

Let's chat...

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XMPP/Jabber has served us well...

- Provides a secondary channel to support in person interactions
- Interoperable
 - Standards-based systems
 - A robust ecosystem of supporting tools
- Accessible...
 - ... to people with different personal needs
 - ... to people using different systems
 - ... to search and archival tools
- Reliable
 - Old, but proven

... but the situation has shifted over time

- As we work more remotely, chat is more ...
 - Primary rather than secondary
 - Continuous rather than sporadic
- Atrophy in the XMPP ecosystem leads to access problems
 - Unsupported / abandoned clients
 - Lack of modern features (e.g., accessibility) in remaining clients
 - Where should I go for an XMPP account?
- Even in the best case, XMPP has poor support for modern features, e.g.:
 - Dynamic participation: Backchannels? Breakout groups?
 - Moderation tools to support CoC / anti-harrassment enforcement
- **Barriers for newcomers** and **suboptimal even for existing participants**

What we need now

- **Functionality** - Helps the IETF get its work done
- **Openness** - Works for the entire community
- **Accountability** - Compatible with policies that guide IETF participation
- **Transparency** - Supports our archiving and retention needs
- **Operability** - Fits within our operational / resource constraints

Functionality

- The service **must provide group chats for IETF working groups** and other sanctioned activities (plenary, IESG, IAB, etc.)
- The service **must allow the creation of ad-hoc group chats**, e.g., for breakout discussions
- The service **should allow for direct messages between members**, and **may provide E2E security** for DM conversations

Openness

- It **must be accessible to the larger IETF community**, at the same level as email lists.
- There must be a **web-based client supported in all major browsers as well as mobile clients** for iOS and Android
- New users **must be able to join the service** without manual intervention from an administrator
- The service **must be accessible** to users who depend on screen readers and high contrast interfaces.
- The service **must support** keyboard-only navigation.

Accountability

- It **must be possible** to enforce the IETF Anti-Harrassment Policy and Code of Conduct on this system.
- **Mature tooling to support CoC/policy enforcement must exist**, including authentication, the ability to warn and ban users, and related tooling.

Transparency

- The service **must have a customizable first-contact experience** to inform new participants about IETF's policies (Note Well, Anti-Harassment, CoC).
- The service **must have** configurable logging & data retention settings that meet our institutional requirements.
- The system **must have persistent scrollback**. New users should be able to see the context into which they're arriving.

Operability

- We **are not** building our own. Whether we host it ourselves or pay for it as a service, we're getting something off the shelf that best meets our needs.
- We will consider **products, not protocols**.
- The service **must have effective administrative tooling** including user and channel management, alerting and banning.
- The service **must support thousands of simultaneous users**, at a minimum.
- **The service must pass an independent, third-party security evaluation.**

Etc.

Nice-to-haves

- Open protocols / third party clients
- Overlap with tools that people are already using
- Bot integration
- Notifications
- User status indicators.
- Markdown formatting and syntax highlighting

Non-goals

- That the product be purely open source / open standards is not a requirement

Some Candidates

- Probably not XMPP
- Probably not corporate tools: MS Teams, Webex Teams, HipChat, etc.

- Slack <https://slack.com/>
- Matrix/Element <https://matrix.org/> <https://element.io/>
- Mattermost <https://mattermost.com>
- Gitter <https://gitter.im>
- Spectrum <https://spectrum.chat/>
- Zulip <https://zulipchat.com>

Discussion

Is this topic of interest?

Scope: Functional requirement document to guide the LLC staff in a selection

Not in scope: Actually choosing a platform

Feedback on requirements?