

Comparing REFEDS and InCommon-only R and S categories

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This document compares the differences between the InCommon Research & Scholarship Category and the [REFEDS Research & Scholarship Entity Category](#). The latter was formally adopted by the [REFEDS](#) community in February 2014. The REFEDS R&S specification was revised to V1.3 on September, 2016.

| | InCommon R&S Requirement | REFEDs R&S Requirement |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | [Participation Agreement , section 9] Participant agrees to respect the privacy of and any other constraints placed on identity information that it might receive from other InCommon Participants as agreed upon between Participant and the InCommon Participant(s). In particular, Participant understands that it may not permanently store nor share or disclose or use for any purpose other than its intended purpose any identity information that it receives from another InCommon Participant without express written permission of the other InCommon Participant. Participant understands that the storing and sharing of resources is between the Participant and the InCommon Participant(s) and is not the responsibility of InCommon. | A "Service Provider claims that it will not use attributes for purposes that fall outside of the service definition." |
| 2 | "Whether an SP operator is commercial or non-commercial is not relevant to eligibility for the R&S Category, nor are any other aspects of how the service is implemented or operated, beyond the specific requirements noted below. It's all about purpose." | "This Entity Category should not be used for access to licensed content such as e-journals." |
| 3 | "...because of the risk involved, a Service Provider that engages subjects in experiments that require specific oversight is not eligible for the R&S Category." | NA |
| 4 | "The SP provides an mdui:DisplayName in metadata..." | "The Service Provider provides an mdui:DisplayName and mdui:InformationURL in metadata." |
| 5 | "The SP provides Technical and Administrative contacts in metadata." | "The Service Provider provides one or more technical contacts in metadata." |
| 6 | "R&S category SPs may request other attributes, but IdP operators will likely require a prior agreement before releasing additional attributes." <hr/> "It is therefore highly recommended that SPs use a minimalist approach to attributes, only requesting those attributes that they absolutely need." | "Service Providers SHOULD request a subset of R&S Category Attributes that represent only those attributes that the Service Provider requires to operate its service." |

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- [REFEDS Research and Scholarship category](#)
- [Service provider - apply for Research and Scholarship category](#)
- [Research and Scholarship FAQ](#)
- [Tagging an entity with Research and Scholarship entity attribute](#)
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|---|---|---|
| 7 | http://id.incommon.org/category/research-and-scholarship | http://refeds.org/category/research-and-scholarship |
|---|---|---|

Privacy

[Item 1] Here is the relevant phrase from the Participation Agreement:

Participant understands that it may not permanently store nor share or disclose or use for any purpose other than its intended purpose any identity information that it receives from another InCommon Participant without express written permission of the other InCommon Participant.

Compare the above passage with the following quote from the REFEDS R&S Category specification:

Service Provider claims that it will not use attributes for purposes that fall outside of the service definition.

The primary distinction is that the former is included in a signed legal agreement while the latter is self-asserted by the service owner. See, for example, the [R&S application form](#) used by InCommon.

Commercial Services

[Item 2] While the InCommon R&S Category keeps the door open to commercial services, the REFEDS R&S Category seems to explicitly rule them out.

Human Subjects Research

[Item 3] Prior to October 27, 2014, the InCommon R&S Category had the following requirement:

a Service Provider that engages subjects in experiments that require specific oversight is not eligible for the R&S Category.

This refers to research that would require Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Following the recommendations of both the Technical Advisory Committee and the Steering Committee, this requirement was removed from the InCommon R&S Category on October 27, 2014.

User Interface Elements

[Item 4] All but one InCommon R&S SP already has an `mdui:InformationURL` in metadata so this particular difference between the two specifications is irrelevant.

Contacts in Metadata

[Item 5] InCommon already requires both technical and administrative [contacts in metadata](#), for all SPs and IdPs.

Requested Attributes

[Item 6] The REFEDS R&S specification has two requirements regarding requested attributes in metadata:

The Service Provider provides requested attributes in metadata.

Service Providers SHOULD request a subset of R&S Category Attributes that represent only those attributes that the Service Provider requires to operate its service.

For clarity, these two requirements are broken into three parts on the [R&S application form](#):

1. [True/False] My service provides requested attributes in metadata.
2. [Yes/No] Are the requested attributes in metadata a subset of the R&S attribute bundle? (Note: This is highly RECOMMENDED otherwise a bilateral agreement with each IdP may be required.)
3. [True/False] My service requests only those attributes required to operate the service.

In particular, the latter is a strict requirement for all InCommon R&S SPs, which goes beyond the REFEDS R&S requirements.

Entity Attributes

Obviously, the entity attribute value for InCommon R&S is different than the entity attribute value for REFEDS R&S. In the short term, the goal is for all InCommon R&S SPs to have a [multivalued entity attribute](#) in metadata, that is, each SP will satisfy the requirements of *both* InCommon R&S *and* REFEDS R&S (which is possible since the gap between them is small). Once all R&S SPs have a multivalued entity attribute in metadata, all InCommon R&S IdPs will be encouraged to migrate their configurations to the REFEDS R&S entity attribute, that is, to release the [R&S attribute bundle](#) to all R&S SPs, globally.

References

- The [REFEDS R&S entity category](#)
- The [REFEDS R&S FAQ](#)