

A photograph of two children, a girl in a pink shirt and a boy in a blue shirt, working in a school garden. They are using tools to work in raised garden beds filled with soil and young plants. The background shows more garden beds and greenery.

# Fundraising Toolkit for your Organic School Garden

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## Who is the target audience for this toolkit?

This toolkit is meant for educators and parents of students in elementary, middle, and high schools that have, or are interested in having, an educational organic vegetable garden on their school grounds. Fundraising can be an important source of funds for the development, expansion, and improvement of your school garden. This toolkit contains suggestions, ideas and hints for fundraising success.

## Where do we start?

Before beginning any fundraising efforts, it is important to know precisely what you are fundraising for, how much money you are looking to raise, what strategies you will utilize to raise funds, and how you will evaluate your efforts.

This toolkit is organized as a series of steps to take, from the first inspirations for your fundraising projects, through to a successful project.

### Fundraising Steps

1. What are you fundraising for?
2. How much money will you need for your identified project?
3. Who will be the target of your fundraising efforts?
4. What methods of fundraising will you use?
5. How will you present your idea to potential donors?
6. When you have been successful in your campaign, how will you share your success with donors?
7. How do you evaluate your overall fundraising strategy?

This booklet is organized as a series of answers to the questions posed above. Feel free to work through the toolkit in its entirety, or to take ideas from any step that fits into your long term visioning for your garden.

**Before you begin your fundraising campaign, some preparations will help you to create a clear vision for your project.**



## Step 1

### What are you fundraising for?

#### A new garden

Starting a new organic school vegetable garden from scratch can be daunting, but setting out a simple plan and budget can help put you on the right track from the start. Most school gardens developed under Growing Up Organic's program begin with two or three raised beds and over the years incorporate additional features and expand in size.

Assess your needs and always **start simple**. In your first year, a couple raised beds can provide numerous opportunities for bringing learning outside. Many things, such as tools and storage, can wait until following years, limiting your initial investment while capitalizing on the most impactful components (the garden itself!).

You will also need to consider annual inputs in your initial budget. Heavily harvested vegetable gardens require annual additions of compost. Purchased at a local nursery or hardware store, this represents an annual cost in the range of \$10 per raised bed.

#### Sample timeline

Year 1:	Two classes are involved – initial investment: 2 raised beds, hose, and watering cans
Year 2:	Three classes involved – additions: 1 new raised bed, tools and storage
Year 3:	Three classes involved – additions: composter and light table
Year 4:	Three classes involved – additions: herb spiral and outdoor seating

#### An existing garden

Depending on the size, use, and development of your school garden program, there are many different upgrades that could take your learning in the garden to the next level!

Here are a few ideas for garden improvements:

- **Tools** – most school gardens make seldom use of tools; however, having some spades and trowels on-site can enhance the gardening experience, especially if students are using the garden beyond GUO workshops.
- **Storage** – You may require a storage facility to keep tools, watering cans, etc. over the summer – easy access to such things can make summer maintenance far easier for volunteers.
- **Light table** – Having an indoor light table can greatly increase your success rate with seedlings – this is an ideal addition to make in the first couple years of your garden. One light table typically holds enough seedlings for one class.

- **Rain barrels** – As long as your school has eavestroughs or sloped roofing, you can take advantage of a free and sustainable water source for your garden.
- **Composter** – Composting is energy and knowledge intensive, but having your own composter on-site will reduce costs associated with annual compost purchasing and provides additional learning opportunities.
- **Cover crop seed** – Planting a cover crop in your garden beds in the fall can help to reduce soil erosion from wind, and increase the friability of your soil.
- **Solar dryer** – A solar dryer is a great way to preserve the bounty of your garden (eg. herbs), and learning about how a solar dryer works makes for some fun science.
- **Garden expansion** – Adding more raised beds to your garden will allow more classes to be involved year after year – typically, each additional garden bed allows one additional class to participate;
- **Books for a garden library** – Plant identification books, books about insects in the garden, and cookbooks could all be used to quench your students’ thirst for knowledge about the garden;
- **Outdoor classroom seating** – many lessons out in the garden are considerably enhanced by space for students to gather, sit and discuss or complete observations and work on tables.

Although these are all great ideas, each garden has different needs and each school will be fundraising for different purposes. Completing an analysis of needs is essential to determining specific improvements that could be made to your garden programming in order to tailor your project to your school’s needs. For tools for assessing your garden’s next steps, see GUO’s *Organic School Gardens and Growing Up Organic: A Guide*.



## Step 2

### How much money will you need to complete your project?

It is very important to set a realistic budget for your project. You want to raise enough money to cover all of the associated costs of your project, but you don’t want to overshoot either.

Be sure to include all possible costs for your project in your budget. Think through your project, and incorporate all of the costs associated with the planning, implementation, and maintenance of your new idea. Also, be sure to think about what special skills the people in your community might be able to contribute. Perhaps rather than having to buy new items, some things could be made inexpensively by a team of volunteers. This can help to build community investment in the garden, and can help you save money!

## Start-up Costs

How much does an organic school garden cost? GUO's start-up gardens which typically involve raised beds, 3' by 8' made from untreated cedar lumber, can range from \$400.00 to \$600.00, depending on site characteristics, garden size, and in-kind donations from parents or community businesses. An example of typical "no-frills" garden with **three** raised beds is outlined below:

### Start-Up Costs

Cedar lumber for 3 new beds	\$230.00-250.00
2.5 yards Garden Mix Soil	\$150.00
Building hardware	\$70.00
Weed Barrier	\$17.00
Watering Cans	\$30.00
Hose	\$50-70.00

For more information on building raised beds and procuring supplies see the resources section on our website: [www.coq.ca/ottawa/growing-up-organic](http://www.coq.ca/ottawa/growing-up-organic)

### Garden additions

Storage	\$100.00+
Rain Barrels	\$55.00
Tools	\$25.00-100.00
Composter	\$100.00
Light Table	\$90.00
Seating	varies

Tips:

- ❖ If you have a handy teacher or volunteer at the garden, you can easily build your own composter out of reclaimed lumber or pallets. Contact GUO or your local master gardener association for suggested designs.
- ❖ Similarly, building a light table can be a fun learning opportunity for students in their technology and design classes, with simple instructions existing online.

**After you have set your goals and budget, it is time to decide what sort of fundraising strategy you will use.**



## Step 3

### Who will be the target of your fundraising efforts?

This is one of the biggest decisions you will have to make in your fundraising journey. The type of donor you target can have a huge effect on how you will fundraise, and also the ultimate results of your efforts. There are a myriad of options for you to choose from. Each has their own benefits and potential drawbacks that you should consider when making your decision.

Funding source	Advantages	Disadvantages
Community fundraising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directly involves people who have an interest or investment in the success of your project.</li> <li>• Increases awareness of your garden within the surrounding community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be difficult to raise large sums without a significant input of time and resources.</li> </ul>
Crowdfunding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can help increase exposure of your project in the local community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can involve a lot of time to reach a large enough network.</li> </ul>
Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be an excellent way to get a large amount of money by concentrating efforts on one funding source.</li> <li>• Can help your garden program build connections with other community organizations and other garden programs.</li> <li>• Completing one grant application typically reduces your workload for every subsequent application.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be time-consuming, and there is no guarantee of winning a competition</li> </ul>
Local business donations  <i>(continued from previous page)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Businesses are often willing to donate in-kind, by contributing some of their products to community initiatives. This can be a great way to get new equipment or resources,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As long as you don't mind publicly thanking your sponsors, there aren't many disadvantages to this. Just make sure that you are comfortable with any conditions that</li> </ul>

	without having to raise money directly.	accompany the donation.
School board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobbying your school board for funding can be tricky, but it can also help draw attention to the importance of outdoor programming and food education for your students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are many great initiatives that are lobbying for more funding from our school boards.</li> </ul>

**Once you have decided what type of donors you will target, decide how you will reach out to them.**



## Step 4

### What methods of fundraising will you use?

Here is a list of potential ideas and resources for each of the fundraising types discussed above:

#### Community fundraising

- Sell produce or flowers from your school garden
- Host a pay-by-donation potluck to celebrate harvest in the fall
- Host a food and agriculture movie night (admission by donation)
- Go door-to-door fundraising
- Host a walk/run/skateboard/bike ride to benefit your garden
- Host an evening of games in the garden (e.g. “Name that plant”)
- Make a snack food (e.g. salsa) with ingredients from the garden, and sell it at lunchtime to students and teachers at the school
- Sell seedlings (when starting yours for the garden) to teachers, parents and community members
- Host a rain-barrel sale (see side bar)



### Host a rain barrel sale!

<http://rainbarrel.ca> is an innovative and easy-to-use service for hosting a rain barrel sale for fundraising purposes. Hosting a rain barrel sale in your school's community increases the visibility of your school garden, helps promote water conservation, and can be lots of fun! While rain barrels are typically quite expensive, rainbarrel.ca helps lower the cost by re-using food grade materials; barrels sold through their program sell for \$55 each. Pre-ordering through the website they create for your event means there is no risk. Plus, eligible Ottawa residents may apply to the city for a \$50 rebate to help cover the cost of their rain barrel!

## Grants

- **Awesome Foundation Ottawa:** Supports awesome initiatives in Ottawa (\$1000) <http://awesomeottawa.ca/>
- **The Home Depot Foundation Community Grants Program:** Supports initiatives in Canadian communities that make lasting improvements to community life (up to \$5000) - <http://www.homedepot.ca/foundation>
- **Toyota Evergreen Learning Grounds School Ground Greening Grants** (see side bar): Supports efforts to create outdoor classrooms to allow children to learn about nature (\$500 - \$3500) - <http://www.evergreen.ca/en/funding/grants/telg.sn>
- **SpeakUp Projects by the Ontario Ministry of Education:** Supports student-led projects to integrate their education into their community lives - <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/students/speakup/projects.html#resource>
- **Project FLOW:** Supports hands-on learning for students on issues relating to water resources and sustainability (\$500 - \$3000) - <http://www.r4r.ca/en/project-flow>
- **EcoLeague:** Supports school-based sustainability projects (up to \$400) <http://www.r4r.ca/ecoleague>
- **Canadian Wildlife Federation Habitat 2020:** Supports school-based projects that aim to increase natural habitats for wildlife (\$500 - \$1000) - <http://www.cwf-fcf.org/en/educate/programs/habitat-2020/>
- **TD Friends of the Environment Foundation:** Supports environmental projects in Canadian communities (needs-based, average \$2500) - <http://www.fef.td.com/>
- **Majesta "Trees of Knowledge" Competition:** Supports initiatives for learning "outside the classroom" (up to \$20 000) - [www.majestatreesofknowledge.ca/](http://www.majestatreesofknowledge.ca/)
- **Metro Green Apple School Program:** Supports projects that encourage healthy eating in schools, communities and homes (\$1000) – <http://www.greenapple.metro.ca/home.en.html>
- **Honda Canada Foundation:** Supports charitable projects focused on environment, engineering, and education - <http://www.hondacanadafoundation.ca/default.htm>
- **Imagineaction Project Subsidies:** Supports projects linking communities and schools( \$500 - \$750) - <http://www.imagine-action.ca/members/Login.aspx?lgtype=T&m=1>
- **It's About Time (Ontario Teachers' Federation):** Supports 3 days of release time for groups of four teachers for professional learning and discussion - [http://www.otffeo.on.ca/english/pro\\_time.php](http://www.otffeo.on.ca/english/pro_time.php)
- **The McLean Foundation:** Supports projects in Canadian communities with social value - <http://www.mcleanfoundation.ca/index.html>

- **World Wildlife Fund Canada Green Community School Grants Program:** Supports initiatives that connect students with nature, decreases community impacts on the environment, and encourages environmental leadership (up to \$5000) - <http://c.studentawards.com/greencommunityprogram/>
- **Project Orange Thumb – Fiskars** - <http://www2.fiskars.com/Activities/Project-Orange-Thumb/Grant-and-Garden-Makeover-Application>
- **Environment Canada’s EcoAction Fund:** Supports environmental projects in communities across Canada (up to \$100 000) - <http://www.ec.gc.ca/ecoaction/default.asp?lang=En&n=FA475FEB-1>
- **Earth Day Community Environment Fund:** Supports localized community environmental projects across Canada (up to \$20 000) - <http://www.earthday.ca/envirofund/>

## Crowdsourced Fundraising Platforms

“Crowdfunding” sites are an emerging tool through which groups and individuals can post projects online and solicit financial support through the use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Some crowdfunding sites (e.g. FundRazr) rely on individuals donating money directly towards your project. Others are sponsored by agencies or companies (e.g. Aviva Community Fund) who donate a given amount to projects receiving the most votes.

- **Aviva Community Fund** (Sponsored by Aviva): Supports environmental projects that benefit Canadian communities (\$0 - \$150 000) - [www.avivacommunityfund.org](http://www.avivacommunityfund.org)
- **Lowe’s FlipGive:** Post your project, when supporters purchase a \$50 gift card for Lowe’s, your project receives \$20 -- <http://lowescanada.flipgive.com/>  
Private donation-based:
- **FundRazr:** <https://fundrazr.com/>

## Local Business Donations

Donations from local businesses are a great way to directly receive the tools and resources that you need for your garden. Depending on what your garden needs, the business that you target will differ. Target businesses with locations in your local community: this will help build connections and open doors for more cooperation in the future. Consider businesses such as local nurseries and greenhouses (who may have extra seedlings or other plant material to donate) and equipment suppliers. Below is a brief list of ideas for which businesses to target. This is just the beginning though, so don’t be afraid to branch out!

- Nurseries and Garden Centres
- Hardware Stores
- Lumber Companies
- Landscaping Companies
- Organic Seed Companies
- Recycled Material Distributors (e.g. Habitat for Humanity Restore, Cohen & Cohen)

**Now that you know who you are reaching out to, it's time to start thinking about how you will present your project to them.**



## **Step 5**

### **How will you present your project to potential donors?**

Before you are ready to start asking for donations, either from community members, businesses or granting organizations, you need to prepare some information about your proposed project. Write a clear **mission statement** that states the mission and goals of your school garden program, and how it serves your school community. Next, you need to prepare a clear written statement about the **purpose of your proposed project**. *How will the money that you are asking for directly achieve the goals of your project?*

Depending on the nature of your fundraising campaign, and who you are targeting in your campaign, your fundraising materials will look different.

**Who is holding the fundraiser?  
Why are you fundraising?  
What kind of event is it?  
When is the event?  
Where are you holding the event?**

### **Community fundraising**

If you are going to undertake a community-based fundraising campaign, your campaign materials will differ depending on your fundraising method. If you are going to be holding a special event (eg. potluck, movie night, etc), you need to create promotional materials such as posters, flyers, or radio announcements. Tailor your promotional materials to your community, your garden, and the atmosphere you wish to create at your event. Regardless of the type of promotional material you use, you should utilize your mission statement and the purpose of your project, and you need to include a few basic pieces of information:

### **Grant applications**

Every grant that you apply for will have different application documents and processes, and it is very important to read the directions carefully. Granting organizations often get flooded with applications, and small mistakes could take your project out of the running. Although every grant application is different, here are some simple do's and don'ts throughout the application process:

Do	Don't
Read criteria and application procedures carefully and follow all instructions	Stray from the stated application process – each organization streamlines their application process to suit their needs, and you will improve your chances of getting funded if you follow their rules
Include a clear mission statement for your school garden program	Use general terms to describe your project – the power of your application will be in the specifics – what are you doing, and how will it improve your school?
Set your project apart from other similar projects – what is unique about your school/garden/student population?	Make a budget that is unrealistically small or large – your budget should be well researched to show the granter that you can pull off the organization of your project
Talk about past successes in your garden – what impact has your garden had on your school already?	
Contact the granting organization before submitting your application for any additional advice they might have	

## Business Donations

Often, the first step in reaching out to local businesses is writing them a letter. The letter should include your mission statement, a brief description of your proposed project, and what you are asking for in donations. The more specific you are, the easier it is for a business to approve your application. Your letter should be simple, straightforward, and to the point. On the next page is an example of a general fundraising letter that can easily be modified depending on the type of business you are writing to, and what sort of donations you are hoping for. You can use this as a template for your own letter.

{Business Contact Name}  
{Business Name}  
{Business Address}

{School Name}  
{School Address}  
{School Phone Number}

{Insert Date}

Dear {Insert Business Name or Contact Person},

For the past *{Insert age of garden}* years, the students, teachers, and parents at *{Insert School Name}* have been growing a special program at our school. With the help of the Growing Up Organic Program of Canadian Organic Growers' Ottawa-St Lawrence-Outaouais Chapter, we have built an organic vegetable and herb garden on our campus!

Since its inception, the school garden at our school has provided many meaningful learning opportunities for our students. The garden is used in subjects across the curriculum, from learning about fractions in math, writing projects in English, and learning about soil biology in science. Additionally, by encouraging learning outside the classroom, the garden helps to promote healthy lifestyles, healthy eating and an appreciation for the natural world.

We are writing to you to ask for donations of *{Insert wish here eg. lumber, hand tools, compost, etc}*. We are reaching out to local businesses in the hope that it will help to create local networks of people who are interested and invested in creating opportunities for students to learn about their food and where it comes from.

Thank you so much for taking the time to consider our request, and we look forward to a fruitful relationship in the future. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you should have any questions about our program or how to make a donation.

Thank you,

{Insert Name}  
{Insert Position and School}  
{Insert Phone Number}

**Once you've been successful in your fundraising campaign, it is important to send updates to all of your donors on the successful completion of your project.**



## **Step 6**

### **How will you share your success with donors?**

This is an important part of the fundraising process. After your project is successful, you need to share your success with your donors. This allows them to see how their money was spent, and hopefully inspires them to donate to your program again in the future. Your communication style will vary depending on the method of fundraising you used. If you raised money within your community, thank you notes or a special event for donors can be a great way to say thank you and share your success. If you have been given a grant or a business donation, a letter with pictures showing the results of your project is a great way to show your gratitude.



## **Step 7**

### **How do you evaluate your overall fundraising strategy?**

School garden programs are a long-term investment in your school and community. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the progress of your fundraising campaign and the overall project. Any work that you put into evaluation will be useful the next time you take on a new project.

Every project is different, and therefore your evaluation process for each project can vary. Some evaluations may be very formal, and others more informal. When designing your evaluation system for your project, here are a few questions to ask yourself:

1. Did we raise enough money to fulfill our original target?
2. Did we fulfill our goals for the project?
3. Did the project proceed as we predicted in our original plans? If not, why? How could we improve our planning process in the future?
4. What did we learn about the fundraising process? Did our chosen strategy work? How might we improve it?

The evaluation process will most likely be carried out with teachers or parent volunteers involved in the school garden. However, do not forget to include feedback from your students and other involved community members. Searching out different perspectives will improve the comprehensiveness of your evaluation process.

**There are many resources available to you with advice on fundraising for your garden.** Below is a brief list of additional resources for fundraising for your school garden.

### **Resources for building a school garden**

- Growing Up Organic's School Garden Guide
- The Woolly School Garden Program: <http://www.woollyschoolgarden.org>
- Food And Agriculture Organization of the United Nations : <http://www.fao.org/docrep/009/a0218e/A0218E02.htm>
- Healthy Schools Initiative: <http://www.myhealthyschool.com/gardens/starting.php>
- City Farmer: <http://www.cityfarmer.org/schgard15.html>
- School Garden Wizard: <http://www.schoolgardenwizard.org/>
- Evergreen: <http://www.evergreen.ca/en/resources/schools/index.sn>
- Cornell Garden-Based Learning: <http://blogs.cornell.edu/garden/>
- The Garden Project SW Colorado: [http://www.thegardenprojectswcolorado.org/site/Starting\\_a\\_School\\_Garden.html](http://www.thegardenprojectswcolorado.org/site/Starting_a_School_Garden.html)

### **Brainstorming your project**

- The Directory for Social Change: [www.dsc.org.uk/Publications/@2613](http://www.dsc.org.uk/Publications/@2613)
- Institute of Fundraising: <http://www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk/guidance/five-minute-fundraiser/>

### **Planning your garden budget**

- Grow to Learn NYC: <http://www.growtolearn.org/view/CreateBudgetSecureFunding>
- Cornell Garden-Based Learning Project: <http://blogs.cornell.edu/garden/get-activities/signature-projects/seed-to-salad/budget/>

### **General fundraising tips**

- Farm to School: [http://www.farmtoschool.org/files/publications\\_470.pdf](http://www.farmtoschool.org/files/publications_470.pdf)
- The Edible Schoolyard Project: <http://edibleschoolyard.org/>
- National Farm to School Network (USA): <http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources.php>
- World Land Trust: <http://www.worldlandtrust.org/supporting/fundraising/top-20>