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The IESG and RFC Editor Documents: Procedures

Status of this Memo

Copyright Notice

Abstract

This document describes the IESG's procedures for handling documents submitted for RFC publication via the RFC Editor, subsequent to the changes proposed by the IESG at the Seoul IETF, March 2004.

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

1. Introduction and History

There are a number of different methods by which an RFC is published, some of which include review in the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), and some of which include approval by the Internet Engineering Steering Group (IESG):

- IETF Working Group (WG) to Standards Track: Includes WG consensus, review in the IETF, IETF Last Call, and IESG approval
- IETF WG to Experimental/Informational: Includes WG consensus, review in the IETF, and IESG approval
- Area Director (AD) sponsored to Standards Track: Includes review in the IETF, IETF Last Call, and IESG approval
- AD Sponsored Individual to Experimental/Informational: Includes some form of review in the IETF and IESG approval
- Documents for which special rules exist

- RFC Editor documents to Experimental/Informational

This memo is only concerned with the IESG processing of the last category.

Special rules apply to some documents, including documents from the Internet Architecture Board (IAB), April 1st RFCs, and republication of documents from other standards development organizations. The IESG and the RFC Editor keep a running dialogue, in consultation with the IAB, on these other documents and their classification, but they are outside the scope of this memo.

For the last few years, the IESG has reviewed all RFC Editor documents (documents submitted by individuals to the RFC Editor for RFC publication) before publication. In 2003, this review was often a full-scale review of technical content, with the ADs attempting to clear points with the authors, stimulate revisions of the documents, encourage the authors to contact appropriate working groups and so on. This was a considerable drain on the resources of the IESG, and since this is 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. The new review model will have the IESG take 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 IESG member chooses to review the technical content of the document and finds issues, that member will communicate these issues to the RFC Editor, and they will be treated the same way as comments on the documents from other sources.

Note: This document describes only the review process done by the IESG when the RFC Editor requests that review. 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, or the IESG may suggest that a document submitted to the IETF is better suited for submission to the RFC Editor but these interactions are not described in this memo.

2. Background Material

The review of independent submissions by the IESG was prescribed by RFC 2026 [1] section 4.2.3. The procedure described in this document is compatible with that description.

RFC 3710 [4] section 5.2.2 describes the spring 2003 review process (even though the RFC was published in 2004); with the publication of this document, the procedure described in RFC 3710 is no longer relevant to documents submitted via the RFC Editor.

3. Detailed Description of IESG Review

The RFC Editor reviews submissions for suitability for publications as RFC. Once the RFC Editor thinks a document may be suited for RFC publication, the RFC Editor asks the IESG to review the documents for conflicts with the IETF standards process or work done in the IETF community.

The review is initiated by a note from the RFC Editor specifying the document name, the RFC Editor's belief about the document's present suitability for publication, and (if possible) the list of people who have reviewed the document for the RFC Editor.

The IESG may return five different responses, any of which may be accompanied by an IESG note to be put on the document if the RFC Editor wishes to publish.

1. The IESG has not found any conflict between this document and IETF work.

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

3. The IESG thinks that publication is harmful to the IETF work done in WG <X> and recommends not publishing the document at this time.

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

5. The IESG thinks 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 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 consensus or IESG approval (as these terms are defined in RFC 2434 [2]), and for the case where an IETF protocol is proposed to be changed or extended in an unanticipated way that may be harmful 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 IESG 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 have review done within 4 weeks from the RFC Editor's notification. 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 the WG and, in the case of a possible conflict with an IANA registration procedure, the IANA expert for that registry.

Note that if the IESG has not found any conflict between a submission and IETF work, then judging its technical merits, including considerations of possible harm to the Internet, will become the responsibility of the RFC Editor. The IESG assumes that the RFC Editor, in agreement with the IAB, will manage mechanisms for additional technical review.

4. Standard IESG Note

One of the following IESG notes will be sent to the RFC Editor for all documents, with a request for placement either in or immediately following the "Status of this Memo" section of the finished RFC, unless the IESG decides otherwise:

1. For documents that specify a protocol or other technology, and that have been considered in the IETF at one time:

   The content of this RFC was at one time considered by the IETF, and therefore it may resemble a current IETF work in progress or a published IETF work. This RFC is not a candidate for any level of Internet Standard. The IETF disclaims any knowledge of the fitness of this RFC for any purpose and in particular notes that the decision to publish is not based on IETF review for such things as security, congestion control, or inappropriate interaction with deployed protocols. The RFC Editor has chosen to publish this document at its discretion. Readers of this RFC should exercise caution in evaluating its value for implementation and deployment. See RFC 3932 for more information.

2. For documents that specify a protocol or similar technology and are independent of the IETF process:

   This RFC is not a candidate for any level of Internet Standard. The IETF disclaims any knowledge of the fitness of this RFC for any purpose and in particular notes that the decision to publish is not based on IETF review for such things as security, congestion control, or inappropriate interaction with deployed protocols. The RFC Editor has chosen to publish this document at its discretion. Readers of this document should exercise caution in evaluating its value for implementation and deployment. See RFC 3932 for more information.

3. For documents that do not specify a protocol or similar technology:

   This RFC is not a candidate for any level of Internet Standard. The IETF disclaims any knowledge of the fitness of this RFC for any purpose and notes that the decision to publish is not based on IETF review apart from IESG review for conflict with IETF work. The RFC Editor has chosen to publish this document at its discretion. See RFC 3932 for more information.

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: A WG is working on a solution to a problem, and a participant decides to ask for publication of a solution that the WG has rejected. Publication of the document will give the publishing party an RFC number to refer to 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).

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.

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 the working group did adopt.

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

6. IAB Statement

In its capacity as the body that approves the general policy followed by the RFC Editor (see RFC 2850 [3]), the IAB has reviewed this proposal and supports it as an operational change that is in line with the respective roles of the IESG and RFC Editor. The IAB continues to monitor the range of organized discussions within the IETF about potential adjustments to the IETF document publication processes (e.g., NEWTRK working group) and recognizes that the process described in this document, as well as other general IETF publication processes, may need to be adjusted in the light of the outcome of those discussions.

7. Security Considerations

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

8. Acknowledgements

This document is a product of the IESG, and all its members deserve thanks for their contributions.

This document has been reviewed in the IETF and by the RFC Editor and the IAB; the IAB produced the text of section 6. Special thanks go to John Klensin, Keith Moore, Pete Resnick, Scott Bradner, Kurt Zeilenga, Eliot Lear, Paul Hoffman, Brian Carpenter, and all other IETF community members who provided valuable feedback on the document.

9. References

9.1. Normative Reference

[1] Bradner, S., "The Internet Standards Process -- Revision 3", BCP 9, RFC 2026, October 1996.

9.2. Informative References

[2] Narten, T. and H. Alvestrand, "Guidelines for Writing an IANA Considerations Section in RFCs", BCP 26, RFC 2434, October 1998.

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

[4] Alvestrand, H., "An IESG charter", RFC 3710, February 2004.

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Full Copyright Statement

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