



# Becoming an eRA Partner

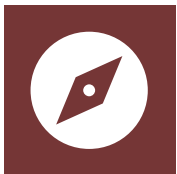
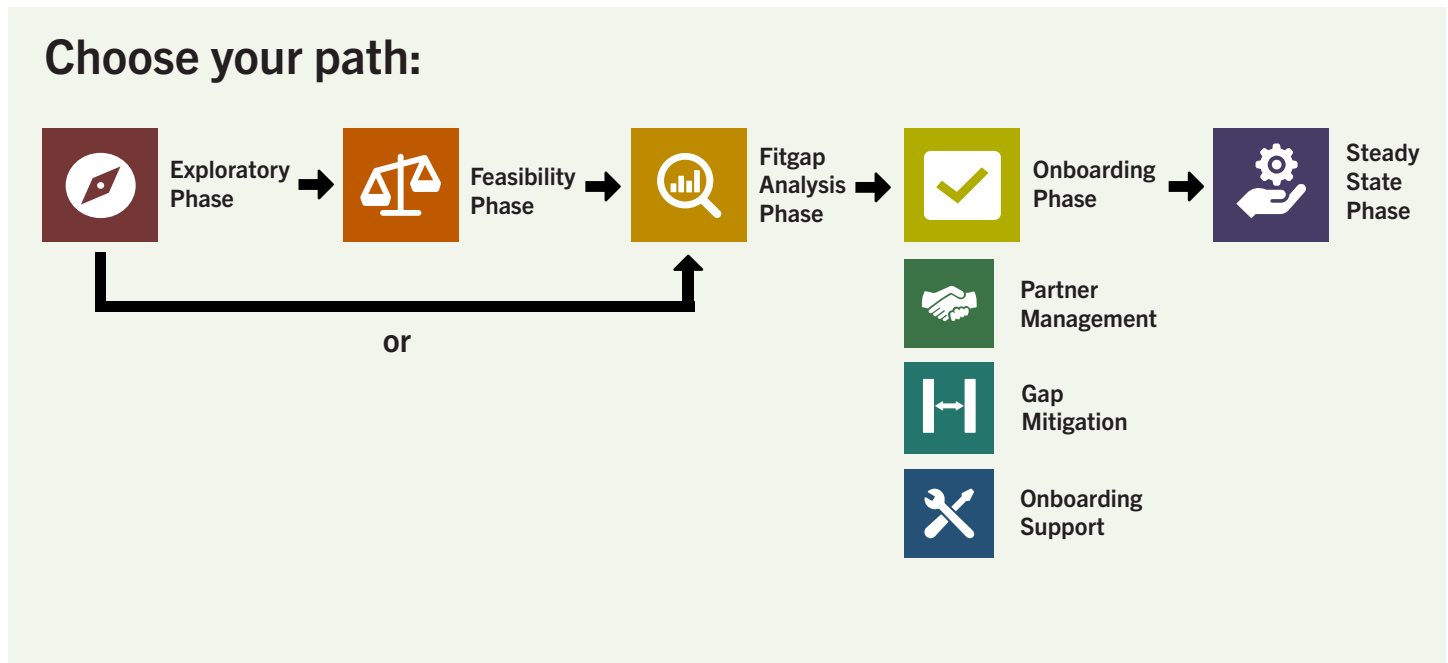
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Understanding the Phases of  
Engagement

## Introduction

Are you a federal agency interested in tapping eRA's reservoir of well-established grants management systems, services and solutions? If so, know that we have been managing electronic grants systems for over 30 years and take pride in our partnerships with agencies across the federal government. By leveraging our services, you can maximize efficiencies and reduce duplicative system development and costs. We will work closely with you to help determine which specific services meet your needs or opting for the entire end-to-end grants management system. Through our close partnership, we will work with you to determine your needs, identify and mitigate gaps and guide you throughout the entire process. Know that timeline and related costs will depend on the services you choose.

The process below outlines the phases you will follow to gather information about our services and decide how best we can meet your business needs.



### Exploratory Phase

During the Exploratory phase, an agency expresses their interest in eRA's grants management services and solutions. A short series of meetings are held to discuss the high-level needs of the agency as well as the overall service offerings of eRA. The result of this phase is a determination made by the agency as to whether to proceed with a high-level Feasibility Analysis or a more detailed Fitgap Analysis.

During this phase, there are no costs for the initial meetings to discuss the overall needs of the agency.



### **Feasibility Analysis Phase (optional)**

During the Feasibility Analysis phase, an agency would like to do a high-level analysis of the eRA service offering to determine if there is a possible alignment of services and solutions to support their overall grants management processing needs. This phase involves a series of meetings and discussions regarding the agency's high-level business processes across the Pre-Award, Award, Post Award and Closeout grants management life cycle areas. The business processes are then compared to the eRA services and system solutions to determine if there is an overall fit or gap in each area. The result of this phase is a high-level feasibility analysis report and cost estimate for the agency to conduct the Fitgap Analysis phase. This assists the agency in determining whether to continue with the more in-depth Fitgap Analysis.

The cost and timeframe to conduct a feasibility analysis is based on limited analysis of high-level processes conducted within the Pre-Award, Award, Post Award and Closeout grants management life cycle areas and varies depending on what was learned during the Exploratory phase. Typically, this high-level feasibility analysis can take between 3 to 6 months to complete, and is optional, as many agencies decide to transition directly into the Fitgap Analysis phase once the Exploratory phase is concluded.



### **Fitgap Analysis Phase**

During the Fitgap Analysis phase, an agency would like to do a more detailed fitgap analysis of their entire grants management business life cycle (or relevant portions). This process involves an extensive series of stakeholder meetings where the agency's business process and existing systems are reviewed. Each area of the business process, as well as the agency system's that support the process, are compared to the eRA services and system solutions to determine if there is a fit or gap in each business process area.

A fitgap analysis provides for the opportunity to conduct a more detailed review of an agency's grants management business processes and identify how eRA's service offerings may address and support the agency's enterprise grants management business needs. eRA's fitgap analysis results in deliverables that an agency can use to assess eRA's service offerings and determine the ability for the agency to take advantage of the full range of grants management services and solutions that eRA offers.

The cost and timeframe to conduct a fitgap analysis varies and depends upon the scope and depth to which the agency would like to review its grants management business processes across the grants management lifecycle and can take between 6 months to one year to complete. If only a small portion of the grants processing life cycle is being evaluated, then the timeframe would be less.



## Onboarding Phase

When an agency decides that it would like to proceed with the utilization of eRA's grants management services and solutions, the Onboarding phase would be initiated. This process involves the onboarding of the agency onto the eRA systems and services which includes completing any development and data migration activities as agreed upon during the Fitgap Analysis phase, as well as the rollout of eRA systems and solutions across the agency. The rollout would follow the recommended transition approach presented during the Fitgap Analysis phase and includes the training and direct onboarding support for the agency staff, applicants, and grantees as they move into the first year of system utilization.

Costs for the Onboarding phase are determined as part of the Fitgap Analysis phase recommendations and include several components critical to the onboarding process:



## Partner Management

A dedicated Partner Relationship Manager (PRM) is assigned for the entirety of the Onboarding phase to oversee all partner relations and onboarding activities. The PRM also provides project management support for the partner's utilization of eRA services and solutions, which also includes coordination with eRA Management and multiple eRA functional groups and teams. After the Onboarding phase is completed and the partner moves into the Steady State phase, this service becomes an optional. However, we always recommend that the partner maintain this service during the Steady State phase to provide for dedicated support to coordinate and support the services received.



## Gap Mitigation

One of the deliverables from the fitgap analysis is the Gap Mitigation Plan. This plan provides a high-level strategy for addressing identified business process area gaps where the system doesn't fully support the current processes of the requesting agency. The strategy may require the development of additional system functionality, modification of current functionality, or the gap may be addressed by adjusting the partner's business process with little or no development required. This plan does not address the detailed functional requirements, design, or full cost of any needed development; however, it will provide gap mitigation alternatives for the agency's consideration. As part of the alternatives, eRA will include a Rough Order of Magnitude estimate for the recommended gap mitigation approach which include the costs for all activities performed during the gap mitigation process which covers the following: planning, prioritizing, requirements gathering, coordinating stakeholder participation and feedback during development sprints, creating technical and architecture designs, code development, testing, and deployments.

### Gap Mitigation cont.

- The Gap Mitigation Plan categorizes gaps as Critical or Non-Critical:
  - o Critical Gap: Defined as a gap that presents an immediate showstopper issue in the business process of the agency and requires mitigation before the partner can begin the Onboarding phase.
  - o Non-Critical Gap: Defined as a gap that does not present any showstopper issues and does not require mitigation before the partner can begin and continue the Onboarding phase. Non-critical gap mitigations will be addressed through the deployment of enhancements or new functionality as the Onboarding phase progresses.



### Onboarding Support

The Gap Mitigation Plan includes strategies and options for how to onboard the agency onto the eRA systems. Based on the analysis, eRA will provide its recommended transition approach which will include the costs to support the onboarding of all staff, applicants, and grantees. This onboarding support includes a dedicated support team to oversee and manage the onboarding process. This support includes initial system setup and configuration, user account preparation, initial training for Federal staff and grantees, direct onsite desk-side support, knowledge transfer to increase the partner's knowledge-base and support structure, and resources to serve as experts for the overall use of eRA systems and provision of grants management business process expertise.

The total onboarding costs depend on the outcome of the fitgap analysis and will be based on the complexity of the organization structure, grant program structure, number of grantor and grantee/applicant users, identified gaps and corresponding mitigation strategies, as well as the recommended onboarding and training approach.



### Steady State Phase

Annual Operation and Maintenance (O&M) costs provide for the base level of support for the management and operations of the enterprise level infrastructure that supports all of eRA's systems and modules and includes service desk services that directly support the partner's federal staff, grantees, and applicants. During the Onboarding phase, O&M costs are phased-in to account for the workload and usage levels of the eRA systems during that period.

Once an agency reaches Steady State phase, O&M costs are assessed annually. Variables used to calculate the annual O&M costs include the 3-year average of the number of grant applications received and number of notices of awards (NoA) issued, as well as size and complexity of the agency's organizational structure.

**Steady State Phase cont.**

O&M includes defect fixes as well as minor updates and feature enhancements needed to maintain the system. If more extensive changes are requested by an agency (or multiple agencies with the same requirements), the cost will be assessed to the requesting agency or agencies. New capabilities that are developed for one agency become part of the shared services system and may be used by other agencies if it meets their requirements.