



MaRS supports innovation
with Softchoice and AWS



Problem Statement

MaRS Discovery district brings together educators, researchers, social scientists, entrepreneurs and business experts under one roof. Founded by civic leaders, they have a mission that is equal parts public and private — an entrepreneurial venture designed to bridge the gap between what people need and what governments can provide.

With IT services overextended and MaRS spending on leases and infrastructure; instead of better serving their internal users as well as tenants. Coupled with a sprawling co-location agreement, and large costs associated with a LAN extension initiative, MaRS was in a bind. To ensure IT remained focused on serving their tenants and internal users and to remove extensive operational costs the organization brought forth the requirement to migrate from their on-premise IT infrastructure to AWS. The first step on their journey to the AWS cloud was to consult with Softchoice to provide the necessary AWS foundation. Through Softchoice lead discovery and design workshops, MaRS was able to define a blueprint for the successful deployment of a SQL environment in AWS.

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Solution

Softchoice worked with MaRS to implement the desired solution from the blueprint leveraging AWS EC2 for SQL Virtual Machines in Dev, UAT and Production environments. EC2 instance level backups to S3 were achieved by a customizable AWS Lambda Function. MaRS will make use of Amazon EBS for its EC2 instances (Leveraging SSD-backed volumes) and Amazon S3 for data backup and recovery. Amazon Glacier used for any data archival requirements.

The solution's success criteria was to be measured on the deployment of the following key deliverables:

- Develop CloudFormation Scripts for deployment of AWS Solution
- Testing of CloudFormation scripts
- Execution of CloudFormation scripts for deployment of Amazon Virtual Private Gateway (VPG), Virtual Private Cloud (VPC). Along with the creation of users, groups, and roles in Identity Access Management (IAM)
- Configuration of Cloud Trail and AWS Config
- Deployment of Elastic Cloud Compute (EC2) instances for Dev, UAT and Production SQL environment along with Domain Controller
- Configuration of EC2 instance level backups to S3: Snapshots of backups of EC2 instances to S3 achieved via Lambda
- As-built documentation + knowledge transfer
- Provide AWS Technical designs and CloudFormation Templates/Scripts

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Outcome(s)

The complexity of MaRSs sprawling IT infrastructure agreement was collapsed and their assets were moved to the cloud, simplifying management and providing additional security to protect their data of their users and tenants. Large operational cost avoidance was achieved by removing the need for a LAN extension to support growth. MaRS now has both the time and budget to better serve their tenants and users – to aid in building better and more bridges – enabling MaRS to fill larger gaps in the services that people need.

“MaRS now has both the time and budget to better serve their tenants and users...”

About Softchoice

Softchoice is one of the largest IT solution and managed services companies in North America. We help organizations transform their business by embracing a secure Hybrid IT strategy and driving technology adoption with their end users. This makes their business more agile and responsive to customer needs, and makes their employees more productive and happier too.

The logo for softchoice, featuring the word "softchoice" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. A stylized, white, handwritten-style flourish is positioned above the letter "i".