eRA Project Team Meeting Minutes

Date:	Tuesday, March 11, 2003
Time:	9:00–11:00 a.m.
Location:	6700 B Rockledge, Room 1205
Chair:	John McGowan

Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 25, 9:00 a.m., 6700 B Rockledge, Room 1205

Action Items

1. (All) E-mail suggestions and comments regarding how to obtain user feedback to JJ with a copy to Scarlett Gibb.

2. (All) E-mail suggestions and comments about creating a separate function for Council Operations to JJ.

3. (All) E-mail suggestions and comments regarding ANY opportunities to combine systems and reduce duplication of effort. This is a key NIH initiative.

Attachments

- eRA July 2003 Top Priorities (Sherry Zucker):

    - Summary: http://era.nih.gov/Docs/July03_Priorities_version2.pdf

    - Detail: http://era.nih.gov/Docs/July_2003_v.5_Plans.pdf

- Need for April/May Non-Functional Deployment (Steve Hughes):
  http://era.nih.gov/Docs/Non_Funct_Deploym_03-12-03.pdf

- Disaster Recovery (Jim Cain): http://era.nih.gov/Docs/Disaster_Recovery_03-11-03.pdf

Opening Remarks

John (JJ) McGowan

JJ announced that the NIH IT Board of Governors (BOG) approved the increase in funding requested by JJ on January 29. For FY 2003, eRA will receive an increment of $6.56 million to raise its approved budget to a total of $40.960 million. For FY 2004, eRA will request an additional $6 million, which will bring eRA's allocation to $39.086 million. For FY 2005, eRA will seek a permanent adjustment of $6.865 million to its base budget plus $4.123 million in contingency funds. If approved, these increases will result in total funding of $45.037 million for FY 2005. JJ commented that approximately 80 percent of the 2003 increase would be assigned to Application Design, Estimation, Maintenance, and Development (Box 9).

JJ remarked that the eRA Steering Committee would benefit from greater representation of the external community and has started the process to identify an appropriate advocate from the CWG. He also talked about a general need for quantitative feedback from users. He asked the Project Team to brainstorm the most effective means to reach out to users and gain insights into what they like and dislike about the systems, how they are receiving updates about system status

and what tools could be added to the systems to streamline their daily tasks. E-mail suggestions and comments regarding user feedback to JJ with a copy to Scarlett Gibb.

Hard copies of the new eRA organization charts were made available at the meeting. Due to the format and special printing requirements of the document, it was not practical to send out soft copies. To request a hard copy of the organization chart, contact Patti Rodbell.

System Status

Brad Sachar, Scarlett Gibb

Brad Sachar updated the team on the document services problem that affected user accessibility to external documents (PDF files, Summary Statements, applications, etc.). Although eRA uses a supported architecture, something in the eRA application functions trigger a bug in the vendor's operating system. The issue does not appear to be load related. The problem originally surfaced on February 9. Over the weekend, Operations deployed a vendor provided patch aimed at addressing the issue. Unfortunately, the issue resurfaced after applying the patch.

Scarlett Gibb informed the Project Team that the help desk is doing all they can to keep users informed of system status. They are emailing status alerts as soon as they become available and calling affected users to resubmit failed jobs as appropriate.

Jim and JJ assured the Project Team that this issue has top priority within their teams.

Note: As of March 12 at 7:30 a.m. all systems are operational and the team feels the issue is under control.

March Release

Jim Cain

To deploy the March release, the systems are scheduled to go down on Friday, March 21, at 3:00 p.m. Since it is a critical time for the Center for Scientific Research (CSR), the Project Team has requested that the down time begin at 5:00 p.m. Jim agreed to work with his team to evaluate the impact of the 2-hour loss on the deployment timeline. Jim and JJ agreed that the time change would be accommodated only if the assessment showed that there was still a high degree of confidence that all systems would be up and operational for Monday morning.

Jim also mentioned that, although his team is still working towards the March 21 deadline, there might be a 2-week deployment delay for the Program Module and CM Web. If the delay occurs, the client-server versions should be used in the interim.

October 2003 Advocates Retreat

Scarlett Gibb

Scarlett Gibb announced that the next Advocates Retreat will take place in October 2003. She circulated a sheet of potential meeting dates for the Project Team Advocates to choose from. The final date will be announced soon.

July Plans

Sherry Zucker

Sherry Zucker reviewed the eRA July 2003 Top Priorities list. Many of the listed items had been reviewed at the December 10, 2003, Project Team meeting, so her presentation concentrated on changes since that meeting. Changes are listed below. See attached documents for additional detail.

Module	New Item/Status Change	Comment
CGAP	Prototype Application Receipt and validation (J2EE Edit checker)	In analysis. Requirements documentation will probably not make deadline for July release.
GM	Build J2EE Foreign clearance system	New item. Complex requirement. Recommend prototype in test for July and full deployment in October.
	Processing of no-cost extensions	Requirements & Architecture for eRequest system not yet defined. No resources for evaluating COTS workflow product.
X-Train/ Trainee	TA—Provide interface to OFM/NBS to show status of records sent to OFM	Reduction of scope to status updates only. Other functionality handled outside of eRA. Requirements are not yet defined. Involves interface or cooperation of OFM.
CM	Incorporate J2EE Person module	Recommend deferring to allow for more up-front user evaluation.
IC Admin/ Operations	ICO — Move application back from next FY to current FY ("advance"); Council data normalized for AHRQ	New Item. Left over from IMPAC I shut down. Needed for August.
Peer Review	Summary Statements—replace FTP with secure method	New item. Security concern.
eRequest System	No Cost Extensions	Recommend deferring. Want to define single architecture that can be used across multiple modules. Three methods under evaluation. Given March release priority, there is not enough bandwidth for the Architecture team to finish the evaluation before requirements deadline.
Subprojects	Accommodate foreign component	Further analysis needed.
	Implement policy that ICs must enter subprojects	Everything is now in place (no more development in this module needed, link from GM to Subprojects in GM module for July). Work flow/policy/training issue.

Module	New Item/Status Change	Comment
J2EE Base System; Status	Combine FSR/eSNAP/Status within Single Search/Results	New item.
	Redesign Create Account	New item.
	Provide update access to LDAP for NIH eRA Commons NCAA role to troubleshoot user account issues	New item.

Jim reminded the team that this is a "wish list" and that cost and resource analysis may bring about further prioritization and changes. The Project Team will be informed as changes occur.

Although not a priority for the July Release, JJ asked the Project Team to start thinking about Council Operations and whether there are enough generic tasks in this area to become a separate function. JJ envisioned a blend of Grants, Program, and Budget modules. Many ICs have automated extension systems. If those systems could be reviewed and leveraged into a common module, then ICs would no longer have to maintain their own systems and ICs without automated extension systems could take advantage of the new system. Although the function would be targeted for 2004, the requirements definition process should begin now. Comments and suggestions in this area should be sent to JJ. JJ re-emphasized that the Project Team must continue to look for opportunities to combine systems and reduce duplication.

Need for April/May Non-Functional Deployment

Steve Hughes

Steve Hughes provided a status on Architecture changes scheduled to coincide with the March application release. Some of the new technology aimed at improving scalability and performance issues is running behind schedule and will not be part of the March Release.

Included in March Release	Not included with March Release
❑ NIH eRA Commons and IMPAC II Production database instances merge ❑ Oracle 9*i* database migration ❑ Oracle 9*i*AS upgrade	❑ Load Balancing for external applications ❑ ORAC (Oracle Real Application Clusters) ❑ 9*i*QS Infrastructure on separate servers ❑ HTTPS Acceleration ❑ Internal applications were not deployed in a single container configuration

Steve explained that several factors have contributed to the schedule slip, including:

- ❑ Load Balancing hardware did not arrive in time for CIT to deploy with confidence
- ❑ ORAC deployment did not go smoothly in development
- ❑ Combination of internal applications proved too risky for March deployment
- ❑ Integration testing platform in development not suitable for adequate testing of deployment integration

The Architecture team would like to achieve as much of the recommended target architecture originally proposed for March by May. This would mean a platform-only deployment in the April/May timeframe. The team feels the changes are crucial to accommodate the expected increase in external usage and offset potential performance issues associated with merging NIH eRA Commons and IMPAC II production databases. The team would also like to baseline the architecture on all platforms (development, test, stage, and production) to create a consistent environment for the July release.

Steve and Jim Cain explained to the Project Team that this platform deployment is the hard one. Their team needs to work through the learning curve of the new technology and debug all configuration parameters. However, once in place, the configuration will be scalable and adding additional devices as load increases will be a much easier, perhaps even boring, task.

Steve and the Project Team discussed ways to "slow down" NIH eRA Commons registration for the 4–5 weeks necessary to complete the architecture plan. Currently 4-5 new registrations are approved each day. The team has the ability to turnaround the requests more slowly.

Disaster Recovery Plan

Jim Cain

Jim Cain introduced the topic of Disaster Recovery to the team. Disaster Recovery is defined as the replication of mission-critical data elsewhere to ensure data and application survivability. In the event of a large-scale outage or disaster crisis, the replicated data would become available in approximately 36 hours. Included in this timeframe is a 24-hour window in which CIT must evaluate recovery options and determine if a disaster declaration is necessary. Once a disaster is declared, off-site recovery plans of mission critical systems are set in motion. In the event of a disaster, less critical systems could be down for up to 6 weeks.

Jim noted that robust disaster recovery plans come with a high price tag. It is not cost effective to recover 100 percent of all eRA systems, nor is it cost effective to do nothing. Therefore, requirements must be prioritized. Jim requested that the Project Team start thinking about what modules should be given the highest recovery priority and which modules could be replaced with manual workarounds until full processing capability is restored.

Grants Management Training Activities

Mike Loewe

Mike Loewe informed the team about current Grants Management training activities that could be used as a best practice. To provide better training for staff, hands-on sessions are being held at the CIT facilities in the Fernwood Building. On March 14, sessions on the Grants Closeout Module will be held and on March 21, Tips & Tricks sessions will be held. The sessions are filling up fast. More hands-on training is needed.

Patty Austin thanked everyone who has helped with training over the past year and encouraged more people to get involved. As the eRA systems become more complex and new functionality is introduced, the need for in-depth, hands-on training only grows.

Attendees

Austin, Patricia (OER/COB)   Bradley, Eileen (CSR)   Caban, Carlos (OER)

Cain, Jim (OER)
Collie, Krishna (RN Solutions)
Copeland Sewell, Zoe-Ann (OD/OER)
Cox, Michael (OER)
Cummins, Sheri (LTS/COB)
Erickson, Bud (NCI)
Fitzgerald, Steve (RN Solutions)
Gibb, Scarlett (OER/COB)
Goodman, Mike (OD/OER)

Hahn, Marcia (OER/OPERA)
Hall, Dan (Z-Tech)
Hughes, Stephen (NCI)
Liberman, Ellen (NEI)
Loewe, Michael (NINDS)
Martin, Carol (NHGRI)
McGowan, JJ (NIAID)
Morris, Richard (NIAID)
Morton, Larry (OER)
Patel, Kalpesh (Ekagra)
Pearson, Johnnie (Z-Tech)

Sachar, Brad (Oracle)
Seppala, Sandy (LTS/COB)
Silver, Sara (Z-Tech)
Snouffer, Anna (OD/OFACP)
Soto, Tracy (DEIS)
Spitzberg, Bobbi (OER)
Stone, George (OER/OPERA)
Tucker, Jim (OER)
Wilson, Mike (NGIT)
Wright, David (OPERA)
Zucker, Sherry (DEIS)