

With RDI partnership model, towards the future of co-creation

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Introduction and aim

There is a clear need to develop partnerships between universities and other actors to enhance the region's capacity, competitiveness and RDI intensity. In South Ostrobothnia region (Finland), only a minority of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) participates in Research, Development, and Innovation (RDI) projects with research universities. In the coming years, universities are expected to move into the fourth generation of higher education. This includes broader and deeper engagement with businesses, stakeholders, as well as with regions and the citizens.

This challenges universities to transform their operations from knowledge sharing to co-creation. The shift to this new phase has been driven by multidimensional challenges shaking the world, such as the energy crisis, ageing, and climate change.

New 6-part model

The novel, so far 6-part hybrid RDI partnership model created and piloted at Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences (SeAMK) enhances the research and innovation capabilities of SMEs. Additionally, it aims to increase RDI intensity and strengthen collaboration between universities and businesses. The goal is particularly to promote with various ways closer integration of the local business community with SeAMK's

eight research groups.

The 6-part hybrid RDI partnership model consists of the following components: 1) Operating model for forming an Advisory Board composed of business and labor representatives, 2) Activator model for involving SMEs as a new partners in RDI projects, 3) Operating model for a closer integration of Master school students and their organizations with research groups, 4) Operating model for a tighter integration of companies and other organizations into project planning, 5) Operating model for post-project support and care alongside SMEs, and 6) A 3-level, novel impact assessment framework for RDI projects. In the future, the model will have eight components. The additional parts will focus on evaluating the impact of projects and developing a new platform for cooperation between higher education institutions and businesses.

The 6-part hybrid RDI partnership model aims to achieve a significantly more comprehensive approach to co-creation in collaboration between universities, businesses, and regional stakeholders. Additionally, the model generates a broader impact assessment than previously conducted.

The difficulty of using research results

The piloting and development of the model's components are currently underway at Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences. Final results may be presented in the spring of 2025.

The incoherence of project activities and difficulties in transforming research results and new ideas into innovations have been identified in practice at SeAMK; projects are implemented in random cycles, and information and support are not available to companies at the right time. Too often, university-industry collaboration ends when a company needs to start using and exploiting the results of the project. The model generates an entirely new framework for the impact of university activities. Impact can be measured through concrete, immediate results, dimensions of long-term impact, and additionally as functional impact. The model combines and strengthens the long-term cooperation based on the strategies of the region and organizations.

Help for long-term effectiveness

The 6-part hybrid RDI partnership model can be widely utilized in the future by universities and universities of applied sciences seeking new operational models as they transition to the co-creation level. Additionally, the model can be employed for significantly broader measurement of impact when assessing the success of university-business collaboration or the long-term impact of RDI projects on the region.

The partnership model of RDI projects combines and strengthens the long-term cooperation based on the strategies of the region and organizations. The permanent partnership intensifies RDI projects and business growth. Project follow-up supports the complete implementation of the results of RDI process. It also improves the conditions for growth. Furthermore, measuring the effectiveness helps with more efficient utilization of the completed and ending projects. Also, the RDI communication is more targeted and business-oriented, based on partnership.

By implementing parts of RDI partnership model, the project activities will be more impressive, and the results

can be utilized in a larger scale. Through the various activities of the project, the effectiveness of the projects and RDI activities has improved, and the impact is also better known by the means of measuring them. The long-term impact of the project also includes more diverse and international economic structure for the South Ostrobothnia region.

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