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RFC Editor Model (Version 1)

Abstract

The RFC Editor performs a number of functions that may be carried out by various persons or entities. The RFC Editor model presented in this document divides the responsibilities for the RFC Series into four functions: The RFC Series Editor, the Independent Submission Editor, the RFC Production Center, and the RFC Publisher. It also introduces the RFC Series Advisory Group and an (optional) Independent Submission Stream Editorial Board. The model outlined here is intended to increase flexibility and operational support options, provide for the orderly succession of the RFC Editor, and ensure the continuity of the RFC series, while maintaining RFC quality and timely processing, ensuring document accessibility, reducing costs, and increasing cost transparency.

Status of This Memo

This memo provides information for the Internet community. It does not specify an Internet standard of any kind. Distribution of this memo is unlimited.

Copyright Notice

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1. Introduction

The IAB, on behalf of the Internet technical community, is concerned with ensuring the continuity of the RFC Series, orderly RFC Editor succession, maintaining RFC quality, and RFC document accessibility. The IAB is also sensitive to the concerns of the IETF Administrative Oversight Committee (IAOC) about providing the necessary services in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

The definition of the RFC series is described in RFC 4844 [1]. Section 3.1 of RFC 4844 defines "RFC Editor":

> 3.1. RFC Editor
>
> Originally, there was a single person acting as editor of the RFC Series (the RFC Editor). The task has grown, and the work now requires the organized activity of several experts, so there are RFC Editors, or an RFC Editor organization. In time, there may be multiple organizations working together to undertake the work required by the RFC Series. For simplicity's sake, and without attempting to predict how the role might be subdivided among them, this document refers to this collection of experts and organizations as the "RFC Editor".
>
> The RFC Editor is an expert technical editor and series editor, acting to support the mission of the RFC Series. As such, the RFC Editor is the implementer handling the editorial management of the RFC Series, in accordance with the defined processes. In addition, the RFC Editor is expected to be the expert and prime mover in discussions about policies for editing, publishing, and archiving RFCs.

RFC 4844 makes no attempt to explore the internal organization of the RFC Editor. However, RFC 4844 envisions changes in the RFC Editor organizational structure. In discussion with the Internet community, the IAB considered changes that increase flexibility and operational support options, provide for the orderly succession of the RFC Editor, and ensure the continuity of the RFC series, while maintaining RFC quality and timely processing, ensuring document accessibility, reducing costs, and increasing cost transparency. The model set forth below is the result of those discussions, and examines the internal organization of the RFC Editor, while remaining consistent with RFC 4844.

Note that RFC 4844 uses the term "RFC Editor function" or "RFC Editor" as the collective set of responsibilities for which this memo provides a model for internal organization. This memo introduces the term "RFC Series Editor" or "Series Editor" for one of the organizational components.

While the IAB approved the initial version of this RFC Editor model on October 1, 2008, the model has received clarifications since. It should be noted that the publication of the document as an RFC does not cast the model in stone, as the primary purpose of this document, throughout the publication process, is to encourage normal community review in order to ascertain consensus to work to this model as a first step. The document, and the resulting structures, will be modified as needed through normal procedures. The IAB will continue to monitor discussions within the community about potential adjustments to the RFC Editor model and recognizes that the process described in this document may need to be adjusted to align with any changes that result from such discussions, hence the version number in the title.

In particular, the document will be reviewed after the various transition periods and mechanisms specified in this version are completed.

2. IAOC Implementation

The model is constructed in such a way that it allows for all these functions to be implemented jointly or under separate contractual arrangements. In fact, a bidder could put together a proposal that includes one or more subcontractors. The reporting structure will depend on the manner that the contracts are awarded, and they are subject to change over time. As a result, the model describes only responsibilities, procedures, and process. The exact implementation is a responsibility of the IAOC.

2.1. Expenses for the RFC Editor

The expenses discussed in this document are not new expenses. They are part of the IASA budget. Today, these expenses are part of the RFC Editor contract with the University of Southern California’s Information Sciences Institute.

3. RFC Editor Model

The RFC Editor model divides the responsibilities for the RFC Series into the following components:

- RFC Series Editor ("RSE").
- Independent Submission Editor ("ISE").
- RFC Production Center.
- RFC Publisher.

The RFC Series production and process under this structure is schematically represented by the figure below. (The figure does not depict oversight and escalation relations.)

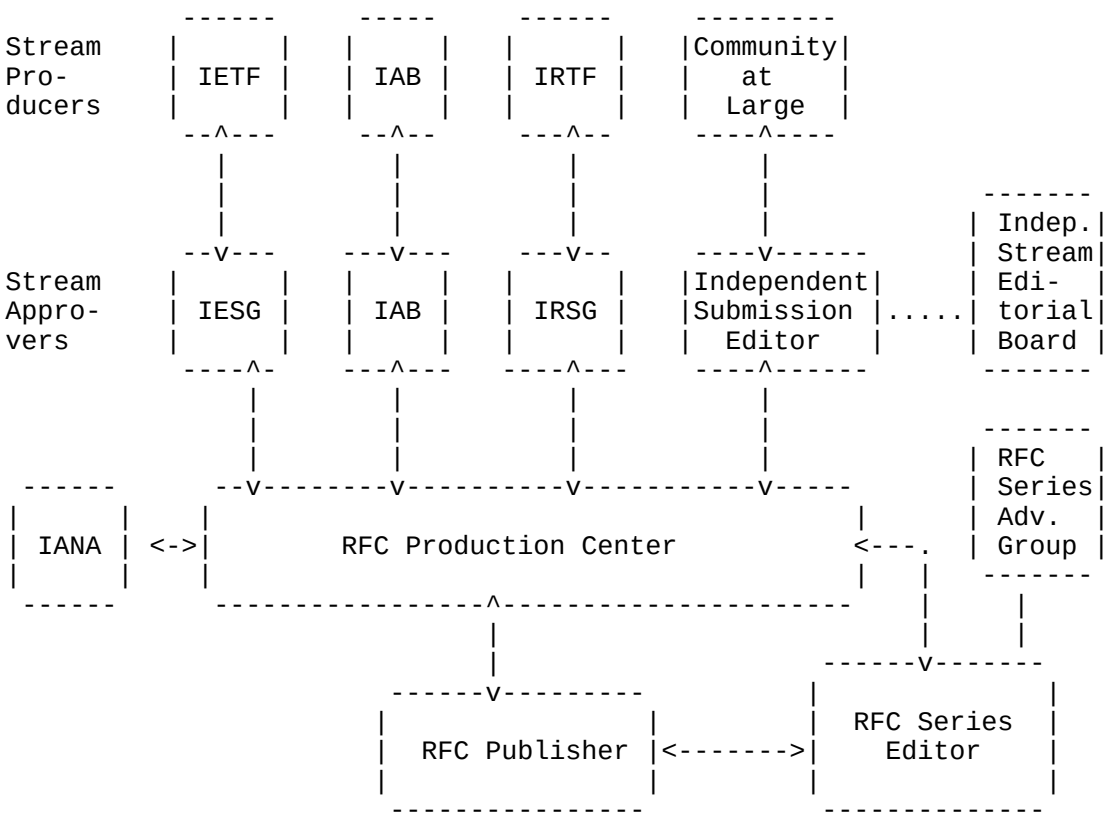

Figure 1: Ordinary RFC Series production and process

In this model, documents are produced and approved through multiple document streams. The four that now exist are described in [1]. Documents from these streams are edited and processed by the Production Center and published by the Publisher. The RFC Series Editor will exercise executive-level management over many of the activities of the RFC Publisher and the RFC Production Center (which can be seen as back-office functions) and will be the entity that:

- Faces the community.
- Works with the IAOC for contractual responsibilities.
- In collaboration with the RFC Series Advisory Group (RSAG), identifies and leads community discussion of important issues and opportunities facing the RFC Series.

while the IAB and IAOC maintain their chartered responsibility. More details about the collaboration with the RSAG and the IAB responsibilities can be found in Section 4.1.

The RSE does not have the authority to hire or fire RFC Editor contractors or personnel (see Section 4.1.3).

3.1. RFC Series Editor

The RFC Series Editor is an individual who may have assistants and who will regularly be provided support from an advisory group (see Section 4.1). The RSE is responsible for:

1. Identifying appropriate steps for RFC Series continuity;
2. Exercising executive-level management over the implementation of policies, processes, and procedures established to ensure the quality and consistency for the RFC Series. The RFC Series Editor will work with the RSAG, and, where appropriate, the IAB and IAOC to develop new policy and see that contractual agreements are met;
3. Taking proposed changes to the community, and working with the IAB so that the IAB can ensure that there is sufficient community review before significant policies or policy changes are adopted;
4. Coordinating with the IAB and/or IAOC and, together with the IAB and/or IAOC, participating in reviews of the RFC Publisher, RFC Production Center, and Independent Submission Editor functions to ensure the above-mentioned continuity;

5. Developing, maintaining, and publishing the RFC Style Manual for use by authors, editors, the stream managers, the RFC Production Center, and the RFC Publisher;

6. Managing the RFC errata process;

7. Liaising with the IAB;

8. Overseeing consistency of RFCs with the RFC Series and RFC Style Manual.

There are many potential issues with respect to RFC Series continuity. To name a few: look and feel of the series, indexing methodologies, accessibility of the publications, IPR and copyright issues, and formatting issues. After identifying the appropriate steps to address such issues, the implementation of those steps resides mostly with the RFC production and publishing functions. Since the IAOC maintains oversight of the implementation, the RFC Series Editor is expected to be invited and to participate in reviews of that implementation.

The RFC Series Editor is a senior technology professional with the following qualifications:

1. Strong understanding of the IETF and RFC process.

2. Executive management experience suitable to managing the requirements outlined elsewhere in this document and the many aspects of this role, and to coordinating the overall RFC Editor process.

3. Good understanding of the English language and technical terminology related to the Internet.

4. Good communication skills.

5. Experience with editorial processes.

6. Independent worker.

7. Experience as an RFC author desired.

There are alternative selection methods for selecting the individual to serve as the RFC Series Editor:

The first alternative involves a Request for Proposal (RFP) process run by the IAOC. The IAOC would seek a person with the listed qualifications in a broadly distributed RFP. The winner would be

selected by the IAOC in consultation with the IAB, and then, the IAOC would contract for the services. Contract terms, including length of contract, extensions, and renewals, shall be as provided in the RFP. The opportunity to bid shall be broadly available. Fees and expenses to support the administrative operation of the RFC Series Editor would be part of the awarded contract and be part of the IASA budget.

The second alternative involves a nomination and confirmation process. Candidates are nominated, and then an individual with the listed qualifications is selected by the Internet community and confirmed by the IAB. An approach similar to the one used by the IAB to select an IAOC member every other year (as described in Appendix A) will be used. Once the selection is made, a contract will be negotiated between the person selected and the IAOC, following the general model above. Financial compensation and expenses to support the administrative operation of the RFC Series Editor selected in this manner would be part of the IASA budget.

Based on an Request for Information (RFI) issued by the IAOC in December 2008, the IAOC recommended that the second alternative is chosen for the selection cycle to be completed in 2009.

3.2. Independent Submission Editor

The Independent Submission Editor is an individual who may have assistants and who is responsible for:

1. Maintaining technical quality of the Independent Submission stream.

2. Reviewing, approving, and processing Independent Submissions.

3. Forwarding to the Production Center the Internet-Drafts that have been accepted for publication as RFCs in the Independent Submission Stream.

4. Reviewing and approving RFC errata in Independent Submissions.

5. Coordinating work and conforming to general RFC Series policies as specified by the IAB and RSE.

6. Providing statistics and documentation as requested by the RSE and/or IAOC.

The Independent Submission Editor is a senior position for which the following qualifications are desired:

1. Technical competence, i.e., broad technical experience and perspective across the whole range of Internet technologies and applications, and specifically, the ability to work effectively with portions of that spectrum in which no personal expertise exists.

2. Thorough familiarity with the RFC series.

3. An ability to define and constitute advisory and document review arrangements. If those arrangements include an Editorial Board similar to the current one or some equivalent arrangement, assess the technical competence of potential Editorial Board members.

4. Good standing in the technical community, in and beyond the IETF.

5. Demonstrated editorial skills, good command of the English language, and demonstrated history of being able to work effectively with technical documents and materials created by others.

6. The ability to work effectively in a multi-actor environment with divided authority and responsibility similar to that described in this document.

The Independent Submission Editor may seek support from an advisory board (see Section 4.2) and may form a team to perform the activities needed to fulfill their responsibilities.

The individual with the listed qualifications will be selected by the IAB after input is collected from the community. An approach similar to the one used by the IAB to select an IAOC member every other year (as described in Appendix A) should be used. While the ISE itself is considered a volunteer function, the IAB considers maintaining the Independent Submission stream within the RFC Series part of the IAB's supported activities, and will include the expenses made for the support of the ISE in its IASA-supported budget.

3.3. RFC Production Center

RFC Production is performed by a paid contractor, and the contractor responsibilities include:

1. Editing inputs from all RFC streams to comply with the RFC Style Manual;

2. Creating records of edits performed on documents;

3. Identifying where editorial changes might have technical impact and seeking necessary clarification;

4. Engaging in dialogue with authors, document shepherds, IANA, and/or stream-dependent contacts when clarification is needed;

5. Creating records of dialogue with document authors;

6. Requesting advice from the RFC Series Editor as needed;

7. Providing suggestions to the RFC Series Editor as needed;

8. Coordinating with IANA to perform protocol parameter registry actions;

9. Assigning RFC numbers;

10. Establishing publication readiness of each document through communication with the authors, document shepherds, IANA and/or stream-dependent contacts, and, if needed, with the RFC Series Editor;

11. Forwarding ready-to-publish documents to the RFC Publisher;

12. Forwarding records of edits and author dialogue to the RFC Publisher so these can be preserved;

13. Liaising with IESG and IAB.

The RFC Production Center contractor is to be selected by the IAOC through an RFP process. The IAOC will seek a bidder who, among other things, is able to provide a professional, quality, timely, and cost-effective service against the established style and production guidelines. Contract terms, including length of contract, extensions and renewals, shall be as defined in an RFP. The opportunity to bid shall be broadly available.

As described in Section 3.1, this model allows the IAOC to recommend the RSE position to be selected through an RFP process. In that case, the model also allows combining the RFC Production Center bid with the RSE bid. For 2009, the recommendation was made that the RSE is selected through an IAB-led selection process.

3.4. RFC Publisher

The RFC Publisher responsibilities include:

1. Announcing and providing on-line access to RFCs.

2. Providing on-line system to submit RFC Errata.

3. Providing on-line access to approved RFC Errata.

4. Providing backups.

5. Providing storage and preservation of records.

6. Authenticating RFCs for legal proceedings.

All these activities will be done under general supervision of the RSE and need some level of coordination with various submission streams and the RSE.

Implementation of the RFC Publisher function can be pursued in two different ways. The choice between these alternatives will be based on an RFI issued by the IAOC in January 2009.

The first alternative is to modify the IETF Secretariat contract to include these services. Expenses to support these services would be part of the revised contract.

The second alternative is a separate vendor selected by the IAOC through an RFP process, possibly as part of the same contract as the RFC Series Editor. Expenses to support these services would be part of the awarded contract.

4. Committees

4.1. RFC Series Advisory Group (RSAG)

4.1.1. Charter

The purpose of the RSAG is to provide expert, informed guidance (chiefly, to the RSE) in matters affecting the RFC Series operation and development. Such matters include, but are not limited to, issues in operation of the RFC model components, and consideration of additional RFC streams, to give a sense of the range of topics covered.

The RSAG is chartered by the IAB. As such, it operates independently of the IAB to fulfill that charter, and provides periodic reports to the IAB via the RSE.

The group provides guidance to the RSE, who in turn addresses immediate operational issues or opportunities with the ISE, Production Center, or Publisher. In cases where these issues have contractual side-effects, the RSE provides guidance to the IETF Administrative Director (IAD). The RSAG also serves to provide advice to the RSE on longer-term, larger-scale developments for the RFC Series. This informs the proposals the RSE takes to the community for discussion, and the IAD/IAOC as proposals for implementation.

The RSAG will assist the RSE in identifying and leading community discussion of important issues and opportunities facing the RFC Series. The IAB retains its oversight role and is responsible for ensuring that adequate community discussion has been held on any such significant topics.

4.1.2. Membership

The RSAG full members are all at-large members, selected for their experience and interest in the RFC Series, to provide consistency and constancy of the RFC Series interpretation over time; the members do not represent a particular RFC stream or any organizations. In particular, there is no requirement or expectation that RSAG members will be IAB members. The RSAG members are proposed by the Series Editor in consultation with the sitting RSAG members, and then confirmed and formally appointed by the IAB. In addition to these full members, each RFC stream approver will appoint a liaison to the RSAG to provide context specific to their stream. The liaisons do not have to be members of the stream approval bodies. Initially, there will be no IAOC or IAB liaison for their oversight role; however, as experience is gained, the IAOC, IAB, or RSAG may request such liaisons.

The RSAG does not select or appoint the RSE, or any other component of the RFC Editor model, although it acts as an important resource for informing any selection process.

It is envisioned that the RSAG will be composed of appointed full members serving staggered 3 year terms, plus the RSE. The full members will serve at the pleasure of the IAB -- appointed by the IAB, and if necessary, removed by the IAB.

In order to provide continuity and to assist with a smooth transition of the RFC Editor function, the members of the existing RFC Editor Editorial Board who are willing to do so are asked to serve as an interim RSAG, effective as of the time of approval of this document. Within one year from the time the RFC Editor function transitions to the new model and after consideration of the operation of the new model in practice, the interim RSAG and RSE will formulate recommendations to the IAB about this model, regarding the regular composition, size, and selection process for the permanent RSAG in particular.

4.1.3. Disagreements among RFC Editor Entities

If during the execution of their activities, a disagreement arises over an implementation decision made by one of the entities in the model, any relevant party should first request a review and reconsideration of the decision. If that party still disagrees after the reconsideration, that party may ask the RSE to decide or, especially if the RSE is involved, that party may ask the IAB Chair (for a technical or procedural matter) or IAD (for an administrative or contractual one) to mediate or appoint a mediator to aid in the discussions, although neither is obligated to do so. All parties should work informally and in good faith to reach a mutually agreeable conclusion.

If such a conclusion is not possible through those informal processes, then the matter must be registered with the RFC Series Advisory Group. The RSAG may choose to offer advice to the RSE or more general advice to the parties involved and may ask the RSE to defer a decision until it formulates its advice. However, if a timely decision cannot be reached through discussion, mediation, and mutual agreement, the Series Editor is expected to make whatever decisions are needed to ensure the smooth functioning of the RFC Editor function; those decisions are final.

RSE decisions of this type are limited to the functioning of the process and evaluation of whether current policies are appropriately implemented in the decision or need adjustment. In particular, it should be noted that final decisions about the technical content of individual documents are the exclusive responsibility of the stream approvers for those documents, as shown in the illustration in Figure 1.

If a disagreement or decision has immediate or future contractual consequences, the Series Editor must identify the issue to the IAOC and, if the RSAG has provided advice, forward that advice as well.

After the IAOC has notified the IAB, the IAD as guided by the IAOC, with advice provided by the Series Editor, has the responsibility to resolve these contractual issues.

If informal agreements cannot be reached and formal RSAG review and/or RSE or stream approver decisions are required, the RSE must identify the issues involved to the community and report them to the IAB in its oversight capacity. The RSE and IAB shall mutually develop a satisfactory mechanism for this type of reporting when and if it is necessary.

IAB and community discussion of any patterns of disputes are expected to inform future changes to Series policies including possible updates to this document.

4.2. Independent Submission Stream Editorial Board

Today the RFC Editor is supported by an Editorial Board for the review of Independent Submission stream documents. This board is expected to evolve in what we will call the Independent Submission Stream Editorial Board. This volunteer Editorial Board will exist at the pleasure of the ISE, and the members serve at the pleasure of the ISE. The existence of this board is simply noted within this model, and additional discussion of such is considered out of scope of this document.

5. IANA Considerations

This document defines several functions within the overall RFC Editor structure, and it places the responsibility for coordination of registry value assignments with the RFC Production Center. The IAOC will facilitate the establishment of the relationship between the RFC Production Center and IANA.

This document does not create a new registry nor does it register any values in existing registries, and no IANA action is required.

6. Security Considerations

The same security considerations as those in RFC 4844 apply. The processes for the publication of documents must prevent the introduction of unapproved changes. Since the RFC Editor maintains the index of publications, sufficient security must be in place to prevent these published documents from being changed by external parties. The archive of RFC documents, any source documents needed to recreate the RFC documents, and any associated original documents

(such as lists of errata, tools, and, for some early items, non-machine-readable originals) need to be secured against failure of the storage medium and other similar disasters.

The IAOC should take these security considerations into account during the implementation of this RFC Editor model.

7. Acknowledgments

The RFC Editor model was conceived and discussed in hallways and on mail lists. The first iteration of the text on which this document is based was drafted by Leslie Daigle, Russ Housley, and Ray Pelletier. In addition to the members of the IAOC and IAB in conjunction with those roles, major and minor contributions were made by (in alphabetical order): Bob Braden, Brian Carpenter, Sandy Ginoza, Alice Hagens, Joel M. Halpern, Alfred Hoenes, Paul Hoffman, John Klensin, Subramanian Moonesamy, and Jim Schaad.

The IAOC members at the time the RFC Editor model was approved were (in alphabetical order): Fred Baker, Bob Hinden, Russ Housley, Ole Jacobsen, Ed Juskevicius, Olaf Kolkman, Ray Pelletier (non-voting), Lynn St. Amour, and Jonne Soininen. In addition, Marshall Eubanks was serving as the IAOC Scribe.

The IAB members at the time the initial RFC Editor model was approved were (in alphabetical order): Loa Andersson, Gonzalo Camarillo, Stuart Cheshire, Russ Housley, Olaf Kolkman, Gregory Lebovitz, Barry Leiba, Kurtis Lindqvist, Andrew Malis, Danny McPherson, David Oran, Dave Thaler, and Lixia Zhang. In addition, the IAB included two ex-officio members: Dow Street, who was serving as the IAB Executive Director, and Aaron Falk, who was serving as the IRTF Chair.

The IAB members at the time the this RFC was approved were (in alphabetical order): Marcelo Bagnulo, Gonzalo Camarillo, Stuart Cheshire, Vijay Gill, Russ Housley, John Klensin, Olaf Kolkman, Gregory Lebovitz, Andrew Malis, Danny McPherson, David Oran, Jon Peterson, and Dave Thaler.

8. References

8.1. Normative References

[1] Daigle, L. and Internet Architecture Board, "The RFC Series and RFC Editor", RFC 4844, July 2007.

8.2. Informative References

[2] Huston, G. and B. Wijnen, "The IETF Administrative Oversight Committee (IAOC) Member Selection Guidelines and Process", BCP 113, RFC 4333, December 2005.

Appendix A. 2009 Selection Process

In 2009, the IAB is responsible for the selection of the RFC Series Editor and for the selection of the Independent Submission Editor. The IAOC selects the RFC Production Center and the RFC Publisher from vendors that choose to submit a proposal. The IAOC procurement process is not described in this document.

The selection process for the ISE and RSE is taken from [2] but modified to allow for subject-matter experts to advise the IAB, to take into account that the community with interest in the RFC series extends beyond the IETF community.

A.1. Ad Hoc Advisory Committee(s)

It is expected that the IAB and IAOC will, during the various stages of the bidding process, establish one or more ad hoc advisory committees to assist them in the selection of the various functions. The names of the members of the committees, who do not need to be IAB members or IETF participants, will be made public through the IAB and IAOC minutes and possibly other mechanisms as well.

Members of these committees are expected to have an understanding of the RFC series and related processes, and of procedures and interests of the various streams.

Members of the subcommittees will be privy to confidential material and are expected to honor confidentiality. Because they are subject to confidential material, they are recused from bidding on any of the functions for which financial compensation is offered.

The IAB and IAOC bear the responsibility for the selections of the candidates for defined functions. The committees provide advice and recommendations but are not expected to act as nomination or selection committees.

A.2. The IAB Selection Process of an RFC Series Editor and/or an Independent Submission Editor

A.2.1. Nominations and Eligibility

The IAB will be making a broad public call for nominations. The public call will specify the manner by which nominations will be accepted and the means by which the list of nominees will be published. Self-nominations are permitted. Along with the name and contact information for each candidate, details about the candidate’s background and qualifications for the position should be attached to the nomination.

People that served on the ad-hoc advisory committee(s) mentioned above are not eligible. There are no further limitations. Specifically, nominees do not have to be actively contributing to the IETF and active participation as a working group chair, an IETF Nominating Committee member, or an IAB or IESG member is not a limitation.

IAB members who accept a nomination for an IAB-selected position will recuse themselves from IAB selection discussions.

A.2.2. Committees in 2009

During the 2009 selection process, a committee assisted the IAOC/IAB in creating the job descriptions and statements of work. This committee may also assist in assessing the bids made to the IAOC for the Production Center and the RFC Publisher. Another committee, the Ad Hoc Committee for Selection of Editorial Functions, assists the IAB in the assessment of the RFC Series Editor and the Independent Submission Editor candidates.

A.2.3. Selection

The IAB will publish the list of nominated persons prior to making a decision, allowing time for the community to pass any relevant comments to the IAB. When established, the advisory committee will be asked to provide a motivated shortlist. The IAB will review the nomination material, any submitted comments, the shortlist from the advisory committee, and make its selection.

It is noted that the community mentioned above is the community with an interest in RFCs and the RFC Editor’s functioning; the IETF community is only a part of that community.

The main intent is to select the superior candidate, taking the continuity of the series into account.

A.2.4. Care of Personal Information

The following procedures will be used by the IAB in managing candidates’ personal information:

- The candidate’s name will be published, with all other candidate names, at the close of the nominations period.

- Except as noted above, all information provided to the IAB during this process will be kept as confidential to the IAB and, when established, the advisory committee.

A.2.5. Term of Office and Selection Time Frame

Subject to further negotiations and in the interest of providing stability, terms of office are expected to be five years with no restrictions on renewals and with provision for shorter actual contracts and intermediate reviews. In addition, an effort should be made so that terms of office for the RSE, ISE, and RFC Production Center do not terminate concurrently.

The selection timeframe for 2009 is roughly:

June - IAB calls for nominations for ISE and RSE positions;

July - A Committee conducts interviews;

Mid-August - Committee recommends individuals to IAB for ISE and RSE positions;

Second half of September - IAB appoints ISE and RSE, subject to successful negotiations of agreement with IAOC;

Mid-October - Memorandums of understanding (MOUs) executed with IAD, ISE for expenses, RSE for stipend and expenses;

Mid-October - Transition begins;

January 2010 - Contract begins.

The timeline for future selections is subject to recommendation from the RSAG and review by the IAB.

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