IV. Proposal Review and Selection

A. Review Process Summary and Schedule

The proposal review process and schedule, summarized in Figure 2, involves 4 steps. All complete proposals (due August 31, 2006) will undergo administrative review, external scientific review, and review by a technical synthesis panel (November, 2006) who will make recommendations on funding to the California Bay-Delta Authority (Authority) board (December, 2006). The Authority Board will consider the recommendations in a public meeting in December 2006 and make funding recommendations to the Resources Agency and other funding agencies as applicable.

B. Administrative Review

Science Program staff will conduct an initial review of proposals to ensure the following:

- all proposal components have been completed by the submission deadline including all on-line application forms and associated uploaded documents including the proposal document and detailed budget (see section III.D. of this PSP above);
- proposals are from eligible applicants;
- proposals are responsive to the solicitation's priorities;
- acceptable past performance of project staff, including effective management of grants previously received from CALFED or CVPIA programs (if any);

C. External Scientific Review

Three independent external reviewers will be selected to review each proposal based on their expertise in the subject areas of the proposal. The reviewers will evaluate submissions using a set of criteria that combine classic scientific review questions and elements designed by the Science Program to address common issues. The subject experts will also make overall recommendations to a Technical Synthesis Panel as to whether proposals are excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor, and explain their recommendations. The external scientific reviewers will thoroughly explain their reviews and base them on the following criteria:

Project Purpose
- Are the goals, objectives and hypotheses clearly stated and internally consistent?
- Is the idea timely and important? Is the study justified relative to existing knowledge?
- Is the selection of research, pilot or demonstration project, or a full-scale implementation project justified?
- Are results likely to add to the base of knowledge? Is the project likely to generate novel information, methodology, or approaches?

Background
- Is a conceptual model clearly stated in the proposal and does it explain the underlying basis for the proposed work?
- Is all other information needed to understand the basis for the proposed work included and well documented?

Approach
- Is the approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project?

- Is it clear who will be performing management tasks and administration of the project and are resources set aside to do so?
- Are products of value likely from the project? Is there a plan for widespread and effective dissemination of information gained from the project? Are contributions to larger data management systems relevant and considered?

Feasibility
- Is the approach fully documented and technically feasible?
- What is the likelihood of success?
- Is the scale of the project consistent with the objectives and within the grasp of authors?

Budget
- Is it clear how much each aspect of the proposed work will cost including each task, salaries, equipment, etc.?
- Is the budget reasonable and adequate for the work proposed?

Relevance to CALFED
- How well does the proposal address the priorities stated in the PSP?
- Does the proposal clearly and directly address one or more of the topics in the Priority Research Topic List?
- Does the proposal address other priorities stated in the PSP such as integration, syntheses, use of existing information, multiple disciplines or modeling?
- Does the proposal address other CALFED needs outside the scope of this PSP?
- Will the information ultimately be useful to CALFED resource managers and policy makers?

Qualifications
- What is the track record of authors in terms of past performance?
- Is the project team qualified to efficiently and effectively implement the proposed project?
- Do they have available the infrastructure and other aspects of support necessary to accomplish the project?

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating
- A brief explanation of a summary rating.

D. Technical Synthesis Panel Review

The role of the Technical Synthesis Panel is to provide final funding recommendations to the Authority based on the evaluation of each proposal's technical quality and responsiveness to the PSP priorities. The Technical Synthesis Panel will consist of technical experts whose expertise spans the range of topics covered by the submitted proposals. The Lead Scientist (or designee) will serve as the non-voting chairman for the panel with primary responsibility for assuring that the discussion is balanced, fair, and comprehensive. The Technical Synthesis Panel will consider all external reviewer comments in their overall evaluation of the proposals. The result of these discussions will be a panel rating of superior, above average, sufficient, or inadequate, along with clear evaluation statements. The Panel may also provide conditions for funding such as the modifications of tasks, products, and funding. . All reviews will be made available for public comment prior to the December Authority meeting. No proposals rated inadequate by the panel will be recommended to the Authority for funding.

E. California Bay-Delta Authority Review and Action
The Technical Synthesis Panel will forward its final recommendations to the Authority which will consider the recommendations in a public meeting and make final funding recommendations to the Resources Agency (as implementing agency for the Science Program effective July 1, 2006), and to other funding agencies as appropriate. The Authority and the Resources Agency may, at their discretion, recommend and/or award a package of grants determined to be most responsive to the charge to promote implementation of the Program in a balanced manner, consistent with the goals and objectives of the CALFED ROD.

F. Signed Grant Agreements
The process of finalizing grant agreements will begin as soon as projects are approved by the Resources Agency (and other funding agencies, as appropriate). Depending on the complexity of each project, the institution receiving the funds, review panel requirements and modifications, and the complexity of the project, it will likely take 2-6 months to develop and finalize the grant agreements for successful proposals. Applicants should not commence work on their projects until a funding agreement is finalized by signature of the grantee and funding agency. Work performed prior to the signing of a funding agreement is done at the risk of the applicant and without expectation of reimbursement. General terms and conditions for grants are provided in Attachment 1. (Note that some modifications may be made to the sample agreement and attachments prior to awarding.)