

NIH eRA CGAP

Service Provider Q&A

August 4, 2004

1. For the June/July pilot, how many proposals were submitted electronically? How many proposals had a detailed budget?

Answer:

How many proposals were submitted electronically?

- **34 total**
- **31 were verified**

How many proposals had a detailed budget?

- **2 total**
- **1 verified**

2. One of our customers gave us feedback on the final PDF image of the application that they rejected. She was wondering why the budget detail section amounts include the decimal and two zeros. She said that in the paper application that she would “round” the budget costs and not include the decimal amount—just enter whole dollars.

Answer:

NIH just wants whole dollars. Just because the schema ALLOWS decimals does not mean the SP should collect cents. There is nothing wrong with the Service Providers collecting cents, but we want the budget supplied to us in whole dollars. *The Service Providers (SPs) need to make sure the calculations submitted are correct.*

In addition, the NIH validation rules for the RequestedSalary in the SalariesAndWages data require that the RequestedSalary be equal to the percent effort multiplied by the BaseSalary if the BaseSalary is provided. Our UI allows the applicant to fill in all 3 of these items. Should we modify the UI to require the BaseSalary and the PercentEffort and calculate the RequestedSalary as a read-only field?

Answer:

That is the correct interpretation of the NIH validation rules for these items. It is up to the SP to determine how to implement their UI.

The schemas use CommonTypes.CurrencyTypes to define the format for the costs elements in the Detailed Budget. This CurrencyTypes defines the data type as decimal. Should we be collecting the budget data with the decimal amounts included? If we allow the applicant to prepare the budget detail as they would in the paper application (this is what we are doing now), they would enter whole dollar amounts and round up or round down as necessary. The XML definition of the costs to be of data type decimal and the validation rule for the RequestedSalary xml element do not allow us to follow this approach. If we let them fill in the costs in whole dollars that are rounded we get an error in the validation at NIH.

Answer:

If an SP is collecting itemized costs and rolling them up to produce the budget "category" costs that they supply to us, there is absolutely nothing wrong with collecting cents in this context; but the calculations submitted must be correct.

Added information

Why do we use our CurrencyType (which supports two fractional decimal places) when in fact NIH wants only whole dollar amounts?

The currency type was modeled a while ago, accepting costing data to greater detail than we needed to receive. This is the approach that Grants.gov is taking with their budget sections in the XML. Even though the preponderance of Federal agencies are likely to want whole dollars only, there are some that account down to the penny so the schema has to support that.

Rounding Up and Down

SPs may be unclear as to how to handle the following budget costs in regarding to whole dollars, rounding up and down:

Hammer	\$15.00
Chisel	\$4.00
Screwdriver	\$ 3.49
Total Equipment:	\$22.49
	rounds to: \$22.00

Pencils	\$3.00
Paper	\$15.00
Rubber Bands:	\$1.49
Total Supplies:	\$19.49
	rounds to: \$19.00

Total Direct costs:	\$41.98
	rounds to: \$42.00

If SPs do all their calculations in cents, and roll the categories up, they could end up with "total direct costs" that have drifted by a dollar (or more) since they would be *rounding* the categorical totals prematurely. If they carry the cents into their overall total Direct Costs (DC) calculations, they are going to round up later on (whereas the categorical level they ended up rounding down and losing the precision). The result in this case would be that we give them a validation error saying their budget categories didn't add up properly to what they said the total DC was (22 + 19 does not equal 42).

This is a classical data processing problem. The best approach, as in the example above, is to not round the calculated total DC before sending to us, but simply add up the (already-rounded) categoricals. Alternatively, the SP can take the approach of always rounding *up* on the categoricals and then adding the rounded-categoricals to produce the grand total DC.