

Learn More About IdP and SP Initiated Authentication

1 IdP initiated SSO

Identity provider (IdP) initiated SSO involves the user clicking on a button in the IdP and then being forwarded to a SP along with a SAML message containing an assertion. This flow would typically be initiated by a page within the IdP that shows a list of all available SPs that a user can login to.

1.1 How does IdP-initiated authentication work?

Suppose a user successfully logs into their Identity Provider, they navigate to the dashboard which displays a variety of Service Providers the user can access, and they click on the desired Service Provider.

The Identity Provider then creates an SSO response and a SAML 2.0 Assertion which contains authentication details and information about the user. The Service Provider receives the SSO response from the Identity Provider via the browser, validates the SAML 2.0 Assertion, and generates a session for the user.

2 SP initiated SSO

Service Provider (SP) initiated SSO starts when a user tries to access an application at the service provider end but hasn't yet authenticated from IdP. A user may have visited the site directly. Once the SP sees that the user does not have any browser session active, it will redirect them to the identity provider (IdP) asking for authentication request.

2.1 How does SP-initiated authentication work?

Suppose a user initiates the authentication process by clicking on a login button within the application. The application will generate a request ID and send those values along with the SAML authentication request to the Identity Provider via the browser.

The application will store the request ID. When the Identity Provider returns a SAML response it will include the request ID provided by the application. The application will then check those values against the stored values to ensure a match.

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