

bridges

CENTRES OF VOCATIONAL
EXCELLENCE

SME DEVELOPMENT

- Giving Regional
Industry a Voice in
the Political Forum

INTRODUCTION

This is a guideline for anyone who wants to create a space where regional industry gets to express their opinion to political actors. The guideline is made in a “plug-and-play”-format and can be used as is, or you can customize it to your needs.

This guideline is based on the arranged visit of Næringslivets Hovedorganisasjon (NHO; Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise) to the island region of Hitra and Frøya in Trøndelag County. NHO is a Norwegian organization for employers and a business lobbyist. The visit was arranged by the local innovation company Blått Kompetansesenter (BKS; Blue Competence Center), and the goal was to gather NHO and local politicians and businesses from the island region to talk about the challenges facing local businesses.

For anyone else that also has ambitions of offering SMEs and local companies recruitment, education, business development, innovation and entrepreneurial support, such an event can be beneficial. Creating such a space lets the politicians experience directly how different challenges affect local businesses, which can lead to a deeper understanding and more effective policymaking.



bks | Blått
Kompetansesenter

BLÅTT KOMPETANSESENTER

- Facilitator – identified and invited stakeholders, set the agenda, coordinated meetings and arranged food
- Contact person & networking – coordinator



NHO

- The Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO) is Norway's largest organisation for employers and the leading business lobbyist. As an organization representing employers, their main mission was to gather knowledge about businesses in the region and their priorities
- Brought publicity to the event



LOCAL POLITICIANS

- Gather knowledge about local businesses and identify how they can better help facilitate a thriving business sector in their region
- Local knowledge experts



AMBITION & GOAL

The ambition is to help create a space where local businesses feel that their opinions and needs are listened to, and where businesses and politicians get to develop a better understanding of each other. The goal is to develop a strong and resilient business sector in the region.



STAKEHOLDER STRATEGY EXAMPLE

- BKS and NHO have common interests and goals, so it was synergistic that they could visit the business community at both Hitra and Frøya together.
- Example of synergy themes: growth, SMEs, sustainability, finding solutions, the right skills and generally showing companies and business that both organisations see and hear them
- Some of the companies visited were not only member companies of "Næringshagen for Hitra og Frøya" (The Business Garden of Hitra and Frøya), but are also important because they provide jobs for people. Recruitment is the common denominator here.



THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Schools being involved in these kinds of energetic meeting spaces are useful in establishing regional skills needs and how to address recruitment to regional needs together with SMEs and politicians.

The companies could visit the schools to discuss their needs, what they can offer and what they envision in the long term.

SMEs can also motivate young people at a young age, point to opportunities for placement, summer jobs and the like. At the same time, schools can convey the importance of companies participating in various events such as exhibition trade fairs and other recruitment methods that work.



COMMUNICATION

Communication took place via SMS, phone calls and e-mail. Local newspapers were contacted in advance.

What is strategically wise depends on who the target group is and what we want to achieve with what we communicate. I experienced this visit as closed, to the extent that it was only for specific invitees, and therefore personal communication was essential.

As a main coordinator, it is natural to take on the role of host. When meetings commence, welcome the attendees, give people the floor and made sure the meetings are running on time throughout the day. Facilitation of the discussions may be necessary to stick to the agenda.



STAKEHOLDER STRATEGY EXAMPLE



CONTINUED

- The business community is betting on young labour, but at the same time has put a spotlight on the challenge of recruiting enough people. Growing pains - companies are growing faster than they can possibly tolerate in terms of recruitment. Accordingly, the companies have a dialogue with Guri Kunna, the local upper secondary school, in order to obtain knowledge about the number of students and the education they offer that may be of interest to the companies.
- BKS, which is present locally, has, among other things, given business advice to the companies they visited, and assisted with new and better solutions for what they are asking for. This is also something that NHO is interested in.
- Its businesses that drive a lot of the activities around us. That's why it is important to be where they are. Feel their pulse and show them respect by physically showing that you see them and- not least of which- understand them.
- In Hitra and Frøya, the companies that work particularly with industry are dependent on each other. If, for example, things go badly at one factory (downsizing, technical problems and the like), it will have ripple effects at others. As we visited the companies, we were able to see links much more clearly when we gained broad knowledge. Everything from commercial space, to the late application process at the municipalities, to infrastructure and population decline.

> Identify the agenda-setting themes of your region to create a highly relevant energetic meeting space for stakeholders

TIME	WHERE	ACTIVITY
0900 - 1130	Visit to Business 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast and mingling • 4 businesses present themselves, their challenges and how they are trying to solve it • Discussions around the table • Tour of the premises of business 1
1130 - 1215		TRANSPORT
1215 - 1500	Visit to Business 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A local catering company serving lunch and presenting their business • Presentation from business 2 and tour of their premises • Another business and NHO giving presentations
1500 - 1530		TRANSPORT
1530 - 1700	Visit to Business 2 & 3 (Co-Located)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 businesses presents themselves • Tour of the premises of business 3 and 4
1700 - 1730		TRANSPORT
1730 - 1900	Visit to Business 5	Presentation from business 5 and tour of their premises
1900 - 2000		Transport back and short break
2000 -		Dinner at a local restaurant