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Questions Arising Concerning In-Person Meeting Cancellation
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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has required the IETF community to confront complicated questions about the cancellation and replacement of in-person meetings. This document lists some general questions that have come up for discussion in the community as the IESG, the IRTF Chair, and the IETF LLC have been faced with making decisions about IETF 107 and IETF 108.

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[1.](#) Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has required the IETF community to confront complicated questions about the cancellation and replacement of in-person meetings. This document lists some general questions that have come up for discussion as the IESG, the IRTF Chair, and the IETF LLC have been faced with making decisions about whether IETF 107 and IETF 108 should be held as in-person meetings. In many places, inspiration was drawn from [\[RFC8718\]](#) and [\[RFC8719\]](#).

This document is focused solely on questions concerning in-person meeting cancellation and it intentionally does not address planning for fully online meetings. This document is offered purely to frame discussion, and it is not intended to be published as an RFC.

[2.](#) Questions

[\[RFC8719\]](#) summarized the goal for face-to-face meetings of IETF WGs as mainly to provide a high-bandwidth mechanism for working out unresolved issues. Historically, these are held in locations from which most of the IETF participants have come in the recent past, with a goal of distributing the travel effort for the participants who attend in person and distributing the timezone difficulty for

those who participate remotely. In the current climate, the IETF leadership, in consultation with the community, needs to determine whether an in-person meeting will be safe and effective.

[2.1.](#) Participation and attendance

Questions that have come up about participation and attendance include:

1. Approximately how many in-person attendees are expected? How does this compare to previous in-person meetings in the same region or at the same time of year?
2. Approximately how many WGs and RGs expect to have a productive in-person meeting based on their expected participation?
3. Approximately how many WG and RG chairs and authors who would normally attend in person are expected to attend? How does this compare to previous in-person meetings in the same region or at the same time of year?
4. Which of these measures should be used to assess the viability of an in-person meeting, if any?
5. For any of these measures, what threshold of expected in-person attendance justifies going forward with an in-person meeting? A majority? A significant majority? Something else? Is an in-person meeting with a small (by some definition) number of in-person attendees and a large number of remote attendees viable?

[2.2.](#) Travel and entry

[RFC8718] includes the following criteria related to travel and entry:

"Travel to the Venue is acceptable based on cost, time, and burden for participants traveling from multiple regions.

"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."

Questions that have come up related to travel and entry include:

1. Should there be meeting cancellation criteria related to travel cost, as there is for venue selection, since travel costs can change in relation to world events?
2. Should there be meeting cancellation criteria related to travel availability, since this too can be affected by world events?

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3. Should the "overwhelming majority" criterion used for venue selection also apply to meeting cancellation criteria concerning entry?
4. Should entry requirements related to health assessments of travelers, quarantine, or isolation requirements be factored in to decisions about in-person meeting cancellation, and if so, how? Should these requirements be evaluated both for the country where the meeting is being hosted and for the countries from which attendees are traveling? Is a "reasonable and nondiscriminatory" test appropriate for these kinds of requirements?
5. How should corporate travel restrictions play into meeting cancellation decisions, if at all? Should they be evaluated directly using their own specific criteria, or should participation and attendance criteria be used without considering corporate travel restrictions?

[2.3.](#) Safety and health

[RFC8718] includes the following criteria related to safety and health:

"Economic, safety, and health risks associated with this Venue are acceptable."

Questions related to safety and health have centered around multiple dimensions:

1. Risks to attendees and others once they are at the venue or in the country where the meeting is taking place. These include getting sick, causing other attendees and staff to become sick, and getting stuck in-country.
2. Risks to attendees and others while traveling to the venue. These include getting sick, causing other people to get sick, and being quarantined.
3. Risks to attendees and others once they arrive home from the venue. These include getting sick, causing other people to get sick, and being quarantined..

[2.4.](#) Meeting host and sponsors

[RFC8718] includes a criterion that says:

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"The Venue is assessed as favorable for obtaining a host and sponsors."

While communication with IETF 107 and IETF 108 hosts and sponsors has been frequent, criteria related to host and sponsorship availability have not currently been used for determining cancellation plans for IETF 107 and IETF 108. We are thankful for the unconditional support of hosts and sponsors during these uncertain times, but we need to determine whether host and sponsor availability related criteria need to be included in the future.

[2.5.](#) Venue

Discussions about IETF 107 and IETF 108 have assumed that the meetings would be cancelled if the venues where the meetings were scheduled to be held were closed or otherwise unable to provide the contracted meeting services. Similarly, if mass gatherings in the venue city or country are banned, then it has been assumed our meetings would be cancelled.

[2.6.](#) Timing

Questions have arisen about how far in advance of a meeting a cancellation decision needs to be made. The level of flexibility around this depends on the circumstances, but when there is some flexibility, there has been discussion about whether a cancellation date should be chosen to give participants higher certainty further in advance or to be able to evaluate circumstances as close to the original meeting date as possible, or somewhere in between.

3. Security Considerations

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

4. IANA Considerations

This document has no IANA actions.

5. Informative References

- [RFC8718] Lear, E., Ed., "IETF Plenary Meeting Venue Selection Process", [BCP 226](#), [RFC 8718](#), DOI 10.17487/RFC8718, February 2020, <<https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc8718>>.
- [RFC8719] Krishnan, S., "High-Level Guidance for the Meeting Policy of the IETF", [BCP 226](#), [RFC 8719](#), DOI 10.17487/RFC8719, February 2020, <<https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc8719>>.

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