

# ***eRA NIH Commons Working Group (CWG) Meeting Minutes***

**Date/Time:** January 13, 2009, 12:30 pm – 3 pm

**Location:** Washington, DC

**Chair:** Megan Columbus

**Next Meeting:** TBD

## **Introduction**

Speaker: Megan Columbus

### **Discussion Points:**

- General update: enhancing peer review process, want to hear from users.  
Electronic Submission: NIH made switch to Adobe-based forms and use of Grants.gov's 2007 system. AIDS submission date on January 7 was fairly quiet.

### **Attendee Responses:**

- Reports that applicants are having trouble submitting applications through Grants.gov
  - Trying to submit and getting timed out
  - Getting error messages even when some of them are going through
  - Receiving cryptic error messages or rejections without specific error message given
  - Unable to login to submit
- Applicants suggest sending an email to Grants.gov Helpdesk to document system issues. This is especially important since applicants report that the Grants.gov Contact Center has not been issuing service ticket numbers when applicants are experiencing time out messages. Requests for acknowledgment from Grants.gov and ownership that there is a problem with the system when they do occur are not always answered.

### **Discussion Points:**

- Attendees' thoughts on Adobe Forms.

### **Attendee Responses:**

- Overall, Adobe considered an improvement from PureEdge though many wished they had taken advantage of the switch to make improvements rather than maintaining the look and feel of PureEdge.
  - Able to scroll through forms in the application
  - Better print capabilities (still want to be able to print entire application including attachments)
  - Able to view list of all attachments and easily scan list to ensure PDF format
  - Auto-complete feature is helpful; less retyping
- Mostly everyone has moved to 8.1.3., but some users were using Acrobat professional and hadn't upgraded their Adobe Reader. Directions are available from Grants.gov <http://grants.gov/assets/UsingAcrobatPro.pdf>
- Adobe is slow to open and slow to save and slow to move from one key person to another.

### **Action Items:**

Ask Grants.gov PMO to reiterate with their Contact Center the importance of providing a ticket number for all inquiries and to give specific instructions on whether or not applicant should resubmit given their specific issue. Find out what specific error messages are coming out from Grants.gov. Examine ways that we can help Grants.gov develop and meet their goals. Might CWG have a role in providing feedback to Grants.gov?

## **Financial Conflict of Interest**

Presenters: Scarlett Gibb

## Discussion Points:

- NIH has received 47 reports from 10 institutions. The Helpdesk has received 11 calls since launch of pilot; five informational, five adding authority, and one policy question.

**Action Item:** (Marcia Hahn) Send a reminder to FDP to complete Financial Conflict of Interest Reporting form, so that we can possibly move forward with rollout.

## ESI Profiles

Speaker: Scarlett Gibb

### Discussion Points:

- Principal Investigators that have attained a terminal research degree or completed their medical residency within the past ten years, and have not previously received a substantial NIH research grant, may be eligible to qualify as an Early State Investigator for the purposes of NIH R01 research grant applications. An ESI is a subset of the New Investigator Category.
- To ensure that NIH recognizes eligibility as an ESI, PIs are urged to log into eRA Commons (<https://commons.era.nih.gov/commons/>) and update their Personal Profile immediately. Note that PIs need to update their degree/residency date *before* they submit their R01 application. Once the PI enters the information, the system will calculate ESI eligibility and display the eligibility end date to the user if he/she is eligible.

**Action Item:** (Megan Columbus) Check distribution of message to PI's email to all PIs letting them know about the new policy.

## xTrain

Speaker: Sheri Cummins

### Discussion Points:

- xTrain goals
  - FY2008 goal: 5% of all NRSA appointments for training periods beginning in FY 2008 submitted through xTrain (met – actually 5.4%)
  - FY2009: 25% of all NRSA appointments for training periods beginning in FY 2009 submitted through xTrain.
- NIH would like to expand beyond FDP and open up xTrain for general usage. Attendees indicated there were no “showstoppers” and felt expanding usage was appropriate.

## In Commons Pilot

Speaker: Scarlett Gibb

### Discussion Points:

- Debbie Bucci presented at FDP the NIH effort for In Commons Single Sign ON. The eRA team is working with Debbie to pilot an effort with three organizations, Penn State, John Hopkins, and the University of Washington.

**Attendee Responses:** Level II assurance requirement will limit universities.

**Action Item:** (Scarlett Gibb) Find out if Level II assurance will be needed for universities to utilize In Commons.

## My Bibliography

Speaker: Scarlett Gibb

### Discussion Points:

- This is a new system being developed by the National Library of Medicine to link with NLM manuscript system and the PubMed system, to help investigators create a more complete bibliography. The eRA team is working with NLM to obtain this information via a web service. We are also working to assist NLM in working on an XML schema and to act as a liaison for NLM to work with the community to facilitate the usability of the system externally. We are looking at the possibility of linking My Bibliography to PI profile in the Commons.

## **Commons Usability Evaluation**

Speaker: Scarlett Gibb

### **Discussion Points:**

- Funding has been approved for a Commons usability study. This means that NIH will be looking at creating a better user interface that is more user-friendly and promotes more completeness in data entry. The eRA team is currently evaluating contractors to perform this evaluation. We will be asking for your assistance in identifying users of various experience levels to help in the evaluation.

## **Loan Repayment System integration**

Speaker: Scarlett Gibb

### **Discussion Points:**

- Currently using a web-based application process, that will not change. However, data will be integrated from this system into the Commons for processing and reviewing. NIH will also utilize SSO.

**Action Item:** (Scarlett Gibb) Add link through Commons for the system.

## **iEdison**

Speaker: Scarlett Gibb

### **Discussion Points:**

- Currently, iEdison is using an old database and outdated software, but it is being upgraded.

## **Hardware presentation**

Speaker: Scarlett Gibb

### **Discussion Points:**

- We plan to refresh eRA hardware over Memorial Day Weekend – May 23 and 24, 2009. The result of this update will be to improve system performance, as well as to allow NIH to develop a new user acceptance environment, to which will give system-to-system developers will have access.

## **New Post-Doc Role**

Speaker: Scarlett Gibb

### **Discussion Points:**

- The new post-doc role will mean anyone with a post doc role will also need to be commons registered. They will also need to be included on key personnel page with Commons IDs.

### **Action Item:**

All post docs will need to be registered in Commons for January 2010 submissions. A new role is being created to identify post docs.

## **User Administration Presentation**

Speaker: Scarlett Gibb

**Discussion Points:** Two current tabs are being merged into a single manage account tab for ease of use.

### **Attendee Responses:**

Pleased with the change.

## **Items for General Discussion**

Speaker: Megan Columbus

### **Discussion Point 1: E-submission:**

- NIH will be updating e-submission Web site and streamlining site to make it easier for newcomers to find what they need.

**Discussion Point 2: eSNAP**

- How can we improve the system to enforce timely submission of eSNAP without putting barriers in the system?

**Attendee Responses:**

- CWG suggest implementing penalties for lateness such as taking money off of a reward if a grantee is late submitting progress reports or not accepting new proposals until the progress report is submitted for the current report. Suggestion to follow the NSF model.

**Action Items:**

(NIH) NIH will now send out an email reminder at 60 days to say that grantees' eSNAP reports are due in the next two weeks. The reminder sent at four months is too early and the reminder sent at 45 days out is too late. We will stop sending reminder at four months.

**General Suggestions:**

- CWG suggest that for career development awards, rather than requiring applicants to roll budgets up, they be allowed to itemize in a way that is consistent.

**Next meeting:** May 2009 in Erskine, CA

**Discussion Points:**

- It is unclear whether the Federal participants will be able to travel for the May meeting. Considering different meeting formats that might work. Maybe phone, web or video conferencing. Also, discussed possibly sending a few NIH employees and getting notes together about what we could take to the bigger group that will meet in September 2009.