

# Background and Guidance for IEP Work Plan Proposal Reviews

## Goal of this document

Provide background, rationale, and guidance for reviewers, particularly those new to IEP or the IEP Science Management Team, of proposals submitted for consideration in the IEP Work Plan.

## Attachments:

- [2020 IEP Science Strategy](#)
- [IEP Directed Study Proposal Submittal and Review Process](#)
- [IEP SMT Proposal Review Summary](#)
- [Conflict of Interest Guidelines](#)

## What is the IEP Annual Work Plan?

The [IEP Annual Work Plan](#) reflects the annually planned work by IEP agencies to be conducted as part of the IEP consortium within the Bay-Delta ecosystem during the following calendar year. The authorities, responsibilities, and management needs for implementing (and funding) projects and programs included in this plan are generally guided by regulatory requirements such as biological opinions, incidental take permits, and water rights decisions that cover the operations of the State Water Project (SWP) and the Central Valley Project (CVP). It is intended that the Annual Work Plan reflect a finer-scale focus for planning encompassed within a higher level of strategic vision (3-5 years and beyond) outlined by the IEP Science Strategy.

## Types of studies included in the IEP Annual Work Plan:

- **Compliance** – Agencies that run the federal and State water projects (CDWR and USBR, respectively) or implement other actions (e.g., USACE) are obligated to implement "compliance monitoring" of fish populations and water quality to satisfy requirements (e.g., permits, licenses, orders, settlements, and agreements) issued by the resource and regulatory agencies (e.g., CDFW, USFWS, NMFS, SWRCB) for the operation of the water projects.
- **Baseline Status and Trends** – The federal and State agencies provide information on the long-term status and trends of fish populations, invertebrates, and water quality that are potentially affected by water diversions, contaminants, invasive species, and other stressors on the Bay-Delta ecosystem over time.
- **Synthesis, Modeling and Reviews** – These elements provide synthesis and analysis of trend information, study and research results, and activities necessary to update conceptual models that are the basis of regulatory requirements. This category also includes reviews of current studies and programs to improve methods, the value of data collected, and the contextual setting of IEP environmental monitoring.
- **Directed Studies** – Directed Studies are those studies proposed and funded by one or more IEP Agencies to inform a specific management-articulated information need or specifically-identified data gap. The request for a Directed Study can come from within a

particular agency or from any IEP Governance entity but must be funded (or partially funded and looking for support) to be included in an Annual IEP Work Plan. Directed Studies typically address specific scientific questions and areas of critical uncertainty regarding species of interest, natural communities, and landscape-scale processes to inform management actions.

- **Program Management** – These activities are necessary to implement the program, including staff time and expenses in each agency responsible for IEP activities (program and project management, data management, etc.).

## **The Bigger Picture: IEP Work Plan Proposal Review Steps**

- **Proposal Review (June):** Reviewers sent full proposals and lead reviewers compile comments from their review team in preparation for the July SMT proposal discussion meeting.
- **July Science Management Team (SMT) Meeting to discuss proposal reviews:**
  - SMT discusses each proposal individually with each lead reviewer sharing their verbal summary recommendation with the SMT, identifying any significant points (high points, low points, areas for improvement, critical flaws, opportunities for leveraging other work, management importance, coordination, etc.).
- **July Joint CT/SMT meeting**
  - IEP Coordinator Team members generally join the 1<sup>st</sup> hour of the meeting to hear the IEP Lead Scientist and SMT's recommendations on the proposals.
  - **CT & SMT work to achieve consensus on next steps.** Discussion may include Federal Delta Smelt Take allotment recommendations and update on potential future releases of Delta Smelt.
  - Lead reviewers compile all summary comments to be shared with the Principal Investigators.
- **Principal Investigators contacted (July/August):** Notify PIs on review outcomes, reviewer comments, and requests for resubmission. PIs are required to address the review comments and send revised documents back to the IEP Lead Scientist, lead reviewer and Program Support Team to assess if all changes have been sufficiently addressed.
- **Additional steps beyond technical review (August-December):** Coordinators finalize their recommendations to be made to the Directors; Draft IEP Work Plan shared with IEP stakeholders; Proposals shared with appropriate Project Work Teams (PWTs); Delta smelt take application negotiated and finalized, IEP Work Plan approved by Directors.

## Guidance for Reviewers:

- Review the proposals for scientific rigor, technical merit, and accordance with the [IEP 2020 Science Strategy](#) and [Conflict of Interest Guidelines](#).
  - Consider whether the submitted proposal addresses key components that are identified in the example [Directed Study Proposal Outline](#) (page 3 of the Directed Studies Proposal Submittal and Review Process). Proposals don't need to be in this IEP outline format, but they should include information relevant to these components.
- Comments should include highlighting good work, areas for improvement, opportunities, critical flaws, etc.
- Provide comments to your Lead Reviewer so one of the following recommendations can be made to the SMT:
  - **Recommend for inclusion:** the study is scientifically and technically supportable for inclusion as part of the annual IEP Work Plan and has been coordinated with other studies as appropriate.
  - **Requires additional modification:** the study proposal requires additional work prior to inclusion as part of the annual IEP Work Plan.
  - **Do not recommend for inclusion:** the effort is not ready for the IEP Work Plan or is not a match for the program.

## Lead Reviewer Role

In addition to serving as a reviewer for your proposal:

- Touch base with your reviewers in advance to share with them your expectations and deadlines for receiving their reviews.
- Collate/aggregate all the reviews and pull out the key points you think the larger SMT group should know (high points, low points, areas for improvement, critical flaws, opportunities for leveraging other work, management importance, coordination, etc.).
- Summarize what your group recommends for this proposal (recommend for inclusion, do not recommend for inclusion, additional work needed before inclusion) with high level comments. Final decision will be made at the July Joint CT/SMT meeting when the SMT and Lead Scientist provide the coordinators with their recommendations for all proposals.
- **July SMT Proposal Review Meeting:** Be prepared to share a summary recommendation with the group, identifying any significant points. After the meeting, based on the larger discussion with the rest of the SMT, update your review or add additional key points based on the input of the entire SMT and Lead Scientist.
- Supply comments to the IEP Program Facilitator. These comments will be provided to the Principal Investigators.