Transcript – Reference Letters

Welcome to the tutorial on how to submit a Reference Letter through NIH eRA Commons.   This tutorial will guide you on how to submit Reference Letters for Career Development and fellowship applications. This demo does not apply to letters of support, which are submitted for training appointments.

Before submitting a reference letter, make sure the following are done properly: First of all, you cannot be a Referee if the applicant is your mentee or protégé.

Applicant should provide his or her eRA Commons User ID. Ensure that the ID has a PI role associated with his or her eRA Commons account. A trainee role or a postdoctoral role will not suffice.

Applicant should provide the current FOA number to the Referee. Please make sure the letter is being submitted for the correct FOA. Reference letters are matched to applications, using the FOA number and the applicant's Commons User ID.

Applicant should let the Referee know a reference letter can be submitted anytime between the opening date of FOA and the application submission deadline. Reference Letters can be submitted before the application itself.

The Fellowship Reference Form previously used with Fellowship applications is no longer required.

As a Referee, please be aware of the application deadline.

Reference letters must be in PDF format, no more than two pages.

For Career Development programs, a letter format (such as one written on university letterhead) is acceptable.

Referees must submit a reference letter directly to eRA Commons. Please go to the eRA Commons site, as shown on the next few slides, to submit the reference letter.

Referees do not need to login to Commons.   Just click on the "Submit Reference Letter" hyperlink, to access the Reference Letter web page.

In the top box, enter the name, email, institution, and division of the person who is submitting the Reference Letter. In the bottom section, enter the applicant's Commons User ID, last name, and the correct current FOA number. Then click Continue.

Attach the reference letter in PDF format, which should be no more than two pages. Please follow the PDF guidelines: Do not password protect the PDF or use a fill-able PDF file. Click the submit button when done. The letters are confidential, and the applicant will not be able to access the letters.

After the referee submits the reference letter, both the referee and the applicant will receive a confirmation of receipt by email. Please retain the Confirmation number. It will be required when correcting previously submitted letters before the current application deadline.

Please do not reuse the confirmation number for other applications. Print the confirmation email for your records.

If the referee needs to correct the submitted reference letter, he or she should go to the eRA Commons Submit Reference Letter screen, enter information and the Confirmation number.

If the applicant withdraws the submitted application and submits a new one before the deadline, reference letter will need to be submitted again.

In case of Resubmission, where an application had been previously submitted but was not funded and is being resubmitted for new consideration: Reference letters will need to be re-sent.

In case a system error occurs when Referee submits the reference letter: It is preferable that the Referee contact the Help Desk. Do not ask the applicant to do so on the Referee's behalf.

We cannot provide Referees with a copy of reference letter that they have submitted.

This concludes the demo for Submitting Reference Letters in eRA Commons. For information: See frequently asked questions about Letters of Reference on the Applying Electronically Web site.

Thanks for watching. If you need help, please submit a ticket.