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Variances to Provisions of Best Current Practices
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Abstract

From time to time, there are unforeseen circumstances which make following the requirements of a Best Current Practice (BCP) untenable, or where the procedures described in the BCP gives no guidance. This document defines a process for the IETF to grant a variance to any IETF process for a single use or of very short duration.

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Internet-Draft

Variances

March 2020

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[1.](#) Introduction

The Best Current Practice (BCP) document series, among other things, defines the operations, policies, and processes of the IETF. From time to time, there are unforeseen circumstances which make following the requirements of a BCP untenable, or where the procedures described in the BCP gives no guidance, yet the BCP gives no latitude for anyone in IETF leadership to simply call for a variance to the procedure. [RFC 2026 section 9](#) [[RFC2026](#)] describes a variance procedure for the IETF Standards Process, but the result of the variance is a published BCP, which is often inappropriate for a one-off or short-lived variance.

This document defines a process for the IETF to grant a variance to any IETF process in cases where publishing an RFC in the BCP series is inappropriate because the variance is for a single use or of very short duration. This variance procedure is modeled on the variance procedure described in [RFC 2026 section 9](#) [[RFC2026](#)].

[2.](#) The Variance Procedure

Upon the recommendation of an IETF Working Group or an ad hoc committee of IETF participants, the IESG may craft a variance to any BCP requirement via the following procedure. In approving a variance, the IESG must first determine that the likely benefits to the Internet community are likely to outweigh any costs to the Internet community that result from noncompliance with the requirements of the BCP in question. In exercising this discretion, the IESG shall at least consider (a) the merit of waving the provision of the BCP in question, (b) the possibility of achieving the goals of the BCP provision without granting a variance, (c) alternatives to the granting of a variance, (d) the collateral and precedential effects of granting a variance, and (e) the IESG's ability to craft a variance that is as narrow as possible. In

determining whether to approve a variance, the IESG has discretion to limit the scope of the variance to particular parts of the BCP in question and to impose such additional restrictions or limitations as it determines appropriate to protect the interests of the Internet community.

The proposed variance must detail the problem perceived, explain the precise provision of the BCP in question which is causing the need for a variance, and the results of the IESG's considerations including consideration of points (a) through (d) in the previous paragraph. The proposed variance shall be issued as an Internet Draft. The IESG shall then issue an extended Last-Call, of no less than 4 weeks, to allow for community comment upon the proposal.

In a timely fashion after the expiration of the Last-Call period, the IESG shall make its final determination of whether or not to approve the proposed variance, and shall notify the IETF of its decision via electronic mail to the IETF Announce mailing list. If the variance is approved, it shall be published on the IETF web site in a place designated for such variances.

[3.](#) Exclusions

This variance procedure is for use when a one-time waving of some provision of the BCP in question is felt to be required. In no event shall the waiver remain in place for longer than one year. Permanent changes to the BCP in question shall be accomplished through the normal BCP process.

No use of this procedure may lower any delays for community notifications, nor exempt any procedure from the requirements of openness, fairness, or consensus, nor from the need to keep proper records of the meetings and mailing list discussions.

[4.](#) References

[4.1.](#) Normative References

- [RFC2026] Bradner, S., "The Internet Standards Process -- Revision 3", [BCP 9](#), [RFC 2026](#), DOI 10.17487/RFC2026, October 1996, <<https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc2026>>.

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