



eCGAP Focus Group

Date: Monday, July 18, 2005
Time: 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Location: Rockledge 1, Room 2198
Moderator: J.J. Maurer (in Jennifer Flach's absence)

Next Meeting: Tuesday, Aug. 2, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., Rockledge 1, Room 2198

Action items

1. (Sara Silver, Richard Panniers) Send one electronic and one paper application respectively with only detailed budget information to Amy Swain for testing.
2. (Amy Swain) Arrange for technical meeting next week between eCGAP Team and Service Providers
3. (Tom Tatham) Find out status of CSR analysis into 'print on demand.'
4. (Amy Swain) Contact Jo Anne Goodnight about SBIR printing issue
5. (JJ Maurer) Convey to eRA management the need for a NIH Guide Notice for electronic submission on Oct/Nov receipt dates
6. (David Wright) Find out from Grants.gov their experience in handling increased volume of applications.
7. (Sara Silver) Check to see if items listed in sample Master Conflict of Interest List are collected in IMPAC II and inform David George and Richard Panniers.

CSR's goal of 1,000 eCGAP applications in the fall

JJ Maurer

JJ Maurer noted that Dr. Antonio Scarpa, the new director of the Center for Scientific Review (CSR), has made a pronouncement that he will try and encourage submission of 1,000 eCGAP applications electronically for the Oct. 1 and Nov. 1 receipt dates.

Given the possibility that eCGAP may receive that many applications, JJ noted that eCGAP will have to gear up for those numbers. David Wright expressed some concern that developmental resources may be stretched between gearing up for the Oct/Nov receipt cycle and shortly thereafter, the Dec. 1 receipt date for receiving all SBIR/STTRs applications electronically via Grants.gov. JJ said that, given the potential of 1,000 applications, eRA needs to be ready to handle it. They first need to assess what is necessary for handling 1,000 applications, evaluating whether they need to add capacity, change physical set-up, change specifications, etc. JJ and Sara Silver discussed the technical areas that need to be addressed:

Consortia—The eCGAP team is working on offering applicants the ability to have consortia in detailed budgets for the Oct. /Nov. receipt dates; this will involve a change in schema. Sara noted that while consortia requirements are not onerous, the eCGAP team has not had much opportunity to test detailed budgets because so few of them have been submitted. She suggested it would be beneficial to test in the electronic system a real detailed budget that came in on paper. Sara and

Richard Panniers offered to send in one electronic and one paper application respectively to Amy Swain with just the detailed budget information for testing.

(Sara Silver, Richard Panniers) Send one electronic and one paper application respectively with only detailed budget information to Amy Swain for testing

Validation service— JJ noted that some adjustments will have to be made to the validation service used by Service Providers to test their applications in a simulated real world environment before submitting to the real exchange. In the submission service, a ticket is issued when a Service Provider submits an application and the eCGAP Team retrieves the application whenever they are ready to do so. This method alleviates any peak load problem. However, in the validation service the response is expected immediately. Therefore the eCGAP team could potentially run into a peak load if many applications are tested simultaneously. The concern is NOT that the validation service will fail due to load, but that validation may take longer. Under a light load, the response time has been seconds. The technical team is keen on providing a very high level of service for the first large volume of applications and obtaining high marks from the applicants. However, a longer response time may be perceived as failure by the user and that perception needs to be managed.

JJ noted that the projected demand for validation should be 5 to 10 times higher than the demand for submission. Ideally, the submission service should be unaffected by the load on the validation service. These goals are already built into the architecture of the system.

JJ noted that the software is separated but hosted by the same server; one option may be to split the hosting, thereby separating the validation service from the receipt service. The eCGAP team had not anticipated this change for October and therefore will have to analyze the load, split the hosting of the software, and conduct testing. JJ also noted that they did not have a load balanced machine but instead relied on a cold failover; in other words, the software is installed on one machine and if it fails, they turn on the second machine. While that interruption can be dealt with easily with 20 applications by notifying the Service Providers, it may be a different case with 1,000 applications streaming in. The Architecture and Operations team for eRA are addressing the anticipated increase in demand on the system.

Amy Swain suggested a technical meeting between the eCGAP team and Service Providers attending the 7th annual SBIR/STTR conference in Bethesda on July 28 and 29. JJ and Sara agreed it would be a good idea.

(Amy Swain) Arrange for technical meeting next week between eCGAP Team and Service Providers

Timely registration in Commons—JJ said that it is imperative for Institutions, PIs, Service Providers, etc. to register in Commons before or by the Oct. 1 receipt date and that Institutions should get their DUNS number (a number issued by Dun & Bradstreet that uniquely identifies an institution) in time. Amy Swain suggested it might be helpful to have a checklist of the items that Service Providers need to have set up before submission, especially the requirements for Grants.gov submission in December.

The group suggested that the need to register in Commons be widely publicized through targeted email and website postings, especially among those applicants submitting SBIR/STTR grant applications on Dec. 1. The group suggested it would be wise to urge applicants to register a month in advance so that the eRA help desk will be able to cope with the demand. Grants.gov has a lengthier registration process, also requiring Institutions to authorize the applicant as an Authorized Organization Representative before they are allowed to register.

To print or not to print— Suzanne Fisher noted that CSR offers all reviewers a printed version of the electronic applications and wondered if the practice should continue for the Oct/Nov receipt cycle, given that 1,000 applications may come in electronically. She said that four color copies of each application are printed for each study section. The consensus of the group was that until electronic submissions are more widely accepted, printing should continue at least for Oct/Nov. The group suggested that in the future, print on demand (the practice at the National Science Foundation) should be the norm. Tom Tatham said that CSR had done an analysis of ‘print on demand’ and that he would find out its status. Suzanne noted that a decision will also have to be made regarding printing for the approximately 2,500 SBIR/STTR applications expected to come in electronically on Dec. 1. Amy Swain said she would contact JoAnne Goodnight about the SBIR printing issue.

Action: (Tom Tatham) Find out status of CSR analysis into ‘print on demand.’

Action: (Amy Swain) Contact Jo Anne Goodnight about SBIR printing issue

NIH Guide Notice— Suzanne said that eRA needs to put out an NIH Guide Notice for the Oct. 1 and Nov. 1 receipt dates, outlining the rules and the incentive of 10 days extra for electronic submission that CSR proposes to offer to applicants. That official notice could then be used by ICs to publicize the receipt dates on their own websites. The need to have a Guide Notice must be conveyed to eRA management.

Action: (JJ Maurer) Convey to eRA management the need for a NIH Guide Notice for electronic submission on Oct/Nov receipt dates

Table Talk

SBIR/STTR update— Suzanne noted that NIH is moving ahead with plans to mandate that all SBIR/STRR applications come in electronically Dec. 1. An announcement will be made at next week’s 7th annual NIH SBIR/STTR conference in Bethesda (July 28, 29). The official announcement will come after Aug. 1. The request has gone to Grants.gov to place the SBIR/STTR form in the forms factory. The opportunity is likely to open Oct. 15. Suzanne also noted that it is likely that R13 conference grants will also be mandated to come in electronically for the Dec. 15 receipt date.

Grants.gov volume—Tom Tatham noted that it would be helpful to know how Grants.gov is handling increased volumes of applications. David Wright said he will raise the issue when he meets with the Grants.gov team at the end of the month.

(David Wright) Find out from Grants.gov team their experience in handling increased volume of applications.

Appendix—Valerie Prenger asked about rules regarding appendix attachment to an application. Sara noted that one attachment is allowed in eCGAP, while Grants.gov allows multiple attachments.

Review Action Items from July 5 meeting

1. (Sara Silver) Arrange for publications to be placed in PDF form after Section C and not be counted toward 25-page limit. **Sara noted that this requirement has been placed in a queue and is planned for the next receipt dates of Oct. 1 and Nov. 1.**
2. (Sara Silver) Arrange for R03 application exceeding the one-page limit for introduction to receive a warning and be flagged in Receipt and Referral for decision.

This will be done in time for the Oct. /Nov. receipt dates. A problem indicator set up in First Contact in Receipt and Referral will trigger a list of problems.

3. (Suzanne Fisher) Send information on variations in business rules for R03s and R21s to Sara Silver. *Done.*
4. (eCGAP Team) Raise issue before EPMC and PRAC of building system to deal with applications sent erroneously to non-participating ICs. *The group decided to hold off pursuing this action item for now and continue with the current practice of instructing the applicant to find a Program Announcement that matches the science the applicant is proposing with the appropriate sponsoring IC.*
5. (Richard Panniers, David George) Raise issue with Peer Review JAD Group of making available for viewing data on key personnel for electronic applications in IMPAC II. *David circulated a sample of a standard spreadsheet listing items that help Scientific Review Administrators (SRAs) determine conflict of interest a reviewer may have with a certain PI. The items included PI, Investigator (Key Personnel), Institution and Role. Sara had noted at the previous meeting that while some of this information is collected in IMPAC II for electronic applications, it is not viewable. David said that there was a lot of opportunity for automation here that would yield valuable information to SRAs. Sara said she would check to see if all the items are collected; then it would be up to David and Richard Panniers to raise the issue before the Peer Review JAD Group of making this information viewable in the Peer Review module.*
6. (Sara Silver) Use statement about presence of consortium to flag application with consortium on eCGAP-RR screen. *This was deemed unnecessary.*

Attendees

Dixon, Diana (OD)	Moyer, George (Skip) (AHRQ)	Stallone, Don (RSIS/OD)
Fisher, Suzanne (CSR)	Myers, Chris (NIDCD)	Swain, Amy (NCRR)
George, David (NIBIB)	Panniers, Richard (CSR)	Subramanya, Manju (LTS/OD)
Goodman, Michael (OD)	Prenger, Valerie (NHLBI)	Tatham, Tom (CSR)
Liberman, Ellen (NEI)	Silver, Sara (IBM/Z-Tech Corp./OER)	Wehrle, Janna (NIGMS)
Maurer, JJ (IBM/Ekagra/OD)	Sinnett, Everett (CSR)	Wright, David (OD)