Use the Cloud9 Environment

The company you work for is constantly deploying applications to AWS. However, the process is currently all manual and involves clicking through the AWS Console. It takes quite a while.

In order to reduce this time and avoid human errors, you were asked to write a CloudFormation template to automate the provisioning and deployment process.

The base infrastructure used for these applications is composed of a Reverse Proxy Server and a Web Server - both powered by Nginx.

The Reverse Proxy Server is responsible for receiving client requests from the internet and routing them to the Web Server. For security purposes, the Proxy and Web servers are deployed to different subnets. The former is hosted on an EC2 instance in a public subnet. The latter, on an EC2 instance in a private subnet. This way, the Web Server is not directly exposed to the internet, which reduces the attack surface.

This will guide us through the steps necessary to write and run CloudFormation templates that create and deploy our infrastructure.

In this first challenge, we will get started with Cloud9, the web-based environment we will use to write our templates.

- 1. Go to the AWS Console and navigate to the AWS Cloud9 service.
- On the AWS Cloud9 dashboard, there should be one environment. Take note and store the name of this environment. We will use it to name our CloudFormation stacks.

Note: The name of the environment should start with *PS-Labs-* and be followed by 5 random characters. For example: *PS-Labs-LFWHN* or *PS-Labs-GVUOV*, etc.

3. Click the **Open IDE** button. A new browser tab will open with a browser-based IDE. Wait a few moments so the project files are loaded.

Note: If you see a pop-up alert saying "Unable to register Service Workers due to browser restrictions, Webviews will not work properly", it's safe to ignore it. This will not affect the Lab.

- 4. Once loaded, click the **templates** folder. We'll be editing files inside this folder shortly, but before we do that, let's make sure our AWS CLI is properly configured.
- 5. There are a few terminal tabs towards the bottom of the screen. Find the one that's open. That's where we'll be running our commands using the AWS CLI.
- 6. Inside the terminal tab, type the following command to move inside the **templates** folder:

cd templates

7. Next, type the following command to confirm we can communicate with AWS using the AWS CLI:

aws ec2 describe-vpcs

This command should display a JSON output with a single VPC. If the VPC was successfully displayed in the results, this means the environment is properly configured and we can continue.

8. In order to avoid repeating the name of the stack every time we run the CloudFormation CLI, we'll use the environment name we just copied from the previous tab to run the following command in the terminal:

export INFRA_STACK=<name-of-the-environment>

So, for example, if the name of the environment was *PS-Labs-GVUOV*, then the command would be:

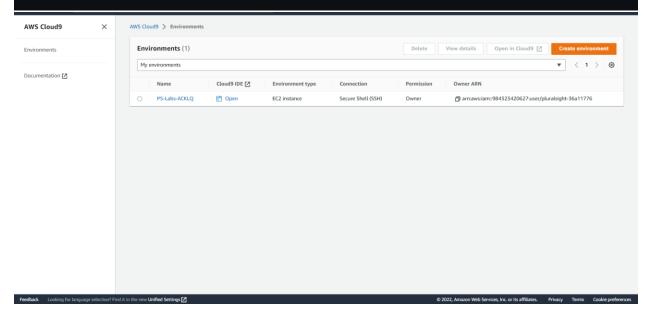
export INFRA_STACK=PS-Labs-GVUOV

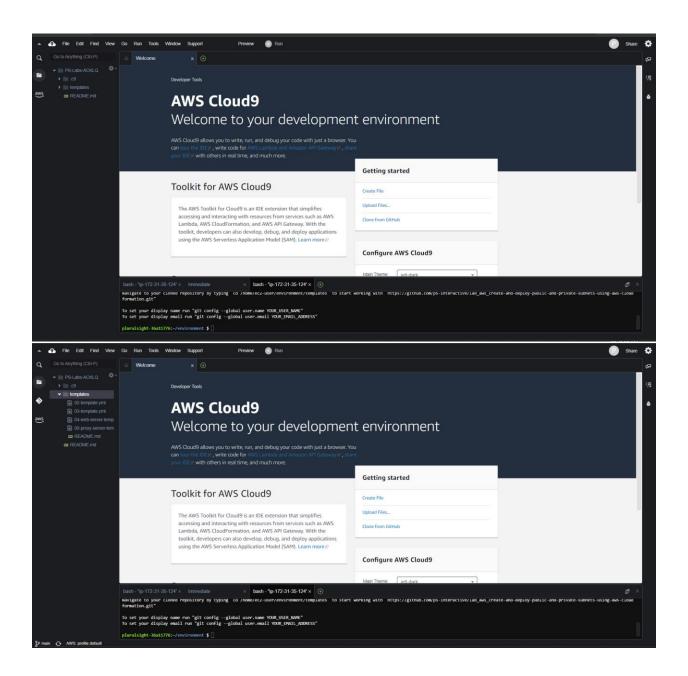
9. To check the previous command, run the following:

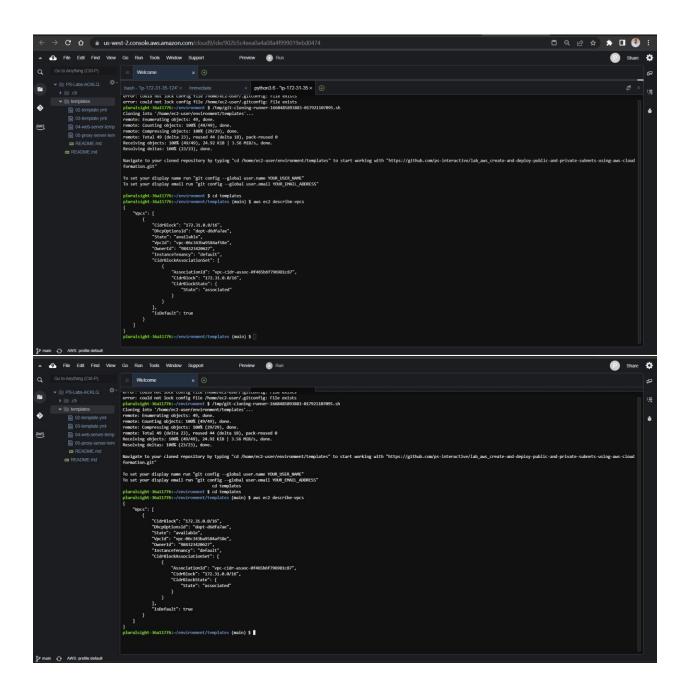
echo \$INFRA_STACK

This command should display the name that we just stored.

If the previous command successfully displayed back the name of the environment, then congratulations! We are all set up and ready to start creating our infrastructure. Move on to the next challenge.







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Create a VPC

Oftentimes, deployment is taking place across various different customers' AWS accounts. To ensure we are not interfering with existing services, we want the new infrastructure to be part of a brand new VPC.

In this challenge, we'll be using CloudFormation to create a new VPC from scratch.

- 1. Inside the templates folder, open the file **02-template.yml**.
- 2. On line 7, set the value AWS::EC2::VPC to the property **Type**. This specifies a resource of type VPC.
- 3. On line 9, set the value 10.0.0.0/16 to the property **CidrBlock**. This specifies the range of IP addresses which will be available in our VPC.
- 4. Save the changes to this file.
- 5. Move to the terminal tab at the bottom of the page. Let's make sure we are in the templates folder. Inside the terminal tab, type the following command:

```
cd ~/environment/templates/
```

6. Prior to deploying our CloudFormation stack, it's a good practice to validate the template for syntax errors. To do so, type the following command:

```
aws cloudformation validate-template --template-body file://02-
template.yml
```

7. This command should return a JSON output with a Parameters key set to an empty array, and a Description key set to the same Description property from the template. If this is the JSON output, then it means our template is valid!

If this command does NOT return a JSON output, check the template file for syntax errors and missing values. Once the template is valid, proceed to the next step.

8. Still inside the terminal tab, run the following command to deploy the stack and create the VPC:

```
aws cloudformation deploy --stack-name $INFRA_STACK --template-file 02-
template.yml
```

9. Wait a few moments until a message like the following is displayed in the terminal

Waiting for changeset to be created..

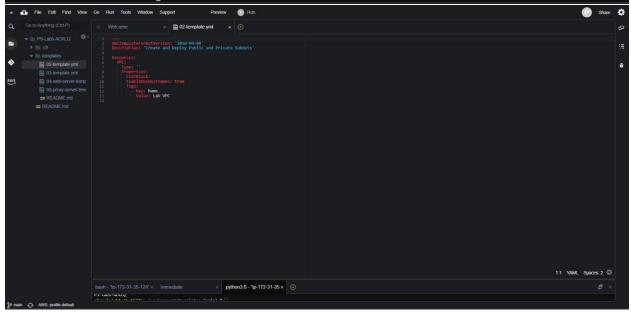
Waiting for stack create/update to complete

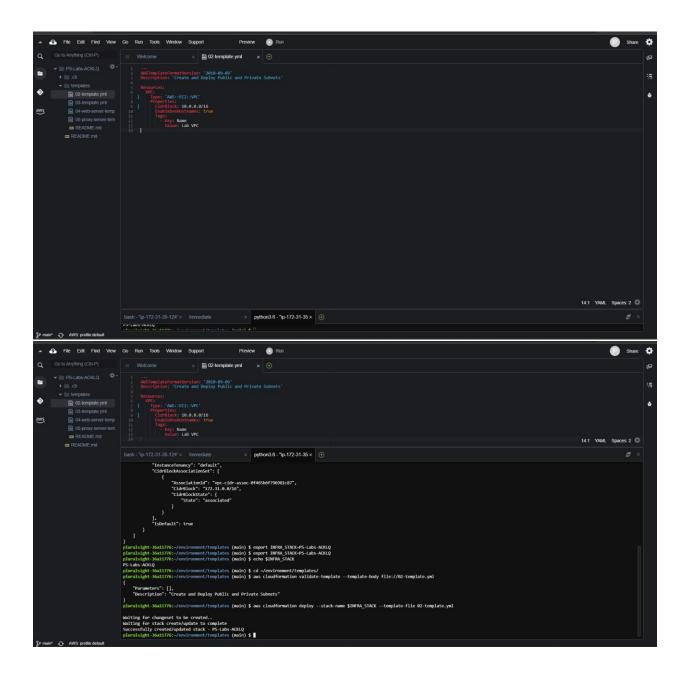
Successfully created/updated stack...

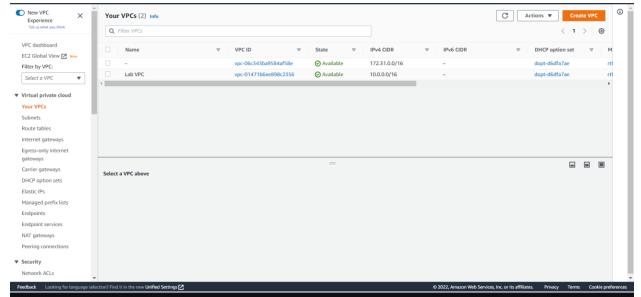
10. To see the newly created VPC, let's visit the VPC page on the AWS Console.

Leave the Cloud9 tab open and, using a new browser tab, visit the AWS Console. Under the **Services** tab, go to the **VPC** service. Navigate to **Your VCPs**. Under the list of existing VPCs, our newly created VPC named "Lab VPC" should be listed with the IPv4 CIDR 10.0.0.0/16.

If our new VPC is listed, congratulations! The VPC has been successfully created. Move on to the next challenge.







Create a Public and Private Subnet

With the VPC in place, we can now proceed with the creation of the subnets.

In this challenge, we will create one public and one private subnet, the routing necessary for both of these subnets, and the Security Groups which will later be used by EC2 instances.

- 1. Go back to Cloud 9. Still inside the templates folder, open the file **03-template.yml**.
- 2. On lines 16 and 27, set the value AWS::EC2::Subnet to the property Type.
- 3. On line 20, set the value 10.0.0.0/24 to the property **CidrBlock**. This sets the CIDR block for the Public Subnet.
- 4. On line 31, set the value 10.0.1.0/24 to the property **CidrBlock**. This sets the CIDR block for the Private Subnet.
- 5. On line 61, set the value **!Ref PublicSubnet** to the property **SubnetId**. This creates a reference to the Public Subnet on the Public Subnet Route Table.
- 6. On line 96, set the value **!Ref PrivateSubnet** to the property **SubnetId.** This creates a reference to the Private Subnet on the Private Subnet Route Table.
- 7. On line 120, set the value <code>!Ref ProxyServerSecurityGroup</code> to the property <code>SourceSecurityGroupId.</code> This ensures that only connections originated from the Proxy Server will be allowed to reach the Web Server.
- 8. Save the changes to this file.

9. Move back to the terminal tab and make sure we are still inside the templates folder. Type the following command to validate the template:

```
aws cloudformation validate-template --template-body file://03-
template.yml
```

If this command does NOT return a JSON output, check the template file for syntax errors and missing values. Once the template is valid, proceed to the next step.

10. Run the following command to deploy the stack and create the public subnet:

```
aws cloudformation deploy --stack-name $INFRA_STACK --template-file 03-
template.yml
```

11. Wait a few moments until a message like the following is displayed in the terminal

Waiting for changeset to be created..

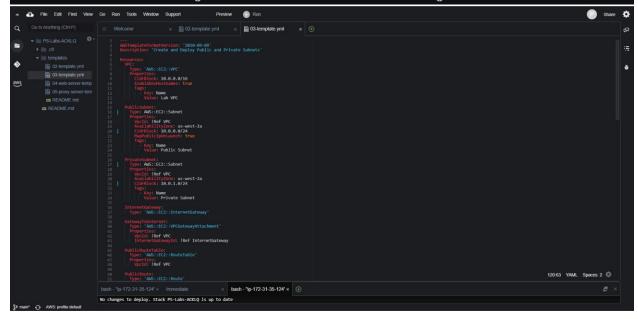
Waiting for stack create/update to complete

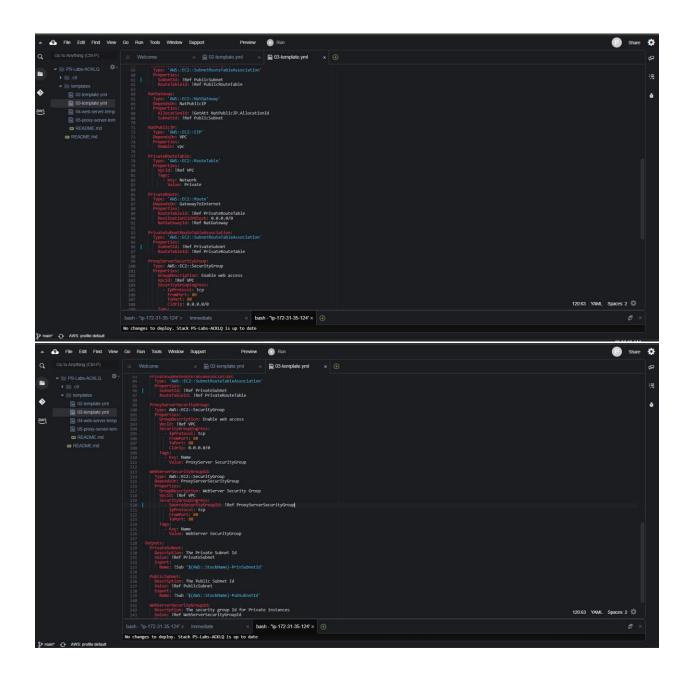
Successfully created/updated stack...

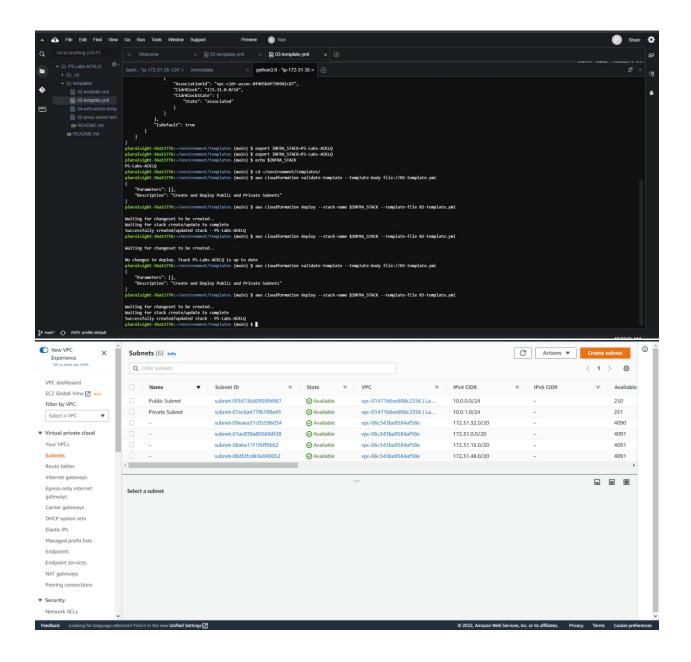
12. To see the newly created subnets, let's once again visit the VPC page on the AWS Console.

On the page for VPCs, click the Subnets link on the left side-bar. There should be a list of subnets, including our newly created "Public Subnet" and "Private Subnet" with IPv4 CIDR 10.0.0.0/24 and 10.0.1.0/24 respectively.

If the subnets are listed, congratulations! Move on to the next challenge.







Deploy to the Private Subnet

With the proper subnets in place, now it's time to create our first EC2 instance. We'll deploy an Nginx web server to the private subnet.

Notice, however, that this web server will NOT be reachable until the next challenge.

- 1. Open the file **04-web-server-template.yml**.
- 2. On line 13, set the value AWS::EC2::Instance to the property Type.
- 3. Save the changes to this file.
- 4. Move back to the terminal tab and make sure we are still inside the templates folder. Type the following command to validate the template:

```
aws cloudformation validate-template --template-body file://04-web-
server-template.yml
```

If this command does NOT return a JSON output, check the template file for syntax errors and missing values. Once the template is valid, proceed to the next step.

- 5. We'll now create a new CloudFormation stack which references outputs from the previous stack. To do this, we'll use the option –parameter-overrides to pass the name of our previous stack to this new stack.
- 6. Run the following command to deploy the web server:

```
aws cloudformation deploy --stack-name WEB-$INFRA_STACK --parameter-
overrides InfraStackName=$INFRA_STACK --template-file 04-web-server-
template.yml
```

7. Wait a few moments until a message like the following is displayed in the terminal

Waiting for changeset to be created..

Waiting for stack create/update to complete

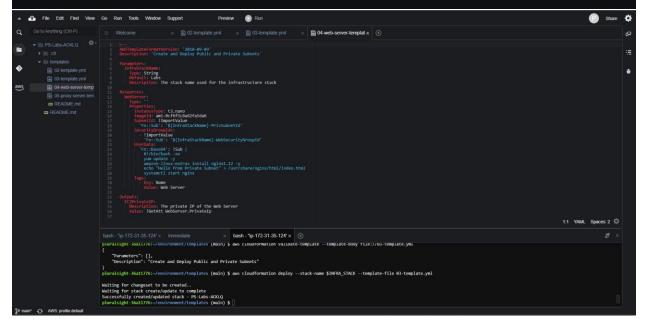
Successfully created/updated stack...

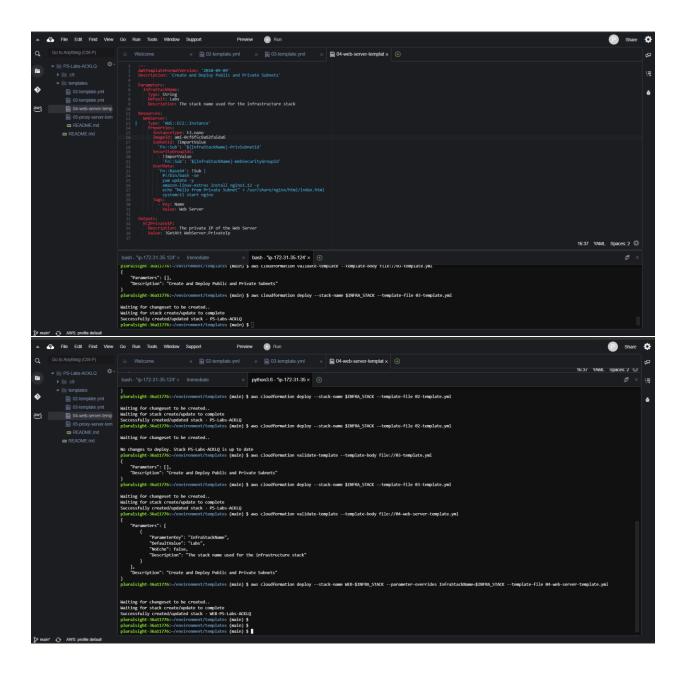
8. To see the newly created EC2 instance, let's one again visit the AWS Console.

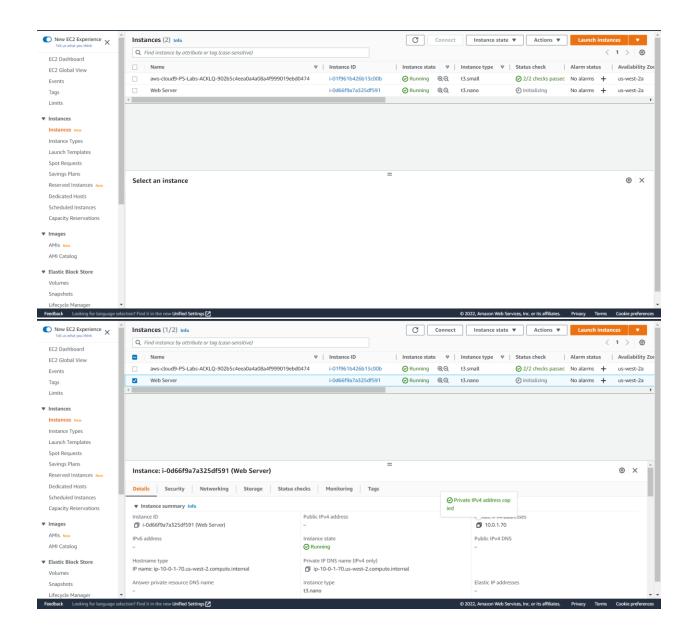
On the page for EC2, click on **Instances (running)**. Click the newly created Web Server instance to expand its details.

9. Under the **Details** tab for the Web Server instance, find the value for the property Private IPv4 addresses. Save this value. It will be needed in the next challenge to configure Proxy Server to find this particular EC2 instance.

If the Web Server EC2 instance is listed and contains a valid Private IPv4 address, congratulations! Move on to the last challenge.







Deploy to a Public Subnet

The web server residing in the private subnet is currently unreachable by the internet. In this challenge, we will deploy Nginx as a Reverse Proxy to the public subnet, so that it can route requests to the web server.

- 1. Open the file **05-proxy-server-template.yml**.
- 2. On line 52, set the **proxy_pass** property, part of nginx's configuration, to the Web Server's IPv4 address copied from the previous challenge.

For example, if the App Server's private IP address was a.b.c.d, then line 214 would look like so:

```
proxy_pass http://a.b.c.d;
```

Attention to a few details:

Do not forget to include the http:// protocol.

Remember to include a semicolon (;) at the end of the line.

- 3. Save the changes to this file.
- 4. Move back to the terminal tab and type the following command to validate the template:

```
aws cloudformation validate-template --template-body file://05-proxy-
server-template.yml
```

If this command does NOT return a JSON output, check the template file for syntax errors and missing values. Once the template is valid, proceed to the next step.

5. Run the following command to deploy the web server:

```
aws cloudformation deploy --stack-name PROXY-$INFRA_STACK --parameter-
overrides InfraStackName=$INFRA_STACK --template-file 05-proxy-server-
template.yml
```

6. Wait a few moments until a message like the following is displayed in the terminal

Waiting for changeset to be created..

Waiting for stack create/update to complete

Successfully created/updated stack...

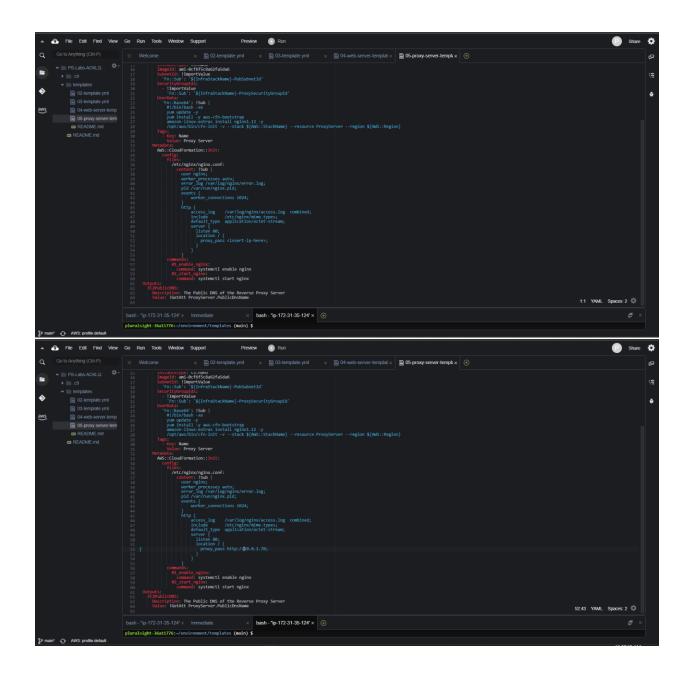
7. Run the following command to print the stack's information, including the URL for the Web Server:

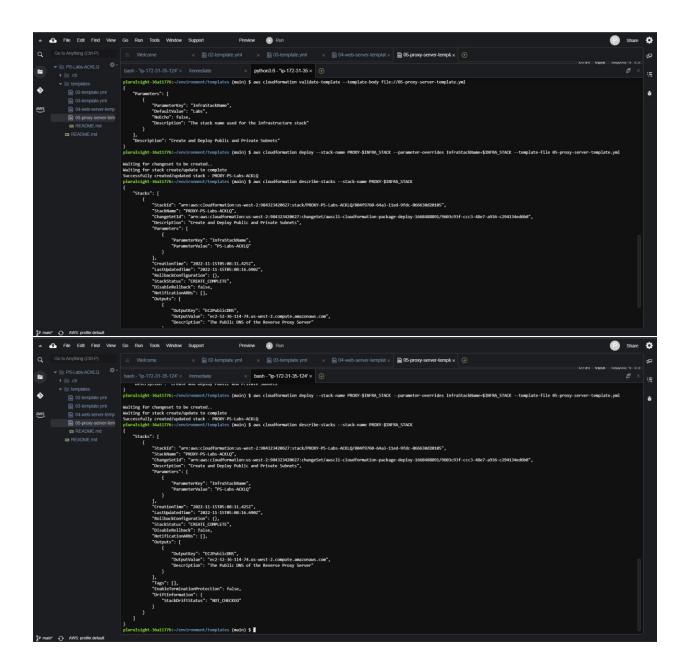
```
aws cloudformation describe-stacks --stack-name PROXY-$INFRA_STACK
```

- 8. The result of running the previous command should be a JSON output. In this output, find the entry for **Outputs**, and then **OutputValue**. This value should be a URL that ends with "...compute.amazonaws.com".
- 9. Visit this URL, and make sure the protocol used is HTTP and NOT HTTPS. Visiting the URL should display the message "Hello from Private Subnet". This content is actually coming from the Web Server running on the Private Subnet!

Note: After the last CloudFormation command is finished running, it still takes a few more minutes for the proxy server to start. If the URL does not immediately display the message, wait a few minutes and refresh the page.

If you can see the message "Hello from Private Subnet", then congratulations! You've successfully created and deployed a Public and Private Subnets using AWS CloudFormation and reached the end of this lab.





Hello from Private Subnet