Electronic ARA/901 Working Group Minutes

Date: Wednesday, Nov. 5, 2003
Time: 1:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m.
Location: Rockledge 1, Third Floor Conference Room
Chair: Ellen Liberman

Action Items

1. (Ellen Liberman, Sara Silver) Discuss hitlists and how to track ARAs at next workgroup meeting.
2. (Sara Silver) Secure a location for future workgroup meetings.
3. (All) Consider whether the workgroup successfully represents NIH; bring suggestions for any additional workgroup members to next meeting.
4. (Ellen Liberman, Sara Silver) Invite an additional SRA representative to join workgroup.
5. (Ellen Liberman, Sara Silver, Mike Goodman) Investigate systems similar to Electronic ARA/901 and inform group via email of any demonstrations that would be helpful to attend.

Welcome

Ellen Liberman welcomed group members to the first meeting of the Electronic ARA (Awaiting Receipt of Application) and 901 Working Group. She explained that members were selected for their expertise and to provide a solid representation across the many Institutes and Centers at the NIH. She thanked members for attending and expressed her enthusiasm about working together.

Purpose of Working Group

Sara Silver, Analyst for the Office of Extramural Research (OER), explained that the purpose of the working group is to generate requirements for the electronic ARAs and 901s. The ARA and 901 functionality will be incorporated into the cross-cutting e-Request module. In addition to setting requirements, the working group provides a great opportunity to understand business requirements for ARAs and 901s and possibly to streamline current processes.

The working group will meet at least twice more before the Holiday season. Members of the group will have the opportunity to pilot the electronic 901s and ARAs.

The group will set requirements for the ARA first, then for the 901. A prototype will then be developed for the working group to review. The prototype will accommodate both the 901s and the ARAs. The electronic 901s and ARAs will be the first components of E-Request, which has not yet been scheduled for completion. Mike Goodman, the Analyst for the E-Request project, explained that electronic ARAs and 901s will be the foundation for other types of electronic forms. The E-Request system will integrate email notifications, incorporate status and tracking capabilities, and adhere to a chain or hierarchy of approvals. Sara explained that Chanath Ratnanather, an analyst on the eRA Project, is responsible for implementing an automated chain of approval (Organizational and Delegation Layers) in the eRA system.

Electronic 901s and ARAs

The goal of creating electronic 901s and ARAs is to eliminate paperwork, improve bookkeeping, and increase communication. The Electronic ARAs and 901s will incorporate a chain of authorization and should be flexible so that all ICs can use and adapt them.

Sara asked the group to begin brainstorming about requirements for the electronic ARAs. The group recommended the following:

- Include all information present on the current ARA form: PI (last name first), submission date (which can be filled in by the system), the requesting IC, and the Subject. Subject on the form may not be the exact title of the application. Discuss the possibility of doing a keyword search. Also, add "Mechanism" (optional field), Grant Number (optional), Program Class Code, two or more names for Referral Liaisons, and Program Director's name.
- Consider having fields automatically populated by eRA (if the PI is registered on the Commons) or by IMPAC II (if ARA deals with a Type 2 or revision).
- Create a drop-down list for different categories of ARAs or Reasons for ARA (e.g., "500k", "Asking for Referral", "Different Receipt Date"). This would take the place of the Narrative section currently on the form.
- Have the system store the identity of the ARA submitter. There may be more than one person in an approval chain within an IC.
- Allow Referral Liaisons to submit ARAs to the Center for Scientific Review (CSR); *only* a Referral Liaison can send the ARA from an IC to CSR.
- Require the application number and the review assignment for approvals. The name of the Referral Officer is not necessary.
- Determine when automatic e-mail notifications should be sent out for an ARA. For example, should they be sent upon a match with an application? Should they be sent out when a grant number is assigned?
- Provide the Referral Liaison with the option of whether or not to receive automatic email notifications when CSR takes action (approves/disapproves) on the ARA.
- Provide the user with the ability to decide who is copied on e-mail notifications.
- Provide the user with the ability to determine whether to receive e-mail notifications for all actions on an ARA, or just for approvals and rejections, or just for rejections.
- Send e-notification back to submitter if the system doesn't match on an ARA within a certain amount of time.
- Provide the ability to update or correct ARA information, along with the choice of updating the ARA or submitting a different one.
- Include Status Screen that displays ARAs submitted, in progress, etc. Include a query just on ARAs that have not been matched. This will allow users to view the status of ARAs.
- Track and match multiple copies of ARAs. Sometimes, more than one IC will submit an ARA for the same PI ("dueling ARAs"). This occurs when more than one IC is

negotiating with the same PI. Both CSR and the IC submitter need to know if other ICs have submitted an ARA on behalf of the PI.

- Include Search function and sorting capability. Users need to be able to query ARAs by application number, PI, title of research, Program Class Code, IC, etc. Sara said that the group should discuss the screen elements for tracking ARAs and search hitlists at the next meeting.
- Allow users to search ARAs by council round or by "all" council rounds.
- Allow ARAs to be sent from IC to IC, from business area to business area. The system needs to accommodate this workflow.
- Determine the best way to identify the PI for whom the ARA is being requested. Some alternatives that were discussed included requiring Commons accounts for PIs for whom ARAs were being submitted, and providing a lookup into persons in the IMPAC II database for users submitting ARAs. In some cases, the person submitting the ARA may not be able to identify the correct PI.
- Provide users the option to update/edit/save information in ARA.
- Provide the ability to identify blanket exemptions to the need to submit ARAs, by IC and mechanism.
- Provide users the ability to view ARAs that have been sent to Referral Liasions. Right now, the Program Director makes the decision whether or not an ARA is required; then the ARA is approved by a Referral Liaison.
- Allow users to view ARAs submitted across NIH.
- Need to accommodate ARAs that result from additional information submitted by a PI. In the current process, for example, a PI may forget a cover letter and send it in, or send in missing pages. This may also come from an IC or from an SRA. These are entered in Receipt and Referral as ARAs. Need to figure out how to match to the rest of the application.
- Alert other business areas in IC (Grants Management, Program, etc.) about *Negative ARAs*.
- Accommodate an expiration period for ARAs, after which new applications are not matched to them. Also accommodate Permanent ARAs, which remain in the database after the expiration period.
- Accommodate "negative ARAs", for example where the request from the IC is that the application *not* be assigned to the IC. This needs more discussion.
- Allow users to annotate ARA. CSR may need to use this, for example, to insert notes about the referral decision-making process.
- Consider using electronic ARA for Conference Grants.
- Consider segregating OPDIVs to ensure confidentiality.
- Consider how to integrate paper components (last-minute cover letter from a PI, the application, additional documentation, etc.) into the electronic ARA. It is important to

decide how to handle the transition from paper to electronic. Sara said that these paper components may need to be scanned and then attached to the electronic ARA.

Action: **(Ellen Liberman, Sara Silver) Discuss hitlists and how to track ARAs at next workgroup meeting.**

Future Meetings

The group decided to meet every two weeks. The next two meetings will be held on Tuesday from 1–3 on November 18 and December 2. Sara agreed to secure a room.

For the next meeting, Ellen asked the group to think about whether the workgroup successfully represents NIH and if any additional individuals should be invited to join. The group said that an additional SRA representative would be helpful.

Finally, Ellen asked if demonstrations of systems similar to the envisioned electronic ARA/901 would be helpful for future meetings. The group suggested that Ellen, Sara, and Mike investigate a few systems and inform the group via email of any demonstrations that would be worthwhile or helpful to attend.

Action: **(Sara Silver) Secure a location for future workgroup meetings.**

Action: **(All) Consider whether the workgroup successfully represents NIH; bring suggestions for any additional workgroup members to next meeting.**

Action: **(Ellen Liberman, Sara Silver) Invite an additional SRA representative to join workgroup.**

Action: **(Ellen Liberman, Sara Silver, Mike Goodman) Investigate systems similar to Electronic ARAs/901 and inform group via email of any demonstrations that would be helpful to attend.**

Attendees

Armistead, Allyson (LTS)

Barr, Robin (for Miriam Kelty) (NIA)

Calderone, Jerry (AHRQ)

Fisher, Suzanne (CSR)

Goodman, Mike (OER)

Carter, Tony (for Ann Hagan) (NIGMS)

Liberman, Ellen (NGI)

Melchior, Christine (CSR)

Noronha, Jean (NIMH)

Ramm, Louise (NCRR)

Ratnanather, Chanath (Z-Tech)

Silver, Sara (Z-Tech)

Stesney, JoAnn (for Allan Czarra) (NIAID)