

Affordable Materials Grants

Round 25: Spring 2024 – Spring 2025  
Due March 11, 2024

# Purpose

In recent years, the implementation of no-cost and low-cost materials in place of a commercial textbook has been found to be an effective high-impact practice, [either raising student performance or keeping it the same while reducing the cost of course materials to students](https://openedgroup.org/review). Furthermore, at the University of Georgia, the implementation of open educational resources (OER) in place of a commercial textbook have been [found to increase educational equity](http://www.isetl.org/ijtlhe/pdf/IJTLHE3386.pdf), benefiting students of marginalized races and ethnicities, students in lower-socioeconomic-status families, and part-time students even more than the overall group of students taking a course.

To this end, Affordable Learning Georgia (ALG)’s Affordable Materials Grants are intended to:

* Explore and expand course materials transformation to include the adoption, adaptation, and creation of OER; the adoption of materials available through GALILEO and University System of Georgia (USG) libraries; and the use of other no-cost and low-cost materials.
* Provide support and time to faculty instructors, librarians, instructional designers, and other professional staff to meet, plan, review, and implement these approaches.
* Work toward equitable access to materials and lower materials costs for students and contribute to their retention, progression, and graduation.

Examples of Affordable Materials Grants projects include:

* Adopting an [OpenStax Sociology](https://openstax.org/details/books/introduction-sociology-2e) textbook in place of a commercial textbook for Introduction to Sociology and [creating new ancillary materials](https://oer.galileo.usg.edu/psychology-ancillary/11/) to support the adoption.
* [Adapting existing Calculus OER](https://alg.manifoldapp.org/projects/armstrong-calculus) to fit the learning outcomes of your particular course and then adopting these new materials in place of commercial materials.
* [Creating new OER](https://oer.galileo.usg.edu/communication-textbooks/3/) to adopt in place of a commercial textbook when there are no OER to cover the subject.
* Creating a [Library Reading List](https://www.affordablelearninggeorgia.org/library_resources/reading_lists) to adopt in place of expensive materials when there are no OER to cover the subject.
* Adopting low-cost software and/or textbooks to ensure total required resource costs for students are under $40.00.

Affordable Learning Georgia has also added a category of **Research Grants** to explore research questions related to teaching and learning with affordable and open learning materials.

# Overview of Grant Categories

Affordable Materials Grants are available within three categories:

## Transformation Grants

Transformation Grants support individual instructors, teams of instructors, and entire departments, along with supporting professional staff, in replacing their existing commercial textbooks and materials in a specific course with no- or low-cost-to-students learning materials. These materials can include the following:

* Adoption, adaptation, and/or creation of **Open Educational Resources (OER)**, such as open textbooks and ancillary materials.   
  *Note: We define ancillary materials as any materials created to support substantially the instruction of a course using an existing open educational resource(s).*
* Adoption of **library materials** available in [GALILEO](https://galileo.usg.edu) and [University System of Georgia (USG) libraries](https://www.affordablelearninggeorgia.org/library_resources/usg_libraries) at no additional cost to students.
* Adoption of **no-cost materials** outside of OER, such as freely available websites and multimedia.
* Adoption of **low-cost materials**, not exceeding **$40.00 total per student**.

*Note: in STEM courses with required laboratory manuals, grant teams are allowed to propose to replace either the commercial lab manual component or the commercial textbook component of a course. Please be specific about the process, student savings, and costs within the application. Peer reviewers are looking for the highest-impact projects, and it is preferable to replace both of these components within one project.*

### Funding

Transformation Grant Funding is based on specific guidelines:

* $5,000 maximum award per individual team member for salary, course release, professional development related to the project, travel, etc.
* Additional project expenses allowed, but must be adequately justified in proposal budget
* $30,000 maximum total award per grant
* Funding disbursed to institutions 50% at full execution of agreement, 50% upon final report submission

Both faculty and professional staff on Transformation Grants teams should qualify for compensation or release time for their work on a project, subject to institutional guidelines. Students can also be compensated for participating as team members, subject to institutional guidelines.

## Continuous Improvement Grants

Continuous Improvement Grants support projects that increase the sustainability of open educational resources through the creation of new open materials, the revision of previously-existing open materials, and new research regarding the use of open materials in instruction.

Continuous Improvement Creation and Revision Projects include:

* Revision of OER used in existing courses
* Creation of ancillaries for existing OER courses
* Replacement of current OER in courses with new/improved OER

For the purposes of this grant, we definea *substantial improvement and/or adaptation* as the major adaptation and/or improvement of a resource through updates for accuracy, accessibility, clarity, design, and formatting. We define *ancillary materials* as any materials created to support substantially the instruction of a course using an existing OER.

### Funding

Continuous Improvement Grant funding is based on specific guidelines:

* $2,000 maximum award per individual team member for salary, course release, travel, etc.
* Additional project expenses allowed, but must be adequately justified in proposal budget
* $10,000 maximum total award per grant
* Funding disbursed to institutions 50% at full execution of agreement, 50% upon final report submission

## Research Grants

In order to learn more about how implementations of open resources affect various aspects of instruction and student outcomes, new research studying the impact of open educational resources and open pedagogy also qualifies through the same funding structure as a Continuous Improvement Grant project.

Research projects in this subcategory must address one or more aspects of the [Open Education Group’s COUP Framework](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1475725718799511) (Cost, Outcomes, Usage, and Perceptions). The linked article contains many examples of areas of research within OER and student success.

Research questions to explore can include, but are not limited to, these examples:

* Access: Does the free and open access to open educational resources lead to increased student success over other resources? (COUP Framework: Outcomes)
  + Analyzing disaggregated data, such as the data analysis in [Colvard, Watson, and Park 2018](https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1184998), is preferred over only total student measures.
* Openness: Does the ability to revise and remix open resources for more localized student relevance have an effect on student success over other resources? (COUP Framework: Outcomes)
* Perceptions: What do students and/or faculty prefer in an educational resource? When students and/or faculty describe an open resource as high- or low- quality, what do they mean? (COUP Framework: Perceptions)

### Research Reports

Research Projects will end with a Research Report due at the end of the Final Semester of the project. This will be a manuscript that is well-developed, concise, and suitable for publication. Research reports will be shared in an ALG repository under a [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0.](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) Supplementary files, such as data sets, will not be shared in the repository.

While there is no specific page limit, award recipients are strongly encouraged to produce succinct Research Reports; these should be written with a broad public audience in mind, including faculty and professional staff of all disciplines. A template will be provided, but an outline is provided here for planning purposes.

* Standard set of information about the project team
* Two or three paragraph summary of the project:
  + Major goals and objectives, research questions
  + Research design, methods, analytical and data analysis techniques
  + Findings and expected applicability of the findings
* Description (but not a replication) of any supplementary files provided to ALG such as data sets
* Future plans (publications, conference papers, websites, databases)

Research teams will not share any files with ALG containing PII (Personal Identifiable Information, or any specific information that identifies an individual) for any student research subjects.

### Institutional Review Boards (IRB)

Because institutions have their own Institutional Review Boards composed of their own faculty and staff, guidelines and procedures for IRB approval will vary by institution. Grant teams are expected to understand their IRB guidelines and procedures before applying, and to work with their institution’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) on the approval of any research activities in these projects.

### Journal Publication

Research Grants teams are encouraged to publish their findings in peer-reviewed journals after the end of the project. Open Access (OA) publications are preferred in order to increase access to research materials, but due to varied OA options and tenure/promotion procedures within different disciplines and institutions, OA publishing is not a requirement.

Publications associated with an ALG Research Grant will acknowledge the award and Affordable Learning Georgia within the publication. Affordable Learning Georgia will link to these publications within the page for the research report in ALG repositories.

### Funding

Research Grant funding is based on specific guidelines:

* $2,000 maximum award per individual team member for salary, course release, travel, etc.
* Additional project expenses allowed, but must be adequately justified in proposal budget
* $10,000 maximum total award per grant
* Funding disbursed to institutions 50% at full execution of agreement, 50% upon final report submission

# Required Activities

## Transformation Grants

Expected activities for transformation grants include training in the chosen project resources, open licensing as necessary, any textbook and/or ancillary creation or adaptation required, and course redesign as necessary for the transformation.

Other required activities:

* Institutional sign-off on Service Level Agreement (SLA) provided by the University System Office, using the project proposal as a statement of work.
* Two institutional invoices for half of the grant amount—one upon SLA execution and one upon submission of the Final Report—sent to Affordable Learning Georgia (ALG).
* Attendance by at least one team member at a required online kick-off meeting.
* Attendance by at least one team member at the midpoint check-in meeting.
* Completion of a Semester Status Report for every semester of the implementation process except for the final semester of the project.
* Completion of a Final Report at the end of the final semester of the project, including provision of data on impact on student success and a course schedule with resource links.

Reporting overall changes in Drop/Fail/Withdraw (DFW) rates and student performance (examples: grades, standardized tests, other learning outcomes assessments) are required.

* All revised or newly created materials must be created under a [Creative Commons](http://creativecommons.org/) **Attribution License** (CC BY), with exceptions for circumstances including modifications of materials with a more restrictive open license, and will be made accessible to the public through OpenALG and the GALILEO Open Learning Materials repository.

This requirement does not include proprietary features of authoring platforms.

* All revised or newly created materials are required to be developed with basic accessibility standards in mind. Materials must have the following (each link also leads to a tutorial):
  + [Accessible document design](https://affordablelearninggeorgia.org/documents/OERAccessibility_DocDesign.pdf)
  + Either [descriptive alternative text](https://affordablelearninggeorgia.org/documents/OERAccessibility_AltText.pdf) OR descriptive figure captions on all images
  + [Accurate captioning on all videos and transcripts on all audio](https://affordablelearninggeorgia.org/documents/OERAccessibility_Captioning_Transcripts.pdf)
  + [Accessible PowerPoint design](https://affordablelearninggeorgia.org/documents/OERAccessibility_PowerPoint.pdf)

*Note: Accessible materials can be created with tools other than those used in the tutorials provided. We recommend looking into your institution-supported tools first.*

* Responding to a brief annual survey for three years after the project is complete. The survey will check on the impact of the project after the grant, including an update on the number of students affected per semester.
* Ensuring that course sections affected by this project are [designated as no-cost materials (ZNCM) or low-cost materials (ZLCM) in the course schedule](https://www.affordablelearninggeorgia.org/about/course_catalog_designators).
* Participation as needed in ALG-related communications.

## Continuous Improvement Grants

Expected activities for continuous improvement grants include open licensing as necessary, any textbook and/or ancillary improvement or adaptation required, and course redesign as necessary for the improvement of open educational resources (OER) use in the course.

* Institutional sign-off on Service Level Agreement (SLA) provided by the University System Office, using the project proposal as a statement of work.
* Two institutional invoices for half of the grant amount—one upon SLA execution and one upon submission of the Final Report—sent to ALG.
* Attendance by at least one team member at a required online kick-off meeting.
* Attendance by at least one team member at the midpoint check-in meeting.
* Completion of a final project report with a narrative description of the project.
* Completion of proposed materials.
* All revised or newly created materials must be created under a [Creative Commons](http://creativecommons.org/) **Attribution License** (CC BY), with exceptions for modifications of materials with a more restrictive open license, and will be made accessible to the public through [OpenALG](https://alg.manifoldapp.org/) and the [GALILEO Open Learning Materials repository](http://oer.galileo.usg.edu/).
* All revised or newly created materials are required to be developed with basic accessibility standards in mind. Materials must have the following (each link also leads to a tutorial):
  + [Accessible document design](https://affordablelearninggeorgia.org/documents/OERAccessibility_DocDesign.pdf)
  + Either [descriptive alternative text](https://affordablelearninggeorgia.org/documents/OERAccessibility_AltText.pdf) OR descriptive figure captions on all images
  + [Accurate captioning on all videos and transcripts on all audio](https://affordablelearninggeorgia.org/documents/OERAccessibility_Captioning_Transcripts.pdf)
  + [Accessible PowerPoint design](https://affordablelearninggeorgia.org/documents/OERAccessibility_PowerPoint.pdf)

*Note: Accessible materials can be created with tools other than those used in the tutorials provided. We recommend looking into your institution-supported tools first.*

* Participation as needed in ALG-related communications.

## Research Grants

* Institutional sign-off on Service Level Agreement (SLA) provided by the University System Office, using the project proposal as a statement of work.
* Two institutional invoices for half of the grant amount—one upon SLA execution and one upon submission of the Final Report—sent to ALG.
* Attendance by at least one team member at a required online kick-off meeting.
* Attendance by at least one team member at the midpoint check-in meeting.
* Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for any research activities.
* Completion of a Research Report by the project’s deadline (see section 2.3.1)
  + Research Reports will be shared with the public by Affordable Learning Georgia under a Creative Commons license. The specific license will be chosen by the team.
* Participation as needed in ALG-related communications.

## Kickoff Training and Meeting

The Round 24 Kickoff will include an **asynchronous training module**, required for all team members to complete, followed by the online **synchronous Kickoff Meeting on Friday, May 3, 2024 from 1pm-3pm**. At least two team members from each awarded team (unless the award is for one individual) are required to attend the synchronous Kickoff Meeting.

## Midpoint Check-In

All grantees will participate in a check-in meeting scheduled to be halfway through the timeline of the project to discuss project status and any questions teams may have about project completion. The midpoint check-in will take place online on **Friday, January 10, 2025 from 1pm-3pm**.

# Application Description

## Application Guidelines

Affordable Learning Georgia (ALG) will work with a team of reviewers who will evaluate the projects in a peer-review process using a [Peer Review Evaluation Rubric](https://www.affordablelearninggeorgia.org/documents/Rubric_Weighted.pdf). The peer-review process is followed by a final administrative review by ALG.

Proposals will be evaluated on the feasibility and organization of the action plan and adherence to the proposal guidelines, as weighted in the rubric. Follow-up questions or interviews may be requested of applicants. **Please note that awardees’ applications will be made available publicly on the ALG website.**

For transformation grant projects, team members will participate in facilitated project initiation processes, including a required meeting to kick-off project implementation and review processes, timelines, and training on content as needed for the grant category.

Teams will complete semester status report forms online and a final narrative report, syllabi which link the materials used to the learning outcomes of the course(s), and any evaluation data. Teams will be expected to be available for information sharing about their experience in future ALG information sessions, in the ALG newsletter and other publications, on the ALG website, and in related presentations and materials. Budgets will be supported by state funds and therefore institutions spending project funds must ensure compliance with state, Board of Regents, and institutional policies and procedures.

### Letter of Support

The Department Chair from the corresponding project, or the Department Chair’s direct report such as the Dean or Provost, must provide a signed Letter of Support for the project. This letter should acknowledge the following:

* The department will provide support for fund disbursement in correspondence with the Grants/Business Office.
* The department approves of the work on the proposal by the applicant(s).
* The department acknowledges the sustainability of the use of these affordable resources after the grant work is complete.

### Grants/Business Office Acknowledgement Form

Institutional Grants/Business Offices will be responsible for fund disbursement, often in correspondence with the Department Chair, including expense and travel reimbursement. Applicants will need to provide a [signed Acknowledgment Form](https://www.affordablelearninggeorgia.org/documents/Grants_Business_Acknowledgement_Form.docx) which confirms that the Grants/Business Office knows about the applicant’s intent to apply for an Affordable Materials Grant. Either the Department Chair or the Project Lead can work with the Grants/Business Office to get this signed form.

*Note: Some institutions may have unique policies in place for grant applications. Be sure to check with your institution’s research, sponsored programs, or business office regarding the policies for submitting ALG proposals.*

## Transformation Grant Application Priorities

Projects in the following categories will receive three extra points in the final score for fitting a strategic priority within the Transformation Grants category. The type of funding for the project is determined by the funding categories criteria above. Projects can be a part of more than one priority category.

*Note that the below categories only indicate* ***priority****, which can matter in competition with other grant applications. Teams with projects which cannot meet these priority categories are still encouraged to apply. For* ***qualifying*** *information, refer to the table in 3.1.* ***These priorities do not apply to Continuous Improvement or Research Grants.***

### Collaborative Projects with Professional Support

Over the course of ALG’s Affordable Materials Grants, collaborative projects involving professional staff to support faculty instructors have been consistently some of the most successful projects. Priority will be given to teams involving at least one collaborator outside of the team of course instructors. These staff include but are not limited to instructional designers, librarians, open educational resource (OER) publishers, instructional technologists, web designers, programmers, and graphic designers.

### Student Participation in Materials Creation, Adaptation, and Evaluation

Affordable Materials Grants quite often involve practices in open education, including using open educational resources and open pedagogy. Involving students in content creation, remixing, editing, and the evaluation of resources is one way to enhance student learning while increasing student agency in the classroom. To that end, projects including students as active participants will receive priority.

### Departmental Scaling Projects

Projects in this category are intended for implementing open, no-cost, or low-cost materials in a department-wide, all-sections scale. There must be a direct commitment from the department to scale to this level in the Letter of Support for at least the final semester of the project; **solely the *potential* for departmental scaling does not fall within this priority category.**

### Upper-Level Campus Collaborations

Projects in the Upper Level Courses category are intended to address the gap in available OER and no/low-cost resources in upper-level undergraduate courses and graduate courses. In order to encourage collaboration in projects like this with smaller course enrollment numbers, **these must be multiple-institution projects.** These multi-institution projects can include a budget for travel and multi-institution collaboration needs in addition to the $5,000 per person maximum for a total of no more than $30,000.

# Application Submission

## How to Apply

To apply for an Affordable Learning Materials Grant:

* Read the rubric for your type of grant:
  + [Transformation Grant Rubric](https://www.affordablelearninggeorgia.org/documents/Rubric_Transformation.docx)
  + [Continuous Improvement Rubric](https://www.affordablelearninggeorgia.org/documents/Rubric_Continuous_Improvement.docx)
* Fill out the Word version of the Application Form:
  + [Transformation Grant Word Application Form](https://www.affordablelearninggeorgia.org/documents/ApplicationForm_Round24_Transformation.docx)
  + [Continuous Improvement Word Application Form](https://www.affordablelearninggeorgia.org/documents/ApplicationForm_Round24_Continuous-Improvement.docx)
  + [Research Grant Word Application Form](https://www.affordablelearninggeorgia.org/documents/ApplicationForm_Round24_Research.docx)
* Get a signed Letter of Support from your sponsor and a signed [Grants/Business Office Acknowledgement Form](https://www.affordablelearninggeorgia.org/documents/Grants_Business_Acknowledgement_Form.docx) from your Grants or Business Office.
* Complete the Online Application Form as your final application: [Online Application Link](https://usgsurveys.usg.edu/zs/X5B3BE)

## Review Process

Applications will be reviewed by peers within the University System of Georgia as selected in an annual Call for Participation. Reviewers are selected for their grant reviewing experience and their experience with and knowledge of open education. While this will not be a true double-blind peer review, the following steps are taken to ensure fair reviews:

* All reviewers will follow a standard rubric for each type of grant:
  + [Transformation Grant Rubric](https://affordablelearninggeorgia.org/documents/Rubric_Transformation.docx)
  + [Continuous Improvement Rubric](https://affordablelearninggeorgia.org/documents/Rubric_Continuous_Improvement.docx)
  + [Research Grant Rubric](https://affordablelearninggeorgia.org/documents/Rubric_Research.docx)
* Reviewers will not be assigned applications from their own institutions.
* Reviewers cannot apply for a grant within the same academic year in which they are a reviewer.
* Multiple reviewers are assigned to each application.

Administrative reviews from within Affordable Learning Georgia take place after peer reviews and ensure that applications comply with the grant program’s guidelines and create the kind of student savings and pedagogical impact that is consistent with the mission of the program. Peer reviews are the most important factor in the final grant application selection.

## Notifications

Applicants are notified by email from Affordable Learning Georgia about the status of each of their application on the notification date, whether or not the application is awarded. Applicants with rejected applications are encouraged to revise their proposals and resubmit in a future round. Reviewer comments will be shared with each applicant to assist with future revisions.

# Timeline

* Monday, March 11, 2024, midnight: Application Deadline
* Tuesday, March 12 – Tuesday, March 26: Peer Reviews
* Wednesday, March 27 – Monday, April 1: Administrative Reviews
* Tuesday, April 2, 2024: Notifications
* Monday, April 8, 2024: Agreements Sent for Signatures
* Friday, May 3, 2024: Online Kickoff
* Friday, January 10, 2025: Midpoint Check-In
* Friday, May 16, 2025: Reports and Materials Due

All Transformation Grants will have a Final Semester of Spring 2025. Continuous Improvement Grants and Research Grants can have a Final Semester of Fall 2024 or Spring 2025 as selected by the team on the application form.

# Funding Details

Grants from Affordable Learning Georgia (ALG) to a University System of Georgia (USG) institution **do not work the same as federal or other external grants.** Through a Service Level Agreement (SLA), the USG funds the institution in order to get the work on the application completed. Grants from ALG can only cover direct costs related to the project; unlike external and individual-stipend grants, they cannot cover indirect costs. For a basic definition of what indirect costs are, consult the [US Department of Education’s definition of indirect costs](https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocfo/intro.html).

Funding will be released to the sponsoring institutional office in two parts through two separate invoices: 50% on return of the USG-drafted SLA with the original or modified proposal serving as the statement of work and 50% on submission of the final report.

This funding structure allows for flexibility with varying institutional guidelines. Funding procedures largely rely on institutional policies, along with state and Board of Regents guidelines. The proposing team must coordinate as necessary with their Grants, Research, and/or Business Offices per institutional guidelines to determine how to handle fund distribution.

Funds can cover faculty and staff time and compensation—including course release time, overload pay, and replacement coverage—depending on institutional and departmental policies. Funds can also cover project expenses, including related department needs and travel expenses.

Both faculty and professional staff on Transformation Grants teams should qualify for compensation or release time for their work on a project, subject to institutional guidelines. Students can also be compensated for participating as team members, subject to institutional guidelines.

Project Leads will be responsible for communications between ALG and the sponsoring Grants or Research Office regarding funding. Project Leads should copy their institution’s sponsoring office on any questions regarding spending or budgets.

## Support from ALG Partner University Press

Affordable Learning Georgia partners with the [University of North Georgia Press](https://ung.edu/university-press/) to assist grantees with copyright clearance, peer review, production and design, and other tasks required to produce quality OER. The University Press is a peer-reviewed, academic press. Its mission is to produce scholarly work that contributes to the fields of innovative teaching, textbooks, and Open Educational Resources. Grant funds may be used for services provided by the Press.

To determine how the University Press can assist ALG grantees or anyone interested in developing OER with ALG, the University Press will provide advance free consultations. Please contact the Press at 706-864-1556 or [ungpress@ung.edu](mailto:ungpress@ung.edu).

# 8. Online Interest Meeting

An online meeting will be held for anyone interested in applying for an Affordable Materials Grant. Please attend this meeting to discuss and learn more about successfully completing an application and navigating funding and agreement processes.

**Monday, January 22, 2024, 11am-12pm Eastern Time:** [Register for the Meeting Here](https://teams.microsoft.com/registration/d_gRRzr7EU-qqzxJaADCPQ,VvDOk_hrA0SO9O8FbmIzVw,2aITbTeoNkG8BeHSHkcZUA,-9KQ6Mf_BUCrCbau_qU1cQ,jujTuZmCWEC-ro4Eg6ucdg,DMDTuV5ysUKaU2XFZrHteg?mode=read&tenantId=4711f877-fb3a-4f11-aaab-3c496800c23d)

# 9. Contact Information

For any questions about Affordable Materials Grants or Affordable Learning Georgia:

* Please check the [Affordable Learning Georgia Website](https://affordablelearninggeorgia.org/) and the Apply for a Grant page.