Access to Internal Resource Granted to External Parties

Problem

A resource is provided to an internal campus group, and over time, it becomes apparent that a small number of external users who are not members of the campus community need to be able to access it.

Solutions

1) Grant honourary member status to the party and place them in instituional IDM systems, then revoke that membership after it's served the need (unfotunately the need for revocation is often ignored). While this solves the problem of granting access it creates many more. Unfortunately adding users into your IDM system may grant access to many resources and this will most likely be in conflict with licencing conditions for commercial products, many institutes just live with "bending the rules" as far as licencing goes. To do this well, your IDM system needs to be designed to support exception use cases, using approaches like enforcing expiration dates.

2) Create a local account that's not in the IDM system and add the userid as an additonal user of the system in question. While this solves the problem, few systems support a model of granting access to users from instituional IDM systems and then adding a "side door" for additional users. This is not recommended, because it creates security holes and access that's rarely revoked.

3) Use federated single sign-on to provide access to the resource to outside parties. Again generally involves the creation of a "side door" onto the system whereby most users directly access the system and the externally users use the federated SSO side door. Also you have the invite problem of how you invite the external user to access the app and how you find out what their idenitifier (e.g EPPN or targetedID) is.

Example

- An instituional virtual learning environment (VLE) is initially only accessible to members of the university. At the end of term external examiners from another institute need to access the VLE in order to asses the quality of the courses offered.

- An additonal usecase with a disproportionate amount of political weight is the access of meeting minutes and sensitive documentation by members of the university's controlling council. Often the council will have outside membership, such as incoming executive leadership who may need to access council materials many months before they officially join the university.

Graphic (click on it to view full size)

Pattern: Access to Internal Resource Granted to External Parties