

Strategic Business Plan for Gildeskål 2026–2029

English summary



-We succeed when you succeed-

Introduction

Gildeskål is a coastal municipality in Northern Norway offering a unique combination of strong industrial clusters, access to abundant renewable energy, world-leading aquaculture expertise, and spectacular natural surroundings. This strategic business plan outlines how Gildeskål aims to strengthen local value creation, support growth in key industries, and position the municipality as an attractive location for national and international businesses.

The goal is clear: **to create sustainable growth, new jobs, and an appealing environment for both living and doing business.** The period 2026–2029 builds on strong progress in recent years, including a significant increase in employment, expanding industrial activity, and growing interest from external companies.

Gildeskål offers:

- A stable and profitable seafood industry
- Competitive renewable energy resources
- Attractive sites for industry and development
- Skilled local workforce and high employment rates
- Strong collaboration between public authorities and businesses
- A safe, inclusive, and welcoming community

This plan is a summary of the Norwegian full-version, and outlines the strategic direction, focus areas, and investment opportunities in Gildeskål.

Background and Current Situation

A growing business community

Between 2021 and 2024, employment in Gildeskål increased by nearly 100 people — almost three times the original target. Growth has been particularly strong in:

- Aquaculture and fisheries
- Industry and processing
- Construction and engineering

Gildeskål has had **the strongest employment growth of any municipality in the Salten region.**

Economic structure

The local economy is built on four pillars:

1. **Seafood (Aquaculture & Fisheries)** – the dominant industry, with high profitability and major national players.
2. **Industry & Energy** – supported by excellent access to renewable hydropower.
3. **Regional Services** – construction, logistics, transport, mechanical services.
4. **Tourism** – small but growing, with strong potential linked to coastal nature and cultural heritage.

Key challenges

Although job creation is strong, Gildeskål faces typical rural challenges:

- A declining population, especially among young adults
- Housing shortages for new employees
- Limited retail and tourism turnover
- Vulnerability due to dependence on a few key industries

This plan addresses these issues through targeted measures to improve attractiveness, diversify the economy, and strengthen long-term competitiveness.

Strategic Priorities 2026–2029

To ensure sustainable growth, Gildeskål will focus on **four strategic areas** that together create the foundation for a modern, resilient, and internationally competitive business community.

1) Public Facilitation (Forvaltning)

Creating predictable, efficient, and professional framework conditions for businesses.

Key responsibilities include:

- Fast and fair processing of building and planning applications
- Development of business areas and industrial sites
- Infrastructure enhancement (roads, digital access, energy, water)
- Municipal services supporting business growth
- Active use of procurement strategies to support local industry

Goal:

A municipality that is easy to work with, efficient, and supportive of industrial growth.

2) Business Advisory Services (Næringsrådgivning)

Delivered mainly by **Sjøfossen Næringsutvikling (SNU)**, the local business development company.

Services offered:

- First-line assistance for investors, entrepreneurs, and companies
- Business planning, funding guidance, and project support
- Access to local networks and partners
- Competence development (courses, workshops, seminars)
- Management of the Gildeskål Business Fund (grants for innovation and growth)

Goal:

A strong, accessible support system that makes it easy to start, grow, and develop businesses in Gildeskål.

3) Innovation & New Development (Innovasjon)

SNU plays an active role in initiating projects and stimulating new industry.

Key tasks:

- Launching and leading development projects
- Attracting new companies and investments
- Building networks and strengthening collaboration across the region
- Strategic investments in local companies
- Supporting innovation within key industries: seafood, tourism, and green energy

Goal:

A business ecosystem that encourages innovation, collaboration, and future-oriented development.

4) “Living in Gildeskål” – Attractiveness & Community Development (Bosted Gildeskål)

Economic development and population growth go hand in hand.

Initiatives include:

- Residential site development
- Improved local services (schools, childcare, health services)

- Activities and meeting places for families, youth, and newcomers
- Stronger visibility and branding of Gildeskål as a place to live
- Collaboration with businesses on recruitment and integration

Goal:

A vibrant community that attracts and retains residents and skilled workers.

Vision and Goals

Vision

“We succeed when you succeed.”

Businesses thrive when the municipality provides the right conditions — and the community thrives when businesses grow.

Main Employment Target

50 new jobs by 2029.

Effect Goals

- Increased value creation and innovation
- Stronger collaboration between stakeholders
- Stabilizing or increasing population
- Higher satisfaction among companies with municipal services
- Stronger branding and reputation of Gildeskål as a business location

Key Strategic Industries

Gildeskål will invest particularly in three sectors with strong competitive advantages and high global relevance:

1. Seafood Industry (Aquaculture & Fisheries)

Gildeskål is part of Norway’s world-leading aquaculture sector.

Local advantages include:

- Excellent natural conditions
- Deep experience and strong competence

- Access to harbor infrastructure and logistics
- Production of high-value protein with global demand

This industry drives large parts of the local economy and provides major opportunities for international partners.

2. Tourism & Experience Industry

Although small today, tourism in Gildeskål has significant growth potential.

Assets include:

- Dramatic coastal landscapes
- Northern Lights and Arctic experiences
- Cultural heritage and historical sites
- Hiking, fishing, kayaking, and mountain terrain

The municipality will align its work with the regional **Masterplan for Tourism in Salten**, positioning Gildeskål for sustainable and experience-based tourism development.

3. Energy-Intensive and Green Industry

Gildeskål offers:

- Access to large volumes of renewable hydropower
- Competitive electricity prices
- Ready-made industrial infrastructure
- Political interest in green transformation

This makes the municipality an ideal location for:

- Data centers
- Battery-related industry
- Green manufacturing
- Technology production
- Circular economy projects

Organisation and Cooperation

Gildeskål's development model is built on strong collaboration between:

- **Gildeskål Municipality**
- **Sjøfossen Næringsutvikling (SNU)**
- **Local businesses and Gildeskål Business Forum**
- **Residents and communities**

Cooperation structures include:

- Bi-monthly coordination meetings
- Joint annual reporting to the municipal council
- Shared project arenas for specific initiatives
- Business surveys and stakeholder workshops

Implementation, Resources & Reporting

Resources

- Annual municipal funding for business development
- Business grants through the Gildeskål Business Fund
- Opportunity for public co-financing (Innovation Norway, County Government, etc.)
- SNU staffing: currently 2 full-time positions, with potential expansion

Reporting

- Annual business development report to the municipal council
- Annual publication of "Indeks Gildeskål" (business analytics)
- Monitoring of employment, industry performance, and satisfaction indicators
- Continuous revision to ensure alignment with market changes

Conclusion: Why Choose Gildeskål?

For international companies seeking an attractive location in Norway, Gildeskål offers a rare combination of:

- ✓ Renewable energy capacity
- ✓ Strong and profitable seafood sector
- ✓ Industrial sites ready for development
- ✓ Supportive public administration
- ✓ Dedicated business development assistance
- ✓ Skilled workforce with high employment levels
- ✓ Unique nature and high quality of life

Gildeskål is a place where businesses can grow — sustainably, profitably, and in close collaboration with an engaged local community.

