

LOCATION: Belfast City Centre
LEAD ORGANISATION: Social Farms & Gardens
DATE: July 2019 – July 2024
PROJECT FUNDER: National Lottery Community Fund
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Growing Resilience: Digging Deeper

KEYWORDS: Allotments, Food Growing, People, Communities

This case study focuses on the organisation of a community growing network to promote climate resilience and raise social capital.

Introduction

- Social Farms & Gardens (SF&G) is a charity that promotes community farming and growing across the UK.
- This initiative was funded by the Big Lottery Fund, with the last phase running from 2019 to 2024, and based off a pilot initiative completed on behalf of Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens.
- The main objective was to enhance food security and community preparedness in Northern Ireland.

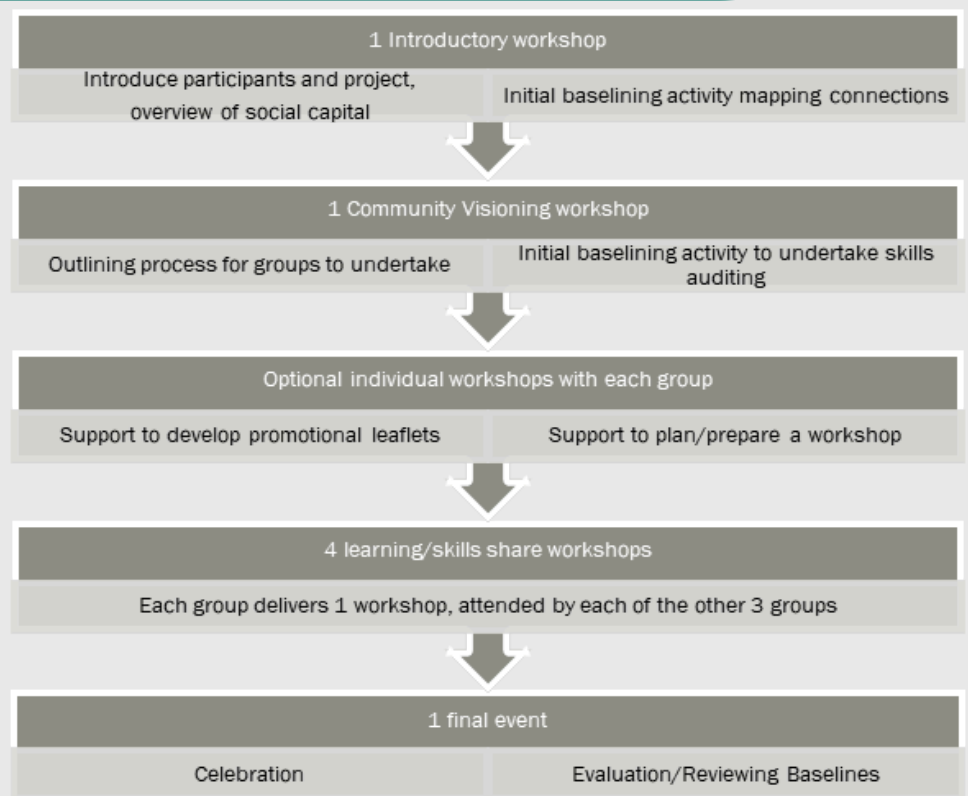


Aims

- Support community growing volunteers to connect and share skills.
- Organise networking forums and practical skills workshops across NI.
- Deepen resilience and sustainability in an ever-changing financial landscape.
- Develop to cover all local council areas depending on need.

Key Actions

- **Creation of a network** of community growing groups and partner organisations as direct beneficiaries of the project.
- **Independently functioning network design**, so that it is not limited by SF&G's resource availability.
- **Enables groups to engage in policy change** to allow the network to expand and develop.
- **Facilitates the sharing of skills and building of social capital**, enabling communities to cope under food provision uncertainties caused by climate change and other crises impacting the global supply chain (e.g. Covid-19, conflict).



Project Structure (Social Farms & Gardens)

Impacts

- The project facilitated practical skills development while fostering a stronger sense of community and place. Under climate pressures, the need for these growing partnerships will become more necessary. SF&G produced sector needs and recommendations in their [project report](#).
- The networks successfully engaged with local councils and policy change through various means. For example: meetings with elected representatives, presentations to committee, participation in Community Planning, creating their own manifesto for Stormont elections, responding to consultations and producing the [Belfast Garden Gathering](#) report with recommendations to Belfast City Council, which were taken onboard).
- The team who delivered this project now work for [Community Garden Support](#), supporting regenerative community food growing across NI. They are currently seeking funding to continue this work.