

## Best Practice Examples of successful Social Enterprises

# Edsele Interest Association

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## Social Mission/key social objectives

Edsele Interest Association's mission is to promote and develop the local business, culture, and environment through inclusive leadership, local cooperation, and innovation. The association strives to create a sustainable and vibrant future for Edsele by supporting local initiatives and businesses and preserving essential community services.

### Main Activity

- Community (Membership organisations that exist for a particular purpose and trade commercially with the goal of operating to reinvest profits into the community - community enterprises, community centres, housing cooperatives, community interest organizations, certain smaller shops, and sports clubs)

### Business Structure

- Cooperative
- Community Development Company
- Umbrella organization for several social enterprises providing food store, petrol, school, pre-school, housing for elderly, culture and sports. The important associations described in text are Medborgarkooperativet Edsele friskola.

## Background

Edsele Interest Association was formed in 1992 with the purpose of being a united voice against local politicians and to protect and develop the local business, culture, and environment. The association has played an active role in preserving services in the village and today owns, among other things, Edsele Fastigheter AB and the village school.

**Year established:** 1992

**Numbers employed:** The association itself does not have many direct employees, relying largely on volunteer work. However, indirectly, through the association's engagement in other operations such as elderly care, bed and breakfast, apartments, school, preschool, and store, up to about 30 people are employed.



## Range of activities

The association runs and supports several activities and initiatives, including:

- Elderly care and secure housing
- Bed and breakfast
- Apartments
- School and preschool
- Store (Edsele General Store)
- Petrol station
- Cultural activities and exhibitions
- Issues related to attracting new residents and development projects like cycle paths, camping sites, bathing jetties, barbecue areas, and sauna
- Local self-sufficiency initiatives such as growing potatoes and pig farming
- Hiking trails like Gideåbergsmyrarna and Bybergsleden

## Target groups/clients

The target groups include the residents of Edsele, particularly members of the association, as well as visitors and new residents. The focus is on supporting the local community by offering services and activities that promote the village's development and cohesion.

## Business Model

The association is financially sustainable through a combination of volunteer work, support from members, municipal grants, and loans from the Micro Fund. They have received 200,000 SEK from the Sollefteå municipality for development efforts and use crowdfunding to finance certain projects. Innovative is how the association uses local engagement and collaborates with various stakeholders to ensure the survival and development of the village.

## Lessons learnt/Tips for success

- The importance of inclusive and engaging leadership to mobilize the local community.
- The significance of having a diversified financial strategy, including volunteer work, local donations, and external grants/loans.
- The flexibility to quickly organize and act on both problems and opportunities that arise.

- Engaging and involving local residents in decisions and initiatives to ensure broad participation and support.
- Creating a strong network of local businesses and associations that together contribute to the sustainability and development of the village.

## Funding

■ Income from Activities

## Main challenges and obstacles in progressing/developing

Edsele faced significant challenges, including the risk of closing its school when the dedicated principal moved away, leading to a demoralized board. The community organized an extraordinary meeting, decided to keep the school running, and successfully recruited a new principal and two teachers.

In February 2023, the village store went bankrupt. The Interest Association raised funds from residents, bought the store premises, and found new operators – a mother and daughter team – who opened Edsele General Store with a loan guarantee from the Micro Fund.

When the ventilation system at the elderly care facility broke down in summer 2023, the association secured a loan and guarantee from the Micro Fund to finance repairs, overcoming the challenge of limited financial margins.

These solutions were driven by strong community engagement, innovative financial strategies, and support from external partners like the Micro Fund.

## What supports have been most useful to the development?

The Edsele Interest Association has received crucial support from several sources. The Sollefteå municipality provided 200,000 SEK for development initiatives. The Micro Fund has been instrumental, offering loan guarantees for projects like the village store and ventilation repairs at the elderly care facility. Additionally, community crowdfunding and member donations have been vital, especially in purchasing the store premises. Volunteer work and local engagement also play key roles, with residents contributing time and resources to sustain and grow various projects, ensuring the association's continued development and the village's vibrant future.