NIH Action Items for NIH Competitive Application Reengineering and Other Issues

1. **NIH will research how NIH staff use the following items on Form Page 1: IPF Number (item 9), EIN (item 11), and Congressional District (item 11).**

IPF—used to identify the submitting institution. Only if the institution has submitted previously and has a profile set up. In an electronic process an IPF will need to be required even though it is not in the paper process.

EIN—Should be part of the IPF. Possibly as part of the org. hierarchy.

Cong. Dist.—This information is mainly used in generating reports. The Quality Assurance branch fills in the ones that are missing and verifies most of the others that are submitted. Does not make sense that this item is on the form if this work is being done anyway. Should be able to use a zip code to congressional district converter (see http://www.house.gov/zip/ZIP2Rep.html).

2. **NIH will define Application and Performance addresses and determine how they are used.**

3. **NIH will analyze whether the Abstract (Form Page 2) is used for Review/Referral, for laypersons, or for multiple purposes. The analysis will determine whether symbols and rich text should be supported in the Abstract.**

GM—Very little use
CRISP—All abstracts for funded projects are posted on the web through CRISP. They are in ASCII format only and the indexer does cannot use rich text.
CSR—The reviewers make minimal use of the abstract, but referral uses it as the first tool to try to decide where an application should be reviewed. They would prefer the use of rich text to make the reading easier. Approximately 20% of all applications received use rich text in the abstract portion. Link with summary statement, SS can print rich text.

4. **NIH will research the use of box 12, i.e., whether contact information is needed for grant negotiations and other purposes as well as for award notification.**

Box 12 is needed for both negotiations and awards. It is the first place the GMO will contact for information. Box 9 is irrelevant in a stream because it is used only for new institutions to populate the IPF. Signature in Box 15 (SO) should go away and be replaced by an added assurance in the IPF. Signature in Box 14 (PI) might go away if assurance is placed in PPF. Still checking on legal ramifications.

5. **Steve will email Jerry details of how the Key Personnel element (Form Page 2) could be changed to reduce the burden on the data stream.**

Email received; need to do more analysis.

6. **NIH will research how to calculate % Effort on Project (Form Page 4) and explain how Review uses this information.**

Percent effort should be calculated based on the average amount of effort on the project over a year. 50% during the academic year and 100% over the summer is 63% (62.5%) total effort or 100% during the academic year and 0% over the summer is 75%.

It is used to establish baselines and expectations and to see if effort is reflective of goals and scope. We looked to is if this might be JIT info—CSR doesn't believe so citing that it only buy a couple of months at best while the application is going through referral.
CSR doesn't mind simplifying the percent effort area. One possibility might be to move this information into the budget justification and not listing it on the form.

7. **NIH will present user and functional groups with two options for streamlining % Effort on Project (Form Page 4). NIH will present the annualized and modular approaches to user and functional groups for comment.**

8. **NIH will research how the Program, Grants Management, and Review business areas and Congress use itemized budget information from the Equipment, Supplies, and Other Expenses fields (Form Page 4). NIH will determine the level of detail required for each category and which fields are processed as data and which as text.**

Assess liability of cost
Assess reasonable cost for scope of work
Review only needs bottom line for each category. If a category might be viewed as out of line, then an explanation should be entered in the budget justification.

9. **NIH will map EDI budget categories to those on the 398.**

10. **NIH will research how Review uses Other Support information.**

Reviewers want to see this information to assess experience and expertise. Also, both program and reviewers use this information to assess the potential for scientific and budgetary overlap. CSR is open to streamlining this in someway; they see the redundancy of effort between related support on the biosketch and other the support information.

11. **NIH will confirm that PDF will be the standard for data stream submission of application materials.**

PDF will be ultimate standard for submitted items. In first iterations only PDF will be submitted. After successful piloting of data stream transmission and of a conversion service, other file types may be allowed as part of upload.

12. **NIH will confirm the 25-page limit for sections A-D to be submitted as one TS102 for EDI submissions; sections E-J to be submitted as a separate TS102. Also, for XML, any similar formatting to allow for receipt of PDF would suffice.**

Sections A-D must be in separate file to check for page limit and other formatting issues. Options for the rest of the project plan include:

- one file for the rest of the sections
- one file for sections E & F and one file for the rest
- one file for sections E & F, one file for section G and one file for the rest.

13. **NIH will research the means to provide conversion service to render PDF from either MS Word or WordPerfect. This service would include the ability for the P.I. to preview prior to final submission.**

NIH is currently providing a conversion service for the eSnap module and the newly released IAR module. Only text and MS Word documents for versions 97 & 2000 are supported.

NIH would like to expand this service to convert more file formats and is looking into 2 possibilities to do so. The first is to host the hardware and software that will do the processing in house and the other is to contract with a conversion provider, possibly NSF, to do the conversions. PI preview of the converted file prior to submission will be difficult using a data stream. There might be a possibility of providing a validation service where the PI can upload a document, have it converted and then view online before including the document in the data stream.

14. **NIH will confirm that during a paper/electronic transition period, a warning message rather than rejection of the application on account of a research plan page length violation will be in effect.**

When electronic submissions are accepted and a submission does not meet the guidelines for formatting, the person submitting will receive a warning letting them know that there is a problem and that they need to correct it in a timely manner (4 days). The application will not be summarily rejected at time of original submission. This may not work in the future when the review cycles are compressed and the receipt dates have been adapted to the shorter time frames. Also the rules for validating the format of the research plan will need to be fleshed out and documented before any such submission can occur. CSR would like to have some sort of conversion validator that would allow the PI, before the actual submission, to see the research plan as NIH will see it after submission and conversion.

15. **NIH will research an algorithm to check font size conformance within the research plan portion of the application.**

NSF uses a product called Pitstop from Enfocus to extract document properties from their PDF files. There are other tools available that will allow PDF document properties to be searched. NIH will need to test these applications to see what we can actually test for and then design the algorithm around the formatting guidelines and the capabilities of the application.

16. **NIH will research the means by which appendices can be submitted electronically in PDF with the application or after assignment.**

Don't see an effective way to submit appendices in the stream. After assignment the appendices could be uploaded through Status.
Due to differences in the rendering of graphics and color, it will be necessary make sure that the interpretation of the appendices will not suffer (ie color). CSR would prefer one large file rather than several smaller files for ease of administration and that the submission go directly to the SRA. We will need to determine the best way to distribute this information to the reviewers. Electronic submission will also give us the ability to make sure that all appropriate parties receive the information (i.e., the program official for the official grant folder). There will be a need for the PI to receive notification when the assignment is made and when the supplemental material is due. There might be problems encountered if the SRA is not assigned in a timely manner. It is also recognized that there will be a need for the foreseeable future to allow mailed submission of appendices as well.

17. NIH will confirm that paper-based appendices to be submitted directly to the SRA after assignment.

It was confirmed that the PI will be able to mail the appendices directly to the SRA once the assignment has been made. The same issues apply here in relation to timely assignment and submission of material as apply to the electronic submission of the appendices.

18. NIH will confirm feasibility of applicants use of format of their choosing rendered in PDF for submission of biosketch information.

Do we have to conform to this format? Format vs Content?

How to best represent citations in the stream or accept them as JIT. How to associate citations from either NIH PPF or institutional profile system. If associating citations, how to measure page length.

Alternatives to investigate:
Provide utility to download selected citations in proper format in PDF from PPF
JIT upload through Status
JIT upload through stream
JIT association from PPF

CSR said that format should be followed as to where the information is presented in the abstract, but that within each section the format does not matter with the exception of the page length & font size guidelines. The key being that the correct content is included and in the proper order.