

MEMORANDUM

To: PIs with NIH funded projects or pending proposals

From: Frank J. DiSanto

Subject: Electronic proposal submission to NIH

Date: April 13, 2006

As you probably know, the NIH is radically changing the way it receives grant proposals. By October 1, 2007, all proposals will be submitted electronically through Grants.gov to the NIH Commons. Implementation dates vary, depending on the program mechanism to which you are applying. See http://era.nih.gov/ElectronicReceipt/files/Electronic_receipt_timeline_Ext.pdf for a table showing all of NIH's planned transition dates. Upcoming implementation dates of interest to Northwestern University researchers include June 1, 2006 for R03 Small Research Grants, R21 Exploratory/Development grants, and R13 Conference grants; and February 1, 2007 for R01 Research Project Grant proposals. In addition, specific RFAs may transition to electronic submission at any point so check the RFA carefully for the submission mechanism. Along with the new submission process, NIH will require applicants to use new forms (SF 424 Research and Related (R&R) application). This is obviously a major change for NIH, for researchers, and for submitting institutions.

Generally, the process will work as follows:

- ◆ Find the appropriate Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) in Grants.gov (all applications will require an FOA). NIH will soon be creating generic FOAs for investigator-initiated R01s.
- ◆ Download the PureEdge Application Viewer, a free software package available at <http://www.grants.gov/DownloadViewer>. A PureEdge training demo is available at <http://www.grants.gov/CompleteApplication#demo>.
- ◆ Download the program announcement and application and save it to your computer.
- ◆ Notify the Office for Sponsored Research (OSR) of your intent to submit an application by contacting your grant and contract officer (GCO). Use the "grant and contract officer finder" at <http://www.northwestern.edu/orsp/RA.html> if you don't know your GCO.
- ◆ Complete the forms (with Chicago or Evanston OSR assistance as appropriate), the proposal text, and create pdf files.
- ◆ Using instructions provided by your GCO, upload your application to the NUIT Depot WebFile server. Depot allows users to save files on a server that can be easily accessed from anywhere online, on or off campus. See <http://www.at.northwestern.edu/depot/index.html> for more details on this server.
- ◆ Authorized Organizational Representatives (AOR – Bruce Elliott in Chicago and Susan Ross in Evanston) and OSR staff review the proposal, request changes if necessary, and submit the final application to Grants.gov.

- ◆ Grants.gov “validates” the proposal against its business rules and, within 24-48 hours, indicates that the application has been successfully validated by the system, or has been rejected because of errors.
 - If there are errors, they have to be corrected and the proposal resubmitted for validation
 - These steps, including error correction, must be completed before the submission deadline, which is 5 PM Central Time for Northwestern University applicants
- ◆ The electronic proposal is retrieved from Grants.gov and loaded into the NIH Commons, where an NIH-specific validation process is performed. Based on OSR’s experience in March, this is a lengthy and time-consuming step that may require several iterations.
- ◆ NIH will notify the Principal Investigator and Signing Official (SO) to go to NIH eRA Commons and verify the application online if there are no errors. From the Commons, the PI and SO will view the grant image and verify or reject the application. If the PI or SO rejects the application, they can revise the application using PureEdge and resubmit it to Grants.gov as long as they are still within the receipt deadline. This final step is under review by NIH and is subject to change.

Changes for the research community:

- ◆ The system is new to investigators, institutions and NIH. Although the changes are being implemented in phases, the system has yet to be “capacity tested”. That will likely occur next February when all R01 applications are submitted electronically using Grants.gov.
- ◆ Application packages are new – NIH is replacing the 398 with the SF 424 (R&R – research and related) forms package.
- ◆ An improved PureEdge viewer for Mac users won’t be available until at least November 2006. In the meantime, PureEdge will work best on a Mac when executed using a software emulator/virtual PC.

What you can do now to prepare:

- ◆ Set up a user account in the NIH Commons if you don’t already have one. Contact Mike Green for assistance at [msgreen@northwestern.edu](mailto:mgreen@northwestern.edu).
- ◆ Review materials provided by Grants.gov at <http://www.grants.gov/>, and the NIH at <http://era.nih.gov/ElectronicReceipt/>. This information is updated frequently.
- ◆ Become familiar with the SF 424 R & R forms (<http://era.nih.gov/ElectronicReceipt/sf424.htm>).
- ◆ Subscribe to NIH’s electronic submission listserv (leaving the subject line blank, send a plain text email message to Listserv@list.nih.gov including only the words **Subscribe NIH_eSUB_PI-L** in the body of the message).
- ◆ Submit a test application. Later this spring, NIH plans to have a website that will allow you to practice the entire process by submitting a demonstration application through Grants.gov and NIH eRA Commons and to obtain the full complement of validation emails so that you can get a better understanding of the new dynamics of the process.
- ◆ Attend a training session – OSR offices in Chicago and Evanston will announce these later this spring.

What not to do:

- ◆ Do not try to register in Grants.gov. The system requires only institutional registration, not individual user registration, and Northwestern University has already registered.
- ◆ Do not obtain a DUNS number for Grants.gov, as all applications will use the DUNS number of Northwestern University.

In summary, this is a new requirement that has been imposed on universities by the federal government. We want to do everything possible to assist Northwestern University's research community with adjusting to this change. The Office for Research will continue to communicate about this major change in proposal submissions to NIH. **In the meantime, perhaps the most important message we can deliver at this time is as follows: redefine your concept of proposal deadline. As the system currently operates, it will be necessary to submit your completed NIH proposal to the Office for Sponsored Research at least 5 business days before the deadline, so it can be reviewed and submitted to Grants.gov with enough time for required validation, error correction, and inevitable system glitches.**

We are committed to providing Northwestern University's researchers the assistance they need to transition to this new proposal submission process. This memorandum will be posted on the Office for Research's website, <http://www.research.northwestern.edu/research/> to allow you to utilize the numerous imbedded hyperlinks.

Please contact either Bruce Elliott in Chicago (312-503-1780) or Susan Ross in Evanston (847-491-3003) if you have any questions.

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