



Added Value of Networking

Success Story

Success Story title *Rural Van Tour*

Theme *Network communications; Knowledge exchange; Cooperation*

NRN *Finland* Coordinator *Rural Network Unit of Finland*

Partners *LEADER Local Action Groups and Central Finland Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment*

Period *1.5.-30.9.2011* Resources *EUR 13,000*

Geo-location *Mainland Finland*

Beneficiaries *Rural residents, especially young adults, around Finland*

Background

The Rural Van Tour was a part of the theme of the Mainland Finland Rural Development Programme for 2011: young adults and rural quality of life. It shared information especially on the opportunities offered by the programme for developing life in rural areas. Younger generations were encouraged to take part in local activities and action groups, and to make use of the business and project funding available from the programme. Young adults from the countryside all around Finland played a central role in the realisation of the theme year.

The aim of the tour was to bring news from the modern countryside to both rural and suburban residents, showing it is possible to live comfortably there, conducting creative or traditional business.

Main activities

For the tour, the Rural Network Unit rented a van that was painted in accordance with a visual image designed by an advertising agency.

- The van was equipped with garden furniture and a laptop computer with WLAN. Other equipment included a video camera and a camera for social media reporting.
- The van also carried copies of a magazine made for the development programme's theme year, in which young rural entrepreneurs and developers from around Finland introduced themselves.
- Operators of the Rural Network were given opportunities for taking in the van and utilising it however they thought best for marketing the Rural Development Programme, their own operations and the region.
- The Rural Network Unit stood for the cost of renting and fuelling the van. Each user of the van picked it up from the previous site.
- The receiving LAG or Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment could claim back some of the costs of running the tour from the Rural Network Unit (by presenting receipts).
- The LAG and centre representatives reported on the Rural Van stops and events in the social media, thanks to integrated Facebook and Twitter profiles.



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Contribution of the partners

The Rural Network Unit of Finland coordinated the Rural Van Tour. Planning and follow-up of the initiative were done together with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's Rural Development Unit, the Agency for Rural Affairs and local operators.

The local operators, i.e. the LEADER Local Action Groups and the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, planned when and where to run the van and were in charge of practical arrangements in the locations where it stopped. Each local operator picked up the van from the previous site and agreed how to transfer it to the next location. They also reported on the events in the social media.

Success factors

The Rural Network Unit created a framework for events to be carried out locally in accordance with each location's specific needs.

- The Rural Van was seen as a novel way of drawing attention to the countryside and to the funding possibilities from the Rural Development Programme for Mainland Finland.
- The main target groups for the tour and the theme year were young adults in the countryside, who play a central role in forming the future of rural areas.
- The Rural Van took the Rural Development Programme to the places where people spend the most time.
- All those who were involved in running the van locally found that it had produced added value for their own organisations. Based on the feedback survey, the van both increased the visibility of the local organisations and the Rural Development Programme, and generated new contacts.
- The visual image of the van was a success. The public could not miss it and it put people in a good mood, almost without exception.
- The Rural Van Tour reached a large rural audience, both directly and indirectly.

Additional information

<http://www.maaseutu.fi/fi/index/viestinta/uutiset/5z5JXheQq.html> (in Finnish)

<http://fi-fi.facebook.com/pages/LandePaku/174165635970877> (in Finnish)





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