



Sounds of eRA Podcast Transcription

Part nine of a twelve part series where Edward Johnson Jr. (a.k.a. Eddie) sits down with Sandra Nordahl, President, Society of Research Administrators International (SRA), to discuss the mission of SRA and the effects of sequestration on research administration.

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Sequestration Countermeasures

Eddie: Welcome to another “*Sounds of the eRA.*” My name is Edward Johnson, a.k.a. Eddie, and I'm the President of InfoEd International. We're going to be speaking today with Sandra Nordahl. She's the President of SRA. We're going to be speaking about SRA's mission and inner workings and also the effects of sequestration on research administration and its effects on the world around us. Hello, Sandra.

Sandra: Hi, Eddie. Thank you for asking me to participate in your podcast.

Eddie: Glad you were able to accommodate this. Looking forward, in knowing what the past is and, hopefully, learning from it, what would you suggest moving forward, what might you say knowing that, as I described earlier, these hits are going to occur? And based upon the information I have, the 24 key hits are going to be the most dramatic of those hits that are projected over the next 10 years. What might you suggest, or what approach might you encourage, in terms of where else to get the money as opposed to taking it out of the seeding, if you will, of research administration?

Sandra: So I think many faculty and researchers are going to look towards private corporations and other nonprofits. I think those are the most logical approaches. Certainly, states will be impacted by sequestration, and I think the private corporations and nonprofits will as well as, as I discussed earlier. The times are going to be bleak, and what we'll find the programs as producing a quality response or request to the organization that's being approached.

So I think the faculty and researchers need to work with the individuals in the pre-award departments and their development areas, and those areas will be key in increasing their success rates. I think it's going to be essential to prepare a submission that specifically speaks to the elements that are being requested by the funding agency or sponsor. Make that document exactly what the reviewer needs to be compliant with the terms and conditions, and the goals of that funder.

Dr. Besio, who was our keynote speaker at the mid-west/northeast section meetings, and he serves on NIH and I believe NSF review panels, and he said it's so important that you tailor your proposals to directly address the elements that are being called out in that solicitation. So you don't want to give more, you don't want to give less, you want to present your proposal in a way that the reviewer can understand what you're doing more in layman's term, but they also have a comfort level in knowing that you know your expertise.

So that's going to be a new way, or a better way, I shouldn't say a new way, but a better way to propose projects that will be successful.

Eddie: Summarizing what you're saying is you're going to need to rely on your development offices to help find funding. I'm sure that you leverage online funding databases and so on, or at least the people that go hunting for that money do, but in addition to looking at those with a lot more scrutiny, if you will, to uncover things that maybe you wouldn't have looked at before or things that you wouldn't have applied for before. Like you're saying, some of the non-feds, I think, sometimes get overlooked. Those people are going to have to really elevate their game.

And then on the other side of that you are going to need to make sure that your proposals are spot-on, that you can't look at them as being topical. You need to be able to dial right into what that PA number or whatever is looking for.

Sandra: Exactly.

Eddie: Are you aware of any lobbying groups or any of the associations that have clustered together, formed consortiums, or whatever they might be, to interact with the government with respect to sequestration? FDP, which I'm sure you're familiar with, basically works on its own, hopefully, in concert with the government of trying to help solve or suggest needs of electronic research administration. They're hoping that the government will listen to them and take their advice.

Are there groups that you are aware of that are doing a similar thing with sequestration in trying to say, hey, look at us we've got 300 institutions that think this is an approach? Are those kinds of groups around to your knowledge?

Sandra: Let's just say I'm not well versed in that area. I do know that SRA does not lobby. We will occasionally comment on proposed pieces of legislation if we are asked directly. I think the best way recourse is for individuals to approach their government representative, and we would encourage people to do that. I think the more Congress hears from the people, their constituents, hopefully they'll get the message that they need to work together with the administration and resolve this issue before it has irreparable damage to our economy.

Eddie: Sandra, this has been absolutely fantastic stuff. I am very excited about the information we have been able to collect from you here.

I want to point out that on the SRA website, on the home page, there's an entry point to the sequestration resource center that SRA has been able to put together. It is a fantastic place to go look and see some real world examples of the things that are going on in sequestration. But I encourage you to go and take a look at that as well because this information is ever evolving and SRA does a great job of keeping that updated. I would encourage you to bookmark that site and look at it periodically to see what's new in that area.

Again, Sandra, I really appreciate your time. Fantastic information and I hope you will be willing to do this again if there are other things that we should chat about.

Sandra: Great. Thank you much for having me.