

NIH eRA Items of Interest — October 2016

Prior Approval – \$500K



A principal investigator (PI) needs to seek prior approval from the NIH before submitting a grant application with direct costs of \$500K or more for a single budget year.

NIH has been developing a way to provide you with an option to electronically submit these prior approval requests through eRA Commons. And effective Sept. 15, this option is a reality.

Here is how it works:

The Invite to Initiate a \$500K Request

The PI will reach out via email or phone to the Program Official at the Institute/Center (IC) with whom they have been working concerning the \$500K request, per current practice. The PO can then choose to invite the PI to initiate the prior approval request through eRA Commons. The initiation of the request will trigger an email notification to the PI and to the email address listed for receiving the Notice of Award (NoA) on the Institutional Profile screen.

PI Action

Upon being notified, the PI will go into eRA Commons and go to the Prior Approval tab along the top navigation menu. The PI will find two options and should click *List my Requests*. The PI will find the \$500K Request under the column Request Type, with a status of “In Progress PI,” and should click the “Modify” link.

The Prior Approval Request \$500K screen will open. The screen is pretty straightforward with a few required fields, such as Project Title, FOA number, and Anticipated Submission Date. The PI will need to provide a short justification (just 500 characters) for the request, with up to 10 supporting documents allowed. Depending on the business processes of the institution, the PI can route the request to the SO for review, or submit directly to NIH.

SO Action

Since the notice to submit the prior approval request is sent to the NoA address as well, the SO should login to eRA Commons and go to the Prior Approval tab. SOs should use the *Search for Requests* button and select the \$500K Request under the Request Type drop down. The SO has the ability to view the request, or if they choose, recall it, thus giving them the ability to modify it and submit it.

Next Steps

If the request is approved by the Program Official at the IC, the PI will receive an email from the Program Official. When the error free application is received by NIH, this application will be matched with the \$500k approval from the IC and the application will move through the normal process.

For the moment, this is an option for the submission of \$500K requests. However, as we continue to move from all paper processes to a formal electronic environment, this option may become a requirement as we seek solutions that provide accountability, transparency and improved reporting capabilities.

There are other features (status and history), which you can read about in the [Prior Approval section of the eRA Commons Online Help](#).

For more information, please see [Guide Notice NOT-OD-17-005](#).

Also, coming soon will be two new [video tutorials](#) on Prior Approval. One focuses on the request to withdraw an application, and the second demonstrates the process of \$500K requests as described above.