

WATER WORKS



**A Guide to Improving Water Access
and Consumption in Schools to
Improve Health and Support Learning**

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Note

While we have attempted to provide the most up-to-date information and website URLs at the time of publication, some information may have changed.

ACTION 5 - FUND YOUR WATER PROGRAM

Many schools have started water programs with very little funding, for example by repurposing supplies used by other programs (e.g., using sports teams' water coolers to serve water during lunchtime) and by recruiting water champions who are passionate about students' health. In some cases, students take initiative to start water projects at their school with the support of teachers and staff. Even with these forms of support, you may need to secure funding to begin or enhance your water program. This section describes:

- potential partnerships and funding sources
- strategies for approaching potential funders, including how to address concerns funders commonly have

IDENTIFY POTENTIAL PARTNERS AND FUNDING SOURCES

Your first step is to identify potential partners and sources of funding. Below, we provide an overview of several types of funding sources. Work with your team to brainstorm which of these sources will work best for your program.

District and School Funding Sources

Your school and district may have funding available for new initiatives like your water program. Below, we outline some common school and district-based sources of funding for school water programs, and provide examples of schools that have used such funding to improve water access.

District or School General Fund

Most school districts and schools have a General Fund, a portion of the budget that is unrestricted (available for general purposes). Talk to your School Board, Superintendent, or Principal about whether the school or district's general fund could help support your water program.

Funding In Action

Zane Middle School in Humboldt County, CA secured funding from the school's Site Council to install a touch-free bottle filler (an insert in the wall that dispenses water into refillable bottles using infrared sensors).¹



School Nurse or Wellness Office

Find out if your school has a nurse or wellness coordinator. These staff or their offices may have access to funding for health-related programs.

Food/Nutrition Services

School or District Food Services Departments can fund the purchase of new water sources or of vessels to serve water (e.g., cups or reusable bottles).³

Funding In Action

In Newark Unified School District in Newark, CA, the school food service director used cafeteria funds to purchase tap water dispensers and cases of paper cups for students to use at mealtimes. He filled the containers with water and sliced fruit from commodity funds. Costs were estimated to be around \$0.01 per serving, mostly reflecting the price of the paper cup.¹

(1) Case Studies. Water in Schools website. http://waterinschools.org/case_studies/. Accessed February 24, 2014.

(2) Inspiring Youth, Growing Change: Nurturing Strong Minds for a Healthy Community. Network for a Healthy California. <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Documents/InspiringYouthGrowingChange.pdf>. Published December, 2011. Accessed February 25, 2014.

(3) The USDA allows food services departments to charge to its nonprofit accounts (which holds revenue from selling meals and a la carte items) "necessary and reasonable" costs associated with providing drinking water, such as pitchers and paper cups. See <http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/wellness-policy-water>.

Facilities Department

School or district facilities departments may have money available for physical improvements to your school, including renovating old water sources or installing new ones.

Funding In Action

Bellevue Union School District in Santa Rosa, CA, installed drinking water stations in the lunch rooms at its four elementary schools. The stations consist of tall “glass-filler faucets” mounted on existing water fountains. The cost of the faucets, including installation, was about \$300 each, and the money came from the district’s facilities budget.¹

Athletics Department

Your school’s athletic department may have tap water dispensers it could loan out during mealtimes, or could have funding to help with your program.



Parents and Parent Groups

Parents at your school may be interested in supporting the water program. Parent Teacher Associations may have funding available for programs, or may be able to assist you in organizing a fundraiser specifically for the water program. Parents can also volunteer to help with programs or speak to school officials to advocate for funding.

Governmental Organizations

Federal, state, and local agencies sometimes put out calls for grant proposals on specific topics. You can search the internet to see if any agencies are looking to fund initiatives related to water or student health. Local governmental agencies sometimes have grants available specifically for local groups. You might consider looking for grants or other support from the following organizations:

- City Council or Board of Supervisors
- Public Health Department
- Department of Education
- Municipal water supplier (e.g., Public Utilities Commission, Water Department)

Funding In Action

A parent in Oakland, California obtained funding from his school’s Parent Teacher Association and matching funds from the city council to pay for a hydration station at his child’s school.²

Funding In Action

San Francisco Unified School District partnered with the San Francisco Department of Public Health and the city’s municipal water supplier, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, to develop and launch the “Drink Tap” initiative. The group began by installing bottle-fillers at five schools, and later obtained funding from The California Endowment to purchase reusable water bottles for 2500 students at the five pilot schools. The Drink Tap program is now expanding to an additional 36 public schools.³



Students from San Francisco Unified School District with free water bottles provided with support from the California Endowment.³

(1) Case Studies. Water in Schools website. http://waterinschools.org/case_studies/. Accessed February 24, 2014.

(2) Model Wellness Policy Language for Water Access in Schools. National Policy & Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity. http://changelabsolutions.org/sites/phlpnet.org/files/WaterAccessSchools_ModelPolicy_FINAL_20101008.pdf. Published October, 2010. Accessed February 25, 2014.

(3) Drink Tap in Schools: Innovative Partnerships to Change the Way We Drink Water. San Francisco Water Power Sewer. <http://sfwater.org/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentID=3677>. Accessed February 24, 2014.

Businesses and Corporations

Companies might be able to provide several types of support for school water programs, including:

- Direct financial support, such as grants or donations (visit company websites to see if they have a foundation or philanthropic division; see what types of programs they typically fund)
- Discounted or free products (e.g., new water sources, reusable water bottles, cups, or promotional materials)
- Technical assistance or in-kind support (e.g., a media company might assist in developing promotional materials at no charge, or a plumbing company might donate the labor needed to install new water units)

Funding In Action

With help from two other companies, Superior Water and Air, a private corporation based in Utah, donated filters to purify the water in more than 18,000 drinking fountains in 750 Utah schools.¹

Companies are often especially interested in investing in the communities where they are located. Consider approaching local businesses or looking for corporations that have headquarters or corporate facilities near your community.

Foundations

Both private and corporate foundations often fund programs and projects. Foundations differ greatly in their scope and goals, so you will need to identify a foundation that is a good match for the goals of your water program. For example, you might search for foundations that are interested in preventing childhood obesity.

Resource Spotlight

The County Health Rankings and Roadmaps “Guide to Funding Your Community Health Initiative” includes a list of resources that can help you identify funding opportunities, including websites that list top grantmaking foundations. (Refer to the *Resources* supplementary material for a detailed list of resources, including weblinks).

Funding in Action

In 2010, the Community Environmental Council (CEC), with funding from the Orfalea Foundation and other private partners, installed 12 hydration stations in schools across Santa Barbara County. CEC also provided students and staff with reusable water bottles and provided education to students, parents, and teachers about the environmental benefits of drinking tap water instead of bottled beverages.²

Non-Profit and Community-Based Organizations

Local non-profit and community-based organizations may also have monetary or in-kind resources available. Potential partners in this area include:

- Organizations focused on health promotion
- Organizations focused on children and youth
- Healthcare providers or organizations (e.g., local hospitals, healthcare groups, or community clinics)
- Faith-based organizations
- After-school programs
- Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, Lions Club, and other service organizations

Funding in Action

A school district in California purchased reusable water bottles for its students with funding obtained from the California Nutrition Network, a collective of local, state, and national partners working to promote increased fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity among low-income communities.³

(1) Searing, N. Superior Water for Utah Classrooms. *Water Conditioning & Purification*. <http://www.wcponline.com/PDF/0205%20Utah%20Classrooms.pdf>. Published February, 2005. Accessed February 25, 2014.

(2) Case Studies. Water in Schools website. http://waterinschools.org/case_studies/. Accessed February 24, 2014.

(3) Model Wellness Policy Language for Water Access in Schools. National Policy & Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity. http://changelabsolutions.org/sites/phlpnet.org/files/WaterAccessSchools_ModelPolicy_FINAL_20101008.pdf. Published October, 2010. Accessed February 25, 2014.

Student Groups

Student groups might have small amounts of funds available (e.g., sometimes student government organizations have monies collected from school dances or other activities), or might be interested in assisting with fundraising.

APPROACH FUNDERS FOR SHORT-TERM FUNDING

Once you have identified potential funders, your next step is to approach these individuals or organizations to request support.

Determine What You Will Ask For

Specify the resources or funds you need to implement each aspect of your water program. You may also want to prioritize these requests. Ask your team which elements of the program are essential, and which are lower-priority? When you approach potential partners, clearly state what you are asking for.

Understand the Funder's Interests

The individuals and organizations you approach will each have their own interests, goals, and missions. When approaching a potential funder, you will want to demonstrate how your water program aligns with the funder's goals. You should be able to clearly explain to the funders how your water program furthers their aims. For example, if you approach a public health department, you may want to explain how your water program will improve the health of students at your school. Companies and businesses may be interested in partnerships that increase their visibility or brand within your community. Educators will be interested in how your water program can help students' academic performance. Foundations will generally make their goals clear in the request for grant applications. Spend time learning what potential donors want, and be clear about how your water program can benefit them.

Anticipate Common Concerns

There are several common concerns funders may have when deciding whether to support a new program. By anticipating these concerns in advance, you can increase your chances of securing a funder. Below are some common topics funders will want you to address:

- **Sustainability** – Funders often want to know whether you have a plan for the long-term future of your program. To demonstrate to funders that your program is sustainable, you might describe the support or commitments you have received from other individuals or organizations, including the key stakeholders described above. For example, school administrators are key gatekeepers in implementing school-based programs, so funders may want you to demonstrate that you have the support of your school's administration. You might also mention other organizations that have pledged support to signal that others have confidence in your program.
- **Implementation** – Funders may want to know the details of your plans for implementing the program. The more you are able to show funders that you are well organized and prepared to implement your program, the more confident they will feel in your potential for success.
- **Results** – Funders will also want to know what they can expect your program to achieve. You should detail the outcomes your program aims to produce, and how you will evaluate whether those outcomes are met. More details on evaluating your program can be found in **Action 4: Monitor Progress and Make Improvements**. To show a funder that you value evaluation, make sure to include an estimate of the costs of evaluation in your budget.

Tips for Approaching Funders

When you approach funders, you should:

- Know your audience:
 - Help the funder see how your program will also further their goals or mission
- Have your pitch ready:
 - Explain what organization you represent, what you hope to accomplish (e.g., purchase a hydration station), what support you would like from the funder, and how your water program aligns with their mission
- Bring a summary document that explains your program's goals and funding needs
- Describe what steps you have already taken toward implementing and enhancing your program
 - Indicate what other individuals and organizations have pledged support or commitment to your program
 - Explain how you will ensure the long-term success of your program
- Explain how you will measure whether your program has been successful

SECURE LONG-TERM FUNDING

Obtaining one-time grants is often a necessary first step to getting your water program started. However, grants usually have fixed timelines and budgets, and once the money is spent or the grant period ends, your funding will end. To continue your water program beyond this initial period, you will need to either continue applying for new grants or work toward longer-term funding solutions.

One way you can secure longer-term funding is to get a line item for your water program written into the school budget. For example, you might work with your food services department to get annual costs for providing cups to students written directly into the food service budget. This will ensure that there is money, year after year, to provide cups.

School districts also have long-term capital-improvement plans, which stipulate long-range plans for the repair and modernization of district facilities. You might consider working with administrators at the district level (e.g., the superintendent, school board, or district facilities director) to make water access a part of these plans. For example, the plans might direct the district to consider innovative water sources when renovating old buildings or constructing new ones.

CONCLUSIONS

Students should have easy access to safe, appealing drinking water at school. Not only is water access in schools required by law, ensuring water access is important to the health and wellbeing of children. When children drink water, especially in place of sugar-sweetened beverages, they are less likely to become obese, develop diabetes, and get dental cavities.

Chances are you know a child who eats meals at school. You are therefore a key actor in holding school districts accountable for meeting the spirit of the laws that require water access in schools. Below are key actions you can take to improve water access and consumption among students:

- Build a team of key stakeholders committed to improving water access and consumption
- Ensure the water at your school is safe to drink
- Select a water delivery option that is appealing to students
- Encourage students to drink water using promotional and educational activities
- Implement model water-related language in your school's wellness policy
- Secure funding for water policies and practices
- Evaluate your program and make improvements

This guide has given you tools, resources, and strategies to develop a comprehensive water program in your school. But starting a school-based water program can be as simple as offering pitchers of tap water on cafeteria tables at mealtime or hanging posters promoting water consumption. Increasing water access and consumption in schools is an easy and low-cost strategy to promote children's health. Get started on your water program today!