

Overview

Per [Bulletin 996](#), Educator Preparation Providers (EPPs) must be approved by the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) in order to recommend teacher candidates for certification. Program approval cycles are held twice a year, resulting in April and October BESE decisions. This guide is specifically for providers training teacher candidates in order to obtain initial certification.

Program approval cycles begin with applicants submitting a Notice of Intent (NOI) specifying what certification program(s) the application is requesting. Once the NOI is approved, applicants are moved to the full application stage. Applications must show evidence of alignment to policy requirements in [Bulletins 996](#) and [746](#). After two rounds of review, pending decisions are presented at BESE for consideration of approval.

Providers will participate in the Teacher Preparation Quality Rating System (TPQRS) beginning one year after BESE approval. TPQRS ratings are published annually and used biannually for renewal decisions.

Terms

The terms below are used by LDOE in [Bulletin 996](#) and for the application process.

- **Add-on Certification (endorsement)**- permanent credential added to a teaching certificate. Upon completion of requirements for an additional area of certification, the holder of a valid Louisiana teaching certificate may have the endorsement added; private providers must receive approval to offer add-on certification programs.
- **Full Application**- required for each pathway for which a provider is applying; all certification programs must be included on a single application for each pathway requesting approval.
- **Initial Certification**- the first certification a candidate obtains; in program approvals, all providers must be approved to recommend candidates for initial certifications.
- **Innovative**- a residency within an already approved certification program; innovative residencies do not follow the requirements in [Bulletin 996](#) but are innovatively adjusted to meet specific workforce and community needs.
- **Merged to Integrated (Dual)**- special education mild/moderate certifications may be earned in conjunction with a core-subject (i.e. math, English, science, social studies) initial certification; providers must obtain approval to offer dual/merged certification programs.
- **Notice of Intent (NOI)**- required by [Bulletin 996](#) to show what workforce needs a certification program application will address; must be submitted and approved by LDOE before an applicant will be moved to the full application.
- **Pathway**- the two options given within [Bulletin 996](#): Traditional or Alternative Certification.
 - Traditional = undergraduate
 - Alternative = post-baccalaureate
 - Master's of Art in Teaching (MAT)
 - Certification-Only (cert-only)
 - Practitioner
- **Program**- the individual certification program offered within a pathway by a provider.
- **Provider**- the overarching organization (e.g. Cajun College of Acadiana; Private Provider, LLC.).

Process

Below is a summary of the program approval process. Additional resources for the approval process may be found in the resource section of this guide. Applications are submitted through an online application [portal](#); there is no fee associated with the application process.

1. **Notice of Intent:** Applicants will submit information regarding organizational structure, certifications being applied for, and the workforce need those certifications will support. This stage allows LDOE to determine that an applicant is applying to the appropriate program application and will meet a workforce need in our state.
2. **Full Application:** This stage requires applicants to show evidence that, as a provider, each certification program will meet policy requirements in Bulletins [996](#) and [746](#).
3. **Round 1 Evaluation:** Upon submitting applications, LDOE evaluation teams review each application to ensure that providers will offer sustainable operations in which candidates will obtain certification through clear evidence that aligns to policy-driven rubrics.
4. **Round 1 Pending Decisions:** After review, applicants will receive notice of their pending decision via email from the LDOE. Pending approvals require no additional action. Per policy, pending denials are allowed seven calendar days to resubmit their application to address gaps based on feedback provided aligned to the rubric in the Round 1 stage.
5. **Round 2 Evaluation:** Upon resubmission, LDOE evaluation teams will review applications to determine if the gaps determined in Round 1 have been appropriately addressed with policy-aligned evidence.
6. **Round 2 Pending Decisions:** Round 2 applicants will receive a pending decision via email. Pending approvals require no additional action. **Pending denials must wait one year before resubmitting for approval.**
7. **BESE Consideration:** LDOE pending decisions are submitted to BESE for consideration. Once approved by BESE, providers will receive a letter of approval via USPS mail to the primary address on the application.
8. **Program Enrollment:** Programs approved at the April BESE meeting may begin enrolling students on **May 1**. Programs approved at the October BESE meeting may begin enrolling students on **November 1**.

Annual Application Cycle

Cycle	Application Window Opens	Notice of Intent Due	Full Application Due	Round 1 Evaluation Period Begins	Notification of Pending Decisions	Round 2 Evaluation and Notification (as needed)	BESE Consideration
Spring	September 1	October 1	December 10	December 11	February 15	TBD	April TBD
Fall	May 1	June 1	July 10	July 11	August 26	TBD	October TBD

FAQs

What is the difference between initial and innovative program approval?

“Initial” refers to the initial certification program the provider is applying to offer to teacher candidates. “Innovative” refers to an innovative residency program design; only Providers who are already approved to offer initial certification may apply for innovative residency approval. Program approval requirements are outlined in [Bulletin 996](#).

Are there any fees required to submit a program application?

There are no fees required to submit a program application.

What is the difference between credit hours and contact hours?

Credit hours refer to coursework hours assigned by university providers. Contact hours refer to training hours conducted by private providers. Hours are converted using a 1:15 ratio (i.e. 3 credit hours = 45 contact hours).

What if an annual deadline falls on a weekend? When is it due?

The deadlines are firm regardless of what day of the week they may fall. Please plan accordingly.

If not approved, what are the next steps?

Applicants who are denied at the BESE Consideration meeting must wait one calendar year before resubmitting the same program application to BESE. During that time, applicants are encouraged to reach out to believeandprepare@la.gov to receive support in order to align to policy requirements.

If approved, what are the next steps?

Approved applicants will receive a letter of approval from BESE and may begin enrolling students. LDOE will reach out to the application’s primary contact to begin an onboarding process for newly approved programs.

Resources

[Program Application Process](#)

[Initial Program Approval Rubric](#)

[Innovative Program Approval Rubric](#)

[Bulletin 996](#)

[LDOE Program Application Portal](#)

Further questions can be directed to believeandprepare@la.gov.