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Guidelines and Registration Procedures for Interface Types draft-thaler-iftypes-reg-02

Abstract

The registration and use of interface types ("ifType" values) predated the use of IANA Considerations sections and YANG modules, and so confusion has arisen about the interface type allocation process. This document provides updated guidelines for the definition of new interface types, for consideration by those who are defining, registering, or evaluating those definitions.

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[1.](#) Introduction

The IANA IfType-MIB was originally defined in [[RFC1573](#)] as a separate MIB module together with the Interfaces Group MIB (IF-MIB) module. The IF-MIB module has since been updated and is currently specified in [[RFC2863](#)], but this latest IF-MIB RFC no longer contains the IANA IfType-MIB. Instead, the IANA IfType-MIB is now maintained as a separate module. Similarly, [[RFC7224](#)] created an initial IANA Interface Type YANG Module, and the current version is maintained by IANA.

The current IANA IfType registries are in [[iana-if-type](#)], [[IANAifType-MIB](#)], and [[ifType](#)].

Although the ifType registry was originally defined in a MIB module, the assignment and use of interface type values are not tied to MIB modules or any other management mechanism. Interface type values can be used as values of data model objects (MIB objects, YANG objects, etc.), as parts of a unique identifier of a data model for a given interface type (e.g., in an OID), or simply as values exposed by local APIs or UI on a device.

[2.](#) Terminology

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "NOT RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in BCP

14 [[RFC2119](#)] [[RFC8174](#)] when, and only when, they appear in all capitals, as shown here.

3. Problems

This document addresses the following issues:

1. As noted in [Section 1](#), the former guidance was written with wording specific to MIB modules, and accordingly some confusion has resulted when using YANG modules. This document clarifies that ifTypes are independent from the type of, or even existence of, a data model.
2. The use of, and requirements around, sub-layers and sub-types are not well understood even though good examples of both exist. This is discussed in [Section 4](#).
3. The registry is kept in the format of MIB and YANG modules, but there was no process guidance written to check that updates were syntactically correct, which led to the registry having syntax errors that broke tools. [Section 5.1](#) adds a validation step to the documented assignment procedure.
4. Transmission values [[ifType](#)] have often been allocated as part of ifType allocation, but no guidance exists about whether a requester must ask for it or not, and the request form has no such required field. As a result, IANA has asked the Designated Expert to decide for each allocation, but no relevant guidance for the Designated Expert has been documented. This is discussed in [Section 5.2](#).
5. Various documents and registries say to submit requests via email, but a web form exists for submitting requests, which has caused some confusion around which is to be used. This is discussed in [Section 6](#).

4. Interface Sub-Layers and Sub-Types

When multiple sub-layers exist below the network layer, each sub-layer can be represented by its own row in the ifTable with its own ifType, with the ifStackTable being used to identify the upward and downward multiplexing relationships between rows. [Section 3.1.1 of \[RFC2863\]](#) provides more discussion, and [Section 3.1.2](#) of that RFC provides guidance for defining interface sub-layers. More recent experience shows that these guidelines are phrased in a way that is now too restrictive, since at the time [[RFC2863](#)] was written, MIB modules were the dominant data model.

This document clarifies that such guidance also applies to YANG modules.

Some ifTypes may define sub-types. For example, the tunnel(131) ifType defines sub-types, where each IANA tunnelType can have its own MIB and/or YANG module with protocol-specific information, but there is enough in common that some information is exposed in a generic IP Tunnel MIB corresponding to the tunnel(131) ifType.

For requests that involve multiple sub-layers below the network layer, requests MUST include (or reference) a discussion of the multiplexing relationships between sub-layers, ideally with a diagram. Various well-written examples exist of such definitions, including [\[RFC3637\] section 3.4.1](#), [\[RFC4087\] section 3.1.1](#), and [\[RFC5066\] section 3.1.1](#).

Definers of sub-layers and sub-types should consider which model is more appropriate for their needs. A sub-layer is generally used whenever either a dynamic relationship exists (i.e., which instances layer over which other instances can change over time) or a multiplexing relationship exists with another sub-layer. A sub-type can be used when neither of these are true, but where one interface type is conceptually a subclass of another interface type, as far as a management data model is concerned.

PROPOSED CLARIFICATION/ELABORATION: In general, the intent of an interface type or sub-type is that its definition should be sufficient to identify an interoperable protocol. In some cases, however, a protocol might be defined in a way that is not sufficient to provide interoperability with other compliant implementations of that protocol. In such a case, an ifType definition should discuss whether specific instantiations (or profiles) of behavior should use a sub-layer model (e.g., each vendor might layer the protocol over its own sub-layer that provides the missing details), or a sub-type model (i.e., each vendor might subclass the protocol without any layering relationship). If a sub-type model is more appropriate, then the data model for the protocol might include a sub-type identifier so that management software can discover objects specific to the subtype. In either case, such discussion is important to guide definers of a data model for the more specific information (i.e., a lower sub-layer or a subtype), as well as the Designated Expert that must review requests for any such ifTypes or sub-types.

5. Registration

The IANA policy (using terms defined in [\[RFC8126\]](#)) for registration is Expert Review. The role of the Designated Expert in the procedure is to raise possible concerns about wider implications of proposals

for use and deployment of interface types. While it is recommended that the responsible Area Director and the IESG take into consideration the Designated Expert opinions, nothing in the procedure empowers the Designated Expert to override properly arrived-at IETF or working group consensus.

5.1. Procedures

Someone wishing to register a new ifType value MUST:

1. Check the IANA registry to see whether there is already an entry that could easily satisfy the modeling and functional requirements for the requested entry. If there is already such an entry, use it or update the existing specification. Text in an Internet-Draft, or part of some other permanently available, stable specification may be written to clarify the usage of an existing entry or entries for the desired purpose.
2. Check the IANA registry to see whether there is already some other entry with the desired name. If there is already an unrelated entry under the name, choose a different name.
3. Prepare a registration request using the template specified in [Section 5.3](#). The registration request can be contained in an Internet-Draft, submitted alone, or as part of some other permanently available, stable, specification. The registration request can also be submitted in some other form (as part of another document or as a stand-alone document), but the registration request will be treated as an "IETF Contribution" under the guidelines of [[RFC5378](#)].
4. Submit the registration request (or pointer to document containing it) to IANA at iana@iana.org or via the web form at <https://www.iana.org/form/iftypes> .

Upon receipt of a registration request, the following steps MUST be followed:

1. IANA checks the submission for completeness; if required information is missing or any citations are not correct, IANA will reject the registration request. A registrant can resubmit a corrected request if desired.
2. IANA requests Expert Review of the registration request against the corresponding guidelines from this document.
3. The Designated Expert will evaluate the request against the criteria.

4. Once the Designated Expert approves registration, IANA updates [[ifType](#)], [[IANAifType-MIB](#)], and [[iana-if-type](#)] to show the registration. When adding values to the IANAifType-MIB, IANA should verify that the updated MIB module is syntactically correct before publishing the update. There are various existing tools or web sites that can be used to do this verification.
5. If instead the Designated Expert does not approve registration (e.g., for any of the reasons in [[RFC8126](#) [section 3](#)]), a registrant can resubmit a corrected request if desired, or the IESG can override the Designated Expert and approve it per the process in [Section 5.3 of \[RFC8126\]](#).

5.2. Media-specific OID-subtree assignments

The current IANAifType-MIB notes:

The relationship between the assignment of ifType values and of OIDs to particular media-specific MIBs is solely the purview of IANA and is subject to change without notice. Quite often, a media-specific MIB's OID-subtree assignment within MIB-II's 'transmission' subtree will be the same as its ifType value. However, in some circumstances this will not be the case, and implementors must not pre-assume any specific relationship between ifType values and transmission subtree OIDs.

The following change is proposed:

CURRENT: For every ifType registration, the corresponding transmission number value should be registered or marked "Reserved."

PROPOSED: For future ifType assignments, an OID-subtree assignment MIB-II's 'transmission' subtree will be made with the same value.

RATIONALE: (1) This saves effort in the future since if a transmission number is later needed, no IANA request is needed that would then require another Expert Review. (2) The transmission numbering space is not scarce, so there seems little need to reserve the number for a different purpose than what the ifType is for. (3) The Designated Expert need not review whether a transmission number value should be registered when processing each ifType request, thus reducing the possibility of delaying assignment of ifType values. (4) There is no case on record where allocating the same value could have caused any problem.

5.3. Registration Template

This template describes the fields that MUST be supplied in a registration request suitable for adding to the registry:

Label for IANA ifType requested: As explained in [Section 7.1.1 of \[RFC2578\]](#), a label for a named-number enumeration must consist of one or more letters or digits, up to a maximum of 64 characters, and the initial character must be a lower-case letter. (However, labels longer than 32 characters are not recommended.) Note that hyphens are not allowed.

Name of IANA ifType requested: A short description (e.g., a protocol name), suitable to appear in a comment in the registry.

Description of the proposed use of the IANA ifType: Requesters MUST include answers, either directly or via a link to some document with the answers, to the following questions in the explanation of the proposed use of the IANA IfType:

- o How would IP run over your ifType?
- o Would there be another interface sublayer between your ifType and IP?
- o Would your ifType be vendor-specific or proprietary? (If so, the label MUST start with a string that shows that. For example, if your company's name or acronym is xxx, then the ifType label would be something like xxxSomeIfTypeLabel.)
- o (ADDED) Would your ifType require or allow vendor-specific extensions? If so, would the vendor use their own ifType in sub-layer below the requested ifType, or a sub-type of the ifType, or some other mechanism?

Reference, Internet-Draft, or Specification: A link to some document is required.

Additional information or comments: Optionally any additional comments for IANA or the Designated Expert.

6. IANA Considerations

This entire document is about IANA considerations.

CURRENT: The registries say to use email, but a web form exists (<https://www.iana.org/form/iftypes>), which is an apparent contradiction. Should IANA require using the form?

Or require using email? Or accept submissions either way?

PROPOSED: In addition, IANA is requested to make the following changes:

1. [[IANAifType-MIB](#)] currently says: "Requests for new values should be made to IANA via email (iana@iana.org)." This should be updated to instead say: "Requests for new values should be made at <https://www.iana.org/form/iftypes> or by email (iana@iana.org)."
2. [[iana-if-type](#)] currently says: "Requests for new values should be made to IANA via email (iana@iana.org)." This should be updated to instead say: "Requests for new values should be made at <https://www.iana.org/form/iftypes> or by email (iana@iana.org)."

7. Security Considerations

Since this document does not introduce any technology or protocol, there are no security issues to be considered for this document itself.

8. References

8.1. Normative References

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