IETF Administrative Strategic Plan 2024

Background

As set out in RFC 8711, the IETF Administration LLC (IETF LLC) was established to provide administrative support to the IETF. It has no authority over the standards development activities of the IETF. The responsibilities of the IETF LLC are:

- **Operations**. The IETF LLC is responsible for supporting the ongoing operations of the IETF, including meetings and non-meeting activities.

- **Finances**. The IETF LLC is responsible for managing the IETF's finances and budget.

- **Fundraising**. The IETF LLC is responsible for raising money on behalf of the IETF.

- **Compliance**. The IETF LLC is responsible for establishing and enforcing policies to ensure compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and rules.

Introduction

This Strategic Plan sets out the strategy the IETF LLC aims to follow over the next 3-5 years, within the scope of its responsibilities as set out above. This strategy comprises the following components:

1. **Linkages.** The organizations and communities that the IETF LLC is linked to and how that linkage is the top-level driver of the IETF LLC strategy.

2. **Mission**. This is a literal definition of what the IETF LLC does. The mission rarely changes in the lifetime of the company.

3. **Values**. These define how the company behaves as it follows its mission. These may change over time to reflect broader social changes.

4. **Strategic Goals**. The highest priority goals of the IETF LLC. These may be short-, medium- or long-term goals or a mix. These are the big picture of what

the IETF LLC is aiming to do in the next 3-5 years and so are the key setting that the board expects the company to follow.

5. **Strategic Transformations**. These detail the changes that need to be made in order to achieve the strategic goals.   Each transformation details the current state and the desired state to transform into. These transformations should be achievable within 1-3 years.

The next level below this Strategic Plan is the various operational plans such as the IETF Comms Plan and the ED Goals, which are where specific projects and specific measures of success are defined.

Linkages

As set out in RFC 8711, the IETF LLC provides the corporate legal home for the IETF, the Internet Architecture Board (IAB), and the Internet Research Task Force (IRTF), and financial support for the operation of the RFC Editor. In addition, the IETF LLC provides financial support for the operation of the IETF Trust.

Consequently, this strategic plan should clearly reflect the plans and goals of the IETF/IRTF/IAB, where they exist.

Furthermore, as the IETF community is a dynamic one, with leaders and other participants changing at a higher rate than the 3-5 year horizon of this strategic plan, the IETF LLC commits that it will adjust this plan should IETF consensus shift

Mission

The best possible support corporation to the IETF/IRTF/IAB.

Values

- **Trusted**. The IETF LLC will uphold the values and policies of the IETF/IRTF/IAB as if they were its own.
- **Transparent**. The IETF community can expect the IETF LLC to keep it informed about its work and to keep comprehensive records which are public by default and only make them confidential where there is specific justification.
- **Responsive**. The IETF LLC will act consistently with the documented consensus of the IETF community, adapt its decisions in response to

consensus-based community guidance, and engage with the community to obtain consensus-based guidance for how it operates where none exists.
- **Diligent**. The IETF LLC will always do its job diligently by following professional best practice, acting ethically and minimizing risks.
- **Evidence-led**. The IETF LLC will use evidence, both qualitative and quantitative, as the primary driver of its decision making.
- **Focused**. The IETF LLC will focus solely on its defined role and within its defined mandate.
- **Equitable.** The IETF LLC will deal with all members of the IETF community equitably regardless of sex, race, geography, culture, religion, age, health or other status.

Strategic Goals

As the IETF LLC is a support organization to the IETF/IRTF/IAB, the strategic goals should ideally reflect their strategic goals. However, as those are neither well understood nor well defined, some assumptions are required.

1. To support the IETF in being the standards development organization (SDO) of choice for those who want to develop Internet protocols that deploy at scale.

2. To provide a high quality and efficient RFC editing and publication service.

3. To support the IETF/IRTF/IAB in building a strong and diverse community of participants at all stages of the participant journey.

4. To secure long-term funding for the IETF LLC/IETF/IRTF/IAB.

5. To ensure the value of the IETF is well articulated to stakeholders.

6. To maintain the IETF LLC as a professional organization that fully meets its values and has strong community support and approval.

7. To deliver a suite of tools that is up-to-date, efficient and well regarded by participants and supporting staff.

8. To provide the high quality planning and operational services required for the IETF to hold productive meetings both in-person and online.

9. To make IETF infrastructure and services, in particular IETF Meetings, as fairly accessible as possible, while still operating within resource constraints.

Strategic Transformations

These are the key strategic transformations that the IETF LLC aims to see delivered over the three-year term of this strategy. The listing of a transformation below does not imply that the IETF LLC takes responsibility for that, as many of these have a different group as the lead responsible body, or broad community responsibility, and the role of the IETF LLC in these cases is to support and contribute to that transformation.

Transformations: Strategic Planning

#	From		To
1	IESG neither seeks nor receives any professional support for any strategic planning they might wish to adopt.	→	IESG uses the LLC to provide professional support for their strategic planning, as required.
2	Slow progress by the IETF in addressing some long-standing and important strategic issues.	→	The IETF makes significant progress on addressing long-standing and important strategic issues.

The IETF LLC now has three years of experience with strategic planning and delivering its strategy, and this is now well embedded. The IETF LLC pays careful attention to developments in the IESG, IAB and broader community and the strategy has adapted as needed in response to those developments.

The IESG does not operate a formal strategy process but does regularly discuss strategic themes and potential strategic action on long-standing and important issues such as the under-representation of women in the IETF.   The IETF LLC believes that the IESG would benefit from being able to use the IETF LLC for strategic support, in the same way it uses the IETF LLC for other professional services. Such professional services could include:

- Research and identification of issues and options
- Development of strategic plans
- Implementation management or coordination

This would make it much easier for the IESG to develop and implement strategy and enable the IETF to tackle these long-standing and important issues.

Care will need to be taken to ensure that the community appointed volunteers to the IESG maintain control over these processes, given the other demands on their time and the potential for regular turnover.

Transformations: Websites and Content

#	From		To
3	No overall strategy for the development of content and engagement channels, with sporadic use of measurement and partially defined participant journey.	→	Content and engagement channels developed and managed under an overall strategy, based on comprehensive measurement and a well defined participant journey.
4	Website and other channels beset with out of date content, poor information architecture, poor content coordination across sites and with important gaps in content.	→	Up to date, effective content with all the important subjects/paths covered, good content coordination between sites and channels, and an established process to keep it this way.
5	Multiple content management systems in use with some out of date, hard to maintain and poorly integrated with IETF systems	→	Small set of modern, fully featured and well integrated content management systems.
6	The IETF retains old content and old data, in many cases past the point of usefulness.	→	A strategy in place for archiving and/or deletion of old content and data.

The IETF LLC now has a clearly articulated value proposition for the IETF that it uses for engagement with current and potential sponsors, and reasonable externally focused content based around that. Further improvement is needed, but not at the level of a strategic transformation.

Looking wider, the IETF has a broader issue with a large volume of content that has developed through a combination of volunteer contributions, focused projects and organic growth. The IESG is the organizational owner of IETF content and websites and has delegated to the Director of Communications a content curation and coordination role for many years, both when at ISOC and now at the IETF LLC. This now needs a higher level of management and the IETF LLC appears to be the only

part of the IETF with the inclination and resources to do that. The IETF LLC has been moving into that role for some time with a rolling program of tackling specific areas of content (e.g. authors, WG chairs, meetings). This will not replace the ownership role of the IESG.

The IETF LLC has partially developed a formal participant journey, which it uses to map out content coverage, and is increasingly using web analytics to understand how that content is used. The next step is to turn this into a formal strategy for the development of content and engagement channels.

To support this strategy, some of our websites need the underlying content management system replaced and new features developed.

The approach to old content and data has been for many years to avoid deleting anything if one or two people complain, leading us to maintain old websites and large sets of unused data. A new strategy would see sensible decisions made about this data and content, based on community consultation, with the aim of reducing the operational burden.

Transformations: Community Engagement

#	From		To
7	Community engagement on IETF LLC services is often based on opinion and personal perspective, not data or broader principles.	→	Community engagements on IETF LLC services largely based on data and broader established principles.
8	IETF LLC data used for informing community discussions is hard to find and difficult to use.	→	IETF LLC data readily accessible and in highly usable formats.

The IETF LLC and Secretariat have moved past the point where they respond to every request/suggestion/complaint by changing the way they do things, and changes to processes are now made on a more measured and planned approach. The improvement in measured satisfaction ratings and the reduction in list flare-ups are strong evidence that this approach is delivering better services.

While many participants have responded well to this more managed approach, the IETF LLC still sees discussions of and feedback on IETF LLC services overly focused on personal opinion and experience. The IETF LLC can improve this by making its data much more accessible and by educating participants on the consensus principles

under which it operates (e.g. those regarding onerous visa processes documented in RFC 8718)

Transformations: Funding

#	From		To
9	While the majority of our funding comes through multiple sources (ISOC and global sponsors) it relies on a small number of interconnected industries	→	Funding comes from a diversity of sponsors , including new types of sponsor such as foundations.
10	The IETF Endowment currently sits at just under $4m with no new large donors in some years.		An endowment in the tens of millions with at least a small set of large donors outside of the current pool.
11	Gaps in what the IETF can offer to prospective donors leading to slow or missed opportunities.		Full range of offerings needed to satisfy prospective donors.

The IETF LLC has secured a long-term funding agreement with ISOC and has a healthy and growing set of sponsors. However growth of the IETF Endowment has been slow and in particular we are yet to engage with new funders outside of our existing donor industries. Much of the work necessary to approach new funders is in place including a well articulated and compelling case for support and multiple channels to receive funds, but more work needs to be done.

Large donors, such as foundations, often provide a package of funding. For example, a portion of the funding may need to be dedicated to outreach and so the IETF LLC will need to work with the IAB and IESG to have plans pre-prepared on how to use outreach funds, which can then be shared with potential donors.

Large donors will also generally expect specific outcomes and regular reporting. While the IETF will always act independently and never allow external funding to influence its work, it is possible to satisfy this requirement by documenting existing work and its expected outcomes. For example, work that increases privacy protections.

Transformations: Meetings

#	From		To
12	Current implementation of RFC 8718 (venue selection) guidance leads to a restricted choice of venues, difficult judgment calls and does not fairly distribute the pain.	→	New implementation of RFC 8718 (and if necessary a -bis document) that provides more venue options, more fairly distributes the pain and reduces the difficult judgment calls.
13	*Intentionally left blank*		
14	Part way towards measuring and offsetting the carbon emissions of IETF meetings.	→	Carbon emissions from IETF meetings are fully measured and offset.
15	Good remote participation	→	Highest quality of remote participation possible
16	Little measurements and analysis of interims and their impact	→	Better data on interims and how they are used, to inform the IESG.
17	IETF Meetings regularly make a deficit	→	IETF meetings regularly make a modest surplus.

Meetings continue to be a major area of focus for the IETF LLC and now that the IETF is back to a normal schedule of onsite meetings the process of choosing meeting venues is increasingly under the spotlight. The process for selecting a venue, which implements the guidance in RFC 8718, was last revised and consulted on in 2020 and is already in need of a revision.

The work on offsetting carbon emissions is close to the final stage of identifying and procuring carbon offsets, but this is still sufficiently important to be a top level strategic transformation.

There has been a lot of work on remote participation leading to a significantly improved experience. However, further improvement is sought, particularly around the social engagement aspect.

Interim meetings have also seen a lot of work making them easier to book and run, but little data is available on how they are used.

Finally, the finances of IETF meetings remain problematic and more work is needed to reach a point where meetings regularly make a modest surplus.

Transformations: Tools

#	From		To
18	Only parts of the overall tools landscape have a strategy in place and these were developed in ad-hoc processes.	→	Well thought out and documented tools strategy and plans with community buy in and high transparency.
19	Inconsistent user experience.	→	Professionally designed user experience
20	Poorly instrumented tools providing limited data for trouble-shooting and planning		Well instrumented tools and data used for troiuble-shooting and planning.
21	Infrastructure is no longer fit-for-purpose.		Fully migrated to new fit-for-purpose infrastructure

The IETF LLC has invested heavily in tools, primarily on people and specialist expertise, with a clear intention to carry on this investment for some years. The impact of that investment has been clearly felt with huge improvements across the full suite of tools and much greater engagement from the community.

The major next step is to migrate all IETF IT onto a new infrastructure that operates and is managed in a very different way. This is expected to lead to significant improvements in performance, reliability and adaptability.

The infrastructure changes came from the development of a strategy, driven by community needs and with strong community input. This same process will now be used to fill the remaining gaps to create an overall strategic plan with the aim of a similar transformational outcome.

Part of this strategy is the use of specialist expertise to supplement the expertise of staff and volunteers. The use of specialist security contractors and specialist database contractors is firmly established, with the next phase being the use of User Experience researchers and designers. Underpinning this is a move to instrument our tools to provide the necessary data for trouble-shooting and planning.

Transformations: RFC Editing and Publication

#	From		To
22	Old and difficult to maintain RPC operational tools that do not support process measurement and optimization.	→	Brand new suite of RPC operational tools that actively support process measurement and optimization.
23	SLA that is no longer fit-for-purpose is regularly unmet.	→	New SLA that is fit for purpose and is comfortably met.
24	Complex and difficult I-D authoring tools and technical process	→	A simple to use and fully featured I-D authoring tool and simplified technical process.
25	Low utility and low authority RFC Editor website	→	High utility and high authority RFC Editor website
26	Significant external (outside of the IETF) misunderstanding of the status of RFCs (and I-Ds).	→	Where it is important, external people understand the status of I-Ds and RFCs.

This section is new to this strategy now that the new RFC Editor model has been designed and implemented.

The most pressing matter is the need for a completely new set of tools for the RFC Production Center (RPC) because the current toolset does not support a move towards a more efficient, higher productivity RPC, nor is it RFC 10k compliant. This is a major project, already underway and expected to complete in 2024. That should then enable the measurement necessary to develop a new, fit-for-purpose SLA.

The second major issue is that the I-D authoring process is complex and difficult because it requires the use of multiple tools, installed and managed in different ways and poorly integrated. A complete rethink and redesign of this landscape is required.

The RFC Editor website is old with poor user experience, limited functionality and a messy information architecture. As well as poorly serving the consumers of RFCs, this undermines the role of the site as the authoritative site for RFCs. A complete redesign is needed, based on sound user experience research.

From a communications perspective, there is a long standing issue of people misunderstanding the status of I-Ds and RFCs that needs to be addressed.