BLESSING PHIRI | TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS ENGINEER

Platform Evaluation and Decision Framework

Leaving VMware: OpenShift Virtualization vs SUSE Harvester

Prepared for: A financial services firm, ~300 production servers

Reference	**SAMPLE-VIRT-001**
Date	**Q1 2026 (sample)**
Status	**Final**
Prepared by	**Blessing Phiri**

Portfolio sample

Based on a real customer evaluation. Client identity has been removed. Prices are indicative list ranges at the time of writing and should be confirmed with formal vendor quotes.

1. Executive summary

The client runs around 300 production Red Hat Enterprise Linux (RHEL) servers on VMware vSphere and already uses SUSE Rancher for container management. Broadcom's changes to VMware licensing, support and roadmap have created cost and vendor risk that a regulated financial institution cannot ignore.

This evaluation compares the two most strategically relevant alternatives, given the client's existing Red Hat and SUSE investments:

- **Red Hat OpenShift Virtualization**, which runs virtual machines alongside containers on OpenShift, built on the KubeVirt project.
- **SUSE Harvester**, an open-source hyperconverged platform built on Kubernetes, KubeVirt and Longhorn storage, with native Rancher integration.

It covers a functional comparison, licensing and cost framework, migration approach, services effort and a weighted scorecard, so leadership can make the decision against their own priorities.

The short answer	
Choose OpenShift Virtualization if	Single-vendor support for RHEL guests, automated VMware migration, compliance evidence and long-term VM and container consolidation matter most.
Choose SUSE Harvester if	Lowest licence cost, simpler deployment and reuse of existing Rancher skills matter most, and a cross-vendor support model is acceptable.

2. Background

Why move off VMware

- Perpetual licences ended, with a move to subscription-only bundles
- Pressure to adopt VMware Cloud Foundation bundles, raising total cost for many customers
- Reduced partner programmes and support tiers
- Roadmap uncertainty across vSphere, vSAN and NSX

Current landscape

Component	Detail
Operating system	RHEL, ~300 production servers
Containers	SUSE Rancher (existing investment)
Virtualisation	VMware vSphere (migration target)
Sector	Financial services, regulated
Scale	~300 production VMs

3. Platform overviews

OpenShift Virtualization

- One control plane for VMs and containers, with VMs running as Kubernetes pods
- Integrated with RHEL, Ansible Automation Platform, Advanced Cluster Management and OpenShift Data Foundation
- Live migration of VMs between nodes
- Enterprise support and published CVE response SLAs from Red Hat

SUSE Harvester

- Hyperconverged, appliance-style platform combining KubeVirt, Longhorn and Rancher integration
- Positioned as a direct alternative to VMware for traditional VM workloads
- Simpler ISO-based deployment onto bare metal
- Open source, with commercial support through a SUSE subscription
- Smaller ecosystem and a younger platform than OpenShift Virtualization

4. Functional comparison

Capability	OpenShift Virtualization	SUSE Harvester
Architecture	Kubernetes-native; VMs and containers on one control plane	Kubernetes-native HCI; VM-first design
Live migration	Mature live migration	Supported; less mature tooling
Storage	OpenShift Data Foundation (Ceph) or any certified CSI storage	Longhorn distributed block; simpler, fewer features
Networking	OVN-Kubernetes, Multus, SR-IOV, multi-VLAN	Built-in networking with VLAN support
Scale	Proven at large VM counts	Suited to hundreds of VMs
Backup and DR	OADP, Velero, CSI snapshots, certified third-party tools	Longhorn snapshots; third-party for full DR
Security	SELinux, FIPS-validated crypto, CIS benchmarks, CVE SLAs	SELinux support; fewer compliance certifications
Multi-cluster	Red Hat ACM: policy, governance, GitOps	SUSE Rancher (already in use)
Automation	Ansible, Helm, Kustomize, Terraform, built-in Argo CD	Terraform, Helm, Argo CD compatible
RHEL guests	Same vendor for guest and platform	Supported; crosses vendor boundary
Maturity	Generally available since 2020; widely used in FSI	Newer platform, evolving rapidly

5. Licensing and cost framework

Figures are indicative public list ranges at the time of writing, in USD per 2-socket node per year. Final pricing depends on negotiation, region and bundles, and must be confirmed with formal vendor quotes.

Option	Indicative list price	Notes
OpenShift Platform Plus	$14,000 to $18,000	Includes ACM, ACS, Quay and ODF
OpenShift Container Platform	$10,000 to $13,000	Without ODF and ACS
SUSE Rancher Prime with Harvester	$4,000 to $6,000	Existing Rancher spend may reduce the uplift

3-year TCO model

Assumes ~300 VMs consolidated onto about 60 hypervisor nodes (5:1 ratio) at a 30% negotiated discount. Cost cells are left for formal quotes; the model defines what must be compared, not the answer.

Cost component	OpenShift Virtualization	SUSE Harvester
Platform licensing (60 nodes x 3 years)	Vendor quote	Vendor quote
RHEL guest subscriptions	Already owned; minimal uplift	Already owned; no change
Storage	Included in Platform Plus or add-on	Longhorn included
Training and enablement	Partner quote	Partner quote
Professional services	See section 7	See section 7
Ongoing support	24x7 premium included	Business or premium tier

Baseline: the current VMware renewal quote under Broadcom's bundle pricing is the benchmark both options are measured against.

6. Migration approach

Every VMware exit involves inventory and workload classification, network redesign, disk conversion, dependency mapping, non-production testing, cutover and rollback planning, and operational training. The platforms differ in how much of that is automated.

Factor	OpenShift Virtualization	SUSE Harvester
VMware migration tooling	Migration Toolkit for Virtualization (MTV): supported, GUI-driven	CDI import and scripting; less automated
Network and storage mapping	Automated through MTV	Largely manual
Low-downtime (warm) migration	Yes, with MTV warm mode	Limited; mostly cold migration
Team familiarity	New platform; Kubernetes skills transfer	Familiar Rancher experience
Rollback	Snapshots and MTV rollback plans	Longhorn snapshots; manual
Support model	Single vendor for OS and platform	Red Hat for guests, SUSE for platform
Overall complexity	Moderate to high	Moderate

7. Professional services effort

Estimates assume a 300-VM scope, a joint partner and client team, and a phased approach: non-production first, then production in two waves. Client internal time is excluded.

Work package	OpenShift Virtualization (hours)	SUSE Harvester (hours)
Assessment and design	80-120	64-96
Cluster build and configuration	120-200	80-120
Storage (ODF / Longhorn)	64-96	40-64
Network design and integration	80-120	64-96
Migration tooling and 20-VM pilot	64-96	80-120
Wave 1: non-production (~80 VMs)	96-144	96-144
Wave 2: production A (~100 VMs)	120-160	96-144
Wave 3: production B (~100 VMs)	120-160	96-144
Training and knowledge transfer	64-80	40-64
Hypercare and stabilisation	80-120	64-80
Project management	120-160	96-120
Total effort	**928 to 1,296**	**816 to 1,192**
Duration	**22 to 26 weeks**	**18 to 22 weeks**

8. Decision scorecard

Both platforms can replace VMware for these workloads. The right choice depends on how the client weights each criterion.

Criterion	OpenShift Virtualization	SUSE Harvester
Platform maturity and stability	●●●●●	●●●○○
RHEL guest integration	●●●●●	●●●○○
VMware migration tooling	●●●●●	●●●○○
Financial services compliance	●●●●●	●●●○○
Licensing cost	●●○○○	●●●●●
Initial setup simplicity	●●●○○	●●●●○
Fit with existing Rancher	●●●○○	●●●●●
Long-term VM and container consolidation	●●●●●	●●●○○
Services hours and timeline	●●●○○	●●●●○

9. Phased migration plan (either platform)

Phase	Activity	Weeks	Milestone
1	Assessment, design and non-production cluster build	1 to 6	Non-production cluster live
2	Migration tooling and 20-VM pilot	6 to 10	Pilot signed off
3	Wave 1: ~80 non-production VMs	10 to 16	Non-production migrated
4	Wave 2: ~100 lower-criticality production VMs	16 to 22	Production wave A live
5	Wave 3: ~100 critical production VMs	20 to 26	Production fully migrated
6	Hypercare, training and VMware decommission	24 to 28	VMware decommissioned

10. Recommended next steps

Step	Timing	Actions
Vendor engagement	Weeks 1 to 2	Formal Red Hat and SUSE proposals reflecting existing RHEL and Rancher entitlements; current VMware renewal quote as baseline
Infrastructure assessment	Weeks 1 to 4	Full VM inventory: sizing, dependencies, OS versions, tiers; flag GPU, SR-IOV, Windows and clustered workloads
Proof of concept	Weeks 2 to 6	Lab cluster for one or both platforms; migrate 10 to 20 representative VMs; validate network, storage and applications
Business case and approval	Weeks 4 to 6	Final TCO with real quotes and VMware cost avoidance; governance decision and budget
Partner selection and kick-off	Weeks 6 to 8	Select a certified partner with FSI migration experience; contract and start Phase 1

About this sample. This document reproduces the structure and analysis of a real customer evaluation. The client's identity has been removed. Prices are indicative public ranges and effort figures are planning estimates. Prepared by Blessing Phiri as a portfolio sample.