



eRA Commons Working Group (CWG) Meeting Agenda

NEXT MEETING

Note the change in location

Friday, January 10, 2020

12:30-2:00 p.m.

Location: **TBA**

Marriott Wardman Park, Washington, DC

Agenda Items:

1. Transitioning Leadership of CWG

Leadership of CWG will transition from Megan Columbus to [Kasima Garst](#), a member of the new Systems Policy Branch of OPERA (Office of Policy for Extramural Research Administration). The goal of SPB is to facilitate the development the grant management systems of NIH to meet both policy requirements and the needs of our applicants/awardees. Under Kasima's leadership the CWG will continue to provide the valuable awardee perspectives it has provided for these many years as NIH has implemented new grants administration systems.

2. What APIs Are Available from NIH?

Requested by: Barbara Inderwiesche

Barbara wanted to know generally what API/web services were available, and specifically if there was a simple way to pull down application images without needing to log into eRA Commons separately for each application.

She was provided the eRA Web Services link

(https://grants.nih.gov/grants/ElectronicReceipt/system_webserv.htm). We noted at the meeting that this page needs to include more information in simple language as to the purpose of each web service.

While getting the application image is good, getting individual attachments as well would be better, and getting the data elements on top of that would be best.

[Laurie Roman](#) requested that the request come to her in writing with the business needs for this webservice because she will need to check with the NIH team and review security requirements as some information in the application can be considered PII (Personally Identifiable Information) or sensitive. Who will have access? How can it be controlled? In the discussion the comment was made that since it is the institution that submits the application and the institution that receives awards, why shouldn't the institution be able to access application images?

And we already have security certificates in place for web service access, this would be no different.

- May need to have some controls added as to who can access what information. For an example, some institution may not want budget/salary/compensation information shared.

Other API services that participants suggested would be helpful:

- Just in Time
- Notice of Award (NoA) data with application identifying information to make it easier to match information with the proposals.
 - There is work being done to standardize page 1 of the NoA. Once this work is completed, adding an API service could be discussed
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 - Streamline information and remove duplicate information
- Unfunded Applications
 - New notifications require a lot of manual work to reconcile information at the institution level.
 - Could status information be pushed to institutions that subscribe to these services? Instead of them having to query (pull) for data on an on-going basis, could these services be engineered to push data and changes to institutions?

- Grant numbers
 - As the proposal goes through the system, and the grant number is updated, getting this information to applicants would aid in tracking the proposal. Possible link the grant number to the ascension number and the grants.gov number.
- ORCID iD number
 - Does it exist in the profile or not?
 - Related to this could the eRA Commons Persons ID number be used to identify a PD/PI?
- Clinical Trial ID number associated with grant awards.

3. Commons Update

Facilitator: Scarlett Gibb

There has been a lot of work on security. Sometimes security changes can cause issues, such as with the SO Search function recently, but it was quickly addressed.

The new ESI Extension Request module permits applicants to request an extension of their ESI eligibility electronically through eRA Commons. A video tutorial can be found at: <https://era.nih.gov/era-training/era-videos.htm#esirequest>

The new requirement for the use of xTRACT for generating Table 8 for RPPRs starts in October. It will then transition to being required for applications in the future.

ORCID iDs will be required in October for trainees, scholars, and participants supported by institutional research training, career development, and research education awards that require appointments through the xTrain system. Then for individuals supported by Research Training, Fellowship, Research Education, and Career Development awards in 2020.

NIH staff will now see the study record summary in Section G.4.b. of the RPPR pdf and full individual study records.

There has been discussion about whether to make ORCID iDs required for all key personal. There are many considerations and no decision has been made.

4. 2 Factor Authentication (2FA)

Facilitator: Scarlett Gibb

NIH is moving forward with 2 factor authentication for all external environments. This will be done by using login.gov. Scarlett has a development team working on the user interface that will help users map their credentials to their commons account. She is looking for volunteers to help with the design of the user interface. If you are interesting in assisting with the development of this process, please contact [Scarlett Gibb](#).

The exact mechanism for this process is still under discussion. Such considerations such as poor and/or no cellular service must be considered. It should also be noted from the customer base what technologies people have available to use for 2FA.

The plan to pilot 2FA will be done by Reviewers who use IAR. Since we have a lot of contact with Reviewers it will be easy to establish a dialog with them. And as many of them are PIs, it will be a good way to see how 2FA works with that group as well.

It is worth noting that there are currently no plans to remove the Federated login option. Although, it too will need to be enhanced for 2FA.

5. eSubmission/ASSIST Update

Facilitator: Laurie Roman

Human Fetal Tissue (HFT) requirements outlined in [NOT-OD-19-128](#) go into effect this month for due dates on or after September 25, 2019.

The big changes include that applications using HFT must include a detailed budget with HTF costs and if the tissue was donated the cost should specifically show \$0. That are also two new attachments that are required: HFT IFB Consent Form, and the HFT Compliance Assurance form.

There is concern because the HFT budgets require a specific name when uploaded. If you have a multi-project application with multiple components qualifying for HFT use, the application will fail validations at Grants.gov as a result of the duplicate names. The suggestion is to update the validation on the HFT budget to use "contains" vs "equal to" when validating.

There has also been work for:

- Fixing the application image generation process as issues were introduced with the use of Aspose PDF file processing.
- ORCID iDs
- SAMHSA requirements
- Streamlined Electronic submission of Administrative Supplements
- Direct upload of HSS study information to ClinicalTrials.gov
- Forms-F

How do we handle publication attachments, especially for multi-project applications? It can create a situation where there can be hundreds of publications, and these could get duplicated between the summary and the components.

The original goal was to reduce burden on reviewers by trying to minimize the size of the application and reduce the duplication of information. Seems this needs to be revisited.

6. Checking In on Unfunded Application Notifications

Facilitator: Kasima Garst

So approximately 14 months after the last council round for application review, if a proposal is not picked by an IC, an unfunded notification will be sent to the institution (the AOR on the application and the NoA email address on the Institution Profile).

The back log of old applications has now been cleared (approximately 2000 messages sent) and the system will now go into a regular schedule of notifications. The next series of messages should be sent in December.

What triggers the notification of not being funded? Is a score, a pay-line at the IC? The notifications do not include data about why a proposal will not be funded. Each IC evaluates applications differently and so there is no systematic way to capture that info.

7. Approach for Submission of Administrative Supplements

Facilitators: Kasima Garst & Laurie Roman

Looking to streamline the process of submitting Administrative Supplements so that all admin supps are submitted electronically via Grants.gov. This would eliminate the eRA Commons option making it the same for all grantees.

A couple of challenges need to be noted. One is that sometimes admin supps need to be acted upon very quickly. There would be a need to by-pass or opt out of the 2-day viewing window so the submission can get to the IC in a timelier manner.

We also need an easy way to adjust the project period start date of the admin supp because it is not always clear when the approval will happen and when the money becomes available.

8. Handling of Expiring/Expired Passwords in ASSIST and Commons

Facilitator: Megan Columbus

There is an issue within ASSIST and eRA Commons that when a person's password expires, you receive a very generic and unhelpful error message. (This was made intentional to maintain security standards). Then it is unclear what to do next. You have to go to eRA Commons and go through the process of updating your password, and when complete, there is nothing to bring you back to ASSIST.

These process needs the user interface group to review it and update the screens and messaging.

Is this related to browser compatibility issues? Some have users reporting that they have to revert to IE to get logged in. We currently don't have any known browsers issues. Please report to [Scarlett Gibb](#) with as much detail as you capture, if a user experiences a login issue related to the use of a specific browser. She can then present that information to the Service Desk for a more detailed analysis.

9. The Payment Management System and FFR Discussion

Facilitators: Kasima Garst & Scarlett Gibb

As part of burden reduction, the FFR will be submitted through the Payment Management System (PMS). There is no mandated time to make this change, so is there time of the year when it would be best to make the change. Or conversely, maybe a time of year to avoid, for example coinciding with end of fiscal year activities?

Since FFR dates align with grant award dates, FFRs can be due at any time. And since there are no standard fiscal year dates for all universities and institutions, you can really base it on that parameter. The overall feeling is that March is good time. After all the holiday season, before the typical EFY times. October was also a viable option if March was not enough lead time for eRA.

This change will not affect the closeout process. Data will be pulled from PMS into the Closeout module.

And PMS is an external agency's system, but the plan being investigated is to access it via a link within eRA Commons, so no other credentials will be required.

As this moves forward, we will come back to CWG for user interface questions/options/insight.

10. General Discussion/Wrap-up

A question was raised about how to deal with researchers who use names other than their legal names (aka preferred name, nick name, etc.) in the light of foreign influence and identifying person who may pose a risk to intellectual property and research integrity?

Should NIH/government require the use of full legal names on proposals and in eRA Commons?

With the threat to research information and integrity, it is something that should be considered.