Facilitator Training Manual

Welcome

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a discussion moderator for the Badges for Learning Working Group process! Over the next few months, you will help steward a community to process that will lay the groundwork for the adoption and implementation of digital badges in Pittsburgh.

Basecamp accounts have been created for each working group; all the members of your working group have already been invited to the Basecamp account. You will be given administrative control of the account to monitor and communicate with group members. Basecamp is a web-based project management tool that was used to coordinate the activities of the facilitators and the over 100 working group members. Basecamp was used by The Sprout Fund because of its user-friendly interface and the reasonable price of the packages.

Background Information

Below you will find additional background information about (*your organization*) efforts to date, as well more information about digital badges.

Rationale for the Working Group Process

(*your organization*) is leading a community planning & visioning process for a city-wide badge system that is co-designed with learning practitioners and key local stakeholders. This process envisions a future where the learning environment in the greater (*your city*) region is composed of seamless pathways of in-school, out-of-school, and online experiences where the learner can build his or her skills and competencies anywhere and at any time. The center of the planning & visioning process is an in-depth effort (working groups) to create a public draft of competencies, assessments, and learning pathways.

Introduction to Digital Badges

As the digital age ushers in new possibilities for where and how people learn, digital badges are transforming how we recognize achievement. Like the physical badges used by the military and scouting organizations, digital badges serve as markers of accomplishment. But digital badges seek to be built on platforms that are portable and verifiable, allowing learners to showcase their work, document skill sets and competencies, and create a robust portrait of their abilities wherever they were acquired – whether in the community or, eventually in schools, on the job and online. Digital badges are a new technology that learners can acquire to certify the skills and competencies they develop both in and outside of traditional classrooms—proficiencies that employers in today's economy value and reward.

Benefits of Digital Badges:

- A digital badge is an online representation of knowledge you've gained, skills you've acquired and changes in thought and behavior that have occurred as a result of your participation in a program
- Digital badges allow you to verify skills, interests & achievements
- Open standards will allow users to combine multiple badges from different issuers—online and off
- Although the technology hasn't been perfected, digital badges have the potential to be displayed wherever you want them on the web

By recognizing skills and competencies wherever they are acquired, badges can illuminate unique and personalized pathways to job, career, and civic success

Facilitation Tips & Tricks

Below you will find information about common challenges faced by facilitators, as well as helpful tactics that will ensure you can successfully moderate a productive session.

The facilitation tips found in this section have been gathered from a variety of high quality sources. This content is not original to (your organization) and we are grateful to the original authors (noted in parentheses).

The Moderator's Dilemma (Alphachimp Studios)

Keep things moving while encouraging wild, innovative ideas. Your role is not to manage people (that's too unpredictable!) but to manage the things we can control: time, energy and the process.

Your Role (The Interaction Method)

The facilitator is a neutral servant of the group and does not evaluate or contribute ideas. The responsibility of the facilitator is to help the group focus its energies on a task by suggesting methods and procedures, protecting all members of the group from attack, and making sure that everyone has an opportunity to participate. The facilitator serves as a combination of tour guide, traffic cop, and meeting chauffeur.

Common Challenges (The Interaction Method)

While you are moderating your session, you will likely face the following challenges and dilemmas. It is best to be aware of these common challenges so that you can recognize and combat them.

- Chaos: Everybody going in different directions

- Personal attacks: Attacking individuals rather than their ideas

- Traffic problems: Difficulty in leaping into the conversational flow and getting a chance to participate

- Unclear roles and responsibilities: Who is supposed to be doing what?

- Manipulation by group leaders: Abuse power to achieve personal goals

- Data overload: Holding on to too many ideas in your head at one time

- Repetition and wheel-spinning: Going over the same old ideas again and again

- Win/lose approaches to decision-making: Partial solutions, compromises, polarization

Things to Keep in Mind (Alphachimp)

When you are moderating a meeting, remember to be authentic, positive, aware, and encouraging.

- **Authenticity**. Be yourself: serious or silly, precocious or ironic—it doesn't matter. People can sense if you are faking it. You don't have to know any answers to any issues. Just know what happens next.

- **Attitude**. You set the tone. If you're excited to be with these people, they'll feed off it. If you're nervous, that's OK, too. In the words of Craig Finn of The Hold Steady, "you gotta stay positive!" Ask for help from the participants if you need it.
- **Awareness**. Scan the room and take in everything without focusing on anything. Notice body language. Is someone scared, tired, bored or angry? Acknowledge it—if appropriate—without putting anyone on the spot. You can slow down or speed up to change the energy, or transition. ("I see some of us might be tired. Let's all stretch!")
- **Acknowledgement**. Every suggestion or idea deserves a "Thanks!" or "Good one!" It's not your job to filter or judge yet. Just to catch everything the crowd pitches at you.