

Open Educational Resources (OER) Grant Program

**A Report to the Texas Legislature
per Senate Bill 810, 85th Texas Legislature**

DRAFT October 2020

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Agency Mission

The mission of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) is to provide leadership and coordination for Texas higher education and to promote access, affordability, quality, success, and cost efficiency through *60x30TX*, resulting in a globally competitive workforce that positions Texas as an international leader.

Agency Vision

The THECB will be recognized as an international leader in developing and implementing innovative higher education policy to accomplish our mission.

Agency Philosophy

The THECB will promote access to and success in quality higher education across the state with the conviction that access and success without quality is mediocrity and that quality without access and success is unacceptable.

The THECB's core values are:

Accountability: We hold ourselves responsible for our actions and welcome every opportunity to educate stakeholders about our policies, decisions, and aspirations.

Efficiency: We accomplish our work using resources in the most effective manner.

Collaboration: We develop partnerships that result in student success and a highly qualified, globally competent workforce.

Excellence: We strive for excellence in all our endeavors.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services.

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Executive Summary

Senate Bill 810, 85th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, established the Open Educational Resources Grant Program, which was designed to incentivize faculty at Texas institutions of higher education to adopt, modify, redesign, or develop courses that use only open educational resources. This report details the administration of the competitive grant program and provides initial information about cost savings for students from the use of OER by faculty grantees as well as the number of students served by the first round of grants (which was awarded in 2018). Additional funds were allocated for the Open Educational Resources Grant program during the 86th Texas Legislature in 2019 and a second round of grants was awarded in 2020.

Introduction

An “open educational resource” is defined in Texas Education Code (TEC) 51.451 as “a teaching, learning, or research resource that is in the public domain or has been released under an intellectual property license that permits the free use, adaptation, and redistribution of the resource by any person. The term may include full course curricula, course materials, modules, textbooks, media, assessments, software, and any other tools, materials, or techniques, whether digital or otherwise, used to support access to knowledge.” Open educational resources (OER) are usually free or offered at a low cost for students.

Between 2006 and 2016, the price of college textbooks rose 87.5 percent (BLS, 2020). In a national survey, 64.2 percent of students indicated that they had decided against buying at least one textbook because of the price and 42.8 percent said that the cost of textbooks affected how many courses they took in a semester (Florida Virtual Campus, 2018).

In states where OER initiatives have been funded, the benefits for students are evident. Affordable Learning Georgia has awarded \$5.58 million in textbook transformation grants since 2014 and saved students \$69.19 million, a return of over 10 times the investment (Affordable Learning Georgia, 2020). North Dakota has spent \$107,250 for faculty training and workshops and institution-level grants as of 2014 for savings of between \$1.1 and \$2.4 million, a return of 10 to 20 times the investment (North Dakota Office of the State Auditor, 2018).

In 2017, the 85th Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 810 (codified in [Texas Education Code \(TEC\) 61.0668](#)), which created the Open Educational Resources Grant Program in order to incentivize faculty at Texas institutions of higher education to adopt, modify, redesign, or develop courses that use only OER. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) administers the OER Grant Program through a competitive grant application process. In fiscal years 2018 and 2019, 15 faculty members were awarded grants under the OER Grant Program, and additional funding was appropriated by the 86th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, for grant awards to be made in fiscal years 2020 and 2021. Faculty members that adopt, modify, redesign, or develop OER for their course(s) under the program are required to offer those materials at no cost to students (other than the cost of printing, should students choose to print the materials) and the course must be taught four times within the grant period. In the 2018 grant period, eligible courses were restricted to courses within the Texas Core Curriculum (TCC).

Program Development

Rules for the OER Grant Program were established using the THECB’s negotiated rulemaking process with input from stakeholders, including representatives from public universities, community colleges, and Texas state technical colleges. Following the negotiated rulemaking process, the THECB adopted rules for the program in February 2018. Rules are codified in the Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Chapter 4, Subchapter O, and available [online](#).

Review, Assessment, and Selection Process

Fiscal Years 2018-2019

The OER Grant Program is a competitive grant and applications are reviewed by expert reviewers, per TEC 61.0668. To assist in the selection process, the THECB contracted with three expert reviewers who were faculty members at Texas public institutions of higher education for each application. Reviewers were required to teach or have the expertise to teach lower-division undergraduate courses offered within the Texas General Education Core Curriculum.

Proposals were assessed based on criteria described in the Request for Applications (RFA), including the strength of the project design, the alignment to project goals, and the likelihood for success of the expected outcomes. Priority points were assigned for applications that proposed to adopt, modify, or design OER for general education Academic Course Guide Manual (ACGM) or equivalent core curriculum courses with proven substantial enrollments offered on a recurring semester basis. The THECB staff compiled the assessment results and made recommendations for funding to the Deputy Commissioner of Academic Planning and Policy, as per TAC Title 19, Rule §1.16. The Deputy Commissioner reviewed the information and made the final award selection for funding.

Fiscal Years 2020-2021

The selection process for fiscal years 2020 and 2021 will be similar to that of fiscal years 2018 and 2019, involving three external, expert reviewers, as per TEC 61.0668. Evaluation criteria will be detailed in the RFA for that grant cycle.

Grant Awards

Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019

In FY 2018 and 2019, 41 eligible applications were received for the OER Grant Program. Grant awards in the amount of \$152,000 were made to 15 faculty members at Texas public institutions of higher education. Faculty members who proposed to adopt, modify, redesign, or create one course using only open educational materials received \$8,000 and faculty members who proposed to adopt, modify, redesign, or create multiple courses received \$16,000. Table 1 provides information about the 15 awards, which will continue through August 2021. The course(s) funded by the OER Grant Program will be taught four times during the grant cycle using only OER.

Table 1. OER Grant Program FY 2018-2019 Awardees

Faculty name	Institution	Course(s)	Grant Amount
Karl Aho	Tarleton State University	Introduction to Philosophy	\$8,000
Veronica Amaku	Houston Community College	General Biology for Majors	\$8,000
Megan Collins	Prairie View A&M University	Social Problems	\$8,000
Brandi Falley	Texas Woman's University	Elementary Statistics I & II	\$16,000
Brittney Gillespie-Porter	Texas Southmost College	College Algebra	\$8,000
Richard Gosselin	Houston Community College	Introduction to Macroeconomics, Introduction to Microeconomics	\$16,000
Joseph Locke	University of Houston – Victoria	U.S. History II	\$8,000
Katherine Oser	Central Texas College	Introduction to Computing	\$8,000
Lamont Rodgers	Houston Community College	Introduction to Symbolic Logic	\$8,000
Amy Petros	University of North Texas	General Chemistry for Majors I & II	\$16,000
India Stewart	Eastfield College	Introduction to Sociology	\$8,000
Laura Villarreal	Texas Southmost College	Mathematics for Teachers	\$8,000
Virginia Villarreal-Disraeli	Austin Community College	British Literature	\$8,000
Nicholas Webb	McLennan Community College	English Composition I & II	\$16,000
Ben Wright	The University of Texas at Dallas	U.S. History I	\$8,000
Total			\$152,000

Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021

For fiscal years 2020 and 2021, the design of the grant program will be modified. Two categories of grants will be awarded – Development Grants and Implementation Grants:

- Development Grants: A maximum of \$25,000 to faculty or teams of faculty to develop new or substantially improve existing OER for two or more high-enrollment TCC courses, focused on TCC courses that account for the majority of credits transferred among institutions. These grants should be matched with contributions from the institution or institutions (contributions may be in-kind).

- Implementation Grants: A maximum of \$5,000 to faculty or teams of faculty to support the substantial redesign of one or more TCC courses to incorporate OER resources.

Contingent upon the amount of appropriation available, the THECB expects to award approximately five to six Development Grants and 20 to 25 Implementation Grants for the biennium ending August 31, 2021.

Data from 2018 Grantee Progress Reports

The 15 faculty members awarded grants in the 2018 round of the OER Grant Program completed their first progress report in December 2019. Many of them taught the course(s) using only OER for the first time during the Fall 2019 semester. For the Fall 2019 semester, grantees reported a total of 2,258 students completing courses using only OER adopted, modified, redesigned, or developed under the program, for a total estimated savings to students of \$318,378 in that semester. This includes students who took courses with faculty members other than the grantees (but at the same institution) who utilized the OER adopted, modified, redesigned, or developed under the grant program. The next progress report for the 2018 grantees is due December 15, 2020. The first project report for the 2020 grantees will be due December 17, 2021.

All grantees will make their work available to the Texas OER repository, a digital library of OER, which is under development and is scheduled to launch September 1, 2020. Faculty and students across the state will have access to the materials in the repository.

Recommendations and Potential Future Directions

Per TEC 61.0668, this report includes suggestions of subject areas that would benefit from the adoption, modification, or development of open educational resources; and recommendations for future steps for adopting, modifying, or developing open educational resources.

Subject Areas to Target

In 2019, THECB partnered with the Digital Higher Education Consortium of Texas (DigiTex) and the Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education (ISKME) to conduct a landscape survey of OER use and adoption in the state. A recommendation for subject areas to target for OER adoption were included in that survey report. The report suggested the curation of OER in career and technical education, especially as those courses could be leveraged to support zero-textbook cost credentials in those fields (Jimes, C., et.al., 2019). In addition, the grant program could be expanded to other Texas Core Curriculum courses (or other transferable, high-enrollment courses), in order to have the widest impact possible. While there are often OER textbooks available for introductory courses, through [OpenStax](#) or other publishers, a lack of ancillary materials can be a challenge for faculty.

Future Steps

In 2017 and 2018, the THECB conducted a study on the feasibility of creating a digital repository for OER in Texas and in 2019 conducted the landscape survey mentioned above. The links for both reports can be found in Appendix A. Several recommendations came out of both of those studies, which could be future steps for encouraging OER adoption and use in Texas.

1. Create a state OER Council.

The feasibility study recommended that this body be made up of “faculty members from universities, community and technical colleges, and health-related institutions; staff at institutions of higher education, such as librarians and instructional designers; at least one student; a representative from P-12; and administrators and other OER stakeholders as appropriate.” The council could evaluate OER policy at the national and state level and make recommendations to the THECB and the legislature.

2. Fund a new position of state Director/Coordinator of OER.

This position could be used to further develop, administer, and market the Texas OER repository and/or coordinate other state OER efforts and represent the state nationally and internationally in the field.

3. Maintain the state OER repository

A repository for OER, customized for Texas institutions of higher education, was mandated by House Bill 3652, 86th Texas Legislature, Regular Session. The repository is due to be developed by September 1, 2020. Funds were allocated to the repository for fiscal years 2020 and 2021, but additional resources will be required for ongoing maintenance and support.

4. Create a long-term integrated portal and resource awareness program.

The number one barrier to adoption of OER, according to a 2016 survey, was that faculty found it difficult to find the OER they needed (Seaman & Seaman, 2017). With the creation of the Texas OER repository, there is potential for faculty to easily find OER that is adapted to the needs of Texas institutions of higher education. However, faculty awareness of the existence of the portal is required, as is knowing how to use it. The feasibility study suggested the creation of an awareness program for this purpose.

5. Develop or identify effective OER training and incentive programs.

Individual faculty members are often the decision-makers when it come to the educational materials that will be used in the courses they teach (Seaman & Seaman, 2017). In order for faculty to choose OER, they have to be aware of its existence and be trained how to recognize and effectively adapt OER for their needs. Training and incentive programs for faculty could use existing open resource training tools (e.g., the Creative Commons Certificate Program or Ontario College’s OER Toolkit) adapted for the needs of Texas institutions.

6. Enable sharing of approaches and lessons learned.

Many institutions of higher education in Texas are already doing work in the field of OER. A suggestion from the landscape survey of institutions was to build on that momentum by enabling the sharing of best practices between institutions. One approach might be to create a program for faculty grantees or other OER adopters to present at institutions where OER programs are emerging. Another approach might be for the THECB to showcase effective OER policies and programs already at work in the state and/or effective approaches to research on the impact of OER.

The THECB maintains information about the OER Grant Program online at <http://www.highered.texas.gov/oergp>.

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- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). 2020. College tuition and fees increase 63 percent since January 2006. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2016/college-tuition-and-fees-increase-63-percent-since-january-2006.htm>.

Appendix A: Resources

Creative Commons Certificate Program

<https://certificates.creativecommons.org/>

Ontario College's OER Toolkit

<https://tlp-lpa.ca/oer-toolkit>

Landscape survey report: *Open Educational Resources (OER) in Texas Higher Education, 2019*

<http://reportcenter.highered.texas.gov/reports/reports-and-studies-non-fiscal/oer-texas/>

OpenStax

<https://openstax.org/>

A Study on the Feasibility of a Texas Repository of Open Educational Resources

<http://reportcenter.highered.texas.gov/reports/data/board-meeting-07-26-18-x-g-oer-repository-feasibility-report/>

OER Grant Program in statute (TEC 61.0668)

<https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.61.htm#61.0668>

Rules for the OER Grant Program (TAC Title 19, Rules §4.230-4.238)

[https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac\\$ext.ViewTAC?tac_view=5&ti=19&pt=1&ch=4&sch=O&r=Y](https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.ViewTAC?tac_view=5&ti=19&pt=1&ch=4&sch=O&r=Y)



This document is available on the [Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board website](#).

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