

sp-determine-your-role

An online service can be partitioned into three layers:

Service
Platform
Software

The **Software** determines the potential functionality of the service. The **Platform** is a deployment of the software that supports the Service. The **Service** is what is actually delivered to its users; it includes the Software and the Platform, as well as all other functions that may be required, such as user administration, user support, marketing, policy and legal compliance, *etc.*

Each of these layers requires supporting activities by one of the following roles. Your responsibilities within InCommon will depend on which of the roles you fill.

- **Service Operator** - The role that is responsible for the Service. The Service Operator establishes the service's policies, manages its business, and oversees its technical operation (which may be outsourced to a SaaS Platform Deployer).
- **Platform Deployer** - The role that is responsible for the Platform used to provide the Service Operator's Service.
- **Software Implementer** - The role that implements the Software used by the SaaS Platform Deployer.

Your organization may be filling all of these roles, but it is also possible for these roles to exist within two or more organizations through outsourcing relationships, use of open source software, *etc.* The following examples should help you determine where you fit within this ecosystem.

Example: Enterprise Video Conferencing

State U provides a video conferencing service, based on Whiz.com, for its staff and faculty, as well as others who collaborate with them. Whiz.com operates the technology, and State U determines who is allowed to use the service, establishes policies for its use, *etc.* In this case, State U is the Service Operator, and Whiz.com is both the SaaS Platform Deployer and the Software Implementer.

Service Operator	State U
Platform Deployer	Whiz.com
Software Implementer	Whiz.com

Example: Resources for (Any) College Student

Students-R-Us operates a service for college students at all universities, providing information about scholarship opportunities, where to find cheap textbooks, ratings of university student services, *etc.* It is hosted by WebHost Inc., and WebHost deploys software created by the Drupal Foundation.

Service Operator	Students-R-Us
Platform Deployer	WebHost Inc.
Software Implementer	Drupal Foundation

Example: Simulation of the Geographic Spread of Infectious Disease

The Institute of Disease Dispersal provides a simulation model to help regional health officials to understand the spread of epidemics within their regions. IDD researchers developed the simulator's software, which is operated by their graduate students.

Service Operator	Institute of Disease Dispersal
Platform Deployer	Institute of Disease Dispersal
Software Implementer	Institute of Disease Dispersal

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