

Evaluation of Business Finland's campaigns

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In recent years, many different campaigns have been included in Business Finland's instrument repertoire to serve as a lighter version of programmes. Campaigns are smaller and shorter entities than Business Finland programmes and have typically been utilised in the search for new market opportunities, to build networks and know-how, to offer customers funding and service advice and to explore the ground for possible future actions. The focus of this evaluation report is on the first four campaigns that were launched after the merger of Tekes and Finpro which led to the foundation of Business Finland. These campaigns are as follows; "Artificial Intelligence (AI)" (2017-2018), "Batteries from Finland (Batteries)" (2018-2020), "Mixed Reality" (2017-2019) and "Entertainment Finland" (2019-2020). The campaign instrument has been iteratively developed since these initial campaigns. Although the focus of the evaluation is primarily on these campaigns, the changes and improvements made in the context of subsequent campaigns have also been taken into account in this evaluation.

The campaign instrument as part of Business Finland's toolkit

There was a clear need to create an agile and flexible programmatic instrument, like campaigns, in Business Finland's operations.

The first campaigns were launched in 2017 with their form of implementation being linked to the Tekes&Finpro merger and Finpro's campaign activities. In recent years, campaigns have developed into an additional programmatic tool alongside programmes. A clear need for campaigns emerged as they represented a lighter and more agile way to promote Business Finland's goals and the development of different themes and industries. In this context it is particularly important that BF's selection of methods also includes a quick and more flexible method to respond to rapidly emerging needs. It is important that the campaigns can also be tailored more freely and in accordance with the development needs of the sector concerned. A characteristic feature of these campaigns has also been their limited focus and resources, as well as a tight schedule, which aims to effectively promote the chosen issue. Like programmes, campaigns act as both a platform for, and a link to BF services and funding.

Campaigns complement programmes as well as representing smaller and lighter instruments. Nothing similar can be found in Business Finland's selection of tools.

The purpose, role, contents and relationship of the campaigns to other measures and services have not been strictly defined. In relation to the other activities and services of Business Finland and to programmes in particular, campaigns can be characterised in different ways: they can be independent and separate entities, preparatory measures preceding programmes and more focused promotion activities following programme completion. Some campaigns 'behave' in a programme manner and eventually develop into a programmes themselves.

As campaigns and their contents can be tailored to the specific needs of the theme/industry, different types of campaigns (services, goals, scope, etc.) have emerged corresponding to different needs. Campaigns often contain a mix of the following activities:

- identifying market opportunities
- gathering together the field of operators into networks
- building ecosystems and cooperation networks
- identifying the development needs of the operator field and responding to them
- identifying expertise and attracting experts to Finland
- activation help in terms of applying for funding
- export campaigns

The nature of the four evaluated campaigns differed somewhat from each other, but in all of them the special characteristics of the campaigns described above can be found. All four campaigns were executed over a 2-3-year period. All four campaigns consisted of several different actions and each used Business Finland's services and funding. The evaluated campaigns did not have their own project funding framework, though they did have a goal in respect of how much project funding could be channelled into the target sector. The objectives in respect of the evaluated campaigns are presented below:

Artificial Intelligence (2017-2018): To activate the field of actors for RDI work and promote networking, increase the ability to utilise artificial intelligence and enable experiments (PoC) and improve productivity with artificial intelligence.

Batteries from Finland (2018-2020): Activate and promote the development of sustainable battery technologies and services, increase awareness and 'know-how' in the theme, build networks and promote the internationalisation of Finnish operators and attract investments to Finland.

Mixed Reality (2017-2019): Promote Finland's rise to become a leading producer of XR/VR/AR technology and the scaling of solutions in verticals.

Entertainment Finland (2019-2020): To turn the Finnish entertainment industry into a strong international export sector (doubling of exports) and to strengthen the sector value network and conditions for development.

Implementation of the evaluated campaigns

Implementation of the evaluated campaigns has been, for the most part, successful and it has been done efficiently. In campaigns, their preparation phase is highlighted, because as campaigns are short-term and quick actions, the timeliness of the actions and appropriate customer choices are emphasised even more strongly than is the case with the programme instrument. The preparation process has been developed and systematised over the years based on the experience of the first campaigns. However, campaigns are being prepared flexibly and preparation has remained fast. A clear strength of the campaign instrument is that it can be launched very quickly. In the evaluated campaigns differences were however apparent in terms of the first steps taken and thus how quickly the campaigns started to function at full capacity. In the evaluated campaigns, it was appropriate to use time for the preparation and start-up phase and to put the groundwork in order, so that the needs and market opportunities of the operator field could be mapped comprehensively and in-depth.

Campaigns represent a new type of experimental activity in Business Finland's operations. They can be used to agilely produce information and implement specific actions for the needs of different industries and themes.

Campaigns are effective in mapping market opportunities, producing information about the development situation and the needs of various fields, tailoring actions according to these development needs and technologies, in enabling experiments and PoC activities, as well as in gathering actors together and helping them to network with potential customers and investors.

The actual implementation of the campaigns has worked well, especially if it is compared against the level of resource used. The activities related to the provision of services and the creation of new services have also worked well in campaigns. In particular, the real strength of the campaigns has been their ability to adapt to the needs of different development themes and to pick the services required as the situation demands. Through them, it has been possible to successfully produce information and offer services in accordance with the agile nature of the campaign tool.

It is also understandable that since the campaigns themselves represented a new method of operation, certain challenges have also emerged in respect of their implementation. These include; limited human resources in relation to the often ambitious goals set, overlap in certain functions (e.g. with Export Booster), the inappropriateness of the funding instruments to the development needs of certain target sectors, the reality that customers can have only a loose connection to the campaign, too broad a focus area in terms of the campaign and, regarding the operational environment, the COVID-19-pandemic and the general challenges arising when working in international markets (language barriers, bureaucracy, etc.). It was also possible to highlight a number of good characteristics and working practices from the campaigns. These include their quick preparation process, the ability to quickly change the direction of campaign operations, utilisation of Business Finland's international networks and contacts, the opportunity to implement Proof of Concepts- related actions and the operation method of assembling BF services in a campaign platform and tailoring new services to the needs of the sector/development theme. Individually effective practices relate to networking and information dissemination, supporting internationalisation, enabling experiments, finding partnerships and customers.

Results and impacts achieved in the evaluated campaigns

Different types of results and achievements have been generated in the evaluated campaigns. These included new information on foreign markets, opportunities for Finnish operators in the international markets, compiled information on Finnish industry actors in target sectors, new information on the target technologies and new information on the functionality and market potential of new solutions and services (PoC). Other key results include improvement in 'know-how' and understanding in the chosen campaign theme areas in respect of the personnel of both Business Finland and the target groups. In addition to these successes, important results have been achieved in terms of the creation of new networks and contacts between Business Finland customers and both foreign and Finnish partners, investors and clients. In addition, the creation of new solutions, applications and services, particularly in Business Finland funded RDI-projects connected to campaigns, can also be viewed as a success here.

Campaigns differ from programmes in terms of their impacts. The potential impacts of campaigns are more focused in relation to certain individual themes and industries and are generated faster. The impacts of the programmes are more extensive, having a wider focus and broader target group. In programmes, the impacts are more broadly directed at different parts of the innovation process. When looking at the evaluated campaigns the impacts are related to

- the improvement of R&D and business development capabilities, skills and 'know-how'
- raising the attractiveness of Finland to investors and to a non-domestic skilled workforce
- activation and the continuation of R&D-work

Campaigns represent a particularly good way to quickly and lightly test whether it is worth investing more in a certain theme in the future.

Compared to programmes, campaign impacts are generated faster with the impacts being more precisely focused.

- increased networking and cooperation between different actors
- the enabling of new international cooperation partners and customers
- the improved ability to internationalise
- the development of new businesses and business expansion into new areas
- an overall improved understanding of the development situation and of the development possibilities of the various theme areas and industries.
- A general strengthening of the position of the campaign's development themes has also taken place

In addition, the operation of the campaigns is often the basis for starting enhanced development work or a focused specific action after a wider action. On the other hand, campaigns can also have an impact where the produced knowledge indicates that additional investments are not worth making in respect of a certain theme.

Overall effectiveness and added value of campaigns

Campaigns have played an important role in Business Finland's activities in recent years. They have a clear role to play as a smaller and more flexible instrument, alongside the more extensive and long-lasting programmes. Campaigns are based on a clear customer need and are a lighter and more agile way of promoting Business Finland's goals and its various development themes. Campaigns also represent a new practical testing or experimentation culture for Business Finland's own operations. Given their nature, they bring clear added value to Business Finland's operations.

Campaigns differ from programmes in terms of their impacts. The potential impacts of campaigns are more focused on certain individual themes and industries and, in addition, are generated faster. When looking at the evaluated campaigns the impacts are related to improvements in R&D and business development abilities and know-how, raising Finland's attractiveness in terms of investments and skilled workforce recruitment, activation and continuation of R&D-work, increased networking and cooperation between different actors, enabling the identification of new international cooperation partners and customers, an improved ability to internationalise, the development of new businesses and business expansion to new areas and overall, an improved understanding of the situation and development possibilities of the various theme areas. In addition, the operation of the campaigns is often also the basis for the starting of wider development work or a focused specific action after a wider action. On the other hand, campaigns can also have an impact on the knowledge produced, including that additional investments are not worth making in relation to a certain theme.

The broader effectiveness of campaigns is often seen as part of a longer 'chain' of measures, whilst programmes serve the whole chain. The campaign catalyses, strengthens and continues the 'chain.' The success of campaigns relates to whether they have resulted in new actions, whether they have strengthened development or whether they have successfully completed their development work. The evaluated campaigns have, in this regard, clearly been, successful. Some campaigns have started new development activities in Business Finland, where new programmes have followed from the campaigns or parts of the campaign have been added to existing programmes. Other campaigns have not however resulted in significant follow-up actions, but they have produced information on whether it is worth investing significantly in their development theme in the future.

The key elements, in terms of the effectiveness of the campaigns, are that they can be started quickly, their actions can be tailored to different needs, their direction can be changed agilely and their actions can also be terminated quickly, if necessary.

The limited resources of the campaigns have also forced campaign implementers to search for the most effective and resource-efficient ways to promote the target themes, as compared to the programmes. In the evaluated campaigns, careful consideration has been given to how the available resources can be used most rationally and in which ways the greatest possible benefit can be obtained from the resources. Because of this, the campaigns have been implemented quite efficiently. On the other hand, the reality of limited resources remain a challenge. In relation to the ambitious goals of the campaigns, human resources in particular have remained very limited.

In terms of the projects connected to campaigns, project ideas can be tested and prepared in campaigns before they are awarded project funding. This is one point where the campaigns, as with programmes, clearly added value to the project. This can speed up the innovation process while ensuring that the projects will be 'ready' for project funding. The challenge in some of the evaluated campaigns, however, has been that the projects have been only loosely connected to the operation of the campaigns. Projects are implemented independently and separately from campaigns and are only marked as part of campaigns if the development theme of the projects matches the theme of the campaigns.

Another argument supporting the successfulness of campaigns is that they have to find the right target groups and customers. In the evaluated campaigns, the customer target groups were defined very precisely. However, customer commitment to the campaigns was variable. In the case of campaigns more generally however, the meaning of 'customership' is not precisely defined. In future, this could be refined and defined to a level that better ensures customer commitment.

The campaigns serve as gathering platforms for Business Finland's services and funding opportunities for a certain chosen theme. In addition to its own services, campaign effectiveness remains, in part, due to the fact that they are able to more effectively direct customers towards Business Finland's services and project funding. In the evaluated campaigns, existing services have been utilised and customers have been sparred in respect of accessing the right services and funding instruments. It is important that the campaigns are able to support customers in a more customised way and, for example, develop the customers' innovative ideas. In this way, campaigns can also increase the effectiveness of Business Finland's other services if they are able to direct customers to the services more appropriately and spar customers to be more 'ready' to effectively utilise these services.

It should also be noted here that, in relation to other Business Finland services, campaigns share many of the same features as programmes, in terms of their implementation, effectiveness and impacts. The key added value of the campaigns emerges, in particular, from the fact that, like programmes, they are able to place the selected target sector/theme area in the spotlight, offering services more effectively while guiding target groups towards Business Finland funding.

Impact model of the campaigns

An effectiveness model derived from the nature and goals of the campaigns was prepared to support future campaign evaluations and management using the evaluation information reproduced here. The purpose of the effectiveness model is to help outline the conditions for the creation of effects and to create a knowledge base for verifying these effects. The core idea of the effectiveness model is to outline logical impact paths

that connect the campaign's inputs, operations and measures, as well as results and effects. The impact chains describe the effect creation paths showing how the immediate results achieved by the measures and the contributions allocated to them bring about the desired broader effects.

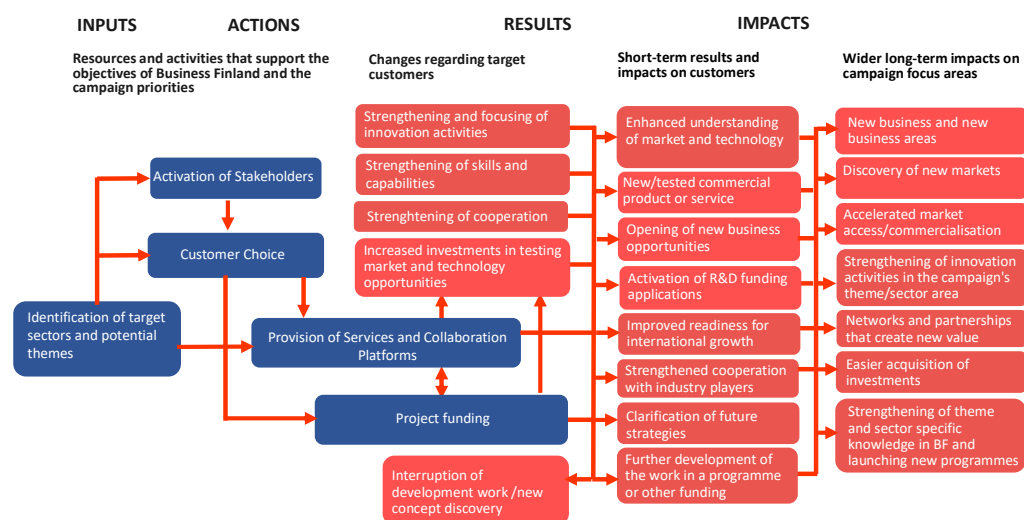


Figure 1. The impact model of Business Finland's campaigns

Use of the influence model in the effective management of campaigns and in the evaluation of the impacts of the campaigns requires a functioning indicator system which is connected to the logic of the creation of the campaign impacts in accordance with the model. With the help of indicators that describe inputs and activities, as well as the results and impacts achieved in the various impact paths, the operation of the campaigns (are the right things being done and are things being done efficiently) can best be evaluated and guided already during their implementation.

Development needs and recommendations

There is a need to continue to implement Campaign-type activities in the future. Lessons have been learned from previously implemented campaigns which can be used to further improve the role, effectiveness and efficiency of the campaigns.

The results of this evaluation show that the campaign instrument will continue to be required in future. It is however important that they are tailored flexibly and freely according to the target theme or sector-specific development needs. Campaigns could also be further developed to increase their effectiveness and efficiency. In what follows, development recommendations considering the continuation of the campaign instrument are presented. These development proposals have been put forward in connection with three different themes:

- Developing the implementation and effectiveness of campaigns
- Clarifying the role and mission of campaigns
- Campaign evaluation in the future

RECOMMENDATIONS

Development recommendation 1. In order to eliminate possible overlaps and achieve synergy benefits, the role of campaigns should be clarified and specified as part of Business Finland's selection of tools. The roles of campaigns and Export Booster activities in relation to each other should also be clarified and synergy benefits should be increased between them. In addition, further follow-up measures after campaigns (programmes, Export Booster) should also be defined more precisely.

Development recommendation 2. In terms of campaign implementation, basic criteria should be drawn up and a general guideline defined as to what type of content can be included in them. This should also include a list of the good and most effective practices for campaigns. This should not however limit the implementation of the campaigns too much, as it is necessary to retain the basic nature of campaigns as experimental proactive and reactive instruments.

Development recommendation 3. In general, it is important to ensure that campaigns will continue to be reactive, experimental, flexible and quick instruments, even if their role and mission are clarified and their methods of operation are defined more precisely.

Development recommendation 4. The 'customership' in respect of campaigns has not been precisely defined while no customer information has been registered in CRM systems in the case of older campaigns. Clear criteria should therefore be defined for campaign future customers. Different types of customers, e.g. core customers and more loosely involved customers could also be designated.

Development recommendation 5. The added value of the campaign for the RDI-projects should be increased and the connection between project and campaign strengthened. As such, projects should receive more systematic sparring and information from the campaign with which they are associated.

Development recommendation 6. Within Business Finland, understanding of the campaign instrument, its uses, role and possibilities varies. In order to clarify their role, campaigns and the opportunities associated with them should be more clearly communicated within Business Finland while a more extensive understanding of what constitutes a 'campaign' should be developed.

Development recommendation 7. The term 'campaign' does not describe or encapsulate the diverse nature of this instrument particularly well. As such, Business Finland could perhaps consider whether another term would better describe their nature and role. Greater clarity across the suite of BF instruments would enable the *niche* position of the 'campaign' to be better defined and understood.

Development recommendation 8. In order to better identify potential campaign customers, all customers who have participated in campaigns should be recorded, for example, with a separate campaign code in Business Finland's customer information system. This also necessitates that clear criteria are defined for campaign customers. In newer campaigns, the gathering of customer information has been developed and this information produced in the same way as in other Business Finland activities.

Development recommendation 9. In order to support the evaluation of each campaign and management team with evaluation information, an evaluation system based on the campaign's goals, intervention logic and monitoring indicators should be created and connected to the campaign management system to more broadly support joint learning and the promotion and dissemination of knowledge and good practices within Business Finland.

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