



# **NORTHEAST ICELAND**

## PLAN OF ACTION

**2025–2029**

---

**Northeast Iceland Development  
Plan 2025–2029**

Association of municipalities in  
Northeast Iceland

December 2024  
Version 1.0

**Responsible**

Albertína Friðbjörg Elíasdóttir,  
Executive director of SSNE

**Layout and design**

Ingibjörg Berglind Guðmundsdóttir

---



# Table of contents

Chairman's address _____	pg. 3
Northeast Iceland _____	pg. 4
Development plan _____	pg. 5
Vision for Northeast Iceland _____	pg. 6
Policy areas _____	pg. 7
Infrastructure _____	pg. 8
Economy _____	pg. 9
Thriving communities _____	pg. 10
Environment _____	pg. 11
Performance indicators _____	pg. 12
Connection to public policies and plans _____	pg. 13
The work process of the Development Plan _____	pg. 14
Communication and promotion plan _____	pg. 15

# Chairman's address

Regional Plans of Action are strategic plans that cover the operating regions of municipal associations. They contain the future vision of those who live there, goals, priorities for projects and the ways in which the plan is implemented. On basis of the current Plan of Action, we have already been able to implement projects that are guided by the common interests of the region and thus the empowerment of the local community. This includes necessary support for regional innovation projects, start-ups and entrepreneurs. Examples of projects that the previous plan supported are the Northeast Iceland Transportation and Infrastructure Policy, the children's culture projects *Fiðringur* and *Upptaktur*, *Loftum* and SSNE's *Green Steps*. Through the Action Plans, local people in every region of the country are given the opportunity and resources to make their own decisions on how best to advance.

**The vision outlined here in the Plan of Action 2025–2029 is based on four main pillars:**

- Strong infrastructure based on the Northeast Iceland's Transport and Infrastructure Policy, as well as important advocacy for the region.
- A strong economy that encompasses all industries, at all levels from entrepreneurs to operating companies..
- Thriving communities characterized by a vibrant cultural life and where everyone is welcome.
- A strong environmental vision where the region will be a leader in environmental issues and an example for others.

The SSNE board tasked its project managers with leading the work on forming the new Plan of Action in extensive consultation with the residents of the region through 13 workshops and the active participation of elected representatives and the board of SSNE.

*Emphasis was placed on reaching and engaging as many groups in society as possible, our young people, senior citizens, newcomers, and multicultural groups, for example.*

The action plan presented here is an ambitious vision for the region. With a concerted effort, we will build an even stronger and more thriving community that we can all be proud of. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our project managers who managed the project with excellence and believe that the work on the preparation of the Northeast Iceland Action Plan has been exemplary. I would also like to thank the other staff of SSNE and the many people who participated in the preparation of our joint Plan of Action. I have great hopes that the Action Plan will create a solid foundation for progress in the region and will be able to move us forward together.

*Lára Halldóra Eiríksdóttir, Chairman of SSNE*

# Northeast Iceland

- The operating area of SSNE extends from Siglufjörður to Bakkafjörður, with the exception of Tjörneshreppur. The total population of the area is about 31 thousand people, or about 8.2% of the total population of the country. The most populous municipality is Akureyri with close to 20 thousand inhabitants, while the smallest, Grýtubakkahreppur, has just over 400 inhabitants. Since 2019, the number of residents with foreign citizenship has increased by over one thousand, and they now account for about 10% of the total population.

The region has a diverse economy. Trade and services are major industries in the region, as well as tourism, which has grown rapidly in recent years. Fishing and fish processing, as well as agriculture and other food production, are major contributors to the region's employment. The number of public sector jobs is highest in the Northeast outside the capital area and the number of jobs has increased somewhat in recent years. Unemployment is generally very low, at around 2%, and has been decreasing in recent years.

- Emphasis on environmental issues was first outlined in the Action Plan for 2020–2024, and now numerous projects have been realized that will move the region forward in the energy transition, full utilisation of resources and reducing waste.
- Strong infrastructure is a basic prerequisite for a strong economy and thriving settlements in the region, The Northeast Iceland's Transport and Infrastructure Policy was approved by all municipalities in 2023. There, the municipalities have united on the region's vision for the future and the prioritization of projects. The level of education in the region has risen steadily, and there are five secondary schools in the region, one of which is a vocational school and one university. There has been a lack of more vocational and technical education, but there has also been a call for art education at the university level
- Northeast Iceland, has a strong arts and cultural scene characterized by ambition and numerous cultural events and festivals are held in the region all year round. There is a strong museum activity in the Northeast and there are about 40 museums, centres and exhibitions in the area, of which three cultural institutions in Akureyri are run under an agreement between the town of Akureyri and the state.



**10 MUNICIPALITIES**  
**POPULATION 31.574**

(January 1<sup>st</sup> 2024)

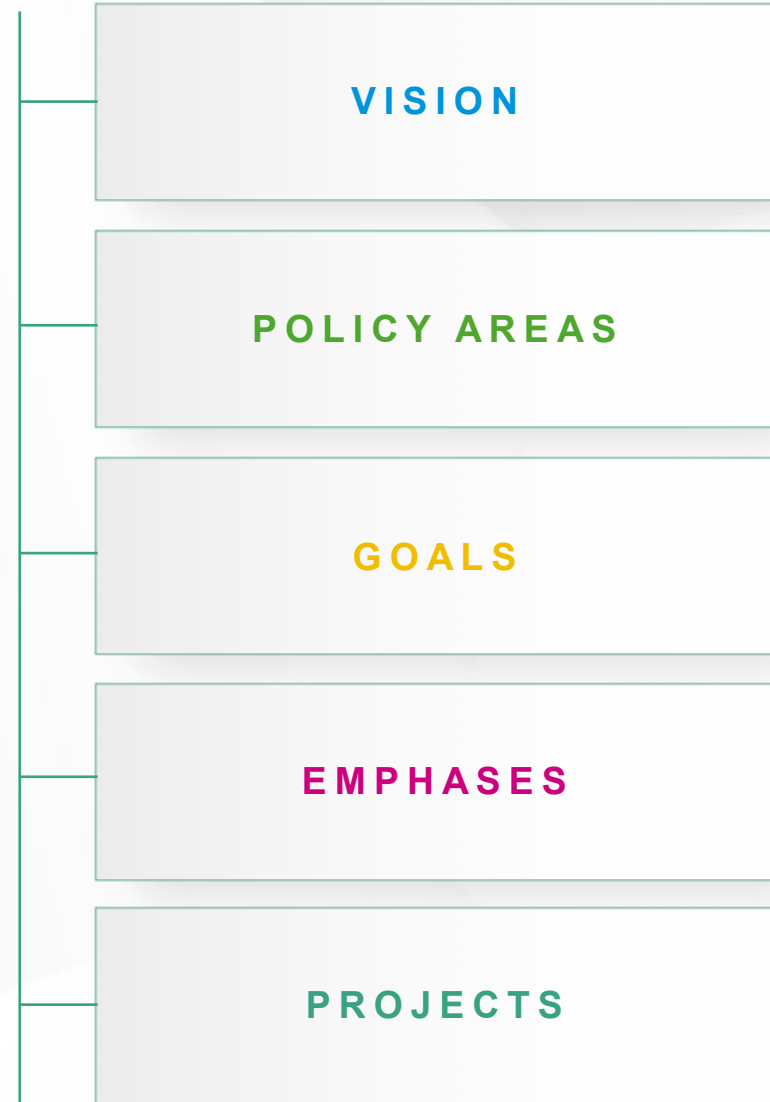


**NORTHEAST ICELAND**  
NORÐURLAND EYSTRÁ

# Plan of Action

The Northeast Iceland Action Plan presents a vision for the region and selects four focus areas to be covered by the plan.. In each policy area goals and emphases are set, and examples of projects are provided, except for the Infrastructure policy where only projects from the Northeast Iceland Transport and Infrastructure Policy are presented.

All projects that will be funded through the regional Action Plan must bring us closer to the goals of the plan and align with its priorities. The strategy set out in the Regional Plan is therefore the basis for the activities and emphases of the Northeast Iceland Development Fund. Likewise, the regional priority projects are based on the Regional Plan..



# Vision for Northeast Iceland

Northeast Iceland will have strong communities built on solid infrastructure and strong basic services that support rural and urban settlements. Thriving settlements based on sustainable and diverse economic activity and a rich cultural life characterize the region. Increased emphasis on public health and proximity to nature has made the region even more desirable as a place to live and has increased the quality of life and happiness of residents.

With a concerted effort, Northeast Iceland has achieved remarkable results in environmental issues, where innovation and green solutions have contributed to diverse opportunities.



**NORTHEAST ICELAND**  
PLAN OF ACTION



# Policy areas



**THRIVING COMMUNITIES**



**ECONOMY**



**INFRASTRUCTURE**



**ENVIRONMENT**



**NORTHEAST ICELAND**  
PLAN OF ACTION



# Infrastructure

## Northeast Iceland Transport and Infrastructure Policy 2023–2033

SSNE and the municipalities in Northeast Iceland have presented the region's transport and infrastructure policy. The municipalities in Northeast Iceland propose the following priorities for transport and infrastructure over the next five years:

- Siglufjarðarskarðsgöng tunnel
- Bárðardalsvegur vestri
- Bridges across Skjálfafljót
- Increased winter services
- Connecting Þórshöfn to the electricity transmission grid

---

## Advocacy

SSNE's role is multifaceted and one of its important tasks is to protect the interests of the member municipalities within and outside its operating region and at the same time monitoring and influencing government policies. There are many things to consider, but examples include:

- Protecting basic services and infrastructure in the region and promoting the development of both
- Increasing international flights through Akureyri Airport
- Access to education in the region, with a special emphasis on vocational and technical studies, art studies and studies in innovation
- Strengthening health services and law enforcement
- Tax incentives for peripheral regions
- Promote education and analyses, e.g. regarding equality
- Strive to getting more grant funding into the area



# Economy

The goal is for the region to have a **diverse and progressive economy with an emphasis on innovation**

## Emphases

- Support for work clusters where facilities can be secured for jobs without location and local jobs
- Continue enhancing a knowledge community with an emphasis on connecting the business community and educational institutions
- Participate in and support product/development projects in diverse industries
- Support for local production, services and products from the region
- Support innovation workshops and innovation projects for diverse groups

## Examples of projects

- Market the area/municipalities as a residential option based on each municipality's premises
- Ensure the continued work of Norðanátt and support for entrepreneurs through education, accelerators and an investor festival
- Ongoing investment projects within SSNE where investment opportunities are analysed and marketed
- Updating infrastructure analysis in Northeast Iceland, [invest.northeast.is](http://invest.northeast.is)



# Thriving communities

The goal is for the region to have strong and tolerant communities with a vibrant cultural life.

## Emphases

- Develop community centres by using diverse housing as meeting places to engage diverse groups
- Support for various public health projects, e.g., projects that connect nature, exercise and outdoor activities
- Support diverse cultural events and artistic creation throughout the region
- Support events that promote the participation of diverse groups
- Support innovation in health and well-being fields

## Examples of projects

- Continued development of a youth parliament that strengthens democracy and empowers young people
- Continued support for children's cultural projects
- Promote diverse events and projects for newcomers in the area, e.g. through the Multicultural Council of Northeast Iceland
- Cultural community of Northeast Iceland in collaboration with the municipalities



# Environment

**The goal is for Northeast Iceland to become a leading region in environmental and climate issues globally**

## Emphases

- Systematic efforts will be made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within the region
- Increase emphasis on the region's energy transition and improved utilisation of energy resources
- Promote the cycle of organic nutrients
- Nurturing biodiversity
- Support for diverse social projects that reduce waste
- Support for educational projects on environmental and climate issues

## Examples of projects

- An action plan will be prepared linked to the report "Carbon Footprint of Northeast Iceland 2022", which includes measures to improve land use, promote the recycling of organic waste, and promote active travel.
- A joint climate policy will be drawn up and solutions will be examined to make joint climate accounting for Northeast Iceland
- Continued support for the development of a bioenergy plant that extracts value from organic streams
- Energy transition in rural areas – RECET
- LOFTUM – educational project in environmental and climate issues

# Performance indicators

To measure the success of the Action plan, it is necessary to set measurable goals and select performance indicators that are accessible and regularly measured by recognized bodies.

## ECONOMY



- ✓ Employment in the region
- ✓ Educational level in the region
- ✓ Number of newly registered companies in the region

## THRIVING COMMUNITIES



- ✓ Resident survey, view towards happiness
- ✓ Population development in the region
- ✓ Resident survey, view towards life and culture

## ENVIRONMENT



- ✓ Community emission (ETS)
- ✓ Amount of oil burned within the region
- ✓ Amount of unsorted residential waste within the region

# Connection to public policies and programs

Regional plans of action are strategic plans in which local people come together on a vision, goals, priorities for projects and ways to achieve the plan. The regional plan for Northeastern Iceland is not only based on the region's vision but also takes into account public policy and existing plans.

- The new plan's policy areas are based, among other things, on the **Regional Development Plan** and the proposals of a working group on the formulation of an **urban policy**. The main objectives of the Regional Development Plan are the same as the Northeast Iceland Plan of Action; that the area will have thriving communities, with strong basic services that promote freedom of residence.
- In connection with the infrastructure category of the Action Plan, special attention is paid to SSNE's **Transport and Infrastructure Strategy 2023–2033**. It specifies priorities for transport and infrastructure development in the region. Reference is also made to the parliamentary resolution proposal for the **Transport Plan 2024–2038**, which places special emphasis on energy transition and active travel modes that are related to this Action Plan.
- The preparation of the Northeast Iceland Forward Action Plan 2025–2029 takes into account the **UN Sustainable Development Goals**, which were made with the aim of leading to better lives, living conditions and the environment.
- The environmental and climate goals of the Action Plan are based on the **Climate Action Plan** as well as **Iceland's Sustainability Policy until 2030**, which includes projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and ways to increase knowledge and education.
- The government's **Cultural Policy** specifically emphasizes the importance of children and young people's participation in cultural life, as well as cooperation in cultural affairs, and these emphases are reflected in the new Action Plan.
- The economy category of the Action Plan includes, among other things, the **Innovation Policy for 2030: Iceland, the Land of Innovation**, which aims to ensure that innovation is embedded in the country's culture and economy. For innovation to become a cornerstone of development, increased emphasis is needed on innovation in diverse forms.
- When preparing the new Action Plan, Iceland's export strategy, the **Future Strategy for Icelandic Exports**, is also taken into account. The vision of the strategy for Icelandic export sectors is for Iceland to become a well-known and leading country in the field of sustainability.

# The work process of the action plan

The Northeast Iceland Action Plan is the region's plan for how it plans to move forward over the next five years. The action plan is a guiding light in all of SSNE's work

Work on the new Action Plan began in December 2023 when the SSNE board and staff met for a productive working day. The strengths and weaknesses of the area were identified as well as threats and opportunities. Consideration was also given to the results of recent years and the goals set in the previous plan.

Early in 2024, it was decided that a new plan would be prepared by SSNE staff and in broad dialogue with the residents of the region, with the active participation of elected representatives and the board of SSNE. A workshop was held at SSNE's annual congress in 2024 in Þingeyjarsveit where 50 people participated, and there was great satisfaction with the work that resulted in the issues of the new plan, along with a draft of the region's future vision. The draft was also presented to professional councils and focus groups.

13 workshops were held throughout the region in August and September, one of which was held in English via teleconference. Much emphasis was placed on broad participation from different groups in each workshop, which was successful and different voices were heard. It was also possible to participate on Instagram and on the SSNE website by submitting project proposals. The material from the workshops resulted in diverse emphases and projects into the new plan. Over 400 people took part in the work, which was both fun and useful

The consultation forum for the Action Plan was informed and met twice during the period, and participants were encouraged to participate in open workshops throughout the region. Discussions took place at the SSNE Youth Congress in October, and the proposals were useful in the work. At the SSNE autumn congress in October 2024, which was held in Akureyri, a draft of the new Action Plan was presented, and attendees were given the opportunity to review the content of the plan and make suggestions for changes. The plan was then discussed and then confirmed by the board of SSNE. Subsequently, the new Action Plan was submitted to the government's consultation portal and to local authorities for comment.

**After a consultation process through the government's consultation portal, a proposal for a new Northeast Iceland Action Plan was submitted to the board of SSNE. The plan was then presented at the extraordinary congress of SSNE on January 7, 2025, where it was approved unanimously**

# Communication and promotion plan

The success of the Action Plan increases with the participation of residents, the business community, cultural community and elected representatives. It is therefore extremely important to ensure awareness among key target groups about the creation and purpose of the regional Action Plan.

**Emphasis is placed on two target groups:**

**M1** Elected representatives and municipal employees

**M2** Residents, businesses and institutions of Northeast Iceland

## TARGET GROUPS

ACTIONS	TARGET GROUPS		
	M1	M2	
<b>Meetings &amp; Conferences</b>	Presentation and discussion about the Action Plan	x	x
	Discussion about the Action Plan at SSNE Congresses	x	
	Presentation and conversation about the Action Plan during Constituency Week	x	
	Workshops/courses for applications to the Development Fund		x
	Allocation ceremony of the Development Fund	x	x
<b>Advertising</b>	Call for applications to the Development Fund in regional media		x
	Call for applications to the Development Fund on social media		x
	Advertised workshops for applications to the Development Fund		x
	Announced allocation ceremony of the Development Fund	x	x
<b>Social Media</b>	Introductory videos of grant recipients from the Development Fund	x	x
	News on the implementation of the Action Plan	x	x
	Media coverage of projects funded from the Action Plan shared	x	x
	Events related to the emphases of the Action Plan shared	x	x
<b>Homepage and newsletter</b>	News on the number of applications to the Development Fund	x	x
	News on the implementation of the Action Plan	x	x
	Coverage of projects funded from the Action Plan	x	x
	Media coverage of the Action Plan and funded projects shared	x	x
	Coverage of SSNE events related to the Action Plan	x	x
<b>Media</b>	Interview in national media about the implementation of the Action Plan	x	x
	Articles in regional media on the implementation of the Action Plan	x	x



**NORTHEAST ICELAND**  
PLAN OF ACTION