NIH eRA eCGAP
Service Provider Q&A

Post-Meeting—February 9, 2005

1. In the last round, PIs who submitted on paper could submit late if there were "weather-related issues." They needed to note their reason in a cover letter. See: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-05-030.html. The same offer was not and could not be made to eCGAP users. We were told "The submission and verification deadlines for this receipt round are as posted on the eRA website. Anything received later is considered late." Will this always be the policy? If yes, this is a very important policy decision that needs to be officially conveyed to PIs and SOs. Can NIH provide an official notice that for eCGAP submissions, extensions of the deadline are never granted for ANY reason despite the fact that extensions are occasionally granted for paper submissions.

   Answer: For now, the policy for paper submissions holds true for electronic submissions. Therefore, it is not accurate to say "The same offer was not and could not be made to eCGAP users." Nor is it the case that "for eCGAP submissions, extensions of the deadline are never granted for ANY reason despite the fact that extensions are occasionally granted for paper submissions."

   We would like to point out that the question that came to us through the CGAPSupport mailbox did not specify any weather-related issues or clearly pose the policy question that is being raised here.

   The eCGAP team did state that "The submission and verification deadlines for this receipt round are as posted on the eRA website. Anything received later is considered late." That is correct; one has to adhere to deadlines. But that does not mean that PI's cannot submit late. PI's can submit late electronically but they have to provide an explanation in their cover letter. Then, it is up to the NIH's Division of Receipt and Referral to determine whether the late application will be accepted or not.

2. Dr Stanfield's letter (see: http://era.nih.gov/Projectmgmt/SBIR/files/CSR_Assurance_Ltr_PI_05-28-04.pdf answers almost every issue except for a minor one which came up during the last round. A PI chose to NOT submit electronically because she wanted to make sure reviewers received a PAPER application that utilized color. The SRA for the likely study section distributes the ORIGINAL paper copies of the grant application. For the PI's field (biochemistry) color was very important. The PI spent a lot of time working on color illustrations and printing in color. We could not guarantee her that the PAPER copy generated from the eCGAP PDF would be in color - so she chose to stay with a standard paper submission.

   o How common is this scenario? How many SRAs give out the original

      (potentially color) paper copies of the proposals to reviewers?

- o To achieve parity, if an eCGAP application were to go to such an SRA would a color printer be used automatically?

- o Is there a mechanism by which a PI can request that the PDF be printed in color (assuming the SRA allows color in the paper applications s/he distributes to reviewers)

Answer: The Center for Scientific Review first prints the e-applications on a color printer and then uses the CSR color copier to make three more copies and deliver the four to the review group (CSR or IC). They began this practice in the previous pilot, and it is likely that they will continue this practice for all applications submitted in 2005 as well.

It should be emphasized to eCGAP applicants that even with the color printing/copying of the electronic image, these pictures will remain the same small size that the Principal Investigator used originally to fit the pictures within the page limits of the Research Plan. It would be prudent on the part of the PIs to send larger versions of color/glossy images, where they feel it is crucial for details to be seen, as part of the appendix materials that are sent directly to the Scientific Review Administrator after assignment. At the very least, PIs should be reminded that they still have that option if they feel it would enhance the review of their application.

3. How many grant applications were submitted electronically for the Feb. 1 receipt date?

Twenty applications were submitted. We are making a big push for the June/July receipt dates. NIH is considering extending the submission date for June/July dates for electronic submission as a big incentive for Principal Investigators. We will let you know the details soon.

UPDATE: *At this time, it looks as if NIH will not move forward with extending the submission date for the June/July grant applications submitted electronically. We will keep you informed.*

4. When does eCGAP plan to move to the new PHS 398 form? Since it will involve schema changes, which mean software changes, it is important that we get information on it at the earliest.

We will completely transition to the new PHS 398 forms before the mandated date of May 10. Right now, the requirements for the 398 form are a work in progress and we would be reluctant to share them with you before it is ready. We will make it available to you as soon as it is ready.

5. Do you plan to open submission for full budget applications?

We received one full budget application on February 1. We would like to see more numbers in pilot before we open access.

Announcements/Questions

Jennifer Flach

1. One Service Provider ran into this issue where two Principal Investigators from an Institute submitted a PDF fillable form from the Office of Extramural Research (OER) website with the

template from the NIH system. The NIH system cannot handle fillable forms. When someone takes PDF fillable forms, fills them in and submits them electronically, they turn up blank in the system. Have other Service Providers run into this problem?

SPs: Application packages provided by some Service Providers do allow applicants to attach documents. In this particular case, the PIs uploaded the fillable form in the application package as an attachment. In the future we will provide information to applicants on what they can attach or cannot attach.

Jennifer: We can take two steps to tackle this issue. One is to put a disclaimer or warning on the OER website that if an applicant is submitting electronically, he or she cannot use the forms on this website. The second step we are looking at is to find out whether the new version of iText used to generate the image will check for this or allow us to accept a fillable form. On the Service Providers' end, it would be beneficial if you could educate your applicants so this does not occur again.

2. The National Center for Research Resources (NCRR) is working on a system to allow grantees to file progress reports through the eRA eXchange. These reports would be sent through a system to system interface by grantees from the 80 General Clinical Research Centers. Would you all be interested in providing that service? If you are, this week we will send you some of the technical documentation associated with the system to system interface. We can also discuss it at next week's Conference Call. We will have some NCRR representatives on hand for you during that call.

    SPs: Absolutely. We would like to do that. Please send the documents.

    Note: *This information was distributed to the Service Providers on Friday, Feb. 11*

3. We are working to set up a new test environment for Service Providers that includes Commons. It has been deployed successfully; we will be deploying it to the test environment and production. When it is completed, hopefully within the next three weeks, we will send out the URLs to let you connect with that environment. This facility grew out of a request from Service Providers who said that while they had the Commons demo facility to get used to working with Commons, the grantee who has to verify his or her application has no testing facility for that.

    SPs: What about the PPF (personal profile) update?

    We have gotten the go-ahead from policy to promote that. We are doing one last check in production; it should be in place for June 1.

4. We plan to move up the next conference call to February 16 due to a conflict with another meeting on the scheduled date of Feb. 23. Please send in your questions by Monday, Feb. 14.