

The Workforce Board Buyer's Guide to a Career Delivery Platform

How workforce boards and regional agencies evaluate, buy, and launch a platform that carries a participant from intake through training, credentialing, employer match, and placement — and reports the outcome without a work order.

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

- 1. Why career platforms fail workforce procurement
- 2. The delivery chain you are buying — and who owns each link
- 3. The 12-point evaluation scorecard
- 4. Career Passport and employer matching: the two questions most vendors dodge
- 5. Investment: tiers, per-participant math, and funding sources
- 6. A 90-day implementation plan
- 7. Questions to ask every vendor — and how Navigate answers them
- 8. How we handle our own claims

How to use this guide

Sections 2, 3, 5 and 6 are vendor-neutral — score every platform you are considering, including ours. Section 7 is the only place we make claims about Navigate, and each one is labeled available today or scoped per contract.

1. Why career platforms fail workforce procurement

Most platforms are built as training catalogs and then sold to institutions. The mismatch shows up the first time a funder asks what happened to the participant after the last module. Four recurring failure points:

- **Course completion is treated as the outcome.** The platform can prove someone finished content. It cannot prove they earned a credential, met an employer, or started a job.
- **The record dies at exit.** Skills, credentials and milestones live inside the vendor's course system, so the participant leaves with a certificate PDF and nothing an employer can verify.
- **No employer side.** Placement is left to your staff and a spreadsheet, which means the platform cannot help with the part of your performance measures you are actually judged on.
- **Reporting is a services engagement.** Exports are custom work orders instead of a button, so every funder report becomes a ticket.

2. The delivery chain you are buying

You are not buying courses. You are buying a chain that has to hold from intake to placement, with a clear owner on every link. Use this to decide what the platform must do versus what your team and your employer partners keep.

Link in the chain	Board / agency owns	Provider & employer partners own	Platform must do
Intake & enrollment	Eligibility, funding stream, contracted seats	Site-level recruitment	Roster upload, cohort by site and term, live seats vs. enrollment
Baseline	Defining what readiness means locally	Administering it in the room	Structured baseline assessment, not a self-report survey
Training & progress	Pathway selection	Instruction and case management	Cohort-scoped instructor view with stalled-participant flags
Credentialing	What counts toward performance	Verifying completion	Certificates with a public verification code
Employer match	Regional demand, employer relationships	Open roles and hiring criteria	Open roles in the platform, matched to participant skills
Placement & reporting	Funder reporting and audit	Confirming hire and wage	Milestone capture and self-serve funder-ready exports

If a vendor cannot name its role on all six links, you are buying content and keeping the delivery work.

3. The 12-point evaluation scorecard

Score every vendor 0–2 on each line. Anything under 18/24 will cost you staff time later.

#	Criterion	What good looks like	Score
1	Cohorts & multi-site	Group people by site, term and program — and report on each separately.	___/2
2	Outcome milestones	Enrollment, progress, credential, employer match and placement captured as structured data.	___/2
3	Pre/post readiness	A baseline and a re-assessment, so gain is measured rather than asserted.	___/2
4	Portable participant record	The participant leaves with a verifiable profile of skills and credentials, not a PDF.	___/2
5	Employer-side capability	Open roles live in the platform and can be matched to participants by skill.	___/2
6	Self-serve exports	A program manager pulls a CSV or funder summary without contacting support.	___/2
7	Instructor / case-manager role	Cohort-scoped staff account with roster, progress and stalled-participant flags.	___/2
8	Seat management	Live enrollment against contracted seats, visible to the board, not just the vendor.	___/2
9	Regional pathway relevance	Pathways mapped to roles that actually hire in your region — and updated.	___/2
10	Data ownership & exit	You own participant data and can export it in full if you leave.	___/2
11	Privacy & audit posture	Documented retention and access controls — and a straight answer on which audits the vendor has actually completed.	___/2
12	Time to first cohort	Launch in weeks, not an integration project.	___/2

4. The two questions most vendors dodge

4a. What does the participant walk away with?

A course certificate is not a record. Ask to see the artifact a participant holds 12 months after exit and whether an employer can verify it without calling you. In Navigate that artifact is the **Career Passport**: a living profile that accumulates credentials, skills, and milestones as the participant moves through the program, shareable with an employer through a link or QR code and verifiable from a public code. It also grounds the participant-facing tools — resume review and the Career Navigator coach read the passport and the open roles in your program, so the advice points at real regional jobs rather than generic answers.

4b. Who does the employer work?

Placement is where performance measures are won or lost, and it is the part most platforms leave to your staff. Ask whether employer partners exist as first-class records with open roles, and whether the system can shortlist participants for a role by skill. In Navigate, employer partners and their open roles live alongside cohorts; staff refer participants to roles and the referral is tracked through to placement so the outcome lands in the same export as everything else.

Neither capability replaces your business-services team. They remove the spreadsheet in the middle of it.

5. Investment

Institutional pricing should be per participant and billed annually, with a small paid pilot ahead of a full commitment. These are Navigate's published tiers — use them to sanity-check any quote you receive.

Tier	Participants	Price	Includes
Launch Pilot	Up to 50	\$2,500 flat, 90 days	Configured workspace, onboarding, staff enablement sessions, pilot outcomes report. Converts to an annual plan or renews.
Growth	50–250	\$75 / participant / year	Everything in Pilot, plus cohort and site analytics, performance reporting and exports, pathway customization, priority support.
Scale	250–1,000	\$55 / participant / year	Everything in Growth, plus multi-site and multi-funder reporting, instructor accounts, quarterly business reviews, dedicated success manager.
Enterprise	1,000+	\$40 / participant / year	Everything in Scale, plus custom MSA and security review, SAML/SSO scoping, API and integration support, executive performance briefings.

The per-participant math. A 300-participant regional program on Scale is \$16,500 a year — about \$55 per participant, or roughly the cost of a single unfilled placement. Annual minimums apply (\$5,000 Growth, \$15,000 Scale, \$25,000 Enterprise); every tier includes the full staff dashboard and every participant-facing tool, so nothing your participants need sits behind an upgrade.

Where the money usually comes from

- WIOA adult, dislocated worker, and youth formula funds
- State discretionary and regional talent-initiative grants
- Economic development and public workforce investment budgets
- Employer-funded cohorts and industry-sector partnerships
- Foundation program grants and fee-for-service contracts with partner providers

6. A 90-day implementation plan

Window	Focus	Exit criteria
Days 1–15	Contract, seat allocation, admin accounts, cohort structure defined by site and term, roster upload.	Cohorts created; instructors invited; live seats vs. enrollment visible.
Days 16–30	Baseline readiness assessment for every enrolled participant; Career Passports opened.	100% baseline completion; every participant has a passport with a starting skill set.
Days 31–60	Pathway delivery, weekly instructor review of stalled flags, employer partners and open roles loaded.	Under 10% stalled at week six; at least three employer partners with live roles.
Days 61–90	Post-assessment, credentialing, first referrals to roles, outcomes export and funder summary.	Documented gain per cohort, referrals in flight, one distributed funder summary.

7. Questions to ask every vendor

- Show me a funder report generated from live data — not a mockup.
- How do you distinguish a participant who finished from one who stalled at week three?
- What does the participant hold after exit, and can an employer verify it without calling us?
- Do employer partners and open roles exist in the product, or is placement our spreadsheet?
- Which security audits or certifications have you actually completed, and can you show the report?
- What happens to our data if we do not renew?
- Which capabilities are available today, and which are contract-scoped roadmap?
- What is the smallest pilot you will run, and what does success look like at the end of it?

How Navigate answers them

Navigate is the workforce delivery platform from Workforce Ascend. Here is an honest split between what is live today and what is scoped per contract — hold every other vendor to the same standard.

Capability	Status	Detail
Roster onboarding & seat management	Available	CSV roster upload, seat limit per organization, live enrollment vs. seats used in the admin dashboard.
Cohort & multi-site reporting	Available	Cohorts by site and term, filterable dashboards, CSV outcomes export, printable funder summary.
Instructor accounts	Available	Cohort-scoped instructor role with roster, progress, and stalled-participant flags.
Pre/post readiness	Available	Baseline assessment and re-assessment so gain is measured, not asserted.
Career Passport	Available	Living participant profile with credentials, skills and milestones; employer-ready link or QR share.
Completion certificates	Available	Issued per cohort with a public verification code anyone can check.
Employer partners & referrals	Available	Employer partner records with open roles; staff refer participants and track referrals through to placement.
Participant tools grounded in your program	Available	Resume review and the Career Navigator coach read the participant's passport and your program's open roles.
AI literacy pathways	Available	AI readiness built into pathways rather than delivered as a standalone webinar.
Google & email sign-in	Available	Available for all participants and staff today.
Role-based access & data export	Available	Data scoped to your organization; you can export your data at any time.
SAML / SSO	Scoped per contract	Single sign-on with your identity provider is scoped per contract — not self-serve yet.
Custom integrations & API	Scoped per contract	Case-management and reporting-system integrations are delivered as scoped engagements, not turnkey today.
SOC 2 / FERPA / HIPAA attestation	Not completed	Navigate has not completed an independent audit or certification. We document our controls, and we will review and sign your DPA or data-sharing agreement before a pilot.

8. How we handle our own claims

Workforce Ascend is early in its institutional rollout, so we hold our own marketing to the standard in section 7.

- We do not publish customer logos, testimonials or case studies we have not earned; anything phrased as a commitment is labeled as ours, not a client's.
- Dashboards and reports in our materials use sample data and are labeled as illustrative.
- ROI and budget figures are planning assumptions you can edit — not measured benchmarks from prior clients.
- We are not independently audited or certified, and we say so rather than implying otherwise.
- Features are labeled available today or scoped per contract so nothing on the roadmap reads as shipped.

We publish pilot targets and design principles, then report against them with your own cohort data. Ask every vendor to do the same. Spot something overstated? Email info@girlstechningover.com.

Next step: book a 30-minute working session

Bring this scorecard. We will walk your cohort structure, your employer partners, your reporting requirements, and a realistic pilot scope for your region.

navigate.girlstechningover.com/book-a-demo