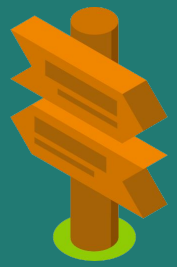


EdTech Purchasers
Segmented Journey Maps

THE DECISION LAB

Overview of EdTech purchasing segmented journey maps

EdTech products have been rapidly adopted by school districts but little is known about how districts choose edtech products, or how processes differ based on district characteristics (e.g., size, percentage of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. This research focused on uncovering the steps in the purchasing process, with attention to differences between districts.

Read this to:

- Understand different edtech purchasing segments for edtech based on purchasing behaviors and district characteristics.
- Learn the unique barriers and drivers experienced by district segments to using evidence when making edtech purchasing decisions.

SAMPLE & METHOD

01 | 200+ EdTech purchasers at the district level interviewed and surveyed.

02 | Segmentation analysis based on district characteristics and purchasing behaviors. Mapping of segments based on analysis, behavioral analysis of barriers and drivers.

TIME TO READ
10 minutes

MAIN AUDIENCE
EdTech

Reading guide: Segmented purchaser journey maps

The journey map outlines **key touchpoints** and **substeps** of **decision-making** in the purchasing processes, from initial scoping to purchase and scaling. Importantly, the map captures the **variability in decision-making among three emergent segments** at particular substeps.

A deep dive into each segment's barriers is conducted.

Decision Points

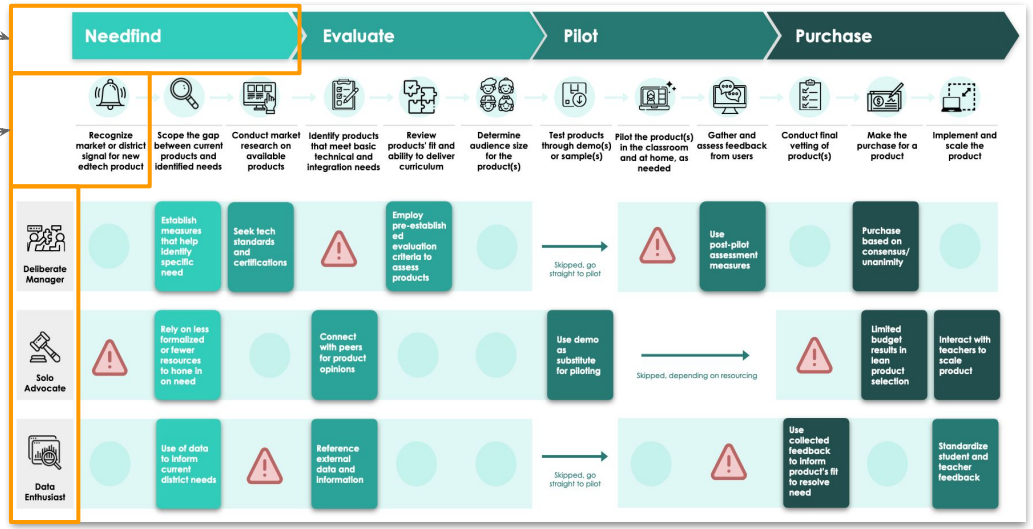
Touchpoint
A key step that edtech purchasers would experience along the journey of bringing a product to the district.

Substep
Specific decisions made or actions taken by the purchaser that are associated with a given touchpoint.

Segment Specificities

Differentiating segments
The different decisions made at a particular substep, per segment:

- Circles represent no notable deviation
- Arrows represent skipped steps
- Warning signs represent barriers

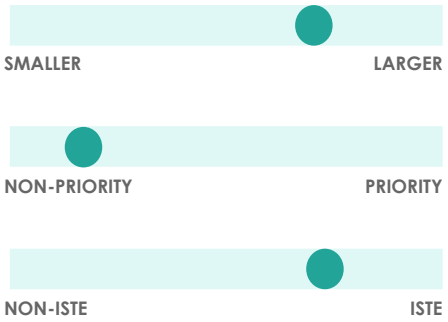


Three predictable EdTech purchaser segments

Deliberate Managers

Deliberate Managers employ standardized steps for procurement using pre-established criteria to assess products. They are highly intentional in their process, and may involve various stakeholders.

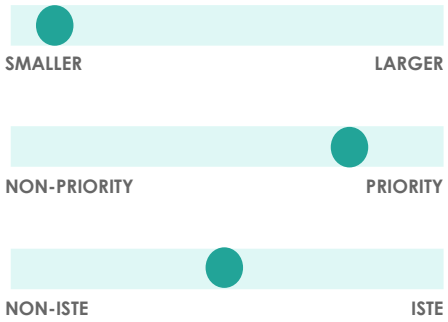
Given the rigidity of the process, they may be less responsive to contextual changes or less likely to consider novel products that don't fit pre-established criteria.



Solo Advocates

Solo Advocates spearhead EdTech purchasing while relying on limited resources and expertise to ensure they alignment with the district's vision.

Yet, Solo Advocates may face limited resources which can result in insufficient evidence engagement, as well as skipped or reduced steps.

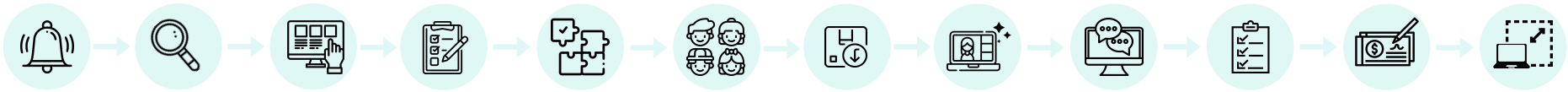


Data Enthusiasts

Data Enthusiasts are determined to leverage external and internal data to inform decision-making while optimizing for culturally-relevant solutions.

However, Enthusiasts may run into obstacles when they cannot obtain the desired external evidence due to availability, or may have trouble with successfully translating available evidence into their local context.

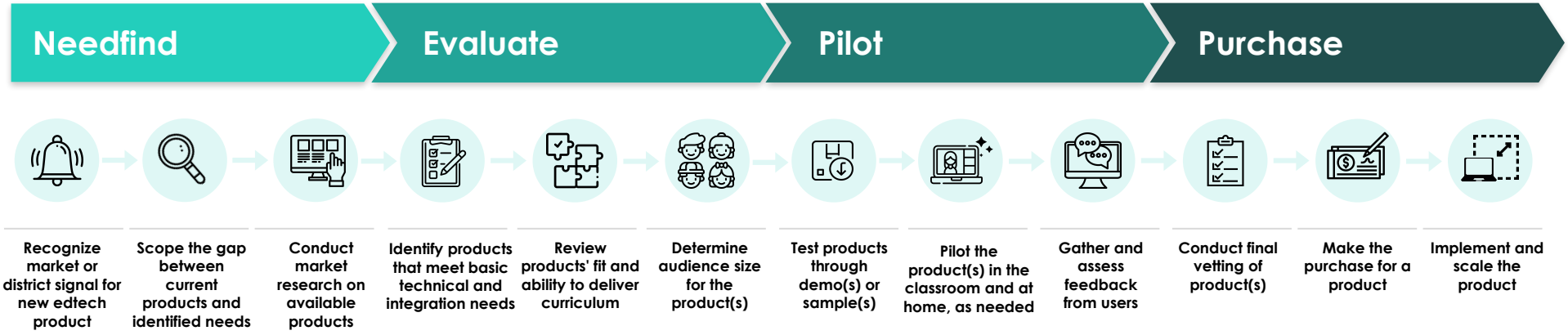
Needfind	Evaluate	Pilot	Purchase
An identified need or edtech interest sparks the beginning of product discussion and investigation in the district.	To better understand edtech solutions, products are scoped according to district needs, resources are reviewed, and connections are consulted.	Select edtech are brought in to be piloted in order to obtain contextualized data on its efficacy in meeting the desired goal.	The edtech that fulfills the necessary requirements and meets the desired goal moves into procurement and implementation.

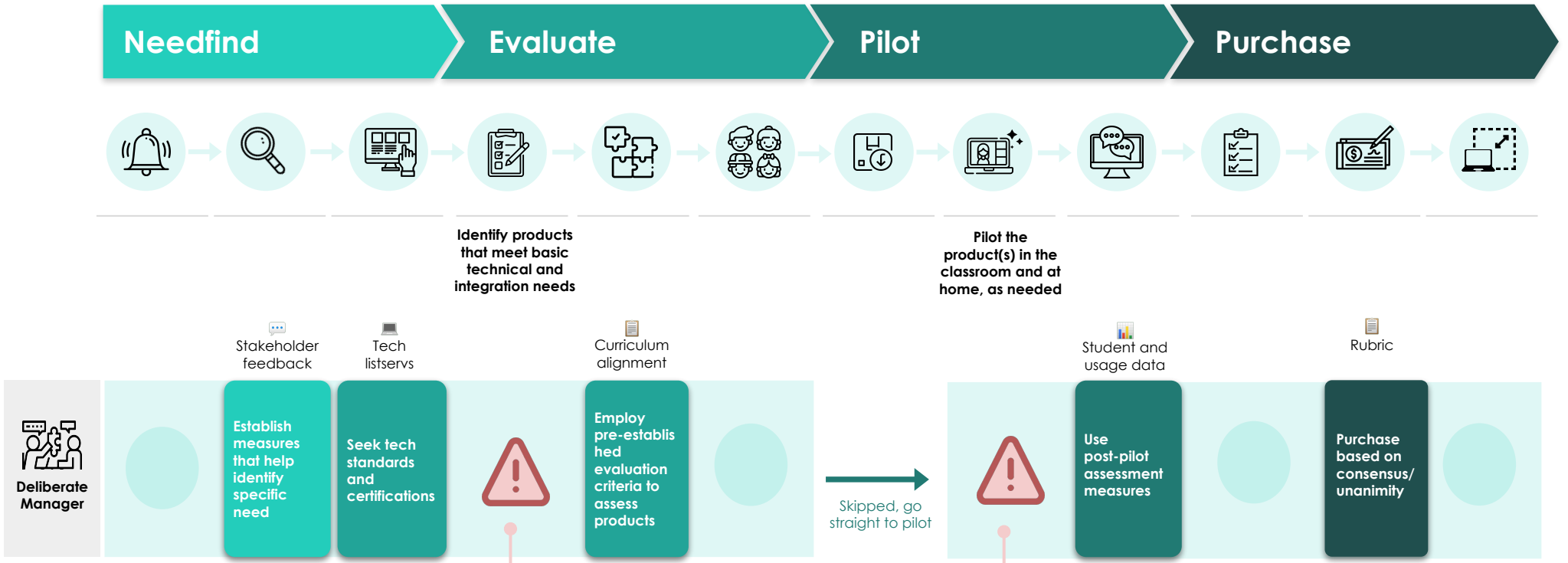


Recognize market or district signal for new edtech product	Scope the gap between current products and identified needs	Conduct market research on available products	Identify products that meet basic technical and integration needs	Review products' fit and ability to deliver curriculum	Determine audience size for the product(s)	Test products through demo(s) or sample(s)	Pilot the product(s) in the classroom and at home, as needed	Gather and assess feedback from users	Conduct final vetting of product(s)	Make the purchase for a product	Implement and scale the product

Deliberate Manager	Establish measures that help identify specific need	Seek tech standards and certifications		Employ pre-establis hed evaluation criteria to assess products	Skipped, go straight to pilot		Use post-pilot assessment measures			Purchase based on consensus/ unanimity	
Solo Advocate	Rely on less formalized or fewer resources to hone in on need		Connect with peers for product opinions		Use demo as substitute for piloting	Skipped, depending on resourcing				Limited budget results in lean product selection	Interact with teachers to scale product
Data Enthusiast	Use of data to inform current district needs		Reference external data and information		Skipped, go straight to pilot		Use collected feedback to inform product's fit to resolve need				Standardize student and teacher feedback

Journey Map | EdTech Purchasing: Deliberate Managers





Reliance on predetermined criteria generates rigidity, as it confines the selection of prospective products that would be able to address the scoped need. Further, criteria for high-quality edtech is non-standardized and in flux as technology changes and evidence updates.

*Larger districts are **significantly more likely to agree** that their district establishes predetermined evaluation criteria before reviewing edtech products than smaller districts ($p < .01$).*

*ISTE districts are **significantly more likely to agree** that their district establishes predetermined evaluation criteria before reviewing edtech products than non-ISTE districts ($p < .001$).*

"Technology changes so fast so we struggled to find a rubric that adapts as quickly."

"We found that every product almost needs a different rubric."

Strict adherence to process makes change unlikely, even if the change would result in a purchase that is better suited to needs; it can reinforce the status quo of leaning towards familiar or existing products and solutions.

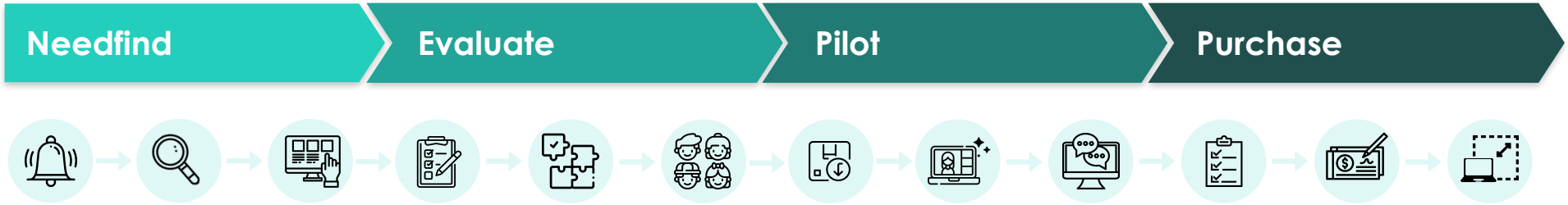
***61% of larger districts** agree that piloting typically leads to a purchase, compared to 48% of smaller districts.*

***87% of non-priority districts** agree that piloting typically leads to a purchase, compared to 81% of priority districts.*

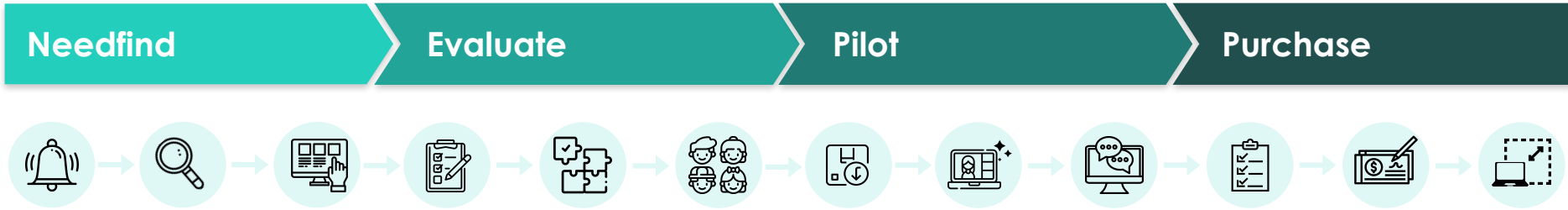
"If I had a critique of the piloting process, it's almost as if we use pilot as this is the deal, this is going to be the one."

"There's the sunk cost of putting so much time into the process."

Journey Map | EdTech Purchasing: Solo Advocates



Recognize market or district signal for new edtech product	Scope the gap between current products and identified needs	Conduct market research on available products	Identify products that meet basic technical and integration needs	Review products' fit and ability to deliver curriculum	Determine audience size for the product(s)	Test products through demo(s) or sample(s)	Pilot the product(s) in the classroom and at home, as needed	Gather and assess feedback from users	Conduct final vetting of product(s)	Make the purchase for a product	Implement and scale the product
Deliberate Manager	Establish measures that help identify specific need	Seek tech standards and certifications		Employ pre-established evaluation criteria to assess products		Skipped, go straight to pilot		Use post-pilot assessment measures		Purchase based on consensus/ unanimity	
Solo Advocate	Rely on less formalized or fewer resources to hone in on need		Connect with peers for product opinions			Use demo as substitute for piloting	Skipped, depending on resourcing		Limited budget results in lean product selection	Interact with teachers to scale product	
Data Enthusiast	Use of data to inform current district needs		Reference external data and information			Skipped, go straight to pilot			Use collected feedback to inform product's fit to resolve need		Standardize student and teacher feedback



Fewer stakeholders in the scoping process limits a comprehensive assessment of district's needs; this lack of perspectives can lead to missing alternative signals.

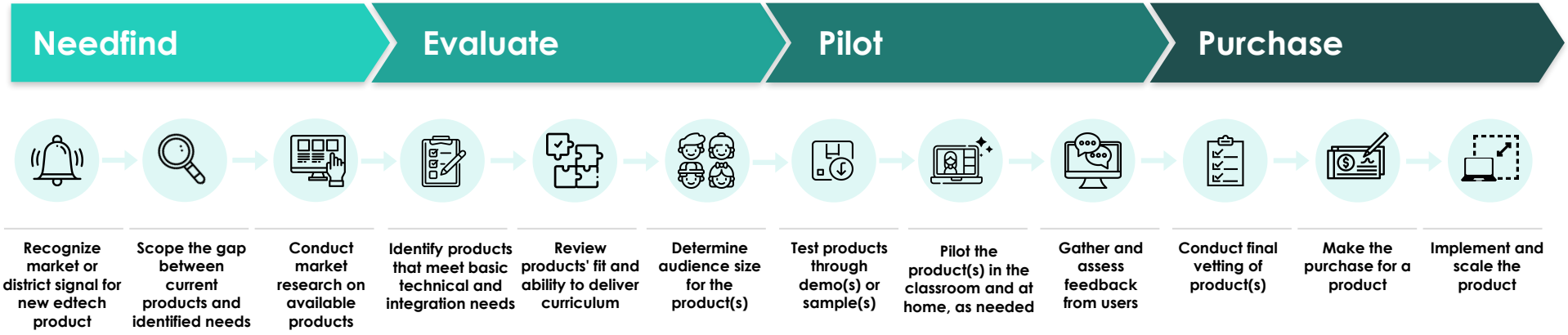
"It's just me for the edtech selection process; I work with the academic director who plays a role in curriculum adoption to make sure that students can access the virtual classroom easily and without issues."

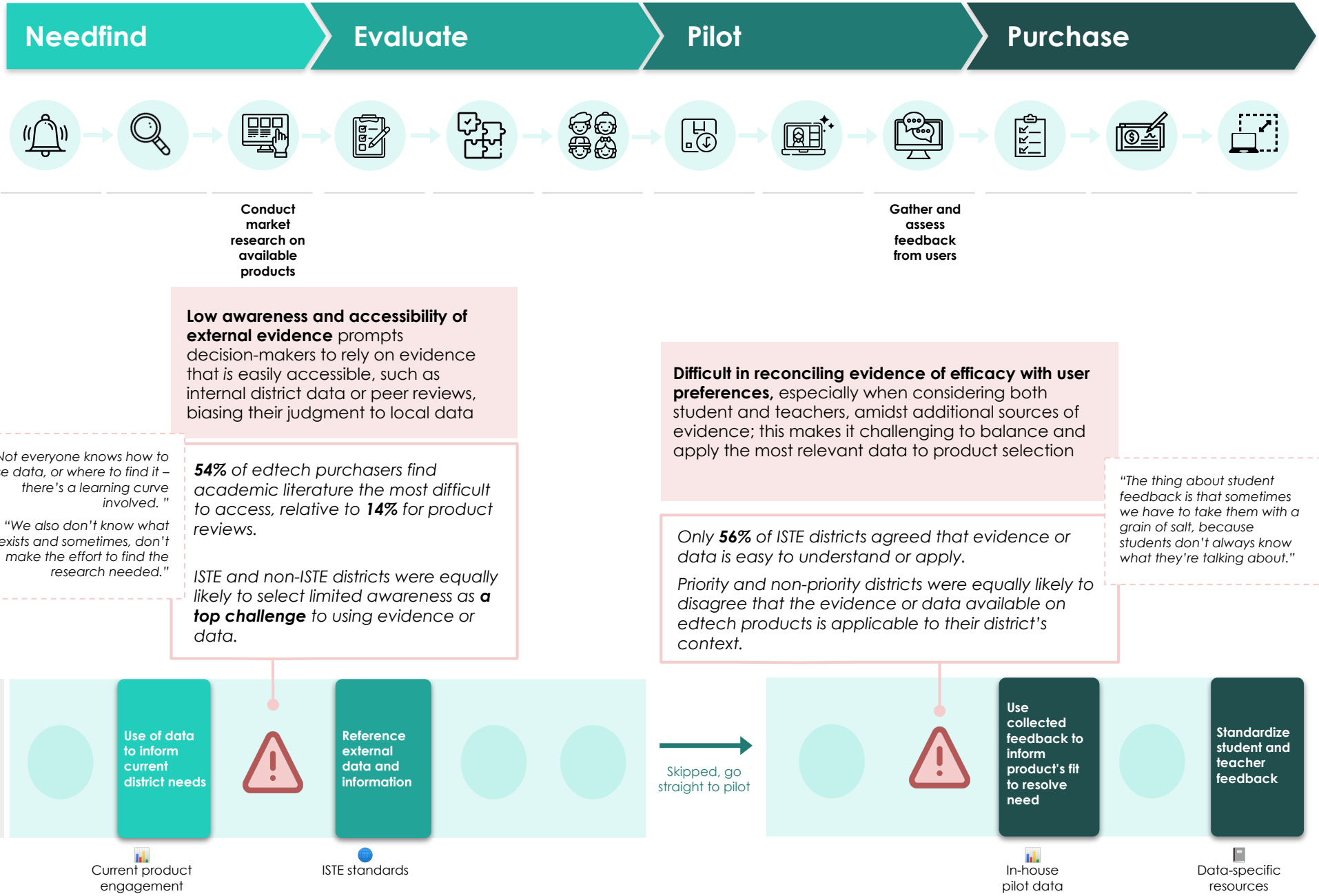
*The higher a respondent's %priority, the **less likely** they were to agree their district should consult externally data or information (p <.05).*

If the demo or pilot is only managed the main stakeholder(s), this can reduce end user feedback or involvement due to limited social scope; this can evolve into an inaccurate perspective of efficacy since there is no/limited in-house testing.

"I do all the initial contact and initial demos to get a feel of the product to see if it will work with the district and has necessary components needed."

Journey Map | EdTech Purchasing: Data Enthusiasts




Needfind
Evaluate
Pilot
Purchase
Conduct market research on available products
Gather and assess feedback from users
Low awareness and accessibility of external evidence prompts decision-makers to rely on evidence that is easily accessible, such as internal district data or peer reviews, biasing their judgment to local data
"Not everyone knows how to use data, or where to find it – there's a learning curve involved. "
"We also don't know what exists and sometimes, don't make the effort to find the research needed."
54% of edtech purchasers find academic literature the most difficult to access, relative to 14% for product reviews.
ISTE and non-ISTE districts were equally likely to select limited awareness as a top challenge to using evidence or data.
Difficult in reconciling evidence of efficacy with user preferences, especially when considering both student and teachers, amidst additional sources of evidence; this makes it challenging to balance and apply the most relevant data to product selection
"The thing about student feedback is that sometimes we have to take them with a grain of salt, because students don't always know what they're talking about."
Only 56% of ISTE districts agreed that evidence or data is easy to understand or apply.
Priority and non-priority districts were equally likely to disagree that the evidence or data available on edtech products is applicable to their district's context.
Data Enthusiast
Use of data to inform current district needs
Reference external data and information
Skipped, go straight to pilot
Use collected feedback to inform product's fit to resolve need
Standardize student and teacher feedback
Current product engagement
ISTE standards
In-house pilot data
Data-specific resources