



School Garden Funding Resources

nonprofit One Cool Earth to help schools garden!

Some Advice for Funding Your Dream Garden

Dream Big, Start Now

It's great to have a big vision for your garden--but don't let an expensive, unobtainable garden get in the way of gardening. Big dreams can be inspiring and do come true if carried out with diligence over time by a talented team. It can help your project, and give kids a chance to garden now if you can break it into bite-sized pieces. Maybe build a few garden beds to get started now before installing an expensive shade structure or launching the school farm. Funders like to see tangible work in place, and sometimes funding comes in many smaller chunks, so it really makes sense to go step-by-step instead of taking an all-or-nothing approach.

The Most Useful Garden Tool: The Garden Educator

We often see schools fundraising for garden infrastructure, like tools, sheds, beds, and shade structures. These are vital to a functional garden. Once a garden is in place, it's critical that it has a dedicated steward--the garden educator really is the most useful tool in the garden. Enthusiastic parents make excellent garden educators, for a time, but may move on after their children graduate (although we know one local parent who has been with her garden for 18 years--this seems to be an exception). We have seen teachers successfully lead garden programs, but it can be overwhelming on top of their regular classroom responsibilities, and they may be transferred or retire (we also know a teacher who has stayed on to run the garden program in her retirement). We strongly advocate for school garden groups to carefully consider who will operate the educational program over the long term. Other models we have seen work:

- Create a multi-person garden committee (made of teachers, parents, administrators, and even students) that can delegate garden education roles and pass on knowledge year after year, overseeing and supporting volunteer parent or teacher education efforts.
- Get teachers and administrators on board--they can help leverage funding. We've seen them:
 - Designate 20 substitute teacher days/year so that a salaried teacher can use those days to lead garden classes for her/his school (while a substitute takes over her/his class for the day)
 - Apply for and receive Enrichment Grants through the school district to hire a garden educator
 - Apply for and receive large grants for their school's garden infrastructure
 - Integrate gardening into a teacher's job description
 - Designate district funding for garden educators
- One Cool Earth works with schools on a partial fee-for-service basis--that means that the school (through district funds, PTA support, or a business sponsor) provides a portion of

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Page 1

School Garden Funding Resources

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the expense of having a garden educator while One Cool Earth fundraises the remaining costs, hires and trains an educator that works with your school throughout the year. Contact action@onecoolearth.org for more info.

Networking For Support

Often, a school has many resources it needs already within reach through existing parent and teacher connections. We have seen schools draw upon parents who own or work with businesses related to landscaping, construction, agriculture, and architecture to leverage design, installation and material donations or discounts to create their garden.

Involve Students from the Ground Up

Just because you don't have a garden yet doesn't mean that students can't be involved in creating one. From designing, learning agricultural techniques in the classroom or through container plantings, or creating and presenting proposals for garden funding and support, students benefit early in the process. Also, a student requesting funding or materials often has more weight with administrators and donors--help the students ask for what they want!

Funding Resources

One Cool Earth believes that school gardens will eventually become as vital to education as libraries or computer labs--with the advocacy of parents, teachers and administrators who recognize their benefits to student health, academics and wellness. Indeed, California law requires nutrition education in public schools (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/he/wellness.asp>), and many are using school gardens to meet this requirement. There are several funding mechanisms within the school system that are already being used to fund school garden supplies and educator salaries:

LCAP - Schools use the Local Control Accountability Planning process to designate how state funding is spent--if sufficient numbers of parents and teachers are involved in prioritizing school garden programming, funding may be realized. (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/re/lc/>)

Cafeteria Fund 13 - This fund provides for student meals and nutrition. It can be used to fund school gardens. Speak with your Food Service Director for more information about this fund. (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/sn/mbsnp082015.asp>)

General Fund - Allocated by the School Board under the advice of the Superintendent and school Principals (you'll want to make your case to these decision-makers), the general fund can be a stable funding stream.

Enrichment/Extracurricular/Supplemental Grants - Often districts or schools offer internal grants on a competitive basis. Ask your school administrators about opportunities!

Education Foundations - Many school districts have foundations to support and provide supplemental funding for their schools.

PTAs - Most often, we have seen excellent PTA support of the garden by creating a line-item in their budget for annual garden supplies. PTAs have also helped to rally garden

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Page 2

School Garden Funding Resources

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resources and fund garden educators. A few parents contributing a small amount monthly can add up to fund staffing for a garden educator (\$50 per parent x 20 parents = \$10,000 over the year, enough to fund a weekly garden educator).

Grants

- One Cool Earth's Free Grant Review - For San Luis Obispo County schools, our grant writer can review your grant application and provide feedback before you submit! Email a draft of your application to greg@onecoolearth.org.
- Whole Kids Foundation has an excellent list of Grantwriting Tips (<https://www.wholekidsfoundation.org/blog/7-tips-for-writing-a-stellar-grant-application-for-your-school-garden-project>)
- SESLOC Education Grants (<https://www.sesloc.org/member-resources/education-grants>)
- The Community Foundation of San Luis Obispo County offers several grants annually to support youth health and recreation (<https://www.cfsloco.org/nonprofits/>)
- United Way of SLO County offers annual grants focused on health and youth services (<https://www.unitedwayslo.org/>)
- Whole Foods' Foundation offers garden grants--usually several are awarded locally (<https://www.wholekidsfoundation.org/>)
- Kid's Gardening keeps an updated list of garden grants that may be available in your region (<https://kidsgardening.org/grant-opportunities/>)
- Seed Money offers an online crowdfunding platform designed specifically for school gardens (<https://seedmoney.org/>)

Service Clubs

- Local Rotary, Kiwanis, and other service groups have been involved in funding and providing volunteer labor for gardens.

Materials and Supplies

- Contact Pam Pickering at Farm Supply for discounts/donations (805) 543-3751
- Miner's Ace gives a 10% discount to teachers
- Many stores offer discounts, including Target, Staples, FedEx, and DollarTree. More information here: <https://www.teacher.org/best-teacher-discounts/>
- It's always worth asking for donations and/or discounts when you are purchasing items for your garden, many businesses want to help!

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Page 3