

mtgvenue
Internet-Draft
Intended status: Best Current Practice
Expires: July 2, 2017

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IETF Plenary Meeting Venue Selection Process
draft-ietf-mtgvenue-iaoc-venue-selection-process-04

Abstract

The IAOC has responsibility for arranging IETF plenary meeting Venue selection and operation. This document details the IETF's Meeting Venue Selection Process from the perspective of its goals, criteria and thought processes. It points to additional process documents on the IAOC Web Site that go into further detail and are subject to change with experience.

Status of This Memo

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1. Introduction

The IAOC has responsibility for arranging IETF plenary meeting venue selection and operation. This document describes the IETF Meeting Venue Selection Process from the perspective of goals, criteria and thought processes. It describes the objectives and principles behind the Venue selection process. It also discusses the actual selection process to one level of detail, and points to working documents used in execution.

1.1. Background

Following IETF 94 and at IETF 95 there was a discussion on the IETF list of the selection process and criteria for IETF meetings. In response to that discussion, the IAOC and the IAOC Meetings Committee took it upon themselves to more publicly document its process and refine it, based on input from IETF Participants.

1.2. Requirements Language

Requirements called out in this document are identified by the degree of requirement. The labels that are used are:

Mandatory:

If this requirement cannot be met, a location under consideration is unacceptable. We walk away.

Important:

Does not qualify as Mandatory, but is still highly significant. It can be traded against other Important items, such that a Venue that meets more of these criteria is on the whole more preferable than another that meets less of these criteria. Requirements classed as Important can also be balanced across Venue selections for multiple meetings.

Desired:

We would very much like to meet this requirement, but the failure to meet it will not disqualify a Venue.

2. Venue Selection Objectives

2.1. Core Values

Some IETF values pervade the selection process. These often are applicable to multiple requirements listed in this document. They are not limited to the following, but at minimum include:

Why do we meet?

We meet to pursue the IETF's mission [[RFC3935](#)], partly by advancing the development of Internet-Drafts and RFCs. We also seek to facilitate attendee participation in multiple topics and to enable cross-pollination of ideas and technologies.

Inclusiveness:

We would like to facilitate the onsite or remote participation of anyone who wants to be involved.

Every country has limits on who it will permit within its borders. However the IETF seeks to:

1. Minimize situations in which onerous entry regulations prevent participants from attending meetings, or failing that to distribute meeting locations such that onerous entry regulations are not always experienced by the same attendees
2. Avoid meeting in countries with laws that effectively exclude people on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, or gender identity

Where do we meet?

We meet in different locations globally, in order to spread the difficulty and cost of travel among active participants, balancing travel time and expense across the regions in which IETF participants are based.

Internet Access:

As an organization, we write specifications for the Internet, and we use it heavily. Meeting attendees need unfiltered access to the general Internet and our corporate networks, which are usually reached using encrypted VPNs from the meeting Facility and Hotels, including overflow hotels. We also need open network access available at high enough data rates, at the meeting Facility, to support our work, including the support of remote participation.

[\[MeetingNet\]](#)

Focus:

We meet to have focused technical discussions. These are not limited to scheduled breakout sessions, although of course those are important. They also happen over meals or drinks -- including a specific type of non-session that we call a "Bar BOF" -- or in side meetings. Environments that are noisy or distracting prevent that or reduce its effectiveness, and are therefore less desirable as a meeting Facility.

Economics:

Meeting attendees participate as individuals. While many are underwritten by employers or sponsors, many are self-funded. In order to reduce participation costs and travel effort, we therefore seek locations that provide convenient budget alternatives for food and lodging, and which minimize travel segments from major airports to the Venue. Within reason, budget should not be a barrier to accommodation.

Least Astonishment:

Regular participants should not be surprised by meeting Venue selections, particularly when it comes to locales. It should be possible for the community to engage early to express its views on prospective selections, so that the community, IAOC, and IAD can exchange views as to appropriateness long before a venue contract is considered.

2.2. Venue Selection Non-Objectives

IETF meeting Venues are not selected or declined with the explicit purposes of:

Politics:

Endorsing or condemning particular countries, political paradigms, laws, regulations, or policies.

Maximal attendance:

Because the IETF garners a significant portion of its revenue from IETF meeting fees, there is considerable incentive for decision-makers to prefer a Venue that will attract more attendees. It is important to resist this temptation: a larger meeting in which key contributors could not make it is not a better meeting; neither is one with a lot of "tourists".

Tourism:

Variety in site-seeing experiences.

3. Venue Selection Criteria

A number of criteria are considered during the site selection process. The following list is not in any particular order, but includes the major considerations.

The selection of a Venue always requires trade-offs. There are no perfect venues. For example, a site might not have a single hotel that can accommodate a significant number of the attendees of a typical IETF. That doesn't disqualify it, but it might reduce its desirability in the presence of an alternative that does provide that single hotel.

Some evaluation criteria are subjective. For this reason, the IAOC and Meetings Committee will specifically review, and affirm to their satisfaction, that all "Mandatory" labeled criteria are satisfied by a particular Venue, as part of the process defined below in [Section 5](#).

Three terms describe the places for which the IETF contracts services:

Venue:

This is an umbrella term for the city, meeting resources and guest room resources.

Facility:

These contain meeting rooms and associated resources, and possibly also contain hotel rooms.

IETF Hotels:

One or more hotels, in close proximity to the Facility, where the IETF guest room allocations are negotiated and IETF SSIDs are in use.

Headquarters Hotel:

The hotel designated as primary for the IETF meeting. It include IETF SSIDs for networking, might be adjoining -- or even contain -- the meeting Facility -- and typically has the bulk of the hotel room allocations.

3.1. Venue City Criteria

These concern basic aspects of a candidate city:

Criteria	Required
Consultation with the IETF Community has not produced concerns sufficient to disqualify the Venue.	"Mandatory"
Travel to the Venue is acceptable based on cost, time, and burden for participants traveling from multiple regions. It is anticipated that the burden borne will be generally shared over the course of multiple years.	"Mandatory"
The Venue is assessed as favorable for obtaining a host and sponsors. That is, the Meeting is in a location and at a price that it is possible and probable to find a host and sponsors.	"Mandatory"
It is possible to enter into a multi-event contract with the Venue to optimize meeting and attendee benefits, i.e., reduce administrative costs and reduce direct attendee costs, will be considered a positive factor. Such a contract can be considered after at least one IETF meeting has been held at the Venue.	"Desired"
Travel barriers to entry, e.g., visa requirements that can limit participation, are acceptable.	"Mandatory"
Economic, safety, and health risks associated with this Venue are acceptable.	"Mandatory"
Available travel issue assessments -- such as < https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country.htm > -- have been pointed out the IETF community. [[Editor's Note: This mostly concerns assessing the problems getting visa's and making the assessment 3 years in advance. What can we do that is meaningful? Also, are there better citations to include? /d]]	"Mandatory"

3.2. Basic Venue Criteria

The IETF operates as an international organisational and adjusts to local requirements. Facilities selected for IETF Meetings conform with local health, safety and accessibility laws and regulations. A useful discussion of related considerations in evaluating this

criterion is at: <<http://www.sigaccess.org/welcome-to-sigaccess/resources/accessible-conference-guide/>>

*** Editor's Note ***

In the spirit of the 'international' focus, we need a comprehensive document that is similar to the one cited, but without a national focus. The current reference is US-specific. /d

In addition:

Criteria	Required
The Facility is adequate in size and layout to accommodate the meeting and foster participant interaction.	"Mandatory"
The cost of guest rooms, meeting space, meeting food and beverage is affordable, within the norms of business travel.	"Mandatory"
The economics of the Venue allow the meeting to be net cash positive.	"Mandatory"
The Facility permits holding an IETF meeting under "One Roof". That is, qualified meeting space and guest rooms are available in the same facility.	"Desired"
The Facility permits easy wheelchair access.	"Mandatory"
The Facility is accessible by people with disabilities.	"Important"

3.3. Technical Services and Operations Criteria

Criteria	Required
The Facility's support technologies and services -- network, audio-video, etc. -- are sufficient for the anticipated activities at the meeting, or the Facility is willing to add such infrastructure or these support technologies and services might be provided by a third party, all at no -- or at an acceptable -- cost to the IETF.	"Mandatory"
The Facility directly provides, or permits and facilitates, the delivery of a high performance, robust, unfiltered and unmodified IETF Network.	"Mandatory"
The IETF Hotel(s) directly provide, or else permit and facilitate, the delivery of a high performance, robust, unfiltered and unmodified Internet service for the public areas and guest rooms; this service is typically included in the cost of the room.	"Mandatory"
The overflow hotels provide reasonable, reliable, unfiltered Internet service for the public areas and guest rooms; this service is included in the cost of the room.	"Desired"

3.4. Lodging Criteria

Criteria	Required
The IETF Hotel(s) are within close proximity to each other and the Facility.	"Mandatory"
The guest rooms at the IETF Hotel(s) are sufficient in number to house 1/3 or more of projected meeting attendees.	"Mandatory"
Overflow Hotels can be placed under contract, within convenient travel time of the Facility and at a variety of guest room rates.	"Mandatory"
The Venue environs include budget hotels within convenient travel time, cost, and effort.	"Mandatory"
The IETF Hotel(s) permit easy wheelchair access.	"Mandatory"
The IETF Hotel(s) are accessible by people with disabilities.	"Important"
The IETF Headquarters Hotel has a space for use as a lounge, conducive to planned and accidental meetings and chatting, as well as working online. There are tables with seating, convenient for small meetings with laptops. The can be at an open bar or casual restaurant. Preferably the lounge area is on the path between the meeting rooms and the hotel entrance, and is available all day and night.	"Important"

3.5. Food and Beverage Criteria

Criteria	Required
The Venue environs, which includes both onsite, as well as areas within a reasonable walking distance or conveniently accessible by a short taxi, bus, or subway ride, have convenient and inexpensive choices for meals that can accommodate a wide range of dietary requirements.	"Mandatory"
The Venue environs include grocery shopping that will accommodate a wide range of dietary requirements, within a reasonable walking distance, or conveniently accessible by a short taxi, bus, or subway ride, from the Facility and IETF Hotels.	"Important"
A range of attendee's health-related and religion-related dietary requirements can be satisfied with robust and flexible onsite service or through access to an adequate grocery.	"Mandatory"

4. Venue Selection Roles

The formal structure of IETF administrative support functions is documented in [BCP 101](#) [[RFC4071](#)], [[RFC4371](#)], [[RFC7691](#)]. The reader is expected to be familiar with the entities and roles defined by that document, in particular for the IASA, ISOC, IAOC and IAD. This section covers the meeting selection related roles of these and other parties that participate in the process. Note that roles beyond meeting selection, e.g., actually running and reporting on meetings, are outside the scope of this document.

4.1. IETF Participants

While perhaps obvious, it is important to note that IETF meetings serve all those who contribute to the work of the IETF. This includes those who attend meetings in person, from newcomer to frequent attendee, to those who participate remotely, as well as those who do not attend but contribute to new RFCs. Potential new contributors are also considered in the process.

Participants have a responsibility to express their views about venues early and often, by responding to surveys or other solicitations from the IAD or IAOC, and by initiating fresh input as the Participant becomes aware of changes in venues that have been reviews. This permits those responsible for venue selection to be

made aware of concerns relating to particular locations well in advance of having entered into contract discussions.

IETF consensus, with respect to this meeting Venue selection process is judged via standard IETF process and not by any other means, e.g., surveys. Surveys are used to gather information related to meeting venues, but not to measure consensus or to be reported as consensus.

[4.2.](#) IESG and IETF Chair

The Internet Engineering Steering Group (IESG) comprises the IETF Area Directors and the IETF Chair. Along with the IAB, the IESG is responsible for the management of the IETF, and is the standards approval board for the IETF, as described in [BCP9](#) [[RFC2026](#)]. This means that the IESG sets high level policies related to, among other things, meeting venues. The IETF Chair, among other things, relays these IESG-determined policies to the IAOC. The IETF Chair is also a member of the IAOC.

[4.3.](#) The Internet Society

With respect to IETF meetings, the Internet Society (ISOC):

- o Executes all Venue contracts on behalf of the IETF at the request of the IAOC
- o Solicits meeting sponsorships
- o Collects all meeting-related revenues, including registration fees, sponsorships, hotel commissions, and other miscellaneous revenues

ISOC also provides accounting services, such as invoicing and monthly financial statements.

[4.4.](#) IETF Administrative Oversight Committee

The IETF Administrative Oversight Committee (IAOC) has the responsibility to oversee and select IETF meeting venues. It instructs the IAD to work with the Internet Society to write the relevant contracts. It approves the IETF meetings calendar. In cooperation with the IAD, the IAOC takes necessary actions to ensure that it is aware of participant concerns about particular venues as early in the process as is feasible.

4.5. IETF Administrative Support Activity

The IETF Administrative Support Activity (IASA) supports the meeting selection process. This includes identifying, qualifying and reporting on potential meeting sites, as well as supporting meeting Venue contract negotiation. The IETF Secretariat is part of the IASA under the management of the IAD. The IAD takes appropriate actions to solicit community input regarding both retrospective and prospective feedback from participants.

4.6. IETF Administrative Director

The IETF Administrative Director (IAD) coordinates and supports the activities of the IETF Secretariat, the IAOC Meetings Committee and the IAOC to ensure the timely execution of the meeting process. This includes participating in the IAOC Meeting Subcommittee and ensuring its efforts are documented, leading Venue contract negotiation, and coordinating contract execution with ISOC. The meetings budget is managed by the IAD.

4.7. IAOC Meeting Committee

The fundamental purpose of the Meetings Committee is to participate in the Venue selection process, and to formulate recommendations to the IAOC regarding meeting sites. It also tracks the meetings sponsorship program, recommends extraordinary meeting-related expenses, and recommends the IETF meetings calendar to the IAOC. The charter of the committee is at: <<https://iaoc.ietf.org/committees.html#meetings>>.

Membership in the Meetings Committee is at the discretion of the IAOC; it includes an IAOC appointed chair, the IETF Administrative Director (IAD), IAOC members, representatives from the Secretariat, and interested members of the community.

5. Venue Selection Steps

The following is a guideline sequence for identifying and contracting a Venue.

5.1. Identification

Four years out, a process identifies cities that might be candidates for meetings:

- a. The IAOC selects regions and dates for meetings.

- b. A list of target cities per region is provided to the Secretariat, with host preferences, if known.
- c. Potential venues in preferred cities are identified and receive preliminary investigation, including reviews of Official Advisory Sources, consultation with specialty travel services, frequent travelers and local contacts to identify possible barriers to holding a successful meeting in the target cities.
- d. Investigated cities and findings are provided by the Secretariat to the Meetings Committee for further review. Meetings Committee makes a recommendation to the IAOC of investigated/target cities to consider further as well as issues identified and the results of research conducted.

5.2. Consultation

Preliminary question:

- a. The IAOC asks the community whether there are any barriers to holding a successful meeting in any of the target cities in the set.
- b. Community responses are reviewed and concerns investigated by the Meetings Committee. The results together with recommendations for whether each city should be considered as a potential meeting location is provided to the IAOC.
- c. The IAOC identifies which cities are to be considered as a potential meeting location.
- d. On a public web page, the IAOC lists all candidate cities, when community input was solicited, and if a city is to be considered as a potential meeting location.
- e. The Meetings Committee pursues potential meeting locations based on the posted list of cities that have been identified as a potential meeting locations.

5.3. Qualification

Visit:

- a. Secretariat assesses "vetted" target cities to determine availability and conformance to criteria.
- b. Meetings Committee approves potential cities for site qualification visit.

- c. Site qualification visits are arranged by Secretariat and preliminary negotiations are undertaken with selected potential sites.
- d. Site qualification visit is conducted using the checklist from <https://iaoc.ietf.org/meetings-committee/venue-selection.html>; the site visit team prepares a site report and discusses it with the Meetings Committee.

5.4. Negotiation

2.75 - 3 years out, initiate contract negotiations:

- a. The Meetings Committee reviews the Venue options based on Venue selection criteria and recommends a Venue to the IAOC. Only options that meet all Mandatory labeled criteria might be recommended.
- b. IAOC selects a Venue for contracting as well as a back-up contracting Venue, if available.
- c. Secretariat negotiates with selected Venue. IAD reviews contract and requests IAOC and ISOC approval of contract and authority for Secretariat to execute contract on ISOC's behalf.
- d. Contracts are executed.

5.5. Final Check

~3 Months prior to the Meeting, the site is checked for continued availability and conformance to expectations.

- a. Secretariat reviews current status of the contracted meeting location to confirm there is no change in the location status and to identify possible new barriers to holding a successful meeting in the contracted city and provides findings to the IAOC.
- b. IAOC considers the information provided and evaluates the risk - if significant risk is identified, the Contingency Planning Flow Chart (<https://iaoc.ietf.org/meetings-committee/venue-selection.html>) is followed, if current risk is not significant, the situation is monitored through the meeting to ensure there is no significant change.

6. IANA Considerations

This memo asks the IANA for no new parameters.

7. Security Considerations

This note proposes no protocols, and therefore no new protocol insecurities.

8. Privacy Considerations

This note reveals no personally identifying information apart from its authorship.

9. Acknowledgements

This document was originally assembled and edited by Fred Baker. Additional commentary came from Jari Arkko, Scott Bradner, Alissa Cooper, Eliot Lear, and other participants in the MtgVenue working group.

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10.1. Normative References

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Appendix A. Change Log

- 2016-01-12: Initial version
- 2016-01-21: Update to reflect <https://iaoc.ietf.org/documents/VenueSelectionCriteriaJan2016.pdf> and <https://iaoc.ietf.org/documents/VenueSelectionProcess11Jan16.pdf>, accessed from <https://iaoc.ietf.org/private/privatemeetings.html>.
- 2016-02-23: Reorganize and capture IAOC Meetings Committee discussions.
- 2016-03-03: Final from Design Team.
- 2016-03-17: First update incorporating mtgvenue@ietf.org comments
- 2016-05-20 Updated in accordance with editing by Laura Nugent, Dave Crocker, Lou Berger, Fred Baker, and others.
- posting as working group draft August 2, 2016
- Reorganized per Alissa Cooper outline Work in progress. In addition, contributors were re-organized to be authors.
- 2016-10-28 Editor changeover. Further alignment with guidance by Alissa Cooper, Andrew Sullivan and the mtgvenue working group. Many various changes.
- 2016-11-16 Extensive editorial, format and polishing pass. A few substance changes, including food section.
- 2016-11-30 Additions based on working group meeting and off-list discussions; more editorial and format hacking.
- 2016-12-24 Various clarifying bits to provide some glue between the high-level 'objectives' and the detailed criteria and roles, per suggestions fromm Lear. Editorial changes, per 12/27 response to Cooper. Refined uses of 'facility' and 'venue', per 12/4 response

to Carpenter; also added Carpenter 'lounge' text. Moved community consultation to a separate criterion; removed 'acceptable to the IETF Community from the 2 entries that had it. Removed Post-Seroul Revisions and Text Carried Forward.

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