hoppid.no - the Entrepreneurial program by the County Authority of Møre and Romsdal

The County of Møre and Romsdal has a unique first line service system for start-ups and businesses that wants to develop and grow. The programme is a collaboration between the County Authority, The County Governor, Innovation Norway and all municipalities in the county, to provide top services to the start-ups and businesses in the region. The County Authority is the owner of this programme. The overall goal is to facilitate actions to achieve more and better start-ups with bigger potential for survival and growth in Møre and Romsdal. The programme base is on four pillars:

- Counselling for start-ups in all municipalities; we have 50 advisors in 26 municipalities
- Empowerment in entrepreneurial skills: we offer different courses for start-ups, and also certification/competence for the advisors
- Network: events for start-ups (to mobilise start-ups) and events for advisors and other service providers in the partnership
- Financial aid / funding opportunities for start-ups and for activities related to mobilising start-ups in the different municipalities

The work on the programme started in 2005. After 10 years of negative development in the region on national statistics regarding start-ups, the County Authority wanted to create and develop a new solution for start-up service in the region. The County Authority wanted to revitalize the entrepreneurial spirit in Møre and Romsdal. To create knowledge and a base for development of new solutions, a report published in 2005, focused on the status on entrepreneurship in the region.

One main challenge stood out: To increase the access and amount of good start-ups, with potential for growth and innovation (NIFU/STEP, O.R Spilling). Link to report (in Norwegian): Click here

The report showed that the region had too many actors and services for start-ups, and start-ups and businesses perceived the system as fragmented and difficult to navigate. The report also showed that each municipality used under 25 % of one person-year in work related to start-ups and the development of businesses in their community. There were a clear need to get the municipalities to prioritize the work with start-ups and business development.

This information formed the starting point for the work the County Authority started in 2006, to develop the first-line-service system hoppid.no. 2nd May 2007 the first office dedicated to hoppid.no opened in the Norddal Municipality (today name is Fjord municipality), after two years of preliminary work and development. The partnership marked the opening by jumping in the ocean, to symbolize the name (hoppid) of the programme, which means to “jump in to it”. To get permission to open a hoppid office, several requirements had to be in place:

- One defined hoppid advisor that took an educational programme at University level. This education, developed by the County Authority together with the University, was defined as mandatory certification, to give qualified advice to start-ups and businesses.
- The municipality with the Mayor or Councilman had to sign a partnership agreement with all participating parties. This is a joint commitment on defined deliveries from all Parties.
- The location of the office had to market the service as the door in to all service related to start-ups, as One Stop Shop service, with defines logo and signs.

4 VestnesAvisa Onsdag 16. april 2008

Hoppid-kontoret er i gang

Med tre hoppande gründerar samt representantar frå kommune, fylke, Innovasjon Norge og Sparebanken Møre, vart opninga av Hoppid-kontoret i Vestnes offisielt opna under ei tilstelling på Vestnes Fjordhotell onsdag i forrige veke.

Av Olav Hole

Det lokale Hoppid-kontoret er lagt til Vestnes Næringsforum, og dagleg leiar Johan Hjelvik endrar dei framsette vel mare til arrangementet. I midten for å klippe snor, var opninga markert ved at tre gründerar, Ann Elisabet Bjerkvoll, Linda Eilertsen og Rune Welberg Olsen begge tau. Alle desse tre har starta eller er i gang med å starte ny næringsverksemd i Vestnes, og er typiske representantar for dei ein ønskjer å oppnå med eit Hoppid-kontor, nemleg å hjelpe etablerar med å komme i gang.

Hoppid-er eit fireårig prosjekt

During 2007 and 2008, new offices opened, and the collaboration in the defined partnership straightened gradually over the next couple of years. The defined topics and commitment on entrepreneurship and regional development got stronger. The programme got a lot of attention in the media, as newspapers, radio and television.

After 5 years with a running programme, an evaluation was completed. Link to Norwegian report: Click here

For the County Authority, the most important barrier to overcome was the fragmented service we had in 2005. Today it is easier for the start-ups to find the much-needed help, and the programme is a success for the region and start-ups. One important aspect in this success is the ownership in which all Parties in the partnership agreement had (still have). In addition, the commitment and defined roles in the public service system defined in this partnership agreement is of great importance.

Summarized deliveries in the Partnership Agreement 2016 – 2020 (revised agreements 2021 - 2025 are under development):

The County Authority of Møre and Romsdal: Commitment on delivering certification/competence to hoppid advisors, hoppid.no marketing material, webpage including visibility of local activities and calendar with courses and events, network and link between the different innovative environments in the region, courses for start-ups and early-funding for start-ups, coordinated by each municipality.

Innovation Norway: Commitment in following the hoppid office and advisors closely regarding their service, have office days out in the communities, regular dialogue meetings with the different offices, updates on funding possibilities, Mentor arrangement, spread knowledge about their international activity and service.

The County Governor: Build competence in agriculture industry, to inform the hoppid office on new services for agricultural businesses, serve the local villages in their projects to mobilize start-ups and activity for growth, to connect different competences in agriculture with other relevant competences and environments for innovation and growth.

The Municipalities: Commitment regarding Action Plan for local development with defined goals for start-ups and businesses, sufficient recourses in the work with development and start-ups, keep the quality in the service at approved level, participate in organised networking events, marketing of the hoppid office and collaboration with relevant communities and innovative environments.

hoppid.no®

New development – the "ten year old" hoppid.no in to the next decade:

In 2016, the County Authority decided to look at the opportunity to modernize the service hoppid.no. The workday for both advisor and start-up has changed since the start of the programme in 2007. Increasing pace in technology development and increased demands for restructuring and change, both in business and the community, clarified the need to revitalise the service. The County Authority received feedback from the users of the service, that hoppid.no, as in 2005, were perceived as difficult to reach and fragmented. The quality of the service and help received, depended on where the entrepreneurs lived and established new business. This had to change and the County Authority set out to change policy and develop the service to meet the needs of the start-ups and advisors.

The work started by looking at possible good solutions within Norway. We found that the first-line-service system hoppid.no is unique in Norway, and to learn and develop better solutions, we had to look outside Norway. The County Authority decided to seek relevant partnership and apply to Interreg Europe call 3. The application were approved, and the partnership received 1.4 mill Euro, together with 6 other partners from UK, Bulgaria, Spain, Slovenia, Poland and Belgium. The project name is OSS – One Stop Shop, and the main objective is to improve policies for SME competitiveness by enhancing advisory support services for first time entrepreneurs. As result, OSS wants to build a complete ecosystem for entrepreneurs starting new business. The partnership works by sharing experience and good practice on the following topics; First-line service system, digital solutions and capacities, mentoring, collaboration in different public levels, access to capital and incubators co-working space. The County Authority of Møre and Romsdal is Lead Partner in the partnership.

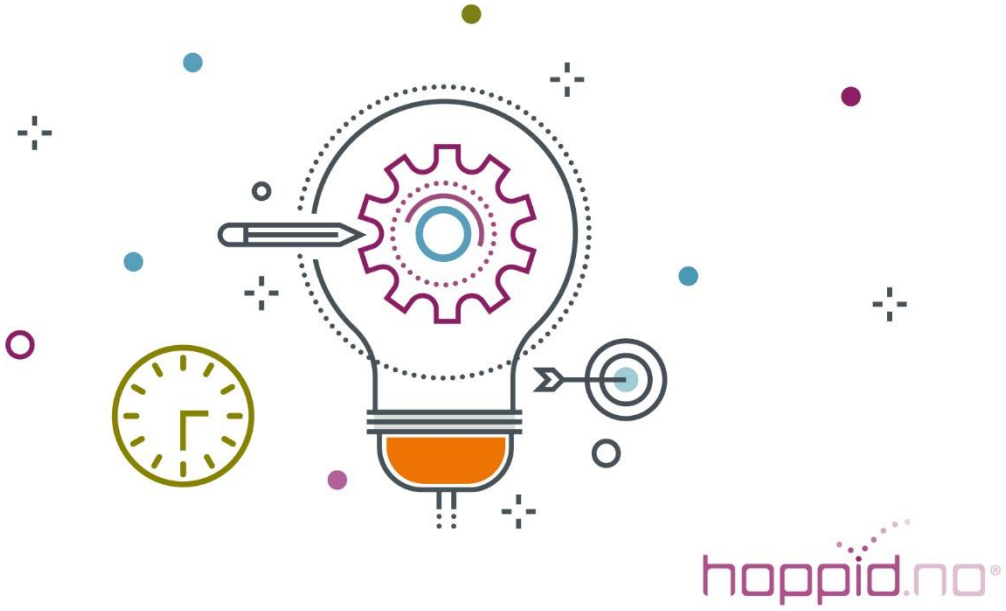
Parallel to the development of this Interreg project the County Authority established a project to develop a digital tool for start-ups and advisors. The project aim is to develop, test and implement one digital door to all help for start-ups. The programme hoppid.no is the "workshop", and all advisors are the "tools". With this digital solution, we want to develop a service independent of where each entrepreneur live in the region.

The work has been user-oriented development (design thinking methods), with the lean method as basis (plan – do – evaluate – adjust – act). This developed as a project, funded by Innovation Norway in addition to contribution from a supplier Entreprenerdy, and the County Authority as customer. This project is closing, and the test-solution (MVP) launched on 12th November 2019, after 18 months development and user testing. 50 advisors are now certified in using this solution. They participated in a two day course, which included entrepreneurial theory and practical use of the digital solution.

After test and launch there are 260 different start-up cases in the solution. All in which have their own designated advisor and the ability to connect with experts within their field of starting business. The overall feedback from users (entrepreneur and advisor) show that the digital solution is easy to both understand and use. As of now, the digital tool is a success. The County Authority needs to keep on working with developing the solution dependent on the needs of the users, to keep it a success.

The digital solution is now getting a lot of attention from European regions. In November 2019, the Project Manager for the OSS project and the digital project, were invited to present the solution and the development of the project in Brussels. This was at the workshop "Mastering the digital transformation of business support". Link: Click here

Link to story written by Interreg Policy Learning: Click here



Conclusions:

hoppid.no in Møre and Romsdal is built on prioritized policy and development of policies. There has been a political and administrative willingness to develop and change the system for regional development for start-ups and business. This had, and still has, priority, and started all the way back to 2005. In this lies a lot of the explanation for the success that we see today. Dedicated policy development with dedicated resources to implement the policy.

In addition to this, the first line service system hoppid.no, has 50 dedicated advisors, that contributes to the development of the service. The municipalities are proud to be a part of the start-up service hoppid.no. We started in 2005, with under 25 % person-year dedicated to this work, and today we have 50 advisors working to give great service to start-ups and business.

The County Authority chose to make each Municipality accountable for their success with start-ups and business, and their development for lively rural communities. This is defined commitments in the partnership agreement. As a result, we have achieved increased commitment for entrepreneurship, and a dedicated local service in hoppid.no, with defined local policies, that works every day to make their communities attractive and ready for the future.