

# JOINT SOLUTIONS FOR SMART VILLAGE TRANSITION IN CENTRAL EUROPE

An analytical framework to assist smart village  
initiatives to support development of rural  
areas in Central Europe

## JOINT SOLUTIONS

Smart village business support tool



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## Document information

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# 1 Introduction

*The Smart Village business support tool* is developed under the project “*More than a Village: Smart village transition, a model for more competitive and attractive villages in Central Europe.*” The European Regional Development Fund co-financed the project under the Interreg Central Europe 2021-2027 programme.

The “More than a Village - MTaV” project aims to revitalize rural areas in Central Europe by developing and testing smart village models. It addresses entrepreneurship, digitalization gaps, youth out migration, and aging populations. Key outputs include a joint strategy for smart village transition, action plans for selected areas, tools and solutions for implementing smart village models, and pilot projects testing different models. The project seeks to create jobs, stabilize rural populations, and boost economic resilience, benefiting small businesses, local communities, and authorities.

In this project, three smart tools are developed based on challenges faced, lessons learned, and conclusions from implementing the pilot actions. It aims to compile insights and best practices from pilot actions in Poland, Hungary, Italy, Slovenia, and Croatia, providing practical solutions to strengthen rural economies, improve digitalization, and increase rural areas' attractiveness. The first solution is a *Smart village business support tool* that contains all the information on the business support in rural areas acquired during the implementation of the pilots by the Local Action Group Association "South Warmia" (LAG SW) from Poland and Hajdú - Bihar County Government (HBCG) from Hungary. The second is a *Smart tourism village tool* that compiles information from the enactment of pilot action by the ANCI LIGURIA (ANCIL) from Italy. It concerns support for local rural entrepreneurs in the tourism sector. The third is an *Agri-food smart village tool* that provides a comprehensive agri-food smart village tool for developing and supporting local agricultural businesses and brings together lessons learned during pilot implementation of ITC - Innovation Technology Cluster Murska Sobota (ITC) from Slovenia and the City of Buzet (Buzet) from Croatia.

Rural areas often have higher levels of poverty, higher percentages of older adults, and slower-growing or declining populations. Also, the lack of entrepreneurship and digitalization leads to economic stagnation and youth out migration. To overcome these problems, the *Smart Village concept* was introduced. It is a territorial tool for strengthening the socio-economic development of rural areas. It describes communities in rural areas that use digital technologies and innovative solutions to boost the local economy and make rural areas more attractive and sustainable. The overall goal is to improve rural communities' resilience and standard of living. To achieve this, understanding, cooperation, and support from the public authorities are needed.

Creating the Smart Village business support tool aims to provide decision-makers with knowledge and recommendations on applying the smart village approach to developing rural smart businesses. Although the tool offers a conceptual framework for exploring entrepreneurial topics, it cannot be applied uniformly across all themes and areas, including their respective sub-themes and sub-areas. As such, the focus is on support from local government and the NGO sector in the smart village concept application for youth entrepreneurship and silver economy business development

*Smart Village business support tool* is a guideline for improving the competitiveness of rural SMEs by creating a support system by public authorities and non-governmental organisations such as Local Action Groups (LAGs). The document includes guidelines, methods, good practices, and practical templates to support businesses and SMEs in rural areas, as well as designing rural development interventions to create favourable conditions for rural businesses and business support assessment. Also, practical tips from the pilots conducted in Poland and Hungary are included.

The methodology used to create this *Smart Village business support tool* is based on the joint work of all project partners. Local Action Group Association "South Warmia" from Poland (LAG SW) and Hajdú-Bihar County Government from Hungary (HBCG) shared insights from implementing their action plans. The Smart Village business support tool was refined through partners' and stakeholders' feedback, and a workshop featuring three key exercises. The

participatory process enabled Pilots to combine experiences, challenges faced, practical solutions, lessons learned, and to draw conclusions from implementing the Smart Village pilots. This participatory approach ensured the *Smart Village business support tool* reflects diverse experiences, practical advice, and tested methods, making it a valuable resource for supporting and enhancing smart business for youth and older people.

The *Smart Village business support tool* is organised as follows: it begins with an overview of the Smart Village concept and its corresponding business support model. This is followed by initial steps focusing on data collection and stakeholder engagement in the pre-planning phase. The planning phase includes a detailed analysis of the local context, the development of a shared vision, the definition of strategic objectives, and the identification of key activities. The implementation phase highlights the importance of executing planned activities and allocating the necessary resources. The monitoring section provides guidance on how to track the implementation of the action plan through clearly defined indicators. Progress is reviewed in accordance with the timeframes specified in the action plan, ensuring alignment with strategic objectives and timely adjustments where necessary. The evaluation section emphasizes the importance of assessing the plan's relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability. It outlines methodological approaches and techniques for conducting evaluations at different stages: ex-ante (before implementation), mid-term (during implementation), and ex-post (after completion). Finally, the tool offers a set of recommendations and a step-by-step guide for delivering business support within the Smart Village framework. The annex includes practical templates designed for use by local authorities when planning and implementing the Smart Village business model.

## 2 The smartness dimensions in the context of business support

### 2.1 Pilots in the MTaV project



The Smart Village business support tool is based on challenges, lessons learned, and practical tips gathered during the implementation of pilots Local Action Group South Warmia from Poland and Hajdú-Bihar County Government from Hungary.



In South Warmia, Poland, a Smart Village Center has been established in the village of Marcinkowo, known as the Smart Village Hub (SVH). The hub provides comprehensive support to residents from Marcinkowo and the surrounding region, with a strong focus on fostering the growth of SMEs and NGOs. Special attention is given to engaging both young people and seniors. The SVH actively assists in developing and implementing the Smart Village concept while working to prevent various forms of exclusion – digital, communication, economic, social, and beyond.



In Hajdú-Bihar, Hungary, the smart transition action has focused on enhancing digital infrastructure in rural areas and small villages, prioritizing the needs of residents. The initiative not only aims to put the county "on the map" but also actively harnesses the potential of the silver



economy for the 55+ age group. Recognizing the low level of digital maturity in these rural communities, significant efforts have been made to improve digital skills and access. This advancement is crucial for the broader implementation of smart solutions and the sustainable, long-term development of the silver economy in the region.

## 2.2 The smartness dimensions in theory and practice

Smart Villages can be analysed through **six smartness dimensions (or categories)**<sup>1</sup>. *These dimensions work together to create vibrant, resilient rural communities.* The smartness dimensions relate to:

### 1. *Smart Economy*

It measures creative and innovative enterprises, employment and unemployment rates, and ICT penetration. Examples of indicators are the number of enterprises, the density of enterprises, the rate of young people employed, and the number of women leading enterprises.

### 2. *Smart Mobility*

This dimension is related to sustainable forms of mobility. Examples of indicators are the number of non-traditional cars, the presence of restricted traffic zones, and the level of sustainability of public transport.

### 3. *Smart Environment*

It aims to measure the quality of water, air, soil, and all other environmental parameters, including using renewable energy. Examples of indicators are the percentage of recycled waste and air quality levels.

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<sup>1</sup> MTaV - D.1.1.2 Knowledge management handbook describing working methodology and knowledge management tools.

#### 4. *Smart People*

Indicates the level of inhabitants' participation in decision-making processes and assesses the level of citizens' education (including digital). Examples of indicators are the number of associations in the area and equal opportunity policies.

#### 5. *Smart Living*

Measures the quality and quantity of services, mainly services of general interest offered to the population and their degree of satisfaction. Examples of indicators are the level of services to citizens (banks, post offices, medical facilities).

#### 6. *Smart Governance*

It indicates the digital level of public administration, the forms and functioning of e-government, and the use or non-use of green public procurement. Examples of indicators are the effectiveness of policies on waste, energy, etc.

In the early stages of developing a Smart Village, it's unclear how well different smart aspects will fit the local context. It is essential to examine all smart aspects by asking practical questions regarding their influence on improving life in local rural areas. Rural areas differ in needs, resources, and readiness. That's why it is essential to reflect on each smart dimension individually to see whether it is appropriate, practical, and realistic in the related village context. For example, while smart business for young entrepreneurs may be highly relevant in one area, it may not be applicable in another due to low internet access. These reflections ensure the Smart Village model is adopted to meet local needs.

The experts from Poliedra - Politecnico di Milano from Italy assessed that the following dimensions are relevant to applying the smart village concept in rural business development. As seen from a practical example, the Mobility dimension was not considered because it does not interest any of the pilots in

the MTaV project. Also, each dimension has associated criteria with a definition that serve as an indicator of smartness and an anchor for measuring implementation success.

Therefore, when planning the implementation of the smart business concept, it is first necessary to decide which of the smart village dimensions are applicable to the related territory.



Practical example on assessing the relevant dimension of smartness and associated indicators/criteria in rural business development (provided by experts in MTaV project, Poliedra from Italy).

Dimension of smartness	Indicator/Associated criteria	Definition
<i>Smart Governance</i>	Existence of strategies, rules, and regulations to promote ICT literacy	Assess the presence of formal policies, strategies, and regulations to improve citizens' ICT literacy to enable digital inclusion and smart governance practices.
	Level of information, data availability, and accessibility	Measures the extent to which community members have access to accurate, relevant, and up-to-date information and data for decision-making and participation in governance
	Level of investment in smart transition initiatives	Tracks governments' financial resources to projects and programs that drive smart development in rural communities.
<i>Smart Economy</i>	Accessibility of cultural and recreational initiatives	Measures the ease with which residents and visitors in rural communities can access cultural and recreational activities,

Dimension of smartness	Indicator/Associated criteria	Definition
		including events, facilities, and programs.
	Economic investment in ICT sectors	Indicates the level of financial commitment to ICT industries, driving innovation and employment in rural areas.
	Adoption of circular energy solutions	Evaluate practices like energy recycling and renewable energy usage to reduce waste.
	Economic investment in the agriculture sector	Indicates the level of financial commitment to agriculture industries, driving innovation and employment in rural areas.
	Level of technical ICT	Evaluates the prevalence of ICT skills within the workforce and local supporting digital initiatives.
Smart Environment	Degree of digitalization in monitoring systems	Enhances data collection, analysis, and management, and evaluates the integration of digital technologies in monitoring environmental systems, such as ecosystems, water, air quality, noise, waste, and wastewater.
	Status of smart waste and recycling management	Assesses the deployment of smart technologies to optimize waste collection, sorting, and recycling, promoting resource efficiency and reducing environmental impact.
	Percentage of equipped natural spaces (e.g., presence of Wi-Fi and 4 G or 5 G coverage) in the area concerned	Percentage of natural spaces with Wi-Fi and 4G or 5G coverage, where citizens can spend their free time or work.
Smart Living	Level of safety in the area	Assess the safety of the area where an intervention is carried out to improve the level of liveability of citizens and beyond.

Dimension of smartness	Indicator/Associated criteria	Definition
	The level of general interest services, such as banks, post offices, and health and social care services for young and older people.	Assesses the presence of primary services needed in the daily lives of citizens.
Smart People	Level of digitalization in rural schools	Evaluates the integration and usage of digital technologies in rural educational institutions to enhance learning outcomes and accessibility
	Number of associations for young and senior citizens	Evaluates the presence of associations in the area that can involve people of all ages, from children to activities covering every theme: recreational, leisure, etc.
	Level of policies for promoting equal opportunities	Evaluates the level of policies promoted by municipalities or institutions to improve equal opportunities.

*Source: MTaV project. In the MTaV project, indicators/associated criteria are defined for each dimension. Thus, the indicators serve a) to check that the implemented pilot can be defined as a smart solution and b) as anchors for measuring implementation success.*

Applying all detected dimensions and related indicators/associated criteria is unnecessary and other institutions involved in the smart transition should consider what may be most important or what they can support. Therewith, a practical example from the Hajdú-Bihar County Government from Hungary is provided.





Practical example of defining detected dimensions and related indicators/associated criteria.

<i><b>Dimension of smartness</b></i>	<i><b>Indicator/Associated criteria</b></i>	<i><b>Comments (optional)</b></i>
<i><b>Smart Governance</b></i>	Existence of Strategies, Rules, and Regulations to Promote ICT Literacy	The pilot development will consider accessible strategies, self-assessment tools, and government-provided digital solutions; on the other hand, through the silver economy platform and mentorship (training), HBCG plans to provide a pool of support to improve the digital literacy of rural entrepreneurs/SMEs.
	Level of Investment in Smart Transition Initiatives	The Silver Economy Platform will provide information on several issues to support participatory processes.
<i><b>Smart Economy</b></i>	Accessibility of Cultural and Recreational Initiatives	Silver Economy Platform is planned to strongly support rural entrepreneurs working in tourism with special focus on agritourism, culture, and recreation through networking.
	Adoption of Circular Energy Solutions	Silver Economy Platform will provide guidance and information for rural entrepreneurs on how to apply circular solutions.
	Level of Technical ICT	Silver Economy Platform is planned to enhance the ICT skills of owners, operators, and the workforce supporting the digital transition.

<b>Smart Environment</b>	Status of Smart Waste and Recycling Management	Silver Economy Platform is planned to support the application and use of smart solutions in the agrifood and tourism sectors.
<b>Smart People</b>	Number of associations for young and senior citizens	Silver Economy Platform is planned to serve multiple goals, including supporting senior citizens' activities and focusing on entrepreneurs and SMEs.

Source: MTaV project, List of the dimensions with associated criteria for developing smart village business support in the MTaV project - Hajdú-Bihar County Government from Hungary (HBCG).

### 3 Supporting smart business for youth and for older people: lessons learnt from MTaV pilots

The strategic planning approach may easily be followed in the smart village approach to developing rural smart businesses. It is performed in four phases: the Pre-planning phase, the Planning phase, the Implementation phase, and the Monitoring and evaluation phase. All the phases, alongside their accompanying activities, are described below.

#### 3.1 Pre-planning phase

Once it is decided that smart rural business support should be offered to interested (future) entrepreneurs, it is highly recommended that a Stakeholder group be established. Such a group should support local governments and other institutions involved in the smart transition throughout all the mentioned phases of implementing the smart rural business model.

Stakeholders are individuals, groups, or entities that have an interest in a business's and/or project's outcomes. They are divided into primary stakeholders (those who experience a project or initiative's direct impact) and secondary stakeholders (those with indirect involvement, e.g., through business relationships). They can be internal (from the same organisation and involved in the business and its outcomes), and external (interact from outside and are interested in performance, but not on a daily basis). The following table shows how stakeholders can be analysed in terms of their influence, interest, and levels of participation in the project (external - internal stakeholders, direct - indirect involvement)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> GOOD/Participatory Governance IN Cultural Heritage - How to involve public,, Interreg Central Europe project "For Heritage (4H): Excellence for integrated heritage management in central Europe", <https://programme2014-20.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/ForHeritage.html>

Stakeholder type		Who are they?	Stakeholders' level of interest	Stakeholders' level of influence
			How interested in the project and its outcome are they?	How powerful (in terms of influencing the project) are they?
Internal	Partners	Working team, team leader, consultant companies, contractors, suppliers, legal, regulatory administrations	Highly interested in completing the project within the timeframe and the identified budget	High influence  They actively contribute to a project and have the power to help make it successful (or to derail it)
External	Beneficiaries	Professionals, entrepreneurs, investors, financial institutions, politicians, and leaders of society	Primarily interested in completing the project with reasonable costs, repayment of the investment in a reasonable period, increasing prestige and experience, etc.	High influence  They have the power to influence it greatly if they become interested
External	Final beneficiaries	The public and marginalised groups	Interested in the outcome of a project because they are directly affected by the outcome	Low influence  They can voice their support in the community, positively influence the project, and change its scope, but they have little actual power to

				influence the effort in any way
	Indirect stakeholders and beneficiaries	Opportunists, activists, media, other members of the community, or area	Highly interested	There is a possibility to influence the project

**Partners** are people or institutions participating in building or delivering a project.

**The project beneficiaries** are those who will benefit from the project.

**Final beneficiaries** are those who benefit in the long term.

**Indirect stakeholders/beneficiaries** are those who will be impacted by or impact the project, though they don't directly participate in working on it.

### *What is the role of the Stakeholder group (SG)?*

By engaging stakeholders, diverse perspectives are incorporated, and projects are more likely to address real-world problems and develop practical solutions. This improves project quality, efficiency, and long-term success. Stakeholders' exchange of good practices and lessons learned across regions while promoting policy innovation makes learning available at various levels. When learning from them, **they co-own the solution tailored to their needs**. By co-decision and validation, external stakeholders impact the solutions reached within the project, ensuring a participatory approach. Further on, stakeholders enable a broad reach-out of the reached smart village business solutions through their own networks by way of wide dissemination activities. In short, they bring input for the analysis of the current state; inform, consult, collaborate, and validate results of the common efforts; they bring ideas and opinions; and validate final solutions.



### *What is the recommended number of stakeholders?*

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The exact number of stakeholders is not determined. The number of stakeholders involved is critically linked to the area's dimensions and demographics, but it also depends on the societal, demographic, and economic structure as well as the type of smart village business solution. It is, however, important to have a broad and diverse group of stakeholders who will bring different views, experiences, and expectations. For example, they can come from:

- 1) Public administrations/Public entities/Policy makers,
- 2) Academia/Research institutions/Innovation parks/ Digital innovation hubs,
- 3) Businesses/Business associations/SMEs/Start-ups/Cooperatives/Enterprises/Economic actors,
- 4) Civil society/Citizen organizations/NGOs.

A thorough understanding of stakeholders' behaviours, motivations, relationships, interests, and their actual or potential influence and resources, regardless of how many stakeholders are involved, is crucial. Based on data collected through instruments such as surveys, workshops, open forums, interviews, and focus groups, effective stakeholder management strategies can be designed. These strategies should address optimal engagement methods and communication approaches tailored to different stakeholder groups.

### *How can the stakeholder group be engaged?*

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After appointing stakeholders as members of the SG, it is time to engage them in the process of smart village business concept implementation. They often want to be involved in the decision-making process. In that case, they are more likely to trust the project because they understand how and why decisions are made. Also, involvement offers a chance to protect and promote the interests of those somehow affected by the

outcomes of decisions. However, as mentioned before, the process of their involvement starts much more before the Implementation phase.

Thus, SG can be involved from the very beginning by getting input for the analysis of the current state; by bringing ideas and opinions; or at the end of the implementation, namely in the Monitoring and evaluation phase by validating final documents to be prepared within the project, etc.



Practical example of how the Local Action Group Association "South Warmia" from Poland (LAG SW) engaged stakeholders in the analysis of the current state-of-the art.



During the stakeholders meeting, residents of Purda commune,

including young people, participated in creating a smart village concept for Marcinkowo and inventorying and diagnosing existing resources.

### *How to communicate with the Stakeholder group?*

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Successful and effective stakeholder engagement often relies on stakeholder experience gained through communication.

The number of meetings depends on several factors. For example, if the project is complex, more frequent or detailed, meetings will be necessary to ensure alignment with the planned activities and manage risks. Often, the planning phase requires more meetings, while later stages need fewer, more focused updates. If stakeholders are highly involved or affected by the project, more meetings may be necessary to keep them informed and engaged. Apart from in-person meetings, e-mail or online meetings may be used for some activities. It may also depend on the stakeholders' preferences, for example, one stakeholder prefers to be regularly updated, while others are satisfied with periodic updates.

Regardless of the method chosen for communication with a Stakeholder group, it is necessary to provide them with information about progress and changes, and to regularly provide answers to their questions. Meetings with stakeholders can also serve to seek their support, obtain resources from them, and coordinate their future work, especially if a milestone is approaching.

To achieve all this, it is essential to encourage stakeholders to be involved and to communicate effectively. This is described in more detail in chapter 3.2.1.

## **3.2 Planning phase**

This phase relates to the following steps:

- a) State-of-the-art analysis
- b) Determining the vision
- c) Determining the objectives
- d) Determining the measures and activities to be performed

### 3.2.1 State-of-the-art analysis

State-of-the-art analysis entails analyzing the selected topic. It is usually done using the method of desk research analysis, which involves studying the available documentation, such as statistical data, strategic and planning documents, and professional and scientific papers.

To gain a deeper understanding of the topic, further analysis should be done via the Stakeholder group: meetings can be organized with them in **focus groups**. Focus group is a qualitative technique which uses in depth group interviews with participants that are chosen based on their knowledge on the specific topic that is being studied (Rabiee, 2004). Focus groups are beneficial when gathering information on residents' or entrepreneurs' needs, preferences, and problems. They are easy to execute, and that is their greatest strength. The moderator actively encourages stakeholders to express their opinions and respond to other participants' and moderators' questions. Responses in a focus group are *spoken, open-ended, relatively broad, and qualitative*. Nonverbal communications and group interactions can also be observed. Focus groups can get closer to people's thoughts and feelings, even though their responses may be more complex.

Additionally, **interviews** with knowledgeable individuals may be organized to gain even more nuanced information on the topic. *Interview* is a method appropriate in situations regarding the collection of in-depth information on participants' thoughts, opinions, experiences, and feelings, and is useful for complex questioning (Easwaramoorthy, 2006). This approach allows for a deeper understanding of personal experiences, opinions, and context relevant to the research focus. Stakeholder groups may be an essential source of information on the possible interviewees. The number of interviews conducted depends on how many stakeholders can meaningfully contribute to the topic. **Good practice** examples may also be helpful in state-of-the-art analysis. Good (best) practice is "a method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means, and that is used as a benchmark within a particular discipline or field" (van Heck and Vervest, 2009). While they are not always available, research to collect good practices

is valuable. Researching good practices provides a good start built on real-world experience and supports evidence-based decision-making. Before the collection of good practices, it is necessary to determine what is considered as a good practice and what is applicable to the related territory. Only after that good practice collection may be performed since only those cases meeting the determined criteria will be sought for.



Examples of data that can be collected about good practices

### *General data about good practice*

#### *Description of good practice*

Description of the good practice - **main aspects** (its scope, implementation, and main features).

In which **smartness dimension(s)** does this good practice work?

Does this good practice have any possible **links with your action**?

#### *Main lessons learnt and main recommendations:*

**Main challenges** encountered while implementing the good practice

Main lessons learnt from the good practice and its implementation

What is the main message you derive from this good practice?

What is the main success story that led you to select it?

What are the main recommendations from these good practices that you wish to communicate to the other rural areas?

Examining what worked well and what didn't in different communities can help avoid repeating mistakes. Proven solutions can be identified and adapted



to local needs, thus accelerating implementation and reducing the need to start from scratch. Transferring a good practice from one rural region to another is not straightforward. Care should be given to the good practice results rather than the implementation process. Transferability depends on the specificities of each rural area and requires significant support from local authorities. The stakeholder group might again be a valuable source in such an activity, but other partners, such as universities and/or research institutes, may also be engaged. Good practice examples are available on the Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform and in the Further Reading chapter. Here are some documents with good practice examples.

Where to find good practice examples?

[How to boost entrepreneurship in rural areas?](#) A Policy Brief from the Policy Learning Platform on SME competitiveness.

[Smart solutions](#) The Smart Solutions Database provides access to a wide range of innovative practices adaptable to various local contexts from Smart Rural 21.

[Good practices](#) Good practices catalogue from Smart Alps platform.

[Smart Communities](#) Examples of smart rural communities / smart villages elaborated in detail, including a short description of the community/ village, key aspects of its 'smartness', journey of becoming smart (smart solutions), thematic area in focus, and aspects of community engagement.

[Pilot project - Publications Office of the EU](#) Project funded by the European Commission to define Smart Villages and identify best practices and case studies.

Once the recommended methods have been applied, the knowledge gained should be presented and grouped along the most critical subtopics, highlighting the *challenges, needs, and development potentials*. Such a holistic analysis should reveal the most pressing challenges in applying the smart village concept to business development. It also discovers which

opportunities may mitigate weaknesses and which strengths can be used to avoid threats. In Annex 1, a template for analysing challenges, needs, and development potentials can be found.

An example of challenges and development potentials encountered while implementing the Silver Economy Hub and Smart Village Hub.

**Challenge:** Implementing the Silver Economy in rural areas may be challenging for senior citizens and entrepreneurs lacking digital literacy.

⇒ **Development potentials:** Develop training materials, introduce mentorship programs, and establish an online hub to support education, networking, and economic opportunities.

**Challenge:** Lack of collaboration in the countryside to mutually develop entrepreneurship and economic potential involving senior citizens.

⇒ **Development potentials:** Build a strong stakeholder network that connects the local economy, academia, public authorities, and civil society.

**Challenge:** Missing feedback channels to define rural gaps in digital transition and community improvement.

⇒ **Development potentials:** Integrate a regular feedback section within the Silver Economy platform to identify needs, evaluate progress, and support community-driven development.

**Challenge:** Finding a place for the Smart Village Hub.

⇒ **Development potentials:** Present the space requirements to stakeholders. There is often someone with suitable facilities who may be interested in hosting or participating in Smart Village Hub activities, especially if they see value in monitoring or engaging with its work.

**SWOT analysis** is another method useful for the state-of-the art analysis. It stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, and offers a simple way of organizing gathered information. A fuller awareness of the situation helps with strategic planning and decision-making. SWOT analysis can help explore possibilities or solutions to challenges, identify opportunities for success in the context of threats, and determine whether a change is possible. For example, strong community engagement and access to local talent eager to upskill in digital tools might be a strength. A weakness could be limited high-speed internet coverage or lack of experience in running tech-based businesses. Opportunities might include government grants for rural digitization, increasing demand for eldercare services (Silver Economy), or growing interest in agri-tourism. Potential threats could involve youth migration to urban areas or resistance to adopting new technologies.

SWOT analysis will be more effective if advantage of many stakeholders is taken. For example, each stakeholder offers a different perspective on the strengths and weaknesses and has various experiences. The best results come when the process is collaborative and inclusive. This type of analysis is particularly relevant for future steps in the implementation of the smart village business concept, that is determining the vision, and goals.

The following elements are particularly relevant for identification through the SWOT analysis:

- **Demographic trends.** Key factors to analyse include the population size, age distribution, income levels, and education levels within the local community.
- **Infrastructure.** Rural areas often face challenges such as unreliable transportation networks, limited access to high-speed internet, inadequate energy supply, or a shortage of commercial and co-working spaces. These constraints can hinder logistics, digital service delivery, communication, and talent attraction.
- **Local resources and assets.** Rural communities often possess unique strengths, such as natural landscapes, agricultural products, traditional skills, cultural heritage, or tourism appeal, that can be leveraged to create value.

- **Organization.** Refer to how the rural community is run, its systems, decision-making processes, leadership roles, and resources.

In Annex 2, a template for SWOT analysis can be found.

### 3.2.2 Determining the vision

Once the analysis has been done, the future vision of the smart village business model needs to be determined. *Vision is the overall goal* you want to achieve, or the “place” you want to be in the future. It describes the smart village's desired long-term results, meaning, and purpose.

The vision is best defined using a participatory approach while working with the Stakeholder group. The previous analysis of the state-of-the-art serves as a basis for determining the vision. The participatory approach allows access to the participants' “collective intelligence” (understanding and learning from multiple perspectives), which is why it is highly recommended. Thus different opinions are heard and the process of sensitization occurs until a final joint vision is brainstormed.

### 3.2.3 Determining the objectives

Alongside the vision, the same workshop organized with the Stakeholder group should be used to determine the **objectives** of implementing the planned smart village business model. Alongside objectives, it is beneficial to identify and establish relevant **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** that will measure progress toward each objective and milestone. Objectives are usually divided into strategic goals and specific objectives. The **strategic goal** is a planned intention (end result) of work preceded by achieving one or more specific objectives, also planned. **Specific objectives** are smaller parts of strategic goals. While strategic goals are long-term, specific objectives are usually set by a shorter deadline. In a practical example, the Hajdú-Bihar County Government of Hungary (HBCG) has set a strategic goal within the MTaV project.



Practical example of the strategic goal set by Hajdú-Bihar County Government of Hungary (HBCG) within the MTaV project.

The strategic goal is to explore the potential of the silver economy, strengthen local entrepreneurs and businesses in this area, and create a platform for the silver economy, thereby enabling the optimal combination of these two development areas to lead to effective cooperation.

All objectives must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART), which allows for better progress tracking. Stakeholders should be engaged in the goal-setting process. This participatory approach fosters buy-in and commitment. When brainstorming, focus must be on high-impact objectives that align with the vision. Setting too many objectives can lead to scattered focus and weaker results. Although there may be several strategic objectives, the recommendation is to keep up to three of them. For example, the Hajdú-Bihar County Government from Hungary (HBCG) has set only one objective, which helped them keep focus but still align with the vision. To better measure the progress, six KPIs are set<sup>3</sup>.

The Check-list may be a handy tool in this process (see Annex 3 for template).

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<sup>3</sup> MTaV D2.1.1 - Joint approach and methodology for pilot planning, implementation and evaluation





Practical example of how the Hajdú-Bihar County Government from Hungary (HBCG) set its objectives and KPIs.

Objective	KPI's	Description	Target value
OBJECTIVE 1 Piloting a new Digital Silver Economy Hub	KPI01	Municipalities involved in pilot testing	3
	KPI02	Training materials developed	1
	KPI03	Trainings organised	3
	KPI04	Participants in the training	30
	KPI05	General public reached (number of citizens)	300
	KPI06	Silver Economy Hub created	1

When planning support for the development of the smart village business model, local governments can set the following goals, in line with their authority:

- ✓ **Development and Support of Local Entrepreneurship.** Advisory services for entrepreneurs, such as mentoring, education, the role of local development agencies, and business support centres; ensuring access to financing - subsidies, microloans, EU funds).
- ✓ **Use of Technology in Business.** Digital infrastructure: internet, IoT, smart sensors; digital tools for agriculture, tourism, and crafts; e-commerce and digital marketing; platforms for collaboration and knowledge/experience exchange - e.g., e-learning, online consulting.
- ✓ **Local Partnerships and Citizen Participation.** Networking with other smart villages and social entrepreneurship.

### 3.2.4 Determining the measures and activities to be performed

A separate workshop with the stakeholders should be organized to determine the measures and concrete activities for each previously set specific objective. The **measures** relate to the sets of activities undertaken to achieve a desired outcome; they can be e.g. preventive, protective, control, restrictive, etc. measures. Thus, e.g. a protective measure in the smart village business development regarding the development of e-commerce may be implementation of robust cybersecurity protocols; on the other side, a restrictive measure in the same context may relate to limiting business types that can operate in certain areas. Further on, **activities** are concrete actions implemented under a certain measure to achieve the goal. They must be clear, have the designated coordinators (possibly also partners in the implementation) and the time-frame of their implementation, and include costs and funding sources alongside measurable success indicators.

The previously set strategic goals, specific objectives, measures and activities are usually presented in the tabular form of the Action plan.

The following practical example of organizing activities is given for developing smart rural entrepreneurship based on the principles of the silver economy. The Action plan template is given in Annex 4.



A practical example of the Action plan for developing smart rural entrepreneurship based on the principles of the silver economy.

<b>Goal 1: To develop smart rural entrepreneurship based on the principles of the silver economy</b>						
<b>S01. To ensure the implementation of a Digital Silver Economy Hub</b>						
<b>Measure 1.1. Ensuring adequate training for future entrepreneurs</b>						
Activity	Coordinator	Key partners	Indicators (KPIs)	Timeline	Monitoring frequency	Funding sources
Organization of workshops for potential entrepreneurs	Municipality	University, all stakeholders interested in training	The number of organized trainings The number of trained participants	2025	Every 3 months Every 3 months	Municipality budget, EU sources
One-to-one peer meetings	Municipality	Successful smart rural entrepreneurs, all stakeholders interested in training	The number of organized peer-to-peer meetings The number of trained participants through peer-to-peer meetings	2025	Every 3 months Every 3 months	Municipality budget, EU sources
<b>Measure 1.2. Ensuring infrastructural support for the future Hub</b>						
Activity	Coordinator	Key partners	Indicators (KPIs)	Timeline	Monitoring frequency	Funding sources
Ensuring premises for the Hub	Municipality	The owner of the potential property (if not the coordinating municipality), all stakeholders interested in becoming silver entrepreneurs	Ensured premises	2025	One-time, by the end of the envisioned period	Municipality budget, Regional budget, National budget, EU sources
Ensuring technical equipment for the Hub	Municipality	Internet and equipment providers, all stakeholders interested in	Internet connection installed	2025	One-time, by the end of the envisioned period	Municipality budget, EU sources, sponsors

		becoming silver entrepreneurs	The number of required equipment purchased		One-time, by the end of the envisioned period	
Measure 1.3. Ensuring networking for future entrepreneurs						
Activity	Coordinator	Key partners	Indicators (KPIs)	Timeline	Monitoring frequency	Funding sources
Collaboration with the existing smart rural silver economy hubs	Municipality	Existing smart rural silver economy hubs	The number of contracts signed The number of concrete collaborations ensured	2026	Bi-annually Annually	Municipality budget
Memberships in relevant business-support organizations	Chamber of Economy	Municipality XY	Internet connection installed The number of required equipment purchased	2026	One-time, by the end of the envisioned period One-time, by the end of the envisioned period	Municipality budget

### Tip!

When developing an action plan, it is crucial to recognize that unforeseen obstacles may arise during implementation, potentially causing delays.

One common challenge is the **public procurement process**, which can be time-consuming and administratively complex, especially in projects involving equipment purchases, construction work, or external services.

Together with the Action plan, risks for the implementation phase should be considered. Risk is defined as the possibility of an unforeseen or undesired event that could negatively affect the achievement of planned objectives. In

the context of Smart Village planning and implementation, identified risks may be operational, financial, or strategic in nature. Examples include a lack of interest or support from local authorities, insufficient cooperation among stakeholders, or limited availability of innovative ideas. Recognising such risks in advance allows for the development of appropriate mitigation strategies. The following example outlines identified risks along with corresponding mitigation measures designed to reduce their potential impact.



Practical example of how the Hajdú-Bihar County Government identified risks and the mitigation measures to address them<sup>4</sup>.

Risk ID	Description	Likelihood	Level of severity	Mitigation measures
1	The citizens' willingness to actively participate in the survey is also a factor to be considered. In cases of relatively low participation or willingness, further actions should be taken to make them understand the rationale behind the survey and the actual level of digital literacy.	Medium	Low	Proper communication from the first steps, direct involvement of municipality decision makers, and citizens

<sup>4</sup> MTaV D2.5.3 - Mid-term evaluation report

2	The lack of financial or human resources can also hinder the proper implementation of the schedule and/or content.	Low	Low	To avoid such difficulties, it is planned to revise the implementation process regularly.
3	Doubts about the role and potential of the silver economy in Hajdú-Bihar County.	Low	Medium	The compilation of baseline information, the outcomes of the recent development strategies, and national initiatives could support the efforts to overcome such doubts.

### 3.3 Implementation phase

This is the most “active” phase regarding the performance of the planned activities. It simply entails that the planned activities are performed by the designated stakeholders and possible partners in a determined time frame, with designated funding and measurable indicators. Thus, it regards the actual implementation of the activities set in the Action plan table.

### 3.4 Monitoring the Implementation

Monitoring is a structured and continuous process that begins once the Action Plan has been formally adopted and continues throughout its implementation. Its purpose is to track whether planned activities are being carried out within

the timeframes specified in the Action Plan. Monitoring is typically carried out by local authorities, who are responsible for ensuring that the plan is implemented in accordance with the defined timeline and that the key performance indicators (KPIs) are being met.

Continuous monitoring throughout the implementation phase enables the early identification of delays or challenges, allowing for timely adjustments and more efficient use of resources. It also serves as a practical tool for steering the implementation process and increasing the likelihood of successfully achieving the strategic goals defined in the plan.

To support this process, it is recommended to develop a tracking matrix that provides a clear overview of planned activities, responsible actors, deadlines, indicators, implementation status, and any notes or alerts related to progress.

In Annex 5, there is an example of a monitoring sheet.

### 3.5 Evaluation

Evaluation is a structured process aimed at assessing the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of planned and implemented activities within the Smart Village framework. It complements regular monitoring by offering deeper insight into whether the business support model is delivering the intended results. Evaluation also supports decision-makers by verifying whether the strategic document is aligned with the needs of local communities and situated within the broader development context. Through evidence-based analysis, it helps guide improvements and informs future planning.

In the context of the Smart Village Action Plan, evaluation should be conducted in three key phases: ex-ante (before implementation), mid-term (during implementation), and ex-post (after implementation). Ex-ante evaluation verifies the logic and relevance of the planned intervention before implementation begins. Mid-term evaluation assesses progress and efficiency during implementation and may inform necessary adjustments. Ex-post evaluation focuses on the long-term results and sustainability of the



intervention after implementation is completed. To ensure objectivity, impartiality, and professional standards, all evaluation phases—ex-ante, mid-term, and ex-post—should be carried out by independent external experts with relevant methodological and thematic expertise. External evaluators bring an unbiased perspective, strengthen the credibility of findings, and contribute to higher-quality recommendations.

Each evaluation should follow a series of key steps: defining the scope and objectives of the evaluation; selecting appropriate evaluation criteria and indicators; collecting and analysing relevant qualitative and quantitative data; consulting key stakeholders where appropriate; drawing conclusions based on evidence; and formulating recommendations. These steps ensure that evaluation is not only a reporting exercise, but a meaningful tool for improving implementation and informing future planning cycles within the Smart Village framework. By conducting the evaluation, the aim is to strengthen accountability, enhance transparency, and ensure the effective use of resources throughout all phases of the Smart Village business support planning process, ranging from situational analysis and strategic framework development to the preparation and implementation of the Action Plan.

Evaluation allows all involved stakeholders to reflect on progress achieved, identify implementation challenges, and extract lessons learned, thereby fostering a collaborative environment for continuous improvement. It also helps to identify best practices and effective approaches that can be replicated or adapted in other local contexts. It provides insights and evidence-based recommendations that support stakeholders in optimising the planning process and implementation efforts, while ensuring that all actions remain aligned with the overarching goals and values of the Smart Village concept.

Key steps that the evaluation process includes:

➤ *Document Review*

A thorough review of planning documents, including the Action Plan, financial reports, monitoring data, and other relevant materials, is conducted to

establish a baseline for evaluation. This step provides essential quantitative indicators for assessing implementation performance.

➤ *Interviews and focus groups*

Structured interviews and thematic focus group discussions are conducted with key stakeholders. These provide qualitative insights into how the implementation process aligns with strategic objectives, uncover perceptions, and identify factors influencing success or delay.

➤ *Progress Tracking*

By comparing findings from document analysis and stakeholder input, evaluators can assess whether the implementation is progressing in accordance with the plan and to what extent the planned goals and KPIs are being achieved.

➤ *Risk and Challenge Assessment*

Evaluation identifies operational, financial, and strategic challenges encountered during implementation, along with the mitigation strategies used. This step provides insight into the resilience and adaptability of the approach taken.

➤ *Good Practices and Lessons Learned*

A final component of evaluation is the identification of successful practices that can be replicated in other contexts, and lessons learned that inform future planning. These insights are crucial for institutional learning, continuous improvement, and scaling the Smart Village model.

A list of proposed interview questions intended to support the evaluation of the Smart Village Action Plan is provided in Annex 6.

## 4 Recommendations on how to plan smart village businesses support - a step-by-step approach

The step-by-step approach is based on the joint work of all project partners on the “More than a Village—MTaV” project. Although this approach provides a reasonable basis for every entrepreneurial theme, it is not universal and cannot be applied to every theme.

### STEP 1. Pre-planning phase

Gathering data, and prioritizing stakeholder collaboration to address local challenges and leverage rural advantages.



### STEP 2. Planning phase

**State-of-the-art analysis:** analyzing the selected topic through desk research and stakeholder focus groups to better understand challenges, needs, and development potentials.

**Determining the vision:** defining the overall long-term goal and desired future state for the smart village business support model through collaborative workshops with the stakeholder group.

**Determining the objectives:** definition of specific, measurable goals and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in collaboration with the Stakeholder group to track progress toward the vision.

**Determining the activities to be performed:** organisation of a workshop with stakeholders to define concrete actions for each objective, including designated coordinators, costs, funding, and success indicators.



### STEP 3. Implementation phase

Performing planned activities by designated stakeholders within a determined timeframe, utilizing allocated funding and measurable indicators.

**STEP 4. Monitoring activities**

Focuses on assessing the success of implemented activities against set KPIs to ensure the smart village model's effectiveness. Regular monitoring allows for necessary adjustments to improve outcomes and ensure the smart village grows strongly and sustainably.

**STEP 5. Evaluation process**

It supports decision-makers by verifying whether the strategic document is aligned with the needs of local communities and embedded within the broader development context. This is carried out through three key phases, each providing critical insights at different stages of the planning and implementation cycle.

Recommendations for planning smart village business support are based on the challenges, lessons learned, and opportunities from the pilot implementation in the “More than a Village—MTaV” project. Understanding them is essential for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and support organizations seeking to foster rural revitalization through local enterprise.

Here are the examples of possible challenges and potential solutions on how public authorities and other institutions involved in the smart transition can help and support.

***What if...***

...digital literacy among community members participating in Smart Village initiatives is low, and can reduce the effectiveness of digital tools?

Public authorities can:

- ✓ Provide support by offering subsidies or tax incentives to those who invest in digital upskilling.
- ✓ Develop partnerships with technology providers to provide local entrepreneurs affordable digital tools and services.

- ✓ Share digital co-working spaces with internet access and training support.

*What if...*

...proper promotion, valuable results, lessons, and success stories aren't shared widely?

*Public authorities can:*

- ✓ fund storytelling campaigns, creating platforms (like websites, newsletters, or social media channels), and organizing public events or exhibitions that showcase achievements.
- ✓ connect local entrepreneurs with regional and national media or invite them to speak at relevant conferences and fairs.

*What if...*

...there is unsatisfying communication with stakeholders?

*Public authorities can:*

- ✓ establish communication protocols with response timelines, regular check-ins, etc.
- ✓ ensure transparency and access to updates by forming, e.g., shared platforms.
- ✓ escalate non-responsiveness through formal channels and emphasize accountability.

*What if...*

...there is negative feedback from stakeholders?

*Public authorities can:*

- ✓ organise collaborative feedback meetings with stakeholders to address concerns constructively.
- ✓ reframe negative feedback so stakeholders can provide a possible solution. For example, ask "How do you propose we address this?"

- ✓ show stakeholders they are heard, and through discussion, joint solutions can be found.

#### *What if...*

...there is a lack of stakeholders' understanding of the urgency?

#### *Public authorities can:*

- ✓ Organise a meeting to communicate project timelines and dependencies, showing how delays impact broader goals.
- ✓ highlight benefits of timely participation and the possible risks, especially when public interest or funding is involved.
- ✓ offer a flexible timeline for input to reduce barriers to involvement.

#### *What if...*

...infrastructure is inadequate (e.g., poor internet connectivity, unreliable transportation, and limited access to energy)?

#### *Public authorities can:*

- ✓ invest in high-speed broadband to support digital services, remote work, e-commerce, and smart solutions.
- ✓ upgrade transport infrastructure, such as rural roads and public transport links, to ensure easier access to markets and supplies.
- ✓ provide subsidies or grants for local businesses to access alternative technologies (e.g., solar panels, delivery vehicles).
- ✓ prioritize rural areas in national infrastructure plans.

#### *What if...*

...there is limited access to finance and business support?

#### *Public authorities can:*

- ✓ refer entrepreneurs to available funding opportunities (e.g., Grants and Government Funding Programs, Public-Private Partnerships,

Cooperative and Member-Based Financing, Crowdfunding) and provide training programs.

- ✓ establish or promote rural-friendly grant and loan programs tailored to the needs of SMEs.
- ✓ set up local business support centers offering free advice, mentorship, and administrative assistance.
- ✓ encourage public-private partnerships to bring additional funding and expertise.

### *What if...*

...there are public procurement issues?

Public authorities can:

- ✓ provide entrepreneurs with support in the form of workshops on how public procurement works (e.g., how to gather all necessary documentation, where to apply for it, how to fulfill public procurement documents, etc.).
- ✓ provide experts who will provide training in digital literacy regarding the public procurement process, especially for the elderly and youth.

### *What if...*

...there is resistance to change because of traditional mindsets?

Public authorities can:

- ✓ engage community leaders, older, and trusted local figures - local heroes.
- ✓ support intergenerational programs where young people introduce digital tools while learning from the older residents.
- ✓ provide training that respects local knowledge and combines tradition with innovation (e.g., smart farming techniques that enhance traditional methods).

- ✓ organise workshops where good practice can be shared (where innovative solutions have improved life), showing the development potential, thus helping people relate to positive change.



## 5 Conclusions

Local governments willing to develop the smart village business model should follow the usual strategic planning approach but previously decide on the smartness dimensions which they are willing and capable to apply. It is not necessary to follow the textbook smartness dimensions, but to select those that apply to a certain territory depending on the context. However, it is essential to have a common understanding of the smartness concept - it does not include activities related only to application of digital solutions; rather it includes a much wider concept for planning inclusive, viable, environmentally friendly, community-oriented well-being solutions.

In the development of the smart village business model, it is highly recommended to follow all the four phases (Pre-Planning; Planning; Implementation; and Monitoring and Evaluation) and the related sub-phases explained in this tool as they greatly ensure that the usual errors are avoided.

Participatory approach used for working with the established Stakeholder group (SG) is essential for targeting the most pressing issues, for the quality of the reached solutions, and ensuring durability and sustainability of outputs, since the SG co-owns them. This is why the SG should be involved throughout the whole process of the development of the smart village business model.

A good state-of-the-art analysis ensures that the development of the smart village business model has been well grounded on the met challenges and needs, while using the detected development potentials. This is why it should be thoroughly performed using the various methods (e.g. desk research, interviews, focus groups, good practice analysis, etc.). SWOT analysis proves to be especially handy since it serves well in generating the vision to be achieved.

The vision can be defined in the short-term, mid-term or long-term time-frame. Short-term (e.g. 1 year) is usually not enough for setting the smart village business model, and long-term (e.g. 10 or more years) is not probable since most local governments strategically plan within their political mandate

time-frames. It is usual to set the vision for a mid-term time-frame (3-5 years), making it optimal for the smart village business model. However, it does not mean that complex projects cannot be planned even for longer terms, depending on their implementation complexity, political stability and challenges in the economic and social environment. Based on this, strategic goals as well as specific objectives are derived, alongside measures and activities gathered in a clearly defined Action plan followed by its implementation.

Once the implementation of the model has been set, the work does not stop there: it is necessary to monitor the very implementation process and to perform its evaluation, which serves for possible adjustments if something goes wrong. Finally, once the work has been done, it is handy to ensure that it is visible for others who want to implement a similar concept, since sharing of experiences is a way to ensure inspiration and transferability.

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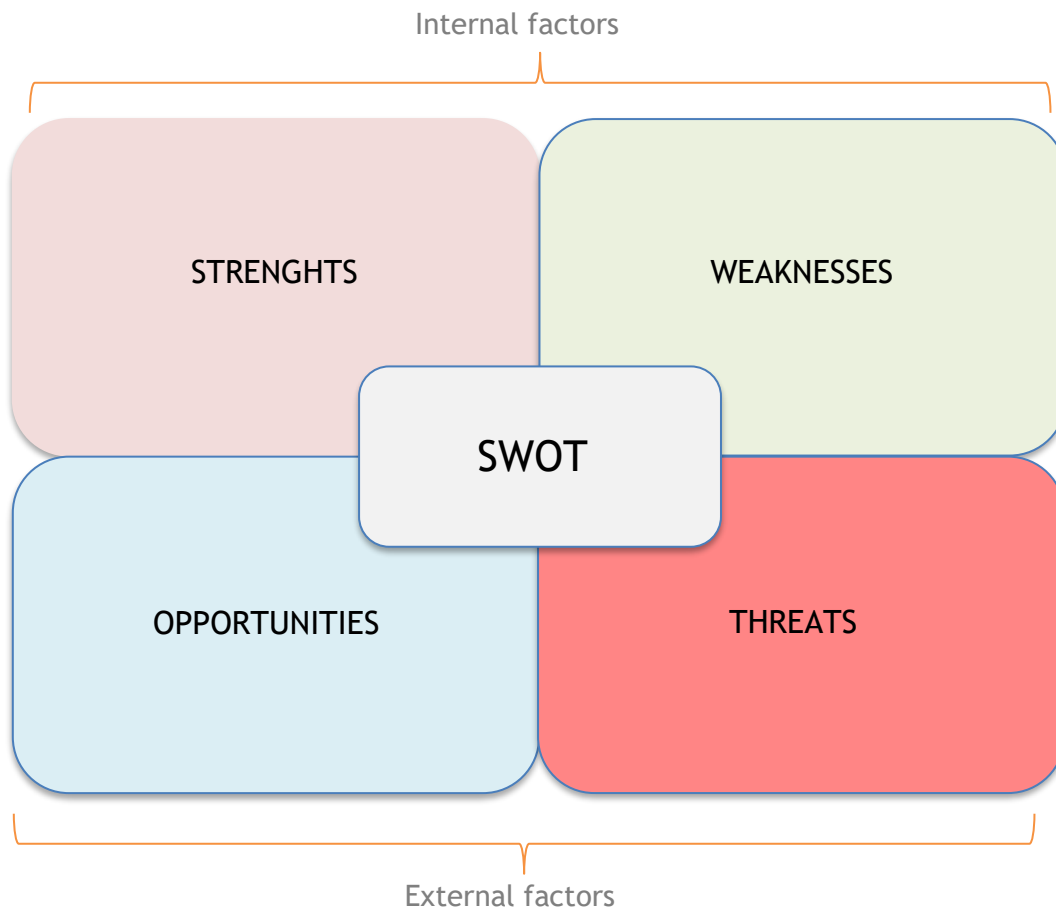
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## 7 Annexes - useful templates

### Annex 1. Form for analysing challenges, needs and development potentials

Challenges	Needs	Development potentials

## Annex 2. Template for SWOT analysis



### Annex 3. Checklist

Element to be checked	YES	NO	Comment
<b>1. Are all resources secured for a smooth planning process?</b>			
Are participants available and willing to participate in the planning process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are the participants aware of their roles and responsibilities in the planning process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do the participants in the planning process have the appropriate competencies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has the necessary budget been allocated for the planning process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is the necessary infrastructure in place to ensure a smooth planning process (e.g., IT support, premises, tools)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>2. Have procedures been established to monitor progress in the planning process?</b>			
Have clear indicators and methods been established to measure success?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have clear monitoring procedures been established for tracking progress?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have evaluation standards and procedures been defined to assess the results?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>3. Are the goals of the planning process clearly defined? Are they defined as</b>			
Specific	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

More than a Village

Measurable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Achievable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Relevant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Time-bound	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



## Annex 4. Action Plan Template

<b>Goal 1:</b>						
<b>SO1.</b>						
<b>Measure 1.1.</b>						
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Coordinator</b>	<b>Key partners</b>	<b>Indicators (KPIs)</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Monitoring frequency</b>	<b>Funding sources</b>
<b>Measure 1.2.</b>						
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Coordinator</b>	<b>Key partners</b>	<b>Indicators (KPIs)</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Monitoring frequency</b>	<b>Funding sources</b>
<b>Measure 1.3.</b>						
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Coordinator</b>	<b>Key partners</b>	<b>Indicators (KPIs)</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Monitoring frequency</b>	<b>Funding sources</b>

## Annex 5. Monitoring template

Goal	Specific objective	Measure	Specific task/action	Coordinator	Deadline	KPIs	Implementation status	Notes

## Annex 6. Suggested interview questions for evaluating the Smart Village action plan

Questions can be adapted depending on the stakeholder group (e.g. local authorities, business owners, NGOs, citizens):

### 1. Relevance

- How well do you think the Action plan reflects the actual needs and priorities of your community?
- Were you or your organization involved in the planning process? If yes, how would you describe the level of inclusiveness and transparency?
- Do you feel the objectives and measures defined in the plan were realistic and achievable?

### 2. Implementation

- How effectively have the planned activities been implemented so far?
- What challenges have you observed or experienced during implementation?
- Are you aware of any monitoring activities? Have findings been used to adjust actions?

### 3. Impact and Outcomes

- Have you observed any concrete changes or improvements since the implementation of the Smart Village Action plan began?
- Which activities or initiatives do you consider the most successful?
- Are there areas where the plan has had little or no impact?

#### 4. Sustainability

- Do you think the changes introduced are sustainable beyond the plan's timeframe?
- How do you assess the level of stakeholder engagement over time—has it increased, decreased, or remained the same?
- What would you improve in future planning cycles?

#### 5. Lessons Learned and Future Steps

- What are the key lessons learned from the Smart Village planning and implementation process?
- Are there practices or approaches you believe should be scaled or replicated in other communities?
- What support (technical, financial, institutional) would you need to improve future outcomes?