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IESG Procedures for Handling of Independent and IRTF Stream Submissions

Abstract

This document describes the procedures used by the IESG for handling documents submitted for RFC publication from the Independent Submission and IRTF streams.

This document updates procedures described in RFC 2026 and RFC 3710.

Status of This Memo

This memo documents an Internet Best Current Practice.

This document is a product of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF). It represents the consensus of the IETF community. It has received public review and has been approved for publication by the Internet Engineering Steering Group (IESG). Further information on BCPs is available in Section 2 of RFC 5741.

Information about the current status of this document, any errata, and how to provide feedback on it may be obtained at http://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc5742.

1. Introduction and History

RFC 4844 [N1] defines four RFC streams. When a document is submitted for publication, the review that it receives depends on the stream in which it will be published. The four streams defined in RFC 4844 are:

- The IETF stream
- The IAB stream
- The IRTF stream
- The Independent Submission stream

The IETF is responsible for maintaining the Internet Standards Process, which includes the requirements for developing, reviewing and approving Standards Track and BCP RFCs. These RFCs, and any other IETF-generated Informational or Experimental documents, are reviewed by appropriate IETF bodies [N2] and published as part of the IETF stream.

Documents published in streams other than the IETF stream might not receive any review by the IETF for such things as security, congestion control, or inappropriate interaction with deployed protocols. Generally, there is no attempt for IETF consensus or IESG approval. Therefore, the IETF disclaims, for any of the non-IETF stream documents, any knowledge of the fitness of those RFCs for any purpose.

IESG processing described in this document is concerned only with the last two categories, which comprise the Independent Submission stream and the IRTF stream, respectively [N1].

Following the approval of RFC 2026 [N2] and prior to the publication of RFC 3932 [I1], the IESG reviewed all Independent Submission stream documents before publication. This review was often a full-scale review of technical content, with the Area Directors (ADs) attempting to clear points with the authors, stimulate revisions of the documents, encourage the authors to contact appropriate working groups (WGs), and so on. This was a considerable drain on the resources of the IESG, and because this was not the highest priority task of the IESG members, it often resulted in significant delays.

In March 2004, the IESG decided to make a major change in this review model, with the IESG taking responsibility only for checking for conflicts between the work of the IETF and the documents submitted. Soliciting technical review is deemed to be the responsibility of the RFC Editor. If an individual AD chooses to review the technical

content of the document and finds issues, that AD will communicate these issues to the RFC Editor, and they will be treated the same way as comments on the documents from other sources.

Prior to 2006, documents from the IRTF were treated as either IAB submissions or Independent Submissions via the RFC Editor. However, the Internet Research Steering Group (IRSG) has established a review process for the publication of RFCs from the IRTF stream [I2]. Once these procedures are fully adopted, the IESG will be responsible only for checking for conflicts between the work of the IETF and the documents submitted, but results of the check will be reported to the IRTF. These results may be copied to the RFC Editor as a courtesy.

This document describes only the review process done by the IESG when the RFC Editor or the IRTF requests that review. The RFC Editor will request the review of Independent Submission stream documents, and the IRTF will request review of IRTF stream documents. There are many other interactions between document editors and the IESG, for instance, an AD may suggest that an author submit a document as input for work within the IETF rather than to the RFC Editor as part of the Independent Submission stream, or the IESG may suggest that a document submitted to the IETF is better suited for submission to the RFC Editor as part of Independent Submission stream, but these interactions are not described in this memo.

For the convenience of the reader, this document includes description of some actions taken by the RFC Editor, the IAB, and the IRSG. The inclusion of these actions is not normative. Rather, these actions are included to describe the overall process surrounding the normative IESG procedures described in this document. No RFC Editor, IAB, or IRSG procedures are set by this document.

1.1. Changes since RFC 3932

RFC 3932 provided procedures for the review of Independent Submission stream submissions. With the definition of procedures by the IRSG for the IRTF stream, it has become clear that similar procedures apply to the review by the IESG of IRTF stream documents.

The IAB and the RFC Editor have made updates to the formatting of the title page for all RFCs [N3]. With these changes, the upper left hand corner of the title page indicates the stream that produced the RFC. This label replaces some of the information that was previously provided in mandatory IESG notes on non-IETF-stream documents.

The IESG may request the inclusion of an IESG note in an Independent Submission or IRTF stream document to explain the specific relationship, if any, to IETF work. In case there is a dispute about

the content of the IESG note, this document provides a dispute resolution process.

2. Background Material

The review of Independent Submissions by the IESG was prescribed by RFC 2026 [N2], Section 4.2.3. The procedure described in this document is compatible with that description.

The procedures developed by the IRTF for documents created by the Research Groups also include review by the IESG [I2].

The IESG Charter (RFC 3710 [I5], Section 5.2.2) describes the review process that was employed in Spring 2003 (even though the RFC was not published until 2004); with the publication of RFC 3932 [I1], the procedure described in RFC 3710 was no longer relevant to documents submitted via the RFC Editor. The publication of this document further updates Section 5.2.2 of RFC 3710, now covering both the IRTF and the Independent Submission streams.

3. Detailed Description of IESG Review

The RFC Editor reviews Independent Submission stream submissions for suitability for publication as RFCs. As described in RFC 4846 [I3], the RFC Editor asks the IESG to review the documents for conflicts with the IETF standards process or work done in the IETF community.

Similarly, documents intended for publication as part of the IRTF stream are sent to the IESG for review for conflicts with the IETF standards process or work done in the IETF community [I2].

The IESG review of these Independent Submission and IRTF stream documents results in one of the following five types of conclusion, any of which may be accompanied by a request to include an IESG note if the document is published.

1. The IESG has concluded that there is no conflict between this document and IETF work.

2. The IESG has concluded that this work is related to IETF work done in WG <X>, but this relationship does not prevent publishing.

3. The IESG has concluded that publication could potentially disrupt the IETF work done in WG <X> and recommends not publishing the document at this time.

4. The IESG has concluded that this document violates IETF procedures for <Y> and should therefore not be published without IETF review and IESG approval.

5. The IESG has concluded that this document extends an IETF protocol in a way that requires IETF review and should therefore not be published without IETF review and IESG approval.

The RFC headers and boilerplate [N3] is intended to describe the relationship of the document to the IETF standards process. In exceptional cases, when the relationship of the document to the IETF standards process might be unclear, the IESG may request the inclusion of an IESG note to clarify the relationship of the document to the IETF standards process. Such a note is likely to include pointers to related IETF RFCs. The dispute resolution process in Section 4 is provided to handle situations in which the IRSG or RFC Editor is concerned with the content of the requested IESG note.

The last two responses are included respectively, for the case where a document attempts to take actions (such as registering a new URI scheme) that require IETF Review, Standards Action, or IESG Approval (as these terms are defined in RFC 5226 [I6]), and for the case where there is a proposed change or extension to an IETF protocol that was not anticipated by the original authors and that may be detrimental to the normal usage of the protocol, but where the protocol documents do not explicitly say that this type of extension requires IETF review.

If a document requires IETF review, the IESG will offer the author the opportunity to ask for publication as an AD-sponsored individual document, which is subject to full IETF review, including possible assignment to a WG or rejection. Redirection to the full IESG review path is not a guarantee that the IESG will accept the work item, or even that the IESG will give it any particular priority; it is a guarantee that the IESG will consider the document.

The IESG will normally complete review within four weeks of notification by the RFC Editor or IRTF. In the case of a possible conflict, the IESG may contact a WG or a WG Chair for an outside opinion of whether publishing the document is harmful to the work of that WG and, in the case of a possible conflict with an IANA registration procedure, the IANA expert for that registry.

If the IESG does not find any conflict between an Independent Submission and IETF work, then the RFC Editor is responsible for judging the technical merits for that submission, including considerations of possible harm to the Internet. If the IESG does not find any conflict between an IRTF submission and IETF work, then

the IRSG is responsible for judging the technical merits for that submission, including considerations of possible harm to the Internet.

The RFC Editor, in agreement with the IAB, shall manage mechanisms for appropriate technical review of Independent Submissions. Likewise, the IRSG, in agreement with the IAB, shall manage mechanisms for appropriate technical review of IRTF submissions.

4. Dispute Resolution

Experience has shown that the IESG and the RFC Editor have worked well together regarding publication recommendations and IESG notes. Where questions have arisen, they have been quickly resolved when all parties become aware of the concerns. However, should a dispute ever arise, a third party can assist with resolution. Therefore, this dispute procedure has an informal dialogue phase followed by an arbitration phase if the matter remains unresolved.

If the IESG requests the inclusion of an IESG note and the IRSG or the RFC Editor intends to publish the document without the requested IESG note, then they must provide a clear and concise description of the concerns to the IESG before proceeding. A proposal for alternate IESG note text from the IRSG or the RFC Editor is highly encouraged.

If the IESG does not want the document to be published without the requested IESG note, then the IESG must initiate an informal dialogue. The dialogue should not take more than six weeks. This period of time allows the IESG to conduct an IETF Last Call concerning the content of the requested IESG note (and not on the document as a whole) to determine community consensus if desired. At the end of the dialogue, the IESG can reaffirm the original IESG note, provide an alternate IESG note, or withdraw the note altogether. If an IESG note is requested, the IRSG or the RFC Editor must state whether they intend to include it.

If dialogue fails to resolve IRSG or RFC Editor concerns with the content of a requested IESG note and they intend to publish the document as an RFC without the requested IESG note, then the IESG can formally ask the IAB to provide arbitration. The IAB is not obligated to perform arbitration and may decline the request. If the IAB declines, the RFC Editor decides whether the IESG note is included. If the IAB accepts, the IAB review will occur according to procedures of the IAB's own choosing. The IAB can direct the inclusion of the IESG note, direct the withdrawal of the IESG note, or leave the final decision to the RFC Editor. Unlike the IAB reviews specified in RFC 4846 [I3], if the IAB directs the inclusion

or withdrawal the IESG note, the IAB decision is binding, not advisory.

5. Examples of Cases Where Publication Is Harmful

This section gives a couple of examples where delaying or preventing publication of a document might be appropriate due to conflict with IETF work. It forms part of the background material, not a part of the procedure.

Rejected Alternative Bypass:

> As a WG is working on a solution to a problem, a participant decides to ask for Independent Submission stream publication of a solution that the WG has rejected. Publication of the document will give the publishing party an RFC number before the WG is finished. It seems better to have the WG product published first, and have the non-adopted document published later, with a clear disclaimer note saying that "the IETF technology for this function is X".
>
> Example: Photuris (RFC 2522), which was published after IKE (RFC 2409).
>
> Note: In general, the IESG has no problem with rejected alternatives being made available to the community; such publications can be a valuable contribution to the technical literature. However, it is necessary to avoid confusion with the alternatives adopted by the WG.

Inappropriate Reuse of "free" Bits:

> In 2003, a proposal for an experimental RFC was published that wanted to reuse the high bits of the "fragment offset" part of the IP header for another purpose. No IANA consideration says how these bits can be repurposed, but the standard defines a specific meaning for them. The IESG concluded that implementations of this experiment risked causing hard-to-debug interoperability problems and recommended not publishing the document in the RFC series. The RFC Editor accepted the recommendation.

The RFC series is one of many available publication channels; this document takes no position on the question of which documents are appropriate for publication in the RFC Series. That is a matter for discussion in the Internet community.

6. IAB Statement

In its capacity as the body that approves the general policy followed by the RFC Editor (see RFC 2850 [I4]), the IAB has reviewed this proposal and supports it as an operational change that is in line with the respective roles of the IESG, IRTF, and RFC Editor. The IAB continues to monitor discussions within the IETF about potential adjustments to the IETF document publication processes and recognizes that the process described in this document, as well as other general IETF publication processes, may need to be adjusted to align with any changes that result from such discussions.

7. Security Considerations

The process change described in this memo has no direct bearing on the security of the Internet.

8. Acknowledgements

RFC 3932 was a product of the IESG in October 2004, and it was reviewed in the IETF, by the RFC Editor, and by the IAB. Special thanks for the development of RFC 3932 go to (in alphabetical order) Scott Bradner, Brian Carpenter, Paul Hoffman, John Klensin, Eliot Lear, Keith Moore, Pete Resnick, Kurt Zeilenga, and all other IETF community participants who provided valuable feedback.

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9. References

9.1. Normative Reference

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9.2. Informative References

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[I4] Internet Architecture Board and B. Carpenter, Ed., "Charter of the Internet Architecture Board (IAB)", BCP 39, RFC 2850, May 2000.

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