

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)