



**Part B: Supporting  
Statement for  
Paperwork Reduction  
Act Submission**

**Study of Financial Aid  
Supports for GEAR UP  
Students**

August 2020

*Prepared for:*  
Daphne Garcia

**U.S. Department of  
Education**

550 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

*Submitted by:*

**Abt Associates Inc.**

10 Fawcett Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138

## Part B: Supporting Statement for Paperwork Reduction Act Submission

### Table of Contents

<b>Part B: Supporting Statement for Paperwork Reduction Act Submission.....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>B. Collection of Information Employing Statistical Methods.....</b>	<b>2</b>
Introduction.....	2
B.1 Respondent Universe and Sampling Methods.....	3
B.1.1 Respondent Universe.....	3
B.1.2 Sampling Methods.....	3
B.1.3 Expected Response Rates.....	3
B.2 Statistical Methods for Sample Selection and Degree of Accuracy Needed.....	3
B.2.1 Sample Selection.....	3
B.2.2 Estimation Procedures.....	4
B.2.3 Unusual Problems Requiring Specialized Sampling Procedures.....	5
B.2.4 Use of Periodic Data Collection Cycles to Reduce Burden.....	5
B.3 Methods to Maximize Response Rates and Deal with Nonresponse.....	5
B.3.1 Maximize Response Rates.....	5
B.3.2 Dealing with Non-Response.....	5
B.4 Test of Procedures and Methods to be Undertaken.....	6
B.5 Individuals Consulted on Statistical Aspects of the Design.....	6

## B. Collection of Information Employing Statistical Methods

### Introduction

The U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES) requests Office of Management and Budget (OMB) clearance for data collection activities for the *Study of Financial Aid Supports for GEAR UP Students*. This is a congressionally-mandated evaluation of the scholarship component of the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) program. Specifically, the request covers two data collection activities: (a) telephone interviews with State Project Directors and (b) collection of numeric data on grant expenditures and student scholarships through a Supplemental Data Form. This is the first and only request for collection of data for this study.

Established in the 1998 Higher Education Act (HEA), GEAR UP provides competitive, multi-year grants to states and local partnerships to prepare students attending high-poverty middle and high schools for college enrollment and success.<sup>1</sup> State grantees must use at least half of their funds to provide college scholarships to GEAR UP students, unless they receive a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education (ED).

This study fulfills a congressional mandate to collect information on states’ provision of scholarships to students participating in GEAR UP. Specifically, the HEA states:

*In order to evaluate and improve the impact of the activities...the Secretary shall...award one or more grants, contracts, or cooperative agreements... to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and, as appropriate, disseminate the results of the evaluation. Such an evaluation shall include a separate analysis of—*

- (1) the implementation of the scholarship component...; and*
- (2) the use of methods for complying with matching requirements...<sup>2</sup>*

How GEAR UP grantees provide scholarships to support students’ enrollment and persistence in college is of interest for several reasons. First, this component distinguishes GEAR UP from other federal college access programs that serve primarily low-income students or those from high-poverty schools. Second, the 2008 HEA reauthorization gave state grantees flexibility in how they implement and fund the scholarships. While program statute requires states to set aside at least half of their GEAR UP funds to provide scholarships (states that do are referred to as “set-aside states”), states may be granted a waiver to devote all of their GEAR UP funds to other activities (referred to as “waiver states”) if they can ensure that GEAR UP students have access to alternative scholarship funds—such as those that are state-funded. The reauthorization also changed other aspects of the scholarship component, such as the minimum amount and which students must be eligible to receive this financial aid.

Little information is available about how states are carrying out these requirements or the challenges they face in administering this part of the GEAR UP program. The data collection for this study will

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/gearup/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, Title IV, Part A, Subpart 2, Chapter 2, [20 U.S.C 1070a-21 1070a 28](https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2016-title20/html/USCODE-2016-title20-chap28-subchapIV-partA-subpart2-divsn2.htm). Sub-Section: §1070a-27. Evaluation and report. Retrieved from: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2016-title20/html/USCODE-2016-title20-chap28-subchapIV-partA-subpart2-divsn2.htm>

examine the scholarship practices of all states that received a GEAR UP grant since fiscal year (FY) 2011, the first year the scholarship changes went into effect. ED plans to use the study results to inform program improvement, both current efforts and the upcoming reauthorization of the HEA.

IES has contracted with Abt Associates Inc. to conduct the study, including all data collection. The study will answer the following research questions:

- **Research Question 1:** To what extent do state grantees emphasize access to scholarships for GEAR UP students?
  - How are federal or other funds used to provide scholarships to GEAR UP students?
  - What processes do states use to inform GEAR UP students about scholarships, determine students' scholarship eligibility, and disburse funds?
- **Research Question 2:** How do state grantees allocate their resources between scholarships and other state and local GEAR UP efforts?
  - How does resource allocation differ across states?
  - What types of matching contributions support state grantees' GEAR UP activities, particularly scholarships?
- **Research Question 3:** What challenges do GEAR UP grantees face in administering GEAR UP scholarships and other aspects of the program?

To address these research questions and respond to the congressional mandate, the study will rely on four data sources: reviews of GEAR UP grantees' Annual Performance Reports and grant applications, interviews, and a Supplemental Data Form (Exhibit B-1).

## **B.1 Respondent Universe and Sampling Methods**

### **B.1.1 Respondent Universe**

The study sample includes all 42 states that received GEAR UP grants since FY 2011. These states received all grants since the 2008 reauthorization of the HEA, which mandated this study.

### **B.1.2 Sampling Methods**

The study team will not use sampling methods but will collect data from the census of grantees.

### **B.1.3 Expected Response Rates**

The study team anticipates a 100 percent response rate across data collection activities (see Exhibit B-1) because grant recipients have an obligation to participate in Department evaluations (Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) (34 C.F.R. § 76.591)) and the study is primarily collecting data from state staff whose positions are funded, at least in part, through the GEAR UP grant.

### **Exhibit B-1. Respondent Universe, Sample, and Expected Response Rate for Data Sources**

Data Source	Respondent	Respondent Universe	Sample	Response Rate Anticipated
Review of Annual Performance Reports <sup>a</sup>	GEAR UP Program Office	1	Census	100%
Review of Grant Applications <sup>a</sup>	GEAR UP Program Office	1	Census	100%
Phone Interviews	State Project Directors	42	Census	100%
Supplemental Data Form (Excel worksheet)	State Project Directors	42	Census	100%

<sup>a</sup> These data are not covered in this clearance package. The ED program office will provide these items to the study team so there is no associated burden on outside respondents.

## B.2 Statistical Methods for Sample Selection and Degree of Accuracy Needed

### B.2.1 Sample Selection

As described above in **B.1.2 Sampling Methods**, the study will collect data from the census of grantees. No sample selection is planned.

### B.2.2 Estimation Procedures

To address the research questions, the study team will conduct descriptive analyses. Specifically, the study will produce summary statistics such as means and standard deviations (for continuous variables), and tabulations such as counts and percentages (for categorical variables). Because the study will collect data from the census of GEAR UP grantees from FY 2011 to present, common statistical tests to determine whether differences are real, such as F-tests, are not necessary. The most common comparison will be between set-aside and waiver states.

Almost all data collected on the Supplemental Data Form is numeric, such as the number of GEAR UP students eligible for a GEAR UP-funded scholarship, the minimum annual scholarship award, and the annual GEAR UP expenditures disbursed to subcontractors. A few questions on the form are “yes/no” questions about how matching contributions are typically used. This will allow for straightforward tabulations and cross-tabulation.

For the interview questions, response options shown on the interview protocol will serve as preliminary categories for analysis. Interviewers will ask the questions in an open-ended manner, but will code responses into pre-specified categories to the extent possible. This approach provides for both standardization across states and adequate opportunity for respondents to provide additional details. For example, the study team will ask “What is the greatest challenge that your grant has faced in providing scholarships to GEAR UP students?” and will code responses into one of 13 pre-specified analysis categories, if possible.

### B.2.3 Unusual Problems Requiring Specialized Sampling Procedures

Not applicable.

### B.2.4 Use of Periodic Data Collection Cycles to Reduce Burden

To minimize burden, the study team will collect data from each State Project Director once.

The study team will collect multiple years of existing data on grantees by working with the GEAR UP program office to access each state's GEAR UP grant application and Annual Performance Reports. However, these reviews of existing documents will not impose any burden on grantees.

### **B.3 Methods to Maximize Response Rates and Deal with Nonresponse**

#### **B.3.1 Maximize Response Rates**

To maximize response rates, the study team will use strategies that have proven successful in the Study of Enhanced College Advising in Upward Bound, the Study of Student Messaging in GEAR UP, and the Comprehensive Literacy Program Evaluation. Through these projects and others, the study team has developed recruitment and communication procedures to maximize response rates. Specifically, the study team will:

- Ask the Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE), which administers the GEAR UP program, to send an initial recruitment email to all State Project Directors providing an overview of the study and inviting their participation.
- Assign a study team member to each state to ensure consistent email communication, including scheduling interviews, conducting follow-up, sending each state's customized Supplemental Data Form, and checking in with each State Project Director to answer any questions about the form or troubleshoot any challenges (see Appendix C for the initial outreach email communication the study team will send).
- Convey to State Project Directors the study's efforts to reduce burden by collecting all existing information in advance of the interview and using the Supplemental Data Form to collect any data that may require reviewing state records.

#### **B.3.2 Dealing with Non-Response**

As discussed above, the study team anticipates a 100 percent response rate across data collection activities because grant recipients have an obligation to participate in Department evaluations (Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) (34 C.F.R. § 76.591)) and the study is primarily collecting data from state staff whose positions are funded, at least in part, through the GEAR UP grant.

### **B.4 Test of Procedures and Methods to be Undertaken**

During the 60-day public comment period, the study team will pilot the interview protocol and Supplemental Data Form with no more than nine states to ensure that the protocol instructions and questions are clear to respondents. The study team will select the pilot states to capture aspects of grant administration that affect which protocol questions states are asked and that could affect responses. These include whether the state:

- disburses GEAR UP scholarships or has a waiver from the scholarship requirement; and
- has received one GEAR UP grant since FY 2011 or two.

Pilot participants will complete the data collection components as they would during the study's main data collection, and provide feedback on each instrument, as described below. During the study's main data collection period, states that participated in pilot testing will complete an abbreviated version of instruments, answering only the questions that were revised after the pilot testing.

#### ***Interview Protocol Pilot Testing***

While conducting the State Project Director interview, the study team will take notes about questions that respondents found difficult to understand or challenging to answer. At the end of the interview, the study team will solicit additional feedback on the length, content, and clarity of the interview. The study team will revise the interview protocol based on pilot participants' feedback and use the average length of time the interviews required to update the burden estimates provided in Part A of this supporting statement if necessary.

### ***Supplemental Data Form Pilot Testing***

The study team will internally test the functionality of the Excel workbook, including logic checks, and will use the instructions provided to respondents to launch the workbook in different versions of Excel. Following the pilot interviews, the team will send the form to no more than nine State Project Directors, to mirror procedures developed for the main data collection. After the State Project Directors complete the form, the study team will solicit their feedback, via email, on aspects of the form that could be improved, and will record how long it took them to complete the form. The study team will use the feedback provided to revise the content and functionality of the form and update the burden estimate as needed.

## **B.5 Individuals Consulted on Statistical Aspects of the Design**

The following individuals were consulted on the statistical aspects of the study:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title/Affiliation</b>	<b>Telephone</b>
Amanda Parsad	Principal Associate, Abt Associates	(301) 634-1791
Tamara Linkow	Principal Associate, Abt Associates	(617) 520-2978
Hannah Miller	Associate, Abt Associates	(617) 520-3892

The following individuals will be responsible for the Data Collection and Analysis:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title/Affiliation</b>	<b>Telephone</b>
Tamara Linkow	Principal Associate, Abt Associates	(617) 520-2978
Hannah Miller	Associate, Abt Associates	(617) 520-3892
Jennifer Poulos	Senior Associate, Abt Associates	(617) 349-2426
Jennifer Turnham	Principal Associate, Abt Associates	(301) 347-5289