VA-ORD RPPR FAQs
(Updated 6/24/2020)

GENERAL

Q: *Is eRA Commons used for both VA-ORD RPPR (interim/annual) and Final Report/RPPR submissions?*

A: Yes, in 2010, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) mandated that Federal agencies implement a Federal-wide RPPR for submission of required annual or other interim performance reporting on research grant and cooperative agreement awards to standardize recipient reporting on Federally-funded research projects.

In response to this mandate, progress reports for VA-ORD (for electronically submitted applications) must be submitted using eRA Commons. RPPRs are due 45 days prior to the next budget period start date. The Final RPPR is due within 120 calendar days of the project performance end date (PPED).

Q: *What are the differences between a RPPR and Final RPPR?*

A: The RPPR and Final RPPR are nearly identical in process, format and information required. Differences between the annual RPPR and Final RPPR are few – for the Final report, only Section D.1 is required in the Participants section; Section F. Changes is not available; and Section I. Outcomes is now required (see special instructions under this section). In addition, there is the difference for when and where the reports are made available to initiate and submit.

Q: *I received notification from NIH that I have a RPPR due for my project, but after logging into eRA Commons, I am not able locate the project – how can I find it?*

A: There are 2 ways for a PD/PI to find a project in eRA Commons:
1) RPPR Tab via Institution – if the PD/PI is affiliated with more than one institution in eRA Commons (such as a VAMC and University), the PD/PI will need to check under the specific VAMC from which the VA-ORD project is funded. In Commons, the PD/PI's current affiliated institution is found in the upper right corner of the page under the Commons ID. Click on the appropriate institution (VAMC) and then the RPPR Tab in order to view the project(s) funded by VA-ORD along with any associated required actions (such as RPPR).
2) Status Tab – the PD/PI can check under the Status Tab (under any institution), List of Applications/Grants section, and his/her entire portfolio will be listed along with any associated required actions.

If a PD/PI is still unable to locate the project in Commons for which s/he received notification that a RPPR is due, please contact the eRA Service Desk.

Q: *How do I locate and initiate the Final RPPR report template?*
  A: The Final RPPR template will become available after the PPED as part of the Closeout process with the link appearing only on the Closeout Status screen. The Closeout Status screen is accessed via links on the Status Result screens (Status Result – Close or Status Result – General Search for Signing Officials (SOs); Status Result – List of Applications/Grants for PIs). The PI and SO will receive 3 Closeout notifications from NIH eRA Commons when their Final RPPR is due: 1st notice 10 days after PPED; 2nd notice on due date (120 days after PPED); 3rd notice 30 days after due date (150 days after PPED).

Q: *Can a PD/PI authorize someone in his/her institution/station to assist in completing a RPPR or Final RPPR in Commons?*
  A: The PD/PI needs to delegate authority to a person to be a PD/PI delegate in order to have access to the PD/PI's account through eRA Commons: https://era.nih.gov/erahelp/commons/Commons/1_Admin/delegations/delegate_auth_own.htm
  or
  https://era.nih.gov/erahelp/commons/Commons/1_Admin/delegations/del_progressRpt_other.htm

Q: *What is the role of the Administrative Official (AO) and Signing Official (SO) in relation to RPPR?*
  A: The AO role provides an additional reviewer for the VA station, however, it is not required to have an AO as a reviewer of a RPPR. While completing the RPPR, if the station does not have anyone with the AO role, the SO name(s) at the station will also appear in the AO dropdown menu. The SO and AO information will be the same on the report.

  If the station does have a user(s) in the AO role, then the PD/PI can route the RPPR to the AO. The AO can review the RPPR and take the following actions: 1) Route back to the PD/PI for corrections; 2) Make corrections to the report and route to the SO for submission to VA-ORD, if final; or 3) Route to the SO for submission to VA-ORD, if final. The PD/PI can also route the RPPR directly to the SO and not involve an AO with the RPPR review at all – this will be dependent on the workflow that has been established within the VA station for the review and submission of completed RPPRs.

  The SO, AO, PD/PI may edit, save, view and route the RPPR; a Commons Delegate may edit, save and view the RPPR. Only the SO or Contact PD/PI with submit authority must submit a RPPR.

Only the SO can grant the PD/PI the submit authority (as a delegated task) to submit his/her own final RPPR to VA-ORD. These steps for the SO to follow are detailed below:
- o Login to eRA Commons
- o Select the Admin menu tab from the Commons navigational bar
- o Select the Delegations option from the Admin menu

The My Delegates screen opens. If applicable, the My Current Delegations area of the screen displays a table of your existing delegations. If you have no current delegations, the table will indicate 'No records were returned.'
- o Select the link called Institution Delegation
- o The Institution Delegations screen will open, displaying Current Submit Progress Report Delegations in a table at the top and Candidates for Submit Progress Report Delegation in a table at the bottom
- o The Candidates for Submit Progress Report Delegation table displays all users in your institution who are eligible to be granted Submit Progress Report authority
- o In the Candidates for Submit Progress Report Delegation table, mark the Submit Progress Report checkboxes next to the users to whom you wish to grant Submit Progress Report authority
- o Verify that you have selected the appropriate users and select the 'Grant Delegation(s)' button
- o The Institution Delegations screen will update to display a certification and acceptance agreement
- o Read the statement and verify that you are granting the delegate(s) the ability to answer the same statement on behalf of your institution by clicking the 'I Agree' button to confirm the delegation(s)

Q: _As a SO, will I receive notification from eRA Commons when a PD/PI has routed a RPPR to me for review and/or submission to VA-ORD?_

A: When logged into eRA Commons, a SO will be able to see the projects that are assigned to him/her as a SO and any associated required actions (such as RPPR). There is an automatic Commons system communication sent to alert the SO/AO that a RPPR has been routed to him/her for review or submission to VA-ORD. However, it is also recommended that PD/PIs send an email directly to their SO or AO to alert them to login to eRA Commons and access the routed RPPR.

Q: _I am the SO and current reviewer for a RPPR but when submitting a RPPR, I received an error message stating that "Institutional assurances and certifications have not been validated. Have signing official validate in institutional profile." What needs to be done to resolve this error?_

A: The SO needs to login to eRA Commons and complete the Institutional Assurances and Certifications. These steps can be found in the eRA Commons user guide (http://era.nih.gov/docs/com_ugv2630.pdf Section 5.5 Institutional Assurances and Certifications). All sections must be marked in the assurance and the page saved - do not leave any sections unmarked even if they do not pertain to VA-ORD research – mark them and provide the explanation of "N/A". The SO can then submit the RPPR without this error. The Assurances and Certifications only need to be completed once per organization.

Q: *I can see the SUBMIT button but it is not active for me - who can submit the RPPR to VA-ORD?*

A: The PD/PI will route the report to the SO either directly or route to the AO who will then route to the SO. The submit button exists for all reviewers (AO, SO) but the button is only active for the SO or for a PI that has been delegated RPPR submit authority/functionality from a SO. The current reviewer must be the SO (or PD/PI as delegated by the SO) for the submit button to be active in order to submit a RPPR to VA-ORD. When the PD/PI is the current reviewer and has been delegated RPPR authority by the SO, the PD/PI will have the option to submit the report.

Q: *Can a RPPR be revised/edited once it has been submitted to agency (to VA-ORD)?*

A: Once the application has been submitted to agency (to VA-ORD) no changes can be made. If the GMS/PO agrees to accept additional documents they can be submitted via PRAM (Progress Report Additional Materials) or can be emailed to the GMS and added to the grant folder via e-Additions. Any PRAM or documents added will not change the image of the original submission.

FORMAT

Q: *Are there format restrictions that apply to files that are uploaded?*

A: Only PDF files may be uploaded, and the maximum size per PDF is 6 MB. The only location in the RPPR where the user may upload multiple PDFs in response to one question is G.1. Special Notice of Award and Funding Opportunity Announcement Reporting Requirements.

Q: *How should PDF attachments to the RPPR be formatted?*

A: Follow the VA Application Guide SF424 (R&R) instructions, Section 2.6 Format Specification for Text (PDF) Attachments. This section details requirements for file names, font, paper size, margins, figures, etc.

Q: *Does the RPPR support non-ASCII characters such as Greek letters, mathematical equations, images, and "rich" text including bold, italic, underline, superscript, subscript, etc.?*

> **A:** Yes and no. RPPR data is either uploaded as text attachment PDF files, or entered directly into data or text boxes. Any PDF attachment uploaded to the RPPR may include non-ASCII characters, "rich" text, or images. A number of sections of the RPPR require a PDF attachment, including B.2. (accomplishments), and C.5. (other significant products that were developed).
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> Data fields and text entry boxes only support ASCII characters. Although the system will allow the user to enter non-ASCII characters in RPPR data or text entry fields, upon submission of the RPPR to the agency a PDF of the progress report is system-generated and the non-ASCII characters will not appear correctly. Accordingly, use only ASCII characters in data fields and text boxes and always review the final RPPR prior to submission.

B.2. Major Goals

Q: *In B.2. Accomplishments (What was accomplished under these goals?), does the two page recommended limit for responses to this question include tables and figures?*

> **A:** No, the two-page "limit" for summarizing accomplishments toward the major goals for most NIH awards is exclusive of tables and figures.

Section I: OUTCOMES

Q: *What is the difference between B.2. Accomplishments and Outcomes?*

> **A: The Outcomes section is required for Final RPPRs only.** The main differences between this and Section B.2 are: 1) the information requested here is cumulative, i.e., for the entire project period; and, 2) this section should be written for the general public*, whereas Section B should address the technical, scientific accomplishments in relation to the project aims, and should be written for an audience of scientists in that particular field. The length should not exceed a half page (2000 characters).
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> NOTE: For VA-ORD awards, Section I. Outcomes will NOT be made publicly available in RePORT. For Career Development Awards and Research Career Scientist Awards, please refer to the Special Instructions for RPPRs for the appropriate award type.

C.1. Publications

Q: In C.1. Publications, why does it state in the second column under "NIH Public Access Compliance" that each publication is "N/A: Not NIH Funded"?

> **A:** For VA-ORD awards, the second column, NIH Public Access Compliance, is not applicable because VA-ORD awards cannot be reviewed for compliance or be required to be in compliance with the NIH Public Access Compliance policy which is used by the eRA Commons system, and therefore, the status displayed is **"N/A: Not NIH Funded."**

Q: In C.1. Publications, why are all of my award-paper associations reported in RPPR – not just those published within the current reporting period?

> **A:** The publication section has three tables, one with publications associated with the current RPPR, one with all publications that the PD/PI has listed in his/her My Bibliography in NCBI and one that lists all publications reported for the grant family. After a PD/PI reports a publication it will no longer appear in the publications not associated with this project box, however if the PD/PI has many grants and many publications, this box may continue to be lengthy. The first time a PD/PI submits a RPPR, all the award-paper associations a PD/PI has made in My Bibliography are reported as part of a one-time transitional measure to ensure that the required systems can store all the appropriate associations. Future RPPR submissions will only list those award-paper associations the PD/PI has identified for inclusion for that reporting period.

Q: What is My NCBI and how does it work in relation to RPPR?

> **A:** My NCBI is a free account system that provides customized services for many NCBI/NLM databases, such as PubMed. It can be linked to eRA Commons accounts and Commons-linked users can associate publications with VA Grants. My NCBI allows users to enter publications into RPPR. PD/PIs and anyone else with VA support who is or was an author (Post-Doctoral, Graduate Student, Scientist and Project Personnel Roles) should have a linked My Bibliography account. My NCBI sign in can be accessed from any NCBI resources, i.e., PubMEd, PMC, SciENcv, etc. For the RPPR, C.1. Publications, the tables draw information from the PD/PI's My NCBI account. PD/PIs can log in to their My NCBI account via the **My NCBI** link at the top of the C.1 screen. PD/PIs that do not have a My NCBI account can create one by simply logging in to My NCBI with their eRA Commons credentials, which will automatically create a My NCBI account. Any changes made to a My Bibliography collection will be reflected in the RPPR once the

screen is refreshed (i.e., by clicking the **Save** button). For more information on My NCBI, see:

Get Started with My NCBI: Access My NCBI, Register, and Sign In
Edit Your My Bibliography Settings (Add a Delegate)

Q: *What can I do if my eRA Commons account is not linked with My NCBI account?*

> **A:** To link the two accounts:
> Log into eRA Commons.
> Click on Personal Profile.
> Scroll down to the Publications – Click View.
> Use the link: If you need to login to My NCBI account please use this link: My NCBI
> You may automatically be logged into My NBCI.
> If not, please click on the link: See more 3rd party sign in options
> Select NIH & eRA Commons
> You will be logged into My NCBI.
> On the top right hand corner, click on your username/email address to access NCBI Account Settings.
> Under linked accounts, click Change.
> Select NIH & eRA Commons.
>
> If your publications are still missing after completing the instructions above, you may have two My NCBI accounts and will need further assistance from the eRA Commons Service Desk (http://grants.nih.gov/support/index.html; or 1-866-504-9552, press 1 for eRA Commons) to walk you through the process of linking the correct My NCBI account to the award.

Q: *In C.1. Publications, can I manually add publications? If not, can they be included in the uploaded PDF for B.2. Accomplishments?*

> **A:** All publications must be entered into the PD/PI's My NCBI account using the bibliography management tool My Bibliography. The publications will then automatically appear in the RPPR under C.1. It is not possible to manually add publications in C.1. Publications listed in other parts of the progress report are not captured electronically and will not be listed as resulting from the award in RePORT.

D.1. Participants

Q: *In D.1. Participants, how do I provide an update on individuals who have worked on the project during the reporting period?*

> **A:** In Section D – Participants, question D.1., an update should be provided for the PDs/PIs and each person who has worked at least one person month

per year on the project during the reporting period, regardless of whether they are being compensated for their work or the source of their compensation. If graduate students (research assistants), undergraduate students, and high school students, have provided at least one month of effort/support for the project during the reporting period they should be reported in this section; however, they cannot be paid with VA research dollars if they are working in these capacities. While these individuals may provide support on a project, if they are compensated for their work, they must be paid through another mechanism with non-research funds.

Q: *In D.1. Participants, how do I update and save a change to the number of calendar months effort made by the PI or other senior/key personnel?*

A: In Section D – Participants, question D.1., an update can be made by clicking Edit for the entry, making the numerical change, clicking the Add/New button, then clicking the Save button at the top or bottom of the page. You must select the Add/New button to add the changes that you have made to the calendar months – just clicking Save will not save the changes to this section.