Institutional Registration in eRA Commons – Transcript

Welcome to this tutorial video on How to Register an Institution in eRA Commons. Individuals, on their own, cannot create an eRA Commons account. Since Commons is used to track, submit reports, and manage federal grants awarded to an institution; research administrators, Principal Investigators, scientists, students, and others, will receive access to Commons through their awarded institution or organization.

The process starts with an institution or organization that wishes to submit for an NIH or partner agency grant. But before an application can be submitted, the institution must be registered with eRA Commons. In this initial step, the institution must identify an authorized person as a Signing Official.

A Signing Official (SO) has institutional authority to legally bind the institution in grants administration matters. The label, "Signing Official," is used in conjunction with the NIH eRA Commons. The SO can register the institution, create and modify the institutional profile, and create or affiliate user accounts.

The SO also can view all grants within the institution, including status and award information. An SO can create additional Signing Official accounts as well as accounts with any other role or combination of roles. For most institutions, the Signing Official is located in his or her Office of Sponsored Research, or equivalent.

Before beginning the registration process, check to make sure your institution is not already registered with eRA Commons. You can do this easily.
- Go to the eRA Commons Home Page
- Click Commons Quick Queries along the right side.
- Then click Commons Registered Organizations link
- Click the Run Query button to have the system build the list of currently registered organizations. The system will display the names in alphabetical order. Because there are thousands of registered organizations, it may take a few seconds to build the list, so be patient.
- You can then search through the list to see if your organization is registered.

Before an institution can begin the registration process in eRA Commons, it must have a valid and verifiable Dunn and Bradstreet (DUNS) number. A nine-digit DUNS number is an NIH requirement that is used to uniquely identify a business entity. Some DUNS numbers will include an additional 4 digits, referred to as "DUNS plus four."

NOTE: Start the process early! Before an institution can successfully submit a grant application, the institution must also be registered with the System for Award Management (SAM) and Grants.gov. And if your organization is a small business, it will need to register with the Small Business Administration (SBA).   Combined, these registrations can take up to 8 weeks to complete.

At the time of initial eRA Commons registration, the SO will also have the option of designating an Account Administrator (AA). The AA is an individual typically in the institution's central research administration office to facilitate the administration of NIH eRA Commons accounts.

Here are the steps to register an institution with eRA Commons:
- On the Commons home page, select the Register Grantee Organization link in the upper right corner.
- The Register Institution screen displays.
- Read the instructional steps and click the Register Now button.
- The Register Institution screen displays with required fields for institution and account information.
- Complete the fields for the Institution Information and Accounts Information sections noting the following:
    - All fields followed by a red asterisk (*) are required
    - A minimum of one address line (Street 1) is required
    - The Institution Name may contain a maximum of 100 characters

- An Official's Title may contain a maximum of 240 characters
- The User Name must have a minimum of six (6) characters (numbers and letters can be combined but no spaces can be used). Usernames may not exceed the maximum of twenty (20) characters.
- The AA position and information is optional. But when you start adding information for the AA, you will need to fill in all the required account information.

When the Register Institution screen opens, you will be prompted to input your 9 digit DUNS number and then click the Verify DUNS button. If your DUNS number cannot be verified, you will see a warning message. If you proceed regardless of the warning, you will see a second warning when the information is saved. You can then choose to proceed or not. If the DUNS number is verified, the address information for your institution will automatically be added and cannot be edited.

Verify that all entered information is correct before selecting Save. Once Save is clicked, a confirmation of submission message will appear.

Not long after the submission of the registration form, the Signing Official will receive an email to confirm the submission request. A link in the message must be clicked to confirm the information.

The E-mail verification screen confirms that the e-mail address provided for the SO is valid. NIH then reviews the registration, which is now pending approval.

Once the SOs email address is confirmed and the registration request is reviewed by the NIH, a second email is sent stating the status of the registration, either approved or rejected.

If approved, select the hyperlink in the message to finalize the registration process. The link opens the IPF (Institutional Profile) confirmation screen. It notes that NIH has approved the registration and wants to confirm the name of your institution. Click Yes to continue.

The final confirmation is then opened which displays what institutional address information NIH should use and put into the IPF form. Using the radio buttons, select either NIH Preferred option or User's Registration Preferred option. Then click the Submit button.

Once the institution information is confirmed, both the SO and the AA will receive two e-mail notifications. The first email will contain the Commons user name, and the second email will contain a temporary password to be used to log into eRA Commons.

NOTE: The Signing Official must first log in to eRA Commons and change their password BEFORE the Account Administrator can log in.

After successfully logging into Commons using the temporary password provided in the final email, the SO is prompted to change their password in accordance with the NIH password policy.

Once the SO's password has been successfully changed, they will select the eRA Commons link on the next screen. The SO will then see a summary of their registration information. This screen will have an accept button at the bottom. The SO must click Accept. This is the electronic signature for the registration. A final confirmation screen is presented, noting that the organization is now successfully registered in Commons. The Account Administrator can log into Commons with the username and temporary password they received in their emails.

The SO and the AA may now create new eRA Commons accounts for their institution, or affiliate existing accounts to their institution.

A number of resources are provided for you to assist you with this process. If you still have questions concerning the process on how to register your institution, contact the eRA Service Desk.

This concludes this video tutorial on How to Register an Institution in eRA Commons. Thanks for watching.