

# **ISOC's responsibilities in the IETF standards process**

*Brian Carpenter*  
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Apart from the recent decision to host the IETF Administrative Support Activity within ISOC, the Society has accepted several formal responsibilities in the IETF standards process over the years.

A guiding principle is that the IETF is an autonomous community that determines its own rules of process and rules of governance. Nothing in the responsibilities accepted by ISOC changes this principle.

## **1. Responsibilities in the IETF governance process.**

The IETF appoints two bodies with responsibilities in the standards process, i.e., the Internet Architecture Board (IAB) and the Internet Engineering Steering Group (IESG). Briefly summarized, the IESG is responsible for ongoing management of the standards process and for approval of IETF documents, and the IAB is responsible for oversight of the standards process (including RFC publication and IANA assignments) and for architectural overview.

Annually, the IETF creates a Nominating Committee (NomCom) which appoints about half the IESG and IAB members to two year terms.

ISOC responsibilities in this process are exclusively:

1. The ISOC President, acting alone, appoints the NomCom Chair.
2. The ISOC Board may appoint a liaison person to the NomCom.
3. The ISOC Board approves (or rejects) the slate of IAB nominees brought forward by the NomCom.
4. The ISOC President, acting alone or with an arbiter, arbitrates any formal disputes raised during the NomCom process.
5. If a recall petition is brought forward against any IAB or IESG member, the ISOC President, acting alone, appoints a Recall Committee Chair.

Note that the NomCom process is highly confidential until the nominees have been approved. [RFC 3777](#) is the current definition of the NomCom process.

## **2. Responsibilities in the IETF standards process**

The IETF standards process includes an appeals procedure for dispute resolution. Appeals progress from the WG level to the IESG, and then to the IAB if the appellant is

unsatisfied. The IAB decision on an appeal is final with respect to the question of whether or not the Internet standards procedures have been followed and with respect to all questions of technical merit. Further recourse is available only in cases in which the procedures themselves are claimed to be inadequate or insufficient to the protection of the rights of all parties in a fair and open Internet Standards Process. Claims on this basis may be made to the ISOC Board. The Trustees' decision upon completion of their review shall be final with respect to all aspects of the dispute.

At this writing, no such appeals have ever been brought to the ISOC Board.

The appeals procedure is defined in [RFC 2026](#), section 6.5. The IESG and IAB have interpreted it as being applicable to any decision taken during the execution of the standards process, not just to matters explicitly defined in RFC 2026.

### ***3. Ensuring the chain of responsibility***

To ensure that the chain of responsibility implied by the above is complete, in particular because ISOC carries liability insurance for the IETF, it is considered necessary for the ISOC Board to formally accept all IETF documents that define or modify the standards process. The word "accept" is chosen carefully to respect the IETF's autonomous self-governance. Thus, Board Resolutions are necessary from time to time to accept new or updated documents. The RFCs that define process rules are published in the "Best Current Practice" category.

### ***4. Suggested ISOC Board Resolution***

It has been noticed that not all IETF process documents have been formally accepted by the ISOC Board, in some cases by oversight and in others due to minor updates of earlier versions.

The Board is invited to consider the following draft resolution, which is designed to avoid the need to refer to all previous resolutions on this topic:

**RESOLVED**, that the Board of Trustees accepts or confirms its acceptance of the IETF process documents current at this time, and accepts the responsibilities of ISOC as described in these documents, namely:

- [RFC2026] Bradner, S., "The Internet Standards Process -- Revision 3", BCP 9, RFC 2026, October 1996.
- [RFC2418] Bradner, S., "IETF Working Group Guidelines and Procedures", BCP 25, RFC 2418, September 1998.
- [RFC2850] Internet Architecture Board and B. Carpenter, "Charter of the Internet Architecture Board (IAB)", BCP 39, RFC 2850, May 2000.

- [RFC3005] Harris, S., "IETF Discussion List Charter", BCP 45, RFC 3005, November 2000.
- [RFC3184] Harris, S., "IETF Guidelines for Conduct", BCP 54, RFC 3184, October 2001.
- [RFC3677] Daigle, L. and Internet Architecture Board, "IETF ISOC Board of Trustee Appointment Procedures", BCP 77, RFC 3677, December 2003.
- [RFC3683] Rose, M., "A Practice for Revoking Posting Rights to IETF mailing lists", BCP 83, RFC 3683, February 2004.
- [RFC3777] Galvin, J., "IAB and IESG Selection, Confirmation, and Recall Process: Operation of the Nominating and Recall Committees", BCP 10, RFC 3777, June 2004.
- [RFC3933] Klensin, J. and S. Dawkins, "A Model for IETF Process Experiments", BCP 93, RFC 3933, November 2004.
- [RFC3934] Wasserman, M., "Updates to RFC 2418 Regarding the Management of IETF Mailing Lists", BCP 94, RFC 3934, October 2004.
- [RFC3967] Bush, R. and T. Narten, "Clarifying when Standards Track Documents may Refer Normatively to Documents at a Lower Level", BCP 97, RFC 3967, December 2004.
- [RFC3978] Bradner, S., "IETF Rights in Contributions", BCP 78, RFC 3978, March 2005.
- [RFC3979] Bradner, S., "Intellectual Property Rights in IETF Technology", BCP 79, RFC 3979, March 2005.
- [RFC4071] Austein, R. and B. Wijnen, "Structure of the IETF Administrative Support Activity (IASA)", BCP 101, RFC 4071, April 2005.
- [RFC4333] Huston, G. and B. Wijnen, "The IETF Administrative Oversight Committee (IAOC) Member Selection Guidelines and Process", BCP 113, RFC 4333, December 2005.
- [RFC4371] Carpenter, B. and L. Lynch, "BCP 101 Update for IPR Trust", BCP 101, RFC 4371, January 2006.
- [RFC4748] S. Bradner, Ed., "RFC 3978 Update to Recognize the IETF Trust", BCP 78, RFC 4748, October 2006.

## ***Further reading***

The “Newcomer’s Training” offered at each IETF meeting gives a good general introduction to the standards process: see <http://edu.ietf.org/newcomer>. The “Internet Standards Process” link on the [IETF home page](#) is also of value.

A guide to RFCs relevant to the IETF process can be found at <http://tools.ietf.org/id/draft-carpenter-procdoc-roadmap>. Not all of these are part of the formal process, so the list requiring ISOC Board acceptance is much shorter. A specific description of the ISOC/IETF relationship is in [RFC 2031](#).