

COTS Project: Forum

Meeting held on 21 September 2009

@ Ingenious Media, 15 Golden Square, W1F 9JG



MINUTES (ABRIDGED)

1) Welcome and introduction

The chair, Malcolm Taylor, welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made around the table. MT set out what the meeting was aiming to achieve, with a focus on needing to be clear regarding the identification of the key stakeholders in this process, and for proposing membership of the working groups and the steering group.

2) Restatement of the objective

Participants discussed the objective of COTS as set out in the 'Draft Principles and Process' paper. The following points were made:

- The objective should be amended from 'low-cost' to 'efficient'
- COTS is not seeking to address every issues relating to local independent access networks; it is anticipated that the following would not be in scope: network design; architecture; funding; State Aid; Non-Domestic Rating; the regulatory framework; public service delivery; and government policy such as the Final Third Project and the Universal Service Commitment; it is also not a standards body.
- It was agreed that in order to fully scope the issues COTS would be addressing, it was necessary to establish all the issues faced by local access networks, and then to highlight areas where COTS would be operating.
- Stakeholder groups were identified: retail service providers; network operators; and end users.
- Product development, particularly passive infrastructure sharing, is also out of the scope of COTS, and is being dealt with elsewhere.

The group then moved on to discuss the guiding principles for the project, also set out in the principles and process paper. The following points were made:

- The tension between standardisation and innovation was discussed.
- The need for a guaranteed level of service for consumers on these networks to be developed, perhaps through standard SLAs.
- In keeping with current regulatory principles, a principle setting out proportionality should be added to the current principles.

Actions arising

- BSG to amend objective from 'low cost' to 'efficient'.
- BSG to draft the long list of issues relating to the success of independent local open access networks.
- BSG to add additional proportionality principle.

3) Approach to the work

The group discussed the proposed approach to the work, including how to engage the industry and drive the work forward. The following points were made:

- It was agreed that the forum, at over 30 members, was too large to drive the work forward efficiently. It was agreed that a smaller steering group, drawn from representatives from the various stakeholder groups, should be put together to take the work forward. This new steering group would report back to the forum.
- It will be necessary for stakeholders to identify the success measures by which to assess the outputs of the project.
- The steering group will be responsible for establishing and working groups, and setting their remit.

Actions arising

- BSG to revise structure and assemble a smaller steering group based on stakeholder groups.

4) ALA

Chris Gallon of Fujitsu, chair of the NICC TSG Working Group, presented the progress NICC have made regarding the standardisation of ALA. The presentation is available on the website. The following comments were made:

- Whether ALA will enable multiple VLAN services is currently being considered by Ofcom, who will advise NICC.
- For ALA delivery over GPON, security is an issue that still needs to be resolved.
- It was agreed that ALA provided an appropriate framework for the development of active wholesale products on independent local open access networks.
- Adrian Wooster of CBN, and Peter Shearman of BSG, agreed to attend NICC TSG meetings as observers, to ensure the work of both groups inform the other and to provide a liaison between the two groups.

5) Governance

The group discussed the governance arrangements for the COTS Project. The following points were made:

- The need for a smaller steering group was reiterated.
- It was agreed that those present should identify themselves with a stakeholder group, in order that the secretariat can create a representative steering group.
- The process for agreeing decisions was discussed, with ideas such as a caucus approach to voting put forward.

6) Wrap-up and next steps

BSG will progress this within a month, and will advise as to what and when the next meeting will be. MT thanked everyone for their participation and contributions.