

The IETF Process

A Short, Informal Introduction

AIPREF WG, April 2025

Note Well

A Reminder of IETF Policies

This is a reminder of IETF policies in effect on various topics such as patents or code of conduct. It is only meant to point you in the right direction. Exceptions may apply. The IETF's patent policy and the definition of an IETF "contribution" and "participation" are set forth in BCP 79; please read it carefully.

As a reminder:

- By participating in the IETF, you agree to follow IETF processes and policies.
- If you are aware that any IETF contribution is covered by patents or patent applications that are owned or controlled by you or your sponsor, you must disclose that fact, or not participate in the discussion.
- As a participant in or attendee to any IETF activity you acknowledge that written, audio, video, and photographic records of meetings may be made public.
- Personal information that you provide to IETF will be handled in accordance with the IETF Privacy Statement.
- As a participant or attendee, you agree to work respectfully with other participants; please contact the ombudsteam (<https://www.ietf.org/contact/ombudsteam/>) if you have questions or concerns about this.

Definitive information is in the documents listed below and other IETF BCPs. For advice, please talk to WG chairs or ADs:

- [BCP 9](#) (Internet Standards Process)
- [BCP 25](#) (Working Group processes)
- [BCP 25](#) (Anti-Harassment Procedures)
- [BCP 54](#) (Code of Conduct)
- [BCP 78](#) (Copyright)
- [BCP 79](#) (Patents, Participation)
- <https://www.ietf.org/privacy-policy/> (Privacy Policy)

Participating

- IETF has no concept of membership
 - Anyone who shows up can contribute
- Participation is considered to be individual, not representative
- Professional behaviour is expected
 - BCP 54: IETF Guidelines for Conduct
 - BCP 25: Anti-Harassment Procedures
- Discussion is often robust, but we criticise ideas, not people
- "Rat-holing" on a topic is not productive

Contributing

- Your contributions to discussions and drafts
 - BCP 79: Intellectual Property Rights in IETF Technology (patents)
 - BCP 78: Rights Contributors Provide to the IETF Trust (copyright)
- IETF operates in the open
 - Your contributions are made public
 - Meetings may be recorded and made public
 - <https://www.ietf.org/privacy-statement/>

Consensus

How we make decisions

- IETF practices “rough consensus”
 - Not perfect unanimity; someone can be “in the rough”
 - All viewpoints should have an opportunity to be considered
 - RFC 7282: On Consensus and Humming in the IETF
- For important decisions, chairs will issue a **Call for Consensus**
 - Expressing support is important; silence is difficult to interpret
 - Dissent should clearly explain why - “I don't want to” isn't sufficient
- All consensus is established on the mailing list

Appeals

- If you disagree with a decision, make sure the chairs know
- Unresolved issues can be appealed to the Area Director
 - Need to show substantial process issue, not just being in the rough
- Further appeals are possible
 - BCP 9: The Internet Standards Process
 - BCP 25: Working Group Procedures

Meetings

- Face-to-Face meetings are higher bandwidth opportunities to discuss nuances of issues, make progress, and share information
 - Agendas will be primarily issue- and discussion-focused, not presentations
- Remote participation assures open access
 - Please speak clearly for remote participants' benefit
- Discussions tend to be free-flowing, but we often keep a queue
- All decisions will be confirmed on the list - we only get a 'sense of the room'

Drafts

- Internet-Drafts are the focus of our work
 - Individuals can publish drafts at any time to make proposals
draft-yourname-aipref-*
- The working group will adopt drafts as official work items
 - **Call for Adoption** will be issued as a call for consensus
 - Adopted drafts are only starting points for work; there is no presumption of consensus on their contents
 - Editors are chosen by the chairs
 - draft-ietf-aipref-*

GitHub

<https://ietf-wg-aipref.github.io/>

- We will use GitHub to manage issues and drafts
- Consensus still determined on mailing list, NOT issues or PRs
 - It's OK to talk about editorial and minor matters on issues
 - Substantial discussions should be moved to the list
- Issues are for tracking things we address
 - NOT proposals!
 - Mailing list first

Finishing Work

- Once issues list is empty and editors + chairs believe a document is ready, a **Working Group Last Call** is issued
- WGLC establishes Working Group consensus that the document is ready to progress
 - Expressing support is important
 - New issues possible, but re-hashing discussions is discouraged

Post-WG Process

- After WGLC, the document is sent to the Area Director
 - They do an initial evaluation; may send back for issues
- AD initiates **IETF Last Call**, which is a whole-of IETF review
 - Also kicks off Directorate reviews
- The IESG evaluates the IETF LC feedback and does their own reviews
 - Issues can be raised that require editor response or WG reconsideration
- Once IESG approves the document (with possible changes), it goes into the RFC Editor queue

Re-Chartering

- Once we ship our deliverables, we can consider new work
- Re-chartering requires IESG and IETF-wide review
 - Not necessarily onerous
- Our charter is aggressive
 - Suggests we ship something limited to start, then re-charter to expand scope

Questions?