

AWS Landing Zone: **Your Startup's Secret** **to Success**

Building a Secure, Scalable Foundation
Without Slowing Down



Introduction

Why Your AWS Account Structure Will Make or Break Your Scale

For a startup just beginning its AWS journey, starting with a single AWS account can seem like the easiest way to move quickly, given limited resources and a drive to get your core product to market ASAP. So that single AWS account is used for everything from development environments, production workloads, and databases, to logs, billing, security settings, and more.

This might be okay initially. But it is not capable of meeting the security, compliance, and reliability needs of a growing company. In fact, it creates a risk of engineers accidentally harming production as they work on development. It harms security and puts compliance at risk because it relies on manual or scripted configurations subject to human error, and because it makes it more difficult to ensure that logs and controls are centralized, automated, and auditable.

Meanwhile, a single-account approach can cause spending to get out of control, as a lack of clear separation between teams and environments makes costs difficult to track and limit. And the longer a startup takes to start using multiple AWS accounts efficiently, the more disruptive, time-consuming, and expensive it becomes to migrate workloads to secure infrastructure.

That's why AWS landing zones are so important from day one

As a governed, multi-account environment, an AWS landing zone lets your startup avoid these problems without slowing your team down. At its core is a robust, automated, rules-based approach to separating AWS accounts and environments. This helps ensure software is developed and executed in a scalable, well-architected, multi-tenant setting. Even for very early-stage startups, that goes a long way to building a safe and secure environment that stays that way over time.

In this guide, we will go in depth on AWS landing zones to give you the tools to succeed.

You will learn:

- What an AWS landing zone is and the signs you need one
- The two main types of AWS landing zones
- Four powerful benefits that landing zones offer startups
- The structure and key components of an AWS landing zone
- How to get an AWS landing zone that meets your needs



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What Is an AWS Landing Zone?

An AWS landing zone is a secure, scalable, well-architected, multi-tenant environment for developing code and running workloads on AWS.

At its core, it is about building, maintaining, and executing software in a way that automatically differentiates between multiple accounts and multiple environments. This can include:

- </> **Development**
- 🔧 **Staging**
- 📦 **Sandbox**
- 🚀 **Production**
- 🕒 **Temporary environments for demos**

Crucially, it allows additional accounts and additional environments to be created automatically and rapidly, based on predetermined rules.

Landing zones offer immediate benefits, saving time by streamlining the creation and management of both accounts and environments for developing software to be deployed on AWS. But the most important reasons to have a landing zone are its long-term benefits, especially in terms of security, compliance, efficiency, and enabling growth. In many cases, the biggest advantages are not its features and capabilities, but the problems it prevents.

Startups can benefit because of the simplicity, freedom, and flexibility this approach offers. By streamlining the creation and maintenance of accounts and environments, a landing zone can help you experiment and innovate without needing to worry about the problems that can arise from over-relying on a small number of AWS accounts. Product development progresses quickly, starting with a landing zone setup process that takes just days.



Do I need an AWS landing zone?

If you can't check all the boxes below, that's a sign your startup needs an AWS landing zone to enjoy all of the benefits described above.

- Do you have separate accounts for your production and development environments?
- Is AWS CloudTrail enabled in all regions?
- Are you using a centralized user management system?
- Can you deploy a new environment that is automatically compliant in minutes?



2 approaches to landing zones:

Understanding the differences and determining which works best for you

Your startup can choose whether to have a landing zone that simply uses AWS Control Tower's built-in capabilities, or you can opt for a custom-built landing zone. It's important to understand the differences.

1

Control Tower

This off-the-shelf AWS tool lets companies set up their own landing zones.

- You can choose to have a landing zone based solely on Control Tower's preset options, letting you get your landing zone up and running rapidly with minimal work.

2

Custom-Built Landing Zone

- A custom landing zone can be built on top of Control Tower's capabilities.
- This helps you ensure your landing zone is robust enough to suit your startup's needs and goals, without being too complex for your company.

AWS Control Tower gives you a prescriptive, managed baseline that's fast to stand up and easy to operate. But a custom-built landing zone offers deeper customization across networking, security, compliance, and integration with your wider platform estate.

Alternatively (as will be explained later), you may opt to let a specialist partner create a custom-built landing zone for you.

Both are very different from the manual approach to setting up and managing accounts and environments that many companies still rely on. Not only is that expensive, time-consuming, and inefficient, but it is subject to human error. A manual approach can present serious security and compliance risks that could be avoided by having an AWS landing zone.

The Business Case for Getting It Right:

4 Key Benefits That Drive Real ROI

To evaluate whether your startup needs an AWS landing zone, it's worth considering its high-impact benefits. A landing zone that's done right will have four "superpowers":



Prevent costs from getting out of control

An AWS landing zone offers you visibility and control over expenses, using multi-tenant architecture and automatic logging to allow you to set rules that help you keep costs in check and ensure that you only pay for what you use.



Efficiently achieve enterprise-grade security

Prevent data breaches by following best practices for identity and access management (IAM) with automated logging. Make changes safely in non-production environments in order to avoid causing problems within your product.



Scale infrastructure rapidly and securely

By letting you create both new accounts and new product development environments automatically, an AWS landing zone saves you valuable work time and lets you accelerate product development.



Automatically apply rules to ensure compliance

An AWS landing zone can be configured to ensure that your product development is conducted in line with the security frameworks that are most relevant for your specific startup, such as HIPAA, SOC 2, and ISO 27001.

Your Cloud Foundation Blueprint:

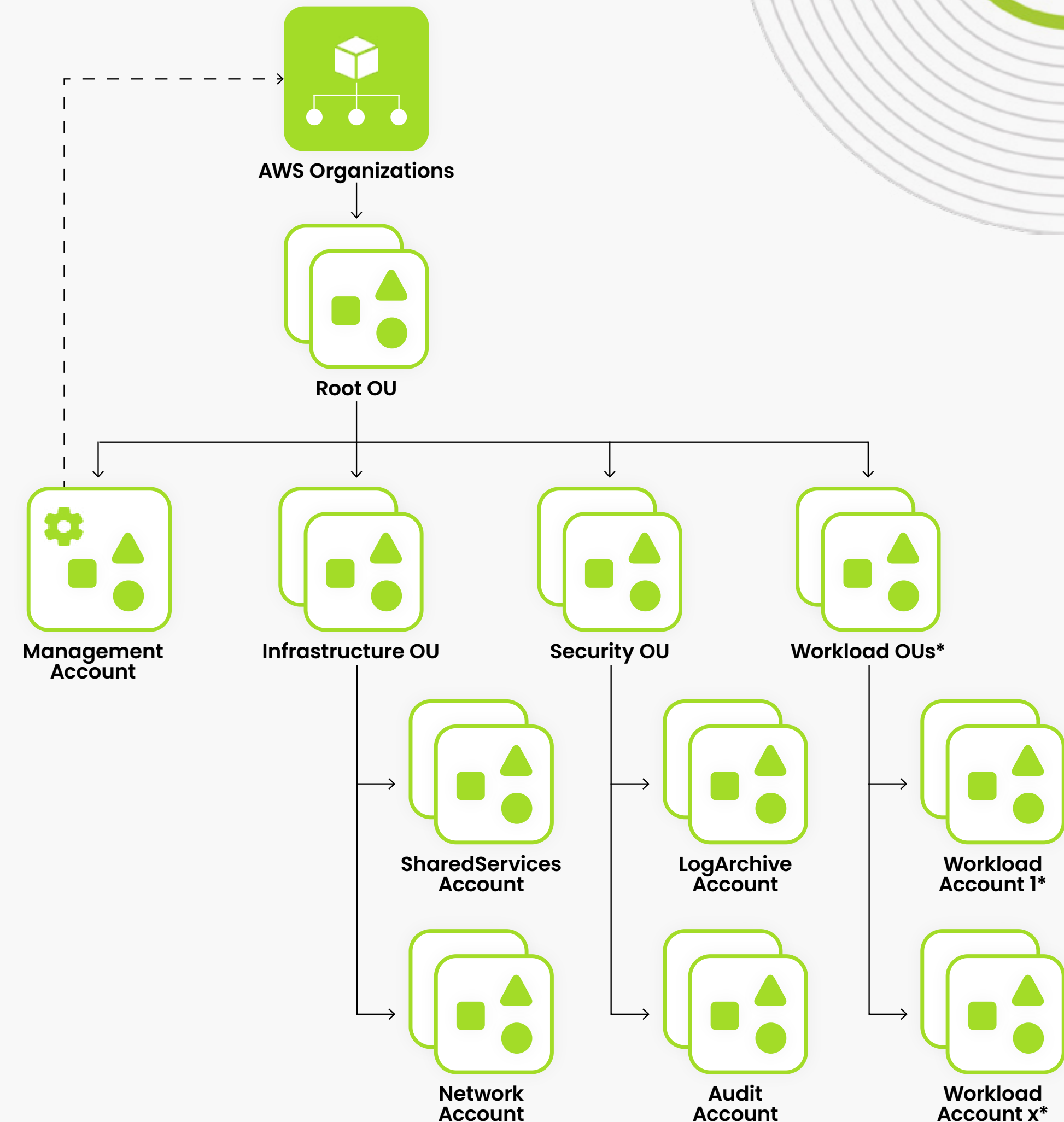
Key Components of an AWS Landing Zone

AWS landing zones are built to automatically separate both accounts and environments based on granular rules, with each account only given permission to access the relevant environment(s). To understand how a landing zone works, let's explore the structure of how accounts should be assigned within an organization.

The root account is created when the AWS account is first set up and acts as the top-level container for all organizational units (OUs) and linked accounts in the landing zone. Some startups run workloads in the root account, but this is strongly discouraged. The root account should be locked down and treated as a break-glass, account-level identity, used only for tasks such as changing account settings, account recovery, and updating the AWS Support plan.

One of your most important accounts should be for shared services, such as networking, logging, and shared tools.

Within your production and development OUs, there should be multiple workload accounts for working with environments where your apps and databases live. While every organization is different, it's common for the production OU to include numerous accounts for both the production and staging environments. It's also common for the development OU to include multiple accounts for both the development and sandbox environments. This approach helps limit blast radius and lay the groundwork for efficiently ensuring security, reliability, and compliance as your startup scales. Here is an example of how an AWS landing zone could be structured:



**Note:* By default the best practices configuration files do not create any workload. Workload accounts shown for illustrative purposes.

The Implementation Journey for a Custom-Built Landing Zone




Many startups face a dilemma: Build a custom AWS landing zone, or rely solely on Control Tower's out-of-the-box capabilities. Building your own landing zone helps meet your specific needs without being excessively complex.

Some startups have higher demands from a landing zone than others. A custom landing zone can be designed to be sufficient for you without being over-engineered.

But building your own AWS landing zone takes time and resources. For a startup focused on getting its core product to market as quickly as possible, even briefly assigning engineers to work on your landing zone rather than on product development can present a frustrating roadblock. And given the limited resources of early-stage startups, taking the time to build an AWS landing zone in-house might not seem like a feasible option.

For startups facing this dilemma, the option of letting a dedicated team of AWS experts build a custom landing zone offers the best of both worlds. This way, you can make sure your AWS landing zone is designed by experienced professionals, without needing to devote time and engineering resources yourself.

Even if your team has deep knowledge of how to work with AWS, this approach helps prevent your need for a landing zone from slowing down your product development and delaying your product launch.

 Aspect	 Control Tower (CT) landing zone	 Specialist partner landing zone
Ownership & ops model	AWS-managed service with console-driven lifecycle and guardrails.	Customer-owned platform with partner-built patterns, usually delivered as code and optionally managed as a service.
Speed to initial value	Very fast: wizard-driven setup for a standard multi-account baseline.	Slower up front (discovery, design, build), faster later for complex orgs due to better fit to requirements.
Degree of opinionation	Highly prescriptive: standard OUs, accounts, logging, and controls, limited variations in console.	Opinionated by partner patterns but ultimately shaped around your network, security, and org constraints.
Customization scope	Extended via CfCT/AFT, SCPs, and additional automation, but within CT's boundaries and supported regions.	Full-stack customization across networking, identity, security tooling, SDLC, FinOps, and landing zone evolution strategy.
Compliance model	AWS-provided controls, mapped to common frameworks, monitored via CT dashboard, with limited tailoring per control.	Controls and evidence collection mapped explicitly to your frameworks and auditors, often with custom reporting and policy as code.
Evolution over time	Follows AWS CT roadmap; upgrades/changes must remain compatible with service expectations.	Evolves via your and the partner's backlog; patterns, pipelines, and policies can change independently of AWS service boundaries.

CfCT: Customizations for AWS Control Tower **AFT:** Account Factory for Terraform **SCP:** Service Control Policies **CT:** Control Tower

Working with Automat-it to rapidly get the landing zone you need

As an AWS Premier Partner, Automat-it has the knowledge and experience to build your AWS landing zone for you. We offer an end-to-end approach, including designing a tailored solution, building it for you, and helping you start using it. And we can do all of this rapidly. Your landing zone can be up and running within approximately 10 days (if not sooner).

Even if you've already built and started using your own environment without an AWS landing zone, it's not too late. Not only can we design and build your landing zone, but we can take care of migrating your existing workloads into it without downtime.

Automat-it is also uniquely positioned to build AWS landing zones that meet the needs of startups. We combine our deep understanding of how startups work and the challenges they face with a "right-sized" approach focused on ensuring your solution meets all of your needs while also avoiding over-engineering it. And, because we also offer DevOps as a service and FinOps as a service, we can be as comprehensive as you choose – seamlessly, scalably, securely, and time-efficiently.

No matter where you are in your AWS journey, Automat-it can help you rapidly get the landing zone you need, with no need to slow down your product development or disrupt your core product's functioning, even temporarily.

To discover how quick, easy, and efficient it can be to get a custom-built AWS landing zone that empowers your startup to grow securely, contact Automat-it's team of experts.

[Contact us](#)

Company information:

500+

AWS certifications

140+

Engineers

800+

Customers

Some of our AWS Badges and Competencies:



All badges and competencies can be seen at the bottom of our website:

www.automat-it.com

