FAQ

The University of Texas System's Curricular Innovation through OER Grant Program

This FAQ includes responses to questions that may arise for applicants considering and developing proposals for the UT System *Curricular Innovation through OER Grant Program*. It includes requirements and guidance for proposal submission in terms of content and process, information on the review process, information and requirements for funded grants, and definitions and links to resources for terms used in the RFP.

For additional questions, please contact Weston Rose, Senior Program Manager in the UT System Office of Academic Affairs, at wrose@utsystem.edu.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Who is eligible to apply?

- Faculty (both tenure and non-tenure stream), librarians, administrative leaders, researchers, and other practitioners from UT System academic and health institutions are eligible to apply.
- While both undergraduate and graduate students at UT System academic and health institutions can be included in funded projects, they may not be named as grant PIs, nor can they receive funds directly from UT System. If you intend to compensate students with grant funds, please see the section below on "What can grant funds be used for?"
- Non-UT System faculty, librarians, administrative leaders, researchers, and other practitioners are not eligible to receive grant funds.

What kinds of proposals will the grant program fund?

- The program will fund both individual and collaborative awards. Collaborative Awards can be given to teams of between 2-5 people either within a single institution (i.e., within or across units, departments, colleges, or institution-wide) or across institutions. Cross-institutional projects are encouraged. For administrative purposes, collaborative grants must designate a primary person.
- The RFP details proposal requirements and applicants should pay close attention to developing proposals that address one or more of the five identified areas of support as well as address required submission components in their proposals (more below).

- Strong proposals will include the following:
  - A clear response to the question, "why this project, and why now?"
  - A compelling case for how the proposal addresses one or more of the five areas of support described in the RFP, including as relevant:
    - How the project will contribute to student success and curricular innovation;
    - How the project will advance the field of Open Education whether through OER development and engagement, pedagogical improvement, student engagement and success, curricular invigoration and redesign, institutionalization and sustainability of OER; and/or research, assessment and infrastructure for wider OER engagement.
    - The applicant's/applicants' experience and capacity to successfully complete and implement the project.

How many awards will be available and at what funding levels?

- The number of Individual Grant Awards and Collaborative Grant Awards will be determined by the number of grant applications received. A total of up to $125,000 grant funds will be distributed during Year 1, and the remaining approximately $125,000 will be distributed during Year 2.
- Each UT institution may submit up to four (4) proposals in total, including individual and collaborative proposals. The number and type of proposals will be determined by the library's capacity to support the project. While proposals are encouraged by all UT academic and health institutions, no institution is required to participate in this optional grant program, and institutions may submit fewer than four proposals.
- As a rule, grant awardees, whether Individual Grant Award or Collaborative Grant Awards, will receive $6,000 per person. However, recognizing that the purpose of some collaborative grants will be to fund software, technology, convenings or other costs, the funds may be distributed differently and will be defined in grant agreements once awarded.

What can grant funds be used for?

- Funds may be used to support time, student engagement, software/technology, project-related travel, and project-related convenings.
- While applicants should follow their institutional rules and procedures, please be advised that grant funds are considered creditable compensation for the purposes of ORP and TRS and are also subject to federal tax withholding. It is possible to split the grant funds with part of the money going to the grantee's paycheck for compensation, and the other part added to a departmental account that the grantee can use to purchase technology, equipment, or for compensating students.
- If the grantee intends to compensate students with grant funds, UT System strongly recommends that students are paid with grant funds from a departmental account. Students will pay taxes on any funds they receive for compensation.

- If any grant funds are placed in a departmental account, the department will be required to provide oversight, tracking the grantee's use of funds, and ensuring funds are used in accordance with university policies and state law.
- Again, applicants should follow their institutional rules and procedures.

What is required in grant applications?

Applicants should review the RFP for a full description of grant application requirements and use the grant application template (a fillable pdf) to submit proposals.

- Proposals must include:
  - Grant Application Template;
  - A brief plan for assessment and evaluation of the project's impact, including expected outputs and/or outcomes.
  - A section outlining a plan for sustained use and updates to the OER.
  - A mandatory description of how the OER meets ADA Requirements (see below).
  - A clear strategy for sharing outcomes and materials under an open license upon completion of the grant period.
  - Project timeline with milestones and deliverables.
  - For Collaborative Awards: project partners and description of roles each partner will have a minimum of two participants and no more than five people.
  - A brief letter indicating library support for the role they will invariably play in supporting the project. Multi-institutional projects should include a letter from each participating institution.
  - A brief statement from the applicant's department or unit acknowledging the required commitment to the project the applicant is making if funded. Multi-institutional projects should include statements from each participating department or unit.
  - A brief budget narrative providing justification for how funds will be used, covering stipends to grantees and others, supplies & expenses (including software, etc.), travel, other.

SUBMISSION PROCESS

Can grant applicants forward their proposals directly to the UT System or do they have to go through their library dean or director/provost or chief academic officer?

- Applicants may <u>not</u> forward proposals directly to the UT System. Proposals sent directly to the UT System will not be considered for funding.
- Applicants must go through their institutional provost-designated lead and/or library deans and directors.

Who makes the final determination of which proposals to forward to the UT System?

- Institutional leadership will determine their own processes, but in most cases, determination of which proposals are forwarded to UT System will be made by institutional library deans and/or directors in consultation with provosts and/or other campus leaders, as appropriate.
- UT System recommends that institutions form campus-level review committees to evaluate grant applications.

Once proposals are forwarded to the UT System Office of Academic Affairs, who makes the final selection of funded proposals?

- A review committee led by the Office of Academic Affairs and including campus representatives will make the final selection of funded proposals using a weighted rubric to evaluate proposals fairly and in accordance with proposal requirements.
- Final determination of funded proposals is subject to review by the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

POST-AWARD LOGISTICS AND IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR FUNDED GRANTS

In addition to completing their projects as proposed in the grant application process, what other requirements and expectations will grantees have?

- The UT System and institutions expect all funded projects and grantees to commit to the time, experience and expertise to ensure the project's successful completion of goals and requirements. In addition to a final report upon completion of the project, grantees are also required to:
    - Provide a one-page project description as they begin their work that can be shared publicly (guidance will be provided).
    - Participate in three virtual meetings, including a project launch, a mid-project check-in, and a final project debrief sharing successes and challenges.
    - Participants will be invited to a UT System OER convening to showcase their work.
- Grantees will also be required to implement and openly license project deliverables—OER, syllabi, assignments, course redesigns, scaling efforts resulting in policy and practice, and infrastructure changes, research studies, etc.—as appropriate. More information on open licensing is below and required webinars and institutional Open Librarians will provide additional guidance throughout the grant program.
- All OER and other public-facing grant deliverables created must meet ADA Requirements (learn more here).

How will grantees receive their funds?

- Funds will be transferred from the UT System to the academic institution at which a grantee works.

- Funds will be added to the paycheck of the recipient, and these will be taxed. However, a portion of the funds can be added to a departmental account that will not be taxed; these funds can be used to pay for technology, software, and student compensation. Please follow institutional rules and procedures and refer to the section on "What grants can be used for?" for more information.

How long will grantees have to complete their funded projects?

- Grantees are expected to complete their projects in one year from the date of signed grant agreements. For the first phase of the grant program, <u>final project reports are due by August 31, 2027</u>.

What constitutes a finished project?

- A project is considered finished when the grantee submits evidence of implementing OER in their classes, or across their department, disciplines, or institution-wide.

What does it mean to openly license the project materials and grant deliverables?

- Open licensing makes materials public and available to users free of cost, enabling creators to give permission in advance for how their work can be shared, reused, and repurposed.
- Most openly licensed materials are done so through [Creative Commons licenses](#), a non-profit organization which "give[s] everyone from individual creators to large institutions a standardized way to grant the public permission to use their creative work under copyright law. From the re-user's perspective, the presence of a Creative Commons license on a copyrighted work answers the question, *What can I do with this work?"*

Which open license should grantees choose, and are there specific requirements for licensing OER?

- Creative Commons Attribution Noncommercial licenses enable re-users to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format for noncommercial purposes only, and only so long as attribution is given to the creator. Copyright can also be included.
- While an Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike license could work in most instances, we recommend that you consult with library staff at your institution.
- Below are a few resources that may help you select the right open license:
  - https://libguides.utsa.edu/ld.php?content_id=61126790
  - https://creativecommons.org/chooser/

Are grantees allowed to use AI in their projects and under what circumstances?

- Use of Generative AI and other forms of AI are permitted in grant projects.
- Grant applicants must disclose how AI was used to develop their proposals.
- Grant recipients must disclose how AI was used in their project upon final submission to UT System.

What happens if a grantee separates from the UT System?

- If the grant recipient is a team member on a Collaborative Grant Award, the person identified as Primary can assign a new member to the team and UT System will award grant funds to the new team member.
- If the grant recipient is a PI on the grant, the PI or Library Dean or Director, and/or others overseeing the project will need to contact the UT System to discuss what happens to the funds and the project.
- Terms will be spelled out in service agreements to grantee regarding the potential of a grantee separating from the institution prior to completing the grant project. Any project created with grant funds must remain openly licensed and cannot be repurposed later for commercial use, even if the grantee separates from the institution. Any partially complete project materials must be given to the PI or UT System prior to a grantee separating from an institution, and any remaining funds must be sent back to UT System.

MORE ABOUT OER, OPEN EDUCATION, AND CURRICULAR INNOVATION

What are Open Educational Resources?

- Open Educational Resources are teaching, learning and research materials in any medium – digital or otherwise – in the public domain or that have been released under an open license that permits others no-cost access, use, adaptation, and redistribution with no or limited restrictions.
- Texas Education Code, Section 51.451, defines OER 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" (SB 810).

What is the UT System's Momentum on OER Initiative?

- Led by UT institutions, the UT *System's Momentum on OER Initiative* has supported deeper and broader OER engagement across the UT System and beyond, resulting in enhanced affordability and reduced student costs, broader and fairer access to learning materials, invigorated teaching, deeper student learning, and improved student outcomes. Engagement with Open Education has also resulted in new research and collaboration opportunities, within and across disciplines, for faculty and students at the UT System's academic and health institutions and beyond.

- The *Momentum on OER* website includes a [glossary](#) of terms about Open Education and other affordability initiatives around course materials.

What is open pedagogy?

- Also known as open educational practices (OEP), open pedagogy refers to using open educational resources to support learning, or the open sharing of teaching practices with a goal of improving education and training at the institutional, professional, and individual level.
- Using open pedagogy invites students to be part of the teaching process, participating in the co-creation of knowledge.
- As described by the [University of Texas at Arlington Libraries](#), open pedagogy refers to "the practice of engaging with students as creators of information rather than simply consumers of it. It is a form of experiential learning in which students demonstrate understanding through the act of creation." The projects created become open educational resources, such as textbooks, videos, quizzes, and learning modules.

The RFP requires that grant proposals clearly describe how they will advance curricular innovation. What is meant by curricular innovation?

- The curriculum is a powerful locus of change to promote student success. UT institutions have demonstrated this in remarkable ways over the past few years with innovations achieved through course and academic program redesigns; through commitment to digital and other technological innovations, including AI and experimentation with and institutionalization of virtual and hybrid as well as in-person learning environments; and through engagement with Open Educational Resources (OER), Open Pedagogy, and other Open Education practices and strategies by students, faculty, library, and other staff across academic and health institutions.

What is the UT System's *Exemplary Student Pathways Project*?

- The UT System's [Exemplary Student Pathways Project](#) is a centerpiece of the UT System's undergraduate student success work across academic institutions. Generously funded by the Lumina and Trellis Foundations, it uses powerful data and a proven change model to redesign curricular pathways to support students in completing degrees at UT System institutions.
- Between 2022-24, the ESP Project funded 22 projects at the academic institutions, which are now in varying stages of implementation.
- The ESP Project posits an expansive vision for holistic curricular redesign—including pathways into and through majors, an entire major, one or more courses in a major, and/or gateway courses.

- The vision results in a curriculum with coherence and transparency for students, faculty, advisors, administrators, and others to understand the value of the degrees offered, pursued, and completed.

What does the UT System mean by Curricular Redesign?

- The ESP Change Model defines the phrase "curricular redesign" as a comprehensive process of evaluating and transforming the domains of <u>structure</u>, <u>operations</u>, <u>content</u>, and <u>pedagogy</u> of academic programs and courses. The primary goal is to provide students with learning experiences that equip them with the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary for success in college, careers, and civic life. This is achieved through the development of clear degree pathways with well-defined learning outcomes resulting in curricula that are coherent and transparent.
- Embedding OER, Open Pedagogy, or other innovations working to scale OER across the curriculum, departments, colleges and institutions are a form of curricular redesign and innovation that may impact not only content and pedagogy, but also structural and operational changes intended to remove barriers to student success and improve educational attainment outcomes.
- For more guidance, the ESP Project developed a Curricular Redesign Self-Assessment Rubric which can be found here.

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