

Added Value of Networking



Innovation Camps

Basic information	
NRN:	NRN Finland
Theme:	Good practice
Coordinator:	Juha-Matti Markkola, NRN Finland
Partners:	Ministry of Employment and the Economy, The Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra, Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners, ProAgria Advisory Centre, Municipality of Kaustinen
Beneficiaries:	Rural stakeholders
Resources:	€ 86,000
Period:	2012 – 2013
Main element of networking:	Capacity building and training
Other elements of networking:	Effective stakeholder engagement Exchange of relevant experience and know-how amongst stakeholders

Background

The focus of the Mainland Finland Rural Development Programme in 2012 was on innovation - new ideas, products or ways of working that responded effectively to some of the challenges of our time. The aim during the year of the theme was to draw attention to new ideas, which utilised rural opportunities in a unique or ingenious fashion, and to remind people that 'There is Room for the Future in the Countryside'. New solutions are needed to deal with climate change, bioenergy, new technologies and population trends, changes that also provide new opportunities in rural areas. New kinds of rural industries may fulfil some of the needs and demands arising from today's changing world.

The innovation camp was a part of the 2012 theme year of the Mainland Finland Rural Development Programme. The aims of the rural innovation camp were to:

- develop new rural innovations,
- develop a rural 'environment of innovation', which increased and improved co-operation between experts and developed a new way of working,
- highlight the strengths within rural areas for enabling new innovations,
- raise awareness of the opportunities provided by the Rural Development Programme to develop new innovations,
- be a learning process to build a model for regional innovation camps.



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Main activities

An open call for rural innovation ideas in Spring 2012 identified a total of forty-seven concepts. Eight of these were selected to be developed further at the Innovation Camp. The first Finnish Rural Innovation Camp was organised in June 2012 in the small municipality of Kaustinen. Each idea was developed in a small team, which included six experts (from researchers and designers to entrepreneurs). These versatile teams then competed against each other over three days and nights during which the ideas were developed to create new products or services, which made ingenious use of opportunities found in rural areas. During the process the teams were helped by different kinds of external experts. The Camp culminated with sales pitches to a jury, who rewarded the most promising ideas. After the Camp the winners have continued working on their projects, supported by the partners involved in the initiative.

The next phase of the initiative is to organise regional Innovation Camps. The model of Innovation Camps has been disseminated to support rural developers at a regional level. During spring 2013 the NSU made an open call to rural actors in order to find areas and subjects where the Innovation Camp model could be utilised. Ten areas with different special local development themes were enrolled, with five of them being selected. During 2013 regional Innovation Camps will be organised in these areas supported both financially and with expert help from the NSU.

Main results/benefits

The Innovation Camp resulted in forty-seven new ideas for rural innovation being launched. Other benefits included:

- The publicity received by the Camp promoted the potential of rural areas as a source of new innovation.
- Via the Camp, development efforts carried out in rural Finland and rural businesses received significant visibility in national, regional and local media.
- A new method to develop rural innovation was launched.

The Innovation Camp model has been disseminated at a regional level.

Success factors

The Innovation Camp was highly successful. The key elements of this success were:

- A totally new method of working was introduced in to rural development.
- The Camp attracted entries from all demographics and all parts of the country.
- New actors were involved in rural development.

The partners were strongly committed to the process.



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Networking enabled the Camp to achieve its success and this networking resulted in a range of benefits:

- New actors took part in the process - urban actors met rural actors and totally new ideas were discovered expanding the rural network.
- The expertise of the partners was used efficiently.
- Benchmarking occurred through ENRD - the initial idea was received from the National Rural Network of Sweden

Contribution of the NSU

The Camp was an NSU initiative. It gathered all the major actors together in the NRN to plan and implement the Innovation Camp. The Rural Network Unit coordinated the process and hired an external service provider to put the Camp into practice. Planning and monitoring of the implementation of the Camp was carried out by the Committee, which consisted of the project partners.

Contribution of the partners

The partners provided both funding and their expertise to implement the Innovation Camp making the Camp a real joint effort. Behind the Camp was the Committee, which planned and monitored the practical arrangements and provided expert help at different stages of the process.

Additional information

<http://www.peloton.me/category/ideat/> (in Finnish). Further information is also available in Case Study format.

A Case Study of this project is also available

Pictures

n/a

Last Update

May 2013

