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Criteria for Evaluating AAA Protocols for Network Access

Status of this Memo

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Abstract

This document represents a summary of Authentication, Authorization, Accounting (AAA) protocol requirements for network access. In creating this document, inputs were taken from documents produced by the Network Access Server Requirements Next Generation (NASREQ), Roaming Operations (ROAMOPS), and MOBILEIP working groups, as well as from TIA 45.6.

This document summarizes the requirements collected from those sources, separating requirements for authentication, authorization and accounting. Details on the requirements are available in the original documents.

1. Introduction

This document represents a summary of AAA protocol requirements for network access. In creating this documents, inputs were taken from documents produced by the NASREQ [3], ROAMOPS [2], and MOBILEIP [5] working groups, as well as from TIA 45.6 [4]. This document summarizes the requirements collected from those sources, separating requirements for authentication, authorization and accounting. Details on the requirements are available in the original documents.

1.1. Requirements language

In this document, the key words "MAY", "MUST, "MUST NOT", "optional", "recommended", "SHOULD", and "SHOULD NOT", are to be interpreted as described in [1].

Please note that the requirements specified in this document are to be used in evaluating AAA protocol submissions. As such, the requirements language refers to capabilities of these protocols; the protocol documents will specify whether these features are required, recommended, or optional. For example, requiring that a protocol support confidentiality is NOT the same thing as requiring that all protocol traffic be encrypted.

A protocol submission is not compliant if it fails to satisfy one or more of the MUST or MUST NOT requirements for the capabilities that it implements. A protocol submission that satisfies all the MUST, MUST NOT, SHOULD and SHOULD NOT requirements for its capabilities is said to be "unconditionally compliant"; one that satisfies all the MUST and MUST NOT requirements but not all the SHOULD or SHOULD NOT requirements for its protocols is said to be "conditionally compliant."

1.2. Terminology

Accounting
The act of collecting information on resource usage for the purpose of trend analysis, auditing, billing, or cost allocation.

Administrative Domain
An internet, or a collection of networks, computers, and databases under a common administration. Computer entities operating in a common administration may be assumed to share administratively created security associations.

Attendant A node designed to provide the service interface between a client and the local domain.

Authentication
The act of verifying a claimed identity, in the form of a pre-existing label from a mutually known name space, as the originator of a message (message authentication) or as the end-point of a channel (entity authentication).

Authorization
The act of determining if a particular right, such as access to some resource, can be granted to the presenter of a particular credential.

Billing The act of preparing an invoice.

Broker A Broker is an entity that is in a different administrative domain from both the home AAA server and the local ISP, and which provides services, such as facilitating payments between the local ISP and home administrative entities. There are two different types of brokers; proxy and routing.

Client A node wishing to obtain service from an attendant within an administrative domain.

End-to-End
End-to-End is the security model that requires that security information be able to traverse, and be validated even when an AAA message is processed by intermediate nodes such as proxies, brokers, etc.

Foreign Domain
An administrative domain, visited by a Mobile IP client, and containing the AAA infrastructure needed to carry out the necessary operations enabling Mobile IP registrations. From the point of view of the foreign agent, the foreign domain is the local domain.

Home Domain
An administrative domain, containing the network whose prefix matches that of a mobile node's home address, and containing the AAA infrastructure needed to carry out the necessary operations enabling Mobile IP registrations. From the point of view of the home agent, the home domain is the local domain.

Hop-by-hop
Hop-by-hop is the security model that requires that each direct set of peers in a proxy network share a security association, and the security information does not traverse a AAA entity.

Inter-domain Accounting
Inter-domain accounting is the collection of information on resource usage of an entity within an administrative domain, for use within another administrative domain. In inter-domain accounting, accounting packets and session records will typically cross administrative boundaries.

Intra-domain Accounting
Intra-domain accounting is the collection of information on resource within an administrative domain, for use within that domain. In intra-domain accounting, accounting packets and session records typically do not cross administrative boundaries.

Local Domain
An administrative domain containing the AAA infrastructure of immediate interest to a Mobile IP client when it is away from home.

Proxy A AAA proxy is an entity that acts as both a client and a server. When a request is received from a client, the proxy acts as a AAA server. When the same request needs to be forwarded to another AAA entity, the proxy acts as a AAA client.

Local Proxy
A Local Proxy is a AAA server that satisfies the definition of a Proxy, and exists within the same administrative domain as the network device (e.g., NAS) that issued the AAA request. Typically, a local proxy will enforce local policies prior to forwarding responses to the network devices, and are generally used to multiplex AAA messages from a large number of network devices.

Network Access Identifier
The Network Access Identifier (NAI) is the userID submitted by the client during network access authentication. In roaming, the purpose of the NAI is to identify the user as well as to assist in the routing of the authentication request. The NAI may not necessarily be the same as the user's e-mail address or the user-ID submitted in an application layer authentication.

Routing Broker
A Routing Broker is a AAA entity that satisfies the definition of a Broker, but is NOT in the transmission path of AAA messages between the local ISP and the home domain's AAA servers. When a request is received by a Routing Broker, information is returned to the AAA requester that includes the information necessary for it to be able to contact the Home AAA server directly. Certain organizations providing Routing Broker services MAY also act as a Certificate Authority, allowing the Routing Broker to return the certificates necessary for the local ISP and the home AAA servers to communicate securely.

Non-Proxy Broker
A Routing Broker is occasionally referred to as a Non-Proxy Broker.

Proxy Broker
A Proxy Broker is a AAA entity that satisfies the definition of a Broker, and acts as a Transparent Proxy by acting as the forwarding agent for all AAA messages between the local ISP and the home domain's AAA servers.

Real-time Accounting
Real-time accounting involves the processing of information on resource usage within a defined time window. Time constraints are typically imposed in order to limit financial risk.

Roaming Capability
Roaming capability can be loosely defined as the ability to use any one of multiple Internet service providers (ISPs), while maintaining a formal, customer-vendor relationship with only one. Examples of cases where roaming capability might be required include ISP "confederations" and ISP-provided corporate network access support.

Session record
A session record represents a summary of the resource consumption of a user over the entire session. Accounting gateways creating the session record may do so by processing interim accounting events.

Transparent Proxy
A Transparent Proxy is a AAA server that satisfies the definition of a Proxy, but does not enforce any local policies (meaning that it does not add, delete or modify attributes or modify information within messages it forwards).

2. Requirements Summary

The AAA protocol evaluation criteria for network access are summarized below. For details on the requirements, please consult the documents referenced in the footnotes.

2.1. General requirements

These requirements apply to all aspects of AAA and thus are considered general requirements.

General Reqts.	NASREQ	ROAMOPS	MOBILE IP
Scalability a	M 12	M 3	M 30 39
Fail-over b	M 12		M 31
Mutual auth AAA client/server c	M 16		M 30
Transmission level security d		M 6	S 31 39
Data object Confidentiality e	M 26	M 6	M 40
Data object Integrity f	M 16	M 6	M 31 39
Certificate transport g	M 42		S/M 31,33/46

Reliable AAA transport mechanism [h]	M 22		M 31 32
Run Over IPv4	M 11	M 1	M 33
Run Over IPv6	M 11	1	S 47
Support Proxy and Routing Brokers [i]	M 12		M 31 39
Auditability [j]	S 25		
Dual App and Transport Security not required [k]		O 6	M 40
Ability to carry service-specific attr. [l]	M 43		S 31 33

Key
M = MUST
S = SHOULD
O = MAY
N = MUST NOT
B = SHOULD NOT

Clarifications

[a] The AAA protocol must be capable of supporting millions of users and tens of thousands of simultaneous requests. The AAA architecture and protocol MUST be capable of supporting tens of thousands of devices, AAA servers, proxies and brokers.

[b] In the event of failure to communicate with a given server, the protocol must provide a mechanism to change service to another backup or secondary server.

[c] This requirement refers to the ability to support mutual authentication between the AAA client and server.

[d] The AAA protocol requires authentication, integrity protection and confidentiality at the transmission layer. This security model is also referred to as hop-by-hop security, whereas the security is established between two communicating peers. All of the security is removed when the AAA message is processed by a receiving AAA entity.

[e] The AAA protocol requires confidentiality at the object level, where an object consists of one or more attributes. Object level confidentiality implies that only the target AAA entity for whom the data is ultimately destined may decrypt the data, regardless of the fact that the message may traverse one or more intermediate AAA entities (e.g., proxies, brokers).

[f] The AAA protocol requires authentication and integrity protection at the object level, which consists of one or more attributes. Object level authentication must be persistent across one or more intermediate AAA entity (e.g., proxy, broker, etc), meaning that any AAA entity in a proxy chain may verify the authentication. This implies that data that is covered by object level security CANNOT be modified by intermediate servers.

[g] The AAA protocol MUST be capable of transporting certificates. This requirement is intended as an optimization, in lieu of requiring that an out-of-band protocol be used to fetch certificates.

[h] This requirement refers to resilience against packet loss, including:

1. Hop-by-hop retransmission and fail-over so that reliability does not solely depend on single hop transport retransmission.

2. Control of the retransmission mechanism by the AAA application.
3. Acknowledgment by the transport that a message was delivered successfully, separate from message semantics or syntax evaluation.
5. Piggy-backing of acknowledgments in AAA messages.
6. Timely delivery of AAA responses.

[i] In the Mobile IP AAA architecture, brokers can be in the forwarding path, in which case they act as transparent proxies (proxy brokers). Alternatively, it is also possible to conceive of brokers operating as certifying authorities outside of the forwarding path (routing brokers).

[j] An auditable process is one in which it is possible to definitively determine what actions have been performed on AAA packets as they travel from the home AAA server to the network device and back.

[k] The AAA protocol MUST allow communication to be secured. However, the AAA protocol MUST also allow an underlying security service (e.g., IP Security) to be used. When the latter is used, the former MUST NOT be required.

[l] The AAA protocol MUST be extensible by third parties (e.g., other IETF Working Groups), in order to define attributes that are specific to the service being defined. This requirement simply means that the AAA protocol MUST allow groups other than the AAA WG to define standard attributes.

2.2. Authentication Requirements

Authentication Reqts.	NASREQ	ROAMOPS	MOBILE IP
NAI Support a	M 9	M 2	S/M 32,34,39/ 40
CHAP Support b	M 10	M 3	
EAP Support c	M 10	S 3	
PAP/Clear-Text Support d	M 26	B 3	
Re-authentication on demand e	M 17		S 33
Authorization Only without Authentication f	M 9		

Key
M = MUST
S = SHOULD
O = MAY
N = MUST NOT
B = SHOULD NOT

Clarifications

[a] The AAA protocol MUST allow the use of Network Access Identifiers (NAI) [8] to identify users and/or devices.

[b] The AAA protocol MUST allow CHAP [20] authentication information to be transported. This is commonly used by Network Access Servers that request authentication of a PPP user.

[c] The AAA protocol MUST allow for Extensible Authentication Protocol (EAP) [14] payload to be transported. Since some EAP authentication mechanisms require more than one round trip, the AAA protocol must allow for such authentication mechanisms to be used. The actual EAP authentication mechanism negotiated MUST be transparent to the AAA protocol. When EAP is used, authentication typically occurs between the user being authenticated and his/her home AAA server.

[d] While PAP is deprecated, it is still in widespread use for its original intended purpose, which is support of clear-text passwords. As a result, a AAA protocol will need to be able to securely transport clear-text passwords. This includes providing for confidentiality of clear-text passwords traveling over the wire, as well as protecting against disclosure of clear-text passwords to proxies in the forwarding path.

[e] The AAA protocol MUST allow for a user to be re-authenticated on-demand. The protocol MUST allow for this event to be triggered by either the user, access device (AAA client), or the home or visited AAA server.

[f] The AAA protocol MUST NOT require that credentials of the user be provided during authorization. The AAA protocol supports authorization by identification or assertion only.

2.3. Authorization Requirements

Authorization Reqts.	NASREQ	ROAMOPS	MOBILE IP
Static and Dynamic IPv4/6 Address Assign. a	M 11	M 5	M 32 36
RADIUS gateway capability b	M 44	M 3	M 45
Reject capability c	M 12	M 4	M 39
Precludes layer 2 tunneling	N 11	N 5	
Re-Authorization on demand d	M 18		S 30 33
Support for Access Rules, Restrictions, Filters e	M 11, 19		
State Reconciliation f	M 20		
Unsolicited Disconnect g	M 18		

Key
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S = SHOULD
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N = MUST NOT
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Clarifications

[a] The AAA protocol MUST allow a server to provide a static or dynamic address during the authorization phase of a user and/or device. The address assigned MUST be either of type IPv4 or IPv6. If both the client AND the server are aware of a pre-configured address, then it is considered static. Anything else is dynamic.

[b] This requirement refers to the ability of a new AAA protocol be sufficiently compatible with the large installed base of attributes for existing approaches (RADIUS), such that a server implementation could speak both protocols, or translate between them.

[c] This requirement refers to the ability of a proxy broker to deny access without forwarding the access request to the AAA server, or to deny access after receiving an access accept from the AAA server.

[d] This requirement refers to the ability of the AAA client or server to trigger re-authorization, or to the ability of the server to send updated authorization information to the device, such as "stop service." Authorization can allow for a time period, then additional authorization can be sought to continue. A server can initially authorize a user to connect and receive services, but later decide the user is no longer allowed use of the service, for example after N minutes. Authorizations can have a time limit. Re-authorization does not necessarily imply re-authentication.

[e] This requirement refers to the ability to of the protocol to describe access operational limitations and authorization restrictions to usage to the NAS which includes (but is not limited to):

1. Session expirations and Idle Timeouts
2. Packet filters
3. Static routes
4. QoS parameters

[f] This requirement refers to the ability of the NAS to use the AAA server to manage resource allocation state. This capability can assist with, but it is not synonymous with, simultaneous user login control, port usage limitations, or IP address pooling.

The design must provide for recovery from data loss due to a variety of faults, including NAS and AAA server reboots, and NAS/AAA server communication outages, and MUST be independent of the accounting stream. The granularity of the recovery of state information after an outage may be on the order of a fraction of a minute. In order to provide for state recovery, explicit session/resource status and update and disconnect messages will be required.

Because of potential multi-domain issues, only systems that allocate or use a resource should track its state.

[g] This requirement refers to the ability of the AAA server to request the NAS to disconnect an active session for authorization policy reasons.

2.4. Accounting Requirements

Accounting Reqts.	NASREQ	ROAMOPS	MOBILE IP
Real-time accounting a	M 14	M 7	M 31
Mandatory Compact Encoding b		M 7	
Accounting Record Extensibility		M 7	M 33
Batch Accounting c	S 21		
Guaranteed Delivery d	M 22		M 31
Accounting Time Stamps e	M 23		M 40
Dynamic Accounting f	M 48		

Key
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S = SHOULD
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N = MUST NOT
B = SHOULD NOT

Clarifications

[a] This requirement may be loosely defined as reporting synchronously with events. Typically the time window is on the order of seconds, not milliseconds.

[b] The AAA protocol's Accounting data format MUST NOT be bloated, imposing a large overhead for one or more accounting data elements.

[c] This requirement refers to the ability to buffer or store multiple accounting records, and send them together at some later time.

[d] This is an application layer acknowledgment. This is sent when the receiving server is willing to take responsibility for the message data.

[e] This requirement refers to the ability to reflect the time of occurrence of events such as log-on, logoff, authentication, authorization and interim accounting. It also implies the ability to provide for unambiguous time-stamps.

[f] This requirement refers to the ability to account for dynamic authentication and authorization. To support this, there can be multiple accounting records for a single session.

2.5. Unique Mobile IP requirements

In addition to the above requirements, Mobile IP also has the following additional requirements:

Encoding of Mobile IP registration messages			M 33
Firewall friendly a			M 35
Allocation of local Home agent			S/M 37/41

Key
M = MUST
S = SHOULD
O = MAY
N = MUST NOT
B = SHOULD NOT

Clarifications

[a] A firewall friendly protocol is one which is designed to accommodate a firewall acting as a proxy. For example, this would permit a Home Agent AAA server situated behind a firewall to be reachable from the Internet for the purposes of providing AAA services to a Mobile IP Foreign Agent.

Notes

[1] Section 4.2.1 of [2]
[2] Section 4.2.2 of [2]. Also see [8].
[3] Section 4.2.3 of [2]. Also see [14].
[4] Section 4.2.4 of [2].
[5] Section 4.2.5 of [2].
[6] Section 4.2.6 of [2].
[7] Section 4.3 of [2].
[8] Section 6 of [3]. Also see [6].
[9] Section 8.2.2.2 of [3]. Also see [14].
[10] Section 8.2.2.1 of [3]. Also see [14].
[11] Section 8.3.2.2 of [3]. Also see [7].
[12] Section 8.1.1 of [3].
[13] Section 8.1.4.4 of [3].
[14] Section 8.4.1.2 of [3].

[15] Section 8.4.2 of [3].
[16] Section 8.1.3 of [3].
[17] Section 8.2.1.2 of [3].
[18] Section 8.3.1.1 of [3].
[19] Section 8.3.2.1 of [3]. Also see [7].
[20] Section 8.3.2.3 of [3]. Also see [6], [7].
[21] Section 8.4.1.3 of [3].
[22] Section 8.4.1.1 of [3].
[23] Section 8.4.1.4 of [3].
[24] Section 8.4.3.1 of [3].
[25] Section 8.4.3.2 of [3].
[26] Section 8.2.3.1 of [3].
[27] Section 8.3.3.1 of [3].
[28] Section 8.1.4.1 of [3].
[29] Refer [15]
[30] Section 3 of [5]
[31] Section 3.1 of [5]
[32] Section 4 of [5]
[33] Section 5 of [5]
[34] Section 5.1 of [5]
[35] Section 5.2 of [5]
[36] Section 5.3 of [5]
[37] Section 5.4 of [5]
[38] Section 5.5 of [5]
[39] Section 6 of [5]
[40] Section 5.1 of [4]
[41] Section 5.2.2 of [4]
[42] Section 8.2.2.2 of [3]
[43] Section 8.1.2.3 of [3]
[44] Section 8.1.2.2 of [3]
[45] Section 5.4 of [4]
[46] Section 7 of [4]
[47] Section 8 of [5]
[48] Section 8.4.1.5 of [3]

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4. Security Considerations

This document, being a requirements document, does not have any security concerns. The security requirements on protocols to be evaluated using this document are described in the referenced documents.

5. IANA Considerations

This memo does not create any new number spaces for IANA administration.

6. Acknowledgments

Thanks to the members of the Mobile IP, AAA, and NASREQ working groups who have discussed and commented on these requirements. We would also like to thank the members of the AAA evaluation team, Mike St. Johns, Barney Wolf, Mark Stevens, David Nelson, Dave Mitton, Basavaraj Patil and Stuart Barkley for their thorough review of this document.

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