



Trusted Network Connect Specification Updates FAQ February 2008

Q. What is happening with new Trusted Network Connect (TNC) specifications?

A. Trusted Computing Group (TCG) has been working on some new things and as a result, it is posting several specifications for Public Review, including that of the IETF Network Endpoint Assessment (NEA) working group. These specifications are IF-TNCCS 2.0 (InterFace for TNC Client-Server interactions), IF-M 1.0 (InterFace for Messaging), and IF-M Security with CMS 1.0 (InterFace for Messaging Security with Cryptographic Message Syntax). They are integral protocols within the TNC architecture, which provides open standards for Network Access Control (NAC) and network security.

Q. What features do these specifications provide?

A. The IF-TNCCS 2.0 specification is a merger of the previously released IF-TNCCS 1.1 and IF-TNCCS-SOH 1.0 specifications. The IF-TNCCS 2.0 specification includes all the features of its predecessors and a few more (e.g. server can send the first message in an assessment of the client's health). The new specification should provide maximum compatibility across all TNC implementations.

The IF-M specifications provide a standard set of messages for basic integrity assessments. The main benefit of these messages is that they allow for an interoperable assessment of an endpoint's capabilities using collector software from a different vendor than provides the policy checking software. When these specifications are implemented, users will have flexibility in mixing products from different vendors throughout a TNC deployment.

Q. What about the IETF?

A. The IETF's NEA working group is working to standardize NAC protocols. The TCG supports this effort since it provides an opportunity to get even more vendors committed to NAC standards. Many TCG participants are also IETF NEA participants.

In January 2008, the IETF solicited proposals for protocols to meet its requirements. The TCG has submitted these latest TNC specifications as proposals. In order to complete these submissions, the TCG has created copies of the specifications in the IETF's preferred document format (Internet Draft) and using the IETF NEA working group's preferred nomenclature. These documents therefore are called PB-TNC, PA-TNC, and PA-TNC Security. These specifications are equivalent to and compatible with the TCG specifications released today for Public Review: IF-TNCCS 2.0, IF-M 1.0, and IF-M Security with CMS 1.0. They have simply been reformatted to meet the IETF's preferred format.

Q. Why release these specifications to Public Review and work with the IETF NEA?

A. The TCG wishes to gain feedback on the specifications from all parties that might be impacted by the new protocols prior to standardization. The Public Review period also allows TCG to actively discuss and potentially revise these protocols in the IETF to help achieve the broadest possible consensus on the specifications before a final specification release being issued. As we

have demonstrated throughout the history of TCG, we are committed to working in an open fashion and supporting industry organizations with complementary work in progress.

Q. Why are you releasing these specs to public review but not others?

A. TCG and its members are working actively with IETF on NAC standardization. In the interest of assisting and promoting that effort, we are issuing our work in a slightly different way.

Q. Does this mean that customers must wait for TNC?

A. No. Many vendors have already implemented the existing TNC specifications or committed to doing so: Consentry Networks, Extreme Networks, Fujitsu, IBM, Juniper Networks, Microsoft, Q1 Labs, PatchLink, ProCurve Networking by HP, StillSecure, Symantec, Trapeze, Vernier Networks, and Wave Systems. Several open-source implementations of the specifications are also available. Many satisfied customers are using TNC technology in their networks today.

Q. Do these specs change the TNC architecture?

A. No, the TNC architecture remains the same.

Q. Will the Public Review process be used for future TCG specs?

A. We might use this process in the future depending on the circumstances. Offering specifications to public review is a well-defined part of the TCG process. It will be used as appropriate.

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Contact: Anne Price
1-602-840-6495
press@trustedcomputinggroup.org