

The opportunity – spring semester 2022

The work and success of the first participants



Summary

The first vocational training of the Opportunity was available from March 1 last. and has lasted until mid-June. The International Department of the Labor Agency referred 17 men under the age of 30 to Tækifærið, who had in common the fact that they had been on the unemployment register for a long time and were of foreign origin. In February, 10 people came for a needs analysis and motivational interview, and seven of them started participating. Two refused participation and one did not need vocational training. Five people could not be reached despite repeated attempts and different ways, and two people had found work.

For the first three weeks, a course was held in Reykjavík where the focus was on team building and education about Icelandic society, its history, culture and politics. The focus was on factors that create opportunities in the Icelandic labor market and in Icelandic society and what leads to poverty.

For four weeks, the group stayed at Bifröst, where practical training took place; renovations to Hreðavatnsskála housing, service and kitchen work at the country hotel Hraunsnefi and at Bifröst, where housing was prepared for the arrival of Ukrainian refugees. After the Easter break, we worked in a group in Reykjavík for a few days, but since April 25, the participants have received individual assistance in job hunting and other follow-up. The opportunity took place in English.

When this report is written towards the end of June 2022, four out of five of those who graduated are employed. The person who is not working is waiting for an operation that will probably take place this fall and will probably make him fit for work. The two who left during the season have also been followed up. One of them is working and doing well, but the other is unstable and has been helped to seek help from the Psychiatric Department of LSH. He has also received a job offer but has not been able to do it.

Those of us who support Tækifærið are determined to offer ongoing training and develop Tækifærið based on this spring's experience and the results of the participants' evaluations. This spring's participants were particularly satisfied with Tætíkfäirin, but overall they gave it a rating of 4.8 out of a possible 5, as can be seen in the evaluation report on Tækifærið's website – www.taekifaeri.is However, they would have liked the course in Reykjavík to be longer and the vocational training in Borgarfjörður longer. The assessment also revealed a variety of good suggestions on what can be done better. The employees also compiled points about their experiences to refine the Opportunity.

At the end of this first course, it remains to be seen how wide the gap is between the participants of the Opportunity and Icelanders and thus Icelandic society, despite the fact that they have lived here from three to nine years. Seven participants seemed to know little about what was going on in Iceland and had little or no contact with other Icelanders. Then it was their general experience that they were not seen by Icelanders. They feel that they are seen as a workforce and not as individuals who want to share their experiences, lives and feelings with others.

In the following, we go into more detail about various aspects of the Opportunity's activities, such as the content of the course, which staff were present and, in addition, financing is discussed. Plan for nk. autumn is submitted, but full funding has been guaranteed for autumn's courses and training.

Staff and partners



- **Björk Vilhelmsdóttir** social worker and managing director saw about all planning and maintenance. Conducted interviews with participants before participation and all individual interviews during participation and follow-up.

- **Jón Eyþór Helgason** was in charge of practical training and was an extremely good role model for the boys in many ways. He organized two workshops on masculinity and connected the group with SÁÁ. Jón Eythór proved to be exceptionally good when difficulties arose due to the consumption of drugs and the boys benefited from his guidance in the men's room in swimming, which turned out to be essential social education.

- **Elisabeth Nienhuis** (Lisa) is a Dutch actress and a master's student in psychology. She was hired to take care of physical development in the gym and hiking, but was an invaluable support to the boys who looked to her a lot. Then she took us all to theatrical expression and art workshops.

Brynja Brynjarsdóttir and **Jóhann Harðarsson** , owners and operators of Hraunsnef and Hreðavatnsskála, provided practical guidance in vocational training. Their contribution was no less how good models they are in operation and efficiency. They have built their business little by little and the participants see that it is possible to run a business without an office, fancy work clothes or expensive vehicles. This aspect is particularly valuable. Then there was lunch a la Brynja every working day, which was great.





Guðjón Jónsson , real estate supervisor at the University of Bifröst, and **Rolando Díaz** , construction and maintenance worker, guided the participants of the Opportunity as they worked with them. They worked on moving furniture and other household items from storage to apartments, cleaning things and doing various things.

The boys especially enjoyed this socially important project, with one of the 27-year-olds saying, "I've never had such a

remarkable job."

In an evaluation survey among the participants about the Opportunity, the question was asked how supportive the staff of the Opportunity were? It was not defined in more detail who was asked. The result was that the participants gave the staff of the opportunity a score of 4.6 out of a possible five. In other words, the participants are very satisfied with the staff and believe that they have been very and even unusually supportive. It is noteworthy that none of the participants gave the staff a neutral or negative rating for how supportive they were.

Financing and operation

Participation in the Opportunity was free of charge for the participants. **The Employment and Education Development Fund**, which is the main sponsor of the Opportunity, made it a requirement and is thanked for it, as it is absolutely necessary. The development fund provided almost 24 million ISK. grant for two courses in the year 2022. The grant depends on the duration of the course and will not be paid in full as the course was shorter than planned. The opportunity has already been paid ISK 11,940,000. from the fund that covers wages, housing and food.

The Mental Health Foundation funded Tækifærið with one million, as did **Landsbankinn's** which also provided one million. That grant was earmarked for leisure activities to ensure no costs there. **The Public Health Fund** provided a grant of 800,000 ISK for the project and the **Women's Employment Development Fund** 600,000 for preparation.

Mainland accounting and management consulting takes care of the finances of the Opportunity. It is important that there is full confidence in the handling of funds when looking for grants for the activity.

As of this writing, no official settlement has been made for the first half of 2022, as the season has not yet passed. The main expenses are salaries and salary-related costs, but it should be noted that salaries are extremely modest for employees. After that, there is the cost of renting a house in Bifröst, the cost of food for very hungry young men ;-) is considerable and the cost of transportation. The opportunity rented the cheapest rental car and otherwise used the executive director's car in exchange for paying for fuel and cleaning. This fall, 2 rental cars will be rented for the activity.

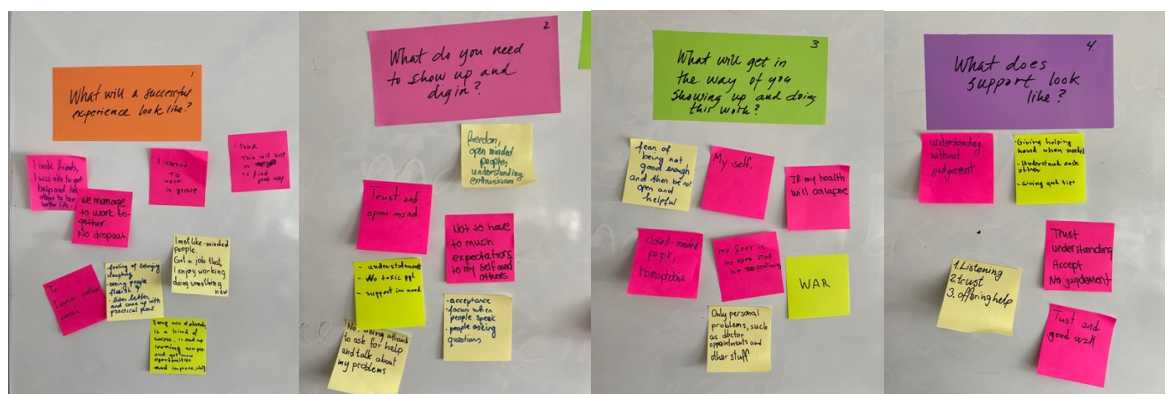
Sponsors will be provided with all accounting information when available upon request.

Course and team building in Reykjavík March 1 - 18 and April 19 - 25

Reykjavík 's student groups provided Tækifæriðin with facilities at Suðurlandsbraut 32, which was priceless. The participants fit in well in the environment, as the target group of the Study Groups and Tæðikfæriin is similar.

Work was done every weekday for 2-3 hours, in the afternoon. Björk was mostly in charge of the training, but also other staff and also external training providers. Visits were made for several days.

Ragnhildur Vigfúsdóttir conducted coaching in the first week of the course, where individuals and the group as a whole set goals.



Þorsteinn V. Einarsson, teacher and sexologist, came and discussed positive masculinity.

The 78 organizations were visited, which was considered important as one participant was homosexual and several others knew little about it. Then **SÁÁ** was visited at the end of the course. After the visit, it was decided that it must be at the beginning of the next course, since all the participants have their own experience of drug use or relatives of addicts. Then the **City Library** in Grófinn was visited, which has a variety of facilities and tools for people, as well as reading material in many languages.

As mentioned before, the subjects of the education in Reykjavík were mostly about Icelandic society and the labor market. It was decided to meet the needs of the group rather than offering pre-determined study material. For example, it turned out that only 1 out of 7 participants knew who Bubbi was, even though they had lived in Iceland from three to nine years. This led to a lot of discussion about popular culture and music.

Labor market education included education about job interviews, resumes, salary structure and the importance of working in a job that is recognized on the labor market. Several participants had experience of black economic activity.

The participants showed particular interest when discussing poverty in Icelandic society and how easy it is to get stuck in poverty in the welfare society in this country.

The participants gave the preparatory course in Reykjavík an average score of 4.6 out of a possible 5.0, as Table 1 shows in the attached evaluation report. No one rated the course below 4, which says that all participants thought the course was good or very good.

The average of the answers to the question about whether the length of the preparation course was reasonable is 2.4. In other words, the participants generally believe that the course was mostly too short. None of the participants thought the course was too long. Participants were asked in an open-ended question what they liked and what they disliked about the preparatory course. It is in accordance with the numerical evaluation of the preparatory course that no participant makes negative comments about the course. Several praise it, saying that they "loved" the course and that it was "perfect". Nevertheless, there are some suggestions on what could be done better. One calls for more creative courses, another for the participants to be trained to deal with social anxiety, the third for a longer course.

Borgarfjörður March 21 – April 13

The purpose of leaving home was to get distance from their situation and hopefully see ways to change. The group all lived in student apartments, where everyone had their own bedroom, toilet and shower. Mealtimes were all shared and took place in the building where Björk, Jón Eypór and Lisa lived, where the kitchen was the largest. The group shared cooking and cooking, and that division of labor sometimes took its toll. It turned out to be important to have a meal together.

Participants were asked to say in their own words what they liked and/or disliked about their stay at Bifröst. The responses are generally positive and talk about the stay being "perfect", "very pleasant" and that there was "nothing to complain about". One talks about how beautiful the surroundings were, another that he had not had the opportunity to go swimming before, and the third that it was refreshing to get away from Reykjavík. Several suggestions on how to improve were made.

Hreðavatnsskáli



Practical training mostly took place in Hreðavatnsskála. The building there has been in disrepair for many years, and therefore countless projects in demolition and reconstruction turned out to be well-planned to learn from. Jón Eypór proved to be a patient instructor, but Jói and Brynja also actively participated in the guidance every day.

The main projects were the demolition of old furniture, floors were plastered and painted, new walls installed and electricity installed.



Hraunsnef

Brynja offered two participants vocational training at the Hraunsnefi restaurant. One of them spent a few days in the local kitchen and received very positive feedback and encouragement to do such work. Another was mostly involved in service work and eventually received a job offer. He wanted to work in Reykjavík and now works in one of the new hotels in downtown Reykjavík.

Preparing for the arrival of refugees from Ukraine

All participants as well as employees came to Bifröst to prepare for the arrival of the refugees from Ukraine. The boys were in the process of moving household items into apartments that needed to be set up, while Björk and Lisa prepared the common spaces and the reception itself.

The average grade of the vocational training is somewhat lower than the average grade of the preparatory course in Reykjavík, or 4.4 versus 4.6.

Participants were asked to answer in their own words what they liked and/or disliked about the vocational training. The answers agree with the numerical assessment that overall the training was good and that most of the participants "enjoyed it". One said she was "perfect". In the answers, however, it is stated that some of the participants would have preferred to receive other types of vocational training. For example, one person would have preferred to receive training in working with people like social workers do, and another spoke of wanting to do more than just "try" things, that the training he received was not "real" enough.

These are the tips that employees will take with them into the fall.

Leisure and outdoor activities

Bifröst has excellent facilities for all kinds of leisure and outdoor activities. The participants took advantage of the fitness facilities under Lisa's guidance and she offered daily walks. The group also had access to student facilities where billiards, football, darts, etc. are offered. The group went to the musical Með all á Hreinu at Leikfélag Borgarfjörður in Lyngbrekka and there was a lot of discussion about that experience.

In an evaluation study, the participants were asked if the fitness/outdoor activities at Bifröst were adequately planned. Their answers ranged from the organization of this part of the job should have been much less to the organization of this part of the job should have been much more.

In Reykjavík, we went to various outdoor games in Laugardal and also in the Ice Skating Rink. Then we went swimming a few times and at the end of our stay at Bifröst we went to Krauma.





After graduation at the end of April, we went on a day trip east of a mountain. We went horseback riding at Eyrarbakki, visited Sólheimar in Grímsnes and bathed in the Old Pool at Flúðir.

It can therefore be said that the participants were treated well and they certainly appreciated it. However, it was often difficult to get everyone to attend, and therefore sometimes mention is made of wild cats that are difficult to herd.

The participants graduated with a letter of recommendation that they have used in their job search. Emphasis is placed on their strengths and they are told more clearly about their attendance at training and what was worked on. Björk, Brynja and Jón Eythór signed letters of recommendation.

Final words

There is a strong need to continue the development of the Opportunity. In the opinion of the executive board, it is necessary to try a larger group so that efficiency will be greater, without compromising the possibility of in-depth support for each one. It is stated in an evaluation study that the participants considered the group to be too small. Also that it could be stated more clearly at the beginning what the remedy was going to be. Thus, it would have to be made clear that the resource was more about realizing where the participants' abilities lay than about training specific skills and more about what it is like to live in Iceland than about targeted vocational training.

Most of the participants have lived alone and left home early due to difficult circumstances. Behavior with others was often lacking, which can probably be attributed to a lack of upbringing. It is the staff's opinion that etiquette, table manners and manners need to be addressed better in the next course. The employees also believe that the group should set its own social rules, so that everyone is aware of which rules apply.

At the beginning, prospective ASEBA participants took an assessment that they received from the Department of Social Work at the University of Iceland. It turned out to be difficult to collect the answers and only three out of five graduates answered. It has not been decided whether another ASEBA assessment will be submitted to these three to find out what personal benefit in well-being has occurred.

It is important to present the opportunity not just as vocational training, but as life training. In fact, attitude formation takes place throughout the working period, where the emphasis is placed on responsibility for one's own life.

In an evaluation study, one pointed out that the participants in the resource could have been selected more diligently. It is clear that many more people need to be referred to the vocational training that is planned, because of how difficult it is to get hold of people. Those with an active addiction and/or serious behavioral problem must also be excluded from participation.

But don't forget the good when talking about things that can be improved. Here are some nuggets from participants in an evaluation study.

- *I was happy with everything, we worked, we learned a lot, I suffered from anxiety but it disappeared, the best thing that happened to me in Iceland, perfect, I would recommend the resort to everyone.*
- *The opportunity was a major one. The staff was great. I gained experience, received encouragement, recommendations and joy, I thank everyone who made the opportunity possible.*
- *I am very grateful for this experience. She highlighted the strengths that I can work with more.*

Finally, see the schedule for fall 2022

Plan for fall 2022

Björk and Jón Eyþór will continue to be employees of Tækifæriin in the fall of 2022 and the same group will cooperate. Lisa will be abroad but also part time with us. We have decided to hire Kacper Barwiak for peer support at least at the beginning of the course. There is a need to extend the training, both the course in Reykjavík and the vocational training in Borgarfjörður.

Our plan is to invite 12 people to participate from September 5th – November 11th. After that, individual support will be provided for job hunting, keeping a job and other things that the participants need support for.

Presentation of the Opportunity at the Icelandic Labor and Employment Agency during the week of August 15 - 19. In April 2022, there are almost 700 young men of foreign origin on the register of the Norwegian Labor and Employment Agency, so there is plenty to do. Individual interviews with those interested will take place at the Study Groups during the week of August 22-26.

The Opportunity course in Reykjavík will last 4 weeks. Starts on Monday, September 5 and ends on Friday, September 30. Continued facilities at Reykjavík Study Groups have been

guaranteed. According to an evaluation study needs to do more in shaking the group together well.

The training will again take place in Borgarfjörður, but now for 6 weeks. It will probably start on Monday, October 3 and work until Friday, November 11. There will continue to be cooperation with the owners of Hraunsnef and Hreðavatnsskáli as well as the University of Bifröst on projects. It is also expected to live in the university's student apartments, as in the spring.

Experience shows that a more extensive follow-up is needed than the first plan assumed. That advice and service will be available and we will try to keep track of the group after they arrive in Reykjavík.

Employees will work with the Finnish Labor Agency and later with the social service on the continued development of the opportunity. We have countless ideas on yellow cards in our hands, and it is very important to listen to the participants, both those who have graduated, those who have stopped, and to develop the vocational training with each group individually.

The most important thing is to keep in touch with the participants - thus working towards the United Nations' Global Goals, which are based on the concept of **Leave no one behind** . Therefore, continued support for participants after graduation is expected. These guys need it and the Opportunity needs it to progress.

