



## Workgroup on Extramural Training Systems (WETS)

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**Date:** March 11, 2004  
**Time:** 10:00 a.m.–Noon  
**Location:** Rockledge 2, Room 9112/9116  
**Advocates:** Barbara Huffman, Rick Ikeda, (Dr. Walter Schaffer)  
**Next Meeting:** April 8, 2004, 10 a.m.–Noon, TBA

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### Action Items

1. (Analysts) Provide scope of work plan for 6 months and beyond.
2. (All involved in trainee appointments and termination notices) Review the SOP's, and send comments to the steering committees.
3. (Walter Goldschmidts) Look further into the matter of the electronic signatures and interpret how this can be handled.

### General Announcements

Rick Ikeda welcomed the group back after a 9 month break and introduced:

- Inna Faenson—Task Order Manager
- Linda Katzburgh—Business Analyst
- David Marcus—Requirements Analyst

### X-Train

Inna reported that X-Train will be included in the Commons Expansion task order. There are four iterations in the task order and X-Train will be mapped in the second, third, and fourth iterations.

Rick noted that when X-Train is back online, some things will be done electronically and some will be on paper. He raised a question; is it worth scanning the hard-copy documents into a database on the IMPAC II system? Marie responded that if the individual is in a payback situation it would help to be able to have access to the information.

Walter inquired if there were any other X-Train concerns that can be addressed in the upcoming iterations. It was noted that terminations were only going to be allowed for pre docs. He also asked how are the pre docs going to be handled on the electronic appointments and if they would still require a signature. Pre docs that were awarded after 1993 do not incur any payback obligations, therefore it would never be involved with the legalities of an original signature.

Walter asked what would be in production for X-Train in 6 months. What are the issues that need to be resolved (i.e., electronic signatures)? The external portion of entering trainees is being worked on and should be put into production in six months or less. The first six months X-Train will be back online with some minor adjustments—clarifications to make it more user friendly.

Walter asked the analysts to provide a scope of work plan for six months and beyond. This would include a summary of the components of X-Train, which is to address:

- Are other things needed to be worked on before the six months?
- How can we prevent re-inventing the wheel?
- Can the group get the URL for the demo site that shows the bigger picture of the functionalities, problems, changes being proposed, etc.?

**Action: (Analysts) Provide scope of work plan for 6 months and beyond.**

## **Standard Operations Procedure (SOP)**

Standard Operations Procedure (SOP) is on the table for change. A memo was circulated via email stating that documents (i.e., Appointments, Termination Notices, and Payback Agreements) will be faxed to a central location and then, from this central location, these documents will be faxed to the proper recipient. The concern is that because of the volume of trainees, faxing that much paper could result in documents getting lost, which could cause an award not to be processed or delayed.

- **Example:** At the end of the fiscal year, an award may be issued but a restriction, stating no monies can be spent, will be put on the award because all of the paperwork was not processed.

There was much discussion on this matter. There is a steering committee for monitoring these procedures (Program Committee, Review Committee, and Grants Management Committee). It was recommended comments on these proposed changes be routed through the WETS members' ICs to the steering committee.

**Action: (All involved in trainee appointments and termination notices) Review the SOPs, and send comments to the steering committee.**

## **Electronic Signatures**

Rick inquired if electronic signatures needed for payback are acceptable for legal matters? It was reported that at a previous meeting with Wally Schaffer, it was announced that the electronic signatures are not acceptable. Therefore hardcopy signatures will still have to be used.

The electronic signature becomes a payback needs to be collected from a former trainee. If payback documents do not have an original signature, the Justice will not proceed with collection of the payback. Walter added that it could be that faxing presents a hard copy of the electronic signature and would be acceptable for legal matters.

Electronic signatures are a major issue because trainees are individually responsible of repaying the NIH, not the institutions or universities. Therefore, unless there is a valid signature on the documents, NIH cannot submit a termination notice. This was the reason why X-Train was stopped in its tracks a year ago.

Rick acknowledged that mailing the documents to the proper office is probably the most proficient. He also made note that once X-Train is back in operation, a policy decision is going to have to be made in reference to the acceptance of the electronic signature. He asked Walter to

look into the matter for further interpretation on how this situation should be handled because it is necessary to totally utilize the electronic system. Walter said he would talk to Marie and Wally.

**Action: (Walter Goldschmidts) Look further into the matter of the electronic signatures and interpret how this can be handled.**

Rick offered a solution to the electronic signature problem. He suggested that each trainee have a Commons account. The trainee would use the account to state that they are being sponsored on the NIH grant, and that they are responsible for the payback and termination. This will give the trainee control of their own profile, they will acknowledge they received a grant from the NIH and submitted a payback agreement. Walter endorsed this concept. Even though the universities have voiced resistance to trainees having their own profiles, Walter pointed out some reasons why the trainees should be involved in their profile.

- NIH is investing in these students with hopes of them transitioning into post doc to become an independent investigator.
- Allow the student to input their information because it is likely that the information will be correct.
- Allow the students to know what type of support they are receiving. If it is a trainee grant the years of eligibility for a pre doc or fellowship decreases.

This gives control and responsibility back to the individual and not the university.

## **Attendees**

Dean Maxwell, Tammy (OD)	Kupfun, Linda (FIC)	Stecklein, Linda (OD)
Faenson, Inna (OER)	Marcus, David (IBM)	Stone, Sara (NIDCD)
Goldschmidts, Walter (OD)	Mohale, Archana (FIC)	Vann, Cecelia (OD)
Ikeda, Richard (NIGMS)	Sirkis, Elaine (NCI)	Willett, Marie (OER/OD)
Katzpen, Linda (OER)	Sprick, Carin (DEIS)	