General Information about Entity Categories

Basic Terminology

- An entity category is a group of entities (SPs or IdPs or both) having a particular characteristic.
- Membership in an entity category is indicated by an entity attribute in metadata.
- An entity attribute is a SAML Attribute in a container of type mdattr:EntityAttributeType defined by the SAML V2.0 Metadata Extension for Entity Attributes, an Entity Attribute Profile of SAML Metadata.
- An Entity Attribute Profile of SAML Metadata describes how SAML Attributes and Assertions may be added to SAML metadata extensions.
- An Entity Category Profile of SAML Entity Attributes describes a specific entity attribute for categorizing entities according to some Entity Attribute Profile of SAML Metadata.

Types of Entity Categories

Both of the following are special types of entity categories:

- A service category is a group of service providers with a common purpose. For example, the Research & Scholarship Category is a service category whose goal is to make attribute release more scalable.
- A support category is a group of entities that support a particular entity category in some fashion. If that entity category is itself a service category, the corresponding support category is a group of IdPs that support the service category in some manner. A given entity category may have multiple support categories. For example, there are two Research & Scholarship Support Categories used in the InCommon Federation.

Resources

- The SAML V2.0 Metadata Extension for Entity Attributes is a standards-based Entity Attribute Profile of SAML Metadata.
- The Entity Category SAML Entity Metadata Attribute Type (draft-macedir-entity-attribute-00.xml)