

A **HEALTHY** Diet  
for **EVERYONE**

**VEGETABLES**  
**Fruit**  
**AimS**



**Community FARMERS MARKET**

**BREAKFAST CLUB**

**Funding PLANNING**

# A GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY FOOD INITIATIVES



**Cook!**



**Fresh**

**Food Co-op**

**Grow your own**



**Healthy Food for All**

access | availability | affordability

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Healthy Food for All is an all-island multi-agency initiative which seeks to combat food poverty by promoting access, availability and affordability of healthy food for low-income groups. It also administers a Demonstration Programme of Community Food Initiatives in association with **safefood**.

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# A GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY FOOD INITIATIVES



**Healthy Food for All**  
access | availability | affordability

The core funders of Healthy Food for All in 2010 are the Social Inclusion Division of the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, the Food Safety Authority Ireland, the Health Service Executive and **safefood**.

An Roinn Gnóthaí Pobail,  
Comhionannais agus Gaeltachta  
Department of Community, Equality  
and Gaeltacht Affairs



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THANK  
YOU

# Foreword

I am delighted to introduce and recommend this *Good Practice Guide for Community Food Initiatives* to you.

The Public Health Agency, of which I am the Chief Executive, was established in April 2009 as part of the radical review and reform of public administration in Northern Ireland. The Public Health Agency is an integral part of the health and social care agenda and brings together a wide range of existing public health functions to give an enhanced focus to achieving public health goals.

As an organisation, we are committed to actively engaging communities in the development of our programmes and policies, and in particular our health improvement activities. If we are to achieve our vision of improving the health and wellbeing of the population, we must harness the efforts, energies and commitment not only of government departments and agencies, but also of local communities and the private sector.

I firmly believe that to achieve reductions in health inequalities we must have as few steps as possible between health commissioners and those who are interfacing with communities on the ground. I also believe that effective partnerships often start at community level, are sustained within that community, and transfer effectively to other geographies and communities. This is why I believe that Community Food Initiatives can make an important contribution to improving the health and wellbeing of all our people throughout Northern Ireland, especially in areas experiencing multiple deprivation and poverty.

By 2012, the Public Health Agency is aiming to increase life expectancy for men and women by three and two years respectively, and to reduce by 50 per cent the gap in life expectancy between the most disadvantaged and the Northern Ireland average. We also aim to halt the rise in obesity by 2010 – a challenging target that will require the help and resources of organisations like Healthy Food for All to work hand-in-hand with the Public Health Agency and other community and statutory stakeholders.

I encourage all communities to use this Guide to enable Northern Ireland to achieve improvements in the health and wellbeing of all our people and in particular to help achieve increases in life expectancy and a halt in the rise in obesity within our communities.

**Dr Eddie Rooney**  
Chief Executive  
Public Health Agency

I am delighted to be involved with the Healthy Food for All initiative and the development of this new and important resource – *A Good Practice Guide for Community Food Initiatives*. The Guide will be of considerable help to those working to combat food poverty by providing guidance on practical ways to improve the nutrition of vulnerable groups across the island of Ireland.

Food and nutrition are key determinants of good health. For the majority of the Irish population, current eating habits are not in line with healthy eating guidelines. Both the quality and quantity of food is important, and today two out of every three adults are overweight or obese. Of even more concern is the recent study commissioned by the Department of Health & Children and the Health Service Executive, which found that as many as one in five children is overweight or obese at seven years of age. This can lead to a lifetime of poor health from diet-related diseases, such as type-2 diabetes, heart disease and certain cancers.

Making the healthier food choice the easier choice is a key requirement for improving nutrition. Community Food Initiatives do just that, not only by delivering good nutrition information and developing important skills, but also by helping to address issues of accessibility, affordability and availability of food in local communities.

This Guide offers practical advice on setting up and sustaining Community Food Initiatives. It outlines some very interesting case studies to help inspire community development workers, community dietitians, health professionals and local authorities to set up more initiatives to promote healthy food on limited means.

I encourage all those involved in community initiatives to use this Guide to help provide children and adults in disadvantaged communities with nutritious food, thereby tackling food poverty and promoting better health for those in most need on the island of Ireland.

**Ursula O'Dwyer**

National Nutrition Policy Advisor to the  
Department of Health & Children, Ireland

# Acronyms used in the text

AGM	Annual General Meeting
CE	Community Employment
CFI	Community Food Initiative
DOHC	Department of Health & Children, Ireland
FARMA	National Farmers' Retail and Markets Association
FRC	Family Resource Centres
FRESH	Focusing Resources on Eating and Shaping Health
HSE	Health Service Executive, Ireland
HFfA	Healthy Food for All
MDA	Mountmellick Development Association
RAPID	Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development
RCMA	Riverside Community Market Association

# Introduction

**Healthy Food for All** is an all-island multi-agency initiative that promotes access to easily available and affordable healthy food for low-income groups. The organisation was set up in 2006 by the Combat Poverty Agency, Crosscare and the Society of St Vincent de Paul as a follow-up to their joint publication, *Food Poverty and Policy* (Friel and Conlon, 2004).

Food and nutrition are key determinants of health. What people eat, and how much they eat, influences how healthy they are, and even how long they live. Food poverty arises when people lack the money or other resources needed to eat a healthy diet.

The overarching objective of Healthy Food for All is to end food poverty on the island of Ireland. We are committed to supporting and improving the standard of Community Food Initiatives (CFIs), as these make an important practical contribution to addressing local barriers to healthy eating. In essence, Community Food Initiatives promote good health by making it easier for people to make healthy food choices.

## **Food poverty**

Food poverty reflects a form of social exclusion and social injustice. It can lead to ill health and early death. In many poorer households, food expenditure is the only flexible budget item and is often reduced to avoid debt or to pay other household bills such as rent, electricity and gas.

Food poverty among socially disadvantaged and marginalised groups has a variety of causes. They may lack suitable cooking and storage equipment, there may be no local shops selling affordable food, transport to shops may be inadequate, or they may lack the relevant knowledge and skills. Food poverty is related to other policy concerns, such as health inequalities, social welfare, education, food production and distribution, retail planning and food safety.

Two reports – *Food Poverty and Policy* (2004) and *Food Poverty: Fact or Fiction* (2007) – shared a number of broadly similar findings:

- The greatest obstacles to accessing a healthy diet are shortage of money and the cost of nutritionally adequate food. The main influences on food purchases are cost and special offers.
- Low-income households eat less well than those with higher incomes; the foods they do eat are less likely to meet their nutritional needs.
- Low-income households spend a higher proportion of their income on food, but have difficulty accessing a variety of good quality, affordable food.
- Even those who know the healthy food options are often restricted by financial and physical constraints in exercising these choices.
- Without suitable retail options, transport, and storage or cooking facilities, access to good quality food is a problem. People who have to shop locally may have to pay higher prices and choose from a severely restricted range of foods. The availability of transport is a particular issue for parents of young children and for older people, who may be unable to use public transport and may have to incur the cost of using taxi services.
- The knowledge and skills involved in food storage, preparation and cooking are necessary to ensure a healthy diet.



## **Rising levels of overweight and obesity**

Obesity reduces life expectancy, and increases the risk of heart disease, certain cancers and type 2 diabetes. It can also lead to experiences of stigma, prejudice and low self-esteem.

Over the past twenty years, the incidence of overweight and obesity has increased rapidly. The World Health Organisation has described it as a 'global epidemic'. It is an epidemic that affects the poor and disadvantaged more than others, as shown in a number of recent reports, including *Tackling Food Poverty* (Balanda et al, 2008) and *Food Poverty: Fact or Fiction* (Purdy et al, 2007).

Recent research from SLÁN suggests that two out of three Irish adults are at an unhealthy weight and approximately one in four is obese. Most worrying is the fact that childhood obesity has become a serious problem – the Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative in 2009 revealed that one in four seven-year-old children in Ireland is overweight. Similarly, research commissioned by Fit Futures found that levels of obesity among children in Northern Ireland are increasing, and that around one in five boys and one in four girls are overweight or obese in their first year in primary school (age 4 to 5). The Young Hearts Study of 12- and 15-year-olds in Northern Ireland also reported that incidences of overweight and obesity have increased by over a quarter in ten years.

Overweight and obesity result mainly from a high intake of energy-dense foods and sugary drinks, coupled with physical inactivity. Other contributors include the increasing proportion of food prepared outside the home, and generally larger portion sizes.

## **How can Community Food Initiatives address these issues?**

People who are living on low incomes encounter a number of significant barriers to eating healthily, as outlined above. The barriers relate principally to accessibility, availability and affordability of healthy food. These barriers can be overcome, at least to some extent, by Community Food Initiatives, as described in this Guide.

Community Food Initiatives address food poverty in a number of ways, including:

- Improving access to good-quality, affordable food
- Addressing gaps in dietary knowledge and skills
- Supporting bottom-up approaches to food provision and consumption
- Improving the quality and extent of food distribution and provision
- Facilitating social participation in the food economy
- Empowering local communities to address local food needs.

Based on the experience of the Decent Food for All intervention in Northern Ireland, the *Tackling Food Poverty* report (Balanda et al, 2008) concluded that:

- Local action is essential to promote an affordable, safe and healthy diet
- An all-island approach is necessary to tackle food poverty and obesity.

Depending on the particular project, community food initiatives can have all or some of the following benefits:

- **Community development:** by involving community members in a project designed to benefit the whole community, the project can reaffirm community identity and promote active citizenship
- **Economic development:** by providing skills training and creating a market for local goods and services, the project can stimulate economic activity within the local community
- **Health:** by eating a balanced diet with fresh fruit and vegetables, participants in the project can experience important health benefits. Similarly, gardening and farming activities require the participants to engage in physical exercise, with resulting benefits to their physical and mental health.
- **Education:** by furthering formal learning at school and informal education in the community and by providing for people with special needs, the project can improve access to knowledge and skills within the community



- **Environmental improvement:** by encouraging local production and consumption of food, the project can reduce the requirement for transport, packaging, storage and chemical preservatives
- **Aesthetics:** growing projects including community gardens can improve the visual appearance of the area.

This Guide describes a number of different types of local Community Food Initiatives. Each of them illustrates the importance of local action in identifying and tackling local issues in relation to food accessibility, affordability and availability. The Guide also has an all-island focus that supports shared learning across the island of Ireland.

### Who should read this Guide?

The purpose of this Guide is to help communities set up and sustain Community Food Initiatives, so that they have better access to safe, sustainable, nutritious food, with positive impact on the well-being of people in their local area.

The Guide has been developed for use within the community, with the following audiences in mind:

- Community/development workers
- Youth workers
- Community dietitians
- Health professionals
- Local authorities
- The general public.



## How is the Guide organised?

The Guide is divided into two main parts:

**Part A** gives general guidance on how to set up and run a food initiative in the community. It provides advice on how to carry out a needs assessment, write aims and objectives, conduct financial planning, establish organisational and management structures, obtain funding, deal with staffing, and evaluate the success of a Community Food Initiative. It also provides guidance on how to develop a healthy food policy for the local community. It encourages communities to take a broad approach to food issues and where possible to strategically link nutrition programmes, so that methods and messages from different initiatives are consistent and mutually reinforcing.

**Part B** gives practical information on setting up specific types of Community Food Initiatives including Community Cafés, Community Food Co-ops, Community Farmers' Markets, Community Growing and Cooking Projects, Community-run Breakfast and Afterschool clubs, and nutrition education and training programmes.'

## ? want More Information

Healthy Food for All provides online resources to support this Guide on our website, including additional information such as links to reports, contact details and extra case studies. We have also created an All-Island CFI Directory, which charts Community Food Initiatives across the island, and we are running an all-island Demonstration Programme for Community Food Initiatives (funded by **safefood**). See section B.7 for further information.

Whether you are embarking on a Community Food Initiative for the first time or expanding the scope of an existing initiative, we hope that this Guide will inspire you and support you through the process. Let us know how you get on, including approaches that have worked and those that have not, so we can bring them to the attention of policy makers and other communities. To contact us, please email us at [info@healthyfoodforall.com](mailto:info@healthyfoodforall.com).



# General Guidance on Community Food Initiatives

## Why set up a Community Food Initiative?

If you want to do something to improve the health of the community in which you live or work, a community food initiative could be a good way to go about it. Organising your efforts in a community-based project can improve the food situation in the local area and can also have far-reaching benefits for the community in which you live.



# How to set up a Community Food Initiative

In this part of the Guide, we outline the key steps involved in planning, implementing and evaluating a community-based project. There are many sources of information that give more detail on different aspects of the process which are referenced throughout the text. A quick guide to Nutritional Guidelines is included in Appendix A.

## A.1 Planning Phase

The planning phase of the project covers assessing the needs, involving the community and other key players and partners, articulating your aims and objectives, determining your budget, planning delivery of the project, arranging finance, establishing the organisational structures, and dealing with legal and administrative issues.

### A.1.1 Assessing the needs

The first step is to identify the need and to choose an initiative that will address that need. You need to know whether people in the community are likely to use the service you are considering. You need to identify and engage with existing projects, knowledge and skills in the area, to see how they are addressing the need and the extent to which they are succeeding or otherwise.

Although this can be time consuming, it will increase the likelihood that your project will succeed. Don't neglect this step – if, for example, you find that there is little demand for what you are considering, or that people want something quite different from what you had in mind, you may save yourself a lot of time and effort.

Research is important, whatever the size of the initiative you are planning, but the approach you take may vary according to your aims and the funding you have or are applying for.



### Preparation

Before carrying out the research for a needs assessment, try to answer the following questions:

- What exactly do you want to find out?

- Who and what is the information for? Is it for your own planning or will it be used in a funding application? If the latter, will the needs assessment answer the types of questions funders may ask?
- What specific questions will you ask and will the answers really tell you what you want to know? How can you express your questions in plain simple language that people will understand and respond to?
- How and where will you gather the information and who is responsible for the research? Will you be able to do it yourselves or do you need help?
- How much is it going to cost to set up and how much time will it take? Draft a budget and a timetable.

## ? Want More Information

For more information on how to set up and carry out a needs assessment in a community, see:

- Center for Urban Research and Learning, *A Community Needs Assessment Guide*, [www.luc.edu/curl/](http://www.luc.edu/curl/)
- Community Health and Social Services Network, *Community Health Needs Assessment Guidelines*, [www.chssn.org](http://www.chssn.org)
- Black and Minority Ethnic Network East of England, *Needs Analysis Made Simple*, [www.partnershipdevelopmentproject.org.uk](http://www.partnershipdevelopmentproject.org.uk)
- Sustain, *The Food Co-ops Toolkit*: [www.sustainweb.org/foodcoopstoolkit/](http://www.sustainweb.org/foodcoopstoolkit/)

### A.1.2 Involving the community

The people that you hope will benefit from the project should be involved in it from the start. A successful project is one that offers something that people both need and want – not just what you think they should have. There are various ways of consulting people locally, including informal conversations, questionnaires, focus groups or a participatory appraisal. Use templates and methods that are already out there. What method you choose will depend on how much time you have, what funding you have, how many people you wish to consult and what their skills and knowledge levels are. If you want to consult several hundred people, then a questionnaire is likely to be the most feasible option. If you want to talk to only ten people, then informal interviews or a focus group may be your best choice.

Three of the more common consultation methods in the context of Community Food Initiatives are described below: questionnaires, participatory appraisals, and food mapping.

## ? Want More Information

For more information on how to involve and consult people in your community, including an overview of different tools and techniques, see:

- [www.publicengagement.ac.uk/our-projects/consultation-decision-making-and-policy-development](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/our-projects/consultation-decision-making-and-policy-development)
- [www.southaustraliantrails.com/pdf/trailmanual/chpater6sml.pdf](http://www.southaustraliantrails.com/pdf/trailmanual/chpater6sml.pdf)
- [www.fife.gov.uk/uploadfiles/Publications/c64\\_4ConsultationMethods.pdf](http://www.fife.gov.uk/uploadfiles/Publications/c64_4ConsultationMethods.pdf)
- [www.designer.dialoguebydesign.net](http://www.designer.dialoguebydesign.net)

## Questionnaires

Written questionnaires can be used to consult a large group of people. They can be paper-based or online (for example [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)).

Sample questions that you might ask if you are trying to find out whether local people would use a food co-op, include:

- Where do you buy food now?
- Do you have any difficulties with getting certain foods?
- Would you be likely to use a food co-op?
- What days and times would you go there?
- What sort of products would you like to buy?
- Would you be interested in volunteering for the food co-op?



Many Community Food Initiatives are set up to enhance access to fresh fruit and vegetables with a view to improving people's health. So you might like to include questions about the respondents' current consumption of fruit and vegetables. It may also be useful to ask how much they spend on particular foods each week, to give you an idea of how much they might spend at the food co-op.

Be careful when you are analysing the results. In any survey, there is likely to be a bias in the responses – respondents are more likely to be well disposed towards your proposal; those who are not interested are less likely to respond at all – either positively or negatively.

Key things to think about:

- **Make it easy for the respondent.** Make sure that the timing, format, length and language of the questionnaire are suitable for the respondents. Take any literacy issues that your respondents may have into account
- **Where possible, ask closed questions,** with a list of options or tick boxes, rather than open ones that ask the respondents to describe or give opinions. Closed questions are easier and quicker for the respondent to answer, and the answers are much easier to count and compare.
- **Consider offering an incentive** for completing the questionnaire, which may increase the response rate.

## ? want More Information

The Food-Co-ops Toolkit developed by Sustain UK provides sample questionnaires. See the Planning section at [www.foodcoops.org](http://www.foodcoops.org).

## Participatory appraisal

Participatory appraisal is a particularly useful way to help you work with a community to find out whether your proposed initiative would be welcomed and used. It uses pictures and plain language to communicate ideas and get responses, and has been found to work well with people who do not like or cannot fill in forms. It can help you reach people who might not otherwise take part in a consultation process.



The visual methods provide a more immediate way of literally ‘seeing’ a problem and its solution. They enable members of the community to think creatively about their situation and to suggest the kind of community projects they would like to see in their area. Participants generally enjoy the process and report having great fun.

Before starting this type of community consultation, consider the following:

- What is likely to happen as a result of your consultation? Be realistic about what can be achieved. You don’t want to raise people’s hopes and then subsequently disappoint them.
- What will it cost to organise and publicise a public event to bring people together?
- Do you have adequate capabilities in-house to run the event? It may be useful to engage a trained facilitator to ensure that it runs smoothly and delivers the results.

## ? Want More Information

Community Food and Health, *Fruitful Participation: Involving People in Food and Health Work*, [www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk](http://www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk).

## Food mapping

Community food mapping involves finding out where people can buy, grow and eat food in a local area. The information is then displayed on a physical (hand-drawn) map of the area, or in a computer graphic. The community food map might include all sources of food, such as corner shops, greengrocers, street markets, supermarkets, cafés, farm shops, restaurants and take-aways, or you might decide to focus only on retailers, and exclude places that only sell cooked food.

The map will help you to identify barriers: for example, there may be no shop within walking distance that sells fresh fruit and vegetables.



As well as recording the types of food available, it is also useful to note other factors, such as variety, price and quality. This is particularly important in the case of fruit and vegetables, as the quality can vary greatly.

Food mapping can be done with groups of people collectively and can be relatively inexpensive. If you are mapping a small area such as a village or ward, local knowledge provided by volunteer participants may enable you to build an accurate picture and save time and money. However, food mapping can also be done on a larger scale that gives a really detailed picture of food availability and access.

### **? Want More Information**

See the Toolkits section of

- Food Vision UK, [www.foodvision.gov.uk](http://www.foodvision.gov.uk)
- Community Food and Health, *Food Mapping for Community Food Activity*, [www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk](http://www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk)

The Food-Co-ops Toolkit developed by Sustain UK provides sample retailer surveys and price comparison tables that can be used to record your findings. See the Planning section of [www.foodcoops.org](http://www.foodcoops.org) under Needs Assessment and Food Mapping.

### **A.1.3 Involving key players and partners**

While planning your project it might become clear that you need the help of other individuals or organisations to achieve your aims. Working in partnership will frequently achieve more than working in isolation, especially when you are trying to influence the diet of a whole community. For example, you might consider involving some of the following:

- Community Nutrition and Dietetic teams in your local Health and Social Care Trust/Health Service Executive area
- Health Promotion Teams in your local Health and Social Care Trust/HSE area
- Public Health Alliance for the island of Ireland
- Community workers

- Parents and other interested residents
- Schools, colleges, universities
- Social Inclusion Unit (Ireland)
- Local Family Resource Centre (Ireland)
- Healthy Living Centres
- Local Council officers
- Professionals relevant to the proposed Community Food Initiative, such as cooks, horticulturalists, environmental health officers, doctors, dentists
- Local representatives
- Local farmers (in the case of food coops, community cafés, community markets)
- Other Community Food Initiatives
- Volunteers
- Local businesses.



### Steering committee

When working with other stakeholders, you should set up a steering committee with representatives from each of the key players. This will ensure that the aims and objectives of the Community Food Initiative are shared by the stakeholders, that they all can influence its direction, and that they share an interest in its ultimate success. It also helps to ensure that skills and resources in the community are fully utilised, and to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort. Section A.1.8 below deals in more detail with setting up a steering or management committee.

#### **A.1.4 Stating your aims and objectives**

Once you are satisfied that your project will address a real need of people in the community and that it will be used by them, you should set down the long- and short-term aims and objectives of the project. The aims of the project are expressed in broad aspirational terms; the objectives should be SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound. When it comes to evaluating the success of your project, your achievements will be measured against your stated objectives.

## **Sample aims and objectives for a community fruit and vegetable stall**

**Aim:** to improve the health of local people by increasing their consumption of fruit and vegetables.

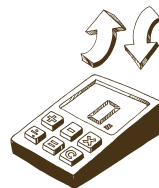
### **Objectives:**

- To increase the availability of fruit and vegetables in the local community
- To promote and encourage people to buy and eat fruit and vegetables
- To ensure that all produce is sold at affordable prices
- To source locally grown fruit and vegetables whenever possible
- To target groups of people who currently have a low intake of fruit and vegetables
- To create volunteering, training and employment opportunities, so that local people can play a full part in the community and take an active role in the promotion of healthy eating.

### **A.1.5 Determining your budget**

Before planning your project in detail, you need to ensure that your budget and resources match the activities you want to carry out. In drawing up a budget, you need to answer the following questions:

- What is your overall budget? Where is the money coming from? How much is available right now, and when will the rest become available?
- Are project partners contributing any money? If so, how much is it and what activities can it be used for?
- Is the funding time-specific and is continued funding dependent on success?
- Are there any grant or sponsorship opportunities, or will the project create revenue? (If so, what is the forecasted revenue?)
- What resources will be needed to deliver the project and what are the associated costs? (Think about venue hire, equipment purchases, outside expertise, staffing, insurances, etc.)



- How much time will be required to set up, deliver and evaluate the project?
- If the project is being delivered as part of the routine work of staff already employed, have you made a reasonable estimate of the time to be spent on the project by each employee? (This is frequently underestimated.)
- Have you estimated the time that will be spent on the project by any partners, and the associated costs? (This may be taken into consideration as 'matched funding'.)
- Do you need a contingency plan in case your budget is insufficient or the timescale for delivery is delayed?

Section A.1.7 below deals with funding.

### **A.1.6 Developing an action plan**

An action plan will help you to keep track of the many activities you will have to carry out in setting up the Community Food Initiative, and the dependencies between actions. It will help you to ensure that they are carried out in the right order and at the right time, that they are relevant and that they are focused on achieving your overall aim.

The objectives of the project form the basis of the action plan. You may want to add more information or break the objectives into smaller sub-objectives with associated actions. For each action, the plan should specify the person who is responsible for completing it, the timescale, the resources needed, and the budget.

Review the plan at regular intervals to check progress, and be prepared to modify your plan as necessary. Setting short-, medium- and long-term goals can also help to give you a quick indication of what is and what is not working.

During the planning phase, you should decide how you are going to evaluate the initiative, so that you collect any information needed for evaluation as the project goes along.

Irrespective of the size of your initiative, your action plan should answer the following questions:

- What are you going to do?
- How are you going to do it? What resources are needed?
- Who is going to do it?
- When does it have to be done by? What are the key milestones?
- Where will the project be located?
- Why are you doing it? What needs will it address?
- How much will it cost?
- How many people do you plan to target with your project?
- How sustainable is the project? When funding stops, will it be able to generate or find the required resources elsewhere?
- Will it deliver good value for money? Will the anticipated results justify the costs?
- Who is going to read and evaluate your plan? Does the plan include the information they require at the right level of detail?

If your proposed initiative is large, and you plan to apply for significant amounts of funding, you will almost certainly need to create a more detailed business plan, describing what you hope to achieve, how it will operate and how you will manage the money. This will not only be needed to support your application for funding, it will also help you to develop your ideas and can be used to plan and monitor goals.

### **A.1.7 Sourcing funding**

There is no straightforward or guaranteed way to obtain funding for a Community Food Initiative. Those involved in community projects typically spend as much or more time identifying sources of funding and applying for funds as they do actually working with their target group. However, if you can identify a good source of funds and are successful in your application, you can build your Community Food Initiative on a solid and stable foundation that will allow it to continue its work for many years. During the planning phase you need to maintain a very practical focus on exactly what you are trying to achieve, how you will go about it and how much money you require to do so.

## Identifying sources of funding

There are a number of potential sources of funding to consider:

- Government-funded initiatives
- National Lottery Funds – National Lottery in Ireland, the Big Lottery Fund in Northern Ireland
- National charities with an interest in your work
- Potential partners (including commercial sponsorship – but make sure to consider any potential conflicts of interest)
- Grant-giving trusts and foundations.

### Potential sources of funds in Northern Ireland

- Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, [www.dardni.gov.uk](http://www.dardni.gov.uk)
- Department of Social Development: [www.dsdni.gov.uk](http://www.dsdni.gov.uk)
- National Lottery: [www.biglotteryfunding.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfunding.org.uk)

See also:

- Food Standards Agency, *Sources of Funding for Food Related Initiatives*, [www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)
- Food Vision provides links to potential funders: [www.foodvision.gov.uk](http://www.foodvision.gov.uk)
- GrantTracker: [www.grant-tracker.org/](http://www.grant-tracker.org/)
- Funderfinder: [www.funderfinder.org.uk](http://www.funderfinder.org.uk)
- Scottish Community Diet Project, *Guide to Funding for Community Food Projects*: [www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk](http://www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk)
- Food Standards Agency, *Sources of Funding for Food Related Initiatives*: [www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)
- The Charities Information Bureau, *Fit4Funding*: [www.fit4funding.org.uk](http://www.fit4funding.org.uk)



### **Potential sources of funding in Ireland**

- National Lottery Grant Scheme: [www.dohc.ie](http://www.dohc.ie)
- Pobal: [www.pobal.ie](http://www.pobal.ie)
- An Taisce's Green Communities Programme: [www.antaisce.org](http://www.antaisce.org)

See also:

- Activelink – [www.activelink.ie](http://www.activelink.ie)
- Citizens' Information Board *Funding e-Bulletin*: [www.citizensinformationboard.ie](http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie)
- CREATE, *The Irish Fundraising Handbook*. For a copy, contact [fh6@create-ireland.ie](mailto:fh6@create-ireland.ie) or tel. +353 (0)1 473 6600.
- Fundingpoint.ie, *Helping Ireland Fundraise*: [www.fundingpoint.ie/](http://www.fundingpoint.ie/)

Information on funding opportunities are also listed on the Healthy Food for All website"

## Applying for funding

When you are applying for funding, you must do your research, work with key stakeholders and partners, and develop a solid, compelling proposal.

- **Do your research** – Find out what funding is available and whether your proposal fits the criteria for funding. All funding bodies have a policy on the sort of organisations and projects that they will support. If the funder issues a Call for Proposals, read carefully any information that accompanies it, as it will generally offer guidance on eligibility and on the application process. Some organisations have specific funding criteria – for example, they may fund a maximum of 50% of your requirement, with the balance ('match funding') to come from your own resources or other sources. Read these criteria carefully and make sure that your application meets them.
- **Work with key stakeholders** – When developing your project, engage with as many people in the community as possible by, for example, conducting research with the target group (see section A.1.2) or setting up a steering group (see sections A.1.3 and A.1.8). Some of your stakeholders may have prior experience of sourcing and applying for funding, and you can learn from their experience and build on it to develop your application. Having strong relationships with other organisations, groups and individuals can strengthen both your application and your project.
- **Develop a solid proposal** – There is considerable competition for any available funds. The funding organisations will need to be convinced that their money will be better spent with your initiative than with the other applications. Your application must demonstrate that you have done your research, that your proposal is realistic, that the funding you are applying for is adequate but not excessive, and that you have the resources to manage and deliver the project (see section A.1.6).

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## Completing your application

If your application is on a standard application form, read the form carefully, including the headings and any accompanying notes. Make it easy for the reviewers to read and remember your application. Use positive language and give your Community Food Initiative a short, catchy title that summarises what it will do.

- **Allow sufficient lead time.** Completing an application takes time. Allow sufficient time to carry out any necessary research, develop your plan, do your financial projections, and to write (and rewrite) your application.
- **Prepare original text.** Don't just copy from an old application form or copy and paste from the website, as often the text will be outdated or written in a different style.
- **Follow instructions carefully.** Make sure your application (including your budget) includes all required information, and meets any set criteria.
- **Be clear and concise.** Many application forms have strict word limits. Avoid jargon.
- **Make it look good.** Take care about the presentation. Use bold or italic fonts (not underlines), heading and sub-headings, tables and bullet points to aid the assessor and to emphasise key points
- **Include any information that adds credibility to your organisation.** Do you have a track record in delivering projects? Have you previously run a similar Community Food Initiative? What have been your successes?
- **Make sure your budget adds up.** Check that your budget covers the project activities and all delivery costs and organisational overheads. Funders generally have extensive experience of evaluating proposals, and will recognise a budget that is inadequate or that is based on unsupported guesswork. Budgeted expenditure should be based on at least two or three quotes. If your project is projected to last for a number of years, you should make reasonable provision for inflation. If your budgeted expenditure exceeds the funder's limit, you need to state where the balance will come from and provide evidence that the money has been or will be secured.
- **Get someone to proof-read your application.** Funders are more likely to be impressed by an application that is carefully worded and easy to read.

## Some other things to consider

- **Supporting information:** If your application is on a standard form and you are submitting supporting information with it, such as evaluations or annual reports, remember that these may not be considered – or even seen – by the assessor. Everything that is important to your application must be included in the application form itself.
- **Cover Letter:** Unless the instructions relating to the application state not to, you should include a cover letter with your application highlighting the main points of your application. Try to keep the letter to one page. Give a brief description of your organisation and the reasons why the funders should fund your proposed initiative.
- **‘Apply in writing’:** Some funders require you to apply in writing, rather than fill out an application form. When writing such a proposal, you should address all the key points outlined above.

## Submitting your application

- Make sure you submit your application before the specified deadline
- Submit the application in the format specified by the funder. Some will require paper-based applications to be sent by post, others will accept applications by fax, by email, or online. Some require several copies of the application. Read the instructions carefully.
- If you are having difficulties sending the application, call the funder and make them aware of the problem, as they may be able to help you.
- Keep a copy of your application for future reference.
- If submitting your application by post, request a certificate of postage or send it by registered post, so that you have a record of when the application was sent.

## Requesting feedback

If your application is unsuccessful, you should consider asking for feedback, so that you can learn from the experience and improve the likelihood of future success. Most funders will provide some information, and many will give details of scoring under the different evaluation criteria.

## Alternative ways of funding your project – social enterprise

The Scottish Community Food and Health's publication *Minding Their Own Business* provides an introduction to business and social enterprise for those supporting the efforts of local communities addressing inequalities in diet and health. The document can be downloaded from the Scottish Community Food and Health's website at [www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk](http://www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk).

### ? Want More Information

#### Social Enterprise

- [www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk](http://www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk)
- Sustain, Sauce Toolkit [www.sustainweb.org/sauce](http://www.sustainweb.org/sauce)

## Non-financial ways of resourcing your project

Resourcing your project, or even components of it, does not always need to involve money. Look to see what is already available locally and use it. Sponsorship through the donation of resources, training, food, equipment, or a venue could all help decrease the need for funding. Some ideas:

- Ask garden centres or hardware companies to donate equipment or supplies for your gardening project
- Enquire if a relevant training course could offer free tuition to your target group
- Ask your local council for access to a piece of land at a reduced or no cost
- Hold a fundraising event, such as a car boot sale or a charity ball, to raise necessary funds
- If appropriate (and if they can afford it), ask members/participants to pay a membership fee. This should be carefully considered as it can have both positive and negative effects
- Look for volunteers with the skills and experience that you need.

### A.1.8 Establishing organisational structures, and dealing with legal and administrative issues

Many voluntary and community organisations start as volunteer groups, with like-minded people coming together for a particular purpose. When seeking funding, many change their organisational status, as grants can generally be paid only to formally constituted bodies.

It is the legal responsibility of the management committee to ensure that funds are properly spent. In the early stages of the transition from an informal group to a formally constituted company, the work may still be carried out by volunteers, but as the workload increases it may be necessary to hire paid staff.

While initially you may get together with others on an informal basis to set up, for example, a bulk buying group or a food co-op, your group will have a legal status (it will be considered an unincorporated association) and may be affected by a number of laws (such as tax law, employment law, property law, libel and copyright). For this reason, as early in the process as possible, you should clarify what the group is trying to do and how it is going to operate:

- Who can be a member?
- What happens if people disagree?
- Is it going to have a bank account and if so, who can sign cheques?
- What happens to any money if the group winds itself up?

If you write these things down, you have in effect a constitution or set of rules – sometimes called a ‘governing document’. Governance is defined formally as ‘the systems and processes concerned with ensuring the overall direction, supervision and accountability of an organisation’.



In practice, this boils down to ensuring that you are organising and managing your Community Food Initiative appropriately. It is important to ensure that risks to the group and the members are minimised and that your Community Food Initiative is as accountable and open as possible.

## **? Want More Information**

Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action's *Code of Good Governance*, [www.nicva.org](http://www.nicva.org).

### **Some organisational models**

There are a number of possible forms your organisation could take. You might decide to operate as an unincorporated organisation or as an incorporated one (or 'corporate body'), or you might operate as a charity.

#### *Unincorporated association*

An unincorporated organisation is a collection of individuals working together without having adopted a separate legal identity. Such an organisation cannot hold property or employ someone or take part in a law suit – one or more of the individual members have to do these things as individuals. If the organisation owes money and can't pay, the individual members (or committee members) are personally liable. This is called unlimited liability. If your Community Food Initiative is operating on a relatively small scale, this is unlikely to present a problem as long as turnover remains relatively low and easily managed, but you should bear in mind that the individual members are exposed for any liabilities of the organisation – even unforeseen ones.

### *Incorporated organisation*

A corporate body, on the other hand, has a legal identity separate from the individual members. It can hold property, employ someone, or enter into contracts in its own right. Members have limited liability – if the organisation goes bankrupt, the members are only liable for an agreed limited amount (perhaps £1/€1). Many voluntary organisations are incorporated as Companies Limited by Guarantee. Incorporating as a company – limited by guarantee or by shares – protects the individual members from undue exposure to risk. (The directors and management of the company are still required to act responsibly and legally – limited liability does not cover reckless or fraudulent behaviour.)

### *Charities*

Under the terms of the Charities Act (NI) 2008, all charities operating in Northern Ireland are required to register with the Charities Commission.

In Ireland, there is no equivalent register of charities. The Revenue Commissioners, however, offer tax exemption to companies whose primary objectives are deemed to be charitable, which they define as being for:

- The relief of poverty
- The advancement of religion
- The advancement of education or
- Other purposes beneficial to the community.

When an organisation in Ireland applies to the Revenue Commissioners, it is not applying for charitable status or to become a registered charity; it is only applying to be exempt from certain taxes.

The whole area of legal status and charity law is quite complicated and many groups feel they need help and advice. If you are going to seek the help of a lawyer, make sure they know something about charities and voluntary organisations.

The Charities Section of the Office of the Revenue Commissioners is able to provide information on charitable status and tax exemption. You may also contact the local development company or Partnership organisation in your area for advice.

## ? Want More Information

For more information see the following:

- [www.charity-commission.gov.uk](http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk) or [www.hmrc.gov.uk/charities/guidance-notes/intro.htm](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/charities/guidance-notes/intro.htm).
- Revenue Commissioners': [www.revenue.ie](http://www.revenue.ie).
- For an overview of Partnerships and Local development companies, see: [www.pobal.ie](http://www.pobal.ie)

## Management structure

Good management is essential if your Community Food Initiative is to achieve its objectives. Even in organisations where no one has the explicit job title 'manager', people manage all the time. Managers can be anyone, paid or volunteer, with responsibility for organising, coordinating and making decisions about the Community Food Initiative.



However you choose to manage your project, it must work in line with the overall ethos of the Community Food Initiative, and be accepted and respected by all people involved.

## *Management or advisory committee*

The development of your Community Food Initiative will benefit from setting up a management committee or advisory committee. Such a committee will play the following roles:

- It acts as a forum where plans and decisions are made. It sets out the vision and mission of the project, determines the aims and objectives, monitors progress, designs policies, outlines the roles and duties of staff and others involved in the initiative

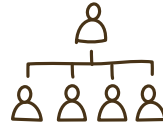
- It plays an ongoing role in reviewing the initiative and its progress
- It keeps links with key individuals, groups and agencies
- It ensures that funding is applied for, and monitors costing and spending
- It may be involved in selecting staff, recruiting volunteers, and drafting job descriptions
- It ensures that all essential roles and responsibilities are assigned to appropriate people within the organisation
- It records minutes of its meetings and decisions in order that it remains accountable at all times

The committee should select a number of officers, including a chairperson, a secretary and a treasurer. The particular responsibilities of these office-holders are set out below.

### *Chairperson*

The chairperson's role is a key one. The chairperson ensures that:

- The management committee functions properly
- Competing agendas and priorities are managed well
- There is full participation during meetings
- All relevant matters are discussed
- Effective decisions are made and followed through



The chairperson's role can be time consuming, involving work between meetings, external representation of the organisation, and work with staff. Chairing an organisation requires diplomacy and leadership skills of a high level.



### *Secretary*

The secretary is responsible for preparing the agenda of meetings in consultation with the chairperson and other committee members, for circulating them to members, and for taking and writing minutes of the meetings. The secretary may also make all the arrangements for meetings, such as booking the room, and arranging for equipment and refreshments. The secretary therefore needs to be organised and good at writing minutes.



### Treasurer

The treasurer is responsible for maintaining an overview of the organisation's financial status and ensuring that proper financial records and procedures are maintained.



In a small charity without paid staff, the treasurer may be more involved in the day-to-day finances of the organisation. *However, final responsibility for financial matters rests with the management committee as a whole.*

### ? Want More Information

For more information, see the following websites:

- The Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action: [www.nicva.org](http://www.nicva.org)
- The Wheel (Ireland): [www.thewheel.ie](http://www.thewheel.ie)
- BoardMatch (Ireland): [www.boardmatch.ie](http://www.boardmatch.ie)

## A.2 Implementation & Management Phase

When you have developed the necessary plans and structures for your project and secured the finance, you can start doing what you planned. And you know best how to do that. However, some practical guidelines on management of financial and other resources in this implementation phase may be useful.

### A.2.1 Managing finances

#### Keeping Records

Any Community Food Initiative that is handling money on a regular basis needs to keep good records of its income and expenditure. If you are thinking of applying for funding it's also essential that you have good financial records, as any potential funders will ask to see your most recent accounts.

- **Keep detailed records** of all expenditure, including invoices and receipts. Similarly, keep detailed records of all monies received, from whatever source. Issue invoices and/or receipts. All monies passing in and out of your bank account must be fully accounted for.
- **Reconcile your bank account** every month.
- **Maintain a rolling projection of cash flow**, so that you can be sure that you can pay any bills as they fall due.
- **Compare your income and expenditure** and bank balance against your budget to confirm that your Community Food Initiative is performing in line with expectations. Do this regularly and in good time to take any necessary corrective action.

You do not need to be an accountant or to understand accountancy jargon to do this (although you may find it useful to get the help of an accountant in the early stages of the project). But the discipline involved in keeping proper and up-to-date records is the single most useful way of ensuring that your project remains on a sound financial footing.

As a minimum, a small Community Food Initiative will need to keep a cash book, a petty cash book and a purchases record.

- **Cash book:** All money received, by cash or cheque, and all payments by cash or cheque should be entered in the cash book. This is the central record of income and expenditure. For every item of expenditure there should be a voucher – a receipt, or account or other form of explanation.
- **Petty cash book:** All businesses need some cash in hand for small purchases that require cash rather than cheque payment. Usually it is simply cash in a box. All cash payments are recorded in the petty cash book and for each payment there should be a receipt attached. It is usual for the petty cash to have an agreed amount of money, which is then topped up each week or month by the amount that has been spent.
- **Purchases Record:** When your Community Food Initiative is buying on credit, it is important to keep a record of what you have ordered and bought, but not yet paid for. It is only when you actually pay that you make the entry into your cash book.

It is vital that you keep everything that might be useful: all receipts, invoices, bank statements, old cheque books with stubs filled in and bank lodgement books. Keep a copy of all invoices and receipts you send out and file them. If filing is not your strong point, at least have an emergency box file where you put everything so you can track it down when you have to.

#### **Golden rules of book-keeping**

- Keep only useful records
- Make records simple to use
- Be accurate
- Guard against fraud
- Check for compliance regularly



## Bank accounts

If your project is a smaller one, and you can avoid the need to handle money at all – for example, if you are setting up a buying club that is going to operate informally as a group of friends – you may not want or need a bank account. You could, for example, arrange for everyone in the group to pay by cheque in advance direct to the supplier. Certain types of food co-ops, such as box schemes, in which customers have a regular order on a monthly basis, could require everyone in the scheme to set up a standing order or pay by cheque. However, this is not really practical when running a stall, a market or a café, where it is likely that most of the money you take will be cash.



### Tips

- Set up a separate bank account for your Community Food Initiative
- Always have at least two signatures for the cheques (three people from the management/steering committee should be selected and given authorisation to sign cheques)
- Submit a regular financial report to the management/steering committee

## Cash handling procedures

- Always ensure you have a float for the same amount, that it is checked by two people and is accurate both at the start and at the end of each day
- Any food used throughout the day for tastings or promotions should also be recorded, as well as any wastage or bad items that couldn't be sold
- When counting cash, you need a secure space with a table on which to count and bag the money
- Banks require that coins are bagged with the same types of coins and the amounts specified on the bank's plastic coin bags
- Pay your takings into the bank as soon as possible so that they appear both in your financial records and on your bank statement on the same date

- If you need to keep any cash from one day to the next, make sure you have somewhere secure to store it, such as a lockable cash box or safe
- Never make payments directly from cash received; ideally no cash payments should ever be made other than through petty cash
- When paying suppliers use cheques wherever possible so that you have a clear record on your bank statement
- If you do have to pay cash, for example when buying from producers at a farmers' market, always get a receipt.

### **A.2.2 Managing human resources**

Many projects are run entirely by volunteers, while others have one or more paid staff members. In all cases, the people who carry out the work need to be recruited, organised and supported. The management committee or steering group is usually responsible for these aspects of the project.

#### **Paid staff**

Community Food Initiatives are increasingly appointing paid coordinators and assistants to look after the day-to-day running of the initiative.

Before taking on any employees, you should consider the following:

- Could you achieve your objectives by working solely with volunteers?
- Does your budget provide for the full employment costs of paid workers at the outset or at a later stage?
- Will you employ people on a full-time or part-time basis?
- What can you afford to pay your employees and will you link their pay to a scale (civil/public sector)?
- Who will manage the workers?
- Legal responsibilities – who will manage health and safety and employment right issues?

#### **Volunteers**

Even when the organisation's work is carried out entirely by volunteers, the management committee still has a legal responsibility for them and their work. It is up to the management to ensure that there are adequate procedures to train and support their volunteers as well as appropriate disciplinary and grievance procedures.

Working with volunteers can be a very rewarding experience for everyone involved, provided proper steps are taken to manage them.

Remember that:

- The role of volunteers is to complement the role of paid staff and those who provide key services within the Community Food Initiative
- Volunteers make a unique contribution to the health and social wellbeing of the entire community
- Volunteers enrich a Community Food Initiative by continually affirming its relevance and connection to the local community.

Good practice guidelines for recruiting volunteers should be followed. The volunteers should be provided with a clear and appropriate work contract stating their area of responsibility and the limits of their authority. This will help prevent difficult situations arising regarding roles and responsibilities.

Volunteers should be given the opportunity to take part in ongoing training and development programmes that meet their own personal needs as well as the needs of the Community Food Initiative.

## **? Want More Information**

For more information, see the following websites:

- Volunteering Development Agency (Northern Ireland): [www.volunteering-ni.org](http://www.volunteering-ni.org)
- Volunteer Centres Ireland (Ireland): [www.volunteer.ie/](http://www.volunteer.ie/)
- For details on the Community Employment Scheme (Ireland), which offers part-time jobs and temporary placements within local communities for long-term unemployed and other disadvantaged people, see [www.fas.ie](http://www.fas.ie)
- Laois Sports Partnership (Ireland), "Volunteering in Changing Times", [www.laoissports.ie](http://www.laoissports.ie)



## Training

The success of your Community Food Initiative will depend on the attitudes, knowledge, professional skills and techniques of the staff. People should be seen as the biggest investment in the long-term future of the Community Food Initiative. All staff, paid or voluntary, will benefit from training to provide them with new skills and to increase their confidence.

What training is necessary for your project depends on the nature of the project, but the following areas are important in many Community Food Initiatives:

- Health & Safety
- Food safety
- Horticulture skills
- Customer care

**training**



### A.2.3 Selecting a venue for your initiative

The location of your Community Food Initiative will have a significant effect on its popularity and success. Your requirements will depend on what type of Community Food Initiative you are setting up. Many Community Food Initiatives, for example, use venues that are free (or very low cost) to avoid having to generate enough money to cover the rent on an ongoing basis.

Many small buying clubs are simply run in someone's house. However, if you plan to be open to the wider public and want to attract as many customers as possible, you should try to find a location that local people already use or know about. For this reason, Community Food Initiatives are often run in premises managed by other community-based organisations – examples include community centres, family resource centres (in Ireland), schools or community buildings.

However, sometimes it can be quite difficult to persuade groups to let you use their space without charge, because rent may be an important part of their income. You will therefore have to emphasise the potential benefits. Food co-ops or community cafés, for example, can help to revitalise community facilities by bringing in more people, who may then use other services and sign up for training programmes and educational initiatives.

For community venues, allowing a Community Food Initiative to use their space can help them to meet their own targets, such as promoting healthy eating or engaging volunteers.



## Key Things

### Key things to think about regarding the venue

- Will you have to pay rent? If so, how much will it be per hour or per week?
- How much space will be available?
- Will you have anywhere you can store things from one week to the next?
- How many people or groups already use the venue on the same day?
- Is the venue in a good location that is likely to attract passing trade? (This is of particular importance for fruit and vegetable stalls, community farmers' markets and community cafés.) Make sure the venue is appropriate and acceptable to the community.
- Will you be able to get appropriate insurance?
- Does the venue meet health and safety requirements?



## **A.2.4 Food Safety**

Food contamination can easily happen if food is stored, handled or prepared incorrectly. Food poisoning can be prevented by taking the time and care to follow the basic rules of food hygiene. Food safety legislation is in place to ensure that food is safe to eat. It covers every stage of the food chain, including purchasing, transportation, storage, preparation, cooking and serving. It also addresses the structure and cleanliness of the kitchen, ventilation, lighting, work space and sink requirements.

Environmental Health Officers have the legal right to visit premises at any time to check for food contamination, food storage temperatures, state of repair of the building and adequacy of facilities and cleanliness.

All Community Food Initiatives should contact their local Environmental Health service, which will provide advice and support, including training courses. All food businesses are required to have a Hazard Analysis System. This should evolve and improve as the project develops.

### **? Want More Information**

In Northern Ireland, the local District Councils have responsibility for environmental health, and you should visit the website of your local Council or contact you local Environmental Health Officer about the regulatory requirements. All relevant legislation can be found on the Food Standards Agency website, [www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)

In Ireland, details of food legislation are available on the Food Safety of Ireland's (FSAI) website, [www.fsai.ie](http://www.fsai.ie).

## A.2.5 Marketing

The most cost-effective way to advertise your initiative is by getting it mentioned in the newspapers, on local or national radio, or on TV. Aim high. Your story could be of as much interest to them as in your local community. National television and radio programmes search all the time for good local stories with a difference.

Use the fact that you have a healthy eating message to attract media attention. Contact the health correspondents of major newspapers, or the editor of a relevant features page. If a national publication picks up on the story, the local press and media will be keen to follow it up.



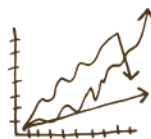
Plan a launch. Journalists get many invitations to launches so you have to make sure they will come to yours. If possible, enlist the support of a local celebrity or sports personality who is genuinely interested in food and the area of your Community Food Initiative. If you are running a community café, a growing project or a community farmers' market, hold the launch over lunchtime and offer healthy food, using produce from the initiative. If possible, have a community dietitian available to answer any general questions on healthy eating.

Send journalists a reminder of the day, with details about the Community Food Initiative. Write to them afterwards to thank them for coming. Keep a note of names and numbers to use in the future. Tell Healthy food for All about your event.



## A.3 Evaluation Phase

It is important to find out what works and what doesn't, to inform both your own future efforts and those of others. Funders are also increasingly looking for proof that their money has made a difference. However, particularly in a relatively small project, it is not necessary to choose a very sophisticated or expensive evaluation methodology.



### A.3.1 Evaluation

Evaluation needs to be built into the Community Food Initiative's plans from the beginning. If you do not have tools and mechanisms in place from the start to record your findings and progress, it is difficult to demonstrate the impact of your work during and after the activities. You need to consider what information you want to collect and how. If you have set realistic and measurable aims and objectives for the project, they provide an important start. It is recommended that you use 10% of your budget on evaluation.

Possible questions you could ask when evaluating your project include:

- Did we meet our original aims?
- Were there any unexpected outcomes?
- 'Why didn't this work?', 'What do we need to change?'

The long term aims of a project should always be considered (for example, the aim of halting the rise in obesity levels by improving the quality of food people eat in the community). However, you can't measure long-term health changes as a result of a one-year food project; what you can measure in the context of a short-term project are indicators, such as changes in the pattern of consumption of fruit and vegetables compared with those of high fat snacks, and levels of knowledge about healthy eating.

The most common ways of collecting data include interviews, focus groups and questionnaires. If you use questionnaires to find out the results of your project, keep in mind that:

- Surveys and questionnaires should be short and simple to complete
- Questionnaires should be confidential/anonymous

- Collect the evaluation information when the Community Food Initiative is being delivered (make time available to do this).

Once the evaluation information has been collected, it can be analysed and you can test your results against your aims.

### **A.3.2 Report and publicise**

Writing a report on your project and publicising, it will help to strengthen your position in securing continued funding. Think about the audience for your report: it will include partner agencies that have provided funding or other forms of support, other community food initiatives who want to learn from your experience, and potential future funders, as well as those in your community who were involved in the project or who used its services. You may have publicised your Community Food Initiative as it was in progress, but now think about also publicising it after you have collected the evaluation information as well. Why not write an article in your local newspaper or do an interview with your local radio station celebrating your success? Why not hold a community celebration event? Why not submit a case study to the Healthy Food for All website?

## **? Want More Information**

For more information on the evaluation of community projects:

- Community Evaluation Northern Ireland, [www.ceni.org](http://www.ceni.org)
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation, *Evaluating Community Projects: A Practical Guide*, [www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk)
- The Community Tool Box, *Bringing Solutions to Light*: [www.ctb.ku.edu](http://www.ctb.ku.edu)
- Evaluation Support Scotland, [www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/](http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/)
- Proving and Improving, [www.proveandimprove.org](http://www.proveandimprove.org)
- Community Development Foundation, [www.cdf.org.uk](http://www.cdf.org.uk)
- The Evaluation Trust, [www.evaluationtrust.org/](http://www.evaluationtrust.org/)

## Checklist

### Checklist for setting up a Community Food Initiative

Have you.....

- Assessed the needs and interest levels in the local community?
- Established clear aims and objectives?
- Consulted the key players?
- Considered setting up a management/steering committee?
- Considered other organisations and people you might like to involve?
- Contacted other similar projects to learn from their experience?
- Thought about or looked into how the initiative will be funded?
- Established a definite budget to work with?
- Developed a clear plan of action?
- Considered how you will evaluate the initiative?
- Looked at your needs regarding venue and facilities and examined what is available?
- Considered Health and Safety/Food Safety requirements?
- Thought about staffing requirements? Will staff be paid or voluntary?
- Planned for sustainability of initiative if existing funding ceases?
- Drawn up a contingency plan in case commitment levels of staff fall off?
- Checked legislation and insurance requirements?

For Community Food Initiatives involving children, have you?

- Considered child safety and child protection issues?
- Confirmed procedures for children registering on arrival, and for dealing with accidents?
- Gained parental consent for inclusion in your initiative?

## ? Want More Information

For community development websites see:

- Community Development and Health Network (Northern Ireland): [www.cdhn.org](http://www.cdhn.org)
- Communities Scotland, National Standards for Community Engagement: [www.scdc.org.uk](http://www.scdc.org.uk)
- The Wheel (Ireland): [www.wheel.ie/](http://www.wheel.ie/)

## A.4 Developing a Healthy Food Policy

Food touches on many aspects of people's lives, such as health, shopping, eating, transport, growing, education, and environment. The impact of a food project can often be enhanced if it is integrated into a wider policy, which relates food to different areas, such as health. This integrated approach will help to ensure that the project will address real needs, will integrate with other activities in the community, and will have the support of the community.

This section examines how you can develop such a coherent and integrated policy.

The policy might start by dealing with foods available in a particular place (for example the after-schools club or the local community café), and then expand to incorporate other aspects of food and drink in the community.

### A.4.1 Developing a policy for healthy food in the community

The steps for developing a healthy food policy are outlined below.

#### Step 1: Getting started

Establish a working group/committee. This group must be representative of key stakeholders within the community.

#### Step 2: Establishing what the local needs are

The working group should establish (possibly by holding a public meeting):

- What Community Food Initiatives are currently running in the area? (As a starting point, check out the All-Island CFI Directory, which is available on [www.healthyfoodforall.com](http://www.healthyfoodforall.com).)

- What barriers are preventing people in the community from eating healthily?
- How could these barriers be addressed?
- Is the community interested in developing a food policy to support a coordinated approach to Community Food Initiatives within the community?

### Step 3: Drafting the policy

The working group should draft a community food policy document that draws on the outcomes of Step 2 and reflects the needs of the community.

The policy could be structured as follows:

- Aims (For example 'To ensure that all food and drink made available through your Community Food Initiative promotes the health and well-being of those living in the community')
- Rationale: state why you are writing the policy
- Objectives: state what you want to achieve
- Guidelines: state how your objectives will be met
- Monitoring and evaluation: state how you will assess whether your objectives are being met.



### Checklist

- Put the policy down on paper and review it at a working group meeting
- Allow working group members to provide constructive feedback on this draft
- Make any necessary changes so that the policy is ready for wider consultation
- Draft a questionnaire for stakeholders to provide structured feedback

#### Step 4: Consultation on the draft policy

- Decide who needs to be consulted
- Set a deadline for the consultation process
- Decide who the responses are to be returned to
- Post information about the process in key places within the community, such as the local school, church, and community centre
- Send the draft policy to all stakeholders with a feedback questionnaire
- At the end of the consultation period, collate feedback

#### Step 5: Amending the draft policy following consultation

- Review the feedback; give consideration to both positive and negative responses
- Amend the policy based on the feedback received
- Include a date on the policy so that it is clear when it was written and when it is due for review
- Acknowledge who contributed to the policy
- Print the final policy when all feedback has been received

#### Step 6: Disseminating and implementing the policy

- Make sure as many people within the community are aware of the healthy food policy
- Provide a copy to all those who attended the public meeting
- Display a copy of the policy in prominent places within the community.



## Step 7: Reviewing and evaluating the policy

- Review the policy every two years, or as often as you feel necessary in light of developments and changes within your community
- New targets may need to be set or efforts moved to meet new priorities and challenges
- Are the objectives of the policy being met?
- How can you tell?
- Have you measured outcomes?
- Have there been difficulties?
- Why have these arisen?



### Suggestions

- Use a digital camera to record what is being done.
- Continue to give stakeholders an opportunity to feed into the policy. For example, you could set up a comments box, send questionnaires out or arrange an open meeting where they can offer opinions.
- Write an article for the local paper to document your success.

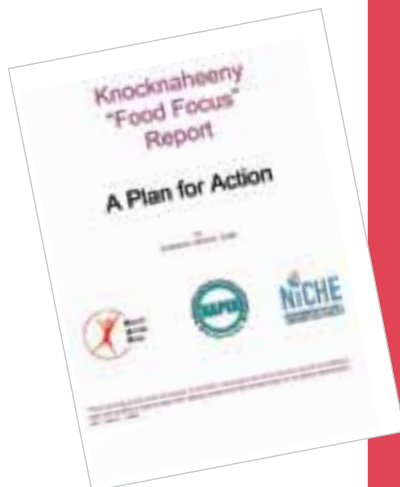
## Case Study

### Developing a Food Change plan of action: Knocknaheeny Food Focus, Cork, Ireland

‘Food Focus’ is a joint initiative between Niche Community Health Project, the Knocknaheeny Health Action Zone, RAPID and the local community in Cork city. The goal of the group was to identify and address the risk and instances of food poverty in order to improve the health and well-being of the local community.

The process began in a positive way to allow different groups and individuals in the local community to participate. A ‘Food Focus’ lunch was held in the local community centre. The local community café supplied the food and people were encouraged to talk about food. They were asked:

- What action have you undertaken around enjoying good food and nutrition?
- What did you observe or experience which led you to take action?
- What are the challenges or barriers for the action you are taking or would like to take?
- Do you have any suggestions about the progression of food focus work in Knocknaheeny?



A lot of important information was gleaned from this lunch  
Some examples of the outcomes of the discussion were:

- **Positive indications:** When given the choice, people are able to make sensible food choices. People are interested in food and find it satisfying and enjoyable when introduced in a relevant and interesting way.
- **Hunger:** A recurring theme was the need to name and identify hunger as a continuing prevalent factor: children are particularly at risk of hunger.
- **Cost:** There is a perception that healthy food is more expensive. People feel that the cost of making a meal from scratch is more than a 'meal deal' offered in supermarkets and take-aways. Special diets are expensive for parents who are trying to meet the needs of children with particular dietary requirements. Young people with a disposable income are snacking all day long, without sitting down for meals. They are not eating well enough for their health needs, and they are not developing social skills around food.
- **Food is a class issue:** The food industry as a whole is seen as exploiting low-income households by compromising the quality of cheaper choices.
- **Information sharing and receiving:** Young parents are receiving conflicting advice from a number of sources – for example, GPs, public health nurses, mothers, friends, magazines and newspapers, and advertising. The developmental stages for growing children and the corresponding food needs are not broadly understood.
- **Skills and knowledge and attitude:** Food skills are not being used, and in many cases have been lost, with the result that problems become multi-generational.



- **Families and households:** Mothers and women are the principal influences on the family's food experiences. Food is a low priority for some households, particularly where there are budgetary pressures. Parents are afraid to challenge young people's behaviour: they do not want to encourage an obsession with food which may lead to eating disorders; it is easier to give children what they want.
- **Changing food experiences:** Food choices are affected by time, fashion, and convenience: food seasons have become blurred and people tend to eat the same foods all year round, gardens are not being used to 'grow your own', and family meals are becoming less frequent.
- **Choice/availability:** There are few viable alternatives to fast food outlets. There is little local competition in the area leading to a restricted range of food options.
- **Projects:** Projects focusing on food and nutrition tend to be isolated.

This discussion made it clear that there was a mandate to pursue a 'food focus' agenda: local barriers to eating well were identified, a high level of local interest was apparent, and the difficulties in undertaking healthy eating work without support or coordination were expressed. This initial stage was vital to building consensus and understanding about food poverty at a local level, and gave the community the basis for the next stage, which was to develop a strategic plan of action. That plan has now been completed and people are now coming together to work effectively for food change locally.

The whole process has ensured that the community and key stakeholders are involved in a meaningful way in the direction of food focused work, and that people and other resources are identified to support the implementation of a food change plan of action.

## Development of a Food Focus Strategy

A strategic action plan was developed to coordinate and support the planning and implementation of local food initiatives. The Food Focus Strategy sets out its vision that everyone can enjoy nutritious, balanced food to enhance their health and quality of life. The strategy sets out a number of objectives:

- To coordinate existing activities
- To develop a community food charter/policy to undertake advocacy work
- To support and resource new and existing food initiatives
- To ensure that all people in the community can access healthy food initiatives
- To research and evaluate resources, local food initiatives and other models of Community Food Initiatives.



## ? Want More Information

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A copy of the Food Focus Strategy can be downloaded from  
[www.healthyfoodforall.com](http://www.healthyfoodforall.com).

