

DPD Project Design Workshop: Building a badge system for learning

What problem needs solving? Why is there a need for badges in this space?

What do you want to create? What learning would you like to recognize with badges?

What will a badge earner do with the badge? Who will they show it to and why?

Who are your learners?

What kind of learners are you trying to reach?

- Targets age or grade range _____
- Professional communities (teachers, vets, technical careers, trades)
- Mixed populations
- Don't know
- Other _____

What is your educational setting?

Where and how will students learn?

- Online platform
- Accredited learning
- Standards-based
- Professional credential
- Informal
- Other _____

While many different learners may use your badge, what are some specific traits of those who you're most excited about engaging? What are their interests? What might motivate or engage them?

Is there anything don't you know about your learners that you should? (you can always fill in these blanks later)

What are your resources for implementing and refining the badge system?

- Funding: Initial, Pilot, Continuing?

- Team: Variety of roles filled?

- Interest/buy-in among community?

From your current point, do you have:

- The technology for awarding and implementing badges?
- Curriculum and content?
- Badges already defined and designed?

Any are fine. You can start from any combination or none of these factors, and they will affect where you experience freedom and constraints.

Refine: In one sentence, describe your organization's goal for implementing badges.

Using the Design Principles card deck to plan a badge system:

The DPD card deck (<http://dpdproject.info/cards>) is intended to get you into the process of wrestling with important design questions quickly. Start with your contextual factors and goal for using digital badges in mind, and to find design principles that will be compatible with these variables and that will fit well together.

Badges essentially connect the issuer and the earner through making a claim about that earner's learning, achievement, or skills. Then, they back up that assertion with evidence. The practices that make up your badge system will need to make the right claims about the learning that happens, and measure it in the appropriate way.

Our project studied four essential functions of practices in digital badge systems:

- **Recognizing learning** (You must make decisions around what learning claims to make and how these will be packaged so that earners can take advantage of their value)
- **Assessing learning** (Each recognition must be paired with appropriate assessment practices so that you can make the critical decision of whether or not to issue the badge, but also so that you collect the right kind of evidence to package with the badge)
- **Motivating learning** (Each of your design decisions in recognition and assessment has consequences for how learners will be motivated to participate and the social dynamics that will affect their community)
- **Studying learning** (You will need to design appropriate research practices to figure out how the badge system is operating, but also to improve it and to inform your knowledge about how badges function in the wider ecosystem.)

In each category, we identified some "design principles" that represent generalized versions of practices that serve one of these four functions in digital badge systems. From this general perspective, these could be re-situated to serve the specific goals and contexts of your particular system.

Begin using the cards by writing down your goal and a few facets of your system context that you think are relevant to your design decisions (i.e. does the learning happen online or in physical classrooms, is there an existing learning management system that you need to integrate with, who will be responsible for developing different parts of the system), or leave space to fill in these factors later. See the attached worksheet.

Then, look through the cards, and try to pick out a few principles that seem to fit well with your goals. See what fits well together across different categories (recognizing, assessing, motivating, studying). Then cycle back through to organize the principles you've selected and see if there are others that complement those you have chosen well or if anything doesn't fit as well as you initially thought.

When you're at a good stopping point, you can look at what you've chosen and you may have decided some important things about the "shape" of your badge system and what the most important priorities for development are. You may have some idea of what kind of technical features you will need and can start looking into development. This card deck is, in this form of workshop, a fairly early stage tool. After deciding on some design principles, you move into a stage of planning and executing what they will look like in your specific context.