Understanding Food Partnership Impact

Callum Etches – Impact Lead, Sustainable Food Places

Session outline

- Part 1: Intro to MEL and the impact measurement process
  - MEL Jargon busting
  - Rainbow Framework – an impact measurement process
  - Theories of change
- Part 2: Impact measurement for food partnerships
  - Overcoming the 'dual attribution' problem
  - A food partnership impact framework
  - Collecting partner data

Learning objectives

By the end of the session, you will:

- Have a basic understanding of the different functions of Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL).
- Know where to go for more information on conducting MEL processes.
- Understand how to create and use an impact framework to capture and communicate the value added of your partnership.

What is MEL?

A comprehensive approach to data collection, analysis and reporting

Monitoring: ongoing, real-time monitoring of project resources, activities and results and review of performance indicators and metrics.

Evaluation: any systematic approach to judge merit, worth or significance of an activity, by combining evidence and values.

Learning: using the results of monitoring and evaluation processes to adapt and develop our approach.

Different types of evaluation

When we talk about evaluation, we include evaluations that are intended to be used for different purposes:

Formative: to make improvements

Summative: to inform decisions about whether to start, continue, expand or stop an intervention.

	Formative evaluation	Summative evaluation
Process evaluation	Focused on processes: intended to inform decisions about improving (primarily implementation)	Focused on processes: intended to inform decisions about stop/go
Impact evaluation	Focused on impact: intended to inform decisions about improving (primarily design characteristics)	Focused on impact: intended to inform decisions about stop/go

https://www.betterevaluation.org/getting-started/what-evaluation

How do we 'do' an evaluation?

- There are a huge number of methods and approaches to conducting MEL.

- What you choose depends on your unique circumstances - approaches need to be tailored to the specific nature of your activity and the objectives of the evaluation.

https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/approaches

1. Appreciative inquiry
2. Beneficiary assessment
3. Case study
4. Causal link monitoring
5. Collaborative outcomes reporting
6. Contribution analysis
7. Critical system heuristics
8. Democratic evaluation
9. Developmental evaluation
10. Empowerment evaluation
11. Horizontal evaluation
12. Innovation history
13. Institutional histories
14. Most significant change
15. Outcome harvesting
16. Outcome mapping
17. Participatory evaluation
18. Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) / Participatory learning for action (PLA)
19. Positive deviance
20. Qualitative impact assessment protocol
21. Randomised controlled trial
22. Rapid evaluation
23. Realist evaluation
24. Social return on investment
25. Success case method
26. Utilisation-focused evaluation

Choosing appropriate evaluation methods and processes

The Rainbow Framework:

1. Manage
2. Define
3. Frame
4. Describe
5. Understand Causes
6. Synthesise
7. Report and Support Use

https://www.betterevaluation.org/frameworks-guides/rainbow-framework

Choosing appropriate evaluation methods and processes

The Rainbow Framework:

1. Manage –how decisions will be made for each step of the evaluation and ensuring they are implemented well.

2. Define – the project and how actions are understood to contribute to impact (Theory of Change).

3. Frame – being clear about the boundaries of the evaluation.

4. Describe – collecting or retrieving data and analyzing it to answer your evaluation questions.

5. Understand Causes – addressing questions about cause and effect

6. Synthesise – bring together data to provide and overall conclusion

7. Report and Support Use – communicate findings, facilitate learning and adaptation.

https://www.betterevaluation.org/frameworks-guides/rainbow-framework

https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches

Theory of Change (ToC)

Explains how your project, programme, policy, or strategy, is understood to contribute to a chain of results that produce the intended or actual impacts.
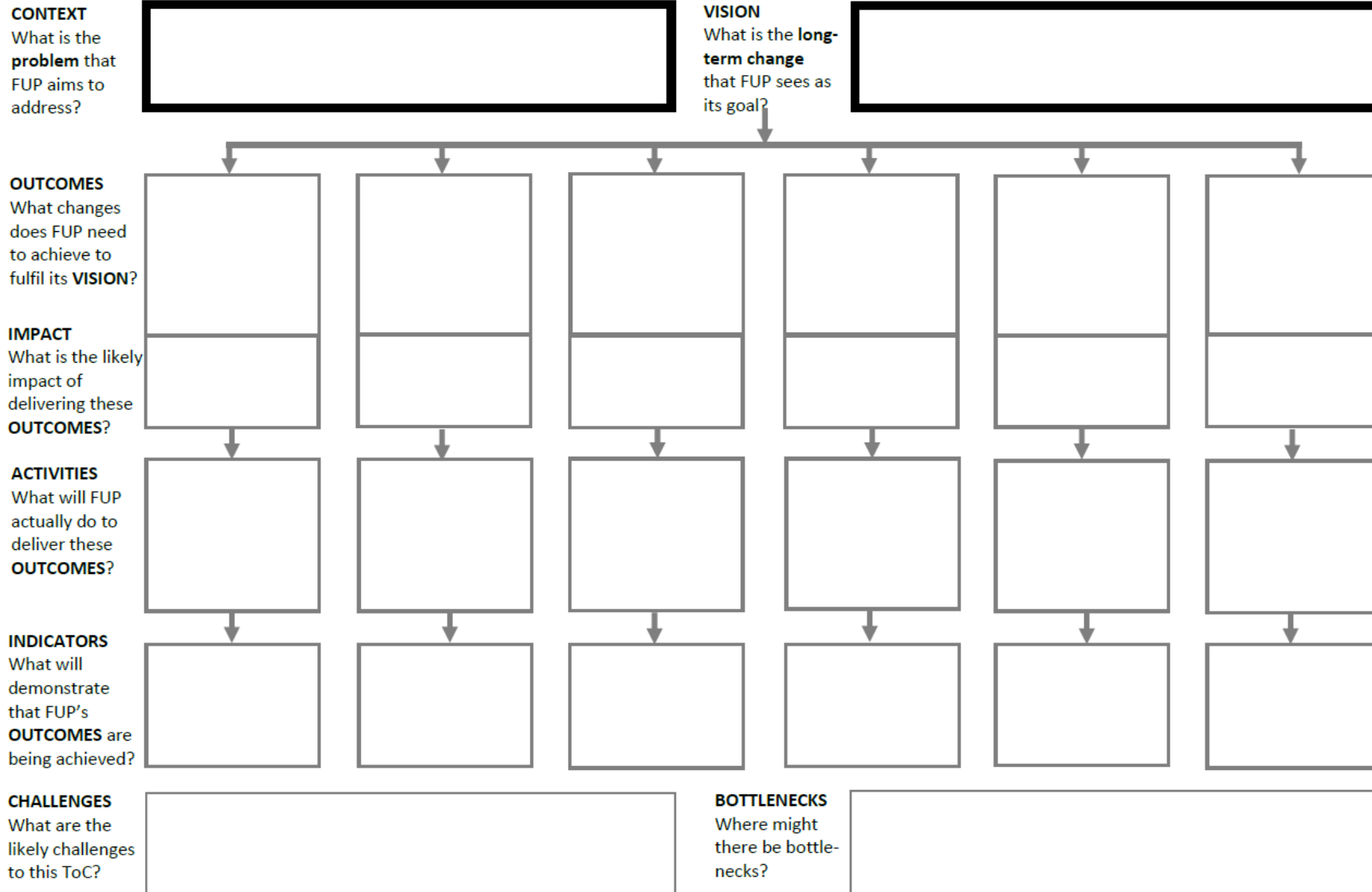
Theory of Change Logic Model:

Activities -> Outputs ->Outcomes -> Impact

The steps to build a Theory of Change:

- o Agree the long-term intended impact (the big long-term change you want to see)
- o Map outcomes (the real changes resulting from your activities) backwards, thinking of them as necessary pre-conditions
- o Identify activities (the things we do - our services, products, campaigns, etc.) necessary to achieve outcomes
- o Identify assumptions (enablers and risks underlying your theory) to interrogate your theory. At this stage, you identify key assumptions you have made between the work delivered and the difference you want to make, and about the overall rationale and context.
- o Establish a timeline and plan resources
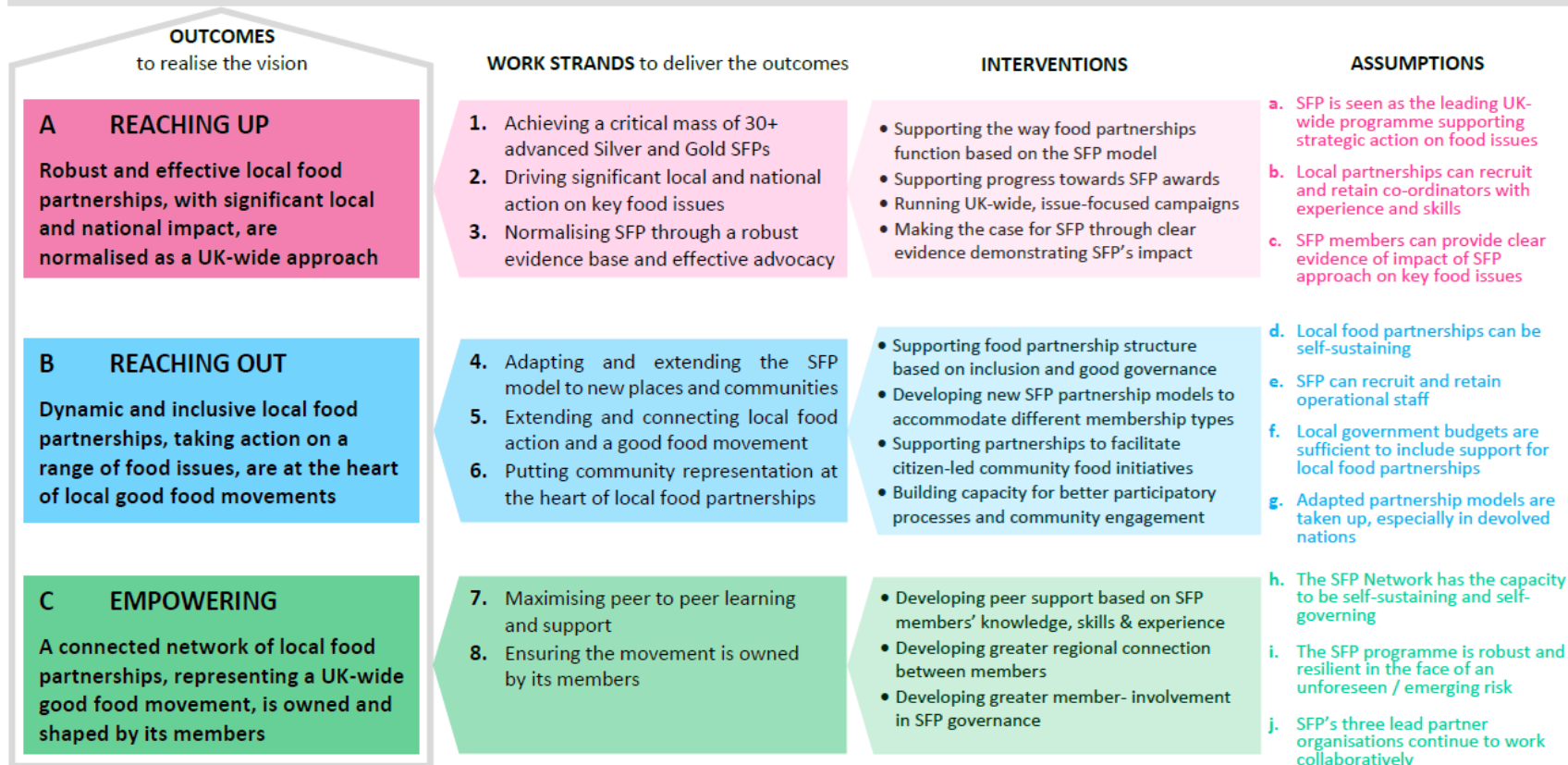- o Produce a diagram and narrative

https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/strategy-and-impact/strategy-and-business-planning/theory-of-change/

ToC Template: Logic Model

CONTEXT
What is the **problem** that FUP aims to address?

VISION
What is the **long-term change** that FUP sees as its goal?

OUTCOMES
What changes does FUP need to achieve to fulfil its **VISION**?

IMPACT
What is the likely impact of delivering these **OUTCOMES**?

ACTIVITIES
What will FUP actually do to deliver these **OUTCOMES**?

INDICATORS
What will demonstrate that FUP's **OUTCOMES** are being achieved?

CHALLENGES
What are the likely challenges to this ToC?

BOTTLENECKS
Where might there be bottlenecks?

ToC Example: SFP

SUSTAINABLE FOOD PLACES – PHASE 3 THEORY OF CHANGE

food matters

The **VISION** or **long-term change** that is SFP's goal.

To make healthy and sustainable food a defining characteristic of where people live

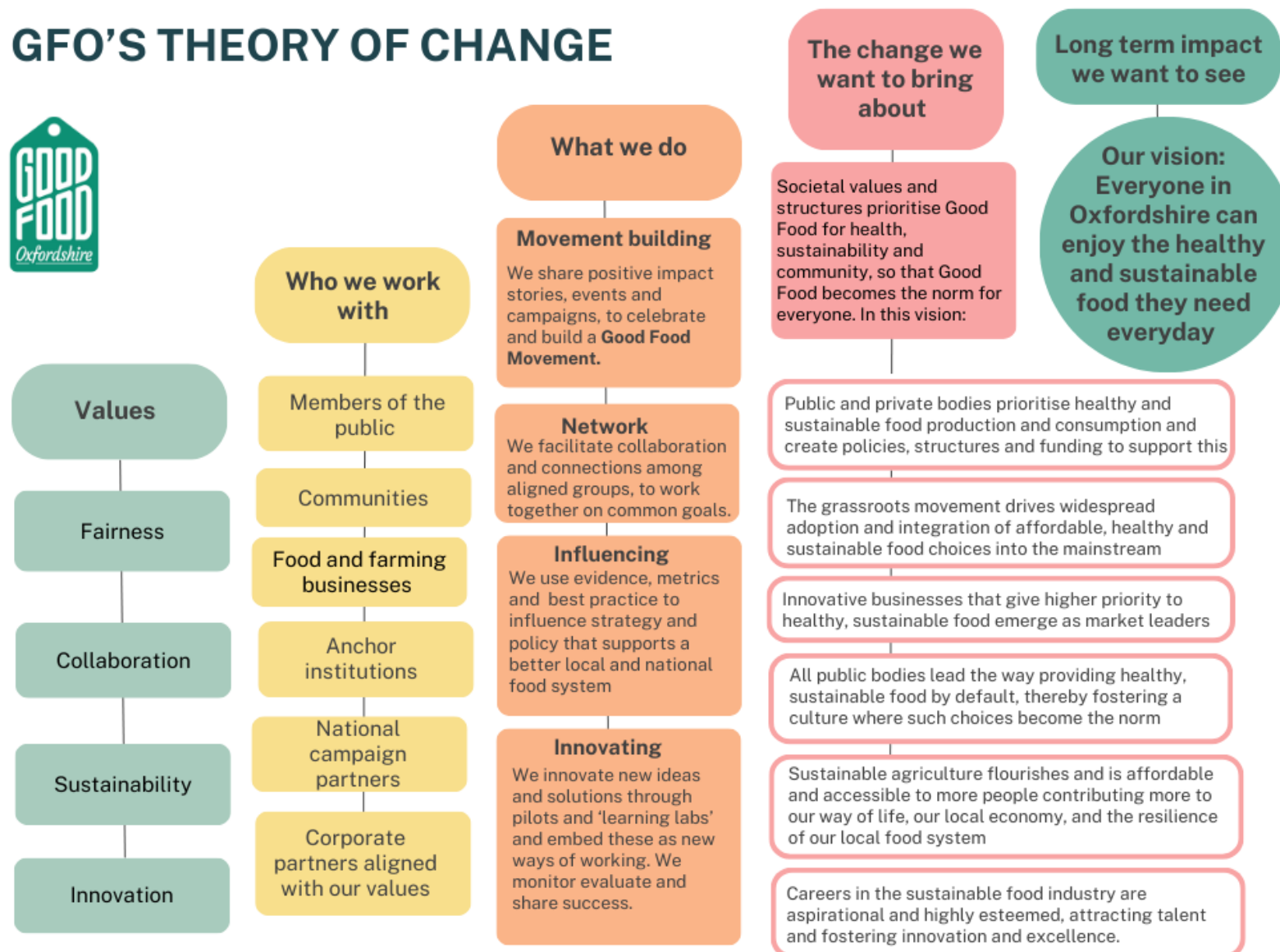| OUTCOMES to realise the vision	WORK STRANDS to deliver the outcomes	INTERVENTIONS	ASSUMPTIONS
A REACHING UP Robust and effective local food partnerships, with significant local and national impact, are normalised as a UK-wide approach	1. Achieving a critical mass of 30+ advanced Silver and Gold SFPs 2. Driving significant local and national action on key food issues 3. Normalising SFP through a robust evidence base and effective advocacy	• Supporting the way food partnerships function based on the SFP model • Supporting progress towards SFP awards • Running UK-wide, issue-focused campaigns • Making the case for SFP through clear evidence demonstrating SFP's impact	a. SFP is seen as the leading UK-wide programme supporting strategic action on food issues b. Local partnerships can recruit and retain co-ordinators with experience and skills c. SFP members can provide clear evidence of impact of SFP approach on key food issues
B REACHING OUT Dynamic and inclusive local food partnerships, taking action on a range of food issues, are at the heart of local good food movements	4. Adapting and extending the SFP model to new places and communities 5. Extending and connecting local food action and a good food movement 6. Putting community representation at the heart of local food partnerships	• Supporting food partnership structure based on inclusion and good governance • Developing new SFP partnership models to accommodate different membership types • Supporting partnerships to facilitate citizen-led community food initiatives • Building capacity for better participatory processes and community engagement	d. Local food partnerships can be self-sustaining e. SFP can recruit and retain operational staff f. Local government budgets are sufficient to include support for local food partnerships g. Adapted partnership models are taken up, especially in devolved nations
C EMPOWERING A connected network of local food partnerships, representing a UK-wide good food movement, is owned and shaped by its members	7. Maximising peer to peer learning and support 8. Ensuring the movement is owned by its members	• Developing peer support based on SFP members' knowledge, skills & experience • Developing greater regional connection between members • Developing greater member-involvement in SFP governance	h. The SFP Network has the capacity to be self-sustaining and self-governing i. The SFP programme is robust and resilient in the face of an unforeseen / emerging risk j. SFP's three lead partner organisations continue to work collaboratively

The **ISSUE** SFP is addressing

Food is at the heart of some of our greatest problems: from obesity and diet-related ill-health to food poverty and waste, climate change and biodiversity loss to declining prosperity and social dislocation. System-wide action on food is a key part of the solution.

ToC Example: Good Food Oxfordshire (draft)

GFO'S THEORY OF CHANGE

Values
- Fairness
- Collaboration
- Sustainability
- Innovation

Who we work with
- Members of the public
- Communities
- Food and farming businesses
- Anchor institutions
- National campaign partners
- Corporate partners aligned with our values

What we do

Movement building
We share positive impact stories, events and campaigns, to celebrate and build a **Good Food Movement.**

Network
We facilitate collaboration and connections among aligned groups, to work together on common goals.

Influencing
We use evidence, metrics and best practice to influence strategy and policy that supports a better local and national food system

Innovating
We innovate new ideas and solutions through pilots and 'learning labs' and embed these as new ways of working. We monitor evaluate and share success.

The change we want to bring about

Societal values and structures prioritise Good Food for health, sustainability and community, so that Good Food becomes the norm for everyone. In this vision:

- Public and private bodies prioritise healthy and sustainable food production and consumption and create policies, structures and funding to support this

- The grassroots movement drives widespread adoption and integration of affordable, healthy and sustainable food choices into the mainstream

- Innovative businesses that give higher priority to healthy, sustainable food emerge as market leaders

- All public bodies lead the way providing healthy, sustainable food by default, thereby fostering a culture where such choices become the norm

- Sustainable agriculture flourishes and is affordable and accessible to more people contributing more to our way of life, our local economy, and the resilience of our local food system

- Careers in the sustainable food industry are aspirational and highly esteemed, attracting talent and fostering innovation and excellence.

Long term impact we want to see

Our vision: Everyone in Oxfordshire can enjoy the healthy and sustainable food they need everyday

Applying MEL to the food partnership context

Twin Attribution Problem

Food partnerships have a particularly difficult task in documenting evidence of impact due to two specific attributes:

1. Working in partnership – actions taken by a range of partners involving a blurring of lines between roles and responsibilities.
2. Addressing systems level challenges – defined by complex feedback loops with often unpredictable dynamics making identify cause and effect very challenging.

Activities -> Outputs -> Outcomes -> Impact

What do Food Partnerships do?

Coordinate

Voice

Connect

Amplify

Share

Influence

Convene

Bridge

Platform

Deliver

Campaign

Instigate

Broker

Network
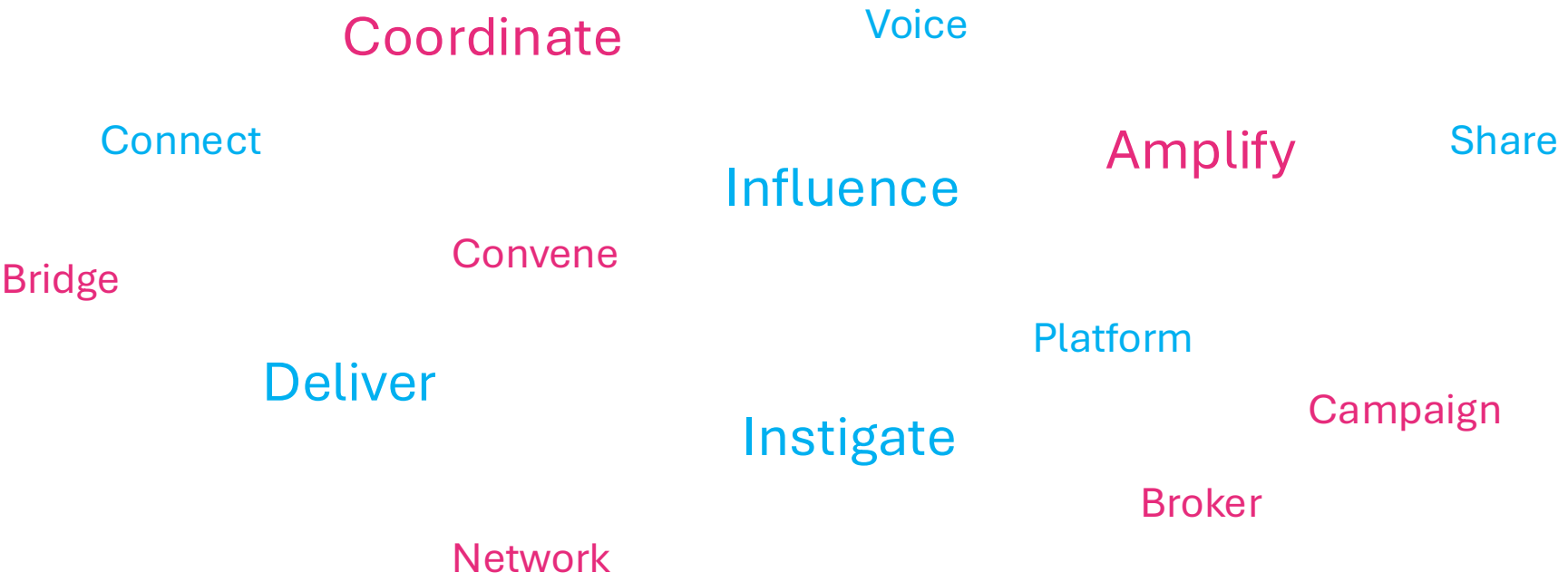
Food Partnership Impact Framework (activity)

Deliver – own projects and programmes, directly involving themselves in local food action.

Coordinate – action across the food system, sharing knowledge, and connecting stakeholders across sectors.

Influence – local food decision making, helping to make local food policies, strategies and actions plans more inclusive and representative. Influencing the hearts and minds of local people through campaigning and public engagement.

Instigate – mobilising funding, identifying gaps, by sharing knowledge of good practice and innovation and facilitating collaboration between stakeholders.

Amplify – by sharing and promoting the work of others, helping to build the momentum of a local good food movement.

https://collectiveimpactforum.org/resource/backbone-starter-guide-a-summary-of-major-resources-about-the-backbone/

What are the outputs?

Activity	Outputs
Deliver	Project impacts, partner impacts*, people reached, activities ran, food distributed, etc.
Coordinate	Connections made, cross-sectoral bridges built, partners engaged, knowledge shared, etc.
Influence	Influential contacts engaged, policies influenced, decision making processes participated in, campaigns ran, etc.
Instigate	Projects seeded, funding mobilized, ideas shared, collective actions mobilized, etc.
Amplify	Partners work platformed, campaigns engaged in, learnings shared, etc.

Tracking your activity and impact

Start logging your activity and impact:

- Make a brief note of what you have done, when and with whom.
- Keep it simple – record just enough information to capture the activity and provide the opportunity to follow up later.
- Provide space for recording longer term impact of activity, as and when it happens.

Top tips(from SFP award holders):

- Start this process early.
- Don't undervalue your work!

Create a database to log activity

Simple submission form for data collection

Automatically archived into database format

Click here to view the new **SFP Evidence Database** or **here** for a guide to build your own.

Using your activity and impact data

Small activities may add up to big impact over time.

Data can be used to:
- Document the role a food partnerships in the convening and coordinating the activities of partners.
- Document the any recorded impacts of the partnership/partners.
- Share knowledge of experience/good practice.
- Visualise the scope and scale of the work of your partnership.
- Provide a basis for analyzing the ripple effects of your actions.

Activity data provides the basis for the application of several rigorous non-experimental impact evaluation methodologies, such as:
- Ripple Effect Mapping
- Contribution Analysis
- Innovation History
- Outcome Harvesting
- Outcome Mapping

Evaluating your backbone effectiveness

Backbone Effectiveness: 27 Indicators

Guide Vision and Strategy	• Partners accurately describe the **common agenda** • Partners **publicly discuss / advocate for** common agenda goals • Partners' **individual work is increasingly aligned** with common agenda • Board members and key leaders increasingly **look to backbone** organization for initiative support, strategic guidance and leadership
Support Aligned Activities	• Partners **articulate their role** in the initiative • **Relevant stakeholders** are engaged in the initiative • Partners **communicate and coordinate** efforts regularly, with, and independently of, backbone • Partners report increasing levels of **trust** with one another • Partners increase **scope / type of collaborative work** • Partners improve **quality** of their work • Partners improve **efficiency** of their work • Partners feel **supported and recognized** in their work
Establish Shared Measurement Practices	• Shared **data system** is in development • Partners **understand the value** of shared data • Partners have robust / shared **data capacity** • Partners **make decisions** based on data • Partners **utilize data** in a meaningful way
Build Public Will	• Community members are increasingly **aware** of the issue(s) • Community members express **support** for the initiative • Community members feel **empowered** to engage in the issue(s) • Community members increasingly **take action**
Advance Policy	• Target audience (e.g., influencers and policymakers) is increasingly **aware** of the initiative • Target audiences **advocate** for changes to the system aligned with initiative goals • Public **policy** is increasingly **aligned** with initiative goals
Mobilize Funding	• Funders are asking nonprofits to **align** to initiative goals • Funders are **redirecting funds** to support initiative goals • **New resources** from public and private sources are being contributed to partners and initiative

Source: FSG and Greater Cincinnati Foundation   1   © 2012 FSG

https://collectiveimpactforum.org/resource/backbone-starter-guide-a-summary-of-major-resources-about-the-backbone/

Measuring Systems changes

Our work is about bringing about 'systems-change', but how do we evidence that we are achieving this?

The food system

Parsons K, Hawkes C, Wells R. Brief 2. What is the food system? A food policy perspective. London: Centre for Food Policy; 2019.
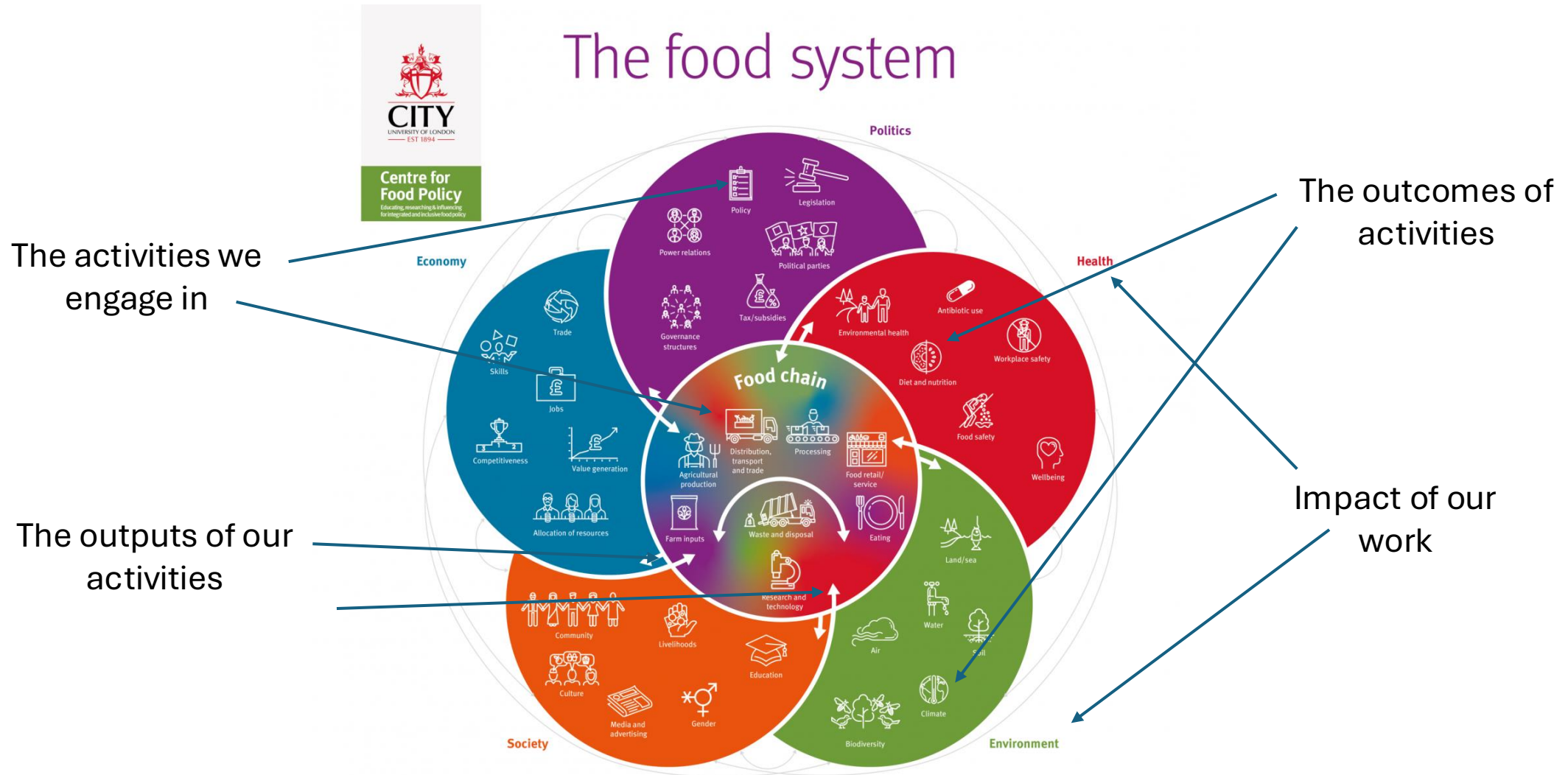
A food system comprises all the activities and outcomes involved in the production, transportation, marketing, distribution, consumption and disposal of food.

"The food system is the combination of all the elements - natural and man-made - that combine to produce, process, market and sell the food we eat and the connections between them" – National Food Strategy (2021)

Activities -> Outputs -> Outcomes -> Impact

What can we track and measure?

The food system

The activities we engage in

The outcomes of activities

The outputs of our activities

Impact of our work

Parsons K, Hawkes C, Wells R. Brief 2. What is the food system? A food policy perspective. London: Centre for Food Policy; 2019.

Worked Example: Health

Impact goal: Improving physical and mental health and wellbeing by reducing food poverty; improving access to affordable healthy food; promoting healthy weight and healthy diets; and increasing participation in food related physical and social activity.

Measurable outcomes:

- Decrease in the number of people requiring emergency food aid

- Decrease in the number of people overweight or obese

- Decrease in the number of people malnourished

- Decrease in the consumption of salt, sugar, fat and meat

- Increase in the consumption of fruit and vegetables (5 a day)

- Increase in the number of healthy options in takeaways and vending

- Increase in the availability of free drinking water
- Increase in the number of people cooking with whole foods

- Increase in number of people involved in community food activities

Proxy variables and levers for change

We may not have the capacity or ability to measure these changes. But we may be able to measure other things that give us an indication as to whether an outcome is more likely to happen.

Proxy variable: an indirect measure that can approximately represent a phenomenon without measuring it directly

'if X happens, Y is also likely to happen'

Lever for change: an area of work that has the potential to deliver wide-ranging positive change beyond its immediate focus

Worked Example: Health

Proxy variables (levers for change):

- A multi-agency partnership is established to strategically address the full range of issues that contribute to food poverty and health inequality.

- Public and private sector organisations adopt healthy food policies including nutrition standards and healthy options in retail, catering and vending.

- A range of healthy eating and healthy weight services are provided.

- Public understanding of healthy eating issues are being raised through campaigns and other communication tools.

- More healthy options are available in supermarkets, convenience stores, restaurants, etc.

- Healthy Start vouchers, free school meals and other social food provision for vulnerable people are being provided and promoted.

Bristol Good Food 2030: Key Performance Indicators

Theme: Eating Better

2030 Outcome	Indicator	Measure	Organisation	Regularity
Learning on climate-friendly, healthy diets and the development of skills to cook, grow and choose good food are in place and consistent throughout Bristol's schools, helping to improve health outcomes for young people.	Increase in the number of schools which have signed up to the Food Environment Specialists Award through BCC's Healthy Schools Award programme.	Number of schools who have signed up the Food Environment Specialists Award.	BCC	Annually
Community-based opportunities for developing skills on sustainable, healthy diets (cooking, growing and choosing good food) are available and taken up across the city, supporting citizens to make healthier, greener food choices.	Increase in the number of wards with HAF Programme projects that run cooking lessons.	Number of HAF Programme projects that run cooking lessons by ward.	BCC	Annually
Catering, retail and hospitality and settings citywide offer healthy and climate-friendly food, and these are a popular choice. A wide range of establishments has a BEBA or FFLSH accreditation with more establishments achieving the highest-level award	Increase in the spread of BEBA businesses across the whole city.	Increase in the number of BEBA accredited businesses per ward.	BCC	Six monthly
Support mechanisms for parents on early years nutrition are increased, resulting in more children receiving good nutrition in the first four years of their life.	Increase in the percentage of babies who are breastfed (either exclusively or in combination with formula milk) at 48 hours, 10–14 days, six to eight weeks and one year after birth, city wide.	Percentage of all babies who are breastfed (exclusively or not) aged up to one year old citywide.	BCC	Six weeks after each quarter

Sustainable Food Places – Levers for Change Indicators

Levers for Change (proxy indicators)					
Partnership & collaboration	A multi-agency partnership is established to strategically address the full range of issues that contribute to food poverty and inequality.	A multi-agency partnership is established to promote and support the developmen[...] vibrant and diverse local sustainable food econor[...]			
	A cross-sector sustainable food procurement group has been est[...] caterers, suppliers and others to promote uptake of healthy, susta[...] all settings.				
Policies & strategies	The Council adopts a city-wide Sustainable Food Procurement poli[...] more healthy, sustainable, ethical and local ingredients.				

	Public and private sector organisations adopt healthy food policies including nutrition standards and healthy options in retail, catering and vending.	Public and private sector organisations adopt fair and equitable food procurement policies including Fairtrade and paying a fair price/wage to workers in the food chain.	Public and private sector organisations adopt sustainable and ethical food policies such as cage-free, organic, sustainable fish, seasonal and tap water only.	
	Retail, tourism and economic development polices and strategies actively promote and support the growth of local healthy, sustainable and ethical food businesses.			
	The Living Wage is adopted by the Council and is actively promoted to other employers through its incorporation into procurement contracts, business networks, campaigns and support.		The Food Waste Hierarchy is incorporated into policies and practice to minimise waste and ensure surplus food and food waste are diverted to the most appropriate purposes.	
Infrastructure & planning	The Council works to prevent the development of food deserts (where people cannot access affordable healthy food within 500m) and food swamps (where the high street is dominated by fast food outlets).	The Council maps redundant retail and brownfield sites and makes them available to new food enterprises, for example through use of meanwhile and special leases and business rates reductions and holidays.	The Council maps green and brownfield sites that could be used for food growing, composting and local food processing and distribution and makes them available to local communities.	
	The Council/city protects and/or re-establishes vital local sustainable food infrastructure, such as Grade 1 and 2 agricultural land, local processing and wholesale businesses, food hubs and distribution networks.			

Who collects the data?

You may not have the capacity or capability to collect all this information. But your partners might!

Examples of data sources:

- Local Authority Health Profiles – Public Health England's Local Authority Health Profile

- Data on free school meals eligibility, uptake and nutritional standards compliance– Department of Education

- Local authority environmental health reports – local authority websites

- Food bank usage statistics – local community food providers

- Local authority open data portals – local council websites

- National Open Data Platforms – Government Data Portals (e.g., data.gov.uk)

Food partnerships can play a key coordinating role when it comes to collecting and consolidating data from partner organisations.

Gathering data from partners

Incentivize – communicate to your partners the value of submitting data to you. Make a case for how the data you collect will help amplify and support their work

Simplify – make data submission as quick and streamlined as possible. Create easy to use, non-time intensive systems for collecting and storing data.

Necessitate – add clear and accountable data expectations into partnership agreements.

Diversify - be open to diverse approaches to data collection including both quantitative and creative, qualitative methods.

Standardize – where quantitative data is concerned, it is good to agree standardized metrics across partners so that they can be easily compared and combined.

Addressing the twin attribution problem

- Working in partnership –
  - Being clear about how food partnership add value (backbone function)
  - Tracking and logging your activity
  - Using that information to evidence the role that you have played in partner impact

- Evidencing systems change –
  - Identifying (realistically) measurable outcomes and proxy indicators (levers for change).
  - Working with partners to measure and collect changes to system outcome
  - Playing a centralized coordination/consolidation role for data

Thanks! Any questions?

Further Reading

- https://www.betterevaluation.org/getting-started/what-evaluation

- https://www.betterevaluation.org/getting-started/choose-methods-processes

- https://www.betterevaluation.org/frameworks-guides/rainbow-framework

- https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/strategy-and-impact/impact-evaluation/about-impact-and-evaluation/why-focus-on-impact-and-evaluation/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAjw5v2wBhBrEiwAXDDoJZz7D4caaih2vXzuCaAltn6LD8bvQI7lvABi8j-exby0r0MtbjQZ1xoC9eQQAvD_BwE

- https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/strategy-and-impact/impact-evaluation/about-impact-and-evaluation/why-focus-on-impact-and-evaluation/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAjw5v2wBhBrEiwAXDDoJZz7D4caaih2vXzuCaAltn6LD8bvQI7lvABi8j-exby0r0MtbjQZ1xoC9eQQAvD_BwE

- https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/a-quick-guide-to-monitoring-evaluation-accountability-and-learning-in-fragile-c-297134/

- https://collectiveimpactforum.org/resource/backbone-starter-guide-a-summary-of-major-resources-about-the-backbone/