

Evolving the Microsoft Partner Network programs

FAQ: Frequently asked questions about Solutions Partner designations, competencies, specializations/expert programs, benefits, and more.

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Overview

We are evolving Microsoft Partner Network programs and are committed to our partnership and helping you grow 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.

To learn more about the program changes, review helpful assets in the [training gallery](#) on the Microsoft partner website, and [Microsoft docs](#) pages.

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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), Digital & App Innovation (Azure), Infrastructure (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 designations, anchored on the Microsoft Cloud in six solution areas aligned to how Microsoft goes to market. By attaining Solutions Partner 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 Data & AI (Azure), Digital & App Innovation (Azure), Infrastructure (Azure), Business Applications, Modern Work, and Security.

A Solutions Partner designation helps to 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.

I have questions about my legacy competencies.

What should I do today 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.

My competency renewal is before September 30, 2022, should I renew my legacy competency or wait to attain the Solutions Partner designation?

You should assess the new designations and benefits to determine how they align with your business plan. You can work with your global or MPN partner admin to sign into Partner Center

to check your progress towards attaining the Solutions Partner designation. If you choose to renew your legacy competency before September 30, 2022, you will be provided your legacy benefits through to your next anniversary date and can renew them at your next anniversary date. If, after October 3, 2022, you attain 70 points for the Solutions Partner designation, you will immediately receive the new customer-facing badge and no additional fee is paid. On your next anniversary date, you will be able to choose whether to retain your legacy competency benefits or move to the updated Solutions Partner designation benefits. You will pay the appropriate fee and receive the benefits. However, you may choose not to renew your legacy competency and instead focus on attaining the Solutions Partner designation. In this example, once you attain the Solutions Partner designation, since you do not have legacy benefits, you immediately have the opportunity to pay the fee and move to the new Solutions Partner benefits. However, note that in this case you would not have the opportunity to select your prior legacy competency benefits as part of your Solutions Partner membership.

My competency renewal is after September 30, 2022, can I renew under legacy in September?

No, you can't renew your legacy competency before your anniversary date. If your anniversary date is after September 30, you will have options. If you meet the requirements, 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 our anniversary date, if you don't meet the requirements for the Solutions Partner designation, you will have the option to pay the fee and retain your legacy benefits (benefits you received based on the competency you held on September 30, 2022), until your next anniversary date.

If we renew our gold competency between now and September 30, 2022, can we get a pro-rata discount to the end of September?

No, however you don't pay another fee until your next anniversary date. If you have renewed your legacy competency ahead of September 30, 2022, and you attain the Solutions Partner designation from October 3, 2022, onwards, you will immediately receive the new customer-facing badge and no additional fee is paid. On your next anniversary date, you will be able to choose whether to retain your legacy competency benefits or move to the updated Solutions Partner designation benefits. You will pay the appropriate fee and receive the 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:

Qualifications for designation at the time of anniversary:

- Maintain a Solutions Partner designation if you have attained one. Partner will have two options relating to benefits, they can only pick one option. A partner must choose option #1 or #2 in order to keep the Solutions Partner designation.
 - Option #1: 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. **OR**
 - Option #2: 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.

Does not qualify for designation at the time of anniversary:

- 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.

I have questions about the partner capability score and points. 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 performance, skilling, 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](#).

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

A 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 Data & AI (Azure): aka.ms/Solutionspartner.DataAI
- Solutions Partner for Digital & App Innovation (Azure): aka.ms/Solutionspartner.DigApplInnov
- Solutions Partner for Infrastructure (Azure): aka.ms/Solutionspartner.Infrastructure
- 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.

When will the data be updated in the Solutions Partner dashboard on Partner Center?

Performance and *Customer Success* subcategories are typically refreshed by the 10th of every month. However, there may be more minor data refreshes throughout the month.

Skilling subcategories are typically refreshed within a week after certification is completed.

If something doesn't appear to be reported correctly on the Solutions Partner dashboard, who do we contact for assistance?

Please log a ticket with Support at <https://partner.microsoft.com/support>.

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 points and you obtain one customer add you will earn 10 of the 30 total points.

For more information about specific requirements, please visit Microsoft Docs:

- Solutions Partner for Data & AI (Azure): aka.ms/solutionspartnerdataai
- Solutions Partner for Digital & App Innovation (Azure): aka.ms/solutionspartnerdigiapp
- Solutions Partner for Infrastructure (Azure): aka.ms/solutionspartnerinfra
- Solutions Partner for Business Applications: aka.ms/solutionspartnerbizapps
- Solutions Partner for Modern Work: aka.ms/solutionspartnermodern.
- Solutions Partner for Security: aka.ms/solutionspartnersecurity

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.

Is the 70 points for the Solutions Partner designation only or does it contribute to the specialization and expert programs?

70 points is the minimum requirement to attain a Solutions Partner designation. Note that it is 70 points out of a possible 100 points, and partners need to have points in all sub categories. The associated Solutions Partner designation will become the prerequisite for specializations and expert programs. For example, to earn the Calling for Microsoft Teams specialization, a partner would first need to attain the Solutions Partner for Modern Work designation, then meet the specialization requirements which are otherwise unchanged. For more information on the requirements visit the [specialization pages](#) on the Microsoft partner website.

Our partner capability score is currently 50 points or less, but we are working towards an advanced specialization, will that boost our score?

No. Specializations (currently called advanced specializations) and expert programs will continue to be a way to further differentiate your organization's deep technical expertise.

Solutions Partner designations are the first opportunity to differentiate your organization's capabilities in delivering customer success. 70 points is the minimum requirement to attain a Solutions Partner designation. Note that it is 70 points out of a possible 100 points, and partners need to have points in all subcategories. The associated Solutions Partner designation will become the prerequisite for specializations and expert programs. For example, to earn the Calling for Microsoft Teams specialization, a partner would first need to attain the Solutions Partner for Modern Work designation, then meet the specialization requirements which are otherwise unchanged. For more information on the requirements visit the [specialization pages](#) on the Microsoft partner website.

What happens if we attain the Solutions Partner designation but dip below 70 points between attaining the designation and our anniversary date?

At any time after October 3, 2022, if your organization meets requirements for the Solutions Partner designation, you'll immediately receive the corresponding customer-facing badge. On your anniversary date, not beforehand, we'll check if you still meet the requirements. If you do, you'll retain the Solutions Partner designation and corresponding badge after paying the annual fee.

Can all types of partners attain a Solutions Partner designation for example ISV, services partners, indirect providers?

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.

I'm an Indirect provider, how should I think about the Microsoft Cloud Partner Program and the resellers I work with?

The Microsoft Cloud Partner Program is designed for all partners, including you and your resellers.

For your resellers

Resellers can join the Microsoft Cloud Partner Program and attain the various designations within it as they align to their organizational goals and priorities. Resellers should refer to all materials and resources in the Training Gallery and Partner Center to learn more about what the Microsoft Cloud Partner Program means for them. Resellers with competencies on September 30, 2022 will not lose their benefits, and will have the option to renew their legacy benefits at their next anniversary date whether they qualify for a Solutions Partner designation or not at that time.

For your work directly with customers

If in addition to your work as an indirect provider you have a direct-to-customer business for your services, software solutions, or devices, our partner-focused business platform opens the door to the Microsoft ecosystem of resources, tools, and opportunities to support your success on the Microsoft Cloud. You can attain the various designations within the partner program as they align to your organizational goals and priorities. Refer to Partner Center and the Training Gallery to learn more about what the Microsoft Cloud Partner Program means for your customer-facing business.

For your work as an indirect provider

To better recognize and support your work within your business model as in indirect provider, we are prioritizing planning for a designation that recognizes the skill, capabilities, resources, and support provided by indirect providers to the resellers in your channel. We are also exploring avenues for making your reseller scores available to you to help you support and grow your resellers. In your work with your resellers regarding the Microsoft Cloud Partner Program, refer to the materials in the Training Gallery as your primary sources of detail, and leverage Partner Center to review your resellers' scores with them.

I'm an ISV, how does the Microsoft Cloud Partner Program help me?

The Microsoft Cloud Partner Program is designed for all partners. Whether you build and sell services, software solutions, or devices, our partner-focused business platform opens the door to the Microsoft ecosystem of resources, tools, and opportunities to support your success on the Microsoft Cloud. To better support any ISV that wants to work with us, we're investing in programs, resources, and initiatives that meet you where you are. At Microsoft Inspire in July, we

announced the ISV Success program within the Microsoft Cloud Partner Program. Currently within private preview and moving to public preview later this year, the ISV Success program will be open to all ISV partners to help them access benefits to build and publish apps faster, accelerate innovation, and reach more customers. We also announced we're adding industry designations to differentiate solutions based on partners' demonstrated performance with customers, technical maturity, and customer success. We'll be prioritizing industry designations anchored on the Microsoft Industry Clouds and aligning across the Solutions Partner and ISV programs to help partners further differentiate their organization's capabilities and marketplace offers.

For more information: <https://partner.microsoft.com/membership/isv-growth>

Find out more about how we're supporting ISV partners today:

- To help remove the traditional barriers to founding a tech company, we launched [Microsoft for Startups Founders Hub](#), where you can grow your business at your pace with Microsoft tools and platforms, guidance from business leaders and technical experts, and startup-friendly offers from Microsoft partners.
- For tailored support as you develop, extend, and sell Microsoft Cloud solutions, you can join the [ISV Success Program](#), the pathway for ISVs within the Microsoft Cloud Partner Program.
- One of our top priorities is to help you deliver quality, high-performing cloud solutions to customers across every market and industry. As an ISV partner, you can expand your customer connections through the [Microsoft commercial marketplace](#).

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 Solutions Partner designation, you will demonstrate your organization's breadth of capabilities in delivering customer success in the solution area 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.

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](#).

How are badges and benefits distributed between a partner global account and a partner location account?

Designation badges and benefits are attained on the partner global account ("PGA") level; badges and benefits can be distributed to the partner location account(s) ("PLA") that are associated to the PGA. It is at the discretion of the PGA regarding how to distribute benefits to PLA(s)? To learn more about the relations between PGA and PLA, go here: [Two levels of MPN partner accounts - Partner Center | Microsoft Docs](#)

If a partner has multiple PGAs, they can choose to consolidate by following these steps <https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/partner-center/merge-accounts?msclkid=46915f2ed07e11ec9095d7db342d8208>

I have questions about the new customer-facing badges.

What badges are available for the Solutions Partner designations?

New customer-facing badges for the Solutions Partner designations will be available from October 3, 2022. There is one badge per solution area which represents the Solutions Partner designation. There is also a Solutions Partner for Microsoft Cloud badge, for partners who attain all six Solutions Partner designations.

Where can we find the new logo designation design guidelines for print and website/digital use? Will there be black/white/transparent images available?

Color and black and white versions of the badging will be available for download from Logo Builder in Partner Center once partners have attained the designations from October onwards. Badge use guidelines will be available from October in Logo Builder and on the Microsoft partner website.

I have questions about fees.

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](#).

Do we need to pay a separate fee for each of the six Solutions Partner designations and what is the fee?

The annual fee for the Solutions Partner designation, regardless of how many designations, will be \$4,730 USD (or equivalent, local fees vary), aligned to the legacy gold competency fee. As it works with competencies today, if a partner earns subsequent designations, they do not need to pay the fee again.

If I meet all the requirements for an additional designation, will the benefits be available immediately, or is there a time delay in Partner Center?

If you earn a subsequent designation in between anniversary dates, you will be able to access the subsequent benefits immediately, you do not have to wait until your upcoming anniversary date.

If I attain an additional designation mid-year, is the designation valid for twelve months from attainment or is it valid through the next anniversary date?

The designation is valid until the anniversary date of when the first designation was attained. For example, if a Solutions Partner for Modern Work designation is attained November 2022, and then Business Applications is attained January 2023 and Security in February 2023, all three designations will have the same anniversary date of November 2023.

I have questions about specializations and expert programs.

How are Microsoft advanced specializations changing?

Advanced specializations will become specializations on October 3, 2022. If you attain a Solutions Partner designation, specializations further validate and differentiate your deep technical experience and expertise. Specializations demonstrate your ability to deliver project-based services related to specific technical scenarios aligned to the solutions areas, and with how we go to market. Earning a specialization strengthens and differentiates you from your competition in areas with high customer demand. We are also introducing new badges and benefits. To learn more about specialization benefits, please visit the [benefits guide on the Microsoft partner website](#).

If you have an active advanced specialization on October 3, 2022, it will automatically transition to specialization. At that time, legacy gold competencies will no longer be valid, and Solutions Partner designations will become prerequisites to earn specializations. You will have until the anniversary date of your specialization to attain the required Solutions Partner designation along with the other specialization requirements. You will not be allowed to renew your specialization if you have not attained a Solutions Partner designation.

What is the difference between Solutions Partner designations and specializations?

The Solutions Partner designation becomes the first opportunity for you to demonstrate your breadth of skills, knowledge and set yourself apart from the competition. Once you attain a

Solutions Partner designation, you can further differentiate your deep technical expertise and experience with specializations (formerly called advanced specializations) and through the Microsoft Azure Expert Managed Service Provider (MSP) program.

When will changes to the advanced specializations happen?

Starting on October 3, 2022, Solutions Partner designations will be available for partners to attain and will become a prerequisite to earn, maintain, and renew a specialization.

If you have an active advanced specialization on October 3, 2022, it will automatically transition to specialization. At that time, legacy gold competencies will no longer be valid, and Solutions Partner designations will become prerequisites to earn specializations. You will have until the anniversary date of your specialization to attain the required Solutions Partner designation along with the other specialization requirements. You will not be allowed to renew your specialization if you have not attained a Solutions Partner designation.

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

Currently, you must maintain an active aligned gold competency to maintain advanced specializations. Beginning October 3, 2022, Solutions Partner designations will be a prerequisite to earn, maintain, and renew a specialization. We are also introducing new badges and benefits. If you have an active advanced specialization on October 3, 2022, it will automatically transition to specialization. At that time, legacy gold competencies will no longer be valid, and Solutions Partner designations will become prerequisites to earn specializations. You will have until the anniversary date of your specialization to attain the required Solutions Partner designation along with the other specialization requirements. You will not be allowed to renew your specialization if you have not attained a Solutions Partner designation.

Once I attain a Solutions Partner designation, what specializations can I earn?

Eligibility for specializations is based on the Solutions Partner designation you have attained. For specializations aligned to more than one Solutions Partner designation, partners need only attain one of the required Solutions Partner designations. See table below for mapping:

Specialization	Solutions Partner designations					
	Data & AI (Azure)	Digital & App Innovation (Azure)	Infrastructure (Azure)	Business Applications	Modern Work	Security
Windows Server and SQL Server Migration to Microsoft Azure	X		X			
Linux and Open-Source Database Migration to Microsoft Azure	X		X			
SAP on Microsoft Azure			X			
Data Warehouse Migration to Microsoft Azure	X					
Kubernetes on Microsoft Azure	X	X				
Modernization of Web Applications to Microsoft Azure	X	X				
Microsoft Windows Virtual Desktop			X			
Analytics on Microsoft Azure	X					

Specialization	Solutions Partner designations					
	Data & AI (Azure)	Digital & App Innov (Azure)	Infra (Azure)	Business Apps	Modern Work	Security
Microsoft Azure VMware Solution			X			
AI and Machine Learning on Microsoft Azure	X	X				
DevOps with GitHub on Microsoft Azure		X				
Hybrid Operations and Management with Microsoft Azure Arc	X	X	X			
Hybrid Cloud Infrastructure with Microsoft Azure Stack HCI	X	X	X			
Networking Services in Microsoft Azure			X			
Microsoft Low Code Application Development		X		X		
Small and Midsize Business Management				X		
Adoption and Change Management					X	
Calling for Microsoft Teams					X	
Customer Solutions for Microsoft Teams					X	
Meetings and Meeting Rooms for Microsoft Teams					X	
Teamwork deployment					X	
Modernize Endpoints					X	
Cloud Security						X

Identity and Access Management						X
Information Protection and Governance						X
Threat Protection						X

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

No, eligibility for specializations is based on the designation(s) you have attained (see table above) and specific requirements for each specialization. For specialization requirement details please sign 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 cannot be added to legacy benefits.

To learn more about Solutions Partner benefits, please visit the [benefits guide on the Microsoft partner website](#).

Can I receive benefits associated with specializations and expert programs before my renewal date?

No. The new incremental benefits for specializations and expert programs are tied to the benefits for Solutions Partner designations and must be selected (by paying the aligned fee) instead of choosing to retain legacy benefits (and paying the aligned fee). The ability to select your benefits will be available at your first membership anniversary date after attaining a Solutions Partner designation.

To view an example of the timeline and options for receiving the benefits associated with specializations and expert programs, please visit the section titled 'Illustrative example' in the [benefits guide on the Microsoft partner website](#).

Will I receive benefits associated with specializations and expert programs if earned after my renewal date?

If you already have the relevant Solutions Partner designation and have opted to select the Solutions Partner benefits (and pay the fee), incremental specialization benefits are received when the specialization is earned and will be available through your next renewal date.

The total number of specializations or expert program associated benefits must be within the respective maximum benefit cap amounts for each category of specializations and expert programs.

To view an example of the timeline and maximum benefit cap amounts for receiving the benefits associated with specializations and expert programs, please visit the section titled 'Illustrative example' in the [benefits guide on the Microsoft partner website](#).

What happens to my advanced specialization on October 3, 2022, if my organization chooses not to attain a Solutions Partner designation?

Advanced specializations will become specializations on October 3, 2022. At that time, legacy gold competencies will no longer be valid, and Solutions Partner designations will become prerequisites to earn specializations. You will have until the anniversary date of your specialization to attain the required Solutions Partner designation along with the other specialization requirements. You will not be allowed to renew your specialization if you have not attained a Solutions Partner designation.

Those in your organization with MPN Admin roles will receive notifications from Partner Center informing you of the requirement.

Example scenario

Partner A

- Current competency: Gold Security, anniversary date November 11, 2022
- Current advanced specialization: Threat Protection, anniversary date February 3, 2023

On October 3, 2022, Partner A has 60 points towards the Solutions Partner for Security designation and has an Active Threat Protection advanced specialization. Partner A must attain the Solutions Partner for Security designation at the time of their Threat Protection specialization anniversary date. If Partner A is unable to attain the Solutions Partner for Security designation at that time, they will lose their specialization on the specialization's anniversary date.

We are working to earn an advanced specialization; can we still apply with our gold competency?

Yes, applications to earn advanced specializations will be accepted until September 30, 2022, with the caveat that the last day to renew competencies is September 30, 2022, and competencies must be current when applying for advanced specializations.

Beginning October 3, 2022, attaining a Solutions Partner designation will be required to earn, maintain, and renew a specialization.

What is the process to renew an advanced specialization?

Advanced specializations will become specializations on October 3, 2022. At that time, legacy gold competencies will no longer be valid, and Solutions Partner designations will become prerequisites to earn specializations. You will have until the anniversary date of your specialization to attain the required Solutions Partner designation along with the other specialization requirements. You will not be allowed to renew your specialization if you have not attained a Solutions Partner designation.

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 (Azure), Data & AI (Azure), and Digital & App Innovation (Azure) 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](#).

To learn more about Solutions Partner benefits, please visit the [benefits guide on the Microsoft partner website](#).

When will Solutions Partner designations be a requirement for earning Azure Expert MSP?

Beginning October 3, 2022, all three Azure-related Solutions Partner designations, Data & AI (Azure), Digital & App Innovation (Azure), and Infrastructure (Azure) will be required as a prerequisite for the Azure Expert MSP.

What happens to my Azure Expert MSP status on October 3, 2022, if my organization does not qualify for the Azure Solutions Partner designations?

On October 3, 2022, to maintain your Azure Expert MSP status your organization will need to attain the required Azure-related Solutions Partner designations at the time of your Azure Expert MSP anniversary date; the legacy Gold Cloud Platform competency will no longer be valid. If your organization does not attain all three Azure Solutions Partner designations at the time of your Azure Expert MSP anniversary date, you will lose your Azure Expert MSP status and existing benefits within 30 calendar days. Your organization will receive notifications from Partner Center informing you of the requirement.

My organization is currently working to earn Azure Expert MSP, can we still apply with our Gold competency?

Yes, applications to earn Azure Expert MSP will be accepted until September 30, 2022, with the caveat that the last day to renew competencies is September 30, 2022, and competencies must be current when applying.

Beginning October 3, 2022, attaining all three Azure Solutions Partner designations will be required to earn, maintain, and renew Azure Expert MSP.

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 these changes impact publishing in the commercial marketplace?

How do Solutions Partner designations work with publishing a Managed Services offer with Commercial Marketplace?

Beginning October 3, 2022, existing partners, who have a competency on September 30 2022, will be able to publish Managed Services offer types until October 3 2023. New partners or partners who did not have a competency on September 30 2022, will be required to have a Solutions Partner designation to publish a managed services offer.

How do Solutions Partner designations work with publishing a Consulting Services offer with Commercial Marketplace?

Beginning October 3, 2022, existing partners, who have a competency on September 30 2022, will be able to publish Consulting Services offer types until October 3 2023. A Solutions Partner designation will be required beginning October 3 2023. New partners or partners who did not have a competency on September 30 2022 will be required to have a Solutions Partner designation to publish a consulting services offer.

How do Solutions Partner designations work with co-sell?

Existing services partners with co-sell ready status, who have a competency on September 30 2022, will be able to publish Consulting Services offer types until October 3 2023. A Solutions Partner designation will be required beginning October 3 2023.

What impact do these changes have on ISVs becoming co-sell ready?

There is no change to how an IP application becomes co-sell ready or incentivized. Details on how to obtain the status can be found in the [Partner Center documentation](#) on Microsoft Docs.

What happens to my existing and new application applications I'm considering publishing on Microsoft AppSource, and if I do not qualify for a new Solutions Partner designation(s) on Oct. 3, 2022 and beyond?

For partners with an existing application, who have an existing silver and/or gold competency as of Sept. 30, 2022, there will be no impact to your existing, published app until October 3 2023. For new applications for consideration post Oct. 3, 2022, a partner will be required to have a Solutions Partner designation to publish an application on Microsoft AppSource.

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.

Will the current platform MPN eventually end up going away?

We are renaming the Microsoft Partner Network to the Microsoft Cloud Partner Program effective October 2022 and Microsoft Partner Network will no longer be in market.

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 Solutions Partner 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](#).

I have broad questions about the requirements.

Are the customer references/evidence going to be 100% telemetry based or will they require manual/ verbal approval and verification from each customer for each scenario?

The customer references are referring to requirements as part of certain specializations (currently called advanced specializations). There are currently no planned changes for existing advanced specializations in market. As a result, there is no change in how customer references are validated at this time. The partner capability score is a telemetry-based score based on data that exists in Partner Center. You will need to ensure the data such as DPOR and CSP and certifications is being captured and reported accurately, but once you've made those connections, the data will be updated monthly and daily for skilling. More information on requirements and how to link reporting is available on the [Microsoft Docs](#) pages.

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](#).

Where an exam, certificate, or assessment counts for more than one Solutions Partner designation, can the same skill (exam, certificate or assessment) be completed by the same MCP (Microsoft Certified Professionals)?

Yes.

Can one person with their exam passed be linked to more than one Solutions Partner designation?

Yes.

Where do I go to learn more about the various association types that are necessary to receive recognition and points associated with performance and customer success categories across the Solutions Partner designations?

Find out more about linking your partner ID on Partner Center document on Microsoft Docs. Specifically:

- [Link a partner ID for CSP Tier 1 or 2](#)
- [Link a partner ID for Azure performance - PAL or DPOR \(microsoft.com\)](#)
- [Link a partner ID for CPOR](#)

Sometimes partners associations are declined by global admins; how should we handle this requirement?

It's important for partners to start conversations with customers now to ensure appropriate associations are in place ahead of October 2022.

How are partner associations such as CPOR and PAL impacted if a customer is served by multiple partners?

Association types such as CPOR and PAL allow partners to be associated at the customer's workload level so that more than one partner who is working in the customer's environment is recognized for the work they have completed.

Will GDAP be added to report partner association to meet the partner capability score requirements?

GDAP is not currently one of the attribution methods for partner capability score requirements. Depending on which Solutions Partner designation you are pursuing, you will need to link CPOR, DPOR or CSP. Please refer to the [requirements information](#) on Microsoft Docs for more information.

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

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

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 Data & AI (Azure): aka.ms/solutionspartnerdataai

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

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

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

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](#).

Requirements for 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.

How do I meet the skilling requirements for the Business Applications designation when 20 people are required?

Partners need to earn 70 points (out of a possible 100 points), with points in each subcategory to attain the Solutions Partner designation. There is flexibility in how the 70 points are earned and partial points within a category can be earned. For example, 20 consultants are required to earn the full 20 points in the intermediate certifications subcategory for larger markets for the Business Applications designation, however partners can earn one point for every consultant. In addition, they may qualify for the other markets category. Please review the detailed requirements on [Microsoft Docs](#) and in the overview for Solutions Partner for Business Applications deck in the [partner training gallery on the Microsoft partner website](#).

Where can I find the list of 'Larger' and 'Other' markets for the Business Applications designation?

Please review the market categories list available on the [partner training gallery on the Microsoft partner website](#).

When will the larger and other markets information on the dashboard for the Business Applications designation be merged?

This update will be implemented in April 2022.

Requirements for 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.

What is the reasoning for basing the performance and customer success requirements for the Modern Work SMB track on greater than 10 seats?

In most cases where the customer account size is less than 10 seats, customers don't engage partners to deploy Microsoft 365 and partners are not focused on delivering value-added services as it is not profitable for them. Because Solutions Partner for Modern Work designation is designed to identify partners with the skills and proven track record needed to help customers deploy and use Microsoft 365, we believe focusing on partner capability with servicing customers with 10 seats or more is the best indicator of this.

Requirements for Security designation

For Solutions Partner for Security, in the performance category, can points be earned for Microsoft 365 and Microsoft Azure workloads?

Yes, partners can earn points from either Microsoft Azure, Microsoft 365 or both. 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 Cloud Solution Provider (CSP) partner association not eligible for the Solutions Partner for Security designation?

In Security, we classify CSP associations to small and medium businesses. Although any partner seeking a Solutions Partner designation for Security can use CPOR to be recognized for servicing a customer's Microsoft cloud environment. The current program is designed to recognize partners who manage larger customer accounts.

Why is the existing Enterprise Mobility Management competency mapping to the Solutions Partner for Security designation?

A 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.