



Executive summary

Feasibility study Regional Flagship

LINKÖPING SCIENCE PARK

Feasibility study Regional Flagship

During 2022/2023, Linköping Science Park has been carrying out a feasibility study project that aims to investigate what is now required to enable more regional flagships and power centres in Sweden. The preliminary study has been carried out together with the help of an Advisory Board consisting of representatives from the region, the municipality, regional innovation environments, the business community, and civil society. The project has also involved an accompanying researcher from the Strategic Municipal Studies Centre at Linköping University. The preliminary study has resulted in a basis of knowledge that regional innovation ecosystems can use in the initiation and planning of future regional flagships.

The Framework – A Path towards a Regional Flagship

To accelerate Sweden’s transition to a more sustainable society, it needs more initiatives with a system-changing ambition. This is where regional flagships are an example of such an initiative. On the basis of lessons learned from major mobilisations in Skellefteå and in Europe, the project has developed a framework to support the initiation and operation of Regional Flagships. The Framework, which we call – ”A Path towards a Regional Flagship” aims to support the efforts of stakeholders to mobilise and enhance the conditions for driving a system-changing initiative. These stakeholders involve municipalities, regions, and the business community. As shown in Figure 1, the framework is packaged in a model that shows

the conditions that favour the progress of a regional flagship. The conditions demonstrate the complexity of initiating a regional flagship as major parts of the regional innovation ecosystem need to be engaged and mobilised.

There are three different layers to the framework, wherein the outer circle visualises the conditions for a region or municipality in terms of identified directions (strategy documents, visions, etc.) and its comparative advantages. The two inner circles highlight the system perspective that stakeholders are expected to adopt in their work, and the enables that are needed to achieve large-scale change and system innovation.

The different elements of the framework are summarised below:

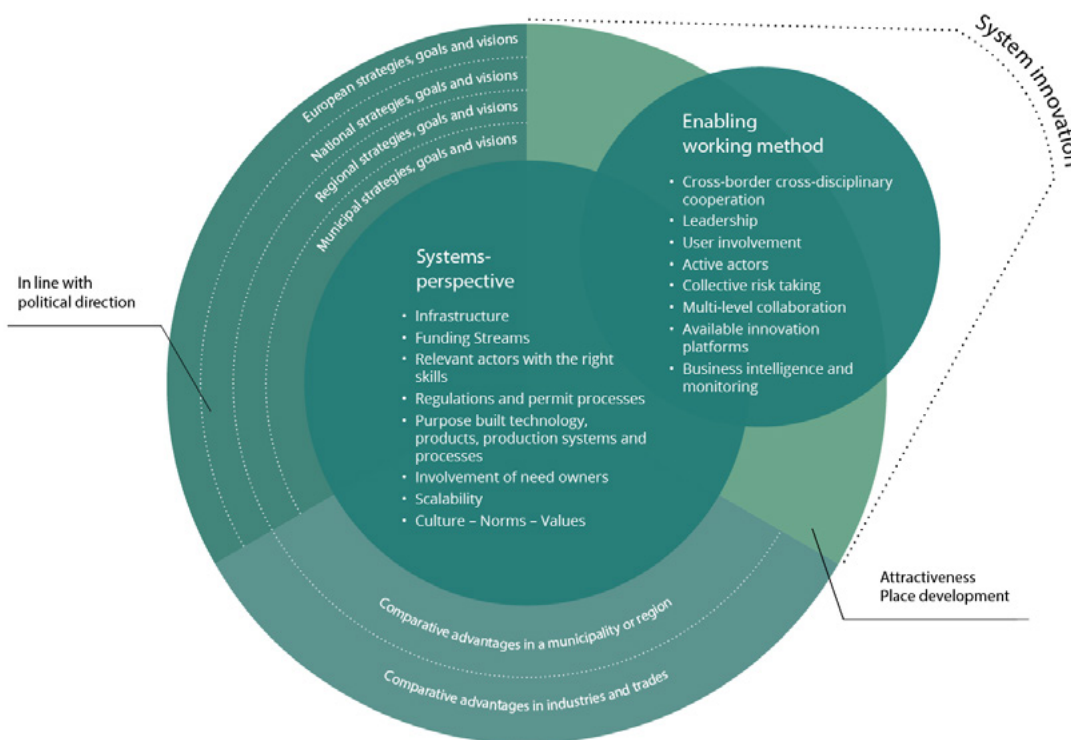


Figure 1. The Framework – A Path towards a Regional Flagship

1. For a region or municipality to be capable of scaling up its initiative into a regional flagship, the initiative should be aligned with the **political directions** (at different levels of society) as this creates the conditions for the initiative to be prioritised by decision-makers. This could make it considerably easier to attract the necessary funding and mobilisation. Where an initiative is to become a flagship and enable upscaling, the starting point should be based on **comparative advantages** in a region, municipality, or a specific industry or sector. In addition, the region should have a **strong power of attraction** or a plan for how this power of attraction can be increased. This is because a regional flagship will require both businesses and residents to want to work and live there.
2. It is essential that the participating stakeholders in regions or municipalities should have a **systems perspective**. This means analysing problems, challenges, and solutions in the framework of the larger system that the stakeholders are part of. Rather than focusing only on a single aspect of a problem, stakeholders should consider the different components, stakeholders, and processes that work together in the system. There has to be an understanding that in order to scale up an initiative, several systems may need to work together. Various aspects need to be taken into account, such as whether there is well-functioning infrastructure, what the funding streams look like, and which sets of regulations and authorisation procedures may affect the process or needs to be affected. It requires engaging relevant stakeholders with the right expertise and that owners of needs are involved. Besides this, it is equally important that there is an idea of how to promote recipient capacity among residents. It may involve working towards influencing prevailing norms and values, and this includes being aware of the norms and values that currently exist.
3. Finally, the initiative should be developed on the basis of enabling practices that can drive the process forward. For example, this can be cross-border interdisciplinary collaboration and user involvement. However, it is equally important to have an identified leadership where actionable.

There are in particular three groups of stakeholders who can make use of the framework:

Stakeholders such as the regions, municipalities, and the business community can use this framework in order to understand the way they can strengthen the conditions to run a regional flagship within a geographical area.

The framework can be used by project owners of a project or an initiative to take stock of whether the necessary conditions for running a regional flagship are in place in the region.

With the help of the framework, financiers can analyse future or ongoing projects in terms of their potential for success.

Summarising the conclusions

After having made an extensive journey through study visits, framework development, and testing with regions and the business community, in the following chapter we have gathered our most important conclusions from the work, and how stakeholders can work with system innovation to drive sustainable transition and growth. We've identified important factors and insights that are crucial to the success of system innovation and present our collective lessons learned here to provide guidance to regions and municipalities in their continued work. The preliminary study provides the following conclusions:

- The framework fills a gap and can provide a basis for taking the next step towards system innovation.
- Regions and municipalities are key stakeholders in driving system innovation.
- However, multi-level cooperation is required and the government also needs to create the financial conditions for this.
- The ownership of key issues by the regions and municipalities provides a good basis for driving the transition.
- There are some challenging structures that require leaders to have the courage to make change happen.
- Regional flagships can be essential for growth and large-scale transitions
- The design-driven process has been a success factor in the framework's development.

Summary of recommendations

The content of the framework and the case study identifies key capabilities, conditions, and working methods for successful system innovation. The Framework is not the solution to everything but can be used as a starting point to provide direction and understanding of the capacity building required. We provide four recommendations for running regional flagships according to the content of the framework.

- Manage and promote the use of the Framework.
- Use the framework to build capacity.
- Creating the conditions for initiating regional flagships.
- Task authorities to coordinate initiatives that provide synergies at multiple levels.

LINKÖPING SCIENCE PARK