Federal Electronic Grant Proposal Submissions

Policies Re Electronic Grant Submission in the CHHD Research Office
GRANTS.GOV

Background:

NIH and eventually all Federal Sponsors of Research will be requiring (in a phased-in fashion) electronic submissions for all proposal mechanisms through an organization known as Grants.gov. This process will require new proposal submission procedures and earlier submission from PIs than with the traditional paper proposal submissions. As a general upfront warning, it is our estimation that the new NIH electronic submission procedures will require MORE attention and effort from PIs than with the traditional paper submissions.

Below we list background considerations and procedures that are necessary for electronic proposal submission together with friendly advice on ways to become effective and efficient in this process.

(Full NIH web addresses for details on electronic submission may be found at the end of this document)

I. Initial Steps PIs Must Take Prior To Submitting Electronically Proposals to Grants.Gov:

A. eRA COMMONS – In order to submit an electronic proposal through Grants.gov each individual faculty person must have an eRA Commons account. Your account will be used by the government to verify that you are a PI and are affiliated with PSU. It will also be the way NIH lists errors that need corrected. Please contact Boe Itinger immediately if you are not registered with NIH eRA Commons. This is a one time event that all faculty need to complete to use Grants.Gov and should be done well in advance of the grant submission date (if it is not already done). In other words once you have an eRA account it is used for all federal grant submissions (consistent with the specific agency progress in adopting this standard).

B. GRANTS.GOV is the organization the federal government is using for electronic submission of proposals. Please note that Grant.gov is like a clearing house in that they will only receive the initial submission and then pass it on to NIH – NIH will review the proposal and accept if format etc is OK or post on eRA Commons the errors that need corrected before they will pass on for review. Grants.gov will be using the 424 R&R forms, NIH 398 Forms will no longer be used for electronic submissions. All proposals submitted will be uploaded and submitted from the CHHD Research Office. Once the proposal is uploaded and correct the actual
submission of the proposal through Grants.gov can take up to 4 hours and acceptance by NIH can take up to 4 business days (and realistically in extreme cases even longer!!).  

II. Procedures for Submitting a Proposal:  

1. Identify PA/PAR/RFP and Download the Application – All proposals submitted to NIH must be submitted in response to an announcement listed on Grants.gov. These are typically posted 2 months before the due date.  

All proposals submitted to NIH must have an announcement number. The only way to submit is to locate the announcement number on Grants.Gov. Once you select the announcement number, Grants.gov will show you the forms that need to be electronically completed and submitted for that announcement. Each announcement is unique and may require additional or different forms. When you find the announcement you want to respond to on Grants.gov you download the application to see what forms need to be completed. All proposal actions will be done off-line by the CHHD Research Office and also submitted by the CHHD Research Office. You need to notify Boe Itlinger of your intent to submit well in advance (at least 1 month in advance) of the deadline submission date (see later section amplifying on this) and provide the Announcement number at the time you are doing the draft of the budget.  

2. PDF FILES – All documents except the budget will need to be delivered to the CHHD Research Office as a PDF file on a memory stick or disc. You must save the file as a PDF, then you open up the file and do a file print and select your printer (Adobe PDF) and this will re-create the PDF in an up-loadable format which Grants.gov will accept. Each section of the grant has its own PDF file that you will need to format in advance of bringing the collective of grant files to the research Office for submission. What follows are our requirements for PDF submission.  

PDF Requirements, Creation Process and Naming Standards  
Adobe minimum requirement:  
Adobe Acrobat 6.0 (Adobe 7.0 Preferred)  

PDF Process:  
Print to a PDF File (This removes editable fields)  
File.....Print.....Select Adobe PDF as your printer.  
You will be asked where to save your PDF File.  

Naming Standards for Each Section File:  

Research & Related Project/Performance Site Location (s)  
AdditionalLocationsPDF  
Research & Related Other Project Information
Federal Electronic Grant Proposal Submissions

Project Summary Abstract.PDF
Public Health Relevance Statement.PDF
Bibliography References Cited.PDF
Facilities Other Resources.PDF
Equipment.PDF
Other Attachments.PDF

Research & Related Senior/Key Personnel
Biographical Sketches Key Personnel.PDF
Bio01(lastname).PDF
Bio02(lastname).PDF
Current Pending Support.PDF
Additional Senior/Key Personnel.PDF
Additional Bio Sketches.PDF
Additional Current Pending Support.PDF

TRADITIONAL BUDGET (direct costs over $250,000 per yr.)
Research & Related Budget – Year 1 (completed on Line by CHHD R.O.)
Research & Related Budget – Year 2 (completed on Line by CHHD R.O.)
Research & Related Budget – Year 3 (completed on Line by CHHD R.O.)
Research & Related Budget – Year 4 (completed on Line by CHHD R.O.)
Research & Related Budget – Year 5 (completed on Line by CHHD R.O.)
Research & Related Budget – Cumulative Budget (completed on-line by CHHD)
Sub-Award Consortium Budget.PDF (received from sub-awardee)

MODULAR BUDGET (direct costs under $250,000 per yr.)
Personnel Justification.PDF
Consortium Justification.PDF
Additional Narrative Justification.PDF

Cover Page Supplement (completed on-line)
Research Plan
Introduction.PDF (revised applications only)
Specific Aims.PDF
Background Significance.PDF
Preliminary Studies Progress Report.PDF
Research Design Methods.PDF
Inclusion Enrollment Report.PDF
Publication List.PDF

Human Sections
Protection Human Subjects.PDF (including Data & Safety Monitoring Plan)
Inclusion Women Minorities.PDF
Targeted Planned Enrollment Table.PDF
Inclusion Children.PDF
Vertebrate Animals.PDF
Select Agent Research.PDF
Multiple PI Leadership Plan.PDF
3. PDF Files and Page Grant Page Length. Separating the proposal sections into separate files may create a problem with page length overrun in the final grant submission. This is because the final electronic merging will lead to each file section starting on a new page and so if a section or sections of a grant begin in the middle of a page in your Word (etc) file version they will start on a new page in the PDF submission version and lead to overruns on the final page count. Advice - this means that if one wants to take advantage of all the space available in grant format one needs to have each section of the grant finish fully at the end of a page (even page count so to speak). Recently, NIH has allowed for white space to be included in your overall page limit but this is a fluid issue that needs monitoring and recognition of the possible scenarios.

4. DATE OF SUBMISSION – Because of the additional time it takes to submit proposals through Grants.gov a change in policy will be required from our long standing procedures. We believe that we will need to have all proposals initially submitted at least 2 weeks before the actual due date if we are to assure submission to be completed by the deadline. As the Government, HHD Research Office and investigators become more proficient at this submission process the lead time may be able to be reduced but we anticipate that at least a week will always be necessary to assure appropriate and successful submission. Remember too that NIH requires all grant submission to be completed successfully (with revisions approved) by 5pm of the stated day of submission. Thus, all the corrections and changes need to be made BEFORE the stated deadline – this is, of course, what requires a substantial lead time for the initial submission. Please note that each round of corrections with eRA commons or NIH could take 2-3 days each (and in a worse case scenario even longer).

5. eRA PROPOSAL PROCESSING APPROVAL - The PI and CHHD Research Office MUST log-on to eRA Commons before the due date and review the proposal to make sure the conversion was done correctly. If errors are noted, they must be revised and the entire application must be resubmitted by the Research Office through Grants.gov. Once the proposal is accepted by NIH, it will be sent on to the appropriate review section within 48 hours unless rejected by the CHHD Research Office.

Note - It will be very important for the PI to be available before and after the initial submission. If errors are detected by NIH after submission, the PI will need to help resolve issues along with
the Research Office. Please be ready to assume your responsibility in the error correction process of the grant submitted.

6. **BUDGETS** – Draft budgets will still need to be completed by the CHHD Research Office (Boe and or Donna) at least 1 month in advance of the grant submission date. Grants.gov uses the 424 budget forms, not the NIH 398 forms. The budget will need to be entered into Grants.gov by the Research Office. If you will have sub-awards in your budget, the process must start even earlier. Boe/Donna will need to enter the sub-award information into Grants.gov and the send via email the appropriate budget to the sub-awardee. They will need to complete the budget form and send back to the Research Office in PDF format so it can be uploaded into Grants.gov. This process may take up to 2 weeks and even longer (given our past experience with all the potential difficulties of subcontracts).

7. **HARDWARE/SOFTWARE** - The Research Office has all the appropriate hardware/software needed to submit proposals through Grants.gov. PI’s may need to update their own software concerning the use of PDF’s.

**Websites re Electronic Submission of NIH grant proposals:**

http://era.nih.gov/

http://era.nih.gov/ElectronicReceipt/

http://www.grants.gov/

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