



Innovation in LAGs

LEADER case study The effectiveness of 'own projects' in LEADER

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Sustainable development is a cross-cutting theme in LEADER Ravakka's current local development strategy. The aim is to encourage local organisations to combat climate change by becoming more active in implementing environmentally friendly projects.

When the LEADER local development strategy was designed, the Local Action Group (LAG) was careful to listen closely to the needs and aspirations of the population and organisations. The community had a widespread concern about the environment and a strong ambition to address the situation.

However, while everyone understood the need for improving the environment, not many felt that they knew how to go about this in practice. There are very few environmental advisors located in the area and the question arose how the strong strategic focus on environmental actions could be implemented effectively by the LAG.

The concept of 'own LEADER projects' was the solution. Here, the LAG employs a thematically relevant person who would join the LAG team and be in charge of facilitating the up-take of a distinct measure or priority of the LAG strategy. This staff member is responsible for connecting with local actors, raising awareness and building capacities in the relevant theme and to help project promoters in project design and application writing. If required, he/she also provides assistance to lead partners throughout the implementation of their project.

'Own projects' are quite popular in Finland with an estimated over 50% of LAGs making use of this model. However, the Managing Authority will only give its approval when the proposal is strictly focusing on the implementation of the LAG strategy, is co-funded by appropriate organisations, and guarantees to create a new position for the job.

For LAG Ravakka, 'own projects' have proven most effective over the years and helped implement their strategy with great success. The additional employees enable core LAG staff to focus on their administrative and management duties, while they are facilitating maximum project up-take and high-quality applications in line with the thematic ambitions of the strategy.

For example, the two-year EkoTeko project (€76 730) strives to enhance sustainability in the countryside. The LAG employed an environmental animator who is providing advice and services for local associations on sustainable development, including training, peer learning, opportunities for networking, cooperation and experience sharing in a range of thematically relevant topics. EkoTeko includes many environmental strands, for example the



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environmental member of staff encourages local associations, local actors, households, young people etc. to rethink their daily activities and help them design projects that will find practical solutions for a more ecological and sustainable everyday life.

Based on the experience of the LAG, 'own projects' are also excellent mechanisms to help engage with specific target groups such as young people, or to increase capacity for networking with other LAGs across Finland and internationally.

'Own projects' are funded in the same way as other LEADER project. At the outset, LAG Ravakka agreed with their seven local Municipalities that they would fund 20% of the LAG's public funding resources over the entire programme period. As such, the part-time environmental post presented above was funded by LEADER public funding consisting of 42% EU, 38% national and 20% Municipalities' resources. Annual meetings with each of the Municipalities ensure that progress is reviewed and that the funders are kept informed about the implementation of the strategy. So far, the Municipalities are delighted with the performance of the LAG and the effectiveness of its 'own projects'. Despite of COVID-19 they have approved an increase in funds to be allocated to the LAG.

Further information:

http://www.ravakka.fi/leader_ravakka/tietoa_meista

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