

AURVALD · METHODOLOGY · V1.1 · OCTOBER 2026

The AurVald Approach

How we run fractional Data, AI, and FinOps engagements — one design authority spanning three lenses, delivered with a partner where build capacity is needed, and paced so decisions actually get made.

Fractional Leadership · Data · AI · FinOps

PURPOSE

This document is the published methodology behind AurVald engagements. It sets out how we work, what clients receive at each stage, and how our design authority combines with our London delivery partner to give clients both independent advice and delivery capability.

Read it end-to-end when scoping a new engagement, or use it as the reference to answer any question about how AurVald actually delivers.

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1. The six principles

These govern how every engagement is scoped, staffed, and delivered.

1	<p>Three lenses, one conversation</p> <p>An architecture decision is also an AI capability decision is also a cost decision. We look through all three lenses in every session, because the trade-offs only make sense together.</p>
2	<p>Senior-led, start to finish</p> <p>The person you meet leads the work and stays accountable for the design. Implementation may involve our London delivery partner or your own team; design authority stays with AurVald. No principal-and-juniors staffing model.</p>
3	<p>Design authority separate from build hours</p> <p>We advise independent of who implements. When our London delivery partner builds against the design, we hold the design authority — not a build-hours incentive shaping the recommendation.</p>
4	<p>Practitioner-tested before recommended</p> <p>We recommend patterns we have designed and delivered ourselves, not patterns seen only on a slide.</p>
5	<p>Decisions on the wall in weeks, not quarters</p> <p>The rapid review is two weeks. The design authority retainer runs to a weekly rhythm. Long engagements are the failure mode, not the goal — quick clarity is the outcome we sell.</p>
6	<p>Every deliverable is decision-shaped</p> <p>Reports that don't drive a next-week decision are theatre. Our outputs are structured as recommendations plus the trade-offs behind them, not as observations without a call.</p>

2. The three-lens model

The AurVald difference in one idea: architecture, AI, and FinOps looked at together as one integrated lens, not three separate conversations.

Architecture lens

Data platform, Fabric, medallion structure, governance, integration — the shape of what gets built and how it holds up under change.

AI lens

Use-case selection, agentic patterns, MCP-based integration, PoC-to-production paths, EU AI Act readiness — what actually delivers value and what does not.

FinOps lens

Unit economics, allocation, AI-workload cost surfaces, capacity planning — what it all costs to run and whether the value covers it.

The convergence: Where the three lenses overlap is where most competitors leave gaps. Pure architects approve features and find out the run cost in month three. Pure AI advisors pick models without seeing the retrieval-cost tail. Pure FinOps advisors optimise bills they cannot influence upstream. AurVald puts one recommendation on the wall with the three-way trade-off explicit.

3. The engagement lifecycle

Four stages, sized to the decisions they support. Most clients start at Stage 1 and choose whether to progress. Each stage stands alone commercially — nothing chains automatically.

Stage	Duration	Focus	Primary deliverable
1. Rapid Review	2 weeks · fixed scope	One-pillar diagnostic; loss-leader or paid	~10-page written report + read-out + reference architecture
2. Design Authority	Months 1-6 · retainer	Cross-lens design decisions on weekly rhythm	Decision log + monthly steering pack
3. Delivery Oversight	Concurrent with build · variable	London partner builds; AurVald adjudicates changes	Gate sign-offs + change adjudications
4. Steady-state Advisory	Post go-live · light retainer	Drift monitoring + AI portfolio refresh + FinOps review	Quarterly convergence review pack

4. The three pillar methodologies

Each pillar follows the same shape: Discovery, Assessment framework, Deliverables, Handoff. What differs is the substance.

4.1 Data & Fabric Architecture

Positioning line: "Get the data platform decision right the first time."

Discovery (days 1-5)

- Kick-off workshop with data leadership and business SMEs
- Interviews with 3-5 stakeholders across data, engineering, business
- Current-state artefact review: existing platform diagrams, data catalogues, pipeline inventories
- Data-source inventory: systems, volumes, refresh cadences, ownership

Assessment framework

- Medallion maturity: bronze/silver/gold delineation, curation clarity
- Governance readiness: ownership, lineage, quality controls
- Integration complexity: source coverage, refresh reliability, error handling
- Cost-to-serve: capacity SKUs, workload isolation, storage tiering
- Skills fit: what the team can operate today versus the target

Deliverables

- Current-state architecture map (one page, with pain points marked)
- Target-state reference architecture with SKU/capacity recommendation
- 3-6 month roadmap with dependencies and decision points
- Top 5 risks and top 5 quick wins (each with owner and effort)
- Decision log: every technology or pattern choice made, with the rejected alternatives

4.2 AI Architecture & FDE

Positioning line: "Turn AI ambition into architecture that ships."

Discovery (days 1-5)

- Business-value workshops with commercial and operational leaders
- Use-case elicitation and shortlist (target 10-15 candidates)
- Data-readiness assessment per candidate use case
- Existing AI/ML footprint review: what's built, what shipped, what stalled

Assessment framework

- Value × feasibility × cost matrix, scored per use case
- Pattern fit: agentic vs. RAG vs. traditional ML vs. buy-not-build
- Data dependency: what data must exist or be trustworthy first
- EU AI Act classification: risk tier, obligations, gating requirements
- Time-to-first-value: PoC feasibility in 4-8 weeks

Deliverables

- Prioritised use-case portfolio (3-5 to progress, rationale for each)
- Target architecture per selected use case (data flow, model, integration, guardrails)
- PoC plan for the top 1-2: scope, success metrics, exit criteria
- PoC-to-production roadmap: what changes between prototype and prod
- Cost envelope per use case at PoC and at production scale (feeds the FinOps lens)

4.3 FinOps & Cloud Economics

Positioning line: "Make every euro of cloud and AI spend defensible."

Discovery (days 1-5)

- Current-spend audit: 3-month billing pull, workload-level attribution
- Existing tag / allocation review — what's tracked versus what's actually spent
- Interviews with engineering, finance, and product to establish ownership reality
- AI/LLM invoice review: model spend, vector-DB, embeddings, orchestration, observability

Assessment framework

- FinOps Foundation maturity model: crawl / walk / run per capability
- Unit economics: cost-per-transaction, cost-per-user, cost-per-AI-outcome
- AI-workload lens: hidden cost surfaces (vector storage, retrieval, guardrails, monitoring)
- Commitment coverage: reserved / savings-plan optimisation opportunity
- Allocation gap: what's shared cost, what's directly attributable, who signs the invoice

Deliverables

- Baseline spend report with allocation map and top drivers
- Quick-wins list with quantified % / € savings, effort, and owner
- Recommended allocation model (chargeback / showback / hybrid)
- FinOps operating-model recommendation: who does what, on what cadence
- AI cost governance framework: budgets, guardrails, review triggers

5. Design authority and partner delivery

The model that gives clients advisory independence and delivery capability without a handoff cliff. AurVald holds the design; our London implementation partner builds against it; the client keeps one accountable authority across both.

Responsibility	AurVald (Design Authority)	London Delivery Partner	Client
Target-state architecture	Owens — sets the reference architecture across all three lenses.	Reviews for buildability; raises delivery constraints	Approves; owns strategic fit and business alignment
Technology selection	Recommends — independent of vendor incentives.	Confirms delivery feasibility with chosen stack	Signs off; procurement and licensing sits here
Implementation	Adjudicates architecturally significant changes; QA sign-off on gates	Owens — builds against the reference architecture.	UAT; product owner input; environment access
FinOps governance	Sets the model: allocation, budgets, review cadence.	Instruments per the model; feeds data	Runs the model day-to-day post-handover
Change control	Approves changes that alter the reference architecture or unit-cost profile	Raises change proposals with impact analysis	Approves commercial impact; sponsors business change
Vendor negotiation	Advises on structure and terms (esp. hyperscaler + AI vendors)	Provides sizing inputs	Signs the contract

Why this works better than the alternatives: Pure fractional CTOs deliver a decision, then leave clients to source and manage a builder — the handoff cliff. Fabric and AI implementation partners deliver a decision biased by their own build hours — the incentive cliff. AurVald sits between both: independent advisory that carries into build without a re-scoping cycle and without a build-hour bias shaping the recommendation.

6. Governance rhythms

The cadences that keep the engagement decision-shaped, not conversation-shaped.

Weekly design authority sync — 30 minutes

- Open decisions on the log: resolved, deferred, escalated
- Delivery partner questions raised in-week
- Emerging risks across any of the three lenses
- Next-week decision agenda

Monthly steering — 90 minutes

- Progress against roadmap milestones
- Unit economics review: what did we spend, what did we get
- Portfolio-level trade-offs (add / stop / accelerate)
- Sponsor decision points teed up with recommendation and rationale

Quarterly convergence review — half-day

- All three lenses reviewed together: has the picture changed
- Architecture drift: what got built versus what was designed
- AI use-case portfolio refresh: retire, promote, add
- FinOps: baseline versus actuals, next quarter's cost envelope

7. The convergence in practice

One concrete example of what "three lenses, one conversation" looks like in the room.

The scenario: A mid-market fintech asks whether to add a semantic-search RAG feature to their customer portal. Their existing data platform is Fabric with a partial medallion structure.

Architecture lens	AI lens	FinOps lens
Do we already have the source data in silver-quality form? Where does the vector store live — Fabric-native, or a dedicated vector DB? Does the retrieval sit inside the existing capacity or need its own? What is the update pathway for embeddings when source data changes?	Is RAG actually the right pattern, or is this a lookup that classical search solves? Which model tier — commodity or frontier? What guardrails, given customer-facing exposure? What is the EU AI Act classification, and what evaluation set proves the answer quality before launch?	What is the per-query cost at expected volume — model tokens, retrieval, embedding refresh, observability? What is the cost ceiling if adoption is 5x the forecast? Who owns the invoice, and does the customer-lifetime-value math still work at that cost per query?

The convergence recommendation: The three lenses jointly determine whether the feature ships, when, and at what scope. A pure architect approves it and finds out the run cost in month three. A pure AI advisor picks the model without seeing the retrieval-cost tail. A pure FinOps advisor optimises a bill they cannot influence upstream. AurVald puts one recommendation on the wall with the three-way trade-off explicit — and reruns the same lens as scale changes.

8. Deliverable catalogue

What clients actually receive at each stage. All deliverables are decision-shaped: a recommendation, the trade-offs behind it, and a next-week action.

STAGE 1 · RAPID REVIEW	Written report (~10 pages) Current state, target state, roadmap, top 5 risks, top 5 quick wins.
STAGE 1 · RAPID REVIEW	Read-out session 60-minute exec walkthrough with sponsor + CFO/CEO if invited. Live Q&A on the recommendations.
STAGE 1 · RAPID REVIEW	Reference architecture (1 page) Target-state picture. Becomes the shared artefact everyone points at in every subsequent meeting.
STAGE 2 · DESIGN AUTHORITY	Decision log Every architecturally significant decision, dated, with rejected alternatives and reasoning. Living document.
STAGE 2 · DESIGN AUTHORITY	Monthly steering pack Roadmap status, unit economics, portfolio-level trade-offs, sponsor decisions requested.
STAGE 3 · DELIVERY OVERSIGHT	Gate sign-offs Written approval at each build gate. Records what was reviewed and what was accepted.
STAGE 3 · DELIVERY OVERSIGHT	Change adjudications Formal response when the build proposes a departure from the reference architecture. Approve, modify, reject — with rationale.
STAGE 4 · STEADY STATE	Quarterly convergence review Half-day session output: all three lenses together, next-quarter cost envelope, use-case portfolio refresh.

9. What we do not do

A clear scope makes the rest of the methodology sharper. These are the things AurVald deliberately does not sell.

Not our scope

- Team augmentation or body-shopping engineers
- Direct hyperscaler licensing resale
- End-to-end managed services or platform run
- Regulatory certifications (we advise on gaps; certification bodies do the certifying)
- Product engineering outside a data, AI, or FinOps context

Not our commercial shape

- Time-and-materials with no defined outcome
- Engagements without a written decision on the wall
- "Fractional CTO" as generalist tech leadership — we sell the three specialist conversations
- Enterprise direct sale — enterprise reached only via main-contractor subcontracting

About this document

The AurVald Approach v1.1 — the published methodology behind fractional Data, AI, and FinOps engagements. Refreshed as engagement patterns evolve; changes logged in the version footer of the master reference. For BD conversations, this document is the shared artefact for framing scope, not a substitute for the tailored proposal that follows a first call.

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