Assessing your readiness for cloud

A local government Guide

eduserv

IT for public good
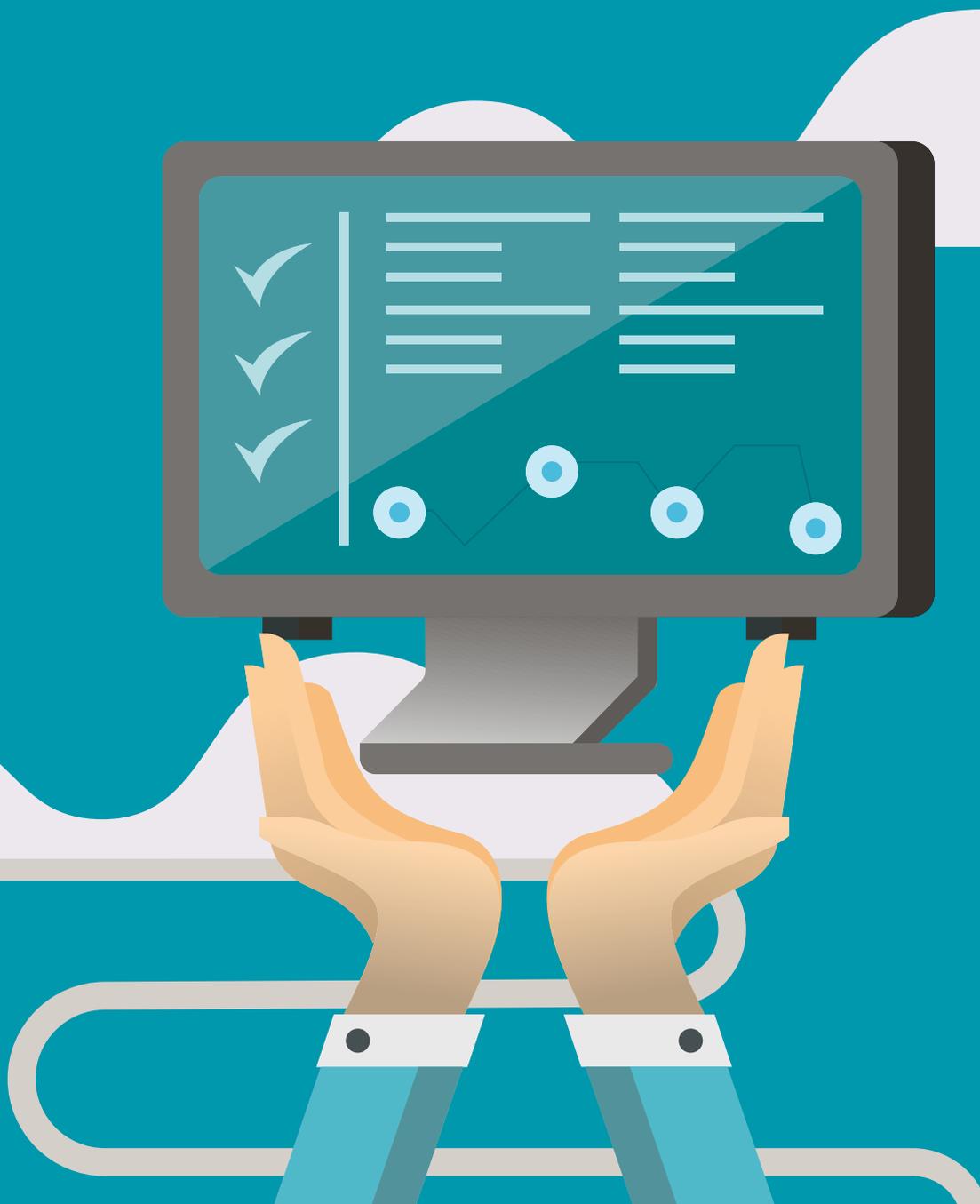
About the author

Max is Principal Architect, leading and maintaining Eduserv's Cloud Adoption Assesment and wider Eduserv professional services standards. He has in depth experience of strategic planning and executing ICT transformations. Max also maintains a keen interest in government security standards and is adept at designing for strict government compliance requirements.

Max has extensive experience with complex transformations and secure hosting projects. Specifically the design and operation of public sector ICT solutions, through consulting phases, outsourcing/managed services, cloud and virtualisation.

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Introduction

This guide will help IT and business leaders within local authorities learn how they can assess whether their organisation is ready for cloud, and use this assessment to support a business case. This guide will then discuss how you can start to plan and implement a cloud strategy.

Creating a cloud strategy to support digital transformation

Local authorities have had their budgets cut, but the demands of their customers have not reduced, either in their complexity or their volume.

The public expects authorities to provide better, digitally enabled, public services. This can only be achieved through well managed organisational change. Technology offers unparalleled advantages to enable these transformations, and cloud is one of these technologies.

Delivering services better, faster, and cheaper – means the public sector must find ways to reduce risk and cost of failure. This can in part be achieved by increasing staff awareness and understanding of cloud technologies, as well as planning and executing cloud transformation with the full backing of their senior leadership teams.
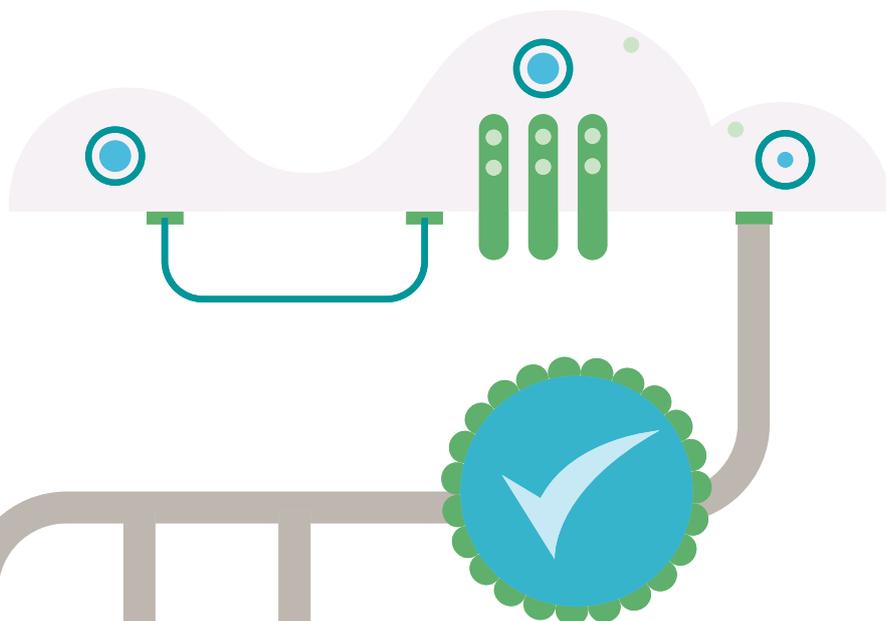
The case for cloud is supported by:

- The need for public sector organisations to focus their efforts on delivering public services.

- The decreasing budgets, across departments mean rationalising buildings and others assets is necessary, planning for this as early as you can is a must.

- The move to a cloud 'rental model' reduces risks associated with upkeep and ownership of assets.

- Cloud enables flexibility that supports the changing and evolving nature of digital demands.

- Over time a reduction in staffing of datacentre and infrastructure teams is possible or re-training of staff can be achieved, to enable them to move into more relevant service/digital delivery roles.

- Current risks associated with legacy equipment and datacentres will be mitigated.

- The medium to long term plan – this should include a reduction of cloud infrastructure assets and a majority shift to a software-as-a-service (SaaS) consumption model, further reducing the need for infrastructure and infrastructure support skills.

Building a business case for cloud

Conducting a cloud adoption assessment will help you discover whether your organisation is ready for the cloud, the type of cloud, what the likely costs will be and which areas of your organisation need the most attention to successfully adopt cloud.

The outcome of the assessment will provide you with a powerful tool to support a business case, if your assessment favours adopting cloud. Having this output will help ensure that the project gets the buy-in and investment it needs from senior stakeholders.

Assessing readiness for cloud

A robust readiness assessment should at least cover the following areas:

- Cultural readiness

- Needs assessment

- Technical readiness

- Budgetary readiness

- Resourcing readiness

- Awareness and management of risk

Cultural readiness

Acceptance of 'cloud' among your organisation's staff, in the most generic sense, is an important measure. Acceptance generally has increased in recent years, in part due to the burgeoning use of cloud in everyday lives, personally and in business. Measuring stakeholder views of cloud, in the context of its use by the public sector will provide early insight and forewarning of any future potential blockers.

- Is your project on the right people's radar, and is it understood? A cloud or digital endeavour being known and understood at the C-level is a key condition for a successful outcome.

- 'Cloud' and 'digital' have become widely used words, but mean different things to different people. Do your stakeholder priorities align to the benefits your project should bring?

Needs assessment

Heads of service, directors and other stakeholders have their priorities already set. These priorities should be mapped and translated into an assessment of their needs and wants, in relation to cloud. This enables you to plan early adopters, exemplars and use cases that are the best fit for cloud. Showing value early is a great way for organisations to buy into the benefits and so identifying services which are 'quick wins' will certainly help your cause.

This process also identifies early on, the areas that don't have the time or other resources to engage with the programme, and further identifies areas of the organisation that don't see the relevance of cloud, enabling you to plan in some communications and awareness sessions.

- Disseminate the digital vision clearly to heads of service and other stakeholders. In parallel, seek to understand their goals and priorities and relate those to characteristics of cloud.

- Identify business services that could be 'quick wins' for cloud adoption, those that will show value early in the project.

Technical readiness

Your ICT landscape will be an assorted mix of applications, operating system flavours, hardware versions, and often suppliers. Assessing their technical readiness for cloud compatibility must be achieved. A methodical approach, and a mix of the right tools and expertise is required to assess the ICT estate.

The assessment should investigate the network, servers and applications, against a range of cloud options to identify incompatibilities and other gaps which will need to be remedied if the systems are migration candidates. This process typically involves detailed discussions with current suppliers and other third parties about their support for cloud and how that affects the price and service they offer, if at all.

Before thinking about adopting cloud, legacy systems should also be checked to ensure they will work effectively with your chosen cloud provider. If it is discovered too late that they are not compatible, the implications on cost and time could be dramatic.

- A full discovery of your ICT infrastructure should enable better categorisation of systems and allows cost forecasting for cloud transformation, per business service.

- Understand your application estate, identify legacy applications, incompatibilities and any vendor constraints/restrictions on cloud.
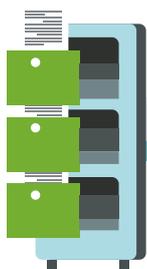
Budgetary readiness

Does your project have a ring fenced budget or is it shared with the wider programme?

Cloud adoption strategies must be apportioned a budget; for people, materials and operational expense. Cloud is a rental model. This could be a change in the way your organisation funds projects, these rental commitments must be understood by finance directors.

For cloud adoption to succeed long term, it must be able to demonstrate an improvement in cost control and financial forecasting. Your assessment of budgetary readiness is best done using side-by-side comparisons of the true current ICT portfolio costs set against the projected cloud and cloud services costs. Expect operating costs to be higher in years 1 and 2 as your platform beds in. Ensuring an 'invest to save' mentality exists among signatories will make sure expectations are managed.

- Transformational projects are investments, there must be acceptance of the necessity for investing to save and investing to focus on the organisational mission.

Resourcing readiness

Can you realistically achieve your goals on time, using your existing resources?

Understanding your current commitments is key to knowing if you can also balance the demands of a cloud migration project. If there is a time pressure it is unlikely that internal teams will succeed in balancing business-as-usual commitments against the burden of cloud related training, planning and execution.

Identify how you will mitigate this, what the skills gaps are and what strategic and tactical roles remain unfulfilled? This is where outside partners add tremendous value.

- Do the resources exist in your organisation to go it alone? If not you need to budget for bringing-in proven expertise to augment your own.
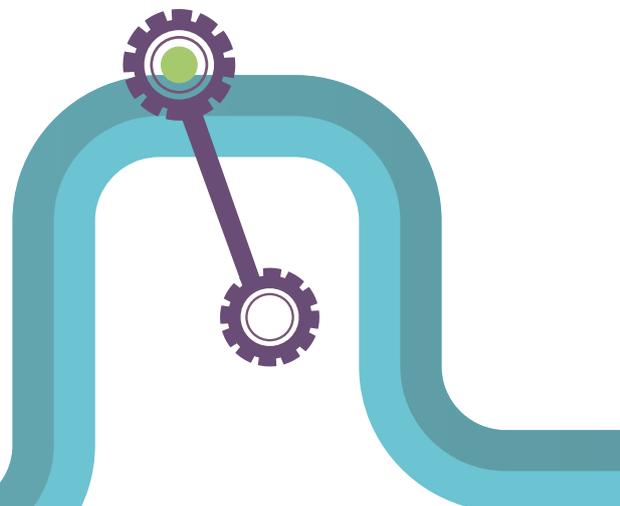
Awareness and management of risk

What is your organisation's risk appetite? Can your risk owner(s) articulate their attitude to risk in this way, in relation to cloud?

Assuming some level of cloud use has been decided on, the destination cloud services should undergo a level of due diligence. This should include measuring their alignment to your organisation's security and compliance requirements. In the case of PSN, how would moving services to the cloud impact your current PSN scope?

Due diligence could be required on the supplier and their supply chain, to include their management of risks and their security and compliance status. This is critical in making a well informed decision on where to store your most important information assets. Does your programme have a risk owner, and what tools are they using to assess and manage the risk involved?

- What is your organisation's risk appetite? Can your risk owner(s) articulate their attitude to risk in this way, in relation to cloud?
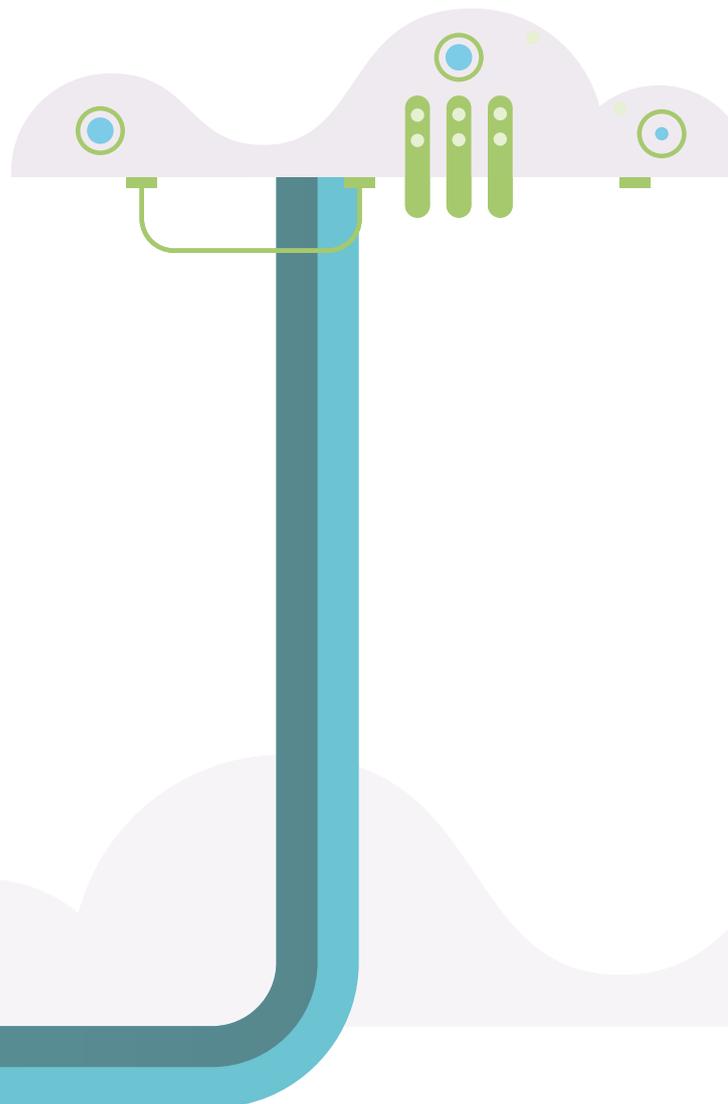
Next steps

Assessing the information – are you ready for cloud and what areas need addressing?

Using the information you have gathered, the assessment data and other analysis, rate your overall alignment and readiness for cloud adoption using a traffic light system for each of the areas above.

You can now make an informed judgement taking into consideration; the gaps, the need for outside assistance, the early candidates, room for experimentation (or not), budgets, timelines, key risks, compliance and security and technical readiness.

Using this traffic light system against key indicators will enable you to visually see which areas are ready for cloud (the greens), which areas need a little bit more work (the amber) and which areas will need significantly more work (the reds).

You can then combine them together to come up with an overall score for cloud adoption, what colour is your programme, red, amber or green?
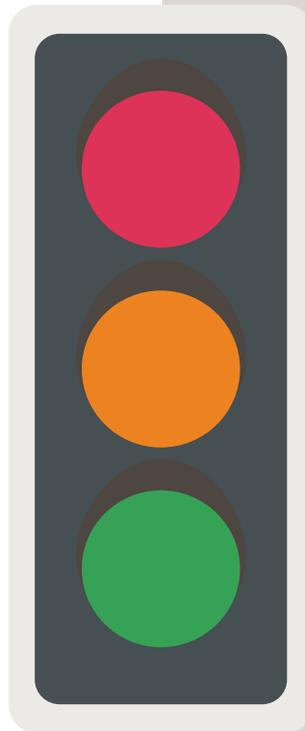
Red: Significant pre-requisites have not been met, these should be prioritised to achieve a successful outcome.

Amber: Some pre-requisites have not been met which will impact significantly on the final outcome but can be worked around or temporarily alleviated in order to progress.

Green: A majority of the transformation activities can proceed to the next stage; any existing pre-requisites are expected to be met by future stages.

Creating an initial strategy and kicking off the project

If you have decided cloud is right for your organisation, it is time to start to plan the cloud strategy. As a starter, you should identify the services that will be easiest to move to the cloud first and start to plan how you will move them, this will help the cloud migration build early momentum and aid in getting the business behind the project.

The cloud strategy should be aligned with the digital vision and show how it will help the organisation meet their business goals, it should answer these questions:

Who – **Who will your team consist of?**
To achieve the vision, what type of outside help will you bring in and for what? What internal teams will you leverage and for what?

• Are you going to use partners and is this for short term and/or tactical assistance or longer term engagements? What roles will internal people take on and is this long or short term?

When – **When will you achieve the major milestones by?** Think about the critical path and dependencies.

What – **What will you use?** The key materials, platforms, technologies, tactical and strategic choices.

How – **This is the method**. How are you going to stitch the components of this strategy together to achieve its aims? Expand on how you will do this, such as; using partners will enable us to achieve X, leveraging cloud infrastructure will enable the datacentres to close in time for Y. Internal staff will be trained in X to enable them to assist in achieving Y.

• How will success be measured? You should measure the strategy throughout the project at key milestones and with strict governance.

Success measures – showing the value

The final thing to consider is how you show and prove the value that this strategy is delivering. Success measures must be baked into the project and its governance, these measures are used to keep check of the three most important aspects, of any project:

1. Cost

2. Time

3. Impact

You need to have an understanding about the costs, the return and exact timescales of each work stream. It is also important to be able to measure, and be able to report on, whether the strategy is having the intended impact and whether it is actively contributing to the organisation's goals.

As part of our cloud adoption assessment service, Eduserv help a number of public sector organisations assess their readiness for the cloud using many of the methods identified in this guide.

or more information about our cloud adoption assessment service, go to **www.eduserv.org.uk/cloud-adoption**.

If you would like help developing your cloud strategy please get in touch:
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Tel: **0844 5000 115**
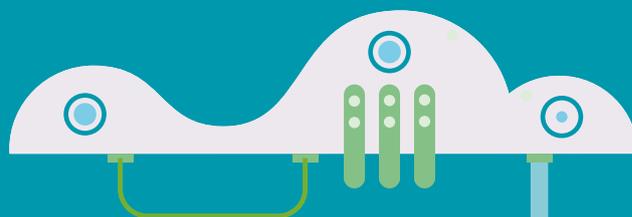
About Eduserv

Eduserv is a not-for-profit IT services provider dedicated to helping charities and the public sector make better use of their IT. Our customers include Adur & Worthing Councils, Brighton & Hove City Council and Bristol City Council

Get in touch

If you would like to find out how Eduserv can help transform your IT, please contact us:

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