TIER is a community-initiated effort, coordinated by Internet2, to develop a consistent, rationalized approach to identity and access management that simplifies campus processes and advances inter-institutional collaboration and research. TIER is both an open source toolset and a campus practice set.

What are TIER’s goals?

1. Sustain components that we’ve developed together. They need a home and ongoing support and maintenance that don’t rely on one-time funding.

2. Fill in gaps. The community has had a collection of tools that address specific pain points. TIER is about providing a set of integrated components that addresses Identity and Access Management (IAM) as a whole. These are based on existing open source/proven components tied together with a standard API that allows for local customization where desired.

3. Address community requirements across the components. Currently the components like Grouper and Shibboleth have separate priority streams. TIER merges the requirements for the program into one pipeline and then leverages them to support a coherent architecture across the components, including services like InCommon. Aligning development for all of these efforts provides a sum much greater than the current parts and enables a normalized identity API to be deployed across participating institutions.

What should the community do now to prepare for TIER?

- Upgrade to the current version of Grouper.
- Upgrade to Shibboleth Identity Provider 3.x.
- Familiarize yourself with CIFER APIs (TIER Components will have public interfaces based on these APIs and their successors).

- Track the InCommon Federation Interoperability Group chaired by Walter Hoehn, University of Memphis, and requirements coming out of that group for federation interoperability.
Is TIER just focused on larger schools?
No. TIER is deriving the requirements from the large research and select small schools to gather the diverse use cases the community will need to support in the long term. TIER is also focused on smaller schools through making it easier to implement an IAM infrastructure that seamlessly interconnects with the rest of higher education. A large part of that is making this easy to implement and support and including corporate partners from the start who can help. Normalizing how identity is thought about and approached across higher education is the key.

Isn’t TIER a suite? Do I have to install everything?
Yes and no. Yes to the extent that it’s a set of integrated components meant to address IAM needs, it is a suite. But no, in the sense that you can connect in your own components by leveraging the TIER API.

The most important part of TIER will not be software, but it will be the practices, standards, and community alignment we get out of adopting the same approach.

Are you including corporate partners?
Yes. We are writing contracts now with several companies that the community has identified as key partners. Currently, these companies will be used to develop code used in the TIER releases, but we expect and will encourage them to also provide support contacts to the community.

How can campus supporters help?
In MANY Ways. The contributions of campus participants has been instrumental since day one in formulating the approach to identity for higher education. Below are a few ideas of how you can engage:

Campus materials and case studies. Each school has a wealth of materials and experience that can be distilled or even just published to help others. TIER is assembling a document repository for your contributions. Share what you have with your colleagues.

Campus readiness. We need your help to define and determine what should be in place prior to each release of TIER.

Outreach help. We’ll need to host training seminars for TIER. We will invite participating institutions to lead seminars and provide adoption assistance to others.

If your campus is interested in helping with outreach, please let us know. Perhaps you can help make connections with certain types of campuses (like small schools) or help frame the message so that it resonates with a broad audience.

WANT TO STAY INVOLVED?
Subscribe to our monthly TIER newsletter here: http://eepurl.com/bAmF01 and join one or both of these email lists:

Tier-discussion@internet2.edu is for all general, non-technical discussions about TIER and may be used to contribute any thoughts about the direction or shape of TIER.
Open to Everyone, Authentication Required

Tier-architecture@internet2.edu is generally focused on the Institutional Technology Architects and Identity Management professionals. This list will primarily focus on the implementation goals and technologies required to make identity components work well within and across participating institutions.
Open to Everyone, Authentication Required.

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