

Workshop

for

Working Group Chairs

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Hello

- **INTRODUCTION**
 - **What are we doing here, at this hour?**
 - **There is only rough consensus about the process**
- **AGENDA**
 - I. IETF structure**
 - II. Formal process**
 - III. The inner working group**
 - IV. Conflict resolution**

The need for working group chair training

- **IETF LARGE, DIVERSE**
 - **Process increasingly formal**
 - **No voting means (very) rough consensus**
- **DIFFICULTY MAKING PROGRESS AND BEING FAIR**
 - **Listen to all points of view**
 - **Keep working group focus**
- **CHAIRS OFTEN UNCLEAR ABOUT LIMITATIONS AND AUTHORITIES**

Documents

- **THE INTERNET STANDARDS PROCESS (RFC 1310)**
- **WORKING GROUP GUIDELINES (IN PROGRESS)**
- **[“EVOLVING THE SYSTEM” IN INTERNET SYSTEM HANDBOOK, LYNCH & ROSE, EDS.]**

I. IETF Structure

ISOC

**Internet Society
legal cover**

IAB

**Internet Architecture Board
Design cohesion, process appeals, IETF
liaisons**

IETF secretariat

Staff support

IESG

**Internet Engineering Steering Group
IETF oversight**

AD

**Area director
Oversight for specific working groups**

WG chair

**Manage a working group to a productive
end**

Working group

The people who do the work

Working group roles

- **CHAIR OVERSEES ENTIRE PROCESS, BUT:**
 - Facilitator**
Process management, things fair, focused, on time
 - Judge**
Evaluation of technical options and driver towards “right” choice
 - Scribe**
Record-keeper and editor of documents
- **WORKING GROUP IS JURY, PROVIDING IDEAS, REVIEW, CONSENSUS**
- **DESIGN TEAM IS PRIMARY ADVOCATE AS SELF-SELECTING GROUP WITH COMMON VISION, PROVIDING CORE EFFORT**

Formal Process

- **FORMAL LABELS FOR A SPECIFICATION**
- **DEVELOPMENTAL STEPS**
- **ACCEPTANCE CRITERIA**

Formal labels

Internet draft: no official standing, fluid working document

Proposed Standard: stable spec, no known errors, might have implementation

Draft Standard: multiple, interoperable implementations testing all functionality

Internet Standard: field experience and clear community acceptance (and use)

IELT[®] acceptance criteria

Competence: **technically sound**

Constituency: **providers & users**

Coherence: **clear writing**

Consensus: **rough but clear**

II. Developmental steps

0. BIRDS OF A FEATHER (BOF)

- “Market research” to determine interest and ability to pursue topic
- Optional, one-shot meeting

1. CHARTER

Role: Public announcement & project management plan

Scope: What is to be pursued

Approach: How it will be pursued

Product: What will be delivered

Checkpoints: Milestones and dates

II. Developmental steps

2. DOCUMENT SPECIFICATION

- **Clarity of purpose**
- **Clarity of writing**
- **Clarity of solution**

3. WG CONSENSUS

- **Clearly dominant agreement**
- **Diversity of opinion about solution may be resolved by agreement to make *some* decision**
- **Agreement about parts may permit eventual agreement about whole**

II. Developmental steps

- 4. AREA DIRECTOR APPROVAL**
 - **Technical review**
 - **Process review**
 - **Independent review when results of wg in question**
- 5. SUBMISSION TO IESG**
 - **Via secretariat & AD**

II. Developmental steps

6. LAST CALL

- Request for final feedback from IETF
- Intended to detect major errors in process or content that might have slipped through cracks
- Not intended as formal, full review

7. IESG REVIEW (& APPROVAL)

- May conduct independent review

II. Developmental steps

(7.5) IAB CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- **If formal challenge not resolved by IESG**

8. RFC PUBLICATION

- **RFC editor has publication criteria**

III. *The inner working group*

- **THE LIVES OF A CHAIR**
- **GROUP STYLE**
- **GROUP ROLES**
- **DEVELOPMENTAL PHASES (PROBLEM SOLVING 101)**
 - **VENUES**
 - **DEBATE**
 - **CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

The lives of a chair

- **HOW TO KEEP FROM BEING SAT ON**
 - **Agenda & schedule**
 - **Adequate debate, but not more than that**
 - **Maintain clear focus**
 - **Rehash *only* if constructive *and* working group desires**
- **PROACTIVE MANAGEMENT**
 - **Maintain pressure for forward progress**
 - **Escalate to IETF management when progress stalled**

Working group style

- **FREE-FLOWING**
 - **Cohesive group**
 - **Clear purpose**
- **TIGHTLY-MANAGED**
 - **Complex topic**
 - **Group diversity**
 - **Major differences in philosophy**

WG management roles

Facilitator : ensuring fairness and a thorough airing of views and alternatives

Judge : evaluation of choices and movement towards choice

Scribe: keeping track of things

Design team: Primary advocates for the core effort, when wg diverse & topic complex; must work to keep wg consensus

Working group: Jury & other contributors

Problem solving 101

- **PROBLEM STATEMENT**
- **SOLUTION EXPLORATION**
- **SOLUTION ADOPTION**
- **SPECIFICATION REFINEMENT**

Discussion & decision venues

- **EMAIL**
 - International participation
 - Inefficient, but extensive
 - The real place for consensus
 - Can be run as “meetings”
- **FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS**
 - Well-advertised ahead of time
 - Inherently restricted attendance
 - Limited time
 - Need for clear agenda and crisp management

Email vs. Meetings

(One person's perspective)

- **W/G RESULTS MUST SHOW APPROVAL BASED ON ENTIRE WORKING GROUP**
- **MEETINGS HAVE LIMITED ATTENDANCE**
- **TREAT MEETINGS AS “STRONG INDICATOR” PRIMA FACIE BASIS FOR DECISIONS**
- **ENSURE VERIFICATION THROUGH EMAIL**

Debate

- CAN CLARIFY PURPOSE, IMPLICATIONS, ALTERNATIVES
- CAN TEAR THE GROUP APART
- MUST BE TOLERATED AND EVEN ENCOURAGED, UNTIL RESOLUTION OR IMPASSE

IV. Conflict Resolution

- **PREFERABLE TO SOLVE WITHIN WORKING GROUP**
 - 1. Conflict types**
 - 2. Timing of objections**
- **OFTEN CAN'T**
 - 3. Chain of appeal**

1. Conflict types

- **TECHNICAL**

Specific detail: minor vs. show-stopper

Basic philosophies: rarely resolved

- **PROCESS**

Unfair practice: usually claim against wg chair

Topic missed: oops. (showstopper?)

2. Timing of objections

- **TECHNICAL SHOWSTOPPERS WELCOME ANYTIME**
- **SMALL DETAILS WELCOME ONLY AT TIME WG COVERS THE SUBJECT**
- **PHILOSOPHICAL DEBATE WELCOME ONLY AT TIME WG MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT APPROACH**
- **UNFAIR PRACTICE COMPLAINTS ALLOWED WHENEVER INFRACTION FELT**
- **WG MAY ALLOW TOPIC TO BE RE-OPENED IF WG FEELS ISSUE COMPELLING OR NEW ALTERNATIVE INTRIGUING.**

3. Chain of appeal

- **WG CHAIR**
- **AREA DIRECTOR**
- **AREA DIRECTOR FOR STANDARDS MANAGEMENT**
- **IETF CHAIR**
- **IESG**
- **IAB**

If you can keep your head when those around you...

- **Most IETF members are remarkably well-intentioned**
- **Differences happen**
 - **Tempers often flare, but then settle down**
 - **Not all differences can be settled**
 - **When minority view clearly will not sway working group, respect the opinion, but move on**
- **Ask questions**
- **Make it happen!**