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Abstract

This document describes a pilot implementation of a protocol change within the IETF. The essence of the change is to have workgroup chairs handle the feedback of AD (Area Director) Evaluation comments on a draft to the authors (and workgroup if necessary) and make sure that needed draft changes are made, and the AD notified when a new draft which resolves the comments is available.

1. Introduction

As part of the currently ongoing effort to improve the work flow
(particularly speed of approval) of documents, the PROTO team [PROTO] is defining pilot projects to test possible protocol changes. This document describes such a pilot.

The purpose of the pilot described here is to test offloading follow-up work which an Area Director (AD) traditionally has done after he has read through and evaluated a document submitted to the IESG for publication. It is hoped that offloading this onto the chair (or one of the chairs) of the workgroup which submitted the draft will increase the speed of follow-up and the transparency of the process, and reduce the workload of the AD to boot. The pilot does not include offloading of follow-up for drafts which do not originate in a workgroup.

For a discussion of the reasoning underlying piloting of process changes, see [JULY14].

2. Pilot description

2.1 Participants

This pilot involves Area Directors of selected areas, and some or all of the chairs for which the Area Director is Area Advisor.

2.2 Running time and pilot size

This pilot is to be run not less than 4 months, and not more than 8 months, unless early experience shows it to be clearly detrimental. It is expected that it will be started shortly after the IETF 59 meeting, and completed in time for the results to be reported at the IETF 60 meeting. The pilot should be run with no less than 2 and not more than 6 ADs, and between 5 and 20 workgroups.

The running time should be chosen such that the participating ADs and WG chairs have opportunity to get past the initial learning and first-time execution barrier, and get some familiarity with the process before the pilot is closed and evaluated.

2.3 Assumptions

The pilot assumes that the steps an Area Director currently (before this pilot goes into effect) go through for an AD Evaluation are as follows:

1. Read and evaluate the document, taking notes of issues found. It is expected that each AD has his own style and method of evaluating documents, but roughly the elements given in Section 3.3 of [SIRS] are probably present in the review.
2. Depending on the magnitude of the issues found (and other considerations?), either

2.a) return the document to the chairs with the review, requesting further workgroup work, and post the review to the workgroup mailing list

2.b) send the full review to the authors, with copy to the chairs, and ask for issues to be resolved; post a summary of the review to the workgroup mailing list

2.c) send the full review to the authors, possibly with copy to the chairs, and ask for nits to be fixed.

3. Follow-up, nudge and iterate until the authors (and workgroup if required) has fixed the issues found, and submitted an updated draft. At this point, the draft is ready for IETF last call if it is a standards-track document (or BCP), or for placement on telechat agenda otherwise.

2.4 Pilot Process Description

The pilot process is changed compared with the process described above in that the responsibility for step 3 above is put squarely on the Workgroup Chair, rather than on the Area Director. Step 2 should preferably be modified so that the Area Director sends the AD Evaluation review comments to the chair(s), who in turn forward them to the authors and workgroup as appropriate. The steps are then as follows:

1. If there is more than one chair, the chairs decide on which one should be responsible for ensuring that the needed fixes are done when the AD returns comments. This can for instance be done at the time the publication request is sent. It is important that this is an explicit agreement.

2. The AD reads, evaluates and writes comments pretty much as before. However, note that since the communication between AD and authors is not direct, the need for clear and well-articulated review comments is somewhat larger.

3. Depending on the magnitude of the issues found (and other considerations?), the AD returns the full review to the chairs, and requests either:
3.a) that further workgroup work be undertaken to put the
document into shape to be published

3.b) that authors and workgroup are informed of the issues found
and resolve them in a revised draft

3.c) that the authors fix nits as needed.

As covered below, the comments will be posted to the workgroup
mailing list. The comments will normally also be posted by the
AD in the ID Tracker [IDTRACKER]. Working groups that use issue
tracking should also record the issues (and eventually their
resolution) in the issue tracker.

4. The chair responsible reads through the AD Evaluation comments,
making very certain that all comments are understood, so that it
is possible to follow up on them with the authors and workgroup.
If there is some uncertainty as to what is requested, this must
be resolved with the Area Director.

5. The responsible chair sends the comments to the author(s) and to
the workgroup mailing list, in order to have a permanent record
of the comments. It is recommended that the chair solicit from
the author(s) an estimate on when the fixes will be done - i.e.,
when the submission of a revised draft can be expected.

6. When incorporating the fixes in the new version of the draft, it
is strongly recommended that the revising editor keep a summary
list showing how the issues were addressed issue by issue, and
showing what the revised text is. If such a list is forwarded to
the AD with the revised draft, it will make it possible for the
AD to verify the fixes very quickly.

7. The responsible chair follows-up, nudges and iterates until the
authors (and workgroup if required) has fixed the issues found,
and submitted an updated draft. At this point, the AD is
notified of the revised draft, and provided with the summary list
of issues and resulting text changes.

In the event that the working group disagrees with a comment
raised by the AD or has already considered the issue and
previously ruled it out, this must be discussed and resolved with
the AD before the new version of the draft is submitted.

8. The Area Director verifies that the issues he found during AD
Evaluation are resolved by the new version of the draft.

9. (Hopefully, that’s it, but in the worst case this starts over at
2.5 Wrap-up

At the end of the pilot lifetime, it is expected that an evaluation of the experienced benefits is made, using input solicited from the participating Area Directors and Workgroup Chairs by means of an email questionnaire, web-page form or something similar. The questions are given below, in Section 2.5.2. A per-review questionnaire is also provided in Section 2.5.1.

2.5.1 Questionnaire to be done after each individual AD Review

To be done by both WG Chair and AD.

R1. I’m submitting this questionnaire as
    1. Area Director
    2. Workgroup Chair

R2. Document name:

R3. WG Chair shepherding of the AD evaluation comments for this draft speeded up the procedure:
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Undecided
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly agree

R4. WG Chair shepherding of the AD evaluation comments for this draft resulted in the comments being resolved in a satisfactory manner:
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Undecided
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly agree
R5. WG Chair shepherding of the AD evaluation comments for this draft resulted in a more transparent process:
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Undecided
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

R6. WG Chair shepherding of the AD evaluation comments for this draft resulted in a more well-documented process:
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Undecided
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

R7. The interaction with the document editors in resolving the comments worked out well:
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Undecided
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

R8. - Public Comments?

R9. - Comments to IESG and PROTO-Team only?

R10. WG Chair shepherding of the AD evaluation comments for this draft worked out well, overall:
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Undecided
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

R11. - Public Comments?

R12. - Comments to IESG and PROTO-Team only?

2.5.2 Questionnaire for the Pilot as a Whole

To be done by both WG Chair and AD.

X1. Document name:
X2. I clearly understood what was expected of me in this pilot.
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Undecided
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree
Comments?

X3. What is your evaluation of the benefit of the procedure you’ve tried out in this pilot?
1. Definitely harmful
2. Somewhat harmful
3. Mixed feelings
4. Somewhat beneficial
5. Definitely beneficial
Comments?

X4. What is your evaluation of the added effort required for the procedure you’ve tried out in this pilot?
1. Major increased effort
2. Somewhat increased
3. No change
4. Somewhat decreased effort
5. Major decreased effort
Comments?

X5. Considering all factors, this procedure should be made the normal way of handling AD evaluation comments.
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Undecided
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree
Comments?

X6. What do you consider to be the major advantages of this procedure change?

X7. What do you consider to be the major disadvantages of this procedure change?

X8. How would you change the procedure to minimise the disadvantages?
X9. Comments to the IESG and PROTO-Team only:

3. Security Considerations

This document specifies a pilot implementation of a change in IETF procedures. It does not raise or consider any protocol-specific security issues. When evaluating the result of the pilot, the IESG should check if the changes has reduced the quality of security review and consideration for protocols, and take this into consideration when deciding whether the changes should be made permanent.

4 Informative References


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