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# DigiRise<sup>↑</sup>

inclusive employment for women

## PROJECT METHODOLOGY

# The DigiRise Methodology

A practical framework for inclusive digital skills training for young rural women and mothers.

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## Project Methodology

A framework for inclusive digital employability, safety and self-directed learning

# 1. Purpose of the DigiRise Methodology

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The DigiRise methodology provides a practical framework for designing and delivering digital skills training for young women aged 18 to 30 from rural and economically disadvantaged areas, with particular attention to young mothers, single mothers, migrant mothers, women returning to the labour market, NEET women, and women with limited access to professional development opportunities. It is designed to support the wider DigiRise objective of strengthening digital employability, social inclusion, and resilience among women whose access to work and learning is often limited by geography, care responsibilities, low income, uneven access to training, and low digital confidence.

The methodology responds to a central finding of the DigiRise research: many women already use digital tools in everyday life, but this does not automatically translate into employment-related digital competence. A learner may use a smartphone, social media, messaging applications, online banking, video calls, and search engines, while still feeling uncertain about creating documents, managing files, using cloud tools, protecting personal data, joining professional online meetings, applying for jobs online, creating a website, or promoting a service through digital channels. The purpose of this methodology is therefore to help trainers and organisations bridge the gap between everyday digital use and confident, purposeful digital participation in society and employment.

DigiRise does not treat digital skills as isolated technical knowledge. It understands them as tools for autonomy, employability, economic participation, family support, and personal agency. For young rural women and mothers, digital competence can mean being able to prepare a CV, communicate professionally, participate in remote work, access online services, protect personal information, support children's learning, promote a small activity, or continue learning independently. The methodology therefore links every digital skill to a practical life or work outcome.

This methodology is also intended to guide educators, youth workers, NGOs, community organisations, and training providers who work with women in vulnerable positions. It gives them a clear approach for creating learning experiences that are short, practical, confidence-building, flexible, and grounded in women's real lives. It is not enough for training to be technically correct. For the DigiRise target group, training must also feel safe, manageable, relevant, and possible.

The methodology is directly connected to the DigiRise micro-learning course. The course is structured around six learning areas: digital empowerment and self-directed learning, basic office skills, online communication and collaboration, digital security and privacy, web development and design, and online marketing and analytics. These areas respond to the research findings and to the project's employability focus. Together, they create a learning pathway that moves from confidence and readiness to practical workplace skills, safe digital participation, online presence, and visibility.

The overall purpose of the DigiRise methodology is to ensure that digital learning is not delivered as a generic course, but as an inclusive pathway into confidence, employability, and participation. It starts from the learner's reality, builds skills step by step, uses real-life scenarios, and supports women to see themselves not as passive users of technology, but as capable digital learners, workers, creators, and contributors.

## 2. Methodological Rationale

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The DigiRise methodology is based on the understanding that digital exclusion among young rural women and mothers is not only a question of access to technology. Many women in the target group already use digital tools every day. They communicate through messaging applications, use social media, search for information, shop online, manage some banking tasks, and stay connected with family. However, the DigiRise research shows that this everyday use often remains separate from the digital competences needed for employment, self-employment, online learning, and professional participation.

This distinction is central to the methodology. A woman may be digitally active in her personal life and still lack confidence when asked to create a professional document, organise files, use Excel, share a cloud folder, join a formal video meeting, protect her personal data, create a digital CV, apply for a job online, or promote a small service. For this reason, DigiRise does not assume that frequent smartphone or social media use means that the learner is ready for digital work. The methodology starts from what learners already know, but deliberately guides them toward more purposeful, employability-related digital use.

The research carried out in Spain, Bulgaria, and Slovakia identified several recurring barriers. Women reported fear of making mistakes, low digital confidence, concerns about scams and privacy, limited time, care responsibilities, unstable internet in some rural areas, lack of suitable devices, and a need for simple, practical, flexible learning formats. Educators also reported that many young people from rural or disadvantaged backgrounds leave school with uneven digital skills, while employers confirmed that basic but reliable digital workplace skills are increasingly important for entry-level work.

The methodology therefore rejects a traditional, content-heavy training model. A course that only explains tools is not enough for this target group. The DigiRise approach must also address confidence, safety, motivation, time constraints, and practical application. Technical content is necessary, but it must be delivered in a way that reduces fear, respects learners' responsibilities, and helps them complete real tasks.

For this reason, DigiRise uses a confidence-first, task-based, micro-learning approach. Confidence-first means that the course begins by helping learners recognise their existing abilities, reframe limiting beliefs, and build trust in their capacity to learn. Task-based means that each lesson is connected to a practical action, such as creating a folder, exporting a document as PDF, building a budget sheet, writing a professional message, sharing a file safely, creating a

webpage, or preparing a social media post. Micro-learning means that content is divided into short, focused units that can fit around childcare, work, household duties, and limited learning time.

The rationale behind this approach is simple: learners are more likely to continue when they experience progress quickly, understand why a skill matters, and can apply it immediately. Small completed actions build evidence of capability. Over time, this evidence strengthens self-confidence and supports self-directed learning. The DigiRise evaluation confirms the value of this design logic: the micro-learning course exceeded its original participation target, with 581 learners completing a course and sitting the final assessment, and the strongest measured learning gain was around 52 percentage points across the completed courses.

The methodology is also grounded in the project's employability purpose. DigiRise is not a general digital literacy initiative. It is an inclusive digital employability pathway. Its goal is to help young women move from informal digital use toward skills that can support remote work, hybrid work, job search, self-employment, professional communication, safer online participation, and continuous learning. This is why the course sequence moves from empowerment and learning readiness to office tools, online collaboration, digital safety, web presence, and online visibility.

In methodological terms, DigiRise treats digital competence as both practical and developmental. It is practical because learners need concrete skills they can use in real situations. It is developmental because many learners also need to rebuild their confidence, learning habits, and sense of professional possibility. The course therefore teaches not only how to use digital tools, but also how to become the kind of learner who can keep adapting as digital work changes.

### 3. Core Methodological Principles

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The DigiRise methodology is built on a set of principles that translate the project research into practical learning design. These principles ensure that digital skills training is not generic, abstract, or disconnected from the realities of the target group. They guide how content is selected, how lessons are structured, how trainers communicate, and how learners are supported from low confidence toward practical digital independence.

The first principle is to **start from the learner's real life**. DigiRise learners are not empty vessels waiting to receive technical knowledge. They already manage responsibilities, solve problems, communicate, organise family life, support children, search for information, and often use digital tools informally. The methodology begins from these existing experiences and connects them to professional digital skills. For example, managing a household budget can become an entry point into Excel. Communicating with schools, doctors, or family members can become an entry point into online communication. Promoting a small local service can become an entry point into social media marketing and web presence. This approach reflects the



DigiRise finding that women are most motivated when digital learning is connected to real needs such as work, family life, safety, public services, and independence.

The second principle is to **build confidence before complexity**. The research shows that fear of mistakes, low self-esteem, anxiety around technology, and uncertainty about keeping up with training are major barriers for women in the target group. For this reason, DigiRise does not begin with complex terminology or demanding technical tasks. It begins with reassurance, recognition of existing skills, small achievable actions, and gradual progress. Confidence is not treated as something learners must already have before joining the course. It is treated as something the course must help them build.

The third principle is to **teach one practical task at a time**. Each lesson should lead to a concrete action that the learner can understand and complete. This may be creating a folder, writing a short professional message, exporting a document as PDF, building a simple spreadsheet, joining a video call, sharing a file, setting a password, creating a webpage, writing a social media post, or identifying search words for SEO. The task gives the lesson a clear purpose and gives the learner evidence that she can do something real. This is essential for learners who may not trust their own digital ability yet.

The fourth principle is to **use micro-learning deliberately**. DigiRise uses short, focused learning units because many learners have limited time, fragmented attention, care responsibilities, and irregular access to quiet learning conditions. Micro-learning does not mean reducing the quality or seriousness of the content. It means breaking learning into manageable steps that can fit into real life. The Module 1 learner guide explicitly frames micro-learning as a way to make learning possible when thirty-minute windows are easier to protect than long study blocks.

The fifth principle is to **use real-life scenarios and relatable stories**. DigiRise materials already use examples of women such as Marta, Elena, Lucia, and Ana to show how digital skills can be built step by step. These stories are not decorative. They are part of the learning method. They help learners see that digital progress is possible for someone with a similar starting point. They also reduce shame by showing hesitation, confusion, and imperfect first attempts as normal parts of learning. This is especially important because the research shows that women benefit from role models, peer support, and examples from similar rural or family contexts.

The sixth principle is to **make learning care-aware and flexible**. DigiRise learners may be mothers, caregivers, workers, jobseekers, or women managing several responsibilities at once. The methodology therefore avoids assuming that learners have uninterrupted time, a personal laptop, stable internet, or the ability to travel to training centres. Materials should be short, mobile-friendly, downloadable where possible, supported by printable guides or checklists, and easy to pause and return to. This principle responds directly to the research finding that care responsibilities, childcare, lack of time, and rural access barriers strongly affect women's participation in training.

The seventh principle is to **teach digital safety as a foundation, not an afterthought**. Across the research, women expressed concerns about scams, passwords, privacy, misuse of personal data, and unsafe online spaces. These concerns can stop learners from exploring online job platforms, digital public services, online banking, social media promotion, and remote work tools. DigiRise therefore places digital safety at the centre of learning. Safety should be taught through practical examples and repeated across the course, so that learners gradually develop both knowledge and trust in their ability to protect themselves online.

The eighth principle is to **connect every skill to employability or independence**. DigiRise is not a general technology course. It is a digital employability and inclusion pathway. Each skill should therefore answer a practical question: how can this help the learner find work, perform work, communicate professionally, access services, promote a small activity, support her family, or continue learning independently? This keeps the course relevant and prevents digital training from becoming abstract.

The ninth principle is to **support self-directed learning**. Digital tools change quickly, and no course can teach every platform forever. DigiRise therefore helps learners build the habits and strategies needed to continue learning after the course. Module 1 supports this through growth mindset, habit design, metacognition, active recall, and constraint-first planning. These tools help learners return after interruptions, understand confusion as part of learning, and break future digital challenges into manageable steps.

Together, these principles define the DigiRise learning approach. The methodology is practical, but not mechanical. It is supportive, but not patronising. It recognises barriers without reducing women to those barriers. It teaches digital tools through action, confidence, safety, and relevance. Its purpose is to help learners move from “I use technology sometimes” to “I can use digital tools to learn, work, protect myself, communicate, and create opportunities.”

## 4. DigiRise Learning Pathway

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The DigiRise methodology follows a progressive learning pathway. The course does not begin with advanced tools or technical terminology. It starts with confidence, self-understanding, and learning readiness, then gradually moves toward practical workplace tools, online collaboration, digital safety, web presence, and online visibility. This sequence is important because the project research shows that many women already use digital tools informally, but lack confidence when digital tasks become connected to employment, formal learning, public services, online safety, or self-employment.

The first stage of the pathway is **readiness and digital empowerment**. This stage is covered by Module 1, Introduction and Digital Empowerment. Its purpose is to help learners understand the DigiRise programme, recognise their existing skills, identify their personal reason for learning, and begin to see themselves as capable digital learners. Module 1 introduces tools such as the Competency Audit, the Belief Reframe, Habit Design, Metacognition, and





Constraint-First Planning. These tools prepare learners not only to start the course, but to continue when learning becomes difficult or life interrupts their progress.

This first stage is essential because many learners do not need only technical instruction. They also need to rebuild confidence, challenge fixed beliefs, and create a realistic plan for learning around family, work, and care responsibilities. DigiRise therefore begins by helping learners name the skills they already have, understand how everyday experience can translate into professional value, and approach digital learning with a growth mindset. This makes the later technical modules more accessible.

The second stage is **basic professional digital competence**. This stage is covered by Module 2, Basic MS Office Skills. Learners develop practical skills in operating systems, file organisation, Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. These are treated as foundational tools for remote and entry-level work, not as isolated software lessons. The module connects each tool to professional outputs such as organised files, CVs, reports, PDFs, household or work budgets, data sheets, and short professional presentations.

This stage gives learners the basic digital language of professional work. A woman who can organise files, prepare a clean document, export it as a PDF, use a spreadsheet, and present herself clearly has already moved from informal digital use toward employability-related competence. The methodology therefore treats Module 2 as a foundation for job search, administration, data entry, virtual assistant work, freelance support, and other realistic entry-level digital roles.

The third stage is **online communication and collaboration**. This stage is covered by Module 3. Its purpose is to help learners communicate professionally online, participate in digital meetings, use teamwork platforms, and manage shared files. The available Lesson 3.4 action sheet shows the practical nature of this stage: learners create a professional cloud folder, upload a file, set sharing permissions, test access, reflect on collaboration, and make a real commitment to move one important file into Google Drive.

This stage is directly connected to remote and hybrid work. Digital employability requires more than knowing how to use a computer. Learners also need to show up professionally in online spaces, share files safely, collaborate with others, manage versions, and communicate clearly. The methodology therefore moves from individual productivity to shared digital work.

The fourth stage is **digital security and privacy**. This stage is covered by Module 4. It responds to one of the strongest findings in the DigiRise research: concerns about scams, passwords, privacy, online fraud, and misuse of personal information can prevent women from participating confidently online. Digital safety is therefore not treated as a side topic. It is a condition for digital participation, employability, and autonomy.

In this stage, learners develop safe digital habits. They learn to recognise common threats, protect personal data, use stronger account protection, and make better decisions about what to

share online. This supports their ability to use job platforms, public services, digital banking, online communication, websites, social media, and remote work tools with greater confidence.

The fifth stage is **digital presence**. This stage is covered by Module 5, Web Development and Design. Learners are introduced to how websites work, how to create a simple WordPress site, how to apply basic design principles, how to write clearly for the web, and how to publish a simple website or page. The purpose is not to turn learners into advanced web developers. The purpose is to help them create a basic online presence that can support self-presentation, small services, local business activity, or professional visibility.

This stage is important because many women in the target group may have skills, services, products, or professional potential that remain invisible. A simple website or webpage can become a space where they present who they are, what they offer, and how people can contact them. The methodology frames website creation as an achievable step toward visibility, confidence, and opportunity.

The sixth stage is **online visibility and growth**. This stage is covered by Module 6, Online Marketing and Analytics. Learners move from simply having something online to helping people find it. They learn the basics of digital marketing, social media content, SEO, and simple analytics. The module focuses on promoting a personal project, service, or small business using accessible digital tools.

This final stage connects digital skills to economic agency. Learners begin to understand that online visibility can create opportunities, whether for employment, self-employment, local services, freelance work, or personal projects. They learn that growth online does not require perfection, popularity, or advanced technical expertise. It requires clarity, consistency, safety, and small improvements based on what works.

Together, the six stages create a coherent pathway: **readiness, basic tools, collaboration, safety, presence, and visibility**. The pathway reflects the DigiRise research and the project's employability goals. It starts where learners are, builds confidence and competence step by step, and leads toward practical digital participation in society and employment.

## 5. Standard DigiRise Lesson Model

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The DigiRise methodology uses a consistent lesson model across modules. This consistency is important because it helps learners know what to expect, reduces cognitive load, and creates a sense of safety. When learners face low confidence, limited time, and unfamiliar tools, a predictable lesson structure makes learning easier to enter and easier to continue.

Each lesson should begin with a clear practical promise. The learner should understand from the title and opening what the lesson will help her do. Titles such as “Creating Your First WordPress Site,” “Working Smarter with Excel,” “Collaborating in the Cloud,” and “Social Media



Strategies That Work” are effective because they are action-oriented and understandable. They do not present digital skills as abstract knowledge. They present them as useful actions connected to work, communication, visibility, or independence.

The lesson should then open with a relatable hook. The hook should connect to a real fear, question, or situation that the learner may recognise. For example, Module 6 begins the social media lesson by saying that the learner does not need thousands of followers, perfect photos, or to be an influencer. This immediately lowers pressure and reframes social media as something accessible. Module 5 uses similar hooks, such as “Good design is not about talent” and “You don’t need to know how to code.” These hooks are not decorative. They are part of the confidence-building method.

After the hook, the lesson should state the learning objective in simple language. The objective should explain what the learner will understand or be able to do by the end of the lesson. It should avoid academic or technical wording. For example, instead of saying “learners will acquire introductory knowledge of search engine optimisation,” the lesson can say, “you will understand how people find information online and how you can make your website easier to discover.” This makes the purpose clear and immediately relevant.

The core content of each lesson should be limited to a small number of essential ideas. DigiRise lessons should not overload learners with too much theory or too many steps at once. A good lesson usually contains three to five content sections, each explaining one part of the task. For example, the Module 5 lesson on how websites work explains what a website is, the three key elements of a website, how a website works in practice, and why websites matter for the learner. This structure keeps the lesson focused and prevents beginner learners from becoming overwhelmed.

Each lesson should include a realistic story or example. The DigiRise materials use examples such as Ana creating her first website, Elena publishing her first page, Marta improving her website, and Lucia becoming easier to find through search. These stories show progress in small, believable steps. They are especially important for the target group because they model what it looks like to begin with doubt and still take action. The story should not present instant transformation. It should show realistic movement from hesitation to first action, from confusion to clarity, or from invisibility to visibility.

The lesson should also include a reflection prompt. Reflection helps the learner connect the digital task to her own life. This is important because DigiRise does not teach tools in isolation. It asks learners to think about what they want to offer, what they want people to know about them, what they already do, what feels difficult, and what first step they can take. A reflection prompt can be very simple, such as “What is one thing you could share on a website?” or “What is one simple thing you could post this week?” These questions support self-directed learning and personal relevance.

The lesson should then move into a practical task. This is the most important part of the DigiRise lesson model. A lesson is successful when the learner does something, not only when

she listens or reads. The task may be creating a folder, uploading a file, exporting a PDF, writing a short text, creating a page, preparing a post, identifying search words, changing a privacy setting, or completing a simple worksheet. The Lesson 3.4 action sheet is a clear example: learners create a Google Drive folder, name it professionally, upload a file, share it with the correct permission, test the link, and send a short message to the person receiving it.

Each lesson should close with a short summary and a transition to the next step. The summary should repeat the most important learning points in plain language. The transition should help the learner see the course as a journey, not as disconnected lessons. For example, Module 6 moves from digital marketing to social media, then to SEO, then to analytics. Each lesson prepares the next one, so the learner feels progression rather than fragmentation.

The final element is commitment and progress tracking. DigiRise lessons should invite the learner to make a small, realistic commitment: to create one post, improve one page, organise one folder, complete one worksheet, or continue to the next lesson at a chosen time. This supports habit formation and makes learning more likely to continue beyond the video or guide. Progress tracking also matters emotionally. When learners can see what they have completed, confidence grows through evidence, not through abstract encouragement.

The standard DigiRise lesson model can therefore be described as: **practical promise, relatable hook, simple objective, focused explanation, real-life example, reflection, practical task, summary, commitment, and progress tracking**. This structure turns digital learning into a sequence of small, meaningful actions. It helps learners experience digital competence as something they build step by step, rather than something they either have or do not have.

## 6. Role of the Trainer or Facilitator

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The DigiRise trainer is not only a person who explains digital tools. The trainer is a guide who helps learners move from hesitation to action. This role is especially important because the DigiRise research shows that many women in the target group experience fear of mistakes, low confidence, anxiety around technology, privacy concerns, and uncertainty about whether they can keep up with digital learning. For this reason, the trainer's task is not only technical. It is also methodological, emotional, and practical.

The trainer should create a learning environment where women feel safe to ask basic questions, repeat steps, make mistakes, and practise without embarrassment. Many learners may have used phones, social media, or messaging applications for years, but may still feel insecure when digital tools are connected to work, documents, online meetings, cloud sharing, websites, or online marketing. The trainer should recognise this difference and avoid assuming that everyday digital use means professional digital confidence.

The trainer should communicate with respect and clarity. DigiRise learners should never be treated as incapable or behind. The course materials already use the voice of a warm mentor: someone who speaks directly, clearly, and practically, without talking down to the learner. The narrator voice in Modules 5 and 6 is described as supportive, grounded, real, non-corporate, non-academic, and careful not to assume the learner is behind. This tone should also guide live trainers, youth workers, mentors, and facilitators.

A DigiRise trainer should break each task into small steps. Instead of saying “upload the file and share it,” the trainer should model each action: open the folder, click upload, choose the file, check the name, click share, choose the correct permission, test the link. This step-by-step approach is visible in the Lesson 3.4 action sheet, where learners create a Google Drive folder, name it properly, upload a file, set access to view only, test the link, and send a short message to confirm sharing.

The trainer should also connect every digital action to a real-life purpose. Learners should understand why a skill matters. File organisation is not taught because it is a technical habit, but because it helps a learner work professionally and avoid losing important documents. Word is not taught only as software, but as a way to create CVs, letters, reports, and proposals. Excel is not taught as abstract data work, but as a way to organise information, calculate budgets, and demonstrate analytical ability. PowerPoint is not taught as decoration, but as a way to present oneself professionally.

The trainer should normalise mistakes. For many learners, the fear of doing something wrong may be stronger than the difficulty of the task itself. A good trainer makes mistakes part of the process: something to notice, correct, and learn from. The trainer should avoid phrases such as “this is easy,” “everyone knows this,” or “you just click here.” These phrases can increase shame. Better language is: “This may feel unfamiliar at first,” “Let’s do it step by step,” “You can always edit it later,” “The first version does not need to be perfect,” and “The goal today is to start.”

The trainer should support self-directed learning rather than create dependence. DigiRise aims to help women continue learning beyond the course. This means the trainer should not solve every problem immediately. Instead, the trainer can model how to search for help safely, how to read instructions, how to test one step at a time, how to use the one-sentence test, and how to return after confusion. Module 1 already introduces metacognition, habit design, active recall, and constraint-first planning as tools for learning more independently.

The trainer should also be care-aware. Some learners may join while managing children, household duties, work, or unstable internet. The trainer should not interpret interruptions or slow progress as lack of motivation. The DigiRise research shows that care responsibilities and lack of time directly affect participation, especially for mothers. Trainers should therefore support flexible pacing, allow repetition, encourage realistic commitments, and help learners identify small actions they can complete between sessions.

In group settings, the trainer should use peer support carefully. Peer learning can reduce isolation and help women see that others share similar fears and goals. However, it must be structured so that learners do not feel exposed or compared. Pair work, small group practice, shared reflection, and voluntary discussion can be useful. Public correction or ranking should be avoided. The goal is to create a community of practice where women feel encouraged to try, not judged for what they do not yet know.

The trainer should also help learners produce evidence of progress. Each completed task should be treated as proof of growing competence. A created folder, a formatted CV, a saved PDF, a simple spreadsheet, a shared file, a secure password, a first webpage, or a social media post can all become visible signs that the learner is moving forward. This is important because confidence grows when learners can see what they have done.

In summary, the DigiRise trainer is a facilitator of digital confidence, practical competence, and learner independence. The trainer explains tools, but also reduces fear, translates tasks into simple steps, connects learning to real life, supports reflection, and helps learners recognise their own progress. This role is central to the methodology because the success of DigiRise depends not only on what is taught, but on how safely, clearly, and respectfully it is taught.

## 7. Assessment Methodology

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The DigiRise assessment methodology is designed to measure practical progress, not only theoretical understanding. Since the project aims to strengthen digital employability, social inclusion, and self-directed learning, assessment should show whether learners can use digital tools in realistic situations. It should also capture changes in confidence, because the research shows that fear of mistakes, low self-belief, and uncertainty are major barriers to digital participation among young rural women and mothers.

Assessment in DigiRise should therefore combine knowledge checks, self-assessment, practical tasks, and evidence of completed outputs. A learner should not be judged only by whether she remembers definitions. She should be able to demonstrate that she can create, organise, share, protect, communicate, publish, or promote something using digital tools. This approach fits the overall DigiRise methodology, where each lesson ends with a meaningful action rather than passive consumption of information.

The first assessment element is **self-assessment**. Learners should regularly reflect on their confidence before and after completing lessons or modules. This is already visible in the worksheet structures for Modules 5 and 6, where learners are asked to rate their confidence on a scale from 1 to 5 before committing to an action. For example, learners reflect on how confident they feel about promoting something online, posting content, or helping people find them online.

Self-assessment is important because DigiRise is not only building competence. It is also helping learners notice that their confidence can grow. Many women may begin the course believing that digital tools are too complicated or not meant for them. When they compare their confidence before and after a lesson, they can see progress more clearly. This strengthens motivation and supports the identity shift from “I cannot do this” to “I am learning to do this.”

The second assessment element is **short knowledge checks**. These can be used to confirm that learners understand key ideas, basic terms, safety rules, and correct procedures. The course structure template includes a final quiz with a suggested pass mark of 70% and eight multiple-choice questions per course. This gives the programme a simple and consistent way to check understanding across course units.

The third assessment element is **practical task completion**. This is the most important form of assessment in DigiRise. Each lesson should ask learners to complete a real action connected to the skill being taught. In Module 3, for example, learners create a Google Drive folder, upload a file, set sharing permissions, test the link, and send a message to confirm access. This shows whether the learner can actually perform the digital task, not just explain what cloud storage means.

Practical tasks should be simple, observable, and directly connected to real life or work. A task may include creating a professional folder structure, exporting a Word document as PDF, building a basic budget in Excel, preparing a five-slide professional introduction, joining a video meeting, setting a secure password, creating a webpage, writing a short social media post, or identifying search terms for SEO. Each task should produce something the learner can keep, improve, or use later.

The fourth assessment element is **portfolio evidence**. Learners should gradually collect outputs from the course as proof of what they can do. A DigiRise portfolio does not need to be complex. It can include a CV, a PDF document, a spreadsheet, a short presentation, a shared folder, a privacy checklist, a webpage draft, a social media content idea, an SEO word list, or a simple reflection on analytics. These outputs make learning visible and can support employability because they show practical readiness.

Portfolio evidence is especially useful for learners who may lack formal qualifications or previous digital work experience. A woman who can show completed outputs can demonstrate motivation, reliability, and applied skill. This matches the research finding that employers often value basic workplace skills and willingness to learn, rather than advanced technical specialisation for entry-level roles.

The fifth assessment element is **reflection**. Reflection helps learners connect the task to their own life, work goals, and next steps. It also helps trainers understand whether the learner is building confidence or still facing barriers. Reflection prompts should be short and practical. For example: “Where could you use this skill in your daily life?”, “What felt difficult?”, “What helped you complete the task?”, “What is one next step you can take this week?” This supports self-directed learning and keeps the course connected to personal agency.

Assessment should be supportive rather than punitive. The aim is not to expose what learners do not know. The aim is to help them identify progress, practise safely, and understand what to repeat. Mistakes should be treated as useful information. If a learner cannot complete a task, the trainer should identify where the process broke down and provide another opportunity to practise.

At course level, DigiRise already uses pre and post quizzes to measure learning gains. The evaluation report states that learners entered with an average pre-assessment score of about 42% and completed with an average final quiz score of about 94% across 581 respondents, producing an average learning gain of around 52 percentage points. This provides strong evidence that the courses built the knowledge and skills they were designed to teach.

A complete DigiRise assessment model should therefore include four kinds of evidence: what learners understand, what they can do, how their confidence changes, and what outputs they produce. This combination is more appropriate for the target group than a traditional exam-only model. It respects the practical, confidence-building, employability-oriented nature of the project and gives learners visible proof that they are becoming more capable digital users.

## 8. Evaluation Methodology

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The DigiRise evaluation methodology is designed to assess whether the course is useful, whether learners gain knowledge and skills, whether they apply what they learn, and whether the course can contribute to longer-term employment and inclusion outcomes. Because DigiRise is an employability and digital inclusion project, evaluation should not focus only on attendance or course completion. It should also examine learning progress, practical behaviour, confidence, and the potential for future use of the skills in work, self-employment, education, and daily life.

The project uses the Kirkpatrick framework, which evaluates training across four levels: Reaction, Learning, Behaviour, and Results. This framework is appropriate for DigiRise because it allows the project to distinguish between what can be measured immediately and what requires longer-term follow-up. A short micro-learning course can measure learner satisfaction and learning gains within the project period, while employment outcomes and sustained career changes usually need more time to appear.

The first level is **Reaction**. This level assesses whether learners and stakeholders find the course relevant, accessible, and useful. In DigiRise, reaction can be measured through course completion, learner feedback, stakeholder feedback, multiplier event observations, and requests from organisations to use the materials. The evaluation report identifies completion behaviour as an important reaction signal: 581 learners completed a course and sat its final assessment, compared with the original target of 300. For a free, self-paced online course, this indicates that a significant number of learners found the course valuable enough to continue to completion.



Reaction should also be understood qualitatively. DigiRise is designed for learners who may have low confidence, limited time, and care responsibilities. A positive reaction is therefore not only “I liked the course.” It may also mean “the lesson felt possible,” “I understood the steps,” “I was not ashamed to try,” “the examples felt close to my life,” or “I can use this with the women I support.” Feedback gathered from stakeholders at multiplier events is especially useful because NGOs, educators, and youth workers can judge whether the materials fit the needs of the target group.

The second level is **Learning**. This level measures whether learners gained knowledge and skills. DigiRise measured learning through pre and post quizzes. According to the evaluation report, learners answered around 42% of items correctly at entry and around 94% correctly after course completion, across 581 final quiz respondents. This represents an average learning gain of approximately 52 percentage points.

Learning evaluation should remain connected to the course objectives. It should test essential concepts and procedures, not obscure terminology. For example, learners should understand how to create a folder, protect an account, export a file as PDF, identify a scam, use basic formulas, join an online meeting, share a document safely, or explain what SEO helps them do. The purpose of learning evaluation is to confirm that the course has built usable knowledge, not to create pressure or reproduce school-like testing anxiety.

The third level is **Behaviour**. This level examines whether learners apply what they have learned. In DigiRise, behaviour is already built into the design of the course because lessons end with named actions in real tools. Learners do not only watch content. They are asked to complete practical tasks such as setting up an account, adjusting privacy settings, writing a professional message, organising files, sharing a cloud document, or building a first webpage. The evaluation report recognises this as behavioural evidence within the course design.

However, behaviour should also be monitored after course completion where possible. Useful follow-up questions include whether learners have used the skills to apply for jobs, create or update a CV, join an online interview, support a child’s school task, manage a public service form, promote a small service, use a safer password, or continue learning online. This kind of evidence is important because DigiRise aims to support real-life digital participation, not only course performance.

The fourth level is **Results**. This level concerns longer-term outcomes such as improved employability, job applications, employment, self-employment, continued learning, increased digital confidence, or stronger participation in social and economic life. The DigiRise evaluation report is transparent that employment and career outcomes follow training by months rather than weeks, and therefore extend beyond the funded project window. The course will continue as a free maintained product after the project ends, with a short learner follow-up survey used to capture application and employment outcomes over time.

This distinction is important for honest reporting. DigiRise can strongly evidence immediate learning gains and course engagement. It can also show that the course design requires

practical action. However, long-term employment results should not be overstated before they are directly measured. Instead, they should be presented as a continuing impact area, supported by follow-up surveys, partner monitoring, stakeholder feedback, and examples of how learners or organisations use the materials after the project.

Evaluation should also include indicators that reflect the specific barriers identified in the research. Since the DigiRise research shows that confidence, safety concerns, care responsibilities, and access limitations affect participation, evaluation should ask more than “Did the learner finish?” It should also ask whether the learner felt more confident, whether the format was manageable, whether the lesson length worked, whether the instructions were clear, whether the materials could be used on a phone, and whether the learner felt able to repeat the task independently.

A complete DigiRise evaluation system should therefore combine quantitative and qualitative evidence. Quantitative indicators may include enrolments, completions, quiz scores, learning gains, number of practical tasks completed, number of certificates issued, number of organisations using the materials, and number of learners reached after dissemination. Qualitative indicators may include learner reflections, trainer observations, stakeholder feedback, examples of portfolio outputs, confidence changes, and follow-up stories of use in work, learning, or everyday life.

The evaluation methodology should remain aligned with the values of the project. It should be rigorous, but not punitive. It should provide evidence of quality, but also help improve the course. It should recognise that for a learner with low confidence, completing a first online task, sharing a file safely, joining a meeting, or publishing a first webpage may be a meaningful behavioural result. In DigiRise, evaluation is not only about proving impact to funders. It is also about understanding whether the learning pathway truly helps women move from uncertainty toward confidence, competence, and participation.

## 9. Inclusion and Accessibility

### Methodology

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The DigiRise methodology is designed for learners whose access to digital education may be limited by geography, income, care responsibilities, confidence, language, device availability, internet stability, or previous learning experiences. Inclusion is therefore not treated as an additional feature of the course. It is a central design condition. If the course is not accessible to women with limited time, low confidence, shared devices, or unstable internet, it will not reach the learners DigiRise was created to support.

The research shows that many young rural women and mothers are motivated to learn, but face practical and emotional barriers that affect participation. These include lack of time, childcare responsibilities, fear of mistakes, concerns about privacy and scams, limited access to suitable



devices, unstable internet, and previous experiences of feeling left behind by digitalisation. The methodology responds to these barriers by making learning short, flexible, practical, mobile-friendly, and emotionally safe.

Accessibility begins with **format**. DigiRise materials should be usable in short learning windows. Lessons should not require long uninterrupted study sessions. A learner should be able to complete one small unit, pause, and return later without losing the learning thread. This is especially important for mothers and caregivers, whose learning time may depend on children's routines, work schedules, household responsibilities, or internet availability.

The course should also be **mobile-first**. The research confirms that many women use smartphones regularly, while access to laptops or stable broadband may be uneven. This means that videos, worksheets, quizzes, and guides should be readable and usable on a phone. Pages should be simple, navigation should be clear, text should not be too dense, and practical tasks should explain when a laptop is helpful but also offer alternatives where possible.

DigiRise materials should support **low-bandwidth and offline use** where possible. Learners in rural areas may not always have reliable internet. For this reason, the methodology recommends downloadable guides, printable worksheets, checklists, screenshots, and short written summaries that can be used even when internet access is unstable. The policy report specifically notes women's preference for offline materials, printed step-by-step guides, downloadable resources, and mobile-friendly formats in Spain, Bulgaria, and Slovakia.

Accessibility also depends on **language and tone**. The course should use simple, direct language without becoming childish. It should avoid unnecessary technical terms, or explain them immediately through examples. Learners should not be expected to already know the vocabulary of digital work. For example, "cloud storage" should be explained as files living online and being accessible from different devices. "SEO" should be explained as helping people find your website when they search online. The purpose is not to simplify the learner, but to simplify the path into the skill.

The methodology also requires **visual and step-by-step support**. Screenshots, short demonstrations, checklists, examples of good and bad file names, sample posts, sample CV sections, and practical templates help learners understand what to do. The Lesson 3.4 action sheet is a good example of this approach because it gives a concept recap, clear file organisation rules, examples of file names, sharing permission levels, a practical exercise, reflection, and a final commitment.

Inclusion also means designing for **emotional safety**. Some learners may feel ashamed to ask basic questions or worried that others will judge them. The methodology therefore avoids public ranking, unnecessary comparison, rushed instruction, or language that suggests learners are behind. Mistakes should be normalised as part of digital learning. Learners should be reminded that first attempts do not need to be perfect and that digital confidence grows through repeated small actions.

The course should also support **different starting levels**. Some learners may already use social media confidently but struggle with files and documents. Others may know Word but be afraid of online safety. Others may be interested in marketing but not yet ready to build a website. The pathway should be structured enough to guide progression, but flexible enough for learners and trainers to revisit lessons, repeat tasks, or focus on priority areas.

For group delivery, inclusion requires careful facilitation. Peer learning can be powerful, but only when it is safe. Learners should be encouraged to share experiences voluntarily, practise in pairs or small groups, and support each other without comparison. Trainers should watch for learners who remain silent, fall behind, or avoid tasks because of fear, and should offer support without exposing them.

Accessibility also means recognising that learners may use **shared or family devices**. The methodology should include guidance on saving work safely, creating folders, using strong passwords, logging out of accounts, protecting personal documents, and separating professional files from family or personal files. This is especially important for women who do not have a private laptop or who share a phone or computer with children or relatives.

The DigiRise methodology should also support **local adaptation**. The core course can be shared across countries, but examples, platforms, support channels, and delivery formats may need to change depending on the local context. A rural learner in Spain, Bulgaria, or Slovakia may face similar barriers, but the available community spaces, public services, job platforms, languages, and employer expectations may differ. Trainers and partner organisations should therefore adapt examples and support mechanisms while keeping the same methodological principles.

Inclusion should be monitored, not assumed. The project should check whether the course reaches women with greater barriers, not only those who are already motivated and digitally active. Evaluation should therefore ask whether the learning format worked for mothers, whether mobile access was sufficient, whether instructions were clear, whether the pace felt manageable, and whether learners with low confidence felt supported. The policy report recommends monitoring both quantitative and qualitative indicators, including confidence, perceived safety, usefulness, accessibility, and relevance to daily life and employment.

In summary, the DigiRise inclusion and accessibility methodology is based on one principle: the course must fit the learner's reality, not the other way around. Digital learning should be short enough to enter, clear enough to follow, safe enough to try, practical enough to matter, and flexible enough to survive real life. This is what allows young rural women and mothers to move from digital participation at the margins toward confident and purposeful digital use.

## 10. Methodological Summary

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The DigiRise methodology is a practical, inclusive, and confidence-building approach to digital skills education for young rural women and mothers. It is designed for learners who may already use digital tools in everyday life, but who do not yet feel confident using them for employment, online learning, professional communication, public services, digital safety, or self-employment. The methodology therefore focuses on the transition from informal digital use to purposeful, employability-related digital competence.

The central idea of the methodology is that digital learning must feel safe, useful, and possible. For many learners in the DigiRise target group, the barrier is not lack of motivation. The research shows that women want to learn, work, support their families, promote small activities, use online services, and become more independent. The problem is that existing learning opportunities often do not match their time, confidence level, care responsibilities, access to devices, or need for practical relevance.

For this reason, DigiRise uses a confidence-first approach. Confidence is not treated as a personal quality that learners must bring with them. It is treated as an outcome that the course helps build. Learners gain confidence by completing small, meaningful actions: creating a folder, writing a professional message, exporting a document, building a simple spreadsheet, sharing a file, protecting an account, creating a webpage, or preparing a social media post. Each completed task becomes evidence that the learner is capable of using digital tools.

The methodology is also task-based. DigiRise does not teach digital tools as abstract software. It teaches them through real situations connected to work, family, safety, communication, and visibility. Word is connected to CVs and professional documents. Excel is connected to budgets and simple data organisation. Google Drive is connected to collaboration and file sharing. Digital safety is connected to scams, passwords, and personal data. WordPress is connected to creating an online presence. Social media, SEO, and analytics are connected to being seen and improving what works online.

Micro-learning is another defining element of the methodology. DigiRise lessons are short, focused, and designed around one clear skill or action. This structure responds to the realities of mothers and women with fragmented time, care responsibilities, unstable schedules, or limited access to long formal training. Micro-learning allows learners to make progress in small steps without needing perfect conditions. It also reduces cognitive overload and makes repetition easier.

The learning pathway is progressive. It starts with digital empowerment, self-belief, and learning readiness. It then moves to basic office skills, online communication and collaboration, digital security and privacy, web development and design, and finally online marketing and analytics. This sequence reflects the project logic: learners first need to believe that learning is possible, then build practical digital foundations, then use those skills for collaboration, safety, online presence, visibility, and employability.

The methodology also gives a central role to the trainer or facilitator. Trainers are not only technical instructors. They are confidence-builders who create a safe learning environment,



explain clearly, normalise mistakes, break tasks into steps, and connect digital tools to real-life purposes. Their role is especially important because the research shows that fear of mistakes, low confidence, and anxiety around technology are major barriers to participation.

Assessment in DigiRise is practical and supportive. It combines self-assessment, knowledge checks, practical tasks, portfolio outputs, and reflection. The goal is to measure what learners understand, what they can do, how their confidence changes, and what evidence of progress they produce. This is more appropriate than an exam-only model because DigiRise is concerned with applied digital competence, not only memorised information.

At project level, evaluation follows the Kirkpatrick framework: Reaction, Learning, Behaviour, and Results. DigiRise has strong evidence at the Reaction and Learning levels, including 581 course completions against a target of 300 and an average learning gain of about 52 percentage points across completed courses. Behaviour is partly evidenced through the action-based design of the lessons, while longer-term employment and career results require follow-up beyond the project window.

Overall, the DigiRise methodology can be summarised as follows: **short, practical, confidence-building learning experiences that start from women's real lives and lead step by step toward digital employability, safety, self-directed learning, online presence, and economic participation.**

The methodology is built on seven commitments: start from lived reality, build confidence before complexity, teach one practical task at a time, use real-life scenarios, make learning flexible and care-aware, connect every skill to employability or independence, and measure progress through action and practical outputs. This makes DigiRise more than a digital skills course. It is an inclusive learning pathway that helps young rural women and mothers participate in digital transformation with confidence, dignity, and agency.

## 11. Applying the Methodology in Practice

The DigiRise methodology is intended to be used by trainers, youth workers, educators, NGOs, community organisations, and project partners who support young rural women and mothers in developing digital skills. It should guide both the design of learning materials and the way the course is delivered. The methodology is not limited to the online platform. It can also be applied in workshops, blended learning sessions, mentoring programmes, community-based learning spaces, and local dissemination activities.

In practice, the first step is to understand the learner's starting point. Trainers and organisations should not assume that all learners begin from the same level. Some women may use social media every day but struggle with files and documents. Others may know how to use Word but feel unsafe online. Some may be confident on a phone but uncomfortable on a laptop. Others may have strong life and work experience but lack the language to describe it professionally. For



this reason, each learning process should begin with a simple orientation, confidence check, and needs assessment.

The second step is to connect learning to a meaningful goal. DigiRise learners should always understand why a skill matters. A lesson on file organisation should be connected to remote work, job applications, client communication, or avoiding lost documents. A lesson on Excel should be connected to budgeting, tracking information, or administrative work. A lesson on online safety should be connected to protecting money, identity, family information, and professional opportunities. When the purpose is clear, learning becomes more relevant and motivation increases.

The third step is to deliver learning in small, manageable units. Trainers should avoid long explanations before practice. Each session should focus on one practical outcome. For example, one session can focus on creating and saving a professional document. Another can focus on exporting it as PDF. Another can focus on sharing it safely. This structure helps learners experience progress quickly and prevents overload.

The fourth step is to use demonstration followed by guided practice and independent action. A DigiRise session should not rely only on explanation. The trainer first demonstrates the task slowly. Then the group repeats it together. Finally, learners complete the task independently or with light support. This gradual release of responsibility helps learners move from watching to doing, and from doing with help to doing with confidence.

The fifth step is to include reflection after each task. Reflection does not need to be long or abstract. It can be a short question: “Where could you use this?”, “What felt difficult?”, “What helped you complete it?”, “What is one situation where this skill could save you time or help you professionally?” Reflection helps learners connect the digital action to their own lives and strengthens self-directed learning.

The sixth step is to make progress visible. Learners should see what they have completed. This can happen through checklists, completed worksheets, saved files, screenshots, portfolio folders, certificates, badges, or simple progress trackers. Visible progress is especially important for learners with low confidence because it turns improvement into evidence. Instead of only hearing encouragement, the learner can see proof that she has completed real digital tasks.

The seventh step is to adapt delivery to the local context. The same DigiRise methodology can be used in Spain, Bulgaria, Slovakia, or other countries, but examples, platforms, language, timing, and support systems may need adjustment. A local organisation may deliver the course through evening workshops, WhatsApp support, community centre sessions, school-based digital hubs, mothers’ groups, or independent online learning. The format can change, but the principles should remain the same: practical, safe, flexible, confidence-building, and linked to real-life outcomes.

The eighth step is to involve stakeholders where possible. Employers, local authorities, educators, community centres, women’s organisations, and youth workers can help make the

learning pathway more useful and sustainable. Employers can explain which basic digital tasks matter at work. Community organisations can provide trusted spaces. Educators can support learning habits and progression. Local authorities can help with access to devices, internet, or venues. This reflects the DigiRise research conclusion that digital inclusion is an ecosystem issue, not something one actor can solve alone.

The ninth step is to follow up after learning. The course should not end with the final lesson. Learners should be encouraged to use their outputs: send the CV, apply for a job, update a profile, share a webpage, post about a service, practise a video call, or continue with another online course. Follow-up can be done through a short survey, mentoring message, group discussion, or local support session. This is especially important because longer-term employment and career results often appear after the project window, not immediately after course completion.

Applying the DigiRise methodology in practice therefore means turning every lesson into a supported action. The learner should not leave only with information. She should leave with something done, something saved, something understood, and one realistic next step. This is how the methodology turns digital skills training into a pathway for confidence, employability, and participation.

## 12. Quality Standards for DigiRise Learning Materials

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All DigiRise learning materials should follow a consistent quality standard so that the course remains practical, accessible, and aligned with the needs of young rural women and mothers. Each lesson should have one clear purpose, one realistic learning outcome, and one practical action that the learner can complete. The material should avoid unnecessary theory and should always connect the digital skill to a real-life or employability-related situation, such as preparing a CV, organising files, joining a video meeting, protecting personal data, creating a webpage, or promoting a small service online.

The language of the materials should be simple, direct, and respectful. Simplicity should not mean childishness. The learner should be addressed as a capable adult who may be unfamiliar with a tool, but who already has experience, responsibilities, and transferable skills. Technical terms should be explained through concrete examples. For example, cloud storage can be explained as a way to keep files online so they are accessible from different devices, while SEO can be explained as helping people find a website when they search online. This approach is already visible in the DigiRise materials, especially in the practical structure of the learner guides and action sheets.

Each lesson should include a clear structure: a relatable opening, a simple objective, focused explanation, a realistic story or example, a reflection prompt, a practical task, and a short

commitment. This structure is important because it helps learners move from understanding to action. The DigiRise module outlines for web development and online marketing already use this model through hooks, learning objectives, core content, stories, reflection prompts, worksheet focus, and workbook focus.

Quality should also be judged by usability. A lesson is not successful only because the information is correct. It is successful when a learner with limited confidence can understand it, follow it, complete the task, and see why it matters. Materials should therefore include screenshots, examples, checklists, short explanations, visible progress markers, and practical outputs. Every worksheet or action sheet should help the learner produce something useful, such as a file, message, document, post, page, plan, checklist, or reflection.

A final quality standard is alignment with the DigiRise research findings. The materials should respond directly to the barriers identified in Spain, Bulgaria, and Slovakia: low confidence, fear of mistakes, care responsibilities, limited time, safety concerns, unstable internet, and the need for practical, flexible, mobile-friendly learning. If a lesson is too abstract, too long, too technical, or disconnected from women's real lives, it does not meet the DigiRise methodological standard.

## 13. Adaptation and Localisation Guidelines

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The DigiRise methodology is designed to be shared and reused, but it should not be applied mechanically in every context. The core principles should remain stable, while examples, platforms, language, timing, and support structures may be adapted to the local reality. Young rural women and mothers in Spain, Bulgaria, Slovakia, or another country may face similar barriers, but the available services, job opportunities, digital platforms, public systems, community spaces, and cultural expectations may differ.

Localisation should begin with the learner's reality. Trainers and organisations should ask what devices women actually use, what internet access they have, what times they can learn, what digital tasks matter most to them, and what local employment or self-employment opportunities are realistic. In one context, the most relevant example may be applying for remote administrative work. In another, it may be promoting handmade products, managing bookings through social media, accessing public services, or supporting children's school communication.

The course examples should therefore be adapted without changing the methodological logic. A story about a woman creating a website for handmade products can become a story about a woman promoting childcare services, beauty services, local food, translation support, administrative assistance, or another locally relevant activity. A lesson on professional communication can use examples from local employers, NGOs, schools, municipalities, or online clients. The aim is to keep the learning recognisable and useful.



Language localisation is also important. Materials should be translated or adapted into the learner's language using clear and natural wording. Literal translation is not enough if the result sounds formal, technical, or distant. The tone should remain supportive, practical, and respectful. Instructions should be tested with real users where possible, especially women with lower digital confidence, to check whether the steps are understandable and the pace is manageable.

Localisation should also include delivery format. In some communities, learners may prefer self-paced online learning. In others, a blended format with local workshops, WhatsApp support, printed materials, or community-based sessions may work better. The DigiRise policy report shows strong preference for blended, mobile-first, short, practical formats, with offline and printed support where needed. The methodology should therefore allow flexible delivery while protecting the same core learning approach: confidence first, task based, practical, safe, and linked to employability.

## 14. Sustainability and Replicability

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The DigiRise methodology is designed to remain useful beyond the project period. Its value lies not only in the course itself, but in the model it offers to other organisations working with young women, mothers, rural communities, disadvantaged learners, and youth employability. The methodology can be used by NGOs, youth workers, community centres, women's organisations, schools, local authorities, employment services, and training providers who want to deliver beginner digital skills in a more inclusive and practical way.

Sustainability depends on keeping the course materials accessible, updated, and easy to reuse. Digital tools change, so partners and future users should periodically review lesson content, screenshots, platform steps, safety guidance, and examples. However, the core methodology will remain relevant even when specific tools evolve. Confidence building, practical tasks, micro-learning, digital safety, self-directed learning, and employability links are not tied to one platform. They can be applied to new tools and new labour market needs.

Replicability requires that the methodology be clear enough for non-expert trainers to use. A community facilitator should be able to take the lesson model and apply it without needing to be a high-level digital specialist. This is why the methodology includes lesson structures, trainer guidance, action tasks, reflection prompts, assessment approaches, and quality standards. The aim is to make the approach transferable, not dependent on one expert or one organisation.

The project evaluation also supports sustainability. The micro-learning course exceeded the original target, with 581 learners completing a course and sitting the final assessment, compared with a target of 300. The evaluation also showed a strong measured learning gain, with average results increasing from about 42% at entry to about 94% after completion. This evidence can help partners and stakeholders justify continued use of the course and methodology after the funded period.

For sustainability, partners should also encourage organisations to integrate DigiRise into existing activities. The course can be used in mother support groups, career guidance programmes, women's entrepreneurship initiatives, youth employability workshops, rural learning hubs, community digital centres, and NGO training programmes. The strongest sustainability model is not to treat DigiRise as a one-off course, but as a reusable learning pathway that can be embedded into local support systems.

## 15. Ethical and Safeguarding Considerations

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The DigiRise methodology works with women who may be in vulnerable positions because of low income, care responsibilities, rural isolation, migration background, unemployment, limited education, low confidence, or previous negative learning experiences. For this reason, ethical and safeguarding considerations must be built into the way the course is designed, delivered, assessed, and disseminated. The aim is to create learning spaces that protect dignity, privacy, emotional safety, and informed participation.

The first ethical principle is respect. Learners should never be treated as deficient because they lack confidence with digital tools. Many women already manage complex responsibilities and have developed valuable skills through family life, work, care, community, or informal activities. The trainer's role is to help them translate these abilities into digital and professional contexts, not to make them feel behind. The language of the course should therefore avoid shame, comparison, or assumptions that "everyone should already know this."

The second principle is privacy and data protection. Since DigiRise teaches online tools, file sharing, digital communication, websites, and social media, learners may create documents, profiles, posts, or pages that include personal information. Trainers should clearly explain what should remain private, how to protect personal data, how to use passwords safely, and how to avoid oversharing. Learners should not be pressured to share personal stories, family details, photos, contact information, or work outputs publicly.

The third principle is emotional safety. The research shows that fear of mistakes, anxiety around technology, and low self-esteem are major barriers for the target group. Trainers should therefore normalise mistakes, allow repetition, avoid public correction that embarrasses learners, and provide support without judgement. In group settings, participation in discussions should be encouraged but not forced. Peer learning should be structured so that it builds confidence rather than comparison.

The fourth principle is informed consent. When collecting feedback, photos, testimonials, screenshots, learner outputs, or success stories, organisations should explain clearly how the information will be used and ask for permission. Learners should be able to refuse without consequences. This is especially important when working with mothers, migrant women,



unemployed women, or women who may feel pressure to agree because the organisation is offering support.

The fifth principle is safe online participation. DigiRise should help learners understand not only how to use digital tools, but also how to protect themselves when using them. This includes recognising scams, protecting accounts, checking links, using privacy settings, managing shared devices, avoiding unsafe job offers, and thinking carefully before posting personal information online. Digital safety should be treated as part of empowerment, not as a fear-based warning.

Ethical delivery also means recognising limits. Trainers are not expected to solve legal, financial, psychological, or social problems that fall outside their role. If a learner discloses serious risk, exploitation, violence, fraud, or urgent personal difficulty, trainers and organisations should follow local safeguarding procedures and refer the learner to appropriate services. DigiRise should remain a learning programme, but one that is delivered with awareness of the real vulnerabilities some learners may face.