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OAuth 2.0 JWT Authorization Request

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Abstract

The authorization request in OAuth 2.0 [RFC6749] utilizes query parameter serialization, which means that parameters are encoded in the URI of the request. This document introduces the ability to send request parameters in form of a JSON Web Token (JWT) instead, which allows the request to be signed and encrypted. using JWT serialization. The request is sent by value or by reference.

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1. Introduction

The OAuth 2.0 specification [RFC 6749] defines the encoding of requests and responses and in case of the authorization request query parameter serialization has been chosen. For example, the parameters 'response_type', 'client_id', 'state', and 'redirect_uri' are encoded in the URI of the request:

```
GET /authorize?response_type=code&client_id=s6BhdRkqt3&state=xyz &redirect_uri=https%3A%2F%2Fclient%2Eexample%2Ecom%2Fcb HTTP/1.1
Host: server.example.com
```

The encoding in the URI does not allow application layer security with confidentiality and integrity protection to be used. While TLS is used to offer communication security between the client and the resource server, TLS sessions are often terminated prematurely at some middlebox (such as a load balancer). The use of application layer security additionally allows requests to be prepared by a third party so that a client application cannot request more permissions than previously agreed. This offers an additional degree of privacy protection.

Further, the request by reference allows to reduce the over-the-wire overhead.

There are other potential formats that could be used for this purpose instead of JWT. The JWT was chosen because of

1. its close relationship with JSON, which is used as OAuth's response format;
2. its developer friendliness due to its textual nature;
3. its relative compactness compared to XML;
4. its development status that it is an RFC and so is its associated signing and encryption methods as [RFC7515] and [RFC7516].

The parameters request and request_uri are introduced as additional authorization request parameters for the OAuth 2.0 [RFC6749] flows. The request parameter is a [JSON Web Token \(JWT\)](#) [RFC7519] whose JWT Claims Set holds the JSON encoded OAuth 2.0 authorization request parameters. The JWT [RFC7519] can be passed to the authorization endpoint by reference, in which case the parameter request_uri is used instead of the request.

Using JWT [RFC7519] as the request encoding instead of query parameters has several advantages:

1. The request can be signed so that an integrity check can be implemented. If a suitable algorithm is used for the signing, then it will provide verification of the client making the request.
2. The request may be encrypted so that end-to-end confidentiality may be obtained even if in the case TLS connection is terminated at a gateway or a similar device.
3. The request may be signed by a third party attesting that the authorization request is compliant to certain policy. For example, a request can be pre-examined by a third party that all the personal data requested is strictly necessary to perform the process that the end-user asked for, and statically signed by that third party. The client would then send the request along with dynamic parameters such as state. The authorization server then examines the signature and shows the conformance status to the end-user, who would have some assurance as to the legitimacy of the request when authorizing it. In some cases, it may even be desirable to skip the authorization dialogue under such

circumstances.

There are a few cases that request by reference are useful such as:

1. When it is desirable to reduced the size of transmitted request. Since we are using application layer security, it may substantially increase the size of the request particularly in the case of using public key cryptography.
2. Static signature: The client can make a signed Request Object and put it at a place that the Authorization Server can access. This may just be done by a client utility or other process, so that the private key does not have to reside on the client, simplifying programming. Downside of it is that the signed portion just become a token.
3. When the server wants the requests to be cacheable: The `request_uri` may include a SHA-256 hash of the contents of the resources referenced by the Request URI. With this, the server knows if the resource has changed without fetching it, so it does not have to re-fetch the same content, which is a win as well. This is explained in [Section 4.2](#).

This capability is in use by OpenID Connect [\[OpenID.Core\]](#).

1.1. Requirements Language

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in [RFC 2119](#) [RFC2119].

2. Terminology

For the purposes of this specification, the following terms and definitions apply.

2.1. Request Object

[JWT](#) [RFC7519] that holds an OAuth 2.0 authorization request as JWT Claims Set

2.2. Request Object URI

Absolute URI from which the [Request Object](#) [request_object] can be obtained

3. Request Object

A [Request Object](#) [request_object] is used to provide authorization request parameters for an OAuth 2.0 authorization request. It contains [OAuth 2.0](#) [RFC6749] authorization request parameters including extension parameters. The parameters are represented as the JWT claims. Parameter names and string values MUST be included as JSON strings. Numerical values MUST be included as JSON numbers. It MAY include any extension parameters. This [JSON](#) [RFC7159] constitutes the [JWT Claims Set](#) [RFC7519]. The JWS Claims Set is then signed, encrypted, or signed and encrypted.

To sign, [JSON Web Signature \(JWS\)](#) [RFC7515] is used. The result is a JWS signed [JWT](#) [RFC7519]. If signed, the Authorization Request Object SHOULD contain the Claims `iss` (issuer) and `aud` (audience) as members, with their semantics being the same as defined in the [JWT](#) [RFC7519] specification.

To encrypt, [JWE](#) [RFC7516] is used. Note that JWE is always integrity protected, so if only integrity protection is desired, JWS signature is not needed.

It can also be signed then encrypted. This is sometimes desired to reduced the repudiation risk from the point of view of the receiver. In this case, it MUST be signed then encrypted, with the result being a Nested JWT, as defined in [JWT](#) [RFC7519].

The Authorization Request Object may be sent by value as described in [Section 4.1](#) or by reference as described in [Section 4.2](#).

REQUIRED OAuth 2.0 Authorization Request parameters that are not included in the Request Object MUST be sent as query parameters. If a required parameter is missing from both the query parameters and the Request Object, the request is malformed.

`request` and `request_uri` parameters MUST NOT be included in Request Objects.

If the parameter exists in both the query string and the Authorization Request Object, the values in the Request Object take precedence. This means that if it intends to use a cached request object, it cannot include parameters such as `state` that are expected to differ in every request. It is fine to include them in the request object if it is going to be prepared afresh every time.

The following is a non-normative example of the Claims in a Request Object before base64url encoding and signing. Note that it includes extension variables such as `"nonce"` and `"max_age"`.

```
{
  "iss": "s6BhdRkqt3",
  "aud": "https://server.example.com",
```


5.2. Signed Request Object

To perform Signature Validation, the alg Header Parameter in the JOSE Header MUST match the value of the pre-registered algorithm. The signature MUST be validated against the appropriate key for that client_id and algorithm.

The Authorization Server MUST return an error if signature validation fails.

5.3. Request Parameter Assembly and Validation

The Authorization Server MUST assemble the set of Authorization Request parameters to be used from the Request Object value and the OAuth 2.0 Authorization Request parameters (minus the request or request_uri parameters). If the same parameter exists both in the Request Object and the OAuth Authorization Request parameters, the parameter in the Request Object is used. Using the assembled set of Authorization Request parameters, the Authorization Server then validates the request as specified in [OAuth 2.0 \[RFC6749\]](#).

6. Authorization Server Response

Authorization Server Response is created and sent to the client as in Section 4 of [OAuth 2.0 \[RFC6749\]](#).

In addition, this document uses these additional error values:

invalid_request_uri

The request_uri in the Authorization Request returns an error or contains invalid data.

invalid_request_object

The request parameter contains an invalid Request Object.

request_not_supported

The Authorization Server does not support the use of the request parameter.

request_uri_not_supported

The Authorization Server does not support use of the request_uri parameter.

7. IANA Considerations

This specification requests no actions by IANA.

8. Security Considerations

In addition to the all [the security considerations discussed in OAuth 2.0 \[RFC6819\]](#), the following security considerations SHOULD be taken into account.

When sending the authorization request object through request parameter, it SHOULD be signed with then considered appropriate algorithm using [\[RFC7515\]](#). The alg=none SHOULD NOT be used in such a case.

If the request object contains personally identifiable or sensitive information, the "request_uri" MUST be of one-time use and MUST have large enough entropy deemed necessary with applicable security policy. For higher security requirement, using [\[RFC7516\]](#) is strongly recommended.

9. Acknowledgements

Follwoing people contributed to the creation of this document in OAuth WG. (Affiliations at the time of the contribution is used.)

Sergey Beryozkin, Brian Campbell (Ping Identity), Michael B. Jones (Microsoft), Jim Manico, Axel Nenker(DT), (add yourself).

Following people contributed to creating this document through [the OpenID Connect 1.0 \[OpenID.Core\]](#).

Brian Campbell (Ping Identity), George Fletcher (AOL), Ryo Itou (Yahoo! Japan), Edmund Jay (Illumila), Michael B. Jones (Microsoft), Breno de Medeiros (Google), Hideki Nara (TACT), Justin Richer (MITRE), (add yourself).

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Dirk Balfanz (Google), James H. Manger (Telstra), John Panzer (Google), David Recordon (Facebook), Marius Scurtescu (Google), Luke Shepard (Facebook), (add yourself).

10. Revision History

-07

- Changed the abbrev to OAuth JAR from oauth-jar.
- Clarified sig and enc methods.
- Better English.
- Removed claims from one of the example.
- Re-worded the URI construction.
- Changed the example to use request instead of request_uri.

- Clarified that Request Object parameters takes precedence regardless of request or request_uri parameters were used.
- Generalized the language in 4.2.1 to convey the intent more clearly.
- Changed "Server" to "Authorization Server" as a clarification.
- Stopped talking about request_object_signing_alg.
- IANA considerations now reflect the current status.
- Added Brian Campbell to the contributors list. Made the lists alphabetic order based on the last names. Clarified that the affiliation is at the time of the contribution.
- Added "older versions of " to the reference to IE uri length limitations.
- Stopped talking about signed or unsigned JWS etc.
- 1.Introduction improved.

-06

- Added explanation on the 512 chars URL restriction.
- Updated Acknowledgements.

-05

- More alignment with OpenID Connect.

-04

- Fixed typos in examples. (request_url -> request_uri, cliend_id -> client_id)
- Aligned the error messages with the OAuth IANA registry.
- Added another rationale for having request object.

-03

- Fixed the non-normative description about the advantage of static signature.
- Changed the requirement for the parameter values in the request itself and the request object from 'MUST MATCH' to 'Req Obj takes precedence.

-02

- Now that they are RFCs, replaced JWS, JWE, etc. with RFC numbers.

-01

- Copy Edits.

11. References

11.1. Normative References

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