



FACT SHEET

5 Steps to Get Started with Policy-Based Authorization

Implementing a [policy-based authorization](#) strategy, like [attribute-based access control \(ABAC\)](#), can transform how an organization handles data access. Beyond enhancing security, ABAC provides fine-grained control over sensitive information, improving compliance and operational agility.

However, ABAC requires careful planning to fit within existing infrastructure and processes.

Though it may seem overwhelming at first, this process can be broken down into just five steps.

1. Get Everyone on Board

ABAC is designed to ensure the right people have access to the right information in the right way, at the right time – across your organization, or even with external parties such as customers and partners. For many organizations, this shift to a policy-based approach involves changing legacy processes for how access control and authorization are handled. It's critical to get your internal teams on board since developers, IT teams, asset owners and business line managers (at minimum) will need to embrace a move to ABAC.

Here are some steps to get everyone involved on board:

- **Education and Training:** Explain the advantages of ABAC in terms of security, compliance, and scalability. This can involve workshops or training sessions where teams learn how ABAC differs from existing models.
- **Emphasize Ease of Management:** Show how ABAC's fine-grained control reduces the need for repeated adjustments to access control lists (ACLs) or roles, allowing access to be managed centrally.
- **Highlight Business Agility:** ABAC can empower business line managers to adjust policies without constantly involving IT, enhancing responsiveness.

Getting everyone on board may take time, but it's essential for transitioning from static, role-based access to more adaptive, policy-driven authorization.

2. Document All Scenarios

It is critical to ensure both security and business [applications](#) your enterprise is running are accounted for when planning your ABAC implementation. This will enable you to streamline existing security infrastructure and accomplish more complex authorization rules and policy enforcement. Each application may have different requirements, and documenting all potential use cases ensures that your ABAC solution will serve both business and security needs.

- **Catalog Critical Business and Security Scenarios:** Identify the key scenarios where access control applies – from general user access to sensitive data and applications to high-security access. The key is to start with the core policies that will define the initial policies and then iterate on your policy changes as you learn more about how your users are accessing information.

- **Define Policy Needs:** Use these scenarios to define the rules your ABAC solution will enforce when dealing with the who, what, and when of data access. For example, a policy might state that only users in certain roles (like managers) can access specific customer data, but only if they're operating within business hours and from secure locations.
- **Avoid Policy Gaps:** This documentation will help ensure that no critical policies are overlooked and that your security infrastructure is streamlined, preventing the need for ad hoc solutions later on.

Documentation becomes the foundation for your ABAC system, offering a clear, well-defined set of requirements for implementing complex authorization rules. Keep in mind that as the policies evolve, the documentation will evolve with it.

3. Map Out the Technology Stack...

ABAC is powerful due to its ability to centralize access control and help organizations scale over time. As part of an initial implementation, reviewing technology currently in place and scoping additions to your existing stack will ensure a smooth transition.

- **Audit Existing Tech:** Look at the technology you already have in place. Are there legacy systems that need upgrades, or are there redundancies that can be eliminated? Understanding these details is crucial to building a comprehensive ABAC plan.
- **Compatibility Check:** ABAC often integrates with federated identity management solutions (like SSO) and [API gateways](#). These technologies often only offer coarse grained access controls at best and can benefit by layering fine grained access controls on top of them.
- **Plan for Future Growth:** Think about how ABAC will scale as new users, roles, and applications come into play. An ABAC system that can adapt over time will ensure smoother access control for evolving business needs, while an RBAC system will often grow in complexity as the application evolves.

A thorough review of your technology stack not only provides insight into what's already in place but also uncovers where ABAC can optimize existing systems.

4. Kick Start Your Project

Starting with a pilot application is a best practice in any ABAC rollout. Selecting a single application with clear access needs can help you fine-tune your policy-based authorization model, making it easier to scale ABAC across your organization.

- **Define The Right Use Cases:** Pick an application where ABAC can add measurable value, such as one with high sensitivity requirements or complex access control needs.
- **Define Measurable Goals:** Look for indicators like time saved on policy management, reductions in unauthorized access incidents, or improvements in compliance reporting.

By starting small, you create a sandbox where you can refine your ABAC setup, uncovering challenges and benefits that will inform future rollouts.

5. Consider Functional and Non-Functional Requirements

To fully realize the benefits of ABAC, it's essential to plan for both functional and non-functional requirements. These factors will shape how the ABAC solution performs, scales, and integrates into your existing infrastructure.

- **Functional Requirements:** Define what your ABAC solution must accomplish. This includes specifying who should have access to what resources, under which conditions, and why. These requirements will drive the creation of policies that meet business needs while ensuring security.
- **Non-Functional Requirements:** These relate to how the ABAC solution performs and integrates within your environment. Consider aspects like hosting options (on-premises vs. cloud), disaster recovery, usability, response times, and scalability. Non-functional requirements are typically areas where IT leadership plays a key role.
- **Align on Success Metrics:** Establish success criteria for each requirement type, allowing you to assess ABAC's performance against tangible benchmarks. This approach also ensures that your ABAC solution can evolve as your organization grows.

Defining these requirements upfront will prevent misalignments and keep your ABAC implementation on track.

Laying the Foundation for Policy-Based Authorization Success

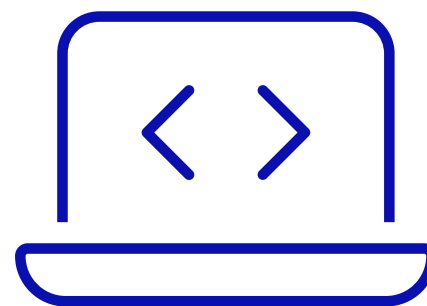
Policy-based authorization offers a dynamic, adaptable approach to access control, helping organizations manage complex permissions across diverse environments. By following these five steps, you can lay a strong foundation for your enterprise, ensuring that your teams, processes, and technology stacks are ready to support a modern authorization strategy.

For organizations looking to improve security, compliance, and business agility, ABAC can be a game-changer — but only with proper planning. With careful documentation and well-defined requirements, your organization can take the [next step](#) and unlock the full potential of policy-based authorization.

Take the next steps

Learn how a security vendor can help secure your access control while allowing you to focus on your core business initiatives.

[Meet with our solution experts for a demo](#) of our Axiomatics Authorization Management Platform and discuss how our approach can save your organization time and money.



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The company enables enterprises to effectively and efficiently connect Axiomatics' award-winning authorization platform to critical security implementations, such as Zero Trust or identity-first security. The world's largest enterprises and government agencies continually depend on Axiomatics' award-winning authorization platform to share sensitive, valuable, and regulated digital assets – but only to authorized users and in the right context.

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