

INTERNET-DRAFT

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**Definition of Participation Metrics for IETF Attendees**  
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Abstract

IETF meetings are held physically in various geographic regions of the world. One of the criteria for choosing a location is the amount of participation by the people in that region. Additionally, questions arise as to whether holding a physical meeting in a location increases the amount of participation by local attendees. Participation in the IETF process may occur in a number of different ways: email lists, writing drafts, physical or remote attendance at a meeting, chairing Working Groups and so on. This document defines the metrics and terms which may be used to measure participation both before and after an IETF meeting.

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## Table of Contents

<a href="#">1</a>	Introduction . . . . .	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">1.1</a>	Geographic outreach . . . . .	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">1.2</a>	Encouraging Participation from New Regions . . . . .	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">1.3</a>	Motivation for New Geographic Regions to Participate . . . . .	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">2</a>	Participation and its Nature . . . . .	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">2.1</a>	What does Participation Mean? . . . . .	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">2.2</a>	Ways to Participate . . . . .	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">2.2.1</a>	Email Lists . . . . .	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">2.2.2</a>	Authoring Drafts . . . . .	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">2.2.3</a>	Authoring Seminal Drafts . . . . .	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">2.2.4</a>	Starting a new Working Group or BOF . . . . .	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">2.2.5</a>	Remote Participation . . . . .	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">2.2.6</a>	Attending Physical Meetings . . . . .	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">2.2.7</a>	Participating as a Leader . . . . .	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">2.2.8</a>	Participation in standards implementation. . . . .	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">2.2.9</a>	Participation in tools development . . . . .	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">3</a>	Measuring Contributions following a Physical IETF Meeting . . . . .	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">4</a>	Guidelines for tracking metrics . . . . .	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">4.1</a>	Phase 1 - Non-binding metrics . . . . .	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">4.2</a>	Phase 2 - How to measure them . . . . .	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">4.3</a>	Phase 3 - Accept as input for meetings . . . . .	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">5</a>	Security Considerations . . . . .	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">6</a>	IANA Considerations . . . . .	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">7</a>	References . . . . .	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">7.1</a>	Informative References . . . . .	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">8</a>	Acknowledgments . . . . .	<a href="#">8</a>
	Authors' Addresses . . . . .	<a href="#">8</a>



## **1 Introduction**

IETF meetings are held physically in various geographic regions of the world. One of the criteria for choosing a location is the amount of participation by the people in that region. Additionally, questions arise as to whether holding a physical meeting in a location increases the amount of participation by local attendees. Participation in the IETF process may occur in a number of different ways: email lists, writing drafts, physical or remote attendance at a meeting, chairing Working Groups and so on. This document defines the metrics and terms which may be used to measure participation both before and after an IETF meeting.

### **1.1 Geographic outreach**

The document [[I-D.sullivan-mtgvenue-decisions](#)] "Prioritized Objectives for Making Decisions in Selecting a Meeting Venue" contains the following:

"The IETF moves its meetings around to ensure that those who can participate in person at the meetings share the difficulty and cost of travel. The point of such moving is emphatically not to find new or interesting places to visit, or to undertake outreach to new communities who would not otherwise participate in the IETF."

### **1.2 Encouraging Participation from New Regions**

The document [[I-D.baker-mtgvenue-iaoc-venue-selection-process](#)] "IAOC Plenary Meeting Venue Selection Process" contains the following:

"The IETF chair drives selection of "\*" locations, i.e., venues outside the usual regions, and requires community input. These selections usually arise from evidence of growing interest and participation in the new region. Expressions of interest from possible hosts also factor into the meeting site selection process, for any meeting.

Increased participation in the IETF from those other regions, electronically or in person, could result in basic changes to the overall pattern, and we encourage those who would like for that to occur to encourage participation from those regions."

### **1.3 Motivation for New Geographic Regions to Participate**

The very process of preparing for or asking for an IETF meeting to be held in a geographic region where it has not been held before can have a profound change on the nature of that region's relationship to Internet Standards. It can change the thinking from being



"consumers" of standards to "developers" of standards. It may help create a core group both within the region and from the diaspora to mentor and foster new work. This can have a long lasting impact on the network professionals of that geographic area. Planning for an IETF meeting to be held in a region can be a concrete rallying point to create such empowerment and change.

All the above factors speak to the need to define more clearly what "participation" means and how to measure it objectively.

## **2 Participation and its Nature**

### **2.1 What does Participation Mean?**

There are two ways to contribute to the IETF process: fundamental participation and process participation.

Fundamental Participation: fundamental participation means active contribution to substantive IETF work. The work of the IETF is to develop protocol standards, so a fundamental contribution is in protocol development. Having said that, the reason for a protocol standard or a Working Group is to solve a problem which exists on the Internet. A new standard is not developed in isolation in someone's head. It is a result of discussions both face to face and electronically, sometimes lasting for several years. Additionally, one Internet Draft or one conversation can lead to changing a view point or sparking ideas for other contributors.

Process Participation: the IETF organism needs support to maintain and improve itself. Groups such as mentoring, education, outreach, diversity, meeting venue and so on attempt to improve the functioning of the IETF organism. Involvement in such groups is necessary to the IETF but is of a different nature than a contribution to a protocol standard. Having said that, involvement in process groups may be a way to build a network of contacts which then may lead to conversations about protocol problems which then may lead to a new protocol standard. Involvement in process groups is very much needed by the IETF and it may be a way for new people to work their way towards fundamental participation.

### **2.2 Ways to Participate**

Traditionally, work in the IETF consists of interactions and decision making on email lists as well as physical meetings which are held three times per year. New ways to participate include attending meetings electronically at a remote hub or from a single location.



One may also become involved in an Internet Draft Review team. Some methods have very little associated economic costs; others have a high cost.

One caveat in starting to keep metrics on participation - one hopes that people will not attempt to "game the system". That is, make comments without merit on email lists or at the microphone in a meeting merely to improve the statistics for the region. The social sanctions for making comments without merit are sufficiently high that the authors feel that baseless contributions will likely not persist.

### **2.2.1 Email Lists**

Posting to a Working Group email list to discuss an Internet Draft is the way that is most open to most people. There is little barrier to entry in terms of economic cost. An Internet connection of some type and an access device is all that is needed.

However, there may be cultural barriers. Sometimes people (especially when new) are not comfortable with the process of posting to the Working Group email list or want to check with others about their understanding of an Internet Draft before asking a question or posting a suggestion. So, the IETF Mentoring program is starting Internet Draft Review Teams so that would-be participants can work with remote mentors to facilitate engagement. The desired output of such teams is posting to an email list.

Posting to a fundamental Working Group email list should be the only metric counted. Posting to an email list such as IETF discuss, 96attendees and so on, is not a worthy metric to gauge participation.

### **2.2.2 Authoring Drafts**

Not all Internet Drafts become RFCs. Often, the statistic used is that one in ten Internet Drafts become an RFC. Still, authoring a draft shows active participation. The draft should however, spark active discussion on the email list. If it is chosen for live presentation at a Working Group session, then that is a high degree of participation.

### **2.2.3 Authoring Seminal Drafts**

Some drafts change the thinking of others. These may be seminal ideas which are referred to by quite a few others. References to a particular piece of work can easily be found and should be regarded as a high degree of participation.





#### **2.2.4 Starting a new Working Group or BOF**

A Working Group is started to address a specific problem.    Leading a BOF or a Bar BOF which then leads to Working Group formation should be regarded as a high degree of participation.

#### **2.2.5 Remote Participation**

One may participate electronically in Working Group sessions either alone or at a remote hub.    Merely viewing a session should not be counted as participation.    Making a comment should be counted.    Comments are kept in the minutes of the WG meeting, hence can easily be used.

#### **2.2.6 Attending Physical Meetings**

One may attend physically and yet not contribute to the process.    Alternatively, a physical attendee may be actively engaged and have many conversations both in fundamental and process groups.    In the end, an active physical participant will likely end up speaking at the microphone and commenting on a draft or a discussion that is underway in a Working Group meeting.    Hence, the examination of WG minutes should be enough to count as a participation metric.

#### **2.2.7 Participating as a Leader**

Serving in an IETF management position, Working Group chair, Area Director, and so on can easily be measured and should be regarded as a high degree of participation.    Fundamental leadership positions (those of standards developing groups) should be weighted more heavily than process group leadership positions.    Having said that, it takes time and a network of contacts to become a fundamental group leader.    It also likely takes consistent physical attendance at IETF meetings.

#### **2.2.8 Participation in standards implementation**

Standards are not useful in isolation. Implementations of standards are important to see what happens "when the rubber meets the road". Many times, once an idea in a draft is implemented in the real world there are problems found either in interoperability, security or some other areas. The IETF has recognized this with more emphasis on code through hackathons and interaction with open source implementers. Implementing an open source solution should also be considered as a contribution. Often implementation of standards goes hand-in-hand with the standard implementation.

#### **2.2.9 Participation in tools development**



Several tools which the IETF uses (such as datatracker) are either completely or partially maintained by volunteers. Contribution to these tools also helps makes interaction and tracking of activities easier for other IETF volunteers. Additions to tools should also be considered as contributions. These can possibly be measured in terms on number of commits or lines of code (though admittedly these are crude metrics).

### **3 Measuring Contributions following a Physical IETF Meeting**

Metrics should be kept and published for the above categories following each physical IETF meeting. Metrics may be kept by individual and also by geographic region. The geographic region should be country, continent and Internet Registry (APNIC, Afrinic, etc.) This way, one can readily assess the impact of a meeting in a particular area as well as the growth in contribution for a region. Aspiring regions who wish to increase their IETF presence will also have a way to show their increase in participation over time.

### **4 Guidelines for tracking metrics**

#### **4.1 Phase 1 - Non-binding metrics**

Define a broad set of non-binding metrics. Some of the metrics can be easily tracked such a number of drafts and meetings attended. Other are little fuzzy such as email contributions, comments in WG on the microphone. Make a list of these and start implementing them.

#### **4.2 Phase 2 - How to measure them**

Metrics such as email contributions can be tracked partially by looking up email addresses of participants (and mapping them to country against known databases such as registration history and drafts/RFCs). Track and refine these metrics and get consensus on which ones to track and on the implementations as well. These can be separate drafts.

#### **4.3 Phase 3 - Accept an input for meetings**

Once these metrics are acceptably robust, they can be checked for suitability for continued tracking. These can be used as inputs in decision making process for meeting locations.



## **5 Security Considerations**

There are no security considerations.

## **6 IANA Considerations**

There are no IANA considerations.

## **7 References**

### **8.1 Informative References**

[I-D.baker-mtgvenue-iaoc-venue-selection-process] Baker, F., "IAOC Plenary Meeting Venue Selection Process", [draft-baker-mtgvenue-iaoc-venue-selection-process-03](#) (work in progress), July 2016.

[I-D.sullivan-mtgvenue-decisions] Sullivan, A., "Prioritized Objectives for Making Decisions in Selecting a Meeting Venue", [draft-sullivan-mtgvenue-decisions-00](#)(work in progress), July 2016.

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