Transcript – SAMHSA Applicant Tutorial

*********************DISCLAIMER!!!*********************

THIS FILE MAY CONTAIN ERRORS. THIS IS NOT A LEGAL DOCUMENT AND IS NOT FOR USE IN A COURT OF LAW.

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This presentation provides guidance for registering and preparing your organization to successfully initiate and submit applications for SAMHSA Funding Opportunity Announcements, or FOAs.

SAMHSA's application submission and processing, is supported by the Grants Management systems of the NIH, otherwise referred to as eRA. The contents of this walk through include technical steps of the registration process, how to create a Project Director account within the eRA system, how to apply to a SAMHSA opportunity in eRA online application system, ASSIST, how to fill out your application in ASSIST, and finally, how to submit and monitor your application post-submission.

The sections concerning ASSIST, will show screens from ASSIST, but the guidance for application contents, are applicable regardless of how you submit. Whether you submit directly through grants.gov, through ASSIST, or through another system to system provider, the requirements for the application are the same.

The first section of this walk through is registration. Before you can apply to SAMHSA FOAs, you will need to register with four institutions.

The four separate registrations are with the Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System, or DUNS, the System for Award Management, or SAM.gov, Grants.gov, and eRA Commons.

First you will need to have a Dun & Bradstreet number. To register you can visit their website or contact them over the phone. Next you will need to be registered with the System for Award Management or Sam.gov. You can register with SAM.gov using their website, where they explain their new registration process, and you must keep your registration active throughout the life of your project if you are awarded a grant. You will need to monitor your SAM registration throughout your grant as it requires yearly renewal.

Once you've gotten the DUNS number and you've completed your SAM registration, you will need to register with Grants.gov and set up an Authorized Organization Representative, known as an AOR.

Note that by registering with Grants.gov you do not automatically get an Authorized Organization Representative account, so you will need to register with Grants.gov and then set up an AOR account.

Once you've completed these three registrations you will need to register with eRA Commons. Even if you are going to apply through Grants.gov Workspace, you must register your organization with eRA Commons.

Completing these four registrations can take up to six weeks, so you are strongly encouraged to begin the process as soon as possible.

Two accounts are required in order to submit your application with eRA Commons, even if you are submitting through Grants.gov Workspace. You will need at least one Signing Official account, or an SO account, and one PI account.

One SO account is created automatically as part of the organization registration process, but there can be more than one SO account with your organization. Additional SO accounts can only be created by SO accounts.

The SAMHSA Business Official that you put down on your HHS checklist must have an account in eRA Commons in the SO role. If you decide to submit your application through ASSIST, the person submitting the application must have an account with the SO role.

You will also need at least one PI account, which is not created automatically as part of the organization registration process. The Project Director that you put down on your HHS checklist must have an account with the PI role in eRA Commons. The application identifier on your SF 424 form will be the Commons account username of your SAMHSA Project Director..

Signing Official accounts held by your Business Official, or any other individuals in your organization with an SO account, will be able to access information about all of your applications from your organization and any grants awarded if applicable.

Any PI accounts or Project Directors will only be able to access applications for which they are listed as a Project Director and any grants awarded for those applications if applicable.

This section will go into more detail about how to register your organization in eRA Commons.

This slide contains an overview of the registration process. The registration process must be completed by someone who will have an SO role and they must regularly check their email during the process.

The first step is to access the Commons homepage and complete a registration form. Completing this registration form will send you a confirmation email with a link inside that you need to click within 48 hours.

Once you click on the link, NIH will verify your registration request and notify you of the result. It will either be approved or rejected, and if rejected the reason why will be included in the notification.

If it is rejected, the SO will need to restart the process and correct the issues noted in the rejection email.

If the registration request is approved by NIH, the SO that started the registration process will need to click a link in the email that is sent out notifying them of the approval. They will need to do this within 48 hours to confirm the information that NIH has reviewed.

Once confirmed, the SO will receive two additional emails. One will have their account information, including their username, and one will have a temporary password. The SO will need to log into Commons with their new account and their temporary password within 48 hours, otherwise the temporary password will expire.

Once they log in, they will be required to change their temporary password.

After they have set up a new password, they can review and accept the registration. This will register the organization in eRA Commons and allow the SO to create additional accounts.

The following slides will contain screenshots of the emails you may receive and the information that you will need to fill out.

First you will access the Commons homepage and click register grantee organization in the upper right corner of the window.

Next you will be taken to a page that gives you an overview of the process as well as a button that says Register Now. Click the Register Now button and you will be taken to a form to fill out.

On the register institution page, you will need to select which funding opportunities you're applying for. In this case you want to check the box. “My organization wishes to apply for non-NIH grants or contracts.

Then you would need to enter your DUNS number and click the verify DUNS button. Once you verify your DUNS you will be able to enter in the rest of your institution information.

You will need to enter in a principal signing official. This is the individual that will complete the registration process and the first SO account that your organization will have, but again, you can have multiple SO accounts for your organization. The principal SO will need to create additional SO accounts.

An accounts administrator (AA) can be optionally entered here. However, even if you enter an Account Administrator they won't be able to complete the rest of the registration process. After your organization is fully registered by the signing official, they will be able to create additional accounts, with the exception of SO accounts.

Once you fill out the registration form and click register, you'll receive a confirmation email at the SO email address that you put down on the registration form. You will need to click the link included within that email within 48 hours.

Once you click the confirmation link, you will be taken to a page in Commons letting you know that your email address has been verified. NIH will then proceed to review your registration request.

If NIH is unable to approve your registration request you will receive an email that looks like this. It will say that the NIH is unable to approve your registration request and it will include the reason why. In this case a valid DUNS number was not supplied.

If you receive an email like this, your SO will need to go back and restart the process and correct any errors.

If the NIH is able to approve your registration request, then you will receive an email that looks like this.

It will notify you that your registration process has been approved so far and it will include a confirmation link. You will need to click the confirmation link in order to review the information that NIH has confirmed, and accepted.

Click the link and you will be taken to a page that looks like this. If you confirm the registration, your signing official will then receive two emails.

One will have their new account information…

…and the second will have a temporary password. Again, they'll need to log in with this temporary password within 48 hours, or the password will expire, and you will need to contact the eRA service desk to have it reset.

To log-in with your temporary password, head back to the eRA Commons homepage and enter in your username and temporary password.

Upon login you will be immediately prompted to change your temporary password…

….and once you do that you'll be taken to a page that looks like this.

Click the eRA Commons link and you will be able to complete your registration…

…and have your organization registered in Commons.

Clicking accept acts as an electronic signature and will complete the registration process.

Once you've finished your registration your SO can create additional SO accounts or any other accounts for your organization and your accounts administrator, if one was created, can create additional accounts with the exception of the SO role. Accounts administrators will not be able to create SO accounts.

If your principal SO is going to be your SAMHSA Business Official, then the only other account you would need is a Project Director account, but you must at least create, or affiliate to your organization, a Project Director account in order to apply to a funding opportunity.

This section will cover creating a Project Director or a PI account in eRA Commons. Again, this is required even if you are submitting through Grants.gov work space because this account will be listed on your SF 424.

Some key things to note before creating a new account:

Your Project Director may already have an account in the eRA Commons system. If they do, you can give them the PI role and affiliate them with your organization. Do not create a duplicate account.

The SAMHSA Project Director account needs to have the PI role in eRA Commons.

If you try to create a new account you won't be able to until you search for an existing account.

The following slides will show you what the process should look like.

First, you will go to the Commons homepage and log in.

At the navigation bar at the top of the screen you would select Admin, and then Accounts, and then Account Management.

This will take you to the Account Management system page where you will need to select the User Type and search for the user. Make sure the user type is Commons and then enter the last name, first name. Or if you know your Project Director already has an account, you can just enter their Commons User ID.

Once you search for users, in the search results you can click on the hyperlinked name and this will take you to more information about the person. This will help you identify if this is really the Project Director you are looking for, or is it just someone who happens to have the same name.

You can also click on the manage button to view more information about this person.

If you've clicked on the manage button this is what the page would look like. You can view their primary organization to help identify them…

…and any secondary organizations they are also affiliated with.

Once you've searched, you will have three scenarios. You could either have a Project Director that already has a PI account in eRA Commons and who is affiliated with your organization, in which case you do not need to take any action to create them an account. This could be the case if your organization was already registered and has previously applied for grants.

A second scenario is your project director has an account with the PI role already, but it is not affiliated with your organization. If this is the case you will need to affiliate their account to your organization.

The third scenario is they could not have an account at all, in which case you would need to create them a new account with the PI role.

These next slides will show you how to affiliate an existing account to your organization.

Search for your Project Director, and in the search results if you see someone that is your Project Director, click Manage.

Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click the Affiliate button.

This will populate a list of roles that you're able to give to them. You will need to give them the PI, Principal Investigator role, and select Add Role. You will only be able to add it with your organization so you don't need to worry about selecting an organization.

Before the affiliation is made, you can review any changes you've made, and you can click Remove if necessary.

If you've added additional roles you want to keep, select Save. You won't successfully add the roles until you click Save, so it's important to save and not just add the role and then leave the page without saving.

Once you've done that, they will be affiliated to your organization and you don't need to do anything else to set up their account.

The third scenario is creating a brand new account in eRA Commons for your Project Director.

Your first action will need to be searching for an account. You can't create an account until you've searched for one that may already exist for the Project Director. But if none of the search results look like your Project Director, you would click create new account in the bottom left hand of the page.

This will take you to a screen where you can enter in a user ID. This is the user ID that you will have to put down on your SF 424 cover page. This is also the ID that your Director will use to log into the system. Make sure it's something they can remember, and write it down and let them know.

Once you enter in the user ID, you will need to add in contact information, their first name and last name, while their middle name is optional. However, the middle name can help in case another organization needs to identify their account later. And finally, add in an email address.

They'll need to monitor their email because once you create an account, just like the Principal Signing Official, they'll receive emails with their user ID and a temporary password.

Once you've entered their email address, select Add Roles.

After clicking Add Roles on the manage page, select PI - Principal Investigator, from the drop down menu, and click Add Role.

This will add the PI role to their list of roles, and click Create to create the account.

Again, once you create the account, just like the original registration process, the PD will now receive two emails. One email will have their new username and information about their account, including what roles they have, and what organization it's with. A separate email will contain a temporary password. The password expires after 48 hours so your Project Director should monitor their email address and log in as soon as they can.

Once they log in, they'll be required to change their temporary password.

Once you've set up a Project Director account or verified that a Project Director account is already set up for your organization, then you're ready to apply to FOAs.

Once you have completed the four required registrations and set up a Project Director account in eRA Commons you are ready to apply to FOAs.

You should not wait until your application is due to submit it. You should submit well in advance just in case there are any submission errors that arise. You should allow at least three full days, 72 hours, to resolve any issues.

You do not need to apply using eRA's ASSIST, you can apply using Grants.gov Workspace or any other system to system provider. Any submitted applications sent through Grants.gov Workspace will then be sent to eRA Commons where they then go through additional data validations. It's critical to note that your application is only considered submitted for the purposes of whether you submitted it by the due date if your application passes all validations from both Grants.gov and eRA Commons. Your application must be error free in eRA Commons on or before the due date.

If you decide to use eRA's ASSIST, any member of your organization with an eRA Commons role can initiate an application, and then fill out the application. Any user affiliated with your organization and who has an eRA Commons role may be given access to the application by a signing official.

You do not need to have an SO or a PI role in order to start the application process in ASSIST, you just need an eRA Commons account with your organization, and access to ASSIST.

If you decide to submit your application through Grants.gov work space, then the account information here may be less relevant,

but again the errors and validations covered must be passed by your application regardless of how you submit it.

If you decide to submit through ASSIST, begin the process by logging in to your Commons account and then clicking on the ASSIST tab on the menu bar. Alternatively you can access ASSIST directly at public.era.nih.gov/assist

You will enter in your FOA number into the Initiate Application box, and click go.

You will then be able to review the summary information about your FOA and make sure it looks right, and then scroll down and enter a Project Title…

… select your lead applicant organization and enter in your Project Director.

Your lead applicant organization should be automatically filled with your organization. You will only need to make a selection here if you are a Project Director or some other user that is affiliated with multiple organizations. You will need to make sure you're selecting the correct organization that is submitting the application.

Once you've filled everything out here you can also check your SAM registration details and if everything is ready to go, click Initiate Application at the bottom of the page.

Once you initiate the application you will be taken to the Application Information page. This is sort of the homepage for your application, and is also known as the Summary tab.

It includes the Application Identifier. You should write this down and communicate this to anyone else that needs to work on the application. This is the easiest way to locate your application in ASSIST in case you need to access it later, you need someone else to work on it, or you need to send it to a Signing Official to have them submit it.

Now we will cover how you can access in-progress applications in ASSIST.

Searching by the application identifier is the easiest method to locate a specific application since it is a unique identifier and will only return one result, but you can look up applications using a variety of search criteria.

To get to the search page in ASSIST click Search Applications on the ASSIST homepage.

Enter in your Application Identifier, or if you don't have it, other fields such as your Application Project Title, your agency, or submission status, and then click Search.

You'll then receive a list of results. If you entered your application identifier you will only have one result. Click Select on the application that you want to view.

You will then be taken to the application information page.

This next section will go over how you fill out your application in ASSIST and provide some guidance for specific forms or your overall application.

In order to fill out your application, you'll need to make sure you have all of the required forms listed in the FOA, and all of the required forms that are required by Grants.gov. This is a sample list of the forms that are required. You can see there are a number of mandatory forms and also there may be optional forms.

If you are ready to fill out your application, you will need to make sure even if you are filling out your application in ASSIST, that you have all of the Grants.gov required forms. They are labeled differently in ASSIST, but they do match up one to one. They are identical to the Grants.gov forms, they just have different titles. This reference table shows you which form matches up to which Grants.gov form.

Note these forms should prepopulate on your application so the only form you would have to worry about making sure is there is the disclosure of lobbying activities form, if it is relevant to your application.

Once you're ready to fill out forms, you'll need to make sure you fill out all required fields on all required forms. You should additionally add and fill out the lobbying disclosure form if any individual that will be receiving money or working on the grant, if one is awarded, is part of any lobbying activities or associated with any lobbying.

Every time you go to edit a form, that form will be locked. That just means if you place a lock on a form, that you are the only person who can edit it. If you want to allow other people to edit that form, you need to release the lock and you can do that by scrolling to the bottom of a form selecting an option to remove the lock. These options include save and release lock and cancel and release lock. If you do not wish to allow other people to edit the form after you have filled it out, use the option Save and Keep Lock.

If you've filled out all of your forms or filled out some forms and want to make sure what you've filled out is correct, you can run validations on the application in ASSIST. This will run all of the checks that you will be required to pass in order to submit your application to SAMHSA. If any validations fail, you will be able to see what corrections are needed and make them before submitting your application.

The next few slides will provide some guidance for your overall application and for some specific forms.

As we covered earlier, the Commons ID of your PI account for your Project Director, the Account ID, is what goes in the Applicant Identifier Field on the SF 424 cover page.

If you get any errors when submitting your application, even after you've put your account ID, make sure it's the account ID for your Project Director, there are no typos, they have the PI role in eRA Commons, and make sure they're affiliated with your organization.

You should also make sure that the person listed on your HHS checklist is the person that holds the account and the information listed on the HHS checklist matches the PI account information.

The Proposed Project Start and End Dates on the SF 424 also need to match up with a year. So for example September 30th, 2018 to September 30th, 2019 is not one year but actually a year and a day.

So if your budget period was going to begin on September 30th, you would need to enter -- September 30th, 2018, to September 29th, 2019.

Several forms require zip codes and congressional district. All zip codes, even if they just have one field, need to be in zip plus four format so you would need to enter your full nine-digit zip code. If you do not know the zip code of your Project Performance Site or your organization, you can look it up using the address on the USPS website.

Likewise, the Congressional District needs to be in a specific format of two-letter state abbreviation dash three-digit number. If you do not know the Congressional District of your organization or your Project Performance Site, you can look that up on house.gov.

On your Project Abstract Summary form you're asked for a project duration. This is in months, which is not clearly specified on the form. So if you are submitting for two years of funding, you will need to enter 24 months.

These budget errors are listed for your reference, but they are much easier to understand with a visual aid, so we have a sample budget prepared in the next two slides.

This first budget is for FOAs that do not require matching funds. In section A, row 1, input the FOA number dash Federal in column a, and then enter the CFDA number in column b. Enter your requested federal total in row 1 column e. This will populate the amount down into row 5, the totals row.

In section B, break down your total requested amount into the various object class categories. Note that the cells circled in green must match up. The validation here is to make sure that your total entered in section A matches the total of the costs in section B broken down by category.

Since this example does not require matching funds, section C is not applicable.

Section D is where you break down your forecasted cash needs by quarter. You will need to take the total you entered in section 1 and then break down your cash needs into four quarters.

Section E is for future funding periods. Column b, or the “First” column is for the first future funding period, so the second funding period overall. Similarly column c is for the second future funding period, or the third funding period overall.

Section F is for other budget information and is optional.

These next two slides will go through the same budget form if matching is required by the FOA.

Section A now requires two rows to be entered. The first row will be the same as the previous example and will be the FOA # dash Federal in column A and the CFDA number in column b. You will then enter your requested federal funds in column e just as you would if matching is not required.

The difference now is that you must enter the FOA # dash Non-Federal in row 2 column a, followed by the CFDA number in column b and the total non-federal matching funds for the first year in column f.

At the bottom right of the section, in column g row 5, you will be able to see the total federal and non-federal amount combined.

In section B you will again break your costs down by the object class categories, but with matching funds required you now need to enter both your federal and non-federal costs by categories. Your federal costs should be entered in the first column and your non-federal costs in the second column. These totals combined will be validated against the combined total from section A, and if they do not match you will receive an error when you validate or submit your application.

The third section, section C, is for your matching information. Enter in your total non-federal match in the second row of section c, which should line up with the Non-Federal grant program information you entered in section A.

In section D, enter your forecasted cash needs by quarter, separating federal and non-federal amounts. The sum total of federal and non-federal amounts for all four quarters will be compared with the sum total from sections A and B.

Section E is for entering in your future funding needs, divided by federal and non-federal funds. Column b, or the "First" column is for the first future funding period, so the second funding period overall. Similarly column c is for the second future funding period, or the third funding period overall.

Section F is for other budget information and is optional.

Several forms have file uploads. Any file you upload in Grants.gov or ASSIST must be a PDF. If you upload a non-PDF, it may take the submission but when you run validations it will let you know the file is not acceptable. It needs to be a PDF.

When uploading PDFs, take care that the PDF is not empty, the PDF has a unique name, and if the PDF is a fillable form that you have entered data into, you have to save it to your computer with a new name, open it, and make sure you can still see the information you entered. If you are uploading your budget narrative form, name your narrative file "BNF". If you include the file extension the full name for your budget narrative should be "BNF.PDF".

Other supporting documents that are uploaded as "other narrative attachments," include, but are not limited to, the SMA170 form, the HHS 690 form, any biographical sketches, confidentiality form, and SAMHSA participant protection/human subjects form.

These files should be uploaded individually. You should not consolidate them before uploading.

If you need to upload multiple files to the Other Narrative Attachments form in ASSIST, follow these steps to correctly attach them.

Add a PDF document using the "Add Attachment" button labelled 1. Delete it or view it later using the buttons next to "Add Attachment".

Add additional PDF documents beyond the first using the "Add Attachment" button labelled 2.

Replace or view additional PDF documents using the buttons labelled 3. To remove an additional document check the "Delete on Save" box and save the Other Narrative Attachments form.

Once you've filled out your entire application, you can validate it or update the status in ASSIST.

Validating your application is going to run all the business and system rules that make sure your application can be accepted and reviewed by SAMHSA.

Just click the Validate Application button on the far left in ASSIST.

Validations are divided into “Errors” and “Warnings.” Errors are issues that will prevent your application from being submitted. Warnings are messages indicating issues that do not prevent submission, but you may want to correct before submitting.

If all validations pass, your application is ready to be submitted.

In order to indicate that the application is ready for submission, you will need to click Update submission status and you will be able to select from several statuses; choose “Ready for Submission.”

Either enter a comment in the text box and click the “Add comment” button, or the hyperlink above the box “continue without adding a comment,” right below the submission status drop-down. A comment is not required, but if you do decide to enter one it will not be shown to SAMHSA. These are comments for your organization’s reference.

Once you've updated the submission status, you will be able to submit the application only if you have an SO account within eRA Commons and you have access to Grants.gov AOR credentials. Again, even if you've passed all validations, if you have a Project Director account within the system you will not be able to use the Submit Application button. You have to have an SO account and you have to have Grants.gov AOR credentials.

You can see on this page the Submit Application button is grayed out because the account viewing the page is a Project Director account.

This is what the page will look like if you have an SO account. The Submit Application button will be active.

This section will cover how you submit your application in ASSIST.

As noted earlier you should not wait until your application is due to submit it. You should submit well in advance just in case there are any submission errors that arise. You should allow at least three full days, 72 hours, to resolve any issues.

To submit your application click the Submit Application button. As noted earlier you must have the SO role in order to have the button be active and the application must be in “Ready for Submission” status.

You will then be prompted to enter in your grants.gov Authorized Organization Representative credentials. Input the credentials, and then click the Enter button to submit your application.

You will then be taken back to the Application Information page in ASSIST but will have a confirmation message at the top letting you know the application was submitted.

This final section will cover what steps you will need to take after submitting your application.

After you submit your application it will be processed by Grants.gov. As it is received and validated, grants.gov will send status emails to the AOR who submitted the application.

Once the application is successfully processed by Grants.gov it will then be routed to eRA Commons where it will undergo additional data validation checks before it is fully considered submitted. The eRA system will send status update emails to three email addresses during this process. They will go to the email address associated with your project director account listed on the SF424 in section 4, applicant identifier, to the business official email address listed on the HHS checklist, and lastly to the grants.gov AOR listed on the SF424.

Your application is not considered submitted until it passes all the validations from eRA Commons. Therefore, you must monitor your application status after it is submitted to verify there are no errors, and if errors are found take appropriate actions to correct them and resubmit.

You may check your application status in eRA Commons or in ASSIST, if you submitted through ASSIST, in addition to receiving status emails. Checking ASSIST or Commons may provide updates faster than receiving system-generated emails as the emails rely on automated processes to send them.

To check on your application status in ASSIST, access the Application Information page. Then, click on the View Submission Status Details link.

This will open up a new window where you can view the submission status for ASSIST, Grants.gov, and eRA Commons. The “Agency” section is for eRA Commons.

If your application does have errors and you need to resubmit, make sure to change the type of submission on the SF424 to be a Changed/Corrected Application. Otherwise, it may be rejected as a duplicate submission.

If you encounter ASSIST or eRA Commons issues during the submission process, you can contact the eRA service desk online or over the phone. If you contact by phone, there is a specific queue for SAMHSA applicants and grantees.

If you have grants.gov issues or questions, you will need to contact their help desk. Note that the eRA service desk and grants.gov support are separate.

SAMHSA also provides agency contact information in their FOA documents. If you have questions about program issues, grants management or budget issues you can contact the appropriate agency staff listed in the FOA.

This concludes this video. We appreciate your attentiveness.