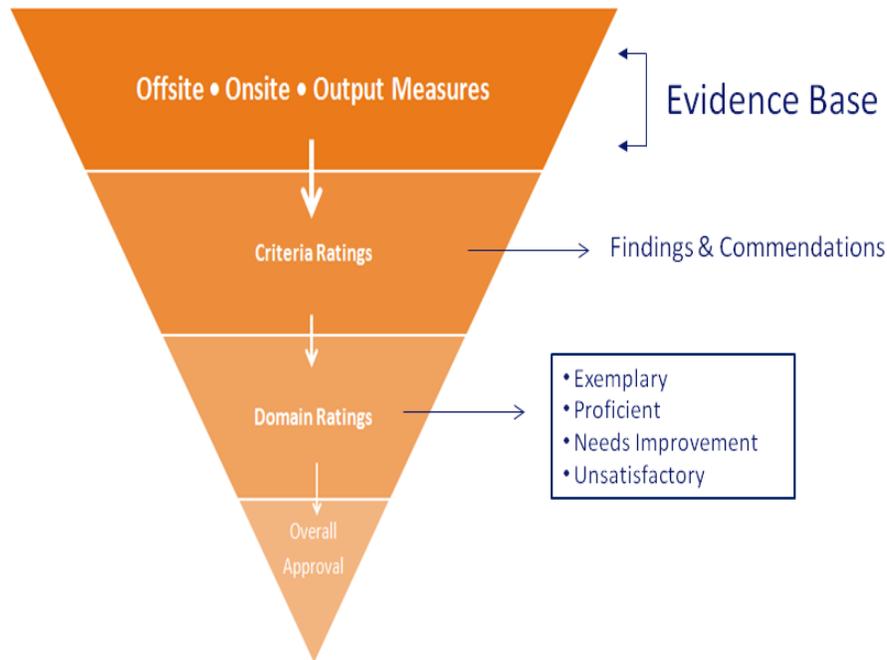

Decision-Making

For each of the reviews, there are various levels of decision-making that occur. In all cases, ESE works with a team of reviewers to triangulate all available evidence carefully and to make judgments that are calibrated within the team and across various reviews. While there are not numeric benchmarks or a formula for dictating decisions, ESE has developed a process that weights evidence of impact to a greater extent than descriptions or plans for inputs.

The graphic below represents the different types of judgments that are made and that culminate in a holistic, overall approval determination.



Criteria Ratings

During the review, an individual reviewer's summative criteria ratings are challenged and corroborated by the entire review team. The review team, under the guidance of the ESE Ed Prep Specialist, must work towards agreement for each finding and/or commendation cited in the report. ESE reserves the right to change a criterion rating based on an in-depth understanding of regulatory requirements or in order to maintain consistency across reviews. Criteria recommendations result in:

- *Commendation*: Commendations are reserved for truly exceptional, innovative, or outstanding practices.
- *Criteria Met*: evidence sufficiently demonstrates that a criterion is being met as expected.
- *Finding*: Findings are areas of concern that require action or additional evidence to substantiate that the criterion is being met.

In addition, the review team may append Professional Suggestions to any criterion, independent of the rating awarded. Professional suggestions serve as recommendations for continuous improvement. They do not require a mandatory response/action.

ESE will work with individual Sponsoring Organizations to address findings outlined as a result of the formal review. The timeline and associated actions are determined on a case-by-case basis. It is important to ESE that agreements on the timeline both expedite improvements and ensure the delivery of high-quality preparation. ESE considers several factors when determining the required actions, including the context of the review and the significance of the findings on overall program quality. ESE may differentiate findings into one of two categories: conditional findings and non-conditional findings. Although all findings require action, ESE may determine that there are some findings, above others, that require immediate and significant action as they are directly related to major concerns identified through the review. More specifically:

- **Conditional findings**: Conditional findings correspond to criteria that have the potential to be high-leverage in the context of individual organizations. Essentially, by addressing concerns outlined in conditional findings ESE will have the necessary assurances needed to grant full approval as the changes are likely to have positive ramifications in key areas. Conditional findings may exist at the organization level and/or for individual programs.
- **Non-Conditional findings**: Non-conditional findings are still crucial for effective preparation, but, within the context of the review, are smaller in scale and scope and are not having a significant negative impact on the quality of preparation or the experience of candidates.

Domain Recommendations

Once the review team has rated all criteria in a domain, the team will make an overall recommendation weighing the cumulative impact and significance of the findings and commendations within that domain. Domain recommendations result in one of the following descriptions:

- *Exemplary*: The Exemplary level represents the highest level of performance. It exceeds the already high standard of Proficient. A rating of Exemplary is reserved for performance on a domain that is of such a high level that it could serve as a model for other providers in the organization, state, or nation.
- *Proficient*: Proficient is the expected, rigorous level of performance for SO's. It is a demanding but attainable level of performance for most.
- *Needs Improvement*: SO's whose performance on a domain is rated as Needs Improvement may demonstrate inconsistencies in implementation or weaknesses in a few key areas. They may not yet have fully developed systems to provide preparation in an effective way.
- *Unsatisfactory*: SO's whose performance on a domain is rated as Unsatisfactory are significantly underperforming as compared to the expectations.