

Evolving InCommon's Affiliate Program

InCommon Steering Committee—October 2014

What is the InCommon Affiliate Program?

The InCommon Affiliate Program was founded in 2009 with the goal of supporting higher education and the growing commercial service provider community who provide identity services. Participating companies most commonly offer cloud-based IAM solutions, on-prem IAM solutions, development services and consulting. The Affiliates Program is a marketing relationship where the companies enjoy benefits such as attendance at annual CAMP meetings; participation in working groups; and being featured in co-branded webinars and website placements. The InCommon Affiliate companies do not offer other types of federated services; they offer services to help *others* federate.

To join the program, InCommon Affiliates must provide two references, at least one of which is from a participant in InCommon, and one from a higher education institution. The references are contacted and asked four questions about their experiences with the company; beyond this, the organization is not vetted, nor are their products reviewed for quality. We do not receive formal feedback from the community about their products and services.

Currently there are seven Affiliates: Microsoft, Unicon, Fischer International, Aegis Identity, IDM Integration, Cirrus Identity and Spherical Cow Group. The latter three companies are extremely small (under 10 employees).

What is the Problem?

There are five primary issues with the InCommon Affiliate Program.

- **Identity is broader than InCommon's current outreach mechanisms.** It is not clear that NET+ participants are aware of the Affiliates and that they could help with InCommon integration. In addition, one of the Affiliates has extensive expertise in assisting research projects and virtual organizations with identity and access control. How can we get this broader message out?
- **Their products and services are not vetted.** Since the inception of the program, one of the primary concerns has been the lack of a formal product/service review and the possibility of perceived endorsement of services that are not helpful, and in fact may be detrimental, to a campus's deployment. The emergence of the NET+ program with its full lifecycle and campus validation model creates a very different expectation set for campuses.
- **A pure marketing relationship, as originally envisioned by the program, may not be possible going forward.** Despite our disclaimers on our website, it has become clear that the Affiliates use of the InCommon brand is misinterpreted by some in the community as having "approved" or "reviewed" products. We need to be careful what we brand with InCommon going forward.
- **The Affiliate program is not growing.** As the Federation grows in importance and HE market share, the number of companies offering services that support the increasing variety of needs will also need to grow. Part of the goal of the Affiliates Program is to inform the Affiliates, keep them aware of needs, and to keep them clued in to supporting good Federation practices. Growing the program means having more knowledgeable partners doing more good things. The companies in the InCommon Affiliate category act as "infrastructure catalysts" and accelerate the community's ability to deploy identity and access control solutions. The Affiliate Program hasn't seen the growth

that fits with the vision of scale needed for the InCommon Federation to become the identity infrastructure for Research and Education. The Program started with four participants and through highs and lows still has only seven.

- **The Affiliate Program duplicates the administrative tasks of the Internet2 Industry Program.** This includes billing, contracts and onboarding.

Requirements for Approach

Via discussions with current InCommon Affiliates, we have identified the following goals as important to apply to the evolved program:

1. The support goal of the Affiliates Program is very important to retain to help resource-strapped organizations implement an identity & access management (IAM) strategy that will have InCommon at its core.
2. The program should be flexible and provide choices for companies in which to participate, but not duplicate other efforts.
3. The program should extend IAM outreach opportunities to existing Internet2 Industry Members.
4. Any Affiliate products or services offered should be vetted before or reviewed after use so the community has some assurance of the applicability and characteristics of the service. Once vetted, the company would be able to display a certified logo.
5. The corporate participants should be positioned to help members with IAM issues in other areas, such as research support, SDN, Net+ etc.
6. The resulting offering should be flexible enough to serve existing and future TIER needs.

Proposed Solution

We propose to offer four solutions to the current Affiliates:

1. Do you have a cloud IAM-related service you would like to sell through Internet2 NET+?
 - a. Join NET+ and vet through the Service Validation process. Established in 2012, the *Internet2 NET+* initiative provides a community-directed approach to normalizing access to cloud services, including aligning business models, security, identity, community vetting, and legal aspects. All service providers in the NET+ portfolio are required to join the InCommon Federation to access to their cloud service.
 - b. NET+ partners must also join the Internet2 Industry Program.
2. Do you have a non-cloud IAM-related service you would like to sell through Internet2 NET+?
 - a. Become a NET+ Service Provider in the Trust and Identity portfolio under new subcategories to be identified.
 - b. NET+ partners must also join the Internet2 Industry Program.
3. Do you want to communicate to the community that you support best practices?
 - a. Join the (proposed, new) Internet2 Catalyst Program under the Internet2 Industry Program
 - b. Primary goal is to create community-approved best practices in IAM, security, networking, and other areas and to engage corporate service providers in implementing these best practices throughout the Research and Education community.
 - c. Build this Catalyst Program in 2015

- d. Associated membership dues revenue would be generated from setting in motion a certification assessment that could be renewed annually and from yearly training on updated practices and related logo to indicate adherence. Possible revenue sharing.
 - e. Each area such as networking, security, or identity would have its own practice set.
 - f. The Program would provide a community vetting mechanism by either validating organizations up front like NET+ or using a social mechanism after the fact where individuals can submit/post comments and ratings. The program could also provide lightweight testing mechanisms.
 - g. Classes of *Catalyst* for innovating campus Best Practices could be:
 - i. Networking: Science DMZ, Performance tuning, IPv6
 - ii. Security: REN-ISAC, DNS Sec, and other Best Practices
 - iii. Cloud Proud: Procurement, Business process speed, data management, etc.
 - iv. Identity and Access Management: on-campus and inter-campus best practices.
4. Do you want to show your support of the community through *sponsorships*?
- a. Join the Internet2 industry Program. The *Internet2 Industry Relations* program was founded in 1997. It currently has nearly 80 members (including three of the seven InCommon Affiliates). Internet2 Industry Members enjoy engagement with the Internet2 community and a portfolio of benefits including: attendance as members at two annual anchor events; representation in governance; participation in working groups, special events, programs, demos, and other initiatives.
 - b. An InCommon Affiliate transitioning to Internet2 Industry Membership would have the added benefits of:
 - i. Exposure to the broad Internet2 Community as an Industry Member
 - ii. Access to Internet2 events (Global Summit, Technology Exchange, etc.) as an Internet2 Industry Member
 - iii. A dedicated booth, and additional visibility if they elect to sponsor
 - iv. A co-branded webinar with engagement across the Internet2 community

Catalyst and NET+ TIER Considerations

The *NET+* Initiative provides a community-directed approach to normalizing access to cloud services, including aligning business models, security, identity, community vetting, and legal aspects. A *Catalyst* would accelerate the community's ability to deploy identity and access management solutions by supporting best practices associated with federation and with the TIER architecture. Any new programs would need to be well defined. For example, Fischer International, a company with an IaaS offering, could participate as both a Catalyst and NET+ provider, but may choose to be a Catalyst only. The programs could be aligned so that would be acceptable as long as the revenue generated is equivalent to the value and cost of running the program. All of the current InCommon Affiliates could fit into the Catalyst Program if their