INTERNAL USER GUIDE

How to Complete and Submit Electronic Applications for Funding with the National Institutes of Health

Applying and Finding Funding within the NIH Guide and Downloading the Application Package
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**Flowchart overview of the NIH Application Process**

**NIH Grants.gov and eRA Commons flowchart – Electronic Application Process**

**Applicant Registration**
- **Prepare to apply**
  - Know your role
  - Register
- **Select Submission approach**
  - On-line Submission / Forms-based
  - Obtain software: Adobe Reader

**Preparation of Application**
- **Find Funding or Opportunity in Grants.gov**
  - Find specific funding programme/opportunity and download the application package
- **Prepare the application in accordance with the NIH Guide**
  - The application proposal is prepared ensuring that the Research Services Team responsible for your campus is made aware that it is in progress. Prepared proposals will also need to be set-up on InfoEd.
  - PI to check application.

**Submission to NIH**
- **Submit the completed application to Grants.gov (PI responsible)**
  - Grants.gov will perform a basic application check
  - Wait for NIH to retrieve the application
  - eRA Commons will check application against guidelines
- **Check the submission status in eRA Commons**
  - Errors found
    - If errors are found, the PI will be informed and instructed to correct application before re-submission to Grants.gov
  - No errors found (may have warnings) the application will proceed successfully
  - Application assembled
  - PI to check application, the application will move forward in the process after 2 business days
- **Check the assembled application**
  - SD (Research Services) to check completed application (within 2 business days)
  - Accept Application
  - Reject Application

**Accept Application**
- Submission Complete
- NIH Grants.gov and eRA Commons flowchart – Electronic Application Process

**Reject Application**
- NIH Grants.gov and eRA Commons flowchart – Electronic Application Process

*AGP = PI approved by the RO for Grants.gov. PI will be set-up by the RO in eRA Commons. AGP cannot submit to NIH. A Senior Research Administrator/Research Services Manager (SD) will submit to NIH. A Senior Research Services/Grant Manager (AA) is a Research Office/Central Administration. SFS = Senior Research Administrator (process submit Financial Status Reports to the NIH)*

*PI registers through Grants.gov, then RO approves registration (refer to Grants.gov approval for info)*

*PI requests registration by contacting rs.compliance@imperial.ac.uk (refer to eRA Common account set up for info)*

*NIH Applicant Guide September 2012*

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Important Pre-Requisite Information:

- As this is a fairly complex application system we strongly suggest that you allow plenty of time to complete your application. The actual process of creating, validating and submitting the application online typically takes considerably longer than other electronic systems.

- We request that you contact your Faculty Research Services/Joint Research Office team as early as possible so that they can assist you through the process.

- Grants.gov may take up to two days to process an application and eRA Commons may take one day, therefore all applications to the NIH should be emailed to your Faculty Research Services/Joint Research Office teams FIVE WORKING DAYS in advance of the deadline to allow for checking and the possibility of re-submission.

- The vast majority of NIH applications where we are applying direct to the Funding Agency must be submitted electronically using the Grants.gov and the eRA Commons online systems; however as the application process is a complex and lengthy one and it is recommended that you allow plenty of time for this.

- PIs need a registered account on eRA Commons, so allow time for this to be created. Also a Grants.gov account is advisable, discuss with the Research Office or visit the Research Support website [http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/researchsupport/funderinformation/onlinesubmissionsystems#nih](http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/researchsupport/funderinformation/onlinesubmissionsystems#nih)

- The NIH requires a variety of different US reference numbers to be entered on the application. Imperial College reference numbers are as follows:
  - DUNS Number (Data Universal Numbering System): 227092590
  - Animal Welfare Assurance Number (OLAW – Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare): A5634-01
  - Human Subject Assurance Number (FWA – Federal Wide Assurance): FWA00003281
  - Employer Identification Number (EIN): 1900216839A1
Narrative Overview of the NIH Application Process

NB. A good summary of the electronic submission process for NIH grant applications can be found at: http://www.grants.gov/applicants/apply_for_grants.jsp

i) Applicants download the Adobe application form and application instructions from grants.gov to their own computer, and complete the application offline. The final application form and attachments should be sent to your department/research services for review. The department will then forward on the application plus any supporting documentation on to Research Services, who will check and submit the application on Grants.gov.

ii) Please note that if more than one computer is used to view or work on an Adobe application form, each computer must be running the same version of Adobe Reader. Using incompatible versions will result in the application becoming corrupt, even if it is not saved.

iii) Once submitted to Grants.gov the application undergoes two validation checks; one by Grants.gov and the second, more detailed check, by the NIH funding agency. If the application has been successfully validated, the PI and Research Services will be notified by e-mail (via the Imperial College Research Support Mailbox rs.compliance@imperial.ac.uk). If the validation process has failed the application will be rejected. All errors must be corrected before the application can be re-submitted.

iv) The validation system will also highlight any warnings on the application. Warnings will not stop the application being submitted to the funding agency but they will have to rectify before the grant will be signed off by the funding agency.

v) If the application needs to be re-submitted due to errors, the submission process has to start again by correcting the application offline, routing it via email to the department and then Research Services, before submitting via Grants.gov and then being electronically routed to the NIH’s eRA Commons. Please note that this will still have to be completed well before the submission deadline date.

vi) The eRA Commons also allows PI’s to review the status of all their grant applications and detailed information associated with them. In addition the system allows reviewers to submit critiques and preliminary scores for applications they are reviewing.

vii) Grants.gov may take up to two days to process an application and eRA Commons may take one day, therefore all applications to the NIH should be emailed to Research Services FIVE WORKING DAYS in advance of the deadline to allow for checking and the possibility of re-submission.

Step by step guide

- Step 1 - create a user account
- Step 2 - install correct software
- Step 3 - download application forms
- Step 4 - complete the application offline
- Step 5 - email the application for approval
- Step 6 - email the costing to Research Services
- Step 7 - Research Services checks the application
- Step 8 - application is re-checked and submitted by Research Services
- Step 9 - electronic routing of application
- Step 10 - notification that application is available for checking on eRA Commons
Step 1 - create a user account

Anyone intending to submit an application to the NIH will first require an eRA Commons User Account, as the details of this account will need to be added to the application. The Principal Investigator will also need this account to view any Errors/Warnings associated with their application once it has been validated and prior to final submission, and to check scores assigned to applications already submitted.

Please contact the Research Office (rs.compliance@imperial.ac.uk) to request the creation of an eRA Commons User Account.

Please supply the following information:

- Full Name
- Email address for notifications
- Birth date (MM/DD/YYYY)

Once a user account has been created the PI will receive a system generated email informing them of their username and a temporary password. The PI should then log in to eRA Commons and change the password as soon as possible.

Step 2 - install correct software

The Principal Investigator and everyone viewing or working on the application must ensure that they have the same version of Adobe Reader software installed. The most recent version can be downloaded for free of charge from http://www.grants.gov/help/download_software.jsp

You may receive a validation error if you are using a different version of Adobe Reader. To prevent a validation error, it is now recommended you uninstall any earlier versions of Adobe Reader and install the latest compatible version of Adobe Reader.

Step 3 - download application forms

The Principal Investigator should locate the funding opportunity they wish to apply for on the grants.gov website: http://www.grants.gov/applicants/find_grant_opportunities.jsp

If you do not know the specific Funding Opportunity Number (FON) or Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number, you can search for a funding opportunity by either selecting one of the following options: (i) Browse by Category (ii) Browse by Agency, (iii) Advanced Search (iv) Find Recovery Act Opportunities (see below):
Once you have found the grant opportunity for which you wish to apply click the "Application" button in the grant opportunity synopsis. This page contains links to the page on Grants.gov where the Adobe application forms and instructions can be downloaded.

It is important to check the instructions for completing each application carefully, noting any page limits or restrictions on attachments.

Alternatively, if the Funding Opportunity Number (FON; e.g. PA-07-100, RFA-HL-07-004) or the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number (CDFA; e.g. 93.393) are known the PI can go to direct to Application page to find and download the application form and instruction.

Once you have found your opportunity you will be directed to the Selected Grant Application page where you will see a list of the application(s) currently available for the CFDA and/or Funding Opportunity Number that you entered.

To download the application instructions or package, click the corresponding download link. You will then be able to save the files on your computer for future reference and use.
Step 4 - complete the application offline

The PI should complete the required information in the application form using Adobe Reader. This is an offline application.

You will need to add the College's DUNS number to the application. The number is 227092590.

The PI is also required to add their eRA Commons Username to the credential field on the Research & Related Senior/Key Person field. This field is located in the first section called “Profile - Project Director/Principal Investigator”.

N.B. The omission of this is one of the most common errors made by applicants. The field is not marked by Grants.gov as required on the application form, but is required by NIH as indicated in the application instructions.

Carefully read the announcement. Application packages are opportunity-specific (i.e. you cannot use an application completed for one opportunity to apply for another), so be sure you have chosen the correct Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) before you download and complete the application package. A button added to the NIH FOA allows you to access the Grants.gov application package directly from the NIH FOA.
Please note copying and pasting data into a Grants.gov application form from MSWord may lead to errors in the Adobe Reader form, unless the information is copied and pasted from a text editor such as "Notepad" which does not have proprietary fonts and characters.

There are various web pages giving instruction on the preparation of applications, these can be found here http://era.nih.gov/ElectronicReceipt/prepare_app.htm

**Step 5 - email the application for approval**

Once the PI is satisfied that the application is correct and complete, it should be emailed to the Research Services for approval a minimum of FIVE WORKING DAYS in advance of the deadline. Select the Envelope option to email it to your Faculty Research Services/Joint Research Office team.

**Step 6 – submit the InfoEd costing and attach any attachments**

The Infoed proposal and any relevant attachments need to be submitted a minimum of FIVE WORKING DAYS in advance of the deadline.

**Step 7 - Research Services checks the application**

Once the InfoEd costing and any attachments have been received, Research Services will check the application within five working days (allowing for up to two working days for the application to be routed via grants.gov and eRA Commons).

Research Services will notify the PI/Department of any amendments that are needed. The PI/Department must make any amendments to the application offline and then email the revised version of the application to Research Services. The Infoed record will also need to be amended and re-submitted.

**Step 8 - application is submitted by the PI**

Once Research Services have checked the application the PI needs to submit the final application to Grants.gov.

**Step 9 - electronic routing of application**

Once submitted the application is routed electronically from Grants.gov to the NIH's eRA Commons for validation.

**N.B.** Please note that the NIH application deadline applies to when the application reaches the NIH and NOT Grants.gov. It can take up to three days for the application to be submitted through both systems (Grants.gov may take up to two days to process an application and eRA Commons may take one day).
Step 10 - notification that application is available for checking on eRA Commons

The PI and the Imperial College Research Office Mailbox (rs.compliance@imperial.ac.uk) will receive an email informing them that the application is available on eRA Commons for checking and of any warnings or errors on the application. If the application needs to be re-submitted the whole process has to be started again by correcting the application offline, routing it via email to the department and then Research Services, before submitting via Grants.gov and then being electronically routed to the NIH’s eRA Commons.

Checking the assembled application is the role of the Authorised Organisation Representative (AOR) / Signing Official (SO). At Imperial College, the Faculty Research Services Managers and Senior Research Administrators are the designated AORs / SOs.

Avoiding Common Errors

a) Common Errors
There are detailed instruction and help pages on the eRA Commons website to help applicants to avoid common errors which may lead to an application needing to be corrected.

http://grants.nih.gov/grants/ElectronicReceipt/avoiding_errors.htm#6#6

b) Preparing Text Attachments

- NIH will accept attachments in PDF format only. Do not submit attachments in other formats such as Microsoft Word - this is one of the most common errors made by applicants
- do not put special characters in filenames
- disable all security features in the PDF document
- do not submit documents with editable fields (fields that can be changed)

Helpdesk

For Further Information or Help please use the following link

http://www07.grants.gov/applicants/app_help_reso.jsp and select the User Guides or see below
Federal User Login [Here](#)

eRA Commons Help Desk

**Hours:** Mon-Fri, 7AM-8PM EDT/EST

**Web:** [http://itservicedesk.nih.gov/eRA/](http://itservicedesk.nih.gov/eRA/)

**Toll-free:** 800-504-9552

**Phone:** 301-402-7469

**TTY:** 301-451-6939

Contact initiated outside of business hours via Web or voice mail will be returned the next business day.