

# Mission Statement

W3C Credentials Working Group

## Current Mission Statement:

<https://www.w3.org/community/credentials/>

A "credential" is a qualification, achievement, quality, or piece of information about an entity's background such as a name, government ID, payment provider, home address, or university degree. The purpose of the Credentials Community Group is to discuss, research, document, prototype and test credential storage and exchange systems for the Web. This work is done in order to make progress toward possible future standardization and interoperability of both low and high-stakes credentials. The goal of this Group is to forge a path for a secure, decentralized system of credentials that would empower both individual people and organizations on the Web to store, transmit, and receive digitally verifiable proof of qualifications and achievements. In addition to documentation, this Group collaborates on and shares various proof-of-concept solutions and components through open source methods, unencumbered by patents or royalties. In general, this Community Group provides an inclusive venue where credentialing solutions, regardless of their origin, can be incubated, evaluated, refined, and tested. The focus of the group is to promote credentialing innovations based primarily on their technical merit. This approach invites competing technical designs to be submitted and incubated in the same group. The hope is that this strategy will lead to either the merging of the best aspects of each technical design, or a clear differentiation emerging between alternative designs.

## Commentary:

From Credentials CG Call:

<https://lists.w3.org/Archives/Public/public-credentials/2017May/0038.html>

**Christopher Allen:** A quick recap of our mission statement... (at link above). There is one thing in here that's core to me - the Credentials CG is to discuss, research, document, prototype credential systems for the Web... that's the core of this. If there is some other aspect of that longer paragraph that we should keep ... or something we should remove.

**Manu Sporny:** That mission statement hasn't been updated in 2 years and it was put together in a rush. We should update it and make it simpler and more concise. One thing about it that most of the folks don't know about is that we wrote it understanding that there were multiple groups that were hostile to the work at the time. Anyone that was

working on things like JWTs/JOSE/SAML/etc may have viewed the work/at least the discussions at the time were "you are reinventing the wheel don't do it". Much of that statement was about allowing us to have the discussion around whether the existing tech could meet the use cases we had. We've come to the conclusion since then that existing tech doesn't but we've tried to integrate the parts that do. I think we should update that mission statement to reflect what we want to do over the next 2 years. I think the environment isn't as hostile as it used to be, the other procedural thing ... we can't change the mission statement without contacting W3C staff and having them update it. We should be absolutely sure with the text we want before approaching them so we don't make them cranky. All that to say, the best thing for that mission statement is to get something on the table and have people nitpick it. Get it into a Google doc and have people comment and have chairs try and capture the essence. [scribe assist by Dave Longley]

**Christopher Allen:** I'd like more comments, but no proposals just yet.

**Joe Andrieu:** Reading this, the first thing that pops up is that credential didn't seem quite right. The credential isn't a statement about a fact, it's an assertion about something by an authority.

**Manu Sporny:** +1 To what Joe just said.

**Matt Stone:** +1 To JoeAndrieu comment

**Christopher Allen:** We need to consider something that happened six months ago - a number of the specs that the Task Force was working on got moved over to the Digital Verification CG.

<https://www.w3.org/community/digital-verification/> What's important about that group is that these are the signature standards. For instance, reading the mission statement...

**Christopher Allen:** The mission of the Digital Verification Community Group is to study, design, promote, and deploy systems that increase trust on the Web. These systems include, but are not limited to signature systems, data normalization algorithms, and computational proof systems.

From Google Doc starting 2017-05-19:

**Christopher Allen:** There is a lot of redundancy in the old mission statement.



# Draft Revised Mission Statement

(Current draft and open comments at end of this document)

## Commentary:

**Christopher Allen:** I'd prefer to see a short and sweet mission statement. What are the minimal requirements? For instance, I'd like to see some reference to enabling both centralized systems and decentralized self-sovereign identity. But how to do that without getting too controversial?

**Joe Andrieu:** Short and sweet is good. I think including a simple statement about a goal of enabling credentials for both centralized and decentralized systems will address your desire there.

Re: credential. I hesitated to use "verifiable", but it's accurate. We look at the seal, the signature, the other signifiers to judge whether a credential is valid.

**Christopher Allen:** Joe, one of the interesting things that has come up is difference between claims, proofs, evidence, assertions, evaluations, etc. We may need to be broader than pure credentials. There is also the broader ecosystem of trust, but short of authorization.

**Joe Andrieu:** Agreed. To me, a credential is the bundle issued by the authority. How that credential is sliced/diced/repackaged for presentation to the "inspector" or recipient seems to be a gap in our terminology. **CA: Agreed.** So, maybe we should say "create and present credentials" (if "credentials" suites for both). Or "Create credentials and present \*\*\*" if there's a better term. Is "proofs" generic enough for that second term? "Present proofs", which may be credentials, derived from credentials, or other evidence? The Inspector arguably wants a form a proof: are you person X? Are you of a certain age? Are you the account controller?

**Shannon Appelcline:** Here's a take based on Chris' take (and the original statement & Joe's comments):

The purpose of the Credentials Community Group is to discuss, research, document, prototype, and test credential storage and exchange systems for the internet, to allow for the standardized and interoperable creation of credentials and presentation of their proofs. It focuses on a credential as a verifiable assertion by an authority about a subject, entity, or person, and seeks solutions for both centralized authorities and self-sovereign identities. Its output includes [...what..]. **CA: I've moved this up**

**Kim H.D.:** Making a rough outline of deliverables, based on charters from other community groups. Concrete deliverables capturing Verifiable Claims and decentralized ID ecosystem include:

- reports, including recommendations for requirements and use cases
- draft specifications
- reference implementations / prototypes

**Joe A.:** I like the latest draft, with a few notes.

First, “centralized authorities and self-sovereign identities” These two are not in the same category so presenting them as comparable options reads oddly. Maybe something like “for centralized authorities, decentralized registries, and self-sovereign issuers.”

I’m not sure those are the best three categories, but maybe that will spur a better suggestion.

Second, I think the “subject, entity, or person” should include the ability to publish credentials for facilities, vehicles, pets, etc. Perhaps “subject entity--a person, place, or thing--”

Finally, unless there is a W3C standard to the contrary, “the Internet” is a proper noun.

Taken together,

**KimHD Issue:** I have concerns that this leaves out the focus on the recipient; it seems to issuer-centric. For me, the benefit of our approach is that claims can be long-lived and managed by the recipient. It references “self-sovereign issuers” but doesn’t include a notion of decentralized identity for all participants.

KimHD update: Actually, if we change “issuers” to “identities” (per Dave’s suggestion), I would be happy. Update 2: or “participants”, “actors”, ...?

KimHD: [this legacy “Verifiable Claims” document](#) has a thorough discussion of a user-centric ecosystem, which I believe touches on many of these characteristics. Perhaps it would suffice to work in the term “user-centric”, or explicitly reference “verifiable claims ecosystem”?

**KimHD discussion and conclusion:**

Original wording was “self-sovereign issuers”, but others wanted to broaden into “self-sovereign identities” to factor in broader ecosystem (such as recipients). Joe’s concern was that “self-sovereign identities” is ambiguous. The other terms in the list related to clear authorities, hence his use of “issuers” in the original proposal. During discussion, we concluded that the mission statement doesn’t need to be perfectly precise; capturing the spirit/intent/etc and search term matching are more important.

ChrisWebber issue: federation also used in the decentralized social web space to talk about sharing state between servers via message passing and updating the social graph. Not an objection to use of the term specifically, but just clarifying that there's some overlap but also different meaning; should probably note/distinguish clearly our meaning. Note that Dave Longley suggests that maybe this is the same definition of federation, and it's just federating some more specific identity information... maybe that's true! Update: ok, I'm convinced they mesh well.

Moses issue: reputation

Rgrant issue: Delete: "credential storage and exchange systems for the Internet, to allow for the standardized and". What does this part add? CA: Good question!

(above here for closed issue notes)

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## Current Proposal

“The mission of the Credentials Community Group is to explore the creation, storage, presentation, verification, and user control of credentials. We focus on a verifiable credential (a set of claims) created by an issuer about a subject—a person, group, or thing—and seek solutions inclusive of approaches such as: self-sovereign identity; presentation of proofs by the bearer; data minimization; and centralized, federated, and decentralized registry and identity systems. Our tasks include drafting and incubating Internet specifications for further standardization and prototyping and testing reference implementations.”

DO NOT EDIT (this line intentionally left blank)