

August 13, 2013 Webinar:
Using ASSIST to Prepare and Submit
Multi-Project Applications to NIH

>> Megan Columbus: Thank you for joining the NIH Office of Extramural Research today as we talk about submitting multi-project applications electronically to NIH through a new system called ASSIST.

I have with me today Sheri Cummins, who is in the communications office that I run in the Office of Extramural Research, and she is actually the program manager behind development of the ASSIST system. Welcome, Sheri. Sheri Cummins: We are here to talk about the Application Submission System & Interface for Submission Tracking, which we're calling the ASSIST system. It is our new web-based system for the application preparation and submission of multi-project applications through Grants.gov to NIH.

So dealing with paper based multi-project applications can be a very overwhelming task for both our applicants and for NIH staff. If you're on the applicant side, then you know that for these multi-project applications you have to build them in your electronic systems and then print them out and collate them and make multiple copies and ship them through the mail to NIH. If you're on the NIH staff side then you receive these big boxes of applications and we actually send them to be electronically scanned and we get a low resolution black and white image and we have to manually enter all the data into our systems. It's really just not an ideal process.

The multi-project applications are the last ones to remain in a paper process, and we are transitioning them over as you know to electronic submission. These are very complex applications. They're often very large programs or centers. There's typically an umbrella application that describes the overall effort and then there's some number of components associated with that

application, each which is about the equivalent of a single project application in and of itself.

These can vary in size from two to 200 components. In fact, we have some in our database with over 400 components. They have multi-tiered budgets. They can have a large number of key personnel. And that key personnel can actually work across components.

And they may require different application structures depending on the type of component people are creating. So it might be a research component or a training component or career development, depending on the opportunity.

So we really want to go electronic with these applications. It's really about time.

Unfortunately when we looked at our current model for applications submission electronically for our single project applications it became very quickly apparent that downloadable forms model used by Grants.gov would not actually accommodate requirements we have for our multi-project applications.

So we partnered with Grants.gov to actually make some changes to the Grants.gov system that would allow us to do these projects within projects and still submit using the Grants.gov system. We wanted to do this for a number of reasons. First we heard from our applicant community that you really like the idea of a centralized portal for electronic submission. And Grants.gov is that portal. And also many of the institutions have a considerable investment in the submission systems in their own institutions to submit to Grants.gov. So we wanted to make sure we maintained that.

So we built this ASSIST system, it's web-based as we had mentioned, and it really is a replacement for the downloadable forms model. But as we have discussed, if you have a solution at your institution that you use for your single project submissions and you don't actually use the downloadable forms for single projects, once your system has expanded to do multi-project applications you can actually use that system in

lieu of ASSIST.

Whether you're using ASSIST or your own solution, and we call those system-to-system data solutions, your still going through Grants.gov and then ultimately on to NIH.

ASSIST has some nice features that we actually were able to incorporate based on feedback that we've been hearing from our applicants since 2005 when we started using the downloadable forms for single projects.

We're able to leverage the eRA Commons accounts that we already have in our systems. We can actually use those accounts to prepopulate some of the data that are in our applications.

We're able to validate both Grants.gov and NIH business rules before you submit. If you're familiar with our single project program process, then you're familiar with the fact that to get any validations on the agency side you actually have to submit all the way through Grants.gov and then we do some processing of the application and then we give you a list of errors and warnings and you

have to come all the way back through. With ASSIST you can actually do those checks up front.

So you're able to do a preview of the application image before you submit. This system will automatically generate the table of contents, the headers and the footers. And you can actually track both the Grants.gov and the eRA Commons submission status from within ASSIST.

ASSIST has been piloted with selected project FOAs since November 2012. We've had about half a dozen pilots and we've gotten a great amount of feedback and made some significant changes to the system based on that feedback. So if you participated in those pilots we just want to put a shout-out to you and thank you very much because we have actually actioned much of the information that we received from you and I think you'll see that as we go through the slides.

Our systems are ready to begin an active-based transition to electronic submission. And as you all know hopefully you've been paying attention to the NIH guide for grants and contracts, we're

starting in September 25, 2013 will be our first transition date. And this transition actually has two parts. We kind of concentrate on the paper to electronic part, but we do also want to highlight the fact that this is not only going from paper to electronic, it's also going from the PHS 390 dataset to the SF which stands for standard format 424 research and related. We abbreviate that to SF424 R & R dataset. The PHS 398 dataset is actually made for the public health services agencies. So it is a great fit for NIH and it's served us well over the years; however, we are required to move to these standard forms. And you will see that much of the data collection is exactly the same. It's just in a different format and collected in a different way. We do have some limitations in what we're able to adjust given that they're federal-wide and not NIH specific.

So our transition timeline. Once an activity code transitions, all applications, whether they're new, resubmission, renewal or revision, to an FOA must be electronic, and that means that no

paper applications will be accepted.

So the first group to transition, and this will be for deadlines of September 25, 2013 and beyond, will be your P01, P20, P50, U19, and you will actually notice that there's a few new codes there, P2C, U2C. And there's a little start next to that R24 and U24.

So when we did our analysis of all the activity codes that remained on paper we determined that some of the activity codes were actually used more for single project activities than for multi-project. So in the case of R24 and U24, we'll be transitioning those to electronic submission, but we'll be doing that as single project activity codes through the downloadable forms at Grants.gov.

And for the programs that actually were using those codes, but in a multi-project way, we created those two new codes, P2C and U2C. As we go forward you may actually find that the activity code has changed for your program.

For the January 25, 2014 deadlines and beyond we have another set of activity codes that will be

going electronic. And you can read those on your screen there. And then finally for the May 25, 2014 deadlines, we'll have the last remaining codes. We'll be doing the U54 and the UM1. Those are the most complex of the complex activity codes so we saved them for the end. And hopefully all of the lessons learned and so forth in experience from the previous ones will make those go as smooth as well.

So there are some registrations that need to be in place before you can submit electronically. And this is true for both single project and multi-project applications. First you need to have a Grants.gov account. Grants.gov is the federal-wide portal for finding and applying to federal grants. As we have mentioned we use it quite extensively for our single project applications already. In fact, we account for over half of the applications submitted through Grants.gov.

And we also have an eRA Commons system. And many of you are very familiar with that. That's

our agency system that allows our staff and our grantees and applicants to share information about applications and grants. And you do have to have an organization registration in eRA Commons as well.

I'm not going to get to the details for registration here so we can kind of get into the details of ASSIST. We have a resource listed on the screen and if you're not yet registered I highly recommend that you go out to that resource and it will talk in great detail about all of the steps and registration both for Grants.gov and for eRA Commons.

As we mentioned with ASSIST we will be leveraging our eRA Commons accounts. In order to use ASSIST you will have to have an eRA Commons account with one of the following roles: A signing official, which is an S0 role; administrative official, which is an A0 role; principal investigator, PI role; an assistant, which is an ASST role; or account administrator, which is an AA role.

In order to submit your application you may have to have a signing official role and the signing official role really gives you the authority to sign on behalf of your organization. So as we go through the screens you will see that the submit action only appears to folks that have logged in to ASSIST using an account with the signing official role.

And as we get towards the end of our slides and we actually are submitting the application, you'll see that when you hit that submit action we'll actually prompt you for Grants.gov credentials, and the role within Grants.gov that is equivalent to signing official in Commons is an AOR or authorized organization representative role, and you will need to have that as well.

If you have problems with your eRA Commons account or your Grants.gov accounts you want to return to those systems and work through those issues, make sure that you can log into those systems themselves and once you're successful there then you should use those credentials with

ASSIST.

Let's talk about the electronic submission of multi-project applications using ASSIST.

So at a very high level this is the process. You're going to find an opportunity to apply to, you will set up a plan, get familiar with the process, create your application plan, lay that out. You'll initiate your application and you're going to create what we're calling an application shell. I'll tell you why that's important as we go through the slides.

You're going to build your team. You will define who is going to be working on your application and you will give them access to that application. And we'll talk about how to manage access within ASSIST.

You're going to enter all of your application data and you can do that either through the applicant institution or you can delegate those functions out to others.

You're going to finalize the components and prepare your application for submission. You're

going to submit your application through Grants.gov to NIH and finally you will track your application and make sure that we received it successfully.

All of those steps can be done within ASSIST.

All right. So let's talk about finding an opportunity. Just like we've been doing for many, many, many years, we post all of our funding opportunity announcements in Grants.gov, find and also the NIH guide for grants and contracts.

If you find your opportunity in the NIH guide for grants and contracts you will see it apply for grant electronically button within that announcement.

If you find your opportunity within Grants.gov apply, you will actually get to a link to agencies multi-project system and that's where you would typically go to download your application packets from Grants.gov and that's one of the changes that Grants.gov made for us was to allow us to link to our system instead of trying to download an application package.

But either the button or that link are both going to send you directly to ASSIST. Now, before we jump into ASSIST, let's take some time to learn about the new process. So when you find that announcement, whether it's in the NIH guide or in Grants.gov, you will go to the announcement text and you will have to read through the entire text one or two times and make sure you know all of the things that it's asking for for a responsive application. But from the perspective of an application submission, you're going to want to pay special attention to Section 4, which is the application and submission information.

Within that section there is a link to the application guide and the application guide is going to give you very general instructions about how to prepare your application. And then that section will also give any instructions that are specific to that funding opportunity announcement. And anything that differs from what you would find in the instructions in the application guide, so that's a really important section to pay attention

to.

When you're looking at the application guide, you want to pay special attention to anything marked with an HHS logo. As I mentioned we're using federal-wide forms which means they are not designed specifically for NIH use. And any of the forms that are used federal-wide, we may have some special instructions that augment what the general federal-wide instructions would provide. So when that happens, when we have some agency-specific information to relay to you, we put that HHS logo next to that information in the application guide to kind of call that out to you. So when you go through the guide pay attention to anything with that HHS logo.

As always, if anything conflicts between the funding opportunity announcement instructions and the instructions that you find in the application guide, it's the funding opportunity announcement instructions that win.

On July 25th, we posted a new version of the application guide. It's out there for your

reading pleasure. And it does include a new section. It's actually Section 9. It talks about how to prepare applications that are multi-project applications. . It's based on a lot on the feedback that we got from our applicants when we went through the pilot and I encourage you to go out and take a look at that section.

So let's spend a minute and just talk about terminology so that we're on the same page as we move forward.

A multi-project application is a single submission with multiple interrelated components that share a common focus. Okay? So the key there is it's a single submission. So when the applicant organization submits, they're submitting their overall and all the components and are actual responsible for that entire application.

A component, so we sometimes refer to those as subprojects, but a component or projects or cores, and we'll see some of those terms in a moment, but a component is a distinct reviewable part of a multi-project application for which there is a

business need to gather detailed information. So each component includes the data collection that's typical after stand alone application. They typically involve people and sites and work and budget.

Now, component type. A component type is a named, agency-defined collection of forms that may be repeated. So if we talk about project components, the type of component is actually project. And within a single application you may have two to five projects. So that's repeating that component type two to five times.

Overall is a very special component type and you will always have an overall component within every application and there will be one and only one overall.

And then finally a form. So a form is a named collection of data fields. And we talk about using an SF 424 R & R dataset, but the government hasn't fully embraced the dataset. So we're actually working with forms. Any time we want to collect a piece of data it's in the context of the

form that it's included in.

So as you're filling out your application, you may find that for a component you have to do some additional data entry to fill out all of the fields in the form to get that to go through.

So our applications that are coming in multi-project electronically are going to have a very specific format and it's a flexible format, but a very predictable format. As we mentioned, every application will have the single overall component and that will provide that overview for the entire application. And as we go through the slides we'll talk about things that are very specific to that overall component.

>> Each funding opportunity announcement will define a set of components that are appropriate for that opportunity. So one FOA may ask for an overall admin core, cores and projects, and another FOA may have a different set of component types. It might be overall in research cores and communication core and pilot projects.

So each one of those is going to change by

opportunity.

We also have automatically prepared data summaries. We'll talk in very detail about the data summaries that are available. But as you are filling out that application, each component is going to be like a stand alone application and when we are finished with that -- all that data entry we'll be able to roll up the data from the components to make, for example, the budget for the overall.

And we'll show how that works as we go through.

So in a little pictorial way, we'll talk about the assembly of that application so the overall is always going to be there first. It will include those system generated summaries and we'll list in the application image the additional components. And there will actually be an alphabetical order by component types. It will be before projects and within each component type there will be sequentially numbered and presented in the order in which they were entered into ASSIST. We'll be

talking more about that as well.

So here's the picture. This is actually a sample application image. And then you can see the book marks on the side there. The overall cover page is first. Then you see the table of contents. You see those system-generated summaries. The remaining overall component data. And then you see the component types. And there's actually -- it's hard to see on the screen it there, but you can expand the cores and expand the projects to see each of the components.

All right. We have a resource there on the screen. I encourage you to go out and look at that. It kind of walks through how we're assembling that application. That resource is actually linked from section 4.6 of every opportunity announcement that we're posting that uses ASSIST. But that talks in very detail about how we're going to assemble your application when you submit it. And this is an area that you are going to really want to kind of pay attention to and do some instructions with your staff because

we found through the pilot that the principal investigators of these applications, if there's one thing that they are having a hard time getting ahold of is that they don't have complete control over how we're assembling that application image. In past with our paper submissions we were able to adjust it and make it look just the way they wanted it. They could rearrange components. They had a lot more control over what that final image looked like. With ASSIST it is a very uniform, it's always presented in the same way and there's some great things that come with that consistency, but that loss of control is something that you're going to be working with as we work through going electronic. It's very similar to what we did with R1's when we moved from paper to electronic with those as well. So it's not an unusual issue that we're dealing with here.

Okay. So we found an opportunity, we kind of is it understand what the structure is. Now we need to have an application plan.

You'll want to carefully read the FOA and note

the allowable types of required an optional components and again that's each FOA is going to define in the instructions what types of components are available for that specific opportunities. You'll want to read through those.

You're going to decide how to distribute the work load, whether the applicant organization will do all the data entry or if you're working with collaborating organizations, whether you'll give them access into ASSIST to do their own data entry and so forth.

You're going to want to make sure that you have all of your eRA Commons and Grants.gov registrations in place since we are leveraging the Commons IDs through ASSIST you will have to have the Commons IDs up front if you're doing data entry which is different from the single project where you have to have your registrations in place when you submit.

And in order to manage access for people into your applications, you will need to get the Commons IDs of those people that you want to

provide access to.

Here's a sample excerpt from an FOA and you can see here that this particular opportunity asks for an overall, which is required. We know that that's required in every multi-project application. This has an administrative core which is required. And the component type cores, and within the cores we have a research core which is required and communications core which is required. We have a component type of projects. And for this particular opportunity to be responsive you will need to have two to five research projects.

So that's kind of typical of what you might see in an opportunity announcement for multi-project applications.

So with that information you're going to want to -- when you're doing your planning you will want to think about okay I need to have an admin core and cores and projects. Who will be my PD/PIs for this application. You will have to see if multi-project applications are actually

allowed. I'm sorry, multi-PD/PI applications are allowed.

You will want to define for each of your components who that component lead is going to be. You'll want to set the project title. Get your project start and end dates. Know the Commons IDs of those individuals. Kind of gather all that information.

In your planning process you'll want to determine the order that you want all the components to appear in the final image because if you remember, the order in which they're entered in ASSIST is the order in which they will show up in the image. And you will create the application shell in ASSIST by initiating the application and adding the components in that appropriate order. And we'll walk through how to do that.

So this is a sample layout. So I've got an application here with my overall component, my PD/PI. We're going to use Cher D. Money and this happens to be a multiple PD/PI application because I have Ben Around as my second PD/PI there.

The applicant organization is Whatsamatta U. We have the project title there, the research title To Cure All the Diseases of the World. Obviously they haven't taken our classes to know to pinpoint your research.

We know that we need an admin core. The admin core is going to be titled administrative core. It's going to be lead by Jedi Knight and that is also from Whatsamatta U. We know there's a product amount of cores and I know that I need a research core. And Ben Around, who is is my PD/PI in the overall, is actually a project lead for my first core.

And this core actually has a subaward. And that's going to be from an organization called Substantial Research.

I know that I have a second core and this is my communications core. Remember that was a required core as well. This is going to be lead by Abel to lead and the organization is not the same as the applicant organization. It's a collaborating organization called Better Now.

I know that I have projects. Remember we needed two to five projects. My first project, which is going to be Fabulous Research focus one is going to be lead by Cher D. Money, she was my PD/PI on the overall, but is a project lead for this component.

My second project is going to be lead by Quint Essential, and that's a fabulous research focus number two, and that is also from Better Now, my collaborating organization.

And then my third and final project is my focus 3, lead by Ima Doer, at Cures R Us. That's the layout of my application. I know the order that I want them to show up in my application image. I'm going to put them into ASSIST in that order. And I have all the information I need to start that application shell.

So let's get started initiating the application and creating that shell.

So ASSIST can be found at the public.eRA.nih.gov/url. And if you recall if you use the apply for grant electronically button or

the ASSIST from opportunity you will get directly to ASSIST system. And when you log in you will log in leveraging your eRA Commons credentials.

From the homepage of ASSIST you will see that I have two options, initiate application and search for applications. Since I'm just starting my application I'm going to choose initiate application, and I'm going to put in the FOA number of the opportunity I want to initiate.

The ASSIST messages will appear at the top of the screen. You can see here that application is saved is the message there. As you're working through these screens -- there we go. As you're working through the screens you'll see the little question mark icons. When you click on these icons you will be brought to ASSIST help. The actions are over in the left-hand side of the ASSIST screen. The ad overall component is one of the few options available once you've initiated your application. Since we know we'll have to have an overall component we go ahead and get started with that.

The actions that are shown will be based on the access you have from your eRA Commons account and also the context of where you are within that application.

So we're going to use that add overall action. You will click add overall component and you will start building out your application.

When you click that button you will be brought to the add overall component data entry screen and you will be presented with the fields that are the minimum fields required to save that add overall component. And you'll notice that those are the same fields of the information that we actually collected when we were doing our planning of that application shell. So the start and end dates, the title, the project lead, the organization and so forth.

So you'll fill that out and say save.

We do have some pre-population available here. You can actually put in the Commons ID, the Commons username of the PD/PI for that component and it will go to eRA Commons, pull that

information and prepopulate the fields for you.

Once you save that overall component you will see that it's added to the navigation on the left side of the screen. And down where you see those orange boxes there you will see that that is the navigation as we add components, those components will be added there and clicking on them brings you to that component for data entry.

Once we add that component into our navigation, you'll also notice that clicking on the component brings up a set of form tabs. We'll show you the data entry in a moment, but as you do your data entry you'll click on each of the form tabs and fill out the fields. ASSIST is smart enough to go out to Grants.gov and only pull the forms that are appropriate for that component type.

So in the overall you'll notice that there is no budget form because as you recall we're going to use the information from the budget forms in the components to make that budget.

Now that we have that overall component

already in our application, we need to go and continue to build out our shell by adding additional components.

Use the add new component action. And under component type it gives us a drop down menu and this is going to change from opportunity to opportunity. ASSIST will only present the types of components that are allowed for that specific opportunity. And in this particular case those component types are admin core, core and project.

This is something that actually came up from our pilot users. We are providing the ability now for that component to give a short name. And this is a 20 character nickname that you can give to that component and use during your application preparation.

You're going to repeat that process for each of your components until you have all of your components entered into ASSIST in the order that you want them.

And you'll see in the navigation that when you actually initiate each of those components and you

build that shell out, ASSIST is giving a random generated identifier for each of those components. In the case that's circled here it's 707-project. Under here you can see that short name or nickname as well which will help you to find and identify a component a little more easily than just using that random number. The reason we aren't using a sequential number up front here is you do have the ability to abandon components and in the future we would like to add the ability as an enhancement to rearrange the components and if we give them a sequential number that will actually make things very confusing in the future.

Okay. So we've built out that shell. Now let's talk about defining your team and providing them with application access.

ASSIST automatically provides application access to some individuals based on their Commons role or role on the application. So for example, all the signing officials and AOs (administrative officials) at the applicant institution automatically have edit access for the

application. When you access the application in ASSIST and enter your organization, the DUNS number is recognized and people with those roles at the applicant organization are automatically granted access.

All the PD/PIs listed on the overall application have edit access for the entire application so once you include the Commons ID for your PD/PIs on the overall application, they have automatic access.

Now, through the manage access screen, and we'll show that in just a moment, you can see that you can reduce the access given to PD/PIs to edit, but you can never actually take away view access to them.

The person that initiates the application has edit access for the entire application. And that way if somebody other than the PD/PI or an AOR or SO is responsible for generating that application then they have the ability to do so as well.

At the component level we take a very similar approach. So if you're working with collaborating

institutions, all the SOs and AOs at the lead institution have edit access for the component only. They don't have access to the entire application, but for their component. That is once the DUNS component is provided on the R & R cover form component.

Similar to the PD/PI, the component project leads have edit access for their components once the Commons ID is provided on the senior key person profile form.

In addition to those automatic access levels, you have the ability to provide access to other users they just have to have a Commons account with an appropriate role. And you can manage that access to those other users across several variables. You can give them access to the entire application or specific components. You can give them read versus edit access and we have also provided the ability to segment budget from non-budget data. We heard from our applicants that the budget data is often very sensitive and some organizations want to limit the number of

people that have view access even to the budget information.

S0s at the applicant institution can manage the application access for other users. They can manage the application status all the way to ready for submission, and we'll show you as we go through these slides what that actually means.

But the S0s can actually delegate the ability to manage status and to manage access to other users. And of course the S0 also has the ability to submit applications.

So let's look at that managed access action. So I'm logged in here as Claire Voyant, that's an S0 at Whatsamatta U. And as an S0 I have the ability to go to the manage access action. And this can be used to provide access to new users or to modify access to existing users.

For the users that were granted access based on their role on the application, so that's like the PD/PIs or the project leads, they will show up in this screen and you can actually manipulate the access levels that they have. So you can restrict

them further or you can open up application access further to them.

If you want to change access for a new user, at the bottom of the screen is an add user button. When you click on that button you're prompted for the username of that user. Once you enter the Commons username it actually populates the name and organization. And then you have the ability down lower in the screen to provide access. In this example we did entire application access and we gave edit for the entire application. So under the all column we said edit. So this user, which happens to be Radar O'Reilly, a very famous assistant, is going to have entire application edit access.

In this next example we're actually going to give access at a component level. So this is the admin core, so for Radar in this example, he's only going to have view access to budget data and edit access for all non-budget data, but can't see anything but the admin core. So it's a pretty flexible system.

As I mentioned, the signing officials can give access maintainer and status maintainer authority to users and that's basically given at the entire application level for the status maintainer, and then at the component level for the access maintainer.

So as assigning a signing official if I want to give the ability to manage access to other users to an assistant I can certainly do that by clicking on that box.

So that's managing access.

>> Megan Columbus: Sheri, you've talked about a lot since with we've started. Let's give your voice a little bit of a break and let you have a drink of water.

The one thing that you've just talked about that I think is really crucial to the system is that the ability to manage access can be used to distribute the work of filling out the application in a way that maintains information securely. And I think that's really key. But there are other points that you made earlier that I would like to

point out. One that is really important is that you take the time to layout the application in advance. The components will appear in the order that you've entered them. You won't be able to reorder the components later. Think about the layout of the application first. And the other super critical point is that it is critical to follow the instructions in the funding opportunity announcement to the letter. It tells you where to put each piece of information and it will be important for you to identify what goes in the overall component and what goes in the individual components of those applications.

Just a little bit of emphasis on the points and back to you.

>> Sheri Cummins: Thank you. That's absolutely right. That's some of the feedback we got from users are right on the points as well. As we've been doing some presentations at conferences and so forth folks that have participated in the pilot have come up to me and said make sure you reinforce doing that

application shell up front because often at the last minute the principal investigator will come and say hey, I really want project 3 to be project 1, and at this point in time at least we don't have the ability to rearrange those components. So it is really important.

Let's talk about entering application data. I'm not going to form by form, field by field through each of the data forms that we have to fill out here, but I did want to highlight some particular areas.

So once your application shell is created, you already have a work in progress application. So instead of initiating an application from the home screen, you're really going to search for that in progress application. So we're going to use that search application screen instead.

It's a standard search screen with different parameters. You put in your parameters, click search, standard stuff, and given a hit list of things that matched of applications that are available to you that matched your search

parameters and you want to select the appropriate application.

That brings you into ASSIST in your application.

You will use that component navigation to identify the component you want to work on. In this case we will work on the overall component. And that of course brings up those form tabs across the top for your data entry.

Each component has a summary page and that summary page is important because it not only gives you component information and it shows you things like status and it also has application information at that level so things like your FOA number and things like the application status that we'll be look at a little bit later. There's also actions that are only available from the summary page. Update component status, for example, is one of those actions.

When we look through and work through all these different actions you will see that you have to be on that summary page and that's one of the

things that some of our pilot users had some trouble with. They're like I don't see how to update the status and they weren't actually on the summary page when they went to do that action. Just a little bit about our form layout there.

As I mentioned you will click across each tab and access each of the data entry screens for each of those forms within the component.

Many screens have useful tips across the top. I encourage you to read those.

At the bottom of each of your data entry screens you will have different save options. The first one here is a save and keep lock and that allows you to save your data and to continue working on that specific form. So when you do that edit you're basically locking out other users from being able to edit that form. Other users can be on other forms within the component. Other users can be within other components filling out data, but at any given time you can only have one user in a specific component form.

All right. So if you want to do incremental

saving you will do that save and keep lock.

The save and release lock basically says okay, I've got all my information in there for this form. I'm going to go ahead and save my data and I'm going to allow other users to get into that form if they need to. So I'm going to release that lock.

And then that third option down there on the bottom is cancel and release lock. And that basically says, do you know what? I was in this form, I thought I was going to put more data in here, but I've decided that I don't want to save any of the changes that I've made so I'm just going to cancel and allow other people to get into that form. So those are your options.

For those first two options, if you do one of the saves, what the ASSIST system is going to do is it will go out and we'll do some form level validations and we'll present to you any errors that it identifies at the top of the screen. And it will give you the option of going back and correcting those errors or saving and continuing.

If you happen to be, if you recall one of our cores had a subaward associated with it, if you need to add a subaward or one of the other optional forms in the action section is an add optional form and you will use that add optional form to add additional forms to your navigations. So in this example I clicked the add optional form, I'm presented with the three optional forms that are available for this component, which is the cumulative inclusion report, the planned enrollment report, or the R & R subaward budget form. I've decided to do an R & R subaward budget form, so I click on that. And then that R & R subaward form is added to the tabs for that component that I can go into there and start filling out that form as well.

So that's how you add your optional forms.

Some of these next few screens are a little bit dense and I'm really just wanted to highlight the fact that as you're going through these opportunities, as Megan mentioned it's really super critical that you look at the FOA

instructions and you follow it the letter -- follow it precisely.

There are differences in data entry if you're doing the overall component versus other components. For example, the R & R cover form. For the overall you're going to use the entire form and that has things like your signoff and who is your authorized organization representative and who is the PD/PI contact for the entire application? And it has the ability to put in a cover letter. All of those things only really apply at the entire application level.

For the other components we'll only use a very small subset of the fields and you can look at the instructions in the multi-project section of the project guide and look at the details here. But the takeaway on this one is there's differences between the overall and the components when you fill these out.

Along the same vein, and this happens to be the other project information form, when you're filling out the overall component, you're going to

answer all the questions related to human subjects and vertebrate animals. When you're filling out other components you will only answer a subset. Basically for human subjects you will answer are human subjects involved and the exemption number. And for vertebrate animals you will answer are vertebrate animals involved?

And the ASSIST system will actually block you from doing any data entry because we're not authorized to do that at the component level. So again, just differences on how you would fill out the form if you were in the overall versus other components. And all these things are highlighted in the application guide instructions.

When you're doing your research plan, when you do your overall, your attachments will talk about the entire application. When you do your other components it will reflect what you're doing specifically in that component. You'll notice that both in the overall and the other components specific aims are required and you will notice that the page limits may be different between

components and that would also be identified in your funding opportunity announcement text in that Section 4 where your FOA specific information is located.

On the senior key person form as you're filling that out and the overall you're always going to define all of your PD/PIs, your project director, principal investigators for the entire application, and basically nobody else gets in the senior key on the overall. While in the components you will define your project lead, your component lead and any senior key that are actually working within that component.

One thing that adds a little bit of a level of complexity to these applications is there's a policy decision that applicants can only have a single biosketch for each senior key person regardless of the number of components that they work in in the application. So as you remember, Cher D. Money and Ben Around, they were PD/PIs for the entire application, they were also component leads. They get a single biosketch. And it

doesn't matter in ASSIST which one of those components you actually attach the biosketch, you just need to choose one and go with it.

If you put a biosketch into both forms, and we'll see this in a moment, as you go through the process of finalizing each of your components, ASSIST will actually make you choose which biosketch you want to include within your application. But that's a policy decision that actually works pretty well with the format that we have here.

If you remember we have those automatic data summaries that we do for the application that end up with the overall senior key persons is one of those data summaries, so we give a consolidated list of all the senior key people and within that overall section we actually list out all the biosketches right there at the top of the application as well.

All right. So there's lots of resources available out there to make sure that you avoid common errors. As I mentioned at the top of many

of the data entry screens we have ASSIST screen tips. I urge you to look closely at the screen tips. We have an annotated form set and that's basically a picture of each of the different data forms with little call-out boxes on hints on how to fill out each of the fields.

On our website we have 10 checks to help avoid common errors. And within that 10 checks there's actually a resource on PDFs. All of the attachments within your electronic application must be in PDF format. And we do have some pretty strict guidelines on what kinds of attachments we'll accept. They have to be plain vanilla. You can't have security on them. You can't password protect them. They have to follow the eight and a half by 11 size as identified in the application guide. And we do do some systematic checks of those rules.

So the PDF guidelines document talks about how to make PDF files, PDF attachments that our systems like.

As component data is entered, there are

several actions that are available. As we mentioned before, you can validate your components, you can preview the current components and we can update component status. At the component level we really have three statuses, the work in progress status, and that's the only status that allows editing, so when you actually initiate a component your component is put into a work in progress status and you have to actually take an action to change it out of work in progress status.

If you've delegated the work to other collaborating organizations or other folks within your organization, we have the status called complete. So whoever is responsible for entering the component data can do all of their data entry and when they've decided that it's good to go, they want the applicant organization to know that they're finished doing that, they can mark it as complete. The applicant organization then has the ability to take that component and say okay, look it over, make sure it follows everything that was

agreed upon and looks good and then they can change the status to final and that would actually be the status that is needed to prepare your application for submission. That's how the applicant organization can know that they have already reviewed and accepted that component for their submission.

Okay. If the applicant organization is doing all the data entry and managing it as a result of the pilot, we actually have provided the opportunity for the signing officials, the AOs and anybody with that status maintainer to go directly to final and skip that complete status.

All right. So to validate a component, I'm on that summary tab within my overall component. There's an action there called validate component. And that triggers ASSIST to go out and do a validation against all of the data that's entered in that component.

Assuming that all the required fields are out there, we can actually get a list of errors and warnings. If the required fields are not filled

out you may at some point get a message saying that you're missing forms that need to be filled out before it can do this action.

>> Megan Columbus: Sheri, we've gotten a few questions about human subjects and animal subjects and associating them with the cores or the overall component.

Could you address that directly again?

>> Sheri Cummins: Sure. When you fill out your overall component you will have the option to identify whether that entire application involves human subjects or vertebrate animals.

And when you're looking at the overall component you're going to look at it from the entire application. So if any component within your application has human subjects or vertebrate animals, you're going to choose in your overall component yes, for vertebrate animals or human subjects.

Within each component you also have the ability to provide some information on human subjects and vertebrate animals. And within that

component you can really only just say yes or no.

In the case of human subjects you can say yes or no and give an exemption number if it applies, but that's all the information that we actually are gathering at the component level.

So we have validations to make sure that if there's a component that has human subjects that it's going to tell you that human subjects needs to be yes on the overall if it's not already designated as such.

One of the summaries that we do, the automatic date summaries that we do that we roll up into the overall section when we do our processing, is a summary table that looks at things like vertebrate animals, human subjects, stem cells and clinical trials. And we'll give a table and show that near the end of the presentation one of the summaries. It gives a table and it will basically say here's all the components and it will give yes or no for each one of the different ones. And we'll summarize that information to make it really easy to identify in the application which components

have them. Does that help?

>> Megan Columbus: Yeah. And you will be seeing an image here so you will understand a little better what Sheri is talking about. Thank you.

>> Sheri Cummins: I know it's a lot of information we have here.

All right. So I've validated this component and it's showing an example of the errors and warnings. And you will see within the component that it tells you exactly which forms and which fields and then gives the error message for each.

Just like with all of our electronic applications, errors stop application processing must be corrected before the deadline. Warnings do not stop application processing and are corrected at the discretion of the applicant.

So if an error is identified when you do that component validation it's something that absolutely must be addressed before you can even submit your application. And we'll see the same thing at the application level when we validate

the application.

There's a resource for avoiding common errors and that actually helps with identifying some of those errors and warnings as well.

So that's validate component.

The action of preview current component, so again you go to the actions, you hit the preview current component button, and it brings up an image of the component data.

Some of the things that you will see in there is all the form data and all the attachments, so they will all be part of that image. What you will not see there is the bookmarking table of contents, some of the header and footer information, or the biosketches. None of that information actually shows up in the component level summary. You would only see that information in the application preview summary.

Okay. So if I'm filling out all the data for a component and I think it's good to go, I go to that summary tab and I'm ready to mark it as complete. So all the action that I'm doing here

is update component status. I'm given a drop down of options. I'm going to choose complete. And once I do that you will see that on that summary page the status for that component moves to complete. A notification goes out, the applicant organization then knows the data entry for that component is completed and if they want to go ahead and review it and pull it into their final application they can do so.

If they find something that needs to be changed, they would need to actually put that component back into a work in progress status in order for editing to occur again. If you're working with collaborating organizations it's somebody at the applicant organization that will control putting that back into work in progress. That's how right before the deadline you can actually control the amount of editing that's going on at the last crucial hours.

All right. So that's marking them complete.

So you would go through that process for each of your components, you would want to go ahead and

validate each component. You're going to preview the component, you will make sure that it's good to go and then you will mark it as complete.

>> Megan Columbus: So Sheri, a quick learning summary here. I think some of the points to remember is how crucial it is -- I know I said this before, but to fill out the application data using the funding opportunity in conjunction with the special section in the application guide that's for multi-project applications. There are some points where you could easily miss things. For example, remember the Commons credentials, that's the Commons username, are needed for all PD/PIs and component leads.

Remember that an organization name is required for all senior key people. We have resources available for avoiding common errors that may be useful to look at before you get too far in your application preparation if this is new for you.

And you know, lastly, I think if electronic submission of applications to NIH is new, you need to understand the difference between an error and

a warning. When you hit submit or validate your application, you're going to see lots of warnings and potentially some errors. Remember that errors will stop your application from going through and must be fixed. Warnings are fixed at your discretion and nobody but you will see the warnings. Okay?

All right, Sheri, back to you to talk about finalizing your content.

>> Sheri Cummins: All right, great.

So finalizing the content and preparing your application for submission. So at this point all the data entry for all the components is complete. All of those components have been marked to complete as the component status. And the applicant organization is then pulling together their application and preparing for submission.

So to finalize components, so as components are marked complete the applicant organization can preview them, incorporate them into their final application. In order to submit an application, every one of those components will have to move to

a final status. Before you finalize a component it's always a good idea to go ahead and validate the application. There's nothing that forces the focus that are doing the data entry to validate that component before they mark it complete. So you'll want to make sure that it is error-free before you try to finalize.

So in order to do that, as you recall before we did a validate component. But as the applicant as you're doing this step, you will want to validate at the application level. And that's going to do just a few more checks than what was actually done at the component level. For example, things like the biosketches, having more than one biosketch, that will be a check done at the application level because within a component you're only going to have one, but it's a cross-component that it's checking to look for multiples. So things that are done across components are actually going to be done when you do the validate application as opposed to validate component.

So in order to do any of the validate actions or previews at the application level you need to be on the application information screen. And the easiest way to get there is through the bread crumbs at the top of the screen. So that little navigation that shows you your path.

You're going to see a longer list typically of errors and warnings when you do an application validate. As Megan mentioned, if you did not know that you need to put the organization down for every senior key person, then for every senior key person that's been pulled into that application you're probably going to get an error saying the organization is required.

At this point you may actually have pages and pages of errors and warnings that you need to work through. Okay? So don't get panicked. It's really you kind of correct one thing at a time and you just kind of work through it.

In this example, though, we have just a few errors that are listed here. And then my warnings. And my warnings are pretty repetitive.

It's basically saying, hey, you don't have degrees for each of your senior key people, which is just a warning.

All right. So my errors here, I have at the application level, it's going to tell me exactly which component and which form within the component the error occurred at. And I'm going to want to address every one of these errors.

There's one exception there. This is the multiple biosketch error, and this one you can actually ignore at this stage if you want the ASSIST system to reconcile them for you. So in this example it says that this particular person has a biosketch in two different -- this is Ben Around, has biosketch in two different components.

If I want to go ahead and leave that error there when I do the finalize of each of those components, when I put them in a final status, ASSIST is actually going to prompt me to select one of those biosketches and it will reconcile and go through that process so you can either do it manually or you can wait for the system to

actually help you with that process on that particular error.

All right. So I've corrected all the errors that I need to correct and I'm going to go ahead and update my component status. So just like we did when we updated the status to complete, we're going to hit the update component status, we'll choose the final status, and sure enough it says, hey, there's Ben Around and this particular senior key person has two biosketches, one is in the research core and one is in the overrule. Which one do I want to keep? And in this case I'm going to choose the overall and that's going to take care of that error for me.

It's going to work through any of these reconciliations that we need to do with the biosketch and once all that reconciliation is done, it's going to go ahead and put that component into a final status.

And again you will repeat this for each of your components in your application.

So at this point you've gone through and each

of your components are now final. But at the application level you're still in a work in progress. So now we're going to talk about some application status.

So a typical application status flow goes like this: You have work in progress and that allows editing. If you need to do any editing on a component your application status has to be work in progress.

Once all of your components are final you can actually mark your application to an all components final status.

At that point you need to validate your application. And once you run that validation and it's error-free, the system will automatically set an all components validated status for you.

Once you're in that all components validated status, you can set your application to ready for submission. Typically before you do that you're going to do your final application preview and make sure that it looks exactly the way you want it to be. And then you will set it into ready for

submission. And we'll walk through that process now.

And then finally after you submit, you're going to have it automatically set to submitted as your application status.

All right. So once all of your components are in final, you can change your application status. So at this point I'm going to update my submission status, my options here are going to be presented and I'm going to choose all components final.

You can see that the status within that application information screen has changed to all components final.

I can now validate my application. In fact, I have to validate my application. And thankfully because we did our due diligence up front and correcting all of your errors and warnings before we got to this stage we actually have all validations passed, which automatically sets our status to all components validated.

Before you submit you can preview your application and verify that everything is just the

way you want it to go to review. One of the nice things about ASSIST is that we use the exact same code to generate our image or do our application validation before submission as we do after submission. So you have a really good idea of what your application image is going to look like. So from that application information screen you can do preview application. That will bring up your application image. Unlike the component image, you will see that all the book marks are there. This is also going to have all of your data summaries. And it's going to have your headers and footers, minus a few fields. It won't have your Grants.gov tracking number because we haven't submitted it yet. It won't have your date and time stamp for submission because we haven't submitted it yet, but the place holders for those fields will be there in your footer. It will be a pretty good representation of what a reviewer would actually see once it's submitted.

Coming at the end of the month we're actually putting enhancement into ASSIST that will allow

you to queue up a preview. Because there is so much processing going on a preview can take a little while to actually be generated. And some of our pilot applicants were getting a little frustrated with having to wait for the preview to finish before they could actually continue working on their application. So at the end of August we're putting in an enhancement that will allow you to request a preview and allow to you work on your application while that processing is taking place and then you can return to that screen and look at the preview. It will also give you the option if somebody else has been working on the application recently did a preview, you can actually look at that preview instead of kicking off another one. And that is actually going to be something that you may want to consider especially if you're close to the deadline and you don't want to take that time to actually generate a new one over and over.

All right. So this is a screen mockup, it will look very similar to that and that will be

available to you in late August.

We've looked at our application image. Everything looks great so we're going to go ahead and make it ready for submission. Again, we're going to update the status. This time we'll update it to ready for submission.

>> Megan Columbus: All right, Sheri. So let's just do a quick recap of some of the key points that you've just gone over.

Clearly there are several steps required to finalize your application from work in progress. Remember that we built that in to be able to allow you to have multiple people working on the application at once. So while there are many steps, I think they're important for your needs.

The key point here is leave time in the process, right? You need to leave time in the process to go through all those steps. You want to be able to take advantage of those presubmission validations and you want to do that well ahead of the submission deadline. There may be information that you didn't realize you needed

that you have to get from somebody else so don't wait until the 11th hour. And take the opportunity to preview your application.

A number of people have been submitting questions about they can I print my application? The answer is yes. You can print it from ASSIST when you preview. You can print it from the Commons after submission. Take the opportunity to preview and actually look through that application image before you actually hit submit and it can save you some time and effort.

Back to you.

>> Sheri Cummins: Thank you, Megan. One thing that you will notice if you actually are going to print these applications, it's something that we noticed when we went from paper to electronic with our single project R0 1's many years ago. These applications actually are going to be longer than you would typically have with a paper application. So if you decide that you absolutely have to print that application, go ahead and do so, but really kind of look at that application image online,

make sure it's the way you want it to be because these are going to be pretty lengthy. Having all of the forms, having a picture of all of the forms in the application image and all the attachments and so forth they do tend to be a little bit longer than you may have been used to with your paper applications.

Okay. So let's talk about submitting your application. So an on time submission is error-free submission must be made by five p.m. local time of the submitting organization on the due date.

As Megan mentioned it takes some time to prepare your application for submission. We have to go through all the status steps. You do have to validate your application and clear all of your errors. So you do want to start this process early. And by early we do not mean minutes. We mean days.

As she mentioned that you may actually have to go out and find some information, so submitting early and starting this process early is really,

really critical.

As we mentioned when we started this presentation, you have to be a signing official in order to submit the application. And you have to have credentials of authorized organization representative, AOR credentials within Grants.gov in order to submit.

Again, I'm logged in now as Claire Voyant, who was my SO at Whatsamatta U. And because I'm logged in as an SO I'm able to see the submit application button and I can verify in here that it's a ready for submission status.

Once I hit that submit it's going to ask me to confirm that I really, really want to submit, which I do, so I'll hit submit. And then the system is going to prompt me for Grants.gov credentials. When you provide these credentials, the ASSIST system is actually going to go out to Grants.gov, make sure that they're valid credentials and send ASSIST back a response that the credentials are okay. Assuming they're fine we go on with the process, otherwise we'll provide

you an error message at that point.

Once you submit the application you will see at the top of your screen a message dating that it's been sent to Grants.gov.

All right. So submit is pretty easy. You sign on as a signing official, you submit the submit button, give your Grants.gov credentials and you do your submission.

You're not yet done. Now you need to track your application. Just like with single projects until you can see that application image in its entirety you do not absolutely know beyond a shadow of a doubt that NIH has received your application. So tracking your application is a very critical step.

Throughout this process you will be literally inundated with emails. We've already gotten quite a bit of feedback from their pilot applicants that there's already far too many of them. Before we start cutting back on the number of email notifications that go out there we did want to get experience. So if you want to provide feedback on

application notifications that you think should stay or ones that you think should go, please go ahead and let us know.

And at the end of the slide presentation there's a way to give feedback. But don't just say there's too many. Be very specific in your feedback of which ones you think are appropriate to keep.

There's a resource at the bottom of the screen that talks about all the different notifications that go out and what conditions and to whom they are sent and I encourage you to look at that resource so you will know what you're in for there.

One of the nice things about ASSIST is although there's those two systems, Grants.gov and eRA Commons, and actually now ASSIST that you're using for this process, you can do all of your steps within the ASSIST system itself. So you can track your Grants.gov status, you can track your agency status and ASSIST will actually link you to the Commons detailed screen in the eRA Commons directly from ASSIST. So within ASSIST you can do

all of those steps.

From that application information screen, and again you can get there through the bread crumbs at the top of your screen, once you're submitted and you can see the submitted status there, you will have a link to view submission status detail.

That will bring up a screen that tells the statuses at each of the different systems. It will give you an ASSIST status, a Grants.gov status, it will give you the agency status. In order to update that status you have to click on that check for status updates button. If there's no change in the status you will get a message saying we didn't detect any change. If there is a change in status it will tell you we did detect a change and it will give you the most up to date status after you click that button.

The statuses that are provided are the statuses you would see within each of the systems. In this case you have ASSIST is in a submitted status. Grants.gov is an agency tracking number assigned and the agency status is processed.

That's all really good news.

If you have submitted an error-free application under that agency status you will see the agency tracking number and that will be hyperlinked to your detailed status screen in eRA Commons.

So you would get to the same information you would if you were to log in to eRA Commons and look there. This information will only be available to the people that actually can see it within eRA Commons so that would be your SOs, your AOs and PD/PIs for the entire application. When you go into that detailed status screen in Commons there's another relevant documents section and under there is the eApplication. That is your application image. It is the exact same application image a reviewer would use to review your application.

Separately within that section you would also see a cover letter if you included one, and you would also see appendices if you used appendices within your application. You will want to go out

and very carefully read each of the documents in that section. We actually call that the grant folder.

Remember it's your responsibility to carefully review that application image. If there's anything in there that went wrong, like you submitted it one way and somehow the system garbled it or turned something upside down you need to actually call the help desk and let us know that there was a problem with your image and we'll work with you to correct it.

I don't know actually if any outstanding issues with the application image, but should you run into any, go ahead and call that help desk and let us know about it and we will work with you to resolution.

So let's talk about some of the component summaries as you're looking through your application image one of the things you really want to pay attention to when you preview that image or actually looking at that assembled image, are those component summaries? Because remember

that's based on the compiled information from your components. So it's only available to you through a preview or through the application image. So the first one there is a component summary.

So this is what's going to show after your table of contents. This is basically a key to match the titles that you provided for each of the components and the PD/PIs for each of those are project leads for each of those components to the system identified sequential number. So you'll see that there's Core 001 and Core 002. Well, Core 001 was the first core you put into ASSIST and as you remember that was the research core and Ben Around was the PD/PI. Core 002 was the second core that you put into ASSIST and that was the communications core. So that's kind of your key that links those fields together.

The next summary is your project performance site location summary and this summary you see the primary site listed first and then you have a table of all of the different organizations and the components and where those primary sites are.

Actually all the sites are listed there.

If you have more than one site on a component you will have more than one row in that table.

As we talked about a little bit earlier, the human subject clinical trials, vertebrate and animal summary was in here as well. We didn't have a lot of human subjects work, but you can see the overall component is marked yes for human subjects because down there in project 001 we have human subject involvement there. And this table allows you to quickly identify where the components are that have human subjects at clinical trials, have used stem cell research or have vertebrate animals involved. So that's a quick little identification of those different types of applications.

Next you have a series of budget summaries. The first one is the composite application budget. And this one is one that's a little bit tricky. The way we do this particular summary is we take any budget form that's in the application that has the DUNS number of the organization and we

consider that budget information for the applicant organization. And then any budget form that has a different DUNS number than the applicant organization, we take all that information together and we make that -- we list that under the consortium cost.

This is basically your applicant budget. It includes all of the full budget request, but it's going to look at it from the perspective of the applicant organization.

The next budget summary is the component budget summary, and that basically goes component by component and then it lists a summary of each of the key areas within the R & R budget form. So it will go through and it will talk about your equipment costs and your salaries and your travel costs and so forth and a summary for each of the components.

The next budget summary is the category summary, and this one goes category by category, but then lists each of the components within each category. So if you look at the travel costs, for

example, you would see the travel costs and then you would see each of the components listed for those.

Next we have the senior key personnel summary and biosketches. So this is where you would see where you see your PD/PIs and any multiple PD/PIs listed first. And then you have an alphabetical listing of all the senior key that show up somewhere in the components of the application. It lists each component that that person is involved in as that final column in the table. If the same person is involved in multiple components you will see multiple rows in the table. The reason we have multiple rows is because we do not have enough information to definitively say that people with the same name are actually the same people because we don't require a Commons ID or any unique identifier for senior keys other than leads.

And then you will find all of the biosketches listed in the same order as that senior key summary. All that is kind of showing up in the

overall section of your application image.

Once your application image is available, applicants have two business days to view the assembled application image in Commons or through ASSIST getting to Commons. Before it automatically moves forward for further processing.

If you find something wrong with your application and you want to make a correction, as long as you're prior to the due date you can actually reject your application and submit a change corrected application before the due date and that will overwrite your submission.

Now, hopefully all of the up front error checking will make the need for this greatly diminished than we have for a single project application process today, but that is still available to you as an option as long as you do it before the deadline.

If no action is taken to reject the application during those two business days, after the two day application viewing window elapses,

then your application automatically moves forward to NIH for further processing.

And your submission is complete.

Some final notes, be patient. Validating and previewing can take some time. As we mentioned we are actually addressing the preview by doing a queuing kind of system for previewing the application. But it can take some time, especially in a highly complicated application to do a validate. So please just click it once and let that roll.

And this is a new system. So should you run into some problem that prevents your ability to submit on time, please follow our standard system issue practices, and that means calling the help desk, letting us know that you're making a good faith effort to submit, and if we verify that you're running into something beyond your control, we're certainly going to work with you even beyond that deadline if you need to to get your application in. For of all of our pilot applications we did have a few that ran into

system issues and we do not have any that were unable to complete the process by having call the help desk and work with us to get the applications in. I think we're in really good shape with the system. I think the pilots have really helped us to tweak it and get it all ready for this transition should we run into a problem we do have that standard policy out there. And I encourage you to know about it in advance.

>> Megan Columbus: Okay. So Sheri, just a couple of points of emphasis. You want to make sure that you're making and submitting any corrections well before the due date. We talked about this a little before Sheri emphasized this, but these are big complex applications. Make sure you give yourself plenty of time to correct the application before the due date.

Also take the time to actually track your application to the image in the Commons. You'll be able to get a link through ASSIST, it will take you to the Commons. Look at the summaries, make sure the application looks the way you expect. Of

course, submit the application early enough so you have time to do something about it before the deadline if it does not.

I think your final messages here are about where to find assistance.

>> Sheri Cummins: All right. So assistance. So first we have online ASSIST help and we actually have some pretty robust online help tools within ASSIST. As you go through the pages there's lots of little question mark icons. Clicking on the icons will bring you to our online help. Within the data entry screens we actually have links directly into the application guide for those specific areas, so for example, if I'm on the senior key person data entry screen within the help icon there, you can get some information on how to enter data within ASSIST for the senior key, but also have a link to the application guide that will bring you directly to that resource that talks about our policies and what's actually expected in the fields.

So the online help is a great resource for

you.

We also within the online help have a research feature so even if you are accessing it from one area if you decide while you're in that tool that you want to find help on a different area you can certainly use that search feature and it will go through the entire help file and look for answers to your specific questions.

We have some links and resources here. Again, the online help, the application guides, the annotated form sets. We talked about many of these form sources as we went through the slides, but there's a consolidated list for you here.

We also have a demo site. If you're not actually preparing an application or if you're NIH staff or somebody who is just kind of curious what the ASSIST system looks like, you're welcome to use our non-production demo environment and we have instructions for how to set up accounts and use that environment for you so you can go and play in our little sandbox there.

You can also use that for your own internal

training. And our help desk. Our eRA Commons help desk will be used to provide support for ASSIST. And although we've worked very closely with Grants.gov, this is a system that was developed and managed by NIH, so the eRA Commons help desk should be your first stop for support. Grants.gov is certainly aware of our activities, they are certainly aware of our transition, however, as far as the details in getting your questions answered regarding ASSIST they will not actually be able to assist you directly. They will probably forward you to NIH so it's best to start with the eRA Commons help desk from the get-go.

And again, we are looking for feedback. We got great feedback from the pilots. We've implemented as many of the things as we can. We can't build every bell and whistle that we would love to put into ASSIST without additional funding. In these funding times it's not always easy to get, but we certainly are committed to making enhancements that will make the transition

as smooth as possible and make this a good and helpful tool to you to make these submissions. There's unconscious is on the screen to get the feedback and we would love to hear from you.

And that's it.

>> Megan Columbus: Thank you so much, Sheri. You know, we have people chiming in with a constant stream of questions and comments, and they are very much appreciating your presentation and I think they like how you put it together. And I particularly appreciate those for whom it's midnight where they are who are still joining us live.

Lisa, who is one of our pilots, she wanted to make the point that we needed to emphasize that there are no shortcuts even if you're close to the deadline. Every component must be marked complete and then final before the application can be submitted. She said if she had known that beforehand that would be a great help.

>> Sheri Cummins: That's great. And actually to Lisa's comment, we actually have built the

capability in for the applicant organization, if you are the person that is doing all the data entry, that you can actually go straight to final and skip the complete step now which is based on the feedback we got from our pilot users. We did add a little bit of a shortcut there, but if you do the collaboration you absolutely need to go through both steps.

>> Megan Columbus: Very good. There are a few questions, Sheri. I don't want to put you on the spot because some are policy-ish questions as opposed to system-ish questions, and we don't have a real policy person in the room.

We've had a number of questions from people who have key personnel who have zero percent effort because they're on committees and other things. Would you off the top of your head know the answer about where they include biosketches for those people?

>> Yeah. If you look at the application guide it's actually laid out pretty well. The difference between senior key people and the

effort is that when you put a person into your senior key person form, that's where your biosketch is entered. There's a senior key person section of the budget form, however, that if you are listing that senior key person in the budget form, that's where the effort is actually listed.

>> Megan Columbus: So the distinction is the budget form rather than the key person form.

>> Sheri Cummins: Right. You can still get the biosketch in that without actually listing them in the budget. That's actually explained in the application guide.

>> Megan Columbus: Other questions we've been getting... yes indeed we will have this webinar available online as the video with the transcript, a full transcript that you can read, with the slides themselves. The slides are already there. If you haven't found them, they can be found by going to grants.nih.gov, going to webinars on the right-hand side and finding this webinar. We expect to have the presentation materials and video and transcript available early next week.

Our technical support is looking at me a little bit gingerly about that, but I think that will work okay.

We've been answering lots of questions as we have gone through this webinar. If you have final questions that have not been answered yet, please let us know.

One question, Sheri, is someone submitting a continuation for a P30. Should they be using ASSIST?

>> Sheri Cummins: So once an activity code transitions to electronic submission, all the new revision resubmissions and renewals and I assume you're talking about a renewal here, a competing renewal, that would actually come in through ASSIST or through electronic means if you don't have your own solution that would be using ASSIST.

>> Megan Columbus: Thank you. We have a few more questions. I think people would appreciate a little bit more clarification about who can grant permissions within components of the application. You have the signing official for the overrule who

is providing some higher level permissions. Can those permission givers be delegated down?

>> Sheri Cummins: Okay. So within the components, the signing officials and the A0, once you provide that DUNS number within the component, from the component organization will have the ability to manage the access within that component. So if I'm at an organization called Better Now and I'm a collaborating organization, I will have automatic access for the S0s for Better Now. They will have automatic access there and they can access the users at Better Now. They will not be able to manage for other components, but they would be able to manage for the component that they're working on.

>> Megan Columbus: A number of people are wondering about submitting progress reports and whether progress reports will be submitted using ASSIST.

>> Sheri Cummins: So we don't actually do the progress reports through our competing application processes. There is a system that we are doing

called RPPR which is the Research Performance and Progress Report system. That I believe this fall will be expanded to do your progress reports at least in a pilot phase for things that require a budget, so that would be your non-SNAP type of awards. So that is in the future, but that would not actually be coming through ASSIST. That would be using eRA Commons and the RPPR module.

>> Megan Columbus: Other questions. I think a few people can use clarification. They're looking for budget forms and probably not finding them because they're looking at the overall components. Could you remind people about how budgets get rolled up?

>> Sheri Cummins: Sure. So within each of the components themselves you will find an R & R budget form. And if you have a subaward within that component you would also be able to use that add optional form to use additional forms within that component. Within a component the budget forms are right there and you do your normal budget data entry.

Within the overall there aren't actually any budget forms, per se. In the overall component there is an SF 424 R&R cover letter and there is a section with estimated funding and it's really just a total number, the total budget request that's a manually entered field on that form, but that's really the only budget related data that you will enter on the overall component.

The application budget is actually rolled up from a summary of all of the different component budget forms themselves based on the DUNS number on each of those forms.

>> Megan Columbus: Continuing on with some budget questions.

You know, we have Nicole here who is asking -- sometimes our PI's do not include bios of grad students or post docs as key, but like to include them in the budget justification as a way to highlight expertise. Is there a way in ASSIST to list the bios and list them in the biosketch component?

>> Sheri Cummins: So as far as the biosketch

component, the only way to include a biosketch is to list them on the senior key person form and the application guide shows under what circumstances you're going to want to include people on that form. There are some other significant contributors, but it really has to be a senior key person there. There is a budget justification in many of the budgets so if there is any additional information you want to include about other individuals that you haven't included on the senior key person form you can certainly do that there as well.

>> Megan Columbus: I think there's a little bit of confusion about subcontracts versus components and whether all subcontracts are components. Could you talk about that a little bit?

>> Sheri Cummins: So there are several ways that you can actually lay out your application. In the example that we used in our slides we have collaborating organizations actually leading components. There are certain institutions where

they maintain that lead responsibility for every component within their application. So in those cases I would have the applicant organization leading every one of those components and I would then use the subaward -form for the collaborating budgets.

So that's kind of the way you would make the distinction.

>> Megan Columbus: A number of people have asked about being able to play in ASSIST so they can get comfortable in the system before actually submitting the application. I believe in your presentation you mentioned that there's a sandbox available.

>> Sheri Cummins: That's absolutely right. We do have a non-production environment. We call it our external user accept testing. It's basically a demo site that allows you to get in there, set up an account and play. The instructions are in the slides at the end there. I actually just posted it with the latest and greatest forms today, so the instructions are up to date and

ready for you to go out and play.

>> Megan Columbus: I do see some questions that are really policy questions. They're not about using the system. So people, if you have questions about things like what percent effort to the PI of a Core B if they're on multiple places, you should really be talking to either the program official at the NIH institute funding the grant or the NIH grants management folks.

The funding opportunity announcement instructions may actually provide the instruction in Section 4, but that's not an ASSIST question, that's really a question about how to construct your application and that comes really from the institute who put out the funding opportunity announcement.

There are some questions about things like where to go for help. Certainly Sheri covered that in her presentation and there's a slide available. But the other thing to point out is that we've done a whole lot of work to make ASSIST as interactive as possible in terms of help. And so you'll be able to find question marks all over

the place that will provide you access to the help desk as well as access to how to use the system. That page in ASSIST and also take you to the application guide as well. And so we've tried our best to try and integrate some of the resources for you.

Sheri, I'm pretty sure that you covered this, but just to reiterate, the signing official's commons credentials, do they need to match the organizations Grants.gov credentials?

>> Sheri Cummins: So within ASSIST in order to get to that submit button you have to have a signing official eRA Commons account. So when you log into ASSIST you have to use an account with an SO role. Now, when you are doing that actual submit action, so that gets you the submit button, when you do the submit action you will have to have authorized organization representative credentials within Grants.gov.

>> Megan Columbus: Thank you. What about the application statuses? Are they reversible?

>> Sheri Cummins: Yes. At any time anybody

that has that status maintainer role or the AOs or SOs at the applicant institution have the ability to change an application back into work in progress and go through the steps of making it ready for submission again.

>> Megan Columbus: I know a couple of people have also asked about abandoning components because that happens all the time. And so they can set the status to abandon?

>> Sheri Cummins: Absolutely, you can abandon a component or actually abandon an entire application. We don't have the ability to delete. We actually wanted to make sure that we have the ability to recover some of the components and applications while we were going through our pilot phase we will be implementing a delete function in the future, but for now you can actually do an abandon both of the component and application level.

>> Megan Columbus: And a number of people wrote in with questions asking if I need to reorder components I can reorder them if I just

start a new application. And the answer to that is yes.

>> Sheri Cummins: Absolutely. Just to expand on that a little bit, we did put a lot of emphasis on creating that application shell. You can actually go back and add a component or if you don't have all the information to do your shell at the time, you can certainly go and add a component in any time, but just know that it's going to show up in the order that they're put into ASSIST within a component type. So if I have three projects and I add them at different days, it's still going to be the order that all three were put into ASSIST.

>> Megan Columbus: All right. So I see that we're over time. Let me do one last question here. And that is, is there a limit on the number of people who can be logged in and working on the application?

>> Sheri Cummins: No, there's not. The only limit is that only one person within a specific form can have access to edit at a time.

>> Megan Columbus: Fabulous. Hey, Sheri, you

have been wonderful.

>> Sheri Cummins: Thank you.

>> Megan Columbus: For those of you who have asked, yes, the transcript will include the answers to the questions that we have addressed out loud. I've been answering some people in the chat window as we can, as has my colleague here, Catherine Fishman. If you need additional support you are welcome to contact the help desk. And with that we thank you for joining with us and hanging with us. We've had over a thousand people with us today. Thank you so much.

[End of Webinar]