1. **Choose the best Azure service to automate your business processes**

Objective:

Evaluate Azure services for integration and process automation scenarios

Azure provides several different ways to host and execute code or workflows without using VMs including Azure functions, Microsoft Power Automate, Azure Logic Apps, Azure WebJobs.

**Common business issues.**

In business, one way to guarantee high-quality products and service to customers is to design and implement strict business processes. Such processes may involve multiple steps, people, and software packages.

Problems arise when it merges a second business or integrates with a partner organization. How can administrators integrate the separate processes used in the two organizations, which may have been implemented using different software?

Business processes modeled in software are called **workflows.** Azure includes 4 different technologies that you can use and integrate systems

* Logic apps
* Microsoft power automate
* Web jobs
* Azure functions

They have some similarities:

* They can all accept inputs. An input is a piece of data or a file that is supplied to the workflow
* They can all run actions. An action is a simple operation that the workflow executes and may often modify data or cause another action to be performed.
* They can all include conditions. A condition is a test, often run against an input, that may decide which action to execute next.
* They can all produce outputs. An output is a piece of data or a file that is created by the workflow.

In addition, workflows created with these technologies can either start based on a schedule or they can be triggered by external event.

**Design-first technologies.**

When business analysts discuss and plan business process, they may draw a flow diagram on paper. With logic apps and Microsoft power automate, you can take a similar approach to designing a workflow. They both include user interfaces in which you can draw out the workflow. We call this approach a design first approach.

**Logic apps**

It’s a service within Azure, to automate, orchestrate and integrate disparate components of a distributed application. By using the design-first approach in Logic apps, you can draw out complex workflows that model complex business processes. The following screenshot shows the logic apps designer and design canvas that you use to define your workflow.

Alternatively, you can create or edit a workflow in JSON notation by using the code view.

One reason why Logic apps is so good at integration is that over 200 connectors are included. A connector is a Logic Apps component that provides an interface to an external service. For example. Twitter connector allows you to send and retrieve tweets, office 365 connector lets you manage your email, calendar, contacts. Logic Apps provides hundreds of pre-built connectors that you can use to create your apps. If you have an unusual or unique system that you want to call from logic apps, you can create your own connector if your system exposes a REST API.

**Microsoft Power Automate**

Is a service to create workflows even when you have no development or IT pro experience.

You can create workflows that integrate many different components by using the website or mobile app.

There are four different types of flow you can create:

* **Automated.** Starts by a trigger from some event. For example, the event could be the arrival of a new tweet, or a new file being uploaded.
* **Button.** Runs a repetitive task with a single click from your mobile device.
* **Scheduled.** Runs on a regular basis such like once a week, on a specific date, or after 10 hours
* **Business process.** Models a business process such as the stock ordering process or the complaints procedure. The flow process can have: notification to required people; with their approval recorded; calendar dates for steps, recorded time of flow steps.

Microsoft Power Automate provides an easy-to-use design surface to create flows of the above types.

Under the hood, Microsoft power automate is built on logic apps. Meaning that Power automate supports same range of connectors and actions.

**Design-first technologies compared**

Microsoft Power Automate is more appropriate for use by non-technical staff. If your workflow designers are IT professionals, Logic apps are usually a better fit.

**Code-first technologies**

The developers on your team will likely prefer to write code when they want to orchestrate and integrate different business applications into a single workflow. This is when you need more control over the performance of the workflow or need to write custom code as part of the business process. For such cases, Azure includes Web Jobs and Functions.

**Web Jobs and the Web Jobs SDK**

The Azure app service is cloud based hosting service for web applications, mobile back-ends and RESTful APIs. These applications often need to perform some kind of background task. For example, when photo is uploaded, you may need to generate a smaller thumbnail photograph.

Web Jobs are part of the Azure App Service that you can use to run a program or script automatically. There are two kinds of Web Job:

* **Continuous.** Run in a continuous loop. For example, you could use a continuous Web job to check a shared folder for a new photo.
* **Triggered.** Run when you manually start them or on a schedule.

You can write code in different languages, like PowerShell, Bash. Alternatively, write program in Php, Python, Node.js or Js. Sdk 3.x supports .NET Core.

You can also program a WebJob by using the .NET framework or the .NET Core Framework. In this case, you can use WebJobs SDK to make the task easier. The SDK includes a range of classes, which reduce the amount of code required to interact with the Azure App Service.

WebJobs SDK only supports C# and the NuGet package manager.

**Azure functions**

An azure function is a simple way for you to run small pieces of code in the cloud, without having to worry about the infrastructure required to host that code. You can write Function in C#, Java, JS, Python or any of the languages listed. In addition, you can only pay for the time when the code runs.

When you create an Azure Function, you can start by writing the code for it in the portal. Alternatively, if you need source control, you may use GitHub or Azure DevOps.

To create Azure Function, choose from the range of templates. The following list is a sample of some of the templates available to you:

* HttpTrigger. When you want the code to execute in response to a request sent through the HTTP protocol
* TimeTrigger. When you want the code to execute according to a schedule.
* BlobTrigger. When you want the code to execute when a new blob is added to an Azure Storage account.
* CosmosDbTrigger. When you want the code to execute in response to new or updated documents in a NoSql database.

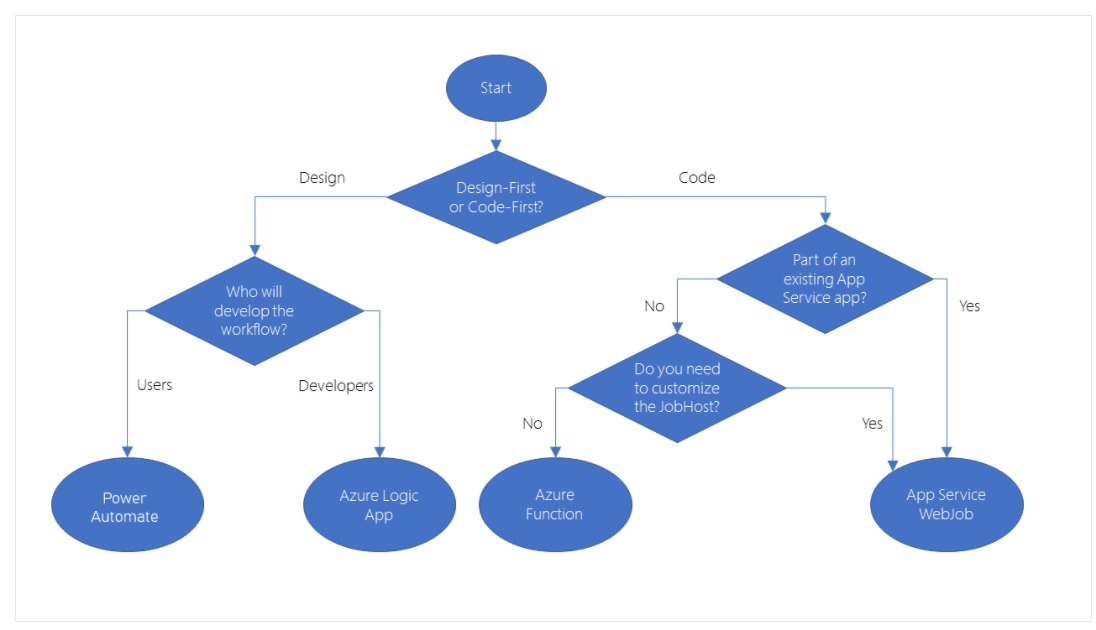
Azure functions can integrate with many different services. These services can trigger your function, or send data input to your function, or receive data output from your function.

**Code-first technologies compared**

In most cases, simple administration and more flexible coding model provided by Azure functions may lead you to chose them in preference to webjobs. However, you may choose WebJobs for the following reasons:

* You want the code to be part of an existing App Service application and to be managed as part of that application, for example in the same Azure DevOps environment.
* You need close control over the object that listens for events that trigger the code.

**Analyze the decision criteria**



First question to ask is if you want GUI or by writing code.

Valid reasons for using a design-first tool:

* People who design the workflow have no coding experience.
* Later designers and users can consult the graphical design to clearly understand how the workflow proceeds

Code-first tool, because:

* People who design the workflow are developers and prefer to work entirely in code
* You want the details of a workflow to be hidden from non-coders.

**Choosing a design-first technology**

The principal question here is who will design the workflow: will it be developers or users?

In logic apps, its designed for people with development skills.

In power automate, its designed for users who have a good understanding of the business process but no coding skills.

**Choosing a code-first technology**

Azure functions should be your default choice (ability to develop test code in the browser, pay per use price model, wider ranges of supported languages and trigger events).

There are situations when WebJobs might be a better choice:

* You have an existing Azure app service application, and you want to model the workflow within the application. This requirement means that the workflow can also be managed as part of the application, for example in Azure DevOps environment.
* You have specific customizations, for example custom retry policy for calls to external systems.

**Mixing technologies**

Remember that there is no requirement for you to use the same technology for different workflows: if your requirements differ, you are likely to reach a different answer at the end of your decision-making process. Furthermore, you can also call one workflow from another. For example, a workflow implemented in Power Automate can easily call another that is built as an Azure Function.

One reason to mix the technologies used in your business processes would be to give users control over a small section of complete workflow.

1. **Create serverless logic with azure functions**

With serverless computing, your cloud provider manages the provisioning and maintenance of the infrastructure letting you focus completely on building the app logic. Azure functions is a key component of the serverless computing offering from Azure and enables you to run peaces of code or functions, written in programming language of your choice, in the cloud.

**What is serverless compute?**

Serverless compute can be thought of as a function as a service (FaaS), or a microservice that is hosted on a cloud platform. Your business logic runs as functions, and you don’t have to manually provision or scale infrastructure. The cloud provider manages infrastructure. Your app is automatically scaled out or down depending on load. Azure has Azure logic apps and Azure functions; this will be our focus in this module.

**What is azure functions?**

Azure functions are a serverless application platform. It enables developers to host business logic that can be executed without provisioning infrastructure. Good scalability and you are charged only for the resources used. You can write code in many different languages. Support for NuGet is also included, so you can use popular libraries.

**Benefits of a serverless compute solution**

Serverless compute is great option for hosting business logic code in the cloud. You get automatic scaling, you have no servers to manage, and you are charged based on what is used. Here are some additional characteristics of serverless solution for you to consider:

* Avoids over-allocation of infrastructure. Scaling up or down automatically.
* Stateless logic. Function instances are created and destroyed on demand. If state is required, it can be stored in an associated storage service.
* Event driven. They run only in response to an event (trigger), such as receiving an http request, or message being added to a queue. You configure a trigger as part of the function definition. Allows you to declare where data comes from and where it goes. No need to write code to watch queues, blobs, hubs, and so on. You can focus purely on the business logic.
* Can be used in traditional compute environments.

**Drawbacks of a serverless compute solution**

Serverless compute will not always be the appropriate solution for hosting business logic. Here are a few characteristics of functions that may affect your decision to host services in serverless compute:

* Execution time. Functions have timeout of 5 minutes (max10). If function requires more than 10 minutes to execute, you can host it on a VM. Additionally, if your service is initiated trough an http request and you expect an http response, timeout is restricted to 2.5 minutes.
* Execution frequency. If you expect your function to be executed continuously by multiple clients, it would be smart to estimate the usage and calculate the cost of using functions accordingly. It might be cheaper to host your service on a VM.

While scaling, only one function app instance can be created every 10 seconds, for up to 200 total instances. Keep in mind, each instance can service multiple concurrent executions, so there is no set limit about how much traffic a single instance can handle. Different types of triggers have different scaling requirements, so research your choice of trigger and investigate limits.

**Azure function triggers**

* Blog storage. Starts when a new or uploaded blob is detected.
* Azure Cosmos DB. Start a function when inserts and updates are detected.
* Event grid. Starts a function when an event is received from Event Grid.
* HTTP. Starts a function with an HTTP request.
* Microsoft Graph Events. Starts a function in response to an incoming webhook from the Microsoft Graph. Each instance of this trigger can react to one Microsoft graph resource type
* Queue Storage. Starts a function when a new item is received on a queue. This queue message is provided as input to the function.
* Service bus. Starts a function in response to messages from a Service Bus queue.
* Timer. Starts a function on a schedule.

**Azure function bindings**

A binding Is a declarative way to connect data and services to your function. Bindings interact with various data sources, which means you don’t have to write code in your function to connect to data sources and manage connection, platform takes care of that complexity for you as part of the binding code. Each binding has a direction. Code reads data from input bindings and writes data to output bindings. Each function can have zero or more bindings.

A trigger is a type of input binding that can initiate execution of some code.

**Function templates**

Azure offers 20~ templates. Once created you can further customize.

Test in 2 ways. Azure portal or trigger yourself (like, send http message if trigger is http)

1. **Execute an Azure function with triggers**

In this module, you will:

* Determine which trigger works best for your business needs
* Create a timer trigger to invoke a function on a consistent schedule
* Create an HTTP trigger to invoke a function when an HTTP request is received
* Create a blob trigger to invoke a function when a blob is created or updated in Azure Storage

Azure Functions app doesn’t do work until something tells it to execute. For example, we could create an Azure function to send out a reminder text message to our customers before an appointment. If we don’t tell the function when it should run, our customers will never receive a message.

Every function must have exactly one trigger associated with it. If you want to execute a peace of logic that runs under multiple conditions, you need to create multiple functions that share the same core function code.

**Time trigger**

Something that executes at a certain time. (Weekly, daily, hourly)

To create a time trigger, you need to supply two pieces of information.

* A timestamp parameter name, which is simply an identifier to access the trigger in code.
* A Schedule, which is CRON expression that sets the interval for the timer.

**What is a CRON expression?**

A Cron expression is a string that consists of six fields that represent a set of times.

The order of six fields in Azure is: {second} {minute} {hour} {day} {month} {day of the week}

Example that executes every five minutes looks like: 0 \*/5 \* \* \* \*

Special characters:

* **\*** Selects every value in a field. In week this means every day
* **,** Separates items in a list. A comma “1,3” in the day of the week means just Mondays and Wednesdays
* **-** Specifies a range. 10-12in hour field means 10, 11 and 12
* **/** Specifies an increment. \*/10 in minutes means an increment of every 10 minutes.

Break down example. 0 in seconds, selects first possible value.

\*/5 means select every fifth value 0-59

Remaining fields are all \*

When put all together, means the first second of every fifth minute of every hour, of every day, of every month

**Execute an Azure function with an HTTP request**

Http request is a common operation on most platforms and devices. Azure allows us to quickly create a piece of logic to execute when an http request is received.

**What is an HTTP trigger?**

It’s a trigger that executes a function when it receives an Http request. Http triggers have many capabilities and customizations, including:

* Provide authorized access by supplying keys.
* Restrict which HTTP verbs are supported.
* Return data back to the caller.
* Receive data trough query string parameters or through the request body.
* Support URL route templates to modify the function URL.

When you create an HTTP trigger, you need to select a programming language, provide a trigger name, and select an Authorization level.

**What is an HTTP trigger Authorization level?**

An HTTP trigger Authorization level is a flag that indicates whether an incoming HTTP request needs an API key for authentications.

There are 3 levels:

* Function
* Anonymous
* Admin

The Function and Admin levels are “key” based. To send an HTTP request, you must supply a key for authentication. There are two types of keys: function and host. The difference between these keys is their scope. Function keys are specific to a function. Host keys apply to all functions inside the function app. If your Authorization level is set to Function, you can use either a function or a host key. If Authorization level is set to Admin, you must supply a host key.

The anonymous level means that authentication is not required. This exercise uses anonymous auth level.

1. **Chain Azure Functions together using input and output bindings**

Suppose you run social networking site. You allow to upload images to be posted on their profile. To reduce workload on the web server, you want to create serverless back end using Azure functions to process this data. You want to create image thumbnail and save it to permanent storage.

With bindings, developers interact with other data sources and services without worrying about how the data flows to and from their function.

**Input and output binding types**

Accessing and processing data are key tasks in many software solutions. Consider some of these scenarios:

* You’ve been asked to implement a way to move incoming data from Blob storage to Cosmos DB.
* You want to post incoming messages to a queue for processing by another component in your enterprise.
* Your service needs to grab gamer scores from a queue and update an online scoreboard.

All these examples are about moving data. The data source and destinations differ from scenario to scenario. But the pattern is similar. You connect to a data source, and you read and write data. Azure Functions helps you integrate with data and services by using bindings.

**What is binding?**

In Azure functions, bindings provide a declarative way to connect to data within your code. They make it easier to integrate with data streams consistently in a function. You can have multiple bindings providing access to different data elements. You can connect to your data sources without having to code specific connection logic.

**Types of bindings**

Two types of bindings you can use with functions:

* Input binding. Connect to a data source. Function can read data from these inputs.
* Output binding. Connects to a data destination. Our function can write data to these destinations.

There are also triggers, which are special types of input bindings that cause function to run.

**Types of supported bindings**

A binding type can be used as an input, an output, or both. For example, a function can write to a Blob Storage output binding, but a Blob Storage update could trigger another function.

Some common binding types follow:

* Blob storage
* Azure Service Bus queues
* Azure Cosmos DB
* Azure Event hubs
* External files
* External tables
* Http Endpoints

These types are just a sample.

**Binding properties**

Three properties are required in all bindings. You may have to supply additional properties based on the type of binding and storage you are using:

* **Name**. Defines the function parameter trough which you access the data (for example, in a queue input binding, this is the name of the function parameter that receives the queue message content)
* **Type**. Identifies the type of binding (for example, the type of data or service we want to interact with)
* **Direction**. Indicates the direction data is flowing (for example, input or output.)
* **Connection** (most types, but not all). Provides the name of an app setting key that contains the connection string. Bindings use connection string stored in app settings to keep secrets out of the function code. This makes your code more configurable and secure.

**Read data with input bindings**

To connect to a data source, you need to configure an input binding. An input binding makes it possible to write minimal code to create a message. You don’t need to write code for tasks, such as opening storage connection. Azure Functions take care of those tasks for you.

**Input binding types**

Azure chain functions can have multiple types of input. However, not all types support both input and output. You’ll use an input function whenever you want to ingest data of that type. Here, we’ll look at the input function types that support input bindings and when to use them.

* Azure blob storage. Blob storage bindings allow you to read from a blob.
* Azure Cosmos Db. Input bindings use the SQL API to retrieve one or more Cosmos DB documents and pass them to the input parameter of the function.
* Mobile Apps. Input binding loads a record from a mobile table endpoint and passes it into your function.
* Azure table storage. Read data and work with Azure table storage.

These are not all, but just common examples.

**What is a binding expression?**

There are several types of binding expressions, including:

* App settings
* Trigger filename
* Trigger metadata
* JSON payloads
* New GUID
* Current date and time

Most binding expressions are identified by being wrapped in curly braces. However, app setting binding expressions are wrapped in percent signs. For example, if the blob output binding path is %Environment$/newblob.txt, and the environment app setting value is Development, a blob is created in the development container.

Input bindings allow you to connect your function to a data source. You can connect to several types of data sources, and the parameters for each vary. To resolve values from input sources, use binding expressions in the function.json file, in function parameters, or in code.

**Write data with output bindings**

Output binding types:

* Blob storage. You can use the blob output binding to write blobs.
* Azure cosmos db. Lets you write a new document to a Cosmos Db database using SQL API
* Event hubs. To write an event to an event stream.
* Http. Http output binding to respond to the Http request sender. Requires Http trigger, allows to customize the response.
* Microsoft Graph. Allow to write to files in OneDrive, modify excel data, send email trough outlook
* Mobile apps. Writes new record to mobile apps table
* Notification hubs. You can send push notifications with notification hubs output bindings.
* Queue Storage. Use Azure Queue Storage output binding to write messages to queue.
* Send Grid. Send emails using SendGrid bindings.
* Service Bus. Use azure Service bus output binding to send queue or topic messages.
* Table Storage. Se Azure Table Storage output binding to write to a table in Azure Storage account.
* Twilio. Send text messages with Twilio.

To create a binding as output, define direction as out.

1. **Create a long-running serverless workflow with Durable Functions**

Durable functions is an extension of Azure functions that lets you perform long-lasting, stateful operations in Azure. Azure provides infrastructure for maintaining state information. You can use durable functions to orchestrate a long-running workflow. You get all the benefits of a serverless hosting model, while letting durable functions framework to take care of activity monitoring, synchronization, and runtime concerns.

**What is durable functions?**

Durable functions allows you to implement complex stateful functions in a serverless-environment.

**Durable functions**

Is an extension of Azure Functions. Whereas Azure functions operate in a stateless environment, durable functions can retain state between function calls. This approach enables you to simplify complex stateful executions in a serverless environment.