

What is the “Cloud” and is it safe?

The term "Cloud" is one of the most over used terms in the technology world today. It seems like every company is selling something that is "in the cloud", "uses the cloud", "is cloud ready", or "cloud enabled".

You might hear the term Cloud in reference to the following service based products:

- Software As A Service(SaaS)
- Platform As A Service(PaaS)
- Infrastructure As A Service(IaaS)

Usually, these cloud service products allow you to pay for actual usage or rent\pay by the month for the service, instead of buying the traditional software or hardware product. For example, Adobe Photoshop which can run several hundred dollars to purchase, but their SaaS offering is called Adobe Creative Cloud and lets you have the same functionality for as little as \$9 per month.



You can also describe the cloud in terms of Private Cloud, Public Cloud or Hybrid Cloud, using the following definitions:

- **Private Cloud** is cloud infrastructure operated solely for a single organization, whether managed internally or by a third-party, and hosted either internally or externally.
- **Public Cloud** is when the services are rendered over a network that is open for public use and shares resources with many users or companies.
- **Hybrid Cloud** is a cloud computing service that is composed of some combination of private, and public cloud services, from different service providers.

Questions to ask about potential cloud service:

1. Will you use this cloud solution to work on or store sensitive information?
2. How fast is your network and Internet connection?
3. Do you need to access this information when outside of the office?
4. Where is the data physically stored?
5. Do you have multiple locations that need access to this information?
6. Do multiple users need access to this information?
7. Do you need to access this information across multiple types of devices, such as PC, laptop, tablet or phone?
8. What type of security and encryption does the service use?
9. What is the cloud provider's policy for data retention and destruction after cancellation of the service?
10. How often does the cloud provider create security updates, bug fixes or add new features?

Safety

The “Cloud” is not inherently good or bad in terms of safety. The best answer for you depends on how you answer the questions above. For most housing authorities, a hybrid or private cloud solution will work well, but there could be times when a public cloud service would make sense.

For most housing authorities, the need for a cloud solution normally involves

1. Sharing information between multiple users, devices or locations
2. Disaster Contingency Plan – Allowing you to conduct business if your primary location is unavailable because of fire, flood or other disaster.
3. Off-Site Storage of data for backup or archive purposes.
4. Housing Software that is web based or Software As A Service.

If you have questions or need help with a potential cloud project, feel free to contact us for help. We regularly provide private and hybrid cloud solutions for housing authorities. So we are familiar with the challenges that you face and the problems that you need to solve.