eduPersonTargetedID was originally conceived as a privacy-preserving identifier to correlate users between an identity provider (IdP) and a specific service provider (SP) in a SAML SSO transaction. Over time, the variations among IdP implementations of eduPersonTargetedID have made reliable use of eduPersonTargetedID problematic:

Case-sensitive vs case-insensitive string comparisons

eduPersonTargetedID derives its original syntax from the SAML V2.0 Name Identifier format of "urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:nameid-format:persistent" (see http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/download.php/35711). One of the traits it inherits is that an eduPersonTargetedID value is case-sensitive. However, implementation gaps and data entry lapses frequently make accurate matching on eduPersonTargetedID problematic.

Its intended replacement, the SAML Pairwise Subject Identifier, addresses this gap by making the value explicitly case-insensitive. It also further clarifies the value’s format/syntax to eliminate matching problems.

eduPersonTargetedID is often not stored in LDAP

Unlike most of the user attributes in use in InCommon, an eduPersonTargetedID is frequently generated on the fly and not stored in an LDAP directory. Since it is generally only used during a SAML SSO transaction, it makes sense to define the identifier in a SAML profile instead of as a part of the LDAP object class.

We need a more widely accepted identifier definition

An correlating identifier is fundamental to any SAML SSO transaction, not only during research and educational collaborations. We need an identifier that is adopted across industries: a SAML pairwise subject identifier defined in a SAML profile.

Transitioning to SAML Subject Identifiers

Choosing the right user identifier

- Why is email address not an appropriate user identifier?
- eduPersonUniqueID
- Why is eduPersonTargetedID deprecated?
- SAML General Purpose Subject Identifier (subject-id)
- SAML Pairwise Subject Identifier (pairwise-id)
- eduPersonPrincipalName (eppn)
- eduPersonTargetedID (eptid)
- Understanding Federated User Identifiers

Related content

- An Introduction to User Data
- R&S Explained in Plain English
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- Why is email address not an appropriate user identifier?
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