



Explanation

The Sustainable Food Places programme recognises how important it is that food partnerships and local place-based food strategies reflect the many communities and sectors they represent. The SFP programme adopts a whole food system and cross-sectoral approach that aims to incorporate the range of different perspectives, issues and challenges faced by local people, organisations and businesses. To do this food partnerships have undertaken different activities to gather information from people, organisations and businesses in their food systems.

These include:

- Food surveys
- Community food mapping
- Food summits
- Food focus groups

Each of these activities – explained elsewhere in this Toolkit – incorporate participatory processes that aim to gather information and build understanding of different perspectives. They also aim to facilitate the engagement and participation of stakeholders from different groups (especially marginalised groups) and communities in the process of developing and delivering a local food strategy.

This **Food Group Workshop** guide will focus on participatory processes that can be used to engage and include groups and communities in food partnerships and food strategy development and delivery. The guide will go beyond the initial consultation of the groups to understand their perspectives on issues and challenges by suggesting how groups can be structured and organised and how they can contribute to ongoing strategic planning and delivery. SFP has particularly recognised the importance of including the voices of vulnerable and marginalised communities, including individuals experiencing food poverty, in the food partnerships.

Food Group Structure and Organisation

A food group might consist of a range of individuals from a particular demographic e.g. older people or from a particular geographical community e.g. neighbourhood. Some food groups may have originally formed as aid groups in response to an emergency food crisis but have progressed to discussing a range of food issues in their community. Perhaps a **Food Focus Group** have decided that they wish to continue to meet. There may be organised ‘**food groups**’ or ‘community food groups’ that have an ongoing involvement with the development of the food strategy.

Food groups might meet once a month and gather in a community venue and discuss food issues in more detail as well as making plans to take local action.

The voices of these food groups can feed into the food partnership and contribute to strategic planning. They may, for example be involved in verifying the aims, objectives, and actions of the emerging food strategy.

Tools and Activities

As food groups become more established, the tools and activities that could be useful are ones that start to look a little more deeply at the issues.

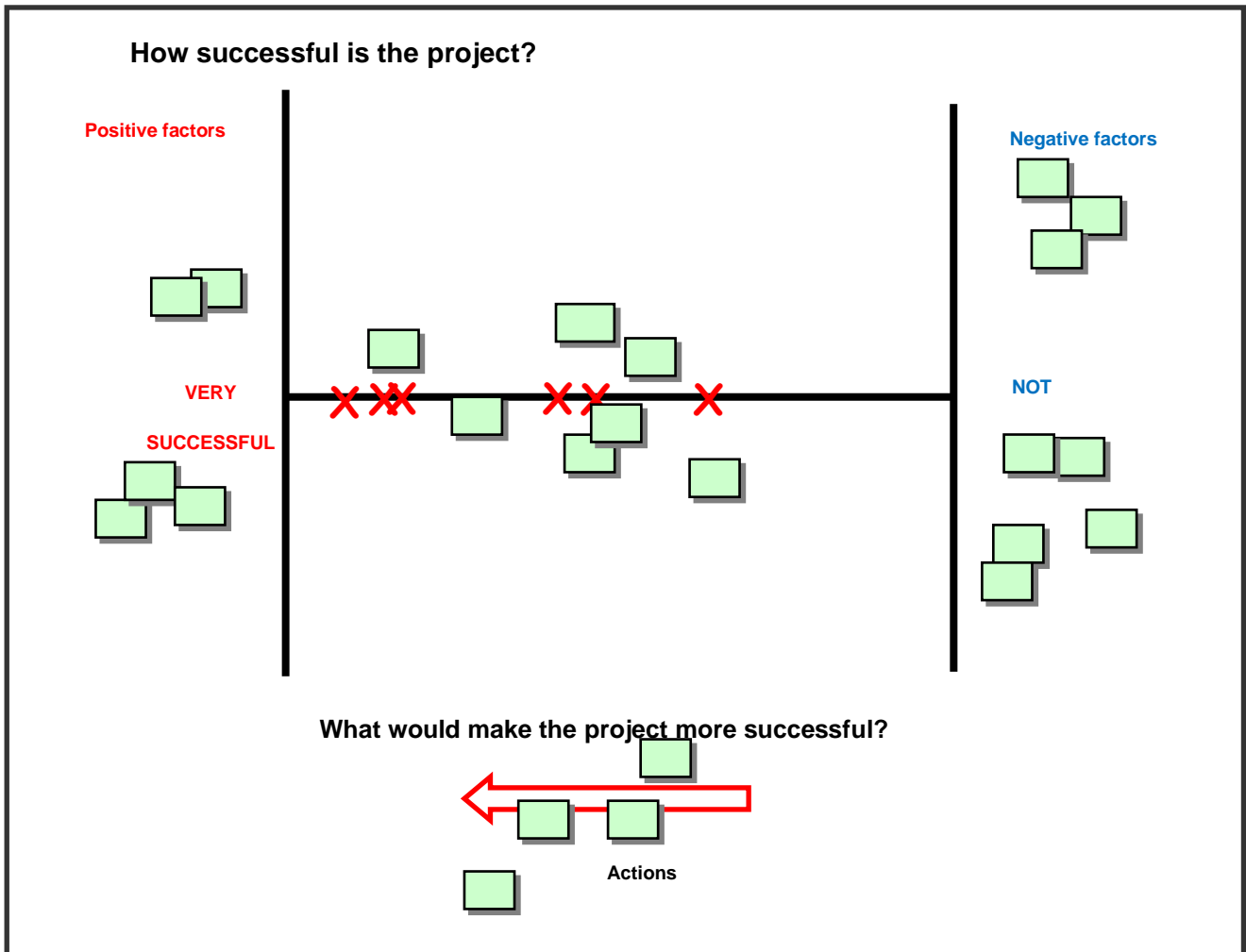
Evaluation 'H'

Beyond a standard continuum or line method (see spectrum exercise in **Food Focus Group** guide) that allows participants to position themselves on a line of possibilities, Evaluation H enables participants to also identify the positive and negative factors that influence their position on the line. Through a facilitated process, this can be used as a focus to discuss what needs to happen to build upon and strengthen positive factors and to overcome or address negative factors in order to support an overall objective. This tool is particularly useful as the first step in the action planning process. To allow for proper discussion the facilitator should allow at least one and a half hours to complete the Evaluation H.

What to do:

- The facilitator poses a question to the group related to the issue being explored with the question written at the top of the wall, table, or large sheet of paper. E.g. 'How easy is it to supply sustainably produced food to the city?'
- A horizontal line is drawn across the centre of the workspace to represent the continuum of opinions on the question e.g. Easy to Difficult
- Participants are each given sticky notes and pens and asked to consider their response to the question posed.
- As well as thinking about where on the line they are, participants are asked to think about and write down on their sticky note the positive and negative factors that explain their position on the line. Write one factor (negative or positive) per sticky note.
- Once all participants have added their notes to the work surface, each response is discussed with everyone having a chance to explain their position.
- The positive and negative factors are attached to vertical lines from either end of the continuum (Hence the H). See diagram below.
- Factors can then be clustered and common themes identified and analysed e.g. what needs to happen to overcome this negative factor?' 'How can we strengthen this positive factor?'

The evaluation H tool is particularly effective when there are a wide variety of perspectives on a particular issue e.g. if people are from different backgrounds, sectors or have different types of involvement.



(Diagram showing Evaluation H in practice with post it notes used to identify key positive and negative factors)

Key Statement Verification

To explore issues and opinions in greater depth it can be useful to check participants responses to a key statement as a stimulus for further discussion. This technique can also be used to identify and confirm emerging findings in a group.

What to do:

- Prepare a statement that will get to the heart of the issue being discussed E.g. 'It is easy to purchase a healthy diet'
- Write this on a wall or piece of paper so that all participants have a clear view.
- Draw 2 boxes / bubbles below, one that says 'AGREE' and one that says 'DISAGREE'.
- Underneath these boxes draw a large box with the heading 'Comments'.
- Provide all participants with sticky dots and post it notes.
- Ask participants to consider their response to the statement and to place a sticky dot in the relevant box – either AGREE or DISAGREE.
- Ask participants to think about why they agree or disagree and write a comment in the Comments Box below.
- Discuss the overall balance between AGREE and DISAGREE.
- Look for consensus / disagreements and discuss differences in the comments sections.

IT IS EASY TO PURCHASE A HEALTHY DIET	
AGREE	DISAGREE
COMMENTS	

(Diagram showing layout for Key Statement Verification exercise)

Verifying Food Strategy Aims and Objectives

It can be helpful to verify emerging food strategy aims, objectives and actions with food groups. This can involve sharing draft aims, objectives and actions and asking how important participants feel they are, what is missing or what needs to be changed or added. A detailed example of Draft Strategy Verification process is covered in the **Steering Group Workshop** guide.

Food Group Workshop for Communities of Interest

As well as working with groups of individuals you are likely to also want to bring together groups of organisations to discuss the key issues that are important to them. This might be groups of local food sector businesses for example. The workshop might include a range of activities to maximise participation such as:

- Mapping
- Spectrum exercise
- Open discussion
- Question mark chart

An example workshop format for engaging food sector businesses is provided below.

Example Local Food Business Workshop

1. INTRODUCTORY QUESTION

As people arrive and settle (Write response on post it notes and add to board)

Sustainable food in Lambeth – what do you think are the key issues for your business?

2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

- Welcome and thank you
- Why the session is happening / How the outputs will be used / How it will work
- Who you are / Introductory question

3. BUSINESS MAPPING

Locate businesses on map of Lambeth with sticky dot (Add comments on post its with arrows)

- Where are your main suppliers located?
- Which suppliers are located within Lambeth? Mark them on the map
- How is produce transported to and from your business?
- Is it important that the food you sell is locally produced?
- Why is this important?
- Is it easy or difficult to source local produce?
- Why?
- How could these issues be addressed? What would make it easier?

4. SPECTRUM LINE CHART

How easy is it for you to operate as a sustainable food business in Lambeth?

- Stand on the line between **VERY EASY** and **NOT AT ALL EASY**
- Share in pairs why you are standing where you are (key factors)
- Discuss as a group
- Record the responses to the discussion prompts on a flip-chart
- Try to identify consensus and key themes or key differences of opinion

5. HOW COULD A FOOD STRATEGY WORK FOR YOU?

- A Food Partnership and Food Strategy is being established in Lambeth.
- What should the food strategy include to support your business?
- What are the key issues for the strategy to focus on?
- What would be the best way for your business to be represented?
- What part could you play in the partnership and strategy development?

6. CONCLUSIONS AND EVALUATION

7. CLOSE