

Local workshops in The Netherlands

Between May and August 2024, we conducted three in-person workshops in the Netherlands. Two of these took place during the Onderwijsfestival, each lasting 45 minutes and designed for small groups of festival participants with limited or no prior experience with Open Badges. The objective was to engage with the formal education sector, gather their perspectives on badges, and explore ways to align non-formal recognition practices with the use of badges in formal education settings.

The third workshop, conducted with Marlijn Academie, was a more extensive 4-hour session. Participants included individuals with limited or no prior experience with Open Badges, as well as someone involved in developing the Quality Label. As a formal education institution operating in a more non-formal manner, the aim of this workshop was to learn from Marlijn Academie's methods of recognising learning.



Target groups and profile of participants

Our first two workshops engaged 10 participants from various Dutch regions within the formal education sector. These individuals shared a common trait: an innovative mindset and a willingness to explore improvements in learning recognition.

The third workshop included 13 participants from Breda and The Hague, all affiliated with Praktijkleren Loont and actively involved with their designated Cities of Learning Platforms. This group primarily comprised social entrepreneurs, municipal employees, and a representative from a sports club. While some participants had a basic understanding of Open Badges, they sought to deepen their knowledge of developing and implementing badges effectively. Their familiarity with the Quality Label was limited or non-existent. One participant, possessing more experience, assumed the role of co-facilitator to gain insights into the questions and concerns of other attendees and assist in addressing them.

Objectives of the workshops

Our objectives for the first 2 workshops were:

- Introduce Open Badges
- Explore the value proposition
- Gather stakeholder perspectives
- Explore alignment strategies
- Build awareness and interest

For the 3rd workshop, our goals were:

- Deepen understanding of Open Badges
- Explore the Quality Label
- Develop practical skills
- Learn from Marlijn Academy
- Address participants questions
- Foster collaboration and networking

How the playlists were used

In our first two workshops, we did not extensively utilise the playlists as they were still under development. Our primary focus was on gathering input from participants on how to effectively use badges and align them with user needs, ensuring that badge earners could derive maximum benefit.

During the third workshop, we began to incorporate the playlist on creating Quality Badges. However, instead of systematically working through the entire playlist, we used the "Open Badge Essentials" badge as an introductory badge. This encouraged participants to continue their learning independently at their own pace. We believe that in-person learning activities should offer a distinct approach to complement the content presented in the playlists.

Most recommended session

We highly value the "Roll the Dice" activity as an effective way to encourage participants to reflect on their informal learning experiences. This game features 36 questions that explore how, with whom, what, and why individuals learned outside of formal educational settings, and how this learning has been recognised. Participants play the game in pairs, followed by a group discussion.

We have found this activity to be particularly beneficial for groups from formal education and the business sector. It helps participants realise that learning can occur in diverse settings and that informal learning is equally valuable to formal recognition. Additionally, it encourages participants to discover a broader range of learning experiences than they may have initially considered.

Tips & tricks

The Quality Label holds significant appeal for organisations. Many express a strong desire to achieve it upon learning about its existence. This recognition serves as a powerful motivator for learners. Even if you believe your current efforts may not immediately qualify for the label, it's highly recommended to inform participants that the course they are undertaking contributes towards achieving this distinction.

While numerous other indicators are necessary to obtain the Quality Label, making it an attainable goal for a wider range of organisations, rather than an exclusive privilege, fosters diverse approaches to motivating learning about recognition through Open Badges across various settings.

