

Research-based competence brokering

- Bergen University College – Bergen, Norway -

What is research-based brokering?

Research-based brokering is a sub-programme of the Programme for Regional R&D and Innovation (VRI), organized by the Research Council of Norway.

Research-based brokering has two equal goals:

- Linking the SMEs needs to research opportunities

By promote greater focus on R&D activity in companies with little or no R&D experience in order to increase their internal innovative capacity, thereby enhancing value creation and competitiveness (stimulation of R&D demand).

- Research institutes as partners to SME

By strengthen the role of the research institutes as partners in collaboration with industry. The competence mediators should contribute to a heightened awareness of the possibilities and potential of the SMEs demand for research (stimulation of R&D supply).

Through organization in regional coalitions, competence mediators should contribute to a heightened awareness of the possibilities and potential offered regional development by research.

Subsidiary goals

- Increase the R&D activity of SME
- Improve the reception capacities of SME
- Strengthen the economic competitiveness of SME
- Strengthen the knowledge of new technology adopted by the SME
- Strengthen the links and communication between R&D inst. and SME
- Support technology transfer from universities and technical colleges
- Increase the knowledge of the TT-process and the methodology

Who are the competence brokers?

Most competence brokers work in research institutes. They are chosen because of their business knowledge.

Research-based brokering contributes to link companies with little R&D experience and research institutions. The competence brokers and the managers will identify challenges the business meet and how competence brokering may assist the business in meeting these challenges.

Characterization of the Competence Broker:

Experienced Researchers act as competence brokers

- The competence broker must:
- Have a broad R&D network (national and regional)
- Experience in Projects planning and Project performing
- Have sufficient soft-skills (communicate, counselling, guiding, be determined)
- To be an initiator, a pusher, following-up, TT (technology transfer) mediator, quality assure, TT-process experience

- To establish interdisciplinary cooperation

What kind of challenges?

The companies meet many and complex challenges. Developing new products or services, or improving existing ones, developing new production methods or improving existing ones, establishing contact with new customer groups or markets, including internationalization, designing and developing the organization of the company, staying professionally up to date and establishing contacts and networks are all relevant topics.

Typical small scale projects:

- Limited funding
- Limited time
- Limited R&D
- Preliminary work, start-ups
- "Feasibility study"
- "Pre research / investigation"

Bottlenecks of the instrument

- TT process is strong related to the Competence brokers capacity and network
- Incapacity, interpersonal barriers or lack of competence at the SME or R&D
- Low priority or interests in TT from the University-sector
- Limitation in outreach activities due to limited competence broker staff
- Limited funding allow "only" start-up projects, further R&D is dependent on other financing
- Unclear priorities (*and sub goals*) in the different national regions
- Focus on SME goals and Institute goals, but lower on system goals (regional)
- Short term budgeting make future unpredictable

Transformation needs

Framework

- Predictable future through longer term budgeting/ funding

Implementation

- Increase the competence of the competence broker (*incl.international network*)
- Increase the possibilities of take-over project funding (*extensions*)

Further Improvements needed

- Incentives to motivate R&D-institutions / universities

Competence brokering - an important tool in the VRI-program in Norway

Business objectives

Contribute to increased R&D efforts in SME-companies (with little or no research experience) to increase the company's ability to innovate - and thus value creation and competitiveness.

Institute objectives

Strengthen the R&D institutes role as a partner for business development.

The competence broker - tasks and features

The competence broker will act as a link between businesses and R&D-/competence providers.

He should have such professional and personal qualifications and characteristics, which enable him to contribute to good dialogue with both companies and knowledge suppliers.

He will also link companies with similar needs and contribute to cooperation and networking

He should also have the ability to initiate actions and activities.

The competence broker should have a extensive network with many participants, and he has to keep track of, and be updated on, companies, R&D-/knowledge suppliers and not the least the national and regional systems for funding. He must be able to benefit from his contacts in different R&D-networks. Moreover, he must initiate and contribute to the implementation and ending of R&D-projects and to contribute to continuation of some of the projects.

The competence broker will contribute in networking, keep an overview of current funding sources, help in connection with organizing projects, agreements on research and development, project definitions and applications. He will also implement project cooperation and work with supervision and feedback.

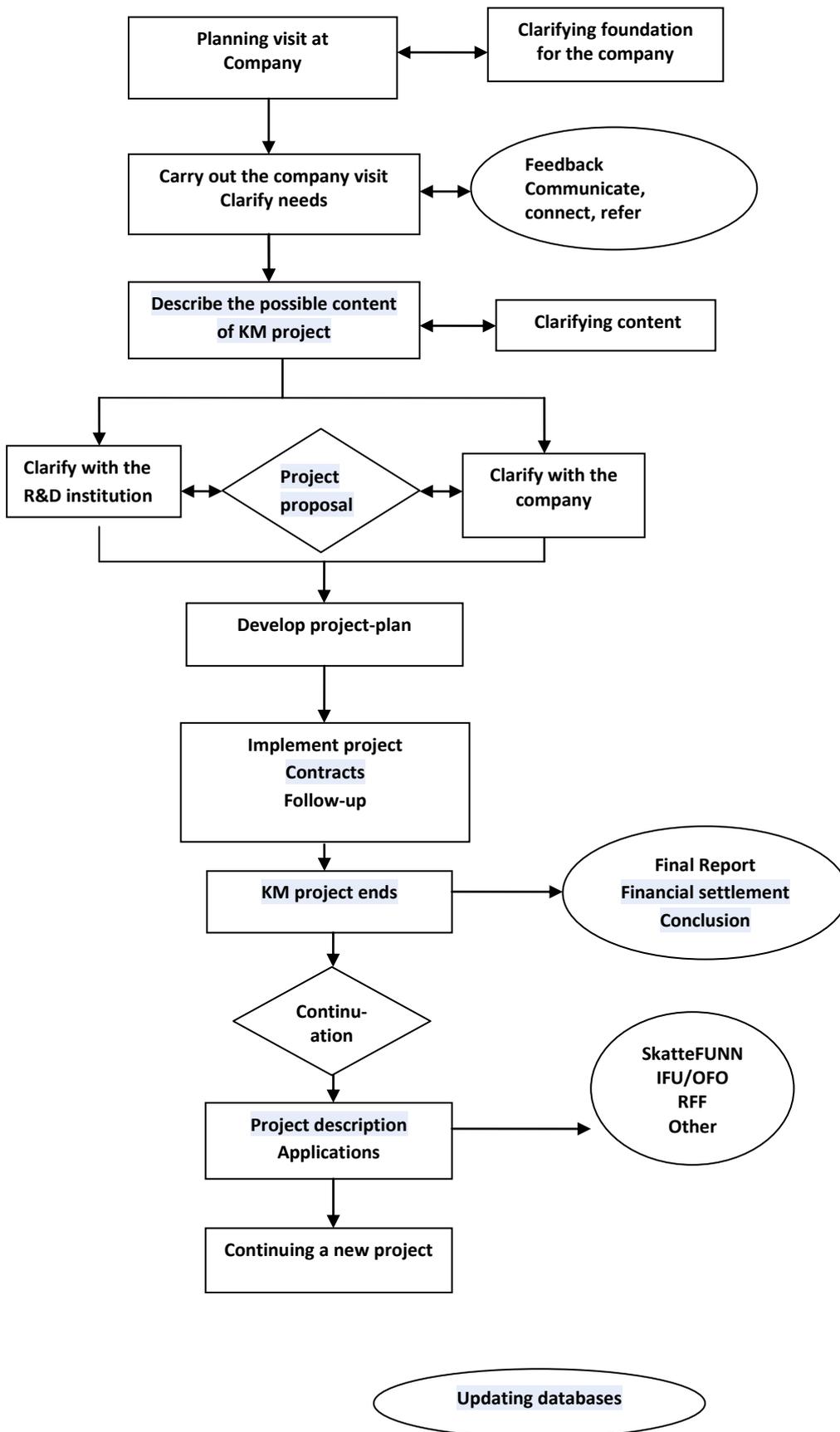
Other Tasks

The competence broker should take new initiatives and start new planning processes; he will convey the information and make companies aware of new experiences, expertise and opportunities.

He will contribute to strategy and business development and guide in connection to market development and internationalization. He will also act as a conversation partner, and mediate and resolve disputes / conflicts. The competence broker must monitor the technology front and be updated.

REBASING

Research-based Competence Brokering
Competence Brokering – Flow-sheet



The competence broker is starting his work with planning a round of visits to some companies. He then contacts the individual companies to make an appointment. The broker may also respond to an inquiry from a company.

After the company contact is established the broker has to clarify whether the company is entitled to support or not. This may be due to regional priorities or national or local regulations. If this inquiry is positive, the broker carries out the visit, and tries to clarify the needs of the company.

The broker tries, as thoroughly as possible, to clarify the competences required. Then he tries to find providers of such expertise or competence. The competence supplier and the company are then connected.

The company may have their own opinion of a desired competence supplier, usually at the institutional level. This should then be followed up.

The specific competence brokering project is described in close collaboration with the company and in dialogue with the competence provider.

The project is checked against those who may allocate money, to ensure that the project definition, as well as the results meets the requirements for support.

The details in the project proposal are then clarified with the competence supplier and company, and a project plan is prepared.

The project is then implemented, contracts drawn (between the company and competence provider). The competence broker maintains contact with the company to ensure progress is good, and that the cooperation between company and competence supplier has a good development.

After the competence brokering project is completed, there will be a short final report with an accounting. The financial settlements are closed, and the project is completed.

Brokering project could also be considered as a pilot project. It is then continued through a new project, and an new application for project funding, through eg, SkatteFUNN, IRD / PRD, or other instruments for funding in Innovation Norway, the Norwegian Research Council or the EU, is prepared. The competence broker will help to find suitable programs for the application.

The brokering projects are to be documented in an appropriate form, preferably in a database.