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Federal Demonstration Partnership

Electronic Grants Business Forum

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RON SPLITTGERBER: . . . for the first half an hour and discovered that we're in the lecture room. I've asked Dick Keogh to moderate the session so that he can keep us on time. We have a couple of folks that need to make other engagements, and we have Theresa Sorrenti coming in at 1:00 p.m. right after lunch, and so we need to pretty much be on track. So, Dick, maybe if you can take it away with intros . . .

DICK KEOGH: Sure. I can do some introductions. First of all, just let me be sure that everyone is on the same page relative to the, sort of the history of this particular group, which has been now for the past several months a subcommittee of the ERA Standing Committee of FDP. And it started out really as a very small effort coming out of the ERA Subcommittee.

It was really an attempt led by Ron and myself right at the beginning with a few other folks to contact individuals, especially at Grants.gov is where we started. We moved that out to other individuals in the federal agencies in order to establish a more focused dialogue relative to the electronic interchanges between the research institutions that were represented in FDP and the principal grant-making agencies of the federal government that provide research support for the institutions making up FDP. That really expanded out quite a bit.

It was intended to be a relatively small group, but we discovered that every time we had a meeting, especially a meeting of this particular group that coincided with an FDP meeting, that more and more people came in. And I think it culminated last time with, well, though I was not able to make the meeting, I think that there was a standing-room-only crowd at the last meeting, which was not really the intent of this particular group.

We certainly wanted the meetings to be open and they are open. We want, we certainly don't want to hide any business that we're doing. It's open public business as far as FDP is concerned. But it's a little difficult to really focus in on demonstration projects and that's the, of course, the key, a key purpose of FDP, is to actually establish demonstration projects, and I'm hoping that we'll get one or two of those out of today's meeting. But that's difficult to do when you have a standing-room-only crowd interacting. It's a little bit too big a group.

So what we decided to do, and when I say we, it was really the co-chairs and the folks in the Executive Committee and the ERA Standing Committee that decided they would change the format a little bit this time and that we would get a, again, a smaller group even before the FDP meeting began that represented the various federal agencies and the interests of FDP and try to do some work that might actually generate some demonstration projects and then do a report in the regular meeting, which will be coming up in the next two days in FDP to, again, have a more broad-scale interaction with the members of the FDP who wanted to interact with the deliberations. So that's essentially what has happened and has brought us here today.

And I want to go around and make some introductions. I'm going to let most of you introduce yourselves, but I want to be sure that, first of all, everybody knows that this group, this subcommittee, does have two co-chairs. And consistent with FDP, one of the co-chairs is from a federal agency and one from an institution, a research institution. And the latter is, as you already heard from today, is Ron Splittgerber from Colorado State, and we're also pleased that Bob MacDonald from the Department of Agriculture is the other co-chair and they'll be doing a lot of leading of discussion today, and I'll just try to function to help keep things on time so we can all get everything done.

We also have another individual here who has been with us throughout functioning as a representative for NIH. He now has changed hats. He is the incoming executive director of FDP, and that's David Wright. And we, especially in this particular group and with the ERA efforts, are delighted that that has occurred, because as I mentioned to David when we came in, we don't have to teach him too much about what we've been doing. He already knows and is very sympathetic. And David, of course, comes not only from, has a federal agency background, but he also has come previously out of the institutions, the research institutions as well, so he knows both sides and we're just delighted with that.

Why don't we just go around and let everybody who is here basically introduce themselves and indicate what agency they're from to be sure that everybody knows one another, and then we'll launch into the first agenda item. So I think I'll start with Dan on my left.

DAN HOFHERR: I'm Dan Hofherr from the National Science Foundation.

DICK KEOGH: Okay. And I'm Dick Keogh from InfoEd and also retain an affiliation also with Rhode Island College.

GUNTA LIDERS: And I'm Gunta Liders from the University of Rochester. I'm represented FDP. I am not an IT person. I'm really here as a coordinator of some of the pre . . . activities to see if there's something that this group talks about that I can bring back to some of the pre . . . folks that perhaps we can help you all demo with.

BOB MACDONALD: Well, we certainly need non-IT people here. I am Bob MacDonald and I'm with USDA CSREES, and I'm also a co-chair.

RON SPLITTGERBER: Ron Splittgerber from Colorado State, also a co-chair.

KEN FORSTMEIER: Ken Forstmeier, Penn State. I'm kind of a groupie here.

DAVID WRIGHT: David Wright. Ex-IT geek, now non-IT geek.

TONY CAVATAIO: Tony . . . from the Department of Education, but I'm actually here not as a representative of the Department, but as a co-chair for the National Grants Partnership. And we had worked with Jerry Stuck pretty closely in a number of things, and we'll talk about that a little bit later. So it's great to be here. Congratulations, David.

DAVID ROBINSON: I'm David Robinson. I'm from Oregon Health and Science University. I am representing the FDP faculty.

RON SPLITTGERBER: David is here in person . . .

DAVID ROBINSON: Because most of the time I was on the other end of that box . . .

JOHN MCBRIDE: John McBride, Wayne State University.

BOB BEATTIE: Bob Beattie, University of Michigan.

JOHN: I'm John . . . I'm also with the National Science Foundation.

DICK KEOGH: Terrific. Okay. I guess we have everybody at this particular point. We may have some other folks that will be coming in as we go along. Why don't we begin, I'll just launch us into the first item on the agenda which return to, which actually is the grandfather item. It was kind of the issue that initially launched some of the initiatives to establish this particular forum.

And that was the concept of attempting to create a national user profile database to help eliminate the difficulties that users would have or potentially have in establishing multiple profiles with multiple agencies. And I'm hoping this is one today that we can actually move into a demonstration project.

Hopefully with, at least in my view anyway or in my vision, having a host agency establish a database with at least a few common elements, data elements that all agencies use to identify the individuals and some of the characteristics of those individuals and to document or at least demonstrate, establish a demonstration that, in fact, even with a few data elements that agencies can interact in a cooperative way with that single database, and that that can be a database which can be updated by a user which in that, and those data elements then get shared by the various agencies as the profile elements for that particular individuals.

And I'm hoping that if we can do that and establish a demonstration of it, maybe we can then expand that out into something that more appropriately really can be recognized as a national user profile database. I think that that's something which for the users, the researchers and investigators out there, is something which is very, very important for them and would cut their workload down enormously.

And, again, that's what the FDP is all about, is trying to establish demonstrations that which then may lead to something on a more broad scale and a more permanent basis. So with that, I think I'll turn to, both to Bob and to Ron to see if we can move that forward a little bit.

RON SPLITTGERBER: At the last meeting, we had several of the agencies try to map some of the data elements that currently exist in their own databases, and we had the addition of the National Science Foundation to that matrix. At this point, Bob is going to bring that up on the screen here in a moment. There are probably two separate pieces to this issue, and one is to identify a person, authenticate a person when they first approach a website.

And I think this has been called digital ID in most recent iterations of that particular project, and this is simply to authenticate or identify a person, I believe, at level two, so that when you go to a website, you have access to the information that would be provided at that level.

And once that is done, once the person is authenticated, then that particular visual ID is mapped to a profile that contains various information. And so the screen that Bob is bringing up has the extension of that. We also will need to talk at some point about what information needs to exist for the digital ID, things such as perhaps a birth date to identify a person. We can't use SSN any longer, so there has to be some other unique way of identifying a person, maybe birth date, name, institution, a few items like that might uniquely identify someone coming in.

But to start with, the profile, if you can read it on the screen, it exists for NIH, USDA, CSREES, and National Science Foundation. We're hoping, as Dick mentioned, to start a pilot that would enable someone to register, say, at NIH. Then using those same credentials, go over to perhaps FastLane or National Science Foundation, and, again, using that same ID, log in to FastLane. And then behind the scenes, the information that you see on the screen would be mapped to that individual. That's sort of the concept we're looking at.

And, you know, maybe we have particular ideas on how that might happen, what might, what we might consider to make that easier for the agencies to help with. NIH I think may provide the infrastructure to begin that demonstration. So maybe if the folks that are here from NIH and Bob from USDA and Dan from NSF can kind of go over the matrix that we have up on the screen and let us know what common elements might provide details for the profile. Dan has some new information we didn't have at the last meeting.

DAN HOFHERR: For NSF, what I tried to do is line up the NSF data elements with the NIH and CSREES.

RON SPLITTGERBER: Dan, is this a little easier . . .

DAN HOFHERR: For our principal investigators, it's first name, middle initial, and last name. Suffix, we don't have prefix. E-mail address. I have URLs for the PIs. We have URL for the reviewers though. To step back, I talked about this at the last meeting. For NSF we have a PI database and a reviewer database. And it's our hope to get resources so we can combine the data together, the quality of our PI data better than the quality of our reviewer data. Both the PI and the reviewer can update their own information on FastLane, but we find that PIs do this more often than the reviewers.

SSN, if you choose to ask for SSN, that, of course, triggers the Privacy Act implications. That's what NSF is doing. For an individual person, if they don't want to supply their real SSN, they can ask for a pseudo-SSN and NSF provides that for them and it starts with three zeros. Real SSNs don't start with three zeros.

We have citizenship, disabilities. PIs can select multiples there. Race, they can select multiples. Ethnicity. When this whole chart, if it doesn't say multiple, they can only select one. Ethnicity, department name, address, and fax number. For the reviewer, you see the different address-related fields. Something we have is we actually have a building field, so that's related to address information. We have, of course, phone number. We have department phone, department extension. I think that is unique to NSF. And then also a fax, e-mail address, and then URL address, which is also unique to NSF.

And then for PIs, two other additional data elements we have, it's highest degree, and that is just one, so the PI has to select what the highest degree, if they have multiples, that they want to tell NSF about. And then we also have degree years. That was the year the degree was conferred. That's the rundown on the NSF data elements.

RON SPLITTGERBER: Is this in the same table or do you look at the data that way or are there various aspects of this as it relates to reviewers versus investigators and others?

DAN HOFHERR: The PI data and the reviewer data are in different tables. There is a mechanism for NSF staff to link the records, but that is not done frequently. So it's our hope to get resources so we can have an extensive effort to combine the data. And that will pay off a lot of dividend. And the same type of things we're talking about in the broader context, for NSF, if you're a reviewer and your e-mail address changes, you have to go in two different places to update it.

RON SPLITTGERBER: Is there a unique value that links those two tables then?

DAN HOFHERR: That's, for all the PI-related data, there's a PI ID. That's a behind-the-scenes unique identifier that the PI wouldn't know what it is. They wouldn't need to know what it is. That's the unique key. For reviewers, we have a reviewer ID. It's the same thing. It's a unique identifier that the reviewer doesn't have to know about. And then when we link them together, we basically, I believe we have a column in our PI data and our PI tables where we put the reviewer ID if the NSF program staff have chosen to link the few records.

DICK KEOGH: I have a question. Just as a matter of curiosity, how is that unique identifier for the PI created?

DAN HOFHERR: It's, I believe, done sequentially. So if a proposal is submitted through Grants.gov, one of the NSF data elements in the Grants.gov proposals is SSN. So when our automated process takes the proposal from Grants.gov, we check to see if the PI and the co-PI's SSNs are already in our PI database. If they're not, that automated process then adds the user onto our PI table.

DICK KEOGH: So you're really using a SSN to create a second identifier for that individual.

DAN HOFHERR: Yeah.

RON SPLITTGERBER: David, if you wouldn't mind updating us on NIH, I think NIH has actually gone down the road, there's a similar situation, if I understand it correctly. That there are two different pieces of information on an individual or the possibility, one for a reviewer and one for other folks, is that right, and you're trying to . . .

DAVID WRIGHT: Actually, no. It's NIH, we have a person's database. And each person has one record in that, but, or a set of records, but one entry into that set of data, and we apply multiple roles to that data, so they can be a PI, they can be a reviewer, they can be a business official. Whatever role that they play, we apply that role to the data.

Our stuff is, I should say NIH's stuff is very similar to NSF with a few differences. We also allow SSN to be used. We don't require it. When, for addresses, we also allow the person to enter more than one address. And those addresses, they can declare them as maybe their residential address and their office address and their lab address. So we're able to associate multiple addresses with one person.

I'm trying to think of the other big differences. When someone goes to put a new entry into this database, typically this is happening now through the commons. When someone logs into the common, it creates a commons account for a PI. What happens, there's a couple ways to do this. The best way or the easiest way is when a business official at the university or research organization goes to create the PI account, they can go and get a list of PIs that we have associated with their institution that don't have commons accounts currently.

And basically what it does, over the past 30 years or however long NIH has been doing this, as people have submitted applications and been on review committees and so forth, we've created profiles on these people. And so what will happen is the business official will log in. We will know what organization that they're with because we've got that information, so they can get a list of all the PIs that we think are at their institution that don't have commons accounts. Those, basically it's just a profile without a commons account, but those profiles are attached to all the applications and other things that that person has done at NIH.

So when John Smith at the university says, oh, I need to create an account for Jim Johnson here, he just clicks, okay, Jim Johnson created an account, so we automatically match and have a correct data match there. There are occasions when, say the PI has moved from an institution and we haven't received an application from that PI at the new institution, we will think that they're still at the old one.

So what will happen is the business official at the new institution will enter in a couple pieces of information, like a grant number that maybe just transferred over or something like that. Then we've got a pretty complex matching algorithm that is run by a human at NIH that says, okay, here is this account request, I'm going to take this information, match it against all the potential profiles that we have, and someone will say, okay, yes, here is, this is really this person and they'll link up that account.

So the, for the last couple of years, it's been a pretty strenuous process of creating accounts and making sure they're matched up with the right profiles, so when someone logs in they don't all of a sudden start seeing grant applications and things from a different John Smith. Typically it takes about two to four business days for a PI account to get created because of that matching and the need to get it right. But in terms of the data elements that Dan went over, I'd say 90 percent or more are matches to what NIH has.

RON SPLITTGERBER: So just to make sure I understand the process correctly, the matches only need to be made when a new account is created, trying to relate the information that's already on file at NIH for that investigator or reviewer.

DAVID WRIGHT: That's correct. Once that match is made, NIH has pretty much put everything in the hands of that PI to maintain that profile and keep it accurate. We call it the single point of ownership. So once that match is made, it's up to the PI to keep that going.

RON SPLITTGERBER: Would you mind, just to follow through on that thought a bit, go over what types of roles are available, and I'm thinking particularly if an investigator doesn't have the time to update their own information, if you allow, for instance, a role of a co-investigator or a staff person to make changes to that record or how that might work.

DAVID WRIGHT: Yeah. In the commons, the PI can designate any other commons user at that institution to have edit capability over their profile. And so they can go in and make changes or whatever that PI needs to have done. We don't limit that to any particular role. Just as long as that user is associated with the same institution, then that PI can delegate that responsibility.

STEVE DOWDY: What about multi-institution . . .

DAVID WRIGHT: If you've got a PI that's affiliated with MIT and Stanford, if they wanted, since there's only one profile for that person, they could designate anyone from either school to update it. Just because of the way the commons works right now, when a PI logs in and if they're affiliated with multiple universities, they'll have a primary one which will be kind of the default association, but if they want to look at things from the other institution, they have to do kind of a switch user type thing, where they say, or a switch institution, where they say, okay, I want to look at my stuff from this institution now.

DICK KEOGH: David, anticipating grants coming in to NIH through Grants.gov, the same situation that Dan referred to, what key would be used to identify that particular individual to the individual which is in commons?

DAVID WRIGHT: On the 424 R&R in the NIH-specific data, one of the required fields is a commons user ID, and we require that right now for the PI only. But we also allow the, all the co-PIs and anybody else listed on the grant who has a common account to put that ID in as well.

GUNTA LIDERS: Actually, David, we got an error message when one of our co-I's didn't have that listed.

DAVID WRIGHT: That'd be a good question for . . .

STEVE DOWDY: Was it all upper case?

GUNTA LIDERS: I don't know, Steve.

DAVID WRIGHT: The way the ERA database was set up, the match has to be . . . all upper-case letters.

GUNTA LIDERS: But specifically it asked for the commons user ID. I mean, that was the error.

KEN FORSTMEIER: For a co-PI.

GUNTA LIDERS: For a co-PI.

DAVID WRIGHT: And was he actually listed on the pull-down that says what is this person's role and was it listed as a PI or was it, did it . . .

GUNTA LIDERS: No, this was one of the conference grants, so maybe that was the difference, because it was not the principal investigator. It was a co-I.

DAVID WRIGHT: I'd have to . . .

GUNTA LIDERS: So it, and it wasn't in the instructions, so we were surprised.

DAVID WRIGHT: Erratically the only person required to have a commons, there are two people listed on a grant that have, that are required to have a commons account. That would be the signing official and the PI.

RON SPLITTGERBER: Could you briefly go over what other roles are assigned to an individual that's registered? There's PI, co-PI, is that correct, and what else?

DAVID WRIGHT: Well, in the commons, there's PI, which we really should have named researcher, because just the fact that it's call PI has caused a bunch of grief because you've got certain schools that don't want to give grad students or fellows a PI account because they think it's inferring PI status on this person. We really didn't do a good job of naming that. It should have been named something else. But right now it just costs too much to rip that out and place a different title in there.

But that covers all, PIs, co-PIs, fellows, anybody listed on a grant as a researcher. We've got the signing official, which is basically the person who can sign a grant and obligate the university. There is an administrative official, which has most of the capabilities of the signing official with the exception of they can't submit anything to NIH. They can't alter the institution profile.

And there's one other thing that I can't think of off the top of my head. Beyond that, there are, there's an assistant role, which has absolutely no rights within the system until they've been delegated some responsibility to either edit someone's profile or fill out the . . . progress report on behalf of the PI. There is a financial status report or FSR role, which is mainly just given to the grants accounts that fill out the financial reports to submit.

TONY CAVATAIO: How is the signing official . . .

DAVID WRIGHT: Typically these are going to be the same people, which is one of the complaints that we've had in that if the AOR is submitted to Grants.gov, why is NIH requiring them to log on to the commons and do that. So we're trying to work through those issues, I keep saying we. NIH is trying to work through those issues with the general counsel, trying to get rid of that requirement. But typically those are the same people.

BOB BEATTIE: But they don't have to be. At Michigan, we have a half a dozen AORs, but we have typically just one signing official who's the top guy, who is the one who goes into the NIH site and does the verification. He's the person who used to be on the right-hand bottom of the 398.

DAVID WRIGHT: Correct . . .

BOB BEATTIE: And I don't know where that person's user, NIH commons ID shows up on the new 424. I don't remember ever putting . . .

DAVID WRIGHT: You're right. The signing official doesn't have the user ID on a 424. Beyond that they're required to have it because they have to log on.

BOB BEATTIE: Yeah. The other official role is the person who can sign accounts. I forgot what that's called.

DAVID WRIGHT: Oh, yeah. We've got the AAR, account administrator role, which all they can do is add, delete and modify user accounts.

TONY CAVATAIO: Can we step back a minute because the premise of Grants.gov, and I'm not trying to be an advocate for or against, I just raise the issue, is if we want to simplify the life of all the people submitting a grant, now it seems like we've got them jumping through hoops here to use this system, to use Grants.gov, and we've got multiple activities now what we've created. We've got the Grants.gov requirements and now we've got these requirements.

So how have we simplified their life? How have we simplified your life, right? It doesn't sound like it's been simplified too much. Just that's what's coming across to me. If I were using Grants.gov right now and then I jump through hoops and I was told I'm the only person who's authorized to submit this grant to you, and then I've submitted it and now you say that here's the only person that can submit it to the commons, okay, and we have to have your authorization as well and have to jump through hoops for them, I'm just saying shouldn't we be simplifying this process a little bit so it's just seamless kind of . . .

RON SPLITTGERBER: Tony, that's a good . . .

TONY CAVATAIO: . . . maybe I'm off base here . . .

RON SPLITTGERBER: I think that's really what we're driving at with this demonstration, that we're hoping to have a single unique ID for folks and then multiple roles when they log in. And so if that, if we can take that step, then at least it simplifies it for the investigator, the knowledge that no matter where they go they're going to have to remember one credential.

I wanted to also move along, and for background information, Bob has also provided some cross-references for USDA. And what we want to keep in mind here is we're looking for a demonstration where we can create a unique authentication user ID, digital ID, and then map that to some specific information at the agencies. They're really two separate pieces, two separate steps. But we need to know what information the agencies have available before we can make that connection. So, Bob, maybe you can cover what USDA does.

BOB MACDONALD: Sure, sure. And I don't know if anyone wants to work the mouse up there. I guess I need to be near the mic. But we have, our information is very similar to that at NIH's and NSF's. As a bit of background, our data came from two sources. We had a database for all of our project directors, basically information that's been captured off grant applications. And we also had a number of different databases around the agency of potential reviewers.

What we did was a few years ago was to combine those. And in fact, we're still dealing with some of the difficulties from that. You were talking about consolidating records, David, at NIH. When someone has existed in several of our potential reviewer databases and in our project director database there multiple times, we went through a cleaning process. It eliminated, oh, I think 20,000 of them, and we found that there's still more out there.

And I can explain a little bit more why we say there's still more out there. So that's why we have three columns up here, because the first column is as a project director, because that's what this discussion really originated on, is how we record people as project directors, but now they're all, they're linked together to us. And so the main thing is that if we link it only on project directors, we just want to make sure we don't jeopardize what we need for potential reviewers.

People that do not have roles as project directors, we're still, there's no way they can log in as a project director to CSREES and change their information as a project director. We do not have the proposals available electronically to assist them, so they can't go in and say view the proposal. We hope within the next year or so we can start things like proposal status and such.

The only thing that's really electronic from that is that they will get their, as a project director, they will be, based on the e-mail address and . . . they will get their reviews e-mailed to them. As a potential reviewer, we do have a web system. That's the PRS up there, Peer Review System. And we say questionnaire because there's an electronic questionnaire. People get e-mails once a year if they haven't updated this recently to update their information not only about their address but their expertise and so on. And there's two columns for that because we're in the process of revising that.

The proposed has actually been sent to OMB for, as part of the information collection renewal process. We can't put it out there until it's been approved by OMB. So there are some changes, and I think one of the differences is, it's down off the bottom, is that we're moving away from what NSF had, unfortunately, looking at what Dan has put in there.

We used to ask, or we currently ask what is the highest degree you have earned. We've had to broaden that, and I don't know exactly the reasons why. I wasn't part of this discussion. But it's now going to what is the highest level of education you have earned. I think part of the difference may be there that we have not, we're not only a research funding agency and an education funding agency, we're an extension funding agency, so we're reaching out to folks who have, may have things other than just degrees.

So that's why we have three columns. And so these folks can actually log in as reviewers or potential reviewers and update their information. We find they do so frequently, more than that they are nudged to do. And then they can also review, at this point, manage reviews. We don't have electronic proposals up there yet. That will be coming very shortly. But then they would be able to access the proposal that way.

Going through some of the details, we also have Social Security number. Until a few years ago, that was our unique identifier in the database. It's not now. It's an optional field for people to submit. We certainly do use it to try to, as part of uniquely identifying somebody if it is there. If it is not there, we look at things like e-mail address and phone number. And there's an algorithm that tries to match things that should be definitive. If it's not definitive then we have the human being who looks at it and works to make these decisions, often without program staff who really know the folks.

And so someone asked the question of what happens with the Grants.gov submission, when that comes in, how we match it up. It's through those algorithms. And so there's a Social Security number, no problem, it's a clean match. If there's an e-mail address, e-mail addresses can be shared so then we look at a few other pieces of information, I mean, we would try to get that matched, and that's pretty authoritative. After that, it reaches a point where, again, a human looks at it to look at the narrowed list of choices. Or if there is actually nothing matching, then they'll go in.

What were some of the other questions that were asked? But I think most of the fields that we have are pretty much aligned with what NIH and the NSF have, particularly for project director, where we have difference is for potential reviewer, which are, if anyone wants to see it, we can scroll down.

STEVE DOWDY: Can I ask a question from the agency's point of view, those of you collecting SSN? Are you getting more push to eliminate that completely from your system? And the reason I'm asking is, when a PI opens up a PureEdge form and they see SSN there, they go ahead and provide that because they go, oh, the agency wants my SSN, I guess I have to give it to them.

For those of us working towards system-to-system, trying to get that information is going to be like almost impossible at our campus, and even data birth is considered something that we are not allowed to store locally in other systems, because you can derive age once you have birth date and that's a no-no. So are you getting any pushback to eliminate? I think NSF, you had gotten some clearance I think, if I remember, to use SSN, but it's going to, it causes a little bit of problem. I know you're saying it's optional, but . . .

BOB MACDONALD: That data . . . are optional. We had plans to eliminate it back when we were talking about having a government user ID. In fact, we rebuilt, that field is in our database, the government user ID, and so actually if we came up with one, it would be very easy for us to implement. Until then, there are no plans to eliminate it, but to keep it optional. And, yeah, we have to, every time we run the information collected by OMB, we have to justify that. But they can't supply it, that's what optional means. Same thing for date of birth, and race and ethnicity are also optional.

TONY CAVATAIO: And education in our payment database for reviewers, paying reviewers, we have to have, we have, it's automatically in there.

DAVID WRIGHT: That's the same for us. I mean, everything is optional, but if you're a reviewer . . .

TONY CAVATAIO: You've got to put it in there or you don't get paid.

BOB MACDONALD: See, we have our travel and our compensation, a separate system for that, so that's not an issue for us.

DAVID WRIGHT: I don't know of any . . . one thing I do want to mention that I forgot about because we're talking about degree information. NIH allows any, as many degrees to be entered in a profile as that person has. They don't have to pick one.

KEN FORSTMEIER: The other thing is, I mean, if this profile does start happening, this . . . profile, and SSN is stored there, then we don't have to store it locally, right, which takes the monkey off my back because we basically have a policy that says if the feds want it, they can have it, but we don't want to start . . . any of our machines unless we have some provisions to do that. The second thing is I guess we'd go back to the authentication case, and if at some point, David, you hear what e-authentication is doing and where they are.

DAVID WRIGHT: I haven't heard anything . . .

RON SPLITTGERBER: This is the agenda item immediately following this one. It's a good point, Ken, and I think we definitely need to move there. And I'd like to echo what Ken said. I think it's important to know that most of the institutions that I visited with are trying to get rid of storing the SSN locally. In the case of Colorado, there's actually a state law that requires that that happen at institutions within the next two years. And so we need to do it just to meet state legislation. I wanted to get some sense from the three agencies that are represented in this profile issue of how many records we're talking about. Maybe start with David, do you have an idea of about how many?

DAVID WRIGHT: I'd say we're probably over 700,000 . . .

DAN HOFHERR: NSF has 380,000 PIs and a few hundred ten thousand reviewers. There's, of course, duplicates of, one person could be showing up in both of those records. On the things I haven't mentioned yet, NSF, we're not collecting date of birth. Like CSREES, SSN used to be the key within our database to link the different PI tables, and that's no longer the case.

We are making a change in a couple weeks in FastLane, actually in the proposal preparation system on the cover sheet. Currently to add a co-PI to the cover sheet, the PI has to enter the co-PI's SSN. And we're going to add another option so the PI can add the co-PI by e-mail address. And so just as an option, we're going to try that out for a couple months to see how that works. One side benefit is that we think that'll help us improve the quality of our e-mail address data, which is key data, because we're communicating mostly through e-mail now.

RON SPLITTGERBER: Do you use any other piece of information then along with the e-mail address to . . .

DAN HOFHERR: Well, if there's people with the same e-mail address, they can then try a phone number, but if it's still not unique there, then they're going to have to still use SSN. We're doing this run as a pilot.

RON SPLITTGERBER: I just had a question. I was, I guess, surprised at the number of reviewers you have is, you know, 90 percent or 80 percent of the number of investigators. Is that, is there any logical explanation for that or is it just . . .

DAN HOFHERR: No. From the NSF perspective, no, we just have a lot of reviewers. That's not a surprising statistic.

RON SPLITTGERBER: David, do you have some sense, since the reviewer, I guess, as a role . . .

DAVID WRIGHT: Yes . . .

RON SPLITTGERBER: Do you have any idea how many people have a role as a reviewer at NIH?

DAVID WRIGHT: Not off the top of my head. I could probably get it by the end of the day.

RON SPLITTGERBER: It would be interesting to see if that kind of coincided with, you know, I guess a lot of it is how you develop the reviewer process and how many people sit on panels and things like that. It would be interesting to see if they're close to the 700,000.

DAVID WRIGHT: Yeah, I can try to do that.

RON SPLITTGERBER: Bob has a copy of this spreadsheet, which has the new information with the NSF column added to it. And I'll get that from him and e-mail it to the EGBF list that we used for announcing the meet, so everybody will have a copy of that hopefully within the next couple of hours.

DICK KEOGH: Just to comment . . . if we're looking for a key identifier that we can use to identify an individual across agencies regardless, which is a unique identifier, it's too bad in a sense that the SSN has disappeared because, I mean, that is exactly what we need. I just worry that if we try to move down that road to use the SSN, there probably would be legal challenges that would come up relative to that and it may be a wasted effort.

You know, I view it as a little bit more cumbersome, but at least with NIH there is a unique identifier that's there, that works, but it currently works to identify individuals uniquely at NIH but not anywhere else. And I don't know whether there's a possibility of extending that concept out or not.

DAVID WRIGHT: . . . couple options. One, in the central profile database that's created there's a unique identifier and that unique identifier is stored in the individual agency systems. And so when someone logs on with that identifier, they get transferred into what other system that has that identifier which associates them with the, in our case, the person ID and I think in Dan's case, I think you called it the PI ID or something like that, so our individual unique identifiers.

RON SPLITTGERBER: We want to see how much cooperation we'll get. I also wanted a sense for how many records USDA ends up having. We had in the neighborhood of 380,000 for NSF, 700,000 with NIH. And, Bob . . .

BOB MACDONALD: We have, at this point, around 60,000 total records. You're asking how many reviewers . . . combined database, and I'm guessing we have 25,000 of that to be potential reviewers that are currently used. And reasons, a lot of our project directors include things, people back to the '80s, who they've been retired or so on. I'm giving an approximate number because this is the first year that all of the programs in our agency are required to use the peer review system. So we have at this point 11,000, almost 12,000 reviewers with accounts in our PRS system, which means those are the ones who've recently come, been reached out and touched.

RON SPLITTGERBER: Is that, what time period is that over, the 12,000?

BOB MACDONALD: Well, that's current. That means they've updated their records in the past year. But my guess is the number is somewhere between there and 25,000.

RON SPLITTGERBER: So as the different folks appear on review sessions, the number will probably approach that 25,000.

BOB MACDONALD: Yeah, that's right, or be asked to review as an ad hoc reviewer, and then from there on after until they say don't call me again, they'll get an e-mail annually to update whether they review or not.

BOB BEATTIE: Can I say something about that identifier issue before we get away from it. I sat through many sessions in the '90s and early this century meetings about a federal identifier number. People would log into a system and they would be assigned a federal ID number.

BOB MACDONALD: That's what I referred to as being already in our database, a place for it.

BOB BEATTIE: Has that ever, has that officially died, been ruled out? I'm also thinking about DUNS numbers. Now all NIH reviewers have to get a DUNS number. Is that a place to start for a number for everybody, except for all the calls you then start to get asking you to get a credit card? It's a good idea to have a DUNS number as a . . .

STEVE DOWDY: The people from D&B specifically made an exception, I believe, for NIH. But they I think were pretty adamant that they did not want to get into the business of issuing DUNS numbers to hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people.

BOB MACDONALD: And I don't think we want to get into the business of asking our reviewers. And since this is a combined database, it would have to work that way to have DUNS numbers.

BOB BEATTIE: Okay. So drop the DUNS number, but whatever happened to the federal identifier number?

BOB MACDONALD: When we, when the federal commons concept shifted to the Grants.gov concept, Grants.gov at that time had no interest in it. So what you're hearing now is renewed interest in that, whether it's that concept or another one, is what we're talking about today.

DAVID WRIGHT: There's a couple . . . you can even do it without a unique federal ID. You can set up a profile that stores all of the user IDs that that person has for NSF and NIH and DOE and whoever else and work that way. It's not as clean, but you can do it.

KEN FORSTMEIER: Does this include the authentication piece?

RON SPLITTGERBER: Yeah. We actually have another topic on that specific issue and Bob's comment, I think, will be a good segue into that. Before we leave the issue of profiles and the details, I think I wanted to ask the $64,000 question, and I visited with David and Bob but probably not Dan, wondering what the agency perspective is on cooperating in a demonstration project with FDP in, number one, creating an authentication, a digital ID of such, and then mapping that to the information that currently is stored at the agencies with maybe a future goal of looking at this matrix, and how those pieces of information might relate horizontally so that if a person's name, e-mail address and a few things like that are common across the agencies, that there be one repository for that common information, that agencies could go to that database and draw the information. So, you know, maybe I'll start with David. What do you think the chances are of NIH having cooperation to do that?

DAVID WRIGHT: It's a project that NIH believes in and they would want to do it. Right now, knowing what I know, what NIH is being forced to do, resources are stretched incredibly thing. I think for NIH to be able to do it, the project would need to be able to pony up some sort of resource, either monetarily or a person, a body to help do some of the analysis. They just don't have the people.

RON SPLITTGERBER: Do you anticipate, you know, after, say, fall 2006 or, you know, after that that there might be resources or what's the timeline on that?

DAVID WRIGHT: I think after the next 12 months, I think a lot of the pressure for NIH will be off. I mean, the big things that NIH basically is being forced to do right now is obviously the whole electronic submission thing through Grants.gov. On top of that, they're being forced to absorb all of the other or most of the other HHS operating divisions into the system, so that means migrating I think up to six other agencies onto ERA. Then there's systemic changes that are being forced to be made to accommodate multiple PI initiative out of OSEP.

RON SPLITTGERBER: Dan, what about National Science Foundation, do you have any sense of whether NSF would be willing to cooperate in a project like that?

DAN HOFHERR: Well, we're always interested in projects that help the community, so we definitely see the benefit of just having one place for people to update information. We also have resource constraints and a lot of big things are going to be happening at NSF. So there's that concern, the resource constraint concern. I also, we're going to have to dig more into the details because sometimes surprising things come up when you start to really get into the requirements. But I think there's a good amount of interest in this idea at NSF.

RON SPLITTGERBER: Bob.

BOB MACDONALD: Yes. We are interested in this as well. Like the others, we share the resource constraints. Grants.gov is a huge money and dollar drain for us at the moment. That's to put it mildly. But we did have a discussion and, depending on the aggressiveness of this, we couldn't move forward at this time. The question is, again, and if you want something in a few months' time, that's what we'll do, more of a resource drain, but, you know, we could start to work forward on something. And maybe it's just some of those discussions of where are the booby traps that we haven't seen yet and you get our techie folks together.

BOB MACDONALD: Because I think that the booby traps particularly may align, not only in just, I mean, the data fields seem to align pretty well, but what's there in terms of trying to identify people in the same way, what's there in terms of our differences, what's there in terms of the entanglement with reviewers that we've discussed, and that just takes some more thought by the people who actually deal with this thing.

STEVE DOWDY: But my big concern if we drag this out too long, we're already seeing things, and I'll pick on NIH since there's nobody in here from NIH right now, but we're seeing in PureEdge and stuff like that things being rejected because pieces of data don't match, okay. And so if I were to say this is S. Dowdy, okay, then I shouldn't have to tell you I'm S. Dowdy in the department of chemistry and, and agencies are starting to reject applications because they transmitted Michigan instead of MI and an application doesn't get accepted.

And so I think we really need to try to figure out how to get something done quick. You know, and the whole grants-management line of business thing, the new buzz around, you know, the beltway or whatever, whether that'll work, you know, for, you know, every agency trying to use the same back-office system for post-award transactions or something, that might be a different, you know, thing to try to do. But just to try to get, you know, a host agency or something to host this information, and don't let the agencies get too far down in building these other walls around that cause us more and more problems of getting applications in.

GUNTA LIDERS: Well, Steve, I totally agree with you. You know, faculty, sorry, David, are just simply not going to remember how they're registered in commons. And, you know, we've had applications bounce because they used Ph.D. instead of doctor or whatever, you know. So it's pretty critical we get this fixed.

DICK KEOGH: I agree with that. And also with Steve that the, this is a problem that's becoming increasingly problematic and it's going to become increasingly problematic and the need for some kind of a common profile system is becoming increasingly important as a result. Steve, you also mentioned the grants line of business, and is there any way in which that particular group might be able to help support or provide some leverage that might help us move down that road. I don't know what their position is relative to a lot of these things. There's not a lot of interaction with the grants line of business with FDP.

STEVE DOWDY: Well, I'll ahead and jump a little bit. I actually had a conversation yesterday or the day before yesterday with Charlie. I spoke to him for probably about an hour. And I sort of mentioned this, and I actually, at one of the agency, whatever that thing, you guys call that the stakeholder, the agency stakeholder meeting or whatever, where I was asked to come down and present a little thing, I spoke to him about that a few months ago.

So Charlie is very interested in this, and as a sort of a little mini proof of concept, and that's why I was sort of alluding to, he sort of jokingly said, you know, I'm not getting a lot of support for, you know, having a single system for an award system or a single system for all technical reports that come into or whatever, but, you know, this might be something to do, a little proof of concept. It has a lot of bang for the buck. And he would be willing to help find some funds or whatever that were needed.

And I think, you know, Becky had expressed some interest. We were told by Beth at one point in time, you know, that Grants.gov shouldn't start being, shouldn't start looking at notices of grant award and other transactions until they got fined and applied, nailed down, all the bugs worked out, and it's working like clockwork before they should do something else.

But this problem is directly related to applying for a grant. If our applications are being rejected because somebody put doctor instead of Ph.D. in an application, we have a problem. And so he seems to be willing to try to do whatever influence he can to try to make this work. And, you know, we had tossed around at the last idea, you know, do we host maybe and try to use an NIH as a host and get some of the other agencies. And to me it seems like we have a unique ID.

If we talk about an agency hosting this service then the unique ID is whatever that agency's unique ID is that we have. And whether it was hosted at NSF or hosted at NIH, they have the best procedures or whatever, they're attempting to put the best procedures in place to make sure we don't have duplicate people and that we have a unique identifier at whichever agency we pick.

And so, you know, the bit about modifying, and I'll pick on NIH again, modifying NIH to include the NSF ID and the USDA ID and the 16 IDs I have to deal with with NASA because they won't even let you use the same ID from system to system, it seems like each agency, that's a small incremental thing to do, to get information, rather than having to maintain multiple IDs. I don't see how we can maintain multiple IDs in a system, you know, and have this matrix of here's, you know, here's the 27 unique IDs I have across the government. I think that's the way we ought to be trying to approach this problem.

RON SPLITTGERBER: Steve, my understanding was that Charlie referred to this concept as digital ID. Is that the term . . .

STEVE DOWDY: I did. I said, the problem with, you remember when we put the word profile, first of all, like even Becky was confused I think at first what we were talking about. And I think if we say profile, then everybody is going to get bogged down into, you know . . . and publication lists and all of this kind of stuff.

Maybe this thing morphs to that five years from now, I don't know, but I think we should talk about something very simple, like a digital unique ID with a handful of the demographic data that we're talking about, name and address and departmental affiliation or whatever, a very small core set of data, and do something small as a proof of concept and all of that.

If it morphs to something bigger over time, great. But, you know, what might fall out of that, well, I have a new PI that doesn't have a commons account. So should there then be a registration and a web service that creates the account so that we don't have to log into the NIH commons because that might be foreign to someone. Why do I have to log into the NIH computer system when I'm applying for a NASA grant? Tell me what's going on there.

But if we had a simple new web service and a new form that's outside of the application process that says you fill this out, this PureEdge, you submit it to Grants.gov, and whoever the service provider is for digital ID, that information goes, creates an account, and what gets returned in that web service is the nice little unique ID that was established during that process. So it seems to me there's a whole bunch of little mini win-wins here that we can do.

KEN FORSTMEIER: You're absolutely right on all . . . Grants.gov. One of the things we talked about was digital ID. And at that point, we got that, well, we can't do that because there's this other project called . . .

BOB MACDONALD: I think we need to separate the two.

KEN FORSTMEIER: Well, but they're inherently linked. And my question is how do politics, e-authentication still exists, have the politics changed sufficiently so Grants.gov or whatever can have a separate digital identity?

BOB MACDONALD: E-authentication is to say that you are you and you're ready to submit this. I think we . . . definition. If we could find, and I'm not sure I would use the term digital ID. Let's find something other than profile, fine. But we're talking about here is a unique, if you will, a unique directory. I mean, it's name, address, phone number, e-mail, a unique directory, a common directory, a shared directory. And so to extend the concept, I agree.

I think wherever it's housed, and I doubt it would be us, so I would say, I would have that their ID in my database, not that my ID would be in their database. That doesn't make sense. And having the web services, and that's the part that's going to take the most time, is defining these services, I think, as well as dealing with the duplicate issue, which for us is a major issue in terms of, and I think for NSF, as with NIH, we don't want all their sensitive information showing to the wrong person.

But if we do that, and so therefore they can come into this one place, be it NIH, be it Grants.gov, be it wherever, and say I want to update my address and have it flow to all the agencies. Or if they want to come to NSF and FastLane or they want to come to CSREES and our peer review system, and then they're updated it there and they say do you also want to update the federal directory and they say yes, and it populates it for everybody. That to me is a very simple thing. The cost, again, would be the web services. I mean, the table would be this big. And just figuring out the, you know, the flows from it.

KEN FORSTMEIER: Well, but we're . . . digital identity. But you have to authenticate. You can't, everything you said is absolutely right, but unless you can authenticate me as Ken and I'm allowed to change my . . .

BOB MACDONALD: See, here's the difficulty with applying it to e-authentication, is that the way e-authentication is really going to go is that e-authentication could be, you could use, and USDA has one, as USDA e-authentication, and you have to go right now to your county office to get that. NSF is being credentialed for e-authentication. Maybe Penn State will be credentialed for e-authentication. So all of a sudden, you have a multiple of these circulating around.

KEN FORSTMEIER: There are a variety of technical solutions. My only point is that everything you described which needs to be done, none of that will work unless somewhere, somehow we are able to electronically authenticate.

STEVE DOWDY: But I think an authentication credential can be different than you government unique ID.

KEN FORSTMEIER: Absolutely.

STEVE DOWDY: This is just a unique identifier, which is part of the payload in any, in the authentication process.

BOB MACDONALD: And we're working towards that. So, for instance, it may be one day that you could use your FastLane ID to come into our peer review system and log in. We haven't crossed those bounds yet and those are, that's a bigger, more complex thing. And if you want something fast, that's a good way to slow it down.

KEN FORSTMEIER: Well, my only point is, I'm not sure I understand what the advantage is . . . suggesting without the ability to make changes by individuals. It seems to me that you have everything, you know, that there's a . . .

BOB MACDONALD: You can make changes.

KEN FORSTMEIER: . . . my point is that the system you describe is really good, but unless we allow, have a mechanism to have people make changes there . . .

STEVE DOWDY: Well, I think it's whatever authentication mechanism the host agency is currently using.

BOB MACDONALD: Or if we have it so that they could log into our peer review system and be given the option to update that. We've already authenticated them. They've logged into our system.

KEN FORSTMEIER: Okay. Now back to my original question. The reason we didn't do this for Grants.gov . . . was because of political reasons that we didn't want to go across the breakers with e-authentication. At least that's the best of my recollection . . . of time. What we're going to be doing here, we'll have an agency authentication to get in. We'll have an agency authentication to go into what will now be a basically federal thingy, profile, right?

BOB MACDONALD: A directory.

KEN FORSTMEIER: A federal directory, which is cool. But that smacks of e-authentication. And my question is a very simple question but it's complex, and that's how come if we couldn't do it before because of the e-authentication initiative, we can do exactly the same thing now, even though e-authentication is still there, albeit it didn't, it hasn't borne particular fruit. That's my question.

DICK KEOGH: The climate may have changed.

KEN FORSTMEIER: That's a great answer. And I just don't, that's my question.

DAN HOFHERR: Yeah, I'm Dan Hofherr, I'm on the eAuthentication Executive Steering Committee. And there's actually a lot of momentum going on, and they're building an identity federation and these things take time. And when you first see the federation as it's growing up, it looks a lot different than what you hope it will end up looking like. And for FastLane, we're one of the first couple of agency applications that have been e-authentication-enabled, so that means that we can accept non-FastLane credentials that have gone through a credential assessment under a process that e-authentication has.

So right now you can log into FastLane with a credential from ORC that USDA is involved with purchasing or creating. I'm not sure how that works. But it's a USDA/ORC credential. We were originally hoping that the Grants.gov ORC credentials would be e-authentication-enabled, and that hasn't happened yet, but Grants.gov said that that will happen.

So at that point, you would have the scenario of organization representatives submitting proposals through Grants.gov using their credential, their Grants.gov credentials, and then they could log into FastLane to do everything else in the life cycle of a proposal, using the FastLane functionality, that there is no functionality like that at Grants.gov. And that's just one small step.

The grand vision of e-authentication is you can use whatever credential you want to access whatever application you want, because it doesn't have to be just federal applications or federal credentials. And e-authentication has spent a lot of time getting some of the banks to have their credentials e-authentication-enabled. So it's a big undertaking. It's really transformational. But they're picking up speed. So how does that relate to our conversation here?

The vision of e-authentication is you can use whatever credentials you want to access whatever applications you want as a user. And what, from my perspective, it sounds like that some of the people here feel that for grants work with agencies, that you would hope that a single person would have only one unique identifier and that's it.

So that may go against the vision of e-authentication, but maybe not. So I would suggest talking to the leadership of e-authentication.

KEN FORSTMEIER: Just to . . . e-authentication model has changed so significantly from start to now, where it's a federated distributed model, that there probably would not, and I'm putting words in your mouth. I just want to make sure that this accurately reflects a possibility anyway.

That having another agency that has gone through the CAF process, say, for instance, NIH, if they're hosting the directory thingy whatchamcalit, if they've been approved for that, then if we were to authenticate there, using their credentials, it would immediately transfer to all the other e-authentication-enabled applications, NSF being the first one, FastLane being the first one.

BOB MACDONALD: You know, one of the things too that I think helps ease it is that it may be, and this would certainly be the case when e-authentication is fully implemented, that regardless of what credential you log into, whichever interface that we're talking about here, and maybe all you have to do is log in. You don't even have to know your unique ID at some point. But the unique ID would be what we need behind the scenes to make this work.

KEN FORSTMEIER: Well, that's the same as any database.

BOB MACDONALD: Yeah.

DAVID WRIGHT: I think we're making this more complicated than it needs to be. You've got to start somewhere, so you start with the simplified solution where you have one system, someone has an ID to log on, and all the other government agencies use this information. That as e-authentication becomes more mature and whatnot.

Then you just roll the directory system in with e-authentication and say, okay, now at some point you can log on to the directory system with your NSF ID, your NIH ID, your Penn State ID, if they're part of the federation. But one thing that I saw at NIH was that too many times a project was started with trying to get the Cadillac on the first time out, and it never works.

KEN FORSTMEIER: You know, I think you're absolutely right. But I think the point that was addressed is that the situation has changed substantially enough that we just won't, my only question was are we in the same situation where it will just blow up on us, and the answer I think it is not, that we can start doing this and it will be, it now, what would have been counter to e-authentication five years ago now fits in pretty well with it, so we don't have to worry about that. We can go forward and just make it work out.

DAVID WRIGHT: . . . this is what we want to do, and as soon as she says, hey, that's a great idea, then we're good to go.

BOB MACDONALD: I'm not sure we even need to do that.

DAVID WRIGHT: Well . . . that's federal-wide, I mean, I think it would be stupid to do something like that without at least bringing her up to speed of what's going on.

DAN HOFHERR: I think the right approach would be to go to the OMP person in charge of the authentication.

KEN FORSTMEIER: One other question on this just to pull a thread. In terms of the . . . process, Dan, have any institutions been approved yet? Do you happen to know?

DAN HOFHERR: For their, for the agency, for the like university credential? I'm not sure yet.

KEN FORSTMEIER: I haven't heard anything there, so I'm guessing that it hasn't happened.

DAN HOFHERR: I'm not sure. But the agencies were all instructed to have at least one agency application e-authentication-enabled by the end of last fiscal year. And some of them got a couple month extensions, but it's starting to build where there will be more agency applications, which is what the banks and other credential providers want, because now there's more value to using their credential.

DICK KEOGH: Now we're getting, one of my functions is to try to keep on time, and we're getting toward the end of the time allotment that we have for this, but I don't want to leave it without some kind of, or least an attempt to get to some kind of an action, this is my perspective, on this.

And I'm wondering if we might be able to have some kind of a smaller group, not necessarily put together right now, but maybe Bob and Ron could get a group together that would open up some dialogue, and maybe with Charlie on one side, maybe there's some resources that can be captured as a result of that discussion, OMB on another side, to try to actually move this thing forward a little bit before we come to another meeting at some future time and discover that we're basically going to be talking about the same thing except the problem has become worse.

DAVID WRIGHT: Just to throw something out, in my new role, one of the things that I can offer is to be a project coordinator and try to deal with all the liaisons between the different agencies and institutions and be the person that kind of says, here's the to-do items and make sure that they get done and things like that, so I can act kind of like a project manager and be able to push that and set up the meetings and phone calls and teleconferences and all that stuff.

RON SPLITTGERBER: Maybe with your concurrence we can move on that. Bob and I will work with David. And I think it's important, Dan, that we learn how this might be assured not to be counterproductive to the authentication effort, since that service is really, you know, so much bigger than this piece. We don't want to be going against any issues. So maybe the four of us can work together to bring some resources together. And we'll include the information that Steve has passed along from Charlie too because he may be our key to finding resources to do that. So if everyone agrees, let's move on to the next agenda item. Does that sound doable to everyone? Great.

DICK KEOGH: The next item that we've got, on the last, yes, please.

DAVID WRIGHT: Before we leave that, I got an answer. We have 28,000 reviewers in our system . . . in the NIH system. Sorry.

DICK KEOGH: Another area that we talked a great deal about relates to DUNS/CCR problems. And actually, there has been some action on that in terms of data gathering, which also points out the good cooperative interaction that FDP is having with the NGP. NGP has, in fact, I believe gone out with a survey relative to how folks are using DUNS. And I think that FDP is, either has or is doing something similar to that to gather some information. So that's the only introduction that I have there. I'll leave it to Tony or to . . .

BOB MACDONALD: Maybe to add just a little bit before we're turning it over to Tony is a little bit of context, of this afternoon, Ron mentioned having Theresa Sorrenti of GSA here. Theresa is a project manager for what's called the Integrated Acquisition Environment, and of which the CCR and DUNS/CCR is, the DUNS is a part of.

And so as we go through the discussion, I think it would be good to note questions that may apply to the bigger picture and where the government or OMB or elsewise are going through that and bring them back up this afternoon after she gives overview. Likewise, we'll see how far we can reach the conclusion on this topic without hearing what she has to say.

TONY CAVATAIO: Thanks very much. Yeah, there has been a lot of collaborative effort here, and I thank Ron and Bob for their participation with the group. Merrill Oliver, who is with the State Department of Maryland, its grants management area, she's been the lead coordinator from the viewpoint of the NGP along with Sandy Swab. And as many of you know, you've seen the questionnaire that was developed to send out to the states and nonprofit organizations regarding this issue.

And we had run it by you all to look at and see if you could use it. And as I understand it, you can use it and you have sent it out. We sent it out and gave an impossible deadline, like last week I think was the deadline, and we got two responses to that. So we feel the timing is inappropriate at this point. We need to have more time in terms of letting people follow up and complete that survey.

And then we'll have a work group, it probably should be a joint work group with FDP, in looking, analyzing the issues that come up, the information that we've collected from that survey. And then we can present the results of this survey to the Grants Policy Committee. This is not an insignificant step, because later on today or whenever you all have me on the calendar here to talk, I want to talk to you about the plan for us to work more closely with the Grants Policy Committee collaboratively, because there will be more power if we work together on this.

And as discussed just now, the profile, I can see that one of the things we could do is go to the Grants Policy Committee and demonstrate to them why this project is significant that's being discussed with the e-authentication and the unique identifiers, etc., and point out to them that we really need some support, financial support. And we've had preliminary conversations with Charlie and the GMLOB and that we'd like to move forward with a demonstration, that activity.

With the CCR/DUNS, once we get these results and we come forward to the Grants Policy Committee and tell them, this is what we've found and these are the changes we're recommending being made, that group can bless it and send it on to Integrated Acquisition, for example, and say this is what we've got from the non-federal stakeholders and their input to this issue with CCR and DUNS.

Now in addition to the efforts we are doing in this area, the Grants Policy Committee has a CCR work group. Did you know that? And they have a team working on CCR issues and changes in the type of information being collected for the CCR. Well, why aren't they talking to us, right? We can tell them what some of the problems have been.

And so that's why I've tried to, it's kind of a fine line that I have to walk because I am a federal person acting in a non-federal capacity to promote non-federal ideas and activities sitting on the Grants Policy Committee as a fed and bringing to that group non-federal ideas that we recommend be implemented. So it's a fine line that I have to walk, and I step in and step out, and I, so I'm kind of a mole in that organization, so to speak, presenting our concerns.

And so I find a lot of times I'm the only person that speaks up in those meetings because I'm the only real non-federal viewpoint being brought into that. And so I do speak up on CCR and DUNS, and I do raise the question that why can't we have a joint work group on this issue of CCR and DUNS with the federal work group, can we work together. Well, at this point, we're sharing information with them. They're already on board with this questionnaire. They like it. They're in support of it. And so they're watching closely to see what comes of this.

And so I think we're going to have to allow more time for results. I think we need to follow up, from the NGP's standpoint, one of the things we can do is call the individual states that are part of our membership and ask them to complete this questionnaire on a personal basis.

One of the things that is involved, has everybody seen that questionnaire, first of all? Everybody has seen it? Well, it involves contacting the individual agencies in a state and asking them their experience with DUNS and CCR. And so that means in some instances, 20 or 30 state agencies are being contacted to input the information on it. That can be a very significant task. But we are, we're moving forward on that, and we should have results maybe in the next month. And I believe we'll want to compare notes and get a joint work group together and talk about this.

Now we are going to have a NGP meeting on February the 7th at the Department of Education in our auditorium in the afternoon, and we'd like to report out where we are at this point, both FDP and NGP. So you may want to put that on your radar. And you don't have to come to it physically. You can just call in on teleconference and be a part of it. So, Ron, did you want to add on in terms of the survey and has it gone out to the FDP and . . .

RON SPLITTGERBER: Jerry Stuck sent an e-mail out to the general list for FDP, so all of you should have received that, a copy of that survey. We weren't sure how to address the e-mail because it probably needs to go to specific people at an institution that deal with DUNS/CCR that may just be someone who, folks who receive that e-mail don't have contact with.

What we plan to do since following this meeting, and I think, Steve, if I recall, we're scheduled for right after lunch for reporting back to the group about 1:00 tomorrow. One of the things that we thought we'd do is bring up the issue of the survey that was sent out and maybe provide a little background on why we're asking for the information so that folks have some encouragement to complete that process if they can.

STEVE DOWDY: I think maybe some of the reasons we're not getting a lot is for most of us, okay, my CCR registration was done so long ago and by somebody that doesn't even work at the office anymore, so I don't know what kind of issues or problems they had. The same with our DUNS number.

And so when I looked at the questions in the survey, I was like, well, I can't answer almost any of this stuff in the survey because I haven't applied for a DUNS number and I never set up the CCR, you know. So I think that may be, also the timing, the original, you know, so we sent it out early because it was due back before the FDP meeting was going to meet, and so I think a lot of people with the holidays and all that were just like I don't . . .

BOB BEATTIE: It came in December. And I was just looking at it to refresh my memory. I haven't sent it back yet because one of the first questions is how many DUNS numbers do you have. Well, I could find that out. We had about 200 or 300, just at the University of Michigan, so I could imagine a state government must have hundreds and hundreds.

And DUNS, or Dun & Bradstreet, charges you to find out who those are. I mean, I have no idea of who these places are. They're all just University of Michigan-Flint, University of Michigan-Dearborn, University of Michigan Medical Center. They're all over. There's no address. There's no way to contact these people and ask them what they're doing with their DUNS numbers or why they have them. And so I think we need to get Dun & Bradstreet involved to allow people maybe a one-time chance to find out who are all the holders of DUNS numbers at their institutions.

RON SPLITTGERBER: As a, maybe as a little follow-up to Bob's question, we had Charlie Martin available from D&B at the last FDP meeting I believe or maybe it was two meetings ago. But he did offer, if we contact Charlie directly, and I can provide that information, to give you a matrix of what's assigned to your institution as a starting point. What I'm wondering, and I might work with Tony on this a little bit, is some of those questions relate more to a state agency than they might a higher ed institution.

So during our presentation to the group, we have a little bit of time between now and tomorrow afternoon, we might try to focus on the questions that folks might be more comfortable in asking and ask that they send back information, leaving the form incomplete, so it's not necessary to answer every question if it doesn't apply. Perhaps we'll try to identify the questions that it would be easier for higher ed to answer.

BOB BEATTIE: One good point about a survey is that each question should have a purpose. And I'm looking at some of these questions and I don't understand why do you want to know certain of these things. And I think the relationship between the question and the concept that's trying to be resolved needs to be resolved so that people are not just sending in pieces of information that aren't of much use. If you look at that questionnaire, you find a lot of questions that what are you going to do with this.

RON SPLITTGERBER: Good point, Bob. And I think maybe as part of the presentation tomorrow we'll identify the questions and may provide a reason why that information would be valuable to the group.

BOB BEATTIE: Start at the other end, what are the issues we're trying to resolve with DUNS and then work to the question that would answer . . .

RON SPLITTGERBER: We actually have a document that outlined those that we presented last time. It was a talking points document that sort of started this whole issue. And so we'll be sure and present that tomorrow too briefly. Let's see, Dick, we're through, the survey is out. My understanding was that the return date was January 13, if that's correct, so this Friday. We probably won't get a lot more, but I'm sure if a few come in a week late that they won't be rejected and we can make sure people understand that. So let's agree to have that as one of the informational items provided to the entire group tomorrow.

DAVID WRIGHT: Should I send out a reminder letter . . . extend that date by a week to allow time for responses?

RON SPLITTGERBER: Tony, do you have anything on the survey?

TONY CAVATAIO: I support that, and I know that we're going to do that ourselves with the states, absolutely, yeah.

BOB MACDONALD: When we send that reminder then do we want to say that if you cannot, that it's not necessary to complete all the questions, give us what information you can give us.

TONY CAVATAIO: Right. I think we need to specify what are the questions that can be left blank. See, I thought that was going to be done before you all sent it out anyway, and I was surprised to hear that you said, no, we'll just send it out as is, so that kind of surprised me to begin with.

RON SPLITTGERBER: I think from the institutional perspective, the semester system ends with students and a lot of faculty leaving campus mid-December and we don't see them back generally until mid-January. And so the timing wasn't real good for higher ed folks. So we'll, maybe I'll work with you, Tony, on that, and we'll provide David with that information. We'll present it as an informational topic at the general meeting tomorrow afternoon, follow up with the e-mail highlighting the questions that are important to higher ed, and I think that should resolve it.

TONY CAVATAIO: Well, see, so much of this arose because of Grants.gov. This just didn't come out of nowhere. Participation in Grants.gov created the situation where there was a demand to have something done about this. And that's why Steve's point is well taken. Well, he didn't have to do anything with CCR not relevant to you, but there are a lot of people out there, it's very relevant to them, and it has been problematic.

And as we've heard through our discussions earlier this morning, this whole thing about multiple identifiers and e-authentication and, you have to go into the CCR and register and tell the CCR who you are and blah, blah, blah, all of that identification information that's going in there. So that's why it's going to be really important when we talk with Theresa this afternoon to raise some of these concerns that we have.

DAVID WRIGHT: From the NIH side, just from a volume perspective, each . . . that we have for the SPIR applications, we create anywhere between 300 and 500, NIH creates between 300 and 500 new organizations for each deadline. So to submit through Grants.gov, that's 300 to 500 every four months that have to go through the CCR process.

BOB MACDONALD: That would be . . .

RON SPLITTGERBER: There's another agenda item on the screen, Grants.gov system to system. John, just as a little background, my understanding is that Becky has taken advantage of some offline education and is going to be absent from Grants.gov for about five months. Is that right, Steve? John Etcheverry is sort of standing in for her. He'll be here this afternoon to provide us an update on Grants.gov. There's . . . pieces of the system-to-system interface that may have future consequences for folks.

One is the possibility that Grants.gov serves as the portal for some management, grants management line of business efforts. And the other is resolving some of the issues that Steve addressed before, directly connected to the system-to-system interface.

And there's a whole variety of issues there, duplicate information, asking for, you know, phone number in several different places even in a PureEdge submission form and the same is echoed on the back end. The use of form within forms, so that the system-to-system sort of falls apart if you're trying to do that from the applicant side because you don't know what form might be inside a form without dissecting the PureEdge form at some point. And so those are all issues that I think this committee needs to deal with as we move forward.

STEVE DOWDY: I don't know if . . . is going to talk about it this afternoon, but just briefly, we've had two or three e-mail exchanges and telephone calls about the form within a form, specifically the sub-award budget. I think most of you know NSF is now taking Version 7 PDF's, so one of our big issues in system to system was the automatic generation of PDF files that were coming out in Version 7. So that problem has gone away.

So that left the form-within-a-form problem. We, MIT agreed to cough up whatever resources and programming would be required to create a new service to get the XML out. Because of the Northrop Grumman folks and the contract and all of that, so we've worked out a deal to create a new web service which sort of opens the door as a pilot for if we need to do a profile or a digital ID or directory form or something later. For Grants.gov to take a different form outside of an application package, so it might be a small entrée into them doing that.

So basically what would happen is we would get the PureEdge form back and, you know, if Ken was going to be my sub, they still would fill that form out. They'd give it back. A web service will be called, and Grants.gov will return the XML of the PureEdge form back to the organization to be included in your data stream.

RON SPLITTGERBER: The current process with that, if I understand it, is that the prime has to actually send out that request for information to all the subs as a PureEdge form. And since you can't merge that without a lot of effort or re-keying, you can't merge that information. That form is kind of stuck out there by itself until you get the return . . .

STEVE DOWDY: And then you upload it back into the form. So that was the problem, is we couldn't get the XML out. We contacted IBM, who now calls us like three times a day because they think they've got a sale in the making, but IBM wanted $10,000 per CPU for the API. I have six CPUs, so I would need to pay them $60,000 just to get the API. So that didn't sit well with Becky and them either. They thought that was a little ridiculous.

So there was, we had actually three different options we were looking at. This one is the most work and causes Grants.gov a little bit more effort, but we feel that's going to be the best to scale. And so if other things arise where form within a form, we already have the web service and everything in place to get Grants.gov to pass back the XML. It has the, we don't want to scale, right now there's some concerns about processing issues on Grants.gov, but in theory, you could have a school that maybe doesn't have a system that is as robust to complete a complete system-to-system.

But you could have a school that collects, you know, 80 pieces of data but doesn't have the 300 pieces of data to do a full system-to-system. If things work out for the long haul, there would be no reason why you couldn't submit the entire PureEdge application through the same system call and get back the full XML file the way it is presented to the agency. And then you could pick and pluck the data off of the form and put it in your own database. But they're concerned about that real time needing to, you know, system call full PureEdge package and passing back a full XML. They're concerned about that. So we decided let's just do the one little one right now.

KEN FORSTMEIER: That one little one, just to be clear, is, deals with the subcontractor module. Nothing else is impacted by that, and that's the one piece that we didn't have an ATI before. And do they have anything like a timeline on this, Steve?

STEVE DOWDY: I just was reading e-mail and because of some of the other stuff they're saying hopefully by May. So, and I'm hoping that that means production ready, that we will have some testing and some things coming up before that. The hooks for the web services doesn't seem to be the big issue at this point in time because they've got a pretty good handle on that. So, but, again, I'm assuming John will talk about that and give us more details either this afternoon or certainly in the, hopefully in the Grants.gov session tomorrow.

RON SPLITTGERBER: Let me ask a follow-up just to make sure I understand. Since that web service will be available, there's a possibility that we can do a PureEdge form for the directory information we were talking about in the last topic.

STEVE DOWDY: Right.

RON SPLITTGERBER: Great.

STEVE DOWDY: And that would be, you know, in my mind one of the next, you know, I think we're getting to the point where we're starting to get to the realization that not everything needs to be packaged up in the proposal application. You know, NSF has a form that, an NSF-specific form for registering a new person. So, you know, your first, or, no, that's an organizational thing. It's not a person thing, right, the NSF-specific form?

DAN HOFHERR: Yeah.

STEVE DOWDY: It's to register a new organization and stuff. So maybe then we can do away with that because we have this other web service that registers an organization or creates a digital directory or some other small little transactions of simple little forms that need to go somewhere.

RON SPLITTGERBER: We're approaching, let me go to the next slide here, we're approaching lunchtime, and I think they've provided lunch for us. I wanted to let you know ahead of time that we need to deal with Theresa Sorrenti's schedule. She's running on a tight timeline today. She thought she'd be here about 1:00.

The information she's going to provide us this afternoon is called Integrated Acquisition Environment, and that term was new to me until Bob did some digging and found out what it encompasses. We're not quite sure how this might apply, but one possibility to keep in the back of your mind is that we were talking about personal profiles this morning.

This might lead us into what might generically be called institutional profiles, so that information that is already maintained in that system might provide a resource for agencies to gather informational . . . and things like that from an institution. And there may be other applications too, but that's kind of the reason we're going that way. It might be an interesting presentation.

If it doesn't apply to anything we talked about, let me apologize ahead of time, but I think it'll, it's part of the research, you know, you eliminate possibilities and some pan out, some don't. And I this will be from that standpoint, so hopefully it'll be an interesting thing. We may be able to derive some value from it. If not, we'll chalk it off as information that is part of the research.

BOB MACDONALD: Just one other thing. We also will have someone else here after lunch. She won't be a presenter, but she'll be listening in. And this is . . . I had a conversation with Andrea Brandon and there was some interest in having, not just Grants.gov, but . . . one of the six, one of the seven . . . having some representation in the discussion, so she'll be here in that role. She's from EPA.

TONY CAVATAIO: And she's also the chair, by the way, of the CCR committee work group.

STEVE DOWDY: Yeah. It'll be interesting because one of the things, I don't know if you guys, we started having our DOD payments being rejected because they were saying our CCR registration was not updated. Well, I updated mine three or four months ago. And I went in and I looked and it said your CCR registration expires in August of 2006. Well, they've added a new little tab where you have to indicate your IRS consent and who signed the IRS consent. So we, somehow we need to get in the loop of all of these new developments and data items and stuff that are being used in the CCR.

BOB MACDONALD: This afternoon will be perfect . . .

STEVE DOWDY: Yeah. Because that hit us by surprise. And for us, where, you know, we tear through a little over $3 million a day in DOD funds, having invoices rejected for a month or two to figure it out, it puts a damper in your cash flow just a little bit.

RON SPLITTGERBER: Okay. I don't see Edvin, but I assume that, I know they were going to . . . so let's take a break. Conversation is welcome during the lunch.

BOB BEATTIE: Let me mention too that if anybody were to send that survey, that DUNS survey, back to Jerry, where it came from, they're going to get a message that says he's no longer in the office, which I just did.. And, Tony, I sent you my copy too.

TONY CAVATAIO: I saw your copy come in.

Lunch Break

RON SPLITTGERBER: Theresa Sorrenti and John Etcheverry from Grants.gov. Sandy Swab is here to provide us some information on the topic that's on the screen now. And when Theresa shows up, she'll be able to maybe provide some new information on how this might relate to Grants.gov. Sandy is here to start the conversation. Bob has some handouts from Sandy.

SANDY SWAB: Well, I think I know most of you. I will just introduce myself. I'm Sandy Swab and I'm formerly known as an OMB'er. And then I left OMB, I retired from the federal government, and I've been consulting for a couple of years and the past couple of years doing some work around. And then just recently I was brought in to KPMG to, with Mark Forman, and we're in the Federal Risk Advisory Service. But they're going to, because of my involvement with grants, I guess they're kind of looking to do a little bit more with the grants and financial management piece to see how they can link these two together for the federal government. I mean, it's crazy out there with the feds.

But I, can you hear me? Okay. I guess part of the reason why I was asked to come, Bob asked me to come, was to talk a little bit, just to kind of give you a little bit of a background. I know the CCR/DUNS issue has become a heated topic from various aspects of the grants process. But in terms of what I wanted to talk about, and from my perspective and why, what we were charged with.

While I was at OMB and Mark was heading up the e-Gov, heading up e-Gov, we were charged really with the, for the e-Gov projects, the 24, to go out. And if we were going to develop anything, to look at areas where we could use current services, and that was the mandate. I mean, that truly, truly was the mandate. And so we got, we were looking around from a perspective that we knew grants still needed to have some type of a central registration point, but we were also looking to gain the advantage.

And I, having been in a financial operation and in a grants program many years ago, grantees, we wanted to look at some value add for the grantees or the applicants, but mainly the grantees, so that when they were submitting information to change their address, to change any information when the administrator of an organization changed, that they actually had one central place to go to.

Plus the federal government at that time was also moving the agencies to use the, I'm talking about the CCR, to go toward the CCR so that individual agencies would not be establishing independent vendor pay files. So at this time, so you start having this convergence to look at a central area to put information that would benefit the federal government as a one source and assist vendors and grant applicants or people doing business with the government, a once source where they could change basic information for the organizations.

Now that Theresa is not here, I am . . . one of the ideas that we had at Grants.gov was to try to leverage the registration at CCR eventually to become the provider of, to authenticate the submission. I mean, in our minds it seemed like an ideal situation. You had everybody going in. You had people identifying this is who's going to submit this application and, you know, we wanted really CCR to become the, to give out those IDs really so that they would be authenticated across the government. Well, we could never come to an understanding on that. And that was, I'll put that out there.

The other reason, and I know the association with the DUNS, my name is associated with it, and I still believe in it, mainly from the government side of the house. We still cannot look across government and find out by organization how many grants in total an organization has. Cannot do it. Still can't do it today. And that was the reason for the DUNS number.

Most of the universities, a number of the state, we went through it, looked, said a university has got contracts, they're using it, they know how to use this. And so we felt because of that use it would be easier to run, to put this in the CCR. And basically what

I said here is a central place for everybody to look. And there were other dynamics to this whole thing.

It's an Integrated Acquisition's solution, and they have the capability of having a repository for past performance, if you wanted to go and check on some things, put that information up there so that you're getting the same information and you're not having to go weed through files and files and files. So this elaborate integrated environment was set up and we were piggybacking on what the procurement folks were already doing. And we were hoping to move in that direction with the CCR and the Integrated Acquisition. The other piece to this is that we felt that source data, that would be generated as long as they started to work on . . . come on in.

BOB MACDONALD: Do you want . . .

SANDY SWAB: I don't care. I mean, I can finish, I mean, because then we can have a discussion. Because I, we went to Theresa, and Theresa, yeah, and Theresa actually added it in her first presentation when we went forward on, when Mark had the, Mark Forman had the 24, one of the, Integrated Acquisition was one of the 24, and I know for the first time, when the procurement folks were all sitting over at the AIA there and she put up e-grants, everybody in the room went, oh, like this, and, because it was put into her environment of Integrated Acquisition. And that was the first time it really was presented to the government in that form.

But the other thing that was going on with the CCR, if things lined up and analysis was done, you could get out of CCR and have these applicants register as the type of organizations that they are. And you can just start using the data in a broader sense. I mean, you know, are they a state agency, are they this, are they that. And the analysis really has to be done better or more, deeper, between the application, the 424, what is in the CCR as they register, and I really think even the CFDA and some of the other granting organizations need to look at this information. And plus, we would give demographic information, are you woman-owned, small business, blah, blah, blah.

So the idea was to, just to create this environment where we could cut across the government and pull out data on the organizations who were getting money from the government. And that's why when you hear many of us talk, you will hear us, they call it doing business with the government. You don't hear them saying are you a grantee or are you a vendor. It's like are you doing business with the government and the answer is yes. Then you kind of look at it and say I'm a grant, I want to apply for a grant, I want to do a contract.

And so you have this terminology and the way they view it kind of coming, but there is a split. And the idea we always thought, and I know Theresa and I have sat down and we've, go into there, are you a grantee, yes, boom, this is all the stuff you have to do. And that was one of our original designs, you know, just to, we're going to split the database, it's going to be a grantee, it's going to be a vendor, and just segment them out. So that was really, that's really a thought process and that was what was going behind it.

And I still think it's viable. And I think it's viable if the analysis is done and everybody work together to create this environment. And the other piece that I will say that CCR, I mean, what they do also with the DUNS number is they give that third-party validation. And so many times throughout the government, people are putting information, you may say, Steve may write MIT on his application and then it goes over to somewhere else it's Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and never do they meet.

So the idea was, if you apply for the DUNS and you go into the CCR and register, there's going to be a flag if something is not matching, you've got to do something, correct this information. So the idea was to standardize this data as you're going through the process. Plus the idea was to give the, for grant applicants to identify who was going to be submitting that application for the organization so that we would have a contact there. And that was key to a lot of the stuff. And then as things went on, we were talking about the ability to identify organizations that maybe had to have an A133 audit. You can do this in the integrated environment if it's created right in the data.

And then also the other thing that we had talked about was standing up these standard terms and conditions in one place so that they're there. And any certs, the other thing is certifications, like the procurement environment, the vendor goes in, can go in once a year and submit their certifications.

The idea is get them pointed in one direction, put those certs up. Why should you have to constantly be submitting 20 different copies of the certs when you can go to one place and the grant, the program official can say, yes, they have their certs. So that's, that was the idea and the thought process behind using the CCR, getting a third-party validation of the DUNS number just to help start that process for consistent data across the government.

And I worked with Theresa and Earl on this stuff for a couple of years. And I know there are other issues out there on it. I know the states are having problems with the DUNS number and the payment issue. I know that's there. And we're working with the State of Maryland to try to work some of, so I will step aside and let Theresa present and then we can have an open discussion. Unless you have questions now . . .

RON SPLITTGERBER: Maybe as a segue into Theresa's presentation, was there any discussion on having information available from an institutional perspective such as reps and certs or anything like that?

SANDY SWAB: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. I mean, that was really key to the, key to it. I mean, eventually the idea is just to get to this one environment. So why should you have to constantly be shipping this stuff off and the program people can go up there and say that you've submitted your certs and reps for a year. I mean, it's valid for a year or whatever the timeframe. And the most current one is . . . it just, to me it makes life a little bit easier, not only for you having one place to go, but for the government to having one place to go. So that's my . . .

RON SPLITTGERBER: Thank you, Sandy. I know Theresa is on a short timeline this afternoon, so Theresa Sorrenti has agreed to give us some information on the same topic and maybe some updates on how it might relate to Grants.gov currently.

THERESA SORRENTI: Well, it would all be done except Sandy retired. My name is Theresa Sorrenti. Earl Warrington is my deputy. I didn't realize Sandy was going to be here, so I think she's done some of the background and we can probably skip a couple of the slides because you had asked for some background information of what IAE is and that's certainly I think was what you were covering at the beginning, similar to eGrants or one of the 24 eGov initiatives. We are in a different portfolio.

In OMB terms, we fall under internal efficiency and effectiveness, which some people found strange. They thought we should be G to B, but the goals that we have are focused more on improving how the acquisition is conducted. It is impacting businesses, but the focus was to develop shared services for those areas of acquisition which are common, the data-sharing aspect of it, not the actual conduct of the acquisition itself. So it's following the overall eGov goals of leveraging IT investments and data sharing, enter once, use many, and so forth, that you have all heard that.

We had five different objectives, which we called business areas, when we were first set up at that meeting. Business partner network being one, which is the focus that we're here on, and that it involved data dealing or oriented toward a single partner. The second one, acquisition information, is focused on individual transactions. So the information in our BPN files are key toward an entity. In our acquisition information files, it's an actual transaction, a contract or a delivery order.

We also had a third group looking at how the data that's used in the conduct of a transaction takes place, what catalogs are searched, what solicitations are posted. We had a group working intergovernmental transactions that was transferred to the CFO council. And then we had an overarching group looking at data standardization in general, making sure that if we carry an element in more than one system that we describe it the same way, that we create our XML naming the same way and so forth. So those were our five different objective areas that were given to us at the onset of the project.

You've got our pamphlet and the inside shows the various screen shots of the different systems. These next three are on the flip side of that. But those different systems provide access to common data to buyers to search for sources to have one place to post synopsis, one place to post sensitive documents that are associated with the solicitation, to review the representations and certifications, to get their wage determinations, to check for people who are excluded from doing business with the government, to report contract data, review vendor subcontracting information, and review performance.

From the seller's point of view, they have one place to register to do business, to provide us those representations and certifications, to revalidate annually, to find the business opportunities that have been posted, and sign up for any interested vendor list or e-mail notifications, and then report subcontracting accomplishments. These citizen has one place to go to to find out where their tax dollars are going, what's the government buying, what solicitations are out there, who's gotten the contracts, what types of things have been awarded, what firms are registered to do business with the government and so forth, because all of our systems are open.

So in that point of view, we have an architecture, which I know you can't read, but it does have each of the different systems and shows how they're clustered in those business areas. The largest one there with the arrow is what we call the business partner network, and that has CCR, the online reps and certs, past performance information, the subcontract reporting, the excluded parties list, all of the entity-oriented information that we talked about. The other groups are for acquisition information reporting and for the marketplace type of information.

So based on the e-mails and looking at some of the minutes of the previous meetings. I was most impressed with the transcript, by the way. There have been many meetings I've wished I had transcripts for. There were a couple areas that I thought I would cover that seemed to enter into some of the questions you have. And I know you've got a subgroup going, that Stan Dabrowski is working with you on, as he's the program manager for CCR.

But just to go over some of the generalities of the DUNS number first, it is a common commercial identifier. It's used quite a bit in industry in the electronic transactions or electronic data interchange to identify trading partners. That's one reason why we chose it back at the beginning. Also, many entities already have a DUNS number, even if they don't know it. They may have had one assigned because another trading partner did business with them. So it's not necessarily a brand-new thing for every entity you're dealing with.

It is unique to an entity at a physical location. How many they have at a given location is a function of how they do business. So you could have one DUNS number theoretically for Lockheed Martin or for a given university or you could have one for every department if they conduct business separately. That's their choice. The other good feature from our point of view is that the numbers are maintained by Dun & Bradstreet.

It's contracted out, to use a common term, but it's not something where we have to expend our resources to maintain those addresses and keep track of it. We have a central contract that covers all agencies that's administered out of our office. Actually Earl administers it. And that handles all of the work we have with Dun & Bradstreet.

It includes a dedicated federal help desk. The phone number and website that they link to from CCR is specifically for federal government partners. It's not the commercial site. And that help desk is trained to answer the questions that our partners have. And they get their DUNS number free if they are getting it in order to register in CCR, because we're, we've covered it under our contract.

The DUNS numbers have been used by the acquisition community since 1979 when the Federal Procurement Data System was first set up. That was chosen as the identifier. So we have a lot of background and experience in using that. And it is part of the contract. There is a clause where they have to tell us what DUNS number they are submitting this offer under, and that becomes part of that contract. If they change their name, if they move, if they are acquired or merge with another firm, they have to tell us and that requires a contract modification and possibly a novation and the files would be updated accordingly.

We have the DUNS Plus 4, which is a capability, again, that was not created by the government or IAE. It's something that existed prior to that as part of the commercial use for EDI, where there is a four-digit suffix that the registrant controls. This is not a Dun & Bradstreet-assigned number. And we have declared that to be used only for additional bank accounts.

So you could have ABC company have a bank account, two different bank accounts in Citibank or a totally different bank and they would have a 0001 and a 0002 or whatever qualifier they chose for those four digits, but it allows them to put the two in.

And then when they submit an offer, they just indicate which one applies to that particular offer.

We have linkage at CCR with Dun & Bradstreet. And this is real time. When somebody goes in to register and they put in their DUNS number, it goes out, launches out to Dun & Bradstreet, brings back the address information from that site. We allow them to do some editing right now. That was sort of a comfort level, but we will be taking in the Dun & Bradstreet information to make sure that we have a tighter control on that.

We also have what D&B calls monitoring. So once they know that that's somebody that's in CCR, they let us know if there are any changes made at Dun & Bradstreet for that entity because they are now a government trading partner. And they also provide us linkage. For the situations where somebody did spell it differently but we still know that they are part of one overall organization. They may have a different name or they may have spelled it differently, but they're all part of that organization. And it gives us the ability to roll up information through that family tree.

STEVE DOWDY: Can I ask a question? So when somebody goes to the CCR, you pull the information from D&B to get the base address and all that. When we update our CCR, are you re-retrieving the D&B information? In other words, if we went to D&B and changed information, would it reflect back in the CCR?

THERESA SORRENTI: Yes.

STEVE DOWDY: And I know we're not necessarily talking about issues, but I'm thinking this maybe is the problem I'm seeing in that, for D&B, because there's where we've got like some bank account information and stuff like that for our controller's office. And so they have a different address than the organization that submits a grant. And it keeps putting the controller's office address on our grants now from agencies that are retrieving from CCR. So are you periodically updating that or is it only at the time someone changes a record, or do you, you know, monthly go out and do a re-sync to make sure . . .

THERESA SORRENTI: That's up to the agency. I mean, our file gets updated whenever the vendor changes it. The vendor is responsible for their data, the registrant. Every agency has worked out a way to take that data in because the other, in addition to requiring people to be in CCR in order to get a contract, the clause states that payment will be made to the bank account identified in CCR.

So the finance community is using it as well, as you indicated. Different agencies have done it differently. In some cases, finance is the driver. They take in the file. They maintain the file. Acquisition shares it. In some cases, acquisition has it and they pass it to finance at the time they make a contract. Finance can get that update daily from CCR or monthly or there's also a real-time interface where at the time you're making a payment, they can send an XML transaction to CCR and say give me the information for this DUNS number and it will come back.

STEVE DOWDY: But how often is CCR syncing back to D&B?

THERESA SORRENTI: Okay. The monitor, that's part of the monitoring.

EARL WARRINGTON: Separate D&B and CCR. If I go into D&B and I make a change in D&B to my file, until I go to update my record in CCR, it doesn't set. As soon as I update my record in CCR, it syncs with D&B. Okay. Now as Theresa has already explained, the outcome of that is, depending on the agency and how often they refresh their files, then they receive the updated . . .

STEVE DOWDY: But when you sync the organizational address in CCR, are you taking the address from the payment in the D&B?

THERESA SORRENTI: There's no separate, there's only one address. The payment information is Citibank, this account number.

STEVE DOWDY: Right. Our D&B registration, because it tends to be because of finance and things . . . so our D&B record points to our controller's office, but my grants point to my grant office. So my D&B record needs to be my controller's office, okay, because they handle, you know . . .

THERESA SORRENTI: Your D&B record would be the address of where you are and your CCR record has that same address. And the banking information is just an account in a bank. It's not an address.

STEVE DOWDY: Right. That's the issue. When we try to get paid, if our D&B numbers don't match our grant at the time we try to get paid, then we can't get paid because the payment can be a different D&B number than the grant. So the D&B number is maintained because it points to our controller's office.

Okay, that's just, we have to have our D&B number point to the controller's office, because that's where the D&B is established, is the controller's office. But yet our grants come out of a different office. So every time I touch my CCR registration, it re-syncs it back to my controller's office and my NSF awards show up pointing that the office to contact is the controller's office, not the sponsored research office.

THERESA SORRENTI: Well, you could have a separate DUNS number from the research office.

STEVE DOWDY: Then they won't pay because my grant has to come under my DUNS number from my research office, and the payment has to match the D&B number on the grant record for the agencies or they won't pay.

BOB BEATTIE: You can't pay, you can't submit with one DUNS number and get paid with another DUNS number.

THERESA SORRENTI: Right. But you just use the same number.

STEVE DOWDY: Then the addresses get screwed up.

BOB BEATTIE: There's only one address per DUNS number.

THERESA SORRENTI: Correct.

BOB BEATTIE: So the award notices for the grants go to some controller's office who doesn't know anything about what this is . . .

THERESA SORRENTI: But, no, you use the DUNS number for the research office.

STEVE DOWDY: Then I can't get paid.

BOB BEATTIE: Because the finance office is the one that does the billing.

THERESA SORRENTI: Okay. But when your finance office does the billing, they just cite the DUNS number for the research office, that I am billing for this department, known as this DUNS number.

EARL WARRINGTON: That's what goes on, that actually goes on with the contractor side or with the vendor side. The vendors can have multiple DUNS numbers. And in those particular cases, when their offices bill, they may have, and we run into this circumstance on a regular basis, they may have a whole listing of DUNS numbers and a whole listing of contracts, and it's a DUNS number and a contract relationship. And so when I . . .

STEVE DOWDY: No, but . . . needs to contact MIT about some issue, they need to contact my controller's office, so my D&B record should have my controller's office address so that the mail gets to my controller, which is two miles away in a different building with a whole different address. So when D&B needs to contact MIT, they should be contacting the controller's office.

BOB MACDONALD: To explain, or perhaps . . . for almost every university I know, grants management is done through a sponsored research office, so everything dealing with the grants and the business and the performance of those grants is managed by the sponsored research office. The payments, and for instance, my agency deals with the payments office separately.

In our database we maintain a database table of all the people who are in the sponsored research office. We made a separate database of all the finance office. We use a generic term for that. Generally this finance office supports, if not the whole university, huge chunks, and those slices of the pies, if they are broken apart, are different than the slices of the pie often for the grants business.

And so the issue is, is now that we're forcing people when they are dealing with grants business to cite a DUNS number and then an agency wants to go back and contact them about these issues, particularly once we start looking more towards the CCR, which we plan to do, for that information instead of our own databases, then that will maintain, there's one record there, where we're maintaining now two records. And I think that's the issues that you're running into. Is that right?

THERESA SORRENTI: Well, but it's no different than commercial contracts. You have large companies who do business with the government out of, say, Washington, D.C., office, but their finance office is in New Jersey. That doesn't mean that that New Jersey office is cited in the contract anywhere at all. The contract is with the Washington, D.C., office. We have their DUNS number associated with that contract.

And if you look at that DUNS number, there is a place for an accounts payable point of contact and that is probably a person in New Jersey with a phone number, that for finance issues this is who you call. But my business relationship is not with the finance office. My business relationship is with the office in D.C.

STEVE DOWDY: But the D&B relationship, okay, you have a linkage between, all right, but we have a relationship with D&B. And when somebody needs to do a credit check or somebody needs tax information, the place they contact is our controller's office.

THERESA SORRENTI: Okay. But you can have another DUNS number for your research office.

STEVE DOWDY: No, because then I can't get paid.

THERESA SORRENTI: Sure you can. You just tell people that that, just like they cite your grant number when they submit the invoice, they include the DUNS number.

BOB BEATTIE: Okay. The small problem associated with that is, for 20 years we've been using one DUNS number for our sponsored, for the entire university. It's in the NIH database. It's in the NSF database. It's all over. If we try to change our sponsored programs DUNS number from the one that is the University of Michigan's number to the sponsored programs office's own DUNS number, it will lead to months and months of confusion. I don't know if Steve has a solution . . .

STEVE DOWDY: And some agencies have told us they don't have any way of mass changing all of our grant records to . . . DUNS number.

BOB BEATTIE: We tried to get a new number and we were told that it would cause too much confusion. The university's DUNS number is so entwined in various agencies that we wouldn't get payments from Defense Department agencies for months because it would have to go through the system, these have to become contract changes and negotiated. But I don't know how to solve . . .

THERESA SORRENTI: Okay. I'd have to talk to Dun & Bradstreet, but it seems to me you can still have your research office be associated with that DUNS number and indicate questions should go to the finance office. Because you're talking about D&B credit checks, which we have no idea what information they have for that, and I'd have to talk to them about whether that can be set up that way. All I'm saying is that the

DUNS number that you put in CCR can have a different point of contact for finance information and can have different bank account information.

STEVE DOWDY: Right. All I'm getting at is by the time it goes through the full circle, when it comes out of DUNS, it goes to CCR and then it gets back to an agency, all of a sudden my grant awards are now having my controller's office on it and that's a problem.

SANDY SWAB: The issue, I think, is, I mean, if you want to do business to the fact that your payments are coming from your controller's, is that what you're saying, the controller's office . . .

STEVE DOWDY: Yeah, I mean, almost all of us have the separation of duties and powers . . .

SANDY SWAB: Right, right . . . I think the issue is the fact, well, I think what I'm getting, hearing is that when a credit check is done, I mean, you don't know, you always have to use that, the MIT number or the central number. That is one thing I would strongly urge them, the organization to do, is to get that tree structure from DUNS, to know what's affiliated with that central number, because once you see that tree structure, everybody, you know, you're going to know that then it's all going to roll up to the controller's, there are the linkages.

And you have to, from the sponsored, the issue really is from the sponsored research area, that's the authorized submitter for the grant, and that DUNS number has, that's the number we're talking about. Now what may, what you may actually be able to do with this is take that DUNS Plus 4 and link it in some way back to the central number, because those are different accounts based on the sponsored research submitting the grant. Do you see what . . .

THERESA SORRENTI: Plus 4 is only for different bank accounts.

KEN FORSTMEIER: At the last meeting we heard that we weren't supposed to be doing DUNS Plus 4.

SANDY SWAB: No. I know, I know. But I'm saying, if this is an issue, at some point that may be a point to look at. But they are for separate bank accounts. The other issue, I think, Steve, is to make sure the payment systems from which you are operating have the right DUNS number. There could easily be an issue there with the payment systems, of them kicking out because something is not matching in that process.

STEVE DOWDY: Is anybody else seeing this problem?

GUNTA LIDERS: We're not, but I don't know why because if I, I'm registered through our CCR and that's the sponsored programs office.

STEVE DOWDY: Right.

GUNTA LIDERS: But we're still getting . . .

STEVE DOWDY: When did all this linkage stuff start and this automatic refreshing? Quite some time ago, after the federal register notice and all that?

THERESA SORRENTI: At least two years . . .

BOB MACDONALD: Can I ask this? I mean, not to . . . important to the discussion, I think it is good, but one of the reasons, the primary reason for bringing Theresa here, and her time is limited, was to try to understand the big picture, how, not only how the issues that we're dealing with now, such as this, fit in, but also what opportunities are there for the future. And while Theresa is able to be with us, I'd like for her to be able to get through that. And then maybe if we have extra time, we can come back to these.

THERESA SORRENTI: And you're with whom?

STEVE DOWDY: MIT.

THERESA SORRENTI: Okay. Maybe you can e-mail us the DUNS number in question and we can look how the linkages are set up and see if maybe there's something unique about your record.

BOB BEATTIE: Are we going to talk later about the CCR and what it does, because I have a big question about that that's related to this?

THERESA SORRENTI: Yeah. I do have another slide here on CCR.

BOB BEATTIE: Okay. I'll wait.

THERESA SORRENTI: Okay. The DUNS number does provide a link for our partners to get to some of our other systems, one being our online representations and certifications. If they intend to submit an offer, they go to that system and do the one-time entry that Sandy was talking about earlier.

Also, when an award is reported to our federal procurement data system, the contracting officer merely indicates the DUNS number and it brings over the address information and so forth from CCR. We also have a performance data system that allows a source selection official to search for a DUNS number to see what other contracts they may have had and what type of performance reporting has been provided by those contracting officers.

BOB MACDONALD: So right now these things, the online reps and certs and the repository of awards, that's just for procurement at this point in time. Is that correct?

THERESA SORRENTI: Yes.

BOB MACDONALD: Are there any plans in the works for, any discussion about . . .

THERESA SORRENTI: I told you, Sandy retired. We had done some preliminary work, but we never got any requirements. So when it went up, it went live a year ago in January. We have 39,000 vendors with their reps and certs up. It has those reps and certs that were part of the . . . for a commercial contract.

SANDY SWAB: I won't take Theresa's time, but I can spend a little more time, I can discuss the, they did see it and where it stands, I don't know.

BOB MACDONALD: Yeah . . .

THERESA SORRENTI: So in terms of features of CCR, and if this doesn't answer your questions, you can ask another one, is the single source for the registrant data, the enter one sees many times, saving the registrant time from previously having to go to the different agencies to provide information. Also for government, eliminating the duplicative files and eliminating the need for somebody to keep them maintained.

The real-time interface with Dun & Bradstreet, validating the DUNS, pulling in addresses, record linkage and so forth that we talked about. We also have a real-time linkage with SBA. There are certain characteristics that are certified by SBA, AID-A, small disadvantaged businesses, and those in HUBZones. When somebody registers, it sends a transaction to SBA and they advise us immediately whether those fields are checked. Those are not things a vendor can check themselves. It comes back from SBA and say, yes, they have been certified in one of these programs or they haven't been.

And we also apply, or SBA applies their algorithm for determining business size, small or large, small or other than small, for each of the North American Industry Codes that they indicate that they are interested in participating. So there are certain size standards based on number of employees and revenue and that's applied automatically at the time of registration.

We also now have an interface with IRS as of October 30th. That is still batch, only because IRS is not ready to do XML. It provides the validation of the TIN number, which has been very key to the finance offices who have to report payments to IRS and they get fined if they report an inaccurate TIN number. So there is a new screen that requires the registrant to consent to this comparison.

And what it does is it sends the name and address that they are giving us in registration. Plus if they indicate that their taxes are under a different name, it captured that. And the TIN number goes off to IRS and in about 48 hours it comes back, yes, that matches our records. If they come back no, the information goes to the registrant and says there's a problem, you can call IRS and see what it is, and until you resolve that, you are not an active record in CCR.

STEVE DOWDY: Really?

THERESA SORRENTI: Really.

STEVE DOWDY: That means we can't submit a proposal.

THERESA SORRENTI: Until you're an, I would imagine that your requirement is that it be an active file in CCR, yes. But, I mean, if you know that your taxes are filed under ABC company and you put in your TIN number, it's going to come back and say, yeah, that's correct.

STEVE DOWDY: Because we just had our payments from DOD being rejected because we were not aware of this new IRS requirement. That was never, anybody in this room gone in and done their IRS consent in CCR? Were any of you notified that that was a new requirement?

THERESA SORRENTI: It is only a requirement for a new registrant or when you come in to do your annual update. It was not effective October 30th, everybody has to do it.

STEVE DOWDY: We were not, the Department of Defense refused to pay, telling us that our CCR record was inactive. And when I went in and looked, the little yellow exclamation point was next to the IRS screen, which I had never seen. When you looked at my registration, it said I am valid until August of 2006, because that's when I did it, was August in 2006 I updated, but yet DOD refused to pay, saying our record was inactive. I looked, new field, all blank. And I put in what I thought was going to be the right information, but now you're telling me if that information, if I got it wrong, which I don't think I did . . .

THERESA SORRENTI: You would have been notified if it was wrong.

STEVE DOWDY: I just did this yesterday.

THERESA SORRENTI: Okay. You will be notified that it's wrong.

STEVE DOWDY: So DOD is not paying unless that information is there.

THERESA SORRENTI: Okay. We'll have to check that out, because they should not have been . . .

STEVE DOWDY: We have three different invoices rejected by three different paying offices at DOD.

THERESA SORRENTI: The conference call is tomorrow?

EARL WARRINGTON: Essentially the process, the business process on this is that you actually have to physically go in and change your record for it to send the IRS file over. It will go over. It will put it in a suspense type of arrangement until such time as it's validated. Once it's validated, it will move you to an active setting.

So if you go in any time between the original time you were looking into the record, since August until August this next, if you had gone in anywhere along that timeline to change that record in any way, that file would have been checked and you would have been put, if it wasn't available or it was an error, that would have put you into a suspended . . .

THERESA SORRENTI: Are you saying that you never touched the file since last August when you . . .

STEVE DOWDY: Well, I didn't touch the file since last August until someone from DOD said that our registration, the first word we got said it was expired and I said there's no way. And rather than doing a display, I did log in like in edit mode, so I now touched the record. I understand that. But when I went in, I just looked and said, no, it's August 2006, called the controller's office up and said it's valid, maybe they just had a stale file, do it again. They called me back a second time saying they're still telling us our registration. So by then, the IRS problem, but I had not touched the record since August.

THERESA SORRENTI: I haven't heard of that happening to anyone. But I've already decided you're special, so, and you're going to give me your DUNS number, we're going to check it.

KEN FORSTMEIER: We all decided that a long time ago.

EARL WARRINGTON: No, no, no. I mean, we'll follow up with the folks. But in the business process that was implemented, this could be one of the . . . it should not have caused you this issue until you . . .

STEVE DOWDY: It could be some overzealous program officer is looking and seeing some piece of required information isn't there and is refusing to pay. But now my danger is I've touched that record. And since they wouldn't pay us, I called and I said who signed it, and the person said I don't know, we'll have to look it up, for right now put Jim Morgan who's the controller. But now you're telling me if Jim Morgan's name doesn't match . . .

THERESA SORRENTI: No, no. It doesn't check that. It checks the name of the entity, Massachusetts Institute of Technology is this PIN number.

STEVE DOWDY: Right. And 99 percent of the time on a lot of systems that I log into, Massachusetts Institute of Technology won't fit in the box, and so I will have no idea, we're in there Mass Inst Tech, MIT, I mean, we're in there hundreds of different ways. And if my record becomes flagged inactive, then when you log in through Grants.gov with your credentials, they are then marked as not allowed. So now I'm sitting down here in D.C., if something is wrong, we can no longer submit proposals right now through Grants.gov because my CCR registration is now invalid.

THERESA SORRENTI: Okay. Well, we're going to look at yours. But in general, at the time somebody gets a TIN, there's a document the IRS gives you and it says, you know, here is your TIN, guard it with your life or whatever, but that tells you how they have you registered. And that controller's office, I told you never mind, you'd have to talk to them. Someone there has the information of how you're registered in IRS and they should know if it's Mass Institute or Massachusetts Inst.

STEVE DOWDY: Okay. And so if the IRS's data field is only 20 characters and so I'm forced to be Mass Inst Tech with the IRS, then from here on out, all my notices of award and everything I do with the government has to be Mass Inst Tech.

EARL WARRINGTON: No, no, no. In the TIN part, there's a question in there, what's the name, you can identify your name and . . . for your tax identifier. For example, you can be MIT as your business, like 3M, Minnesota Mining Manufacturing, but the TIN is actually under Minnesota Mining Manufacturing. Their business record is 3M, and for the purposes of the TIN they write in Minnesota Mining Manufacturing and put . . .

THERESA SORRENTI: Our office has a DUNS record and our TIN number with IRS is out of our finance office in Kansas City and that's the way it's registered. The TIN is GSA Kansas City, but we are GSA Integrated Acquisition Environment, Arlington.

BOB BEATTIE: Can I follow up on something that Steve said . . . was really crucial, and that is, he said if something happens to a CCR number, he can't submit through Grants.gov. Do we think that the Grants.gov folks, after you have registered with a valid CCR, do they go back and revalidate that you still have a CCR number or do you just need that MPIN or TPIN or some PIN to get a Grants.gov registration, but once you've registered with Grants.gov, you don't go back and have to . . .

THERESA SORRENTI: I don't know what Grants.gov does.

BOB BEATTIE: Because I don't think they would go back and check. Once you've gotten into Grants.gov . . .

BOB MACDONALD: I think they check on an annual basis . . .

STEVE DOWDY: If your CCR goes bad, your credential is no longer valid.

THERESA SORRENTI: If they get an extract, they're getting an extract of active records. So if you go inactive, you would no longer be on the extract.

BOB BEATTIE: But I don't think they're smart enough to go back and check everything . . .

THERESA SORRENTI: But it depends, if they get an update of their extract every day, that would be an issue. If they get an update monthly . . .

STEVE DOWDY: Well, the other issue is that even on the handle, let's say everything is perfect, your TIN is great, your IRS thing is great, everything is perfect, and on August

2006 I go back in to update to take me out through August of 2007, and you get the little notice that says your CCR registration is under review, it's my understanding that during that review process our CCR registration is technically in a pending inactive state and that we, again, in that window would not be able to submit a grant.

THERESA SORRENTI: That's a Grants.gov question. I don't know.

SANDY SWAB: And that would be, it's a valid point.

BOB MACDONALD: Once again, why don't we let Theresa go on. I think it's clear that we don't, that there's a tremendous lack of understanding how the process works and I think it is causing a problem.

TONY CAVATAIO: But the point here, excuse me, Bob, but what I hear, just listening to this, is if we're having these issues here . . .

BOB MACDONALD: Yes, that was my point.

TONY CAVATAIO: . . . they've got to be greater out in the field than just here.

BOB MACDONALD: Which is one reason I've let it go on so long. But, yes, I think that . . .

STEVE DOWDY: But we need to be able to present this tomorrow and stuff to the full FDP, so when we get questions, I mean, the people out there look to Ken and Steve for these answers to these kinds of problems they're having, so . . .

THERESA SORRENTI: And this TIN validation is new.

STEVE DOWDY: Yes.

THERESA SORRENTI: So, you know, in my mind I'm thinking I've never heard this problem with a commercial contractor, but maybe it's only because it's new. So we will check using our guinea pig over here. We mentioned the PINs. There are two types of PINs associated with CCR. The trading partner ID number is the one that is assigned to the person who created that registration record. They're responsible for maintaining that record. That's the PIN they use to access the record and make any changes.

The MPIN is one that is assigned by the registrant themselves, and that is used to allow access to other systems. So we didn't want to compromise the PIN that gives you access to your record. This is a separate item. It's something that's self-assigned. Within the acquisition community, those are the three systems we use it for, where we have the sensitive documents associated with the solicitation.

You need the MPIN to be able to view those documents. You need the MPIN to put your reps and certs into ORCA, in the online representations and certifications application. And that's where I have the, in the initial design, grants representatives were considered, did not get pursued by Grants.gov. I think there were just too many other things they were addressing, but Sandy will talk about that later I guess.

CPS and CPARS are the past performance systems, and those, where a contracting officers will review a contractor's performance. They submit their write-up. The contractor has the right and the ability to go in and provide any rebuttal or additional information on that performance report card, and they access that system using the MPIN. So we use that as an associated bit of ID.

And based on the different system, they treat it differently. The fed tends, because we're dealing with sensitive information, the contracting officer can either restrict access to certain DUNS numbers or ask for a report on what DUNS numbers have accessed it or require people to apply for access, but it's the MPIN that is actually getting them into that. But that's the difference between the two PIN numbers. Did that answer your question on the PINs?

BOB BEATTIE: I knew that. I had a whole different question.

THERESA SORRENTI: Okay.

BOB BEATTIE: No, I just meant that you used some PIN to register with Grants.gov. So it was the MPIN and it's the TPIN that I don't know that I, so I can't look at my CCR registration right now because I didn't bring my notebook with my, all my passwords.

KEN FORSTMEIER: You're not supposed to write those down.

BOB BEATTIE: I have three books of passwords for every system there is. I try to use the same one. But they assign it to you and I think that's why I don't have it. My question about the CCR is, I think the government is trying to do too much with the CCR. A couple years ago we were told if we want to do grants we'd better be registered in the CCR because we need that for Grants.gov.

So I went in as the first person at the University of Michigan and registered myself as the BPOC maybe or the EPOC, different POCs, and I registered my boss as another, as the alternate POC. And now, we get calls from people in the Medical School financial office that say I'm so-and-so and I deal with medical students from the Navy whose tuition needs to be paid and I have to do this electronically, would you please assign me into the CCR. And then I get calls from people in the Law School.

And so it seems like the, you know, why should I in the grants office be assigning these people rights in the CCR? There needs to be like sub-CCRs or something so that, and I wouldn't expect somebody in the finance office to be in charge of it and have people from the grants office come in and say, well, we need to be registered in the CCR to do grants. What, there's just like too much going on in this one little system.

THERESA SORRENTI: Yeah. Well, that evidently is because you've chosen to have a single DUNS number for the university.

BOB BEATTIE: That's a . . . conclusion.

THERESA SORRENTI: Right.

BOB BEATTIE: I tried to get more DUNS numbers, but I can't get DUNS numbers.

THERESA SORRENTI: What do you mean you mean you can't?

BOB BEATTIE: I'm not allowed.

EARL WARRINGTON: Who's restricting you, the school or . . .

BOB BEATTIE: The controller of the university.

THERESA SORRENTI: Ah. Well, see . . .

BOB BEATTIE: They already have 300 DUNS numbers and they're a little upset about that, and they don't want more DUNS numbers.

THERESA SORRENTI: Okay. And those people aren't associated with any of the 300? They like yours better?

BOB BEATTIE: Those people did those in the past years before we understood that DUNS numbers were important.

SANDY SWAB: You really need to scrub the data with D&B.

BOB BEATTIE: Yeah, we'd like to do that.

SANDY SWAB: And D&B will help you do that.

BOB BEATTIE: But as I say, the University of Michigan has one big public DUNS number and that's what goes on all of our documents so far as the University of Michigan. And grants are submitted on behalf of the University of Michigan. I have a personal DUNS number. I did get a DUNS number for our grants office, but I was told don't use that number for the grants office because we want this to be the University of Michigan submitting applications with the University of Michigan's DUNS number.

And so those are all, Steve raised all the issues with that. But now given that decision, is there any way to, should we tell these other people that if they want to get registered in the CCR so they can get money to pay for the tuition of the students in the medical school, that they should get their own DUNS number and register themselves in the CCR?

THERESA SORRENTI: It's a business decision of the registrant, and I'm trying hard not to make any other comment because I went to Michigan State, so . . .

BOB BEATTIE: You don't even get any grants, so you don't have to worry about them.

STEVE DOWDY: I think one of the other problems too, piggybacking on that, about the explosion in the use. So I'm the e-business point of contact, so I'm God to my CCR registration now. And I control who is in AOR for MIT, so I can say who can submit on behalf of MIT. I now can control who can invoice on behalf of MIT, and I also now control the bank account where the funds are deposited.

So I'm going to submit and get myself a billion-dollar grant and change the payment to my Swiss bank account and stuff, because we've now got, where we used to have all these checks and balances, sponsored programs submits grants, the controller's office requests payment and all that, we've now given control of that to two individuals at a university. And I can control every business transaction that happens at MIT now.

BOB BEATTIE: Or be bothered by people who want to . . .

STEVE DOWDY: Or be bothered by the people, yes, because I have the ROTC students calling me saying I need to get my tuition paid.

BOB BEATTIE: Yeah, yeah. I have that too.

EARL WARRINGTON: But can I just interrupt the discussion? And I'm going to go back and I realize that, you know, we have a number of different issues here dealing with the large volume of grants and so forth. But let me convert this back on the business side, and I'm going to try and relate this in a corporate type of arena in this particular case.

We have a number of different registrants that have, for example, some of the largest firms that we have involved in the process to date can have up to 5,000 Dun & Bradstreet numbers. And in that case, they've got 5,000 various locations registered in the Central Contract Registration. That's their business decision to go in that particular case.

Now there may be one finance office, CFO office, on that organizational piece that in fact is actually doing the billings, but they have the listing of contracts and they have the DUNS numbers that go along with that listing of contracts. And when they bill in that particular case, for lack of a better example, MIT would be, you know, one of those names on that particular piece.

They may say my billing is MIT, but I'm billing on behalf of this research unit and this group, this DUNS number, this grantee number, so that the information is correct for the purposes of the payment. And then at that moment, it's billed to, on the DUNS number in that particular case, when they look at the CCR, it's billed to that account that's on the CCR. Now in fact, that's how it typically actually operates in the commercial arena, where there could be a number of different DUNS numbers.

Now I hear this all the time because of the Electronic Subcontract Reporting System and it's a whole different software package that we have in play, but it uses DUNS numbers in that particular case and it matches up to the contract number. And those offices that maintain those reports with the federal government may have 25 DUNS numbers that they're having to report on and hundreds of contracts that tie up to those various DUNS numbers that they're having to report on, and that's one office. But they're one office reporting that information and it could be the CFO office and that could be another program office.

Now I understand what's going on in the various, in your organizational pieces here because they don't want to proliferate information out to a number of different sources and then try and manage all that information. But at the same time, what they've done is kind of boxed you in in terms of flexibility in that regard.

And so the question comes into play, I think, where one day it was, I could do this stuff on a paper process, I can really rev this stuff up and go and the paper process. Now what we have is applications that are sharing data points all over the place. And in this particular case, where you're thinking it's my DUNS that's messing me up, and in fact what's happening is I went in and registered central contract registration with this specific DUNS numbers, which brings across the standard name and convention of the organization I'm dealing with, the address location of information that's there, and I load in the banking information that they're going to pay from the CCR piece on there.

So in essence, if I was, for example, if I were one of you folks and I was sitting out there and I was in the finance shop, for example, I probably would say go out and get another, in my case, knowing how this operates in the commercial industries, I probably would say go get another DUNS number, but I need to know what that DUNS number is and what it matches up to.

And then when you propose or when you go in for a grant, you go in with that particular DUNS number and address information, and then if you win that, I have a record at the, my account is based on that particular grant information, and then I bill based on that grant information, on the account basis. So I have accounts that are set up file by file on that. That's a whole different business paradigm than it sounds like you guys are operating off of.

KEN FORSTMEIER: You know, I think you're absolutely right. And what's happened is that the system has changed, you know, kind of unbeknownst to us. I mean, it's changed and we saw it and, okay, we didn't understand the implications and so forth, but one of the issues that we deal with, and Penn State is the same way. We have a couple hundred numbers, DUNS numbers, and I look here, it says right here, use this number on everything, okay, and that's our policy.

But the problem is, this needs to get put out to the community and we're not necessarily the right people to go to. You know, we don't have that voice to make that change. And I think you're absolutely right and that's the way it should run. But how do we get the university community to make that change when we're not necessarily the points, we're not the right points of contact and we don't necessarily have the voice high enough to make that change. They're separate branches entirely.

BOB BEATTIE: And how do we go back and get rid of all the DUNS numbers already in the systems?

KEN FORSTMEIER: That's okay. We can just figure out where they all belong to and that's actually okay. That's not the problem.

THERESA SORRENTI: I think my other question would be who said always use this number and did they say that for the right reason. Did they say it because it makes life easier for them because they only have to keep track of one number or because that's the right way for the process.

STEVE DOWDY: The federal register notice, even when the government went to implement the use of the DUNS numbers, was billed to us as the unique identifier for an organization. And now you're telling me I'm supposed to have 200 unique identifiers for my organization.

THERESA SORRENTI: No. It depends on how your organization does business.

STEVE DOWDY: We want an organizational profile, and this was billed to us as a unique identifier for the organization. That's what the federal register notice said, and that's what the public comment came back assuming, because the FDP commented on that. And we all said it's a great idea to have a unique identifier for an organization. So if I have 200 DUNS numbers, which one is my unique identifier.

THERESA SORRENTI: They're all a unique identifier for that piece of the organization. If each department does business separately, then each department probably should have a unique identifier. And the family tree will link them all to whatever is the headquarters.

SANDY SWAB: See, the issue, now I understand because I authored this whole thing, you know, and I . . . so I will take, you know, come on. But the issue when, and is anyone in here from Harvard? Harvard came in with a comment on this, and then we had a great discussion. And they said we want to set it up so that my business practice, I want to bill from the Harvard Medical School, I'm going to bill from this school and I'm going to bill from that.

And when they called me, and I said, all right, then if that's the way you're going to do business then, and you're going to bill that way, and Harvard, and on top of that you are going to be able to affiliate in that tree structure that those DUNS numbers go to the board of directors of Harvard College, and that's the way it comes out.

They went in and created that structure so that the billing from, if a grant is going to go through from Harvard Medical, it's going to use that DUNS number from Harvard Medical. It's going to use from whatever other school that, if it's not going to go through, and they also said we have a separate finance office for Harvard Medical. So they wanted even to separate their finance offices. So in the business side of things, how they were conducting business, they did follow the . . . with the DUNS number.

And that's, we had, and the State of New York is the same way. They only have two universities out there that do not go through the foundation that can apply for grants. They allow them to set up separately. So you have to, in essence, and I hear what you're saying. It's almost like the government now may need to go back to the university community and say follow the business path.

And what we can give you is this tree structure if you go in and request that tree structure from D&B, which they will give you so that you can see how the structure is set up. And it's not going, and then it would streamline for their purposes the path of how the money is flowing. And I know, and maybe it is something that the government needs to take on from an OMB perspective, from the various organizations that are dealing with the grants and working with Theresa's group to come up with this business process, to offer, let's put it this way, to offer a business model to the university community.

BOB MACDONALD: I think it's, that would be very helpful, but I think also to say will you deviate from this, here are some of the things you need to think about and possible implications, because I've been hearing story after story of people finding out the hard way and the hard way is when, as Steve was talking about, you don't get paid or grants don't get submitted.

SANDY SWAB: Right, right. My fear is, and it is a fear, and obviously you guys are doing okay, is in the pool payment piece or when you're coming into the payment systems and making sure, you know, when you're doing your requests and getting the money back down through that things are matched between the payment systems, grant payment systems, and what is in the CCR. I mean, I have a, I'm a little antsy about that and I admit that. I mean, but it sounds like everybody is still getting their payments.

EARL WARRINGTON: Can I offer this one extra suggestion? I mean, I realize that there's a lot of, a load of information coming in here, coming from multiple, and it sounds like a tactical weight that's way over the top of so many of you in that regard. But I know you keep asking the question what about already existing grants that are already in play.

In many cases, I think the smart thing on that is to let them play out until completion and then anything new you follow your new business path or whatever it happens to be in that regard. That is an offering in that direction to go in that, to help in terms of not overtaxing, trying to go back and do something that could create a total cluster on the backside.

STEVE DOWDY: Then we would have to modify our systems to include the DUNS numbers with our internal grant.

EARL WARRINGTON: And quite frankly . . .

STEVE DOWDY: I have grants that have been running for 35 years.

EARL WARRINGTON: Right. And quite frankly, in those cases where you have those real long-term grants, now you might want to go back and say, Mr. or Mrs., whoever the cognizant individual responsible for that is on the government side, and talk about what an amended grant would look like to make that change for the new DUNS number on that particular piece.

BOB BEATTIE: Let me ask one other question. I'm looking at this message that I got from the person in the medical school. And this is the message he got, thank you for registering in WAWF. Now that's something we haven't mentioned here. I don't know if that fits. In order to activate your account, you need authorization from your electronic business point of contact as listed in the CCR. So that's me listed, but that, he's in the medical school finance office, so why am I being asked, because I'm in the CCR, why am I being asked to authorize this person.

THERESA SORRENTI: Because that's the DUNS number they gave. WAWF is Wide Area Work Flow. It's a Department of Defense system that, where you submit invoices. And they use the e-B point of contact as the designee for that.

BOB BEATTIE: From the CCR.

THERESA SORRENTI: Right. So, I mean, that right there you see . . .

BOB BEATTIE: Well, CCR is being used for too many things. I mean, why should a business point-of-contact person in the grants office be authorizing somebody for Defense Department finance, like Steve rather than me doing all this embezzlement. Maybe he's trying to set up something.

THERESA SORRENTI: Yeah. I'm not sure why they chose to use the e-business point of contact for WAWF.

BOB BEATTIE: There's a whole . . . they're looking for one . . . place where they can get . . .

THERESA SORRENTI: No. But I mean of all the information in the record why they chose the e-business point of contact because . . .

BOB BEATTIE: It's an electronic system.

THERESA SORRENTI: Well, but that isn't necessarily somebody working with an invoice, as you've just indicated. So we can check on that because we know the program office for WAWF as well.

BOB BEATTIE: I think there is a plain old regular business point-of-contact person. I couldn't look at the CCR because I can't remember my TPIN.

STEVE DOWDY: But most of the agencies appear to always be using the e-business point of contact for all authorizations now. Grants.gov uses the e-business point of contact for authorizations. WAWF is using them, eSRS seems to be wanting to use them.

RON SPLITTGERBER: I wanted to let everyone know we're running a bit behind schedule. This is all very valuable information. So I wanted to make sure everybody could stick around a bit. John is willing to extend his stay. And I know Sandy had a couple of points on CCR yet too. So I know this topic is going to come up again, and since we have Theresa at hand, I think she has a couple more points to do. And I think if we don't have time for Sandy, we may be able to twist her arm to come back to the next meeting.

BOB BEATTIE: Can we get your e-mail so that we can do these things online instead of in the group?

THERESA SORRENTI: It's on the last slide. I think this segues into what Sandy is going to talk about in terms of what can be done if you have something that needs to change in CCR. We do validate. We have specific edits. There is an initial question, which I think you were talking about when we first came in, are you interested in contracts, grants or both. And we put that in intending to have the ability to edit things differently for grantees. That never happened. We were never asked to utilize that for anything.

As far as I know, all of the edits are applied across the board regardless of how they answer that. It does give the government agencies an opportunity to isolate who's interested in grants versus contracts in terms of their business flow, but it doesn't change the processing of the record.

So certainly, if you're having problems with certain edits and we need to key on that and edit differently, that's something we have the capability of doing. We have a configuration management process. We have one that overall applies across all of our system where we make sure something is not going to impact another system. If it's something unique to CCR, they have a functional requirements board that evaluates those.

So, and grants has representation there, so we certainly can accept change requests to add something only for grants, change and edit so that it treats it differently for a grantee. We're also doing some redesign of the website itself, so if you feel that from a grantee's perspective one section or one screen needs to be worded differently or it would be helpful if it looked totally different, that might be a little harder to do, but if there's any suggestions on that website, this would be a good time for you to submit those as well.

We do have, there was some discussion about special conditions, classified work and things of that nature. We have established some generic DUNS numbers on the acquisition side for some of those conditions, such as foreign, where it's impractical to get a DUNS number. There are thousands of DUNS numbers in the file already for foreign firms, but there are some situations, such as Navy ships refueling in ports around the world where they're not going to stop and ask the guy fueling the ship if he has a DUNS number.

So we have some generic numbers in there. They're identified as to what type, what category that's for, you know, this is for classified work, this is for foreign, where it's impractical, and so forth. There is some federal acquisition regulation changes in process that are going to spell out exactly how and when those are used. But those DUNS numbers do exist. They're in CCR right now. And it may be suitable for some of the special conditions that I saw discussed in the previous minutes. Be careful how you use them though because I'm the point of contact on all of them and I don't want to get calls on WAWF processing.

We have, on the acquisitions side, a central website that gets you access or links to all of our different systems. Earl and myself can be contacted at those numbers. We have a generic e-mail, integrated.acquisition@gsa.gov. To get to us directly, it's first name dot last name at gsa.gov, so that will work as well.

EARL WARRINGTON: Just so that you know, in your handout, the integrated.acquisition@gsa.gov is there.

RON SPLITTGERBER: Any questions?

SANDY SWAB: I was just going to go back and talk about a couple of things that we had discussed and Theresa brought them up in her slides. One of the things that we were exploring at one point was the fed . . . putting the secure information up. And this is something you might want to think about and at some point down the road, when classified, when contracts would come in with classified information with them, they've created a secure area to put information. Now I know some of the research that goes on may have this, you may want to consider having these attachments put there. And it can take all sorts and sizes of information . . .

THERESA SORRENTI: Couldn't they just ask for . . . they do CAD drawings . . .

SANDY SWAB: CAD drawings and the whole thing. The ORCA piece is what I think was the most interesting to use for terms and conditions, or I mean for certs and reps. I will say this. We did take a team over to Integrated Acquisition and they did demonstrate the ORCA piece to us. And at that time, it was Sheila Conley and a few of us from OMB.

And Sheila, at that point in time, really when she saw it she realized that this was a place where possibly the certs and reps could go. That has to be taken up with what is going on in the work groups and the PO106, 107 work groups, and I believe Mark Herbst is working on that.

TONY CAVATAIO: We were talking about that yesterday.

SANDY SWAB: So I know for a while there was some opposition to going in that route, but I think in the last year or so they've been thinking more about doing that. The other thing about past performance, that's an issue that, you know, it could be used, but it depends on how the grant community wants to approach past performance in general. The big one is the FPDSNG. Data is already in, data fields are already established, can be established, and they've been working on that for general basic management information.

And what this would do, if the grant information was put into the FPDSNG, it would be put into a relational database which the grant data is not in now. You would, the agencies, as Bob can point out, and he came over and did a fantastic presentation to Jerry Keffer from Census on telling why the agencies don't use the FADS database, because it doesn't give them the management information that they need. And I'm hot on this one.

Plus the other piece to it is, as soon as an award is made in the procurement framework, that information can be, as Theresa pointed out, from the CCR put into the FPDS database. Jerry, for FADS data, he can scoop it off. But what this gives you, it would give you access automatically, as soon as an award was made, if it went back through a central point, when an award was made, the agency shot that information into the FPDS database.

They're already doing it for procurement. It would not take them a lot of effort to move the grant piece in there. Every agency does procurement. And plus it would give you the contact of the contracting officer or the grants officer, who the PI is, who's the contact. It would give you the length of time. It would give you the total dollar value of that grant. It would also break it out by year, how much the expenditures are for that year. It would give the government much more control in terms of management information. It would also allow the public to have this information on a faster basis because of that requirement of going in as soon as that award is made.

RON SPLITTGERBER: And I think that's an issue with the state too, right? That they . . .

TONY CAVATAIO: Yeah, there's a letter right now that's getting ready to be sent to the, to OMB under the National Grants Partnership on the very point that Sandy is making.

SANDY SWAB: So, and the other side of it is . . . manage it. It would automatically go, as she pointed out. And I think that's worth looking into. I also believe that another item for this to happen to push it is to have the awards go back through Grants.gov as a central point. But those are my points.

I think the main thing is the certs and reps getting standardized and put in one place, and to be done annually would be a great big help to the grantees and getting the data back and forth between. I know there are other issues with the DUNS and stuff, but I also would suggest that it's probably time for the government to spearhead another good communication effort to the various communities.

We're working with the states on this. Through the NGP actually we're working through the states, with the states to, with Dun & Bradstreet to help them clean up that, their trees. And I think the research community, the university community could be part of that. And I think it would be, have OMB and the various organizations to come out with a good communication package on how the business process should happen with the establishment of the DUNS and the CCR.

RON SPLITTGERBER: Sandy, I apologize, I may have missed it. What does the acronym FPDS stand for?

SANDY SWAB: FPDS is the Federal Procurement Data System, NG, New Generation. And it's a relational database, so that you can go in and have fun with it.

RON SPLITTGERBER: Thank you very much.

STEVE DOWDY: Can I ask with your former OMB, because I'd asked this question before and it didn't get answered and then somebody tried to answer it in writing and they skirted the issue. So as I was looking at something, the eSRS system, which is the new thing for doing the subcontract reporting, and the current SF 294 and 295, they expired last May, and they haven't been cleared yet through OMB. And so when I wrote and said, since the forms haven't been cleared, I assume that relieves us of the requirement for reporting. Of course, I was being a little facetious, okay.

But they wrote back and said, well, since we have a new electronic system, we don't need OMB clearance anymore for this, so it shows you how much the person that I was talking to, but, so I just was out at eSRS looking at something because I thought the e-business point of contact did have to and you don't have to authorize for eSRS. So Theresa was right there. But it says that the Department of Defense is delayed and is not going to use eSRS just yet. So what forms do we use to do SF 294's if there is no government-cleared form for that data collection?

SANDY SWAB: . . .

STEVE DOWDY: But who should be clearing that form?

SANDY SWAB: It should have come in through their, the DOD process, I believe, or, I mean, they're doing the electronic piece of it right now, right?

STEVE DOWDY: Who?

SANDY SWAB: DOD.

STEVE DOWDY: No. But it says here that DOD is delayed and they're not going to do eSRS yet. It's on their fact sheet on eSRS. So we have to use an electronic system for everything else except for, and then, of course, now they're saying for your subs and everything, we need to put the DUNS number with all of them, so I know all of you . . .

SANDY SWAB: That's for procurement, because, wow.

STEVE DOWDY: . . . for procurement . . . we do it for grants . . .

SANDY SWAB: No, no, no, no, I know what you're talking about and I was like, I was translating it into the grants because we didn't ask for that.

STEVE DOWDY: Only the EPA as far as I know requires it on grants.

SANDY SWAB: Right, right. I would use the old forms. And it should have been coming in through the . . . for clearance. That's where it should have been coming from.

STEVE DOWDY: But, you know, again, on the DUNS, you know, they were saying that they're going to want us to have DUNS numbers, so I know all of you have DUNS numbers for all of your second- and third-tier awards, right, to be able to do your 294 reporting online now.

SANDY SWAB: But that's not for grants. It's not for grants. It's for procurement.

STEVE DOWDY: Yeah . . . $100 million of contracts that we have to deal with.

SANDY SWAB: I know, I know. That was the other reason of going through the CCR. You guys are already in it.

RON SPLITTGERBER: We have a few folks that have another engagement at 3:00, and so I'd like to give John some time to cover the Grants.gov issues and new information that's coming online.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: I know Becky is on, some latest information is Becky is, for those of you who don't know, Becky Spitzgo is on a five-month rotation. It's with a SES candidate development program. So she's working for HRSA right now through the end of May. This is her first week out. So I get to come and do these kinds of reports on her behalf.

So, but I would also like to introduce to my left Russ Wyland. You all know Pete. Pete Brunner as retired officially a couple weeks ago, and Russ has come over from the National Endowment for the Humanities to work in our office and to cover some of what Pete used to cover, which is system-to-system, applicant . . . system-to-system functionality, as well as our e-authentication effort and some of the work we're doing with agencies. So you'll be hearing from Russ and seeing Russ. If you have questions along those lines, system-to-system specifically, definitely send a note to him. Is it Russ or Russell . . . the e-mail is russell.wyland@hhs.gov. And you can find that on our web page as well.

So what's new here? We have an update. Becky is gone but not gone. And, of course, we had our merge December 19th. To give you a little bit of history, this merge was supposed to have happened a year ago. Didn't happen because of just procurement. We had contractors, it's a long story. These two systems were developed separately. Finally got a contractor in and the schedule was to be October 31st. And they went to merge and we were not satisfied with the results on the search functionality. It was just coming back a little slow, a little unpredictable.

And so we backed up and redid it, and then December 19th it happened. The results on search are quick now, 200 milliseconds or something like that. But we're fine tuning on some of the relevancy factoring and some of that. We're fine tuning that to make sure that that is exactly what we want. And some quoted strings that weren't behaving correctly that I think those by the end of the week will be done. So we're still working on just stabilizing that.

There are some things agency side that popped up when we got everything merged, we realized, hey, this isn't working or that looks funny, and so we're just kind of cleaning house on that, nothing major. In fact, we've been probably as busy as ever. In the first three months of the year, October through December, we received more application submissions than we did all of last year, about 16,000, 17,000. We expect, our goal this year was 45,000. We may hit 60,000, 65,000 this year, submission, so it's coming along. A lot of help from NIH, by the way.

They did, yeah, we had, oh, I forget numbers, but something along the lines of 1,400 in one day, which was the most we ever had, and 3,500, 4,000 in a week. So that was good. Those were not huge applications, but, well, there were a few. Somehow, I don't know how, in one grant opportunity, we have applications ranging from 450, from half a meg to 120 megs. I mean, they were all over the place. But it's all in how you put it together. So anyway, that's where we are in the merge. And we did have, we do have the Citrix application. Are you Bob, by the way, from Michigan?

BOB BEATTIE: Yes.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Bob over here helped us out on testing for this Citrix server, and maybe you can give us a little feedback on what your thoughts were. Initially what I've seen is it's worked. We're going to bolster it up a little bit. I know there were some people who had some wait times that were unacceptable and I'm not sure what the times were, but I heard up to ten minutes just waiting for the thing. So we're working with NIH now to throw a little more power at that to get that down to something more acceptable. But it does work.

You can work the package, fill it out, save it on your own machine, and submit it through that, which is very different than the emulator experience or even the pilot we did some time ago where you can only fill it out and then you had to go through someone who had a non-Mac machine. So that's sort of our abridged solution for the non-Windows machines to get us through hopefully about a year from now, when PureEdge comes up with their platform independent viewer. They're supposed to have that done November of this year. And then we're going to need a little time to play with it and test it, make sure it's working with our forms.

So I'm meeting with PureEdge the week after next just to get a little status report on that. We're keeping pretty close tabs on it since IBM acquired them, and from what I've seen, it seems positive. IBM is really going, they're hoping to leverage this and we're one of their larger customers obviously, so they want to make sure that it happens. They did, in fact, put some pressure to tie that commitment to November. The best we were getting before was sometime between November '06 and May '07, and they did at least say, okay, guaranteed we'll have it in your hands November '06.

STEVE DOWDY: What exactly does that mean, a platform independent viewer?

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: I'm sorry. You can use it with the PureEdge . . .

STEVE DOWDY: I know what platform independent . . .

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Yeah. It's just that PureEdge viewer right now doesn't work with Macintosh, Linux. It's just Windows.

STEVE DOWDY: Are they going to rewrite the whole thing in Java or something like that?

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Yeah. That's what they're doing. That's what they're doing.

BOB BEATTIE: It will still be just click on the application and it opens or do you have to go to a website and go over . . .

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: No, no, no, no. It'll work like the PureEdge viewer now does. It's just that it will work on any machine basically, so the same process. You won't have to, like right now, maybe you're probably more familiar with the process with the Citrix now, if you want to give us just a quick overview of what your thoughts were.

BOB BEATTIE: Sure. It's good in the middle and it's bad on the ends. By that I mean, once you get the file open, it works just like it would on a Windows machine, except you have to, you do your copy from your Mac with your Mac copy commands, which is your apple+C, but you have to paste into the Citrix version with your control+C.

And if you use the apple command to do the paste, you erase what's in the copy, and so then you have to go back because the people are going to be accustomed to doing that. I think there needs to be a note in the instructions. But that's the only problem I had in the middle. And the end of the process, it times out in ten minutes. That's just unacceptable. It cannot time out. People get a phone call and you lose all your data. You have to completely log out and then log back in again.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: This is what we're addressing with NIH now. It was timing out because it was waiting for memory to come available. And so we're going to put some more memory . . .

BOB BEATTIE: You get a message that says enter a password if you want to get back or you could give people a password to use.

RON SPLITTGERBER: John, there's another issue with that too, and that's after ten minutes of inactivity, it logs you off. So they're both . . .

BOB BEATTIE: That's what I meant . . . if you just sit there, it'll go out.

JOHN MCBRIDE: It locks your account actually. It just locked the screen.

BOB BEATTIE: Yeah. The screen just turned black, and if . . .

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: That's probably something we're going to need to work with NIH to set, the ten minutes . . .

BOB BEATTIE: I didn't test that part of it because I was just sort of looking at how to actually fill out the forms. I didn't take it from start to finish. But I was doing a demo of showing people how great, we now have the Citrix, and it kept locking out and . . .

RON SPLITTGERBER: Also, John, the version of the viewer, the last we checked, I don't know if we had the correct path, the version of the viewer that's on that Citrix platform isn't the one that allows the SRO to do the submit through the Citrix platform.

BOB BEATTIE: Although I asked the guys, the Northrop guys about it. Northrop, is that the right, I asked them, and I said are you using the same system that's in there, and they say, yeah, we got it to work.

RON SPLITTGERBER: If you look at the version, it's much older . . .

BOB BEATTIE: Yeah, I know. We have submitted . . .

RON SPLITTGERBER: Anyway, the version isn't current. The version of PureEdge viewer isn't current with the . . .

BOB BEATTIE: I'll have to check that, double check that, because maybe I was using something else. And the front end, it's very cumbersome to understand. The instructions were not written by somebody who uses Macs. So there's talk about C drives, besides the grammar is bad. I mean, there's typographical errors. I would not want to own those instructions.

I think you need to have some technical writer take those instructions. Some of the windows don't agree. You click on the button, it says download the Citrix program, and you get a different window than what's in that instruction. I mean, I don't think anybody really followed the instructions as a writer. I think those programmer guys sort of wrote this . . .

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Well, we'll make sure we get our . . . people in, as well as the tech people. And you were probably working with Keenan and James.

BOB BEATTIE: Yes, exactly. Right, right.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Keenan has mentioned there were problems with the instructions. And I think we've learned a lot of lessons this last, this past . . .

BOB BEATTIE: But I think, you know, we started like here and now we're here.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Yeah. It's getting there. And it's definitely a step ahead of what we had before, and we're hoping to get to the final step soon. And the question with PureEdge is some of the other things about existing versions of forms. We want a guarantee from them that this viewer is going to work when we get it. So that's where we're going next. But this is, it's a step there. And I think that to the waiting period we can definitely address that, and that's, in fact, in the works. That's going to happen very quickly.

BOB BEATTIE: Right. And the instruction. As I say, get somebody who uses Macs to write the instructions.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: We even got some Macs, so . . .

BOB BEATTIE: I had to get a PC to use the Grants.gov a year ago.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Architecture, we are working on an architecture upgrade merely, merely, for the sole purpose of capacity. We last year, last year you probably heard we had some problems. We got hit simultaneously with everything. There was a DOS attack and then there was just some tremendous volume. We had these people from HUD sending gigabyte-and-a-half applications that, well, we don't know if we could take it or not because they couldn't get them off their machines.

But there were just these giant things coming in constantly. And we weren't, frankly, built for that. And so we've done some things in the interim that when we had the heaviest hit with the NIH SBIR program, we peaked somewhere around 50 percent CPU utilization, but for the most part, it was in the 30, 35. It got up that high. So it wasn't bad. We'd like it to be lower than that. And that's what we're working on. And we know maybe starting in April, definitely May, June, July, we're going to have a lot of volume. So we've got between now and then to really get this done, and that's where our focus is going to be between now and April.

On top of that, we have some e-authentication things that we have to do, OMB milestones, that that's really what's our focus now in this time that is relatively slow. We don't have slow times like we had a year, two years ago, simply because there's so much more activity. We had, the OMB requirement of posting 25 percent of your packages on Grants.gov has now gone up to 75 percent this year and it'll go up to 100 percent next year, so there are a lot more people out there doing things and discovering different ways to do things that we have to figure out with also. But it's actually going pretty smoothly.

We had an issue, Steve, that we spoke about, the form-in-form, and I don't know if you got my message today, if you've had a chance to check out your e-mail. The problem here, and I'm going to try to characterize this, and correct me if I go astray. The applicant system-to-system, when we're using the sub-award budget form, that sub-award, a potential sub-awardee can't, maybe they don't have access to the system, to get them to fill out that sub-award budget is problematic. Right now you're having them fill out a PureEdge form and then manually entering it?

STEVE DOWDY: No.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Or just not doing it?

STEVE DOWDY: We can't do system-to-system.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Okay. So an alternative is just to do manual entry on their behalf, which is certainly not ideal. So the objective, the idea is have them fill out a PureEdge form and we can through web services, what looks like the best way to go, get that to Grants.gov. We generate that XML file and return it to you, and you then compile those things into your package and send it to us. That's what we're shooting for. It's not a major undertaking, but it's not a minor one either.

But with all the architecture upgrades and so forth, we're hoping to get this done by May. Another reason May is, we don't want to get it done on one system and then have to redo it for the new architecture, so it's going to sort of happen all together. I think it's, obviously it's very important.

We have a couple of form-in-a-form type forms now and that's likely to increase in the future. Right now we have one with NASA that's going to be R&R for key personnel, key-person forms, where you can add up to something like 40 names of people on a project, and that will be form-in-form, much simpler than the budget, by the way.

So those things are going to happen. It's unavoidable, and we really hate to just chop you short because that budget is there and it's going to be around. Hopefully May is soon enough and it will get you some time. We'll be working with Mike Stein at Northrop Grumman. They're already on it and they're putting together the project plan. Did I capture that . . .

STEVE DOWDY: Yeah, that, we anticipated that it'll take us probably 200 hours of programming as well to do the work on our end. The estimates . . .

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Do you have to do much of that simultaneously or do you have to wait . . .

STEVE DOWDY: Yeah. We'll just doctor up a dummy XML file or we'll get Brian or Mark or someone to send us a completed one just as a dummy to use, because we obviously have the issue now of how to take an XML stream and insert another XML stream and keeping all the hash values straight and all of that other mess that's going to go along with it.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: And something, as I think about this, there's another issue that I've heard brought up before, that I think this gets us a step closer to this idea of when your organization does submit a PureEdge application to us, wouldn't it be nice if you could get back the XML file for that whole package. And I think we're getting close to something like a web service there to eliminate that need for someone to manually enter it into your own system.

And I know I worked at a college before where that's all, you just had someone, and errors happen whenever you have data entry. So, and this is more easily manipulated. So I think that's not far away from us either. I'm not going to commit to a time on that yet, but it's definitely there.

BOB BEATTIE: Is that related to the issue also, which I think is a big flaw, let me start by saying there are a lot of people in our grants office that like Grants.gov. One of our grants officers said, you know, I really like this Grants.gov.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: I'm waiting for the comma but . . .

BOB BEATTIE: There's a lot of people that like it, no, I just wanted you to know that this is, you'll hear a lot of complaints, but in general, it's good. I think people are happy at Michigan with it. I've been in a lot of demos and I'm going to do some more when I get back. So when we give you comments, it's like, again, you know, we're getting closer to the final point and so don't think everything is negative, please.

You now, so now the but. We've got to be able to see an application before we submit it or after we submit it to the sponsor. Why is it that NIH can make a PDF version of it that we can view as an entity, but we can't get that until we send it to NIH? Why can't we get either a completely printable, although I'm trying to get away from a paper office. I don't even give people handouts anymore. I just give them websites.

But it should be possible before we submit, when the whole thing is compiled, we hit the save, there should be a button that says display and we can see the whole thing as a total entity with the pages in pages and forms in forms and the whole thing. Currently, even if you try to print the whole thing, you can't get a lot of the attachments printed. And I would think that this may be a really big problem, but NIH can do it once it gets there. So somehow you guys need to, again, work with NIH or, well, you're at NIH, but the Citrix was a great collaborative effort. Now let's have a collaborative effort to allow for a display function.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: We have had, part of the challenge is when you have that PureEdge package completed and assembled, it's not a complete product. We take it and process it behind the scenes here and make it available to the agencies. A couple ways we can do this. First, after you submit, and we're playing with this idea of making it available too. When the agencies get it from us, they have a choice. They can pull an XML file, PDF version or both.

And some agencies, they don't have backend systems, so they're just doing PDF. Social Security is an example. They pull them all and they print them all, not quite paperless the way we'd like. You know, we've got paperless all the way up to the door and then they print it all. But, you know, they're a step away.

The challenge now is get that back to you, where you log in with your user ID or password and, by the way, when you go on and log, check the status. Let's say your university has got 15 applications pending with Grants.gov and you're looking for one, and you can't figure out which one of these 15 it is. We're changing that screen to include the title of the project that you gave it, as well as the federal dollars requested.

And I, gosh, I can never remember dates, but that's coming soon to, gosh, when is that coming. I want to say that'll be by March 1. But anyway, that's happening. That was actually, that was a recommendation we had from plenty of you, but specifically from Texas A&M, they printed up something and said can you do this and we said we can do this.

BOB BEATTIE: Let me add a footnote to that. I wasn't going to mention this but I will because it's so related to that. How about including that information into all four of the follow-up messages? The first message gives you the title of the file.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: I've got all kinds of good news for you.

BOB BEATTIE: The next message, the next three messages are almost meaningless when you've got 20 of them coming back.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: What we've done, I'm not very good at focusing, so I'm going to finish the first thought first. On that page also, ideally what we'd like is for you to be able to click and get the PDF version or perhaps the XML version also so there it is for you. We've got it. We just need to make it accessible to you. And, of course, security, we don't want anybody else to get it. But that's easy. I mean, you're already logging in now to get that information. So that's one of those things coming down the road.

We just, I keep talking about this architecture. It's just really draining all the resources we have to get this done because it is a really intense project, but we'll be there. So that's coming. Oh, the message. We have gone through, and you've probably seen some of our e-mail messages were clearly written by IT people. And I promise you, they're accurate. But our communications people are shaking their head a little bit.

We've gone through and printed up every one of those system-generated e-mails, and we are just ripping them apart. And just to clarify, what is this, everyone will have that whole bit of information, the opportunity, the funding number, a funding opportunity number, a tracking number, all of that stuff is going to be in each one of those messages, as well as in the subject line on the e-mail, because a lot of, if it's not mine, I'm not going to open it, or I know who to forward it to, you know, because you may have one person who's routing all the e-mail for your organization, because we send it to one address.

So that is definitely going to happen. We're looking for, probably in February, a hatch to take care of all the e-mail messages. So we're doing a little bit of housecleaning on that kind of stuff. These are, some of these messages have been unchanged since day one, and we have changed significantly since day one and we're catching up on those kinds of things.

BOB BEATTIE: The applicant's number, internal number, is a really great piece of data that beats everything, the one that's in the upper right-hand corner of the 424.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Oh, okay.

BOB BEATTIE: I don't know if that's on the regular 424. On the 42 R&R. I think it's on both. It says applicant's own number, you know, a number that the, the one that we give it. We give it a number ourselves.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Yeah. Well, we're doing it, there's a title. There are two boxes. I think box 11, it was a title and we thought, oh, this will be great, but it's got like 300 characters and that's going to crowd it out. So there's another one, and we may be talking about the same box. It's an identification that you give to that specific proposal.

BOB BEATTIE: Right, right. That's it.

KEN FORSTMEIER: That's more important than anything.

GUNTA LIDERS: Yeah . . .

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: And it does get tangled up. Because I know when, if we get an agency number, we'll include it in the e-mail, but not all, some agencies, several agencies will use our tracking number as their tracking number, particularly those who didn't have systems prior to Grants.gov. They said why create our own, we've already got one.

BOB BEATTIE: As long as we're on the topic of messages coming back, there's a very long message that comes back when somebody wants to become an AOR, because we sent out a long message to folks saying get ready for Grants.gov, it's coming, sign up for our e-mail list so you can get info about Grants.gov. Three or four people then went to Grants.gov and tried to sign up, tried to register.

So I get a message, because I'm the person who assigns AORs, somebody tried to become an AOR, here's a long, long, long, long, and never in the whole message does it tell me that person's name. I have to go open the system, get into it, find that person, and delete them from the system. And if you don't delete them, you keep getting a message every couple days. So is it possible to put the name of the person? It shows up very nicely in the status screen.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Yeah, I'll look at that. That may be one of those listed I've talked about that we're already working on. And another thing, we have found that people have, I'm first to admit, our registration process is not fun. Let's just put it that way. A lot of steps, you've got to go to, I think it's five external, you've got DUNS, CCR, now CCR jumps over to IRS, ORC, and finally you get to us, but then it's got to go back.

Oddly enough, people have no trouble getting through that. Ninety-plus percent of the people who stumble and on submission day they don't get through is because the e-business point of contact has not approved it. And so many of these people say I don't even know who that is. And . . .

BOB BEATTIE: . . . submitting.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Well, and very often they are the e-business point of contact and they don't eve know it.

BOB BEATTIE: Oh, I see. There, yeah, we had that whole discussion about e-business point of contact in the CCR.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Well, what we're going to do now is this message that you're talking about, we can clean it up, but it's also going to go cc to the person who's trying to get this done, because many times the e-business point of contact is retired, promoted, died, vacation, is just not checking e-mail, whatever, and they just don't get to it in time. So at least they're cc'd and we're going to put the message in there that says this person cannot apply for a grant until you respond to this, you know, big flashing letters, the whole thing. So that's another improvement that'll come up real quick. Any other questions? I think I've . . .

KEN FORSTMEIER: John, you said February for that?

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Our target for the patch for all of these messages is sometime in February, so I'm going to say by the end of February you should see those.

KEN FORSTMEIER: 2006?

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: That's right. Now I've got to get back to work.

KEN FORSTMEIER: I just like to firm that up sometimes.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Researchers are a tough group. Let's see here, form in a form. You know, there's, 7C here, I'm not sure, identify duplicate data requests and apply, are we talking about on multiple forms asking the same question?

RON SPLITTGERBER: Right. I think everyone needs to remember that John is dealing with two sides of the coin. One is the agency side and the other is the applicant side. And, you know, we on the applicant side see phone numbers in multiple places in an application, and it'd be nice to work through Grants.gov with the agencies to take information that's duplicated and provide that in one instances for an application.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Yeah. And that drives you insane. Not long ago, getting my kids enrolled in a school, I had to put my name and address on nine forms to get the kid in the school, and it just drives you insane. Our goal is streamlining these things. And we regularly get, an agency says, well, here's this form we need.

An example, not long ago, 28 data elements, 24 of them were on an existing form, and no way, no how this form will work for us. And, you know, we got it, but it's just a waste of your time. It's a waste of our time. And with the capabilities we have with forward-populating within PureEdge and with the agency then doing whatever they want with the data when they get it, there's no reason for it. We comb through these things. We've just upgraded our global schema and the way we build these forms to avoid that.

And we check them through, but if there's anything, if you've got a specific example, just feel free to send it to me and we'll clean them up as we clean things up. We can't change forms too frequently because of everybody else now has to change the system that connects to it, but just to give applicants a break in having to fill the same information out repeatedly, it's worthwhile. All right. Repository for basic grantee information. I'm not sure that's the Grants.gov. Was that the, like the national database of . . .

RON SPLITTGERBER: Yeah. There are issues that may end up downstream being a Grants.gov function. One of them, we talked about replication of information or the reps and certs, as universities call them, if there's a place where agencies can obtain that data, either through Grants.gov or through, you know, the CCR website so that it doesn't have to be in every application. Obviously that's another efficiency that . . .

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Let me tell you, right now we've got the blessing of OMB for find and apply. Originally reporting was part of the deal and they pulled it off before I ever came around. I'm not sure why, but they just said this isn't the time, get the rest of it going first. Reporting reared its head again, and the Executive Board said hold on. Actually they said we need to research this more.

There was an on-the-table proposal for Grants.gov to do this. HHS was going to put up the money for it. And so they said hold on, let's back up, and they're doing some research on this. And I think probably by the end of February they're going to have a decision. So this is an Executive Board and an OMB call.

And frankly, I don't know the mechanics of it, but it's probably an Executive Board recommendation to OMB. But, and the same with the awards database. That'd be a really easy one for us to do. Basically just take our find functionality and call it an awards database and change the interface. It's the same functionality, where agencies post this information out there that's now available to the world.

BOB MACDONALD: I guess I'd ask though, I'm not sure, for the certs and reps, I don't see it as a reporting process. I would maybe even link that into the registration process.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Yeah, okay. That's a different thing there. I'm just talking about, if we're going to grow the project, if the scope changes, it's not our call necessarily to do that, but the board listens to other voices certainly. Certs and reps, yeah, anything like that where you've got to just, it's repeatable through anything you're going to apply for so why repeat it. I mean, that makes sense. To have a central repository for that where you have access to it to update date is certainly . . .

BOB MACDONALD: I guess I would ask though, because it seems to me from what we just saw from Theresa that the certs and reps might be low-hanging fruit, seeing as that's already there in the Integrated Acquisition environment for procurements.

SANDY SWAB: Yeah, it's already there. I mean, and it was already explored when Shelia Conley was there. I mean, it's already been explored.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: What are we missing to get there?

SANDY SWAB: Basically we want, basically you're missing the buy-in from the work group to put them there. And it's already been explored. And as you saw earlier today, you know, with the ORCA and the integrated environment, it would be just as if they would register on an annual basis, they'd put their certs and reps up there. But it's getting the buy-in from the PO 106, 107 work group.

I think that it's, possibly now there is some thought about that, that they wanted to establish standard terms and conditions and everything else all at the same time, and they wanted to have it done a certain way. But this environment exists and it needs to be revisited to look at it to see where some of these, you can get some of these economy of scale going so that you're not putting up a cost if it's already out there somewhere, you know.

TONY CAVATAIO: . . . award database too . . .

SANDY SWAB: Well, the other issue is, and one of the things while I was at OMB and we had been talking about was to put the, because the FAS data is not in a relational database, bottom line. And it only gets the obligation data. Was to, because all agencies do the same work, they put their procurement data in as soon as they make the award, NASA and the State Department and the Department of Interior were working with the integrated environment to create the data elements for grants in the FPDSNG.

And that, some of that work has already been done. And on top of that, since the agencies are already doing it for procurement, it would be an easy requirement for them to move into the grants and put it there. And then the FPDS data is available for public, or it could be sucked off by components that want to have it, you know, posted in a certain environment. I mean, I think these are options that need to be explored and worked out.

RON SPLITTGERBER: John, could you follow through on that point a minute just so that we're all aware of how that process might work? If it appears a logical choice that the CCR is the place that would contain the reps and certs information, but yet it's a part of an application process for various agencies, how do you get from having that available, if the decision is made to have it available in CCR, to eliminating it from the forms that the agencies need to on the backend and having that information? Is that a Grants.gov function, that you guys would go in and pull it from CCR or is that an agency function on the backend that they need to go . . .

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Well, you can build it any way you want. Right now, you know, the agency builds that package and they want to put that form in there or they don't. That's their choice. It could go either way. And, you know, immediately my mind says what's more efficient is to have one do it. But until you're getting to the point that 100 percent of applications are submitted through electronic, then they're going to have to have it anyway. So that's the challenge.

And you get like a Department of State or some of these that are international and they, you know, they have different issues, but I guess that's another part of the discussion. We could do it. You know, we pull an extract from the CCR daily now, but this would have to be real time, we get that application in, we have to connect it right now and then go. And part of that is, very much of that depends on CCR. So, I mean, we were hoping that this IRS TIN matching was going to be real time, and that was what they call near real time. And it's going better now, but it's 24 to 48 hours. And when someone tries to start registering today for an application they need to submit Friday, they're out of luck.

SANDY SWAB: That holds up the application for 48 hours.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Up to. They say up to. And it started out, it was going beautifully, but then they had some problem and it took some people a week. But they're going again. It seems to be going well. But it just stretches that registration process out one more, two more days, and it's another step. It's just very complex.

RON SPLITTGERBER: Any other questions? Thank you, John . . .

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Yeah, sorry. We have, Executive Board is always from 10:00 to 12:00, but this month, for whatever reason, it was 11:00 to 1:00 . . . well, then I went to the wrong building. And then we got to the building, went to the wrong room. There's another group over there. But we found you.

TONY CAVATAIO: John . . . Grants Executive Board, did I understand you correctly to say that they are going to do more research on the issue of putting reports into Grants.gov? Did I understand that correctly?

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Not necessarily Grants.gov. They just looked at reporting, whether it be through Grants.gov, yeah, electronic reporting or some other . . . this Executive Board used to be called the Grants.gov Executive Board, but it's now Grants Executive Board. It's the . . . line of business and it's grown, so we don't just talk about ourselves anymore.

SANDY SWAB: But they are actually overseeing the GMLOB.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: GMLOB and the Grants Policy Committee, which is on the other side, is there monthly to give us an update on what they're doing as well.

TONY CAVATAIO: Is it your understanding that the Grants Policy Committee is reporting to the GEB and recommending to the GEB what they think should be considered?

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: They don't report, they're on, I think it's . . . they don't, no, they're just there as sort of a, I don't know how you say it. They report out, they just give us updates, frankly. That's what it is. They're not, they don't have members on the board voting or otherwise. They're just there for reporting out and doing communication between the two.

TONY CAVATAIO: Okay. Then who gives the GEB feedback on the results of work groups and surveys and things that have been developed and presented to the Grants Policy Committee so that information gets back to the GEB?

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: They're on the agenda every month, you know, whether they're, if they're not reporting something they should be, I would not know.

BOB BEATTIE: I have one little tiny thing as long as I've got you here. I want to ask you this. And I won't say anything tomorrow or whenever you make the FDP presentation. I got a message from somebody today who said that they have to do a Department of Justice application and they require Grants.gov and they also want a hard copy. Can we tell that person or can I contact the Department of Justice person and say you can't ask for both? You know . . . you can only do Grants.gov, because they can't print it out, which is a problem.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: The answer to the question, yes, you can call them, but if they're saying we need this, you might send it before you call them.

BOB BEATTIE: You see, the problem is that we print it, it's not going to be the same thing that they're going to get electronically.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Well, you know, it's interesting. One agency that shall remain unnamed requires 20 hard copies. And now they wanted people to submit electronically 20 times. They have 20 hard copies required, but I think they got over that one. There's just that mentality that paper is concrete and people are going to have to get past it.

BOB MACDONALD: They're going to mix themselves up. We actually are trying to forbid people from submitting both, because what happens is you do run into exactly that issue, and we're sitting here saying, well, which one do we work with.

BOB BEATTIE: Exactly.

BOB MACDONALD: And so . . .

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: And you don't know that it's the same submission. That's the thing, you don't know. We have people submit seven, eight times through Grants.gov and agencies just say we're taking the last one, forget the rest of them, because, you know, you don't know what's changed.

BOB BEATTIE: Well, maybe you could at your next meeting with all the agencies say that you had a complaint from a major university unnamed that didn't think people should have to do both. You know, it's like wearing a belt and suspenders.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: Well, I agree. I certainly agree. And I'll talk with, actually the chairman of the Grants Executive Board is from Justice, and he's a reasonable guy, so I'll throw it at him. If you could let me know the program . . .

BOB BEATTIE: I'm going to find the actual program. I didn't do that yet because I just got that message.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: E-mail that to me. We'll get it.

BOB BEATTIE: Yeah, I already sent you one, but I'll send you another.

JOHN ETCHEVERRY: You know, it's probably, probably someone just wants to save themselves the copying time. A lot of them will copy them for reviewers rather than e-mail or whatever.

RON SPLITTGERBER: Great. I want to thank John for filling us in. I also wanted to remind the EGBF that there's a cycle of four meetings for this group. The one that is not held in conjunction with the regular FDP meeting is the one where FDP holds their meeting away from D.C. That happens to be the next meeting.

And so we're proposing, and we haven't cleared this with everyone yet, but the next EGBF meeting will be here in D.C. on May the 5th. And before everyone leaves, I wanted to get your input on if that might be a bad time because, again, it's open at this point. We can, you know, move it. But, again, there's an off-cycle meeting that we've agreed to hold for a year and generally the off-cycle one that is from FDP. The next FDP meeting, if you haven't heard, is going to be held in Seattle May 22nd and 23rd, I believe. And so . . .

RON SPLITTGERBER: I'd like to thank everyone for attending. We'll have a report during the regular ERA session at FDP at 1:00 tomorrow. And I'm counting, since Bob and I were in and out trying to bring things together, we missed some of the testimony, so we're going to count on you folks that attended to keep us honest. We'll attempt to relate what happened here at that meeting. But please help us, especially on the DUNS/CCR issue. I missed a part of that. So thank you everyone, and we'll see you at the reception this afternoon. Thank you.