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E. Lear, Ed.
Cisco Systems
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IETF Plenary Meeting Venue Selection Process

Abstract

The IETF Administration Support Activity (IASA) is responsible for arranging the selection and operation of the IETF plenary meeting venue. This memo specifies IETF community requirements for meeting venues, including hotels and meeting space. It also directs the IASA to make available additional process documents that describe the current meeting selection process.

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 7841.

Information about the current status of this document, any errata, and how to provide feedback on it may be obtained at <https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc8718>.

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1. Introduction

The IETF Administrative Support Activity (IASA) [RFC8711] is responsible for arranging the selection and operation of the IETF plenary meeting venue. The purpose of this document is to guide the IASA in their selection of regions, cities, facilities, and hotels. The IASA should apply this guidance at different points in the process in an attempt to faithfully meet the requirements of the IETF community. We specify a set of general criteria for venue selection and several requirements for transparency and community consultation.

It remains the responsibility of the IASA to apply their best judgment. The IASA accepts input and feedback during the consultation process and later (for instance, when there are changes in the situation at a chosen location). The community is encouraged to provide direct feedback about the IASA's performance to the IETF Administration LLC, the Nominations Committee (NOMCOM), or the Internet Engineering Steering Group (IESG). Any reviews of IASA decisions remain subject to the provisions of Section 4.7 of [RFC8711] (BCP 101).

The following four terms describe the places for which the IETF contracts services:

Venue:

An umbrella term for the city, meeting resources, and guest room resources.

Facility:

The building that houses meeting rooms and associated resources. It may also house an IETF Hotel.

IETF Hotels:

One or more hotels, in close proximity to the Facility, where the IETF guest room block allocations are negotiated and where network services managed by the IASA (e.g., the "IETF" SSID) are in use.

Overflow Hotels:

One or more hotels, usually in close proximity to the Facility, where the IETF has negotiated a group room rate for the purposes of the meeting. Of particular note is that Overflow Hotels are not usually connected to the IETF network and do not use network services managed by the IASA.

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "NOT RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in BCP 14 [RFC2119] [RFC8174] when, and only when, they appear in all capitals, as shown here.

2. Venue Selection Objectives

2.1. Core Values

Some IETF values pervade the selection process. These are often applicable to multiple requirements listed in this document. At a minimum, they include the following:

Why we meet:

We meet to pursue the IETF's mission [RFC3935]. This is partly done by advancing the development of Internet-Drafts and RFCs. We also seek to facilitate attendee participation in multiple topics and to enable cross-pollination of ideas and technologies.

Inclusiveness:

We would like to facilitate the on-site or remote participation of anyone who wants to be involved. Widespread participation contributes to the diversity of perspectives represented in the working sessions.

Every country has limits on who it will permit within its borders.

However, the IETF seeks to:

1. Minimize situations in which onerous entry regulations inhibit, discourage, or prevent participants from attending meetings; failing that, meeting locations are to be distributed such that onerous entry regulations are not always experienced by the same attendees; and
2. Avoid meeting in countries with laws that effectively exclude people on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, citizenship, or gender identity.

Where we meet:

We meet in different global locations, in order to spread the difficulty and cost of travel among active participants, balancing travel time and expense across participants based in various regions. Our regional location policy is articulated in [RFC8719].

Internet Access:

As an organization, we write specifications for the Internet, and we use it heavily. Meeting attendees need unfiltered access to the general Internet and their corporate networks. "Unfiltered access", in this case, means that all forms of communication are allowed. This includes, but is not limited to, access to corporate networks via encrypted VPNs from the meeting Facility and Hotels, including Overflow Hotels. We also need open network access available at high enough data rates, at the meeting Facility, to support our work, which includes support of remote participation. Beyond this, we are the first users of our own technology. Any filtering may cause a problem with that technology development. In some cases, local laws may require some filtering. We seek to avoid such locales without reducing the pool of cities to an unacceptable level by stating a number of criteria below, one mandatory and others important, to allow for the case where local laws may require filtering in some circumstances.

Focus:

We meet to have focused technical discussions. These are not limited to scheduled breakout sessions, although of course those are important. They also happen over meals or drinks, through a specific type of non-session that we call a "Bar BOF", or in side meetings. Environments that are noisy or distracting prevent or reduce the effectiveness of these sessions and are therefore less desirable as a meeting Facility [RFC6771].

Economics:

Meeting attendees participate as individuals. While many are underwritten by employers or sponsors, many are self-funded. In order to reduce participation costs and travel effort, we therefore seek locations that provide convenient budget alternatives for food and lodging, and that minimize travel segments from major airports to the Venue. Within reason, one's budget should not be a barrier to accommodation.

Least Astonishment and Openness:

Regular participants should not be surprised by meeting Venue selections, particularly when it comes to locales. To avoid surprise, the venue selection process, as with all other IETF processes, should be as open as practicable. It should be possible for the community to engage in discussion early to express its views on prospective selections, so that the community and the IASA can exchange views as to appropriateness long before a venue contract is considered.

2.2. Venue Selection Non-objectives

IETF meeting Venues are not selected or declined with the explicit purposes of:

Politics:

Endorsing or condemning particular countries, political paradigms, laws, regulations, or policies.

Maximal attendance:

While the IETF strives to be as inclusive as possible, both online and in person, maximal meeting attendance in and of itself is not a goal. It would defeat a key goal of meeting if active contributors with differing points of view did not have the opportunity to resolve their disagreements, no matter how full the rooms.

Tourism:

Variety in site-seeing experiences.

3. Meeting Criteria

This section contains the criteria for IETF meetings. It is broken down into three subsections: mandatory criteria (Section 3.1), important criteria (Section 3.2), and other considerations (Section 3.3), each as explained below.

3.1. Mandatory Criteria

If criteria in this subsection cannot be met, a particular location is unacceptable for selection, and the IASA MUST NOT enter into a contract. Should the IASA learn that a location can no longer meet a mandatory requirement after having entered into a contract, it will inform the community and address the matter on a case-by-case basis.

- * The Facility MUST provide sufficient space in an appropriate layout to accommodate the number of participants, leadership, and support staff expected to attend that meeting.
- * The Facility and IETF Hotels MUST provide wheelchair access to accommodate the number of people who are anticipated to require it.
- * It MUST be possible to provision Internet Access to the Facility and IETF Hotels that allows those attending in person to utilize the Internet for all their IETF, business, and day-to-day needs; in addition, there must be sufficient bandwidth and access for remote attendees. Provisions include, but are not limited to, native and unmodified IPv4 and IPv6 connectivity, and global reachability; there may be no additional limitation that would materially impact their Internet use. To ensure availability, it MUST be possible to provision redundant paths to the Internet.

3.2. Important Criteria

The criteria in this subsection are not mandatory, but they are still highly significant. It may be necessary to trade-off one or more of these criteria against others. A Venue that meets more of these criteria is, on the whole, preferable to another that meets fewer of these criteria. Requirements classed as Important can also be balanced across Venue selections for multiple meetings. When a particular requirement in this section cannot be met but the Venue is selected anyway, the IASA MUST notify the community at the time of the venue announcement. Furthermore, it may be appropriate for the IASA to assist those who, as a result, have been inconvenienced in some way.

3.2.1. Venue City Criteria

The following requirements relate to the Venue city.

- * Travel to the Venue is acceptable based on cost, time, and burden for participants traveling from multiple regions. It is anticipated that the burden borne will generally be shared over the course of multiple years.

- * The Venue is assessed as favorable for obtaining a host and sponsors. That is, the Meeting is in a location in which it is possible and probable to find a host and sponsors.
- * Travel barriers to entry, including visa requirements, are likely to be such that an overwhelming majority of participants who wish to do so can attend. The term "travel barriers" is to be read broadly by the IASA in the context of whether a successful meeting can be had.
- * Economic, safety, and health risks associated with this Venue are acceptable.
- * The selection of the venue comports with the practices described in [RFC8719].

3.2.2. Basic Venue Criteria

The following requirements relate to the Venue and Facilities.

The IETF operates internationally and adjusts to local requirements. Facilities selected for IETF meetings SHALL have provided written assurance that they are in compliance with local health, safety, and accessibility laws and regulations, and that they will remain in compliance throughout our stay.

In addition:

- * There are sufficient places (e.g., a mix of hallways, bars, meeting rooms, and restaurants) for people to hold ad hoc conversations and group discussions in the combination of spaces offered by the facilities, hotels, and bars/restaurants in the surrounding area, within walking distance (5-10 minutes).
- * The cost of guest rooms, meeting space, meeting food and beverage is affordable, within the norms of business travel.
- * The Facility is accessible, or reasonable accommodations can be made to allow access, by people with disabilities.

3.2.3. Technical Meeting Needs

The following criteria relate to technical meeting needs.

- * The Facility's support technologies and services -- network, audio-video, etc. -- are sufficient for the anticipated activities at the meeting, or the Facility is willing to add such infrastructure, or these support technologies and services might be provided by a third party, all at no -- or at an acceptable -- cost to the IETF.
- * The IETF Hotels directly provide, or else permit and facilitate, the delivery of a high performance, robust, unfiltered, and unmodified Internet service for the public areas and guest rooms; this service is to be included in the cost of the room.

3.2.4. Hotel Needs

The following criteria relate to IETF Hotels.

- * The IETF Hotels are within close proximity to each other and the Facility.
- * The guest rooms at the IETF Hotels are sufficient in number to house one-third or more of projected meeting attendees.
- * Overflow Hotels can be placed under contract, within convenient travel time to and from the Facility and at a variety of guest room rates.

- * The Facility environs include budget hotels within convenient travel time, cost, and effort.
- * The IETF Hotels are accessible by people with disabilities. While we mandate wheelchair accessibility, other forms are important and should be provided for to the extent possible based on anticipated needs of the community.
- * At least one IETF Hotel or the Facility has a space for use as a lounge, conducive to planned and ad hoc meetings and chatting, as well as a space for working online. There are tables with seating, convenient for small meetings with laptops. These can be at an open bar or casual restaurant. Preferably the lounge area is centrally located, permitting easy access to participants.

3.2.5. Food and Beverage

The following criteria relate to food and beverage.

- * The Facility environs, which include both on-site as well as areas within a reasonable walking distance or conveniently accessible by a short taxi ride or by local public transportation, have convenient and inexpensive choices for meals that can accommodate a wide range of dietary requirements.
- * A range of attendees' health-related and religion-related dietary requirements can be satisfied with robust and flexible on-site service or through access to an adequate grocery store.
- * The Facility environs include grocery shopping that will accommodate a wide range of dietary requirements, within a reasonable walking distance or conveniently accessible by a short taxi, bus, or subway ride from the Facility and IETF Hotels.

3.3. Other Considerations

The following considerations are desirable, but they are not as important as the preceding requirements and thus should not be traded-off for them.

- * We have something of a preference for an IETF meeting to be under "One Roof"; that is, qualified meeting space and guest rooms are available in the same facility.
- * It is desirable for Overflow Hotels to provide reasonable, reliable, unfiltered Internet service for the public areas and guest rooms, and for this service be included in the cost of the room.
- * It is desirable to enter into a multi-event contract with the Facility and IETF Hotels or associated hotel chains in case such a contract will reduce administrative costs, reduce direct attendee costs, or both.
- * When we are considering a city for the first time, it is particularly desirable to have someone familiar with both the locale and the IETF participate in the site visit. Such a person can provide guidance regarding safety, location of local services, the best ways to get to and from the Venue, and local customs, as well as how our requirements are met.

4. Documentation Requirements

The IETF Community works best when it is well informed. This memo does not specify processes nor who has responsibility for fulfilling our requirements for meetings. Nevertheless, both of these aspects are important. Therefore, the IASA SHALL publicly document and keep current both a list of roles and responsibilities relating to IETF meetings, as well as the selection processes they use in order to fulfill the requirements of the community.

5. IANA Considerations

This document has no IANA actions.

6. Security Considerations

This note proposes no protocols and therefore introduces no new protocol insecurities.

7. Privacy Considerations

Different places have different constraints on individual privacy. The requirements in this memo are intended to provide for some limited protections. As meetings are announced, the IASA SHALL inform the IETF of any limitations to privacy they have become aware of in their investigations. For example, participants would be informed of any regulatory authentication or logging requirements.

8. Normative References

- [RFC2119] Bradner, S., "Key words for use in RFCs to Indicate Requirement Levels", BCP 14, RFC 2119, DOI 10.17487/RFC2119, March 1997, <<https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc2119>>.
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Contributors

The following people provided substantial text contributions to this memo. Specifically, Fred Baker originated this work.

Fred Baker

Email: fred.ietf@gmail.com

Ray Pelletier

Email: Rpelletier13@gmail.com

Laura Nugent
Association Management Solutions

Email: lnugent@amsl.com

Lou Berger
LabN Consulting, L.L.C.

Email: lberger@labn.net

Ole Jacobsen
The Internet Protocol Journal

Email: olejacobsen@me.com

Jim Martin
INOC

Email: jim@inoc.com

Author's Address

Eliot Lear (editor)
Cisco Systems
Richtistrasse 7
CH-CH-8304 Wallisellen
Switzerland

Phone: +41 44 878 9200

Email: lear@cisco.com

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S. Krishnan
Kaloom
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High-Level Guidance for the Meeting Policy of the IETF

Abstract

This document describes a meeting location policy for the IETF and the various stakeholders required to realize this policy.

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 7841.

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1. Introduction

The work of the IETF is primarily conducted on working group (WG) mailing lists, while face-to-face WG meetings mainly provide a high-bandwidth mechanism for working out unresolved issues. The IETF currently strives to have a 1-1-1 meeting policy where the goal is to distribute the meetings equally between North America, Europe, and Asia (see "Meeting Location Distribution" (slides 14 and 15) of [IETFMEET] for details). These are the locations from which most of the IETF participants have come in the recent past. This meeting rotation is mainly aimed at distributing the travel effort for the existing IETF participants who physically attend meetings and for distributing the timezone difficulty for those who participate remotely. This policy has been neither defined precisely nor documented in an IETF consensus document until now. This BCP RFC is meant to serve as a consensus-backed statement of this policy.

2. The 1-1-1-* Meeting Policy

Given that the majority of the current meeting participants come from North America, Europe, and Asia [CONT-DIST], the IETF policy is that the meetings should primarily be held in those regions. That is, the meeting policy (let's call this the "1-1-1" policy) is that meetings should rotate between North America, Europe, and Asia. Note that the boundaries between those regions have been purposefully left undefined. It is important to note that such rotation and any effects to distributing travel pain should be considered from a long-term perspective. While a potential cycle in an IETF year may be a meeting in North America in March, a meeting in Europe in July, and a meeting in Asia on November, the 1-1-1 policy does not imply such a cycle, as long as the distribution to these regions over multiple years is roughly equal. There are many reasons why meetings might be distributed differently in a given year. Meeting locations in subsequent years should seek to rebalance the distribution, if possible.

While this meeting rotation caters to the current set of IETF participants, it is important to recognize that due to the dynamic and evolving nature of participation, there may be significant changes to the regions that provide a major share of participants in the future. Therefore, the 1-1-1-* meeting policy is a slightly modified version of the aforementioned 1-1-1 meeting policy that allows for additional flexibility in the form of an exploratory meeting (denoted with an "*"). Exploratory meetings can be used to experiment with exceptional meetings without extensively impacting the regular meetings. For example, these exploratory meetings can

include meetings in other geographical regions, virtual meetings, and additional meetings beyond the three regular meetings in a calendar year.

The timing and frequency of future exploratory meetings will be based on IETF consensus as determined by the IETF chair. Once a meeting proposal is initiated, the IESG will make a decision in consultation with the IETF Administrative Support Activity (IASA) [RFC8711] to ensure that the proposal can be realistically implemented. The final decision will be communicated back to the community to ensure that there is adequate opportunity to comment.

NOTE: There have not been a large number of meetings that would qualify as exploratory meetings under the 1-1-1 policy (with IETF 95 in Buenos Aires and IETF 47 in Adelaide being the exceptional instances). IETF 27 (Amsterdam) and IETF 54 (Yokohama) were earlier examples of exploratory meetings that pioneered Europe and Asia as regular IETF destinations.

3. Implementation of the Policy

IASA should understand the policy written in this document to be the aspiration of the IETF community. Similarly, any exploratory meeting decisions will also be communicated to the IASA to be implemented. The actual selection of the venue would be performed by the IASA following the process described in [RFC8718].

As mentioned in [RFC8718], the IASA will also be responsible for the following:

- * assisting the community in the development of detailed meeting criteria that are feasible and implementable, and
- * providing sufficient transparency in a timely manner concerning planned meetings so that community feedback can be collected and acted upon.

Given that the geographical location of the venue has a significant influence on the venue selection process, it needs to be considered at the same level as the other Important Criteria specified in Section 3.2 of [RFC8718] (including potentially trading-off the geographical region to meet other criteria and notifying the community if the geographical region requirement cannot be met).

4. Procedure for Initiating Proposals for Exploratory Meetings

Someone who is interested in pursuing an exploratory venue proposes it on the IETF discussion list or on a future discussion list expressly set up and announced for this purpose. The community gets to comment on the venue and offer their opinions. If the IETF chair determines that there is community consensus to pursue the venue further, the venue will be put up for discussion on the venue-selection mailing list <<https://www.ietf.org/mailman/listinfo/venue-selection>>. This would allow the interested party(ies) to refine their proposal based on insightful feedback regarding the logistics of the venue from those tasked with evaluating it. Once the venue selection process takes place, the final decision will be communicated back to the community to ensure that there is adequate opportunity to comment.

5. Re-evaluation and Changes to This Policy

Given the dynamic nature of participant distribution in the IETF, it is expected that this policy will need to be periodically evaluated and revised to ensure that the stated goals continue to be met. The criteria that are to be met need to be agreed upon by the community prior to initiating a revision of this document (e.g., try to mirror draft author distribution over the preceding five years).

6. References

6.1. Normative References

[RFC8711] Haberman, B., Hall, J., and J. Livingood, "Structure of the IETF Administrative Support Activity, Version 2.0", BCP 101, RFC 8711, DOI 10.17487/RFC8711, February 2020, <<https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc8711>>.

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[CONT-DIST] IETF, "Number of attendees per continent across meetings", <<https://datatracker.ietf.org/stats/meeting/continent/>>.

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Author's Address

Suresh Krishnan
Kaloom

Email: suresh@kaloom.com