

HOW TO PREPARE A STRONG YOUTH GARDEN GRANT APPLICATION

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.

WHAT MAKES AN APPLICATION STRONG

-  A clearly defined community need
-  Meaningful youth and community involvement
-  A plan for accessibility and inclusion
-  A realistic plan, timeline, and leadership team
-  A budget that matches the proposed activities
-  Measurable outcomes
-  A sustainability plan that includes support from the local community

GRANT WRITING TIPS

1 CHECK ELIGIBILITY

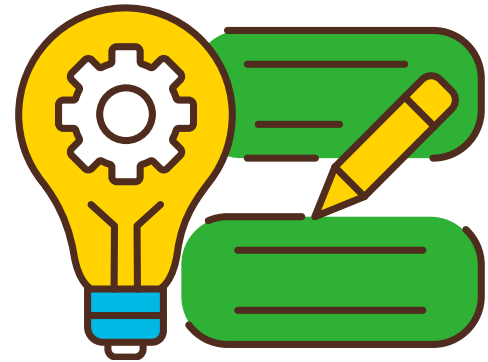
Research the grant opportunity before investing time in an application. Some grants are open to all organizations, others to just schools or tax-exempt organizations. Make sure to check that your organization is eligible for the opportunity and only apply for grants whose funding objectives match your 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, and how will you do that?



For more support in brainstorming your plan, see ["Crafting Your Narrative: Learn how to write a compelling case statement or narrative about your grant program."](#)

3 DRAFT YOUR THOUGHTS

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. For example:

- Vague Description: We want to expand our school garden so more students can learn about gardening and healthy eating.
- Stronger Description: We will engage 60 students in planting and caring for an expanded food garden through twice-monthly lessons. Grant funds will purchase soil, seeds, tools, and an accessible raised bed.

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.

AI can help proofread, refine, and shorten your responses, but it shouldn't write your application from scratch. Reviewers can recognize generic AI-generated language, so make sure your application reflects your program's unique story and your authentic voice.

For a list of common grant application questions, see "[Grant Application Question Guide](#)". The following question prompts, and more, are provided in the guide:

- Mission
- Youth Involvement
- Garden Details
- Budget
- Community
- Leadership
- Maintenance
- Sustainability

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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! Typically, letters of support are written by a principal, a community partner, or sometimes even by a youth participant in your programming.

Letters of support can push your application to the top of the stack, but a mediocre letter can have the opposite impact.



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FINALIZE YOUR APPLICATION AND PRESS SUBMIT

Re-read the answers you have prepared. 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 you. 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.

KidsGardening and our peer organizations developed two tools to make it easier for youth garden programs to find relevant funding opportunities and determine which ones may be a good fit.

Kids Garden Community Grant Opportunities Database

The [Kids Garden Community Grant Opportunities Database](#) is a searchable collection of grants, contests, and other funding opportunities for youth garden programs. Browse or filter opportunities by status, award type, organization type, region, and frequency. You can also review closed, recurring grants to identify opportunities that may reopen and plan ahead for future application cycles.

Youth Garden Funding Finder

The [Youth Garden Funding Finder](#) is a quick eligibility tool that matches your youth garden program with relevant local, regional, and national grants. Answer a few questions about your organization, location, and project to see which opportunities you may qualify for. The tool is regularly updated with new grant opportunities.