

STRATEGIC PLAN

INTRODUCTION

This Strategic Plan describes the mission statement, long-term priorities and communication strategies of Folkbildningsförbundet – FBF (the Swedish Adult Education Association) and also provides a description of the directions its activities will take in the period 2007–2010.

The aim of the plan is to achieve a long-term focus, and a co-ordinated internal view, upon our core tasks and operational goals.

The priorities set out in this Strategic Plan will form the basis of an Operational Plan in which all planned activities will be assigned people responsible and a budget. For each activity decided upon, a more detailed Activity Plan will be drawn up.

The Strategic Plan is to be reviewed and revised every other year and the Board and staff are to be involved in this process. The Plan is to be adopted by the General Meeting of the Federation.

Liberal adult education exists to take on contemporary challenges using their own special methods. Of the challenges facing society in the near future, not least with regard to liberal adult education, the following four may be mentioned. Climate change has given a central position to sustainable development. The fast progress of the E-society has called attention to the digital gap which risks getting wider. The growing number of urban areas characterised by social exclusion show the importance of inclusion and integration. At the same time, many in Sweden still have a great feeling of estrangement towards the EU and its institutions. This has called attention to how communications between the EU and its citizens may be improved, not least since Sweden will assume the presidency of the EU for the second half of 2009. In the debate on these challenges to society, liberal adult education should take a strong position.

A major challenge facing FBF, and the study associations, in coming years is to explain and demonstrate the importance of liberal adult education to people and society. It is also important to maintain and strengthen the confidence of the general public and decision-makers in liberal adult education. Priority tasks, therefore, in the next few years include influencing public opinion and lobbying as well as work on ethics and quality.

We will show how with the exchange of knowledge, the energetic meeting of people and its commitment, liberal adult education clearly reinforces democracy and develops society. By strengthening liberal adult education in Sweden, we can strengthen the role played by the study associations in this process.

There are many areas where the study associations can gain much by acting in unison as an interest organisation. FBF should be the forum for collaboration among study associations. By using it, they will both profit from rationalisation and be able to exploit their collective knowledge.

Using this Strategic Plan and other policy documents, FBF, along with the study associations, aim to clearly demonstrate that liberal adult education is Sweden's greatest meeting place for people looking for personal development. It is a place for increased knowledge and commitment which strengthens society.

FOLKBILDNINGSFÖRBUNDET – FBF

Mission statement

FBF is the interest organisation of the study associations and its task is to strengthen the position of the study associations in society.

In this way, FBF gives the study associations better opportunities to grow and develop, to achieve their own goals and to fulfil the purposes assigned to them by the State in its support for liberal adult education.

Policy documents

FBF activities are controlled by the following policy documents:

The FBF Regulations
The Strategic Plan
The Communications Platform with its plan of action for shared communications
The Operational Plan

FBF activities are also affected by the purposes and motives assigned to liberal adult education by the support it receives from the State.

The purposes of the State grant given to liberal adult education:

Liberal adult education is to support activities which help strengthen and develop democracy.

Liberal adult education is to help people to affect their life situation and promote commitment to participate in the development of society (e.g. through political, union, cultural or other unpaid work).
Liberal adult education is to help reduce the gap in educational opportunities and raise the educational level of society

Liberal adult education is to help broaden interest in participation in the cultural aspects of life.

The reasons given by the State for supporting liberal adult education are stated as seven areas of activity:

Shared fundamental values

The challenges of the multicultural society

The demographic challenge

Life-long learning

Cultural activities

People with functional impairments

Public health, sustainable development and global justice.

THE TASK OF FOLKBILDNINGSFÖRBUNDET – FBF

FBF has two main functions – to act as the interest organisation for the study associations and to be the co-ordinating organisation for collaboration among the study associations.

Industry and trend monitoring

One of the prerequisites for fulfilling expectations as the trade and co-ordinating organisation for the study associations is to carry out continual industry and trend monitoring.

The aim of FBF's industry and trend monitoring is to improve the position of the study associations by perceiving and analysing changes in society.

The aim is to give study associations better opportunities to take action and be influential by producing materials which will enable them to react to other organisations' initiatives which affect the way the study associations work.

The diversity of study associations means that each educational association carries out its own trend analysis based upon its own specialities and profile. FBF trend analysis is based upon a shared interest in strengthening liberal adult education and encompasses a wide range of subject areas resulting from the FBF's remit for communication and collaboration. At the core of this work are media monitoring, press analyses, monitoring of research, reports in progress and the polling of attitudes and opinions.

FBF AS AN INTEREST ORGANISATION

The aim is to strengthen the position of study associations in society by spreading knowledge and insight regarding the activities of those study associations. We want liberal adult education to be part of the debate on the development of society.

In its aim to strengthen the position of study associations in society, FBF communications focus upon reinforcing liberal adult education as a feature of society and making the connection with study associations clearer.

Communications Platform

The FBF Communications Platform includes the following communication strategy, core value, vision, overall message and target groups:

Communication strategy

All influencing of public opinion is to start out from the Communications Platform

Clearly and consistently speak of the power inherent in the meeting of people rather than the details of activities.

Make a clearer connection between liberal adult education and study associations and between study associations and liberal adult education.

Make better use of internal forces (circle-leaders) in spreading the message of the benefit of liberal adult education to society.

Identify and present external spokespeople (moulders of public opinion) for liberal adult education in Sweden.

Identify and highlight social issues in which liberal adult education has a relevant place.

Create attention by dramatising and presenting liberal adult education as a force for social good to politicians and the general public.

Core value

“Liberal adult education is Sweden’s greatest meeting place for people in search of personal development. A place for increased knowledge and commitment which strengthens society.”

This core value is, in concentrated form, what liberal adult education offers to individuals and society. It is the benefit which target groups are to perceive.

Vision

“The meeting of people provides opportunities for knowledge and commitment, allowing us to create the best developed and most sustainable democracy in the world.”

The vision is a guiding light and not a goal. It is an image of the future which signposts the way to go.

Overall message

“Liberal adult education is an exchange of knowledge, a commitment and a meeting of people. It enables both individuals and society to feel good. Study associations play the major role in maintaining and developing liberal adult education in Sweden.”

It is important to convey a shared, overall message regarding liberal adult education in Sweden.

Target groups

Main target groups

Politicians and civil servants at national, regional and local levels

Internal target groups

Study circle-leaders

Other educational association personnel

Member organisations

Public opinion moulders

Secondary target groups

Public authorities and organisations with connections to liberal adult education

The mass media

Participants and potential participants in study circles

THE MAIN TASKS OF THE INTEREST ORGANISATION

Influencing public opinion and lobbying are priority tasks for FBF. A stated goal is to take initiatives in matters which are important to liberal adult education and study associations.

It is strategically important that influencing public opinion and lobbying are carried out in such a way that they reinforce each other. It is also strategically important that many people who are active at local level become involved in this and that they convey a similar message regarding the benefit of liberal adult education to individuals and society. Internal information is crucial in this respect.

Influencing public opinion and lobbying

The aim of FBF's work on influencing public opinion and lobbying is to improve awareness of the importance of study associations to the society and to use systematic contacts with decision-makers to create good conditions for the activities of study associations.

Influencing public opinion and lobbying activities are based on the Communication Platform and should strive to be concrete, challenging and should focus upon the meeting of people. These activities should also present good examples of what liberal adult education can accomplish.

Within its priority liberal adult education subject areas, FBF is to produce new knowledge to use to influence public opinion and lobbying in a powerful manner.

FBF gives priority to contacts with decision-makers and officials at national level, primarily within Riksdagen (Swedish parliament), the government and various authorities. By presenting good examples of educational association activities, we are to stress the importance of study associations to both individuals and society.

Strong local authority autonomy and changes in the system of local authority grants has also made it important to develop dialogues with the local authorities in order to ensure continued support by local authorities for educational association activities.

FBF focuses primarily on influencing public opinion via various media channels – both local and nationwide – and through the trade and specialist press where this is adjudged to give the greatest dissemination of the message to our target groups.

FBF is to stimulate and initiate a broad, general debate on liberal adult education.

Information programmes

The aim of FBF's internal information is to support the influencing of public opinion and lobbying activities on a national, regional and local level and to create shared points of departure for communications between study associations.

The aim of FBF's external information, besides the influencing of public opinion and lobbying, is to use a website to provide up-to-date information upon issues relevant to our business for the media, politicians and other interested parties.

As the interest organisation for the study associations, FBF has a special role as co-ordinator and information-spreader within 'the Family'. It is therefore important that internal communication channels work well. Internal information also helps us influence others and is closely linked with trend analysis and the moulding of public opinion and lobbying. Communication which has not been successful internally can never be successful externally. Internal communication must go in both directions between the central organisation and the regional organisations. The FBF website is the hub of the internal communication system.

The FBF website is to act as the central hub of both internal and external communication and is to offer our target groups up-to-date and relevant information regarding liberal adult education and study associations. FBF also uses newsletters to both internal and external interested parties to provide up-to-date and relevant information.

An important aspect of both internal and external communications is to develop and disseminate good examples of educational association activities. FBF is to help identify, document and spread good examples of local educational association activities to support its influencing of public opinion and lobbying activities. FBF will also develop methods for publicizing educational association activities and their importance to the development of both the town or city and its citizens.

FBF AS AN AGENCY FOR COLLABORATION

The aim is to collaborate on common core issues when this is more beneficial than study associations acting independently.

Collaboration provides good opportunities to exchange experiences and to exploit the collective expertise of FBF and its members in order to achieve the best possible results. Acting together within the FBF gives the study associations greater authority in the issues they wish to pursue. Collaboration does not mean that every educational association always takes part.

Aims

To negotiate common agreements which members can support.

To use GUSTAV to promote the development of liberal adult education activities, reduce vulnerability in IT/computer contexts and to keep administrative costs down.

To maintain the confidence of society in study associations and ensure continued State grants through quality management and ethical conduct.

To create a Nordic consensus on issues relating to the role of study associations in the Nordic countries and the EU and to promote the role of study associations in the contacts EU countries have with their citizens.

To strengthen the standing of study associations in society in collaboration with the Adult Education County Councils by acting as the interest organisation and co-ordinating body of the study associations.

To define and clarify the separate roles of Folkbildningsförbundet – FBF and Folkbildningsrådet – FBR (The Swedish National Council of Adult Education).

THE MAIN TASKS OF FBF AS AN AGENCY FOR COLLABORATION

Collaboration takes place in a number of areas as set out in the FBF regulations. These include the negotiation of collective agreements for teachers and circle-leaders employed by study associations and project GUSTAV for computer/IT operations.

FBF's collaboration tasks comprise:

negotiations

computer-based administration, GUSTAV

ethics and quality programmes

international issues

co-operation with Adult Education County Councils

co-operation with Folkbildningsrådet – FBR (The Swedish National Council of Adult Education),

Rörelsefolkhögskolornas intresseorganisation – RIO (The Interest Organisation for Popular Movement

Folk High Schools), SALAR (The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions)

Negotiations

The role of FBF as a negotiator is to act as a unified party in agreement negotiations important to the study associations.

Collective agreement negotiations and labour law negotiations

By unifying under the umbrella of FBF acting as a party to collective agreements for circle-leaders, the scale of negotiations becomes so large that study associations can justifiably call themselves a separate 'service industry'. This increases the chances that the special aspects of liberal adult education carried out by study associations will make a difference to the agreements reached.

Information, training and advice regarding collective agreement and labour law matters requires constant monitoring of developments in these areas. The work done by FBF is primarily directed at the head offices of study associations who are then responsible for distributing advice to the local branches. FBF represents the study associations in settling disputes at the national level. The dissemination and instilling of skills and expertise is carried out in conjunction with the head offices of the study associations.

Representatives of study associations which have large numbers of circle-leaders covered by central salary agreements also take part in direct negotiations along with FBF.

For dealings with their administrative staff, study associations are members of other employers' organisations. The information supplied by FBF to employers regarding collective agreement and labour law matters therefore primarily applies to circle-leaders. It is the responsibility of each study association to ensure that agreements entered into are followed by local branches or the equivalent.

Other negotiations

FBF negotiates for and enters into agreements on behalf of study associations where it is in the interest of those study associations to act collectively as FBF. This applies to agreements where copyright is involved and to other areas in which more favourable conditions may be achieved collectively rather than each study association acting independently.

FBF informs the study association head offices about the content and interpretation of agreements entered into. Where necessary, FBF also helps set up training courses. Service out to the local branches regarding agreement application questions is primarily the responsibility of the head offices.

Administrative computer network – GUSTAV

The purpose of FBF's collaboration in the area of computer administration is to develop and manage the jointly produced computer system GUSTAV.

FBF owns, develops and manages the computer program GUSTAV. Seven member study associations collaborate within FBF in the work done to develop this computer program. The adult education activities to be serviced by the GUSTAV program are unique. By owning and developing the program ourselves, users have the opportunity to exert direct influence on that development. This collaborative system also reduces vulnerability and dependence on outside suppliers.

Activities connected to GUSTAV are led by the Computer Delegation which consists of representatives of the participating study associations. The FBF GUSTAV Group maintain and develop GUSTAV in consultation with the GUSTAV representative from each study association and special working groups. GUSTAV representatives gather together and assign priority to the wishes of their particular study association. After this, there is a general discussion regarding priorities between the GUSTAV representatives and the GUSTAV Group. The Computer Delegation carry out a total assessment of the action to be taken and resources to be allocated for the work.

Ethics and quality programmes

The aim of FBF's ethics and quality programmes is to take further the joint ethics work carried out by study associations as part of their liberal adult education which attracts State grants.

The work done by FBF to influence public opinion and improve the status of study associations in society is based upon confidence in the way they provide their services. That there is agreement between the services we wish to provide and what course participants, grant-givers and authorities experience in practice is crucial to this feeling of confidence. Without this confidence, the standing of study associations will be weakened.

A sustainable ethical attitude is an important expression of quality in the activities of study associations. To sustain and develop ethical attitudes, living ideological and ethical discussions are needed within and among study associations at local, regional and national levels.

By setting up an Ethics Delegation in spring 2006, FBF has given added priority to work on ethics. The aim is to exploit the special character and profile of each study association to strengthen and widen our shared ethical platform. This is to apply in both individual study associations and the service as a whole and apply to our dealings with the State, local authorities and County Councils. The core of this platform is to comprise the responsible organisation of the planning, implementation and reporting of activities. The Ethics Delegation is to contribute towards increased knowledge and is to provide advice and guidelines. In this way, it will aid and strengthen responsible local organisation.

The Ethics Delegation is under the FBF Board who appoint its chairperson. The ethical platform is adopted by the Board and presented at the FBF Annual General Meeting.

International issues

The aim is to strengthen and promote the importance of study associations internationally.

In order to strengthen and promote the international work done by liberal adult education, FBF coordinates a network of contacts from among the study associations who are responsible for international matters.

Along with RIO (The Interest Organisation for Popular Movement Folk High Schools) and SALAR (The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions), FBF have assigned FBR (The Swedish National Council of Adult Education) to represent Swedish liberal adult education at the EAEA (The European Association for Education of Adults) and at ICAE (the International Council for Adult Education).

Along with the other Nordic study association federations and their Baltic sister-organisations, FBF takes part in work directed at creating Nordic and Nordic-Baltic concordance on matters relating to liberal adult education and formal adult education in the Nordic countries, Europe and globally.

COLLABORATION WITH ADULT EDUCATION COUNTY COUNCILS

The purpose of FBF's collaboration with Adult Education County Councils is to increase the impact of its opinion-moulding and interest-monitoring activities by exploiting collective competence and experience.

FBF and the Adult Education County Councils are to have a common point of departure when promoting liberal adult education so that opinion-moulding work carried out locally, regionally and nationally has greater impact.

The Adult Education County Councils may well act as regional collaboration organisations for study associations when this is a more beneficial way of working than each study association acting independently.

Ultimate responsibility for the manning levels and skills of each Adult Education County Council lies with its Board. It is also the Board who have the responsibility as employers for Adult Education County Council staff.

COLLABORATION WITH RIO (THE INTEREST ORGANISATION FOR POPULAR MOVEMENT FOLK HIGH SCHOOLS) AND SALAR (THE SWEDISH ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND REGIONS)

The purpose of this is to take responsibility for FBF's role as an educator and member of FBR (The Swedish National Council of Adult Education) by cultivating and rationalising the collaboration between these organisations in order to gain long-term public support for study associations.

Interactions between the National Council Board, working committees, office and the boards of member organisations and their offices should be regularly evaluated so that the various interested parties may gain as much as possible of what they wish for from the exchange.

FBR is dependent upon strong, distinctive members who are responsible to the government and parliament for ensuring that the Council's administrative work is carried out in a confidence-building manner. They are also responsible for ensuring that the tasks assigned to FBR by its members are handled in accordance with their intentions. It is therefore important to assert FBF be assertive in its role as founder and member of FBR. The way in which the directions taken by FBF in its work affect FBR and vice versa should be tested at regular intervals. The relationships between FBF and RIO/SALAR, who are also educators and members of FBR, should be included in these tests.