

Build or buy an MCP connection

Compare ownership and ongoing work, then test the same task on each option.

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Build when you need control that an available service cannot provide. Buy when a maintained service meets your requirements and its contract assigns the work you want to delegate. The protocol alone does not decide this.

Work you still own

A custom adapter needs authentication, argument validation, error handling, logging, updates and support. It also needs a person who can respond when an upstream API changes. A working demo does not prove that these tasks are covered.

A managed service can remove some of that work. It also adds a supplier, contract and data path. Review its access model and export path before making it a dependency.

Compare ownership directly

| Area | Build | Buy | | --- | --- | --- | | Upstream changes | Your team updates the adapter | Confirm the vendor's maintenance scope | | Access control | Your team implements and tests it | Verify how the service maps each user | | Data handling | Your deployment design controls it | Review vendor and subprocessor terms | | Support | Name an internal operator | Get a defined escalation path | | Exit | Keep source, docs and credentials | Confirm export and revocation steps |

Use measured costs

Estimate engineering and operations effort with your team's own rates. Add hosting, model use and upstream charges. Compare these with a dated vendor quote for the same workload. Cloudflare's published compute rates can inform a hosting component, but they do not price the full MCP connection.

Run the same acceptance tasks on each option. Include denied access, a vendor outage, expired credentials and a write that must not be repeated. Record where recovery needs a human.

Leave a maintainable result

If you build, assign ownership and document deployment, rollback and credential rotation. If you buy, document contractual limits and the shutoff path. If neither option passes the access tests, narrow the task before proceeding. Avoid solving a broad integration problem with an unreviewed adapter.

Sources

- [MCP specification: Transports, revision 2025-06-18](#). Fetched 2026-10-29.
- [MCP specification: Security best practices, revision 2025-06-18](#). Fetched 2026-10-29.
- [Cloudflare: Workers pricing](#). Fetched 2026-10-29.

Frequently asked questions

How should we compare build and buy costs?

Use the same measured workload. Include maintenance, hosting, upstream charges and incident ownership.