



## **MEF CERTIFICATION PROGRAM FAQs**

*(PROPOSED FOR EXTERNAL RELEASE - TO SHARE WITH PRESS & ANALYSTS)*

### **Overview**

#### **What is the MEF Certification Program?**

The MEF Certification Program is part of the Metro Ethernet Forum's mission to accelerate the deployment of Carrier Ethernet in the WAN.

Ultimately, MEF approved test laboratories will provide certification for Carrier Ethernet products and services according to specifications defined by the MEF. The objective is to assure the service provider community and their customers that such products are compliant with MEF specifications, thereby facilitating the selection of equipment, the integration of Carrier Ethernet WANs and accelerating the adoption of CE services & technology worldwide.

The program begins with an initial pilot phase administered by a single test laboratory in order to establish practical working methodologies and is followed by a broader roll-out of the Certification Program with additional MEF approved laboratories.

#### **Is the MEF the certifying body?**

No, an MEF approved test laboratory is the certifying body and the approved product or service may be labelled "Certified Compliant to MEFx" when it has met the relevant MEF specifications and passed the appropriate MEF test procedures.

Test laboratories that are approved and accredited by the MEF's Certification Committee, contract directly with the maker of the product or service being tested.

#### **Does the MEF Certification Program cover equipment and/or services?**

Initially, during the pilot phase, the program will define and monitor equipment certification. Equipment certification could accelerate the deployment of Carrier Ethernet service offerings by service providers. After the pilot phase is completed, it is expected that the certification process will be extended to the certification of Carrier Ethernet services.

#### **When does the MEF Certification Program become operational?**

The pilot phase of the program becomes operational during April 2005. Submissions for first phase of certifications close on June 9<sup>th</sup>. Review of first phase during late Q3 early Q4 2005.

#### **What is MEF 9?**

MEF9 is the first in a series of MEF test specifications. It specifies the conditions required for the delivery of services compliant with the specification MEF1, covering the definition of E-line and E-LAN services. Further test specifications will be created for compliance with subsequent MEF standards.

## **Benefits**

### **Why is the MEF Certification Program important?**

Carrier Ethernet is a huge growth area for emerging connectivity services as it is seen as a comparatively simple, cost effective and familiar technology whose migration to the Wide Area Network will lead to better, more flexible network connectivity while reducing overall IT costs.

However, as with any advance in technology, initial take-up is constrained by a shortage of global standards providing assurance that equipment from different vendors will interoperate. With each service provider doing their own product evaluation and testing, network deployments and the widespread availability of services are slowed.

The MEF Certification Program provides global assurance that equipment from different manufacturers will comply with certain essential specifications. This can facilitate a service provider's equipment selection process by reducing the need for extensive testing and facilitate a quicker response to market demands for Carrier Ethernet services.

The MEF seeks to serve the wider community by encouraging and certifying test labs, while not controlling the selection and operation of the labs or in other ways restraining trade.

### **What are the key benefits to enterprise users of Ethernet services?**

Initially, MEF certification will help service providers to respond more quickly to demand for Carrier Ethernet services, by facilitating their equipment selection and test procedures. It will also inform end-users interested in selecting Ethernet services by providing the assurance of compliance to MEF specifications.

### **What are the key benefits to service providers?**

Service providers can be assured that certified products meet MEF specifications, thereby increasing confidence that they can interoperate and support Carrier Ethernet Services according to the pertinent MEF specifications. Less time and effort would be required for in-house equipment selection and product approvals. Service providers could then focus on their own network validation and operations and provide a quicker, more cost-effective response to customer installation and upgrade demands.

### **What are the key benefits to equipment vendors?**

At the design and development stage, companies will benefit from clear guidelines on the interfaces and standards of performance required for their products to be accepted worldwide. Once a product has been certified it will enjoy the marketing advantage of being compliant with an internationally recognized industry benchmark. Such recognition will likely accelerate sales to service providers and end users by facilitating simplified product selection procedures and not requiring products to be independently tested by each potential customer.

## **Detail**

### **Will more than one laboratory be certifying?**

The initial pilot phase of the Program involves just one test laboratory, Iometrix Inc. (South San Francisco, CA). A number of additional labs will be accredited after the pilot phase to stimulate competition, but the objective is to provide a range of regional laboratories to meet subsequent demand around the world.

### **How will test labs be chosen to certify?**

Test labs will be evaluated by the MEF's Certification Committee, which will require proof that they have the necessary test and reference equipment, instrumentation, software and skilled personnel to perform and report tests in accordance with the pertinent MEF specifications. They will be required also to develop or source scripts to automate tests as is needed to provide an efficient service.

Test laboratories will be recruited so that no vendor need be inconvenienced by excessive waiting times or geographically inconvenient test facilities while, on the other hand, the number of laboratories should be restricted as is necessary to maintain appropriate standards of quality and conformity.

### **Will the certification be recognised internationally?**

The certification program will be valid internationally and serve the world-wide Carrier Ethernet community. However, there are areas where national differences in communication standards or protocols could lead to initial exceptions. The MEF will seek to reduce these exceptions.

### **Can non-MEF companies gain certification?**

Ultimately, the certification process will be open to all participants MEF members and non-members alike. However, during the pilot phase of the program, the certification process will be restricted to MEF members. We hope this policy will tighten the learning curve and limit the duration of the pilot phase.

### **Will certification be compulsory?**

No. However, we expect a growing number of service providers will find value in vendors whose equipment is certified and ultimately, end-users may ask for a similar type of compliance from their service provider.

## Practical

### **Can I apply now for certification?**

MEF members can apply immediately to Iometrix for the Certification Program beginning in April 2005. Non-members will have to wait until the Pilot Phase is completed.

### **How much will certification cost?**

The cost of certification is set only by the certifying lab.

### **How long will the certification testing process take?**

It is anticipated that certification testing should take less than a week.

### **How long will a specific certificate be valid?**

As with any industry standard, it will depend upon the pressures of innovation and demand. Any certification will be linked not only to a specified MEF specification, but also the specific version numbers of that standard.

### **How can I find equipment and services approved under the MEF Certification Program?**

Equipment vendors and service providers will likely promote their certified status to potential customers. Upon completion of the pilot phase, the MEF website will also provide information on how to find certified products.

### **Who should I contact for advice or help in getting my product certified?**

MEF members can apply to Iometrix for certification via [certification@iometrix.com](mailto:certification@iometrix.com) or (650)872-4001. Applications for the first round of certification must be received by June 9, 2005.

For general inquiries regarding MEF or the certification, please contact:

[Manager@MetroEthernetForum.net](mailto:Manager@MetroEthernetForum.net)