High Level Description of the Kantara Initiative Identity Assurance Framework Accreditation and Approval Processes

The Kantara Initiative is an international US incorporated 501 (c)(6) industry association formed in 2009. Alongside community developed specification activities, it operates an Identity Assurance Framework (IAF) to provide Assurance to a range of parties who have an interest in, and reliance upon, the degree of rigor applied to the management, operation and provisioning of electronic Identity Proofing and Credential Management services. By design, the IAF is strongly aligned to ISO/IEC 17065 Conformity Assessment for products and services. In 2011 Kantara became an authorized Trust Framework Provider to the GSA's (then) FICAM program. Through its IAF, Kantara grants Approvals for Credential Service Providers (CSPs) and Accreditation to Assessors which meet the IAF's requirements.

The Kantara executive director has final authority with respect to the granting, and other decisions concerning, Accreditations and Approvals within the context of the IAF. The Assurance Review Board (ARB) receives its operational mandate from the executive director and it 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 executive director for the granting of these qualifications, carrying insurance applicable to their activities. 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 a recommendation to the executive director. 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. The ARB multistakeholder membership maintain confidentiality and impartiality throughout the lifecycle of the assessment and approval process and are subject to NDA and recusal policies in the case of conflict of interest. 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, but the legal basis on which the CSP contracts with its Accredited Assessor and with its Relying Parties is outside the scope of the IAF.

Kantara Approval scheme is based on independent third-party assessments of the subject services, performed by Kantara Accredited Assessors, to determine those services' conformity to the applicable criteria. Kantara lists independent third parties which it accredits as being competent to perform the task, demonstrating to the ARB that it meets the required knowledge, skill and qualifications set by the IAF. A grant of Accreditation is triennial, with annual reviews taking place in the two intervening years. The independence of these Assessors, as well as the appropriateness of the criteria against which they assess, helps to underpin the value in the assurance given by a Kantara Approval.

Kantara grants Approval for services which have been found to be conformant to a set of Kantara-defined criteria typically specific to a particular standard or specification for which a CSP seeks evidence of compliance. These criteria focus on the operation of identity proofing and credential management functions at a given level of assurance. The criteria address the technical functionality of the target service, the service provider's bona fides and the applicable information security management practices. CSP Approvals are triennial starting with a complete Assessment. In each of the following two years, CSPs undergo an Annual Conformity Review to Assess a subset of the applicable criteria.