

Utah Education and Telehealth Network
inCommon Federated Identification Pilot Summary
September 2015

Problem: Many UETN stakeholders provide login and other application services for those schools who use these services. UETN also directly provides services that require other separate login authentication to access.

The Southwest Educational Development Center (SEDC) is a rural regional service center providing educational resources, technical support and training for 6 districts in Southwest Utah. SEDC desired to be able to provide a login capability to its stakeholders that would also facilitate authentication to these other UETN resources. The vision of the team was to reduce support needs, e.g. password resets and other authentication related issues, that consume much of SEDC technology staff time. Time that could be better used to address other more technically demanding needs.

Proposal: UETN desired to pilot the inCommon Federated Identification platform to answer the following questions:

1. What are the components of the inCommon Federated ID service and what resources will be required by UETN to pilot, and if successful, implement a production instance of a federated ID?
2. Is it possible to provide UETN application resources as part of a federated ID?
3. Can SEDC use the federated ID to authenticate to UETN applications through the already established SEDC authentication process?
4. What can UETN do to be part of a larger ID federation? How will our efforts fit in a national/regional federation?
5. Upon a successful completion of a federated ID pilot, what are the next steps for UETN?

Implementation:

Upon notification that UETN would participate in the inCommon Federated ID pilot, a project team was assembled. This team met regularly throughout the pilot. Specific project goals and objectives were identified and were used to guide the work of the UETN team.

UETN provided federated ID training to technical resources. The team was able to determine that this training and other material provided to us were sufficient for the pilot efforts to move forward.

Prior to the start of the pilot project, SEDC had been identified as the subject of our pilot and we included the service center technology staff in the project planning and implementation processes.

MyUEN, the UETN portal used by many Utah educators, was identified early on as the UETN application that would be trialed in the inCommon pilot. This was appealing as a test application due to its large user base and its compatibility, as it is SAML 2 compliant.

Results:

UETN was able to provide the MyUEN application as a federated service.

UETN also implemented, tested and proved our ability to turn up and use an identification server for a subset of UETN employees. A small group of UETN employees were able to participate in this test and verify that it was possible to authenticate to the MyUEN portal application.

UETN was able to work with SEDC staff and assisted them in turning up their own instance of an identity server. SEDC was also able to work with a select set of its stakeholders to verify that these users were able to authenticate to the MyUEN application through the SEDC identity server.

The UETN team was also able to demonstrate the value of this federated ID authentication methodology to the organization's leadership team.

Going Forward:

UETN has identified resources, in terms of funding, equipment and staff, to move the federated ID project to a production instance. We have also identified the top applications that will be turned into federated services. Work is moving forward to make this possible.

Additionally, UETN has implemented a production instance of our identity server. We have also worked with SEDC so that they have also implemented a production version of their identity server.

UETN leadership is very interested in using our new-found experiences with the inCommon Federated ID pilot to realize a vision of single sign on authentication supporting a large cross section of services that are critical to our stakeholders.