

A Teacher's Perspective on Fundraising for Flex Farms



Hello Emily.

Emily Bennett is a science teacher at Neenah High School. She also coaches varsity girls volleyball. She received her first Flex Farm in May of 2018 and since then, she has written grants and received funds for Flex Farms that are in various classrooms in the Neenah Joint School District. Her goal is to have at least one Flex Farm in every building in the district.

Fundraising Q&A

What is your top fundraising advice?

Start by being organized and continue to stay organized. It is easy to lose track of the different types of opportunities, requirements, timelines, funding criteria, spending of funds, and reporting responsibilities. Half the battle is making sure your information is readily available and up to date. Spreadsheets are a great place to start.

What else about grants should people know?

Know you are not going to be able to answer 100% of the application questions on your own. Plan accordingly. Identify who else you need to engage to get answers. For example, almost every grant has a budget/financial section. Make sure you know whom to go to for these types of questions and give them plenty of time to respond.

Take a break. Don't continue to push yourself to apply to every opportunity. Select the ones that are the best fit and be okay with letting a grant pass by if it doesn't feel right. It is easy to get burnt out.

What advice do you have for pursuing grants?

Don't be discouraged or intimidated. It's typical of the grant process to apply for 10 but only get 1 application funded. It is important to keep in mind - it is nothing personal.

Remember to save your answers to grant questions. Often, you will find similar questions across your applications. You can repurpose a lot of your initial work and cut down the time it takes to apply for future opportunities. It also gives you a chance to refine your request language.

What has helped your fundraising efforts?

Social media has been a huge help in spreading awareness and supporting my fundraising activities. Your current network of friends, family, and peers can be your biggest champions - especially when trying to get a new project off the ground. There is a lot of power in social media and allows you to have greater reach.