

A Gartner G-Cloud 15 Service Definition for Cloud Consulting: Cloud Interoperability and API Standards

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Gartner G-Cloud 15 Service Definition

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Service Summary

Gartner will define a robust Cloud Interoperability, Multi-Cloud API Management and Sovereign Cloud Strategy, a critical consideration for enterprises embarking on digital transformation.

This service enables value realisation through definition of cloud-agnostic architecture principles, prioritising solutions that rely on open standards and minimal proprietary services to maximise portability across environments.

Service Description

This service ensures that the organisation is positioned to successfully operate across diverse cloud environments by mitigating vendor lock-in, enforcing consistent security policies, streamlining complexity in integration and data portability, and establishing unified governance and control. Gartner will support the establishment of an API strategy to enable consistent communication and governance across heterogeneous services.

Gartner will independently and objectively assess the maturity of the client's existing environment regarding cloud interoperability, multicloud API management, and Sovereign Cloud Strategy, using a strategic life cycle approach that extends from initial strategy through continuous optimisation. We will enable value realisation by supporting the definition of cloud-agnostic architecture principles, prioritising solutions that rely on open standards and minimal proprietary services to maximise portability across environments.

A central focus involves addressing the challenges inherent in managing diverse cloud environments, such as complexity in integration, data portability, and governance. Deliverables will include a defined strategy for Multi-Cloud API Management aimed at avoiding 'API Gateway Sprawl' by leveraging solutions that offer a centralised control plane with distributed gateways. Gartner will review and recommend architecture patterns for hybrid and multicloud API management, considering options such as Distributed API Gateways or Federated API Gateways, assessing criteria such as unified policy governance, operational simplicity, and consistent developer experience.

The engagement will seek to strengthen the client's Governance and Operating Model for multi cloud usage. This includes reviewing Identity and Access Management (IAM) strategies, securing API transaction flows from the edge to back-end services across hybrid clouds. Ultimately, Gartner will partner in developing an approach to implement and mature multi cloud interoperability, ensuring that workloads are resilient and exit strategies are documented upfront.

Service Benefits

- Enhanced resilience and compliance of distributed workloads
- Architectural support to prevent vendor lock-in and related risks
- Guidance on building best-of-breed cloud services and innovation
- Enhance cost control and flexibility by diversifying providers
- Ensure consistent security and observability across multi-cloud APIs
- Provision of client side, independent and objective advice
- Accelerates delivery of actionable insights through proven analytical capabilities
- AI-powered analysis that augments Gartner's Insights and SME delivery experience

Service Features

- Review current multi-cloud and API integration landscape for gaps
- Define cloud-agnostic principles for portability via open standards
- Assess integration mechanisms for interoperability and standardised data sharing
- Assess operating model and skills for multi-cloud management

Full List of Service Features

- Review Cloud Strategy alignment with business goals and drivers, confirming executive sponsorship is in place.
- Assess architectural needs for portability, favouring open standards to minimise reliance on cloud-specific proprietary components that hinder movement.
- Review Governance, Compliance and Visibility framework maturity across environments, including the need for a 'single pane of glass' view of resources and data location.
- Undertake a review of API deployment patterns, specifically examining potential issues like API Gateway Sprawl.
- Analyse deployment options for the API Management control plane and distributed gateways (hybrid/multicloud model).
- Perform detailed design of Cross-Cloud Integration Framework (CCIF) requirements, focusing on federating security, data, applications, and business outcomes.
- Support the definition of resilience and exit strategies, including procedures to retrieve data and code, and regularly test workload migration capability.
- Review the Security and Identity Management strategy across clouds, focusing on centralised identity providers, encryption, and consistent security controls (e.g., zero-trust models).
- Analyse Multi-Cloud API Management Architecture Patterns (e.g., Distributed vs. Federated API Gateways) to recommend a solution that balances control, consistency, and local autonomy.
- Define the approach for Unified Security and Governance Policies for APIs, ensuring uniform security standards are enforced across all deployed gateways.
- Develop a strategy for End-to-End Observability across the multicloud API ecosystem, including centralised logging, monitoring, and distributed tracing.

Project Approach

This service is structured to be delivered in a 12-week sprint, with different focus/depths depending on the stage of cloud interoperability and API strategy implementation. The proposed standard approach aligns with the Lifecycle Approach for Multi-Cloud Strategy.

Phase 0 — Kick-off

- Confirm objectives and schedule
- Conduct project kick-off with key stakeholders to identify current business and technology strategic drivers, cloud strategy and governance

Phase 1 — Strategy and Assessment of the Cloud Baseline

- Confirm project objectives and schedule with key stakeholders
- Conduct a thorough assessment of the current IT landscape, documenting cloud services in use, identifying multi cloud workload candidates and existing API integrations. Documentation of existing pain points (e.g., cost, scale, vendor risk)
- Review current multi cloud utilisation patterns, confirming if adoption was intentional or resulted from "accidental" multicloud scenarios

Phase 2 — Planning and Architecture Design

- Design the target multi cloud architecture, including provision of a market guide on potential providers based on strengths (e.g., AI/ML, IoT)
- Define the interoperability architecture, specifying how applications will communicate (e.g., APIs, event buses) and how data will be replicated or shared, utilising common standards
- Develop Reference Architectures and Blueprints for deploying cloud-neutral workloads, such as a microservice containerised for Kubernetes on any cloud
- Select the unified API management platform that will function as the central control plane across environments
- Plan the holistic security architecture across clouds, focusing on identity federation, encryption standards, and a unified logging/monitoring framework
- Develop or update policies, particularly focusing on data classification to enforce sovereignty requirements (i.e., specifying which cloud or region certain data types can reside in)

Phase 3 — Analysis of prioritised interoperability initiatives

- Conduct analysis on prioritised API architecture patterns, such as implementing a Distributed API Gateway model to achieve consistency in governance and user experience
- Perform detailed design of key initiatives, such as establishing unified API security policies (authentication, authorisation, throttling) that are automatically applied across gateway instances
- Plan for DevOps and CI/CD Automation integration, ensuring API life cycle management is simplified and consistent across disparate environments
- Create action plans for each opportunity, detailing estimated time to benefit, necessary investments (e.g., new tooling) and risks associated with implementation

Phase 4 — Support Implementation of Key Initiatives

- Provide guidance on establishing foundational infrastructure in each target cloud (e.g., accounts, networks, security controls, CI/CD pipelines)
- Identify standard, shared services across environments, including the centralised identity management integration and API management gateways in each required location
- Recommendations relating to the utilisation of Infrastructure-as-Code (IaC) scripts to automate consistent deployments of APIs and configurations across clouds
- Proposals for centralised monitoring dashboards and runbooks that cover multicloud failure scenarios (e.g., rerouting traffic if one cloud fails)

- Assure Knowledge Transfer to Client teams through training on new cross-cloud tools and operational processes, addressing potential skill gaps
- Conduct regular governance audits and performance tuning to ensure continued alignment with compliance and cost objectives

Project Schedule

Gartner anticipates completion of this engagement within 12 weeks, with final scope depending upon the client's selected engagement scenario and maturity stage regarding cloud interoperability and API management. The duration of each subsequent phase/sprint will be agreed with the Client based on the complexity of the prioritised initiatives, such as the effort required for implementing complex cross-cloud data synchronisation mechanisms.