

# Regional Development in South Iceland

## Policy and Action

# Overview of presentation

- ▶ Háskólafélag Suðurlands - University Centre of South Iceland
- ▶ Fjölheimar - Knowledge Centre
- ▶ Byggðaáætlun - Strategic Regional Plan
- ▶ Sóknaráætlanir landshluta - Plans of Actions for the Regions
  - ▶ Uppbyggingarsjóður Suðurlands - Development Fund of South Iceland
  - ▶ Áhersluverkefni sóknaráætlunar - Priority Projects for South Iceland
- ▶ Katla Geopark - Example of a funded project

# Háskólafélag Suðurlands

## University Centre of South Iceland

- ▶ Owned by 14 municipalities
- ▶ 25.400 inhabitants
- ▶ Three pillars:
  - ▶ Access to education
  - ▶ Research
  - ▶ Pilot projects
- ▶ Not part of the formal education system, emphasis on working with companies, universities and institutions
- ▶ Founded in 2007, start capital from the owners



# Fjölheimar

- ▶ Originally a primary school (1945-2011)
- ▶ Knowledge centre since January 2013 (1.620 m<sup>2</sup>)
- ▶ 10 classrooms, 17 offices, 3 meeting rooms, reading room, 2 canteens, reception, teachers work room
- ▶ Háskólafélagið pays rent to the municipality and sublets offices to 13 different institutions and companies
- ▶ About 30 individuals with university education working in Fjölheimar, plus students
- ▶ Fræðslunetið, the Regional Adult Education Provider, is the main user of the classrooms
- ▶ Pilot courses developed and taught by Háskólafélagið
- ▶ About 1.000 exams annually, mostly for universities

# Who are we in Fjölheimar?

- ▶ Háskólafélag Suðurlands
- ▶ Fræðslunetið - Adult Education Provider
- ▶ Birta - Work Rehabilitation Centre
- ▶ Regional ombudsman for disabled people in South Iceland
- ▶ University of Iceland, Educational specialist
- ▶ South Iceland Marketing Office
- ▶ Cultural Heritage Agency of Iceland - Regional office
- ▶ Westfjords Natural History Institute - Division of Archaeology
- ▶ Institute of Archaeology
- ▶ Komma Strik - Graphic designer
- ▶ Snerpa - Financial manager
- ▶ Consultants:
  - ▶ Sálin/Birta/Virk - Psychologists
  - ▶ Lausnin - Social workers
  - ▶ Næsta skref - Business consultant

# Regional Development Plans

## The Legal Context

- ▶ New legislation in 2015, combining a Strategic Regional Plan (Byggðaáætlun) and Plans of Actions For the Regions (Sóknaráætlanir)
- ▶ Byggðaáætlun used to be no more than a mere wish list for the future, but since 2018 it also has funding secured for some of the actions of the wish list (2018-2024)
- ▶ The first Plans of Actions for the Regions will expire at the end of this year (2015-2019) and now the Regions are working on the the next five year Plans of Actions (2020-2024)
- ▶ The eight regional plans should be made according to a common contract between government ministries and the Regional Associations of Local Authorities

# Three main pillars of Regional Plan of Actions in South Iceland 2015-2019

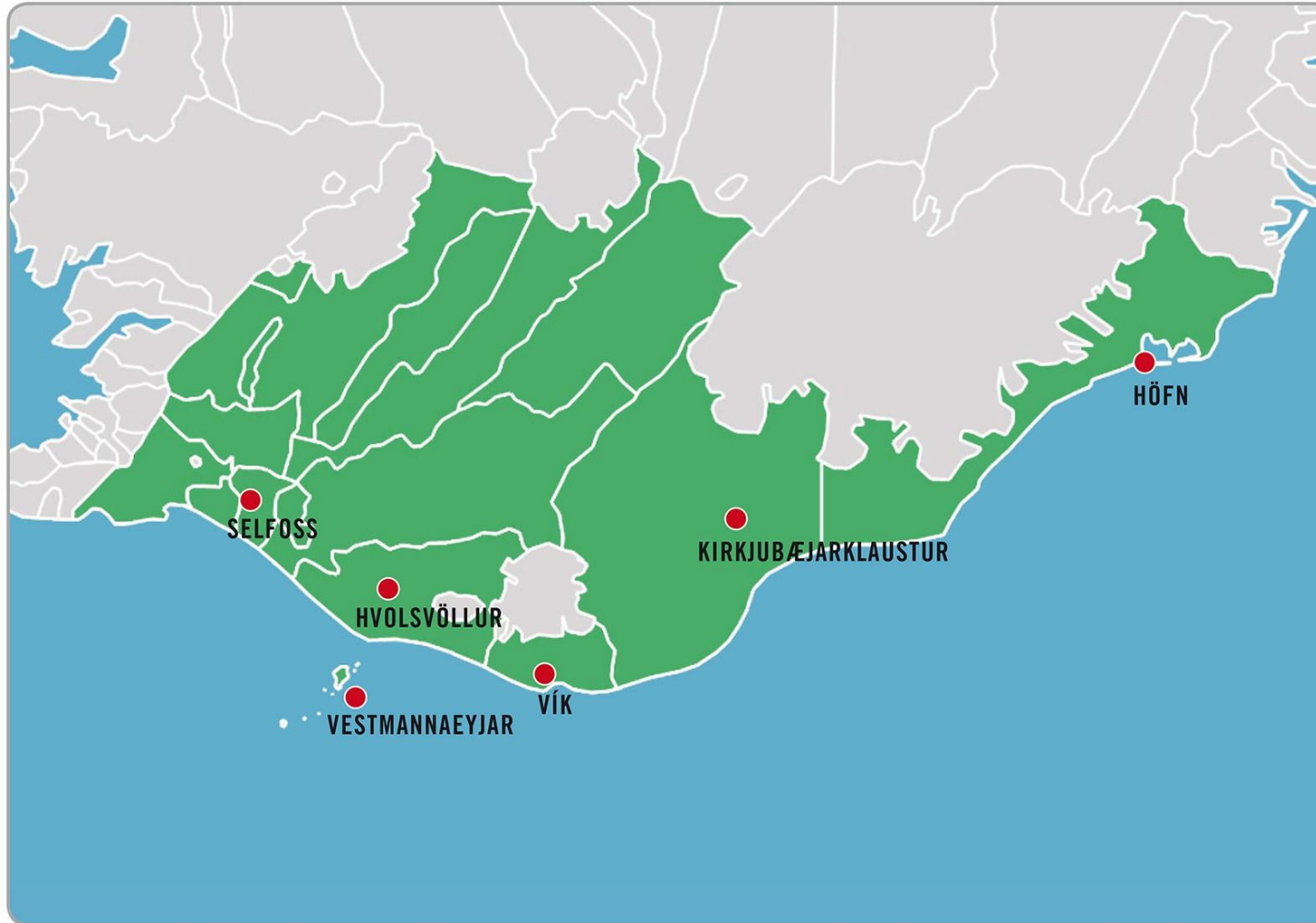
- ▶ Employment and Innovation
- ▶ Culture
- ▶ Education and Human Resources

# The Regional Plan of Actions (Sóknaráætlun Suðurlands), two strands:

- ▶ **Priority projects (Áhersluverkefni):**
  - ▶ They are based on the main focus of the Regional Plan of Actions
  - ▶ Everyone can send in an idea of a priority project
  - ▶ Led and followed up by consultants
- ▶ **Development Fund of South Iceland (Uppbyggingarsjóður Suðurlands), a competitive fund with two distinct focus areas:**
  - ▶ Innovation and employment
  - ▶ Culture and arts



# Network of consultants (since 2016)



## Uppbyggingarsjóður 2018

About 88 MKR (550.000 GBP) in grants (155 in total, i.e. on average about 0,57 MKR/3.400 GBP)

253 applications for about 350 MKR (2,2 M GBP)

Grants for up to 50% of total costs, the other 50% can be applicant own working hours

# Áhersluverkefni (Priority Projects)

## Main emphasis 2015-2019:

- ▶ Increase cooperation between municipalities in as many issues as possible
- ▶ Holistic mapping of nature, culture and human resources in the area as well as highlighting the uniqueness of the area
- ▶ Create a positive image of the South based on quality and purity.
- ▶ Focus on environmental issues with sustainability in mind, and increase use of sustainable energy and resources
- ▶ Raise the level of education by better access to education in the area
- ▶ Diversify the economy, society, culture and education.

# Priority Projects in 2018 (270.000 GBP)

- ▶ Environment (62.500 GBP)
- ▶ New international airport (34.500 GBP)
- ▶ Vocational College studies (31.250 GBP)
- ▶ Remote health services (18.750 GBP)
- ▶ Culture Pass (18.750 GBP)
- ▶ Economic statistics (15.600 GBP)
- ▶ Invest in the South (15.600 GBP)
- ▶ Educational/Vocational Fair in Westman Islands 2018 (12.500 GBP)
- ▶ Educational/Vocational Fair in Selfoss 2019 (12.500 GBP)
- ▶ Courses for entrepreneurs and innovators (12.500 GBP)
- ▶ Innovation contest in upper secondary schools (6.250 GBP)
- ▶ Award for innovation and culture (6.250 GBP)
- ▶ Youth councils (3.100 GBP)
- ▶ Skaftárhreppur municipality - a vulnerable area (18.750 GBP)

# How do applicants rate the services of the consultants (2018)?

- ▶ Response rate around 70%
- ▶ Around 90% felt that there should be diversity in the grant amounts depending on the nature of the project ideas
- ▶ Around 90% were happy with two application periods per year
- ▶ Around 83% of the respondents were pleased or very pleased with the services of the consultants, none were displeased and 17% did not contact the consultants
- ▶ Slightly more females in terms of number of applicants and grants
- ▶ About 72% of all grants awarded in 2018 were handled by consultants of Háskólafélag Suðurlands

# Democratic challenge

- ▶ How can we make the process of determining the focus of the next five year Plan of Actions for South Iceland more democratic?
  - ▶ Each municipality select candidates for the **Samráðsvettvangur (Consultation Forum)**. The Forum also includes the Board of the Regional Association of Local Authorities (SASS), the consultants and the Youth Councils. Meeting held on May 23 2019
  - ▶ But first structured open public meetings (April/May)
  - ▶ The outputs now being processed
  - ▶ Will formally be approved in October at the annual meeting of SASS

## An example of a funded project: Katla UNESCO Global Geopark

- ▶ First Pilot Project of Háskólafélagið, started in 2008, 65.000 GBP
- ▶ Declining population
- ▶ Application to Global Geoparks Network 2010
- ▶ Member 2011
- ▶ Yellow card 2015
- ▶ UNESCO Global Geoparks 2015
- ▶ Green card 2017
- ▶ Population growing
- ▶ Pressure increasing on natural and human resources

