

Partnership for Reading Success – Massachusetts (PRISM)

Frequently Asked Questions



Eligibility and Competitive Priorities:

1. Can Dual Language or Immersion schools apply to PRISM?
 - a. Yes! PRISM applications that include a dual language and/or immersion school or program will receive competitive priority. All schools (not to exceed 15) within an LEA are expected to participate in PRISM. LEAs with only one school serving grades PreK-3 are required to apply in consortium with other LEAs so that at least three schools are included in the application.
2. Can high schools apply to PRISM?
 - a. No. PRISM is an early literacy grant that will serve students and educators in grades PreK-3 only.
3. Must districts already have HQIM in place to apply to PRISM I?
 - a. Yes. To apply to PRISM I, LEAs must have HQIM, as defined in the RFP, in place for grades K-3. DESE anticipates that future grants and programs coming out of Literacy Launch may have different eligibility.
4. I see that there will be future opportunities to apply to the PRISM grant "in the following months" if LEAs are not eligible or not able to submit the RFP by the October 1 deadline. Will there also be opportunities to apply for the grant in future years, or will future-year funding be available only to LEAs that receive a PRISM grant this school year?
 - a. LEAs can apply to PRISM I by October 1, 2024. We do not anticipate LEAs will be added to the PRISM I program after FY25 awards are made. Additional PRISM grants (herein referred to as PRISM II), with different programming and eligibility, will be made available later. Pending funding and approval, PRISM II grants will be offered annually through FY29.
5. Our LEA has two schools serving PreK-3. Can we apply as one LEA, or do we need to partner with another LEA to apply as a consortium with at least three schools?
 - a. LEAs with one or two schools serving PreK-3 must partner with another LEA to apply as a consortium with at least three schools.
6. Our LEA has numerous PreK-2 schools. Can we apply with just those schools, or must we include our grade 3 classrooms, which are housed at different schools with different school leadership?
 - a. Yes, you can apply with just PreK-2 schools. You will have the option to include grade 3 in your PRISM work but are not required to in this specific instance.
7. Our core curricular materials are rated All Green on EdReports Gateway 1 and 2 but have not yet been reviewed by CURATE. Are we eligible to apply?
 - a. For the purposes of PRISM, "high quality core curricular materials" for grades K-3 ELA/Literacy are defined as having an overall rating of Meeting Expectations or Partially Meeting Expectations on a CURATE review. It is anticipated that new CURATE reports will be published in late August.

8. We are using a separate foundational skills curriculum in addition to our eligible tier 1 core materials. CURATE does not review foundational skills curricula. What are the eligibility requirements for separate foundational skills curricula?
 - a. For the purposes of PRISM, “high quality core curricular materials” for grades K-3 ELA/Literacy are defined as having an overall rating of Meeting Expectations or Partially Meeting Expectations on a CURATE review. *An example of this is Amplify CKLA.*
 - b. If the HQIM does not include foundational skills, it should be *paired with* a strong foundational skills resource. *An example of this is Wit & Wisdom paired with Appleseeds.* An examination of the quality of the foundational skills resource will be part of the PRISM work.
9. Can this grant be used for a curriculum review team and process?
 - a. No. To apply to PRISM I, LEAs must have HQIM, as defined in the RFP, in place for grades K-3. DESE anticipates that future grants and programs coming out of Literacy Launch may have different eligibility.
10. Our elementary schools do not currently use a high-quality literacy program; however, we are in the process of adopting a high-quality, approved program. Since we are purchasing HQIM for 25-26, are we eligible to apply for the PRISM grant?
 - a. To be eligible to apply for PRISM I, LEAs must be implementing HQIM in grades K-3 at the time of application. That said, DESE anticipates offering other PRISM grants in the near future that would align with where your district is on the HQIM implementation journey.
11. We have HQIM in grades K-3 for ELA, but have district-created materials in place in our preschool and dual language classrooms. Are we still eligible to apply?
 - a. Yes. LEAs are eligible to apply to PRISM if they have HQIM in place in grades K-3. For the purposes of this grant, we are defining HQIM as materials that are rated "meets" or "partially meets" on CURATE. We understand that the world of HQIM and instructional materials looks very different for preschool and for dual language programs. It is anticipated that PRISM would help support the transadaptation, development, and/or adoption of high quality materials in dual language programs. The PRISM grant would also support an evaluation of existing preschool materials and funding to make adjustments to those materials.
12. Are educational collaboratives eligible to apply for the PRISM grant or is this strictly for LEA's and/or charter schools as listed in the RFP?
 - a. Districts and charter schools are eligible to apply for PRISM I. DESE anticipates that future grants and programs coming out of Literacy Launch may have different eligibility.
13. Do all (or at least three) of the elementary schools in our LEA need to serve PreK in order to apply for PRISM I?
 - a. No. An LEA that has at least three schools that serve students ranging from grades PreK-3 (in whatever configuration) can apply to PRISM I. If applying to PRISM I, all of the schools within the LEA that serve PreK must be included in the proposal. For example, if an LEA has four elementary schools with two serving K-3 and two serving PreK-3, all four schools must be part of the PRISM I application. LEAs that do not meet the minimum of three schools must partner with another LEA to develop a consortium.
14. If we are applying as a consortium, do we need to have letters of stakeholder support from all LEAs within the consortium?
 - a. Letters of stakeholder support are not a required part of the PRISM I application. However, to meet the competitive priority of “a commitment to early literacy improvement, and specifically to PRISM, from key constituencies including school

committee, principals, and teachers;" this would need to be demonstrated across all LEAs within the consortium.

15. We are a private independent school with some publicly-funded students in attendance. We are not a Chapter 766 approved Special Education Program. Are we eligible to apply to PRISM I?
 - a. No. Only public school districts and charters that are using HQIM (as defined by the RFP) are eligible to apply for PRISM I. Private schools nor Special Education Programs are not eligible to apply for PRISM I.

Application Requirements:

1. Is the PRISM I grant offered on a rolling basis? If we apply after October 1, 2024, will our application be reviewed?
 - a. PRISM I is not offered on a rolling basis. Only applicants received on or before October 1, 2024 will be reviewed. DESE does anticipate issuing additional PRISM grants with potentially different eligibility requirements and programming later this year.
2. Do awarded LEAs need to reapply each year?
 - a. Yes. PRISM I is a continuation grant, and all LEAs awarded after the FY25 competitive grant will be required to reapply to continue funding each fiscal year. Continuation funding is not guaranteed and is dependent on funding and LEAs timely completion of grant activities and progress toward grant goals
3. We have a network of community-based preschools that we partner with through our LEA's Early Childhood Center; are we able to partner with them to write the PRISM I proposal?
 - a. Yes. LEAs can partner with any key stakeholders in the LEA community, including members of community-based preschools or the LEA's Early Childhood Center, to write the PRISM I proposal.
4. Is there a number cap for how many letters of support that we can upload to GEM\$?
 - a. No.
5. We are partnering with another LEA as a consortium. Does only one LEA submit an application on behalf of all the LEAs within the consortium?
 - a. Yes. There will be fields within the application on GEM\$ for the grant contact to enter the information for each school that makes up the consortium. It is important to note that the proposal process should be a collaborative process amongst the consortium to ensure that the proposal is representative of each LEA within in the consortium even though only one LEA submits the application

Budget:

1. Will the grant fund purchasing electronic licenses for literacy programs?
 - a. It is possible but not guaranteed that this purchase would be supported. All purchases will align to the strengths and needs identified in districts' Literacy Systems Scan and subsequent Literacy Action Plan. All purchases must be pre-approved by a DESE program liaison.
2. Will the grant fund the hiring of a specialist to support PD trainings?
 - a. It is possible but not guaranteed that this purchase would be supported. All purchases will align to the strengths and needs identified in districts' Literacy Systems Scan and subsequent Literacy Action Plan. All purchases must be pre-approved by a DESE program liaison. That said, it is likely there will be funding available for PD throughout the continuation years of PRISM (FY26 – FY29).
3. Will the grant fund the purchase of an app to communicate with families?

- a. It is possible but not guaranteed that this purchase would be supported. All purchases will align to the strengths and needs identified in districts' Literacy Systems Scan and subsequent Literacy Action Plan. All purchases must be pre-approved by a DESE program liaison.
4. Can the grant fund materials and PD for grades outside of PreK-3, like middle or high school grades?
 - a. No, this is a preK-3 grant.
5. The RFP says \$160,000 is available for PRISM I in FY25. Is that for one district or for all awards?
 - a. \$160,000 is available for PRISM I in FY25 for all grantees. This amount is modest because the coming school year will be a planning and preparation year for PRISM I schools. As is stated in the RFP, up to \$27 million or more may be available to the selected PRISM I schools over the life of this grant, which may be up to 5 years.
6. What happens if the LEA cannot take over the financial impact of the FTE staffing after the PRISM program?
 - a. A goal of PRISM I is to create sustainable systems and structures for early literacy improvements. It is expected that LEA's will assume the responsibility of funding for some of the costs of the program at a decreasing annual proportion over the possible 5 years of the grant. For staffing, PRISM I LEA's will receive support in advocating for the continued funding of FTE positions throughout the grant period.
7. It doesn't seem like a lot of money.
 - a. You may have noticed in the RFP that \$160,000 is available for PRISM I in FY25. This amount is modest because the coming school year will be a planning and preparation year for PRISM I schools. As is stated in the RFP, up to \$27 million or more may be available to the selected PRISM I schools over the life of this grant, which may be up to 5 years.
8. Will the literacy staff member be fully funded in FY26 or will the gradual decrease start in FY26?
 - a. Budgeting decisions for FY26-29 will be made specific to the needs of the LEA/Consortium that are identified in the Literacy Systems Scan and are pending funding and approval.
9. Do we need to budget for all \$30,000 for FY25?
 - a. No. LEAs/Consortia may budget up to \$30,000 for the following: PRISM Leadership Team, Stipends for educators to complete PRISM work outside of contractual hours and/or substitute coverage for educators to complete PRISM work within contractual hours. Please see the Fund Use Document on the RFP for more information on FY25 budgeting.
10. What will the FY26 maximum budget be?
 - a. FY26 maximum budgets will be determined based on approved available funding, along with LEA/Consortia size and need.
11. For consortia, are literacy positions funded for each school in the consortium?
 - a. The PRISM grant will fund a significant portion of the cost of up to one position for each participating school in the roles of literacy coach, reading specialist, reading interventionist, or similar, if a staff member is determined as a need for the LEA based on the results of the Literacy Systems Scan.

Leadership Coaching:

1. What do the supports provided or available look like from K-3?
 - a. Please reference the [PRISM Program Details](#) for an overview of PRISM I activities.

2. We are currently working with a literacy consulting group. If awarded, would we be able to continue with this provider as our PRISM Leadership Coach?
 - a. All PRISM Leadership Coaches are paid for by DESE. As such, all PRISM Leadership Coach providers must be pre-approved and contracted with DESE. Though districts are free to continue partnerships with other groups, only DESE-approved providers can serve as PRISM Leadership Coaches. We will work to coordinate and streamline services, so they are supportive for PRISM schools.
3. How many PRISM Leadership Coaches will there be, and will they be paid for by DESE?
 - a. Currently, there is not a set number of coaches. However, each awardee will have at least one PRISM Leadership Coach. PRISM Leadership Coaches will be DESE-approved vendors that will be hired within the next few months. All PRISM Leadership Coaches will be paid for by DESE.

Participation Expectations:

1. Our community's Head Start program is technically part of our Public School District. Would we still be able to count this Head Start program as one of our community-based preschool partners?
 - a. Yes, so long as the Head Start program is managed by a separate team than the public school district preschool classrooms.
2. We have a network of community-based preschool partners that we work with, can we partner with them to write our proposal?
 - a. Yes! You are encouraged to work with any existing community-based preschool partners to develop the proposal.
3. Will LEAs be permitted to use PRISM funding for professional development in reading interventions?
 - a. Potentially, yes. All funding decisions must be pre-approved by DESE and must respond to the strength and needs outlined in the LEA's Literacy Action Plan that will be developed in Spring 2025.
4. Are all organizations included on the DESE's PD Provider Register Search consider "approved vendors" for the purposes of the PRISM grant?
 - a. All organizations included on DESE's PD Provider Register Search may provide professional development for districts that are awarded PRISM I. All purchases, including PD, will align to the strengths and needs identified in districts' Literacy Systems Scan and subsequent Literacy Action Plan. All purchases must be pre-approved by a DESE program liaison.
 - b. Organizations interested in serving as PRISM Leadership Coaches must apply to PRISM-specific bids posted on COMMBUYS and then be approved by DESE, through a formal procurement process, to work with PRISM LEAs as PRISM Leadership Coaches.
5. We are currently looking to form a literacy team to help strengthen our literacy approaches to align with the science of reading and next year will be embarking on a curriculum review to purchase a new curriculum. Would the grant also cover the curriculum review process for a tier 1 curriculum?
 - a. The PRISM I grant is open to those LEAs that already have high-quality instructional materials in place and does not support the purchase of tier 1 curriculum. DESE does anticipate that other PRISM grants, with different eligibility requirements and programming that may include financial support for tier 1 curriculum purchases, will be available later this year.

6. Does the years 2-5 budget allow for existing staffing costs to be supported/supplemented, or are these funds only intended to support new positions?
 - a. Staffing costs are only intended to support new positions. LEAs with existing staffing positions would not receive funding in this area.
7. What are the partnership expectations with regards to Preschool partners and the development of the MTSS? Can you share more about the goal of aligning with our preschool partners to achieve this shared system? (i.e. would this mean utilizing the same curriculum and/or assessment resources?)
 - a. Alignment with preschool partners is intended to ensure all students, regardless of where they attend preschool, have equitable early learning experiences prior to entering Kindergarten at the LEA. Preschool curriculum and assessments are unique and must be developmentally appropriate. It is not expected that preschool partners utilize the same curriculum and/or assessments as the LEAs K-3 program. All decisions regarding curriculum, instruction, assessment, etc. will be made after a thorough Literacy Systems Scan and will reflect the unique local context of each LEA.
8. Can you describe what partnering with community-based preschool providers would look like?
 - a. Please reference the [PRISM Community-Based Preschool Partnerships \(mass.edu\)](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/prism-community-based-preschool-partnerships) one-pager for information around partnering with community-based preschool providers.
9. Are the community partnerships required if the district has an existing preschool program?
 - a. A portion of the funding for FY25 will be used to partner with at least two community-based preschool providers. Please reference the [PRISM Community-Based Preschool Partnerships \(mass.edu\)](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/prism-community-based-preschool-partnerships) one-pager for more information about partnering with community-based preschools.
10. Can the grant be limited to just pre-K in its initial phase, or must PreK work connect to K-3 work?
 - a. No, the grant can't be limited to pre-K and must span from grades pre-K through 3. All schools serving grades preK–3 in the LEA must participate in the PRISM program if awarded this grant, up to a cap of 15 participating schools per LEA. For LEAs with more than 15 schools serving grades preK–3, the LEA will select up to 15 schools to participate.
11. What if we have a community-based preschool partner that has multiple program sites? Does that partnership count as two community-based partners since there are multiple program sites?
 - a. No, a community-based partner may have multiple program sites, but it is still considered a single community-based preschool partner. Each partnership should be with a different organization.
12. If two of our elementary schools have preschool classrooms, does that apply as the “two preschool” partnership criteria?
 - a. No. Districts are expected to include both their public preschool classrooms and at least two community-based preschool partners, which could include YMCA, Head Start, private early education centers, etc. For more information on preschool collaborations, please visit the PRISM website.
13. For districts that have established consultant relationships and want to start high dosage tutoring and other grant activities early, is there room for adjustments to the timeline?
 - a. Due to funding and programmatic design, only the items outlined on the FY25 funding portion PRISM I RFP Fund Use details document will be funded in FY25. It is expected that other grant activities, like high dosage tutoring, will only be funded in FY26 and beyond, pending funding and approval.

14. Our LEA has already adopted HQIM and currently partner with a literacy coach that conducted a needs assessment, but we could use funding for screeners and to continue work with our literacy coach. Is it possible to jump into Year 2 PRISM work?
 - a. Due to approved funding and programmatic design, only the items outlined on the FY25 funding portion PRISM I RFP Fund Use details document will be funded in FY25. Additionally, All PRISM Leadership Coaches are paid for by DESE. As such, all PRISM Leadership Coach providers must be pre-approved and contracted with DESE. Though districts are free to continue partnerships with other groups, only DESE-approved providers can serve as PRISM Leadership Coaches. We will work to coordinate and streamline services, so they are supportive for PRISM schools.
15. Our LEA has already completed a lot of the objectives listed for the PRISM I Grant for Year 1. Are we able to apply for Year 2?
 - a. The PRISM I grant is a competitive grant for LEAs currently implementing HQIM due by 5:00 p.m. on 10/1/24. Though we anticipate other types of competitive grants (with different eligibility requirements and focal areas) becoming available in the future, this is likely the only time to apply to join PRISM I. Another cohort of PRISM I is not planned.
16. Is there a suggested number of people that should be on the PRISM Leadership Team?
 - a. If awarded, the PRISM Leadership Coaches and DESE will work with LEAs/Consortium to establish, guide, and coach the PRISM Leadership team.
17. We currently have a Dyslexia Team and envision that they would be the PRISM Leadership Team, is that okay?
 - a. If awarded, part of the scope of work for LEAs in FY25 will be to work with the PRISM Leadership Coaches to establish the PRISM Leadership Team. This may include some or all of the same people who are on an existing leadership team within the LEA depending upon the needs identified by the Literacy Systems Scan.
18. How often does a consortium need to meet to monitor progress?
 - a. If awarded, the PRISM Leadership Coach and DESE will work with the consortium to determine frequency of collaboration.
19. Can community-based preschool partners be part of the PRISM Leadership Team? How much time would be required for representation?
 - a. Yes, community-based preschool partners can and should be part of the PRISM Leadership Team. If awarded, LEAs/Consortia will work with the DESE approved PRISM Leadership Coach to establish the PRISM Leadership team including its members and the frequency of convening to complete PRISM activities. As this will be specific to each LEA/Consortia's needs, there is no set time requirement for representation on the PRISM Leadership Team. However, we anticipate PRISM Leadership Team members should set aside at least a few hours a month for meetings and grant work. PRISM Leadership Team members will be stipended for their time.
20. Would our extended day program be considered a preschool community partner, given that it's a separate organization from the LEA and is led by our Asst. Supt. for Community Partnerships?
 - a. The community-based preschool partners must offer preschool education. However, the extended day program may be a stakeholder, and we do encourage stakeholders to be involved in PRISM. See the [Engaging Stakeholders in the Application Process](#) one-pager on the PRISM website.

Miscellaneous:

1. Does the PRISM grant have any specific components tied to the seal of biliteracy?
 - a. No.

2. Are vendors permitted to attend the informational webinar for the PRISM grant?
 - a. Yes, but the informational webinar will only cover LEA programming and expectations for PRISM.
3. Who is providing tech assistance? Who are the consultants?
 - a. PRISM Leadership Coaches will be DESE approved vendors that will be hired within the next few months. Any professional development provided through PRISM programming will be from a DESE approved external provider.
4. How many recipients will be awarded?
 - a. At this time, we anticipate approximately 20 recipients will be selected for PRISM I. If the recipients are on the smaller side, the total number may be more than 20, and if some recipients are very large districts, the total number may be fewer than 20. Projections could change significantly depending on the amount of funding allocated to Literacy Launch.
5. I want to give Principals/Building Leaders more information about PRISM I. What might be the experience a school would go through if they are participating in PRISM I?
 - a. In FY25, PRISM I LEAs will participate in a Literacy Systems Scan conducted by the PRISM Leadership Coach. Specific literacy improvement activities will be determined based on the Literacy Systems Scan and reflected in the multi-year Literacy Action Plan. Please view the webinar recording and one-pagers on the PRISM website for overview of the PRISM I program.
6. We have adopted HQIM for our tier 1 core, but we have schools using a variety of foundational skills curriculum. The application only lets you choose one foundational skills curriculum, what should I do?
 - a. Please enter the HQIM in use for the tier 1 core ELA/literacy block. Please make a note of the foundational skills curriculum in use across the LEA in your narrative response questions. An examination of the foundational skills in use will be part of the Literacy Systems Scan.

Please contact Allison Pickens [allison.d.pickens@mass.gov] or Amy Tavares [amy.tavares@mass.gov] with any questions.