



# URBACT DigiPlace

Integrated Action Plan in Oulu, Finland

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## 1. Cool City – Hot sOolutions!

Oulu has a solid foundation for becoming a smart city; it is an education and trade city with 50 years of know-how in radio technology. We have a multidisciplinary university doing extensive research and product development, and, for centuries already, our city has had its place in international trade by exporting tar, paper, and technology solutions. The products of our northern, real-life living lab have not only made locals' day-to-day lives smoother but also gifted the world with smart solutions. The advantage is, in addition to our world-class know-how, of course, our unique agility—such as the seamless collaboration between education, research, business, and the public sector.

We have ridden many waves of industrialization. Our city's role in the recent history of the mobile industry is proof of our ability to develop as a community—ability that calls for creativity, courage, and a common will. That is what lies at the heart of an Ouluan. Juxtaposition strengthens Oulu; urban culture draws strength from nature and our close-knit community is more international than ever before.

Creating innovations that stun the world is every day for us, and we are also willing to experiment. In fact, Oulu is a pioneer of experiments. When the city celebrated its 400th anniversary in 2005, it launched panOulu, an open wireless network, as a gift to all citizens. Already then, the people of Oulu had Wi-Fi on the bus—and even on the ferry to Hailuoto! At the same time, dozens of pioneering mobile applications were developed in Oulu, in collaboration with residents of different ages, to improve the efficiency of services for young people and the elderly.

Today, our city serves as an open platform for innovation. In Oulu, urban planning and construction are developed to be sustainable, energy-efficient and suited to extreme conditions. And, for our compact-sized city, decreasing carbon emissions is a matter of course: short distances encourage thousands of people to cycle all year round.

Our future Oulu is a carbon-neutral and resource-friendly urban environment where well-being and ageing, as well as know-how and culture, are acknowledged. Using anthropocentric digital solutions offers many opportunities, for example, for supporting the elderly in living at home. Through the inclusion of people and the use of new tools becomes possible to create innovations that support continuous learning and develop working life skills. We believe that the input of the entire urban community is needed to create new digital solutions and achieve the city's carbon neutrality goals.

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## 2. Oulu context

Digitalization is an important topic for Oulu area. We are utilizing digitalization to improve the efficiency of the city functions and to provide better services to our citizens. Many of the new digital services are not dependent on time and place but are available all the time and all places.

The other reasons for strong digitalization focus are the universities in the area and strong company basis that are providing new digital solutions and people with the knowledge how to design and develop those. University of Oulu and university of applied sciences need city to support their research. City can help by sharing its infra for testing and verification needs and at the same time, city will get the view to the latest technology available. Logic is the same with the company ecosystem but in this case the city and citizens are getting access to latest digital solutions and products.

City of Oulu is organized sector based (see figure 1). On the side of the other units, the city has a unit called “Oulun Digi Public Utility”. This unit is serving the other units by providing them the ICT services, including the devices and networks. The same unit is also accountable to drive for digitalization in a city and to provide the needed training for the staff. Oulun Digi Unit is also working with the companies to find the latest solutions for its service portfolio.

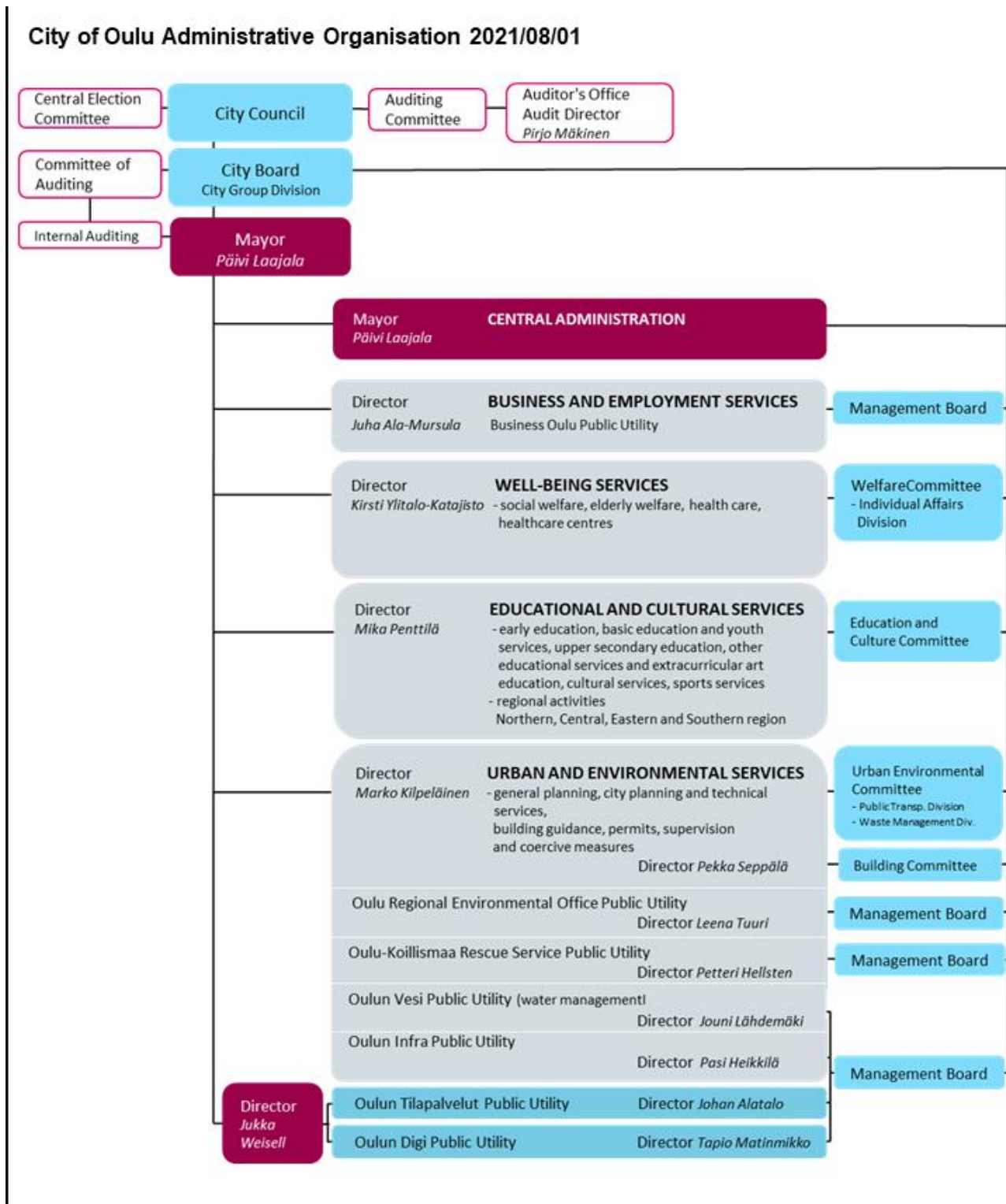
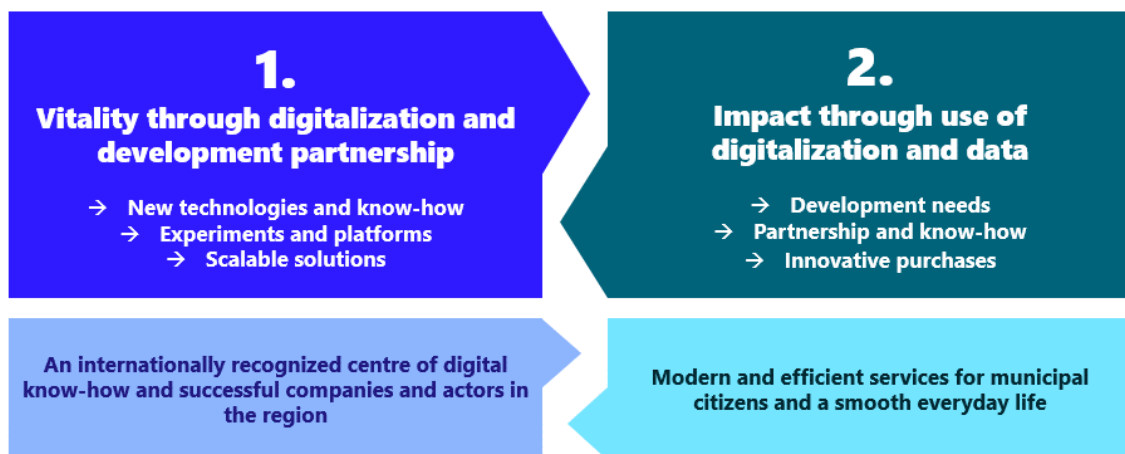


Figure 1: Oulu Organization model

To drive and support the digital solution creation in City of Oulu, Digital Oulu Program was established. The program is based on the city strategy, where the utilization of the digitalization has been recognized as a central objective. The program will last four years (2019-2023) and has two focus areas (see picture 1). Focus area 1 is for vitality and ecosystem creation and focus area 2 is to support and enable new digital solutions for the citizens and city itself.

## The focus areas of the Digital Oulu programme complement each other



Picture 1: Focus areas of the Digital Oulu program

In the baseline studies for the URBACT DigiPlace -program the findings in city of Oulu status and the DigiPlace focus areas were described as following (see picture 2)



Picture 2: Local experience in Oulu and project focus area

As seen in the picture, Oulu will focus on improving the Engagement & Participation dimensions in this categorization.

#### State of customer service in the city of Oulu

Since we will focus on digital services in this project, it is good to recap how customer service is organized in the city of Oulu. Oulu offers multiple services for citizens and companies alike. Among these are customer services related to: Health and social services, daycare and schooling, employment services, entrepreneur support services, leisure such as fishing, gardening and sports, public transportation, and general guidance about city matters. Different service units organize their customer service quite independently, but there is also a centralized service point called Oulu10. It gives general guidance and further contact information concerning any matter in the city. The service team has a lot of cooperation with different city units, and it helps to maintain some of the units' service channels. Oulu10 for example takes calls about unemployment services and parking tickets and operates as the main face-to-face service point for public transportation. In the future the centralized service point aims to play a bigger role as an expert consultant for other city units in the field of customer service development.

There are a variety of different service channels in use in the city: face-to-face, by phone, chat on the city website, social media, email, and feedback form. There are also web shops and other online services where the user can send applications, check their medical history, or send messages to their children's teacher. Some of these require the user to identify with their online banking credentials. As a new addition to the service channels the city has launched a chat robot called Oulubot on their website and other channels such as Facebook. Oulubot aims to work as "one brain" for the whole city and answers questions about all

city services. It has been available on the city website since autumn 2019. In the winter 2022, the chat robot has roughly 4000 conversations per month.

There has been very recent development around digital service development in the city: In the spring 2020 a new project called MODA set up to increase the use and quality of modern digital services in two cities, Oulu and Jyväskylä. Participation and customer-oriented approach have been central themes for the project, and its specific aim has been to create a cross-governmental operating model for customer service and development. As a tool the project team has utilized BT model (Business Technology model) and modified it to serve the needs of a municipal organization. The project has had a compact schedule and it finishes in the end of November 2021. After that, the city has started implementation.

The big outcome of the MODA project in Oulu has been to create a new model for customer service operations. The project launched a term *value stream* to mark the set of ideals and focus points that customer service in the city should value. In the autumn 2021 a new executive team for the value stream met for the first time. The idea is that this executive team (OUTO steering group) oversees the large strategic directions that customer service in the city will take. City services are then divided into different sections that don't necessarily strictly follow the sector-based units of the city. Oulu10 and Oulubot-robot are examples of such sections. These sections develop and maintain their services in accordance with the executive team's guidelines and will run their development ideas and budgets through the executive team. The aim of this is to create a more unified and consistent base for customer service, and to help change big directions.

During the process MODA has also conducted some interesting pilots and case studies around customer service. These have included mystery shopping, mapping existing digital support channels for elderly citizens, and a pilot to use robot calls as a tool for citizen participation. In the pilot citizens got a phone call where a robot asked their opinions about digital services and other matters.

### 3. Problem statement

While the will and resources to develop digital solutions in the city is great, there is scarce knowledge about how end-users experience the services. The city as a whole doesn't collect consistent data about the user experience, such as: How many people use the service in a period of time? Do people find the services helpful and easy? What kind of people use the services – are there some user groups that feel left out due to language limitations, limited digital skills or other reasons? As a result, we don't fully understand whether the digital services are useful or not.

Behind this problem is a broader root cause: the culture of running the city is still quite organization driven. Officers tend to develop services from the process point of view, the central question being: *What kind of development would help the working process* or *What kind of development is technically possible*. It is easy to forget the question of *Who are we essentially developing for* (the citizens) and *Do they want and need this kind of development?* As a result, citizens have limited possibilities to affect how digitalization (or other matters) in the city looks like. In order to bring citizens in the center of development there needs to be more participation and two-way dialogues between the city officers and the citizens.

Besides organization driven working model there is another challenge: Different units of the city operate quite independently, and their specific micro cultures can vary greatly from another. One unit might put a lot of thought into their processes and collect consistent statistics about the quality of their services, while another might have less interest in development or monitoring. The challenge is then, how to offer a consistent tray of services both in quality and their "logic". By logic we refer to things like the number of

programs that are used in different services. This might project to the users as a complicated or confusing set of service platforms.

For the citizens the city isn't necessarily a set of different units but a single large organization, and municipal services should reflect the citizens' point of view. To gain a more citizen-based development process we need more information about the citizens as users of municipal services that exist within the different sectors of the city.

Based on this discussion we can define our problem statement:

The way we develop digital services is too much focused on the needs of the organization and process.

#### 4. Vision and Objectives

Since the City of Oulu wants to increase digital engagement and participation, focus should be in co-creating services with citizens and companies. The thought process should start by putting the customer first, create solutions that truly solve problems for the customers, and at the same time ensure how the city processes should be adjusted accordingly.

City of Oulu wants to create digital services and solutions for the citizens and companies. Services that are providing easy access to all city services regardless of time and place.

That leads to the Vision Statement:

Citizens play a central role when developing digital services. As a result, services are user friendly and widely used.

The vision of citizen-centric development model sets many requirements. To have a better understanding of what the citizens want and need from our existing digital services, we need means to systematically monitor user satisfaction. We also need to take into consideration that citizens are not one coherent group but consist of a whole range of people. Some face more challenges with digital services than others, due to lack of digital skills, language barriers, or some special needs. Reacting to this means developing accessible services as well as ensuring better user support.

Objectives:

1. **Objective:** *We have a means to collect and process citizen perceived digital service quality.*
2. **Objective:** *Different user groups are taken into consideration when developing services.*
3. **Objective:** *Raising awareness of the availability and the possibilities of digital services.*
4. **Objective:** *Citizen participation in the process of developing digital services is consistent thorough the city.*



## 5. Actions and indicators

Our aim in this project is to integrate user feedback and citizen participation in the process of digital service creation and maintenance. To get there we need technical tools for collecting and monitoring user experiences. We then need to encourage other service units thorough the city to take the methods in use. In addition to better technical solutions, we need more contacts with citizens and citizen organizations. Not only do we need to understand the different needs of user groups, but also to ensure better support for citizens who have trouble using the services. Based on all this, we have recognized four actions.

During Urbact DigiPlace we have made small steps (Small Scale Action or SSAs) to clarify our plan within each action. Based on the results of SSA we have outlined an action table for the future. The action table explains each action in smaller detail.

### Action 1: Methods to validate digital service quality

We want to bring forth tools for collecting and analyzing user experiences. Current situation in the city is not clear at the moment. Are there already good methods that we could market to other city units?

#### Small Scale Actions

- 1) Map what kind of methods are currently used to monitor user perception
- 2) Test OuluBot system as a means to collect feedback

#### Results and conclusions from SSA

- 1) Currently units monitor their services on a varied level, from none to satisfactory. Oulu10 service team uses a service company called Zef to monitor user satisfaction. Customers will get a link to a short questionnaire after each customer experience in different service channels. Zef is based on NPS and open feedback (optional). For now, Zef has proven to work well and could be recommended to other service units. It would not be advisable to bring forth other similar services that overlap existing methods.
- 2) OuluBot is a top strategic project of customer service development in the city. So far it operates as a chat robot that all city units build together. In the pilot survey in 2022 we tested new qualities for OuluBot. Test pilot complements NPS type of user feedback. Aim is that OuluBot could be used to build surveys and longer feedback forms that have different types of questions. This would introduce us to new ways for participation and feedback. Same questionnaires could be used on a regular basis to monitor change in opinions on a longer time frame.

Test pilot took place in May 2022 (see Appendix 1). It had three types of questions: yes/no, NPS and open question. Customer would open the survey in the same chat box where they would normally use the chat robot. Participation count was 56 participants. Number is sufficient for a first test pilot: Results are easily monitored and controlled, yet participation rate was enough to conclude that the survey worked well from a technical perspective. After this first questionnaire the same model should be easy to modify and apply to other subject. This means that OuluBot could be a low threshold method to collect feedback about any given matter, and to monitor attitudes trough time.

Results from the survey were collected to Windows Power BI tool. The platform includes some basic analyzing methods such as calculating average responses and creating visual graphs. Data can be also exported to Microsoft Excel for further analysis. Excel was used for analyzing the results of this survey.

Experiences from the test survey were positive. From the organization point of view the survey didn't have any technical downfalls and the report was easy to export to Excel and analyze in a software already widely used for other functions. From the participants' point of view, we didn't receive negative feedback and it seemed that participants understood how to use the survey (there were no misunderstood actions within the answer history).

However, and as the results of the survey show (see appendix 1), most participants had a positive attitude towards digital services and claimed they are fluent with digital service channels. The results highlight the point of view of some user groups, and we might potentially see more challenges with other, less "digi native" groups. This means that while developing OuluBot further, we need to collect further feedback about user satisfaction of this method, as well as consider other forms of participation to complement OuluBot. When developing tools for participation, we need to consider accessibility and service design of the tool itself.

Next step for developing the method is to collaborate with the University of Oulu to develop more possibilities for analysis. This includes for example focusing in better analysis for open question in a next test round in the autumn 2022. Besides developing better tools for analysis, it is an opportunity to test how well existing survey basis can be modified for a new survey.

Information gained from Small Scale Actions leads to a detailed plan for monitoring service quality:

<b>Action 1 title:</b> Methods to validate digital service quality		<b>Action owner</b> Veli-Matti Keloneva / OUTO steering group		
<b>Short description</b>  We want to bring forth tools for collecting and analyzing user experiences.	<b>Stakeholders</b>  - Oulu10 service team - Selected citizen groups - Oulun Digi service creation team - Oulubot team	<b>Objective: 1)</b> We have a means to collect and process citizen perceived digital service quality.	<b>Risks</b> - Negative feedback or lack of interest from the public towards chosen feedback methods	
		<b>Resources &amp; finance</b> OuluBot development resources Oulu10 resources		
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Related activities</b>	<b>Problems / Concerns</b>
Develop analyzing tools for OuluBot questionnaires (cooperation with Oulu University)	9 / 2022	We have a functioning tool and functioning analysis methods for low threshold surveys.		
Increase open communication between digital service developers and users (utilizing digital support network).		We gain in-depth information about user experiences. Complements data from NPS		
				-

## Action 2: Ensuring digital support for citizens

While it is important to develop better digital services there will probably always be need for some kind of user support. At the moment some user groups face challenges to keep up with digitalization in general. We need to make sure that those people are still able to be part of the society. By arranging digital support, it is also possible to get first-hand information about what kind of challenges different people face when using digital services. It is then possible to develop services to meet the needs of *all* citizens.

### Small Scale Actions

- 1) Make connections with municipalities and other actors to learn best practices for organizing digital support
- 2) Make connections in Oulu area to form a coordinated network for digital support and to map current situation

### Results and conclusions from SSA

- 1) Three cities in Finland were consulted: Helsinki, Kuusamo and Turku. Each city already has a functioning model for digital support in use. All cities use a network model where other actors besides the municipality provide support services. During discussions it became clear that a) in the long-term digital support needs to become part of city strategy in order to develop consistently, b) creating a network of actors is essential in order to provide needed services with the available resources, c) marketing of available services is important for the citizens and members of the network alike.
- 2) During spring 2022 we contacted different organizations, program leaders, public service actors and city actors that either provide digital support or represent a special needs group that potentially needs digital support. Main outcome of the actions was an introduction event that took place 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2022. It was held for 22 participants. Participants included projects and non-governmental organizations that give digital support or represent a special needs group, as well as representatives of the city organization and national public service providers in the Oulu area. In the event participants collectively stated that an action plan and a network for digital support is needed. These participants are the basis when setting up the network.

Oulu10 services has produced a separate plan of action for digital support. OUTO steering group will approve the plan for implementation in September 2022. The document defines how responsibilities and roles of digital support are divided inside the city organization. Central administration will have the strategic responsibility to organize and develop digital support. Oulu10 services will act as a digital support coordinator and provide guidance to citizens to unite customers with right services. The plan for digital support also lists what steps we need to take to achieve a working network model:

<b>Action 2:</b> Create a channel for citizens in need of digital support		<b>Action owner</b> Central administration/ Veli-Matti Keloneva		
<b>Short description</b>  We want to make digital support a strategic goal for city organization and form a network for digital support stakeholders.	<b>Stakeholders</b> • Oulu10 team • Other Oulu city units • Citizen organizations • Digital and population data service agency (national) • Companies	<b>Objective: 2)</b> Different user groups are taken into consideration when developing services		<b>Risks</b> - Resourcing new service within Oulu10 team - Participants' commitment to the digital support network
		<b>Resources &amp; finance</b> Oulu10 budget / team input		
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Related activities</b>	<b>Problems / Concerns</b>
Create detailed service description for Oulu10 about digital support.	9-12/2022		Oulu10 will execute	• Conflicting expectations between actors on what the boundaries of service should be in Oulu10 → resourcing
Gather first network meeting for digital support and settle principles for action. Approval from all participants.	11/2022		Oulu10 will execute	
Set up communication platform for digital support network (Teams, other?)	9-10/2022	We have a tool for free communication between network partners	Oulu10 will execute	
Conduct survey for all city units to map current digital services and responsibilities		We have a list of responsible persons for each digital service. Will be used when in need of education for personnel, for conveying user feedback, etc.	Central administration will organize	- It is not clear who is responsible for which service (internal support etc.)
Conduct research to map special needs groups that need digital support, and if such support is available.			Central administration will organize	

### Action 3: Marketing for end users

Marketing and communications are an essential part in each section of our plan. We need to make existing means of citizen participation better known. For instance, we haven't used the full potential of a test community called Patiolla. We also need marketing to make digital services known to citizen and to increase usage of the services.

#### Small Scale Actions

- 1) Marketing plan for Patiolla community
- 2) Marketing campaign to increase the use of (a new mobile feature of) OuluBot
- 3) Visual identity for digital support services

#### Results and conclusions from SSA

- 1) Patiolla is a community that is BusinessOulu operates. Anyone can participate in the community. Idea is that companies and units can test out their services and develop ideas together with a community of test clients. Patiolla is not yet very well known among service developers or citizens that could join the community. We need more participants to create a continuous and stable system, and more organizations that want to use the Patiolla community for development. During DigiPlace project we made a marketing plan to lift Patiolla's profile. Patiolla can be a creative and effective means of citizen participation between organizations and citizens.
- 2) With initial marketing efforts for OuluBot we were able to get a set of tools that can be used in different situations. During the marketing campaign it became clear that OuluBot is still a relatively unknown service to many people. We need to continue existing marketing and create new marketing ideas.

3) Visual identity for digital support entails a logo and a slogan. These are important tools to create a sense of shared vision for the digital support network. For the citizen, digital support will feel like a coherent service despite the wide range of actors that form the service network. We will start campaigning when digital support in Oulu10 and network are organized according to the separate plan of action. Creating a more detailed marketing plan is part of the plan of action for digital support.

<b>Action 3:</b> Marketing for end users		<b>Action owner</b> Divided between Oulu10, BusinessOulu and communications team	
<b>Short description</b> We need marketing to increase the use of digital services and to promote existing means of participation. Marketing is also needed to support other actions 1 and 2.	<b>Stakeholders</b> - Oulu10 service team - OuluBot team - Oulu library - Citizen organizations related to digital support	<b>Objective:</b> Raising awareness of the availability and the possibilities of digital services.  <b>Resources &amp; finance</b>	<b>Risks</b>

Activity	Dates	Outputs	Related activities	Problems / Concerns
Renew web page for Patiolla community		Web page has a clear message and allows easy participation in the community		Resourcing ?
Promote Patiolla through BusinessOulu's connections (universities, Facebook groups, events)		Awareness attracts more participants and potential test projects		
Increase marketing for OuluBot in events and social media	Autumn 2022	Attract more users for OuluBot and what it is	Brochure on instructions how to download OuluBot	
Create a web page for digital support	Spring 2023	Information about available digital support is always updated and easy to find	Cooperation with Oulun Digj team (renewal of the whole ouka.fi website)	Network partners don't want to participate in marketing
Marketing campaign for digital support	Spring 2023	Information about available digital support reaches all user groups	Adverts in print media, social media, brochure	Lack of resources; network partners don't want to participate in marketing

Action 4: Citizen-centric development practices are implemented as a part of the value stream model

Methods for validating service quality, participatory digital service development and digital support are all practiced in different parts of the city organization. Development in these areas isn't yet consistent and unified through the organization. The three actions explained above will have no impact if they are not implemented by other units.

Small Scale Actions related to actions 1 to 3 have been mainly carried out in Oulu10 service team and connected service units. Successful outcomes in Oulu10 can further be communicated to other units through OUTO steering group and the new value stream model. This newly implemented model for customer service governance will play a central role in creating change through the organization.

<b>Action 4:</b> Citizen-centric service creation is implemented as a part of the Value stream model (based on BT-model)		<b>Action owner</b> Veli-Matti Keloneva / head of OUTO steering group		
<b>Short description</b>	<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>Objective:</b> Citizen participation in the process of developing digital services is consistent thorough the city.	<b>Risks</b>	
We need to ensure the consistent quality of all city services by increasing cross governmental actions and collaboration between city units.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OUTO steering group</li> <li>• Oulu10 services</li> <li>• City of Oulu, all operational units</li> </ul>	<b>Resources &amp; finance</b>		
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Related activities</b>	<b>Problems / Concerns</b>
Communicate methods for feedback and monitoring through OUTO steering group to be shared with different units.	Continuous	Tools for better participation are available for all city units		City units don't have interest in adopting available tools
Reinforce Oulu10 role as a service expert that can support other units and give consultation	Continuous	Units have better support in organizing customer services. Experiences from customer interface impact service design.		City units aren't interested in cooperation with Oulu10

## 6. Governance and ULG set up

At the beginning of the DigiPlace -project work in Oulu we decided that Oulu will not set up a specific ULG for our IAP. We saw that we have several ongoing activities that are heavily linked with the selected IAP area, and one of the goals in DigiPlace Oulu project should be to connect various activities in digital service creation area to focus more on improving and ensuring the perceived end user quality of digital services. This means that we would start by utilizing the existing steering groups to form a virtual ULG for our project and as the project proceeds, we will review the ULG set up.

In early stage we ended up using mainly two existing programs to line up with:

### 1. Digital Oulu program

- This program is city of Oulu wide program, driving the implementation of digital solutions in city organizations and service creation. The other target is to support new technology development and future digital solution creation
- The current steering group is having members from all main branches in city organization who are working with services. Members (15 total) represent the development management in their organizations and one of the missions of this steering group is to accept the new development programs related to digitalization in the City of Oulu.
- The steering group is having its meetings on monthly basis and DigiPlace topics are on the agenda as relevant.

### 2. MODA - program

- The MODA program was set to rethink the digital service creation in City of Oulu and City of Jyväskylä. The leading guideline for the program is the implementation of BT –standard ([Business Technology Standard | The Open-Source Framework \(managebt.org\)](https://managebt.org)) in city environment.

- Since the key driver for the MODA- program was to promote citizen centric service creation, it fit very well with the DigiPlace Oulu program.
- MODA- program steering group had its regular meetings in monthly basis and the steering group included members from city development functions and management from City of Oulu and City of Jyväskylä.

When MODA program ended in November 2021, deployment program was set up in Oulu. The steering group of this new OUTO program has acted as our ULG from December 2021 on. Besides a steering group, the new model consists of several development sectors that focus on the development of a specific service or concept. Head of each development sector are also included in the ULG.

During the last part of DigiPlace project we started to work on connections outside the city organization. This was related to our goal to form a network for digital support. However, we were very aware from the beginning that these connections could serve as a broader ULG type of network around the theme of digital services. By the end of DigiPlace program we had a first event with these actors and will continue consistent work towards an active and functional network after the program. This potential network consists of different kinds of actors: NGO's, governmental public actors, Oulu city units and potentially companies. It will work as a complementary local group besides the OUTO steering group. The range of stakeholders and citizen involvement could be further increased in the future.

Since the components of our ULG pre-existed the DigiPlace program, local group is not in high risk of dissolving after the end of this program. It is important to continue close relationship between Oulu10, the OUTO steering group and Digital Oulu steering group. It is equally important to continue working towards the digital support network that includes actors outside the city organization. Oulu10 has potential to act as a link between this wider network and city organization's own steering groups.

## 7. Implementation and roles

The action plan will be implemented as a part of the new Value stream model for managing development horizontally across organization. As a part of this new model OUTO steering group will set strategic guidelines for customer service and oversees implementation. Both digitalization and participation are top focus points for further development on the strategic level.

On a practical level, implementation of the action plan will be divided between different development sectors that operate under OUTO steering group. For example, OuluBot development sector will carry out further development for Action 1 feedback development. Especially Oulu10 will play a central role in implementation. It has the main responsibility for developing digital support network (action 2) and is closely connected to developing monitoring tools and marketing. In a way, Oulu10 works as a test bed for better participation and development, and it is through OUTO steering group that the best practices are communicated forward. Key element is to encourage co-operation between service units and Oulu10.

BusinessOulu will also continue implementation, and its role will be focused in the companies' point of view: increasing participation between companies and the city organization, and between companies and citizens. Development of the Patiolla community is a central factor in this.

Funding for the action plan comes from the city's development budget. OUTO steering group will direct funds between different development sectors such as Oulu10 and OuluBot. Besides the existing development budget, different funding options are being searched to increase resources for digital

customer service development. This being said, a big part of the action plan concerns cultural change and a change in working manners rather than big investments. Parts of the action plan, such as action 2 (citizen digital support) will be integrated into Oulu10 service team by re-organizing activities.

## 8. Conclusions

Oulu area has a good digital ecosystem and digital solutions are being increasingly implemented to services, but we need to get citizens more involved in the process. It is important to continue searching for tools that can enable participation and make feedback easier to give. Monitoring user satisfaction and increasing communication is in many cases easiest and most efficient to achieve through digital tools.

We need to remember the role of digitalization though: that it is a tool, not an intrinsic goal. It is important to keep a critical mindset and evaluate which service channel serves the customers' needs best in a particular situation. To create accessible and fitting services, we need to hear the users' feedback and ideally co-create services to an extent. Moreover, it is important to recognize that users are not a single coherent group but consist of different preferences and levels of ability. Active participation process is needed to ensure that all different needs are met. This way we can develop better digital services. Well designed and developed digital services also help us optimize our resources so that we are still able to provide more traditional service channels to groups that face challenges with digital services or have particularly complicated problems to deal with.

Our action plan is very much about a cultural change in the organization: Our vision is to make the service development process more citizen-centric and to include citizen participation. In addition, we aim to fade lines between service units and create more cooperation to create more coherence in the service structure from the customers' point of view. To extend this, we also need to network with actors and service providers outside of the city organization.

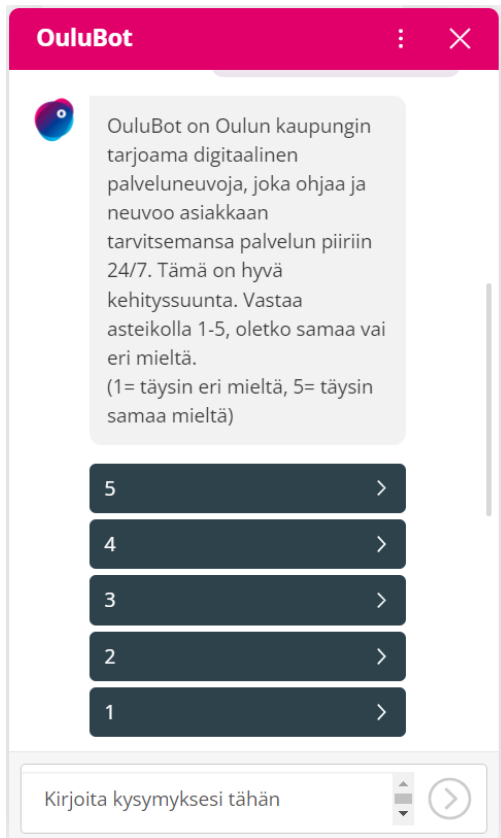
The cultural change is gradual, and in our action plan we have defined important steps towards it. The city has good premises for this development: we have a new cross-governmental development model for customer service in place, and an actively developing central customer service unit that can act as a test bed and advocate for good practices. Moreover, we have channels to connect companies with citizen participation. The digital ecosystem in the city is already strong, and through better collaboration between city units and companies, we can bring companies and citizens closer together when looking for development solutions.

Inclusion and digitalization are both big and current themes in city planning and policies. The integrated action plan for citizen-centric digital service development is part of important trends that Oulu needs to be a part of.



## Appendix

### OULUBOT TEST SURVEY 23.5. – 5.6.2022



*Picture: Participants answer questions in a chat box. Participant can choose an answer by pressing a button or by typing it in the answer box.*

## RESULTS

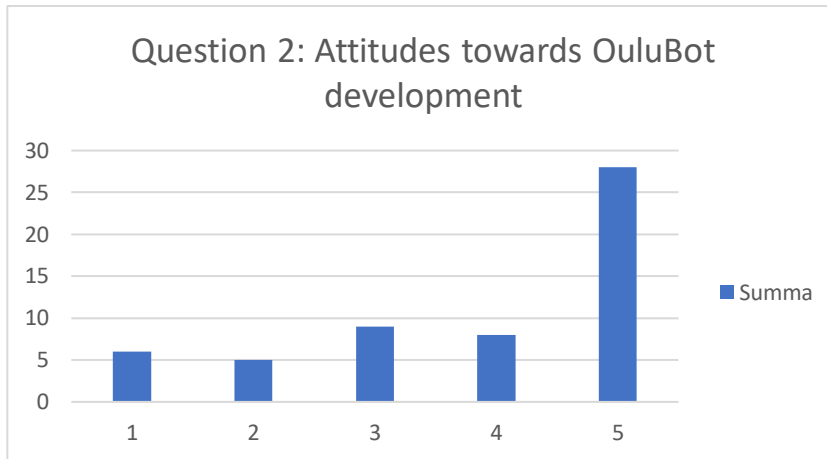
Total participant count: 56

### **Question 1: Do you usually prefer digital service or face-to-face service if it is possible to choose?**

- Face-to-face service: 12,4%, digital service 78,6% → amongst participants digital services were preferred.

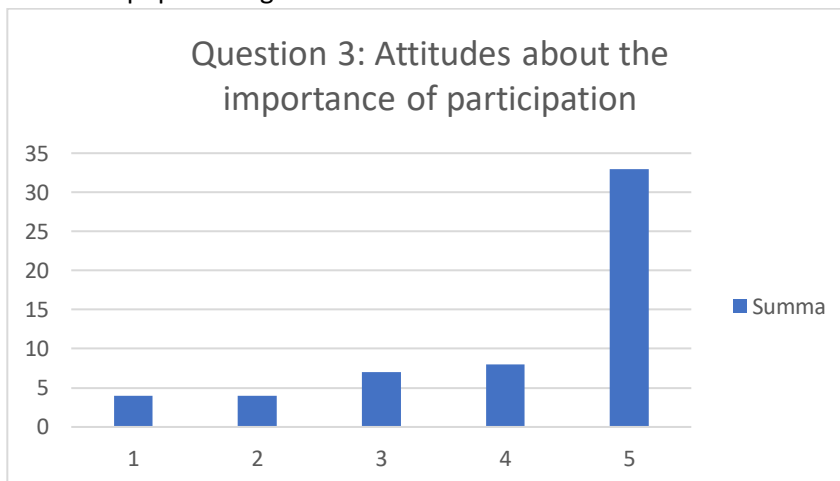
### **Question 2: On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 disagree, 5 agree) do think that it is good to develop OuluBot (Oulu city's chat robot) as a 24/7 service for all citizens.**

- mean: 3,8 → mildly positive to positive attitude towards OuluBot-development. 5, highest rate, was the most popular single answer.



**Question 3: On a scale of 1 to 5 do you agree that OuluBot service should developed together with the citizens.**

- mean 4,1  
→ agreement with the importance of participation in OuluBot development. 5, the highest rate, was most popular single answer.



**Question 4: Have you previously used OuluBot?**

- Yes: 52%,
- No 48%

**Question 5: Do you feel you get enough support and guidance to use digital service channels?**

- Yes: 55,4%
- No: 44,6%

**Question 6: What kind of support do you feel you would most need to use digital services? (Open question)**

- 18 participants (32%) answered that they didn't personally need digital support
- 10 participants (17,8%) left blank answers / "I don't know"
- Amongst the rest answers vary, including subjects:
  - o Better service design and accessibility

- Real time, instant personal support (face-to-face, through phone or chat)
- Marketing and information about new available services
- Instruction videos