

Service point in Värmskog

The construction of a multifunctional building that provides a range of services to the inhabitants and visitors of a small village affected by depopulation.

EAFRD-funded projects

Location: Värmskog, Sweden

Programming period: 2014-2020

Priority: P6 - Social inclusion & local development

Focus Area: Local development

Measures: M19 - LEADER/CLLD

Funding: RDP contribution 210 595 (EUR)

EAFRD 105 298 (EUR)

National/Regional 105 297 (EUR)

Timeframe: 2017 to 2020

Project promoter: Bygdegårdsföreningen

Värmskog

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Lessons & Recommendations

The funds that this project received were a vital boost, but it was the area's local development strategy and the involvement of multiple stakeholders that really steered the initiative and made sure that the project established clear aims and objectives that would deliver benefit for the whole community.

Context

Värmskog is a small community in southwestern Sweden which has suffered depopulation. Despite the natural beauty of the area making it a popular destination for tourists, the area's permanent population was in decline. The municipality provided services such as schools and childcare, but the inhabitants, particularly young families, needed something more than only basic infrastructure to want to make a future for themselves in Värmskog. Local businesses were primarily oriented towards tourism and the tourist season, and there was no space or venue that could provide year-round for the needs of local people.

Summary

In a small community affected by depopulation, CAP funds were used to build a multifunctional social hub and information point that hosts a grocery, a café-bar, shops, a postal service, a pharmacy, coworking spaces, conference rooms and a tourist information and services point. The interior of the building can be easily reconfigured depending upon changing needs and, in the long run, the project hopes to revitalise local life and businesses; making the area an attractive place for young people to settle with their families.

Project results

The social hub and information point has already been cited as a reason for people moving back to Värmskog with their young families. It offers a meeting point for the whole community and provides visitor information and services to the 12 000 tourists who visit the area each year.

The project has created one new full-time job and several seasonal jobs during the summer.

Objectives

The aim of this project was to establish a social hub and information point which would address the needs of local people as well as providing a boost to local tourism through increased visitor welcome and orientation infrastructure.



Activities

In order to ensure that the proposed investment would address multiple needs and interests, the initiators conducted numerous consultation meetings and were careful to reach out to all local stakeholders. The Närheten LEADER Local Action Group (LAG) made an important contribution to facilitating this process, which took almost two years, but which meant that the project was truly reflective of the community's specific requirements.

The principal action of the investment project was to build the social hub and information point. This involved a formal procurement process and building permit authorisation. Many local people contributed hours of volunteer effort to support the planning, design, and financial calculations which underpinned the project's design and implementation.

The finished building now provides space for a new café-bar, a grocery shop (specialising in local produce), and the community's pharmacy and postal service. It also provides conference and co-working facilities, and a tourist information point.

Main results

The social hub and information point makes life easier for residents, especially families with small children, who are now able to access several services in one convenient location. The fact that this includes flexible access to a remote workspace is a real added value, and some have already cited this as a reason for moving back to Värmskog with their young families.

The social hub and information point contributes to the development of local tourism and businesses, and it offers a meeting point for the whole community and a gathering point for young people to participate in social events. It also provides visitor information and services to the 12 000 tourists who visit the area each year. A good example of this being the bicycle rental business that operates from the premises.

The project has created one new full-time job and several seasonal jobs during the summer. This reflects the Närheten LAG's funding condition that for every EUR 80 000 of support that is granted, at least one sustainable full-time job must be created.

Key lessons

The funds that this project received were a vital boost, but it was the area's local development strategy and the involvement of multiple stakeholders that really steered the initiative and made sure that the project established clear aims and objectives that would deliver benefit for the whole community.

Additional information:

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