

Added Value of Networking



Showcasing Rural Projects

Basic information	
NRN:	Northern Ireland
Theme:	Good practice
Coordinator:	n.a.
Partners:	n.a.
Beneficiaries:	More than 30 project managers
Resources:	n.a.
Period:	2013
Main element of networking:	Collection, analysis and dissemination of good practice, success stories and relevant experience
Other elements of networking:	Exchange of relevant experience and know-how amongst stakeholders

Background

More than 30 businesses which have been supported through the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme were showcased recently at Ireland's largest agricultural show, Balmoral Show. A wide range of ventures including farm diversification, business creation and development as well as tourism businesses formed part of the inaugural LEADER marquee.

The exhibit was the idea of the RDP Communications Working Group (CWG) which comprises LAG members as well as representatives of the Rural Network and Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) and is dedicated to promoting Axis 3 projects. The CWG has ratified an Axis 3 Communication/ Publicity Strategy devised by DARD, engaged in media training and have succeeded in raising the profile of the Axis 3 RDP projects.

Main activities

Once the CWG had made the decision to deliver the exhibit the partners worked together to identify those businesses who wanted to participate. The opportunity to become involved was promoted through a range of channels with over 30 businesses responding. The Leader Marquee was then developed to accommodate these businesses ensuring every opportunity was provided to enable them



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to showcase their products and services. Much work was carried out with the show organisers to ensure the Leader Marquee was also promoted extensively through their marketing media.

During the three day show members of the CWG, including the NRN, hosted the Marquee ensuring everything ran smoothly and the general public were able to learn as much as possible about Axis 3 funding in the area.

Main results/benefits

The LEADER marquee was a major initiative to demonstrate the 'bottom-up development' ethos of Axis 3 and tangibly illustrate how people on the ground had successfully applied and received investment. The businesses showcased during the three day show exemplified the diversity of rural life and the flexibility and adaptability of EU rural development policy.

The Minister for Rural Development Michelle O'Neill officially opened the exhibit and said the Rural Development Programme had continued to deliver tremendous support to the agri-food industry and rural communities. The Minister revealed that from an overall budget of £500m, several thousand projects have been supported by the Programme creating new business and new employment opportunities in rural areas.

Success factors

The marquee allowed Networking to take place on a greater scale as businesses owners became more aware of other RDP grant recipients and shared stories and views on the programme intervention. It also required LAG staff and members, Rural Network team members and DARD (Managing Authority) to work together to initially coordinate the event and to work together over the three days of the show to ensure its success.

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Networking was vital to the success of the initiative as members of the Communication Working Group had to work effectively together to deliver the activity. Networking also enabled the businesses to become engaged with the opportunity and raise their profile as part of the Leader Marquee. Much networking also took place over the three days with the businesses involved learning more about each other and exploring new ways of working together.

Contribution of the NSU

The Northern Irish NRN worked with the Communications Working Group to successfully deliver the



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three day exhibition.

Contribution of the partners

The Leaser Marquee was a joint initiative with DARD and LAG partners all of which contributed to the initiative.

Additional information

n.a.

Pictures



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Source: Northern Ireland NRN

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