



Oregon GEAR UP Project Narrative

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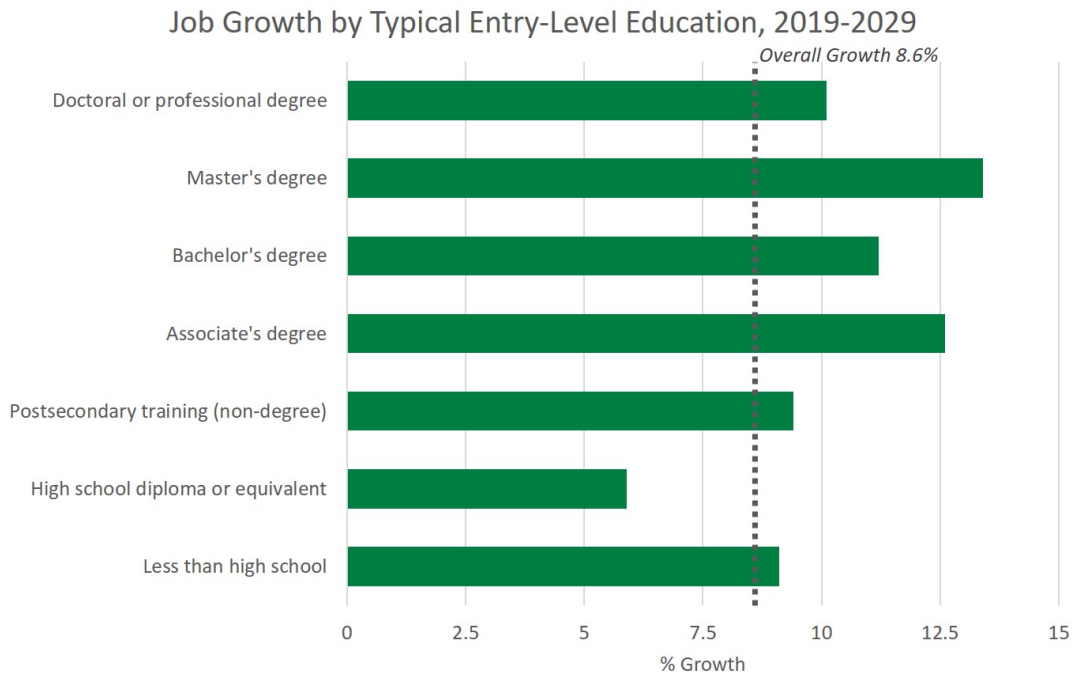
1. NEED FOR THE PROJECT

Oregon is facing a crisis in college access and completion. The COVID-19 global pandemic has exacerbated that crisis even more. Oregon GEAR UP is eager to address this crisis through the successful implementation of the state's fourth GEAR UP grant (GU4). Building on over 20 years of experience in delivering GEAR UP services, our service model to be explored later employs a two-pronged approach:

- 1) **School-based Services:** direct services to priority students in grades 7-12 and the first year in college. While the college completion crisis in Oregon is statewide, it is more dire in rural areas. For this reason, we have identified 60 rural school districts that will be invited to apply to provide services once we have been awarded a new grant. These schools serve a preponderance of low-income students and, as you will see, are below state averages in many categories.
- 2) **Statewide Services:** technical assistance to secondary schools throughout the state to improve college access across Oregon. Services include events largely focused on supporting seniors on their path to postsecondary education, a vast collection of college awareness resources and tools, and professional development for educators.

We will address both of these approaches in the Project Services section. First we'll explore the **magnitude and severity of problems** related to college access and success in Oregon. Where possible, we have included rural data to illustrate the struggles in potential GU4 schools. The benefits of education beyond high school are numerous: increased earning potential, personal development, and preparation for careers, to name a few. Some of the most compelling benefits relate to employment. Low-income Oregonians who enroll in college as young adults are twice as likely to become middle or high income earners as those who do not (Chetty, Saez,

Turner and Yagan, 2017). The Oregon Employment Department predicts that job growth in the state will be approximately 9% over the next ten years. As the chart below indicates, most of that growth will occur in fields that require some education or training beyond high school, and primarily in fields that require a Bachelor’s degree or higher. During this same time period, 97% of higher paying jobs will require a postsecondary credential or degree.



Despite Oregon’s job growth trends, only 43% of adult Oregonians (25 and older) hold a postsecondary degree; in rural areas that number drops to only 35% (American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). College enrollment among recent high school graduates is encouraging, and yet there is still much work to be done. According to the Oregon Department of Education, 62% of 2018 high school graduates attended college within a year of graduating. In comparison, only 56% of graduates from potential GU4 schools attended college within a year even though these schools have higher high school graduation rates than the state average. These higher graduation rates suggest a greater percentage of students in these schools may be prepared

to continue their education after high school. Yet, they don't make the choice to do so. With the support of GU4, schools will be able to build their college-going cultures and increase the likelihood that students will enroll in postsecondary education.

Moreover, according to a recent study by Education Northwest, Oregon's rural students persist from the first to second year in college at lower rates than their non-rural counterparts – 78% and 83% respectively. Similarly, rates of completion are lower for rural students than non-rural students – 44% versus 53% (Riggs, Pierson, Hodara, 2021). Research also shows that college fit, or the type of institution where a student enrolls, matters. Students who are academically prepared for a college or university that is more selective than the one they choose are less likely than others to complete their degrees (Avery & Hoxby, 2013). Fifty-seven percent of rural students enrolled in Oregon two-year public colleges compared to 45% of non-rural students, and rural students enrolled in Oregon four-year universities at a lower rate than non-rural students – 22% versus 29%. A similar share of rural and non-rural students enrolled in four-year Oregon private and out-of-state public institutions. However, non-rural students were twice as likely as rural students to enroll in out-of-state private institutions. These trends are consistent over time, and in some cases have only worsened (Riggs, Pierson, Hodara, 2021).

Oregon is the 27th most populous state in the nation but the ninth largest geographically with over 98,000 square miles. Oregon's landscape is diverse: a rugged Pacific coastline, volcanic mountain ranges, dense forests, and a high desert. This geographic diversity includes a wide array of rural communities, from frontier areas to small towns on the outskirts of cities. Over two-thirds of Oregon public high schools are in these rural areas, and they enroll approximately 42% of all public high school students. Oregon's rural schools serve a diverse population—more than 30% of rural high school graduates in 2019 identified as a student of

color (primarily Native American and Latino), and nearly 75% were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The primary economic drivers in rural Oregon have traditionally been agriculture, timber, and fishing. These resource-based industries are in serious decline and as a result unemployment and poverty rates are highest in rural Oregon (Turning Point 2020; Oregon Employment Department). It took rural areas of Oregon much longer than urban areas to begin adding jobs following the Great Recession of 2008. By 2019, the number of jobs in rural Oregon had barely budged above the levels seen in 2001; rural Oregon job growth was 7% while metro areas was around 24% during the same time period. To compound matters, Oregonians have felt the impacts of the COVID-19 recession, along with other disruptions including significant wildfires that displaced residents and destroyed homes and businesses. In March of 2020 the unemployment rate in the state was at a near record low of 3.6%. By April it climbed to 13.6%. One year later it still stands at 6.1% across the state, and higher in rural areas (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). The most recent economic forecast from the Oregon Office of Economic Analysis projects the economy won't return to early 2020 levels of employment until mid-2023. Rural economies have been the slowest to recover from past recessions, suggesting economic recovery could take even longer in these areas of the state. Research also finds that after the Great Recession, more than 95% of jobs created required some postsecondary education (Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce). When COVID-19 struck and unemployment rose, those with some college education were more likely to retain their jobs (Pew Research Center). GU4 can help schools do a better job of preparing graduates from rural high schools to weather future economic disruptions.

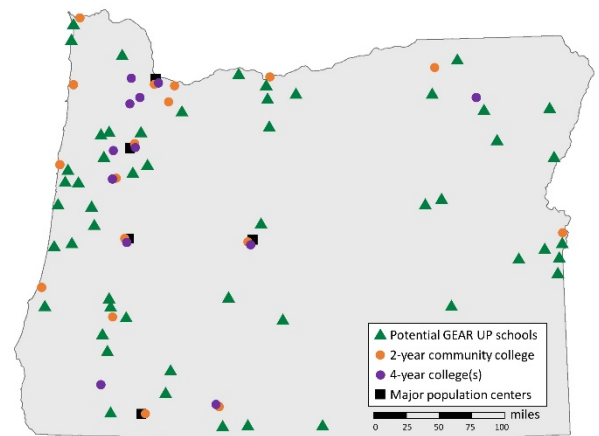
Oregon's rural schools face additional barriers to postsecondary preparation and access related to their economies. Historically, high school graduates could get a family-wage job in the

community without any additional training or education beyond high school, which helped create a culture that undervalues postsecondary education. Declining job opportunities in resource-based industries have forced many residents to relocate, so rural communities are shrinking. School funding in Oregon is a per-pupil model, so decreased enrollment equals fewer resources. As a result, these school districts and communities struggle to expose students to a variety of careers that may require postsecondary education.

As noted above, the sheer size of our state creates geographic isolation for most rural schools. Many colleges and universities are located near urban centers, making college visits and other first-hand college experiences difficult, and productive partnerships between secondary and postsecondary schools challenging. Recent research has found that in large part rural students don't go to college because they aren't recruited. College recruiters tend to focus their efforts where they can reach a large number of students, and preferably a large number of middle to upper class students (Gettinger, 2019). For the most part, nearby campuses are limited to community colleges. To illustrate the geographic barrier, the map above shows potential GU4 schools in relation to colleges and universities in contrast to urban areas.

The geographic isolation of these communities and a lack of access to nearby meaningful

professional development also makes it difficult for schools to attract and retain highly qualified teachers who are properly credentialed to provide dual credit courses. Even with the proliferation of virtual training opportunities, there are often shortages of substitute teachers to stand in while



teachers attend. Moreover, administrators frequently serve as building principal and district superintendent and are often without nearby peers.

As referenced earlier, our project design includes direct services for students from a set of rural schools. Table 1-1 provides a demographic snapshot of potential GU4 schools. These schools serve mostly low-income students and many also serve a relatively high percentage of students of color. Most of this racial/ethnic diversity is represented by large numbers of Latino students, but several schools also have more American Indian students than the state average. At fifteen of the schools, more than 10% of the students are designated as English Language Learners (ELL) and three of those serve over 40% ELL students. Because of the factors addressed earlier, rural Oregon schools often have far fewer teachers trained to work with ELL students and even fewer resources to serve underserved populations.

Table 1-1 Characteristics of Potential GU4 Schools

Characteristic	GU4		State
	High	Average	Average
Free/reduced price lunch	95%	62%	49%
Percentage of students of color	71%	27%	38%
Percentage of English Language Learners	57%	N/A	18%

These demographics lead to challenges in working with parents. English is not the first language for many parents, yet schools are often unable to provide interpretation and translation services needed for effective communication. In addition, rural parents often lack first-hand experience with college admissions and financial aid, as demonstrated by the low college degree attainment rates. Strategies 360 conducted interviews with families from across the state to better understand college access through their eyes. Education and training beyond high school are seen as paramount to a successful career, but many parents feel largely unprepared to help their students obtain a degree or certificate (Mears and Kozlowski, 2021).

An examination of data from these schools through the lens of federal GEAR UP objectives further defines the **gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, and opportunities** to be addressed through GU4. We are using data from the 2018-19 school year because it paints a more realistic picture of these schools, unmarred by the effects of COVID-19 on student outcomes. These data have shaped the development of a logic model that leads to specific strategies and activities that we will address under Project Design and Services.

Federal Objective 1: Increase the academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education for GEAR UP students

Academic performance and preparation was analyzed by examining standardized test scores, and access to dual credit courses. The data clearly demonstrate that students from potential GU4 schools are not adequately prepared for postsecondary success. Average scores are alarming enough, but some schools fall far below these averages and disaggregated data reveal that low-income students, students of color and English language learners are faring far worse. While the data is not yet available, we can be assured that the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted student learning. We should anticipate the need to help students “catch up” once they return next year. With regards to access to rigorous courses, in 2018-19 one in five potential GU4 schools offered no dual enrollment courses. For those that were able to offer these courses, an average of only 18% of students enrolled. According to the Education Northwest study cited earlier, rural Oregon students who participated in college coursework in high school were more likely to enroll in college, persist from their first to second year of college, transfer from a two-year community college to a four-year college or university, and complete any college degree (Riggs, Pierson, Hodara; 2021). These findings suggest students’ academic supports and school curricula need to be improved to prepare students for the rigors of college.

Table 1-2 Needs related to increasing academic performance

Needs, gaps and weaknesses	GU4		State
	Low	Average	Average
Percentage students meeting or exceeding benchmarks on statewide tests			
8 th grade English Language Arts	8%	48%	53%
11 th grade English Language Arts	36%	68%	67%
8 th grade Math	7%	33%	38%
11 th grade Math	7%	27%	32%
Percentage of students taking dual credit course when available	3%	19%	15%

Federal Objective 2: Increase the rate of high school graduation and enrollment in postsecondary education for GEAR UP students

For this objective we examined the behaviors that lead to the successful completion of high school along with high school graduation rates and enrollment in college. Students struggle to learn if they're not in school; missing school can lead to students falling behind and eventually dropping out (Buehler, Tapogna, Chang, 2012). Chronic absenteeism is an epidemic in our state. For several years, Oregon has seen some of the highest rates of absenteeism in the country. A report released by the Oregon Department of Education in December 2019 shows that 20.4% of students were chronically absent in the 2018-19 school year. That is down slightly from 20.5% in 2017-18 and stops a run of four consecutive years with increases in chronic absenteeism. Despite the fact that a large majority of freshmen are on-track to graduate and the average graduation rate among these schools is higher than the state average, nearly half are below the state average in each category and several are as much as sixty points below the state average. Even those with high graduation rates do not have high college-going rates. This represents a great opportunity to get more students into postsecondary education.

Table 1-3 Needs related to increasing high school completion and college enrollment

Needs, gaps and weaknesses	GEAR UP 4		State
	Low	Average	Average
Percentage of middle school students attending 90% or more days	64%	79%	80%
Percentage of high school students attending 90% or more days	56%	75%	80%
Percentage of freshmen on-track to graduate in 4 years	33%	82%	85%
High school graduation rate	33%	84%	80%
College enrollment rates	31%	56%	62%

Federal Objective 3: Increase GEAR UP students' and their families' knowledge of postsecondary education options, preparation, and financing

Behaviors that require an understanding of postsecondary options, preparation, and financing were explored as indicators of student and family “college knowledge.” Taking college entrance exams and applying for financial aid are important steps to college that a disturbingly low number of students are taking. In addition, a large majority of students will be the first in their family to attend college as determined by the percentage of working-age adults with college degrees; therefore, there is little firsthand knowledge of preparing and paying for college. Furthermore, appropriate college advising is sorely lacking in potential GU4 schools. Nearly half of the identified schools report not having a counselor. Where counselors do exist, there is often one providing counseling to students across six or even all thirteen grades. The student to counselor ratio is as high as 465:1 with an average of 298:1. Further exacerbating this, most counselor preparation programs do not include coursework in college-related advising and preparation. At the start of the grant, students and their families will be surveyed to get baseline information on their knowledge regarding college options, entrance, and financing to better understand these gaps and weaknesses.

Table 1-4 Needs related to increasing knowledge of postsecondary education

Needs, gaps and weaknesses	GEAR UP 4		State
	Low	Average	Average
Percentage of seniors filing FAFSA or ORSAA*	24%	58%	59%
Percentage of adults with college degree	N/A	35%	43%

*Oregon Student Aid Application for students ineligible to fill out the FAFSA

2. QUALITY OF PROJECT DESIGN

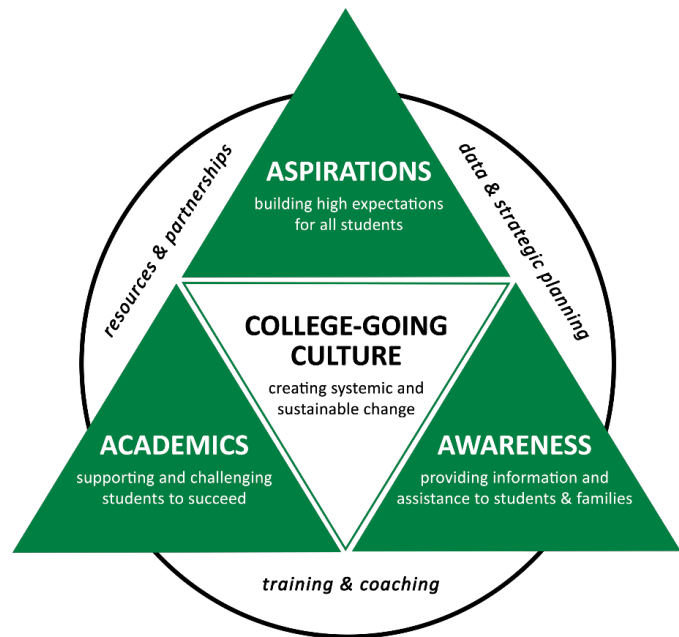
The Oregon GEAR UP project design has undergone continuous improvement over the last 19 years. The **rationale** for the updated theoretical framework described in this proposal is based on research regarding college access and success for low-income students as well as evidence from our current practices. This combination of research and experience has led to the development of a strong theory of change that supports our overarching goal to create college-going cultures in schools. For students who will be the first in their families to attend college, schools are often the only place for receiving basic information on why college is important, advising on appropriate classes, and guiding college choice. Given that many schools either lack a counselor or have a counselor with a heavy caseload and myriad responsibilities, it is clear that they alone cannot carry a school's college resource infrastructure. Cultural changes must occur throughout schools so that the college message is heard by all – students, educators and families. College expectations must be conveyed at every opportunity starting early in students' academic careers. This is best accomplished through a school culture that encourages all students to believe college is an option and prepares all students to make informed decisions about available postsecondary options (McClafferty et al., 2002).

According to the Center for Educational Partnerships at UC Berkeley, college-going culture refers to the environment, attitudes, and practices in schools and communities that encourage students and families to obtain the information, tools, and perspective to enhance access to and success in post-secondary education. The relationships between and among

students and staff in the school are the foundation upon which the school’s college-going culture is built.

The framework for GU4 will establish college-going cultures that set high expectations for all students and give them the tools necessary to meet these expectations. Students need sufficient academic preparation, as well as awareness of and assistance with the college-going process in order to achieve their aspirations.

- **Academic Preparation:** Students will be academically prepared to succeed in postsecondary education.
- **Awareness:** Students and their families will be knowledgeable about careers and the college-going process. They will also receive support and assistance with the college-going process.



- **Aspiration:** Students will feel supported and encouraged by the school environment, policies, and relationships that promote high expectations for all students.

These three areas, dubbed the “3As,” will guide both modes of service delivery: School-based and Statewide. Applying this model and widely disseminating the wealth of resources and materials we have created over the years will lead to long-term improvements and systemic reforms, ensuring the work is sustained beyond the life of the grant.

We have identified **measurable outcomes** that include Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) Measures, Federal GEAR UP Measures (Program), and Oregon GEAR UP

Measures (Project) for each of the areas. There are three GPRA measures that overlap several of the 3As and are called out separately at the end of this section.

The 3As are broken down into actionable strategies that lead to specific activities that will be addressed in the Project Services section. The **rationale** for each strategy is driven by **current research** as well as our extensive history of implementing GEAR UP programming. We will break down the measures and rationale for each of the three areas of focus.

Academic Preparation

There is widespread agreement that sufficient academic preparation is the most important tool for ensuring college access and success. According to a Bridgespan Group publication entitled “Reclaiming the American Dream,” adequate academic preparation is by far the most effective means of increasing the odds that students will graduate from high school prepared to enter postsecondary education (Bedsworth et al., 2006).

Table 2-1 Academic Preparation Measurable Objectives

Objective	Type
The percentage of students who pass Algebra 1 or its equivalent by the end of ninth grade will increase by 5 points by the end of the grant.	GPRA
Each year, 95% or more of students will be promoted on time to successive grade levels.	Program
The percentage of regular attenders will increase by 5 points by the end of the grant.	Program
The percentage of students passing their math courses will increase by 5 points by the end of the grant.	Project
The percentage of GU students passing their English Language Arts courses will increase by 5 points by the end of the grant.	Project
The percentage of students taking at least one dual credit course will increase over baseline by end of the grant (target to be set at baseline).	Project
Each year, 80% or more of GEAR UP students in college will report they are getting Cs or better.	Project

Strategy 1: Ensure all students have access to rigorous courses. Cliff Adelman was among the first education researchers to describe the importance of a rigorous curriculum in

“Answers in the Tool Box: Academic Intensity, Attendance Patterns, and Bachelor’s Degree Attainment” (Adelman, 1999). He backed up this research in “The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion From High School Through College” (Adelman, 2006) by following a cohort of high school students into and through college, and further cemented this idea by noting that a rigorous high school curriculum has greater impact on bachelor’s degree completion than any other pre-college indicator of academic preparation, regardless of socioeconomic status or race. Insufficient preparation in high school often leads to students enrolling in remedial or developmental courses in college. In a recent study published by the Institute for Education Science, nearly 75% of recent high school graduates who enrolled in an Oregon community college took at least one developmental (non-credit-bearing) course. The study also reported that students who started at a lower level of developmental education were less likely than their peers who started at a higher level to stay in college and earn a degree (Hodara, 2015). Developing sufficiently rigorous courses and supports for student success, aligning the curriculum from middle school through the first year of college, and encouraging students to take math all four years of high school are among the most successful strategies for reducing the need for remediation (Boatman, 2013). As addressed in our response to competitive preference priority 2, several studies from the What Works Clearinghouse demonstrate that taking dual credit courses has a significant impact on students’ enrolling and completing postsecondary education. Increasing the availability of dual credit courses will be a significant part of GU4.

Strategy 2: Provide support and motivation for all students to enroll and succeed in rigorous courses. Many students need to be counseled to enroll in rigorous courses and then need support and encouragement to do well. The number one recommendation from The Institute of Education Sciences Practice Guide “Helping Students Navigate the Path to College: What High

Schools Can Do” is for schools to not only offer courses that adequately prepare students for college, but also ensure that students understand what constitutes a college-ready curriculum no later than 9th grade (Tierney, 2009). When polled, many low-income middle school students have college aspirations, but they do not plan to take a college-preparatory curriculum in high school. Specifically, 52% of low-income students reported that they expected to go to college, but nearly one-third of them do not plan to pursue a college-prep curriculum (Bedsworth, 2006). While these numbers do not explain why the high aspirations are not matched by actual enrollment rates, they do illustrate the importance of ensuring that students are both academically prepared and understand what is required to achieve their dream of a college degree – they need a plan.

In their 2019 position statement on promoting rigorous courses for each student, the Policy & Advocacy Center of the National Association of Secondary School Principals advocates not only for access to rigorous courses by removing barriers, but also for providing additional supports to students who may have academic and social deficits. Additional supports are what these students need to enable them to do well in demanding courses (NASSP, 2019).

Helping students achieve rigorous standards is critically important, but it is not enough. They must also develop both learning skills and social emotional skills. After decades of research, Dave Conley, Director of the Educational Policy Improvement Center, discovered that academic content knowledge alone was not sufficient for success in college, particularly for low-income students. He identified four key areas critical for student success: content knowledge, cognitive strategies, learning skills and techniques, and transition knowledge and skills (Conley, 2012). Addressing all four areas greatly enhances a student’s college readiness.

Research has proven that non-cognitive skills and character traits play an important role in helping students thrive. In his 2013 book *How Children Succeed*, Paul Tough pinpoints the

most critical traits related to academic performance as grit, self-control, enthusiasm, social intelligence, gratitude, optimism and curiosity. In his follow-up book *Helping Children Succeed, What Works and Why* (2016), Tough provides research-based strategies schools can implement to help students develop these non-cognitive skills. Additionally, research into the brain and brain development provides evidence that intelligence is not fixed. Success does not depend only on students' intelligence and abilities, it is also influenced by how they see themselves as learners. This growth mindset – understanding that intelligence and abilities can be developed – has a dramatic impact on student motivation and learning. Educators can work with students to develop this mindset, enabling them to overcome adversity and achieve greater academic success (Dweck, 2008). Classroom techniques that help students develop these skills and see themselves as capable learners are important elements of the GU4 design.

Strategy 3: Create positive and supportive school and classroom practices that improve attendance and behaviors in school. As stated earlier, attendance is a significant concern for a number of potential GU4 schools. Like absenteeism, disciplinary practices that unfairly/unevenly target low-income students and students of color have an adverse impact on their ability to learn. Schools can help ensure students are in class and engaged in their learning by better understanding and addressing the reasons behind student absenteeism and exploring adult practices that overtly or inadvertently contribute to student disengagement.

Historically, school improvement efforts have emphasized academic achievement, curriculum, and instruction and downplayed school climate rather than considering their interactive nature and influence. Positive school and classroom climate has been linked to several important outcomes including increased school completion, student self-esteem and self-concept, decreased absenteeism, behavioral problems and disciplinary actions, and enhanced risk

prevention. Utilizing Positive Behavior and Intervention Supports as a form of multi-tiered system of supports can lead to better student outcomes (Cohen, J., McCabe, E., Michelli, N., & Pickeral, T. 2009; Lindstrom Johnson, S., Pas, E.T., & Bradshaw, C. P. 2015 and Sugai, Simonsen, Freeman, and La Salle, 2016).

Schools can also increase student engagement by making teaching and curricula more relevant and engaging, and by improving the connection between school and work. In a survey of recent high school dropouts conducted on the part of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, four out of five (81 percent) said there should be more opportunities for real-world learning and some in the focus groups called for more experiential learning. They said students need to see the connection between school and getting a good job (Bridgeland, DiIulio, Jr., Burke Morison, 2016). Career and technical education (CTE) courses are one strategy to enhance a student's experience and result in better attendance.

Awareness

Low-income and first generation students often lack sufficient information on the steps necessary for college entry such as taking admissions exams, choosing the right college, submitting applications, and paying for their education. This lack of information plays a role in the formation of early negative attitudes toward college. Barbara Schneider (2003) suggests that students from low-income families, while highly ambitious, do not fulfill their expectations because they lack important information that would help them successfully navigate the transition to college.

Parents play a central role in the development of students' aspirations, expectations, and plans for college. Although most parents support their children's postsecondary aspirations, many do not have the knowledge and resources that are necessary to guide their children through the search and choice phases of the college enrollment process (Perna, 2004). Researchers from

Strategies 360 reinforced this finding with their 2021 report on a study of parents from across Oregon. There was widespread agreement that a postsecondary credential is important, but there is nearly universal agreement that they lack sufficient knowledge and resources to assist their students (Mears and Kozlowski, 2021). Recognizing that awareness alone is insufficient, we will also provide support and assistance to students and families with the steps necessary for college matriculation.

Table 2-2 Awareness Measurable Objectives

Objective	Type
Each year, 60% or more of students will complete FAFSA/ORSAA.	GPRA
Each year, 75% or more of students will report they have learned about careers that interest them.	Project
Each year, 75% or more of students will report they know about postsecondary options and college entrance requirements.	Project
Each year, 75% or more of students will report they know about sources of financial aid.	Project
Each year, parent participation in college and career readiness activities will increase by 2 points over baseline.	Project
Each year, 90% or more of alumni will report their high school helped them prepare for life after high school.	Project

Strategy 1: Offer ways for students to explore a wide array of careers with attention to required education and training. Students who understand that a college degree is necessary to pursue their desired career are six times more likely to earn a degree than those who do not (Bedsworth et al., 2006). Recognizing the importance of linking an educational path with career choices, the Oregon Department of Education now requires that all students demonstrate knowledge and skills in personal management, problem solving, communication, teamwork, employment foundations, and career development. GEAR UP will increase the capacity of GU4 schools to meet these requirements and offer even more robust opportunities to students. Exposing students to career-relevant instruction and career pathways also greatly enhances their motivation and engagement (Christenson, 2008). This is particularly true for middle school

students. A study of a middle school program designed to add relevance to the curriculum showed that students receiving career-relevant instruction had significantly higher levels of school engagement and appreciation (Orthner et al., 2013).

It is also important to build on students' interests and passions to elevate intrinsic motivation for college. In their groundbreaking book *Ready, Willing, and Able: A Developmental Approach to College Access and Success*, Suzanne M. Bouffard and Mandy Savitz-Romer (2013) make a clear and convincing argument that providing students with external motivators to attend college is not enough. Youth need a balance of intrinsic and extrinsic goals. External incentives to go to college like making more money or pleasing others do play a role in students' decisions. However, coupling these with intrinsic motivators such as finding a satisfying career and making positive contributions to their community is much more effective.

Strategy 2: Provide students and families with opportunities to explore all postsecondary options and assistance with tasks related to going and staying in college. Low-income students are often the first in their families to pursue postsecondary education and lack the requisite skills and knowledge to navigate this path effectively. However, the influence of parents in promoting the aspirations of first-generation students should not be ignored. Researchers from the Higher Education Research Institute released a report entitled, "First in My Family: A Profile of First-Generation College Students at Four-Year Institutions Since 1971." Their findings suggest that parental influence is as important as that of peers. Compared to peers with college-educated parents, first-generation students are more likely to report that the reason they went to college was their parents' desire for them to go. The number of first-generation students citing parental encouragement as their primary motivator has more than doubled since 1971 (Saenz et al., 2007). We gather the feedback on the experiences of GEAR UP students through our "Life After High

School” survey administered to alumni during their first year after graduation. These alumni also report that their parents had the greatest influence on their post-high school plans.

Where students enroll can be just as important as if they enroll. Students are more likely to complete college if they attend an institution that fits their social, academic and financial needs. Low-income students often face barriers to enrolling in an institution that would be a good fit: late college planning, limited knowledge of college options, limited support in the college choice process, and an underestimate of their academic ability as well as their capacity to pay for college. High-achieving, low-income students are especially prone to “undermatch” and end up at a less selective institution (Sherwin, 2012). Therefore, GU4 will provide students and their families with resources and information about college options as early as possible, organize campus visits to various types of institutions, and serve as a constant source of guidance and support.

The Institute of Education Sciences Practice Guide “Helping Students Navigate the Path to College: What High Schools Can Do” offers two recommendations which carry the designation of “moderate success” from the What Works Clearinghouse. One of them is to engage and assist students in completing critical steps for college entry (Tierney, 2009). In addition to information about a wide variety of colleges, schools will implement activities to help students with the process of applying to college and completing financial aid forms.

Supporting students during the transition from high school to college and helping them succeed once there are important aspects of GU4. Students need continued support in order to successfully complete a college degree. Researchers estimate that anywhere between 10-40% of students who plan on attending college upon graduating from high school do not enroll in the fall (Castleman and Page, 2011). This “summer melt” is one of many obstacles first-year students

face. Additionally, more than half of first-year students in Oregon's community colleges and over 25% at 4-year public colleges will not return for their second year. Students who are engaged on campus and have social supports are more likely to have greater academic success, persist and graduate.

Strategy 3: Help students and families learn about the cost of college and the ways to finance it, and provide assistance with the application process. The second recommendation from "Helping Students Navigate the Path to College: What High Schools Can Do" that shows moderate promise is to increase families' financial awareness, and help students apply for financial aid. Increasing college costs and the absence of easily understood information about affordability and financial aid create an awareness gap that must be addressed. Today in Oregon, average tuition and fees to attend state universities represent 18% of median family income. Not surprisingly, affordability matters in determining a student's chances of attaining a bachelor's degree. Many low-income students believe that college simply is not affordable for them and therefore do not take the necessary steps to prepare. When surveyed, students and their families in the current Oregon GEAR UP schools report that the primary reason they might not continue their education beyond high school is college cost. The student surveys also revealed that students who were able to correctly identify the cost were more likely than other students to say they can definitely or probably afford a college education. This is supported by research that found that low-income students who attended financial aid information sessions and subsequently applied for financial aid were much more likely to attend and complete college, presumably because they understood both the net-price cost of college and the types of aid available to them (Bedsworth, 2006). As noted above, financial considerations are only one part of finding the right college fit. Helping students understand the cost of college and how to pay

for it also helps ensure that they are not choosing a college based on the cost alone.

Aspiration

As described above, high expectations for students are essential in a college-going culture. It is critical to be intentional about establishing high expectations and then demonstrating support for them throughout the school.

Table 2-3 Aspiration Measurable Objectives

Objective	Type
Each year, at least 75% of students will report that they will complete a college degree or certificate at any time.	Program
Each year, the percentage of educators who believe that students would benefit from postsecondary education will increase 2 points.	Project
Each year, at least 75% of school staff will report that their school's college-going culture is improving.	Project
The percentage of students who talk to peers about postsecondary education will increase by 5 points by the end of the grant.	Project
Each year, 60% of former GEAR UP students who are not in college will report they plan to enroll in the future.	Project

Strategy 1: Promote the value of postsecondary education through visuals, customs and practices. A school environment that communicates the importance of college and celebrates student achievement is essential. Schools must establish customs and practices as well as physical, visual, and auditory signs that communicate and celebrate a shared commitment to students' pursuit of education and training beyond high school. According to Ebony Bridwell-Mitchell, Associate Professor of Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, culture is shaped by five interwoven elements: fundamental beliefs and assumptions; shared values; norms; patterns and behaviors, and tangible evidence. (Shafer, 2018).

Strategy 2: Consistently communicate high expectations for all students. It is critically important that all staff consistently communicate the expectation of postsecondary education for all students. Having high expectations for students is one of the defining characteristics of all comprehensive school reform programs. When teachers have high expectations for students and

provide engaging, high interest tasks, students build self-esteem, increase confidence and improve academic performance (Brophy, 2010). Student confidence is critical because it is linked to students' willingness to tackle challenging learning activities. A teacher's expectations, whether high or low, become a self-fulfilling prophecy as students perform in ways that teachers expect. Teachers' beliefs about student potential are particularly powerful for students of color and students from low-income families (Ferguson, 2002).

When asked who was most influential in their decision about what to do after high school, GEAR UP alumni reported that teachers and school counselors were second only to parents. Given this strong influence, it is critically important for them to communicate the importance of postsecondary education and their belief in student' abilities.

Strategy 3: Foster relationships that cultivate college-going identities among students.
Ready, Willing, and Able: A Developmental Approach to College Access and Success (Bouffard and Savitz-Romer, 2013) lays the groundwork for using adolescent identity development theory in helping more students engage in college planning. Helping students develop college-going identities is a process that consists of five stages: envisioning, believing, aiming, organizing, and connecting. Implementing activities that intentionally lead students through these developmental stages increases the likelihood of their enrollment in college. Relationships are a key part of helping students in their identity development process, especially in the "aiming" stage when students are beginning to set goals and need both external and intrinsic motivation. Adolescents are more likely to develop intrinsic motivation when they feel emotionally secure, cared about and connected to the people around them, especially adult leaders such as teachers.

The positive impact of mentoring on college planning and preparation is demonstrated by strong and long-standing evidence. Some of the impacts of mentoring include: increased grade

promotion, decreased absenteeism, improved relationships with parents, increased goal-orientation and achievement, increased interest in attending college (particularly when the mentors have attended college themselves), increased awareness of the steps required for college entrance, and overall improved satisfaction with school (Coles, 2011).

Peer relationships can also help students develop their identity as college students. As students progress through high school, their peers have an increasing effect on life decisions. Given this, it is not surprising that the college-going views of a student’s friends have a significant impact on their own chances for success in college. The American Council on Education reported that students are four times more likely to enroll in college if a majority of their friends also plan to attend than if their friends do not (Choy, 2002). Creating student groups focused on academics and the pursuit of college are one way to tap into this powerful influence.

The following measurable objectives will be impacted by all three of the elements of the project design – Academic Preparation, Awareness, and Aspiration.

Table 2-4 Overarching Measurable Objectives

Objective	Type
The percentage of seniors who graduate from high school will increase by 1 point each year.	GPRA
The percentage of current and former students who enroll at an IHE will increase by 5 points by the end of the grant.	GPRA
Each year, 70% or more of current and former GU students who enrolled at an IHE will persist to the second year.	GPRA

These research-based strategies, anticipated outputs, and associated outcomes can best be seen in the following logic model. Specific activities will be addressed in more detail in the Project Services section and evaluation of the outcomes will be addressed at greater length under Project Evaluation. Δ denotes the activities, outputs and outcomes associated with the evidence-based practice identified in Competitive Preference Priority 2

Table 2-5 Logic Model

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-term outcomes	Mid-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes
Funding from USDOE District support (1:1 match) Oregon GU staff's technical assistance, networking, and admin support 3As research-based framework	STUDENTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic: Challenging curricula and rigorous coursework (Δ); supports (advising, tutoring, enrichment, clubs, credit recovery, and summer programs); Mentoring, SEL, and positive behavioral supports • Awareness: Resources, and assistance with career exploration; college visits and fairs; College Application Week; College Exploration Week; college and career clubs, classes and lessons; financial aid information; career interest inventories/tracking; workplace experiences • Aspiration: College and career visuals and centers; GEAR UP Week; Decision Day; development of postsecondary plans; meaningful relationship with an adult 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number/% of students taking advanced and dual credit courses (Δ) • Number of activities and supports, and student participation rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Improved academic and non-cognitive skills and behaviors (Δ) ✓ Increased knowledge of careers, PSE options and financial aid ✓ Higher postsecondary education expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Completion of advanced courses (Δ) ✓ Improved attendance ✓ Improved academic performance (Δ) ✓ Completion of college entrance activities (ACT/SAT, applications, FAFSA/ORSSA scholarships) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increased high school graduation rates [All As] ✓ Increased postsecondary education enrollment, persistence and completion [All As]
Oregon State University resources Participating schools and communities School coordinators	SCHOOLS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic: Data exploration to promote effective teaching and equitable disciplinary practices; CTE and Life Skills courses; curriculum development; technology; educator PD • Awareness: Educator PD, partnership development • Aspiration: Data exploration and staff activities to elevate and communicate high expectations; refinement of schools' mission and policies; development of partnerships; educator PD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of activities and educator participation rates • Number of rigorous courses • Vertically-aligned curricula • Number of partnerships • Refinement of mission statements and school policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Development of partnerships [All As] ✓ Improved use of data to make decisions [All As] ✓ Greater staff involvement of in college work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increased number of accelerated learning and rigorous courses (Δ) ✓ School leadership and quality teaching ✓ Higher educator expectations for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sustained partnerships [All As] ✓ College prep curriculum ✓ Systems of college and career readiness supports ✓ Sustained college-going culture
Local and statewide partnerships Higher ed institutions Evaluator	FAMILIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic: student-led conferences • Awareness: Dissemination of financial aid information; family events; newsletters • Aspiration: college and career décor and center; awards and celebratory events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of activities and participation rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increased involvement in school and students' education ✓ Increased knowledge of PSE options and financial aid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ FAFSA completion ✓ Higher expectations for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Local culture of continued and lifelong learning

3. QUALITY OF PROJECT SERVICES

The Oregon GEAR UP values statement, first adopted in 2014 reads: “Anchored by a foundation of respect, our five core values of education, **equity**, empowerment, growth and balance influence why and how we do our work.” Our equity value is embodied as follows, “Our work aims to level the playing field for all students in access and opportunity. We have high expectations and believe in the potential of every student. We affirm all students' right to explore and pursue postsecondary education that meets their physical, social, emotional, and educational needs.” Furthermore, our work is guided by the state’s educational equity lens, also adopted in 2014, which defines equity as the notion that “each and every learner will receive the necessary resources they need individually to thrive in Oregon’s schools no matter what their national origin, race, gender, sexual orientation, differently abled, first language, or other distinguishing characteristic.” This commitment to equity is reflected in the proposed project services outlined below that seek to reduce barriers for all students, with special care taken to ensure the needs of underrepresented students are addressed.

We live this value in several ways. The central office staff has participated in a variety of professional development opportunities through the Social Justice Education Initiative at Oregon State University as well as regional and national workshops related to racism, economic class bias, and other related topics. We have offered, and will continue to do so, workshops for school staff on implicit bias, addressing race and trauma in the classroom, generational poverty, exploring equity in discipline, and working with students with disabilities. Additionally, as we review school implementation plans we will make every effort to ensure that all students from underrepresented groups are being well served. We will also provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations to meet participants’ diverse physical, social, cultural, and learning needs at all

events. Many of our printed and online materials will be provided in other languages. As you will read below, our proposal includes required activities that ensure schools are looking at their data through an equity lens including disaggregating data to ensure underrepresented groups are participating in rigorous courses and not disproportionately disciplined.

When it comes to implementing our project design, GU4 services will be delivered through our two-pronged approach: 1) School-based Services for priority students with the assistance and guidance of the central office, and 2) Statewide Services from the central staff to secondary schools across the state.

School-based Services

To maximize the likelihood of systemic and sustainable change, direct services to students will be implemented through sub-awards to schools selected using a competitive application process. This model has been successfully implemented in each of our prior GEAR UP grants and, according to third-party evaluations, fostered a high level of local buy-in. In addition, former GEAR UP schools attribute much of their success to the local control and flexibility provided by this method. As mentioned in the Needs section (page 1) we have identified a group of eligible GU4 schools. Once we are notified of the new grant award, we will invite these schools to apply to be a part of the program. Schools will be selected based on their need, district commitment to project goals, readiness to implement our proposed strategies, and ability to sustain activities once the funding period is over through partnerships and other resources. Schools will start serving priority students across all grades, including students in their first year of college, in order to have an immediate impact on college access and success.

Each local site will receive an annual allocation to implement GU4. The allocation will range from \$70,000 to \$100,000, dependent upon each site's student enrollment numbers. These

funds will be used to hire a GEAR UP Site Coordinator and implement services. Each Site Coordinator will work with their local GEAR UP team - made up of teachers, administrators, family members, businesses and community leaders - to develop and implement their yearly GEAR UP plan.

Over the past two decades we have developed and refined an extensive annual planning process. In fact, we have been invited to present this process at the national GEAR UP technical assistance workshop multiple times. School sites start the planning process with an exploration of data broken down by each of the 3As to establish the needs and specific weaknesses or gaps to address. Central GEAR UP staff and the external evaluator provide assistance with data interpretation and activity design, ensuring that teams are using data to inform their planning efforts. School sites also receive assistance with developing methods for evaluating the effectiveness of their planned activities. A mid-year progress report submitted in January provides an opportunity for school sites to reflect on their progress to date and get feedback from central GEAR UP staff. During our April planning retreat, school teams evaluate the effectiveness of each activity in the current year's plan, review key data, and then use that information to set goals and start designing their plan for the next year. Local planning and ongoing evaluation ensures that the services and activities are appropriate to the needs of students and families, while regular data analysis promotes data-driven project improvement decisions. This cyclical model is an effective way to provide schools with technical assistance in many areas: analysis and interpretation of data, design of annual goals to address gaps or weaknesses highlighted by the data, evaluation of goal attainment, and data-based plan development.

As described in our Project Design, we developed the strategies within the 3As to be easily actionable. We have generated a number of sample activities and will encourage GU4 schools to develop their own in response to the needs and opportunities within their communities. The following tables offer a sample of services schools may provide in conjunction with project partners through **comprehensive mentoring, outreach, and supportive services to students**. They are designed to address the **required areas**: providing information regarding financial aid for postsecondary education to participating students, encouraging student enrollment in rigorous and challenging curricula and coursework in order to reduce the need for remedial coursework at the postsecondary level, and improving the number of participating students who obtain a secondary school diploma and complete applications for and enroll in a program of postsecondary education. Note that this is merely a sample of activities supported by GU4 and activities marked with an asterisk will be required of all participating schools.

Table 3-1 Services to academically prepare all students for postsecondary education

Academic Preparation Strategy 1: Ensure all students have access to rigorous courses.				
Sample Services	Areas of Impact			
	<i>Knowledge of financial aid</i>	<i>Rigorous courses</i>	<i>HS completion</i>	<i>Apply and enroll in postsecondary</i>
Ensure all students have the opportunity to complete coursework that meets entrance requirements for Oregon's public universities.*		✓	✓	✓
Explore disaggregated participation data to ensure all students have access to rigorous courses.*		✓	✓	✓
Encourage student enrollment in rigorous and challenging curricula and coursework.*		✓	✓	✓
Offer or expand rigorous courses such as dual credit, AP, etc.		✓	✓	✓
Align the curriculum from MS through college entrance courses.		✓	✓	✓
Provide teacher professional development to ensure effective teaching and learning.		✓	✓	✓
Academic Preparation Strategy 2: Provide support and motivation for all students to enroll and succeed in rigorous courses.				
Explore classroom student outcome data and instructional practices to inform changes needed for effective teaching.*		✓	✓	✓
Institute school-wide AVID or similar program.*		✓	✓	✓
Provide individual help to students during and after school through activities such as tutoring and homework help.		✓	✓	✓
Help students understand their learning preferences and teach skills such as study habits, organization, and note taking.		✓	✓	✓
Host student-led conferences to encourage students to take responsibility and ownership for their learning.		✓	✓	✓
Provide summer academic enrichment programs on college campuses.		✓	✓	✓
Train all school personnel to coach students to take the right classes necessary for their postsecondary goals.		✓	✓	✓
Provide teacher professional development on social and emotional learning to support effective teaching and learning and incorporate those topics into advisory periods, classroom activities, etc.		✓	✓	✓
Academic Preparation Strategy 3: Develop systems and practices to improve school and classroom climate in order to				

improve attendance and behaviors in school.				
	<i>Knowledge of financial aid</i>	<i>Rigorous courses</i>	<i>HS completion</i>	<i>Apply and enroll in postsecondary</i>
Explore disaggregated school data for disproportionate disciplinary practices.*		✓	✓	✓
Incentivize/reward attendance and good behavior using Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, restorative justice, or other methods.			✓	✓
Offer courses that engage students and promote attendance such as Career and Technical Education (CTE), life skills (e.g., personal finance, resume writing, interview skills, etc.).			✓	✓
Offer all students access to co-curricular activities such as Robotics, Project Lead the Way, clubs focused on academics.		✓	✓	✓
Build community by having older students mentor younger students (e.g., Link Crew).			✓	
Host transition events from elementary to middle and middle to high school.		✓	✓	✓

Table 3-2 Services to raise awareness of and provide assistance with the college-going process

Awareness and Assistance Strategy 1: Offer ways for students to explore a wide array of careers with attention to required education and training.				
Sample Services	Areas of impact			
	<i>Knowledge of financial aid</i>	<i>Rigorous courses</i>	<i>HS completion</i>	<i>Apply and enroll in postsecondary</i>
Host guest speakers and events related to career exploration.*			✓	✓
Provide dedicated space, resources and assistance for students to research careers and required training.*			✓	✓
Utilize career interest inventories/tracking such as Career Information Systems, Career Choices and SparkPath to help students explore many career options.			✓	✓
Take students and staff on career/workplace visits and tours.			✓	✓
Give students on-site learning opportunities through internships, job shadows, service learning projects.			✓	✓

	<i>Knowledge of financial aid</i>	<i>Rigorous courses</i>	<i>HS completion</i>	<i>Apply and enroll in postsecondary</i>
Teach students job readiness skills through workshops, advisory, student-run businesses, project-based learning, etc.		✓	✓	✓
Provide opportunities such as industry tours and training for staff to learn about careers, what employers look for, how to integrate careers in the classroom and other career-related topics.			✓	✓
Awareness Strategy 2: Provide opportunities for students and families to explore all postsecondary options and assistance with tasks related to going and staying in college.				
Use the grade-specific “It’s a Plan” checklists with students.*	✓		✓	✓
Expose students and families to all types of postsecondary institutions - public, private, 2-year, 4-year, trade - through college visits and fairs.*			✓	✓
Participate in College Exploration Week.*	✓		✓	✓
Host College Application Week.*	✓		✓	✓
Host family nights to explore benefits of training and education beyond high school and the college-going process.*	✓		✓	✓
Include families on college visits.	✓			✓
Have students “try on” the role of college student through on-college-campus experiences (especially overnight camps) and using college-like practices in high school activities.			✓	✓
Support recent alumni in college with regular email, text check-ins to support their persistence.			✓	✓
Provide professional development for staff regarding college fit, the admissions process, financial aid, and other college access topics.	✓		✓	✓
Awareness Strategy 3: Help students and families understand the cost of college and ways to finance it, and provide assistance with the application process.				
Provide information about financial aid to students and parents.*	✓		✓	✓
Promote participation in the Oregon College Savings Plan incentive program.*	✓		✓	✓
Debunk myths about college affordability and provide information about paying for college to families and students starting in middle school.	✓		✓	✓
Teach students about scholarships and provide assistance with submitting them.	✓		✓	✓
Host family nights to help with the Free Application for Federal Student	✓		✓	✓

Assistance (FAFSA) and the Oregon Student Aid Application (ORSAA).			
Participate in statewide efforts to boost FAFSA/ORSAA completion.	✓	✓	✓
Integrate scholarship essay prompts into English Language Arts curriculum.	✓	✓	✓
Invite financial aid staff from colleges to present to and connect with students and families.	✓	✓	✓

Table 3-3 Services for increasing students' aspirations for postsecondary education

Aspiration Strategy 1: Create a school environment that communicates the value of postsecondary education.				
Sample Services	Areas of impact			
	<i>Knowledge of financial aid</i>	<i>Rigorous courses</i>	<i>HS completion</i>	<i>Apply and enroll in postsecondary</i>
Hold GEAR UP Week at the beginning of school with activities to encourage a college-going culture.*			✓	✓
Celebrate students' postsecondary plans with Decision Day.*	✓		✓	✓
Include the year after graduation in all education plans.*			✓	✓
Promote training and education beyond high school with visual cues such as: college door wars, college pennants and posters, displays showcasing graduates' plans.*			✓	✓
Hang banners that celebrate academic accomplishments along with athletics and other co-curricular activities.		✓	✓	✓
Host grad walks where seniors parade through elementary and middle school in their caps and gowns.			✓	✓
Provide staff professional development on how to integrate college readiness into their subject matter/classroom lessons.			✓	✓
Aspiration Strategy 2: Consistently communication high expectations for all students.				
Assess educator expectations for students and explore ways for all staff to elevate and communicate their expectations for all students.*		✓	✓	✓
Incorporate preparing students for postsecondary options into school mission statements.			✓	✓
Provide training and resources for teachers to create classroom environments based on high expectations (i.e., supportive classroom environment, teaching		✓	✓	✓

students to set their own goals, advocate for themselves, and take responsibility for their learning, etc.).				
Host a staff book discussion on "Ready, Willing and Able; A Developmental Approach to College Access and Success."	✓	✓	✓	
Aspiration Strategy 3: Foster relationships that cultivate college-going identities among students.				
	<i>Knowledge of financial aid</i>	<i>Rigorous courses</i>	<i>HS completion</i>	<i>Apply and enroll in postsecondary</i>
Ensure each student has a meaningful relationship with at least one staff person in the building who encourages them to do their best.*			✓	✓
Provide adult mentors who can build self-esteem and help turn goals into reality.	✓		✓	✓
Provide near peer mentoring opportunities between college students and middle and high school students.			✓	✓
Offer clubs centered on the college going process, especially for first generation students.			✓	✓
Create partnerships with postsecondary institutions that reinforce the importance of education and training beyond high school.	✓		✓	✓

The central GEAR UP staff will support the work of GU4 schools in many ways. These supports are depicted around the outside of the visual representation of our model on page 11.

Data and strategic planning: Our research and evaluation team will compile a robust set of data consisting of student achievement and outcome data, college enrollment and persistence numbers, results from student, parent and educator surveys, and more. These data will be broken down by the 3As to guide the schools through the planning process described earlier, and shared through an online data visualization system. In addition, the research and evaluation team will provide data literacy training, help staff better understand the implications of school data and how to adjust their plans accordingly, and produce school-level reports of significant findings and others upon request.

Training and coaching: On-site and centralized professional development for educators will be provided to help ameliorate the challenges of geographic isolation. Experts will provide on-site as well as virtual training to educators on topics such as ensuring equity in the classroom, working with students and families experiencing generational poverty, developing students' growth mindset, engaging families and communities, aligning the curriculum across grades and schools, and innovative instructional strategies. An annual summer institute for classroom educators will be offered to enhance teaching skills, and semi-annual gatherings of GU4 communities will feature keynote speakers and breakout sessions designed to increase understanding of college access and success for low-income youth.

Two Program Support Specialists and an Academic Success Specialist will provide additional coaching and training as they guide schools in their implementation. The latter is a new position created to increase focus on the academic preparation portion of our model. They will work with school and district administrators to explore student achievement data to better understand curriculum and instructional deficits or challenges in the school.

In addition to centralized coaching and training for school staff, we will host GEAR UP Summer Camp for middle and high school students. Seeds Training, a national leader in this area, will develop and deliver the four-day sessions. The camp will utilize simulations, dialogues and experiential games based on proven methods to help students gain increased academic confidence, higher levels of motivation, skills for working in teams, heightened personal awareness, and learning-to-learn skills. We will host this event on a college campus and have college students serve as “coaches” which will help build college-going identities in participants.

Resources and partnerships: We have and will continue to update a collection of tools, consisting mainly of toolkits, to assist schools. Toolkit topics include: hosting college and career days, building a college and career center, helping students with college fit, conducting meaningful college visits, building a college-going culture, engaging parents and the community, and assisting students with the transitions to high school and college. Our partnerships will leverage GEAR UP resources and centralize additional programming. Examples of partnerships include students participating in summer camps, GEAR UP visitation days on college campuses, campus tours for GEAR UP Site Coordinators, and virtual workshops and help sessions on college-access topics. A comprehensive list of partners that will assist with both school-based and statewide services is found at the end of this section.

Statewide Services

Providing professional development and technical assistance to additional secondary schools through statewide services will enable us to have a positive impact on college access and success across Oregon. The OregonGoesToCollege.org website is the student and family-facing online arm of Oregon GEAR UP. It is the starting point for all Oregonians seeking information on how to explore, apply, pay and go to Oregon colleges and universities. The website also houses our extensive library of educator resources –college checklists and associated materials,

worksheets, handouts, and presentations, and planning tools for statewide events. Secondary schools throughout the state will be invited to participate in statewide events and utilize resources created under the umbrella “Oregon Goes To College.” GU4 schools will be required to participate in these events and professional development opportunities.

Oregon GEAR UP will coordinate four school-based events that assist students with key tasks associated with college matriculation: exploring, applying, paying, and going. Schools throughout the state register to participate and in turn receive access to planning resources and technical assistance to successfully host their events. Because college readiness begins early, all secondary schools are invited to participate in the first event, which centers on college exploration. By 12th grade, students have specific key tasks they must complete to successfully matriculate to postsecondary education, so high schools are invited to also host the remaining three events that address applying, paying, and going.

Students need to EXPLORE their college options early and often. College Exploration Month serves as an opportunity for middle and high schools across the state to simultaneously engage in coordinated activities related to exploring college and career options. Oregon GEAR UP provides suggestions for developmentally appropriate options for 6th-11th grades, as well as support for planning and implementing these within the event period.

Students must APPLY before they can attend. Schools hosting College Application Week (CAW) in November provide time and space for students to work on college applications as well as scholarships and financial aid applications during the school day. As a part of the American College Application Campaign, Oregon was among the first states to host CAW in 2012 at 7 high schools in the state. Since that time we have become a national leader in these efforts with recognition from the national campaign, and 209 Oregon schools have hosted CAW events, helping more than 36,000 students submit applications. CAW opens the door for students by

encouraging them to apply to college in their senior year. It is particularly important for students who would be first in their families to attend college and students who have not yet seriously considered going to college. Applying to nearby, open-admissions colleges – as well as more distant and more selective institutions – gives students the confidence and encouragement that college is possible. The annual Governor’s proclamation of November as Oregon Goes To College Month offers evidence that CAW has become a part of the landscape of Oregon’s efforts to increase college going across the state.

To attend college, students must have a realistic plan to PAY for it. Since 2019, Oregon GEAR UP, under the auspices of Oregon Goes To College, has led the effort to host the statewide FAFSA/ORSAA Challenge. A partnership with the Higher Education Coordinating Commission’s Office of Student Access and Completion, Oregon Department of Education, Oregon Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators and ECMC’s The College Place Oregon, the Challenge offers schools an opportunity to engage in a collaborative effort to increase the state’s FAFSA and ORSAA completion rates.

Finally, students must decide where they will GO. Schools host Decision Day activities designed to celebrate post-high school plans. As with each of the other events, schools receive planning support not only for the celebratory events but also for the necessary pre- and post-steps. For example, schools have access to tools to help students make their decision as well as resources to assist them in the transition from high school to college. The event is held in May to coincide both with the national candidates’ reply date and Reach Higher’s College Signing Day efforts.

Oregon Goes To College also provides Oregon-specific resources for educators to use as they help students learn about going to college in Oregon. These include handouts, worksheets, presentations, and our most accessed resource – grade-level checklists.

The [*It's A Plan*](#) college checklists walk students through the steps they need to take in order to be successful in the pursuit of postsecondary education, starting in middle school and continuing through the first year of college. The checklists include resources that help educators and families support students with each step. Each of the checklists and associated resources are available both online and as downloadable PDFs. The 12th grade checklist can also be accessed through a companion smart phone app to help students keep track of the myriad tasks during this critical year. As the most robust of the checklists, the 12th grade version also includes an extensive set of tools for educators to use in helping students navigate their journey including readymade presentations, posters, handouts, worksheets and more.

As part of the Oregon Goes To College statewide initiatives, professional development will also be provided to educators through monthly virtual gatherings. These educator “chats” will feature a brief presentation on a tool or resource followed by a topical conversation on a timely and related topic.

Additionally, a pool of funds for college visits for other low-income serving schools will be created. In order to access these funds, schools must commit to utilizing our college visit toolkit and providing assessment data regarding the effectiveness of the visits.

Prior to COVID-19, we began offering virtual components for many of our statewide services. We increased these offerings for the 2020-21 academic year, as most of Oregon’s schools remained in remote or hybrid learning through mid-April. Among these offerings are support for virtual college visits, a virtual College Night, online chat assistance for college and financial aid applications, and online professional development for educators. As referenced in the Project Need on page 5, rural schools will continue to face the challenges of geographic isolation and the realities of limited travel budgets so we will continue to improve upon and expand our virtual offerings.

Over the course of the last three GEAR UP grants, a number of key **strategic partnerships** have been developed and many of these any organizations are enthusiastic about partnering again. Other partnerships will be developed through the life of the grant as needs and opportunities arise. The development of these statewide partnerships maximizes the effectiveness of GU4, and leads to sustainability of the project. Effective partnerships will play an important role in all of our project services at both the local and statewide levels. In GEAR UP communities, school teams will form partnerships with nearby colleges, businesses and community organizations in order to build long-term relationships leading to sustainability and college-going cultures that include the wider community.

One of our new partnerships is with Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID). AVID will provide a suite of services targeted at middle and high school students and educators, which includes summer institutes, coaching, professional development, and tutoring. Professional development for educators will center on proven strategies to serve the learning needs of all students with methodologies designed to promote students' access to rigorous college prep curriculum. Students will have expanded access to challenging coursework and will therefore be better prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. This will be required of all GU4 schools unless they have a similar system of supports already in place.

Another new partnership is with the Oregon State Treasury. As the state agency responsible for the Oregon College Savings Plan, they share our commitment to ensuring that more low-income and first generation Oregonians pursue postsecondary education. Through this new partnership, the Oregon State Treasury will make annual deposits into college savings plan accounts as financial incentives for students to take steps toward their postsecondary goals starting in the 7th grade. These steps include participating in campus visits, taking rigorous

courses, exploring career interests, submitting college and financial aid applications, and more. This support will result in as much as \$500,000 deposited into student accounts.

In addition to the above two organizations, GU4 schools may choose to work directly with additional partners to the extent their services align with schools' data-driven plans. The following are brief descriptions of our core partners. Oregon GEAR UP will support these partnerships in conjunction with schools' annual GU plans and budgets.

ASPIRE Student Mentoring: trained and supportive adult volunteer mentors help middle and high school students develop a plan to meet their future career and education goals.

Education Credit Management Corporation College Place: statewide "Paying for College" nights, FAFSA/ORSAA training, drop-in assistance to students, free materials and supplies.

Financial Beginnings: age-appropriate financial education programs for youth that include curriculum, supplemental materials, and trained volunteers who teach the lessons.

Northwest Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (NWPBIS): access to online resources and professional development on topics such as PBIS, multi-tiered systems of support, restorative practices, equity in discipline, and more.

Office of Student Access and Completion (OSAC): workshops for students on financial aid, filing the FAFSA and ORSAAA, and the Oregon Promise application.

Oregon Association of Financial Aid Administrators (OASFAA): expertise in completing FAFSA/ORSAA applications, information sessions about financial aid in general, and "train the trainer" instruction to certify site coordinators and other school staff on how to complete the FAFSA and ORSAA in English and in Spanish.

Oregon Career Information Systems (CIS): career information including current employment outlook, wages, and the skills, abilities and required education and training; listing of every postsecondary program of study or training offered in the state.

Pacific Northwest Association for College and Admissions Counseling (PNACAC): professional development for high school counselors on the college admissions process.

Path to Scholarships: curriculum and training on college preparation with a special focus on securing scholarships.

Texas Instruments (TI): STEM programming and professional development that includes technology-embedded instruction for high school students.

4. QUALITY OF PROJECT PERSONNEL

Oregon State University affirms its commitment to the elimination of discrimination and harassment, and the provision of equal opportunity for all. Furthermore, OSU recognizes that employees from traditionally underserved groups often bring with them unique skills and experiences and therefore seeks to employ them in positions where their background enhances their qualifications. OSU commits to inclusive excellence by advancing equity and diversity in all that we do. We are an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity employer, and particularly encourage applications from members of historically underrepresented racial/ethnic groups, women, individuals with disabilities, veterans, LGBTQ community members, and others who demonstrate the ability to help us achieve our vision of a diverse and inclusive community. These beliefs and practices, along with our organizational value of equity addressed earlier, will guide the recruitment and hiring of any open GEAR UP positions. Several of the current GEAR UP staff members reflect the populations GEAR UP serves including first-generation college students, families from low-income and rural backgrounds, and students of color.

A total of 9 FTE will be dedicated to GU4 in order to achieve the intended outcomes and

provide the supportive services addressed under Project Services.

Project Director (key personnel): The required qualifications of the **Project Director** include: Master's degree in education, public policy, sociology, management or a related field (doctoral degree preferred); minimum of five years working in a leadership and management role in a field related to middle and high schools, college access, serving underrepresented populations, or public administration; prior experience in oversight of a multi-million dollar budget; experience in developing and strengthening partnerships involving a diverse group of constituents; strong communication skills including writing reports and making effective presentations at meetings and/or conferences; demonstrated ability to design, organize and coordinate complex projects and to work effectively with faculty, staff, students, administrators and others in secondary or higher education; ability to effectively supervise staff and interact with colleagues; experience in working with students from diverse backgrounds; excellent understanding and knowledge of college access and success for low-income students.

The current Project Director, Stephanie Carnahan, will continue to serve in this role, ensuring continuity and a smooth transition to the new project. Stephanie joined the Oregon GEAR UP staff in March 2003 as the Project Manager and has been the Project Director since 2006. As a leader in the GEAR UP community, Stephanie was recognized as the GEAR UP Professional of the Year by the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP) in 2015. She also served on the GEAR UP Advisory Commission for NCCEP from 2017-2019. Stephanie holds a B.S. in Sociology from Oklahoma State University and a M.A. in Student Affairs in Higher Education from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Prior to her tenure with GEAR UP, Stephanie worked in various student service positions at colleges and universities around the country. She is well versed in project administration, college access policy development, and building collaborative partnerships. Stephanie was one of the founders

of the Oregon College Access Network and received their inaugural “Oregon College Access Service Award” in 2013. Beyond her academic and professional credentials, Stephanie was the first in her family to obtain a college degree and grew up in rural Oklahoma. These experiences have helped shape her understanding of the challenges facing the students served by GEAR UP.

The director will supervise the following positions responsible for project implementation. Except where noted, all positions will require a Bachelor’s degree in education, public policy, sociology, management or a related field; two years prior experience related to middle and high schools, college access, serving underrepresented populations, or public administration; experience in working with students from low-income backgrounds; strong communication skills; and ability to work with broad range of individuals.

Program Support Specialist (1.5 FTE): Provides technical assistance to school-based GEAR UP coordinators to ensure effective delivery of services.

Academic Success Specialist (1 FTE): Provides technical assistance to school and district administrators to ensure academic achievement goals of the grant are being sufficiently addressed. Due to the specialized nature of this position a Master’s degree in education, public policy, sociology, management or a related field and five years prior experience related to middle and high schools with a strong preference for prior school administration experience will be required.

Statewide Services Coordinator (1 FTE): Serves as an expert resource to partner schools and schools across the state to ensure successful implementation of statewide events.

Communications Specialist (1 FTE): Develops comprehensive communication strategy to include partner schools, stakeholders, the public, and other partners including social media, website, newsletters, and implementation “toolkits.”

Research and Evaluation Specialist (1 FTE): Provides leadership on research and evaluation-related activities including the annual performance report; works with school clusters to utilize data in goal setting and decision making; implements supplemental research and evaluation projects; explores ways to streamline and innovate evaluation procedures; and disseminates research and evaluation findings.

Data Assistant (1 FTE): Works closely with Research and Evaluation specialist to ensure accurate and timely data entry and validation, trains field staff in database operations, validates data from external sources, researches alternative data sources, runs and formats data reports.

Events Specialist (.5 FTE): Coordinates appropriate professional development opportunities for teachers, counselors, and administrators; coordinates statewide events for students, families, and others participating in the program; and develops and monitors budgets for these activities.

Business Manager (1 FTE): Responsible for organizational and administrative aspects of the program including contracts management, cost share tracking, processing invoices, providing logistical support for events, and assisting with special projects.

In addition to the core GEAR UP staff at OSU, each school cluster will be required to hire a full-time GEAR UP Site Coordinator. These school-based staff, who will be employees of the school districts, will be recruited from within the community to ensure that they are familiar with and supportive of the student population with whom they are working. This person will be responsible for coordinating the GEAR UP site team which will consist of local teachers, administrators, students and parents and charged with developing the local plan. The coordinator will also be responsible for managing all GEAR UP activities; submitting yearly plans and evaluations; monitoring participation of students, parents and educators and entering this along with cost share information into the statewide online database; and communicating regularly with the GEAR UP Program Support Specialists.

5. QUALITY OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

A project of the size and scope of GU4 requires a strong staff team, trusted advisors, and a comprehensive management plan. The following management plan, in concert with the staffing plan describe earlier, will ensure that all federal and project objectives are met in a timely, cost-effective manner.

Table 5-1 Management calendar

Management Tasks and Milestones	Timeline	Responsibility	Purpose
Recruitment of new staff	September 2021	Director	New position filled
Recruitment of school sites	September – October 2021	Director, Program Success Specialists	Select up to 20 GEAR UP school sites for implementation
Local GEAR UP Coordinators hired	November 2021	GEAR UP School Districts	Hire local staff to lead and implement GEAR UP locally
GEAR UP Coordinator onboarding	December 2021	Program Success Specialists	Familiarize Coordinators with grant policies and practices
Evaluation plan/baseline data/targets	September 2021	Research and Evaluation Specialist	Determine evaluation targets for measurable outcomes
Project Kick Off Meeting	January 2022	Director, Events Specialist	All schools participate and receive grant training
Local programming begins	January 2022	Local GEAR UP Coordinators	Kickoff GEAR UP in schools with few key activities (GEAR UP Week, college visits, FAFSA Challenge, Decision Day, etc.)
Site visits to GU4 schools	Quarterly (at a minimum), starting in February 2022	Program Success Specialists and Academic Success Specialist	Technical assistance for cluster coordinators and teams, review data for planning and evaluation purposes
Annual planning retreat	April	Events Specialist	All schools participate and receive professional development, time to evaluate current plan and prepare for coming year.
Annual school plans developed	Due in July	School GEAR UP Coordinators with help of Program Success Specialists and Academic Success	All plans monitored for grant compliance and approved for implementation

		Specialist	
Statewide meetings	October and January	Events Specialist	Ongoing professional for cluster coordinators
Mid-year progress report	January	School GEAR UP Coordinators; reviewed by Program Success Specialists	Review status of GEAR UP plans and request changes as necessary.
Annual Performance Report	April	Director and Research and Evaluation Specialist	Ensure progress toward project objectives.
School plans evaluated	July	Program Success Specialists and Academic Success Specialist	Ensure progress toward project goals
Professional development/training	Ongoing	Events Specialist	Training for school staff in response to needs and in support of project objectives
Coordinator bulletin	Weekly	Communications Specialist	Regular communication with school coordinators to ensure grant management and data collection tasks are complete
GEAR UP Educator newsletter	Monthly	Communications Specialist	Communicate relevant research, professional development and funding opportunities to staff at GEAR UP schools.
GEAR UP staff meetings	Bi-monthly	All GEAR UP staff	Regular communication among staff, professional development as needed.
Fiscal review and reconciliation	Monthly	Director	Project is on budget
Advisory committee meetings	Quarterly	Director	Receive guidance from key stakeholders regarding implementation

The planning/evaluation cycle described under Project Services (page 27) will be a crucial method of collecting important data that will be used to **continually refine and improve** the project. Lead by their GEAR UP Coordinator, local teams made up of teachers, administrators, family members, business and community leaders, will be responsible for designing and implementing the GEAR UP project in their communities. Technical assistance from staff and the external evaluator will ensure that teams are using data to improve their

efforts. Each activity will be evaluated to determine whether it achieved the intended outcomes. School teams will use this information along with student achievement data, school data, and survey results to set goals and design their plan for the next year. The regular analysis and use of data will also promote efficient management and data-driven project improvement decisions.

Just as GU4 schools will reflect on and revise their plans on an ongoing basis, so too will the central GEAR UP staff with respect to the services provided to participating schools. To that end, an annual survey of coordinators and administrators will be conducted by our external evaluator to gather feedback on professional development, communication strategies, services to students, and any additional support needed. Each professional development activity will also include an evaluation that will assess the relevance, usefulness, and quality of the activity as well as suggestions for future events. The central GEAR UP staff will also continuously review data with a particular focus on a strategic planning session each summer.

With a core group of returning GEAR UP staff and a long history of managing precollege programs, Oregon State University is well positioned to manage this project effectively. The Project Director and nearly all current staff members will continue in the same or similar roles with this grant. This experienced group of returning staff has demonstrated effective planning and implementation skills through three prior GEAR UP grants. The 9 FTE (including a full-time Director) will **ensure sufficient time commitments to the project**. These staff members will comprise the management team charged with daily oversight of the project goals, objectives, and budget. Twice monthly meetings allow the team to effectively coordinate efforts, monitor budgets and timelines, and identify obstacles.

In addition to the local site-based GEAR UP teams that will guide implementation and include the voices of parents, teachers and community members, an advisory committee made up of central GEAR UP staff, major partners, former and current GU school staff, university staff,

and parents or other community members will be instrumental in guiding the implementation of GU4. Through quarterly meetings with this group, the central GEAR UP staff will receive important information from key constituencies which will **ensure a wide variety of perspectives are utilized in implementing the project**. This broad-based group will guide the staff in implementing the project and help ensure coordination of resources and continuation of services after the grant.

6. QUALITY OF PROJECT EVALUATION

Oregon GEAR UP is committed to data-driven decision-making to inform continuous improvement efforts in the service of high-need, rural students. The GEAR UP Research and Evaluation Specialist and Data Assistant will work closely with an external evaluator, Metis Associates. Metis is an independent research and evaluation consulting firm that has extensive experience using rigorous evaluation designs to evaluate programs designed to increase academic achievement and college and career readiness. Over the past decade, Metis has evaluated 10 GEAR UP grants in four states. They are the evaluator for the current Oregon GEAR UP grant and retaining them for GU4 will ensure continuity and enable evaluation efforts to start right away.

Guided by the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) Standards Handbook (v. 4.1, 2020) and the WWC's Transition to College Review Protocol (v. 4.0, 2019), we will conduct a rigorous evaluation that is participatory, systematic, and cumulative, with links between activities, **outcomes** and contexts that can yield insights into the nature and extent of implementation fidelity and project impact. The evaluation will include formative and summative components and use multiple sources of quantitative and qualitative data and methods of analysis. The evaluation will adhere to federal regulations as established by all Federal regulations and standards, and will be designed to assess the initiative's progress

towards the five GPRA measures as well as other federal and local objectives.

The *implementation* evaluation will be guided by the following questions: (1) Is GU4's research-based 3As model being implemented as designed (fidelity)? To what extent does implementation fidelity vary by school and by core strategy under each A? (2) What are promising practices, successes, and factors facilitating implementation? (3) What are challenges, lessons learned, and recommendations for improvement?

The *outcome/impact* evaluation will be guided by the following research questions: 1) To what extent, if any, does GU4 increase the academic performance and preparation for post-secondary education of GEAR UP students? 2) To what extent, if any, does GU4 increase the rate of high school graduation and participation in post-secondary education? What are positive and negative predictors of high school graduation and college enrollment? 3) To what extent, if any, does GU4 increase student and family expectations and their knowledge of post-secondary education options, preparation, and financing? (4) What overall impact does GU4 have on students' high school graduation and college enrollment rates as compared to a well-matched sample of non-participants?

The evaluation of GU4 will utilize multiple **quantitative and qualitative** methodological approaches and collect data to assess the extent to which the project's goals, objectives and measures are attained. Specifically, the evaluation will utilize student-level data from the Oregon Department of Education (e.g., standardized test scores, course enrollment, grades, attendance) and the National Student Clearinghouse (college enrollment and persistence), data from student, parent, and educator surveys, and interviews and focus groups with all key stakeholder groups. In addition, through the use of unique student identification numbers, program participation data will be merged with survey and student outcome data to form a comprehensive database to be used for evaluation purposes.

The evaluation plan specifies objective performance measures, each of which is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-based (SMART). The indicators provide performance targets for each year of the project, which will be finalized after a thorough analysis of baseline data in Year 1. In order to assess progress towards the measurable objectives developed for this project (see Tables 2-1, 2-2, 2-3 and 2-4 on pages 12, 17, 21, and 23), the evaluation will use the methods and data sources described next.

- Analyses of student outcome data. Each year, the evaluator will obtain student-level data from the Oregon Department of Education and participating schools, including information on students' demographic characteristics, academic performance, course enrollment and completion, daily school attendance, grade promotion, suspensions, and high school graduation. In addition, we will collect college enrollment, retention, and completion data from the National Student Clearinghouse. These data will be collected on GEAR UP students and students in a well-matched comparison group.
- Analyses of program participation data. Data gathered through a database that captures student, teacher, and parent participation in GU4 activities will be utilized to continuously assess the progress of the initiative in reaching milestones and meeting objectives, including parent engagement.
- Student and parent surveys. Student surveys will be administered each year, and parent surveys will be administered in Years 2, 4, and 6 to students (and parents of students) in grades 7-12 attending the GEAR UP schools. These surveys will be designed to assess the extent to which the GU4 meets its objective of increasing students' and families' knowledge of postsecondary options, preparation and financing as well as students' postsecondary aspirations/expectations, to gather their feedback on GU4 activities, and to measure school climate and school-wide college-going culture. Student surveys will also be used to assess

acquisition of non-cognitive and social and emotional skills.

- Alumni surveys. Alumni surveys will be administered in Years 2-7. These surveys will be designed to capture alumni's experiences after high school (and in college, for those who enrolled), as well as their feedback on the GEAR UP program and high school experiences.
- Educator surveys. Each year, educator surveys will be administered online to collect their feedback on project activities, as well as information on implementation fidelity, and data needed to measure and assess changes in school climate and the development of school-wide college-going cultures.
- Coordinator and administrator surveys. Each spring, GEAR UP site coordinators and administrators will be asked to complete a survey designed to gather their feedback on GU4 implementation, challenges, outcomes, and lessons learned, as well as feedback on GEAR UP supports, events, and resources.
- Training and event evaluations. At the conclusion of each GEAR UP-sponsored event, participants will provide their feedback via brief evaluations. These data will be used formatively in order to improve programming, supports, and future events.
- School visits. Metis will conduct visits in a sample of participating schools to gather in-depth data on school context, school implementation and stakeholder feedback on GU4 activities. School visits will include interviews and focus groups with district and school administrators, educators, the GEAR UP coordinator, students, and parents or guardians. Schools will be provided with a summary of findings that they can use to inform their efforts.
- Review of project documentation. To provide information for project implementation and improvement as well as to better interpret project impacts, we will use an inventory tool to track data on key project inputs and outputs (e.g., curriculum development and alignment, educator support, technology infrastructure, etc.).

Qualitative data from open-ended survey items, interviews, focus groups, and observations will be analyzed to identify common themes that illuminate key findings for GU4. A list of content themes will be developed based on the 3A Program Design. In addition, grounded theory principles will be used to allow for additional themes and variations to emerge from the data themselves. Variations across response categories will be summarized both graphically and in narrative form.

For quantitative data collected through participation records, the Oregon Department of Education, the schools' student information systems, and surveys, descriptive and longitudinal analyses will be conducted to assess the extent to which GU4 is meeting its objectives and performance measures. Data will also be collected to build implementation fidelity scales for all key components and strategies detailed in the 3A research-based framework. Dosage and multivariate analyses will be conducted to assess the extent to which program fidelity or dosage are associated with better outcomes. In Years 6 and 7, Metis will also conduct a quasi-experimental well-matched comparison group design study (described in detail later) to assess the impact of GU4 on high school graduation and college enrollment. This study will complement the implementation study and descriptive and dosage analyses of outcome data.

Formative data gathered through event evaluations, surveys, onsite qualitative data collection, and analyses of program and outcome data will be used to continuously assess progress towards achieving our intended objectives and outcomes, and inform implementation efforts. The Oregon GEAR UP data team will collaborate with Metis and meet on a monthly basis, to ensure that the evaluation is conducted as specified in the research design and that external evaluators are provided with updated information to inform evaluation efforts.

Formative evaluation findings will be used to 1) monitor **progress toward meeting**

objectives and outcomes, 2) ensure the relevance of GU4 activities to students' needs and adherence to the proposed design, and 3) prompt specific recommendations for program improvement, as appropriate. Toward this end, Metis will prepare ongoing evaluation reports at the conclusion of each evaluation activity and discuss the findings during monthly meetings with GEAR UP staff and school convenings in the fall and spring semesters. These reports and presentations will include a summary of the evaluation activities conducted to date, a presentation of key findings from each data collection, and a set of recommendations to inform continuous improvement efforts.

In addition to ongoing meetings and reports from Metis, Oregon GEAR UP will use a program participation database to track and support the implementation of the program. This database will produce user-friendly automated monthly reports that will allow central office and school staff to track GU4 participation overall, and for individual activities and students, thus allowing project staff to identify areas for growth and make mid-course corrections as needed. Based on the lessons learned from earlier GEAR UP grants, we will also create a comprehensive dashboard system with GEAR UP participation, survey data, and student and school outcome data. Oregon GEAR UP will conduct trainings to build the project staff and school staff capacity to use these data to inform programming and continuous improvement efforts. As described under Project Services, these data will also be used as part of the schools' annual planning process. Metis will also assist in the preparation of the Annual Performance Report for the US DOE and will prepare a local comprehensive evaluation report each fall.

In order to **facilitate replication or testing of the proposed project model in other settings**, the evaluation will not only assess the feasibility of the model implementation, but also identify indicators of the extent to which core strategies are implemented as planned (with fidelity). In addition to developing and specifying operational definitions of all indicators, the

evaluation team will strive to define what constitutes adequate implementation and possibly establish a threshold for acceptable fidelity. The evaluation builds on a body of evidence, described in the Project Design section, about the types of academic and non-cognitive strategies that have been identified as successful in preparing students for postsecondary success.

Each year, descriptive and longitudinal analyses will be conducted to assess the extent to which GU4 is meeting its objectives and performance measures. In addition, analyses will be conducted for specific subgroups of students (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, FRL, English language learner, and special education status) to identify if and where/how the program is having a differential impact on sub-populations. The dosage and fidelity analyses mentioned earlier, as well as qualitative data from interviews and visits, will elucidate elements and procedures that are essential to successful replication.

In collaboration with project staff, Metis will continue to develop and conduct presentations on the evaluation findings at national GEAR UP and other relevant professional conferences, and to project partners and school stakeholders. Findings also will be disseminated through print and electronic media through user-friendly reports suitable for distribution to a broad audience including policy makers, practitioners and researchers.

Furthermore, as noted earlier, in Years 6 and 7, the evaluator will conduct a rigorous quasi-experimental design study based on a carefully matched comparison group to assess the impact of GU4 on high school graduation and college enrollment rates. This study will also provide very valuable data for helping build a body of evidence for GEAR UP. The study will use propensity score matching (PSM) to identify comparable students in similar non-participating schools based on important observed baseline characteristics, including but not limited to: age, grade level, prior school attendance, baseline academic achievement, race/ethnicity, gender, eligibility for free/reduced price meals (as a proxy for low-income),

special education status and English language learner status. After PSM procedures, baseline equivalence of the treatment and comparison groups will be assessed to ensure that the evaluation eliminates overt selection bias and meets the WWC evidence standards, albeit with reservations owing to the fact that unobserved variables (such as motivation) may not be equated between the two groups. Appropriate statistical analyses will then be carried out for each of the outcome measures, including high school graduation and college enrollment.

Implemented as planned, the proposed evaluation will provide seven years of valid and reliable data regarding the impact of GU4 services on low-income, rural students.

7. ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES

The state of Oregon and Oregon State University (OSU) are fully committed to continuing GEAR UP. As Oregon's land-grant university, OSU's primary mission is to provide equal access to education for ALL Oregon citizens and is committed to college access work. OSU has the academic expertise, infrastructure, and institutional knowledge to successfully administer GU4. OSU's longstanding commitment to college access and academic preparation for Oregon's youth is most visible in the Office of Precollege Programs, where GEAR UP will be housed. Precollege Programs staff will support the implementation of GU4 by hosting campus visits, sponsoring summer academic enrichment opportunities, and building strategic alliances with other program partners. Being located alongside more than 60 programs designed to increase access to higher education will afford GU4 ample opportunities to leverage resources and form strategic partnerships.

Other departments at the university have also expressed their commitment to serving GU4. Staff from the financial aid office will provide training to students, families and educators on the myriad ways to pay for college. The admissions office will support Oregon Goes To College statewide events, conduct professional development for school staff and students on the

admissions process, and help plan campus visits for educators. The Office of Sponsored Programs and other administrative units at OSU will provide centralized support for grant and business management activities such as procurement and contracting, accounts payable/receivable, communications and public relations, IT support, and much more. In addition, OSU will provide basic workplace needs such as offices, meeting spaces, printers, copiers, telephones, and miscellaneous office supplies. All told, OSU will contribute approximately \$0.5 million in cost share over the course of the grant.

As addressed in the Project Services section (page 35) we have developed a number of key partnerships that will contribute to the success of our efforts. Other partnerships will be developed through the life of the grant as needs and opportunities arise. The development of meaningful statewide partnerships not only maximizes the effectiveness of GU4, but leads to relationships that persist beyond the life of the grant thus sustaining the work of GEAR UP.

One of our most significant partnerships has been with The Ford Family Foundation. In 2010, the foundation proactively awarded us \$4.8 million to replicate GEAR UP in ten additional communities beyond those served by the federal grant. They also provided support for all GEAR UP communities by providing \$800,000 in additional grants for sustainability projects. They remain committed to helping GU4 be successful, primarily by supporting our statewide services. Given the nature of grant-making, they are not able to provide a dollar amount, but are strong supporters of our work.

The following table represents the commitment of our core partners to provide services at no cost, or services above and beyond those that will be paid for with grant funds.

Table 7-1 Core Partners

Partner	Demonstrated Commitment
Advancement Via Individual Determination	Staff support of AVID implementation at GU4 schools, free resources, and training for additional staff.
ASPIRE	Trained adult mentors for students

Education Credit Management Corporation College Place	Training for staff and support for students
Financial Beginnings	Financial education for youth
Metis	Additional pro bono evaluation services
National Council for Community and Education Partnerships	Reduced price access to college and career curriculum for students and training for school-based coordinators.
Northwest Positive Behavior and Interventions Support	Online support and professional development
Office of Student Access and Completion	Grants and scholarships for GEAR UP students
Oregon Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators	Workshops for students and families, and certification for staff
Oregon Colleges and Universities (at least 14)	In-kind support for school-based and statewide services
Oregon State Treasury	Deposits to 529 accounts
Seeds Training	Reduced cost summer campus for students
Texas Instruments	Professional development for teachers
The Ford Family Foundation	Support for statewide services

Oregon is requesting \$3.5 million per year for the seven-year grant period to establish school-wide college-going cultures and supports in rural communities across the state as well as continued support of statewide initiatives that will be available to every secondary school in the state and impact thousands of students. Of this amount, approximately \$1.2 million per year will provide direct GEAR UP services to an average of nearly 6,500 students and their families in GU4 schools; this comes to approximately \$184/student. Moreover, countless others in the education pipeline will benefit from the infrastructure, high quality teaching, and college-going cultures that GEAR UP will establish in these schools. Oregon Goes To College statewide programming will serve approximately 55,000 additional students each year. All told, the cost will be less than \$63/student. These costs are very **reasonable and will support the achievement of our intended outcomes.**

Each participating GU4 school will commit to providing the necessary supports to implement GEAR UP locally and to **continued support of the project after Federal funding ends.** Specifically, school and district administrators have agreed to support and supervise the

GEAR UP coordinator, actively participate on the GEAR UP team, and most notably provide dollar for dollar matching of grant funds. The high level of cost sharing and commitment will ensure sufficient administrative and financial support during implementation and will lay the groundwork for sustaining GEAR UP after the grant ends.

GU4 will begin with the future in mind. As part of the application process, potential GEAR UP schools will be asked to address the question of sustaining their efforts after federal funding ends. Each will be required to submit a letter of support from their district administration outlining the opportunities for continued support. Beginning in the first year, annual plans will include information on how each school cluster plans to sustain each activity. This sustainability plan will be their roadmap for maintaining effective activities, nurturing and developing partnerships, and continuing to pursue the goals of GEAR UP. The Program Support Specialists will also work with each school team to develop community-based partnerships to further bolster program sustainability.

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COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 1 – SUCCESSFUL STATE GRANT

Oregon’s successful GEAR UP experience began in 2002 with the awarding of our first state grant, and has continued with two subsequent awards in 2008 and 2014. We have consistently demonstrated success in administering the program over the course of three grants as evidenced by measurable outcomes, independent evaluation, feedback from stakeholders, and an unblemished history of compliance with applicable statutory and regulatory requirements. All of the current GEAR UP staff members will be returning for GU4 which will make for a smooth transition to the new grant.

Here we’re focusing on **outcome data** for the current grant (2014-21), but we will be drawing on our nearly twenty years of experience in program delivery and continual improvement to successfully implement GU4. As evidenced by the following outcomes with regard to the overarching goals of GEAR UP, Oregon is well positioned to continue this work.

Objective 1: Increase the academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education for GEAR UP students.

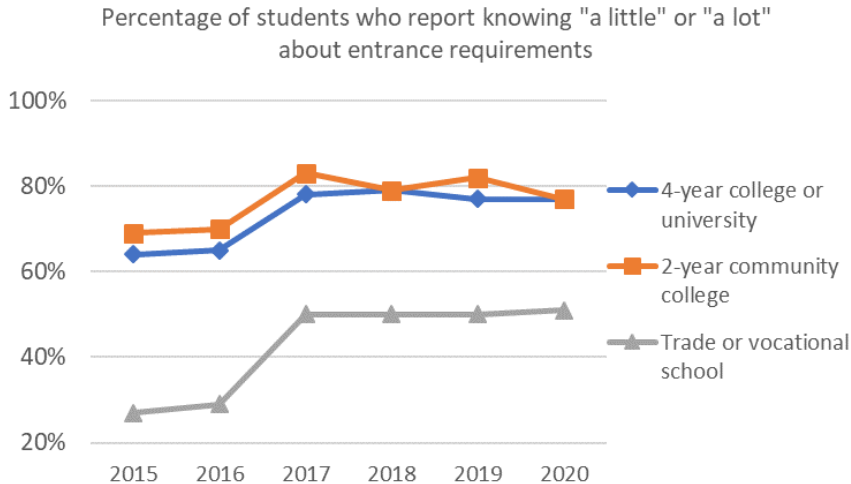
- The percentage of 9th grade students on track to graduate went from 75% to 81%.
- The percentage of students taking Algebra by the end of 9th grade increased from 61% to 78%.
- The percentage of schools offering dual enrollment nearly doubled from 38% to 69%.

Objective 2: Increase the rate of high school graduation and enrollment in postsecondary education for GEAR UP students.

- High school graduation rate climbed from 72% to 83%.
- Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic exacted a terrible toll on college enrollment rates, nearly a quarter of seniors reported that the pandemic forced them to change their post-high school plans; only 39% of 2020 high school graduates enrolled the fall after graduation.

Objective 3: Increase GEAR UP students’ and their families’ knowledge of postsecondary education options, preparation, and financing.

- Significantly more students reported being aware of college entrance requirements.



- Students also reported that they are familiar with the multiple ways to pay for college.

According to reports from our external evaluator GEAR UP has had a powerful impact on schools. Surveys of administrators and GEAR UP coordinators show that the program significantly enhanced the college going culture in schools. That will be a lasting change resulting in sustained attention to the importance of postsecondary education. One principal summed it up this way:

“I have been an educator/administrator for just over 30 years and have been very involved in various grants over the years. GEAR UP is by far the best grant I have worked with due to its focus on improvement and sustainability. I love that the grant always made us focus on how we could sustain our improvements. The grant lasts long enough to institutionalize many improvements. Well done and thank you so much!”

Other comments from interviews and surveys also revealed a strong trend toward sustaining GEAR UP. Just as GU4 will begin with the future in mind, so too was the case for GU3.

Oregon State University (OSU) has a long and proud history of providing college access support to students across the state. As Oregon's land-grant university, OSU is committed to teaching, research, and outreach, and promotes economic, social, cultural, and environmental progress for the people of Oregon, the nation and the world. All told, the university boasts more than 70 youth-serving programs designed to increase college access and academic preparation for Oregon's youth. The Office of Precollege Programs, where GEAR UP is housed, supports and oversees a wide range of these programs including award winning programs such as the SMILE (Science and Math Investigative Learning Experiences) Program and the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Academy, which have been nationally recognized for their best practices and 25 years of service to students. Being housed within Oregon State University's Office of Precollege Programs has enabled GEAR UP to easily collaborate with other college access programs over the years. A continued collaboration in GU4 will lead to greater outcomes for all programs as we share and replicate promising practices in college access.

COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 2 – MODERATE EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

A key component of GU4 will be to increase the number of students taking and passing dual credit courses, a strategy that has been found to be effective by at least five studies meeting WWC standards.¹ Two studies in particular assessed the impact of dual enrollment programs in varied districts across a state with significant low-income and rural populations, and thus have influenced our proposed strategies and activities. Specifically, we will work with participating schools to increase the number of dual credit courses available, focusing those on core academic courses, and encourage students to take more than one dual credit course. These two studies show “moderate evidence of effectiveness” of dual enrollment on: college access and enrollment, college degree attainment, and credit accumulation.

Study #1: Struhl and Vargas (2012) conducted a quasi-experimental study in Texas to determine the effectiveness of dual credit participation (defined as completing and passing at least one dual enrollment course before graduation) on improving postsecondary outcomes. The study used a P-20 statewide, longitudinal student-level database maintained by the Texas Education Research Center to identify a similar comparison group using propensity score matching. It compared outcomes for 32,908 students who attended all four years and graduated from public high schools in Texas in the 2003–2004 school year. Half of the students made up a treatment group (meaning they took and passed at least one dual enrollment course), and the other half composed a well-matched comparison group.

To assess the impacts of dual enrollment participation, the researchers conducted multiple linear mixed regressions for each outcome assessed, controlling in different models for

¹ For a summary, please see:
https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/InterventionReports/wwc_dual_enrollment_022817.pdf

demographics, academic achievement, and differences in dual enrollment completion. They found for each model that treatment students who participated in dual enrollment were more likely than comparison group students to attend postsecondary education (2.21 times more likely in the fully controlled model), persist in postsecondary education (1.79 times more likely), and complete an Associate's degree or higher within six years (1.66 times more likely), and the differences were statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. Significantly for the purposes of the proposed project, the study found that among low-income students, the treatment effect on attending postsecondary education was higher: low-income students who participated in dual enrollment courses were 2.40 times more likely to attend postsecondary education, and students who were not economically disadvantaged were 2.03 times more likely.

Study #2: In 2014, Giani et al. conducted another quasi-experimental study in Texas to further explore and understand the impacts of dual enrollment (defined as completing and passing at least one dual enrollment course during the junior or senior year) on postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and completion, and in particular to determine if there are differential impacts based on the number and type of dual credit courses taken. The study population was pulled from the same statewide database and was composed of 31,432 students entering ninth-grade in 2000–2001 in public high schools in Texas, including 15,716 treatment students and an equal number of comparison students who had been selected through propensity score matching process. Both groups of students in the final analytical samples were equivalent on key baseline characteristics. Students in the treatment group attended all four years of high school in the same district, and included low-income students, although the authors did not specify the total numbers for any subgroup. Notably, the comparison group was created from the sample of students who were enrolled in districts which did not offer any dual-credit courses to minimize self-selection bias.

The authors investigated the impact of dual enrollment participation on postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and completion through multilevel logit modeling techniques. They first assessed the impact of participation in at least one dual enrollment course on the three outcomes when controlling for demographic, academic, and other factors. Like Struhl and Vargas (2012), the authors found dual credit participation was positively associated with accessing (1.775 times more likely), persisting (1.571 times more likely), and completing (1.723 times more likely) postsecondary education, and the differences were statistically significant at the $p < .001$ level. The authors then assessed the differential impact of the number and type of dual enrollment courses on these outcome variables. Notably for the purposes of the proposed project, they found that the benefits of dual credit on postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and completion increased with the number of dual credit courses taken (high statistical significance with each outcome at the $p < .001$ level). Their analyses also indicated that dual credit courses in core academic subjects were more consistently found to significantly increase the likelihood that students will experience positive postsecondary outcomes, while non-core courses were less consistently significant, with the exception of computer and advanced language dual credit courses. Finally, the impact of participation in dual credit math courses was found to have the largest impact on college completion in particular, increasing student's likelihood of college completion by 1.60 to 1.90 times depending on the model (significant at the $p < .001$ level).

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INVITATIONAL PRIORITY 1 – BUILDING CAPACITY FOR REMOTE LEARNING.

When COVID-19 forced schools to close in March 2020, Oregon GEAR UP quickly responded and utilized CARES Act flexibilities to provide schools with additional funds for items to support remote learning including mobile hotspots, data plans and devices for students; items necessary for participation including cleaning supplies, face coverings, hand sanitizer, etc.; technology carts or other items to enable teachers to move from classroom to classroom rather than have students change rooms; technology to allow teachers to provide remote instruction where necessary; school supplies for students; and relevant professional development for teachers and staff. We will continue to offer this flexibility to GU4 schools as needed to support whatever modes of instruction they deploy this year. We will pay particular attention to the ongoing professional development needs of educators as they continue to modify and hone their instructional strategies. Decisions regarding in-person, remote or hybrid instruction are made on a county by county basis in Oregon, so we will work with each district to develop plans for professional development for teachers and access to software, mobile hotspots, laptops, and other equipment for students.

INVITATIONAL PRIORITY 2 – ADDRESSING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON STUDENTS’ MENTAL HEALTH AND ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

The recent report from the US Department of Education “Education in a Pandemic: The Disparate Impacts of COVID-19 on America’s Students” makes clear the challenge before us to mitigate these impacts as quickly as possible. While the full toll the pandemic has taken on student learning is not yet clear, we do know that the educational gaps that existed before the pandemic are widening, especially for students who had the greatest needs going into the pandemic. In addition to providing the flexibilities mentioned above for school supplies and other direct supports to students, we will work with schools to leverage partnerships in their

communities to provide emotional support to students and families, explore the creation of peer support networks, and offer professional development on trauma-informed practices to help educators respond more effectively to this crisis.

INVITATIONAL PRIORITY 3 – PROVIDING GEAR UP SERVICES TO SCHOOLS LOCATED IN RURAL AREAS

Oregon GEAR UP has had a focus on rural schools in since 2008 and as laid out in this application, we are proposing to once again provide direct service to students from rural communities. All of the local educational agencies we have identified as eligible and who will be invited to participate in GU4 have a rural NCES locale code of 32, 33, 41, 42, or 43.