



Garddwriaeth Cymru Horticulture Wales

Cluster Facilitation



Introduction

Horticulture Wales is a pan-Wales project supporting Welsh horticultural businesses to reduce waste, improve product shelf life and optimise economic returns through knowledge exchange, collaboration and supply chain development.

Facilitating the creation of regional Clusters within the horticulture sector forms part of the project's activities, as a tool to disseminate information, enable collaboration and knowledge sharing across Wales.

Building on the vast experience and knowledge gained by Ifor Ffowcs-Williams, Horticulture Wales has created this model which the project will follow to help facilitate, and establish three clusters throughout Wales.

Today's economy is about speed, flexibility and connectivity in an environment where innovation and economic growth are geographically concentrated. Clusters and smart specialisations are cornerstones of this reality.

The focus for economic development is shifting from the national level, shifting from support to industries and to individual firms. Today the emphasis is on the development of regions and their clusters. This bottom-up approach reflects that while companies may come and go, strong and evolving clusters provide economic stability to a region.

Though clusters are a natural occurrence, the development of clusters does not need to be left to chance. Over the last two decades, cluster development has become a mainstream framework for regional development, especially across Europe, providing a centre stage strategy that addresses innovation, productivity and competitiveness.

Ifor Ffowcs-Williams, 2018.

Defining 'Clusters'

Clusters are an umbrella concept. With variations in usage across industries, geography, and between academics, public agencies and private sector groups, 'clusters' are not a precisely defined term.

At its simplest level, a cluster is a group of firms that are operating in the same sector and are in close geographical proximity to each other.

A cluster may also have access to a range of support organisations such as, trade associations, chambers of commerce, technical and training institutes, government agencies, universities and schools.

A cluster, is therefore, more than just a group of firms. There may (or there may not) be close relationships between these different players.

Defining Clusters

"Clusters are geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, firms in related industries, and associated institutions (e.g., universities, standards agencies, trade associations) in a particular field that compete but also cooperate."

Professor Michael E. Porter (2000) Location, Competition, and Economic Development: Local Clusters in a Global Economy, Economic Development Quarterly.

Horticulture Wales will adopt this definition of 'Clusters' and will seek to create three geographical clusters. One in North Wales, one in Mid Wales and one in South Wales.

Each cluster will include growers, horticulturalists and suppliers, with representatives from the University providing support and input from external experts when required.

Formulation of Clusters

The 12 Steps discussed within the Cluster Development Handbook have been reviewed and the Horticulture Wales project will adopt the main points and refine the model to suit the projects objectives and sector requirements. Therefore the project has developed and will follow 8 key steps based on the recommendations and accredited cluster development work of Ifor Ffowcs-Williams:

A. Process Relevance and Building the Base



Step 1: Introducing Relevance

Social media campaigns and other promotional activity to advertise cluster membership opportunities.

Positioning cluster development to find common themes around project objectives.

Establishing engagement for future development.



Step 2: Prioritising

Communicate project objectives to cluster members

Agree sector and regional needs and initiatives.

Agree activities and set timelines.



Step 3: Cluster Governance and Ongoing Appraisal

Setting and agreeing role responsibilities.

Ongoing monitoring.

Reporting Schedule agreed.

B. Creating Momentum



Step 4: Preferred Future

Broadly setting direction and cluster aims.

Agreeing outcomes and achievements required across the cluster.

Setting outcome timelines.



Step 5: Initial Strategy and Short Term Agendas

Early actions and timelines.

Engaging with short term goals.

Achievement of short term goals.

C. Extending the Base



Step 6: Launching, Promotion and Linking

Launch to celebrate initial successes for individual clusters and promotion to others.

Working with the clusters to bring them together.

Create Case studies.

D. Sustaining Momentum



Step 7: Long-term agenda

Setting long term goals and direction.

Providing a platform for continuation after the Horticulture Wales project ends.



Step 8: Evaluation

Has clustering made a difference?

Outcomes and achievements.

Reports created and fed back.

The Horticulture Wales project is a short term project, its main aim will be to facilitate the creation and early establishment of the three regional clusters, supporting them in their development, and providing businesses with a neutral environment to develop mutually beneficial relations, establish trust and find common ground. This will be through bridging gaps, undertaking research found to be needed within the sector/region, organising events to bring people together and to find information and guidance from other projects when required. The project will support these sustainable clusters which will continue post-project for the long term benefit of the sector.

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