



Promoting and supporting educational gardens for youth.

## How to Fund School Garden Projects

By Susan Joy Sager, Coordinator

Whether your plans are modest or visionary, you can apply the following steps to financing your school garden project and yourself through donations, discounts, fundraisers, grants and more! You need to make a plan, break it down into steps, begin asking for help and then carry out your project. Before you know it, you will be on your way to realizing your dreams for financing your school garden projects (and yourself)!

### Ready to make a plan to fund your school garden? Let's get started!

Here's how other school gardens in our 2023 [Network Survey](#) funded their projects:

- **23%** have funds in their **school budget**
- **64%** received **donations**
- **38%** **sell seeds, plants and vegetables**
- **16%** benefit from **other local fundraisers**
- **71%** received **grants** from Maine Agriculture in the Classroom, Seed Money, Maine Environmental Education Association, WholeKids Foundation and more!

### First, describe your project.

You decide whether to use the long or short answers to the question below when you are asking for help in person, designing a flier or writing a grant. It helps to be prepared! Funders want to know project outcomes so be prepared to estimate aspects like the number of students impacted.

#### Answer the following questions.

- What do you want to do?** (long version -45 words or less)  
*Example:* In our school garden, we want to create 6 new raised garden beds with enough soil to fill them, seeds and mulch to increase the size of our school garden to teach garden lessons for 10 classes of 30 students or 300 students total.
- What do you want to do?** (short version 10-20 words)  
*Example:* In our school garden we want to create 6 new raised beds to teach 300 students.

### Second, list what you need for your project and what it will cost.

- What **materials** do you need, what do they cost and can you get them donated?
- What **kind of help** do you need? Do you need money to pay staff or can you use volunteers for all or part of the project?
- What else do you need?

### Third, how will you finance your garden project?

- BEFORE YOU BEGIN: Check in with your school office to make sure you have permission for your project and to see if they have any suggestions!**
- Does the office have any fundraising suggestions for your project?
- Can they supply any of your materials for your project?
- What form of payment works for the school for donations or fundraisers (online donations, credit cards checks or cash)?
- Does the school have any standing discounts at local businesses that you can use?
- Do you need to use purchase orders or can you get reimbursed?

### Next, decide what type of financing makes sense for your project.

Make it easy for people to donate money or materials! You have your list of materials and their costs so you are almost ready to go! If you are nervous about asking for help, what's the worst that can happen?! Someone says no and you move on to the next step... Make sure to do this well ahead of time because sometimes it takes a few weeks to get an answer from a potential funder.

#### Monetary Donations

- Draft an email or letter outlining your project using your information above.
  - Who will you ask for help?
  - How will they receive your request?
  - Is it easy for them to make a donation?
  - Who can they contact for more information?
  - What is your deadline?
  - Remember to follow up and see if they need more information.
  - Don't forget to say thank you with a card or email to donors and give their generosity publicity through social media or during an event!

#### Material Donations

- Using your material list above:
  - Ask your local lumber yard or hardware store: donation or discount.
  - Read the [Wish List for Garden Tools article](#) on our website.
- Ask for a soil donation from:
  - your local greenhouse or nursery business.
  - Coast of Maine *Growing Good*.
  - your Town: is soil or mulch available for your project?
- Submit a request to seed companies for donations or discounts.
  - [Fedco Seeds](#)
  - [Johnny's Selected Seeds](#)
  - Pinetree Seeds
  - Wild Seed Project
  - Other seed companies

### FUNDRAISING

#### Would fundraisers be a good fit for your project?

- Read the [Fundraising Resources and Tips](#) article on our website.
- Seed Sales**  
Consider buying seeds in bulk and repackaging them to sell.
  - [Fedco Seeds](#)
  - [Johnny's Selected Seeds](#)
  - Pinetree Seeds
  - Wild Seed Project
- Plant Sales**  
Grow them yourself or talk to your local florist, nursery or greenhouse about ordering wholesale seedlings, plants or flowers to resell at your school. Or have samples on display at a table and take orders.
  - Sell plant seedlings in the spring that you grow over the winter.
  - Sell bouquets for Mother's Day.
  - Sell mums in the fall.
  - Sell poinsettias for the holidays.
  - Read [Plant Sales and Farm Stands](#) article

- School Events**
  - What can you sell at Parents Night, Conferences, Performances, PTO, Fairs?*
- Other events in your town**

### GRANTS

**Would obtaining a grant be a good fit for your project?**

**Check out:**

- [Financing Your School Garden](#) resource page
- [Grant of the Month](#) profiles
- [Grant Resources](#) spreadsheet
- [Grant Writing Resources and Tips](#) article

### SCHOOL BUDGET

**What can you do to get money allocated for you and your projects in the school budget?**

- Talk to your principal.
  - Are there funds available to pay you as a coach?
  - Will they support your application for our *School Garden Caretakers* grant?
  - When are budget decisions made?
  - What could you prepare to help them apply for funds for the school garden project?
  - Could you show the MSGN video and/or make a presentation of your school garden to a school board meeting?

### Other Sources of Funding

- *Take up a collection and pass the hat!*
- *Have a bake sale!*
- *Raffle a donated item!*
- *Combine forces with another project at your school and fundraise together!*
- *Organize an event and charge an admission fee!*

### WHAT NEXT?

Now that you have come up with a project description, made a simple budget and identified potential sources of funding or donations, what's next?!

- The **deadline** to have this project completed is \_\_\_\_\_
- Determine your potential sources of funding**
- Break up the project into manageable tasks**
- Make a timeline** *starting now!*
- Identify the help you need**, recruit and assign specific tasks with deadlines.
- Schedule meetings or work days** *so people can get them on their calendars.*
- Obtain volunteer help.**
- Evaluate your progress and keep repeating the above steps. You can do this!**

### Resources:

- [Financing Your School Garden](#) **MSGN website**
- [Funding a School Garden Program](#) **Kids Gardening**
- [Growing Good Program](#) **Coast of Maine**
- [School Garden Caretakers Grant](#) **MSGN**

### Questions?

Contact Susan Sager, Coordinator at [susan@msgn.org](mailto:susan@msgn.org)