Google Gateway FAQ

Google Gateway Frequently Asked Questions

General Questions

Why is Google being used in the InCommon Federation? What is the goal of this project?

For the Service Providers listed on the Google Gateway home page, Google has become the *Identity Provider of Last Resort* (IdPoLR). Since many users already have a Google account, using Google as the IdPoLR precludes the need for users to create yet another password to access federated services. This is a big win for both users and Service Provider operators.

I didn't know I could use Google to log into the Federation Manager?

That's not entirely true. Site Administrators may **not** use federated identities (Google or otherwise) to log into the Federation Manager. On the other hand, Delegated Administrators **must** use federated identities to log into the Federation Manager. A Delegated Administrator may use Google for this purpose *if the Site Administrator approves*.

Questions from End Users

I have multiple Google accounts so which one should I use?

That is completely up to you. You could even create a new Google account for exclusive use with the Gateway (although there's no particularly good reason for doing so).

My institution is a Google Apps for Education campus. Can I use that account to log into the Google Gateway?

Yes, you can. At the Google sign in page, type your *campus email address* into the email field but leave the password field blank. Google will automatically redirect your browser to your campus login page.

Btw, exactly the same technique works for Google Apps for Business or any other Google Apps account. If you enter the email address of one of your personal Google Apps accounts, you'll have to type your password as well (since there's nowhere else to go!).

I don't have a Google account but I do have a Facebook account. Can I use Facebook instead?

No, sorry, we only support Google at this time.

Does the Google Gateway store any information about me?

No, the Gateway maintains NO state information about the browser users who use it. It does maintain log files for troubleshooting issues and compiling usage statistics, but that's all.

Questions from Service Provider Operators

I run a Service Provider in the InCommon Federation. Can my users use the Google Gateway to access my service?

No, the Gateway may be used by Internet2 Service Providers only. You may implement your own gateway for Google authentication or contract with a commercial provider for such services. InCommon's is powered by Cirrus Identity.

What protocols does the Google Gateway support?

On the near side of the Gateway, facing the SP, the protocol used is ordinary SAML V2.0 Web Browser SSO. In that sense, the Google Gateway is just like any other IdP in the InCommon Federation.

On the far side of the Gateway, facing Google, the protocol is OpenID Connect (not to be confused with OpenID 2.0). So technically the Google Gateway translates OpenID Connect (OIDC) assertions to SAML assertions, that is, it is an instance of an OIDC-to-SAML gateway.

Is Google Gateway metadata included in the InCommon metadata aggregate?

No. Since the Gateway is intended to be used by Internet2 Service Providers only, including it in InCommon metadata would only confuse users on discovery interfaces.

How will my user's know Google is an option?

The discovery interface will include "Google Sign In" will automatically appear on the discovery interface.

Does the Google Gateway provide a unique identifier for each person?

Yes, the Gateway asserts an `eduPersonPrincipalName` (`ePPN`) for each user.

The `ePPN` asserted by the Gateway for a particular user is the same for all downstream SPs. (We say that the `ePPN` is "scoped to the Federation.") See the Google Gateway home page to understand how the `ePPN` is computed by the Gateway.

Does the Google Gateway assert other attributes?

Yes, see the Google Gateway home page for a complete list of attributes asserted by the Gateway.