eRA Project Team Meeting Minutes

Date:	Tuesday, March 8, 2005
Time:	9:00–10:10 a.m.
Location:	Rockledge 1, 5th floor conference room
Chair:	Izja Lederhendler, Jim Cain

Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 22, 9:00 a.m., Rockledge 1, 5th floor conference room

Action Items

1. (Izja Lederhendler) Arrange for a discussion on IC-wide business practices associated with the Grant Folder at a future Project Team meeting.

2. (Tracy Soto) Send J2EE conversion timeline and request for volunteers to test J2EE versions of modules to EPMC mailing list.

Handouts

❑ EPMC presentation:
  http://era.nih.gov/docs/EPMC_Marchpresentation.pdf

❑ J2EE Conversion timeline:
  http://era.nih.gov/docs/J2EE Conversion one-pager schedule.pdf

EPMC presentation

Izja Lederhendler
http://era.nih.gov/docs/EPMC_Marchpresentation.pdf

Izja shared with the group the presentation he made to the Extramural Policy and Management Committee on March 3. He noted that the EPMC had endorsed some of the ideas and they will be taken to the ITWG to see if they will support funding of these ideas in the budget.

❑ *Paperless Mailers*—Izja reported that CSR's Brent Stanfield had proposed to the EPMC that mailing of all paper notifications to institutions and PIs registered in the NIH eRA Commons be gradually phased out and discontinued completely by Jan.10, 2007. Izja noted that some electronic notifications can replace mailers as early as nine months from now. However, ITWG needs to okay this before eRA can proceed. He noted that Commons registration, currently at 65 percent to 70 percent of awardees, needs to be revved up. The increase in Commons registration is about two percent a month now.

❑ *eSNAP electronic submission required date*—Izja noted that submission of eSNAPS (electronic Streamlined Non-Competing Award Process) is increasing quite rapidly, an indication that the electronic tool to file progress reports for continuation of a non-competing grant is finding general acceptance in the user community. He noted that the eRA system can be readied to accept all progress reports that fall under the SNAP guidelines electronically by October 2006, but it is up to the extramural ITWG to approve the requirement. The progress reports will be accepted through the Commons (eSNAP) or through a system-to-system

option using the eRA eXchange. Ultimate approval for eRA to move forward with requiring electronic submission of progress reports will come when funds are made available for implementation.

❑ *424 R&R (Research and Related) dataset update*— Work on developing the 424R&R form is moving along as eRA works to integrate its system with Grants.gov. The 424 R&R is a federal form that Grants.gov uses to receive electronic applications for research grants; eRA is mapping the 424R&R data elements to the eRA database and developing agency specific data elements from its PHS 398 form as a supplement to the 424 R&R to accommodate NIH and other DHHS OPDIVs.

Izja reported that those agency specific forms to supplement the 424R&R are almost final. IT (Mike Goodman) is working very closely with policy (Marcia Hahn) on this data set. He noted that the current proposal is to convert to 424R&R use by grant mechanism, starting with the investigator-initiated small research grant (R03) and the exploratory/developmental research grant (R21). The simple mechanisms will be developed first with the complex to follow later.

The question remains whether to proceed with the electronic conversion to 424R&R exclusively, or include a paper option as well. Izja said his own viewpoint is that he would like eRA to focus on the electronic 424R&R and keep the spotlight on electronic submission and not do the paper version of 424R&R. Before this decision is reached, eRA and the user community will have to be ready. Izja noted that the community will have to get used to the visually different look of the 424R&R.

Carlos Caban questioned whether this conversion of 424R&R would be linked to the revision of the current PHS 398 form when the latter comes up for Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval in September 2007. Marcia Hahn predicted that the 398 will be only agency specific in the future, including in it those data elements missing in the 424R&R. The 398's fate will depend on how users react to the electronic 424R&R — whether it catches on like wildfire or is rejected by the grantee community. Therefore, Marcia noted that eRA should be cautious in formulating its long term plans regarding the 424R&R because the process still has a long way to go.

Izja noted that eRA has two-and-a-half years to complete the 424R&R implementation plan. The Grants Management focus group is participating in developing an issues and recommendation list; input will also be sought from Program and Review staff. A contractor will be hired to help keep the process moving forward (for both policy and technical issues). A task list will be developed and a detailed timeline and milestones hammered out. A comprehensive application guide is needed and will probably be modeled on the one developed by the National Science Foundation.

The plan is to test use of the 424R&R with dead data in the spring and early summer of 2005 assuming Grants.gov is ready to proceed.

❑ *Electronic Documents*—Izja noted that different solutions have been developed by different ICs to store official grant files electronically.

- o For instance, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) has developed eGrants, an Electronic Image Management System, with official grant files sitting in a separate database and no paper grant files at all. The grant portfolios are all processed electronically.

- o In contrast, the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) has a mix of both paper and electronic; it uses a separate database but its official files include both paper and electronic.

- o The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) uses eRA data systems; its official file also includes both paper and electronic.

Izja noted that the mixed model may be appropriate for ICs who do not have the resources that NCI had in digitizing its legacy system files. NINDS has reduced the thickness of its files by 90 percent by storing its data in IMPAC II. Izja said that eRA could provide information to ICs about this arrangement and work with them in developing solutions.

Izja noted that eRA does not have all the features in place that ICs may be seeking and are offered in the different IC solutions. ICs that choose to work with eGrants should go ahead and do that; eRA will continue to provide whatever support it can. For its part, eRA does not plan to digitize all the data for the grant folder. Instead, it plans to capitalize on the use of data stored in the system. Standard documents such as a Just-in-time mailer only require a record of an event that happened and a link. eRA will also try and get all requests in through the Commons to bypass the need for scanning or adding externally generated documents.

Izja noted that eRA is looking to leverage the existing systems to develop a corporate system palatable to most of the ICs.

Discussion:

- o With the movement towards electronic files, Ellen Liberman asked if there was consensus on which documents should or should not reside in the official electronic grants folder. Rick Ikeda noted that with regard to email between applicants and Program Officials, the recommendation is to include what you believe to be official action. Group members noted that while there has been some consensus on the contents, nothing has been officially sanctioned. One member suggested getting an update on the work eRA is doing with regard to the grants folder and Izja suggested that a broader discussion on IC-wide business practices regarding the grant folder would be a good topic for a future meeting.

  Action: (Izja Lederhendler) Arrange for a discussion on IC-wide business practices associated with the Grant Folder at a future Project Team meeting.

- o One group member noted that when grant records are transferred to the Records Management Center to be archived, the center will require a packaged document, not a link. Izja noted that another option may require consideration of changes in existing practices to accommodate electronic records.

FY 2006 Planning Update
Izja Lederhendler

Izja reported that eRA is developing a budget request for Fiscal Year 2006. The request will be presented first to eRA's governance body, the Extramural IT Working Group, then the ITWG and back to the Project Team. The planning mirrors the theme of FY2005 and has no major new initiatives, given that this is a tight budget period. Izja noted that a majority of the funding would be consumed by issues that are mandatory, ranging from Public Access, implementation of the Co-PI, OPDIV integration and the like. This is an issue that the ITWG will have to take into account.

J2EE Conversion Timeline

Tracy Soto

http://era.nih.gov/docs/J2EE Conversion one-pager schedule.pdf

Tracy presented a revised timeline for conversion of client-server software applications to J2EE web-based versions. Phase I applications scheduled to be in production pilot by May 2005 and Phase II by September 2005 have now been pushed back a month.

Tracy noted that eRA is actively seeking users experienced in the client-server applications to test out the Web-based versions during integration and acceptance testing. Such timely feedback would help detect problems early and avoid situations such as when critical bugs were found in the Grants Management module during its production phase. A room has been set up on the second floor of Rockledge 1 to allow for testing by users. The handout lists the person to be contacted if a user wants to volunteer to test an application.

Izja suggested that the J2EE conversion timeline and the list soliciting users for testing be sent out to the EPMC mailing list.

Discussion: Carlos Caban asked about the cost implications for the next year ensuing from maintenance of applications converted to J2EE. Pete Morton noted that one assumption behind J2EE is that it will reduce maintenance costs associated with client-server applications. Izja noted that ITWG is examining eRA's Operations and Maintenance budget in detail. eRA spends fifty percent of its budget on Operations and Maintenance and is looking to redefine what maintenance means — is it a small enhancement, a major enhancement or a minor fix? Izja said more details would be available when he outlines the eRA budget to the Project Team once it is approved.

Sandy Karen of HRSA asked if there was a timeline for migrating the OPDIVs to eRA. Izja said eRA is trying to help OPDIVs meet the Sept. 30 deadline for migration to eRA. At the same time eRA is working at the limits of its available resources and will request additional support from the other OPDIVs.

Action: (Tracy Soto) Send J2EE conversion timeline and request for volunteers to test J2EE versions of applications to EPMC mailing list.

Attendees

Caban, Carlos (OER)	Dutcher, Sylvia (Mitretek)	Hirsch, Melissa (OER)
Cain, Jim (OER)	Flach, Jennifer (OD)	Horton, Marcia (HRSA)
Cox, Michael (OER)	Goodman, Michael (OD/OER)	Ikeda, Richard (NIGMS)
Cummins, Sheri (LTS)	Hahn, Marcia (OER/OPERA)	Jordan, Craig (NIDCD)

Karen, Sandra (HRSA)

Katzper, Linda (OD/DEIS)

Khramkova, Tatiana (IBM)

Kinley, Teresa (CDC)

Lagas, Robert (Lagas Associates)

Lederhendler, Israel (OD)

Liberman, Ellen (NEI)

Lynch, Peggy (IBM)

Milner, Tina (OD)

Morton, Larry (OER)

Morton, Pete (CIT)

Paugh, Steve (LTS)

Patel, Kalpesh (Ekagra)

Porter, Yvette (OD)

Salata, Kalman (CSR)

Shah, Sachin (LTS)

Simms, Sophonia (OD)

Soto, Tracy (OD/DEIS)

Subramanya, Manju (LTS/OD)

Tucker, Jim (OER)

Wehrle, Janna (NIGMS)

Zhen, Changqing (IBM)