OFFICE OF SPONSORED PROGRAMS
POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL
ELECTRONIC RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION (eRA)
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Effective Date: August 1, 2006

Last Modified Date: April 10, 2019

Electronic Research and Administration (eRA)

Overview: The Electronic Research and Administration (eRA) system automates the processes the university uses to apply for research grants and other funding. It manages the pre- and post-award administrative and regulatory aspects of grants, contracts, protocols and conflicts of interest. The Electronic Research and Administration (eRA) system provides integration across business offices, creating efficiencies and streamlining processes.

Benefits: Electronic Research Administration(eRA) supports research administration while mitigating risk by improving overall management and delivery of the administrative portions of sponsored research which includes pre- and post-award administrative and regulatory aspects of grants, contracts, protocols and conflicts of interest.

External Factors: Sponsoring agencies, particularly federal agencies, have begun to mandate the use of electronic systems for submission and management of grants. Other leading Federal sponsors are requiring, or at minimum encouraging, electronic submissions through their agency websites. The federally-mandated and sponsored Grants.Gov initiative provides an electronic portal for proposal submissions and other electronic correspondence both to and from federal sponsors. Accountability and compliance with increasing federal regulatory burden and auditor oversight of University systems will require that the University be able to demonstrate consistency of practices, adherence to regulatory compliance guidelines and proper stewardship of funds at the institution level for accountability.

Internal Factors: There are strategic, financial, operational, compliance and reputational risks in the administration, management and reporting for sponsored research programs. An effective electronic research administration system enables the university to mitigate these business risks to ensure effective management of research funds and measurability with respect to managing grants and administrative efficiencies.

Accessibility of Information. There is an increasing demand for data to assist with decision-making at all levels within the university. At a strategic level, this includes trend analysis, projections, return on investment and other productivity metrics for charting the course and growth of research. At an operational level, basic operational reporting and

other detailed analyses are required. State legislatures are more frequently requesting this type of information from the University.

Electronic Research and Administration (eRA) Training

OSP offers periodic workshops to familiarize you with electronic research administration processes. OSP's website also contains Standard Institutional Information and WSSU Facts and Statistics to assist you with completing necessary forms and preparing your proposal narrative.

History - Electronic Research Administration

Definition

Electronic Research Administration (eRA) refers to electronic or web-based submission of proposals and reports as well as electronic draw-down of funds. In a broader sense, the term refers to electronic or web-enabled transactions between proposers, sponsors, and awardees

Background

The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 mandates that the Federal government transact business electronically to the greatest possible extent; in response, multiple e-government initiatives have been developed.

The Federal Financial Assistance Management Act of 1999 applies these laws to federal grantmakers by further mandating that electronic research administration services and procedures be created and implemented across all grantmaking agencies and offices. As a result, Grants.gov has been established as the single Internet-based grants management portal for all federal grantmaking agencies. The purposes of this Act are to— (1) improve the effectiveness and performance of Federal financial assistance programs; (2) simplify Federal financial assistance application and reporting requirements; (3) improve the delivery of services to the public; and (4) facilitate greater coordination among those responsible for delivering such services.

President Bush signed into law the E-Government Act of 2002 on December 17, 2002.

Effective March 2007, pre-award eRA will be mandatory across all federal grantmaking agencies via Grants.gov.

The Grants Policy Committee (GPC), composed of federal grants experts, was formed and tasked with carrying out the law. In 2011, the Office of Management and Budget

(OMB) replaced the GPC and the Grants Executive Board (GEB), established in 2002, with a single entity – the Council on Financial Assistance Reform (COFAR). COFAR built on these the initiatives first outlined in The Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999. In 2017, COFAR was dissolved by OMB Memorandum M-17-26, Reducing Burden for Federal Agencies by Rescinding and Modifying OMB Memorandum.

Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014 (DATA Act), also called the DATA Act, expands on federal awards reporting reforms that began with the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006. The purpose of the DATA Act is to improve the quality and transparency of the Federal Government's award data. Lawmakers have directed the Department of the Treasury (Treasury) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to create government-wide standards for reporting spending data associated with Federal awards. The law also requires that this data be channeled to a central, public database so that it can be easily accessed and tracked throughout an award's full lifespan – from a vote in Congress to its final disbursement.

Key Memoranda on Grant Policy from the Office of Management and Budget

The following Office of Management and Budget (OMB) memoranda offer a window into how grant policy is implemented through the Executive Office of the President:

M-18-24 Strategies to Reduce Grant Recipient Reporting Burden (2018)

OMB Memorandum M-18-24 provides guidance to federal agencies to implement lessons learned from the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act (DATA Act) of 2014. Some highlights include:

- **Integrating New Data Standards** - By September 30, 2018, "government-wide core grants management data standards are expected to be finalized by the Grants Management Federal Integrated Business Framework (FIBF)." By April 30, 2019, "agencies must submit a plan to OMB that describes their strategy for integrating the new data standards into current and/or future grant systems."
- **SF-424B Form Phase-Out** - Effective January 1, 2019, "the SF-424B will become optional and agencies shall make plans to phase out use in Funding Opportunity Announcements."
- **Centralized Certifications and Representations using System for Award Management (SAM)** - Effective January 1, 2020, SAM.gov "will become the central repository for common government-wide certifications and representations required of Federal grants recipients. ... Federal agencies will use SAM information to comply with award requirements and avoid increased burden and costs of separate requests for such information."
- **Sharing of Systems and Services** - Agencies are to "work with other agencies and OMB to reduce the number of existing legacy systems and grants recipient burden via sharing quality services and systems."

How to Apply for a Grant via Grants.gov

Winston-Salem State University is already the registered "Applicant" with Grants.gov. Therefore, faculty do NOT need to register.

Following are the steps for faculty applying for a grant via Grants.gov:

STEP 1:   Register with Grants.gov and affiliate with Winston-Salem State University using the University DUNS number located on the Standard Institutional Information.

STEP 2:   Create an application in Workspace (Grants.gov electronic submission portal).

If you need to find the opportunity first, click on the "Find Grant Opportunities" tab at the top right of the screen and use the search tools. After determining the opportunity's identifiers (CFDA number, etc.), click on "Apply for Grants" and then "Apply Step 1" if needed.

STEP 3:   Complete the application package according to the instructions in Workspace. You may complete the package offline and even send it to others as an email attachment.

First, complete all the required forms, starting with the SF 424 form, by inputting information into the yellow fields. OSP's Standard Institutional Information page offers the information requested on the SF 424 form.

STEP 4:   Save the final version of the application package and review.

STEP 5:   Check the application for errors by clicking on the "Check Package for Errors" button. If there are errors, correct them and save the application package again by clicking on the "Save" button.

STEP 6:   Preview the entire application package by clicking on the "Print" button.

STEP 7:   Download the application package to a hard drive or thumb drive to include with the complete proposal package that will be submitted to OSP through RAMSeS.

STEP 8:   No later than five (5) business days prior to the sponsor deadline, prepare and submit the complete proposal package to OSP in RAMSeS, including the following:

- A completed application package signed by the PI, all co-PIs, their supervisors or chairs, and their unit heads or deans.
- An electronic copy of the application guidelines.

- A <u>hardcopy</u> printout of the complete Grants.gov application package if required by the agency.
- An <u>electronic</u> copy of the complete Grants.gov application package to be approved by the PI, all co-PIs, their supervisors or chairs, and their unit heads or deans in RAMSeS.
- Any applicable internal forms, such as Cost-Sharing/Match.
- Any additional forms or letters required by the sponsor.

After you submit your complete proposal package, OSP will review your proposal against the sponsor guidelines and route it for authorizing signatures. [NOTE: Please <u>remain</u> <u>available</u> during this period in order to answer any questions that may arise.]

WSSU's Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) will then submit the proposal by the sponsor due date and time. You will receive notification from OSP that your proposal has been submitted.

eRA Tools - Grants Management: Several federal agencies currently have eRA tools to submit grant applications and manage the review and award processes within the individual agencies. Most electronic research administration systems require PI pre-registration. Below are general instruction for applying electronically by agency. Contact the Pre-Award Administrator in the Office of Sponsored Programs for assistance in your registration process.

Agency: National Science Foundation (NSF)
eRA Tool: FastLane

Action Required: Registration, proposal submission, report submission, and prior approvals.

PRE-AWARD NOTE: Contact the Pre-Award Administrator for assistance with registration and proposal submission.

Some federal sponsors currently have their own electronic research administration systems. Following are step-by-step instructions for applying electronically via NSF FastLane, the eRA system for the National Science Foundation (NSF), which is available at fastlane.nsf.gov/fastlane.jsp.

NOTE: You must pre-register with FastLane before submitting a proposal to NSF. Contact the Pre-Award Administrator for assistance.

To become familiar with the system, attend OSP FastLane training workshops and/or visit the NSF FastLane demonstration site at fastlane.nsf.gov/jsp/homepage/demo_site.html.

Following are the steps for applying for NSF grant funding via FastLane.

Step 1: To register as a PI in NSF FastLane, contact the Pre-Award Administrator.

Step 2: Complete the Cover Page using information found on the Standard Institutional Information page.

Step 3: Upload documents into applicable forms. Contact the Pre-Award Administrator for assistance.

Step 4: When uploading is complete, press the submit button.

NOTE: At this point, the proposal is made available to the Director of Sponsored Programs and to the Pre-Award Administrator.

Step 5: Contact the Pre-Award Administrator, who will then submit the proposal to NSF. (NSF sends the electronic confirmation receipt to the Pre-Award Administrator.)

Step 6: Within three (3) days of submission, the Provost submits an electronic signature to NSF via FastLane. (NSF sends the electronic confirmation receipt to the Pre-Award Administrator.)

POST-AWARD NOTE: Contact the Post-Award Administrator for assistance with report submission and prior approvals.

Using the "Proposal, Awards, and Status" Module, the PI uploads notifications and requests in FastLane including grantee-approved requests for no-cost extensions, budget revisions, requests for no-cost extensions, changes in key personnel. Under the same module, the PI uploads annual and final progress reports as well as check the status of all post-award items submitted/uploaded into FastLane.

Using the "Research Administration" module, the Post-Award Administrator views and prints award letters, checks notifications and requests that PI uploads into FastLane, submits the items uploaded by the PI to NSF, checks the status of award amendments, incremental funding, and prior approval status documents, and checks for report due dates.

Agency: National Institutes of Health (NIH)
eRA Tool: Grants.gov, and eRA Commons

Action Required: Principal Investigators (PIs) must register in NIH's proposal holding system, eRA Commons to qualify to submit NIH proposals.

PRE-AWARD NOTE: To register as a PI in eRA Commons, contact the Pre-Award Administrator.

OSP will submit NIH proposals via Grants.gov through the ASSIST web portal and held in eRA Commons for NIH review. Both the Institution (WSSU) and the Principal Investigator (PI) must be registered in eRA Commons in order to submit applications to NIH via Grants.gov through ASSIST. WSSU is already registered in Grants.gov and eRA Commons.

POST-AWARD NOTE: Currently there are no requirements to submit reports or request prior approvals via Grants.gov. Below are the post-award processes for eRA Commons. To track a proposal/award: The AOR, Post-Award Administrator and the PI can check the status of a proposal or award by the following: logon on through eRA Commons, click on "Status". Click on "Search". A listing of all WSSU proposals that have been released will appear with the activity status.

SUBMIT REPORTS - eRA: The PI uses their credentials to log-on and click on "RPPR" (Research Performance Progress Report) from "Status" and initiates the report and follows prompts from the system. The PI uploads and completes all information required for the reports and releases to the Signing Official (SO). The SO submits reports, prints/downloads progress reports, and checks status award for incremental funding and end dates.

AGENCY: Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA)
eRA Tool: Grants.gov

Action Required: Registration and proposal submission.

PRE-AWARD NOTE: HRSA has transitioned to the Grants.gov portal for proposal submissions; check HRSA guidelines and/or contact the Pre-Award Administrator to determine the appropriate electronic submission process. Contact the Pre-Award Administrator for assistance.
POST-AWARD NOTE: Currently there are no requirements to submit reports or request prior approvals via Grants.gov.

AGENCY: U.S. Department of Education (ED)
eRA Tool: Grants.gov

Action Required: Registration and proposal submission.

PRE-AWARD NOTE: ED has transitioned to the Grants.gov portal for proposal submission; check ED guidelines and/or contact the Pre-Award Administrator to determine the appropriate electronic submission process. Contact the Pre-Award Administrator for assistance.
POST-AWARD NOTE: Currently there are no requirements to submit reports or request prior approvals via Grants.gov.

Other Submission Systems - Applying Electronically

Some sponsors utilize their own unique electronic submission systems. During the proposal development phase, contact the Pre-Award Administrator to determine appropriate registration and submission processes associated with these electronic submission systems. **NOTE:** Contact the Pre-Award Administrator well in advance of the sponsor deadline, since *registration in some systems may take several weeks*.

Assistance

Contact the Pre-Award Administrator in the Office of Sponsored Programs if further assistance is needed in registering and submitting proposals in the above systems. Contact the Post-Award Administrator in the Office of Sponsored Programs if assistance is needed in submitting your reports and/or requesting prior approvals via these systems. The phone number for the Office of Sponsored Programs is 336-750-2413.