

Substitutions and the Parameter Acquisition Path

Each parameter in a service policy requires that a value be obtained. In the example above, the denial-of-service protection policies have two parameters: port number and bandwidth percentage. Each of those parameters in a service's network policies results in the creation of a variable. Policy configuration specifies the name of a variable.

Each of these variables must have a value assigned to it (unless it already has a default value). The enterprise service portal can obtain that value from the enterprise customer. The enterprise service portal must then call a method in the API to assign that value to the variable. The API will record this value by writing a substitution into an LDAP entry. A substitution is an LDAP entry attribute that, at its simplest, just assigns a value to a variable.

More than one substitution can exist for a given variable. Substitutions for a given variable can exist in any LDAP entry on the acquisition path. The acquisition path is a path through a sequence of LDAP entries. It begins with a most specific entry and ends with a most general entry. When the value for a given variable is specified through substitution attributes in multiple LDAP entries on this path, only the most specific entry's substitution is actually used.

The ordering of the LDAP entries in the acquisition path is always the same. Starting from the most specific, they are the:

1. SSP subscription entry under the access entry (if one exists for the service in question)
2. Access entry
3. SSP subscription entry under the site entry (if one exists for the service in question)
4. Site entry
5. SSP subscription entry under the enterprise entry (if one exists for the service in question)
6. Enterprise entry
7. Relevant localized version of the SSP service entry (if one exists)
8. SSP service entry

The acquisition path allows values assigned to variables at a more general place in the acquisition path to be overridden by values assigned at a more specific place in the acquisition path. This method enables an enterprise to subscribe to a given service, to specify values for that service's parameters at a more general place in the acquisition path, and then to override those values at a more specific level according to the needs of local enterprise IT managers who control a given site or access.



NOTE: Each session of a subscription uses a different acquisition path (because each is associated with a different access). This means that each session of a subscription may end up with different values for a given service parameter. For each session, the enterprise API exposes detailed information about the actual values used for every service parameter.

Power of Substitutions

In addition to assigning values to the variables that are used as service parameters, a substitution can declare that the value it assigns is fixed. When a fixed value is declared, substitutions for the same variable that exist in more specific places in the acquisition path are ignored (that is, the fixed value cannot be overridden). More important, a substitution can specify the value for a variable as an expression that includes other variables. A substitution can also introduce new variables. The new variables are then available for use in other substitutions at any more specific point on the acquisition path. Enterprise service portals that expose these features allow enterprises to define their own way of presenting and managing service parameters. For more detail on service parameters, the acquisition path, and the uses of substitutions, see *Parameters and Substitutions* and *Value Acquisition for Single Subscriptions*.

Substituting Values for Policy Parameters

The value substitution feature of an enterprise service portal gives the enterprise IT manager the ability to customize subscribed services in his or her sphere of control. The enterprise IT manager can be required to provide a set of substitutions that define the values for the parameters of the underlying service policies everywhere the policies are applied. Sample parameter types that might require value substitution include:

- Network—Address/prefix length pairs that denote networks
- Interface—Router interface specifications
- Protocol—Eight-bit unsigned integers enumerating protocols such as IP, TCP, and UDP
- Rate—32-bit unsigned integers used for rate-limit and burst-size calculations

For example, the service provider could offer a service to the enterprise that applies a firewall policy. The firewall policy could screen ingress traffic from a source network and redirect the screened traffic to a specific destination. The enterprise IT manager might want to specify at the time of subscription or subscription activation which source networks are involved. The service provider establishes a general policy template, in this case configuring the destination. The enterprise IT manager modifies the template by means of value substitution for the particular needs of the enterprise, such as providing a range of IP addresses for one or more source networks.

A different service might have an egress rate-limit policy with policy rules to screen egress traffic from the source network, by protocol, or according to a traffic rate limit. Value substitution for the parameters defined in the generic policy template enables the manager to define the policy to match the needs of the enterprise.

Note that parameter names provided to one customer can be renamed by the service provider to suit the needs of another customer. For example, one customer might prefer a parameter named “ department” to one named “ network” because that name better fits the enterprise hierarchy.

The service provider can specify whether all parameters or only certain ones can be modified in the enterprise service portal by the enterprise IT manager by means of value substitution. Likewise, an IT manager can determine whether subordinate managers have the ability to modify a given service parameter. Parameters for which values cannot be substituted at a given level are said to be fixed at some higher level. For example, in the sample portal, the enterprise service portal populates drop-down lists from which the manager at that level can select values to substitute. If a parameter substitution is fixed at a higher management level, lower-level managers will not see options for substituting for that parameter in the drop-down lists on their instance of the enterprise service portal.

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