

Open Educational Resources (OER) Grant Program

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

October 2021

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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 (SB) 810, 85th Texas Legislature (2017), Regular Session, (codified as Texas Education Code 61.0668) established the Open Educational Resources (OER) 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. Reports are required both by TEC 61.0668 and rider 55 of the General Appropriations Act of 2019.

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 and second rounds of grants (awarded in 2018 and 2020, respectively). The second round of grants in 2020 made use of appropriations allocated for the Open Educational Resources Grant program during the 86th Texas Legislature in 2019.

Introduction

An “open educational resource” is defined in [Texas Education Code \(TEC\), Section 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% (BLS, 2020). A recent report by the College Board states that students at public, four-year, in-state institutions spend on average \$1,240 on books and supplies each year (Ma, Pender, & Libassi, 2020). In a national survey, 64.2% of students indicated that they had decided against buying at least one textbook because of the price, and 42.8% said that the cost of textbooks affected how many courses they took in a semester (Florida Virtual Campus, 2018). One report documented that on average, students save between \$66 and \$121 per course when using OER (Griffiths, R., et. al., 2018, p. ES-6).

In 2017, the 85th Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 810 (codified in [TEC, Section 61.0668](#)), which created the Open Educational Resources Grant Program to incentivize faculty at Texas institutions of higher education to adopt, modify, redesign, or develop courses that use only OER. Evidence from other states indicates that OER grant programs positively impact students. Affordable Learning Georgia has awarded \$6.2 million in textbook transformation grants since 2014 and saved students \$86 million, a return of over 12 times the investment (Affordable Learning Georgia, 2021). North Dakota spent \$107,250 for faculty training and workshops and institution-level grants as of 2014, for savings of between \$1.1 million and \$2.4 million, a return of 10 to 20 times the investment (North Dakota Office of the State Auditor, 2018). This report compiles data on student impact and cost savings from the first two rounds of the Texas OER Grant Program (in 2018 and 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic spotlighted the importance of quality, reasonably priced, digital educational materials, as courses across the country transitioned to remote learning. From March 2020 into the fall 2020 semester, institutions experienced “large-scale digital materials adoption” (Seaman & Seaman, 2021, p. 25). OER are an accessible and affordable option and the OER Grant Program facilitates OER use and adoption by Texas students and faculty.

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 (TAC), Title 19, Chapter 4, Subchapter O, and available [online](#).

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) administers the OER Grant Program through a competitive grant application process. In fiscal years 2018 and 2019, \$200,000 was appropriated for the program (including 1 FTE for administration), and 15 faculty members were awarded grants under the OER Grant Program. Additional funding in the amount of \$212, 049 was appropriated for grants by the 86th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, for awards to be made in fiscal years 2020 and 2021, and 20 grants were awarded in October 2020. 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). For fiscal years 2020 and 2021, a distinction was made between development and implementation grants. Development grants were awarded to faculty or teams of faculty to develop new OER or substantially improve existing OER for two or more high-enrollment TCC courses that account for the majority of credits transferred among institutions. Implementation grants were awarded to faculty or teams of faculty to support the substantial redesign of one or more TCC courses to incorporate OER resources.

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, Section 61.0668. To assist in the selection process during fiscal years 2018 and 2019, the THECB called for Texas public institutions of higher education to nominate faculty members who had the expertise to teach lower-division undergraduate courses offered within the Texas General Education Core Curriculum (TCC) or were experts in the use of OER. Three expert reviewers evaluated each application.

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 in the 2018 round for applications that proposed to adopt, modify, or design OER for courses in the general education Academic Course Guide Manual 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 appropriate Deputy Commissioner, as per TAC, Title 19, Rule 1.16. The Deputy Commissioner reviewed the information and made the final award selections.

Fiscal Years 2020-2021

The selection process for fiscal years 2020 and 2021 was similar to that of fiscal years 2018 and 2019, involving three external, expert reviewers, per TEC, Section 61.0668. Reviewers were required to teach or have the expertise to teach lower-division undergraduate courses offered within the TCC or were experts in the use of OER.

The THECB awarded two categories of grant awards under this RFA, Development Grants and Implementation Grants. Development Grants awarded a maximum of \$25,000 to faculty or teams of faculty to develop new OER or substantially improve existing OER for one or more high-enrollment TCC courses. These grants were matched with support from the institution employing that faculty member or team of faculty members. Implementation Grants awarded 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.

Proposals were assessed based on criteria described in the 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 in the 2020 round for applications that proposed to redesign a course or courses with high transfer rates. Courses in the state with the highest transfer rates since 2017 were determined using data reported to the THECB by institutions and the THECB Approved Core Course Inventory. A list of eligible courses was available to applicants on the [OER Grant Program website](#).

For Development Grants, an applicant who proposed cross-institutional collaboration received up to five additional points during the application evaluation. THECB staff compiled the assessment results and made recommendations to the appropriate Deputy Commissioner, per TAC, Title 19, Rule 1.16. The Deputy Commissioner reviewed the information and made the final award selections.

Grant Awards

Fiscal Years 2018-2019

In fiscal years (FYs) 2018 and 2019, 41 eligible applications were received for the OER Grant Program. Grant awards in the total 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. Materials developed under the OER Grant Program have been uploaded to the statewide OER repository, [OERTX](#).

Table 1 provides information about the 15 awards, which will continue through August 2021. 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 Fiscal Years 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 2020-2021

In FYs 2020 and 2021, 45 eligible applications were received for the OER Grant Program. Faculty members or teams were awarded a maximum of \$5,000 for Implementation Grants and a maximum of \$25,000 for Development Grants. The THECB awarded 20 total grants, six Development Grants and 14 Implementation Grants, to faculty members at Texas

public institutions of higher education. Materials developed under the OER Grant Program will be uploaded to the statewide OER repository, [OERTX](#), beginning in June 2021.

Table 2 provides information about the 20 awards, which will continue through August 31, 2023. Course(s) funded by the OER Grant Program will be taught four times during the grant cycle using only OER.

Table 2. OER Grant Program FYs 2020–2021 Awardees

Faculty Name	Institution	Course(s)	Grant Amount
Sarah Alvanipour	Houston Community College	General Chemistry	\$24,624.00
Brenda Norton	Angelo State University	Texas Government	\$21,474.00
Fred Spaulding	Tarrant County Community College	Art Appreciation	\$25,000.00
Jesse Taylor	Angelo State University	Finite Mathematics	\$22,137.00
Erika M. Warnick	South Plains College	English Composition	\$20,500.00
Adam Weiss	West Texas A&M University	Learning Frameworks, Educational Foundations	\$25,000.00
Total Development Grants			\$138,735.00
Faculty Name	Institution	Course(s)	Award Amount
Kimberley Breuer	University of Texas at Arlington	Technology and Science in American Society	\$5,000.00
Billye Cheek	Grayson College	College Algebra, General Chemistry, Organic Chemistry	\$5,000.00
Jangsup Choi	Texas A&M University – Commerce	United States Government	\$5,000.00
Wade A. Cornelius	El Paso Community College	Public Speaking, Organizational and Professional Communication	\$5,000.00
Molly Wiant Cummins	University of Texas at Arlington	Fundamentals of Public Speaking	\$5,000.00
Jerrica Jordan	Tarrant County Community College	English Composition	\$4,936.00
Minchul Kang	Texas A&M University – Commerce	Calculus I and II	\$5,000.00
Maura L. Krestar	Texas A&M University – Kingsville	Introduction to Psychology	\$5,000.00
Ming Lou	Lamar University	College Physics II	\$5,000.00
Rajone Lyman	Houston Community College	Learning Frameworks	\$5,000.00
Kristi Moore	Angelo State University	General Psychology	\$4,949.00
Creshema Murray	University of Houston – Downtown	Introduction to Communication	\$5,000.00
Sadaf Sajjad	Austin Community College	Introduction to Psychology	\$5,000.00
Anthony Zoccolillo	Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi	General Psychology	\$5,000.00
Total Implementation Grants			\$69,885.00
Total OER Grant Program Grants			\$208,620.00

Data from Grantee Progress Reports

The 15 faculty members awarded grants in the 2018 round of the OER Grant Program completed their first progress reports in December 2019 and their second progress reports in October 2020. The final report for the 2018 grantees is due September 13, 2021. The 20 faculty members awarded grants in the 2020 round of the OER Grant Program will submit their first reports in December 2021.

Many of the 2018 awardees taught the course(s) using only OER for the first time during the fall 2019 term. Data was also collected for the spring 2020, summer 2020, and fall 2020 terms. An estimated total of 4,918 students completed courses during this time using only OER adopted, modified, redesigned, or developed under the program, for a total estimated savings to students of \$774,240. This estimate includes students who took courses with faculty members other than the grantees (but at the same institution) who also utilized the OER adopted, modified, redesigned, or developed under the grant program.

Table 3 provides information about the 2018 grantee outcomes for students served and money saved. As noted above, the grantees' colleagues may also be using OER created or curated for the grant program.

Table 3. OER Grant Program FY 2018-2019 Awardee Impact

Term	Students served by grantee faculty member	Total amount saved by students during the term*
Fall 2019	1,487	\$237,387
Spring 2020	1,502	\$251,109
Summer 2020	427	\$34,635
Fall 2020	1,502	\$251,109
TOTAL	4,918	\$774,240

Source: OER Grant Program Progress Reports

**Amount saved based on the number of students completing the course and the cost of course materials in the semester preceding OER use. Material costs ranged from \$43.00 to \$413.00 per student per course.*

Possible Future OER Opportunities

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 options for future steps for adopting, modifying, or developing open educational resources.

Subject Areas

In 2019, the 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). Developing OER for high-value workforce credential programs, in particular, should be explored. In addition, the grant program could be targeted to TCC courses

(or other transferable, high-enrollment courses), where few resources currently exist, to have the widest impact possible. While there are often OER textbooks available for introductory courses, such as English and history through OpenStax or other publishers, a lack of ancillary materials can be a challenge for faculty. A gap analysis could provide insight into courses and subject areas where OER would have a high impact.

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, the agency conducted the landscape survey mentioned above. The links for both reports can be found in References. Several recommendations came out of these studies, which could inform future steps for encouraging OER adoption and use in Texas.

Governor Greg Abbott announced in 2020 that the State of Texas would invest \$175 million in Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funding in higher education, originating from the U.S. Department of Education's administration of the Education Stabilization Fund in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020. A portion of this funding was dedicated to digital learning support, including OER initiatives, in order to build on the state investment in this area.

The THECB launched the Division of Digital Learning (DLD) in November 2020. The DLD will sustain existing OER programs and initiatives, as well as provide direction and support for innovative efforts in the future. Suggestions in this report were developed from available research, the experience the THECB now has with statewide OER initiatives, and the goals of the Division of Digital Learning. The following future steps could help support OER in Texas.

1. Increase state-level OER advocacy and collaboration with key stakeholders.

States that have documented success in expanding OER use and adoption target a variety of key stakeholders. For example, the "Massachusetts Department of Higher Education Open Educational Resources Working Group Report" (2019) offers insight about how to increase OER advocacy and awareness by collaborating with students, bookstores, student support services, librarians, administrators, and instructional designers.

The THECB has a strong foundation for this in the Learning Technology Advisory Committee (LTAC). LTAC members provide guidance and support for the THECB's OER initiatives as institutional representatives. The THECB also collaborates with other organizations and institutions. The THECB, DigiTex, and Texas Digital Library collaborate on the annual "Open Texas" OER conference. OpenStax at Rice University, the Charles A. Dana Center at The University of Texas at Austin, and Dallas College have partnered with the THECB to provide support for OER initiatives. As the THECB continues to increase OER advocacy and collaboration, strategic outreach to key stakeholders will be vital.

2. Continue to build on the THECB's current OER training and outreach initiatives.

Individual faculty members are often the decision-makers when it comes to the educational materials used in the courses they teach (Seaman & Seaman, 2017). A recent study found that faculty cited trouble finding OER materials, quality of

available OER materials, and lack of institutional support as significant reasons for not adopting OER (Seaman & Seaman, 2021). Only 18% of faculty noted providing OER in the fall 2020 term, despite the need for accessible digital materials during the pandemic pivot to remote learning. Even though respondents indicated an increased awareness of OER from previous years, adoption of OER did not increase. According to open resource advocacy organization SPARC (2020a), OER adoption is still limited, even though OER receives high marks for quality from students and faculty.

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. The THECB, in partnership with ISKME, sponsored an OER Core Elements Academy for faculty, instructional designers, and librarians interested in using OER in June 2021. Additional trainings are in the planning stages.

3. Use grant funding to build capacity for OER work at institutions.

Institutional resources devoted to OER projects and programs at institutions of higher education in Texas varies from campus to campus (Jimes, C., et.al., 2019). Grant funding to build awareness of and capacity for OER initiatives at institutions may help to increase the impact of available funding. The THECB is in the planning stages of an OER Capacity Building Grant Program using federal Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds.

4. Effectively use 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. All grantees are required to make their work available to the Texas OER repository, a digital library of OER, which launched on September 1, 2020. Funds were allocated to the repository for fiscal years 2020 and 2021, and additional resources have been dedicated for ongoing maintenance, support, and expansion in the General Appropriation Act of 2021.

The most notable barrier to the adoption of OER, according to a 2016 survey, was that faculty found it difficult to find materials they needed (Seaman & Seaman, 2017). With the creation of the Texas OER repository, [OERTX](#), there is potential for faculty to easily find OER that is adapted to the needs of Texas institutions of higher education. The feasibility study suggested creating an awareness program for the repository. The THECB has plans to collaborate with grantees and institutions to increase awareness and use of the OERTX repository.

5. Recognize exemplary work being done at institutions.

The THECB is in a unique position to bring attention to Texas institutions and faculty already striving for excellence in OER use. Inviting faculty and administrators to serve as guest speakers or facilitators for upcoming webinars, highlighting best practices through OERTX, and awarding commendable projects with grant funding are means by which the THECB can spotlight these exemplars.

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

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Appendix A: Resources

Creative Commons Certificate Program
<https://certificates.creativecommons.org/>

OER Grant Program in statute (Texas Education Code, Section 61.0668)
<https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.61.htm#61.0668>

OERTX Repository: <https://oertx.highered.texas.gov/>

Ontario College's OER Toolkit
<https://tlp-lpa.ca/oer-toolkit>

OpenStax
<https://openstax.org/>

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



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