

RelayState

[RelayState](#) is a term from [SAML2.0](#) that refers to a parameter supported by SAML bindings that pass SAML messages through a web browser. A request can include this information and the responder then returns the information with its response, allowing the requester to reconnect the response to any locally-relevant state.

[SAML1.1](#) doesn't formally have the concept of [RelayState](#), but has a one-way mechanism, the *TARGET* parameter, used in both [BrowserProfiles](#). It's usually been interpreted/used as being the URL of a resource at the [ServiceProvider](#) to access once a session is built.

When Shibboleth developed a custom [AuthnRequest](#) message to initiate the [BrowserProfiles](#), a *target* parameter was defined to match the response parameter (the case is unfortunately different, but they correspond). The initial Shibboleth implementations embedded the URL of a resource in it.

Starting with [Shib1.3](#), a new property in [ShibbolethXml](#) (`=/SPConfig/Local/@localRelayState=`) exists to cache the URL locally in a cookie and send a fixed value to the [IdentityProvider](#). The fixed value is arbitrary (an implementation detail) and is a signal to the [ServiceProvider](#) to retrieve the URL from the cookie and redirect to it.

Secondly, a new property `/SPConfig/Applications/@=homeURL` is used to establish a default location to redirect the user if nothing better can be found. An [IdentityProvider](#) can set a *TARGET* value of `default` to rely on this behavior, but this depends on knowing the [ServiceProvider](#) is running a new enough version (so it's application-specific, but suitable for those creating such links).

Going forward, I would expect this to be the model used, and that we would generally not use the [RelayState](#) mechanism defined in that specification.