



eRA Project Team Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, May 10, 2005
Time: 9:00–10:20 a.m.
Location: Rockledge 1, 5th floor conference room
Chair: Izja Lederhendler, Jim Cain

Next Meeting: Tuesday, May 24, 9:00 a.m., Rockledge 1, 5th floor conference room

Action items

1. (Izja Lederhendler, David Wright) Document current process and oversight for changing content in external communications.
2. (Scarlett Gibb) Clarify ITWG's position on 424RR paper option and have 424RR Transition Group discuss next steps.

Opening Remarks and Announcements

Izja Lederhendler

- ❑ Izja welcomed Tom Boyce, Chief Information Officer at the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), who will assist him on site beginning Tuesday, May 17.
- ❑ Izja congratulated analyst Cathy Walker and writer Steve Paugh for receiving special recognition awards from the Grants Management Vision Steering Committee for their work.
- ❑ Izja also commended the eCGAP team, in particular Jennifer Flach, for receiving the HHS Secretary's Award for Distinguished Service. He acknowledged Diana Dixon's work on eCGAP-RR.
- ❑ Izja also congratulated the NIH Public Access Policy Development and Implementation Team, in particular David Wright, for being chosen to receive the NIH Director's Award.
- ❑ The final version of the budget request for FY2006 will include expansion of Knowledge Management for Receipt and Referral, an item that was previously deferred but has now been included in the budget.
- ❑ Izja noted that Oliver "Pete" Morton of CIT has joined the OERRM transition team. Leyla Desmond has also come aboard to help Zoe-Ann Copeland with the transition effort.
- ❑ Izja said that Tim Leahy and Bridget Stickers from Management System Designers, Inc. (MSD) will be examining eRA processes to see if they are effective and determine if eRA is following its practices. He encouraged employees to be open and frank with the two as they objectively assessed eRA's way of working.
- ❑ Izja welcomed back Chip Groh, a former eRA employee who has returned to eRA as an Information Technology (IT) analyst.

Update on latest releases of Commons

David Wright

Commons Releases Update

David noted that eRA recently emerged with major releases of Commons that add new functionality to the heavily used site. He noted that two releases had stacked up against one another and were therefore combined into one new release— Commons 2.7.0/Commons 2.7.1 — that came out on April 18, 2005. This was followed a week later by Commons 2.7.2, out on April 25, 2005.

The releases fixed some defects and added new features, namely:

- Displays a note reminding Principal Investigator that the Signing Official must submit the Just-In-Time information when uploading the document. This will cut down calls to Help Desk.
- Permits users to see errors in electronic submission via status and indicates whether the application was submitted via paper, an eCGAP Service Provider or through a Grants.gov submission
- Allows submission of eSNAP if the Human Subjects assurance and/or Animal Subjects assurance numbers are blank in the Institutional Profile
- Modifies eSNAP to handle only four digit Social Security Numbers as required in the newly revised 398 form
- Allows submission of No Cost Extensions on last day of grant

The changes associated with the Internet Assisted Review module are:

- Aligned fonts and colors with the rest of Commons
- Fixed sorting problems
- Fixed incorrect Council date problem
- Added link to Meeting Materials screen on the List of Applications screen
- Allowed Scientific Review Administrators to send batch emails to selected reviewers
- Created Word Preliminary Summary Statement files for sub-projects, doing away with the painful task of individually cutting and pasting each one.
- Allowed discussants to upload late critiques during the Read phase. Previously, discussants could not upload their critiques
- Made enhancements to performance — The growth of IAR has been phenomenal but the system has been bogged down by so many users; the enhancements have improved performance by 40 percent.

Big Ticket items

- **Close out module** — David walked the group through some of the screens for the grants close out module, a program that allows grantees to close out grants that have ended. A new feature allows PIs or Signing Officials to submit the Final Invention Statement and the Final Progress Report.
- **Content Management** — A screen change on eRA Commons, including something as simple as correcting a typo, required a major effort. A new tool allows eRA to change text on Commons on the fly. The tool divides Commons into five areas; text or links can be added to any of these areas.

Discussion: Carlos Caban asked if NIH could see the changes or did one have to go to the Commons demo site. David and Tim Twomey noted that the Demo site is currently not in sync with the changes on the main Commons site; however, they noted that very

little had been added to the Commons site and most of the changes had to do with the Public Access component. Marcia Hahn noted that keeping the demo site synchronized with the Commons site is crucial because without the demo facility, one cannot drill down to the screens.

Izja emphasized that the current process and oversight for changing content in external communications should be documented and David Wright would work with him to do that.

- **Integration with NIH Manuscript Submission system** — This refers to eRA's role in NIH's new Public Access policy—integration with the National Library of Medicine to allow Principal Investigators to upload manuscripts via Commons to the library's archives. David noted that eRA had to make the process as easy as possible for PI uploading; therefore, making a PI go through an Accounts Administrator to create a Commons account was not acceptable. Instead, eRA is allowing 'anonymous account creation' meaning that anyone can create a Commons account; the caveat being that they have access only to the manuscript system. Their privileges will be extended to other areas of Commons only if their account is affiliated to an institution; the major implication being that more duplicate profiles and accounts will be incurred with this process in place.

David noted that over 70 percent of PIs have a Commons account, so theoretically the percentage of people creating these anonymous accounts will be in the minority. He predicted that down the road, these new account creations will dwindle and ultimately go away. Izja said that eRA ultimately will integrate with the department wide authentication process. Integration with Grants.gov is in the works.

Discussion— Carlos Caban asked whether it was mandatory that the first author create the Commons account or could the task be handed off to a staff member? David noted that the author or a designee could do the upload, but the author had to verify the upload.

- **Improved error handling** — If users receive a nondescript system error, the user has the ability to send the message directly to the Help Desk along with the technical information to troubleshoot the ticket.

Action: (Izja Lederhendler, David Wright) Document current process and oversight for changing content in external communications.

eCGAP and Grants.gov Update

Jennifer Flach

[eCGAP Update](#)

Jennifer noted that eCGAP reached a milestone in January 2005, when it opened up electronic submission of select grant applications to any applicant. In previous pilots, Service Providers had been working with volunteer applicants to submit grant applications electronically. Now any applicant can work with a Service Provider to submit an application. For the February and March receipt dates, 38 applications were received electronically.

There were many reasons for the low numbers:

- Some institutions are waiting for the Grants.gov submission option

- There was a restriction on accepting consortia in modular budgets that has been lifted for upcoming receipt dates
- Potential applicants were expressing interest too close to the deadline; interested applicants are being urged to begin earlier in the process
- CGAP-Receipt and Referral is being enhanced to handle higher volume of applications
- Outreach and support activities are being expanded:
 - Developed a brochure on Submitting Grants Electronically
 - Placed a link to eRA's Submitting Grants Electronically website on the Grants-OER website (<http://grants2.nih.gov/grants/oer.htm>)
 - Sent an article that was printed in the National Council of University Research Administrator's (NCURA's) April/May newsletter
 - Revamped content on Submitting Grants Electronically webpage (http://era.nih.gov/Projectmgmt/SBIR/sbir_grants.htm) including information on Service Providers, orientation for first time applicants to electronic receipt and NIH's plans with Grants.gov
 - Expanded eCGAP technical support to help Service Providers; they are reacting much quicker to any issues that are arising

Jennifer noted that a new eCGAP software released yesterday (May 9) incorporates the new 398 form whose use is mandatory as of May 10. The next CGAP-RR release is set for June 3 and will include enhancements and fixes. She noted that the goal is to have CGAP-RR ready to handle higher volumes by the fall of 2005.

Grants.gov test—Jennifer noted that integration with Grants.gov is progressing well. Grants.gov released its 424 Research and Related form last fall. eRA has been working with Grants.gov to develop portions of the 398 form not present in the 424RR, to supplement the 424RR; those were deployed mid-April. The grant image of the combined form set for submitting applications to NIH via Grants.gov is based on the 424RR form, not the 398. Both Marcia Hahn and Mike Goodman are working on the instructions to accompany the form set. The newly formed 424RR Transition Group is working on the timeline for transition from the 398 to the 424RR.

A user acceptance test is planned May 25 with Commons Working Group members submitting dead data to NIH via Grants.gov. Following a pilot in July, the goal is to accept select grant applications live through Grants.gov in the fall of 2005.

Jennifer emphasized the need to include OPDIV applicants in Commons soon so they can get Commons accounts, view transactions of grant applications and verify the applications.

The first test release of Grants.gov is slated to be finished mid-May. There is no mechanism within Grants.gov to return validation errors, therefore errors will be placed in Commons for applicants to see and then resubmit their corrected application to Grants.gov.

Discussion—Izja asked how much time it will take for applicants to resubmit. Jennifer noted that one of the goals of the user acceptance testing May 25 is to find out how many errors applicants are hitting and how instructions can be improved to avoid errors. A grace period will be built in to allow applicants to correct their applications and still meet the deadline at Grants.gov. Pete

Morton asked if applicants will know when they have errors. Jen noted that applicants will be encouraged to check in Commons; an email will also be sent to the research institution.

424RR paper option—Jennifer noted that a schedule has not yet been established for transitioning from the 398 to the 424RR. Izja emphasized that NIH eRA would not accept 424RR applications on paper; all 424RR applications would be required to come in electronically. He noted that eRA needed to focus its resources on electronic receipt and could not afford to expend funds on offering paper 424RR as an alternative.

Some members expressed concern about not offering paper as an alternative. Marcia Hahn noted that such an approach would rule out fifty percent of the applicant pool who may want to submit applications but may be reluctant or unable to send in applications electronically. Sandy Karen noted that even though Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) has an electronic application system, they have to offer the paper option. They have to accommodate applicants who may be in remote areas without access to a computer. Rick Ikeda noted that one solution would be to have mixed forms – an electronic form for the 424RR and a paper one for the 398. Scarlett Gibb suggested clarifying the issue with eRA’s governing body, the IT Working Group (ITWG) and then having the 424RR Transition Group discuss it.

Izja noted that with the shift to electronic submission occurring across the federal government, it is not unreasonable for NIH to require all electronic 424RR applications. The applicant community would have to fall in line with that trend. Izja noted that the key is getting the community ready for this major culture change through outreach efforts. CDC’s Teresa Kinley noted that when CDC made the jump to electronic receipt, they had to do a lot of handholding and outreach. Scarlett Gibb said she would talk to Teresa about lessons learned.

Action: (Scarlett Gibb) Clarify ITWG’s position on 424RR paper option and have 424RR Transition Group discuss next steps.

Attendees

Boyce, Tom (AHRQ)	Fadeley, Vickie (OER/OERRM)	Hughes, Stephen (OER/OERRM)
Caban, Carlos (OER)	Faenson, Inna (OER/OERRM)	Ikeda, Richard (NIHMS)
Clevenger, Gail (OD/OER)	Finch, Dorrette (ORA)	Karen, Sandra (HRSA)
Connelly, Vance (Blueprint Technologies/OERRM)	Flach, Jennifer (OER/OERRM)	Katzper, Linda (OD/DEIS)
Copeland, Zoe-Ann (OER/OERRM)	Frahm, Donna J. (OER/OERRM)	Kinley, Teresa (CDC)
Cox, Michael (OER/OERRM)	Gibb, Scarlett (OER)	Koshy, Maria (OER/OPERA)
Crapo, Harry (PSGS)	Goodman, Mike (OER/OERRM)	Lagas, Robert (Lagas Associates/OERRM)
Cummins, Sheri (LTS/OERRM)	Groh, Chip (eRA)	Leahy, Tim (MSD)
Diggs, Lana (OER/OERRM)	Hahn, Marcia (OER/OPERA)	Lederhendler, Israel (OER/OERRM)
Dixon, Diana (OER/OERRM)	Horton, Marcia (HRSA)	Lieberman, Ellen (NEI)
Dutcher, Sylvia (Mitretek/OERRM)		Lynch, Peggy (IBM/OERRM)
		Mayer, Pamela (NINDS)

Morton, Pete (CIT)
Moyer, Skip (AHRQ)
Porter, Yvette (OD)
Salata, Kalman (CSR)
Seach, James (NCI)

Sneade, Brad (Northrop
Grumman)
Sylvester, Chuck (Northrop
Grumman)
Subramanya, Manju
(LTS/OERRM)

Tatham, Tom (CSR)
Twomey, Tim (OER/OERRM)
Wehrle, Janna (NIGMS)
Wright, David
(OER/OERRM)
Zhen, Changqing (IBM)