eCGAP Focus Group

Date: Tuesday, April 5, 2005
Time: 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.
Location: Rockledge 1, Room 8111
Advocate: Jennifer Flach

Next Meeting: Tuesday, May 3, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., Rockledge 1, Room 8111

Action item

1. (Janna Wehrle) Find out the average size of an application and appendix and the average number of CDs requested for an application in a study section to gauge whether there should be a limit imposed on CDs.

Cutting CDs for electronic applications

With future growth anticipated in the volume of incoming electronic grant applications, several issues related to cutting CDs are likely to arise. Mike Goodman noted the following issues: Will the application material fit on a CD? How will correction material received after submission but before review be handled? One option is to rely solely on the Internet Assisted Review (IAR) module, bypassing the need to cut CDs. Other issues to consider are — if the application spans several CDs, should all the information be placed on multiple CDs or on a DVD format instead? How much of the appendix material should be on CD?

With members of the NIH Office of Research Services (the group that cuts the CDs from grant applications) invited to participate in the meeting, group members discussed these issues at length.

CDs—Skip Moyer noted that having an application on a CD would be more convenient than having the reviewer go to the IAR module. He noted that problems sometimes crop up with expiration of a password in using IAR; any such problem would be obviated if the application was available on a CD for review.

Limit on CD?—Mike Goodman noted that a reasonable limit could be placed on an application size and if it exceeded that size, the information would be available only through IAR. Everett Sinnett noted that if an application came in with 10 appendices, one option would be to cut one main CD for the application and 10 accompanying CDs for each of the 10 accompanying appendices. Another option could be to send one CD with the application for all reviewers and a set of CDs with appendices to the assigned reviewers. The group agreed that it would be helpful to get the average size of an application and appendix, as well as the average number of CDs requested per application by a study section. This average would help them base their decision on whether there should be a limit on CDs. Janna Wehrle said that she would try and find out the average.

Action: (Janna Wehrle) Find out the average size of an application and appendix and the average number of CDs requested for an application in a study section to gauge whether there should be a limit imposed on CDs.

Appendix— Everett Sinnett noted that the volume of an appendix can be huge. To ask a reviewer to retrieve that information from the Web would be extremely burdensome. It would be preferable to have the appendix material on a CD that reviewers could carry with them and review wherever they want to work.

Janna Wehrle asked about the current practice for dealing with appendix material. Roger Coombs of Quality Associates Incorporated, an NIH ORS contractor, noted that appendices are placed on CD on request only, and generally those requests have been few. The appendix material goes out on paper currently. Roger noted that the page limit on a CD is about 650 to 750 pages.

On the issue of whether the appendix should be separate from the application, the group had various thoughts:

- o Most felt that it would be reasonable to have both the application and appendix together so that reviewers would not have the hassle of popping in one CD after another during a study section meeting.
- o Tom Tatham suggested that if the application and appendix spanned two CDs, it would be hard to come up with one integrated menu. He suggested switching to DVDs or downloading the application and appendix material to a PC's hard drive. Some members said they felt uncomfortable with mandating that reviewers download applications and thought it would also be a security issue; if they mandated downloads, they would be responsible for ensuring its destruction after use.

Sara Silver suggested the group draw up a list of alternatives with pros and cons. However, she also noted that she was not sure that the group could make a decision in this regard, since it may be a policy decision to be made at a higher level.

Supplemental material— The group agreed that supplemental material received after submission, but before review will be emailed to reviewers if the CD has already been cut; in addition, the material will be placed in the official grants folder. Those two steps would constitute reasonable accommodation and obviate the need to burn CD after CD to accommodate changes.

Tom Tatham noted that the plan is to have individual grant folders in IAR where supplemental material can be deposited. One assumption is that there will be wireless connectivity at study section meetings, allowing reviewers to pull up information from IAR easily. Tom also noted that the Center for Scientific Review is developing a standardized set of requirements for hotels that includes wireless connectivity. While they cannot mandate that hotels follow them, the requirements greatly increase the odds that hotels will provide this perk.

CD vs DVD—Tom Tatham suggested that instead of multiple CDs, the media format be switched to DVDs. He noted that DVD use would be more widespread in a year or two. Roger Coombs noted that his office received only one request from an NIH Institute to provide the application information on one DVD instead of six CDs. However, the request finally went out on CD itself because the Institute was not sure that all reviewers would have access to a DVD player. Roger noted that providing the application information on a DVD would not pose a problem; however, his office would need to know the commitment level to DVDs. Some group members suggested that while agencies may switch to DVDs in the future, time may not be right now.

CD and Reviewer Conflict—Everett asked what will be done with CDs if a reviewer has a conflict of interest with the institution or applicant he or she is supposed to review. On occasion, a buddy conflict can also arise; for example, a reviewer may have co-authored a paper with the applicant, or they may both be employed at the same institution. In such cases, the reviewer should state his or her conflict upfront so that he or she will not participate in the review of that

particular application. In these cases, the CD will still contain the application materials, since there is no need to withhold access from the reviewer. However, true "conflict CDs" will continue to be produced, in competitive or adversarial situations where it is necessary to keep a reviewer from having access to certain application materials. The group noted that if they adopted the practice of keeping the applications and their appendix materials separate, and distributed on different CDs, then this would be another wrinkle they would have to deal with. In that case, they would need to ensure that the "conflict reviewer" also has the submission excluded from his/her companion CD of appendix material.

Web link in appendix—The group discussed the idea of how to handle a web link in an appendix. Some members noted that the 398 form instructions forbade links in applications: therefore, it is not for this group but up to policy to determine something like that. Some members felt that this group should bring the issue to the attention of policy because web links will be more of an issue as more and more people get web savvy.

In conclusion, the consensus of the group was to proceed as follows:

In the near term, continue to produce CDs that contain *all* applications for the meeting (reviewer conflicts notwithstanding).

The CDs should be organized so that applications are stored on the same CD as their appendices and supplemental material, to avoid the inconvenience of reviewers having to switch CDs when discussing an application during a study section.

Carefully monitor the efficacy of this approach as we move forward. If necessary, other options can be considered, such as changing media from CD to DVD.

Any supplemental review material that is received before the review meeting, but *after* the CD order has been placed, should be emailed to reviewers. In addition, the supplemental material should also be stored in the electronic grant folder, so that all information being considered for review is collected conveniently in one place.

Communications/Outreach efforts

Jennifer Flach
Jennifer updated the group on a variety of efforts by eRA's Communications branch to publicize electronic submission:

o Developed Frequently Asked Questions brochure about Submitting Grants Electronically. Scarlett Gibb plans to distribute 200 brochures at the NIH regional seminar in Albuquerque this week.

o Sent in an article March 28 for publication in the National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA) for the April/May newsletter.

o Plan to send article on electronic submission for June/July receipt dates to Peer Review Notes for the May 2005 issue.

- o Posted a link stating "Submitting Grants Electronically to NIH" on the Grants-OER web page (http://grants2.nih.gov/grants/oer.htm), as well as the Submitting Your Grant Application page at (http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/submitapplication.htm)

- o Changed links of some Service Providers on the eRA website from their company home page to a more relevant Service Provider link showing applicants how they can submit grants electronically (Amy Swain's idea).

The group suggested sending brochures and other promotional literature to scientific meetings. Tom Tatham suggested placing eCGAP material in booths run by the Center for Scientific Review at various meetings and recommended getting in touch with CSR's Don Luckett to arrange that.

Table Talk

Foreign applications—Everett Sinnett noted that summary statements were not pulling in addresses from foreign applications. Sara Silver said that the problem is caused by a defect in the summary statement software that needs to be fixed.

Grants.gov—A member asked if applicants could electronically submit applications to NIH through Grants.gov. Jennifer noted that applicants will not be able to submit to NIH via Grants.gov until the system-to-system interface between the two entities is in place. NIH eRA plans to run a pilot in May with Commons Working Group members submitting dead data via Grants.gov to NIH. The exercise would be a dry run for a live pilot sometime in July. Jennifer noted that eRA is looking for grant opportunities to conduct the live pilot and would welcome suggestions.

Review Action Items from March 21 meeting

1. (Sara Silver) Email list of new institutions that submitted applications for the Feb. 1 and March 1 receipt date. ***Done.***

2. (Sara Silver) Change wording of the last sentence on Table of Contents page to read "Number of Attachments in Appendix." ***Done.***

3. (Sara Silver) Change wording of "Introduction to Application" under the subhead PHS 398 Specific Research Plan to "Introduction to Revised/Supplemental Application." ***Done.***

4. (Sara Silver) Add (Data Sharing and Model Organism Sharing) after Resource Sharing Plan in Table of Contents page. ***Done.***

5. (Sara Silver) Add (Description) after Project Summary/Abstract under the subhead Research & Related Project Information and remove Project Narrative altogether from the Table of Contents page. ***Done.***

6. (Sara Silver) Remove "Other Attachments" under the subhead "Research and Related Other Project Information" on the Table of Contents page. ***Done.***

7. (Jennifer Flach) Arrange for a presentation on Grants.gov at a future meeting. *Jennifer said that she would have a NIH-centric presentation on Grants.gov at a future meeting in the next month or so.*

Attendees

Brogdon, Janet (ORS)

Calderone, Gerald (AHRQ)

Coombs, Roger J (QAI)

Flach, Jennifer (OER)

George, David (NIBIB)

Goodman, Michael (OD)

Greenberg, Linda (AHRQ)

Liberman, Ellen (NEI)

Maurer, JJ (OD)

Moyer, George (Skip) (AHRQ)

Myrbeck, Edward (NINDS)

Nelson, Robert (ORS)

Panniers, Richard (CSR)

Silver, Sara (OER)

Sinnett, Everett (CSR)

Stick, Melissa (NIDCD)

Swain, Amy (NCRR)

Subramanya, Manju (LTS/OD)

Tatham, Tom (CSR)

Wehrle, Janna (NIGMS)

Wallace, Arlene (ORS)