VILLAGE HOSTS

Open School for Village Hosts

Handbook

Table of contents

1. Introduction

1.1 About the Handbook

The 'Open School for Village Hosts' Handbook is a legacy document designed to encapsulate the project's essence, methodologies, and impacts. It provides essential tools, methodologies, and approaches that have been tested and refined during the 'Open School for Village Hosts' project. The handbook offers a practical perspective on community building, rural economies, and social innovation. It is a testament to the importance of developing competencies and training programs that bolster rural development. It aims to be a reference point for creating a network of Village Hosts across Europe. This handbook is not just a compilation of tools and methodologies that have been proven effective during the project; it is a testament to the transformative power of community building, rural economies, and social innovation. It is a culmination of collective knowledge, experiences, and insights.

How and When to Use It

Handbook's primary aim is to guide those aspiring to become Village Hosts or training-related competencies and for organisations, NGOs, and businesses that wish to understand, apply, and integrate the training elements into their contexts. This publication especially benefits those who aim to revive small villages and seek innovative solutions to address rural communities' challenges. Whether you're a budding Village Host, a community leader, or an organisation aiming to make a difference in rural areas, this format provides insights and methodologies that can be applied in various contexts.

The handbook aims to:
- **Educate**. Provide an educational perspective on community building, rural economies, and social innovation.

- **Inspire**. Serve as a social document emphasising the importance of rural development and training programs supporting it.
- **Guide**. Offer guidance to future Village Hosts and trainers, summarising the essential tips, tools, methodologies, and approaches validated through the project.

What It Is and What It Is Not
The handbook is:

- A guide with tips, definitions, tools, methodologies, and approaches of the 'Open School for Village Hosts' project.
- A legacy document and a reflection of the project's impacts and its significance in promoting rural development.

The handbook is not:

- A one-size-fits-all solution. While it provides guidance, it encourages adaptation based on specific contexts and needs.
- A static document. It is expected to evolve as new methodologies emerge and the landscape of rural development changes.
- Merely theoretical. It emphasises practical application and real-world impact, urging readers to implement and adapt the approach in their communities.

1.2 About the Project

The Open School for Village Hosts (OSVH) project is an initiative that seeks to rejuvenate and revitalise small villages across Europe. The project recognises these communities' unique challenges and opportunities. It aims to be a guide and a driving force for positive change. It is an initiative to revitalise rural areas by introducing new social, economic, and ecological dynamics. The project recognises the potential of these villages to offer unique experiences, projects and service or product models.

Purpose, Vision and Goals

The OSVH project emerged from a deep understanding of the challenges faced by smaller villages, particularly those with populations under 5,000. Such villages often confront the harsh realities of depopulation, limited resources, and economic stagnation. However, amidst these challenges, there are glimmers of hope and pockets of innovation. The OSVH project was conceived to amplify these positive signals, laying the groundwork for a 'Rural Renaissance'. This renaissance envisions rural areas that are vibrant, sustainable, and forward-looking. The project aims to halt and reverse the decline, creating thriving communities attractive to residents and visitors. The vision is one of empowered villages, where local tangible and intangible resources are harnessed effectively, and every individual has a role in shaping the community's future.

What is the Open School

The Open School is not an educational institution; it's a movement. It offers tools and practical approaches tailored to the needs of Village Hosts based on the competency framework. The Open School emphasises experiential learning, where Village Hosts can apply their knowledge in real-world contexts. Also, the 'school' serves as a hub, connecting Village Hosts from different communities, facilitating the exchange of ideas, and fostering a sense of fellowship and shared purpose.

The 'Open School for Village Hosts' is not based on a standard education model. The project recognises the uniqueness of each village. It points to a range of competencies, allowing Village Hosts to select the ones that best suit their needs.

Project Approach and Results

The 'Living Labs' methodology underpins the OSVH project. This approach is inherently user-centric and research-driven, promoting iterative development and continuous feedback. By embedding the project in real-life contexts, the Living Labs

methodology ensures that solutions are innovative but also practical and sustainable. This approach fosters co-creation, where community members actively participate in the project, contributing their insights, expertise, and perspectives.

Outside of the set of tools and competency framework, the project's tangible results are a manifesto advocating for the role of Village Hosts and this handbook. Additionally, the project provides an online Collaboration Platform that collects stories, provides tools, and fosters a knowledge exchange community.

Ethics and Use License

All materials and resources developed as part of the project are open-sourced, ensuring that they are accessible to all and can be adapted to different contexts. This commitment to openness and collaboration is a testament to the project's ethos, which values knowledge-sharing, community empowerment, and collective growth.

1.3 Who is the Village Host

At the heart of the OSVH project is the figure of the 'Village Host.' This individual is deeply embedded in the community and serves as a linchpin, connecting various stakeholders and driving community initiatives. The Village Host is not just a passive observer but an active participant, identifying opportunities, fostering collaboration, and spearheading transformative projects. They are the community's champion, advocating for its needs, celebrating its successes, and addressing its challenges.

Imagine Anna, a young woman who returned to her childhood village after years in the city. She sees the potential in her community and steps into the role of Village Host, leveraging her urban experiences and local knowledge to bridge gaps and

initiate projects. Or consider Jakub, a retired teacher who has always been active in community affairs. As a Village Host, he uses his vast network and deep understanding of the community to bring people together and drive change.

The Village Host professional figure plays a crucial role in this transformation. Village Hosts act as connectors, identifying and linking assets that might already exist within a community but remain underutilised or isolated. These assets range from people, places, and buildings to skills and knowledge. By creating these connections, Village Hosts can develop new services supported by innovative business models, such as remote working, co-housing, platform co-operatives, positive-impact tourism, nature reconnection, adventure sports, farm-shares, learning journeys, wellness retreats, work vacations, heritage trails, and much, much more. The role of a Village Host is multifaceted. While they may often require 'hard' skills like digital proficiency and business planning, their most valuable attributes often lie in the 'soft' skills domain. As collaboration experts, their ability to host, convene, facilitate, animate, and coordinate is paramount.

The project acknowledges that while the term 'Village Host' might be relatively new, the essence of the role is not. Local pioneers, social innovators, and enterprising local officials have performed similar tasks under different designations. The urgency of this role becomes evident when considering the decline of small villages across various European countries. For instance, Italy has declined in 5,500 small villages, Spain in 3,500, and Serbia in 4,700.

2. Background and Context

2.1 The Concept of Village Hosting

Across the European Union, many countries grapple with the challenge of rural depopulation. Once bustling with activity, villages now face the risk of becoming desolate. In the face of rural depopulation and economic challenges, the emergence of Village Hosting presents an approach to community revitalisation across European villages.

Central to this initiative are the Village Hosts, critical agents in reinvigorating local engagement and economic activities. This role is inherently interdisciplinary, demanding a harmonious blend of soft skills such as adaptiveness, proactiveness, and, most importantly, the art of hosting. These individuals can breathe life back into these small villages, enhancing their appeal as places to live, visit, and invest. Their role is similar to a form of social infrastructure, a connective tissue that enables diverse stakeholders to collaborate seamlessly. Through their efforts, local, context-specific solutions emerge—solutions that resonate with the community and are embraced by its members.

Lastly, the concept of Village Hosting aligns harmoniously with global aspirations. It resonates with the priorities set forth by the Erasmus+ Program. It builds on the principles of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Inner Development Goals (INGs). Whether championing good health, promoting economic growth, ensuring gender balance, or advocating for sustainable communities and climate action, Village Hosting catalyses community development, social innovation, and revitalising disadvantaged rural areas.

2.2 Value of the Village Hosts and How to Work Together

The Village Host project will enhance your rural community life and build on its potential. It supports the growth of local businesses, preserves cherished traditions, strengthens neighbourhood bonds, and promotes environmental care. Who may benefit from the project? The spectrum of beneficiaries and stakeholders of Village Hosting is vast. It spans Village Hosts, trainers, village citizens, local communities, NGOs, municipalities, small and medium enterprises, and local action groups. Each plays a pivotal role in the community development. Here's what this project may bring to your community:

- **Boosting Local Economy**. Village Hosts assist in launching new local ventures and generating jobs. They discover innovative income avenues beneficial for your village.
- **Preserving Local Culture**. They champion local crafts, narratives, and festivals, ensuring your heritage remains vibrant and inviting others to appreciate your unique story.
- **Uniting the Community**. Village Hosts ensure everyone's voice is heard in communal decisions. They facilitate collaboration on significant initiatives.
- **Protecting the Environment**. They advocate for practices safeguarding your natural surroundings, like conserving local water sources, forests, and wildlife.

How To Identify a Village Host Among You

Village Hosts might be your friends, neighbours or other local community members committed to positive change. They're recognisable through certain traits:

- **They Lead Initiatives.** These individuals spearhead projects, such as community-based activities or local events.
- **Innovators at Heart.** Village Hosts devise clever solutions to longstanding issues.
- **Community Collaborators** unite various groups—schools, businesses, clubs—towards communal goals.

- **Guardians of Nature**. Their conversations often revolve around sustainable living and environmental protection.

Collaborating with a Village Host

Partnering with a Village Host can lead to transformative community achievements.

Here's how you can contribute:

- **Participate**. If they're orchestrating an endeavour, offer your assistance. Every contribution, no matter how small, counts.
- **Communicate**. Share your vision for enhancing your village. They're open to diverse perspectives and ideas.
- **Offer Support.** Whether it's time, resources, or spreading the word about community efforts, your involvement is invaluable.
- **Expand the Network.** If you know individuals or groups who can contribute, introduce them to your Village Host. The broader your collective resources, the more impactful your initiatives.

2.3 Social Innovation in Rural Development

Social innovation is a transformative force that can reshape rural landscapes and breathe new life into communities grappling with challenges such as depopulation, economic stagnation, and limited access to essential services. The OSVH project recognises the pivotal role of social innovation in driving positive change in rural areas. It aims to harness its power to revitalise villages across Europe.

Often perceived as static entities, villages can become dynamic centres of change. They can serve as playgrounds for interdisciplinary, socially innovative communities to experiment and explore strategies that ensure the prosperity and well-being of rural inhabitants. The project's bottom-up approach is designed to activate communities, harness collective intelligence, and

devise solutions that cater to the needs of all stakeholders. This inclusive methodology ensures that policymakers and citizens have an equal voice in shaping the future of their villages.

In the OSVH project, social innovation is not just a buzzword but a tangible tool that can be harnessed to transform rural communities. By focusing on the intersection of social and ecological systems, the project aims to identify and capitalise on opportunities for innovation. The project's emphasis on social innovation is evident in its commitment to inspiring and educating proactive village hosts. These individuals are envisioned as leaders who will spearhead initiatives in rural areas, thereby contributing to the evolution of new directions in the field of social innovation in Europe. This is especially pertinent for regions grappling with the challenges of rural exodus.

The recent global events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, have further underscored the need for innovative approaches in rural areas. Villages have been reimagined as spaces that offer easier social distancing, abundant natural surroundings, and conducive environments for remote work. This changing perception presents an opportunity to develop new, positive strategies for rural revitalisation.

Site-specific social innovation stands at the forefront of rural development. It emphasises the importance of understanding and respecting the heritage of the hosting community while also recognising the role of active citizen participation and engagement in fostering social innovation. Keeping the balance between preserving traditions and embracing innovation has been a pivotal aspect of this approach.

2.4 The Role of Community Building in Rural Economies

Community building stands as a cornerstone in the revitalisation and sustainable growth of rural economies, promising rejuvenation and sustainable development. The essence of community building lies in its ability to foster connections, nurture collaborations, and cultivate a sense of belonging among residents. Opportunities are identified through these connections, local actors are united, and impactful projects are initiated. The presence of skilled individuals, such as the Village Hosts, plays a pivotal role in this process.

Community building extends beyond infrastructural or economic development and fosters an environment where novel solutions to longstanding challenges can emerge. By prioritising community-based initiatives, villages can witness a resurgence in their cultural, economic, and social fabric. One of the standout features of community building is its emphasis on co-creation. The focus on collaborative efforts and co-creation with citizens, organisations, and policymakers ensures that the solutions and initiatives that emerge are innovative and resonate deeply with the community's needs and aspirations.

Moreover, community building champions the cause of knowledge sharing and mutual learning. Such interactions are fertile grounds for exchanging ideas, fostering innovation, and promoting best practices. Community is about forging connections, nurturing collaborations, and cultivating a sense of belonging. It's about recognising every individual's value and harnessing the community's collective strength to chart a path of sustainable growth and development.

Encouraging Continuous Learning and Adaptation

The dynamic nature of challenges in rural areas necessitates continuous learning and adaptation. While providing a robust framework, the project also underscores the importance of flexibility and responsiveness to the evolving needs of communities. The success of the Open School for Village Hosts project lies in its potential to inspire and guide future initiatives. The collaborative spirit, the emphasis on co-creation, and the focus on sustainable solutions form the bedrock of this project.

3. Manifesto of the Village Hosts

Whole Manifesto document can be accessed here: https://www.villagehosts.eu/manifesto/

The Open School Village Hosts Manifesto is a foundational document that articulates the core principles, mission, and vision of Village Hosts. It serves as a guiding light, emphasising the commitment to enhancing community well-being, empowering residents, and fostering active participation in decision-making processes. The Manifesto underscores the transformative role of Village Hosts in initiating activities, driving collaboration, and leading sustainable change within local ecosystems. It is recognised as a first edition, open to evolution and adaptation as the movement and its needs develop. This flexibility ensures that the Manifesto remains relevant and responsive to the changing dynamics of rural communities and the evolving role of Village Hosts.

How and When to Use It

The OSVH Manifesto is not just a statement of intent but a practical guide for action. Village Hosts and community stakeholders should use the Manifesto as a roadmap for implementing community-driven initiatives. It outlines the steps for collaborative engagement, from creating a shared vision to establishing guiding principles that reflect community values. Continuous learning, knowledge exchange, and inclusive governance are promoted as mechanisms for achieving holistic community outcomes.

The OSVH Manifesto is applicable in various stages of community development projects. It is particularly relevant during the planning phase, where a shared vision is vital, and during the execution phase, where collaboration, inclusivity, and sustainability principles must be at the forefront. The Manifesto is also a tool for reflection, helping communities assess their progress and re-align their strategies with core values as necessary.

Additionally, the Manifesto is crucial in articulating the emerging concept or sentiment that may not yet be clearly defined as village hosting. It helps communities and individuals recognise and express their efforts, saying, 'Yes, this is what we are doing' or 'This is what we aspire to do.' As a communication tool, the Manifesto aids in sharing the values of village hosting with those who are not yet familiar with the concept, helping them see the potential without the need for persuasion. It serves as a bridge, connecting the essence of village hosting with broader community aspirations and goals.

3.1 The Mission of Village Hosts

The mission of Village Hosts is deeply rooted in enhancing the well-being of residents and ecosystems. They are change-makers who empower communities by fostering active participation and leadership in decision-making processes. By connecting assets within communities, such as people, places, and skills, Village Hosts ignite a transformative movement that prioritises holistic, sustainable outcomes for rural areas. The manifesto introduces the following 8 principles:

1. **The opportunity.** Dissatisfaction with gentrified urban centres and mainstream activities started this trend before the COVID-19 crisis, which increased it further. But new projects, livelihoods, and connections are sprouting up among Europe's many small villages.

2. **Mission**. The mission of Village Hosts is to enhance the well-being of residents and ecosystems. Village Hosts empower communities and foster active participation in decision-making processes that shape their lives.

3. **The Village Hosts, a new professional figure.** Village Hosts seek out and connect assets that may already exist in a community – but are unknown or isolated: people, places, buildings, and skills.

4. **Lived stories of pioneering Village Hosts.** Village Hosts can be the roots of our weakened rural soils and communities, regenerating economies, protecting ecosystems and strengthening communities.

5. **The impact of Village Hosts.** A Village Host's role will impact the local ecosystem by creating a more equitable, sustainable, thriving rural environment, including economic development, cultural preservation and community empowerment.

6. **Collaboration within the local ecosystem.** The Hosts will bring interventions into the existing ecosystem, initiating activities, motivating others, suggesting ideas and solutions, and taking leadership or managing positions.

7. **Spread of the Village Hosts seeds.** The Village Hosts can galvanise support and create collective efforts to address the needs of their community. Every village has the power to make a difference by recognising their potential and joining hands with others.

8. **Implement a Village Host in your community**. Village Hosting initiatives often spring from individual actions. Yet, they inevitably expand to local physical communities and connect with global online communities.

4. Competence Framework of the Village Hosts

Whole Competency Framework document can be accessed here: https://www.villagehosts.eu/competencies/

The framework outlines the necessary competencies for Village Hosts. The Competency Framework is a structured guide for individuals operating as Village Hosts and their trainers. It is designed to support improving living standards in small villages and rural areas by identifying essential skills and competencies for sustainable development and community service.

Beyond being a framework for developing the OSVH Training Program, the Village Host Competency Framework contributes to a larger goal of sustainable rural development. It is about practical application and the real-world impact of acquired skills and knowledge. Village Hosts, through their work, contribute to a practical approach to community development, focusing on tangible improvements and sustainable practices.

The creation of this framework was based on the Triple Design process, which involves defining, designing, and delivering. This approach was chosen to ensure the framework adequately addresses rural communities' real needs and challenges. The framework aligns with established European competence frameworks, ensuring its relevance and applicability. It also introduces a progression concept, where Village Hosts can advance from basic to expert levels, providing a pathway for continuous learning and improvement within the Training Programme.

How and When to Use It

As a Village Host, your role is pivotal in harnessing selected competencies to initiate positive changes within your community. Here's how you can integrate these skills:

- **Community Assessment.** Use your competencies to evaluate your village's strengths, needs, and opportunities. Identify areas where specific competencies can impact the most, such as sustainable tourism, local entrepreneurship, or cultural preservation.
- **Project Initiation.** Leverage your skills to start projects that address community needs. For instance, apply social innovation techniques to launch initiatives that solve local issues or use design thinking to develop new community spaces.
- **Resource Mobilization.** Utilise your network and knowledge to gather resources. This could involve organising community funding for local ventures or connecting with external organisations for support and collaboration.
- **Skill Sharing.** Host workshops or community meetings to transfer your knowledge to others. Educating residents about the competencies you've gained through OSVH can empower them to take on active roles in community development.

Key Competencies and Their Applications

Within the framework, five major competency areas are identified, encompassing various fields such as rural development, community building, and social innovation. These practical competencies focus on actions Village Hosts can take:

- Encourage responsible tourism and reconnect people with nature.
- Support local enterprises, promoting the production and marketing of local goods and services.
- Connect different assets within a community, including people, locations, infrastructure, businesses, and skills.
- Enable collaboration among a wide range of partners and stakeholders.

Each competency area includes specific learning outcomes, providing Village Hosts with practical skills and knowledge they can apply directly.

4.1 List of Competencies

As a result, the following five competence areas identified in this Competence Framework will contribute to the design and structuring of the modules of the Training Program of the Open School for Village Hosts (PR2):

1. Visioning and mapping opportunities (competence area (CA) 1)
2. Map actors and resources (competence area (CA) 2)
3. Storying the place (competence area (CA) 3)
4. Make service prototypes & Curate activities and outcomes (competence area (CA) 4)
5. Assemble cooperation platforms & new business models. (competence area (CA) 5)

Within the above-named competence areas, the following nine competencies are regarded as crucial to Village Hosts bearing in mind design process and methodologies:

1. Innovative & Reflective Thinking
2. Ability to act in ambiguous environments
3. Benchmarking & Evaluation methodology
4. Communication & Networking
5. Co-designing & Co-creation

6. Presentation & Digital communication
7. Product & Service system innovation
8. Planet & Human-centric service
9. Entrepreneurship (i.e. Sales / Marketing / Fundraising)

Following competencies are redefined as learning outcomes that Village Hosts will be able to apply in their activities after taking and individual learning paths (levels of learning progression):

- Able to make reasoned & informed decisions (CA1)
- Able to apply analytical design mindset and design process (CA1)
- Understanding of inter and cross-cultural diversity (CA1)
- Able to maintain and to sustain relationships with local community & partners (CA2)
- Able to engage with people and organisations (CA2)
- Skilful to organise community & civic participation (CA2)
- Able to resolve conflicts (CA2)
- Able to take leadership & coordination (CA2)
- Skilled at outsourcing & delegating responsibility, tasks (CA2)
- Skilled at communicate via storytelling and placemaking (CA3)
- Able to understand methodology of product development, experience & service design (CA4)
- Able to sense visual aesthetics (CA4)
- Able to apply appropriate design methods to design user experience (CA4)
- Able to define funding opportunities (CA5)

- Competent to apply diverse fundraising strategies (CA5)
- Able to apply appropriate business model (CA5)
- Knowledgeable to develop and implement appropriate marketing strategies and audience development (CA5)

Above-described selected competencies for Village Hosts are trained as design process and design methodology in the Training Program described in the following chapter of this Handbook.

Key Takeaways

The Village Host Competency Framework establishes a comprehensive set of skills and knowledge areas essential for individuals dedicated to revitalising and supporting rural communities. This framework serves as a foundational guide for Village Hosts, ensuring they are equipped to handle the multifaceted demands of rural development. The following are key takeaways from the Competency Framework research:

- **Diverse Skill Set.** Village Hosts require a blend of competencies in cultural preservation, economic development, and social innovation to effectively support and transform rural areas.
- **Personalised Approach.** The framework recognises the unique characteristics of each village, advocating for a customised application of competencies based on individual community needs.
- **Continuous Learning.** The framework emphasises the importance of adaptability and growth. It continually encourages Village Hosts to refine their skills and knowledge through various learning opportunities.
- **Community Integration.** Competencies extend beyond academic knowledge, encompassing the ability to engage with, mobilise, and integrate into local communities for sustainable development.
- **Alignment with European Standards.** The competencies are aligned with broader European frameworks, ensuring a standardised yet flexible approach to rural development across different regions.

5. About The Training Program

The Purpose

The OSVH Training Program is a place where knowledge meets practical application, a path designed for enthusiastic trainers, Village Hosts, and community members. It is an educational and developmental initiative designed to empower individuals - potential and current Village Hosts - with the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to facilitate community growth, drive social innovation, and contribute to the economic revitalisation of rural areas. Whether you're guiding other village hosts towards success, directly applying these skills yourself, or you're part of the community supporting this ecosystem, this program is your companion. The OSVH Training Program serves as a learning platform and a springboard for action, providing the tools, knowledge, and support network to catalyse long-term positive change in rural communities.

The Training Program was developed to reach the following objectives:

Addressing Depopulation in Rural Areas

Many villages across Europe, especially those with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants, face the challenge of depopulation. However, there are signals of a positive shift. Numerous social and rural enterprises are emerging, creating livelihoods and fostering a positive social impact. This phenomenon termed the 'Rural Renaissance,' is rooted in resource mapping. The potential of rural areas is amplified by identifying and analysing existing resources, from people to natural assets.

Enhancing Rural Potential Through Training

Training programs are pivotal in this transformation. They equip individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to activate rural regions, benefiting communities and improving livelihoods. These programs enhance rural areas' social, cultural, natural, and economic potential by focusing on resource mapping.

Supporting Existing Initiatives

While the aim is to create new opportunities for rural development, these training programs also bolster existing initiatives. They provide a structured approach, ensuring efforts are not duplicated, and resources are optimally utilised.

A Holistic Approach to Rural Development

Training programs emphasise a holistic approach, focusing on economic development and social and cultural revitalisation. They promote community building, sustainability, and innovation, ensuring that rural areas are equipped to face modern challenges.

The Long-Term Impact

The benefits of such training programs lay the foundation for sustained growth, ensuring that rural areas remain vibrant and resilient in changing dynamics. These programs ensure the long-term vitality of rural regions by equipping individuals with the skills to understand and manage rural processes, communities, and business models.

5.1 The Training Program - How to Use It as a Village Host

How and When to Use It

In the program, we provide tools and methods to deploy to enhance your projects, engage with your community, and drive sustainable development in your locality. The training program materials, available at OSVH Platform and described in this handbook, are your playbook. Use these tools to plan, execute, and evaluate your initiatives. Apply them to real-world scenarios you face within your community projects.

Tools, frameworks and tips introduced in the training program modules form the foundation to support you in your community-based project work. Below are the potential benefits of using them and how they might help you at different project phases:

- **Identify Needs and Opportunities.** Start by assessing the current status of your village or community project. What are the needs, challenges, or untapped opportunities? Use the training materials to perform a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) to understand your starting point clearly. This assessment is crucial as it informs when and how different tools and strategies should be applied for maximum impact.
- **Project Planning and Development.** Once you've identified the needs and potential of your community, it's time to start planning. Use tools like the Business Model Canvas or the 3P sustainability canvas to outline your project's structure, objectives, and sustainability measures. These frameworks help you organise your thoughts, set attainable goals, and consider your initiative's financial and operational aspects.
- **Community Engagement and Collaboration.** Your project will thrive with the community's support and involvement. Utilise methods introduced in the training, such as stakeholder mapping, to identify key community members and

stakeholders who could contribute to or benefit from the project. Tools like Assemble Cooperation platforms foster collaboration, sharing ideas, and gathering feedback.

- **Implementation Phase.** This is where your project comes to life. Depending on your specific initiative, this could involve setting up a local event, launching a cooperative business, starting a tourism service, or other activities. Throughout this phase, refer to your training materials for guidance on execution strategies, monitoring progress, and adapting to challenges. Remember, the case studies from your training are not just stories but learning experiences detailing practical approaches and solutions.

- **Evaluation and Adaptation.** After running your project for some time, use the training methods to evaluate its success and areas where improvement is needed. Self-evaluation questions and feedback tools are invaluable in this process, helping you to reflect on outcomes and gather insights from all participants and stakeholders involved. The landscape of community work and entrepreneurship is ever-evolving. Use this content as a living resource to revisit and build upon your knowledge and strategies.

- **Continuous Learning and Scaling Up.** Your journey doesn't end after one project. Use what you've learned to adapt and grow continuously. Whether expanding your current project or starting a new one, the training materials serve as a perennial resource. Stay connected with the Village Host platform and fellow hosts to exchange experiences, insights, and support.

5.2 The Training Program - How to Use It as a Trainer

How and When to Use It

As a trainer, you are the bridge between knowledge and application, theory and practice. Your role involves educating or instructing, inspiring, empowering and building agency. The training materials summarised in the following Handbook chapters are

comprehensive resources, and knowing how and when to utilise them can significantly enhance the learning experience and the subsequent impact on community projects. Below are key principles that underpin the effective use of training resources:

Before the Training

- **Pre-Assessment and Customization.** Customise your approach. Not all learners absorb information the same way. Use these materials as a flexible framework to tailor your sessions, addressing the unique needs of your audience. Incorporate local contexts into examples and case studies to make learning relatable and impactful.
- **Assess Needs.** Conduct a needs assessment of your participants before the training sessions. Understand their backgrounds, existing knowledge levels, specific challenges, and what they hope to achieve.
- **Customise Content.** Tailor the training materials to address the identified needs and goals. Highlight relevant tools and methods that offer practical solutions to your learners' challenges.

During the Training

- **Facilitate, Don't Dictate.** Encourage dialogue and participation. Use the materials to spark discussions, group activities, and peer-to-peer learning, ensuring that sessions are interactive and dynamic.
- **Introduce with Context.** When introducing a new tool or method, always provide the background of its development, its objectives, and real-world instances where it has been successfully applied. This approach helps learners grasp the material's practical relevance and potential impact.
- **Interactive Engagement.** Use interactive teaching methods like workshops, role-playing, and group discussions to explore each tool and method. These activities encourage active participation and help solidify understanding.

- **Timely Integration.** Introduce tools and methods progressively, starting with foundational ones and building towards more complex materials as the training progresses. Each session should naturally extend from the previous one, gradually expanding the participants' skill set.

After the Training

- **Reflection and Analysis.** Encourage participants to reflect on these experiences, analyse the outcomes, and discuss them in follow-up sessions. This reflection is crucial for deepening understanding and improving practical application skills.
- **Solicit Feedback.** Regularly gather feedback on the effectiveness of the tools and methods being taught. Understand how they're being received and applied in the real world.
- **Iterate Accordingly.** Use this feedback to adjust your training approach, ensuring the content remains relevant, practical, and impactful.
- **Community of Practice**. If possible, create or integrate into a community of practice, encouraging peer support, knowledge sharing, and collaborative problem-solving among past and present participants.
- **Encourage Exploration.** Inspire learners to use these tools and methods verbatim and adapt them to their unique needs. Innovation should be a key takeaway from the training.

Facilitation Tips

Facilitation requires a delicate balance of numerous skills to guide a group through a learning process, help them reach a consensus, or lead them to achieve a common goal. As a trainer, mastering the principles of good facilitation is essential to creating an engaging, productive, and inspiring environment. Good facilitation empowers participants to think critically, collaborate effectively, and discover solutions independently. Your role is less about teaching and more about creating the optimal environment for learning and growth. Below are crucial principles that form the basis of effective facilitation:

Preparation and Planning

- **Understand the Audience.** Know participants' backgrounds, expectations, and learning styles. Tailor your approach to meet their needs and ensure the content is relevant and relatable.
- **Set Clear Objectives.** Define clear, achievable goals for each session. Ensure all participants agree on these objectives to foster a shared purpose.
- **Organise Materials.** Prepare all necessary materials, tools, and exercises. A smooth flow without unnecessary interruptions for logistical adjustments keeps the focus on learning.

Creating a Safe Learning Environment

- **Establish Ground Rules.** Set a tone of respect, openness, and confidentiality. Encourage equal participation and ensure participants feel safe to express themselves without fear of judgment.
- **Foster Open Communication.** Promote a culture of honest, transparent communication. Encourage questions, feedback, and open dialogue to deepen understanding and learning.
- **Handle Dynamics with Sensitivity.** Be attentive to group dynamics and individual behaviours. Intervene if necessary to address conflicts, disengagement, or dominance in discussions.

Active Facilitation and Engagement

- **Encourage Participation.** Use techniques to ensure everyone has a voice, possibly through round-robin sharing, small group discussions, or direct solicitation of input.
- **Utilize Interactive Methods.** Employ a mix of teaching strategies such as group activities, role-playing, and case studies to cater to different learning preferences and maintain engagement.

- **Be Adaptable.** Be ready to adjust your plan based on the group's energy, comprehension, and discussions. Flexibility allows you to address emerging needs or topics that resonate strongly with participants.
- **Summarize and synthesise.** Help crystallise key points and collective discoveries. Recap progress and learnings, ensuring everyone is on the same page.

Reflection, Feedback and Follow-up.

- **Encourage Self-reflection.** Allocate time for participants to reflect on what they've learned, jot down personal insights, and consider application in their contexts.
- **Provide Constructive Feedback.** Offer thoughtful, constructive feedback to participants, especially following activities or discussions. This guidance can help deepen their understanding and growth.
- **Encourage Community Building.** Suggest or create platforms for participants to continue discussions, share successes, and seek advice from peers.

Experienced-based Learning

Experience-based learning is fundamental to effective training, immersing participants in real-world scenarios and practical exercises that reinforce theoretical knowledge. As a trainer, you can create a dynamic environment where participants learn by doing, significantly enhancing the retention and practical application of new skills and concepts. Below are essential guidelines for facilitating experience-based learning:

- **Hands-On Activities.** Incorporate practical tasks that mirror real-life challenges. Whether through simulations, role-playing, or on-site assignments, these activities allow participants to apply their knowledge in tangible contexts, solidifying learning.
- **Reflection.** Encourage participants to contemplate their experiences. Post-activity discussions or reflective journals can help learners internalise lessons, recognise patterns, and understand consequences.

- **Personal Relevance.** Tailor scenarios or examples based on participants' backgrounds or interests, increasing engagement. Learners who resonate with an experience are more likely to absorb and apply the information outside the classroom.
- **Feedback and Iteration.** Provide constructive criticism and allow participants to redo tasks. Learning is enhanced when individuals can immediately correct mistakes and experiment with different strategies, deepening their understanding through trial and error.
- **Collaborative Learning.** Foster an environment where participants work together on tasks, promoting exchanging ideas, peer learning, and teamwork skills.

Supporting Tools and Documents

Integrating online tools can significantly enhance interactive and collaborative training sessions. Incorporating these tools into your training approach can streamline communication, enhance participant engagement, and provide a structured, interactive environment conducive to effective learning. Here are some practical tools that can be helpful, especially for online sessions or supporting offline workshops with follow-up online communication and activities:

- **Miro**. A versatile digital whiteboard, Miro allows for real-time collaboration, making it perfect for brainstorming, mapping out ideas, or running collaborative workshops and training sessions. Its visual nature and extensive template library can enhance creative participation and engagement from remote locations.
- **Slack**. Beyond a messaging platform, Slack facilitates real-time team communication and collaboration. Trainers can create channels for different topics, integrate them with various productivity apps, share resources, and even conduct quick polls.
- **Zoom**. This video conferencing tool is essential for hosting virtual training sessions, offering features like breakout rooms for group activities, screen sharing for presentations, and recording options for those who want to revisit the session later.

- **Padlet**. An interactive virtual bulletin board, Padlet allows participants to post notes on a shared page. It's excellent for gathering feedback, brainstorming, Q&A sessions, or sharing valuable resources during training sessions.
- **Trello** or **Asana**. For project management and organisation, Asana's or Trello's boards, lists, and cards enable trainers to organise and prioritise training content and tasks collaboratively. It's great for tracking progress, assigning tasks, or managing group projects for trainees.

Practical Documents

Below, we mention the supportive paperwork that may help you maintain clarity, professionalism, and legal integrity in your role as a trainer. While seemingly bureaucratic, these practical documents are safeguards that ensure respectful, lawful, and professional interactions in your training engagements. Even if often not legally required, these documents may help establish responsibilities, expectations, and boundaries between you, the participants, and any involved institutions.

- **Participant Waiver and Release Forms.** These forms are crucial for physical or outdoor activities. Participants acknowledge the potential risks involved in the training activities and release you from liability for any injury or harm, barring negligence. Such a document usually includes a description of training risks, release of liability, medical consent, and emergency contact information.
- **Feedback and Evaluation Forms.** While not legally binding, these documents are crucial for your growth and development as a trainer. They provide structured ways for participants to leave feedback on the training's content, delivery, and impact. Such a document usually includes criteria for rating various aspects of the training, open-ended questions for detailed feedback, personal success stories, and suggestions for improvement.
- **Copyright and Citation Guidelines.** If your training involves third-party content or if you expect participants to create and share content, clear guidelines on copyright and citation practices are essential to avoid plagiarism and respect intellectual

property rights. Such a document usually includes proper citation practices, permissible use of copyrighted material, and consequences of copyright infringement.

- **Privacy Policy.** A privacy policy is mandatory if you collect personal data from participants (like email addresses, employment details, etc.). It explains how you handle, store, and (if applicable) share participants' information, ensuring compliance with data protection laws. Such a document usually includes information collection, usage, protection measures, participants' rights, and cookie usage (if applicable).

6. Training Program - the Content

How and when to use the tools and frameworks described in the training modules?

Understanding the Scope. Before diving in, recognise that these materials are more than just instructions; they are catalysts for transformation. The content you're about to explore has many applications, from fostering social entrepreneurship to revitalising community engagement. Each module, tool, and framework is a building block towards sustainable development and innovation.

Navigating the Content. Each module and activity is structured to build your competency progressively. While jumping to immediately relevant sections is tempting, we recommend a sequential approach for a holistic understanding. However, the modular nature of the content also allows for specific, need-based consultation.

Beyond the Classroom. The learning doesn't stop when the training session ends. For trainers, consider setting practical assignments to encourage learners to implement concepts in real-life scenarios. For Village Hosts and community members, these assignments are opportunities for hands-on experience, testing the feasibility of concepts, and innovating solutions specific to your locale.

Building a Support Network. Encourage ongoing communication and support among the training cohort. Leverage these relationships for collaborative problem-solving, knowledge sharing, and moral support as you apply your training in sometimes challenging and unpredictable environments.

How a Local Workshop Session Could Look Like?

Organising a Village Host training workshop, either onsite or online, is a practical approach to applying theoretical concepts within a community setting. Such workshops simplify complex challenges and turn them into action, providing a direct method for understanding and implementing sustainable rural development strategies.

Below is a structured explanation of conducting such an exemplary 2-4 hour workshop, using content from one of the training modules. This structured, standard approach to the workshop emphasises practical understanding and application, making the theoretical aspects more accessible and manageable.

Preparation Before the Workshop:

- Set clear objectives (e.g., formulating a stakeholder map, initiating a business model canvas).
- Arrange necessary materials, including case studies and collaborative platforms (like Miro for online sessions).
- Share the agenda with participants beforehand, emphasising interactive elements.

Conducting the Workshop:

Introduction (5-15 minutes):

- Outline the workshop's aims.
- Briefly touch on the theoretical aspects.
- Conduct a simple activity to initiate participant interaction.

Exploring the Content (15-30 minutes):

- Explain the module content using practical examples.

- Discuss the importance of a stakeholder map in community projects.

Hands-On Activity (30 min - 2 hours):
- Form small groups (onsite or in break-out rooms online).
- Task: Draft a basic business model canvas for a community-based business idea.
- Tools: Whiteboards, post-it notes, markers, etc.

Sharing and Discussion (20-45 minutes):
- Groups showcase their ideas.
- Facilitate a question-and-answer session, inviting constructive dialogue.

Concluding the Workshop (15 minutes):
- Summarise the main points.
- Reflect on how the session's insights apply to real-world community projects.
- Offer resources for further learning.

After the Workshop:
- Distribute workshop materials or additional resources.
- Request feedback for continuous improvement.

6.1 Module 0. Introduction - Reasoning

The Module 0 content can be accessed through the Village Hosts Community Platform: https://platform.villagehosts.eu/

How and When to Use It

In Module 0 – Reasoning, a key focus is on noticing and understanding the need to pause and re-evaluate our personal narratives and the reasons behind our behaviours and endeavours. This module employs various tools and exercises to understand better our current life phase, intentions, goals, necessary resources, and plans. Practical exercises included in this module are invaluable for grounding users in new situations, aiding them in making informed decisions crucial for personal and professional growth. The learning outcomes of this module are multifaceted.

For Village Hosts, it aims to enhance adaptability and resilience, help avoid cognitive dissonance, and foster a better understanding of one's role in life and the community. It also focuses on improving time management and teamwork skills within the community. For trainers, the module is instrumental in helping users comprehend the reasons behind their stories. It enhances participants' tolerance for ambiguity, increases their sensitivity to uncertainty, and supports them in making informed decisions. This module is foundational for recognising and building our capacities to lead, envision the future, acknowledge our current state, and find creative solutions to present and future challenges. Before learning new skills, it's crucial to understand the reasons behind our stories and to introspectively assess our existing behaviours, attitudes, skills, and knowledge, identifying areas for learning and growth.

Tools and Frameworks

[Wheel of Life](#). This tool invites you to consider essential fields like health, wealth, friendship, career, love, spirituality, family and leisure time. They are all part of everyday life; balance is essential to live fulfilled lives. Results can guide you in paying particular attention to the fields that need improvement or enhancement.

For Village Hosts, the tool is designed to assist in visualising critical aspects of their lives, enabling them to identify and focus on improving or enhancing key areas during specific periods. For Trainers, the approach involves encouraging participants to reflect on the essential fields in their lives for a few moments. Participants should be encouraged to download their results for future comparison if an online tool is used. In cases where a hard copy is used, they should be advised to save it as a reference point, allowing them to track their progress and measure improvements over time. This systematic approach aids both Village Hosts and Trainers in better understanding personal development areas and track growth effectively.

Professional Development Planning Worksheet. This tool helps users understand and set clear goals, with an understanding of their current powers and resources and what they need to acquire to achieve goals, like skills, knowledge, material and nonmaterial resources, and physical and online places where they can seek support.

For Village Hosts, it's important to allocate sufficient time to answer all the worksheet questions thoroughly. This process involves mapping out their strengths and weaknesses, crucial for setting achievable and realistic goals. It also includes assessing their existing resources and identifying additional resources needed to attain these goals. For Trainers, the approach should ensure participants have ample time to complete the worksheet and encourage them to journal their thoughts afterwards. Trainers should guide participants to carefully consider their language when describing their resources and formulating their goals. Additionally,

trainers should prompt participants to reflect on the orientation of their goals, whether they are aimed at avoiding unpleasant situations or geared towards changing attitudes and acquiring new skills, with either short-term or long-term effects. This comprehensive approach helps Village Hosts and Trainers in goal-setting and personal development planning.

Workshop Tips and Instructions

Wheel of Life. Before the first session, invite users to complete the Wheel of Life at their own pace to see where they are now. Ask them to return to the Wheel of Life once or twice during the year, at least once a year. In that way, they will use themselves as benchmarks of progress, not others.

Professional Development Planning Worksheet. Use this tool in 1-on-1 or team sessions if a team has a shared goal. Invite the participant(s) to think about resources and activities they can take to achieve a goal, keeping in mind that their goals need to be clear, realistic and oriented to achievement, not avoidance.

Self-evaluation Questions

Reflective questions for participants to internalise module learnings:
- Am I satisfied with my life and work balance, and what can I improve to feel more balanced?
- How can I visualise and write goals that serve my purpose?
- What is holding me back from achieving my goals?

Key Takeaways

- It is crucial to spend time with yourself and think about the present moment and "As is" state to envision and foresee the future for yourself and your team or community. Be honest and ask for help from peers and community members to support you.
- Learn how to be efficient and effective in setting goals. Try to avoid setting goals that help you avoid unpleasant situations and feelings. Instead, set your intentions on what you can learn to be more flexible and open to new ideas and points of view.
- Be open towards yourself and your community or team members. Lead yourself and your team with compassion, try to look for the bigger picture, and understand the system you are part of.

Recommended supplementary resources for a deep dive:

- Andreas Demetriou, Karin Bakracevic, Reasoning and self-awareness from adolescence to middle age: organisation and development as a function of education https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S104160800800109X
- Daniel Goleman on Focus: The Secret to High Performance and Fulfillment https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTfYv3lEOqM
- Start with why - how great leaders inspire action, Simon Sinek, TEDxPugetSound https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4ZoJKF_VuA

6.2 Module 1.1: Vision and Mapping of Opportunities: Innovative Thinking and Ability to Act in Ambiguity

The Module 1.1 content can be accessed through the Village Hosts Community Platform: https://platform.villagehosts.eu/

How and When to Use It

'Vision and Mapping of Opportunities', which empowers participants to conceptualise and articulate a clear vision and identify potential opportunities within their scope. A Vision can be defined as a forecast of the future on which we have influence. This forecast can be imaginary or well studied, based on available information we have to make a forecast. Participants engage in innovative and reflective thinking exercises, enabling them to navigate ambiguous environments and anticipate various future scenarios. This proactive approach prepares them to adapt strategically to potential changes and uncertainties.

As a trainer, your goal in this module is to facilitate participants in establishing a clear, actionable vision and identifying opportunities by forecasting various future scenarios. Encourage innovative and reflective thinking, crucial for navigating uncertain and ambiguous environments.

Tools and Frameworks

Innovative thinking is a tool that encourages participants to break away from conventional patterns and explore new ideas and solutions. This involves exercises and techniques that stimulate creativity, challenge assumptions, and foster an open-minded

approach to problem-solving. Participating in innovative thinking teaches participants to approach problems differently, leading to more diverse and impactful solutions.

Scenario planning, on the other hand, is a strategic framework that enables participants to anticipate and prepare for various future scenarios. This involves analysing trends, identifying key uncertainties, and developing multiple plausible future contexts. Participants learn to create detailed scenarios that help them visualise how choices and external factors might shape the future. This process not only aids in better understanding potential challenges and opportunities but also equips participants with the ability to adapt their strategies in response to changing circumstances.

Workshop Tips and Instructions

As a trainer, introduce the participants to the 'Scenario Forecast Matrix.' Guide them through its application, emphasising its importance in envisioning diverse future scenarios and aiding decision-making. Use detailed studies on Scenario Planning and sustainable sanitation and water management as references to provide a robust theoretical foundation.

Structure your sessions to blend theoretical discussions with practical exercises. Assign homework for individual reflection and organise peer-to-peer feedback sessions. This comprehensive approach ensures participants can internalise and apply the concepts learned in a real-world context. Encourage active engagement and the practical application of theoretical knowledge, fostering a learning environment that is both reflective and innovative.

Your role as a trainer extends beyond mere instruction; it involves facilitating a space where participants can engage in critical thinking and adaptability. This approach is crucial for navigating uncertain and ambiguous environments, preparing participants to

adapt strategically to potential changes and uncertainties. By fostering an environment of active learning and application, you help participants develop the skills necessary to anticipate and respond to future challenges effectively.

Self-evaluation Questions

Reflective questions for participants to internalise module learnings:

- How has the Scenario Forecast Matrix contributed to your approach to uncertainty?
- How has your perspective on your community's potential changed after this module?
- Can you identify new opportunities that you hadn't considered before?

Key Takeaways

After using the tools and frameworks described in this module, participants should:

- Comprehend and utilise the Scenario Forecast Matrix in their decision-making processes.
- Feel empowered to influence their future, utilising prediction, envisioning, and direction-setting techniques.
- Understand the importance of a clear, shared vision for community projects.

Recommended supplementary resources for a deep dive

- Scenario Building: The 2x2 Matrix Technique
- The Futures Toolkit: Tools for Futures Thinking and Foresight across UK Government (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- Futures Platform | All-in-one platform for actionable foresight

6.3 Module 1.2: Vision and Mapping of Opportunities: Benchmarking and Evaluation

The Module 1.2 content can be accessed through the Village Hosts Community Platform: https://platform.villagehosts.eu/

How and When to Use It
This module focuses on methodologies essential for creativity in new products or services, particularly from cultural, entrepreneurial, and community perspectives. This module is best utilised during the 'develop' phase of the triple design process, where strategic positioning, strategy development, and planning are key. It's ideal for participants who are ideating new products or services and must incorporate various stakeholder insights into their strategies.

As a trainer, you should guide participants through this transformative process, ensuring they engage deeply with strategic positioning, strategy formulation, and comprehensive plan development. This module is particularly valuable when participants must identify and describe the social, environmental, political, technological, and economic context of their project activities and consider the ethical implications of their actions.

Tools and Framework
The module employs several methods to facilitate real-world learning experiences and personalised learning plans. These include context mapping, brainstorming, hands-on activities, individual projects, interviewing, ethnographic studies, reflective discussions, role-playing, storytelling, supplemental reading assignments, timelines, and leveraging community or local resources. Each tool serves a specific purpose: context mapping grounds ideas in reality, brainstorming fosters creativity, hands-on activities provide

tangible experience, and role-playing builds empathy. Storytelling makes theories relatable, and timelines help visualise processes.

The Design Self-Assessment Maturity Matrix is one of the critical tools enabling organisations to assess their design process maturity and focus on product/service design development aspects. This matrix helps categorise information, understand user needs, define product/service criteria, evaluate impact, identify customer service touchpoints, and develop an action plan for design use in the organisation.

Workshop Tips and Instructions

When conducting workshops using this module, follow a structured approach to ensure comprehensive learning:

1. **Study the Context.** Analyse external data to understand economic, political, social, technological, and environmental factors. This helps grasp the interconnected nature of global challenges and how legal frameworks influence business operations.

2. **Know Your Stakeholder(s).** Use user-centred design techniques to create products and services that meet diverse user needs. Examine demographics, migration patterns, cultural shifts, and societal attitudes to gain insight into the factors influencing social, economic, and political systems.

3. **Define What to Develop.** Consider factors like inclusiveness, functionality, ergonomics, usability, and testing of products/services. Define specific criteria or characteristics for each design area's maturity level.

4. **Evaluate the Impact.** Understand global environmental challenges and incorporate sustainable production and consumption practices. Focus on product/service longevity and take responsibility for actions.

5. **Identify User Touchpoints.** Address perceived design value attributes to ensure a positive customer experience. Focus on customer service standards and the user perspective.

6. **Develop an Action Plan.** Use the Design Self-Assessment Maturity Matrix to analyse the use of design in your organisation. Regularly update the matrix to reflect changes in your organisation and industry best practices.

Self-evaluation Questions

Reflective questions for participants to internalise module learnings:

- Have I fully grasped the various contexts impacting my design/community project?
- How have I factored in the ethical implications of my project decisions?
- Did I define my project's clear and achievable objectives, tasks, resources, and quality indicators?

Key Takeaways

After using the tools and frameworks described in this module, participants should:

- Gain a broader view of strategic planning, monitoring, and evaluation skill set within a complete business cycle.
- Increase understanding of inter- and cross-cultural diversity and its design and project management implications.
- Gain the ability to discern and leverage community and user-centric design values for strategic advantages.

Recommended supplementary resources for a deep dive.

- Freimane, Aija, 2020, Perceived Design value. The Socio-economic Impact of Design. Rīga: Art Academy of Latvia.
- Fremane, Aija, 2015,. Design for sustainable Social Well-being. Paradigm shift of Design. Summary of Doctoral thesis, Art Academy of Latvia.
- Movie: 'The Fountainhead', 1949, Directed by King Vidor, based on 'The Fountainhead' by Ayn Rand (1943)

6.4 Module 2.1: Map Actors and Resources: Communication and Networking

The Module 2.1 content can be accessed through the Village Hosts Community Platform: https://platform.villagehosts.eu/

How and When to Use It

This activity incorporates a variety of methods designed to foster real-world learning experiences and personalised learning plans, catering to the diverse needs of participants. Key methods include context mapping, which helps ground ideas in reality, brainstorming for creative ideation, and hands-on activities that provide tangible experience. Individual projects and interviewing techniques are employed for in-depth understanding. At the same time, ethnographic studies and reflective discussions encourage a deeper exploration of topics. Role-playing and storytelling are used to build empathy and make theories more relatable. Timelines are utilised to visualise processes effectively. Supplemental reading assignments expand knowledge, and leveraging community or local resources ensures a practical application of learned skills.

This section focuses on developing practical skills in communication and collaboration, emphasising tools that enhance team alignment and aid in conflict resolution. These tools are intended for direct application in daily interactions and effective project management. Participants are encouraged to reflect on their learning outcomes by considering how they will integrate the Team Canvas approach in future team interactions, assessing the impact of applying Non-violent Communication in their current roles, and re-evaluating past conflicts to understand how these tools could have led to different outcomes. This reflective practice aims to embed the learned skills deeply into the participants' professional repertoire, enhancing their effectiveness in team dynamics and conflict management.

Tools and Framework

The Team Canvas is a useful tool employed at the start of meetings and projects to align project members. It is crucial in clarifying roles, responsibilities, and objectives, contributing to a more organised and efficient team environment. The process is collaborative, with each team member sharing their expectations and contributions. This approach clarifies individual roles and fosters a mutual understanding of the team's collective goals and the contributions required from each member. Templates and guides for implementing the Team Canvas can be found on The Team Canvas website, offering a structured method to apply this tool in various team scenarios.

Non-violent Communication (NVC) is a communication method that emphasises empathy, genuine expression, and empathic listening. It is structured around four key steps: observations, feelings, needs, and requests. This method is designed to help individuals express themselves clearly and listen to others with empathy, leading to more effective and understanding interactions. By practising these steps, team members learn to communicate respectfully and non-confrontational, effectively expressing their needs and making requests. Resources for learning more about the principles and techniques of NVC, such as the book "Nonviolent Communication" and materials from The Center for Nonviolent Communication, provide detailed guidance on applying NVC in various interpersonal situations, thereby enhancing communication and conflict resolution skills.

Workshop Tips and Instructions

The Team Canvas is a helpful tool for building effective team collaboration and alignment. Start by introducing the concept of Team Canvas, explaining its purpose as a framework for understanding team dynamics and setting clear objectives. Guide participants through the different sections of the canvas, such as goals, values, roles, and needs, encouraging open and honest discussion. It's important to ensure that each team member has the opportunity to contribute their thoughts and insights, creating

a comprehensive picture of the team's collective strengths and areas for improvement. Facilitators should emphasise the importance of mutual understanding and shared commitment to the team's goals. Concluding the session, summarise the key agreements and action points, and encourage the team to refer to the canvas regularly to maintain alignment and address any evolving challenges or opportunities.

Implementing Non-violent Communication. Apply NVC in daily interactions, starting with personal conversations. Recognise the links between feelings and needs and use this understanding in complex communication scenarios. If planning a workshop session training on NVC application, then begin with the significance of communication, followed by an introduction to NVC. Utilise interactive exercises focusing on empathetic connection and practice the four-step communication method. Encourage participants to share their thoughts and discuss the application of these skills in real-world scenarios.

Self-evaluation Questions
Reflective questions for participants to internalise module learnings:
- **Review past team interactions.** Identify opportunities where Team Canvas could have improved communication and alignment.
- Recall a recent conflict or difficult conversation. How could the principles of NVC have influenced the outcome?
- **Plan for upcoming discussions or projects.** How will you integrate Team Canvas and NVC to foster more effective communication?

Key Takeaways
After using the tools and frameworks described in this module, participants should:
- Learn practical techniques for establishing and maintaining clear communication within teams.

- Understand strategies for resolving conflicts through empathetic and effective communication.
- Gain competence in utilising tools like Team Canvas and NVC, which are essential for transparent and collaborative project environments.

Recommended supplementary resources for a deep dive

- Bring your team on the same page (no date) Team Canvas. Available at: https://theteamcanvas.com/ (Accessed: 06 December 2023).
- Rosenberg, – Marshall B. (2020) Learn nonviolent communication, PuddleDancer Press. Available at: https://www.nonviolentcommunication.com/learn-nonviolent-communication (Accessed: 06 December 2023).
- Alvarez, L. (no date) The Center for Nonviolent Communication: Home of NVC, Center for Nonviolent Communication. Available at: https://www.cnvc.org/ (Accessed: 06 December 2023).

6.5 Module 2.2: Map Actors and Resources: Co-designing and Co-creation

The Module 2.2 content can be accessed through the Village Hosts Community Platform: https://platform.villagehosts.eu/

How and When to Use It
This module focuses on the practical application of collaborative, participatory, and community-centred design. These methodologies are crucial for community building, allowing members to design solutions and build infrastructure that addresses complex problems collaboratively. The solutions fostered through these approaches encourage community ownership and sustainable development.

Tools and Framework

The "OSVH Co-Design Toolbox for Village Hosts," developed by the Elisava team, is the primary framework introduced in this module. It is designed to facilitate the co-design process, a non-linear approach that involves multiple actors and stakeholders in the ideation, implementation, and assessment of products, services, and systems. The toolbox aims to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, and satisfaction of those involved in Village Hosting initiatives. It is tailored to understand better and prioritise each context's unique aspects, supporting the development of design-based processes from problem analysis to solution ideation, prototype development, and real-world experimentation. The toolbox is structured to assist in organising a Community-Centered Co-Design process, enabling the collaborative development of Village Hosting initiatives with local communities and the broader international community of Village Hosts.

The OSVH Co-Design Toolbox is divided into three sections for comprehensive and structured application. Section A offers a selection of tools for co-designing a Village Hosting initiative. Section B provides tools for organising the co-design process with all stakeholders, as outlined in Section A. Section C presents an example application of the toolbox, demonstrating its practical use. This toolbox represents an evolution of the 'SISCODE Toolbox for Co-Creation Journeys,' initially developed for the Horizon 2020 SISCODE project to facilitate co-creation in science policymaking. The OSVH Toolbox extends and adapts this earlier version to suit the specific needs of Village Hosts. Both toolboxes are designed to incorporate existing tools, such as those found in the '101 Design Methods' book and the 'DIY - Development Impact and You' toolkit, allowing users to organise co-creation processes effectively while choosing tools that best fit their needs.

Workshop Tips and Instructions

Start with understanding the principles of co-design and its role in social innovation. Introduce the concept of Community-Centered Design, which expands upon user-centred principles to encompass the community's broader needs. This

introduction sets the stage for a deeper exploration of how design can be used to address community-wide issues and foster inclusive solutions. Emphasise the importance of considering the entire community as a stakeholder in the design process, ensuring that solutions are effective but also equitable and inclusive.

The practical application of these concepts can be facilitated through Section A of the OSVH Co-Design Toolbox. Guide participants through sessions focusing on real-world problem analysis, solution ideation, prototype development, and testing. These sessions should be interactive and hands-on, encouraging participants to apply the co-design principles in a practical setting. Stress the importance of prototyping and testing in the design process, as these steps are crucial for refining ideas and ensuring they meet the community's needs. Encourage participants to think creatively and collaboratively, fostering an environment where diverse ideas and perspectives are valued and explored.

Another key aspect of the workshop should be the participatory co-creation process, which involves collaborative design with users and communities. Instruct participants about different levels of user engagement and how to effectively manage social interactions within the design process. This includes understanding the dynamics of community involvement and how to facilitate productive and respectful dialogues. Additionally, explore strategies for effectively communicating design results to the community. Discuss the use of online tools for continuous revision and feedback, ensuring that proposed solutions are adaptable and responsive to community feedback. By the end of the workshop, participants should clearly understand how to engage communities in the co-design process and communicate their results in a way that is transparent, inclusive, and conducive to ongoing collaboration.

Self-evaluation Questions
Reflective questions for participants to internalise module learnings:

- Reflect on potential participation levels within your community initiative. What engagement strategies might be most effective?
- Outline a plan for your co-design process. How will you ensure it is inclusive and representative of your community's needs?
- Consider the tools available in the OSVH Co-Design Toolbox. Which would be most beneficial for your specific context, and at what stages of your process would they be most effectively utilised?

Key Takeaways

After using the tools and frameworks described in this module, participants should:

- Understand principles of co-design that involve stakeholders in the holistic design process, enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of solutions.
- Understand different levels of user engagement, each with unique benefits, can be integrated into the co-design process.
- Gain co-designing skills that extend beyond the project, influencing the design process and emerging social interactions.

Recommended supplementary resources for a deep dive

- 'Kumar, Vijay. 2013. 101 Design Methods: A Structured Approach for Driving Innovation in Your Organisation. Hoboken, N.J: Wiley.
- Menichinelli, Massimo, Denise de Spirito, Elena Elizondo Nieva, and Iván Paz. 2023. 'OSVH Co-Design Toolbox for Village Hosts'. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7853080
- Menichinelli, Massimo, Priscilla Ferronato, Diana Pamela Villa Alvarez, and Marion Real. 2019. 'SISCODE Toolbox for Co-Creation Journeys'. SISCODE. https://siscodeproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/toolkit-27092019-1.pdf

6.6 Module 3: Storying of Place

The Module 3 content can be accessed through the Village Hosts Community Platform: https://platform.villagehosts.eu/

How and When to Use It

'Storying of Place' is a practical exploration of social media content creation and strategy specifically tailored for collaborative and open projects. This activity is crucial when you aggregate a community through various communication channels, manage an editorial plan effectively, and understand the significance of creating a robust database. It involves hands-on learning through case studies and active media content creation. It is tailored to enhance audience engagement and refine media production techniques, making it an essential tool for anyone looking to leverage social media for community building and storytelling. It emphasises audience engagement and adept media production techniques.

Tools and Framework

The module introduces two key tools: Content Strategy on Social Media and Creating a Content Template. The Content Strategy on Social Media is designed to teach participants the art of crafting impactful social media narratives, helping them develop a content template tailored to specific channels. This strategy is crucial for building a cohesive and effective social media presence. Creating a Content Template provides a structured approach to consistently communicate your message, ensuring alignment with your project's voice and goals. These tools are instrumental in developing a strong and engaging social media strategy that resonates with your audience.

Workshop Tips and Instructions

When conducting workshops on this module, start with an Introduction to Content Strategy on Social Media. This will help participants understand the foundational principles of creating an effective social media strategy. Next, guide them in Creating a Content Template for a Specific Channel, teaching them how to devise content templates that resonate with their audience and suit their chosen social media platform. Incorporate Exploring Relevant Case Studies to analyse successful instances of digital communication strategies, providing practical insights. Finally, conduct a workshop on How to Tell Stories About Places, engaging participants in practical sessions where storytelling highlights the uniqueness of places. For exemplary use, consider case studies like Grottole's Digital Transformation and the AppARTEngo Festival in Stigliano (Matera), which demonstrate the transformative power of digital communication in community and cultural projects.

Self-evaluation Questions

Reflective questions for participants to internalise module learnings:

- Reflect on the case studies discussed. What strategies were effective, and why?
- How can the principles learned be applied to enhance the digital presence of your community or project?
- Consider your current project. What story do you want to tell, and how can you leverage social media to do this effectively?

Key Takeaways

After using the tools and frameworks described in this module, participants should:

- Understand storytelling as an approach relying on facts and weaving a narrative connecting emotionally with the audience.
- Gain skills in digital communication that are pivotal in transforming local communities and bringing cultural and social projects to the forefront.
- Understand that learning from real-world examples provides invaluable insights that can be adapted to your unique needs.

Recommended supplementary resources for a deep dive

- Desert of the Real – John Thackara. Available at: https://thackara.com/most-read/desert-of-the-real/ (Accessed: 06 December 2023).:
- Italian Stories - Artigianato italiano, visite ai laboratori e turismo culturale. Available at: https://www.italianstories.it/ (Accessed: 06 December 2023).
- Thackara, J. (2005) In the bubble: Designing in a Complex World. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

6.7 Module 4.1: Make Service Prototypes and Curate Activities: Product and Service Innovation

The Module 4.1 content can be accessed through the Village Hosts Community Platform: https://platform.villagehosts.eu/

How and When to Use It

The 'Dream Builder' module focuses on cultivating entrepreneurial competencies, strategic planning, and innovative thinking. It emphasises green practices for sustainable business value propositions, covering product development, service design, and visual aesthetics. This module offers interactive training courses centred on value-driven tools, teaching participants how to launch their sustainable ventures. It provides insights into sustainable business aspects—environmental, social, and economic viewpoints—and guides participants in creating value propositions aligned with local challenges and market needs. By the end of the 4.1 module, participants will master crafting viable business ideas that address market, societal, and environmental demands.

Tools and Frameworks

As global challenges escalate due to population growth, economic crises, and resource depletion, traditional linear business models focusing solely on economic sustainability are proving inadequate. The outdated 'take-make-use-dispose' approach no longer aligns with our sustainable future goals. Emphasising sustainability and the shift towards a circular economy is essential. Sustainability encompasses ecological, social, and economic facets, while circularity prioritises optimising resource cycles. This convergence highlights the necessity of balancing ecology, social equity, and economic viability. Hence, innovative tools and models are designed to create smarter solutions, a focus explored throughout this chapter. This segment constitutes an in-depth exploration of various tools essential for comprehending the fundamental components of crafting innovative product and service systems. It is structured into three pivotal steps:

1. **Sustainable Products & Services.** This section defines sustainability while contextualising the intricate relationship among the environment, society, and economy within sustainable business. Concepts such as TLB (Triple Layer Business Model Canvas), the measurement of sustainability across environmental, societal, and economic contexts, the definition and dimensions of Social Enterprises, and potential strategies (including FAIR TRADE, ECO-FRIENDLY, REUSING - encompassing recycling & repurposing, SHARING - advocating non-ownership, and CRADLE-TO-CRADLE) are covered. Case studies like Apunts, BARCELONA HIDDEN CITY TOURS, RESTAURANTMESLADIS, and the Social Enterprise Soap Brand Created From a Palestinian Refugee Camp - SITTI - are illustrative examples.

2. **Problem & Goal Tree Method.** This segment focuses on addressing local challenges through the lens of sustainable business or within the framework of social enterprises. It explores concepts like MIND MAP, progressing into Problem Tree and Goal methodologies (comprising three essential steps: identification of the main problem, analysis of problem causes - the 'WHY,' and identification of problem effects).

3. **Value Proposition.** This phase revolves around generating value tailored to meet the needs of potential clients or users. It covers the Value Proposition methodology, initially emphasising understanding the target group (users), defining their Jobs to be Done, and identifying their pains and potential gains. Subsequently, it elaborates on defining gain creators and pain relievers to craft products or services that precisely address user needs. The section culminates with a summary using the Golden Circle tool, guiding responses to three pivotal yet straightforward questions regarding your product or service: Why, How, and What.

Workshop Tips and Instructions

As a facilitator in this workshop, you guide participants through a deep understanding of the Dream Builder module within the 4A framework, focusing on entrepreneurial competencies, strategic planning, and innovative thinking in sustainable business practices. Start by setting the context for sustainability, discussing the limitations of traditional linear business models and the need to shift towards sustainable and circular economic practices. Utilise case studies to provide tangible, real-world examples that align with the workshop's goals. These case studies are instrumental in sparking active participation and discussion, allowing participants to see the practical application of theoretical concepts.

In the second part of the workshop, lead participants through structured segments focusing on Sustainable Products and Services, the Problem and Goal Tree Method, and the Value Proposition. Explaining each tool and using examples or case studies for better understanding is crucial. Encourage interactive learning through group activities, mind-mapping exercises, or problem-solving scenarios, enhancing the collaborative learning experience. Stress the importance of applying these tools in real-world scenarios, prompting participants to brainstorm and adapt these concepts to their business contexts or entrepreneurial ideas. Conclude each segment with a summary and reflection period, allowing participants to share insights or challenges. Finally, demonstrate the Golden Circle tool, guiding participants in crafting concise and impactful value propositions.

Self-evaluation Questions

Reflective questions for participants to internalise module learnings:

- Why is shifting towards sustainable practices and circular economy principles urgent?
- How can you use what you learned to meet market, societal, and environmental needs?
- Could you effectively answer Why, How, and What about your product/service?

Key Takeaways

After using the tools and frameworks described in this module, participants should:

- Understand why developing entrepreneurship and strategic thinking skills, mainly focusing on sustainability and innovative product/service creation, is crucial for today's problem-solvers.
- Gain an overview of why traditional business models that are only about making money aren't enough anymore and why it is essential to consider sustainability and balance nature, society, and money.
- Practice using tools like TLB models and the Golden Circle that help understand and fix sustainability problems.

Recommended supplementary resources for a deep dive:

- Using problem and objective tree for community development projects (n.d.) grassroots collective. Available at: https://www.thegrassrootscollective.org/problem-objective-tree-development (Accessed: 06 December 2023).
- Social enterprises. (n.d.). Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs. https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/proximity-and-social-economy/social-economy-eu/social-enterprises_en (Accessed: 06 December 2023).

● Smart Business Modeler. (2021, July 28). Sustainable Business Models - Venturely. Venturely.
https://venturely.io/business_model_database__trashed/sustainable-business-models (Accessed: 06 December 2023).

6.8 Module 4.2: Make Service Prototypes and Curate Activities: Planet and Human-centric Service

The Module 4.2 content can be accessed through the Village Hosts Community Platform: https://platform.villagehosts.eu/

How and When to Use It
In this module, participants engage with the planet-centred design approach, enabling them to synthesise their foundational concepts from prior models to ideate and develop more impactful solutions. This module integrates theoretical concepts and interactive peer-group processes (exchange), including shared examples, facilitating participants in actualising their ideas from a novel perspective. By the end of module 4.2, participants will have practical tools to increase the sustainability of their practices.

Tools and Frameworks
Tools and frameworks used in this module aim to support the paradigm shift from a human-centred design approach to a more holistic, planet-centric design. This shift is crucial in the current era, often called the 'Anthropocene,' where the impact of human actions on the Earth is increasingly evident. The module explores this new perspective, emphasising the need to create solutions that are beneficial for humans and considerate of the planet's well-being. Participants are introduced to planet-centric design as a problem-solving technique, with an in-depth analysis of its principles and movements, as elucidated by Sam Huber. The theory section also covers the implications of the Anthropocene, understanding planetary boundaries, and strategies for sustainable

design. This theoretical foundation is vital for fostering a mindset prioritising eco-friendliness, resource consciousness, and creativity in developing sustainable solutions.

The practical aspect of the section involves facilitated discussions and sharing sessions, where participants can apply the concepts learned in a collaborative environment. The practice section focuses on planet-centric ideation built on the value proposition designed earlier. Participants are encouraged to formulate 'How Might We' questions, challenging their existing ideas and perspectives. This stage is guided by three fundamental principles: responsibility, a systematic approach, and transparency. By integrating these principles, participants are prompted to think beyond conventional boundaries and develop responsible solutions that are systemically sound and transparent in their approach to sustainability. This hands-on practice reinforces the theoretical concepts and enables participants to apply them in real-world scenarios, fostering a deeper understanding and commitment to planet-centric design.

Workshop Tips and Instructions
In the Workshop Tips and Instructions chapter, facilitators are guided on effectively communicating the shift from a user-focused approach to a more inclusive, planet-centred design. This shift is crucial in the context of the 'Anthropocene,' a term that highlights the significant impact of human actions on the environment. Facilitators should emphasise the importance of creating solutions that cater to human needs and prioritise environmental sustainability. Encouraging participants to synthesise concepts from previous modules is key. Facilitators should assist them in understanding how these foundational concepts can be integrated into their ideation processes to develop impactful and sustainable solutions. Highlighting the importance of considering planetary well-being in their ideation process is essential for fostering a holistic approach to design.

The workshop should also include interactive practices that engage participants in exploring the transition from human-centred to planet-centric design as a problem-solving technique. Discussions should focus on the principles and movements in sustainable design, with insights from experts like Sam Huber. Deliberations on the implications of the Anthropocene, understanding planetary boundaries, and strategies for sustainable design are crucial. Facilitators should encourage interactive discussions and sharing sessions, guiding participants in continuing Planet-Centric Ideation based on their previously designed Value Propositions. This involves formulating 'How Might We' questions that challenge existing ideas while adhering to critical guiding principles: responsibility, a systematic approach, and transparency. Facilitators should also highlight the significant role of design in environmental impact, noting that design decisions constitute about 80% of a product's overall environmental footprint. It's important to stress the need for modern design methods to adapt to evolving environmental and societal requirements, encouraging participants to think innovatively and responsibly.

Self-evaluation Questions
Reflective questions for participants to internalise module learnings:
- Have I integrated elements of sustainability into my project? How does it contribute to reducing environmental footprints or addressing ecological concerns?
- How well does my project align with the community's needs and address environmental challenges within the given context?
- How responsive is my idea to the community's needs, promoting shared responsibility and transparency in addressing environmental challenges?

Key Takeaways
After using the tools and frameworks described in this module, participants should:

- Understand the planet-centred thinking concept that surpasses the focus solely on users and embraces a necessary shift towards a planet-centred approach, addressing the consequences of human actions on the environment.
- Learn about existing strategies for sustainable design implementation, tools, methods, and existing concepts to enhance the responsibility. Understand how to implement these resources to elevate the level of responsibility within your projects.
- Gain an understanding of the responsibility and transparency in recognising that design contributes significantly to an environmental impact. Learn about design principles that are crucial in mitigating environmental and social footprints.

Recommended supplementary resources for a deep dive
- Planetary boundaries. (n.d.). Stockholm Resilience Centre.
  https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries.html (Accessed: 06 December 2023).
- Humble, J. (2023, June 17). The design of really big things: Planet-Centric design. The Fountain Institute.
  https://www.thefountaininstitute.com/blog/design-of-really-big-things (Accessed: 06 December 2023).
- Planet Centric Toolkit (n.d.). Planet Centric Design.
  https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/6362597/Oppaat%20EN/Planet%20Centric%20Design%20toolkit%20-%2025.11.2019.pdf (Accessed: 06 December 2023).

6.9 Module 5: Assemble Cooperation Platform and New Business Models

The Module 5 content can be accessed through the Village Hosts Community Platform: https://platform.villagehosts.eu/

How and When to Use It

Module 5 is designed to equip village hosts with the skills and knowledge to conceptualise and implement sustainable project ideas within their communities. This module is particularly valuable when brainstorming business ideas, understanding market dynamics, or preparing to launch new products or services. It offers a hands-on approach that covers the essentials of entrepreneurship, including marketing, finances, leadership, team dynamics, and networking, focusing on contemporary trends. The module is ideal for those looking to transform freely available information into actionable business insights, providing a solid foundation for anyone embarking on an entrepreneurial journey. It's beneficial for village hosts to develop or refine their business models and strategies, ensuring they are well-equipped to navigate the complexities of modern business environments.

Tools and Frameworks

The module introduces tools and frameworks to aid in developing sustainable business models. The Stakeholder Map is an essential tool for identifying and understanding the key influencers in your project's ecosystem, helping you to strategise effectively. The 3P in Sustainability Canvas is a framework focusing on the three Ps: People, Planet, and Profit. This framework ensures that your business model adheres to sustainability principles, balancing economic viability with social and environmental responsibility. Additionally, the Business Model Canvas is introduced as a strategic management template. This tool is invaluable for developing new business models or documenting existing ones, providing a clear and structured approach to business model innovation.

Workshop Tips and Instructions

When conducting workshops on Module 5, start with a theory and discussion session on assembling cooperation and new business models. This session should focus on the theoretical frameworks supporting collaborative platforms and innovative business strategies, providing participants with a comprehensive understanding of the current business landscape. Follow this with group work and discussion centred around the Rural Hub case study. This interactive session should focus on dissecting the case study to extract practical strategies for participants' ventures. Encourage active participation and critical thinking, allowing participants to engage with the material in a relevant way to their specific contexts. This approach ensures that participants not only understand the theoretical aspects of the module but also how to apply these concepts in a practical, real-world setting.

Self-evaluation Questions

Reflective questions for participants to internalise module learnings:

- How effectively can I communicate my village's needs and project objectives to potential supporters and stakeholders?
- Am I capable of identifying and securing diverse funding opportunities?
- Can I confidently say that my business operations are environmentally sustainable and contribute positively to local livelihoods?

Key Takeaways

After using the tools and frameworks described in this module, participants should:

- Recognising and securing funding opportunities, which are skills that require nurturing through research, effective communication, and networking.

- Gain skills in marketing and audience development strategies to involve an understanding of target groups, leverage social media, and offer personalised experiences.
- Understand strategic planning and implementation that involves community collaboration, local resource utilisation, partnership creation, long-term thinking, and impact evaluation.

Recommended supplementary resources for a deep dive

- Impact networks - film discussion guide (no date) Converge Network. Available at: https://www.converge.net/toolkit/film-discussion-guide (Accessed: 05 December 2023).
- Database: Social innovations in marginalised rural areas (no date) SIMRA Social Innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas. Available at: http://www.simra-h2020.eu/index.php/simradatabase/ (Accessed: 05 December 2023).
- Morris, D. et al. (2023) 59 best small business ideas for rural areas in 2023, Niche Pursuits. Available at: https://www.nichepursuits.com/small-business-ideas-for-rural-areas/ (Accessed: 05 December 2023).

7. OSVH Platform and Online Community

7.1 Purpose of the Platform and General Use

The OSVH platform (www.villagehosts.eu) is a resource for individuals and groups eager to contribute to their community's development. It offers practical advice, shared experiences, and a supportive network for those undertaking projects in their villages. It provides content, tips, training material, and community space. As a structured initiative focusing on community development and engagement, it aims to support small villages by introducing new avenues for social, economic, and ecological growth. It advocates for developing services based on these connections, supported by practical business models considering rural areas' unique needs and resources.

How and When to Use It

The primary users of this platform are Village Hosts. They might be local leaders, entrepreneurs, or enthusiastic residents who are well-versed in various essential skills, both technical and interpersonal. The platform also serves a broader audience, including potential investors, policymakers, and individuals from other communities interested in similar developmental projects. It provides insights, success stories, and practical knowledge that can be adapted to various contexts. You may use the platform for:

- **Reviewing Stories and Updates.** Users can read about the experiences of other Village Hosts. This section offers a realistic look at what it's like to initiate community projects, including both successes and challenges.
- **Accessing Tools.** The platform provides various resources that Village Hosts might find helpful. These range from how-to guides on starting community projects to strategies for engaging residents and stakeholders.

- **Selecting Relevant Courses.** Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach, users can identify specific areas they want to learn more about and select courses accordingly. This feature recognises the diversity of villages and the need for a tailored approach to community development.
- **Participating in Knowledge Sharing and Community Discussions.** The platform encourages interaction among users, allowing them to share advice, provide feedback, and collaborate on issues or projects.

Engaging with the Community Space

A key feature of the Village Hosts platform is the 'community space,' a dedicated area that fosters interaction, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing among Village Hosts. This virtual space transcends geographical boundaries, creating a digital commons where ideas grow, experiences are traded, and innovative solutions to common challenges are born. The Community Space offers the following features:

- **Interactive Forum.** The forum is at the heart of the community space. Village Hosts can post queries, share insights, and provide feedback on this meeting ground. This interactive hub thrives on the diverse experiences of its members, encompassing a wide range of topics from logistical challenges to success stories.
- **Personal Profiles.** Each Village Host can create a detailed personal profile highlighting their skills, experiences, and current projects. These profiles allow individuals to showcase their journey and help find like-minded professionals, foster collaborations, and exchange specific expertise.
- **Project and Village Host Map.** One of the most innovative features is the interactive map. Users can visualise the geographical distribution of projects and Village Hosts. This feature provides a macro-view of ongoing initiatives, enabling users to find and connect with nearby projects and individuals, understand regional trends, and identify opportunities for collaboration or learning.

- **Direct Messaging and Networking.** Beyond public discussions, the community space enables private conversations. Village Hosts can reach out to each other through direct messages, encouraging more in-depth, focused interactions. This function is particularly beneficial for discussing sensitive topics, planning collaborations, or sharing confidential progress updates.
- **Resource Sharing.** The community space is also a resource repository. Users can upload relevant documents, links, videos, and other materials that they find helpful, making them available to the broader community. This collaborative approach enriches the pool of resources, ensuring that valuable information is easily accessible.

Community Space Value for Village Hosts

By actively participating in the community space, users are not just observers but contributors to a living, evolving knowledge network. It's a space that mirrors the ethos of the Village Hosts platform itself: collective growth through shared knowledge and mutual support. The community space is a dynamic ecosystem that offers multiple benefits:

- **Collaborative Learning.** By sharing successes and failures, Village Hosts engage in a form of collective learning that is practical and grounded in real-life experiences.
- **Networking Opportunities.** The space is ripe with opportunities for professional networking, mentorship, and collaboration, helping Village Hosts expand their support system.
- **Innovation and Problem-solving.** When diverse minds collaborate, innovative solutions emerge. The community space is a think-tank where users can brainstorm receiving feedback and fresh perspectives on their challenges.
- **Emotional Support and Motivation.** Perhaps less tangible but equally important, the sense of community and shared purpose is an emotional buoy for Village Hosts, especially when facing setbacks or feeling isolated.

7.2 Platform as a Resource for the Training Program

The Village Host Platform (https://platform.villagehosts.eu/) is a resource for trainers in preparing influential village hosts. It provides various tools, insights, and opportunities for collaboration, all designed to enhance the training process. This platform provides training materials, including comprehensive modules, case studies, and real-world scenarios, which trainers can use to enrich their sessions.

In addition to training materials, the platform serves as a hub for continuous learning and staying updated with the latest trends and best practices in village hosting. Trainers can gain insights from the experiences and strategies shared by top-performing village hosts, integrating these practical, tested approaches into their training sessions. The platform also fosters a community of practice, enabling trainers to network with peers, discuss ideas, collaborate on projects, and even explore partnership possibilities for co-hosting training sessions or developing new training materials.

The platform's interactive tools and technologies further enhance the training experience. Features like polls, quizzes, and discussion boards make learning more engaging and allow real-time feedback. The platform's virtual training support, including virtual meeting rooms and multimedia content sharing, is invaluable for remote or hybrid training models. Additionally, the platform facilitates feedback collection, enabling trainers to refine their approach based on participant reviews and access self-improvement resources for professional development.

8. Handbook Summary

The handbook provides an overview of the methodologies, tips, strategies, and tools that may be helpful for those involved in and running projects aiming to revitalise rural areas through innovative methodologies and collaborative efforts. The emphasis has been empowering local communities, fostering collaboration, and leveraging the power of social innovation. The document created serves as a repository of rural innovation knowledge and a digital meeting space for stakeholders, bridging gaps and facilitating knowledge exchange.

In rural development and social innovation, leveraging existing skills while integrating new methodologies is paramount. This handbook underscores the importance of this holistic development approach. With an emphasis on co-creation, social innovation, and community building, the Village Hosts are encouraged to merge their pre-existing skills with these new methodologies, leading to impactful results in their communities.

9. Appendices

This section ensures that readers have access to all the necessary resources, terms, and references that can aid in their understanding and application of the project's methodologies and outcomes.

Glossary of Terms

Given the specialised nature of the project, several terms and jargon were employed throughout the handbook. This subsection will provide definitions for these terms To ensure clarity and foster understanding.

- **Village Hosts.** Individuals or entities that play a pivotal role in rural areas, acting as catalysts for positive change. They identify opportunities, connect local actors, and develop projects to rejuvenate and sustain small villages.
- **Open License.** A license that promotes and respects open access. It allows for copying, distributing, displaying, and modifying the work under specific conditions.
- **Social Innovation.** A novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions. It benefits society as a whole rather than private individuals.
- **Handbook.** A manual or guidebook that provides detailed information, instructions, or methodologies on a specific topic.
- **Manifesto.** A public declaration of intentions, motives, or views. It outlines the principles and vision of the movement.
- **Rural Renaissance.** A phenomenon where social and rural enterprises create sustainable livelihoods and generate positive social impact in small villages, countering the effects of depopulation.
- **Resource Mapping.** A strategy for identifying and analysing existing resources such as people, services, natural resources, and technologies. It enhances an area's social, cultural, natural, and economic potential.

- **Rural Activators.** Individuals or groups that take proactive steps to bring about positive change in rural areas. They often work on rejuvenating neglected areas and giving them a new lease of life.
- **Site-specific Social Innovation.** A social innovation rooted in a particular place or community's needs, characteristics, and context.

Tips on Funding, Resources and Partnerships

In the heart of every successful community project lies the strategic trinity of funding, resources, and partnerships. As you embark on the noble journey of rural social innovation, this chapter brings you tips, guiding you through the paths of garnering financial support, mobilising resources, and forging partnerships that are the lifeblood of community-driven initiatives.

Partnerships are the cornerstone of community enrichment, offering a symbiotic relationship that fuels progress and innovation. The journey begins with recognising the inherent value of partnerships and understanding that these alliances foster a shared responsibility and collective empowerment among all stakeholders. Identifying potential partners requires a keen eye for synergy; local businesses, educational institutions, NGOs, and government bodies are all potential collaborators, each harbouring unique assets that could be pivotal for your project's success.

Preparation is your most trusted ally when the stage is set for outreach. Crafting an engaging partnership proposal can make all the difference; this document should resonate with the prospective partner's values, highlighting the communal benefits and the shared vision that binds you together. As you navigate agreements, remember that these are not mere contracts but the foundation of mutual respect and collaboration, designed to nurture and sustain long-term relationships. And it doesn't end there; partnerships catalyse community engagement, serving as a beacon that draws in diverse groups, uniting them under educational empowerment.

Resources. Tangible and intangible resources are the gears that propel your project into motion. Start with a thorough assessment, an inventory of what your local community offers. It's like piecing together a puzzle, identifying what's available, and pinpointing what's missing. This holistic view is crucial for bridging the gaps, whether through mobilising local assets like venues and experts or securing in-kind contributions that add value without financial strain.

Yet, the world beyond your village holds untapped opportunities. Governmental and non-governmental entities often provide grants or donations, waiting for initiatives like yours to breathe life into them. It's about extending your hand and reaching out to these external bodies with a request that echoes your community's aspirations. And amidst all this, creativity is your wildcard. In a world of innovation, solutions come in various forms—digital platforms, shared resources, or even repurposed materials—each unlocking new possibilities for your training program.

Funding is the pulse of your project, a steady flow that ensures vitality and sustainability. Begin with a clear-eyed understanding of the costs, mapping out each expense to draft a budget that reflects the financial blueprint of your activities. Within your village, the spirit of unity can translate into fundraising success. Local events, campaigns, and social media drives are more than just funding avenues; they call for community solidarity, weaving a network of local patrons committed to your cause.

Beyond the confines of your locality, the world is a reservoir of financial support. Grants, sponsorships, and private donations are streams waiting to be directed towards your village. Each requires a unique approach, from crafting compelling grant proposals to nurturing lasting relationships with donors. And amidst the financial ebb and flow, transparency stands as your guiding principle, a commitment to accountability that earns you the unwavering trust of your community.

10. Acknowledgments

The success and realisation of any project is a collective effort; this project is no exception. This section recognises and expresses gratitude to all those who have contributed their time, expertise, and resources to bring the vision of this project to life.

The OSVH project is a collaborative endeavour, bringing together various partners. These partners, ranging from grassroots organisations to academic institutions, bring unique strengths. Their collective expertise ensures the project is holistic, addressing multiple facets of rural development. These collaborations are not just transactional but are built on mutual respect and a shared vision for the future of rural communities:

- **Casa Netural** (https://benetural.com/en_GB/): Casa Netural, founded in 2012 in Matera, Italy, began as a rural coworking space and evolved into a coliving space, hosting innovators worldwide to collaborate on local projects and foster community development. The organisation supports projects that enhance sharing economies, collaborative work methods, and community space management while promoting skill and knowledge exchange at national and international levels. Casa Netural has developed the "Netural Incubator" method, aiding individuals and organisations in refining business models and prototyping new services, and also runs the Netural Academy for business project management training. Key figures include Andrea Paoletti, an architect and social entrepreneur who co-founded Casa Netural and Wonder Grottole. The organisation plays a significant role in social innovation, rural coworking, and urban and rural regeneration, actively engaging in social media and community building.

Project contributors from Casa Netural: Andrea Paoletti (OSVH Project manager, partners facilitator, trainer), John Thackara (OSVH Strategic Consultant), Rocco Pisilli (OSVH Project manager junior, trainer), Samuele Biagioni (Communication strategist).

- **Materahub** (https://www.materahub.com/): Manages international pilot projects to support cultural and creative industries, focusing on innovation and inclusion processes and fostering a new entrepreneurial vision to address contemporary challenges. The organisation conducts several international capacity-building activities, facilitating skill exchanges between local and international experts, entrepreneurs, and policymakers, supported by European programs like Erasmus+, Cosme, Interreg, and Horizon 2020. Since 2010, Materahub has been the intermediary organisation for the European Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs program and, since 2014, the Italian host for the Creative Business Cup, an international competition for cultural and creative industries. It is a member of the Puglia Creative District and the Basilicata Creativa cultural and creative industries cluster. Materahub is also included in international networks such as the CARP network, which promotes cultural routes on prehistoric art, the European Creative Business Network, the European Creative Hubs Network, ENCATC, and from 2022, is part of the EIT KIC Culture and Creativity.

  Project contributors from Materahub: Sara Simeone, Becky Riches, Hai Ly Nguyen, Eleonora Santini.

- **Radošā partnerība** (https://www.radosapartneriba.lv/): The goals of the organisation are the development of art, design, cultural education and creativity for children and adults by the implementation of new initiatives; implementation of local and international art, design and cultural development projects; to participate and carry out research activities and projects in art, design, cultural education. The organisation manages cultural and artistic events: personal development courses, summer camps, continuing and in-service training programs, art symposia, competitions, festivals and seminars for

children and adults. The organisation co-operates with individuals and organisations in Latvia and abroad. The members of the organisation carry out scientific research activities. The projects vary from a single-person involvement to 30 paid staff and more than 100 participants.

Project contributors from Radošā partnerība: Dr Aija Freimane (project manager, researcher and trainer, lead of the competence framework development); Nora Freimane (trainer), and Paula Gunāra Benuža (trainer)

- **Stowarzyszenie KobieTY** (https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100069633309072): KobieTY is a non-profit, apolitical, and non-governmental educational organisation that is inclusive and open to all, focusing on diversity, equality, and community responsiveness. The organisation emphasises nonviolent communication, ecosystem thinking, and global education to foster positive social change. Its mission is to empower individuals to become agents of this change, addressing local community needs through innovative projects. KobieTY champions Lifelong Learning through non-formal education methods and transcultural expression and supports an intergenerational approach that includes youth, adults, and seniors. Additionally, the organisation actively promotes volunteerism at both local and international levels. Project contributors from KobieTY: Klaudia Latek (project assistant and researcher), Jerzy Łepkowski (trainer) and Henryk Stawicki (project manager).

- **FUNDACIO PRIVADA ELISAVA ESCOLA UNIVERSITARIA:** ELISAVA Barcelona School of Design and Engineering, affiliated with Pompeu Fabra University, is a hub for research and academia, focusing on technological and social innovation through design. The institution offers degrees and postgraduate programs in various design disciplines, emphasising sustainable, ethical, and well-being development. ELISAVA Research, recognised as an Emergent Research Group by the Generalitat de Catalunya, operates advanced labs and facilities, fostering a vibrant community of researchers

dedicated to societal innovation and talent transfer. The school strongly focuses on social innovation, demonstrated through initiatives like "Design for City Making" and "Inhabiting the Void," which explore collaborative city scenarios and address European demographic changes. Key figures like Daria de Seta and Albert Fuster lead these efforts, integrating design with social sciences, engineering, and architecture to create impactful, community-driven projects.

Project contributors from Elisava: Massimo Menichinelli (project manager, trainer, platform project manager), Iván Paz (platform coder, researcher), Elena Elizondo Nieva (platform designer, researcher), Denise de Spirito (visiting researcher from UNIFI - external volunteer; toolbox designer, researcher), Albert Fuster (researcher), Daria de Seta (researcher), Sergio Bogunyà (researcher).

- **HOLIS** is an interdisciplinary collaborative and learning community that works on the most critical ecological and social challenges of our times. We are a group of designers, researchers, makers, artists, and facilitators pursuing change through collaboration and collective intelligence. Our site-specific workshops and courses address large-scale global issues by solving problems in collaboration with our partners. Our work also combines research, delivering workshops, product development, and consultancy to help clients achieve their sustainability goals.

Project contributors from Holis: Simona Mancusi and Dominika Majewska (primary manifesto process facilitators), Justyna Turek (project manager, trainer and manifesto editorial project manager), Márton Gosztonyi (researcher & training materials designer) and Maxim Dedushkov (trainer).

- **Centre for Socially Responsible Entrepreneurship – CDOP** (https://cdop.rs/en/): The main objective of the CDOP is continuous recognition of socially responsible entrepreneurial ideas, individuals and organisations and active support

through its educational and development activities. In that way, we will continually support society and people in realising creative, socially responsible and sustainable ideas and projects. The Centre represents an incubator for creating innovative, socially responsible ideas, a place where individuals can develop their potential to realise their ideas and thus improve their quality of life. CDOP recognises socially responsible ideas, individuals and organisations, actively supports them through its educational and development programs and represents the creator of socially responsible surroundings.
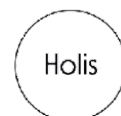
Project contributors from CDOP: Dragana Tomić Pilipović (project manager, researcher and trainer) and Sanja Milosavljević (trainer).

- **John Thackara** (https://thackara.com/): A renowned writer, advisor, and event producer with over thirty years of experience exploring sustainable community practices globally, which he shares through books, blogs, talks, and events. He is the author of several books, including "How To Thrive In The Next Economy." He has curated numerous influential design and innovation events, such as the Doors of Perception conference and the UK's Dott07. Thackara's career includes roles as a magazine editor, design correspondent, and co-founder of Design Analysis International, organising events in major cultural venues. He has held academic positions, including Director of Research at the Royal College of Art and the first director of the Netherlands Design Institute. Thackara is a visiting professor and senior fellow at several prestigious institutions, focusing on urban-rural reconnection and social, ecological, and relational design.

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