A guide to funding your school garden

RHS Campaign for School Gardening

We believe that nurturing a passion for plants and our natural world has incredible benefits for children and young people. It can improve their:

→ Physical and mental wellbeing

→ Understanding of the environment and sustainability

→ Confidence and self-esteem

→ Teamwork and communication skills

→ Literacy and numeracy skills

Evidence demonstrates that school gardening also enriches the school curriculum from science and maths to art and literacy. Teaching through school gardening can bring the curriculum to life in new ways, encouraging pupil engagement, as well as giving all-important opportunities to connect with plants and nature. Taking children and young people outdoors to learn and helping them to develop skills in caring for plants and the environment, encourages them to think about how they can make a difference to the planet at a time of ongoing climate crisis.

Registration is free!

Join our campaign for free today to:

→ Receive a free Welcome Pack containing a growing year calendar and cress seeds

→ Receive our e-newsletter, packed full of stories about what other schools and groups are doing to inspire you, plus growing expertise, seasonal growing opportunities and funding opportunities

→ Start progressing through the **School Gardening Awards** scheme to receive certificates and rewards

The **School Gardening Awards** provide a structure to develop gardening through the curriculum at your school and a way to celebrate your progress. Our free, five-level awards scheme provides achievable goals to help your pupils gain the benefits that gardening brings, including supporting the environment and improving wellbeing. You will receive a certificate, a digital logo and rewards at each level to celebrate your achievement, with £350 of funding in reward vouchers available through completing all the levels.

A guide to funding your school garden

We know it can be a challenge to support school gardening financially so are pleased to share this funding guide. It's full of ideas to help you get your gardening projects started and engage with your school and local community to support your school garden.

Funding can feel like a bit of a minefield, especially if you have no experience of fundraising or applying for grant funding. This guide focuses on the essentials of building a successful project and how to fund it, with tips on getting started, who can help and signposts to different routes to funding. Work your way through each section so your planning can inform your fundraising approach.

Section one:
Getting started

Initial planning for your garden project will help you consider all the elements you need to include in your plan from why you want to start your project through to considering a timeline for it.

Who can help? Shares ideas for how to engage people in your school and local community and encourage them to support your project.

Section two:
Fundraising for your project

Fundraising in school helps you think about how you can raise funds through school events and suggests ideas for working with your pupils and PTA to help.

Support through the local community looks at how you could ask for donations and in-kind support from local organisations.

Grant funding takes you through the process of identifying a funder right through to top tips for completing grant funding applications.

Useful Links signposts to organisations who might be able to support your project, as well as grant funding search engines and other routes to finding support.

Throughout you'll see ideas shared by some of our brilliant schools audience and teachers who have been gardening successfully, helping you see just how they did it!

> **"**
> Starting up a school community garden project can seem daunting but with support it soon becomes a passion for all. The outdoors becomes another classroom for the children. They learn different skills and learn how to take responsibility for their environment. It is a proud moment when you see the children pick and eat what they have grown or sit amongst the plants and flowers. A great way to enjoy nature and mindfully relax.
>
> Mona Mehta, School Council Lead,
> **Hall Meadow Primary School, Kettering**

Getting started

Initial planning for your garden project

Once you have decided to embark on gardening in school, the best place to start is with a pen and paper, writing down all the things you want to achieve with your project and anything you're going to need to get there. Questions to consider:

1. What are you hoping to fund and why is it needed?

You don't have to have an outdoor space to garden and grow plants. Starting small can be a great route to developing gardening at your school. You might start by growing plants on windowsills or in containers outdoors; or add greenery to all your school spaces with indoor plants for each classroom. You may have identified a space that could be converted into a garden area in your school grounds to support pupil wellbeing or grow food. Gardening offers so many ways to inspire learning and support pupil outcomes that you may have decided on embedding growing in the curriculum.

Whatever your starting point, consider why the work you want to do is needed. With the many benefits school gardening can bring, think about who in the school community will benefit and what those benefits will be. This will help inform funding applications so you can demonstrate the importance of your project to the funder.

There are lots of ideas for projects on the **RHS Campaign for School Gardening** website and if you are planning a larger garden project our **resource** focused on setting up a school garden will help.

2. What equipment and resources do you need?

You will need to think about the types of equipment, tools and resources (plants, seeds, compost, staff time) that will help you on the road to success.

Your resources list could be quite short or substantial depending on what you are doing. It's important to include everything you will need so that you know all of the costs that must be covered.

3. How much money do you need?

When you have worked out what equipment and resources you need, the next step is to cost it out. This will help you create a budget and will form the target amount for your fundraising and/or funding applications. Research online, visit local garden centres and other suppliers who can give you guidance and maybe even offer discounts if you plan to buy in bulk. They may even offer you support free of charge!

Depending on the size and scale of your project, your budget will vary and will dictate what kind of funding you need. For example, if you are starting small, you may only need £100 to get going, an amount which could be raised via fundraising activities in school or even with local community support. If your budget is £1,000, you will most likely want to look at grant funding options alongside other fundraising.

4. Timeline

Think about a timeline for what you are doing, this will give a focus to your efforts and build momentum. When do you want to start? How long will it take? You'll need to factor in time to raise funds and get people engaged, as well as delivering the actual project itself.

When you have completed your initial planning, create a project plan document. This can be as simple as a word document, detailing all the key information about your project to share with relevant stakeholders. Don't forget to include time for evaluating your project; evidencing the success of it will not only help show impact to senior leaders and stakeholders, but is often a requirement of many grant funds you might want to apply to. Sharing evidence of success is also a great way to engage future supporters in the community.

Who can help?

Any kind of project is a great opportunity to engage with pupils, colleagues in school and members of your wider school and local community. With 30 million gardeners in the UK, it is highly likely there are people in your community who love to grow and have an interest in plants.

The school community

When you have done your initial planning, communicate what you're trying to achieve and why, to raise awareness and garner support.

Start sharing your ideas with pupils, colleagues, parents and carers, grandparents and the local community and invite people to help. You could formalise this by creating a school gardening committee who meet regularly to support and maintain your school garden project and offer one-off volunteering opportunities through open days.

Giving pupils agency in the project will help build the foundations of a long-term approach and create excitement in school. Engaging with fellow teachers and school staff can also add to the strength of the project and give you much-needed support as you move forward. Inviting parents and carers to help builds school to home relationships and you might find some very skilled volunteers who are willing to join in.

> " Get help from parents and grandparents, then get a few raised beds near classrooms so they have easy access to help water. Have one or two key people in school to drive the project along.
>
> Nicola Webzell, Forest School Practitioner,
> St Peter's C of E Primary School, Farnham

Your PTA will also be able to support in lots of ways encouraging others to volunteer time and expertise (more on this later). The school community can also reap the rewards through the produce a school garden can grow, and many schools grow food to support their local food banks or to sell at school fairs. Pupils can run social enterprise projects and the money raised can be invested back in the garden.

> " Enter lots of competitions to win things and get the parents involved. It's our second year and our school garden is doing so well and the children are so interested.
>
> Samantha Jackson,
> Learning Support Practitioner,
> Jackfield Infant School, Stoke on Trent,

The local community

Members of the local community beyond the school community could be willing to get involved, either with expertise in gardening and general manpower for larger projects, or even with in-kind (donations instead of money) or financial donations.

Corporate organisations often have Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) departments whose remit is to give back to their local communities. Some do this through corporate volunteering which can be an ideal way of kicking off a big project or perhaps revitalising a neglected garden space. Get in touch with local companies and see if they would like to help. Non-profit organisations that focus on supporting the community like, **GoodGym**, do brilliant work across the country and invite people to get in touch and ask for support.

Community organisations with charitable goals may be interested in working in partnership to support your school garden and this could be a route into not only securing funding for your project through a joint funding application, but also some long-term support in the shape of volunteers. Consider the types of organisations near you and who might be interested to help.

Find out more about local community and voluntary organisations by clicking on the map:

Fundraising for your project

Now you know what you want to achieve and how much money you need, consider the different ways to raise it from school fundraising to in-kind donations to grant funding applications.

Fundraising in school

Some of the most successful fundraising happens in school. Bake sales, ice cream sales, school fetes, Christmas fairs and non-uniform days, often run by the school's Parent Teacher Association (PTA), all generate much needed funds to support school projects.

The RHS runs a number of engagement projects that offer resources and a supportive framework that you can use for fundraising. Make sure you're signed up to the Campaign for School Gardening to be the first to hear about upcoming opportunities.

PTAs work tirelessly to provide additional funding, as well as creating a sense of community throughout the school. What better way to engage with parents and carers, than through a school garden project! In addition to the more traditional fundraising events, there are a myriad of ideas that could raise all-important funds.

PTAs may have members who know all about gardens – and maybe even all about grant funding; don't forget to ask for their advice and see what they can do.

Invite people to sponsor: a plant, a container garden, a garden tool or even a growing space. Ask for volunteers to help care for the garden; clear ground space for new growing areas; help build greenhouses or a garden shed.

> " Ask for things from parents and staff. It is amazing what people have in their sheds!
>
> Katie Reed,
> St John's Primary Academy, Stafford

Pupils will likely be brimming with ideas to raise funds and getting them involved will give an additional a sense of ownership. Invite their suggestions and have a vote to decide on the favourite, announcing the chosen idea in assembly so the whole school can join in.

Support through the local community

Local communities often have a variety of businesses who could be approached for sponsorship or in-kind support. Builders merchants might be willing to donate materials such as timber offcuts or pallets for raised beds, garden centres might be willing to donate plants or seeds and local landscapers or artists could support the creative side of bigger garden projects.

> " Get in contact with local companies and garden centres to see if they would be willing to donate anything to the school. Even a few packets of seeds are a good start.
>
> Dee Boyes and Mrs Potts,
> Countess Anne Church of England School, Hertfordshire

The **Rotary Club** supports a variety of local community projects and can be a good route to raising funds and support.

Your local council will have community funding opportunities to explore – find your local council's information **here**.

Crowdfunding

A great way to raise funds can be through online platforms such as **crowdfunder.co.uk**. There are different types of platforms with different models depending on the sector they support, so it's worth investigating which will best suit your project and the amount you need to raise. Crowdfunding can be a great way to raise awareness of your project with your local communities.

Grant funding

There are literally thousands of grant funds available from a huge variety of trusts, foundations and organisations who each fund different projects and programmes.

Identify a funder

You will need to spend some time researching potential funders and it's a good idea to create a list of possible options as you go, so you can refer back to it later. Don't forget to ask the PTA, parents and carers and other stakeholders in your school community if they have experience of grant funding; they may be able to point you in the right direction!

A great place to ask for help is the local library where they often have directories with lists of grant funders and will be able to signpost you to other local organisations. They will also possibly have access to grant funding search engines that would normally require a subscription, such as **Funds Online**.

Find your local library.

Funding search engines enable you to explore the different funders who might support your project, searching by theme, location or causes:

→ **Grants Online Regional Search**

→ **Grant Nav's 360 Giving Data**

→ **My Funding Central**

Sign up to newsletters of funding organisations you discover to stay up to date. New funding opportunities are announced regularly with sometimes very specific timeframes for applications, so this way you'll be the first to hear.

Organisations like Grants Online share regular updates and following organisations on social media will help you stay in touch.

Jargon buster

Terminology around funding can be confusing! These definitions will help you understand funding terms:

Aims/Objectives/Impacts - what are the overall aims and intended longer-term impacts of your group or project?

Outcomes – what positive changes and/or differences do you intend to create through your project? Think SMART outcomes: Sustainable, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound.

Outputs – what are the measurable, quantifiable things you will achieve (e.g. how many activities or lessons delivered for how many pupils) - be ambitious but also realistic with what you can achieve.

Deliverables– describe the activities you will run within your project: what/ when/ how and how these relate to the desired project outcomes

Match-funding – describes support that 'matches' the funding you are applying for. This can include any donations in-kind such as people's time, room hire or equipment as well as other financial donations from different sources.

Resources – what are the things you will need to deliver your project? Make sure to include a budget line for each, even if you are getting something free of charge. This could include staff or volunteer time, materials or equipment needed.

Monitoring and evaluation – what you will do to track the success and impact of your project. Monitoring describes how you will track each activity in relation to your desired outcomes and outputs. You can collect quantitative data (numbers of people, activities), or qualitative data (case studies, quotes from participants, focus groups). Evaluation is the process of looking back and reflecting on what went well or could be improved upon for next time.

Always keep in mind what you are hoping to fund, as every grant funder will have areas of focus ranging from big themes like supporting education or any kind of community engagement activity to small areas of focus like support for specific beneficiaries (the people who will benefit from your project).

Themes you could explore that may align with school gardening projects include things like:

→ Outdoor learning
→ Children's health and wellbeing
→ Food growing
→ Trees/planting/garden resources

→ Projects that bring communities together
→ Closing the attainment gap
→ Special educational needs support

The focus of your project - what you will do, who it will benefit and how much money you need - will all dictate the fund you can apply to. Some funds are very small starting at £500 and some go right up to £1 million (larger funds usually require applicants to meet very specific criteria around things like organisational governance and annual turnover). Funders often like to see match-funding, where you have secured other support from different sources which helps to demonstrate the value of your project as an investment and something others want to commit too supporting.

In the **Useful Links** section you'll see a list of organisations who may be able to support a school gardening focused project.

Eligibility and criteria

Every funder has specific criteria that must be met before an application can even be considered. You need to check your **eligibility** to apply and the **criteria** for the fund you want to apply to. It is **absolutely essential to read and understand the eligibility and criteria** before you start an application. Read all the information available thoroughly so you fully understand the aims of the fund. As a starting point, questions to consider:

1. Do they fund school projects?

Some funders do not support projects which are deemed to be supported by statutory school funding already.

2. Who do they fund?

Some funders only fund organisations that are registered charities, community interest companies (CICs) or similar, and will exclude applications from anyone else. This is where working in partnership through a joint application with such an organisation may help you access funds you would not otherwise be able to. Some PTAs have registered status (for example, as a charity or CIC) that could help you access funds.

3. What projects do they fund?

As described, funders will support specific themes and whilst this may include themes around education, they may not support schools directly. They may only support people with specific demographics and require specific outcomes that any project they fund must meet.

4. Where do they fund?

Some funders work in very specific local or regional locations and will not fund projects outside of the designated area.

5. What won't they fund?

In addition to listing what they do fund, some funders list what they won't fund. It may be they fund activity in the theme your project aligns with, but they may not fund things like staff salaries or building (capital) projects.

6. When will they fund?

Funding opportunities can be time specific and only open for a period; some may only fund projects that have started and some will only fund projects that haven't started. Make sure you are clear what the application process involves and what all the relevant deadlines are.

7. Can I meet all of the criteria?

If you cannot meet all of the criteria for eligibility and for the actual project you want to fund, you cannot apply and it's best to move on to another funder.

Some funders are happy to talk to potential applicants on the phone or via email so that you can check anything you're not sure about before you apply. They also often have FAQs on their websites which can help with straightforward queries.

The application

When you know you are eligible to apply for a fund, and that your project aligns with funder's aims (what they fund) download the application form. Some grants require you to submit through a portal, but it's usually possible to click through each question and copy them into a Word document so you can draft your answers. Make a note of the word count – applications that go over word counts won't be accepted. But don't panic – it can actually help you really think about your responses and be more careful with your answers!

Read through the application and consider what information and evidence you will need to support it. Questions applications are likely to include:

→ What is your project/what do you want us to fund?

→ Why is it needed?

→ Who are the beneficiaries/who will it help?

→ What are the aims/outcomes of it?

→ How much money are you applying for? (some funds may have set amounts, some may give the opportunity to apply for anything up to a certain amount)

→ What is the timeline for your project?

→ How will you evaluate your project?

All these questions can be answered using your initial planning and thinking as a guide, ensuring you have the right information available to inform your answers. If working in a group, share the load with your colleagues and supporters, working to their strengths by giving them questions to focus on that fit their expertise.

When you read through your draft, imagine reading your answers from the perspective of someone who knows nothing about your project:

→ Is it clear what you want to do?

→ Does it make sense? Does it show why you want to do it?

→ Does your proposed timeline and budget add up?

→ Have you shown how you will evaluate your project?

Funders like to support projects that demonstrate how they will be evaluated to learn and develop the most effective ways of working and showing impact.

Write your answers from the perspective that the person reading them is someone who knows nothing about your project. Think about how you can make your project stand out from the many other applications received. It is always helpful to show how you will build on support if successful and continue the project after the funding has ended.

Invite other stakeholders to read through the application and check for proofing errors and general readability, and that all the statements you make are backed up by the right evidence and research.

Evidence for applications

Every funding application will require evidence to support it. This can include very practical evidence to prove who your organisation is (for example your school URN which can be obtained from the school office), who the lead applicant is and their contact details. It is really important to know from the start which colleagues, if any, will be involved in the project, and who will help with your application so you know whose details to include in the application form. It may be a requirement to evidence specific policies relating to your project, such as risk assessments or safeguarding which you are likely already familiar with. Make sure you have access to the most up-to-date policy documents to include with your application.

You may need data and statistics to support your application, especially when it comes to evidence of need for your project. If you need data and information about your school, such as levels of pupil premium, this can be found on **Get Information about Schools**, the Government database of information about every school in the country.

If you use research to support your application, make sure it is specifically linked to your project and its outcomes. Any research referred to should demonstrate why your project is needed and what value it will bring, linking to the specific aims of what you are trying to achieve. Is it clear who the beneficiaries are, what they need and what the benefit of your project will be to them? Can you demonstrate how your project will meet their needs? Make sure you can show this through your answers.

When you have finalised all your responses, it is time to submit. Always have another proofread to check the word count and for anything missing and save a copy of your submitted application for future reference.

Responses to funding applications can vary greatly. Some funders will provide specific dates for applying to a fund and when a panel will sit and review them; some funds are open throughout the year and review applications as they come in. If there are multiple applications to a fund this will add to the wait – but be patient and keep an eye on your email and funder websites for updates. Please also be aware that sometimes if you are unsuccessful, you may not hear from the funder at all.

It can be frustrating after all that work if your funding application is unsuccessful. Common mistakes include:

→ The applicant or project were not eligible

→ The applicant or project were not aligned with the aims of the grant fund

→ The application answers were inconsistent or unclear

→ The application requested funding for something not covered by the grant

→ The application answers were repetitious

→ The application answers did not relate research evidence used to the project

→ The application did not demonstrate understanding of beneficiaries/participants

→ The use of 'I' in answers

→ The budget did not reflect the project or aims of the grant

→ The timeline of the project did not fit with the timeline required

Or sometimes, they received so many other applications and they can't fund them all.

But don't lose heart! Every time you apply for funding you are building skills and experience and will likely get better at completing applications as you go.

Useful links:

The **RHS Campaign for School Gardening** has resources, training and lots more to help you on your school gardening journey. You can sign up completely free of charge and you'll receive a welcome pack with free seeds and a growing calendar. You can also find out all about the **School Gardening Awards**, which offer £350 of reward vouchers for schools actively engaged in gardening.

Here you will find links to grant funding search engines, local community supporters and organisations who at the time of publication offer grant funding and support to schools. Follow the links to find out more and direct any queries about these opportunities to the relevant organisation.

General support and information

For information about schools use the Get Information about Schools service **www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/**

Find your local council with possible community funding opportunities here **www.gov.uk/apply-funding-community-project**

Find your local library here **www.gov.uk/local-library-services.**

Use these links to find your local community voluntary service:

→ **England navca.org.uk/find-a-member-1**
→ **Northern Ireland www.communityni.org/**
→ **Scotland scvo.scot/funding**
→ **Wales wcva.cymru/**
→ **Third Sector Support Wales knowledgehub.cymru/contact/**

Grant funder search engines

Funds online - **fundsonline.org.uk/** - requires a subscription but might be accessible via library or

My Funding Central - **www.myfundingcentral.co.uk/**

Grants4School - **www.grants4schools.info/**

Grant Nav's 360 Giving Data – search by theme or location **grantnav.threesixtygiving.org/**

Grants Online Regional Search **www.grantsonline.org.uk/search/grants**

Funder organisations

British Society of Soil Science provide a number of grants and awards each year which promote research and education across all soil science disciplines. soils.org.uk/grants-awards/

Ernest Cook Trust – offer grants to schools within a 15 mile radius of one of their estates and have an Outdoors Essentials Grant to help you get started. ernestcooktrust.org.uk/what-we-do/everything-outdoors/#schools

Field Studies Council provide support to help disadvantaged young people to access environmental education and outdoor learning. field-studies-council.org/fsc-grants-for-schools/

Kew Youth programme provide support direct to young people aged 14-25 for summer projects. growwild.kew.org/apply-grant/youth

Learning through Landscapes provide funds of £500 outdoor equipment. ltl.org.uk/projects/local-school-nature-grants/

The Woodland Trust provide free trees and hedging to schools and communities. woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/schools-and-communities/

Community funds

Community Matters supports local community projects via John Lewis and Partners stores which schools can apply to.

National Lottery Awards for All supports community projects that connect people and use their existing skills and experience. tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/national-lottery-awards-for-all-england#section-1

Tesco Stronger Starts supports schools and community projects across the UK. Apply for outdoor, afterschool and growing projects. tescostrongerstarts.org.uk/

Other ways to get support

Brevio is a matching tool that helps match your project to funders with the right criteria. nonprofits.brevio.org/

GoodGym provides support in the local community to help with physical activity.goodgym.org/

Local Giving offer fundraising tools, grants and support to organisations, their supporters, and large scale grant makers. localgiving.org/

Neighbourly connects you with businesses that have volunteer time, money or product surplus. neighbourly.com/solution/good-causes

Parentkind offer support for engaging with parents and carers and making the most of your PTA. parentkind.org.uk/for-schools

RHS CAMPAIGN FOR

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For more inspiration and ideas visit **rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening** where you will find further resources and information about how the Campaign for School Gardening can help you and the children and young people you work with get into growing and nature.

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