eRA Project Team Meeting Minutes

Date:	Tuesday, November 23, 2004
Time:	9:00–10:00 a.m.
Location:	Rockledge 1, 5th floor conference room
Chair:	Izja Lederhendler

Next Meeting: Tuesday, December 14, 9:00 a.m., Rockledge 1, 5th floor conference room

Opening Remarks

Izja Lederhendler

❑ Izja reminded the team that the Fourth Annual eRA Symposium, eRA eXchange: Making the Electronic Connection will take place on December 2. Electronic receipt is the main theme of the symposium and the key note speaker, Kenneth Forstmeier, will provide the user's perspective.

FY2005 Annual Plan

Izja Lederhendler

In March Izja presented the FY2005 eRA Budget Request to the IT Working Group (ITWG) and to the Management and Budget Working Group (MBWG). The budget presentation laid out four eRA objectives:

1. Maintenance, Performance, Data Quality

2. Electronic Receipt of Applications

3. End-to-End Process

4. Future Innovations (Knowledge Management)

The top priorities set by the Project Team at the fall 2003 retreat were folded into the four objectives. Of the $45.055M requested, eRA received $39.93M and an additional $1.8M to be put towards knowledge management.

Izja shared with the team a presentation describing the process used to set the FY2005 annual plan and the items the program hopes to accomplish in FY2005. He noted that the presentation is still a draft, since it is still under discussion with the ITWG.

Izja began the presentation with a draft mission statement for eRA:

eRA is an information technology program that seeks to support the medical discovery and science management missions of NIH by providing a comprehensive system for end-to-end electronic processing of extramural grant applications and awards. Through the creative use of information technology eRA increases the productivity and reduces the costs of grants administration through leadership in the establishment of more efficient and consistent business practices across NIH.

eRA is a collaborative endeavor of the full NIH community and its partners. This includes foremost the scientists and administrators of the national biomedical enterprise and the public beneficiaries of this effort. The scientific information that is stored and managed through the program has great value for the health of the American public, thus its security and integrity are a prime responsibility of the program. At the same time eRA retains a focus on expanding and improving customer service and satisfaction.

eRA is a partner with the other major NIH information and business systems in the integration for critical and accurate data for leadership decision-making.

Key Discussion Points:

❑ Planning principles

- Strategic alignment to mission and purpose of eRA, new governance structure, Federal Enterprise Architecture and Lines of Business

- Open and transparent process

- Regard for users needs and input

- Moving towards best practices (proactive risk management, earned value management, outcome based performance measures)

- Pay within same year as work done

❑ Planning process

- Develop request list

  ▪ Input from group advocates, OPDIVs, ITWG, eRA staff

  ▪ Cultural shift – list must be wrapped within strategy and in line with governance

  ▪ In order to protect the planned and approved eRA annual objectives, a case will be made to get additional funds with requests to support new and emerging initiatives.

- Develop estimates

  ▪ Develop conservative estimates up front and adjust as the project moves forward

  ▪ Estimates account for all required resources

- Prioritize and schedule

  ▪ Priority based on business need and funding availability

  ▪ Schedule based on priority, architectural dependency and resource availability

- Approvals

  ▪ eRA Program Manager, ITWG, Project Team (Advocates, OPDIVs, eRA Staff)

  ▪ Do not have well established decision making process yet. Izja noted that in the current process too much responsibility falls on eRA staff.

❑ The planning process is iterative and subject to continuous refinement. As the year progresses, we will refine the plan based on revised estimates and collected actuals.

❑ The FY2005 planned task list will be published once the ITWG approves it.

❑ The eRA team will continue to carry items that don't make the cut on the task list. These items will be revisited for strategic alignment and priority as funds become available.

❑ The team raised concerns that although the "support for new initiatives should come with funds" is a nice theory; the reality is that we don't have a great deal of control over the requesters. Izja responded that having an upfront understanding with the governance structure is critical in these cases. If you have buy-in from the governance structure to obligate the funds to do the work specified in the planning process, then it is also up to the governance structure to help work through the issues associated with unfunded initiatives either through re-prioritization or by identifying alternate funding sources (e.g., IT contingency fund). Pete Morton commented on the importance of being responsive and the need to build a reputation that whatever we do is done well.

❑ The team further noted that finding funding is only part of the issue when new requests are added to the workload. The effect on staff can be substantial. Izja responded that eRA management is working harder than ever on resource allocation and is positioned to do "what if" scenarios to determine the effect a responding to a request will have on staff. In the case of TA/X-Train, Izja was able to make a case for funding and resources. He also cautioned that eRA has a fairly large staff of over 50 dedicated FTEs and others can push back and say what are they all doing? We need to ensure all resources are deployed effectively.

❑ Izja commented that we know going into every year that some initiative will pop-up and divert resources (people and money). He looked at planning scenarios that included a contingency fund of 10% of the development budget, but it had too drastic an effect on work toward known development priorities.

Attendees

Bradley, Eileen (CSR)	Hendrick, Brad (HHS/OS)	Siegert, Mark (OD)
Burns, Amy (LTS)	Hughes, Steve (OD)	Simms, Sophonia (OD)
Caban, Carlos (OER)	Ikeda, Richard (NIGMS)	Sinnett, Everett (CSR)
Cain, Jim (OER)	Jordan, Craig (NIDCD)	Snouffer, Anna (OFACP)
Connelly, Vance (BT)	Katzper, Linda (OD)	Soto, Tracy (OD)
Crapo, Harry (PSGS)	Lagas, Robert (Lagas Assoc.)	Tatham, Thomas (CSR)
Cummins, Sheri (LTS)	Lederhendler, Israel (NIMH)	Thomson, Alastair (BT)
Dean, Caroline (FDA)	Luo, Weihua (CSR)	Tipparaju, Sury (ACT)
Fadeley, Vickie (OD)	Lynch, Peggy (IBM)	Tucker, Jim (OER)
Faenson, Inna (OD)	Milner, Tina (OD)	Twomey, Tim (OD)
Flach, Jennifer (OD)	Morton, Pete (CIT)	Van Brunt, Virginia (LTS)
Gaines, Patti (OD)	Patel, Kalpesh (Ekagra)	Walker, Cathy (OD)
Gibb, Scarlett (OD)	Porter, Yvette (OD)	Wehrle, Janna (NIGMS)
Goodman, Mike (OD)	Reeb, Michael (PSGS)	Wright, David (OD)
Hahn, Marcia (OER)	Salata, Kalman (CSR)	
Hausman, Steve (OD)	Shingler, Felicia (OD)	