

SWEDISH AGENCY FOR ECONOMIC
AND REGIONAL GROWTH

TILLVÄXT
VERKET

Open up!

National Strategy
for Business Promotion
on Equal Terms 2015–2020

What is business promotion?

If you want to start, run or develop a business in Sweden, you can apply for various types of services and forms of financing that are wholly or partially publicly funded. To develop a business model, succeed in growing your business, or expand into an international market, you can get:

- ➔ Advice and business development assistance
- ➔ A place in a business incubator
- ➔ Loans, venture capital or other financing.

CONTENTS

<i>A strategy for a level playing field</i>	5
Who is this strategy for?	7
Equivalent conditions – essential for sustainable growth	7
The impact of perceptions about entrepreneurs and enterprises	8
What does “on equal terms” mean in this strategy?	9
How will this strategy be beneficial?	10
<i>What are the challenges?</i>	13
Priority areas	14
Leadership	16
Governance	19
Industry	21
<i>Eight goals for change</i>	23
Leadership	25
Governance	26
Industry	26
<i>How we will achieve the goals</i>	29
The proposals of the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth to the Swedish Government up until 2020 ..	30
Leadership for the future	31
Governance that is inclusive	32
Industries in transformation	34
The proposals of the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth to all business promotion stakeholders up until 2020	37
Leadership for the future	38
Governance that is inclusive	39
Industries in transformation	39
Additional proposals from the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth	40
<i>References</i>	46
<i>Find out more</i>	46

Business promotion on equal terms is about utilising the capacities for enterprise and innovation of the entire population. A great variety of businesses and entrepreneurs within a broad range of industries contributes to economic renewal and sustainable growth.

In 2011, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (*Tillväxtverket*) was tasked by the Swedish Government with drawing up a national strategy for how women and men could avail themselves of business promotion efforts on equal terms. The Agency financed efforts during the period 2011–2014 as part of its work with this strategy. The purpose of these efforts was to develop the business promotion system, and to acquire more knowledge for the content of the strategy. The strategy that you are now reading about is based on the experience gained from these efforts, and on facts gathered from research, surveys and evaluations.

I would like to extend heartfelt thanks to all those who have been involved in developing the strategy. It was crucial for the strategy's content and its proposals for actions that it was developed in dialogue with business promotion organisations and other relevant stakeholders. Stakeholders responsible for regional development, county administrative boards, stakeholder associations and organisations, government agencies, and business promotion organisations have all contributed their valuable knowledge. Entrepreneurs provided important input to the formulation of the strategy. Researchers and experts also participated in the dialogue and provided their views.

There is a more detailed version of the strategy in a report (in Swedish only) detailing more about the challenges for business promotion and the efforts carried out. The report version of the strategy also includes references to the research and reports on which the strategy is based. You can download an English Summary of the report in Swedish from www.tillvaxtverket.se/publikationer: Open up! National strategy for business promotion on equal terms – English Summary Info 0600.

Gunilla Nordlöf, *Director-General, Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket)*
March 2015

How do we create
something new?



A STRATEGY FOR A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

In 2011, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (*Tillväxtverket*)

was tasked by the Swedish Government with drawing up a national strategy for how women and men could avail themselves of business promotion initiatives on equal terms. The overarching goal of the strategy is that women and men –regardless of ethnic background or age – should be able to avail themselves of business promotion initiatives and resources such as advice, business development assistance, cluster and business incubator activities, and financing on equal terms.

The industry in which a business starts and operates is very important for the entrepreneur's chances of gaining access to state-funded business promotion initiatives. The type and size of the business also play a role. The various forms of financing and business support available therefore need to be opened up so that businesses across *all* industries – regardless of the size and type of business – can avail themselves of the aid and support available.

It is proposed that this strategy will apply for the period 2015–2020.

Who is this strategy for?

Do you work with growth issues, developing business or the distribution of resources to enterprises and entrepreneurs, and do you receive Swedish state or municipal funding? Do you work in a politically controlled organisation, a government agency, an organisation with regional growth responsibilities, a local authority, or a business promotion organisation? Then this strategy is for you.

If you are part of the management of a business promotion activity, you belong to a particularly

important target group. A level playing field is a measure of quality, and management is responsible for developing your activity towards this goal. It is crucial that political leaders and the managements of government agencies and business promotion organisations give priority to this development if the goals of this strategy are to be achieved.

Equivalent conditions – essential for sustainable growth

Our prosperity as a nation depends on sustainable growth, which in turn is based on continuous economic renewal. Innovation is a key for growth in both businesses and regions. This means, for example, that entrepreneurs need to work more efficient or develop new products and services in order to strengthen and maintain the competitiveness of their businesses.

When a range of different ideas are utilised, and businesses within a broad range of industries have the opportunity to blossom and grow, the foundations for economic renewal and dynamics are strengthened. A great variety of businesses and

entrepreneurs is good for growth. So it is important that the community's resources for business promotion are open and available on equal terms to all. A business promotion system that offers a level playing field provides a good foundation for a variety of businesses and entrepreneurs to start and grow across all industries, which aids growth.

It is also fundamentally important that business promotion organisations offer support on equal terms to women as well as men, regardless of ethnic background and age, as a matter of democracy and equity.

The impact of perceptions about entrepreneurs and enterprises

Today, state resources more often go to men's businesses, and to industries in which men's businesses are more frequent. It could be said in fact that business promotion today is built around traditionally male-dominated sectors of industry and manufacturing.

Just like other parts of our society, entrepreneurship and business promotion are coloured by perceptions and norms regarding what is perceived to be masculine and feminine. The norm for entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur is still primarily a masculine one. It is common to picture the entrepreneur as a man and entrepreneurship as "male-coded". An indication that this norm exists is that the expression "female

entrepreneurs" is often used, but never "male entrepreneurs".

Norms around entrepreneurship result in certain groups being experienced as deviant. This means that women, women and men with foreign backgrounds, and young women and men are at greater risk of facing barriers when they seek advice or finance.

When resources from the state and municipalities are distributed in a biased way, and when certain groups face more barriers than others, we are not utilising the enterprise and innovation of our population effectively. Renewal in businesses and the economy is curtailed.

What does “on equal terms” mean in this strategy?

On equal terms means here that there should not be any form of special treatment or discrimination (whether conscious or not) in how applications are processed, nor in access to resources, that can be linked to the entrepreneur’s gender, ethnic background and/or age. Neither should the enterprise’s industry, or the type or size of the enterprise have any relevance.

However, in terms of the distribution of resources, much evidence points to that there is a greater difference between businesses in various industries than those that belongs to the entrepreneur’s gender, ethnic background or

age. The various forms of financing and business support available therefore need to be designed and made accessible such that businesses in all industries – regardless of the size and type of business – can avail themselves of this support.

Today, the most common business for women and men to run is in the service sector. More than 60 per cent of all enterprises are in the service sector. Advice and financing need to be adapted to the needs arising as new industries and business models emerge, and to changes occurring in the economy and industry structures.

How will this strategy be beneficial?

The strategy contains goals and actions that describes *what* to do in order to open up the business promotion system so that it offers a level playing field. A large proportion of the proposals for actions apply to all business promotion organisations. These proposals can be seen as guidelines for what needs to be done in order to work successfully with quality and operational development.

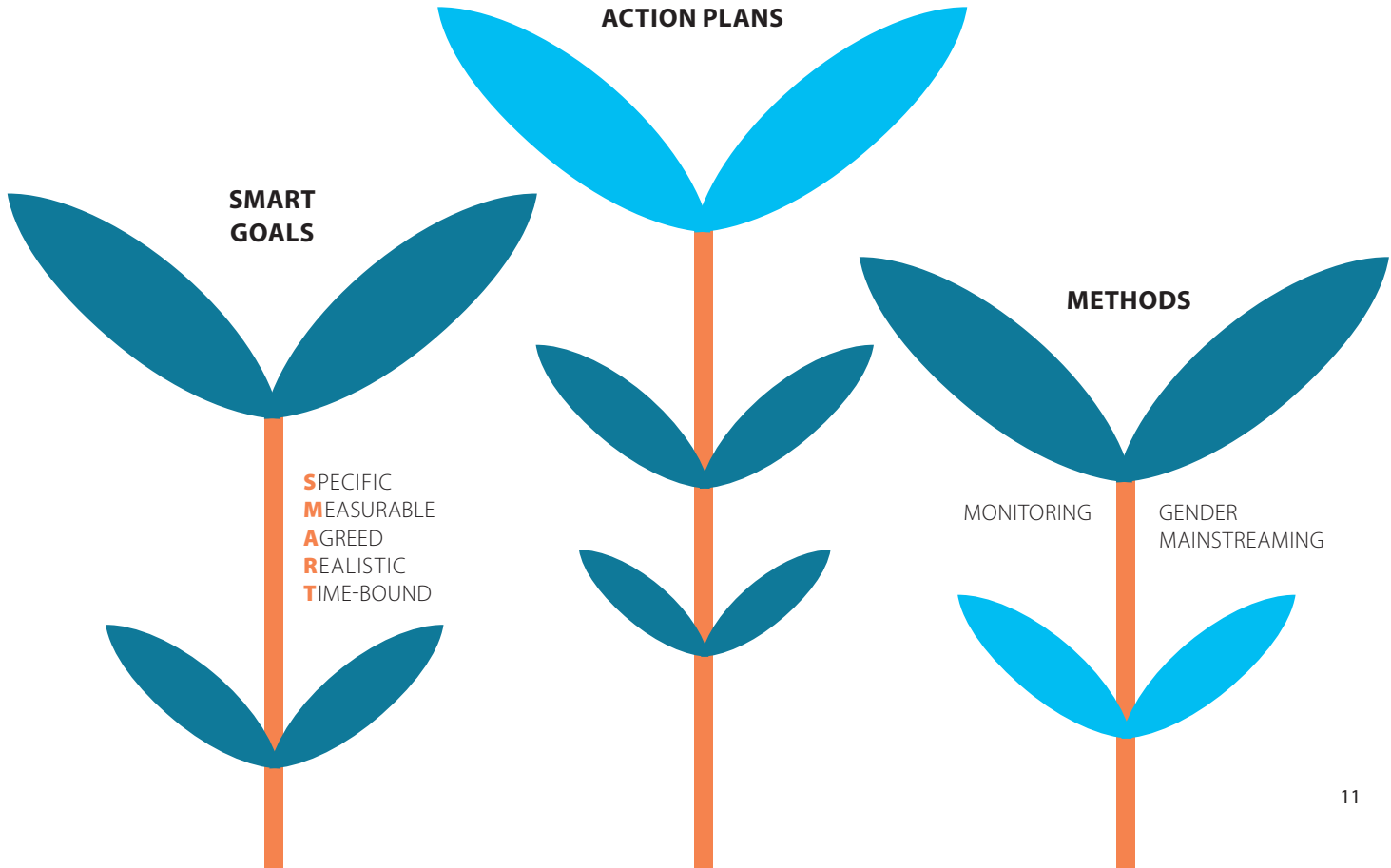
How the strategy should be implemented in each organisation is not stated.

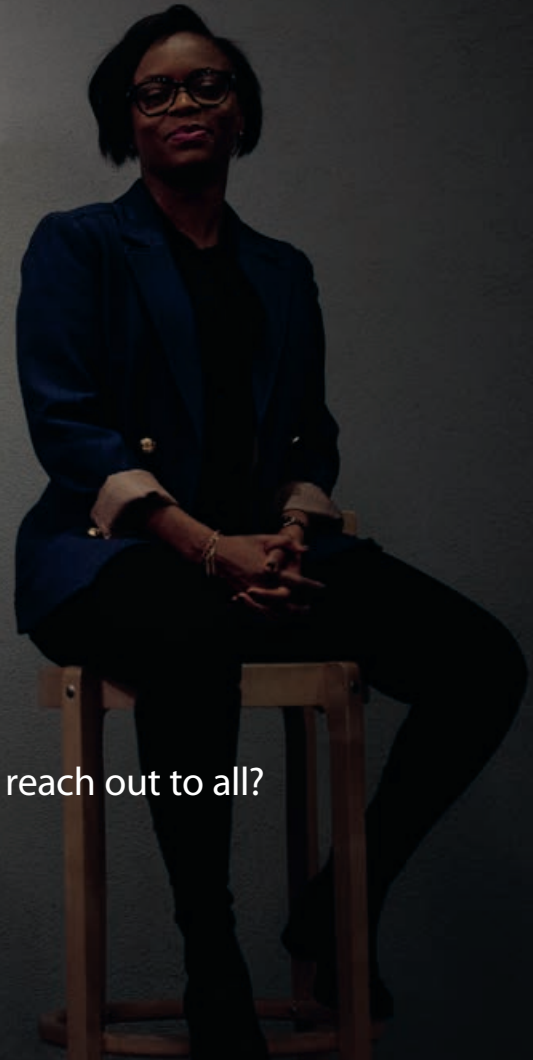
All state-funded business promotion has a responsibility to develop and monitor its activities, based on the strategy's direction. Local authorities can also contribute to achieving the goals of the strategy, even though the state does not control the activities of local authorities.

This means that the proposals for actions must be incorporated into their own organisations. Each organisation needs to develop SMART (specific, measurable, agreed, realistic, time-bound)

goals, based on the strategy's overarching goal, and based on the organisation's activities and capacities. This might also include producing action plans at the organisation level based on the goals and proposals in this strategy, and using monitoring methods based on gender-disaggregated statistics, and methods for gender mainstreaming.

The Swedish Government has a central role to play in making the strategy effective. A large proportion of the proposals for actions in the strategy are therefore addressed to the Government. For entrepreneurs to be able to avail themselves of business promotion resources on equal terms, it is essential that development efforts continue. Also vital are clear governance and monitoring of how state-funded stakeholders are acting to achieve a level playing field, and how they distribute business promotion resources to women and men, regardless of ethnic background, age and industry.





How do we reach out to all?

WHAT ARE
THE CHALLENGES?

What are the challenges in business promotion? Don't we already have a level playing field? No. There are several major challenges, even if development is under way in various parts of Sweden. The challenges can be sorted into three main categories:

- 1.** A lack of clear and strong leadership for change that focuses on knowledge, communication and collaboration.
- 2.** Insufficient priority is given to working to provide equivalent conditions for all, and thus does not have an impact on the management of the activities.
- 3.** Business promotion resources go to traditionally male-dominated sectors of industry and manufacturing to a high degree.

Based on these categories of challenges, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth is proposing three areas to prioritise in development work in the future: leadership, governance and industry.

There are goals and proposals for actions in each of these three areas.

A summary of the challenges within each priority area follows on the next pages.

You can download an English Summary of the full report in Swedish from www.tillvaxtverket.se/publikationer:
Open up! National Strategy for business promotion on equal terms – English Summary Info 0600.

Challenges

1

A lack of clear and strong leadership for change that focuses on knowledge, communication and collaboration.

2

Insufficient priority is given to working to provide equivalent conditions for all, and thus does not have an impact on the management of the activities.

3

Business promotion resources go to traditionally male-dominated sectors of industry and manufacturing to a high degree.

The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth's priority areas

LEADERSHIP

GOVERNANCE

INDUSTRY

Challenge | Leadership


Knowledge and communication

- The lack of knowledge of the impacts of gender, ethnic background and age, attitudes, norms and values within the business promotion system are limiting for women, women and men of foreign background, and young women and men. This risks impacting their interactions with business promotion stakeholders.
- Knowledge of and attitudes to gender equality and diversity vary among business promotion organisations. Many business promotion stakeholders lack knowledge of and insight into the actual conditions, and therefore experience the business promotion system as fair and balanced. They do not experience that there are specific barriers for women, women and men of foreign background, or young women and men.
- Role models and good examples are lacking that can demonstrate the breadth of entrepreneurship and highlight the entrepreneurship of women, women and men of foreign background, and young women and men who run businesses. Role models that can increase knowledge, prevent prejudice and inspire others to become entrepreneurs.
- Business promotion targets “all” without any knowledge of appropriate strategies for reaching out to “all”, for example, by establishing new networks and forums in collaboration with the third sector. Many people working in business promotion consider themselves to be open to all types of businesses regardless of phase, size, industry and who is running the company. Yet they have no clear strategies for how to communicate with different target groups. They need more knowledge about the conditions and needs of different target groups in order to reach out with offers of support.

Collaboration

→ There is scope for developing collaboration: between stakeholders and functions at the national and regional levels, and between these levels. Many people involved in the business promotion system want clearer leadership in policy and in management at the regional and national levels, so they can more broadly and collaboratively develop a business promotion system towards a level playing field. The lack of collaboration and networks means that experience and learning risks remaining within the organisations. Consequently, the organisations do not transfer knowledge about methods and good examples to each other.

→ Entrepreneurs want access to business networks. The existing networks are mainly comprised of men, and are perceived as less accessible to women who run businesses. Women and men of foreign background as well as young women and men who run businesses need access to networks in order to share experiences and for business opportunities.

A close-up, shallow depth-of-field photograph of a person's hands adjusting a large, multi-channel audio mixing console. The person is wearing a red long-sleeved shirt. The console is filled with numerous sliders, knobs, and buttons, some of which are illuminated with green and blue lights. The background is dark and out of focus, showing a large, dimly lit room, possibly a concert hall or arena, with some warm, glowing lights. The overall mood is professional and focused.

To guide you need a direction.

Challenge | Governance

Governance is closely linked to leadership, since governance is a management responsibility. Nonetheless, governance has been made a separate area in order to clarify challenges and proposals for action.

- Disaggregated data on the distribution of public resources to women's and men's businesses is lacking. In many parts of the business promotion system, statistics disaggregated for gender, foreign or Swedish background, and age are lacking or not used.
- There are no targets for the distribution of resources to businesses run by women and men, women and men of foreign background, and young women and men, nor to various industries.

- Accompanying research shows that horizontal criteria such as gender equality, integration and diversity are not having an impact on the distribution of resources from the EU's regional structural fund programmes. The projects have not integrated the horizontal criteria into business and operational development and thus not in work for growth either.
- The 11 regional venture capital funds fail to take the horizontal criteria into account. They neither choose nor manage portfolio companies based on horizontal criteria. Regional financiers do not make clear demands either.
- Only a small proportion of applications for state fundings to businesses in the Rural Development Programme come from women. Executing officers say that it is difficult to take the horizontal criteria into account when processing business aid applications and need clearer instructions.



Which industries
get funding today?

Challenge | Industry

- The monitoring done based on gender-disaggregated statistics shows that resources frequently go to male-dominated sectors of industry and manufacturing.
- The Government Appropriation 1:1 (*Anslag 1:1*) goes largely to men's businesses and to male-dominated industries. This co-financing is important for achieving the aim of regional growth policy.
- Incubators and investments in cluster initiatives primarily target sectors of industry and manufacturing where men's companies predominate. Directives, targets and strategies for an equitable inclusion of entrepreneurs are lacking.
- State venture capital largely benefits men's companies and male-dominated industries. Here too, directives, targets and strategies for an equitable inclusion of entrepreneurs are lacking.
- The Swedish Standard Industrial Classifications (SNI) have very blunt industry classifications, especially in the services sector. Women more often run businesses in the "unknown" category than men. This makes women more invisible, resulting in poorer knowledge about women's entrepreneurship and the industries in which women run businesses.
- Business promotion stakeholders have less knowledge of products (goods and services), business models and entrepreneurship in industries in service-dominated sectors, than in industry and manufacturing.
- The lack of knowledge of the significance of gender, ethnic background and age, and of traditional norms and values linked to an industry, type and size of company are more likely to hinder women's entrepreneurship than men's. Similar barriers exist for women and men of foreign background, and for young women and men who run businesses.



More ideas lead to development.

8 GOALS FOR CHANGE

The strategy's overarching goal

Women and men – regardless of ethnic background or age – should be able to avail themselves of business promotion initiatives and resources such as advice, business development assistance, cluster and business incubator activities and financing on equal terms. In addition, the financing and business support available need to be designed and accessible such that businesses in all industries – regardless of size and type – can avail themselves of the funding and support available. For this to be achieved, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth has set goals for the three priority areas Leadership, Governance and Industry.

Goal | Leadership

Knowledge and communication

1 Base the work on knowledge concerning equality and diversity

All business promotion stakeholders base their development activities on knowledge concerning equality and diversity, as well as surveys and analyses of industries and the conditions that apply within them in relation to gender, ethnic background and age.

2 Communicate on equal terms

The stakeholders' communications with entrepreneurs are norm critical and tailored to the target group, and aim to foster equivalent conditions.

3 Emphasise role models and prevent stereotypes

Stakeholders emphasise role models in order to broaden the perception of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship, to prevent stereotypical notions and inspire others to become entrepreneurs and start businesses.

Collaboration

4 Coordinate and stimulate development

Managements of government agencies, or the organisation's management at the national, regional and local levels, take responsibility for stimulating development and for coordination within business promotion, so that entrepreneurs can avail themselves of these resources on equal terms.

Goals | Governance

5 Monitor and change the allocation of resources

All business promotion stakeholders use gender-disaggregated statistics in order to monitor and change how they distribute resources to entrepreneurs as regards gender, ethnic background and age, and the enterprise's industry. The statistics produced should be disaggregated by gender, Swedish or foreign background, and age.

6 Set goals and work towards them with explicit requirements and activities

Concrete goals and activities for distributing resources are part of the activity and are based on analyses of statistics and surveys of industries and their conditions in respect of gender, ethnic background and age.


Goals | Industry

7 Design the regulatory framework so that more businesses can obtain financing

The regulatory framework for state funding to businesses and for other financing is designed in such a way that businesses across all industries, whatever the size or type of company, can obtain financing.

8 Have knowledge of new sectors, types of companies and business models

All business promotion stakeholders have relevant knowledge of a broad range of industries, including emerging and service-based industries, as well as types of companies and business models, so that entrepreneurs are supported on equal terms.



»I think that this strategy has been eagerly awaited. It helps us to understand that we have not yet achieved the goal, that there are still major imbalances. Everyone who works with these issues understands that wasted talent is the same as unused growth potential. Anyone who wants to should be able to start and run a business – any other position is just crazy. But it requires becoming aware of who we are reaching with our efforts and having the courage to change. The local authorities want to play an active role, because it's important for growth.«

*Anders Gunnarsson
Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR)*



The vision is a great variety of businesses and entrepreneurs.

HOW WE WILL
ACHIEVE OUR GOALS

The proposals from the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth to the Swedish Government up until 2020

The Swedish Government's role is central in continuing development towards a level playing field in the business promotion system. If business promotion organisations are to offer equivalent conditions to entrepreneurs – regardless of gender, ethnic background, age and the enterprise's industry – it is essential that the Government continues its efforts and provides clearer guidance. The Government needs to do the following up until 2020:



Proposals to the Government | Leadership for the future

→ Give stakeholders responsible for regional development the task and resources to lead, develop and coordinate work for regional growth and business promotion so that entrepreneurs can avail themselves of resources on equal terms. This task should include knowledge development, and method and process support. Stakeholders responsible for regional development are to include business promotion organisations at the regional level, which should be able to access resources for knowledge development and method and process support. The task is to be carried out in consultation with the county administrative boards.

→ Develop clear guidelines for the distribution of responsibilities and collaboration between regional development stakeholders and the county administrative boards at the regional level in work with regional growth and business promotion on equal terms.

→ Give the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth the task of coordinating knowledge development, forums for dialogue, and

learning between the regions. This coordination is to assist regional development stakeholders with introducing new tools, approaches and methods in order to achieve regional growth and business promotion on equal terms. The task is to be formulated in consultation with regional growth stakeholders and the county administrative boards.

→ Give the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth the task of outlining a joint action for knowledge and operational development, with associated resources, in collaboration with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), that targets trade and industry at the local level. This joint action should assist women and men to share in trade and industry activities on equal terms. The joint action should be based on this strategy for a business promotion system on equal terms, as well as on the experience and lessons learned from the SALAR course *Förenkla helt enkelt* (Simplify, quite simply) and the *Program för hållbar jämställdhet* (Programme for sustainable gender equality).

Proposals to the Government | Governance that is inclusive

- Place clearer demands on state-funded business promotion stakeholders:
 - Set targets for allocating resources to women’s and men’s businesses, taking into account ethnic background and age
 - Use gender-disaggregated statistics
 - Monitor how resources are allocated and analyse outcomes.

- Set these requirements in the relevant policy documents: appropriations directives to government agencies, decisions on conditions for regional development stakeholders, owner directives for Almi, state venture capital funds, etc. Require that stakeholders report their results, and collect the outcome for analysis. Also link the requirements to the financing of the activity. If results fail to materialise: Reduce appropriations or use other sanctions.

- Place clearer demands on stakeholders who manage or co-finance EU funds via the Structural Funds and Rural Development Programme:
 - Give the horizontal criteria impact in the processing of applications
 - Reject applications that do not comply with the horizontal criteria.

These requirements also apply to venture capital mediated via the regional venture capital funds, as well as cluster and incubator activities financed with EU funds.

→ Task a national authority with developing a uniform monitoring system for stakeholders at the national, regional and local levels with common indicators for monitoring the results of actions and the allocation of resources by gender, ethnic background and age.

→ Review *förordning (2007:713) om regionalt tillväxtarbete* (the Ordinance on regional growth initiatives) to include a gender and diversity perspective. This means, for example, that responsibility for producing a regional development plan or a regional strategy should also include responsibility for integrating a gender and diversity perspective. In addition, this responsibility should include conducting impact assessments on how actions promote entrepreneurship among the various target groups in terms of gender, ethnic background and age.



Proposals to the Government | Industries in transition

→ Adapt the ordinances for business promotion within Appropriation 1:1 to provide for a broad range of industries, types and sizes of companies, and for ensuring that women running businesses are allocated a bigger share of the fundings.

→ Task the responsible government agency, in consultation with regional development stakeholders and the county administrative boards, with drawing up action plans for how to distribute state funding to businesses and regional project support within Appropriation 1:1, as well as state funding to businesses within the Rural Development Programme. The distribution targets are to be at least in proportion with the relative shares of entrepreneurs in the stock of enterprises.

→ Allocate resources to regional development stakeholders for developing instruments for measuring growth industries in new and more inclusive ways.

→ Task Statistics Sweden with developing SNI codes in cooperation with the corresponding bodies in other EU countries and within the United Nations, so that the SNI codes can better follow the trends in new industries and provide a relevant reflection of the structure of trade and industry.



»The issue of gender mainstreaming is bigger than you might think. It is driving support schemes to become more innovative. We need process support to implement the available methods and tools directly in our routine work. While we are hoping for national support, we are already discussing what we can achieve at the regional level. It is important that the Swedish Government takes the initiative and provides the direction. It is also important that working for gender equality goes hand in hand with work for growth, innovation and business incubation. That way, we can achieve a great deal.«

*Monica Lejon, Unit for Growth and Infrastructure,
Norrbotten County Administrative Board*



Sweden needs businesses
in a broad range of industries.

The proposals of the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth to all business promotion stakeholders up until 2020

To achieve a business promotion system on equal terms, all those involved must contribute: government agencies, regional growth stakeholders, county administrative boards, business promotion organisations and local authorities. All business promotion stakeholders need to do the following up until 2020:



Proposals for business promotion stakeholders | Leadership for the future

- Ensure that the activity's management is development-oriented and that leadership is gender- and norm-aware. Leadership should focus on knowledge development, communication and collaboration in development work.
- Coordinate tasks and actions. Create and participate in forums for learning and sharing experiences, with a focus on creating a level playing field within business promotion. Collaborate with the third sector and other networks, for example, resource centres, immigrant associations and networks of young people.
- Increase knowledge of the conditions and needs of different groups of entrepreneurs. Survey how the activity is reaching out to different groups of entrepreneurs. Develop target-group-specific guidelines for norm-critical communications, business counselling and client interaction.
- Require potential aid beneficiaries to formulate and report on their actions from a gender and diversity perspective. Also require aid beneficiaries to continuously train their employees and consultants in gender equality and diversity issues.
- Use a gender and diversity perspective in public procurements of goods and services within business promotion. When procuring business counselling functions: Insist that the supplier is competent in gender and diversity matters.
- Emphasise and disseminate instructive examples, methods and role models. This could include successful projects for creating a level playing field in business promotion that highlight different types of entrepreneurs, types of companies and industries, and which help to break down stereotypical norms and perceptions about entrepreneurship.

Proposals for business promotion stakeholders | **Governance** that is inclusive

→ Develop SMART (specific, measurable, agreed, realistic, time-bound) goals for reaching out to and distributing resources to various target groups. The goals for these groups are to be at least in proportion with the relative shares of entrepreneurs in the stock of enterprises. Produce action plans for reaching out to under-represented groups.

→ Use gender-disaggregated statistics to monitor how resources are being distributed to women's and men's enterprises. It must be possible to disaggregate the statistics based on gender, Swedish or foreign background, and age.

→ Earmark funds in the budget for quality and operational development with a view to entrepreneurs being able to avail themselves of services and financing on equal terms regardless of gender, ethnic background, age and the enterprise's industry.

→ Ensure that the officials processing funding applications for money from the structural funds have the knowledge and resources to set requirements, inform and if necessary train applicants in what taking horizontal criteria into account means.

Proposals for business promotion stakeholders | **Industries** in transformation

→ Continue to develop knowledge about new industries and business models. Always start from a broad-based industry perspective and include all

groups of entrepreneurs when funding business promotion activities. This also applies to clusters and incubators.

The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth's additional proposals



Collaboration – proposals to the Swedish Government, government agencies, regional development stakeholders, county administrative boards and local authorities

→ Develop further the forms for collaboration and dialogue between regional development stakeholders and national authorities, and between regional development stakeholders and county administrative boards and local authorities, respectively – in order to develop the business promotion system towards a level playing field.

→ Use the Forum for regional growth and attractiveness 2014-2020 as an arena for dialogue and learning about a level playing field in the business promotion system.

Require disaggregated statistics – a proposal for regional development stakeholders, county administrative boards and local authorities

- Place clearer demands on aid beneficiaries to:
 - Set targets for distributing resources to women's and men's businesses, taking into account ethnic background and age
 - Use gender-disaggregated statistics
 - Monitor how resources are allocated and analyse outcomes.


Require that stakeholders report their results, and collect the outcomes for analysis. Also link the requirements to funding. If results fail to materialise: Reduce appropriations or use other sanctions.

- In regional and municipal policy documents, strategies and programmes:
 - Require gender-disaggregated statistics and impact assessments of how actions promote entrepreneurship in the various target groups. This should also be included in the regional development stakeholders' learning plans. Local development plans and trade and industry plans should be linked to regional policy documents such as the regional development programmes (RUP/RUS) and rural development strategies.

The strategy supports policy objectives

The strategy's direction and proposals for measures are in line with Sweden's policy objectives and strategies for business development, regional growth and gender equality.

- Economic policy and regional growth policy aim to contribute to sustainable growth, for which gender equality, integration and diversity are important building blocks. Europe 2020, the EU's strategy for growth and employment, is an important platform for Swedish policy, and is based on goals for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.
- Sweden's National innovation strategy 2013–2020 emphasises the importance of the diversity perspective for innovation and creativity, and states that innovation and creativity benefit from meetings and collaborations between people of different sexes, ages and ethnic origins.
- The National strategy for regional growth and attractiveness 2014–2020 emphasises that the sustainability perspective must be strengthened. The stated goal is that “women and men, regardless of age and background, should have the same rights and opportunities for exercising influence and access to resources in regional growth activities”.
- The overarching goal of gender equality policy is that women and men should have the same power to shape society and their own lives. Out of the four objectives, the strategy relates in particular to “equal distribution of power and influence” and “economic equality”. Since 1994, gender mainstreaming is the strategy that, together with specific measures, is to be used to achieve the gender equality policy goals. This means that the gender equality perspective is to permeate all policy areas, including economic policy and regional growth.



»Women's entrepreneurship is essential for Sweden to achieve sustainable growth. When we provide support to businesses, we always need to think about its effects on under-represented groups. The strategy provides collective wisdom and shows that many actors must join forces, cooperate and pull together in the same direction. Many measures are needed for this to become a reality. The strategy also provides the energy for us to be able to continue with the tough prioritisation we have already begun.«

Marie Ahlgren
Head of Advisory Services, ALMI

How gender equality and diversity aid economic renewal

Gender equality and diversity contribute to creating better conditions for renewal, growth, employment and competitiveness in a number of ways. Four links are often cited:

Equality, diversity and innovation

Diversity contributes to a more innovative climate, which in turn creates the conditions for sustainable growth and development. In concrete terms, with a more equitable distribution of resources to innovations and clusters, innovations can be developed in more sectors of the labour market, thereby strengthening the climate for innovation.

Equality, diversity and regional attractiveness

Gender equality and diversity at the regional level can help make the region more attractive to creative and talented people, as well as knowledge-intensive companies and capital. The region is then better able to compete with other countries and regions for the various forms of resources.



Equality, diversity and utilisation of resources

Gender equality and diversity result in more effective utilisation of human resources such as knowledge and skills. When women and men, regardless of ethnicity, can seek out the occupations and educational programmes they want without being hampered by structural barriers and discrimination, this leads to an optimum utilisation of knowledge and skills. It also leads to women and men participating in the labour market to the full, and being in the occupations they have the skills for.

Equality, diversity and democracy

Gender equality and diversity help strengthen democracy, which in turn helps to create the conditions for greater growth. A society that welcomes diversity and does not exclude people from access to capital, networks, institutions, etc., fosters greater trust and empowerment in the society. Trust and diversity in social contacts increase opportunities for private and public sectors collaborations, thus fostering the innovation potential in the society.

References

For a list of references, see the Report version of the strategy (in Swedish only), which can be downloaded from www.tillvaxtverket.se/publikationer:
Open up! National Strategy for business promotion on equal terms – English Summary Info 0600.

Find out more | www.jamstall.nu

The Swedish website www.jamstall.nu is a national resource for gender equality. It contains facts and news about gender equality, practical examples and tools for promoting gender equality.

The website was launched in December 2009 and is currently operated as a joint effort of the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research, the county administrative boards, the Swedish ESF council, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), and Vinnova (Swedish National Innovation Agency).

Tillväxtverket

Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth

Tel + 46 8 681 91 00

www.tillvaxtverket.se

Open up!

An accessible and inclusive business promotion system that utilises the enterprise and innovation of all people is a competitive advantage for Sweden. A great variety of businesses and entrepreneurs within a broad range of industries contributes to economic renewal and sustainable growth in the economy and Sweden's regions.

The National strategy for a business promotion on equal terms sets out eight goals for developing the business promotion system up until 2020. Together, we can work for change where women and men, regardless of ethnicity and age, have the same opportunities to start, run and grow businesses. And where businesses across all industries get support to start and grow.

You can download an English Summary of the full report in Swedish from www.tillvaxtverket.se/publikationer: Open up! National Strategy for business promotion on equal terms – English Summary Info 0600.