Organizing IETF Process Change
draft-davies-pesci-next-steps-01

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Abstract

This document sets out a strawman proposal for how to organize the revision and update of any part of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) processes including those for developing standards and other specifications. It does not propose specific changes to any of these processes, which should be the subject of future documents. However, it does propose an initial target area for process change.
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1. Introduction

In a previous document [I-D.davies-pesci-initial-considerations] a design team selected by the IETF Chair suggested some goals and guidelines that should be followed in setting out to change any of the processes used in the IETF. In the light of the design team’s experience, this document suggests a possible way of organizing such process change work and also identifies a target area as the initial focus for process change to address the problems that were summarized in [I-D.davies-pesci-initial-considerations].

[I-D.davies-pesci-initial-considerations] also contains an extensive reading list of background material which documents many of the processes which might be the subject of change through the process suggested in this document. One problem that has been identified is that this material has been built up piecemeal over the lifetime of the IETF and it is neither entirely self-consistent nor easy to navigate even for experienced IETF participants. An overview and guide to the existing and draft material has been developed [I-D.carpenter-procdoc-roadmap] as an interim measure.

1.1. About This Document

This document was produced by the PESCI design team selected by the IETF Chair and is published here as a record of discussion. PESCI stands for Process Evolution Committee of the IETF and is in the IETF’s naming tradition as a successor of the earlier POISSON working group. The membership of the design team is listed in the Acknowledgements. PESCI had no special status in the IETF process; it was simply the group of people who produced this document under the leadership of the IETF Chair.

Discussion of this draft is welcomed on the pesci-discuss@ietf.org list (join via https://www1.ietf.org/mailman/listinfo/pesci-discuss).

2. A Template for Process Change Organization

The PESCI design team is proposing a process for developing changes to the IETF processes especially in the area of developing standards documentation and other specifications. It is intended that this should be a template for any future change process that appears to be required, but in the best traditions of the IETF the process should itself be tested by experiment and modified if it is found wanting.

This proposed new process
would be used by all individuals, design teams, and working groups who wish to propose changes or additions to IETF processes,
should involve consultation with the IESG, the IAB, the IAOC, the Working Group chairs, and IETF participants generally, but must avoid requiring the IESG to develop the new processes or micromanage this process of development and approval.

The new proposals, both for the change process and any resulting changed processes, should be implemented as a matter of urgency and should be handled expeditiously by the existing approvals and publishing process.

2.1. Change Process Proposal

We propose that the design team model is the most effective way of engineering process changes. The design team is a tried-and-tested IETF methodology especially suitable for creating concrete solutions applicable to constrained problems. Within the context of the existing IETF process, the model would be applied by constituting a set of design teams with appropriate oversight and the charter of carrying out process change. The design teams would operate within these charters: the overseers would invite design team members to participate, but alternative teams could offer solutions if they feel they have better solutions.

The teams should function with an open discussion list, in the same way that the PESCI team has done. The output of each team should be tested against the IETF consensus in the normal fashion; we believe that if there is clear IETF consensus that the proposal makes sense, the IESG (and the ISOC Board of Trustees) will respect that consensus and approve of it.

3. Immediate Tasks for the Change Process

Assuming that the model suggested in Section 2.1 is adopted, the following process change task appears to be the most urgent one, and a team should start on this as soon as possible.

The most important single management role in the IETF at the moment is that of the IESG, including the role of IETF Chair. This should therefore also receive the most scrutiny. It’s unreasonable to ask people to grade their own performance, or to attempt to perform a role at full speed while having to review how it could be done otherwise. Therefore, a review of the roles the IESG has should be rooted outside the IESG - while asking current and former IESG members for information and advice at every opportunity.
This review should include:

- Creating a list of the tasks that currently gate on the IESG
- Identifying any additional related tasks that might be appropriate to improve efficiency and effectiveness
- Making proposals for discarding or restructuring the existing tasks in combination with the new tasks
- Making a proposal for grouping those tasks into separate task groups that can be assigned to different bodies as needed.
- Developing a proposal for how the standards development work of the IETF should be partitioned to provide optimum efficiency while allowing the IETF to take on all appropriate work.
- Developing a suggestion for an initial set of bodies for handling those tasks in the new work partitioning scheme, including, if appropriate, a restructuring of the IESG.
- Describing the process by which the set of bodies gets modified.
- Describing how members of the proposed bodies get selected, replaced, and (if needed) removed.
- Proposing a structure for the documentation of the IETF process that would result from their recommendations.

4. Security Considerations

This document has no direct impact on the security of the Internet. However, a smooth and efficient IETF process is necessary to deal rapidly with emerging security threats. Also, a badly designed process may be subject to social denial of service attacks that could damage both the IETF and indirectly the Internet itself. We should also note that the change process (and the evaluation of potential change) is itself vulnerable to social DoS.

5. IANA Considerations

This document does not require action by the IANA. However, IANA activities do form part of the IETF process and process changes may affect IANA.
6. Acknowledgements

The members of the PESCI team at the time this document was written were:

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    Adrian Farrel
    Michael Richardson

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7. Informative References

[I-D.carpenter-procdoc-roadmap]
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