



The “Aha” Guide to Maximizing School Resources: Tips for Obtaining What Is Available

Finding financial and material resources is possible. Plenty of foundations, organizations, companies, and individuals are willing to contribute their time, money, or services to schools. This document will help you learn how to identify and acquire fiscal, personnel, and material resources by using all members of your school community—the students, families, and local businesses in your neighborhood. As an advocate for your school community, you will open doors to new possibilities and resources.

Key Questions:

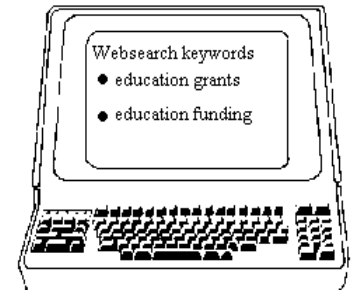
- ✓ How can we identify and obtain resources?
- ✓ How can we find time to research grants and write proposals?
- ✓ What other resources are available?

Finding Grants: Ways to Increase Your School’s Resources

I know grant opportunities are out there, but how do I find them?

Grants and funding opportunities come in all shapes and sizes. There are organizations specifically devoted to compiling grant information and other funding resources. They help schools and communities develop appropriate applications to meet the requirements of specific funding opportunities. Some of these organizations are listed below:

- ❖ Departments of education (federal, state, and local)
- ❖ Professional national or local associations
- ❖ The Foundation Center (<http://fdncenter.org/>)
- ❖ SchoolGrants (<http://www.schoolgrants.org/>)
- ❖ Polaris Grants Central (<http://www.schoolgrants.org/>)
- ❖ Council on Foundations (www.cof.org/)
- ❖ FundsNet (<http://www.fundsnet.com/>)
- ❖ GrantsTech (<http://www.grantstech.com/>)



Another way to find out what types of grants are available comes from watching television, reading the newspaper or magazines, and listening to the radio. Many companies that sponsor educational programming like to “show off” by advertising the work they have done. For example, an advertisement for one company showed several activities that it sponsored: work with Habitat for Humanity, a field trip for fourth graders, a tutoring program, and a mentorship program. By doing some research on this company, members of a school fund-raising committee learned that it offered several types of grant opportunities, including education, after-school programming, and community development.

Sometimes making a simple phone call to the local branch of a company or even to the national customer service line can lead you to information about grant and funding opportunities. Finally, by ordering and reading the financial report of a company or an organization, you can learn about the quantity and types of philanthropic endeavors that it supports.

I know which grant I am interested in. How do I actually write the application or proposal?

A great deal of information is available about writing grants. It is possible to take classes or workshops on the subject, and many books explain the process. The following books offer guidance in grant writing and may help as you write your application:

- ✓ Belcher, J. C., and Jacobsen, J. M. (1992). *From Idea to Funded Project: Grant Proposals That Work*, 4th ed. Westport, CT: Oryx Press.
- ✓ Browning, B. (2001). *Grant Writing for Dummies*. New York: Hungry Minds.
- ✓ Burke, J., and Prater, C. A. (2000). *I'll Grant You That: A Step-By-Step Guide to Finding Funds, Designing Winning Projects, and Writing Powerful Proposals*. Westport, CT: Heinemann.
- ✓ Ferguson, J., Drake-Major, L., and Gershowitz, M. V. (1999). *The Grantseeker's Answerbook: Fundraising Experts Respond to the Most Commonly Asked Questions*, 2nd ed. Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Publishers.
- ✓ New, C. C., and Quick, J. A. (1998). *Grantseeker's Toolkit: A Comprehensive Guide to Finding Funding*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- ✓ Orlich, D. C. (1996). *Designing Successful Grant Proposals*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

You can also refer to the organizations named on page 1 for resources on how to write grant proposals and step-by-step instructions.

The following suggestions come directly from the Web sites of grant organizations (refer to the sites for further information):



From Polaris Grants Central:

- ❖ Never write a proposal if you have not first fully developed the project. Otherwise, you have nothing to write about.
- ❖ Have multiple fully developed projects on the shelf, ready for proposal writing, and you'll always meet proposal deadlines.
- ❖ Each grantmaker should receive a different, highly personalized proposal, fitting "to the letter" whatever guidelines it requires.
- ❖ Write persuasively—you are selling a concept. You are not writing a term paper.
- ❖ No jargon. No "beaurocrap." Use simple, clear, concise sentences.
- ❖ Never, ever cheat on margins, pages, words—on anything. After all, if you cheat on a proposal, then what in the world will you do with the money!
- ❖ No matter what you've been told, don't shotgun—don't write one proposal and then mail it out to a bunch of potential funders.

- ❖ When developing a budget, think project budget first. List every penny it will take to run the entire project. Don't forget support staff, copying charges, postage, memberships, telephone charges, meeting costs, and all the hidden expenses. Then think, what part of this budget is appropriate to request from the funder? No grantmaker will fund every cent of a project. The funder wants to see your investment. Then put together an itemized list for the part of the overall budget you're requesting from the funder, the request budget. Use this request budget to fill out the grantmaker's summary forms. Remember, the forms you see are just summaries of line items, not the budget itself, which comes from those line items you used to complete the summary.
- ❖ Grantmakers want good proposals. They will help you. Call them and ask questions—but be sure that you've done your homework first and that you're not asking questions already answered in their literature.

Available at: <http://polarisgrantscentral.net/tips.html>

From SchoolGrants



- ❖ The most important thing for grant writers to remember is that they might submit a perfect application and still receive a rejection. Most foundations have limited resources with which to fund projects. Do not get discouraged if you get a rejection from a possible funding source.
- ❖ READ the grantor's guidelines and instructions carefully. Do not try to make the grantor's program fit what you want to do—your program must be in line with the funding agency's priorities.
- ❖ Ideas should be innovative, creative, and educational. Grantors will rarely fund operating expenses—they usually invest in supplemental programs. Private foundations often seek creative solutions to problems and needs, but they usually do not wish to fund risky projects. Try proposing a project that puts a fresh spin on an existing idea.
- ❖ Is your project replicable? If so, tell the grantor how you plan to extend the project to other grades or schools.
- ❖ If possible, cite research that supports the program for which you are requesting funding.
- ❖ Clarity of communicating your ideas is very important. Have someone who is not involved in the project in any way read and critique your draft application.
- ❖ Follow the grantor's instructions to the letter. Applications are turned away when they do not exactly meet the funding agency's requirements.
- ❖ If your project is rejected, ask the grantor for reviewer comments. The comments can offer invaluable tips for improving future grant applications. Never forget to write thank you notes—even if your project is not funded initially!

Available at: http://www.schoolgrants.org/grant_tips.htm

I just don't have hours and hours to research funding opportunities and write grants. How do I stay on top of it all?

Hints for funding committees:

- ✓ Keep the committee small, but make sure that each member has sufficient support to work effectively.
- ✓ Explicitly define the role of each committee member to avoid duplicating efforts.
- ✓ Hold meetings regularly to update, to plan, and to maintain a development calendar for future projects.
- ✓ Have one person take the lead in pursuing each funding opportunity. He or she should be in charge of collecting the necessary proposal or application requirements and submitting them on time.

Consider developing funding committees. Finding funding opportunities and writing grants are not one-person jobs. They require the work of a committee whose members might include teachers, family members, administrators, and other community members.

It is very important to involve families and other community members in fundraising efforts. They have a vested interest in making the school better and are generally willing to become involved in school improvement efforts. Look for potential committee members in the school's parent-teacher organization, such as the PTA, or among members of other family advocacy groups. Individuals who participate in these activities are generally both capable and willing to assist. They may also have the connections to get other community members involved in efforts to improve school quality.

Moving Beyond Grants: Ways to Enhance Your School's Resources

What other funding opportunities are available?

Many schools want grants because they are a way to get a large amount of money or resources at one time, but they shouldn't overlook other ways to get resources. These opportunities vary from major to minor contributions on the part of the school, the community, or individuals. They may be one-time opportunities or long-term commitments. Most important, each can facilitate growth within the school.

School-community partnerships open doors to informal and formal relationships within the community. These relationships foster the natural links between education and the "real world." Involving philanthropic and community organizations in schools is also a way to increase resources. Such organizations allow children to learn from one another and to develop positive relationships with adults in their community. Contact local or national chapters to begin developing these partnerships.

Possible partner organizations:

- ✓ AmeriCorps
- ✓ National PTA or local parent-teacher organizations
- ✓ Girl Scouts of the USA
- ✓ Boy Scouts of America
- ✓ Great Books Foundation
- ✓ Big Brothers Big Sisters of America
- ✓ America Reads
- ✓ America Counts
- ✓ Everybody Wins!

Possible volunteer opportunities:

- ✓ Reading a book to the class
- ✓ Tutoring students
- ✓ Being a mentor
- ✓ Helping with school clean-up
- ✓ Contributing materials (paper, markers, etc.)
- ✓ Helping with food, clothing, and toy drives

Creating volunteer and donation opportunities allows schools to create links to the community, lets students see the importance of “giving back,” and gets the school the resources it needs. Schools can advertise volunteer or donor opportunities by posting information in local stores, sending notes home to parents, and publishing press releases. Opportunities can vary according to curriculum, projects, or day-to-day functioning.



Finally, freebies and discounts are available to educators throughout the community. Many companies and organizations are sensitive to the needs of teachers and schools and offer services and materials at free or reduced costs. And many free resources are available on the Internet.

How can members of my school community contribute to the school?

It is important to keep in mind the personnel resources that are available to schools. Individuals within the school community are able to advocate for and find opportunities for student growth and school improvement. Everyone wants his or her school to be the best it can be, so getting internal school community members involved in acquiring resources for schools is always possible. Students, parents, teachers, and local businesses are able to brainstorm and execute great ideas to increase resources.

Student Contributions

Students often contribute to their school because they realize that by doing so they are contributing to their own growth and success. Students can find many ways to help themselves. These ideas not only lend themselves to increasing resources but also are fantastic academic lessons (charity, economics, recycling).

Ideas for students:

- ✓ Bake sale
- ✓ Car wash
- ✓ Clothing drive
- ✓ Candy bar sales
- ✓ School store

Family Contributions

Family members want the most for their children and will work to ensure that it happens. As well as helping informally, many PTAs and PTOs organize fund-raisers to support school activities. Finally, family members may be affiliated with organizations that can make contributions. For example, a parent who owns a print shop or paper warehouse may donate folders, binders, and paper.

Ideas for families:

- ✓ Supply drive at work (paper, pencils, pens)
- ✓ Bake sale
- ✓ Yard sale
- ✓ Gift wrap or candy bar sales

Educator Contributions

Educators may contribute because they know firsthand what schools, teachers, and students need. They can be very savvy about calling local merchants and asking for discounts or free services. They are able to coordinate fund-raising activities. Teachers may know about free things available to them in the neighborhood and be skillful in acquiring resources. They are also able to network with one another to share ideas about getting the most out of what is available.

Ideas for teachers:

- ✓ Collection campaigns for box tops, grocery receipts, and so on
- ✓ Teacher cards for discounts at book, video, and toy stores
- ✓ Free field trips to local organizations and businesses, such as banks, grocery stores, animal shelters, and libraries

Business Contributions

Finally, local businesses and organizations can make unique contributions to schools because they generally have the resources that schools seek. They are able to organize fund-raising opportunities for schools. For example, a local store may be willing to sell an item and give a portion of the proceeds to the local school district—it's good advertising for the store. Finally, many companies upgrade computers, typewriters, and other equipment from time to time. They may be willing to give the materials they are discarding to local schools—especially when a tax credit is an extra incentive.

Ideas for businesses:

- ✓ Discount cards with proceeds toward schools
- ✓ Contribution box placed on the checkout counter
- ✓ Donations of underused or unnecessary equipment
- ✓ Purchase of advertising in school paper

How can I create partnerships with community members and how can they help me with resources?

Community partnerships can have an impact on—

- ✓ achievement and competency,
- ✓ technology use and support,
- ✓ graduation and School-to-Work,
- ✓ systemic change,
- ✓ school readiness and family issues,
- ✓ community development,
- ✓ safe and drug-free schools, and
- ✓ professional development.

National Association of Partners in Education (2001). *Partnerships 2000: A Decade of Growth and Change*. Alexandria, VA: National Association of Partners in Education

Partnerships between schools and community members are important to education and schools. In fact, according to a survey report from Partners in Education, the number of school-community partnerships has risen from 51% of all districts in 1990 to 69% in 2000. Why? Schools and communities are seeing the importance of the tie they have to each other and the necessity of working together. However, rural communities are still having the most difficulty in developing partnerships and finding the resources they need.

Schools often lack resources that the community is able to supply. By selecting a partnership professional, schools have access to more community members, including businesses and institutions of higher education. Technology and professional

development are growing focus areas for these partnerships. An important outcome of these partnerships is the lesson that children learn: the value of giving back to the community and the importance of contributing skills and knowledge to others.

Many resources are available to help you form partnerships with families, universities, and other community members. Once you have made these connections, you can create formal and informal relationships to ensure that students' needs are being met.

Key guidelines to creating partnerships:

- ✓ Keep an “open door” policy to community organizations—community elections, community meetings, and so on.
- ✓ Reach out to corporations and businesses.
- ✓ Research and get involved in outreach programs.
- ✓ Create alliances with community service agencies.
- ✓ Invite parents to do outreach.

You'll find the following resources valuable as you create partnerships:

Dorfman, Diane. (1998) *Building Partnerships Workbook*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Library, Rural Education Project. www.nrel.org/ruraled/

Epstein, Joyce. (1998) *Chalkboard: Tips and Resources. Sample Activities for Successful School, Family, Community Partnerships*. Baltimore, MD: National Network of Partnership - 2000 Schools. www.handinhand.org/epstein.html

North Carolina Association of Educators. (2001) *NCAE Builds Family-School-Community Partnerships*. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Association of Educators. www.ncae.org/news/press/fscpartnerships.shtml



Partners in Education: www.partnersineducation.org/

What other resources can I look for?

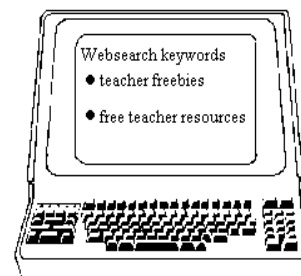
While sitting at the breakfast table, look at the top of the cereal box for a symbol that states “box tops for education.” At the checkout line in the grocery store, look for signs saying “resources for the classroom: save your receipts.” These fundraising opportunities require only that schools arrange for someone to organize them—no grant writing, no partnership development. Many similar opportunities are available. Simply look around and you will see plenty of opportunities to get resources for your school.

- ❖ The Scholastic Book Club: Teachers earn points for classroom books when children order books. Sometimes Scholastic also sponsors book giveaways.
- ❖ Local libraries: Used book sales offer opportunities for schools to purchase books very inexpensively. Some libraries may be willing to donate the books.
- ❖ Federal, state, and local governments: If you contact the appropriate departments, they will send you materials or arrange field trips. For example, when studying the federal government, a teacher contacted her state representative and arranged a tour of the U.S. Capitol for her students, including tickets to sit in the gallery and watch congress in session.
- ❖ Hollywood Video: This chain of video stores offers a movie rental card that allows teachers to rent educational videos for free and to extend the rental time to five days.
- ❖ The National Education Association: This teachers' organization has “Free Things for Your Students and Classroom”: www.nea.org/grants/free.html.

- ❖ Parents, Educators, and Publishers National Directory of Computer Recycling (PEP) and Computers for Learning: These organizations are accessible through the Internet and telephone to help schools find donated computers. PEP is available at www.microweb.com/pepsite/Recycle_index.html and can be reached by phone at (415) 382-1818. Computers for Learning is available at www.computers.fed.gov/school/user.asp.

Is the Internet a good place to look?

The Internet has lots of free classroom resources—coloring sheets, word finds, games, information, and shareware. One teacher constructed an entire unit out of resources available to her and her class through the Internet. Also, teachers should network with other teachers to share information about acquiring certain materials or resources or finding new sources of free or inexpensive materials.



Which corporations offer funding opportunities or contributions to schools?

The following list of companies and organizations have foundations with grant opportunities, employee volunteer programs, or donation programs. Contact these companies directly to find out just what they have to offer your school.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Allstate | <input type="checkbox"/> Hewlett-Packard | <input type="checkbox"/> Pfizer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> AOL | <input type="checkbox"/> Home Depot | <input type="checkbox"/> Pillsbury |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bank of America | <input type="checkbox"/> Howard Johnson | <input type="checkbox"/> Pitney Bowes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BJ's Wholesale Club | <input type="checkbox"/> IBM | <input type="checkbox"/> Procter & Gamble |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Best Buy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intel | <input type="checkbox"/> Prudential |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cisco | <input type="checkbox"/> Kelloggs | <input type="checkbox"/> Ralston Purina |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Citigroup | <input type="checkbox"/> Kennedy Center | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading Is Fundamental |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coca-Cola | <input type="checkbox"/> Kimberly – Clark | <input type="checkbox"/> Samsung |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comcast | <input type="checkbox"/> Kiwanis | <input type="checkbox"/> Sonoco |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eli Lilly and Company | <input type="checkbox"/> Kmart | <input type="checkbox"/> Sprint |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enron | <input type="checkbox"/> Kraft | <input type="checkbox"/> Starbucks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Federated Department Stores | <input type="checkbox"/> LensCrafters | <input type="checkbox"/> State Farm Insurance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fleet National Bank | <input type="checkbox"/> MBNA | <input type="checkbox"/> Texas Instruments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GE Fund | <input type="checkbox"/> MCI Worldcom | <input type="checkbox"/> Timberland |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Mills | <input type="checkbox"/> Marriott | <input type="checkbox"/> Toyota |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Motors | <input type="checkbox"/> Microsoft | <input type="checkbox"/> Travelers Insurance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> H&R Block | <input type="checkbox"/> Museum of Modern Art | <input type="checkbox"/> UPS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hallmark Cards | <input type="checkbox"/> Nike | <input type="checkbox"/> Verizon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hasbro | <input type="checkbox"/> Novartis | <input type="checkbox"/> Walmart |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Oracle | <input type="checkbox"/> Whirlpool |

What have I learned?

Resources are plentiful and are accessible to everyone. Acquiring them may require teamwork and creativity, but schools usually find that putting forth the effort is worthwhile. With a little ingenuity and a lot of help from the community, both internal and external, schools can get what they need to be successful.

The most important lesson of all is to keep trying to make positive community connections and innovate in the classroom to improve the lives of students. When educators continue to work for students, the community is more likely to become invested in the school and contribute toward its success.

GOOD LUCK!