



Expanded Application Services and SOAP in the Main Residency Match: An Update on Collaboration and Process Improvement

In August 2023, the NRMP issued a [public statement](#) in reference to the expansion of application service providers in the transition to residency. The statement referenced changes that would be made to NRMP Match policy to recognize multiple application service providers in the Matching Program beginning with the 2024 Main Residency Match cycle. The statement also outlined the NRMP's intentions to work with application service providers to ensure efficiency of processes during the Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program (SOAP) and to provide timely, informative communications that aim to maintain if not enhance the applicant experience. Provided here is a summary of collaborative efforts to date as well as steps the NRMP is taking to ensure applicant data remains secure and protected as the network of application service providers in the transition to residency grows for 2025 and beyond.

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

In February 2024, the NRMP began convening meetings with the residency application service providers as well as other organizations involved in the transition to residency to generate collaboration and consensus on how to ensure a quality experience for applicants during SOAP. The graphic below identifies the meetings convened, the stakeholders involved, and the primary discussion themes:

NRMP CONVENED SOAP PROCESS MEETINGS

Completed

- February 12, 2024
- April 1, 2024
- April 22, 2024
- May 6, 2024



Upcoming

- June 3, 2024
- June 10, 2024

PARTICIPANTS



- ERAS Leadership
- OB/GYN Leadership and Liaison International
- Plastic Surgery Leadership
- NBME, NBOME, and ECFMG Representation

DISCUSSION THEMES



- Central repository for program designation
- Application data sharing
- USMLE and COMLEX data
- Application cap for SOAP

The NRMP focused the meetings on SOAP because, historically, that has been the only component of the matching cycle that identified utilization of a specific application service to streamline applicant-program interaction and ensure efficiency of process during a time-compressed event.

Effort on the part of the NRMP to bring these organizations together was, in part, in response to the Match Summit hosted by the NRMP in December 2023 where expansion of application services was discussed among Summit participants invited from across the medical education continuum. The NRMP's [Match Summit Meeting Report](#) provides a comprehensive summary of stakeholder reflections and recommendations on this and other transition-related topics.

Two primary objectives for the NRMP in convening the meetings was to create an unbiased space for the application service providers to reflect on ways they would collectively ensure 1) a recruitment experience that minimizes additional stress and burden on applicants; and 2) a seamless application data exchange for applicants participating in SOAP. Through the meetings convened to date, participants have explored those objectives in the following ways:

- Identification of common application data fields/attributes within each service provider's platform to inform the development and build of an Application Programming Interface (API) to share application data.
- Collection and display of additional program data (e.g., application service used) to inform applicant recruitment decisions early in the transition cycle.
- Formulation of data sharing agreements for purposes of uploading transcripts/profile information updates during a compressed Match Week.
- Recognition and consideration of the potentially unique needs of IMG applicants and how to ensure adequate resources for the verification/certification process across multiple providers.

At this time, the application service providers have agreed to develop an application programming interface (API) that allows for seamless exchange of data between providers for applicants utilizing multiple services during SOAP. Some, but not all of the providers are capable of developing an API for this year; therefore, the application service providers have agreed to develop **the API for the 2026 SOAP.**

Discussions will continue at future meetings, convened as necessary to support application service providers in their shared development of a timeline that allows for the building and testing of the API. Clear, effective messaging will continue to be a priority to keep our shared community informed of developments.

NRMP INTERNAL PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS AND SOAP PROCESS CHANGES

Since the onset of SOAP in 2012, the NRMP has been the steward of and primary source of data for the community about applicant SOAP-eligibility, program participation in SOAP, and position availability. As such, the NRMP:

- ✓ Requires programs to set their SOAP-participation preferences in the Registration Ranking and Results (R3) system by the Quota Change Deadline so that it can be displayed to applicants on the List of Unfilled Programs during Match Week.
- ✓ Provides applicants with their SOAP eligibility status on Monday of Match Week.
- ✓ Permits SOAP-eligible applicants to view only the unfilled program information and position type(s) for which they are eligible.
- ✓ Provides programs with access to the authoritative Applicant Match History in the R3 system, allowing programs to verify the eligibility of applicants who have applied to their program in SOAP.
- ✓ Limits unfilled SOAP-participating programs from placing on their preference lists any applicant who is ineligible for the program.

The NRMP will continue these efforts to ensure complete, accurate information about SOAP is provided to the community. At the same time, the NRMP has considered how its internal processes and protocols need to evolve in response to the expansion of application services supporting the transition cycle. The details below reflect the NRMP's commitment to steady, thoughtful change that maintains high data security protocols while also facilitating a more seamless experience by leveraging new technology tools.

2025 MATCH CYCLE:

Registration: NRMP has historically distributed applicant registration information to the AAMC for the purposes of identifying and correcting AAMC ID numbers. Beginning September 2024, NRMP will no longer distribute applicant registration data in order to prevent the distribution of applicant data to application service providers not being utilized by the applicant and/or program. NRMP will continue to proactively investigate partner organization ID mismatches and data anomalies utilizing data provided by partners and report discrepancies back to application service providers.

Match Week: The NRMP has historically provided applicant SOAP-eligibility status for all applicants to the AAMC's ERAS staff prior to the official start of Match Week. Beginning with 2025 Match Week, the NRMP will no longer engage in that data distribution. To continue doing so would obligate the NRMP to distribute applicant SOAP-eligibility status data for all applicants to all application service providers, which creates unnecessary risk of data exposure, exposes confidential applicant information to services and third parties with no direct need for or utilization of the information, and potentially weakens measures and practices in place to protect applicant confidentiality.

The NRMP will provide to application service providers the SOAP-eligibility status of applicants whose specialties or programs have indicated use of their specific application during SOAP. NRMP also will share SOAP program eligibility information with application service providers 30 minutes after the official match status notification in R3, which will enable the application service providers to limit a program's ability to accept applications during SOAP if they are not SOAP-eligible and unfilled. Application services will only receive program eligibility status for the programs that have indicated use of that service during SOAP. NRMP will collect, and will publish on the List of Unfilled Programs, the application method or service that programs will accept during SOAP to provide additional guidance and clarity to applicants.

2027 MATCH CYCLE:

Registration: The NRMP is pleased to announce a new feature that will be available to all application service providers partners for the 2027 Match cycle. The feature will allow for data integration and improved experience for applicants by:

- ✓ Enabling application service providers to transmit applicant registration data to NRMP via an API when their service opens for the application season;
- ✓ Securely storing applicant data in the NRMP environment until the Main Residency Match opens for registration; and
- ✓ Distributing personalized invitations to applicants, noting their choice of application service partner, and providing a registration link that permits applicants to “seed” their NRMP registration with their application data, thereby reducing the burden of data entry on the applicant.

Application service providers will also be able to retrieve Match-participating program data via the API after the Rank Order List deadline has concluded to ensure they have the proper NRMP program codes in their service in preparation for SOAP.

Match Week: For the 2027 Match Week and SOAP, NRMP will publish APIs for all application service providers to enable the retrieval of program eligibility data. Updated program eligibility also will be available at the end of each of the first 3 rounds of SOAP to support program tracking for each provider.

The work of the NRMP is always driven by our mission and commitment to promote a matching process that is fair, equitable, transparent, and reliable. We have welcomed the opportunity to convene external meetings of national organizations for the purpose of creating consensus and developing shared purpose around how best to support the UME-GME community during SOAP while also looking internally at our processes to ensure minimal risk to data while building new services to support applicants. As the UME-GME landscape continues to change, the NRMP will continue to encourage collaborative and productive relationships and examine its processes to advance its mission and continue to foster a meaningful and successful transition experience for applicants and the communities that support and train them.