

SIP Forum Task Group Certification Process

Document number: sf-draft-twg-admin-batson-taskgroups

Technical Working Group

Status: Draft

Version: 5

Date: 2005-05-12

Abstract

This document defines the process that the SIP Forum uses to create, and terminate Task Groups within the Technical Working Group ("TWG") of the SIP Forum. Task Groups are created to work on specific technical issues related to the use and implementation of the IETF Session Initiation Protocol. Task Groups are formed when SIP Forum members and its Board of Directors conclude that such technical issues are best handled by the SIP Forum in preference other standards (or quasi-standards) bodies. These Task Groups are chartered, and create outputs in the manner set forth here.

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1 Introduction

1.1 The Need For, and Positioning of Task Groups

The SIP Forum is not, and does not intend to be a body that defines the SIP protocol standard. However, from time to time technical issues arise about how to use already-defined SIP standards to create SIP-based solutions. For instance, there are technical issues that would not merit standards-track or BCP-track status within the actual SIP protocol definition in the IETF, yet which still require a shared consensus among industry product and service vendors. In addition, the Forum undertakes activities from time to time that need a team to perform the activities. For example, some collection of individuals needs to oversee the continued development of the SIP Forum Test Suite software.

The SIP Forum is an association of members that is well suited to address these issues. To do so, the SIP Forum needs a process by which groups of interested individuals can work to achieve these goals. This document describes that process.

1.2 Task Group Life Cycle

In outline, a Task Group may be created when any SIP Forum member identifies a substantive technical issue area, proposes the creation of a Task Group to reach consensus on this issue, a review is performed to insure the Forum is the appropriate body to work on this issue, a set of Forum members interested in working on the issue is identified, the Task Group formation is certified, it creates its outputs, and is (optionally) terminated.

The goals of a Task Group are:

- Technical excellence
- Openness and fairness
- Rapid speed in producing outputs
- Timeliness of outputs

There are some natural, and intentional contradictions in these goals.

On one hand, the Task Groups should strive to create outputs in shorter durations than is often required for the creation of a full standard. This is because the nature of the work done by the Forum is intended to be something that is not quite a standard – something that is more like the name of its document: a “Recommendation” for implementation. In addition, the Forum is working “closer to the market” where products and services are actually being built and deployed, and to serve the “Timeliness” goal a Task Group should be able to quickly create Recommendations to solve emerging issues that are slowing deployment of SIP-based products and services. And finally, the process that must be followed in some standards bodies has been shown to slow

the approval of, and subsequent adoption of documents that accurately reflect the consensus of participants in its creation.

On the other hand, speed can reduce the level of technical excellence. Such speed can also reduce the openness and fairness of the process, since speed can be the tool of those who wish to wield undue and technically inappropriate influence. The mere existence of a certain solution does not mean it has the needed technical excellence to be certified. Often the value of time and reflection increases the technical excellence of the solution to an issue.

These goals and the description of the contradictions are therefore guidelines that should inform the participants as to the desired spirit of the activities of a Task Group.

1.3 Organization of This Document

Section 2 describes the process used to form a Task Group within the TWG of the SIP Forum. Section 3 presents the rules that are required to protect intellectual property rights in the context of the activities of Task Groups. Sections 4 and beyond contain administrivia.

2 Task Group Formation

2.1 Proposal for Formation

In order to form a Task Group, the following process shall be followed.

2.1.1 Who can propose a Task Group

Any member of the Forum -- Full or Participant -- can propose the formation of a Task Group.

2.1.2 How to propose a Task Group

Any proposal for a Task Group shall be made in email to the TWG mailing list. The Proposal shall contain (at a minimum) the following elements.

2.1.2.1 Issue Description

The Proposal must clearly and specifically describe the technical issue area on which the Task Group intends to work. The issue area shall be bounded to as narrow an area as practical given the issues involved.

2.1.2.2 Venue Justification

The Proposal must contain a statement of why this issue area should not be resolved within the IETF, or other relevant "official" standards body.

2.1.2.3 Outputs

The Proposal must describe the principal work product of the Task Group, such as a describing the key elements of a Recommendation to be created. Task Groups should strive to create identifiable outputs when practical given the issues being addressed.

2.1.2.4 Timing

The Proposal must establish a schedule for completion of the stated outputs. As used in the Proposal, these dates should be described in elapsed time format, not using specific calendar dates, due to the uncertain timing prior to Task Group certification and commencement of work.

2.1.2.5 Initial Participants

The Proposal must identify at least two individuals that will actively participate in the work to be done by the Task Group. Any member – Full, or Participant – can be named.

2.2 Task Group Formation Certification

2.2.1 TWG chair review and comment period

If such a Proposal is made, the TWG chair shall review the proposal to assure it meets the formal requirements for a proposal.

The TWG chair shall receive comments on the proposal for 15 days after the Proposal has been submitted to the TWG mailing list. Comments should be made on the mailing list.

2.2.2 Venue review and coordination

If the issue area is related to SIP, RTP, or other IETF-related protocol handling, the TWG chair shall consult the IETF Working Group Chair for the relevant working group to determine whether the IETF intends to create an RFC in this issue area. If such an intention exists, the proposal for creation of the SIP Forum Task Group should not be certified.

2.2.3 Board approval

After the 15 day comment period has elapsed, and any relevant IETF consultation is complete, the TWG chair shall within 7 days forward the Proposal, a summary of comments to the SIP Forum Board of Directors, and a recommendation concerning whether the Task Group should be certified.

Within 15 days after receiving a proposal from the TWG chair, the Board shall certify or deny the formation of the Task Group. If denied, the denial shall contain a specific discussion of the reason.

2.2.4 Re-proposal

If the Board denies certification of a Task Group, the individual(s) advocating the creation of the Task Group may repeat the Proposal process at will, though each Proposal must follow the same process.

2.3 Task Group Operation

2.3.1 Task Group Participation

Participation in a certified Task Group is open to any SIP Forum member – Full or Participating.

Before a participant can actively contribute text or original ideas to the activities of a Task Group (e.g. text in a draft Recommendation), the participant must assent to the SIP Forum's Intellectual Property Rights policy then in force by the mechanism then in use. This assent may be done electronically at the Forum's web site if such a mechanism is available. Otherwise, some form of written assent must be provided to the Forum. It is the responsibility of the Task Group Lead to assure such assent is obtained from any Forum member participating in the group's activities.

2.3.2 Task Group Lead

2.3.2.1 Nomination and election

After Certification, the Task Group shall publish an announcement on the general TWG mailing list announcing a first meeting of a Task Group. This meeting may be in person, or telephonic, or other real time communication method (e.g. instant messaging, chat room, etc.) In this initial meeting, the chair of the Technical Working Group shall be present, and the Technical Working Group chair shall nominate a single individual to the role of Task Group Lead. Participants in the meeting shall cast a vote to confirm this designation of Task Group Lead. In order to be confirmed as the Task Group Lead, the nominated person must receive affirmative votes from 50% or more of the participants in the meeting.

2.3.2.2 Responsibilities

The Task Group Lead shall:

- Coordinate Task Group activities to produce the intended outputs, and hold as close to the originally estimated schedule as is practical
- Coordinate meeting and conference calls scheduling
- Obtain IPR policy assent from all relevant Task Group participants
- Provide grammatical editing review to the author(s) of any Recommendations
- Coordinate Task Group activities with the Technical Working Group chair.

Note that the Task Group Lead is not given authority to direct or decide the final outputs of the Task Group. All outputs of the Task Group must have the consensus of approval by the Task Group participants.

2.3.3 Task Group Activities

It is anticipated that the bulk of the actual work of the Task Group will be accomplished through email, and this is encouraged. The Task Group may meet in person as desired. If the Task Group wishes to request the Forum to provide facilities for a meeting, approval must be obtained from the Technical Working Group chair prior to incurring expenses.

All Task Group Activities should be performed publicly (e.g. on open mailing lists). At the request of a Task Group Lead, the TWG may specify that some activities of a competitively-sensitive nature may be performed outside of public examination, but this is discouraged as a general principle in Task Group activities.

2.3.4 Task Group Reporting

The Task Group shall provide at a minimum a progress report in conjunction with the annual general meeting required by the SIP Forum bylaws. This report may be in electronic form, and should provide sufficient information to generally inform attendees at the general meeting about the activities of the Task Group, and progress of the Task Group towards meeting its output objectives.

2.4 Task Group Dissolution

Task Groups may be formed for a limited duration for the completion of a specific activity, or for an ongoing purpose. As a general principle, there should be a preference for Task Groups that have a limited purpose, and which are dissolved after completion of the activities. It is not necessary to make this determination at the formation of the Task Group, as it may become clear during or at the end of the activities of the Task Group whether the group should continue to exist or end its activities.

2.4.1 Analysis of completion of purpose

Within 90 days after the outputs specified in the original proposal for the Task Group have been completed, the Task Group Lead shall provide to the TWG Chair an indication of the consensus of whether the Task Group wishes to remain certified, and if so, provide the reasoning for this.

2.4.2 TWG chair recommendation

Within 30 days of receiving this indication from the Task Group Lead, the TWG shall review the indication, and in turn provide a recommendation to the SIP Forum board of directors regarding whether the TWG should remain certified.

2.4.3 Board of Directors action

Within 30 days of receipt of the TWG chair recommendation, the board shall take action to either leave the Task Group certified or decertify the Task Group. The action of the board is final.

3 Intellectual property rights

Task Groups should try to structure their activities such that their outputs are as “open source” content as possible. In this context, the term “open source” means that technical details that are specified should strive to be free of intellectual property rights (“IPR”) claims by third parties. While this may be difficult to achieve entirely, and while there will often be no way to know if the outputs meet this requirement, it should represent the aspirational goal of all Task Groups.

All activities performed within the Task Groups shall be performed in accordance with the SIP Forum’s then-current effective Recommendation(s) specifying how Copyright and IPR issues are to be handled, specifically as these relate to the submission by SIP Forum Full or Participant members of ideas and documentation for use in Recommendations, and the acceptance of the same by the SIP Forum.

4 Administrivia

4.1 Author and contact

The author of this document is Jay Batson, acting Managing Director of the SIP Forum as of the time of authoring.

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4.2 References

IETF RFC 2026, BCP 9 – The Internet Standards Process – Revision 3, Scott Bradner, October 1996

4.3 Intellectual Property Right Notices

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