

Mainframe as a Service Migration

Develop a customer-driven, WaTech-led migration plan to outsource the mainframe service to a vendor-managed cloud solution.

Definition

Mainframe as a service (MFaaS), sometimes called mainframe cloud, provides compute and storage capabilities as a cloud service provided through a vendor relationship. The mainframe vendor provides all the IT infrastructure, support and maintenance. Customers pay only for services they use.

Current state

Several statewide mission critical applications are running on the mainframe service including payroll, benefits and retirement systems. Some agencies have projects underway to re-host these applications (OFM, L&I, DRS), while others are maintaining data for records retention compliance (ESD).

Customer demand is declining, and several large agency customers have recently discontinued their mainframe service with WaTech. Skilled mainframe support staff are near, or at retirement age with no backup technicians to assume the work.

WaTech owns the mainframe hardware system. However, IBM withdrew this system from sales in December 2016. The system is currently supported but without a published end of support date. The current operating system is the last supported system for WaTech's hardware.

The storage solution (VMAX) OEM support ends February 2020. Support beyond February will be dependent on migration to a new solution or purchasing extended service from a third-party vendor.

Future state

- Develop a sourcing strategy to identify a third-party Mainframe as a Service vendor that will provide the best value to the state.
- Adapt to a more flexible and agile infrastructure in a cloud-based model.
- Leverage leading edge technology and avoid large capital expenses.

Key Facts

- Annual revenue: \$13.8 M*
*Includes \$2 M allocation from OFM to cover deficit in FY18-19.
- Annual expense: \$12 M
- Customers: 114 on current mainframe platform.

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Benefits

- **Scale.** MFaaS allows users to scale up or down according to their changing requirements. This pay-as-you-go model means you can budget for more predictable capital expenditures over longer periods of time.
- **Maintenance and upgrades.** The key benefit of MFaaS is that the provider pays for the maintenance and upgrades to IT infrastructure. The MFaaS consumer pays only for the compute and storage consumed in normal operations.
- **Continuity.** MFaaS offers assurances of business continuity, because the vendors can offer redundancy that agencies might find cost-prohibitive if they maintain their own mainframes in one location. This means reduced downtime in the event of a mainframe failure, and assurances of full recovery in the event of disaster because data is mirrored at a second site.
- **Predictable costs.** MFaaS vendors will offer an SLA that gives very accurate predictions of the cost of transportation, installation, de-installation, configuring, initial training, requested level of managed service and preventive maintenance. Cloud mainframe services change mainframe cost from a capital budget expense to an operational expense.
- **Support.** Top-tier MFaaS vendors offer 24/7/365 support, something agencies might not even be able to afford or access.
- **Security.** Mainframe private cloud implementation allows better control with a high level of security transparency providing a view across the enterprise. Mainframe clouds can also decrease the security threats inherent on public clouds with open networks.