

# Open Geospatial Consortium

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Editor: Carl Reed

## RFC Submission Process: FAQ, Guidelines and Timeline

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### **Warning**

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## **i. Preface**

This document describes as clearly as possible the steps that comprise the OGC Request for Comment (RFC) Process. This document also provides a suggested timeline and guidance as appropriate.

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 standards.

Please read Section 9.0 of the OGC Technical Committee Policies and Procedures for the exact policies and procedures related to the submission of a Candidate Standard.

Please also note that this FAQ and Hot To document will apply to the proposed Full and Provisional standards tracks that are part of the proposed multi-track standards process. Community Specifications will follow a different path through the OGC process.

## Scope

The Request for Comment (RFC) procedure is the most common way for a candidate standard to enter into the OGC standards approval process. The RFC procedure is described in detail in the Technical Committee Policies and Procedures, Section 9.0.

However, there are always questions regarding the RFC submission process, the timeline, and so forth. This document is provided to the OGC membership as a guide and checklist<sup>1</sup> to submitting an RFC to the OGC and then manoeuvring the candidate standard to final formal adoption.

## 1 Overview of the Process

The following general diagram captures the flow of the candidate standard submitted using the RFC process from submission to adoption.

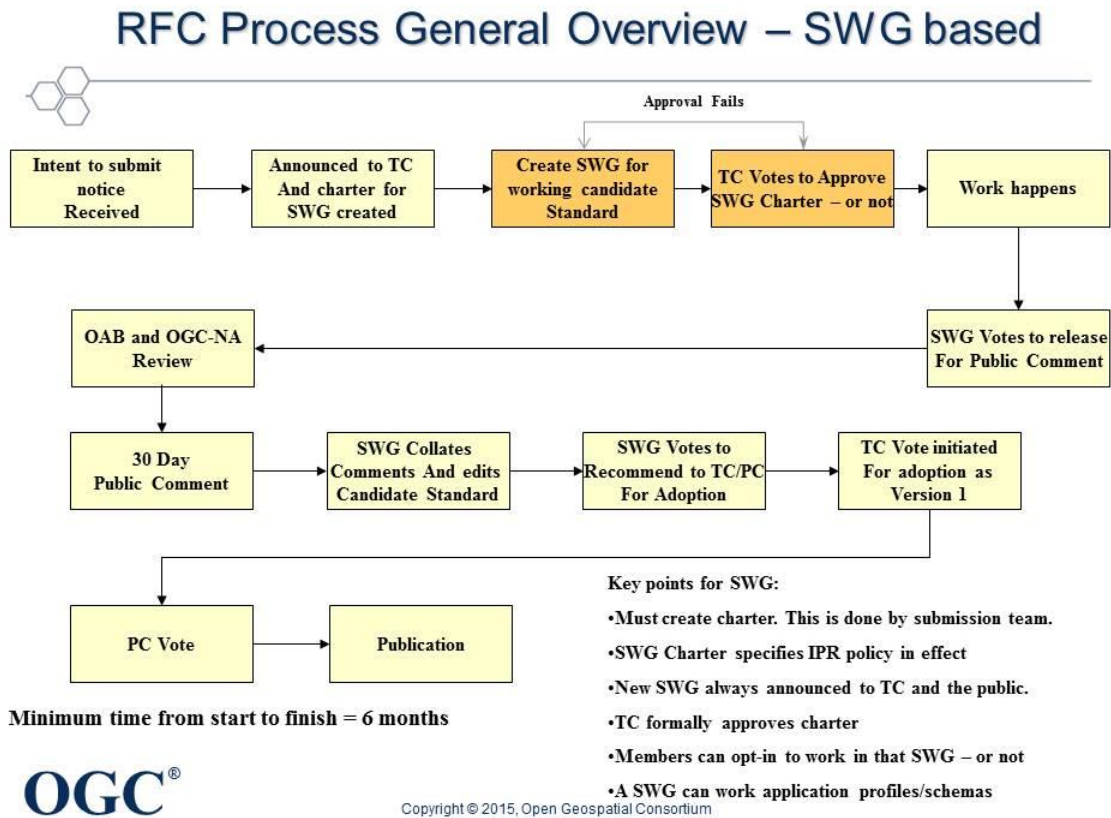


Figure 1 – General RFC Document Flow

<sup>1</sup> Please note that there is a detailed checklist for all of the steps related to submission, processing, and approval of a candidate standard.

Please note that the development of the draft SWG charter can occur in parallel with the submission process and OAB review.

The Primary Steps of the RFC Process Include:

- An RFC Submission Team is formed;
- The RFC Package is completed and submitted to the OGC;
- The Technical Committee Chair TC Chair announces the RFC submission to the entire Technical Committee.
- The OGC RFC consideration and approval process starts. Process Steps include:
  - Formation of a Standards Working Group (SWG)
  - Presentation and discussion in a Standards Working Group.
  - Recommendation and SWG vote to release (or not) the candidate standard for a 30-day public comment period.
  - OAB and OGC-NA Review
  - Comments are collected and consolidated into a single document.
- The SWG edits the document based on the comments. When work is completed, the SWG votes to recommend to the TC for have an adoption vote. This edited document is then posted to pending for final review and approval for release as the publicly available OpenGIS Standard, Version 1.

Each of these major steps is now detailed.

## **2 STEP 1: Submission Team is formed**

The first step in the submission process is for three or more OGC members to agree to submit a candidate standard via the RFC process for consideration by the members for adoption. Please note that having multiple members submit an RFC package add additional “weight” to the submission. This coordination may happen by a vote in an existing Standards Working Group. A SWG may vote to release a document into the OGC RFC process. In this case, the SWG may be the submission team. If there is a submission team and no SWG, then a new SWG needs to be formed.

The following items and actions always pertain.

### **2.1 The primary submitting organization must be a TC voting member**

Only TC voting members can be the primary submitter, also known as RFC lead organization. This is one of the member benefits for being a Technical, Planning, or Strategic member.

### **2.2 The submission team notifies the Technical Committee Chair (TTC) of the intent to submit**

The submission team informs the OGC TCC of the intent to submit a candidate standard via the RFC process. This can be done by email.

### **2.3 What is the minimum number of Members required for a Submission Team?**

Three. Any OGC Member, regardless of level<sup>2</sup>, can be part of a submission team.

### **2.4 What do the other submission team members need to do as part of the submission process?**

The other submission team members need to send an email to the TCC stating their intent to support the submission and to be part of the submission team. Or, the lead submitter can send the TCC an email stating who the members of the submission team are.

### **2.5 Copyright**

All submission team members shall agree to the following copyright policy:

- The Submitters agree that the OGC may copy, distribute and otherwise make available this submission for the purpose of evaluation, and that in the event that the submission is accepted, that OGC will own the copyright in the resulting standard or amendment and all rights therein, including the rights of distribution. This agreement shall not in any way deprive the Submitter of any patent or other IPR relating to the technology to which its submission relates.

## **3 STEP 2: RFC Submission Package is sent to the OGC**

Please note that the following section assumes that a candidate standard (document) exists. The RFC process can also be used to develop a new OGC standard from “scratch”. In this case, the interested Members need to form a SWG and do work. For this case, please skip to Section 4.2 of this document.

At any point after providing notice to the OGC, the submission team can provide the entire RFC submission package to the Technical Committee Chair.

### **3.1 What is in the RFC Submission Package?**

The following must be included in the RFC submission package:

- A cover letter/email.
- The candidate document in the proper OGC template.
- If required, a signed Submission of Technology Form. A SoT form is only required in the situation if the submission (specification) was developed outside the OGC process and is being submitted to the OGC for consideration. A past example was the KML submission.

Each of these is now described in more detail

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<sup>2</sup> Except Individual Members.

### 3.2 What is the submission Cover Letter and who signs it?

The lead organization on each RFC submission must provide a signed Cover Letter. The Cover Letter can be signed by any individual in the primary submitting organization with signature authority. The cover letter may be in the form of an email to the TC Chair.

If the organization submitting the Cover Letter is committing to commercialize the Implementation Standard, then the letter must contain a commitment to make the implementation available on commercially reasonable terms, applied in a non-discriminatory fashion within twelve months of adoption.

An example cover letter can be found in Annex A.

### 3.3 Candidate Standard in Proper OGC template

The candidate standard being submitted must be in the proper OGC document template. There are three possible templates that can be used:

- If the template is for an OpenGIS Abstract Specification topic volume, then use this template: OGC Abstract Specification Template.
- For all other interface, protocol, and encoding standards use the template: OGC Standard Document template.

All document templates can be found at the following URL:

<http://portal.opengeospatial.org/?m=public&subtab=templates&tab=2>

### 3.4 Submission of Technology Form

In order to assure that the candidate standard, if approved, will be made available under license to all implementers, members and non-members alike, any organization submitting a RFC Proposal Package that has non-OGC copyright and/or intellectual property associated with the candidate standard<sup>3</sup> is required to complete, sign and deliver a *Submission of Technology Form*, a copy of which can be obtained via download from the OGC Web Site ([www.opengeospatial.org](http://www.opengeospatial.org)). See caveat above.

#### 3.4.1 Who provides the Submission of Technology Form?

Only the submission team members need to provide a signed STF.

#### 3.4.2 Who signs the STF?

Any officer, executive, senior level manager, legal counsel, group manager or product manager of the endorsing organization and has the authority to make this commitment on behalf of the submitting organization

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<sup>3</sup> This would typically be the case for a candidate standard developed outside the OGC and then submitted to the OGC as a candidate standard. KML is a good example of this case.



## **4 STEP 3: RFC Submission Review Process**

Once the complete RFC submission package has been received by the OGC, the submission will be checked by OGC staff.

Receipt of the RFC submission will be announced to the members.

Concurrent with the submission process, the submission team can develop a SWG Charter for a new Standards Working Group (SWG). The TCC shall work with the submission team to develop the charter. A template for the charter can be found at <http://portal.opengeospatial.org/?m=public&subtab=templates&tab=2>. The charter template is similar to the old Working Group charter template, which has been in use for years.

### **4.1 When should the RFC Submission package be submitted?**

Anytime after receipt of the notice to submit.

### **4.2 Creation of a Standards Working Group<sup>4</sup>**

Once the charter for the new SWG has been developed, the charter will be posted to pending documents and the TCC will announce the formation of the new SWG to the entire membership. There is a three week review period in which members can review and comment on the draft charter.

After the three-week period, the TCC shall announce an approval vote to form the new SWG and accept the charter.

Assuming approval, the TC Chair shall then do a formal call for participation.

The submission team members will automatically be “opted” into the new SWG and will have immediate voting rights. The first order of business for the new SWG is to elect a chair and vice chair.

#### **4.2.1 Opting into the new SWG (Participation)**

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. Go 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”.

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<sup>4</sup> Please refer to the informational document: OGC Standards Working Group FAQ document. [https://portal.opengeospatial.org/files/?artifact\\_id=22853](https://portal.opengeospatial.org/files/?artifact_id=22853)

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.

#### **4.2.2 Voting Status**

During this 30-day period, the member can participate in all discussions and activities of the SWG except for voting. After the 30 day waiting period, the member can request that the SWG Chair change the members voting status from “Observer” to “Voting”.

#### **4.2.3 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. However, the member who opts out is still bound by the IPR policy of the SWG but the member is not required to declare any essential claims or IPR.

#### **4.2.4 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.

#### **4.2.5 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.

#### **4.2.6 Staff Actions related to the formation of a new Swg**

Staff will do the following:

- Announce the formation of the SWG
- Create and maintain the portal web page that allows member representatives to opt into the new SWG
- Will create a folder, and if requested, a wiki in the TC project to be used for the work of the SWG. Only members who opt in will have access to this folder.

All documents related to the work of the SWG will be posted to the SWG folder on the portal. NO SWG documents will be posted to pending until the submission is ready for an adoption vote by the members.

### **4.3 Voting in a SWG**

#### **4.3.1 Who can vote in a SWG?**

SWG Charter members may vote at the very first official meeting of the SWG. Observers (new participants who have not gone through the 30 day waiting period) may participate in all discussions but may not vote until after 30 days.

#### **4.3.2 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.

#### **4.3.3 Special note on case where multiple individuals in aSWG are from the same Member organization.**

If there are multiple individuals from the same Member organization in a SWG, only one of those individuals can vote on items and issues brought before the SWG for consideration. Therefore, if your organization has more than one individual working in a SWG, please let the SWG Chair know who the voting individual will be. The Chair will update the SWG portal folder with that information.

#### **4.4 Release of the document for public comment – the Process**

Once the submission has been presented and discussed in the SWG, there must be a motion from any member of that SWG to release the candidate Standard for a 30-day (or longer) public comment period. The SWG will only make this motion if they feel that the candidate standard is mature enough and is properly aligned with other existing adopted OpenGIS standards.

##### **4.4.1 What does this motion look like?**

A typical motion from the SWG floor to release the candidate standard for a 30-day public comment period would be:

The <xyz> Standards Working Group recommends that the candidate standard <title of the candidate standard> OGC document number <xx-xxx> be released for a 30-day public comment period.

The results of the vote on the motion must be maintained in the meeting minutes for the SWG.

##### **4.4.2 Can there be friendly amendments?**

Yes, there can be friendly amendments. A typical friendly amendment might be to allow the submission team to make minor edits to correct grammatical errors, add informative text, or correct template issues. Anyone in the SWG can make a friendly amendment.

##### **4.4.3 Can the comment period be longer than 30 days?**

Yes, if the SWG feels that a longer comment period is required, there can be a friendly amendment.

#### **4.4.4 The motion for public comment passes after . . .**

A key SWG vote is to release a candidate standard for the public comment period.

##### **4.4.4.1 The SWG motion passes if**

There is a positive vote. A positive vote for a SWG, as defined in the TC P&P, is a simple majority (quorum) of the official membership of the SWG voting “Yes”. These votes can be done via teleconference if a quorum is present or by email vote.

#### **4.4.5 OGC Architecture Board review of the candidate standard**

Once the TCC has checked the submission, the candidate standard is then reviewed by the OAB. The OAB has the responsibility to insure that the RFC submission is relevant in terms of the rationale for how the candidate standard fits into the current adoption plans of the OGC (and/or the current Abstract Specification) and that the OGC Policies related to the Modular Specification Policy are followed (unless there is a justification not to follow the Modular Spec Policy).

Any guidance from the OAB will be provided to the SWG. In some cases, the OAB will recommend that the candidate standard not be released for public comment until corrections are made to the document.

#### **4.4.6 OGC Naming Authority Review.**

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>.

#### **4.4.7 The Candidate Standard is released for Public Comment**

Assuming that the SWG approves the release of the candidate standard for public comment, the following happens:

- OGC staff in concert with the Submission Team develops a press release announcing the public comment period.
- The document is given a final check and then posted with other relevant information to the OGC public home page under the “Current Requests and Initiatives” link.
- The comment period is announced to the OGC membership at large.
- The comment period begins.

#### **4.4.8 Can anyone submit comments?**

Yes, any member or non-member can submit comments.

#### **4.4.9 How are comments submitted?**

Every request for public comment page will have a “Click here to submit comment” link. Clicking this link will bring up a pre-formatted email template that the comment submitter can then complete and send to the OGC. Annex D has an example of the comment email format.

#### **4.5 The Public comment period closes – what happens then**

Once the public comment period ends, the SWG must do the following.

##### **4.5.1 SWG collects comments and creates new document.**

The SWG collects all the received comments and any others that they may have received by other channels of communication.

##### **4.5.1.1 How does the SWG get the comments?**

The OGC will provide the SWG with direction on where all of the comments received during the comment period can be located. Typically, the comments are located at the comment submission site where the public has posted comments pertaining to a given candidate standard.

##### **4.5.1.2 What does the SWG do with the comments?**

The SWG takes all the comments and consolidates and organizes them into a single document.

##### **4.5.1.3 Is there a document template for organizing the comments?**

Yes.

##### **4.5.1.4 Does the SWG need to respond to any of the comments?**

Yes. It is the responsibility of this SWG to consider each of the comments and determine whether they are valid or not and to respond to the comment submitter.

##### **4.5.1.5 Can the SWG provide notes in the consolidated document?**

Sure. If the SWG feels that these notes will help the members during the E-Vote adoption process, then feel free to provide such notes.

**4.5.2 Then post the consolidated comments to the SWG folder.**

Once the submission team has developed the consolidated and organized document of comments, the document must be posted to the SWG folder on the members’ portal. Also, the TC needs to be notified that the consolidated comments document is available.

**4.6 And then the editing work begins.**

And now the work begins. Each of the comments must be discussed and voted on by the SWG members as to whether the candidate standard should be edited in response to the comments. Voting on comments can be done either at a teleconference, by email, or at a face-to-face meeting. Quorum for these votes is a simple majority of the SWG membership.

**5 The Timeline**

The following is a normal timeline for the RFC process. The timeline starts with the submission of the letter of intent and finishes with the approval of version 1 of the standard. Please note that the timeline can drastically change based on the timing of the submission of documents, the TC face-to-face meetings, and so forth.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Typical Duration</b>	<b>Typical Total elapsed time (in days)</b>
Submission Notification	Immediate	0
RFC Package Submission	Within 6 months of notice of intent to submit	30
Create SWG	45 days	75
SWG Approval for release for Public Comment	Can occur anytime once SWG agrees document is ready for public release	105
OAB Review	Once SWG approves for release as RFC	139
Public comment period	30 days	169
Collect comments and post to SWG	14 days	173
Process Comments and edit document	60 days	223

If all goes smoothly, from notice of intent to submit until approval as version 1, typically 240 elapsed days at a minimum is required. Then work continues.

## Annex A - Sample Cover Letter



Intergraph Corporation  
Security, Government & Infrastructure  
PO Box 6695  
Huntsville, AL 35824

Date: April 3, 2006

t: 1.256.730.2000  
www.intergraph.com

To: Carl Reed  
Technical Committee Chair, Open GIS Consortium

Re: SensorML Request for Comment

Dear Dr. Reed,

It is our pleasure to submit a Sensor Model Language (SensorML) Implementation Specification Request for Comment (RFC) package for consideration by the OGC Technical Committee. The SensorML specification provide a core framework for defining processes, including measurement and the processing of observations.

Multiple OGC member organizations join Intergraph in this submission. Several corporate, government, and commercial members have committed to utilize SensorML or to make implementations available on commercially reasonable terms, applied in a non-discriminatory fashion within twelve months of adoption by the OGC Planning Committee. A full list of SensorML RFC Submission Team members is attached. The Letters of Endorsement and Letters of Intent are included in this submission package. Known implementations are being listed at: <http://vast.uah.edu/SensorML/implementations.htm>. Several other efforts are currently protected under confidentiality agreements.

SensorML has been developed over the last 6 years. The specification was approved as a Public Discussion paper in April 2002, as a Recommended Paper in November 2004, and as a Best Practices Paper in October 2005. The relevance of a SensorML Implementation Specification to OGC is clear as SensorML was developed through OGC Interoperability Program initiatives and has generated much interest both within and outside of OGC membership. SensorML has been harmonized with the OGC Sensor Web Enablement Framework. SensorML has generated significant interest throughout various sensor communities, including those for science, defense, intelligence, emergency management, and utilities. The SensorML Forum currently has 140 subscribers. NASA recently published a Request for Proposals that specifically targeted efforts directed toward Sensor Webs and SensorML specifically.

We look forward to improving the specification based on comments received through this RFC.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ignacio Guerrero".

---

Ignacio Guerrero  
Executive Vice President  
Intergraph Corporation

## **Annex B - Email Comment Template**

Part A is to be completed once per evaluator per comment submission. Please iterate over Part B as needed.

### **PART A**

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1. Evaluator: [CONTACT INFORMATION]
2. Submission: OGC Request 35: OpenGIS® Catalogue Services Standard 2.0.1 (with Corrigendum) - ISO Metadata Application Profile (CSW2 AP ISO): Request for Public Comments

### **PART B**

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1. Standard Section number: [GENERAL, #]
2. Criticality: [MAJOR, MINOR, EDITORIAL, ETC.]
3. Comments/justifications for changes: [COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS]