Preparing, Submitting & Tracking Applications Using ASSIST

NIH
National Institutes of Health
Office of Extramural Research

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ASSIST is NIH's online system for the preparation, submission & tracking of grant applications through Grants.gov to NIH.
• NIH requires electronic submission for all single and multi-project applications

• Electronic submission options to Cornell
  – ASSIST
  – Grants.gov
Key Benefits of ASSIST

- Secure, online data entry
- Collaboration of multiple users
- Pre-submission validation of NIH and key Grants.gov business rules
- Pre-population of data from eRA Commons profiles
- Pre-submission print/preview of application in NIH format
- Submission status tracking for both Grants.gov and eRA Commons within a single system
Before jumping into ASSIST, let’s take some time to get acclimated...
All electronic applications include:

- A single Overall component
- Some number of additional components
- Automatically prepared data summaries
Overview of Process

1. **Find Opportunity**
   - Make a submission plan

2. **Plan**
   - Initiate application

3. **Initiate**
   - Define team and provide application access

4. **Build Team**
   - Enter application data

5. **Enter Data**
   - Finalize application and prepare for submission

6. **Finalize**

7. **Submit**

8. **Track**
   - Track status and view final application image
Find Opportunity
**ASSIST - electronic application submission required**

This FOA uses NIH’s new Application Submission System & Interface for Submission Tracking (ASSIST) for both the preparation and submission of multi-project applications through Grants.gov to NIH. Applications to this FOA that are submitted electronically, paper applications will not be accepted. ASSIST replaces the Grants.gov downloadable forms currently used with most NIH opportunities and provides many features to enable electronic multi-project application submission and improve data quality, including: pre-population of organization and PD/PI data, pre-submission of many agency business rules and the generation of data summaries in the application image used for review.

Required Application Instructions

It is critical that applicants follow the instructions in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide, except where instructed otherwise in this FOA or in a Notice from the NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts and where instructions in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide are directly related to the Grants.gov downloadable forms currently used with most NIH opportunities. GRANTS.gov applicants must follow the instructions in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide, except where instructed otherwise in this notification. Following instructions not provided in the Problem Page will delay the consideration of an application. Applicants must follow all application instructions in the Application Guide as well as any program-specific instructions noted in this notification. When the program-specific instructions differ from those in the Application Guide, follow the program-specific instructions. Applications that do not comply with these instructions may be delayed or not accepted for review.

1. Download Application Instructions
2. Link to Agency Multi-Project System
Make a Submission Plan
Make a Submission Plan

• Ensure all registrations are in place
  – All standard registrations requirements apply (DUNS, SAM, Grants.gov, eRA Commons)
    • NIH User Registration:
      – https://ras.research.cornell.edu/NIH/Registration/nih-reg.html

• Decide how to distribute the work
  – Gather the Commons IDs for everyone who will be working on your application in ASSIST

• Carefully read the FOA
  – Note the allowable types of required/optional components and any special instructions
  – Define the layout of your application (e.g., define components and who will lead each)
Think about the components you plan to include

- PD/PI(s) for entire application
- Organization lead for each component
- Project lead for each component
- Project Title for application/components
- Start/End dates for application/components
Initiate Your Application
Create an Application Shell

Create an application shell by initiating the application and adding the components

- Components can be rearranged, added, deleted or abandoned at any time

  - Applicants can rearrange components of the same type (e.g., have the third project entered in ASSIST appear first in the assembled application image)

  - Applicants cannot control the order in which the component types appear (e.g., Cores will always be before Projects)
Log In to ASSIST

https://public.era.nih.gov/assist

Use your eRA Commons credentials to access ASSIST
Welcome to the Application Submission System & Interface for Submission Tracking (ASSIST)

Initiate Application

Funding Opportunity Announcement # PA-40-201
(Example: PA-00-000)

The National Institutes of Health posts Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs) in the NIH Guide for Grants & Contracts and in Grants.gov's Find Grant Opportunities. Each resource has robust search functionality to identify opportunities of Interest. ASSIST can only be used to prepare and submit applications when explicitly stated in the FOA.
FOA information pulled from Grants.gov

Enter Project Title

Drop-down list of organizations affiliated with your eRA Commons account
Initiate: Pre-population

Data pre-populated from organization selection

Can manually enter PD/PI information or provide eRA Commons username to auto-populate
Using ASSIST

Access on-line help

Screen tips

ASSIST messages

Available actions vary based on application context and access
Using ASSIST

The Overall Component is added to the component navigation.

Form navigation for the selected component.
Adding Additional Components for Multi-Project Applications

Add additional components

Allowable component types defined in the FOA are presented
Adding Additional Components for Multi-Project Applications

Tips: Some actions (e.g., Preview Application and Validate Application) are only available from this screen. The Application Information link in the breadcrumbs above can be used to return to this screen.

Application Information

- **Application Identifier:** 2142
- **Application Project Title:** Research Center to Cure the Diseases of the World
- **PI/PI Name:** MONEY, CHER D
- **Organization:** What's Matta U
- **Project Period:** 01/01/2015 - 12/31/2019
- **Status:** Work In Progress
- **Status Date:** 2014-04-10 04:18:11 PM EDT

FOA Information

- **FOA Number:** PA-40-201
- **Opportunity Title:** NIH Multi-project Test FOA with optional Additional Core, Core and Project Components
- **Agency:** National Institutes of Health
- **CFDA Number:** 93.396
- **Competition ID:** FORAS-C
- **Opportunity Open Date:** 08/09/2013
- **Opportunity Close Date:** 08/09/2016
- **Agency Contact:** SRS Support
  - E-mail: SRSsupport@OD.NIH.GOV

Continue adding components to build out the application shell.
Define Your Team and Provide Application Access
ASSIST automatically provides application access to some individuals based on:

• eRA Commons roles
  – All SOs and AOs at the applicant institution have irrevocable edit access for the entire application
  – All SOs and AOs at an organization leading a component have irrevocable edit access for their component

• Role on the application
  – The application initiator has edit access for the entire application
  – All PD/Pis listed on the Overall application have edit access for the entire application
  – The component Project Leads have edit access for their components
Managing Access

• Application access can be given to additional users with Commons IDs
  – Within or outside applicant organization

• Application access can be controlled across these variables:
  – Entire application vs. specific components
  – View vs. Edit
  – Budget vs. Non-budget data
Signing Officials (SOs)

SOs at the applicant institution can

- Manage application access for other users
- Manage application status all the way to Ready for Submission status
- Delegate **Access Maintainer** and **Status Maintainer** authority to other users within their institution
- Access the Submit action
The Manage Access action can be used to provide access to additional users or modify access for existing users.

Modify access for existing user

Give access to additional users
Add User

Provide Commons ID

User can be designated to manage access for the application or components

User can be designated to change application status

Change View/Edit/None access for the application or components
Enter Application Data
Searching for In-progress Applications

Use **Search Applications** to access your in-progress application.
Form navigation for the selected component
Adding Optional Forms

Select form and click **Submit**

Select the form you wish to add:
- Select Form
- Cumulative Inclusion Report
- Planned Enrollment Report
- R&R Subaward Budget

Complete the subawardee budget(s) in accordance with the R&R Budget instructions.

- Add New Subaward
- Remove All Subawards
- Download Subaward Form
- Attach Subaward Form
Data Entry: General

• Overall
  – Describe the entire application
  – Always completed with applicant organization information

• All Other Components
  – Reflect the activity in the specific component
  – Completed from the perspective of organization leading the component
Data Entry: R&R Cover

• Overall
  – All form fields used

• All Other Components
  – Subset of fields used
  • Field 5: Organization Information
  • Field 7 (Optional): Type of Applicant
  • Field 11: Descriptive Title of Applicant’s Project
  • Field 12: Proposed Project Start/End Dates
Data Entry: Other Project Information

• Overall
  – **Human Subjects & Vertebrate Animals:** Answer all questions
  – **Project Narrative:** Required

• All Other Components
  – **Human Subjects:** Answer only the ‘Are Human Subjects Involved?’ and Is the Project Exempt from Federal regulations?’ questions
  – **Vertebrate Animals:** Answer only the ‘Are Vertebrate Animals Used?’ question
  – **Project Narrative:** FOA may specify attachment is optional
ASSIST prevents data entry of additional Human Subject and Vertebrate Animal info on components other than Overall.
Data Entry: Sr/Key Person Profile

• Overall
  – Use the Project Director/Principal Investigator section to designate the Contact PD/PI
  – Include any Multi-PD/Pis
    • Use PD/PI Project Role
  – Do not include other Sr/Key personnel

• All Other Components
  – Use the Project Director/Principal Investigator section to designate the Project Lead
    • Must not use PD/PI Project Role
      – ASSIST defaults Project Role to Other, Project Lead
    • Follow FOA instructions
  – Include all Sr/Key personnel associated with the component

Applications must include a single biosketch for each Sr/Key person regardless of the number of components they are listed on. Biosketch can be included with any entry – just pick one.
Avoid Common Errors

- ASSIST screen tips
  - Found at the top of many data entry screens
- Application Guide
- Annotated form sets
  - http://grants.nih.gov/grants/ElectronicReceipt/communication.htm#forms
- Ten Checks to Help Avoid Common Errors
Finalize Application & Prepare for Submission
Before you submit, **Preview the Application** and verify that everything is just the way you want it to go to review.

Application preview does not include Cover Letter or Appendices which are maintained separately post-submission.
Once all internal reviews are complete, update the application status to **Ready for Submission**.
Submit Your Application
Error-free submission must be made by 5:00 p.m. local time (of submitting organization) on due date

– It takes time to prepare your application for submission

– Submit early (days, not minutes) to have time to address any unforeseen issues and to view your assembled application
Submit Your Application

Must be a Signing Official (SO) in eRA Commons and an Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) in Grants.gov to submit

Application Status must be set to Ready for Submission

Tip:
- Some actions (e.g., Preview Application) are only available from the previous screen. Return to this screen.

Application Information

Application Identifier: 2142
Application Project Title: Research Collaboration
PD/PI Name: MONEY, CHEEZ
Organization: Whatsamatta U
Project Period: 01/01/2016 - 12/31/2020
Status: Ready for Submission
Status Date: 2015-04-02 03:40:16.000 PM EDT

Submit Application
Submit Your Application

Applications are submitted from ASSIST to Grants.gov.

Enter your Grants.gov AOR credentials and click Enter

Message will appear indicating the application was sent to Grants.gov
Track Your Application
ASSIST sends out quite a few email notifications throughout the preparation and submission process to help track the application

– Application access changes, component/application updates, component/application status changes, submission status updates and more

Check out this resource:
ASSIST provides the ability to track both Grants.gov and NIH status

- Links to the eRA Commons Detailed Status Information to view your assembled application
After submitting to Grants.gov, submission status can be tracked in ASSIST.

**Application Information**

| Application Identifier: | 2142 |
| Application Project Title: | Research Center to Cure the Diseases of the World |
| PD/PI Name: | MONEY, CHER D ROUND, BEN A |
| Organization: | Whatsamatta U |
| Project Period: | 01/01/2016 - 12/31/2020 |
| Status: | Submitted |

Click View Submission Status Details
You must click **Check for Status Updates** to force ASSIST to poll Grants.gov and NIH for status updates.

ASSIST will indicate if a status change was detected.
ASSIST, Grants.gov and Agency submission status are available.

Grants.gov status of Agency Tracking Number Assigned and Agency status of Processed is good news!

**Agency Tracking #** link brings you to the detailed status screen in eRA Commons.
eApplication is the application image reviewers will use so check it carefully.

You will also want to check the Cover Letter and Component Appendices which are stored separate from the image.
Applicants have two (2) business days to view the assembled application image in Commons before it automatically moves forward to NIH staff for further processing.

If you can’t VIEW it, we can’t REVIEW it!
It is your responsibility to carefully review the entire application to ensure it has been processed correctly!
SO can Reject application in eRA Commons within viewing window and submit a Changed/Corrected application prior to the due date

• Action cannot be done within ASSIST
If no action is taken to reject the application during the two business day viewing window, the application automatically moves forward to NIH for further processing.
Follow NIH’s standard ‘system issue’ procedure if you run into problems beyond your control that threaten your on-time submission:

http://grants.nih.gov/grants/ElectronicReceipt/support.htm#guidelines
ASSISTance
On-line ASSIST Help

Overall Component

Tips:
- For Multi Project Applications:
  - In the Overall component, only enter the PD/PI and any multi-PD/PIs for the entire application.
  - For other components, enter all Sr/Key for that component and use roles other than PD/PI.
  - Each Sr/Key person gets one biosketch covering their involvement for the entire application. It does not need to be a single biosketch.
  - A system-generated Summary of Sr/Key persons and their biosketches will be included in the application. Biosketches will not be included in completed biosketches.

Access to Application Guide for additional guidance on field content information.

Click on question mark icon to access ASSIST help

Search feature

Search feature

• ASSIST: public.era.nih.gov/assist

• Online help: era.nih.gov/erahelp/ASSIST/

• Applying Electronically Website: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/ElectronicReceipt/index.htm

• Annotated form set: grants.nih.gov/grants/ElectronicReceipt/files/annotated_multi-project.pdf

• eRA ASSIST Training page: http://era.nih.gov/era_training/assist.cfm
eRA Service Desk

Toll-free: 1-866-504-9552
Phone: 301-402-7469
Hours: Mon-Fri, 7a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern Time (Except for Federal holidays)

Although we’ve worked closely with Grants.gov, ASSIST is a system developed and managed by NIH.

The eRA Service Desk should be an applicant’s first stop for support.
QUESTIONS