

Why have paid coordination?

It sounds obvious, but being a partnership requires actively bringing together partners, in whatever form that takes. Often food partnerships start (and may choose to remain) voluntary, sharing the role out between the members. However, most SFP members, as they evolve, reach a point where they need some paid support to fulfil their ambition and ensure consistency. Feedback from SFP members is that a paid coordination function has been crucial to their success.

2. What is Food Partnership Coordination?

Food partnership coordination is not an administrative role – it requires relationship building, partnership development, project management, and a strategic approach.

There is no one size fits all job description as different partnerships need different types of support. Plus they change over time. In some cases, an initial coordination role becomes a much bigger role – even a chief exec - as the food partnership extends its activities and reach.

As a guide, while full time is ideal, a food partnership typically starts out with a post for 2-4 days a week. The role may be combined with another role(s).

Some places split coordination into two or more separate roles at different levels and salaries e.g. a more senior or strategic lead plus admin or project support. This is most common in food partnerships hosted by local authorities, and larger independent food partnerships.

In a council-hosted food partnership, consider where the post should sit: Policy, Economic Development, Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) Support, Communities or Public Health teams are all common. See the SFP [Structures](#) Guide for Council, VCS and fully independent examples.

Salaries vary but are generally at upper 'officer' level - or above. **We recommend considering salary carefully – don't go too low! A coordinator must be able to take a strategic view and have the confidence to engage diverse stakeholders – from community to very senior level.**

3. Race, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (REDI) is key

Remember the [SFP REDI Review Tool](#) which includes: “**Recruit consciously:** Your partnership has developed recruitment and employment procedures that actively promote REDI principles”.

4. Promoting your vacancy

As well as local networks, don't forget to share your vacancy **through the SFP email discussion list** (sign up [here](#)).

Many partnerships also use national sites such as www.environmentjob.co.uk, www.charityjob.co.uk and especially www.rootstowork.org which promotes sustainable food jobs in the UK.

5. What goes in the job description?

Example responsibilities (a longlist - be selective!)

Programme Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of (or establishment of) a diverse cross-sector food partnership/ network. • Development & support for governance structures; chair and/or partnership members. • Development/oversight of/ consultation for collaborative strategy/action planning, involving multiple partners. • Reporting – to funders/ steering group/ on action plan progress. • Identifying funding opportunities and/or bid writing. • Ensuring inclusion & diversity (could include use of SFP REDI Review Tool). • Work specific to your place’s priorities – such as a mapping exercise; achieving or maintaining SFP awards; capacity building/ training for partners; developing resources; influencing local and/or national policy. • Management of projects led by food partnership, often taken from your food strategy or action plan e.g. development of specific network(s), a food charter, promotion of independent food businesses etc.
Facilitation, engagement, promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitation e.g. of partnership (if no chair) and/or other meetings e.g., steering group, working groups. • Engagement e.g. to build membership, involvement, etc. • Events – in person and/or online (running or overseeing) • Relationship building – with stakeholders at all levels. • Comms (website/ social media/ newsletters) and/or campaigns. • Engaging with Sustainable Food Places and other opportunities e.g. regional/national food networks and forums.
Administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting up and servicing of meetings • Admin associated with events

Example Skills/Knowledge/Experience (Be selective!)

- Partnership working
- Community engagement/ participatory approaches
- Relationship building – at different levels
- Working strategically/ strategy oversight and reporting
- Programme development/ project management/ organisational skills
- Fundraising/ bid writing/ reporting and/or staff management experience
- Events and/or campaign experience
- Monitoring & evaluation skills
- Communication skills – written and verbal – for diverse stakeholders
- Facilitation skills
- Experience of/ commitment to diversity and inclusion including less heard voices
- Administrative/ event/ minute taking skills

What else? Some food Partnerships request these....

- Education e.g. degree level or equivalent (but think about experience/ lived experience as an alternative).
- Willingness to learn about food issues or food systems and/or relevant social/ environmental/ economic issues (some specify 'experience of' these - but this may exclude good applicants).
- Personal qualities e.g. initiative, empathy, diplomacy; a creative energy, solutions focused, imaginative, practical; comfortable with uncertainty.
- Ability to think strategically / identify the best opportunities in a complex situation.
- Knowledge of specific area such as public health, climate change; or understanding of community food.
- Understanding of local and/or national opportunities to influence policy.
- Political awareness in relation to food issues.
- Ability to work on the 'big picture' while also delivering projects on the ground.
- Understanding or lived experience of food poverty and/or experience of working with underrepresented or marginalised people.
- Working locations or patterns e.g. evening/weekend availability.
- Especially in councils, may require link into other areas e.g. to lead on food within the council's climate change strategy, or an area of health.
- Your organisational requirements e.g. equal ops, ICT skills (sometimes website design), confidentiality, health & safety, welcoming applications from under-represented groups.
- "If you don't have all required experience, welcome to discuss the role with us".

Typical job titles or roles

- Food Partnership Coordinator
- Network Coordinator
- Sustainable Food Coordinator
- Development Officer
- Policy and Partnerships Manager
- Director/ Chief Executive

Three top tips for successful employment

1. **Link into SFP at the earliest stage:** Food partnership coordinators often hold a unique role locally, so our network is an important source of support and peer learning. SFP can provide new coordinators with an induction which signposts to our resources and support. We can sometimes arrange and fund mentoring with a more experienced coordinator.
2. **Ensure support:** This complex role requires juggling of multiple priorities which can be stressful. Make sure your new coordinator has clear management support. We recommend employment by a host organisation (not freelance/self-employed) to ensure HR function/support.
3. **Build your organisational commitment:** Often the host organisation has limited or no experience of food partnerships – so a wider organisational commitment to understanding the model is important to ensure the coordinator does not feel siloed or isolated.

Researched and written by Emily O'Brien, Food Matters
& Chris Walker, Soil Association - September 2022