# The OMG Continues Its Work on Business Process Standards

The Object Management Group (OMG) is an international standards body that develops standards by consensus. Several hundred companies, including most of the leading companies and vendors in the world, are OMG members, and so it is not surprising that the process takes a bit of time. The OMG actually works faster than most standards groups because it insists that proposals submitted by member companies be based on existing technology, and that submitters commit to make an implementation available within a reasonable period, for a modest licensing fee, if the standard is adopted. Others can also implement the OMG standards, which are open, but this approach guarantees that submitters are practical, and that at least one implementation is available if a new standard is adopted. The OMG has technical meetings about five times a year, and at each of these meetings various task forces work to create or refine standards.

If a task force wants to consider a new standard, it usually issues a Request for Information (RFI) just to find out what members think of the possibility, and to determine what technology already exists to serve as a solution for the problem. If the RFI produces favorable results, the task force usually proceeds to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP). Different companies or groups of companies submit proposed standards. Typically, there are at least two or three proposals, and often more. The task force reviews the proposals and usually asks submitters to work together to create a consensus proposal that combines features that everyone finds valuable. The requirement that the submitter actually implement the standard within a given period often leads to some cross licensing deals among leading companies that are backing alternative submissions. Once a standard is accepted by the task force, it must be approved by the OMG technical committee which assures that the new standard is compatible and compliant with all other OMG standards. Then, the membership of the OMG votes on the standard. In many cases, once the OMG approves and publishes a new standard, the standard is forwarded to the International Standards Organization (ISO) for fast track adoption as an ISO standard.

There are several standards under consideration by the OMG that are important to those of us involved in business process

change. Most are being considered by the OMG's Business Enterprise Integration (BEI) Domain Task Force. The BEI Domain Task Force is headed by Fred Cummins of EDS and Stan Hendryx of Hendryx Associates. (We published a column by Stan Hendryx reporting on the OMG work on Rules this month, and anyone interested in the OMG's rules standardization efforts should be certain to read that column ([www.bptrends.com](http://www.bptrends.com)).

The latest OMG Technical Committee meeting was held in Montreal, Quebec, Canada on the 23rd-27th of August. We had hoped that some of the OMG's business process standards would reach final form at the meeting, but it seems that summer took its toll, and in most cases, the deadlines for final submissions and voting were delayed until later in the fall or early next year. This isn't unusual when you consider the variety of work currently being done in the business process area. More work means more coordination to assure that standards reflect all the latest work in the business process domain.

Following is an update on the standards the BEI Domain Task Force is working on. Material in italics are quotations from the OMG's official descriptions of the standards.

**BPRI RFP**

*This Request for Proposal is soliciting specifications for a platform-independent model (PIM) of the runtime interfaces to business processes. Business processes include workflow management but address a broader range of applications, including processes supporting electronic commerce and web services. This RFP does not include models to specify business processes - only interfaces to business processes when they are executed. A business process in this context is a set of activities coordinated and controlled by the execution of a business process definition.*

The BEI has asked the original submitters to work on a revised submission. The date for submission of the revised RFP has been extended to March 21, 2005.

**Business Process Definition Metamodel RFP (BPDM)**

*This Request For Proposal solicits submissions that specify a business process definition metamodel, which is platform independent with respect to specific business process definition languages. This metamodel will define an abstract language for specification of executable business processes that execute within an enterprise (with or without human involvement); and may collaborate between otherwise-independent business processes executing in different business units or enterprises.*

The BEI listened to a presentation on a revised submission and extended the deadline for a final submission to March 21, 2005.

**Business Rules Management RFI (BRM)**

*This Request for Information (RFI) solicits information regarding the management of all kinds of business rules in business information systems, under the term 'business rule management', and whether there is a need or desire to standardize such management information and/or services. The issuing of this RFI follows from previous OMG meetings that discussed the need for standards in various areas of 'business rule management'. In the context of this Request For Information, the term 'business rule management' is defined to mean any combination of: - collection - representation - organization and structure - analysis and reporting - input and output, for any purpose - testing, or extraction for testing - verification and validation, or extraction for these purposes - comparison - deployment information - tracing to external stimuli, requirements or other information of "business rules", where such rules may be: - defined as business definitions for business use (to represent policies, practices and procedures), or - defined as executable business rule statements for use in some rule-driven system, or - both.*

The BEI expects to receive responses to this RFI by October 11 and plans to consider them at the next meeting of the OMG Technical to be held in Washington, DC on November 1-5 of this year.

**Business Semantics of Business Rules RFP (BSBR)**

*There is no generally accepted approach for defining or representing business rules. The objective of this RFP is to allow business people to define the policies and rules by which they run their business in their own language, in terms of the things they deal with in the business, and to capture those rules in a way that is clear, unambiguous and readily translatable into other representations. Among those representations are presentation forms for business people and software engineers, and executable rules for many kinds of automated systems. This RFP solicits proposals for the following:*

- *a metamodel for the specification of business rules by business people, with a MOF representation;*
- *a metamodel for the capture of vocabularies and definitions of the terms used in business rules;*
- *an XML representation of business rules and vocabularies based on XMI that permits exchange among software tools that manage, display, use, and translate business rules*

The BEI listened to a presentation of BSBR and extended the deadline for the final submission of proposals to October 11,

2004.

**Organization Structure Metamodel RFP (OSM)**

*The objective of this RFP is to solicit proposals for a metamodel to be used for specification of an organization structure and at least one mapping to a production directory schema. An organization structure metamodel consists of modeling elements used to represent organizational entities, their attributes, the relationships between them and the people assigned to them. This includes information about the organizational units that make up an enterprise and the structure and formal relationships by which they interact. This metamodel shall support the specification, analysis and modification of the organization structure of an enterprise. The concepts and associated information must be defined in business terms and must be sufficient to support a variety of organization types. The metamodel shall also support specification of future-effective organizational changes. The specification shall include a mapping of the metamodel to a runtime directory schema to provide consistent data structures for use by production applications while addressing the schema-characteristics needed for runtime performance.*

The BEI extended the initial submission deadline to January 10, 2005.

**Production Rule Representation RFP (PRR)**

*This RFP addresses the representation of production rules in UML model (Production rules, as considered in this RFP, should not be confused with XMI production rules as defined in XMI 1.1 specification (formal/2000-11-02) or other model or grammar transformation rules specified by the OMG standards.) With respect of production rules, this RFP solicits proposals for the following:*

- *A MOF2 compliant metamodel with precise dynamic semantics to represent production rules, where "production rules" refers to rules that are executed by an inference engine. This metamodel is intended to support a language that can be used with UML models for explicitly representing production rules as visible, separate and primary model elements in UML models;*
- *An XMI W3C XML Schema Description (xsd) for production rules, based on the proposed metamodel, in order to support the exchange of production rules between modeling tools and inference engines;*
- *An example of a syntax that is compliant with the proposed metamodel for expressing production rules in UML models. This syntax will be considered non-normative.*

The BEI extended the deadline for submission of a proposal to

January 1, 2005.

The BEI task force expects to focus on the BSBR submission at its November 1-5 meeting in Washington, DC.

Other OMG Domain Task Forces are also working on standards that will effect the way business processes are designed. Thus, for example, the Finance DTF is beginning work on an e-Payments Standard.

Future meetings of the OMG Technical Committee, after the November 1-5 meeting in Washington DC, will be held at Burlingame, California, on January 31-February 4, 2005, on April 11-15, 2005 at a European location that has not yet been determined, and then on June 20-24, 2005, in Boston, Massachusetts. For more information on any aspect of the OMG's work, check [www.omg.org](www.omg.org).

Til next time,

Paul Harmon