Getting Started at W3C

Sandro Hawke, W3C Staff

Gov Linked Data WG
F2F1 – 29 Jun 2011

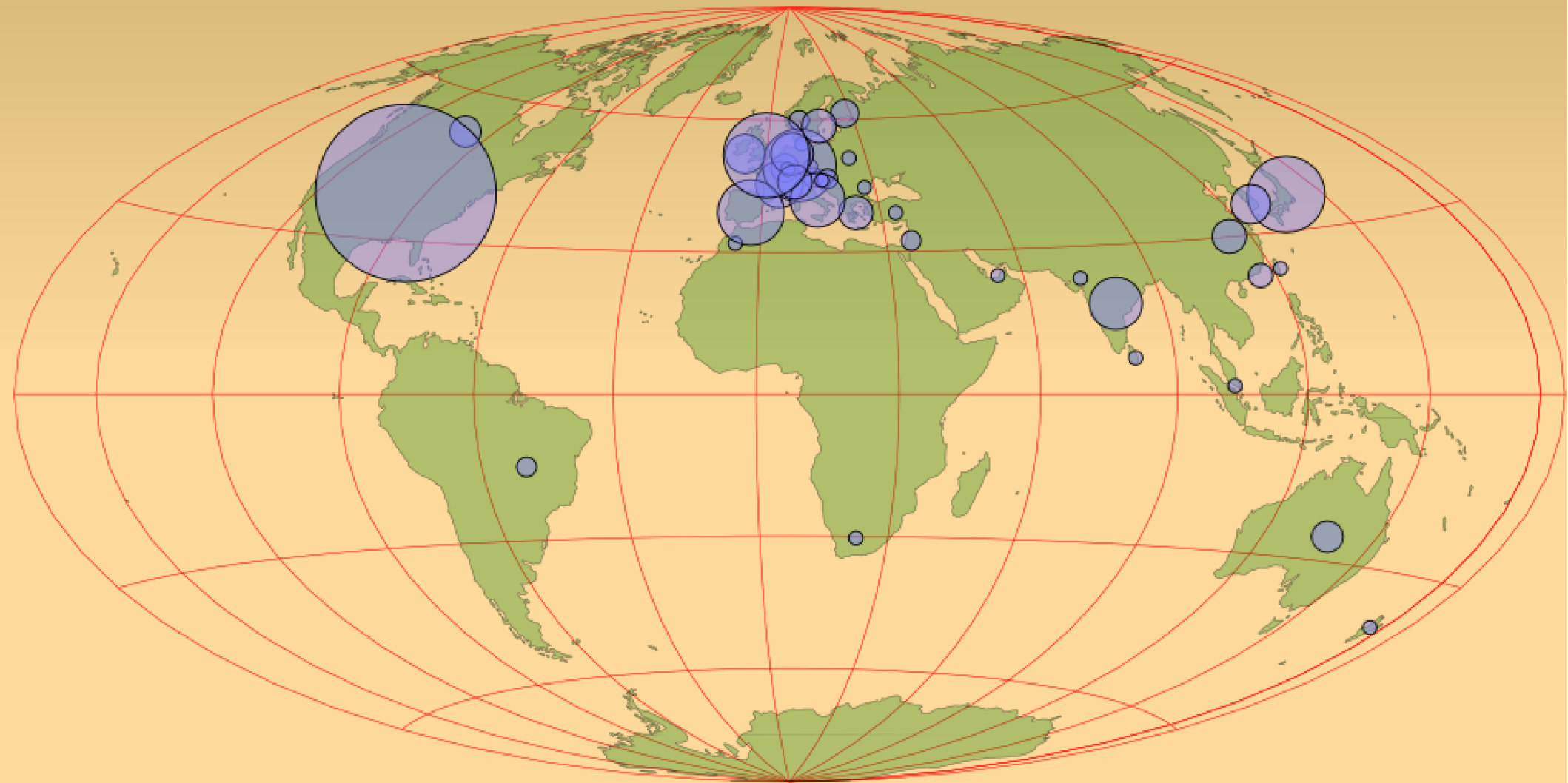**http://www.w3.org/2011/Talks/0628-gld-sandro**

Overview

1. What W3C Does (and Why)
2. The "Recommendation Track"
   (secret: the sausage is made of public comments and formal objections)
3. Tools for Working Together

About W3C

- Founded 1994 by Web inventor, Tim Berners-Lee

- Mission: Lead the Web to its Full Potential

   (making the web do more for <u>everyone</u>)

- Funded by membership fees, donations, grants

International Presence

333 member organizations in 40 countries. Offices in 20 countries, including 3 host sites (MIT/US, ERCIM/France, Keio/Japan).
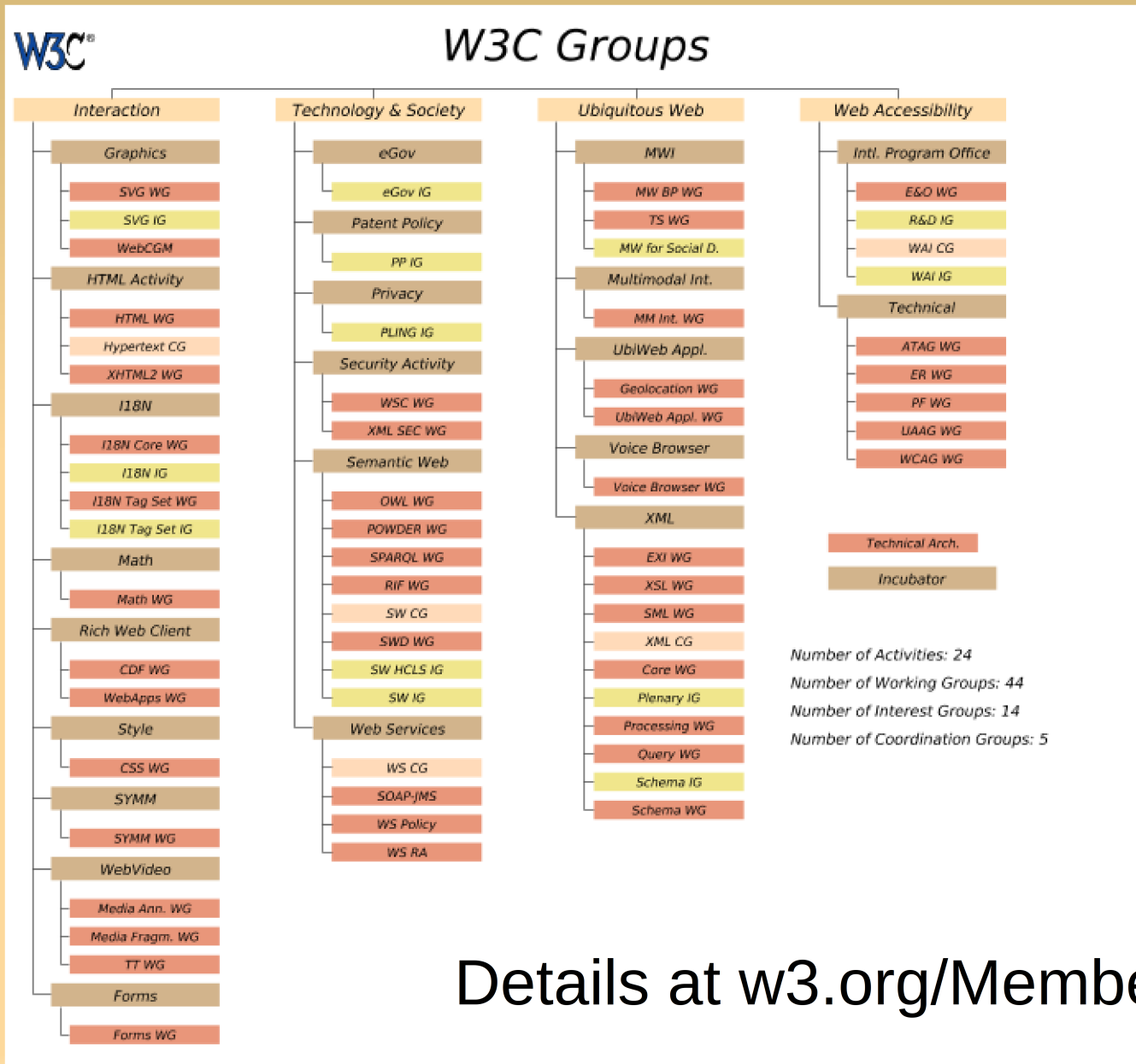
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Diverse Membership

Broad Reach

- Translations of standards into 45+ languages

- Liaisons w/ 40+ global standards organizations UN (IGF), ISO, ITU, IETF, OGF, Unicode, Eclipse, OMA, etc.

- 32,000 people subscribed to mailing lists

- 10,000,000 hits/day on www.w3.org

- 100+ Web standards:HTML, XML, PNG/SVG, RDF/OWL/SPARQL, accessibility, etc.

- 1,500+ participants in 60+ Groups

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W3C's groups

Details at w3.org/Member/Mail

W3C Staff

- 62 people, 49 FTE, 25 directly in WGs
- Largest cluster (about 15) at MIT
- About half work from home

So What Does W3C Do?

- Turn Possible Consensus into Standards

  - Bring together stakeholders

  - To understand each other's use cases

  - To understand the technologies

    …

  - Respecting people's contributions

  - Learning to communicate effectively

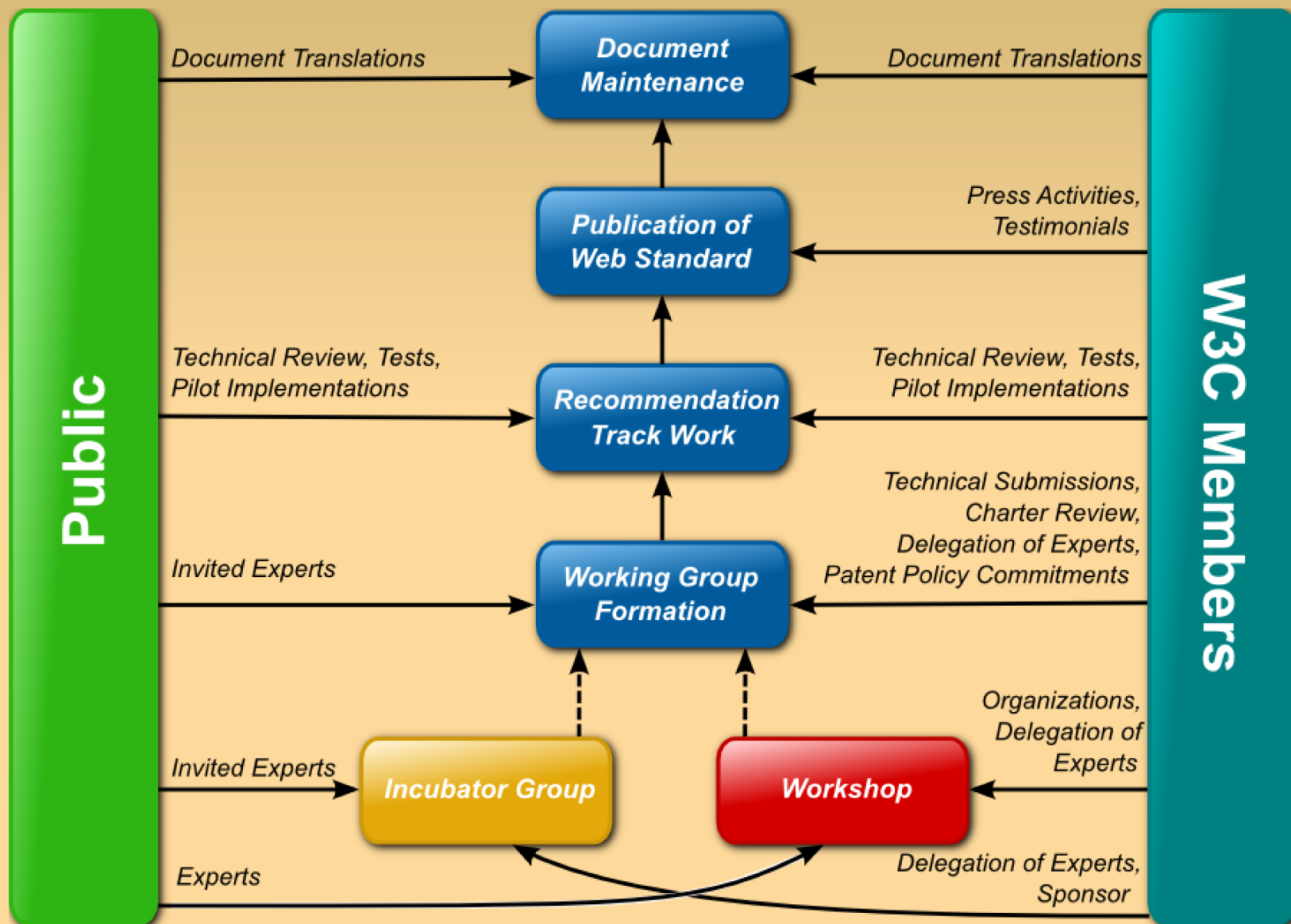 - Basis in verifiable facts, running code

Decisions

- W3C groups try to make decisions by consensus
  - That is, decisions no one Formally Objects to
  - We try to minimize objections, and usually succeed
  - Every Formal Objection is reviewed by mgmt, to make sure the group really tried.
- Why would someone formally object?
  - They are convinced the decision is bad for group
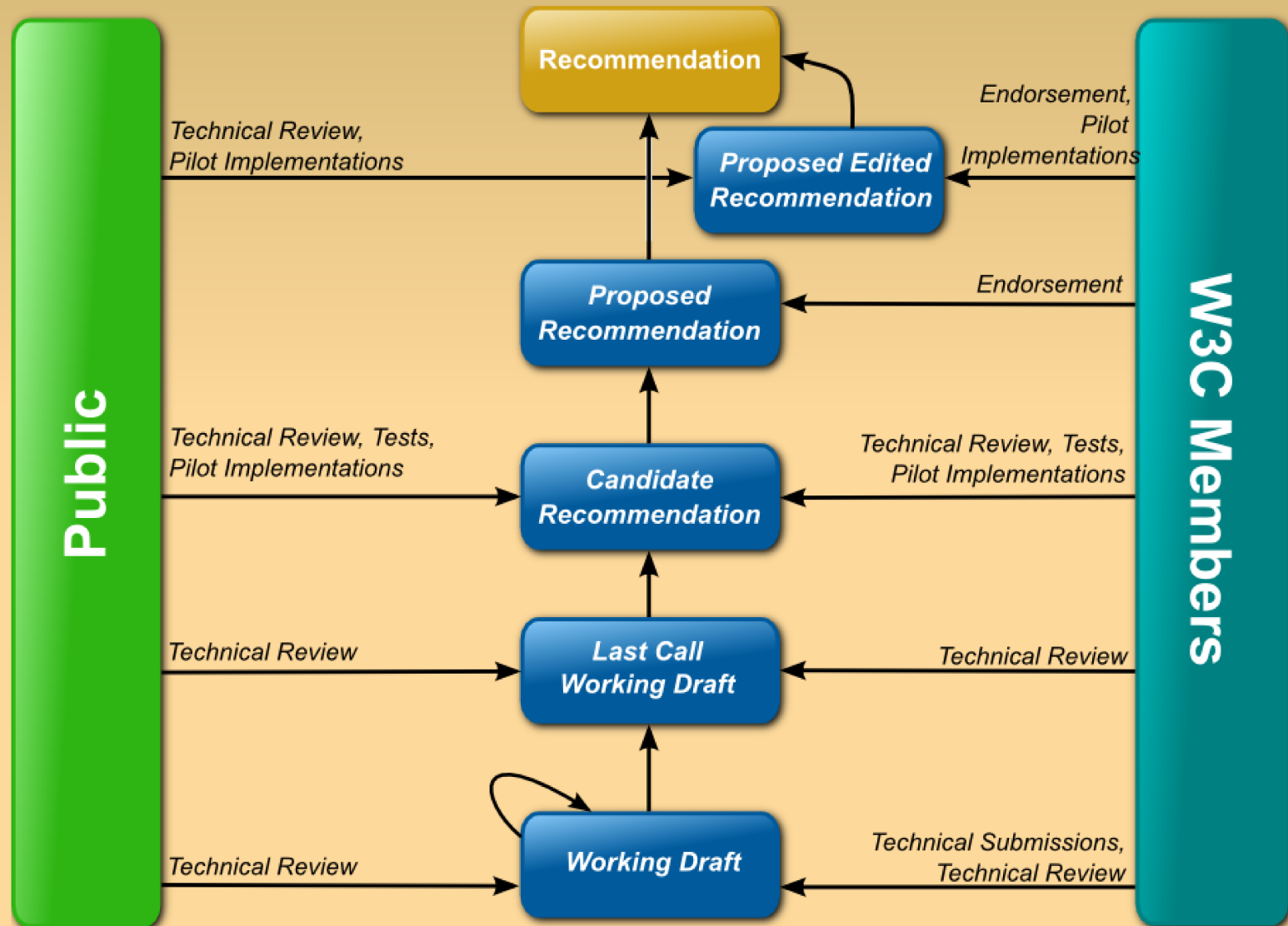 - It goes against their business. "We wont implement it".

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W3C Rules and Traditions

- Rules (formal process)
  - W3C "Process Document"
  - W3C "Member Agreement"
  - Approved Charters
  - "PubRules" (for document publication)
- Traditions (informal process)
  - Meeting minutes
  - Responding to comments from the public
  - Making decision
  - Keeping people happy and productive

Working Group Life Cycle

W3C Recommendation Track

Details: W3C Patent Policy

- **Goal**: Produce Specs implementable on Royalty-Free basis and allow technical work with minimal interruption

- **Method**:

    - W3C Royalty-Free licensing definition: available to all, all Essential Claims 'owned or controlled', field of use limitation, reciprocity, no fees, defensive suspension.

    - W3C RF obligations for Working Group participants:

        - license Essential Claims they hold on an W3C RF basis
        - Exclusions opportunities early in the development of a specification

    - Disclosure rules for non participants, based on actual knowledge

    - Exception Handling: Patent Advisory Group (PAG)

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In short...

- W3C has a solid track record for developing open standard Web technologies

- Work on standards involves lots of challenging issues related to the future evolution of the Web

- The process is transparent and unbiased, but participation usually requires Membership

No Silver Bullet

- Good Design and Global Consensus take work.

W3C Membership

- W3C Members (Organizations)
    - Approve Activities, Recommendations
    - Nominate Participants for Wgs
    - Advisory Committee (AC Rep is Member Liaison)
    - Fees vary by size, type, country
        - 68,500 USD/yr for Large US company
        - 7,900 USD/yr for US Gov't Agency/Dept
        - 1,905 USD/yr for Non-Profit in Dev. Country
    - Usually organizations that buy or sell things which implement our standards.
- See http://www.w3.org/Consortium/membership

Invited Experts

- Sometimes a WG needs certain other people

- Requires approval by chairs, staff contact, usually management.

- Different groups have different policies.

  - eGov Interest Group, HTML5 WG == open to all

- Sometimes provides Member access

- Not suitable for WG-related businesses

- Best to have Membership discussion first

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Tools for Working Together

- Mailing Lists

- Main Website, Group Wiki

- Phone Meetings

- IRC, Bots, Scribing

- Issues

- WBS (polling)

- Document Development

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Mailing Lists

- public-gld-wg@w3.org

  - Official Participants automatically on list

  - Public archives

  - Where the main written discussion takes place

- team-gld-chairs@w3.org

  - Chairs and staff contact

  - Private archives

  - Better than contacting the individuals, usually

Mailing Lists Cont'd

- public-gld-comments@w3.org

  - How everyone else talks to us

  - Also sent to all WG participants

  - We officially respond to every comment

  - If commenter is not satisfied, mgmt review

- sysreq@w3.org

  - For reporting systems problems, bugs

Main Website

- 16+ years of accumulation

- Heavy use of dates in URLs

    - http://www.w3.org/TR/

    - http://www.w3.org/TR/2009/WD-gov-data-20090908/

    - http://www.w3.org/2011/gld

- Fine-grained read/write access control

- Large portions only for W3C Members, Staff

- http://www.w3.org/Guide ("Art of Consensus")

    - Still Member-Only (alas)

Group Wiki

- GLD WG has its own Wiki

- Same software as Wikipedia

- Public can see every version of everything

- Only WG participants can write (usually)

- "Recent Changes" (rss feed)

- Try to clean up, improve things, make links
  - It's easy to undo

Phone Meetings

- We use "Zakim" bridge – tied to IRC bots

- Most groups meet weekly for 60-90 minutes

- Maybe: task forces with other meetings

- CallerID can often remember who-is-who

- Use IRC commands to record who you are

IRC, Bots, Scribing

- One person, the "scribe", takes notes on IRC

- After revision and approval those become official minutes

- Others can see scribing at the same time, correct, understand

- IRC chatter ignored by some, but logged

- Polling on IRC, PROPOSED: +1 / 0 / -1

- "Zakim" bot reports/controls phone bridge

- "RRSAgent" bot logs what's said

- Scribe.perl or CommonScribe reformat logs

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Issues

- An "Issue" is a matter the group will have to resolve later.   Often, a Design Decision

  - ISSUE: What color shall we paint the bike shed?

- Proposed by anyone in group

- Chairs decide if it's OPEN

- WG decision to CLOSE it

- All issues closed == Last Call

- "tracker" manages them nicely

  - It also manages Action Items

Web Based Strawpoll (WBS)

- Most of you did GLD scheduling poll

- Not as fancy as some Web polling systems

- But integrated with User Accounts

  - Poll this WG

  - Nag the people who haven't answered

- Great for groups with quiet members, fewer telecons

Document Development

- Document Storage Options
  - Editor do it themselves
  - CVS
  - Mercurial (hg)
  - Wiki
- Document Formatting Options
  - Wiki
  - ReSpec
  - Anything that makes *good* HTML

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Welcome!

- The rules, traditions, systems work pretty well

- The output is usually quite good

- Member organizations usually satisfied

- Participants usually satisfied

- Yes, we have a lot to do!