

3 Fundraising



Slow Food USA®

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Introduction

School gardens cost a lot of money to build, to develop experiential learning opportunities, and to maintain over many years. The costs may appear to be daunting, but many within the Slow Food world see great value in the education that the children receive. And, with careful planning and some good luck, school gardens can become self-sustaining or even profit centers that can support the development of larger projects or gardens at other schools.

The Design & Build chapter described a series of steps and created a project plan and a budget for that plan. Moving forward, a Slow Food chapter can play an important role in how to best fund the project. When setting out to fundraise, it is important to be realistic while also reaching for the stars. There is always the possibility that there can be a financial angel who is just looking for the right project to support. However, the more realistic approach is to look at a multi-phased fundraising approach to capture enough interest from the community to provide funds for the project. This chapter will discuss various routes for fundraising.

Tell Your Story

The first and, in many ways, the most important step in approaching a potential funder is to develop a powerful story behind the school garden project. Images of students growing healthy food on school grounds to learn about healthy eating pretty much will write itself into a compelling story. Add some images of children working in the garden along with some student-written testimonials and people will be engaged in the project. Slow Food Miami describes this process:

State the fundraising mission of the event before and during the event. At every Slow Food event and in every piece of media that you distribute there is an opportunity to let the community know about the garden project. Try to tell a compelling story about the importance of school gardens. When there is an audience listening, they will forget most of what they heard, but they will remember a story and they will remember if they liked and trusted the storyteller. Stories humanize and make lofty ideas real. Visuals, of course, are invaluable as well and can add to the story. The Slow Food Miami chapter consistently lets guests know that “All proceeds from this event go to our school garden program.” It is up to the Slow Food chapter to decide when and how often to tell the story and how to build up for the “ask.” Strategies include making an announcement at the meal, placing donation cards at every place setting, or even having a live auction and asking people to raise their hand if they will make an additional gift to the garden. Some donors love to be a role model and to goad others on in public. Make clear that donors may contribute anywhere from a few dollars to funding for an entire garden or more. Slow Food Miami has used all of these techniques, including showing photos of children’s big smiles as they harvest carrots for the first time.



Network

Donations can come from all types of interactions, even some very unlikely places. It can be helpful to network, using connections that come from the Slow Food membership. Slow Food Miami overheard that there was a lady who loved gardening and was looking for a way to give back. Through a conversation, it was discovered that she was having a birthday party, and it was decided that she could ask for donations to Slow Food Miami in lieu of gifts. The chapter set up a “hot button” on their website, and donors could give in her name through the website. Over \$1,500 was raised from her kind gesture and from a member who followed through on a conversation. Part of networking also includes the advertising for the garden and fundraising project. Slow Food chapters may utilize social media, email lists, and news opportunities to get out the message that a school garden is in need of donations from the public.

Donations

Potential donors can appear from anywhere, and a successful Slow Food chapter should be ready whenever there is a chance to cultivate a new donor. There may be donors in the midst of a Slow Food chapter’s event, as a volunteer at a school garden work day, or hearing about Slow Food for the first time at a public meeting. Donors must be sought out, cultivated, and properly thanked.

There are three types of donors:



Individual donors include event ticket buyers, chapter members, and philanthropists who kindly open their checkbooks to hand over funds from as little as \$5 to donations as high as in the thousands of dollars. Sometimes foundations will give without solicitation or at the request of an individual who has power to direct funding from the foundation. More often, a foundation will make a gift after the chapter has filled out an application for grant money. Often, the foundation will require the money to be spent in a certain way (generally, as outlined in the grant proposal), and it will ask for a report at the end of the grant period to verify this. When a gift is given this way, it is referred to as a “grant.” Grants are covered in more detail below.

Examples of potential corporate donors include: farms, nurseries, supermarkets, newspapers, restaurants, printing companies, rental companies, and food brands. Corporations usually appreciate attention and consideration for their donation. Sometimes corporations will require some kind of action from the chapter in return for the gift, such as signage at an event or a notice of their gift in the newsletter. A corporate donation that has “strings attached” is often called a corporate partnership or sponsorship. Slow Food USA is developing guidelines for its own participation in fundraising from corporations, and it will make these guidelines available to chapters for their reference when they are complete.

One way to gain access to like-minded grantors and donors is to have adequate visibility with respected organizations that attract donors. Groups like PhilanthroMedia (www.myphilanthropedia.org), GiveWell (www.givewell.org), and United Way (www.unitedway.org) support donations from businesses and individuals by vetting and qualifying charitable donors. In

In addition to annual RFPs, many organizations, such as United Way, offer bi-weekly payroll deductions to recipients chosen from a selected group of charities that are hand-selected by the local chapters. It is important for Slow Food to become more widely known for its passion, dedication, and successes in these circles of influence in order to gain access to the donors who share our mission and concern.

There are several issues to consider before looking for and accepting donations. Before approaching or accepting money from any donor, the leadership of the chapter should be familiar with the Slow Food Fundraising Guidelines developed by Slow Food International to guide fundraising decisions by chapters. For example, there are different considerations when the donor represents a business versus as an individual. The Slow Food chapter must consider and confirm that the potential donor is in line with the mission and values of Slow Food. For example, a chapter would likely turn down a donation from a “fast-food” restaurant. While the Fundraising Guidelines clearly describe instances where donations cannot be accepted (e.g., companies that produce or sell GMOs, weapons, or oil), there are certainly gray areas that need to be carefully examined. A good yardstick is to ask: if this donor-chapter link became a cover story in a newspaper article, would it be a good association? Fundraising Guidelines are included as an appendix.

A chapter must also consider the donor’s goals. Most certainly, the donor would like to be recognized for their gift by either being publicly listed in a program flyer or at the garden site, or the donor may be happy with a simple thank you note from the chapter. Slow Food Miami produces a plaque to acknowledge the donor and places it directly on the garden bed frame. Slow Food Miami has given donors a tour of the gardens that their money has supported so that they can directly see where their money has gone.

When potential donors have been identified, making the “ask” can be done multiple ways. The most direct approach is to have a conversation with the potential donors either at their workplace, at an event, or in a more private setting over coffee or lunch. The direct approach allows for a more-detailed conversation and the immediate exchange of information that the donor believes is important for them to make their decision. In addition, the Slow Food presenter can have ready materials and pictures that can be used to sway the donor to get involved.

On the other hand, social media can be used to get the attention of many more potential donors with an ask for a donation. Information can be loaded on a website that provides potential donors with lots of information about the project. Email blasts and Twitter posts can reach thousands of potential donors with information of an upcoming event or just by keeping Slow Food on their radar screens. The recipients can look at the information at their leisure and can always refer back to the information later. The drawback of social media approaches is that they do not feel personalized and the exchange of information is more one-sided.

Consider and confirm that the potential donor is in line with the mission and values of Slow Food.



Grants

Grants differ from donations in that donations are made without any contractual requirements and often without restrictions. Grants are generally made from foundations (and, rarely, individuals) and require a report at the end to verify how the money was spent. Another source of grants for school gardens are federal, state, and local government departments. In most cases, granting organizations release Requests for Proposals (RFPs) or send out direct invitations to apply. State and local offices may also offer more specific opportunities through their Agriculture, Education, Health and Human Services, and/or Consumer Services Departments. Many non-government organizations (NGOs) and corporations have specific interests aligned with those of Slow Food. A quick Google search may help identify matches for organizations looking to donate to food, environment, children, and educational causes. You can also do a search for like-minded foundations at www.foundationcenter.com.

Grant opportunities from federal and state agencies as well as from organizations such as the W. K. Kellogg Foundation or the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation offer a significant amount of multi-year funding that can be very attractive to a garden program. However, when looking at grant opportunities to get funding for school garden programs, a Slow Food chapter needs to look at its capacity to write the sometimes lengthy applications and, if successful, manage the reporting requirements requested by some grant programs, including completing a report at the end of the grant period. This is especially true of government funding, which can be especially onerous in reporting and spending requirements. In many cases, the application process can be quite lengthy and require the partnership of other organizations to be competitive. Since these national RFPs are widely advertised, the number of fellow applications can be quite large, making for a highly competitive process.

Slow Food Denver has been successful with two Specialty Crops Grants from the Colorado State Department of Agriculture (funds from the USDA) to support their Youth Farmers' Market program in food desert communities. The Specialty Crops grant required the reports to be filed twice, once at the midway as a progress report and then at the completion of the grant as a final report. The reporting process took quite a bit of energy by the Slow Food Denver team to complete on time and with the required information.

Grant opportunities from local government agencies or business or health foundations may carry smaller award amounts, but the amount of competition will be much less, and often the amount of reporting required is also less. Going after local funding also allows for the opportunity to make direct contact with the officers in charge of the grants to ask questions and perhaps get advice on the application process. For smaller Slow Food garden programs or brand new gardens, it is advisable to start with local funding so that it is manageable to write the grants and to deal with any reporting requirements. Just the writing process for the application is a valuable exercise, as it pushes the Slow Food chapter to gather its resources and data into one place for the application process. Even if the application is not successful, there now exists a template with information for future RFPs.

Slow Food Miami has been lucky enough to find several experienced grant writers who donated their time by looking for and applying for grants. This can be time consuming and is always much appreciated by chapter leaders. Post a notice to the membership asking for any previous grant writing experience. Even without professional help, be sure to save all previous grant applications to build up a database of information that can be used in future applications.

For smaller garden programs or brand new gardens, it's advisable to start with local funding so that it's manageable to write the grants and deal with reporting requirements.

On a smaller scale, it is a good idea to get the Garden Leaders involved in grant writing to develop skills for larger efforts. Slow Food Denver offers micro-grants to individual garden programs every couple of years to support infrastructure needs of the gardens. While the grants may be for only \$500–\$1,000, Garden Leaders are required to submit an application that asks for a mission statement, goals, budget, and work plan for the grant money. This process makes the Garden Leaders look at their program closely and pushes them to plan for the future.

Support from Local Businesses

Outside of grant opportunities, local businesses are very generous in using their standing in the community to drive fundraiser opportunities for Slow Food chapters and school gardens. Because of the obvious food connections, restaurants and chefs have been very supportive of using their businesses to raise funds for school gardens. A common approach is to donate a percentage of the day's receipts to a garden program. Chipotle encourages its restaurants to partner up with local schools to raise money for garden programs. Often these fundraiser efforts involve 25%–50% of the daily total donated to the school garden. Whole Foods offers two programs to support local nonprofits and schools. Every quarter, Whole Foods selects a new nonprofit to receive the 10 cents per grocery bag that customers donate to the program. In addition, a couple times a year a store may donate 5% of its day's receipts to a nonprofit. Both of these programs at Whole Foods can raise \$3,000–\$5,000 for Slow Food with a relatively simple effort.



Events

For those Slow Food chapters that have a large amount of capacity, events are a wonderful fundraising opportunity. They can further the mission and story of Slow Food and allow the guests the opportunity to give to the community. The Slow Food Miami chapter plans five or six fundraising events per year to support school gardens, interspersed with other lower cost/free events.

Here is a checklist of fundraising event planning:

1

Recruit a chef, venue, food, rentals, and menu printing. Often, these “in-kind donations” can be gotten for free, especially if given consideration in the program/advertising for the event. Slow Food Miami prints a program/menu for almost every event. The program thanks donors, clarifies menu details, and later serves as a memento of a wonderful dinner. A program helps to make it feel like an “event.” Ticket pricing can be tricky to set but look around your community at similar events to guess what people would be willing to pay. If the chef or venue is prestigious, it is easier to set a higher price. Include sample program.

2

Publicize the event. Send email blasts to your mailing list, newspapers, and listings websites. Use Twitter, Facebook, and other social media. Sometimes chefs and venues have their own mailing lists and will forward on the event information. One of Slow Food Miami’s chef-partners sent a blast out to several thousand Twitter followers. Perhaps the local news station will cover the event as a story. For one offbeat event on food allergies, Slow Food Miami put flyers in local allergy doctors’ offices.

3

Decide if it would be appropriate to do further fundraising at the event. An expensive event might preclude you from asking donors for even more money. However, who knows if that financial angel is in the audience? You can make an announcement at the meal, place donation cards at every place setting, or even have a live auction and ask people to raise their hand if they will make an additional gift to the garden. At one Slow Food Miami live auction, the guest chef generously added a last-minute addition that he would cook a private dinner in the winner’s home, and that raised several thousand dollars. Some donors love to be a role model and to goad others on in public. Make clear that donors may contribute anywhere from a few dollars to funding an entire garden or more. Silent auctions can be another financial boon.



Examples of Successful Events

HIDDEN KITCHENS

Hidden Kitchens was created by Slow Food Miami as a cooking demonstration/tasting-fundraiser in which locally grown produce or locally sourced proteins were featured. The name came from the fact that each event would take place in a different kitchen—usually at a private residence, but once in a while it might be a different venue that also has a kitchen, such as a corporation or teaching culinary school (but always donated space).

The formula was to use the private residence of a well-known local host or someone who prides themselves on a large cooking/dining area and would like to share it with others. Ideally the space would be large enough to host 30 guests. The Slow Food chapter would also recruit a very well-known chef who would grab people's attention to donate their time to come and cook a few dishes. There is often an air of specialness and exclusivity to the event. The chef would prepare the dishes on the menu and answer questions as people gathered around. The guests would watch them to understand how the recipe worked and then taste the food to see how delicious it was, thereby promoting locally sourced items.

We were fortunate enough that Whole Foods would donate about \$400 per event to purchase needed items, and at times a farmer would donate their items or a local vendor would donate wine. As our mission is to support small farmers as well, we might buy and feature produce from them. The only overhead would be if additional food was needed for the event, rentals (dishes, linens, cutlery, stemware), and a person to wash dishes and service the event.

Since the home and chef were usually quite prestigious, we found that we could charge \$140 per person and sell out our events. The event and pricing can, of course, be customized for your chapter's personal style and potential attendees.

ARK OF TASTE FUNDRAISER

Our Ark of Taste Fundraising dinner is one of Slow Food Miami's most important and lucrative events of the year. Every year our best chef in Miami, Michael Schwartz, creates a multicourse meal around a native and endangered South Florida ingredient. We pay for the ingredients since our farms need our support and can't afford to donate. Our publicity for the event always highlights that it is important for us to keep our native and diverse plants alive and support the growers who produce them while encouraging chefs and consumers to eat them. We emphasize that if you know your farmer, you know your food.

We have our event at the Kampong National Botanical Gardens and split the proceeds with them to help maintain their unique gardens. The charge is our highest ticket of the year, \$250 per person. We have found success and sellouts at 110 people when we have the event in late October or early November, before the holidays. We allot 10 comps to cover restaurant guests, farmers, media, and sponsors. Our sponsors give us in-kind gifts of vodka, wine at a big discount, and gift-bag premium items for guests. We pay a discounted fee to the chef for food per head and catering company rate per head for staff and rentals.

BREW-B-QUE

Down the street from the Saints Peter and Paul School in Buffalo is Island Park. Every year during the summer, community events take place in the park, such as Old Home Days, Taste of Williamsville, and various beer festivals. The park is right across the street from the Williamsville Farmers' Market. Ellicott Creek was once an important local source of transporting grain down to the Erie Canal. Several of the farmers at the market raise delicious grass-fed beef as well as heritage GOS hogs. I am very engaged in the craft beer scene, and a colleague



of mine is pitmaster for a BBQ team that competes in Memphis in May, the largest pork BBQ in the world. In addition to all of this, our parish Knights of Columbus (KofC) Chapter does service work for our school.

Putting this all together, we teamed up to propose the KofC Brew-B-Que in Island Park as an annual family-friendly event featuring locally brewed craft beer, BBQ sourcing meat from local vendors and featuring local BBQ teams, and even a people's choice home-brewing competition.

The Brew-B-Que was proposed as a KofC-sponsored event to benefit the school's Boy Scout Troop as well the SSPP Edible Schoolyard. The concept went over well, and we sold enough tickets to break even. Our success and our potential were recognized by school leadership, and we have been invited to make this an annual fundraiser. It will be key to partner with other organizations and farms to make the Brew-B-Que a fundraising success. But its potential is tremendous and could easily raise impressive dollars for our school garden program.



DENVER BRAVA PIZZA

Brava Pizza did a fundraiser for Denver's gardens when they opened, which raised about \$200. They have also offered to buy basil from the gardens. In addition, they have brought their mobile pizza ovens to a few events. In return, we have also hired them when possible. This is an example of a partnership that has brought funds to Slow Food Denver and attention to a Slow Food-friendly company.

FRIENDSHIP TRAYS

Each year, Slow Food Charlotte, Friendship Trays, and Friendship Gardens team up to throw our 'Garden Party.' The Garden Party is a \$50-a-person dinner party hosted under hanging lights at the Friendship Trays Demo Garden. Local chefs prepare local food as guests drink local beer/wine and listen to music. All proceeds support Friendship Gardens www.friendship-gardens.org, a partnership between Slow Food Charlotte and Friendship Trays, our local Meals on Wheels program. Friendship Gardens is a network of gardens across Charlotte, all teaching gardening and donating food to Friendship Trays. Our gardens are located at schools, faith-based organizations, nonprofit agencies, etc.

SELLING PIES

In the fall, Slow Food Miami has a pie baking contest called Thighs and Pies. The ticket price is held at cost so as to attract many attendees, but there is a fundraiser in the fact that pie contestants are asked to bake and donate a second pie that is sold for \$15–\$20 after the contest is over. People are eager to take home the delicious homemade pies, and they always sell out.



Crowdsourced Funding

Other ideas for fundraising include crowdsourced funding, merchandise sales, and buy-a-brick programs. It is not known if any chapters have done crowdsourced funding such as Kickstarter, but this type of fundraising could be effective.

Merchandising

Another idea is selling Slow Food-branded merchandise. Slow Food Miami does steady sales of aprons, hats, and children and adult t-shirts at our events. Slow Food Long Island has had a successful buy-a-brick program.

Long-term Sustainability of the Gardens

Once a garden has been built and the program is under way, the fundraising needs for the garden are not as great. There needs to be some money available to replenish the supplies that get used, such as seeds, amendments, and planting pots. Ideally, the school community gets behind the garden program with some steady donations or with a couple of annual events that fund the program. Perhaps the PTA takes up the needs of the garden program with a couple of fundraisers throughout the year. If a Slow Food chapter was involved in the initial financing of the garden build, the chapter could possibly support the garden program for a couple of years with events and promotions. Eventually, the school community needs to make the garden program self-sufficient.

One way to generate funds for the long-term sustainability of the garden is to use the primary asset that the garden generates. Not only can the fresh produce be used for educational opportunities for the students but the produce can be sold in several ways to support the garden program. Slow Food Denver has created several programs that not only provide students with

educational opportunities but also raise money that gets pumped back into the garden program.

The Youth Farmers' Market program is designed for students with adult supervisors to sell fresh produce from the school garden to the school community, usually as an after-school activity. Students learn how to run a small business with everything from marketing to sales to customer relations. Slow Food Denver supports the YFMs by buying produce from local farms to supplement the school garden

produce so that the market stands have a nice variety of seasonal produce. The YFM leaders can set the prices for the produce, ideally in a range that the local community will see as a fair value while still earning a profit for the garden program. In Denver, an eight-week YFM season can net anywhere from \$250 to \$1,500 in profit for the gardens. In addition, the YFM program brings some very positive attention to the garden program and some new volunteers.



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Also in Denver, Slow Food Denver has worked with Denver Public Schools on food safety protocols so that the students can harvest fresh produce from the school gardens and sell it to the kitchen manager in the cafeteria. The Garden to Cafeteria program is now in its fourth year and has resulted in over 3,000 pounds of school garden produce going into the salad bars at about 20 schools. Overall, the GTC program has raised \$3,000 for the garden programs at those schools.

Other fundraising efforts using products of the school gardens include sales of seedlings that the students raise in the classroom for the garden program. In Denver, many schools start the Seed to Table program in February with seedling classes to generate many of the plants that will be planted in the garden later in May. Generally, the first and second-grade classrooms grow the seedlings, as this activity is consistent with the science curriculum at those ages. The seedling program produces many more plants than are needed for the garden, with enough for each student to take one home for their garden, and the rest are pooled to be sold at a school-wide plant sale as a fundraiser.

In many ways, using the fresh produce and plants from the school garden program to raise funds to support the gardens has several advantages. The students learn that their efforts in the gardens are not only fun and educational but they are supporting the continuation of the program for years to come. Activities like Youth Farmers' Markets and Plant Sales bring the community to the school and provide an opportunity to increase awareness of the programs. New volunteers and donors may come from these visits who will have an impact on the program. Finally, many schools are in neighborhoods that are classified as food deserts, so the garden program may be the only source of fresh produce for the community. If prices are set accordingly, the produce from the gardens can support both healthy eating habits in the community as well as raising funds for the program.

Policies and Procedures

Fundraising guidelines from Slow Food International

There is a clear directive in the draft Slow Food International Fundraising Guidelines as follows to ensure that donations do not violate the Slow Food principles.

Donations and collaborations of any nature cannot be accepted from any legal entities that:

- produce or sell weapons
- produce or refine oil
- produce or sell tobacco at a multinational level
- produce or sell GMOs
- violate regulations regarding the disposal of toxic or dangerous waste
- violate international conventions on human, property, and workers' rights
- violate fundamental rights or are being prosecuted or have been condemned for legal violations