

Self-organising Action for Food Equity (SAFE)

DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Background and Purpose

Sheffield, Greater Manchester and Gothenburg are at pivotal points regarding their food systems, as all at various stages of developing comprehensive food strategies. Numerous food based initiatives and networks exist in each city region. However, like most cities internationally, there is a lack of understanding on how best to organise, harmonise and capitalise on the energy of these separate projects. A significant barrier to such coordination is that food is a cross-cutting issue that spans social, ecological, economic, political, cultural, technical, and climatic arenas, and often falls through the cracks between different areas of urban responsibility.

This project will bring together people with different interests and backgrounds to learn, evaluate and share insights on how expertise and information in our urban food systems is collected, presented and shared using digital infrastructure.

2. What is Digital Infrastructure / Digital Commons?

The definition of digital infrastructure is varied and complex, but in the context of this project we mean any or all of the following:

- A wiki - a website on which users collaboratively modify content and structure directly from the web browser
- An interactive map of local services (including production, processing, distribution, retail, catering, consumption, waste disposal and health promotion)
- Cloud services for on-demand capacity to link up the above services, including a comprehensive database of projects, skills, services, produce and requirements
- Internet connected sensors or devices (otherwise known as the 'Internet of Things' or IoT) for sensing real-time conditions (e.g. organic waste receptacle full, harvest ready for collection, certain ingredients required, delivery/collection van passing nearby etc.)
- Linked smartphone apps

A commons is the cultural and natural resources accessible to all members of a society, so we are using 'digital commons' to simply mean a collection of the above digital services that are accessible to any member of society with access to a computer or smartphone.

Note that while 'Self-organising Action for Food Equity' (SAFE) is unlikely to be able to fund anything more than the basic underpinnings required (for example fully fledged apps can be very expensive to produce), we hope that by using open-source technology users can modify, adapt and extend the platform so that it can evolve as required.

3. Key Issues

Citizens will be supported in developing and supporting local initiatives that self-organise to share learning and skills and trade goods. The idea behind the project is that by supporting

self-organising social networks with digital infrastructure, we can increase participation in initiatives which enhance food quality, affordability and access in low income communities.

The key issues that define the purpose of SAFE can be summarised as:

1. Increasing participation in self-organised governance to foster social coordination and combat social fragmentation (*See section 8 for examples of where this has worked elsewhere*). The hope is that this will lead to the people involved in their local food 'ecosystem' having a more coherent voice, which will allow them to exert pressure and influence for change, ultimately contributing to achieving fairer, greener and more accessible cities
2. Improving social networking and sharing of knowledge and physical resources (e.g. expertise, tools, time, land) between different initiatives, creating a stronger urban food ecosystem
3. Understanding how digital infrastructures can help address food equity and overcome the physical limitations of community initiatives by fostering social networks
4. Appreciating that the development of systemic approaches requires people and communities to cohere without necessarily signing up to any overarching grand vision

With this in mind, SAFE will:

- Collectively create a digital 'commons' (see description above) in each partner city that provides a communications hub to foster connections across all sector stakeholders
- Facilitate interdisciplinary peer to peer learning events within and between the partner cities
- Take a whole system approach to food across each of the partner cities, encouraging links to be made between individuals, organisations and sectors
- Support the development of a food strategy in each participating city, without being directly involved in the strategy itself
- Carry out an evaluation exercise that will support the development of food networks across the partner cities and beyond by producing insights and a series of shared actions

4. Terms Of Reference

As part of its core purpose, SAFE will:

- Create an interdisciplinary 'Action Research Team' (ART) in each partner city
- Create and examine digital infrastructures that support the different layers of formal and informal food governance
- Enable knowledge sharing and learning between the three partner cities (Sheffield, Manchester, Gothenburg)
- Work with cross-sector partners within and between the partner cities to encourage appropriate links to be made
- Provide an information hub for all stakeholders

5. OPERATING PRINCIPLES

5.1 Meeting frequency

Each ART will meet quarterly, for the two year duration of the project. Wherever practical papers will be issued five working days before meetings, and the meeting notes will be issued within two weeks of the meeting date.

5.2 Action Research Team (ART) Roles and responsibilities

ART Chair

- Agree agenda and papers
- Chair meetings
- Report back to other ART Chairs to enable close liaison between the ARTs for the duration of the project

ART Members

- Regularly attend and actively contribute to meetings and meeting actions
- Thoroughly review and inform the work of the ART, including how the flexible portion of the budget is used
- Participate in joint peer to peer learning events involving the ARTs from other partner cities
- Individually lead specific responsibilities and action points
- Contribute to collating information on work to date, background information, context mapping, and the current status of food strategy/action in their city into a short report
- Peer review reports from the other partner cities

6. MEMBERSHIP

To ensure true interdisciplinarity, where possible the membership of each ART will be drawn from representatives from the following groups, amongst others:

- Elected politicians [councillors and/or MPs]
- Public Health
- National Health Service
- Academia
- NGOs including voluntary and community sector and social enterprises
- Food producers, suppliers, retailers, industry, logistics
- Professional bodies
- Local Government

7. INDICATIVE TIMESCALES

7.1 Quarterly Meetings

It is anticipated that the quarterly project meetings will be held in:

2017: November,

2018: February, May, August, November

2019: February, May, August, November

7.2 Field Trip to Gothenburg

It is anticipated that the field trip to Gothenburg will take place in March 2018.

7.3 Knowledge exchange events

To be decided by each ART.

8. CASE STUDY EXAMPLES

Below are outlines of a selection of case study projects (not all food based) that have achieved the type of coordinated impact we are aiming for here:

- **Growing Middlesbrough** (<https://www.menvcity.org.uk/gm/>) brought together more than 1,000 citizens to find a new way in which the town of Middlesbrough could sow the seeds of a more sustainable economy. The result was that people could source food from places closer to home and could also effectively link the many people and organisations who already participate in the social and environmental regeneration of the town. The culmination was an annual 'Town Meal' - a celebration of local food growing and eating (<http://www.lovemiddlesbrough.com/whats-on/event/6784/middlesbrough-town-meal-2017>).
- **Feeding Milan** (<http://www.transitsocialinnovation.eu/sii/ctp/project-feeding-milan>) was intended to design a more efficient and effective agri-food chain. The core idea was to develop services such as the 'Earth Market', a local 'bread chain', a veg box scheme, the creation of a local distribution hub in the city, and a vegetable garden in the campus of Politecnico di Milano. Before the project, few efforts had been made in terms of developing an urban food plan. The project sought to create connections between various actors: food producers, users, gastronomic scientists, experts, and then to turn discussions and conversations into practice.
- **Cleaning day Helsinki** (<http://siivouspaiva.com/en/info/basics-of-cleaning-day>) is a 'carnival-like' event that occurs twice a year where anyone is encouraged to sell, swap and donate things that people have at home and don't use anymore. Cleaning day has developed from an initial conversation between friends, via Facebook posts, to a working group of active people that created a platform (tools, information, resources, communication channels) that citizens use to turn Helsinki into a giant flea market for a day. The initiative continues and has spread to other cities. This is an example of a self-organising group that has built momentum for the event and successfully mobilised people. After the first Cleaning day took place, the City of Helsinki public works department approached the core organising group to discuss possibilities for cooperation. Amongst other things, this has led to change in the way city authorities deal with the provision of permits for selling second-hand goods in public spaces.