

Using cloud services for in-project data storage and transfer

NRM Climate Change Adaptation
Information Management Support Project



Third party cloud storage services

Cloud computing refers to computing services (such as file storage) provided by an online provider and accessed via the internet. Third party cloud storage services outside of your organisation are typically large, international services being provided from outside Australia.

Third party cloud services are useful for sharing project information among project teams; however it is important to be aware of the risks and limitations of these services. The most common concerns are potential data exposure, data loss, confidentiality and privacy compliance.

Questions to ask about cloud storage services

Who owns my content once I upload it?

Most common cloud providers state that you retain full ownership of any intellectual property rights that you hold in the content you store with their service. However some services have rights to reuse your data in some circumstances.

Where is my content located?

Cloud services are typically large, international services with servers located outside Australia. You need to be aware of any legal implications if your information is stored in a different jurisdiction.

Am I breaking any laws by storing my content on a cloud service?

In many cases, storage of material that contains personal information outside Australia will be a breach of national or state privacy legislation. Queensland's and Victoria's Information Privacy Laws specifically prohibit universities and government departments from storing personal information on public cloud servers located outside of Australia.

Who has access to my content?

If a cloud provider or its hardware is located in a country outside of Australia, an agency's information may be subject to the laws of that country (e.g. the US Patriot Act allows broad access by the US Government to data located in the USA).

Also, the service provider may be permitted to open your files to determine if content is appropriate or to make previews available for you.

Who has responsibility for content loss?

The terms and conditions of most public cloud storage services state that they will take no responsibility for data loss and can withdraw the service at any time. And not all cloud services have a mandatory security breach notification clause in their terms and conditions of use.

What is the privacy policy of the cloud service?

Cloud providers collect a wide range of personal information about you when you use their services. They may share this information with third party companies for the purpose of analytics and advertising. Privacy policies can and do change regularly.

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Recommendations

- Store or backup master copies on institutional network drives and on cloud storage services that have been assessed and approved by your organisation.
- Make sure you understand the terms of service and privacy policies of any cloud service you use.
- Cloud services should only be used to store additional copies of data that are not critical, and that contain no private, confidential or sensitive information.
- If you use a non-approved, public cloud service, make sure that you have scheduled backups in place, that your account is secure, and that your use of the service is not in breach of any legal or contractual requirements.
- Transfer data using AARNet's CloudStor service.

Some Risk Examples

Dropbox: security breach

In June 2011 a Dropbox update accidentally turned off password authentication for its 25 million users. Effectively, all files stored on Dropbox were open to the world until the problem was discovered 4 hours later. Dropbox later notified all those who were logged in at the time of the error and asked them to review details of activity on their account. Dropbox claimed that "much less" than 1 percent of its users were affected.

Google Drive: who owns my data?

Google's terms and conditions state "when you upload or otherwise submit content to our Services, you give Google (and those we work with) a worldwide license to use, host, store, reproduce, modify, create derivative works ... communicate, publish, publicly perform, publicly display and distribute such content ... for the limited purpose of operating, promoting, and improving our Services, and to develop new ones. This license continues even if you stop using our Services." www.google.com/policies/terms/

Approved private cloud services for government and universities

Your organisation may have an approved cloud storage option. The terms of agreement will meet your institution's privacy and security expectations and should comply with relevant state and federal laws. Consult your IT providers for more information.

Govdex – share data across institutions

Govdex is a free, online collaboration service hosted by the Department of Finance. It is a secure, private web-based space that enables government agencies to share information, collaboratively author documents while tracking all changes, create calendars and discussion forums, and communicate with project stakeholders.

Govdex communities have been set up by the DoE for all NRM Element 2 groups. If you would like further information on the Govdex arrangements that have been established for Element 2 groups (including storage capacity) contact DoE on

Dccee-nrmfundenquiries@environment.gov.au

CloudStor – transfer large files

Free cloud storage services give you limited space to store files. AARNet's CloudStor is a web service for easily and securely sending and receiving large files. You can send files of up to 100 GB per upload, and email up to 100 recipients to give them download access. All Australian Access Federation subscriber institutions can access CloudStor. Download vouchers can be issued to non-subscribers. CloudStor is not for long term file storage: files and download vouchers expire after 20 days. www.aarnet.edu.au/services/netplus/cloudstor

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Last modified: 31 January 2014 (version 1.0)



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