



# Commons Working Group (CWG) Minutes

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Date: Friday, May 14, 2010  
Location: Hotel George  
15 E Street NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
Meeting Chair: Megan Columbus  
Next Meeting: TBD

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## Action Items

### 1. Change of Institution (Type 7s) & Administrative Supplements (Type 3s)

- Emily Linde will call NSF and ask about their process for receiving Change of Institution applications.
- Think about implications for Closeout, especially FSRs and Final Invention Statements.
- NIH will revisit the plan for Type 3s.

### 2. Thinking About Streamlining NIH Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs)

- S2S folks could come up with a list of what they would like to see in the XML.
- Explore the possibility for a teleconference with faculty weigh-in. Ask David Robinson to seek out input from faculty representatives.

### 3. eRA Web site Redesign Update & Time for General Discussion

- Look into making delegating eSNAP submit authority part of the Single-Sign-On project.
- Ask Data Quality to attend the next meeting.
- NIH will discuss submission process for supplemental materials and will update the group when possible.

## Changes of Institution (Type 7s) & Administrative Supplements (Type 3s)

**Presenters:** Emily Linde (Type 7s), Dave Curren (Type 3s)

### Summary:

- **Type 7s:**
  - Submission of applications will be handled via Grants.gov and submission of relinquishing statements will be handled via eRA Commons.

- Participants would like eRA to send a notification to the new institution that a relinquishing statement has been submitted. In order to do so, the relinquishing institution would have to be able to accurately identify the new institution. We are trying to build flexibility into the system that would allow either the relinquishing statement or the application to be received first.
- Group state that financial information for the relinquishing statement often comes from a different person than someone with a Commons FSR role.
- The group sees no problem with the information on the relinquishing statement being sent to the new institution; rather, they often send the new institution a copy of the relinquishing statement themselves.
- The group is ok with Grants.gov application submission, even before the Commons module is ready for the submission of relinquishing statements.
- The group prefers multiple FOA packages that each include a list of which forms are required and which are optional (budgets will be semi-modular).
- **Type 3s:**
  - NIH proposed creating a Commons module to handle administrative supplements while simultaneously allowing S2S submission through Grants.gov (module for Commons solution would be accessed on a per-grant basis, similar to accessing NCE, JIT, or other modules in Commons). This will simplify the submission process by greatly reducing the number of unnecessary and duplicative data elements require through current solutions.
  - CWG members did not see a need for the hybrid solution. Both S2S and forms-based group members largely treat an administrative supplement as though it is a new application and fill out a complete application already as part of their own compliance requirements. Group suggested not developing a Commons solution and instead suggested having supplements only come in through Grants.gov. Although a few data elements could be reduced, this would still require a lot of duplicative information. NIH committed to continue reviewing the proposed solution and will come back with revised options.

#### **Action Items:**

- Emily Linde will call NSF and ask about their process for receiving Change of Institution applications.
- Think about implications for Closeout, especially FSRs and Final Invention Statements.
- NIH will revisit the plan for Type 3s.

## **Mandating eSNAP & Plans for Mandating Federal Financial Report (FFR)**

**Presenters:** Carol Wigglesworth (eSNAP), Emily Linde & Carol Wigglesworth (FFR)

## **Presentation: eFFR Implementation Timeline**

### **Summary:**

- **Mandating eSNAP:** About 20 percent of users still submit their SNAP reports on paper. [As of August 1, all Type 5s must be submitted via the eSNAP module.](#) This is a firm date and paper reports will not be accepted.
- **Mandating FFR:** We are already capturing cash transaction data via the Payment Management System. We will continue to capture cash transaction data via PMS; everything else will be handled via eFFR.
- The eFFR system will be released to the eight pilot institutions with the July software release (pilot will contain all "live" data). During the pilot, pilot institutions should make any necessary revisions using the method of the original submission (i.e., if you submitted using FSR, you have to revise using FSR). The reporting period is not changing and is still based on the project period.
- For annual FFRs, the FFR will be due 90 days from the end of the calendar quarter in which that budget period ends. Final FFRS will be due 90 days after the end of the project period.
- If the pilot phase is successful, the eFFR system will be released to all users as of the October release and use of eFFR will be mandated as of January 2011.

## **eRA Commons Update**

**Presenter:** Scarlett Gibb

### **Summary:**

- Commons is now automatically importing all of the information in users' My NCBI "My Bibliography" accounts into Commons.
- Commons' framework has been upgraded, which has caused a couple of small bugs that we are working on.
- Both eSNAP and xTrain will undergo minor tweaks in the July and October releases to prepare them for required use ([eSNAP as of August 1](#) and [xTrain as of January 1](#)).
- eRA is assessing how to tackle implementing multi-PI functionality in xTrain and Closeout.
- eRA has started to process CDC's non-research grants and now takes care of all of CDC's grants processing.
- Scarlett noted that general grants policy questions and comments may be directed to the central grants office at Grants.gov. The contact there is Amy Haseltine.
- The October release will include the ability to terminate Fellowships electronically and to submit a PDF file via Commons for multi-year-funded progress reports. Users will also be able to search for their multi-year-funded grants in Status.

## **Thinking About Streamlining NIH Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs)**

**Presenter:** Mary Ann Guadagno & Susan Grove

### **Summary:**

- NIH has over 600 FOAs active at any given time. Currently, FOAs are 35 pages long (on average), and it takes approximately 28 days to a month for internal policy reviews of each FOA.
- FOAs are being revised to be more succinct and easier to understand. Policy experts are determining what information must remain in the FOAs and what can be reduced or eliminated by pointing to relevant sections of the application guide or policy statements. The hope is for standard language to remain standard and not change from FOA to FOA.
- The goal is to have a database-driven system that will allow NIH to put together FOAs more quickly and easily, reducing the administrative burden on the internal and applicant communities by implementing FOAs that are shorter and easier to write, read and understand.

### **Suggestions/Feedback:**

- The group proposed removing much of the information that can also be found in the guide and simply linking to the guide. Megan noted that this is possible for some information, but we have to keep small organizations and new applicants in mind.
- Group noted that for NSF, any information that is different from NSF's application guide is distinguished in a special section in the NSF funding opportunity. NIH could adopt the same practice.
- FOAs should still link out to old announcements.
- The Resources link (at the end of each FOA) could be removed and replaced with a link to a web page listing the resources, or describing where they can be found.
- Make the number of applications that will be funded more prominent by moving it up.
- Move "Requests of over \$500,000 for direct costs" into the Award Information table under Award Budget.
- Consider/revisit the difference between Additional Review Criteria and Additional Review Considerations.

### **Action Items:**

- S2S folks could come up with a list of what they would like to see in the XML.
- Explore the possibility for a teleconference with faculty weigh-in. Ask David Robinson to seek out input from faculty representatives.

## **eSubmission Discussion**

**Presenters:** Dave Curren & Sheri Cummins

### **Summary:**

- New form versions are on the way for a number of activity codes, including DP1 & DP2 (will have a Competition ID of ADOBE\_FORMS\_B1). Version 1.3 of the R&R Other Project Information Form and version 1.4 of the Project/Performance Site Locations forms.
- Updates are being made to K (Career Development), F (Fellowship), and T (Training) forms (PHS 398 Career Development Award Supplemental Form, PHS 398 Fellowship Supplement Form, and PHS 398 Research Training Program Plan).

## eRA Web Site Redesign Update

**Presenters:** Megan Columbus & Sarah Binder

### Summary:

- The redesigned eRA Web site will go live during the first week of June. Feedback and suggestions are welcomed.
- **Update:** The site is live (as of June 8, 2010) and can be found at: <http://era.nih.gov/>

## General Discussion

### Summary:

- Implementing Organizational Hierarchy impacts not just Commons but NIH's back-end modules as well, making it a large project. Unfortunately, although we clearly recognize the value, NIH will not be able to implement it any time in the near future, due to higher-priority projects and a lack of funds.
- Several institutions noted that they are being contacted by NIH staff to determine which institute should review their grant proposals (Data Quality will be invited to the next meeting to discuss).
- There is concern with the current process for submitting supplemental materials; the old practice was that the PI could send supplemental material directly to the SRO. The group noted that requiring the SO to submit directly to the SRO has made the business process uncomfortable.
- In the future, a new notification (as a result of Evergreening) will "ding" all SOs with an e-mail, once a JIT submission has been completed or modified.
- An institution asked if sub-awardees can complete their own FCOI reporting, instead of relying on the parent grantee organization to do so. NIH noted that this is not possible for a variety of reasons.

### Action Items:

- Look into making delegating eSNAP Submit Authority part of the Single-Sign-On project.
- Ask Data Quality to attend the next meeting.
- NIH will discuss submission process for supplemental materials and will update the group when possible.