



# NOAA FISHERIES

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# NEW Application Process

## INTRODUCTION

The Department of Commerce has transitioned their grants management system from Grants Online to eRA Commons. This change requires updates to an organization's application submission process. Any grant application submitted to a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), competitive or noncompetitive, in Grants.gov after January 1, 2024 must follow the below guidance.

## SYSTEM REGISTRATIONS

Applicant organizations must complete and maintain three registrations to be eligible to apply for or receive an award. All registrations must be completed prior to the application being submitted. The complete registration process for all three systems **can take 4 to 6 weeks**, so applicants should begin activity as soon as possible. If an eligible applicant does not have access to the internet or other technical issues prevent electronic submission, please contact the Agency Contacts listed in the NOFO to enable submission prior to the deadline. Registration for all three systems is free.

*If your organization is already registered, proceed to Submission Checks on Page 2.*

### SAM.gov

#### [Registration Guidance](#)

Prior to registering with eRA Commons, applicant organizations must first register in [SAM.gov](#) to obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). The username and password for SAM.gov are managed by Login.gov. Registration can take 2+ weeks and requires renewal annually.

### Grants.gov

#### [Registration Guidance](#)

In order to submit an application, applicant organizations must be registered in [Grants.gov](#). Organizations must register after receiving the UEI from SAM.gov, but can register before or after registering in eRA Commons. Registration can take 2-4 weeks.

### eRA Commons

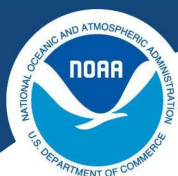
#### [Registration Guidance](#) | [How to Register Webinar Link](#) | [Webinar Presentation](#)

Prior to submitting in Grants.gov, applicant organizations must first register in eRA Commons. The eRA registration can start while an organization is waiting for their final SAM.gov approval of their UEI. However, the organization must have a complete SAM.gov registration in order to submit the final application. Registration can take up to 4 weeks.

eRA Commons registration must be completed by the Signing Official (SO). An SO is someone in the organization with signatory authority such as a President, Executive Director, Owner, etc. The SO will receive 4-5 emails throughout the registration process.

In addition, a Project Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) account must be created and linked on the SF-424 for a successful submission. More information in Common Errors on Page 3.





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## **SUBMISSION CHECKS**

When an application is submitted in Grants.gov, it will undergo two layers of checks. This is a **new process** with the transition to eRA Commons.

### **First Check: Grants.gov**

Grants.gov will check for an on-time submission and attachments uploaded for each required form in the application package. If your application is successfully submitted in Grants.gov you will receive a Grants.gov tracking number.

### **Second Check: eRA Commons**

eRA Commons will check for ERRORS and WARNINGS: elements of the application that need to be resolved and resubmitted - such as file formatting or role information. ERRORS will prevent the application from being received by the agency. **Therefore, a Grants.gov tracking number alone does not verify a successful submission.**

If the application includes ERRORS or WARNINGS, you may receive an email from eRA like the image below. **You must resolve any ERRORS listed and resubmit in Grants.gov prior to the due date in order for NOAA to receive your application for processing.**

**From:** era-notify@mail.nih.gov <era-notify@mail.nih.gov>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 1, 2024 12:00 PM  
**To:** First Name Last Name <applicant email>  
**Subject:** [External] GRANT123456/ NOAA-NMFS-FHQ-2024-12345 / Notice of Funding Opportunity Name ACTION REQUIRED TO COMPLETE SUBMISSION - Application Errors and Warnings

#### **ACTION REQUIRED TO COMPLETE SUBMISSION OF GRANT APPLICATION:**

NOAA has received the electronic grant application GRANT123456 / Notice of Funding Opportunity Name. Our systems have identified errors and warnings associated with your application. Your application will not move forward for further processing and funding consideration unless you address all identified errors and the authorized organization representative submits your changed/corrected application to Grants.gov before the submission deadline.

Your application ERROR(s) are listed below:

Form Name	Severity	Rule Number	Message Text
SF424	E	025.6.2	The Commons Username provided in the Applicant Identifier field is not a recognized Commons account.
ProjectInfo	E	000.35	The Proposal - Project Narrative.pdf attachment contained formatting or features not currently supported: File Name size greater than 50

Your application WARNING(s) are listed below:

Form Name	Severity	Rule Number	Message Text
KeyPerson	W	005.21.7	One of the Accounts included has an "SO" role. This will not prohibit your submission, but may cause some functions to not work properly.

**All listed errors must be corrected by the application deadline.**

Warnings will not prevent your application from completing the electronic submission process, but serve as reminder to verify that your application complies with specific requirements in the funding opportunity announcement.

Applicant Organizations should refer to the opportunity announcements for guidance on correcting application content.

**Any submission to change or correct the grant application must be received by the application deadline or it will not be considered for review.**

If you have any questions about this email, please contact the eRA Service Desk via the web at <http://grants.nih.gov/support/> or by phone at 1-866-504-9552.



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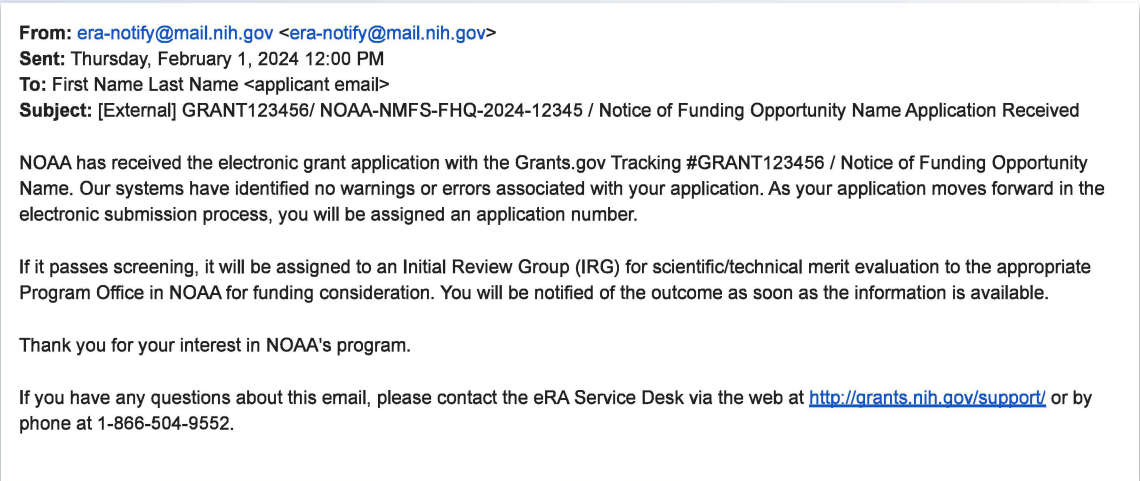
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**SUBMISSION CHECKS Continued**

**Applicants cannot consider their application fully received by the agency until they receive an email from eRA that may look like the image below:**



For more information on Application Submission and Tracking in eRA Commons [Webinar](#) | [Presentation Slides](#) | [Business Process Guide](#)

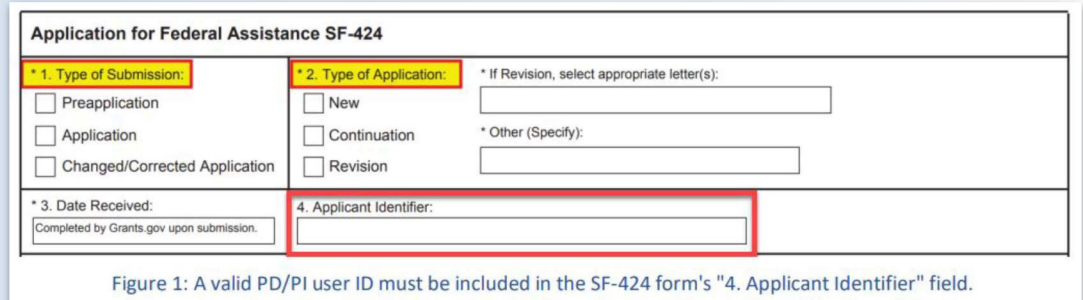
NOTE: NOAA does not accept the use of the ASSIST function at this time. The ASSIST role is mentioned in some eRA Guidance Documents.

**COMMON ERRORS**

The following are common errors that prevent a successful application submission and receipt in eRA. Grants.gov may allow you to submit an application, but eRA will not accept it if it includes these errors, and therefore NOAA will not receive it.

**PD/PI Account and eRA Commons ID not in SF-424**

The PD/PI listed on the application materials must have an eRA Commons account and that eRA Commons account must be affiliated with the applicant organization. The valid, affiliated eRA Commons ID must be included in the application materials on the SF-424 in box "4. Applicant Identifier"



Failure to provide the exact eRA Commons ID on the SF-424 in Box 4 will result in an ERROR and **prevent the successful receipt of the application**. Additional personnel included on the form do not need to include their accounts, however eRA will create a WARNING recommending those personnel also have valid eRA Commons IDs. The applicant can still proceed with submission.

Any SO, Administrative Official (AO), or Account Administrator (AA) can create a PD/PI account. Please see the next page for more information.





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**COMMON ERRORS Continued**

**Creating a PD/PI Account**

eRA Commons requires separate Accounts for Administrative and Programmatic roles.

<b>Administrative Roles</b>	Signing Official (SO) Administrative Official (AO) Account Administrator (AA)
<b>Programmatic Roles</b>	Project Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI)

Therefore, if one person is both the SO and PD/PI they need to have 2 separate usernames and passwords (it can be the same email and contact information). It's highly recommended that you distinguish your usernames such as Jane.Doe\_Admin and Jane.Doe\_PI.

For example, SO and PD/PI for the application are:

Same Person	Different People
SO: Jane.Doe_Admin PD/PI: Jane.Doe_PI	SO: Jane.Doe_Admin PD/PI: John.Smith_PI
Same contact info, different usernames	Different contact info and usernames

Any SO, AO, or AA can create a PD/PI account. If the SO and PD/PI are the same person, it is possible that the SO will be creating their own PD/PI account. Instructions for how to create a PD/PI account: [PDF Starting on Page 10](#) | [Webinar Starting at 17:00](#) | [Presentation Slides](#)

Once the PD/PI account is created, that is the eRA Commons ID you will input in Box 4 of the SF-424. **NOTE: PD/PIs will receive the email notifications from eRA Commons for application tracking.**

**Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) not entered correctly**

The correct and approved UEI provided by SAM.gov must be included on the SF-424 in the box 8.c "UEI". This UEI should be consistent across all platforms: SAM.gov, eRA Commons Registration, and Grants.gov registrations.

8. APPLICANT INFORMATION:

\* a. Legal Name: [Redacted]

\* b. Employer/Taxpayer Identification Number (EIN/TIN): [Redacted]

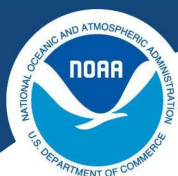
\* c. UEI: [Redacted]

Figure 2: The primary UEI assigned to the applicant organization must be included in the SF-424 form's "8. C. UEI" field.

**Congressional District not entered in the correct format**

Applicants are required to enter their Congressional District on the SF-424 in a very specific format. It must be the two-letter abbreviation, a hyphen, and the three-digit district number. For example: State of Virginia, 1st Congressional District would be "VA-001".

Any other format (VA001 or VA-01) will result in an error and rejection from eRA. For more information and how to find your Congressional District number [click here](#).



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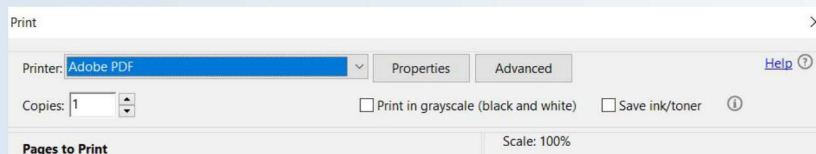
## COMMON ERRORS Continued

### Flattened PDFs

Any PDFs uploaded into eRA must be “flattened” meaning they are removed of any fillable fields. This is especially important for the Standard Forms: SF-424, SF-424A, CD-511, etc.

To flatten a PDF:

- Fill out the PDF.
- When you are done, Select Print.
- Select the Adobe PDF printer and click OK.



- Specify a location to save the flattened version.
- Open the saved file to verify that it retained all saved information and is no longer fillable.
- Upload the “flattened” file to Grants.gov.

### Formatting Issues

#### [Full List of eRA Format Requirements](#)

In addition, eRA requires certain formatting that Grants.gov may not require. The most common errors are:

- File sizes that are too large (over 100 MB)
- Including paper (page) size larger than 8 ½” x 11”
- File names that are too long (greater than 50 characters including spaces)
- Including invalid characters in the file name

## SUBMISSION CHECKLIST FOR ERA REQUIREMENTS

Below is a submission checklist for eRA Requirements. This is not an exhaustive list of everything you need for a successful application, but a summary checklist of the items discussed in this document. All items below should be checked before you submit your application in Grants.gov.

- SAM.gov Registration and approved UEI
- eRA Commons Registration
- Grants.gov Registration
- PD/PI Account Created
- PD/PI Commons ID entered exactly on Box 4 on the SF-424
- UEI entered exactly on Box 8c. of the SF-424
- Congressional District formatted correctly (ex. VA-001)
- All PDFs flattened
- File sizes are less than 100 MB
- File page sizes are 8 ½” x 11”
- File names are shorter than 50 characters (including spaces)
- File names do not include invalid characters (&, diacritical marks)

If you have any questions, please reach out to the eRA HelpDesk or the Agency Contact listed in your NOFO.

- End of Document -