Talent Management for Nordic Science Parks, Incubators and Clusters

—an invitation to a Nordic collaboration project focusing on enabling innovation arenas to become talent magnets
Introduction – a Nordic collaboration project at the forefront
The competition for talent is rapidly intensifying. Not only do employers step up efforts to attract, retain and develop talent, but places – cities, regions and countries – have joined the competition as well.

Access to talent is, in fact, increasingly becoming a critical factor and bottleneck to growth for many companies. Especially SMEs – usually without an established employer brand or an in-house HR function of their own— struggle to find the skills that they need to grow and innovate.

In these situations, innovation ecosystems – cluster organisations, science parks and incubators – can play a key role in both branding the location as an attractive place for talent, as well as launching concrete strategies and activities to attract, retain and develop talent, to the direct benefit of businesses and other ecosystem stakeholders.

How can this be done? What are the best and innovative practices that one can learn from?

To answer these questions, this collaboration project will carry out studies of best practice cases in the Nordic countries and Europe, organise experience sharing between the participating organisations and create a practical toolkit for talent attraction management for different innovations ecosystems.

Thus, the purpose of this project is to identify, exchange experiences around and develop tools and strategies for helping clusters, science parks and incubators to attract, retain and develop talent.

Focus and outline of the project
A variety of approaches and tools need to be considered in order to secure supply of qualified workforce. The project will focus on the following main themes and associated questions:

1. **Talent attraction** – How can we attract the talent and the entrepreneurs we need for our companies and the innovation ecosystem to thrive? How can we support the firms’ own employer branding? Can we collaborate with other ecosystems to enhance mobility and ‘talent sharing’ between different places?

2. **‘Virtual talent attraction’** – If we cannot find the talent we need in our place, how can we help our firms and startups access talent, skills and expertise in other locations?

3. **Soft landing for talent** – How can we make sure that those who choose to come get a positive and smooth welcoming and settle in well – both professionally and socially?

4. **Talent development and integration** – How can we help the firms and other ecosystem stakeholders identify skills gaps, and, most importantly, make sure that we develop the skills and talent needed? How can we create opportunities for the individual talents to thrive and build their career? What are the synergies with traditional HR functions? And how can we make those who chose to leave ambassadors for our place?

The detailed set of questions to be explored in the project will be decided together with the project partners at the start of the project. Read more about examples of talent management activities at the end of this prospectus.
In order to develop a comprehensive understanding for talent attraction, retention and development, the following main steps are proposed:

1. **Learning from best practice**: Case studies of the tools and strategies used by the most successful and innovative talent management actors in Europe and the Nordic countries, and of the results they achieve. A total of 8-10 case studies will be carried out.

2. **Inspiration from each other**: Exchange of experience between the project partners, at meetings and through a digital platform in between meetings. The Nordic partnership ensures that a broader range of learnings and perspectives will benefit the participants. Two physical meetings and one virtual meeting will be held during the project period.

3. **Co-creating new approaches**: Introduce a creative process aimed at conceptualising new, innovative methods for talent attraction, retention and development that is adapted to Nordic innovation ecosystems. The final output will be a ‘talent management toolkit for innovation arenas’.

**Training sessions** will be offered to the participating regions as an optional module after the final meeting, focusing on helping each city/region to begin using the new methods and, thereby, improve their capacity to attract and develop talents. Training sessions can be offered in either English or Scandinavian. The project management will also be available to facilitate **study visits** to best practice locations as optional activities.

**Partners**
Cluster organisations, science parks, incubators and other place-based innovation arenas in the Nordic countries will be invited to participate in the project as partners and co-founders. Municipalities/cities, regions and national government agencies that work to facilitate clusters, science parks and incubators are invited to participate.

Starting in the autumn of 2016, a total of 15 Nordic organisations will take part in this development project, gaining exclusive access to new approaches to the talent management challenge; talent attraction, retention and development.

**Preliminary project timeline**
1. **Virtual kick-off**: Virtual kick-off period: October-December 2016
   - Skype sessions in smaller groups to identify interesting cases to study and to gather general input & expectations etc.
2. **Mid-term meeting**: February 2017 (lunch-to-lunch meeting)
3. **Final meeting**: May 2017 (lunch-to-lunch meeting)
4. **Optional: Training sessions to get started (May 2017)** and potential Study Tour(s) to places with successful approaches to Talent Attraction based on Incubators and Science Parks.

**Benefits and deliverables**
An important component of the project will be the exchange of experiences between the project participants from all Nordic countries, and they will be given first-hand, exclusive access to the results of the project.

Project participants will also be able to influence the focus of the study by proposing subjects and cases to be explored, have the chance to benchmark with other Nordic locations and gain privileged access to the case studies.
Participation entitles partners/members to the following specific benefits and deliverables:

1. Participation of up to 3 people in the three experience sharing seminars that will be held during the project. The meetings will be held in locations in the Nordic countries that are easy to reach for the participants.
2. Participation in the continuous sharing of experiences and best practice between the project partners, facilitated through an electronic project platform that will be set up by Nordic Place Academy.
3. An expanded network of potential partners in other Nordic countries.
4. Get privileged access to case studies and a concrete and innovative toolkit on talent management for innovation arenas.

The project will especially focus on making the results of the project readily available and practically useful to the project participants. The participants will also be given support for informing about the project and its results in their respective local and regional networks during and after the project period, with the aim of creating awareness and sense of urgency about the need for working with talent attraction practices.

**Participation fees**

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<tr>
<th>Type of Organisation</th>
<th>Fee (EUR)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual cluster organisation, science park or incubator (or similar types of organisations)</td>
<td>3500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual local authority (cities/municipalities)</td>
<td>4500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional partnership of two or more innovation arenas in the same region</td>
<td>5500</td>
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<td>Regional and national authority</td>
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Half of the fee will be invoiced at the start of the project, and half of the fee towards the end of the project. Travel costs for meetings will be borne by each participant.

**Examples of successful talent management activities in the Nordic countries**

Several clusters, science parks and incubators in the Nordic countries have already initiated successful and innovative efforts to attract, retain and develop skilled and talented individuals.

*EnergyVaasa*, the Finnish energy cluster organisation, launched a campaign to recruit an **Energy Ambassador**, calling it ‘Finland’s best summer job’. Targeting future talents needed in the Vaasa region, the Ambassador tasks consisted of working with the cluster’s top companies and recount the experience, mostly in social media. The summer job as Energy Ambassador was remunerated with €30,000, making it an exceptionally well-paid summer job. Results were clear and the campaign received significant attention. With some 100,000 views per week on Facebook, 20,000 views on YouTube and 30,000 views on the ambassador’s blog, the value of the exposure in the media is estimated at €3 million.
**Mjärdevi Science Park** in Linköping, Sweden, has launched a **Tech Pilots** programme, consisting of 9 Swedish cutting edge technology companies and 10 talents. Initiated mid-2015, the talents’ task is to follow the companies’ development progress and their products for one year. The Tech Pilots will test products, share their experiences and provide the companies with their feedback on the selected products.

The strategy of Stockholm’s main ICT innovation ecosystem, **Kista Science City**, has been to use **urban development** to transform itself from a science park to a science city in order to enhance its attractiveness to talent. Key to this development has been the ambition to create an attractive, welcoming urban environment. Construction of natural meeting places, such as squares, and making pedestrian passages and sidewalks more open and green have been important elements, alongside trying to make sure that the street level of office buildings – many of which have the typical ‘science park look’ – house meeting places (cafés, restaurants, etc.), shops and other amenities in order to create an open, urban feeling.

The **talent development** strategy of the cluster organisation **NCE Systems Engineering** in Kongsberg, Norway, has been to attract leading international universities and educational institutions within systems engineering to set up operations in Kongsberg, thereby ensuring a supply of skills and talent to the cluster members. **Movexum**, an incubator in the Gävleborg Region in Sweden, has made **soft landing** a key strategy, which entails making sure that those moving to the region together with an investing business are received in a systematic way, can settle in socially and professionally, and can focus on their job from day one.

**About Nordic Place Academy**

The purpose of Nordic Place Academy is to strengthen the knowledge for place managers about developing the attractiveness of places and how to lead in such places. Ultimately, our goal is help to create more creative interfaces and learning encounters between place managers, place developers and place marketers in the Nordic countries.

Nordic Place Academy is a unique concept that brings together a practical range of seminars, conferences, training and development projects for place actors in the Nordic countries, with a focus on real-world development and experiences.

Nordic Place Academy is developed by Tendensor and Place Consulting – two leading Nordic companies working on issues affecting municipalities, regions and other areas on place attractiveness, innovation and leadership.

**Previous projects – a track record of innovative, successful Nordic collaboration projects**

The project will be planned using lessons learned and methodological and practical experiences from three previous Nordic development projects:

- **Business Attraction Management in Nordic Cities and Regions** (‘BAM’) ran 2015/16 and was carried out by Nordic Place Academy. It focused on providing tools and strategies to cities and regions to attract businesses and investments.
  This has been done through case studies of international best practice cases, exchange of experience between the partners and a creative process to elaborate tools and strategies for the next generation investment promotion. A total of 22 project partners from six countries participated in the project. The project produced a **Handbook on Business Attraction Management for Cities and Regions**.
• **Talent Attraction Management in Nordic Cities and Regions** (‘TAM’) was carried out in 2013/14 by Tendensor and Place Consulting. It involved 17 Nordic regions and cities that all aimed to become frontrunners in the competition for talents, such as Copenhagen, Stockholm, Reykjavik, Bergen, Tampere, Aalborg, Skåne and Uppsala. During the project, more than 10 case studies of internationally successful regions and cities were carried out. TAM resulted in a unique handbook on talent attraction and retention and training sessions for key persons from the participating locations.

• **Cluster Marketing and Branding in the Nordic Countries** (‘CMB’) ran in 2012/13. The project was implemented in collaboration with 11 cluster organisations and regional and national investment promotion and innovation agencies in the Nordic countries (such as VINNOVA, Innovation Norway, Greater Helsinki Promotion, Business Region Göteborg and Medicon Valley Alliance). The purpose of the project was to explore how cluster organisations and their stakeholders can use brand building and strategic marketing. The main deliverables included experience sharing between the project partners and a handbook on Cluster Brand Management.

Please feel free to contact us for client references or printed copies of the handbooks described here, or any other questions about the project.

**You may register here:**

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