THE BASICS OF GRANT WRITING

Grants are a great source of funding to help lay the foundation for your youth garden program.

There are many avenues to explore when seeking grant opportunities. In general, grants are distributed through public entities, such as local, state, and federal governments, or private groups, including foundations, corporations, and nonprofit organizations. Although different funding entities may share some similar procedural requirements, each will also have specific and unique goals for the distribution of its funds.

To find a list of yearly youth garden grant opportunities, join the Kids Garden Community, a free online space for anyone gardening with kids to ask their youth gardening questions, give advice, access resources, and learn from each other in discussion forums and live community events.

COMMON GRANT
REQUIREMENTS

LED BY ENTHUSIASTIC LEADERS
who have carefully crafted their plans to meet specific needs and will meet all grant reporting requirements; and,

SUPPORTED BY THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY
and demonstrate how the project will be sustainable beyond the grant term.

GRANT WRITING
TIPS

1 CHECK ELIGIBILITY

Research the grant opportunity before investing time in an application. Some grants are open to all organizations, others to just schools or tax-exempt organizations. Make sure to check that your organization is eligible for the opportunity and only apply for grants whose funding objectives match your program's goals and needs. If you are not sure whether your program is a strong match, look for information about past recipients or, if possible, contact the funder.

2 BRAINSTORM A UNIQUE PLAN

Before you start writing your application, take time to develop solid goals and a plan of action. Involve your community in the process! Consider questions such as:

- Who is your garden for, and what are their needs?
- What do you want to accomplish with your garden program?
- How will you accomplish your goals, and what supplies will you need to obtain?
- How will you ensure the program is sustainable?
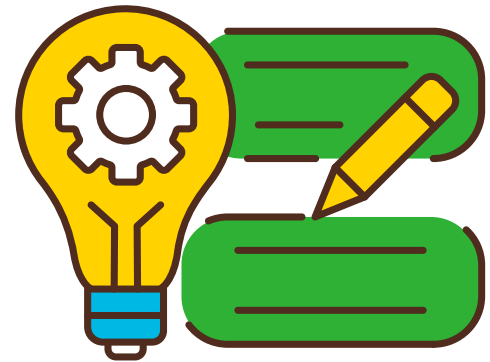
3 DRAFT YOUR THOUGHTS

It may be helpful to create a document that includes basic information frequently requested on grant applications, such as mission, youth involvement, garden details, budget, leadership, maintenance, and sustainability. As you fill out an application, remember your C's: make sure your thinking is clear, concise, creative, consistent, compelling, follows the criteria, and demonstrates collaboration.

A good application effectively communicates the many qualities and benefits of your program in concise, descriptive language. Your proposal should convey enthusiasm and stress the excellent organization and leadership fueling your

garden program. Emphasize reasons why your project is unique and worthy of funding.

When writing proposals, avoid using acronyms and professional jargon; small text size or a hard-to-read font; and irrelevant appendix materials. Also, grant reviewers can recognize generic responses, so make your responses authentic.

4 **PREPARE REQUIRED GRANT ATTACHMENTS**

Frequently requested items include photos, a map of the garden space, an itemized budget, tax-exempt documentation, and a letter of support.

Don't underestimate the power of a glowing letter of recommendation from your principal, a community partner, or perhaps even from a youth participant in your programming to help push your application to the top of the stack, or the converse impact of a mediocre letter.

CONSIDER BRAINSTORMING ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS:

- **Mission - What is your garden program's mission and educational goals?**
- **Youth Involvement - How will youth participate in garden programming? Frequency? Length? What will they learn?**
- **Garden Details - How do you plan to create or improve your garden? What plants will you grow? Be specific and include details like dimensions of garden beds, garden features, walkways, learning spaces, and accessibility.**
- **Budget - How will you use the grant funds? Be prepared to provide an itemized budget of how you will utilize the funding, and if your project requires more than the grant amount, how will you secure the additional funds?**
- **Leadership - Who is on your garden program's leadership team, and what experience do they have?**
- **Maintenance - What is your maintenance plan for your garden? Think of who will assist in the maintenance and how frequently they will be involved. If your program takes a break during the summer months, how will your garden be maintained?**
- **Sustainability - How do you plan to sustain your garden program in the future? Do you have plans for a change in leadership? New partnership? Consistent funding?**

5 FINALIZE YOUR APPLICATION AND PRESS SUBMIT

Re-read the answers you have prepared and double-check using spell check! Also, have someone proofread your finished application. Often, a proofreader unfamiliar with your program can offer a fresh perspective.

Copy and paste your answers into the online form or save your narrative as a pdf, upload your attachments, double-check everything is completed, and press submit! We recommend submitting a few days before the deadline to give yourself extra time in case you run into technical difficulties.

FUNDING
NEXT STEPS

If you hear back that your proposal was funded, celebrate that success! But if you hear back that you are not funded, don't let the unsuccessful grant result deter your implementation of the garden program. Grants are highly competitive, and the number of grants funders can give out is always much lower than the number of applications worthy of funding. Continue to seek and apply for other grant opportunities and meanwhile, strengthen community collaborations and partnerships that can offer support to your program.

Kohala Elementary School