Credentials Community Group
2018 End of Year Survey Results

Conducted, Analyzed & Authored by Heather Vescent & Karn Verma

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Introduction

The idea to hold an end of year survey for the Credentials Community group came during the end of a CCG call in December 2018, where the leaders asked for ad-hoc feedback from the call participants. Heather Vescent volunteered to manage a survey to get the best data and allow the most people to submit feedback. Vescent queried the CCG mailing list for a volunteer, and Karn Verma responded. The survey questions were suggested by Manu Sporny, and developed by Heather Vescent, Karn Verma and reviewed by Kim Hamilton Duffy. The survey consisted of 29 questions and was posted on SurveyMonkey. The questions collected a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. There were 44 responses from Jan 1-Feb 4, 2019. These responses mainly came from the existing CCG mailing list members, but at least one participant somewhat active in the community was recruited via email. It took about 12 minutes to complete, with a 66% completion rate. Anonymized data is available for external analysis.

- Credentials Community Group: https://w3c-ccg.github.io/
- SurveyMonkey survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CCGList
- Survey questions: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wVkLrS2TPHccN2AS8l9c5MgDYrMi_LT36ked8LvwCu0/edit
- Contact the authors for a PII cleaned set of data for additional analysis.

Volunteers

- This survey collected the names of people who wanted to volunteer. This PII was cleaned out of the publicly available dataset. It is unclear who should receive this information. We want to ensure the people who volunteer are involved in a way where they can be successful in giving their time, learning from the experience and moving forward the community goals. So we need to find a solution, that is not necessarily the current CCG leadership, to manage, utilize and empower these volunteers.

Key Points

There were clear insights in several areas.

- **Inclusion and Diversity**: The results of 2018 show mostly technical activities, goals and accomplishments. The CCG is a technical group with the aspiration to make DIDs and VCs mainstream; ==however it is extremely difficult for== non-technical ==people to understand the way the group works and get involved effectively.==
  - A question to the community: There needs to be a conscious decision to double down on the technical focus, or change some fundamental things to enable non-technical people to effectively influence standards development. The current structure does not support input and participation of non-technical skill sets.
  - One of the biggest challenges with this technology is making it accessible and understandable to people outside the technical community. The current skills supported in this community have failed to achieve this goal - this is a gap in current leadership/community diversity. If this community wants to support this technology to be central and accepted, the skill sets that fill the gap must be supported into this community and represented in the leadership.
- **Process**: ==Most respondents were not confident about how the work was done/managed. However there was a group of responses that were confident about the process.==
- **North America Focus**: ==Core group of technologists from North America driving the technical standards, and most others, are not in a position to influence the standard==. Part of this problem is the timing of the call which limits participation from companies in certain time zones where the regular call falls in the middle of the night.
- **Core Group is insular**: ==The core group of technologies is a double edged sword - these people drive the main momentum of activities, but are seen as cliquey by people outside of this core group. In addition, there is a required privilege necessary to attend the in-person meetings on a regular basis.==
- **Roadmap:** In 2018, there was not clear consensus on the work that was to be done and the responses to many questions shows a variety of activities. The people in this group are doing a lot, and this quantity is good, but we may wish to ask ourselves if these are the right things to do and are we achieving what we are setting out to do? There was not clarity on the most important things. There is opportunity for to leaders to involve more people and grow the community this way.
- **Participation:** due to lack of clear roadmap and the status of the ongoing work it is difficult for volunteers to understand how to contribute.
- **2019 priorities:** The recommendations for 2019 focus were primarily technical with DID Auth and the DID spec + moving to a WG as the top priorities.

Results

The results are grouped by following categories.

1. CCG Work (Questions 17-21)
2. CCG Organization (Questions 1-5 & 23-24)
3. CCG Operations (Questions 6-16)
4. 2019 (Question 23)

1. CCG Work

Objective: This section (questions 17-21) asked about 2018 work items and efforts.

- **Top 3 accomplishments in 2018:** The top 3 accomplishments were: Work on the DID Spec, General Technical discussions/activities moving forward DID understanding and clarification, and Community cohesion: creating the place to have the technical conversations.
- **Working item or other community item?:** 16 people said they worked on various items with the DID Spec, data minimization and selective disclosure the most mentioned items.
- **Was there a work item that did not get enough focus?** There was no consensus in the replies with the exception of two comments about improving the DID spec.
- **Are there any current or future work items the group should not work on?** There was no consensus on the replies, with most as N/A.

Importance of work items: Work items were ranked with the top ranked items:
1. DID Resolver
2. DID Use Cases
3. VC Use Cases
4. DID Auth
5. Alignment with other digital verification standards (4.5)
6. DID Methods
7. DID Primer and Explainer

Q21 How important are the following work items?
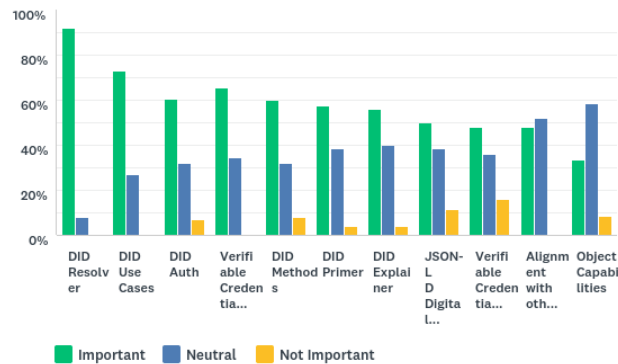
*Note we believe there is a slight data collection bias, due to a survey error for the first respondents that only allowed one selection for the question, vs one selection per category. We were unable to clean this data, but suspect this is the reason the DID resolver is slightly higher than the other.

2. CCG Organization

Objective: This section (questions 1-5 & 23-24) of the survey ask the participants questions regarding their interests and understanding of how the CCG community group functions. It also tries to gauge roadblocks to participating and contributing to the on-going work.

- **How CCG works:** 27 out of 44 respondents did not know, weren't sure or mostly knew how they CCG groups work was proposed and incubated. 17 respondents knew how the group functions.
- **Roadmap:** Most participants felt that there is a lack of a roadmap and a clear set of achievable goals.
- **Interests:** Majority of participants were interested because they feel this group is working on an emerging technology/trend. It hasn't been useful in their work so far but want to see applications in domains like advertising, digital publishing and healthcare. Other participants are interested in varied but specific things viz. protocols for Verifiable Credentials, help with standards and tooling, contribute to IPFS standards, continue to contribute to RWOT work items, understanding privacy protecting solutions.
- **Roadblocks to contributing:** The major roadblocks listed were funding and understanding of the previous and current work - i.e. what and how to contribute. Other reasons included: group culture and difficulty in traveling to remote conferences.
- **Missing constituencies:** There were several categories of constituencies mentioned as missing. There was no consensus how to involved these groups. Suggestions included proactive outreach to invite them, assigning work items, having a less formal work style, and having good explanatory text that explains DIDs and VCs.

- ○ **Geographical:** Missing Asia-Pac, broader European, Australia, and individuals outside of North America.
- ○ **Area of expertise:** Missing lawyers, VCs, government, non-coders, builders & implementers, PGP developers, cryptographic engineers, cryptographers, identity academics, and real active digital human rights activists.
- ○ **Companies/Communities:** Missing startups (not necessarily identity focused), Sovrin, Civic, Blockstack & Indieweb communities.
- ○ **Gender diversity** was also mentioned as lacking.

3. CCG Operations

Objective: This section (questions 6-16) of the survey ask the participants questions regarding the efficacy of the current means of operation viz. emails and phone calls.

Mailing lists: The mailing list is used by the majority respondents who find value in participating.

- 60% of the respondents read the mailing lists regularly.
- 75% think that the mailing list are productive.
- Most feel the following works well regarding the mailing list:
    - ○ It is good place for discussions
    - ○ It is a good way to spread awareness
    - ○ It is a forum to get ideas from IIW and RWOT into CCG.
- Most feel that the following can be improved about the mailing lists:
    - ○ Email is not the right forum to track discussions: need threading
    - ○ Encourage non-technical discussions
    - ○ Long discussions should be meetings
    - ○ More moderation to avoid personal pitches
    - ○ Insufficient dialogue

Weekly calls: Many people attend the weekly calls, and they work well for the most part, although there are areas for improvement, with technology cited as one area that could be improved.

- 27/37 attend or mostly attend the calls.
- 11/35 think that the technology used for the calls could be better.
- 20/36 think that the weekly calls are productive.
- Working well: Agenda, action items, accountability and good range of interests.
- Areas of improvement: give more time to prepare - make it once in two weeks, send agenda in advance - not night before, better interpersonal rules of engagement, speed is glacial, need better info on how to join calls, need more focus, don't argue JSON LD vs JWT on calls, difficult to contribute, too many overlapping calls.
- People mostly attend weekly calls to follow the space.

4. CCG 2019 Priorities

The technical suggestions for 2019 priorities outweighed non-technical suggestions almost 3:1.
- DID Auth (4)
- DID Spec + DID WG (3)
- DID Resolver (3)
- Verifiable Credentials (3)
- BTCR + other public DID examples

Non-Technical suggestions included
- The story of standards and how fit into the bigger picture
- Marketization
- More thorough use cases
- Amira engagement model
- Taxonomy of terms