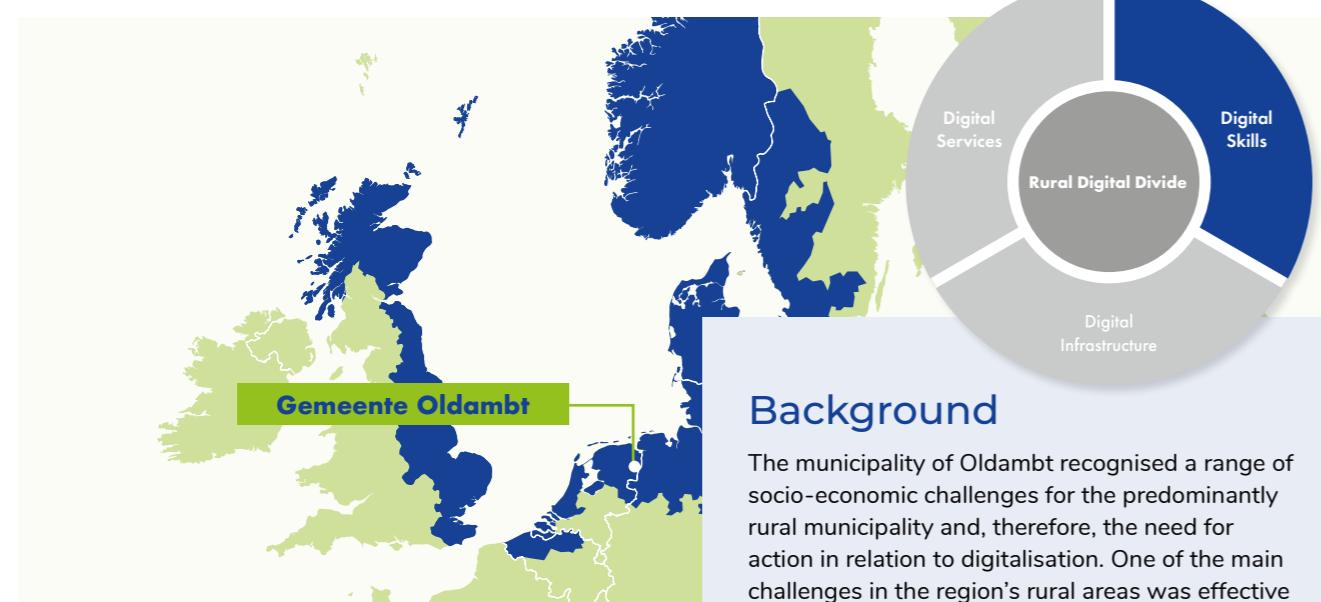


Gemeente Oldambt, NL

Smart public welfare solutions and in place support

The aim of the pilot was to raise awareness and improve the digital skills and competencies of citizens and enterprises in the municipality of Oldambt, as well as testing public welfare solutions using digital technology. Oldambt aimed to create a digital hub (a Broadband Innovation Centre) for local enterprises and start-ups to help improve digital business activities in the area. It was hoped that the Centre would become a place for all citizens, entrepreneurs, civil servants, unemployed, old and young, to get inspired, be engaged and participate in a range of innovation projects in the field of broadband and digitalisation. Topics to be covered included home automation, e-health, virtual reality applications, agri-projects and new energy solutions.



Designing and delivering the pilot

How has it been designed?

The Oldambt Verbindt Foundation and Groningen Internet Exchange (GN-IX) planned to co-create a digital hub, the Broadband Innovation Centre Oldambt, for local people, enterprises and start-ups to establish and improve digital activities in the area.

Who is it for?

The Broadband Innovation Centre was intended to be accessible by anyone with an interest in ICT and the target audience therefore included all residents and businesses in the region. It was meant to be an inspiring Centre for various Inter-net and ICT-related projects as well as local community initiatives.

How has it been delivered?

In 2019 the decision was taken to separate the project into two parts as it was felt residents required more information on the possibilities of digital technologies. The first stage was there-fore to provide a Broadband Information Centre, with a focus on awareness of the Digital Agenda followed by the second stage of the Innovation Centre, focusing more closely on businesses.

The Broadband Information Centre will focus on promoting and stimulating the use and opportuni-ties of broadband, becoming an educa-tion/information focused pilot project.

Outcomes of the pilot

What outputs have the pilot achieved?

The pilot gathered a significant amount of data on the opportunities for an Innovation Centre, which will be used for future phases of the project. The project has successfully increased awareness and interest in a Broadband Information Centre, created partnerships with schools and achieved buy-in from new political leaders for future phases which include the original Innovation Centre concept.

Unintended outcomes?

Although there have been delays to building the Broadband Innovation Centre, the pilot team have been able to get support from local schools, in addition to the local government partners, therefore creating a stronger local partnership. These schools are taking part in planning for the first phase, the Information Centre.

Lessons learned

Overcoming insufficient digital aware-ness: local government and key actors must be able to see the importance of the digitalisation programme in order to buy into developments such as an Innovation Centre. In this case they did not always see the importance, and were not moti-vated to act, which slowed progress for the pilot.

Joined-up interest: having individual buy-in from local actors is not enough, digitalisation must be on the

agenda at a high level to ensure constant attention and prioritization.

Getting the right space: requiring a specific building or physical space can slow a project. This pilot had ear-marked a suitable building, but it was sold before it could be purchased for the purpose of the Innovation Centre. Not being able to identify an alternative space slowed the pilot down.

Communication with stakeholders: it is important to spend a significant amount of time with prospective local users in order to engage their interests and ensure future use of the Centre.

Remaining pilot activities and future plans

The first phase, the Broadband Information Centre, is now being pursued, with a potential location identified in the centre of Winschoten, the main city in Oldambt (as of end of 2019). The pilot now includes support from the larger Province of Groningen, local schools and private companies. The local partners intend to investigate and build an Innovation Centre as a second, future phase to the Broadband Information Centre created as part of the CORA pilot. They remain engaged with CORA project partners and have also begun a partnership under COM3 (another NSR Interreg project) to see this vision become a reality. They intend to spend more time with local enterprises and the local authority to increase communication and user engagement, with a goal to make Oldambt the SME-friendliest municipality in the Netherlands.



Aerial view of Winschoten, the main city in Oldambt municipality, The Netherlands © Oldambt municipality