eCGAP Focus Group

Date: Tuesday, July 5, 2005
Time: 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.
Location: Rockledge 1, Room 2198
Advocate: Jennifer Flach

Next Meeting: Monday, July 18, 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., Rockledge 1, Room 2198

Action items

1. (Sara Silver) Arrange for publications to be placed in PDF form after Section C and not be counted toward 25-page limit
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.
3. (Suzanne Fisher) Send information on variations in business rules for R03s and R21s to Sara Silver.
4. (eCGAP Team) Raise issue before EPMC and PRAC of building system to deal with applications sent to non-participating ICs.
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.
6. (Sara Silver) Use statement about presence of consortium to flag application with consortium on eCGAP-RR screen.

July 1 Receipt Date

Jennifer Flach

Jennifer noted that 19 grant applications had been electronically received for the July 1 receipt date. All the applications had modular budgets (seeking funding of up to $250,000 in direct costs). A member asked why more applications were not coming in electronically. Jennifer noted that some Service Providers are still setting up new clients. Some institutions are waiting to submit to NIH via Grants.gov. She suggested that depending on the performance of the eCGAP-Receipt and Referral module for the July cycle, perhaps the Center for Scientific Review can look at offering electronic submitters an incentive of pushing back the receipt date.

Suzanne Fisher noted that such an incentive could be announced mid-to-end July. She said that with a 10-day incentive, the next receipt date will fall on Oct. 10, which happens to be Columbus Day. In that case, the holiday rule would kick in and the date would officially be Oct. 11.

She noted that a neat feature of the eCGAP-RR module is the eDocs button that allows all relevant RR documents— the grant image, the PI history, the cover letter —to open simultaneously in separate browser windows, instead of one by one. With the advent of the J2EE web-based version of eCGAP-RR, referral officers will not even need to push the button for these screens to come up.

Publications in Section C— Sara Silver noted that two issues arose during the recent receipt cycle. For one, eCGAP has a 25-page limit on Section C, including publications, whereas the 398

instructions specifically exclude publications from the 25-page limit. A solution may be to remove the hard limit of 25 pages in eCGAP and give a warning message to an applicant who exceeds the 25-page limit with publications; this application would then be flagged in Receipt and Referral for a decision. The group instead suggested retaining the hard limit of 25 pages and placing the publications in a PDF form after Section C that will not be counted toward the page limit.

Action: (Sara Silver) Arrange for publications to be placed in PDF form after Section C and not be counted toward 25-page limit.

Difference in page limit for introduction—The second issue that arose is that eCGAP limits the introduction to the R03 grant application to one page, whereas the 398 instructions do not specify a limit. An applicant pointed out that the limit is not in keeping with the instructions and was unable to submit electronically.

Members questioned why a ten-page research plan needs to have a three page introduction. Suzanne Fisher noted that the R03 is up for renewal next year and the instructions could then be brought in line with the one page limit that eCGAP enforces. At that time, the requirement of a one page introduction will be reinstated and the warning eliminated.

The group agreed that for the short term, an applicant who exceeds the one page limit for the introduction in eCGAP will be given a warning and the application will be flagged for a decision in Receipt and Referral. Some ICs limit the introduction to one page, so the warning should specifically state: "Some R03s and R21s limit the introduction to one page. Check your Program Announcements to make sure you are compliant." This problem generated a discussion on guidance for customization or standardization of submission criteria and business rules for opportunities.

Customization vs standardization—JJ Maurer noted that a Request for Applications (RFA) can have customized business rules and that the business rule parameters required for an RFA will have to be integrated into eCGAP. Members noted that budget is one of the biggest variations, with some RFAs capping the budgets at 4 years. JJ suggested that if the rules/parameters were set up for RFAs and Program Announcements (PA), then eCGAP would automatically check the rules. If, in the long run, the RFA and PA will have customizable parameters such as page limits, budget ceilings, sponsoring IC, planned study sections, submission dates and grace period, etc, then these parameters should be quantified and made available to the Service Providers to check before submissions. The architecture of the eRA system should be designed to anticipate variable parameters for RFA/PAs as opposed to the fixed set of rules set up right now in the eCGAP and RR systems. Suzanne noted that Jo Anne Goodnight's office is working on an automated guide that includes boilerplate sections and will allow ICs to add their specific sections. This is a web-based system that is still in the works. JJ noted that eventually a checklist of items will also have to be put in Grants.gov for specific guidance to applicants for each RFA/PA. Jennifer noted that while a certain amount of customization can be supported, NIH should eventually move towards standardization. Variability always has a cost, whether it pertains to the manual changes needed for each RFA/PA or calls to the HelpDesk. Suzanne noted that she had some information about R03s and R21s, including range of years and budgets, that she would send to Sara.

Action: (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.

Action: (Suzanne Fisher) Send information on variations in business rules for R03s and R21s to Sara Silver

R21s sent to non-participating ICs —Janna Wehrle raised the issue of her institute (National Institute of General Medical Sciences or NIGMS) receiving a lot of R21s that do not belong there. NIGMS is one of the NIH institutes that accepts investigator-initiated R21 applications only in response to their initiative specifying this mechanism. Janna noted that the erroneously sent R21s are bounced, which leaves applicants with insufficient time to submit their application to the right institute. She wondered if there is any way to forestall this from happening.
Sara suggested incorporating a validation as part of the Commons notification process stating, for example, "Sorry. This is not the IC listed on the Program Announcement." Tom Tatham noted that an enotification would work well and would cut back on the burden of notifying people that they had erroneously sent their application to the wrong IC. Suzanne suggested that it could be a warning that an applicant would receive stating, for instance, "The IC you requested did not match the Program Announcement." Sara noted that while such a warning would work for applications from Grants.gov, it would not for eCGAP because eRA would have no control over how the Service Providers present this warning. Tom suggested that eRA could cut down the burden on Service Providers by hosting a table of parameters that SPs could check. Sara noted that eRA already has a table of parameters listing the ICs that are applicable to an RFA/PA. However, while they do not share this table with SPs, a database change would enable them to do so. JJ noted this issue is another example of the customization per RFA/PA and that if eRA is given the go-ahead to build a parametrized system, they would do so. Suzanne noted that this issue probably needs to be raised before the Extramural Program Management Committee (EPMC) or the Peer Review Advisory Committee (PRAC).
Action: (eCGAP Team) Raise issue before EPMC and PRAC of building system to deal with applications sent to non-participating ICs

Consortia Requirements for Detailed Budgets

Sara Silver

One resource page—Sara Silver said that she had received feedback on the consortia requirements for detailed budgets from Suzanne and Everett Sinnett. One issue that Suzanne raised is that resource information is needed for each consortium/subcontract organization. Sara noted that the 398 instructions do not mention more than one resource page, so she asked the group to proffer advice on the issue. Suzanne noted that just like the budget for the parent and the consortium, it is logical to assume there would need to be a resource page for both of them as well. The group suggested that if the applicant submits more than one resource page, it should be as a PDF in Section H. Sara noted that there is only one bookmark for the resource section, so that there would not be a separate bookmark for the subcontract resources. However, multiple pages could be accepted; it would simply not be a separate section.
DUNS numbers—Sara noted that Everett had asked if there was any way to capture DUNS information for each consortium organization to enable Peer Review to do conflict checking in a more automated manner. The Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) is a nine-digit identification number provided by the commercial company Dun & Bradstreet. The answer is – not yet. Providing DUNS information is optional for the consortium organization at this time. David George and Richard Panniers noted that it would be useful if more information was captured in Peer Review; for instance, if key personnel were required to plug in their Commons

User names, it would be helpful for a fact check. Sara noted that the new 398 provides the ability to put in a Commons user name for key personnel, but she did not know what kind of response that had generated. Sara noted that data on key personnel is collected for electronic applications only as structured data; however this data cannot be viewed in IMPAC II. The group noted that the availability of this data in IMPAC II would be immensely useful. Suzanne wondered if this data could be manually entered for paper applications. Sara suggested that these issues be raised with the ongoing Peer Review JAD group as they would know how to incorporate these suggestions.

Sara noted that the 398 requires a separate statement to indicate if an application has a consortium or not. The plan is to use the presence of this statement to indicate consortia. She suggested that this could also be used to flag an application with a consortium on the eCGAP-RR screen.

Action: (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

Action: (Sara Silver) Use statement about presence of consortium to flag application with consortium on eCGAP-RR screen.

Table Talk

Grants.gov encouraging heads up on receipt dates—Jennifer said that one of the issues that Grants.gov people raised at the June 29 stakeholders' meeting was that as they ramp up for increased volumes of applications, they would appreciate it if agencies let them know about proposed receipt dates in advance of their grant packages being listed on Grants.gov. This is to avoid a situation where most agencies will zero in on one day and strain the system and support.

SBIR announcement—Jennifer said the plan is to make the formal announcement —that SBIR/STTRs will be the first grant opportunities to be submitted to NIH via Grants.gov on December 1—only after August 1, so as not confuse the SBIR/STTR applicants who are submitting for the Aug. 1 deadline. There will be some mention of this internally within NIH and at the seventh annual NIH SBIR/STTR (Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer Conference) slated for July 28 and 29 in Bethesda. The plan is to mandate that all SBIR/STTR applications for Dec. 1 come in electronically.

Jennifer noted that the end-to-end software required for submission to NIH via Grants.gov is still being developed. The software that deals with the SBIR/STTR submission is being worked on with Grants.gov.

Print or CD—Richard Panniers noted that if all the SBIR/STTR applications are going to come in electronically, there should be an internal discussion within CSR as to whether these will be printed or sent on a CD to reviewers. Suzanne noted that the reason the applications for the July 1 receipt date are to be printed is to place both electronic and paper applicants on an even playing field when it comes to review. That issue may not arise if the SBIR/STTR applications come in all electronic. Richard noted that SBIR Phase II applications and SBIR Fast Track applications (bundling both Phase I and II) may need to be printed because they are more complex than Phase I applications. Many reviewers are more comfortable with reviewing on paper and printing copies would make it easy for them.

Attendees

Fisher, Suzanne (CSR) Flach, Jennifer (OER) George, David (NIBIB)

Goodman, Michael (OD)

Liberman, Ellen (NEI)

Maurer, JJ (IBM/Ekagra/OD)

Panniers, Richard (CSR)

Silver, Sara (IBM/Z-Tech Corp./OER)

Swain, Amy (NCRR)

Subramanya, Manju (LTS/OD)

Tatham, Tom (CSR)

Wehrle, Janna (NIGMS)