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# RESOURCE MOBILIZATION IN RED

## A Tip Sheet from Revolutionizing Engineering Departments (RED) Participatory Action Research

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**F**or members of National Science Foundation Revolutionizing Engineering Departments (RED) teams, their Community of Practice (CoP) provides important support as they develop and implement their change projects. Resource mobilization—an important dimension of the CoP—allows RED teams to access useful strategies that reinforce their change work. Resource mobilization refers to the processes by which a group secures, pools, and directs resources toward desired changes through collective action (Jenkins 1983). Resources may be broadly defined as social ties, specialized skillsets, shared repertoires for action, and legitimacy, as well as financial resources (Edwards and Kane 2014). This Tip Sheet focuses on how resources are mobilized by RED team members in the CoP and provides examples of that mobilization. This tip sheet uses research findings from conference calls with NSF RED grantees. Contact us at [grp\\_redpar@rose-hulman.edu](mailto:grp_redpar@rose-hulman.edu) for additional information.

### Aggregating Resources

CoPs are ideal sites for compiling resources across RED teams and are especially useful when people learn from the examples of other CoP participants. As RED CoP participants mobilize a variety of resources, their discussions lead to the collection of change assessment strategies, resources to improve team dynamics, and generative discussions on embedding diversity/equity/inclusion (DEI) into their change projects.

➡ **TIP:** Use the examples of other project teams in order to identify and leverage resources that can benefit your own project.

"I took notes. I was very impressed with how everyone is measuring change. There's such a broad array of tools. Lots of measuring enrollment and demographics, tracking that. Some groups are collecting baseline data. Lots of focus groups, students or faculty." RED Project Coordinator

"I've learned a lot from everything that REDPAR members have done with getting resources together, so I'm gathering resources beyond sharing my personal knowledge." RED team member

### Creating Shared Understandings

In addition to their usefulness as sites for compiling resources, CoPs like RED allow for the formulation of shared understandings of the impediments to change and solutions that can help participants address issues. Since higher education organizations have unique impediments to change, the CoP provides space for participants to discuss issues and create solutions (Kezar 2014).

➡ **TIP:** Given that many impediments to academic change are similar yet distinct challenges across different contexts, use your CoP as a sounding board for proposed changes and a way to identify resources that can support collaboration on possible solutions.

"I appreciate any opportunity to share the ideas we have. A lot of us have come up with innovative new practices and technology and don't have enough time to transfer that technology. It's great that we can then exchange this info and others can adapt it... actually establish meetings to transfer ideas... I appreciate any time we get for moving technology from one context to another." RED team senior personnel

## Reflection on Team Dynamics

Finally, CoPs can offer a space for RED teams to reflect on and discuss team dynamics; understanding these dynamics is itself a resource that can be mobilized. Cross-disciplinary teams, like those who work on RED projects, may experience differences in expertise and background that can create communication challenges about the work to be done. The CoP provides a dedicated space for teams to discuss team dynamics and resolve differences. When participants discuss team dynamics and role-specific differences in a dedicated space, they arrive at an enhanced understanding of the unique skillset that each team member brings to the project.

➡ **TIP:** CoPs can provide a productive environment in which to identify team members' contributions and increase understanding of diverse perspectives.

"There's been a lot of time and effort just spent on getting people to understand each other in the room, our theoretical background and assumptions, and even among the engineering education researchers on our team, people are coming with different theoretical assumptions. So we've spent quite a bit of time, very worthwhile time, coming to a common understanding. There is one person taking the lead and we have conversation and try to come to some consensus and then the lead author takes the lead from there in terms of how we are approaching it." RED Team social scientist

By their very nature, RED projects bring together team members representing a wide range of disciplines. The CoP facilitates collaboration and understanding between individual team members and across RED teams, through opportunities to share resources and advice, potentially leading to improved cross-disciplinary understanding. RED teams also see the importance of strategic partnerships, and they can leverage the CoP in order to connect and build relationships with peers.

Check out other REDPAR Tip Sheets that can help, available at [academicchange.org](http://academicchange.org) and <http://depts.washington.edu/cerse/research/current-research/>

- Communicating Change
- Communities of Practice
- Creating Shared Vision
- Creating Strategic Partnerships
- Forming and Developing Teams
- Leadership Succession
- Starting a Change Project

Material for this Tip Sheet is drawn from:

Edwards, B. & Kane, M. 2014. "Resource mobilization and social and political movements" in *Handbook of political citizenship and social movements*, edited by H. van der Heijden. Edward Elgar Publishing: 205-232.

Jenkins, J. C.. 1983. "Resource mobilization theory and the study of social movements." *Annual Review of Sociology* 9 (1): 527-553.

Kezar A. 2014. *How colleges change: Understanding, leading, and enacting change*. New York, NY: Routledge.

