

Exchange Standards Frequently Asked Questions

Here are some commonly asked questions about the standards. There are additional FAQ's on the [Plug Fest FAQ](#) page.

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What's the basic difference between the SES and the SIS?

The SES refers to the Solution Exchange Standard, a specification which outlines a data model for exchange of solutions (information pertaining to the diagnosis and resolution of a technical situation).

The SIS refers to the Service Incident Exchange Standard, a specification which outlines a data model and appropriate transactions to support the exchange of incidents (specific customer requests and interactions towards solving a technical situation).

Both standards share many common data elements, as in many scenarios an incident may migrate or translate into a solution.

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What's the latest release of SES and SIS?

SES and SIS versions 1.1 were released on June 15, 1998. These releases contain clarifications and corrections from the version 1.0 specifications released in 1997. Compatibility workshops and compatibility listing will be based on the 1.1 version.

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Who is using the standards, and how?

The following organizations have one or more groups within them that have stated their intent to support the standards in 1998. Enablers are organizations which provide technology to the support industry - their support will be through the software and tools they provide to create and exchange incidents and solutions. Content Providers are support organizations themselves - their support will be through the data they store and exchange through the standards.

Enablers	Content Providers
Clarify	Attachmate
Cybermedia	Compaq
Inference	Hewlett-Packard
Primus	Intel
Service Soft	Microsoft
Serviceware	Xerox
SystemSoft	
Vantive	

Compatibility with the standards is determined at Standards Compatibility Workshops. See the [Compatibility Workshop FAQ's](#) for more information about these events.

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What information exists about implementation?

The SES/SIS specifications and MOF Addendum contain examples of use. There is also an [Implementer's Guide](#) created by Microsoft and Cambridge Technology Partners, which outlines the key business considerations and processes in implementing. See the Exchange Standards Program Page for further documentation and presentation information about standards implementation.

The Documentation sub-group will be working to create additional

examples, focus papers and key documentation to help capture and make available information about best practices in using SES and SIS.

The Consortium hosts [Exchange Standards Workshops](#) on a regular basis, to help disseminate information about the standards and their use. See the [Consortium Events Calendar](#) for the next workshop, or contact John Chmaj, the Consortium co-chair and workshop leader. Contact:

jchmaj@customersupport.org

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Is there an SES/SIS Developer Kit?

Several Consortium and DMTF member organizations contribute software and tools to help further the standards work. Several companies are currently working on parsing, translation and testing tools, which will be posted on the Exchange Standards Program Page as they become publicly available. Our intent is to provide an initial set of tools, examples and interoperability practices to demonstrate and stimulate industry adoption. Individual developers will use as much or as little of the publicly available tools as meet the size and scope of capability they are seeking to achieve.

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Is the communication protocol for SES or SIS defined?

SES or SIS do not require or mandate one specific communication protocol; however, it is understood that exchange partners will need a common protocol to interoperate. It is not possible at this time to define a single protocol which will service every platform and system in the support technology space. Partner organizations define appropriate communications platforms with each other as part of initiating a standards interaction effort. The initial interoperability tests will confirm the initial protocol(s) used by early adopters, to give other implementers examples and guidance on what is possible. This information will be published as part of the report from these tests.

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What's the difference between MOF and CIM? How are they related?

The standards mention use of the Common Information Model (from the DMTF). Where does CIM get used within the standard and the MOF file?

CIM encompasses an entire information model that is not necessary for the exchange standards proper. CIM data definitions include: physical system descriptions, networks, products, users and services. This data can eventually serve as input to the support standards, as system state and diagnostic information flows from the CIM standards into SES and SIS to create support incidents and solutions.

The associative representation method used by CIM to define how objects are related to each other is the part that is incorporated into the exchange standards. This was done to assure long-term compatibility with the CIM design, so that if and when it's appropriate to leverage these two models together, it will be much easier to do. MOF reflects the CIM markup in how it points to objects and their relationship to each other in the data model hierarchies.

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How do the standards and MOF relate to XML?

The Exchange Standards groups of the Consortium/DMTF use the Managed Object Format (MOF) as the common markup. The desirable aspects of MOF as a common markup include:

1. MOF is a rich, well defined language capable of handling data with varying degrees of structural complexity. It was created specifically for the rich data representations required in CIM, and contains definition capabilities beyond current XML specifications.
2. MOF uses an object association model which optimizes the amount of markup (less redundancy, minimum data overhead).
3. MOF is a core part of the DMTF CIM initiative; SES/SIS can leverage and integrate with emerging data objects as the CIM committees define them (e.g., for networks, systems, etc.) to stimulate a consistent format and markup across both the support and the IT worlds.
4. MOF is intended as a data transmission format, so is an appropriate for efficient exchange transactions.

XML is emerging as a common markup format for Internet and SGML-based documents. It has the following inherent advantages:

1. XML as an SGML-based language can easily integrate with many existing

- data markup and parsing tools.
2. **Many organizations have or will have a large collection of XML documents, particularly in their solution set for Internet delivery. Providing an XML mapping to the standards would allow a clear and relatively simple migration path for the industry to the standard data models.**
 3. **XML as a hierarchical, fully tagged representation gives a readable view of a marked-up collection, making identification of data elements easier, and simplifying some parsing tasks.**

Many companies are strongly interested in SES/SIS support for XML. XML translation capabilities could help drive understanding and adoption of the standards in the industry. The DMTF has created a sub-committee on XML to define an effective interoperability approach between CIM/MOF and XML. The standards group has a sub-committee which is working to define the specific translations required between the SES and SIS data models, CIM/MOF and XML. Standards committee members can get more information on this ongoing effort at the [XML Sub-group page](#).

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