

SFP Gold Awards Application Form 2025

This form is for completing an SFP Gold application.

Before starting your application, please fully read this form.

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Background

Sustainable Food Places (SFP) brings together pioneering food partnerships from towns, cities, boroughs, districts, and counties that are driving innovation and best practice around healthy and sustainable food.

The Sustainable Food Places Award is designed to recognise and celebrate the success of those places taking a joined-up, holistic approach to food and that are achieving significant positive change on a range of key food issues. The award is the only one of its kind in the UK.

The SFP Gold Award builds on the Bronze Award criteria of recognition of whole food system, cross-sector activity and has the Silver Award criteria as a baseline including exceptional work that is beginning to be embedded at strategic level. The Gold SFP award must additionally demonstrate innovative and embedded activity across two areas of exceptional work that could easily be represented on an international stage as well as showing both a strategic approach and a citizen led good food movement.

Why go for gold?

- The award provides an incentive for leaders, institutions, businesses, groups, and individuals to act on healthy and sustainable food
- To celebrate the collective work happening across your place
- To facilitate collaboration
- To secure funding and resources to deliver action on healthy and sustainable food.
- To show leadership and ambition to your UK network of Sustainable Food Places
- To monitor and document the impact of healthy and sustainable food action

Gold Award Criteria

Gold Criterion 1

Evidence of significant continued action and outcomes across each of the six key issues demonstrated by extending reach to new audiences and beneficiaries and successfully embedding positive change.

If one of your areas of exceptional achievement directly relates to one of the 6 Key Issue action areas please make note of this in the relevant part of Section 2 but please ensure all Key Issue areas and action areas are completed.

Gold Criteria 2

Exceptional achievement in two areas of food-related activity, the ambitions for which will be identified and described by the food partnership in the applicant place and agreed in advance with Sustainable Food Places Programme Management Board along with measures through which their achievement can be judged.

Gold Criteria 3

Evidence that the applicant food partnership and programme is embedded and sustainable and supports growth of the SFP movement including:

- the longevity of the partnership to date and its success with securing resources.
- the strength and traction of the partnership and the degree to which it includes key representatives and is recognised and supported by key institutions and the wider food movement.
- the degree to which a robust culture of food activism and related good food movement has developed that is not entirely dependent on institutional funding or support.
- Direct support to SFP members and prospects
- Regional or cohort specific working

- Acting as an ambassador for a systems approach, cross-sector approach to food

SECTION 1: Information about your partnership and your place

Name of your partnership:

Good Food Oxfordshire

Name and contact details of person/people leading on this application:

Kelsi Farrington, Comms Lead, kelsi@gfo.org.uk

Geographic region which this award will represent:

Oxfordshire

What year did your partnership achieve an SFP Silver Award:
2023

Please provide us with background information about your place: Advisory word limit: 400 words

This is to help the panel understand the context in which you are working. *You may include (but not limited to): Population and demographic information, location/geography & economic and social challenges.*

ANSWER:

[Good Food Oxfordshire](#) (GFO) is a county-wide food partnership mobilising over **230 partners** to drive systemic change so that healthy, affordable and sustainable food is the default across Oxfordshire.

Oxfordshire (2,605 km²) is a mixed urban-rural county in South-East England with an estimated **population of 763,218** (mid-2024). Around 60% of residents live in Oxford City and larger towns; the remaining 40% are distributed across smaller towns and rural communities. Oxford City is demographically distinct: it hosts a large student population (approx. **22% of the city**) and significantly **higher ethnic diversity** (46.5% non-white British in the 2021 Census) compared with more rural districts (e.g., West Oxfordshire 11.0% non-white British).

The county experiences deep inequalities that intersect with food access and health. Severe disparities in life expectancy persist between the most and least deprived neighbourhoods (an estimated gap of up to 13 years for men). **Child poverty in Oxford is estimated at 26%** after housing costs. Local public-health data show higher-than-average levels of childhood obesity and other diet-related ill-health in priority wards. At the same time, **76% of Oxfordshire's land is agricultural** and the local food economy generated **£2.2bn in turnover in 2020**, supporting around **19,500 jobs** (demonstrating potential to re-localise food supply within the county).

Since our Silver Award (2023), GFO has moved from crisis-response to systems building. The [Oxfordshire Food Strategy](#) and [Food Action Plans](#) have **achieved unanimous endorsement** from all six local councils, embedding food priorities into council planning and public health delivery.

Strides in achievement since Silver include [OxFarmToFork](#), a short-supply-chain marketplace **connecting 21 colleges, 3 restaurants and 23 producers** (to date, OxFarmToFork has sold **£300,000+ of local food** and directly reinvested £32,000 into farm infrastructure). Another area is leading the way in participatory co-design of solutions, backed by a strong evidence base and a coalition of European partners via the FEAST project.

Together, these actions show a county shifting from needing emergency aid towards a resilient, locally rooted food system rooted in economic, social and environmental benefits.

This application outlines how Oxfordshire stands as a **demonstrably replicable model** where policy work, community leadership, and agroecological food production deliver measurable reductions in food poverty, improved diet-related health outcomes, and lower food-system emissions. This Gold submission evidences both the depth of local impact and the clear routes for others to adopt and adapt Oxfordshire's approach.

(386 words)

How have you considered equity, diversity and inclusion in the structure and work of your partnership?

Advisory word limit: 300 words

ANSWER:

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are **core to GFO's decision-making and delivery**. The Oxfordshire Good Food Charter, signed by over 230 members, explicitly commits partners to equitable access, cultural food recognition, and inclusive participation. Our Steering Group and working groups include community organisations, refugee and faith-based groups, social enterprises and lived-experience representatives, ensuring that **diverse voices inform priorities and policies**.

GFO's **internal EDI Policy** goes beyond minimum industry standards by moving beyond legal compliance towards an **equity-led, outcomes-focused approach**. In addition to covering all protected characteristics, the policy explicitly addresses socioeconomic disadvantage, proactive neurodiversity inclusion, supportive recruitment, and tailored support to **achieve a thriving workplace**. It requires a measurable EDI action plan with named responsibilities, places accountability at the Board level, and applies **across the entire partnership ecosystem** (including members, volunteers, and business partners) rather than just staff.

Alongside this internal commitment, GFO has worked closely with **Food Matters** to help inform the FAIR Food strategic framework. Since the beginning of 2025, we have helped **co-develop this EDI strategy**, positioning GFO as a core contributor to a justice-led approach to food systems change. The framework deliberately broadens the scope of EDI beyond anti-racism alone, addressing discrimination, under-representation and marginalisation within food systems work.

EDI is embedded across GFO's programmes and ways of working. Governance structures are inclusive, with transparent terms of reference for partnership groups. GFO projects such as [FEAST](#) and our [Digital Content Workshop](#) are co-designed and delivered with/for community facilitators and local leaders to ensure **cultural relevance, inclusivity, and accessibility**. Our communications and resources prioritise plain language, inclusive/representative imagery, dyslexia-friendly formats, and translated formats (i.e. [Arabic Cooking Toolkit](#)) and posts around religious holidays. Delivery of projects/support also involves prioritisation of areas of deprivation, informed by the [Priority Places for Food Index](#).

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SECTION 2: SFP Key Issue activity and impact

Please describe the activity and impact of local food work delivered in your place within the last three years against the SFP 6 Key Issues below. Your SFP Silver Award application will have covered this in detail and this section is to reiterate and update based on that application. When referring to your silver application it is permissible to be brief and give a reference page number from your silver application for readers to get further detail. Hyperlinks to blogs, videos, websites etc. are all acceptable but require one or two sentences for context. Please use hyperlinks with impact and brevity in mind.

We advise that you keep answers to within 400 words for each Key Issue. Whilst you won't be penalised for going over this limit, this will help the panel focus on your main achievements. The panel will expect broadly silver levels of activity in this section.

Key Issue 1: Taking a strategic and collaborative approach to good food governance and action

Action area A: Establish a broad, representative, and dynamic local food partnership

Across Oxfordshire, good food governance is underpinned by a broad, representative and active food partnership that brings together public, private and community voices. More than **230 organisations** are engaged in shaping and delivering a fairer, healthier and more sustainable food system, with **38 new partners since Silver**. This breadth of membership reflects the diversity of the county and ensures that strategic decisions are informed by lived experience, professional expertise, and local knowledge.

The partnership spans Oxford City, market towns and rural communities, and includes ethnic and community-led food organisations such as [AFIUK](#), [OX4 Food Crew](#), [Syrian Sisters](#), and [Cherwell Collective](#). This ensures that perspectives from communities most affected by food insecurity and diet-related inequality are embedded within food system planning and action.

Since Oxfordshire received the Silver Award in 2023, collaborative governance has strengthened and matured. Well-established partnership structures now operate across the county, including **Food Action Working Groups (FAWGs)**, the **Food Sustainability and Health Group (FSHG)**, **Community Food Networks (CFNs)** and the **OxFarmToFork Advisory Group**, as well as ongoing engagement with the **Oxfordshire County Council Public Health Communications Group** (see

Silver Award Application, pp. 5-6). These structures enable coordination across themes and places, reduce duplication and support collective problem-solving.

As a result, Oxfordshire has moved beyond an emergency food-aid response towards a **systems-change approach**. Community insight is increasingly translated into policy, investment, and delivery at scale. This shift is evidenced by the development of local food co-ops led by OX4 Food Crew and a transition in Food Poverty Action Plan pledges towards building long-term resilience and away from emergency support.

Council investment from Oxfordshire County Council enables GFO to act as a robust **testing ground** for **new ideas** within our **existing, trusted network**. We bridge the gap between community reality and council policy, **turning ground-level trust into actionable insights**. This mutual reliance is best shown by our recent Healthy Start campaign where we created new entry points for public health support, significantly increasing engagement among families who are usually harder to reach.

This strategic relationship was recently reinforced by reviewing governance structures, such as the Food Strategy Steering Group, to integrate new NHS Thames Valley ICB partners. We deliver an **annual progress report and presentation** to the Health Improvement Board, successfully uniting the NHS, Local Authorities, and Healthwatch to optimise resources, address Oxfordshire's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment priorities, and meet Health and Wellbeing Board performance measures.

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Action area B: Develop, deliver, and monitor a food strategy/action plan

Oxfordshire is already benefitting from the outcomes of a **shared, metrics-based, county-wide [Food Strategy](#)**. The Strategy aligns activity across sectors and geographies while enabling local flexibility through place-based delivery. Since our Silver award, progress against these plans and commitments has been **consistently measured and reported**. This rigorous monitoring led to all **four [Food Action Plans](#) being updated with new actions and targets** to address local root causes of food insecurity while remaining aligned with county-wide objectives.

Shared metrics support collective delivery, accountability, and learning across the partnership. At the **[June 2025 Oxfordshire County Food Summit](#)**, partners assessed delivery to date and co-created priorities for the next phase. Implementation continues to be coordinated through **FAWGs**, each responsible for district-level delivery, monitoring, and transparency.

This collective commitment is captured in the **[2025 Food Strategy and Food Action Plans Roadmap Report](#)**, which documents the governance model and provides a replicable blueprint for other food partnerships.

Building a cross-sector food movement takes a lot of time, care, and steady coordination. Co-designing individual Food Action Plans through workshops with each district council required intensive groundwork, but it created a highly resilient framework across the county. This day-to-day network management acts as an invisible infrastructure that keeps our partners aligned. Because GFO consistently maintains these relationships, Oxfordshire **has a strong level of system readiness**. Whenever the county faces a new challenge or opportunity—whether deploying emergency funding, handling supply chain shocks, or launching new innovations—the network is already trusted, intact, and ready to act.

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Key Issue 2: Building public awareness, active food citizenship and a local good food movement

Action area A: Inspire and engage the public about good food

Public engagement and interaction with good food content has grown significantly across Oxfordshire, driven by coordinated county-wide campaigns and digital platforms.

Between April 2024 and March 2025, GFO's online engagement with good food messaging **surged; social media reach and interaction more than doubled**, securing nearly 6,500 followers, over 80,000 content views, and a 400% increase in engagement. This momentum has escalated rapidly into 2026: in May alone, we achieved a grand total of 139,077 combined views, impressions, and web visitors, demonstrating **performance and engagement that align more closely with a national-level campaign** than a regional food network.

These digital platforms now act as **vital, shared county resources**. The GFO website provides extensive practical signposting, including our [Community Food Map](#), which features over **140 community food services** and receives over **4,000 visits annually**. Regular newsletters reach nearly **2,000 subscribers**, while the OxFarmToFork-specific stream maintains a **70–80% open rate**. These digital touchpoints successfully translate awareness into offline participation and behaviour change. Since 2023, the [Oxfordshire Pumpkin Festival](#) has delivered 24 community events for 6,000 residents, preventing over **12 tonnes of waste**—including a shift in 2025 to processing 1.5 tonnes of surplus into frozen purée via OxPlenty. Similarly, the [Great Big Green Lunch](#) campaign engaged 5,500 people across 75+ participating organisations in 2025, with one headline event serving over 2,000 plant-based meals in a single sitting to normalize sustainable choices in everyday settings.

While GFO has achieved significant digital reach, our campaign and movement-building approaches are entirely driven by offline community listening, participatory research, and a commitment to digital equity. GFO intentionally designs its campaigns as a **'hybrid ecosystem'** where this massive digital visibility amplifies—rather than replaces—diverse community voices. For example, when FEAST community feedback highlighted that digital-only surveys would

exclude key demographics, we **adapted by printing physical assets to ensure full accessibility**. To bridge the digital divide, we balance our online reach by deploying tactile, physical assets—such as printed cooking toolkits, localised Arabic translations, and physical postcards—alongside interactive, in-person workshops and roundtables.

Furthermore, we use digital tools to drive community empowerment rather than top-down broadcasting. Every digital resource we host is grounded in deep community listening, including research with **32 community groups and over 263 community surveys** and co-design workshops conducted via the [FEAST Living Lab](#).

(380)

Action Area B: Foster food citizenship and a local good food movement

Public awareness in Oxfordshire has grown through coordinated county-wide campaigns that foster active food citizenship and support residents to move from passive engagement to active involvement in shaping local food culture. This resonance is driven by a commitment to **locally-specific resources that highlight Oxfordshire issues and case studies**. These tools are designed to support local professionals to signpost residents effectively, ensuring that support is tailored to the lived experience of local people rather than just recycling a generic national campaign.

Targeted local campaigns and collaborative programmes have strengthened conversations about food access and nutrition across the county. For example, our **Healthy Start campaign** secured 64 organisational pledges, demonstrating deep cross-sector commitment. This localised approach will continue for the **new Oxfordshire-specific Healthy Start communications campaign launching in April 2026**. Associated training resources for these campaigns have already been viewed over 500 times, providing a strong foundation of knowledge for community leaders and frontline workers to build upon as we move into the next phase of public engagement.

Accessible digital resources are expanding reach and impact. GFO's [Recipe Hub](#), developed in 2025, focuses on healthy, easy and affordable food, has already achieved **50,000 video views** since launching mid 2025, extending food skills learning beyond in-person activity.

Food skills remain central to movement-building. The **Cooking Toolkit** continues to support community cooks and facilitators, with **200+ printed copies** distributed between 2024 and 2025. Building on this, Oxfordshire launched a [Digital Cooking Tutor Training Workshop](#) in 2025, supporting a cohort of **15 community food leaders** to create culturally relevant, accessible digital recipes. Led by an experienced content creator with a large online following, the programme strengthens peer leadership and helps ensure the good food movement is visible, representative and sustainable both online and offline.

Together, these activities demonstrate a clear shift towards **greater participation, shared ownership and leadership** — key foundations for a resilient, long-term good food movement in Oxfordshire.

Crucially, our analytics show that over 70% of our social media followers are based locally, ensuring that this massive digital visibility **translates directly into place-based resonance rather than a generic reach.**

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Key Issue 3: Tackling food poverty and diet related ill-health and increasing access to affordable healthy food

Action area A: Tackle food poverty

Oxfordshire is shifting its approach to food poverty from emergency aid to a preventative, resilience-focused model through the **Oxfordshire Community Food Network (CFN)**. CFN supports over **70 community food groups**, encouraging shared learning and collective action rather than isolated crisis responses.

In early 2025, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) used the [Household Support Fund \(HSF\)](#) to prioritise food resilience and dignity. **£48,000** was distributed via GFO to **22 community-led projects**, reaching around **4,175 residents** with initiatives such as community cooking, food access, and healthy eating. Funding targeted local needs and supported organisations that usually find it hard to secure funds, ensuring priority neighbourhoods received help. This funding approach will continue in 2026.

During 2023-24, OCC provided an additional **£28,000** to bolster community cooking and healthy eating projects, reducing reliance on emergency food provision and resulted in [this report](#).

Workforce skills in food poverty have improved significantly. Over the past three years, **120 frontline workers from 55 organisations** completed [Food Poverty Training](#) through 10 Level 1 and 2 sessions. MECC-based [food insecurity training](#) has been integrated into frontline work, training **40+ professionals** using a train-the-trainer model, with new sessions planned for 2026 via GFO's open-access training portal. This has enhanced confidence in discussing food insecurity and directing residents to support like [Healthy Start](#), which engaged 52 teams countywide.

Since the [Food Poverty Action Plan](#) launched in 2021, over 40 organisations made nearly 70 pledges. In 2025, [13 pledges were renewed](#), reinforcing shared responsibility (see [Food Poverty Action Plan 2025 Progress Report](#)). Oxfordshire also developed the [Priority Places for Food Index](#) to better target resources and guide Food Strategy metrics.

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Action Area B: Promote healthy eating

Oxfordshire has enhanced support for healthy eating through **skills, environments, and information**, particularly benefiting low-income households with culturally relevant resources. GFO's [Recipe Hub](#), launched in mid-2025, offers accessible videos (over 50,000 views), guides,

and toolkits that promote healthy eating countywide. This builds on [research](#) involving **32 community groups**, which identified cooking facilities, barriers, and opportunities locally.

A deeper understanding of barriers comes from participatory work via [FEAST's Oxfordshire Living Lab](#), which collected insights through **263+ community surveys** and **six co-design workshops**. This approach highlights how food access, affordability, and diet-related health issues intersect in priority neighbourhoods, guiding [effective interventions](#).

Oxfordshire's involvement in this **EU-wide initiative** supports [knowledge exchange](#) by sharing place-based learning and testing practical solutions with local food actors, ensuring innovations reflect community needs.

Public Health is also transforming the 'Out of Home' sector by implementing the [Healthier Catering Commitment](#) and restricting high fat, salt, and sugar (HFSS) advertising on council-owned assets in priority areas to encourage healthier choices. It also enabled [RICE marketing trials](#) that experiment with 'good food' retail nudges—such as product placement changes and localised social marketing—to boost healthy, sustainable food purchases in community retail settings.

Together, these actions demonstrate how Oxfordshire is combining targeted support, participatory research and co-created solutions to **improve diets, reduce food poverty and contribute local learning to international food systems innovation**.

(222)

Key Issue 4: Creating a vibrant, prosperous, and diverse sustainable food economy

Action area A: Put good food enterprise at the heart of local economic development

Good food enterprise in Oxfordshire is a key driver of **inclusive economic development**, community resilience, and local wealth retention. Partners are integrating [Community Wealth Building](#) (CWB) principles into food initiatives, **prioritising social and environmental value alongside economic growth**.

Growing from foundational work, GFO collaborates with [Oxfordshire Social Entrepreneurship \(OSEP\)](#) to provide tailored support for Food Social Enterprises, especially local farmers. This helps enterprises scale their **social impact and financial viability**.

A notable example is the [OX4 Food Crew](#), a collective including social enterprises like [Damascus Rose Kitchen](#) and [Waste2Taste](#). In 2024, GFO published a [CWB report](#) identifying barriers such as finance and infrastructure access. In response, GFO supported the development of food co-ops in partnership with [Co-operation Town](#), shifting from emergency aid to resilient, member-owned

food retail. The County Council now funds a **Co-op Coordinator role** to set up six community food co-ops across the district.

Key recommendations include **leveraging anchor institution spending** for local procurement, creating accessible funding for start-ups, and strengthening partnerships between social enterprises and public institutions. These inform wider policy, including improvements to the [Holiday Activities and Food programme](#).

Further OSEP investment enabled 1:1 support for seven food social entrepreneurs and market-development events connecting **34 producers with buyers**. Early-career producers received peer mentoring to build skills and sustainability.

At county level, OxFarmToFork's procurement model generated £100,000 sales in 2024 and nearly £200,000 in 2025, securing £32,000 for on-farm infrastructure. Research with [Oxford SDG Impact Lab](#) confirmed its success in fostering a viable local food system, strengthening producer livelihoods, increasing local supply, and keeping food spend circulating within Oxfordshire's economy (see in-depth report [here](#)). There is also this [blog post](#) outlining the OxFarmToFork journey to a thriving local food hub.

The success of this sector is also evidenced by [Waste2Taste](#), which won the [2025 Oxfordshire Business Award](#) for Charity & Community and the [Ox In A Box 'Best Food Hero' award](#).

At a landscape scale, Oxfordshire is supporting the [North East Cotswold Farmer Cluster](#) (NECFC) to build **direct-to-consumer sales channels** for its 44 member farms, ensuring more value stays with local producers. These initiatives are now embedded within the [Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership](#), aligning food system activity with the county's broader inclusive growth ambitions.

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Action Area B: Promote healthy, sustainable, and independent food businesses to consumers

Alongside enterprise support, Oxfordshire is improving visibility and demand for healthy, sustainable and independent food businesses. Residents increasingly have access to information that supports local purchasing and healthier food choices.

Digital tools such as the **Community Food Map** and [Local Supplier Directory](#) connect consumers directly with local food businesses and nearly **100 mapped cooking spaces**, generating over **4,000 views** each year. These resources are complemented by regular promotion of local food businesses through newsletters and social media, contributing to a growth of **over 2,000 new followers between 2024 and 2025** and increased public engagement with local food.

The retail environment is also beginning to shift. [Good Food Retail](#) and **Good Food Out of Home** pilots are underway with the County Council to improve the availability and promotion of

healthy, sustainable food in shops and food outlets, particularly in priority areas. In parallel, collaboration with [WISH](#) has led to the launch of the [Good Waste Charter](#), supporting businesses to reduce, reuse and recycle food waste.

Together, these actions show how Oxfordshire is strengthening its local food economy by supporting enterprise, shaping markets and enabling residents to choose food that is good for people, place and planet.

(195)

Key Issue 5: Transforming catering and procurement and revitalising local and sustainable food supply chains

Action area A: Change policy and practice to put good food on people's plates

Throughout Oxfordshire, catering and procurement practice is increasingly aligned with good food principles, embedding sustainability, fairness, and health into everyday provision. This shift is underpinned by the **Oxfordshire Food Strategy**, providing a shared framework for local authorities and anchor organisations to prioritise local, nature-friendly, and socially responsible food.

Institutional commitment has strengthened significantly through **OxFarmToFork**. Since 2023, **21 Oxford colleges and 23 local farms** have signed the OxFarmToFork Charter, committing to transparent supply chains and fair pricing. This has translated into over **£300,000 of local food procurement**, redirecting spend into the Oxfordshire economy and proving that values-led procurement is commercially viable at scale.

Change is equally visible within the school food environment, where we have moved beyond basic compliance toward a **'whole-school approach'** to nutrition. Led by a **School Food Advisor (a Registered Nutritionist)**, Oxfordshire has trialled and embedded a variety of tailored training approaches designed to meet the specific catering structures of diverse schools:

- **Raising Nutrition:** There was the delivery of the **'Feeding Success'** certified course, equipping headteachers and catering leads with the strategic tools to shift school food culture.
- **Chefs in Schools:** Through the **School Chef Educator** programme, kitchen teams received intensive 1:1 mentoring to improve food quality, meet School Food Standards, and reduce waste.
- **University Partnerships:** Oxfordshire supported **16 Oxford Brookes Nutrition students** to deliver the 'Banking on Health' project, providing hands-on workshops to secondary pupils.

- **Targeted Support:** To date, these varied approaches—including Raising Nutrition and Chefs in Schools—have engaged 15 schools, ensuring interventions are tailored rather than ‘one size fits all’.

Together, these actions demonstrate how Oxfordshire is shifting from fragmented procurement towards coordinated, values-led purchasing that delivers measurable social, environmental, and health benefits from plate to policy.

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Action Area B: Improving connections and collaboration across the local supply chain

Oxfordshire has strengthened local supply chains by reconnecting producers and buyers through **OxFarmToFork**, a short food supply chain model that improves collaboration, transparency and resilience. Since launching in 2023, the platform has generated **over £300,000 in sales**, including **£100,000 in 2024**, with sales projected to exceed **£200,000 in 2025**.

OxFarmToFork directly links **23 agroecological producers** with **21 institutional buyers**, building long-term relationships that reduce risk for farmers and simplify procurement for buyers. The model goes beyond transactional trading to support systemic change. Participating colleges have contributed **£32,000 in on-farm infrastructure via buyer fees**, including cold storage and polytunnels, signalling long-term commitment to local supply and enabling producers to scale sustainably.

Environmental impact has also been reduced. The supply chain uses shared logistics and **zero-emission e-bike deliveries**, completing **424 deliveries** and saving an estimated **2 million food miles** since launch. Governance has been strengthened through an **Advisory Board**, with producers and institutions contributing to decision-making.

Relationship-building underpins this work. In 2025, **five** OxFarmToFork events brought together around **200 chefs, farmers and food professionals**, strengthening trust, sharing knowledge and improving alignment between supply and demand. Read about our latest event, the inaugural [OxFarmToFork Showcase](#), in December 2025.

Looking ahead, Oxfordshire is using OxFarmToFork as a **proving ground for wider public procurement reform**, including collaborations to integrate local supply into schools. This positions the county to scale sustainable procurement across the public sector, offering a replicable model for other places seeking to revitalise local food supply chains.

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Key Issue 6: Tackling the climate and nature emergency through sustainable food & farming and an end to food waste

Action area A: Promote sustainable food production and consumption and resource efficiency

In Oxfordshire, food system activity supports climate and nature outcomes by prioritising **agroecological production, soil health, and ecosystem resilience** over simple carbon metrics. We have transitioned from individual projects to supporting landscape-scale nature recovery, most notably through the [North East Cotswold Farmer Cluster \(NECFC\)](#). Comprising 44 member farms, the NECFC is designing direct-to-consumer routes to market, ensuring that regenerative farming is commercially viable and that local producers retain a greater share of the food pound.

This diversified economy is evidenced by producers like [Traditional Garden Growers](#). While 60% of their produce is sold through GFO's OxFarmToFork short-supply-chain model, they also supply **Clarkson's Farm (Diddly Squat)**, demonstrating how sustainable local horticulture is achieving mainstream commercial success. Similarly, [Tolhurst Organic](#)—a pioneer in peat-free, stock-free organic systems—exemplifies how our local farms are leading the way in biodiversity-rich production without reliance on animal inputs or synthetic fertilisers (as well as research into this field).

By shortening supply chains, **OxFarmToFork** achieves environmental impact far beyond carbon reduction. The model's primary ecological value lies in its **support for biodiversity and soil health**. Through the use of the [Agroecological Assessment Framework](#), we incentivise producers to move away from synthetic inputs toward nature-friendly practices, such as **natural pest management (like beetle banks) and the use of wool-pellet fertilisers**, which rebuild soil organic matter and sequester nitrogen. Furthermore, our direct, demand-led procurement model drastically reduces **on-farm edible food waste**—a major source of methane and nutrient loss—by ensuring crops are grown to meet specific institutional needs rather than being subject to the volatile perfect produce standards and insecurity of global supply chains. This creates a circular local food system that actively protects Oxfordshire's **natural capital and water quality** while building landscape-scale climate resilience.

Through food action plan delivery, GFO enabled **mapping of growing spaces across West Oxfordshire and Oxford City**. We share a building and dialogue with [Community Action Groups \(CAG\) Oxfordshire](#), which hosts an established growing network. Ultimately, we seek to **connect grassroots initiatives to strategic policy**.

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Action Area B: Reduce, redirect, and recycle food, packaging, and related waste

Oxfordshire leads the UK in tackling food waste, achieving some of the **highest domestic recycling rates** thanks to the [Oxfordshire County Council Waste Management team](#) and the [WISH \(Waste Innovation Station Hubs\) partnership](#). Combining innovative collection systems with targeted behaviour change campaigns, Oxfordshire sets a strong example for resource recovery.

The county's efforts include **public engagement, redistribution, and system innovation**. Since 2014, the [Oxfordshire Pumpkin Festival](#) (which inspired the Hubbub Pumpkin Campaign) has raised awareness of seasonal food waste, specifically highlighting the **18,000 tonnes of edible pumpkins wasted annually** in the UK. In 2025, **eight community-led events involved around 480 participants in activities** such as cooking workshops and garden gatherings. The campaign reached **30,000 people via social media** and rescued over **325 pumpkins for community use**.

Behaviour change is further supported by the annual [Great Big Green Lunch](#), promoting **plant-based meals and leftover use in workplaces**. In 2025, **5,500 people participated across Oxfordshire**, with one event serving over **2,000 plant-based, waste-free meals**.

At the farm level, the [OxPlenty project](#)—a collaboration between GFO, Oxford Food Hub, and Cherwell Collective—piloted **surplus redistribution in 2025**. It rescued [1.5 tonnes of pumpkins and 1,540 apples](#), producing frozen pumpkin purée and pasteurised apple juice distributed to food banks and community networks. This addressed **food waste and shortages of fresh ingredients in food aid**.

OxPlenty exposed a need for local processing infrastructure, leading to efforts to **secure funding for industrial-scale facilities**.

These initiatives reflect Oxfordshire's integrated approach to climate, nature, and waste through a place-based food system strategy.

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SECTION 3: Two areas of exceptional achievement

Please submit evidence for the areas of exceptional achievement agreed with the SFP board. A combination of quantitative evidence and storytelling will be the most impactful. Hyperlinks to blogs, videos, websites etc. are all acceptable but require one or two sentences for context. Please use hyperlinks with impact and brevity in mind.

There is no word limit, but we suggest 600 words per area of exceptional achievement.

Areas of exceptional achievement 1: GFO's Participatory Process – Embedding Food Strategy Across Policy-Level and Institutional Boundaries

Description & Evidence

[Oxfordshire's Food Strategy](#) stands out as a community-driven, participatory approach that shapes food policy from the ground up while securing strong institutional support. Rather than a top-down model, Good Food Oxfordshire (GFO) has developed **robust, facilitator-led processes** that centre community voices and multi-stakeholder collaboration—ensuring that food strategy is shaped by those it affects and delivered in partnership with institutional actors.

1. Multi-Stakeholder Food Action Working Groups (FAWGs)

The governance structure of the Food Strategy is designed around genuine participation. Four multi-stakeholder **Food Action Working Groups** bring together local authorities, public health, community organisations, anchor institutions, and grassroots representatives. These groups co-design and oversee the delivery of **52 measurable actions**, revisited quarterly to maintain shared ownership and accountability. This inclusive setup means that policy and practice are continuously shaped by diverse perspectives rather than imposed from above.

In the [2025 Food Poverty Action Plan Report](#), food is now embedded within district-level policy and delivery mechanisms. For example, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse councils are implementing actions that directly connect community growing initiatives with food banks and local support services.

All six district councils now allocate staff capacity to coordinate and deliver local food work, and GFO's role as a trusted steward of public funds is evidenced by its administration of **£375,000 in Household Support Fund investment** on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council.

The [June 2025 Oxfordshire Food Summit](#) convened over **60 stakeholders** to scrutinise delivery and recommit to next steps, reinforcing **shared ownership and accountability**.

2. Community-Led Co-Design through FEAST

At the heart of the participatory process is the [FEAST Oxfordshire Living Lab](#)—a community-led initiative that goes **beyond consultation to full co-design**. Five trained community facilitators work within **priority neighbourhoods**, leading workshops and gathering detailed insights from local residents on **food access, affordability, and cultural relevance**. Between 2023 and 2025, this process collected **263 community surveys** and directly informed decision-making bodies such as FAWGs and funders.

This approach ensures community priorities shape not only problem definition but also the **design of solutions**. For instance, insights from [Cooking and Healthy Eating research](#) and the [Holiday Activities and Food \(HAF\) programme](#) consultations have led to co-designed initiatives that influence both **funding allocations and service delivery models locally**.

Quarterly Community Food Network meetings provide a **two-way accountability forum** where community facilitators and leaders report back on progress and adapt plans alongside institutional partners—**closing the feedback loop between lived experience and strategic action**.

3. Embedding Food Strategy in Institutional Policy and Practice

While participation drives design, GFO has also successfully embedded the **Food Strategy** within institutional frameworks to ensure sustainability:

- All four Oxfordshire local councils have **formally endorsed Food Action Plans** linked to the Strategy, reflecting **political consensus built through participatory dialogue**.
- Food-related metrics are embedded at executive levels; for example, the Director of Public Health incorporates these into public health objectives, **recognising food as a key determinant of health** rather than an optional programme.
- The six district councils allocate **dedicated staff capacity** for local food work coordination and delivery.
- GFO acts as a **trusted steward** of public funds, managing £375,000 in Household Support Fund investment on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council.
- The June 2025 Oxfordshire Food Summit convened over **60 stakeholders to review progress and reaffirm collective commitment**.

4. A Replicable Model That Centres Community Leadership

The participatory governance model developed by GFO is **documented transparently** in the Food Strategy and [Food Action Plans Roadmap Report](#) (2025), including lessons learned. This model demonstrates how authentic community leadership combined with institutional commitment and structured coordination creates lasting systems change.

Targeted impacts include:

- Creation of a dedicated **School Food Advisor role** delivering nutrition training in **15 schools**.
- Partnerships with [Chefs in Schools](#) and [Bite Back 2030](#) embedding **good food principles from education through to policy**.

Summary

Good Food Oxfordshire's approach clearly prioritises bottom-up participation through **co-designed processes like FEAST**, supported by multi-stakeholder working groups that guide delivery. This participatory foundation has enabled embedding food strategy across **policy frameworks and budgets** within local government, **securing long-term accountability**.

In doing so, Oxfordshire offers a **practical blueprint** for other regions seeking to **build food systems change grounded in community voice and institutional collaboration**.

Areas of exceptional achievement 2: OxFarmToFork – A Model for Local, Sustainable Procurement

Description & Evidence

[OxFarmToFork](#) addresses one of the most deeply rooted barriers to sustainable food systems: the **disconnect between local producers and institutional buyers**. What began as a small, informal exchange between chefs and farmers has evolved into a bespoke, values-led procurement platform (and community collective) that is reshaping Oxfordshire's food economy.

1. Delivering measurable economic and supply-chain change

OxFarmToFork demonstrates that local, sustainable procurement can be commercially viable at scale. Sales have grown from **£23,000 in 2023** to **£100,000 in 2024**, with projected sales exceeding **£180,000 in 2025**. In 2024 alone, **15.6 tonnes of local produce** were sold through the platform.

Twenty-one Oxford colleges and **23 agroecological producers** have signed the OxFarmToFork Charter, committing to transparent, fair and nature-friendly supply chains. Crucially, the model has delivered clear economic benefits for producers by creating **stable, repeat institutional markets with transparent, agreed pricing**. Some growers now rely on OxFarmToFork as a **primary route to market**, increasing production by **up to 60%** in response to predictable demand. This shift from ad-hoc wholesale sales to planned institutional procurement has improved **cashflow certainty, production planning and long-term business resilience**, particularly for smaller agroecological farms.

Institutions have demonstrated long-term commitment by jointly investing **£32,000 in on-farm infrastructure** (including cold storage and polytunnels, which have supported farmers to lengthen the growing season and provide more stable predictable year round income), complemented by **£50,000 in external funding** secured by Rebel Restoration to support logistics and environmental impact monitoring.

The overall impact of OxFarmToFork can be read in [this blog](#).

2. Environmental and governance innovation

OxFarmToFork embeds sustainability into both logistics and governance. Since September 2023, the platform has facilitated **424 zero-emission e-bike deliveries**, saving an estimated **2 million food miles** (equivalent to **670 tonnes of CO₂**).

Environmental integrity is independently validated. Research by the **Oxford University SDG Impact Lab** confirmed that all farms studied demonstrate strong ecological stewardship, with a clear emphasis on soil health and natural pest management.

Governance innovation underpins resilience. A **co-operative governance pilot** places producers and institutions as equal partners in decision-making, fostering trust, transparency and shared responsibility. Relationship-building is further supported through regular events; in 2025, **five OxFarmToFork events** brought together around **200 chefs, farmers and stakeholders**.

3. National recognition and scalability

OxFarmToFork is now recognised nationally as a leading model for sustainable procurement. It has been featured on **BBC Farmwatch** and **BBC South Today**, and the team has knowledge-shared on a national level such as [Better Food Traders' Regional Food Hubs programme](#) and [Procurement for Good](#).

The model continues to scale locally, with plans to expand to **24 colleges and two schools**, using OxFarmToFork as a proving ground for wider public-sector procurement reform. In 2026, GFO will be collaborating with academic and international partners, including the **University of Oxford**, **University of Heidelberg** and **ICLEI**, to research pathways for embedding local procurement in schools.

OxFarmToFork's [digital marketplace](#) has also received recognition and was built specifically to meet the needs of Oxfordshire producers and institutional buyers, evolving from an informal WhatsApp group into a bespoke online ordering system. What began with growers and chefs sharing surplus via a spreadsheet rapidly revealed the need for a more structured platform, and in **mid-2024 GFO commissioned a dedicated digital build** with tech partners to create a marketplace designed *with and for* its users. The platform has enabled a significant step-change in how fresh, local food gets to plates across the county.

A [short promotional film](#), in-depth [web pages](#) (including an [FAQ page](#) and [producer map](#)), and the use of 'get to know the growers' social media videos (such as this one of [Worthy Earth](#)) supports recruitment and knowledge sharing, wider engagement, demonstrating direct impact on producers and chefs.

The success of OxFarmToFork relies on **commercial predictability and trust**. Feedback from our growers, such as Worthy Earth, shows that steady, local market access changes how a farm operates. When smaller agroecological producers are backed by committed buying contracts from institutions like Oxford University colleges, it reduces their financial anxiety. This economic stability gives growers the safety net they need to **try new nature-friendly farming methods and invest in long-term biodiversity** without risking their business survival. Ultimately, the supply chain works as a practical loop: colleges secure sustainable local produce, and farmers get the security they need to innovate.

OxFarmToFork shows that institutional spending power, when aligned with values-led governance, can **rebuild local food economies, strengthen producer livelihoods and support nature-friendly farming**, offering a clear, evidence-backed model for replication across the UK.

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SECTION 4: Embeddedness, sustainability and growing the movement

To what extent is the food partnership and its work embedded in local policy, strategies, and practice? How sustainable is funding and traction with stakeholders, including the local authority? To what extent do citizens and community organisations have a sense of ownership of, and agency with, the work of the food partnership? Are governance structures robust and democratic?

How does your partnership contribute the food partnership movement? This might be direct support to SFP members and prospects, Regional or cohort specific working and acting as an ambassador for a systems approach, cross-sector approach to food. This can include contributing to forums, conferences, and sessions in the UK and abroad.

We advise that you keep answers to within 600 words. Hyperlinks to blogs, videos, websites etc. are all acceptable but require one or two sentences for context. Please use hyperlinks with impact and brevity in mind.

Embeddedness & sustainability

Across Oxfordshire, good food work is now embedded within local policy, strategies and everyday practice, rather than operating as a stand-alone programme. This is rooted in the co-development and adoption of the **Oxfordshire Food Strategy** and associated **Food Action Plans** by Oxfordshire County Council and all five District Councils, ensuring alignment with public health, economic development, climate and inequality priorities.

Food is increasingly integrated into statutory delivery. Strong working relationships with local authority officers across public health, sustainability, economic development and procurement have resulted in food being embedded within initiatives such as the **Household Support Fund**, school food improvement, inclusive economic strategies and local climate action. Senior ownership is secured through the Director of Public Health, who incorporates food metrics into public health objectives, reinforcing food as a determinant of health rather than an optional activity (see [PPFI](#)).

Institutional commitment has translated into tangible resourcing. All six district councils now contribute officer time to local food delivery, and Good Food Oxfordshire's role as a trusted steward of public funds is evidenced by the administration of **£375,000 of Household Support Fund investment**. Alongside public funding, sustainability for GFO's food partnership is strengthened through a blended funding model that includes project grants, partner contributions and earned income from initiatives such as **OxFarmToFork**, reducing reliance on any single funding stream.

Community ownership and agency are central to sustainability. Community organisations are not only participants but co-creators of strategy and delivery, contributing directly through **Community Food Networks**, **Food Action Working Groups** and facilitator-led co-design processes. These structures ensure that lived experience shapes priorities, funding decisions and programme design. Quarterly Community Food Network meetings operate as two-way accountability spaces, reinforcing trust and shared ownership across the partnership.

Governance structures are robust and democratic. A diverse **Steering Group**, operating under clear terms of reference, provides strategic oversight and accountability. Members hold roles across key systems, including the **Food Sustainability and Health Group**, **Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership**, **Oxfordshire Social Enterprise Partnership**, **Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Partnership**, **Local Nature Recovery Partnership** and the **MECC Strategic Board**, ensuring food is consistently represented within wider policy and systems conversations.

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Growing the movement

Good Food Oxfordshire actively contributes to the national and international food partnership movement by sharing learning, supporting peers and acting as an advocate for a systems-based, cross-sector approach to food.

We regularly support other **Sustainable Food Places** members and emerging partnerships through peer advice, mentoring and knowledge exchange, drawing on our experience of strategy development, participatory governance and implementation at scale. Learning from Oxfordshire is shared through openly available resources, including the **Food Strategy and Food Action Plans Roadmap Report**, **Cooking Toolkit** and case studies, all designed to be adaptable for use in other places.

GFO contributes to regional and national forums and conferences, presenting Oxfordshire's work and advocating for integrated approaches that connect food with health, climate, equity and local economies. This includes participation in networks such as **Better Food Traders**, **Procurement for Good**, **Regional Food Hubs**, and national discussions on public-sector procurement and community wealth building.

We also play an active role in shaping the future of equitable food systems. GFO contributes to **SFP governance and working groups**, including the **SFP Terms of Reference Group**, and worked with **Food Matters** and others to advance sector-wide thinking on **diversity, equity and inclusion**, building on anti-racism practice and broadening the focus to representation and justice across food systems.

Internationally, learning from Oxfordshire is shared through academic and practitioner networks, including collaboration with universities and European partners on changing healthy eating behaviour, sustainable procurement and local supply chains. These exchanges ensure that Oxfordshire both **contributes to, and learns from, global best practice**.

By embedding food within policy, investing in community leadership, securing institutional commitment and sharing learning openly, Oxfordshire demonstrates how a **place-based food partnership can deliver lasting systems change locally while strengthening the wider good food movement**.