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**Considerations for Cancellation of IETF Meetings**

## **Abstract**

The IETF firmly believes in the value of in-person meetings to reach consensus on documents. However, various emergencies can make a planned in-person meeting impossible. This document provides criteria for making this judgment.

## **Status of This Memo**

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### 1. Introduction

One highlight of the IETF calendar is in-person general meetings, which happen three times a year at various locations around the world.

Various events could make a scheduled IETF meeting impossible, in that a particular time or place can be largely closed to travel or assembly. These conditions do not always have obvious thresholds. For example:

- \*The meeting venue itself may close unexpectedly due to a health issue, legal violation, or other localized problem.

- \*A natural disaster could degrade the travel and event infrastructure in a planned location and make it unethical to further burden that infrastructure with a meeting.

- \*War, civil unrest, or public health crisis could make a meeting unsafe and/or result in widespread national or corporate travel bans.

- \*An economic crisis could sharply reduce resources available for travel.

- \*Changes in visa policy or other unexpected governmental restrictions might make the venue inaccessible to numerous attendees.

This document provides procedures for the IETF to decide to postpone, move, or cancel an in-person IETF meeting.

## **2. Conventions**

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in RFC 2119 [[RFC2119](#)].

In this document, the term "venue" refers to both the facility that houses the sessions and the official meeting hotel(s).

## **3. Decision Criteria and Roles**

### **3.1. IETF LLC**

The LLC is responsible for assessing if it is safe to hold the meeting given the following criteria. This assessment SHOULD occur eight weeks prior to the first day of the meeting, though events may require reevaluation as late as during the meeting itself.

This document provides a consensus of principles the LLC can apply in emergency situations, to avoid operating without such consensus or invoking a time-consuming consensus process. In the event of considerations this document does not foresee, the LLC should protect the health and safety of attendees, as well as the health of the organization, with approval from the IESG and a plan to seek a later update of this document.

The criteria in Section 3.1 of [[RFC8718](#)] apply to venues that have changed status. Specifically:

- \*Local safety guidelines allow the venue and hotels to host a meeting with the expected number of participants and staff.

- \*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.

- \*A reasonable number of food and drink establishments are open and available within walking distance to provide for the full number of participants and staff.

\*Local health and public safety infrastructure should expect to have adequate capacity to support an influx of visitors during the meeting week.

The LLC must also confirm that:

\*There are no US [[USSTATE](#)], UK [[UKFO](#)], or local authority travel advisories for the location of the meeting. The first two are chosen to be easily accessible in English, which all IETF staff can read. This should not be interpreted as requiring cancellation due to a warning about a different region in the host nation, or in the rural area surrounding a host city provided transportation to the airport is secure.

\*Air travel is assessed as safe by the relevant health and safety authorities.

\*Travel insurance is both available and priced close to norms.

\*There is no quarantine or self-isolation requirement at the location.

\*Other similar international meetings (conferences) are going ahead at a similar time to IETF.

Finally, the LLC should assess the impact of various travel restrictions, legal and corporate, on the ability of critical support staff and contractors to enter the host nation. The LLC can cancel the event if it concludes it cannot adequately support it.

### **3.2. IESG**

The IESG assesses if projected attendance is high enough to capture the benefit of an in-person meeting. In some cases, corporate travel restrictions may lower attendance in the absence of any formal guidance from authorities. If it concludes that attendance is too low, it can cancel the meeting regardless of the LLC's safety assessment.

The IESG is discouraged from relying on a simple head count of expected event attendance. Even dramatically smaller events with large remote participation may be successful. The IESG might consider:

\*Are many working groups largely unaffected by the restrictions, so that they can operate effectively?

\*Is there a critical mass of key personnel at most working group meetings to leverage the advantages of in-person meetings, even if many participants are remote?

The IESG is encouraged to solicit information from the IRTF char, Working Group chairs, and Research Group chairs to make this assessment.

#### **4. Remedies**

In the event cannot be held at the scheduled time and place, the IETF has several options. The remedies below should be considered in light of these principles, presented in no particular order:

- \*Hold the scheduled sessions of the meeting in some format
- \*Provide benefits of in-person interactions when possible
- \*Avoid exorbitant additional travel expenses due to last minute flight changes, etc.
- \*The available time and resources allow the alternative to be adequately prepared.

##### **4.1. Relocation**

For attendees, the least disruptive response is to retain the meeting week but move it to a more accessible venue. To the maximum extent possible, this will be geographically close to the original venue. In particular, the IETF should strive to meet the criteria in [\[RFC8718\]](#) and [\[RFC8719\]](#).

Relocation that requires new air travel arrangements for attendees SHOULD NOT occur less than one month prior to the start of the meeting.

##### **4.2. Virtualization**

The second option, and one that has fewer issues with venue availability, is to make the meeting fully remote. This requires different IETF processes and logistical operations that are outside the scope of this document.

##### **4.3. Postponement**

Although it is more disruptive to the schedules of participants, the next best option is to delay the meeting until a specific date at which conditions are expected to improve. The new end date of the meeting must be at least 30 days before the beginning of the following IETF meeting.

Due to scheduling constraints at the venue, this will usually not be feasible. However, it is more likely to allow attendees to recover at least some of their travel expenses than other options.

#### **4.4. Cancellation**

As a last resort, IETF may cancel the meeting totally. This is a last resort in the event that worldwide conditions make it difficult for attendees to even attend remotely. Not holding a meeting at all has wide implications for the rhythm of IETF personnel policies, such as the nomination process and seating of new officers.

Cancellation is likely the only practical alternative when emergencies occur immediately before or during the meeting, so that there is no opportunity to make other arrangements.

#### **5. Refunds**

The IETF SHOULD NOT reimburse registered attendees for unrecoverable travel expenses (airfare, hotel deposits, etc).

However, there are several cases where full or partial refund of registration fees is appropriate:

- \*Cancellation SHOULD result in a full refund to all participants. It MAY be prorated if some portion of the sessions completed without incident.

- \*Upon postponement, the LLC SHOULD offer refunds to registered attendees who claim they cannot attend at the newly scheduled time.

- \*When the meeting becomes remote, the LLC SHOULD attempt to recover whatever venue-related payments, past or future, it can and rebate this to registered attendees, up to a maximum of their total cost of registration.

These provisions intend to maintain trust between the IETF and its participants. However, under extraordinary threats to the solvency of the organization, the LLC may suspend them.

#### **6. Security Considerations**

This document introduces no new concerns for the security of internet protocols.

#### **7. IANA Considerations**

There are no IANA requirements.

#### **8. Informative 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>>.

[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>>.

[UKFO] Office, U.F., "Foreign Travel Advice", n.d., <<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>>.

[USSTATE] State, U.D.o., "International Travel", n.d., <<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>>.

## **Appendix A. Acknowledgments**

## **Appendix B. Change Log**

### **B.1. Since draft-duke-shmoo-cancel-meetings-00**

\*Added mention of IRTF

\*Discussed consensus on cancellation

### **B.2. Since draft-duke-remote-meetings-00**

\*Defined "venue"

\*Added principles for selecting remedies and rewrote alternatives.

\*Added local authority travel advisories

\*Added some criteria from IETF 109

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