

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS # 27110
GEAR UP VIRTUAL MENTORING SERVICES

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Exhibits:

Exhibit A	Instructions to Bidders
Exhibit B	General Terms and Conditions
Exhibit C	Emailing Requirements
Exhibit D	Signature/Certification
Exhibit E	Addendum Acknowledgement
Exhibit F	Pricing Sheet

Questions will be received until October 14, 2026 @ 3:00 PM EDT

Proposals will be received until October 23, 2026 @ 3:00PM EDT

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
RFP #27110
GEAR UP VIRTUAL MENTORING SERVICES

SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 Introduction: The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission on behalf of the West Virginia GEAR UP Program is soliciting bids for a 24/7 virtual college readiness mentoring service for up to 300 total students involved in the WV GEAR UP Mentoring Program known as the Student Success Society.

1.2 Instructions to bidders: See Exhibit A for bidder instructions.

1.3 General terms and conditions: See Exhibit B.

1.3 Schedule of Events:

Release of RFP: October 8, 2026

Question Deadline: October 14, 2026

Addendum/Response to Questions: October 16, 2026

Proposal Due Date: October 23, 2026

Target Award Date: October 30, 2026

1.4 Posting of Information: This RFP and any addenda, including answers to questions, will be posted at <https://www.wvhepc.edu/resources/purchasing-and-finance/>. Vendors are responsible for checking the website for additional information.

1.5 Proposals shall remain in effect ninety (90) days from the submission date.

1.6 Expenses: The state will not be held liable for any expenses incurred by any bidder responding to this RFP including expenses to prepare or deliver the proposal or attend any oral presentation.

1.7 Interviews: Discussions and/or interviews may be held with the bidders under final consideration prior to making a selection for award; however, the RFP may be awarded without such discussions or interviews.

1.8 Award: It is anticipated that a single contract will be awarded for all services. However, the state reserves the right to configure the contract in whatever manner is in its' best interests.

SECTION 2: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 West Virginia GEAR UP is a federally funded program that helps students in eleven counties to succeed in education and training beyond high school. “GEAR UP” stands for “Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs,” and the program’s goal is to help more students pursue their dreams of earning a college diploma or skillset certificate.

West Virginia GEAR UP is managed by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (Commission), in collaboration with the West Virginia Community and Technical College System, the West Virginia Department of Education and many other community partners.

The GEAR UP program operates on seven-year cycles. The Commission is administering its third consecutive GEAR UP grant, which began in 2021 and will conclude in 2028.

2.2 There are currently 300 students (high school juniors and seniors) who actively participate in the GEAR UP Mentoring Program, known as the Student Success Society. Many of these students have been engaged in the program for 3 years.

2.3 The historical model has seen a contracted, school-based mentor (typically a teacher) facilitate weekly, small group mentoring sessions during the day (using advisory, club time, lunch, or before/after school programming). These contracted mentors will continue to lead a monthly small group session and a monthly one-on-one check-in with each participant in addition to this virtual mentoring service.

SECTION 3: SCOPE OF SERVICES

3.1 This RFP may contain mandatory provisions identified by the use of the words “must, will and shall”. Failure to comply with a mandatory term in the RFP will result in bid disqualification.

3.2 Grant objectives include the following:

1. Increase the academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education for students.
2. Increase the rate of high school graduation and enrollment in postsecondary education for schools.
3. Increase students’ and their families’ knowledge of post-secondary education options, preparation, and financing.
4. Increase Academic, Postsecondary, and Social Emotional Resilience.

3.3 The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission is in search of a vendor that will establish a framework or model to evaluate the impact of the West Virginia GEAR UP program, including working with GEAR UP evaluation staff to establish a template for student/participant level engagement reports that can be formatted for upload into the program’s research database.

3.4 The winning vendor must commit to hosting an in-person program launch event on December 10, 2026 in Charleston, WV for all 300 student participants in order to provide overview information, build excitement, and complete the virtual opt-in process.

3.5 The vendor's ability to subsequently assist students with tutoring, advising, application completion (college and scholarship), and essay writing will be taken into consideration.

SECTION 4: VENDOR INFORMATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

Provide a statement/response to each of the following:

4.1 Identify and provide a statement of qualifications of individuals to be assigned direct responsibility for the services and description of vetting process to validate subject matter expertise.

4.2 Describe the experience that key personnel have, their length of service with the firm, as well as other relevant skills.

4.3 Describe the Firm's size, illustrating its ability to fulfill the terms of the RFP.

4.4 Describe any related experience.

4.5 Provide a complete description of how the work will be conducted, including all quality assurances that are provided in the firm's process for this type of work and detail the amount of time and effort that will be required of the entities' personnel. Include in this description an explanation of the tools/technology used to coordinate requested items.

4.6 Provide a proposed schedule that ensures completion of the services.

4.7 Provide the names, telephone numbers and mailing addresses of at least three higher education clients and the contact person from whom references may be obtained for both the firm and the key personnel assigned to the engagement. References should be from clients comparable to the type and scope of services solicited in this RFP.

SECTION 5: BIDDER RESPONSE AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

5.1 Economy of Preparation: Proposals should be prepared simply and economically, providing a straightforward, concise description of the bidder's ability to satisfy the requirements of the RFP. Emphasis should be placed on completeness and clarity of content.

NOTE: DO NOT INCLUDE ANY PRICING WITH THE TECHNICAL

PROPOSAL ALL PRICES ARE TO BE PROVIDED IN A SEPARATE EMAIL OR FILE CLEARLY LABELED AS PRICING INFORMATION.

5.2 Proposals should be limited to 12 pages. Additional material may be presented as exhibits to the main proposal.

5.3 The proposal will be evaluated on a one hundred (100) point scale with points assigned as outlined below.

Vendors failing to score at least 70% or 49 points for Sections 3 and 4 will not be considered to have met the minimum acceptable score. Any vendor not meeting the minimum acceptable score will NOT have their prices opened and will NOT be considered for award of the bid.

5.3.1 Qualifications, Experience and Company Background – 40 points

Responses to Sections 4.2 – 4.4 and 4.7 will be reviewed and evaluated here.

5.3.2 Services – 30 points

Responses to Sections 4.5 and 4.6 will be reviewed and evaluated here.

5.4. Price – 30 points – In a separate sealed envelope/file, complete the included pricing sheet (EXHIBIT F) indicating the total cost based on 5,000 hours of digital mentoring and advising services for up to 300 total student accounts. Any required travel should be included in this fixed price. Also include any cost for additional hours if needed.

The low bid will receive the full 30 points. Each higher bid will receive a percentage of the 30 points on a ratio basis compared to the low bid cost (Price Score = (Lowest Evaluated Total Price ÷ Bidder's Evaluated Total Price) × 30).

5.5 Award will be made to the bidder receiving the highest point total.

5.6 In the event that mutually acceptable terms cannot be reached within a reasonable period of time, with the highest ranked bidder, the state reserves the right to undertake negotiations with the next highest ranked bidder and so on until mutually acceptable terms can be reached.