

# The Comprehensive Microsoft Government Community Cloud (GCC and GCC High) Guide

 American  
Technology Services  
a WWTS Company

# What is Microsoft Government Community Cloud (GCC)?

The Microsoft Cloud for Government is a full-featured Microsoft 365 platform specifically designed for the US local, state, and federal government, public sector, and government contractors with regulatory and compliance requirements for doing business with the government or handling government data. Simply put, GCC is a government-focused replication of the commercial Microsoft Office 365 cloud environment.

Office 365 Government Community Cloud (GCC) provides government contractors and government customers with the Microsoft suite of Office 365 productivity services with additional levels of security and the US data residency required for US government customers. Office 365 government plans (GCC and GCC High) provide the functionality of Office 365 services through a partitioned government cloud community.

Designed to meet the distinct needs of government entities and contractors that do business with the government, GCC provides deployment flexibility and cost-saving opportunities.

## The Office 365 GCC environment provides compliance with federal requirements for cloud services

- ✓ FedRAMP High
- ✓ Defense Federal Acquisition Regulations Supplement (DFARS)
- ✓ Criminal Justice Information Systems (CJI data types)
- ✓ Federal Tax Information Systems (FTI data types)

# Services and Levels

## Office 365 Government G1 Services

This plan includes cloud file storage and sharing, online meetings and instant messaging, HD videoconferencing, intranet and team sites, and the below services:

- Exchange
- OneDrive
- SharePoint
- Teams

## Office 365 Government G3 Services & Applications

Building upon the features of Office 365 Government Community G1 is the addition of Office desktop applications, personalized search and discovery, self-service business intelligence, enterprise management of apps, eDiscovery tools, hosted voicemail with auto-attendant capabilities, and the services and applications listed below:

- Exchange
- OneDrive
- SharePoint
- Teams
- Word
- Excel
- PowerPoint
- Outlook
- Publisher (PC only)
- Access (PC only)

## Office 365 Government G5 Services & Applications

The most robust Office 365 Government offering includes all the features of G1 and G3 plus Skype for Business Server, advanced eDiscovery, Office 365 Advanced Threat Protection, analytics, PSTN conferencing, and the below office applications and services:

- Exchange
- OneDrive
- SharePoint
- Teams
- Word
- Excel
- PowerPoint
- Outlook
- Publisher (PC only)
- Access (PC only)

# What is Microsoft Government Community Cloud High (GCC High)?

GCC High is the Microsoft cloud environment with services and applications that meet the specific and growing requirements of the United States Department of Defense, as well as government contractors utilizing DoD controlled unclassified information (CUI) or subject to International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR).

As a Department of Defense cloud environment for agencies, DoD contractors, and cleared personnel, GCC High is a secure and stringent cloud platform outside of Microsoft's commercial cloud environment.

## The Office 365 GCC High environment provides compliance with federal requirements for cloud services

- The Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program at FedRAMP High
- Security controls and control enhancements outlined in the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Special Publication 800-53

## The Office 365 GCC High environment provides compliance with federal requirements for cloud services

- Exchange Online
  - Exchange Online Unified Messaging Support for On-Premises IP-PBX
- SharePoint
- OneDrive
- Skype for Business
- Microsoft Teams
  - Phone System and Audio Conferencing via Direct Routing
- Identity
  - Multifactor authentication (MFA) using a federated identity model, which enables the usage of PIV and CAC cards

| GCC  | GCC High  |
|--|---|
| Compliance assurances for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ FedRamp Moderate</li> <li>✓ CJIS</li> <li>✓ IRS 1075</li> <li>✓ DISA SRG L2 Controls</li> </ul>  | Compliance assurances for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ FedRamp High</li> <li>✓ DFARS</li> <li>✓ ITAR</li> <li>✓ DOD SRG L4 Controls</li> <li>✓ IRS 1075</li> <li>✓ CJIS Data Handling</li> </ul> |
| CJIS and IRS-1075 data-compliant features and functionality: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Exchange Online</li> <li>✓ SharePoint Online</li> <li>✓ Exchange Online Archiving</li> <li>✓ Skype Business</li> <li>✓ Office for the Web</li> </ul> | IP-PBX integrations for on-premises systems for Exchange Online Unified Messaging are not supported.  |
| PSTN Calling & PSTN Conferencing on Skype for Business is available.   | PSTN use requirements dictate that PSTN Calling and PSTN Conferencing on Skype for Business are not available.  |

## Unique Benefits of Office 365 Government

- ✓ Customer content is stored within the US
- ✓ Customer content is segregated from Microsoft commercial Office 365 services
- ✓ Compliance with accreditations and certifications required for US public sector and certain government contractors
- ✓ Access to customer content is restricted to screened Microsoft personnel

# What are the security requirements for employees working in GCC High data centers?

There is a rigorous screening process with background checks for Microsoft employees to be allowed to access customer content. This includes multiple layers of security and authorization, involving the checks below:

- ✓ US Citizenship
- ✓ 7-year Employment History Check
- ✓ Education Verification
- ✓ Social Security Number (SSN)
- ✓ Criminal History Check
- ✓ Office of Foreign Assets Control List (OFAC)
- ✓ Bureau of Industry and Security List (BIS)
- ✓ Office of Defense Trade Controls Debarred Persons List (DDTC)
- ✓ Fingerprinting Check
- ✓ Department of Defense IT-2

Office 365 personnel do not have standing access to GCC High production, meaning that authorized staff need to request temporary permission elevation. This intense level of employee scrutiny and management of customer data ensures the highest level of protection for your Microsoft Government Community Cloud environment.

# Who qualifies for GCC and GCC High?

Due to the nature of Microsoft Government Community Cloud, it is required to be an eligible entity as regulated by US laws. The first aspect of eligibility is sponsorship to hold or process controlled information by government customers and non-government organizations that work with the government.

GCC and GCC High licenses are available to any customer that has eligibility for Microsoft Government Cloud. A quick rule of thumb is that GCC is the hero offering if your organization does not hold FedRAMP High or DoD CUI. If it does, the more rigorous GCC High offering should be assessed.

Proof of membership in one of these groups is required for access to Microsoft 365 Government offerings, with US subsidiary qualifications for international commercial entities:

## Eligible government customers:

- Federal agencies, such as a bureau, office, agency, department, or other entity of the US government
- State or local entities, including any agency of a US state or local government, US counties, cities, and towns, the District of Columbia, or US Commonwealths
- Tribal entities with status as an Indian tribe or native village

## Eligible commercial private entities subject to regulation:

- Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI)
- Criminal Justice Information (CJI)
- Department of Defense (DoD) Unclassified Controlled Nuclear Information (UCNI)
- Department of Defense Impact Level Data
- Department of Energy (DoE) Unclassified Controlled Nuclear Information (UCNI)
- International Traffic in Arms (ITAR)



# What are the GCC and GCC High validation processes?

01

**Request validation** through the Microsoft Government General Validation page to initiate the validation process. Microsoft then takes the information you provide to verify you meet eligibility requirements. It is important to select the proper options for your organization, so your validation is not declined. Additionally, if applying for GCC High, it must be confirmed that your validation is registered as a category 3 entity since category 2 entities are granted access to Azure Government but not into the GCC High environment.

02

**Provide documentation** once the Microsoft Government Cloud Eligibility team contacts you to move forward with the GCC High validation process. They may request a valid CAGE code, SAM registration with DUNS, a signed contract, and/or a sponsor letter that confirms regulated data requirement specifics.

03

**Submit the request**, and Microsoft will follow up with the need for additional documentation, or you will be notified that your organization has been validated. Once validated, you can move forward with purchasing GCC High licenses through the Microsoft team or one of the trusted partners that have the authorization to distribute Microsoft GCC High licenses. American Technology Services is authorized to sell GCC and GCC High licenses for approved organizations that intend to purchase less than 500 seats.

# How do government agencies, the public sector, or government contractors (govcon) purchase GCC or GCC High?

01

Validate your organization's eligibility through the completion and submittal of the GCC or GCC High official forms.

02

Work with the Microsoft team or an official partner to place an order for GCC or GCC High licenses.

**American Technology Services, LLC (ATS)** is a qualified AOS-G partner for both GCC and GCC High licenses (under 500 seats). As a trusted managed IT services provider with decades of experience, ATS can help your organization through the process of obtaining and implementing GCC or GCC High. ATS can assist with getting your compliant Office 365 environment ready and help strategize on rollout and usage within your agency or organization.

To schedule a GCC or GCC High consultation with ATS, please reach out to [info@networkats.com](mailto:info@networkats.com) or visit <https://www.networkats.com>.

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