

# URBAN AGRICULTURE GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS AND PROCESSES

## A guide for practitioners



ИНСТИТУТ  
ПО ФИЛОСОФИЯ  
И СОЦИОЛОГИЯ



EFUA

European  
Forum  
on Urban  
Agriculture

## What is the aim of this guide

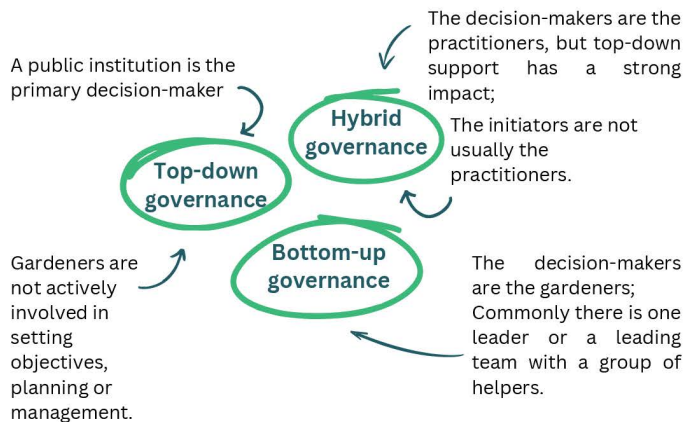
Urban agriculture initiatives (UAI) play a crucial role in promoting sustainable and innovative urban development, as well as community engagement. However, ensuring good governance throughout the various stages of UAI development can be challenging. This guide aims to help practitioners navigate UA governance processes by learning about best governance practices, success factors and common pitfalls throughout the different stages of UAI development. The information in the guide is based on the EFUA research on the most common governance mechanisms that make UAIs sustainable, innovative and place-sensitive.



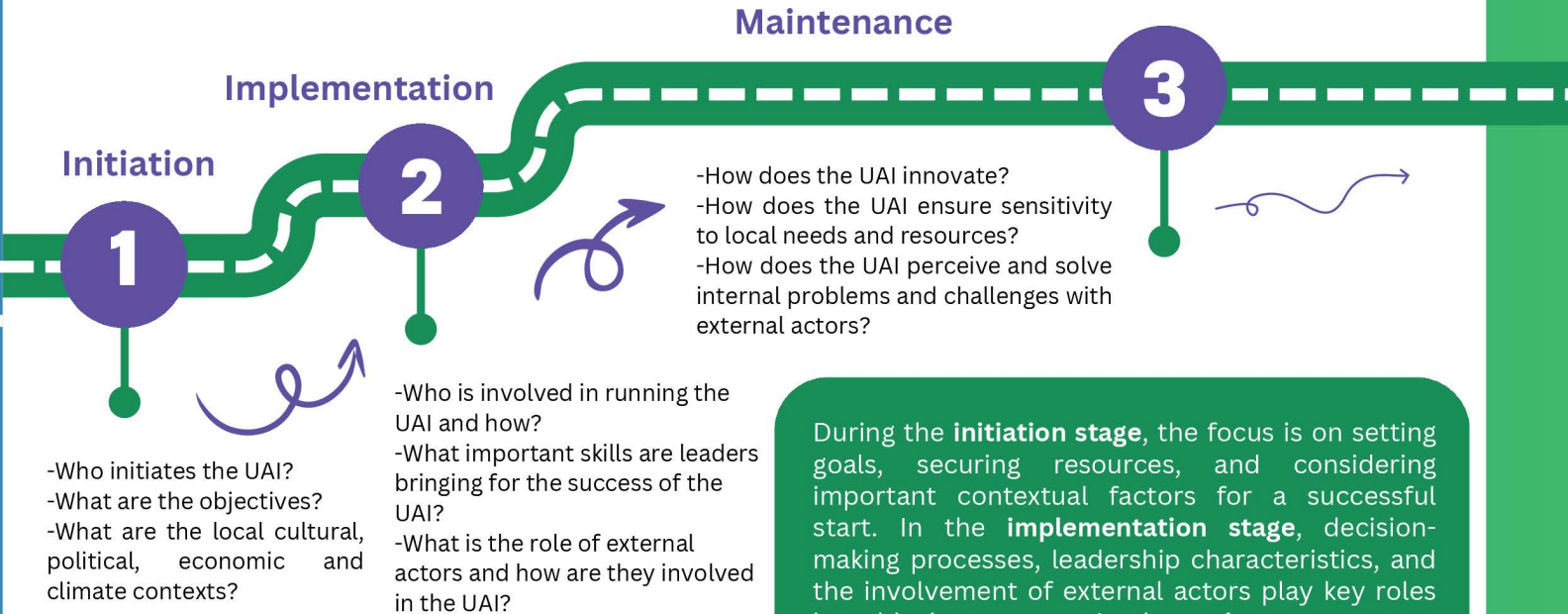
## What is a UA governance model?

UA governance models represent “ideal types” of the most common ways in which UAIs may be structured internally, their practice characteristics and the way they interact with external actors and the broader urban context. These characteristics tell us what the initiative is all about: who runs it, with what goals and resources, how decisions are made, how problems and conflicts are solved.

In the EFUA project, we identified three most common UA governance models:



# The stages of UAI development



During the **initiation stage**, the focus is on setting goals, securing resources, and considering important contextual factors for a successful start. In the **implementation stage**, decision-making processes, leadership characteristics, and the involvement of external actors play key roles in achieving success. In the **maintenance stage**, the main governance characteristics ensure sustainability, innovativeness, and embeddedness of the urban agriculture initiatives.

# UA GOVERNANCE BEST PRACTICES

# UA GOVERNANCE SUCCESS FACTORS



## INITIATION

- Encouraging all type of initiators: experienced farmers, and people with no prior farming experience, organizations aiming to benefit local communities, etc.
- Planning for the necessary resources and securing initial funding or volunteer energy.
- Engaging the community from the start to kindle enthusiasm and gain support.

- Successful initiators often have a strong drive and clear vision to transition from other professional fields to UA.
- A supportive social and political context can greatly enhance the chances of success of a UAI.
- Initial Funding: securing initial funding, whether from personal savings, local institutions, or private partners, is essential for reducing insecurity and stress among initiators .



## IMPLEMENTATION

- Combining bottom-up energy with top-down support from municipal or state institutions is often the most successful approach.
- Involving all relevant stakeholders during the growth of a UAI can enhance engagement and commitment.
- Strong leaders with excellent interpersonal skills are crucial for navigating political contexts and securing policy support.

- A strong community spirit and culture of volunteering significantly contribute to UAI success.
- External support from local or national institutions helps sustain volunteer-driven initiatives.
- Leaders who can gather policy support and effectively manage both supportive and non-supportive political contexts are vitally important.



## MAINTENANCE

- Ensuring ongoing financial support and active participation from community members.
- Maintaining both formal and informal decision-making structures that provide transparency and reduce uncertainty.
- Including external stakeholders in governance to bring in additional resources and support.

- Efficient and inclusive governance structures that allow for democratic participation.
- Leaders who can adapt to changing circumstances and maintain motivation and engagement among participants.
- A clear long-term vision and strategic planning help in navigating unpredictable circumstances like economic crises or climate changes.

# UA GOVERNANCE BARRIERS

- The enthusiasm and energy of initiators can be powerful but often have limits, leading to burnout over time if not supported by external resources.
- Even when initial funding is secured, it often comes with conditions and is not guaranteed long-term.
- Lack of supportive policies, difficult relations with local authorities, and cultural resistance can impede progress.

- Lack of supportive policies, difficult relations with local authorities, and individualistic local cultures can hinder progress.
- Engaging local citizens can be challenging and time-consuming.
- Even with external support, the sustainability of resources is a constant challenge.

- Leaders and key participants can experience burnout if responsibilities are not shared.
- Long-term success is influenced by less evident economic, cultural, political and climate factors, which are hard to predict and manage.
- Ensuring compliance with various and changing regulatory frameworks can be a complex and ongoing challenge.



## How can practitioners foster success and overcome common pitfalls in UAI development?

Practitioners play a key role in ensuring the success and sustainability of UAIs. By addressing key success factors and overcoming common barriers, practitioners can significantly enhance the impact of these initiatives. Here is how you can do this:

### HOW DOES IT BRING SUCCESS

#### ENGAGE IN BOTTOM-UP INITIATIVES

- Participants feel a personal stake in the initiative, leading to higher levels of commitment.
- Bottom-up initiatives are more likely to address specific local needs and utilize local resources effectively.
- Grassroots initiatives build stronger, more resilient communities by fostering local skills and networks.

#### FOSTER COMMUNITY SPIRIT AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

- A strong sense of community encourages more people to get involved and contribute to the initiative.
- Collective action enables the pooling of resources, knowledge, and skills.
- Building a network of support within the community creates a robust foundation for ongoing activities and projects.

#### SECURE AND DIVERSIFY FUNDING

- Multiple funding sources ensure consistent financial support, allowing for long-term planning and innovation.
- Diverse funding enables the initiative to undertake a broader range of activities and reach more people.
- Securing funds attracts more supporters and volunteers and increases credibility of UAIs.

### HOW DOES IT OVERCOME BARRIERS

- Community resources and volunteering make UAIs less vulnerable to changes in municipal policies.
- Grassroots movements can quickly adapt to new challenges and opportunities without bureaucratic delays.
- Local engagement generates support and goodwill, reducing opposition and enhancing cooperation with local stakeholders.

- Encouraging collaborative culture helps overcome individualistic tendencies and promotes collective responsibility.
- Sharing responsibilities and delegating tasks prevents burnout and ensures continuity even if key individuals step back.
- A strong community spirit fosters open communication and trust, making it easier to resolve conflicts and challenges.

- Diversified funding reduces the risk associated with reliance on a single source, protecting the initiative from sudden financial shortfalls.
- A broad funding base enhances the initiative's ability to weather economic fluctuations and policy changes.

## HOW DOES IT BRING SUCCESS

### IMPLEMENT INCLUSIVE DECISION-MAKING

- Inclusive processes build trust among participants, leading to stronger commitment.
- Including diverse perspectives in decision-making leads to more balanced solutions.
- Participants are more likely to stay involved when they feel their voices are valued.

### RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT UA BENEFITS

- Educating the public and authorities about UA benefits can lead to greater acceptance, support, and better visibility for potential participants.
- Demonstrating the benefits of UA can influence policy makers to create more supportive policies.

### PROMOTE INNOVATIVE SOCIAL SOLUTIONS

- Addressing social issues in innovative ways through UA can enhance the initiative's impact and relevance in the community.
- Innovative solutions attract attention and support from various stakeholders, such as funders and volunteers.

### FACILITATE NETWORKING

- Building networks and alliances enhances UAIs' capacity to achieve its goals, strengthening advocacy efforts and increasing the UAI's influence on policy and public opinion.
- Networking facilitates the exchange of best practices and innovations, improving the initiative's effectiveness.

### ENCOURAGE POLICY CO-CREATION

- Engaging with policy makers can result in more favorable policies supporting UA, and institutional support.
- Co-creating policies ensures that they are clear, relevant, and beneficial to UA practitioners.

## HOW DOES IT OVERCOME BARRIERS

- Inclusive decision-making helps prevent and resolve conflicts.
- When decisions are made inclusively, participants are more likely to support and follow through on them, reducing resistance and improving implementation.

- Awareness efforts can shift negative perceptions about UA.
- Increased awareness can lead to better access to land, funding, and other necessary resources from supportive institutions.

- Addressing social issues in innovative ways can open up new funding opportunities from organizations focused on social impact and help the UAI gain wider acceptance.

- Networks provide mutual support, helping UAIs navigate challenges and overcome obstacles.
- Collective action can improve access to markets and resources, making it easier for small-scale UA producers to compete.

- Working with policy makers to streamline regulations can reduce bureaucratic hurdles.
- Engaging in policy discussions can enhance the legitimacy of UA initiatives, making it easier to gain support and resources.



E|F|U|A

European  
Forum  
on Urban  
Agriculture

Photographs by Daniel Munderlein,  
RWTH Aachen University

This project has received funding from  
the European Union's Horizon 2020  
research and innovation programme  
under Grant agreement No 101000681.



For more detailed information, data and analysis on  
the governance mechanisms that contribute to  
sustainability, innovativeness and place-sensitivity of  
each type of UAI, visit the Public resources section of



[www.efua.eu](http://www.efua.eu)