# Launch Stage Overview and Purpose

This planning guide provides a detailed overview of the Launch stage of the Formal Review process. The purpose of the Launch stage is to familiarize sponsoring organizations (SOs) with the overarching review process and prepare SOs for the Initial Inquiry stage. During the Launch stage, DESE will seek a general understanding of the SO’s program information and any specific context needed to prepare for stakeholder engagement. Several deliverables will be requested to gather this information. This stage is also when the SO determines which programs it will propose to move forward for review.



# Step-by-Step Guide for the Launch Stage

Step 1: [Notification](#_Notification)

Step 2: [Technical Assistance (TA) Call 1 and Completing Launch Worksheet](#_Complete_Launch_Worksheet)

Step 3: [Cohort Launch Session](#_Cohort_Launch_Session)

Step 4: [Technical Assistance (TA) Call 2 and Completing the Program Overview, Required Documents, and Candidate Artifacts](#_What_happens_during)

# Step 1: Notification

### What happens during this step?

* The DESE specialist notifies the SO that the Formal Review is upcoming, which officially launches the review.
* The notification includes a timeline and a high-level overview of the review process.
	+ The notification will also include a high-level overview of the early literacy-specific components of the review process for SOs with Elementary, Early Childhood, and Moderate Disabilities PK-2 and/or PK-8 programs.
	+ The timeline reflects all relevant dates for the SO’s Formal Review.

### When does this step happen?

* Month 1 *(Note: Notification takes place at least 6 months before the Cohort Launch Session. Each SO will receive a timeline with specific dates for each step of the review process. All timelines referenced throughout this and the other Planning Guides denote the minimum time that will be provided between each step.)*

### Important Details

* DESE tries to accommodate shifts in the timeline if there are major conflicts elevated by the SO at this time.
* After the SO confirms there are no conflicts, DESE and the SO move forward with the agreed-upon timeline.
* If significant unforeseen circumstances arise that require additional shifts, DESE coordinates with the SO to determine whether adjustments to the timeline are possible.

### Helpful Tips

* When reviewing the proposed timeline, the SO should consider conflicts with holidays, academic breaks, major institutional events, or times when faculty will not be under contract. While DESE aims to ensure that portions of the review when faculty are most likely to be involved do not have notable conflicts, it is ultimately the responsibility of the SO to ensure the appropriate personnel are available during the dates for stakeholder engagement (the Initial Inquiry) and preparation of the targeted submission (the Follow-Up Inquiry).

### Deliverables

* Provide DESE with the name and contact information for the SO review designee.
	+ The designee is the person appointed by the SO to be responsible for all review communication with and submissions to DESE.
	+ For sponsoring organizations with Elementary, Early Childhood, and/or Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8 programs, the SO provides DESE with an additional designee specific to the early literacy components of the review to be responsible for communication with and submissions to DESE relative to early literacy.
* Review the timeline for any major conflicts, communicate conflicts with DESE.

# Step 2: Technical Assistance (TA) Call 1 and Completing the Launch Worksheet

### What happens during this step?

* DESE leads a call with the SO to review how it will complete the Launch Worksheet to provide foundational context about stakeholder groups and licensure programs, which enables DESE to adjust surveys, focus groups, and interviews based on the organization’s unique structure and terminology.
* DESE provides the SO with a list of all approved programs and the number of corresponding completers over the past three academic years. If the SO wishes to continue offering programs with six or fewer completers over the three years preceding review, the SO needs to complete a Needs Assessment or High Needs Affidavit (see below for additional details). Programs that will undergo a more detailed review for alignment with the Early Literacy Criteria will also be identified at this time.
* If the SO has an Elementary, Early Childhood, or Moderate Disability PK-2 and/or PK-8 program, the SO will also complete the Early Literacy Matrix to provide additional context for early literacy-specific components of the review.

### When does this step occur?

* Month 5

### Instructions for Completing the Launch Worksheet

**Program Chart tab:**

* DESE prepopulates the completer numbers. These reflect the last three years of available data in Edwin, which is also available on the SO’s EP701 report. For each program, DESE identifies whether the number of completers in the program meets or exceeds the low enrollment threshold. If the SO wishes to expire a program that meets or exceeds the threshold, inform the DESE specialist at this time.
* If the program is below the enrollment threshold and the SO wishes to continue offering the program, DESE indicates whether the SO may pursue reapproval by completing a Needs Assessment or a High Needs Affidavit. Needs Assessments will be submitted for programs that are not listed on the [High-Needs webpage](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/review/default.html), while High Needs Affidavits will be submitted for programs that are listed on the High-Needs webpage. See page 11 for more information.
* The SO completes the last column in the Program Chart tab by selecting the appropriate action for each program that is identified as having low enrollment (this column is automatically greyed out for programs that meet or exceed the enrollment threshold):
* Submit a Needs Assessment
* Submit a High Needs Affidavit (only an option for programs listed on the [High-Needs webpage](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/review/default.html))
* Choose to expire the program



**Stakeholder Groups tab:**

* The Stakeholder Groups tab includes questions specific to each group in the organization from which DESE will collect evidence through focus groups, interviews, and/or surveys. The questions focus on whether groups exist within the organization, the language the SO uses to refer to them, and other information that may impact stakeholder groupings throughout the review.
* Within the Stakeholder Groups tab, the SO should complete the prompts in columns C, D, and E for the stakeholder groups identified in each row. Some types of personnel listed may not exist as separate roles in the organization; if this is the case, please indicate what other roles fulfill the functions described for those stakeholder groups.



**Personnel List Tab:**

* The Personnel List tab is designed to collect information about the people employed by the organization. DESE uses this information to tailor stakeholder group assignments, set minimum participation thresholds, and track survey completion and focus group/interview RSVPs.
* Within the Personnel List tab, the SO should fill out columns A and B with the names and titles for all currently employed education leadership, education faculty, arts and sciences faculty, candidate support staff, field-based experiences staff, and program supervisors. The SO should then add Xs in columns C through J to indicate which role(s) each individual holds within the organization. If the individual supervises other personnel, this should be noted and briefly described in column K.



**PK-12 Partnerships tab:**

* The PK-12 Partnerships tab provides asks for information about the SO’s partnerships with PK-12 schools and districts. This may include a variety of partnerships including, but not limited to, those focused on field-based experiences placements, professional development, and hiring pipelines.



**External Partnerships tab:**

* The External Partnerships tab provides an opportunity for SOs to identify any non-PK-12 partnerships that are integral to program oversight, operations, or decision-making.



**Satellite Campuses tab:**

* The Satellite Campuses tab includes a place to identify any satellite locations, a brief description, and information about candidate enrollment and completion at the campus.



### Instructions for Completing the Early Literacy Matrix (If Applicable)

As applicable, the SO completes a separate matrix for each of the eight relevant early literacy programs listed below to identify the required coursework in which the described knowledge and skills are being demonstrated **up to and at** the requisite practice level:

* Initial, Baccalaureate
	+ Early Childhood
	+ Elementary
	+ Moderate Disabilities, PK-2
	+ Moderate Disabilities, PK-8
* Initial, Post-Baccalaureate
	+ Early Childhood
	+ Elementary
	+ Moderate Disabilities, PK-2
	+ Moderate Disabilities, PK-8

### Helpful Tips

* SOs should continuously monitor their program completer numbers so that they are aware which programs may have low enrollment and consider whether to continue offering those programs in anticipation of their Formal Review.

### Key Resources

* [**Needs Assessment Advisory**](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/resources/guidelines-advisories/needs-assessment-advisory.pdf)(Affidavit template is in Appendix D)
* [**[High Needs List](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/review/toolkit/formal/)**](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/review/default.html)

### Deliverables

* Launch Worksheet
* Needs Assessments (If applicable for new or low-enrollment programs)
* High Needs Affidavits (If applicable for low-enrollment programs)
* Early Literacy Matrix (If applicable)

Completing Needs Assessments and High Needs Affidavits

**What is a Needs Assessment and when is it required?**

* To continue operating a low enrollment program or propose a new program in most licensure areas, the SO is responsible for demonstrating need for the program and providing evidence that the SO has the capacity to meet that need. This evidence is submitted through the Needs Assessment form.
* Any new programs the SO wishes to move forward must also be included in the Needs Assessment in order to be considered for review.

**What if the program is a DESE-Identified High Needs License?**

* DESE maintains a [list](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/review/default.html) of license areas identified as high-needs areas using a combination of preparation program data and in-service educator shortage area data. Programs in these licensure areas are eligible to continue operating if the SO completes a High Needs Affidavit, attesting that the SO will monitor outcomes data and attempt to increase enrollment.

**If the SO chooses not to complete an affidavit, or if insufficient need or capacity is demonstrated through the Needs Assessment, DESE will not review the program(s), and the program(s) will expire at the conclusion of the Formal Review.**

### Completing the Needs Assessment

The first several sections of the Needs Assessment form provide the SO with guidance and ask for basic program information. The form then prompts the SO to identify a category of need and provide aligned evidence.

**Program Groupings for Needs Assessments**

* All Professional Teacher programs may be grouped together at this time.
* All School Support Personnel programs may be grouped together at this time.
* All Administrator programs may be grouped together at this time.
* All Endorsement programs may be grouped together at this time.
* Specialist Teacher programs may not be grouped.
* Initial Teacher licensure programs may be grouped together if they meet **all of the following criteria**:
	+ They are at the same level (i.e., baccalaureate programs cannot be grouped with post-baccalaureate programs)
	+ They have very similar programs of study
	+ The SMK Guidelines for the programs reference the same MA Curriculum Framework(s)
* Early Literacy Programs: Early Childhood and Elementary programs must be submitted individually, Moderate Disabilities PK-2/PK-8 may be grouped if they are at the same level (e.g., both are baccalaureate programs).

**If, across programs in a grouping created based on these criteria, the combined number of completers is greater than six, please contact the DESE team prior to submitting the Needs Assessment.**

****

**Categories of Need**

There are five categories through which SOs can demonstrate need: high need subject area, district need, candidate interest, increasing diversity in the workforce, and impact/effectiveness of completers. To move a program forward for review, the SO must demonstrate need in one of these categories.



### Completing a High Needs Affidavit

SOs may use the template language in Appendix D of the [2023 Needs Assessment Advisory](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/resources/guidelines-advisories/needs-assessment-advisory.pdf) to attest to their commitment to monitoring the quality of low/zero-completer programs in DESE-Identified high needs areas. The completed affidavit should be on official SO letterhead and signed by the SO’s President/Executive Director.

# Step 3: Cohort Launch Session

### What happens during this step?

* DESE hosts a half-day Cohort Launch Session for all SOs undergoing review in the same academic year. The session provides a more detailed overview of the review process and timeline, evidence sources, and guidance for the initial submission materials.

### When does this step occur?

* Month 6

### Important Details

* The Cohort Launch Session takes place at DESE’s office at 135 Santilli Highway in Everett.
* For SOs with programs requiring a Needs Assessment or Affidavit and/or programs that require an Early Literacy review, additional information will be shared immediately following the full group session.

### Deliverables

* Invite up to five SO personnel, including the review designee and the literacy-specific designee when applicable, who will be key members of the review process. While these personnel are determined by the SO, we recommend focusing on those with decision-making power and those who will be responsible for preparing deliverables.
* Participate in the Cohort Launch Session

Step 4: Technical Assistance (TA) Call 2 and Completing the Program Overview, Required Documents, and Candidate Artifacts

### What happens during this step?

* DESE leads a call with the SO to discuss details in the Launch Worksheet, including results of the Needs Assessment(s) and/or Affidavit(s), and provide support for completing the Program Overview Worksheet and submitting all required documents and candidate artifacts.
* If an SO has participated in an Early Literacy Formative Feedback Review conducted by TPI-US, the SO may submit any artifacts connected with this review, such as:
	+ Sections or totality of TPI-US's report
	+ Improvement plans or documentation of next steps as a result of the formative feedback review or participation in the PLC

### When does this step occur?

* Month 7

### Important Details

* Review the following items (DESE will share these in advance of the call):
	+ Review Timeline (review upcoming steps to ensure expectations are clear)
	+ Program Overview Worksheet, including a checklist of required documents and candidate artifacts
* DESE reserves the right to ask for additional documents or artifacts - either in type or number - during the Follow-Up Inquiry stage

### Deliverables

* Prior to TA Call 2: Send list of SO personnel who will be joining the technical assistance call. This should include key members completing the Program Overview and/or assembling the required documents and candidate artifacts. This may also include personnel that serve as department leaders or support with field-based experiences and licensure.
* Program Overview Worksheet (use template)
* Required Documents (use template)
* Candidate Artifacts (use template)

Submit Program Overview, Required Documents, and Candidate Artifacts

**What is the Program Overview?**

The Program Overview Worksheet requests high-level information relative to each domain. It is an opportunity to orient DESE and the review team to the SO’s unique structure and approach to educator preparation. Responses will provide reviewers and DESE staff with foundational information prior to engaging with stakeholders during focus groups and interviews.

**Identifying Program Groupings**

In the Instruction domain section of the Program Overview Worksheet, DESE will identify programs to be grouped together for the purpose of Formal Review. The review of evidence in the Initial Inquiry and Follow-Up Inquiry will align with these groupings. Each grouping will have its own Instruction domain worksheet in the Follow-Up Inquiry.

* All Professional Teacher programs may be grouped
* All School Support Personnel programs may be grouped
* All Administrator programs may be grouped
* All Endorsement programs may be grouped
* Specialist Teacher programs may not be grouped
* Initial Teacher licensure programs may be grouped **if they meet all of the following criteria**:
	+ They are at the same level (i.e., baccalaureate programs cannot be grouped with post-baccalaureate programs)
	+ The SMK Guidelines for the programs reference the same MA Curriculum Framework(s)
	+ They have very similar programs of study
* Early Literacy Programs: Early Childhood and Elementary programs must be submitted individually, Moderate Disabilities PK-2/PK-8 may be grouped if they are at the same level (e.g., both are baccalaureate programs)

The SO will review DESE's proposed groupings and indicate whether there are any concerns or desired adjustments.

###

### Instructions for Using the Required Documents and Candidate Artifacts Checklist

**Required Documents tab:**

DESE reviews several key documents from the SO during the Initial Inquiry Stage. Additional documents may be requested as part of the Follow-Up Inquiry based on evidence gathered during the earlier stages of the review. Please note that all files must be submitted electronically.

* The Required Documents tab includes a list of documents along with the aligned criteria, a description, and additional information from DESE, such as if there is a template or the location of where to upload the materials. The SO can add additional notes for DESE if desired.
* The SO will electronically upload the required documents into the Sharepoint folder.



**Candidate Artifacts tab:**

DESE also reviews candidate artifacts during the Initial Inquiry Stage.

* The Candidate Artifacts tab includes the artifact type, aligned criteria, a description, sample type, and additional information from DESE, such as if there is a template or the location of where to upload the required documents. The SO can add additional notes for DESE if desired.
* For categories that are relevant to all candidates, DESE generates a random sample for which files must be shared. For categories that do not apply to all candidates, the SO selects relevant files. For additional guidance on records retention, please see the [Candidate Record Retention Advisory](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/resources/guidelines-advisories/).
* Based on the size of the SO, DESE will determine the number of candidate artifacts required for each category.
* The SO will electronically upload the required documents into the SO’s Sharepoint folder.

