Network Working Group
Request for Comments: 1602
Obsoletes: 1310
Category: Informational

Internet Architecture Board and
Internet Engineering Steering Group

March 1994

The Internet Standards Process -- Revision 2

Status of this Memo

This memo provides information for the Internet community. This memo does not specify an Internet standard of any kind. Distribution of this memo is unlimited.

Notice

This informational memo presents the current procedures for creating and documenting Internet Standards. This document is provisional, pending legal review and concurrence of the Internet Society Trustees. It is being published in this form to keep the Internet Community informed as to the current status of policies and procedures for Internet Standards work.

Abstract

This document is a revision of RFC 1310, which defined the official procedures for creating and documenting Internet Standards.

This revision (revision 2) includes the following major changes:

(a) The new management structure arising from the POISED Working Group is reflected. These changes were agreed to by the IETF plenary and by the IAB and IESG in November 1992 and accepted by the ISOC Board of Trustees at their December 1992 meeting.

(b) Prototype status is added to the non-standards track maturity levels (Section 2.4.1).

(c) The Intellectual Property Rights section is completely revised, in accordance with legal advice. Section 5 of this document replaces Sections 5 and 6 of RFC-1310. The new section 5 has been reviewed by legal counsel to the Internet Society.

(d) An appeals procedure is added (Section 3.6).

(e) The wording of sections 1 and 1.2 has been changed to clarify the relationships that exist between the Internet Society and the IAB, the IESG, the IETF, and the Internet Standards process.

(f) An Appendix B has been added, listing the contact points for the RFC editor, the IANA, the IESG, the IAB and the ISOC. The "future issues" are now listed in Appendix C.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This memo documents the process currently used by the Internet community for the standardization of protocols and procedures. The Internet Standards process is an activity of the Internet Society that is organized and managed on behalf of the Internet community by the Internet Architecture Board (IAB) and the Internet Engineering Steering Group.

1.1 Internet Standards

The Internet, a loosely-organized international collaboration of autonomous, interconnected networks, supports host-to-host communication through voluntary adherence to open protocols and procedures defined by Internet Standards. There are also many isolated internets, i.e., sets of interconnected networks, which are not connected to the Internet but use the Internet Standards.

Internet Standards were once limited to those protocols composing what has been commonly known as the "TCP/IP protocol suite". However, the Internet has been evolving towards the support of multiple protocol suites, especially the Open Systems Interconnection (OSI) suite. The Internet Standards process described in this document is concerned with all protocols, procedures, and conventions that are used in or by the Internet, whether or not they are part of the TCP/IP protocol suite. In the case of protocols developed and/or standardized by non-Internet organizations, however, the Internet Standards process may apply only to the application of the protocol or procedure in the Internet context, not to the specification of the protocol itself.

In general, an Internet Standard is a specification that is stable and well-understood, is technically competent, has multiple, independent, and interoperable implementations with substantial operational experience, enjoys significant public support, and is recognizably useful in some or all parts of the Internet.

The procedures described in this document are designed to be fair, open and objective; to reflect existing (proven) practice; and to be flexible.

- These procedures are intended to provide a fair, open, and objective basis for developing, evaluating, and adopting Internet Standards. They provide ample opportunity for participation and comment by all interested parties. At each stage of the standardization process, a specification is repeatedly discussed and its merits debated in open meetings and/or public electronic mailing lists, and it is made available for review via world-wide on-line directories.

- These procedures are explicitly aimed at recognizing and adopting generally-accepted practices. Thus, a candidate specification is implemented and tested for correct operation and interoperability by multiple independent parties and utilized in increasingly demanding environments, before it can be adopted as an Internet Standard.

- These procedures provide a great deal of flexibility to adapt to the wide variety of circumstances that occur in the standardization process. Experience has shown this flexibility to be vital in achieving the goals listed above.

The goal of technical competence, the requirement for prior implementation and testing, and the need to allow all interested parties to comment, all require significant time and effort. On the other hand, today's rapid development of networking technology places an urgency on timely development of standards. The Internet standardization rules described here are intended to balance these conflicting goals. The process is believed to be as short and simple as possible without undue sacrifice of technical competence, prior testing, or openness and fairness.

In summary, the goals for the Internet standards process are:

* technical excellence;

* prior implementation and testing;

* clear, short, and easily understandable documentation;

* openness and fairness; and

* timeliness.

In outline, the process of creating an Internet Standard is straightforward: a specification undergoes a period of development and several iterations of review by the Internet community and

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