Electronic Research Administration
A program of the National Institutes of Health

eRA Commons Working Group (CWG) Meeting Notes

Meeting Details:

Tuesday, January 7, 2014
1-3 p.m.
Washington Court Hotel
Room: Springwood Hall
525 New Jersey Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20001
202.628.2100

Agenda Items:

1. xTRACT: Making Training Tables Electronic

Presenter: Stacey Kocher, Jennifer Sutton, and Walter Schaffer

Overview

- A new system early in its development
- Focus on a simple solution for the electronic management of training tables for training grants.
- Looking to CWG group for reactions, ideas and involvement
- Goals of xTRACT
  - Simple and comprehensive management of training data
  - Make the data formatted so it can be stored in a database
  - Provide the ability to easily identify and track people supported by NIH funds
  - Development in parallel with SciENcv and ORCID
  - Need to know better what happens to students and post-docs after funding ends
  - Need to reduce burden on applicant organizations
  - Leverage information from existing sources
    - Commons Personal Profile
    - xTrain
    - SciENcv
    - ORCID

Challenges

- Information Privacy: potential for Personally Identifiable Information to be exposed
- Balance need for information vs. burden on applicants/institutions
- How to handle pre-xTrain data and historical data
  - This old data may be incomplete or out of date
- What approach will work best with other existing systems?

What has been done to date:

- New Personal Profile in Commons
  - Better interface,
  - Better demographic information

- New eRA Roles for identifying students for reporting purposes
- Pilot of SciENcv
- New warnings for RPPRs without Commons ID for students
- Committee created and tasked with analysis of current table instructions/requirements

The New System
- Early in process, policies still in development
- Moving forward we need a better understanding of the burdens applicants face
- Looking to determine what can be removed, reduced and streamlined
- One thing agreed upon: the name
    - xTRACT: **T**rainee, **R**eporting **A**nd **C**areer **T**racking

Addressing Issues with Tables
- How to get information from tables to database?
- Some NIH ICs have developed their own systems for dealing with data.
- Need consistent solution

Other Concerns
- Adding another system (too many moving parts?)
- How to find efficiencies without adding burden to applicant
- Creating a two level, two step review process for applicants? Application and training tables?

xTRACT and Commons IDs
- If an ID already exists for a student, data can automatically be added to the training table from the Personal Profile
- Without a Commons ID data will need to be manually added to the training table

Applicant Comments
- They get their information from a variety of sources at the institution (PI, Registrar’s office, other faculty etc.)
- Different for each institution
- Steep learning curve, but as time goes there will more historical data to pull from, moving from creating to updating/maintaining

Timeline
- Full implementation scheduled for March 2015
- Looking for volunteer institutions to help with user acceptance testing
- Might be 2-3 webinar meetings for feedback/discussion

Questions for consideration:
- How do you gather and integrate information for training grants?
- Spread sheets? Dedicated “systems”?
- Who is responsible for gathering and maintaining this information?
- If built as a part of Commons, what new or existing roles should be used?
- What new or existing delegations would be needed?

2. eRA Commons/ASSIST Updates
- Recent changes
- Upcoming releases

Presenters: Scott Rieland and Scarlett Gibb

Commons Update

- RPPR Pilot going well, learning a lot from participants
- Possibility of opening RPPR to all in April 2014
- Multi-Year Funding (MYF) reporting with RPPR to start January 31, 2014
- Adding "F" activity codes for AHRQ grants to supported activity codes for RPPR
- April Release
  - Lots of behinds the scenes changes around inclusion integration
- July Release
  - Changes coming to eRA Commons home page

eSubmission Update

- Forms C Migration going well
- All application packages will be moved to Forms C with the January submission dates
- One exception is SBIR
  - Waiting on additional changes from SBA
  - Trying to avoid two forms changes in the same year
- Implemented new image generation service for applications
  - More control, cleaner look
  - One issue with attached PDF, appearing blank or rotated, will be resolved with January release
- Reminder to keep attached PDFs simple (no pws, no portfolio, etc.)
- Make sure to check out Grants.govs PDF Conversion Software for compatible solutions
- New project title expanding from 81-200 characters
- Refreshing of UAT: It is understood that it needs to be done, but doing creates additional concerns. Analysis ongoing for best approach.

ASSIST Update

- January submission date represents the final step in the transition to electronic submission
- Load (volume of submissions) expectation for January submission is low
- S2S providers are either still in development or just don't have clients pursuing multi-project applications
- April release enhancements (tentative)
  - Copy functionality of application
  - Delete (vs abandon) of individual components
  - Ability to reorder components
  - Individual component status check (dashboard)

3. **Composite Summary Calculation Error in Multi-Project Applications: How to Best Implement a Solution**

Presenters: Scott Rieland

Looking for feedback on best possible solution for this complicated problem.

- Where to put overall budget information?
  - Use an optional budget form that already exists
    - It has fields that have requirements, but not needed in this case
    - It is a Grants.gov form, making changes complicated
    - Reduce requirement from error to warning?
    - How will this effect S2S users?
  - Or use the Admin Core budget form?
  - Get Grants.gov to provide a new budget form with all fields optional?

Want to participate in the ideas for a solution for Composite Summary Calculation? Contact Scott Rieland, Customer Relations Manager

Scott is to provide full description of the issue and potential solutions to group. Conference call to be scheduled ASAP with all who are willing/able to participate

4. **Application Retention: How Long Should an Application with Errors or that was Rejected Remain in Commons?**

Presenters: Scott Rieland

Traditionally all submissions have been kept as part of the database for analysis on trends in submissions

- Retained in database are applications that have errors (did not move forward), withdrawn, or rejected by SO.
- Applications with errors and those that are withdrawn should be removed immediately
- Applications that are rejected should be retained for a year, along with reasons for rejection

Enhancement request: A report that would provide a list of rejected applications for a singled institution, when they were rejected and by whom, and why.

5. **Seeking Structured Data for Cover Letters**

Presenters: Cathy Cooper

To help expedite IC and study sections requests via the cover letter, the Division of Receipt and Referral is asking for the best options to structure cover letter data.

- In past they have tried text mining the cover letter for key words with limited success
- Try to request for specific formatting of these requests with limited success
- Options:
  - Move data to another form and make form part of the application package
    - Challenge: Will require OMB approval, long process
  - Make request after submission via Commons, but before 2 view window similar to reference letters
    - Challenge: High customer burden to make sure customer logs in within the limited time frame.
  - Resurrect the PHS 398 Cover Letter form
    - Already approved form
    - Already approved to gather info

- Would need to be renamed to avoid confusion (Referral Request Form)
- Seems like best option

6. Changes to Closeout: The Next Discussion

Presenters: Vicki Bishton and Tony Corio

Last CWG meeting it was discussed that new closeout policies from HHS were coming

- New directives have been received and a work group is reviewing them
- Guide Notice to be published at the end of January
- Most of the changes are on the NIH, not grantee/institution side of process
- Changes focused around the time frame for reconciling discrepancies in financial reporting issues
- These must be resolved within 6 months of project end date
- Term of Award/Closeout Notifications (reminders that the “end is near”)
- 45 days prior end date up to the project end date will be opportunity for No Cost Extension to be filed

Enhancement requests:

- Provide report for institutions for all active grants and current closeout dates
- Allows institution to coordinate closeout process with correct personnel
- Add to the Institution Profile form fields for a closeout specialist that includes name and email address
- Closeout reminder notifications should go to the PI, SO, and Closeout specialist listed on the Institution Profile form

7. Wrap-up & General Discussion

Presenters: All

Dave Hunter, Chief, User Support Branch is asking for people to provide feedback on the Support Portal.
More questions?
Different questions?
Different categories?

Suggestions can be sent to the NIH OER Communications Office.