

Toward a PEC Use-Case Suite

*Draft 2021-January-21, for public comments

†Send feedback to pec-suite@nist.gov, by 2021-March-22

Abstract. This document motivates the development of a **privacy-enhancing cryptography (PEC)** use-case *suite*. This would constitute a set of proofs of concepts, showcasing the use of cryptographic tools for enabling privacy in various applications. This is not a proposal, but rather a sketch idea to motivate initial public feedback, which can be useful to determine a potential process towards a PEC use-case suite.

Keywords: cryptography, privacy, privacy-enhancing cryptography (PEC), reference material, secure multiparty computation (SMPC), zero-knowledge proof (ZKP).

1 Introduction

1.1 Scope

PEC. **Privacy-enhancing cryptography (PEC)** refers, in a broad and literal sense, to cryptography (that can be) used to **enhance privacy**. PEC tools can serve as enablers of responsible data sharing and interactions, in settings where otherwise (without PEC) one may lack trust to partake in such processes, or be unable to meet privacy regulatory requirements. The technical challenge is often to enable multiple parties to interact meaningfully, towards achieving an application goal, without revealing extraneous private information to one another or to third parties.

Suite. To help identify and assess the potential and pertinence of various PEC tools, it is useful to foster the development of related reference material. This can include reference definitions, descriptions, comparisons, evaluations, security analyzes and

* Luís T. A. N. Brandão. Foreign Guest Researcher at NIST (Contractor via Strativia). Opinions expressed here are by the author and should not be construed as official NIST views.

† Earlier feedback may be useful for an early-improved public draft version.

1 benchmarking. The sketch idea of a PEC use-case suite arises in this context. Such
2 a suite would constitute a collection of proofs of concept, showcasing the possible use
3 of cryptographic tools for enabling privacy in various applications. The showcased
4 PEC tools can include non-standardized primitives and complex protocols, possibly
5 characterized as advanced cryptography, and they may allow a wide range of tradeoffs.
6 The scope of interest is indeed on the use of currently non-standardized cryptographic
7 techniques and building blocks.

8 **Vision.** Over time, the suite can develop into a practical basis of PEC *reference*
9 *material*, providing insights about security, feasibility, system design, tradeoffs, interop-
10 erability and best practices. This would be developed with the collaboration of the in-
11 ternational community of stakeholders. From such endeavor would emerge an improved
12 expertise about PEC, useful to assess the pertinence of PEC in conceivable applica-
13 tions, and to develop possible recommendations, for example about future fundamental
14 research and standardization efforts. In the long term, the conceivable benefits of such
15 endeavor also include fostering a responsible promotion of privacy goals in myriad
16 applications. Figure 1 illustrates a corresponding sequence of phases, at a high level.

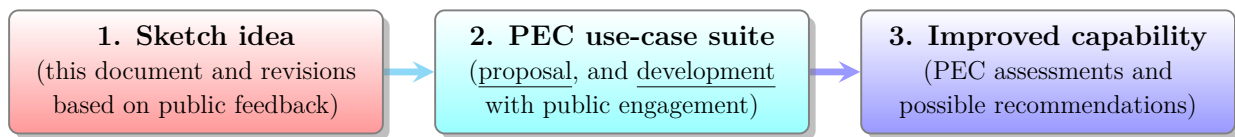


Figure 1: Possible sequence of phases

17 **A large space.** Traditional activities of cryptography standardization, for example at
18 NIST, have revolved around *basic* cryptographic primitives, such as block-ciphers, hash
19 functions, random-number generators and regular public-key encryption and signatures.
20 The development of a PEC use-case suite is an approach to tap into the space of more
21 advanced cryptography, where there is a large complexity and range of tradeoffs, many
22 of which to be better understood. It is not on its own intended to derive standards, but
23 to build a (use-case) knowledge basis of how PEC tools can be securely used in the real
24 world. This reference can be useful to characterize the next *basic* level of primitives and
25 protocols, and to support rationale for selecting directions of subsequent engagement.
26 Overall, this is aligned with supporting *the development of innovative security tech-*
27 *nologies, to address current and future computer and information security challenges.*

1 **Early feedback.** While this writeup is informal in nature, the intention is that it
2 serves as a basis for developing future more-technical documentation. Rather than mak-
3 ing here a concrete proposal of a PEC use-case suite, the document sketches an idea of
4 what such a suite could be, in order to promote initial external feedback. Such feedback
5 can come from a variety of international stakeholders, including from academia, indus-
6 try and government sectors. In general, it will be useful to hear about areas of privacy-
7 enhancing applications where advanced cryptographic techniques may be essential en-
8 ablers. The expected feedback can be useful to steer the idea, with respect to its focuses,
9 format and goals, and for elaborating a subsequent proposal for a PEC use-case suite.

10 **1.2 Cryptographic tools vs. privacy applications**

11 A main aim for considering a PEC use-case suite is to enable assessments about the
12 potential use of cryptographic tools (primitives, techniques, protocols) as privacy en-
13 ablers. In doing so, taking an application layer into account is essential to better scope
14 the perspectives from which to consider PEC tools, namely to enable a comparison
15 of the potential and of the pertinence across tools.

16 The scope of interest in PEC in this document can be seen arising from an intersec-
17 tion of cryptography (namely research results in cryptographic tools, here meaning
18 to include primitives, protocols and techniques), privacy (namely potential privacy-
19 enhancing applications), and standardization-like activities (including development of
20 recommendations, guidelines and standards). This intersection is illustrated in Fig. 2.

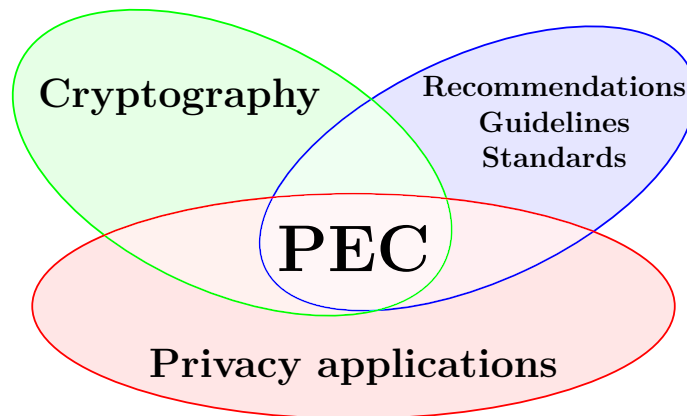


Figure 2: A PEC scope from an intersection of several areas

1.3 Document organization

Section 2 describes various examples of PEC primitives and application areas. Section 3 considers the complementarity of PEC and related areas. Section 4 gives an outline of a possible PEC use-case suite development. Section 5 suggests a structure for the public feedback.

2 Examples of PEC Primitives and Applications

2.1 Example PEC techniques

PEC tools include a variety of cryptographic primitives, protocols and techniques useful for enabling privacy. Relevant representatives include **zero-knowledge proofs (ZKPs)**, **secure multiparty computation (SMPC)**, group signatures and functional encryption.

- **Zero-knowledge proofs (ZKPs)**. Allow one party (the prover) to prove to another (the verifier) that a given statement is true, or that some mathematical solution is known to the prover, without revealing any information about the solution.
- **Secure multi-party computation (SMPC)**. Allows multiple parties, possibly mutually distrustful, to compute a function (or functionality) of their inputs, as if it were computed by a trusted third party. A party can therefore preserve privacy of their input (i.e., what cannot be derived from the input and output of other parties), even though the input is used in the computation, while also ensuring correctness of outputs. This is achieved without actually needing a trusted party.
- **Group and ring signatures**. Allow a member of a group to digitally sign a message, to prove authenticity/membership with respect to the group (i.e., that it was signed by a group member and it has not been altered there since), while preserving identity privacy (not revealing the identity of the signatory, apart the group membership predicate, and not allowing linkage to other signatures by the same signatory). In group signatures there is a group manager with a secret key that may enable finding who was the actual signatory.
- **Functional encryption**. A sophisticated encryption scheme that allows producing decryption keys that only decrypt a specific function of whatever plaintext

1 is encrypted. Two specialized cases are identity-based encryption (IBE) and
 2 attribute-based encryption (ABE), where the decryption ability respectively de-
 3 pends on the assigned identity and attributes of the decrypting party (i.e., who
 4 has a special decryption key dependent only on the identity and attributes, re-
 5 spectively). For encryption it is sufficient to have a single encryption public key,
 6 regardless of how many different functions, attributes or identities may be allowed
 7 to perform decryption (with corresponding decryption keys).

Table 1: Examples of PEC primitives/techniques

Primitive	Description hint (informal)
Zero Knowledge Proofs (ZKPs)	Prove knowledge of a secret solution to a problem, without revealing the solution.
Secure Multiparty Computation (SMPC)	Jointly compute a function over inputs distributed across several parties, without each party revealing their input.
Group and ring signatures	Produce an unforgeable digital signature, convincingly exhibiting that it has been signed by an unrevealed member of a group.
Functional encryption	Decrypt a function (as specified by a decryption key) of a plaintext that has been encrypted, without learning the clear plaintext.
Fully-Homomorphic Encryption (FHE)	Compute over encrypted data, without learning the plaintext input/output, but ensuring the intended functional transformation.
Private Set Intersection (PSI)	Determine the intersection of sets held by multiple parties, without revealing the non-intersecting components.
Private Information Retrieval (PIR)	Query a key-value database, with the database owner being assured that only one element was queried but not learning which.
Searchable Encryption	Search for a keyword in a database of encrypted documents, obtaining the resulting documents without revealing the keyword.
Blind signatures	Obtain a signature, from a trusted party, without revealing what document has been signed.

1 Other examples include fully homomorphic encryption (FHE), private set intersection
2 (PSI), private information retrieval (PIR), and blind signatures. This is not an ex-
3 haustive list. Table 1 collects these examples, along with very brief description hints.
4 Some PEC techniques may be characterized as “advanced cryptography”, as their high
5 dimensionality of variants and tradeoffs may present a challenge for interoperability,
6 and for reflecting on the pertinence of standardization. Yet, they have a clear potential
7 as enablers of enhanced privacy in myriad use-cases.

8 **“Interesting” PEC primitives.** There is a wide range of cryptographic techniques
9 and uses that can fit in the PEC scope. These can be used as tools to enable
10 information utility/sharing together with fulfillment of data minimization principles,
11 sometimes in sophisticated and possibly counter-intuitive manners. The exploration
12 proposed in this document is purposely biased toward advanced and non-standardized
13 cryptographic primitives/techniques. Naturally, this characterization is contextual,
14 dependent on the state of development and standardization.

15 Throughout the proposed process of identifying interesting PEC tools, some basic or
16 standardized primitives may be given less emphasis. Two such examples are regular en-
17 cryption and signatures, which, although useful, already have well known standardized
18 instantiations. Regular encryption is the paradigmatic tool for enforcing confidentiality
19 of data, which can be useful for enabling privacy in some settings. Regular signatures
20 can in some applications be used as a basis for authorization of data disclosure, sustain-
21 ing privacy by preventing said authorization from being given by illegitimate parties.

22 **2.2 PEC application areas**

23 The notions of application and use-case are related. In this document, “use-case” typ-
24 ically denotes a representative application. The main elements of the conceived suite
25 are PEC use-cases, which encompass an instantiation of PEC tools (i.e., cryptographic
26 primitives, protocols or techniques) and a description of an application setting (which
27 will inform the privacy requirements and why the proposed PEC tools make sense).

1 A future suite could identify numerous PEC use-cases, along with a detailed showcasing
2 of cryptography tools that are or can be used to achieve or facilitate them. To prepare
3 a process for a PEC use-case suite, it would be useful to count with initial suggestions
4 of *application areas*, along with a note on the corresponding useful PEC building
5 blocks. There is value in having application areas be first suggested in detailed manner
6 by external stakeholders. The following notes, intended as suggestive and purposely
7 described at a very high level, are based on descriptions in the NIST-PEC project
8 webpage. More details at <https://csrc.nist.gov/projects/pec>.

9 **2.2.1 Direct disclosure of predicates**

10 A person has a credential, e.g., embedded within a smartcard, issued and digitally
11 signed by a certification authority (CA), and containing **private identifiable information**
12 (PII). The certified PII may include some alphanumeric identifiers, such as full name,
13 birthdate, address, some identification or license number (for some activity) and profes-
14 sional title(s), and possibly also some digitized biometric data (e.g., face photo and fin-
15 gerprint). In a conceivable application, the person holding the credential uses it to prove
16 some predicate on the PII. For example, it could prove that a real-time digitization of
17 the person’s face matches the certified photo, and that the associated data is consistent
18 with having a voting age and having a registered address in a particular voting jurisdic-
19 tion. Using a practical PEC protocol, e.g., based on ZKPs, the person should be able
20 to convince a verifier that the predicate is satisfied consistently with the identifiers and
21 attributes that the CA has vouched for, yet without revealing extraneous data (e.g., the
22 birthday, the address and even the original photo) and without interacting with the CA.

23 **2.2.2 Brokered authentication**

24 Identity providers (IDPs) can enable users to authenticate to service providers (SPs).
25 Some settings require a broker to mediate this transaction, so as to allow authentication
26 of a passive user (not having specialized software) between the IDPs and SPs, while
27 blinding each IDP and SP from one another. For example, the issuer (identity provider)
28 of an assertion, such as “John Smith is an employee of the Department of Commerce,”
29 does not need to know who the consumer of the assertion is. PEC can be used to

1 further prevent the mediator from learning the assertion, the user attributes and user
2 identity, and even from tracking/linking the same user across various authentications,
3 while at the same time ensuring auditability features to verify the validity of the
4 transactions. Various advanced cryptographic techniques can be used to assist with
5 privacy-preserving brokered identification. For example, SMPC can let the broker
6 verify that the attributes and identity of a user, as held by an IDP, satisfy some
7 predicate required by a SP, but without the IDP (or even the broker) learning what
8 that predicate is, and without the broker or SP learning the attributes and identity.

9 **2.2.3 Public auditability**

10 A Randomness Beacon publishes a random 512-bit number every minute, making it
11 publicly available for free in a digitally signed and time-stamped manner, and chaining
12 it into a backward-immutable chain. Such public randomness can be used to help
13 numerous parties coordinate on future randomness to use, while also allowing post-
14 facto public verification that correct randomness was used. This can fit applications
15 where the probabilistic distribution of the outcome should depend, in a publicly known
16 manner, on committed private attributes. Using PEC, e.g., ZKPs, it is possible to
17 allow such public auditability, while also satisfying privacy requirements. For example,
18 this can allow publicly auditable randomization of clinical trials that depend on
19 patients' data, while also satisfying the patients' privacy.

20 **2.2.4 A wide variety of topics**

21 Topics of PEC applications are likely to have an emphasis on information technology,
22 both in business and non-business sectors. For example, applications can relate to
23 online commerce, banking, health, education, geo-location, encounter metrics, elec-
24 tronic voting, treaty verification, social media and private messaging. They can
25 relate to enabling autonomy of private persons and communities, as well as enabling
26 good practices by collective entities. Also, the range of properties that are being
27 sought along with privacy can be diverse, including auditability and statistics. Some
28 applications, such as identification and authentication, can relate to real uses that
29 extend to a large range of activities.

1 Use-cases can be motivated by general privacy principles and by the perceived social
2 impact of the solutions. In some other cases the privacy requirements may result more
3 directly from existing regulations. For example: the handling of medical or educational
4 records in the U.S. may be subject to, respectively, the Health Insurance Portability
5 and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
6 (FERPA); depending on the jurisdiction, there may exist state-level regulations related
7 to consumers' rights over their personal data collected by business; the transmission of
8 data across countries may require compliance with various international regulations.

9 **3 PEC-related areas**

10 When reflecting about a possible PEC use-case suite, it is useful to consider the relation
11 between tools, applications and standards. This interconnection is illustrated in Fig. 3.
12 From a cryptographic-centric perspective, the “tools” are the cryptographic building
13 blocks that can be put together to facilitate an application. The applications are in
14 the level of specification of privacy requirements, which can then be implemented
15 with the help of PEC building blocks. Some PEC tools may be standardized by some
16 organizations, and that may constitute a motivation for their interoperable use in
17 applications. Correspondingly, the use of PEC tools in applications may promote
18 standardization. Both applications and standards related to PEC tools can also
19 promote further development and research toward improved PEC tools.

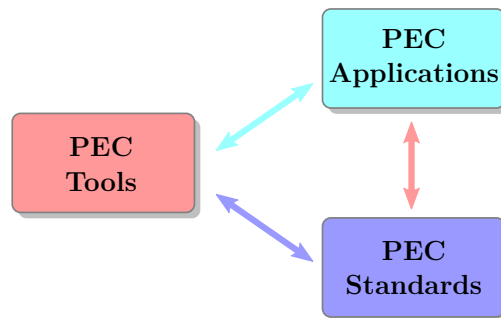


Figure 3: Interconnection between PEC tools, applications and standards

20 Fig. 4 illustrates a mind map with examples of PEC aspects of interest, in each of
21 the identified perspectives of tools, applications and standards.

1 The PEC range of interest is very broad and naturally touches on various perspectives
 2 of research, applications and standards. Correspondingly, the promotion of PEC can
 3 be designed to be complementary or enable synergies with those identified perspectives,
 4 rather than constituting a duplication of efforts in separate areas. Taking the NIST-
 5 PEC project as a reference point, the following paragraphs consider such possible rela-
 6 tions with the perspective of other NIST projects related to cryptography and privacy.

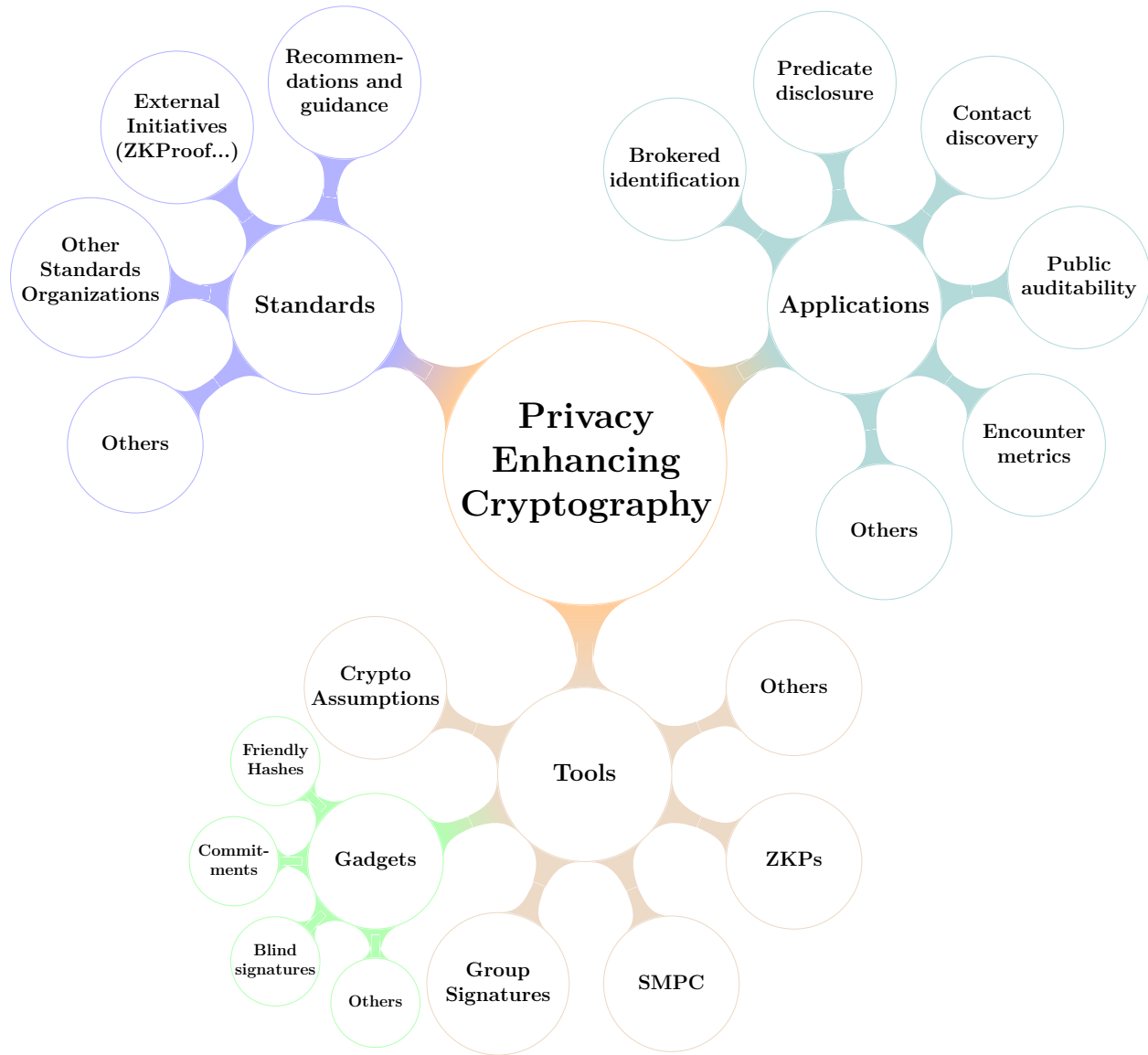


Figure 4: Mind map with examples of conceivable PEC focuses

3.1 Synergies with other cryptography-related projects

- **Threshold Cryptography.** SMPC, a main technique of PEC, is useful for threshold cryptography, where the typical goal is to compute a key-based cryptographic primitive while the secret-key is secret-shared. The PEC project provides a complementary coverage of SMPC techniques, since the reach of SMPC as a general technique is much broader than what the threshold cryptography project encompasses. More details at <https://csrc.nist.gov/projects/threshold-cryptography>.
- **Interoperable Randomness Beacons.** While a main application of randomness beacons is that of enabling public auditability of randomized processes, achieving such auditability in scenarios with privacy constraints imply the use of PEC. More details at <https://csrc.nist.gov/projects/interoperable-randomness-beacons>.
- **Post-Quantum Cryptography.** Some post-quantum cryptographic schemes are based on PEC building blocks (e.g., inspired by ZKPs or SMPC paradigms). Conversely, PEC techniques can (should) be developed to achieve post-quantum security, in line with progress in state of the art cryptography. More details at <https://csrc.nist.gov/projects/post-quantum-cryptography>.
- **Circuit Complexity.** Myriad efficient ZKPs and SMPC depend on good circuits with low complexity, e.g., low number and depth of multiplicative gates/operations. More details at <https://csrc.nist.gov/projects/circuit-complexity>.

3.2 Complementary privacy-related projects

Privacy is a very broad interdisciplinary area. While PEC is primarily focused on a direct relation between privacy and advanced cryptography, there are other privacy-related techniques, focuses and development activities. The following are some examples of privacy-related projects at NIST.

- **The Privacy Engineering Program (PEP):** “*support the development of trustworthy information systems by applying measurement science and system engineering principles to the creation of frameworks, risk models, guidance, tools,*

1 *and standards that protect privacy and, by extension, civil liberties.”* More details
2 at <https://www.nist.gov/itl/applied-cybersecurity/privacy-engineering>.

- 3 • **NIST Privacy Framework:** *“A tool to help organizations improve individuals’*
4 *privacy through enterprise risk management.”* More details at [https://www.nist.](https://www.nist.gov/privacy-framework)
5 [gov/privacy-framework](https://www.nist.gov/privacy-framework).
- 6 • **Differential Privacy Temporal Map Challenge:** *“develop algorithms and*
7 *metrics that preserve data utility while guaranteeing individual privacy is protected.”*
8 More details at [https://www.nist.gov/ctl/pscr/open-innovation-prize-challenges/](https://www.nist.gov/ctl/pscr/open-innovation-prize-challenges/current-and-upcoming-prize-challenges/2020-differential)
9 [current-and-upcoming-prize-challenges/2020-differential](https://www.nist.gov/ctl/pscr/open-innovation-prize-challenges/current-and-upcoming-prize-challenges/2020-differential)
- 10 • **National Cybersecurity Center of Excellence (NCCoE).** Maintains several
11 active projects that relate to the enhancement of trust, privacy and security in
12 cyber-security activities. More details at <https://www.nccoe.nist.gov>

13 **Complementarity example.** SMPC, within the scope of the PEC project, is a
14 general cryptographic technique that allows a fine-grained control of the leakage
15 happening in a secure interaction where multiple parties have decided which function
16 (or functionality) to compute from their combined inputs. Differential privacy on the
17 other hand provides insights and metrics to what data transformations are safe to leak,
18 in some contexts. Whether or not these techniques are applied in a complementary way
19 is up to the application design, but they can certainly be considered as complementary
20 building blocks for privacy-enhancing purposes.

21 **4 Envisioning a PEC use-case suite**

22 The promotion of innovation and industrial competitiveness in the area of PEC is
23 useful to enhance economic security and improve quality of life, which is aligned with
24 the mission of NIST. Such promotion is aligned with the following actions:

- 25 • Accompany the progress of emerging PEC technologies.
- 26 • Assess the potential of cryptography to enable privacy goals.
- 27 • Devise guidance about PEC tools and evaluate the pertinence of standardization.

1 The above should be anchored on a significant understanding of applicable privacy-
2 related use-cases of societal interest, and on the role of cryptographic techniques for
3 the secure design of corresponding privacy-enhancing applications.

4 **4.1 The “reference material” approach**

5 An engagement in the development and characterization of PEC reference material
6 — documents and implementations inspired by real-world and potential use cases —
7 is a way to foster the mentioned needed understanding of PEC. Besides becoming a
8 support for recommendations, such material may also motivate the engagement of
9 the community of stakeholders for further experimentation with PEC, including in
10 research of applied cryptography and development of privacy-enhancing applications.

11 A conceived instantiation of the reference material approach is to devise a reference set
12 of use-cases from which to learn and based on which to enable exploration of feasible
13 design constructions, sets of important building blocks, benchmark results and possible
14 tradeoffs. That is what this document sketches here as a PEC Use-Case Suite, whose
15 format and development process could be driven by NIST, based on a model that
16 leverages public contributions by stakeholders and where NIST serves as a facilitator.

17 **4.2 The substance of a use-case**

18 In contrast to the very high-level description of examples in this document, the PEC
19 use-cases of a suite would be detailed in various dimensions. Suggested aspects:

20 1. **Privacy motivation.** Description of an application setting where there are main
21 privacy requirements identified in duality with a sharing or verification utility.
22 This should also include a motivation for the privacy-enhancing solution, possibly
23 based on regulatory requirements or privacy principles, and (possibly informally)
24 its expected potential for social impact.

25 2. **PEC building blocks.** Enumeration of PEC tools used as building blocks to
26 enable a solution application, and a description of corresponding cryptographic
27 assumptions. Use-cases can depend on currently non-standardized primitives and
28 on assumptions not required in current NIST cryptography standards. These

1 primitives may for example include the use of pairings (bilinear maps), MPC/ZKP-
2 friendly hashes, commitments, and post-quantum plausibly-secure primitives.

3 **3. System design.** Description of a real or conceived system design that securely
4 achieves the intended properties of the privacy-enhancing application. This should
5 also include a description of adversarial models and security analysis. Preference
6 should be given to modular designs and analyzes, where PEC tools can be identify
7 as modules, and their composition in the system be proven secure. Availabil-
8 ity of implementations, including proofs of concept, can be useful, along with
9 benchmarking and analysys of possible tradeoffs.

10 **Broader considerations.** Also relevant in a privacy-enhancing use-case is the
11 identification of privacy in a context broader than cryptography. Beyond the technical
12 dimension of a cryptographic tool, there is the real-world setting where the end users
13 are often humans. For the latter, usability and trust in a technical solution are essential
14 aspects for an application setting to be successful. These aspects can strongly depend
15 on the social settings, and other aspects of real life, including on a personal dimension.

16 **Levels of specification.** The envisioned suite would fit a large number of PEC
17 use-cases, developed and specified at various levels. While a complete PEC use-case
18 should specify well the required elements, there is value in taking into account that
19 PEC tools and applications may vary depending on the stages of research, development
20 and deployment. For example, there may exist well defined:

- 21 • application settings with privacy challenges “in search of” suitable PEC tools;
- 22 • PEC tools “in search of” of applicability in the real world.

23 The process for developing a PEC use-case suite should enable interconnection between
24 (i) the stakeholders that can propose application settings of real relevance but might
25 not have the corresponding solutions, and (ii) the stakeholders that have the technical
26 expertise on PEC tools but might not be in the role of driving certain applications.

27 **4.3 Enabling a suite**

28 The presented sketch induces some questions about how to drive the process toward
29 a PEC use-case suite, what the incentives for participation are, and what to do after.

1 A useful perspective for a standards organization is that the PEC use-case suite be
2 developed to become a reference from where to derive useful insights to support rec-
3 ommendations. An apparent challenge relates to the settings where NIST is bound to
4 make recommendations about the use of primitives that have been standardized. With
5 respect to this, the development of a PEC use-case suite is useful from two perspectives:

- 6 • It can advance the state of knowledge and experience to assess what future
7 standardization activities are useful. The exploration of PEC use-cases can, for
8 example, make clearer the differentiation of levels of complexity across tools,
9 protocols and techniques. This may facilitate the identification of the next-level
10 basic techniques, whose possible standardization may be pertinent in the future.
11 Such primitives would be beyond the current basic standardized primitives, while
12 still in contrast with more complex cryptographic techniques. Complementary,
13 the process can also support a better understanding of useful techniques for secure
14 composition of those primitives.
- 15 • It can help strengthen the ability for other type of recommendations, such as those
16 related to collaboration with other standards bodies and initiatives. It would
17 also enable better informed subsequent recommendations about PEC activities of
18 research and standardization.

19 Besides the above, the idea of leveraging a PEC use-case suite in collaboration with
20 the community is that there are clear benefits beyond those of the standardization
21 organization. The proponents of use-cases get an opportunity to publicly expose them
22 within a structured program of comparison, evaluation, categorization and possibly
23 incentivization for further development.

24 **4.4 A process**

25 The development of a use-case suite would be initially geared toward improving the
26 understanding of the variety of PEC tools and their potential use, possibly for aiding
27 with the future devising of recommendations.

28 NIST, as a direct stakeholder of such development, is well placed to promote the
29 endeavor. The role of NIST, namely within the scope of the PEC project, could be
30 that of defining the format and facilitating the process of submissions and security
31 review open to the public. Such facilitation can include:

- 1 • defining a structured program that calls external stakeholders to collaborate;
- 2 • web-hosting and organizing the reference material provided about PEC use-cases;
- 3 • promoting public evaluation and presentations about said material.

4 Of relevance in this role is the delimitation of the scope of exploration to aspects
5 that matter to cryptographic technology, in the context of information technology
6 applications that rely on the security of computer systems. Challenges exist. For
7 example, an open question at this point is in what way can or should the process
8 encourage a balance of submissions across various areas, or limit submissions based
9 on their technological maturity and/or the relevance of application area.

10 As in cryptography there is a difference between static and adaptive adversaries, so in
11 this setting seems that an adaptive process is useful, at least on the onset. A proposal
12 for a process would benefit from early feedback from stakeholders (see Section 5).

13 The endeavor may benefit from an organization in call–evaluation–adaptation phases,
14 possibly with several cycles. The following enumeration is just a sketch:

15 **Phase 1: Call for use-cases.**

- 16 1. Devise a structure for calling for proposals of PEC use-cases for the suite (see
17 Section 4.2), possibly including diverse categories of submission. The categories
18 should take into account the interplay between tools and applications, the corre-
19 sponding subsequent analysis.
- 20 2. Filter submissions based on admissibility criteria (e.g., material can be publicly
21 posted), and publish the corresponding use-case material, for free accessibility.

22 **Phase 2: Evaluate use-cases.**

- 23 1. Elaborate and publish an initial summarized and comparative characterization
24 of the received use-cases, enumerating the application areas, PEC tools, cryp-
25 tographic assumptions, existing implementations and/or standards, notes on
26 potential technological impact, and other aspects of interest.
- 27 2. During a publicized period of evaluation, gather public analysis results about the
28 submitted use-cases, including from public presentations (and possibly including
29 a NIST PEC workshop), and proposals of adaptation.

1 **Phase 3: Adapt to results and evolve.**

- 2 1. Systematize the analysis results into a technical report about the suite, possibly
3 deriving recommendations about the further exploration of PEC tools.
- 4 2. Devise a roadmap for the continuation of the suite development process, which
5 may include subsequent improvement and enlargement of the reference set, as
6 well as a possible identification of more specific goals for various focus areas.

7 **5 Intended feedback**

8 A main goal of this document is to motivate feedback from stakeholders external to
9 NIST. The feedback may be used to produce an improved version of this document,
10 and possibly to advance further documentation toward a PEC use-case suite. All
11 feedback will be appreciated. The following are aspects of desired feedback:

- 12 1. **Approach.** Comments on the writeup and the overall outlined approach, and in
13 which ways this may be effective for advancing PEC.
- 14 2. **Use-case content.** Types of content that should be described in a PEC use-case
15 (see Section 4.2), and whether to differentiate types of use-cases with different
16 submission requirements.
- 17 3. **PEC tools.** Suggestions of PEC tools (see Section 2.1), possibly distinguished
18 by complexity, from basic primitives to high-complexity techniques and protocols.
- 19 4. **Application areas.** Examples of application areas (see Section 2.2), including
20 those where a privacy requirement exists as a component of enabling information
21 security. This can encompass settings where cryptography has a potential for
22 enabling an essential solution, but the practical cryptography tools and standards
23 currently available to the interested entity might be insufficient.
- 24 5. **Process.** The development phases (see Section 4.4), including the process and
25 criteria for organizing submissions and subsequent evaluation. Useful feedback
26 can also include notes about the potential role of the facilitator, of the submitters
27 of use-cases and of the more broad community of stakeholders.

28 **Acknowledgments.** Thank you to Lily Chen, René Peralta, Andrew Regenscheid,
29 Angela Robinson and Matthew Scholl from NIST for valuable feedback for this draft.