RFC Series Model Process

Abstract

The RFC Series has come to a crossroads where questions must be
answered regarding how the Series should be managed, the role of the
RFC Series Editor, and the oversight of the RFC Editor function.
This draft offers a proposal to form a new IAB program called the
RFC Editor Future Development Program. This proposal is based on the
discussions held during three virtual meetings in September and
October 2019, as well as the RSEME session at IETF 106, and requests
a new, open IAB program that will drive consensus around any changes
to the RFC Editor model. The program will require extensive
community engagement and outreach to a broad set of stakeholder
communities. This draft is not intended to become an RFC.

Status of This Memo

This Internet-Draft is submitted in full conformance with the
provisions of BCP 78 and BCP 79.

Internet-Drafts are working documents of the Internet Engineering
Task Force (IETF). Note that other groups may also distribute
working documents as Internet-Drafts. The list of current Internet-
Drafts is at https://datatracker.ietf.org/drafts/current/.

Internet-Drafts are draft documents valid for a maximum of six
months and may be updated, replaced, or obsoleted by other documents
at any time. It is inappropriate to use Internet-Drafts as reference
material or to cite them other than as "work in progress."

This Internet-Draft will expire on 23 May 2020.

Copyright Notice

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

The RFC Series has come to a crossroads where questions must be
answered regarding how the Series should be managed, the role of the
RFC Series Editor, and the oversight of the RFC Editor function. The
RFC Editor, editor and publisher of the Series, publishes RFCs for
the IETF, the IRTF, the IAB, and the Independent Submissions
streams. Those RFCs are referred to by other Standards Development
Organizations (SDOs) and the users of their documents, by
organizations and governments in their procurement processes, by
academics, by network operators, and more. Decisions on the future
of the RFC Editor and the RFC Series must include input from, and
reflect considerations of the needs and uses of, both the producers
and the consumers of RFCs.

2. Summaries from Virtual Meetings and IETF 106

Three virtual meetings were organized, scheduled to be sensitive to
a wide range of time zones, to discuss the process by which the
communities of interest can determine consensus on the RFC Series

model. These meetings were coordinated by Heather Flanagan, RFC
Series Editor, and explicit invitations were sent to:

   *IETF, IRTF, IAB, and Independent Submission authors and
    participants via various mailing lists, including the rfc-
    interest, ietf-announce, and wgchairs mailing lists

   *IETF liaison contacts [IETF-LIAISONS]

   *REFEDS [REFEDS]

Invitations were considered for ISOC chapter heads and NANOG Board
leadership, but the invitations were not delivered in time for the
meetings.

2.1. First Virtual Meeting Summary

Approximately 24 people attended this meeting.

The stream managers and and a small number of community at-large
members should be part of a committee that would work much like a
design team [DESIGN]. A chair and a co-chair should be chosen from
within that committee to run a working group. That working group is
not to be part of the IETF (though much participation is expected
from within the IETF community). An important characteristic of the
chair (and possibly co-chair) is clearly identifying any potential
Conflict of Interest that the chair(s) have before they call
consensus.

A key characteristic and requirement of the working group is
openness of participation and process.

While external stakeholders may not be interested in defining and
developing the RFC Editor model, they should still be offered
another opportunity to comment on any plans after those plans are
developed (and before a full consensus call is made).

2.2. Second Virtual Meeting Summary

Approximately 12 people attended this meeting.

Despite the current tension between the community and the IAB, the
IAB is the correct home, from a logical and organizational
architecture perspective, to host the discussion for the RFC Editor
model. The IAB should organize a program that follows the principles
of open participation (e.g., the model of an IETF working group),
and run a community-wide call for volunteers to both find chairs for
this group and to invite participation. The program should have a
clear, concrete, and objective charter that can be published as an
Internet-Draft. Organizations external to the IETF should be invited

to participate as well as to offer feedback on any proposed products
from the group (assuming the external organizations do not actively
participate in developing those final products).

Reaching consensus through this group should be expected to take a
long time, but it is important that that time be taken so as to
avoid a bigger mess in the future.

2.3. Third Virtual Meeting Summary

Approximately 6 people attended this meeting.

While there was no agreement on whether or not the group that drives
the discussion and consensus needs to be an entirely new group
outside the existing leadership structure, there was consensus that
some IAB involvement is critical. One suggestion was to bring in
past IAB and IETF chairs as core membership to the group, and that
the group must look to the long-term structure of the RFC Editor (as
opposed to looking at short-term, tactical matters).

In terms of what needs to be decided for the long-term (where 'long-
term' was defined as 6-8 years), structural issues that will need to
be considered: business (funding), administration (hiring/firing) as
well as more about publishing documents (who gets to say no to
publishing something). There will be a role for many of the existing
groups (e.g., IETF LLC Board, since they hold contracts). The model
must be clear around when the RSE can be overridden (and when they
can't be). The model cannot be designed around one individual or
entity, which means the roles themselves have to be more clearly
described.

2.4. RSEME session at IETF 106

The session held during IETF 106 [RSEME] was a review of the ideas
generated during the virtual meetings and a discussion on the
proposal laid out in the -02 version of this draft. The consensus of
the room was, first and foremost, to focus on doing the right thing
over making sure an end-to-end process was defined at the start.
Some decisions, such as where to ultimately publish any outputs of
the proposed program should be made later when there was some idea
of what, exactly, would be proposed as the final outcomes of the
program.

The proposal below has been revised based on the discussion. This
draft is ultimately intended as guidance for next steps, but will
not itself turn into an RFC.

3. Proposal - RFC Editor Future Development Program

The proposal, based on the calls and the session at IETF 106, is to request the immediate formation of a new IAB program. The role of the IAB is to convene this program and to ultimately verify that the program and any outputs it generates have followed a consensus process. The work and the participation should be open and transparent, and must focus on the long-term needs of the RFC Series and the communities it serves.

An IAB program, run correctly and with community accountability, covers many of the required characteristic of this group. For example, an IAB program is designed to support a long-term perspective, and to exist beyond any given IAB cohort.[IAB-PROGRAM]

Note that while programs are not generally required to produce minutes, this group should regularly offer updates on its activities, either in the form of minutes, blog posts, or other easily found community reports, for the sake of individuals and organizational entities who cannot actively participate, and to support a historic record of discussions and decisions. The meetings themselves should always support remote participation.

This program should be led by a chair and a co-chair, selected from the community. The chair/co-chair roles are responsible for general outreach, whereas the IAB Program Lead will act as the liaison to the IAB. In all cases, a clear Conflict of Interest statement should be made by both chairs, and the IAB Program Lead must be neutral in all decisions.

Individuals chosen by the IAB, IESG, and the IRSG from among their memberships and with an eye towards program continuity, and the Independent Submissions Editor, are strongly encouraged to participate in this program, as recommendations will be made that impact all document streams.

The program should be modeled closely on an IETF working group [BCP25], using a mailing list to validate consensus among the participants, and adhering to the IETF Note Well [BCP78] [BCP79]. Decisions are expected to be made using rough consensus; consensus will be called by the chairs, and any appeals will be handled by the IAB.[RFC7282].

The program may choose to create one or more design teams to focus on specific aspects of the questions being raised; this model should definitely be supported if the community decides it to be useful.

The scope of work for this group includes:

  *Clearly defining the guiding principles that will drive any
   further decisions and discussions.

  *Determining the full scope of responsibilities and authority
   within the RFC Editor, in particular focusing on the RFC Series
   Editor. What is the actual driving problem?

  *Considering and proposing business and administrative
   requirements to support any proposed changes (e.g., who decides
   on budget).

  *Soliciting input from organizations that are expected to be
   directly impacted by any changes to the RFC Editor model.

A note about the RFC Series Oversight Committee (RSOC), also a
program of the IAB: the RSOC should continue to oversee day-to-day
running of the RFC Editor, and be available to assist with any
immediate, tactical questions, as well as acting as the search
committee for any of the roles defined by the new program. RSOC
members are encouraged to participate in the new program, and
equally encouraged to request subject matter expertise from
participants in this program on matters of job descriptions,
statements of work, and any other areas impacted by changes in the
RFC Editor model as recommended by this program.

Similarly, members of the IAB and the IESG are welcome to
participate as individuals, but should not be in any leadership role
within the program (the IAB liaison role should not be considered a
leadership role; liaisons are important to communication and
transparency). The IAB will ultimately act as the point of appeal
(if necessary).

4. Timeline

  *IETF 106: community discussion, complete proposal

  *November 2019: IAB to announce new program, open a community-wide
   call for volunteers for the chair and co-chair roles

  *December 2019: IAB to create a new mailing list, select chairs,
   and solicit membership.

  *No later than IETF 107: Program to have its initial meeting
   (interim meetings are also encouraged)

  *No later than IETF 108: First draft(s) of defining principles;
   iterate on improvements

*No later than IETF 109: First draft(s) of recommendations
 regarding any changes in the RFC Editor model

5. Informative References

[DESIGN]   IETF, "On Design Teams", , <https://www.ietf.org/about/
            groups/iesg/statements/design-teams/>.

[IAB-PROGRAM] IAB, "IAB Programs", , <https://www.iab.org/
            activities/programs/>.

[IETF-LIAISONS] IETF, "Liaisons", , <https://www.ietf.org/about/
            liaisons/>.

[REFEDS]   REFEDS, "REFEDS", , <https://refeds.org>.

[RSEME]   IAB, "Community Process for RSE Model Evolution
            (rseme)", , <https://datatracker.ietf.org/group/rseme/
            about/>.

[BCP25]   Bradner, S., "IETF Working Group Guidelines and
            Procedures", BCP 25, RFC 2418, September 1998.
            Wasserman, M., "Updates to RFC 2418 Regarding the
            Management of IETF Mailing Lists", BCP 25, RFC 3934,
            October 2004.
            Resnick, P. and A. Farrel, "IETF Anti-Harassment
            Procedures", BCP 25, RFC 7776, March 2016.
            <https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/bcp25>

[BCP78]   Bradner, S., Ed. and J. Contreras, Ed., "Rights
            Contributors Provide to the IETF Trust", BCP 78, RFC
            5378, DOI 10.17487/RFC5378, November 2008, <https://
            www.rfc-editor.org/info/bcp78>.

[BCP79]   Bradner, S. and J. Contreras, "Intellectual Property
            Rights in IETF Technology", BCP 79, RFC 8179, DOI
            10.17487/RFC8179, May 2017, <https://www.rfc-editor.org/
            info/bcp79>.

[RFC7282]   Resnick, P., "On Consensus and Humming in the IETF", RFC
            7282, DOI 10.17487/RFC7282, June 2014, <https://www.rfc-
            editor.org/info/rfc7282>.

Appendix A. Acknowledgments

With many thanks to the individuals who attended the virtual calls
and who engaged constructively on the mailing lists.

Author's Address

Heather Flanagan
RFC Editor

Email: rse@rfc-editor.org
URI: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2647-2220