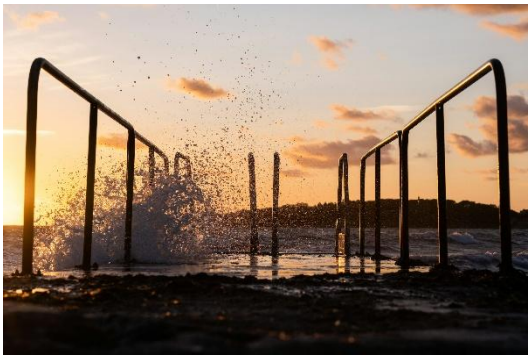

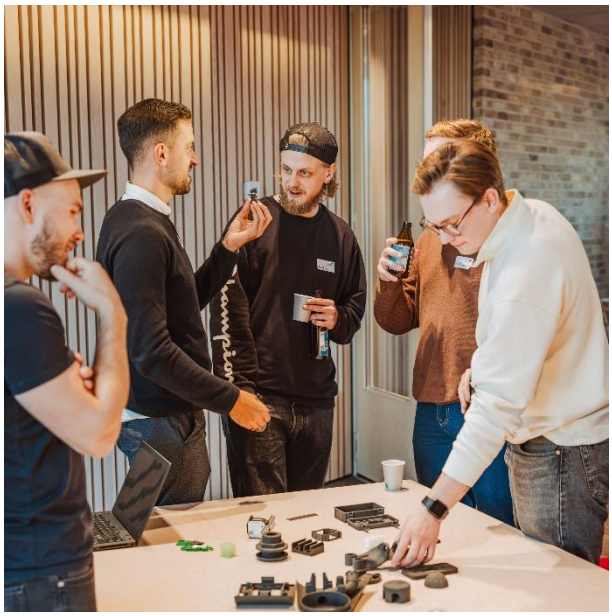

Integrated action plan Varberg 2025

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Introduction and Context

Talent Attraction refers to the strategies and initiatives used by regions, cities, or organizations to attract skilled individuals to live, work, and grow within their area. In today's interconnected world, young people have access to global opportunities. They can study in Berlin, work in London, or start a company in New York. So why would they choose to stay or move to a small coastal town like Varberg?

As a city grows, talent attraction becomes crucial for maintaining economic development, innovation, and competitiveness. A qualified workforce drives business investment, promotes entrepreneurship, and enhances the city's ability to adapt to new industries, trends, and challenges. Attracting the right competencies also improves the quality of public services, supports cultural and technological progress, and strengthens the local economy through increased consumption and tax revenues. Without a strong talent pipeline, cities risk stagnation, labor shortages, and missed opportunities for long-term prosperity. By prioritizing talent attraction, growing cities can ensure sustainable and dynamic development.

Effective talent attraction and establishment require collaboration between many different stakeholders to create meaningful and lasting impact. Success demands coordinated efforts at multiple levels and for various target groups, involving a wide range of activities, engagement strategies, and initiatives.

Talent attraction involves many perspectives, from student housing to strong professional networks. But above all, it's about showing young people that they can live a meaningful and rich life in Varberg, both professionally and personally. In Varberg, you're not tied to the stress of a big city, but you're never disconnected from the outside world. A place where young talents don't have to choose between a meaningful career and a fulfilling life, here you can have both.

Background

C4TALENT – *Cities for Talent* – is an Action Planning Network (APN) co-funded by the URBACT IV Programme of the European Union. It brings together ten small and medium-sized towns from across Europe that face a shared challenge: the steady loss of skilled and creative people, often referred to as *brain drain*.

The network's central question is simple but critical: How can smaller cities attract and retain talent by creating thriving local conditions for entrepreneurship, innovation, and quality of life?

Between June 2023 and December 2025, C4TALENT supported its partner cities in developing their Integrated Action Plans (IAPs) to tackle this challenge at local level. Each plan is based on the URBACT method – a structured, participatory process that helps cities design concrete actions through learning, exchange, and collaboration.

The network

C4TALENT is coordinated by Nyíregyháza (Hungary) as Lead Partner.

The partner cities are :Alghero (Italy) · Alytus (Lithuania) · Centar Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) · Nyíregyháza (Hungary) · Piraeus (Greece) · Pula (Croatia) · Roeselare (Belgium) · Rzeszów (Poland) · Varberg (Sweden) · Vilanova i la Geltrú (Spain).

Together they represent a diverse mix of local contexts – from Northern to Southern Europe, EU Member States and IPA countries – but all share similar demographic and economic pressures linked to youth outmigration and limited local opportunities.

The thematic focus

C4TALENT addresses talent attraction and retention as its overarching theme, with a specific focus on entrepreneurship and startup ecosystem development as one of the main levers to make smaller cities more attractive for talent.

The network has explored three closely interlinked policy areas:

- **Entrepreneurial ecosystems** – how cities can create favourable conditions for starting and growing local businesses;
- **Talent attraction and retention** – how they can better understand and respond to the factors that influence people's decision to stay, return, or move;
- **Place branding for talent** – how cities can communicate their authentic identity and strengths to attract residents, investors, and professionals.

Rather than treating these topics in isolation, C4TALENT connects them into one integrated approach: a vibrant startup environment supports local talent to thrive; an attractive, inclusive city encourages people to stay; and a strong, authentic place identity provides a strong strategic framework for local development and communication efforts.

The URBACT approach

URBACT is the **European Territorial Cooperation Programme** that helps cities work together and develop integrated, sustainable solutions to urban challenges. It is built on the understanding that cities are on the front line of Europe's most pressing issues – from climate change and demographic shifts to digital transformation – but also hold the key to many opportunities through their diversity, creativity, and innovation potential.

URBACT promotes **integrated development** by supporting cities to connect policies across sectors and governance levels. This means ensuring **horizontal integration** – tackling economic, social, and environmental dimensions together – and **vertical integration**, through collaboration between local, regional, national, and EU actors.

At the same time, URBACT encourages cities to rethink traditional governance models and move towards more **inclusive and participatory planning**. Its **action-oriented, co-creation approach** builds ownership by involving stakeholders directly in defining problems, shaping solutions, and implementing change. Each partner city in C4TALENT has set up a **URBACT Local Group (ULG)** bringing together local government, businesses, education institutions, NGOs, and citizens to co-design their Integrated Action Plan.

Finally, **transnational exchange and peer learning** are central to the **URBACT method**. By sharing experiences and learning from other European cities, partners can adapt good practices to their own context and build stronger, more resilient local solutions.

Through this process, URBACT helps cities **move from ideas to action** — creating locally grounded strategies that are **integrated, participatory, and ready for implementation**.

Focus of the document

In the early 2000s, Varberg made bold decisions to invest in a learning center in a region with historically low levels of education and limited access to skills development opportunities. This led to the opening of Campus Varberg, built around three main ideas: to be a **Meeting place**, a **Mediator** in education, and a **Motor** in regional development.

Shortly thereafter, the project unit Alexanderson Institute was launched to strengthen the "motor" function of Campus Varberg. By collaborating with business networks and international partners, Alexanderson institute developed robust methods and processes to drive triple helix projects, initiatives involving academia, industry, and government, focused on themes closely linked to the education programs at Campus Varberg. Historically, these projects have emphasized sustainability, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning. More recently, they have expanded to include tech and digitalization and talent attraction. Alongside Alexanderson institute's growth, a municipal vision emerged to position Varberg as "the creative hub of the west coast.

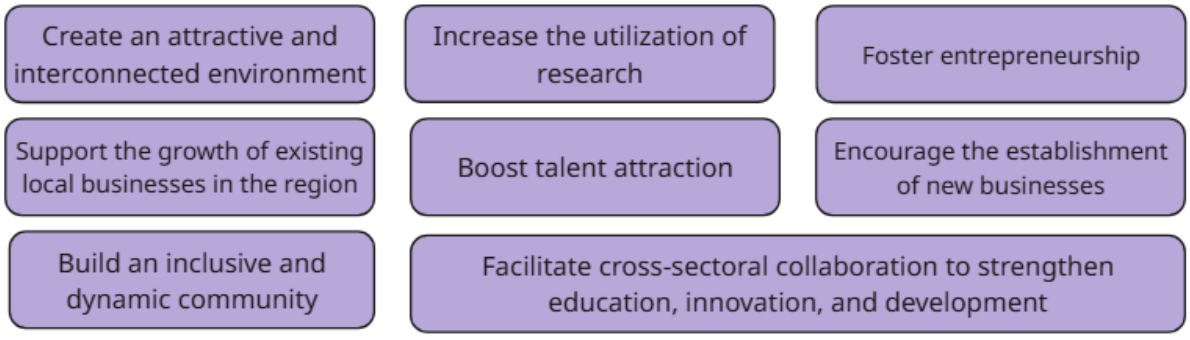
Now, 2025, Varberg is undergoing a significant transformation that will shape the region's long-term growth and attractiveness. Major investments are underway by the Swedish Transport Administration, the Region, and the Municipality. These investments aim to improve infrastructure and connectivity to the European continent with projects such as tunnel construction, new train station, the relocation of the port, and the creation of a new city district called Västerport.

The municipal real estate owner VFAB has already begun investing in key parts of the Västerport district and Campus Varberg is set to become an integral part of this vibrant new district. This development is driven by a shared ambition—both VFAB and the municipality of Varberg see Västerport as a possible platform to showcase Varberg's innovation and growth on a larger scale.

The idea of establishing an innovation district in Varberg has been evolving within Campus Varberg alongside the development of Västerport. The need for a coordinated space for innovation has grown increasingly important, particularly in relation to talent attraction. Through continued dialogue between Varberg Municipality, local businesses, academia, and property owners, plans are now emerging to explore the establishment of an innovation district in Varberg.

Innovation districts are internationally recognized hubs where **innovation, entrepreneurship**, and **creativity** converge. Often known by different names, these districts are developed in highly accessible urban locations and closely integrated with the city's fabric. They provide platforms for **research, knowledge sharing, testbeds, and innovation infrastructure**. Within an innovation district, diverse actors collaborate to co-create economic growth, social innovation, and enhance the attractiveness of the area.

Varberg's innovation district is envisioned as a collaborative space where multiple actors work together to:



The Innovation district aims to strengthen the city's ability to attract and retain talent. By coordinating efforts and showcasing Varberg as a vibrant, opportunity-rich environment, it

seeks to become a hub for growth and learning and place Varberg and the Halland region on the national and international innovation map.

City context

Varberg is a charming coastal town located on Sweden's west coast. With its vibrant cultural life, safe environment and strong sense of community,

Varberg is a place where the quality of life is in focus, making it an ideal place for live. The city's rich history is manifested in the big fortress situated on the seafront. The city is also a center for wellness and outdoor activities, where residents and visitors can enjoy a wide range of health-promoting activities, from surfing and hiking to relaxing spa visits. Here you can enjoy the beautiful forest of beech trees and surf on the rolling waves in the bay of Apelviken or just exhale whilst catching an amazing sunset.

The residents of Varberg municipality are largely satisfied with living in the municipality. As many as 97% think that the municipality is a very or fairly good place to live, which means that the people of Varberg are more satisfied than the national average (92%). Close to 80% of residents would recommend others who do not live in the municipality to move here, over 15% more than the national average 1.

Varberg is a city in transformation, great investments in infrastructure are being made and a new district in the harbour area is about to be built. The 67 000 inhabitants in the city are forecasted to grow to 80 000 in 2030. This situation presents a unique opportunity for growth and development. The city must proactively plan for this expansion and ensure the availability of necessary resources to accommodate the needs of new residents, businesses, and visitors.

Varberg is situated on the west coast of Sweden, in between the second largest city of Sweden, Gothenburg, and the regional capital of Halland, Halmstad. Varberg is one of six municipalities in Halland.

Varberg is located an hour drive from Gothenburg in the north. The train going to Gothenburg, Halmstad, Malmö and Copenhagen make commuting and travelling easy.

[1] The results of the 2023 citizen survey.

Facts & figures

City size (km2): 869 km²
Total unemployment rate Varberg: 3.7% (women: 1.7% men: 1.9%)

Halland - a multi-core region!

This means that no single place or municipality is dominant without the residents being relatively evenly distributed between them, only about 30 percent of Halland's residents live in the largest municipality of Halmstad. Being a multi-core region is usually a positive thing! The various cores of Halland, here understood as our larger towns Kungsbacka, Varberg, Falkenberg and Halmstad contribute to the fact that there is a market base in large parts of the region. Statistically speaking, only Halmstad can be considered a larger city according to European practice (>50,000 inhabitants). However, research shows that 25,000 inhabitants - which the other mentioned cores reach - is a critical limit for a place to grow itself and generate positive foreign effects. (faktaunderlag-hallands-utveckling.pdf)

Population

Varberg is growing at a relatively fast pace, with projections showing a population of 70,000 by 2025 and 80 000 by 2030. In addition, the region of Halland boasts the highest life expectancy in Sweden. Many people choose Varberg as a place to retire, contributing to a higher dependency ratio here (88.9) compared to the national average (77.1). On top of this, the proportion of residents with higher education in Varberg (22%) is lower than the national average (27%).

Inhabitants : 67 800
Division of inhabitants according to age (%):

- 0-15: 18.6%
- 16-24: 8.9%
- 25-44: 23.6%
- 45-64: 24.8%
- 65-: 24.1%

The economy

Sector	number of enterprises	share enterprises
Advanced business services	933	11,8%
building and Construction	879	11,1%
Retail	466	5,9%
Finance and real estate operations	982	12,4%
Business services and personal services	539	6,8%
Hotel and restaurant	211	2,7%
Information and communication	303	3,8%
Agriculture and forestry	1383	17,5%

Culture, leisure and entertainment, society	239	3,0%
Public Administration	1	0,0%
unkown	666	8,4%
Wholesale and online trade	399	5,0%
Manufacturing and extraction	395	5,0%
Transport and logistics	161	2,0%
Education	154	1,9%
Health and social care	209	2,6%
Total	7920	100,0%

The hospitality industry is one of the largest industries in the city which creates many reasons for travel and drives tourism and purchasing power to Varberg. During the summer months, the population doubles and the town teems with life, cultural events, restaurants, pop-ups.

Varberg is also known for the timber industry, which is dominated by companies such as Deromegruppen, Södra and Varbergs trä. Together with Hallands Hamnar, which manages Sweden's largest port for timber, these companies make Varberg an active "timber municipality".

Varberg is a perfect cycling city, and the cycling industry has ancient roots in Varberg. Monark was for a long time one of the largest employers in Varberg and was founded here in 1908. The company is now part of Cycleeurope which is a large part of cycling Sweden.

Varberg has many large companies, but in Halland it is small and medium-sized companies that dominate the business structure.

Size	number of enterprises	share
0 employees	4396	55,5%
1-9 employees	3164	39,9%
10-49 employees	296	3,7%
50-249 employees	60	0,8%
250 + employees	4	0,1%
Total	7920	100,0%

Income/turnover	number of enterprises	share
< 1 tkr	1360	17,2%
1-499 tkr	3327	42,0%
500-999 tkr	811	10,2%
1000-4999 tkr	1399	17,7%
5000 + tkr	1023	12,9%
Total	7920	100,0%

In thousands Swedish kronor.The data is extracted from Bisnode and provided by the region of Halland and show the data for the municipality of Varberg in 2023.

Commuting to work

Varberg's great location with good commuting connections and distance to Mölndal and Gothenburg means that many choose to commute out of the region. According to statistics, around 7,474 residents of Varberg work in other municipalities, with the majority commuting to Gothenburg (1,726), the nearest major city. Commuting across municipal borders in Halland is growing faster than the population itself, indicating that Halland, especially its northern municipalities like Varberg, is becoming increasingly integrated into the labor market of the larger Gothenburg metropolitan area. [2]

Halland has a high outbound commute, but also a high inbound commute. 22% of the employed residents work outside the region's borders, many in the Gothenburg region. At the same time, Halland obtains 11% of its competence from another region through commuting. Commuters generally have more advanced occupations than those who live and work in the county or commute to the county to work. The region's own labor market is supplemented with more advanced occupations in the Gothenburg region above all.[3]

[2] faktaunderlag-hallands-utveckling.pdf

[3] Bedömning av kompetensbehov i Halland – Populärversion av Region Hallands rapport Kompetensförsörjning i Hallands län 2024).

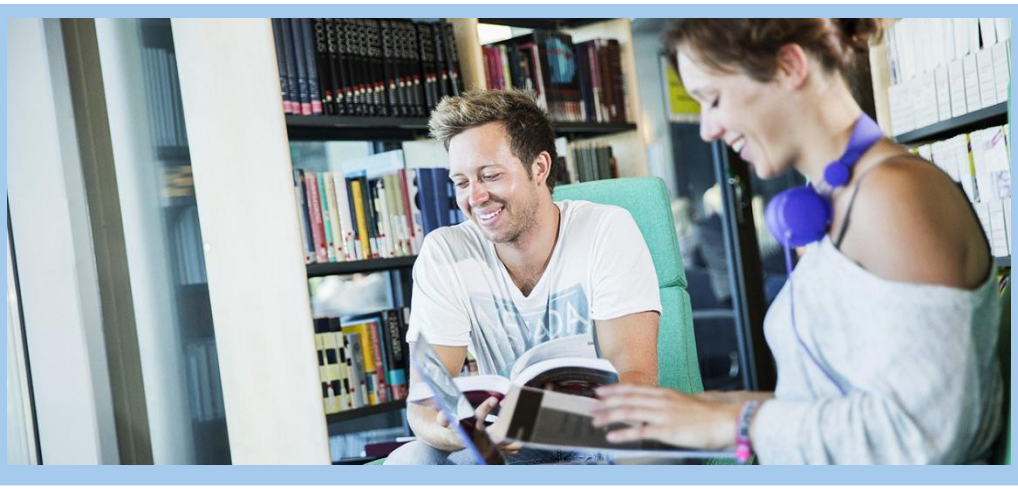
The new district - Västerport

Between the sea and the city, the new district of Västerport will emerge. The goal is a lively and welcoming district. An investment in public environments and businesses on the ground floors of buildings should help to create a lively neighborhood with many people in motion. The goal is that there should be something for everyone in Västerport. The area belongs to all Varberg residents and visitors - just as the area around the Fortress and the boardwalk does today.

When Västerport is fully developed, there will be around 2,500 homes here. Of these, approximately 75 percent will be condominiums and 25 percent rental properties. Half of the ground floors will be premises with different types of business. Plans are being made for a new square, a new park and an extension of the already existing beach walk.

Preliminary construction start for the first houses in Västerport is the end of 2026 or the beginning of 2027 at the earliest (Varbergs nya stadsdel vid havet | Varbergs kommun).

Education



Campus Varberg is an educational institution that hosts approximately 1,500 students each year. The original intention was to establish a university, however, due to the high number of universities nationwide, the model shifted to a "lärcentra" approach instead.

A “lärcentra” refers to an entity that is organized by one or more municipalities and where the student is offered support in learning from teachers and is given the opportunity to meet other students. The concept of a local Campus emerged from the need to enhance local educational levels and secure future development of the city.

Campus Varberg offers a wide range of bachelor programmes in collaboration with various universities.

- Högskolan i Halmstad

- Högskolan i Borås
- Högskolan i Skövde
- Malmö Universitet

The campus also specializes in providing professional and vocational education that aligns with the needs of the local and regional job market. This is a strong point that other educational institutes, like an university, can't not provide. It allows Campus Varberg to be adaptive and agile and attentive to the needs of the local businesses. Creating a bachelor programme is a process stretching over a longer period, often several year (5-8 years), before the students are ready to enter the labour market. Whilst a higher vocational education can be up an running within a year or two.

The origin of student at Campus Varberg

- 30% of the students live in the municipality of Varberg
- 25% Move here to study (national)
- 45% Come from neighboring cities and commuting

Research

In collaboration with Varbergs Sparbank Campus Varberg is the benefactor of scholarships for research projects within subject, disciplines or projects that are represented at Campus Varberg. Through funding from the Sparbanksstiftelsen in Varberg the *Efterfrågad forskning* initiative strives to increase the presence of research in the courses and projects offered and conducted at Campus Varberg.

The scholarships are announced yearly and are open for researcher associated with the university partners of Campus Varberg or any other learning centers that want to collaborate with Campus Varberg. Doctoral students, doctoral students and those with a PhD corresponding to a minimum of a licentiate in philosophy are welcome to apply.

Key policies and strategies

Political objectives – the municipality of Varberg

Attractiveness and Quality of Life

Entrepreneurship

- *To attract talent, Varberg needs to continue to market itself as an attractive place to live and work. This means developing the city's infrastructure, housing market and cultural offerings to meet the needs of a diversified workforce.*
- *To attract more students to stay in Varberg, support is available to enable them to try running their own business during their studies. This strengthens the students' entrepreneurial abilities but also gives them the opportunity to develop new businesses in the city.*
- *It is becoming increasingly important to have a comprehensive offer to businesses, such as living environments, accommodation, culture and leisure. Interest in co-location in cluster environments where skills can be shared is increasing.*

The best place to live 2035 Regional development strategy for Halland

Region Halland's strategy for sustainable growth is aligned with this strategy by (1) promote companies' strategic competence supply, (2) contributing to their internationalization in an increasingly globalized context but also the objectives to (3) secure and develop relevant competence to meet the needs of the labor market and (4) strengthen the conditions for a more adaptable, inclusive and equal labor market

Summary of interventions in the policy area so far

Entrepreneurship & business development

Varberg has a strong focus on promoting entrepreneurship and innovation, with several initiatives that support students, startups, and established companies in their development.

The Business and Destination Office (NOD) Varberg municipality offers support and advice for those who have or want to start their own business. The "entrepreneur-school" is for those who want to start, or have recently started, their own business. It is also open to those who want to take over an existing company. There are also several support initiatives that help entrepreneurs navigate the municipality's various administrations and contact persons when it comes to permits.

The Region Halland's Time Bank gives advice and inspiration regarding what is important to you when developing your business.

Potential VBG

Potential VBG. is a business incubator that is co-financed by the local bank and its grant "Sparbanksstiftelsen Varberg". Potential VBG works to support the growth of small and medium-sized companies. With a focus on scalable business ideas, Potential VBG offers an incubator program that gives new entrepreneurs, and established companies access to venture capital, support and training in entrepreneurship.

Ung Företagsamhet (UF)

UF students in high school get to start and run a business during an academic year. UF helps students to develop entrepreneurial skills. In a typical year, approximately 60 UF companies are run by almost 200 students at PS-gymnasiet in Varberg.

NyföretagarCentrum Halland

Nyföretagarcentrum is a foundation that has worked since 1993 to help people transform their ideas into businesses. Providing free, personal and confidential advice for those who want to start a business.

Tech report – live locally, work globally

A printed report for the "tech mecca" in Varberg produced by the Alexanderson institute. The report covers the current situation, global inspiration, interviews, objectives and an action plan to move Varberg towards the vision.

Techarena Varberg

A physical meeting place at Campus Varberg. Every Tuesday and Wednesday from 08:00 to 17:00, tech aficionados can sit and work in the open space, drink coffee with like-minded people and share their enthusiasm for everything in tech. In addition, breakfast events and exciting workshops are held.

The community Varberg Tech

The Varberg Tech community strives to create a dynamic community in Varberg where entrepreneurs, startups, coders, investors and tech enthusiasts can gather to build the scalable tech companies of the future together. Here you can meet like-minded people, discuss ideas big and small, ask for advice and make valuable contacts.

Coompanion

Coompanion can be found in various locations all over Sweden and in Halland they have existed for almost 30 years. They are a membership organization where, together with members, its board and the employees, work to promote entrepreneurship and development based on cooperation and cooperation. They work for an equal and democratic world where we jointly own and share responsibility and resources.

Through free advice, commitment and support, they help those who want to develop a business together with others.

Impact house

A co-working space in the central part of the city. Here entrepreneurs can rent an office spaces in a creative environment, an online studio with modern technology solutions, event spaces and a range of meeting rooms for all possible types of needs.

Impact House Halland has a sustainability profile.

INTERVENTION LOGIC AND INTEGRATED APPROACH

Summary of key problems / challenges

Varberg is entering a phase of rapid transformation, driven by major developments in the new district of Västerport. This momentum presents a unique opportunity for the city to strengthen its position, but doing so requires strategic efforts to attract, retain, and engage both professionals and investments. Although Varberg offers a vibrant lifestyle and a growing business community, it competes with larger cities and must address several structural and perception-based challenges to position itself as an attractive destination for talent.

Varberg? - “Smaller cities are competing with strong brands of bigger cities.”

It is crucial to build awareness and a strong identity around Varberg to attract highly qualified professionals looking for a place to live and work. As a city renowned for its summer appeal, enhancing its brand to support the transition toward a knowledge-based economy, and be percieved as this for talents, is a vital step in meeting future competency needs and ensuring long-term growth.

Varberg’s vision—the creative hub of the West Coast—needs to be brought to life within the Varberg brand and serve as a guiding principle for activities, initiatives, and investments.

How do we showcase Varberg’s identity? – **“Without a common brand, Varberg’s collective potential is fragmented and less recognizable beyond local borders.”**

A city is made up of a strong and complex ecosystem where public actors, private businesses, and academia together form the foundation for innovation and development. Currently, there is a lack of organization, coordination, and alignment among the strong network of stakeholders in Varberg that offer methods, programs, and development efforts in entrepreneurship, innovation, and business development. This hampers the ability to scale up and gain momentum in larger strategic initiatives and collaborations, and potential synergies are lost in the gaps. It also weakens the ability to present a cohesive and clear image of Varberg as an attractive destination for investment, business establishment, research, talent attraction, and new residents.

Where can I work? - "There is limited awareness of the diverse and dynamic career opportunities that Varberg has to offer."

Many students perceive larger cities as offering better career prospects, and therefore often overlook opportunities in Varberg—even though the city hosts numerous innovative companies operating in national and global markets. This makes it challenging to retain young talent locally. At the same time, several companies report difficulties in finding the skills they need.

Many highly qualified professionals live in Varberg but commute to work in other municipalities, primarily Mölndal and Gothenburg. This creates two key challenges. First, Varberg needs to better showcase attractive career opportunities through meeting places, co-working environments, and communities that highlight the city’s potential. Second, the local business sector must strengthen its capacity for innovation to generate a greater demand for highly skilled workers.

How do we bridge academia and industry? – “Without stronger ties between academia and business, Varberg risks missing the expertise needed to drive innovation and growth.”

6.3% of those employed in Halland’s business sector hold an occupation classified as advanced—the third-lowest level in Sweden and far below the national average of 13.9%. This low share of advanced jobs is linked to the county’s industry structure, which leans toward less knowledge-intensive activities. Therefore, it is crucial to strengthen the connection between academia and local businesses. Linking academia and industry, developing and expanding vocational education programs in high-demand fields, and

attracting more advanced degree programs, such as bachelor's and master's programs in key industries in the city. The presence of these higher-level programs is crucial to providing the city with the expertise needed to drive development in green transition, innovation, and digitalization.

How can we turn research into a shared strategy? – "Lacking a unified direction, Varberg risks scattering resources, losing relevance, and failing to attract the research talent needed for long-term growth."

Campus Varberg has untapped potential when it comes to attracting researchers and strengthening its role in the knowledge economy. While Campus Varberg already awards scholarships to researchers, there is currently no broader strategy in place to position the campus as a destination for research and innovation. The lack of structured efforts to connect academia with the public and private sectors limits the city's ability to fully leverage research-driven development and build a stronger foundation for long-term competitiveness in a knowledge-based economy.

How do we foster future-ready skills and new business ideas? - *"Without stronger entrepreneurial pathways in higher education, Varberg risks losing talent, missing promising business ideas, and falling behind in innovation."*

Even though Varberg has a strong focus on entrepreneurship in primary and secondary education (PS-gymnasiet), there is a clear lack of entrepreneurial opportunities at the higher education level. Currently, there are no structured initiatives to engage higher education students in entrepreneurship, and no system in place to identify or support promising business ideas — despite the clear potential to reach and nurture this target group. Without targeted efforts, there is a risk overlooking a key group that could play a vital role in driving local innovation, creating jobs, and boosting business development.

In a rapidly changing labor market, entrepreneurial skills—such as adaptability, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving—are no longer optional; they are essential. As automation, digital transformation, and global competition reshape industries, the ability to navigate uncertainty, drive innovation, and continuously learn becomes crucial for individuals and communities alike. Higher education plays a central role in equipping students with these future-ready skills. Without a stronger and more strategic focus on fostering entrepreneurial competencies at this level, Varberg risks falling behind—not only in preparing students for tomorrow's jobs but also in building a resilient, innovative, and competitive local economy that can thrive amid constant change.

VARBERG INNOVATION DISTRICT

The idea of creating an innovation district in Varberg has been gradually taking shape, and the development of the new district Västerport has made the need for such a platform—and more coordinated stakeholder efforts— increasingly clear.

Through ongoing dialogues between Varberg Municipality, businesses, academia, and property owners, a shared curiosity has emerged to establish an Innovation district in Varberg. A collaborative environment, supported by a shared brand identity, will enhance Varberg's appeal for talents, business establishments, and investments.

By formalizing collaboration among a wide range of stakeholders, Varberg can strengthen its regional employment offer and create a compelling value proposition—including testbeds, research initiatives, and innovation partnerships with academia. The innovation district will serve as a dynamic platform for promoting innovation and driving urban development. In doing so, it can become both a catalyst and an enabler of growth across various sectors and target groups, contributing to the long-term prosperity of Varberg and the wider Halland region.

The innovation district is envisioned as a place where a variety of stakeholders collaborate to achieve the following objectives:

- Create an attractive and interconnected environment
- Build an inclusive and dynamic community
- Facilitate cross-sectoral collaboration to strengthen education, innovation, and development
- Increase the utilization of research
- Foster entrepreneurship
- Boost talent attraction and encourage the establishment of new businesses, while also supporting the growth of existing local businesses in the region.

Varberg's role models

As part of its involvement in the C4Talent network, Varberg Municipality had the valuable opportunity to participate in several study visits aimed at gathering inspiration, sharing expertise, and gaining new insights into how Varberg can grow as an attractive city for talent. These visits have included trips to leading innovation environments such as Helsingborg and their innovation district HEIDI and Linköping—named the most innovative capital in the EU—providing firsthand experience of successful strategies and practices that can help shape Varberg's future development.

Helsingborg Innovation district

In Helsingborg, a bold and forward-thinking approach to urban development has led to the creation of a brand-new innovation district—designed from the ground up with innovation, sustainability, and collaboration at its core. This district brings together a variety of stakeholders, including the municipality, academia, industry, and entrepreneurs, all working together to drive change and shape the future of the city. The result is a vibrant ecosystem that encourages experimentation, supports business growth, and fosters talent.

During our visit, we explored key components of this thriving district:

HETCH – Helsingborg's dynamic tech hub, located in the heart of the innovation district. HETCH serves as a collaborative workspace and growth environment for tech companies, startups, and entrepreneurs. Here, we learned about their focused efforts on community building, startup incubation, and acceleration programs designed to turn early-stage ideas into scalable businesses. HETCH also acts as a bridge between private sector innovation and public service needs, contributing to the broader digital transformation of the city.

RecoLab – A unique and cutting-edge initiative that combines wastewater treatment, circular infrastructure, and urban sustainability. RecoLab houses a fully operational testbed and showroom where new environmental technologies and sustainable practices are developed, tested, and demonstrated in real-world conditions. It exemplifies how public utilities can play a leading role in innovation and climate-smart urban solutions.

Campus Helsingborg – Part of Lund University, Campus Helsingborg plays a vital role in shaping the district through research, education, and close collaboration with local industries and the public sector. The campus acts as both an anchor and a driver of innovation, fostering knowledge exchange and ensuring that academic insights are effectively integrated into practical urban development strategies.

Together, these elements illustrate how Helsingborg's innovation district has become a model for how cities can build innovation into their physical, social, and institutional fabric making it a powerful source of inspiration for Varberg's own ambitions to become a city of talent and innovation.

BOSS

Linköping

Representatives from Varberg Municipality, Campus Varberg, and Varberg Fastighets AB (VFAB) participated in an insightful and inspiring study visit to Linköping—one of Sweden's leading cities in innovation and sustainable development.

The delegation met with several key stakeholders, including **Sankt Kors Fastighets AB**, the visionary development of **Ebbepark**, a forward-looking district with a growing focus on the gaming industry, and **Science Park Mjärdevi**, a dynamic innovation hub bridging academia and business. These visits offered valuable insights into how strategic collaboration and purposeful urban planning can drive innovation and talent attraction.

Engaging discussions with local development actors provided further understanding of the practical approaches that have positioned Linköping as a national leader in innovation and place-making.

The purpose of the trip was to explore best practices and gain new perspectives on how municipalities and organizations can work strategically to attract talent, foster innovation, and support long-term regional development.

Vision

Varberg Innovation District 2030

Varberg - the creative hub of the West Coast. We will simplify people's everyday lives and inspire them to achieve their dreams.

By 2030, Varberg will be home to a thriving and well-recognized innovation district. A vibrant, inclusive district where diverse stakeholders collaborate to drive sustainable growth and regional development.

As a catalyst for innovation, Varberg will bring together academia, business, and the wider community in a dynamic ecosystem that fuels creativity, entrepreneurship, and real-world impact. With flexible learning pathways, strong entrepreneurial support, and cross-sector partnerships, Varberg will be a place where individuals can grow, both professionally and personally.

Through a strong community, strategic events and a distinct brand identity, the innovation district will position Varberg as a magnet for talent, investment, and visionary minds seeking to shape the future.

Intervention Areas and objectives for Varberg

The overarching objective is to establish an innovation district in Varberg that strengthens the city's identity, fosters collaboration across sectors, and integrates research into a dynamic ecosystem. By combining efforts in branding, collaboration and entrepreneurial learning, and research, the district aims to strengthen its visibility, attract talent and investment, and position Varberg and Halland as a recognized hub for innovation — both nationally and internationally.

Intervention area 1 - Branding & talent attraction

Objective:

The objective is to establish a shared platform that enhances collaboration, visibility, and attractiveness, creating the conditions to showcase the district's strengths and attract talent, research, and investment.

Actions:

- Engage in dialogue with key stakeholders to build consensus and co-create a compelling value proposition
- Develop a brand and communication plan for the innovation district

Intervention area 2 – Collaboration & entrepreneurial learning

Objectives:

The objective of this intervention area is to establish strategic partnerships with key companies, stakeholders, and educational institutions, and to equip higher education students with future-ready entrepreneurial skills and opportunities to develop new business ideas**.**

Actions:

- Build strategic partnership for collaboration project that fosters networking, collaboration and entrepreneurial learning.
- Integrate entrepreneurial learning into Campus Varberg's programs
- Host two entrepreneurship events per year
- Develop an attractive mentorship program pairing students and entrepreneurs

Intervention area 3 – Research

Objective:

Strengthen Campus Varberg's position as an attractive hub for researchers by encouraging their active presence and collaboration on campus.

Actions:

- Develop a research strategy
- Create a physical research facility at Campus Varberg
- Establish an showcase platform for projects and success stories, and clear guidelines to ensure quality and visibility.

Intervention areas and list of actions

Specific objective / intervention area 1	Branding & talent attraction		
Definition	This intervention area aims to establish a strong and unified brand for the innovation district that reflects its vision, values, and potential. The work begins by engaging key stakeholders in an open dialogue to build consensus and co-create a compelling value proposition for the district. This collaborative process will help define what makes the district unique and ensure that its identity resonates across partners, organizations, and target audiences. Building on these insights, a comprehensive brand and communication strategy will be developed to strengthen visibility, promote collaboration, and position the district as an attractive environment for talent, research, and investment — both nationally and internationally.		
		Baseline value (Year 2025)	**Target value (Year 2026)**
Result indicators	Increased stakeholder alignment and shared understanding of district purpose with 80% of stakeholders expressing willingness to participate in joint initiativ	No formal consensus-building process has been conducted. 4 meetings No shared value proposition Low alignment	10 dialogue meetings 1 stakeholder dialogue summary report with a validated value proposition and clearly defined offering are developed, approved, and endorsed by 80% of the key stakeholder groups.
	Improved visibility and recognition of the innovation district by Website and social media engagement increase Number of external inquiries about collaboration or investment	No brand No communication strategy	Brand strategy completed; Communication plan developed; Branding toolkit created

				By the end of Year 1, awareness of the innovation district increases by 25%, measured through growth in combined media mentions, website traffic, and social media engagement.
Action	Output	Intended outcome	Responsible organisation	Timescale
1.1 Engage in dialogue with key stakeholders to build consensus and co-create a compelling value proposition for the innovation district	Number of stakeholder meetings conducted; Stakeholder dialogue summary produced	A shared vision and strong alignment among key stakeholders, resulting in a clear and compelling value proposition that attracts collaboration, investment, and active participation in the innovation district.	Municipality of Varberg	2026- 2027
1.2 Develop a brand and communication strategy for the innovation district	Brand strategy completed; Communication plan developed; Branding toolkit created	New professional branding based around the innovations district for increased brand awareness and strenghten the professional brand of the city. A clear, consistent branding toolkit that helps hubs in the innovation district present a unified and professional identity.	Municipality of Varberg and stakeholders	2026-2027

Specific objective / intervention area 2	**Collaboration & Entrepreneurial learning**

Definition	This intervention area focuses on strengthening the connection between education, business, and innovation by fostering a culture of collaboration and entrepreneurship at Campus Varberg. The objective of this intervention area is to establish strategic partnerships with key companies, stakeholders, and educational institutions, and to equip higher education students with future-ready entrepreneurial skills and opportunities to develop new business ideas**.** Key activities include hosting events that encourage networking and entrepreneurial learning, integrating entrepreneurship into academic programs, and developing an engaging mentorship program that connects students with entrepreneurs and industry professionals. Together, these efforts will contribute to a more dynamic and interconnected innovation ecosystem in Varberg		
		Baseline value (Year 2025)	**Target value (Year 2026)**
Result indicators	Stakeholder perception of improved collaboration	No formal agreements	5 partnership agreements
	Number of joint activities (study visits, internships, projects event)	0	2+ joint activities per year Number of follow-up collaborations initiated
	Student self-assessment of entrepreneurial competence (pre/post)	0 modules 0 integration	Minimum 3 modules 100% program integration by 2030 30% increase in entrepreneurial competence
	Number of student innovation ideas or prototypes created	0	2 Innovations ideas or prototype created

	80% of mentor–mentee pairs reporting progress		0 mentors 0 framework	20 mentor–mentee pairs yearly 80% satisfaction rate
Action	Output	Intended outcome	Responsible organisation	Timescale
2.1 Build strategic partnership for collaboration project that fosters networking, collaboration and entrepreneurial learning.	5 formal collaboration agreements established	Enhanced cross-sector collaboration and knowledge exchange, where students, entrepreneurs, and businesses co-create innovative solutions, build networks, and strengthen the innovation district's reputation as a hub for creativity and problem-solving.	Municipality of Varberg	2026- 2027
2.2 Integrate entrepreneurial learning into Campus Varberg's programs	Entrepreneurial modules integrated across programs	Higher education students at Campus Varberg are equipped with entrepreneurial mindsets, skills, and practical tools that enable them to identify opportunities, develop innovative business ideas, and contribute to regional growth and innovation.	Municipality of Varberg and stakeholders	2026-2027

2.3 Host at least two entrepreneurship events per year.	Number of events delivered annually	A vibrant entrepreneurial culture is fostered at Campus Varberg through regular events that inspire students, connect them with industry and investors, and provide platforms to showcase and develop innovative ideas.	Municipality of Varberg and stakeholders	
2.4 Establish and implement a mentor programme pairing students with entrepreneurs	Number of mentorship pairs established annually	A structured mentor programme connects students with experienced entrepreneurs and industry professionals, providing guidance, inspiration, and real-world insights that strengthen entrepreneurial skills and foster collaboration between Campus Varberg, businesses, and key stakeholders.	Municipality of Varberg and stakeholders	

Specific objective / intervention area 3	**Research**
Definition	This intervention area aims to strengthen Campus Varberg's position as an attractive hub for research and innovation by fostering collaboration between academia, industry, and the public sector. Through the development of a joint research strategy with key stakeholders, Campus Varberg will establish a clear and regionally anchored research focus that addresses locally significant areas such as wood, logistics, and energy. This strategy will guide future research initiatives and ensure alignment with Varberg's development priorities and the Sparbanksstiftelsen's mission to support regional growth in business, research, and education.

	The initiative also includes the creation of a dedicated research facility at Campus Varberg, providing a physical environment for visiting researchers and facilitating close interaction between academic, municipal, regional, and private actors. To enhance visibility and engagement, a digital showcase platform and an annual public event will highlight ongoing research, success stories, and collaborative projects. Together, these efforts will increase the visibility, credibility, and accessibility of Campus Varberg's research activities — strengthening knowledge exchange and positioning the campus as a key player in regional innovation and development.

		Baseline value (Year 2025)	Target value (Year 2026)
Result indicators	Number of R&I projects initiated	No strategy 5 projects	10 R&I projects initiated
	Number of research collaborations hosted in the facility	0	10 R&I projects
	Attendance at annual showcase event	0	Annual showcase event with at least 25 attending

Action	Output	Intended outcome	Responsible organisation	Timescale
3.1 Develop a research strategy together with stakeholders	Number of research and innovation projects initiated within the district	Campus Varberg has the opportunity to establish a strategic research focus with a clear regional anchoring, primarily through commissioned research and, to some extent, collaborative research. The focus should be on areas of local significance, such as wood, logistics, and energy, addressing concrete challenges. Annual research funding is already available through Sparbanksstiftelsen, which can	Municipality of Varberg	2026

		increase if efforts clearly contribute to growth in Varberg and align with the foundation's mission to support the region's business, research, and education sectors.		
3.2 Create a physical research facility at Campus Varberg	Research facility concept and architectural plan completed	By providing a physical environment for researchers from other institutions, research can be conducted in close interaction with municipal, regional, and private actors.	Municipality of Varberg	2026-2027
3.3 Establish an showcase platform for projects and success stories, and clear guidelines to ensure quality and visibility.	Platform developed Annual showcase event implemented	Increased visibility, credibility, and accessibility of research and innovation activities, leading to stronger knowledge exchange, wider recognition of success stories, and enhanced collaboration opportunities with external stakeholders.	Municipality of Varberg	2027

ACTIVITY PLAN

Intervention Area 1 – Branding & talent attraction

Action Title	1.1 Engage in dialogue with key stakeholders to build consensus and co-create a compelling value proposition for the innovation district	**Action Owner**	Municipality of Varberg & key stakeholder
Description	**Stakeholders**	**Links to objectives:**	The objective is to establish a shared platform that enhances collaboration, visibility, and attractiveness, creating the conditions to showcase the district's strengths and attract talent, research, and investment.
A structured partnership with key stakeholders will be developed to create a shared vision and a unified value proposition for the innovation district. By engaging in dialogue with key actors to build consensus and co-create this value proposition, the district can present a clear and compelling offer that attracts collaboration, investment, and active participation from a broad range of organisations.	• Ventilo 2.0 • VFAB • TEK kompetens • Campus Varberg • Impact house • Techarena Varberg • Region of Halland • Municipality of Varberg • Potential VBG	**Estimated costs:**	Staff cost
		Readiness	0%

Activity	**Timing**		**Deliverable**	**Estimated cost**	**Source of funding**
	Start	**End**			

1.1.1 Coordinate dialogue meetings with representatives from academia, industry, and municipal services to identify roles, interests, and collaboration opportunities.	2026	2027	Stakeholder Dialogue Summary: Brief report summarizing key insights from meetings, including identified roles, interests, and potential collaboration areas between academia, industry, and municipal services.	Staff cost	Municipality of Varberg through EUI-funding Space4talent
1.1.2 Develop a stakeholder map including profiles and craft a value propositions for the innovation district	2026	2027	Stakeholder map with profiles of hubs and a value proposition of the innovation district.	Staff cost	Municipality of Varberg through EUI-funding – Space4talent

Action Title	1.2 Develop a brand and communication plan for the innovation district	**Action Owner**	Municipality of Varberg (support of external expertise)				
Description	**Stakeholders**	**Links to objectives:**	The objective is to establish a shared platform that enhances collaboration, visibility, and attractiveness, creating the conditions to showcase the district's strengths and attract talent, research, and investment.				
Develop a clear and cohesive brand and communication plan that strengthens the identity, visibility, and attractiveness of the innovation district.	• Ventilo 2.0 • VFAB • TEK kompetens • Campus Varberg • Impact house • Techarena • Region of Halland • Municipality of Varberg • Potential VBG	**Estimated costs:**	10,000€				
		Readiness:	0%				

Activity	Timing		Deliverable	Estimated cost	Source of funding
	Start	End			
1.2.1 Develop the innovation district's brand.	2027	2027	A brand strategy that Includes visual identity, key messages, and a functional prototype or concept for the innovation district's	7000 euros	Municipality of Varberg (Staff costs)
1.2.2 Create a communication plan and digital communication platform	2027	2027	A written communication plan document outlining target audiences, key messages, channels, timelines, responsibilities, and evaluation methods. A website or other digital presence.	2000 euros	EUI-funding – Space4talent
1.2.3 Create a branding toolkit for use by event organizers.	2027	2027	A Branding tool kit**:** A guideline outlining principles, tools, and processes to ensure consistent use of the innovation district's brand and alignment across all activities, events, and partner communications	1000 euros	Municipality of Varberg (Staff costs) External consultant

Intervention Area 2 – Collaboration & Entrepreneurial learning

Action Title	2.1 Build strategic partnership for collaboration projects that foster networking, collaboration and entrepreneurial learning.	**Action Owner**	Municipality of Varberg (campus Varberg)
Description	**Stakeholders**	**Links to objectives:**	Establish strategic partnerships with key companies, stakeholders and educations for collaboration projects.
This activity focuses on building strategic partnerships that support collaboration projects fostering networking, knowledge exchange, and entrepreneurial learning. It includes developing a collaborative contract framework for long-term partnerships and organising events or study visits that connect students with local businesses to strengthen mutual engagement.	Municipality of Varberg (campus Varberg) Representatives from public and private sector	**Estimated costs:**	5 000 €
		Readiness:	0%

Activity	**Timing**		**Deliverable**	**Estimated cost**	**Source of funding**
	Start	**End**			
2.1.1 Build strategic partnership for collaboration project that fosters networking, collaboration and entrepreneurial learning.	2026	2027	A structured framework that establishes strategic partnerships to support collaboration projects fostering networking, cross-sector cooperation, and entrepreneurial learning. The deliverable includes partnership roles, engagement models, shared objectives, and guidelines for co-creating activities that strengthen the local innovation ecosystem.	Staff cost	Municipality of Varberg through EUI-funding – Space4talent

2.1.2 Develop a Collaborative Contract Framework for long-term partnerships	2026	2026	A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or collaborative agreement that defines the intentions, roles, responsibilities, and terms of engagement between participating partners to support sustained collaboration.	Staff cost	Municipality of Varberg through EUI-funding – Space4talent
2.1.3 Organize events/study visits to foster collaboration between students and local businesses.	2026	-	A series of networking events and study visits designed to connect students with local companies, encouraging knowledge exchange, collaborative projects such as thesis and internship to build stronger ties between education and industry.	5 000 €	ERDF and/or EUI-funding – Space4talent

Action Title	2.2 Integrate entrepreneurial learning into Campus Varberg's programs	**Action Owner**	Municipality of Varberg
Description	**Stakeholders**	**Links to objectives:**	Equip higher education students with future-ready entrepreneurial skills
Entrepreneurial learning will be systematically integrated into Campus Varberg's educational programs to strengthen students' innovation capacity and employability. The initiative aims to provide students with practical tools, methodologies, and real-world experiences that foster creativity, problem-solving, and business development.	• Potential VBG (local incubator) • UF företagssamhet Halland • Business and destination administration	**Estimated costs:**	5000 €
		Readiness:	50%

Activity	**Timing**		**Deliverable**	**Estimated cost**	**Source of funding**
	Start	**End**			

2.2.1 Consult stakeholders (faculty, students, local businesses, entrepreneurs) to define relevant entrepreneurial skills and learning outcomes.	2026	2026	Stakeholder Consultation Report documenting the outcomes of consultations with faculty, students, local businesses, and entrepreneurs to identify and define relevant entrepreneurial skills and learning outcomes.	Staff Cost	Municipality of Varberg
2.2.2 Co-design entrepreneurial learning modules	2026	2027	finalized module outlines, learning objectives, content frameworks, teaching and assessment strategies, and integration plans that reflect stakeholder input and align with identified entrepreneurial skills and outcomes.	Staff cost	Municipality of Varberg through EU-funding – Scandinavian Employability
2.2.3 Pilot entrepreneurial modules in selected programs to test and refine content.	2026	2028	The deliverable includes pilot design, participant feedback, evaluation of learning outcomes, assessment results, and recommendations for content refinement and wider program integration.	5000 euro	Municipality of Varberg through EU-funding – Scandinavian Employability
2.2.4 Integrate entreprenuerial learning modules in all educational programmes at Campus Varberg	2028	2030	Entrepreneurial learning modules incorporated across all study programmes at Campus Varberg, providing students with practical skills, innovation tools, and opportunities to develop and test new ideas as part of their education.	Staff cost	Municipality of Varberg through EU-funding – Scandinavian Employability

Action Title	2.3 Host two entrepeneurship per year	**Action Owner**	Municipality of Varberg
Description	**Stakeholders**	**Links to objectives:**	Equip higher education students with future-ready entrepreneurial skills
Hosting events that encourage networking and entrepreneurial learning was tested through *Våga, Växa & Vinn*, a pilot action within the C4Talent network. These events created a platform for entrepreneurs and innovators to connect, share experiences, and explore new ideas together.	• Potential VBG (local incubator) • UF företagssamhet Halland • Business and destination administration	**Estimated costs:**	5000 €
		Readiness:	10%

Activity	**Timing**		**Deliverable**	**Estimated cost**	**Source of funding**
	Start	**End**			
2.3.1 Establish a Hosting Team and Expert Network	2027	-	A coordinated group of speakers, facilitators, and local role models who together form a hosting team capable of delivering high-quality events and learning activities. This includes identifying, recruiting, and organising contributors into a structured network that can regularly support workshops, discussions, and entrepreneurial learning initiatives.		Municipality of Varberg through EU-funding

2.3.3 Design structured event formats, such as workshop agendas, networking exercises, and discussion themes, to ensure participants gain value and meaningful connections			A comprehensive toolkit outlining workshop agendas, networking exercises, discussion themes, and facilitation guidelines to ensure events provide meaningful value and foster strong connections among participants.		Municipality of Varberg through EU-funding

Action Title	2.4 Establish and implement a mentorship program pairing students and entrepreneurs	**Action Owner**	Municipality of Varberg				
Description	**Stakeholders**	**Links to objectives:**	Equip higher education students with future-ready entrepreneurial skills				
Establish and implement a structured mentorship program that connects students with entrepreneurs or experienced local business representatives on a recurring basis. The program will be co-designed with stakeholders to ensure relevance, include clear guidelines and expectations for mentors and mentees, and provide regular sessions focused on knowledge exchange, skills development, and networking. By fostering long-term relationships, the program aims to strengthen entrepreneurial competences within students, create career opportunities, and deepen collaboration between Campus Varberg and the local business community.	• Potential VBG (local incubator) • UF företagssamhet Halland • Business and destination administration	**Estimated costs:**	5000 €				
		Readiness:			50%		

Activity	Timing		Deliverable	Estimated cost	Source of funding
	Start	End			
2.3.1 Design the mentorship framework	2025	-	Define objectives, structure, and selection criteria for both mentors and mentees, ensuring alignment with Campus Varberg's educational goals.		Municipality of Varberg Staff cost
2.3.2 Recruit and match participants	2026	2026	Identify and engage local entrepreneurs, business leaders, and alumni to serve as mentors, and match them with students based on interests and study areas.		Municipality of Varberg Staff cost
2.3.3 Implement and evaluate the mentor program	2027	-	Launch mentorship cycles, provide orientation and support materials, and conduct evaluations to measure outcomes and satisfaction for continuous improvement.		Municipality of Varberg Staff cost

Intervention area 3 – Research

Action Title	3.1 Develop a research strategy	**Action Owner**	Municipality of Varberg (campus Varberg)
Description	**Stakeholders**	**Links to objectives:**	Strengthen Campus Varberg's position as an attractive hub for researchers by encouraging their active presence and collaboration on campus.
Campus Varberg will be able to establish and develop a strategic research focus, not through generic research, but primarily through commissioned research and, secondarily, collaborative research. Campus can quickly set up an appropriate physical environment where researchers from other academic institutions can operate within a municipal and regional context. The research sought should be closely linked to regional demand. Preferably, the focus areas should have local and regional relevance, such as wood, logistics, and energy. Private actors will be engaged to address relevant challenges and issues. Currently, Campus already has access to annual research funding through the Sparbanksstiftelsen.	Municipality of Varberg (campus Varberg) Representatives from public and private sector Research institutions and higher education	**Estimated costs:**	5 000 €
		Readiness:	10%

Activity	**Timing**		**Deliverable**	**Estimated cost**	**Source of funding**
	Start	**End**			

3.3.1 Conduct a need analysis in collaboration with regional stakeholders to identify relevant research areas.	2026	ongoing	Comprehensive needs analysis report, developed in collaboration with regional stakeholders, identifying and prioritizing relevant research areas.	2000 €	Municipality of Varberg through EU-funding - feasibility study
3.3.2 Develop a research strategy outlining prioritized themes, target groups, and collaboration models.	2025	ongoing	Comprehensive research strategy document outlining prioritized research themes, target groups, and collaboration models.	2000 €	Municipality of Varberg through EU-funding - feasibility study
3.3.3 Define criteria and guidelines for the application and approval process of research grants and collaborative research projects.	2026	2027	Documented criteria and guidelines outlining the application, evaluation, and approval process for research grants and collaborative research projects.		Municipality of Varberg through EU-funding - feasibility study
3.3.5 Promote Visibility and Impact of Funded Research	2026	ongoing	A public event or seminar (at least once per year) showcasing key findings from funded research projects. A digital platform listing active projects, results, and success stories.	1 000 €	Municipality of Varberg through EU-funding - feasibility study
3.3.6 Evaluate and adjust the research strategy annually based on completed projects and stakeholder feedback.	2026	ongoing	Annual evaluation report of the research strategy, including analysis of completed projects and stakeholder feedback, with recommendations for adjustments.		Municipality of Varberg through EU-funding - feasibility study

Action Title	3.2 Create a physical research facility at Campus Varberg	**Action Owner**	Municipality of Varberg (campus Varberg)
Description	**Stakeholders**	**Links to objectives:**	Strengthen Campus Varberg's position as an attractive hub for researchers by encouraging their active presence and collaboration on campus.

Campus can quickly set up an appropriate physical environment where researchers from other academic institutions can operate within a municipal and regional context. The research sought should be closely linked to regional demand reserach needs.	Municipality of Varberg (campus Varberg) Representatives from public and private sector Research institutions and higher education	**Estimated costs:**	15 000 €				
		Readiness:			50%		

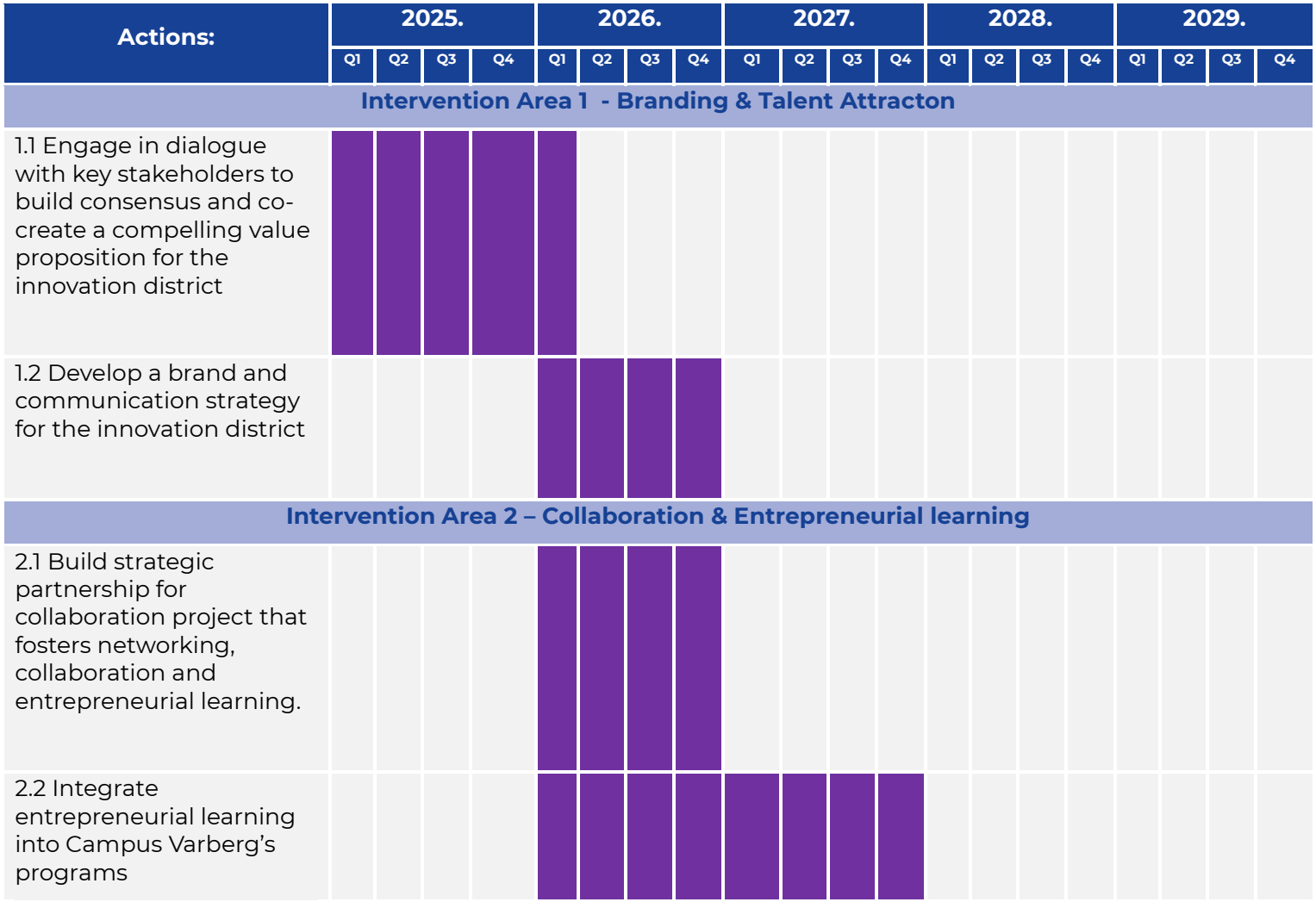
Activity	**Timing**		**Deliverable**	**Estimated cost**	**Source of funding**
	Start	**End**			
3.2.1 Develop the conceptual framework and functional requirements for the facility (labs, co-working, and meeting spaces).	2025	2026	A research facility at Campus Varberg		Municipality of Varberg through EU-funding - feasibility study
3.2.2 Conduct stakeholder consultations to align design with researchers' and partners' needs.	2025	2026	A summary report of stakeholder consultations detailing input from researchers, students, and partners, and outlining key requirements and recommendations to inform the facility's design and functionality.		Municipality of Varberg through EU-funding - feasibility study
3.2.3 Produce the architectural concept and spatial design proposal for the facility, ensuring flexibility, collaboration, and adaptability for future research and innovation needs.	2026	-	An architectural concept and spatial design proposal outlining the layout, functionality, and design principles of the facility, ensuring flexible, collaborative, and adaptable spaces for researchers, students, and industry partners.	15 000 €	Municipality of Varberg through Research scholarship

Action Title	3.3 Establish an showcase platform for projects and success stories, and clear guidelines to ensure quality and visibility.	**Action Owner**	Municipality of Varberg (campus Varberg)
Description	**Stakeholders**	**Links to objectives:**	Strengthen Campus Varberg's position as an attractive hub for researchers by encouraging their active presence and collaboration on campus.
To enhance visibility and engagement, a digital showcase platform and an annual public event will highlight ongoing research, success stories, and collaborative projects. Together, these efforts will increase the visibility, credibility, and accessibility of Campus Varberg's research activities — strengthening knowledge exchange and positioning the campus as a key player in regional innovation and development.	Municipality of Varberg (campus Varberg) Research institutions and higher education	**Estimated costs:**	2000 €
		Readiness:	0%

Activity	**Timing**		**Deliverable**	**Estimated cost**	**Source of funding**
	Start	**End**			
3.3.1 Develop a digital and physical platform to showcase projects and success stories.	2025	2026	A functional digital and/or physical platform prototype that presents selected projects and success stories, including layout, design elements, and user guidelines.	2000 €	Municipality of Varberg through EU-funding - feasibility study

3.3.2 Create guidelines and criteria to ensure high-quality, consistent, and relevant showcases.	2025	2026	A documented set of criteria and standards outlining how projects and success stories should be selected, presented, and maintained to ensure clarity, relevance, and consistency.		Municipality of Varberg through EU-funding - feasibility study
3.3.3 Implement a process for collecting, curating, and publishing stories to maintain visibility and engagement.	2026	-	A repeatable process description detailing workflows, responsibilities, and timelines for gathering, reviewing, and publishing stories across the platform.		Municipality of Varberg through EU-funding - feasibility study

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK



2.3 Host at least two entrepreneurship events per year.	
2.4 Establish and implement a mentor programme pairing students with entrepreneurs	
Intervention Area 3 – Research	
3.1 Develop a research strategy together with stakeholders	
3.2 Create a physical research facility at Campus Varberg	
3.3 Establish an showcase platform for projects and success stories, and clear guidelines to ensure quality and visibility.	

Governance of implementation

The implementation and continued development of the innovation district will be led primarily as a municipal initiative, ensuring strong local ownership, accountability, and alignment with Varberg's long-term development ambitions. The municipality will serve as the main coordinating body, responsible for setting strategic direction, securing resources, and maintaining coherence between the different intervention areas — branding, collaboration and entrepreneurial learning, and research.

At the same time, Campus Varberg will play a central enabling role, driving many of the activities outlined in the Implementation Action Plan (IAP). As a bridge between education, business, and the public sector, Campus Varberg will initiate the next phase of the work by bringing together key stakeholders to co-develop the framework for collaboration within the innovation district. This process has already begun through the C4Talent network, which has established valuable relationships and a shared understanding among regional partners.

While the municipality provides strategic leadership, this collaborative approach ensures that the innovation district evolves in close interaction with local businesses, research actors, and educational institutions. Together, they will form the foundation of a governance structure that combines public leadership with active stakeholder participation — ensuring both long-term stability and innovative capacity.

To support coordination and transparency, a steering group or advisory board could be established, including representatives from the municipality, Campus Varberg, and other key partners. This group would oversee progress, ensure alignment across initiatives, and help identify new opportunities for collaboration and external funding.

Implementation and Management of the IAP

The implementation and management of the Implementation Action Plan (IAP) will be led by **Campus Varberg (municipality of Varberg)**, serving as the main operational driver in translating the strategy into tangible actions and results.

Building on its strong position at the intersection of education, business, and the public sector, Campus Varberg will take the lead in coordinating and executing the activities outlined across the three intervention areas — branding and talent attraction, collaboration and entrepreneurial learning, and research. This role includes facilitating partnerships, mobilizing stakeholders, and ensuring that initiatives are aligned with the broader vision for the innovation district.

Campus Varberg's experience from the **C4Talent network** provides a solid foundation for this task, having already established valuable collaborations and structures for stakeholder engagement. This network will form the initial platform for continued cooperation and for driving early implementation efforts.

While Campus Varberg will lead the day-to-day management and coordination, the **municipality of Varberg** will retain a strategic oversight role — ensuring alignment with municipal priorities, providing policy support, and contributing to the long-term sustainability of the innovation district.

Clear communication channels, regular follow-ups, and shared evaluation frameworks will be established to monitor progress, assess impact, and adapt activities as needed. Together, these mechanisms will ensure that the IAP moves from planning to implementation in a structured, inclusive, and results-oriented way — turning the innovation district vision into a concrete reality for Varberg

Resourcing and Funding

Establishing an innovation district in Varberg requires a strong foundation of municipal commitment and early-stage investment. The municipality's confidence in the long-term value of the initiative—driving innovation, talent attraction, and regional growth—will be essential for building momentum and credibility. While several activities can be co-financed through EU-funded initiatives and other external sources, a core municipal investment is necessary to create the structure, continuity, and trust needed among partners and stakeholders. This initial commitment not only lays the groundwork for the district's development but also clearly signals Varberg's ambition to strengthen its innovation capacity and entrepreneurial ecosystem.

At the same time, several relevant international projects provide opportunities for co-financing and knowledge exchange. Work Without Borders, funded through Interreg Öresund-Kattegatt-Skagerrak, focuses on strengthening the transition from studies to employment for international students—an effort directly aligned with Varberg's goals around talent attraction. With partners across Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, and a total budget of EUR 2.6 million, the project offers a strong platform for collaboration, testing new methods, and engaging Campus Varberg and Högskolan i Halmstad in concrete activities.

Similarly, Varberg—through Alexandersoninstitutet—is a transfer partner in SPACE4talents, an ERDF-funded initiative led from Poland with a total project budget of EUR 6.2 million. The project explores models for talent attraction through industry hubs, skills-development academies, and pentahelix collaboration models. Varberg's participation, funded with EUR 150,000, provides access to European best practices and strengthens the municipality's capacity to design and implement elements of its future innovation district.

Discussions are currently underway to design a long-term financing model that ensures sustainable growth of the innovation district. The ambition is to combine municipal core funding with strategic use of external programmes—such as INTERREG, ERUF, and future EU initiatives—creating a stable financial foundation that maximises local impact. Through this mixed-financing approach, Varberg aims to generate long-lasting value for the business community, researchers, students, and residents.

Summary Financial Table - Financial Overview of the Implementation Action Plan (IAP)

Intervention Area	Action / Key Activity	Estimated Cost (€)	Timeframe	Lead Organisation	Potential Source(s) of Funding
1. Branding & Talent Attraction	1.1 Stakeholder dialogue and co-creation of value proposition	–	2026–2027	Municipality of Varberg	Municipality / EU funding
	1.2 Develop brand & communication plan (including digital platform and toolkit)	**10,000**	2026–2027	Municipality of Varberg (with external experts)	Municipality / EU funding

	Subtotal – Intervention Area 1	**≈ 10,000**			
2. Collaboration & Entrepreneurial Learning	2.1 Create events fostering networking, collaboration & entrepreneurial learning	**5,000**	2026–2027	Municipality of Varberg (Campus Varberg)	Municipality / Business partners / EU funding
	2.2 Integrate entrepreneurial learning into Campus programs	**5,000**	2026–2027	Municipality of Varberg	Municipality / EU funding
	2.3 Host two entrepeneurship per year	**5,000**	2025–2027	Municipality of Varberg	Municipality / Private sector
	2.4 Develop and implement mentorship program	**5,000**	2025–2027	Municipality of Varberg	Municipality / EU funding
	Subtotal – Intervention Area 2	**≈ 20,000–30,000**			
3. Research	3.1 Develop research strategy and visibility initiatives (including events & digital platform)	**5,000**	2025–2027	Municipality of Varberg (Campus Varberg)	Municipality / EU funding
	3.2 Create physical research facility at Campus Varberg	**15,000**	2025–2027	Municipality of Varberg (Campus Varberg)	Municipality / Sparbanksstiftelsen (research scholarship) / EU funding
	3.3 Establish a showcase platform for projects and success stories, and clear guidelines to ensure quality and visibility.	**2000 €**			Municipality / Sparbanksstiftelsen (research scholarship) / EU funding
	Subtotal – Intervention Area 3	**≈ 25,000**			
TOTAL ESTIMATED COST		**≈ 650 000**	2025–2027	Municipality of Varberg (lead), Campus Varberg	Municipality of Varberg (core funding), Sparbanksstiftelsen, EU programs, and private partnerships

Monitoring Framework and Process

Effective monitoring is essential to ensure that the Implementation Action Plan (IAP) delivers tangible results, remains aligned with strategic objectives, and continues to evolve in response to emerging opportunities and challenges. The monitoring framework for the innovation district will focus on **transparency, learning, and accountability**, providing a structured approach to track progress, evaluate impact, and inform future decision-making.

1. Monitoring Objectives

The monitoring process aims to:

- Ensure that actions and interventions are implemented according to plan and within agreed timeframes.
- Assess progress against the defined **result indicators** and **target values** for each intervention area.
- Identify successes, challenges, and areas for adjustment or additional support.
- Provide evidence-based input for funding discussions, stakeholder engagement, and strategic planning.

2. Governance and Responsibilities

- The **Municipality of Varberg**, as the strategic lead, will oversee the overall monitoring process to ensure coherence and alignment with municipal priorities. **Campus Varberg**, as the main implementing body, will be responsible for collecting data, documenting progress, and reporting on outcomes for the actions under its coordination.
- A **joint monitoring group** — consisting of representatives from the municipality, Campus Varberg, and key stakeholders — will meet biannually to review progress, share insights, and propose adjustments. This group will ensure that monitoring is participatory, inclusive, and reflective of the innovation district's multi-actor nature.

3. Monitoring Tools and Methods

- Monitoring will be guided by a set of quantitative and qualitative indicators defined within each intervention area.

  Key tools include:

- **Progress Reports:** Prepared semi-annually by Campus Varberg, summarizing status, key achievements, and next steps for each action.
- **Stakeholder Feedback Sessions:** Periodic consultations with businesses, researchers, and students to gather perspectives on outcomes and emerging needs.
- **Indicator Tracking:** Systematic data collection on agreed result indicators (e.g., number of partnerships, events, projects, media visibility, and research outputs).
- **Annual Review Meetings:** A yearly evaluation session led by the monitoring group to assess overall progress and define priorities for the following year.

4. Evaluation and Learning

- Beyond monitoring, an **annual evaluation report** will summarize key results, assess the effectiveness of interventions, and identify lessons learned. These insights will feed into updates of the IAP, ensuring continuous improvement and adaptability.

- The monitoring process will not only track compliance but also foster **a culture of learning and collaboration**, encouraging innovation and responsiveness as the district evolves.

Result indicators

Specific Objective (SO)	Result Indicator	Definition	Baseline Value (2025)	Target Value (2027)	Source of Information
SO1: The objective is to establish a shared platform that enhances collaboration, visibility, and attractiveness. .	1.1 Established consensus among key stakeholders around a shared value proposition and a clearly defined offering.	Degree of alignment among key stakeholders reflected in an agreed value proposition and communication framework for the innovation district.	0	Consensus established among main stakeholders and documented value proposition by 2027.	Project documentation, stakeholder agreements, meeting minutes.
	1.2 Reach and impact of the communication strategy (growth in awareness measured through media mentions, website traffic, and social media engagement).	Increase in visibility and engagement generated by the communication plan and brand platform.	Baseline not established (brand under development).	+25% growth in media visibility and digital engagement by 2027.	Web analytics, media monitoring reports, social media statistics.
SO2: Equip higher education students with future-ready entrepreneurial skills and opportunities to develop new business ideas. Establish strategic partnerships with key companies, stakeholders, and education providers for collaboration projects.	2.1 Number of strategic partnerships established with companies, stakeholders, and educational institutions.	Number of formalized collaborations promoting entrepreneurial learning and innovation.	0	5 partnerships established by 2027.	Partnership agreements, stakeholder records.

	2.2 Number of collaborations between students and local businesses.	Count of collaboration projects linking students and businesses.	1	3 projects or collaborations annually by 2027.	Event reports, academic records, project documentation.
	2.3 Number of student-led business ideas or projects developed as a result of events or learning activities.	Number of new business concepts or prototypes initiated by students.	0	3 student-led initiatives by 2027.	Event evaluations, student surveys, incubator reports.
	2.4 Number of Campus Varberg programs embedding entrepreneurial learning outcomes in curricula.	Count of programs integrating entrepreneurial learning modules or competences.	1	5 programs by 2027.	Campus Varberg academic records, curriculum documentation.
SO3: Strengthen Campus Varberg's position as an attractive hub for researchers by encouraging their active presence and collaboration on campus.	3.1 Number of research projects hosted in the new facility annually.	Number of active research projects conducted within Campus Varberg's physical or collaborative research environment.	0	10 projects annually by 2027.	Campus Varberg research reports, project database.
	3.2 Number of external collaboration requests or partnerships generated through the research platform or annual event.	Number of new research collaborations or partnerships initiated through visibility efforts.	0	5 new partnerships or collaboration requests annually by 2027.	Research platform analytics, event participant feedback, partnership records.

Output indicators table

Intervention Area 1 – Branding & Talent Attraction

Action	Output Indicator	Definition	Baseline Value	Target Value	Source of Information
1.1 Engage in dialogue with key stakeholders to build consensus and co-create a value proposition for the innovation district	Number of stakeholder meetings conducted; Stakeholder dialogue summary produced	To build a shared understanding of roles, functions, and collaboration opportunities with an innovation district through structured dialogue and interviews with key stakeholders.	0	At least 10 stakeholder dialogue meetings and 1 stakeholder dialogue summary report	Stakeholder Dialogue Summary; Meeting minutes; Activity reports
1.2 Develop a brand and joint communication strategy for the innovation district	Brand strategy completed; Communication plan developed; Branding toolkit created	To create a clear, cohesive brand and communication plan that strengthens identity, visibility, and attractiveness of the innovation district.	0	Completed brand; Communication strategy; Branding toolkit	Brand strategy document; Communication plan; Branding toolkit

Intervention Area 2 – Collaboration, Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Action	Output Indicator	Definition	Baseline Value	Target Value	Source of Information
2.1 Build strategic partnerships for collaboration projects	Number of formal collaboration agreements established	Formal long-term agreements between educational institutions, industry, and key stakeholders to strengthen cooperation.	0	5 formal collaboration agreements	Signed MoUs; Partnership framework; Activity reports
2.2 Integrate entrepreneurial learning into Campus Varberg's programs	Entrepreneurial modules integrated across programs	Systematic integration of entrepreneurial learning into all educational programs at Campus Varberg.	0%	100% of programs include entrepreneurial modules	Curriculum documentation; Module design reports; Evaluation reports

2.3 Host at least two entrepreneurship events per year	Number of events delivered annually	Delivery of structured entrepreneurship events that foster networking, inspiration, and entrepreneurial learning.	0	2 events per year	Event reports; Attendance lists; Event evaluations
2.4 Establish and implement a mentor programme pairing students with entrepreneurs	Number of mentorship pairs established annually	A structured mentorship program connecting students with entrepreneurs/business leaders for knowledge exchange and skills development.	0	Minimum 20 mentor–mentee pairs established	Mentorship programme records; Matching logs; Evaluation surveys

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Intervention Area 3 – Research

Action	Output Indicator	Definition	Baseline Value	Target Value	Source of Information
3.1 Develop a research strategy together with stakeholders	Number of research and innovation projects initiated within the district	A jointly developed research strategy leading to new R&I collaborations between academia, industry, and public sector.	0	10 R&I projects initiated	Research strategy; Project portfolio; Stakeholder meeting notes
3.2 Create a physical research location at Campus Varberg	Research facility concept and architectural plan completed	Development of a functional research facility concept with co-working, lab, and meeting spaces supporting collaborative research.	0	Completed architectural concept and functional design	Facility concept documents; Architectural designs
3.3 Establish a showcase platform for research projects and success stories	Platform developed; Annual showcase event implemented	A digital and/or physical platform that highlights research success stories and increases visibility of Campus Varberg's research activities.	0	1 platform created + 1 annual public showcase event	Digital platform; Event documentation; Story c

Result Indicator Table

Specific Objective	Result Indicator	Definition	Baseline Value	Target Value	Source of Information
SO1: Establish a shared platform that enhances collaboration, visibility, and attractiveness.	RI1: Level of stakeholder alignment and collaboration willingness	Measures stakeholder understanding, support, and engagement in joint initiatives.	Low alignment / no shared platform	80% stakeholder alignment	Stakeholder surveys, meeting summaries
	RI2: Increase in visibility and recognition of the innovation district	Tracks increased visibility via engagement analytics and external inquiries.	0 coordinated branding	25% increase in digital engagement & inquiries	Analytics dashboards, inquiry logs
SO2: Equip students with entrepreneurial skills & create opportunities; establish strategic partnerships.	RI1: Improvement in student entrepreneurial competence	Measures students' increased entrepreneurial skills (pre/post assessments).	No systematic entrepreneurial learning	30% improvement	Student surveys, module evaluations
	RI2: Number of collaborative activities enabled through partnerships	Tracks learning opportunities created by strategic partnerships.	0 structured collaboration	5 agreements & recurring activities	Partnership agreements, activity logs

	RI3: Student-driven innovation ideas or start-up concepts	Counts new business ideas or prototypes developed by students.	None	10 ideas annually	Event reports, entrepreneurship records
SO3: Strengthen Campus Varberg as an attractive hub for researchers.	Number of R&I projects initiated	Tracks research collaborations supporting regional needs.	0 R&I projects	5 initiated	Project portfolio, research strategy
	Number of researchers actively present and engaged on campus	Measures external researcher presence and engagement.	No research facility	20 researchers active	Facility logs, attendance records
	Visibility and impact of research activities	Measures visibility via platform traffic and event participation.	No showcase platform	Functional platform + annual event	Analytics, event evaluations

Output indicators

Action	Output indicator

Overview and Analysis of Risks

Category	Description of the Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Prevention	Mitigation
Administrative Risks	Disagreements or misalignment between public, private, and academic partners over priorities, governance, or decision-making.	High	Moderate	• Establish a formal **governance framework** with a clear division of roles and responsibilities. • Develop a **shared vision and strategy document** co-created with key stakeholders. • Facilitate **quarterly alignment workshops** to review progress and adjust priorities.	• Appoint a **neutral coordinator (Campus Varberg)** to mediate and align interests.
	Lack of clear accountability for coordinating hubs, events, and shared resources.	Medium	High	• Define roles and responsibilities through **MoUs or partnership agreements**. • Appoint a **dedicated community or innovation district manager**. • Implement a **shared project management tool** for task tracking and transparency.	• Review governance structure annually and adjust responsibilities based on activity levels and feedback. • Provide regular updates and open communication channels among all partners.
	Difficulty in sustaining participation and engagement from key actors over time.	Medium	High	• Formalize engagement through **partnership agreements**. • Align activities with partners' core interests and business needs.	• Publicly celebrate achievements and success stories to reinforce commitment. • Rotate leadership or event hosting responsibilities among partners to maintain engagement.

Financial Risks	Difficulty securing initial capital or long-term investment to maintain infrastructure and programs.	High	High	· Develop a **diversified funding model** combining municipal investment, EU funds, and private partnerships. · Prepare detailed financial plans and early project proposals.	· Prioritize core municipal funding for foundational elements. · Create a **funding task group** (Municipality + Campus Varberg) to identify and apply for grants.
	Overreliance on a limited number of major funders or EU programs.	Medium	High	· Map alternative funding streams (regional, private, academic collaborations). · Establish multi-year agreements with co-funders where possible.	· Create an emergency funding reserve or contingency plan. · Scale non-core activities based on available resources.
Operational Risks	Ineffective communication between hubs and stakeholders leading to duplication of work or missed collaboration opportunities.	Medium	Moderate	· Conduct **monthly coordination meetings** with hub leaders. · Implement a **shared event calendar and CRM**. · Appoint a **Campus Varberg community manager** responsible for cross-hub coordination.	· Review communication flows annually. · Introduce collaborative digital tools and shared reporting templates.
	Difficulty attracting or retaining a balanced mix of researchers, entrepreneurs, and companies to sustain vibrancy.	Medium	High	· Launch targeted **talent and partnership campaigns**. · Offer incentives such as **research residencies, startup incubation, or co-working discounts**. · Collaborate with universities and industry networks.	· Continuously evaluate the ecosystem's composition and needs. · Adjust programming (events, partnerships) to address participation gaps.
Strategic Risks	Lack of long-term political commitment or leadership	Medium	High	· Secure **formal political endorsement** and integrate the innovation district into	· Document progress and outcomes to demonstrate value.

	changes affecting project continuity.			municipal development plans. • Maintain strong communication between project leads and decision-makers.	• Build broad institutional support across departments and leadership levels.
Reputational Risks	Poor visibility or unclear value proposition reduces engagement and credibility among stakeholders.	Low	Moderate	• Implement a strong **branding and communication strategy** (Intervention Area 1). • Regularly showcase success stories and measurable outcomes.	• Conduct periodic brand perception reviews. • Adjust communication tactics based on stakeholder feedback and analytics.

ANNEX: THE PLANNING PROCESS

Varberg Municipality's Participation in the URBACT Programme: A Strategic Approach to Talent Attraction and Retention

The Municipality of Varberg joined the URBACT network in response to the growing need to strengthen efforts around talent attraction and retention. As competition for talent intensifies, particularly among smaller cities, it has become increasingly important to develop strategic approaches that ensure sustainable growth and long-term development. As a growing city, Varberg recognized the necessity of aligning its initiatives with a broader vision that fosters a resilient, innovative, and future-ready community.

Participation in the URBACT programme significantly raised awareness of the importance of talent attraction, an area that was relatively new to the city at the outset. However, as the project progressed, the relevance of this issue became increasingly apparent, evolving into one of the most discussed and prioritized topics within the city's development agenda. The programme, along with insights from the lead expert, provided Varberg with an invaluable head start in understanding and addressing the challenges and opportunities related to talent attraction and retention.

Throughout the development of this strategy, the municipality has actively utilized several URBACT tools and methods—including the problem tree, the "newspaper of tomorrow," and the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) framework. Of particular significance was the small-scale actions, Hackathon and Våga, Växa & Vinn, which proved to be a crucial milestone for the organization. There had long been an interest in exploring new approaches to stimulate entrepreneurial learning and working collaborative with companies, but uncertainty about where to begin had held us back. The C4Talent network offered both support and a safe platform to pilot locally relevant initiatives, encouraging us to take bold steps forward. The activities have since become regular features within our organizational calendar and have opened doors to new collaborations. Notably, they have positioned Campus Varberg as a more visible and relevant stakeholder in regional innovation, research, and entrepreneurship and strengthened our relationship with new stakeholders.

Additionally, the participatory approach fostered by the URBACT-programme has proven extremely valuable—not just for this strategy, but for the municipality and the wider city. It has broadened our perspective and inspired a more participatory mindset in future planning and implementation processes.

The role of the ULG (URBACT Local Group) has been critical to the success of this initiative. The group has contributed fresh ideas, new perspectives, and high levels of engagement. Their commitment to making Varberg and Campus Varberg a thriving environment for young talent and entrepreneurs has been a driving force. Without their active participation, it would not have been possible to build such a vibrant community or create meaningful and relevant activities aligned with our vision for the future.

Presentation of the ULG - its members and roles

Over the course of this 2.5-year period, the URBACT Local Group (ULG) has served as a dynamic and evolving forum comprising a diverse range of stakeholders. Given the exploratory nature of the project, we adopted an agile and flexible approach — inviting relevant individuals and organizations as needed, based on the evolving context and emerging priorities. This adaptive process has been essential, particularly as Varberg is undergoing significant transformation that impacts multiple sectors and stakeholder groups.

To increase effectiveness and focus, the ULG was structured into smaller working groups tasked with specific responsibilities. This allowed for more targeted collaboration and efficient progress on key areas of the strategy.

ULG members have brought substantial added value to the process by leveraging their own networks, actively participating in meetings and events, co-hosting activities, and

serving as dedicated ambassadors for the initiative. Some members were engaged through individual meetings, while others participated in broader group settings—ensuring a mix of perspectives and continuous engagement throughout the process

The process has involved close collaboration with a broad network of stakeholders, including representatives from Region Halland, local businesses and entrepreneurs, academic institutions such as the Universities of Halmstad, Skövde, and Chalmers, and various municipal departments. Special thanks are extended to the Varberg Tech community, whose engagement and innovative ideas have been vital to shaping the vision for the innovation district.

The contributions from students at Campus Varberg have also been invaluable, offering a fresh perspective on how Varberg can continue to evolve as an attractive and dynamic place for learning, innovation, and growth.

Together, these partners have co-created a shared foundation for the continued development of the innovation district — one that will strengthen Varberg's capacity to attract talent, foster collaboration, and drive sustainable innovation.

Stakeholder Overview (Organisations Only)

Organisation / Role	Relevance to the Policy Challenge	Possible Future Role in the IAP
Varberg Tech	A community in Varberg where entrepreneurs, startups, coders, investors, and tech enthusiasts can come together to create the scalable tech companies of tomorrow. They both shape and represent the local tech ecosystem that new talent seeks to join. Their needs, experiences, and collaborative culture provide essential insight into what makes Varberg an appealing place for skilled professionals to grow and innovate.	To be defined
Ledarcompagniet	External consultant supporting the development of Varberg Techarena. As an external consultant with deep experience in regional collaboration, university partnerships, and strategic development, they bring valuable insights into how to build strong ecosystems that attract talent. Their role in driving the Varberg Techarena process gives them a unique overview of stakeholder needs and opportunities, making their perspective essential for shaping effective talent attraction strategies.	To be defined
Business & Destination Office, Municipality of Varberg	Municipal department responsible for business and destination development. They are an important stakeholder because they shape the conditions that make the municipality an attractive place for businesses, residents, and talent. Their strategic work in business support and destination development directly influences how appealing Varberg becomes to skilled professionals and innovative companies.	To be defined

Potential VBG (Local Incubator)	Local incubator driving entrepreneurship and innovation. They play a key role in talent attraction by nurturing early-stage companies and creating an environment where innovation can thrive. Their close connection to entrepreneurs and emerging startups provides valuable insight into what attracts and retains talent in a growing innovation ecosystem.	To be defined
Region Halland	Regional authority contributing expertise and resources for regional development. They are important because their regional perspective, resources, and strategic initiatives help create long-term conditions that support talent attraction. By aligning regional development efforts, they strengthen the overall ecosystem and make the area more appealing for skilled individuals and businesses.	To be defined
University of Skövde	Academic research partner. They contribute essential knowledge and research-based insights that strengthen understanding of talent attraction dynamics. Their expertise helps ensure that strategies are evidence-informed and aligned with current trends in learning, innovation, and workforce development.	To be defined
University of Halmstad	Academic research partner. They contribute essential knowledge and research-based insights that strengthen understanding of talent attraction dynamics. Their expertise helps ensure that strategies are evidence-informed and aligned with current trends in learning, innovation, and workforce development.	To be defined
Entrepreneurs in Varberg	Local entrepreneurs are important stakeholders because they offer real-world perspectives on the needs and challenges of growing companies. Their hands-on experience helps shape talent attraction strategies that are practical, relevant, and aligned with the realities of startup and scale-up environments.	To be defined
Coompanion	Organisation that is supporting cooperative entrepreneurship and business development. They are an important stakeholder because they support cooperative entrepreneurship and inclusive business development, helping broaden the local ecosystem. Their work provides valuable insights into how collaborative business models can attract and retain diverse talent.	To be defined

HR Department, Municipality of Varberg	Providing organisational and workforce insights. They are important stakeholders because they provide deep insight into workforce trends, organisational needs, and talent dynamics within the municipality. Their perspective helps ensure that talent attraction strategies are aligned with both current and future public-sector competence needs.	To be defined
Education & Labour Management Department, Municipality of Varberg	Responsible for education, skills supply, and labour market initiatives. They are important stakeholders because they oversee education, skills development, and labour market initiatives, all of which directly influence the local talent pipeline. Their insights help ensure that talent attraction efforts align with long-term competence needs and regional workforce strategies.	To be defined
Chalmers University of Technology	Research expertise within innovation, entrepreneurship, and learning. They are important stakeholders because their research expertise in innovation, entrepreneurship, and learning provides evidence-based insights that strengthen talent attraction strategies. Their knowledge helps ensure that approaches are forward-looking, effective, and aligned with how people develop skills and choose where to work.	To be defined
VFAB (Varberg's Real Estate Company)	Public real estate company. They are important stakeholders because they influence the physical environments where businesses, innovation spaces, and talent communities can grow. By shaping attractive, functional, and future-oriented places, they help create the conditions that draw skilled professionals to the region.	To be defined
EMC	EMC supports companies and organisations in Halland with strategic business relationships in the region, helping them take their sustainability work to the next level	To be defined
Campus Varberg (Students)	Students offer valuable first-hand insights into what attracts emerging talent, making their perspectives essential for shaping effective talent attraction strategies. Their experiences, expectations, and priorities help organisations and regions better understand how to appeal to the next generation of skilled professionals..	Possible contributors and co-creators
Culture & Leisure Management, Municipality of Varberg	Municipal unit with relevance for community and youth engagement. They are important stakeholders because they shape the cultural and recreational environment that influences how attractive Varberg feels to both current	To be defined

	and potential residents. Their work in community and youth engagement contributes directly to creating a vibrant, livable city that appeals to incoming talent.	
Invest in Halland	Regional organisations that attract business and investment are vital because they strengthen the region's economic growth and competitiveness. Their strategic insights and networks help create opportunities that make the area more appealing to both companies and skilled talent.	To be defined

Valuable insights were also gathered during study visits and transnational meetings with project partners in the C4talent network and our external experts – Allison Partridge and Tracy Johnson (Urbact experts) Marcus Andersson (Futureplace Leadership), Martin Boisen (For the love of place).

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Municipality of Linköping, Vallastaden, Sankt Kors, Ebbe Park, and Science Park Mjärdevi for generously hosting us during our study visit. The insights we gained were invaluable and the experience provided us with tremendous inspiration for our work ahead. We also wish to thank the Helsingborg Innovation District, Hetch, Campus Helsingborg, and Recolab for sharing their valuable experiences in developing and managing an innovation district.

Role and Impact of Transnational Learning – the URBACT added value

Bringing together stakeholders
URBACT has played a key role in uniting a diverse range of local stakeholders—from public institutions and businesses to educational actors and civil society—around the shared goal of attracting and retaining talent. This collaborative approach has fostered stronger partnerships and mutual understanding of local challenges and opportunities.

Putting the theme on the local agenda
By participating in the URBACT network, the topic of talent attraction has gained visibility and strategic importance within the city's development agenda. It has sparked political interest and encouraged cross-departmental engagement, ensuring that talent attraction is considered a critical factor in long-term urban planning.

Providing a methodology to deliver a structured planning process
URBACT's tested methodology has supported cities in moving from ideas to action through a clear, participatory planning framework. This has enabled a more coherent and strategic approach to tackling talent attraction, supported by shared learning and peer exchange across Europe.

The URBACT methodology had a profound impact on the local action planning process, resulting in this IAP. The topic itself was a priority, and participation is already an important aspect of urban development in the city due to the many projects that required it and therefore made it common and accepted.

The learnings from the in-person transnational meetings were also crucial in forming the final details of the actions.

• **Alytus – November 22-23, 2023:** Identifying and inviting the "unusual suspects" to the ULG – previous groups in URBACT were very administrative, involving mainly large institutions. Now the ULG also includes the owners of smaller companies who are very local- minded and ready for change.

• **Vilanova I la Geltrú – May 28-30, 2024**

“Intangible things can make a lot of difference.” When talking about the local entrepreneurial environment, a physical location often comes up automatically – a place where people can work, meet, network, receive support, etc. However, the MasterClass of Alison Partridge and Tracey Johnson during this meeting highlighted that not every city needs a hub – some remain empty after they are built, unfortunately, because the concept behind them wasn’t very strong. The visit to Norrsken Barcelona House provided a positive example for the concept.

Another learning of the MasterClass was that business culture is about “curating chaos or serendipity”. Local authorities need to understand when to step in with direct action/coordination and when to stay in the background while still supporting.

Alghero – October 1-3, 2024

The MasterClass of Marcus Andersson from FuturePlace Leadership offered valuable insight about talent management, emphasizing the importance of branding and how young talents are increasingly looking for the “coolness factor” of cities – having a unique selling point is crucial to attract and retain people. The MasterClass made it clear that examining good examples before committing to anything specific is the way to go, therefore, this was included as the first activity within the action.

Roeselare – March 18-20, 2025

The topic of Martin Boisen’s MasterClass was place branding. The presentation clearly delineated the difference between several definitions related to branding (place marketing, place promotion, and place branding) which will have an impact on the way the employer city brand is communicated and what it should be based on and take into account: the brand the city already has (which city promoters often forget about and disregard instead of carefully consider and work around).

Centar Sarajevo – June 17-18, 2025

The online MasterClass of Ed Thorpe focused on an important task of the partners: how to create a short version of the IAP (which – in its original form – is most likely longer than 50 pages and in some cases reaching 100). Visualizing the intervention logic took center stage – the Ad-hoc Expert showcased examples from other networks that could be adapted by C4TALENT partners. The session also included a self-review of the integrated approach – whether the IAP presents it well (or at all) from different aspects (e.g., sectoral integration, integration of cross-cutting issues).

A local entrepreneur facilitated a workshop during the meeting, where Canva was introduced as an option to create highly visual and attractive infographics about the IAP – its templates can even be used to visualize the intervention logic (discussed during the MasterClass).

Nyireghaza – oct 14-15, 2025

Nyíregyháza proved to be an outstanding host, demonstrating a clear commitment to fostering talent and innovation. A student panel enriched the event by sharing their experiences of living and studying in the city, offering candid reflections on Nyíregyháza’s potential as a place to build their future careers. Their insights provided valuable guidance on how the city can further enhance its attractiveness to young talent. The visit to the LEGO factory was another highlight, offering a fascinating look into the company’s culture, production processes, and its strong engagement with the local community.

Testing Actions and Key Learnings

Hackathon – the energy challenge!

Varberg has carried out two testing action to explore new ways of fostering innovation and entrepreneurship within the intervention area of Research, innovation and entrepreneurship. One of these was a hackathon—an idea that the tech community "Varberg Tech" had discussed for quite some time but never quite managed to put into action. However, during the initial phase of the project, the timing finally felt right. The opportunity to collaborate with a local company (Varberg Energi) arose and this became the perfect catalyst to bring the hackathon idea to life. This resulted in a 3-day hackathon where system developers and IT project managers explored how they could use the company's data to create more value for their customer.

Hackathons can be a powerful tool for connecting students with companies in ways that benefit both sides. In this case, the collaboration between a local tech community, an energy company, and emerging talent created an environment where students could apply their skills to real business challenges, while the company gained fresh perspectives and innovative ideas.

A key insight from this testing action was the importance of carefully framing the case. When the challenge is clear, relevant, and supported with meaningful data, participants can focus their creativity on solutions that are both feasible and valuable. Managing expectations on both sides proved essential—students need to understand the company's goals, constraints, and timelines, while companies need to appreciate that fresh ideas may challenge existing assumptions.

The format of the event also played a critical role. A three-day structure allowed participants enough time to dive deep into the problem while maintaining the intensity and momentum that hackathons are known for. Creating a supportive and inspiring atmosphere encouraged risk-taking and open dialogue, enabling the exchange of knowledge between experienced professionals and up-and-coming talent.

Overall, the hackathon format demonstrated its ability to act as a bridge—helping students gain real-world experience and professional connections, while enabling companies to access innovative thinking and potential future recruits. When designed thoughtfully, such events can become a win-win platform for learning, collaboration, and value creation.

Våga, Växa & Vinn

In parallel, the Urban Local Group (ULG) had expressed a strong interest in more hands-on activities to stimulate entrepreneurship among young people. Responding to this feedback, we decided to fully dedicate one of our test actions to this specific topic. This resulted in the event Våga, Växa & Vinn where student could get support in finding a business idea and/or scale up an already existing business idea. The event was co-created with stakeholders who support young people in entrepreneurship. The event was a part of Varberg's efforts to become an attractive choice for young talent by creating an environment where entrepreneurship, innovation, and personal development are at the core. By highlighting local opportunities, building networks, and offering concrete support for business ideas, Varberg positions itself as a place where the next generation of changemakers wants to live, work, and grow.

Throughout the day, participants had the opportunity to delve into entrepreneurship through a mix of inspiration, knowledge, and hands-on workshops. A dynamic moderator guided the program, which included a mini hackathon for those curious about starting their own business. It clearly demonstrated how the journey from idea to reality can be both quick and exciting.

The event also featured shared experiences from entrepreneurial journeys, incubator programs, and digital growth. Participants gained insight into what it means to be accepted into a business incubator and the opportunities it brings—for both business development and personal growth. Additionally, the potential of the growing tech scene was highlighted, where digitalization opens doors to a global market.

Entrepreneurship events aimed at young people can be highly effective when they combine inspiration, practical tools, and opportunities for real networking. “Våga, Växa & Vinn” brought together students, aspiring entrepreneurs, and a diverse range of stakeholders to create an environment where ideas could take shape and grow. By offering both support for developing new business ideas and guidance on scaling existing ones, the event provided value to participants at different stages of their entrepreneurial journey.

One of the main insights from this initiative was the importance of understanding the needs and motivations of young participants. A successful entrepreneurial event requires balance—ensuring content and activities appeal to varied target groups, while keeping the atmosphere engaging and accessible. The mix of inspirational talks, shared

experiences, and hands-on workshops proved effective in maintaining energy and fostering creativity.

Collaboration with stakeholders who work directly with young entrepreneurs added depth and credibility to the program. Their contributions not only connected participants to real-world opportunities, such as incubator programs and the growing regional tech scene, but also strengthened networks that can support future ventures.

The experience also highlighted the value of working with new partners and reaching audiences from across the wider region. By creating a relaxed, fun, and interactive setting, the event demonstrated that entrepreneurship can be an exciting and achievable path—helping young people envision themselves as the next generation of changemakers.