UPSKILL & RECONNECT

METHODOLOGY FOR LIVING LABS

A comprehensive framework for bridging generations through digital skills development and meaningful intergenerational exchange.

Overall Summary

The Living Labs methodology creates structured intergenerational learning environments where young people (15-19 years old) and seniors (60-70 years old) engage in meaningful exchanges around digital skills development. This approach sensitizes youth to the challenges seniors face in the digital world while preparing them to become effective mentors.

Structured Learning

Facilitated sessions with hands-on activities, guided practice, and collaborative problem-solving focused on digital competencies.

Bridge Building

Serves as a connection between initial training and subsequent workshops, establishing mutual understanding.

Challenge Identification

Identifies key digital challenges that will be addressed in later project phases through comprehensive documentation.

The methodology employs experiential learning techniques where participants actively engage with digital tools in real-world scenarios. Youth workers provide facilitation and support, while young mentors develop communication, leadership, and mentoring skills. Comprehensive documentation throughout the process captures insights, challenges, and progress, culminating in a list of the 30 most important digital challenges seniors face – a key deliverable that informs subsequent project activities.

By implementing this methodology across all partner countries with a minimum of 20 participants per country, the project effectively prepares young people to mentor seniors in developing digital competencies while fostering intergenerational solidarity and enhancing the skills needed for 21st century employment.

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Introduction and Purpose

The Living Labs methodology aims to create a structured framework for intergenerational learning spaces where young mentors (15-19 years old) and seniors (60-70 years old) engage in meaningful exchanges focused on digital skills development.

Mutual Understanding

Spaces where young people can understand the challenges seniors face in the digital world

Practical Learning

Environments where seniors can learn digital skills in a supportive setting

Preparation Grounds

For young mentors before they deliver structured workshops on digital skills

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Living Lab Framework Components

Structural Elements

Physical Setting Requirements

- Comfortable, accessible venue with proper lighting and seating
- Reliable Wi-Fi connection
- Projection capabilities for demonstrations
- Sufficient power outlets for participants' devices
- Arrangement of tables in small groups to facilitate interaction

Technical Requirements

- Various devices available for practice (smartphones, tablets, laptops)
- Backup devices in case participants don't have their own
- Pre-installed relevant applications for demonstrations
- Printed handouts as backup for digital materials

Time Structure

1 Living Lab per partner/country with up to 3-hour sessions including appropriate breaks

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Participants and Roles

Young Mentors (15-19 years old)

4-5 young mentors per 15 seniors and 1-2 youth workers

Responsibilities: Listening, demonstrating, supporting, documenting challenges

Seniors (60+ years old)

Groups of 8-12 seniors per Living Lab

Diverse digital literacy levels for balanced learning experience

Youth Workers

1-2 youth workers per Living Lab

Responsibilities: Facilitation, conflict resolution, maintaining focus, evaluation

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Living Lab Process

Preparation Phase (2 weeks before Living Lab start)

Youth Workers

- Prepare venue and technical setup
- Train young mentors on facilitation and empathetic communication

Young Mentors

- Receive training on mentoring skills
- Learn about age-related challenges

Seniors

- Identify personal goals for digital learning
- Bring personal devices if available

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Implementation Structure

Introduction and Needs Assessment

Objective: Build rapport and identify specific digital needs

Activities:

- Ice-breaking activities to facilitate introductions
- Paired discussions between mentors and seniors
- Group mapping of digital challenges faced by seniors
- Collective prioritization of top digital skills to focus on

Documentation: Creation of "digital challenges map"

Digital Basics Exploration

Objective: Establish foundational understanding of common digital devices

Activities:

- Exploration of various devices
- Identification of comfort levels and fears
- Group discussion on daily digital activities

Documentation: Individual "digital comfort zone"

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Implementation Plan

Phase 1: Individual Reflection (15 minutes)

Objective: Personal identification of digital challenges and comfort zones

1

Digital Challenge Assessment (10 minutes)

Participants work silently with pen and paper addressing key questions about digital difficulties and learning goals.

2

Digital Comfort Zone Assessment (5 minutes)

Individual completion of comfort scale (1-10) for different digital activities including phone functions, internet browsing, and online services.

Materials: Individual worksheets, pens, quiet reflection space

Focus Areas: Banking, communication, information finding, and daily life challenges

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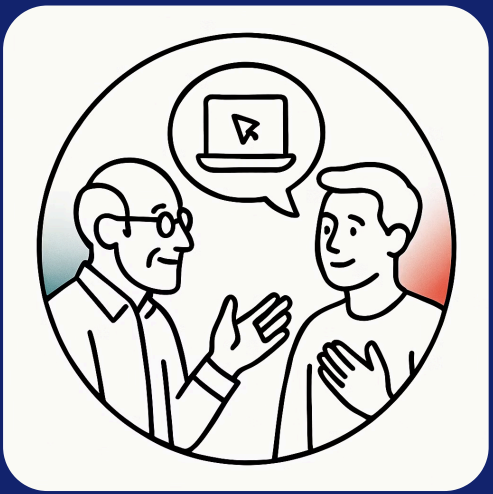
Phase 2: Paired Sharing (20 minutes)

Objective: Cross-generational understanding and shared priority identification



Intergenerational Pairing Structure

- 3-4 seniors paired with 1 young mentor
- Pairs seated in comfortable, private spaces
- 20-minute structured conversation + 5-minute documentation

01

Challenge Sharing & Understanding (10 minutes)

Senior shares top 3 digital challenges with guided conversation prompts and clarifying questions from young mentors.

02

Comfort Zone Exchange (5 minutes)

Senior demonstrates a digital skill they're comfortable with while young mentor identifies success factors.

03

Shared Priority Setting (5 minutes)

Pair agrees on 2-3 most important digital skills to focus on with documented reasoning.

Documentation: Paired worksheets with agreed priorities and reasoning

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Phase 3: Small Group Synthesis (35 minutes)

Objective: Build consensus among expanded perspectives

Groups of 4 Formation

2 seniors + 2 young mentors per group, mixing different comfort levels and challenge types with assigned facilitators.

Priority Comparison (10 minutes)

Each pair presents their top 2-3 priorities to create a combined list and discuss similarities and differences.

Challenge Deep-Dive (5 minutes)

Structured exploration examining root causes, universality, success outcomes, and urgency rankings.

Group Consensus Building (5 minutes)

Group ranks their top 5 digital skills priorities through discussion-based consensus with documented reasoning.

Break: 15 minutes included in this phase

Documentation: Group priority lists with detailed reasoning

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Phase 4: Expanded Group Discussion (25 minutes)

Objective: Broader perspective and refined prioritization

Groups of 8 Formation

4 seniors + 4 young mentors per expanded group, bringing together diverse experiences and perspectives.

Priority Presentation & Analysis (15 minutes)

- Each group of 4 presents their top 5 priorities
- Expanded group maps all priorities on wall/flip chart
- Identify overlapping themes and unique needs

Impact vs. Feasibility Assessment (10 minutes)

Structured evaluation using visual matrix: High/Low Impact × Easy/Hard to Learn

Documentation: Visual priority matrix with group consensus

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Phase 5: Whole Room Co-Creation (25 minutes)

Objective: Final prioritization and action planning

Priority Consolidation (15 minutes)

Each group of 8 presents their priority matrix to create a master list of most commonly identified priorities with whole room discussion.

Final Prioritization & Validation (5 minutes)

Democratic refinement process using dot-voting to indicate most important priorities with discussion and final adjustments.

Learning Pathway Planning (5 minutes)

For top 5 priorities, briefly discuss starting points, support needs, and how young mentors can best help.

Whole Group Assembly: All participants (16-20 people) in circle or U-shape with facilitator managing discussion and youth workers providing support

Documentation: Final ranked list of digital skills priorities with learning pathway notes

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Documentation Outputs

With all notes collected, facilitators will create a final Digital Challenges Map: Visual representation of most common senior digital challenges.

Digital Challenges Map

Purpose

Visual representation of digital challenges identified through the co-creation process, compiled from all session phases
(individual → pairs → groups of 4 → groups of 8 → whole room).

Structure

Central Theme: "Digital Challenges Faced by Seniors"

Primary Branches:

- Communication Challenges (email, messaging, video calls)
- Information & Navigation (internet browsing, search, verification)
- Security & Safety (passwords, scams, privacy)
- Online Services (banking, shopping, healthcare, government)
- Device Management (setup, troubleshooting, updates)
- Social Connection (social media, photo sharing, family communication)

Secondary Branches for each Primary:

- Specific challenges identified
- Frequency of mention (how many groups identified this)
- Urgency level (high/medium/low priority)
- Current comfort level (beginner/intermediate/advanced need)

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Compilation Process

01

Individual Phase Data

Extract most mentioned challenges from worksheets

02

Pairs Phase Data

Note shared priorities and reasoning

03

Small Groups Data

Include consensus challenges and impact rankings

04

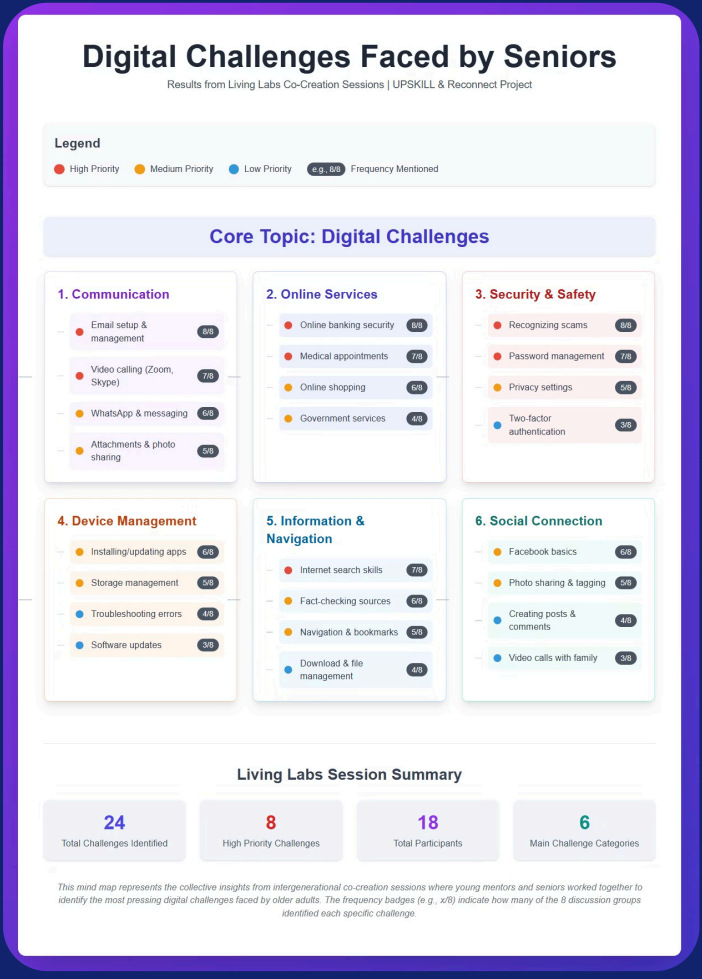
Whole Room Data

Highlight final prioritized challenges

05

Visual Creation

Use colors/symbols to show priority levels and frequency



EXAMPLE MAP:
Digital Challenges Map Example

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Pedagogical Approaches

Learning Principles

Experiential Learning

Hands-on practice with real-world applications that connect directly to seniors' daily needs and challenges.

Peer Learning

Seniors learning from each other as well as from young mentors, creating multiple learning pathways.

Need-Based Learning

Focusing on digital skills that are immediately useful and relevant to participants' lives.

Scaffolded Approach

Building from simple to more complex skills with structured progression and support.

Strength-Based

Recognizing and building on existing knowledge and capabilities of all participants.

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Facilitation Techniques

Core Facilitation Methods

Active Listening

Young mentors trained to truly understand seniors' concerns and respond with empathy and patience.

Clear Communication

Avoiding technical terminology and using jargon-free language that everyone can understand.

Show-Then-Practice

Demonstrations followed by guided practice, allowing participants to learn through observation and action.

Patient Repetition

Allowing for multiple attempts without judgment, creating a safe learning environment.

Positive Reinforcement

Celebrating small wins and progress to build confidence and motivation.

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Documentation and Assessment

Documentation Methods

Digital Challenges Map

A mind map summarizing challenges identified by participants, compiled by facilitators from individual, paired, and group notes.

Digital Challenges Map Example.png

LLL Report

A comprehensive report on the Living Labs, including key points, conclusions, and actionable insights.

UPSKILL LLL template.docx

Event Media

Images from the event capturing key moments and interactions; video testimonials are a valuable bonus.

Attendance List

A detailed record of participant attendance throughout all phases of the Living Lab.

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Outputs and Expected Results

Tangible Outputs

Digital Challenges List

Comprehensive list of digital challenges faced by seniors

Teaching Approaches

Documentation of effective teaching approaches for each digital skill

Learning Resources

Collection of senior-friendly digital learning resources

Workshop Plans

Plans for 5 workshops to be delivered by young mentors

Expected Results

Digital Competency

Increased digital competency among senior participants

Youth Understanding

Greater understanding among young people of seniors' digital challenges

Enhanced Skills

Enhanced mentoring and communication skills for young participants

Stronger Relationships

Strengthened intergenerational relationships and understanding

Prepared Mentors

Prepared young mentors ready to deliver structured workshops

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Risk Management and Contingency Planning

Potential Risks

Varying Digital Literacy

Different skill levels among seniors creating learning gaps

Technical Difficulties

Equipment failures or connectivity issues during sessions

Attendance Fluctuations

Inconsistent participation affecting group dynamics

Communication Challenges

Generational differences in communication styles

Learning Resistance

Reluctance to engage from either age group

Mitigation Strategies

Flexible Planning

Adaptable session plans for different skill levels

Technical Support

Dedicated technical support person available during all sessions

Clear Expectations

Attendance expectations and reminder system

Communication Training

Specialized training for young mentors

Safe Environment

Non-judgmental learning atmosphere

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Quality Assurance

Monitoring Mechanisms

Regular Check-ins

Ongoing communication with both young mentors and seniors

Session Observation

Youth workers observing and evaluating sessions

Material Review

Regular review of documentation materials

Feedback Collection

Systematic feedback after each session

Success Indicators

80%

Digital Confidence

Seniors report increased digital confidence

5+

Challenge Identification

Young mentors identify specific digital challenges

90%

Completion Rate

Participants complete full Living Lab cycle

Clear Workshop Topics: Identified for follow-up activities based on Living Lab outcomes

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Sustainability and Scalability

Knowledge Transfer

Process Documentation

Comprehensive documentation of all Living Lab processes and outcomes

Facilitator's Guide

Creation of a Living Lab Facilitator's Guide for future implementation

Training Materials

Comprehensive materials for new youth workers and young mentors

Adapting for Different Contexts

- Guidelines for rural vs. urban implementation
- Adjustments for different cultural contexts
- Options for various resource levels

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Conclusion

The Living Labs methodology offers a robust and adaptable framework for the UPSKILL & Reconnect project. It ensures meaningful intergenerational exchanges are fostered, with a clear focus on enhancing digital skills across generations. This approach not only addresses the digital literacy gaps for seniors but also cultivates essential soft skills in young mentors.

Structured Framework

The Living Labs provide a structured yet flexible environment for intergenerational learning, emphasizing practical digital skills development.

Empowered Mentors

Young mentors gain invaluable experience in understanding seniors' digital needs, while significantly enhancing their own mentoring, communication, and digital literacy skills.

Bridging Initiatives

These labs serve as a crucial bridge, linking initial training phases to the successful rollout of structured workshops and innovative "hackathons" for seniors.

By implementing this methodology, the project successfully prepares all participants for future engagement. It guarantees that the foundation laid during the Living Labs translates into tangible outcomes, leading to enhanced digital competency for seniors and stronger community bonds through sustained intergenerational collaboration. This forward-looking strategy ensures the long-term impact and scalability of the UPSKILL & Reconnect project.

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