

US Patent & Trademark Office

Patent Public Search | Text View

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| United States Patent | 12393720 |
| Kind Code | B2 |
| Date of Patent | August 19, 2025 |
| Inventor(s) | Venkatesan; Ramarathnam et al. |

Blind subpoena protection

Abstract

Embodiments described herein enable at least one of a plurality of entities to access data protected by a security policy in response to validating respective digital access requests from the entities. The respective digital access requests are received, each comprising a proof. For each request, an encrypted secret share is obtained from a respective ledger database. Each request is validated based at least on the respective encrypted secret share and the proof, without decrypting the respective encrypted secret share. In response to validating all of the requests, a verification that an access criteria of a security policy is met is made. If so, at least one of the entities is provided with access to data protected by the security policy. In an aspect, embodiments enable a blind subpoena to be performed. In another aspect, embodiments enable the at least one entity to access the data for an isolated purpose.

Inventors: Venkatesan; Ramarathnam (Redmond, WA), Chandran; Nishanth (Bangalore, IN), Antonopoulos; Panagiotis (Redmond, WA), Setty; Srinath T. V. (Redmond, WA), Cherian; Basil (Bellevue, WA), Carroll, Jr.; Daniel John (Columbia, MD), Barnwell; Jason Sydney (Seattle, WA)

Applicant: Microsoft Technology Licensing, LLC (Redmond, WA)

Family ID: 1000008762907

Assignee: MICROSOFT TECHNOLOGY LICENSING, LLC (Redmond, WA)

Appl. No.: 17/938711

Filed: October 07, 2022

Prior Publication Data

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Document Identifier | Publication Date |
| US 20240119168 A1 | Apr. 11, 2024 |

Publication Classification

Int. Cl.: G06F21/62 (20130101); H04L9/08 (20060101); H04L9/32 (20060101)

U.S. Cl.:

CPC G06F21/6227 (20130101); H04L9/085 (20130101); H04L9/3263 (20130101);

Field of Classification Search

CPC: G06F (21/6227); H04L (9/085); H04L (9/3263)

USPC: 713/193

References Cited

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

| Patent No. | Issued Date | Patentee Name | U.S. Cl. | CPC |
|--------------|-------------|-------------------------|----------|-----|
| 8601549 | 12/2012 | Dickerson | N/A | N/A |
| 9547771 | 12/2016 | Roth | N/A | N/A |
| 10211977 | 12/2018 | Roth | N/A | N/A |
| 10637855 | 12/2019 | Mikulski | N/A | N/A |
| 10990689 | 12/2020 | Reiner | N/A | N/A |
| 11036869 | 12/2020 | Roth | N/A | N/A |
| 11139954 | 12/2020 | Mercuri | N/A | N/A |
| 11424920 | 12/2021 | Bursell | N/A | N/A |
| 11544409 | 12/2022 | Brannon | N/A | N/A |
| 11593316 | 12/2022 | Haldar | N/A | N/A |
| 11695555 | 12/2022 | Roth | N/A | N/A |
| 11799630 | 12/2022 | Zhang | N/A | N/A |
| 11886574 | 12/2023 | Bursell | N/A | N/A |
| 12058265 | 12/2023 | Khoury | N/A | N/A |
| 12107900 | 12/2023 | Gargaro | N/A | N/A |
| 2002/0023213 | 12/2001 | Walker | N/A | N/A |
| 2002/0138738 | 12/2001 | Sames | N/A | N/A |
| 2007/0055867 | 12/2006 | Kanungo | N/A | N/A |
| 2012/0060207 | 12/2011 | Mardikar et al. | N/A | N/A |
| 2013/0145151 | 12/2012 | Brown | N/A | N/A |
| 2015/0089575 | 12/2014 | Vepa | N/A | N/A |
| 2015/0288669 | 12/2014 | Litoiu | N/A | N/A |
| 2015/0381575 | 12/2014 | Bhargav-Spantzel et al. | N/A | N/A |
| 2017/0041148 | 12/2016 | Pearce | N/A | N/A |
| 2017/0111175 | 12/2016 | Oberhauser et al. | N/A | N/A |
| 2019/0020485 | 12/2018 | Uhr | N/A | N/A |
| 2019/0163912 | 12/2018 | Kumar | N/A | N/A |
| 2019/0258811 | 12/2018 | Ferraiolo | N/A | N/A |
| 2019/0370358 | 12/2018 | Nation | N/A | N/A |
| 2019/0394175 | 12/2018 | Zhang | N/A | N/A |

| | | | | |
|--------------|---------|---------------------|-----|-------------|
| 2020/0014537 | 12/2019 | Ortiz | N/A | N/A |
| 2020/0082401 | 12/2019 | Arora | N/A | N/A |
| 2020/0322342 | 12/2019 | Gokhale | N/A | N/A |
| 2020/0374105 | 12/2019 | Padmanabhan | N/A | N/A |
| 2020/0396222 | 12/2019 | Gargaro et al. | N/A | N/A |
| 2020/0404023 | 12/2019 | Zhu | N/A | N/A |
| 2021/0089676 | 12/2020 | Ford | N/A | H04L 9/0825 |
| 2021/0092607 | 12/2020 | Klinkner | N/A | N/A |
| 2021/0218742 | 12/2020 | Cook | N/A | N/A |
| 2021/0232707 | 12/2020 | Wilson | N/A | N/A |
| 2021/0233673 | 12/2020 | Zhang | N/A | N/A |
| 2021/0273931 | 12/2020 | Murdoch et al. | N/A | N/A |
| 2021/0279355 | 12/2020 | Otte | N/A | N/A |
| 2021/0303714 | 12/2020 | Yaghooobi | N/A | N/A |
| 2021/0367778 | 12/2020 | Hamel | N/A | G06F 16/27 |
| 2021/0377037 | 12/2020 | Antonopoulos et al. | N/A | N/A |
| 2022/0020003 | 12/2021 | Sarkar | N/A | N/A |
| 2022/0021711 | 12/2021 | Marsh | N/A | N/A |
| 2022/0138181 | 12/2021 | Irazabal | N/A | N/A |
| 2022/0188810 | 12/2021 | Doney | N/A | N/A |
| 2022/0269927 | 12/2021 | Rice | N/A | N/A |
| 2022/0271936 | 12/2021 | Doney | N/A | N/A |
| 2022/0292211 | 12/2021 | Reineke | N/A | N/A |
| 2022/0400020 | 12/2021 | Davies | N/A | N/A |
| 2022/0417254 | 12/2021 | Michaelis | N/A | N/A |
| 2023/0015569 | 12/2022 | Davies | N/A | N/A |
| 2023/0035317 | 12/2022 | Jufer | N/A | N/A |
| 2023/0336547 | 12/2022 | Damour | N/A | N/A |
| 2023/0379699 | 12/2022 | Oerton | N/A | N/A |
| 2023/0388348 | 12/2022 | Authement | N/A | N/A |
| 2024/0056424 | 12/2023 | Venkatesan | N/A | N/A |
| 2024/0089098 | 12/2023 | Venkatesan | N/A | N/A |
| 2024/0104229 | 12/2023 | Venkatesan | N/A | N/A |
| 2024/0114012 | 12/2023 | Venkatesan | N/A | N/A |
| 2024/0121081 | 12/2023 | Venkatesan | N/A | N/A |

FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

| Patent No. | Application Date | Country | CPC |
|------------|------------------|---------|-----|
| 110363528 | 12/2018 | CN | N/A |
| 114221764 | 12/2021 | CN | N/A |
| 2022020557 | 12/2021 | JP | N/A |

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

“Application as Filed in U.S. Appl. No. 17/819,030”, filed Aug. 11, 2022, 57 Pages. cited by applicant

International Search Report and Written Opinion received for PCT Application No.

PCT/US2023/031452, Dec. 4, 2023, 11 pages. cited by applicant

International Search Report and Written Opinion received for PCT Application No.

PCT/US23/030988, mailed on Nov. 30, 2023, 13 pages. cited by applicant

Non-Final Office Action mailed on Oct. 18, 2024, in U.S. Appl. No. 17/934,730, 25 pages. cited by

applicant

Alansari., “A Blockchain-Based Approach for Secure, Transparent and Accountable Personal Data Sharing”, A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Aug. 2, 2020, 213 pages. cited by applicant

Antonopoulos, et al., “SQL Ledger: Cryptographically Verifiable Data in Azure SQL Database”, In Proceedings of the International Conference on Management of Data, Jun. 20, 2021, pp. 2437-2449. cited by applicant

Final Office Action mailed on Apr. 24, 2025, in U.S. Appl. No. 17/934,730, 27 pages. cited by applicant

International Preliminary Report On Patentability received for PCT Application No. PCT/US23/030988, Apr. 3, 2025, 08 pages. cited by applicant

International Preliminary Report on Patentability received for PCT Application No. PCT/US23/031452, Apr. 17, 2025, 06 pages. cited by applicant

Jaroucheh, et al., “Secretation: Toward a Decentralised Identity and Verifiable Credentials Based Scalable and Decentralised Secret Management Solution”, IEEE International Conference on Blockchain and Cryptocurrency, 20201, 09 Pages. cited by applicant

Mounnan, et al., “Efficient Distributed Access Control Using Blockchain for Big Data in Clouds”, International Conference on Wireless and Mobile Communications (ICWMC), Jun. 30, 2019, pp. 53-62. cited by applicant

Singh, et al. , “Security for Online Transaction Based on User Location”, In Journal of International Journal For Innovative Research In Multidisciplinary Field, vol. 3, Issue 4, Apr. 1, 2017, pp. 60-64. cited by applicant

Yue, et al. , “GlassDB: An Efficient Verifiable Ledger Database System Through Transparency”, In repository of arXiv:2207.00944v2, Aug. 8, 2022, 14 Pages. cited by applicant

Primary Examiner: Truong; Lan Dai T

Attorney, Agent or Firm: Weaver IP L.L.C.

Background/Summary

BACKGROUND

(1) Public-key cryptography (also known as asymmetric cryptography) is a cryptographic system that uses pairs of keys. Each pair consists of a public key (which is known to others) and a private key (which is only known to the owner). Effective security requires keeping the private key private, whereas the public key can be openly distributed.

SUMMARY

(2) This Summary is provided to introduce a selection of concepts in a simplified form that are further described below in the Detailed Description. This Summary is not intended to identify key features or essential features of the claimed subject matter, nor is it intended to be used to limit the scope of the claimed subject matter.

(3) Embodiments described herein enable at least one of a plurality of entities to access data protected by a security policy in response to validating respective digital access requests from the entities. For example, a respective digital access request is received from the plurality of entities. Each digital access request comprises a respective proof. For each digital access request, a respective encrypted secret share is obtained from a respective ledger database. Each digital access request is validated based at least on the respective encrypted secret share and the respective proof, without decrypting the respective encrypted secret share. In response to validating all of the

requests, a verification is made that an access criteria of a security policy is met. In response to verifying that the access criteria of the security policy is met, at least one of the entities is provided with access to data protected by the security policy. As an example, embodiments enable a plurality of entities to jointly enable a user's data to be accessed pursuant to a blind subpoena and without notifying the user in response to a determination that the access criteria of the security policy is met. In another example, embodiments enable the at least one entity to access the data for an isolated purpose.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS/FIGURES

- (1) The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated herein and form a part of the specification, illustrate embodiments and, together with the description, further serve to explain the principles of the embodiments and to enable a person skilled in the pertinent art to make and use the embodiments.
- (2) FIG. 1 shows a block diagram of an example system for providing access to data protected by a security policy in accordance with an example embodiment.
- (3) FIG. 2 shows a block diagram of a system for storing data protected by a security policy in accordance with an example embodiment.
- (4) FIG. 3 shows a flowchart of a process for storing data protected by a security policy in accordance with an example embodiment.
- (5) FIG. 4 shows a block diagram of a system for providing access to data protected by a security policy in accordance with an embodiment.
- (6) FIG. 5A shows a flowchart of a process for accessing data protected by a security policy in accordance with an embodiment.
- (7) FIG. 5B shows a flowchart of a process for validating a digital access request in accordance with an embodiment.
- (8) FIG. 5C shows a flowchart of a process for providing decrypted data to at least one entity in accordance with an embodiment.
- (9) FIG. 5D shows a flowchart of a process for authorizing a data handler to provide decrypted data to at least one entity in accordance with an embodiment.
- (10) FIG. 6 shows a flowchart of a process for obtaining respective encrypted secret shares from respective ledger databases in accordance with an embodiment.
- (11) FIG. 7 shows a flowchart of a process for validating a policy proof in accordance with an embodiment.
- (12) FIG. 8 shows a block diagram of a system for validating a policy proof in accordance with an embodiment.
- (13) FIG. 9 depicts a policy tree in accordance with an embodiment.
- (14) FIG. 10 shows a block diagram of a system for accessing data based on a policy of the policy tree of FIG. 9.
- (15) FIG. 11 shows a block diagram of an example computer system in which embodiments may be implemented.
- (16) The subject matter of the present application will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings. In the drawings, like reference numbers indicate identical or functionally similar elements. Additionally, the left-most digit(s) of a reference number identifies the drawing in which the reference number first appears.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

I. Introduction

- (17) The following detailed description discloses numerous example embodiments. The scope of

the present patent application is not limited to the disclosed embodiments, but also encompasses combinations of the disclosed embodiments, as well as modifications to the disclosed embodiments. It is noted that any section/subsection headings provided herein are not intended to be limiting. Embodiments are described throughout this document, and any type of embodiment may be included under any section/subsection. Furthermore, embodiments disclosed in any section/subsection may be combined with any other embodiments described in the same section/subsection and/or a different section/subsection in any manner.

II. Example Embodiments

(18) As set forth in the Background section, public-key cryptography (also known as asymmetric cryptography) is a cryptographic system that uses pairs of keys. Each pair consists of a public key (which is known to others) and a private key (which is only known to the owner). Effective security requires keeping the private key private, whereas the public key can be openly distributed.

(19) However, in some scenarios, a third party entity may request information protected by a user's private key. For instance, suppose a law enforcement agency seeks to enforce a blind subpoena to access data encrypted with Dan's private key and stored by a cloud service provider. In this scenario, the law enforcement agency wants to access the encrypted data without contacting Dan. However, Dan's employer wants the law enforcement agency to contact them in order to access Dan's encrypted data. Furthermore, Dan does not want his employer to be able to regularly access his encrypted data. In order to prevent unauthorized access to his encrypted data while enabling a blind subpoena to be enforced without his knowledge, Dan specifies a security policy that enables his employer or the law enforcement agency to access his encrypted data if the employer, the law enforcement agency, and a court request that Dan's employer or the law enforcement agency be provided access to Dan's encrypted data. For example, as described further below, Dan may generate a plurality of respective policy key shares to distribute to his employer, the law enforcement agency, and the court. These key shares correspond to a private key used to decrypt Dan's data, and when combined, cause a system to release the private key to the employer, law enforcement agency, and/or court, or otherwise provide access to Dan's encrypted data to the employer, law enforcement agency, and/or court without contacting Dan.

(20) Moreover, as will be described further below, in accordance with one or more embodiments, systems and/or methods described herein enable the generation of a policy proof. A policy proof is a cryptographic proof that enables any entity (e.g., Dan, the employer, the law enforcement agency, the court, etc.) to cryptographically verify that the key shares provided by Dan result in releasing Dan's private key when provided to a verifier. In this context, any entity is able to verify that the key shares generated by Dan satisfy an access policy that enables a blind subpoena to be enforced without his knowledge, without revealing the key shares themselves.

(21) Embodiments described herein are directed to providing access to data protected by a security policy via a zero-trust distributed architecture. For example, a respective digital access request is received from each of a plurality of entities (e.g., Dan's employer, the law enforcement agency, and the court). Each digital access request includes a respective proof. For each digital access request, a respective encrypted secret share is obtained from a respective first ledger database. As used herein, the term "secret shares" refer to multiple items of information that, when combined, can be used to reconstruct a secret. In an embodiment, the secret shares are distributed to different entities, such that each entity receives only one of the secret shares and thus cannot by itself reconstruct the secret. In a further embodiment, when all of the entities present their respective secret shares to a verifier, the verifier will determine that a security policy has been satisfied and will grant access to data protected by the security policy to at least one of the entities. For instance, each of the digital access requests are validated based at least on the respective encrypted secret share and the respective proof, without decrypting the respective encrypted secret share. In response to validating all of the digital access requests, verification is made that an access criteria of a security policy is met. In response to verifying that the access criteria of the security policy is met, at least one of the

entities (e.g., the law enforcement agency) is provided with access to data (e.g., Dan's data) protected by the security policy.

(22) The techniques described herein provide cryptographic enforcement, in a zero-trust model (and other models), end-to-end across various types of data, services, and organizations. In particular, one or more components (e.g., component(s) that perform policy verification, proof verification, and/or key recovery) may not be considered “trusted.” Such untrusted components are not entrusted to store sensitive data, such as decryption keys, due to a risk of the sensitive data being compromised thereon. Instead, such component(s) simply maintain the necessary information to release such keys.

(23) Accordingly, the techniques described herein advantageously provide improvements in other technologies, namely data encryption, security, and privacy. For instance, by utilizing a zero-trust model, access to sensitive data, such as decryption keys, is prevented. Consequently, the techniques described herein also prevent access to a user's network and computing entities (e.g., computing devices, virtual machines, etc.). By mitigating the access to such computing entities, the unnecessary expenditure of compute resources (e.g., central processing units (CPUs), storage devices, memory, power, etc.) associated with such entities is also mitigated. Accordingly, the embodiments described herein also improve the functioning of the computing entity on which such compute resources are utilized/maintained, as such compute resources are conserved as a result from preventing a malicious entity from utilizing such compute resources, e.g., for nefarious purposes.

(24) Moreover, unauthorized access to personal and/or confidential information is prevented by associating encrypted secret shares with identities of respective identities, the encrypted secret shares corresponding to an encrypted decryption key. Consequently, the techniques described herein prevent an unauthorized entity or an entity associated with only one of multiple respective encrypted secret shares from accessing personal and/or confidential information protected by a security policy that utilizes encrypted secret shares without authorization from each entity that possesses each respective encrypted secret share. For instance, a security policy in accordance with an embodiment requires proof of three distinct secret shares corresponding to an encrypted decryption key to be provided before authorizing access to data protected by the security policy. A verifier verifies the respective proofs and if all of the proofs are verified and an access criteria of the security policy is met, at least one of the entities is provided access to the data protected by the security policy. Consequently, the techniques described herein also prevent access to network and computing entities (e.g., computing devices, virtual machines, etc.) accessible to users with a corresponding decryption key and/or data protected by the security policy. By mitigating the access to such computing entities, the unnecessary expenditure of compute resources (e.g., central processing units (CPUs), storage devices, memory, power, etc.) associated with such entities is also mitigated. Accordingly, the embodiments described herein also improve the functioning of the computing entity on which such compute resources are utilized/maintained, as such compute resources are conserved as a result from preventing a malicious entity from utilizing such compute resources, e.g., for nefarious purposes.

(25) FIG. 1 shows a block diagram of an example system **100** for providing access to data protected by a security policy in accordance with an example embodiment. As shown in FIG. 1, system **100** includes a computing device **102**, entity systems **104A-104N**, an orchestrator **106**, a data source **108**, and one or more database (DB) host(s) **110** (“DB hosts **110**” hereinafter).

Computing device **102** is any type of processing device, including, but not limited to, a desktop computer, a server, a mobile or handheld device (e.g., a tablet, a personal data assistant (PDA), a smart phone, a laptop, etc.), an Internet-of-Things (IoT) device, etc. Entity systems **104A-104N** are any types of computing systems, including, but not limited to, one or more computing devices, enterprise computing systems, networked computing systems, etc. Orchestrator **106** comprises one or more server computers or computing devices, which include one or more distributed or “cloud-

based” servers, in embodiments. In embodiments, orchestrator **106** is associated with, or a part of, a cloud-based service platform and in some embodiments, orchestrator **106** comprises on-premises server(s) in addition to, or in lieu of, cloud-based servers. DB hosts **110** comprise one or more server computers or computing devices, which include one or more distributed or “cloud-based” servers, in embodiments. In embodiments, DB hosts **110** are associated with, or are a part of, a cloud-based service platform and in some embodiments, DB host **110** comprise one or more on-premise servers in addition to, or in lieu of, cloud-based server(s). DB hosts **110** are configured to host and execute any type of DB server application, such as but not limited to, Azure SQL Database™ from Microsoft Corporation of Redmond, WA. In embodiments, computing device **102**, entity systems **104A-104N**, orchestrator **106**, data source **108**, and/or DB hosts **110**, are communicatively coupled via one or more networks **112**, comprising one or more of local area networks (LANs), wide area networks (WANs), enterprise networks, the Internet, etc., and includes one or more of wired and/or wireless portions.

(26) As shown in FIG. 1, DB hosts **110** execute ledger databases **116A-116N**. Each of ledger databases **116A-116N** provide tamper-evidence capabilities for database tables of the respective ledger database (referred to as ledger tables), where one can cryptographically attest to other parties, such as auditors or parties that the data maintained by the database has not been tampered with. Ledger databases **116A-116N** protect data from any attacker or high privileged user, including database administrators, system administrators, and cloud administrators. As with a traditional ledger, historical data is preserved. If a row is updated in a ledger table, its previous value is maintained and protected in a history table. Each of ledger databases **116A-116N** provide a chronicle of all changes made to the respective database over time. In accordance with an embodiment, historical data is maintained in a relational form to support queries (e.g., SQL queries) for auditing, forensics, and other purposes.

(27) For each of ledger databases **116A-116N**, any rows of the respective database that are modified by a transaction in the ledger table are cryptographically hashed (e.g., SHA-256 hashed) using a data structure, such as a Merkle tree, that creates a root hash representing all rows in the transaction. The transactions that the respective ledger databases process are then also hashed together through another Merkle tree data structure. The result is a root hash that forms a block. The block is then hashed through the root hash of the block, along with the root hash of the previous block as input to the hash function. That hashing forms a blockchain. The root hashes, also referred herein as database digests, contain the cryptographically hashed transactions and represent the state of the database at the time the digests were generated. In accordance with an embodiment, respective digests are periodically generated and stored outside the respective database in tamper-proof storage. Digests are later used to verify the integrity of the respective database by comparing the value of the hash in the respective digest against the calculated hashes in the respective database.

(28) In accordance with an embodiment, materialized views of ledger tables are generated in fixed periodic intervals referred to as epochs. In accordance with an embodiment, each of ledger databases **116A-116N** are also configured to provide forward integrity, which guarantees that given a materialized view of a ledger table at any time t , it is infeasible to tamper the ledger table in any subsequent epoch.

(29) Each of ledger databases **116A-116N** is configured to store and protect any type of data or information, including, but not limited to a verifiable identity map, a verifiable attribute map, and/or a verifiable policy map. Additional details with regards to verifiable identity maps and verifiable attribute maps will be discussed further below with respect to FIG. 2. Additional details with regards to verifiable policy maps will be discussed further below with respect to FIG. 10. Each of ledger databases **116A-116N** are configured to provide users (e.g., users of computing device **102** and/or entity systems **104A-104N**) access to respective digests, which are representative of the state of the respective ledger database. Computing devices and/or systems may store the

digests, as described further below with respect to FIGS. 2 and 10. It is noted that in embodiments, ledger databases **116A-116N** are configured to provide access to some or all of the respective digests that are generated by the respective ledger database over time.

(30) Computing device **102** is associated with a user and comprises an application **114**. Application **114** is any software application that is utilized to access data (e.g., data maintained by data source **108**), encrypt data (e.g., to generate encrypted data **118**), generate secret shares, encrypt secret shares, access ledger databases (e.g., ledger databases **116A-116N**), and/or interface with orchestrator **106**. Examples of application **114** include, but are not limited to, a messaging application (e.g., Microsoft Teams™ published by Microsoft Corporation of Redmond, WA), a word processing application (e.g., Microsoft Word™ published by Microsoft Corporation), a database application, etc.

(31) As stated above, application **114** is configured to access data on behalf of a user. For example, application **114** accesses encrypted data **118** maintained by data source **108**. Data source **108** also comprises a policy ID specified for data maintained thereby. In accordance with an embodiment, the policy ID is stored as metadata associated with the data. Examples of data source **108** include, but are not limited to, a data store, a file repository, a database, etc. Examples of data maintained by data source **108** include, but are not limited to, a data file (e.g., a document), a database object (e.g., a table, a directory, etc.), structured data, unstructured data, semi-structured data, a data container, a decryption key, etc. The data may be encrypted (e.g., the data is encoded in accordance with an encryption technique, such as, but not limited to, the Advanced Encryption Standard (AES)). In such a case, application **114** requires the data to be decrypted (e.g., decoded in accordance with a decryption technique, such as, but not limited to, the AES), for example, using a decryption key in order to access it. The data is decrypted if a policy (e.g., an access policy) associated with the data is satisfied.

(32) Each of entity systems **104A-104N** correspond to a respective entity. For instance, as shown in FIG. 1, entity system **104A** corresponds to Entity A, entity system **104B** corresponds to Entity B, and entity system **104N** corresponds to Entity B. Examples of entities include, but are not limited to, individual users, groups of users, and organizations. Examples of organizations include, but are not limited to, enterprises, non-profit companies, non-profit groups, governmental institutions, governmental bodies, and governmental agencies. For example, in a non-limiting example, Entity A is an enterprise, Entity B is a law enforcement agency, and Entity N is a court. In accordance with an embodiment, the user associated with computing device **102** is associated with an entity (e.g., as a member of the entity, an employee of the entity, a volunteer of the entity, an owner of the entity, a subscriber to a service of the entity, etc.). For example, in the non-limiting example, the user associated with computing device **102** is an employee of Entity A. In this context, computing device **102** may be a computing device within the entity system of the entity (e.g., entity system **104A**) or another computing device associated with the user (e.g., a personal computing device).

(33) Orchestrator **106** is configured to facilitate a determination as to whether the policy for data attempted to be accessed by application **114**, stored in data source **108** on behalf of a user associated with computing device **102**, and/or accessed by one of entities associated with entity systems **104A-104N** (or applications and/or members associated with those entities) is satisfied. For example, in accordance with an embodiment, orchestrator **106** facilitates the determination as to whether secret shares provided by the user associated with computing device **102** correspond to a decryption key that is used to decrypt data protected by a security policy. Upon determining that the secret shares do correspond to the decryption key, orchestrator **104** (or another component on behalf of orchestrator **104**) stores the data protected by the security policy in data source **108** (e.g., as encrypted data **118**). Additional details regarding storing data protected by a security policy are described below with respect to FIGS. 2 and 3.

(34) In accordance with another embodiment, orchestrator **106** facilitates the determination as to whether a plurality of entities (e.g., entities associated with any of entity systems **104A-104N**) have

the necessary secret shares specified by a security policy. Upon determining access criteria of the policy is met, orchestrator **106** obtains (or recovers) the decryption key and/or provides the decryption key to at least one of the plurality of entities. Alternatively, orchestrator **106** (or another component coupled thereto) decrypts the data using the decryption key, and the decrypted data is provided to the at least one of the plurality of entities. Additional details regarding determining as to whether a plurality of entities have the necessary secret shares specified by a policy are described below with respect to FIGS. **4-6, 11, and 10**.

(35) In accordance with another embodiment, orchestrator **106** facilitates the determination of whether a proof held by an entity corresponds to a security policy. Upon determining that the proof held by the entity corresponds to the policy, orchestrator **106** notifies the entity (e.g., via a short messaging service (SMS) message, a telephone call, an e-mail, a notification that is presented via an application associated with the entity, etc.) that the proof corresponds to the policy. Additional details regarding validating a proof corresponding to a security policy are described below with respect to FIGS. **7 and 10**.

III. Example Embodiments for Securely Storing Data

(36) As discussed above, systems, computing devices, and computer storage mediums described herein may store data protected by a security policy in various ways, in embodiments. For example, FIG. **2** shows a block diagram of a system **200** for storing data protected by a security policy in accordance with an example embodiment. As shown in FIG. **2**, system **200** comprises computing device **102**, entity systems **104A-104N**, orchestrator **106**, data source **108**, and ledger database **116A-116N**, as described above with reference to FIG. **1**, a security policy **202**, which includes one or more policies for data maintained by data source **108**, and a key manager **204**, which stores one or more decryption keys (e.g., decryption key **226**). In accordance with another embodiment, key manager **204** comprises server computer(s) or computing device(s), which may include one or more distributed or “cloud-based” servers. In embodiments, key manager **204** comprises on-premises server(s) in addition to, or in lieu of, cloud-based servers. In accordance with an embodiment, key manager **204** is a trusted key manager. In accordance with another embodiment, key manager **204** is an untrusted key manager. Ledger databases **116A-116N** each comprise respective identity maps **230A-230N** and respective attribute maps **232A-232N**. As also shown in FIG. **2**, computing device **102** comprises application **114**, as described with respect to FIG. **1**, a user key pair **222**, and secret share(s) **224**. Application **114** executes a proof generator **220** and a secret share generator **250**. As also shown in FIG. **2**, orchestrator **106** comprises a data handler **206** and a verifier **208**. In accordance with an embodiment, key manager **204** is included as part of orchestrator **106**. As shown in FIG. **2**, data handler **206** and verifier **208** are incorporated in orchestrator **106**. In accordance with another embodiment, data handler **206** and/or verifier **208** are separate components (e.g., software applications) from orchestrator **106**. In accordance with an embodiment data handler **206** and verifier **208** are integrated (e.g., as a single software application). In accordance with an embodiment, data handler **206** is a trusted data handler. In accordance with another embodiment, data handler **206** is an untrusted data handler. In accordance with an embodiment, verifier **208** is a trusted verifier. In accordance with another embodiment, verifier **208** is an untrusted verifier. In accordance with an embodiment, verifier **208** is incorporated in a location attribute policy (LAP) server coupled to orchestrator **106**, not shown in FIG. **2** for brevity.

(37) For illustrative purposes, system **200** is described below with respect to FIG. **3**. FIG. **3** shows a flowchart **300** of a process for storing data protected by a security policy in accordance with an example embodiment. System **200** may operate according to flowchart **300** in embodiments. Not all steps of flowchart **300** need be performed in all embodiments. Further structural and operational embodiments will be apparent to persons skilled in the relevant art(s) based on the following descriptions of FIGS. **2 and 3**.

(38) Flowchart **300** starts with step **302**. In step **302**, a digital storage request is received from a user. The digital storage request comprises data protected by a security policy. For example, data

handler **206** receives digital storage request **234** from application **114** on behalf of a user, as shown in FIG. 2. Digital storage request **234** comprises data protected by security policy **202**. As a non-limiting running example, data handler **206** receives digital storage request **234** from application **114** on behalf of Dan. In this context, digital storage request **234** comprises data that Dan wants to store and protect under security policy **202** (e.g., a security policy set by Dan's employer).

(39) In step **304**, the user is prompted to provide a policy proof to authorize storing the data protected by the security policy. For example, data handler **206** transmits a user prompt **236** to application **114** to prompt the user to provide a policy proof (e.g., via application **114**) to authorize storing the data protected by security policy **202**, as shown in FIG. 2. Data handler **206** may determine to transmit user prompt **236** in various ways. For example, data handler **206** in accordance with an embodiment, accesses security policy **202**, analyzes security policy **202** to determine that security policy **202** includes a secret share policy (e.g., a key share policy). For instance, security policy **202** in accordance with an embodiment requires the user to validate secret shares (shown as secret share(s) **224** in FIG. 2) that correspond to a decryption key that may be used to decrypt the data protected by security policy **202**. In this context, data handler **206** transmits user prompt **236** to prompt the user to prove that the user has generated secret shares **224** that correspond to a decryption key that may be used to decrypt the data protected by security policy **202**. For instance, in the running example described above, data handler **206** determines that security policy **202** is a secret share policy that requires Dan to validate secret shares **224** that correspond to a decryption key used to encrypt Dan's data. In this context, security policy **202** is a security policy that requires Dan to enable certain entities to have access to either the decryption key or the encrypted data when the certain entities provide proof of possession of respective secret shares. In this running example, the certain entities include the legal team of Dan's employer ("Costly Co legal" herein), a law enforcement agency, and a court. In this running example, Costly Co legal is associated with entity system **104A**, the law enforcement agency is associated with entity system **104B**, and the court is associated with entity system **104N**.

(40) Secret shares may be generated in various ways. In accordance with an embodiment, the user (e.g., Dan) manually generates secret shares **224** based at least on decryption key **226** via secret share generator **250** of application **114**. Alternatively, secret share generator **250** of application **114** automatically generates secret shares **224** based at least on the decryption key. For example, in accordance with an embodiment, secret share generator **250** generates multiple key shares from decryption key **226** by generating (e.g., randomly, pseudo-randomly, etc.) multiple numbers that, when used in a mathematical formula (e.g., multiplication), generate decryption key **226**. In accordance with an embodiment, secret share generator **250** generates a secret share of secret shares **224** for each of entities of entity systems **104A-104N** (e.g., Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and the court). As shown in FIG. 2, secret share generator **250** is incorporated in application **114**. In accordance with an alternative embodiment, secret share generator **250** is a separate component (e.g., a software application, a hardware-based secret share generator, etc.) from application **114**.

(41) As mentioned above, user prompt **236** prompts a user (or an application on behalf of the user) to provide a policy proof to authorize storing of data protected by a security policy. For example, proof generator **220** is configured to generate a zero-knowledge cryptographic proof based at least on a decryption key and unencrypted versions of secret shares that correspond to the decryption key (shown as secret share(s) **224** in FIG. 2). For instance, with respect to the running example, proof generator **220** generates a zero-knowledge cryptographic proof on behalf of Dan based at least on Dan's decryption key and the unencrypted versions of the secret shares generated by secret share generator **250** on behalf of Dan. In accordance with an embodiment, proof generator **220** is incorporated in application **114** (as shown in FIG. 2). In accordance with another embodiment, proof generator **220** is a separate component (e.g., a software application, a hardware-based proof generator, etc.) from application **114**.

(42) In accordance with an embodiment, and with reference to the running example, proof generator **220** of FIG. **2** is configured to generate the zero-knowledge cryptographic policy proof based at least on the decryption key, the unencrypted versions of secret shares, and public keys of entities associated with the unencrypted versions of secret shares. For instance, in the running example, proof generator **220** generates a (zero-knowledge) cryptographic policy proof based on Dan's decryption key, the unencrypted secret shares, and the public keys of Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and the court. In accordance with an embodiment, proof generator **220** retrieves the public keys from respective identity maps **230A-230N**, as discussed elsewhere herein. In accordance with an embodiment, proof generator **220** generates the cryptographic policy proof based on a zero-knowledge protocol, such as, but not limited to, Schnorr's protocol. In examples, while proof generator **220** generates a value using the unencrypted secret shares (which are deemed private), the generated value does not include the shared secrets. In other words, the generated value of the cryptographic policy proof cannot be used to reconstruct any secret share of the secret shares. In this manner, proof generator **220** provides a policy proof that when the secret shares are presented to a verifier, access to Dan's encrypted data will be provided to at least one of Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and/or the court, as described elsewhere herein, despite not relaying any of the secret shares.

(43) In various embodiments, the (zero-knowledge) policy proof comprises information that is used to prove that the secret shares generated by Dan correspond to the encryption key used to encrypt the data to be stored, and that if each of the secret shares is inputted into a mathematical formula, Dan's decryption key is generated. In accordance with an embodiment, a known encryption algorithm is used to generate the policy proof. In various other embodiments, other algorithms are used, such as a secure hash algorithm (SHA) instead of an encryption algorithm. For instance, the zero knowledge proof in such a case would be used to prove that if the secret shares were inputted into a SHA, the decryption key would be obtained. Other techniques are also contemplated herein, and disclosed techniques for providing a zero-knowledge proof are not limited to these illustrative examples.

(44) In step **306**, a digital validation request is received from the user. The digital validation request comprises the policy proof, an encrypted decryption key of the user, and respective encrypted secret shares. For example, verifier **208** receives a digital validation request **238** from application **114** on behalf of the user, as shown in FIG. **2**. Digital validation request **238** comprises the (zero knowledge cryptographic) policy proof generated using proof generator **220**, an encrypted decryption key of the user, and respective encrypted secret shares generated using secret share generator **250**, as described above. For instance, in the running example, digital validation request **238** comprises the policy proof associated generated using proof generator **220**, an encrypted version of Dan's key, and encrypted versions of the secret shares generated (e.g., by Dan or on behalf of Dan), as described above. In accordance with an embodiment, proof generator **220**, the encrypted decryption key of the user, and the respective encrypted secret shares are included in separate requests received from application **114**. As described herein, digital validation request **238** in accordance with an embodiment is a request. However, it is also contemplated herein that application **114** may generate digital validation request **238** automatically, semi-automatically, or manually (e.g., via a user interacting with application **114**) as a digital validation response (e.g., in response to user prompt **236**).

(45) In step **308**, the digital validation request is validated based at least on the policy proof, the encrypted decryption key, and respective encrypted secret shares. For example, verifier **208** of orchestrator **106** of FIG. **2** determines if the policy proof received in step **306** corresponds to the encrypted decryption key and the respective encrypted secret shares received in step **306**. In accordance with an embodiment, verifier **208** is a proof verifier that verifies the (cryptographic) policy proof received via digital validation request **238** based at least on the encrypted decryption key and respective secret shares received via digital validation request **238**. In accordance with

another embodiment, verifier **208** is a proof verifier that verifies the (cryptographic) policy proof received via digital validation request **238** based at least on the encrypted decryption key and respective encrypted secret shares received via digital validation request **238** and public keys of respective entities. In this context, verifier **208** retrieves the public keys from respective identity maps **230A-230N**. For instance, in the running example, verifier **208** retrieves public keys of Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and the court from respective identity maps **230A-230N** and uses the retrieved public keys, the encrypted version of Dan's keys, and encrypted versions of the secret shares to verify the policy proof generated by, or behalf of, Dan. In accordance with an embodiment, verifier **208** verifies the (cryptographic) policy proof based on a zero-knowledge protocol, such as, but not limited to, Schnorr's protocol. In one implementation, validation of the policy proof is performed by comparing a first value generated by verifier **208** that is determined from the encrypted decryption key and respective encrypted secret shares with a second value that is based on a stored version of the policy proof that is accessible to verifier **208** (e.g., stored in data source **108** or a policy map of a ledger database). In response to determining that the (cryptographic) policy proof is verified, verifier **208** validates digital validation request **238** and transmits a validation notification **240** to data handler **206**, as shown in FIG. 2, and flowchart **300** proceeds to step **310**.

(46) In response to determining that the (cryptographic) policy proof does is not verified, verifier **208** of FIG. 2 does not validate the digital validation request and data handler **206** does not store the data protected by security policy **202**. In accordance with an embodiment, in response to not validating the digital validation request, verifier **208**, data handler **206**, and/or another component of orchestrator **106** transmit a notification (not shown in FIG. 2) to application **114** or the user (e.g., Dan) indicating that the data protected by security policy **202** was not stored.

(47) In step **310**, in response to validating the digital validation request, the data protected by the security policy is stored. For example, data handler **206** transmits a storage signal **242** to data source **108** for storing the data protected by security policy **202** therein, as shown in FIG. 2. Storage signal **242** comprises the data protected by security policy **202**. In accordance with an embodiment, storage signal **242** also includes the policy proof and data source **108** stores the policy proof with the data. For instance, in the running example, data source **108** stores Dan's protected data and the policy proof associated with his protected data as encrypted data **118**. Alternatively, data handler **206** associates the policy proof with security policy **202**. For example, data handler **206** in accordance with an embodiment associates the policy proof with security policy **202** in a policy map. Additional details regarding policy maps are described further below with respect to FIG. 10.

(48) In step **312**, in response to validating the digital validation request, the encrypted decryption key is provided to a key manager. For example, data handler **206** provides the encrypted decryption key to key manager **204** via key store request **244**, as shown in FIG. 2. Key manager **204** stores the encrypted decryption key (e.g., an encrypted version of Dan's key) included in key store request **244** as decryption key **226**. In accordance with an embodiment, key manager **204** includes a data identifier with decryption key **226** that uniquely identifies the data associated with decryption key **226** (e.g., encrypted data **218**).

(49) In step **314**, the user is notified that the storage of the data protected by the security policy is authorized. For example, data handler **206** transmits a successful storage notification **246** to application **114**, as shown in FIG. 2. Examples of successful notification **246** include, but are not limited to, a short messaging service (SMS) message, a telephone call, an e-mail, a notification that is presented via application **114** and/or another application executing on computing device **102** and/or another computing device associated with the user, etc. Alternatively, data handler **206** transmits notification **246** to another computing device (e.g., a personal computing device) associated with the user (e.g., Dan).

(50) In response to receiving notification **246**, application **114** distributes respective secret shares of

secret shares **224** to entity systems **104A-104N**. As discussed above, in accordance with an embodiment, application **114** encrypts each secret share with a respective public key of the corresponding entity associated with respective entity systems **104A-104N**. As shown in FIG. 2, application **114** distributes respective secret shares of secret shares **224** to entity systems **104A-104N** by transmitting respective secret share signals **248A-248N** to respective entity systems **104A-104N**. In accordance with an embodiment, each respective secret share signal of secret share signals **248A-248N** are messages that comprise a respective encrypted secret share encrypted with a respective entity's public key and the policy proof. For instance, in the running example, secret share signal **248A** comprises the first encrypted secret share encrypted with Costly Co legal's public key and the policy proof, secret share signal **248B** comprises the second encrypted secret share encrypted with the law enforcement agency's public key and the policy proof, and secret share signal **248N** comprises the third encrypted secret share encrypted with the court's public key and the policy proof. By providing each of entity systems **104A-104N** with the policy proof, each entity (e.g., Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, the court) is able to verify that the secret shares distributed to entity systems **104A-104N** correspond to the encrypted decryption key that decrypts the data protected by security policy **202**. Additional details regarding verifying the policy proof will be described further below with respect to FIGS. 7 and 8.

(51) Each of entity systems **104A-104N** stores respective secret shares on-premises (e.g., shown as secret shares **228A-228N** in FIG. 2) and/or in an external data source accessible by the respective entity system. In accordance with an embodiment, each of entity systems **104A-104N** stores encrypted versions of secret shares **228A-228N** in respective attribute maps **232A-232N**. In accordance with an embodiment, encrypted versions of secret shares **228A-228N** are encrypted with respective public keys of entities associated with entity systems **104A-104N**. For instance, in the running example, Costly Co legal's secret share **328A** is encrypted with Costly Co legal's public key, the law enforcement agency's secret share **328B** is encrypted with the law enforcement agency's public key, and the court's secret share **328N** is encrypted with the court's public key. Additional details regarding identity maps **230A-230N** and attribute maps **232A-232N** are described below.

(52) Identity maps **230A-230N** are configured to store identities for each of a plurality of users (e.g., members, employees, etc.), for example, associated with an entity. Each identity comprises information that uniquely identifies the user associated with the entity. Examples of the identity include, but are not limited to, the user's e-mail address, the user's phone number, the user's username, or any other type of information that uniquely identifies the user. Identity maps **230A-230N** are also configured to store, for each user, a public key of the user in association with the identity of the user.

(53) Attribute maps **232A-232N** are configured to store one or more attributes for each of a plurality of users associated with the entity. Each of the attribute(s) for a particular user are stored in association with the identity of that user. For instance, attribute maps **232A-232N** are configured to store, for each user, one or more encrypted secret shares (e.g., one or more pieces of data, such as a password, a private key, a public key, a string of characters and/or random numbers, etc. that are encoded in accordance with an encryption technique, such as, but not limited to, a secure hash algorithm (SHA)-based technique). Each of the secret share(s) for a particular user are stored in association with the identity of that user. Attribute maps **232A-232N** also associate each encrypted secret share with a corresponding attribute of the attributes stored in respective attribute maps **232A-232N**. As described below, the encrypted secret share(s) are utilized to verify whether a user is actually associated with corresponding attributes. In accordance with an embodiment, the secret share(s) of a user stored in attribute maps **232A-232N** are encrypted with a private key of that user. In accordance with an embodiment, attribute maps **232A-232N** are also configured to store, for each attribute, a public key, which, as will be described below, is utilized to generate and verify cryptographic proofs. In this context, attribute maps **232A-232N** associate each public key with a

corresponding attribute and corresponding encrypted secret share of the attributes stored in respective attribute maps **232A-232N**.

(54) Identity maps **230A-230N** and attribute maps **232A-232N** may be generated and/or maintained by respective entities in accordance with any technique known for generating and or maintaining maps within a ledger database. While FIG. 2 depicts ledger databases **116A-116N** each storing a respective identity map of identity maps **230A-230N** and a respective attribute map of attribute maps **232A-232N**, in accordance with an alternative embodiment separate ledger databases are used to store respective identity maps and/or attribute maps. An example of a database via which respective identity maps of identity maps **230A-230N** and/or respective attribute maps of attribute maps **232A-232N** are maintained includes, but is not limited to, Azure SQL Database™ from Microsoft® Corporation of Redmond, Washington.

IV. Example Embodiments for Providing Access to Data

(55) As described herein, embodiments provide at least one entity of a plurality of entities access to data protected by a security policy. Systems, methods, and computer-readable storage medium having program instructions recorded thereon may provide access to data protected by a security policy in various ways, in embodiments. For example, FIG. 4 shows a block diagram of a system **400** for providing access to data protected by a security policy in accordance with an embodiment. As shown in FIG. 4, system **400** includes entity systems **104A-104N** (which store respective secret shares **228A-228N**), orchestrator **106** (comprising data handler **206** and verifier **208**), data source **108** (maintaining encrypted data **118**), ledger databases **116A-116N** (comprising respective identity maps **230A-230N** and respective attribute maps **232A-232N**), security policy **202**, and key manager **204** (which stores one or more decryption keys, e.g., decryption key **226**), as described above with respect to FIG. 2. As also shown in FIG. 4, each of entity systems **104A-104N** comprise respective applications **414A-414N** and respective entity key pairs **422A-422N**. Each of applications **414A-414N** is any software application that is utilized to access data (e.g., data maintained by data source **108**), encrypt secret shares, access ledger databases (e.g., ledger databases **116A-116N**), decrypt data, and/or interface with orchestrator **106**. Examples of applications **414A-414N** include, but are not limited to, a messaging application (e.g., Microsoft Teams™ published by Microsoft Corporation of Redmond, WA), a word processing application (e.g., Microsoft Word™ published by Microsoft Corporation), a database application, etc. Each of applications **414A-414N** execute a respective proof generator **420A-420N**. Each of respective entity key pairs **422A-422N** comprise a public key of the respective entity (which is known to others) and a private key of the respective entity (which is only known to the entity).

(56) For illustrative purposes, system **400** is described below with respect to FIG. 5A. FIG. 5A shows a flowchart **500** of a process for accessing data protected by a security policy in accordance with an embodiment. System **400** may operate according to flowchart **500** in embodiments. Not all steps of flowchart **500** need be performed in all embodiments. Further structural and operational embodiments will be apparent to persons skilled in the relevant art(s) based on the following descriptions of FIGS. 4 and 5A.

(57) Flowchart **500** begins with step **502**. In step **502**, a respective digital access request is received from each of a plurality of entities. Each digital access request comprises a respective proof. For example, verifier **208** receives respective digital access requests **424A-424N** from each of applications **414A-414N** on behalf of respective entities, as shown in FIG. 4. Each of digital access requests **424A-424N** comprises a respective proof generated by a respective proof generator **420A-420N**. For instance, with respect to the running example described above with respect to FIGS. 2 and 3, verifier **208** receives digital access request **424A** from application **414A** on behalf of Costly Co legal, receives digital access request **424B** from application **414B** on behalf of the law enforcement agency, and receives digital access request **424N** from application **414N** on behalf of the court.

(58) In accordance with an embodiment, and as will be described below with respect to FIG. 6,

each of digital access requests **424A-424N** comprises a respective digest representative of the state of a respective ledger database. In accordance with an embodiment, verifier **208**, data handler **206**, and/or another component of orchestrator **106** (e.g., a proof requestor, not shown in FIG. 4 for brevity) request applications **414A-414N** to provide respective digital access requests **424A-424N** (e.g., via prompting a user to provide a respective proof or via proof generators **420A-420N** to generate the respective proof). For example, in accordance with an embodiment, verifier **208**, data handler **206**, and/or another component of orchestrator **106** receive an initial access request from at least one of applications **414A-414N** (e.g., Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and/or the court) requesting access to encrypted data **118** (e.g., Dan's data) on behalf of at least one respective entity (e.g., a "requesting entity"), access security policy **202** in response to the initial access request (e.g., based on a policy ID included in the initial access request), and analyze security policy **202** to determine the secret shares that are required to access encrypted data **118**. In this context, verifier **208**, data handler **206**, and/or another component of orchestrator **106** transmits a request to each of applications **414A-414N** to provide respective zero-knowledge cryptographic proofs that the respective entities have respective secret shares (e.g., secret shares **228A-228N**) of the determined secret shares and authorize the requesting entity to access encrypted data **118**.

(59) Each of proof generators **420A-420N** are associated with a respective application **414A-414N**. In accordance with an embodiment, each of proof generators **420A-420N** are incorporated in a respective application **414A-414N**. In accordance with another embodiment, any of proof generators **420A-420N** are separate components (e.g., software applications, hardware-based proof generators, etc.) from the respective application **414A-414N**. Each of proof generators **420A-420N** are configured to generate a zero-knowledge cryptographic proof based at least on an unencrypted version of a respective secret share (shown as secret shares **228A-228N** in FIG. 4). As shown in FIG. 4, respective secret shares **228A-228N** are stored locally by respective entity systems **104A-104N**. As described above, encrypted version of respective secret shares **228A-228N** are stored in respective maps maintained by respective ledger databases (e.g., attribute maps **232A-232N** maintained by ledger databases **116A-116N**).

(60) In accordance with an embodiment, each of proof generators **420A-420N** are configured to generate a zero-knowledge cryptographic proof based at least on the unencrypted version of the respective secret share, a respective public key (e.g., a public key of a respective entity key pair of entity key pairs **422A-422N** or a public key associated with an encrypted version of the respective secret share (e.g., stored in attribute map **232A-232N**, as described elsewhere herein)), and an encryption algorithm used to encrypt a set of data. In accordance with an embodiment, each of proof generators **420A-420N** generates a respective cryptographic proof based on a zero-knowledge protocol, such as, but not limited to, Schnorr's protocol. In examples, while each of proof generators **420A-420N** generate a value using respective secret shares **228A-228N** (which are deemed private), the respective generated values do not include the respective secret shares **228A-228N**. In other words, the respective generated values of the respective cryptographic proofs cannot be used to reconstruct any secret share of respective secret shares **228A-228N**. In this manner, proof generators **420A-420N** each provide a proof that proves that the respective entity (e.g., Costly Co legal, the law enforcement entity, and/or the court) possesses a given secret share, despite not relaying the secret share. Proof generators **420A-420N** provide respective cryptographic proofs to verifier **208** (e.g., via respective digital access requests **424A-424N**).

(61) In various embodiments, and as will be discussed further herein, the zero-knowledge proof comprises information that is used to prove that the entity (e.g., Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and/or the court) possesses the value of a secret share, and that if that secret share is inputted into a known encryption algorithm, then the value of an encrypted version of the secret share (e.g., stored in a respective attribute map of attribute maps **232A-232N**) will be obtained. In various other embodiments, other algorithms are used, such as a secure hash algorithm (SHA) instead of an encryption algorithm. For instance, with respect to the running example, the

zero knowledge proof in such a case would be used to prove that if secret share **228A** associated with Costly Co legal is inputted into a SHA, the value stored in the attribute map **232A** will be obtained (provided that the value in attribute map **232A** is also based on this algorithm). Other techniques are also contemplated herein, and disclosed techniques for providing a zero-knowledge proof are not limited to these illustrative examples. In some further implementations, the zero-knowledge proof is not re-playable. For example, in some embodiments, verifier **208** generates a random number for each session (e.g., each new communication session in which entity systems **104A-104N** seek access to encrypted data), and provides the randomly generated number to respective proof generators **420A-420N** to be used as part of the proof generation process. Thus, even if the same proof was attempted to be used for a subsequent session (either by the same system or in a malicious fashion by a different system), the proof would not succeed because the subsequent session would have a different randomly generated number that is to be used as part of the proof generation process.

(62) In step **504**, for each digital access request, a respective encrypted secret share is obtained from a respective first ledger database. For example, verifier **208** obtains a respective encrypted secret share for each of digital access requests **424A-424N** from respective attribute maps **232A-232N** via signals **426A-426N**. As will be discussed below with respect to FIG. 5B, signals **426A-426N** in accordance with an embodiment also include respective public keys obtained from respective identity maps **230A-230N**. In order to obtain the respective encrypted secret shares, verifier **208** determines which attribute map stores the respective encrypted secret share for each of digital access requests **424A-424N**. For example, each of digital access requests **424A-424N** in accordance with an embodiment includes an entity identifier (ID) that uniquely identifies the entity associated with the digital access request. Verifier **208** accesses the respective attribute map of attribute maps **232A-232N** based on the respective entity IDs and obtains a respective encrypted secret share associated with the respective entity ID. For instance, in accordance with the running example, and as shown in FIG. 4, verifier **208** accesses attribute map **232A** to obtain an encrypted version of secret share **228A** associated with an entity ID of Costly Co legal included in digital access request **424A**, accesses attribute map **232B** to obtain an encrypted version of secret share **228B** associated with an entity ID of the law enforcement agency included in digital access request **424B**, and accesses attribute map **232N** to obtain an encrypted version of secret share **228N** associated with an entity ID of the court included in digital access request **424N**. Additional details regarding obtaining encrypted secret shares from attribute maps are discussed below with respect to FIG. 6.

(63) In step **506**, for each digital access request, the digital access request is validated based at least on the respective encrypted secret share and the respective proof, without decrypting the respective encrypted secret share. For example, verifier **208** of FIG. 4 is configured to validate each of digital access requests **424A-424N** based at least on the respective encrypted secret shares and respective proofs, without decrypting the respective encrypted secret shares. In accordance with an embodiment, verifier **208** determines if the respective proof provided in each of digital access requests **424A-424N** corresponds to the respective encrypted secret shares. In accordance with an embodiment, verifier **208** is a proof verifier that determines if the respective proof provided in each of digital access requests **424A-424N** corresponds to the respective encrypted secret shares based at least on two or more of the respective proof, the respective encrypted secret share of encrypted secret shares, and a public key corresponding to the respective encrypted secret share. In accordance with an embodiment, verifier **208** verifies the respective proof based on a zero-knowledge protocol, such as, but not limited to, Schnorr's protocol. In one implementation, validation of the respective proof is performed by comparing a first value generated by verifier **208** that is determined from the respective encrypted secret share obtained from the respective attribute map and the public key corresponding to the associated entity obtained from the respective identity map with a second value that is based on the proof received in respective digital access request

424A-424N. In response to determining that the respective proof corresponds to the respective encrypted secret share, verifier **208** validates the respective digital access request of digital access requests **424A-424N**.

(64) In response to determining that a respective proof does not correspond to the respective encrypted secret share, verifier **208** does not validate the respective digital access request **424A-424N**. In accordance with an embodiment, in response to not validating one or more of respective digital access requests **424A-424N**, verifier **208** invalidates all of digital access requests **424A-424N**. In accordance with an embodiment, in response to not validating one or more of respective digital access requests **424A-424N**, verifier **208** transmits a notification (not shown in FIG. 4) to a respective application **414A-414N** or the respective entity (e.g., Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, or the court) associated with the respective application **414A-414N** indicating that the respective digital access request **424A-424N** was not validated. In accordance with an embodiment, verifier **208** transmits a notification to each respective application of applications **414A-414N** that provided a respective digital access request of digital access requests **424A-424N** if any one (or more) of digital access requests **424A-424N** were not validated. In this context, such notification may indicate which digital access request(s) was not validated, an entity associated with the digital access request, the policy associated with the digital access request, and/or any other information associated with the digital access request.

(65) In accordance with an embodiment, verifier **208** validates each of digital access request **424A-424N** simultaneously or concurrently. In accordance with another embodiment, verifier **208** validates each of digital access requests **424A-424N** sequentially. In accordance with another embodiment, verifier **208** includes multiply sub-verifiers (e.g., child applications) that verify a respective one or more of digital access requests **424A-424N**. Additional details regarding validating digital access requests are described further below with respect to FIGS. 5B and 6.

(66) In step **508**, in response to validating all of the digital access requests, a verification is made that access criteria of a security policy is met. For example, in response to validating all of digital access requests **424A-424N**, verifier **208** verifies that access criteria of security policy **202** is met. In accordance with an embodiment, verifier **208** analyzes security policy **202** in response to validating all of digital access requests **424A-424N** to determine (e.g., verify) that access criteria of security policy **202** is met. For instance, in the running example, verifier **208** analyzes the security policy that Dan's data is protected by and determines that access criteria of the policy is met if the digital access requests from Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and the court (or on behalf thereof) are all validated. In accordance with another embodiment, verifier **208** transmits validation notification **428** to data handler **206** to verify that access criteria of security policy **202** is met. In this context, validation notification **428** includes an indication of each digital access request of digital access requests **424A-424N** that was validated. In this context, data handler **206** analyzes validation notification **428** and security policy **202** to verify that the access criteria of security policy **202** is met.

(67) In step **510**, in response to said verifying that the access criteria of the security policy is met, at least one of the entities is provided with access to data protected by the security policy. For example, in response to verifying that the access criteria of security policy **202** is met, orchestrator **106** of FIG. 4 provides access to at least one of the entities associated with entity systems **104A-104N** with access to encrypted data **118** protected by security policy **202**. For instance, in the running example described above, orchestrator **106** provides access to Dan's data to at least one of Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and the court. Additional details regarding providing entities access to data protected by security policies is described further below with respect to FIGS. 5C and 5D below.

(68) Verifier **208**, as described above with respect to FIG. 4, may operate in various ways to validate digital access requests, in embodiments. For instance, each of digital access requests **424A-424N** is signed by a respective private key of a respective entity. For example, in accordance

with an embodiment, digital access request **424A** is signed by a private key of Entity A, digital access request **424B** is signed by a private key of Entity B, and digital access request **424N** is signed by a private key of Entity N. In this context, verifier **208** operates to validate each of digital access requests **424A-424N** by validating signatures of digital access requests **424A-424N**. For example, FIG. 5B shows a flowchart **520** of a process for validating a digital access request in accordance with an embodiment. Verifier **208** may operate according to flowchart **520** in embodiments. Not all steps of flowchart **520** need be performed in all embodiments. One or more steps of flowchart **520** may be a further embodiment of step **506** of flowchart **500** of FIG. 5A. Alternatively, one or more steps of flowchart **520** are performed prior to step **504** or step **506** of flowchart **500** of FIG. 5A. Further structural and operational embodiments will be apparent to persons skilled in the relevant art(s) based on the following description of FIG. 5B.

(69) Flowchart **520** begins with step **522**. In step **522**, for each digital access request, a respective public key is obtained from a respective second ledger database. Each respective public key corresponds to a respective private key. For example, for each of digital access requests **424A-424N**, verifier **208** obtains a respective public key from respective identity maps **230A-230N** via signals **426A-426N**. In accordance with another embodiment, for each of digital access requests **424A-424N**, verifier obtains a respective public key from respective identity maps **230A-230N** via signals separate from signals **426A-426N**, not shown in FIG. 4. In order to obtain the respective public keys, verifier **208** determines which identity map stores the respective public key for each digital access request **424A-424N**. For example, each of digital access requests **424A-424N** in accordance with an embodiment includes a respective entity ID that uniquely identifies the respective entity associated with the respective digital access request. Verifier **208** access the respective identity map of identity maps **230A-230N** based on the respective entity IDs and obtains the respective public key associated with the respective entity ID. For instance, in the running example described above with respect to FIGS. 2-5A, verifier **208** accesses identity map **230A** to obtain a first respective public key associated with an entity ID of Costly Co legal included in digital access request **424A**, accesses identity map **230B** to obtain a second respective public key associated with an entity ID of the law enforcement agency included in digital access request **424B**, and accesses identity map **230N** to obtain a third respective public key associated with an entity ID of the court included in digital access request **424N**. Public keys may be obtained from identity maps in a similar manner to that described with respect to obtaining encrypted secret shares from attribute maps, as discussed below with respect to FIG. 6.

(70) In step **524**, for each digital access request, the signature of the digital access request is validated using the respective public key. For example, verifier **208** validates the signatures of digital access requests **424A-424N** using the respective public keys obtained in step **522**. For instance, in the running example, verifier **208** validates the signatures of digital access requests **424A-424N** using the public keys of Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and the court. If all of the signatures of digital validation requests **424A-424N** are validated, the flow in accordance with an embodiment proceeds to step **508** of flowchart **500** of FIG. 5A. In accordance with another embodiment, steps **522** and **524** are performed prior to step **504** of flowchart **500**. In this context, if all of the signatures of digital validation requests **424A-424N** are validated, the flow proceeds to step **504** of flowchart **500**. In accordance with another embodiment, verifier **208** performs steps **522** and **524** of flowchart **520** and steps **504** and **506** of flowchart **500** sequentially for each of digital access requests **522-524**.

(71) In response to determining that a respective signature of a respective digital access request **424A-424N** does not correspond to the respective public key, verifier **208** does not validate the respective signature. In accordance with an embodiment, in response to not validating one or more respective signatures of respective digital access requests **424A-424N**, verifier **208** invalidates all of digital access requests **424A-424N**. In accordance with an embodiment, in response to not validating one or more respective signatures, verifier **208** transmits a notification (not shown in

FIG. 4) to a respective application **414A-414N** or the respective entity (e.g., Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, or the court) associated with the respective application **414A-414N** indicating that the respective signature and/or the respective digital access request **424A-424N** was not validated. In accordance with an embodiment, verifier **208** transmits a notification to each respective application of applications **414A-414N** that provided a respective digital access request of digital access requests **424A-424N** if any one (or more) of the respective signatures were not validated, as described elsewhere herein.

(72) System **400** of FIG. 4 may operate in various ways to provide at least one entity with access to data protected by a security policy. For instance, verifier **208**, as described above with respect to FIG. 4, in accordance with one or more embodiments is trusted to decrypt data protected by a security policy and operates to provide at least one entity with access to data protected by security policy **202**. For example, FIG. 5C shows a flowchart **530** of a process for providing decrypted data to at least one entity in accordance with an embodiment. Verifier **208** may operate according to flowchart **530** in embodiments. Not all steps of flowchart **530** need be performed in all embodiments. Flowchart **530** is a further embodiment of step **510** of flowchart **500** of FIG. 5A. Further structural and operational embodiments will be apparent to persons skilled in the relevant art(s) based on the following description of FIG. 5C.

(73) Flowchart **530** begins with step **532**. In step **532**, the data protected by the security policy is decrypted. For example, verifier **208**, as described with respect to FIG. 4, decrypts encrypted data **118**. Verifier **208** may decrypt encrypted data **118** in various ways. In accordance with an embodiment and in response to verifying that the access criteria of security policy **202** is met, verifier **208** sends a key request (not shown in FIG. 4) for decryption key **226** associated with encrypted data **118** to key manager **204**. For instance, in the context of the running example described above with respect to FIGS. 2-5B, verifier **208** sends a key request that specifies a data identifier that uniquely identifies Dan's encrypted data (e.g., encrypted data **118**) and that is associated with Dan's decryption key (e.g., decryption key **226**). In this context, key manager **204** returns Dan's decryption key to verifier **208** via a key response (not shown in FIG. 4). Verifier **208** sends a data request (not shown in FIG. 4) for Dan's encrypted data to data source **108**. The data request specifies a data identifier that uniquely identifies Dan's encrypted data. Data source **108** returns Dan's encrypted data to verifier **208**, which decrypts the encrypted data using Dan's decryption key.

(74) In step **534**, the decrypted data is provided to the at least one of the entities. For example, in the context of the running example, verifier **208** provides a decrypted version of Dan's encrypted data (e.g., encrypted data **118**) to at least one of Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and/or the court, via one or more responses, not shown in FIG. 4. In accordance with an embodiment, verifier **208** encrypts the decrypted version of Dan's data with a public key (e.g., a public key of the at least one entity (as stored in a respective identity map of identity maps **230A-230N**), a public key of the at least one entity's application (e.g., applications **414A-414N**), a public key of a document management and storage system (e.g., Microsoft SharePoint™ published by Microsoft® Corp.) that is to decrypt the resource, etc.). Verifier **208** obtains the public key from an identity map (e.g., identity maps **230A-230N**), as described elsewhere herein. In accordance with such an embodiment, verifier **208** sends the data encrypted with the public key to a respective application of the at least one entity (e.g., applications **414A-414N**). By doing so, the decrypted version of encrypted data **118** is protected from rogue users that may intercept communications between verifier **208** and the at least one entity.

(75) As discussed above, system **400** of FIG. 4 may operate in various ways to provide at least one entity with access to data protected by a security policy. For instance, verifier **208**, as described above with respect to FIG. 4, in accordance with one or more embodiments, is not trusted to decrypt data protected by a security policy and operates to authorize another component of system **400**, or external to system **400**, to provide at least one entity with access to data protected by

security policy **202**. For example, FIG. 5D shows a flowchart **540** of a process for authorizing a data handler to provide decrypted data to at least one entity in accordance with an embodiment. Verifier **208** may operate according to flowchart **540** in embodiments. Flowchart **540** need not be performed in all embodiments. Flowchart **540** is a further embodiment of step **510** of flowchart **500** of FIG. 5A. Further structural and operational embodiments will be apparent to persons skilled in the relevant art(s) based on the following description of FIG. 5D.

(76) Flowchart **540** includes step **542**. In step **542**, a data handler is authorized to decrypt the data protected by the security policy and provide the decrypted data to the at least one of the entities. For example, as shown in FIG. 4, verifier **208** transmits validation notification **428** to data handler **206**, authorizing data handler to decrypt encrypted data **118** protected by security policy **202** and provide the decrypted data to the at least one of the entities. For instance, in accordance with the running example described above with respect to FIGS. 2-5B, and alternative to the example described above with respect to FIG. 5C, data handler **206** receives validation notification **428** and sends a key request **430** to key manager **204**. Key request **430** specifies a data identifier that uniquely identifies Dan's encrypted data (e.g., encrypted data **118**) and is associated with Dan's decryption key (e.g., decryption key **226**). Key manager **204** returns Dan's decryption key via key response **432**. As also shown in FIG. 4, data handler **206** also sends a data request **434** for Dan's encrypted data to data source **108**. Data request **434** specifies a data identifier that uniquely identifies Dan's encrypted data. Data source **108** returns Dan's encrypted data via data response **436**. Data handler **206** decrypts Dan's encrypted data using his decryption key and provides the decrypted version of his encrypted data to at least one entity (e.g., Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and/or the court), a user on behalf of at least one entity, and/or an application on behalf of at least one entity (e.g., shown as application **414A** of entity system **104A** in FIG. 4) via an access response **438**.

(77) In accordance with an embodiment, data handler **206** encrypts the decrypted version of encrypted data **118** with a public key (e.g., a public key of the at least one entity (as stored in a respective identity map of identity maps **230A-230N**), a public key of the at least one entity's application (e.g., applications **414A-414N**), a public key of a document management and storage system (e.g., Microsoft SharePoint™ published by Microsoft® Corp.) that is to decrypt the resource, etc.). Data handler **206** obtains the public key from an identity map (e.g., identity maps **230A-230N**), as described elsewhere herein. In accordance with such an embodiment, data handler **206** sends the data encrypted with the public key to a respective application of the at least one entity (e.g., applications **414A-414N**). By doing so, the decrypted version of encrypted data **118** is protected from rogue users that may intercept communications between data handler **206** and the at least one entity.

(78) In accordance with an embodiment, data handler **206** is a trusted data handler. In this context, data handler **206** is trusted to evaluate security policy **202** and decrypt encrypted data **118**.

(79) In accordance with one or more embodiments, data handler **206** is not a trusted data handler. For instance, with respect to the running example described with respect to FIG. 5D above, in one aspect, data handler **206** receives Dan's decryption key (e.g., decryption key **226**) from key manager **204** via key response **432** and receives Dan's encrypted data (e.g., encrypted data **118**) from data source **108** via data response **436**. In this context, Dan's encrypted data is encrypted with a first layer of encryption corresponding to his decryption key and a second layer of encryption corresponding to a private key of at least one of Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and/or the court. Data handler **206** decrypts the first layer of encryption of Dan's encrypted data using his decryption key and provides the at least one entity with the partially decrypted version of his encrypted data via access response **438**. By doing so, the decrypted version of Dan's encrypted data is protected from rogue users that may infiltrate data handler **206** while still preventing Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and/or the court from independently accessing the decrypted version of Dan's encrypted data without the access criteria of security policy **202** having been met.

(80) In accordance with another embodiment where data handler **206** is not a trusted data handler, key request **430** includes an identity corresponding to the at least one entity. For instance, with respect to the running example described with respect to FIG. 5D above, in another aspect, in response to receiving key request **430**, key manager **204** obtains a public key from a respective identity map (e.g., of identity maps **230A-230N**) based at least on the identity included in key request **430** (e.g., the identity of Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and/or the court). Key manager **204** encrypts Dan's decryption key (e.g., decryption key **226**) with the public key obtained from the respective identity map and provides the encrypted version of Dan's decryption key to data handler **206** via key response **432**. Data handler **206** obtains Dan's encrypted data (e.g., encrypted data **118**), as described above, and provides the encrypted version of Dan's decryption key and Dan's encrypted data (e.g., via access response **438** of FIG. 4) to at least one entity (e.g., Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and/or the court), a user on behalf of an entity (e.g., a member of Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and/or the court), and/or an application (e.g., applications **414A-414N** or a decryptor external to applications **414A-414N**) that decrypts Dan's encrypted data using Dan's decryption key on behalf of at least one entity. By doing so, the decrypted version of Dan's encrypted data and the decrypted version of Dan's decryption key are protected from rogue users that may infiltrate data handler **206** while still preventing Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and/or the court from independently accessing the decrypted version of encrypted data **118** without the access criteria of security policy **202** having been met.

(81) In accordance with another embodiment, data handler **206** is not a trusted data handler and key manager **204** is not a trusted key manager. For instance, with respect to the running example described with respect to FIG. 5D above, in another aspect, Dan's decryption key (e.g., decryption key **226**) is encrypted prior to providing decryption key **226** to key manager **204** (e.g., by Dan as part of or prior to step **306** of FIG. 3). In this context, key manager **204**, in response to receiving key request **430**, provides the encrypted version of Dan's decryption key to data handler **206** via key response **432**. Data handler **206** provides the encrypted version of Dan's decryption key (e.g., via access response **438** of FIG. 4) to at least one entity (e.g., Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and/or the court), a user on behalf of an entity, and/or an application that decrypts encrypted data **118** using decryption key **226** on behalf of at least one entity. By doing so, the decrypted version of Dan's encrypted data and the decrypted version of Dan's decryption key are protected from rogue users that may infiltrate key manager **204** and/or data handler **206** while still preventing Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and/or the court from independently accessing the decrypted version of encrypted data **118** without the access criteria of security policy **202** having been met.

(82) As discussed above, in accordance with one or more embodiments, data handler **206** obtains encrypted data **118** from data source **108** and provides either a decrypted version of encrypted data **118**, a partially decrypted version of encrypted data **118**, or an encrypted version of encrypted data **118** and an encrypted decryption key **226** to the at least one entity, a user on behalf of the entity, and/or an application that decrypts encrypted data **118** on behalf of the at least one entity, e.g., via access request **438** shown in FIG. 4. In accordance with one or more alternative embodiments, data handler **206** does not obtain encrypted data **118**. For instance, with respect to the running example described with respect to FIG. 5D above, in another aspect, data handler **206** obtains Dan's decryption key (e.g., decryption key **226**) (or an encrypted version of Dan's decryption key), as described above, and provides his decryption key (e.g., via access response **438** of FIG. 4) to the at least one entity (e.g., Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and/or the court), user, and/or application. The at least one entity, user, and/or application accesses Dan's encrypted data (e.g., encrypted data **118**) (e.g., from data source **108**, from an on-premises data source, or from another data source accessible to the at least one entity, user, and/or application) and uses Dan's decryption key to decrypt his encrypted data. By doing so, Dan's encrypted data is further protected from rogue users that may intercept communications between Costly Co legal, the law enforcement

agency, and/or the court and data handler **206**. Furthermore, by not including Dan's encrypted data in access response **438**, fewer computing resources are used by data handler **206**, as data handler **206** does not need to obtain Dan's encrypted data from data source **108**.

(83) Embodiments of verifier **208**, as described above with respect to FIG. **4**, may operate in various ways to obtain respective encrypted secret shares from respective ledger databases. For example, FIG. **6** shows a flowchart **600** of a process for obtaining respective encrypted secret shares from respective ledger databases in accordance with an embodiment. Flowchart **600** is a further embodiment of steps **502** and **504** of flowchart **500** of FIG. **5A**, in accordance with an embodiment. Verifier **208** of FIG. **4** may operate according to flowchart **600**, in embodiments. Not all steps of flowchart **600** need be performed in all embodiments. Further structural and operational embodiments will be apparent to persons skilled in the relevant art(s) based on the following description of FIG. **6**

(84) Flowchart **600** starts with step **602**, which is a further embodiment of step **502** of flowchart **500** of FIG. **5A** in accordance with an embodiment. In step **602**, a respective digital access request is received from each of a plurality of entities. Each digital access request comprises a respective proof and a respective digest representative of a state of the respective first ledger database. For example, continuing the running example described above in reference to FIG. **5A**, verifier **208** receives digital access requests **424A-424N**. In this context, each of digital access requests **424A-424N** comprise a respective proof and a respective digest representative of the state of a respective ledger database (e.g., ledger databases **116A-116N**). In accordance with an embodiment, digital access requests **424A-424N** also comprise an identity (or a reference thereto) of a respective entity associated therewith. For instance, with respect to the running example, digital access request **424A** comprises an identity of Costly Co legal, digital access request **424B** comprises an identity of the law enforcement agency, and digital access request **424N** comprises an identity of the court. In accordance with another embodiment, each of digital access request **424A-424N** also comprise a policy ID representative of a security policy that the respective encrypted secret share is associated with. In accordance with an embodiment, for each digital access request, the respective proof, respective digest, the respective identity and/or the policy ID are included in separate requests to verifier **208**. It is noted in embodiments that a plurality of digests is provided to verifier **208**, where the plurality of digests comprises some or all of the digests previously generated by a respective ledger of a respective ledger database.

(85) Flowchart **600** continues to step **604**, which is a further embodiment of step **504** of flowchart **500** of FIG. **5A**. In step **604**, a respective digest is provided to the respective first ledger database. For example, verifier **208** of FIG. **4** provides respective digests received in step **602** to respective ledger databases **116A-116N** (e.g., the digest received in digital access request **424A** to ledger database **116A**, the digest received in digital access request **424B** to ledger database **116B**, and the digest received in digital access request **424N** to ledger database **116N**). In accordance with an embodiment, the respective digests are provided to respective ledger databases as attribute requests that comprise a respective identity of a requesting entity (e.g., Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and/or the court). Each respective digest is validated by the corresponding ledger database (e.g., of ledger databases **116A-116N**). If a digest is not validated, the corresponding ledger database determines that the ledger database has been tampered with and issues a notification to verifier **208** and/or one of entity systems **104A-104N** indicating the corresponding ledger database has been tampered with.

(86) In response to validating the respective digest, a corresponding encrypted secret share is obtained. For instance, in response to validating the respective digest, a ledger database in accordance with an embodiment retrieves a corresponding encrypted secret share from a table (e.g., based on a respective identity and/or policy ID included in the corresponding digital access request). Once each digest has been validated, flowchart **600** continues to step **606**.

(87) In step **606**, a response indicating the respective digest is valid is received from the respective

first ledger database. The response comprises the respective encrypted secret share. For example, verifier **208** receives respective responses from each of ledger databases **116A-116N**. In this context, each response comprises a respective encrypted secret share located by the respective ledger database, as described above and/or as would be understood by one ordinarily skilled in the relevant art(s) having benefit of this disclosure.

V. Additional Embodiments

(88) A. Validating an Existing Proof

(89) As described herein, a verifier in accordance with one or more embodiments is configured to verify proofs of that secret shares correspond to a decryption key to decrypt data protected by a security policy. For example, verifier **208**, as described with respect to FIG. 2 above, is configured to verify that a policy proof corresponds to encrypted secret shares and an encrypted decryption key. In accordance with one or more embodiments, any user or entity can provide such a policy proof to verifier **208** to verify that the policy proof is valid with respect to an existing security policy. By doing so, any user or entity is able to validate the proof via verifier **208** without requiring access to all of (or any of) the unencrypted versions of the secret shares and decryption keys corresponding to the proof.

(90) Verifier **208** may operate in various ways to verify an existing policy proof, in embodiments. For example, FIG. 7 shows a flowchart **700** of a process for validating a policy proof in accordance with an embodiment. Verifier **208** may operate according to flowchart **700**, in embodiments. For purposes of illustration, flowchart **700** is described with respect to FIG. 8. FIG. 8 shows a block diagram of a system **800** for validating a policy proof in accordance with an embodiment. As shown in FIG. 8, system **800** includes entity system **104A**, ledger databases **116A-116N**, security policy **202**, key manager **204**, and verifier **208**, as described elsewhere herein. As also shown in FIG. 8, entity system **104A** comprises an application **814A** and a policy proof **850**. Application **814A** is a further embodiment of application **414A** described above with reference to FIG. 4. Policy proof **850** is a policy proof corresponding to security policy **202**, one or more encrypted secret shares stored in attribute maps **232A-232N** (e.g., encrypted versions of secret shares **228A-228N** described above with respect to FIGS. 2 and 4), and an encrypted decryption key (e.g., an encrypted version of decryption key **226**). For instance, policy proof **850** in accordance with an embodiment is the policy proof generated using proof generator **220**, as described above with respect to FIGS. 2 and 3. Flowchart **700** and system **800** are described as follows. Note that not all steps of flowchart **700** need be performed in all embodiments. Further structural and operational embodiments will be apparent to persons skilled in the relevant art(s) based on the following descriptions of FIGS. 7 and 8.

(91) Flowchart **700** starts with step **702**. In step **702**, a digital validation request is received from an entity. The digital validation request comprises a policy proof. For instance, in reference to the running example described above with respect to FIGS. 2-5A, verifier **208** receives a digital validation request **852** from application **814A** on behalf of Costly Co legal, as shown in FIG. 8. Digital validation request **852** comprises (zero knowledge cryptographic) policy proof **850**. In accordance with an embodiment, digital validation request includes a policy ID that uniquely identifies the security policy (e.g., security policy **202**) that policy proof **850** corresponds to.

(92) In step **704**, for each respective encrypted secret share, the respective encrypted secret share is obtained from the respective first ledger database. For example, verifier **208** obtains one or more respective encrypted secret share(s) **854** from ledger databases **116A-116N** (e.g., stored in respective attribute maps **232A-232N**). Verifier **208** obtains the one or more respective encrypted secret share(s) **854** using any of the techniques described elsewhere herein. In accordance with an embodiment, and with reference to the running example, verifier **208** accesses security policy **202**. Verifier **208** analyzes security policy **202** and digital validation request **852** to determine that encrypted versions of secret shares provided by Dan (or on behalf of Dan) to Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and the court correspond to security policy **202**. In this context, verifier

208 determines which respective encrypted secret share(s) to obtain from respective ledger databases **116A-116N**.

(93) In step **706**, an encrypted decryption key is obtained from a key manager. For example, verifier **208** obtains an encrypted version of decryption key **226** from key manager **204**. For instance, with continued reference to the running example described above, verifier **208** provides a key request **856** to key manager **204**. Key request **856** in accordance with an embodiment includes a policy ID that uniquely identifies security policy **202** and is associated with Dan's decryption key (e.g., decryption key **226**). In response to receiving key request **856**, key manager **204** encrypts Dan's decryption key with a public key associated with the decryption key (e.g., a public key associated with Dan). Key manager **226** obtains the public key from a respective identity map (e.g., of identity maps **230A-230N**) of a respective ledger database (e.g., of ledger databases **116A-116N**). Alternatively, Dan's decryption key is stored in key manager **226** as an encrypted decryption key, as described elsewhere herein. Key manager **226** provides the encrypted version of Dan's decryption key to verifier **208** via key response **858**.

(94) In step **708**, the digital validation request is validated based at least on the policy proof, the respective encrypted secret shares, and the encrypted decryption key. For instance, and with continued reference to the running example described above, verifier **208** determines if policy proof **850** corresponds to the encrypted version of Dan's decryption key (e.g., decryption key **226**) and respective encrypted secret shares of Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and the court (e.g., respective encrypted secret shares **854**). In accordance with an embodiment, verifier **208** is a proof verifier that verifies (cryptographic) policy proof **850** based at least on the encrypted version of Dan's decryption key and respective encrypted secret shares **854**. In accordance with another embodiment, verifier **208** is a proof verifier that verifies (cryptographic) policy proof **850** based at least on the encrypted version of Dan's decryption key, respective encrypted secret shares **854**, and a public key of an entity (e.g., a public key associated with Dan). In this context, verifier **208** retrieves the public key from a respective identity map (e.g., of identity maps **230A-230N**) of a respective ledger database (e.g., of ledger databases **116A-116N**). In accordance with an embodiment, verifier **208** verifies policy proof **850** based on a zero-knowledge protocol, such as, but not limited to, Schnorr's protocol. In response to determining that policy proof **850** is verified, verifier **208** validates digital validation request **852** and flowchart **700** proceeds to step **710**.

(95) In response to determining that policy proof does is not verified, verifier **208** does not validate digital validation request **852**. In accordance with an embodiment, in response to not validating digital validation request **852**, verifier **208** transmits a notification (not shown in FIG. 2) to application **814** or Costly Co legal indicating that policy proof **850** is not valid.

(96) In step **710**, in response to validating the digital validation request, the entity is notified that the digital validation request is valid. For example, as shown in FIG. 8, verifier **208** transmits a validation notification **860** to application **814A** indicating that digital validation request **860** is valid in response to validating the request. Examples of validation notification **860** include, but are not limited to, a short messaging service (SMS) message, a telephone call, an e-mail, a notification that is presented via an application associated with the entity (e.g., application **814A**), etc. In accordance with an embodiment, validation notification **860** indicates the entities associated with each of respective encrypted secret shares **854** (e.g., Costly Co legal, the law enforcement agency, and the court). For instance, validation notification **860** in accordance with an embodiment includes (e.g., a list of) entity IDs that uniquely identify the associated entities. By doing so, validation notification **860** enables application **814A** (or Costly Co legal) to identify the entities associated with secret shares required to access data protected by security policy **202**. For instance, with continued reference to the running example described above, if Costly Co legal possessed a first secret share of the respective secret shares and desired to know (or verify) which other entities possessed secret shares of the respective secret shares, Costly Co legal (or application **814A** on behalf of Costly Co legal) could analyze the identities of the entities included in validation

notification **852** to determine that the law enforcement agency and the court possess secret shares of the respective secret shares. By enabling Costly Co legal to (or application **814A** on behalf of Costly Co legal) to identify the entities associated with secret shares, embodiments described herein are able to verify security policies are updated and/or that the correct entities possess secret shares without revealing the secret shares.

(97) Embodiments of verifier **208** may operate to validate existing policy proofs in other ways as well. For instance, in response to receiving digital validation request **852**, verifier **208** in accordance with an embodiment access a stored version of the existing policy proof (e.g., stored by verifier **208**, data handler **206**, or in a data source accessible to verifier **208**). Verifier **208** compares the existing policy proof to policy proof **850** received in digital validation request **852**. If the existing policy proof matches policy proof **850**, verifier **208** validates digital validation request **852** and notifies the entity, as described above. Otherwise, verifier **208** does not validate digital validation request **852**, as described above.

(98) B. Policy Trees

(99) FIGS. **2-8** have been described above with respect to secret shares corresponding to a decryption key suitable to decrypt data protected by a security policy. It is further contemplated herein that a security policy may include more than one sub-policies to provide access to a decryption key and/or the data protected by the security policy. For example, a user may specify multiple security policies that, when respective access criteria of any one security policy is met, enable at least one entity to access data protected by the multiple access policies. For instance, a user may specify a first security policy that enables the user to self-identify in order to access data protected by the multiple security policies and a second security policy (e.g., a secret share policy) that enables at least one entity to access the protected data when the access criteria is met (e.g., each of a plurality of entities provide respective proofs of respective secret shares to a verifier, as described herein).

(100) It is also contemplated herein that a user may specify multiple secret share policies that enable entities holding respective secret shares of respective secret share policies of the multiple secret share policies to access the data protected by the multiple secret share policies. Such multiple secret share policies may be represented by a policy tree. For example, FIG. **9** depicts a policy tree **900** in accordance with an embodiment. Further structural and operational examples will be apparent to persons skilled in the relevant art(s) based on the following description of FIG. **9**.

(101) Policy tree **900** as illustrated details a security policy that includes multiple secret share policies. The security policy associated with policy tree **900** may be accessed, e.g., by orchestrator **106** or a component thereof (e.g., data handler **206** and/or verifier **206**), to determine (encrypted) secret shares that correspond to the security policy, decryption keys associated with the security policy, and/or data protected by the security policy. Policy trees may include tiers of one or more decryption keys, policies, sub-policies, and/or secret shares. Furthermore, policy trees may specify whether multiple sub-policies need to be met before a decryption key is released, or if at least one (or more) of multiple sub-policies need to be met before a decryption key is released. For instance, in policy tree **900**, decryption key **902** is associated with sub-policies **904A** and **904B**. Sub-policy **904A** is associated with secret shares **906A-906C**. Sub-policy **904B** is associated with secret shares **906D-906G**.

(102) As shown in FIG. **9**, policy tree **900** specifies that decryption key **902** is to be released when access criteria of either sub-policy **904A** or sub-policy **904B** is met. For instance, suppose sub-policy **904A** corresponds to security policy **202** as described above with reference to the running example described with respect to FIGS. **2-5A**. In this context, secret share **906A** is a first secret share associated with Costly Co legal, secret share **906B** is a second secret share associated with the law enforcement agency, and secret share **906C** is a third secret share associated with the court. As shown in FIG. **9**, access criteria of sub-policy **904A** is met when proof of each of secret shares **906A-906C** is validated. In this context, access to decryption key **902** is granted when access

criteria of sub-policy **904A** is met. As also shown in FIG. **9**, access criteria of sub-policy **904B** is met when proof of each of secret shares **906D-906G** is validated. Proof of each respective secret share may be validated in various ways described elsewhere herein (e.g., as discussed with respect to FIGS. **4-6** above and/or FIG. **10** below).

(103) As shown in FIG. **9**, each of sub-policies **904A** and **904B** are associated with distinct respective secret shares. However, in accordance with an alternative embodiment, one or more secret shares are repeated across one or more sub-policies. For instance, in accordance with an embodiment, secret shares **906A** and **906D** are the same secret share, secret shares **906B** and **906E** are the same secret share, and secret shares **906C** and **906F** are the same secret share. Furthermore, as will be discussed further below with respect to FIG. **10**, sub-policies **904A** and/or **904B** may specify an isolated purpose for which decryption key **902** is released.

(104) C. Isolation of Purposes

(105) In accordance with an embodiment, a decryption key is subject to multiple policies (or sub-policies), such as the sub-policies described above with respect to FIG. **9**. In accordance with a further embodiment, each sub-policy is associated with a respective purpose (e.g., an action). In this context, usage of the decryption key for a first purpose is authorized if access criteria of a first sub-policy is met, usage of the decryption key for a second purpose is authorized if access criteria of a second sub-policy is met, and so-on, for each sub-policy associated with the decryption key. In accordance with an embodiment, a system is configured to enable entities to prove possession of secret shares in order to use the decryption key (e.g., either directly or via a data handler or decrypter on behalf of the entity) to access data protected by the corresponding sub-policy for the respective purpose. For example, FIG. **10** shows a block diagram of a system **1000** for accessing data based on a policy of policy tree **900** of FIG. **9**. System **1000** is described as follows with respect to policy tree **900**. Further structural and operational examples will be apparent to persons skilled in the relevant art(s) based on the following description of FIG. **10**.

(106) As shown in FIG. **10**, system **1000** includes a policy map **1002**, entity systems **1004A-1004D**, an orchestrator **1006**, a data source **1008**, and a key manager **1010**. Entity systems **1004A-1004D** are example embodiments of entity systems **104A-104N**, orchestrator **1006** is an example embodiment of orchestrator **106**, and data source **1008** is an example embodiment of data source **108**, as each respectively described above with respect to FIG. **1**. Key manager **1010** is an example embodiment of key manager **204**, as described above with respect to FIG. **2**, and is configured to store decryption key **902** of policy tree **900** of FIG. **9**.

(107) Each of entity systems **1004A-1004D** store respective secret shares of policy tree **900** of FIG. **9**. For instance, entity system **1004A** stores secret share **906A** and secret share **906D**, entity system **1004B** stores secret share **906A** and secret share **906E**, entity system **1004C** stores secret share **906C** and secret share **906F**, and entity system **1004D** stores secret share **906G**. Secret shares **906A-906G** are distributed to each of respective entity systems **1004A-1004D** by the user (or an application on behalf of the user) that generated secret shares **906A-906G** (or that secret shares **906A-906G** were generated on behalf of, e.g., by an application). For example, secret shares **906A-906G** in accordance with an embodiment are generated by secret share generator **250** as described above with respect to FIG. **2**.

(108) Data source **1008** is configured to maintain data protected by security policies (e.g., the security policy of policy tree **900**). For instance, as shown in FIG. **10**, data source **1008** maintains encrypted data **1018A** and encrypted data **1018B**. Encrypted data **1018A** is protected by sub-policy **904A** of policy tree **900** and encrypted data **1018B** is protected by sub-policy **904B** of policy tree **900**.

(109) Policy map **1002** is configured to store one or more policies ("policies" hereinafter) for data maintained by data source **1008**. For example, as shown in FIG. **10**, policy map **1002** stores sub-policy **904A** and sub-policy **904B** of FIG. **9**, each corresponding to encrypted data **1018**. Each of the policies specify one or more conditions that are required to be satisfied for a user to perform a

certain action with respect to corresponding data for a particular purpose. Policy map **1002** associates each policy with a policy ID, which uniquely identifies a corresponding policy. Such actions include, but are not limited to, accessing data (e.g., reading the data or modifying the data), sending the data to another user, sending a communication associated with the data to another user, etc. The purposes include, but are not limited to, performing a blind subpoena, applying for a loan, applying for a credit card, providing enhanced customer experience, performing an administrative task with respect to the data, and/or any other purpose that would require access to the data protected by the security policy. The conditions include, but are not limited to, particular secret shares required to perform the action, a particular identity of a particular user authorized to perform the action, particular attributes that the identity (or user) is required to have to perform the action, a location at which the user (and/or a computing device associated therewith) is required to be to perform the action, and/or the like. Examples of locations include, but are not limited to, a particular room or building, a particular vehicle or vessel (e.g., a particular car, a particular submarine, a particular aircraft carrier, etc.), a particular city, a particular country, etc. In accordance with an embodiment, policy map **1002** is maintained by a ledger database (e.g., ledger databases **116A-116N** of FIG. **1**). In this context, policies stored in policy map **1002** may be accessed in a similar manner as information stored in identity maps and/or attribute maps, as described elsewhere herein.

(110) With respect to FIGS. **9** and **10**, sub-policy **904A** is associated with a first policy ID and specifies that valid proof of secret shares **906A-906C** is required before decryption key **902** may be used to access encrypted data **1018** for a first purpose and sub-policy **904B** is associated with a second policy ID and specifies that valid proof of secret shares **906D-906G** is required before decryption key **902** may be used to access encrypted data **1018** for a second purpose. By doing so, a single decryption key (e.g., decryption key **902**) may be used to access data protected by sub-policies (e.g., sub-policies **904A** and **904B**) of a security policy associated with the decryption key in a manner that limits the use of the decryption key for a respective purpose of the sub-policy for which access criteria is met.

(111) As a non-limiting example, suppose encrypted data **1018** includes various data sets used for financial purposes (e.g., credit card applications, loan applications, enhanced customer experiences, and administrative purposes). In this example, entity system **104A** is associated with a personal identifiable information (PII) custodian, entity system **104B** is associated with a credit worthiness custodian, entity system **104C** is associated with a custodian for client permissions for payment forecasting (“payment custodian” hereinafter), and entity system **104D** is associated with a customer analytics custodian. In this example, sub-policy **904A** of policy tree **900** specifies that valid proof of secret shares **906A-906C** is required to use decryption key **902** to access encrypted data **1018** for applying to a loan and sub-policy **904B** of policy tree **900** specifies that valid proof of secret shares **906D-906G** is required to use decryption key **902** to access encrypted data **1018** for apply for a credit card.

(112) In this non-limiting example, suppose the payment custodian is requesting access to encrypted data **1018** for applying for a loan on behalf of a customer. In this context, entity system **1004C** transmits a digital access request **1024C** to orchestrator **1006** comprising a policy ID corresponding to sub-policy **904A** and a proof corresponding to secret share **906C**. In accordance with an embodiment, orchestrator **1006** analyzes the policy ID received in digital access request **1024C** and sends a policy request **1030** comprising the policy ID to policy map **1002**. In accordance with an embodiment where policy map **1002** is maintained by a ledger database, digital access request **1024C** and policy request **1030** also include a digest representative of the state of the ledger database that maintains policy map **1002**. In this context, the ledger database that maintains policy map **1002** is validated based at least on the digest in response to policy map **1002** receiving policy request **1030** (e.g., in a manner similar to that described with respect to attribute map **332A** and FIG. **7** above).

(113) Policy map **1002** returns a policy response **1032** to orchestrator **1006** comprising sub-policy **904A**. In response to receiving policy response **1032**, orchestrator **1006** determines valid proof corresponding to secret shares **906A**, **906B**, and **906C** are required to provide the payment custodian access to encrypted data **1018** for the loan application. In accordance with an embodiment, orchestrator **1006** prompts the PII custodian, the credit worthiness custodian, and the payment custodian (or users and/or applications on behalf of the respective custodians to provide respective proofs corresponding to respective secret shares **906A**, **906B**, and **906C**. As shown in FIG. **10**, entity systems **1004A** and **1004B** provide respective digital access requests **1024A** and **1024B**, each comprising at least respective proofs corresponding to respective secret shares **906A** and **906B**. As discussed above, entity system **1004C** provided a respective proof corresponding to respective secret share **906C** in digital access request **1024C**. Alternatively, the initial digital access request **1024C** does not include the respective proof. In this context, entity system **1004C** provides the respective proof via a subsequent digital access request **1024C** in response to being prompted by orchestrator **1006**.

(114) Orchestrator **1006**, or a verifier external to orchestrator **1006**, determines if each of digital access requests **1024A-1024C** are valid in a similar manner to the techniques described herein. If any of digital access requests **1024A-1024C** are not valid, orchestrator **1006**, or a verifier external to orchestrator **1006**, notifies at least one of entity systems **1004A-1004D** that at least one of the digital access requests **1024A-1024C** were not validated and access to encrypted data **1018** for the loan application was not granted. In response to the validation of all of digital access requests **1024A-1024C**, orchestrator **1006** obtains decryption key **902** from key manager **1010** (e.g., by transmitting a key request **1034** and subsequently receiving a key response **1036** comprising decryption key **902**, as shown in FIG. **10**) and obtains encrypted data **1018** from data source **1008** (e.g., by transmitting a data request **1038** and subsequently receiving a data response **1040** comprising encrypted data **1018**). In accordance with an embodiment, orchestrator **1006** decrypts encrypted data **1018** using decryption key **902** and provides the decrypted version of encrypted data **1018** to the payment custodian. In accordance with an embodiment, orchestrator **1006** provides decryption key **902** (or an encrypted version of decryption key **902**) and/or encrypted data **1018** to the payment custodian, a user acting on behalf of the payment custodian, or an application associated with the payment custodian, for decryption thereby. In accordance with an embodiment, orchestrator **1006**, key manager **1010**, and/or data source **1008** place a restriction upon decryption key **902**, encrypted data **1018**, and/or the decrypted version of encrypted data **1018** that prevents the payment custodian from using decryption key **902** and/or the decrypted version of encrypted data **1018** for a purpose other than applying for a loan on behalf of the customer.

(115) Continuing the non-limiting example with reference to FIGS. **9** and **10**, suppose the payment custodian is requesting access to encrypted data **1018** for applying for a credit card on behalf of the customer. In this context, entity system **1004C** transmits a digital access request **1024F** to orchestrator **1006** comprising a policy ID corresponding to sub-policy **904B** and a proof corresponding to secret share **906F** (and optionally a digest representative of the state of the ledger database that maintains policy map **1002**). Orchestrator **1006** analyzes the policy ID, sends a policy request **1042** comprising the policy ID (and optionally the digest if included in digital access request **1024F**), and receives policy response **1044** comprising sub-policy **904B**.

(116) In response to receiving policy response **1044**, orchestrator **1006** determines the secret shares required by sub-policy **904B** (e.g., secret shares **906D**, **906E**, **906F**, and **906G**) and prompts the PII custodian, the credit worthiness custodian, the payment custodian, and the customer analytics custodian (or respective users and/or applications on behalf of the respective custodians) to provide respective proofs corresponding to respective secret shares **906D**, **906E**, **906F**, and **906G**. As shown in FIG. **10**, entity systems **1004A-1004D** provide respective digital access requests **1024D-1024G**, each comprising respective proofs corresponding to respective secret shares **906D-906G**. As discussed above, entity system **1004C** provided a respective proof corresponding to respective

secret share **906F** in digital access request **1024F**. Alternatively, the initial digital access request **1024F** does not include the respective proof. In this context, entity system **1004C** provides the respective proof via a subsequent digital access request **1024F** in response to being prompted by orchestrator **1006**.

(117) Orchestrator **1006**, or a verifier external to orchestrator **1006**, determines if each of digital access requests **1024D-1024G** are valid or not valid as described above with respect to the loan application example and digital access requests **1024A-1024C**. In response to validating all of digital access requests **1024D-1024G**, orchestrator **1006** obtains decryption key **902** from key manager **1010** (e.g., by transmitting a key request **1046** and subsequently receiving a key response **1048** comprising decryption key **902**, as shown in FIG. **10**) and obtains encrypted data **1018** from data source **1008** (e.g., by transmitting a data request **1050** and subsequently receiving a data response **1052** comprising encrypted data **1018**). In accordance with an embodiment, orchestrator **1006** decrypts encrypted data **1018** using decryption key **902** and provides the decrypted version of encrypted data **1018** to the payment custodian. In accordance with an embodiment, orchestrator **1006** provides decryption key **902** (or an encrypted version of decryption key **902**) and/or encrypted data **1018** to the payment custodian, a user acting on behalf of the payment custodian, or an application associated with the payment custodian, for decryption thereby. In accordance with an embodiment, orchestrator **1006**, key manager **1010**, and/or data source **1008** place a restriction upon decryption key **902**, encrypted data **1018**, and/or the decrypted version of encrypted data **1018** that prevents the payment custodian from using decryption key **902** and/or the decrypted version of encrypted data **1018** for a purpose other than applying for a credit card on behalf of the customer.

(118) In the non-limiting example discussed above with respect to FIGS. **9** and **10**, an entity (e.g., the payment custodian) that possess one of the secret shares initiates the request to access encrypted data **1018** for either applying for a loan or a credit card. However, it is also contemplated herein that another entity may initiate the request to access encrypted data **1018** for an isolated purpose. For example, the customer for which a loan or credit card may initiate the access request. In accordance with an embodiment, each custodian provides respective proofs to orchestrator **1006** as an indication that the respective custodian approves the application for the loan or credit card on behalf of (or by the) customer). As shown in FIG. **10**, secret shares **906A-906G** are individual secret shares. In accordance with one or more alternative embodiments, one or more secret shares stored by the same entity system are the same secret share. For instance, in accordance with an embodiment, entity system **1004A** stores secret shares **906A** and **906D** as the same secret share, entity system **1004B** stores secret shares **906B** and **906E** as the same secret share, and entity system **1004C** stores secret shares **906C** and **906F** as the same secret share.

VI. Example Mobile Device and Computer System Implementation

(119) Each of system **100**, system **200**, system **400**, system **800**, system **1000**, and/or each of the steps of flowcharts **300**, **500**, **520**, **530**, **540**, **600**, and/or **700** may be implemented in hardware, or hardware combined with software and/or firmware. For example, system **100**, system **200**, system **400**, system **800**, and/or system **1000** (and/or any of the components thereof) and/or the steps of flowcharts **300**, **500**, **520**, **530**, **540**, **600**, and/or **700** may be implemented as computer program code (e.g., instructions in a programming language) configured to be executed in one or more processors and stored in a computer readable storage medium. Alternatively, system **100**, system **200**, system **400**, system **800**, and/or system **1000** (and/or any of the components thereof) and/or the steps of flowcharts **300**, **500**, **520**, **530**, **540**, **600**, and/or **700** may be implemented as hardware logic/electrical circuitry, such as being implemented together in a system-on-chip (SoC), a field programmable gate array (FPGA), or an application specific integrated circuit (ASIC). A SoC may include an integrated circuit chip that includes one or more of a processor (e.g., a microcontroller, microprocessor, digital signal processor (DSP), etc.), memory, one or more communication interfaces, and/or further circuits and/or embedded firmware to perform its functions.

(120) Embodiments disclosed herein may be implemented in one or more computing devices that

may be mobile (a mobile device) and/or stationary (a stationary device) and may include any combination of the features of such mobile and stationary computing devices. Examples of computing devices in which embodiments may be implemented are described as follows with respect to FIG. 11. FIG. 11 shows a block diagram of an exemplary computing environment **1100** that includes a computing device **1102**. In some embodiments, computing device **1102** is communicatively coupled with devices (not shown in FIG. 11) external to computing environment **1100** via network **1104**. Network **1104** comprises one or more networks such as local area networks (LANs), wide area networks (WANs), enterprise networks, the Internet, etc., and may include one or more wired and/or wireless portions. Network **1104** may additionally or alternatively include a cellular network for cellular communications. Computing device **1102** is described in detail as follows

(121) Computing device **1102** can be any of a variety of types of computing devices. For example, computing device **1102** may be a mobile computing device such as a handheld computer (e.g., a personal digital assistant (PDA)), a laptop computer, a tablet computer (such as an Apple iPad™), a hybrid device, a notebook computer (e.g., a Google Chromebook™ by Google LLC), a netbook, a mobile phone (e.g., a cell phone, a smart phone such as an Apple® iPhone® by Apple Inc., a phone implementing the Google® Android™ operating system, etc.), a wearable computing device (e.g., a head-mounted augmented reality and/or virtual reality device including smart glasses such as Google® Glass™, Oculus Rift® of Facebook Technologies, LLC, etc.), or other type of mobile computing device. Computing device **1102** may alternatively be a stationary computing device such as a desktop computer, a personal computer (PC), a stationary server device, a minicomputer, a mainframe, a supercomputer, etc.

(122) As shown in FIG. 11, computing device **1102** includes a variety of hardware and software components, including a processor **1110**, a storage **1120**, one or more input devices **1130**, one or more output devices **1150**, one or more wireless modems **1160**, one or more wired interface(s) **1180**, a power supply **1182**, a location information (LI) receiver **1184**, and an accelerometer **1186**. Storage **1120** includes memory **1156**, which includes non-removable memory **1122** and removable memory **1124**, and a storage device **1190**. Storage **1120** also stores an operating system **1112**, application programs **1114**, and application data **1116**. Wireless modem(s) **1160** include a Wi-Fi modem **1162**, a Bluetooth modem **1164**, and a cellular modem **1166**. Output device(s) **1150** includes a speaker **1152** and a display **1154**. Input device(s) **1130** includes a touch screen **1132**, a microphone **1134**, a camera **1136**, a physical keyboard **1138**, and a trackball **1140**. Not all components of computing device **1102** shown in FIG. 11 are present in all embodiments, additional components not shown may be present, and any combination of the components may be present in a particular embodiment. These components of computing device **1102** are described as follows.

(123) A single processor **1110** (e.g., central processing unit (CPU), microcontroller, a microprocessor, signal processor, ASIC (application specific integrated circuit), and/or other physical hardware processor circuit) or multiple processors **1110** may be present in computing device **1102** for performing such tasks as program execution, signal coding, data processing, input/output processing, power control, and/or other functions. Processor **1110** may be a single-core or multi-core processor, and each processor core may be single-threaded or multithreaded (to provide multiple threads of execution concurrently). Processor **1110** is configured to execute program code stored in a computer readable medium, such as program code of operating system **1112** and application programs **1114** stored in storage **1120**. Operating system **1112** controls the allocation and usage of the components of computing device **1102** and provides support for one or more application programs **1114** (also referred to as “applications” or “apps”). Application programs **1114** may include common computing applications (e.g., e-mail applications, calendars, contact managers, web browsers, messaging applications), further computing applications (e.g., word processing applications, mapping applications, media player applications, productivity suite applications), one or more machine learning (ML) models, as well as applications related to the

embodiments disclosed elsewhere herein.

(124) Any component in computing device **1102** can communicate with any other component according to function, although not all connections are shown for ease of illustration. For instance, as shown in FIG. **11**, bus **1106** is a multiple signal line communication medium (e.g., conductive traces in silicon, metal traces along a motherboard, wires, etc.) that may be present to communicatively couple processor **1110** to various other components of computing device **1102**, although in other embodiments, an alternative bus, further busses, and/or one or more individual signal lines may be present to communicatively couple components. Bus **1106** represents one or more of any of several types of bus structures, including a memory bus or memory controller, a peripheral bus, an accelerated graphics port, and a processor or local bus using any of a variety of bus architectures.

(125) Storage **1120** is physical storage that includes one or both of memory **1156** and storage device **1190**, which store operating system **1112**, application programs **1114**, and application data **1116** according to any distribution. Non-removable memory **1122** includes one or more of RAM (random access memory), ROM (read only memory), flash memory, a solid-state drive (SSD), a hard disk drive (e.g., a disk drive for reading from and writing to a hard disk), and/or other physical memory device type. Non-removable memory **1122** may include main memory and may be separate from or fabricated in a same integrated circuit as processor **1110**. As shown in FIG. **11**, non-removable memory **1122** stores firmware **1118**, which may be present to provide low-level control of hardware. Examples of firmware **1118** include BIOS (Basic Input/Output System, such as on personal computers) and boot firmware (e.g., on smart phones). Removable memory **1124** may be inserted into a receptacle of or otherwise coupled to computing device **1102** and can be removed by a user from computing device **1102**. Removable memory **1124** can include any suitable removable memory device type, including an SD (Secure Digital) card, a Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) card, which is well known in GSM (Global System for Mobile Communications) communication systems, and/or other removable physical memory device type. One or more of storage device **1190** may be present that are internal and/or external to a housing of computing device **1102** and may or may not be removable. Examples of storage device **1190** include a hard disk drive, a SSD, a thumb drive (e.g., a USB (Universal Serial Bus) flash drive), or other physical storage device.

(126) One or more programs may be stored in storage **1120**. Such programs include operating system **1112**, one or more application programs **1114**, and other program modules and program data. Examples of such application programs may include, for example, computer program logic (e.g., computer program code/instructions) for implementing one or more of system **100**, system **200**, system **400**, system **800**, and/or system **1000**, along with any components and/or subcomponents thereof, as well as the flowcharts/flow diagrams (e.g., flowcharts **300**, **500**, **520**, **530**, **540**, **600**, and/or **700**) described herein, including portions thereof, and/or further examples described herein.

(127) Storage **1120** also stores data used and/or generated by operating system **1112** and application programs **1114** as application data **1116**. Examples of application data **1116** include web pages, text, images, tables, sound files, video data, and other data, which may also be sent to and/or received from one or more network servers or other devices via one or more wired or wireless networks. Storage **1120** can be used to store further data including a subscriber identifier, such as an International Mobile Subscriber Identity (IMSI), and an equipment identifier, such as an International Mobile Equipment Identifier (IMEI). Such identifiers can be transmitted to a network server to identify users and equipment.

(128) A user may enter commands and information into computing device **1102** through one or more input devices **1130** and may receive information from computing device **1102** through one or more output devices **1150**. Input device(s) **1130** may include one or more of touch screen **1132**, microphone **1134**, camera **1136**, physical keyboard **1138** and/or trackball **1140** and output device(s)

1150 may include one or more of speaker **1152** and display **1154**. Each of input device(s) **1130** and output device(s) **1150** may be integral to computing device **1102** (e.g., built into a housing of computing device **1102**) or external to computing device **1102** (e.g., communicatively coupled wired or wirelessly to computing device **1102** via wired interface(s) **1180** and/or wireless modem(s) **1160**). Further input devices **1130** (not shown) can include a Natural User Interface (NUI), a pointing device (computer mouse), a joystick, a video game controller, a scanner, a touch pad, a stylus pen, a voice recognition system to receive voice input, a gesture recognition system to receive gesture input, or the like. Other possible output devices (not shown) can include piezoelectric or other haptic output devices. Some devices can serve more than one input/output function. For instance, display **1154** may display information, as well as operating as touch screen **1132** by receiving user commands and/or other information (e.g., by touch, finger gestures, virtual keyboard, etc.) as a user interface. Any number of each type of input device(s) **1130** and output device(s) **1150** may be present, including multiple microphones **1134**, multiple cameras **1136**, multiple speakers **1152**, and/or multiple displays **1154**.

(129) One or more wireless modems **1160** can be coupled to antenna(s) (not shown) of computing device **1102** and can support two-way communications between processor **1110** and devices external to computing device **1102** through network **1104**, as would be understood to persons skilled in the relevant art(s). Wireless modem **1160** is shown generically and can include a cellular modem **1166** for communicating with one or more cellular networks, such as a GSM network for data and voice communications within a single cellular network, between cellular networks, or between the mobile device and a public switched telephone network (PSTN). Wireless modem **1160** may also or alternatively include other radio-based modem types, such as a Bluetooth modem **1164** (also referred to as a “Bluetooth device”) and/or Wi-Fi **1162** modem (also referred to as an “wireless adaptor”). Wi-Fi modem **1162** is configured to communicate with an access point or other remote Wi-Fi-capable device according to one or more of the wireless network protocols based on the IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) 802.11 family of standards, commonly used for local area networking of devices and Internet access. Bluetooth modem **1164** is configured to communicate with another Bluetooth-capable device according to the Bluetooth short-range wireless technology standard(s) such as IEEE 802.15.1 and/or managed by the Bluetooth Special Interest Group (SIG).

(130) Computing device **1102** can further include power supply **1182**, LI receiver **1184**, accelerometer **1186**, and/or one or more wired interfaces **1180**. Example wired interfaces **1180** include a USB port, IEEE 1194 (FireWire) port, a RS-232 port, an HDMI (High-Definition Multimedia Interface) port (e.g., for connection to an external display), a DisplayPort port (e.g., for connection to an external display), an audio port, an Ethernet port, and/or an Apple® Lightning® port, the purposes and functions of each of which are well known to persons skilled in the relevant art(s). Wired interface(s) **1180** of computing device **1102** provide for wired connections between computing device **1102** and network **1104**, or between computing device **1102** and one or more devices/peripherals when such devices/peripherals are external to computing device **1102** (e.g., a pointing device, display **1154**, speaker **1152**, camera **1136**, physical keyboard **1138**, etc.). Power supply **1182** is configured to supply power to each of the components of computing device **1102** and may receive power from a battery internal to computing device **1102**, and/or from a power cord plugged into a power port of computing device **1102** (e.g., a USB port, an A/C power port). LI receiver **1184** may be used for location determination of computing device **1102** and may include a satellite navigation receiver such as a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver or may include other type of location determiner configured to determine location of computing device **1102** based on received information (e.g., using cell tower triangulation, etc.). Accelerometer **1186** may be present to determine an orientation of computing device **1102**.

(131) Note that the illustrated components of computing device **1102** are not required or all-inclusive, and fewer or greater numbers of components may be present as would be recognized by

one skilled in the art. For example, computing device **1102** may also include one or more of a gyroscope, barometer, proximity sensor, ambient light sensor, digital compass, etc. Processor **1110** and memory **1156** may be co-located in a same semiconductor device package, such as being included together in an integrated circuit chip, FPGA, or system-on-chip (SOC), optionally along with further components of computing device **1102**.

(132) In embodiments, computing device **1102** is configured to implement any of the above-described features of flowcharts herein. Computer program logic for performing any of the operations, steps, and/or functions described herein may be stored in storage **1120** and executed by processor **1110**.

(133) In some embodiments, server infrastructure **1170** may be present in computing environment **1100** and may be communicatively coupled with computing device **1102** via network **1104**. Server infrastructure **1170**, when present, may be a network-accessible server set (e.g., a cloud-based environment or platform). As shown in FIG. **11**, server infrastructure **1170** includes clusters **1172**. Each of clusters **1172** may comprise a group of one or more compute nodes and/or a group of one or more storage nodes. For example, as shown in FIG. **11**, cluster **1172** includes nodes **1174**. Each of nodes **1174** are accessible via network **1104** (e.g., in a “cloud-based” embodiment) to build, deploy, and manage applications and services. Any of nodes **1174** may be a storage node that comprises a plurality of physical storage disks, SSDs, and/or other physical storage devices that are accessible via network **1104** and are configured to store data associated with the applications and services managed by nodes **1174**. For example, as shown in FIG. **11**, nodes **1174** may store application data **1178**.

(134) Each of nodes **1174** may, as a compute node, comprise one or more server computers, server systems, and/or computing devices. For instance, a node **1174** may include one or more of the components of computing device **1102** disclosed herein. Each of nodes **1174** may be configured to execute one or more software applications (or “applications”) and/or services and/or manage hardware resources (e.g., processors, memory, etc.), which may be utilized by users (e.g., customers) of the network-accessible server set. For example, as shown in FIG. **11**, nodes **1174** may operate application programs **1176**. In an implementation, a node of nodes **1174** may operate or comprise one or more virtual machines, with each virtual machine emulating a system architecture (e.g., an operating system), in an isolated manner, upon which applications such as application programs **1176** may be executed.

(135) In an embodiment, one or more of clusters **1172** may be co-located (e.g., housed in one or more nearby buildings with associated components such as backup power supplies, redundant data communications, environmental controls, etc.) to form a datacenter, or may be arranged in other manners. Accordingly, in an embodiment, one or more of clusters **1172** may be a datacenter in a distributed collection of datacenters. In embodiments, exemplary computing environment **1100** comprises part of a cloud-based platform such as Amazon Web Services® of Amazon Web Services, Inc. or Google Cloud Platform™ of Google LLC, although these are only examples and are not intended to be limiting.

(136) In an embodiment, computing device **1102** may access application programs **1176** for execution in any manner, such as by a client application and/or a browser at computing device **1102**. Example browsers include Microsoft Edge® by Microsoft Corp. of Redmond, Washington, Mozilla Firefox®, by Mozilla Corp. of Mountain View, California, Safari®, by Apple Inc. of Cupertino, California, and Google® Chrome by Google LLC of Mountain View, California.

(137) For purposes of network (e.g., cloud) backup and data security, computing device **1102** may additionally and/or alternatively synchronize copies of application programs **1114** and/or application data **1116** to be stored at network-based server infrastructure **1170** as application programs **1176** and/or application data **1178**. For instance, operating system **1112** and/or application programs **1114** may include a file hosting service client, such as Microsoft® OneDrive® by Microsoft Corporation, Amazon Simple Storage Service (Amazon S3)® by Amazon

Web Services, Inc., Dropbox® by Dropbox, Inc., Google Drive™ by Google LLC, etc., configured to synchronize applications and/or data stored in storage **1120** at network-based server infrastructure **1170**.

(138) In some embodiments, on-premises servers **1192** may be present in computing environment **1100** and may be communicatively coupled with computing device **1102** via network **1104**. On-premises servers **1192**, when present, are hosted within an organization's infrastructure and, in many cases, physically onsite of a facility of that organization. On-premises servers **1192** are controlled, administered, and maintained by IT (Information Technology) personnel of the organization or an IT partner to the organization. Application data **1198** may be shared by on-premises servers **1192** between computing devices of the organization, including computing device **1102** (when part of an organization) through a local network of the organization, and/or through further networks accessible to the organization (including the Internet). Furthermore, on-premises servers **1192** may serve applications such as application programs **1196** to the computing devices of the organization, including computing device **1102**. Accordingly, on-premises servers **1192** may include storage **1194** (which includes one or more physical storage devices such as storage disks and/or SSDs) for storage of application programs **1196** and application data **1198** and may include one or more processors for execution of application programs **1196**. Still further, computing device **1102** may be configured to synchronize copies of application programs **1114** and/or application data **1116** for backup storage at on-premises servers **1192** as application programs **1196** and/or application data **1198**.

(139) Embodiments described herein may be implemented in one or more of computing device **1102**, network-based server infrastructure **1170**, and on-premises servers **1192**. For example, in some embodiments, computing device **1102** may be used to implement systems, clients, or devices, or components/subcomponents thereof, disclosed elsewhere herein. In other embodiments, a combination of computing device **1102**, network-based server infrastructure **1170**, and/or on-premises servers **1192** may be used to implement the systems, clients, or devices, or components/subcomponents thereof, disclosed elsewhere herein.

(140) As used herein, the terms “computer program medium,” “computer-readable medium,” and “computer-readable storage medium,” etc., are used to refer to physical hardware media. Examples of such physical hardware media include any hard disk, optical disk, SSD, other physical hardware media such as RAMs, ROMs, flash memory, digital video disks, zip disks, MEMs (microelectronic machine) memory, nanotechnology-based storage devices, and further types of physical/tangible hardware storage media of storage **1120**. Such computer-readable media and/or storage media are distinguished from and non-overlapping with communication media and propagating signals (do not include communication media and propagating signals). Communication media embodies computer-readable instructions, data structures, program modules or other data in a modulated data signal such as a carrier wave. The term “modulated data signal” means a signal that has one or more of its characteristics set or changed in such a manner as to encode information in the signal. By way of example, and not limitation, communication media includes wireless media such as acoustic, RF, infrared, and other wireless media, as well as wired media. Embodiments are also directed to such communication media that are separate and non-overlapping with embodiments directed to computer-readable storage media.

(141) As noted above, computer programs and modules (including application programs **1114**) may be stored in storage **1120**. Such computer programs may also be received via wired interface(s) **1180** and/or wireless modem(s) **1160** over network **1104**. Such computer programs, when executed or loaded by an application, enable computing device **1102** to implement features of embodiments discussed herein. Accordingly, such computer programs represent controllers of the computing device **1102**.

(142) Embodiments are also directed to computer program products comprising computer code or instructions stored on any computer-readable medium or computer-readable storage medium. Such

computer program products include the physical storage of storage **1120** as well as further physical storage types.

VII. Additional Example Embodiments

(143) A system is described herein. The system includes a processor circuit and a memory. The memory stores program code that, when executed by the processor circuit, performs operations. The operations include receiving a respective digital access request from each of a plurality of entities. Each access request includes a respective proof. The operations further include, for each digital access request, obtaining a respective encrypted secret share from a respective first ledger database and validating the digital access request based at least on the respective encrypted secret share and the respective proof, without decrypting the respective encrypted secret share. The operations further include, in response to validating all of the digital access request, verifying that an access criteria of a security policy is met. The operations further include, in response to said verifying that the access criteria of the security policy is met, providing at least one of the entities with access to data protected by the security policy.

(144) In one implementation of the foregoing system, each digital access request further includes a respective digest representative of a state of the respective first ledger database. For each digital access request, said obtaining the respective encrypted secret share from the respective first ledger database includes providing the respective digest to the respective first ledger database and receiving, from the respective first ledger database, a response indicating the respective digest is valid and comprising the respective encrypted secret share.

(145) In one implementation of the foregoing system, each digital access request is signed by a respective private key of a respective one of the entities. The operations further include, for each digital access request, obtaining a respective public key corresponding to the respective private key from a respective second ledger database. For each digital access request, said validating the digital access request further comprises validating the signature of the digital access request using the respective public key.

(146) In one implementation of the foregoing system, each digital access request further includes a respective digest representative of a state of the respective second ledger database. For each digital access request, said obtaining the respective public key corresponding to the respective private key from the respective second ledger database includes providing the respective digest to the respective second ledger database and receiving, from the respective second ledger database, a response indicating the respective digest is valid and comprising the respective public key.

(147) In one implementation of the foregoing system, said providing the at least one of the entities with access to the data protected by the security policy includes decrypting the data protected by the security policy and providing the decrypted data to the at least one of the entities.

(148) In one implementation of the foregoing system, said providing the at least one of the entities with access to the data protected by the security policy includes authorizing a data handler to decrypt the data protected by the security policy and provide the decrypted data to the at least one of the entities.

(149) In one implementation of the foregoing system, the operations further include, prior to said receiving step, receiving a digital validation request from a user. The digital validation request includes a policy proof, an encrypted private key of the user, and the respective encrypted secret shares. The operations further include, prior to said receiving step, validating the digital validation request based at least on the policy proof, the encrypted private key, and the respective encrypted secret shares. The operations further include, prior to said receiving step and in response to validating the digital validation request, storing the data protected by the security policy.

(150) In one implementation of the foregoing system, the operations further include receiving a digital validation request from the at least one of the entities, the digital validation request comprising a policy proof. The operations further include, for each respective encrypted secret share, obtaining the respective encrypted secret share from the respective first ledger database. The

operations further include, obtaining an encrypted private key from a key manager. The operations further include, validating the digital validation request based at least on the policy proof, the respective encrypted secret shares, and the encrypted private key. The operations further include, in response to validating the digital validation request, notifying the at least one of the entities that the digital validation request is valid.

(151) A computer-implemented method is also disclosed herein. The computer-implemented method includes receiving a respective digital access request from each of a plurality of entities, each access request comprising a respective proof. For each digital access request, a respective encrypted secret share is obtained from a respective first ledger database and the digital access request is validated based at least on the respective encrypted secret share and the respective proof, without decrypting the respective encrypted secret share. In response to validating all of the digital access request, a verification that an access criteria of a security policy is met is made. In response to said verifying that the access criteria of the security policy is met, at least one of the entities is provided with access to data protected by the security policy.

(152) In one implementation of the foregoing method, each digital access request further includes a respective digest representative of a state of the respective first ledger database. For each digital access request, said obtaining the respective encrypted secret share from the respective first ledger database includes: providing the respective digest to the respective first ledger database; and receiving, from the respective first ledger database, a response indicating the respective digest is valid and including the respective encrypted secret share.

(153) In one implementation of the foregoing method, each digital access request is signed by a respective private key of a respective one of the entities. The method further includes, for each digital access request: obtaining a respective public key corresponding to the respective private key from a respective second ledger database; and said validating the digital access request further includes validating the signature of the digital access request using the respective public key.

(154) In one implementation of the foregoing method, each digital access request further comprises a respective digest representative of a state of the respective second ledger database. For each digital access request, said obtaining the respective public key corresponding to the respective private key from the respective second ledger database includes providing the respective digest to the respective second ledger database and receiving, from the respective second ledger database, a response indicating the respective digest is valid and comprising the respective public key.

(155) In one implementation of the foregoing method, said providing the at least one of the entities with access to the data protected by the security policy comprises one of: decrypting the data protected by the security policy and providing the decrypted data to the at least one of the entities; or authorizing a data handler to decrypt the data protected by the security policy and provide the decrypted data to the at least one of the entities.

(156) In one implementation of the foregoing method, the method further includes, prior to said receiving step: receiving a digital validation request from a user, the digital validation request including a policy proof, an encrypted private key of the user, and the respective encrypted secret shares; validating the digital validation request based at least on the policy proof, the encrypted private key, and the respective encrypted secret shares; and, in response to validating the digital validation request, storing the data protected by the security policy.

(157) In one implementation of the foregoing method, the method further includes: receiving a digital validation request from the at least one of the entities, the digital validation request including a policy proof, for each respective encrypted secret share, obtaining the respective encrypted secret share from the respective first ledger database; obtaining an encrypted decryption key from a key manager; validating the digital validation request based at least on the policy proof, the respective encrypted secret shares, and the encrypted decryption key; and in response to validating the digital validation request, notifying the at least one of the entities that the digital validation request is valid.

(158) A computer-readable storage medium having program instructions recorded thereon is also described herein. When executed by a processor circuit, the program instructions receive a respective digital access request from each of a plurality of entities. Each access request includes a respective proof. For each digital access request, the program instructions, when executed by the processor circuit, obtain a respective encrypted secret share from a respective first ledger database and validate the digital access request based at least on the respective encrypted secret share and the respective proof, without decrypting the respective encrypted secret share. In response to validating all of the digital access request, the program instructions, when executed by the processor circuit, verify that an access criteria of a security policy is met and, in response to said verifying that the access criteria of the security policy is met, provide at least one of the entities with access to data protected by the security policy.

(159) In one implementation of the foregoing computer-readable storage medium, each digital access request further includes a respective digest representative of a state of the respective first ledger database. The program instructions, when executed by the processor circuit and for each digital access request, obtain the respective encrypted secret share from the respective first ledger database by: providing the respective digest to the respective first ledger database; and receiving, from the respective first ledger database, a response indicating the respective digest is valid and comprising the respective encrypted secret share.

(160) In one implementation of the foregoing computer-readable storage medium, each digital access request is signed by a respective private key of a respective one of the entities. The program instructions, when executed by the processor circuit and for each digital access request: obtain a respective public key corresponding to the respective private key from a respective second ledger database; and validate the signature of the digital access request using the respective public key.

(161) In one implementation of the foregoing computer-readable storage medium, the program instructions, when executed by the processor circuit, provide the at least one of the entities with access to the data protected by the security policy by authorizing a data handler to decrypt the data protected by the security policy and provide the decrypted data to the at least one of the entities.

(162) In one implementation of the foregoing computer-readable storage medium, the program instructions, when executed by the processor circuit and prior to said receiving the respective digital access request from each of the plurality of entities: receive a digital validation request from a user, the digital validation request comprising a policy proof, an encrypted private key of the user, and the respective encrypted secret shares; validate the digital validation request based at least on the policy proof, the encrypted private key, and the respective encrypted secret shares; and in response to validating the digital validation request, store the data protected by the security policy.

VIII. Conclusion

(163) References in the specification to “one embodiment,” “an embodiment,” “an example embodiment,” etc., indicate that the embodiment described may include a particular feature, structure, or characteristic, but every embodiment may not necessarily include the particular feature, structure, or characteristic. Moreover, such phrases are not necessarily referring to the same embodiment. Further, when a particular feature, structure, or characteristic is described in connection with an embodiment, it is submitted that it is within the knowledge of one skilled in the art to affect such feature, structure, or characteristic in connection with other embodiments whether or not explicitly described.

(164) In the discussion, unless otherwise stated, adjectives modifying a condition or relationship characteristic of a feature or features of an implementation of the disclosure, should be understood to mean that the condition or characteristic is defined to within tolerances that are acceptable for operation of the implementation for an application for which it is intended. Furthermore, if the performance of an operation is described herein as being “in response to” one or more factors, it is to be understood that the one or more factors may be regarded as a sole contributing factor for causing the operation to occur or a contributing factor along with one or more additional factors for

causing the operation to occur, and that the operation may occur at any time upon or after establishment of the one or more factors. Still further, where “based on” is used to indicate an effect being a result of an indicated cause, it is to be understood that the effect is not required to only result from the indicated cause, but that any number of possible additional causes may also contribute to the effect. Thus, as used herein, the term “based on” should be understood to be equivalent to the term “based at least on.”

(165) Numerous example embodiments have been described above. Any section/subsection headings provided herein are not intended to be limiting. Embodiments are described throughout this document, and any type of embodiment may be included under any section/subsection. Furthermore, embodiments disclosed in any section/subsection may be combined with any other embodiments described in the same section/subsection and/or a different section/subsection in any manner.

(166) Furthermore, example embodiments have been described above with respect to one or more running examples. Such running examples describe one or more particular implementations of the example embodiments; however, embodiments described herein are not limited to these particular implementations.

(167) Moreover, according to the described embodiments and techniques, any components of systems, computing devices, orchestrators, ledger databases, data handlers, verifiers, key managers, and/or proof generators and their functions may be caused to be activated for operation/performance thereof based on other operations, functions, actions, and/or the like, including initialization, completion, and/or performance of the operations, functions, actions, and/or the like.

(168) In some example embodiments, one or more of the operations of the flowcharts described herein may not be performed. Moreover, operations in addition to or in lieu of the operations of the flowcharts described herein may be performed. Further, in some example embodiments, one or more of the operations of the flowcharts described herein may be performed out of order, in an alternate sequence, or partially (or completely) concurrently with each other or with other operations.

(169) The embodiments described herein and/or any further systems, sub-systems, devices and/or components disclosed herein may be implemented in hardware (e.g., hardware logic/electrical circuitry), or any combination of hardware with software (computer program code configured to be executed in one or more processors or processing devices) and/or firmware.

(170) While various embodiments have been described above, it should be understood that they have been presented by way of example only, and not limitation. It will be apparent to persons skilled in the relevant art that various changes in form and detail can be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the embodiments. Thus, the breadth and scope of the embodiments should not be limited by any of the above-described example embodiments, but should be defined only in accordance with the following claims and their equivalents.

Claims

1. A system, comprising: a processor circuit; and a memory that stores program code that, when executed by the processor circuit, performs operations, the operations comprising: receiving a respective digital access request from each of a plurality of entities, each access request comprising a respective proof; for each digital access request: obtaining a respective encrypted secret share from a respective first ledger database; and validating the digital access request based at least on the respective encrypted secret share and the respective proof, without decrypting the respective encrypted secret share; in response to validating all of the digital access requests, verifying that an access criteria of a security policy is met; and in response to said verifying that the access criteria of the security policy is met, providing at least one of the entities with access to data protected by

the security policy.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein: each digital access request further comprises a respective digest representative of a state of the respective first ledger database; and for each digital access request, said obtaining the respective encrypted secret share from the respective first ledger database comprises: providing the respective digest to the respective first ledger database; and receiving, from the respective first ledger database, a response indicating the respective digest is valid and comprising the respective encrypted secret share.

3. The system of claim 1, wherein: each digital access request is signed by a respective private key of a respective one of the entities; and the operations further comprise: for each digital access request, obtaining a respective public key corresponding to the respective private key from a respective second ledger database; and for each digital access request, said validating the digital access request further comprises validating a signature of the digital access request using the respective public key.

4. The system of claim 3, wherein: each digital access request further comprises a respective digest representative of a state of the respective second ledger database; and for each digital access request, said obtaining the respective public key corresponding to the respective private key from the respective second ledger database comprises: providing the respective digest to the respective second ledger database; and receiving, from the respective second ledger database, a response indicating the respective digest is valid and comprising the respective public key.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein said providing the at least one of the entities with access to the data protected by the security policy comprises: decrypting the data protected by the security policy; and providing the decrypted data to the at least one of the entities.

6. The system of claim 1, wherein said providing the at least one of the entities with access to the data protected by the security policy comprises: authorizing a data handler to decrypt the data protected by the security policy and provide the decrypted data to the at least one of the entities.

7. The system of claim 1, the operations further comprising, prior to said receiving step: receiving a digital validation request from a user, the digital validation request comprising a policy proof, an encrypted private key of the user, and the respective encrypted secret shares; validating the digital validation request based at least on the policy proof, the encrypted private key, and the respective encrypted secret shares; and in response to validating the digital validation request, storing the data protected by the security policy.

8. The system of claim 1, the operations further comprising: receiving a digital validation request from the at least one of the entities, the digital validation request comprising a policy proof; for each respective encrypted secret share, obtaining the respective encrypted secret share from the respective first ledger database; obtaining an encrypted private key from a key manager; validating the digital validation request based at least on the policy proof, the respective encrypted secret shares, and the encrypted private key; and in response to validating the digital validation request, notifying the at least one of the entities that the digital validation request is valid.

9. A computer-implemented method comprising: receiving a respective digital access request from each of a plurality of entities, each access request comprising a respective proof; for each digital access request: obtaining a respective encrypted secret share from a respective first ledger database; and validating the digital access request based at least on the respective encrypted secret share and the respective proof, without decrypting the respective encrypted secret share; in response to validating all of the digital access requests, verifying that an access criteria of a security policy is met; and in response to said verifying that the access criteria of the security policy is met, providing at least one of the entities with access to data protected by the security policy.

10. The computer-implemented method of claim 9, wherein: each digital access request further comprises a respective digest representative of a state of the respective first ledger database; and for each digital access request, said obtaining the respective encrypted secret share from the respective first ledger database comprises: providing the respective digest to the respective first

ledger database; and receiving, from the respective first ledger database, a response indicating the respective digest is valid and comprising the respective encrypted secret share.

11. The computer-implemented method of claim 9, wherein: each digital access request is signed by a respective private key of a respective one of the entities; and the method further comprises: for each digital access request, obtaining a respective public key corresponding to the respective private key from a respective second ledger database; and for each digital access request, said validating the digital access request further comprises validating a signature of the digital access request using the respective public key.

12. The computer-implemented method of claim 11, wherein: each digital access request further comprises a respective digest representative of a state of the respective second ledger database; and for each digital access request, said obtaining the respective public key corresponding to the respective private key from the respective second ledger database comprises: providing the respective digest to the respective second ledger database; and receiving, from the respective second ledger database, a response indicating the respective digest is valid and comprising the respective public key.

13. The computer-implemented method of claim 9, wherein said providing the at least one of the entities with access to the data protected by the security policy comprises one of: decrypting the data protected by the security policy and providing the decrypted data to the at least one of the entities; or authorizing a data handler to decrypt the data protected by the security policy and provide the decrypted data to the at least one of the entities.

14. The computer-implemented method of claim 9, further comprising, prior to said receiving step: receiving a digital validation request from a user, the digital validation request comprising a policy proof, an encrypted private key of the user, and the respective encrypted secret shares; validating the digital validation request based at least on the policy proof, the encrypted private key, and the respective encrypted secret shares; and in response to validating the digital validation request, storing the data protected by the security policy.

15. The computer-implemented method of claim 9, further comprising: receiving a digital validation request from the at least one of the entities, the digital validation request comprising a policy proof; for each respective encrypted secret share, obtaining the respective encrypted secret share from the respective first ledger database; obtaining an encrypted decryption key from a key manager; validating the digital validation request based at least on the policy proof, the respective encrypted secret shares, and the encrypted decryption key; and in response to validating the digital validation request, notifying the at least one of the entities that the digital validation request is valid.

16. A computer-readable storage medium having program instructions recorded thereon that, when executed by a processor circuit: receive a respective digital access request from each of a plurality of entities, each access request comprising a respective proof; for each digital access request: obtain a respective encrypted secret share from a respective first ledger database; and validate the digital access request based at least on the respective encrypted secret share and the respective proof, without decrypting the respective encrypted secret share; in response to validating all of the digital access requests, verify that an access criteria of a security policy is met; and in response to said verifying that the access criteria of the security policy is met, provide at least one of the entities with access to data protected by the security policy.

17. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 16, wherein: each digital access request further comprises a respective digest representative of a state of the respective first ledger database; and the program instructions, when executed by the processor circuit and for each digital access request, obtain the respective encrypted secret share from the respective first ledger database by: providing the respective digest to the respective first ledger database; and receiving, from the respective first ledger database, a response indicating the respective digest is valid and comprising the respective encrypted secret share.

18. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 16, wherein: each digital access request is signed by a respective private key of a respective one of the entities; and the program instructions, when executed by the processor circuit and for each digital access request: obtain a respective public key corresponding to the respective private key from a respective second ledger database; and validate a signature of the digital access request using the respective public key.

19. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 16, wherein the program instructions, when executed by the processor circuit, provide the at least one of the entities with access to the data protected by the security policy by: authorizing a data handler to decrypt the data protected by the security policy and provide the decrypted data to the at least one of the entities.

20. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 16, the program instructions, when executed by the processor circuit and prior to said receiving the respective digital access request from each of the plurality of entities: receive a digital validation request from a user, the digital validation request comprising a policy proof, an encrypted private key of the user, and the respective encrypted secret shares; validate the digital validation request based at least on the policy proof, the encrypted private key, and the respective encrypted secret shares; and in response to validating the digital validation request, store the data protected by the security policy.
