Evolving the Microsoft Partner Network programs Partner FAQ

We are evolving Microsoft Partner Network programs and are committed to growing our partnership and your business. This includes simplifying our partner programs and aligning how we go to market, validating partner capabilities to deliver successful customer outcomes, and investing in your growth and profitability.

How are the Microsoft Partner Network programs changing?
We are simplifying our partner programs focused on differentiating services solution capabilities, to meet customer's needs and introducing the solutions partner designation, anchored on the Microsoft Cloud in six solution areas aligned to how Microsoft goes to market: Data & AI (Azure), Infrastructure (Azure), Digital & App Innovation (Azure), Business Applications, Modern Work and Security. This new model provides two qualifying levels: solutions partner and specialist/expert. For more information, please visit the Microsoft partner website.

When will these changes happen?
From September 30, 2022, legacy competencies and associated badging will no longer be valid, although if you have a competency by that date, you will retain your benefits. Starting on October 3, 2022, solutions partner designations will be available for partners to attain. To learn more about the timeline for these changes, please visit the Microsoft partner website.

What are solutions partner designations?
We are introducing the solutions partner designation, anchored on the Microsoft Cloud in six solution areas aligned to how Microsoft goes to market. By attaining solution area designations, you can demonstrate your organization's capabilities in delivering customer success in the solution areas. That's valuable for you, because it's where we see customer demand, and where the opportunity is for partners to scale to meet customer needs. The six designations will be Solutions partner for Infrastructure (Azure), Data & AI (Azure), Digital & App Innovation (Azure), Business Applications, Modern Work, and Security.

The solutions partner designation helps easily identify partners with experience in high demand Microsoft Cloud solution areas, and that have delivered successful customer outcomes. Success is measured by customer success, skilling, and performance. For more information about the solutions partner designations, please visit the Microsoft partner website.

Are competencies going away?
Yes. September 30, 2022, is the last day for partners to renew competencies. From October 2022, competencies will no longer be valid, meaning that badges will go away, and competencies will not be promoted by Microsoft. Partners will retain their benefits.

What if I have legacy competencies?
If you have competencies, you will have time to learn more and assess how the solutions partner designation fits into the strategic plan for your business. September 30, 2022, is the last day to renew legacy competencies. Once solutions partner designations are available on October 3, you will have the option to retain legacy benefits.

I have a legacy competency and choose to attain a solutions partner designation.
What is the process?
Starting October 3, 2022, solutions partner designations will be available for partners to attain. If you meet the requirements and earn the required partner capability score, you immediately attain a solutions partner designation and the new customer-facing badging. Legacy competencies and associated badges will no longer be valid after September 30, 2022. However, you will retain your legacy benefits (benefits you received based on the competency you held on September 30, 2022), until your next anniversary date.

On your next anniversary date after October 3, 2022, you will have the following options:

· Maintain a solutions partner designation if you have attained one. To receive the solutions partner designation benefits you will pay the annual fee. Annual fees for solutions partner designation will be aligned to the legacy gold competency fees.
· Retain your legacy silver or gold competency benefits and pay an annual fee. Annual fees for legacy silver or gold competency benefits will be aligned to the legacy silver and gold competency fees.

I have a legacy competency and will not attain a solutions partner designation. What is the process?
Competencies and associated badges will no longer be valid after September 30, 2022. You will continue to receive legacy benefits (benefits you received based on the competency you held on September 30, 2022), for legacy competencies until your next anniversary date. After that time there will be an option to continue to purchase legacy benefits.

How can I attain a solutions partner designation? (Partner capability score)

The solutions partner designation has a holistic measurement framework, the partner capability score, which measures performance, skilling, and customer success. So, it is not just what you know, it is how you apply that knowledge to what you do for customers every day. This holistic measurement provides you flexibility to demonstrate your knowledge, skills, and experience.

To attain a solutions partner designation, you will need to earn a minimum of 70 points (with points in each category and sub-category) out of the possible 100 points that are available.

For detailed partner capability score requirements for each solutions partner designation, please visit the training gallery on the Microsoft partner website:

- Solutions partner for Infrastructure (Azure): aka.ms/Solutionspartner.Infrastructure
- Solutions partner for Data & AI (Azure): aka.ms/Solutionspartner.DataAI
- Solutions partner for Digital & App Innovation (Azure): aka.ms/Solutionspartner.DigAppInnov
- Solutions partner for Business Applications: aka.ms/Solutionspartner.BizApps
- Solutions partner for Modern Work: aka.ms/Solutionspartner.ModernWork
- Solutions partner for Security: aka.ms/Solutionspartner.Security

Where can I see what points I have towards the solutions partner designation?
Admins can sign into the solutions partner page in Partner Center to see how their organization is progressing towards the solutions partner designation.

What if I do not have the 70 points required to meet the solutions partner designation?
If your organization does not have the 70 points required to meet the solutions partner designation, you can sign into the solutions partner page in Partner Center for guidance on how you can improve your score in each of the categories: performance, skilling, and customer success.

Can all types of partners attain a solutions partner designation?

We recognize that solutions partner designations are primarily for partners providing services, but all partners are welcome to participate in solutions partner designations and our broader partner program that offers additional benefits. For example, new features and functionality are now available to help Independent Software Vendors (ISVs) sell more with Microsoft through our commercial marketplace.

Microsoft continues to make commitments to make the commercial marketplace the most partner-focused business platform with flat agency fees of 3%, the opportunity to motivate partners in the Cloud Solution Provider (CSP) program to sell an ISV's offer with margin sharing, and unlock enterprise customers with enhancements in private offers for customized deals.

For services partners who focus on SMB, there is a path within the Solutions partner for Modern Work. For more information, please visit aka.ms/Solutionspartner.ModernWork.

Why should I attain a solutions partner designation?

Customers want to work with partners who have the right skills and capabilities to meet their needs, along with demonstrated ability to deliver customer success. The solutions partner designations clearly differentiate you from your competition. By attaining a solutions partner designation you demonstrate your commitment to skilling and training and highlight the innovations and successful solutions you are building and delivering that contribute to customers' success.

By attaining solution area designations, you will demonstrate your organization's breadth of capabilities in delivering customer success in the solution areas aligned to how Microsoft goes to market. That is valuable for you, because it is where we see customer demand, and where the opportunity is for partners to scale to meet customer needs.

To learn more about the solutions partner designations, please visit the Microsoft partner website.

Where can I track my progress towards attaining a solutions partner designation?

You can track your progress towards earning a solutions partner designation by signing into Partner Center and navigating to the solutions partner page.

I have questions about the benefits associated with solutions partner designations.

What are the benefits associated with solutions partner designations?

Program benefits will continue to support you as you grow your business. The solutions partner designations benefits include internal use licenses (IUR) as well as other familiar benefits such as go-to- market services and resources, support and more.

All solutions partner designations include benefits such as marketing, support, and advisory benefits. Each designation also has specific incremental benefits.

To learn more about solutions partner benefits, please visit the benefits guide on the Microsoft partner website.

What is the fee to attain a solutions partner designation?

The annual fee to attain a solutions partner designation is $4,730 USD (or equivalent, local fees vary). This is aligned to the existing fees to attain a legacy gold competency.

For partners with a legacy competency by September 30, 2022, who attain a solutions partner designation, the required annual fee is based on the benefits selected and is due at your existing anniversary date (as listed in membership page in Partner Center).

For example, if you choose the solutions partner designation benefits, you will pay an annual fee of $4,730 USD (or equivalent, local fees vary) aligned to the legacy gold competency fee. If you choose to retain the legacy benefits (benefits you received based on the legacy competency you held on September 30, 2022), you will pay a fee aligned to your legacy silver or gold competency fee (local fees vary).

You can choose to attain one solutions partner designation, or more, if applicable to your business. Once you attain a solutions partner designation, subsequent solutions partner designations can be attained, after requirements are met, with no additional fee.

For more information, please visit the Microsoft partner website.

I have questions about specializations.

What is the difference between solutions partner designations and specializations?

We are introducing the solutions partner designation, anchored on the Microsoft Cloud in six solution areas aligned to how Microsoft goes to market. By attaining solution area designations, you can demonstrate your organization's capabilities in delivering customer success in the solution areas. That's valuable for you, because it's where we see customer demand, and where the opportunity is for partners to scale to meet customer needs. This new model provides two qualifying levels: solutions partner and specialist/expert.

The solutions partner designation becomes the first opportunity for you to demonstrate your breadth of skills and knowledge as well as set yourself apart from the competition. Once you attain a solutions partner designation, you can further validate deep technical expertise and experience by earning a specialization (currently called "advanced specializations"). Specializations for workload-based scenarios align to the six solution areas or becoming a Microsoft Azure Expert Managed Service Provider (MSP) that demonstrates your deep expertise and proven experience providing managed services across the end-to- end lifecycle for Azure customers.

When will solutions partner designation be a requirement for earning specializations?

Beginning October 3, 2022, solutions partner designations will be a prerequisite to earn a specialization.

Once I attain a solution partner designation what specializations can I earn?

Eligibility for specializations is based on the solutions partner designation you have attained.
To learn more about how specializations will map to the solutions partner designations, please visit Microsoft Docs.

Can I earn any specialization if I have any of the three Azure-related designations (Infrastructure, Data & AI, Digital & App Innovation)?

No, eligibility for specializations is based on the designation(s) you have attained and specific requirements for each specialization. For more information on specialization requirements log into Partner Center.

What are the benefits associated with specializations and expert programs?

After you earn a specialization or expert designation, you will have access to benefits that include a customer-facing badge to display on your business profile in the Microsoft AppSource partner gallery, prioritization ranking in the commercial marketplace, evaluation for active cooperative selling opportunities with Microsoft field sellers, and more.

Additionally, as part of the benefits associated with the solutions partner designation, if you subsequently earn a specialization, you will receive incremental product benefits to help further accelerate your business. Incremental benefits for specialization and expert programs are only available with solutions partner benefits and can not be added to legacy benefits.

To learn more about solutions partner benefits, please visit the benefits guide on the Microsoft partner website.

What will change if my organization has already earned an advanced specialization?

Advanced specializations will become specializations on October 3, 2022. You will retain existing benefits for specializations until your next anniversary date.

How can my organization renew our advanced specialization?

Advanced specializations will become specializations on October 3, 2022. At that time prerequisites to earn a specialization will become attaining a solutions partner designation and legacy gold competencies will no longer be valid. Partners will also need to meet the requirements to renew their specialization.

What is happening with the Azure Expert MSP program?

There are no changes to the Azure Expert MSP program outside of the impact of the move from competencies to solutions partner designations. After October 3, 2022, when the solutions partner designations are available for partners to attain, all three Azure-related solutions partner designations, Infrastructure, Data & AI, and Digital & App Innovation will be required as a prerequisite for the Azure Expert MSP. Once you have attained the solutions partner designations you will need to meet the additional requirements. To learn more, please visit the Azure Expert Managed Services Provider information on the Microsoft partner website.

Will there be changes to Action Pack?

There are no changes to Action Pack. For more information about Microsoft Action Pack, please visit the Action Pack information on the Microsoft partner website.

Will incentives be changing?

If you have a legacy competency, you have options to continue attaining partner incentives.
October 1, 2022, through September 30, 2023:

Option 1: Attain a solutions partner designation. Meet the requirements and immediately become eligible for incentives.

Option 2: Purchase legacy benefits (benefits you received based on the legacy competency you held on September 30, 2022), package. This option could apply if:
- Legacy competency is renewed by September 30, 2022.
- Solutions partner designation is not attained. You can continue to be eligible for incentives until your first anniversary after September 30, 2022, or later (until October 1, 2023) if you choose to purchase a legacy benefits package on your anniversary date.
- Double incentives will not be possible.

October 1, 2023, and beyond:
Attaining a solutions partner designation will be required to be eligible for incentives. Legacy competencies and legacy benefits will no longer be recognized as eligible criteria for incentives, unless otherwise stated in applicable incentive program terms.

How do solutions partner designations work with co-sell?

Beginning October 3, 2022, attaining a solutions partner designation will be required to become co-sell ready. Specifically, for consulting service offers, obtaining a relevant solutions partner designation provides you an opportunity to publish in the Microsoft commercial marketplace.

How do solutions partner designations work with the Learning Partner program?

In the future, the solutions partner for training services designation will be attained through a set of Learning Partner requirements in categories for number of learners trained, certifications purchased, training delivery quality and capability across Microsoft solution areas.

The categories and metrics to attain a solutions partner for training services designation are defined as follows:

- Partner performance: 1,000+ Microsoft Official Courseware (MOC) activations, and minimum of 200 Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP) exam vouchers purchased in a 12-month period.

- Quality of training: Learning Partners will need to achieve a minimum score of 4.25 out of a possible 5.0 across designated survey questions on Microsoft's Advanced Role-based courses via post-training surveys delivered on the required Metrics that Matter (MTM) survey platform.

- Solution area depth: A Learning Partner must earn a minimum of one solutions partner designation. This is achieved by students delivering a minimum of 200 Metrics that Matter (MTM) quality surveys for advanced role-based training for a particular Microsoft solution area. The same requirements apply to earn additional solution area designations.

A partner must meet the requirements of partner performance and quality of training and at least one solutions area depth performance benchmark to achieve their solutions partner for training services designation for the Learning Partner program and applicable benefits.

While we are announcing the program now to support Learning Partner planning, availability for solutions partner for training services designations for the Learning Partner program is targeted for Q4 CY 2022. This is the earliest a partner will be able to attain the new program designations. Stay tuned for additional updates when they become available via our Learning Partner Community.

Why is the Microsoft Partner Network name changing?
The Microsoft Partner Network will change to the Microsoft Cloud Partner Program in October 2022. This new name prioritizes our focus on the cloud and ensuring that Microsoft and our partners are equipped for the road ahead. Whether you build and sell services, software solutions, or devices. The Microsoft Cloud Partner Program will build on the foundation and success of the Microsoft Partner Network and will remain a place for all partners to align with the critical areas of technology that customers need to be successful.

I have questions about the requirements for solutions partner designation.
What is the difference between partner capability score and the Partner Contribution Indicator score?
PCI (Partner Contribution Indicator) score has seven key indicators used to assess your progress toward attaining or retaining a legacy Cloud Business Applications competency only.

With the introduction of solutions partner designations, PCI will no longer be used, and we are moving to a new holistic measurement called the partner capability score which measures knowledge, skills, and customer success categories aligned with each solution area. A minimum of 70 points (with points in each category and sub-category) out of the possible 100 points that are available, is needed to attain a solutions partner designation. For more information, please visit the training gallery on the Microsoft partner website.

Is it possible to earn partial points in a category?
Yes, you can earn partial points in whole increments. For example, if a metric requires three customer adds with a total of 30 total possible points and you obtain one customer add you will earn 10 of the 30 total possible points.

For more information about specific requirements, please visit Microsoft Docs:
- Solutions partner for Infrastructure (Azure): aka.ms/solutionspartnerinfra

- Solutions partner for Data & AI (Azure): aka.ms/solutionspartnerdataai

- Solutions partner for Digital & App Innovation (Azure): aka.ms/solutionspartnerdigiapp

- Solutions partner for Business Applications: aka.ms/solutionspartnerbizapps

- Solutions partner for Modern Work: aka.ms/solutionspartnermodern.

- Solutions partner for Security: aka.ms/solutionspartnersecurity

Is it possible to earn more than the maximum number of points in a category?
No, you cannot earn more points than the total possible points in each category.

I have earned more than 70 points for a solutions partner designation. When will I receive a badge?
Once you have attained a solutions partner designation, your customer-facing badge will be available to download from logo builder in Partner Center.

How often is the partner capability score reporting refreshed in Microsoft Partner Center?
The skilling category is updated daily. The performance and customer success categories are updated monthly.

Azure-related designations
For solutions partner for Azure-related designations, how do the requirements differ?
The requirements in the Performance and Customer Success categories are the same. The Skilling category has different required certifications for each of the designations.

For more information about specific solutions partner designation requirements, please visit:

- Solutions partner for Infrastructure (Azure):
  aka.ms/solutionspartnerinfra

- Solutions partner for Data & AI (Azure):
  aka.ms/solutionspartnerdataai

- Solutions partner for Digital & App Innovation (Azure):
  aka.ms/solutionspartnerdigiapp

For solutions partner for Azure-related designations, in the performance category, what qualifies as a Net Customer Add?
To learn more about the requirements for performance, please visit:

- Solutions partner for Infrastructure (Azure):
  aka.ms/solutionspartnerinfra

- Solutions partner for Data & AI (Azure):
  aka.ms/solutionspartnerdataai

- Solutions partner for Digital & App Innovation (Azure):
  aka.ms/solutionspartnerdigiapp

For solutions partner for Azure-related designations, in the customer success category, how is ACR (Azure Consumed Revenue) Growth calculated?
To learn more about the requirements for customer success, please visit:

Solutions partner for Infrastructure (Azure):
aka.ms/solutionspartnerinfra
Solutions partner for Data & AI (Azure):
aka.ms/solutionspartnerdataai
Solutions partner for Digital & App Innovation (Azure):
aka.ms/solutionspartnerdigiapp

For solutions partner for Azure-related designations, in the customer success category, how are Deployments measured?
To learn more about requirements for the customer success category for Azure designations, please visit:

- Solutions partner for Infrastructure (Azure):
  aka.ms/solutionspartnerinfra

- Solutions partner for Data & AI (Azure):
  aka.ms/solutionspartnerdataai

- Solutions partner for Digital & App Innovation (Azure):
  aka.ms/solutionspartnerdigiapp

For solutions partner for Azure-related designations, in the skilling category, what certifications are required?
To learn more about requirements for skilling, please visit:

- Solutions partner for Infrastructure (Azure):
  aka.ms/solutionspartnerinfra

- Solutions partner for Data & AI (Azure):
  aka.ms/solutionspartnerdataai

- Solutions partner for Digital & App Innovation (Azure):
  aka.ms/solutionspartnerdigiapp

After a solutions partner for Azure designation is attained, what specializations can be earned?
Specialization requirements are specific to each specialization. For more information on specialization requirements log into Partner Center.

Business Applications designation
For Solutions partner for Business Applications, in the performance category, what workloads are relevant?
To learn more about requirements for performance, please visit Microsoft Docs at aka.ms/solutionspartnerbizapps.

For Solutions partner for Business Applications, in the customer success category, what is the monthly consumption value and how is it used?
To learn more about requirements for customer success, please visit Microsoft Docs at aka.ms/solutionspartnerbizapps.

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Modern Work designation

For Solutions partner for Modern Work, in the performance category, what qualifies as a Net Customer Add?
To learn more about requirements for performance, please visit Microsoft Docs at aka.ms/solutionspartnermodern.

For Solutions partner for Modern Work, in the performance category, how do I associate my organization with my customers?
For enterprise and SMB customers, please visit Microsoft Docs at aka.ms/solutionspartnermodern.

For Solutions partner for Modern Work, in the skilling category, what exams and certifications are required?
To learn more about requirements for skilling, please visit Microsoft Docs at aka.ms/solutionspartnermodern.

For Solutions partner for Modern Work, in the customer success category, how is the monthly Active usage growth score calculated?
To learn more about requirements for performance, please visit Microsoft Docs at aka.ms/solutionspartnermodern.

For Solutions partner for Modern Work, in the customer success category, how is deployed service defined?
To learn more about requirements for performance, please visit Microsoft Docs at aka.ms/solutionspartnermodern.

How does Solutions partner for Modern Work map to the Microsoft Cloud Accelerator Program?
Solutions partner for Modern Work is an important requirement to be eligible for the Microsoft Cloud Accelerator Program. Please visit sign into Partner Center to see your eligibility.

Security designation

For Solutions partner for Security, in the performance category, can points be earned for Microsoft 365 and Microsoft Azure workloads?
To learn more about requirements for performance, please visit Microsoft Docs at aka.ms/solutionspartnersecurity.

For Solutions partner for Security, in the performance category, is it the same process to associate my customers with my organization for solutions partner for Modern Work and solutions partner for Security?
To learn more about requirements for performance, please visit Microsoft Docs at aka.ms/solutionspartnersecurity.

For Solutions partner for Security, in the performance category, how can I verify my organization is getting credit for our work with customers?
Customers will be associated with your organization through Partner Center Claiming Portal of Record (CPOR). For Azure customers will be associated with your organization through the Partner Admin Link.

For more information about Claiming Partner of Record (CPOR), please visit aka.ms/cpor. Please select Online Services Usage Microsoft 365 Incentive Resources.

For more information about Partner Admin link (PAL), please visit PAL collection on the Microsoft partner website.

Why is the existing Enterprise Mobility Management competency mapping to the solutions partner for Security designation?
A truly secure environment is an always-up-to-date environment. The goal is to facilitate modern cloud deployment technologies to ensure customers are always secure and up to date.