eRA Project Team Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, August 12, 2003
Time: 9:00–11:00 a.m.
Location: 6700 B Rockledge, Room 1205
Chair: JJ McGowan

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

Note: The meeting scheduled for August 26 has been cancelled.

Action Items

1. (Scarlett Gibb, Amy Burns) Distribute retreat material at least 2 weeks prior to the retreat to allow enough time for participants to review the information and prepare for the meeting.

2. (All) Email Amy Burns Burnsa1@mail.nih.gov with a copy to JJ McGowan JMcGowan@niaid.nih.gov with thoughts on initiatives and ideas for retreat topics or if you would like to volunteer.

3. (JJ McGowan) Assign advocate for new IC Admin module.

Attachments

❑ Performance Measurement: Earned Value (Donna Frahm): http://era.nih.gov/Docs/Performance_Measurement.pdf

❑ eRA Organizational Layers & Delegation (Chanath Ratnanather): http://era.nih.gov/Docs/OrgLayers3.pdf

Project Report

JJ McGowan

HHS will issue an official memo stating that eRA will be the department-wide system for research-grant administration.

HHS will consolidate all eGovernment grant initiatives into one OMB 300 with the exception of eRA and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). This step sends other OPDIVs a clear message and will help force OPDIV migration to the two systems.

Priority Setting

JJ McGowan

JJ encouraged the team to step back from their individual areas and think about the eRA project as a complete enterprise system. eRA is receiving requests and requirements from numerous sources: individual users, user groups, ICs, OPDIVs, boards, management, analysts, advocates, and even legal mandates. There is simply not enough funding or resources to implement

everything. Therefore, it is more important than ever to set priorities and concentrate on the initiatives and requirements that will deliver the best return on investment.

JJ listed several initiatives and challenged the team to think about how they would fit into project priorities:

- ❑ Council-generation module

- ❑ Document-management system

- ❑ Knowledge-management tools (what can be done now and in the future)

JJ would like to package workload into four categories:

1. What's new?—Big hitters, redesign of business practices.
   E.g., IAR, Program

2. What's required?—Policy, law
   E.g., Security/password policy

3. J2EE migration activities

4. Maintenance

Thinking of the eRA project tasks in these categories provides a complete and consistent view of what the team has on its plate. JJ commented on the importance of communicating all the activities in progress so that individual communities have a better understanding of project goals and priorities.

JJ will meet with Dr. Zerhouni next month and will have a better understanding of what is important to him following that meeting. However, it is clear that co-PI designation and key personnel are likely to top the list.

JJ engaged the project team in an open discussion. Discussion points:

- ❑ How will OPDIV migration fit into project priorities?

  - − OPDIVs have been asking for a scientific initiative management system and a central budget dashboard.

  - − JJ directed the team to look at each OPDIV as no more (or less) than a single IC. OPDIVs must use the same request/feedback channels as other ICs (functional groups, project team, steering committee, advocates, etc.).

- ❑ Impact should be a key consideration when setting priority; "biggest bang for the buck."

- ❑ Business changes will affect priorities (e.g., RUP, new task-oriented contracts, move to 1–2 big releases per year with smaller maintenance releases throughout cycle).

- ❑ Need to understand how different groups view *success* (e.g., use of cutting-edge technology, ability to do daily tasks with solid tools).

- ❑ Need to have global picture within project team and an understanding of global and area-specific initiatives.

- Suggestion: Cycle through advocates at project team to provide future directions and updates; advocates need to provide each other with concise updates that easily can be communicated (updates can also be communicated through the newsletters).

❑ Common infrastructures are not fully understood; there needs to be more cross-cutting issue discussion.

❑ Need more in-depth discussion on policy issues at project team meetings so that there is a better understanding of how the policy was reached and advocates are equipped to discuss the reasons within their communities.

❑ The consolidation of the department will affect eRA; efficiency should not be only consideration.

❑ Must consider road-blocks to community "buy-in" to eRA (e.g., need annotation feature, document management system).

- Buy-in can be top-down (policy, mandate), bottom-up (make a tool that works and spread the word), or a combination of both.

eRA Project Team Retreat

Scarlett Gibb

The eRA Project Team Retreat—theme: *Resetting the Vision*—will take place October 9–10, 2003, at the Harbourtowne Golf Resort & Conference Center in St. Michaels, MD.

The agenda is pending approval and will be posted on the eRA website shortly.

Action: **(Scarlett Gibb, Amy Burns) Distribute retreat material at least two weeks prior to the retreat to allow enough time for participants to review the information and prepare for the meeting.**

Action: **(All) Email Amy Burns** Burnsa1@mail.nih.gov **with a copy to JJ McGowan** JMcGowan@niaid.nih.gov **with thoughts on initiatives and ideas for retreat topics or if you would like to volunteer.**

Performance Measurement: Earned Value

Donna Frahm

OMB (Circular A-11, Part 7) states "Agencies must use a performance-based acquisition management system, based on ANSI/EIA Standard 748, to measure achievement of the cost, schedule, and performance goals." eRA will utilize Earned Value Analysis (EVA) to meet this requirement.

EVA compares the planned amount of work with what has actually been completed, to determine if cost, schedule, and work accomplished are progressing as planned. With EVA, work is "earned' as it is completed. Further detail on EVA can be found in the attached presentation, *Performance Measurement: Earned Value*.

Donna explained that EVA is a good fit for the eRA project because it will allow the team to quantify success and obtain early warnings of cost and schedule issues via temperature gauges throughout the cycle.

With the new task-order structure for contracts, contractors will be required to submit detailed project plans. Donna's Project Management Office (PMO) will validate the plan and assess accuracy of the plan (data collected for the project over the past several years will be used as a gauge for time estimates). The PMO will monitor progress against the plan. At any point in time, the PMO will be able to calculate cost and schedule variance. In addition to the calculations, the PMO will provide an interpretation of the results. For instance, the calculation may indicate the project is over budget for the percentage of work completed, but it may be expected to have an increased expenditure upfront based on the type of work being done.

eRA Organizational Layers and Delegation

Chanath Ratnanather

Many groups in the eRA user community have requested the ability to enforce a user hierarchy within the eRA system. The current design provides little control over what supervisory users within a particular role can see and do. Providing a mechanism to define organizational structure within eRA systems has many benefits including:

- ❑ Supervisory oversight
- ❑ Security
- ❑ Delegation of authority
- ❑ Directing of workflow activities

Details of the proposed solution can be found in the attached presentation, *eRA Organizational Layers & Delegation*.

Discussion points:

- ❑ Team sees potential in the solution and endorses the development of a global solution.
    - − Implement in Program, then learn, tweak, and roll to other candidate modules (eRA Commons, Review).
    - − Some larger institutions do not want to use eRA systems without this functionality. This could be an excellent opportunity to win over reluctant users.
    - − OPDIVs have expressed a need for this functionality.
- ❑ Who will administer (create/maintain) the layers?
    - − The team felt that the administrator would be designated on a case-by-case basis since the structure of each organization is drastically different.
- ❑ Could users be assigned across organizations?
    - − The team felt that the ability to be assigned across organizations is critical.
    - − If administration is left to each organization and a user can be assigned across organizations there are potential maintenance issues that would need to be worked out.
- ❑ Data maintenance functions left in ICO would eventually be moved to the IC Admin module.

- ICs need training on total picture.
- ❑ The design should allow for the greatest flexibility (avoid redesign when policy changes).
  - Should lay policy structure over flexible design; do not design to current policy.
- ❑ Need advocate
  - Chip Groh was proposed as a good fit for this role

Action: **(JJ McGowan) Assign advocate for new IC Admin module.**

- ❑ Potential to leverage hierarchy with eNotification

JJ closed the discussion with his endorsement and added that bringing this functionality into eRA will help ICs migrate from independent extension systems.

Attendees

Bradley, Eileen (CSR)

Burns, Amy (LTS/COB)

Caban, Carlos (OER)

Chicchirichi, Dave (OD)

Collie, Krishna (RN Solutions)

Cobert, Penny (OD)

Copeland, Zoe-Ann (OD/OER)

Cox, Michael (OER)

Cummins, Sheri (LTS/COB)

Fadeley, Vickie (OER/OPERA)

Fitzgerald, Steve (RN Solutions)

Frahm, Donna (OER)

Gaines, Patti (OD)

Gibb, Scarlett (COB)

Grandy, Vanessa (Z-Tech)

Hahn, Marchia (OER/OPERA)

Hausman, Steve (NIAMS)

Hughes, Stephen (OD)

Lederhendler, Israel (NIMH)

Loewe, Michael (NINDS)

McGowan, JJ (NIAID)

Morris, Richard (NIAID)

Morton, Pete (CIT)

Panniers, Richard (CSR)

Patel, Kalpesh (Ekagra)

Ratnanather, Chanath (Z-Tech)

Seppala, Sandy (LTS/COB)

Siegert, Mark (OPERA)

Silverman, Jay (NGIT)

Sinnett, Everett (CSR/OD)

Snouffer, Anna (OD/OFACP)

Soto, Tracy (OD/DEIS)

Tucker, Jim (OER)

Van Brunt, Virginia (LTS)

Wilson, Mike (NGIT)

Wright, David (OPERA)

Zucker, Sherry (DEIS)