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Developing Food Tourism Networks: A Practical Manual

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DEVELOPING
Food Tourism Networks

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National Tourism Development Authority

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Irish Academy of
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Acknowledgements

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Section 1 | What is this Guide About?

1.1 Background

Research suggests that visitors rate food quality and service in Ireland relatively highly. Despite this, Ireland is not currently considered a food destination as evidenced in the Fáilte Ireland *Visitor Attitudes Survey*, where food is the least cited advantage of holidaying in Ireland and the *Irish Food Tourism Survey* which found that food is not considered part of Ireland's core identity. Yet, Ireland's food industry is already capitalising on the perception of Ireland as natural, green and pure. Irish organic smoked salmon, for example, is currently being sold in Europe at a higher premium than Norwegian and Scottish organic smoked salmon. This suggests that Ireland's destination brand of natural and pure can be leveraged to develop Ireland as a destination for tourists seeking experiences related to high quality, natural food products.

In light of this opportunity, Fáilte Ireland has developed a *National Food Tourism Implementation Framework 2011-2012*. Within the framework, the importance of developing and promoting Ireland as a food tourism destination is emphasised. Food tourists want to experience a sense of place through food which means that to provide this experience, high quality, good value, authentic local food, as well as Irish cuisine, must be available. Therefore, those interested in developing food tourism must aim to enhance visitors' experiences of food by ensuring that their expectations with regard to availability, variety and value of local foods are met and exceeded. Integral to this aim is the development of food-related events and ensuring a consistently high quality of food and food tourism related offerings. Additionally, it is important, if Ireland is to build its reputation as a food tourism destination, that our cuisine becomes as recognised, known and valued as our food products. Development should be focused on *visitor ready* versus *product ready* initiatives.

Food tourism networks have been identified as a key facilitator in developing food tourism in Ireland. Despite the advantages that food networks can bring, collaborating effectively with others is challenging and consequently networks can be difficult to set up and maintain. Simply bringing people together in a network does not guarantee knowledge sharing or successful outcomes. This manual offers practical advice to individuals interested in setting up or further developing food tourism networks. Even if you are not involved in food tourism however, you may find the manual useful as the exercises, information and advice in sections 3 – 6 apply to anyone involved in a committee involved in regional development of any kind.

1.2 About this Manual

There is no one 'right' way to collaborate to develop food tourism but the aim of this manual is to provide you with advice on good practice illustrated by case studies from home and abroad. The advice provided is based on research with three committees based in Ireland who were directly or peripherally involved in developing food tourism, as well as decades of research on collaboration, networks, tourism and food tourism. Throughout the manual are exercises which will help apply this advice to your region and circumstances, key facts which provide evidenced-based research information and insights from members of the three committees. You are also pointed towards various websites which provide further information on various aspects of food tourism.

EXERCISE | **USING THIS GUIDE**
One person should be assigned the responsibility for ensuring that your network committee, whether it is already in existence or is in the process of being set up, works through the exercises in this manual.

KEY FACT ⬤

Tourism spend on food and drink is approximately 35% of all visitor spend equalling close to €2billion. Strengthening the food tourism proposition could have a positive impact on visitor spend, local communities and employment opportunities.

Common features of effective committees, shared by all types of committees, are discussed throughout this manual and are summarised in the following table.

EFFECTIVE COMMITTEES ...

- Have discussed and agreed on a common goal and objectives (so that individual members know what the network is all about and what they hope to achieve as a committee).

- Have developed an action plan (which is regularly revisited and updated).

- Celebrate progress and learn from mistakes.

- Have figured out how to deal with the differences that arise due to individuals coming from different backgrounds (e.g. different sectors, different schools of thought, different professions, etc.).

- Are made up of individuals who understand their role and are comfortable clarifying any confusion about their role within meetings.

- Divide work fairly.

- Have clarified the role of any public agencies represented on the committees and have established efficient channels of communication with those agencies.

- Have an effective chairperson.

- Evaluate continually.

- Communicate well.

- Are made up of committee members with appropriate skillsets and social networks.

- Have a written code of practice around finances that is adhered to

- Have less than 20 members.

- Have agreed on a protocol to deal with conflict within the committee.

- Get buy-in from stakeholders and communicate effectively with those stakeholders and with the wider community.

- Have meetings:
  - which start and end on time
  - which are well attended by a core group of members
  - where individual committee members are comfortable engaging in discussions and decision-making and encourage others to do the same
  - where discussions are not dominated by one or two individuals
  - where individuals treat each other with respect and provide constructive feedback
  - where individuals trust each other
  - where committee members have fun
  - where new members are made feel welcome
  - of which a record is kept - this may consist of meeting minutes or may simply be a list of action points.

Supporting food tourism means supporting authentic, high quality local food production and use.

Section 2 | Food Tourism - What is it All About?

2.1 Food Tourism

There is no one universally accepted definition of food tourism but in the National Food Tourism Implementation Framework 2011-2013 it is described by Fáilte Ireland as 'travel to specific locations, with varying degrees of motivation, to sample cuisine unique to that area in order to gain a real sense of place.'

Evoking
a Sense of Place

Celebrating
Local Foods

Food
Tourism

Providing
Food Related
Experiences

Ensuring
High Quality

The Dingle Food Network Group is a network which was set up to develop food tourism in the region. When asked to describe food tourism, members of the group suggested that it involves emphasising high quality local foods, especially artisan foods, providing high quality food-related experiences to tourists and evoking a sense of place though food. These echo Fáilte Irelands Food Tourism Destination Essentials, listed in Appendix A.

Food tourism networks play an important role in the development of food tourism-focused events, activities and products. There are some already in existence, on the Dingle Peninsula, West Cork and Howth for example, and now is an ideal time to develop others throughout the country. Food tourism networks are of prime importance in encouraging the buy-in of a critical mass of tourism providers in a region to the concept of food tourism. A network can also support individuals who wish to create specific food-related experiences. These experiences can in turn become part of a 'food trail'.

If you are planning to (or have) set up a network to develop food tourism, what should you focus on?
Firstly, you should think about ways that the region can become a food destination. On one hand this means catering for tourists who will come to the region specifically for food by developing high quality food-related experiences such as food trails, cooking schools, food festivals, etc. But it also means ensuring that the quality of food offerings in the whole region is high and that the food available evokes a sense of place. This does not all have to be accomplished at once. Developing a food destination can be an iterative process that begins with, for example, developing a food festival, and grows from there.

If you are a tourism provider, what does it mean in practical terms to support food tourism?
Essentially, supporting food tourism means supporting authentic, high quality local food production and use. If you provide food, you should know about and inform visitors about local food. If you are a food producer, you should be aware of the tourism potential of local foods and work with others to ensure that local food products are highlighted in local restaurants and retail outlets. Both tourism providers and food producers can also create food-related tourism experiences either individually or as a group.

A Key Insight from a Committee Member

Visitors to a place "should get real food along with the local history and the knowledge"

KEY FACT | Supporting Food Tourism

For food providers, supporting food tourism means:

• Getting to know about foods produced locally
• Using local food produce and highlighting the use on their menus
• Delivering dishes that reflect Irish cuisine
• Educating front of house staff on local food being used in menu dishes as well as local food traditions so they can tell customers about them
• Providing high quality, reasonably priced dishes
• Getting involved in local food initiatives

For food producers, supporting food tourism means:

• Letting local food providers know about their products/produce
• Ensuring that local food providers can access their products easily
• Getting involved in local food initiatives
• Developing food related experiences. This includes experiences that are commonly developed such as:
  - A visitor centre at a production facility
  - Farm visits
  - Farmers markets
  It also includes more imaginative approaches such as:
  - Twinning producers and restaurants
  - Moving one aspect of a production process to a facility that is not governed by the rules and regulations of a production facility, e.g. waxing cheese.
  - Themed menus and activities
  - Partnering with other producers at festivals or farmers markets to share a stand

For tourism providers, supporting food tourism means:

• Highlighting local food and local food traditions to visitors
• Encouraging visitors to sample local foods
• Getting involved in food tourism initiatives

A Key Insight from a Committee Member

"I suppose this county is fundamentally a tourism county and people come here to see the sights and that. But everybody has to eat on the way and the whole thing is about enhancing experiences, enhancing everybody's experience of a place through food and through the local produce. Markets, speciality retailers and restaurants stocking local foods, all of that is very much part of it."

Fáilte Ireland has developed a set of suggestions that provide guidance on how food producers can commit to food tourism. They are provided in Appendix C. Additional guidance is provided on Fáilte Ireland's website: **www.failteireland.ie**

CASE STUDY -
INFORMING FOOD PROVIDERS ABOUT LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTS

The Kingdom Food Network, a food producer's network in Kerry, developed a food finder's guide which listed food being produced locally. The guide was distributed to local food providers and made available on their website Tastekerry.com. The network also organised networking events in order to encourage the development of business relationships between food producers and food providers.

2.2 Why Get Involved in the Development of Food Tourism?

Developing food-related visitor experiences or sourcing, using and finding out about locally produced food requires time, effort and expense. Why then should you consider active involvement in food tourism development?

One reason is the economic benefit. If a destination becomes known for its high quality, locally produced food and food-related experiences, this can increase visitor numbers which in turn can lead to increased tourist spend. Thus, food tourism can be beneficial to individual businesses as well as the region.

CASE STUDIES - BENEFITS OF FOOD TOURISM

The state of Vermont in the United States attracts visitors by marketing its farms, farm produce and food-related experiences. These experiences include overnight farm stays, pick-your-own produce, farmers markets and corn mazes. Research has shown that more than half of visitors would not consider Vermont as a holiday destination without these types of experiences to attract them.

Food tourism has increased the exports of products from the Burren Smokehouse. Visitors to the visitor centre taste the product, go home and buy it on line.

More use of local products by local food providers translates directly into more sales for producers. Additionally, if food providers and other local businesses highlight locally-produced foods, this results in increased consumer exposure to these foods which can also translate into more sales. This means that food tourism can ensure that more money circulates within the local economy rather than leaking out of it.

Benefits to local food producers can translate into other regional benefits since increases in sales of local foods can create local employment. Additionally, there are opportunities created for businesses to diversify, as highlighted in the Vermont case study. So food tourism in a rural area can support rural development.

KEY FACT |

A study conducted on food consumption in the Seattle area in the US found that for every $100 spent at restaurants prioritising the use of local produce, $79 is re-spent locally while if $100 is spent at a restaurant which does not give precedence to the use of local produce, only $31 is re-spent locally.

Other studies have demonstrated that in rural areas, food tourism provides employment opportunities which would not otherwise exist, particularly for women and young people.

Some benefits of food tourism can be less economically tangible, but equally important. Association with quality food products can encourage the celebration and preservation of local traditions that might otherwise be lost. Consequently, while the mass tourism industry has sometimes been accused of causing dilution of identity, food tourism can in fact be an effective means of maintaining regional identities. By differentiating a tourist region from its competitors in this way and focusing on making a destination different through the creation of unique food experiences, food tourism can increase the competitiveness of a destination in the tourist market. Increasing the competitiveness of a destination can, in turn lead to greater numbers and a greater visitor spend. If you are a tourism provider and you position yourself as a provider of local food in such an environment, you can benefit even more from this increased spend.

A Key Insight from a Committee Member

"Every time a tourist spends another night in the town, the tourist spend goes up, and that benefits the whole area."

CASE STUDY - RURAL TOURISM NETWORK, WILD REDESDALE, NORTHUMBERLAND, ENGLAND

Redesdale is a very rural region in North East England, bordering with Scotland. They launched their tourism network in November 2001. It was set up to promote Wild Redesdale as a destination 'Be Active, Be Quiet, Have Fun'. It started with 32 members and now has 81 members.

Membership includes:
• Hotels
• B&Bs
• Campsites
• Farmers
• Activities
• Food Producers
• Artists
• Crafts
• Visitor Attractions

Their marketing activities include a destination brochure, a cultural heritage trail leaflet, a food festival, a radio programme about the network and a website of the area. To further market their region as a food destination, they attended exhibitions in the UK and overseas, hosted tour operators and journalists and developed a free map of the area.

Benefits for members:
• Increased business for all members
• Increased business referral between members
• Five new businesses launched
• Up-skilling of all members/training
• Less seasonality
• Increase in full time jobs

2.3 Summary

Food tourism entails delivering a food experience to visitors and there should be stakeholder from a range of sectors involved in its development including food producers, tourism providers and food providers. There are numerous benefits, many of them economic, to being part of food tourism initiatives.

Section 3 | Laying the foundations for successful collaboration

Whether you are about to set up a food tourism network or you want to re-examine your existing network, you need to think about who should be involved. Your network will probably consist of (1) a core committee who make the decisions about network activities and (2) stakeholders who are less centrally involved in decision making but who take part in network events and activities. You may decide that you want to make stakeholder involvement more formal, in which case these stakeholders can be asked to become members of the food tourism network and depending on how your network will be funded, they can be asked to pay a membership fee.

This section of the manual deals with how you can encourage people to become involved, either as core committee members or as network members. Advice is provided on which sectors you should be targeting and how to get stakeholders involved.

3.1 Which Sectors Should You Target?

Food tourism spans several sectors, so a food tourism network should have involvement and representation from a number of relevant stakeholder groups in order to draw from a wide range of knowledge and experience. These stakeholder groups can include:
- Food Producers *(including farmers)*
- Farmers Markets
- Specialist Food Stores
- Distributors
- Restaurants
- Cafes
- Hotels
- Guesthouses
- Campsites
- Bed and Breakfasts
- Tourism Activities Providers *(visitor attractions, artists, crafts...)*
- Festival and Event Organisers
- Public Sector Development Agencies
- Public Sector Tourism Agencies
- Public Sector Agencies with a Food Remit
- Stakeholders with an interest in Community Development
- Education Providers.

Any attempt to develop food tourism begins with a core committee, but getting others involved is vital to success. Simply 'including' stakeholders in a network by for example, keeping them informed of network activities, is not enough. Members of tourism networks must be actively involved in activities rather than taking a passively supportive stance. For example,

restaurants must use and promote local foods, individual food producers must recognise and exploit the potential of developing the tourism aspects of their businesses and festivals require involvement from a range of stakeholders across the community.

There are questions that you can ask when setting up a network and core committee: e.g. Are all possible stakeholder groups involved? Is it possible for them to be involved? If logistics dictate that there are stakeholders that are difficult to include as committee members, can they become involved in more peripheral roles? Even if you have already set up a committee, it is important to examine who is on the committee and ask yourselves these questions from time to time.

KEY FACT

Collaboration can be difficult across different sectors due to different attitudes and beliefs within different professions and sectors. It has been shown that if individuals recognise that these different attitudes and beliefs exist and if they acknowledge and discuss them, this makes successful collaboration more likely. Finding and highlighting commonalities has also been shown to be an effective strategy.

By completing the following exercise to identify possible stakeholders, you will create a template that you can use to create your core committee and list of possible members. It will also be useful when expanding your network membership or rotating your core committee membership. It should not be regarded as a static document but should be added to by the core committee as necessary.

EXERCISE | IDENTIFY THE POSSIBLE STAKEHOLDER GROUPS THAT COULD BE INVOLVED IN A FOOD TOURISM NETWORK IN YOUR REGION

Refer to the list of stakeholder groups on the previous page to ensure that you take account of the types of stakeholder that can be involved. The list is not exhaustive so feel free to add your own.

Private Sector	Public Sector	Wider Community
	(e.g. Bord Bia, Fáilte Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Teagasc, County Councils, local Development Agencies, and local County Enterprise Boards)	

3.2 How Can You Encourage Stakeholders to Become Involved?

It can be difficult to get individuals involved in attempts to develop food tourism. This can be because of logistical issues or because some of the stakeholders, such as those involved in food production, do not consider themselves part of the tourism sector. Additionally, even those who consider themselves part of the tourism sector are often so focused on the day to day aspects of running their businesses that they may not see the benefits of being involved in a network.

A Key Insight from a Committee Member

"You need the general membership to be behind you. Four or five people can't get something like this off the ground. You need people to buy into it."

There are a number of ways in which stakeholder involvement can be encouraged and these are discussed in the remainder of the section:
1. Ensuring that potential members see benefits to involvement
2. Utilising social capital
3. Developing an action plan with stakeholder input
4. Creating opportunities for individuals to learn from others

1. ENSURING THAT POTENTIAL MEMBERS SEE BENEFITS TO INVOLVEMENT

By becoming involved in a network, individuals can gain what's called collaborative advantage, in other words the benefits that can result from co-operating with others that cannot be gained by acting alone. The advantages of collaboration can include cost reductions and greater organisational effectiveness if individual businesses can find ways to co-operate in areas such as product development, procurement, distribution, marketing or sourcing funding. By co-operating, individual businesses also have the potential to address more complex issues than individual businesses alone. Additionally, as discussed previously, food tourism can increase tourist spend in a region, which will benefit local businesses. However, individuals will not necessarily recognise the benefits of collaborating to develop food tourism so these benefits must be highlighted to them.

There are a number of ways that you can highlight the benefits of network membership to stakeholders. Some immediate benefits you can offer to businesses which join a network are a web page and joint marketing opportunities. Potential benefits derived from co-operating in areas such as distribution or procurement can also be highlighted to potential members.

If a core committee ensures that network activities are evaluated on an on-going basis, the benefits of network membership can be documented which makes them more easily demonstrated to stakeholders. How to conduct evaluations of activities is dealt with in section 6.

To encourage the involvement of food producers, who are traditionally not involved in tourism and may not see the benefits to becoming involved, you may have to focus at the outset on engaging with food producers through events rather than expecting them to set up their production facilities for tourist's visits. Any type of event can be appropriate if local food producers are facilitated to meet tourism providers or to market/sell their food products either to tourism providers or to the public.

Another method that has been shown to be successful in gaining buy-in from stakeholders is to get input from individuals or groups who have been involved in developing food tourism. These individuals can endorse the advantages of network membership as they have experienced them personally and are not viewed as having a vested interest. They can also offer independent practical advice and ideas. There are a number of ways of getting these experts involved. For example, you can invite them to speak at a public meeting to which relevant stakeholders are invited. Alternatively (or additionally) they can provide information or videos to be uploaded onto a website.

A Key Insight from a Committee Member

"The easiest way to convince people to join a network is show them one that works or introduce them to someone who joined a network and increased their profits."
"At the end of the day most people are going to say: 'what does this mean for me?' And that is the bottom line. If they think they are going to benefit from going to meetings or trainings then they will do it."
"You are so busy, so caught up in your own work that it has to be worth it to be involved, you have to do well out of it."

EXERCISE | IDENTIFY POTENTIAL BENEFITS

By identifying the benefits of the network it is easier to get others involved and draw in general membership. You may create expectations in attempting to gain the support of stakeholders. Carrying out this exercise will help you examine how (and whether) you can deliver on these expectations.

Potential Benefits to Tourism Providers in your Region	Potential Benefits to Food Producers in your Region	Potential Regional Benefits

A Key Insight from a Committee Member

"It helps a lot when people know you personally - that makes it easier to sell the concept"

2. UTILISING 'SOCIAL CAPITAL'

Social capital is a term used to describe the good will, fellowship, friendship, tolerance, mutual respect, trust and sense of belonging that result from an individual's network of social relationships. Individuals who have already bought into the concept of developing food tourism, for example the individuals who have volunteered to become committee members, can ask others in their social network to become involved.

KEY FACT

People may be happy to volunteer but will often have to be asked before they will do so.

KEY FACT

One reason that having representation from a range of stakeholder groups on a committee is useful is that each individual is connected by a network of social relationships to other individuals within that stakeholder group.

If you can get Individuals in positions of influence in the region involved in network activities, this can open doors, raise the network's profile and encourage buy-in from others.

3. DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN WITH STAKEHOLDER INPUT

It is important for stakeholders to have a voice in developing the strategic vision for the network as this will encourage them to become involved in network activities. A public meeting can provide the forum for this to occur and can be an effective way of building support for a network.

It is also important to establish the needs of various stakeholders. Committee members can engage with stakeholders on a one-to-one basis but a public meeting can also provide the setting to engage in a needs analysis.

If you hold a public meeting, there a number of things you can do to help the meeting run smoothly:

- The meeting agenda should be distributed before the meeting if possible, but if not, should be distributed at the beginning of the meeting.

- A neutral facilitator should be utilised, whose role is to ensure that discussions remain on track and that there is equal participation. This means that stakeholders with vested interests can be discouraged from dominating the discussion.

- No personal attacks should be allowed. One person, either the facilitator or a nominated person, should be responsible for ensuring this.

- If possible the names and contact details of all attendees should be recorded.

- Meeting minutes should be recorded and distributed to attendees. In this type of situation is often more useful to have minutes which do not identify the source of individual comments but instead highlight what was discussed and the action points that emerged from the discussion.

- A flip chart provides a useful focal point to focus the discussion and can be used to record decisions publically during the meeting.

- An output of the meeting should be an action plan listing a number of action points to ensure that decisions are translated into actions.

- The action plan will be particularly useful if individual and group tasks are assigned. This can help ensure that any momentum gained can be built upon. Additionally, it can help individuals take ownership of the network.

4. PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN FROM PEERS

An enormously beneficial aspect to engaging in network activities is the potential to learn from one's peers. Events organised by a network create opportunities for individuals to network and to learn from the experiences of others. If this potential for learning from others is highlighted, it can encourage stakeholders to become involved.

CASE STUDY - GETTING STAKEHOLDER INPUT

The development of a food tourism network in Dingle was facilitated by organising a public meeting to which businesses on the Dingle Peninsula involved in food production, food provision and tourism were invited. Fáilte Ireland brought the co-ordinator of the Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance, an existing food tourism network, to speak at the meeting. She shared her experiences and encouraged participants to examine the potential for Dingle to become a major food destination. Participants examined the current situation in Dingle and articulated their vision for the future. A SWOT analysis was used to provide some structure to the discussion (A SWOT analysis helps a group identify Strenghts, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. An example of a SWOT analysis is provided in Section 4). Subsequent to that meeting, a core committee was established with representatives from the accommodation, food provider and food production sectors.

Individuals in early stages of developing their businesses benefit from engaging with others in their sector in order to understand and negotiate government regulations, business supports and funding possibilities. Involvement in network activities provides individuals further along in their business lifecycle with insight and a better understanding of aspects of their own businesses. Committees can organise networking events, skills development events such as workshops and classes, food tasting events and food showcase events and can highlight the opportunity to learn from others as one of the benefits of attending such events.

KEY FACT

Members in networks can, as a result of their membership, benefit from finding out more about their own region and business activities occurring within it.

CASE STUDY - PROVIDING OPPORTUNITES TO LEARN FROM EACH OTHER

The co-ordinator and core committee of the Kingdom Food Network, a food producer's network in Kerry, encouraged stakeholder involvement by organising a number of events during which participants could learn from experts and from each other. Events included workshops and food tasting events. The network also arranged for members to exhibit at national food showcasing events, allowing them to network on a national stage.

3.3 Summary

Getting people involved in a food tourism network is not always easy, but there are a number of steps you can take to facilitate the process. Firstly, you should identify the stakeholder groups you think should be involved. To gain buy-in from individual stakeholders from those groups, there are a number of approaches you can take:

1) You can offer immediate benefits such as a web presence, or you can identify and highlight long-term benefits by, for example, having individuals who are already benefiting from food tourism speak to stakeholders.

2) All committee members can use their social networks to identify and gain buy-in from stakeholders. Getting people in positions of influence in a region can also be helpful in raising the network's profile.

3) You should try to include stakeholder input in developing an action plan for food tourism in the region. A public meeting can be one way of achieving this.

4) Individuals who join a network will have the opportunity to learn from each other and you should highlight this to stakeholders.

Section 4 │ What are you going to do?

It is important at the outset to establish what you are trying to do as a group.
This section gives you some pointers.

4.1 Agreeing on a Common Vision

It is important for all committee members to have a very clear and agreed understanding of the reason for the existence of the network. This common vision provides committees with direction and helps ensure success. It is important to take time to discuss and agree on a common vision in the early stages of network development. To achieve a vision a committee must create a roadmap of clear long-term aims and shorter-term objectives.

KEY FACTS

If a committee does not discuss and agree on a strategic vision for a network and does not establish commonly-agreed aims and objectives, people can end up working at cross-purposes because they are working towards different goals without realising it.

Agreeing on goals in the shorter term is just as important as agreeing on a strategic vision. Without clear and achievable objectives it can be difficult to engage the attention of individuals, as there is nothing tangible to aim for in the immediate term. Additionally, individuals can feel overwhelmed if a 'big picture' vision is not structured into clear shorter-term objectives.

Your aim and objectives should not be set in stone and should be revisited on a quarterly basis. Constant re-evaluation ensures that as committee members, you are familiar with the goals you have set. This allows you to adjust them as necessary as priorities may change and as a result, the short-term focus of the committee may need to change. It also ensures that the group is kept focused on a common purpose. Additionally, establishing clear objectives allows you to establish criteria against which success can be measured; achieving milestones allows a group to celebrate success, which builds momentum.

strenghts
SWOT
weaknesses
opportunities
threats

Before you decide where you want to get to as a network, it is useful to engage in an exercise to examine where you are now. A SWOT analysis provides a template for carrying out such an evaluation and is a commonly used tool across both public and private sectors.

SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Carrying out this analysis allows you to evaluate the current situation (**strengths and weaknesses**) as well as identify **opportunities** that you can take advantage of in the future and the potential difficulties (**threats**) you may face in taking advantage of these opportunities. You can undertake a SWOT analysis as a group yourself or ask an individual from outside the group to facilitate the discussion. The following exercise provides some guidance, but do not limit yourselves to the questions asked.

A Key Insight from a Committee Member

"It's very difficult for people to say ok, I'll come to the meeting because in 3 years' time there will be another 1000 visitors coming."

STRENGTHS (of the network/community/region)	WEAKNESSES (of the network/community/region)
What are the strengths of the region? (What makes it stand out from others in terms of its tourist potential? Is there high quality food being produced? Is it already a tourist destination with a range of amenities? Are there food related experiences already developed? ...) *What are the strengths of the network? (Representation from a number of sectors? Public agency support? Enthusiastic members? Good leadership? High quality products/services? ...)* 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. *(list as many as you can)*	*What are the weaknesses of the region? (Is it difficult to get to? Is there limited food being produced in the region? Are there difficulties with accommodation? Is it too large/too small? Is there no food culture? ...)* *What are the weaknesses of the network? What can be improved on? (Is representation from some sectors limited? Is there limited funding? Is there no public agency support? Are there difficulties with collaboration? ...)* 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. *(list as many as you can)*
OPPORTUNITIES (external to the network/community/region)	THREATS (external to the network/community/region)
What opportunities or trends can you take advantage of? (Government policy/public agency focus? A focus on regional tourism development? Existing collaboration among tourism or food providers? Trends in visitor numbers/type? ... *Hint: Look at your strengths and weaknesses and see if they open up any opportunities.* 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. *(list as many as you can)*	*What are the obstacles you face from outside the region/network? (Global recession? Changing visitor demographic? Lack of government policy? ...)* 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. *(list as many as you can)*

A SWOT analysis is useful but it can only be regarded as a starting point. If developing food tourism in a region is your aim, you should also conduct a *Food Tourism Experiences Inventory* to list the types of food tourism experiences currently available in your region. Fáilte Ireland has developed a template to give you some guidance in conducting such an inventory. This can help identify all potential resources and gaps in product offerings and be used as a way to communicate your plans to the wider food community and possibly get more people involved. See Appendix D.

Your next step as a group is to discuss, agree on and define the aims and objectives of the network. As with the SWOT analysis, you can do this as a group, or ask a person from outside the committee to facilitate the discussion.

Every committee's action plan will be different depending on their aims and objectives. If however, your long term aim is to develop food tourism in a region, *the food tourism destination essentials* in Appendix A will provide some guidance on what you should aim for. Additionally *the suggestions on industry's input and visitor ready criteria* provided in Appendix B and C will provide further guidance since food tourism has authentic buy-in from local food producers, food providers and tourism providers at its heart. Remember, authenticity (truly local food and Irish cuisine) and high quality should be emphasised. Additionally, remember not to lose sight of the importance of a visitor's *overall experience*. This should remain your focus even as you plan the individual components that will make up this experience.

EXERCISE | AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Take the time to discuss, agree on and write down the aims and objectives of your network. It is often helpful to record them as one aim and several objectives. Some examples are provided for guidance.

AIM
(What is the big picture vision for your network? Is it to do with regional development? Is it to do with distinguishing your region from others as a tourist destination? Is it to do with sustainable development? etc.)

OBJECTIVES
(Objectives should be achievable goals that you can aim for. Objectives should focus on WHAT you are going to do, more than HOW you are going to do it (you will identify the HOW in an action plan). If an objective is in some way measureable, this can be helpful when you are evaluating network activities.   *When developing objectives you should ask the following questions: Is this objective:*   *• Appropriate?*   *• Realistic/achievable?*   *• Agreed/shared?*   *• Addressing an authentic need?*   Objective 1:   Objective 2:   Objective 3.   *(Add more if necessary)*

The examples provided in the following case studies should provide some guidance.

CASE STUDIES - EXAMPLES OF AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF TOURISM NETWORKS

NEPAL TOURISM, OUTDOOR AND ENVIRONMENT DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (NTOEDP) *(http://www.netif-nepal.org)*

AIM: To enable stakeholders to create a destination without pollution and waste, where nature and wildlife areas are protected, where friendships prevail among tourists, local communities and entrepreneurs, and a destination where tourists will have a memorable holiday, entrepreneurs will have enough business and security, and local people will have enough food, shelter and dignity

OBJECTIVES
1. To promote community focused eco-tourism to enhance the environment for better tourism.
2. To harmonize the local communities and tourism entrepreneurs and build networking channels for them.
3. To develop and promote locally made products, such as organic produce and handicrafts.
4. To enhance the local capacity to manage tourism.

TOUR OPERATORS INITIATIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT *(http://www.toinitiative.org/index)*

AIM: To advance the sustainable development and management of tourism and to encourage tour operators to make a corporate commitment to sustainable development.

OBJECTIVES
1. To assist tour operators in implementation of sustainable tourism through adoption of best practices in their internal operations and management of the supply chain, and in destinations.
2. To broaden the support for sustainable development among other players in the tourism sector, including tourists.
3. To create a critical mass of committed tour operators.

MA-LIN VILLAGE
(http://www.snvworld.org)

AIM: Contribute to poverty alleviation in Ma-lin village.

OBJECTIVES
1. To develop ecotourism accommodation in Ma-lin Village.
2. To run the accommodation unit successfully.
3. To encourage extensive local participation in community-based tourism.
4. To improve the situation for women in Ma-lin village.

A Key Insight from Committee Members

Different Motivations for Involvement
"We are all volunteers. We are not getting anything at all for it. But it brings out the community feeling."
"I'm here to try and make money for my business and the only way to do it is by meeting others."

It is important, when you are considering what you should be aiming for, for all committee members to recognise that everyone has their own reasons for becoming involved. Some people focus on the benefits to the community as a whole, others will focus on the benefits to their own business and yet others will be motivated to become involved due to a mix of reasons - a desire for mutually beneficial outcomes and a desire to maximise benefits to their own business. An individual's motivations for involvement in a committee may influence their degree of involvement. This in turn can impact on the success of the committee because commitment from committee members is an important success factor.

Different motivations for involvement mean that to keep people involved and active as committee members, different needs must be met. There must be a balance achieved where benefits to individuals co-exist with benefits to the community at large. This also applies when as a committee, you are trying to attract network members. Some individuals will want to see potential benefits to themselves if they become involved in the network and others will want to see potential benefits to their community.

As a committee, when you are setting your network aims and objectives, you should think about whether you are addressing the different needs of current and potential committee members and network members. In the context of food tourism, this means finding ways to tap into the potential for individual benefits, such as cost savings or increased profits, as well as highlighting potential benefits to the community as a whole, such as making a region more attractive to tourists or maintaining a regional identity.

EXERCISE

Take a look at your aim and objectives. Are you aiming to develop the region as a whole as well as developing individual businesses within it?

4.2 Developing an Action Plan

CASE STUDY - ACTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH OBJECTIVES (http://www.snvworld.org)

OBJECTIVES	ASSOCIATED ACTIONS
1. To develop ecotourism accommodation in Ma-lin Village	To have at least five accommodation units open for business by the end of year two. To have trained at least four people in housekeeping and two people in management by the end of year two.
2. To run the accommodation unit successfully	To have at least 50% room occupancy by the end of year three. To have 75% visitor satisfaction rate by the end of year four. To achieve an operating surplus by the end of year five.
3. To encourage extensive local participation in community-based tourism	To increase the number and diversity of community members attending planning meetings. To increase the number of opportunities for involving stakeholders in CBT planning.
4. To improve the situation for women in Ma-lin village	Increase the number of women involved in tourism planning to 50% or more of all those residents involved. Increase the number of women entrepreneurs working in Tourism. Increase the proportion of women in supervisory positions to 25% or more.

Once you have established your aim and objectives, you will be able to establish actions that address those objectives. This gives the committee a roadmap to follow. It is important to recognise however, that this roadmap usually changes as the network develops, as it can be difficult to identify and articulate all objectives and associated actions at the outset.

The Ma-Lin case study provides an example of how objectives can be linked to associated measurable actions. The actions you decide on may not be as specific as those in the case study but it can be useful to be specific on actions and timeframe, as this allows you to monitor progress. Bear in mind that objectives must be realistic and achievable.

KEY FACT

Objectives should be realistic and achievable because:

Individual committee members are more likely to take on more responsibility and a greater workload if they expect favourable outcomes.

Committee members are more likely to take on more responsibility if they have not failed repeatedly before in achieving their goals.

EXERCISE | DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

Discuss, agree on and record the actions associated with each objective.

| Objectives	Associated Actions
Objective 1:	
Objective 2:	
Objective 3:	
(Add more if necessary)	

4.3 How Fast Should You Be Progressing?

There is no hard and fast rule about how fast you should be achieving your goals as a committee. Trying to achieve too much too soon can be counter-productive as individuals experience burn out and there is not enough opportunity for reflection on either success or failure. On the other hand, the pace must not be allowed to stagnate as lack of forward momentum can cause frustration and have a negative effect on your efforts to achieve your objectives. One way to ensure that the pace does not stagnate is to hold committee meetings regularly. Another is to ensure that committee members leave committee meetings with real and meaningful work to do. At the next committee meeting, follow-up should occur to ensure that everyone provides feedback.

You should also be aware that networks have been shown to progress through developmental cycles. In successful committees, this leads to improvement in co-ordination and interaction as committee members progressively learn to work effectively together and trust each other. However, some of the phases of development are more fruitful than others and as a result, there will be some network activities that are more successful than others and probably some that you will categorise as failures. It is important to acknowledge that this is normal, and that as a committee, you should not expect the network to continuously grow from strength to strength. What is more important is that you as committee members learn from experiences, both positive and negative. Reflecting on less successful experiences can ensure that you make changes to ensure a better chance of success next time. Reflecting on positive experiences is important not only to learn what works but also to ensure that the committee does not become locked into patterns based on past successes that do not take account of the changing world.

Evaluating committee activities on a regular basis is important as it ensures that committee members can decide whether aims and objectives are appropriate, allows members to acknowledge that peaks and troughs in activities are normal, and provides a means of evaluating whether an appropriate pace of change is being achieved. There is information on how to evaluate network and committee activities in section 6.

A Key Insight from a Committee Member

"I suppose you have to be very aware of the learning process. People on a committee need to be aware that just because it doesn't work the first time, doesn't mean it's useless. There are certain things that work with people and certain things that don't. It's like style, it changes. What is good this year might not be good next year."
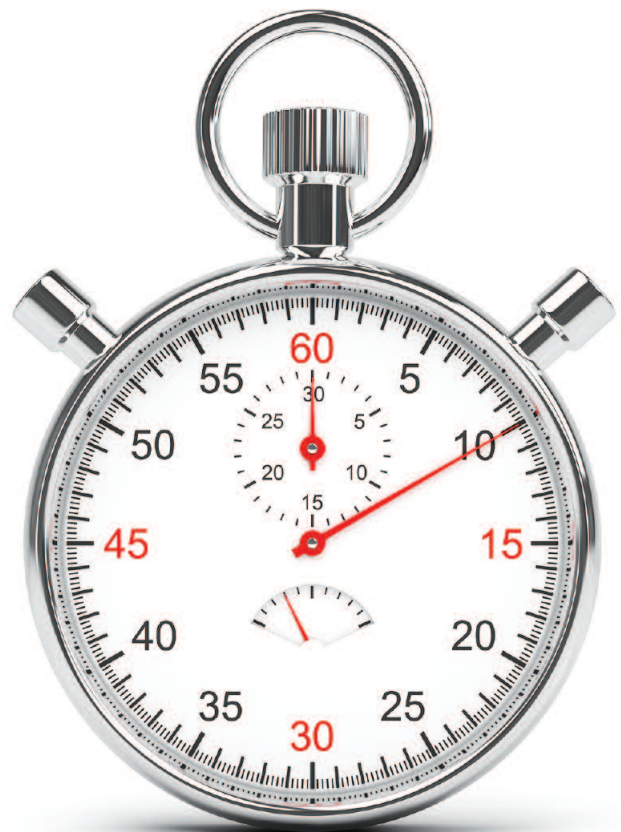
4.4 How Can You Fund Network Activities?

Funding is required for marketing, amenity development, information provision, workshops, festival events etc. There are several funding models utilised by food tourism networks worldwide. Funding can be gained, for example, through member subscriptions, charging fees for providing a web site booking service, generating income by charging for events, seeking partners in the private sector to provide finance and funding applications to public agencies.

CASE STUDIES - FUNDING

The *Food from Fife Network* is financed through an annual £50 membership fee combined with support from the European Regional Development Fund, Fife Council, Scottish Government, Fife Tourism Partnership, Scottish Enterprise and LEADER, which is part of the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP).

The *South East Food and Tourism Forum* of Northern Ireland is funded by a membership fee combined with financial support from the European Regional Development Fund and the councils in the region.

Funding applications processes can be time consuming and approval may take time so it is important that finding sources of funding and applying for it is something that is planned for within committee meetings.

Some funding processes may require the network to seek approval in advance from the funding agency but the network can only apply for reimbursement on production of evidence of payment of invoices. A committee may therefore need to think about ways to raise alternative funds in order to have this money available in advance.

Other funding applications may require data such as visitor numbers or bed nights collected during a previous event. Therefore, when planning for events, evaluation of the event should be built in.

EXERCISE | TO IDENTIFY SOURCES OF PUBLIC FUNDS

There are a number of agencies that may be able to provide financial support for network activities. These include local enterprise boards and local development agencies. You will have to contact the agencies individually to investigate the types of funding schemes they provide as well as the appropriate contact person for your region. When you talk to them about their funding schemes, ask them also if they know of other funding sources.

Agency	Support/Funding Scheme	Contact Details

4.5 What Sorts of Events/Activities Should you Organise?

There are a large range of activities or events you can choose to focus on. Food festivals and food trails are a common choice but you are limited only by the power of your imagination! When deciding, remember to bear in mind that your aim is to enhance the visitor experience. The following case studies provide examples of food tourism initiatives in Ireland and around the world.

CASE STUDIES

The Baltic Sea Dish
The Baltic Sea Dish arose in the Southern part of Zealand in Denmark and the adjoining islands as cooperation between the tourism development agency *East Denmark Tourism*, the regional authority, restaurants and local producers.

The overall idea behind the Baltic Sea Dish is to promote local and regional products for the local community as well as tourists. To kick it off, a competition was held where chefs had to use at least 75% of ingredients of local origin. The competition resulted in good publicity and increased sales in the participating restaurants. After the competition, the restaurants continued selling the dishes and were able to tell a story about the farmers who provided the products for the dish. A joint tourism brochure features the restaurants on one side and the local producers on the other. In this way the stories of the product's origins are linked to the consumption experience.
http://www.destilink.net/fileadmin/FactSheets/Local_Produce_Matters.pdf

Bicycle Basket on the New Dutch Waterline
Visitors to the New Dutch Waterline in the Netherlands can hire a bike which comes with a bike basket filled with local food samples, a picnic blanket and food vouchers. They are given a map of a food route where they can stop off and use their food vouchers for discounts and a free cyclist lunch of local products.
http://www.collabor8.me/

Dingle Bay Charters
Dingle Bay Charters in Dingle, Co. Kerry offers fishing packages which allow visitors to take their catch to a local restaurant where it is prepared for their dinner, enhancing the entire experience.

Gourmet Greenway
Several food producers on the Gourmet Greenway in Mayo offer tours of their production facilities. This provides the opportunity for visitors to experience the stories behind local foods.

Galway Oyster Festival
The Galway Oyster Festival has grown from small beginnings in 1954 when 34 people attended a single event, to a multi-event festival with more than 22,000 visitors in 2012. Events in 2012 included an oyster opening championship, a seafood trail and a music trail.

Listowel Food Fair
The Listowel Food Fair has been in existence since 1995. The core committee responsible for organising the food fair includes food producers, food providers and local business owners. The programme for the food festival has altered in response to visitor demand over the years. Festival events have included:
- Cooking demonstrations
- Seminars on healthy eating
- Children's cooking workshops
- Food and craft markets
- Banquets and other meals
- Agricultural awards
- Agricultural seminars
- Food awards
- Taste trails
- Cookbook awards
- Literary/Food trail

Additional Information
The internet is a rich source of information which can provide you with ideas. Here are just a few examples of how food tourism is promoted online, but an online search will yield many more.

The Dingle Food Festival, Kerry:
http://www.dinglefood.com/

Food Experiences in the Finnmark Region of Norway:
http://www.visitnorway.com/en/Where-to-go/North/Finnmark/Activities--Culture-in-Finnmark/Dining-in-Finnmark/

Culinary Traditions in Gotland, Sweden:
http://regionalmatkulturgotland.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/culinary-traditions-on-gotland1.pdf

The Gourmet Greenway, Mayo:
http://www.mulrannyparkhotel.ie/gourmet-greenway-getaway

Taste the Coast Culinary Network in Norway:
http://www.grand-egersund.no/restaurant-/--taste-the-coast

The Listowel Food Fair, Kerry:
http://www.listowelfoodfair.com/Listowel_Food_Fair/Listowel-Food-Fair-Home.html

The World Food Travel Association:
http://www.worldfoodtravel.org/

4.6 Summary

When developing food tourism:

1) It is important that the whole committee discusses and agrees on a common vision. Otherwise, if you are a committee member, you may assume that everyone else is working towards the same goals as you, which may not in fact be the case. It is also essential to structure a long term aim into more short-term clear, realistic objectives. When discussing network aims and objectives, it is also useful to evaluate where you are now in order to decide where you want to get to. A SWOT analysis and the guidance provided in the appendices can help in this process.

2) Once you have decided on network objectives, they should be translated into an action plan.

3) Each committee must establish for themselves an appropriate pace of change. There will be some things that work better than others, and times when you may feel that you are going backwards. These times should be viewed as learning experiences.

4) There are a number of funding models utilised by networks and you must decide as a committee what works best for your network.

5) There are a diverse range of activities you can undertake to develop food tourism in your region. When deciding what you are going to do, remember that you are trying to enhance the overall experience of a visitor to your region.

Section 5 | Being Effective as a Committee

What happens in core committee meetings and how it happens, are very important in the success or failure of networks. This section gives pointers on avoiding common pitfalls and taking advantage of opportunities.

There are numerous configurations of committee structures, procedures and practices and each committee will be different. Committee members must agree on the structure most appropriate to them and how committee meetings will be conducted. This can be an evolving process; not all of these decisions have to be made at the outset and some naturally evolve. A checklist is provided in the next section which will allow you to track your progress and establish which of these decisions have been taken (or have evolved naturally) and which you have yet to decide on as a committee.

5.1 How Many People should be on a Core Committee?

For a group of people to work effectively together, there should be less than 20 people on the core committee. There are arguments for having less than 15 or even less than 8, but it is unlikely that all committee members will turn up to every meeting, suggesting that if as a committee, you start with very low numbers, there may be times when you cannot hold a meeting due to poor attendance.

KEY FACT ●

Twenty is a 'magic number' because groups with less than 20 members tend to reach agreement while those with 20 or more members tend to splinter into subgroups with different opinions with the result that compromise is difficult and the group does not reach agreement.

Not all committee members will be as involved in network activities as others. Having a core group of 6-8 committed committee members positively impacts on the effectiveness of a network committee.

EXERCISE | CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WHEN DECIDING ON COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

- *Have you included individuals from a range of sectors? (See section 3 for ideas on sectors to include)*

- *Do you need geographical representation as well as representation from a number of sectors? If so, do you have it?*

- *Are you including the right people from the organisation/ agency or community? For example, do they have knowledge, enthusiasm, have access to decision makers, or have access to a range of stakeholder in their sector?*

- *Agencies have an essential role in supporting food tourism networks by providing information, training, guidance and funding. Depending on how a food tourism network is set up, they can also have a role in its co-ordination. Are you going to have agencies involved and if so, in what role?*

- *Agencies may not have resources to dedicate a person to be a member of the core committee but they may be available to attend to address specific issues within their remit. Is this how you can include agency personnel?*

- *If you have an Institute of Technology with culinary programmes in your region, they may be interested in becoming involved. Have you explored this possibility?*

A Key Insight from a Committee Member

"So while all the committee members are very proactive, they are also the busiest people in the town and it's probably the same for any sort of network. So really, for it to be taken to the next level, we need someone that is in a paid position, who can actually dedicate time to do the work. And that's probably our biggest problem.
Because anyone that's involved with this is really involved in other committees and stuff and work takes over, the season is so busy, which is great but it means that your time is limited. And unless you've someone that is driving it really, eventually it might start to fade unless there's someone very proactive constantly chasing those goals."

5.2 Paid or Unpaid Members?

Your committee will probably be made up of volunteers as well as local or national agency personnel. There is also the potential to create a paid administration role or a paid co-ordinator role, by sourcing funding. There can be difficulties created by the time demands of being a committee member, especially if individuals are small business owners. For example, scheduling and organising meetings and events, minuting meetings, and following-up between meetings is time consuming and difficult for volunteers to sustain. Having individuals in paid positions to help with these activities by either providing administrative support or to co-ordinate activities can be advantageous.

It may be useful to contact local employment agencies in your region to see if there are schemes such as the Community Employment Scheme through which you can offer sponsored employment.

KEY FACT

Having a paid co-ordinator on an otherwise volunteer committee is not always beneficial as it can change the dynamics of the committee. This is due to the fact that if the responsibility for taking actions and making decisions related to network activities is mostly left to one person, this negates much of the potential benefits of collaboration.

EXERCISE | TO EMPLOY OR NOT TO EMPLOY?

As a committee, you should discuss and decide if you need to create a paid position, what type of position this should be - administrative or co-ordination, and how you will fund the position. In situations where there is a paid co-ordinator or administrator, you must discuss and define the roles of all committee members to ensure that collaborative working still occurs and that everyone takes, or is given, responsibility for aspects of network activities. An individual in an administrative role will often schedule and organise meetings, distribute minutes, follow up with committee members between meetings and undertake similar administrative duties. A co-ordinator has more responsibility for network activities and they will often take a leadership role. Their responsibilities may include applying for funding, organising network events, liaising with individuals and agencies outside the network, liaising with other networks, representing the network, strategic planning, etc.

5.3 Formal or Informal?

You must decide as a committee what degree of formality is appropriate for you. Committees meetings which are very formal in structure are conducted around certain structures and practices. For example, there is an agreed formal method for raising points of order to question procedure, a chairperson must recognise an individual before they can speak up in the meeting, there is a requirement for a quorum of members to be present before proceeding with the meeting, there is a requirement for motions to be proposed and seconded, and the chairperson is often restricted from engaging in debates, with their role limited to that of facilitator and arbiter. Very informal committee meetings on the other hand, are unstructured in nature with no formally agreed structures and practices.

KEY FACTS

- Co-ordination can be enhanced through formalising structures and processes, for example defining communication protocols and defining and establishing patterns of working together. However, excessive formality can stifle creativity. On the other hand, excessive informality can slow forward momentum, and impact negatively on a committee's ability to achieve its tasks.

- Having fun is important as without it, committee members are likely to question the time they are committing.

A Key Insight from a Committee Member

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON STRUCTURE

"People went on and on, the meetings never started on time, they went on for hours and everybody let people talk about anything. So yes there does need to be a formal structure rather than just a group of people talking."
"It's a little bit ad hoc. And maybe that's the best way. Who knows? People say 'look I'll do that' and that's the way it happens and it does work because sometimes you can have a little bit too much structure and formality. But every committee is different. Some committees you may need a bit more structure."

Even if you decide that you want an informal structure, there are certain procedures and codes of practice that you should consider putting in place:

a) Establishing clarity on start times and end times of meetings and sticking to them.

b) Creating an agenda for every meeting (even a very loose one).

c) Having someone take notes/minutes of what was discussed, what was agreed and who agreed to do what. These notes/minutes should be circulated to all attendees within a week of the meeting.

d) Establishing a code of practice (either a verbal or written agreement) for behaviour outside and within meetings

e) Establishing a written code of practice around finances. Financial transactions should be transparent, monitored and require sign-off by more than one individual.

Agenda elements can include:

- Welcome

- Apologies

- Confirmation of minutes/notes from previous meeting

- Ongoing business - Reports from committee members on what has occurred since the previous committee meeting

- New business - Often this list will come out of committee discussions at a previous meeting

- Any other business - This allows committee members to discuss items that are not on the agenda

- Date of next meeting.

Remember, the configuration of your committee will probably change as committee members join and leave so you are setting up procedures not only for the current committee configuration but for future configurations also.

Most people on your committee will be busy people and so it is important that committee meetings are meaningful and efficient. Having an agenda helps, as does starting and ending on time. Another way to achieve this is to decide as a group what action will be taken before the next committee meeting, who will take that action, and recording those decisions as an action plan.

EXERCISE | EXAMINING PROCEDURES

If your committee structure is not a formal one, with a nominated secretary, does someone take notes at every meeting and circulate them afterwards? If not, nominate an individual at each meeting to do this (or the same person, if willing, can take notes at each meeting). These do not have to be detailed as long as they briefly highlight what was agreed on and, most importantly, the resulting action plan (who will do what). They can also highlight what was discussed.

Do your meetings generally start and end on time? If not, what can you do about this?

Do you have an action plan at the end of each meeting? In other words does everyone bring something to the table and leave the table with a task? If not, what can you do about this?

There are also a number of procedural decisions you need to make as a group. The following exercise will help you to identify some. Others will emerge as you work together as a committee.

EXERCISE | PROCEDURAL DECISIONS

Are you going to make your meeting notes/minutes publically available or only available to committee members?

Who will act as spokesperson(s) for the group, for example in negotiations with agencies or in making information publically available?

How will you ensure that there is good communication between committee members and good communication between the committee and the rest of the network? (e-mail updates/a newsletter/utilising the community notes in a local paper, etc.)

Take the time to discuss the logistical issues that are involved and to try to find a day and time that suits most people.

5.4 Scheduling Meetings

From a logistical perspective, it may be difficult to schedule network meetings which include both food providers and food producers as there are often conflicts in the times when each are free to attend meetings. Food producers tend to be engaged in production during the day, meaning that they are free to attend evening meetings while restaurant and hotel stakeholders are busy in the evenings and at night, meaning that they may only be free to attend meetings during the day.

EXERCISE | EXPLORING LOGISTICS

When you are setting up a committee or trying to get others to join your committee be aware that you will have to take account of differences in working arrangements within the different sectors related to food tourism. You may find that there is one day (often Monday) which is a common day off across the sectors and this may be a good day on which to schedule meetings.

Early in the process of setting up a committee, take the time to discuss the logistical issues that are involved and to try to find a day and time that suits most people. If, as the network develops, you find that there is a sector that is not represented, is this due to logistical issues?

Can you find a way to have representatives from this sector involved? Would a subcommittee be useful, for example?

When and wherever you decide to schedule meetings, scheduling them **regularly** and **often** is key. Additionally, it is very important that there is a core group of committed members who attend most or all committee meetings. Committees where this does not occur waste too much time revisiting the same ground.

Rotation of committee members is also useful as it means that new ideas and new perspectives are introduced into the committee at regular intervals. Rotation of committee can also ensure that individuals do not suffer burn out. It is important that committee member rotation is structured in such a way that there are not too many new members at a time. Some of the committee members from one year must remain on the committee in the subsequent year(s) so that learning that has occurred within the group is not lost.

Committee chairpersons must ensure that new members are encouraged to participate in discussions and decision-making to allow their full potential to be realised.

KEY FACTS

Regular core committee meetings are very important in developing food tourism in a region.

Regular meeting attendance by committee members improves committee effectiveness.

5.5 Effective Leadership of Food Tourism Network Committees

Leadership within groups can range from autocratic leadership where one person makes the decisions and directs others, to a participative style of leadership where decisions are made jointly. There is no one 'right' style of leadership as some circumstances lend themselves more to different leadership styles than others.

KEY FACTS | Leadership ●

- **Whether a group has a single leader or a more shared form of leadership both models work as long as there is clarity in leadership. Confusion over leadership results in very poor group effectiveness**
- **If the style of leadership within a group is adjusted depending on the task at hand, this has a positive impact on group activities. If a committee is facing a deadline on a specific task, having one person take the lead and direct others is often more effective, while if the committee is engaged in discussions on their vision or goals, a more participative style of leadership, where decisions are shared among group members, is more effective.**

Who Should Lead?

In a committee like a food tourism network committee, which is made up mostly of volunteers from the local community, an effective leadership model is shared leadership where different people will take the lead depending on the task at hand and decision-making is shared. However, even in a shared leadership model, one person should take responsibility for calling and chairing meetings.

KEY FACT ●

If individuals participate in a group decision, they are more likely to become involved in and take responsibility for its implementation.

Champions are key in developing food tourism initiatives. These are individuals who act as catalysts for change due to their enthusiasm and their vision for change. Champions may be regarded as leaders by other network members and will often take the lead on individual initiatives. Additionally, committee chairpersons act in leadership roles within committee meetings and are often regarded as the leader by others.

The Leadership Role of Chairpersons

There are no hard and fast rules about the duties and responsibilities of chairpersons, since the degree of formality of network procedures will impact on what is expected of a chairperson. Nevertheless, there are core duties that are common. A committee chairperson has the most responsibility for timetabling meetings, ensuring that clear goals are set, keeping the group on task, involving all group members in discussions, making others feel valued and ensuring that roles are clear. Chairpersons must also recognise and address issues that can emerge from the interaction between different individuals, and encourage the group to deal with conflict in a constructive way. They should ensure that forward momentum is maintained either by scheduling and organising regular meetings or by asking someone else in the group to take on that responsibility.

The following exercise is for chairpersons.

EXERCISE FOR CHAIRPERSONS | WHAT SHOULD YOU DO TO BE AN EFFECTIVE CHAIRPERSON?

- *Do you encourage all committee members to give input in discussions and decision-making?*
- *Do you ensure that one or two people do not dominate discussions?*
- *Have you established ground roles for interactions within committee meetings that encourage everyone to treat each other with respect?*
- *Have you facilitated discussions on the network's long term aims and shorter term objectives on a regular basis?*
- *Do you keep the group on task by ensuring that committee meetings are efficient?*
- *Are you aware that inter-group social interactions and having fun are also important elements in developing group cohesion and effectiveness?*
- *Do you celebrate progress?*
- *Do you use positive language?*
- *Do you acknowledge your own mistakes?*
- *Have you led the development of an agreed protocol to deal with conflict?*
- *Do you ask for volunteers/delegate tasks?*
- *Do you sum up what the committee has agreed on and who will do what?*
- *Are you having fun?*

5.6 The Role of Individual Committee Members

One key factor in ensuring the success of committee activities is that everyone has a grasp of their role on the committee and what it entails. An individual's role in a network comprises of the expected pattern of behaviours that is associated with their position, for example as a committee member, committee chairperson or general member. Defining your role as a committee member is an evolving process, so do not expect to know from the outset exactly what is expected of you. However, if as a committee, you take the time to establish a strategy structured around network aims and objectives, the roles of individuals will become clearer, especially as you begin to work on specific tasks. A committee chairperson can also help committee members understand their role by summing up at the end of each discussion and revisiting at the end of the meeting what each individual and group of individuals has agreed to do. Nevertheless, as an individual committee member, if you are unclear about your role, you must be prepared to speak up in committee meetings to clarify your own role and that of others. If this clarity is not established there will be confusion which may result in some individuals working at cross-purposes and others not undertaking tasks.

A Key Insight from a Committee Member

"The chair shouldn't be responsible for everything for the simple reason is that people will let them do everything and when that happens, the chairperson ends up totally disenchanted and leaves. You have good people being lost to various committees because they end up doing all the work."

KEY FACT

Although a member of a group may compensate for others in the group by working harder, especially if they feel that the group may fail otherwise, this may lead to resentment and friction within a group

As well as establishing clarity in roles, it is important that individual committee members feel that their role and the tasks they undertake are meaningful and that their contribution is valued.

KEY FACTS

- **Individuals who feel that their effort is dispensable engage less in group activity**
- **Individuals are more likely to perform well if a task is attractive, interesting or involving**

As well as taking on tasks related to committee activities, your role as an individual committee member on a mostly volunteer committee may include some coordination, as the chairperson should not be expected to assume a large amount of the responsibility and workload associated with network activities. Responsibility for network activities should be shared.

5.7 The Role of Public Agencies on Committees

Roles that are very important to define early in network development are those of public sector agency personnel on a committee. This is because having public sector agency representatives on a committee with volunteers from enterprises and the community commonly causes difficulties due to different styles of decision making, different views on what constitutes success or failure, confusion about roles and a greater pressure on staff than on volunteers to produce results.

The following case study illustrates how volunteers and public agency staff may think differently about issues impacting on efforts at collaboration.

CASE STUDY - COLLABORATIVE TOURISM PLANNING IN CUSCO, PERU *(Participants from the public and private sectors were asked what they thought made it difficult to collaborate. The responses highlight differences between the sectors)*

Constraints to collaboration according to Public Sector	**Constraints to collaboration according to Private Sector**
1. Cultural barriers	1. Multiplicity of public agencies with tourism-related functions
2. Lack of shared vision	2. Short-term objectives due to political constraints and frequent changes of public officials
3. Centralisation and limited decision-making power	3. Poor information about tourism policies from government agencies
4. Lack of trained people in the public sector	4. Slow decision-making processes and implementation of decisions
5. Limited budgets of regional and local public institutions	5. Absence of long-term strategy towards joint decision-making process
6. Lack of clearly defined roles.	6. Lack of an organisation to lead and articulate collaborative planning

Ladkin, A. & Bertramini, A.M. (2002) Current Issues in Tourism Vol 5, No 2, 2002

Research studies highlight a number of ways to improve collaboration between community and agency committee members and to overcome difficulties that may arise due to the different perspectives of both. Effective communication is key, and to achieve this, it is essential that committee members and agency personnel discuss and agree on (1) the role of the agency with regard to the network and (2) communication protocols between the committee and the agency.

EXERCISE FOR COMMITTEES WITH A MIX OF VOLUNTEERS FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR/COMMUNITY AND FROM THE PUBLIC SECTOR

What is the role of the agency(s) on the committee?

How will communication occur between the committee and the agency?

Will communication occur informally through the agency personnel on the committee or will communication protocols be more formalised, e.g. e-mails from the chairperson or the agency representative on the committee, reports, etc.

How will agencies inform the committee of agency decisions of interest to the committee?

KEY FACTS | OVERCOMING PUBLIC/PRIVATE SECTOR DIFFICULTIES

Difficulties can be overcome if the committee leaders and members:

- clearly define roles early in the process
- recognise and celebrate the opportunities for mutual learning that arise in committees made up of agency personal and volunteers
- emphasise respect
- emphasise the benefits to both agencies and communities that can result from collaboration
- do not have an expectation that the committee's role is to provide a list of work for an agency to undertake - committee members must take ownership of network activities and be prepared to undertake part of the workload involved

and agency staff:

- ensure that the committee is kept abreast of agency decisions that impact them
- ensure that any feedback from a committee to an agency is dealt with efficiently so that committee members receive a response from the agency quickly
- ensure that any feedback from a committee to an agency is dealt with in a transparent way
- understand that the other committee members are (usually) volunteers and will therefore have a different perspective on the aims and objectives of the network and how to achieve them

Build in opportunities to chat and socialise can also help in ensuring that committee members enjoy themselves ...

5.8 Trust and Fun

Trust will probably not exist between committee members when you first set up your committee as you may not know each other or may not have worked together in the past. A growing sense of trust in committee meetings results in individuals being more comfortable asking questions, seeking feedback, highlighting failures and sharing information. This in turn translates into greater success in committee activities.

KEY FACTS

Higher levels of trust and respect within committees are linked to:
- **Better communication**
- **Greater commitment**
- **Greater co-operation**
- **Greater satisfaction**
- **Higher creativity**
- **More success in achieving committee goals**

Everyone on a committee can work to ensure that trust grows and that others feel comfortable in committee meetings. Committee chairpersons in particular, can ensure that individuals are encouraged to give input and can nurture respectful interactions within committee meetings.

A Key Insight from a Committee Member

"It has become great fun. The committee has great fun. Initially you get involved in a voluntary committee because you like the idea of what they are doing but if that night out is not enjoyable then you have to pack it in. And it's always important to make sure it's not too serious because the moment it becomes unenjoyable, it's hard to justify going. You know on a Monday evening at 9 o'clock you really don't feel like getting up and going to something, but if it's enjoyable when you get there, you'll go. That's a huge thing."

What you can do as a committee member to ensure that others are comfortable and there is an atmosphere of trust in team meetings

- Celebrate progress.
- Listen attentively to others in a respectful way.
- Provide constructive feedback.
- Be aware of the effect that you could have on others if you are overly critical.
- But do not be afraid to acknowledge failure (either your own or the committee's as a whole).
- Take part in decision-making - speak up.
- But be aware that others may want to speak - do not dominate discussions.
- Encourage others to give input and take part in decision-making.
- Talk to others so you develop a better understanding of their role on the committee and their role in their organisation/the community.
- Let others know about the things you do in your organisation and the community that are relevant to the committee's work.
- Attend meetings regularly so that you and other committee members get to know each other better.
- Have fun!!

It is also important for committee members to enjoy being a part of the committee. Chairpersons have an important role to play in ensuring that new committee members, in particular, feel welcome. Building in opportunities to chat and socialise can also help in ensuring that committee members enjoy themselves.

5.9 Examples of Successful and Unsuccessful Networks

The following case studies illustrate some of the point raised throughout this section by highlighting some key elements for the successful development of a network as well as difficulties encountered.

CASE STUDY
UK Trade and Investment Rural Tourism Networks

UKTI has developed 18 visitor networks in North East England. Four networks did not last.

Key Elements for Success are:
- Small group of committed people
- A big idea - must be achievable
- Public meeting - to sell the network concept, to share the idea and recruit members
- First Network meeting - to vote in committee and decide priorities for the network
- Co-ordinator
- Set up to be self-sustaining within 2 years
- Constitution which includes
  - Name of the network
  - Aims
  - Membership
  - Meetings
  - Voting
  - Finance
- Have a bank account
- Steering Group
  - Members represent all the relevant sectors within the region e.g, Accommodation, Activities, Artists, Food Producers.

Difficulties for Networks:
- Finding the right leader
- Finding at least 6 committed people with vision
- Identifying the Big Idea
- Overcoming tribalism
- Maintaining internal communication
- Retaining members' loyalty
- Funding
- The need for a co-ordinator after the first year.

http://www.powershow.com/view/23dd0f-ZDc5M/RURAL_TOURISM_NETWORKS_THE_TOOLKIT_powerpoint_ppt_presentation

CASE STUDY
Waterloo-Wellington Ale Trail, Ontario, Canada

In 1997 Craft brewers worked together to 'increase awareness of the regional brewing industry and increase interest in and consumption of the region's premium beers'. In a three year period the Ale Trail developed successfully through the following stages:

1. Initial Meetings - objectives set
2. Wider support sought from tourism related industries
3. Ale Trail launched
4. General Manager hired for day to day operations, PR and Marketing
5. Over 10,000 participants after 3 years.

However, the Waterloo-Wellington Brewers Group made the decision to discontinue the Ale Trail. So why did this network fail?

- Geographic expansion created administrative challenges as well as potential loss of place identity
- Focus of the aims and objectives altered over time as new people became involved. (This highlights a need for networks to revisit aims and objectives and continually evaluate where they want to be in the future)
- Lack of understanding of the indicators of success
- Lack of commitment
- Intrinsic motivation lost
- Weak leadership
- Prioritisation of indiviudual benefits by some members
- Extra work
- Success came too quickly and success without trial and error does not always provide opportunities for reflection. Without reflection and appreciation of the collaborative efforts, participants started seeking more individual benefits rather than benefits of the partners and involved areas.

Plummer, R., Telfer, D. & Hashimoto, A. (2006) Current Issues in Tourism, Vol. 9, No. 3, 2006

5.10 Summary

There are a number of structural and procedural features that can impact on the effectiveness of a committee:

1) There should be less than 20 people on a core committee. As a group you will have to decide if one of those people should be an individual in a paid administrative or co-ordinator position.

2) Different degrees of formality work for different committees. Nevertheless there are some rules of thumb regarding procedures and codes of practices: an agenda is useful for keeping discussions on track; there should be some record of what was agreed within the meetings; people should leave each meeting knowing what they will be doing before the next meeting; there should be communication between the committee and the rest of the network; and there should be a written code of practice around finances.

3) It is important to hold meetings regularly and often.

4) Rotation of committee members is useful and should be considered. If new members join the committee as a result, it is important to encourage them to take part in discussions and decision-making.

5) Committee chairpersons can improve their effectiveness in chairing committee meetings by paying attention to interactions within meetings and encouraging respect, efficiency, fairness and shared decision-making.

6) It is important for individual committee members to understand their role on the committee. In particular it is important to establish clarity on the role of agencies on committees.

Section 6 | How to Measure your Success - Evaluation Framework

Evaluation should be ongoing in any network as it allows members to benchmark progress, to quantify success and to learn from failures. Evaluation can be:
• Formal - achieved through questionnaire distribution, interviews and/or focus groups
• Informal - conducted through group discussions within meetings.

6.1 Evaluation

One committee member should take responsibility for ensuring that committee members evaluate committee structures, procedures and practices on a regular basis. Evaluation is most effective if it is undertaken on an ongoing basis and committee practices are modified accordingly. However, some committees find it easier to have one meeting (e.g. once a year or once every six months) where the majority of the meeting is dedicated to an evaluation exercise. The exercises in the rest of this section will help guide evaluation.

Practical Guidelines for Facilitating Evaluation Discussions

• Use a flip/chart, a computer with projector or another visual aid to note bullet points. You can do this yourself or ask someone else to do it and give them suggestions throughout the process on what to write. (e.g. 'I think what we have just said can be summarised as ... Does everyone agree? Let's write that down.')

• Ask for input from all and do not let one or two people dominate the discussion

• Use positive language

• Remember the ultimate aim is improvement, so it is not enough to discuss issues or challenges, you must also discuss ways to overcome them.

6.2 Formal Evaluation

Formal evaluation can assess processes or outcomes and can look at the network as a whole or at particular network activities/events.

Evaluation at Network Level

Some outcomes at the network level that can be evaluated are outlined in the following exercise. Undertaking evaluation of these or similar elements early in a network's life can provide a benchmark for comparison at a later date (even if it is not always possible to quantify the extent of the change that can be attributed to network activities). You can count numbers, use questionnaires, or use interviews with stakeholders to conduct a formal evaluation.

EXERCISE | NETWORK OUTCOMES TO EVALUATE
Outcomes
• *Tourist spend in a region*
• *Percentage spend on local foods by restaurants, hotels, guest houses and B&Bs*
• *Change in employment numbers in the tourism sector*
• *Change in the number of local food production enterprises*
• *Change in the number of tourists visiting the region*
• *Percent of local products sold locally*
• *Visitor awareness of food tourism offerings*
• *Visitor attitudes on food tourism offerings*
• *Visitors attitudes towards food in the region*
• *Motivations for visit*
• *Change in restaurant bookings*
• *Etc.*

Processes
• *Increase in networking among network members*
• *Increase in active collaboration between network members (e.g. development of joint marketing, distribution, production opportunities)*
• *Awareness among the general public of the network and its activities*
• *Number of stakeholders participating in network activities*
• *Etc.*

A Key Insight from a Committee Member

"You've got to be able to publish a report to say that the tourist spend went up by, say 10%, as a result of efforts. In Prince Edwards County spend went from 25 million dollars per annum to 100 million dollars in 4 years. It is worse not to be a member of that food network than to be a member because they have proven it. So it has to be benchmarked and you have to be able to say: you are a member this year and it cost you x Euros and y Euros was what you gained."

Evaluation at Network Event/Activity Level

If you organise particular events for the public, for example a food festival, or particular activities for food tourism stakeholders such as a networking evening or developing a website, it is important that you evaluate them. Evaluating network activities/events is particularly important for two reasons. Firstly, to gather information that will aid you in any future funding applications to support the event or other events and secondly to gather information to allow you to take participant feedback into account when organising future events and activities. Therefore there are two types of data you should be gathering:

1) Participant demographics
   a. Events - how many people attended, where they are from, their estimated spend, how long they are staying in the area etc.
   b. Activities - how many stakeholders involved, what sector are they from, the level of their involvement etc.

2) Participant feedback – what they think of the event/activity, how did they hear about it, what improvements could be made, would they recommend it to others etc.

EVENTS (e.g. food festival)
- Number - e.g. number of participants at an event, number of visitors on a food trail
- Feedback from participants at an event - did they enjoy it, how did they find out about it, where are they staying, how long are they staying, where do they live, what did they enjoy about it, any suggestions for changes, etc.
- Distance participants travelled to an event
- Increase in bed nights in a region over the timescale of an event
- Total spend on local produce during an event
- Visitor feedback on what worked and did not work about the event
- Etc. (See Appendix E for an example of a survey)

NETWORK ACTIVITIES (e.g. workshops)
- Number of stakeholders who participated
- Positive aspects of the activity
- Suggested improvements
- Learning gained
- Depending on the activity, a measurement of the outcomes - if the workshop was focused on social media for marketing for example, you could measure how many people set up facebook pages for their business as a result of the workshop.
- Etc.

6.3 Informal Evaluation

Informal evaluation occurs when a committee discusses its practices in committee meetings. If evaluation is ongoing, a committee becomes more effective. A checklist is provided below to provide you with a roadmap for informal evaluation. If your committee is in its early development stages, there will be some practices that you have not established yet. As the committee develops, you will be able to evaluate more practices.

EXERCISE │ CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATION

Practice	Some Questions to Ask
Agreeing on a common vision *(Section 4.1)*	• Have you discussed a strategic vision and articulated aims and objectives? • Do you refer to them regularly? • Are the aims and objectives still current or should they be updated? • Are they updated regularly?
Developing an action plan *(Section 4.2)*	• Have you an action plan to achieve the objectives? • Is it updated regularly?
Progress *(Section 4.3)*	• Have you discussed your pace of progress? • Are the majority of committee members happy with the pace of progress? • If not, what can you do differently?
Funding *(Section 4.4)*	• Have you established how you will finance the network? • Have you identified sources of public funding you can apply for? • What do you need to put in place in order to apply for funding? *(eg event evaluation, other sources of finance, etc.)* • Is there a written code of practice around finances?
Committee Membership *(Sections 3.1 and 5.1)*	• Do you have too little/enough/too many people on your committee? • If there are too little or too many what can you do about it? • Are there any other sectors that should be represented? • Is there a skill set/knowledge missing from the committee? Can you fill the gap? • Do you have a process to allow committee members to rotate out of the committee after several years *(and rotate in again later if they wish)*
Paid administrator/Co-ordinator *(Section 5.2)*	• Do you have someone in a paid position? - Do they and other committee members understand their role and responsibilities? - Is this individual undertaking all the work or is there input from other committee members to ensure that the network is benefiting from collaboration among committee members? • If you do not have someone in a paid position, is this something you need? - What should their responsibilities be? *(administrative or co-ordination?)*
Structure and Procedures *(Section 5.3 & 5.4)*	• Is the committee structure appropriate? *(Too formal? Too informal?)* • Do meetings start and end on time? • Is there an agenda for every meeting? • Is there a record kept e.g of the action points agreed? • Do you have a code of practice for behaviour outside meetings? *(Is there/should there be a committee spokesperson? In what situations should individuals say they are representing the network? etc.)* • Do individuals leave at the end of meetings with tasks? *(although tasks should not be assigned unless they are meaningful)* • Is there a communication protocol to ensure that others outside the committee, especially network members, are kept abreast of committee activities *(e.g. email updates, newsletters, community diaries on local radio or in local papers, etc.)* • Do you have regular, frequent meetings? (e.g. once a month)
Leadership *(Section 5.5)*	• Do you have a single leader or a shared leadership model? *(Is there common agreement on this question within the group?)* • Does this style of leadership work or is there anything that could be done differently? *(e.g. Is too much work left to the chairperson - could the workload be more evenly spread?)* • Has the committee chairperson carried out and reflected on the exercise for chairpersons in section 5.4?
Roles *(Sections 5.4 - 5.7)*	• Does every committee member understand their role and responsibilities? *(this is an evolving process)* • What is the role of each agency on the committee? • Do volunteer committee members take on responsibilities and take ownership of committee activities even if there are agencies involved? • Do agencies involved in the network keep the committee abreast of agency decisions that impact on network activities? If not, can they be asked to do so? • Is feedback from the committee to agencies dealt with in an efficient and transparent manner? If not, can committee members discuss and agree a communication protocol with agency personnel?
Trust and Fun *(Section 5.8)*	• Are committee members having fun? If not, what can you as a committee do about it? • Has each committee member carried out and reflected on the exercise for committee members in section 5.8?

These questions can also be utilised within a more formal evaluation procedure, where the group sets aside a time on an annual basis to work through the questions and develop an action plan to enhance committee procedures and interactions.

It is also important to reflect on any activities. When doing so, there are a number of questions you should be asking when examining each of your practices. (So for example, if the committee organises an event, for example a food festival, you should evaluate the event afterwards using the following questions).

EXERCISE | EVALUATING ACTIVITIES

- *What happened?*
- *What worked?*
- *What didn't work*
- *What have you learned?*
- *Did everyone on the committee understand their own role and that of others?*
- *What will you do differently in the future (if anything)?*
- *Are there any actions the committee needs to take in order to enable you to do things differently in the future?*

As you undertake evaluation of network processes and outcomes, there will be some gaps in skills or knowledge that will become obvious. These gaps can be addressed in a number of ways. Fáilte Ireland and local regional development agencies often provide training on aspects of marketing, business development, networking, etc. Third level institutions, especially Institutes of Technology's can also provide training. Committee members should contact the relevant agencies to identify specific business supports, hospitality initiatives and training initiatives which build provider capability.

6.3 Summary

Evaluation should occur often within networks. You can undertake a formal evaluation where you set aside a time to evaluate processes or outcomes within a network. However, you should also undertake informal evaluation where, as a committee, you discuss certain aspects of committee or network practices within committee meetings to see how improvements can be made. Several lists of questions to help you in evaluating your committee were provided throughout this section and we hope that they will be of use to you to explore how well you work together as a group in developing food tourism in your region.

Appendices

APPENDIX A | Food Tourism Destination Essentials (Fáilte Ireland)

- A Food Destination Steering Committee in place with an agreed vision.
- Industry commitment to delivering the agreed vision.
- A collaborative approach by producers and providers.
- Local and seasonal food produce is clearly evident and easily accessible to visitors.
- There should be a local food experience across all food related touch points of a visitor experiences.
- There are a variety of food experiences available to the visitor to include accessible food producers, restaurants, cafes, pubs, hotels, B&Bs using local and seasonal produce, farmers markets, farm visits, cookery schools, specialist food stores, food trails, food festivals and events and local food heroes/champions.

APPENDIX B | Suggested Criteria for Visitor-Readiness (Fáilte Ireland)

These criteria apply to food producers who are developing food tourism at a physical location such as a visitor centre.
- Where appropriate, be Fáilte Ireland approved.
- Open at least 6 months of the year.
- Have published opening times.
- Staff are educated on local food history/food providers.
- Regularly updated and maintained website/web presence with opening times, visitor facilities and attractions, contact details, directions, etc.
- Visitors can engage in an activity such as learning to do something or tasting opportunities.
- A clearly defined consumer experience message.
- Clear signposting as appropriate.

APPENDIX C | Suggestions on Industry Input (Fáilte Ireland)

Industry Commitment - Provider
- Food Plays the primary role in your business.
- You are committed to working in collaboration with local producers.
- You are committed to using between 25-50% (depending on availability) of fresh, locally sourced, seasonal food on your menu, thus providing the visitor with a true sense of the locality.
- Staff has knowledge of all recipes, provenance and source of the food being served.
- Staff demonstrate knowledge of local food producers and local food history and are encouraged to engage with customers to make suggestions and recommendations.
- Your menu informs customers as to the source of the produce, names local suppliers and identifies any regional speciality/traditional dishes.
- You are willing to work collaboratively with other individuals in joint promotions and initiatives.

Industry Commitment - Producer
- You are committed to working in collaboration with local providers.
- You are willing to work collaboratively with other individuals in joint promotions and initiatives.
- You engage in one or more of the following ways to connect with visitors:
  - Onsite visits
  - Food tasting/demonstration opportunities
  - Farmers Markets
  - Festivals and events
  - Supply local retail/providers.

APPENDIX D | Food Tourism Experiences - Inventory Template Fáilte Ireland

Each food tourism region is unique and before the region can be developed and marketed it is important to be aware of exactly what constitutes a food tourism offering. It spans the spectrum of food experiences and success is based on the careful cultivation of the regions food tourism inventory.

In creating this inventory it is important to capture all relevant business information in addition to the categories and information noted for consideration in each category. This includes but is not limited to:
- Business name
- Key contact(s)
- Contact information - address, email, phone
- Website and social media addresses
- Hours of operation

INVENTORY CATEGORIES AND INFORMATION TO CONSIDER:

Farmers Markets
- How many markets are held?
- Are they seasonal or year round?
- When do they take place and what frequency?
- How many vendors do they have?
- What is the % of local food growers/producers/retailers at the markets?
- Are the markets easy to locate (adequate signage, etc.)?
- Do the markets have a website and does it list the vendors?

Specialist Food Stores
- How many retailers do you have that sell artisanal goods made either in your region, or in Ireland?
- Are those products authentically locally/Ireland made?
- What are the hours of operation? Year round/seasonal?
- Do they offer taste education experiences in their operations?

Farms/Producers
Note: All farms/producers in the region should be included in the inventory. They will fit in either Category A or B. Category A reflects farms that are ready to supply the value chain of food tourism and Category B reflects farms that are ready to offer a food tourism experience.

Category A
What do they grow/produce?
What is their current market for sales?
How do they currently sell their products (onsite, farmers markets, wholesale, direct to stores/restaurants/cafes, etc.?
Is there a co-operative group in place for sales and distribution?
Do they want to increase local sales/grow their local market?
Are they Bord Bia approved, certified organic, member of Love Irish Food/Good Food Ireland?

Category B
What do they grow/produce?
What type of taste/education experiences do they offer the consumer (pick your own, guided tour, workshops etc.)?
Are they seasonal or year round operations?
Do they offer food services onsite to showcase their product?

Artisan Food Producers
- What businesses in the region (e.g. cheese factories, chocolatiers, bakeries, etc.) who make in-house authentically local, culinary delights?
- Do they represent the flavours found in your region?
- Do they have retail locations?
- Do they offer taste and/or education experiences?
- What are their hours of operation?

Restaurants/Cafes/Pubs
- How many food service providers use local ingredients in their menus?
- List all service providers and rate the amount of local/Irish produce being used from 0-5 (0 being no local/Irish produce and 5 being 75% local/Irish produce)
- Do they inform their customers as to the source of the produce?
- Are they quick-serve, family/casual, fine dining or catering?
- Are they members of Good Food Ireland or other product marketing group?

Accommodation
- What types of Fáilte Ireland approved accommodation available?
- Is it year round or seasonal?
- At type of food service do they offer?
- Do they showcase local food and drink?
- Do they have knowledge of local food history, local and regional dishes/specialities and access to local suppliers?

Festivals and Events
- Consider all events, i.e. those with a strong food element and those where the food element could be enhanced.
- Type of event (family, age of majority)
- Length of festival/event
- Taste and/or education experience
- Date of event (or estimation of annual occurrence)

Food Related Visitor Attractions
- Are there any local cookery schools? Are they open year round?
- Do they have a range of programmes encompassing local food, local and regional specialities?
- Any guided or self-guided food trails/tours, opportunities for foraging?
- What other taste/learn to food experiences are available in the region, e.g. Catch & Cook?

Distributors
- When developing food tourism in the region it is critical to ensure that the full value/supply chain connects. Determine any organised or professional distributors of local or Irish products and determine the following;
  - What type of products to they distribute?
  - Are they specifically local or Ireland wide products with local distribution?

APPENDIX E | Survey Example

The following survey is an example of a short survey which will capture data during an event.

WE ARE GATHERING INFORMATION TO HELP US IMPROVE THIS EVENT IN THE FUTURE.
WE WOULD BE VERY GRATEFUL IF YOU COULD SPARE A FEW MINUTES TO COMPLETE THIS SHORT SURVEY.

1. WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

Ireland	❑	Which County? _____
Overseas	❑	Which Country? _____

2. WHERE ARE YOU STAYING?

Home	❑1	
Friends/Relatives	❑2	
Hotel	❑3	
Guesthouse/B&B	❑4	
Campsite/Caravan	❑5	
Other	❑6	*Please specify_____*

3. HOW MANY NIGHTS ARE YOU STAYING IN THIS ACCOMMODATION _____

4. WHO ARE YOU TRAVELLING WITH?

On your own	❑1
Couple	❑2
With family (including children)	❑3
With adult family members (No children)	❑4
Other adult group	❑5

5. DID YOU COME TO THIS TOWN JUST FOR THE FESTIVAL?

No	❑1
Partially	❑2
Yes	❑3

6. HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT THE FESTIVAL?

Travel Agent/Tour Operator	❑1	
Word of Mouth	❑2	
TV	❑3	
Radio	❑4	
Posters	❑5	
Promotional Literature	❑6	
Newspaper	❑7	Which newspaper? _____
Guidebook	❑8	Which guidebook? _____
Website	❑9	Which website? _____
Tourist Office	❑10	
Just travelling through	❑11	
Other	❑12	_____

7. PLEASE RATE ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5 HOW MUCH YOU ENJOYED THIS EVENT

   O   O   O   O   O
   1   2   3   4   5
Not at all   To a great extent

8. WHAT DID YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT THE FESTIVAL? *(Add more overleaf if you wish)*

9. ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR THINGS WE COULD IMPROVE OR DO DIFFERENTLY NEXT YEAR? *(Add more overleaf if you wish)*

Recommended Reading

Food Tourism

Fáilte Ireland's National Food Tourism Implementation Framework 2011-2013.
Available online at www.failteireland.ie

Fáilte Ireland's *'Place on a Plate: Using Local Food to Promote your Business'.*
Available online at www.failteireland.ie

Destilink guide, manual and best practice examples on Local and Regional Produc.e
Available online at www. destilink.net.

Collaboration

Collabor8 publications and video downloads.
Available online at www.collabor8.me

Destination Development

Destilink guide Cooperation for Sustainable Destinations.
Available online at
http://www.destilink.net/fileadmin/FactSheets/Cooperation_for_Sustainable_Destinations.pdf

Managing Tourism at World Heritage Sites: A Practical Manual for World Heritage Site Managers.
Available online at http://whc.unesco.org/uploads/activities/documents/activity-113-2.pdf

Fáilte Ireland's Destination Development advice.
Available online at http://www.failteireland.ie/Develop-Your-Business/Work-With-Local-Partners/Step-1-Establish-a-Destination-Development-Group.aspx

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The National Food Implementation Framework is available on the Fáilte Ireland web site
http://www.failteireland.ie/

Other examples of national food tourism initiatives include:

Scotland - The Land of Food and Drink
http://www.scotlandfoodanddrink.org/

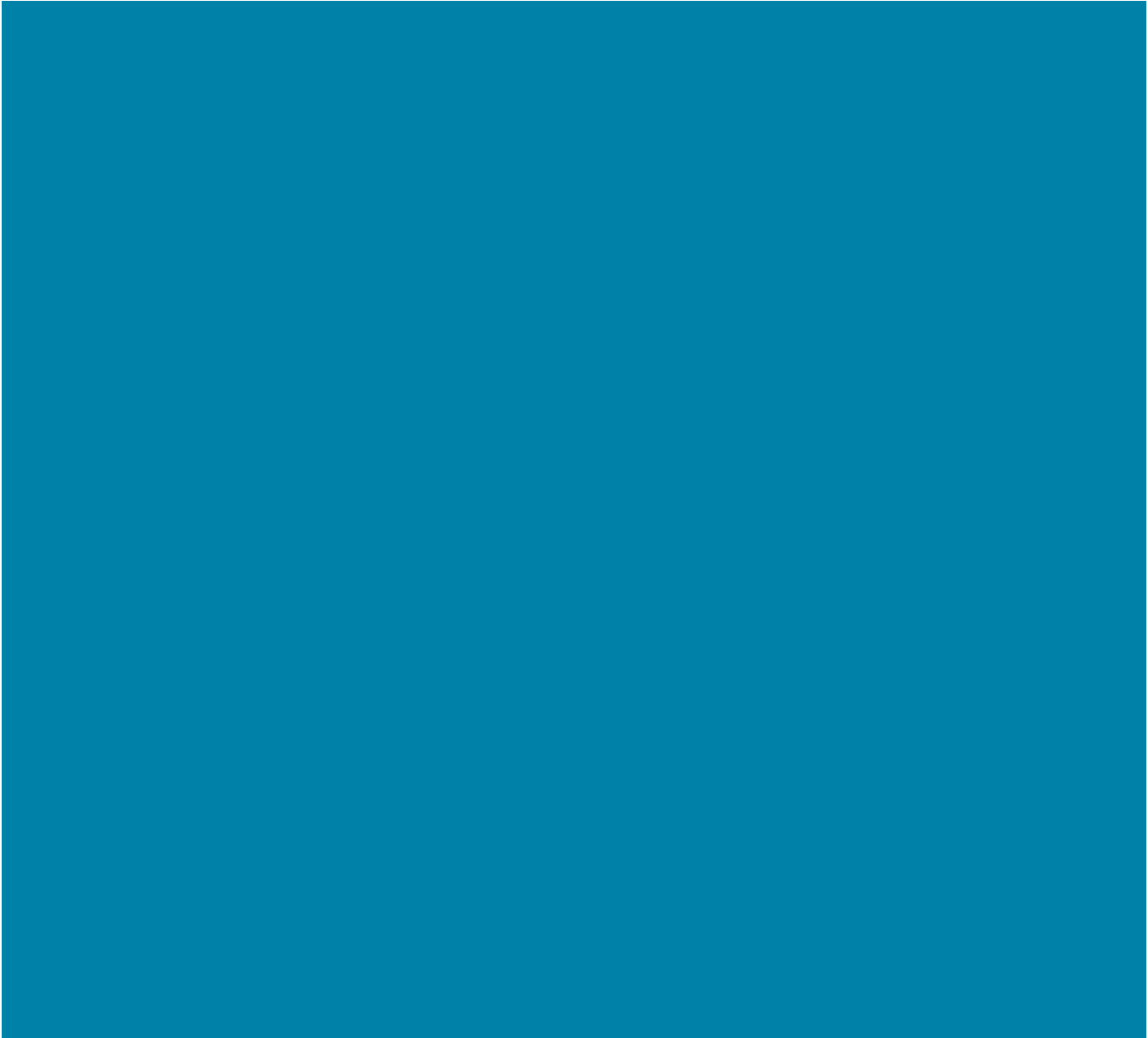Sweden - The New Culinary Nation
http://www.visitsweden.com

Ontario - Culinary Tourism Strategy
http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/publications/Culinary_web.pdf

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