This was the first meeting of the newly formed Grants Management User Network (GMUN). A proposal was submitted in February 2003 from the Certified Approver Advisory Committee to create a group to replace some of the functions of the disbanded “SPA Advisory Committee.” The “SPA Advisory Committee” was disbanded in 2001 and it left a void in communications from central research administrative units and the colleges and departments. GMUN was developed to be a more interactive group with issues for discussion coming from both central research and the colleges/departments.

The steering committee was appointed in December 2003 by SPA/OVPR. The committee members are:

Mary Olson, College of Pharmacy – olson075@umn.edu
Sue Paulson, Sponsored Financial Reporting – spaul@umn.edu
Terri Ritz, College of Natural Resources – tritz@umn.edu
Randa Rosby (Co-Chair), College of Education and Human Development – randa@umn.edu
Donna Rosenthal, Aerospace Engineering and Mechanics – d-rose@umn.edu
WinAnn Schumi, Office of the Vice President for Research – wschumi@umn.edu
Rosalyn Segal (Co-Chair), Medical School – rsegal@umn.edu
Ed Wink, Sponsored Projects Administration – ewink@umn.edu

One of the first things the steering committee developed was the key contact list. The Associate Deans of Research for the colleges were asked to submit the names of individuals from their units that worked with the pre-award and post-award processes. A list was developed for each group and expectations were written (see attached). The expectations will be communicated back to the Deans or Associate Deans for Research at the next CRAD meeting on May 17, 2004.

The next steps for the steering committee will be to determine a quarterly meeting schedule, develop by-laws for the steering committee, create an email address and web page for GMUN, and to post the key contact list to the web. Until the GMUN email address is set up, the steering committee encourages suggestions for topics for further meetings to be sent to one of the steering committee members.

The topic of this first meeting was the Proposal Routing Form (PRF). We addressed “housekeeping questions” 1-11, and “accounting and payroll questions” 7, 8, 12, 17, 18. The questions and answers follow.
Question: For those units not routing electronically, does SPA accept faxed signatures?
Answer: Yes, if it facilitates meeting the deadline, SPA will accept. However, SPA will need a signed copy with original signatures for their files. This can be put in campus mail.

Question: So does that mean if there are multiple PI’s from multiple departments/colleges, that SPA must have original signatures from all involved?
Answer: Yes, SPA needs original signatures from everyone involved in the project. It should be the prime departments responsibility for getting all original signatures to SPA.

(Discussion continued around getting every original signature and how time consuming that would be. Most units accept the faxed signature from those outside of their units and send those as part of the proposal to SPA. Office of General Counsel confirmed that fax copies are acceptable. Paper copies of the PRF and proposal must still be submitted to SPA.)

Question: When will all departments be mandated to use EGMS?
Answer: It cannot be mandated until the parallel routing feature is figured out. It is on the list of OVPR projects.

Question: Will the white out feature in EGMS be given to approvers so they can make minor changes to the PRF?
Answer: The white out feature is only for SPA administrators and it will not be granted to approvers at this time. SPA published the minor changes they can make to PRF’s in the August 23, 2002 Research News Online.

Question: Can SPA grant administrators print out their own copies of proposals in EGMS so PI’s don’t have to bring one over to their office?
Answer: Grant administrators deal with so many proposals it would be too hard for them to keep track. At proposal deadlines, they receive too many to print them all off and match them to the PRF.

Question: The PRF initiator does not get any information on the status of the PRF unless they keep logging in and checking on it. Can this be changed so the initiator is notified where the PRF is?
Answer: EGMS is working on a process so the initiator can look at a portal to track the PRF.

Question: Can the alternate approvers be listed on the PRF?
Answer: It is the expectation of the approvers to alert their own alternates when they are out of the office and unable to approve the PRF. The alternates should be notified so they watch for the PRF’s.
Question: What is SPA looking for in the box “# of copies” – is the copy for SPA included in this total?
Answer: The number indicated should be the number of copies that goes to the sponsor. A copy for SPA is still needed. SPA will publish a clarification article in Research News Online.

Question: What about electronic submissions?
Answer: Put 0 in # of copies and in mailing instructions put do not mail.

(A suggestion was made to add a box to the PRF for “on-line submission.” This would clarify the copies issue. EGMS said they could add this.)

Question: For NIH modular proposals, do you need to attach a detailed budget to the PRF?
Answer: Yes. SPA does not send it with the proposal, but it is needed for review (allowability) and for set up when awarded.

Question: IRB exemptions – if PI knows human subjects will be exempt, can PI indicate exemption pending? Can’t do this in EGMS but can on paper copy.
Answer: SPA and EGMS will follow up on this issue.

Question: Can passwords be published in case they are forgotten?
Answer: We cannot publish passwords – it is a breach of security.

Question: What date should be used when there is not really a due date?
Answer: Mark the target box and insert the date the PI would like the proposal sent out. You could also put more information in the mailing instructions box.

Question: Why can’t you type Associate Professor in the job title box instead of doing a search?
Answer: All data must be consistent so there cannot be different variations on abbreviations for different job titles.

(Discussion followed on different options to add to the PRF and it was suggested that the x500 ID could be typed in and it would populate all of the required fields. This is a goal of EGMS).

Question: Is the budget line supposed to be only for the first year of a multi-year project or is the budget line supposed to be the same information as the project line?
Answer: It is agency driven but usually the first line is the budget and the project period is the total of the entire grant.

Question: For non-competing continuations, why is a PRF needed?
Answer: The PRF is needed because it is the mechanism used to collect compliance issues. Only the PI, co-PI, department heads, and deans need to sign.
Question: Do mentors have to sign training grants?
Answer: Mentors are not required to sign training grants but the PI, co-PI, department head, and dean needs to sign. The department head needs to sign so that he is aware of what his personnel are doing and what resources are being used.
(SPA will publish an article in Research News Online to clarify issues about non-competing training grants. SPA is working on a routing grid for all types of grants that will be published on their website. Also they plan to put more links and information on their website for electronic submissions.)

Question: If waivers and reductions of IDC are discouraged - why is that option written on the PRF?
Answer: This statement is telling the PI’s that there is a formal process to ask for a waiver of indirect cost. Requests for waivers are being looked at more closely. There has to be a compelling reason for the waiver in order for it to be approved.

Question: Can there be a different PRF for clinical trials since they are so different than other grants?
Answer: The current PRF was designed to be generic and it collects data for compliance issues. OVPR is working on a draft policy and procedures for fixed priced clinical trials but how it will feed into the current PRF still needs to be determined.

Question: What is needed if there is no IDC allowed by the agency?
Answer: In the indirect cost justification box, there should be statement saying that the agency does not allow indirect costs. Supporting documentation for this statement needs to be sent to SPA along with the proposal.

Question: What does SPA assume when they see 1% unpaid effort for a PI on the PRF? Will 0% ever be allowed?
Answer: They assume this is 1% cost share and they look for that information in the budget justification. SPA has looked into the issue of putting 0% but they feel that PI’s put some time on their grants and that needs to be accounted for. 0% effort can be allowed for equipment grants. On the reverse side, a PI cannot indicate 100% effort because they do other things i.e., teach, administration.
(It was suggested that a justification box be added to the PRF under the effort line so that PI’s can explain why the effort is 0%. EGMS will look into this.)

Question: Why do you have to submit a new PRF for budget changes only?
Answer: Because the “deal” has changed. Usually budget changes occur because the agency has decreased the award amount. Department/collegiate resources may be impacted and units need to be informed. The agency
usually wants a new signed budget back from SPA and by routing a new PRF, SPA has confirmation that the units agree with the changes.

(A suggestion was made to include spell checking on the PRF.)

Question: Can section 17 on the PRF dealing with cost sharing and matching dollars be improved to be more representative of the data the colleges/departments need to track? Right now the justification, account number and dollar amount is written in the justification box and is hard for units to pull out that information.

Answer: EGMS will work on it. Perhaps there could be separate boxes for the account number and dollar amount.