

The Organizations Involved in the IETF Standards Process

Status of this Memo

This document specifies an Internet Best Current Practices for the Internet Community, and requests discussion and suggestions for improvements. Distribution of this memo is unlimited.

Abstract

This document describes the individuals and organizations involved in the IETF. This includes descriptions of the IESG, the IETF Working Groups and the relationship between the IETF and the Internet Society.

1. Documents controlling the process

1.1 The IETF Standards Process

The process used by the Internet community for the standardization of protocols and procedures is described in [B]. That document defines the stages in the standardization process, the requirements for moving a document between stages and the types of documents used during this process. It also addresses the intellectual property rights and copyright issues associated with the standards process.

2. Key individuals in the Process

2.1 The Request for Comments Editor

The RFC publication series [B] is managed by an Editor (which may in practice be one or more individuals) responsible both for the mechanics of RFC publication and for upholding the traditionally high technical and editorial standards of the RFC series.

The functions of the RFC Editor are performed by one or more individuals or organizations selected in accordance with the procedures defined by the RFC Editor charter [G].

2.2 The Working Group Chair

Each IETF Working Group is headed by a chair (or by co-chairs) with the responsibility for directing the group's activities, presiding over the group's meetings, and ensuring that the commitments of the group with respect to its role in the Internet standards process are met. In particular, the WG chair is the formal point of contact between the WG and the IESG, via the Area Director of the area to which the WG is assigned.

The details on the selection and responsibilities of an IETF Working Group chair can be found in [A].

2.3 The Document Editor

Most IETF Working Groups focus their efforts on a document, or set of documents, that capture the results of the group's work. A Working Group generally designates a person or persons to serve as the Editor for a particular document. The Document Editor is responsible for ensuring that the contents of the document accurately reflect the decisions that have been made by the working group.

As a general practice, the Working Group Chair and Document Editor positions are filled by different individuals to help ensure that the resulting documents accurately reflect the consensus of the Working Group and that all processes are followed.

3. Key organizations in the Process

The following organizations and organizational roles are involved in the Internet standards process. Contact information is contained in Appendix A.

3.1 Internet Engineering Task Force

The Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) is an open international community of network designers, operators, vendors and researchers concerned with the evolution of the Internet architecture and the smooth operation of the Internet. It is the principal body engaged in the development of new Internet Standard specifications.

3.2 IETF Working Groups

The technical work of the IETF is done in its Working Groups, which are organized by topics into several Areas (e.g., routing, network management, security, etc.) under the coordination of Area Directors. Working Groups typically have a narrow focus and a lifetime bounded by completion of a specific task.

For all purposes relevant to the Internet Standards development process, membership in the IETF and its Working Groups is defined to be established solely and entirely by individual participation in IETF and Working Group activities. Participation in the IETF and its Working Groups is by individual technical contributors rather than by formal representatives of organizations.

Anyone with the time and interest to do so is entitled and urged to participate actively in one or more IETF Working Groups and to attend IETF meetings which are held three times a year. In most cases active Working Group participation is possible through electronic mail alone. Internet video conferencing is also being used to allow for remote participation.

To ensure a fair and open process, participants in the IETF and its Working Groups must be able to disclose, and must disclose to the Working Group chairs any relevant current or pending intellectual property rights that are reasonably and personally known to the participant if they participate in discussions about a specific technology.

New Working Groups are established within the IETF by explicit charter. The guidelines and procedures for the formation and operation of IETF working groups are described in detail in [A].

A Working Group is managed by one or more Working Group chairs (see section 2.2). It may also include editors of documents that record the group's work (see section 2.3). Further details of Working Group operation are contained in [A]

IETF Working Groups display a spirit of cooperation as well as a high degree of technical maturity; IETF participants recognize that the greatest benefit for all members of the Internet community results from cooperative development of technically superior protocols and services.

3.3 IETF Secretariat

The administrative functions necessary to support the activities of the IETF are performed by a Secretariat consisting of the IETF Executive Director and his or her staff. The IETF Executive Director is the formal point of contact for matters concerning any and all aspects of the Internet standards process, and is responsible for maintaining the formal public record of the Internet standards process [B].

3.4 Internet Society

The Internet Society (ISOC) is an international organization concerned with the growth and evolution of the worldwide Internet and with the social, political, and technical issues that arise from its use. The ISOC is an organization with individual and organizational members. The ISOC is managed by a Board of Trustees elected by the worldwide individual membership.

Internet standardization is an organized activity of the ISOC, with the Board of Trustees being responsible for ratifying the procedures and rules of the Internet standards process [B].

The way in which the members of the ISOC Board of Trustees are selected, and other matters concerning the operation of the Internet Society, are described in the ISOC By Laws [C].

3.5 Internet Engineering Steering Group

The Internet Engineering Steering Group (IESG) is the part of the Internet Society responsible for the management of the IETF technical activities. It administers the Internet Standards process according to the rules and procedures defined in [B]. The IESG is responsible for the actions associated with the progression of technical specification along the "standards track" including the initial approval of new Working Groups and the final approval of specifications as Internet Standards. The IESG is composed of the IETF Area Directors and the chair of the IETF, who also serves as the chair of the IESG.

The members of the IESG are nominated by a nominations committee (the Nomcom), and are approved by the IAB. See [E] for a detailed description of the Nomcom procedures. Other matters concerning its organization and operation, are described in the IESG charter [does not yet exist].

3.6 Internet Architecture Board

The Internet Architecture Board (IAB) is chartered by the Internet Society Trustees to provide oversight of the architecture of the Internet and its protocols. The IAB appoints the IETF chair and is responsible for approving other IESG candidates put forward by the IETF nominating committee. The IAB is also responsible for reviewing and approving the charters of new Working Groups that are proposed for the IETF.

The IAB provides oversight of the process used to create Internet

Standards and serves as an appeal board for complaints of improper execution of the standards process [B]. In general it acts as source of advice to the IETF, the ISOC and the ISOC Board of Trustees concerning technical, architectural, procedural, and policy matters pertaining to the Internet and its enabling technologies.

The members of the IAB are nominated by a nominations committee (the Nomcom), and are approved by the ISOC board. See [E] for a detailed description of the Nomcom procedures. The membership of the IAB consists of members selected by the Nomcom process and the IETF chair sitting as a ex-officio member. Other matters concerning its organization and operation, are described in the IAB charter [D].

3.7 Internet Assigned Numbers Authority

Many protocol specifications include numbers, keywords, and other parameters that must be uniquely assigned. Examples include version numbers, protocol numbers, port numbers, and MIB numbers. The Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) is responsible for assigning the values of these protocol parameters for the Internet. The IANA publishes tables of all currently assigned numbers and parameters in RFCs entitled "Assigned Numbers" [E]. The IANA functions as the "top of the pyramid" for DNS and Internet Address assignment establishing policies for these functions.

The functions of the IANA are performed by one or more individuals or organizations selected in accordance with the procedures defined by the IANA charter [F].

3.8 Internet Research Task Force

The Internet Research Task Force (IRTF) is not directly involved in the Internet standards process. It investigates topics considered to be too uncertain, too advanced, or insufficiently well-understood to be the subject of Internet standardization. When an IRTF activity generates a specification that is sufficiently stable to be considered for Internet standardization, the specification is processed through the IETF using the rules in this document.

The IRTF is composed of individual Working Groups, but its structure and mode of operation is much less formal than that of the IETF, due in part to the fact that it does not participate directly in the Internet standards process. The organization and program of work of the IRTF is overseen by the Internet Research Steering Group (IRSG), which consists of the chairs of the IRTF Working Groups. Details of the organization and operation of the IRTF and its Working Groups may be found in [H].

4. Security Considerations

Security is not addressed in this memo.

5. References

[A] Huizer, E. and D. Crocker, "IETF Working Group Guidelines and Procedures", RFC 1603, March 1994.

[B] Bradner, S., Editor, "The Internet Standards Process -- Revision 3", RFC 2026, October 1996.

[C] By - Laws for the Internet Society, as amended:
gopher://info.isoc.org/00/isoc/basic_docs/bylaws.txt

[D] Huitema, C. and the IAB, "Charter of the Internet Architecture Board (IAB)", RFC 1601, March 1994.

[E] Galvin, J (Ed.), "IAB and IESG Selection, Confirmation, and Recall Process: Operation of the Nominating and Recall Committees", RFC 2027, October 1996.

[F] IANA Charter, Work in Progress.

[G] RFC Editor Charter, Work in Progress.

[H] IRTF Charter, RFC 2014, October 1996.

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Appendix A - Contact Information

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IESG - iesg@ietf.org, <http://www.ietf.org/iesg.html>

IAB - iab@ietf.org, <http://www.iab.org/iab>

RFC Editor - rfc-ed@isi.edu, <http://www.isi.edu/rfc-editor>

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