

**Work-Flow Working Group**  
**Inaugural meeting, October 10, 2016, 1:00 pm**

Attending: Gwen Epling (chair person), Tammy Williams, Rachel Simpson, Leigh Stephens, Ginger Phillabaum, Darren May. Absent: Gina Bailey.

The first question was, where do we start? We are implementing a new cover form for proposals to be sent to OSP. We have decided that the Plus-7s will submit theirs through the new cover form.

Electronic - There was some discussion about what exactly Martha wants to happen – when do we switch to electronic? With new funds? Or can we switch over with a mod? Gwen stated that Martha said when we get a mod, we should check each page to make sure it is in Xtender, then we can shred the paper file. Gwen will ask Martha for clarification.

Paper - Leigh said lately we are having trouble finding paper files, and it feels like we're spinning our wheels. Gwen said electronic files are very quick, once you get used to it. There are no "holding" piles.

Electronic - Leigh said that so few people use Xtender, and Darren doesn't like it, said there should be a more efficient way to use it. He prints the files in Xtender to PDF and saves them to his computer in order to go through them. Leigh suggested we have some training in Xtender.

Electronic - Currently we get proposals from the Plus-7s via OSP scan, paper, regular mail, individuals sending them directly to contract administrators via email.

Paper - It was suggested that we write down the work flow we have now.

Electronic - For the electronic files, we log them in, then save them plus the emails to the network drive. We then combine the files, and print to PDF to make the file smaller, and then we import that file to Xtender. We have to be careful with any file with signatures, and print it to PDF so signatures are not lost.

Electronic - Ginger said when she is finished with the files, she sends them to Gene for his signature, and sends them to get a cover form number (usually at the same time as it is going to Gene), then distributes, then puts that file in a specific folder on the network drive. Some files are separated, some are combined. The only real reason to separate them (by component, for example: award, budget, JV, etc.) is so we can easily fix problems.

Leigh asked if we ever run the risk of running out of space on the network drive. Gwen doesn't know, but supposes we could ask for more space if needed, or archive some of the old files in a different manner. Leigh asked if electronic proposals stay on the network drive until awarded, and then are put in Xtender if awarded? Gwen said we tossed around the question of should we save space in Xtender, since only about 25% of proposals are funded. Which will be the best way - to keep electronic proposals in Xtender, or on the R drive, until funded?

Leigh said CGA (Contracts & Grants Accounting) does have access to Xtender, but we (OSP) are considered the official record keepers for the contracts.

Electronic - The file comes in, the contract administrator gets it, and does their thing. Gene signs it, then puts it in for distribution. Somewhere in there it gets logged in. Gene sometimes gives it back to the

contract administrator, who then sends it to the sponsor, etc. Then the contract administrator puts it on the network drive.

Paper - The paper files get logged in, distributed, then put on the shelf behind Linda, then logged out, then get files made for them – HFA, contract, digest, etc. If it's a digest, Gwen gets the blue digest form, Linda pulls the file from the Holding for Digest drawer, Gwen checks to make sure the dollar amount is right, then Linda makes a file, scans it, puts it in Xtender, then files it in the file drawer.

Electronic - Gwen said the electronic files avoid the situation of having the paper file go all over the place in the office. The process is called OSP Electronic Distribution. The electronic files will all be in one place, and it will be so much easier to find a file. She spent 4 hours last week looking for a file.

Leigh asked if it was preferred that the package be bundled with the routing sheet; Gwen said we would rather you get the cover form logged in right off the bat, because of the timing of reporting. Darren said so it'd be better to get it logged in immediately, when the budget is wrong, than not to get it logged in at all. Gwen said it's easy to fix the electronic file. Leigh talked about some cool Adobe tricks, and it was suggested she teach us some of the Adobe tricks.

Darren said, to sum up, that

- 1) We need to find out from Martha exactly what the work-flow group is supposed to be doing, as far as electronic and paper files; and
- 2) We need to come up with a way to explain the electronic work flow to other people such as Diane and the new person, making points of things that *have* to be done. Leigh suggested everyone write down their particular flow. We need some bullet points on "has to happen," such as get CF#, Gene signs, etc. We should write it down, so we can all do it the same way.

There was some discussion about the things Gene shouldn't have to sign, such as no-cost extensions and extend-to-indefinites, proposal certs, reps, and sometimes incremental funding. Leigh said any of us *could* sign electronically for him. Although his signatures on the various pages shows that he's looked at the file.

Gwen said some Plus-7s have started putting the indirect cost recovery form in the proposal. If one is doing it, all of them need to. Darren said there should be some way for each college/department to say this is our default agreement. Gwen said on the electronic proposal, they have to fill in the IDC split. They have to decide up front how they're going to split it. There was some discussion about JVs.

Gwen said we are working out proposals now, but we will move on to contracts next. We all need to work together on this. If it doesn't come in uniformly, it doesn't flow uniformly. There's a proposal information page that is supposed to help with the electronic input into the database. Linda is about to revamp it. Gwen said the new electronic system will automatically assign a cover form number as soon as the file is opened, but it'll be five digits instead of four. The biggest problem will be routing correctly.

There was discussion about catching errors. If it's wrong on the cover form, we're supposed to catch it before it goes on. Maybe we can add that if it's wrong on the cover form of a Plus-7, we send it back to the Plus-7s to fix. They are supposed to be equivalent to us. Let them do their own error correction.

Gwen asked how often we should meet, and suggested every two weeks to begin with, and then once a week.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 pm.

**Work-Flow Working Group**  
**Meeting #2, October 28, 2016, 9:00 am**

Attending: Gwen Epling (chair person), Tammy Williams, Rachel Simpson, Leigh Stephens, Ginger Phillabaum, Darren May. Absent: Gina Bailey.

Gwen began the meeting by reading from the email exchange between herself and Martha:

FROM GWEN TO MARTHA:

When we are talking about workflow, do we want to try to figure out what we are doing or are we figuring out what we want to do in the future to make it more streamlined? We had that question and I didn't know how to answer it. My opinion was to have an idea of how we do it now, and figure out a better way of doing it. For example: electronically, how that is going to work, the steps that need to be taken to get there, etc. What is your opinion?

FROM MARTHA TO GWEN:

It is important to figure out what the current workflow is and where the bottlenecks/potholes are. Then decide if things can be routed differently, eliminated completely, electrified to improve a smooth ride, or pieces added to ensure smoother transitions later down the path. The considerations you are making are valid. If we do something new, is it going to work consistently and what is needed to make it work. Do we need people, equipment, training? Will everyone buy in or will we have to force compliance. Does everyone know how to use the new technology? Is technology all that is needed or is there something in the process itself that could just go away and no one would care or even notice? Do we keep a paper copy of EVERYTHING? Do we discuss EVERYTHING via email or can we use the phone? Is it THAT necessary that we document the details of everything we do to the nth degree or can we be more general in our efforts? For example, we document the crap out of things in order to have a defense when someone gets upset and blames us for delays. Is it possible we could be more efficient and react faster via the telephone and avoid them getting upset in the first place?

I don't know the answers to these questions but what we should always ask:

- Why do we do this?
- Why do we do it this way?
- What happens if we don't do it?
- And if it is necessary, is there a better way to do it?

Gwen said her opinion is that we need to document everything. Tammy mentioned that some people like to make phone calls either because they don't understand how to use email, or because they don't want the documentation of email.

Gwen said we are supposed to get signatures on the award, which sometimes is totally different than the proposal. If proposals come in different than the award, it is the Contract Administrator's responsibility to go back to the department head/dean for approval. We're supposed to get new signatures if the award is different than the proposal. Ginger said she doesn't, that she was never told to do that. Darren said he doesn't go back to the department if there is just a small revision. Leigh said someone has to revise the budget. Gwen asked if this is a question for the Work Flow group, or for the Roles and Responsibilities group? We need to decide what level of change would determine if we get new signatures.

Leigh said everyone's flow should be consistent, so if you're gone, someone else can step in and handle it. Gwen said everyone does their job differently. Tammy said the electronic cover forms will fix a lot of that. Gwen said we're supposed to demo the electronic cover form the week after next. We want to

demo to the Plus-7s and to Contract Administrators. She wants to get Tony to add it to the next staff meeting, because we want to wait to start submitting electronic cover forms until after the demos.

Darren said there's more to the signatures question than budgetary issues. If the budget is off by \$2, he doesn't think we need to go to the dean/department head for new signatures. Gwen said we need to know what constitutes a reason to get extra signatures on the cover form if it doesn't match the proposal. There's a lot of confusion and miscommunication. Darren said we make a big deal out of something that only happens 1% of the time--meaning the department head/dean getting mad because they did not know about the change--and said maybe the threshold should be 10%: If the budget is changed by at least 10% we have to get new signatures. A modification to personnel or a change in the cost share would also be a reason.

Linda asked if there is an operating manual for OSP. No, there isn't – there used to be, long ago. We need to put one together. Gwen mentioned that some folks don't know about the In Date and the Initial Contact Date on the routing sheet and how they are used. A discussion followed about In Dates versus HFA dates, and how each are and should be noted.

Gwen asked what should be our first thing to tackle as Work Flow group. She suggested we start with how we do Xtender proposals. Next time we can talk about contracts, paper proposals, and so forth. Darren said maybe we should cover our overall work flow first. Asked if there is any issue with the Plus-7s? No, not really, except that they should send their proposals in on the day they are submitted. In September we received 80-90, and some of those were submitted in June.

Leigh said the Plus-7s were brought in to increase communication with P.I.s. They are supposed to make sure that everything is ok on proposals, but they cannot negotiate the award. Leigh asked if the Plus-7s compare the award to the proposal. Gwen said it doesn't matter what shape the award is in when it comes in, we're supposed to fix it. We don't fix the proposals sent in by the Plus-7s, but the Contract Administrators are supposed to check and fix the awards. We are supposed to check paper proposals, but we don't check the electronic proposals sent in by the Plus-7s. All we do is make sure things are ok in the database.

Leigh asked if we are checking to see what happened if a proposal is denied. Not all sponsors say why they are denying a proposal. Discussion about denied proposals.

Gwen suggested maybe we should have a separate person just to handle proposals, but Darren pointed out that it's much easier to do an award if you've also done the proposal.

Rachel drew a chart on the white board; a big overview of our processes:

*Find funding – Develop proposals – Route & submit – Set up project – Manage project – Close out*  
**Research Ethics & Compliance**

**PSFS:**

Marc – Helps find funding. Hands off to Rachel.

Rachel – Looks at requirements & scope. Makes contact with C.A. Keep in loop. Rachel hands off to C.A.

C.A. – Uploads, reviews budget, and hits button. Awarded/declined. Then sends number to CGA.

- FCOI
- RCR
- COI

- CPP
- Cover Form
- Signatures/approvals
- Budget
- Budget Justification

**OSP:**

- *Tracking:*
- *Xtender:* OSP scan email \*time to scan\* – Cathy logs in – Cathy organizes – Print to PDF – Import to Xtender the next week – Index in Xtender
- *Digest:* Log in – hold for digest – upload to Xtender - combined
- *Plus-7 Process:* Incoming \*takes too long to get\* – log in/save to drive – combined PDF with signatures\* – import to Xtender
- *Electronic:* Send to Gene – get cover form number – emailed – combined PDF to R drive – some separated

**CGA/Gina:** Not here so couldn't give input

**Problems:**

- (Plus-7) Time (waiting to send) – set timeframe for incoming proposals from Plus-7s, 3 days
- Checklist of what to check for to be sure proposal is correct
- Declined why?
- Can't see whole proposal in Grants.gov

Gwen talked about how we track Xtender proposals:

1. The first time we see a Plus-7 proposal is when it is scanned to the OSP email box.
2. Then Cathy works on them a few each day, logging them in.
3. She then combines them, organizes them, and prints them to a PDF to make one file.
4. Depending on her workload, she imports them to Xtender, then indexes them (these are two separate processes). Then we're done with these until they are funded.

Cathy imports them usually the next week after she gets them and logs them in. The only time it really matters if they are late is if the Plus-7 needs the cover form number right away. It's not a bottleneck. Tammy said it would help if the Plus-7s wouldn't sit on the proposals before submitting them to us. Gwen said we have no control over that. If we could get another person hired, it would help. But if we don't get someone else, how can we improve this process? There was a discussion about getting electronic cover forms and attachments, and how they will send these to us. We will be getting two files, and will have to put them together. Ginger has a concern about attachments, that we can't click them to open them once they are attached to the cover form. We need to do a test run to find out. Grants.gov is a good example. Darren asked if this wouldn't encourage PIs to do this on the back end? Gwen said we can log in the cover form, then they can do whatever it is they do.

The electronic cover form will assign its own number. The hope is that it will eventually be able to index itself. Cayuse is a very expensive system, but it would solve most of our problems. Unfortunately, we can't afford it. Ginger asked what is the purpose of electronic cover forms? To get rid of paper files; it is also supposed to be more user-friendly. It puts more responsibility on the deans and department heads; they will have to figure out credit splits instead of us doing it. Leigh asked what does the electronic cover form fix? Nothing for the Plus-7s. It won't affect that.

**To fix the backlog, someone at OSP has to tell the PIs or the Plus-7s that they have to send these electronic cover forms to us in a timely manner. And they need to submit the proposal WAY before the award gets here.**

Leigh said the main problem here is if someone is doing something wrong, we're not allowed to tell them.

Darren suggested we submit a note to the Policies & Procedures group to ask "What defines a proposal?" It is not a fixed price agreement, or can it be? What about ANP (Award No Proposal)? A proposal should definitely have the scope of work and the budget. Ginger said if it is a signed agreement, it is not a proposal, it is an ANP. A discussion about ANPs followed. Ginger is in the Policies & Procedures group – she will ask this question.

In the next meeting we'll track regular proposals. We will ask each contract administrator to break down and explain exactly how they do each step, and send it to Gwen via email. We may ask the Plus-7s to do this too, so they have some input also.

The meeting adjourned at 10:20 pm.