Program approval is the process through which a program or sponsoring organization may receive state approval. All Massachusetts educator preparation program providers are required to meet the same rigorous expectations articulated in the [2023 Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/resources/guidelines-advisories/).

**A periodic formal review ensures educator preparation programs' continued growth and effectiveness beyond their initial approval.**

The [formal review process](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/review/toolkit/formal/) relies on an evidence base constructed by:

* The sponsoring organization (SO) under review through the Program Overview and Follow-Up Inquiry;
* Evidence collected during the Initial Inquiry, including surveys, focus groups, and interviews with internal and external stakeholders; and
* State-collected data (see [Edwin for Ed Prep Overview](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/domains/improvement/edwin/overview.html)).

Picture of differendt sizes anvils illustrating the weight of each tier int he hierarchy of evidence:
Plans = Light;
Inputs = Medium; 
Impact = HeavyTaken together, this collection of evidence helps the review team determine whether each program approval criterion is rated as a commendation, met, or finding in the final report. In the Follow-Up Inquiry, an SO organizes and submits evidence by responding to prompts in targeted submission worksheets tailored based on their Initial Inquiry evidence. During the Follow-Up Inquiry portion of the review, the SO is responsible for providing high-quality evidence to address gaps, inconsistencies, or promising practices identified through the Initial Inquiry. SOs may share state-collected or SO-collected data along with additional context, analysis, and decisions informed by the data to demonstrate the extent to which they are meeting DESE expectations. In all cases, evidence of impact is valued more highly than evidence that describes inputs or plans (see Hierarchy of Evidence graphic). As evidence of impact is weighed most heavily in the formal review process, it is the focus of this advisory.

Figure 1. Hierarchy of Evidence in the Formal Review

The goal of this advisory is to support SOs’ understanding of the characteristics of high-quality evidence of impact and enable SOs to evaluate the quality of evidence they are providing in the formal review. More specifically, this advisory will provide general guidance on incorporating data from a variety of sources into their formal review, including quantitative and qualitative data collected to inform the SO’s continuous improvement processes.

## **What is High-Quality Evidence of Impact?**

The table below describes the characteristics of high-quality evidence of impact. The “Questions to Consider” guide SOs to evaluate the quality of evidence they are collecting and sharing through the Formal Review process. **In preparation for their Formal Review and to inform their continuous improvement efforts, SOs should consider what evidence they are already collecting or could begin collecting that meets these characteristics**. SOs may wish to consider this table alongside the 2023 Program Approval Criteria list to determine whether they are collecting high-quality evidence of impact aligned with each criterion.

#### Characteristics of High-Quality Evidence of Impact

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **High-quality evidence of impact submitted through the formal review should be:** | **Questions to Consider** |
| **Connected with plans and inputs:** All evidence shared should describe the impact of your SO’s inputs and/or how the evidence is informing plans for the future. | * Does this evidence help illustrate how your SO is making data-informed decisions? * How does this evidence connect with structures or systems that support the expectation described in the criterion? * Based on this evidence, what plans does your SO have to maintain or modify those systems and structures? |
| **Outcomes-based:** Evidence focuses on the *results* *or impact* of the aspect of the program it is measuring. | * Can this evidence be used to better understand whether the system/structure/ decision/policy is working to improve quality and equity in programs? * What results does this evidence show? * What impact on internal or external stakeholders does this evidence demonstrate? |
| **Aligned with criterion:** Evidence of impact and the programmatic aspects it is measuring should be directly linked to the expectation described in the criterion being evaluated. Some criteria have multiple components; multiple sources of evidence may be needed to address all components of the criterion. | * Does this evidence directly align with the expectation in the criterion? * Will it help demonstrate whether and how we are meeting that expectation? * Which component(s) of the criterion does this address? What additional evidence do we need to address all aspects of the criterion? |
| **Specific and, if possible, inclusive of quantitative and qualitative information:** Evidence of impact should be specific to the result of the connected programmatic feature. It should be aligned to the intended outcome of the feature. When possible, share both quantitative and qualitative evidence. | * Is this evidence directly aligned to or a clear measure of the intended outcome? * Does this evidence avoid making broad statements or generalizations that are not explicitly grounded in the data? |
| **Measured by multiple sources:** Whenever possible, it is helpful to triangulate evidence from multiple sources. | * Does your SO have multiple sources of evidence that can be used to more clearly understand the impact? * Does the evidence reflect multiple perspectives on the impact? * Do multiple sources of evidence support a similar conclusion or are they contradictory? If contradictory, what additional measure(s) will your SO use to better understand the impact? |
| **Interpreted:** All evidence shared should include a clear description of your SO’s key takeaway(s). | * What did your SO learn from this evidence? * What are the takeaways your team identified? |
| **Capture multiple points in time, whenever possible:** This could include pre- and post-implementation data; formative and summative data; and/or longitudinal data from multiple points throughout a year or over multiple years. | * Can the data be used to show trends in impact over time? |

## **Additional Considerations for Quantitative Evidence**

Below are general guidelines to consider while incorporating quantitative data into the targeted submission worksheets during the formal review. When surveying stakeholders, SOs may wish to reference the [DESE Stakeholder Surveys](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/domains/improvement/surveys/) as a resource for crafting items aligned to the 2023 Program Approval Criteria. These recommendations are meant to ensure data provides the review team with the information they need to contextualize it in their decision-making process:

| **Recommendation** | **Rationale** |
| --- | --- |
| Share data from the three most recent years  *“X percent of 2022 completers (n=a), Y percent of 2023 completers (n=b), and Z percent of 2024 completers (n=c)…”* | Although SOs may choose to include data from any year, by focusing primarily on the most recent three years reviewers get an indication of recent impacts and experiences in the program that are more reflective of any recent changes. |
| Include the n-size  *“In 2024, we received survey responses from 58 completers and found that…”* | This will help reviewers understand how representative this data is of the population of stakeholders. |
| If sharing survey data, include the entire survey scale for the item in the prompt response.  *“When asked whether, overall, their advising was effective,* ***80 percent of candidates (n=60) agreed, 10 percent somewhat agreed, and 10 percent somewhat disagreed.”*** | Reviewers need to understand the full range of responses in SO-collected data to better interpret the evidence. |