

## NIH eRA Commons Working Group (CWG)

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Date: Sunday, January 7, 2007  
Location: Washington, DC  
Chair: Scarlett Gibb  
Next Meeting: TBD

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### Action Items

1. (Scarlett Gibb, Dan Fox) Run reports to determine the number of institutions that delegate submit authority for eSNAPs to PIs.
2. (Scarlett Gibb) Check the scope of PI delegation to assistants.
3. (CWG Members) Try out the organization hierarchy functionality within the Ext-UAT stage environment.
4. (Scarlett Gibb) Create feedback mechanism for organization hierarchy user testing in Ext-UAT stage environment.
5. (Sheri Cummins) Need to communicate to PIs the importance of keeping credentials secure and consequences of sharing this information especially if a reviewer.
6. (Scarlett Gibb) Investigate whether an additional layer of security is appropriate for IAR information.
7. (Scarlett Gibb) Write up request for PI delegation for viewing summary statement information and send it to CWG members to ensure it properly reflects the user requirement.
8. (Scarlett Gibb) Send to CWG members list of current rights/roles/delegations and Virtual Organization Layer presentation.
9. (Scarlett Gibb) Invite Jim Tucker to May CWG meeting to discuss data integrity and how organization hierarchy will be carried through NIH systems.
10. (Scarlett Gibb) Send list of outstanding eRA Commons requests to the group.
11. (Scarlett Gibb) Hold internal discussions regarding roles of Fellows in eRA Commons.
12. (Scarlett Gibb) Send communication to trainees without eRA Commons accounts with link and instructions to register.
13. (Dan Fox) Distributed final xTrain screens to the group.
14. (Scarlett Gibb) Distribute plans for xTrain demo version.
15. (Scarlett Gibb) Put discussion of current experience with eSNAP and suggestions for improvements on the May CWG agenda.
16. (CWG Members) Provide any feedback on reference letter use with DPI applications to Scarlett Gibb.
17. (Scarlett Gibb) Add discussion of partial JIT uploads to May CWG meeting agenda.
18. (Scarlett Gibb) Hold internal NIH meeting to revisit make-up, structure and focus of CWG and to determine if adjustments are necessary.

19. (Scarlett Gibb) Email plans for next CWG meeting.

## Presentations

- [eRA Commons Update](#)
- [Accessing the eRA Commons Ext-UAT Stage Environment](#)
- [Adding the Hierarchy Role in Commons UAT](#)
- [xTrain in eRA Commons](#)

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## Welcome

Scarlett Gibb welcomed CWG members to the meeting. Each participant introduced themselves.

The group showed their appreciation for the work of the eRA Helpdesk by breaking into spontaneous applause as Tina Faunteroy (Helpdesk project manager) and Samuel Smith (eRA Commons Team Lead) introduced themselves.

## Commons Update

*Scarlett Gibb*

Scarlett reviewed the [eRA Commons Update](#) presentation with the group.

### Discussion Points:

- (*slide 4*) Scarlett noted that eRA Commons is now being used by additional agencies, including Agency for Health Research and Quality (AHRQ), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA). She confirmed that currently PIs would be able to see there grants for other agencies from their Status view. The group agreed that a sort by agency may be needed in the future.
- (*slide 7*) The Internet Assisted Review (IAR) enhancements targeted for an April 2007 release help position NIH to allow virtual review meetings.
- (*slide 8*) The group inquired about the percentage of institutions that delegate the ability to submit eSNAPs. They added that NIH may be surprised at the frequency this occurs.

**Action: (Scarlett Gibb, Dan Fox) Run report to determine the number of institutions that delegate submit authority for eSNAPs to PIs.**

- (*slide 8*) A member of the group thought at one time that a PI could delegate to an assistant the ability to do eSNAP and JIT uploads, but indicated that can no longer delegate for JIT.

**Action: (Scarlett Gibb) Check the scope of PI delegation to assistants.**

- (*slide 8*) Scarlett confirmed that Institutional delegations to PIs cannot be delegated again from PI to assistant.
- (*slide 8*) eSNAP enhancements include updates to SO and PI assurance language.
  - Modify “Submit Application to NIH” screen as seen by SO to remove the last paragraph of the message that reads “This also certifies that the PI and other key personnel meet the

debarment and suspension requirements as specified in 45 CFR 76''. Make the content of this screen Content Management driven so that future changes to this message can be done on the fly in Production.

- If PI has Submit eSNAP authority, a new message will be shown to the PIs when they Route eSNAP. PI will have [I agree } and [Cancel] buttons on the bottom of that message.

New message:

*I certify that the statements herein are true, complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I am aware that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements or claims may subject me to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties. As PD/PI, I agree to accept responsibility for the scientific conduct of the project and to provide the required progress reports if a grant is awarded as a result of this submission.*

*In addition, I have been delegated the authority to submit this progress report on behalf of the institution. Therefore, the institution accepts the obligation to comply with the PHS terms and conditions if a grant is awarded as the result of this submission.*

- If PI does not have Submit eSNAP authority, the message will be updated to read:

*I certify that the statements herein are true, complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I am aware that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements or claims may subject me to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties. As PD/PI, I agree to accept responsibility for the scientific conduct of the project and to provide the required progress reports if a grant is awarded as a result of this submission.*

- The group noted that these language changes are beneficial and help to clarify the role the PI is assuming as eSNAP actions are taken.
- (slide 9) An eSNAP report will be added to provide easy access to institutional assurance information for audit purposes.
- (general comment) In the case of multiple-PIs the contact PI would be able to initiate the eSNAP.

## Accessing the eRA Commons Ext-UAT Stage Environment

Scarlett provided instructions for CWG members to access the Ext-UAT stage environment and to set up organization hierarchies in the stage environment.

**Action: (CWG Members) Try out the organization hierarchy functionality within the Ext-UAT stage environment.**

**Action: (Scarlett Gibb) Create feedback mechanism for organization hierarchy user testing in Ext-UAT stage environment.**

### Discussion Points:

- Currently there is no way for PIs to delegate ability to see Errors/Warnings. The group unanimously agreed that this delegation would be a great help and explained that without this ability PIs often share their login information with others. An additional concern was raised that when PIs that also are

reviewers share their login information they have opened up access to review materials. eRA management indicated that the fact that current system limitations are forcing bad business practices within applicant organizations is a good argument to bring to the NIH Steering Committee as part of the justification for further funding of the organization hierarchy project.

- Marcia Hahn noted that if a delegation is allowed it would have to be to a customized view so that access to summary statement, priority score, and personal data would be withheld.
- The group discussed whether there is a current role that would be appropriate for the delegation. It was decided that the AO role could be used and a status view similar to the SO view would be appropriate.
- The ability for PIs to delegate the viewing of errors/warnings would be a stop/gap measure until organizational hierarchy is fully functional. Megan Columbus indicated that with the code freeze in place, it is not possible to implement this “quick fix” for February submissions.
- The group suggested that an extra layer of security may be appropriate for IAR information.

**Action: (Sheri Cummins) Need to communicate to PIs the importance of keeping credentials secure and consequences of sharing this information especially if a reviewer.**

**Action: (Scarlett Gibb) Investigate whether an additional layer of security is appropriate for IAR information.**

- The group indicated there continues to be interest for administrators to see summary statement information. Marcia indicated that there have been on-going discussions with general council on this topic and whether it is appropriate to release all or part of summary statement information as a standard practice. She noted that the concept of PIs being able to delegate the ability to view summary statement information is a different matter since it puts the decision to share the information in the hands of the PI. The group expressed interest in this delegation being an option in organization hierarchy.

**Action: (Scarlett Gibb) Write up request for PI delegation for viewing summary statement information and send it to CWG members to ensure it properly reflects the user requirement.**

**Action: (Scarlett Gibb) Send to CWG members list of current rights/roles/delegations and Virtual Organization Layer presentation.**

- Dan explained that with organization hierarchy everyone gets a basic role and then all rights are allocated to a node within the hierarchy. The lowest node is the grant level. When asked, Dan indicated that the initial versions will not allow institutes to create their own roles but that it could be included as a future enhancement if approved for funding.
- Scarlett confirmed that there are no plans to refresh the Ext-UAT environment in the near future so the group is free to try the organization hierarchy without interruption.
- The group noted the importance of fully understanding the applicant organization structure to properly set-up organization hierarchy. Institutions have homework to do.
- The group asked how org. hierarchy will be reflected through NIH system. Scarlett noted that internal discussions and analysis are taking place. She suggested that Jim Tucker be invited to May CWG meeting for discussion.

**Action:** (Scarlett Gibb) Invite Jim Tucker to May CWG meeting to discuss data integrity and how organization hierarchy will be carried through NIH systems.

## **eRA Budget Process**

Tom Boyce (eRA Program Manager) and Pete Morton (Director of eRA Customer Support Services Division) thanked the group for their service and Scarlett for inviting them to participate in the meeting to hear first-hand accounts of the importance of proposed eRA functionality.

Tom explained that eRA maintains a list of proposed eRA system enhancements including potential enhancements to eRA Commons. It is NIH governance, however, that provides final approval on spending for individual projects. eRA staff, like Scarlett, help to prepare Tom for budget discussions to ensure he understands the user impact of individual projects and can properly represent the needs and priorities of user groups. Tom indicated he would be happy to have CWG representatives accompany him in the budget presentation with governance to provide first hand accounts of their priorities.

Pete noted that eRA's top priority is to provide reliable and responsive systems. The vast majority of eRA's budget goes to maintaining the system and only a small fraction of the budget is available for enhancements.

**Action:** (Scarlett Gibb) Send list of outstanding eRA Commons requests to the group.

## **xTrain in eRA Commons**

*Dan Fox*

Dan reviewed the [xTrain in eRA Commons](#) presentation with the group.

### **Discussion Points:**

- (slide 3) A new eRA Commons role of Business Official (BO) is proposed. The BO role and associated abilities will eventually become a right within Virtual Organization Layers (VOL; i.e., organization hierarchy).
- (slide 3) Should the 2271 email notification be sent to those with BO role? The group agreed having an option for the BO to receive these notifications and the ability for SO and BO to run reports would be ideal.
- (slide 8) The group noted that it would be nice to have a link from Status to the 2271.
- (slide 10) If Trainee does not respond within allowable time period, the system forwards Termination Notice back to PD/PI. The group agreed 30 days should be allowed before this action is taken.
- (slide 10) If PD/PI does not respond within allowable time period, the system forwards Termination Notice to BO/SO. The group agreed that 2 weeks should be allowed before this action is taken.
- (slide 10) The group agreed that the system should prevent the submission of a reappointment if following grant year is not awarded yet. This should be checked before 30 day nudge.
- (slide 10) The group would like PD delegation to handle affairs at the grant level. The SO and AA roles should be able to do delegation also.

- *(slide 12)* The group asked if the trainee can initiate the termination. Scarlett and Dan explained that it is not currently planned. Although it may be something to consider when working with fellowships, it is not appropriate with training since stipends must be adjusted.
- *(slide 19)* The group agreed that the Trainee Roster screens should default to current year.
- *(slide 19)* Adjustments to screen layout were made, including:
  - Removing the Trainee Status column and incorporating the information into the other status columns.
  - The Action column should be split into two columns, View and Action, to provide easy identification of entries requiring action. Action items also should use bold type.
  - Change Reappointment column to reflect appointment, new reappointment, or amendment.
  - Use 2271 instead of SOA (Statement of Appointment) acronym.
- *(slide 20)* Some concerns were raised about having PI and Trainee roles on same eRA account. Some institutions require F32 at end of year one.

**Action: (Scarlett Gibb) Hold internal discussions regarding roles of Fellows in eRA Commons.**

- *(slide 20)* Suggestion was made to put out a communication to trainees without eRA Commons accounts with link and instructions to register.

**Action: (Scarlett Gibb) Send communication to trainees without eRA Commons accounts with link and instructions to register.**

- *(slide 22)* Dan will send final screen.

**Action: (Dan Fox) Distributed final xTrain screens to the group.**

- *(slide 23)* Remove the SSN information from the Termination Notice screen.
- *(slide 26)* Dan noted that this slide contains all the workflow buttons for illustrative purposes. Actual screens only would include appropriate buttons. The group suggested that links to pertinent policy information be included.
- *(slide 29)* Suggestions similar to slide 19.
- *(general)* Next steps – the eRA Commons team will review the feedback, adjust requirements, complete the screens, and distribute plans for demo version.

**Action: (Scarlett Gibb) Distribute plans for xTrain demo version.**

## General Discussion Topics

- When will eSNAP be mandatory? Scarlett noted there is no set date to make eSNAP mandatory. She suggested that the next CWG agenda should include a discussion of current experience with eSNAP and suggestions for improvements.

**Action: (Scarlett Gibb) Put discussion of current experience with eSNAP and suggestions for improvements on the May CWG agenda.**

- The group thanked NIH for its flexibility in handling contingencies, but noted that consistency across agencies is needed. Policies for accepting late applications are at the discretion of individual agencies.
- Steve Dowdy asked if there was a way to provide explanation for applications affected by known system issue as a group rather than individual cover letters. He gave the example of the recent Grants.gov issue that affected system-to-system transmissions. It is harder for individual cover letters to be adjusted in system-to-system. Suzanne Fisher said that each application is looked at separately in Receipt and Referral and they depend heavily on the cover letter information especially in cases when only certain user populations are affected.
- The reference letter functionality put in eRA Commons will be first tested with the DPI applications due January 16. Scarlett asked the group for feedback since this functionality will be reused for T's and F's in the future.

**Action: (CWG Members) Provide any feedback on reference letter use with DPI applications to Scarlett Gibb.**

- Additional requests:
  - For No Cost Extensions (NCEs) would like option to pick from 1-12 months instead of 3, 6, or 12 months.
  - Ability to provide partial Just In Time (JIT) uploads.

**Action: (Scarlett Gibb) Add discussion of partial JIT uploads to May CWG meeting agenda.**

- Add to Status view the FOA number to easily identify the solicitation the application was in response to.
- Notification when summary statement is posted to PI.
- Increase to Commons timeout period. Scarlett noted that the timeout period is already maxed.
- Would like CWG to refocus on helping NIH improve internal business practices. The need for single sentence PDF files, different use of Narrative section than other agencies and the break out of current/pending support were identified as examples of NIH requirements that are not in line with other agencies.
- Scarlett noted that the make-up and structure of the CWG has not been looked at for several years. The internal NIH structure has changed; specifically in the way requests for new functionality are approved. There are currently 19 standing CWG members with varying levels of participation. There also are many other institutional representatives that consistently attend meetings, although they are not standing members. Group feedback included:
  - Suggestion to schedule meetings further in advance so that travel arrangements can be made.
  - NIH should revisit what they want from the group and the kind of representation desired (e.g. large institutions, small institutions, hospitals, small business?, geographic representation, roles in organization) then look at the current make-up of the group and determine where they holes are.
  - Decide if members should be chosen based on institution affiliation or individual strengths.

**Action: (Scarlett Gibb) Hold internal NIH meeting to revisit make-up, structure and focus of CWG and to determine if adjustments are necessary.**

## Next Meeting

The next meeting FDP meeting will be held May 24-25. The decision for CWG meeting timing will be emailed.

**Action:** (Scarlett Gibb) Email plans for next CWG meeting.

## Attendees

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### CWG Members

Arias, Lynette (Oregon Health and Science University)  
Dowdy, Stephen (MIT)  
Fant, Jane (Univ. of Alabama at Birmingham)  
Forstmeier, Kenneth (Penn. State Univ.)  
Gray, Patricia (Rensselaer Polytechnic Inst.; representing Denise Clark)  
Guentert, Kellie (UC Davis)  
Wilson, Thomas (City of Hope, National Med.Ctr & Beckman Research Institute)  
Wray, Nancy (Dartmouth College)

### Other Institutional Representatives

Beattie, Robert (Univ. Of Michigan)  
Broking, Emily (Penn. State Univ.)  
Cheng-Chong, Cora (Mass. General Hospital)  
Kusiak, Michael (UC Berkeley)  
Miller, Esteria (U.T. Southwestern Med. School, Dallas)  
Myers, Jason (Univ. Of Minn.)  
Robinson, David (Oregon Health and Sci. Univ.)  
Spalding, Frances (Univ. of Minn.)  
Swavely, Todd (Univ. of Pennsylvania)

### Service Providers

Bozler, Dianne (ERA Software Systems)

### NIH Staff/Contractors/Grants.gov

Boyce, Tom (NIH/OER/eRA)  
Columbus, Megan (NIH/OER)  
Cummins, Sheri (NIH/OER/eRA, Contractor)  
Fadeley, Vicki (NIH/OER/eRA)  
Fauanteroy, Tina (NIH/OER/eRA, Contractor)  
Fisher, Suzanne (NIH/CSR)  
Fox, Daniel (NIH/OER/eRA, Contractor)  
Gardner, George (NIH/OER/OPERA)  
Gibb, Scarlett (NIH/OER/eRA)  
Hahn, Marcia (NIH/OER/OPERA)  
Morton, Pete (NIH/OER/eRA)  
Smith, Samuel (NIH/OER/eRA, Contractor)  
Wigglesworth, Carol (NIH/OER/OPERA)