

Working Group Participation

AKA

The “Stuckee” problem

What are Working Groups accountable for?

- Within an area of responsibility set out in a charter:
 - Making good engineering decisions for the Internet as a whole
 - Specifying those decisions in protocol standards, operational advice, or related documents
 - In ways which are clear enough to allow the readers of those specifications to produce implementations or manage their networks in an interoperable way.
 - In a timely fashion.

Working group theory

- Historically, working groups are defined by a mailing list; all decisions require consensus of the list.
- No “membership” requirements; anyone can provide technical comments at any time.
 - Since anyone can provide technical comments, cross-working group or cross-area fertilization is possible.
 - Specific calls for input are present, but not limiting.
- A remarkably open process that has produced successful results.

The openness vs. commitment issue

- Making a comment on a document does not imply that you are taking responsibility for the work of the working group.
- That ambiguity makes it very difficult to predict how much attention a work item will receive or to estimate when a work item will be completed.
- Openness can make it difficult to make anyone other than the working group chairs and current authors accountable for the working group making progress.

How do we retain openness and track commitment?

- We need commitments to:
 - Make decisions that take into account the needs of the Internet as a whole.
 - Produce documentation of those decisions.
 - Review that documentation for accuracy, readability, and usefulness.
- Without:
 - Shutting out the technical comments from those outside a working group or area.