

# NIH eSubmission Tips for Investigators

## Prepare to Apply - Start early!

### Get informed

The new process requires close coordination between investigators and grants administrators. Work with your institution's central grants office early to learn how your institution is managing the new submission process.

### Get registered

- All Project Director/Principal Investigators (PD/PIs) listed on an electronic application must have an [eRA Commons](#) account with the PI role.
  - Work with your organization to get an account set up.
  - If you are already an NIH reviewer and have an account to use Internet Assisted Review you still need to work with your institutional official to ensure you also have the PI role.
- Your eRA Commons account will stay with you throughout your career. The same account can be affiliated with multiple institutions. You are responsible for maintaining your account information.

### Ensure you have appropriate software

- Talk to your institution to find out if you will be relying on Grants.gov's forms-based solution or an alternate solution specific to your institution.
- You will need a way to convert your text documents into PDF format. This format is required by NIH for all text attachments to the form.

## Find Opportunity and Download Package

- All funding opportunities are posted in the [NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts](#) and in [Grants.gov Find](#).
- **IMPORTANT:** All electronic applications must be in response to a funding opportunity announcement (FOA). Application packages are specific to individual FOAs (i.e., can't reuse application forms from one opportunity to another).
  - General opportunities have been posted to capture unsolicited, investigator-initiated applications. These announcements have the term "Parent" in the title and can be found on the [parent announcement page](#) of the [NIH Office of Extramural Research](#) website.

## Prepare Application

- Work with your central grants office to determine what parts of the application package you are responsible for completing.
- Develop the research plan and other text documents as usual using a word processing program. Once finished, convert the document into PDF format and split into the required separate documents following the instructions in the research plan section of the [SF424 \(R&R\) application guide](#). Check the PDF files carefully to ensure graphics and legends, etc. are as intended.
- Follow ALL instructions in the application guide and within the FOA. Instructions in the FOA "trump" those found in the application guide.
- Remember to include your eRA Commons Username in the PD/PI Credential field of the R&R Senior/Key Person Profile component. NIH requires it for application processing, but it is not marked on the form as a Grants.gov mandatory field since it is not needed by other agencies.
- Once your application is received by NIH, our systems will automatically generate the table of contents, page numbers, headers and footers. We do recommend you use section headings in your documents to make sections easy to identify for reviewers.

Check out <http://era.nih.gov/ElectronicReceipt/> for details

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Online clickable version at [http://era.nih.gov/ElectronicReceipt/files/PI\\_Advice.pdf](http://era.nih.gov/ElectronicReceipt/files/PI_Advice.pdf)

## Submit Application to Grants.gov

- PIs cannot submit the application themselves. Only the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) can submit applications to Grants.gov.
- Many grants offices are asking for applications early to ensure on-time submission. Check with your grants office for specific instructions on how and when to get your completed application to your AOR for submission.
- Grants.gov does not send any email notifications regarding submission status to the PI, so keep the communication lines open with your grants office.

## Check Submission Status in Commons

- NIH provides status emails to the AOR and the PI, but email can be unreliable. Proactively check your application status in eRA Commons. Allow up to 1 weekday from the time NIH has retrieved the application from Grants.gov for the status to appear in [eRA Commons](#).
- The [NIH Electronic Submission website](#) and the [application guide](#) are excellent resources for resolving errors and warnings.
- Errors are fatal – your application will not be accepted until all errors are resolved and the AOR submits a complete “Changed/Corrected” application through [Grants.gov](#). Warnings do not stop application processing.

## Check Assembled Application

- No one cares more about your application than you! After your error-free application is assembled in the eRA Commons you will have two weekdays (excluding federal holidays) to check it – use it! This is your first chance to view/print the application just as a reviewer will see it. Remember, if you cannot view it, we cannot review it! Corrections to the application after this viewing period can only be made through and at the discretion of the Scientific Review Administrator (SRA) and will be an addenda (i.e., reviewers will still see your original application submission).

## Finding Help

- Support desks can get busy during heavy submission dates. Avoid phone delays by taking advantage of online options like the eRA Commons [Web support ticket system](#).
- For information about eRA Commons registration, application validation, post submission functions:
  - **eRA Commons Help Desk**  
Toll-free: 1-866-504-9552  
Phone : 301-402-7469  
TTY : 301-451-5939  
Hours : Mon-Fri, 7a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern Standard Time  
Web : <http://ithelpdesk.nih.gov/eRA/> (Preferred method of contact)
- For information about Grants.gov registration, PureEdge software and form navigation:
  - **Grants.gov Contact Center**  
Toll-free: 1-800-518-4726  
Hours : Mon-Fri, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Eastern Standard Time  
Email : [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov)
- For NIH funding opportunity, application guidelines and grant-related resources:
  - **Grants Info**  
Phone: 301-435-0714  
TTY : 301-451-5936  
Fax : 301-480-0525  
Email : [GrantsInfo@nih.gov](mailto:GrantsInfo@nih.gov)

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