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                 After the first decade: IASA Retrospective
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Abstract

   The IETF Administrative Support Activity was formally established and
   undertaken as a project of the Internet Society in 2005. In the
   following 10+ years, the IETF has grown and changed, as have the
   responsibilities that fall to the IASA.

   This document reflects on some of those changes and the implications
   within the IASA structure, providing some areas for further
   discussion to consider evolving the IASA and the IETF/ISOC
   relationship.

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1. Introduction

   In April 2005, BCP 101 ([RFC4071]) was published, formally creating
   the IETF Administrative Support Activity (IASA). At the end of an
   intense community discussion, the IASA was formed as an activity
   housed within the Internet Society (ISOC), and BCP 101 defined the
   roles of the IETF Administrative Oversight Committee (IAOC), and the
   IETF Administrative Director (IAD). Together, these roles have
   defined responsibilities for IETF's fiscal and administrative
   support.

   With the newly established IASA, the IETF was in a position to
   formalize several activities that had been undertaken by other
   organizations, on behalf of the IETF. This allowed the IETF take
   responsibility of those operations. Through the 10+ years since the
   inception of IASA, the operations and responsibilities have, however,
   grown and requirements have evolved. Nor has the world stood still
   -- at the same time, the Internet Society has grown and taken on a
   broader role in Internet governance discussions and global
   activities.

   This document reflects on some of those changes and the implications
   within the IASA structure, providing some areas for further
   discussion to consider evolvingthe IASA and the IETF/ISOC
   relationship.

2. Forming the IASA

   In 2003, the IETF and IAB Chairs formed an IAB Advisory Committee
   (AdvComm) to "review the existing IETF administration relationships
   (RFC Editor, IETF Secretariat, etc.) and propose IETF management
   process or structural changes that would improve the overall
   functioning of the IETF" ([RFC3716]). The AdvComm identified several
   stressors to the efficient and effective operation of the IETF
   related to financial support, informality of relationships, and
   opaqueness of decision making in administrative matters.

   To address the identified stressors, the AdvComm developed a set of
   requirements for any eventual solution:

   o Resource Management

      * Uniform Budgetary Responsibility (autonomy)

      * Revenue Source Equivalence (ability to consider all sources of
         income and apply them as appropriate across all functions,
         which was not possible when the Internet Society was funding
         the RFC Editor function and CNRI/Foretec was supporting the
         Secretariat function

      * Clarity in Relationship with Supporting Organizations (clear
         contractual relationships between the IETF and each supporting
         organization)

      * Flexibility in Service Provisioning (ability to make choices)

      * Administrative Efficiency (avoiding duplicate overhead across
         multiple organizations)

   o Stewardship (looking after the future as well as the present)

      * Accountability for Change (i.e., accountability to the IETF
         community)

      * Persistence and Accessibility of Records

   o Working Environment

      * Service Automation (for administrative tasks and IETF
         information flow management)

      * Tools (development of more tools for IETF support)

The IETF followed up the AdvComm recommendations with discussions of possible administrative structures to support the IETF and ensure its continued ability to focus on its mission of making the Internet work better. The eventual result was the IETF Administrative Support Activity (IASA), defined in BCP101 ([RFC4071]) and formed in 2005.

The selected form of the IASA (as "an activity of the Internet Society") meant that the IETF could focus on building out the pieces of administration necessary to carry out its standards activities, without having to instantly build general corporate overhead. That is, the Internet Society was specifically tasked with providing any additional needed clerical or financial support, and was identified as solely responsible for obtaining sponsors for the IETF. The latter also was intended to provide arms-length distance between corporate donors and direction of the IETF's activities: the IETF could not be "bought".

3. Evolution of IASA breadth

3.1. IASA coverage in 2005

In order to understand the evolution of the IASA, it is important to describe the baseline -- what the IASA was when it was first formed.

o Secretariat -- the IETF Secretariat function was carried out by an organization that had been a subsidiary of CNRI (which had collected meeting fees and provided Secretariat services until the creation of the IASA). In 2005, key personnel migrated to Neustar to carry out the Secretariat function under contract with the Internet Society (for IASA). This gave the IETF full control and responsibility for picking meeting locations, as well as setting and collecting meeting fees.

o Meeting planning -- A first priority was to establish meeting dates, locations and contracts more than a year in advance, to improve contract negotiating positions, costs, and provide clarity for attendee planning. (Historical data point: the early 2004 Seoul IETF meeting did not have a hotel contract booked in December of 2003).

o RFC Editor -- The RFC Editor function had been handled at USC/ISI for many years (since Jon Postel moved to USC/ISI from UCLA in 1978). In the years leading up to the formation of the IASA, The Internet Society had provided funding to ISI in the form of a contract to carry out the work. With the creation of the IASA, this contract was folded into the ISOC/IASA support. See [RFC5540] for more details.

o IANA -- by the time the IASA was created in 2005, ICANN was well-
   established and had been carrying out the Internet Assigned Names
   Activity since 1998. The IETF had agreed on a Memorandum of
   Understanding with ICANN on the handling of protocol parameters
   for IETF standards ([RFC2860]), but it did not specify levels of
   service or practical terms of agreement. (See more IANA detail at
   http://www.internetsociety.org/ianatimeline).

o Tools -- the Secretariat had developers on staff who had built
   tools to support the workflow of the IETF (e.g., liaison manager).
   The software was proprietary, and IETF community programmers had
   no access or insight. At the same time, the IETF community being
   what it is, there were community-driven tools that were built up
   in an open source fashion. These were completely separate and
   separately maintained.

o Meeting network support -- in 2005, standard meeting hosting
   agreements included providing network connectivity to the meeting
   hotel. This might have extended to include a terminal room for
   attendees.

o Staff -- the IASA established that the IETF would have one full-
   time employee (officially an employee of ISOC, as part of the
   administrative arrangements). That one employee was the IETF
   Administrative Director.

o The IAOC -- established as an administrative oversight body, the
   IAOC was established with 3 voting and one non-voting ex officio
   members (IETF Chair, IAB Chair, ISOC CEO and IAD, respectively),
   one member appointed by the ISOC Board, and 4 appointees from the
   community (2 from NomCom, 1 each appointed by the IESG and IAB).

3.2. IASA coverage in 2017

   A little more than a decade later, things have changed substantially
   in terms of the coverage of the responsibilities of the IASA.

   o Secretariat -- the IASA put the Secretariat contract out for
      competitive bid in 2007, establishing a contract with professional
      association management company (Association Management Services)
      in 2008, with key personnel moving to AMS.

   o Meeting planning -- IETF meeting locations are now mostly
      contracted two to three years in advance. At the same time, IETF
      leadership and participants' expectations of meeting locations and
      venues have evolved. The IETF now aims to meet regularly in Asia,
      as well as Europe and North America. Meeting layout requirements
      have evolved. The topic is sufficiently complex that the MTGVENUE

working group was created in 2016 to develop an IETF consensus
document on meeting venue requirements.

o RFC Editor -- the IAB split the RFC Editor function into separate
   functions and these have been contracted out -- RFC Series Editor;
   RFC Production, Independent Series Editor. These are collectively
   overseen by an IAB-based, community-populated advisory board
   (RSOC). The RFC Series continues to grow in terms of number of
   documents published, and new features (e.g., ISSNs) and other
   formats supported for the documents. (N.B.: The IASA is not
   responsible for defining or driving any of that growth -- the IASA
   role is limited to writing and managing the contracts for the work
   defined by the IAB and RSOC).

o IETF Trust -- the IETF Trust was formed to hold IETF-related IPR
   (marks, copyright, domain name registrations) after the IASA was
   established. It was created in late 2005, by agreement between
   the Corporation for National Research Initiatives (CNRI) and the
   Internet Society (ISOC) as the Settlors, the IETF and the initial
   trustees (IAOC members at the time). One provision of the Trust
   Agreement was that, prior to July 1, 2010, the Trust could be
   amended only by unanimous written consent of both the Settlors and
   two-thirds of the Trustees. The Trust Agreement includes a list
   of the initial assets contributed to the Trust, and they generally
   included the IETF and IETF SECRETARIAT marks, relevant domain
   names, and the content of the databases used to do the IETF's work
   (including then-current Internet-Drafts). RFC 4371 ([RFC4371])
   updated RFC 4071 (BCP 101) to reflect the fact that there would be
   an IETF Trust to hold the rights to IETF-relevant intellectual
   property. Additionally, RFC 4748 updated RFC 3798 (the first
   organization of IETF rights in contributions), and that RFC was
   updated by RFC 5378 ([RFC5378]) to unify the IETF rights
   definitions and Trust structure.

o IANA -- the IETF Trust holds the IANA IPR (IANA trademark and
   iana.org and related domain name registrations). We now formally
   contract with ICANN to do the work (which is an update over the
   SLA that was established in the intervening decade)

o Tools -- the IETF's software tools are still a mix of things
   developed spontaneously by community members and specific work put
   out for hire. The latter is now handled through RFPs, and care is
   made to ensure that tools upon which the community is dependent
   can be maintained and supported for as long as needed.

o Meeting network support -- network support for IETF meetings has
   grown in scope and expectation of uniformity of services in
   meetings across the globe. This now encompasses a large scale

combination of NOC volunteers, hired support, in-kind donations of equipment and specialized support for remote participation. The following list of current meeting network support expectations highlights not only the complexity of the support, but also the increased issues in funding, contract management, and implications for hotel contracts that land on the IASA plate:

* Support for pre/post events (ISOC BOT, Hackathon, etc.)

* Ubiquitous wireless with multiple SSIDS

* Hotel wireless with IETF SSIDs -- sometimes multiple venues

* V6 enabled throughout

* Increasing remote participation support

* Support for experiments

* Bits and Bites

* Core network management (ASN/ip addresses/DNS/monitoring/etc.)

* Storage, management and shipping of IETF-owned equipment (in-kind donations)

o Comms -- Beyond simply having a reliable website, the IETF's use of "communications" has extended in recent years. This ranges from updates in the website itself, to work with social and industry media and messaging to position the IETF in relevant global discussions. Of late, the IETF has used the services of ISOC's professional communications staff, helping deal with some of the publicly visible issues such as the impacts of surveillance revelations or the IANA transition. Starting from 2017, this support is for the first time part of the IETF budget, whereas previously the activity and its funding not visible at that level

o Sponsorship and funding -- even as the IETF retains its basic operational structure, the industry around it changes. The last decade has seen increased costs of meetings and productions, and a greater reliance on corporate funding. Where once the IETF relied on individual community members convincing their companies to step up for the next meeting, the IETF now plans its meetings several years in advance and needs to align funding expectations accordingly. It takes expertise to update funding models, build and implement programs for securing industry sponsorship. BCP 101 formally identifies that the IETF is not to fundraise on its own; indeed, the IASA is not responsible for the sponsorship

development (just managing its impact on the IASA budget). The
IETF sponsorship models have evolved, and in 2017 they consist of
ISOC memberships, the Global Host program, meeting hosts and other
meeting sponsors, the Hackathon and Bits-n-Bites sponsorships, and
the IETF Endowment. The team helping with sponsors involves a
primary sponsorship person at ISOC, the IAD, the Secretariat, as
well as frequent help from the IETF leadership and their
connections.

o Staff -- the IASA still has exactly one permanent employee -- the
   IETF Administrative Director.

o IAOC -- the structure of the IAOC remains unchanged since the
   IASA's inception.

o IAOC Committees -- recognizing the need for more eyes and
   specialized attention for different branches of work requiring
   IAOC oversight, the IAOC expanded its support by creating
   committees. Committees are dynamic -- formed and closed as needed
   to focus on key areas of the moment, and often include members
   from outside the IAOC. The committees do the heavy lifting on
   background work for IAOC decisions. The IAOC is nonetheless
   responsible for its decisions based on committee output and
   recommendations. Example committees include:

   * Finance Committee: reviews financial reports prepared by the
      IAD (with support from ISOC Accounting staff), discusses budget
      proposals before going to the whole IAOC.

   * Meetings Committee: reviews candidate IETF meeting venues and
      proposes selections for approval by the IAOC.

Further details about IAOC Committees, including the current list of
committees and membership, is available from https://iaoc.ietf.org/
committees.html .

4. Evolution of Internet Society Partnership

When the IASA was formally created, the Internet Society had only
recently established a substantial and steady financial basis
(through its Public Interest Registry project). "Internet
Governance" was a relatively new global policy discussion topic, and
the Internet Society provided a much needed voice from the Internet
technical community. It had a very small staff (10 staff listed in
the 2004 annual report), a broad footprint of Chapters around the
globe, and a few, focused projects undertaken by staff.

Since 2005, the Internet Society has expanded significantly, organizationally (reaching 90+ staff) and in its presence on the world stage of Internet policy, development and technology. While it remains committed to its role of support of the IETF, it becomes increasingly challenging to maintain (and explain) the reality that the Internet Society and the IETF are two separate organizations, with independent roles and perspectives, while everything from the hotel contracts to the MoU with ICANN (for IANA services) is signed by the Internet Society (as the legal entity for the IETF).

5. Issues and Potential Next Steps for the IASA structure

Here are some issues that could use addressing in updates to the IASA structure:

o The most general question: the effort involved in IASA-related tasks has considerably risen during its existence, and the current organisational arrangements may no longer be the perfect match for the task. Are changes needed in the organisation?

o The 2017 IETF is more diverse and more international than it was previously. Arranging meetings is a particular area that today demands more work. In addition, the IETF community periodically raises new requirements that must be met by venues. Local conditions, invitation and visa processes, and hotel and network facilities demand effort. While the IAOC has made some changes regarding site selection, and ongoing IETF working group efforts will help specify requirements more clearly, this remains a sensitive and critical area.

o Sponsorship and hosting issues in particular are increasingly difficult for meetings. While some operational changes are being made to the sponsorship opportunities for the IETF, the IETF would probably be served well by moving more towards a funding model that is independent of the meetings.

o In the last couple of years, the IAOC and ISOC have worked to ensure that contributions such as staff time and other support are properly accounted for in the IETF budget. This increases transparency and awareness. However, even with this progress, the actual work is still organised within two separate organisations, which makes it hard to have one decision point regarding where and how to spend resources.

o Clarity of IETF representative communications: who is responsible for determining the structure and message of the IETF's place on the world stage, to potential sponsors, etc. The IASA role is to ensure there are appropriate resources (expertise, materials), but

it is not currently clear to whom those should be provided, and
therefore, what the specification of the task is.

o Representation for sponsorship: The Internet Society is formally
   responsible for IETF fund raising (per BCP101). The IASA is
   responsible for aligning promised sponsor benefits with meeting
   realities, and tracking the overall budget. Currently, the IASA
   relies on the IETF Chair to take responsibility for managing
   discussions required to vet any possible changes in
   representation, but perhaps there are other models that would
   scale more effectively.

o Clarity of role in the IETF Endowment: related to the question of
   determining the shape of representative communications materials,
   potential IETF Endowment contributors ask for a perspective of
   where the IETF is going in the next decade, and how Endowment
   money might be used. The future of the IETF is not for the IASA
   to decide, but the IAOC's role in building and managing the IETF
   budget make it a natural place to look for some of these answers.
   This highlights three problems:

   * It is ISOC that is pitching the IETF Endowment (because ISOC is
      a legal organization; because the IETF is not supposed to do
      fundraising, per BCP 101) and potential funders can be confused
      why the IETF is not speaking directly.

   * The obvious question, "Why doesn't ISOC just pay for it?" --
      which stems from a lack of perception of the different world
      roles of the two organizations.

   * In preparing the pitch for the IETF Endowment, ISOC naturally
      turns to the "money manager" of the IETF to get answers to
      questions, and it is confusing when the IAOC can neither
      provide answers or identify the suitably responsible part of
      the organization.

   A better plan would be to have clarity about who the IETF thinks
   is responsible for such discussions, and messaging that more
   clearly to the rest of the world.

o Clarifying, and as necessary, updating the relationship between
   the IETF and the Internet Society: in establishing the IASA in
   2005, the IETF and the Internet Society determined the best
   relationship was to have the IASA homed as an Internet Society
   project. Is that still the best arrangement for all concerned?

o Staffing: The IASA was created with one full-time IETF staff
   person -- the IETF Administrative Director. Some questioned

whether it would even be a full-time job. It always has been at least a full-time job, and over the years the shortfall of resources has been at least partially addressed by contributions of Internet Society staff resources that are available (e.g., see notes above about the IETF Communications plans, etc). The problems are mismatch of talent, (lack of) resources for the IETF, and unplanned impact on resources for the Internet Society that has its own projects to pursue. It would be better that the IETF should just manage its own staffing needs

o IAOC membership: The IAOC has 4 ex officio members (IETF Chair, IAB Chair, ISOC CEO, IETF Administrative Director (non-voting)), and 5 appointed members. One of 5 members is appointed by the ISOC Board of Trustees, and is traditionally expected not to stand for IAOC Chair. That leaves a small pool from which to select the IAOC Chair (and the IETF Trust Chair, usually a different person), and very few (2, by the time you've appointed Chairs) "worker bees" for the IAOC. This is a functional model for handling those review issues that can be put to the IAOC by the IAD and the Committees and addressed in the IAOC monthly teleconference. There is zero bandwidth for deep review or engagement on any topic. While the IAOC was intended only ever to be oversight, and the IAD does not need a huge flock of "bosses", the fact that this shallowness has become a friction point suggests that something structural needs to change, either within the IAOC or the IASA staffing.

o IETF Trust Trustees: Since its inception, the Trustees of the IETF Trust have been defined as the current sitting IAOC members. While the Trust was being established, there was value in keeping the process of identifying Trustees simple, especially if the Trust did not persist beyond its minimum lifespan (July 1, 2010). The Trust has become an integral part of the IETF support system and seems to be here to stay. It could be useful to appoint Trustees through some process independent of appointing IAOC members, to reduce the level of role and committee overload described elsewhere, and also to make the separation between the Trust and the IETF clearer and better formalized.

o IETF participant engagement in IASA: Most participants in the IETF demonstrate little interest in the work done by IASA, including how things are administered and paid for, unless something goes "wrong". (Consider the consistent lack of interest and short volunteer lists for open IAOC positions, contrasted against the e-mail evaluations of meeting venues at each and every IETF meeting. Hmmm. Perhaps the latter dissuades potential volunteers?!). This makes it difficult for the IAOC to identify, pursue, or suggest changes that might ultimately be in the

organizations long term (or, sometimes, even short term) interest.
More consistent engagement might help.

6. Closing remarks

The creation of the IETF was a step in formalizing discussions among
engineers who were interested in the development of the
specifications of the technology to drive the Internet. Creating the
IASA was a logical step in bringing together the various
administrative functions that had been first offered by different
organizations involved in the work. As the world continues to evolve
around the IETF and the Internet, perhaps it is time for another
review of where we are and whether our administrative formalizations
fit the needs of the work at hand.

7. Acknowledgements

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