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IAB Processes for Management of IETF Liaison Relationships

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Abstract

This document discusses the procedures used by the IAB to establish and maintain liaison relationships between the IETF and other Standards Development Organizations (SDOs), consortia and industry fora. This document also discusses the appointment and responsibilities of IETF liaison managers and representatives, and the expectations of the IAB for organizations with whom liaison relationships are established.

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1. Liaison Relationships and Personnel

The IETF, as an organization, has the need to engage in direct communication or joint endeavors with various other formal organizations. For example, the IETF is one of several Standards Development Organizations, or SDOs, and all SDOs including the IETF find it increasingly necessary to communicate and coordinate their activities involving Internet-related technologies. This is useful in order to avoid overlap in work efforts and to manage interactions between their groups. In cases where the mutual effort to communicate and coordinate activities is formalized, these relationships are generically referred to as "liaison relationships".

In such cases, a person from the IETF is designated to manage a given liaison relationship; that person is generally called the "IETF liaison manager" to the other organization. When the liaison relationship is expected to encompass a complex or broad range of activities, more people may be designated to undertake some portions of the communications, coordinated by the liaison manager. Often, the other organization will similarly designate their own liaison manager to the IETF.

This document is chiefly concerned with:

- the establishment and maintenance of liaison relationships, and
- the appointment and responsibilities of IETF liaison managers and representatives.

The management of other organizations' liaison managers to the IETF, whether or not in the context of a liaison relationship, is outside the scope of this document.

The IETF has chartered the Internet Architecture Board to manage liaison relationships. Consistent with its charter [2], the IAB acts as representative of the interests of the IETF and the Internet Society in technical liaison relationships with other organizations concerned with standards and other technical and organizational issues relevant to the worldwide Internet. Liaison relationships are kept as informal as possible and must be of demonstrable value to the IETF's technical mandate. Individual participants of the IETF are appointed as liaison managers or representatives to other organizations by the IAB.

In general, a liaison relationship is most valuable when there are areas of technical development of mutual interest. For the most part, SDOs would rather leverage existing work done by other organizations than recreate it themselves (and would like the same done with respect to their own work). Establishing a liaison relationship can provide the framework for ongoing communications to

- o prevent inadvertent duplication of effort, without obstructing either organization from pursuing its own mandate;
- o provide authoritative information of one organization's dependencies on the other's work.

2. Aspects of Liaisons and Liaison Management

2.1. Liaison Relationships

A liaison relationship is set up when it is mutually agreeable and needed for some specific purpose, in the view of the other organization, the IAB, and the IETF participants conducting the work. There is no set process or form for this; the IETF participants and the peer organization approach the IAB, and after discussion come to an agreement to form the relationship. In some cases, the intended scope and guidelines for the collaboration are documented specifically (e.g., see [3], [4], and [5]).

In setting up the relationship, the IAB expects that there will be a mutual exchange of views and discussion of the best approach for undertaking new standardization work items. Any work items resulting for the IETF will be undertaken in the usual IETF procedures, defined in [1]. The peer organization often has different organizational structure and procedures than the IETF, which will require some flexibility on the part of both organizations to accommodate. The IAB expects that each organization will use the relationship carefully, allowing time for the processes it requests to occur in the other organization, and will not make unreasonable demands.

2.2. Liaison Manager

As described above, most work on mutually interesting topics will be carried out in the usual way within the IETF and the peer organization. Therefore, most communications will be informal in nature (for example, Working Group (WG) or mailing list discussions).

An important function of the liaison manager is to ensure that communication is maintained, productive, and timely. He or she may use any applicable businesslike approach, from private to public communications, and bring in other parties as needed. If a

communication from a peer organization is addressed to an inappropriate party, such as being sent to the WG but not copying the Area Director (AD) or being sent to the wrong WG, the liaison manager will help redirect or otherwise augment the communication.

IETF liaison managers should also communicate and coordinate with other liaison managers where concerned technical activities overlap.

Since the IAB is ultimately responsible for liaison relationships, anyone who has a problem with a relationship (whether an IETF participant or a person from the peer organization) should first consult the IAB's designated liaison manager, and if that does not result in a satisfactory outcome, the IAB itself.

2.3. Liaison Representatives

The liaison manager is, specifically, a representative of the IETF for the purpose of managing the liaison relationship. There may be occasion to identify other representatives for the same relationship. For example, if the area of mutual work is extensive, it might be appropriate to name several people as liaison representatives to different parts of the other organization. Or, it might be appropriate to name a liaison representative to attend a particular meeting.

These other liaison representatives are selected by the IAB and work in conjunction (and close communication) with the liaison manager. In some cases, this may also require communication and coordination with other liaison managers or representatives where concerned technical activities overlap. The specific responsibilities of the liaison representative will be identified at the time of appointment.

2.4. Liaison Communications

Communications between organizations use a variety of formal and informal channels. The stated preference of the IETF, which is largely an informal organization, is to use informal channels, as these have historically worked well to expedite matters. In some cases, however, a more formal communication is appropriate, either as an adjunct to the informal channel or in its place. In the case of formal communications, the established procedures of many organizations use a form known as a "liaison statement". Procedures for sending, managing, and responding to liaison statements are discussed in [6].

3. Summary of IETF Liaison Manager Responsibilities

While the requirements will certainly vary depending on the nature of the peer organization and the type of joint work being undertaken, the general expectations of a liaison manager appointed by the IAB are as follows:

- Attend relevant meetings of the peer organization as needed and report back to the appropriate IETF organization any material updates.
- Carry any messages from the IETF to the peer organization, when specifically instructed. Generally, these communications "represent the IETF", and therefore due care and consensus must be applied in their construction.
- Prepare occasional updates. The target of these updates (e.g., the IAB, an AD, a WG) will generally be identified upon appointment.
- Oversee delivery of liaison statements addressed to the IETF, ensuring that they reach the appropriate destination within the IETF, and ensure that relevant responses from the IETF are created and sent in a timely fashion.
- Work with the other organization to ensure that the IETF’s liaison statements are appropriately directed and responded to in a timely fashion.
- Communicate and coordinate with other IETF liaison managers and representatives where concerned technical activities overlap.

4. Approval and Transmission of Liaison Statements

It is important that appropriate leadership review be made of proposed IETF liaison statements and that those writing such statements, who claim to be speaking on behalf of IETF, are truly representing IETF views.

All outgoing liaison statements will be copied to IETF Secretariat using procedures defined in [6] or its successors.

For a liaison statement generated on behalf of an IETF WG, the WG chair(s) must create a statement based on appropriate discussions within the WG to ensure working group consensus for the position(s) presented. The chair(s) must have generated or must agree with the sending of the liaison statement, and must advise the AD(s) that the liaison statement has been sent by copying the appropriate ADs on the message.

For a liaison statement generated on behalf of an IETF Area, the AD(s) must have generated or must agree with the sending of the liaison statement. If the liaison statement is not sent by the ADs, then their agreement must be obtained in advance and confirmed by copying the ADs on the message.

For a liaison statement generated on behalf of the IETF as a whole, the IETF Chair must have generated or must agree with the sending of the liaison statement. If the liaison statement is not sent by the IETF Chair, then his or her agreement must be obtained in advance and confirmed by copying the IETF Chair on the message.

For a liaison statement generated by the IAB, the IAB Chair must have generated or must agree with the sending of the liaison statement. If the liaison statement is not sent by the IAB Chair, then his or her agreement must be obtained in advance and confirmed by copying the IAB Chair on the message.

In cases where prior agreement was not obtained as outlined above, and the designated authority (AD, IETF Chair, or IAB Chair) in fact does not agree with the message, the designated authority will work with the liaison manager to follow up as appropriate, including emitting a revised liaison statement if necessary. Clearly, this is a situation best avoided by assuring appropriate agreement in advance of sending the liaison message.

5. Security Considerations

The security of the Internet is not threatened by these procedures.

6. Acknowledgements

This document was developed as part of a conversation regarding the management of [6], and the authors of that document contributed significantly to it. Also, this version of the document has been improved over its predecessor by several suggestions from Stephen J. Trowbridge, Peter Saint-Andre, Michael Patton, Bert Wijnen, Fred Baker, Scott Bradner, Scott Brim, Avri Doria, Allison Mankin, Thomas Narten, Russ Housley and Dan Romasanu.

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7. References

7.1. Normative References

[1] Bradner, S., "The Internet Standards Process -- Revision 3", BCP 09, RFC 2026, October 1996.

[2] Internet Architecture Board and B. Carpenter, "Charter of the Internet Architecture Board (IAB)", BCP 39, RFC 2850, May 2000.

7.2. Informative References

[3] Rosenbrock, K., Sanmugam, R., Bradner, S., and J. Klensin, "3GPP-IETF Standardization Collaboration", RFC 3113, June 2001.

[4] Bradner, S., Calhoun, P., Cuschieri, H., Dennett, S., Flynn, G., Lipford, M., and M. McPheters, "3GPP2-IETF Standardization Collaboration", RFC 3131, June 2001.

[5] Fishman, G. and S. Bradner, "Internet Engineering Task Force and International Telecommunication Union - Telecommunications Standardization Sector Collaboration Guidelines", RFC 3356, August 2002.

[6] Trowbridge, S., Bradner, S., and F. Baker, "Procedure for Handling Liaison Statements Between Standards Bodies", June 2004.

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