

InCommon Update, Fall 2009

A report about collaboration activities supporting federated access.

The InCommon Federation, in conjunction with Internet2, supports a number of collaboration activities aimed at increasing the use of federated access to protected resources. Here is an update on the focus and activities of these groups. You can find more information about these projects and others at www.incommon.org and on the InCommon wiki: spaces.internet2.edu/display/InCCollaborate.

NIH/Silver Pilot

The National Institutes of Health and eRA are working with the University of Washington, Johns Hopkins University, the University of California Davis and Penn State University to demonstrate the use of InCommon Silver assertions to access applications requiring a higher level of assurance. The pilot includes several faculty members with various roles from each of these participating InCommon member institutions accessing the NIH Electronic Research Administration (eRA) application. A presentation and demo was done for the Federal Demonstration Partnership meeting in September 2009, and at the 2009 Fall Internet2 Member Meeting. The pilot has worked through identifying information required to assert InCommon Silver credentials. With the demonstration complete, this group will document requirements for moving from pilot to production.

TeraGrid

TeraGrid is running a gateway to allow its user community to access resources using their campus logins via InCommon. After authenticating, users can open terminals to resources, use file management applications, or download a X.509 credential to their desktop for use with other applications. The services have been accredited by the TAGPMA (The Americas Grid Policy Management Authority) and credentials could potentially be used with other Grids as well. This service is available today at <https://go.teragrid.org/> and represents functionality that will eventually be integrated into the TeraGrid User Portal. Currently 26 InCommon institutions are participating. Other institutions interested in participating can find information at: teragridforum.org/mediawiki/index.php?title=Shibboleth

Student Services

The InCommon-Student group has collaborated with the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) to encourage the use of identity management systems and federation. The goal is to improve processes in the areas of admissions, registration, enrollment verification, transcripts, and other aspects of student administration and student experience.

The collaboration group has been working with PESC to house the student-related attributes defined by Stanford University and the National Student Clearinghouse pilot. The group's next task is to review the Silver Identity Assurance Framework in the context of FERPA. Further information is available on the wiki: spaces.internet2.edu/display/InCCollaborate/InC-Student.

Library Services

The InCommon Library Services collaboration explores the use of federated identity for online access to library services and resources. The first phase of the project recommended a hybrid Shibboleth/EZproxy solution as showing the most promise.

Phase 2 has the goal of putting the hybrid solution into production and validating its utility. It includes work by two subgroups. One has developed a series of use cases related to the hybrid and other library service issues. The other subgroup has developed a registry of resource providers that have enabled federated access or are on that path. The subgroup is working with vendors to produce a best practices document for libraries and for library resource providers. More information is available on the collaboration wiki: spaces.internet2.edu/display/inclibrary/.

US Federations

This collaboration group is exploring the building of federations within and across state boundaries. Invited participants include StateNets and higher education systems staff. This effort is supported by Internet2, EDUCAUSE, and the InCommon Federation.

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The group's monthly calls have focused on hearing presentations about federations and related technology. Presentations have focused on working with K-12 and state government as federation partners, and creating new federations in the California State University system and the State University of New York system.

The monthly calls will continue to explore issues related to federations, sharing of experiences and identifying solutions, and building on strategies used by state university systems. Further information is available on the wiki: spaces.internet2.edu/display/USFederations/.

InCommon-Geneva

The InC-Geneva collaboration works to integrate Microsoft's suite of federation products in "Geneva" with existing SAML-based federations like InCommon. This includes using Geneva products both in the identity provider and service provider roles, integration with Windows LiveID and the Microsoft Federation Gateway, issues of integration with popular Microsoft applications such as SharePoint, and whatever other issues the group deems relevant. The wiki address is: spaces.internet2.edu/display/InCCollaborate/InC-Geneva.

About InCommon

InCommon manages the trust environment for its members. That trust is based on secure operations, stable technology, and common policies and practices. InCommon provides a framework of shared policies, trust-establishing processes, and technology standards for universities and service partners to follow. This greatly streamlines collaboration with multiple organizations.

For example, institutions and service providers could spend time establishing operating principles, technology hooks, and agreed-upon data exchange elements with each partner, or they could do it once by joining InCommon and then leveraging these common elements for many relationships.

InCommon now has more than 160 organizational members and serves more than 3.6 million users.

InCommon Benefits

- InCommon supports Web-based distributed authentication and authorization services, such as controlled access to protected content resources.
- Participants exchange information in a standardized format, reducing or removing the need to repeat integration work for each new resource.
- Access decisions and user privacy controls are decided on a case by case basis for each resource,

providing higher security and more granular control.

- Institutions experience reduced account management overhead by eliminating the need for separate accounts to access particular resources.
- Campus and company IT professionals provide protected content to multiple organizations using a single authentication framework.
- The home institution controls when an identity is disclosed, and how much information is revealed.

Who can join InCommon?

Any accredited two- or four-year higher education institution can join InCommon. Additionally, higher education participants can sponsor their online service providers. For more information, and a list of participants, see www.incommon.org.

InCommon Web: www.incommon.org

Collaboration Wiki:
spaces.internet2.edu/display/InCCollaborate

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