

Taste 4
Success

Skillnet,



ConnectsUS

Reimagining sustainable,
healthy & local food communities

Commences 21 March 2026, 9.30am-1.30pm

Location The Model, Sligo



Register expression
of interest

t4s.ie/connectsus-reg



This Taste 4 Success Skillnet programme is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union

Connecting Communities & Enterprise for Sustainable Food

Food and sustainability are deeply intertwined. The way we produce, consume, and waste food has significant environmental and social impacts. Achieving sustainability in food systems is essential to addressing issues like climate change, biodiversity loss, and food insecurity. Local food communities are a powerful tool in the transition to a more sustainable and resilient world.

By reducing environmental impacts, supporting local economies, enhancing food security, and promoting healthier eating, local food initiatives such as small-scale farms, local markets, or community food projects are an essential part of creating a sustainable future.

Business and communities are crucial partners in delivering sustainable food action on the ground. Communities are often the first to recognise and act on the opportunity to create healthier and sustainable food pathways and choices for their towns and areas. With its deep base of expertise, skills and resources business can contribute to, and collaborate with, local communities to deliver more effective action.

Connectsus is a unique and innovative training programme which brings community and business together to imagine and co-produce vision and action for healthy, place-based and circular food systems that are good for people and planet.

The programme will explore and review:



Key sustainability challenges and how they impact communities and business



Why and how business engages with communities and the benefits



Key factors for successful community sustainability initiatives



Food systems particularly in relation to local food networks and partnerships



Circular economy and food waste



How to form lasting partnerships and collaborate effectively



Envisioning positive sustainable food futures for your community



Creative placemaking: what makes the Sligo region special?



How to establish a micro or social enterprise to support new local food systems businesses



Community Leadership

We will examine key food issues for the Sligo area and how the community can play its part in addressing global food challenges. A key output from the programme will be a Sligo Sustainable Food Charter which will be underpinned by future initiatives and actions developed in the programme.

The course will draw on a diverse range of innovative learning approaches to complement formal learning e.g. experiential learning, dialogue, reflection, diaries/journals, imagining, podcasts, citizen science and videos and will include field trips to exemplar communities and demonstrators.

The programme will require a commitment of approx. 20-24 hours over March-May 2026.

Target Audience

Companies in the broad food / beverage / hospitality sector and community members interested in enhancing sustainable food initiatives and networks in the Sligo region.

Course Objectives



Re-imagine and re-envisage the sustainability transition as an unprecedented opportunity to create better enterprises and more sustainable and healthier communities



Support enterprise and communities to establish a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities which will be presented by the societal transformation to sustainable food systems



Learn from case studies exemplars of community sustainability transitions programmes in Ireland to speed up and catalyse change



Leverage the deep expertise and capacity within enterprise and business to support communities



To develop a Sligo region Sustainable Food Charter along with a set of planned activities that readies the community & business for action on sustainable food



Seed the establishment of a potential long-term collaborative network between enterprise and communities in the target geographical area to build long term capacity for community wealth building

Learning Outcomes



Appreciate key global and local sustainability challenges (climate change, biodiversity loss, water/waste, poverty, SDGs, just transition) and what they mean for communities and business



Learn key business-community approaches and develop a tailored business-community engagement strategy



Understand the key factors behind successful sustainable food communities and review case studies in Irish context



Appreciate how a food systems approach can be applied to your community/town



Understand the concept of circular economy and explore the potential for new business models using this concept



Learn how to form lasting partnerships and collaborate effectively



Envision positive sustainable food futures for your community



Know how to leverage the power of policy/government organisations to realise your goals



Why attend this course



Connect with like-minded individuals, community groups, and businesses interested in sustainable and healthy food in your area



Learn in an atmosphere of fun, collegiality, hope and ambition



Get involved in developing a community food initiative in your town



Become a more effective community leader



Draw on skills and resources of business and industry to deliver a food initiative of interest to you



Establish deeper and long-lasting community relationships

Dates, Times & Locations



Saturday, March 21st

9.30-13.30, in-person
The Model, Sligo



Tuesday, April 14th

18.00-20.00
Online



Wednesday, April 29th

18.00-20.30, in person
WB's Coffee House



Tuesday, May 12th

18.00-20.00
Online



Saturday, June 6th

9.30-13.30, in-person
Location (To be Announced) Sligo



Academic Team & Industry Support



Mick Kelly

Founder & CEO, GIY

Mick is founder of GIY, a social entrepreneur, author, TV presenter and hacker grower. He worked in the IT industry for 10 years before starting GIY in 2008 after a chance encounter with a bulb of Chinese garlic in a supermarket.

He co-presented/produced 3 series of Grow Cook Eat for RTE which is now watched around the world on Amazon Prime. He also presents and co-produced the 6-part series Food Matters on RTE 1.

Mick is an Ashoka Fellow, a member of The Irish Food Writers Guild and a board member at Common Knowledge. He has written 5 books, the latest of which The GIY Diaries was nominated for an Irish Book Award in 2022.

He has written columns on food for The Irish Times, The Irish Independent and Food & Wine Magazine. He was Local Food Hero in the Food & Wine Awards.



Dr Colin Sage

Independent Research Scholar

Colin Sage is an independent research scholar who worked previously at University College Cork, Ireland. He is an Affiliated Professor with the Faculty of Nutrition and Food Sciences at the University of Porto, and Visiting Professor at the University of Gastronomic Sciences, Italy.

He is the author of Environment and Food (Routledge, 2012); editor of A Research Agenda for Food Systems (Elgar, 2022), and co-editor of five other books.

He was a co-founder of the Cork Food Policy Council and served as its chair from 2013-2019. He now lives in Viana Do Castelo, Portugal.



Dr Paul Bolger

Head of UCC Sustainability Academy

Paul is Head of the UCC Sustainability Academy. He has worked across academia, industry and government for over 25 years developing long term research solutions for global sustainability challenges.

He is lead trainer on a range of short sustainability courses in UCC including Introduction to Sustainability in Business, Sustainability in Practice for Business, and Sustainability for Business Success. He teaches on Leadership for Sustainability as part of the HDip for Sustainability in Enterprise for at UCC. He has led a number of research projects on climate action and the circular economy. A golden thread through Paul's training and research has been to ensure that knowledge developed and taught is useful and impactful for learners and users.



Patrick Mulvihill

Systems Designer & Strategic Director

Patrick is the co-founder of Amicitia, an award-winning hybrid social enterprise in Athenry, Co. Galway. His multidisciplinary practice focuses on place-based strategies for economic, social, and cultural regeneration, promoting a just transition to a low-carbon economy.

Amicitia serves as a vibrant social hub, hosting community projects in assistive technologies, sustainable energy, biodiversity, and socially engaged arts. The enterprise also offers sustainability-focused education and consultancy across Ireland, co-designing initiatives with diverse groups, including migrants and individuals with disabilities.



Professor Janas Harrington

School of Public Health, UCC

Janas is a Professor and Director of the BSc Public Health Sciences at University College Cork's School of Public Health. Her research focuses on the determinants of dietary patterns and their links to obesity and cardiovascular risk, adopting a systems approach to food policy.

Janas leads the Food Policy Research team and has contributed to significant epidemiological studies in Ireland. She is actively involved in policy development as Chair of the Cork Food Policy Council and co-Chair of the Public Health Task Force for the European Association for the Study of Obesity.



Anna Ozolina

Manager, UCC Sustainability Academy

Anna is a manager, educator and researcher specialising in responsible and sustainable business. She is experienced in co-designing and delivering sustainability leadership programmes, managing large EU and corporate projects, and developing centers of excellence. Anna has a strong track record in building communities and leveraging networks to advance sustainability-driven practice. In her role as Manager of UCC Sustainability Academy, she focuses on developing impactful sustainability training that empowers communities and supports transformative change.



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Fees and Funding

There is no fee for Taste 4 Success Skillnet members and is available to all eligible applicants.

Eligibility Criteria

- Business must be registered and based in the Republic of Ireland
- Start up/artisan/sole traders/social enterprise and representatives from community groups are eligible if based and operating in the Republic of Ireland
- Participants must be resident and living in the Republic of Ireland
- Participants should ideally be decision makers/influencers in their organisation/community group, to champion and support the sustainability initiative
- Participants demonstrate (as per application/registration form) an understanding and commitment to sustainability, community and ESG initiatives in general
- Interested candidates, who are not employed by a registered ROI enterprise or social community/enterprise, or who may be unemployed, or a volunteer, must check the Connectsus Programme Eligibility Criteria to ensure the candidate meets the Programme funding criteria before applying.
- As a Government of Ireland and Member Company funded training network, we can only support those enterprises and candidates meeting the above criteria

For further information visit t4s.ie/connectsus, www.connectsus.ie or email Breda Barber at info@taste4success.ie, or Anna Ozolina at aozolina@ucc.ie