

Checklist: Factors in Selecting a Special EIR Process

This checklist provides a summary of factors in selecting a special environment impact report (EIR) process under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).



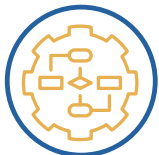
I. Determine Whether Other EIRs Apply to the Project

- **Are any existing EIRs relevant to the proposed action?**

A special EIR process is not always the most appropriate method of complying with CEQA. If a prior EIR was prepared for a prior version of the project, it would normally be best to rely on that prior EIR and either supplement it or find that no supplement is required.

- **Do any EIRs apply to the project site or area?**

The project sponsor should also evaluate whether any EIRs apply to the project site or area, including EIRs that may have been prepared for a general plan, community plan, specific plan, or zoning ordinance.



II. Decide Whether to Use a Special EIR or Streamlining Process

- **Which of the special EIR processes are available to review the proposed action?**

If the proposed action is a planning or policy decision or the first of several actions or approvals related to the project, preparing a master EIR, program EIR, first-stage EIR, or other form of first-tier EIR may be appropriate.

- **Is the first-level CEQA document subject to a legal challenge?**

If a legal challenge is pending to the first-level EIR, it might be risky to rely on that EIR for purposes of streamlining CEQA review through a special EIR process.

- **Would a regular project EIR be more suitable?**

Even when an action or project involves several levels of approvals, proponents should evaluate the desirability of preparing a regular project EIR, with follow-up approvals to be considered under [Public Resources Code section 21166](#) and its provisions for determining whether a subsequent or supplemental EIR is required.



III. Decide Which Special EIR or Streamlining Process to Use

- **Can special requirements for the first level of CEQA review be satisfied?**

Various special EIR processes require that specific information be provided in the first-level EIR, so the project proponent must evaluate whether any problems will arise in satisfying those requirements. For example, the master EIR statute contains unique content requirements.

- **How long will the first-level EIR be usable?**

Several streamlining provisions contain timing restrictions. Generally, the master EIR process is more difficult to use after five years because the agency must reevaluate the master EIR's adequacy. The staged EIR Guideline envisions a series of approvals over a period of at least two years. By contrast, the program EIR Guideline does not contain any timing restrictions.

- **Which process offers the most suitable procedure for later approvals?**

When evaluating streamlining processes at the plan or policy stage, the project sponsor should carefully consider which process offers the most suitable procedure for conducting environmental review for later approvals. The program EIR provisions for later actions are generally more flexible than the master EIR provisions. The staged EIR process anticipates that all follow-up documents will be supplemental EIRs but requires less intensive review in the first-level EIR.

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