

What will success look like in 2018?

Outcomes

- Increased awareness of Northamptonshire as a place for Food & Drink that attracts manufacturing investment into the county and increases sales of Northamptonshire's products at local, national and international levels
- Northamptonshire as a centre of innovation excellence for the industry that is able to identify, develop and execute finished and saleable new products as well as improve food safety along the supply chain and its environmental performance
- Increased productivity through process innovation and an improved skills base that creates competitiveness in price and which leads to a more resilient sector
- Increased staff retention within the sector
- More school and college students understanding the Food & Drink sector
- A better skills base through training and attracting young home grown talent into the industry



Food & Drink Northamptonshire More than twice the national average of producers

In 2013, the Food & Drink industry contributed £96.3bn of Gross Value Added (GVA) to the UK economy and employed 3.3 million people or 14% of national employment. It is the largest manufacturing sector in the UK and represents 18% of the manufacturing industry in the UK by turnover.

The sector invests over £350m in research & development (R&D) which, in 2013, led to the launch of 16,000 new products. The sector exports almost £19bn of Food & Drink products a year and is an important trading partner with Europe with just over £12bn made up of food and non-alcoholic drink exports.

Northamptonshire's Food & Drink industry is thriving.

About one in seven jobs (14%) in Northamptonshire are in the Food & Drink industry - slightly higher than the average of 13%. It is estimated that Northamptonshire is home to over 150 Food & Drink manufacturers and over 600 registered farms.

There is a concentration of specialist Food & Drink distribution companies such as Booker as well as several major food companies such as Weetabix.

A broad range of products are made in Northamptonshire with a high concentration in flavourings, confectionery, herbs and spices and also food equipment. The county is also strong in the major growth area of convenience foods and ready meals, particularly chilled foods, where the county has some of the UK's (and Europe's) leading companies.



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Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership (NEP) has developed an industry-led Work Programme through engagement with 60 of Northamptonshire's Food & Drink businesses and in conjunction with a Food & Drink industry-led Strategic Board. The creation of the Food & Drink Strategy Board has contributed by prioritising areas of support identified through the engagement process under three Strategic Aims.

Strategic Aim 1

Support sector growth through the development of a physical hub and focal point for delivery of support that encourages innovation, business and workforce development for start-up and growing SMEs. *We will do this by:*

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Developing a physical hub for the provision of industry support
Supporting industry's need for a focal point for Food & Drink sector support and encouraging growth through innovation, business and workforce development through the delivery of the activities. Opportunities to establish food grade manufacturing premises for SMEs will also be sought.

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Providing business, innovation and food technical support through mentoring and Knowledge Transfer programmes and access to support network advice
Supplying a range of grants and support activities to address industry's need for innovation and Knowledge Transfer that helps SMEs identify and respond to market opportunities. Activity will specifically provide food technical support and assistance to increase uptake of low carbon technologies and services to improve production efficiency.

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Providing supply chain development support to help establish new supply chains
Support to develop new collaborative supply chains between farmers, manufacturers and CHR businesses that facilitate value-adding processing to local commodity products, such as red meat. Additionally, a number of supply chain development opportunities were identified during the business engagement process such as the supply of local malt for craft beer producers. This will be investigated further for potential future funding.

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Championing the needs of the Food & Drink sector to enable growth
The Food & Drink Sector Strategy Board and NEP will seek to address the issues raised by businesses that fall outside of the remit of this Work Programme such as superfast broadband, better mobile phone connectivity, public transport and improving the relationships with Local Authority departments.

Strategic Aim 2

Support sector growth by promoting Northamptonshire's Food & Drink businesses and the county's strengths as a place to do business, both inside and outside of the county. *We will do this by:*

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Promoting Northamptonshire's location and identity to inward investors in Food & Drink manufacturing
Providing Food & Drink expertise and knowledge to effectively communicate the benefits of the county to potential inward investors as well as actively engage with external partners to seek and identify these investors.

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Connecting and promoting local buyers and suppliers of food and drink through marketing and promotional activity
Connecting food and drink business across the supply chain in Northamptonshire was clearly demanded by businesses during engagement. A range of activities will be developed to promote businesses and their products through local brand marks, meet the buyer events and promotional activity.

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Promoting Northamptonshire's products and produce outside of the county by helping SMEs access new markets
Support for established SMEs looking to develop or increase sales outside of Northamptonshire or to access new markets. This is especially focused on helping businesses to deal with the step change from supplying local independents to supplying national chains and for exporting into new markets.

Strategic Aim 3

Increase employment in Northamptonshire's Food & Drink sector by inspiring young people to explore the breadth of career breaks, training and apprenticeship opportunities available locally as well as developing a skills base that meets employers' needs. *We will do this by:*

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Improving the image and insight into the available career paths for school and college students (and their advisers) to increase the number of entries into the industry
Engagement with schools through the Enterprise Adviser pilot and further education to attract talented young people to the industry by communicating the wide range of career opportunities available. Creating opportunities for both young people and local businesses to increase the use of apprenticeships in the industry as well as utilising NEP's Love Bright Futures and Enterprise Advisers. Working with Northamptonshire's bid for a Food & Drink specialist University Technical College (UTC).

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Filling skills gaps that meet employers' needs whilst limiting shortages and accentuating sector growth
Activity to fill skills gaps surfaced during business engagement in a manner that suits industry needs (i.e. in-house). Creating a mechanism to engage and understand individual SME skills gaps on a continuous basis so that skills support and training can be flexed to meet needs during delivery.

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Supporting NPD and menu innovations
With the ongoing shortage of food technical expertise in the industry, especially for start-up and small companies, suggested activity would be able to provide a wide range of 'bite sized' courses aimed at bringing Food Technologists and Development Chefs together to develop products for commercial sale for manufacturers or develop menu options for catering, hospitality and retail outlets.

What will happen in 2015?

NEP will begin to progress each of the three defined Strategic Aims during 2015 in preparation for European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Growth Programme for England.

This initial activity will include:

Strategic Aim 1

- Support Moulton College's Food & Drink Technology Academy and examine the case for the provision of food grade premises
- Develop a Knowledge Transfer initiative between Large Enterprise and SMEs by building on existing activity delivered by The Mallows Company and Northampton College
- Seek interest in collaborative projects including the supply of local malt barley to Northamptonshire's craft brewers, group procurement, shared distribution and a development of a bottling plant for craft brewers
- Signpost businesses to available local and national grant programmes
- Champion the industry's needs for fast broadband, mobile connectivity and improved public transport for staff
- Champion the need for improved relationships between the sector and Local Authority departments

Strategic Aim 2

- Support inward investment activities conducted by NEP, UKTI and Local Authorities. This includes assisting NEP to showcase Northamptonshire's products at MIPIM and the Milan Expo
- Augment existing 'Made In Northamptonshire' activity including meet-the-buyer events, local food and drink directories and marketing support under the kitemark
- Assist local businesses to access new markets through attendance at national and international exhibitions and by providing exporting workshops working with NEP, UKTI, EMB and Northamptonshire Chamber. One example of this is participating in NEP's 'Making it in Northamptonshire' export week

Strategic Aim 3

- Develop an apprenticeship carousel to enable young people to gain industry skills by working in a number of local businesses
- Work with NEP's Enterprise Advisors Pilot and Love Bright Futures campaigns and the National Skills Academy programmes and others for Food & Drink's Tasty Careers project to highlight industry career opportunities to school children
- Seek to address driver shortages in the industry by working with NEP's Logistics Sector
- Support the county's Food & Drink UTC bid
- Develop leadership and management training programmes for senior management