



Hybrid Cloud Operations and Management with Microsoft Azure Arc Specialization

V1.2 Program guide, audit checklist, and FAQ

Valid Oct 3, 2022 – Jan 31, 2023

To be discontinued Jan 31, 2023, see program notes on following page

Program updates and announcements

Dec 5, 2022

The V2.1 Hybrid Operations and Management with Microsoft Azure Arc Specialization will be deprecated effective Jan 31, 2023. Specific requirements related to this Azure specialization will be incorporated into the new [V1.0 Infra and Database Migration to Microsoft Azure Specialization](#) over time. This new specialization is in effect Jan 9, 2023.

Oct 3, 2022

Microsoft retired Gold Cloud partner competency, Solutions partner designation required

Gold and Silver competencies are retired and replaced with [Solutions Partner](#) designations. Azure Specialization requirements are now associated with your achievement of a required Solutions Partner designation. Partners have until the anniversary date of their specialization to attain the required Solutions Partner designation along with the other specialization requirements. Partners will not be allowed to renew their specialization if you have not attained a Solutions Partner designation

July 1, 2022

Module A

Checklist updates published May 2, 2022 in preview for the Module A Cloud Foundation audit checklist are now required

In Control 2.2, a new required Skilling Plan has been added as required

Module B

May 2, 2022

- **Guidance for the definition of Proof of Concept and Pilots was added to the FAQ**
- **Preview updates to Module A were made available, these are required July 1, 2022**
- **The Module B audit for Hybrid Operations and Management with Microsoft Arc had no new required checklist control changes, item 3.1 had an added option:**

The control for Azure Arc enabled infrastructure deployment 3.1 can include an optional multicloud design and delivery approach

Jan 1, 2022

New requirement for Module B 2.2 Control Jan 1, 2022, the Well Architected Review

The Well-Architected Review was added to the audit checklist control requirements in Control 2.2 for this Module B workload along with Program guidance and FAQ updates in all Azure Specializations

Dec 1, 2021

Preview Available for the Well Architected Review Module B Control 2.2

The preview for the Module B workload checklist with a Well-Architected Review went live for partners Dec. 1, 2021

May 29, 2021

New Audit Fee Schedule

Please note the new audit fee schedule effective July 1, 2021

- For audits comprised of both Modules A and B, the audit fee is \$3,000 USD
- For audits comprised of Module B alone (available for partners who previously passed module A), the fee is \$2,000 USD

Contents

- Hybrid Cloud Operations & Management w/ MSFT Azure Arc Specialization Overview..... 4**
- How to apply 5**
- NDA for audit..... 5**
- Payment terms and conditions..... 5**
- Audit blueprint 6**
- Audit roles..... 6**
- Audit Process: High-level overview 7**
- Audit Process: Details 8**
- Audit preparation best practices and resources..... 9**
- Audit checklists..... 11**
- Partner FAQ..... 23**

Hybrid Cloud Operations and Management with Microsoft Azure Arc specialization

Program overview

The Hybrid Operations and Management with Microsoft Azure Arc specialization is designed for partners to demonstrate their deep knowledge, extensive experience, and proven success in planning and deploying Azure Arc for their customers' addressable market to create new and recurring revenue streams on premises, on the edge and in multi-cloud.

Such partners also empower their customers to use Azure Arc to realize the full breadth of security and governance services at scale, partnering with Microsoft on cloud-native Kubernetes DevOps to deliver unique cloud PaaS service offerings that can run anywhere in the customer's environment.

Partners can optimize their OPEX ROI and development costs to deliver value to their customers through a single pane of glass, leading hybrid cloud services to build transformative, secure Azure solutions at enterprise scale.

The Hybrid Cloud Operations and Management with Microsoft Azure Arc specialization allows partners with an active [Solutions Partner](#) designation to further differentiate their organizations, demonstrate their capabilities, and build stronger connections with customers. Partners who meet the comprehensive requirements to earn an Azure specialization, receive a customer-facing label they can display and a business profile in [Microsoft AppSource partner gallery](#).

In AppSource, access to specific Microsoft go-to-market programs is prioritized in customer searches to help drive new business. Partners can also generate a certified letter from Microsoft that verifies the Azure specialization that they have earned. For these reasons, this opportunity is available only to partners that meet additional, stringent requirements.

This document defines the requirements to earn the Hybrid Cloud Operations and Management with Microsoft Azure Arc specialization. It also provides further requirements, guidelines, and an audit checklist for the associated audit that is required to earn this Azure specialization.

Partners will receive a Pass or No Pass result upon completion of the audit process. A Pass result satisfies the audit requirement for this Azure specialization for two (2) years. A No Pass result is generated when a partner fails or withdraws from the audit. When a No Pass result is entered into Partner Center, you will see your status as Audit Failed. Your status will reset after one week, allowing you to apply again.

Partners who have passed Azure Expert MSP V1.9 (Full and Progress) have satisfied the requirements for Module A in all audit versions unless otherwise noted. When applying to subsequent Azure specializations, a previous audit Pass result will satisfy the requirements for Module A. The Pass result must be within two (2) years and can only be applied to the same version of Module A.

How to apply

Only an MPN Account Administrator or a Global Administrator of an organization's Microsoft partner account can submit an application for the Azure specialization on behalf of the organization. Partners with the appropriate role and access permissions can apply. To do so, they sign into their **Partner Center** account. On the left pane, select **Competencies**, and then select **Adv. Specialization**.

Important: Take note of the audit effective dates and access the most current version from Partner Center. (Audit checklists are updated twice a year). Partners audit on the version that is live on their audit date, not the application date. Partners may apply for the audit only after all other program requirements have been fully met. Partners must complete the audit within thirty (30) calendar days of the audit application, and they must complete it against the then-current program requirements.

NDA for the audit

Auditors comply with requests from partners to sign a direct NDA. All ISSI auditors are under a nondisclosure agreement (NDA) with Microsoft. If a partner would like an NDA to be signed directly between ISSI and the partner organization for purposes of the audit, one can be provided by the partner during the audit scheduling process to ISSI. ISSI will sign and return it.

Payment terms and conditions

Pricing schedule

Module B Audit: \$2,000 USD

Module A+B Audits: \$3,000 USD

A Gap Review Meeting is included with each Module audit.

Payment terms

The cost of the audit is payable in full to the audit company and must be settled before the audit begins. Failure to pay will result in cancellation of the audit.

Program status term

When a partner meets all prerequisite requirements shown in Partner Center and Microsoft receives a valid Pass Report from the third-party audit company, the partner will be awarded The Hybrid Operations and Management with Microsoft Azure Arc specialization for one (1) calendar year.

The status and the Hybrid Operations and Management with Microsoft Azure Arc specialization label can be used only by the organization (determined by Partner Center MPN PGA ID account) and any associated locations (determined by MPN PLA ID) that met all requirements and passed the audit. Any subsidiary or affiliated organizations represented by separate Partner Center accounts (MPN PGA ID) may not advertise the status or display the associated label.

Audit blueprint

Audits are evidence-based. During the audit, partners will be expected to present evidence they have met the specific requirements on the checklist. This involves providing the auditor with access to live demonstrations, documents, and SME personnel to demonstrate compliance with checklist requirements. The audit checklist will be updated to stay current with technology and market changes, and the audit is conducted by an independent, third-party auditor. The following is included in the audit blueprint:

1. Audit Roles
2. Audit Process: High level overview
3. Audit Process: Details
4. Audit Best practices and resources

Audit roles

Role of the auditor

The auditor reviews submitted evidence and objectively assesses whether the evidence provided by the partner satisfies the audit checklist requirements.

The auditor selects and evaluates evidence, based on samples of the information available from live systems. The appropriate use of such sampling is closely related to the confidence that can be placed in the audit conclusions.

All ISSI auditors are under a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) with Microsoft. Auditors will also comply with requests from partners to sign a direct NDA.

Role of the partner

The partner must provide objective evidence that satisfies the auditor for all checklist items. It is the responsibility of the partner to have reviewed all checklist items prior to the audit, to have collated all necessary documentation and evidence, and to have ensured that the right subject matter experts are available to discuss and show systems, as appropriate.

All audit evidence must be reproducible and verifiable.

Role of the Microsoft Partner Development Manager

For partners that have an assigned Microsoft Partner Development Manager (PDM), the PDM is responsible for ensuring that the partner fully understands the requirements prior to applying for the audit. The PDM may attend the optional consulting engagements that ISSI offers, but the PDM and other Microsoft FTEs may not attend the audit.

Audit Process: High level overview

Step	Action	Responsibility
1	Review: specialization requirements in Partner Center. Review audit checklists in the specialization and begin to prepare needed evidence with personnel for an evidence-based audit. <u>Recommended:</u> Before you apply, review the specific audit checklist thoroughly and confirm SME personnel.	Partner
2	Meet the prerequisites and apply for the audit: In the initial application phase, applications are submitted in two (2) stages: 1. Prerequisite requirements (see Partner Center for details) 2. Audit <u>Do not start the application process unless you are ready to undertake the audit.</u> Assess your firm's ability to complete the audit, including considerations for readiness, employee availability, and holidays.	Partner
3	Validate: The partner meets all requirements prior to audit.	Microsoft
4	Confirmed by Microsoft: Microsoft confirms to the third-party audit company that the partner is eligible for audit.	Microsoft
5	Schedule with partner: The auditor will schedule within two (2) business days.	Auditor (with partner)
6	Conduct the audit: Within thirty (30) calendar days of the approval for audit.	Auditor
7	Provide a Gap Report: If applicable, to the partner within two (2) business days of the completed audit, listing any Open Action Items. *	Auditor
8	Acknowledge Gap Report receipt and schedule meeting: Within two (2) business days of receiving the Gap Report, the partner acknowledges receipt of the report and schedules a Gap Review Meeting. Partners can begin immediate remediation of open items.	Partner
9	Complete the meeting: Within fifteen (15) calendar days of receiving the Gap Report, the partner schedules and completes the Gap Review Meeting with the auditor to provide evidence and address any Open Action Items. *	Auditor (with partner)
10	Issue Final Report: To the partner within five (5) business days. Notify Microsoft of audit Pass or No Pass result.	Auditor
11	Notify the partner: About program status within two (2) business days.	Microsoft

*These steps will be skipped if the partner has no OpenActionItems after the audit.

Audit Process: Details

Microsoft uses an independent, third-party audit company, Information Security Systems International, LLC (ISSI), to schedule and conduct Azure specialization audits. After the audit date has been confirmed, ISSI will provide an agenda to the partner. The duration of an audit is four (4) hours for Module B workloads and eight (8) hours for Module A+B audits combined, depending upon the scope of the audit.

During the audit, the partner must provide access to the appropriate personnel who can discuss and disclose evidence that demonstrates compliance with program requirements. We highly recommend that subject matter experts for each section attend as well as a person who is familiar with the entire audit.

On the day of the audit, the partner must be prepared to provide the auditor with access to live demonstrations, documents, and personnel, as necessary to demonstrate compliance with the requirements. During the audit, the auditor will seek to verify that the partner's evidence has addressed all required audit checklist items satisfactorily.

A note on audit checklist effective dates: Partners are audited against the checklist items that are active on the date of their remote audit, not the date they apply. Audits are updated twice annually. The partner application or renewal date has no bearing on the version of the checklist that is used for the audit.

The audit can produce either of two (2) outcomes:

1. The partner passes the audit.
 - The auditor will present a brief synopsis of the audit. This will include identifying observed strengths and opportunities for improvement.
 - The auditor will provide a Final Report to the partner.
 - The auditor will notify Microsoft.
2. The partner does not satisfy all checklist items during the audit.
 - The auditor will present a brief synopsis of the audit at the end of the day, including observed strengths and Open Action Items, as outlined in the Gap Report, within two (2) business days.
 - The partner will acknowledge receipt of the Gap Report within two (2) business days.
 - The partner will move into the Gap Review phase and schedule their Gap Review Meeting within fifteen (15) calendar days.

The Gap Review

If the partner does not, to the auditor's satisfaction, provide evidence that meets the required scores across all audit categories during the audit, the partner will move into a Gap Review. A Gap Review is part of the audit and completes the process.

Within two (2) business days after the audit, the partner will receive a Gap Report, which details any Open Action Items and the outstanding required evidence. It is suggested to begin remediation on any open action items as soon as possible following the audit.

The partner then has two (2) business days to acknowledge receipt of the Gap Report and schedule a Gap Review Meeting. The Gap Review Meeting is conducted with the auditor over the partner's virtual conference platform of choice. The meeting must take place within fifteen (15) calendar days of when the Gap Report was sent, and it may last no longer than one (1) hour. During the Gap Review Meeting the partner must present evidence that addresses any and all Open Action Items.

The Gap Review Meeting can produce either of two (2) outcomes:

1. The partner resolves all Open Action Items.
 - The auditor confirms that the partner has provided the required evidence.
 - The auditor provides a Final Report to the partner.
 - The auditor notifies Microsoft about the outcome (subject to Auditor Terms and Conditions).

2. The partner does not resolve all Open Action Items.
 - The auditor presents a brief synopsis of the audit, including missed items.
 - The partner receives a Final Report that details the missed items.
 - The auditor notifies Microsoft about the outcome (subject to Auditor Terms and Conditions).

If the partner is still unable to provide satisfactory evidence to the auditor during their Gap Review Meeting, the partner will be deemed to have failed the audit. Partners that still want to earn this Azure specialization will need to begin the application process again.

Completion of the audit

The audit process concludes when ISSI issues the Final Report after the audit or after the Gap Review. Partners will be awarded a Pass or No Pass result upon completion of the audit process, including if they withdraw from the audit process. At the conclusion of the audit process, the auditor will issue a Final Report to the partner and notify Microsoft of the pass or no pass result. A Pass result satisfies the audit requirement for this Azure specialization for two (2) years. A "No Pass" result is generated when a partner fails or withdraws from the audit. When a No Pass result is entered into Partner Center, you will see your status as "Audit Failed" in your dashboard. This status will reset within one week to "Not Enrolled," allowing you to reapply. Contact [Partner Center Support](#) if needed.

Audit preparation best practices and resources

Partners should ensure that the audit checklist has been thoroughly read in advance of the audit

- Partners should ensure that all partner stakeholders involved have a copy of the audit checklist and that a stakeholder who knows the entire process is available for the duration of the audit

- Partners should confirm that they have live access granted, and make sure files and tools are readily available during the audit exhibits

Stakeholder SME attendance in the audit

Stakeholders who can best address the relevant section should be available for the audit. However, please make sure that a stakeholder who knows the entire process is available for the duration of the audit.

Auditors often probe for more information

The auditor probes for more information to ensure that mature and repeatable processes are in place with the partner and that they are established, effective, and efficient. The auditor is looking to see how a document was created, where it is located, and what source materials were used to create the document. By probing for more information, the auditor evaluates and validates that the partner is operating at an advanced level. This can only be done by questioning during the audit. This approach is explained to the partner during the opening meeting.

Acceptable evidence: Excerpts, exhibit file formats and use of PowerPoints

PowerPoints are a common and accepted format for presenting a high-level overview of a partner's systems. However, please also be prepared to present live demonstrations from source files so that the auditor may confirm that the systems in place are mature and effective. Excerpts can be used to communicate the high-level overview but are not acceptable evidence, source documents must be presented.

Additional resources: Two optional audit preparation offers from the auditing firm

To ensure objectivity, audits are conducted by different ISSI auditors than the one that would be engaged for consulting. Consulting engagements can be scheduled at any time using the partner's preferred conferencing platform.

Partners can participate in an optional, one (1)-hour, live Audit Process & Controls Overview session from ISSI. This session provides a high-level overview of key aspects of the Azure specialization audit process. The session includes a discussion of the checklist requirements along with best practices to help partners prepare for the audit. Partners work directly with ISSI to schedule this remote session (via online web conference). For more information about this session, see [Audit Process and Controls Overview Session](#)

ISSI provides optional extensive, in-depth consulting engagements to help partners prepare for their Azure specialization audit. Partners work directly with ISSI to schedule this remote session (via online web conference). For more information about this type of in-depth engagement, see [Azure Specializations - Consulting Offer](#).

** Please note that there is a cost associated with the consulting and audit preparations services. See Payment Terms and Conditions.*

Audit checklists

The Hybrid Operations and Management with Microsoft Azure Arc specialization audit checklist contains two (2) modules, **Module A:** Cloud Foundation and **Module B:** Hybrid Operations and Management with Microsoft Azure Arc specialization workload.

Module A, The Cloud Foundation module evaluates the use of a consistent methodology and process for Azure adoption that is aligned with customers' expected outcomes, spanning the entire cloud adoption lifecycle. Module B, The Hybrid Operations and Management with Microsoft Azure Arc specialization workload module validates that the partner has adopted robust processes to ensure customer success across all phases of deploying Hybrid Operations and Management with Microsoft Azure Arc solutions, from the assessment phase to design, pilot, implementation, and post- implementation phases.

Review the following audit checklist tables for more details about each control phase and to learn how the partner will be evaluated for an audit. The same customers may be used for Module A & B. The estimated length of both modules together is eight (8) hours.

Module A: Cloud Foundation

1. Strategy
2. Plan
3. Environment readiness and Azure landing zone
4. Governance
5. Manage

Module B: Hybrid Cloud Operations and Management with Microsoft Azure Arc workload

1. Assess
2. Design and proof of concept (POC) or pilot
3. Deployment
4. Review and release for operations

To pass the audit, the partner must complete all audit checklist items.

Module A: Cloud Foundation is required for multiple Azure advance specializations. To complete Module A: Cloud Foundation, the partner needs to pass all controls in Module A by providing the specified evidence. Alternatively, the partner may present evidence of a previous pass result from Module A or from another Azure specialization audit conducted on V2.0 or later.

Module B: Hybrid Operations and Management with Microsoft Azure Arc specialization workload. Each control has one (1) or more requirements and required evidence the partner must provide for the auditor. Both the requirements and the required evidence are defined in the following tables. For some controls, a reference customer or customer evidence is the documentation requested.

Unless otherwise stated, the partner must show at least **one (1)** unique customer with deployments completed within the last **twelve (12)** months. Please note some checklists call for four (4) customer examples. The partner can use the same customer across audit checklist controls, or they can use a different customer. For audit evidence relating to customer engagements, the partner can use a customer case study and reference it multiple times. The same or different customers can be used for Modules A & B if they demonstrate requirements.

Module A: Cloud Foundation

1.0 Strategy and Economics	
The partner must have a defined approach for helping their customer evaluate and define a cloud adoption strategy beyond an individual asset (app, VM, or data).	
Requirement	
1.1	<p>Cloud adoption business strategy</p> <p>The partner must have a process that captures the data-driven business strategies being used to guide customer decisions. The process should include, at minimum, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strategy review that captures the customer’s business needs and the problems the customer is trying to solve • Personalized recommendations from the partner for the customers’ business strategies <p>Required evidence:</p> <p>A Report, Presentation, or Document that captures strategic inputs and decisions for two (2) unique customers, that demonstrates Cloud Adoption Strategy Evaluator assessment output, with projects completed in the past twelve (12) months. These projects must be aligned with the above-described process and highlight both customer Business and Financial outcomes.</p> <p>For an example, see the Strategy and plan template in the Cloud Adoption Framework for Azure, or the Cloud Adoption Strategy Evaluator.</p>

2.0 Plan	
The partner must have a consistent approach to planning for cloud adoption that is based on the strategy outlined in the preceding section.	
Requirement	

2.1	<p>Cloud adoption plan</p> <p>The partner must have a process and approach for planning and tracking the completion of cloud adoption projects. For an example of a cloud adoption plan, see the Azure DevOps Demo Generator for the Cloud Adoption Framework.</p> <p>Required evidence:</p> <p>The partner must provide evidence of their capability with examples of two (2) unique customers, with projects that were completed in the past twelve (12) months. Acceptable evidence must include at least one (1) of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cloud Adoption Plan Generator output or • Azure DevOps backlog or • Any other tools for project planning and tracking 	
2.2	<p>Plan for skilling</p> <p>When customers adopt the cloud, their existing technical staff will need a variety of new skills to aid in making technical decisions and to support the new cloud implementations. To ensure the long-term success of the customer, the partner must document a skilling plan to prepare the customer’s technical staff.</p> <p>The Partner must document a list of key customer technical roles expected to require new skills such as, but not limited to, IT Admins, IT Governance, IT Operations, and IT Security.</p> <p>The documentation must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of the new skills the technical roles will need to achieve to successfully manage the new environment. • Resources the customer can leverage when training their technical employees such as Microsoft learning paths, technical certifications, or other comparable resources. <p>For guidance, review Microsoft docs Azure Cloud Adoption Framework How to build a skilling readiness plan.</p> <p>Required evidence:</p> <p>The partner must provide a skilling plan for at least two (2) unique customer engagements completed within the last 12 months. The two (2) skilling plans documentation can include a customer facing presentation, planning documents, post deployment documentation or similar plan documentation.</p>	

3.0 Environment readiness and Azure landing zone

The partner must be able to demonstrate that the following design areas are addressed through their approach to landing zone implementation.

Requirement

3.1

Repeatable deployment

The partner must demonstrate adherence to Azure landing zone design areas through a repeatable deployment. The deployments should configure, at minimum, the following identity, network, and resource organization attributes:

- Identity
 - Adoption of identity management solutions, such as Azure Active Directory or equivalent
- Networking architecture design (topology)
 - [Define an Azure network topology - Cloud Adoption Framework | Microsoft Docs](#)
 - Application of hybrid architectures that use Azure ExpressRoute, VPN Gateway, or equivalent services for connecting local datacenters to Azure
- Resource organization
 - Implementation of tagging and naming standards during the project

The partner must demonstrate which of the following [deployment approaches](#) they used when they deployed Azure landing zones:

1. Start small and expand: Azure landing zone does not deploy governance or operations configurations, which are addressed later in the implementation.
2. Full Azure landing zone conceptual architecture: Azure landing zones implement a standard approach to the configuration of governance and operations tools prior to implementation.
3. Alternative approach: If the partner follows a proprietary approach or a mixture of the **two (2)** approaches above, the partner must clearly articulate their approach to environment configuration.

Required evidence:

The partner must provide evidence of a repeatable deployment they used to create landing zones aligned to the Azure landing zone conceptual architecture or equivalent complete architecture deployed to **two (2)** unique customer environments using [Bicep](#), ARM (AZURE Resource Manager) templates, Terraform modules, or equivalent tools to automatically deploy the environment configuration.

If a customer deviates from specified architecture, the partner must demonstrate the customer requirements to justify the deviation.

The provided template can be pulled directly from the [implementation options](#), or it can be based on the partner's own IP (Intellectual Property). In either case, the script as evidence must demonstrate the configuration of the identity, network, and resource organization, as described earlier.

4.0 Governance

The partner must demonstrate their customer's role in governing cloud-based solutions and the Azure tools they use to facilitate any governance requirements their customer might have today or in the future.

Requirement	
4.1	<p>Governance tooling</p> <p>The partner must demonstrate the ability to deploy the required governance tools for two (2) unique customer projects.</p> <p>Required evidence:</p> <p>The partner must demonstrate the use of Azure Policy or equivalent tool to provide controls to govern the environment for two (2) unique customers with projects that were completed in the past twelve (12) months.</p>
5.0 Manage	
<p>The partner must demonstrate that they have set up their customer for operational success after the deployment is completed. All partners have a role in setting up operations management, even if they do not provide long-term managed services.</p>	
Requirement	
5.1	<p>Operations management tooling</p> <p>The partner must demonstrate the use of Azure products or equivalent to help their customer and/or managed service provider operate the environment after deployment.</p> <p>Required evidence:</p> <p>The partner must demonstrate the deployment of at least one (1) of the following Azure products or third-party equivalents: Azure Monitor, Azure Automation, or Azure Backup/Site Recovery, for two (2) unique customers with projects that were completed in the past twelve (12) months.</p>

Module B: Hybrid Cloud Operations and Management with Microsoft Azure Arc workload

1.0 Assess	
The partner must have a consistent approach to assessing customer requirements for the workload.	
Requirement	
1.1	<p>Environment assessment</p> <p>The partner must demonstrate how they assess the current state of the customer environment.</p> <p>The assessment must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where customers run their servers and Microsoft SQL instances.• What tools are used for management and security across these environments?• What immediate value the customer can get by onboarding to Azure Arc - Which services they can take advantage of without changing anything in their environment (Azure Defender, Azure Sentinel, Azure policy, etc.).• What potential OPEX savings can the customer realize from moving to a single pane of glass management and using Azure services.• Any SLA commitments by Partner to their customers. <p>Required evidence:</p> <p>The partner must provide relevant <u>documentation</u> showing that the preceding items were reviewed for at least one (1) hybrid customer with on-premises/edge/multi-cloud presence with a plan on how to onboard these customers to Azure Arc enabled servers and/or Azure Arc enabled Kubernetes and a plan to use Azure management services such as monitoring and security.</p> <p>Onboarding the customers to Azure Arc and Azure services must have been completed within the last twelve (12) months. The partner must show that all assessment details were considered for that customer. Assessments may be done manually or through an industry-accepted assessment tool.</p> <p><u>Accepted documentation:</u> Assessment Checklists, Templates, Questionnaires, and Project plans.</p> <p>For more information see the planning & assessment guidance in hybrid scenario.</p>

<p>1.2</p>	<p>Kubernetes-based Cloud-native applications and DevOps assessment</p> <p>The partner must demonstrate how they assess the current state of the customer environment and intent to develop Kubernetes based cloud-native applications. For more information see the landing zone accelerators for Azure Arc.</p> <p>The assessment must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where does the customer deploy and run their Kubernetes clusters (on-premises, edge, cloud)? • Current customer DevOps, GitOps and CI/CD practices. • Which Kubernetes distributions are used by the customer? • Who is managing the various Kubernetes environments (central IT, multiple teams, development teams)? • What security and governance tools does the customer use for the development and production pipeline of Kubernetes based applications? • What immediate value can the customer get by onboarding to Azure Arc enabled Kubernetes – and which services can they take advantage of without changing anything in their environment (Azure Defender, Azure Sentinel, Azure policy, etc.)? • What potential OPEX savings DevOps/GitOps expertise can the customer realize from using Azure Arc enabled Kubernetes? <p>Required evidence:</p> <p>The partner must provide relevant <u>documentation</u> showing that the preceding items were reviewed for at least one (1) customer with on-premises/edge Kubernetes presence with a plan on how to onboard the customer to Azure Arc enabled Kubernetes and a plan to use Azure DevOps, Security, and Management services.</p> <p>Onboarding the customers to Azure Arc and Azure services need to be completed within the last twelve (12) months. The partner must show that all assessment details were considered for that customer. Assessments may be done manually or through an industry-accepted assessment tool.</p> <p><u>Acceptable Documentation:</u> Assessment Checklists, Templates, Questionnaires, and Project plans.</p>
<p>1.3</p>	<p>Assessment for running Azure Arc enabled data services on-premises/edge</p> <p>The partner must demonstrate how they assess the opportunity for the customer to run Azure Arc enabled data services in their on-premises/edge environment.</p> <p>For more information see the landing zone accelerators for Azure Arc</p> <p>The assessment must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current customer use of databases on-premises and/or in other cloud platforms. • Customer management practices for databases (inventory, update, monitor, secure, backup). Include security and governance tools the customer use for their databases.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which Kubernetes distributions are used by the customer? • Who is responsible for management of the Kubernetes clusters (central IT, multiple teams, development teams)? • What are the immediate opportunities for the customer to use Azure Arc enabled data services in their environment, e.g., SQL MI, PostgreSQL Hyperscale? • Has the customer migrated to SQL MI or PostgreSQL Hyperscale from other 3rd party vendor databases e.g., Oracle? • What are the reasons for the customer to maintain data on-premises? E.g., regulatory, connectivity? • What potential OPEX savings can the customer realize from using Azure Arc enabled data services? • What potential governance and security benefits can the customer gain from using Azure Defender, Azure Sentinel, Azure policy, etc.? • Does the customer have any databases that cannot be directly connected to the internet? • Does the customer have any specific restrictions on data? E.g., Data sovereignty, data governance? <p>Required evidence:</p> <p>The partner must provide relevant <u>documentation</u> showing that the preceding items were reviewed for at least one (1) customer with on-premises/edge presence with a plan on how to onboard the customer to Azure Arc enabled data services.</p> <p>Onboarding the customer to Azure Arc enabled data services need to be completed within the last twelve (12) months. The partner must show that all assessment details were considered for that customer. Assessments may be done manually or through an industry- accepted assessment tool.</p> <p><u>Acceptable Documentation:</u> Assessment Checklists, Templates, Questionnaires, and Project plans.</p>
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2.0 Design	
The partner has robust methodologies for designing the workload.	
Requirement	
2.1	<p>Solution design</p> <p>The partner must provide solution designs that show a consistent approach to addressing customer requirements that were captured from the assessment phase.</p> <p>Completed projects must meet at least one (1) of the following scenarios:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Onboarding servers into Azure Arc enabled servers and Azure management services. 2. Onboarding Kubernetes clusters into Azure Arc enabled Kubernetes and Azure management services. 3. Deploying Azure Arc enabled data services in the customers' environment. <p><u>Scenario 1 or 2:</u> The solution design for Azure Arc enabled server and Azure Arc enabled Kubernetes must show:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A plan on how to onboard servers and Kubernetes clusters at-scale into Azure Arc. This also includes the subscription/resource group structure, tagging recommendation and RBAC recommendation. • Details on what Azure management services such as security, policy and monitor should be enabled on day 0. • Details on what potential Azure management services will be replacing current tools in the next 12-24 months. <p><u>Scenario 3:</u> The solution design for Azure Arc enabled data services must show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A plan on how to deploy Azure Arc enabled data services on Kubernetes clusters on-premises/edge as well as how to manage the respective Azure resources. This also includes the subscription/resource group structure, tagging recommendation and RBAC recommendation. • Details on the database topology and deployment mode (connected or disconnected) • Details on what Azure management services such as security, policy and monitor should be enabled on day 0. • Details on what potential Azure management services will be replacing current tools in the next 12-24 months. <p>For more information, see managing your assets with Azure Arc.</p> <p>Required evidence: The partner should provide relevant solution design documents that address the preceding points, for at least two (2) unique customers with projects that were completed within the past twelve (12) months.</p> <p><u>Acceptable Documentation:</u> Design documents, functional specifications, architectural diagrams, automated tooling reports, and physical and logical diagrams.</p>
2.2	<p>Azure Well-Architected Review of workloads</p> <p>The partner must demonstrate usage of the Azure Well-Architected Review for a hybrid workload. The Well-Architected Review is designed to help partners evaluate their customers' workloads against the latest set of industry best practices. It provides actionable guidance to design and improve those workloads. The review can be used to evaluate each workload against the pillars of the Azure Well-Architected Framework that might apply to that workload.</p> <p>Required evidence: Unless otherwise specified, Reviews may be conducted before, during, or after deployment. The partner must provide exported results from the completed Microsoft Well-Architected Review, using the assessments in the review from at least two (2) business critical workloads migrated to completed within the last twelve (12) months, indicating the customer's name. The two (2) workloads can come from one (1) or more customers.</p>

3.0 Deployment

The partner has robust methodologies for deploying the workload.

Requirement

3.1

Azure Arc enabled infrastructure

The partner must provide evidence of their ability to onboard customer infrastructure onto Azure Arc and Azure management services.

Design and delivery must include the following elements:

- At scale onboarding of on-premises, edge, multicloud or other servers using Azure Arc enabled servers and Azure Arc enabled SQL server.
- Onboarding of on-premises, edge and other cloud Kubernetes clusters using Azure Arc enabled Kubernetes.
- At scale enablement of Azure management services on Azure Arc enabled servers and Azure Arc enabled Kubernetes
 - Azure Defender
 - Azure Defender for SQL servers
 - Azure Monitor
 - Guest Configuration policy for server and GitOps for Kubernetes
 - Azure Sentinel
 - Change and inventory
 - Update management

For more information, see the [best practices for onboarding VMs to Azure Arc](#).

Required evidence:

The partner must provide documentation for at least **one (1)** customer with Azure Arc enabled servers that were completed within the past **twelve (12)** months. The documentation must show the resulting Azure Arc resources and onboarded services in Azure.

To cover the entire sequence of the project, including design and production deployment, the documentation must include at least **two (2)** of the following:

- Signed statements of work (SOWs) for all projects
- Solution design documents for all projects
- A project plan and deployment sequence
- Architecture diagrams
- High-level designs (HLDs) and low-level designs (LLDs)
- As-built documentation

3.2

Cloud-native Applications with Kubernetes

The partner must provide evidence of their ability to provide Azure Arc enabled Kubernetes services to help customers establish and manage their Cloud native applications, DevOps and/or ITOps process:

- Onboarding of on-premises, edge or other cloud-based Kubernetes cluster flavor using Azure Arc enabled Kubernetes.
- At scale GitOps-based management for applications including Secure Deployment Practices.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atscale GitOps-based ITOps for Kubernetes configuration. • Kubernetes Monitoring, security and policy using Azure services. <p>Required evidence:</p> <p>The partner must provide <u>documentation</u> for at least one (1) customer with Azure Arc enabled Kubernetes using GitOps that were completed within the past twelve (12) months.</p> <p>The <u>documentation</u> must show the resulting Azure Arc resources and onboarded services in Azure.</p> <p>To cover the entire sequence of the project, including design and production deployment, the <u>documentation</u> must include at least two (2) of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed statements of work (SOWs) for all projects • Solution design documents for all projects • A project plan and deployment sequence • Architecture diagrams • High-level designs (HLDs) and low-level designs (LLDs) • As-built documentation
3.3	<p>Azure Arc enabled data services</p> <p>The partner must provide evidence of their ability to implement deployment of Azure Arc enabled data services and management services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At scale deployment of Azure Arc enabled SQL MI and/or Azure Arc enabled PostgreSQL Hyperscale on Kubernetes clusters running on-premises, edge, and other clouds. • Management of Azure Arc enabled data services from Azure. • Local management of Azure Arc enabled data services using local AzData tools. <p>Required evidence:</p> <p>The partner must provide <u>documentation</u> for at least one (1) customer with Azure Arc enabled data services that were completed within the past twelve (12) months.</p> <p>The <u>documentation</u> must show the resulting Azure Arc resources and onboarded services in Azure.</p> <p>To cover the entire sequence of the project, including design and production deployment, the <u>documentation</u> must include at least two (2) of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed statements of work (SOWs) for all projects • Solution design documents for all projects • A project plan and deployment sequence • Architecture diagrams • High-level designs (HLDs) and low-level designs (LLDs) • As-built documentation

4.0 Review and release for operations

The partner has robust methodologies for creating Azure Arc operations.

Requirement

4.1

Service validation and testing

The partner must validate the deployment, including:

- A documented process and approach to testing and evaluating the performance of all applications against customer expectations and Azure best practices.
- A documented process and approach to evaluating and improving architectural best practices to remediate issues with Azure Arc resources and attached Azure services that do not meet performance or cost expectations.

Required evidence:

Documentation of testing, validation, and performance evaluations that address the preceding points for **three (3)** unique customers. The documentation must indicate that the implemented solution meets customer expectations, and it must include a sign-off from the customer.

4.2

Post-deployment documentation

The partner must provide post-deployment operational documentation to show that customers are successfully using the new service on Azure.

- Demonstrate how the partner's documents, decisions, architectural designs, and procedures were implemented.
- Demonstrate standard operating procedures for the business-as-usual operations team that describe "how-to" scenarios.

Required evidence:

Documentation showing the preceding points for **three (3)** unique customers with completed Azure Arc projects. These projects can be the same as those in previous sections.

Partner FAQ

Definition of a Customer

A customer is a company which has direct contractual relationship with the partner and is not affiliated with the partner. Each customer tenant ID (TPID) attached to the partner by DPOR, CSP or PAL is counted as one customer. A customer can be different companies, or different departments within the same company, represented by different TPIDs, but the projects must have different stakeholders. Internal projects are not accepted as customer evidence for Azure specializations. The customer's project must be executed by the partner applying for the accreditation program. Microsoft will not accept customer evidence from a company not included in the applying MPN PGA ID (Vorg).

Who can participate in the program?

The program is open to any members of the Microsoft Cloud Partner program who can meet the program requirements and pass the audit.

Can a partner have more than one Azure specialization?

Yes, if you qualify, you can earn as many Azure specializations as you choose. Earning additional Azure specializations will increase your visibility to customers in the Partner Finder tool.

Is a partner's Azure specialization global or local?

It depends on how your company has set up your account in Partner Center. If your company has one global account (Partner Center MPN PGA ID), your Azure specialization is assessed and awarded at the global level. If you have set up multiple Partner Center accounts (MPN PGA ID) to represent different divisions, countries, subsidiaries etc., only the account that earned the Azure specialization will be awarded it.

Is there a cost to participate in the audit?

Microsoft does not charge a program fee. However, there are direct costs associated with the following requirements:

- Solutions Partner designation
- Microsoft and third-party certifications
- Audit

In addition, there are indirect costs associated with preparation for the audit.

How much time and how many resources (people) do we need to commit to preparing to meet the audit requirements?

The amount of time it takes to meet all requirements and pass the audit varies greatly. It depends on how many of your current employees already have the required Azure skills, whether they have documented customer wins, and how you document your people, technology, and processes.

How long do the actual audits take?

The remote audit will be either half day or a full day, based on the scope of the modules being audited. Module A is generally four (4) hours and Module A+B is generally eight (8) hours to complete. However, as mentioned above, significant preparation is required to be audit ready. We recommend that you read the audit checklist thoroughly to streamline your preparation. Consider the consulting and audit preparation overview offered by ISSI.

How much does the audit cost?

The audit fee for Module A or Module B standalone is \$2,000 USD, the audit fee for Modules A+B combined is \$3,000 USD. The fee is paid to the third-party independent auditor. The audit fee must be paid in full *before* the audit is completed.

How do we apply to the program?

You can apply by signing into your Partner Center account, then navigating to your Partner Center [dashboard](#). Select **Competencies > Azure specializations** from the Partner Center navigation menu, followed by the specific Azure specialization.

When should we apply to the program?

Do not apply for the program until you have met all the program requirements prior to the audit. Be sure you have thoroughly reviewed the audit requirements and are confident you can satisfy them.

What checklist version will we be audited on?

Take note of the active dates for the audit checklist. Partners are audited against the checklist items that are active on the date of their remote audit. The original application date has no bearing on the version of the checklist that is used for the audit.

In which languages are the audits conducted?

These are the current audit languages:

- English
- Portuguese
- Spanish
- French
- German
- Italian
- Serbian
- Croatian
- Russian
- Hebrew

- Mandarin
- Japanese
- Korean
- Arabic

What languages can we provide evidence and documentation in during the audit?

ISSI will make every effort to support the partners' specific language need. In instances where this is not possible, the working language for the audit will be English. Partners may present evidence and documentation in their local language. It is not required for the partner to translate their documentation into English for the purposes of the audit.

What types of evidence should be used as examples for the audit?

The evidence should relate to the project and be signed off by the customer no earlier than 24 months before the audit.

What is the definition of a project for audit evidence?

A project is a paid endeavor resulting in a customer solution used in production. Projects should be complete when presented as evidence.

What is the definition of evidence for a PoC (Proof of Concept) or pilot when used for the audit?

Proof of Concepts (PoCs) and pilots by themselves do not qualify as projects. Accepted evidence documentation is specified in the checklist.

How is the audit scored?

The partner score for the audit checklist is based on the checklist controls. To pass the audit, partners must complete all sections in each control area. They must provide adequate evidence to demonstrate the existence, effectiveness, and efficiency of their processes, policies, procedures, and tooling against each checklist item.

What if I meet only some of the requirements?

Because this is an Azure specialization audit for an opportunity for partners to truly differentiate your business, we expect partners to demonstrate that they meet each of the controls by providing evidence that satisfies all requirements.

What happens if I don't pass the audit outright?

At the conclusion of the audit process, the auditor will issue a Final Report to the partner and notify Microsoft of the pass or no pass result. Partners that receive a no pass result may reapply for the Azure specialization in six (6) months.

Partners that withdraw from the audit process without completing the audit may submit a ticket through [Partner Center support](#) to request that their status be reset to “Not Enrolled,” which enables them to reapply.

Who conducts the audit?

The audit is carried out on behalf of Microsoft by an independent, third-party auditor, appointed by Microsoft. The audit company is Information Security Systems International (ISSI).

Can I contact the auditor to schedule the audit before I apply or as soon as I apply?

No. The audit company, ISSI, cannot schedule your audit until it receives an official notification from Microsoft. Microsoft will issue the notification only after you have shown that you meet all program requirements and you have applied for an audit by selecting “schedule audit” from the Partner Center dashboard. ISSI will reach out to you to begin the scheduling process within one (1) to two (2) business days.

What is the difference between the audit and the consulting and audit preparation?

Consulting and the Audit Preparation Overview are optional resources and conducted by the third-party audit company, ISSI. The purpose is to help partners prepare for the Azure specialization audit.

To ensure objectivity, audit preparation consulting is conducted by someone other than your assigned remote auditor. You can schedule consulting engagements at any time by using your preferred conferencing platform.

Are the consulting and audit preparation mandatory?

No, the consulting and Audit Preparation Overview are optional. However, we do recommend that you opt for the consulting and audit preparation, because it can help ensure that you are more prepared for the audit.

What is an Azure specialization?

An Azure specialization is an extensive validation of a partner’s capability to deliver high-fidelity services in a specific solution area. Azure specializations are customer-facing labels displayed on a partner’s business profile. They are used in our customer referral engine to allow partners to showcase their differentiated capabilities in a specific solution area. To earn an Azure specialization, partners must first hold an aligned active Solutions Partner designation.

How is an Azure specialization different from a competency?

A competency measures a partner’s broad technical capability in a Microsoft product or technology. An Azure specialization measures more in-depth capabilities in a specific solution area, such as Analytics on Microsoft Azure.

Does a partner need a competency to earn an Azure specialization?

Yes. Azure specializations can be earned only by partners with an active Solutions Partner designation. For example, to earn the Analytics on Microsoft Azure specialization, partners must first have a Solutions Partner designation and then pass the specialization audit in Analytics on Azure.

What Azure specializations are available to partners?

Certain competencies have different Azure specializations available to them. For details on all available Azure specializations, go to the [Azure specializations](#) site.

Why would a partner want to get an Azure specialization?

With an Azure specialization, partners can differentiate their capabilities to customers that are looking for partners to help them with a business need. Partners with an Azure specialization are listed first in Partner Finder, a Microsoft-owned, customer-facing tool. Azure specializations are also indicated on a partner's business profile alongside their competency status.

What are the benefits of an Azure specialization?

Partners with an Azure specialization are listed first in Partner Finder, a Microsoft-owned, customer-facing tool. Azure specializations are also indicated on a partner's business profile alongside their competency status.

How does a partner earn an Azure specialization?

Each Azure specialization has a set of requirements that a partner must meet. The criteria depend on the Azure specialization the partner is seeking, but they can include performance requirements, exams, customer evidence, and third-party certification, among others. For detailed criteria for individual Azure specializations, go to your [Partner Center dashboard](#). Azure specializations are not available in PMC.

Is there a cost associated with attaining an Azure specialization?

Microsoft does not charge a program fee. However, there are direct costs associated with the following requirements:

- An active Solutions partner designation
- Microsoft certifications
- The audit, optional ISSI consulting and audit preparation, and third-party certifications

In addition, there are indirect costs associated with preparation for the audit, including audit preparation hours.

How long do partners keep their Azure specialization?

Your Azure specialization will remain in place for one (1) year, but it requires that you maintain an active Solutions Partner designation defined in the Azure specialization requirements. If you do not maintain your Solutions Partner designation, you will lose your Azure specialization status. On your renewal date, you will need to meet the then-current requirements. Requirements may evolve over time.

When and how do partners renew the Azure specialization?

Partners renew their Azure specialization on their anniversary date. See the specific requirements in Partner Center. Partners must also maintain an active, aligned Solutions Partner designation.

Do partners need to requalify for the Azure specialization after a specific period of time?

Yes. Partners must meet the requirements each year. A partner firm should expect the requirements to evolve year over year, to best meet the needs of customers. Partners will be expected to undergo an annual audit as part of the renewal process.

What happens to the Azure specialization if a partner does not renew their associated Solutions Partner designation?

To maintain an Azure specialization, partners must keep their active Solutions Partner designation status at all times.

How will my customer know whether my company has an Azure specialization?

Your Azure specialization will be listed on your Business Profile.

What can partners tell customers about Azure specializations?

An Azure specialization is a customer-facing label on your Business Profile. They do have a badge associated with it. You can tell your customers which Azure specializations you have earned. They can validate by reviewing your Business Profile in the Partner Finder tool.

What if my company has an endorsement now?

As Azure specializations go live, they replace endorsements on the customer-facing profile. Each Azure specialization has published requirements for partners to meet to earn them.

Can a company have both an endorsement and an Azure specialization on its profile?

No. As Azure specializations go live, they replace endorsements on the customer-facing Partner Profile.

Does a partner get a badge to use externally in their marketing to differentiate their Azure specialization?

Yes, Azure specializations now have a badge. We are providing a customer-facing badge to display on your business profile in your Microsoft AppSource partner gallery, and on your marketing assets and resources to promote your expertise. You can download your badge from Logo Builder in Partner Center <https://partner.microsoft.com/dashboard/mpn/membership/benefits/logobuilder> More information on Logo Builder can be found here: <https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/partner-center/mpn-logo-builder>

Other questions on the program?

If you have questions that we have not answered in this document, please go to [Partner Center support](#) to create a ticket with our Frontline team.