

**Panel Scientific and Technical Review Form**  
(Note: Review comments will be anonymous, but public)

**Proposal number: 2001-H204**

**Short Proposal Title: Sierra Forest Communities  
Institute**

**1a) Are the objectives and hypotheses clearly stated?**

*Summary of Reviewers comments:*

The peer reviewers indicated that the objectives are clearly stated. However, they also noted that the hypotheses upon which the hypotheses are based are not clearly stated.

*Panel Summary:*

The panel agrees with the reviewers' assessment of both the statement of objectives and the hypotheses. The hypotheses section on page 10 presents four bulleted items that describe a mixture of statements that could be testable hypotheses and products or actions that the project would produce. Overall, the hypothesis statement is vague and confusing.

**1b1) Does the conceptual model clearly explain the underlying basis for the proposed work?**

*Summary of Reviewers comments:*

The peer reviewers note that the conceptual model shows linkages between the environment, the economy, and the community, but it does not indicate in any detail exactly what would be done by the students nor does it describe in any detail the benefits of the work.

*Panel Summary:*

We believe that the conceptual model illustrated on page 10 is very weak. There is some accompanying text regarding the conceptual model on page 9, but it essentially describes a project that SEDD has contracted for with the Foresters Co-Op and NorCET, the Institute upon which the proposed Sierra Forest Communities Institute is being modeled.

**1b2) Is the approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project?**

*Summary of Reviewers comments:*

As with the conceptual model, the peer reviewers found that the project approach is based on NorCET, a training center located in Yreka, but the results of that effort are not clearly identified.

***Panel Summary:***

The panel finds that the approach is vague in its design; it doesn't specify curriculum, doesn't provide much information about the ways in which NorCET is effective or ineffective, provides scant detail on what the training would include, what the trainees actually would do, or the environmental benefits that would accrue from implementing the program.

**1c1) Has the applicant justified the selection of research, pilot or demonstration project, or a full-scale implementation project?**

***Summary of Reviewers comments:***

One peer reviewer indicates that the applicant's justification for implementing the project as a full-scale implementation project is based on the fact that SEDD has seen the NorCET program in action. Another states that the project (as a demonstration project) isn't well justified.

***Panel Summary:***

The panel concludes that there is little justification to indicate the project is ready for full-scale implementation, even if the NorCET project may be successful. This kind of a training program should be undertaken as a pilot, and expanded slowly. We believe the project should not be considered watershed planning, as it would not produce a plan other than site-specific plans for local projects aimed at reducing fuel load.

**1c2) Is the project likely to generate information that can be used to inform future decision making?**

***Summary of Reviewers comments:***

Peer reviewers conclude that the project is narrow in scope and that the information generated may be of limited utility.

***Panel Summary:***

The panel concludes that the information developed by the project would likely be of limited use in informing future decision making. The proposal is too vague to enable the panel to determine how each of its components would be used in decision making. To the extent the project were developed as a pilot and monitored carefully, this information could be useful in expanding the program to full implementation.

**2a) Are the monitoring and information assessment plans adequate to assess the outcome of the project?**

***Summary of Reviewers comments:***

One reviewer states that the monitoring and information assessment plans might be adequate to assess the outcome of the project, as the project would "monitor the development and operation of

SFCI as per the CALFED PSP requirements. Another reviewer states that the proposal identified no monitoring or assessment.

***Panel Summary:***

We believe there is not enough information in the proposal to show that the outcome of the project will be adequately monitored.

**2b) Are data collection, data management, data analysis, and reporting plans well-described, scientifically sound and adequate to meet the proposed objectives?**

***Summary of Reviewers comments:***

The reviewers note that the proposal provides inadequate information from which to draw conclusions about these items.

***Panel Summary:***

The panel finds that the proposal contains no details regarding the kinds of data to be collected, how data will be managed or analyzed, or how project reporting plans will be prepared and distributed for review.

**3) Is the proposed work likely to be technically feasible?**

***Summary of Reviewers comments:***

One reviewer states that it is unclear whether the program is technically feasible, as feasibility is based on only one example (NorCET). Another reviewer believes the proposal is technically feasible.

***Panel Summary:***

The panel believes that it may be technically feasible to establish SFCI as a "rural county vocational work force training program that provides manpower for watershed/ecosystem assessment, monitoring, and restoration work." However, it is not possible to conclude this solely from the information presented in the proposal.

**4) Is the proposed project team qualified to efficiently and effectively implement the proposed project?**

***Summary of Reviewers comments:***

One reviewer states that the project team appears to be qualified to implement the proposal. Another notes that the proposal identifies only one person, the grant administrator; therefore, it is not possible to determine if the project team is qualified.

***Panel Summary:***

The proposal identifies three specific persons who would have project responsibilities, either as administrators, coordinators, or advisors. Although it seems that some of the proposed project team members may be qualified, the panel is unable to determine how successful the project might be at reaching its stated goals.

**5)Other comments**

One peer reviewer indicated the proposal appears to be strong, but another reviewer felt the proposal was poor, and is lacking in budget detail, clear goals, and adequate detail on how the project would meet its goals. The first reviewer seems to have some knowledge of NorCET. The Panel agrees with the second reviewer that the project has value, but this value was not articulated clearly in the proposal.

**Overall Evaluation  
PANEL SUMMARY COMMENTS**

Overall, the panel believes the proposal is lacking in detail, focus, and direction. It also is concerned that the project has very unclear ties to the ecosystem problems that CALFED is seeking to address.

The panel recognizes the benefits to the economy and the environment that could result from appropriate interdisciplinary training at a non-profit training institute. Accordingly, a more detailed and carefully prepared proposal might warrant funding. We suggest the applicant improve their grant-writing skills before preparing another grant application to CALFED.

Summary Rating

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

Your Rating: POOR