



## eRA SBIR Partnership Meeting Minutes

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**Date:** Wed., Nov. 13, 2002  
**Time:** 1:00–4:30 p.m.  
**Location:** 6700 B Rockledge, Room 1205  
**Chair:** John McGowan

### Action Items

1. (JJ Maurer, Tim Twomey) Define and create standard mailing list (listserv) for continuing communications beyond this meeting.
2. (Sandy Seppala) Provide Tim Twomey with a list of SBIR company Web sites.
3. (Tim Twomey) Send the URL for NIH eRA Commons Registration to the SBIR companies.
4. (All SBIR companies) Register in the NIH eRA Commons.
5. (JJ Maurer) Send a list of alternatives for the outstanding technical issues with the preferred NIH solution noted to the SBIR companies via the listserv. These issues include:
  - How to handle attachments in the XML data stream.
  - Determining the interim security solution to be used for the June–August pilot.
  - How to handle changes or corrections to an application after submission.
6. (All SBIR companies) Respond with comments to NIH within one week of receipt of the email.

### Welcome and Overview

Dr. John McGowan (JJ) reviewed the focus for the meeting, discussing the need for collaboration as well as possibly sharing costs for some development, for example, testing. Additionally, he asked for input regarding contract models to use in this endeavor.

The mission of the SBIR project is to be the arm of eRA to get software out to the community. SBIRs are ahead of the curve to add enhancements to the internal project. SBIR companies will provide features to the community that we know we can't provide. The project provides SBIR companies the opportunity to develop products that tie into the XML data stream, use core and non-core Adobe tags, and go to market with it. Additionally, they can strip down the product so that it is a universal standard available to other agencies. If success is shown in the development of software for competing grants, there may well be other opportunities for software development.

The internal IMPAC II system is used in about 220 countries besides the U.S. There are approximately 500 business rules in the internal system, illustrating how complicated it is. The original database, IMPAC I, was retired on November 1 having served the NIH for many years. Plans call for IMPAC II to be replaced in the next five years.

Today, we are looking at how much SBIR companies can share to help move the project along as well as what else the eRA Project Team needs to provide for the success of this project.

## Discussion

**Trusted broker concept.** What are the federal government's plans to develop a central point (trusted broker) through which applicants can communicate to all government agencies? Paul Markovitz, representing E-Grants, responded that in the long-term, at this time, a "trusted broker" architecture for communication with the federal government is planned. However, this plan is in the distant future. In the short-term, applicants must go to each agency individually. JJ added that at some point, probably as a result of the public's demands, it will all come together into a more cohesive communication system with the federal government. The NIH would welcome a data stream standard.

**E-Grants.** Markovitz said that the target for the E-Grants Storefront is October 2003 (as determined by the OMB). However, what will be available in that timeframe will be the ability to accept data from a defined data stream but the storefront will not provide an interface.

**Institutional Profiles.** Institutional Profiles are scheduled to be on line in the NIH eRA Commons in January. There are between 100–200 of them. Markovitz noted that E-Grants is mandated to have a common Institutional Profile by October 2003 but the profile has not been defined as yet. The plan is for the eRA to define an Institutional Profile now that meets the needs of the NIH, and, when the E-Grants Institutional Profile is operational and available, to use it.

**Profiles.** Those who register in the NIH eRA Commons will "own" their profile. However, how to update the profile has not been defined yet.

**Bi-directional communications.** Sherry Zucker asked what the SBIRs need from the eRA Project Team for bi-directional communications.

**Grant Development.** The NIH is not going to have a Web site or software applications for researchers/applicants to develop a grant application on-line.

**eAuthentication.** Markovitz reported that the Federal government eAuthentication project has not progressed very far. Because the NIH is ahead on the development of an electronic grants system and authentication, it can be a pacesetter for standards that can be used by all Federal agencies.

## SBIR Presentations

Each SBIR company gave a 10-minute overview of their company and proposed product. The companies, product names and representatives are:

Company/Contact	Email/Phone	Product
<b>Cayuse, Inc.</b> Portland, Oregon Harker, Chris	503-297-2108, x207 <a href="mailto:harker@cayuse.com">harker@cayuse.com</a>	<i>GrantSlam eRA: Scalable electronic grants administration</i>
<b>Clinical Tools</b> Raleigh, N.C. Tanner, Brad	919-960-8118 <a href="mailto:tanner@clinicaltools.com">tanner@clinicaltools.com</a>	<i>Electronic Submission of NIH Grant Applications</i>
<b>ERA Software Systems</b> Los Angeles, California Bozler, Dianne A	<a href="mailto:dianne@erasoftwaressystem.com">dianne@erasoftwaressystem.com</a> 323-980-4900	<i>Enhancements to GAMS to Include XML for the NIH Commons</i>
<b>Formatta Corp.</b> Vienna, Virginia Garver, David P	703-346-0407 <a href="mailto:dgarver@formatta.com">dgarver@formatta.com</a>	<i>Next Generation eRA: Portable Internet Date Containers</i>
<b>InfoEd International</b> Albany, New York Johnson, Sr., Edward	518-464-0691 <a href="mailto:ejohnson@infoed.org">ejohnson@infoed.org</a>	<i>Electronic Submission/Response System via an NIH Portal</i>
<b>RAMS Company</b> Germantown, Maryland John Rodman (primary contact) Kirby, William S	301-916-4557 <a href="mailto:jrodman@ramscopany.com">jrodman@ramscopany.com</a> <a href="mailto:wkirby@crosslink.net">wkirby@crosslink.net</a>	<i>Test ERA Software Package with Local Control of Profiles</i>

## Discussion

McGowan posed two questions to the group following the presentations:

- How can we communicate beyond this meeting?
- What can we collaborate on?

**Mailing List**—JJ Maurer said that the eRA will establish a standard mailing list to increase communications and to provide a forum in which to discuss technical issues.

**Standards for Grant Submission**—Maurer also presented some issues for the group to consider:

- There should be a standard for receiving applications, which should be determined in time to be used in the pilot.

- There should be a style sheet for applications that defines fonts, length, and etc. Note: The National Science Foundation (NSF) had a standard postscript form in which applications are and it is acceptable to applicants.
- How can we best, besides the listserv, exchange information?
- How can we communicate with the E-Grants project?
- How will we handle graphics, i.e., what technology will we use?
- How will we handle changes to the applications?
- How can we ensure that applications, Profiles, attachments, etc., have the same format when received by the NIH as when they were sent by the applicant? We have to figure out how to confirm that the data image that was sent in the data stream matches the data image received.

In regard to the last bullet, it was proposed that the 398 be divided into sections, with a format standard established for each. For example, attachments might be sent directly to the IC administrator where the application will be reviewed, and certain sections with graphics and Greek letters might be sent as a PDF file. PDF files, however, cannot be searched, so that might be an issue.

The group agreed on the following:

**Encode files using the Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP) to transmit in XML.**

***NIH Confirmation***—What constitutes a receipt by the NIH? The NIH has developed internal business rules to validate an application. In addition, when the NIH receives an application, it assigns it a number. This number can be used to track the application throughout its lifetime.

***Addressing Last-Minute Submissions***—The group will have to address the NIH policy for last-minute submissions.

***Handling Attachments***—Several technical alternatives for handling attachments were discussed. There is currently no industry standard in place to handle attachments in XML data streams. Neither HHS nor NIH has a standard yet either. Since the issue could not be resolved during this meeting, eRA will publish alternative technical solutions to the SBIR listserv. The SBIR companies will be asked to send their comments and responses back to eRA.

***Security Solution for the Pilot***—The eRA project is committed to piloting an e-CGAP process exchanging live data with grantee institutions in the June–August 2003 timeframe. Since the E-Grants initiative does not yet have an official Business-to-Business (B2B) security solution in place, eRA will need to come up with a minimal interim solution to support the pilot. The target for selecting this solution is the end of January 2003. The security solution would need to be sufficiently generic to work for e-SNAP and FSR as well as e-CGAP.

***Changing Submitted Applications***—The group discussed the issue of correcting, adding to or changing an application after it has been electronically submitted. There would need to be a distinction between update activities prior to and after a cutoff date determined by CSR. Solutions for the time period prior to the cutoff date include keeping applications on the server at the SBIR ASP in a “pending queue” and replacing updated documents while setting a “new version” flag.

Solutions for amending a document after the CSR cutoff date include adding an addendum to the official, stored version of the grant.

**Generic Event Reporting**—JJ McGowan said that the NIH is moving toward the concept of an “event report,” which would be a generic mechanism handling protocols, informed consent forms, etc. He asked for feedback from the group on designing this mechanism.

**E-Grants**—Paul Markovitz said that the E-Grants team is committed to close collaboration with the NIH team. Paul will bring the following feedback from this meeting to E-Grants:

- Federal agencies must collaborate to publish XML data standards.
- E-Grants should not create a government-controlled access point like the NSF FastLane product. Private industry is better suited to provide the applications needed to fill this void.

If businesses take over the “trusted broker” role in the E-Grants model, NIH will not have to take on the “workflow management” piece in grantee institutions.

- The SBIR companies agree that grantee institutions want to be able to control their own profiles on their own systems.
- The feedback to E-Grants from this group is for the research grant piece of E-Grants only—not the state and local government piece.

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## Attendees

Abhinadnad, Jain (Ekagra eRA)	Holland, Charlie (Cayuse)	Rodman, John (RAMS)
Albrecht, Lyn (LTS/OCO)	Johnson, Ed Jr. (InfoEd International)	Senfaute, Jocelyn (Ekagra eRA)
Bhatt, Archita (InfoEd International)	Johnson, Ed Sr. (InfoEd International)	Seppala, Sandy (LTS/OCO)
Bozler, Dianne (ERA Software)	Kirby, Bill (RAMS)	Silver, Sara (Z-Tech)
Cain, Jim (OER)	Markovitz, Paul (E-Grants)	Stone, George (OER/OPERA)
Garver, David (Formatta)	Maurer, JJ (Ekagra eRA)	Swain, Amy (NCRR)
Goodman, Mike (NGIT)	McGowan, JJ (NIAID)	Tanner, Brad (Clinical Tools)
Hall, Dan (Z-Tech)	Mongan, Michael (RAMS)	Twomey, Tim (OD)
Hildreth, Richard (RAMS)	Priest, Ben (Cayuse)	Whitmore, Joseph (Formatta)
	Rao, Harsha (Silicon Spirit)	Wright, David (OD/OPERA)
		Zucker, Sherry (OD/DEIS)