Tech Selection and Implementation

Especially at the beginning of the SkillsFWD grant period, vendors varied widely in their levels of readiness, capacity for customization, and alignment with emerging standards. This required teams to carefully assess how the available tech options would align with their project needs. In many cases, emerging LER tools required substantial additional investment to become operational in real-world settings. While SkillsFWD supported these changes, some early expectations about timelines and ease of implementation were overly ambitious. Compounding this challenge, interoperability standards and ecosystem expectations were still relatively new, and many vendors were not yet fully familiar with them or incentivized to prioritize alignment. At the same time, those leading LER demonstrations, often workforce, education, or policy experts, are not technology specialists—nor should they need to be. To be successful, those leaders need clear translation, strong technical support, and shared infrastructure to choose the best technology partners for their projects.

What We Learned

Strong, collaborative relationships drive progress. All grantees entered SkillsFWD with identified vendor partners, and the strength of those relationships played an important role in early momentum. Teams with established vendor relationships were generally able to set expectations more quickly and begin implementation sooner. Grantees forming new vendor partnerships often required additional time to align on priorities such as customization, user-centered design and technical requirements, and to move through procurement. In some cases, grantees realized the vendor they had initially selected was not the best fit and had to identify other options. The clarity provided by the Principles, Rights, and Responsibilities helped teams articulate requirements and establish shared expectations with vendors, while the assessment process created a constructive mechanism for accountability. Together, these elements supported vendor alignment and helped ensure solutions were positioned to contribute to long-term interoperability and scalability across the broader ecosystem.

Grantee Example

Strong relationships between grantees and their technology vendors enabled faster alignment, more effective collaboration, and accelerated adoption. Western Governors University (WGU) entered the SkillsFWD demonstration with a strong, well-established relationship with its primary technology vendor, iQ4 Corp, having already completed a pilot together. This foundation enabled the two organizations to collaborate effectively from the outset, align quickly around the Principles, Rights, and Responsibilities, and accelerate efforts to scale the solution to reach more users. WGU also leveraged this existing relationship to support an integration with SmartResume, adding valuable functionality that allows learners to use their LERs directly in job applications.

Indiana Achievement Wallet

How to Apply It

Set clear expectations for LER technology functionality. Establishing clear technical and functional expectations is critical to the success of LER implementations. It is important to define technical requirements that adhere to common standards and guidance, supporting scalability, interoperability, and privacy. However, it is equally important to set expectations around how the technology should function for users, ensuring a positive user experience. Communicating these expectations through procurement language, implementation plans, and assessment processes aligns internal teams and technology partners, reduces risk, and provides accountability, helping ensure that both technical and user-centered objectives are met consistently.

Identify opportunities to leverage and integrate with existing technology systems. Organizations implementing LER solutions should prioritize opportunities to build on and integrate with existing technology systems rather than developing standalone tools. Existing working relationships with technology partners can foster enhanced trust, smoother collaboration, and greater accountability. Connecting LER infrastructure to existing learner information systems, credential platforms, and hiring or application tools accelerates implementation and reduces operational burden, increasing the likelihood of real-world use.

Helpful Resources

- SkillsFWD Principles Rights and Responsibilities - This table is designed to be completed in conjunction with selected project vendors to identify outstanding needs in order to ensure adherence to standards and functional interoperability.
- T3 Technical Implementation Plan - This tool can be used to help team members understand key concepts and options related to how LER issuing is implemented with Verifiable Credentials as well as document and describe the decisions made and to ensure compatibility across solution components.
- Education Design Lab CredCompare - This resource evaluates features across multiple providers, from accessibility to interoperability, all tailored to educational and workforce needs for select vendors in the LER space.