



Safe Routes
to School
**National
Partnership**

Frequent Routes to Funding



Safe Routes to School programs need to secure funding to carry out programming and to expand to reach more students. The financial needs of Safe Routes to School programs vary based on program size, depth, and maturity. Some programs can thrive using in-kind donations and volunteers, while others require grants and paid staff. No matter the need and available resources, Safe Routes to School programs need to consider funding in order to flourish and be effective in the long run. This fact sheet describes key steps to ensure your program is well positioned for funding, provides ideas for where to look for funding, and highlights the breadth of funding sources that programs from around the country are currently accessing.

Partnerships are key to maximizing funding opportunities for Safe Routes to School. Different types of organizations are eligible for different funding pots. Because Safe Routes to School programs often have partners from many sectors, they may be more flexibly able to take advantage of restricted funding sources than other programs. If your program is based at a school, it may not be eligible for certain funding opportunities. You may want to have a relationship with a local 501(c)3 non-profit organization that would be able to apply for funding or receive a donation on your school's behalf. Conversely, some funding opportunities such as certain federal and state transportation and health grants are not available to non-profits, however, schools can apply.

Partnering with your city or county transportation department, health department, and/or a community organization can open the doors to more funding. If you are looking to get funding for your school's activities, contact your local walking or bicycle organization to see if they have a larger Safe Routes to School initiative. Let city or county and health agencies know your school is interested in programs if funding or partnerships are available.

Key Steps for Successful Funding Pursuits: Ready, Set, Go!

Get Ready!

Identify funding needs and recruit leadership

Begin by evaluating your funding needs to understand which funding method or combination of methods fit your program best. Questions to ask include:

- How much funding is needed?
- When do you need the funding?
- Can in-kind donations such as event space, program materials, or volunteers offset any funding needs?

Recruit leadership to assist in funding evaluation. Engage team members such as your Safe Routes to School task force.

Get Set!

Make lists of prospective funders and build the case for your proposal

Get ready for your next steps by creating lists of available grants and funders. Develop a list of prospective funders including local businesses, foundations, and hospitals. Identify who on your team has a relationship with these organizations for future solicitations or partnerships. Work with leadership to build a case for your funding proposal.

Go!

Ask for funding

Now you are ready and set to go secure funding! Research grant availability and deadlines. Look at previous grant applications for a particular funder to anticipate what will be required. Often grants and funding opportunities are presented at the last minute, and there is not much time to prepare. You may want to prepare for funding opportunities by developing the basics for grant responses in advance. Grant applications often ask for the following:

- Program description
- Needs statement
- Solution or goals and objectives
- Timeline
- Budget
- Evaluation methods

Prepare a response to each of these components so you are ready for funding opportunities. Gather testimonials, pictures, and/or videos from local students and community members describing the need.

Helpful Tips

Use the tips below in conjunction with your prospect list.

Outreach

Make contact with local businesses as well as regional, state, or national funding organizations. It is often helpful if the person who has a personal connection or close relationship with the organization does the outreach.

Ask

Make the “ask” personally if you are looking for a local opportunity. Again, it is often helpful if someone who has a personal connection or close relationship with the business or organization make the “ask.” It can also be effective

for students to make the “ask” or to show the need. If an application is required, complete and submit the application on time to apply for funding.

Thank

Make sure to thank whomever you ask whether or not they fund you. It often takes multiple requests and asks before funding or a donation is secured. It is important to stay in communication with businesses, foundations, and organizations you are hoping to secure funding from. Update them on the progress of the project and provide testimonials and feedback along the way. You cannot thank them enough!

Funding Opportunities

Funding opportunities for Safe Routes to School programs vary. Depending on need, a program may use one or many of the options below. Funding opportunities vary in amount, ranging from a contribution to subsidize a one-time event to funding for a multi-year staffed program.

Federal and State Transportation Grants

The federal Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) is a major source of funding for walking, bicycling, Safe Routes to School, and trails. TAP funds can be used for sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, and trails, as well as Safe Routes to School projects. TAP dollars are awarded through a competitive process by the state or regional bodies called metropolitan planning organizations. Eligible activities vary by state, but typical funding can be used for Safe Routes to School infrastructure and programs. In addition to TAP funding, some states and regional transportation departments have other funding programs that support walking, bicycling, and Safe Routes to School. Contact your state Safe Routes to School coordinator, state bicycle/pedestrian coordinator, regional planning organization, or local city or county transportation department for more information on available funding.

Health Grants

Health grants may fund Safe Routes to School as a program that supports healthy and active communities. Education and encouragement activities such as walking school buses, Walk to School Day, and bicycle skills clinics are a good fit. Health grants may support walk audits and parent surveys as they evaluate community needs for improving neighborhood environments for walking and biking to school, and provide opportunities for community engagement. Contact your local and state health departments for information on available grants that could support Safe Routes to School. Additional funding opportunities may be available via health foundations in your community.

Physical Education Grants

Physical education grants often strive to increase student physical activity. Safe Routes to School provides options for physical activity before and after school, as well as skills to enable students to walk and bike into adulthood. Physical education grants may support bicycle skills trainings and education in the classroom or may support other programming. Physical education grants vary—some are available for programs in or outside of school, and they range in funding amounts. Physical education grants are available through organizations such as Active Schools and SHAPE America. For assistance finding physical education grants in your region use the SPARK grant finder tool.

Local Foundations

Local foundations may have opportunities for Safe Routes to School funding. Research local foundations supporting the environment, health, schools, active transportation, community building, student empowerment, and street safety. Contact your local community foundation for assistance discovering available local grants. A community foundation may be able to provide information on deadlines and requirements for local foundation grants. Some community foundations provide free services such as grant writing or networking. Search your community foundation's website to review previously funded grant applications and projects.

Local Business Sponsorships

Local businesses can be a source of funding for Safe Routes to School. Any kind of local business may be interested in supporting the health and safety of local schoolchildren. Businesses that champion walking, biking, health, physical activity, sports, or the environment may be particularly interested. Sponsorships can also come from building relationships between Safe Routes to School practitioners and a champion within a business. Create an opportunity for a business to sponsor a specific activity such as walk to school day or a walking school bus. Sponsorships can also be in-kind through volunteer time or donations such as venue space, printing materials, bicycles, and food.

Donations

Donations can be a source of funding for specific projects or materials for a Safe Routes to School program. Possible sources for donations include families, community leaders, or other community members. Online donation campaigns are useful for reaching larger audiences such as a school or neighborhood. Fundraising platforms such as ioby make it easy to donate online.

Case Studies

These five case studies provide insight on how local communities have raised funds for Safe Routes to School programs through transportation revenue, events, grants, and other sources.

Case Study: Portland, Oregon

The Portland, Oregon, Safe Routes to School program is housed in the Portland Bureau of Transportation. Five full-time Safe Routes to School staff positions, along with education and encouragement activities for over 100 schools in five school districts are funded through general transportation revenue, traffic safety fines and a grant from the Oregon Department of Transportation.

Photo: Walk+Roll to School Day at Jason Lee K-8 School in Portland, Oregon



Case Study: Brooklyn Center, Minnesota

Brooklyn Center Community Schools' Safe Routes to School Program in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota, provides bicycle and pedestrian education and encouragement to just over 2,000 students in grades K-12. The program has one part-time staff member funded by grants from Hennepin County Statewide Health Improvement Plan, Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation, 21st Century Grant, and more. The Safe Routes to School program partners with Three Rivers Bike District to supply bicycles for education. Schwinn mini-grants have provided bicycle repair supplies for the program.

Photo: Brooklyn Center City Mayor, MN State Representative, Brooklyn Center Police Department, District Superintendent, and Brooklyn Center STEAM Middle and High School Principal support Bike to School Day, May, 2017. Photo credit: Michelle Auld





Case Study: Cary, North Carolina

Northwoods Elementary School in Cary, North Carolina has an active Safe Routes to School program with a walking school bus, walking recess programs, a bike Friday program, and Walk and Bike to School Day participation. These activities are financially supported by the PTA, and a Safe Routes to School grant funded by the John Rex Endowment and managed by the UNC Highway Safety Research Center. Approximately 130 students, parents, and teachers participated in Walk to School Day in 2017, and around 85 participated in Bike to School Day in 2018.

Photos: Walk to School Day 2017 at Northwoods Elementary





Case Study: Reston, Virginia

Lake Anne Elementary in Reston, Virginia hosts a monthly "Walk & Roll" to school program, which is similar to a walking school bus. Parents and students meet at a local park before school for 15 to 30 minutes of play time and activity, breakfast treats, and socializing. The event concludes with parents and students walking to school together. Encouragement events are organized by the PTA. These events are low-cost and use donations from local merchants as well as PTA funds. In addition to breakfast, the PTA has provided key chain tags from Fitness Finders, t-shirts, safety reflectors, and safety vests for participants. Participation ranges from 25 to 250 individuals each month.

Photos: Walk & Roll to School events at Lake Anne Elementary



Conclusion

Finding resources for Safe Routes to School is necessary for programs of all sizes and configurations. There are many methods for seeking monetary and in-kind funding. Evaluate your program's funding needs and determine which method or methods will work best. Reach out to similar programs to share strategies or best practices, and partner with local community organizations, public health, and municipalities when possible. More funding for Safe Routes to School helps more kids develop healthy habits.