



How To Fund Your Makerspace with Grants

Finding funding for makerspaces, STEM labs, professional development, etc., can be daunting, but this detailed guide simplifies the process. We will explore various grant opportunities, from government programs to private grants, delving into the specifics of each option and specific contributions you can apply for to help you fund your makerspace or STEM lab. With perseverance and a well-crafted proposal, you can achieve the funding needed to create an inspiring and hands-on learning environment in your school or community.

Overview of Makerspace Grants

Makerspaces allow individuals to create, collaborate, and learn hands-on experiences. As critical components of schools, libraries, and community centers, demand for makerspace grants has recently increased. This guide covers the available funding opportunities in 2023, focusing on essential elements needed for securing funds and helping STEM educators make an impact.

Types of Makerspace Grants

As numerous funding opportunities exist, this guide will break down the most relevant ones for makerspaces:

Federal Formula Grants

Agencies, such as the Department of Education ([DOE](#)), offer various federal formula grants to support local school reform, technology in educational settings, and workforce development. Specific grants include:

- [DOE Innovative Programs](#) - This state-administered Federal formula grant program is designed to support local school reform. Funds can be used for instructional and educational materials, technology, and school improvement.



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- [DOE Enhancing Education Through Technology State Program](#) - Designed to improve student achievement through technology, the “Ed-Tech Program” also aims to enhance tech literacy among students by eighth grade.
- [DOE 21st Century Community Learning Centers](#) - This program provides money for before- and after-school programs. Funds may be used for expanding learning activities or any area of enrichment and include technology, such as robotic kits, engineering kits, science kits, STEM Education kits, and telecommunication education.
- [DOE Minority Science and Engineering Improvement Program](#) - This program assists predominantly minority institutions in effecting long-range improvement in science and engineering education programs and increasing the flow of underrepresented ethnic minorities, particularly minority women, into science and engineering careers.
- [DOL Workforce Pathways for Youth](#) - Supports age-appropriate workforce readiness programming to expand job training and workforce pathways for youth living in rural areas, including soft skill development, career exploration, job readiness and certification, summer jobs, year-round job opportunities, and apprenticeships.

National Science Foundation (NSF) Grants

The [NSF](#) offers various STEM-focused grants, such as:

- [Innovative Technology Experiences for Students and Teachers](#) - This is one of several grants awarded by the National Science Foundation, a Federal agency. It is designed to expose students to STEM careers and provide them with technology-rich experiences.
- [Research Experiences for Teachers](#) - Supports summer research experiences for K-14 educators that foster long-term collaborations between universities, community colleges, school districts, and industry partners.



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Discretionary Grants

Other discretionary grant programs support different aspects of education, including innovative learning environments and workforce readiness. Examples include:

- [Early Childhood Professional Development](#) - This program seeks to improve early childhood educators' knowledge and skills in high-poverty areas. Funding can be used towards providing science activities for kids.
- [GEAR UP](#) - This discretionary grant program is designed to increase the number of low-income students prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.
- **SAXENA** - The Saxena Family Foundation is a privately funded, 501(c) (3) registered non-profit charitable foundation headquartered in Austin, Texas. The Foundation awards grants and supports programs focusing on S.T.E.M (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) education and empowering women in the United States and India.

Private Grants

Corporations, private foundations, and nonprofits offer grants to support STEM education initiatives or innovative learning environments. Some opportunities include:

- [Advanced Micro Devices Inc](#) - AMD's K-12 initiatives target programs that increase student interest and proficiency in literacy, math, science, and computer technology.
- [AEP](#) - AEP is interested in science, mathematics, technology, the study of energy and a sustainable environment, and energy efficiency.
- [AFCEA](#) - The Gravely & Paige Grants provide funding to elementary and middle schools in the United States to promote STEM innovation in the classroom, emphasizing academic programs.
- [Alcoa](#) - Funds projects that support global education, workplace skills, and safe & healthy children.



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- [American Honda Foundation](#) - The focus of these grants is on math, science, and technology.
- [Dell](#) - For education grants, Verizon Foundation funding is intended to support, among other things, projects that promote science, technology, engineering, and math (“STEM”), including, for example, summer or after-school programs, teacher training, and research on improving learning in STEM areas through the use of technology. New applications are by invitation only.
- [Gates Foundation](#) - Supports raising graduation rates and graduates who will be strong citizens ready for college or the workplace. Provide tools for Makerspaces, libraries, and future engineers.
- [Honda Community Grant](#) - This grant funds public school districts to secure classroom technology or STEM curriculum.
- [Sony Grants](#) - While support in other areas may also be considered, the Company seeks to apply its financial, technological, and human resources to encourage the creative, artistic, technical, and scientific skills required of tomorrow's workforce.
- [Toshiba America Foundation](#) - Sixth to 12th-grade teachers are invited to apply online for a Toshiba America Foundation grant of up to \$5,000 and more than \$5,000 to help bring an innovative project into their classroom.
- [Verizon](#) - For education grants, Verizon and Verizon Foundation funding is intended to support projects that promote digital skills development for students and teachers in grades K-12. This includes, for example, summer or afterschool programs in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM), teacher professional development, and research on technology-infused pedagogy. Schools and districts that apply for grants from Verizon and are eligible for the Education Rate (E-Rate) program may not use grant funding to purchase technology hardware (computers, netbooks, laptops, routers), devices (tablets, phones), data or Internet service and access, unless approved by Verizon compliance.

NOTE: Pay attention to local businesses that may be willing to support the local community and funding for a maker space. These spaces promote workforce development and enhance the local community.



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Indiana-Specific Grants and Resources

- [IDOE](#) - The Indiana Department of Education offers grant opportunities utilizing state and federal dollars, serves as a resource for local education agencies, and aims to strengthen education programs statewide by providing technical assistance, professional development, and compliance support.
- [IDOE Title Grants Handbook](#) - A comprehensive guide for local education agencies to manage federal grants.
- [IDOE Weekly Updates](#) - Newsletters that include information on grants, among other updates.
- [Indiana GrantWatch](#) - A portal to find grants and funding opportunities in Indiana.
- [Lilly Endowment](#) - Supports efforts to enhance educational outcomes for K-12 students in Indiana and improve preparation for post-secondary education through funding various initiatives and programs.
- [Duke Energy Foundation](#) - Focused on strengthening and uplifting communities in Indiana with grant funding up to \$20,000, accepting applications on a rolling basis for various focus areas. The Application Process Step-By-Step link provides an overview of their grantmaking process.

Local Grants

Some school systems have local foundations, such as [Hamilton County, Indiana](#), where teachers and students from the district can apply for grants.

Crowdfunding Platforms

- [DonorsChoose](#) - A favorite among schools and districts for crowdfunding projects like school trips and classroom supplies. The platform provides financial transparency and features that make it easy for administrators to know what projects are getting funded in their schools, contributing to significant wins for schools and districts. They also offer a teacher resource guide to help make the process even more accessible. Unlike other sites, DonorsChoose doesn't charge teachers commission, but they must shop at the site's vendor partners when using their funds.



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- [ClassWish](#) - Another favorite, allowing donors to contribute to any public, private, or parochial school, unlike some platforms such as DonorsChoose that only enable public schools to participate. However, ClassWish does charge a processing fee of 2.9 percent plus 30 cents per transaction and requires shopping from the site's vendor partners.
- [Adopt-A-Classroom](#) - It has an inspiring mission, and its donors aren't forgotten once they've contributed. They receive updates on how their money was used. The site doesn't charge fees but requires all purchases with its approved list of vendors.
- [PledgeCents](#) - Commonly referred to as the 'GoFundMe for teachers.' With over 1,700 schools in 51 states on their platform, PledgeCents sends checks directly to schools or organizations once all funds are raised. There are no platform fees, and educators who use their service can keep whatever funds they raise regardless of whether it meets their final goal.

Grant Research

- [Grants.gov](#) - A comprehensive listing of the grants given by every federal agency. It also has a robust help center for those new to the grant application process.
- [GrantWatch](#) - Every type of grant—federal, state, city, local, and foundational—can be found here, and you can effortlessly search by grant category and state.
- [STEM Education Coalition](#) - The website offers information on STEM activity in the US and how to support those efforts. From the website, individuals can sign up for a free newsletter or follow posted information through Facebook, Twitter, or RSS feeds.

Other Financing Options

- [NCL Government Capital](#)



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20 Tips for Crafting the Perfect Grant Proposal

Writing a successful grant proposal involves extensive research, thorough preparation, and an understanding of each funder's mission and requirements. Follow these tips for a stand-out makerspace grant proposal:

1. Answer all grant application questions.
2. Define the problem and propose a solution.
3. Explore school district and online grant opportunities.
4. Research needs and funding usage.
5. Clearly define the condition that the makerspace aims to address.
6. Understand desired resources and their purpose.
7. Gain experience as a grant reader.
8. Study grant organization's vision and goals.
9. Follow instructions and double-check before submission.
10. Aim high while adhering to the grant's rules.
11. Showcase existing initiatives in the proposal.
12. Present measurable outcomes by defining specific goals and explaining quantifiable results.
13. Focus on students' benefits and potential.
14. Highlight partnerships with other organizations or experts to demonstrate support.
15. Maintain a positive tone, avoiding complaints.
16. Proofread the proposal for clarity and grammar.
17. Collaborate with other educators or experts for insight and best practices.



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18. Get non-educator input for clarity and jargon reduction.
19. Assemble a team for larger grants and involve district resources.
20. Include a detailed budget that breaks down costs and connects them to the project plan.

Conclusion

Obtaining funding for a STEM lab or makerspace is within reach if you take advantage of the numerous grant opportunities and learn to craft a winning proposal. As you embark on this journey, remember to celebrate milestones, share your progress with your community, and maintain your passion for innovation and growth. After all, makerspaces create spaces for collaboration and creativity and nurture tomorrow's problem-solvers and innovators.



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