GM Lead Users Group

Date: February 09, 2004, Wednesday
Time: 9:00–11:00 a.m.
Location: 6101 Executive Building, 2nd Floor Conference Room
Advocates: Michael Loewe and Pamela Mayer

Next Meeting: Wednesday, March 09, 9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m. Atrium Building, 6101 Executive Blvd, 2nd Floor Conference Room.

Action Items

1. (Pam Mayer) Publish website showing User Interface (UI) of the new end to end training activities to show to Commons Work Group.
2. (Eddie Myrbeck) Construct survey to assess needs/address suggestions of GM Lead Users Group.
3. (Mike Loewe) Secure a helpdesk representative to attend the GM Lead Users Group meeting.

Eddie Myrbeck opened the meeting by reminding group that they are a resource to GM users at their respective ICs. Users should coordinate IMPAC II Helpdesk requests whenever possible in order to divert basic concerns or questions, such as how to access the Grant Folder. Grant Management Lead Users should be there to alleviate the stress and help them solve these issues.

Electronic Competing Grant Application Process (eCGAP) Focus Group Overview

Eddie Myrbeck

In 2004 NCRR funded 6 SBIR applications to provide applicants the ability to submit competing applications electronically. The goal for this year was to submit 600 electronic applications, with a more realistic expectation of around 200. These Service Providers are currently concerned with working on bug fixes and other IT issues, the Lead Users are responsible for making sure that other users know about the electronic shift and should point those interested to the eRA webpage to learn more http://era.nih.gov/. The following question was asked about the Grant Application Process:

> *Q. Are there any institutions that have more applications than others?*
>
> *A. Eddie was not sure of an exact list, and will look into compiling one. Michael Loewe gave the following tentative list of organizations expected to supply a larger application output: Commons, MIT, Penn State, Michigan, and UCLA.*

Grants Closeout

Mike Loewe / All

Mike Loewe said that by the end of this month, all grantees will have the ability to submit closeout documents through the Commons. This ability requires adding grant records to the Closeout Module. Because all the information will be stored in Closeout, users will either ignore specific grants or review the status and history of a grant. If these records are not added, the grantees will not see the necessary information for their grants. The group has to make sure that all of the Closeout information is up to date within the system. Current information should be updated before dated material so that the branch chiefs, who are concerned with information from 2004 to 2005, can see pertinent, updated information.

Mike Loewe suggested that, since grants are not officially closed until three months after they end, termination reports should run on a monthly basis. Updated records should be added to Closeout, and the grant should sit for three months so that the grantee may go in and update the record or pull attachments as needed. Eventually, users can come in and end the record. Pamela Mayer stated that this all revolved around a training issue, where the users need to be taught how to use the options within Closeout that are available to them. The following question was asked about the Closeout issue:

> *Q. In Just-In-Time, all information needs to be submitted one time, together. Is this the method of the Closeout process, or will users be allowed to submit separately and whenever they want?*
>
> *A. Currently, everything will be submitted at one time, but eventually more than one person will be able to add information to the report at different times.*

Mike stated that the most important aspect of the electronic formatting process is the need for it to be centralized, which ensures an easier, more logical flow.

Overview of Type 5 Receipt and Scanning Process

Mike Loewe

Mike gave a background to the Type 5 submission process as it relates to the eRA. Currently, Type 5 forms are submitted by the grantee to the Second Floor eRa office at Rockledge, Building 1. The Type 5 form is then added into IMPAC II, copied if needed, and sent off to the appropriate IC. A few problems arise within this process; the following is a list of a few issues Mike mentioned to the group:

1. Some records of certain Grant Numbers are lost either because they are routed incorrectly or because the records are sent to the wrong IC. To remedy this problem, the staff is working on establishing better communication with the ICs as well as keeping better records of the grants.

2. Grantees are either incorrectly completing grants, or are skipping certain steps on the submission form. This causes a problem in generating a correct Grant Cover Sheet, which pulls a Grant Image that is then coupled with the incorrect grant. If any of these types of mistakes are found, Lead Users have the responsibility to catch and record them.

3. Grantees are initiating eSNAPs (Electronic Streamlined Non-Competing Award Process applications), routing them through the Commons, and printing them out. Mike suggested some kind of rule calling for the prevention of printing these eSNAPS. The

eRA has had to manually identify grantees trying to upload initiated eSNAPs. Mike also proposed the mandate of a submission date, after which grantees could no longer submit forms.

The important thing to remember is to work cooperatively with the DEAS to centralize everything in order to create and maintain a smoother, more efficient system for grant submission. Mike called for more communication between GM Lead Users and the ICs.

Mike talked about the problem in the 2590's Personnel Report wherein the applicant submits one copy with the original, which is uploaded to the Grant Folder. I/Cs then receive a copy which doesn't contain the Personnel Report. The 2590 instructions tell applicants not to duplicate the Personnel Report in the copies they submit. A disconnection occurs in this process, which slows down the ability to check images within the Grant Folder to see if they are there.

Another problem is the length of time it takes to see uploaded applications in the Grant Folder, taking anywhere from 15 minutes to four days. Pam Mayer noticed that the problem was getting better in that it was taking less time to view objects within the folder.

Mike also told the group about an issue concerning grantees where edit checks are not working properly to differentiate between Human and Animal work on an eSNAP and a scanned SNAP application. These checks are needed to distinguish different policies and procedures between these two groups. Pam said that she completed a progress report the day before this meeting, neglecting to make a distinction between eSNAP and scanned SNAP and the process worked fine. Mike still insisted that the group push a mandate that the grantees must fill out all pertinent information correctly, or else the process just gets more complicated and more time is wasted. The following question was asked about the timeframe of this process:

Q. Is there a standard timeframe when Lead Users get back progress reports from ICs and if so, what is it?

A. Next week, this whole process will be gone over in detail. Originally, the copies would not be going back to the ICs beginning April 1. However, Mike believes that paper copies are still needed while the entire system works on converting to electronic.

TA Module Update

Pam Mayer

Pam explained that all Client Server Applications are undergoing a conversion to Web-Based Applications. Concurrently with this process, they are looking at a new end-to-end process for TA Modules with X-Train (an eRA system that allows program directors and trainees to submit Statement of Appointments and Termination Notices electronically). They hope to improve upon this process, however, by including a two-way conversation built into the system, which would make it less of a paper process and more of an electronic one. Right now, they are working on creating a better flow of how the information goes through the system. On the Lead User end, they wish to define not only the ability to accept or reject paperwork, but also to determine validations for appointing and terminating training. For now, only TA Modules are being converted, without any changes to the functionality.

The Commons working group saw a PowerPoint presentation on this conversion process, but asked for a website to be created that would allow them to interact with the functionality. Pam asked the working group to supply her and her team with program directors who have not only produced successful training grant programs, but who have experience using X-Train, to tell them what they did and did not like about that program. This website will be published by March 1 with feedback to follow within three weeks thereafter. Finally, a small user group will be setup to test out the website and provide more feedback.

Action: (Pam Mayer) Publish website showing User Interface (UI) of the new end to end training activities to show to Commons Work Group.

Future Meetings / Training Discussion

Eddie Myrbeck

Eddie said that they will release a survey to assess the needs of the group along with addressing all member suggestions. Along with this survey, there will be a footnotes-management demo presented to the group. Eddie said that if anyone had any other suggestions, comments, or concerns, to address them to either Pam or him.

Action: (Eddie Myrbeck) Construct survey to assess needs/address suggestions of GM Lead Users Group.

General Questions

Q. What is the status of the IMPAC II web base?

A. There were more bugs than expected. Mike stated that this issue goes hand-in-hand with the conversion from existing client server applications into the J2EE architecture. GM was given a timeline and implementation for this project in January, but the contractor who was given this responsibility began doing other conversions. Now, everything they are identifying as problems exist in eRA as maintenance fixes. The current web application is not stable. They need to fix problems and then run another test. The new test will take place in a month and then sent out for implementation in two months. It is just too unstable to be sent out before then. Everyone involved here knows that this is a high priority and is working hard on getting this issue finished and tested. The pilot ***will not*** *be out before the end of the fiscal year.*

Q. Are the client server issues any closer to being resolved?

A. The initial goal was to complete critical fixes to the client servers while re-designing and creating a new and better system. Now, they need to maintain the client server version as well as the J2EE version, but neither one is working to optimum performance. They are currently working on these problems.

Q. Should specialists still be pushed to use the web base version?

A. Yes, if it is working. Right now, before it is stabilized, it depends on the day whether it works or not.

Mike Loewe suggested that the group secure a Helpdesk representative/liaison to discuss issues with them. This would allow greater communication between the Lead Users Group and the Helpdesk, making problem solving easier and more efficient. The problem right now is that productivity is down because solutions take too long to establish. Mike said that the eRA needs to focus its scope so that specific requirements are met, rather than just creating more issues. He also stated that the business community needs to more clearly define what it needs at the higher level.

Action: (Mike Loewe) Secure a helpdesk representative to attend the GM Lead Users Group meeting.