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Electronic signing provides a quick, easy, and secure method for signing and submitting internal research forms without the need to appear in person. This guide provides information on how DocuSign® is used to access, complete, sign, and submit an application for continuing funding to Research Administrative Services (RAS).

ACCOUNT SETUP

A DocuSign® account is not required for the submission or signature of an application for continuing funding, but it is useful for tracking and managing submissions. Accounts are created by RAS upon request.

GETTING STARTED

Before beginning this process, there are a few things to keep in mind:

- **Speak to a research administrator.** Consultation with a research administrator is highly recommended prior to any submission. This helps to avoid any errors in the submission.

- **F&A Rate Change.** There has been a change in the F&A rate that will affect any projects starting on or after July 1, 2013. Visit the HU research website for more information. ([http://www.howard.edu/research/](http://www.howard.edu/research/))

- **RAS reserves the right to withdraw for consideration, any submission that was received by RAS less than five (5) full business days prior to the submission deadline date.** When planning a submission, make sure to give each signer at least 2 business days to review the submission. It is also important to make sure that there is ample time to resolve any possible issues that may arise.

- **RAS will not review or submit incomplete applications.** Be sure that submissions are in FINAL form, as required by the sponsor. Once the submission has been sent to the next person for review, access to that envelope will not be available.

- **RAS reserves the right to withdraw for consideration, any application that lacks sponsor solicitation guidelines.** It is important that all sponsor guidelines are clearly followed as defined.

- **There are limitations when using Grants.gov PDFs.** These limitations and their solutions are explained on page 7.
To begin, go to the following page and click on the “Click here to submit a continuing application to RAS” link: [http://www.howard.edu/research/ras/esap.html](http://www.howard.edu/research/ras/esap.html)

Navigation to this link may also be possible by following the path below:

HU Website → Research & Innovation → Click on the red “Electronic Signature and Approval Process” link → Click on the “Click here to submit a continuing application to RAS” link

### THE SUBMISSION ROUTING STRUCTURE

Below is the current submission routing structure for **Academic Affairs** and **Health Sciences**. This routing structure should be followed to properly route an application to RAS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACADEMIC AFFAIRS</th>
<th>HEALTH SCIENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PI/PD</strong></td>
<td><strong>PI/PD</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department Chairperson/Head</td>
<td>Department Chairperson/Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andre Powell (<a href="mailto:andre.powell@howard.edu">andre.powell@howard.edu</a>)</td>
<td>Jeanette Gibbs-Deshields (<a href="mailto:jgibbs-deshields@howard.edu">jgibbs-deshields@howard.edu</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/College Dean</td>
<td>School/College Dean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary L. Harris (email address provided)</td>
<td>Gary L. Harris (email address provided)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Administrative Services (email address provided)</td>
<td>Research Administrative Services (email address provided)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once the application is received by RAS, it is processed and submitted to the funding entity.

### POWERFORM SIGNER INFORMATION

Define who will review and sign the submission. Enter the name and Email address of the individuals who best fit the listed roles. Keep in mind that:

- Someone other than the PI may complete the application envelope. **Contact RAS for advice and direction.**

- Units with no Chairperson or Dean may use the department head and Unit director/manager. These role entries may also be left blank if necessary.

- The CC role is optional. It can be used to send a copy of the approved submission to someone not in the routing structure.
• The name or email address of an unknown reviewer may be found with the use of the University website, Microsoft Outlook, or other available resources.

• If a reviewer is unavailable, an alternate reviewer may be used. It is the duty of the PI to contact the office of the reviewer and request information regarding the alternate reviewer. This change may also be made later with the assistance of RAS.

When all of the necessary information has been entered, click the **Begin Signing** button. An email, containing an access code, will be sent to the email address used in the PI role.

**ACCESS CODE AUTHENTICATION**

The requested code is located in an email from “Proposal Needs Your Signature!” The subject line will begin with, “Email Validation.” Each access code is unique to a specific envelope and should be saved for future use.

Copy the code from the email and paste it in the space provided.

Click the **Validate** button.

**CUSTOMER DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT**

The consumer disclosure covers the terms and conditions of system. It may be read in leisure. It may also be printed by clicking on the small print icon to the top right.

To move forward, select the checkbox to agree to conduct business electronically with Howard University and click the **Review Document** button to continue.

**Important!**
The **Finish Later** and **Decline to Sign** options will be discussed later and should be ignored for now.
THE APPLICATION FOR CONTINUING FUNDING ENVELOPE

This 13-page envelope includes a copy of the following common documents:

- Award Continuation Application Checklist
- Award Continuation Application Form
- Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form (PI ONLY)
- F&A Waiver/Reduction Form
- Matching/Cost Sharing Authorization Form

ENVELOPE LAYOUT

MAIN MENU

The main menu offers the following services and features:

- Use the triangles to navigate up or down one full page. A page number may also be entered to jump to that page.
- Select or enter a percentage to zoom in or out of the envelope.
- Download a PDF copy of the envelope at any time. When asked, choose to download the combined document. The envelope may be saved to a computer or an eternal hard drive such as a flash/thumb drive.
- Print the envelope. If the envelope does not print correctly, save it then print the saved copy.

Use more options and features such as:

- **View History** of events pertaining to the envelope.
- **View Certificate** that may be used for legal matters.
- **View Consumer Disclosure** for the terms and conditions.
- **Decline to Sign and Markup**: Not applicable for now.
- **Finish Later** saves the progress of the envelope. To return to the envelope, select the **Resume** link in the original Email that included the access code.

The X closes the window.
PAGE ICONS
The icons on the right side of the page represent actual pages in the envelope. Click on a page icon to jump to that page. The scroll bar may be used to navigate through pages and page icons.

Blue Page Icon
The currently active page.

Blank Page Icon
A read-only page.

Circled Page Icon
A page with fillable fields that requires an action. Required actions may include signatures, attachments, or choosing an item from a dropdown.

Checked Page Icon
A page that has fillable fields, but no required actions.

Important!
All Circled Page Icons must become Checked Page Icons in order to submit this envelope for review.

ATTACHMENTS AND SIGNATURES

ATTACHMENTS

The Attach tag is used to upload supporting documents. You may attach one document or many. DO NOT use the Send by fax option!!

Click the Browse button and select the document that should be attached. The attach tag will look like change to

Once a document has been attached, the opportunity to attach another will be presented. If no other attachments are necessary, select No. If another attachment is needed, select Yes. A new Attach tag will appear on the page. Click on that tag and attach a document as before.

All visible attach tags should be used or removed in order to submit this envelope for review. To remove an attached document or an Attach tag, click on the tag and select Remove Attachment.
There are no space or size limitations to the documents that may be attached. Images or documents created in Word, Excel, Adobe PDF, or similar applications can be attached.

**Important!**
Grants.gov PDF documents are complex and cannot be attached to the envelope. These documents should be emailed to the reviewers separately. It will be best to do so after the envelope has been submitted for review.

**SIGNATURES AND INITIALS**

This portion of the guide will explain how to sign or initial documents within the envelope. Click on a **Sign Here** or **Initial** tab to begin.

![Sign Here and Initial](image)

To adopt a signature:
- Verify that your name and initials are correct. Make any necessary changes.
- Select a style of handwriting by clicking on the **Change Style** link and choosing a style from the ones available.
- Finally, click **Adopt and Sign** to save the signature. The adopted signature will be used throughout the document.

![Adopt Your Signature](image)

Each signature has its own identification code that links the signature to the email address of the signer. Since these are in-house documents and the identification code verifies the identity of the signers, RAS has agreed to accept any of the signatures provided by the system.

Initials are required when a reviewer makes a change to the form.

**COMPLETING THE ENVELOPE**

This section of the guide will give an overview of the various forms found in this envelope. It will also provide information on completing these forms. If further information or assistance is required, please contact RAS or the Office of Research Development.
AWARD CONTINUATION APPLICATION CHECKLIST

The first page of the envelope is a handy checklist that details everything that may be required to complete this envelope.

Form Requirements
Page 1: Place a check next to the items that are included in or required for this submission. This checklist is optional.

AWARD CONTINUATION APPLICATION FORM

This form spans from pages 2-4 and is used by Research Administrators as an overview of the project. This form is required for record purposes.

Form Requirements
Pages 2&3: Complete the form in its entirety.
Page 3: Attach the requested documents and any other information required by the sponsor and RAS.
Page 4: Sign the form.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE STATEMENT FORM

This form spans from pages 5-9 and must be completed with the PI’s information. This form is required for audit purposes and will be filed by RAS.

It is required that one of the options from the dropdown box at the top of the page is selected. Based on which option is chosen, further action may be required.

Choose this option if the PI has a conflict of interest with this project. The PI is required to use the Attach tag provided to attach a document that explains the conflict.
Choose this option if there other key personnel are included on the project. These personnel will have to complete a COI form (found on the research website) and email a signed copy to the PI. The PI can then attach the signed form to the envelope using the Attach tag provided.

Choose this option if the PI is the only key personnel on the project and has no conflict. Even if this option is chosen, the form must be completed.

**Form Requirements**
- Page 5: Select an option from the dropdown box. Attach any additional documents if necessary.
- Pages 5-9: Complete the form in its entirety.
- Page 9: Sign the form.

### F&A WAIVER/REDUCTION FORM

This form is on page 10 and is required if the requested F&A rate is different from the current negotiated rates. The current rates are located on the research website.

It is required that one of the options from the dropdown box at the top of the page is selected. Based on which selection is chosen, further action may be required.

Choose this option if the requested F&A rate is the same as a current, negotiated rate. No further information is required and this form may be left blank.

Choose if the F&A rate is different from the current, negotiated rates. The form will have to be completed and a justification for the rate difference will need to be attached using the Attach tag. A letter from the sponsor or a copy of the RFP requesting the different rate is sufficient.

**Form Requirements**
- Page 10: Select an option from the dropdown box.
- Page 10: If required, complete the form in its entirety, attach a justification, and sign the form.
AUTORIZATION FOR MATCHING FUNDS/COST SHARING

This form is on page 12 and is required if cost sharing is included in the project.

Choose an option from the Source of M/CS Commitments portion of the form. Based on which selection is chosen, further action may be required.

If No M/CS Commitments is chosen, no further information is required and this form may be left blank.

If either of the other two options is chosen, the form will have to be completed and signed. An explanation of the commitment must be attached using the Attach tag provided.

Form Requirements
Page 12: Select an option from the Source of M/CS Commitments portion of the form.
Page 12: If required, complete the form in its entirety, attach an explanation, and sign the form.

COMPLETING THE PROCESS

When all required actions within the envelope have been completed, the Confirm Signing button and a message will be displayed. Before pressing the button, review the envelope and make any changes to the information as necessary. Click the gold Confirm Signing button when done.

Once the button is pressed, a window will display a confirmation of the completion of the envelope. The first reviewer is immediately sent a link to the completed envelope.

The option of printing or downloading a PDF copy of the completed envelope is also given at this point. DocuSign® accounts are created by RAS, so ignore the login request. Close the window by clicking on the X at the top right of the screen.
TRACKING A SUBMISSION

Reviewers are asked to sign envelopes within 2 business days of receipt. Envelopes can be tracked by the DocuSign® Account Administrator or a DocuSign® account owner (usually the PI). Accounts are created by the Account Administrator and will only show envelopes submitted after the account has been activated. Below is a brief summary of this feature. For more detailed information, see the Account Management Guide or contact RAS.

Log into DocuSign® and, from the Home tab, click on Out For Signature.

In the Results Pane, select an envelope to track.

Review the information in the Details Pane.

At this point, the reviewer may be contacted if the document has not been signed within the allotted time. It is the duty of the PI to contact the office of the reviewer and request information regarding the alternate reviewers.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS AN ENVELOPE?
An envelope is a collection of documents that are sent to recipients for review and signature.

WHERE ARE THE ENVELOPES STORED?
DocuSign® is operated by a third party outside of the University. All documents are saved to DocuSign® servers and are accessible, even if the HU network is down.

HOW ARE DOCUSIGN® ACCOUNTS CREATED?
The DocuSign® Account Administrator will create and distribute accounts for users upon request.

DO REVIEWERS NEED A DOCUSIGN® ACCOUNT?
No! Reviewers do not need an account to review or sign envelopes.

WHY WERE NEW ROLES ADDED?
The RAS Team Lead and Executive Director were always a part of the general RAS review process. However, these approvals were completed manually, on printed copies of applications. To produce a more complete application for filing and promote full paperless process, it was decided to add these reviewers to the routing structure. This is addition will not interfere with the final submission of the application.

WHAT DO I DO IF THE PROCESS IS HELD UP BY RAS?
RAS staff has been trained to respond to DocuSign® submissions in a timely manner. If there has been no movement within RAS, users should contact their Research Administrator.

WHO CAN BE ADDED AS ALTERNATE SIGNATORIES?
Reviewers, especially Department Chairs and Deans, should always inform their staff of when they will be unable to sign documents and who will be their designated signatory. It is up to the PI to contact reviewers and their offices to find out the status of signatory responsibilities.

CAN THE ROUTING PROCESS BE MORE PARALLEL INSTEAD OF HIERARCHAL?
No. The routing process is a hierarchal in nature and DocuSign® follows the rules of that process.

CAN SOME REVIEWERS BE EDITED OR OMITTED?
It is recommended that all members of the routing process review and sign the envelope as listed. If there is no other choice, the signature of the Assistant Vice President for Academic/Health Sciences Finance and Associate Provost for Research and Graduate Studies are the only signatures that are absolutely required in order for RAS to process and submit an application. The DocuSign® Account Administrator can edit the routing structure.
DO ALL DOCUMENTS OF AN ENVELOPE REQUIRE COMPLETION?
No. There are some documents that are required and some that are mandatory based on your research. The Award Continuation Application Form and Conflict of Interest Disclosure forms are always required. Forms such as the F&A Waiver/Reduction Request, Cost Sharing Authorization are only required if the items are included in the project.

CAN INFORMATION IN AN ENVELOPE BE CHANGED WHILE IT IS BEING REVIEWED?
Once an envelope has been submitted for review, no changes can be made unless the envelope is returned by the current reviewer. When this happens, the user may change any information within the envelope. However, the user will be required to initial each change made.

WHAT FIELDS IN THE ENVELOPE ARE REQUIRED?
Required fields have a red border. Each required form must be thoroughly completed. Users should ensure that all forms have been completely filled out and all attachments are included.

CAN ENVELOPES BE PRINTED OR SAVED AT ANY STAGE?
Yes. The user and anyone who has reviewed a document may save or print the document at any time. To save the document, use the Finish Later feature under More button. To get back into the document, click on the Resume link in the email containing the access code. Printing can be done by clicking the printer icon.

CAN ANY OF THE INFORMATION ON THE FORMS BE PRE-POPULATED?
No. DocuSign® has no connection to any of the University systems, so there is no information that can be populated automatically.

CAN THE ROUTING PROCESS BE AUTO-POPULATED?
Yes. Unfortunately, many users access the same template. The idea of creating a different template for every user is time consuming and inefficient.

CAN AN ENVELOPE BE TRACKED?
Users with a DocuSign account® may track any envelope they initiate after the account has been created. See the Account Management Guide for more information.

WHAT DOCUMENT TYPES ARE SUPPORTED IN DOCUSIGN®?
DocuSign® can be used to sign many kinds of documents: .doc, .docx, .pdf, .xls, .xlsx, .txt, among others. Grants.gov PDF documents cannot be attached to DocuSign®. These documents should be emailed to the members of the routing structure separately.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE IF THE PROCESS IS HELD UP BY A REVIEWER?
We ask that all reviewers respond to DocuSign® submissions within 2 business days. We recommend that PIs contact reviewers who take longer than that to respond.
ARE USERS NOTIFIED EACH TIME A REVIEWER SIGNS AN ENVELOPE?
Yes, but this feature is inactive. Instead, users receive an email notification when the envelope has completed the routing process.

CAN REMINDERS BE SENT TO REVIEWERS?
Email reminders are sent to reviewers once a day until the envelope is signed. The PI may contact a reviewer if necessary.

DOES THIS PROCESS AFFECT THE DEADLINE TO SUBMIT AN ENVELOPE TO RAS?
No. When submitting an envelope for routing, users should keep in mind that submissions should be received by RAS at least 5 business days prior to the deadline/due date. Reviewers are asked to sign submissions within 2 business days.

HOW ARE SIGNATURES CREATED?
The first time users sign a document, they are asked to adopt a signature. They may select a signature style, create one using a mouse, or use a stylus on a tablet PC. This signature will be associated with a unique identifier so that every document signed will show the same signature. Contact the Account Administrator for instructions on uploading a scanned image of handwritten signatures.

DOES DOCUSIGN® SUPPORT SMS MESSAGING?
DocuSign® does not support SMS messaging, but users may receive email reminders on a mobile device connected to the HU email system.

WHAT INTERNET BROWSERS SUPPORT DOCUSIGN®?
DocuSign® has been tested on and works fine with the latest versions of Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, and Apple Safari. It is also compatible with most mobile-based browsers.

ARE ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES LEGAL?
In 2000, the U.S. Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce (ESIGN) Act established electronic records and signatures as legally binding, having the same legal effects as traditional paper documents and handwritten signatures. But not all eSignature solutions are created equal. Only DocuSign® warrants federal ESIGN Act compliance. Per European Directive 1999/93/EC, DocuSign®’s advanced signature is legally admissible and enforceable in the European Union. In fact, almost every civilized country in the world has adopted an electronic signature law, and the vast majority recognized DocuSign®’s form of electronic signature as meeting the definition of a valid electronic signature.

An electronic signature, as defined by the Federal ESIGN Act, is an “electronic sound, symbol or process, attached to or logically associated with a contract or other record and executed or adopted by a person with the intent to sign the record” (ESIGN). All 50 states have laws that define electronic signatures in substantially the same way.
Whereas, a **digital signature** or **digital signature scheme** is a mathematical scheme for determining the source of a digital message or document. A digital signature by definition is a technology, a method of authenticating. It does not by itself meet the standards of what constitutes a valid electronic signature, nor does it mean that the signer’s identity has been verified. Digital signatures are most often used to apply a digital “seal” to an electronic document in order to make it tamper-evident. In fact, DocuSign® uses digital signatures in this way; DocuSign® customers and signers have the option to apply a digital signature to a DocuSign®ed document when the transaction is complete.

So when you need to get a legally-binding signature, make sure you’re using a complete electronic signature solution.

Since the documents included in the envelope are primarily in-house documents, Research Administrative Services has agreed to accept documents signed electronically through DocuSign®.
**SUPPORT**

Any questions or comments regarding DocuSign® should be forwarded to the individuals or offices below:

For general assistance in completing and submitting the envelope, contact:
**Office of Grants Management**
*huogm@howard.edu*

For account inquiries, envelope tracking, and technical issues, contact:
LeeRoy Smith (DocuSign® Account Administrator)
**Research Administrative Services**
*leesmith@howard.edu*
*(202) 806-4759*