Increased System Enforcement of Filename Rules

Our [Format Attachment](#) guidance on the [How to Apply - Application Guide](#) page has included the same rules for filenames for many years. Filenames used for grant application attachments must be:

- descriptive;
- unique within an application (or within a component of a multi-project application);
- comprised of the following characters: A-Z, a-z, 0-9, underscore, hyphen, space, period, parenthesis, curly braces, square brackets, tilde, exclamation point, comma, semi colon, apostrophe, at sign, number sign, dollar sign, percent sign, plus sign, and equal sign; and
- 50 characters or less (including spaces).

eRA systems now enforce the 50-character limit for filenames used for attachments in grant applications. I don’t know about you, but I’m not in the habit of counting characters when I name a file. As a point of reference … This is 50 characters with spaces and punctuation. You can convey a surprising amount of information in 50 characters, but maybe not as much as you want. For example, “consortium-contractual-arrangements-institution-pi-name” is over the limit and its use would result in an error.

The new validation will be part of the business rules checked by ASSIST and other solutions that use our validation service pre-submission. If you think you might be pushing the 50-character limit, run a quick [Validate Application](#) (if using ASSIST), [Preview Grantor Validation](#) (if using Workspace), or whatever your system-to-system solution calls it and make any necessary adjustments. If the long filename isn’t caught prior to submission, you know we’ll catch it after submission.

No one wants to be left scrambling to rename and reattach files at the last minute.

**Avoiding Last Minute Lock-outs in ASSIST**

Picture this - a colleague makes a last minute change to the grant application you’re preparing in ASSIST then rushes out of the office to catch a flight. You login to ASSIST to finalize the application, but discover she forgot to unlock the form. It’s 4:30pm and the application is due today. What do you do?

I know what you’re thinking … This is a crazy, made-up scenario. We submit super-early and can just wait until the colleague can unlock the form. To that I say, well played.

But, in the off chance you find yourself in a similar predicament, you now have another option. eRA just released an enhancement that allows ASSIST users logged in with SO (Signing Official) or AO (Administrative Official) accounts to unlock a form that was locked by another user. Simply go to the form that is locked and use the “UNLOCK CURRENT FORM” button located in the bottom portion of the left navigation.

Use the feature with caution. Forcing a form to unlock means any data your colleague didn’t save will be lost. But, it’s nice to know the feature is there - just in case you need it in a pinch.

**Spring Training in Baltimore**

Wow - it feels good to talk about spring. It seems like winter just won’t let go.

We are gearing up for the [NIH Regional Seminar on Program Funding and Grants Administration](#) in Baltimore May 15-17. If you’ve never been to one of these seminars, our short [video](#) provides a general idea of what you can expect. Laurie Roman and I will provide half-day Grant Application Preparation & Submission workshops, in addition to, several conference presentations.

The cost of [registration](#) goes up at the end of March. If you’re interested, now is the time to sign-up. Hope to see some of you there. If May doesn’t work for you, consider joining us in Phoenix November 6-8. Watch for updates on our main [NIH Regional Seminar Home Page](#).

Take care,
Sheri

*Sheri Cummins*
Communications & Outreach
NIH Office of Extramural Research
cumminsS@mail.nih.gov