Microsoft Windows Azure for Research

Microsoft Research is pleased to announce a new initiative to help the research community use the cloud to advance scientific discovery. Three years ago we partnered with researchers to experiment with cloud computing on Azure. The results from these early efforts – many of which are described on our [website](http://research.microsoft.com/azure) – have been outstanding. These pioneering projects have cut across disciplines, from bioinformatics, ecology, social network analysis, civil engineering, mobile computing, natural language processing and more.

These outcomes have convinced us of the immense value of using Windows Azure in scientific research. Moreover, they made us determined to do all we can to bring “cloud power” to the broader community of researchers. One reason for our confidence is that the Windows Azure platform has expanded to include a number of fantastic new capabilities. The original Platform as a Service capabilities remain, but Azure now supports persistent Windows and Linux virtual machines, Hadoop services through HDInsight, mobile services support for Windows, Android and iOS clients, virtual networks and identity management, various Database services, Windows Media Services and programing support for C++, C#, F#, Java, Python, Ruby and R. Scientist can take advantage of the same platform used by thousands of our commercial customers as well as ourselves, rely on and, in doing so, accelerate the speed and dissemination of scientific discovery.

Science today is at an inflection point where the challenges of dealing with massive amounts of data and the growing requirements of distributed multidisciplinary collaborations make moving to the Windows Azure cloud extremely attractive. This is true for the individual researcher who does not want to manage local physical infrastructure and for large teams who need to make their discovery resources and services available to the larger research community

There are many researchers from many scientific disciplines that are ready to benefit from the flexibility and convenience of the cloud. We at Microsoft Research look forward to supporting them by launching a program called Windows Azure for Research <http://Azure4Research.com> .

Azure 4 Research has four components:

* Windows Azure for Research Awards Program.
  + We will be accepting proposals for sizable grants of azure resources. We expect to make up to 100 of these awards each year. The awards will be for individual projects or for community efforts to host scientific data and services. There will be calls for special topics that we will publish periodically on the Azure4Research.com website. We will be accepting proposals continuously and making awards six times a year. The first deadline is Oct 15, 2013 and the first set of awards will be announced two weeks after that date. Learn more at http://www.azure4research.com
* Training. Starting September 2013, we will begin a series of 20 or more worldwide training events designed specifically for scientific researchers. For more information see http://www.azure4research.com
* Technical resources and curriculum will be available on-line and we have additional programs for professors to teach cloud computing in their classes.
* Research community engagements. We will be sponsoring a Windows Azure for Research workshop each year, as well as participating in existing scientific gatherings. It is our belief that building community is the best way to encourage people to share techniques, ideas and discoveries.

Our commitment is to support the scientific community to build and use cloud based data collections and tools that will drive new discoveries and create new and innovative scenarios for using cloud computing. We are encouraged by many of the new open source scientific tools that are now available on Windows Azure and we are eager to see more being built and distributed in the year ahead. In short, we are extremely excited to engage with the research community on this endeavor.

[*Dennis Gannon*](http://research.microsoft.com/en-us/people/degannon/)*, Director of Cloud Research Strategy, Microsoft Research Connections*

Learn more:

* [Windows Azure for Research](http://research.microsoft.com/en-us/projects/azure/default.aspx)
* [Windows Azure for Research Training](http://research.microsoft.com/en-us/projects/azure/training.aspx)
* [Windows Azure Research Award Program](http://research.microsoft.com/en-us/projects/azure/default.aspx)
* [Windows Azure homepage](http://www.windowsazure.com/)
* [Windows Azure Marketplace](http://datamarket.azure.com/)