eRA Commons Working Group (CWG) Meeting Notes

Meeting Details:

August 28, 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:
Scarlett Gibb
Dave Curren
Emily Linde
Megan Columbus
Patti Gaines
Carol Wigglesworth
Sheri Cummins
Dave Hunter
Maria Koszalka
Yuri Gorbach
Marina Israilevitch
Adam Levy
Joe Schumaker

Attendance

Attendee Name:	Institution:	Attendee Name:	Institution:
Tom Drinane	Dartmouth College	Pattie McNulty	Evisions
Terri Maxwell	University of Michigan	Don Turner	St. Jude
Kellie Guentert	OHSU	Nancy Anderson	Huron Consulting
Deb Golden-Eppelein	OHSU	Roger Wood	Info Ed
Gary Raetz	Huron Consulting	William Hunn	Washington U in St. Louis
Tim Rinner	OHSU	Cindy Gilbert	UCLA
Jason Myers	Univ. of Washington		

Introduction

Megan Columbus wanted to make sure that everyone was aware that the NIH was experiencing login issues. And the difficulty for the eRA is that the eRA does not control that process. All NIH login functionality is centralized through a single system, so when that has issues, everyone is affected. The eRA is put in the uncomfortable position of having to field Help Desk calls for a system over which we have no control.

Agenda Notes:

1. Complex Applications UAT Testing Update

Presenter: Sheri Cummins
Time Allotted: 15 minutes

- Exercise 2 for User Acceptance Testing (UAT) was sent the morning of August 28
- 70+ people have volunteered to be involved in the testing process – exciting because it shows the level of enthusiasm people have for the new process.
- Documentation for System-to-System (S2S) providers is coming soon to Grants.gov

- 3-5 pilot Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs) will be published in early November
- We expect all complex applications to transition to electronic submission in CY 2013.

- Resources for S2S providers are available on the System-to-System Testing page: rules, information about image generation, requirements and validations.

- Request from group: When will FOAs be available for review? This is important for S2S providers because they will need to know if their customers will have interest in applying. And if they do, then they need to get their systems programmed and tested prior to January submission dates.
  - Megan Columbus to explore what might be able to be provided before the November publishing time frame.

2. New Help Desk Ticket Application

Presenter: Dave Hunter
Time Allotted: 20 minutes

- New Help Desk Ticketing Application coming this fall.
- At the last meeting, Dave Hunter provided examples of the email notifications users would get. He received a little feedback, and feedback is welcome any time, but if you want your suggestions to be incorporated by the release date, he will need that by September 30, 2012. *Sample Attached*
- New Web-submit interface has been developed. Great for documenting issues *Screenshot attached*
- Request from participants: Provide any feedback of web submit interface to Dave Hunter by September 30, 2012 if it is to incorporated into the release, otherwise feedback is always welcomed. Contact information is below.
- Global Ticket Update will be a link for users to check on known system wide issues. The window will provide the option to subscribe to updates about the issue.
  - Other Options include:
    - An initial first screen when submitting a ticket
    - A pop-up window (requires pop-ups enabled in browser configuration)
- Dave is requesting customer feedback because the eRA Help Desk is a customer resource and his goal is figure out the best way to utilize those resources based on the needs of the customers.
- Questions from Participants:
  - **Question:** Can an SO see all the tickets from the same institution?
  - **Answer**: This will need to be investigated, but seen as a wonderful opportunity for identifying internal training needs and reduce redundant tickets.
    - **For Consideration**: What would display screen look like? How would SO know which tickets have been recently worked on, new, or closed?
    - **Answer**: Individual (per person) ticket lists are sortable, and there is an Advanced Search option. But the interface options will need to be investigated.
  - **Question:** When completing a ticket, can the name of an SO be looked up as opposed to logging in to eRA Commons and looking it up?

- **Answer**: This will need to be investigated.
- **Question:** Is there a way for a ticket to be reopened? Help Desk claims problem is resolved, but from customer perspective, there is still an issue.
- **Answer**: This will need to be investigated. Sometimes the issue is multi-layered, and solving one issue exposes another, before unknown issue. Best option for now is to provide the old ticket number.
- **Question:** Can the customer close a ticket (the "Oops! Never mind option.")?
- **Answer**: This will need to be investigated. A good option for reducing redundant tickets.
- **Question:** What is the timing for escalation? How long should a customer wait to have an issue resolved before asking it to be escalated and how does one escalate an issue?
- **Answer**: The time frame is up to the customer. It will depend on the perceived urgency of the situation. There are a couple of steps the customer can take.
  - First, contact the User Support Branch Team Leads at eRAUSBLeads@od.nih.gov. This address will deliver a message to the team leaders alerting them to the issue / concern.
  - Second, contact Dave Hunter directly. His contact information is:

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

- **Concern / Observation**: When nearing a submission deadline and the applicant feels that there might be a system issue (application stuck in Grants.gov), they open a Help Desk ticket minutes before 5PM on the due date as a way to "document" that they have a problem.
- **Question:** Is this allowable?
- **Answer**: Yes as long as they can prove they have a real issue. The new web submit option will be very good for this process. Documentation must be specific as to what the issue is, what error messages they have received, whom else they have contacted (Grants.gov), etc. The applicant cannot just submit a blank ticket with the expectation that this proves due-diligence.
- **Question:** Does the Help Desk ever have the situation of asking for more information from the customer and not getting a response? And if so, how long does the ticket remain open?
- **Answer**: Yes, this does occur. And it is important that if an applicant is claiming a system issue, they must get the information back to the Help Desk as soon as possible. Receipt & Referral works within a strict time frame so they require a quick response time. Tickets of this nature are not closed out without Dave's specific approval and remain in the system until they reach a natural end of cycle. This will depend on the nature of the issue.

3. Pilot of Type 6s & Type 7s Update

Presenter: Emily Linde
Time Allotted: 15 minutes

- Three Guide Notices were released on Friday:

- NOT-OD-12-132: Notice of Pilot Processes for Submitting of Post-Award Relinquishing Statements to NIH
- NOT-OD-12-133: Notice of Pilot for Processing Post-Award Changes in Grantee Organizational Status: Successor-in-Interest
- NOT-OD-12-134: Notice of Pilot Processes for Post-Award Change of Grantee Organization Applications to NIH

- Two Parent FOAs were posted on Friday:
  - PA-12-269: Successor-in-Interest (Type 6 Parent)
  - PA-12-270: Change of Grantee Organization (Type 7 Parent)
- The FOAs are not yet posted on the Parent Announcements page, but will be soon. In the meantime, they can be located by searching for "type 6" or "type 7."
- Feedback back on these open pilots should be directed to Emily Linde at lindee@mail.nih.gov.

4. RPPR (Research Performance Progress Report) Pilot Update

Presenter: Emily Linde and Carol Wigglesworth
Time Allotted: 20 minutes

- New Guide Notice released on August 23, 2012 concerning upcoming training on RPPR
  - NOT-OD-12-142: Research Performance Progress Report (RPPR) Module and Training Webinar Available to NIH Grantees
- Release in October will include almost all SNAP eligible and "F" activity codes
- NIH expects to require use of the RPPR for these awards in Spring 2013
- The grace period of 2 weeks for the pilot institutions submitting RPPRs will expire with expansion of RPPR to all grantees with the October 19 Enterprise Release
- The timeline for implementation of RPPR for non-SNAP awards is still to be determined.
- Received valuable feedback from pilot institutions and FDP participants. Working to address issues identified by pilot and FDP institutions. Some updates will be made, but not all will make it into the October release.
- **Feedback from last training/Suggestions for upcoming training:**
  - Survey (audience participation) was engaging, but need to be aware of pace due to delays in webinar transmission.
  - Helpful to mix content with live demonstration.
  - Use of the highlighter very helpful in pointing out key information on slides.

5. eRA Commons

Presenter: Sheri Cummins and Scarlett Gibb
Time Allotted: 20 minutes

- New email reminders coming for Annual Reports.
  - **Question**: From Scarlett Gibb is "Who should this go to?"
  - **Answer**: From participants, any person with the FCOI role at that institution. It should be aligned with the progress report reminders and on the same schedule (50/30 days from due date).
  - **Question**: Can a field be added to the Institutional Profile for an FCOI email address? This would be a shared address at the institution, much in the same way the award email address is used.
  - **Answer**: It can certainly be looked into and makes sense to have that option.
- Commons Usability - Profiles *Sample Attached*

- In development is a new dashboard look to the user profile. All the same information as the old profile interface, just new look / feel.
- Missing information messages will be specific as to why NIH needs this information
- Publications section may be removed
  - Instead may add a link to MyNCBI
- Email will be coming soon to ask for volunteers to test new interface.
  - Looking for PIs, trainees, new post-docs.
  - Can send out wireframes for volunteers to play with and provide feedback on
  - Feedback to be requested in October
- **Question**: Is the New Investigator status set/shown here?
- **Answer**: No. New Investigator status is determined by the system as applications are submitted.

6. **Forms (398 and 424) and Policies Update**
   Presenter: ~~Dave Curren~~ Carol Wigglesworth
   Time Allotted: 10 minutes

- All forms used by the federal government must be approved by OMB (Office of Management and Budget). Forms are assigned an approval number and an expiration date. Forms expire every three years. NIH realigned its OMB packages into pre-award (0925-0001) and post-award (0925-0002) forms, so some forms will now have different OMB numbers.
- All of the NIH applications and related forms expired in June 2012 but remain eligible for use while the new forms are implemented.
- These forms received OMB approval in August 2012
- New forms are not yet posted
  - Need Guide Noticed to announce release of new forms
  - Need forms integrated into eRA Commons programming, mapping fields to database etc.
  - Grants.gov, uses the SF 424 forms and NIH uses PHS 398 forms, we want to release the changes to these forms at the same time and Grants.gov needs to complete its integration
- Some changes have been made to the SF424 form set
  - Rearrangement of data fields
  - Combined data fields
  - New Inclusion (Population Tracking) Form
- eRA's goals is to release all the electronic forms for competing applications at the same time, one release.
- **Question**s:
  - How soon can S2S providers get information on the changes? Changes to forms represent significant work as they require the update of their applications, mapping to databases, etc.
  - Because some Complex Multi-Project activities will require paper applications, can S2S providers use old forms until ASSIST is complete and all Activity Codes are transitioned to electronic submission (want to avoid having to reprogram applications for short shelf life of paper forms)?
- **Answers:**
  - There will be at least a 60 day advance notification about implementing new forms.

- We will look into the viability of using old forms but it shouldn't be necessary. The use of only approved forms (non-expired forms) is a federal requirement.

- **Request from eRA:** Please put in writing the impact of changing forms on S2S providers.

7. General Discussion

Time Allotted: 15 minutes

- **Question**: Why are Fellowship Application Notices still a paper process? Why is it not done electronically through eRA Commons?
- **Answer**: Good question! We'll do some research into this and hopefully put it on the to-do list.

8. Update Just in Time Changes and JIT Notifications

Presenter: Roundtable Discussion/Dave Curren
Time Allotted: 15 minutes

Overview question about Just-in-Time: Why the changes in behavior?

- The eRA Commons JIT link used to be score triggered but is now made available for all JIT-eligible applications, regardless of impact score. See Guide Notice NOT-OD-12-101 for more information.
- A future enhancement on the books is to allow JIT notification triggers to be set by individual ICs. Until funding is available NIH will continue with a standard approach for all JIT information.
- Question: Where should applicant go for help the JIT information/requests? Customer has had trouble being forwarded to multiple NIH staff without resolving how to handle JIT.
- Answer: NIH will clarify with staff the appropriate handling of these sorts of questions.
- CWG Concerns:
  - If the JIT link is opened after the score is released (potentially months before the project start date), but JIT information is only valid for 120 days, and the information must be post at least 60 days before project start date, this becomes a timing issue.
  - Wording of notifications is too imprecise which can lead to messages being ignored. The notifications should include a target date for submission of JIT information.
- **NIH Response**: Dave Curren will review and consider any ideas for wording of JIT notifications. Please submit suggestions to GrantsPolicy@mail.nih.gov by October 15, 2012.