eCGAP Focus Group

Date: Tuesday, November 2, 2004
Time: 9:00 –11:00 a.m.
Location: Rockledge 1, Room 8111
Advocate: Jennifer Flach

Next Meeting: Tuesday, November 16, 9:00 a.m.–11:00 a.m., Rockledge 1, RM 2198

Action Items

1. (Lana Diggs) Add these new features to list of changes for Electronic Corrections:

- Add history of prior decisions made so user can go back and look at justification for rejecting or approving grant application.
- Add save button to allow the 'justification' explanation to be saved as a draft.
- Approvals or routing will be determined based on defined business rules
- Build in permission rules to define the owner for routing, notifications and the capability to review/accept corrections

Electronic Corrections

http://era.nih.gov/docs/Electronic Corrections new.pdf

Jennifer Flach stated that in the current electronic receipt world, grant applicants can submit corrections electronically until the application is verified by a Principal Investigator and Signing Official in the NIH Commons. Once they sign off, the application goes forward, and any corrections are sent in paper to the Scientific Review Administrator. However, in the paper world, a lot of changes take place post-receipt. The eCGAP team is planning to incorporate those changes electronically through business processes and software changes.

Lana Diggs gave a presentation on the list of features that exist or that they plan to incorporate for electronic corrections:

- Replacement of full application
- Acceptance of addenda and PDF attachments
- Structured data correction

The scope of the first pilot (for the June receipt date) is that full replacement will be allowed to a point as well as addenda, while structured data correction will not be in place.

Lana stated that once a Service Provider requests an electronic correction to a grant application on behalf of a Principal Investigator, the request for correction will appear in an eRequest Queue that NIH staff can access through a link. The system will recognize the user and show what the user currently has in queue. If the application is with the Division for Receipt and Referral (DRR), the request will appear in the DRR queue; if it is with the Scientific Review Administrator, it will show up in the SRA queue. She noted that for the pilot, these corrections will be allowed only up to the review meeting. Tom Tatham suggested they incorporate existing business rules. For example, for changes in budget details, the corrections are accepted only if they come both from the Principal Investigator and Signing Official; a biographical sketch is acceptable from just the PI. Lana responded that she was collecting these business rules as they developed the processes. She noted that if the application was in DRR, the chiefs would determine what is acceptable or not. Once the application is in review, the Integrated Review Group chief or the Scientific Review Administrator (if the grant application has been assigned) would make that call. Tom asked if there would be provision to delegate that authority. Lana stated that she would include such a provision. She demonstrated a Review and Accept screen that showed the grant ID number, the name of the PI, the type of correction and the justification from the PI for seeking a correction. The user would click to see the correction and compare it to the current application. Then the user would click on approve or reject, giving an explanation for any rejection so that the PI and SO would know why their correction was turned down.

Discussion points:

Recruiting applicants—Richard Panniers asked what would be done during the February receipt date, if these corrections are not in place. Lana replied that the same process now in place would occur then. Jennifer stated that they did not expect a high number of applications in production, expecting to garner 50 for the first receipt date and 50 for the second receipt date. Richard asked if people were reluctant to submit applications electronically. Jennifer replied that she would put feelers out to Service Providers to find out what obstacles they are running into with recruiting new applicants. eRA does outreach to let the community know about electronic applications, but it leaves the marketing to Service Providers. She noted that it is hard for Service Providers to focus on recruitment right now in the midst of the current pilot. Richard noted that recruitment seemed to be the real bottleneck.

Information—A member asked if there was any place they could direct people who were interested in submitting grants electronically. Jennifer noted that the eRA website had information on electronic submission of grants (http://era.nih.gov/Projectmgmt/SBIR/sbir_grants.htm). One member suggested it may be a good idea to have a link to this page on the Grants and Funding Opportunities page (http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/) on the main NIH website or wherever the information about PHS 398 was listed.

Detailed budgets—A member asked if eCGAP planned to receive detailed budgets for the June receipt date. Jennifer noted that because eCGAP has not been receiving enough full budget grant applications, it may be hard for them to declare production for those in June. Sara Silver noted that the eCGAP business rule specifies that if the budget is less than $250,000, the applicant has to submit a modular budget. eCGAP will not allow a detailed budget for less than that amount. George “Skip” Moyer noted that the Agency for Healthcare Research Quality (AHRQ) takes detailed budgets for all applications; their business processes do not allow them to accept modular budgets.

Versioning—Skip wondered if eCGAP would keep a copy of the original application and how could one tell which one was the original. Lana stated that they would have versioning. If there is a new abstract, Richard Panniers stated that the reviewers should be flagged to the fact that they are reading something new. Sara Silver noted that it would be stated on the cover page. Brent suggested labeling it red to get attention. Sara noted that if they were to take an image and add a link, it would amount to modifying the image and that could cause legal problems.

Putting a stop to corrections—Sandy Karen stated that her organization (HRSA) provides for a six week application period. Once the application is submitted, no changes are allowed, making for a level playing field. She wondered that in the electronic world, at what point does one say "no more changes." Brent Stanfield stated that it was up to the reviewer to determine if it was gaming or an honest mistake that can be easily corrected. The electronic process is simply mirroring the paper world of today. Ellen Liberman noted that the system is accommodating NIH culture, the way NIH does business.

Saving rejected applications—JJ Maurer asked what should be done with grant information that is not approved. David George noted that rejected applications need to be retained in case there is an appeal by the PI. Skip noted that the original document has to stay so that the reviewer has an electronic trail. Edward Myrbeck also suggested that a user have the ability to save a draft of a justification for rejection he or she is working on. The group also agreed that the system needs to have built in permission rules to define the owner for routing, notifications and the capability to review/accept corrections.

Action: (Lana Diggs) Add these new features to list of changes in Electronic Corrections:

- **Add history of prior decisions made so user can go back and look at justification for rejecting or approving grant application.**
- **Add save button to allow the 'justification' explanation to be saved as a draft.**
- **Approvals or routing will be determined based on defined business rules.**
- **Allow for delegation of authority to determine whether a correction will be accepted or not. Have built in permission rules to define the owner for routing, notifications and the capability to review/accept corrections.**

Presentation: Changes in Receipt and Referral

Sara Silver
http://era.nih.gov/docs/Electronic processes.pdf

Overview—In the paper world, the first step in receipt and referral is when the applications come into the Center for Scientific Review's Division of Receipt and Referral and clerks enter the data into computers. Assistant chiefs then do the manual breakout, working at a huge table with stacks of paper and divvying up the applications among the most appropriate Integrated Review Groups (IRGs) and the ICs; the process moves along very quickly. A referral officer then assigns it to an Institute, and refers it to an IRG or to an Institute for review. A second unit does the Quality Assurance, generates labels, generates grant numbers and releases applications. The print shop copies, scans and loads the images. Paper copies get distributed, which kicks off the notice to the Institute and Investigator.

In the electronic world, the first step of data entry is eliminated as the eCGAP eXchange will automatically add in the information. The first contact unit does the quality assurance; most business validations will have already been done by eCGAP, and others run as an automated process in eCGAP RR. Assistant chiefs use breakout module software to refer the applications to the appropriate section—no more paper stacks. The Referral Officer sees the applications assigned to him and refers them to the right study section. There is no unit two, no scanning. Five copies are still made for the primary and secondary reviewer; CSR handles the copies.

Sara walked the group through individual screens. She noted that first contact can query eCGAP applications and pull applications with identifiable problems into a batch. The user can indicate whether there is a problem with the application or move the application for breakout. Suzanne Fisher noted that in the breakout detail screen, a neat feature is that the user can pull out just the checklist or just the budget if he or she does not want to see the whole application. However, one downside is that electronic breakout is much slower than it is on paper. She noted that it is a lot easier to open a folder than to look at different screens.

Suzanne noted that the biggest challenge for all users would be adjusting to an all electronic culture. She observed that there is something about the paper on your desk that reminds you that there is work to do; when information is transmitted electronically, there is no trigger to say that there is something to do. When something physical is not coming through your office, how do you know you have to deal with it?

Sara acknowledged the help provided by Suzanne and others in modifying the electronic R & R processes and invited group members to send any suggestions her way.

Update on action items from previous meeting:

1. (All) Suggest wording of purpose statement for newly expanded eCGAP Focus Group. **(Jennifer stated that she would work with the Communications Branch to draft a purpose statement for the group's review. She also urged the group to individually define their own role in the group as part of an effort to identify stakeholders and their purpose in the group)**
2. (Jennifer Flach) Make an eCGAP presentation to a select group of the External Review Committee at the Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality (AHRQ). **(Jennifer stated that Skip and she are working on dates).**

Attendees

Flach, Jennifer (OER)
Diggs, Lana (OER)
George, David (NIBIB)
Goodman, Michael (OD)
Fisher, Suzanne (CSR)
Liberman, Ellen (NEI)
Long, Kelly (HRSA)
Karen, Sandy (HRSA)
Maurer, JJ (OD)
Moyer, George (Skip) (AHRQ)
Myrbeck, Edward (NIAMS)
Panniers, Richard (CSR)
Silver, Sara (OER)
Stanfield, Brent (CSR)
Swain, Amy (NCRR)
Subramanya, Manju (LTS)
Tatham, Thomas (CSR)