

Turning IEP Data into Information: Recommended Short-Term and Long-Term Solutions December 13, 2011

Issue

- Policy makers and managers in the IEP agencies need scientific information, not data, to make well-informed decisions about the BDCP, OCAP BiOps, Delta Plan, etc., and about the most cost-effective science with limited agency funds.
- The IEP needs a more consistent way to turn data into scientific information.
- An ongoing, collaborative IEP team with additional full-time, dedicated, expert staff would likely be the best way to do this over the long term.
- The IEP Management Team (MT) has led data analysis and synthesis efforts, but lacks formal agency support for this. In the short term, existing IEP MT staff needs more agency support and a clearer process to consistently accomplish this.

Recommended Short-Term Solution

- The IEP MT formally takes a strong analysis and synthesis role and becomes the IEP “Management, Analysis, and Synthesis Team” (MAST). Like the current MT, this team includes senior scientists from IEP member agencies and is co-chaired by the IEP Program Manager and IEP Lead Scientist. Agencies may add members that focus specifically on data analysis and synthesis, or designate staff to support the analytical work.
- Selected MAST members form an analysis and synthesis core group that has agency support to turn data into information about major topics of concern throughout the year. Progress is discussed with the whole MAST at its regular monthly meetings.
- All MAST members and up to five additional invited experts participate in an annual, 3-day IEP offsite meeting at a relatively close state or federal-operated facility and prior to the IEP Annual Workshop. The purpose is work synthesis and planning.
- MAST members may also participate in a local 1-2 day meeting after the Annual IEP Workshop to revise synthesis and planning documents based on new information and feedback received at the Annual Workshop.

Organizational structure and work flow: See Figure 1.

Staffing:

- Senior technical staff from IEP agencies.
- Relatively small synthesis core group (target <15 people).
- IEP agencies may designate additional analysts.
- Additional technical experts may be invited by the MAST.

Deliverables:

- Annual synthesis reports (e.g. technical summaries, draft manuscripts, contributions to CA WQMC’s “Estuaries Portal,” etc.).
- Annual work plan (for approval by IEP Directors).
- Presentation at IEP Annual Meeting (typically in spring).
- Presentation to IEP Directors.

Independent Peer-review:

- Group products will be evaluated by the IEP Science Advisory Group (SAG) or a similar panel of external reviewers.
- Synthetic products will be directed toward publication in peer-reviewed literature.

Recommended Long-Term Solution

- As recommended to the IEP Directors in 2010, form an ongoing, full-time, dedicated IEP Analysis, Synthesis, Assessment, and Communication Team.
- Would include up to ten agency scientists and assistance from external experts and other groups (Estimated cost: \$1,450,000/year).

Figure 1: Proposed organizational structure and work flow to improve annual IEP analysis, synthesis, and work planning.

