Policy Development Process in RIPE

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1. Introduction

Since its creation in 1989, RIPE has from time to time agreed on common practices. These common practices may come in different forms and/or under different names:

- best common practice (or BCP),
- recommendations to the community,
- requests to the RIPE NCC,
- recommendations to the RIPE NCC,
- or just policy.

In this document they are all called 'Policy'.

The process that results in a policy has a few important and fundamental principles:

a. it is open to all. Everyone interested in the well-being of the Internet may propose a policy, and take part in the discussions.
b. it is transparent. All discussions and results are documented and freely available to all.
c. conclusions are reached by consensus.

This process has worked quite well over the years. This document does not seek to change that.

What this document does try to accomplish is a description of the process that will improve its management.

2. The Process

In the process of developing a policy, several distinct phases are identified:

1. Creating a Proposal
2. Discussion Phase
3. Review Phase

4. Concluding Phase

Each of these phases are detailed below.

In the descriptions below, timelines are mentioned. They are proposed deadlines for the various stages. Individual proposals may choose to vary these, however the actual timescales must be documented.

In this process, the RIPE NCC (the RIPE community's secretariat) gives administrative support, such as:

- administering proposals
- publication on relevant web pages
- tracking deadlines

Anyone who wants to draft a policy proposal may seek assistance from the RIPE NCC. The RIPE NCC will provide relevant facts, statistics and an assessment of the work involved in implementation of a proposal. The RIPE NCC will also assist with the drafting of text if its editorial services are required.

The process flow is illustrated in a diagram, attached as Appendix A.

2.1 Creating a Proposal

Discussions may be started by anyone at any time. Participants are welcome to discuss broad ideas as well as make detailed policy proposals. Proposals are made using a Policy Proposal template [TEMPLATE Appendix B].

The template forms a structure for the proposal. It details the reason for the proposal and any perceived consequences of the proposal.

A proposal is usually submitted via the Chair of the relevant RIPE Working Group or via the RIPE Chair.

The RIPE NCC identifies proposals with a number and publishes them in the appropriate section of the relevant working groups web pages.

The page will indicate the version history and status of proposals:

- Open for Discussion;
- Agreed or
- Withdrawn.

The RIPE NCC will also maintain a web page with an overview of all outstanding policy proposals.

2.2 Discussion Phase.

Once a proposal has been submitted it will be announced on a dedicated mailing list to which anybody can subscribe: <policy-announce@ripe.net>. This announcement will also indicate where discussion on this proposal will take place. Usually this will be the relevant working group mailing list.

Where discussion leads to an amendment of a proposal, an amended proposal will be published highlighting the changes. If there is significant comment and change suggested there may be multiple iterations of this process. Each published revision of a proposal will contain a history of changes to document this process.

The Working Group chair will set a limited time period for the discussion phase, not ususally less than four weeks.

2.3 Review Phase

Following the conclusion of the discussion phase, the RIPE Working Group Chair determines whether the working group has reached consensus. If consensus has not been reached, then the proposer may decide to withdraw the proposal. Alternatively, a new round of discussion and documentation may occur.

The review phase will have a limited time period, but not more than four weeks.

2.4 Concluding Phase

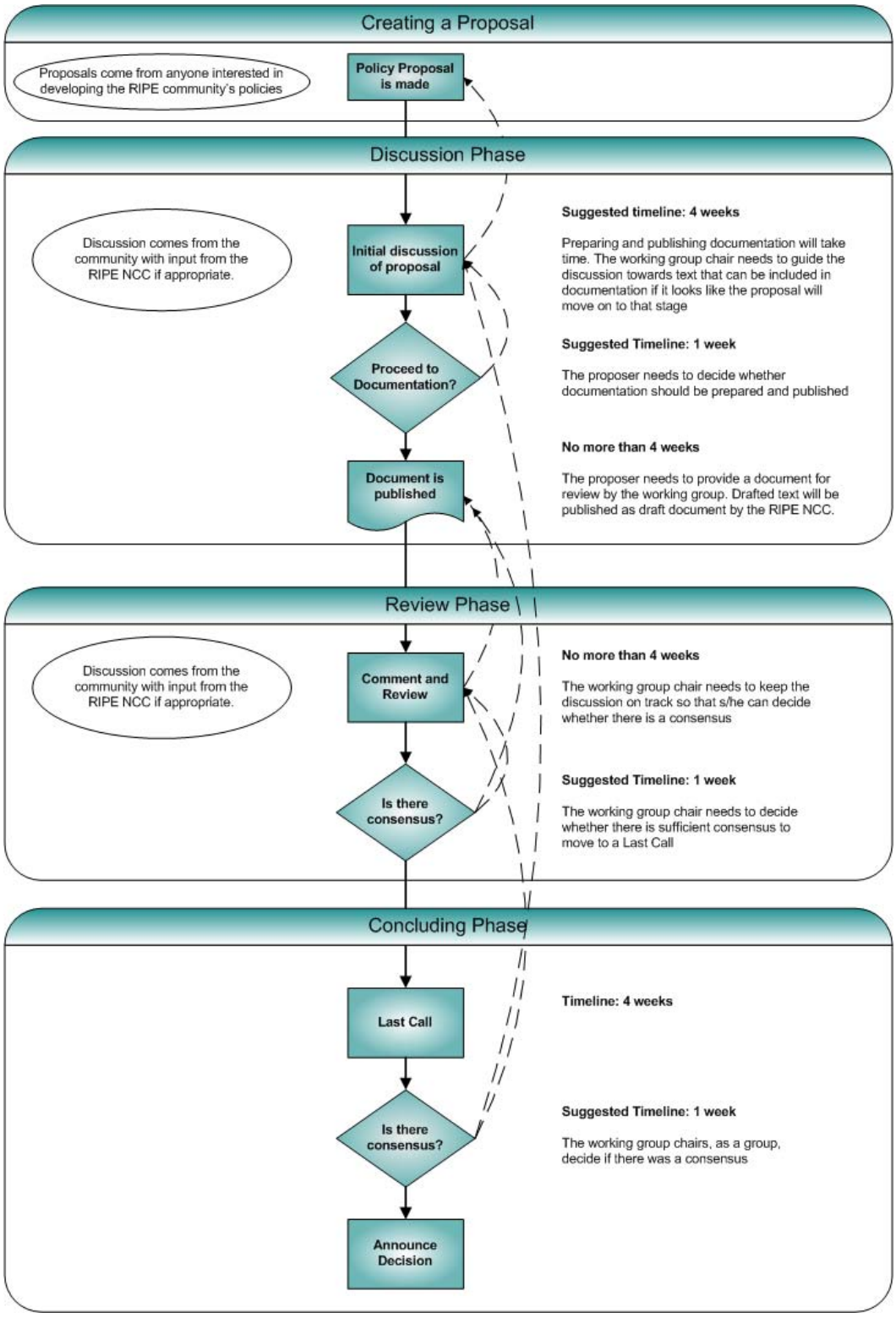
When the RIPE Working Group Chair determines that the working group has reached a consensus, s/he moves the proposal to a Last Call for Comments. The Last Call announcement is posted to the working group mailing list, the Last Call announcements mailing list and Chairs of all working groups. At the end of the Last Call period, the working group chairs will decide together whether a consensus has been achieved.

The last call period will last four weeks.

If a consensus has been achieved, the RIPE NCC will announce the decision of the RIPE Working Group Chairs and implement the policy, if needed.

If consensus has not been achieved the proposer (or anyone else) is free to return the proposal to the working group for further discussion.

[Diagram Appendix A]



[TEMPLATE Appendix B]

1. Number (assigned by the RIPE NCC)
2. Policy Proposal Name:
3. Author
    a. name:
    b. e-mail:
    c. organisation:
4. Proposal Version:
5. Submission Date:
6. Suggested RIPE WG for discussion and publication:
7. Proposal type:
    a. new, modify, or delete.
8. Policy term:
    a. temporary, permanent, or renewable.
9. Summary of proposal
10. Policy text
    a. Current (if modify):
    b. New:
11. Rationale:
    a. Arguments supporting the proposal
    b. Arguments opposing the proposal