eRA Project Team Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, February 24, 2004
Time: 9:00–10:20 a.m.
Location: Rockledge 1, 5th floor conference room
Chair: Israel Lederhendler

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

Action Items

1. (Scarlett Gibb) Review upcoming outreach opportunities and develop a plan to integrate CGAP updates.

2. (Marcia Hahn) Brief Izja on the details of the Research & Related dataset.

3. (Tim Twomey, Jim Cain) Investigate the possibility of adding temporary resources to the Helpdesk staff to assist with IAR account creation approvals and support services.

4. (Jim Tucker) Provide Scarlett Gibb with a report of duplicate profiles to help identify individuals that may need additional training.

Attachments

❑ Program Update (Carlos Caban, Janna Wehrle):
http://era.nih.gov/docs/Project_Team_PGM_status.pdf

❑ Grants Management Update (Mike Loewe):
http://era.nih.gov/docs/ProjectTeam_GM_status.pdf

Remarks and Project Discussion

Israel (Izja) Lederhendler

Introductions

Izja introduced Teresa Kinley, OPDIV Representative for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Teresa normally joins the Project Team meetings via teleconference, but was able to leverage business travel in the area to attend this meeting in person.

Advocate/OPDIV Representative Only Meeting

Izja reminded the team that he would like to hold the first Advocate/OPDIV Representative-Only meeting after the next Project Team meeting (March 9). The purpose of these meetings is to share ideas, discuss the implications of doing or not doing certain tasks, and to rejuvenate interest and enthusiasm within the team. He indicated that he would like to focus on communication between business area advocates first and then bring in technical advocates in solution-oriented discussions later.

Pioneer Award

Izja explained to the team that eRA has an important opportunity with Grants.gov to assist in the successful processing of Pioneer Awards. Pioneer Awards are a high-profile roadmap initiative. These fast-track grants will not follow the same process as other grants. A subset of nominations for the awards will be reviewed, selected, and invited to apply. The applications for these awards are to be electronic, simple, and have a different look and feel from the typical 398 application. Current ideas involve a process where Grants.gov will be used to accept the applications via the widely-used federal 424 form. A data stream will be needed to get the data from Grants.gov into the eRA database. To date, the focus of the eRA team has been on the exchange of 398 data with Grants.gov. In order to meet tight deadlines for the processing of Pioneer Awards, the eRA team will need to assess some resources from planned activities. It is unclear at this time the impact this initiative will have on eRA commitments.

Izja encouraged the team to think about how the work done on the Pioneer Award initiative could be leveraged to add value to other activities currently within the eRA scope. Suggestions in this area should be sent to Scarlett Gibb, Jim Cain, and Israel Lederhendler.

OPDIV Integration

Izja reported that the Department is looking at possibly providing funds to NIH and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) for OPDIV migration activities to eRA and GATES. Teresa Kinley commented that OPDIVs are struggling with migration costs and the new funds will not help the OPDIVs directly. Jim Cain responded that eRA has been putting together a package for a one-time tap of OPDIVs for migration activities. The Department funds might help offset some of the costs included in the package.

Knowledge Management

Izja reported that Dr. Morris gave an excellent presentation to Dr. Zerhouni and his Steering Committee on the potential application of the Collexis knowledge management system for disease coding. This presentation helped to justify funds graciously provided through innovation funds from the CIO. The majority of the funds have been used to acquire the Collexis license. The remaining funds are committed to the immediate development of pilot data by September 2004. This will help the Steering Committee decide on a future strategy for NIH disease coding.

CGAP Status

Jennifer Flach

Jennifer, in her role as an eRA Task Order Manager, provided a status of CGAP. Several weeks ago the eRA team was faced with a go/no-go decision on whether the CGAP application would be ready for its second pilot. The team framed the potential risks, including the unknowns associated with a transitioning development team. In order to maintain momentum on the project, Jim Cain made the decision to proceed with the pilot but to carefully control the scope of participation. Each of the six Service Providers was invited to submit a single application. Two declined to participate. Two Type 2 applications with complex data came into CGAP on Monday (2/23) and two more are expected by next week. The AC Technologies development team, working under the Maintenance Task Order, has done a great job and has quickly addressed critical issues.

Despite the limited scope of the pilot, Jennifer reported that both the eRA team and the Service Providers continue to learn and build expertise necessary to achieve future milestones. In June,

the team hopes to expand the pilot to include more complicated submissions including ties to Grants.gov and revisions. In order to move CGAP into its next phase, a new Task Order was sent to the Contracting Officer last week. The Task Order covers the build-out of CGAP through next year.

The CGAP team also is pulling together a start-up package to assist other institutions and companies in becoming there own service providers. Some companies, such as Oracle, have already joined the weekly Service Provider conference call.

Jennifer emphasized the importance of setting clear expectations of what CGAP can and can not do at each phase of its development. The team is targeting first quarter of 2005 for production acceptance of RO1 applications with modular budgets. This significant milestone will represent the ability to electronically accept nearly two-thirds of all NIH grants.

The Project Team expressed the need to keep OPDIV Representatives and Advocates in the loop. They are an important link to the needs of the user community and can offer a perspective that can lead to greater overall success.

Izja asked Scarlett Gibb to spearhead a comprehensive outreach effort for eRA, highlighting the successes and milestones of CGAP. Although a CGAP *press campaign* is premature, planning can begin immediately. Scarlett explained that eRA uses many communication vehicles including:

- ❑ Presentations at FDP, NCURA, regional meeting
- ❑ Newsletters
- ❑ Website
- ❑ User Groups

She indicated that the team is often invited to attend meetings, but only a subset can be accepted due to limited availability of resources.

Action: **(Scarlett Gibb) Review upcoming outreach opportunities and develop a plan to integrate CGAP updates.**

Marcia Hahn warned the team that political pressure is growing for the Research & Related (R&R) dataset. The dataset was pulled together by research agencies and includes the 424 core, common research elements and a mechanism to add agency specific elements.

Action: **(Marcia Hahn) Brief Izja on the details of the Research & Related dataset.**

Advocate Updates

Grants Management

Mike Loewe

Mike reviewed the key discussion points contained in the attached handout. He explained that Grants Managers are constant users of eRA systems, including: Grant Closeout Module (GCM), Grants Management (GM) Module, Institute/Center Operations (ICO) and Training Activities (TA).

Additional discussion points:

- ❏ Many of the 30 potential changes/enhancements can be leveraged across eRA.

- ❏ Good teaming between business areas is occurring. The OPDIV representatives asked to be kept in the loop and brought in on some of the planning meetings.

- ❏ Grantee submission of Final Progress Report and Final Inventions Statement via the NIH eRA Commons is an exciting opportunity to get away from paper processing. The current process has numerous manual failure points.

- ❏ Skip Moyer suggested that eRA solutions remain flexible to allow for process variation of OPDIVs.

- ❏ National Research Service Award (NRSA) business modeling is scheduled for this year.

- ❏ Need to bring Program and Budget business areas into GM redesign discussions.

Review

Eileen Bradley

Eileen stated that she would like to focus her discussion on Internet Assisted Review (IAR). IAR was added to the Review module last August. IAR is a web-based tool that tracks assignments of Applications and allows reviewers to come in through NIH eRA Commons and post reviews. Eileen praised the IAR team and pointed out the extraordinary effort put forth by Tracy Soto.

IAR Statistics:

- ❏ 7,000 NIH eRA Commons users with IAR

- ❏ IAR usage has doubled in 2 months

- ❏ 40,000 reviews have been posted

- ❏ 15,000 preliminary summary statements

- ❏ 600 meetings

Eileen explained that although reviewers love the tool, ramping IAR has been a slow process saddled with the reconciliation of IMPAC II profiles. Many of the reviewers are new to NIH eRA Commons. Eileen explained that the reviewers are under a lot of pressure to submit their reviews within a tight schedule and the account set-up delays have led to heightened frustration.

The program is suffering from its own success. The Helpdesk call volume has more than doubled. The fact that reviewers often work nights and weekends (when the Helpdesk is typically not staffed) exacerbates the issue and puts the Helpdesk in a perpetual state of catch-up. Tim Twomey, the Systems Management & Support Branch Chief, stated that average turn-around times for account approvals are still 3-5 days, but that about 10% take weeks and sometimes months. Jim Tucker added that his Quality Assurance team is working through the duplicate profile issue with IAR users as their top priority. His team is looking at automation tools that may help to address up to 50% of the current duplicates. The tool is being tested and, if successful, will be rolled out mid-March.

Although encouraged by the progress made to date and the use of automation, Eileen emphasized an immediate need to get the Helpdesk additional resources. She is trying to help SRAs become as self-sufficient and independent as possible in anticipation of Most Efficient Organization (MEO) staff changes in April.

Action: **(Tim Twomey, Jim Cain) Investigate the possibility of adding temporary resources to the Helpdesk staff to assist with IAR account creation approvals and support services.**

Jim Tucker mentioned that some additional training also may be in order to help address the root cause of the duplicate profiles. Jim is able to produce a report of duplicate profiles to help identify individuals that have created duplicates.

Action: **(Jim Tucker) Provide Scarlett Gibb with a report of duplicate profiles to help identify individuals that may need additional training.**

Eileen mentioned that as part of the IAR process MS Word documents are uploaded to the system, manipulated, and distributed. Recently a virus infected about 2,000 of the 100,000 files. Consequently, the eRA team is looking at short and long time solutions to address corruption concerns. The Operations team is currently performing periodic virus scans of the files.

Eileen reported that a Review redesign is underway. She hopes that the Knowledge Management tools that have been demonstrated at prior meetings will be incorporated into the new process.

Scientific Program Management

Carlos Caban, Janna Wehrle

Carlos and Janna reviewed the attached slides which describe the history, portfolio, features, training and needs of the Program module (PGM).

Additional discussion points:

❑ Some institutions are reluctant to use PGM until virtual organizations are fully implemented.

❑ Organizational Layers allow flexibility to assign individuals to a particular topic area. The hierarchical approach limits the scope of an individual.

❑ The separate roles for Program Official (signoff) verses Program Assistant (read) and the "Other Portfolio" feature may be leveraged for MEO.

❑ Customizable Type 5 Checklist is a good success story. The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) and National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) are big users of the customizable checklists. Carlos and Janna are getting feedback from users on what is needed to increase usage. One improvement area already identified is the need for clearer pilot instructions.

Open Discussion and Announcements

❑ Izja would like to review the eRA 2004 priorities at a future Project Team meeting. The introduction of new initiatives may lead to priority adjustments.

❑ Izja asked the team if they felt the advocate report format of the meeting was helpful. The team agreed that is important to provide a forum for the sharing of activities and ideas among the different business areas. New members of the team felt it was very informative and helped to provide needed background on current activities.

❑ Izja posed the question: If KM tools are used to reduce cycle time with Review, what is the implication to the overall mission of advancing health research? The team discussed

that Review is one link in the chain and that there would be more pressure placed on reducing end-to-end cycle time. The majority of commitments are made in the last few months of the year. More efficient processing early in the cycle could help distribute workload and commitments throughout the year and increase quality of individual application reviews.

Attendees

Armistead, Allyson (LTS/COB)

Bradley, Eileen (CSR)

Burns, Amy (LTS/COB)

Caban, Carlos (OER)

Cain, Jim (OER)

Chicchirichi, David (OER)

Collie, Krishna (RNSolutions)

Cummins, Sheri (LTS/COB)

Dutcher, Sylvia (Mitretek)

Flach, Jennifer (OD)

Fox, Daniel (IBM/Z-Tech)

Frahm, Donna (OER)

Gibb, Scarlett (COB)

Goodman, Mike (OD)

Hahn, Marcia (OER/OPERA)

Hausman, Steve (NIAMS)

Hughes, Stephen (OD)

Kinley, Teresa (CDC)

Lederhendler, Israel (NIMH)

Loewe, Michael (NINDS)

Lynch, Peggy (IBM)

Martin, Carol (NHGRI)

Maurer, JJ (Ekagra)

Morris, Richard (NIAID)

Morton, Larry (OER)

Moyer, Skip (AHRQ)

Patel, Kalpesh (Ekagra)

Petrosian, Arthur (CSR)

Porter, Yvette (OD)

Ratnanather, Chanath (Z-Tech)

Sachar, Brad (Oracle)

Salata, Kalman (CSR)

Schaffer, Wally (OER)

Seppala, Sandy (LTS/COB)

Silver, Sara (Z-Tech)

Silverman, Jay (NGIT)

Simms, Sophonia (OD)

Soto, Tracy (OD)

Tatham, Thomas (CSR)

Taylor, Jean (SAIC)

Thomson, Alastair (Blueprint Technologies)

Tipparaju, Suryarao (ACT)

Tucker, Jim (OER)

Twomey, Tim (OD)

Williamson, Pamela (Perot)

Zucker, Sherry (DEIS)