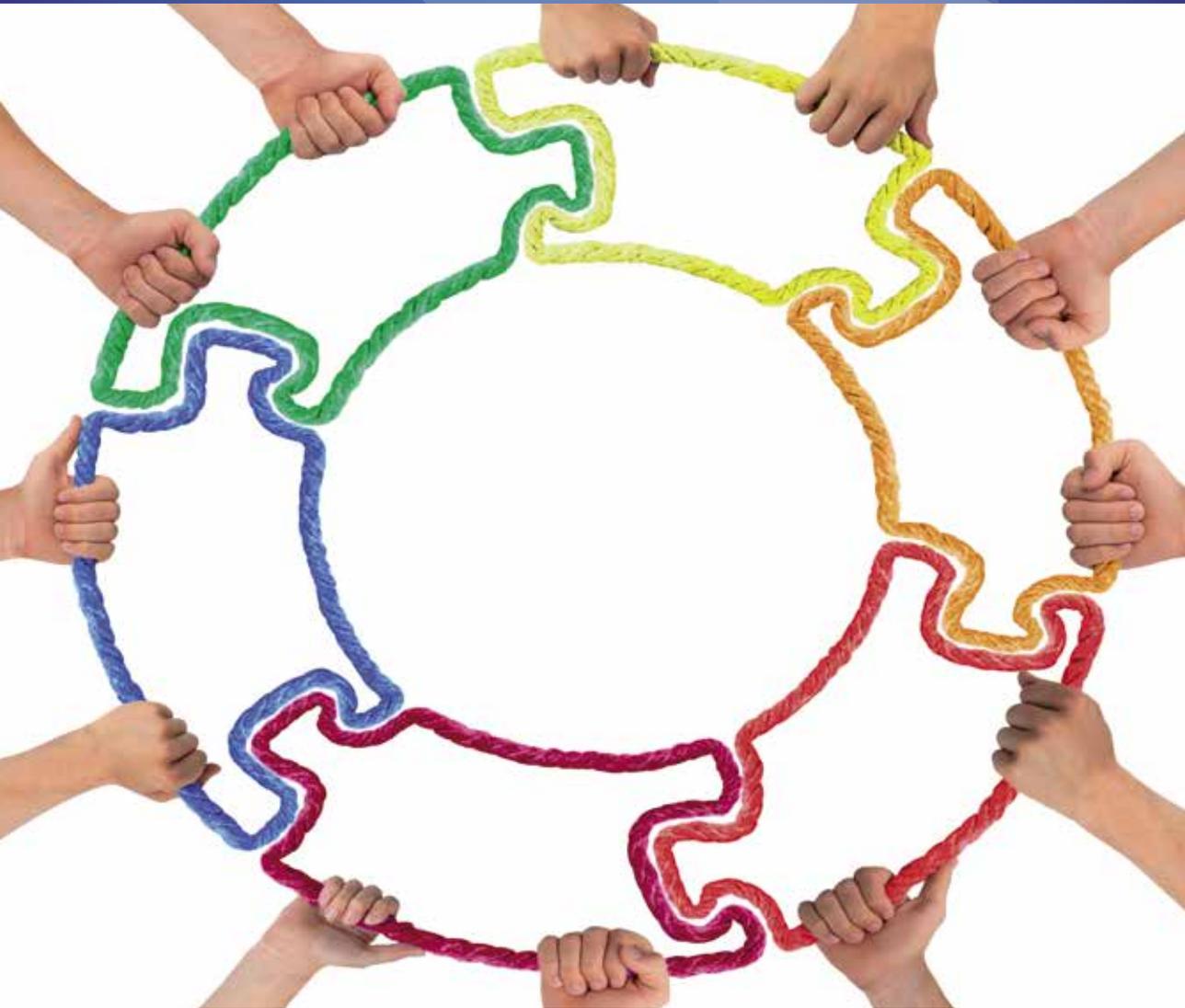


Regional business services

Best practices



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Best practices of Enterprise Finland's regional business services

Regional business services are a significant part of the Enterprise Finland service package. Regional activities have been launched on a considerable scale, and the best practices presented here are just a few examples. Stepping up interaction and cooperation between various organisations plays a key role in regional activities.

As the work to develop cooperation progresses, five central themes have come up. These are communication, networking, relying on third-party expertise, processes and immigration. All these aspects require good interaction skills, expertise and trust in partner organisations. If a website is a source of information, regional cooperation is people working together. The benefits of this are reaped by the customers: entrepreneurs who will receive more flexible services.

In this magazine, we have collected good practices that are already off the ground, indicating that our efforts have indeed been successful. Service providers' joint communications are essential when striving to make it all clear and simple for companies, as in final analysis, entrepreneurs do not need to know who is assisting them and why. Networking helps key actors develop their operations, remove as many bureaucratic stumbling blocks as possible and eliminate boundaries between various branches of administration.

Relying on third-party expertise will certainly be one of future trends; it means that those working with companies will increasingly take on the role of sparring partners and motivators, and that different types of expertise will be utilised in different situations. Processes refer to making the path for accessing a service as short and effortless as possible. In regional services, this refers to the way in which the roles of various actors are optimised for the customer. Another emerging special feature is immigrant entrepreneurs: service providers must be able to tackle special features that are not only legal but above all cultural.

The best practices presented here showcase the work of regional business services in practice. We believe that the examples given in this magazine will instil courage in regional actors and inspire great ideas for new initiatives in developing regional business services.

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Labour Market Counsellor
Ministry of Employment and the Economy

Yrjö Westling
Executive Director
Association of Regional Development Agencies in Finland, SEKES

Efficient communication hits the mark

Forssa Regional Development Centre was one of the first regional business service actors in Finland to introduce electronic newsletters to communicate with its stakeholders. Their eLetter, Netteri, was launched several years ago, and experiences of it have been positive. Netteri, which is compiled and published by the Development Centre, comes out once a month.

– In the beginning, Netteri was a newsletter that you could read directly in your e-mail, but we found this inflexible and resource-intensive, and the letter of course also looked different in different applications. It then evolved into a web-based newsletter: the recipients receive an e-mail with a link to Netteri, which opens up on

our website. The e-mail message also contains a summary of the most important subjects, which allows the recipient to assess at a glance whether the latest newsletter has information that is of interest for them, explains Heidi Cavén from Forssa Regional Development Centre.

It is Heidi's job to get the items for Netteri together and enter them in a ready-made template. However, the whole work community shares the responsibility for gathering the information.

– We only put positive news in Netteri. They may be business news, good practices or ideas. Netteri naturally also provides information about topical training or other events. We are constantly



improving Netteri, for example based on reader feedback, to make it as easy as possible for the recipients to pick out subjects that are important for them in our newsletter, says Heidi Cavén.

In the early days of the newsletter, there were some 500 addresses in the subscription list. In six years, the register has expanded to comprise some 3,000 recipients.

– Our subscribers are companies, private and public sector actors and such people as local councillors. As a development company, we are well placed to cover a wide range of themes that interest our target group, as we are active in many sectors. For example, Netteri provides information about the current training programmes or events of the Chamber of Commerce, entrepreneurs' organisations, the ELY Centre, the TE Office or other organisations. This means that entrepreneurs need go no further than this newsletter to look for interesting information or topical training events, as all items that might be of interest for them can be found at one address.

Good to know

- *An eLetter works best when the content is structured and the items are short.*
- *The responsibility for sending out the letter should be assigned to a specific person.*
- *It is a good idea to share the responsibility for collecting news and information between several persons.*
- *Web-based eLetters have been found the most effective.*
- *Reader feedback helps to find ways of getting the message across more effectively.*

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A joint communication plan makes for more efficient regional business services

The regional business services in Seinäjoki have a joint communication plan that divides between various actors the tasks aiming to increase the visibility of the Enterprise Finland brand.

The communication plan contains a clear-cut list of regional events where Enterprise Finland should have a presence. The thirteen regional business service actors that participate in plan implementation have undertaken to represent Enterprise Finland in these events in turns. The actors regrouped behind a joint communication plan in a spirit of consensus, says Managing Director Ari Loukasmäki from Seinäjoki New Enterprise Centre, who was responsible for coordinating the communication plan and the business service agreement that preceded it.

–This appeared to be the most straightforward way of achieving a rational and cost-effective division of labour. The best way of reinforcing the Enterprise Finland brand is to take part in various events, occasions and fairs in the region. It would be impossible for a single regional business

service actor alone to get around to all of them, but this cooperation and arrangement allow us to make our voices heard at every important event, explains Ari Loukasmäki.

Drafting the plan was a smooth process

Ari Loukasmäki calls for a spirit of cooperation amongst regional business service actors to achieve good results. In Seinäjoki region, the Enterprise Finland business service agreement was signed by the municipalities of Kauhava, Kurikka, Lapua, Seinäjoki, Ilmajoki and Jalasjärvi as well as the New Enterprise Centre for South Ostrobothnia, ProAgria South Ostrobothnia, the TE Offices of Seinäjoki Region and Härmänmaa (amalgamated on 1 Jan 2013 to form the TE Office for South Ostrobothnia), ELY Centre for South Ostrobothnia, Seinäjoki Region Development Centre Liiveri and the development organisation AISAPARI. All parties to the agreement were happy with the joint communication plan.



– Getting it together was a piece of cake. We appointed a communications and marketing group, which came up with the idea of a joint communication plan. The Communications Secretary crafted a functional model for it, which we can update as the situation requires, Ari Loukasmäki relates.

When Enterprise Finland introduces itself at various events, some expenses are always incurred. The signatories to the business service agreement in Seinäjoki region have agreed to always share the costs of the events between all parties.

– Of course, if the scale of our activities grows, financial issues are something that we will have to discuss separately and agree upon specifically.

The jewel of the communication plan created in Seinäjoki region is a shared event calendar. The calendar shows events in the region where regional business services actors should have a presence. Ari Loukasmäki, who coordinates the calendar, e-mails a calendar template to all actors. The parties to the plan then enter in the calendar any upcoming events that they are aware of, including an outline of how the Enterprise Finland brand should be visible in it. They write down the date, the name of the event, the type of action required and the costs to be shared. For example: "8 October. Enterprise fair in Kurikka. Stand + distribution of brochures, address, a presentation in a suitable connection."

– We update the calendar as the situation requires and agree on which one or ones of the regional business service actors will take care of the event and how the costs will be divided. This idea that sounds simple has worked well and reinforced our cooperation, says Ari Loukasmäki.

A clearer structure for business services

While the joint communication plan makes the work of business service actors easier, it is fundamentally customer-driven. Joint communications make the field of business services, which is often seen as fragmented by

new and established entrepreneurs alike, easier to understand.

– In general, the purpose of working under a joint Enterprise Finland brand is to make the process of finding services simpler for the customer. We intend to conduct an extensive customer satisfaction survey this year, which will also help us check how the communication plan has worked for those requiring business services.

How was the communication plan for Seinäjoki region created?

- *The parties came together at a coordination meeting. Working groups on communication and marketing and customer relationships management were appointed.*
- *The communication and marketing group met for the first time and proposed the drawing up of a communication plan.*
- *It was decided that Seinäjoen Seudun elinkeinokeskus would hire a professional to prepare the plan.*
- *By the second meeting, the framework of the communication plan had been completed. The working group started filling in dates in the calendar and recording the names of actors responsible for each event.*
- *The business service agreement and communication plan were published.*

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Together we are good

Organising the activities into a business service centre and concluding a business service agreement translate into clarity and efficiency. National Enterprise Finland services are reaching the customers better than ever. "They supported my ideas and helped me to develop them", entrepreneur Harri Kerkelä describes the business advisory services he received from Enterprise Finland for Mikkeli Region.

The business advisory and guidance services of the seven municipalities in the Mikkeli region are headquartered in the Business Service Centre. The services include guidance in starting a business and obtaining funding, advice on startup grants and the processing of applications, business skills development services and entrepreneur training.

– The customers have been very happy. Our services have been better than they expected, said Project Coordinator Kyösti Lempiäinen from Enterprise Finland Business Service Centre for Mikkeli Region in autumn 2012.

Even a good idea needs support

In spring 2011, Harri Kerkelä started a business called Saimaan Saaristo- ja Veneilypalvelut Oy. The entrepreneur perfected his idea and worked on his plans together with Enterprise Finland Business Service Centre for Mikkeli Region.

Getting the plans together took over a year. The spring before, he had met several times with Development Manager Kyösti Lempiäinen to work on his plan of action.

– Both of us let our ideas flow freely, and this is what the plan was based on. We shaped the visions and missions, specified what the activities would comprise and where the company should head for. With our feet on the ground, however. Your ideas come into a sharper focus when you can talk about them and somebody encourages



you to develop them. Managing Director Pekka Teittinen from New Enterprise Centre Dynamo went through the financial side of it with me, and that was the ultimate encouragement I needed to get going.

Today Harri Kerkelä's business transports people and goods by boat to the islands of Lake Saimaa and operates chartered trips.

– My business has taken off as I expected. At first, you spend your time on marketing, making yourself known, establishing connections and networks. I am still in touch with the people in the Business Service Centre and keep up my contacts with them.

All services under one roof

A business service centre that has been granted the Enterprise Finland logo meets national objectives in its activities and guarantees consistent and high-quality services to the users.



– The business service centre is a cost-effective way of diversifying the advisory services offered to companies, especially in rural municipalities, even if the region features municipalities of many different sizes, each with their own special characteristics. The region is served by a great number of organisations that produce public business services.

The Enterprise Finland project has resulted in closer cooperation and a shedding of prejudices.

– We can talk about things both at the personal level and the level of the organisation, and we use each other's services efficiently. Together we are good. The Business Service Centre is now facing an opportunity and a need to take longer steps towards intensifying the cooperation.

– In March 2012, we moved into shared premises. We have honed our activities and will hone them further once we have got used to working closely together. We need to work hard

to establish our position and to develop our expertise. The Business Service Centre consists of the actors playing a key role in the on-going project to develop Enterprise Finland services: TE Office for South Savo, Miset Oy's regional business services, Mikkeli Region New Enterprise Centre Dynamo and Etelä-Savon Koulutus Oy. Eight persons are working in the centre. Other actors that take part in providing the services comprise the ELY Centre for South Savo, Aalto University's School of Business Small Business Centre, Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences, Veej'akaja association, ProAgria South Savo, the University of Helsinki's Ruralia Institute, South Savo Tax Office, Finnvera Oyj and Miktech Oy.

Steps towards closer cooperation:

- *cooperation at public servant level*
- *joint fair participation*
- *a document on cooperation in business services*
- *support project for regional business services*
- *Enterprise Finland project, business service agreement and annual plan*
- *business adviser training*
- *shared premises*
- *short thematic seminars on Who does what*
- *annual business adviser theme days*

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Effective networking in Tampere region

A building in the centre of Tampere houses a so-called entrepreneur's world, where a number of services are provided under one roof.

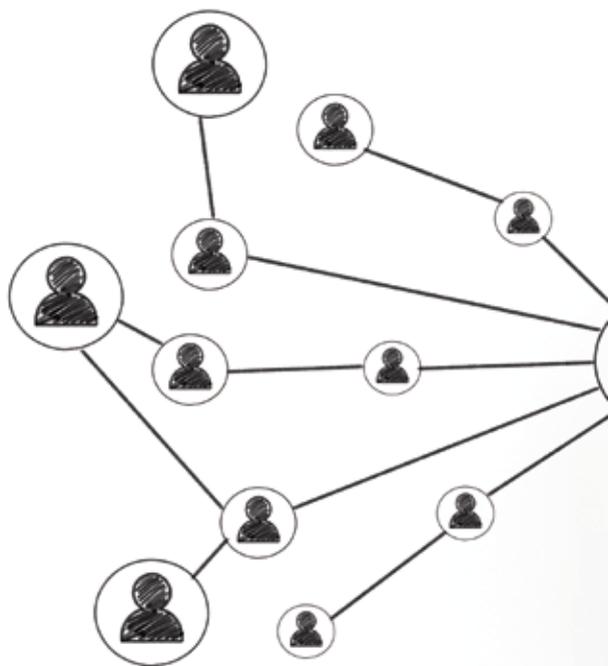
On the ground floor, jobseeker customers are served by the TE Office. The first floor is entirely reserved for entrepreneurs. In addition to the TE Office's labour market experts, you will find here New Enterprise Centre Ensimetri, a tax adviser of Central Finland Tax Office, Tampere region cooperative centre, Pirkanmaa Business Mentors, the Foundation for Finnish Inventions, Pirkanmaa ELY Centre and Finpro. On the same premises, there is also a meeting place for entrepreneurs giving up their business and aspiring entrepreneurs (Viestinvaihto). Finnvera's regional office is also found in the same block.

The entrepreneur's world is part of Enterprise Finland services in Tampere region, and it offers entrepreneurs and those planning to start a business a wide range of services provided by various actors within easy access. While the customers may visit the offices in person, multi-channel services are also offered in the form of Enterprise Finland's helpline and website, says Service Manager Regina Saari from Pirkanmaa TE Office's employment and business services.

Employment and business services for companies

The role of the employment and business services provided by the TE Office in Tampere region is to actively respond to company needs. Services are developed both for new entrepreneurs and established companies. The offer for operating enterprises include assistance in recruitments as well as business development and change management services. Pirkanmaa

TE Office also is one of the five TE Offices in Finland that specialise in international job exchange activities. – In our business services, we extensively rely on other business service networks and our Enterprise Finland partners. We work together to help companies find the right services in the network, says Saari.



The Enterprise Finland package

In Tampere region, Enterprise Finland agreements cover the entire province. The agreements and action plans that guide the practical work help to serve the individual needs of companies in the region. Some of the services for the entire region are provided from Tampere as part of the reformed TE services. The reform makes it possible to use experts in a new way, especially in case of major recruitments or dismissals. – In

these situations, network support is invaluable and has given the services a new dimension, explains Saari.

One of the priorities of Enterprise Finland cooperation in Tampere region is to identify growth enterprises and to support their growth by means of cooperation between various actors. When we encourage the growth of SMEs, we boost competitiveness and employment in our region, Saari notes.



Vital tips for effective cooperation:

- *Regional networking brings the resources into cost-effective use.*
- *Cooperation is based on expertise and trust.*
- *Genuine cooperation is born from company needs.*
- *Making services easy to find is important for entrepreneurs, which is why we operate under the shared brand of Enterprise Finland.*
- *Cooperation translates into better services for companies.*

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Business services for immigrants

In Helsinki Metropolitan area, advisory services for new immigrant entrepreneurs were centralised to Service Centre EnterpriseHelsinki, one third of whose customers have an immigrant background.

– We strive to meet equally the various needs of all those interested in becoming entrepreneurs, regardless of their background. Serving immigrants requires certain special skills, however, including language skills and an understanding of multiculturalism, explains Managing Director Timo Onnela.

In addition to Finnish and Swedish, EnterpriseHelsinki serves new entrepreneurs in six other languages: Estonian, Russian, German, French, English and Arabic. While the customers represent over one hundred different nationalities in total, the largest group of immigrant customers are Russians.

Tailored training and advice in plain language

Immigrant entrepreneurs are active. They have a high standard of education, versatile language skills and a willingness to get better and be successful. As immigrants require more support and guidance in launching their businesses because of their various cultural backgrounds, EnterpriseHelsinki organises training events tailored for this group in the evenings.

– These events help them understand how Finnish society works and give them an opportunity of focusing on one theme at a time. Networking is another important goal, Onnela adds.

Because of the high demand, four preparative labour market training courses of seven weeks were also organised together with the ELY Centre in 2012.

– A plain-language guidebook on enterprising in Finland also serves immigrant entrepreneurs. This guidebook, which has been translated into ten languages, can be found on the website for immigrant entrepreneurs at www.masuuni.info and EnterpriseHelsinki's website at www.yrityshelsinki.fi.



A will to grow and succeed

Entrepreneurs who have sought advice from EnterpriseHelsinki have been highly successful. After five years, some 80 per cent of their companies are still alive, both where the owners are Finnish and persons with an immigrant background.

– There are regional differences in the rate of setting up businesses. Helsinki Metropolitan area has the highest number of expert companies that offer business services. While restaurants and pizzerias are highly visible in the streets, their share in all businesses set up is only about five per cent.

EnterpriseHelsinki's company incubator in Ilmala rents out office facilities for 18 growth enterprises. In a pilot project in 2011–2012, EnterpriseHelsinki also successfully managed a virtual business incubator, which helped 15 growth enterprises to make headway. The majority of these are technology sector companies generating innovative business ideas.

– The businesses set up by immigrants are potential growth enterprises. They have a clearly more courageous approach to developing their businesses and taking them to international markets. Finland, a country that offers high-quality business services, is seen as an excellent springboard for international activities, Timo Onnela says contentedly.



Providing business services for immigrants

- *support and advice must be offered to adapt to the local legislation and culture*
- *business advisers with language skills and training in managing multiculturalism are needed*
- *an entrepreneur's guide and a website that serve many linguistic groups*
- *a willingness to help an immigrant entrepreneur to adapt to Finnish society and to internationalise*
- *support for networking*
- *seeing immigrant entrepreneurs as a national resource*

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Working together to assist Russian entrepreneurs

The ELY Centre of Southeast Finland has focused special attention on making it easier for Russian entrepreneurs to come and do business in Finland. The office employs two Russian speakers to advise this group.

– The fact that we have Russian-speaking staff is already significant as such. We have also published a guide on setting up a business in Russian, which is a very effective and practical tool for covering the basic legal issues. It can also be accessed on our website, says expert Sari Federley from the ELY Centre of Southeast Finland.

Sari Federley explains that the guide on setting up a business is a basic tool that supports new Russian entrepreneurs in taking their first steps. Cooperation with the ELY Centre and regional business service actors is vital for supporting Russian entrepreneurs in getting established in the Finnish market.

– We frequently meet with regional business service actors in both formal and informal contexts. Every now and then, we have informal coffee mornings where we discuss international issues and bring each other up to date.

Networks and cooperation are important elements in efficient interaction with Russian entrepreneurs.

Not only are the ELY Centre in Southeast Finland and the business service actors prepared to support entrepreneurs coming from behind the eastern border, but they also pay visits to Russia to disseminate information about business opportunities in Finland.

Cultural differences are a challenge

Even if there only is a narrow border zone between Finland and Russia, the cultural differences are major. This is also often reflected in ways of doing business.

– Quite often, we sort of speak different languages. Russian entrepreneurs find it peculiar that you are required to provide so much documentation and information in Finland, even just concerning your business idea. Even an experienced entrepreneur does not necessarily have formal business sector education, and differences in concepts make giving advice more difficult in Finland.

The Russians appreciate highly the Finnish support system for innovations. Finnish business service actors frequently meet technology sector entrepreneurs from our great neighbour in the east. In some cases, the Russian actor has a ready-made





technology or innovation, but they need a Finnish partner and the ensuing EU stamp of approval to access such markets as China. The continuously increasing flows of tourists to Southeast Finland also make the tourism and services sector attractive for Russians.

– Interest in the Finnish market is growing all the time, which is good. We are contacted a few dozen times a year. In some cases, we are talking about large companies wishing to establish themselves here, and in others, naturally, small startups. This is a growing trend, as in such areas as St Petersburg, the costs of living and labour already are relatively high. The Finnish grant system is another attraction.

There are many companies with a Russian background already operating in the Lappeenranta region. Some of these have manufacturing operations in Finland. At least one pharmaceutical

factory with Russian actors behind it is about to be set up, and one plant manufacturing electrical devices has begun operating. These customers, too, were supported by the location services provided by regional business service actors and the advisory and funding services of the ELY Centre.

Foreign entrepreneurs and good innovations bring employment and tax revenue to Finland. Good relationships and open cooperation with Russia add to the vitality of Finnish business and industries.

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Facilitating transfers of ownership

Development company Vaasanseudun Kehitys Oy VASEK assists both new entrepreneurs and those giving up their business in the business transfer process through its service product titled What is the customer buying.

If you wish to be an entrepreneur, you do not necessarily have to start from a scratch. A constant stream of entrepreneurs are reaching retirement age, and their companies need new owners.

In January 2012, Vaasanseudun Kehitys Oy launched a project to support entrepreneurs in transferring their companies to new owners or the next generation. Even if each case is always unique, VASEK has developed a model for a controlled transfer of ownership. The project also draws on mentoring provided by a local entrepreneurs' association and the Startia programme run by Vaasa New Enterprise Centre.

– Previously, we were unable to allocate adequate resources to advisory services for transfers of ownership in the Vaasa region, but this project allows us to support the customer from the beginning until the end. We advise both customers who are selling their businesses and those buying one, explains Manager of Business Services Kjell Nydahl from Vaasanseudun Kehitys Oy.

A good start for new entrepreneurs

During its first six months in 2012, the project to support transfers of ownership had 50 customers, and their number is constantly increasing.

The project began with business advisers from Vaasanseudun Kehitys Oy contacting potential entrepreneurs. When an entrepreneur thinking about transferring their company is found, Kjell Nydahl starts examining the starting points for

the transfer of ownership with the key personnel of the company.

This examination is based on a model where the business transfer is looked at from nine different angles.

Psychologist, diplomat and business adviser

The transfer of ownership of a company does not only involve a cold analysis of the figures.

A business adviser as an outside provider of support must have sensitivity and social skills to ensure that the transfer is based on accurate facts.

– It is understandable that discussing their financial situation, for example, is a very private issue for the outgoing entrepreneur, which they might initially find difficult to

discuss with a business adviser. When a business is transferred to a new owner, however, every scrap of information about its current situation counts. In this job, you have to be a psychologist, a diplomat and a business adviser all wrapped up in one, Kjell Nydahl laughs.

Each case is different. This makes a ready-made concept for ownership transfers even more important in increasing the efficiency of the work. As the large age classes reach retirement age, many entrepreneurs in the SME sector will need someone to take over their businesses. Right now, there is a high demand for advice related to ownership transfers.

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VASEK'S MODEL FOR A TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP

This model can be applied to both entrepreneurs selling their businesses and those thinking about buying a company to set up as entrepreneurs.

1. Initial plans

– Analysing the initial situation. Does it involve a change of generation or transfer of ownership by acquisition? What is the schedule?

2. Finding a company to buy/a buyer

– VASEK has its own customer register, and many actors notify us of their intention to buy or sell, even if they are not willing to announce their plans publicly. Public corporate acquisition forums are also used to find a company to buy or a new owner.

3. Analysing the company

– Once a suitable company for a transfer or a buyer has been found, the company is analysed thoroughly. All basic questions are addressed, including income and expenditure and, for example, any entrepreneur training needed to run the company.

4. Business valuation

– External experts determine the value of the business to be transferred. These experts may be accountants or a specialist from the ELY Centre's business transfer programme.

5. Negotiations

– Once all the facts are known, a solution that is optimal for both the buyer and the seller can be negotiated.

6. Business plan

– The business plan is scrutinised carefully. At this stage, questions may arise that might otherwise have been overlooked.

7. Financing

– Once we know how much money will be needed to complete the transfer of ownership, potential finance providers are approached. This typically means banks and Finnvera. In some cases, external finance providers are also needed, including shareholders or silent partners.

8. Contract

– Once the contents of the deal have been agreed, a contract will be drawn up by a solicitor.

9. Transfer of the company

– All provisions are discussed in detail. We must remember that each deal, and each transfer of ownership, is always unique.

Effective cooperation between educational institutions in Turku



Adult education centres in Turku region have created a network that brings educational offer closer to entrepreneurs' needs.

There are more than a dozen educational institutions in Turku region whose educational offer can help adults improve their skills.

– In the hectic world of business, SMEs do not have the time and resources to go through a whole range of institutions to find the most suitable possible training for their staff. This was a problem we had to solve, explains Communications Manager Tuula Nummila from Business Service Centre for Turku Region Potkuri.

Business service actors in Turku region tackled the problem by appointing a dedicated person to develop cooperation between the world of business and educational institutions. Tuula Nummila, who took on this job, is an experienced

professional in the fields of educational institutions and business services.

– An entrepreneur contacts me and explains to me what type of personnel development needs their company has. I go through the network of institutions to find suitable training and find out if other entrepreneurs have similar needs, she explains.

The extensive network allows her to find a suitable training provider without delay.

– Typically, we can put together a training programme that meets the company's needs in the same week, and funding can also be organised without delay. The cooperation model also makes it possible for institutions to co-organise certain training programmes. This is a win-win situation: companies can arrange training programmes for their staff on a short notice, and the educational

institutions gain students and contacts with the world of business.

All under one roof

In order for this process to run smoothly, close interaction between the business service actors is needed. In many Finnish regions, an effort has been made to facilitate cooperation between the actors applying the one-stop shop principle. In Turku, this principle has been realised in very concrete terms, as key business service actors in the region are operating from the same building.

Business Service Centre Potkuri houses the New Enterprise Centre, the Turku Region Development Centre and the ELY Centre for Southwest Finland. The TE Office, the Finnish Tax Administration, the Finnish Foundation for Inventions, the National Board of Patents and Registration (PRH), educational institutions in the region and Finnvera also offer their services on the same premises.

A platform for the cooperation model

Business Service Centre Potkuri was set up in 2005. A year later, the business service actors and

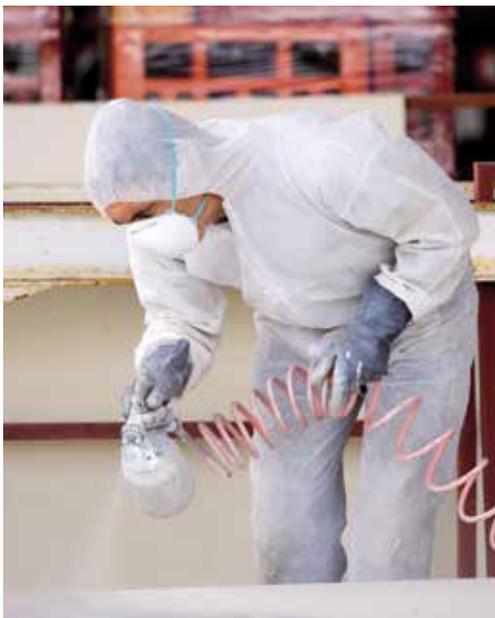
the network of educational institutions conceived a cooperation model, with such large actors as Turku Adult Education Centre, Turku University of Applied Sciences, Paimio Adult Education Centre (which later merged with its counterpart in Turku) and Turku Vocational Institution stepping in as project leaders.

– At a later stage, some smaller educational institutions joined the network. Most of the training programmes can thus be organised in the local area, which reduces their costs, Tuula Nummila says.

When an entrepreneur comes to Potkuri to discuss their personnel development needs, they are immediately directed to Tuula Nummila. This sets the wheels in motion to improve personnel skills.

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Cooperation across municipal borders

While the joint business and cooperation strategy of Eastern Lapland does not shorten the geographical distances between actors, it does bring them closer together.

In late 2009, the joint municipal authority of Eastern Lapland comprising the town of Kemijärvi and the municipalities of Pelkosenniemi, Savukoski and Salla decided that the area needed a joint business strategy.

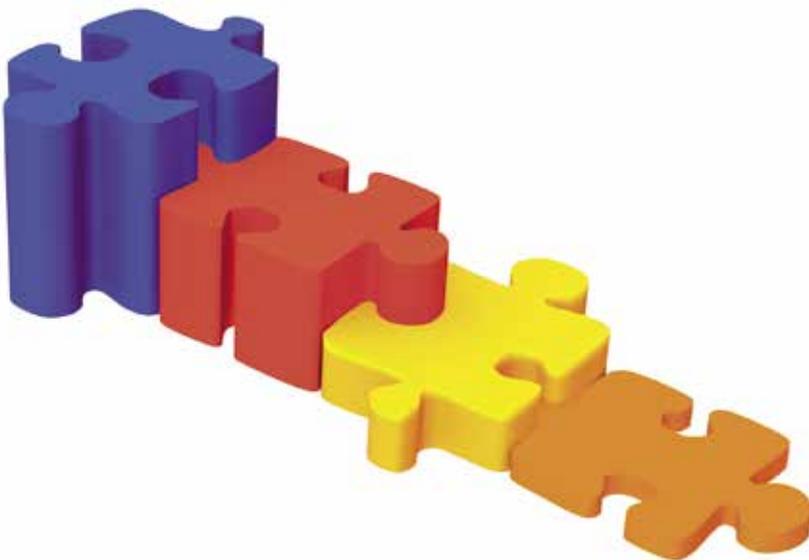
– We honed the strategy during the year 2010, and in the future, we will implement it and see how it works in practice. The objective of the joint business and cooperation strategy is to enable flexible activities across municipal borders, Service Manager Tiina Kiuru from the TE Office for Lapland explains.

The priorities of the business and cooperation strategy in the region of Eastern Lapland are joint business services, the mining, tourism

and wood industries, as well as bioenergy and other renewable energy sectors. In addition, cooperation with Russia as a neighbouring area has been pinpointed as an important part of the strategy. The objectives of the joint business and cooperation strategy are productivity, developing cooperation and networks, and wellbeing in the municipalities.

One-stop shop for services

The recently adopted joint business and cooperation strategy for Eastern Lapland has already brought the cooperation between the municipalities and other regional business service actors in Eastern Lapland into a sharper focus. Business service providers in the region include Pohjoisimman Lapin Leader ry, Posion Kehitysyhtiö Oy, the ELY Centre for Lapland, the TE Office for Lapland and ProAgria Lapland.



CREATING A JOINT STRATEGY

Why?

No joint business strategy existed for Eastern Lapland. The business team of the Eastern Lapland joint municipal authority proposed the preparation of a business strategy, and work on it was launched without delay to enable the municipalities in Eastern Lapland to make progress with shared projects.

How?

The strategy was fine-tuned in jointly appointed working groups relating to priority areas and business sectors for which the municipalities were responsible, as well as in joint workshops. In addition to experts and the management of the joint municipal authority and individual municipalities, the working group had other experts as its members, including TE Office management and other regional business service actors in Eastern Lapland. The difficulty of finding time for working on the strategy under pressure from other work sometimes obstructed the progress with the strategy. The project kept to the agreed schedule, however.

Who?

The management of the Joint Municipal Authority of Eastern Lapland, the town of Kemijärvi, and the municipalities Salla, Savukoski and Pelkosenniemi, as well as experts assisted by an outside consultant. As agreed, other business and industry experts were also involved in the work.

– Our marketing efforts are more intensive and fast-moving now that we have set our shared goals and decided on operating methods. Overlapping activities have been cut back, meaning that the municipalities and regional business service actors no longer do the same work without any knowledge of each other. We are better at picking up the signals from the business world, and we are able to direct each entrepreneur to the right type of business service.

Tiina Kiuru explains that the actors' knowledge of companies in Eastern Lapland has been increased and expanded considerably. This has also facilitated networking between companies in Eastern Lapland and also further afield.

Distances are not a problem

Developing cooperation in the sparsely populated region of Eastern Lapland is more arduous than in southern centres of higher population densities. Tiina Kiuru does not see this as a problem, however.

– Of course it is always better to meet a customer face to face, but we use video conferencing if necessary. It is true that the distances sometimes eat into your working time, but I do not find them a problem in any way.

Further information:

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Enterprise Finland's online services are always open – and contain the local services of more than 60 regions

Enterprise Finland's services are offered on three channels, one of which is the free online service yrityssuomi.fi. The website provides information and services for starting, expanding and developing a business, internationalisation and the role of an employer. The online services also provide e-services and forms.



"This is a step in the right direction, and some of the services were helpful even for someone with a good bit of experience in doing business. I look forward to what comes next."

An entrepreneur's comment on the My Enterprise Finland service

Yrityssuomi.fi regional sites

Enterprise Finland launched its first regional sites in March 2012. A year later, as many as 50 regions have websites providing information about local business services as part of the yrityssuomi.fi site. In the end of 2013 there was 66 sites for the local services of regions.

From yrityssuomi.fi frontpage, the customer can access the local site of the selected region, with information about the business services, business life and services in the region and the region's special features. Services offered in the regions also come up with the national content.

Regional services can be accessed from the regional site by clicking on one of the icons for starting a business, developing a business or internationalisation.

My Enterprise Finland service

The latest service, My Enterprise Finland, was launched as a pilot project on 2 May 2013. Now each company and entrepreneur setting up a business can set up a workspace for themselves in Enterprise Finland.

My Enterprise Finland is a user profile based online service for setting up a business and managing the duties related to running it. In the future, entrepreneurs will be able to access with a single login the e-services of the authorities, tools suited for the situation of the company including a business plan and additional services that make the company's everyday life easier.

Yrityssuomi.fi – a company's services at a single address:

- *brings business services together behind a single address*
- *provides information and advice for launching, expanding and developing a business*
- *is free for the users*

Further information:

Yrityssuomi.fi,

Online Editor-in-Chief Merja Heinonen,

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Advice and first aid from enterprise Finland's helpline

Enterprise Finland's helpline is an excellent example of the multiple channels for which the service package designed for entrepreneurs aims. The helpline will either provide advice to the entrepreneur or direct them to the right experts. The helpline works closely together with regional business services.

The business advisers manning the helpline are located at ELY Centres and TE Offices around the country. Some of them do this job on a part-time basis in addition to other duties.

In total, the yearly work output of the business advisers is 9 person-years. The service is not about a machine guiding the customer; the business advisers listen to the entrepreneurs and advise them in person from start to finish.

Service Manager Marjo Öhmann has voluble praise for the expertise of the employees working for the helpline.

– We have received very positive feedback from customers on the way the helpline advisers dedicate themselves to the entrepreneur.



Working for the helpline requires strong and highly versatile competence. Enterprising has many different aspects, and the questions may concern any of them. This is why we have invested strongly in personnel training.

The largest number of questions concern the steps of setting up a business, trade register issues and startup grants. The second most important group is tax issues, financing and licences needed to operate.

Limiting the advice is in the customer's interest

Because of the extensive field of enterprising and the fact that the advisory service is not dependent on specific organisations, the scope of the advice must be limited: it is necessary to decide which questions to answer on the helpline and which should be referred to another expert.

Making calculations, assessing a business idea or considering other questions open to interpretation are not part of the business advisers' job description on the Enterprise Finland helpline. Those who need advice in questions of this type are referred to regional business service actors or other experts.

Cooperation with regional business services

The priority for both Enterprise Finland helpline advisers and the experts of regional business services is that the entrepreneur needing advice can be assisted.

– If there is a long waiting list to see a regional business service actor, the customer may be advised to call our helpline, where we can at least provide first aid, and often much more. After receiving initial guidance, the customer often also is better prepared to meet the regional business adviser in order to receive more in-depth advice. This makes for more efficient time use, both for the entrepreneur and the regional business adviser, Marjo Öhmann explains.

However, most customers gravitate from the helpline to regional business services. Almost one out of three callers to Enterprise Finland's helpline are directed to continue the discussion with the regional business services.

Awareness of free business advice surprisingly low

Originally, Enterprise Finland's helpline was intended specifically for new entrepreneurs, but in the last year, the service package has been expanded to also cover entrepreneurs who already are in business.

– The majority of callers are persons interested in starting a business or new entrepreneurs, but about one out of three is an entrepreneur whose business is already up and running.

Marjo Öhmann explains that a large share of new entrepreneurs continue to be surprised to hear that there are regional business service actors who provide assistance to entrepreneurs free of charge.

Further information:

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**ENTERPRISE FINLAND
HELPLINE**
for new entrepreneurs
and companies

0295 020 500

Mon–Thu 8–17, Fri 10–17
In English, send an electronic
service request form

Enterprise Finland's business services are close to the customer

Regional business services are a network of actors providing business-related advice and services who, by mutual agreement, are committed to providing high-quality business services to the customers in line with the Enterprise Finland operating model. Key actors include municipal regional development companies and other development organisations, Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres), Employment and Economic Development Offices (TE Offices), Finnvera, New Enterprise Centres and ProAgria Advisory Centres. Other service providers are technology centres, tax offices, company incubators, educational institutions and other business service organisations.

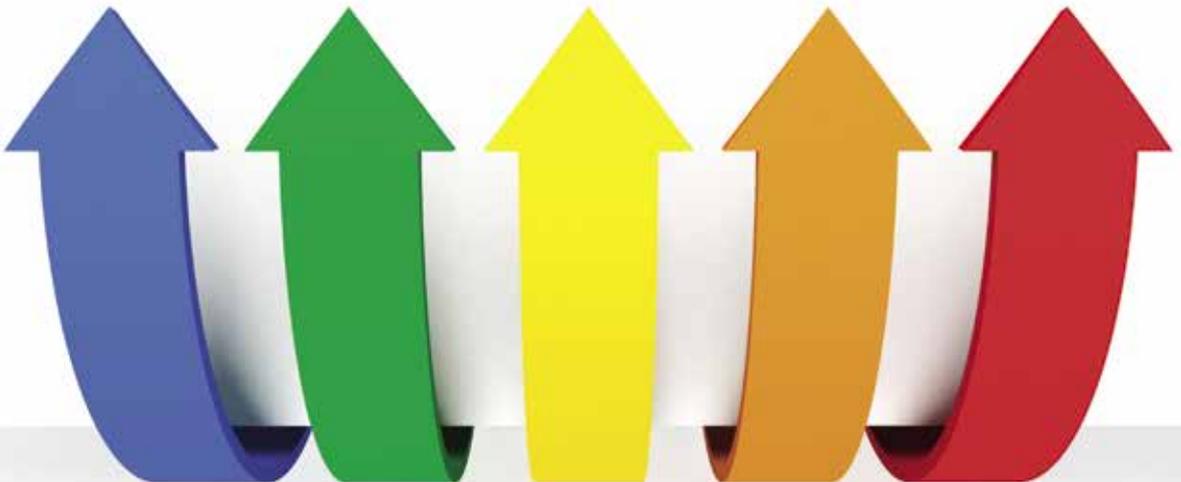
The regional business services offer advice in starting and developing a company and can direct customers to special experts. Regional business services are the entrepreneur's first contact with enterprising and a competent partner when expanding and developing a company.

Various business service organisations may offer services to the customer on the same premises, or the services may be decentralised and provided by a network of actors. The main thing is that the services can be found easily and locally, and that the customer can expect expert services of a high standard.

Support Project for Regional Business Services

In 2009, a Support Project for Regional Business Services financed by the European Social Fund was launched. The project is implemented by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy's Employment and Entrepreneurship Department. Following a tendering process, regional development organisations (SEKES) were selected to carry out the practical project work.

The aim of this project coordinated by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy is to use concrete cooperation agreements to bring all public business services under the umbrella



of the Enterprise Finland service network, thus offering more comprehensive and effective service packages to the customers. The aim is to provide regional business services under a single roof, to eliminate overlapping services and to improve cooperation between the actors to serve the customers and partners better. Regional business services are a key part of Enterprise Finland's national network of personal services. The project is underpinned by the policies on reforming the employment and economic development services and the Enterprise Finland's service system.

In the course of the support project, business service agreements have been concluded or renewed in nearly 70 regions. The regions also have the right to use the Enterprise Finland logo. The agreement signatories comprise from three to fifteen parties in the various regions. In total, 400–500 parties have been involved in negotiations on regional development. The extent of the network has lent its unique character to the project. After concluding the agreement, each region has developed the cooperation from their own starting points and following a jointly prepared action plan. Areas to be developed have included

joint communications, content of the regional Enterprise Finland websites, joint development of skills, development of monitoring and work on processes.

While the support project has been in operation, a report on developing the monitoring of regional business services was produced in 2012 to support the development efforts in the regions, and a report to support the regions' work on process descriptions will be completed in summer 2013.

Further information:

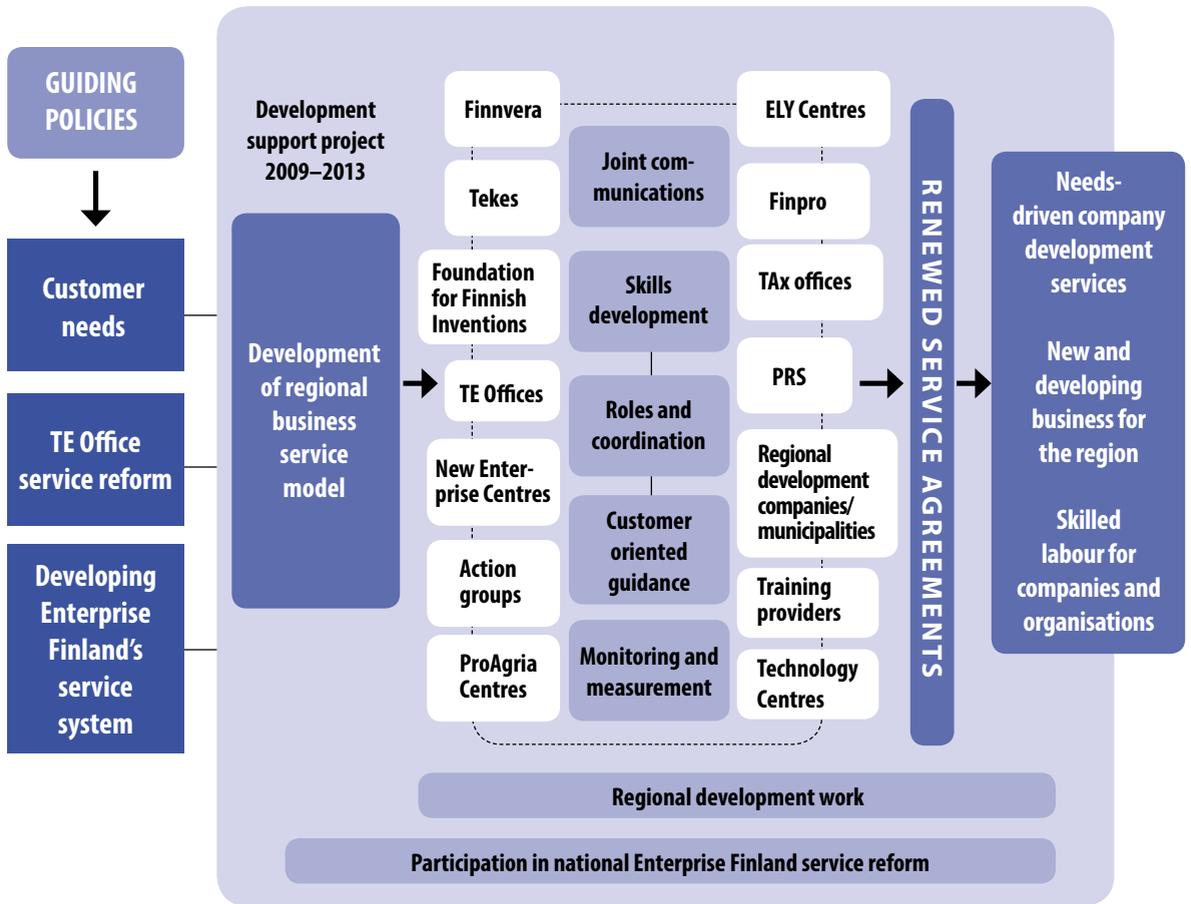
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Development of a regional business service operating model



Initial-phase	Analysis-phase	Renewal of regional agreements	Intermediate evaluation	Further development of activities
3-5/2009	4-8/2009	5/2009-6/2011	1-2/2011	2/2011-12/2014

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