UI-less Data Submission Protocol

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# Overview

This document describes bulk automated data submission protocol for NCBI archives.

To submit data, submitter needs to prepare a submission package that consists of:

1. Data files (actual data files)
2. Submission XML (description of what need to be done with these files, plus metadata)

Each submission package contains set of actions. Each action is associated with a single target database (NCBI archive, such as BioSample, BioProject, GenBank WGS, etc.). Processing of each action results in creation of a single “object” in target database.

Created object could be aggregate, i.e. contain multiple parts with many accessions. For instance WGS processing will create genome that contains multiple contigs and “WGS master”. But the action processing is atomic, it either completely succeed or completely fails. In case of failure no partial objects are created and the action has to be re-submitted as a whole.

DB1

Submission

Action

Action

DB2

Upon successful processing of initial submission, Submission Portal returns an NCBI Accession for the created object. In case of aggregate object, single accession is returned. Usually this accession points to a record linking together all parts of the submission. For instance for WGS submission it is WGS master accession, which in turn links to all contigs.

Submission package have to have all information necessary to create submitted objects without additional communication with NCBI, though it is possible to reference and link objects submitted before.

In case of errors, Submission Portal provides diagnostic message with listing of failed actions and files and provides error descriptions.

# Prerequisites

1. Access to an upload directory on NCBI FTP server or Aspera upload.

Aspera configuration guide is available at: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK47527/>

1. Account in NCBI Submission Portal and optional group. Consider having group if you need to share access to submissions among multiple people.

To set-up an account:

1. Log in at [https://submit.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](https://submit.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/subs/bioproject/) (Log in button is in the upper right corner)
2. Click on your user name in the upper right corner to update your profile
3. Fill-in your profile and click Save
4. If you registered for direct NCBI account, validate your email
5. Coordinate with NCBI namespace name that will be used in Submitter Provided Unique Identifiers (SPUIDs).

# Submission Package Format

The file submission.xml is an envelope for the whole submission. Its schema is defined in submission.xsd.

Here is a brief description of different elements of submission.xml.

### Description element

**Submitter (optional)**

Submitter user name and contact information.

**Organization (required)**

Organization name and contact information.

**Comment (optional)**

Submitter comment.

**Hold (optional)**

If provided, all objects in this submission will not be made public until specified date. This can be overridden for each action.

### List of actions

Each action in the list corresponds to a single submission object. For instance submission.xml could have three actions: one for BioSample, one for BioProject and one for WGS genome.

For the initial submission Action could be represented either by AddFiles element or AddData element.

**AddFiles**

When AddFiles is used, the object data is provided in standalone files that in turn are referenced in AddFiles element. In addition list of key-value attributes is provided to define objects metadata. This method is currently used for WGS and SRA submissions.

**AddData**

Element AddData allows including arbitrary XML block that defines the object. This is being used for BioSample and BioProject which are metadata objects themselves.

Action elements and attributes:

**Status (optional)**

Release policy. Overrides submission Hold policy for the specific action.

**Identifier (required)**

Either SPUID (Submitter Provided User ID - object identifier in submitter’s database) or LocalId (object identifier in submission context) have to be provided. This is used to report back assigned accessions as well as for cross-linking objects within submission. For instance if both BioProject and BioSample are submitted, LocalId can be used to specify the link between them.

When using SPUID spuid\_namespace has to be provided.

**@target\_db (required)**

Target NCBI archive. Currently Submission Portal supports the following UI-less submissions:

1. BioProject
2. BioSample
3. WGS
4. SRA

### Object references

Object reference is used to link different objects within single or multiple submissions. For instance it can be used to link SRA experiment to BioSample and BioProject.

There are three choices for the reference.

**PrimaryId**

The PrimaryId is used when accession of referenced object is known. To specify PrimaryId accession is used as a content of the element and the name of NCBI database as an attribute “db”. For instance:

<RefId><PrimaryId db="BioSample">SAMN12345</PrimaryId></RefId>

List of allowed databases: BioSample, BioProject, SRA.

**LocalId**

The LocalId is used to reference objects within the same submission package. For instance:

<RefId><LocalId>id12345</LocalId></RefId>

The id can be an arbitrary string no longer than 128 characters.

**SPUID (Submitter Provided Unique ID)**

SPUID is used to link objects by their external (user provided ids). SPUID has spuid\_namespace attribute that is unique for each submitter. The values of spuid\_namespace are from controlled vocabulary and need to be coordinated with NCBI prior to submission. Example of SPUID:

<SPUID spuid\_namespace="JGI">JGI12345</SPUID>

The id can be an arbitrary string no longer than 128 characters.

# Submission Protocol

1. Submitter creates a folder (**submission folder**) under his/her **upload directory** for the new submission. The choice of folder name is up to submitter. Submitter can create nested directories to group submissions.
2. Submitter uploads **data files** into submission folder
3. Submitter uploads submission.xml into submission folder
4. After data files and submission.xml are ready to be submitted, submitter uploads submit.ready file into submission folder.
5. NCBI Unified Submission Portal periodically scans upload directory and after it founds new submit.ready (by its timestamp) and submission.xml files it creates a new submission in SP and verifies that all data files referenced in it are present in the submission folder and there is no other unreferenced files (other than submit.ready, report.<N>.xml).
6. If file check (5) is successful SP continues with processing of submission actions specified in submission.xml.
7. Upon completion, SP creates submission report file in the submission.folder. This submission report has name report.<N>.xml, where <N>stands for consecutive numbers 1, 2, etc. SP always start from report file report.1.xml and, if there are more updates on submission state, can create report files report.2.xml, report.3.xml, etc.

Report file contains status for every action in the submission. See complete list of statuses in Appendix A. If some actions have status Processed-error, those need to be corrected and resubmitted. SP can delete data files and submission.xml for successful submissions, but leaves all files in submission folder if an error occurred to allow corrections.

Submitter has a quota on disk space. If this quota is exceeded, submitter can free some space by removing files from upload directory.

Submitter can also login into SP to see the submission status and stats.

We anticipate having the following type of errors:

1. Not all data files referenced in the submission XML are present. To correct this error submitter need to upload missing files into submission folder.
2. Some data files, which are present in submission folder, are not referenced in submission.xml. To correct this error submitter need either specify these files in submision.xml or delete them from submission folder.
3. Target archive specific errors. To correct these errors, submitter needs to upload new data files and submission.xml.

**Important!** Only failed actions need to be included in update submission.xml. If submission.xml contains actions that succeeded it can lead to creation of duplicate objects.

After all corrections are done, submitter needs to touch (upload) submit.ready file to initiate the processing.

# Appendix A Submission Statuses

1. Failed

Failed automated validation and expecting corrections from user. No curation happened yet.

1. Queued

Picked up by target database, automated validations can be rum, but no curator is assigned yet.

1. Processing

Transformation, curation and loading.

1. Processed-ok

Processing completed successfully, all objects are accessioned and loaded in archive(s). Accessions not necessary public yet.

1. Processed-error

Processing completed with error(s). Some objects can be accessioned and loaded while some can be waiting for corrections from user.

1. Deleted

Submission is deleted and no work on it is expected. Could be duplicate, error, etc.