

NIH eSubmission Items of Interest – April 27, 2009

I realize some of the information below is coming too late for Challenge Grant application submitters, but the questions I received today reminded me that many folks are new to the process. For the benefit of our new applicants (and as a reminder to our more experienced applicants), here's some basic information and available self-service resources. Of course, both Grants.gov and eRA Commons also have support staff to assist you if you really get stuck ([Finding Help](#)).

Read & Follow all Instructions

The Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) to which you are applying includes opportunity-specific instructions that should be followed in conjunction with the general guidance in the application guide you downloaded with the application forms.

When the instructions in the two documents are different, the announcement instructions should be followed. For example, the Challenge Grant FOA ([RFA-OD-03-009](#)) has the following instruction:

R&R Other Project Information, Item 6. Project Summary/Abstract: Limited to one page. Begin this section by stating the broad Challenge Area and the specific Challenge Topic that this application addresses. Use the following format: *This application addresses broad Challenge Area (01) Behavior, Behavioral Change, and Prevention and specific Challenge Topic, 01-GM-104: Mechanisms of Behavior Change Research.*

That FOA instruction should be followed rather than the application guide instruction which states "This section must be no longer than 30 lines of text." and does not mention the need to include the Challenge Area and Topic.

If you didn't download the application guide with your forms, you can always access it from the [SF424 \(R&R\) forms page](#) of [NIH's Grants Web site](#). The page also includes Biographical Sketch, Targeted/Planned Enrollment, and other format samples to assist you in preparing application attachments.

Before Submitting

Use the "Check Package for Errors" button at the top of the form. This button checks for some very basic Grants.gov form errors (e.g., ensures you completed all the fields marked required by Grants.gov.) Additional Grants.gov and all eRA validations take place after you submit your application. Getting the "Validation Passed" message after clicking the button is a good start, but not an indication you are completely free and clear of all potential errors. Check out the [Avoiding Common Errors page](#) and give your application one final check before you submit.

What Notifications Should I Expect?

The Grants.gov Web site has a nice reference titled [Tracking Your Application Package](#) that outlines the different notifications sent to the submitting AOR. The "Submission Receipt Email" is received first and should arrive soon after your submission. Grants.gov has a 48 hour target for processing applications and you will not receive the "Validation Receipt Email" (second notification) until processing is complete. Grants.gov is receiving a record number of submissions as a result of [NIH's Recovery Act opportunities](#). **Processing times will likely exceed the 48 hour target for the larger Recovery Act submission dates. Be patient.** Both Grants.gov and NIH are closely monitoring systems and they are humming along as fast as they can go.

Applications that pass all Grants.gov validations are queued for agency retrieval. The eRA system pulls applications from Grants.gov, checks them against agency business rules and posts the results of these agency validations in eRA Commons. The eRA system sends status notifications to the contact, PD/PI and AOR email addresses included on the SF424 (R&R) cover form (see http://era.nih.gov/ElectronicReceipt/submit_app.htm#4 for list of notifications and samples.)

Do not rely on email notifications as your sole means of tracking application status. It is your responsibility to track your application through Grants.gov and eRA Commons. If you can't see your assembled application in eRA Commons, we don't have it.

Available Resources to Decipher Grants.gov Errors

If Grants.gov identifies application errors you will need to make any necessary corrections and submit your application again. You may find these Grants.gov references useful in determining why your application was "Rejected with Errors."

- [Applicant Resources page](#)
 - [FAQs](#)
 - [Understanding Error Messages document](#)
 - [Troubleshooting Tips page](#)

Available Resources to Decipher eRA Errors and Warnings

In addition to the FOA and application guide instructions, you may find these NIH resources useful if the eRA system identifies application errors:

- [Electronic Submission Web site](#)
 - [Avoiding Common Errors](#)
 - [FAQs](#)
 - [Validations Document](#)

Error Correction Window Extended

Applicants that submit their initial application by 5:00 pm local time on the submission deadline, can correct system-identified errors/warnings during the error correction window (the time allowed after the submission deadline to correct errors/warnings identified by the eRA system).

Last week we posted a notice in the NIH Guide for Grants & Contracts extending the window from two to five business days for those opportunities with submission deadlines from April 21, 2009 through May 1, 2009 ([NOT-OD-09-087](#)). This extension should allow you to view your submission status and make a corrective submission to address errors (if needed) despite the longer processing times.

Change in eRA Commons Status Detail Screen

On April 24, changes were made to the status messages available to Commons users in the Status Result hit list and the Status Details screen. The status information available to external users now aligns with the status information seen by federal users of our internal grants administration software. As a result of this change, the Status Details screen will not be populated until the day after an error-free application is received in eRA. The Other Relevant Documents section of the Status Details screen, including the eApplication, Appendices and Cover Letter, still are available to users immediately.

Release Notes for the April 24 software release are available on the [Commons Support Page](#).

It's been a busy time for all of us. Hope everyone is hanging in there.

Take care,

Sheri Cummins & Scarlett Gibb

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Final Notes:

Although you are welcome to send suggestions, feedback and general inquiries to us at askera@mail.nih.gov, all production issues must be reported through the [eRA Commons Help Desk](#). This ensures timely support and appropriate documentation of your issues.

This message was sent to multiple listservs; you may receive it more than once – sorry for any inconvenience. To subscribe/unsubscribe to eRA listservs, please go to our [Get Connected](#) page.