NIH eRA Commons FAQs

Q1:   What is the NIH eRA Commons?
A: NIH has developed a system to facilitate the discrete exchange of essential information between NIH and applicant organizations. The "Commons" is a Web interface where NIH and the grantee community are able conduct their extramural research administration business electronically.

Q2:   NIH eRA Commons Registration: Who, What and How?
A: An institution must be registered in the NIH eRA Commons before faculty and staff can take advantage of electronic submission and retrieval of grant information. Only an individual with signatory authority for the institution in grant-related matters (see Q4: What is an SO Role?) can register an institution. To register in the NIH eRA Commons, open the NIH eRA Commons homepage (***https://commons.era.nih.gov/commons/***) and click on the **Grantee Organization Registration** link. Follow the step-by-step instructions. The institution is registered when the information is completed, submitted (by pressing the Submit button) and **confirmed** by the NIH.

Q3:   Can anyone sign the NIH eRA Commons Registration FAX-back form?
A: No, only an authorized Signing Official can sign the FAX form.

Q4:   What is an SO Role?
A: An SO, or Signing Official, has institutional authority to legally bind the institution in grants administration matters. The individual fulfilling this role may have any number of titles in the grantee organization. The label "Signing Official" is used in conjunction with the NIH eRA Commons. The SO can register the institution, and create and modify the institutional profile and user accounts. The SO also can view all grants within the institution, including status and award information. An SO can create additional SO accounts as well as accounts with any other role or combination of roles.

For most institutions, the Signing Official (SO) is located in its Office of Sponsored Research or equivalent. If you are unable to identify your SO, contact the NIH eRA Commons Help Desk at commons@od.nih.gov.

Q5:   If someone in my office or I need an account, whom do I contact?
A: Contact the Sponsored Research Office (or equivalent) at your institution. If you cannot locate the appropriate person for your institution, contact the NIH eRA Commons Help Desk at commons@od.nih.gov.

Q6:   What is an AO Role?
A: An Administrative Official (AO) reviews the grant application for accuracy before the SO submits the final application to the NIH. Depending on the institution workflow process, it is possible for the SO and AO to be the same person. AOs can reside in either the central research administration office or academic departments. They can create additional AO and PI accounts; however, AOs are not authorized to transmit applications to the NIH.

Q7:   What is an AA Role?
A: An Account Administrator (AA) is designated by an SO at a grantee organization to facilitate the administration of NIH eRA Commons accounts. The AA can create, modify and/or remove the necessary accounts for these types: AO, AA, FSR, PI or ASST. Although the AA can create additional accounts, the AA cannot modify institutional profile (IPF) information. The AA typically will be in the central research administration office.

Q8:   Does an SO need to assign an AA?
A: No, the creation of an Account Administrator (AA) is at the SO's discretion.

Q9:   **What is an FSR Role?**
A: The FSR role allows members of your staff to process Financial Status Reports (FSRs) for submission to the NIH electronically. An account with only the FSR role assigned only can perform FSR tasks. An account can include multiple roles, including that of FSR.

Q10:   **What is an ASST Role?**

A: The Assistant (ASST) role has been designed to allow PIs to delegate certain responsibilities for data entry of grant information and upkeep of their personal profiles. The ASST does not have any other functions in the system.

Q11:   **What is a PI Role?**
A: A Principal Investigator (PI) is designated by the grantee organization to direct the project or activity being supported by the grant. The PI is responsible and accountable to the grantee for the proper conduct of the project or activity. The role of the PI within the NIH eRA Commons is to complete the grant process, either by completing the required forms via the NIH eRA Commons or by delegating this responsibility to another individual. A PI can access information for any grant and only those grants for which they are designated the PI.

Q12:   **What is an IPF number?**
A: The Institution Profile (IPF) number is an identifier that uniquely identifies and associates institutional information within the NIH enterprise database. The NIH assigns an IPF number after the institution submits its request for registration.

Q13:   **I am the Signing Official for my institution, but am too busy to administer the NIH eRA Commons. What should I do?**
A: In this case, you can create accounts for others to help you administer the NIH eRA Commons. You should assign the appropriate roles for these users (SO, AO, AA) depending on their function.

Q14:   **I am the primary Signing Official for my institution. Can I create additional SOs?**
A: Yes, each institution can create as many user accounts (SO, AA, AO, ASST or PI accounts) as defined by the institution workflow process.

Q15:   **I am the Signing Official for my institute. Will I receive all the NIH eRA Commons email information?**
A: The SO can assign a specific email address to receive NIH eRA Commons' messages by updating the Institution Profile (IPF) section of the NIH eRA Commons. The email address used in the section *"Policy Announcements and Notifications Email Address:"* will receive all policy announcements and notifications that are sent to registered users of the NIH eRA Commons. This address will not receive Notices of Grant Approval (NGAs).

Q16:   **Do I have to maintain a database at my institution to use the NIH eRA Commons?**
A: No, the information you submit to the NIH eRA Commons resides in the NIH enterprise database. This information is accessible by the institution on demand.

Q17:   **What do you mean by the term "Account"?**
A: The term "account," as used by the NIH eRA Commons, is a personal account that an individual would use to log into the NIH eRA Commons. An account is identified by a unique combination of username and password.

Q18:   **Where will my NGA notices be sent?**
A: Notices of Grant Awards (NGAs) are sent to the email address specified in the Institutional Profile (IPF). The SO can update the NGA email address through the

institutional profile update function in the NIH eRA Commons. Additionally, the SO can provide a contact name and email address for NIH to contact regarding general issues with the institution and associated data. This contact information is in addition to the NGA email address.

Q19: **Do I have to use a specific browser to connect to the NIH eRA Commons?**
A: Yes, for now you must use Internet Explorer version 5.01 (or later) or Netscape version 4.7 to access the NIH eRA Commons.

Q20: **Do I have to have my browser configured a certain way?**
A: Yes, to use the functionality of the NIH eRA Commons, you must enable JavaScript on your browser. For instructions on making this change, check your browser's help text.

Q21: **What if I forget my password?**
A: If you have forgotten your password, you can reset it yourself using the link provided on the NIH eRA Commons homepage. The "Forgot Password" link is located under the login box on the homepage. Access this link and provide the user name and email address used at the time of account creation. If successful, the system will send a message containing your user id and new password to the email address provided at the time of registration. If you cannot successfully reset your password, contact the NIH eRA Commons Help Desk at commons@od.nih.gov for additional assistance. An institutional official (SO or AO) can reset your password. Please remember that all passwords should be kept private and secure.

Q22: **How do I choose a user name?**
A: You can select any username you would like as long as it is at least 6 characters and no more than 20 characters in length. It can be a combination of letters and numbers. Each username must be unique within the NIH eRA Commons community.

Q23: **If I don't see the module I need on the NIH eRA Commons selection bar, what should I do?**
A: Contact the Sponsored Research or similar office for your institution. If you cannot locate the appropriate person for your institution, contact the NIH eRA Commons Help Desk at commons@od.nih.gov