

Appendix A. State Project Director Interview Protocol

Notes for reviewers: This interview protocol will be used with the State GEAR UP Project Directors for each of the 42 states in the study sample. Each interview will take up to 90 minutes and will focus on details of state scholarship policies, rationale for key decisions regarding scholarship provision and waivers, role of partners, and challenges related to administering GEAR UP-funded scholarships and applying for waivers. Interviewers will ask the questions in an open-ended manner, but will code responses into pre-specified categories to the extent possible.

Red font indicates text that will be pre-programmed by Abt. Purple font indicates instructions to the interviewer. Blue boxes are instructions or transitions that the interviewer will read to respondents. Radio buttons indicate only one answer should be selected. Checkboxes indicate the interviewer should check all that apply.

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Introduction

My name is [NAME]. My organization, Abt Associates, is contracted by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences to conduct a study of how state grantees provide scholarships and other supports to GEAR UP students. Thank you for making time to speak with me today – I am very interested in learning more about your state's program. The call should take no longer than 90 minutes.

Our conversation today will focus on the GEAR UP grant that your state received in FY [Abt to fill in]. **For states that received more than one GEAR UP grant since 2011:** We know you have a more recent FY [Abt to fill in] grant, but we would like to focus on your state's prior FY [Abt to fill in] grant so that we can understand the full arc from initial student recruitment to grant completion in your state.

Prior to our call, I reviewed your state's GEAR UP grant application and Annual Performance Reports (APRs) to the Department of Education. **If applicable:** I also reviewed:

- Name of Other Document, if any
- Name of Other Document, if any

During our conversation, I may ask a question that other existing documentation answers. Should this be the case, just let me know. At the end of our conversation, we will review a list of these documents to determine the easiest way for me to access them.

We want to let you know that responses to this data collection will be used only for descriptive research purposes. None of our reports will name you as an individual. Information collected for this study comes under the confidentiality and data protection requirements of the Institute of Education Sciences (The Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, Title I, Part E, Section 183). As part of the study, data on state policies and supports may be reported by state. Thus, while personally identifiable information (PII) about individual respondents will not be released, data displayed by state could be attributed to the state agency or possibly an individual respondent. Your identifiable data will not be stored for reuse in future research.

If any questions are unclear or you would like additional clarity about a particular question, let me know.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

All answers should be recorded verbatim. To avoid signaling to respondents that they should be doing a particular activity, do not use response categories as follow-up prompts. If respondents answer a question earlier in the interview, prior to its appearance on the protocol, record their answer when given and skip the question when you come to it on the protocol.

Paperwork Burden Statement: According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is xxxx-xxxx. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1.5 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is expected under the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) (34 C.F.R. § 76.591). If you have any comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual submission, please contact (National Center for Education Evaluation/Institute of Education Sciences U.S. Department of Education, 550 12th St, SW Room 4130, Washington, DC 20202).

GEAR UP Model

First, we'd like to confirm a few basic features of your GEAR UP program as context.

1. For your FY [earliest in study period] grant, does/did your state focus on serving a “cohort” of students starting in a particular grade level, a “priority group” of students with particular characteristics, or both? That is, did your grant use a cohort model, a priority model, or a hybrid model? If respondent asks for clarification: By “cohort,” we mean a model that serves all students in a particular grade level who attend an eligible school or reside in public housing. By “priority,” we mean a model that serves students based on particular characteristics, which might be students in foster care, students from groups traditionally underrepresented in college, or another high-need group you selected. By “hybrid,” we mean a model that includes both cohort and priority students.
 - Cohort (GO TO 2)
 - Priority
 - Hybrid
 - a. How does your state define “priority” students?

Students who are...

 - Eligible for free or reduced-price lunch
 - Limited English Proficient
 - From groups that are traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education
 - Individuals with disabilities
 - Homeless
 - In a specific grade, such as 12th graders
 - Other: _____
2. When completing your Annual Performance Reports (APRs), what students do/did you report on as “GEAR UP students”?
 - Students who are/were part of the GEAR UP cohort
 - Students who are/were part of the priority group
 - Students who attend/attended a GEAR UP school
 - Students who take/took part in GEAR UP activities
 - Other: _____
 - I don't know (if checked, no other response options can be selected)
3. Are GEAR UP students identified at the start of the grant or annually?
 - At the start of the grant
 - Annually
 - Both at the start of the grant and annually
 - Other: _____
 - I don't know
4. Who is responsible for identifying GEAR UP students: the state grantee or your partners? If respondent asks for clarification: By “partners,” we mean schools and others working on local GEAR UP activities as well as any organizations providing GEAR UP services statewide.

- Grantee
- Partners
- I don't know

5. Do schools with GEAR UP programs in your state provide services only to this set of identified “GEAR UP students” or also to other students? If respondent asks for clarification: We are interested in whether some students may participate in certain GEAR UP activities or be served through resources funded through GEAR UP but not necessarily be counted in your APR. Do schools with GEAR UP programs in your state provide services only to students identified in your state APR, or also to other students?

- Only to this set of identified students (GO TO 6)
- To other students too

a. Which types of other students are served?

- Other students in the same grade as the identified students
- Other students in the same school but different grades than the identified students
- Other: _____

GEAR UP Scholarship or Waiver Decision-Making

The next few questions are about your state's decision-making regarding GEAR UP scholarships.

6. For your FY [earliest in study period] grant, does/did your state set aside, or use, any federal GEAR UP funds to provide scholarships?

- Yes
- No (GO TO 8)

a. Approximately what percentage of your FY [earliest in study period] grant is set aside/or planned for scholarships?

- 50% (GO TO 7)
- More than 50% → Percentage: _____
- Less than 50% → Percentage: _____
- Don't know (GO TO 7)

b. How did your state decide on the amount to set aside for scholarships?

- Based on amount remaining after other projected expenditures
- Based on predicted number of GEAR UP students enrolling in college
- Based on the amount of non-GU funds available to the state for scholarships
- Other: _____
- I don't know

7. How important were each of the following to your state's decision to use federal GEAR UP funds to provide scholarships? Please answer “not at all important,” “somewhat important,” “very

important,” or “don’t know/not applicable.” How important was the... [Read each potential reason below.](#)

	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Very important	Don't know/not applicable
Lack of other scholarship options for GEAR UP students in your state	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
High unmet financial need of students in your state	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wanting to motivate or encourage GEAR UP students with the promise of financial aid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

a. **Were there other reasons that your state decided to use federal GEAR UP funds to provide scholarships?**

- Yes - What were these reasons? _____
- No
- I don't know

b. **If more than one reason given for using federal GEAR UP funds to provide scholarships: Which of these was the primary reason that your state decided to use GEAR UP funds to provide scholarships?**

- I don't know

8. **If state sets aside less than 50% of GEAR UP funds to provide scholarships, including not setting aside any funds for scholarships (Q6/Q6a): Did your state request a waiver for the scholarship component?**

- Yes
- No (**GO TO 10**)
- I don't know (**GO TO 10**)

9. **How important were each of the following to your state's decision to request a waiver for the scholarship component?** Please answer “not at all important,” “somewhat important,” “very important,” or “don’t know/not applicable.” How important was... [Read each potential reason below.](#)

	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Very important	Don't know/not applicable
Preferring to spend all grant funding on activities other than scholarships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of flexibility in federal requirements about share of grant funds spent on scholarships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of flexibility in federal requirements about scholarship award amounts for individual students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of flexibility in federal requirements about scholarship eligibility criteria	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Anticipated or experienced difficulties tracking or managing scholarship funds	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Anticipated or experienced difficulties meeting matching requirements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other sources of scholarship aid available to GEAR UP students in your state so less funding is needed or funding is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

not needed

- a. **Were there other reasons that your state decided to apply for a waiver to the scholarship component?**
- Yes – What were these reasons? _____
 - No
 - I don't know
- b. **If more than one reason given for applying for a waiver: Which of these was the primary reason your state decided to apply for a waiver?**
- _____
- I don't know

If no federal GEAR UP funds used to provide scholarships (Q6), GO TO 29

GEAR UP Scholarship Policies

Next, we would like to ask about your state's GEAR UP scholarship that is funded in part or whole using federal GEAR UP funds.

10. Is this scholarship funded solely using federal GEAR UP funds or partly through federal GEAR UP funds and partly through other sources?

- Federal GEAR UP funds only (GO TO 11)
- Both federal GEAR UP funds and other funds
- I don't know (GO TO 11)

a. What are the other funding sources for this scholarship?

- The state
- Institution(s) of higher education
- Private grants
- Other: _____
- I don't know

b. How are these additional funding sources used to support this scholarship? For example, are they used to provide larger award amounts than would otherwise be possible, to provide scholarships to individual students for more years than would otherwise be possible, to provide scholarships to students who are not GEAR UP students, or in other ways?

- Provide larger scholarship award amounts
- Provide scholarships to individual students for more years
- Provide scholarships to more GEAR UP students (e.g., later cohorts of GEAR UP students)
- Provide scholarships to students who are not GEAR UP students
- To cover potential shortfalls in future years
- Other: _____
- I don't know

11. In what academic years did your state award scholarships using federal GEAR UP funds, or in what years is your state planning to do so?

- 2011-12
- 2012-13
- 2013-14
- 2014-15
- 2015-16
- 2016-17
- 2017-18
- 2018-19
- 2019-20
- 2020-21
- 2021-22
- 2022-23
- 2023-24
- Future years beyond the 2023-24 school year
- I don't know (if checked, no other response options can be selected)

12. Does your grantee agency directly inform GEAR UP students about this scholarship?

- Yes
- No (GO TO 12b)
- I don't know (GO TO 12b)

a. When are students in your state typically first informed about the availability of this scholarship? (THEN GO TO 13)

- Middle school
- 9th or 10th grade
- 11th grade
- 12th grade
- I don't know

b. Does your agency require your GEAR UP grant partners, including schools, to inform students about the availability of GEAR UP-funded scholarships at any time(s)?

- Yes (GO TO 12c)
- No (GO TO 13)
- I don't know (GO TO 13)

c. When does your agency require partners to first inform students about the availability of GEAR UP-funded scholarships?

- Middle school
- 9th or 10th grade
- 11th grade
- 12th grade
- I don't know (if checked, no other response options can be selected)

13. What criteria does/did your FY [earliest in study period] grant use to determine which **GEAR UP students** receive a GEAR UP-funded scholarship? If respondent asks for clarification: “By ‘GEAR UP-funded scholarship,’ we mean a scholarship that is funded in whole or part through federal GEAR UP funds. By ‘GEAR UP students,’ we mean those you report on in your Annual Performance Reports (APRs).”

Federal eligibility criteria

- Under 22 years old
- Received high school diploma or equivalent
- Accepted at/enrolled in college

Other eligibility criteria

- Financial need (such as family income or eligibility for free or reduced price lunch)
- Academic achievement or performance
- Number of years participated in GEAR UP
- Teacher/advisor recommendation
- First-generation college student
- Enrollment at in-state college
- Other: _____

a. If grantee does not mention all three federal eligibility criteria: A common criterion is often [students being under age 22/receipt of a high school diploma or equivalent/accepted at or enrolled in college]. Is that a criterion you use?

- Yes
- No → Is there a particular reason that you do not take into account this criterion?

14. Earlier you said that your grant defined “GEAR UP students” as students who [response from Q2; skip question if respondent answered “Don’t know” to Q2]. Can other students, beyond those identified as “GEAR UP students,” receive a GEAR UP-funded scholarship?

- Yes
- No (GO TO 15)
- I don’t know (GO TO 15)

a. What other students are eligible for a GEAR UP-funded scholarship?

- Other students from GEAR UP high schools
- Students who participate in TRIO programs
- Other: _____

b. What are the eligibility criteria for these students?

- Under 22 years old
- Received high school diploma or equivalent
- Accepted at/enrolled in college
- Financial need (such as family income or eligibility for free or reduced price lunch)
- Academic achievement or performance
- Teacher/advisor recommendation
- First-generation college student

- Enrollment at in-state college
- Other: _____

If “yes” to 14, say: For the following questions, we would like to focus on your state’s scholarship policies and practices for GEAR UP students. If any of these policies or practices differ for other students who can also receive GEAR UP-funded scholarships, we will ask about those differences later. For now, please focus on GEAR UP students only.

15. Do students apply for the GEAR UP scholarship?

- Yes
- No (GO TO 16)

a. What do students provide as part of their application?

- Verification that they are a GEAR UP student
- Transcript, GPA, or other indicators of academic performance
- Documentation of financial need (such as FAFSA or eligibility for free or reduced price lunch)
- Personal statement
- Resume
- Letters of reference or recommendation
- Other: _____
- I don’t know (if checked, no other response options can be selected)

b. To whom do students apply: your agency or another agency?

- Grantee
- Agency/organization: _____
- I don’t know

16. If “no” to 15: How are students identified, or verified as eligible, for GEAR UP scholarships?

- GEAR UP project data, such as student rosters
- State administrative data, such as academic achievement in high school, demonstrated financial need, or other student characteristics
- GEAR UP staff or teacher recommendations
- Other: _____
- I don’t know (if checked, no other response options can be selected)

17. Do all students who [if “yes” to 15: apply and] meet the eligibility requirements receive a GEAR UP scholarship?

- Yes (GO TO 18)
- No
- I don’t know (GO TO 18)

a. What factors are used to prioritize which eligible students receive a scholarship?

- First-come, first-served
- Financial need
- Academic achievement or performance
- Years of participation in GEAR UP
- Participation in college access program other than GEAR UP
- Teacher/advisor recommendation

- First-generation college student
- Other: _____
- I don't know (if checked, no other response options can be selected)

18. Can students receive a GEAR UP scholarship in multiple years?

- Yes
 - No (GO TO 19)
 - I don't know (GO TO 19)
- a. Are the eligibility requirements the same in subsequent years as for an initial scholarship?**
- Yes (GO TO 18c)
 - No
 - I don't know (GO TO 18c)
- b. What are the eligibility criteria in subsequent years?**
- Satisfactory academic progress
 - GPA
 - Financial need
 - Other: _____
- c. For how many years, or how many semesters, can students receive a scholarship?**
- ____ years or ____ semesters

19. Do all students who receive a GEAR UP scholarship and are enrolled full-time receive the same

The next set of questions focuses on award amounts and notification and disbursement procedures for the scholarship funded in whole or part using federal GEAR UP funds.

award amount?

- Yes (GO TO 19a)
 - No (GO TO 19b)
 - I don't know (GO TO 20)
- a. What is the award amount?**
- \$_____ (then GO TO 20)
- b. What determines students' scholarship award amounts?**
- Year in college (for example, freshmen vs. sophomore)
 - Type of college attended (two-year vs. four-year)
 - Whether college is in-state vs. out-of-state
 - Financial need
 - Academic achievement or performance
 - Number of years participated in GEAR UP
 - Other: _____
 - I don't know (if checked, no other response options can be selected)
- c. How does [answer from 19b] affect the award amount?**
- _____
- _____

d. Do students who enroll less than full-time received a pro-rated scholarship?

If so, what award amount do these students receive, or what percentage of the full-time amount do they receive? \$_____

20. How did your state decide on the scholarship award amount for students?

- Used the federal minimum
- Used the number of students predicted to be eligible for scholarships divided by the total amount set aside for scholarships while ensuring the federal minimum was met
- Other: _____
- I don't know

21. When are students typically notified of their initial scholarship award?

- Fall semester of senior year
- Winter/early spring of senior year (January - March)
- Late spring of senior year (April - May)
- Summer after senior year (June - August)
- Fall of first expected year of college or later
- Other: _____
- I don't know

a. If students who are not GEAR UP students can receive this scholarship (Q14): Are there any differences in how and when GEAR UP students versus other students are notified about this scholarship?

- Yes
- No (GO TO 22)
- I don't know (GO TO 22)

b. What are the differences?

22. When are scholarship funds typically disbursed to students for the initial award year?

- Before the end of students' senior year of high school
- The summer before students enter college
- Within the first few weeks of students' first semester of college
- During the first semester of college but after the first few weeks
- After the first semester of college
- I don't know

23. What agency or organization is responsible for disbursing scholarship funds?

- Grantee

- Other: _____
- I don't know

24. What documentation or verification, if any, is required to disburse funds to GEAR UP students?

- None
- Proof of high school graduation
- Proof of college enrollment
- Proof of unmet financial need
- Proof of satisfactory academic performance or "good standing" in college
- Other: _____
- I don't know (if checked, no other response options can be selected)

25. If "yes" to 14 [other students beyond "GEAR UP students" can receive scholarship]: Now, I'd like to ask whether any of your state's policies and practices for this scholarship, such as the scholarship award amounts, disbursement procedures, or how students are identified for scholarships, differ for GEAR UP students versus other students who may receive a GEAR UP-funded scholarship. **For the other students, are there any differences in your state's policies and practices related to this scholarship?**

- Yes
- No (GO TO 26)
- I don't know (GO TO 26)

a. What are the differences?

Now we have a few questions about how your state predicts the funds needed to provide scholarships.

26. Does your state have a process to predict the number of scholarships likely to be disbursed from your GEAR UP grant?

- Yes
- No (GO TO 27)

a. How does your state predict the number of scholarships?

- Assume every student served is eligible and will receive scholarship (if checked, no other response options can be selected)
- Historical college enrollment rate for GEAR UP students
- Historical college enrollment rate for all low-income students in the state
- Previous take-up rate for GEAR UP scholarships
- State leaders' opinions, expectations, or expertise about how many students are likely to use scholarships
- Other: _____
- I don't know (if checked, no other response options can be selected)

27. In a given year, has your state ever had additional federal GEAR UP scholarship funds available to disburse, beyond what you anticipated? If respondent asks for clarification, say “This might be because fewer students were eligible for GEAR UP scholarships than you expected or for another reason.”

Yes

No (GO TO 28)

a. When your state had additional scholarship funds available, how did you use these funds?

Saved funds for future years

Provided larger scholarship awards than originally planned

Provided scholarships to more GEAR UP students than originally planned

Provided scholarships to individual students for more years than originally planned

Provided scholarships to students who were not GEAR UP students

Other: _____

28. Did your state change its GEAR UP scholarship award amounts, eligibility requirements, or the number of years scholarships were offered compared to what you initially communicated to students, schools, or other GEAR UP partners? If respondent asks for clarification: By “partners,” we mean schools and others working on local GEAR UP activities as well as any organizations providing statewide GEAR UP services.

Yes

No (GO TO 29)

I don't know (GO TO 29)

a. What changed?

Annual award amount increased

Annual award amount decreased

Scholarships were available for more years per student than originally planned

Scholarships were available for fewer years per student than originally planned

Scholarships were available for more students than originally planned

Scholarships were available for fewer students than originally planned

Other: _____

b. How did you communicate this change to partners and to students and their families?

I don't know

Other Scholarships for GEAR UP Students

Now we would like to ask about any [if state uses at least some federal GEAR UP funds to provide scholarships: other] scholarships, grants, or tuition waivers in your state to which GEAR UP students have access.

irst, are there any [if state uses at least some federal GEAR UP funds to provide scholarships: other]

29.
F

scholarships, grants, or tuition waivers in your state that are specifically for GEAR UP students or for which GEAR UP students receive priority? If respondent asks for clarification: For this question we are focused on scholarships or grants specifically for GEAR UP students in your state or for which GEAR UP students receive priority, but which are not funded through federal GEAR UP funds.

- Yes
- No, there are scholarships/grants for which GEAR UP students are eligible but don't receive priority (GO TO 29b)
- I don't know (GO TO 29b)

a. Please tell me the name(s) of these scholarships, grants, or tuition waivers. Record all mentioned.

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____
- (...) _____ (GO TO 30)

b. Can you describe the non-federal means of providing scholarships to GEAR UP students in your state?

For each scholarship, grant, or tuition waiver listed in Q29a (if none listed, GO TO 44)

Now we would like to collect some information on [the scholarship /each of the scholarships] you just mentioned.

If only one scholarship identified: First we have some questions about eligibility for this scholarship/grant/tuition waiver. If multiple scholarships mentioned: Let's start with [name of first scholarship mentioned in Q29a; then repeat Q30 - Q43 for each additional scholarship].

30. Who administers this scholarship?

- State grantee
- Other: _____
- I don't know

31. Does your state set aside a specific amount of this scholarship for GEAR UP students? For example, does your state set aside a specific amount for each GEAR UP student, a specific overall amount for GEAR UP students each year, or a specific amount over the course of your state's GEAR UP grant?

- Yes, sets aside a specific amount per GEAR UP student →
 - Amount per student? \$ _____
- Yes, sets aside a specific overall amount per year →
 - Amount per year? \$ _____
- Yes, sets aside a specific overall amount over the course of the GEAR UP grant? →
 - Amount? \$ _____
- Yes, sets aside a specific amount determined by: _____ →

- o What is this amount? \$ _____
- No, does not set aside a specific amount for GEAR UP students (if checked, no other response options can be selected)
- I don't know (if checked, no other response options can be selected)

32. Does your GEAR UP grant – that is, your agency or your grant partners – specifically inform GEAR UP students about the availability of this scholarship? If respondent asks for clarification: By “partners,” we mean schools and others working on local GEAR UP activities as well as any organizations providing GEAR UP services statewide.

- Yes
- No (GO TO 33)
- I don't know (GO TO 33)

a. When are GEAR UP students in your state typically first informed about the availability of this scholarship?

- Middle school
- 9th or 10th grade
- 11th grade
- 12th grade
- I don't know

33. Is being a GEAR UP student the only criterion for receiving this scholarship?

- Yes (GO TO 34)
- No
- I don't know (GO TO 34)

a. What are the other eligibility criteria?

- Age
- Received high school diploma or equivalent
- Accepted at/enrolled in college
- Financial need (such as family income or eligibility for free or reduced price lunch)
- Academic achievement or performance
- Number of years participated in GEAR UP
- Teacher/advisor recommendation
- First-generation college student
- Enrollment at in-state college
- Other: _____
- I don't know (if checked, no other response options can be selected)

34. Can students who are not GEAR UP students receive this scholarship?

- Yes
- No (GO TO 35)
- I don't know (GO TO 35)

a. What other types of students are eligible for this scholarship?

- Other students from GEAR UP high schools

- Students who participate in TRIO programs
- Low-income students or students with financial need
- Other: _____

35. Do GEAR UP students apply for this scholarship?

- Yes
- No (GO TO 36)
- I don't know (GO TO 36)

a. What do students provide as part of their application?

- Verification that they are a GEAR UP student
- Transcript, GPA, or other indicators of academic performance
- Documentation of financial need (such as FAFSA or eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch)
- Personal statement
- Resume
- Letters of reference or recommendation
- Other: _____
- I don't know (if checked, no other response options can be selected)

b. To whom do students apply: your agency or someone else?

- GEAR UP grantee
- Someone else - organization name: _____
- I don't know

36. If "no" to 35: How are GEAR UP students identified for this scholarship?

- GEAR UP project data, such student rosters
- State administrative data, such as academic achievement in high school, demonstrated financial need, or other student characteristics
- Staff or teacher recommendations
- Other: _____
- I don't know (if checked, no other response options can be selected)

37. Do all GEAR UP students who [if "yes" to 35: apply and] meet the eligibility requirements receive this scholarship?

- Yes (GO TO 38)
- No
- I don't know (GO TO 38)

a. What factors are used to prioritize which eligible students receive this scholarship?

- First-come, first-served
- Financial need
- Academic achievement or performance
- Years of participation in GEAR UP
- Participation in college access program(s) other than GEAR UP
- Teacher/advisor recommendation
- First-generation college student

- Other: _____
- I don't know (if checked, no other response options can be selected)

38. Can GEAR UP students receive this scholarship in multiple years?

- Yes
 - No (GO TO 39)
 - I don't know (GO TO 39)
- a. Are the eligibility requirements the same in subsequent years as for an initial scholarship?**
- Yes (GO TO 39)
 - No
 - I don't know (GO TO 39)
- b. What are the eligibility criteria in subsequent years?**
- Satisfactory academic progress
 - GPA
 - Financial need
 - Other: _____
 - I don't know (if checked, no other response options can be selected)

The next set of questions focuses on award amounts and notification and disbursement procedures for [scholarship name].

39. Do all students who receive this scholarship and are enrolled full-time receive the same award amount?

- Yes (GO TO 39a)
 - No (GO TO 39b)
 - I don't know (GO TO 40)
- a. What is the award amount?**
- \$_____ (then GO TO 40)
- b. What determines students' scholarship award amounts?**
- Year in college (for example, freshmen vs. sophomore)
 - Type of college attended (two-year vs. four-year)
 - Whether college is in-state vs. out-of-state
 - Financial need
 - Academic achievement or performance
 - Number of years participated in GEAR UP
 - Other: _____
 - I don't know (if checked, no other response options can be selected)
- c. How does [answer from 39b] affect the award amount?**
- _____
- _____
- d. Do students who enroll less than full-time received a pro-rated scholarship?**

If so, what award amount do these students receive, or what percentage of the full-time amount do they receive? \$_____

40. When are GEAR UP students typically notified of their initial scholarship award?

- Fall semester of senior year
- Winter/early spring of senior year (January – March)
- Late spring of senior year (April – May)
- Summer after senior year (June – August)
- Fall of first expected year of college or later
- Other: _____
- I don't know

a. If students who are not GEAR UP students can receive this scholarship (Q34): Are there any differences in how and when GEAR UP students versus other students are notified about this scholarship?

- Yes
- No (GO TO 41)
- I don't know (GO TO 41)

b. What are the differences?

41. When is this scholarship typically disbursed to students for the initial award year?

- Before the end of students' senior year of high school
- The summer before students enter college
- Within the first few weeks of students' first semester of college
- During the first semester of college but after the first few weeks
- After the first semester of college
- I don't know

42. What agency or organization is responsible for disbursing scholarship funds?

- State grantee
- Other: _____
- I don't know

43. What documentation, if any, is required to disburse funds?

- None
- Proof of high school graduation
- Proof of college enrollment
- Proof of unmet financial need
- Proof of satisfactory academic performance or "good standing" in college
- Other: _____
- I don't know (if checked, no other response options can be selected)

Communication about Scholarships and Financial Aid Tracking

Now I have a few questions about how your agency communicates with GEAR UP students and their families about financial aid, and about what information on financial aid your GEAR UP grant tracks.

44. First, what modes of communication – if any – does your agency use to inform GEAR UP students or their families about financial aid?

- None, all communication comes from partners (if checked, no other response options can be selected)
- Print mailings
- Emails
- Text messages
- State website
- Social media
- Radio or TV
- 21st Century Scholar Certificates
- Other: _____

a. If print mailings or emails checked above: How frequently does your agency send [print mailings/emails] to communicate with students or their families about scholarships for GEAR UP students?

_____ times per year, on average

or

_____ times over the course of the GEAR UP grant

45. Now thinking about what information – if any – your GEAR UP grant tracks for individual students:

Does your GEAR UP grant track... Read each option below.

	Yes	No	I don't know
If some federal GEAR UP funds used to provide scholarships (Q6): Receipt of GEAR UP-funded scholarships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If "yes" to row above: GEAR UP-funded scholarship award amount	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For each scholarship/grant/tuition waiver listed in Q29a: Receipt of [scholarship name]	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For each "yes" to row above: [Scholarship name] award amount	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Total state aid received	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Total financial aid, including federal and institutional aid received	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other: _____			

46. Does your GEAR UP grant have access to – and review or otherwise use – students' FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) information?

- Yes, has access to FAFSA and uses (GO TO 47)
- No, has access to FAFSA but does not use
- No, does not have access to FAFSA
- I don't know

a. Does your GEAR UP grant have access to – and review or otherwise use – any other information on individual students’ financial need?

- Yes → What other information? _____
- No
- I don’t know

47. Will/did your agency track any data on GEAR UP students once your grant ends? If respondent asks for clarification, say “This might be data on students’ college enrollment or financial aid receipt.”

- Yes
- No (GO TO 48)
- I don’t know (GO TO 48)

a. What data will your agency track for individual GEAR UP students once your grant ends?

- If some federal GEAR UP funds used to provide scholarships (Q6): Receipt of GEAR UP-funded scholarships
- If at least one scholarship listed in Q29a: Receipt of at least one of the following [scholarship names from Q29a]
- Total state aid received
- Total financial aid, including federal and institutional aid, received
- College enrollment and/or persistence
- College completion
- Other: _____

Partners

Next to provide context in understanding states’ approaches to the GEAR UP scholarship component relative to how other federal GEAR UP funds are spent, we would like to learn more about your grant partners and the activities and services they provide. In this section, we would like to focus on the partners to which your agency disburses/distributed federal GEAR UP funds. These partners could include schools and school districts working on local activities as well as any organizations providing GEAR UP services statewide.

48. What types of organizations does/did your agency disburse federal GEAR UP funds to? Did your agency disburse grant funds to... Read each option below.

	Yes	No	I don't know
Schools or school districts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Institutions of higher education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other types of organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Name(s) of other types of organizations: _____			

49. Next, we would like to ask about services and activities provided through your GEAR UP grant. We are asking about these activities and services to understand how the scholarship component fits into other activities provided GEAR UP grants, including what states may or may not be able to fund if they choose to devote GEAR UP resources to scholarships. For each service or activity, please let us know if it was provided through your GEAR UP grant. If so, we then would like to know if (1) the service or activity is primarily provided by your agency, by your partners, or both, and (2) which of your partners provide this service or activity.

Does your FY [earliest in study period] GEAR UP grant provide [first service/activity below]? If yes: Who primarily provides [service/activity]: your agency, your partners, or both? Read each service/activity below.

	Provided through grant?			If yes: Provider?			If partners or both grantee and partners selected: Which of your partners provide?			
	Yes	No	I don't know	State grantee	Partners	Both	Schools/ school districts	Institutions of higher education	Other	I don't know
Direct services to students or families <i>If respondent asks for clarification: By this we mean services such as tutoring, college advising, and financial aid assistance, which may be offered to students or their families</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Direct outreach for student or school recruitment <i>Activities related to recruiting students or schools to participate in the GEAR UP program</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information dissemination/communication, such as print mailings, maintaining the GEAR UP website or social media accounts, and other activities to communicate with students, families, and other stakeholders <i>Activities to disseminate information to GEAR UP program stakeholders including students and their families</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Staff development or technical assistance <i>Professional supports for educators working with GEAR UP students or schools</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Curricular reforms or development <i>Activities related to implementing rigorous courses or new academic opportunities to promote high school completion and college access and enrollment</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Data collection, reporting, or compliance <i>Activities that support collecting data on program operations and outcomes, including responding to federal reporting requirements</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other: _____				<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Challenges

Finally, we want to ask about any challenges that you may have faced related to your GEAR UP grant. First, I'd like to know how challenging each of the following has been, and then I'd like to hear about any other challenges that your grant has experienced.

- 50. First, how challenging has each of the following been?** Please answer “not at all challenging,” “a little challenging,” “moderately challenging,” “very challenging,” or “don’t know/not applicable.” **If state requested a scholarship waiver (Q8): We realize some of these topics may not be a challenge because your state requested a waiver from the scholarship requirement. However, we want to make sure we fully understand which challenges affect different states. Please answer “don’t know or not applicable” if appropriate. How challenging is...** Read each potential challenge below.

	Not at all challenging	A little challenging	Moderately challenging	Very challenging	Don't know/not applicable
Tracking how much financial aid individual GEAR UP students receive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communicating with GEAR UP students and their families about scholarships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Confirming GEAR UP students meet scholarship eligibility requirements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Processing GEAR UP students' scholarship applications	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Disbursing scholarship award payments to GEAR UP students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If some federal GEAR UP funds used to provide scholarships (Q6): Managing federal GEAR UP funds to plan for multiple years of scholarship disbursement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Managing non-federal grant funds to plan for multiple years of scholarship disbursement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If state requested a scholarship waiver (Q8): Requested a waiver for the scholarship component	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If state requested a scholarship waiver (Q8): Complying with waiver requirements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overseeing or working with your GEAR UP partners	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having sufficient funds available for all required GEAR UP activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understanding GEAR UP matching requirements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meeting GEAR UP matching requirements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Collecting or reporting data for GEAR UP Annual Performance Reports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

51. Are there any other challenges that your GEAR UP grant has faced that we did not already ask about, or that you would like to elaborate on?

52. What is the greatest challenge that your grant has faced in providing scholarships to GEAR UP students?

For states that have received a second GEAR UP grant since 2011; other states skip to Closing Statement.

Scholarship Disbursement among States with Multiple Grants

Finally I wanted to ask about your state's more recent FY [Abt to fill in] GEAR UP grant.

53. Is your state currently using, or planning to use, federal GEAR UP funds to provide scholarships through your FY [Abt to fill in] GEAR UP grant?

- Yes
- No (GO TO CLOSING STATEMENT)

54. For states that used federal GEAR UP funds to provide scholarships through their initial GEAR UP grant: Do you anticipate any changes in your state's GEAR UP scholarship processes – such as in scholarship eligibility, application, notification, or disbursement – for this grant compared to your prior grant?

- Yes
- No (GO TO CLOSING STATEMENT)

a. What are the main changes you anticipate making?

Closing Statement

Thank you so much for providing all this information. We really enjoyed learning more about your state's approach to the GEAR UP program and appreciate your time!

If any documents were mentioned that we need to gather: Earlier you mentioned [documents], which would be helpful for me to have to better understand your GEAR UP grant. What would be the easiest way for me to access these documents?

After we have a chance to process all of the information you shared with us today, we'll send you a brief worksheet asking for some follow-up information, such as [if applicable: the number of students who received GEAR UP scholarships and] your approximate grant spending in different activity categories. The worksheet will be customized based on the information you shared today and should take no more than 30 minutes to complete. If you need to consult with others to complete the worksheet, we would appreciate it if you could do so. After you have had a chance to look over the worksheet, we would be happy to schedule a brief call to go over any questions you have on the worksheet. Just let us know if that would be helpful once you've had a chance to review

