

## Institution: University of Manchester

### Food and Drink

### Working with Small Organic Producers

#### Section 1

##### About the project

Helping the University's sustainability its food team has been working successfully with a locally cooperative group of growers to deliver local organic food to the University. Staff are engaged in the initiative and the growers are able to sell directly to one of the largest food buyers in the city.

##### Project partners

The University became a founder member of the Manchester Veg People (MVP) co-operative in May 2011. MVP is a multi-stakeholder co-operative of local organic growers and buyers who worked together to help develop a new model for the local food supply chain. It wants to increase access to local produce, at the same time as creating a larger and much more stable market for the growers' produce.

#### Section 2 The results

##### The problem

How to deliver food made from organic locally sourced ingredients which is affordable for the University community.

##### The approach

Working directly with suppliers. the University became a founder member of the Manchester Veg People (MVP) co-operative in May 2011. The University is one of the largest food buyers in the city and its Executive Chef met with the growers to discuss what they could produce that the University would buy. MVP allowed growers to coordinate supply and demand, minimising waste, strengthening trust and understanding, and eliminating much of the risk for growers.

The partnership is now into its third year and going strong. All the MVP produce is grown within 50 miles of Manchester city centre and as far as possible is picked to order the day before delivery so it's really fresh and the University cuts down on waste.



##### Profile

Example:

- 38,430 students and 11,000 staff
- 2,900 covers a day .
- 30 cafes across the campus
- 18 Chefs

Category supported by



# TUCO

Share. Learn. Buy. Grow.

# Finalist's case study

MVP earned its Soil Association organic certification in March 2012 and through a number of local suppliers it delivers everything from free range organic eggs to potatoes and leeks to the University. This requires close collaboration between the catering teams at the University and MVP. By working together we have been able to support our joint objectives of:-

- Selling more organic fruit & veg across Greater Manchester, encouraging more growers to go organic reducing the risk that pesticides and fertilisers have on soil and water courses.
- Paying growers fairly for their produce.
- Supporting local businesses and the local economy.
- Making the food supply chain fairer and more sustainable
- Supporting organic farming and reducing waste.

The relationship between MVP and the University has built steadily and a representative from University catering sits on the MVP committee meetings, to provide a perspective as their largest buyer. Students from the University have volunteered to work on the farms which has helped the University achieve a Food for Life bronze for its catered halls.

## Our goals

Social responsibility and sustainability are part of our three core University goals. This goal is expanded to 'The University will contribute to the social and economic success of the local, national and international community by using our expertise and knowledge to find solutions to the major challenges of the 21st century, and by producing graduates who exercise social leadership and responsibility.'

We are supporting this as a food team by engaging with our students in initiatives such as MVP volunteering events and the annual campus food events we organise. These events include 'Vegetarian Week', 'Fairtrade Fortnight' and 'FoodOnCampus Live'. They provide an opportunity to promote our MVP initiative and for MVP to attend and sell produce to the campus community. In addition we are developing displays about MVP sourcing in our cafes. We feel this plays a part in influencing and developing future leaders with sustainable principals.

## Obstacles and solutions

Getting staff buy in	Key operational staff including our chefs visited growers and built relationships
Meeting University demand	Executive Head Chef attends regular committee meetings with MVP to ensure we understand likely crop yields etc. and can plan accordingly.
Utilising seasonal produce	Chefs redesign recipes to utilize the ingredients seasonally MVP can produce.

## Performance and results

We have now developed the scheme to the stage where the University's demand for food outstrips that which MVP can currently supply. Our spend with MVP in 2012/13 was £18,531 and our spend for 2013/2014 will be £40k. To address this growing demand MVP's focus is now on new growers who will add to the volumes and also increase the range and varieties of produce available.

Alongside this focus, MVP additionally wishes to increase its customer base in order to provide a more rounded annual demand profile without the peaks and troughs of University term demand. To support this

# Finalist's case study

MVP have invested significantly taking on two extra staff and purchasing their own vehicle through a Crowd funding project. They have built a larger refrigerated storage and sorting area. This has enabled them to co-ordinate, collect and sell more produce locally.

MVP have enlisted a consultant to help them understand how to work with Public Sector procurement processes and are currently running a pilot with Oldham Schools and the 'Feeding Stockport' initiative. They are looking at the possibility of being involved with a wider Greater Manchester sustainable food initiative.

## Section 3 The future

### Lessons learned

The key lesson we learned is that it is viable for large buyers to engage directly with smaller scale organic growers provided a framework structure is in place and communication links are strong.

### Sharing our project

We are engaging with our students in initiatives such as the MVP volunteering events outlined later and the annual campus food events we organise. These events include 'Vegetarian Week', 'Fairtrade Fortnight' and 'FoodOnCampus Live'. They provide an opportunity to promote our MVP initiative and for MVP to attend and sell produce to the campus community. In addition we are developing displays about MVP sourcing in our cafes. We feel this plays a part in influencing and developing future leaders with sustainable principals.

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

Our University is delighted to be a Green gown finalist as its key ethos and initiatives are at the heart of our institution's core goals.

### Further information

Layton Quinton – Marketing Manager – [Layton.quinton@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Layton.quinton@manchester.ac.uk) 0161 306 4076  
[www.foodoncampus.manchester.ac.uk](http://www.foodoncampus.manchester.ac.uk)