



## Commerce Recommends Industry Lead Internet ID Board

BY ALIYA STERNSTEIN 02/08/12 04:46 pm ET

The Commerce Department plans to initiate a government-funded steering board that eventually would be privatized to build a global system for safekeeping online identities.

Under [recommendations](#) released on Wednesday, private sector officials would lead the committee in cooperation with, but independent of, the government. After about two years, the body would need to be self-sustaining, Commerce officials said.

The board is part of an Obama administration [strategy](#) to spawn an online credentialing network similar to the credit card payment system that would allow consumers to, without registering, access their bank accounts, veterans benefits and any manner of secure online services. No more multiple passwords to forget.

"As a key stakeholder and active participant in the identity ecosystem, the government intends to catalyze the creation of this new governing body by funding, through a competitive grant, a service to provide secretarial (administrative and operational) support for the Identity Ecosystem Steering Group," the Commerce report states. "After a period of initial government support, the steering group will need to establish a self-sustaining structure capable of allowing continued growth and operational independence.

Some critics of the overall approach, called the National Strategy for Trusted Identities in Cyberspace, have argued that a government-run credentialing initiative could morph into a national ID system for tracking citizens. "If the folks doing NSTIC succeed in their goal of creating an identity ecosystem, it's not the national ID that I oppose," said Jim Harper, director of information policy at the Cato Institute. But, "if the government is the lead actor in this ecosystem, well, the government's going to end up calling the shots," he added. "And when we have a bad day, if heaven forbid there's some kind of terrorist attack, watch the government turn on a dime and drop the idea of an open ID system."

On Wednesday, Jeremy Grant, senior executive advisor for identity management at Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology said in a statement, "While NSTIC is a government initiative, the Identity Ecosystem it envisions must be led by the private sector. . .The recommendations we published today lay out a specific path to bring together all NSTIC stakeholders--including the private sector, advocacy groups, public-sector agencies and other organizations--to jointly create an online environment, the ecosystem, where individuals and organizations will be able to better trust one another, with minimized disclosure of personal information."