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IETF Administrative Support Activity 2.0: Update to the Process for Selection of Trustees for the IETF Trust

Abstract

This document captures the rationale for the changes introduced in RFC 8714, "Update to the Process for Selection of Trustees for the IETF Trust".

At the time RFC 8714 was published, the changes to the IETF Administrative Support Activity, Version 2.0 (IASA 2.0) had an impact on the IETF Trust because members of the IETF Administrative Oversight Committee (IAOC), which was being phased out, had served as Trustees of the IETF Trust. This document provides background on the past IETF Trust arrangements, explains the effect of the rules in the founding documents during the transition to the new arrangement, and provides a rationale for the update.

Status of This Memo

This document is not an Internet Standards Track specification; it is published for informational purposes.

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Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction

This document captures the rationale for the changes introduced in [RFC8714].

At the time [RFC8714] was published, the changes to the IETF Administrative Support Activity, Version 2.0 (IASA 2.0) had an impact on the IETF Trust [RFC4071] [RFC4371] [RFC8711]. This is because members of the IETF Administrative Oversight Committee (IAOC), which was being phased out, had served as Trustees of the IETF Trust. A minimal change regarding the selection of the Trustees is implemented by [RFC8714].

This companion memo provides some background on the details of the past IETF Trust arrangements, explains the effect of the rules in the founding documents during the transition to the new arrangement, and provides a rationale for the update.

2. Background

The purpose of the IETF Trust is to acquire, hold, maintain, and license certain existing and future intellectual property and other property used in connection with the administration of the IETF [RFC8714]. The intellectual property is, for instance, rights that the IETF contributors grant for text in RFCs and Internet-Drafts. The IETF Trust also manages trademarks such as "IETF" and domain names such as "ietf.org". The IETF Trust is also serving the broader Internet community by holding domains and trademarks associated with the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) [RFC7979].

The IETF Trust is a legal entity, registered in the Commonwealth of Virginia [Trust-FD].

Previously, the members of the IAOC also served as ex officio Trustees of the IETF Trust. The founding documents specify persons eligible to become Trustees as having to be then-current members of the IAOC [Trust-FD]. The documents also specify that if for any reason there are fewer than three individuals serving as Trustees, then the Internet Engineering Steering Group (IESG), or the IESG's successor as the leadership of the IETF, shall appoint one or more individuals to serve in a temporary capacity as Trustee(s) until eligible persons can be found.

In the previous system, there were eight voting members of the IAOC. Two were named by the IETF Nominating Committee (NomCom), one by the Internet Engineering Steering Group (IESG), one by the Internet Architecture Board (IAB), and one by the Internet Society (ISOC) Board of Trustees. There were three ex officio members via their roles as IETF Chair, ISOC CEO, and IAB Chair. In addition, the IETF Administrative Director (IAD) was a non-voting IAOC member who also served as one of the Trustees.

3. General Approach

There were two basic approaches to resolving the issue with the Trustees once the IAOC ceased to exist. One approach would be to merge all IETF Trust functions in the new IASA structure and under the new legal entity. However, this memo advocates a second approach where the IETF Trust is kept independent.

The rationale for advocating the second approach is, in part, to minimize changes to the IETF Trust while the IETF's administrative structure is undergoing major change. In addition, the IETF Trust and other administrative IETF processes are quite different. While very important, the IETF Trust is a low-activity entity where changes are minimal and gradual, and there are no pressing issues.

4. Changing the Way Trustees Are Selected

When the Trustees were serving on both the IETF Trust and the IAOC, many of the requirements for naming a particular group of people were driven by the IAOC's requirements. For the IETF Trust in the new model, some of those arrangements were rethought, both in terms of the number and source of the Trustees, as well as the desired qualifications and length of terms.

Several options were possible, of course. A newly designed selection process could have been devised, but in this document we argue for limited change based largely on the fact that a) the IETF Trust arrangements worked generally well, b) the expected time commitment is expected to be modest, and c) the assets need very careful management.

As a result, a smaller group of Trustees appeared sufficient.

In addition, the terms set for the Trustees selected from the IETF community could be longer than the two-year period typical of other IETF bodies.

One could have continued the practice of having the chairs and CEOs from the IETF, IAB, and Internet Society be Trustees as well, but this may not be necessary. In general, the tasks of the IETF Trust are well defined, and while there is a need for coordination, it does not need to be at the level of chairs or CEOs.

Given all this, one approach was to have Trustees appointed by the NomCom, the IESG, and the ISOC Board of Trustees. (One might also have considered the IETF Administration LLC legal entity instead of the Internet Society for this role, but the Internet Society is perhaps more suitable for the role given their focus on the broad use of the IETF Trust assets and not merely administrative aspects.)

If the same principles used for previous appointments continued to be used, then appointments performed by the NomCom would need to be confirmed by another entity. This could be, for instance, either the IESG or the IAB. The IESG had previously been the confirming body for the IAOC, so it has been retained in that role for the Trustees.

5. Transition

When the new entity for the IETF Administration LLC was set up, the IAOC was expected to be discontinued soon thereafter. Fortunately, there was no pressing need to change all the components of the IAOC and its dependent organizations at the same time. As discussed in Section 2, the IESG holds the ability to continue to name Trustees. Once the updated procedures were in place, the IETF Trust had its management nominated in the usual manner, and the IESG's exception process was no longer needed.

6. Security Considerations

This memo has no security implications for the Internet.

7. IANA Considerations

This document has no IANA actions.

8. References

8.1. Normative References

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