

Ideas to Action Fund: Affordable Resources Movement – Project Summary

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Background

The original intent of this project was to research the interest, needs, and feasibility of providing centralized support for open educational resources (OER) to Wisconsin libraries. Over one year later this intent remains strong. However, the means by which we intend to reach this goal is continually evolving. As the true nature of the project pertains to openness, having open and inviting conversations between many stakeholders across statewide institutions is crucial. These important conversations have resulted in enduring collaborations and a strengthening of the original intent.

Stakeholders

The project has reached a variety of stakeholders from Wisconsin. As libraries tend to be the primary providers of affordability and OER, many of the stakeholders involved represent OER advocates and champions from Wisconsin libraries and the newly-formed Community for Open Wisconsin (COW). The Ideas to Action Fund has provided a consistent and cohesive platform for COW to ensure that the group has remained focused on the objective through its infancy. An ad hoc leadership team was formed to guide the work of the Steering committee, which will develop the future of open education in Wisconsin over the next few years. The Steering committee is composed of representatives from a variety of libraries and institutions including university, technical college, and private college libraries; public libraries; the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction; bookstores; private industry; K-12, CESA, the University of Wisconsin-System, and the Wisconsin Technical College System. Our objective will be to have student involvement once the Steering committee has a clearly-defined agenda.

Impact

During the first year of its founding, the Ideas to Action Fund supported COW and the Wisconsin open education community largely through connecting open education advocates. Many small milestones have been accomplishments over the past year such as an organization [web page](#), the formal development of a Steering committee, COW listserv, and the successful holding of inaugural meetings. Some Steering committee members were also able to meet with other open education leaders from across the country at the national Open Education conference in Niagara Falls, to [learn](#) how other states have moved forward with open education collaboration in their respective communities. A major milestone was hosting an “[OER 101](#)” workshop at UW-Stout’s [Affordability Summit](#) in March 2019. The Ideas to Action Fund allowed COW to bring in national Open Education advocate, Nicole Allen from SPARC, to educate beginners on the importance of openness and furthering the value of libraries and open education in Wisconsin, in which over 40 participants attended. The project has provided an intentional sense of cohesion in open education principles to a niche group of open education leaders in Wisconsin through COW. The work of this group – the Steering committee and its members – will bring greater equity to education in Wisconsin by reducing financial barriers for all students. It will also bring a new sense



Figure 1: Logo for Community for Open Wisconsin



Figure 2: Pictured are COW Steering committee members at the National Open Education Conference in Niagara Falls, 2018.

of value to libraries – primarily academic libraries – by capitalizing on existing information-seeking and curating expertise held by librarians.



Figure 3: Marketing material for OER 101 workshop, a preconference to Effordability Summit.



Figure 4: Nicole Allen, SPARC Director of Open Education and national advocate for open education, speaking on the value of open education at OER 101 workshop.

Advice

A project of this scope is important and valuable. However, it can also be tiring and overwhelming. Before moving forward into such a large-scale project, be sure that you have a system of support that is willing to provide guidance, coaching, and feedback along the way. One must have a fair amount of grit, because this is not the type of project where you will be able to “check the box” and move on to the next project at the end of the day, month, or even year. We are currently working on building by-laws, succession planning, and more; all of which is intense and important planning that is required for a group to be continuously successful, yet this sort of preparation is often not considered at the beginning of a project.

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