

Announcement from the Shibboleth Consortium Regarding Sustainability and Fees

24th July 2024

Dear members,

The Shibboleth Consortium has successfully overseen the Shibboleth software project over the last decade. The Consortium was established to ensure the long-term sustainability of our software. The project has delivered ongoing security and bug fixes, further development of our software to meet evolving requirements, and subsidized technical support.

Shibboleth remains the leading open-source solution for scalable federation support and remains widely deployed within the global research and education community. The support of the membership has allowed us to deliver ongoing updates to our major software products and to invest heavily in producing a best-of-breed implementation of more modern identity standards such as OpenID and OAuth, and more recently, the WebAuthn standard.

We have been pleased to have been able to maintain fees for membership at the same level for many years. However, the inflationary environment of the past several years has forced us to review our current and future budgets more closely. We have carefully considered our future roadmap and the cost of delivering on it successfully without compromising the level of support that constitutes one of our most important value propositions.

One demonstration of our value proposition is that membership remains stable. It has not, however, grown as substantially over the last several years. As a result, while our short-term financial prospects are good, our medium- and long-term projections show that fees must be allowed to keep pace with the increasing costs of retaining our existing team and of succession planning. The Board also recognizes that future sustainability depends on investing more into our organizational structure and into marketing and outreach.

The Board believes that the project's and community's future needs should be addressed through a combination of measures:

1. Increasing the Consortium's membership fees for all categories of membership by 10% for 2025.
2. From 2026, we will introduce an expected 3% yearly increase on membership rates to reflect inflation and the increasing costs of retaining existing talent and identifying successors.
3. Focusing marketing and outreach to increase number of Consortium memberships from commercial companies and academic organizations with large installations.
4. The Board will over the next several months develop a plan to simplify the organizational charter and move toward a more formal organizational structure

to facilitate donations, grant opportunities, and overall simplification of the membership process.

While a notice of an increase in fees is almost always unexpected, the Board encourages each Member to assess the value Shibboleth has provided to its community historically, comparing it with both the annual membership fee and the potential expenses associated with transitioning to an alternative solution. As a demonstration of their ongoing dedication to the Consortium, all Members directly represented on the Board have already committed to paying the raised membership fee in 2025.

In addition, the Board asked for and received a set of detailed proposals on the project roadmap from the development team to ensure that the vision for the software aligns with the needs expressed by the membership. The final proposed roadmap is directed by the member survey that was performed last year and many conversations at conferences and amongst the various communities represented by the Board. The goal is to balance the needs of the user community with the Consortium's ability to meet those needs in a cost-effective way.

The updated roadmap has been published and will be continually revised and open to feedback as it has always been for the life of the project:

<https://shibboleth.atlassian.net/wiki/x/NYDPQg>

We invite the Consortium's members to share their views on strategy, roadmap and on how to enlarge the membership. We also invite all members to consider how they can contribute beyond financial support. Feedback can be provided via:

- The members@shibboleth.net mailing list, which allows for open discussion amongst the membership. Members may request any alterations to the subscribers of this list for their organization at any time.
- A dedicated and confidential feedback mechanism at feedback@shibboleth.net, which the Board will be monitoring.

Best regards,

The Shibboleth Consortium Board

S.Cantor (OSU), A.Stuart (Jisc), D.Vaghetti (GARR), K.Morooney and S.Zoppi (Internet2),
W.Pempe (DFN), P.Axelsson (NORDUnet)