THC CONSULTING

VENTURE ASSESSMENT & DIAGNOSTIC SPRINT

D2 · RPP Strategic Assessment

NorthBridge Freight Solutions

CLASSIFICATION
SEVERE STRUCTURAL MISFIT

RPP SCORE
1 of 8

GO NOT PERMISSIBLE
Under current organizational conditions — 5 of 6 scored dimensions failed

PREPARED FOR	NorthBridge Freight Solutions · CEO, CFO, VP Business Development
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1 RPP Score Summary

The RPP framework assesses whether a specific organization can host a specific venture. It diagnoses structural fit across six scored dimensions (Q1–Q5, Q8) and two diagnostic context dimensions (Q6, Q7). Each scored question receives a 0 (fail) or 1 (pass) against primary source evidence. Q5 and Q8 carry 2× weight as existential questions. Scores are not interpolated. The maximum score is 8.

Q	Question	Weight	Score	Pts
Q1	Channel Fit	×1	1 — PASS	1
Q2	Process Compatibility	×1	0 — FAIL	0
Q3	Technology & Data Readiness	×1	0 — FAIL	0
Q4	Strategic Priority Alignment	×1	0 — FAIL	0
Q5	Margin Model Compatibility — EXISTENTIAL	×2	0 — FAIL	0
Q6	Regulatory & IP Environment — diagnostic context only	Context only	N/A	—
Q7	Customer Relationship Transferability — diagnostic context only	Context only	N/A	—
Q8	Organizational Immune System — EXISTENTIAL	×2	0 — FAIL	0
	TOTAL			**1 of 8**

CLASSIFICATION: SEVERE STRUCTURAL MISFIT · Score: 1 of 8 · GO not permissible under current organizational conditions

Verdict implication from RPP alone: NorthBridge Connect's Phase 1 internal efficiency platform fails five of six scored RPP dimensions — including both existential questions at full 2× weight — leaving no structural basis for a GO verdict under current organizational conditions.

Note: This is the RPP verdict direction only. The full sprint verdict — incorporating D3 market intelligence, D4 unit economics, and the Day 12 pre-mortem — is issued in the D1 Sprint Master Report on Day 14. The RPP result is a necessary but not sufficient input to the final verdict.

2 Score Rationale

Q1 — Channel Fit · Score: 1 · ×1

Q1 is structurally not applicable to the locked Phase 1 hypothesis. Phase 1 is an internal efficiency platform — there is no external customer to acquire, no sales channel required, and no buyer type to match. The internal "sale" is an executive-level decision already in motion: the CEO commissioned this diagnostic engagement, the VP Business Development holds board-level visibility, and the initiative has active champion energy. No salesforce involvement is required for internal deployment. The absence of channel fit risk is not a positive signal about organizational capability — it is a structural feature of the Phase 1 scope.

Phase 2 caveat — mandatory: For the conditional Phase 2 external SaaS thesis, Q1 is a strong 0. Three independent sources converge on zero channel fit: the VP Business Development confirmed the current salesforce cannot execute a SaaS selling motion; the sales lead quantified the output ceiling at two qualified conversations in six months at maximum effort; and a second sales representative independently raised the compensation gap unprompted. The 8–12 month SaaS sales cycle is structurally incompatible with a gross-margin-per-load compensation model. The Phase 2 Q1 score is 0 and this constraint is a material input to the Day 9 Reality Check.

Q2 — Process Compatibility · Score: 0 · ×1

Phase 1 internal deployment avoids external SaaS delivery complexity. The TMS integration is technically feasible per the Engineering Lead. These are the only passing signals — they address prerequisites, not the delivery challenge that actually governs Phase 1 viability: getting dispatchers to adopt the system.

No change management process exists for dispatcher adoption. Dispatchers have not been consulted and are unaware the platform is in development. The 30–40% override rate on current system recommendations reflects professional identity and carrier judgment protection, not a technology limitation. Structured change management is a prerequisite for Phase 1 success, not a post-deployment consideration. The Engineering Lead's own characterization — "this phase has the most operational risk" — is the technical lead identifying a process gap his own team cannot close. The Phase 1 financial model contains no line for training, change management staffing, or adoption support.

Three additional process dimensions compound the primary finding. First, the carrier portal resource conflict is a process competition for the same engineering team responsible for Phase 1A data engineering. Second, the data consolidation process required for Phase 1A crosses an organizational boundary between engineering and operations — two organizations not currently aligned on this initiative. Third, there is no process for capturing tacit dispatcher knowledge that has departed with recent retirements, the most nuanced component of the ML training layer.

Q3 — Technology & Data Readiness · Score: 0 · ×1

The data asset is real. Six years of Pacific Northwest load records in the TMS represent a genuine competitive moat — no external competitor can replicate this lane and carrier history on a relevant timeline. The core technical concept is sound: AI-powered load matching is established applied ML on structured data, not a research problem. These are the only passing signals.

The distinction that governs this score is the difference between data existence and data readiness. The asset exists. It is not deployment-ready. The carrier behavioral layer — the differentiating data the ML model actually requires — is present in only approximately 50% of load records, per the Engineering Lead's own estimate. 25–30% of migration-era records are incomplete in at least one material field. Carrier performance data is fragmented across three systems. No ML engineers or data scientists are on staff. A dedicated data warehouse does not exist. Cloud ML infrastructure has not been provisioned. Phase 1A data engineering — the critical path prerequisite — is 6–9 months of dedicated work.

Q4 — Strategic Priority Alignment · Score: 0 · ×1 · Most ambiguous call in this assessment

Three genuine passing signals exist. The venture has been presented at board level. The CEO commissioned this VAD diagnostic engagement — a formal signal of strategic seriousness. The VP Business Development is an energized, sustained champion.

The score is 0 on the formal evidence standard, which requires that senior leadership attention and budget be demonstrably committed. Commissioning a diagnostic is the precursor to strategic commitment, not commitment itself. No formal budget has been allocated. The CFO has not reviewed the current financial case. The CEO is described by his own CFO as "cautiously supportive." A directly competing capital priority — the carrier portal upgrade, deferred twice — is actively in play on the same engineering team.

This score is explicitly provisional. If the CEO formally allocates budget and the carrier portal conflict is documented as resolved before Day 14, Q4 revises to 1. That revision would produce a total of 2 of 8 — which remains SEVERE STRUCTURAL MISFIT and does not change the verdict direction.

Q5 — Margin Model Compatibility · Score: 0 · ×2 · EXISTENTIAL

This question carries 2× weight. A 0 on Q5 contributes 2 points to the fail column. Score with full evidence weight.

Phase 1 is framed as an efficiency investment, and a cost reduction model is theoretically compatible with a brokerage culture focused on operational performance. If internal savings materialize at the modeled rate, the ROI logic is internally consistent in structure. These are the only passing signals, and both are conditional on timeline and cost assumptions that are now in doubt.

The core brokerage business runs on mid-single-digit net margins. A $2–2.5M capital outlay is "not trivial" at this scale, and the CFO environment is highly margin-sensitive. The Engineering Lead's revised memo places build cost at $2–2.5M before the formal data audit, with a note that this figure may move further once audit results are known. The CFO stated that a build cost above $2M without clear explanation will trigger a pause request to the CEO. The venture is already at the CFO's threshold before audit results are in.

The payback math fails under either ROI threshold currently in play. Under the 18-month contribution margin gate, the Engineering Lead's honest deployment timeline means the venture completes at the gate with zero months of savings realization before the threshold fires. This is a structural impossibility, not a modeling risk. Under the 24-month payback gate — the CFO's stated threshold — the math is extremely tight and deteriorates directly if the data audit pushes costs upward.

The CFO's preferred governance structure — quarterly milestone checkpoints tied to capital release — is misaligned with Phase 1A's 6–9 months of invisible data engineering work. A series of "still in data preparation" quarterly updates is a governance structure likely to generate funding pressure before Phase 1B begins.

Q6 — Regulatory & IP Environment · Diagnostic Context Only — Does Not Score

Two material legal exposures require disclosure. Carrier data governance has not been designed or tested. Moving carrier performance data outside the organization's walls into an external product creates trust risk and potential contractual exposure — the VP Operations identified this risk independently. No data governance structure, competitive firewall, or carrier disclosure protocol has been developed or reviewed by counsel. This risk is concentrated in Phase 2; internal use of carrier data in Phase 1 carries materially lower legal exposure. No IP protection strategy for the trained ML model has been documented.

Q7 — Customer Relationship Transferability · Diagnostic Context Only — Does Not Score

For Phase 1, carrier relationships are the asset being captured — not a market access question. The organization's 30-year carrier relationships are the entire basis of the data moat. For Phase 2, existing customer relationships do not transfer to the broker buyer. Relational capital was built with shippers — a fundamentally different buyer type from the broker COOs and VPs of Operations who would purchase the platform. The one named broker contact who raised the competitor-trust objection declined further engagement. This compounds the Q1 and Q2 Phase 2 challenges.

Q8 — Organizational Immune System · Score: 0 · ×2 · EXISTENTIAL

This question carries 2× weight. A 0 on Q8 contributes 2 points to the fail column. Score with full evidence weight.

The methodology's pass standard requires that named opposition has been heard, understood, and addressed structurally — not politically — and requires documented autonomy protections across the five independence functions: HR, Finance, Sales, Revenue Recognition, and Technology. Neither condition is met.

Three independent immune system vectors are active and unaddressed. The primary vector is the VP Operations. She is named opposition, structurally motivated, and unaddressed — her specific objections include carrier trust erosion, dispatcher non-adoption, and resource competition for the carrier portal. Three independent sources converge on her as an immune system risk. The CFO independently flagging the VP Operations as an unaddressed risk is a material organizational signal.

The second vector is sales team incentive misalignment. Two sales representatives independently identified the compensation gap: under the current gross-margin-per-load commission structure, the rational response to a SaaS license opportunity is quiet deprioritization, not confrontation. This immune system response does not require intent — it is the structural output of an unchanged incentive system.

The third vector is engineering bandwidth competition. Phase 1A and the carrier portal upgrade cannot be simultaneously resourced on the current engineering team. The portal has been deferred twice; a third deferral has direct operational consequences for the VP Operations' team.

The venture has no documented autonomy protections across any of the five independence functions. It relies entirely on the VP Business Development's sustained energy and the CEO's conditional sponsorship — a high-risk configuration for a 13–19 month build timeline.

> **Scoring caveat: The VP Operations' Day 2 interview focused on the external licensing thesis. Her position on Phase 1 internal deployment has not been fully established in direct interview. The score holds at 0 on current evidence. The carrier portal resource conflict alone — independently corroborated by the Engineering Lead — is sufficient to sustain Q8 at 0 regardless of her stated position on the internal platform.**

3 Organizational Disability Profile

The RPP scoring pattern is diagnostic as well as evaluative. A 1 of 8 result identifies specific organizational disabilities — the structural gap between the organization as it currently operates and as it would need to operate to host this venture successfully. Three disability clusters emerge.

Disability Cluster	Description
1 Change Management Absence	The organization has no process for introducing technology that disrupts established professional practice. The dispatcher adoption challenge is not a training problem — it is a change management problem. The 30–40% override rate reflects professional identity protection by an experienced workforce. Closing this gap requires structured change management capability: a formal elicitation process for capturing tacit dispatcher knowledge, a staged adoption protocol, and a change champion structure that does not currently exist. The financial model contains no budget for this capability.
2 Financial Culture Misalignment	The organization's P&L; culture is optimized for gross margin per load on thin net margins. It has no experience evaluating, funding, or sustaining a multi-year technology investment with a 13–19 month development period before first operational output. The CFO's quarterly milestone governance model is structurally mismatched with a 6–9 month Phase 1A period that produces no user-visible output. The payback math fails under both ROI thresholds in play. The build cost is already at the CFO's stated stopping point before the formal data audit is complete.
3 Immune System Exposure — Multiple Vectors	The venture faces three simultaneous, unaddressed immune system vectors: named operational opposition (VP Operations), structural incentive misalignment (sales team compensation), and engineering bandwidth competition (carrier portal resource conflict). In the VAD Pattern Library, ventures facing multiple simultaneous immune system vectors without structural autonomy protections have a significantly elevated failure rate in the Mezzanine — the period after initial commitment when executive attention diffuses and the immune system asserts.

These three disabilities are not independent. Change management absence and immune system exposure are directly linked: the VP Operations' unaddressed concerns include dispatcher adoption as a central objection. Financial culture misalignment and immune system exposure are directly linked: the CFO's quarterly milestone governance model creates funding pressure precisely during the Phase 1A period when the immune system is most active and the venture produces no visible progress. A credible path forward requires all three disability clusters to be addressed structurally, not sequentially.

4 Verdict Implication from RPP

> **Verdict direction from RPP: NorthBridge Connect's Phase 1 internal efficiency platform fails five of six scored RPP dimensions — including both existential questions at full 2× weight — leaving no structural basis for a GO verdict under current organizational conditions.**

A score of 1 of 8 places NorthBridge Connect in the SEVERE STRUCTURAL MISFIT classification. At this score, the VAD methodology does not permit a GO verdict. The Pattern Library evidence is direct: an RPP score of 2 or below predicts NO-GO or WRONG COMPANY in 96% of cases at N=128.

The RPP result identifies organizational structural misfit, not idea failure. The core insight — that the organization's accumulated carrier relationship intelligence represents a genuine competitive data moat with ML potential — survives this assessment. What does not survive is the thesis that the organization as currently structured is the right host for the venture

in its current configuration.

This verdict direction will be tested against the D3 market intelligence (Day 7–8), the D4 unit economics (Day 9–10), and the Day 12 pre-mortem before the full sprint verdict is issued on Day 14. If the D3 demand signal comes back strong and the D4 unit economics are viable, the sprint verdict may be WRONG COMPANY rather than NO-GO. The RPP result alone cannot distinguish between these outcomes.

5 Scoring Notes and Known Limitations

Four scoring notes are carried on the record for Day 13 finalization of this document.

Question	Scoring note
Q4	Strategic Priority Alignment scored 0 on the formal evidence standard (no budget allocated, conditional sponsorship, competing capital priority active). The sprint commission is acknowledged as a meaningful positive signal. If the CEO formally allocates budget and the carrier portal conflict is documented as resolved before Day 14, this score revises to 1. A revised Q4 score would produce a total of 2 of 8 — which remains SEVERE STRUCTURAL MISFIT and does not change the verdict direction.
Q1	Phase 1 score of 1 reflects structural inapplicability — Q1 does not apply to an internal deployment with no external sales motion. For Phase 2 (conditional, external SaaS), Q1 is a strong 0 on convergent evidence from three independent sources. Phase 2 Q1 evidence is carried into the Day 9 Reality Check as a Critical Unknown dimension.
Q5	Score of 0 is stable under both ROI thresholds currently in play (18-month contribution margin and 24-month payback). The CFO's confirmed operative threshold governs severity language in the D4 unit economics model — it does not affect this score.
Q8	The VP Operations' Day 2 interview focused on the external licensing thesis. Her Phase 1 internal deployment stance is not fully established in direct interview. Score holds at 0 on current evidence. The carrier portal resource conflict alone — independently corroborated by the Engineering Lead — is sufficient to sustain Q8 at 0 regardless of her stated position on the internal platform.

6 Organizational Capability Gap Inventory

This section translates the RPP scoring into a practitioner-facing capability gap inventory. Where Section 3 identifies disability clusters at a strategic level, this section names the individual capabilities the organization lacks at sufficient resolution to inform the Day 12 pre-mortem failure scenarios and the D7 Validation Experiment Playbook.

Practitioner reference — Day 12 pre-mortem input and D7 Validation Experiment Playbook. Not a client-facing section in isolation; carried as an annex to D2 for sprint continuity.

Cluster 1 — Change Management and Adoption Capability

Specific capability missing	Primary evidence	Downstream sprint impact
Structured change management process for technology adoption in an established professional workforce	VP Operations (Interview 2); Engineering Lead — "most operational risk" characterization	Day 12 pre-mortem Scenario 1; D7 Experiment 1 design
Dispatcher knowledge elicitation protocol — structured process for capturing tacit carrier judgment	Engineering Lead (Interview); recent dispatcher retirements noted across multiple sources	Q3 data readiness; Day 12 pre-mortem; D7 knowledge capture experiment
Internal change champion structure — dispatcher-level adoption advocates below senior operations leadership	VP Operations (Interview 2); senior ops lead two management levels above dispatcher cohort	Phase 1C adoption risk; Q2 score rationale
Adoption staging methodology — phased rollout plan with measurable milestones before full deployment	Financial model omission; no staging plan in any reviewed document	D4 financial model inputs; Day 9 Reality Check

Specific capability missing	Primary evidence	Downstream sprint impact
Budget line for change management, training, and adoption support	Pre-sprint financial model — no line item present; two sources independently flagged	D4 financial model; Q5 score rationale

Cluster 2 — ML and Data Engineering Capability

Specific capability missing	Primary evidence	Downstream sprint impact
Senior ML engineer (minimum one hire required before Phase 1A can begin)	Engineering Lead memo; intake — "honestly pretty low" AI maturity	Phase 1A critical path; D4 cost modeling; Q3 score
Data engineer (minimum one hire required for carrier data consolidation)	Engineering Lead memo	Phase 1A critical path; D4 cost modeling
Dedicated data warehouse (separate from production TMS systems)	Engineering Lead memo — building on production creates operational risk	Phase 1A prerequisite; Q3 score
Cloud ML infrastructure (not provisioned)	Engineering Lead memo	Phase 1A prerequisite; build cost floor
Carrier data consolidation process — extracting and unifying records across three fragmented systems	Engineering Lead — fragmentation is "most significant data engineering challenge"	Phase 1A scope; Q2 and Q3 scores; data audit output
Custom extraction engineering for legacy carrier portal (undocumented, aging stack)	Engineering Lead memo	Phase 1A scope; build cost and timeline
Carrier behavioral data remediation — completing the ~50% of load records missing performance attributes	Engineering Lead (Interview) — carrier behavioral layer present in ~50% of records	ML model quality; Q3 score; data audit scope

Cluster 3 — Organizational Autonomy Architecture

Specific capability missing	Primary evidence	Downstream sprint impact
Documented HR independence — venture's ability to hire and compensate outside core brokerage HR structures	No documentation in any reviewed source	Q8 score; Day 12 pre-mortem Scenario 2
Documented Finance independence — separate P&L;, budget ring-fence, protection from core business reallocation	No documentation; CFO quarterly checkpoint governance creates reallocation risk	Q8 score; D4 financial model governance
Documented Technology independence — dedicated engineering capacity protected from competing demands	VP Operations (Interview 2); Engineering Lead (Interview) — portal conflict corroborated	Q8 score; Phase 1A timeline risk; Day 12 pre-mortem
Formal immune system engagement plan — structured response to VP Operations' specific objections	VP Operations (Interview 2); CFO (Interview 3) — two independent sources flagging this gap	Q8 score; Day 9 Reality Check; D7 experiment design

Cluster 4 — Financial Governance for Long-Horizon Technology Investment

Specific capability missing	Primary evidence	Downstream sprint impact
Governance model compatible with 6–9 months of invisible Phase 1A progress	CFO (Interview 3) — quarterly milestone checkpoints tied to capital release	Q5 score; D4 financial model; Day 9 Reality Check
Risk tolerance framework for pre-revenue capital deployment at $2–2.5M+ scale on thin net margins	CFO — "not trivial" characterization; mid-single-digit net margin environment	Q5 score; D4 scenario modeling
Finance-reviewed financial model — current model built on figures the Engineering Lead has superseded	Pre-sprint financial model cover note; Engineering Lead memo	D4 financial model build; Day 9 Reality Check input
Operative ROI threshold confirmed and documented — two conflicting figures currently in play	CFO (Interview 3); VP Operations (Interview 2) — two conflicting figures	D4 financial model gate; Q5 scoring note

Cluster 5 — SaaS Commercial Capability · Phase 2 Conditional

Applies to the conditional Phase 2 external SaaS thesis only. Not required for Phase 1 internal deployment.

Specific capability missing	Primary evidence	Downstream sprint impact
SaaS sales motion — broker buyer access, enterprise SaaS selling skills, 8–12 month deal cycle management	Sales lead (Interview 3); VP BD (Interview 1); second sales rep (cited by lead)	Q1 Phase 2 score; CU-01 validation; Day 9 Reality Check
SaaS compensation structure — recalibrated commission model that makes SaaS pursuit rational for existing reps	Two sales representatives — "how do we get paid?" raised unprompted	Q1 Phase 2 score; D4 CAC modeling
Customer success and implementation function — SaaS onboarding, deployment support, retention management	No documentation; not referenced in any planning document	Q2 Phase 2 score; D4 LTV modeling

Specific capability missing	Primary evidence	Downstream sprint impact
SaaS revenue recognition capability — MRR accounting, deferred revenue treatment, ARR reporting	No documentation; core business is transactional gross margin per load	Q5 Phase 2 score; D4 financial model
Qualified broker buyer pipeline — minimum 2 COO/VP Ops contacts for independent validation interviews	VP BD — contacts overdue since Day 4 EOD; first broker contact declined follow-up	CU-01 resolution; D3 demand signal grade; Day 7 interview window

Summary count: 24 specific capability gaps identified across five clusters. Clusters 1–4 apply directly to the locked Phase 1 hypothesis and are active constraints on the current investment case. Cluster 5 applies to the conditional Phase 2 thesis and is carried as a Day 9 reference. The gap inventory is the direct input to the Day 12 pre-mortem failure scenario design and the D7 Validation Experiment Playbook prioritization.

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SAMPLE — This report has been anonymized. All client and stakeholder details are fictionalized. The methodology, framework, and analytical structure are representative of a live engagement.