

WE ARE THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION RURAL SWEDEN.

**Hela Sverige
ska leva!**



**HELA
SVERIGE.**

*Hela Sverige
ska leva!*

COUNTRYSIDE AND CITY IN BALANCE.



WHO WE ARE.

Rural Sweden is a national non-profit organization whose membership consists of thousands of local development groups. Members are community groups and village councils as well as some local heritage associations and even sports clubs who are dedicated to local development.

What unites these groups is that they work for local development in their village or district, even if their activities may vary. They work with everything from organizing Midsummer celebrations and taking over schools and shops, to promoting their village as an attractive place to live and work in.

Our 24 regional departments provide support and guidance to groups in their respective locations. The departments coordinate and initiate common issues and maintain contact with government agencies and organizations at the regional level.

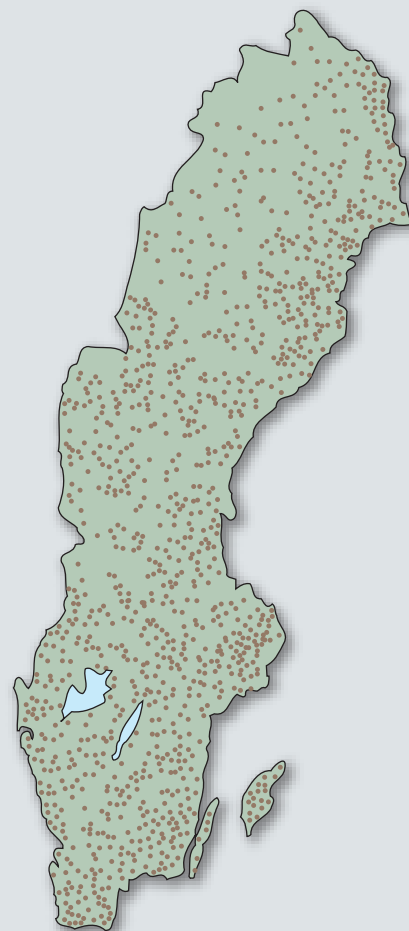
At the national level, an administrative office under the leadership of the organization's board maintains contact, coordination and communication with groups throughout the country. The board consists of 13 members from across Sweden. We strive for a gender equal leadership and therefore have two chairpersons, one woman and one man.

An important component of the work by the administrative office and the board is to act as a collective voice for the rural movement in Sweden. Thousands of local development groups are unable to meet with the Minister for Rural Affairs but our board can do so and convey the voice of the rural movement.

We also have about forty large member organizations that share our values and support our work.

Rural Sweden was founded in September 1989, at the end of a large campaign by the same name. This meant a strong mobilization of rural Sweden and after the campaign ended, local groups wanted to continue to work together to develop their villages and communities.

That was the start of a long journey towards a country in balance.
A journey that is still underway.



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OUR AIM.

Good conditions throughout the entire country
Decent rural development
Balance between the city and countryside

STRENGTHEN LOCALLY.

Collaboration/Knowledge transfer/Support

Examples

- Local Projects
- Handbooks
- Networks
- Village Banks
- Insurances
- Courses/Conferences
- National Rural Parliament

INFLUENCE NATIONALLY.

Advocacy/Dialogue with Leaders

Examples

- Policy Recommendations
- Committees
- Dogue Meetings
- Editorials
- Letters
- Courses/Conferences
- National Rural Parliament

Good Examples/Knowledge

Better Conditions

OUR GOAL.

Our goal is simple.

We want to have balance between the countryside and city.

We will achieve this balance when rural areas are treated fairly, i.e. they are given development opportunities equivalent to those provided to urban areas.

This is not about extraordinary things but rather those things that should be natural for inhabitants all over Sweden. Everyone needs daily life to function with nearby grocery stores, where police come when called, and with accessible internet and travelable roads.

The solutions are not necessarily going to be the same for rural areas as for urban areas. Instead, solutions should be adapted to the conditions and needs in a given place. Rural areas have to develop on their own terms.

Now we are touching on an important point, and that is how rural areas are viewed.

Today, there is a widely-held urban norm that views cities and towns as where modern life is lived, and where creativity and innovative thinking flourish, with the people in rural areas and villages portrayed as the opposite, i.e. as backward-looking and static.

We want to contribute to ending this myth and to fostering a more multifaceted and equitable portrayal of our rural areas. We hope that this work can lead to a better distribution of resources between the countryside and city and to a greater understanding of the important contribution rural areas make to all of Sweden's development.

When there is balance between the countryside and city, then we will have achieved our vision where all of Sweden flourishes.

*”Rural areas have to
develop on their
own terms”*



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WHAT WE DO.

Rural Sweden is a non-partisan and non-profit organization that takes a holistic approach to rural issues. We have two main strategies that interlink with one another: to strengthen locally and to influence

STRENGTHEN LOCALLY.

We help strengthen local development groups and other members that have local development and rural development as their role so that all of Sweden flourishes. This is achieved through collaboration, knowledge transfer, and local projects and by highlighting good examples and supporting these examples in different ways.

We strengthen locally by, among other things, writing handbooks and inspiration materials as well as sharing our own and other's experiences and best practice. We organize courses and conferences and hold dialogue meetings and web seminars. At the regional level, our regional departments offer support and guidance.

All member groups receive free insurance.

We arrange the National Rural Parliament every other year, which is the rural movement's largest meeting. People from all over Sweden who are concerned with rural issues attend this event in order to discuss important questions, get inspiration and exchange experiences during the course of a few days. Politicians and civil servants from municipal, regional and national levels also attend this event.

INFLUENCE NATIONALLY.

In order to strengthen locally, the organization must influence nationally and be a means of communication between local development groups and those who have authority over society's development. This involves carrying out advocacy and engaging in productive dialogues with decision-makers.

Influencing nationally is important because this is how we can change the broader conditions for local development and for people who live in rural areas. We want to make visible the circumstances of rural areas and rural issues.

Therefore, we write policy recommendations, debate articles and press releases. We produce reports on important topics. We meet politicians and decision-makers as well as participate in different arenas to make our voice, and that of rural areas, heard.

Together with others, we identify original solutions directly adapted to the conditions in rural areas. One example is the Regional Micro Funds that provides social financing by, among other things, giving loan guaranties. Another is the Service for Cooperation project that creates models for partnerships around services at the local level, mainly among municipalities.

The Project Village Network Forum supports rural associations that build and manage their own non-profit broadband network.

Rural Sweden has produced its own Rural Areas Dictionary, offering alternative words for expressions that we consider reflect an urban norm. The Dictionary is available on our website, in Swedish only.



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WHAT WE CAN.

We have good knowledge of what is going on in rural areas in Sweden. We also are very aware of how people living in rural areas feel and think.

With more than 30 years of experience in local development and working with rural concerns, we have in-depth knowledge of our issues and a broad network. Our regional departments have their ears to the ground and know what people in their area think and believe about current issues. They even have a large contact network through their engagement in regional and county issues.

We have proven methods for mobilizing and supporting successful local development groups. Our methods work just as well in rural areas as in cities and suburbs.

We use our knowledge in diverse ways. We sit on committees as experts and we engage in dialogue and debate with decision-makers. We participate in seminars, conferences and debates organized by others as well as ourselves.

We have been arranging the conference Local Economy Days regularly since the beginning of 2000s, which spreads knowledge, experience and inspiration on local economy and local capital maintenance.

We collect data and analyze the balance among different sectors (i.e. employment, education, social services) to see the distribution of resources between the countryside and city. We present this in our recurrent Balance Report, which is published in Swedish only.

We want to share our knowledge and to collaborate. It is about using all of the resources in the best way so that Sweden can be sustainable and the entire country flourishes.

Samtala eller debattera med oss, samarbeta med oss, låt oss komma och berätta saker vi kan! Ej översatt.

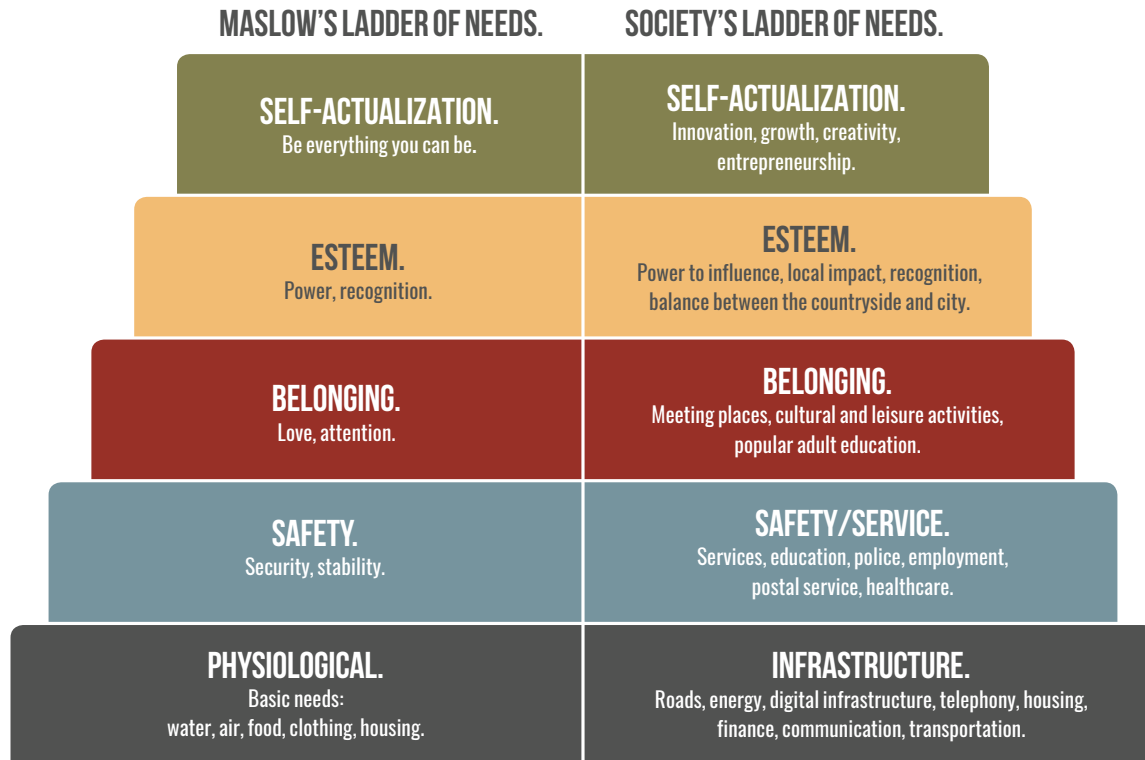
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SOCIETY'S LADDER OF NEEDS.

We have developed a model that described society's ladder of needs. It describes what society needs at a minimum to work and exist.



Society's Ladder of Needs shows the needs that must be fulfilled in order for society to be socially and economically sustainable – where infrastructure, safety, belonging, and esteem are all crucial elements. It is inspired by Maslow's Ladder of Human Needs, which describes the needs that must be met on five levels in order for humans to reach their full potential.

INFRASTRUCTURE. The first step on Society's Ladder of Needs is that which provides a basic structure for society. It is essential that it is nearby or "just around the corner". We call this step Infrastructure and it includes things like roads, telephony, energy, digital infrastructure, and housing; everything that you need to live and reside in a given locality.

SAFETY/SERVICE. The second step is Safety and Service. This consists of that which you need within a reasonable distance such as public and commercial services, for example, shops, schools, health facilities, police, emergency services and so forth.

BELONGING. The third step is belonging. A key condition for a village to create belonging and a sense of identity is access to meeting places, cultural and leisure activities and popular education for adults. Therefore, buildings for meetings need to exist and opportunities for arranging activities need to be available. With these things in place, a locality's attractiveness increases.

ESTEEM. The fourth step is Esteem. Esteem means to feel important and proud over one's hometown, even when life there does not line up with the predominant urban norm. It is equally important to have influence and power to affect one's daily life and the community one lives in..

SELF-ACTUALIZATION. The fifth step is Self-Actualization. To achieve this, the other steps have to be present because it is difficult to achieve self-actualization if one is busy trying to save the local school from being shut down or getting broadband for the town. The fifth steps offers the possibility for innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship. It is a visionary stage where society is able to "be all it can be".

*"Society's Ladder of Needs
shows what is needed
for society to be socially
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