G4 - Automated Code Conversion Tool

White Paper / FAQs

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Authors: Rajesh Ramachandran, Cat Perry

The intention of this document is to provide a high-level overview of one of Google’s Mainframe Modernization solutions, G4, Google’s automated code conversion tool. This document is intended to answer frequently asked questions around our refactoring solution, what the solution entails, and how we engage with customers to deliver this solution to meet their objectives.

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What is G4?

G4 is Google’s modernization solution for customers looking to refactor their Mainframe or Midrange applications. Developed by Cornerstone Technology and acquired in 2020, G4 automates the code conversion process by providing tools to transform legacy program languages like COBOL, PL/1 or RPG into modern Java.

The G4 Platform is both programming language- and platform-independent and can handle the most common legacy languages. Customers taking advantage of this approach to legacy modernization have seen significant business agility improvements and cost savings.

We recognize the fact that our customers all have a unique combination of languages, database systems, transaction monitors, and schedulers. The G4-based solution takes into consideration all of these different unique characteristics.
What are the benefits?

Converting your legacy application to run on a cloud-native environment eliminates all dependencies on legacy technologies and skills. This is contrary to the re-host approach that eliminates the mainframe hardware dependency but is still 100% reliant upon mainframe software and skills.

G4 allows for more innovation in the following areas:
- Cloud-ready solutions that can be run and be managed in containerized environments
- Access to a larger pool of Java developers and modern tooling
- Access to leverage Google Cloud’s reliability, scalability, and elasticity
- Ability to granularly maintain, deploy, and scale services
- Large run cost savings compared to Mainframe
- The agility customers need to create a new product or neutralize a competitive threat in the market
- An accelerated approach to unlocking mainframe data compared to a rewrite

What challenges does this solve?

G4 is targeted to solve for the following challenges customers face today:
- Lack of mainframe skills in the customer’s organization and in the market
- Lack of SMEs available within the customer’s organization
- Inability to meet market demands in terms of business agility and time to market
- Cloud readiness and transitioning to a modern language, tooling, and skillset
- No funding to spend on a rewrite
- High cost of running on Mainframe
- Wanting to leverage services available in Google Cloud
Industry leading technology from Google

ISG, a leading analyst in the industry, named Google's G4 as a leader in Mainframe modernization technology in 2021 and 2022.

Google’s approach

As the first step in a modernization journey, Google recommends starting with an assessment where we will conduct a deep-dive analysis of the application environment—including the applications, their dependencies, the languages, and associated databases. With that knowledge, we can then derive the recommended modernization solution. The important thing to keep in mind is that there is certainly no one-size-fits-all solution for every environment.

The information gathered during the engagement will provide a blueprint for the journey from legacy to Google Cloud, and provide any supporting financial and business cases for project approval. The assessment engagement requires access to customer-owned source code to analyze the interdependencies and understand technical debt. After completing the assessment, customers can get a proof of concept (POC) to prove the capabilities. Detailed below is a typical engagement process we follow for a G4 approach with customers.
What infrastructure changes are required?

G4 doesn’t require any infrastructure changes on the mainframe. If the end solution requires connectivity back to the mainframe, then it requires TCP/IP connectivity to the mainframe from Google Cloud. Cloud connectivity options should be evaluated and selected based on customer requirements.

What infrastructure is recommended?

To run the converted applications on Google Cloud, we recommended Google Kubernetes Engine (GKE), GCS, and Filestore. Since the converted application is containerized, depending on the application requirements, you can execute the app in a serverless infrastructure such as Cloud Run.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended architecture for production</th>
<th>*could change based off of customers requirements/choices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GKE Regional Cluster</td>
<td>Hosts highly available modernized application after conversion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Filestore Enterprise</td>
<td>Shares files between batch jobs running on GKE</td>
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Google Cloud Storage
 Archives data, such as files and backups

Apigee or API Gateway
 Consumes/exposes services

Cloud SQL / Spanner / AlloyDB
 Database of choice

Recommended architecture for POC

VMs (w/ persistent disk)
 Runs docker images and stores output/input files

PostgreSQL
 Data purposes

G4 Support Stack for z/OS

The following diagram details individual legacy technology components and the recommended corresponding mapping of the target state technology.

G4 key features for Mainframe

01 Scheduler Integration
 Ability to invoke jobs in GKE from external schedulers like CA-7, CTL-M etc including restart, DD override, return codes and symbols

02 REST Enabled APIs
 CICS Commodare Programs, COBOL callable routines can be REST enabled

03 Angular Frontend
 BMS and IMS MFS are converted to Angular frontend

04 Containerized Workloads
 Programs are packaged as containers and deployed in GKE

05 VSAM, DB2 & IMS DB, GDGs & QSAM
 VSAM, DB2 and IMS DB are supported in RDBMS format. Handle GDGs and QSAM

06 COBOL, JCL, PL/I, CICS, IMS DC
 Support for mainstream z/OS software

07 IBM Utilities support
 Support for IBM Utilities like SORT, IEBCGENER, IDCAMS etc
G4 Key Features for iSeries

- **01 Scheduler Integration**: Ability to invoke jobs in GKE from external schedulers like CA-7, CTL-M etc.
- **02 REST Enabled APIs**: RPG and CL callable routines, can be REST enabled.
- **03 Angular Frontend**: DSPF files are converted to Angular frontend.
- **04 Containerized Workloads**: Programs are packaged as containers and deployed in GKE.
- **05 Data area, Data Queue, DDS, PRTE**: Support for iSeries constructs.
- **06 RPG, CL, Free Format, MQ**: Support for mainstream iSeries software.
- **07 Utility to generate DDL**: Utility to generate DDL.

*IMS DC currently in development*
Recommended Architecture

Google’s approach to code conversion is to ensure that the converted code is dockerized and run in a container orchestration platform. This makes the converted code portable. The recommended target platform for the converted code is GKE due to the fact that batch jobs will create files and these files might need to be shared across multiple containers and require Google Cloud’s Filestore or an equivalent NFS file system. As depicted in the diagram below, the target GKE environment provides high availability, scalability, and recoverability. The diagram also demonstrates how to integrate with the mainframe, including scheduler.
Thank you

For questions, examples, references:
Please contact mainframe@google.com
Google Cloud Consulting