

DRAFT PROPOSAL

**POLICY FOR RELEVANCY AND PEER REVIEW
OF PROPOSALS IN SUPPORT OF THE SALTON SEA
SCIENCE SUBCOMMITTEE**

APRIL 21, 1998

I. Relevance and Peer Review Process

The Salton Sea Science Subcommittee (S³) in whole or in part, will review the proposals for their content, general compliance with this guidance, and relevance to the mission of the subcommittee and its charge. Relevant proposals will then go forward for technical peer review. The format, guidelines, and example forms for completing the reviews are included in this document. **A review for relevancy will be conducted before sending the proposals for technical peer review. If relevancy is not established, then the proposal will not be sent out for outside review.** The S³ will select peer reviewers from among its own members but will always include at least two reviewers from outside the S³. In every case, conflicts of interest will be avoided.

A. Relevancy Review -

Relevancy reviews will be conducted by the Subcommittee or by designated members of the Subcommittee. Each proposal will be evaluated using the following criteria:

1. Is the proposal responsive to the RFP?, i.e. does the proposal reflect an understanding of the needs identified in the proposal?
2. Will the proposed products provide timely input to the NEPA/CEPA process? (If applicable)
3. Will the proposed products provide lasting input to management and restoration of the Sea?
4. Are technology transfer elements considered? i.e., can the products be readily transferred to the SSA and its members for their use in restoration and long-term management of the Sea?

B. *Scientific Peer Review*

Each proposal will be externally peer reviewed by at least three reviewers. These reviewers will be required to sign standard confidentiality and conflict of interest statements. These are *ad hoc*, one-time, independent reviews by peers and will be conducted via "correspondence". These reviewers will independently evaluate and score each proposal within a given area according to the evaluation criteria. Proposals will be evaluated and scored in the following general areas: (detailed breakout for each area provided in Section III.)

II DETAILED GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING PROPOSAL

1. Summary of Requirements

Proposal must be typed on 8-1/2 x 11 inch paper; double sided, single spaced; font size of at least 12 point; and all margins at least 1 inch.

The proposal shall consist of the following:

- *Cover Sheet* (Title of Research Project, Principal Investigator(s), Organization)
- *Signature Page* (Signature of Principal Investigator(s) with Concurrence of the Appropriate Management)
- *Table of Contents*
- *Project Summary* (Limited to 1 page with: Title, Principal Investigator, Organization, and Summary of the Work)
- *Project Narrative* (Limited to a maximum of 15 pages, including all tables, figures, but excluding attachments, appendices, and reference lists)
 - *Goal/Objective*
 - *Background/Literature Review*
 - *Technical Approach* (moderate detail)
 - Schedule and Anticipated Milestones
 - Work Breakdown Structure (who does what)
 - Data Collection, Sampling, and Analytical Methods
 - *Quality Assurance Statement*
 - *Anticipated Result/Products*
- *Proposed Staffing* (1 page) and *Resumes of Key Personnel* (Maximum of 3 pages/individual)
- *Description of Facilities* (2 pages)
- *Budget* (2 pages)

Respondent must submit five 10 copies (three for peer review, one for the official file, and 6 to be shared by the Subcommittee)

2. Detailed Format Guidance

B. Cover Sheet (1 page maximum)

The cover sheet should contain the title of the research project, the name of the principal investigator(s), and the investigator's address and phone number.

C. Signature Page (1 page maximum)

D. Project Summary (1 page maximum)

The summary should contain the title of the research project, the name of the principal investigator, the investigator's organization and address, and a description of the proposed research. The summary should be suitable for publication and not more than one page in length. It should NOT be an abstract of the proposal, but rather a self-contained description of the research project. The summary should be written in the third person and include a statement of objectives, methods to be employed, and the significance of the proposed research to the advancement of knowledge or technology. It should be informative to other persons working in the same or related fields and, in so far as possible, understandable to a scientifically or technically literate reader.

E. Project Narrative (15 pages maximum)

The project narrative consists of the following sections and has a 15 page maximum, including all tables and figures, but excluding attachments, appendices, and reference lists. The narrative will include the following:

1. Goal/Objective
2. Technical Approach (includes tables and figures)
3. QA Statement/Plan
4. Anticipated Results/Products
5. Bibliography, Attachments, Appendices, and References Lists

The project narrative is the most important section of the grant proposal. It should clearly articulate the goals/objectives of the research. The technical approach should contain a clearly stated hypothesis, demonstrate a knowledge of the current literature, propose an experimental approach that is scientifically and statistically sound, identify the analytical approach/methods to be used to gather, analyze, and interpret data, and propose a work schedule with milestones. The technical approach should include information to allow evaluation of the appropriateness of the project duration. Anticipated results and their significance should be presented along with general nature of the products expected.

member, and the time allocation of all engineering and scientific staff proposed for the grant.

For example:

| Name | Duties | Percent Time | | |
|------------|--------------------------|--------------|--------|--------|
| | | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 |
| Jane Doe | Principal Investigator | 40% | 60% | 80% |
| John Smith | Technician - Pilot Plant | 50% | 50% | 50% |

2. Resumes

Provide the principal investigator's and all co-investigators' resumes. *Resumes must not exceed three consecutively numbered pages for each investigator* and should focus on education, recent positions held, relevant experience and accomplishments, and most recent or relevant publication(s).

G. Description of Facilities (2 pages maximum)

The proposal should contain a description of the facilities and major pieces of equipment proposed for the research. The description should be sufficiently detailed to allow the science peer review panel to determine adequacy with respect to accomplishing the project objective/goals. Commonly available facilities and equipment do not need to be identified.

H. Budget (2 pages maximum)

Budgets covering all years of the proposal (itemized by year) are to be included. Budget categories must include the following budget elements.

Budget Elements

1. Personnel (Staffing - %Time)
2. Travel costs **uniquely required for the project**
3. Special capital equipment costs
4. Expense costs
5. Other costs

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| Co-Investigator #1 ... n | | | |
| Technician #1 ... n | | | |
| Travel Costs | | | |
| Capital Equipment Costs | | | |
| | | | |
| Item #1 ... n | | | |
| | | | |
| Cost Subtotal | | | |
| R&D Costs (Extramural Resources) | | | |
| Contracts (all types) | | | |
| IAGs | | | |
| Cooperative Agreements | | | |
| | | | |
| R&D Cost Subtotal | | | |

III. GUIDELINES FOR EXTERNAL SCIENTIFIC PEER REVIEW

1. Identification and Selection of Peer Reviewers

The Subcommittee members will provide lists of candidate peer reviewers from appropriate sources including their respective organizations, professional organizations, and other sources. In addition, each member may serve as a peer reviewer depending on the specific circumstances and subject to the member's competence and in a manner that avoids any real or apparent conflicts of interest. A minimum of three peer reviews will be obtained and in every case at least two reviews will be obtained from reviewers not on the Science Subcommittee.

2. Review and Scoring of Proposals

Selected peer reviewers will evaluate and score the proposal according to the guidelines and evaluation criteria identified below. All reviewers will use the same criteria and scoring guidelines.

3. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated by peer reviewers using the criteria and associated point distribution shown below. Exhibit 2 provides a definition of the scoring categories. Exhibits 3 and 4 contain sample score sheets that will be used by the reviewers. The following criteria were developed and adapted from similar criteria used in the EPA's external grants program, the various grant programs of the National Science Foundation, and DOE's solicitation for grants and cooperative agreements.

Evaluation Criteria

| | | |
|----|--|-----------|
| 1. | Quality of the Proposal | |
| | a. Goal/Objective | 10 |
| | b. Demonstrated Knowledge of the Current Literature | 10 |
| | c. Adequacy of the Research Plan | 25 |
| | d. Adequacy of Methods, Tools, and Approaches to Conduct the Research | 20 |
| | e. Adequacy of Work Schedule, Milestones, Project Duration and Level-of-Effort | 5 |
| | f. Anticipated Outcomes and Products | <u>10</u> |
| | Subtotal | 80 |
| 2. | Quality of Proposed Staff, Facilities, and Equipment | |
| | a. Quality of Staff | 10 |
| | b. Quality of Facilities and Equipment | 10 |
| | Total Points | 100 |

Exhibit 1

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

Proposal:

Reviewer:

Organization:

I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge and belief that I have no personal conflict-of-interest with the Principal Investigator (PI) or the PI's submitting element organization . If a conflict exists for this proposal, the reviewer is instructed to recuse himself/herself from the proposal, and return the proposal without a review.

The reviewer agrees to treat all information contained in the proposals as privileged information and will not copy any of this information or otherwise make this information available to any other party. All information and final scores will be returned to the SSB.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Exhibit 2

External Peer Review's Checklist for Evaluating and Scoring Proposals

This checklist is to be used to evaluate proposal(s). The goal of this form is to develop scores, with supporting written rationale and justification (i.e., strengths, weaknesses, and appropriate discussion) which describe the technical merit and adequacy of the technical proposal relative to the technical criteria. It is essential to provide factual statements to support each score.

| <u>Score</u> | <u>Definition</u> |
|--------------|---|
| Outstanding | Meets highest expectations of the criterion with no or only trivial weaknesses. |
| Very Good | Fully addresses all aspects of the criterion and demonstrates significant ability to meet the requirements with only a very few weaknesses. |
| Satisfactory | Satisfies the basic requirement of the criterion and demonstrates few significant weaknesses |
| Poor | Does not fully address a number of aspects of the criterion and/or does not present evidence which indicates the ability to successfully meet the requirements. |
| Unacceptable | Does not fully address most aspects of the criterion and does not indicate requirements could be met. |

Exhibit 3

External Peer Review's

Checklist for Evaluating and Scoring Proposals

Applicant: _____
Proposal Number: _____
Reviewer: _____

1. Quality of the Proposal

- a. *Goal/Objective* - Are the goal and objectives identified and clearly articulated? Is the hypotheses, if appropriate, clearly stated?

| Score (Select One) | Definition | Points Available | Points Awarded |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------|-------------------|
| Outstanding | Meets highest expectations of the criterion with no or only trivial weaknesses | 10 | |
| Very Good | Fully addresses all aspects of the criterion and demonstrates significant ability to meet the requirements with only a very few weaknesses | 8 | |
| Satisfactory | Satisfies the basic requirement of the criterion and demonstrates few significant weaknesses | 5 | |
| Poor | Does not fully address a number of aspects of the criterion and/or does not present evidence indicating the ability to successfully meet the requirements | 2 | |
| Unacceptable | Does not fully address most aspects of the criterion and does not indicate requirements could be met | 0.00 | |

Comments:

Exhibit 3

- b. *Demonstrated Knowledge of the Current Literature* - Do the introductory/background sections of the proposal clearly demonstrate a knowledge and awareness of the current literature?

| Score (Select One) | Definition | Points Available | Points Awarded |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------|-------------------|
| Outstanding | Meets highest expectations of the criterion with no or only trivial weaknesses | 10 | |
| Very Good | Fully addresses all aspects of the criterion and demonstrates significant ability to meet the requirements with only a very few weaknesses | 8 | |
| Satisfactory | Satisfies the basic requirement of the criterion and demonstrates few significant weaknesses | 5 | |
| Poor | Does not fully address a number of aspects of the criterion and/or does not present evidence indicating the ability to successfully meet the requirements | 2 | |
| Unacceptable | Does not fully address most aspects of the criterion and does not indicate requirements could be met | 0.00 | |

Comments:

c. *Adequacy of Research Plan* - Is the proposed research plan consistent with and likely to achieve the stated goals and objectives? Does it demonstrated uniqueness and innovativeness?

| Score (Select One) | Definition | Points Available | Points Awarded |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------|-------------------|
| Outstanding | Meets highest expectations of the criterion with no or only trivial weaknesses | 25 | |
| Very Good | Fully addresses all aspects of the criterion and demonstrates significant ability to meet the requirements with only a very few weaknesses | 20 | |
| Satisfactory | Satisfies the basic requirement of the criterion and demonstrates few significant weaknesses | 10 | |
| Poor | Does not fully address a number of aspects of the criterion and/or does not present evidence indicating the ability to successfully meet the requirements | 5 | |
| Unacceptable | Does not fully address most aspects of the criterion and does not indicate requirements could be met | 0.00 | |

Comments:

Exhibit 3

- d. *Adequacy of Methods, Tools, and Approaches* - Are the proposed methods, tools, and approaches to conduct the proposed research consistent with the state-of-the-art and general science practices for this type of research?

| Score (Select One) | Definition | Points Available | Points Awarded |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------|-------------------|
| Outstanding | Meets highest expectations of the criterion with no or only trivial weaknesses | 20 | |
| Very Good | Fully addresses all aspects of the criterion and demonstrates significant ability to meet the requirements with only a very few weaknesses | 16 | |
| Satisfactory | Satisfies the basic requirement of the criterion and demonstrates few significant weaknesses | 10 | |
| Poor | Does not fully address a number of aspects of the criterion and/or does not present evidence indicating the ability to successfully meet the requirements | 4 | |
| Unacceptable | Does not fully address most aspects of the criterion and does not indicate requirements could be met | 0.00 | |

Comments:

Exhibit 3

- e. *Adequacy of Work Schedule, Milestones, Project Duration and Level-of Effort* - Are the proposed work, schedule, milestones, level-of-effort, and project duration reasonable and consistent with the proposed research?

| Score (Select One) | Definition | Points Available | Points Awarded |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------|-------------------|
| Outstanding | Meets highest expectations of the criterion with no or only trivial weaknesses | 5 | |
| Very Good | Fully addresses all aspects of the criterion and demonstrates significant ability to meet the requirements with only a very few weaknesses | 4 | |
| Satisfactory | Satisfies the basic requirement of the criterion and demonstrates few significant weaknesses | 3 | |
| Poor | Does not fully address a number of aspects of the criterion and/or does not present evidence indicating the ability to successfully meet the requirements | 1 | |
| Unacceptable | Does not fully address most aspects of the criterion and does not indicate requirements could be met | 0.00 | |

Comments:

Exhibit 3

f. *Anticipated Outcomes and Products* - Are the proposed outcomes and products reasonable and consistent with the proposed research?

| Score (Select One) | Definition | Points Available | Points Awarded |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------|-------------------|
| Outstanding | Meets highest expectations of the criterion with no or only trivial weaknesses | 10 | |
| Very Good | Fully addresses all aspects of the criterion and demonstrates significant ability to meet the requirements with only a very few weaknesses | 8 | |
| Satisfactory | Satisfies the basic requirement of the criterion and demonstrates few significant weaknesses | 5 | |
| Poor | Does not fully address a number of aspects of the criterion and/or does not present evidence indicating the ability to successfully meet the requirements | 2 | |
| Unacceptable | Does not fully address most aspects of the criterion and does not indicate requirements could be met | 0.00 | |

Comments:

2. Quality of Proposed Staff, Facilities, and Equipment

a. *Quality of Proposed Staff* - Does the proposed staff have the necessary expertise to accomplish the research with high quality?

| Score (Select One) | Definition | Points Available | Points Awarded |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------|-------------------|
| Outstanding | Meets highest expectations of the criterion with no or only trivial weaknesses | 10 | |
| Very Good | Fully addresses all aspects of the criterion and demonstrates significant ability to meet the requirements with only a very few weaknesses | 8 | |
| Satisfactory | Satisfies the basic requirement of the criterion and demonstrates few significant weaknesses | 5 | |
| Poor | Does not fully address a number of aspects of the criterion and/or does not present evidence indicating the ability to successfully meet the requirements | 2 | |
| Unacceptable | Does not fully address most aspects of the criterion and does not indicate requirements could be met | 0.00 | |

Comments:

- b. *Quality of Proposed Facilities and Equipment* - Are the proposed facilities and equipment likely to adequately support the research?

| Score (Select One) | Definition | Points Available | Points Awarded |
|-----------------------|---|------------------|----------------|
| Outstanding | Meets highest expectations of the criterion with no or only trivial weaknesses | 10 | |
| Very Good | Fully addresses all aspects of the criterion and demonstrates significant ability to meet the requirements with only a very few weaknesses | 8 | |
| Satisfactory | Satisfies the basic requirement of the criterion and demonstrates few significant weaknesses | 5 | |
| Poor | Does not fully address a number of aspects of the criterion and/or does not present evidence indicating the ability to successfully meet the requirements | 2 | |
| Unacceptable | Does not fully address most aspects of the criterion and does not indicate requirements could be met | 0.00 | |

Comments:

Exhibit 4

Summary Table

| Criterion | | Points Available | Points Awarded |
|--|-------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1. Quality of the Proposal | | | |
| a. Goal/Objective | | 10 | |
| b. Knowledge of the Literature | | 10 | |
| c. Adequacy of the Research Plan | | 25 | |
| d. Adequacy of Methods, Tools, and Approaches | | 20 | |
| e. Adequacy of Work Schedule, Milestones, Duration and LOE | | 5 | |
| f. Anticipated Outcomes and Products | | 10 | |
| | Subtotal | 80 | |
| 2. Quality of Staff and Facilities | | | |
| a. Quality of Staff | | 10 | |
| b. Quality of Facilities and Equipment | | 10 | |
| | Subtotal | 20 | |
| | Grand Total | 100 | |

Applicant: _____

Proposal #: _____

REVIEWER SUMMARY COMMENTS

- External Review -

(additional pages may be attached)

Note : Relevancy to SSB goals, mission, and functions has already been performed. Do not make comments which relate to these factors.

STRENGTHS:

WEAKNESSES:

OTHER COMMENTS:

Reviewer Name: _____
(Please Print)

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Sample Letter to Reviewer

TO: Dr. John Doe, Ph.D.
New England University
Amherst, MA 22222

From: SSB

Dear Sir/Madam:

Thank you for agreeing to review the proposal/proposals. The technical review is a major and decisive part of our criteria for awarding recipients to support the Salton Sea Science Program. Your expertise in the area of _____ qualifies you to conduct the review as outlined in the attached packet.

Please note that you are not asked to do a relevancy analysis. Note also that there is a conflict of interest form to submit. If you feel that a conflict of interest exists or that you are not suited as a reviewer for other reasons, please return all material. Upon completion of your review, please return all material including the original proposal, review packet and all signed forms to XXX at the above address, to arrive by month, date, year.

Should you have any other questions please contact me at XXX-XXX-XXXX.