

Workgroup: shmoo
Internet-Draft:
draft-duke-shmoo-remote-meetings-00
Published: 28 July 2020
Intended Status: Best Current Practice
Expires: 29 January 2021
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Considerations for Cancellation of IETF Remote 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 or civil unrest could make a meeting unsafe.

- *A political, economic, or public health crisis could result in widespread national or corporate travel bans.

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](#)].

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.

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.

Additionally, there should not be any US [[USSTATE](#)] or UK [[UKFO](#)] travel advisories for the location of the meeting. These sources are chosen to be easily accessible in English. 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.

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 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?

4. Remedies

In the event cannot be held at the scheduled time and place, the IETF has several options.

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 [\[RFC8719\]](#).

4.2. Postponement

Although it is more disruptive to the schedules of participants, the next best option is to delay the meeting until 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.

Note that due to scheduling constraints at the venue, this will usually not be feasible.

4.3. Virtualization

The final option is to make the meeting fully remote. This requires different IETF processes and logistical operations that are outside the scope of this document.

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.

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

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[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

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