



## eRA Project Team Meeting Minutes

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**Date:** Tuesday, July 27, 2004  
**Time:** 9:00–10:25 a.m.  
**Location:** Rockledge 1, 5<sup>th</sup> floor conference room  
**Chair:** Izja Lederhendler

**Next Meeting:** Tuesday, August 10, 9:00 a.m., Rockledge 1, 5<sup>th</sup> floor conference room

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### Opening Remarks

*Izja Lederhendler*

- ❑ CGAP, a high visibility item for the team, is on track and on schedule.
- ❑ Izja asked Mike Goodman to update the team on current 424 Research and Related (R&R) activities. Mike explained that R&R is a set of common data requirements used across federal agencies that are involved in funding research and related projects. Marcia Hahn, working with counterparts at the Department of Education and National Science Foundation, helped to finalize the R&R dataset. Grants.gov is using the 424 R&R forms to provide a common face to the government. Agency specific forms are also accepted to augment the 424 R&R forms. Mike reported that work has begun on NIH specific forms to be tested with Grants.gov later in the year. Several small cross-functional working groups will be convened soon to finalize the NIH specific forms. A great deal of work comparing the 398 to the 424 R&R has already taken place.
- ❑ A high-level policy group has been formed to look at issues surrounding the assignment Co-Principal Investigators. Currently, only one Principal Investigator (PI) is allowed per grant. A change in policy to allow multiple PIs to be tracked for a single grant will have large implications throughout the grants process. Izja will update the team as additional information becomes available.

### eRA Team Earns DHHS Secretary's Award for Distinguished Service

*Scarlett Gibb*

Scarlett announced that the eRA Project Team received the DHHS Secretary's Award for Distinguished Service. She thanked the entire group for their efforts.

### New eRA System Made Easy Brochure

*Sandy Seppala*

Sandy unveiled the new "eRA System Made Easy" brochure. The brochure targets all NIH staff members who are in any way involved in the grants management process. It is designed to entice them to use eRA System modules and data access tools. The brochure maps to eRA System business area pages on the eRA website (<http://era.nih.gov/>) where more information is provided.

The efforts of many members of the eRA Planning, Communications, and Outreach team have finally turned Sandy's idea for an outreach tool into a reality—Matt Craner created the design and Allyson Armistead redesigned the corresponding Web pages on the eRA website. The brochure provides the following information in a quick and easy format:

- ❑ Key benefits of the eRA system
- ❑ Directory of eRA System Resources (websites, newsletters, training, helpdesk)
- ❑ A guide to popular modules and tools users in different roles may want to use

Copies of the brochure can be obtained by contacting Sandy Seppala.

## **Strategic Planning**

*Izja Lederhendler*

Izja explained that he would like to involve the team in the strategic planning process by initially soliciting team member input for setting high level goals for eRA. Starting in early October, he will begin a process in which small groups will be brought together to answer some very specific questions (e.g. What do you see eRA becoming in the next 3-5 years? What measurable accomplishments should eRA achieve to claim success in 3 years? 5 years?).

Izja emphasized that it is not possible to do an effective job of annual budgeting and planning without having such high level goals clearly defined. Steve Hughes commented that a strategic vision is also crucial to architecture planning.

Current lists of project requests simply cannot be managed rationally within budget and resource constraints without an accepted strategic direction. Otherwise it is very difficult to determine and plan for scope creep and risks associated with changes in scope.

Some team members expressed their concerns that this exercise has been done before and the program has not yet met the goals set years before. They noted that new dreams are good, but must be balanced with current needs. Izja explained that although the vision of the program has been articulated in the past, it was not done in a way that links a vision to concrete deliverables that must be achieved along a designated timeline and within budgetary constraints. If outlined in this manner, it will be possible to describe (in specific detail) the impact an emerging initiative will have on the agreed upon/planned scope of the project and the downstream effects on goals, resources, and budget.

The team asked how a vision statement can be written with enough flexibility to accommodate new pressures (e.g., Co-PI, Roadmap)? Izja simply stated that emerging initiatives will always challenge eRA priorities. New initiatives must be looked at in the context of an overall strategic direction, without it it is difficult to manage new and competing requests: what additional resources are required, what is the impact of implementation on existing budgets, resources, and timelines? And what can be done to offset that impact?

Izja reminded the team that eRA must now manage the interests of many governance bodies and stakeholders. He would like to ensure that the Project Team continues to have a strong voice in the process and hopes that this forum will provide that voice. The output of these group discussions, together with input from other sources (IV&V, governance bodies, etc.) will be used to form the initial strategic vision of the eRA program.

Izja remarked that NIH can no longer function without eRA functioning at a high level.

## Project Team Meeting Feedback

*Izja Lederhendler*

Izja reported that the Project Team meetings are open to the entire eRA Project Team and are a forum to share information and raise concerns. The format of the meetings has varied from *show & tell* sessions to open discussions on hot topics. Izja asked the team for their thoughts on the meetings (i.e., What is working well and what is missing?).

The general theme of the feedback was to continue to schedule Project Team Meetings for the following major reasons:

- Receiving information including updates in various areas
- Opportunity to raise concerns and hear discussions from multiple perspectives
- Personal knowledge of new contractors, staff, and advocates

Feedback included:

- ❑ The meetings are useful for **getting tactical information that can be brought back to the institutes**
- ❑ Attending the meetings provides an **interactive format for receiving information**
  - The use of email to relate similar information is not as effective—lost in the volume of emails, does not allow for discussion or sharing of concerns between business areas
- ❑ The meetings are an **opportunity to raise concerns** to eRA management
- ❑ Would like to see **more timely information on releases and status of requests**
  - If delayed, why? What are the constraints? An understanding of the impacts and constraints across business areas can open the door to trans-business communication and prioritization.
  - Would like to see high level project progress updates and have access to more detailed information at the specific request level.
  - Schedules have direct impact on decision making.
- ❑ There have been a lot of changes in the eRA organization, process and in specific team members. Advocates no longer know **who to call for specific issues**; misdirecting inquiries can lead to duplication of effort and frustration.
  - Explanations of common processes (e.g., CCB request process)
  - Who does what? (e.g., who submits requests to CCB)
  - Action: (Scarlett Gibb) Arrange for a functional overview of the eRA organization structure at the next Project Team meeting) August 10.
- ❑ Would like to see **updates on operational issues** (e.g., system throughput, architectural upgrades).

- ❑ Would like to see **updates on issues that span business lines** (e.g., duplicate profiles in commons)
- ❑ eRA Operational team members (developers, architecture, analysts) are **exposed to alternate views**

## Open Discussion

Marcia Hann noted that a guide notice (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-04-054.html>) was issued last week announcing business process changes for the handling of progress reports received by NIH ICs. Effective October 1, 2004, NIH is centralizing receipt and initial processing of all NIH non-competing progress reports. As part of this centralized activity, all progress reports will be scanned and stored in eRA.

## Attendees

Ashley, Rich (RNS)	Goodman, Mike (OD)	Patel, Kalpesh (Ekagra)
Bielenstein, Danielle (NIH/FIC)	Hahn, Marcia (OER/OPERA)	Reeb, Michael (Perot)
Bradley, Eileen (CSR)	Hartnett, Libby (HRSA)	Sachar, Brad (Oracle)
Bukowski, Maria (OD)	Hausman, Steve (OD)	Seach, Jim (NCI/eRA)
Burns, Amy (LTS)	Hughes, Stephen (OD)	Seppala, Sandy (LTS)
Caban, Carlos (OER)	Jordan, Craig (NIH/NIDCD)	Shingler, Felicia (OER)
Chicchirichi, David (OER)	Lagas, Robert (Lagas Assoc.)	Simms, Sophonia (OD)
Cummins, Sheri (LTS)	Lederhendler, Israel (NIMH)	Sinnett, Everett (CSR)
Dean, Carolina (FDA)	Loewe, Michael (NINDS)	Snouffer, Anna (OD/OFACP)
Dutcher, Sylvia (Mitretek)	Martin, Carol (NHGRI)	Tatham, Thomas (CSR)
Faenson, Inna (OD)	Mayer, Pamela (NINDS)	Tucker, Jim (OER)
Flach, Jennifer (OD)	Morris, Richard (NIAID)	Wehrle, Janna (NIGMS)
Gibb, Scarlett (OD)	Morton, Larry (OER)	
	Morton, Pete (CIT)	