Internet Engineering Task Force

“Rough Consensus and Running Code”
Internet Engineering Task Force

“Rough Consensus and Open Source?”
General IETF Experiences

Open Source code is used in our management software with code sprints at IETF meetings.

Open Source projects are a common source of input material. ACME, for example, grew in part out of Let’s Encrypt.

Open Source projects are also a common source of interoperability testing (e.g. SIPit)
Patent Licensing

IETF IPR rules require disclosure but do not mandate specific licenses. Historically, advancement on the standards track required that any required license be exercised twice independently. Now approval as a standard with a license that could not be used by Open Source projects would cause debate.
Copyright

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Why?
Forking
Standards Outcomes

The fork dies.
The fork re-merges with the source.
The original dies.
They both survive.

One way of looking at this is that this is an open source method to assess “rough consensus”.
But if both survive, which one is standard for what is muddy until adaptive radiation is done.
Using this method for a standard seems pretty much unworkable.
It’s hard to prevent forking while allowing broad re-use.

That’s why IETF generally simply doesn’t allow broad re-use outside the standards process.

That has occasionally caused conflict with Open Source distributions that want to include RFCs within their packages, as the copyright doesn’t permit broad modification.
There are exceptions

For the **OPUS Codec**, the IETF created **special terms** that says any re-use that doesn’t claim to be from the IETF or an RFC is permitted.

The approval **history** goes through the issues in detail, but note especially that **appendix A is base-64 encoded source code for the codec.**
Appendix
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