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Rights Contributors Provide to IETF Intellectual Property Management
Corporation
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Abstract

The IETF policies about rights in Contributions to the IETF are designed to ensure that such Contributions can be made available to the IETF and Internet communities while permitting the authors to retain as many rights as possible. This memo is an update to [RFC5378] and retains the same consistent policies about intellectual property rights in Contributions to the IETF and contains the edits needed to recognize the IETF Intellectual Property Management Corporation (IPMC) as the successor to the IETF Trust. This memo updates [RFC5378].

About This Document

This note is to be removed before publishing as an RFC.

The latest revision of this draft can be found at <https://gitnnelg.github.io/ietf-contribution-rights/draft-deen-gen-ipmc-contributor-rights.html>. Status information for this document may be found at <https://datatracker.ietf.org/doc/draft-deen-gen-ipmc-contributor-rights/>.

Discussion of this document takes place on the genarea Working Group mailing list (<mailto:tlp-interest@ietf.org>), which is archived at <https://mailarchive.ietf.org/arch/browse/tlp-interest/>. Subscribe at <https://www.ietf.org/mailman/listinfo/tlp-interest/>.

Source for this draft and an issue tracker can be found at <https://github.com/gitnnelg/ietf-contribution-rights>.

Status of This Memo

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1. Conventions and Definitions

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "NOT RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in BCP 14 [RFC2119] [RFC8174] when, and only when, they appear in all capitals, as shown here.

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- e. "IETF": in the context of this document, the IETF includes all individuals who participate in meetings, working groups, mailing lists, functions, and other activities that are organized or initiated by ISOC, the IESG, or the IAB under the general designation of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), but solely to the extent of such participation.
- f. "IETF Documents": RFCs and Internet-Drafts that are used in the IETF Standards Process as defined in 1(g). This is identical to the "IETF stream" defined in [RFC4844].
- g. "IETF Standards Process": the activities undertaken by the IETF in any of the settings described in 1(a) above.
- h. "IETF Trust": a trust established under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, USA, in order to hold and administer intellectual property rights for the benefit of the IETF. The IETF Intellectual Property Management Corporation replaced the IETF Trust in 2025 as the successor organization.
- i. "Internet-Draft": temporary documents used in the IETF Standards Process. Internet-Drafts are posted on the IETF web site by the IETF Secretariat. As noted in Section 2.2 of RFC 2026, Internet-Drafts have a nominal maximum lifetime of six months in the IETF Secretariat's public directory.

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k. "RFC": the publication series used by the IETF among others. RFCs are published by the RFC Editor. Although RFCs may be superseded in whole or in part by subsequent RFCs, the text of an RFC is not altered once published in RFC form. (See [RFC2026] Section 2.1.)

l. "Reasonably and personally known": something an individual knows personally or, because of the job the individual holds, would reasonably be expected to know. This wording is used to indicate that an organization cannot purposely keep an individual in the dark about certain information just to avoid the disclosure requirement.

m. "Non-IETF documents": Internet-Drafts that are submitted to the RFC Editor independently of the IETF Standards Process. (See Section 4.)

n. "IETF Intellectual Property Management": IETF IPM, the role of holding and administering the intellectual property rights for the IETF.

o. "IETF Intellectual Property Management Corporation": IETF IPMC, A Delaware corporation established in 2023 as the legal entity supporting the IETF IPM role and the successor entity to the IETF Trust.

2. Introduction

In all matters of copyright and document procedures, the intent is to benefit the Internet community and the public at large, while respecting the legitimate rights of others.

Under the laws of most countries and current international treaties (for example the "Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Work" [BERNE]), authors obtain numerous rights in the works they produce automatically upon producing them. These rights include copyrights, moral rights, and other rights. In many cases, if the author produces a work within the scope of his or her employment, most of those rights are usually assigned to the employer, either by operation of law or, in many cases, under contract. (The Berne Convention names some rights as "inalienable", which means that the author retains them in all cases.)

In order for Contributions to be used within the IETF Standards Process, including when they are published as Internet-Drafts or RFCs, certain limited rights must be granted to the IETF Intellectual Property Management Corporation (IPMC) , which then grants the necessary rights to the IETF. In addition, Contributors must make representations to the IETF IPMC and the IETF regarding their ability to grant these rights.

Section 1 provides definitions used in these policies. Sections 3 and 4 of this document explain the rationale for these provisions. Sections 1, 2, 5, and 6 of this document are normative, the other sections are informative. RFC 3979 BCP79 [RFC3979] deals with rights, including possible patent rights, in technologies developed or specified as part of the IETF Standards Process. This document is not intended to address those issues.

This memo obsoletes RFCs [RFC5378], [RFC3978] and [RFC4748] and, with RFC 3979 BCP79 and [RFC5377], replaces Section 10 of RFC 2026 [RFC2026].

This document is not intended as legal advice. Readers are advised to consult their own legal advisors if they would like a legal interpretation of their rights or the rights of the IETF IPMC [RFC4371] in any Contributions they make.

2.1. No Retroactive Effect

This memo does not retroactively obtain additional rights from Contributions that predate the date that the IETF Intellectual Property Management Corporation announces the adoption of these procedures.

2.2. IETF Trust Successor IETF Intellectual Property Management Corporation

In 2025 the IETF Intellectual Property Management Corporation (IETF IPMC) replaced the IETF Trust providing intellectual property management to the IETF.

The rights granted and held by the IETF Trust were assigned to the IETF IPMC. Mentions of the IETF Trust in this memo and prior versions should be understood to now refer to the IETF IPMC.

2.3. Changes from RFC5378

This document does not change the IETF intellectual property rights from what is described in [RFC5378] other than to update mentions of the IETF Trust with the IETF Intellectual Property Management Corporation and references and links previously to the IETF Trust website to the IETF IPMC website.

3. Exposition of Why These Procedures Are the Way They Are

3.1. Rights Granted in Contributions

The IETF IPMC and the IETF must obtain the right to publish an IETF Contribution as an RFC or an Internet-Draft from the Contributors.

A primary objective of this policy is to obtain from the document authors only the non-exclusive rights that are needed to develop and publish IETF Documents and to use IETF Contributions in the IETF Standards Process and potentially elsewhere.

The authors retain all other rights, but cannot withdraw the above rights from the IETF IPMC and the IETF.

It is important to note that under this document, Contributors are required to grant certain rights to the IETF IPMC (see Section 5.3.), which holds all IETF-related intellectual property on behalf of the IETF community. The IETF IPMC will, in turn, grant a sublicense of these rights to all IETF participants for use in the IETF Standards Process (see Section 5.4.). This sublicense is necessary for the standards development work of the IETF to continue. In addition, the IETF IPMC may grant certain other sublicenses of the rights that it is granted under this document. In granting such other sublicenses, the IETF IPMC will be guided and bound by documents such as [RFC5377].

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collective work constituting such RFC upon the submission of such RFC for publication, and acknowledges that a copyright notice acknowledging the IETF IPMC's ownership of the copyright in such RFC will be included in the published RFC.

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republication of the work of another standards development organization. Such exceptions must be approved on an individual basis by the IAB.

7. Changes since RFC5378

This document does not change the intellectual property policies from [RFC5378], those remain as they previously were.

The edits made are replacing mentions of the IETF Trust with the IETF Intellectual Property Management Corporation (IPMC) and mentions of the IETF Trust website with the IETF IPMC website as needed to recognized the change from the IETF Trust to the IETF IPMC.

8. Security Considerations

This memo relates to the IETF process, not any particular technology. There are security considerations when adopting any technology, but there are no known issues of security with IETF Contribution rights policies.

9. IANA Considerations

This document has no IANA actions.

10. References

10.1. Normative References

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- [RFC4844] Daigle, L., Ed. and IAB, "The RFC Series and RFC Editor", RFC 4844, DOI 10.17487/RFC4844, July 2007, <<https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc4844>>.

10.2. Informative References

- [BERNE] "Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Work", n.d., <<http://www.wipo.int/treaties/en/ip/>>.

Appendix A. Acknowledgments

The editor would like to acknowledge the contributions of Scott Bradner and Jorge L. Contreras as the editors of RFC5378 and the IETF IPR Working Group that developed RFC5378.

Appendix

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