

AWS FinOps Cost Governance Assessment

Fictional case: Meridian Analytics SaaS

ASSET TYPE	Synthetic FinOps assessment and savings register
STATUS	Review draft Synthetic scenario Version 1.0 - August 2026

IMPORTANT DISCLOSURE This demonstration uses a fictional company, invented workloads, and illustrative calculations. It does not represent a customer engagement, customer environment, testimonial, or actual savings result.

Executive summary

Meridian Analytics is modeled as a growing AWS SaaS company with \$186,400 in monthly spend. The scenario shows how engineering, finance, and product ownership can convert cost visibility into governed action.

Metric	Illustrative value	Interpretation
Current monthly AWS spend	\$186,400	Fictional baseline
Gross opportunity identified	\$31,700-\$47,900 / month	Not all opportunities are simultaneously realizable
Practical 90-day target	\$18,500-\$29,000 / month	Subject to technical validation and owner approval
Tagged spend coverage	61%	Below a useful allocation threshold
Unowned anomalies over 30 days	7	No accountable reviewer or documented disposition

Recommendation

- Approve a 30-day validate-and-assign sprint before purchasing another FinOps platform.
- Create one savings register with baseline, evidence, owner, risk, due date, realized value, and verification method.
- Separate rate optimization, usage optimization, architecture change, and governance gaps so leaders understand tradeoffs.
- Measure realized savings against a normalized baseline rather than treating recommendations as savings.

1. Fictional spend profile

Service family	Monthly spend	Share	Primary driver
EC2 + Auto Scaling	\$62,800	33.7%	Always-on production and oversized non-production
RDS / Aurora	\$41,600	22.3%	Multi-AZ estates, storage growth, idle dev clusters
Databricks on AWS	\$33,500	18.0%	Unbounded clusters and interactive idle time
S3 + backup	\$18,900	10.1%	Versioning, stale snapshots, incomplete lifecycle rules
Data transfer	\$15,400	8.3%	Cross-AZ and egress-heavy data paths
Other services	\$14,200	7.6%	Observability, NAT, support services

Allocation quality

Dimension	Coverage	Assessment
Business unit	84%	Usable but inherited/shared costs need rules
Product	68%	Insufficient for product margin decisions
Environment	91%	Good; normalize values and prevent free text
Owner	54%	Major accountability gap
Cost center	61%	Finance mapping incomplete

Illustrative monthly trend

Month	Spend	Normalized change	Comment
March	\$164,800	-	Baseline
April	\$171,900	+4.3%	New analytics workload
May	\$177,300	+3.1%	Data-transfer increase
June	\$181,700	+2.5%	RDS storage and snapshots
July	\$186,400	+2.6%	Compute growth without owner attribution

2. Opportunity register

ID	Opportunity	Gross range / mo.	Confidence	Risk	Owner
F-01	Stop or schedule idle non-production EC2, RDS, and development environments	\$7,200-\$10,500	High	Low	Platform
F-02	Rightsize persistently underused EC2, RDS, Aurora, and EBS capacity	\$5,500-\$8,200	Medium	Medium	Service owners
F-03	Databricks cluster policies, job compute, and auto-termination	\$6,000-\$9,000	Medium	Medium	Data platform
F-04	Delete unattached EBS volumes, stale snapshots, unused elastic IPs, and obsolete load balancers	\$2,400-\$3,800	High	Low	Cloud ops
F-05	Use Spot Instances for fault-tolerant batch, CI, and distributed workloads	\$3,100-\$5,600	Medium	Medium	Platform
F-06	Evaluate Compute Savings Plans for stable eligible compute after optimization	\$7,500-\$10,800	Medium	Medium	Finance + cloud
F-07	Evaluate EC2 Reserved Instances where instance-specific requirements justify them	\$2,800-\$4,900	Medium	Medium	Finance + cloud
F-08	Evaluate RDS Reserved DB Instances for stable database baselines	\$3,200-\$5,400	Medium	Medium	DB + finance

Why gross opportunity is not realized savings

- Some actions overlap; for example, commitment purchases should follow right-sizing and scheduling.
- Technical reliability, product latency, engineering effort, and contract constraints can reduce or delay value.
- A recommendation becomes realized savings only after implementation and verification against an agreed baseline.
- Reserved Instances and Savings Plans are rate commitments, not substitutes for removing waste; evaluate them only after rightsizing, scheduling, and demand normalization.
- Spot capacity is suitable only where interruption handling, checkpointing, diversification, and service objectives have been designed and tested.

Illustrative opportunity detail: F-03

Evidence	Proposed control	Validation	Success measure
23 clusters exceed 30 minutes idle; 8 use unrestricted node types	Default auto-termination, approved policies, job clusters for repeatable workloads	Compare runtime, queue time, failure rate and DBU trend for four weeks	Verified spend reduction without material SLA degradation

3. Governance operating model

Cadence	Participants	Decisions	Artifact
Weekly cost triage	FinOps lead, platform, service owners	Anomalies, new opportunities, blockers	Updated savings register
Monthly business review	Engineering, finance, product	Forecast variance, unit economics, commitment posture	Executive cost pack
Quarterly architecture review	Architecture, security, product	Structural changes and material tradeoffs	Approved modernization backlog

Policy minimums

- Every production resource must map to product, environment, cost center, and accountable owner through enforceable metadata.
- Budgets and anomaly thresholds must have named responders, expected response time, and escalation path.
- Commitment purchases require an approved utilization forecast and documented downside case.
- Idle-resource policies define approved operating schedules, exception owners, and automated shutdown or termination actions for non-production services.
- A weekly waste scan covers unattached EBS volumes, obsolete snapshots, unused elastic IPs, idle load balancers, old AMIs, and other chargeable resources without accountable use.
- Spot usage requires workload eligibility, interruption handling, on-demand fallback, and monitoring of interruption and completion rates.
- Savings claims must record baseline period, normalization method, implementation date, and verification owner.

FinOps role boundaries

Role	Accountability
Engineering owner	Explains usage, evaluates technical risk, implements approved changes
Finance partner	Confirms allocation, forecast, rates, and realized financial impact
FinOps lead	Facilitates evidence, prioritization, standards, and reporting
Executive sponsor	Resolves tradeoffs and enforces accountability

4. 30/60/90-day plan

Window	Actions	Outputs
Days 0-30	Normalize billing data; validate top drivers; assign owners; inventory idle and orphaned resources; baseline workloads	Trusted baseline, allocation gaps, ranked register
Days 31-60	Implement shutdown schedules and safe cleanup; rightsize; pilot Spot; launch budgets, anomaly routing, and cluster policies	Verified quick wins, Spot evidence, and operating cadence
Days 61-90	Evaluate Savings Plans and Reserved Instances after optimization; approve architecture changes; publish unit metrics	Commitment decision and executive scorecard

5. Executive scorecard example

Measure	Current	90-day target	Definition
Spend allocated to product	68%	>=90%	AWS spend mapped using approved rules
Spend with accountable owner	54%	>=90%	Owner can approve or explain consumption
Open anomalies older than 7 days	7	0	Alert lacks disposition or next action
Gross opportunity implemented	0%	>=60% of validated value	Action deployed, excluding rejected items
Savings verified	\$0	\$18.5K-\$29K / month	Normalized baseline minus post-change spend

Measurement caveats

- Currency, taxes, support charges, marketplace purchases, credits, refunds, and negotiated rates require explicit treatment.
- Growth, seasonality, workload migration, and customer volume should be normalized where material.
- Avoid optimizing cloud cost in isolation when labor, licensing, reliability, latency, or revenue impact changes.

What a real client receives

- Cost baseline and allocation-quality assessment.
- Evidence-backed opportunity register with owners, risks, and verification methods.
- Commitment analysis for Savings Plans and Reserved Instances, Spot suitability assessment, and idle/orphaned-resource cleanup plan.
- Governance cadence, policy minimums, executive scorecard, and 30/60/90-day roadmap.
- Optional implementation support for approved low-risk actions and ongoing monthly governance.