The RFC Series and RFC Editor
draft-ietf-iasa2-rfc4844-bis-00

Abstract

   This document describes the framework for an RFC Series and an RFC
   Editor function that incorporate the principles of organized
   community involvement and accountability that has become necessary as
   the Internet technical community has grown, thereby enabling the RFC
   Series to continue to fulfill its mandate.

   Cover Note:

   {{ RFC Editor: Please remove this cover note prior to publication. }}

   The IASA2 WG asks the IAB to publish this replacement for RFC 4844.
   The document is changed for alignment with the new structure for the
   IETF Administrative Support Activity (IASA), eliminating all
   references to the IETF Administrative Oversight Committee (IAOC).

Status of This Memo

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1. Introduction

   The first Request for Comments (RFC) document was published in April
   of 1969 as part of the effort to design and build what we now know of
   as the Internet. Since then, the RFC Series has been the archival
   series dedicated to documenting Internet technical specifications,
   including both general contributions from the Internet research and
   engineering community as well as standards documents.

   As described in the history of the first 30 years of RFCs
   ([RFC2555]), the RFC Series was created for the purpose of capturing
   the research and engineering thought that underlie the design of
   (what we now know of as) the Internet. As the Internet Engineering
   Task Force (IETF) was formalized to carry out the discussion and
   documentation of Internet standards, IETF documents have become a
   large part (but not the entirety) of the RFC Series.

   As the IETF has grown up and celebrated its own 30 years of history,
   its requirements for archival publication of its output have changed
   and become more rigorous. Perhaps most significantly, the IETF must
   be able to define (based on its own open consensus discussion
   processes and leadership directions) and implement adjustments to its
   publication processes.

   At the same time, the Internet engineering and research community as
   a whole has grown and come to require more openness and
   accountability in all organizations supporting it. More than ever,
   this community needs an RFC Series that is supported (operationally
   and in terms of its principles) such that there is a balance of:

o expert implementation;

o clear management and direction -- for operations and evolution
   across the whole RFC Series (whether originating in the IETF or
   not); and

o appropriate community input into and review of activities.

In the past, there has been confusion and therefore sometimes tension
over where and how to address RFC issues that are particular to
contributing groups (e.g., the IETF, the Internet Architecture Board
(IAB), or independent individuals). It was not always clear where
there should be community involvement versus RFC Editor control;
depending on the issue, there might be more or less involvement from
the IAB, the Internet Engineering Steering Group (IESG), or the
community at large. There are similar issues with handling RFC
Series-wide issues -- where to discuss and resolve them in a way that
is balanced across the whole series.

For example, there have been discussions about Intellectual Property
Rights (IPR) for IETF-generated documents, but it's not clear when or
how to abstract the portions of those discussions that are relevant
to the rest of the RFC Series. Discussions of labeling (of RFCs in
general, IETF documents in particular, or some combination thereof)
generally must be applied to the whole RFC Series-wide or not at all.
Without an agreed-on framework for managing the RFC Series, it is
difficult to have those discussions in a non-polarized fashion --
either the IETF dictating the reality of the rest of the RFC Series,
or the RFC Series imposing undue restrictions on documents from the
IETF.

As part of its charter (see Appendix A), the IAB has a responsibility
for the RFC Editor. Acknowledging the IETF's needs and the general
Internet engineering and research community's evolving needs, the IAB
supports a future for the RFC Series that continues to meet its
original mandate of providing the archival series for the technical
research and engineering documentation that describes the Internet.

With this document, the IAB provides the framework for the RFC Series
and an RFC Editor function with the specific purpose of ensuring that
the RFC Series is maintained and supported in ways that are
consistent with the stated purpose of the RFC Series and the
realities of today's Internet research and engineering community.
The framework describes the existing "streams" of RFCs, draws a
roadmap of existing process documents already defining the
implementation, and provides clear direction of how to evolve this
framework and its supporting pieces through discussion and future
document revision.

Specifically, this document provides a brief charter for the RFC
Series, describes the role of the RFC Editor, the IAB, and the IETF
Administrative Support Activity (IASA) in a framework for managing
the RFC Series, and discusses the streams of input to the RFC Series
from the various constituencies it serves.

2. RFC Series Mission

The RFC Series is the archival series dedicated to documenting
Internet technical specifications, including general contributions
from the Internet research and engineering community as well as
standards documents.

RFCs are available free of charge to anyone via the Internet.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

As this document sets out the framework for supporting the RFC Series
mission, this section reviews the updated roles and responsibilities
of the entities that have had, and will have, involvement in
continued support of the mission.

3.1. RFC Editor

Originally, there was a single person acting as editor of the RFC
Series (the RFC Editor). The task has grown, and the work now
requires the organized activity of several experts, so there are RFC
Editors, or an RFC Editor organization. In time, there may be
multiple organizations working together to undertake the work
required by the RFC Series. For simplicity's sake, and without
attempting to predict how the role might be subdivided among them,
this document refers to this collection of experts and organizations
as the "RFC Editor".

The RFC Editor is an expert technical editor and series editor,
acting to support the mission of the RFC Series. As such, the RFC
Editor is the implementer handling the editorial management of the
RFC Series, in accordance with the defined processes. In addition,
the RFC Editor is expected to be the expert and prime mover in
discussions about policies for editing, publishing, and archiving
RFCs.

3.2. IAB

In this model, the role of the IAB is to ensure that the RFC Series
mission is being appropriately fulfilled for the whole community for
which it was created. The IAB does not, organizationally, have
comprehensive publishing or editorial expertise. Therefore, the role

of the IAB is focused on ensuring that principles are met, the
appropriate bodies and communities are duly informed and consulted,
and the RFC Editor has what it needs in order to execute on the
material that is in their mandate.

It is the responsibility of the IAB to approve the appointment of the
RFC Editor and to approve the general policy followed by the RFC
Editor.

3.3. Operational Oversight

The IETF Administration Limited Liability Company (IETF LLC), as part
of the IETF Administrative Support Activity (IASA), is responsible
for administrative and financial matters for the IETF, the IAB, and
the Internet Research Task Force (IRTF) [I-D.ietf-iasa2-struct]. The
IASA is tasked with providing the funding for and operational
oversight of the RFC Editor.

The IETF LLC Board provides oversight of the IASA, and the IETF
Executive Director is the chief actor for the IASA.

The IETF Executive Director works with the IAB to identify suitable
persons or entities to fulfill the mandate of the RFC Editor.

The IETF Executive Director establishes appropriate contractual
agreements with the selected persons or entities to carry out the
work that will satisfy the technical publication requirements defined
for the various RFC input streams (see Section 5.2). The IETF
Executive Director may define additional operational requirements and
policies for management purposes to meet the requirements defined by
the various communities.

The IETF Administration LLC Board approves a budget for operation of
the RFC Editor activity, and the IETF Executive Director establishes
and manages the necessary operational agreements for the RFC Editor
activity.

3.4. Policy Oversight

The IAB monitors the effectiveness of the policies in force and their
implementation to ensure that the RFC Editor activity meets the
editorial management and document publication needs as referenced in
this document. In the event of serious non-conformance, the IAB,
either on its own initiative or at the request of the IETF
Administration LLC Board, may require the IETF Executive Director to
vary or terminate and renegotiate the arrangements for the RFC Editor
activity.

4. Framework

   With the RFC Series mission outlined above, this document describes a
   framework for supporting

   o the operational implementation of the RFC Series,

   based on

   o public process and definition documents,

   for which there are

   o clear responsibilities and mechanisms for update and change.

   Generally speaking, the RFC Editor is responsible for the operational
   implementation of the RFC Series. As outlined in Section 3.3, the
   IETF Executive Director provides the oversight of this operational
   role.

   The process and definition documents are detailed below, including
   responsibility for the individual process documents (maintenance and
   update). The RFC Editor works with the appropriate community to
   ensure that the process documents reflect current requirements. The
   IAB is charged with the role of verifying that appropriate community
   input has been sought and that any changes appropriately account for
   community requirements.

   There are three categories of activity, and a fourth category of
   series-wide rules and guidelines, described for implementing the RFC
   Series to support its mission:

   o Approval of documents.

   o Editing, processing, and publication of documents.

   o Archiving and indexing the documents and making them accessible.

   o Series rules and guidelines.

4.1. Document Approval

   The RFC Series mission implicitly requires that documents be reviewed
   and approved for acceptance into the series.

4.1.1. Definition

   Section 5.1 describes the different streams of documents that are put
   to the RFC Editor for publication as RFCs today. While there may be
   general policies for approval of documents as RFCs (to ensure the
   coherence of the RFC Series), there are also policies defined for the
   approval of documents in each stream. Generally speaking, there is a
   different approving body for each stream. The current definitions
   are catalogued in Section 5.1.

4.1.2. Operational Implementation

   Each stream has its own documented approval process. The RFC Editor
   is responsible for the approval of documents in one of the streams
   (Independent Submission stream, see Section 5.1.4) and works with the
   other approving bodies to ensure smooth passage of approved documents
   into the next phases, ultimately to publication and archiving as an
   RFC.

4.1.3. Process Change

   From time to time, it may be necessary to change the approval
   processes for any given stream, or even add or remove streams. This
   may occur when the RFC Editor, the IAB, the body responsible for a
   given stream of documents, or the community determines that there are
   issues to be resolved in general for RFC approval or for per-stream
   approval processes.

   In this framework, the general approach is that the IAB will work
   with the RFC Editor and other parties to get community input and it
   will verify that any changes appropriately account for community
   requirements.

4.1.4. Existing Approval Process Documents

   The existing documents describing the approval processes for each
   stream are detailed in Section 5.1.

4.2. Editing, Processing, and Publication of Documents

   Producing and maintaining a coherent, well-edited document series
   requires specialized skills and subject matter expertise. This is
   the domain of the RFC Editor. Nevertheless, the community served by
   the RFC Series and the communities served by the individual streams
   of RFCs have requirements that help define the nature of the series.

4.2.1. Definition

General and stream-specific requirements for the RFC Series are
documented in community-approved documents (catalogued in Section 5.2
below).

Any specific interfaces, numbers, or concrete values required to make
the requirements operational are the subject of agreements between
the IASA and the RFC Editor (e.g., contracts, statements of work,
service level agreements, etc).

4.2.2. Operational Implementation

The RFC Editor is responsible for ensuring that editing, processing,
and publication of RFCs are carried out in a way that is consistent
with the requirements laid out in the appropriate documents. The RFC
Editor works with the IASA to provide regular reporting and feedback
on these operations.

4.2.3. Process Change

From time to time, it may be necessary to change the requirements for
any given stream, or the RFC Series in general. This may occur when
the RFC Editor, the IAB, the approval body for a given stream of
documents, or the community determines that there are issues to be
resolved in general for RFCs or for per-stream requirements.

In this model, the general approach is that the IAB will work with
the RFC Editor to get community input and it will approve changes by
validating appropriate consideration of community requirements.

4.2.4. Existing Process Documents

Documents describing existing requirements for the streams are
detailed in Section 5.2.

4.3. Archiving, Indexing, and Accessibility

The activities of archiving, indexing, and making accessible the RFC
Series can be informed by specific subject matter expertise in
general document series editing. It is also important that they are
informed by requirements from the whole community. As long as the
RFC Series is to remain coherent, there should be uniform archiving
and indexing of RFCs across all streams and a common method of
accessing the resulting documents.

4.3.1. Definition

   In principle, there should be a community consensus document
   describing the archiving, indexing, and accessibility requirements
   for the RFC Series. In practice, we continue with the archive as
   built by the capable RFC Editors since the series' inception.

   Any specific concrete requirements for the archive, index, and
   accessibility operations are the subject of agreements between the
   IASA and the RFC Editor (e.g., contracts, statements of work, service
   level agreements, etc).

4.3.2. Operational Implementation

   The RFC Editor is responsible for ensuring that the RFC archive and
   index are maintained appropriately and that the resulting documents
   are made available to anybody wishing to access them via the
   Internet. The RFC Editor works with the IASA for regular reporting
   and feedback.

4.3.3. Process Change

   Should there be a community move to propose changes to the
   requirements for the RFC archive and index or accessibility, the IAB
   will work with the RFC Editor to get community input and it will
   approve changes by validating appropriate consideration of community
   requirements.

4.3.4. Existing Process Documents

   There are no applicable process documents.

4.4. Series-Wide Guidelines and Rules

   The RFC Series style and content can be shaped by subject matter
   expertise in document series editing. They are also informed by
   requirements by the using community. As long as the RFC Series is to
   remain coherent, there should be uniform style and content for RFCs
   across all streams. This includes, but is not limited to, acceptable
   language, use of references, and copyright rules.

4.4.1. Definition

   In principle, there should be a community consensus document (or set
   of documents) describing the content requirements for the RFC Series.
   In practice, some do exist, though some need reviewing and more may
   be needed over time.

4.4.2. Operational Implementation

   The RFC Editor is responsible for ensuring that the RFC Series
   guidelines are upheld within the RFC Series.

4.4.3. Process Change

   When additions or changes are needed to series-wide definitions, the
   IAB will work with the RFC Editor and stream stakeholders to get
   community input and review. The IAB will approve changes by
   validating appropriate consideration of community requirements.

4.4.4. Existing Process Documents

   Existing series-wide rules and guidelines documents include:

   o RFC Style Guide [RFC7223],

   o The Use of Non-ASCII Characters in RFCs [RFC7997],

   o Copyright and intellectual property rules [RFC3978] [RFC4748],

   o Normative references [RFC3967] [RFC4897].

5. RFC Streams

   Various contributors provide input to the RFC Series. These
   contributors come from several different communities, each with its
   own defined process for approving documents that will be published by
   the RFC Editor. This is nothing new; however, over time the various
   communities and document requirements have grown and separated. In
   order to promote harmony in discussing the collective set of
   requirements, it is useful to recognize each in their own space --
   and they are referred to here as "streams".

   Note that by identifying separate streams, there is no intention of
   dividing them or undermining their management as one series. Rather,
   the opposite is true -- by clarifying the constituent parts, it is
   easier to make them work together without the friction that sometimes
   arises when discussing various requirements.

   The subsections below identify the streams that exist today. There
   is no immediate expectation of new streams being created, and it is
   preferable that new streams NOT be created. Creation of streams and
   all policies surrounding general changes to the RFC Series are
   discussed above in Section 4.

5.1. RFC Approval Processes

   Processes for approval of documents (or requirements) for each stream
   are defined by the community that defines the stream. The IAB is
   charged with the role of verifying that appropriate community input
   has been sought and that the changes are consistent with the RFC
   Series mission and this overall framework.

   The RFC Editor is expected to publish all documents passed to it
   after appropriate review and approval in one of the identified
   streams.

5.1.1. IETF Document Stream

   The IETF document stream includes IETF WG documents as well as
   "individual submissions" sponsored by an IESG area director. Any
   document being published as part of the IETF standards process must
   follow this stream -- no other stream can approve Standards-Track
   RFCs or Best Current Practice (BCP) RFCs.

   Approval of documents in the IETF stream is defined by

   o the IETF standards process [RFC2026] (and its successors).

   o the IESG process for sponsoring individual submissions [SPONSOR].

   Changes to the approval process for this stream are made by updating
   the IETF standards process documents.

5.1.2. IAB Document Stream

   The IAB defines the processes by which it approves documents in its
   stream. Consistent with the above, any documents that the IAB wishes
   to publish as part of the IETF Standards Track (Standards or BCPs)
   are subject to the approval processes referred to in Section 5.1.1.

   The review and approval process for documents in the IAB stream is
   described in

   o the IAB process for review and approval of its documents
      [RFC4845].

5.1.3. IRTF Document Stream

   The IRTF is chartered as an activity of the IAB. With the approval
   of the IAB, the IRTF may publish and update a process for publication
   of its own, non-IETF Standards-Track, documents.

The review and approval process for documents in the IRTF stream is described in

o IRTF Research Group RFCs [RFC5743].

5.1.4. Independent Submission Stream

The RFC Series has always served a broader Internet technical community than the IETF. The "Independent Submission" stream is defined to provide review and (possible) approval of documents that are outside the scope of the streams identified above.

Generally speaking, approval of documents in this stream falls under the purview of the RFC Editor, and the RFC Editor seeks input to its review from the IESG.

The process for reviewing and approving documents in the Independent Submission stream is defined by

o Independent Submissions to the RFC Editor [RFC4846],

o The IESG and RFC Editor Documents: Procedures [RFC3932].

5.2. RFC Technical Publication Requirements

The Internet engineering and research community has not only grown, it has become more diverse, and sometimes more demanding. The IETF, as a standards-developing organization, has publication requirements that extend beyond those of an academic journal. The IAB does not have the same interdependence with IANA assignments as the IETF stream does. Therefore, there is the need to both codify the publishing requirements of each stream, and endeavor to harmonize them to the extent that is reasonable.

Therefore, it is expected that the community of effort behind each document stream will outline their technical publication requirements.

As part of the RFC Editor oversight, the IAB must agree that the requirements are consistent with and implementable as part of the RFC Editor activity.

5.2.1. IETF Documents

The requirements for this stream are defined in [RFC4714].

5.2.2. IAB Documents

   Although they were developed for the IETF standards process, the IAB
   has identified applicable requirements in [RFC4714] for its stream.
   In addition, procedures related to IPR for the IAB stream are
   captured in [RFC5745].

   If the IAB elects to define other requirements, they should deviate
   minimally from those (in an effort to keep the collective technical
   publication requirements reasonably managed by one technical
   publisher).

5.2.3. IRTF Documents

   The IRTF has identified applicable requirements in [RFC5743] for its
   stream.

   If the IRTF elects to define other requirements, they should deviate
   minimally from those (in an effort to keep the collective technical
   publication requirements reasonably managed by one technical
   publisher).

5.2.4. Independent Submissions

   Although they were developed for the IETF standards process, the RFC
   Editor has identified applicable requirements in [RFC4714] for the
   independent submissions stream. In addition, procedures related to
   IPR for the independent submissions stream are captured in [RFC5744].

   If the RFC Editor elects to define other requirements, they should
   deviate minimally from those (in an effort to keep the collective
   technical publication requirements reasonably managed by one
   technical publisher).

6. Security Considerations

   The processes for the publication of documents must prevent the
   introduction of unapproved changes. Since the RFC Editor maintains
   the index of publications, sufficient security must be in place to
   prevent these published documents from being changed by external
   parties. The archive of RFC documents, any source documents needed
   to recreate the RFC documents, and any associated original documents
   (such as lists of errata, tools, and, for some early items, non-
   machine readable originals) need to be secured against failure of the
   storage medium and other similar disasters.

7. Changes Since RFC4844

   Sections 3.3, 3.4, and 4 have been updated to align with the
   restructuring of the IETF Administrative Support Activity (IASA).
   Under the new structure, the IETF LLC performs the tasks that were
   previously assigned to the IETF Administrative Oversight Committee
   (IAOC) under the old structure.

   Many references were updated to point to the most recent documents.

   Minor editorial changes were made to reflect 10 years of using the
   framework provided in RFC 4884. For example, RFC 4844 said, "...
   this document sets out a revised framework ...", and it is now more
   appropriate to say, "... this document sets out the framework ...".

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Appendix A. A Retrospective of IAB Charters and RFC Editor

   With this document, the IAB's role with respect to the RFC Series and
   the RFC Editor is being adjusted to work more directly with the RFC
   Editor and provide oversight to ensure the RFC Series mission
   principles and communities' input are addressed appropriately.

   This section provides an overview of the role of the IAB with respect
   to the RFC Editor as it has been presented in IAB Charter RFCs dating
   back to 1992. The point of this section is that the IAB's role has
   historically been substantive -- whether it is supposed to be
   directly responsible for the RFC Series' editorial management (circa
   1992, Appendix A.1), or appointment of the RFC Editor organization
   and approval of general policy (circa 2000, Appendix A.3).

A.1. 1992

   [RFC1358] says:

   [The IAB's] responsibilities shall include:
   [...]
      (2) The editorial management and publication of the Request for
           Comments (RFC) document series, which constitutes the
           archival publication series for Internet Standards and
           related contributions by the Internet research and
           engineering community.

A.2. 1994

   [RFC1601] says:

   [The IAB's] responsibilities under this charter include:

   (d) RFC Series and IANA

      The IAB is responsible for editorial management and publication of
      the Request for Comments (RFC) document series, and for
      administration of the various Internet assigned numbers.

   which it elaborates as

    2.4 RFC Series and Assigned Numbers

      The RFC Series constitutes the archival publication channel for
      Internet Standards and for other contributions by the Internet
      research and engineering community. The IAB shall select an RFC
      Editor, who shall be responsible for the editorial management and
      publication of the RFC Series.

A.3. 2000

The most recent IAB Charter [RFC2850] says:

(d) RFC Series and IANA

The RFC Editor executes editorial management and publication of the
IETF "Request for Comment" (RFC) document series, which is the
permanent document repository of the IETF. The RFC Series
constitutes the archival publication channel for Internet Standards
and for other contributions by the Internet research and engineering
community. RFCs are available free of charge to anyone via the
Internet. The IAB must approve the appointment of an organization to
act as RFC Editor and the general policy followed by the RFC Editor.

Appendix B. IAB Members at the Time of Approval

{{ RFC Editor: Fill in the current membership. }}

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