



## Garden Grant Writing Tips

The following is a list of suggestions compiled by FoodCorps Fellows who contributed to our 2013 review process.

In no way are you required to follow these suggestions but feel free to utilize them as a resource in working on your application

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When writing a grant, be sure to remember the following:

- 1. BE SPECIFIC AND USE NUMBERS!**
- 2. MAKE IT UNIQUE.**
- 3. WATCH YOUR NARRATIVE.**
- 4. BE REALISTIC AND HUMBLE.**
- 5. BE SPECIFIC ABOUT NEEDS/STRUGGLES.**
- 6. BE PASSIONATE.**

### **BE SPECIFIC AND USE NUMBERS**

#### **In the Budget section:**

Be specific about money (you are after all, asking for money). How are you going to use the money and for what, *exactly*.

**Poor example:** "The funds will be used to purchase supplies and supplement labor for our garden program"

**Better:** "The funds will be used to buy potting soil, fertilizer, pots, labels, etc for the greenhouse; sprinklers, hoses, and lumber for garden beds in the garden; and cooking

ingredients, utensils, and plates for the kitchen. The remainder will be used towards staff expenses (no more than 1/4 of the grant funds).”

**Even Better:** an itemized list:

#### GARDEN VERMICOMPOSTING PROJECT ESTIMATED BUDGET

Four 4' x 8' worm bins- (eight 4' x 8' 3/4" plywood, 116' cedar 2" x 12", screws, hinges) - Approx. \$500.00

One cedar vermicompost holding bin (100' cedar 2" x 12", 16' cedar 4" x 4", screws, hinges) - Approx. \$120.00

100 pounds of Eisenia fetida (red worms)- Approx. \$875.00

Industrial paper shredder - Approx. \$200.00

Pitchfork - Approx \$40.00

Shovel - Approx \$40.00

Hanging Scale- approx \$90.00

Garden Hose- approx -\$35.00

Wheelbarrow- approx- \$100.00

TOTAL: APPROX. \$2,000.00

*\*this is especially important if your grant project is nested within a larger project for which you are outlining overall costs and revenues. Make sure it is clear how this \$2000 (or whatever the request is for) fits into that larger budget specifically*

**Pick a specific project** to focus on. It is much more attractive (from a reviewer standpoint) to have funds go to a specific part of a project (as in the example above, for a Vermicomposting system that supports the overall garden program/vision) than for funds to be requested for a few things here, and a few things there in a scattered, disconnected manner. Bigger projects are not necessarily better. It's better to have a very clear, well-organized project proposal that will engage 60 students than a broad, vague one that intends to engage 500.

#### **In how you Measure Success:**

When answering this question, here are some ideas to jog your thoughts:

- ❖ How long has the program been around?
- ❖ How many meals have come out of your garden?
- ❖ How many pounds of produce been donated? How much time do kids actually spend in the garden? (if you have a FoodCorps service member, your fellow can often help you generate these numbers from America Learns)
- ❖ Do you collect any information from the students in your program about their reactions to gardening and cooking/trying healthy foods? Information could range from simple, such as class polls or votes conducted in response to taste tests, or more in-depth, such as pre- and post surveys of garden programs.

**Poor Example:**

“Our garden coordinator \_\_\_\_\_ spends much of her time working with children throughout the school.”

**Better:**

“Each class comes to the Farm for forty-five minutes two times per month”

**Even Better:**

“Our garden hosts 50 students each week in 45 minutes classes with 2 instructors at each class. This is 3 hours in the garden per student. Produce from the garden is used in a meal in the cafeteria once a month. This is 9 meals a year. We hope to improve our garden program by increasing our student participation to 100 students twice a week, instead of once a week. This would increase student participation to 6 hours a month. We hope to use garden produce in 2 cafeteria meals a month, increasing garden meals to 18 meals a year.”

**MAKE IT UNIQUE**

If you are writing one template proposal for a number of different sites, make sure you tailor each one in some way. One reviewer could read all of them and may deduct points. Relatedly, if the original template proposal isn't stellar, all of the submissions may get the same low grade. Increase your chances of getting one of your applications awarded by making a strong, individual case with each request.

In addition, if you are just submitting one application, make it stand out! All garden projects are special, but how is yours a shining example of a sustainable program that will be incorporated into the school's culture and curriculum?

**WATCH YOUR NARRATIVE**

Keep most of your wording succinct and to the point. Use bullet points! A grant reviewer, no matter how brilliant, only has so much space in the brain (especially after reviewing a number of grants in succession). Don't clutter their ability to see your project clearly by providing extraneous information. There is a fine line between unnecessary language and making a point or saying something unique about your program with strong imagery.

**Poor:**

“We do have tools to garden, but we desperately need a safe place to store them. With the grant we can do that! Please help us have more time in the garden!”

**Better:**

“This grant will make it possible for city kids, many of which are low-income, to touch worms, smell lemon verbena, taste egg flower soup, hear cows moo, and see the beauty of real life on a farm in their own community.”

**Even Better:**

This grant will make it possible for **100** city kids, many of which are low-income, to touch worms, smell lemon verbena, taste egg flower soup, hear cows moo, and see the beauty of real life on a farm in their own community. There will be 14 classes throughout the year which will cover the following topics:

- Seed starting
- Planning a garden
- Planting
- Harvesting
- Composting...”

## **BE REALISTIC AND HUMBLE**

Be realistic about the garden project you are planning. Outline how each phase of the process will be conducted. If you have specific and/or unique challenges facing your project, talk about them and the ways you will overcome them. Show that you have really thought through your project and all the possible hurdles you may have to jump over, and then be specific about how you will address each.

**Poor:**

“Last summer we had a hard time getting volunteers to water the garden, but we’re hopeful that this year we’ll recruit more people to help.”

**Better:**

“We learned a lot last summer when the volunteers we recruited couldn’t keep up with the needs of the garden. At the end of the season we developed a task force that researched and presented alternatives. This spring we will work on outreach to parents, partner organizations, and teachers living in the neighborhood through newsletters, social media and PAC meetings to recruit volunteers.”

## **BE SPECIFIC ABOUT NEEDS/STRUGGLES**

Use an opportunity to express challenges faced by your particular school/community to your advantage! Applications are stronger when the grant reviewer understands the specific/unique needs of your community that can be addressed through a grant.

Here are some ideas for how to find more specific resources:

- Communicate with your local public health offices and organizations to learn more about the challenges and needs relating to the health of children and adolescents in your area, and describe how your garden program can help meet those needs.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also maintains statistics about the health of youth in America, often broken down to the state level. You can find more information on [their website](#).
- The County Health Rankings and Roadmaps [website](#) also has public health information broken down by county.
- Think locally as well. What do the children at your school need, and how does your program serve that? Think about your free and reduced lunch rate, the number and types of nurse visits, the breakdown of disciplinary issues at your school, the challenges your student tend to face at home - how does your school garden fit into the larger picture of your school community?

## **BE PASSIONATE!**

It helps to show passion for your project, especially in the overall goals section.