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Standards Working Group (SWG): Process: Guidelines and FAQ

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i. Preface

This document describes as clearly as possible the roles and responsibilities of a Standards Working Group (SWG) Revision process. This document assumes that a Standards Working Group for a given candidate standard or adopted OGC standard is already in place.

The Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC) is an international industry consortium of more than 500+ companies, government agencies, and universities participating in a consensus process to develop publicly available geo-processing specifications.

1 Scope

The Standards Working Group (SWG) revision process is the mechanism by which all OGC standards are edited and versioned. The SWG revision procedure is described in detail in the Technical Committee Policies and Procedures, Section 9.0.

However, there are always questions regarding the SWG policies and procedures process, the timeline, and so forth. This document is provided to the OGC membership and the community as a guide and checklist to the OGC SWG process and then manoeuvring the standard revision to final formal adoption.

2 Terms and Definitions

Candidate Standard: A Standard in the form of an existing, operational standard that one or more OGC Voting TC Members wish to sponsor as an RFC submission under the Bylaws of the OGC.

Change Requests (CRP): A Change Request Proposal allows for the formal documentation of a proposed change to an existing, adopted OGC implementation standard or abstract specification.

OpenGIS Implementation Standard: A document containing an OGC consensus computing technology dependent standard for application programming interfaces and related standards based on the Abstract Specification.

OGC Architecture Board (OAB): A forum within which Consortium wide standards architecture issues can be discussed and deliberated with the intent of providing guidance and recommendations to the TC and the PC on these issues

OGC Naming Authority (OGC-NA): The OGC Naming Authority (OGC-NA) controls the assignment of OGC Names to resources of interest in geographic information infrastructures. In the terminology defined in ISO 19135, OGC-NA is the Control Body for the register of OGC Names.

Public Comments: These are comments received by the Consortium during the 30-day public comment period that is a key part of the OGC Request for Comment (RFC) Process.

Standards Working Group (SWG): A Technical Committee subgroup responsible for processing a new candidate standard or for managing the cleanup and maintenance (revision) process for specific OGC Implementation Standards.

SWG Chair: The SWG Chair is responsible for organizing, documenting, and facilitating the activities of the SWG as defined in the OGC Technical Committee Policies and Procedures.

Standard Editor: The Editor has the responsibility for managing the actual physical editing and maintenance of the standard document. The editor is neither the author, nor the owner of the document.

3 Overview of the Process

The following diagram captures the flow for a candidate standard. A candidate standard may be a new standard or a revision to an existing standard.

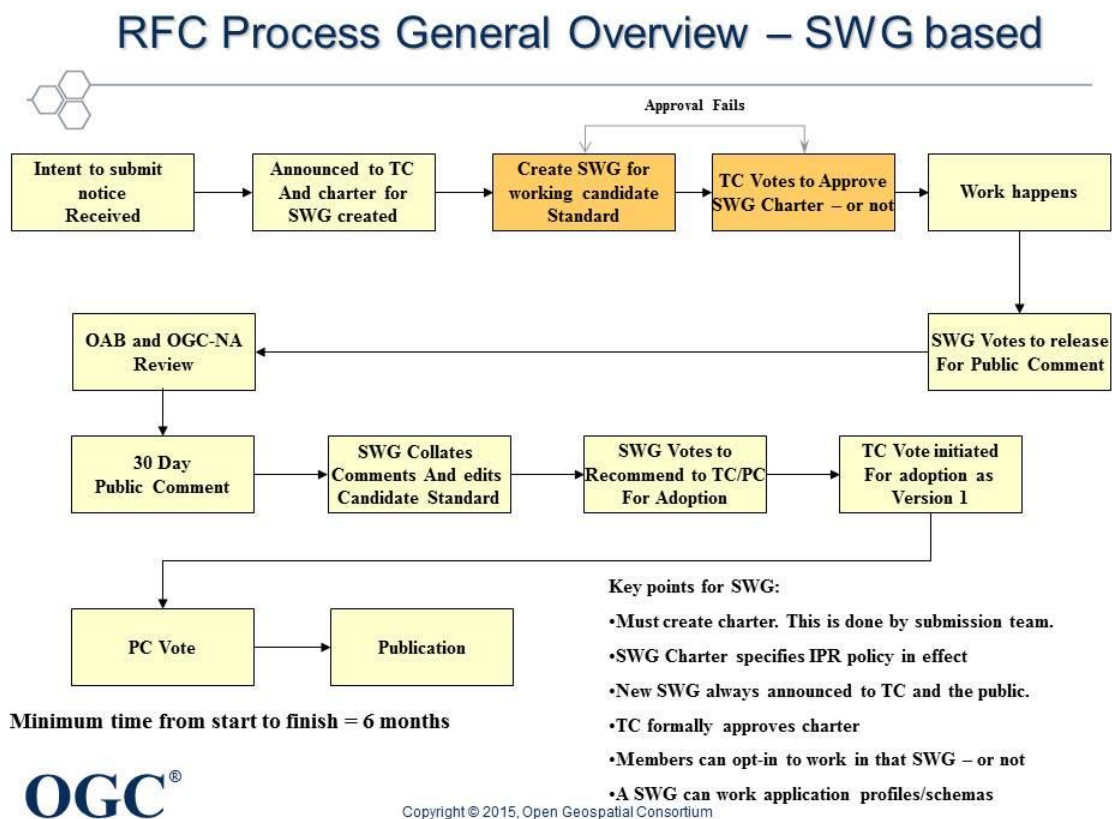


Figure 1 – General SWG Flow

The Primary Steps for SWG Process are – and not necessarily done in sequential order:

- Three or more OGC Members agree to form a new SWG. One of the charter members must be a TC Voting Member.
- A convenor for the new SWG is identified.

- The convenor communicates to the Technical Committee Chair that they wish to form a new SWG.
- The SWG Members and the TC Chair develop a charter for the new SWG.
- Draft Charter is assigned an OGC document number and posted to pending documents.
- The draft charter is announced to the full TC. There is a three-week review period. The TC Chair also asks if there are additional charter members.
- The draft charter is also made public and there is an official OGC press release announcing the planned formation of the SWG and requesting public review and comment.
- During the review period, OGC staff works with the team and implemented the necessary OGC portal presence for the new SWG (email, project, twiki, etc).
- After the three week review period, the TC Chair asks the TC Voting members if there are any objections to forming this new SWG. The voting period is two weeks.
- Assuming TC Voting Member approval, the TC Chair does a call for participation for the new SWG.
- The SWG identifies one or more standard editors.
- Work happens. The SWG also documents a timeline for completion of their work and publishes to the members and the public.
- When ready, the SWG votes to release the candidate standard for OGC Architecture Board (OAB) review and the 30-day public comment period.
- SWG works with OGC communications to develop press release about the public review period.
- 30 day public review happens.
- Comments from a candidate standard public comment period and/or formal change requests are received for a given standard document.
- The SWG creates a consolidated document of the comments and a summary of the processed change requests and posts to pending documents.
- The SWG processes all comments and/or change requests.
- The SWG (via the editor(s)) modifies the document.
- When ready, the SWG announces to the TC Chair that the document is ready for an adoption vote.
- The TC Chair does a final check of the document.
- Candidate standard is posted to pending documents
- TC Chair makes motion
- The TC votes.
- The PC votes
- Final edits are made. SWG approves final version of document.
- Document (and related schemas) are published.

More details on these steps are provided in Section 4. First, a short description is provided of the roles and responsibilities of the Standard Editor and SWG Chair.

3.1 Standard Editor (Section 9.8 of the TC P&P)

In addition to the formation of a SWG, there is a requirement for an editor or editors who will maintain the content of the candidate standard based on member input and the decisions of the SWG. One or more members can fill the Editor position. The Editor has the responsibility for managing the actual physical editing and maintenance of the standard document. The editor is neither the author, nor the owner of the document. By way of guidance, the Editor is responsible for:

- The editorial quality of the document: clear language, well written, self-consistent, and proper format.
- Ensuring that the consensus of the SWG and the TC (approval of a CRP or edit and the language of the edit) is captured in the content of the document.
- Keeping modification of the document on schedule -- knowing the content and history of the document well enough to prevent it from going around in circles, in an endless round of modification.
- Maintaining a revision notes that document what changes were made and in response to which comments or CRPs. These notes will be used as the basis for creating the revision notes document for a given revision/version of a standard.

The Editor and the SWG Chair may or may not be the same individual.

3.2 Electing a Chair and Vice Chair (Section 7.7.7 of the TC PnP)

The first order of business of a new SWG is to elect a Chair and Co-chair. The Chair and Co-chair must be from different Member organizations. When there are adequate nominations or volunteers for the Chair/Co-chair, the SWG Convener will call for a vote of members who have opted in to participate in the SWG. In the case where there is only one nomination for Chair and one for co-chair, the Convener will ask the SWG members whether there is any objection to unanimous consent. The election of a Chair or Co-Chair can happen at either a TC Meeting or via email. The election of the Chair and Co-Chair does not require TC or PC approval.

Once the vote is complete, the names of the elected chair and vice-chair shall be entered into the minutes of the meeting and communicated to OGC staff (TC Chair).

The TC Chair or his representative shall then insure that the OGC portal account for the SWG is properly updated.

3.3 The SWG Chair Responsibilities (From Section 7.7.9 of the TC P&P)

In addition to the sub-group Chair and Co-chair responsibilities as outlined in [Section 7.2](#), the SWG Chair is responsible for organizing the activities of the SWG, including:

- Ensuring that minutes of meetings are taken, and once approved by the SWG voting members and made available electronically to the SWG membership within two weeks of the meeting. Minutes must include:
 - A list of persons attending the meeting and determining if there is quorum;
 - A list of motions, seconds, and outcomes, and

- A section that details specific actions taken by members of the subgroup.
- Reporting on subgroup activities to the TC and if the SWG meetings during a TC meeting, presenting at the closing TC Plenary, including presenting subgroup recommendations (if any). Any reports to the TC SHALL be approved for release by the SWG voting members
- Maintaining SWG member status on the portal (voting, observer, etc)
- Ensuring that issues are logged into the portal and these issues are prioritized and put into a roadmap for completion of a revision (or a future revision). Further, that the Chair ensures that the pertinent standard roadmap is updated, agreed by consensus of the SWG members, and posted at least for each regularly scheduled TC meeting time.
- Ensuring that issues worked result in official change proposals and that only these official change proposals shall be considered by the SWG.
- In the event that the Chair is not able to fulfill these duties, the Co-chair will step in and assume the leadership role until such time as the Chair is able to resume their duties. Failure of the Chair and/or Co-chair to provide these capabilities will result in the removal of the Chair and the election of a new Chair. If no suitable Chair can be located, then the work of the SWG will be considered to be non-critical and the SWG will be dissolved.

4 FAQ for the work of the SWG process.

4.1.1 How many individuals can be in a SWG?

There is no limit to the number of individuals that can be in a SWG. However, by way of guidance, the more members in a SWG the harder it may be to keep the group focused on the task at hand. Any OGC member who wishes to participate in a SWG activity must opt-into the SWG. This is done through the OGC portal page for the given SWG. Opting-in means that the member agrees to abide by the IPR policy for that SWG.

4.1.2 Can more than one individual from any member organization participate in a given SWG?

Yes. However, only one individual from any member Organization can vote on any items or issues brought before the membership of the SWG. This person is an official voting member of the SWG.

4.1.3 Which members can participate?

Any member organization in good standing, regardless of membership level, can provide resources to participate in an SWG.

4.1.4 Can the standard author/editor begin edits before the SWG is formed?

No! Part of being an open and transparent standards organization is that all standard activities are visible to all members and that any approved edits to a standard occur as a result of consensus. However, any informal group can begin to consider the impacts of

comments and/or change requests for a given standard. This would be pre-SWG education and preparation.

4.1.5 Do all active SWG members then become contributors to the standard?

Yes! Any individual who actively participates in the work for a given standard has the right to be listed (along with their organization name) as a contributor. The key word is active. If an individual signs up to be on a SWG but does no work, they will not be listed as a contributor.

4.2 The WORK

The SWG can begin the work of evaluating discussing, and voting on any comments received during a public comment period or any official change requests received. These discussions can happen via teleconferences, email, or at face-to-face meetings. In the case of teleconferences, the SWG must post the teleconference information to the calendar on the OGC members' portal. For the case of F2F meetings, the chair must post this information to the entire TC at least two weeks prior to the actual F2F meeting.

4.2.1 How often should a SWG meet?

This is a decision for the SWG members. Obviously, the more the group meets, the more quickly the work agenda is completed.

4.2.2 Are SWG meetings open to all members?

Yes. While the OGC fosters an open and transparent consensus process, only members who have opted into the SWG can actively participate. Any member can join by opting in at any time.

4.2.3 Must every comment and/or change request be voted on?

Yes. Every comment and/or change request deserves proper consideration by the SWG, including a vote as to whether the comment/change requests should be accepted or not (see SWG voting below).

4.2.4 What is the cut off date for changes and comments (work items) for a new revision of a standard?

This is an interesting balancing act. One of the first decisions that must be made by the SWG is when they will stop accepting new change requests and/or comments. By way of guidance:

- For a candidate standard the SWG is obligated to only work those comments received during the 30-day comment period. It is at the discretion of the members of the SWG as to whether they consider additional comments or change requests.

- For an existing version 1 or higher adopted implementation standard, the SWG is required to process all outstanding Change Request Proposals for the standard a given SWG is responsible for. Again, the SWG has the decision authority as to whether they will consider additional comments or change requests.

There is always a tendency to want to consider new comments or change requests that arrive during the term of work of a SWG. The SWG can defer work on any of these requests. In this case, they suggested changes should be noted in a Future Work section of the standard.

4.2.5 Must the SWG consider change requests that arrive as email and not as official CRPs?

According to the TC Policies and Procedures:

Ad-hoc emails and verbal requests at meetings will not be considered as official change requests. However, the SWG may vote to discuss issues that have not been submitted as change requests, and may vote to direct one or more of its members to create official change requests to document an agreement reached as the result of those discussions.

4.2.6 Change of Scope

From time to time, the work of a SWG may deviate from the scope of work as defined in the Charter. As this has implications in terms of IPR, any member of the SWG may at any time raise a question regarding a proposed work item being out of scope. If the SWG decides to pursue the work item in question, even if out of scope, then there must be unanimous consent that the new work item is OK. Further, the charter must be amended and posted for Member review. If there is not unanimous consent, then the SWG must dissolve, the Charter revised to modify the scope of work and then the SWG re-chartered including a new opting in period.

4.3 Can the SWG release a candidate standard for review prior to the mandatory comment period?

Yes. The SWG Voting Members can vote at any time to release an interim version of a candidate standard for comment, implementation, and/or review. Further, the SWG may vote to have a version always publicly available. Such a case allows the implementation community to implement and test any draft versions of a candidate standard.

Any comments received should be evaluated and reviewed in the same manner as comments received during the mandatory public comment period (see below).

4.4 Mandatory Public Comment Period

Once the document has been edited to incorporate any necessary changes, such as by incorporating change requests, there is a mandatory 30 day public comment period¹.

4.4.1 Vote for Public Comment and OAB Review

The SWG voting members must approve the release of the candidate standard for the 30 day public review period. See section 4.5 of this document on voting. The SWG chair shall make a motion to the SWG. Voting members in good standing can vote. A simple majority of positive votes is required to release the document. The Chair shall notify the TC Chair of the intent to release the document for a 30 day public comment period. The TC Chair then notifies the OGC Architecture Board.

4.4.2 OGC Architecture Board Review

Assuming a positive vote to release the document for public comment, the next step is a mandatory review by the OAB. These reviews typically take two weeks. The OAB reviews the document to insure that all of the mandatory sections are included and that the document properly expressed requirements, conformance classes, and so forth as per the OGC Modular Specification Policy document. The OAB shall issue guidance. The guidance may require additional edits to the candidate standard prior to the release of the document for public comment. The OAB may also request a second review once any suggested edits have been made.

4.4.3 Press release

During the OAB review period, OGC staff shall work with the SWG to develop a press release. This press release is used to announce the public comment period. The PR is sent to dozens of news outlets. The PR provides the URL and information on how to provide comments.

4.4.4 The Comment period

During the comment period, the public and OGC Members can comment on the candidate standard. All comments are submitted using the information provided in the comments page for the candidate standard. Typically, comments are sent using email to requests@opengeospatial.org. There is a standard template for submitting comments. http://portal.opengeospatial.org/files/?artifact_id=3239 .

4.4.5 Processing comments

Assuming that comments were received during the comment period, the SWG shall collate all comments and integrate them into a single document. This document shall be published to pending documents. The SWG shall discuss all comments and determine

¹ The SWG may request a longer review and comment period.

their disposition. The SWG may decide to accept the changes suggested in the comment as is. The SWG may decide to accept the changes suggested in the comment but with modification. The SWG may reject the changes suggested in the comment. In all cases, the SWG shall notify the comment submitter of the disposition of a specific comment.

4.4.6 OGC naming Authority Review of Names

At some point, usually during the Public Comment process, the SWG needs to work with the OGC Naming Authority to insure that all names (urn's, http uri's, etc) are reviewed for structure and adherence to OGC policies on naming. The name review and registration process is described in the OGC Policy document, "OGC Naming Authority – Procedures". This document and related documents can be found at <http://www.opengeospatial.org/ogc/policies/directives>.

4.5 SWG Participation and Voting

Every comment and/or change request related to the standard being edited by the SWG must be discussed and voted on. The SWG can:

- Vote to accept a comment or change requests for inclusion in the new version of the standard;
- Vote to reject a comment or change requests for inclusion in the new version of the standard. In this case, the SWG must document and communicate why the comment/change request was rejected;
- Vote to defer the changes required to "implement" a given comment or change requests for inclusion in the future version of the standard.

All votes need to be documented.

4.5.1 Opting into the new SWG

Once the formation of the new SWG has been announced, any member representative of a member organization in good standing may opt into the new SWG. The "opt in" or participation process is managed by a web page on the members only portal. Got to <http://portal.opengeospatial.org/?m=public&orderby=default&tab=7> and review the list of available active standards working groups. Click on the SWG that you would like to participate in. Read the agreement and then click to accept or not. If you click to accept, you will be added to the SWG membership with a status of "Observer".

Opting in means that the member agrees to the IPR policies of the SWG. There is a 30-day waiting period after opting in before the member can vote on any items or issues brought before the SWG. A member opting out during the 30-day waiting period is not required to declare any essential claims or IPR

4.5.2 Opting out after the 30 day wait period.

A member can opt out of a SWG at any time by notifying the chair of the SWG as well as the TCC. The member who opts out is still bound by the IPR policy of the SWG. However, the member is not required to declare any essential claims or IPR related to future work of the SWG.

4.5.3 Is there any limit to the number of members who can join a SWG

No. However, please be aware that a SWG focus is on Work associated with bringing a candidate standard or a revision to a standard to a formal adoption vote. If you are a Voting Member of the SWG and if you are not contributing, voting on motions, or attending meetings, you may be asked to change status from “Voting” to “Observer”.

4.5.4 Can more than one individual from a Member organization join a SWG?

Yes. However, only one individual from that Member Organization can vote in the SWG.

4.5.5 Quorum

Quorum for a SWG is a simple majority of the official voting members of the SWG. In the case where there is an even number of voting members, quorum is a simple majority plus 1.

4.5.6 Deemed completion of a vote

The vote is deemed complete when a simple majority of the voting SWG members have voted. The vote carries if the majority (based on quorum) vote YES for the recommendation.

4.5.7 Who can vote in the SWG?

Any OGC member who has opted into the SWG and has gone through the 30-day waiting period and notifies the SWG Chair that they wish to be SWG voting Member (see [4.5.10](#)) may vote on items and issues. However, only one member representative from any given Member organization can vote.

4.5.8 What happens if you miss two SWG votes?

Obtaining quorum for all votes allows the SWG to more effectively do business. Therefore, any SWG voting member who misses two consecutive SWG meetings in which votes occur (teleconference, face to face, or webinar) or two consecutive email votes shall be deemed as inactive and will not count toward quorum after the second missed meeting. The SWG Chair shall take roll call at the beginning of each meeting and determine quorum based on active voting members only.

4.5.9 Can a SWG voting member proxy another voting member?

If regular attendance by a given voting member is an issue, that voting member may assign a temporary or permanent proxy to another SWG voting member or to the SWG Chair. The voting member may rescind that proxy at any time. If the voting member wishes not to assign their proxy, they can ask to change their status to "Observer" and still actively participate in the SWG.

4.5.10 Changing Status from Observer to Voting

After the 30-day waiting period, the individual can ask the SWG chair to have their status changed from "Observer" to "Voting". This can be done by email. The SWG chair will then update the portal.

4.5.11 Who can make a motion and who can second a motion?

Any member of the SWG can make a motion. Any member of the SWG can second a motion. However, the individual making the motion and the individual seconding the motion shall be from different OGC Member organizations. Only SWG Voting Members can then vote on the motion.

4.5.12 Who can discuss a motion?

Any member (voting or observer) can discuss a motion.

4.5.13 What if there is a tie for any given vote?

If the issue cannot be resolved and the tie cannot be broken, the proper OGC court of arbitration is the OGC Architecture Board. Submit the issue to the OAB Chair (Currently George Percivall) for review and consideration.

4.5.14 How is the final SWG vote for recommendation to the TC handled?

Once the SWG and the standard editor feel that the revision of the Implementation Standard is complete, the following steps happen:

- The SWG Chair calls for an electronic vote of the SWG members for recommending to the TC that the document be considered for formal adoption and public release. This e-vote can be done by email. The Chair keeps the tally.
- The revised document must be posted to the SWG Documents Archive and an informational announcement made to the members at least one week prior to the to the SWG vote.
- The SWG Chair initiates the vote.
- The vote is deemed complete when a quorum (simple majority) of the SWG members have voted and a simple majority vote YES for the recommendation.
- The results of the vote are announced to the TC.

- Assuming a positive SWG vote, the document is posted to Pending Documents and the TCC shall announce the 60 day IPR review and associated adoption vote.

4.5.15 The TC e-voting procedure.

The OGC electronic voting policies are defined in section 6.5 of version 20 of the TC Policies and Procedures. Please note that any OGC TC Voting member can vote on an adoption vote. They may vote Yes, No, or Abstain. All votes count towards quorum. The key clauses in the e-voting procedure are defined in sections 6.5.6 (Sufficiency) and 6.5.7 (Approval)

4.5.16 Can the SWG members ask TC members to vote?

Yes. Given that an adoption vote is only 45 days with no extensions, the SWG should consider encouraging the TC Voting Members to vote. Remember this is a consensus process so active politicking to vote Yes or No is discouraged. Each Voting Member organization needs consider the motion and vote according to their organizations wishes.

5 What happens after the adoption vote?

Assuming a successful adoption vote, the following happens:

1. The SWG shall consider all comments submitted during the voting process and shall respond accordingly. Edits are allowed based on the comments.
2. The OGC Planning Committee is asked to review and approve the Technical Committee vote. This action requires two weeks duration.
3. Once the PC approves the adoption vote, then OGC staff reviews and edits the document in preparation for publication.
4. The edited document is returned to the SWG for final approval.
5. OGC staff works with the SWG to prepare a press release announcing the availability of a new OGC standard.
6. OGC staff works with the SWG to publish the document and any related schema(s).

