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Community considerations on DNS WG structures at IETF
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Abstract

There has been an increasing level of discussion within the IETF about the best Working Group (WG) structures for handling the wide array of DNS work being conducted within the IETF. Wes Hardaker was asked to gather information from the community at large through email, hallway discussions, and meetings and create a small team to discuss potential structural changes to be shared with the community. This document is the result of that effort.

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	2
1.1. Working Group Names Used In This Document	3
2. Findings	3
2.1. Observed Commonality in Feedback Received	4
2.2. Feedback That Did Not Achieve Common Agreement	5
3. Recommendations	6
3.1. Example Dispatch Scenarios	8
4. Security Considerations	9
5. IANA Considerations	9
Acknowledgments	10
Original project announcement	10
Authors' Addresses	14

1. Introduction

There has been an increasing level of discussion within the IETF about the best Working Group (WG) structures for handling the wide array of DNS work being conducted within the IETF. Wes Hardaker was asked to gather information from the community at large through email, hallway discussions, and meetings and create a small team to discuss potential structural changes to be shared with the community. See Appendix "Original project announcement" for the announcement. This document is the result of that effort.

The DNS@IETF recommendation small team (which consisted of Wes Hardaker, Joe Abley and Lars-Johan Liman) reviewed all materials collected between September 2025 through March 2026 about what respondents thought about the effectiveness of the DNS related WGs within the IETF. Material reviewed (118 pages) included relevant e-mail (both public and private), notes taken during discussions, and

WG/Area recordings from IETF meeting proceeding archives. After review, the small team met multiple times in early 2026 to extract any commonality among the expressed opinions and developed recommendations based on them to offer the DNS community and the IESG.

This document describes the small team's findings (Section 2), their derived recommendations (Section 3) and topics where the team did not find sufficient commonality within the collected opinions (Section 2.2).

1.1. Working Group Names Used In This Document

The team use a few new working group names below, but recognize both these recommendations and these not-yet-existing working group names are subject to change and thus should be considered placeholders. It will be up to the IESG and the community to decide what groups and their names should actually be used. These are terse definitions that are further defined in the rest of the document.

- * DNSPROT: A potential new working group dedicated to the development of the DNS protocol features itself.
- * DNSDEP: A working group dedicated to developing documents related to the deployment of the DNS protocol. Note that in discussions, some believe this should be called DNSOP still or potentially DNSOPS.
- * DNSDISPATCH: A working group dedicated to recommending where new DNS proposals should be directed for potential adoption.
- * DNSOP: the still existing (in March 2026) DNSOP working group. Note that at the time this writing the current charter of the DNSOP working group includes all of the tasks described above in the DNSPROT, DNSDEP and DNSDISPATCH group.

2. Findings

The small team found some clear points within the collected opinions. These findings are listed here and were later distilled into recommendations (Section 3). Note that items listed here do not necessarily indicate unanimous agreement, but do reflect a significant majority among the opinions. Note that some of the concerns listed below are at least partially addressed later in the recommendations section.

2.1. Observed Commonality in Feedback Received

- * A separated DNSDISPATCH mechanism would be beneficial for helping decide where and how new work should be conducted.
 - Working groups can then concentrate on the work they are chartered for.
 - DNSDISPATCH followers know where to track new works of interest.
 - A downside of this approach could be a potential slow down of new work, and an increase in agenda time in face-to-face IETF meetings.
- * It would help DNS engineers within the IETF to create two groups: one for operations and one for protocol development.
 - One group should concentrate on operations and hopefully streamline the process to get these from drafts to RFCs.
 - One group should concentrate on longer term protocol development efforts, potentially in a higher-volume discussion.
 - An issue mentioned with splitting of work into separate groups is that some people would need to attend and participate in both groups anyway. Though this is clear for some IETF participants, there were indications it doesn't apply to everyone. Some participants may also be able to concentrate more centrally on one, and merely watch the other.
- * No structure can solve the "human problems".
 - It will still be up to the area directors and chairs to deal with common management issues and disagreements, for example.
 - This includes how and where work is handled in more nuanced cases.
 - WG chairs need to be supported in handling these situations.
 - WG chairs MUST coordinate within their own groups and between their group and other related groups. Collaboration needs to occur between all DNS@IETF WGs and IESG Area Directors (ADs) about all current DNS topics of concern.
- * Narrowly chartered working groups are necessary for more challenging development problems.

- DELEG and ADD were two examples referred to in discussions and comments, with DELEG being an especially agreed-upon example of a body of work that needed a separated, dedicated working group.

- * We did not receive enough feedback indicating that the other DNS groups not mentioned here, like DNSSD and REGEXT, need structural modifications. Thus we have no findings related to these groups and do not provide recommendations that affect them.

2.2. Feedback That Did Not Achieve Common Agreement

- * Always requiring running code.
 - Requiring running code before adoption had a wide set of opinions with no commonality among them.
 - Requiring running code before document publication had generally more agreement, but opinions varied about whether this was required for all types of documents.
 - Based on this, we believe each group will need to make their own decision on this matter.
- * Where to develop BCP documentation is an open question.
 - Some believe operational groups like DNS-OARC should drive BCP development.
 - However, there was general agreement that the publication of BCPs should remain in the IETF to ensure multiple protocol reference commonality remain within the IETF.
 - It may be that interim meetings held in conjunction with external conferences would be a good idea to better gather input from network operators managing DNS infrastructure.
- * Although a few people did suggest splitting the main DNS groups into three or more groups, most of the feedback received indicated that two primary groups would be sufficient. For example, some IETF participants believe there should be a DNSAPP or similar group focused on applications and protocols that make use of the DNS protocol. Furthermore, some people offered opinions that more than two would impose additional complications.
- * There was general disagreement about whether or not to close the existing DNSOP WG if new ones were formed, or whether it should be rechartered in the process.

- Some believed that a clean break would be beneficial to signal the change in structure.
- Others believed that DNSOP was already the right name and there was no need to change it, aside from narrowing its charter.

3. Recommendations

Based on the findings above (Section 2), the DNS@IETF small team extrapolated information from discussions to derive a set of suitable recommendations that the IESG ADs should consider:

- * Create a new DNSPROT (DNS Protocol) or similar group for working on protocol development and maintenance.
 - This group should have a fairly wide charter that tasks it with work on the DNS protocol itself.
 - One potential recommendation for deciding whether things belong in this group is whether or not the work was likely to develop special processing rules.
 - Documentation about protocol semantics should progress in DNSPROT.
- * Create a new DNSDEP (DNS Deployment) group for working on protocol deployment and operational concerns.
 - This group should have a fairly wide charter that tasks it with work that doesn't require special processing rules, needs algorithms or other simple IANA actions, or are BCPs that document existing behaviors.
 - Work should include guidance documents about "How you use the protocol". Examples such as algorithm rollover guidance, BCPs, split horizon considerations.
- * Create a DNSDISPATCH working group for providing guidance to authors about where new DNS work should be conducted.
 - This will alleviate the current DNSOP WG from needing to fulfill this role.

- To avoid introducing delays and agenda constraints (as discussed in Section 2), this group should conduct its work almost entirely over a mailing list. Only the more complex or difficult cases should require interim or, worst case, in-person meeting time. Ideally, in-person meetings should be rare.
- A significant portion of submissions to DNSDISPATCH can likely be handled quickly and efficiently.
- DNSDISPATCH can recommend dispatching work to any areas of the IETF, including but not limited to DNSPROT, DNSDEP, AD-sponsored, another-WG, a BOF, or the ISE.
- The DNSDISPATCH chairs should require that documents clearly articulate the problem space and proposed solution before consideration.
- DNSDISPATCH may decline to provide a recommendation for documents. This would include documents not within scope of the IETF or were not sufficiently mature to understand the problem or solution space, for example.
- Chairs of the DNSDISPATCH group need to be strict in managing, enforcing and carrying out its objective.
- The DNSDISPATCH group will not prioritize work within the other groups, and its dispatch decisions cannot result in automatic adoption. Each group will continue to follow its own processes for formal adoption.
- The DNS directorate will be a resource available to the DNSDISPATCH working group, just as it is available to other working groups.
- The DNSDISPATCH group might use a pool of willing shepherds to assist the chairs and authors with process related help for incoming documents.
- The dispatch group will make informed recommendations to authors and document where they should take their work.
 - o The output of a dispatch discussion should include a short shepherd write up (perhaps a paragraph in length)
 - o These should be light weight write ups that are sent to the mailing list for archiving. This should not require datatracker changes.

- o DNSDISPATCH chairs should create a light template as a boiler plate to be used by most cases.
 - DNS WGs MAY require, in their charter, that new work proposals first get a dispatch suggestion before being considered in their WG.
 - After a dispatch recommendation, document authors are encouraged to follow the recommendation and approach the relevant WG chairs, AD, ISE, etc with a follow-on request (including but not limited to adoption requests).
 - The chairs of the DNSDISPATCH group should work closely with the chairs of the other groups. They may need to work together for handling more difficult topics and to collaborate on advice or questions for the DNSDISPATCH WG participants.
- * Group management may be significantly different in each of these groups.
- With an effective split in functionality, each group may choose to have different forms of execution, meeting, progression, and publication requirement strategies.
 - For example, some groups may require running code, while others may not.
- * Documents may occasionally (hopefully rarely) need to move after being dispatched when the problem or solution scope changes during its development and refinement.
- For example, problems that become large may need to move to an entirely new group.
 - Sometimes, however, the dispatch and adoption location decision might have been wrong, but might as well stay in the current group.
 - The area director and WG chairs will need to handle this (rare) problem on a case by case basis.

3.1. Example Dispatch Scenarios

The DNS@IETF small team recognized that some examples might be helpful in better understanding how the envisioned DNSDISPATCH group might process incoming work. As such, we offer the following three example scenarios that highlight how dispatch workflows might happen.

1. Maxwell Coulomb writes a document that describes a new way that DNS can be used by DHCP clients. They take this document to DNSDISPATCH where, after some discussion (including references to other discussions in DHCP working groups), the chairs post a recommendation drawn from consensus to the list saying that in their opinion the best DNS working group for this document would be DNSDEP. Maxwell then approaches the DNSDEP chairs by sending a message to the chairs that includes a mailing list archive link to the DNSDISPATCH recommendation. The chairs review and decide that this is a good candidate document for DNSDEP and send a request for comment to the DNSDEP mailing list.
2. Marie Ampre writes a document that describes a new protocol for encoding video into linked, short ASCII messages, including examples of how this allows video to be published in the DNS. They take this document to DNSDISPATCH where, after some discussion, the chairs post a recommendation that this is not a good fit for any DNS working group since it does not really represent DNS-specific work. Thus, the chairs draw a consensus that a dispatch recommendation will not be provided.
3. Marmaduke Nxdomain writes a document in response to some operational problems that have been discussed in another forum, proposing some changes to DNS best practices to avoid such failures. After some discussion, including references to presentations and related observations surfaced in a recent DNS-OARC meeting, the chairs decide that this is a good candidate document for DNSDEP but that the document would benefit from some restructuring and rewriting first so that the substantive issues can be better considered in the working group. The chairs solicit a volunteer shepherd to help Marmaduke with the next steps. The shepherd helps Marmaduke update the text and later discuss the document with the DNSDEP chairs, including a reference to the DISDISPATCH recommendation.
4. Security Considerations
None
5. IANA Considerations
None

Acknowledgments

Wes greatly thanks the small team members (Lars-Johan Liman and Joe Abley) he corralled into helping him consume all of the review content, and for the insights they brought to the discussion about this problem space.

A significant number of people offered their opinions on this subject and we greatly appreciate everyone's time, energy and desire to help the IETF be as efficient as possible in the DNS space.

Original project announcement

The following text is the announcement about this opinion collection project that was sent to various DNS IETF lists on 2025-10-06 by Mohamed Boucadair in his role as the opsarea AD.

``` text

From: mohamed.boucadair@orange.com Subject: Kick-off DNS work  
structure consultation Date: Mon, 06 October 2025 07:49 UTC

Hi DNSOP, all, (+ all concerned WGs: opsawg, intarea, deleg, dnssd, add, dconn, regext)

### Background

As you know, DNS-related activities in the IETF are wide, affecting many other protocols within the IETF's standardization efforts. Because of this, the DNS and its adjacent work is carried out in a wide number of WGs and even areas (INT, OPS, ART).

Currently, DNSOP is acting as the central hub for much of the core DNS work and has been for the past decade or more (and prior to that in DNSEXT as well). But, the full history of the slowly evolving structure of the DNS related WGs is beyond the scope of this message (although certainly the lessons learned from the changing structure over time remain important to consider).

Recently there has been a flurry of hallway discussions about whether the current DNS-related WGs structures are working as efficiently as possible, and whether it is time to make some changes about where recommended DNS related work gets dispatched to and subsequently developed in. It may be that change is needed. It may be that no change is needed. However, it has become clear that a discussion needs to happen, and the results of that community discussion should drive any change to be implemented. See also the provisions about this discussion in the recent DNSOP Charter 1 (<https://datatracker.ietf.org/doc/charter-ietf-dnsop/>).

As indicated in my message 2 (<https://mailarchive.ietf.org/arch/msg/dnsop/9aztqcxfpgCEkhQT3LGxkWuMui8/>), and now that the first intermediate DNSOP chartering step is done, we want to hear from everyone about what is working, and what is not, with the current structure of DNS WGs. What are the requirements for creating the most optimal work environment? Specifically, should the current DNSOP structure be maintained, modified, etc.?

#### Mission

The main goals of this effort are as follows:

- \* Provide an overview of current IETF DNS landscape & interactions
- \* List issues/features with the current work structure
- \* Propose options to soften/mitigate the issues
- \* Sketch a transition plan
- \* Propose Charter(s) (New and/or Updates to existing ones)

Task leader, team, and Call for Feedback

In order to avoid impacting ongoing DNSOP work and given the load the DNSOP Chairs already experience, I decided that this discussion is better moderated by other community members than the DNSOP WG Chairs.

I'm delighted to announce that Wes Hardaker has agreed to collect information from the community to help me, other ADs/IESG decide what the best path forward is.

Wes and a small team will gather the thoughts and opinions of those working on the DNS within the IETF and distill them down to a set of recommendations for the IESG about whether the community believes that structural changes are needed or not and, if so, to what existing or new charters.

To accomplish this, we need help from the community. Specifically, we want feedback from everyone with an opinion on the subject (including from those who think "everything is fine as is").

Below is provided a list of sample questions that are worth considering (thanks Wes for the inputs), but opinions of any sort on the subject are welcome. Note that though Wes has his own opinions, he intends to only collect information from the community and will only respond with an acknowledgment and maybe follow on questions, if needed. Wes is willing to meet with anyone wanting to discuss this during IETF#124 in person or over a virtual meeting before hand.

After thoughts, opinions, and suggestions are collected from the community, Wes will be convening a small discussion team of interested parties to help review the collected material. If you're interested in helping on the review and recommendation team, please let Wes know. Responsible ADs, with Wes help, will decide on the small team membership later this year.

A timeline is included below detailing the course of events over the next 6 months.

Mailing List to collect feedback & discuss

A new mailing is created to collect public opinions and discussion: [dns-at-ietf@ietf.org](mailto:dns-at-ietf@ietf.org) (<mailto:dns-at-ietf@ietf.org>).

If you have opinions you don't want to share publicly, please send them to [dns-structure-anon@hardakers.net](mailto:dns-structure-anon@hardakers.net) (<mailto:dns-structure-anon@hardakers.net>) or to me and Wes or only to me and I will anonymize them before bringing them to the discussion team.

Information to be gathered

- \* How do we deal with the quantity of work that approaches DNSOP or similar?
- \* Is one overarching group like DNSOP good, or do we need an ops/protocol split like DNSOP and DNSEXT were in the past
  - and how do we ensure WGs/Chairs communicate and collaborate efficiently?
- \* What is the right combination of operational vs protocol maintenance group(s)?

- \* How to make sure that new work takes into account operational and deployment considerations?
- \* How do we dispatch new work coming into the IETF related to the DNS protocol?
  - DNSOP did this for the past few years.
  - Should small, contained proposals generally be dispatched to OPSAWG or similar?
  - Do we need a DNSDISPATCH group or leverage DISPATCH WG?
  - What is the right balance between a bunch of small groups vs one or a couple larger ones?
  - How to address different problem spaces and attract interested people?
  - What is the overhead on the participants that need to attend all these meetings?
  - How do we ensure there is enough expertise available?
- \* How do we ensure that there is sufficient support for things that are adopted (before they're adopted)?
- \* Do we have an over-arching policy for requiring running code/deployment(-promises) first, or is it per-WG?
- \* Is the current split between mDNS/EPP/RDAP/RPP, and full DNS working well?
- \* What should change?
- \* What shouldn't change?

Timeline

| +=====+                                     |  | +=====+       |  |
|---------------------------------------------|--|---------------|--|
| Event                                       |  | Expected Ends |  |
| +=====+                                     |  | +=====+       |  |
| OPSAREA Session discussion                  |  | IETF#124      |  |
| +-----+                                     |  | +-----+       |  |
| Collect feedback, suggestions, etc.         |  | Nov 31        |  |
| +-----+                                     |  | +-----+       |  |
| Analysis team craft recommendation(s)       |  | Jan 2026      |  |
| +-----+                                     |  | +-----+       |  |
| Team recommendations given to the community |  | Feb 2026      |  |
| +-----+                                     |  | +-----+       |  |
| Analysis team meets with IESG members       |  | Feb 2026      |  |
| +-----+                                     |  | +-----+       |  |
| IESG announces plans                        |  | IETF#125      |  |
| +-----+                                     |  | +-----+       |  |

Table 1

Thank you

Cheers, Med

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