

# Growing the Good Food Movement

A guide for food partnerships to support more people to get involved in community food action





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## Introduction

Building and sustaining a Good Food Movement is one of the **six elements** of the food partnership development journey as part of the Sustainable Food Places programme. Every local area deserves a plethora of diverse, inclusive, engaging and life-affirming activities for people to get involved in that not only improve access to good food, promote sustainability but also build community connections and give people a sense of power in improving our food system.

The Sustainable Food Places (SFP) vision of a healthy, sustainable, equitable food system is not one that will be achieved behind closed doors, on paper or in a queue; it will take shape in local communities, through sharing, learning, connecting and organising. This guide offers a framework of actions and tried and tested approaches for, and from, food partnerships to support more people to get involved in good food, whether for the benefit of themselves and their families, or for the benefit of their wider communities.

Growing the Good Food Movement is for both established and emerging food partnerships, as well as for grassroots movements, like food hubs, or community food groups wanting to harness regional energy towards developing a more formalised partnership approach and broader good food movement in their place.

The guide includes an overview of what a good food movement is, its role for food partnerships and Sustainable Food Places. It signposts to practical tools to start building a movement, or to keep momentum of an existing one and provides case studies of areas across the UK doing great work to amplify their local food movement.

## About movement-building

There is no one definition of a movement so it's ok if everyone has a different idea of what a movement is. But most generally, movement-building is the process of organising and helping to activate the will and capacity of people and organisations to work collectively toward a vision they all share.

Movement building vests its power in people and organisations so they can take the work wherever it needs to go.

## What is the SFP approach to a Good Food Movement?

Good Food Movement-building helps food partnerships to nurture, support and sustain broad, inclusive citizen-led action around good food. As the movement builds, different audiences and communities connect, communicate and collaborate as active food citizens whilst they work together to transform their local food system around common goals.

Food partnerships are best placed to capture the energy of grassroots food movements at a local level; from mutual aid groups, to good food enterprises, to the local community fridge or the farmers' market, and bring all of those people and communities into a broader good food movement that represents its place. The work is all about developing a place-wide initiative to build a movement that connects people and communities up through common interests and goals, for example around food justice, health, food sustainability, food equity or community food growing.

# The role of movement-building in food partnership working

A common theme that has emerged among Sustainable Food Places is the importance of finding ways to inspire, enable and support individuals and organisations in every community and across every sector. Partnerships want to support these communities to become active agents of change in establishing connections, collaboration and a shared vision and purpose around food.

While food partnerships vary in the way they function – some are convening and strategy-focused ‘backbone’ organisations while others deliver projects within communities – they all deliver some form of engagement with decisionmakers and key stakeholders, as well as the wider public and community-level groups. This balance of focus both inwardly toward power-holding institutions and outwards to the wider communities (who are truly the power-holders in terms of achieving cultural change) is crucial.

To borrow a guiding principle from SFP campaigns frameworks, citizen engagement and food policy/environment transformation must happen in tandem in order to achieve lasting change. One without the other will not yield the broad buy-in needed, nor decentralise leadership to effect change that involves the whole community.

Movement-building not only develops a landscape of networks that make a distributed and inclusive campaign possible, but it supports the message that good food is everyone’s business. Citizen involvement in food partnership work helps to hold decision-makers to account, and likewise offers decision-makers a public mandate to make sustained improvements to the local food system. Both are vital to the success of a food partnership’s strategic objectives.



Volunteers at community farm, CoFarm, in Cambridge. Credit: Tony Buckingham



# Putting diversity, inclusion and anti-racism at the heart of movement-building

A movement around food should also be a movement around social justice. We are all connected by food. Everyone needs to eat it, everyone has the right to it, and everyone should be able to enjoy it. Yet sadly, that is not currently the case for everyone so a movement around food should also be a movement around social justice, to ensure fair access and equal enjoyment. That's why diversity, inclusion, equity and active anti-racism is a key part of the Sustainable Food Places programme.

When building a local Good Food Movement it is important to consider how you ensure meaningful inclusion, involvement and empowerment of underrepresented communities from the start of any project or campaign.

Those who gather at the inception of a movement help determine who joins it. It is important to consider who is part of your movement, and who might be missing from the table. This has to go beyond inviting someone in, by making sure their voice is heard, the space is a safe platform for them to express their views, and their opinions are properly taken into account.

As a food partnership, you have the privilege of authority and audience, even at the early stages of partnership development. With privilege comes a responsibility to all the communities within the area. Areas evolve over time and demographics change, so it is all the more important to ensure your work, activities and promotional approach are as inclusive and inviting as possible from the outset.

Also, your position of authority and audience reach is an opportunity to inspire the hearts and minds of people within your local communities to take an active stance against racism and discrimination. Diversity, inclusion and anti-racism work is for the benefit of everyone, not only Black, Brown and people of colour. It can be a tool for inspiring compassion and solidarity.

The Sustainable Food Places REDI for Change Review Tool is a useful approach for your food partnership or movement to review your culture, practice and people in relation to race, equity, diversity and inclusion. REDI for Change is a process centred around a belief in deeply participatory approaches to social change, guided by the following questions:

- What does a healthy, sustainable and more equitable food system look like?
- What can be done to dismantle the entrenched systems of oppression within our food systems?
- How can food partnerships across the UK lead the way in this change?
- And crucially, how can the SFP programme support members to be actively anti-racist in their own sustainable food work?

## Tips for putting diversity, inclusion and anti-racism at the heart and start of movement-building

- Reach out to and involve a diverse cohort of groups and organisations from the start of project and event-planning and maintain their involvement throughout, including groups that may not be directly involved in food. It is worth noting though, that some groups may experience a lot of demand to provide certain perspectives. Some groups had a lot of time demanded of them after the BLM protests, and felt tokenised.
- Take some time to understand what may prevent groups and people from getting involved to make sure diverse groups can take part full. are there language barriers? Are you using accessible spaces
- Utilise your communication channels and storytelling platforms to shine a light on groups and individuals typically underrepresented in food and sustainability narratives. But make sure you are not extractive with this. Platforming voices and telling stories about people in your community needs to be on their own terms rather than mining stories.
- Use your engagement work and activities as opportunities to platform and showcase the diversity of foods, recipes and cultural traditions and language in your community.
- Check out Sustain's [Diversity Style Guide](#) for guidance on how we will write about, portray and provide a platform for diversity.



School children visiting local Community Supported Agriculture Scheme, Stanford Hall  
Credit: Leicestershire Food Partnership

# Good Food Movement Framework of activities and action

Good Food Movement work is broadly divided into three overarching themes that can help food partnerships identify their role in inspiring and sustaining meaningful citizen involvement in good food activities:

1. **Supporting grassroots-led action;**
2. **Inspiring and engaging the public about good food**
3. **Community representation.**

## Tip: Create a Movement Building Canvas

The **Movement Building Canvas** is a practical framework and printable worksheet developed by the Social Change Agency to help you or your organisation design and build a social movement. The Canvas is split into four sections and you can use it to explore who is part of your movement, the movement identity, the movement journey and movement enablers.

The Canvas asks a series of questions about how you shift to a movement building approach and helps guide where you would like your movement to have the most impact.

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## Support community leadership and grassroots action on good food

This step is about understanding who is in your movement and nurturing seedlings to grow. This means building the capacity of your movement by organising and connecting with your local community. This includes supporting new initiatives and activities led by small groups and members of the community, reaching out to new organisations and lending your weight to other important causes in the area. Your role is one of facilitation of new relationships and new opportunities.

What does this mean in practice?

- Community mapping – to organise and facilitate, it's important to know what is happening in your local area and who you should be engaging with. Sustainable Food Places have a **community food mapping tool** and **food system mapping tool**.
- Support and host community food activist networks to enable inspiration, learning, and collaboration
- Support community access and ownership of existing underused land/venues to give projects and enterprises a space to flourish.
- Offer training, resources and small grants funding programmes for community initiatives
- Increase citizen participation in and leadership on community food activity through development of new spaces, venues and initiatives.



## Case study: **Arran**

A key element of movement building is bringing people together into a physical space to build networks, inspire action and create a community. As part of their movement building and strengthening of local food identity, the Isle of Arran has set up their first farmers' market.

Bringing together 15 local producers and over 900 local residents, the physical market was used to bring local people closer to their food producers and act as a dynamic space to get people talking and thinking about key food issues: sustainability, supply chains, seasonality, and food access. Spring-boarded from the market, Eco-Savvy, the local organisation coordinating the good food movement-building, now hosts a 'A day in the life of an Arran farmer' column in their newsletter and are working with a Scotland Food and Drink regional group to develop Arran's Food Journey, a directory showcasing local and sustainable food.

Coming off the back of the momentum of the good food movement work, Eco Savvy has been able to bring together 18 key members of the community - farmers, business owners, people working in tourism and other charities - to respond to the Local Food for Everyone Scottish consultation for the island. This has started to lay the groundwork for developing a formalised food partnership for the island and has helped Arran to be recognised for their great work on sustainable food.



Arran Farmers' market. Credit: Jess Wallace

## 2 Inspire and engage the public about good food

Outward facing engagement and public community mobilisation.

### Start with the basics:

**Create communication channels:** Every food partnership should aim to have at least a regular newsletter (you can do this for free on mailchimp) and some form of social media presence, even if your main audience is stakeholder organisations at this stage in your food partnership journey, with a view to build and expand your public reach.

**Get to know your local media:** Local newspapers, radio channels and even social media influencers are great avenues for sharing what's happening in your local area around good food. Take a look at this [NEON press officers handbook](#) for ideas on how to engage with your local press.

**Create content:** be that blogs, short news stories or videos and vox-pops and use these to feature different aspects of your community linked to food - those within the partnership and outside through your newsletters, social media channels and local media. [Canva](#) is a great free tool for creating social media cards.

### A bit more advanced...

A food partnership is well placed to amplify a spectrum of food issues from health and food access to food growing and climate-friendly food, as well as promote stakeholder organisations and groups that people can get involved in. Here's how you can use your platforms to build the movement:

**Host opportunities** for learning about, sharing and enjoying good food, such as events, workshops, festivals and community meals

Ensure citizen participation in community food initiatives is **widely and inclusively promoted** through signposting, online promotion, including through facebook groups or other networks not current utilized by the partnership, open days and volunteering programmes

**Develop a citizen-facing umbrella campaign** like Bristol to encourage individuals, organisations and businesses to pledge and take action on a broad range of food issues

### Tip: Bringing your movement together through an umbrella campaign

The [Food Equality Creative Methods toolkit](#) was developed by members of Food Plymouth. These resources are for anyone working with groups who want to make their views heard and make changes at a local level, or even beyond. This tool is useful for facilitating discussions with different people, organisations and community groups to better understand common goals and visions.



#BitesBackBetter posters in the city  
Credit: Bristol Food Network



## Case study: **Bristol**

Central to Bristol Food Network's **Going for Gold** bid was a citizen-facing campaign and the development of an interactive website which helped encourage individuals and organisations to get involved. Across the city, the partnership focused on several key themes: urban growing, eating better, buying better, food waste and community action. The new website was central to promoting the wide range of activities happening across the city and sharing stories and action.

A new communications specialist was brought on board to support the partnership to engage with communities who had historically been disconnected and excluded from conversations around sustainable food. The Community Participation Lead decided to focus on five communities in the city: including the Kurdish-, Spanish-, Arabic-, Lithuanian-, and Urdu-speaking communities and find spokespeople to talk about food waste in a series of short, bi-lingual films.

The intention is that the community engagement work will be able to continue, using these films as a starting point to engage wider discussion on sustainable food and how issues such as food waste might be approached in culturally relevant ways in each community.



Going For Gold campaign. Credit: Bristol Food Network

### 3 Amplifying community voices and building advocate programmes

Once you've set-up your channels of communication and built capacity, it's time to start amplifying the voices of your community and advocating for change at all levels, from local farmers and growers to local authorities and MPs. The world needs to know about the change you want to see and why it is important. Participatory approaches to facilitating and supporting the good food movement is key here.

These approaches are based on the principle that local people are experts in their own lived experience and that this experience should be recognised and incorporated into local good food movements and food strategies. This involves exploring ways to engage with and listen to the voices and perspectives of local people. There are many ways this can be achieved, including:

- Participatory appraisal in public places;
- Facilitated workshops where people gather;
- Food focus group discussions;
- Larger-scale community events like a Citizen Assembly using a range of different tools and methods.

Supporting community action will inevitably bring forth individuals who want to do more beyond their immediate community, and having opportunities for them to be involved in engaging decisionmakers with you or contributing to consultations will further empower them. This is where you may want to run a Champion/Local Ambassador/ community food hero scheme. Supporting a cohort of named community advocates can be a powerful tool in reaching more communities and bringing them into the fold of your network.

It's worth noting that this is an ask on people's time, and can often be limited to those who are able to offer unpaid time and resource, which is not very representative. Accessing micro grants or small pots of funding for your local food champions is key to broadening citizen involvement.

The Sustainable Food Places Toolkit includes a range of resources covering different ways to encourage and facilitate representation in local good food movements (see the sections on Food System Consultation and Food Strategy Development).



The Good Food Cardiff Autumn Festival  
Credit: Food Cardiff



## Case study: **Cardiff**

In 2021, Food Cardiff coordinated their second Good Food Cardiff Autumn Festival which aims to empower the city's communities to champion local, sustainable food. To do this, they provided small grants to 14 hyper-local communities to host their own events to align with Food Cardiff's 5 Good Food Goals and released [a toolkit](#) to support their groups to host the events, including sample press releases, social media templates, branding guidance and ideas. The festival culminated with [Field to Fforc: A People's assembly](#), where 70 people came together virtually to start developing Food Cardiff's strategy.

Adding to supporting hyper-local food movements, Food Cardiff developed the idea of 'Good Food Neighbourhoods' and piloted two areas to create their own good food network, Ely & Caerau and Trowbridge & St Mellons. Grants of £1000 were given out to the two areas so that engagement could be tailored to local needs and the local leads hosted a series of events and engagement workshops in these areas.

As a result, the two neighbourhoods, led by local food champions, have been able to engage with hundreds of people through their own events (plant giveaways on local driveways, outdoor pizza lunches, bread-making workshops and more) and have been able to use these events to help better understand what people want to see in their Good Food Neighbourhood plan as well as strengthen the local food identity.



The Good Food Cardiff Autumn Festival. Credit: Food Cardiff



# Resources and connections every community needs to ensure a thriving and inclusive food system

Good Food Movement-building involves taking a holistic view of interventions and activities in your area at whatever geography your food partnership covers, be it a city, district or county. While the activities you facilitate and run may focus on specific local communities, all should have a long-term plan of being rolled out across your entire area, so all communities can ultimately benefit.

It's also useful to consider movement-building from an individual community perspective, especially to consider what might be missing, and to acknowledge that every community's needs are different.

Here are some ideas for resources and relationships every local community deserves to allow for a thriving landscape of community action around food.

You can define a geographical community as you see fit. At a micro level you could look at it as your immediate neighbours e.g. Big Lunch. Or a community of interest around a goal or interest. Or at a more macro-level a council headed by a Mayor or Lead Councillor or a constituency represented by your MP.

## 1. Connect with influential allies

Food partnerships have a proven track record on local food work **in a time of crisis** and **in the long term** but it's important to bring in your local leaders to help them understand what your food partnership is doing and what changes are needed to strengthen the local food agenda. Your local politicians, be they local councillors, the Mayor or your MP automatically have a vested interest in the community food agenda on their patch. They are also able to raise obstacles to local or national government that cannot be solved at a community level.

## 2. Build a network of volunteers and activists

Establish accessible networks to connect and organise, whether in person or online. An area with thriving community action on food needs multiple networks based on people's interests and localities. These networks also bring richness beyond food - they offer diverse and, in some cases, underrepresented perspectives, and should be involved in shaping local food systems.

## 3. Utilise community buildings... with working kitchens!

Physical community spaces are the beating hearts of local neighbourhoods, where people can be productive, look after each other and take action that improves the outcomes of their wider communities. Community centres, village halls and faith-based buildings should be equipped with adequate cooking and eating facilities, and protected for public use, with free or very affordable rental rates.

## 4. Protect local land for growing and more

Protecting public use of land for growing, composting and public events is as crucial as protecting community buildings. The case is well established on the mental and physical **health**

benefits of community growing as well as the negative impacts of derelict and underused land on community well-being. Beyond urban growing, fertile agricultural land, such as that in city farms, county farms, parks or in green belts is a vital community asset for generations to come.

## 5. Share equipment and resources

Taking a shared asset approach when it comes to resource-heavy food work is cost-effective and it bonds community groups together. Event equipment, cooking equipment, trailers, even decorations can be held by food partnerships or other groups for the benefit of the wider community. Local organisations can take a shared asset approach when spending grant funding, putting in a long-term community use plan for resources.

## 6. Support and encourage community food hubs

Every area needs numerous user-led food-sharing projects that foster mutual support through food, make a case for protecting community resources by using them, and build networks for people to influence their food system collectively. Ideally, every neighbourhood or ward will have a variety of projects including growing spaces, cooking clubs, community fridges, communal composting and surplus-sharing initiatives.

## 7. Make the most of the planning levers

If community food access is a vital neighbourhood infrastructure, as are playgrounds and recycling bays, it must be written into local planning and development policies. Community kitchens, food growing spaces and provision for food enterprise should be written into and promoted through planning advice notes, but ultimately should become formal planning policy.

## 8. Prioritise training opportunities

While grassroots groups and local residents have the power to co-create and run local initiatives and actions, they need to be supported through training and peer to peer mentoring opportunities. This is the perfect role for food partnerships and other community alliances focusing on food. In addition to helping people

develop in their role as community food leaders and gain transferable skills, community sector allies' benefit from convening these loose and diverse networks to help feed into wider local food strategies.

## 9. Think outside the funding box

One learning from Covid emergency food responses in 2020 was that, although funding was available locally, it was inaccessible to many local groups, who did not have the necessary constitution, bank accounts nor time to navigate formal grant funding processes. Alternative funding structures, such as local micro grants for small food projects can allow small groups to cover activity costs without complex reporting.

## 10. Support and space for food enterprise

Volunteer-run food project leaders of today can become the local food business leaders and job creators of tomorrow. Support in the form of training, funding, access to processing facilities and outdoor/indoor market spaces are the necessary springboards for people to take their projects to the next level and build livelihoods around their passions. Beyond job-creation, supporting routes to market keeps passionate community-minded people in a sector otherwise dominated by corporations with little community stake.

## 11. Build a collective food identity

With the ten aforementioned structures, networks and resources in place, a public-led good food movement needs its banner: a local identity based on shared values, strengths and vision that everyone can rally behind. This gives both individuals and community groups a sense of shared purpose to keep up their motivation and creativity around food.

You can explore the list and further links in full [here](#).

# Further reading, watching and networking

## Reading and watching materials

[Growing the good food movement webinar](#) featuring Better Food Traders, Shared Assets, Social Change Agency, Sustain and [accompanying blog](#)

[Community organising: sowing seeds for a strong, diverse food movement webinar](#) featuring Organising for Change, Women's Environment Network, Bakers Good and Allied Workers Union, Food for Life Get Togethers

## Anti-racism movement building

[Local Movements won't save the world: Why Local and Equitable are not synonymous](#) (USA focus but of relevance to British movements around local and sustainable food)

[We Don't Have to Halt Climate Action to Fight Racism](#)

[Enough with the poshsplaining](#) (on the terminology used within the charity sector to refer to working class people)

[Reflections on diversity and inclusion in healthy eating campaigns](#)

[Building an Antiracist Farming Movement with Leah Penniman](#)

## Inspirational organisations

A list of organisations who are supporting communities to build movements

- **Better Food Traders:** a movement of food growers, traders and consumers that support better food for people and planet
- **Food Ethics Council:** an organisation working to transform the discussion around food and farming, using ethics and values as our foundation. They do a lot of work on **Food Citizenship**
- **Food for Life Get Togethers:** run regular community activities that connect people from all ages and backgrounds through growing, cooking and eating good food
- **Hubbub** run creative campaigns to encourage positive everyday actions for the environment, including the **community fridge network**
- **Landworkers' Alliance:** a UK-based union of farmers, growers, foresters and land-based workers founded in 2015 who work together to campaign for better food and land-use systems.
- **My Food Community:** a network for good food champions to learn, connect and take action. It is a programme of activities to bring together people who champion good food
- **Neighbourhood Democracy:** led by local activists and community organisations, neighbourhood movement to create real democracy in every community and a real shift of power to local people
- **New economy organisers network (NEON):** an independent network of activists working to replace neoliberalism with an economy and politics based on social and economic justice.
- **Organising for Change:** collective that builds the capacity of those working for a co-created, equitable society which respects and makes space for multiple cultures and is rooted in the principles of environmental, racial and social justice

- **Plastic Free Communities:** led by surfers against sewage (SOS), local community leaders take action in local areas to reduce plastic use. SOS have developed resources and toolkits but it's the community leaders pushing the movement forward
- **Shared Assets:** a think & do tank that makes land work for everyone
- **Social change Agency:** explore the mechanisms around how social and environmental change happens and innovation and tools for understanding
- **Transition Network:** a movement of communities coming together to reimagine and rebuild communities through Transition Towns
- **We're Right Here:** the campaign for community power
- **Women's Environment Network (Wen):** Wen connects, inspires and mobilises women to take action on issues that connect gender, health and the environment. They run Just FACT - a programme supporting community led climate action in Tower Hamlets - focussing on reducing the environmental impacts of our food system

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## About Sustainable Food Places

Sustainable Food Places is a partnership programme led by the Soil Association, Food Matters and Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming. It is funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and The National Lottery Community Fund.

There are currently over 70 Sustainable Food Places Network members around the UK. Each has a cross-sector food partnership involving the local authority, local businesses and organisations, academics and NGOs working together for better and healthier food. To find out more about getting involved in your local partnership or establishing a food partnership in your local area, please visit [www.sustainablefoodplaces.org](http://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org).

## About Sustain

Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming, advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the living and working environment, enrich society and culture, and promote equity. It represents around 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional and local level.

### Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming

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