

Leave No Stone Unturned

Our discussion of funding begins with some basics on developing a budget. As you list the supplies and services that you need, it will help you develop a plan to obtain them. Support comes in many forms: expertise, labor, supplies, service, donations, publicity. Be creative in where you look for support as well as in what you ask for. We also provide information on obtaining support from various sources.

Budget

This list is intentionally comprehensive to address large garden programs. You may require many fewer items than are listed.

❑ **Site Development and/or Improvements** will cover the garden's capital needs. This typically includes the costs of tools, lumber, block, pipe, irrigation timers, soil, fencing, site preparation (plowing, amendments), rental costs for tillers or trenchers and major structural additions such as sheds or greenhouses.

❑ **Annual Operating Expenses** are recurring costs of the garden's operation. Review your requirements for seeds, transplants, fertilizers and other amendments (don't forget delivery charges), planting pots or flats, replacement tools, stakes, cages, twine and all other garden supplies. If your school does not cover the cost of your water, power or liability insurance, you will need to estimate these costs, too.

❑ **Curriculum and Project Expenses** include books and manuals, supplies for science projects, garden crafts, birdhouses, flower presses, water colors, journals and field trips.

❑ **Miscellaneous Expenses** include costs of postage, envelopes, paper, photocopies, thank-you notes, film and developing.



Public Relations

Now that you've determined what you need, where do you find it? Let's start with public relations, not supplies. You are an ambassador in the neighborhood publicizing your efforts and building a community base of support. A well-executed awareness campaign will not only enrich your gardening program, it also will show the community that its members are working to improve the education of its children. Put yourself in the shoes of the people you will approach and keep in mind some of the key elements of effective outreach and promotion.

- ❑ Know what the garden program is all about and believe in it. Nothing generates interest as much as your own enthusiasm for your school garden. Be able to recount a brief history, the number of children served, the size of the volunteer network, pounds of produce grown and special events sponsored.
- ❑ State clearly what is happening in the garden, what you are attempting to accomplish and ways the potential sponsor might provide assistance.
- ❑ Keep sponsors posted on the garden's progress and how their specific generosity helped.
- ❑ Give credit to sponsors with small signs in the garden or notices in the school newsletter. They will appreciate the free advertising.
- ❑ Ask sponsors for letters of support for your use in future drives or grant applications.
- ❑ Know the people who walk the community beat at the local newspapers (don't forget the "zone" sections of the larger papers), radio or TV stations. Send them press releases from time to time, but don't be discouraged if you are not always promoted. Newsworthy items might include the garden groundbreaking, request for volunteers, a large contribution by a donor, first major planting day, market days, harvest festivals, experimental crops, food donations to relief organizations or a garden open house. Put your young gardeners in front of the camera or include their comments in the releases. Don't



forget to have your school board and administration represented at these events.

- ❑ Keep parents posted on progress. Ask them for needed materials. Do you have some parents employed by the media? Make friends!
- ❑ Include pictures of garden activities in the school's annual report and use this material when you call on prospective sponsors.
- ❑ Keep the garden as neat as possible, even after harvest. A prospective sponsor may be around the corner.
- ❑ Investigate the tax ramifications of individual or business donations (IRS Publication 526, "Charitable Contributions," is a good place to start). Know the tax status of the body that is to receive the donations (school, PTO), and if the donor cannot deduct a contribution, consider seeking nonprofit status.



TIP

Thank-you notes are a powerful tool. Handwritten notes from the students are particularly appreciated. Consider including photos of the children working on garden projects or notes from the principal, PTO or school board as well.

Donated Garden Supplies

Begin your search with the nucleus of the project. How much more dearly will the students nurture and protect plants that they have purchased with money they raised than plants that were donated? Encourage students to bring seeds or plants from home. Be ever-vigilant in your search for ways to encourage personal investment in the garden. Take stock of the resources and contacts that you have. The closer the tie with the children the more likely the donation. For example, if the mother of one of your students owns a nursery, you are set! "Taking stock" can be an excellent exercise for the whole team. Once you have identified your vi-



sion, your goals and your needs, develop a list of who has what connection that can help to meet a particular need.

This process teaches the students to develop an effective strategy and keeps them responsible for accomplishing their dream. It may be much easier to recruit one sponsor who will “give” you the garden, but don’t fall to the temptation. There is much to be learned in the creation process and the long-term benefits of developing investment in the garden are immeasurable. Gradually widen your search from the school campus, to the school district, to the community, public agencies (city, county, state and federal) and the private sector, as needed.

How to Ask for Donations

- Identify what you need.
- Determine who has it.
- Do your homework (on your project and on the donor).
- Decide who will make the pitch.
- Decide upon the request.
- Schedule the meeting.
- Succinctly convey your vision and strategy (take props, photos, garden designs).
- Listen.
- Obtain a commitment before you leave.
- Thank the prospect.
- Involve the donor in the project.
- Be creative in expressing your appreciation.

Now that we’ve covered how to approach the community, let’s examine where you might find garden supplies on a donated or discounted basis.

Establishing a relationship with a local garden center is a good place to start. Besides advice, discounts or donations, ask to be kept posted on discards such as plants, seed packets with expired dates, containers or discontinued supplies.

Lumber will be useful for stakes, borders, compost bins, cold frames, tool sheds, trellises, boxes, seed flats and fences. Sources

include local contractors, scrap piles at lumber yards and construction sites, and crates and pallets at trucking companies. Be sure that you are getting raw, untreated lumber, not chemically treated.

Hardware stores and garden centers come to mind when tools are needed. Don't overlook rental companies for donating or discounting older quality tools or donating a day's use of a cultivator or trencher. Yard sales and thrift stores can yield real bargains.

Paint stirrers make great stakes and row markers. Bent wire coat hangers can hold seed packets for display. Even plastic buckets might come from fast-food restaurants, paint stores or ice cream parlors. The five-gallon variety is especially handy.

Most organic amendments can be found at little to no cost if you have access to a truck or trailer. Try local stables and county or state fairs for manure or stable bedding. Utility companies or city maintenance departments may have wood chips or other plant material for mulching beds or maintaining pathways. Consider lumber yards for sawdust or wood chips, again ensuring that raw, untreated lumber is the source. Most landscape maintenance services pay to dispose of their grass clippings and other waste materials at landfills. Why not ask for a delivery now and again?



Your own cafeteria could become a great source for fruit and vegetable scraps. Don't get too much at one time unless you have the labor to bury it into your compost piles quickly. Also, check your school's regulations on the disposal of food scraps. More schools are starting to recycle this material; we know of one high school that has students recycle their cafeteria scraps in compost piles and worm bins.

Contact fencing companies for donations, but keep in mind landscape architects, contractors or pool refinishers, all of whom may have old fencing for you. They may have other used materials to donate after they renovate an existing landscape. Do speak with your administrator to ensure that all fencing meets school code which is often more stringent than residential requirements.

Try locating wholesale seed companies, though often purchases must be in larger quantities. Collect the beautiful and often free catalogs many seed companies provide. They will inspire you and the children and are great to cut up for posters and projects. Appendix C, "Seed and Other Suppliers," lists a variety of seed companies offering catalogs.



A little imagination goes a long way. Ever consider the old ski poles in the attic as stakes for your plants? If you really have an urgent need, ask your students. You would be absolutely amazed with their ingenious improvisations—we guarantee it!



TIP

Save seeds from your non-hybrid plants so that you won't have to purchase them next year. Allow a few plants to "go to seed." For flowers and vegetables that reproduce with flowerheads (lettuce and other greens), tie small paper bags over the plant's flowerheads. The bag will catch the seeds as they fall. (Punch a few tiny holes in the bag to provide air circulation.) For fruiting vegetables that produce seeds within (tomatoes), allow the fruit to become very ripe, but not rotten, on the vine before harvesting it for seeds.

Collect seeds on a dry, sunny day after any morning dew is gone. Moisture will encourage seeds to rot. Dry seeds for a week on sheets of newspaper. Clean the seeds of excess leaves, stems or insects. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator or in a cool, dry place.

Don't save seeds from hybrids, which will not develop true to the parent plant.



Funding Sources

There's almost always a need to raise a little cash along with your crops. Funds may be as close as the PTO. Lessons in economics can go hand-in-hand with gardening by encouraging the students to participate; fund raising need not be the exclusive domain of the coordinator or committee. Sources of funding might include fund raising projects, donations and/or corporate support.

Appendix E, "Grants and Funding Sources," lists sources that may offer longer term or more substantial support. In addition, contact your mayor's office for information on applying for community development block grants (which are federal funds allo-



cated to local projects). Lobbying for city money or attending council meetings makes a great civics lesson. Check out local community or public school foundations for possible grants. Ask the principal about federal entitlement programs for various subject areas.

After you identify potential funders, obtain the funder's goals and selection criteria. Ask the funder to send you a copy of a successful proposal from last year. Complete their application meticulously and by the deadline.

And, finally, keep in mind some of these keys to successful fund raising:

- People give to dreams and dazzling visions, not to needs.
- People give to make a difference and be a part of something grander than themselves, not out of guilt.
- Request money and you get advice; request advice and you get money.
- Listen.
- Develop a team with a mix of talent, time and treasures.
- Fame brings fortune: seek out awards and publicity.
- Give before you ask others to give.



Types of Corporate Support

- Outright gifts and grants
- Matching employee gifts
- United Way
- Released staff time
- Gifts in-kind (printing, publicity, use of equipment)
- Program investments
- Grants



Fund Raising Projects



Sell garden products

- Plant seedlings or propagate houseplants for spring or fall plant sales.
- Sell dried flower bouquets, herbal sachets, flowers at holidays, herb-flavored vinegars, pressed flower crafts or vegetables.
- Make and sell popcorn balls, even if only a token amount of garden corn is available.
- Sell produce at local farmers' markets.



Sell investments in the garden

- Create individual fence pickets, stepping stones or borders around beds, complete with the donor's name.



Sell labor

- Students could be hired to work in private gardens.



Hold special events

- Raffle off a basket of school-grown goodies or donated garden supplies.
- Grow colored corn or create a pumpkin patch in time for Halloween.
- Large gardens may have the capacity for a "you-pick-em" event.
- Hold a contest to design a school garden logo. Sell T-shirts or hats with the new emblem.

