



## Microsoft Cloud Partner Program

FAQ: Frequently asked questions about the  
Microsoft Cloud Partner Program for  
Independent Software Vendors

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## Overview

On March 22, 2023, Microsoft provided an update regarding new designations for qualifying integrated independent software vendor (ISV) partner technologies.

To help customers identify partner organizations with software solutions suited to their needs, Microsoft created Solutions Partner designations, within the Microsoft Cloud Partner Program.

The existing Solutions Partner designations are anchored on the Microsoft Cloud in six solution areas aligned to how Microsoft goes to market. By attaining Solutions Partner designations, partners demonstrate their organization's capabilities in delivering customer success in the solution areas.

Designations for ISV solutions will be aligned to how Microsoft goes to market and how customers will be buying: by industry (e.g., finance, retail, etc.), by use cases across industries (e.g., security), or by the specific imperatives of line-of-business leaders (e.g., marketing and sales). These designations will distinguish a software solution's specific capabilities and help customers identify proven solutions for their business needs.

To help partners prepare for the upcoming launch of these new designations, we've provided responses to frequently asked questions.

- To learn more about the Microsoft Cloud Partner Program, review helpful assets in the [training gallery](#) on the Microsoft partner website, [Microsoft docs](#) pages, and the [Microsoft Cloud Partner Program FAQ](#) in addition to the information provided below.
- Helpful tips:
  - Ctrl+F to open a search window and locate a specific character, word, or phrase in the FAQ document.
  - Ctrl+Click on a topic located in the Table of Contents to jump to that specific topic.

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# Independent Software Vendors

## Why is Microsoft planning to launch designations for ISV solutions?

At Microsoft, we recognize that what partners need to succeed is unique to their business model, size, and stage of growth. To better support our ISV partners—we're investing in programs, resources, and initiatives that meet them where they are.

Whether they're building their first app, migrating from another cloud provider, or selling established solutions through Microsoft, we're defining clear pathways towards their goals.

To help businesses build smarter from day one, [Microsoft for Startups Founders Hub](#) is how we support founders from idea to exit with Azure credits, expert guidance, developer tools, and access to trusted partners. Through [ISV Success](#), we provide benefits and resources, including cloud credits, software licenses, developer tools, and one-to-one consultations, that help you build, publish, and grow well-architected software solutions on the Microsoft Cloud.

We are building upon the existing ISV resources by adding designations for qualifying ISV solutions with the goal of allowing customers and Microsoft sellers to identify solutions that may be best suited for customer needs. To learn more about the Solutions Partner designations please visit the [Microsoft Cloud Partner Program FAQ](#).

## What are the eligibility criteria for the new designations?

Eligibility will be based on technical criteria, commercial marketplace presence and demonstrated customer success. We plan to share full details on eligibility criteria ahead of launching the new designations.

## What are the benefits of attaining a designation?

After attaining a designation, partners will receive benefits that can help their go-to-market capabilities. We will be sharing additional details about the associated benefits ahead of launching the new designations.

## What will the badge for the new designations look like?

We will share additional details about the badging and branding ahead of launching the new designations.

## What is your launch timeline?

We will share additional details about the timeline of these new designations starting in July, during Microsoft Inspire 2023.

## Will this impact my eligibility for the currently available Solutions Partner designations and/or specializations?

No. Eligible partners will be able to attain both existing Solutions Partner designations and/or specializations, as well as the new designations for ISV solutions.

## Will I lose the benefits—such as internal use licenses (IUR)—from my legacy gold/silver competency?

Competencies and associated badges are no longer valid as of September 30, 2022. However, partners who renewed their competency by September 30, 2022, will continue to receive legacy benefits (benefits they received based on the competency they held on September 30, 2022) for legacy competencies until their next anniversary date. After that time, there will be an option for partners to continue purchasing legacy benefits.

## Will attaining the new designations impact my existing Microsoft commercial marketplace listings?

No. ISV partner solutions that obtain the new ISV designation(s) will still be able to differentiate their software solution on the commercial marketplace.

## Can I enroll in ISV Success and attain the new designations concurrently?

Yes. Depending on an organization's business priorities and goals, eligible partners can both enroll in ISV Success (which is available to join today) and can attain designations for ISV solutions (when they are available).

## With respect to the designations for ISV solutions, do I need to take any action today?

Stay tuned for more details about new designations purpose-built for partners developing software. Ahead of the launch, we will share additional information and details on the partner website.

## I'm an ISV partner, 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. The ISV Success program is 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 will start with focus on these three industries: Financial Services, Retail, and Healthcare, with more industries coming afterwards. 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

## 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. On March 22, 2023, we announced that we are also expanding Solutions Partner designations to include options that differentiate our partners who develop software, or otherwise known as independent software vendors (ISVs).

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 and for Business Applications. For more information, please visit [Solutions Partner for Modern Work](#) and [Solutions Partner for Business Applications](#).

## 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.

## I'm an ISV partner with an existing silver or gold competency, what action do I need to take?

If your anniversary date is before September 30, 2022, make sure you renew your competency by September 30, 2022 as that is the last day to renew existing legacy competencies. After September 30, no new competencies can be attained.

Partners with active legacy competencies after September 30, 2022, will retain the associated benefits. On your next anniversary date, you will have the option to pay the same fee and retain your legacy benefits. If you meet the requirements for Solutions Partner, you will have the option to pay the fee and move to the new Solutions Partner benefits instead. As an ISV partner, you can also consider the ISV Success program which is the pathway for ISV partners within the Microsoft Cloud Partner Program, in addition to Solutions Partner designations.

## If an ISV is close to achieving the required points for a Solutions Partner designation, should they go the extra mile to achieve this?

The initial Solutions Partner designations are aligned to six solution areas anchored on the Microsoft Cloud. While the Solutions Partner designations available today are geared towards recognizing a partner's ability to build and sell services, we're continuing to invest in new ways to help all partners build innovative, secure, high performing solutions for customers, go to market faster, while driving customer demand, sell their solutions, scale their reach, differentiate, and stand out to customers. Whether an ISV, or any partner, should pursue the Solutions Partner designation is a decision for each partner organization to make based on their own circumstances and alignment to their organization's goals and business plan. In making your decision, we recommend you review the materials in the Training Gallery on the partner website, including how Microsoft is positioning Solutions Partner designations, the requirements to attain each designation and the associated benefits.

## Will Microsoft recognize silver or gold competencies after October 3, 2022?

No. September 30, 2022 is the last day for any partner 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. Solutions Partner is the new designation and will be creating public awareness for these designations, future developments, and the Microsoft Cloud Partner Program overall.

## I missed renewing my legacy competency ahead of September 30, 2022. Can I submit a request for an exception and still renew my competency even though it is now October?

There is no exception process for partners who did not renew their competency at the time of their anniversary date ahead of the September 30 deadline. Instead, partners can choose to subscribe to Microsoft Action Pack, work towards a Solutions Partner designation, or if they are an ISV partners, they can sign up for the ISV Success program.

## I'm an ISV. Should I keep my legacy competency benefits or wait for the ISV Success program to be available to my organization?

Whether a partner should renew their existing legacy competency or not is a decision for each partner organization to make based on their own circumstances and alignment to their organization's goals and business plan. If you're evaluating legacy competency benefits alongside ISV Success program benefits, we recommend you review the [legacy benefits listed in Partner Center](#) and the [ISV Success program benefits](#).



Does Microsoft plan to introduce a higher level of enhanced benefits for ISV partners, similar to the incremental benefits available for specializations?

Yes. An enhanced benefits package will be available with public preview. Details will be shared ahead of Microsoft Inspire 2023.

As an ISV, I see a clear focus on the Microsoft commercial marketplace. What are the benefits of the marketplace?

The Microsoft commercial marketplace enables partners to reach every Microsoft customer, scaling instantly to 141 geographies. They can simplify sales cutting through red tape and enabling scale across 17 currencies and over 50 tax IDs. Partners can also reach the 98% of Fortune 500 organizations that use the Microsoft Cloud and by empowering customers to fulfil their cloud consumption commitment by buying eligible solutions through marketplace, demand continues to increase with a 288% YoY increase in SaaS billed sales and 52% YOY increase in deal size.