

Finalist's case study

University of Brighton Food and Drink Field to fork, bringing the veg back home.

Section 1 About the project

Summary

'Field to fork, bringing the veg back home' is a simple but rarely used concept in large-scale multi-sited foodservice. In effect we moved from using a regional framework for the supply of fruit and vegetables in favour of using a small local grower and wholesaler.

Project partners

University of Brighton Hospitality Services team
University of Brighton Procurement team
University of Brighton Environment team
JR Wholesale – our supply partner for fruit and vegetables

The problem

Prior to 2011, and in tandem with most other large HEI's, the University of Brighton used a regional framework for the supply of fruit and vegetables. All the suppliers on the framework were large organisations operating out of central distribution centers, predominately in the London area. The Hospitality Services team believed customers, the University, and local business would all benefit if fruit and vegetables were procured on a more 'local' basis.

The approach

The Hospitality team made enquiries in the Sussex area and established that there were a number of growers and wholesalers who were equipped to supply the University with sufficient quantities of fresh produce across all the seasons. The team engaged the University's procurement department to assist in drawing up a specification and tender package that encouraged smaller, local businesses to participate. The University also provided guidance and advice for local businesses that didn't have experience of completing tender returns. The resulting evaluation enabled the University to appoint a local grower and wholesaler, JR Wholesale, as the principal supplier of fruit and vegetables to the University. JR Wholesale also now supplies Sussex NHS Trust and we expect other larger, local organisations to see the benefits of procuring fresh, seasonal and local produce.

Our goals

1. To support the valuable work of smaller local growers in the rural Sussex community.



University of Brighton

Profile

- HEI
- 5 Campuses
- 3 cities/towns
- 25,000 students
- 3500 staff
- 7 halls of residence and 18 foodservice outlets

Category supported by



TUCO

Share. Learn. Buy. Grow.

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2. To serve locally grown and seasonal produce in all areas of food production and service.
3. To advocate and promote the quality and freshness of locally grown and seasonal produce.
4. To provide value for money for both the University and our customers.

Obstacles and solutions

Procurement law	Our procurement team provided all the advice and guidance we needed to ensure our specification and tender process gave local businesses an opportunity to compete, whilst also complying with procurement legislation.
Cost	The perceived view was that tendering in isolation would make the project prohibitively expensive in comparison to using large established frameworks. However, by incorporating more 'intelligent' menu planning and - wherever possible - utilising seasonal produce, we have proved that sourcing locally needn't necessarily be more expensive.

Performance and results

In 2013/14 Hospitality Services at the University of Brighton served in excess of 370,000 meals to students in catered accommodation and a further 100,000 meals to visiting foreign language students. An additional £2.7m of revenue was taken through our range of cafes and restaurants. In every aspect of our planning and service delivery we consider how best to incorporate ethical purchasing, local procurement, seasonality and waste reduction. The 'Field to Fork' project has had a significant impact in shifting attitudes towards sustainable working methods and continues to be the cornerstone of our procurement strategy.

Sharing our project

We believe the scale of our project is unique but eminently replicable. As members of TUCO (The University Caterers Organisation) we are used to sharing best practice and have replicated a number of successful initiatives from other institutions. Our project has been shared amongst the Southern Region and we intend to take a presentation to the national conference in 2016.

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

We are delighted to have been named a finalist in a competition that promotes an ethos that runs through the very fabric of this university – sustainability, encouraging healthy living, and reducing our carbon footprint.

Further information

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