

G. Going from good to great - checking and improving the health of your partnership

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Workshop summary

The workshop adopted a participatory approach allowing participants to experience the Health Check by using it to review and assess their own sustainable food place there and then. For those participants not directly associated with or involved in a food partnership a buddying-up option allowed them to experience the Health Check by working alongside another participant going through the process.

The workshop introduction explained:

- the evolution of the Health Check tool from its origins in the evaluation check-list used in Phase 1 of the SFC programme, and
- demonstrated how the tool reflects the Life Stages approach being adopted in Phase 2.

All of this is explained in the introduction to the Health Check that has now been sent to all SFC member places.

During the workshop the facilitator helped participants with any queries or guidance they needed when using a print version of the Health Check tool as well as demonstrating the interactive Excel version and documenting any comments and suggestions that were made.

Important

The Health Check has been developed as a useful diagnostic tool helping to determine the support needs and priorities of different members as well as a development tool helping members to strengthen and develop their organisational structure and function. It is also recognised as a valuable way to monitor member progress and as such is being used as an evaluation tool for the programme as a whole.

For this reason all SFC members have been asked, if possible, to complete the Health Check before the end of June.

Workshop outputs

“Using the Health Check has actually made me think”

- The Health Check needs to recognise that the Life Stages are not a one-way linear flow from emerging to leading and that places can also move backwards in response to changes in local or national circumstances.
- The tool needs to recognise the different models adopted by different members – e.g. some do not engage with the awards scheme and many are not cities.

- Participants recognised the value of the tool as the basis for a group workshop to collaboratively help determine where focus or support is needed.

“It’s better as a group as it gets people thinking together”

- By working as a group to complete the Health Check differences in perspective based on different participants’ roles can be fully acknowledged and discussed and any bias or subjectivity can be overcome.
- It is important to avoid being too critical and negative about the progress being made. The tool can also be a celebration of what is working well.
- It was suggested that the Health Check should recognise members that are engaging with research into aspects of their food systems.

Note: Further discussion on this suggestion recognised that research should perhaps be considered as an output of a strategic food partnership and thus better reflected in the SFC awards.

- It was also suggested that whilst the Health Check includes scoring on a food partnership’s ‘recognition’ it should also include scoring on its ‘visibility’.

Note: Discussion acknowledged that it would be difficult for the members of the partnership to score this objectively and that it was more appropriately evaluated by people outside the partnership in the local community.

- This discussion also identified a further function of the Health Check as a useful way to communicate the food partnership, its purpose and the way it functions to less engaged or potential partners.
- In a strong endorsement of the Health Check tool participants from the Bristol Food Policy Council immediately requested a facilitated Health Check workshop from the SFC network support team.

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