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An IESG charter
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Abstract

This memo gives a charter for the Internet Engineering Steering Group (IESG), a management function of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF).

It is meant to document the charter of the IESG as presently understood (Jan 2003).

Discussion of this memo is encouraged on the POISED mailing list <poised@lists.tislabs.com>

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1. Introduction

1.1 The role of the IESG

The Internet Engineering Steering Group (IESG) is the operational and technical management function of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF).

It is tasked with making the management decisions about working groups in the IETF, and with the final review and approval of documents published as IETF standards-track documents.

1.2 Historic note

The role of the IESG in the IETF management structure has been largely constant since 1992, when the structure of the Internet standards process was defined by [RFC 1310](#) (which was later updated by [RFC 1602](#), [RFC 1871](#) and [RFC 2026](#)).

Some of the functions were also defined in [RFC 1603](#) (which was later updated by [RFC 2418](#)).

As the community has grown, and the IESG has gathered experience, the way in which the IESG approaches its tasks has varied considerably, but the tasks have remained relatively constant.

This document describes the tasks assigned to the IESG. It does not attempt to describe the procedures the IESG uses to accomplish these tasks; that is done in other memos.

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2. The composition of the IESG

The IESG has the following members:

- o The IETF Chair, who is also the General AD
- o The Area Directors for the IETF Areas
- o The IAB Chair and the IETF Executive Director, as ex-officio members of the IESG.
- o Liaisons

The Chair and the Area Directors are selected by the IETF NomCom according to the procedures of [RFC 2282](#) (Nomcom procedures).

The RFC Editor

The IANA

The IAB

In addition, members of the IETF Secretariat are subscribed to the mailing list and present in the IESG meetings as needed in order to serve as a support function.

Decisions of the IESG are made by the IETF Chair and the Area Directors.

[3.](#) The IESG role in working group management

[3.1](#) Working group creation

The formation of working groups is described in [RFC 2418 section 2](#).

The normal case is that a working group is requested by members of the IETF community.

Each area director is responsible for ensuring that a working group being chartered is relevant, has achievable goals and constitutes an acceptable risk, has sufficient interest and so on. The charter is the result of a negotiation between the AD and the prospective chairs, with review by the IAB and approval by the IESG. Normally, there will be communication with the community of interest for the working group too.

The AD is also responsible for selecting chairs for the working group that he thinks will be up to the task.

All charters for proposed working groups are announced to the community at large before the IESG makes a decision.

The BOF procedure described in [RFC 2418 section 2.4](#) also requires approval from the relevant AD. A BOF is not required to start a working group, and a BOF may be held without the purpose being to create a working group. BOFs are also often discussed with the IESG and IAB.

If an AD determines that it is needed, the AD can initiate the formation of a working group.

[3.2](#) Working group management

The role of the Area Director in WG management is described in [RFC 2418 section 6.7](#). The AD is responsible for making sure the working groups stay focused on the charter tasks, make forward progress, are coordinated with the rest of the area, and (with the IESG) coordinated with the rest of the IETF.

In a well functioning working group, main responsibility for these things rests with the chairs; the AD will normally be able to concentrate on supporting the working group chairs' work.

When a WG finds that it is essential that work gets done which is not on its charter, the AD, consulting with the rest of the IESG as required, is responsible for figuring out whether to add it to their charter, add it to another group's charter, task someone outside the

WG to work on it, or initiate creation of another WG.

The Area Director is also responsible for picking and, when necessary, replacing working group chairs. This is usually done in consultation with the IESG.

[4.](#) The IESG role in document review

[4.1](#) Working group documents

This role is described in [RFC 2418 section 7.5](#), and [RFC 2026 section 6](#). The IESG role is one of review and approval.

[4.2](#) Non-working group documents

[4.2.1](#) Standards-track

This role is described in [RFC 2026 section 6](#). Such documents are submitted to the IESG, which will assign them to a relevant area director. The IESG is responsible for determining:

- o Whether or not the specification is appropriate for standards track
- o Whether or not the specification needs review by one or more existing WGs
- o Whether or not the quality of the specification is adequate

The IESG may recommend that a document submitted for standards-track publication instead be published as Experimental or Informational.

[4.2.2](#) Informational and Experimental

These documents are usually submitted to the RFC Editor in accordance with the procedures of [RFC 2026 section 4.2.3](#) and [RFC 2418 section 8](#). The IESG is asked to review all documents submitted in this fashion for conflicts with the IETF standards process or work done in the IETF community; this is a modification of the [RFC 2026](#) procedure, and documented in [RFC 2418 section 8](#).

The IESG may recommend that the document be reviewed by a working group, that the document be published with an IESG note indicating issues such as conflict with the IETF standards process, or may recommend that the document not be published.

[4.3](#) IESG review procedures

The IESG review procedure is defined by the IESG.

The IESG has web pages as part of the IETF web (www.ietf.org); current details of procedures should be published there.

[5](#). The IESG role in area management

The IETF divides its work into a number of areas, each comprising working groups that relate to that area's focus. ([RFC 2418 section 1](#)). The area structure is defined by the IESG, and may be changed by the IESG. The IESG decides which areas groups belong to. When reassigning areas, the IESG can move responsibility for areas between

IESG members, but the IESG can only add new members through the nomcom process.

The primary task of area management is done by one or two area directors per area. An area director may be advised by one or more directorates, which is selected and chaired by the area director ([RFC 2418 section 1](#)). Directorates may be specific to an area, specific to a technology, or chartered in some other fashion.

The ADs for an area are responsible for making sure the WGs in the area are well coordinated, that there is coverage for the technologies needed in the area, and that the challenges that are most important to the Internet in that area are indeed being worked on.

To that end, they may charter working groups, suggest modifications to working group charters, encourage people to work on specific work items within or outside working groups, or even shut down working groups that are not performing an useful function.

[6.](#) Other IESG roles

[6.1](#) Staff supervision

The IESG is the main body responsible for supporting the IETF Chair in supervising the work of the IETF Secretariat.

The supervision of the IANA and the RFC Editor is handled by the IAB.

[6.2](#) Process management

The IESG is responsible for making sure the IETF process is functional in all aspects. This includes taking responsibility for initiating consideration of updates of the process when required, as well as addressing obvious miscarriages of process even when it does not fall into the categories described above.

[6.3](#) External relations

The main responsibility for handling external relations rests with the IAB, as described in the IAB Charter ([RFC 2850](#)). However, when technical cooperation is required, it is essential that the work be coordinated with the relevant ADs. This often means that ADs will function in a liaison role with other organizations, but the same function may also be done by others when that seems more appropriate.

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[7. Procedural issues](#)

While the IESG is generally free to set its own procedures, some parts of the procedures are properly part of its charter. These are given here.

[7.1 Decision taking](#)

The IESG attempts to reach all decisions unanimously. If unanimity cannot be achieved, the chair may conduct informal polls to determine consensus. The IESG may make decisions and take action if at least seven members concur and there are no more than two dissents.

For the purpose of judging consensus, only the IETF Chair and the Area Directors are counted.

(NOTE: This rule is new, and has not been tried. Its inclusion here is only done to get around the "how do we decide about a challenge to the rules" problem.)

The IESG may reach decisions by face to face meeting, teleconference, Internet communication, or any combination of the above.

[7.2 Openness and confidentiality](#)

The IESG publishes minutes of all its meetings on the Internet, and conducts an open meeting at every IETF meeting. It publishes all its findings as RFCs, Internet Drafts or messages to the IETF-announce mailing list. However, discussion of personnel matters and possibly legal and financial matters may sometimes be required to be kept confidential, and the chair may, with the consent of the full members, exclude liaison and ex officio members from such discussions.

[8](#). Security considerations

The security of the Internet depends on standards giving proper thought to security. Apart from that, there seem to be no considerations of security relevant to this memo.

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