The State Board of Education in Idaho worked closely with members of the higher education academic community in the region to develop policies to improve student access to instructional materials through open educational practice. This policy development effort benefited from recognizing that the most vocal members of Idaho’s academic community are also its greatest policymaking resources. In this session, we will describe the processes and tools used to collaboratively develop the new policy, increase stakeholder buy-in, and ultimately move the policy through the formal adoption process. We will also walk through the policy itself to highlight it as model for others to adopt or adapt in their contexts. Finally, we will discuss how this policy and the development process we used support the first two Action Areas of the UNESCO OER Recommendation:

1. Building the capacity of stakeholders to create, access, re-use, adapt and redistribute OER; and
2. Developing supportive policy for OER.

A common concern among our academic community members led to policy redevelopments that considered how instructors have already been pursuing relevant outcomes (open, affordable, and otherwise) for students. Rather than describe specific cost-saving tactics or prescribe the adoption of certain materials, however, policy became a mechanism for both protecting and celebrating the scholarly causes of faculty members who actively iterate instruction to meet their students’ needs. We developed this policy with significant input from faculty throughout the state via open listening sessions, in-person visits, and faculty-endorsed resolutions. Initial dissent about an “open educational resources” policy angle evolved into a constructive conversation that examined definitions of scholarly work in general and not just affordable course materials in particular. It did not take much more time or effort to turn instructor concerns about one policy into enthusiasm for how other critical updates could be made to policy language around academic freedom, quality assurance, student data, accessibility, and so on.

Our efforts provide a model for what we consider an instructor-informed and therefore a more relevant strategy for scaling policy within the actual capacities of an academic community. Developing policy in close collaboration with the people who are most unsettled by the perceived or actual implications of said policy, particularly if those stakeholders are expected to take responsibility for policy-related outcomes, is proving invaluable for ensuring progress toward shared goals. These collaborations can prove as efficient as they are effective when policymakers stop, look around, and recognize that stakeholders dissent because they care. Their concerns position them as shrewd partners in taking a policy beyond where we may have wanted to go alone.