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RFC Editor Model (Version 3)
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Abstract

This document describes Version 3 of the RFC Editor model. As specified here, the model divides the responsibilities for the RFC Series into two high-level functions: policy definition governing the Series as a whole, and policy implementation through publication of documents in the Series. The policy definition function is the responsibility of the RFC Series Working Group (RSWG), which produces policy proposals that are subject to approval by the RFC Series Approval Board (RSAB). The policy implementation function is primarily the responsibility of the RFC Production Center (RPC), under the ultimate authority of the IETF Administration Limited Liability Company (LLC).

This document reflects experience gained with version 1 of the RFC Editor Model as specified in [RFC 5620](#) and with version 2 as specified in [RFC 6635](#) and [RFC 8728](#).

This document obsoletes [RFC 8728](#).

Status of This Memo

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[1.](#) Introduction

NOTE: This document is a work in progress. Although it is intended to describe consensus forged in the RFCED-Future Program, many aspects are not yet settled; as a result, this document contains proposals and conjectures that do not yet have consensus in the Program. Where possible, open issues are identified herein to foster discussion.

Documents in the Request for Comments (RFC) series have been continually published since 1969 [[RFC8700](#)]. The RFC series is described in [[RFC8729](#)]. [RFC 8729](#) uses the term "RFC Editor function" or "RFC Editor" to identify the collective set of responsibilities for publishing documents in the RFC series.

The processes and organizational models for publication of RFCs have changed significantly over the years. Most recently, in 2009 [[RFC5620](#)] defined the RFC Editor Model (Version 1) and in 2012 [[RFC6635](#)] defined the RFC Editor Model (Version 2), since modified slightly in 2020 by [[RFC8728](#)].

In order to provide a sustainable basis for continued publication of the RFC series, this document describes Version 3 of the RFC Editor model, which divides the responsibilities for the RFC Series into two high-level functions: policy definition governing the Series as a whole, and policy implementation through publication of documents in the Series. The policy definition function is the responsibility of the RFC Series Working Group (RSWG), which produces policy proposals that are subject to approval by the RFC Series Approval Board (RSAB). The policy implementation function is primarily the responsibility of the RFC Production Center (RPC), under the ultimate authority of the IETF Administration Limited Liability Company (LLC) [[RFC8711](#)].

This document obsoletes [RFC 8728](#) by making a full update to the RFC Editor Model, changing the responsibilities of existing bodies and functions, and introducing new functions (see [Section 7](#) of this document for a summary of the changes from Version 2).

[2.](#) Overview of the Model

Version 2 of the RFC Editor Model [[RFC8728](#)] specified a structure consisting of the RFC Series Editor, the RFC Production Center, and the RFC Publisher, with oversight provided by the RFC Series Oversight Committee (RSOC) on behalf of the Internet Architecture Board (IAB).

Discussion within the RFCED-Future Program has led in the direction of a more consensus-oriented structure (similar in some respects to the structure of technical work within the IETF or IRTF) that retains roles for specialized expertise in document editing and publication.

The policy definition function is performed by the RFC Series Working Group (RSWG), which produces policy proposals that are subject to approval by the RFC Series Approval Board (RSAB). The RSWG is an open working group (as described below) that seeks input and participation from a wide range of persons who have an interest in the RFC Series. The RSAB consists of appointed members who represent the various RFC streams [[RFC8728](#)] as well as an expert in technical publishing.

The policy implementation function is performed by the RFC Production Center (RPC), under the ultimate authority of the IETF Administration Limited Liability Company (LLC).

3. Policy Definition Function

Policies governing the RFC series as a whole shall be defined in the open through proposals that are generated by and discussed within the RFC Series Working Group (RSWG) and then approved by the RFC Series Approval Board (RSAB).

Policies under the purview of the RSWG and RSAB might include but are not necessarily limited to document formats, processes for publication and dissemination of RFCs, and overall management of the RFC series.

3.1. Structure and Roles

3.1.1. RFC Series Working Group (RSWG)

The RFC Series Working Group (RSWG) shall formulate proposals regarding policies that govern the RFC series. The intent is that the RSWG operate in a way similar to working groups in the IETF and research groups in the IRTF. Therefore, all RSWG meetings shall be open to any participant, subject to intellectual property policies which must be consistent with those of the IETF as specified in [BCP 78](#) [[RFC5378](#)] and [BCP 79](#) [[RFC8179](#)]. When the RSWG is formed, all discussions shall take place on an open email discussion list. Subsequently, the RSWG may decide by rough consensus to use additional tooling or forms of communication (e.g., GitHub as specified in [[RFC8874](#)]) as long as they are consistent with [[RFC2418](#)].

All interested persons are welcome to participate in the RSWG (subject to anti-harassment policies as described below). This includes participants in the IETF and IRTF, IAB and IESG members, RFC authors, individuals who use RFCs in procurement decisions, and the like. The IETF LLC Board members, staff, and the Executive Director are invited to participate as community members in the RSWG to the extent permitted by any relevant IETF LLC policies. Members of the RSAB are also expected to participate actively.

The RSWG shall have two chairs, one appointed by the IESG and the other appointed by the IAB. Chairs shall serve for a term of two (2) years, with no term limits on renewal. The appointing bodies shall determine their own processes for making these appointments, such as provision for an open nominations period. Community members who have concerns about the performance of an RSWG chair should direct their feedback to the relevant appointing body.

NOTE: This section is intended to address ISSUE #14 [[1](#)], ISSUE #41 [[2](#)], and ISSUE #44 [[3](#)].

3.1.2. RFC Series Approval Board (RSAB)

The RFC Series Approval Board (RSAB) shall act as the approving body for proposals generated within the RSWG. The sole function of RSAB is to review policy proposals generated by the RSWG; it shall have no independent authority to formulate policy on its own.

The voting members of the RSAB shall be as follows:

- o One delegate representing the IETF stream, appointed by the IESG
- o One delegate representing the IAB stream, appointed by the IAB
- o The IRTF Chair, representing the IRTF stream
- o The Independent Submissions Editor [[RFC8730](#)]
- o The RFC Series Editor/Advisor

Whenever a new stream is created [[RFC4844](#)], a voting member representing that stream shall also be added to the RSAB, either an appointed delegate or a direct representative in accordance with the document that creates the stream.

The RSAB shall choose a chair from among its members using a method to be determined by the RSAB. The RSAB is expected to operate via email, teleconferencing systems, and any necessary tooling.

The RSAB shall keep a public record of its proceedings, including minutes of all meetings and a record of all decisions.

The RSAB shall announce plans and agendas for their meetings on the RFC Editor website and by email to the RSWG at least a week before such meetings. The meetings shall be open for public attendance and the RSAB may consider allowing open participation. If the RSAB needs to discuss a confidential matter in Executive Session, that part of the meeting shall be private to the RSAB, but must be noted on the agenda, and must be documented in the minutes with as much detail as the confidentiality requirements permit.

NOTE: This section is intended to address ISSUE #9 [\[4\]](#), ISSUE #38 [\[5\]](#), ISSUE #50 [\[6\]](#), and ISSUE #53 [\[7\]](#).

[3.2.](#) Process

[3.2.1.](#) Intent

The intent is to provide an open forum by which policies related to the RFC series are defined and evolved. The general expectation is that all interested parties will participate in the RSWG, and that only under extreme circumstances should RSAB members need to hold "CONCERN" positions as described below.

Because policy issues can be difficult and contentious, RSWG participants and RSAB members are strongly encouraged to work together in a spirit of good faith and mutual understanding to achieve rough consensus (see [\[RFC7282\]](#)). In particular, RSWG members are encouraged to take RSAB concerns seriously, and RSAB members are encouraged to clearly express their concerns early in the process and to be responsive to the community. All parties are encouraged to respect the value of each stream and the long term health and viability of the RFC series.

This process is intended to be one of continuous consultation. RSAB members should consult with their constituent stakeholders (e.g., authors, editors, tool developers, and consumers of RFCs) on an ongoing basis, so that when the time comes to consider a proposal, there should be no surprises. Appointing bodies are expected to establish whatever processes they deem appropriate to facilitate this goal.

[3.2.2.](#) Specifics

The following process shall be used to formulate or modify processes related to the RFC series:

1. An individual participant in the RSWG generates a proposal in the form of an Internet-Draft.
2. If there is sufficient interest in the proposal, RSWG may adopt the proposal as a draft proposal of the RSWG, much the same way a working group of the IETF or IRTF would.
3. The RSWG shall then further develop the proposal. Members of the RSAB are expected to participate in discussion relating to such proposals so that they are fully aware of proposals early in the policy definition process and so that any issues or concerns that they have will be raised during the development of the proposals and will not be left until the RSAB review period.
4. At some point, if the RSWG chairs believe there may be rough consensus for the proposal to advance, they will issue a working group last call.
5. After a suitable period of time, the RSWG chairs will determine whether rough consensus for the proposal exists. If comments have been received and substantial changes have been made, it is expected that additional last calls may be necessary.
6. Once consensus is established in the RSWG, the RSAB shall issue a community call for comments as further described below. Should substantial comments be received, the RSWG will again consider those comments and make revisions as they see fit. At this same time, the RSAB will consider the proposal.
7. Should substantial changes be made, additional community calls for comment should be issued by the RSAB, and again comments considered by the RSWG.
8. Once all comments have been been addressed, the RSWG chairs will submit the proposal to the RSAB for its consideration.
9. Within a reasonable period of time, the RSAB will then poll on the proposal. Positions may be as follows: * "YES": the proposal should be approved * "CONCERN": the proposal raises substantial concerns that must be addressed. * "RECUSE": the person holding the position has a conflict of interest.

Anyone holding a "CONCERN" position must explain their concern to the community in detail. The explanation may or may not be actionable.

A CONCERN may be made for two reasons:

- o The proposal represents a serious problem for the group a particular member represents.
- o The member believes that the proposal would cause serious harm to the overall series, including harm to the long term health and viability of the series.

No CONCERN should ever come as a surprise to the RSWG.

1. If a CONCERN exists, discussion will take place within the RSWG. Again, all RSAB members are expected to participate.
2. A proposal without any CONCERN positions is approved. If substantial changes have been made in order to address CONCERN positions, an additional call for community input might be necessary.
3. If, after a suitable period of time, any CONCERN positions remain, a formal vote of the RSAB is taken. If a majority of RSAB members vote to approve, the proposal is approved. Otherwise, it is returned to the RSWG. In the case of a tie, the proposal is approved.
4. When a proposal is approved, a notification is sent to the community, and the document enters the queue for publication as an RFC.

ISSUE #22 [8]: In which stream [RFC8729] are these documents published? Is a new stream (e.g., the "Editorial Stream") needed?

3.2.3. Community Calls for Comment

When a community call for comment is made, the RSAB sends a notice containing:

- o A subject line beginning with 'Call for Comment:'
- o A clear, concise summary of the proposal
- o A URL for the proposal document
- o Any commentary or questions for the community that the RSAB deems necessary (using their usual decision-making procedures)
- o Clear instructions on how to provide public comments
- o A deadline for comments

Notices will always be sent to the rfc-interest mailing list. The RSAB and RSWG should also send notices to other communities that may be interested in or impacted by a proposal as they see fit, following policies for those fora as appropriate. Notices are also to be made available and archived on the rfc-editor.org web site, and other communication channels can be established for notices (e.g., using an RSS feed, social media).

A comment period will not last less than two weeks. Comments will be publicly archived on the rfc-editor.org web site.

NOTE: This section is intended to address ISSUE #67 [[9](#)]

[3.2.4.](#) Appeals

Appeals of RSWG decisions shall be made to the RSAB and should be made within thirty (30) days of public notice of the relevant RSWG decision. The RSAB shall decide whether a process failure occurred and what if any corrective action should take place.

Appeals of RSAB decisions shall be made to an entity yet to be determined and should be made within thirty (30) days of public notice of the relevant RSAB decision (typically, when minutes are posted). The appeals body shall decide whether a process failure occurred and what if any corrective action should take place.

ISSUE #16 [[10](#)]: Which body provides oversight and appeals for the RSAB? Discussions in the RFCED-Future Program have ruled out the ISOC Board of Trustees. One possibility still under discussion is the IAB.

[3.2.5.](#) Anti-Harassment Policy

The IETF anti-harassment policy [[11](#)] also applies to the RSWG and RSAB, which strive to create and maintain an environment in which people of many different backgrounds are treated with dignity, decency, and respect. Participants are expected to behave according to professional standards and demonstrate appropriate workplace behavior. See also [[RFC7154](#)], [[RFC7776](#)], and [[RFC8716](#)].

[4.](#) RFC Series Editor/Advisor (RSEA)

NOTE: Discussion continues within the RFCED-Future Program regarding the roles and responsibilities of an expert in technical publication processes. To retain flexibility (e.g., as to whether this individual plays more of an advisory role or more of a singular leadership role), this document temporarily refers to the individual as the "RFC Series Editor/Advisor" ("RSEA"), see also ISSUE #24 [[12](#)].

The RFC Series Editor/Advisor (RSEA) shall be a senior professional with deep knowledge of technical publishing.

The primary responsibilities of the RSEA are as follows:

- o Provide expert advice regarding policy proposals within the RSWG.
- o Serve as a voting member on the RSAB.
- o If requested, provide expert advice to the RPC and IETF LLC.

Matters on which the RSEA might be consulted could include proposed changes to the RFC style guide [[RFC7322](#)], RFC formatting in general, web presence, copyright matters, archiving policy, and dissemination and cataloging of RFCs.

[4.1.](#) RSEA Selection

The RSEA will be selected by a committee formed by the Executive Director of the IETF LLC, taking into account the role definition [[13](#)] and any detailed job description defined by the relevant parties (e.g., the Executive Director, other RSAB members, or RSWG chairs). The search committee may ask others to take part in the selection process in confidence. The initial length of service shall be for one year, but then further extensions will be for three to five years.

[4.2.](#) RSEA Performance Evaluation

Periodically, the Executive Director will send out to the community a call for input on the performance of the RSEA. The evaluation will be based on criteria specified in the role definition. Criteria could include matters such as the following:

- o Was the RSEA an active participant in RSWG/RSAB discussions and meetings?
- o Did the RSEA provide useful advice to the RSWG and RPC?
- o Did the RSEA exercise good judgment in RSAB decision making?
- o Was the RSEA effective in advising the community on policy direction?

The Executive Director will review the feedback, consulting with stream manager representatives, and then produce a recommendation to the IETF LLC Board. The LLC will then make a decision, taking into account the Executive Director's recommendation.

Whether the RSEA role is structured as a contractual or employee relationship is a matter for the IETF LLC and its Executive Director to determine.

5. Policy Implementation Function

5.1. Roles and Processes

Publication of RFCs shall be continue to be handled by the RFC Production Center (RPC) function in accordance with high-level policies currently in force or yet to be defined following the processes specified in the foregoing sections of this document.

This document does not specify the exact relationship between the IETF LLC and the RPC function; for example, the RPC function could be provided by a separate corporate entity under contract to the IETF LLC, it could be performed by employees of the IETF LLC, or the IETF LLC could work with independent contractors for some or all aspects of the RPC function. The exact relationship is a matter for the IETF LLC and its Executive Director to determine.

The IETF LLC has authority over negotiating performance targets for the RPC and also has responsibility for ensuring that those targets are adhered to. The IETF LLC is empowered to appoint a manager or to convene a committee to complete these activities.

Community members who have concerns about the performance of the RPC can request that the IETF LLC look into the matter. Even if the IETF LLC opts to delegate this activity, concerns should be raised with the IETF LLC. The IETF LLC is ultimately responsible to the community via the mechanisms outlined in its charter.

5.2. Editorial and Publication Policies

Under and consistent with the high-level policies defined for the RFC Series in general or particular streams, the RPC shall define more particular policies regarding matters related to the editorial preparation and final publication and dissemination of RFCs. Examples include:

- o Maintenance of a styleguide that defines editorial standards to which RFCs must adhere (see [[RFC7322](#)] and related updates).
- o Policies regarding the file formats that are accepted as input to the editing and publication process.
- o Policies regarding the final structure and layout of published documents; in the context of the XML vocabulary ([[RFC7991](#)]), such

policies could include matters such as the exact XML elements and attributes used to capture the semantic content of RFCs.

5.3. Resolution of Disagreements between Authors and the RPC

NOTE: This section is intended to address ISSUE #59 [[14](#)] and parts of ISSUE #6: Streams have content control [[15](#)].

During the process of editorial preparation and publication, disagreements can arise between the authors of an RFC-to-be and the RPC. Where an existing policy clearly applies, typically such disagreements are handled in a straightforward manner through direct consultation between the authors and the RPC, sometimes in collaboration with other individuals such as a document shepherd, IETF working group chair, IRSG research group chair, or IETF Area Director.

However, if it is unclear whether an existing policy applies, or if the interpretation of an existing policy is unclear, the parties may need to consult with additional individuals or bodies (e.g., RSAB, IESG, IRSG, or stream manager) to help achieve a resolution. The following points are intended to provide more particular guidance.

- o If there is a conflict with a policy for a particular stream, the RPC should consult with the relevant stream manager to help achieve a resolution, if needed also conferring with a per-stream body such as the IESG or IRSG.
- o If there is a conflict with a cross-stream policy, the RPC should consult with the RSAB to achieve a resolution.
- o If the disagreement raises a new issue that is not covered by an existing policy or that cannot be resolved through consultation between the RPC and other relevant individuals and bodies as described above), the issue should be brought to the RSWG in order to formulate a new policy. However, in the interest of time the disagreement may be resolved as the parties best see fit while the RSWG formulates a more general policy.

5.4. Administrative Implementation

The exact implementation of the administrative and contractual activities described here are a responsibility of the IETF LLC.

5.4.1. Vendor Selection for the RFC Production Center

Vendor selection is done in cooperation with the streams and under the final authority of the IETF LLC.

The IETF LLC develops the work definition (the Statement of Work) for the RPC and manages the vendor selection process. The work definition is created within the IETF LLC budget and takes into account the stream managers and community input.

The process to select and contract for an RFC Production Center and other RFC-related services, is as follows:

- o The IETF LLC establishes the contract process, including the steps necessary to issue an RFP when necessary, the timing, and the contracting procedures.
- o The IETF LLC establishes the Selection Committee, which will consist of the IETF LLC Executive Director and other members selected by the IETF LLC in consultation with the stream managers. The Committee shall select a chair from among its members.
- o The Selection Committee selects the vendor, subject to the successful negotiation of a contract approved by the IETF LLC. In the event that a contract cannot be reached, the matter shall be referred to the Selection Committee for further action.

5.4.2. Budget

The expenses discussed in this document are not new expenses. They have been and remain part of the IETF LLC budget.

The RFC Series portion of the IETF LLC budget shall include funding to support the RSE/A, RFC Production Center, and the Independent Stream.

The IETF LLC has the responsibility to approve the total RFC Editor budget (and the authority to deny it). All relevant parties must work within the IETF LLC budgetary process.

6. IANA Considerations

This document defines several functions within the overall RFC Editor structure, and it places the responsibility for coordination of registry value assignments with the RFC Production Center. The IETF LLC will facilitate the establishment of the relationship between the RFC Production Center and IANA.

This document does not create a new registry nor does it register any values in existing registries, and no IANA action is required.

7. Security Considerations

The same security considerations as those in [[RFC8729](#)] apply. 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, originals that are not machine readable) need to be secured against any kind of data storage failure.

The IETF LLC should take these security considerations into account during the implementation and enforcement of the RFC Editor component contracts.

8. Changes from Version 2 of the RFC Editor Model

8.1. RFC Series Editor

The RSWG and RSAB together provide a public process by which policies for the RFC series can be defined. It is expected that these bodies will therefore cover some of the responsibilities of the RFC Series Editor under Version 2.

8.2. RFC Series Oversight Committee (RSOC)

In practice, the relationships and lines of authority and responsibility between the IAB, RSOC, and RSE have proved unwieldy and somewhat opaque. To overcome some of these issues, this document dispenses with the RSOC.

9. IANA Considerations

This document has no actions for IANA.

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10.1. Informative References

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[10.2. URIs](#)

- [1] <https://github.com/intarchboard/program-rfcd-future/issues/14>
- [2] <https://github.com/intarchboard/program-rfcd-future/issues/41>
- [3] <https://github.com/intarchboard/program-rfcd-future/issues/44>
- [4] <https://github.com/intarchboard/program-rfcd-future/issues/9>
- [5] <https://github.com/intarchboard/program-rfcd-future/issues/38>
- [6] <https://github.com/intarchboard/program-rfcd-future/issues/50>
- [7] <https://github.com/intarchboard/program-rfcd-future/issues/53>
- [8] <https://github.com/intarchboard/program-rfcd-future/issues/22>
- [9] <https://github.com/intarchboard/program-rfcd-future/issues/67>

- [10] <https://github.com/intarchboard/program-rfced-future/issues/16>
- [11] <https://www.ietf.org/about/groups/iesg/statements/anti-harassment-policy/>
- [12] <https://github.com/intarchboard/program-rfced-future/issues/24>
- [13] <https://github.com/intarchboard/program-rfced-future/blob/master/Issue12-RSE-role.md>
- [14] <https://github.com/intarchboard/program-rfced-future/issues/59>
- [15] <https://github.com/intarchboard/program-rfced-future/issues/6>

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