

# LEVER

## Voluntary culture as leverage of cultural activities in sparsely populated areas with added value for democratic and community bonding

*Draft version of the local pilot work strategy*

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### ***I. Common pilot work strategy***

#### **1. Background and objectives with reference to the need analysis**

The Finnish social welfare system is based on the Nordic welfare model and to a great extent, is public and financed through taxes (Abrahamson 1999). Since the aftermath of the economic recession of the 1990s, the Governments of Finland have come to recognize the increasing role NGOs play. Part of this recognition can be attributed to the key characteristics of NGOs which are not only in terms of resources and inputs, but also in terms of their social and political productivity. Thus, NGOs are said to play a number of fundamental roles in Finland (Särkelä 2004).

The NGO's play an important role in the attempt to retain the sparsely populated villages. The association helps to create that feeling of really belonging to a community.

Something that seems to be a recurring challenge among organizations in the boonies is to get away from the same old routines and get some kind of innovation in the activities. If you are active in a sparsely populated area, it is rare to get outside influences, and several of the associations that we interviewed was actually talking about the risk of getting stuck in the same old rails.

Several of the people we spoke to during the mini survey wanted to see simpler models when it comes to applying for grants, or instruction for how to apply. People who are active in voluntary culture associations has day jobs and seldom have time for a lot of extra paperwork. Another typical problem is the division of labor within the organizations. In several cases, there is not the structural framework for how the economy should be managed, but most are made entirely without funding. Besides e.g. repair of the association house which often remains undone because of lack of money.

The objectives of the proposed project will be as follows:

- Education in seeking grants and contributions
- Education in managing the economy through a purchased service on commission
- Education in economic, social, and cultural potential in sparsely populated areas
- Presenting the work done by NGO's to local officials
- Do volunteer exchange both nationally and internationally to gain new insights and influences
- Make certain that there are benefits for association members within the community

#### **2. The essential key activities and deliverables with advices for efficient approaches, incl. quality indicators and evaluation procedures**

Activities:

- Seminars for 10 NGO representatives in 2 different areas about administration, project management, funding etc
- Developing material in writing about the procedure
- Using a local project as an example and following it through

The evaluation will be made by using questionnaires to the participants and by gathering a report on the conclusions. We strive to answer the following questions:

- 1) Which have been the key-actors and the key-beneficiaries of the project?
- 2) Are the key-beneficiaries coherent to the original aim of the project?
- 3) Which is the networks potentiality once the project will be over?
- 4) Has the project created permanent networks?
- 5) Which actions and policies should be taken to improve the sustainability?

The analysis can be useful for both mid-term and final evaluation. In the mid-term, we can verify if the project is creating what it aims for and if it is are potentially sustainable. By periodically monitoring the project and its future potentiality during the implementation phase, we can understand how to correct and improve it.

What is ultimately measured here, is the instrumental social and economical values of the culture, but not the intrinsic values that make culture matter. Thus, we need to acknowledge that evidence-based policy-making has significant limitations in relations to culture, when built on a narrow range of easily measurable indicators.

The aim with the evaluation is still to develop a sophisticated qualitative analysis and a theoretical generalisation of the field to explore how transformation takes place, who engages, how they engage, in what circumstances, and to what end. Furthermore to contribute to a better cultural policy, as well as to fulfill the need of various cross-disciplines to understand the position of culture in relation to individuals, institutions, communities and wider societal structure.

### **3. Suggested content and form in local courses**

Seminars for local NGO activists on administration, project management, funding etc

The participants selected to take part in the seminars will be asked to prepare and submit in advance of the seminar a max 1 page paper addressing economic, social and cultural matters of their NGO and their area.

The seminars' work will then be built principally around a discussion and refinement of draft action files or elements for alternative reports based on the papers prepared in advance, in order to ensure that the participants would leave the seminar with practical action to take on returning home. Particular emphasis will be placed on the potential for NGOs to bring about change by working together.

### **4. Dissemination strategy**

Dissemination is well done when the benefit produced by good quality results and good practices

- 1) helps and encourages people to develop themselves,
- 2) increases the understanding and execution of the idea of lifelong learning in working life,
- 3) changes the practices and patterns of thought in teaching and
- 4) promotes the adoption of the innovation in society.

When considering an appropriate target group for the project results, the three-level division, individual–community–society, helps to outline the essential target groups and individual groups within the different levels.

The dissemination measures require a summary of the progress of the project at certain intervals. In practice we will be using both printed material as well as internet, social media and conversation. This strategy will be updated during the process.

Effective dissemination produces additional advantages:

- 1) Gaining an overall picture of the project
- 2) Involvement of different target and interest groups
- 3) Learning from one's own and others' experiences
- 4) Networking to create the image
- 5) New projects are created
- 6) Learning to learn together

The dissemination activities do not end when the financing of the project ends. Successful results and products continue their lives afterwards. The networks that have been built during the project are involved in the dissemination of the project results also after the close of the project. The results are integrated into the activities of the partner organizations. At its best, the cooperation of the target and interest groups may result in a new development project.

## **5. Time schedule**

To be agreed.

## ***II. Local pilot strategies***

### **1. The local priorities of need and objectives**

We are focusing on these following themes that were presented to us during the mini survey:

- Education in seeking grants and contributions
- Manage the economy through a purchased service on commission
- Greater collaboration provides greater contributions
- Do volunteer exchange both nationally and internationally to gain new insights and influences
- Cooperate also with urban associations to attract their "audience"
- Package the operation for various potential sponsors

### **2. The specific 1-2 local pilot plan (where, what, when, with whom)**

#### **Local pilot projects:**

#### a) The idea hatchery

- will be carried out in local NGOs
- with 4 NGOs per area, in 2 areas
- During the period of september 2016 to april 2017
- An attempt to find models for the NGOs to develop new ideas

#### b) Volunteer exchange / visits

- 4-5 local NGOs and their volunteers
- familiarize volunteers with different activity models and solutions
- will be carried out from september 2016 to april 2017

### **3. Content and form of local training courses for culture boosters**

The idea hatchery: for volunteers at a "pre-activity launch" stage, which typically means they have yet to work past the activity idea or concept. During the course, the participants will receive

mentoring and advising to help establish whether or not the activity concept will be feasible or successful.

Volunteer exchange / visits: Visit another NGO to challenge yourself to do something outside your comfort zone. The experiences range from 1-3 days. Expand your way of thinking and experience different ways of doing things.

After planning and identifying of the main priorities in these two local pilot projects, some material for volunteers in local NGOs will be sent in advance in the selected topics.

#### **4. Dissemination plan**

Using both printed material as well as internet, social media and conversation. This strategy will be updated during the process. The same strategy as in 1. Common pilot work strategy.

#### **5. Evaluation plan and selected quality indicators to monitor and evaluate**

The evaluation will be made by using questionnaires to the participants and by gathering a report on the conclusions. The same strategy as in 1. Common pilot work strategy.

### **REFERENCES**

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