

Chapter 6

Business Incubator as a Tool for Developing Regional Network Projects of Cooperation Between Schools and Businesses

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ABSTRACT

The chapter describes the work experience of the Penza region (Russia) in support of innovative development in the region. A lot of work is being done in the region to involve young people in innovative technical and entrepreneurial activities. For this purpose, a comprehensive program has been developed in the region, in which schools and business enterprises, universities, and additional education centers cooperate. To coordinate this activity, a special department of youth innovation programs has been established on the basis of the business center. In particular, the objectives of the program include the support of projects of schoolchildren working in cooperation with specialists of enterprises – on the basis of the Centers for Youth Innovation Creativity, during STEM summer schools and other events organized in the region. The chapter describes the mechanisms for supporting techno-entrepreneurial projects of schoolchildren on the basis of a business incubator, and the conditions of the organization, the results, and effects of such activities are analyzed.

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INTRODUCTION

In a modern market economy, Penza region, as well as Russia on the whole, faces global competition, the primary challenge of which is a reinforcement of struggle for limited important resources at disposal – human resources and investment. Low resource efficiency will inevitably lead to its outflow and, as a result, to decrease of opportunities for development of the territory.

As there is a lack of commercially meaningful natural resources and huge budget forming industrial enterprises in Penza region, innovations are the only driver of the long-term stable development of the region, and the leading resource of innovations is a human, involved in the innovative regional community on the basis of social and business connections.

In order to meet the challenges, it is necessary to consolidate the regional community around the idea of purposeful innovation development of Penza region, aiming at its sustainable competitiveness. For this reason, Penza region must become the territory which will be attractive for life and development of an innovative business. It needs to create conditions necessary for creative development and achievement of personal potential, safe and comfortable life of residents, positively associating themselves with Penza region, achieving their strategies alongside with strategies of the region, supporting stable social and business interaction.

Taking into account innovation potential and infrastructure of support for innovative activities, Penza region has an excellent opportunity to improve its position among other Russian regions. In this regard, the strategy of the regional development is aimed at invigorating the innovation development of Penza region using regular and integrated solutions in three main directions: “innovative economy,” “innovative society,” “innovative infrastructure.”

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR SUPPORTING INNOVATION IN THE REGION

Penza region refers to leaders among Russian regions according to scope and speed of infrastructure for supporting innovation development, which includes a network of business-incubators (37 in total with total area of 35 860 square meters, including 13 regional (31 730 square meters) and 24 municipal (4 120 square meters) business incubators, 2 technology parks (technopark “Yablochkov” specializing in information technologies, precision instruments industry, material science; technology park of high technologies “Rameev” specializing in information technologies and production of items designed for medical use), a business angel network.

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