



SPECIAL ISSUE

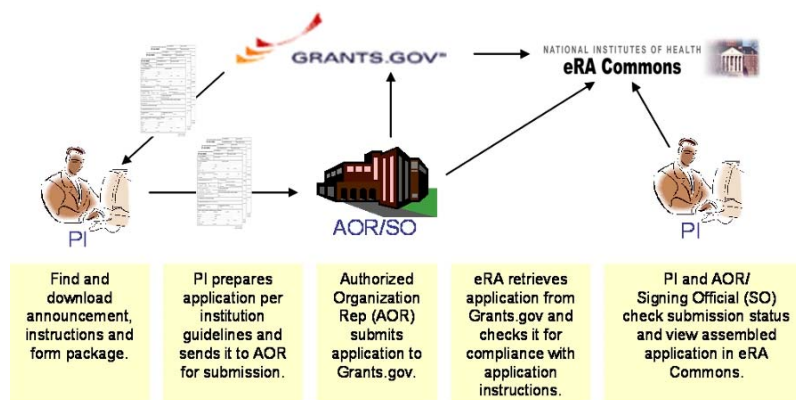
November 2006

R01 APPLICATIONS REQUIRE ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION FOR FEBRUARY 2007 AND BEYOND. NEW FORM...NEW PROCESS...FIND OUT HOW!

- ◆ [News From the Director of OER: NIH Will Begin Accepting R01 Grant Applications Electronically on February 5, 2007](#)
- ◆ [Electronic Submission of R01 Grant Applications: The Process](#)
- ◆ [NIH Will NOT Penalize You for Grants.gov or eRA Commons System Issues](#)
- ◆ [Unsolicited Applications: Use "Parent" Announcements](#)
- ◆ [NIH Training: Preparing for NIH Electronic Grant Application](#)
- ◆ [NIH On-Time Submission Flexibility during the eSubmission Learning Curve](#)
- ◆ [Options for Macintosh Users](#)
- ◆ [Electronic Submission Questions: Who, What, Where](#)
- ◆ [Multiple PI Option Available February](#)
- ◆ [Most Popular Pages on the Electronic Submission Web Site](#)
- ◆ [NIH Guide Notices](#)
- ◆ [Feedback](#)
- ◆ [Print Version](#)

NEWS FROM THE DIRECTOR OF OER: NIH WILL BEGIN ACCEPTING R01 GRANT APPLICATIONS ELECTRONICALLY ON FEBRUARY 5, 2007

The Electronic Application Submission Process



(Click on picture for larger view)

Dear Extramural Community, PIs, Administrators, et al.:

On February 5, 2007, NIH will begin accepting electronic applications of R01 Research Project Grants, our most heavily used mechanism. Both NIH and applicant institutions have been preparing for this event for over a year. We have built systems; developed new processes to prepare, route, and process electronic applications; and we have dedicated numerous presentations, meetings, emails, Web sites, newsletters and outreach materials to this topic.

Since I announced in August 2005, NIH's plans to move to electronic submission, we have (with, I will admit, a few bumps along the way) transitioned more than 14 of our smaller grant programs and have received nearly 18,000 unique electronic applications. The upcoming electronic submission of R01s likely will set new submission records at both Grants.gov and eRA Commons. To handle this anticipated increased demand, we have [changed our standard receipt dates for applications](#) so that we spread the workloads on systems within NIH and within the business offices of applicant institutions. The receipt date changes, in combination with recent system-performance improvements, have minimized capacity concerns and we are well positioned to handle the increased load.

I want you to know that if problems do arise in spite of all our preparation, we have contingency plans to address them, and I assure you that NIH will not penalize you for a Grants.gov or eRA Commons system issue.

There is a learning curve associated with using the new submission process and forms. NIH is hosting a [training event](#) available through NIH VideoCast on December 5, 2006 that will be a great introduction to these changes. Although the hands-on workshops offered in conjunction with this training event are full, additional hands-on training opportunities will be available including those at [NIH Regional Seminars on Program Funding and Grants Administration](#). I also encourage you to take advantage of the available online [training resources](#), including NIH VideoCasts, tutorials, videos and the eRA Commons demo facility for hands-on experience in a non-production environment. My team will continue to expand the training resources as we move towards the February R01 receipt date.

NIH staff and I recognize that the electronic submission process is complex, requires advance preparation, and represents a significant change in how an application is written and how it is submitted. eSubmission is in many cases redefining the relationship between a PI and his/her institutional administrator. We recognize that these changes may be provoking some anxiety. It is my hope that the articles in this special edition of the *NIH Extramural Nexus*, which focus on electronic submission of the R01 grant application, will demystify the electronic submission process and help relieve the anxiety that some of you may be feeling.

I really appreciate all the feedback that we have received from you—applicants and applicant institutions. Your feedback has helped us make significant improvements in the system, and I encourage you to continue to speak up. Please feel free to write to me at DDER@NIH.gov with comments or questions.

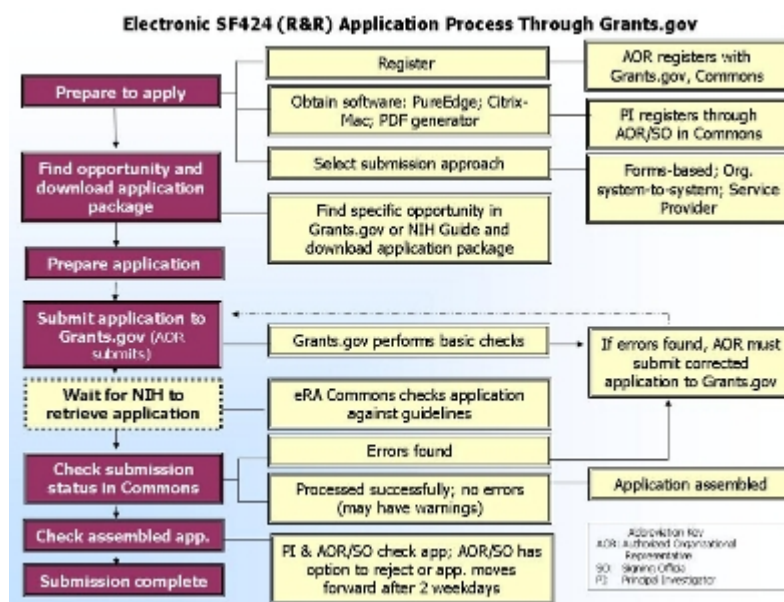


Norka Ruiz Bravo, Ph.D., Director, Office of Extramural Research and NIH Deputy Director for Extramural Research

ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OF R01 GRANT APPLICATIONS: THE PROCESS

The [NIH Electronic Submission of Grant Applications Web site](#) contains detailed instructions, tips and resources to walk you through the electronic application submission process:

- ◆ [Overview of Electronic Submission](#)
- ◆ [Prepare to Apply](#)
- ◆ [Find Opportunity and Download Application Package](#)
- ◆ [Prepare Application](#)
- ◆ [Submit Application](#)
- ◆ [Check Submission Status](#)
- ◆ [Check Assembled Application](#)



(Click on picture for larger view)

➤ [Back to top](#)

NIH WILL NOT PENALIZE YOU FOR GRANTS.GOV OR eRA COMMONS SYSTEMS ISSUES



The forms are different. The submission method has changed. Some things, however, remain the same—it is still about the science and getting the best applications in the door and ready for review. So, if you follow the application guide and opportunity instructions and do everything you can to successfully submit your application on time, but then cannot complete the submission because of a Grants.gov or eRA Commons system failure do not despair. **Help is available and NIH will ensure that you are not penalized for a Grants.gov or eRA Commons system problem.**

What should you do if you have a problem? Immediately contact the [eRA Commons help desk](#) to report the issue. The help desk can be busy around submission deadlines so take advantage of the [Web](#)

[ticketing option](#) to avoid telephone delays and ensure the details of your issue are captured correctly. As soon as the help desk staff confirms a system issue, they will document the issue and continue to work with you until the problem is resolved.

System issues that prevent application submission are fairly uncommon, but they can and do occur. During our first electronic submission rounds, a number of application submissions were unsuccessful due to system issues. At that time, most of the issues were coding errors that prevented correct information from being accepted. With the experience gained from processing nearly 18,000 unique applications, we have seen a significant drop in the number of coding issues. Currently, only a handful of application submissions encounter system issues. No application that has been brought to the attention of the eRA Commons help desk with a confirmed system issue has missed its review cycle due to a system issue.

All system issues that we have experienced to date have affected individual or small subsets of applications. NIH, however, does have contingency plans in place to handle larger system issues encountered close to standard submission deadlines. Since on-time submission is dependent on receipt of applications to Grants.gov by 5:00 p.m. local time, it is Grants.gov system issues that are most problematic for applicants. NIH's contingencies provide for extending submission dates when Grants.gov is unavailable for a significant period of time leading up to a deadline. The [NIH Guide](#), [Electronic Submission Program email lists](#) and [Electronic Submission Web site](#) will be the primary vehicles used to communicate any deadline extensions. If eRA Commons experiences a significant interruption in service just after a submission deadline, the error-correction window may be extended to provide applicants with the necessary time to check submission status, address errors and view their corrected applications. The Electronic Submission email lists and Electronic Submission Web site will be the primary vehicle used to communicate error-correction window extensions.

To provide a fair and competitive process, all applicants must follow the same rules for application submission. The most common reason for unsuccessful application submissions is because the applicant did not follow the application guide and funding opportunity instructions. **Please be aware that if your submission failed to complete because you did not follow all the instructions, NIH is under no obligation to accept your late application.**

There is a learning curve involved with submitting electronic applications. Start the submission process early, read and follow all instructions carefully, subscribe to the electronic mailing lists and consult the NIH Electronic Submission Web site or support desk when you have questions or concerns.

[» Back to top](#)

UNSOLICITED APPLICATIONS: USE "PARENT" ANNOUNCEMENTS

[Click Here for
NIH Research Project
Grant Program \(R01\)
Parent Announcement](#)

NIH's commitment to unsolicited, investigator-initiated research is deep and longstanding. Investigators are the innovators of the future—they bring fresh ideas and technologies to existing biomedical research problems and they pioneer new areas of investigation. NIH-funded researchers are essential to the success of this country's biomedical research enterprise.

NIH's interest in pioneering new areas of investigation is stronger than ever. The implementation of ["Parent" Funding Opportunity Announcements](#) (FOAs) is a strategic part of this interest. To apply for a grant from NIH, all applications now must be submitted in response to an FOA. Parent FOAs are designed to provide a solicitation

mechanism for unsolicited, investigator-initiated applications. Responding to a Parent FOA ensures that the correct application package is used by applicants, and enables NIH to receive the application through Grants.gov.

Parent Announcements are NIH-wide, but some NIH Institutes may limit their participation, so check the announcement's statement of interest. For institute-specific opportunities in your area of science, search the [NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts](#). There may be an FOA published by an NIH Institute or Center that is searching specifically for research that you are interested in pursuing.

We have received feedback from the applicant community that the use of Program Announcements (PAs) for the unsolicited, investigator-initiated opportunities does not reflect correctly the spirit of unsolicited research. Further, the "PA" acronym found in the announcement number can be seen as standing for Program Announcement or Parent Announcement, adding an additional layer of confusion for applicants searching for Parent Announcements. Although NIH cannot address this issue for the initial R01 submission rounds, we are developing plans to address it in the future.

[» Back to top](#)

NIH TRAINING: PREPARING FOR NIH ELECTRONIC GRANT APPLICATION



NIH will hold a presentation on **December 5, 2006**, to prepare the applicant community for the upcoming transition of R01s to electronic submission. The training presentation will be held at the Natcher Conference Center in Bethesda, Maryland, and online via [NIH VideoCast](#) in the morning with a repeat session in the afternoon.

The presentation will include an overview of the electronic submission process, a walk through the SF424 (R&R) grant application form, and "Lessons Learned" presented by a panel of eSubmission experts. There also will be a question-and-answer session with the panel at the close of the presentation.

Registration is required but the training is offered free of charge. The training will be archived for later viewing.

Presentation: Tuesday, December 5, 2006, Natcher Conference Center, Main Auditorium, NIH Main Campus, Bethesda, Maryland (onsite and via [VideoCast](#)).

[Click here for more details and registration information.](#)

[» Back to top](#)

NIH ON-TIME SUBMISSION FLEXIBILITY DURING THE eSUBMISSION LEARNING CURVE



All NIH grant applications are required to be submitted on time. Eventually, on time will mean that a "clean" application (i.e., passed Grants.gov and eRA Commons validations without errors) has been submitted to Grants.gov by 5:00 p.m. local time on the receipt date. However, NIH has provided some flexibility for the first few submission dates of grant programs transitioning to electronic submission. Applicant institutions can submit changed/corrected applications in the week (5 business days) following the submission deadline, provided the changes made are needed to correct errors encountered during the eRA business rule validation process. This is not for tweaking the content of a research plan, but for working

through specific errors on other fields of the forms.

NIH expects that all registration requirements have been met prior to the initial application submission and that the initial application is submitted to Grants.gov on or before the submission deadline. If the one-week correction window is used, the application must include a cover letter including the Grants.gov tracking number for the original submission and an explanation for why the corrected application is required. The cover letter should be attached to the PHS 398 Cover Letter form component found with the optional documents in the application package.

[» Back to top](#)

OPTIONS FOR MACINTOSH® USERS



Grants.gov has posted on their Web site an update on IBM's progress towards providing a PureEdge™ viewer compatible with Macs. They have included a link to an early-release of an IBM Workplace Forms (PureEdge) viewer for Macs on their [Download Software page](#) and have identified some of the limitations to this version of the viewer (e.g., compatible only with PowerPC based machines – G4 and G5). While this is not the solution NIH and many of you had been hoping for, it may be a viable option for some of you. We strongly suggest that you read the available documentation carefully before deciding whether using the viewer is a good option for your specific circumstances.

As a reminder, Mac users can continue to use the following proven options:

- ◆ **NIH-hosted Citrix® servers:** allow non-PC users to prepare and submit applications using the PureEdge forms viewer. This service has been used successfully by many applicants over the past year and has the capacity to handle the anticipated load for the electronic submission of R01s in February 2007.
- ◆ **PC-emulation software:** commercially available products allow Mac users to run the PureEdge viewer.
- ◆ **Commercial Service Providers:** offer a wide range of platform independent services—from low-cost, single transaction options through full scale, end-to-end grants management solutions. You should coordinate with your institutions' grants office to explore these options further.

We recognize fully that these options are an interim solution, and that access to Grants.gov PureEdge forms remains less than ideal for Mac users. But, we have good news for the future. Grants.gov plans to unveil a new platform-independent solution based on Adobe forms in April 2007. And NIH will migrate to the new Adobe forms sometime between early summer and October of 2007. Until then, applicants relying on Grants.gov's form-based solution will continue to use the PureEdge viewer.

Information on further developments for Mac users and contact information for [Grants.gov's Customer Care Center](#) may be found on the [Grants.gov Web site](#).

[» Back to top](#)


ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION QUESTIONS: WHO, WHAT, WHERE



The [Electronic Submission Web site](#), the [application guide](#) and Funding Opportunity

Announcements are great initial resources to determine how to complete and submit electronic applications. If you have checked these resources and still need assistance, you can contact any one of several support teams available to answer your electronic application submission questions, as indicated in the matrix below.

TIP: Support desks can get busy during heavy submission dates. Avoid phone delays by taking advantage of online options like the eRA Commons [Web support ticket](#) system.

Who	What	Where
eRA Commons Help Desk	Commons registration Post-submission technical questions Addressing errors/warnings from eRA Commons Submit a Web ticket for assistance	Customer support Web page Web support ticket  Phone: 1-866-504-9552 or 301-402-7469 Monday–Friday, 7a.m.–8 p.m., EST
Grants.gov Contact Center	Grants.gov registration Grants.gov submission and error PureEdge™ questions and form navigation	Customer Support Web page Email: support@grants.gov Phone: 1-800-518-4726 Monday–Friday, 7 a.m.–9 p.m. EST
Grants Information	NIH extramural research and research training programs—Funding Opportunities Grant application procedures and process	NIH Grants Administration Information Sources Email grantsinfo@od.nih.gov Phone: 301-435-0714

[» Back to top](#)

MULTIPLE PI OPTION AVAILABLE BEGINNING FEBRUARY



Since May 2006, the NIH has conducted a pilot involving nine different Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs) that attracted more than 60 applications involving multiple Principal Investigators (PIs). During the pilot, the NIH tested modifications to electronic systems and operating policies associated with grant applications involving more than one PI. Upon interviews with a number of applicants and peer reviewers, nearly all expressed support for the concept and agreed that the Multiple PI option would facilitate interdisciplinary and other types of team research. They also offered constructive comments that have been incorporated into the instructions and review criteria to be used in the future.

Reviewers raised some concerns about the description of teamwork approaches included in some of the applications. For example, in some cases the listed PIs did not appear to have a clearly identified leadership function or their expertise did not appear to be closely related to the proposed project. In all such cases, reviewers pointed out that those issues detracted from the perceived merit of the application. This type of feedback has been vital towards clarifying the instructions to applicants regarding the choice of the multiple PI option.

Revised instructions to applicants and standard review criteria to accommodate both single PI and multiple PI

applications will be built into both the PHS 398 and the SF424 (R&R) application packages as well as FOAs that appear in the [NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts](#). All relevant information will ultimately be reflected and consolidated on the [NIH Multiple PI Web site](#).

The NIH has recently published the [Establishment of Multiple Principal Investigator Awards for the Support of Team Science Projects](#) *Guide* notice. To summarize the notice, most research grant applications received electronically starting in February 2007 will accommodate the Multiple PI option. The decision to apply for a single PI or a multiple PI grant will be the responsibility of the investigators and the applicant organization. Those decisions should be consistent with and justified by the scientific goals of the project. Salient features of the revised policy include:

- ◆ Applications have been modified to accommodate more than one PI ([see application forms](#)).
- ◆ Applications will include a Leadership Plan that describes the roles, the responsibilities and the working relationship of the identified PIs.
- ◆ All listed PIs will have access to Status on the [eRA Commons](#).
- ◆ All PIs will be listed on summary statements.
- ◆ All PIs will be listed on the Notice of Grant Award.
- ◆ All PIs will be listed in [CRISP](#).
- ◆ Awards involving PIs at different institutions will be managed using subcontracts until options involving linked awards have been developed.
- ◆ The role type "Co-PI" employed by other federal agencies will not be used by NIH.

NIH's recognition of all leaders on a team-managed project will encourage collaboration among equals and multidisciplinary approaches when that is the most appropriate way to address a scientific problem.

[» Back to top](#)

MOST POPULAR WEB PAGES ON THE ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION WEB SITE



Since its debut in September 2005 and redesign in May 2006, the [Electronic Submission of Grant Applications Web site](#) has been a valuable online resource for people looking for information on NIH and other Federal agencies' electronic grant application submission process using Grants.gov and the SF424 (R&R) forms package.

As traffic to the Web site averages 20,000 hits a month, which pages are the most popular among viewers? From September's statistics for most visited pages, the "Prepare Application" page wins hands down.

As for the most downloaded file, the "NIH Transition Plan," which details the dates each grant program will transition to electronic submission, is the clear winner.

Here are the top five most-trafficked Web pages for the month of September:

- 1 [Prepare Application](#)
Contains the application guide, sample applications, errors and warnings, a training video on the SF424 (R&R) application, tips on completing an application.

- 2 [Prepare to Apply](#)
Contains registration links for both Grants.gov and eRA Commons, steps for registering in eRA Commons, a list of commercial Service Providers, technical information for system-to-system developers.
- 3 [Avoiding Common Errors](#)
Contains a list of the most common errors made by applicants. This is a must-read to avoid having your application tripped by errors.
- 4 [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
Contains answers to the most frequently asked questions about electronic submission.
- 5 [Timeline](#)
A handy one pager that outlines NIH's timeline for transitioning grant programs from paper to electronic submission.

When it comes to the most downloaded pages, these five led the pack in September:

- 1 [SF424 \(R&R\) Validations](#)
A detailed list of the errors and warnings an applicant may encounter after submitting an application.
- 2 [Transition Plan](#)
A handy chart of NIH's transition dates for each grant program (including AIDS dates).
- 3 [SBIR Phase I PHS 398 application](#)
A completed sample paper application on the PHS 398 form.
- 4 [Timeline](#)
- 5 [SBIR Phase I SF424 \(R&R\) application](#)
A completed sample electronic application on the SF424 (R&R) form.

In addition, the following two resources provide basic information to those new to the electronic grant application submission process:

- ◆ An [Overview of Electronic Submission](#) via Grants.gov
- ◆ A flowchart of the [Electronic Application Process through Grants.gov](#)

[» Back to top](#)

NIH GUIDE NOTICES

[NIH/AHRQ/NIOSH Confirm R01 Electronic Application Submission Plans for February 5 Receipt Date:](#)

NIH/AHRQ/NIOSH will move forward with the R01 transition to electronic submission of grant applications using the SF424 (R&R) forms for the February 5, 2007 receipt date and beyond.

[New Limits on Appendix Materials for All NIH/AHRQ/NIOSH Grant Applications Beginning with Receipt Dates on or After January 3, 2007:](#)

Guidelines for the inclusion of Appendix materials in grant applications have changed to encourage applications to be as concise as possible while containing the information needed for expert scientific review. These changes take advantage of electronic access to many publications and should make application

preparation and handling easier for both applicants and reviewers.

[Establishment of Multiple Principal Investigator Awards for the Support of Team Science Projects](#): Beginning with research grant applications submitted for February 2007 receipt dates, the NIH will allow applicants and their institutions to identify more than one Principal Investigator (PI). The Multiple PI option will be extended to most research grant applications submitted electronically through Grants.gov using the SF424 R&R application package.

[Announcing Electronic Grant Submission Training Opportunity](#): NIH will hold a presentation on December 5, 2006, to prepare the applicant community for the upcoming transition of R01s to electronic submission.

[Change in Standing Receipt Dates for NIH/AHRQ/NIOSH Beginning in January 2007](#): New standing receipt dates will be effective as of January 2007 and will apply to both paper and electronic applications. The new submission dates will allow for a steady flow of applications rather than "boom and bust" cycles and will maximize electronic system responsiveness.

[Request for Information \(RFI\): Possible Page Limit Reduction for the Research Plan Section of the Research Project Grant \(R01\) Application](#): The NIH is exploring the possibility of reducing the current 25 page limit for the Research Plan section of the R01 application, as it has been suggested that NIH peer review could be improved by focusing less on experimental details and more on key ideas and the scientific significance of proposed projects. Your response to the RFI is greatly appreciated.

[» Back to top](#)

FEEDBACK

[Feedback](#) from recipients and subscribers of the *NIH Extramural Nexus* is vital. Comments, questions, and suggestions for topics will enable *Nexus* editorial staff to deliver appropriate content to the grantee community.

[» Back to top](#)

PRINT VERSION

[This issue's printer-friendly version](#) (Adobe® Reader® Required)

[» Back to top](#)



The *NIH Extramural Nexus* is a bimonthly update from the NIH Office of Extramural Research. Send articles, comments, questions and suggestions to the [Editor](#). The *NIH Extramural Nexus* reserves the right to select and edit submissions.

To subscribe to the *NIH Extramural Nexus*, send a plain text email to Listserv@list.nih.gov including only the words **Subscribe EXTRAMURALNEXUS** in the body of the message. To unsubscribe, follow the same procedure, using the words **Unsubscribe EXTRAMURALNEXUS** in the message body.

[NIH Extramural Nexus Web site and archives](#)