



Added Value of Networking

Success Story

Success Story title	<i>Best Practices Competition</i>		
Theme	<i>Network communications; Knowledge exchange; Cooperation</i>		
NRN	<i>Finland</i>	Coordinator	<i>The Rural Network Unit of Finland</i>
Partners	<i>Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, and action groups around Finland</i>		
Period	<i>2010, 2012 and 2014</i>	Resources	<i>110,000 Euro</i>
Geo-location	<i>Mainland Finland and Åland Islands</i>		
Beneficiaries	<i>Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment; local operators; other Rural Network stakeholder; rural project operator; rural businesses and rural residents around Finland</i>		

Background

- The aim of the activities of the Rural Network is to showcase the results achieved in the development of the Finnish countryside and to pass on best practices for use in other contexts. As a part of its work towards this aim, the Rural Network Unit organised the first Best Practices Competition in 2010. The next competitions will run in 2012 and 2014. The idea for the competition came from examples from the Swedish and Austrian rural networks.
- The 2010 competition accepted entries in six categories: LEADER; Development; Rural Investment; Rural Innovation; Environmental Investment; and, Rural Investor, which this time was picked from among Finnish Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment.
- Only projects that had been granted funding from the Mainland Finland Rural Development Programme or the Åland Islands Rural Development Programme by the end of January 2010 could be entered into the competition.

Main activities

- Contestants could submit their entries directly into a national best practices database, based on the criteria specified for each category. Representatives from Finland's fifteen Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment picked the best practices from their own area for the semi-final stage of the competition. From the semi-finalists, the Best Practices Committee picked twenty finalists, from which the winners of five categories were chosen by a panel of judges. The winner of the sixth category, the Rural Investor of the Year, was picked by the committee.
- A multimedia presentation lasting approximately one minute was produced on each finalist and uploaded to the Rural Network's YouTube channel and maaseutu.fi. The finalists were presented on maaseutu.fi and in the Rural Network's other communication channels in Finnish and Swedish.
- More than 300 guests celebrated the finalists and winners of the 2010 competition at an Agricultural Gala held at the Old Student House in Helsinki on 7 October 2010.



Main results/benefits

- Today the national best practices database includes all of the competition entries as well as information about the criteria set for the different categories. The database also contains information about which of the entries were nominated to take part in the semi-final and the final in each category.
- For the 2012 competition, the national database has been aligned with the joint best practices database of the EU Member States.
- The winners and some of the finalists for 2010 were also entered in the joint best practices database of the European networks (RDP Projects Database, http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm).

Contribution of the NSU

The Rural Network Unit coordinated the competition and carried out the practical arrangements with external service providers. Planning and monitoring of the implementation were carried out by the Best Practices Committee, which consisted of Rural Network operators from all parts of Finland.

Contribution of the partners

- The Best Practices Committee was behind the competition and it also planned some of the practical arrangements with the Rural Network Unit;
- The Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment and the LEADER Local Action Groups marketed the competition, its stages and its results in their own areas and selected the semi-finalists from their areas;
- From the 173 candidates selected, the Best Practices committee chose twenty finalists, four for each competition category. It also picked the winner of the sixth category, the Rural Investor of the Year;
- The winners, i.e. the best practices put forward in each category, were selected by a panel of six judges. Like the Best Practices Committee, the panel consisted of Rural Network operators;
- The regional information officers of the Mainland Finland Rural Development Programme provided some assistance in creating the introductions and multimedia presentations of the finalists.

Success factors

- Some 173 best practices were recorded in the national best practices database and can be viewed by all those involved and interested in the programme;
- The development efforts carried out in rural Finland and its businesses received significant visibility in national, regional and local media;
- The competition emphasises best practices that are also applicable in other areas of Finland;
- The competition attracted entries from all parts of the country;
- The publicity received by the candidates and winners will encourage new rural entrepreneurs, project operators and residents to make use of Rural Development Programme funding;
- Best practices from Finland were also shared with other EU Member States.

Additional information

- <http://www.maaseutu.fi/fi/index/hyvatkaytannot.html> (in Finnish)
- Best Practices 2010 competition database: <http://mmm.multiedition.fi/maaseutuverkosto/jhkt/> (in Finnish)
- Best Practices 2012 competition database: <http://pk2012.multiedition.fi/pk2012/landing>
- <http://www.rural.fi>





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