CORESTACK®

# Governing SaaS Spend in the Cloud+ Era

## SaaS Spend Has Escaped Financial Control

As organizations accelerate cloud adoption, software licensing and SaaS investments have grown exponentially, yet are one of the least governed expenses. Teams procure SaaS tools rapidly, AI services quickly multiply across departments, and software costs scale faster than the financial controls designed to manage them.

This challenge is intensifying just as finance leaders are under pressure to deliver greater cost efficiency. According to the FinOps Foundation's most recent annual report, workload optimizations and waste reduction is the top priority for FinOps leaders seeking to regain financial control.[1]

At the same time, SaaS and AI tools are being budgeted, procured, and reported through different systems that are separate from cloud infrastructure costs and traditional financial workflows. These silos create blind spots that undermine financial forecasting, accountability, and cost discipline. For CFOs, the result is persistent variance between budgeted and actual spend, limited leverage in vendor negotiations, and elevated audit and compliance risk, despite significant investment in FinOps and cloud cost management tools.

Managing licensing and SaaS across multi-cloud environments using native tools alone only compounds the problem. Visibility is fragmented, controls are inconsistent, and governance becomes reactive rather than operational. Finance and FinOps leaders need a **single control layer** that extends financial governance across all software spend—not just infrastructure.

Effective governance ensures that software investments:

- Align with business objectives and actual usage patterns
- Comply with licensing agreements and avoid audit penalties
- Operate within financial guardrails alongside cloud infrastructure costs
- Scale efficiently without creating waste, shadow IT, or compliance risk

CoreStack addresses this challenge by delivering a **unified, policy-driven governance framework** that embeds licensing and SaaS visibility directly into day-to-day FinOps operations, helping finance leaders maintain control without slowing down business.

# CoreStack's Licensing and SaaS Governance Framework

CoreStack extends FinOps beyond infrastructure, giving CFOs a unified system of record for cloud, licensing, and SaaS spend. By embedding software governance directly into FinOps workflows, CoreStack enables finance leaders to apply the same rigor to software spend that they already expect from cloud infrastructure.

At the heart of this approach is comprehensive cost tracking that treats licensing and SaaS as critical budget line items that are integral to maintaining day-to-day business operations.

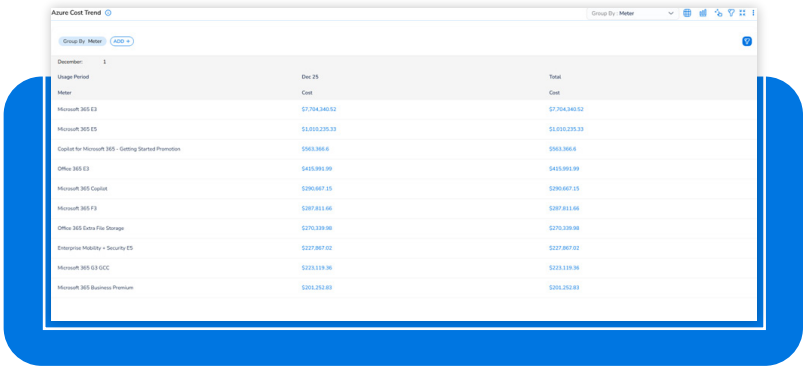
## 1. Accurate License Cost Attribution Across Cloud Billing

In most cloud environments, software license costs are embedded within infrastructure charges, obscuring true software spend and limiting finance's ability to allocate costs, forecast accurately, or validate ROI. This lack of transparency makes it difficult to distinguish true infrastructure growth from license-driven cost increases, as well as weakens negotiating leverage during renewals.

CoreStack addresses this challenge by extracting and tracking license costs as **separate, auditable line items within cloud billing**, giving finance and FinOps teams a clear, defensible view of software spend across providers.

**Key capabilities include:**

- **SaaS Marketplace Cost Separation** – Software purchased through AWS Marketplace, Azure Marketplace, or GCP Marketplace is categorized and reported independently from infrastructure spend.
- **Microsoft Publisher License Tracking** – Licenses purchased through Azure Marketplace are identified and tracked separately from infrastructure costs, enabling accurate tracking and reporting.
- **Microsoft 365 (O365) License Visibility** – Office 365 subscription costs are surfaced as distinct line items, enabling accurate allocation to business units and cost centers.
- **BYOL Cost Attribution** – Resources running with Bring Your Own License are tagged and tracked to validate license utilization against entitlements.




With CoreStack, finance leaders and their teams gain granular visibility into license spend across their cloud estate. This leads to improved forecasting capabilities, stronger positions for upcoming vendor negotiations, and smarter decision making when it comes to renewals, true-ups, and optimization conversations.

## 2. Unified Visibility Through FOCUS-Based Ingestion

Beyond cloud marketplace purchases, organizations rely on numerous direct SaaS subscriptions that exist outside cloud billing entirely. Direct SaaS subscriptions, particularly for AI services, data platforms, and developer tooling, are procured independently, billed separately, and tracked inconsistently. This is especially true as employees sign up for trials of new LLM tools to test out new capabilities that promise to enhance their productivity and reduce tedious tasks. For CFOs, this creates a material blind spot: SaaS costs grow rapidly, but remain disconnected from cloud cost reporting, financial forecasts, and FinOps governance.

CoreStack closes this gap by ingesting external SaaS cost data using the **FinOps Open Cost and Usage Specification (FOCUS™)** and normalizing it alongside cloud infrastructure and marketplace spend. This allows finance teams to analyze SaaS costs with the same rigor, consistency, and governance applied to cloud resources.

By leveraging FOCUS as a standardized cost schema, CoreStack eliminates data silos and enables apples-to-apples comparison across providers, billing models, and technology categories.

**Supported SaaS provider categories include:**

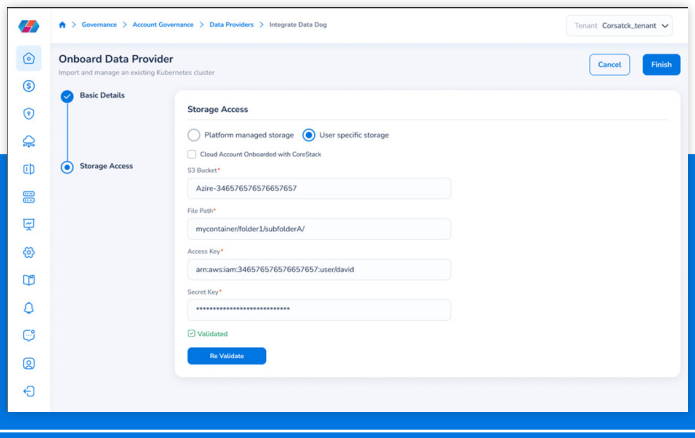
- **AI Services:** Track rapidly growing generative AI costs for vendors like OpenAI and Anthropic with full visibility.
- **Data Providers:** Manage consumption-based data platform costs for industry-leading providers including Databricks, Fabric and Snowflake.
- **Observability & DevOps:** Monitor high-velocity engineering tools that often expand without centralized oversight, including those from Datadog, New Relic, Dynatrace, Grafana, Splunk, and Elastic.
- **Productivity & Security:** Allocate subscription-based SaaS costs accurately across teams and business units for vendors, including, Okta, Microsoft, and Salesforce.
- **Custom Services:** Organizations can onboard any SaaS tool not in the predefined list based on business needs using our standardized ingestion format.

With CoreStack, finance leaders gain a consolidated view of total technology spend, across cloud infrastructure, marketplace software, and direct SaaS subscriptions, within a single FinOps governance model. This enables more accurate forecasting, clearer accountability, and data-driven decisions around budgeting, renewals, and vendor negotiations.

## 3. Standardized and Governed SaaS Onboarding at Enterprise Scale

One of the biggest barriers to effective SaaS cost governance is inconsistency. When SaaS tools are onboarded ad hoc using spreadsheets, manual uploads, or one-off integrations, finance teams inherit unreliable data and uneven controls. This undermines confidence in reporting and limits the ability to enforce financial and compliance standards.

CoreStack addresses this head-on with a **governed onboarding flow** specifically designed to track and control costs from external SaaS providers. The platform standardizes how SaaS cost data is collected, validated, and ingested to ensure that every new service adheres to the same financial, security, and governance requirements from day one.




**Key capabilities include:**

- **Structured onboarding workflows** guiding users through account configuration, storage validation, and data ingestion setup.
- **Flexible storage integration** supporting cloud accounts already governed by CoreStack or external storage using secure role-based or access-key authentication.
- **Standardized, FOCUS-aligned data templates** that ensure consistent cost formatting and comparability across all SaaS providers.
- **Credential validation and lifecycle management** ensuring secure, reliable data access with revalidation capabilities.

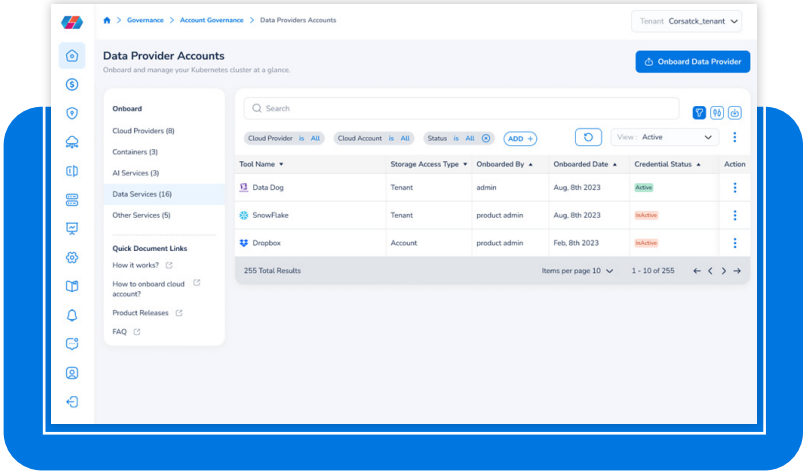
With a standardized onboarding process, SaaS cost governance becomes repeatable, auditable, and scalable. Finance and FinOps teams can trust the completeness and consistency of SaaS data without relying on manual collection or reconciliation.

## 4. Centralized SaaS Management as a Financial Control Plane

As SaaS portfolios expand, finance leaders often lack a single, authoritative view of what tools are in use, who owns them, and whether cost data is reliable and current. When this information is fragmented across teams and systems, accountability breaks down and governance becomes reactive. CoreStack addresses this by providing a centralized SaaS management dashboard that serves as a **system of record for all onboarded SaaS services**. Organized by common vendor categories, including AI services, data services, and other services, the dashboard enables cross-functional teams to manage their full SaaS ecosystem from a single, governed interface.

**Key capabilities include:**

- **Comprehensive SaaS inventory** with searchable, filterable views and real-time status visibility.
- **Clear ownership and provenance tracking**, including who onboarded each service and when.
- T**ransparent configuration and access management**, with the ability to review service details, update storage integrations, and revalidate credentials.
- **Role-based access controls** that ensure appropriate permissions across finance, IT, and engineering teams.
- **Export-ready reporting** to support audits, internal reviews, and executive reporting.




With a single system of record, all stakeholders operate from a shared source of truth for SaaS investments. Finance teams gain confidence in data completeness and accountability, FinOps teams can act on trusted insights, and leadership has clear visibility into SaaS use, risk, and cost exposure across the organization.

## 5. Governance Aligned to the FinOps Framework

In recent years, finance leaders are increasingly accountable for governing SaaS, licensing, and cloud costs as a single operating expense. The FinOps Foundation's Framework 2025 introduced **Scopes** as a core element to formally recognize this shift and reflect the new reality that modern FinOps extends beyond public cloud into a broader Cloud+ technology portfolio.

CoreStack's licensing & SaaS governance capabilities are purpose-built to operationalize this model, enabling finance and FinOps teams to apply consistent financial controls, accountability, and optimization across all technology spend categories.

**Core governance capabilities aligned to the FinOps Framework include:**

- **Unified data ingestion** using consolidated intake of cloud billing, marketplace software, and FOCUS-formatted SaaS data.
- **Consistent cost allocation** with accurate chargeback and showback of license and SaaS costs to business units, applications, and cost centers.
- **Continuous optimization** that identifies underutilized licenses, redundant SaaS subscriptions, and right-sizing opportunities across providers.
- **Standardized governance** with consistent, policy-driven controls that ensure procurement aligns with organizational and financial standards.

By centralizing licensing and SaaS governance within the FinOps operating model, CoreStack enables organizations to **define policies once and enforce them everywhere.** The result is a unified governance framework embedded into daily operations that replaces fragmented management with consistent, auditable financial control.

# Business Impact of Licensing & SaaS Governance with CoreStack

Licensing & SaaS governance is no longer optional—it is foundational to maintaining financial control in technology-driven enterprises. According to the **State of FinOps 2025,** approximately 70% of FinOps practitioners are already managing SaaS costs, while 65% have taken responsibility for software licensing optimization, which underscores a permanent shift in the finance operating model. As software spend expands beyond infrastructure, finance leaders are increasingly accountable for costs that are dynamic, decentralized, and difficult to forecast.

By adopting CoreStack's licensing & SaaS governance capabilities, organizations can:

- **Gain complete, auditable visibility** into license and SaaS spend alongside cloud infrastructure costs.
- **Reduce software waste** by identifying unused licenses and redundant subscriptions.
- **Lower compliance and audit risk** through consistent tracking of licensing terms and entitlements.
- **Standardize governance** across cloud, marketplace, and direct SaaS investments.
- **Enable data-driven financial decisions** for renewals, procurement, and vendor negotiations.

With CoreStack, finance regains visibility and control, costs scale predictably with business growth, and efficiency improvements are achieved without slowing innovation.

Discover how CoreStack transforms fragmented software spend into a measurable, manageable, and optimizable component of enterprise performance.

**Request a demo** to get started.

[i] State of FinOps 2025 Report, FinOps Foundation
[ii] State of FinOps 2025 Report, FinOps Foundation

CORESTACK®

CoreStack is an AI-powered NextGen Cloud Governance & Security Platform that enables enterprises to embrace cloud with confidence, rapidly achieving continuous and autonomous cloud governance at scale. CoreStack helps 750+ global enterprises govern more than $2B in annual cloud consumption. The company is a Microsoft Solutions Partner with Certified Software, Amazon AWS Technology Partner with Cloud Operations Competency, Oracle Cloud Build Partner, and Google Cloud Build Partner.