

Final Grant Report Executive Summary

September 2022

The aim of National Consortium of Open Educational Resources (NCOER) and the Midwestern Higher Education Compact's (MHEC) work under this grant was to increase access, affordability, and equity using Open Educational Resources (OER). This partnership expanded current efforts and engaged new opportunities to build capacity for policy and effective practice, enabled substantial research, developed open education solutions that promote equitable learning, and supported coordination across regions to scale and sustain use of OER across the country.

Specifically, MHEC focused on building upon current work to expand and strengthen capacity in the 12 MHEC states (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin) to scale up and implement a sustainable OER infrastructure and Open Education practices. Additionally, research conducted under this grant examined promising and consistent methods for tracking and calculating cost savings, a landscape of dual/concurrent enrollment policies regarding course materials and the opportunity for engaging with OER in dual/concurrent enrollment, and a project to support the creation of new OER in Career Technical Education fields and for incarcerated students.

PROGRESS AGAINST GRANT OUTCOMES

Over the course of the 18-month grant, MHEC collaborated and coordinated with all the sister regional compacts, as well as national OER actors in the following areas:

RESEARCH

- **Costs and Benefits of OER:** MHEC organized a national working group representing the NCOER team and OER leaders across the country to inform

[*Toward Convergence: Creating Clarity to Drive More Consistency in Understanding the Benefits and Costs of OER.*](#)

- **Dual Enrollment:** MHEC partnered with SREB to conduct research on policies and practices regarding course materials for dual/concurrent enrollment courses across the country, and to provide recommendations for how OER might be of benefit to these types of courses. The published report, [*OER in Dual Enrollment: Leveraging Open Educational Resources to Expand Equitable Access*](#), was released in partnership with SREB in October 2021.

MIDWEST OER CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

MHEC collaborated with all 12 MHEC states to complete a baseline and follow up assessment of their capacity for OER. States indicated their progress on several indicators for statewide capacity, such as state policy and legislation, institutional commitment, communications and infrastructure, and strategic planning.

FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR STATE-LEVEL OER ACTIVITIES

To build state capacity further, MHEC offered subgrants and in-kind support for state OER Action Teams to progress their statewide work. In some states this took the form of statewide virtual convenings. In other states it was to support a seminar with senior leaders from across their state on the why and how of OER in partnership with the Open Education Network (OEN). In another set of states, the support was a statewide membership in the Open Education Network, and for one state, MHEC collaborated to provide seed funding for a state-level faculty grant program.

CREATION OF NEW RESOURCES

Through a call for proposals, MHEC selected three projects to receive support for their work from MHEC through the Rebus Textbook Success Program. The three projects were targeted to produce open educational resources for career and technical education courses and fill gaps in available OER content to address the needs of incarcerated students. These new resources include a Higher Ed in Prison Training Manual for Teachers, a Handbook for BSN recipients, and a new resource on Sheet Metal and Fabrication.

EXPLORATION OF TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS FOR OER

The MHEC Technology work group organized a series of webinars to gain more insight into the features, functions, and capabilities of various tools and platforms that can be used for authoring and publishing OER. MHEC used these conversations as a forum between the Midwestern OER community and the marketplace to help vendors continue to develop new tools and improve existing ones. All of the recordings and presentations from this series of meetings are now [published on MHEC's website](#).

LESSONS LEARNED

The following list includes the lessons we have learned over the course of this project.

All the states are in different places with respect to OER; some are more ready for large-scale statewide efforts than others. Bringing individuals working on OER across the state together regularly builds camaraderie and encourages collaboration.

The capacity assessment helped teams think about what their next best step might be to move their efforts forward and reflect on and celebrate the progress already made. This could be turned into a rubric going forward where states could self-assess their progress.

There is a dearth of easily adoptable OER content in the Career and Technical Education (CTE) space, which makes projects in that area challenging. In addition, faculty who teach in these disciplines tend to be practitioners themselves and may struggle with the academic demands of writing a textbook. Helping the team broaden their definition of a textbook to take advantage of the

affordances of open and the digital nature of OER, can open more possibilities for videos, demonstrations, case studies, labs, podcasts, and other definitions of course materials that might better align with the needs of career and technical education.

There are a lot of challenges around technology products to author and publish OER, and that the current marketplace is relatively immature and sometimes difficult to navigate. Time spent educating stakeholders on what products and services are available has been tremendously valuable.

WORK PRODUCTS DEVELOPED

- [Toward Convergence: Creating Clarity to Drive More Consistency in Understanding the Benefits and Costs of OER](#)
- [OER in Dual Enrollment: Leveraging Open Educational Resources to Expand Equitable Access](#)
- [Sheet Metal and Fabrication](#)
- [Opening Doors to Your Future](#)
- UW-Madison Higher Education in Prison Training Manual¹

NEXT STEPS

This September, MHEC received an additional \$432,400 grant from the Hewlett Foundation to continue the work with the Midwestern states and the collaboration with the NCOER. Building on the momentum of recent projects, the Compact's future work to sustain coordinated efficiencies around open educational resources includes:

- Supporting minority-serving institutions in implementing and scaling up use of high-quality, free resources to positively impact student success;
- Developing consistent practices for identifying and marking courses supported by open educational resources so that student outcomes data is more consistent and reliable;
- Building the capacity of every state to build its own OER infrastructure that is independent of logistical and financial support from MHEC; and
- Fostering a Midwestern community of practice that is engaged with high-quality national resources and leadership.

¹Not yet published