Better and earlier inter-area coordination

IESG Retreat
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Problem statement (?)

• We want to write fewer DISCUSSes (and major comments)
  • ... that occur because a document from one area hasn’t considered the perspective of another area sufficiently.
  • Any non-trivial IESG feedback to authors can be seen as a kind of diving catch. Let’s do fewer diving catches.

• Right now we have, arguably, a fail-slow process. We’d really like fail-fast. How can we get there?

• Focus on incremental improvement
  • Out of scope –
    • Manhattan Project level effort (e.g., restructuring or eliminating areas, better defining the Internet architecture)
    • Layer eight issues (e.g., conflict of commercial interests)
Example of uneven area interaction

- RTG and SEC
  - KARP tried, and failed, to systematize RTG’s approach to SEC
- Others?
  - Some worked examples of successes and failures would be really helpful.
Tools

• Existing
  • Directorate reviews
  • Considerations sections
  • Technical advisors

• Potential
  • Wider advertisement of WG adoption calls, WG last calls
  • Checklists
  • Pushback

• Out of scope
  • Reorganization
  • Making everyone be smarter and more experienced and more diligent
Directorate Reviews

• In principle early reviews could be extremely helpful
• In practice there are problems with them –
  • Chairs don’t request early reviews soon enough, or at all
  • Review quality is variable
  • Sometimes reviews are requested but never done (do we know the rate?)
• More generally, a review implies a (relatively) finished product. Cross-area visibility is probably often needed before we get to that stage.
  • E.g., at (or before!) document adoption
  • I don’t know what to do about this, process-wise
    • Directorate reviews of WG adoption calls???
Considerations sections

• For instance, the Security Considerations section
  • Pro: requires authors to think about it
  • Con: often cursory pro-forma consideration only
  • For example, we have RFC 3552/BCP 72 with 44 pages of detail about how to write a good Security Considerations section
    • In an unscientific poll of WG chairs and contributors, several of them didn’t even know BCP 72 exists 😐
  • Cargo cult approach to writing considerations sections

• Recruit someone from the appropriate area to help author the considerations section?
  • Instead of pulling an all-nighter right before the WGLC...
Technical advisors

• Technical advisors from other areas
• Can be tremendously useful, if engaged and active
  • example: TSV advisor for DETNET
• More commonly... disengaged, not very helpful
• Is this something we can scale/replicate, or is it just a special case of a valuable WG contributor who happens to have a “technical advisor” title?
• Possibly can be replicated in cases where there’s a long-term, strong crossover between two areas.
  • Probably late surprises occur in one-off cases though, not cases where there’s clear and continuing interaction, so this may not address the problem.
Wider advertisement of WG calls

• Maybe people in other areas just aren’t hearing about adoptions, last calls, etc?
  • We could create a list for all WG calls. (Opt-in? Opt-out?)
• Counterpoint: too much noise, needle in haystack effect.
  • We could put together some statistics, if needed.
• Arguably, WG chairs should be notifying related/affected groups already.
  • Sometimes this happens.
  • Maybe it should happen more.
  • Doesn’t have to be the chairs, of course, as long as someone does it.
Checklists

• We do have some checklists, they are genuinely helpful
  • Shepherd checklist, authors checklist
• Why don’t we have more of these?
• Think back on your last six months worth of DISCUSSes and comments.
  • Are there any themes that you can identify?
  • Can you write them down in check-off form?
• Things to consider
  • Who writes the checklists?
  • Who maintains them?
  • Who uses them? (Everyone in the document chain, starting with authors. Maybe use of checklist can make directorate reviews better?)
  • Who ensures they’re getting used?
Pushback

• Sometimes a small spec is tagged with a big concern, that really relates to an architectural problem beyond the scope of the little extension.
  • Example: anything that uses BGP Communities.

• Observed outcome: DISCUSS raised, authors explain it’s beyond scope, DISCUSS is dropped.

• Maybe there should be more outcomes where the DISCUSS is dropped based on a negotiated settlement with the WG, or area – “Please commit to tackling this systemic problem, then I will be happy to clear.”
  • Counterpoint: KARP, not a success story.
Further discussion, next steps

• Open mic
• Airing of grievances