

WISCONSIN SCHOOL GARDEN INITIATIVE BRIEF:

FUNDING YOUR SCHOOL GARDEN PROGRAM



**Wisconsin
Partnership Program**
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Having adequate resources for a successful school garden program can be daunting, but it doesn't need to be. Take a cue from the financial industry and diversify your revenue streams! A mix of grants, donations, and sales of value-added products may be the perfect equation for a long-lasting school garden program. This brief will offer suggestions to fund a school garden program now, and for years to come!

Five tips for funding a school garden

1. Create a wish list

It's easier to ask for resources if you know exactly what you need. Putting garden needs into a list helps encourage people to give what they can, and see where their donation is making a difference. Information to include: number of items needed, cost if bought new, and whether used items would suffice. Consider adding volunteer hours or specific skills on your list as well!

2. Ask for help

Many people are excited to donate or volunteer for a project they can see directly benefits their kids or community. Seek help within your school – parents, students, staff – as well as businesses, non-profits, and garden enthusiasts from the surrounding community. Make a plan to recognize donors and volunteers.

3. Share your garden story and vision

Get people excited about helping by sharing how the garden will benefit students, stories about what you've already accomplished, and your vision for moving forward. Consider developing a 30-second "elevator speech" to share with people on the fly, writing a garden column in your school newsletter, or starting a garden Facebook page to share photos, and videos.



Marshall Early Learning Center

4. Plan in phases

Some of the most-repeated advice from experienced school garden coordinators is to start small, and grow from there. This is excellent advice overall, and especially when funds are limited. Set a yearly goal that feels achievable, and build on your success with a new goal each season!

5. Think outside the "stuff"

Consider how you can make use of skills and expertise to achieve the same results. Is there a local handyman or woman who can build a compost barrel instead of buying one? A parent who has experience writing grants? A student who is a great photographer or social media guru? Turn skills into stuff without going to the store!



Lapham Elementary, Madison

Raising funds for all stages of a youth garden program

Garden programs have different funding needs throughout its lifecycle. Here are some suggestions for gathering resources for all stages in a youth garden program.

Planning:

- As you form your garden committee, look for staff, parents, and community members with special skills. Expertise in carpentry, watering systems, writing, marketing, and more will come in handy as your garden becomes established.
- Create a school garden budget at the on-set. This document can be dynamic and change as ideas and designs do, but having a financial plan can help guide decision-making.

Gathering Supplies:

- Building raised beds? Hardware stores will often offer discounts for school garden construction materials. It doesn't hurt to ask!
- Collect gently-used garden tools that are in good repair. Leave a collection bin in a convenient spot and advertise your need in the local newspaper.

Planting:

- Farms and garden centers tend to discard seeds after a season or two. Ask that these seeds be donated to your garden program. Check seeds for viability by placing some on a moistened paper towel in a plastic bag. Look for a germination rate of around 80%.
- Save money on compost by making your own. Check out the WSGI brief on compost for help: bit.ly/SchoolCompost

Harvesting:

- Have the garden help you raise funds by selling the produce that comes from it or by creating value-added goods like canned salsa, seed packets, or garden art. Don't forget to add information about your garden produce on anything that is distributed.

Resources

WSGI's List of Grant Opportunities:

www.communitygroundworks.org/content/grants-opportunities-school-gardens

Woolly School Garden Fund Raising Kit:

<http://dev.woollyschoolgarden.org/fundraising-kit>

Annie's GardenFunder: www.crowdrise.com/anniesgardenfunder

Fundraising Webinar (Life Lab):

www.lifelab.org/2015/05/webinar-innovative-ways-to-fund-your-school-garden/

Funding School Gardens (CSGN):

www.csgn.org/funding-school-gardens



Dixon Innovation Garden, Brookfield



For more information about the Wisconsin School Garden Initiative, visit us at WISchoolGardens.org

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