

Network Working Group  
Internet-Draft  
Expires: December 21, 2006

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June 19, 2006

IETF Mailing List Principles  
draft-galvin-maillists-00

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Abstract

A model is suggested for guiding the management of IETF mailing lists, including a set of bullet points for the principles and structure of that guidance. The IESG could use this to develop and evolve the procedures for the operation and use of IETF mailing lists.

Acknowledgements

The following team of individuals worked together to develop the

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ideas and concepts suggested in this document. draft (listed in alphabetical order): Brian E Carpenter, James M Galvin, Eric Gray, Martin Hannigan, Sam Hartman, Eliot Lear, Lucy E. Lynch, Margaret Wasserman.

#### Discussion of this Draft

Please direct all comments, suggestions, and questions rearding this draft to the following IETF mailing list:

`ietf-maillists@lists.elistx.com`

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`ietf-maillists-request@lists.elistx.com`

Alternatively, you may visit the web-based subscription manager at:

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## 1. Introduction

- o Although the IETF has face-to-face meetings on a regular schedule, all official work of the IETF is conducted on its mailing lists.
- o Need to create uniformity in the management of IETF mailing lists.
- o Need to create some structure to assign authority and delegate responsibilities.
- o Need to be flexible and allow for rapid evolution.

## 2. Definitions

- o mailing list - This is a generic term that refers to any IETF mailing list. The following categories of IETF mailing lists are defined according to their expected operational characteristics, which may be changed with the approval of the relevant area director.
- o administrative list - a category of mailing list for which subscriptions are by invitation only, e.g., iab, iesg, wgchairs, or a document design team list.
- o announcement list - a category of mailing list for which messages are moderated according to relatively strict guidelines; subscriptions are open to anyone. Examples include ietf-announce, i-d-announce, or irtf-announce.
- o discussion list - a category of mailing list for which subscriptions are open to anyone, subscribers submit messages without restriction, and non-subscriber messages are moderated. Examples include working group mailing lists.
- o open list - a mailing list characterized as "open" permits anyone to subscribe to receive messages. Such a list may or may not permit subscribers or anyone else to submit messages.
- o closed list - a mailing list characterized as "closed" restricts who may be subscribed to receive messages. Such a list may or may not permit subscribers or anyone else to submit messages.

- o list owner - this person is responsible for ensuring the mailing list exists, is operational, and is used in accordance with its charter. Unless otherwise specified, for IETF working groups the working group chair is the list owner.
- o list host - this person is responsible for the technical operation of the mailing list. The list host MUST be someone who has all of the necessary privileges and expertise for the responsibility at and on the site where the mailing list is hosted. If a mailing list is hosted in the "@ietf.org" domain then "webmaster@ietf.org" is the list host.
- o list administrator - this person is responsible for administrative issues of the mailing list, including subscribe, unsubscribe, and archive issues not related to technical operations.
- o list moderator - this person is responsible for message content submission issues of the mailing list.

- o list sergeant-at-arms - this person is responsible for behavior issues of those who submit messages to the mailing list.

### [3.](#) Model

- o Assign authority for the management of IETF mailing lists to the IESG.
- o Community will develop a set of principles (a draft of some are proposed here) to be specified in a BCP to guide the management.
- o IESG will develop policies and procedures for the management of IETF mailing lists. The BCP (developed by the community) will specify a streamlined process for the announcement, review, and enactment of these policies and procedures. Some policies and procedures already exist.
- o IESG will create a group -- for example, a mailing list resolution

committee or a mailing list directorate -- to which to delegate the responsibility of execution of the policies and procedures. This aligns well with existing procedures because it leaves the IESG in the appeals path, relieves the IESG of most of the administrative workload, and provides the desired uniformity in the management of mailing lists.

- o The BCP would need to include appropriate guidance for the constitution of the group, the rules by which it operates, and the appeals process.

#### [4.](#) Principles and Structure

- o IESG has responsibility and authority to create, manage, and update mailing list management policies and procedures, and is the final arbiter in any dispute regarding the operation of an IETF mailing list, as detailed elsewhere in this document.
- o Each IETF working group MUST have one open discussion list to use

to conduct its business. A working group MAY have one or more closed mailing list(s) for use by a design team, editors, or other sub-groups of the working group.

- o Unless otherwise specified the working group chair is the owner of all the working group mailing lists. The working group chair, with the approval of the relevant area director, is responsible for identifying one or more individuals to serve in the mailing list management roles defined elsewhere in this document.
- o In general, each role SHOULD have more than one person assigned and a working group chair SHOULD NOT be the only person in a mailing list role, except that the working group chair may be the sole list owner. Exceptions are only permitted with the approval of the relevant area director.
- o Any action that effects the distribution or content of any message submitted for an IETF mailing list MUST be visible to and auditable by the subscribers of that mailing list and the IESG. Such actions MAY be visible to and auditable by the IETF community. A subscriber MUST have reasonable access at all times. IESG access MAY be provided upon request to the working group chair or any mailing list role.
- o Submitting messages to an IETF mailing list is a privilege not a right. All submissions MUST be within scope and conform to reasonable and accepted standards of behavior for IETF mailing lists. All such submissions MUST be distributed to all subscribers. This privilege MAY be revoked.
- o The IETF Secretariat maintains an archive of all mailing lists. The mailing list host MUST ensure that the central archive subscriber address remains subscribed to the mailing list.
- o Anyone MUST be permitted to subscribe to receive messages distributed by any open working group mailing list.
- o A working group's open mailing lists' archive MUST be publicly accessible.

- o It MUST be possible to subscribe or unsubscribe from an IETF



mailing list using an email-based manager. An IETF mailing list MAY include a web-based manager for managing subscriptions.

- o All issues or appeals of any action or decision regarding the operation of an IETF mailing list MUST be addressed first to the working group chair. If a satisfactory resolution is not forthcoming the issue may be referred to the "mailing list group". Decisions of the "mailing list group" may be appealed to the IESG.

## [5.](#) Mailing List Group

- o Need discussion of how this group is constituted. Options include serving at the pleasure of the general area director, selected by NOMCOM, drawn from the pool of working group chairs, some combination of all of the above, or something else entirely.
- o Need discussion of its operation. Suggestion is a consensus body whose deliberations are private but it must release a detailed decision that includes all relevant and appropriate documentation and supporting material.

## [6.](#) Setting Policies and Procedures

- o IESG has specified a few policies and procedures already. A central location needs to be identified for collecting them and all future entries for ease of access.
- o Need discussion of how policies and procedures are enacted. Suggestion is that the IESG announces them with a 4 week last call. If there are no substantial issues then they automatically approve at the end of the 4 weeks. This is similar to what has been done on many existing policies and procedures.

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## Acknowledgment

Funding for the RFC Editor function is currently provided by the Internet Society.