A Guide to Evaluating Financial Education Options

A scorecard guide for financial institutions weighing in-house delivery against an established platform provider.

For banks and credit unions, the question is no longer whether to invest in financial education. The question is how to deliver it at the scale, quality, and measurability that community impact requires — across every audience that matters: adult customers, students in the schools you serve, and community members. Most institutions choose one of two approaches:

Build

Create and manage an in-house financial education program, including volunteer-led classroom visits, sponsored school programs, internally developed digital content for customers, and locally run financial workshops.

Partner

Work with a financial education provider that brings curriculum, technology, implementation support, and reporting together across student, adult, and workshop audiences in one integrated platform.

Both approaches can contribute to financial literacy. The right choice depends on what an institution is trying to achieve and what it has the capacity to sustain across multiple audiences over time. This guide evaluates both options across the factors that matter most: scale, quality, accessibility, measurement, cost, and long-term sustainability.

Evaluation Area	In-House Program	Education Partner
Audience Reach	One audience at a time	Students, adults, and workshop attendees
Scalability	Limited by team capacity	Scalable without added headcount
Curriculum Quality	Dependent on internal expertise	Standards-aligned, continuously updated
Assessment and Outcomes Measurement	Difficult to measure creadibility	Built-in pre/post assessments across audiences
Accessibility and Equity	Resource-intensive to build	Bilingual and accessible by design
Delivery Formats	One format at a time	Digital, mobile-first, and live workshops
Implementation Support	Internal responsibility	Included
Reporting and Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) Documentations	Manual	Automated, exam-ready
Total Cost of Ownership	Often underestimated	Predictable
Time to Impact	Month to years	Immediate

Building and Managing an In-House Program

For financial institutions seeking full ownership of their financial education efforts, building in-house offers a tailored approach. Institutions develop curriculum, manage delivery, and maintain relationships with schools, customers, and community partners. While this model provides flexibility and control, expanding across multiple audiences typically requires additional curriculum, delivery, and support resources.

What It Delivers

- Full control over curriculum, messaging, and branding
- Direct relationships with schools, customers, and community partners
- Flexibility to tailor content to specific local needs
- Employee-led community engagement and visibility
- Customizable classroom, digital, and workshop experience
- Internal expertise and institutional knowledge built over time

What to Look for in an In-House Build

When evaluating whether to build in-house, institutions should ask:

- Do we have personal finance subject matter experts on staff?
- Can we support students, adults, and community audiences as our program grows?
- Can we resource curriculum and instructional design across multiple formats?
- Do we have the technical infrastructure to host and maintain digital learning experiences?
- Can we ensure ongoing alignment with state standards for K-12 content?
- Do we have accessibility and translation expertise?
- Can we measure and report learner outcomes credibly across every audience?
- Do we have the staff capacity to recruit, train, and support educators, presenters, and digital users?

Best Fit For

Building a financial education program in-house may be the strongest fit for institutions that:

- Serve a small, focused geographic footprint
- Have dedicated staff with curriculum and instructional design expertise
- Are prepared to invest in long-term program development and maintenance
- Prioritize full content ownership over operational efficiency
- Are focused on a single audience rather than reaching customers, students, and community members at once

Partnering with a Financial Education Platform

For financial institutions seeking measurable community impact at scale, partnering with a financial education platform provides the infrastructure to deliver, support, and measure learning across students, adults, and community members. Rather than building curriculum, technology, reporting, accessibility, and implementation support independently, institutions can focus on community engagement and strategic outcomes.

What It Delivers

- Standards-aligned curriculum that is continuously updated
- Multi-audience reach across K-12 students, adult consumers, and community members in live workshops
- Scale across schools, districts, branches, and markets without adding headcount
- Implementation support for educators and facilitators
- Accessible, bilingual digital and live learning experiences
- Built-in pre/post assessments that measure actual knowledge gain
- Real-time dashboards lterable by audience, LMI status, and geography
- Mobile-first digital education delivered through the institution's branded channels
- Turnkey workshop materials with scripted facilitator guides and "train the trainer" support

What to Look for in an Education Partner

When evaluating providers, institutions should ask:

- What experience does the provider have in delivering financial education programs?
- Does the platform support every audience we need to reach?
- Does the curriculum align with state standards and educational best practices?
- Can the platform support digital and live learning experiences at scale?
- Is the platform accessible and available in multiple languages?
- How rigorous are the learner assessments, and what reporting is available for leadership, regulators, and stakeholders?
- How does the provider support educators, branch staff, and workshop facilitators?

Best Fit For

Partnering with a financial education provider may be the strongest fit for institutions that:

- Need to reach multiple audiences — students, adult customers, and community members
- Want measurable outcomes rather than participation metrics alone
- Serve diverse populations and prioritize equitable access
- Need reliable reporting for CRA documentation and stakeholder updates
- Want to launch quickly without building new internal capabilities

The Hidden Requirements Most Institutions Overlook

When evaluating a build-versus-buy decision, many institutions focus primarily on curriculum development costs. The larger costs are often operational.

Curriculum Maintenance
Financial education content must be reviewed regularly to remain current and aligned to evolving state standards for K-12 audiences, real-world financial products for adult audiences, and just-in-time topics for workshops.

Accessibility Compliance
Creating accessible content requires expertise in learner accommodations, digital accessibility standards, and inclusive design across formats.

Translation and Localization
Serving diverse communities often requires more than direct translation — content must be adapted for different audiences, age groups, and learning contexts.

Technology Infrastructure
Digital learning experiences require hosting, user management, progress tracking, reporting systems, data privacy controls, and ongoing technical support.

Mobile-First Design
Adult learners increasingly expect financial education delivered through mobile experiences integrated with the institution's brand.

Workshop Logistics
Live programming requires event scheduling tools, registration systems, calendar reminders, branded landing pages, facilitator training materials, and participant take-home resources.

Teacher and Presenter Success
Even the strongest curriculum stalls if educators and facilitators can't implement it easily. Supporting them requires training materials, classroom and branch resources, technical assistance, and ongoing customer support.

These costs rarely appear in an initial business case but often become significant as programs grow, and they compound when an institution tries to serve more than one audience.

Red Flags That a Homegrown Approach May Not Scale

An internal program may struggle if:

- Success depends on a small number of employees
- Classroom or workshop delivery requires staff to be physically present every time
- Curriculum updates happen infrequently
- Participation is measured, but learning outcomes are not
- Content is only available in English
- Schools, customers, or community members must pay to participate
- Reporting is assembled manually
- Expansion to new audiences requires hiring additional staff
- District adoption is inconsistent
- The program serves one audience well but leaves others underserved
- There is no process for maintaining alignment with state standards or financial product changes

Key Questions to Ask Before You Decide

Regardless of which path an institution chooses, decision-makers should be able to answer:

01 Which audiences are we trying to reach — students, adult customers, community members, or all of them?

02 How many learners can we realistically reach each year?

03 How will we measure whether students learned anything?

04 Can we serve diverse communities equitably across audiences and delivery formats?

05 What resources are required to maintain the program over time?

06 How quickly can we begin creating impact?

07 What evidence can we provide to stakeholders and regulators?

The answers often reveal that the decision is less about content and more about the infrastructure required to deliver, support, measure, and scale financial education effectively. Both approaches—building or partnering with an experienced provider—can contribute to financial education efforts. The right choice depends on an institution's goals, resources, and expectations.

The most successful programs are not necessarily the ones with the most content. They are the ones that combine reach, measurable outcomes, accessibility, and sustainability in a way that creates lasting community impact.