Audio Engineering Society, Inc.

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STANDARDS CORRESPONDENCE

PROJECT CRITERIA: Key Questions

The questions in the project initiation form are designed to help identify what the outcome of a proposed project should be. There are no trick questions and the examples are not exclusive - they are simply a guide to illustrate how a standards project might be justified.

Q1. Why is this project necessary or useful?

Purpose

A standards project needs to have a useful output in order for the AES membership and the audio community to benefit in some way.

Sometimes the useful output suggested by a proposal will be quite obvious, sometimes it will only be apparent to audio engineers with specialist knowledge.

In either case it helps to clarify why the project is intended to be useful at the beginning of a project as a useful guide to help track its completion. Better targeted and timely standards.

Good examples

- A standardised (interface/ protocol/ process/ connector) is needed to reduce ambiguity in the field and to ensure satisfactory inter-working between items of equipment from different manufacturers.
- A satisfactory (interface/ protocol/ process/ connector) is needed but does not exist.
- A standard definition is needed to reduce (current/ anticipated) confusion in technical specifications.

Poor example!

- Because the topic is interesting for the working group. This may indeed be true, but needs to be balanced by some eventual benefit for the wider audio community.

Q2. What will the output be?

Purpose

The output does not need to be a full standard to be useful. In many cases, a report or an information document may be more useful because they can be completed comparatively quickly and, by opening up discussion in the community, allows a subsequent standard to be drafted and published more effectively. It is also helpful if a subject can be subdivided into self-sufficient modules which can be published quickly rather than attempting to standardise a complex subject in a single document which will inevitably take longer to develop and may be less useful as a result.

Options

The output of a standards project normally takes one of three forms.

- A standard represents a full public consensus
- An Information Document needs to demonstrate public consensus but may contain opposing or alternative views.
- A Report need only show consensus within the Working Group. A document may therefore be produced more quickly and may be useful in communicating information in a timely manner.

- Other forms of output are not precluded; the secretariat will be happy to offer advice on practicalities.

Q3. Who benefits?

Purpose

The value of a standard remains abstract until the usefulness outlined in Q1 is actually realised by somebody. Identifying the part of the audio community that benefits from a standard is a powerful focussing tool. Clearly, a proposal that benefits the whole international community will be more attractive than a proposal that only benefit a small or regional subset.

Good examples

- Operators in the field, who will benefit from a standardised interconnection.
- Equipment manufacturers, who will be able to reduce the number of variants they need to design and test for EMC compliance.
- Broadcasters, who will be able to specify (installations/ equipment/ procedures) with greater confidence.
- Installation companies, who will be able to quote for contracts on a basis of greater stability.
- Users, who will be able to interchange recorded audio material with greater confidence.
- Archivists, who will be able to store recorded audio with greater certainty of being able to replay it in the future.
- This standard is necessary to establish a basis for further, directly beneficial, standards, such as: (…).

Poor example!

- Just seems like a good idea!

Q4. Related standards?

Purpose

Few standards exist in isolation. Where a standard needs to, or should, refer to provisions in some other standard, whether published by the AES or another body, then this should be recognised at the outset.

Normative standards

Recognised standards bodies, including: ISO, IEC, ITU-R, ITU-T

Ourselves: AES

Recognised standards

National standards committees (ANSI, DIN, BSI, etc.).

Specialist standards bodies: IEEE, SMPTE.

Other standards

Trade associations, for example: DVD Association, ATM Forum

Industry consortia, for example: Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), Object Management Group (OMG)

Q5. Liaisons?

Purpose

While the subject of a proposal may be important to professional audio engineering, we in the AES may not hold all the keys. It is useful to liaise with other bodies where their expertise can complete the necessary understanding, or where it is useful for them to understand our direction.

Q6. Alternative standards body?

Purpose

It is sometimes possible to imagine that the AESSC is in competition with other groups for standardising a given topic, however this is rarely the case. Where a standard is important to support professional audio engineering there is an obvious interest for AESSC. Where a standard might be more appropriately developed by another group, it may be better to encourage them to proceed with their standardisation, with our assistance as appropriate. This is a form of active liaison in a reverse sense.

Q7. What's the AES advantage?

Purpose

Where a grey area is identified in Q6, it is useful to set out the case for AESSC involvement.

Examples

- Existing developments in this area are aimed at consumer applications. The AES can apply its expertise to the requirements of professional applications.