

Innovation Within the Government Sector

Five Examples of Applications That Impacted the Way Dutch Government Organizations Do Business

Ready to innovate?



With the technological possibilities nowadays, innovation is easily accessible for every organization. You can order new shoes on your mobile device in three clicks, and transferring money or booking your dream trip is just as easily done.

Digital transformation is a fact... except for government organizations.

Digital transformation is no longer a choice, it's the norm. Innovation is going so fast that it's a continuous process. Either you innovate, or you'll soon become irrelevant.

In general, government organizations struggle with the following obstacles:

- ▶ Legislation;
- ▶ Unnecessary complexity of government organizations;
- ▶ Long-term contracts with outdated IT suppliers and;
- ▶ Employees who are not involved in digitization.

Despite these reasons, digital transformation is still possible for government organizations. In this whitepaper, we'll introduce you to five Dutch government organizations that use Betty Blocks to realize great digital results. The focus is on smaller applications that integrate seamlessly with existing legacy systems or run stand-alone.

Want to know how Betty Blocks can replace a legacy system? [Click here](#) to find out how the City of Zaanstad did just that and saves €2.3 million over four years.

Read on to find out how other municipalities such as Hoorn, Moerdijk, The Hague, and Schagen use Betty Blocks to better serve their community.



Table of Content

#1 The digital ombudsman in the municipality of The Hague	4
Digital transformation: opportunity or necessity?	5
#2 The municipality of Amsterdam innovates youth care with platform Ikzoekjeugdhulp.nl	7
Five benefits of no-code application development	9
#3 The municipality of Moerdijk brings fellow residents together	11
#4 Secure care portal for the municipality of Hoorn	13
In Business and IT: Action is the best way to think	14
#5 Participate in the municipality of Schagen	16
About Betty Blocks	18

#1 The digital ombudsman in the municipality of The Hague

One of the municipalities that successfully made the leap into the digital age is the municipality of The Hague. This municipality is always looking for new ways to improve service for citizens and is open to modernizing (internal) processes. Fast innovation and direct implementation is a priority. Also in the case of “The Municipal Ombudsman”.

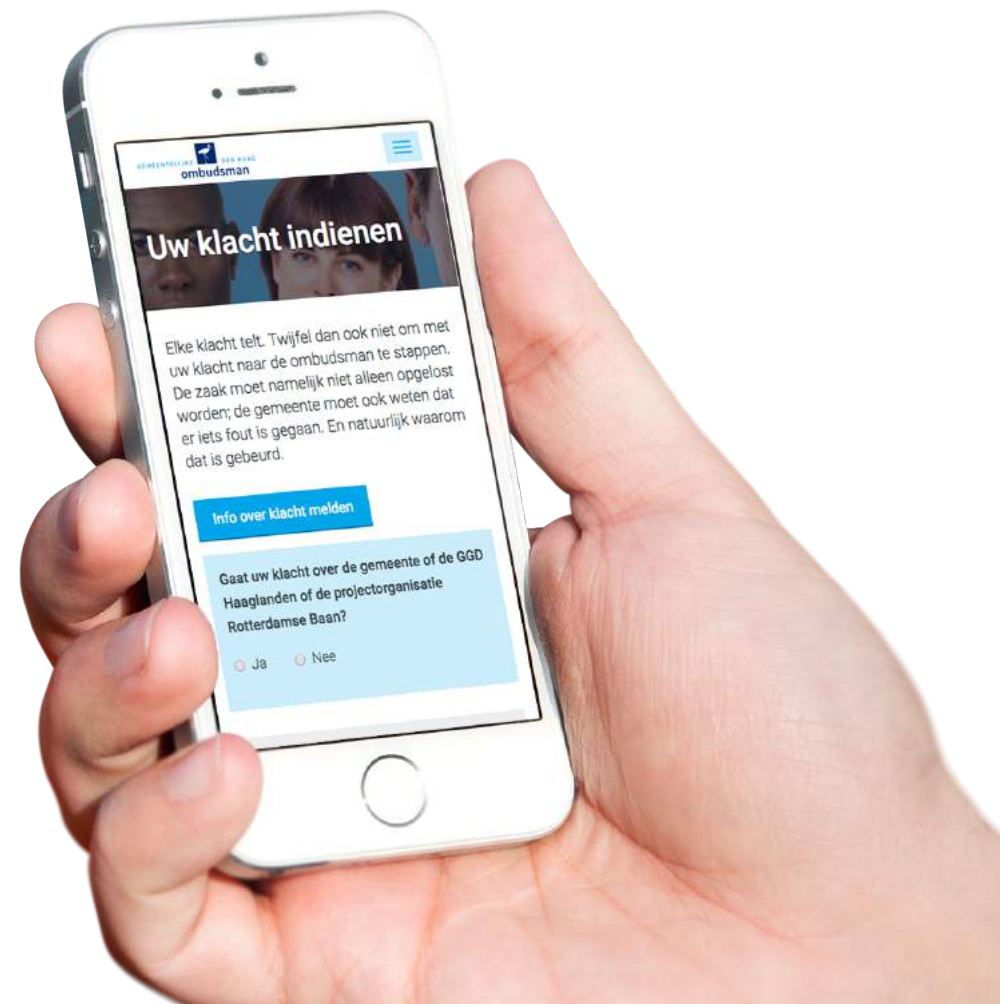
The independent ombudsman investigates complaints. First, an attempt is made to resolve the complaint in good consultation. To make submitting a complaint as easy as possible, the municipality of The Hague has developed a new website with an underlying workflow system. This means that citizens are better served and underlying work processes are largely digitized.

Speed and efficiency

Within a few weeks, a completely new website with an underlying workflow system was built. The back office environment and the website are fully integrated with each other. Because this is managed from one environment, it provides major benefits for efficient working. This is stimulated because there is no need to constantly change systems.

The municipality of The Hague was looking for new possibilities to quickly convert concepts into prototypes. The aim was to implement continuous improvements in order to speed up innovation.

It's often mistakenly thought that IT innovation is a lengthy and drastic process, while this is no longer the case. With the development of the web application for “The Municipal Ombudsman”, the municipality of The Hague is showing that digital innovation can be achieved quickly and flexibly.





Digital Transformation: Opportunity or Necessity?

The technology for a successful digital transformation is broadly present and available for everybody these days. However, there are many digital transformations that fail, or that don't even get off the ground in the first place. You could invest heavily in a new IT system that's easy to come by, but often it simply doesn't work out. If it's not the technology that causes the failure of a digital transformation, then what is it?

Innovation is the work of humans

A recent study by Harvey Nash and KPMG found that 43% of CIOs see protest as the biggest obstacle to the implementation of a digital strategy.

Every transformation means change, and every human reacts differently to change. One person gets excited by new possibilities and another steps on the brake completely. "But this is the way we always did it," is their battle cry. The problem is that the people protesting are the people who have to work with the change, or in this case, the new technology. But the decision-making process comes from the top.

A transformation can start in two ways: because it can, or because it has to. Undergoing a transformation is a far-reaching event that can stir up friction.

This is especially true of organizations in which the current strategy has been successful for years.

There's a fundamental difference between transforming because you can and transforming because you have to. And in that difference lies the deciding factor for successful transformation.

Transforming because you can

Transforming because you can means that you've run into an opportunity that's up for the taking. Taking this opportunity brings a lot of positives: Innovations can be implemented step-by-step, the organization has time to get used to it, and to consider future adjustments to make things even better. It's an especially important process for the 43% of people who turn against change.

By transforming in this way you create a buffer (well, two actually): a buffer for technology and a buffer for people. It creates a safety margin where there's room for friction, setbacks, and changes. It's gradual, and it's practical.

Transforming because you have to

Transforming because you have to comes with a completely different user manual. When transformation happens out of necessity, it's because the alternative is quitting, or failure. The work pressure is too high, the competition is miles ahead, and the systems are so outdated that they aren't even functioning anymore. It's a situation similar to that of a drowning man clutching at a straw for support.

Instead of being busy with innovation and improvement, the focus is on survival. The stakes are high, and so are tensions. The transformation goes too fast and the culture doesn't have time to adjust. The buffer that makes transformation possible is lacking. The result is a failing transformation, with all its fallout.

How to determine the speed limit?

The truth is that we don't always have control over the speed at which something like digital transformation needs to take place. There are circumstances beyond our control and we don't always have the luxury of choosing to transform, rather than doing so out of necessity.

When you don't have the luxury of a buffer-zone, just remember: While technology can carry out a digital transformation at the speed of light, success is ultimately determined by the people who have to work with it. So, work with them to meet them where they're at.



#2 The municipality of Amsterdam innovates youth care with platform [Ikzoekjeugdhulp.nl](https://www.ikzoekjeugdhulp.nl)

The municipality of Amsterdam has a clear purpose: To offer innovative healthcare in a personal way to the youth of the Amsterdam-Amstelland and Zaanstreek-Waterland regions. To accomplish this goal, the project team of the township developed a new strategy which is embodied in the platform [Ikzoekjeugdhulp.nl](https://www.ikzoekjeugdhulp.nl).

It's an entirely different approach to youth healthcare. Through a roadmap, the services of more than 200 healthcare providers from 14 townships are narrowed down to the perfect match for the youth seeking help.

Jordy de Koning - Municipality of Amsterdam

A platform for and by users

With the idea that healthcare should be personal in the forefront, the platform provides a very specific offering in terms of youth healthcare. The new platform presents the purchased healthcare in an innovative way. The

standard products which the municipality of Amsterdam had used previously are now translated into eleven personalized profiles that fit seamlessly into the needs of healthcare.

Ikzoekjeugdhulp.nl is really a platform for all parties, created by users.

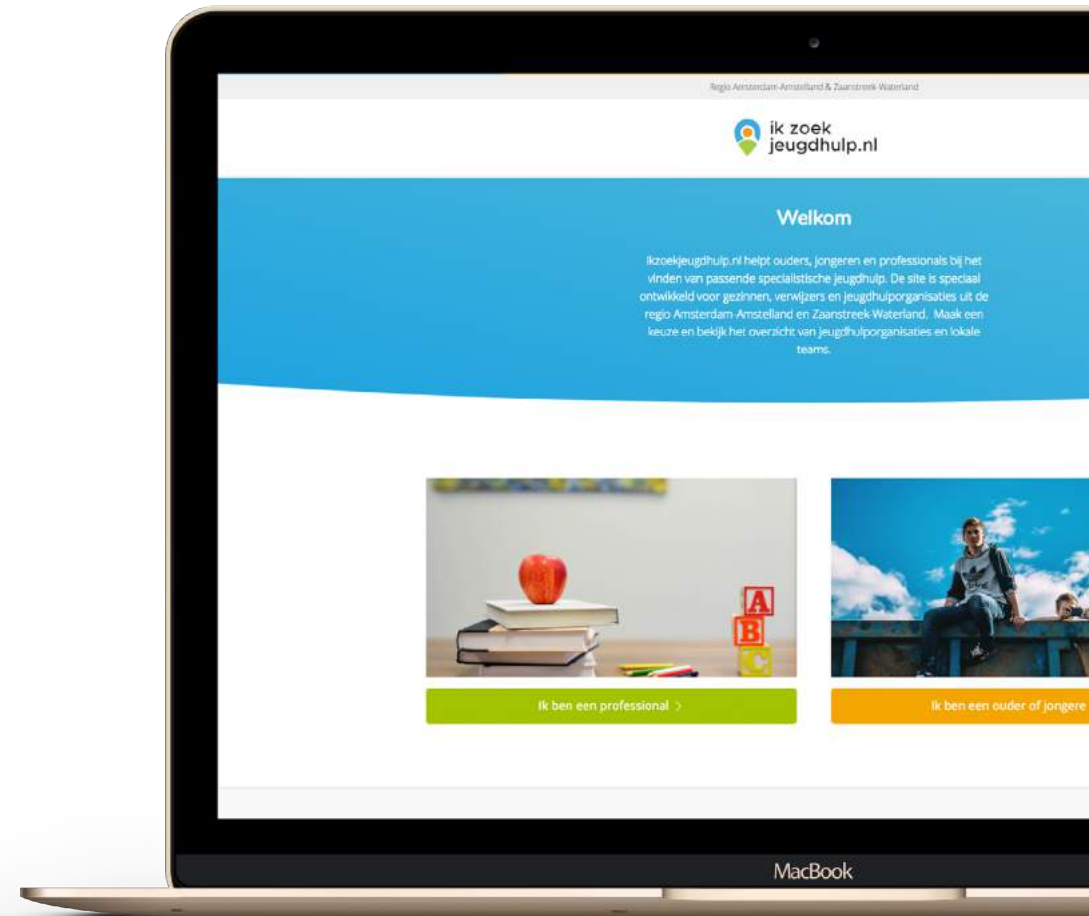
Jordy de Koning - Municipality of Amsterdam

The platform has been endorsed by different stakeholders involved in the healthcare industry, from general practitioners and institutions to the children and their parents. The needs of the end users have been at the centre of the project since day one.

The municipality of Amsterdam chose rapid application development

Clearly, the municipality of Amsterdam chose rapid-application-development. “We had a hard deadline for the development of the platform. We were looking for a platform where quality development could be done extremely fast, but we were also looking for a developer that could translate our strategy to IT while continually pushing the boundaries of our concept.”

Betty Blocks managed to finish the project within just two weeks. The quick collaboration between the two teams, the ability to quickly adapt the platform, and the speed of further development made the collaboration between the municipality of Amsterdam and Betty Blocks a success.



Five benefits of no-code application development

Earlier in this whitepaper, we discovered that government organizations cannot keep up with the pace of digital transformation in the world. The landscape of the government is unnecessarily complex and the people who have to work with the technology are forgotten.

No-code application development offers many benefits for a successful transformation that also apply to government organizations:

1. No-code integrates with existing IT system

If you invest in a complex IT system, you're probably not excited about yet another radical change. With no-code, this isn't the case. You can easily and quickly connect no-code applications with existing IT systems. This way, no-code automates and optimizes existing applications.

2. The business in the driver's seat

With traditional web application development, there is no insight into the development process, which leads to web applications that do not always match the needs of those who work with it. No-code makes the development of applications understandable, and that's where the citizen developer arises. Citizen developers are employees who know exactly what the web



application should look like and work alongside the professionals on their own application. This can be the innovation manager, policy officer or any other employee.

3. Rapid application development

Speed and flexibility are an absolute must in the digital revolution. A no-code rapid application development (RAD) platform enables professionals to build any application up to eight times faster than traditional development methods. Due to the extremely short time-to-market, a no-code RAD platform is perfect for testing and further developing effective web applications.

4. Design thinking as a basis for digital transformation

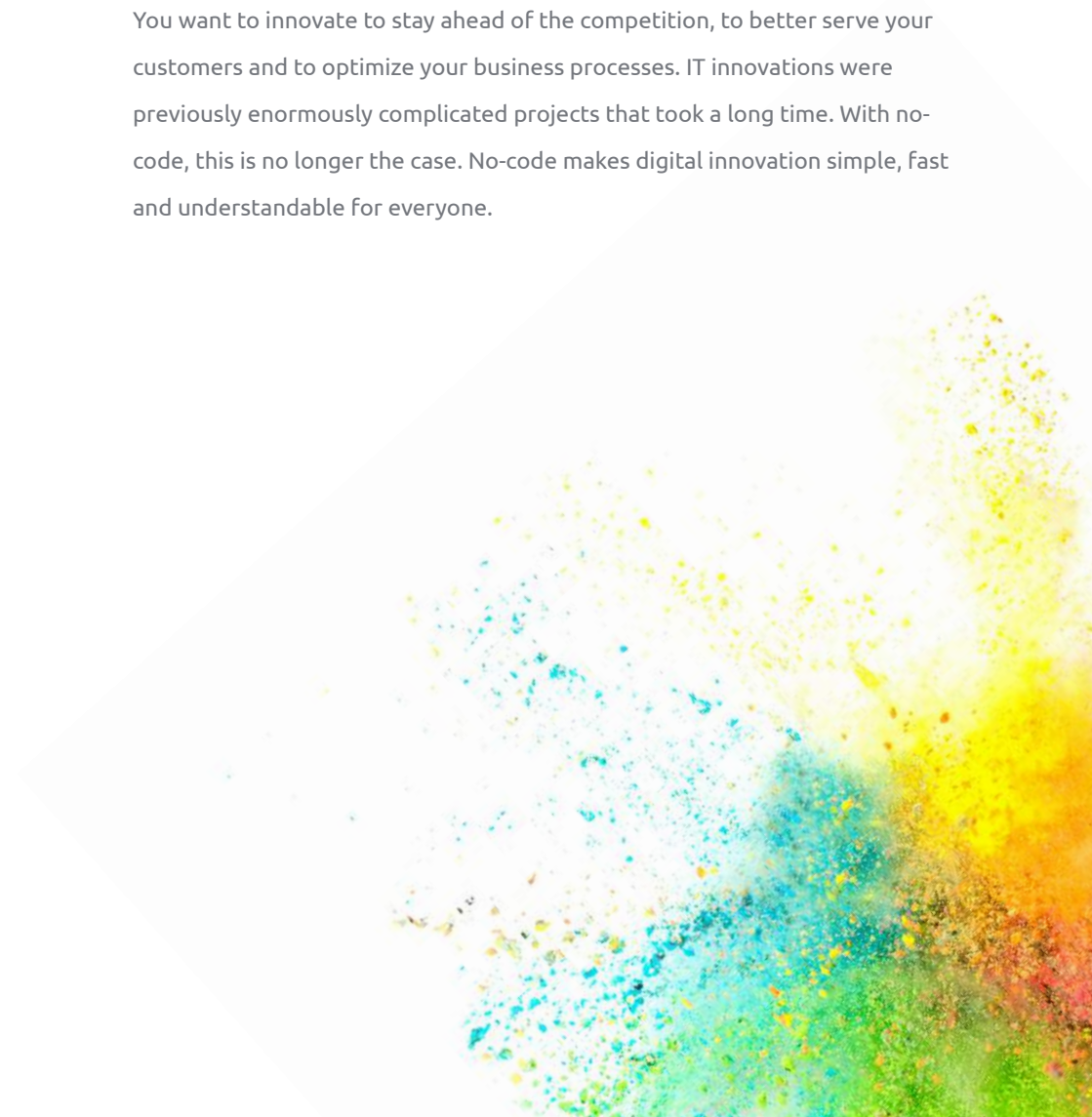
Involvement and enthusiasm of the business are even more important than the web application itself to make digital transformation successful. This requires creativity and courage from the entire organization. No-code makes application development comprehensible for all employees and gives everyone the opportunity to think about new innovations.

Because employees have different disciplines, there are also different perspectives, which together form an optimal "design". Design-thinking is described as "a continuous process that gives value from idea to product, with the result that it is better to use". With the combination of design-thinking and no-code, organizations build applications that continuously focus on the right solution.

5. Your customer is better served

You optimize the web application based on what works and what doesn't. The application grows with the organization so that the organization is able to serve the customer better and better. Great for the customer, great for your organization.

You want to innovate to stay ahead of the competition, to better serve your customers and to optimize your business processes. IT innovations were previously enormously complicated projects that took a long time. With no-code, this is no longer the case. No-code makes digital innovation simple, fast and understandable for everyone.





#3 The municipality of Moerdijk brings fellow residents together

The municipality of Moerdijk is a good example of how you can have a positive effect on society thanks to a simple no-code application.

Local deployment in your own neighborhood

The municipality of Moerdijk wants to actively engage their neighborhood to realize initiatives. After all, the residents know best what their neighborhood needs, and with the right tools, they can achieve it. Initiator Paul Wiegel of the municipality of Moerdijk came up with an innovative online concept that empowers the community. The municipality of Moerdijk only helps when really necessary, for example, when applying for a permit. In this way, initiatives quickly become reality and the action remains good at it.

It is the optimal, innovative way for every municipality to really facilitate citizen participation.

Paul Wiegel - municipality of Moerdijk

Local residents determine, the municipality facilitates

Through an application, that most closely resembles a cross between a crowdfunding platform and Peerby, all residents receive push notifications with new initiatives taking place in the neighborhood. Think of a new foosball table for the youth center, or an event for the neighborhood in the care center where money is needed as well.

Let's say someone wants to organize a barbeque for the neighborhood. The organizer submits their initiative for the barbeque in the application with all the details of the event.

Next to the details, they can also submit requests for anything else they might need. If a fellow resident can bring the chairs, and another resident the music installation, they can cross this off in the application. If they also need funding or a permit, the municipality can chip in to help out.

The application makes it clear in no time who contributes what and whether there is enough support. Fast, easy and effective.

The perfect bridge between initiatives, municipal subsidies and what residents want to contribute in money or things. A nice combination between the sharing economy and crowdfunding.

Paul Wiegel - municipality of Moerdijk

The connecting factor

Knowing that your initiative really counts, that you are being heard and that your idea has support among multiple fellow residents has a positive effect. The application has created a sense of involvement, motivation, and responsibility among the residents, who can now do more for themselves. It's better for fellow residents, the neighborhood and the municipality. In this way, residents are empowered to make a livable society possible.

#4 Secure care portal for the municipality of Hoorn

The Municipality of Hoorn was faced with the problem that the national Municipal Data Exchange and the healthcare providers' portal would not be ready in time for all desired message exchange. The municipality of Hoorn wanted to prevent the confidential message traffic from going through e-mail.

Switch quickly

Entrepreneurship is one of the core values of the municipality of Hoorn. This made it possible to find a connection quickly when the contact with Betty Blocks was established. Functional specifications were listed during a two-hour session.

Good working alternative

Decentralizations have given municipalities additional care duties, whereby contracts with healthcare providers have been concluded. A secure portal had to be created for municipalities and healthcare providers to exchange messages for compliance with contracts. It became clear that the national facilities would not be ready in time for this.

There is now a portal where the municipality can issue instructions to health care providers and health care providers can send back messages and

We are very satisfied with this rapid cooperation, we have identified other processes and projects in addition to this portal that we want to automate in this way.

Arnoud Huijgen, Municipality of Hoorn

declarations. This has created a temporary alternative to GGK-VECOZO on which the municipality actively communicates, in accordance with the iJW and iWmo standards. When GGK-VECOZO contains all functionalities, the temporary portal can be canceled.

Continue to develop

The portal is still being developed further and a total of eight days of realization time have been put into it. Other municipalities around Hoorn — such as Koggenland and Opmeer — are also connected to the portal that has since been renamed BB-Web.

Time frame

The portal had to be developed quickly since the central government portal was not going to be ready on time. A working proof of concept was built within two hours. A working portal within two days. A total of eight days were put in, including implementation and further development.

In Business and IT: Action is the Best Way to Think

Business and IT development are two sides of the same coin. Building a new business initiative, or developing new features in an application, are complicated processes that take too long and are full of risks. Failure isn't an option when the stakes are so high, so your instinct is to think everything through to perfection. And this is what can hold organizations back from successful digital transformation.

The IT-driven era in which we live demands speed, flexibility, and involvement. And today's technology (think low- and no-code tools) are already fully ready to meet those demands. Thinking too long about digital transformation means that you miss the boat. In the time that you spend thinking, your competition has already taken giant digital leaps forward.

Forget perfection and focus on speed

Nowadays, your motto should go from "don't fail" to "fail fast". This might sound negative. But by actually implementing solutions and 'failing' you can see in real-time what works, what doesn't, and what needs to be adjusted. In a disruptive and digital world, you can't learn only by thinking, you have to also learn by doing.



The failing fast principle thrives on speed, agility, and fast adjustments, much like business development or IT projects. And it's at odds with the old notion of over-thinking and needing to develop the perfect product the first time around.

'Failing fast' in practice

In application development, "failing" early gives you valuable data to get to your optimal product faster by focusing on the user experience. You develop a product that's "market fit": a product that is designed to align perfectly with the user experience. Monitoring, testing, and adjusting become fundamental tasks to every organization. The business side can learn from this, too, to eliminate bugs and errors in all kinds of processes.

The speed and flexibility of low- and no-code platforms bring application development up to speed (literally) to the fail-fast party. Just ask a programmer how time-consuming rounds of testing and adjustments are in the traditional development process (spoiler alert: it's very time consuming).

When you eliminate coding from the process though, you increase the flexibility of development by 20 times (at least). You can incorporate feedback in real-time and make adjustments on the fly without having to alter an application's codebase, making adjustments a breeze. This also brings together both business and IT innovations by creating a bridge for the two sides to meet under a common language: innovation.

Digital transformation: From thinking to doing

In a digital world, constant innovation isn't a choice anymore; it's an obligation. This demands flexibility and speed from every organization, from the business end to IT departments. Luckily, the technology is advanced enough already that innovation is available for both sides in every organization.

#5 Participate in the municipality of Schagen

On the “Meedoen Schagen” platform, children from low-income families and pensioners can spend a personal budget on sports and cultural activities they have chosen themselves.

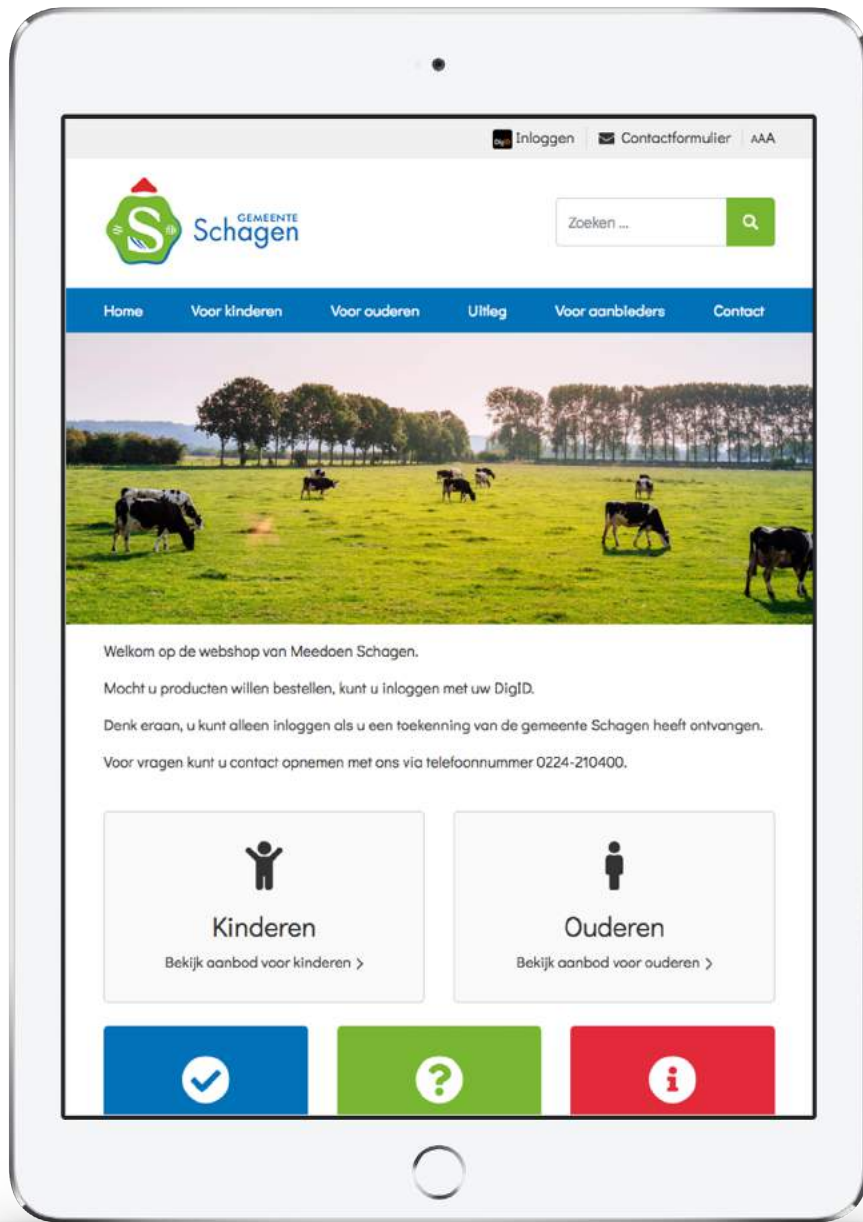
Webshop for the participation project of the municipality of Schagen

In every municipality in the Netherlands, residents with a low income get the chance to participate, thanks to the participation project. They can engage in sports activities, courses, or a movie visit. To reach more residents from low-income families, the municipality of Schagen has developed a webshop called “Meedoen Schagen”.

“It started with the evaluation of the old platform Meedoen Schagen. There was some dissatisfaction with the operation and user-friendliness of the online platform. In addition, we haven’t reached all Schagen residents who are eligible for the participation project; only around 59%.” Herman de Ruiter, from Society Affairs of the municipality of Schagen.

To make the webshop more user-friendly, a number of crucial issues have been addressed. Where people used to log in with a date of birth, DigiD is now integrated. This prevents many duplicates in the system and ensures that





every user immediately gets his or her personal profile. The employees of the municipality of Schagen are also a lot more self-reliant.

“We needed an external party for every addition or modification. The changes in purchases were also not efficient enough. We entered all changes manually, which in turn resulted in a lot of extra work and a high degree of error sensitivity.” According to Herman, it was time to embrace IT and improve the concept.

Schagen municipality is participating again

Together with Betty Blocks, the municipality of Schagen has redesigned the existing webshop. With a new design and a user-friendly back-end, “Meedoen Schagen” is now participating again. By building the application on Betty Blocks, the application is enormously agile and very easy for the employees of the municipality of Schagen to self-manage.

Adding, checking and managing new users and providers without the intervention of an external party, logging in with DigiD, automated changes of purchases. The municipality of Schagen saves a lot of time and frustration with the new webshop.



Greetings from the team

About Betty Blocks

As the world's leading no-code platform, Betty Blocks empowers both enterprises and Citizen Developers to build complex applications efficiently and effectively without writing a single line of code. With its focus on people, Betty Blocks empowers organizations to work towards the right solution and enable the workforce to take control of their innovations. Cloud-based Betty Blocks is available worldwide. The company has offices in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, US, Mexico, UK, Japan, and South Africa.

Visit us at www.bettyblocks.com and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).



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