



Added Value of Networking

Success Story

Success Story title *Communities of Practice*

Theme *2. Knowledge exchange; 3. Training;*

NRN *Netherlands* Coordinator *NSU*

Partners *Municipalities with an innovative rural policy*

Period *2007-2012* Resources *From municipalities*

Geo-location *Overijssel-Gelderland*

Beneficiaries *Alderman of 8 municipalities*

Background

There are several municipalities which have large rural areas and who want to share innovative ideas for the development of the countryside. The Alderman of these areas face many challenges, including for example tensions between farmers and entrepreneurs over land for recreational use, or how to organise public-private co-funding for project activities. Individually they lack information on new options to overcome these challenges, however each of them has experience to share which is very relevant to the others.

Main activities

Inviting the Alderman to meetings and organising dialogues on their needs. Each session discusses one problem the host Alderman is facing with the host presenting the key issue and asking advice on a specific policy question. The contributions of the other participants make reflection on the issue more profound and they advise the host. Answering each others questions leads to the development of field based knowledge. As the NSU we describe this knowledge and disseminate it for further exchange via different communication channels. All these reports are accessible on our website. These meetings have taken place once every 3 months over a period of two years.

Main results/benefits

The Alderman gained new insights into rural development, sharing innovative practices amongst each other and among their civil servants. In one case they generated a policy debate with the Ministry on Natura 2000. The solutions developed in the Community of Practice are disseminated to other regions.





Contribution of the NSU

The NSU was the facilitator. The facilitation time is largely paid for by the municipalities and enabled the NSU to organise and prepare the meetings, during the meetings NSU team members also acted as chairman and took the minutes. After the meetings we shared the new knowledge with other regions and facilitated new connections between Alderman and civil servants around the country where we knew they were facing the same problems.

Contribution of the partners

Municipalities, they hosted the meetings and selected the discussion themes. Furthermore each of them pays 2000 euro for a series of 6-8 sessions, spread over 2 years. These payments come from their internal capacity building budget.

Success factors

This activity has developed the field based knowledge available for dissemination and has answered a professional need for sharing knowledge and ideas. A community based on trust has gradually developed amongst the participants. The success of the meetings is reliant on the clear preparation of the lead questions by the facilitator. The fact that they pay the major part of the costs indicates the relevance of this networking activity to their needs.

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