# eRA Commons Working Group (CWG) Meeting Notes

## Meeting Details:

May 15, 2012
1-3 p.m.
Washington Court Hotel
Room: Springwood Hall
525 New Jersey Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20001
202.628.2100

| NIH Staff in Attendance: |
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| Scarlett Gibb |
| Dave Curren |
| Emily Linde |
| Marcia Hahn |
| Laura Roman |
| Carol Wigglesworth |
| Sheri Cummins |
| Dave Hunter |
| Maria Koszalka |
| Scott Cooper |
| Samuel Smith |
| Yuri Gorbach |
| Alina Khazmutdinova |
| Marina Israilevitch |
| Joe Schumaker |

## Attendance

| Attendee Name: | Institution: | Attendee Name: | Institution: |
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| Jim Kresl | Univ of Washington - Seattle | Pattie McNulty | Cayuse/Evisions |
| Richard Fengen | University of Washington | Don Turner | St. Jude |
| Matt Moore | University of Minnesota | Debbie Nixon | Duke University |
| Frances Spalding | University of Minnesota | Christa Johnson | Washington U in St. Louis |
| Tom Drinane | Dartmouth College | William Hunn | Washington U in St. Louis |
| Terri Maxwell | University of Michigan | Nancy Anderson | Huron Consulting |
| Carolynn Pappar | University of Michigan | Roger Wood | Info Ed |
| Ben Priest | Cayuse/Evisions | Ron Splittgerber | Colorado State |
| Kellie Guentert | OHSU | Tammy Custer | Cornell University |
| Lynette Arias | Columbia University | Steve Dowdy | MIT |
| Deb Golden-Eppelein | OHSU | Todd Swavely | University of Pennsylvania |

## Agenda Notes:

1. **Upcoming Form Changes for PHS 398**
   **Presenter:** Dave Curren
   **Time Allotted:** 15 minutes

- Every 3 years OMB approved forms must be updated, reviewed and approved or reapproved. June 30th, 2012 is the deadline for PHS 398.
- Federal-wide SF424 (R&R) forms are also due to be renewed by June 30, 2012.
- The requested changes for the PHS 398 form went to the Federal Registry in February 2012 for public review and comment. Approval expected in June 2012.
- Once approved by OMB, Grants.gov and the eRA will work to develop the new forms for electronic submission.

- No changes in Grants.gov or eRA Commons will happen until both PHS 398 and PHS 424 are approved.
- Proposed Changes
  - Application Guides
    - Section 1 – dedicated to basics of electronic submission and form-specific instructions. Parts II and III cover Human Subjects and Policies and Assurances
    - Sections 2 and 3 will be removed from the current application guides and consolidated into a single document covering Human Subjects, Policies, Assurances and Definitions for all application types, including Fellowships and SBIR/STTR applications.
- Moving some fields
  - Applicant Organization Contact information and clinical trial question moving from PHS 398 to R&R Cover form
  - Adding cover letter attachment field to R&R Cover form, allowing removal of the PHS Cover Letter Form
- Combining Forms
  - PHS 398 Checklist fields moving to PHS 398 Cover Page Supplement, allowing removal of the PHS398 Checklist form.
- Other Changes
  - Added new Letters of Support from Collaborators, Contributors and Consultants field and separated from Statements from Mentors as this created confusion. Both fields will have their own instructions
  - Minor changes to PHS 2271 listing of Specialty Boards and Fields of Training.
  - Some redundant fields to be removed, such as application type.
  - Some renumbering of fields due to addition/deletion of fields

After approval and programming tasks are completed by Grants.gov and eRA for single-project applications, all the forms will be adapted for Complex applications

Question: After Complex applications transition, what is left as paper submissions?
Answer: NIH will be almost all electronic, however other agencies do not use eRA for post-submission processing. This will still require use of paper-based PHS398 application forms.

Question: Can there be limited changes to paper version because mapping fields can be difficult, or at least a longer grace period before requiring use of new forms?
Answer: NIH has a legal obligation to phase out use of old forms and implement new forms promptly. But we will provide a grace period to allow applicants and system-to-system providers time to prepare.

2. **Help Desk Processes and Procedures – Best Practices**
   **Presenter:** Dave Hunter
   **Time Allotted:** 20 minutes

- Since the start of eRA's electronic submission of applications, the number of help desk calls has increased dramatically in part due to the increased complexity of the system, and increased number of submissions, while the number of agents to take those calls has decreased over time.
- Hold times are 6-15 minutes with a 20 minute resolution time once call is picked up, and 85% resolution rate on calls and 99%+ resolution rate overall.

- The challenge is how to maintain quality of service given the scenario increased call volume and flat lined staffing
- Part of the solution, a new help desk ticket system that is customizable to the needs of eRA:
  - New email notifications
    - When a new ticket is made by phone or email
    - When a ticket is submitted via the web
    - When Information that is needed is pending
    - When a ticket is closed.
  - Additional features:
    - You can send a reply to a notification and it becomes part of the ticket history
    - Re-opened cases send a notification to Dave Hunter automatically
    - Emails (not web submit tickets) will automatically generate a ticket so it can be tracked
  - Categories for web submission
    - Allows for great detail and narrowing of issue
    - This improves response times to solutions

Request:  Please review notifications language and provide feedback within 3-5 weeks

Question: Can there be more guidance on the web on how to narrow a problem? Sometimes user gets bounced between Grants Management and the Help Desk, each claiming it issue is in the others area of responsibility.

Answer:   Dave Hunter: Seems we need some internal conversations/training in how to handle these types of calls.
If you are ever not satisfied with the service on a particular issue, feel free to contact:

> Dave Hunter
> Chief, User Support Branch
> OD/OER/ORIS/DCSS
> 301.435.0226
> HunterD@mail.nih.gov

Question:  How will CWG users get to test it (Footprints)?
Answer:   Difficult to say as there is the CIT security policies to deal with but Dave H will look into what might be done.

Question:  Could system be used to capture information regarding the form set used in the submission?
Answer:   Great idea and will need to be explored

Question: Are all tickets equal?  Do some get a higher priority?
Answer:       Security issues get #1 priority
              Those related to a pending deadline get #2 priority

If you have the luxury of time, use it, send email, or submit a ticket. This is true for issues/concerns or praise.  We don't want you to waste time on hold if you don't have to.

**3.   Review of T6/T7 Update**
      **Presenter:**   Emily Linde
      **Time Allotted:** 15 minutes

- Type 6/Type 7 and Relinquishing Statements are available to the system now, and Relinquishing Statements have been available to be completed electronically through the Commons since April 21.
- Because of a delay due to the work on RPPR (see below), the documentation needed to complete Type 6 and Type 7 requests electronically has not yet been put in place.  Two FOAs, one for Type 6 and one for Type 7 and 3 Guide Notices (T6, T7 and Relinquishing Statement) will be sent to Communications shortly for review and posting.
- Note that these are limited to post-award activities for only those activity codes that are available for electronic submission.
- The steps to manage a relinquishing statement are part of the [Change of Institution User Guide](#) found on the [eRA Commons User Guides](#) page.

**4.   Status of T3 Pilot**
      **Presenter:**   Dave Curren
      **Time Allotted:** 15 minutes

Type 3 – Administrative Pilot update
- Pilot started in February as open pilot (all grantees have the choice to try it)
- 92 T3 applications received through the eRA Commons submission option
- Over 800 work in progress applications have been started in the eRA Commons
- 54 requests have been submitted via Grants.gov with 14 coming from System-to-System users
- A few minor issues have been identified which are scheduled to be fixed in the June release

Comment:    System-to-system users have difficulty identifying the correct FOA package to use because Competition Title is not displayed without downloading the form package directly from Grant.gov
Response:    Sheri Cummins will discuss with Grants.gov to look into viability of providing competition title through a web-service.

Comment:    Encourage applicants to use the demo site!  Have PIs practice process, become familiar with it.

**5.   RPPR Pilot Update**
      **Presenter:**   Emily Linde and Carol Wigglesworth
      **Time Allotted:** 20 minutes

- Research Performance Progress Report (RPPR) pilot started in February with 7 institutions volunteering to try the new system
- Training was held April 26
- Some defects have been discovered and are scheduled to be fixed in the June release. These include:
    - Budget Reporting Period Dates incorrectly carried through
    - Performance Site issue

- o Link to Notice of Award seems to work only sometimes (please report if you experience this one)
- o Can not accept rich text format in text boxes (ie Goals and Objectives).
- o Issue because PIs find formatting and special characters critical to their communication needs
- o Text boxes support 8000 characters (approximately 3 pages) in plain text.
- o Copy and Paste looks fine until image is rendered then data becomes corrupted
- Text boxes used so that data could be used for downstream processing and other areas of the RPPR
- Option: revert back to upload fields using PDFs

Comment: RTF issue is a problem, also cannot use figures.

Comment: If text boxes are engineered to support RTF, what happens downstream? Would formatting break other things/systems (ie FADA) later?

Comment: Better instructions about limitations might help.

Comment: Effort gets rounded to nearest whole value. This should be tracked to determine if this could become an issue. Rounding down / rounding up make create inaccurate information.

Question: Could Senior/Key personnel be used for payroll ID information?
Answer: Not really as this is unstructured data. Commons does not delineate between real Key people and perceived Key people (PIs labeling persons as Key as not insult them or to make them feel valued)
Question: Then could Senior/Key Personnel be added as part of the Notice of Award (NoA)
Answer: Scarlett Gibb will check with developers to see what might be done.

Comment: Webinar/Training was good. But because so much more data is requested then in the past, stress that this is a Federal wide mandated process (no choice), not an NIH initiative. Also provide highlight as to what new data NIH is requiring


6. **eRA Update**
   **Presenter:** Sheri Cummins and Scarlett Gibb
   **Time Allotted:** 20 minutes

Complex, Multi-project Applications update
- Changes to Detailed Status page
- With Complex the Errors and Warnings list box at the top has the potential to get very large with so many different components.
- Options:
- Put in column on hit list page with link to errors/warnings
- Put a dialog box at the top to direct them where to look for errors and warnings
- Put the link to error and warnings information in the box
- New resource to put on the web:

- Slides to represent what different complex applications might look like, different "flavors" of applications

Financial Conflict of Interest update
- The June release will and expansion of the module
- It will be required to use the 2010 format starting in mid-August 2012

**7.**      **General Discussion**
     **Time Allotted:** 15 minutes

- Some institutions still having issues with Fellowship terminations within xTrain.
- Scarlett informed group they have an Emergency Response Team that is looking into the problem. It is complex because different scenarios can result in problems so identifying the source has been difficult.