

Application Form

PART 1: BASIC DATA

Experience data (complete the information below in a clear and concise manner)

Title of the experience: "Tillsammans för en stark och hållbar demokrati" ('Together for a strong and sustainable democracy')		
Name of the city or region: Örnsköldsvik Municipality		
Inhabitants of the city or territory 56 250		
Country: Sweden		
Institution presenting the candidacy: Örnsköldsvik Municipality, Kommunledningsförvaltningen		
Website of the experience or institution: www.ornskoldsvik.se		
Profiles in social networks of the experience or the institution:		
Start date of the experience: 2020-09-15		
End date of the experience (if operational, indicate "ongoing"): Ongoing		
Budget of the experience (indicate the budget of the experience or the resources mobilized for its development and implementation): Carried out within the bounds of the existing municipal budget		
Type of candidacy (Mark with an X in the right column)	New experience	
	Innovation on an existing experience	X
	Continuity of an experience	
Type of experience (Mark with an X in the right column) (you may choose more than one)	Participatory budgeting	
	Participatory planning	X
	Standing council	X
	Workshop/meeting for diagnosis, monitoring, etc.	X
	Public Hearing/Forum	X
	Poll/referendum	
	Assemblies / Citizen juries / Deliberation spaces	
	E-government/Open government/Digital platforms	
	Citizen initiative	
	Other (specify): Geographically based citizen dialogue on complex issues	X
	To achieve higher levels of equality in terms of participation	X
	Including diversity as a criterion for inclusion	X
	Community empowerment	X

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Objective of the experience (Mark with an X in the right column) (you may choose more than one)	To empower non-organised citizens		X
	To increase citizen's rights in terms of political participation		X
	To connect different tools of participation within a participatory democracy "ecosystem"		X
	To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the mechanisms of participatory democracy		X
	To improve the quality of public decision-making through the mechanisms of participatory democracy		X
	To improve the evaluation and accountability of the mechanisms of participatory democracy		X
	To improve any public policy through the active participation of the public		X
Territorial area (Mark with an X in the right column) (you may choose more than one)	All the territory	Local (Örnsköldsvik municipality)	X
		Regional	
	District		
	Neighbourhood		
Thematic area (Mark with an X in the right column) (you may choose more than one)	Governance		X
	Education		X
	Transport		X
	Urban management		X
	Health		X
	Security		X
	Environment/Climate change and/or urban agriculture		X
	Civic associations, grassroots and new social movements.		X
	Culture		X
	Housing		X
	Job creation		X
	Decentralization		X
	Local development		X
	Training/learning		X
	Economy and/or finances		X
	Legal regulations		X
	Social inclusion		X

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	All	X
	Other (write the topic)	
Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) associated with the practice <i>Mark with an X in the right column (more than one option can be chosen)</i> <i>You can also add the specific target</i>	SDG 1 - No poverty	
	SDG 2 - Zero hunger	
	SDG 3 - Good health and well-being	X
	SDG 4 - Quality education	X
	SDG 5 - Gender equality	X
	SDG 6 - Clean water and sanitation	
	SDG 7 - Affordable and clean energy	
	SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth	X
	SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	X
	SDG 10 - Reduced inequality	X
	SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities	X
	SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production	
	SDG 13 - Climate action	
	SDG 14 - Life below water	
	SDG 15 - Life on land	
	SDG 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions	X
	SDG 17 - Partnership for the goals	X

PART 2: DESCRIPTION OF THE EXPERIENCE

Fill in the following fields clearly and concisely. You can add links if you consider it appropriate.

Context

*In a **maximum of 300 words**, it presents the cultural, geographical, historical, institutional and socioeconomic context of the city, the territory in which the experience takes place.*

Örnsköldsvik municipality lies within Västernorrland County and has a surface area of 8500 km² and a population of 56 250.

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For each female inhabitant there are 1.02 men, the two largest age groups are 25–54 years (36%) and 65+ (24%), 11 % of the population is born outside of Sweden. The population in Örnsköldsvik has turned from a negative decreasing of population and are now trending a positive increasing. The average age of the inhabitants is 43,9 years, the proportion of inhabitants with higher education is 23%, and 81 % of the population work.

Civil society is strong, with 940 registered associations on the municipal register of associations and an estimate of at least 100 more organisations that are unregistered.

There is access to post-secondary education – including distance learning. There are two community colleges in Örnsköldsvik, and Umeå University in Umeå and Mid Sweden University in Sundsvall are both within commuting distance by train.

Overall unemployment in Örnsköldsvik is under the national average and is trending down. Youth unemployment is at the national average and the unemployment among those born outside of Sweden is higher than average. Örnsköldsvik scores well when it comes to safety, the number of pupils who make it through secondary education and how many men who make use of parental leave. There are differences in socio economic conditions across different parts of the municipality.

Historically Örnsköldsvik was an important industrial district in the lumber trade and maritime transport. Today Örnsköldsvik has around 6500 companies based in the municipality –including small and medium sized companies as well as large internationally active export companies. There is a well-developed entrepreneurial spirit and innovative tradition.

Areas present in the municipality include biochemistry, IT, mechanical engineering, music production, research, tourism, medicine, and services.

Precedents

Explain the precedents and origins of the experience: if it is the innovation of an existing experience, what are its origins, if it is a new experience, what are the antecedents in participation in your city/municipality/region. You can also indicate if you have been inspired by experiences in other cities/countries. (maximum 300 words)

In 2019 the municipal assembly in Örnsköldsvik decided to create a 'parliamentary democracy review' to look over the political governance of the municipality. The task was broadened to look over the administrative organisation and how the municipality could work to increase trust between citizens and the democratic system.

This review was developed into a programme of work where local politicians and municipal staff worked together in creating an approach to citizen participation processes based on the idea of a local societal contract. This has been done with the Swedish Association of Local Government and Regions (SALAR). The work has created the foundation for a more strategic approach to participatory democracy.

The goal is that all citizens in Örnsköldsvik shall have the feeling that they are included, have the possibility to influence, and are able to participate in the democratic process.

Objectives of the experience

What is the objective listed in Part 1 that you think is the most important, and indicate other outstanding objectives of the experience (maximum 100 words)

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The work is based on the municipality's vision "We build best together". The stated goal of the municipality's democracy work is to create a strong and sustainable democracy. The following conditions are required:

- An active and secure political organisation
- Competent and democratically aware staff
- Active citizens
- More equal democratic influence.

Based on this we feel that goal 16 of the global goals are most relevant to our work, especially 16.5, 16.6, 16.7, 16.10, 16.B.

Other important goals are 3, 5, 10 and 11. Other global goals can be linked to the democracy work based on the issue at hand.

Methodology

Describe the methodology of the experience: phases of the process, participation channels
(**maximum 300 words**)

The starting point for the municipality's work is that democracy becomes real when people meet and together define their challenges, needs and solutions. The work builds on the principles of openness and transparency; necessary components are trust, participation, and inclusion.

The municipality functions both as an actor and an arena for democratic discussions on local choices, priorities, and decisions. As such, the municipality's focus lies on building the legitimacy of local democracy, managing tensions and conflicts, and through this managing the ability to deliver.

The role of elected politicians is to manage and develop the local area in line with their political beliefs and goals by bringing their parties' perspectives into the democratic process.

Citizens are active in democratic processes through elections, citizen participation processes and their own initiatives.

Part of the initiative has been to establish a toolbox with different types of dialogues such as safeguarding countryside and city, dialogues in complex matters (360 degrees), local walkabouts and open consultations on different issues. A broad toolbox allows us to adapt the method to different participant groups, locations, and topics. Individual dialogues can also develop over time, for example leading to local development plans, partnership or joint agreements between the local government and citizens.

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Innovation

*Explain what you consider most innovative in the practice. (In a **maximum of 150 words**)*

What sets this apart from previous engagement work in Örnköldsvik is that it involves close collaboration between elected representatives and civil servants working to strengthen the relationship between the municipal organisation and citizens.

The political representatives, staff and citizens have jointly developed methods for citizen participation to create a strong and sustainable democracy. The process has not been restricted to the working groups but has also taken place in the internal municipal departments and political parties to better embed the approach. All political parties (regardless of number of mandates) are working together from the start in each dialogue.

This process is built on openness and transparency and the condition for that is trust, participation, and inclusiveness. These dialogues will narrow the gap between politics and citizens.

Inclusion

*Point out the importance of including as many groups and diverse populations as possible and how you have achieved it. (In a **maximum of 150 words**)*

To reach the goal of a strong and sustainable democracy we create the conditions for more equal influence. A key part is developing adaptable methods and tools, that changes based on the issues and the capabilities and needs of different groups. This makes participating citizens feel more included and often leads to increased knowledge about the democratic system and to increased trust over time.

The work provides a framework to reach out to unengaged groups in a more systematic and structured way. Inclusion also means using many different channels and communication routes to invite participants and inform them about the work.

The most innovative aspect has been including all perspective in an area: civil society, unorganised people, the resistant opinions, the parties that are normative and not normative, all ages and so on. The collection of perspectives is important to do thoroughly for the dialogue to be genuine and productive.

Communication

*What has been the strategy and communication channels of the experience so that the population knows about it and gets involved. (In a **maximum of 150 words**)*

The approach in Örnköldsvik starts with the what, who and where of an issue. We work quickly to collaboratively understand the nature of the issue and based on this to reach out to and involve those citizens and other actors who are affected.

Communication takes place through social media, local papers and above all- through cooperation with companies and civil society organisations. This is done to reach as many people as possible. We use the same approach for feedback and evaluation. We adapt our communications approaches to the target group - all individuals process information in different ways, and it is important that the information is disseminated in the ways that citizens are comfortable with.

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Articulation with other actors

*It explains how the experience was articulated with different actors and simultaneous or pre-existing processes. What roles did these participants assume? Explain the degree of success of this joint. (In a **maximum of 150 words**)*

The municipal organisation can't create successful democratic engagement on its own. It must be carried out in collaboration with individual citizens, civil society organisations and other actors.

The work has led to an approach which builds on 'five Fs':

Focus (FOKUSERA): How do we collectively create a better Örnköldsvik in the present and the future?

Understand (FÖRSTÅ): Jointly understanding the challenge and opportunities of a situation through mutual deliberation and exploration.

Formulate (FORMULERA): Together we formulate:

1. Common goals and solutions.
2. What needs to be done and who does what.
3. Rights and obligations of those who take part.

Realise (FÖRVERKLIGA): Together we carry out, sustain, and develop what we have agreed.

Follow up (FÖLJA UPP): Together we evaluate the work and communicate what is happening as a result.

It is in the meeting and collaboration between people that we broaden our perspective and where conversations lead to action.

Evaluation:

*What evaluation mechanisms have been implemented? Develop whether citizenship has participated in the evaluation of the practice (In a **maximum of 300 words**)*

In the democracy development work there have been three pilot projects (see attachment). In one project there has been an academic evaluation to track the effects of the process on levels of public trust. The analysis of the research isn't done yet.

The pilot projects have allowed us (together with the participants) to shape the foundations for the strategic work on participative democracy.

The steps in each pilot have been:

- Formulate - The central question/problem/goal/desire for the issue
- Assess - Who are affected by the issue? (Within the municipal organisation and among organised and unorganised citizens)
- Prepare – Which method and tool is best? What is the time plan?
- Gather perspectives – Understand the context and the complexity of the issue from the perspective of those affected.
- Dialogue – May take place without perspective gathering first, but the more complex an issue is the more important the gathering of perspectives is.

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- Formulate actions - Where possible actions and activities as well as the plan for taking them forward and following up are listed.
- Act –When a decision has been made, we need to practically deliver what we have committed to.
- Feedback – There needs to be a plan for feeding back at the start of the process.
- Follow up – Depending on the issue and its complexity there often needs to be a strategy for following up the process

Impacts and results

*Describe the impacts and results of the process. How many people have participated, and which are their profiles. What have been the impacts on public policies, on the functioning of the administration and on citizens. (In a **maximum of 300 words**)*

9 politicians from all parties in the municipal assembly have been involved in the parliamentary democracy review group.

The practical working group has included 3 politicians and 3 council staff, as well as a steering group with two senior politicians and two senior managers from the municipality.

In total 500 people have been involved in the three pilots, including representatives of companies, civil society organisations and individual citizens of all age, different physical circumstances, socio-economic status and with different backgrounds. The work has been established in the municipal board and municipal assembly.

The result of the work is a new political organisation in the municipality which will provide elected representatives with a simpler and more efficient organisation for increasing democracy and placing citizens at the centre of decision-making.

In total the work has led to renewed commitment to developing citizen engagement in a strategic way, placing elected representatives at the forefront of the work. In this work different tools and ways of working will be continually developed together with the citizens.

For the three pilots the results have been a positive injection of development and new perspective for solutions.

The need for and responsibility for democracy work is visible in more levels within the municipality organisation and in the political arena. There is a more present discussion on democratic work and responsibility today than it was at the start of the project. The elected politicians express that they are more confident in talking about, and working with, democracy and citizens dialogues today than before.

The working relationship between the political level and the staff level has become clearer and more sustainable.

PART 3: EXPERIENCE SUMMARY

A summary of the experience: origin, objectives, operation, results, monitoring and evaluation (Do not hesitate to repeat aspects that have already been written before, this summary is the

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one that will be shared on the digital platform for open evaluation and in the publication of the award). (In a **maximum of 500 words**)

Many global challenges affect the local and individual levels. A strong democracy is a precondition for reaching the global goals set out in Agenda 2030.

We face significant democratic challenges at the global and local levels. A precondition to meet these challenges needs to be a focus on strengthening local democracy.

The vision for Örnköldsvik is that “We build best together” and we believe that it is through meetings and democratic conversations that we create the conditions for building a sustainable society and an Örnköldsvik for all.

Municipalities have two main missions – a service mission and a democracy mission. As a service actor focus is placed on providing good services efficiently, fairly, and legally.

As a democracy actor the focus is on legitimacy and trust, managing tensions, and conflict and through this strengthening the ability to deliver and decision-making ability based on an understanding of priorities. The work requires transparency

The municipality is both an actor and an arena for democratic processes, where local politicians manage and develop local society in line with their political beliefs by bringing their party's perspective into the democratic processes. Citizens in turn are part of democratic process through elections, citizens dialogues and own initiatives.

In working “Together for a strong and sustainable democracy” Örnköldsvik seeks to ensure that all citizens feel that they can take part, be able to affect change and be part of the democratic process.

The route into the municipality's democracy work is that the work comes alive when people meet and together can formulate challenges, needs and solutions.

During the processes we have identified a need for forums where citizens, politicians and public officers can meet and have dialogues on all kinds of questions.

We have also identified the importance of education in methods of dialogues and to discuss the core values in democracy and the democracy processes in to have a common understanding of democracy work and that this knowledge also brings confidence to the participants.

The starting process in each dialogue where all perspectives are shared have created better understanding for the parliamentary decision process and that it is no longer that important to “win” with your arguments but to have had the possibility to share them with others and have been part of the process.