

Introduction to Working Group Leadership: Chairs and Editors

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What we are covering

- How to be an effective WG chair
- How to be an effective WG editor
- What WG members expect from you
- How chairs and editors can work together to make the process go smoothly

Who we are

- Paul
 - Co-chaired many WGs in the email and security areas
 - Produced many RFCs, some of which were pure editing jobs
 - Co-authoring the revision of the Tao of the IETF
 - IETF 61 Editors Orientation
- Spencer
 - Working Group co-chair for PILC
 - BoF in Dec 1998, concluded in Dec 2003
 - Produced 7 RFCs
 - Survived RFC Auth-48 with 16 text resets, 142 e-mail
 - Currently serving on General Area Review Team
 - IETF 61 Working Group Chair Orientation

Why we combined two orientations

- We discovered that the two earlier presentations had >50% overlap
- WG participants expect the chairs and editors to be working together
- People have noted WGs where the chairs and the editors don't work together
 - “OK, I'll ask Dad” syndrome
 - if the editor won't allow it, go ask the chair
 - If the chair won't allow it, go ask the editor

Motivations to become a WG chair

- You have to balance progress and fairness
 - If you aren't fair, you won't make progress
 - If you don't make progress, fairness doesn't matter
- If you often insist on having your own way, don't chair a WG
- How willing are you to work through others?
 - How successful are you when you work with volunteers?
 - How successful are you when you work with competitors?

Motivations to become a WG editor

- Written organization skills are important even on the shortest of documents
 - Can you organize a protocol as well as you can organize your code?
- Protocols live and die on document clarity
 - RFCs are written in English, but
 - are often read by English-as-Second-Language readers
- Fairness and working well with others are just as important for editors as they are for chairs

Which will it be: chair or editor?

- Some skills and motivations overlap
- Are you doing this for the fame and glory?
 - “The fleeting and often minor fame and glory?”
- How committed are you?
 - It will almost always take longer than you expected
 - Editing documents takes more work but often less elapsed time than being a WG chair
 - Sponsoring organization changes are commonplace
 - ADs may prefer not to have authors as chairs or editors

WG secretaries

- Secretaries can be lifesavers for groups with lots of documents and/or lots of open issues
 - Mentioned but not officially defined in references
 - May take minutes, may track issues ...
 - Good minutes surprisingly important to getting consensus
 - Also surprising how few WGs have secretaries
- Chairs select WG secretaries
- Fairness is an important quality for secretaries too
 - (Do you hear a theme?)

Critical references for WG leaders

- RFC 2026: Internet standards process
 - This is the must-read document for everyone
- RFC 2418: WG guidelines and procedures
 - This is a must-read document for chairs and editors
 - See also RFC 3934, an update to about managing mailing lists and suspending members
- For editors
 - RFC 2119: Key words
 - RFC 3552: Writing security considerations sections
 - RFC 2434: Writing IANA considerations sections
 - `draft-narten-iana-considerations-rfc2434bis` is now in -04

Mechanics

- The rest of this presentation...
- Steps in the WG process (everyone)
- Getting a WG started (chairs)
- Getting drafts published as RFCs (editors)
- The RFC end game (everyone)
- Making WGs work for everyone (everyone)

The Working Group Process

A quick look (back?)

Steps in the WG process

- Initial Submission
- Author Refinement
- WG Acceptance
- Editor Selection
- WG Refinement
- WG Last Call
- WG Request to Publish

“Who controls the document text?”

Steps in the WG process

- Initial Submission
 - Original idea or issue is submitted to the WG
 - May be done via mailing list or at a meeting
 - Should become an Internet-Draft (or part of one)
 - Chairs will reject submissions that don't fit within the WG charter, in chair judgment
 - May refer submission to more appropriate groups or areas
 - Chairs should reject submissions that aren't relevant or don't meet minimal quality requirements
 - “There is no admission control on IETF Internet-Drafts”
 - Rejections can be appealed

Steps in the WG process

- Author Refinement
 - Idea is more fully documented or refined based on feedback
 - May be done by the person who originally submitted the idea/issue, or by others
 - May be done by individual, ad hoc group or more formal design team
 - Change control lies with author(s) during this phase

Steps in the WG process

- **WG Acceptance**
 - For a document to become a WG work item, it must:
 - Fit within the WG charter (in the opinion of the chairs)
 - Have significant support from the working group, including:
 - People with expertise in all applicable areas who are willing to invest time to review the document, provide feedback, etc.
 - Current or probable implementors, if applicable
 - Be accepted as a work item by a rough consensus of the WG
 - Should reflect WG belief that the document is taking the correct approach and would be a good starting place for a WG product
 - Have corresponding goals/milestones in the charter
 - Goals/milestones approved by the Area Directors
 - Adopting a specific draft is not approved by Area Directors

Steps in the WG process

- Editor Selection
 - Editor(s) will be selected by the WG chairs
 - Usually one or more of the original authors – but not always
 - Must be willing to set aside personal technical agendas and change the document based solely on WG consensus
 - Must have the time and interest to drive the work to completion in a timely manner
 - Make this decision explicitly, not by default!
 - Some people are concept people, some are detail people
 - Some people start strong, some people finish strong
 - Some people have changes in life circumstances

Steps in the WG process

- WG Refinement
 - Document updated based on WG consensus
 - All technical issues and proposed changes MUST be openly discussed on the list and/or in meetings
 - All changes must be proposed to the mailing list
 - Complex changes should be proposed in separate IDs
 - The WG has change control during this phase
 - Changes are only made based on WG consensus
 - During this phase, silence will indicate consent

Steps in the WG process

- WG Last Call
 - Final check that the WG has rough consensus to advance the document to the IESG
 - The WG believes that this document is technically sound
 - The WG believes that this document is useful
 - The WG believes that this document is ready to go to the IESG
 - Process BCPs do not require WG Last Call
 - It is a good idea, however
 - It does shorten your IETF Last Call (see later slides)
 - A disturbingly large number of people wait until WGLC to read drafts!

Steps in the WG process

- WG Last Call
 - The document must be reviewed and actively supported by a significant number of people, including experts in all applicable areas
 - ... or it should not be sent to the IESG
 - Silence does NOT indicate consent during this phase
 - “Why would we want to waste IESG time on a document that we can’t be bothered to review ourselves?”

Has anyone else read the draft?

- Standards-track documents reflect IETF views
 - Not just a working group's view
- Standards-track protocols run on the Internet
- Avoid the group-think trap
 - Ask “who else should be reading this draft?”
 - Your ADs are good sources of potential reviewers
- Don't wait until the last minute to share
 - Stop the “last-minute surprise” madness
- Some “last minute surprise” examples
 - Discovering that no one plans to implement the new spec
 - Did you know routing protocols use a different standards track?
 - Did you know some INT protocols are “routing protocols”?

Working Group Chair/ Working Group Editor Responsibilities

Responsibilities

- Now that you have seen how the process is supposed to go, we look at who does what
- Some responsibilities are imagined by the participants, but that makes them kind of real anyway
- Feel free to refer back to the references

WG Chair responsibilities

- **Determine WG consensus at many steps**
 - Taking in new work
 - Disagreements in the proposals
 - Determining when a document is done
- Negotiate charter and charter updates with ADs
- Select and manage the editors and the WG to produce high quality, relevant output
- Schedule and run meetings
- Keep milestones up-to-date (with AD approval)
- “Manage up”
 - Track WG documents during approvals
- Keep the process open, fair, moving forward

Editor responsibilities

- **Produce a specification**
 - that reflects WG consensus
 - and meets IETF editorial requirements
- Raise issues at meetings or on the list for discussion and resolution
 - If there is contention, the chair sniffs out consensus
- Track document issues and resolutions
 - Some type of issue tracking software or tools are recommended, but not required
 - A secretary can help with this

How we got here: the origins of Working Groups

If there is no “right” working group yet

- Before chartering, WGs should have:
 - Well-understood problem
 - Clearly-defined goals
 - Community support (producers and consumers)
 - Involvement of experts from all affected areas
 - Active mailing list
- WGs may or may not start with a BOF
 - Not required, but most WGs do start with BoFs
 - Meet once or twice
 - IETF.ORG hosting BOF mailing lists now
 - BoF proposals have to pass IESG “giggle test”
 - See [draft-narten-successful-bof](#)

WG charter contents

- Administrative information
 - Chair and AD e-mail addresses
 - WG e-mail info
- WG Purpose, direction and objectives
- Description of WG work items
- Specific WG milestones

WG charter approval

- Contract between the WG and the IETF
 - Regarding scope of WG
 - Identifying specific work to be delivered
- Initially negotiated by WG chair(s) and AD(s)
 - Sent to the IETF community for comment
 - Approved by the IESG
 - Different ADs have varying views of whether or not new WGs are a good idea
- Re-charter as needed
 - Minor changes (milestones, nits) approved by AD
 - Substantive changes require IESG approval

Getting drafts published as RFCs

- Start with a well-formed Internet Draft
 - <http://www.ietf.org/ietf/1id-guidelines.txt>
- Instructions to Request for Comments (RFC)
Authors: draft-rfc-editor-rfc2223bis
- Alternative view: draft-hoffman-rfc-author-guide
- Check for process issues early
 - <http://tools.ietf.org/tools/idnits/>
- IESG review
 - <http://www.ietf.org/ID-Checklist.html>

Text formatting tools

- List at <http://www.rfc-editor.org/formatting.html>
- xml2rfc
 - This has rapidly become the most common because it creates the correct template information automatically
- nroff
- Microsoft Word templates
- LaTeX

Document structure

- Recommendations on titles
 - Don't have excessively broad document titles
 - If you have a group of documents, use common naming structure
 - Expand all abbreviations - except for the most well known (such as IP, TCP ...)
- Some sections are mandatory, including order
- Reference section
 - Distinguish between normative and informative
 - Use of URLs in references strongly discouraged

Authors list

- Limited to lead authors or editors
 - While not strictly limited, you need a very good reason to list more than five
 - Others can (should!) be included in contributor and acknowledgment sections
- Authors address section should provide unambiguous contact points
- All “authors” in the header are contacted during final pre-publication review
 - “Missing In Action” author = “hard stop for 2 weeks”

Pre-approval checklists

- Small items people often forget (“nits”)
- Great list at <http://www.ietf.org/ID-Checklist.html>
- Automatic checking tool at <http://tools.ietf.org/inventory/verif-tools>

Big document issues for chairs and editors

- The following two topics nail at least 80% of all Working Groups
 - What are the MUSTs and SHOULDs for the specs?
 - Intellectual property rights (IPR)

MUSTs and SHOULDs: RFC 2119

- Defines use of words in standards
 - MUST, MUST NOT (REQUIRED, SHALL)
 - SHOULD, SHOULD NOT (RECOMMENDED)
 - MAY, MAY NOT (OPTIONAL)
- Gives guidance on the use of the imperatives
 - Use sparingly
 - Needed for interoperation/avoiding harmful behaviour
 - Do not use to impose methods on implementers
 - Limited significance in non-standards-track documents
- If it's a **SHOULD/SHOULD NOT**
 - Tell us **WHY** it's not a **MUST/MUST NOT**

IPR (intellectual property rights)

- WG chairs – please pay attention to IPR!
- **Participants' duty:**
 - **To disclose IPR they personally know about**
- Talk to your ADs early, and particularly if there is any whiff of IPR issues
- Patent issues
- Copyright issues
- Even trademark issues
- Don't play armchair lawyer
 - And try to prevent those in your WG from doing so

IPR documents

- Guidelines for Working Groups on Intellectual Property Issues (RFC 3669)
- IETF Rights in Contributions (RFC 3978)
- Intellectual Property Rights in IETF Technology (RFC 3979)
- If the WG starts to talk about IPR, point them to these documents
- If the WG start to talk about how badly the IETF does IPR, point them to the IPR WG

Getting your excellent specifications published

“What to do when you think you are finished”

WG Last Call

- Called by WG chair
- Optional but traditional
 - First one usually lasts for at least two weeks
- Goal is intensive document review
 - Within the WG
 - ... and outside the WG, even in other areas

Last WG Last Call

- Substantive changes to the document may warrant a second WG Last Call
- Any WG Last Call is a WG chair decision
 - Second WG Last Call can be shorter
 - Can be restricted to issues raised at previous last call
 - ... but be careful about ignoring technical issues

IESG review, early steps

- First, your AD must approve the document
 - Sometimes the AD asks for a revision to clear his/her own objections
- Your AD may want a “shepherd” document
 - draft-ietf-proto-wgchair-doc-shepherding
 - Requires a more intensive writeup than the old days
- IETF Last Call for Standards Track and BCP
 - (and sometimes Experimental and Informational)
 - Usually two weeks, but can be longer

IESG review, later steps

- RFC Editor Review
 - See if guidelines have been met
- Preliminary IANA Review
 - Looks at IANA consideration to start figuring out the namespaces that will need to IANA managed
- General Area Review Team (Gen-ART)
 - Generalist review provided to IETF chair
 - Usually assigned at IETF Last Call time

IESG cross-discipline review

- Takes IETF Last Call comments into account
- Can decide to pass document on for publication
- Decides on track for document
- Can reject a document for a variety of reasons
- Can send document back to WG with comments and “DISCUSS” issues which must be resolved before the document proceeds to RFC
 - <http://www.ietf.org/u/ietfchair/discuss-criteria.html>
- If you negotiated significant changes with the IESG, please show them to your WG before RFC publication!

Final process

- Editor(s)
 - Should also send the RFC Editor your nroff or XML source
 - Must send the RFC Editor any updates, especially editor contact info and known editorial changes
- RFC Editor
 - Create final nroff source
 - Works with editors on any issues (format, language, ...)
 - Assigns an RFC number
- IANA review
 - Creation of IANA registry

Editor's review of pre-RFC text

- Historically called “48-hour review”, but currently averaging about a month, because ...
- ... All editors must sign off on final document
 - Be prepared to help the RFC Editor find other editors
- It is critical that editors take this review seriously
 - Review the entire document, not just the diffs
- Last minute changes are allowed as long as they are not technically substantive
- This is your last (ever!) chance for changes

It gets published!

- Announcement is sent out
- Some people read it for the first time
 - And some think that now is a good time to make corrections or bring objections
 - And this is not a bad thing – it means people are starting to use your specifications

And later... the errata

- RFC Editor keeps set of errata for both technical and editorial errors in RFCs
- IESG and editors verify errata
- <http://www.rfc-editor.org/errata.html>

Making WGs work for everyone

Making WGs work for everyone

- Consensus
 - “We reject kings, presidents and voting. We believe in rough consensus and running code.”
- Openness and accessibility
- Getting a correct specification published
- Getting a timely specification published

Consensus

- Clearly dominant agreement
- Does not have to be unanimous
- Judging consensus can be hard without voting
 - hum
 - show of hands (sorta like voting but ...)
- Even harder on a mailing list
 - ask for "hum" & provide list of hummers at end?
- May discard parts to get consensus on rest
- Consensus rulings can be appealed
 - Sometimes this is better than arguing about how to determine consensus

Appeal process

- Process and/or technical appeal to WG chair
- Process and/or technical appeal to AD
- Process and/or technical appeal to IESG
 - via email to IESG list
- Process and/or technical appeal to IAB
 - via email to IAB list
- Standards process appeal to ISOC BoT
 - via email to ISOC president
 - But ONLY for appeals of process violation

If someone appeals a decision

- They need to do this in writing
- They make clear, concise statement of problem
 - With separate backup documentation
- They make it clear that this is an appeal
- They make specific suggestions for remedy
- They do not try to jump the steps in the process
 - Wait for specific response for each step
- Avoid personal attacks (in either direction!)

AD & WG chair authority

- Chair can replace document editors
 - Editor replacement is painful but may be required
 - Should have the backing of AD
 - (Some ADs don't want to be bothered by this detail)
- AD can recommend document editor replacement
 - If the editor is getting in the way of process or progress
 - AD can **strongly** recommend ...
- AD can replace chair
 - Happens rarely but this option is used
- AD can close the WG
 - Happens rarely but this option is used

Openness and accessibility

- WG should be open to any participant
 - In person or via mailing list only
- Don't make decisions in face-to-face meetings
 - Consensus must be confirmed on the mailing list
- Not all people participate the same way
 - Be aware of cultural differences, language issues
 - Quiet doesn't always mean "no opinion", and loud doesn't always mean "I care a lot"
- You are responsible for openness and fairness
 - Trying to make decisions in face-to-face meetings
 - Trying to do all the work in face-to-face meetings

Structured discussion slides

- Recommend use of slides for structured discussion and consensus calls
 - Written consensus questions result in higher quality and more credible responses
 - Get all the alternatives out, then take the hums on each
 - “Openness” includes accessibility to non-native English speakers, hearing-impaired people, etc.
 - Sometimes, the chair is speaking-impaired
 - If your minute-taker isn’t sure what the question was, “consensus” will be problematic!

Almost done: Helpful Web pages

- WG Chairs web page
 - <http://www.ietf.org/IESG/wgchairs.html>
- IESG web page
 - <http://www.ietf.org/iesg.html>
- ID-Tracker
 - <https://datatracker.ietf.org/public/pidtracker.cgi>
- RFC Editors web page
 - <http://www.rfc-editor.org/>
- A dozen important process mailing addresses
 - <http://www.ietf.org/secretariat.html>

Questions?