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IAOC Plenary Meeting Venue Selection Process
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Abstract

This documents the IAOC's IETF Meeting Venue Selection Process from the perspective of its goals 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

This document describes the IETF Meeting Venue Selection Process from the perspective of goals and thought processes. 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 involve community input.

This document 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. Requirements Language

Requirements called out in this document are identified as either "mandatory" or "desired", and considerations are tagged as "Important" or "Would be nice". For clarity, the terms are defined here:

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

Desired: We would very much like to meet this requirement, but have frequently been unable to. The fact that we could not meet it is considered in comparison to other sites.

Important: Can be a make-or-break consideration, but can also be traded off against other considerations.

Would be nice: Not make-or-break, but warrants additional consideration if found to be true.

2. Meeting Selection Participants and Responsibilities

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.

2.1. The IETF Community

While somewhat obvious to most, it is important to note that IETF meetings serve all those who contribute to the development of IETF RFCs. This includes those who attend meetings, from newcomer to frequent attendee, to those who participate remotely, and to those who don't attend but contribute to new RFCs. Potential new contributors are also considered in the process.

IETF consensus with respect to the 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.

2.2. IESG and IETF Chair

The Internet Engineering Steering Group (IESG) is a group comprised of the IETF Area Directors and the IETF Chair. The IESG is responsible for the management, along with the IAB, 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 is a member of the IESG who, among other things, relays policies to the IAOC. The IETF Chair is also a member of the IAOC.

2.3. The Internet Society

The Internet Society (ISOC) executes all venue contracts on behalf of the IETF at the request of the IAOC; solicits meeting sponsorships; 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. The meetings budget is managed by the IAD.

2.4. 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.

2.5. 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.

2.6. 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.

2.7. IAOC Meeting Committee

The IAOC Meeting Committee is generally referred to as the Meetings Committee.

The fundamental purpose of the 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 located here: <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.

3. Venue Selection Process

The process of selecting a venue is described below and is based on <https://iaoc.ietf.org/venue-selection.html>.

3.1. Venue Selection Principles

The IETF, and therefore the IAOC and its Meetings Committee, have some core values that pervade the selection process. These are not limited to the following, but at minimum include them.

Who are we?

We are computer scientists, engineers, network operators, academics, and other interested parties sharing the goal of making the Internet work better. At this time, the vast majority of attendees come from North America, Western and Central Europe, and Eastern Asia. We also have participants from other regions.

Why do we meet?

We meet to advance Internet standards development, to advance Internet Drafts and RFCs. We meet to facilitate attendee participation in multiple topics and to enable cross-pollination of ideas and technology.

Where do we meet?

We meet in different locations globally in order to spread the pain and cost of travel among active participants, balancing travel time and expense across the regions from where IETF participants are based. We also aim to enhance inclusiveness and new contributions.

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. This principle of inclusiveness militates against the selection of venues within countries that impose visa regulations and/or laws that effectively exclude people on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or national origin, and to a lesser extent, reduces the likelihood of selecting countries that use such attributes to make entry difficult.

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 venue and hotels, including overflow hotels. We also need open network access available at high enough data rates to support our work, including the support of remote participation.

Focus:

We meet to have focused technical discussions. These are not limited to 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 venue.

Economics:

Meeting attendees participate as individuals. While many have their participation underwritten by employers or sponsors, there are many who do not. Locations that do not provide convenient budget alternatives for food and lodging, or which are multiple travel segments from major airports, are therefore exclusionary, and violate our value of "Inclusiveness". Within reason, budget should not be a barrier to accommodation.

Political considerations:

The IETF does not make political statements. We do not decide who is or is not a country, and we do not choose or not choose venues based on political criteria.

3.2. Venue Selection Objectives

Venues for meetings are selected to advance the objectives of the IETF, which are discussed in <https://www.ietf.org/about/mission.html>. The IAOC's supporting objectives include:

- o Advancing standards development
- o Facilitating participation by active contributors
- o Sharing the travel pain; balancing travel time and expense across the regions from where IETF participants are based.
- o Encouraging new contributors
- o Generating funds to support IETF operations in support of standards development, including the Secretariat, IASA, and the RFC Editor.

There is an explicit intent to rotate meeting locations equally among several places in accordance with IETF policy. However, a consistent balance is sometimes difficult to achieve. The IAOC has an objective of setting the Regions 4 years in advance, meeting in Europe, North America, and Asia, with a possibility of occasionally meeting outside those regions. This policy, known as the 1-1-1* model, is set by the IESG, <https://iaoc.ietf.org/minutes/2010-11-10-iaoc-minutes.txt>, and is further discussed in [I-D.krishnan-ietf-meeting-policy]. The reason for the multi-year timeframe is maximization of opportunities; the smaller the time available to qualify and contract a conference venue, the more stress imposed on the qualification process, and the greater the risk of not finding a suitable venue or paying more for it.

There is no formal policy regarding rotation of regions, the time of year for a meeting in a specific region, or whether a meeting in a non-targeted region replaces a visit to one of the regions during that year.

The IETF chair drives selection of "*" locations, i.e., venues outside the usual regions, and requires community input. These selections usually arise from evidence of growing interest and participation in the new region. Expressions of interest from possible hosts also factor into the meeting site selection process, for any meeting.

Increased participation in the IETF from those other regions, electronically or in person, could result in basic changes to the overall pattern, and we encourage those who would like for that to occur to encourage participation from those regions.

3.3. Venue Selection Criteria

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

The selection of a venue always requires trade-offs. There are no perfect venues. For example, a site may 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 may reduce its desirability in the presence of an alternative that does.

Each identified criterion is labeled with the terms defined above in Section 1.1, i.e., "Mandatory", "Desired", "Important" or "Would be nice". These terms guide the trade-off analysis portion of the selection process. All "Mandatory" labeled criteria must be met for a venue to be selected. The remaining terms may be viewed as weighting factors.

There are times where the evaluation of the criteria will be subjective. This is even the case for criteria labeled as "Mandatory". For this reason, the Meetings Committee will specifically review, and affirm to its satisfaction, that all "Mandatory" labeled criteria are satisfied by a particular venue and main IETF hotel as part of the process defined below in Section 3.5.

3.3.1. Venue City Considerations

- o Travel to the venue is reasonably 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 the year. [Important]
- o Travel barriers to entry, e.g., visa requirements that can limit participation, are researched, noted, and carefully considered. [Important]
- o Economic, safety, and health risks associated with this venue are researched, reviewed and carefully considered, at the time the selection is made, and thereafter as the time for the meeting approaches. [Important]
- o Review available travel information (such as <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country.html>) for issues that would be counter to our principles on inclusiveness etc. [Important]

- o 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. [Important]
- o Prior successful IETF experience with the Venue and Venue city will be considered as a positive factor when deciding among multiple venues. [Would be nice]
- o Consideration will be given to whether it makes sense 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. [Would be nice]

3.3.2. Basic Venue Criteria

- o The Meeting Space is adequate in size and layout to accommodate the meeting and foster participant interaction. [Mandatory]
- o The venue and hotels can be put under contract. The subsequent failure to put a selected venue under contract will result in a re-evaluation of the venues and selection for the meeting. [Mandatory]
- o The cost of guest rooms, meeting space, meeting food and beverage is affordable (within the norms of business travel). [Mandatory]
- o The economics of the venue allow the meeting to be net cash positive [Mandatory].
- o An Optimal Facility for an IETF meeting is held under "One Roof", that is, qualified meeting space and guest rooms are available in the same facility. [Desired]
- o An Optimal Facility for an IETF meeting is accessible by people with disabilities.
 - * The selected facility conforms with local accessibility laws and regulations [Mandatory]
 - * <http://www.sigaccess.org/welcome-to-sigaccess/resources/accessible-conference-guide/> provides a definition of related considerations that shall be used in evaluating this criterion. [Desired]

3.3.3. Technical Services and Operations Criteria

- o The Venue's support technologies and services -- network, audio-video, etc., are sufficient for the anticipated activities at the meeting, or the venue is willing to add such infrastructure at no or at an acceptable cost to the IETF. [Mandatory]
- o The meeting venue must permit and facilitate the delivery of a high performance, robust, unfiltered and unmodified IETF Network. [Mandatory]
- o The IETF hotel(s), which are one or more hotels in close proximity to the venue where the primary IETF room allocations are negotiated and the IETF SSIDs are in use, must provide, or 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]
- o The overflow hotels should provide reasonable, reliable, unfiltered Internet service for the public areas and guest rooms. This service is typically included in the cost of the room. [Desired]

3.3.4. Lodging

- o The IETF hotel(s) are within close proximity to each other and the venue. [Mandatory]
- o The Guest Rooms at the IETF hotel(s) are sufficient in number to house 1/3 or more of projected meeting attendees. [Mandatory]
- o The Venue environs include budget hotels within convenient travel time, cost, and effort. [Mandatory]
- o Overflow Hotels that can be placed under contract. They typically must be within convenient travel time of the venue and have a variety of guest room rates. [Mandatory]
- o The IETF hotel(s) are accessible by people with disabilities.
 - * The selected facility conforms with local accessibility laws and regulations [Mandatory]
 - * <http://www.sigaccess.org/welcome-to-sigaccess/resources/accessible-conference-guide/> provides a definition of related considerations that shall be used in evaluating this criterion. [Desired]

3.3.5. Food and Beverage

- o The Venue environs, which includes onsite, and the areas within a reasonable walking distance, or conveniently accessible by a short taxi, bus, or subway ride, has convenient and inexpensive choices for meals that can accommodate a wide range of dietary requirements. [Mandatory]
- o 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. [Desired]

3.4. Non-criteria

The following is specifically not among the selection criteria:

- o Visiting new locations for the sake of variety in meeting locations.

3.5. Venue Selection Phases

Commencing the process four years in advance of an event results in the following schedule as a guideline:

Phase 1: Identification and Preliminary Investigation

Four years out, a process identifies cities for meetings and initiates site selection.

- A. The IAOC selects regions for meetings.
- B. Meeting target cities per region are provided to the Secretariat based upon Meetings Committee input and, if known, host preferences.
- C. Potential venues in preferred cities identified and investigated, 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 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.

Phase 2: Community Consultation

The IAOC asks the community whether there are any barriers to holding a successful meeting in the target cities. Community responses are reviewed and concerns investigated. IAOC provides a list of vetted cities to the Meetings Committee to pursue as potential meeting locations.

Phase 3: Vetted Venues Evaluated for Site 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.

Phase 4: Qualified Venues Evaluated for Contract

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 may 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.

Phase 5: Evaluation and Contingency Planning

3 Months Prior to the Meeting, the meeting 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.

3.6. Experience Notes

- a. The foregoing process works with reasonable certainty in North America and Europe.
- b. Experience to date for Asia and Latin America is that contracts take longer and often will not be executed more than two years in advance of the meeting. While the IETF will have the first option for the dates, for reasons not completely understood contracts won't be executed.

4. Transparency

BCP 101 requires transparency in IASA process and contracts, and thereby of the meetings committee. BCP 101 also states that the IAOC approves what information is to remain confidential. Therefore any information produced by the meetings committee or related to meetings that individuals believe is confidential, e.g., venue contracts, must be confirmed to be confidential by the IAOC.

5. IANA Considerations

This memo asks the IANA for no new parameters.

6. Security Considerations

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

7. Privacy Considerations

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

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9. Acknowledgements

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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.

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