

Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF)
Request for Comments: 8789
BCP: 9
Updates: 2026
Category: Best Current Practice
ISSN: 2070-1721

J. Halpern, Ed.
Ericsson
E. Rescorla, Ed.
Mozilla
June 2020

IETF Stream Documents Require IETF Rough Consensus

Abstract

This document requires that the IETF never publish any IETF Stream RFCs without IETF rough consensus. This updates RFC 2026.

Status of This Memo

This memo documents an Internet Best Current Practice.

This document is a product of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF). It represents the consensus of the IETF community. It has received public review and has been approved for publication by the Internet Engineering Steering Group (IESG). Further information on BCPs is available in Section 2 of RFC 7841.

Information about the current status of this document, any errata, and how to provide feedback on it may be obtained at <https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc8789>.

Copyright Notice

Copyright (c) 2020 IETF Trust and the persons identified as the document authors. All rights reserved.

This document is subject to BCP 78 and the IETF Trust's Legal Provisions Relating to IETF Documents (<https://trustee.ietf.org/license-info>) in effect on the date of publication of this document. Please review these documents carefully, as they describe your rights and restrictions with respect to this document. Code Components extracted from this document must include Simplified BSD License text as described in Section 4.e of the Trust Legal Provisions and are provided without warranty as described in the Simplified BSD License.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction
 2. Terminology
 3. Action
 4. Discussion
 5. IANA Considerations
 6. Security Considerations
 7. Normative References
 8. Informative References
- Authors' Addresses

1. Introduction

IETF procedures, as defined by [RFC2026], allow for Informational or Experimental RFCs to be published without IETF rough consensus. For context, it should be remembered that this RFC predates the separation of the various streams (e.g., IRTF, IAB, and Independent.)

When it was written, there were only "RFCs".

As a consequence, the IESG was permitted to approve an Internet-Draft for publication as an RFC without IETF rough consensus.

2. Terminology

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.

3. Action

The IETF MUST NOT publish RFCs on the IETF Stream without establishing IETF rough consensus for publication.

4. Discussion

The IETF procedures prior to publication of this BCP permitted such informational or experimental publication without IETF rough consensus. In 2007, the IESG issued a statement saying that no document will be issued without first conducting an IETF Last Call [IESG-STATE-AD]. While this apparently improved the situation, when looking more closely, it made it worse. Rather than publishing documents without verifying that there is rough consensus, as the wording in [RFC2026] suggests, this had the IESG explicitly publishing documents on the IETF Stream that have failed to achieve rough consensus.

One could argue that there is a need for publishing some documents that the community cannot agree on. However, we have an explicit path for such publication, namely the Independent Stream. Or, for research documents, the IRTF Stream, which explicitly publishes minority opinion Informational RFCs.

5. IANA Considerations

This document has no IANA actions.

6. Security Considerations

This document introduces no new security considerations. It is a process document about changes to the rules for certain corner cases in publishing IETF Stream RFCs. However, this procedure will prevent publication of IETF Stream documents that have not reached rough consensus about their security aspects, thus potentially improving security aspects of IETF Stream documents.

7. Normative References

[RFC2026] Bradner, S., "The Internet Standards Process -- Revision 3", BCP 9, RFC 2026, DOI 10.17487/RFC2026, October 1996, <<https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc2026>>.

[RFC2119] Bradner, S., "Key words for use in RFCs to Indicate Requirement Levels", BCP 14, RFC 2119, DOI 10.17487/RFC2119, March 1997, <<https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc2119>>.

[RFC8174] Leiba, B., "Ambiguity of Uppercase vs Lowercase in RFC 2119 Key Words", BCP 14, RFC 8174, DOI 10.17487/RFC8174, May 2017, <<https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc8174>>.

8. Informative References

[IESG-STATE-AD]

IESG, "Guidance on Area Director Sponsoring of Documents",
IESG Statement, March 2007,
<<https://ietf.org/about/groups/iesg/statements/area-director-sponsoring-documents/>>.

Authors' Addresses

Joel Halpern (editor)
Ericsson
P.O. Box 6049
Leesburg, VA 20178
United States of America

Email: joel.halpern@ericsson.com

Eric Rescorla (editor)
Mozilla
331 E. Evelyn Ave.
Mountain View, CA 94101
United States of America

Email: ekr@rtfm.com