

Mainframe-as-a-Service (MFaaS) Provider Selection: What to Know Before You Commit

The essential checklist for choosing a MFaaS partner

A simplified approach to a complex decision

Choosing to entrust the management or hosting of your mainframe to an external partner is a significant decision—one that can be transformative when approached correctly. MFaaS offers many powerful advantages, highlighted by:



Shifts costs from CapEx to OpEx, providing monthly subscription pricing.



Reduces reliance on internal mainframe expertise, addressing talent shortages.



Improves agility and lowers costs without migrating off the mainframe.

But not all MFaaS providers are created equal. Choosing the right partner is critical to achieving stability, security, and performance. Making the wrong choice can expose your organization to operational, financial, and reputational risk.

To help you make a confident, informed decision, we've removed the guesswork and created a checklist of the crucial factors to consider when selecting a MFaaS provider.

Use the checklist on the next page to identify the MFaaS qualities and capabilities that are most important to your organization. If you check 10 or more, you're likely aligned with what leading MFaaS providers—like Ensono—deliver. It's a quick way to clarify your priorities and see if the right partner is already within reach.

Strategic fit and innovation

Flexibility: The provider should offer adaptable service models and consumption-based pricing that support your workloads and pace of change.

Modernization readiness: The provider should support legacy applications and languages (e.g., COBOL, PL/I, RPG) native to the mainframe, integrate with cloud-native services, enable DevOps workflows and CI/CD pipelines, and support hybrid environments.

Integration capabilities: The provider should support seamless integration with enterprise systems, cloud platforms, and DevOps workflows, including API development, application decoupling, and interoperability between mainframe and distributed/cloud environments.

Future-state governance: The provider should offer strategic guidance to streamline your mainframe application portfolio, plan a phased modernization, and recommend which applications to retain, update, or migrate.

Operational excellence

Maintenance and support: The provider should offer infrastructure and application-level services, including incident management, proactive maintenance, and automation to keep mainframe workloads running securely.

Automation and optimization: Look for built-in tools that automate routine tasks and optimize workload performance through analytics and monitoring.

Service management and reporting: Look for dashboards and reporting tools that provide visibility and control over your environment.

Migration and onboarding support: The provider should offer expert guidance and tools to make sure there's a smooth transition to MFaaS with minimal disruption.

Transparency: Assess the provider's communication around service performance, system changes, usage metrics, security breaches and incident response, and operational updates.

Security and compliance

Secure data centers: The provider should use secure data centers that deliver high performance and availability.

Comprehensive security services: Look for offerings such as security patches, system upgrades, and real-time monitoring.

Governance and compliance: The provider should demonstrate alignment with established frameworks (e.g., NIST, ISO 27001, SOC 2) and have internal processes to help you meet compliance requirements.

Performance and security service level agreements (SLAs): The provider must adhere to performance and security per SLAs and be willing to accept contractual penalties for non-compliance.

Zero Trust principles: The provider should enforce Zero Trust by validating every user, device, and connection.

Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA): The provider should enforce MFA and implement role-based access controls so users can only access what they need.

Access controls and monitoring: Evaluate the provider's ability to manage access, monitor threat activity, and respond to security incidents.

Disaster Recovery (DR) effectiveness: Evaluate if the provider can provide solutions and security measures that can prevent malware or threats from being reintroduced during DR.

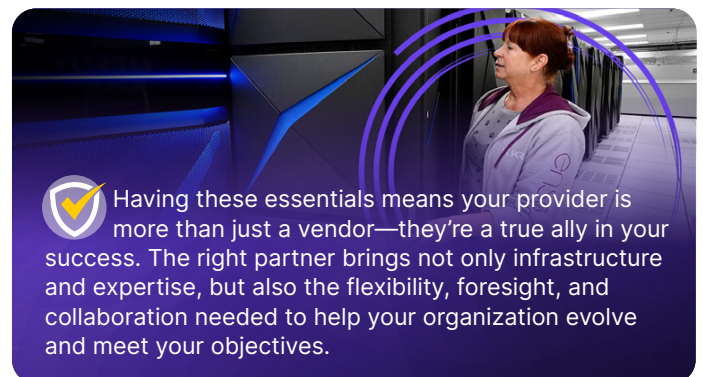
Data protection: Assess if the provider can provide solutions to secure all data using strong encryption with data loss prevention controls in place.

Partnership and experience

Partnership approach: The provider should act as a strategic ally, offering proactive guidance and aligning with your long-term goals.

Skills and resource management: The provider should offer access to mainframe and application expertise, support knowledge transfer, and provide ongoing training opportunities for client teams.

Proven track record: Assess the provider's experience, customer success stories, and ability to invest in and grow mainframe operations.



Having these essentials means your provider is more than just a vendor—they're a true ally in your success. The right partner brings not only infrastructure and expertise, but also the flexibility, foresight, and collaboration needed to help your organization evolve and meet your objectives.

Ensono checks every box

From checklist to action plan, we'll help you on your MFaaS journey. Talk to our experts today to find out how.

Let's Connect