Identity Assurance Framework: IAF-1050
Glossary and Overview

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Abstract:
Kantara Initiative’s Identity Assurance Framework (IAF) consists of policies, processes, reference materials and criteria which together define an Approval scheme for organizations operating services which provide Identity and Credential Management functions. Approval is based on independent third-party assessments, performed by Kantara-Accredited Assessors, of the subject services, to determine those services’ conformity to the applicable criteria.

This document provides a Glossary of terms used within the IAF for the purposes of conveying specific meanings and an Overview of the IAF and its constituent parts, both organizationally and in terms of the available reference documents.
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1 SCOPE

This document addresses Kantara Initiative’s Identity Assurance Framework (IAF) [3.4] and its principal components (glossary, roles, processes, and publications).

2 INTRODUCTION

This document provides an overview of Kantara Initiative’s IAF along with guidance as to where to gain further insight and understanding of the IAF’s operations and the benefits accruing from participation within it. It also defines the terms in use within the IAF and provides references and links to governing documents.

Terms in bold are defined in the Glossary. Numbers shown in the main text after the first use of a defined term relate to its index number within the Glossary and provide a hyper-link to the definition.

3 GLOSSARY

The following definitions are for use across Kantara Initiative’s IAF. They align to generally-accepted usage in the identity and credential management community and are used within the IAF with their given specific meanings. Though there may be commonly-defined and named terms, or similar terms and/or definitions in this Glossary, Kantara Initiative makes no claim as to the value or legitimacy of these definitions in any other situation or context.

Simple principles have been employed in creating the definitions. Firstly, a definition should be able to be expressed in a single sentence. Secondly, although notes have been provided in some cases, the definition must not rely on the note to be understood (otherwise the first rule is broken). Thirdly, the definitions are presented in a relational order, respecting the rule wherein no definition may use another defined term unless that term has been previously defined.

NOTE TO READERS: The definitions appearing in this version of the IAF Glossary and Overview pertain solely to the terms appearing in this document. Additional definitions, pertaining to terms appearing in other IAF documents, will be added in future versions of the IAF Glossary and Overview.

3.1 Identity Proofing

the function of collecting evidence [identity attributes] which supports a claim of identity [for a specific entity] and the validation and verification of that evidence so as to determine the veracity (or otherwise) of the claim.

3.2 Proven Identity

an identity which has successfully passed the checks made during Identity Proofing.

3.3 Credential Management

the functions of binding a Proven Identity to a credential, of confirming the legitimacy of a credential when it is put to use, and of managing the credential across its life-span.
Note - **Credential Management** can also be used in a broader, all embracing, sense, as a convenient term when the distinction is not relevant, to include the **Identity Proofing** function.

### 3.4 Identity Assurance Framework

Kantara Initiative’s [certification scheme | framework] established for the purposes of providing trust and confidence in the provision of [electronic] **Identity Proofing** and **Credential Management Services**. Abbrv: IAF.

### 3.5 Credential Service Provider

an organization which provides the functions of an [electronic] **Identity Proofing** and **Credential Management Service**, either in full or as a discrete component (i.e., a sub-set of the functions). Abbrv: CSP.

### 3.6 Credential Service

an **Identity Proofing** and/or **Credential Management Service** as offered by a **Credential Service Provider**. 

*Note* – operates as either as an out-sourced or in-house capability.

### 3.7 Approval

recognition that a **Credential Service** has been subjected to a specific process and has been found to meet the **Identity Assurance Framework**’s applicable requirements concerning its operation and provision.

### 3.8 Approved Service

a **Credential Service** which has been granted **Approval**.

### 3.9 Approved Service Provider

an organization which provides an **Approved Service**. Abbrv: ASP

*Note* – this term may seem redundant, given the definition of an **Approved Service** and the implied relationship to credentials, but the term **Approved Service Provider** is used in some high-level **Identity Assurance Framework** specifications with the intention that they be applicable to a broader set of services which are approved [sic] under the **Identity Assurance Framework**.

### 3.10 Service Assessment Criteria

a formal set of requirements established as the basis on which **Approval** may be granted. Abbrv: SAC.

### 3.11 Assessment

a process of reviewing a **Credential Service** against **Service Assessment Criteria**.

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[www.kantarainitiative.org](http://www.kantarainitiative.org)
3.12 Assessor

an organization (or a representative thereof) which performs Assessments.

3.13 Accreditation

recognition that an Assessor has been subjected to a specific process and has been found to meet the Identity Assurance Framework’s applicable requirements concerning its operation.

3.14 Accredited Assessor

an Assessor which has been granted Accreditation.

Note – some of the Identity Assurance Framework’s documents will use ‘Assessor’ instead of ‘Accredited Assessor’ where it is contextually evident that the Assessor in question must be an Accredited Assessor in order to fill the described role. e.g., the ‘Kantara Assessor’s Report’ explicitly omits ‘Accredited’.

3.15 Class of Approval

Approval that can be granted on the basis of an Assessment against a [specific | defined] set of Service Assessment Criteria.

Abbrv: CoA.

3.16 Statement of Conformity

a record of which Service Assessment Criteria specifically apply to a Credential Service undergoing Assessment, the Credential Service Provider’s evidence of conformity and the Accredited Assessor’s findings, after review of the Credential Service Provider’s evidence.

Abbrv: SoC.

3.17 Kantara Assessor’s Report

a record prepared by an Accredited Assessor, for a Credential Service Provider, documenting their process and findings following the conclusion of an Assessment.

Abbrv: KAR.

Note – ‘conclusion’ is used in preference to ‘performance’, since the Assessment may not be fully performed, yet a report should be produced on the conclusion of an Assessment however it ends.

3.18 Assurance

a declaration which gives confidence that specified processes have been diligently applied.

Note – assurance as derived through the IAF is that due processes were correctly and competently applied in the case of an Approved Service or an Accredited Assessor.
3.19 **Assurance Review Board**

the Kantara Initiative body charged by the Kantara Initiative Board of Directors with responsibility for reviewing all submissions for **Approval** and for **Accreditation**, and for related activities and works.

Abbr. ARB

3.20 **Identity Assurance Work Group**

the Kantara Initiative body charged with responsibility for maintaining (i.e., drafting, reviewing and approving) the **Identity Assurance Framework**’s **Service Assessment Criteria**, and for related activities and works.

Abbr. IAWG

3.21 **Level of Assurance**

**Assurance** that the entity claiming a particular identity, is the entity to which that identity was assigned\(^1\), based on the application of a defined level of rigour expended in making that determination.

Abbr. LoA

*Note – As an example, see NIST SP 800-63 rev.2, although application of this term is not intended to be anchored to or limited by that referenced publication. This term is used by multiple jurisdictions World-wide which may define alternative level specifications.*

3.22 **Assurance Level**

**Assurance** that the entity claiming a particular identity at a particular phase of a life-cycle, is deemed to be the entity to which that identity was assigned\(^1\), based on the application of a defined level of rigour expended in making that determination.

Abbr. AL

*Note – This definition is specific to NIST SP 800-63 rev.3, which refers to Identity, Authentication and Federation **Assurance Levels**, abbreviated to IAL, AAL and FAL respectively, to identify the degree of confidence that the applicant’s claimed identity is their real identity (IAL), the degree of confidence in the authentication process (AAL), and the degree of confidence in the assertion protocol used by a federation to communicate authentication and attribute information (FAL).*

3.23 **Applicant**

an entity which presents, or is presented, for **Identity Proofing**.

3.24 **Subject**

an **Applicant** which has had its **Proven Identity** bound to a credential.

*Note – astute readers may observe that an **Applicant** is not considered to have undergone the state-change

\(^1\) ISO/IEC 29115 Standard (Information Technology -- Security Techniques -- Entity Authentication Assurance Framework)
to Subject until binding has occurred. One could consider that an Applicant which exists in this ill-defined status between Applicant and Subject is a ‘Proven Applicant’, since they have a Proven Identity which has yet to be made into a useful ‘thing’. Such a formal definition could easily be added if it is felt useful to do so. Conceptually, a ‘Proven Applicant’ could be a logical parcel to share around until some other entity chooses to bind it to a ‘something’, so long as the the proofing Credential Service can be authenticated as to establish the veracity of any such parcel.

3.25 Claimant
an entity presenting a credential as the basis for proving itself to be the Subject.

3.26 Authentication
the function of confirming the legitimacy of a Claimant [i.e., that the Claimant is indeed the Subject which it claims to be].

3.27 Relying Party
an entity which determines its actions based upon an Authentication [regarding the Subject party or that party’s actions].

Abbr. RP

Note – this is deliberately a very broad definition under which an Relying Party could be considered to be, e.g.: i) a regulatory body which sees no need to exercise its regulatory powers so long as the assurances are provided; ii) a Credential Service Provider wishing to secure the services of an Accredited Assessor; iii) a consumer of an Approved Service (which could be another Credential Service Provider if a component service is under consideration) which wishes to be confident that the provider of the service has been subjected to an independent assessment process against defined criteria.

Other forms of Relying Parties can probably be described but hopefully the point is made. An alternative, narrower, definition would address only the third exemplar, and could be: “an entity which chooses to determine its own actions based upon Assurance regarding an Approved Service”.

3.28 End User
a general purpose term for an entity which may require a credential to be bound to it or which may already have a credential bound to it and which is expected to participate in some form of transaction with a Relying Party or with a Credential Service Provider, without defining any particular status to the entity.

3.29 Trust Status List
a published listing of all services Approved and all assessors Accredited under the auspices of the Identity Assurance Framework, and their respective statuses and validity.
4 OVERVIEW OF THE IAF

The primary objective of the IAF is to provide Assurance [3.18] to a range of parties who have an interest in, and reliance upon, the degree of rigour applied to the management, operation and provisioning of electronic Identity Proofing [3.1] and Credential Management [3.3] services, operated as either in-house or out-sourced capabilities.


The principal interested parties are organizations which need to have confidence in the asserted identity of persons and other entities with which they interact in their day-to-day operations. These interested parties are generally known as Relying Parties (RPs) [3.27]. By accepting credentials and Authentications [3.26] from Identity Proofing and Credential Management services which have been Approved [3.7] under the IAF, those RPs will gain Assurance that the entities are using credentials which are issued and managed by Identity Proofing and Credential Management services that have been subjected to rigorous Assessment [3.11] by independent third parties, Kantara’s Accredited Assessors [3.14], following the IAF’s defined processes and using published and peer-reviewed Service Assessment Criteria (SAC) [3.10].

Additional parties which stand to gain Assurance from the IAF are:

1. Other providers of Credential Services;
2. Identity and Credential Federations, seeking to establish common levels and standards of inter-working and cooperation;
3. Regulatory and other oversight bodies; and

Kantara Initiative and its IAF are recognized by various bodies around the world, which include:

1. US Federal Identity, Credentialing and Access Management Architecture;
2. Government of Canada (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat);
3. Government of New Zealand (Department of Internal Affairs);
4. ISO JTC 1 / SC 27 / WG5 (Identity management and privacy technologies);
5. Australian Government Digital Transformation Agency; and

The principles of operation of the IAF are modeled on those described in ISO/IEC 17065 “Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies certifying [...] services” (IS17065), at its latest published edition.

5 BENEFICIARIES

The following stand to benefit by being part of the IAF:
1. **Identity Proofing** and **Credential Management** Service Providers who have an established baseline of criteria which, if met, will demonstrate that they are operating and delivering their services in accordance with best practices which are defined by standards, RPs and other **Credential Service Providers (CSPs)** [3.5];

2. RPs who know what potential **Identity Proofing** and **Credential Management** services are claiming with regard to their Kantara and other standards conformity;

3. **Applicants** [3.23] for credentials, who recognize the formal **Approval** and the value it denotes, plus a guarantee that they know what they must do to be issued with a credential, prior to committing any of their personal information to an **Identity Proofing** or **Credential Management** service;

4. Regulators, who find support from an industry body (such as Kantara Initiative) which is driven by multiple stakeholders in the Identity Proofing domain; and

5. All participants in the Kantara Identity Assurance Working Group can benefit by having their say in development of the Kantara **SAC** and procedures.

### 6 KEY ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

#### 6.1 General

The figures in this section show the principal roles within the IAF and the relationships between the entities in those roles. The following symbology is used:

**Key: Relationship symbols**

- Contractual relationship, within Kantara
- Contractual relationship, outside Kantara
- Publishes document
- Refers to and applies document
- Membership relationship

Each of the entities and roles within these figures is explained below.

#### 6.2 Kantara Initiative Board of Directors

The Board of Directors (KIBoD) is Kantara Initiative’s executive body. It has final authority with respect to the granting, and other decisions concerning, **Accreditations** and **Approvals** within the context of the **IAF**.

The constitution and mandate of the KIBoD is beyond the scope of this document. Refer to Kantara Initiative’s website ([https://kantarainitiative.org/trustees/](https://kantarainitiative.org/trustees/)) for further information about the KIBoD and its membership.
6.3 Assurance Review Board

Figure 1 focuses on the roles around the IAF’s Assurance Review Board (ARB) [3.19].

The ARB receives its operational mandate from the KIBoD. The ARB is responsible for the day-to-day management and operation of the IAF. Its principal functions are the accepting and reviewing of applications for Approval and for Accreditation, and in making recommendations to the KIBoD for the granting of these qualifications. The ARB is also empowered to reject or request additional supporting information from Applicants wherever it feels it has insufficient information on which to base any recommendation to the KIBoD.

The ARB also ensures that contractual arrangements are put in place with Accredited Assessors and CSPs to protect Kantara Initiative’s marks, logos, and terms of use.

Additionally, the ARB is responsible for the following:

1) documenting and publishing its Accreditation and Approval procedures and other supporting documents and pro formae,
2) handling enquiries from any parties concerning the ARB’s functions, and
3) publishing details of those entities which have been granted Accreditation or Approval in its Trust Status List [3.29].

The ARB is composed of subject matter experts from a range of fields applicable to the Assurance of identity proofing, credential management and Authentication services, in accordance with its Charter.

Figure 1: ARB and related roles
6.4 Relying Party

A Relying Party is an entity which places reliance in the fact that the appearance of a CSP’s or an Assessor’s service in Kantara’s Trust Status List is an indication that the service has been subjected to rigorous and objective review and evaluation as to its ability to meet defined requirements and its continued conformity to them, and hence that the service offered can be relied upon to the stated Level of Assurance (LoA) [3.21] / Assurance Level [3.22].

In the most common usage a RP is considered to be an organizational entity which wants to have a reliable basis for knowing the identity of the End Users [3.28] with which it enters into some form of transaction. The legal/contractual basis on which such transactions are entered into is outside the scope of the IAF.

In other potential usages a RP could be one of the following:

1) an End User requiring to be issued with an identity credential which might allow it to be a participant in such transactions,
2) a CSP wishing to find an Accredited Assessor, or
3) any other interested party which wishes to derive confidence from the fact that Kantara Initiative has published an entity’s details in its Trust Status List.

6.5 Accredited Assessor

This is an entity which, organizationally and in terms of the competence of named personnel, has demonstrated to the ARB that it meets the required knowledge and skill qualifications set by the IAF (as described in the IAF’s applicable documented procedures etc.). Upon such demonstration it is granted Accreditation by the KIBoD. Accredited Assessors must establish a formal contractual arrangement with Kantara Initiative [through the Trademark License Agreement (TMLA)] but the legal/contractual basis on which they contract with the CSP they assess is outside the scope of the IAF.

A grant of Accreditation is valid for three years, with annual reviews taking place in the two intervening years.

6.6 Credential Service Provider

This is an entity which, organizationally and in terms of service operation and provision, has demonstrated to the ARB that its service meets the applicable criteria set by the IAF (as described in the IAF’s applicable documented procedures, SAC, etc.). Upon such demonstration it is granted Approval by the KIBoD for the given service. CSPs must establish a formal contractual arrangement with Kantara Initiative [through the TMLA] but the legal/contractual basis on which they contract with their Accredited Assessors and with RPs is outside the scope of the IAF. The ARB will not accept applications from CSPs unless their service has been Assessed by an Accredited Assessor.

A grant of Approval is valid for three years, with annual conformity reviews taking place in the two intervening years.

6.7 Identity Assurance Work Group

Figure 2 focuses on the roles around the IAF’s Identity Assurance Work Group (IAWG) [3.20].
The IA WG receives its operational mandate from the Kantara Initiative Leadership Council. The IA WG is Kantara Initiative’s steward of the IAF’s Service Assessment Criteria. Its principal functions are the drafting, review and approval of the SAC and of any relating documented processes. The IA WG has established processes which ensure that, before being approved for use, all SAC and other relevant publications are subject to internal IA WG review and, where the subject of review is new or has undergone material change, for public review. Following these reviews the IA WG is empowered to approve its own outputs without further reference to the KIBoD.

The IA WG is composed of subject matter experts from all perspectives of Kantara Initiative’s interested parties: CSPs, Accredited Assessors and, importantly, RPs.

7 SERVICE APPROVALS

7.1 Introduction

Granting Approvals to Credential Services is the raison d’être of Kantara Initiative’s IAF. Even though Accreditation is an equally formally-administered process, it is but a means to an end, that being to ensure that Assessments on which Approvals are based have been conducted by suitably qualified and competent organizations and persons, thus underpinning the Assurance given by the IAF.

There are a number of varying perspectives on Approvals which are brought out in the following sections.
7.2 Classes of Approval

The IAF supports multiple Classes of Approval [3.15]. Each Class of Approval is distinguished by a principal reference document, such as a specific piece of legislation or standard (e.g., NIST 800-63 Rev3). These may be generally-applicable or could respond to the needs of a specific sector or domain. Each Class of Approval is separately recognized in the IAF’s Trust Status List, and is described here.

7.3 Full Service versus Component Service Approval

A CSP is not obliged to provide a service which covers the entire life-cycle of credential management functions (which would be a Full Service). A CSP may elect to offer just a sub-set of functionality, which will be referred-to as a Component Service, and indicated as such in the IAF’s Trust Status List.

7.4 Service Approval Cycle

Service Approvals operate on a triennial (three year) cycle. At the start of each cycle a full Assessment is required. The scope of this Assessment will be all of the functionality described for the service, be it a Full Service or a Component Service. In each of the following two years a lesser scope of surveillance assessment is required. In these Assessments, known as an Annual Conformity Review, a subset of the applicable criteria are Assessed.

As an option, the very initial Assessment may only assess the service in a ‘static’ sense, (i.e., it has yet to commence operations). This is known as a ‘Ready To Operate’ Assessment. This Assessment is intended to permit the CSP to show that their service meets the applicable criteria in a conformant manner, but for the fact that it cannot yet be shown to be operating in a conformant manner. After a specified minimum period of time of operations the service offered by the CSP can then be subjected to a ‘Fully Operational Service’ Assessment, which will address those criteria which now have operational records available for the demonstration of conformity. Until the ‘Fully Operational Service’ Assessment has been successfully concluded, the initial Triennial Assessment is not considered concluded nor the three-year cycle started.

8 PRIMARY DOCUMENTS

The IAF has a number of primary documents, authority for which falls under either the ARB or the IAWG. These documents are available either in the public domain or exclusively to members of Kantara Initiative. These documents are:

- Document reference: KIAF-1050
  Document title: Overview and Glossary
  Approved by: IAWG
  Scope: This present document.

- Document reference: KIAF-1340
  Document title: Service Approval Handbook
  Approved by: ARB
Scope: Processes and procedures for how the ARB, CSPs and Assessors are required to operate in the performance and review of a service assessment.

Document reference: KIAF-1350
Document title: Assessor Accreditation Handbook
Approved by: ARB

Scope: Processes and procedures for how the ARB, and Assessors are required to operate in the performance and review of an assessor Accreditation.

Document reference: KIAF-1410
Document title: Commonly-Applicable Service Assessment Criteria
Approved by: IAWG
Scope: Assessment criteria which apply to any service assessment, for any assurance level.

Document reference: KIAF-1420
Document title: Operational 63-2 Service Assessment Criteria
Approved by: IAWG
Scope: Assessment criteria which apply to an assessment of a service against NIST SP 800-63 rev.2, for any level of assurance.

Document reference: KIAF-1430
Document title: SP 800-63A Service Assessment Criteria
Approved by: IAWG
Scope: Assessment criteria which apply to an Assessment of a service against NIST SP 800-63A (rev.3), for IAL2.

Document reference: KIAF-1440 - This document is available for Kantara Members Only.
Document title: SP 800-63B Service Assessment Criteria
Approved by: IAWG
Scope: Assessment criteria which apply to an Assessment of a service against NIST SP 800-63B (rev.3), for AAL2.

Document reference: KIAF-1610
Document title: Required Assessor Knowledge and Skills
Approved by: ARB
Scope: Requirements to be met by Assessors wishing to be Accredited in accordance with KIAF-1350.

Other documents exist but are more focused and specific to particular aspects of the IAF, and hence are not considered to be deserving of mention in this overview. Such documents will be referenced as appropriate in the documents identified above.
9 CONTACTS & FURTHER INFORMATION

If you need further information about Kantara’s IAF or have specific questions please submit them to Kantara Initiative’s Secretariat at Secretariat@Kantarainitiative.com.

Additional information about the IAF, and links to the above and other pertinent documents (e.g., various pro formae, etc.) can be found at the following web pages:

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<td><a href="https://kantarainitiative.org/trustoperations/service-provider-approval/">https://kantarainitiative.org/trustoperations/service-provider-approval/</a></td>
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<td>Up-to-date listing of all Kantara-Approved Services and all Kantara-Accredited Assessors, with full details relating to their Approval or Accreditation, as applicable.</td>
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<td>IAF Controlling Documents</td>
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10 Annex A – Alphabetical List of Glossarial Terms

The following provides an alphabetically-ordered list of glossarial terms, and their associated (and hyper-linked) index number.

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