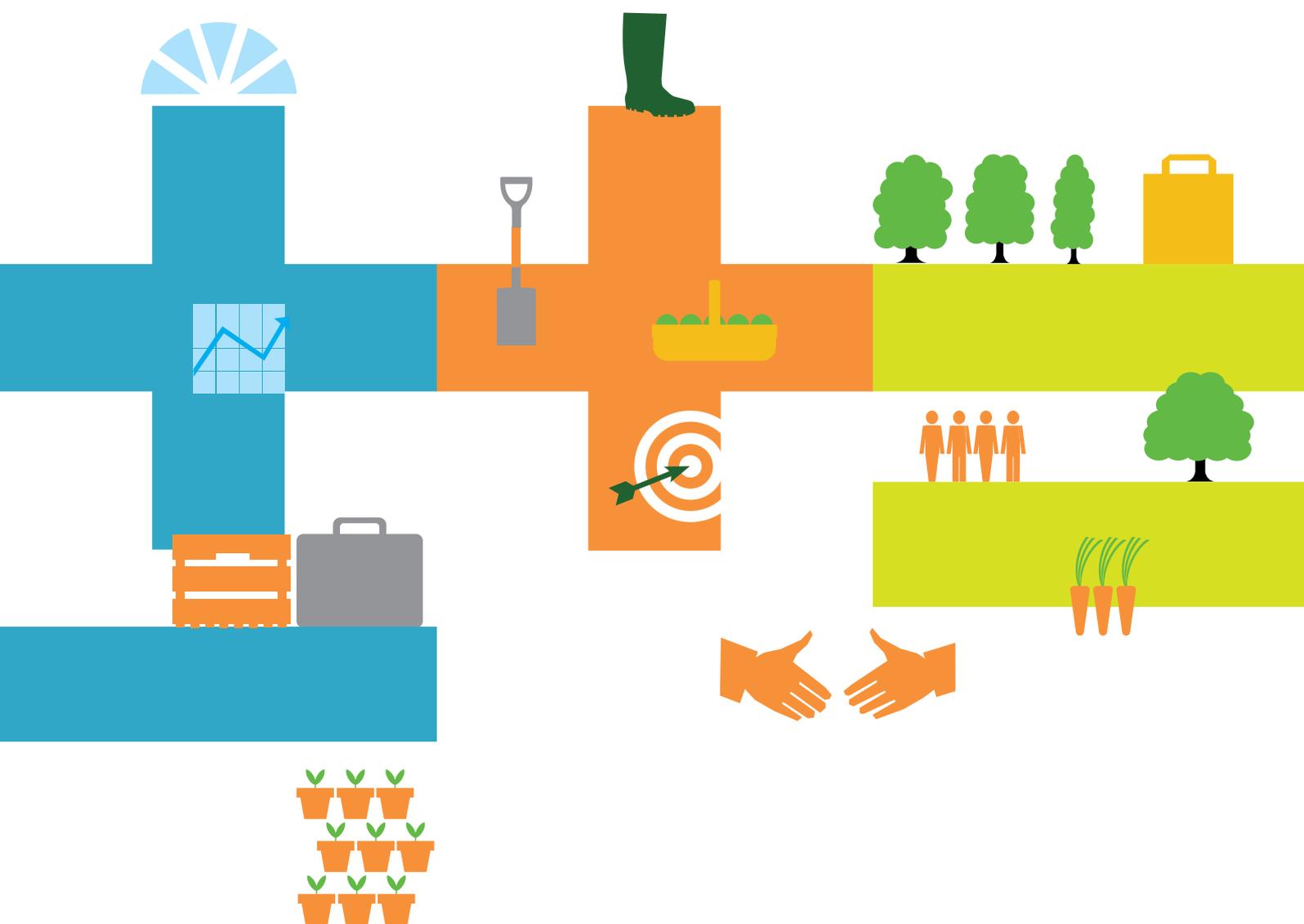


# LOCAL ECONOMIC RESILIENCE: THE PART YOU PLAY A GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY FOOD ENTERPRISES



Written by Chris Walker



# INTRODUCTION

**Across the UK, community food enterprises (CFEs) are playing pioneering roles in their local economies. Whilst meeting a growing demand for local, seasonal and healthy food, CFEs are also using their land and their skills to offer employment, training, education and an array of opportunities for community participation. What's more, they are demonstrating the potential to care for the environment and help build cultures of fair, cooperative trade whilst creating new economic opportunities. A recent estimate suggested that the UK community food sector is now worth between £77 million and £150 million per year. They are one of the recent success stories of local collective action.**

Yet, CFEs face many challenges. For many, the biggest is access to land. Buying or leasing land at market rate is increasingly prohibitive. Small enterprises are excluded from the generous land subsidies enjoyed by larger scale farms. In a market dominated by supermarkets, CFEs must compete to provide customers with convenience and low prices. With rising living costs, creating good livelihoods on low incomes is a big challenge.

In this context, CFEs must get support from those who hold the key to their success. In order to gain access to land at affordable rates, to secure planning permission for infrastructure, or to attract social investment and grant funding, it's essential that local authorities, land owners, investors and funders understand the role that you can play in making your local economy, and therefore your community, more resilient.

Shared Assets supports the management of land for the common good. Through our Better Land-based Economies project (2015-17), we have worked with and supported three leading community food enterprises, Ecological Land Cooperative, Kindling Trust and Organiclea, over two years as they worked to access land, grow their businesses and create new livelihoods. This work was funded by Friends Provident Foundation.

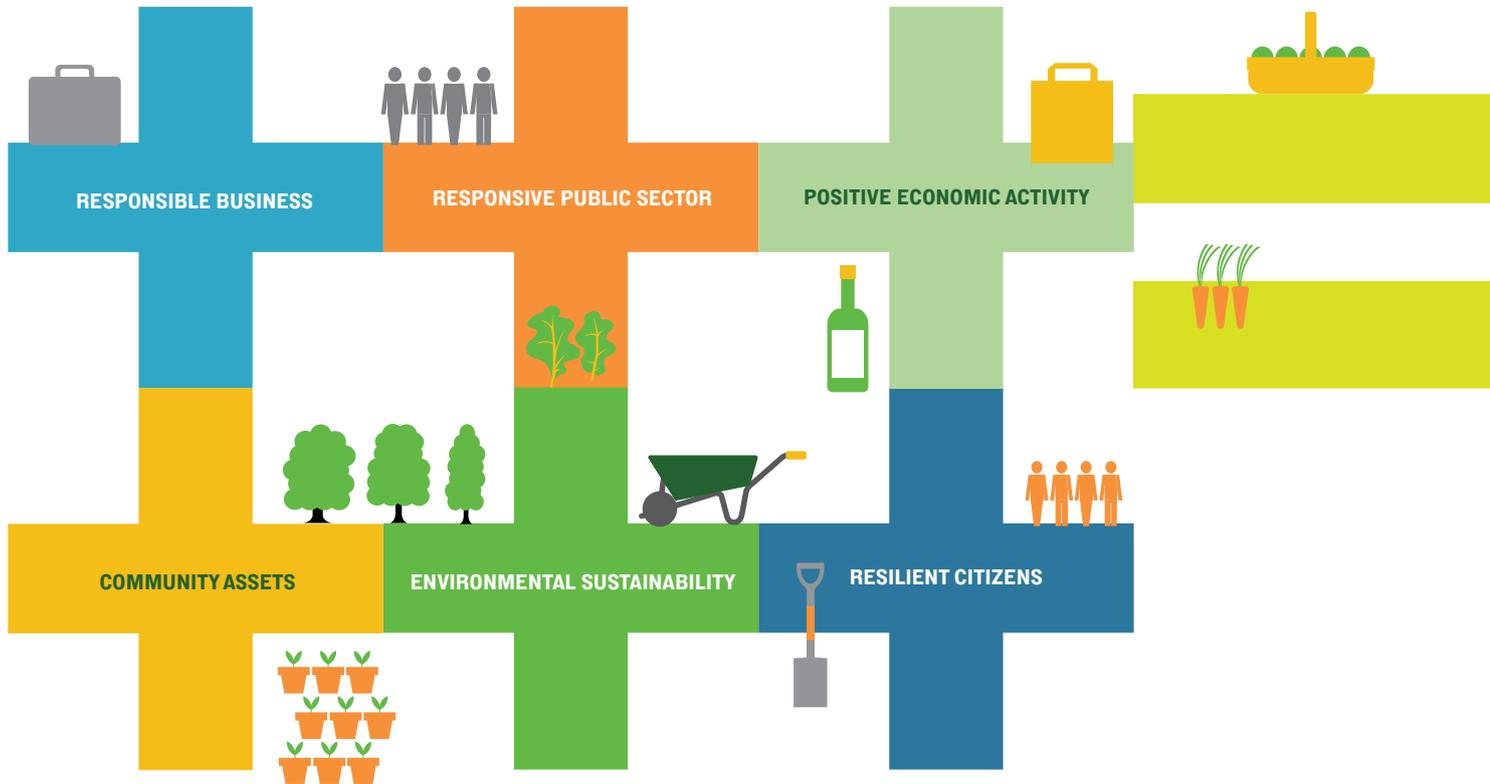
## What's a community food enterprise?

Community food enterprises don't simply produce, process or distribute food. They operate at a local level, working in and for their local community. Consisting of small-scale farms or market gardens, community-supported agriculture schemes, local veg box services, and many other enterprise models, they aim to provide multiple services and social benefits. This can include learning and training through food activities, improved wellbeing through community activity, healthy food and green space, strengthening local trade, or encouraging green growing and business practices. The recent 'Making Local Food Work' programme estimated that there are 12,000 members of community food networks in the UK. Research for the programme estimated that the total value of the community food sector is between £77 million and £150 million a year (Crabtree, T., Morgan, K., and Sonnino, R., (2012), **Prospects for the Future: Scaling up the Community Food Sector**, Plunkett Foundation).

## What is local economic resilience?

Resilient local economies are those that can provide good livelihoods for people, and use their fair share of resources, whilst responding to short-term shocks and long-term changes. These shocks and changes may relate to the ecological, social and broader economic conditions within which they operate. To be resilient, local economies need a broad range of assets, skills and innovations that serve and respond to the needs of local people and the environment. They also require strong relationships between local people, responsive institutions and a strong sense of local ownership and stewardship of the resources, goods and services which people use. In a time when local communities are vulnerable to instabilities in our global economy, and as local authorities are experiencing severe budget cuts, local economic resilience is a concept that many people see value in. Based on the definition proposed by the New Economic Foundation (Greenham, T., Cox, E. and Ryan-Collins, J. (2013) **Mapping economic resilience**, New Economics Foundation and Friends Provident Foundation) Shared Assets believes the following factors are key to building local economic resilience.

## The factors that add up to local economic resilience



## The part community food enterprises play

CFEs can play a vital role in local economic resilience. They offer sustainable and healthy food through short supply chains that benefit both local producers and customers. But they play a much wider role too. CFEs support good livelihoods, help local citizens improve their skills and wellbeing, build community assets, attract local investment, and build links between communities, businesses and public services in ways that are good for people and the planet.

## How to use this guide

This guide is for CFEs or those helping them to run or develop. It is designed to help you recognise and describe the roles you play in building local economic resilience, and suggests ways of measuring and evidencing your contribution to it. We hope this will help you make the case for support from local authorities, land owners, investors and partners. It could also help you recognise key areas for organisational development.

The following pages explore the six components of local economic resilience in the diagram above and what CFEs can offer in each case. CFEs are diverse – this is one of their strengths. No single CFE is a driving force for all six components of local economic resilience. Yet Shared Assets believes each CFE has something significant to offer in this framework. Use pages 4 - 9 to consider the role your CFEs play, and how you could evidence this. On page 10 we have included a framework for a guided exploration for groups to explore this issue together.

# FACTORS OF RESILIENCE

## Responsible business

Community food enterprises can be models of responsible business. They often place values such as sustainability, fair trade, wellbeing, and community at their core. They demonstrate ethical practices in growing and selling food, environmental management, employment and training that inform and inspire others. Community food enterprises both rely upon and nurture cooperation with other ethical businesses (eg distributors, food outlets and local services). This helps create and strengthen local networks of mutually supportive and economically sustainable enterprises.

### Resilient local economies need...

#### What can you offer?

#### What can you evidence?

A diverse range of responsible enterprises

- Creation of and support for new food enterprises
- Demonstration of innovative or progressive models of land use, distribution and enterprise

- Number of businesses created and supported
- Records, case studies and testimonials of local or regional trade within local food sector

Viable businesses and business models

- Financially viable enterprises and livelihoods
- Financial support for growers
- Support in accessing land at affordable prices
- Business mentoring for new entrants
- Cooperative and community-led governance models

- Annual accounts showing turnover and profit
- Business plan showing plans for growth or diversification
- Growth of turnover or land managed
- Statistics on access to finance and business support
- Evidence of skills and expertise of staff and board members

Good livelihoods

- Creation of jobs and livelihoods
- Access to markets, land, training and support for new entrants
- Fair pay and working practices, including living wages and minimising pay ratios

- Number of jobs and livelihoods created
- Self-reported changes in skills and employability by workers, trainees and volunteers
- Numbers of people completing training and gaining qualifications
- Numbers of people accessing onward employment
- Numbers of enterprises created with your support
- Details of your employment practices

Meeting local needs

- Access to healthy, high quality and affordable food
- Community participation and wellbeing opportunities
- Employment, training and education opportunities

- Number of local customers
- Customer satisfaction surveys
- Number of visits by schools and learner groups
- Number of participants in training and education
- Number of people you employ

A balanced and diverse regional economy

- Contribution to regional networks of interdependent enterprises
- Creating opportunities and access to markets for growers
- Short supply chains

- Description / map of local food networks and their purpose and outputs
- Examples of distribution and supply chains
- Examples of partnerships and collaborations

Fair trade

- Ethical procurement of goods and services
- Building stronger relationships between local producers and consumers
- Increasing public will to support local livelihoods through fair trade

- Details of policies including costing, procurement, and approaches to partnerships
- Numbers of people partaking in fair trade awareness activities
- Self-reported changes in awareness of producers and fair trade issues among customers

## Positive economic activity

Community food enterprises develop positive economic activity by producing goods and employment, generating income and attracting investment in ways that benefit local communities. By producing and selling food locally and sustainably at a small scale, they also reduce waste and protect the environment.

### Resilient local economies need...

High local multipliers in terms of spending and investment

### What can you offer?

- Local spending and investment by your enterprise, partner enterprises and consumers locally
- Securing investment that will benefit local people and the environment
- Creating strong trading relationships between producers, distributors and food outlets

### What can you evidence?

- Figures of expenditure by your enterprise, customers and partners within a local region (eg within 30 miles)
- Number of local businesses you are working with
- Amount of funding and investment you have secured through grants, shares, crowdfunding etc
- Self-reported change in expenditure habits by consumers as a result of your activities

Efficient use of resources

- Sharing tools and infrastructure and bulk buying with other enterprises
- Setting up or contributing to local hubs of equipment, buildings, skills & resources
- Efficient use of natural resources (eg composting, rainwater harvesting, renewable energy generation and energy efficiency measures)
- Management of peaks in food production (eg production of preserved goods, donations to charity)

- Use of shared resources (eg compost) and number of participants in sharing initiatives
- Quantity of resources saved through efficiency measures (eg units of energy, water, agricultural inputs)



# FACTORS OF RESILIENCE CONTINUED

## Community assets

Community food enterprises build local resources and skills which provide a lasting benefit to communities. They invest in and improve land and infrastructure that strengthen local food systems. They build skills in land work, enterprise, community work and general employability for workers, trainees and volunteers. By doing this, they build the capacity of local communities to develop further positive economic activity.

### Resilient local economies need...

Skills and knowledge

#### What can you offer?

- Training in food growing, cooking and healthy eating for your community
- Educational opportunities for schools and other learner groups
- Training in grow-to-sell, business skills and employability
- Inspiration and case studies for new growers

#### What can you evidence?

- Number and type of formal and informal training courses and informal learning opportunities
- Examples of skill and resource sharing
- Numbers of, and feedback from, volunteers, learners and community visitors
- Number of growing or enterprise trainees gaining experience or qualifications

Access to fair financial services

- Helping new businesses access finance or other assets

- Amount of money invested in local enterprises with your help
- Provision of loans or credit to growers or partners

Access and control over productive resources

- Securing and supporting access to land
- Helping to develop local infrastructure (eg for production, processing or distribution)

- Amount of land and buildings you, or enterprises you have supported, own, lease or manage
- Number of people accessing shared resources or infrastructure

A strong local food system

- Growing and selling food locally
- Developing and maintaining local supply chains and markets
- Procurement and use of local resources
- Setting up shared distribution schemes with other growers

- Analysis of sales and expenditure of your own and other local enterprises
- Details of the makeup and membership of local food networks or clusters
- Self-reported shopping habits of local consumers as a result of your activities
- Number of local networks and forums for sharing learning and developing partnerships



## Responsive public sector

CFEs don't just benefit from the support of local authorities. By demonstrating their impact, engaging in advocacy and supporting service delivery, many CFEs play a key role in helping councils become more responsive. They can help councils increase their knowledge about food systems and assess and meet the needs of communities.

### Resilient local economies need...

Public sector investment in the local economy

### What can you offer?

- Ensuring public funding is effectively invested in generating local food activities, services and jobs

### What can you evidence?

- Amount of public funding secured and outputs and outcomes delivered

Local authorities to value local food systems

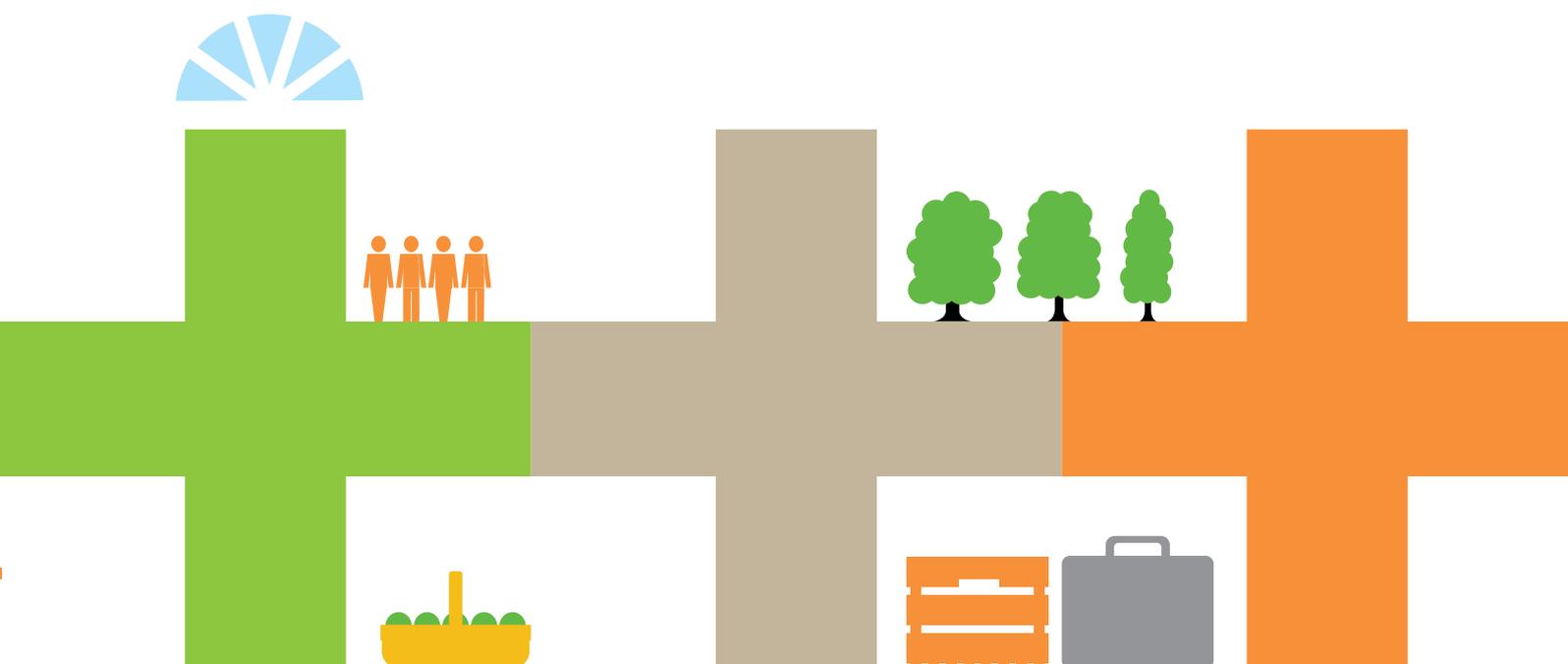
- Educating schools, community groups and local authority staff about food growing, healthy eating, and sustainability
- Consultancy and advice to local authority staff and service providers

- Feedback from learning participants
- Testimonials by local authority staff about organisational learning
- Testimonials from local authorities
- Changes to local authority practice

Better local policy

- Providing feedback on public policy
- Developing guidance on engaging with policy/public sector for other CFEs or similar groups
- Participation in local policy forums and consultations

- Changes secured in local policy
- Evidence submitted to consultations
- Testimonials from local authority staff or community partners



# FACTORS OF RESILIENCE CONTINUED

## Resilient citizens

CFEs help local people become more active and healthy. Many provide employment, training or volunteering opportunities that help people build their skills, confidence and economic security. CFEs often offer local people access to green space, physical activity and community participation that improve physical and mental health. All these opportunities help people take control of their lives and become more resilient to personal, social and economic challenges. Resilient citizens are then more able to play active, rewarding and meaningful roles in their local economies and communities.

### Resilient local economies need...

#### What can you offer?

#### What can you evidence?

Access to physical activity and healthy food

- Volunteering, learning and training opportunities involving physical activity and shared meals
- Training in healthy eating
- Mentoring to support engagement in outdoor activities and healthy food
- Advice for schools on food activities and menus

- Self-reported changes in physical health and health awareness among participants
- Self-reported changes to diets among participants, partner organisations and customers

Access to green space

- Accessible green spaces, with structured activities (eg food growing, forest schools etc)
- Supported opportunities for those with barriers to green space engagement (eg limited knowledge, confidence and mobility in green space settings)
- Venues or spaces for community partners to run their own activities

- Self-reported changes in wellbeing among participants
- Testimonials from participants and partners
- Records of increase in participant's time spent in green space
- Visitor numbers

Activities that support mental health recovery

- Supporting volunteering and training in food growing and enterprise
- Mentoring for volunteers and other participants
- Referral routes developed with local mental health services

- Self-reported improvements to mental health among participants
- Testimonials from referral partners
- Number of referrals

Routes to employment and personal development

- Training, skills and employment opportunities
- Employment-focused mentoring and advice for volunteers and trainees
- Opportunities for volunteers, trainees and staff to develop autonomy and other capabilities

- Self-reported changes among participants
- Number of participants accessing employment and further training
- Observations by support workers
- Quantitative and qualitative information on participants achieving personal progression steps in skills, confidence and capabilities

Social cohesion and connectedness

- Providing community spaces and places for integration and social interaction
- Referral routes into training and learning for people experiencing social isolation
- A focus for intercultural and intergenerational learning (eg skill sharing, cooking, growing)

- Participant numbers
- Testimonials from participants and referral partners
- Behaviour change and personal progression steps among participants

Enterprise skills and training

- Training, placements and employment in grow-to-sell, distribution, customer service and business development
- Enterprise and business mentoring for new growers and businesses

- Number of people supported, trained, employed and mentored
- Testimonials from participants

Broad political participation

- Participation in local debates, consultations and decision making forums
- Forming coalitions with other groups to seek local and national political change
- Supporting groups and individuals in their own political engagement or activism

- Changes in local policy
- Media and social media coverage of your work
- Testimonials for partner organisations or those you have advised or influenced

## Environmental sustainability

CFEs are often deeply committed to responsible management of land and the environment. They demonstrate positive practices in improving soil quality, resource use, reducing carbon emissions and improving biodiversity in their growing sites. They reduce their environmental impact within their own activities, rather than relying on remote and unsustainable supply chains or on 'offsetting' their impact. They help make other people more environmentally aware through education and training initiatives, offer people more sustainable diets and share research and innovation in sustainable production. Local food groups can also offer other environmental services, including flood management.

### Resilient local economies need...

Economic activity that conserves ecosystems, resources and climate stability

### What can you offer?

- Improvement of soils, water sources, pollinator populations, habitats
- Use of sustainable approaches including organics, permaculture, crop rotation etc
- Maintenance or improvement of biodiversity
- Cutting carbon emissions through reduction of travel and agricultural inputs
- Use of renewable energy generation or procurement and energy efficiency measures
- Waste reduction

### What can you evidence?

- Reports and measurements of soil improvement
- Ecologist or other professional reports on green space management
- Records of energy and water use, and carbon footprint calculations
- Wildlife conservation plans and monitoring
- Measurement of other environmental benefits including flood/water flow management

Training, information and education on environmental sustainability

- Demonstration of sustainable practices
- Training in organic growing and other sustainable growing practices
- Research and innovation in sustainable production
- Encouraging a sustainable diet

- Number of people receiving training or information
- Use of or promotion of your research and innovation
- Self-reported behaviour and diet changes among volunteers, participants and customers
- Surveying growers, learners and participants on their sustainability awareness



# EXERCISE: A GUIDED EXPLORATION FOR GROUPS

**The following exercise is designed to help groups running CFEs to explore economic resilience in your locality, and the roles you play or could play in it.**

It may help you:

- explore your priorities for organisational development in relation to your role in local economic resilience
- recognise your strengths and what you have to offer your community
- consider how you can monitor your impact
- describe the benefit of your activities to a local authority, funder or potential partner in the context of local economic resilience

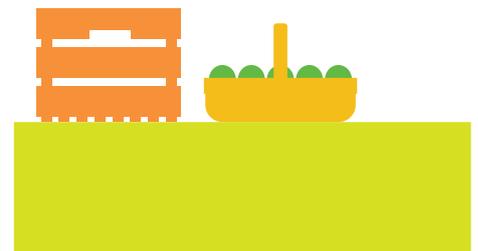
A similar exercise could be run by a group setting up a CFE. Simply reframe the exercise and questions on p11 to focus on what your planned CFE hopes to offer, or what it could potentially offer.

**You will need big piece of paper or large whiteboard, pens and post-it notes.**



## Guide for facilitators

- 1 Draw out a large version of the framework on page 3 of this guide outlining the components of local economic resilience. Leave space around each component to write or add post-it notes.
- 2 Ask the group to describe what local economic resilience is, and why it's important. You could read out description on page 2 if you feel the key points have not been covered.
- 3 Go through each component in the framework together. Using post-it notes, brainstorm what activities you do (or plan to do, or could do) that contribute to each component.
- 4 When you've done this, give yourself a mark out of 5 for each component. No CFE supports each component of local economic resilience equally. Ask the group to answer the following questions:
  - a Which components are your key strengths?
  - b Do these strengths fit your main organisational objectives?
  - c In order to achieve your main organisational objectives, which components do you need to be stronger at? What kind of activities could you develop in order to achieve this?
  - d How well do you measure and report on them? Could you do this better?
- 5 Agree how to record the conclusions of your conversation. Could you write them up as the beginning of an organisational development plan or a strategy or to engage with your local authority or landowner? Think about when in the future you need to consider the needs and aspirations you've identified.



# FURTHER RESOURCES

## In this series

**Growing for change:** creating good livelihoods for a better food system  
A guide for community food enterprises

**Access to land:** working with local authorities  
A guide for community food enterprises

**Understanding the planning system**  
A guide for smallholders and community food enterprises

**Essential rural workers' accommodation for small-scale agriculture**  
A guide for local authorities

**Local economic resilience:** the role of community food enterprises  
A guide for local authorities

You can find these resources at:

[www.sharedassets.org.uk/innovation/local-land-economies/](http://www.sharedassets.org.uk/innovation/local-land-economies/)

## Other resources

Greenham, T., Cox, E. and Ryan-Collins, J. (2013) **Mapping economic resilience**,  
New Economics Foundation and Friends Provident Foundation

## Project Partners

**Shared Assets** is a think and do tank that provides practical advice, support and training to landowners and communities who want to manage land as a sustainable and productive asset  
[www.sharedassets.org.uk](http://www.sharedassets.org.uk)

**Kindling Trust** support new organic growers in Greater Manchester through their FarmStart training programme, and have established and support a cooperative of growers and buyers, and a worker owned organic box scheme [www.kindling.org.uk](http://www.kindling.org.uk)

**Organiclea** run an organic market garden, a veg box scheme, provide training for new growers in London, and help them access land and set up new enterprises  
[www.organiclea.org.uk](http://www.organiclea.org.uk)

**Ecological Land Cooperative** secure land to develop affordable sites for farming, forestry and other rural enterprises, and opportunities for ecological land-based businesses in the UK  
[www.ecologicaland.coop](http://www.ecologicaland.coop)

**Friends Provident Foundation** is a grant-making charity whose Building Resilient Economies programme aims to contribute to a more resilient, fairer and sustainable economic system [www.friendsprovidentfoundation.org](http://www.friendsprovidentfoundation.org)

