



Automating Access Reviews with Microsoft Entra Identity Governance

Continuous access verification for a Zero Trust world.

In every enterprise, access granted today might not be needed tomorrow. Access Reviews automate this verification cycle—ensuring users retain only what's necessary, nothing more.

Why Access Reviews Matter

- Access permissions rarely age well. Over time, users accumulate unnecessary rights—creating compliance risks.
- Microsoft Entra Access Reviews help reduce “access creep” by periodically re-evaluating user assignments.
- They support continuous verification—one of the key pillars of **Zero Trust**.

Instead of granting access indefinitely, you define a recurring review policy to verify who still needs it.

Zero Trust = continuous verification, not one-time setup.

Architecture Overview

Flow:

1. User requests access via Access Package
2. Manager or resource owner approves
3. Access Review runs periodically
4. Reviewer confirms or denies continued access
5. Microsoft Entra auto-removes stale permissions

Think of Access Reviews as the “heartbeat” that keeps your identity governance system alive and healthy.

Governance automation = sustained least privilege.



Creating an Access Review

- When you create an Access Review in **Microsoft Entra → Identity Governance → Access Reviews**, you define:
 - **Scope:** Which groups, apps, or packages to review
 - **Frequency:** One-time or recurring (e.g., monthly, quarterly)
 - **Duration:** How long each review period stays open

The goal is automation—so reviews happen consistently, not manually.

Reviewers and Decision Process

- Assign **Reviewers** → managers, resource owners, or group owners
- Reviewers receive **email notifications** and can approve or deny access in the **My Access portal**
- If no action is taken, Entra can **auto-apply default decisions** (for example, remove access)

This is where governance meets automation — reviewers confirm relevance, Entra enforces compliance.

This keeps access clean without waiting for manual cleanups.



Audit & Reporting

- Every review cycle generates **audit logs** showing who reviewed, what decisions were made, and why.
- Reports can be exported for **compliance audits** (ISO 27001, SOC 2, NIST, etc.).
- Integrates with **Microsoft Sentinel** for governance dashboards and monitoring alerts.

Transparency is critical—Access Reviews create a full audit trail for accountability.

This is what auditors love — traceability built into the process.



Business Value

-  Minimizes over-permissioned accounts
-  Simplifies compliance evidence gathering
-  Reduces insider risk and human error
-  Strengthens Zero Trust by continuously verifying access

Access Reviews are not just governance—they're proactive risk reduction.

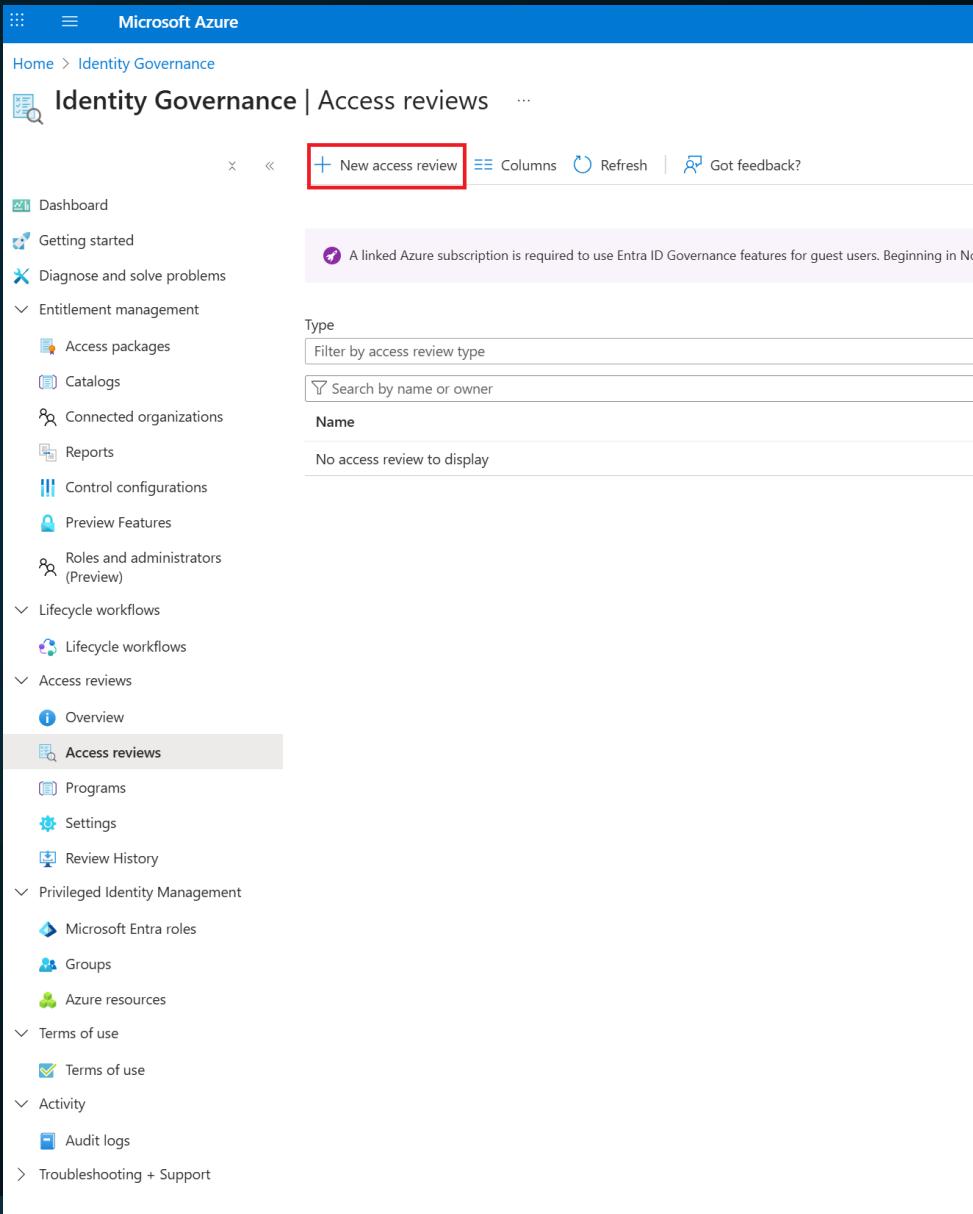
Here's what organizations gain from automating reviews.



Dashboard Entry Point

Navigate to *Identity Governance* → *Access Reviews* to begin configuration.

Start a new review.



The screenshot shows the Microsoft Azure Identity Governance Access reviews page. The top navigation bar includes 'Home', 'Identity Governance', and the current page 'Identity Governance | Access reviews'. Below the navigation is a search bar and a button for 'New access review', which is highlighted with a red box. The left sidebar contains a navigation menu with the following items: Dashboard, Getting started, Diagnose and solve problems, Entitlement management (with sub-options: Access packages, Catalogs, Connected organizations, Reports, Control configurations, Preview Features, Roles and administrators (Preview)), Lifecycle workflows (with sub-options: Lifecycle workflows, Access reviews (with sub-options: Overview, Access reviews, Programs, Settings, Review History)), Privileged Identity Management (with sub-options: Microsoft Entra roles, Groups, Azure resources), Terms of use (with sub-option: Terms of use checked), Activity (with sub-options: Audit logs, Troubleshooting + Support), and Troubleshooting + Support. A message at the top right states: 'A linked Azure subscription is required to use Entra ID Governance features for guest users. Beginning in November 2023, guest users will no longer be able to access these features.' The main content area displays a message: 'No access review to display'.

Select Group for Review

Select what to review: Teams + Groups → Select specific groups.

Chose the *Marketing* group as the target resource to evaluate membership validity.

The screenshot shows the Microsoft Azure Identity Governance 'New access review' interface. The left pane displays the 'New access review' configuration, including 'Review type' (set to 'Reviews'), 'Select what to review' (set to 'Teams + Groups'), 'Review scope' (set to 'Select Teams + groups'), and a 'Group' dropdown. The right pane is a 'Select group' modal. It includes a search bar, a 'Groups' section with a table listing various groups (e.g., All Company, Developers / Engineering, Executives & Admins, Finance Department, Guests User, HR Department, HR Team, IT & Security, Marketing, WHFB_Pilot), and a 'Selected groups' section on the right. The 'Marketing' group is selected and listed there. The bottom right of the modal has a 'Select' button.

Define Review Scope

Scope set to **All Users** for inclusive governance coverage.

Scope determines who is evaluated.

Microsoft Azure

Home > Identity Governance | Access reviews >

New access review

A linked Azure subscription is required to use Entra ID Governance features for guest users. Beginning in November 2025, an Azure subscription must be connected to use this feature.

***Review type** ***Reviews** Settings ***Review + Create**

Schedule an access review to ensure the right people have the right access to access packages, groups, apps, and privileged roles. [Learn more](#)

Select what to review *

Teams + Groups

Review scope *

All Microsoft 365 groups with guest users ⓘ
 Select Teams + groups

Group *

Marketing

Scope *

Guest users only
 All users ⓘ

In public preview, B2B direct connect users and teams in shared channels are included in access reviews. B2B direct connect users and teams are not supported in reviews of 'All Microsoft 365 groups with guest users', as well as reviews scoped to inactive users. [Click here to learn more](#).

Inactive users only

Assign Reviewer

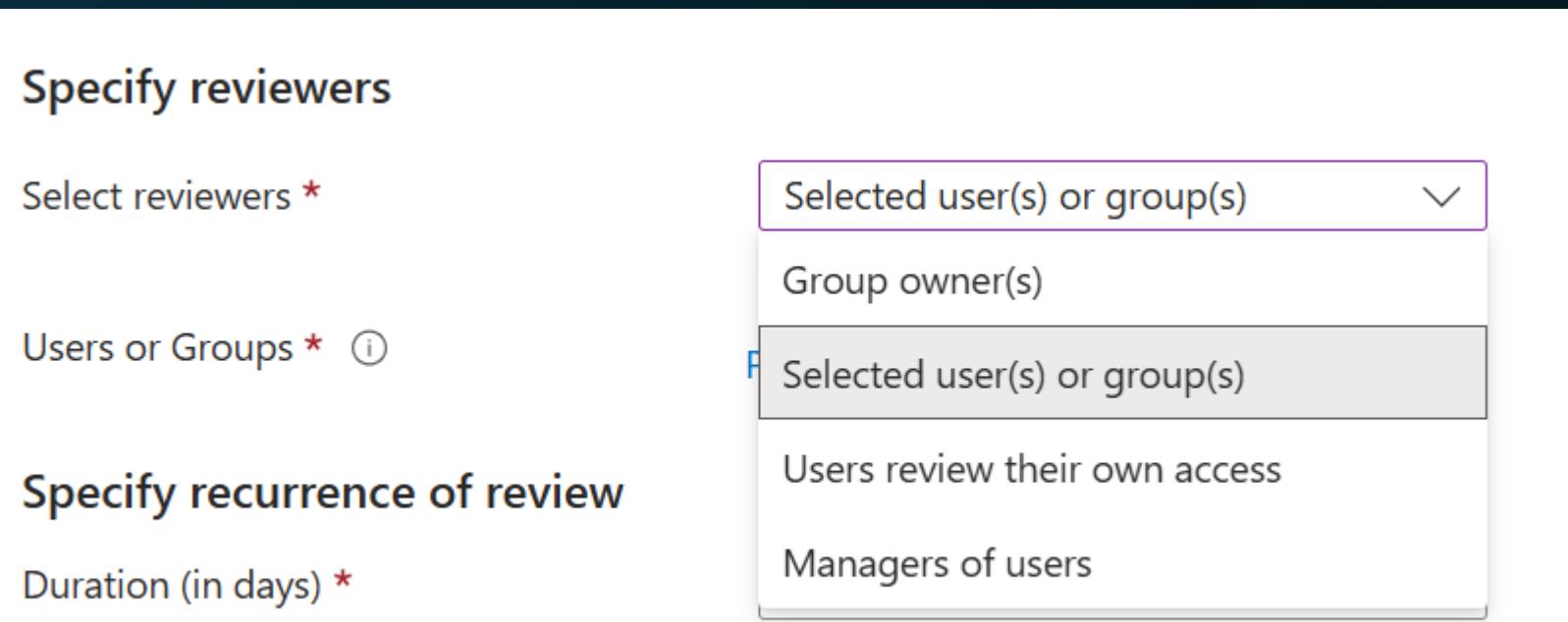
Selected *Specific User(s)* — assigned yourself (Perparim Abdullahu) as reviewer.

Picked Perparim as reviewer.

The screenshot shows the Microsoft Azure Identity Governance 'New access review' page. The 'Reviews' tab is selected. The page includes a note about a linked Azure subscription being required for guest users. It features sections for 'Specify reviewers' (with a dropdown for 'Selected user(s) or group(s)' containing 'Perparim Abdullahu'), 'Specify recurrence of review' (with 'Duration (in days)' set to 3, 'Review recurrence' set to 'Quarterly', and 'Start date' set to '/2025'), and 'End' options (with 'Never' selected). Navigation buttons at the bottom include '< Previous' and 'Next: Settings'.

Reviewer Models

Group Owner / Manager / Selected User — flexibility for governance design.



Specify reviewers

Select reviewers *

Users or Groups * ⓘ

Specify recurrence of review

Duration (in days) *

Selected user(s) or group(s)

Group owner(s)

Selected user(s) or group(s)

Users review their own access

Managers of users



Configure Settings

Default action: *Remove access if reviewers don't respond* → enforcing least privilege.

Microsoft Azure

Home > Identity Governance | Access reviews >

New access review

A linked Azure subscription is required to use Entra ID Governance features for guest users. Beginning in November.

*Review type *Reviews **Settings** *Review + Create

Configure additional settings, including decision helpers and email notifications.

Upon completion settings

Auto apply results to resource

If reviewers don't respond **No change**

No change

Remove access

Approve access

Take recommendations

At end of review, send notification to

Enable reviewer decision helpers

No sign-in within 30 days

User-to-Group Affiliation

Advanced settings

Justification required

Email notifications

Reminders

Additional content for reviewer email

Access Review Agent (Preview)

Notification & Justification

Enabled **justification, email notifications, and reminders** for accountability.

Governance guardrails..

The screenshot shows the Microsoft Azure Identity Governance 'New access review' settings page. The 'Settings' tab is selected. Under 'Upon completion settings', 'Justification required' is checked. Under 'Advanced settings', 'Email notifications' and 'Reminders' are checked. The 'Select recipients' modal is open, showing a list of users and groups. The user 'Perparim Abdullahu' is selected, indicated by a blue checkmark. The modal includes a search bar, a 'Selected recipients (1)' section, and a 'Select' button at the bottom.

Name	Type	Details
DB	User	david.brown@cloudmatearchitects.onmicrosoft.com
GU	Group	
EG	User	emma.garcia@cloudmatearchitects.onmicrosoft.com
HD	Group	HRDepartment@cloudmatearchitects.onmicrosoft.com
ES	User	emma.smith@cloudmatearchitects.onmicrosoft.com
HT	Group	HRTeam@cloudmatearchitects.onmicrosoft.com
JD	User	john.davis@cloudmatearchitects.onmicrosoft.com
IS	Group	ITSecurity@cloudmatearchitects.onmicrosoft.com
LJ	User	laura.johnson@cloudmatearchitects.onmicrosoft.com
M	Group	MedicalProjectGroup@cloudmatearchitects.onmicrosoft.com
LA	User	liam.anderson@cloudmatearchitects.onmicrosoft.com
WP	Group	WHPilot@cloudmatearchitects.onmicrosoft.com
MS	User	michael.smith@cloudmatearchitects.onmicrosoft.com
MT	User	michael.thompson@cloudmatearchitects.onmicrosoft.com
MJ	User	mike.johnson@cloudmatearchitects.onmicrosoft.com
MK	User	mohammed.khan@cloudmatearchitects.onmicrosoft.com
PAB	User	perparim.abdullahu@cloudmatearchitects.onmicrosoft.com
SW	User	sara.wilson@cloudmatearchitects.onmicrosoft.com

Manual vs Auto-Apply

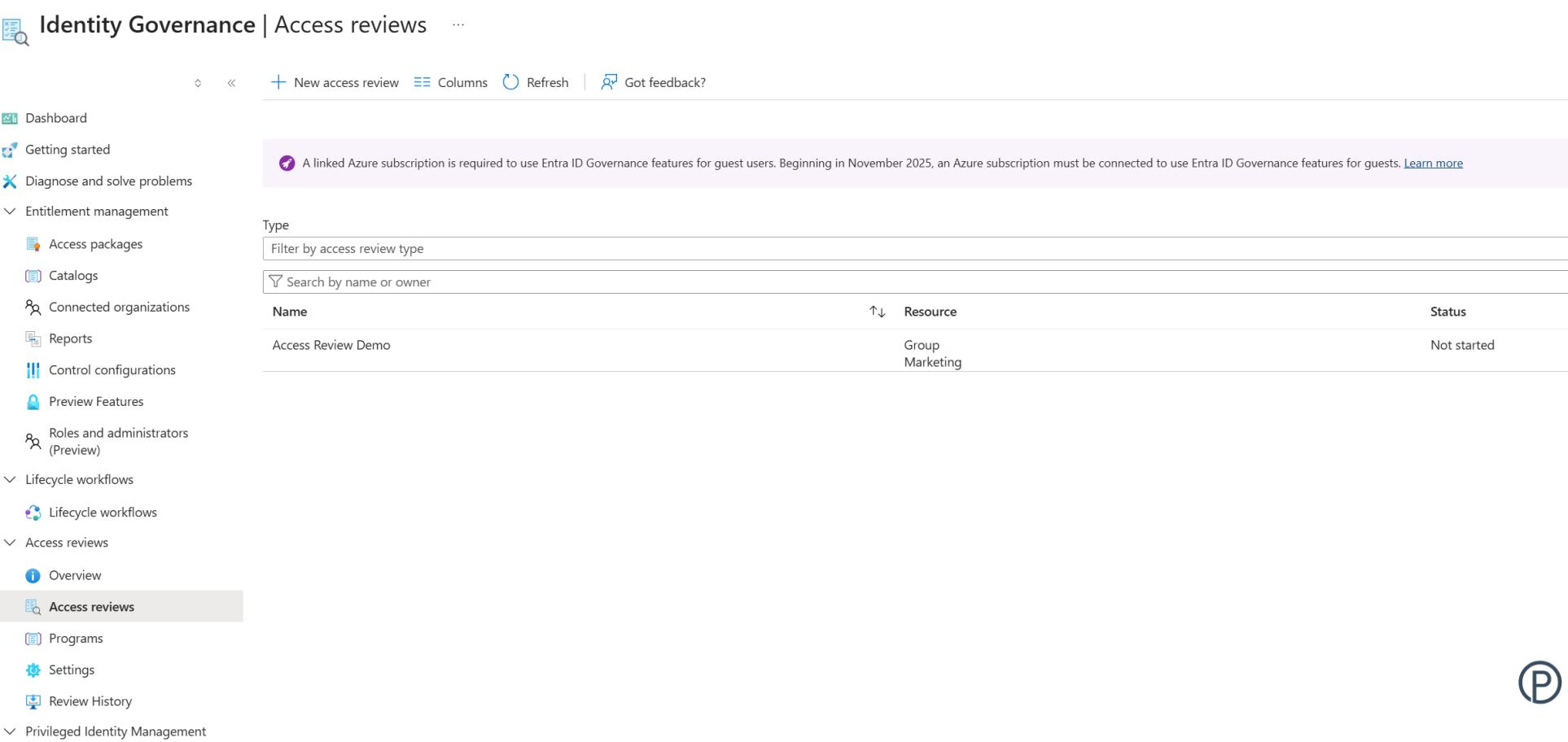
Auto-apply ON = decisions enforced automatically.
OFF = owner applies later (safer for first rollout).

The screenshot shows the 'Settings' tab selected in the top navigation bar of the Microsoft Entra Identity Governance interface. The page is titled 'Configure additional settings, including decision helpers and email notifications.' It features three main sections: 'Upon completion settings', 'Enable reviewer decision helpers', and 'Advanced settings'. In the 'Upon completion settings' section, 'Auto apply results to resource' is checked, and 'If reviewers don't respond' is set to 'Remove access'. A warning message states: 'Setting 'If reviewers don't respond' to 'Remove access' or 'Take recommendations' while 'Auto-apply results to resource' is enabled could potentially lead to all access to this resource being revoked if the reviewers fail to respond.' In the 'Enable reviewer decision helpers' section, 'No sign-in within 30 days' is checked, while 'User-to-Group Affiliation' is unchecked. The 'Advanced settings' section includes 'Justification required' (checked), 'Email notifications' (checked), 'Reminders' (checked), and an empty text input field for 'Additional content for reviewer email'. There is also an unchecked checkbox for 'Access Review Agent (Preview)'.



Access Review Created

Access Review “Marketing Demo” successfully initialized; status: *Not Started*.



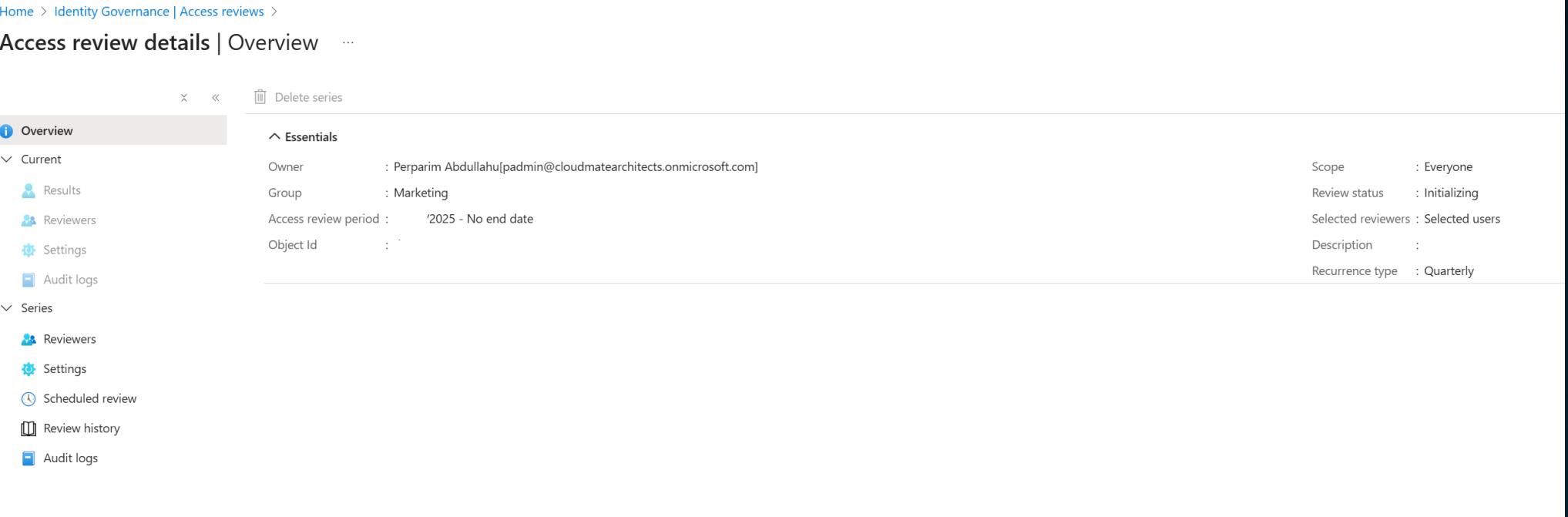
The screenshot shows the Microsoft Entra ID Governance Access reviews page. The left sidebar is collapsed, and the main content area displays a table of access reviews. A message at the top states: "A linked Azure subscription is required to use Entra ID Governance features for guest users. Beginning in November 2025, an Azure subscription must be connected to use Entra ID Governance features for guests. [Learn more](#)".

Name	Resource	Status
Access Review Demo	Group Marketing	Not started

Page navigation and search controls are visible at the top, along with a "Got feedback?" link.

Review Details

Dashboard shows recurrence type (Quarterly) and assigned reviewers — confirming governance schedule.



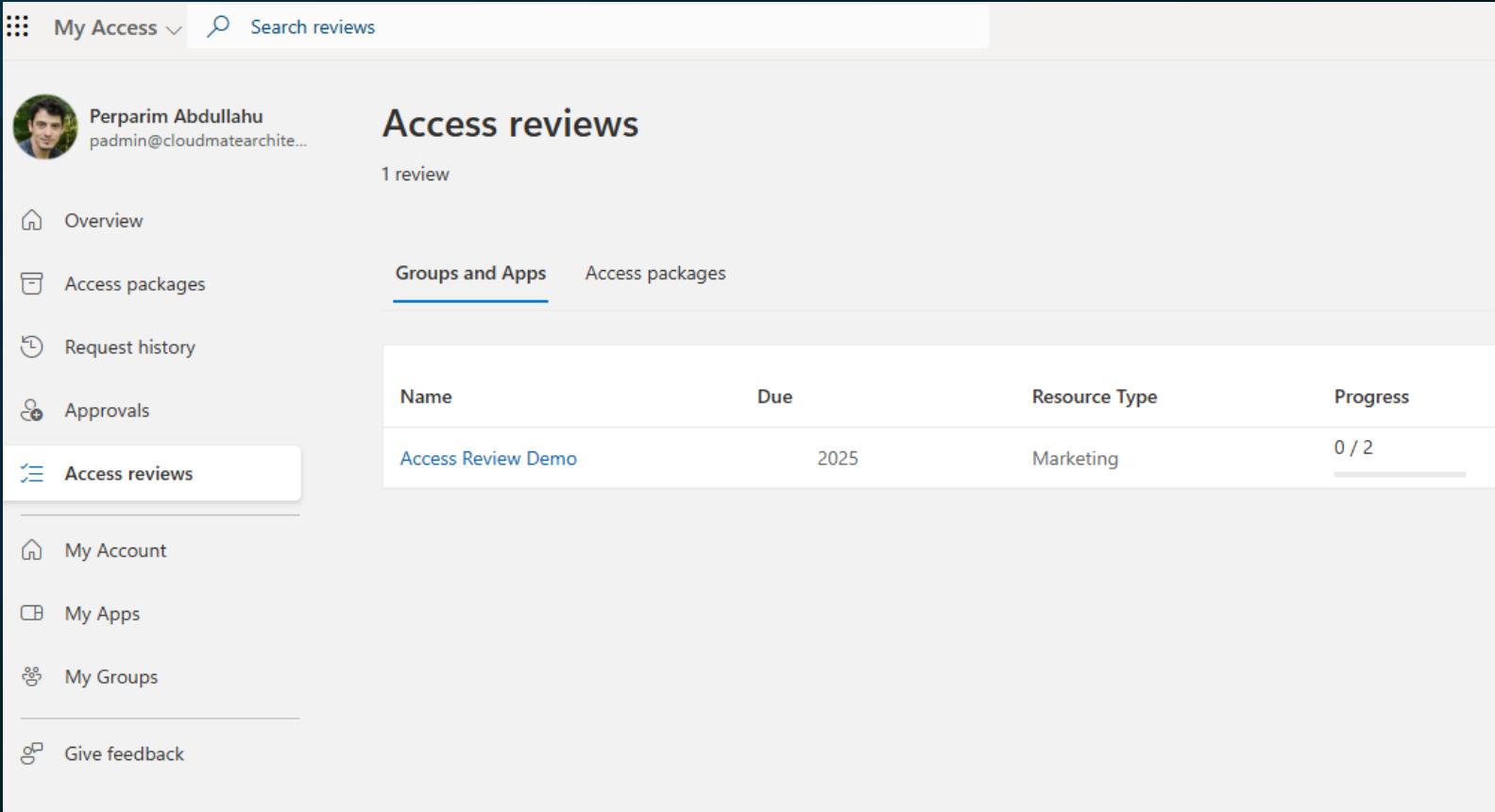
The screenshot shows the 'Access review details | Overview' page. The left sidebar has a 'Overview' section selected, with 'Current' and 'Series' sections below it. The main content area is titled 'Essentials' and displays the following information:

Setting	Value	Setting	Value
Owner	Perparim Abdullahu[padmin@cloudmatearchitects.onmicrosoft.com]	Scope	Everyone
Group	Marketing	Review status	Initializing
Access review period	'2025 - No end date	Selected reviewers	Selected users
Object Id	...	Description	...
		Recurrence type	Quarterly

Reviewer Dashboard (My Access Portal)

Reviewers see all assigned reviews in one place for streamlined validation.

Reviewers work from **myaccess.microsoft.com**.

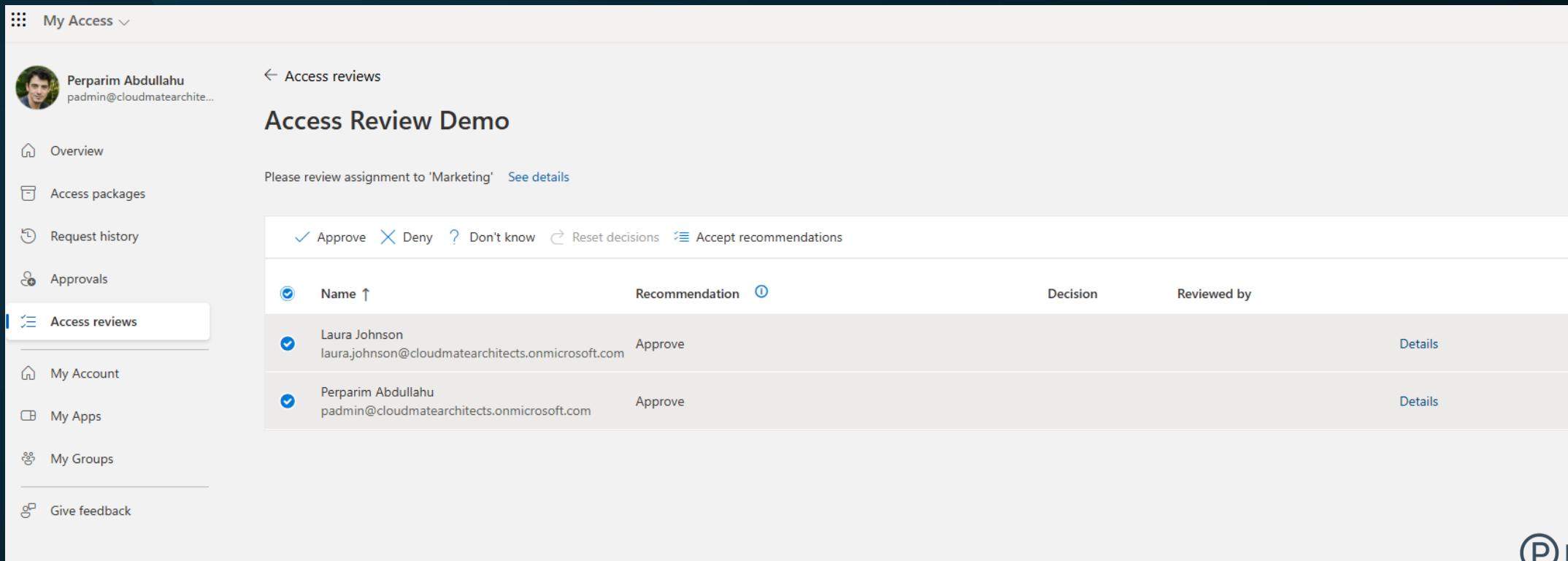


The screenshot shows the Microsoft My Access portal. The left sidebar has a user profile for 'Perparim Abdullahu' and a list of navigation items: Overview, Access packages, Request history, Approvals, Access reviews (which is highlighted with a white background), My Account, My Apps, My Groups, and Give feedback. The main content area is titled 'Access reviews' and shows '1 review'. It has tabs for 'Groups and Apps' (which is selected) and 'Access packages'. A table lists the review details:

Name	Due	Resource Type	Progress
Access Review Demo	2025	Marketing	0 / 2

Reviewing Assignments

Each user displays recommendations based on activity;
reviewer decides Approve/Deny.



The screenshot shows the Microsoft Entra Access Review Demo interface. On the left, a sidebar menu is open under 'My Access' with the 'Access reviews' option selected. The main content area is titled 'Access Review Demo' and displays a message: 'Please review assignment to 'Marketing' [See details](#)'. Below this, there is a table of assignments:

	Recommendation <small> ⓘ</small>	Decision	Reviewed by
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Name ↑	Approve		
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Laura Johnson laura.johnson@cloudmatearchitects.onmicrosoft.com	Approve		Details
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Perparim Abdullahu admin@cloudmatearchitects.onmicrosoft.com	Approve		Details

User Detail View

Sign-in activity shown (e.g., last login within 30 days) to support approval reasoning.

Perparim Abdullahu X

padmin@cloudmatearchitects.onmicrosoft.com

Last signed in less than 30 days ago 2025)

Approve (recommended)
User has signed into this tenant in last 30 days

Deny

Don't know

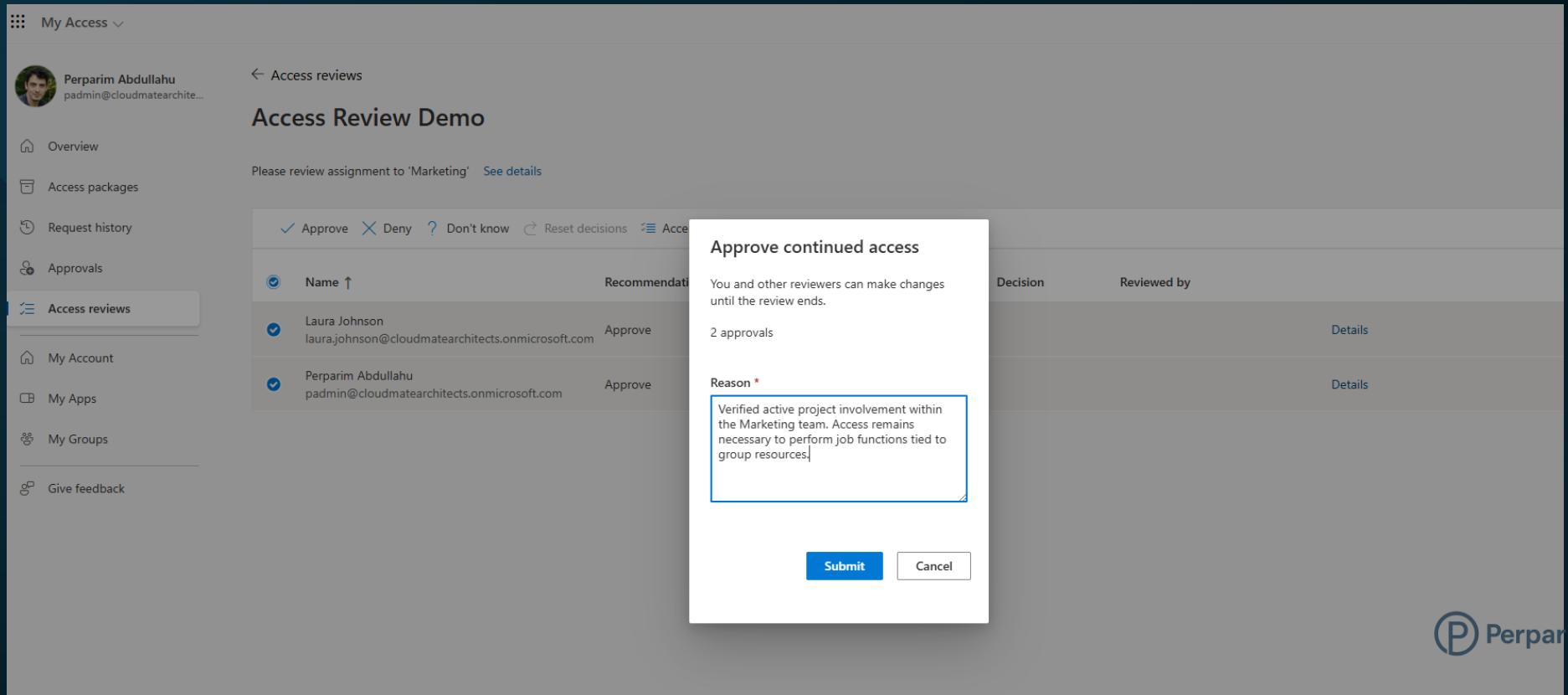
Reason *

Submit Cancel

Professional Justification (Modal)

Example:

Verified active project involvement within Marketing team.
Access remains necessary to perform job functions tied to group resources.



Final Decisions Logged

Decisions stored with reviewer identity — full traceability achieved.

Both users approved; reviewer identity tracked.

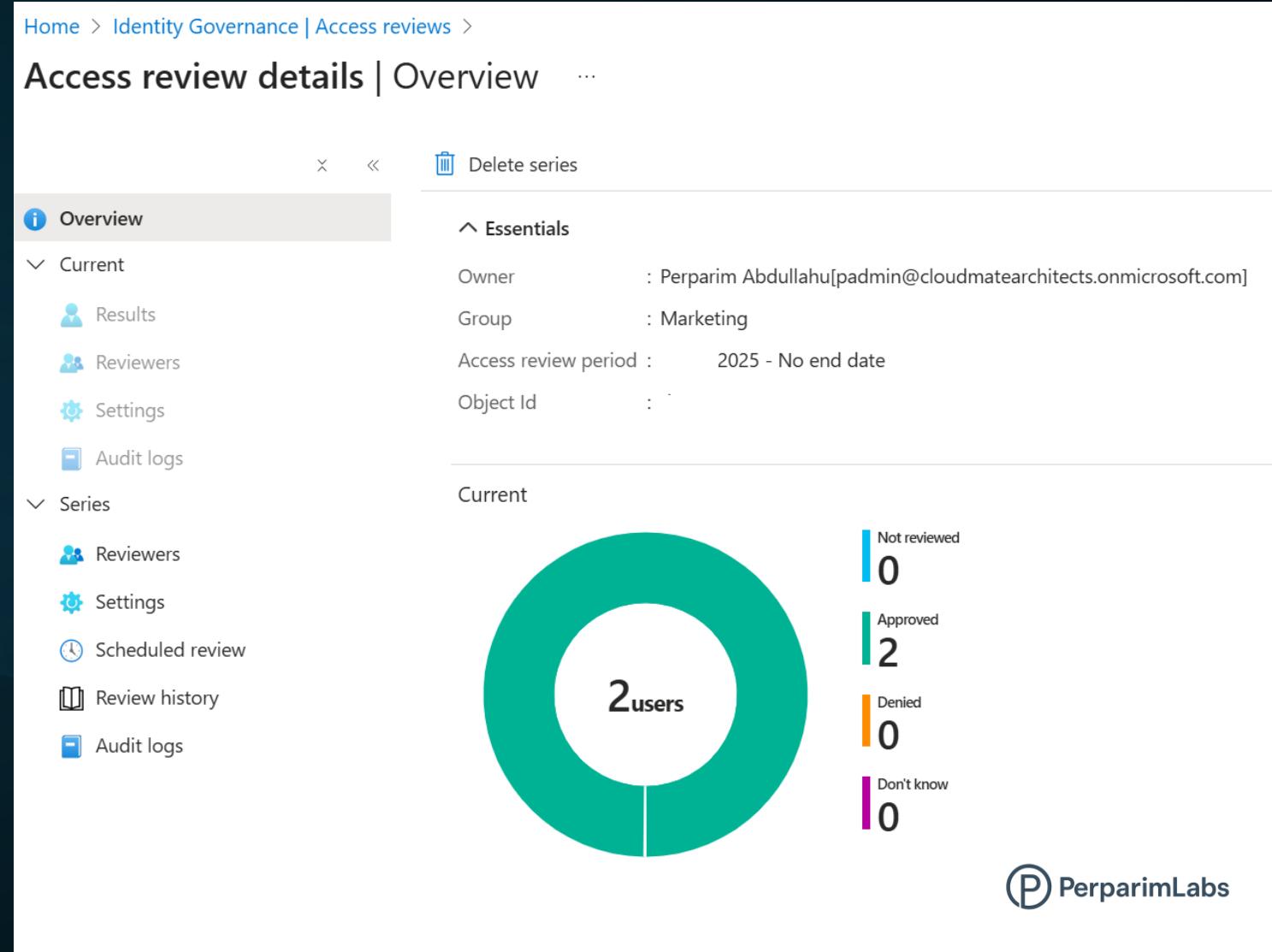
Traceable accountability.

Decision	Reviewed by
Approved	Perparim Abdullahu
Approved	Perparim Abdullahu



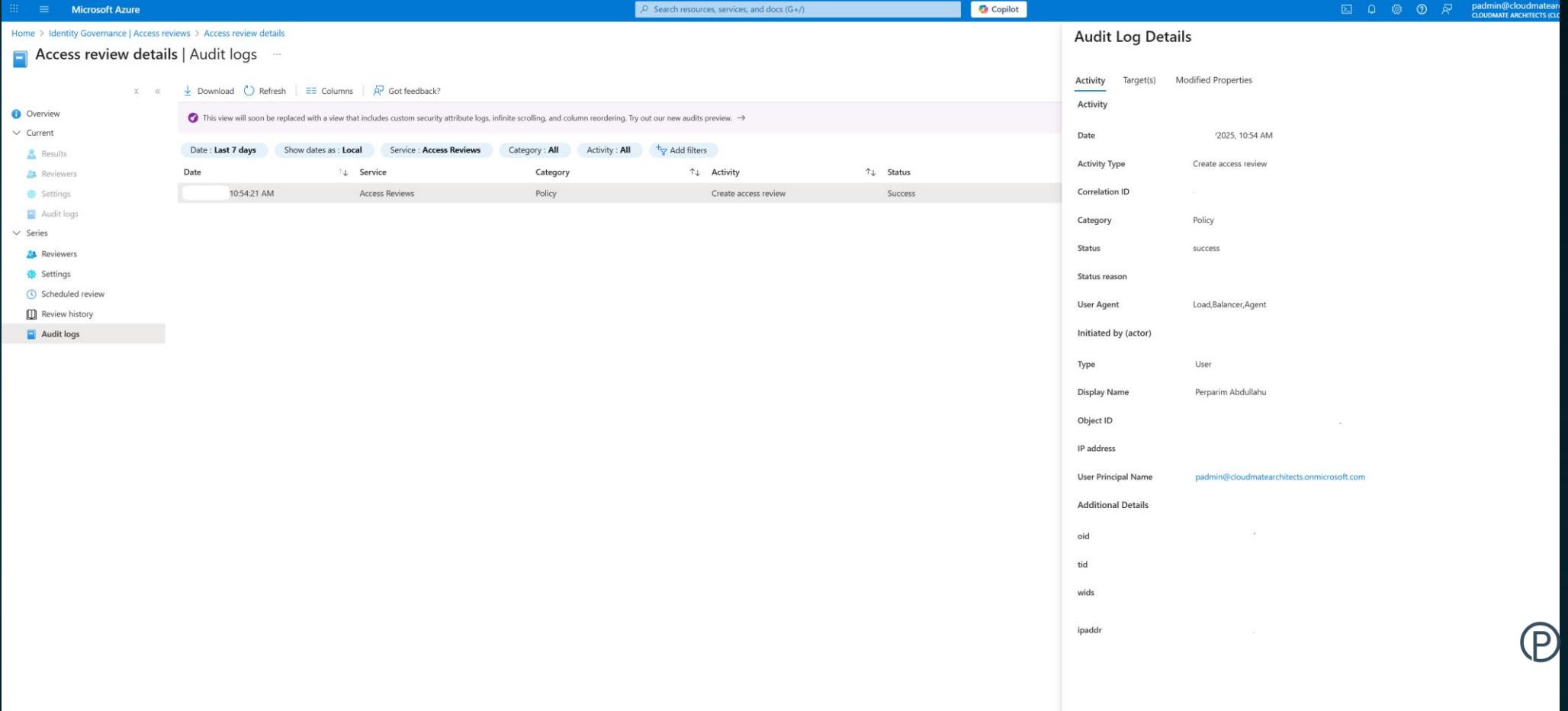
Results Overview

Visualization of completed reviews (Approved: 2, Denied: 0) confirming compliance posture.



Audit Log Verification

Audit entry recorded under *Access Reviews* → “Create Access Review” → *Success*.

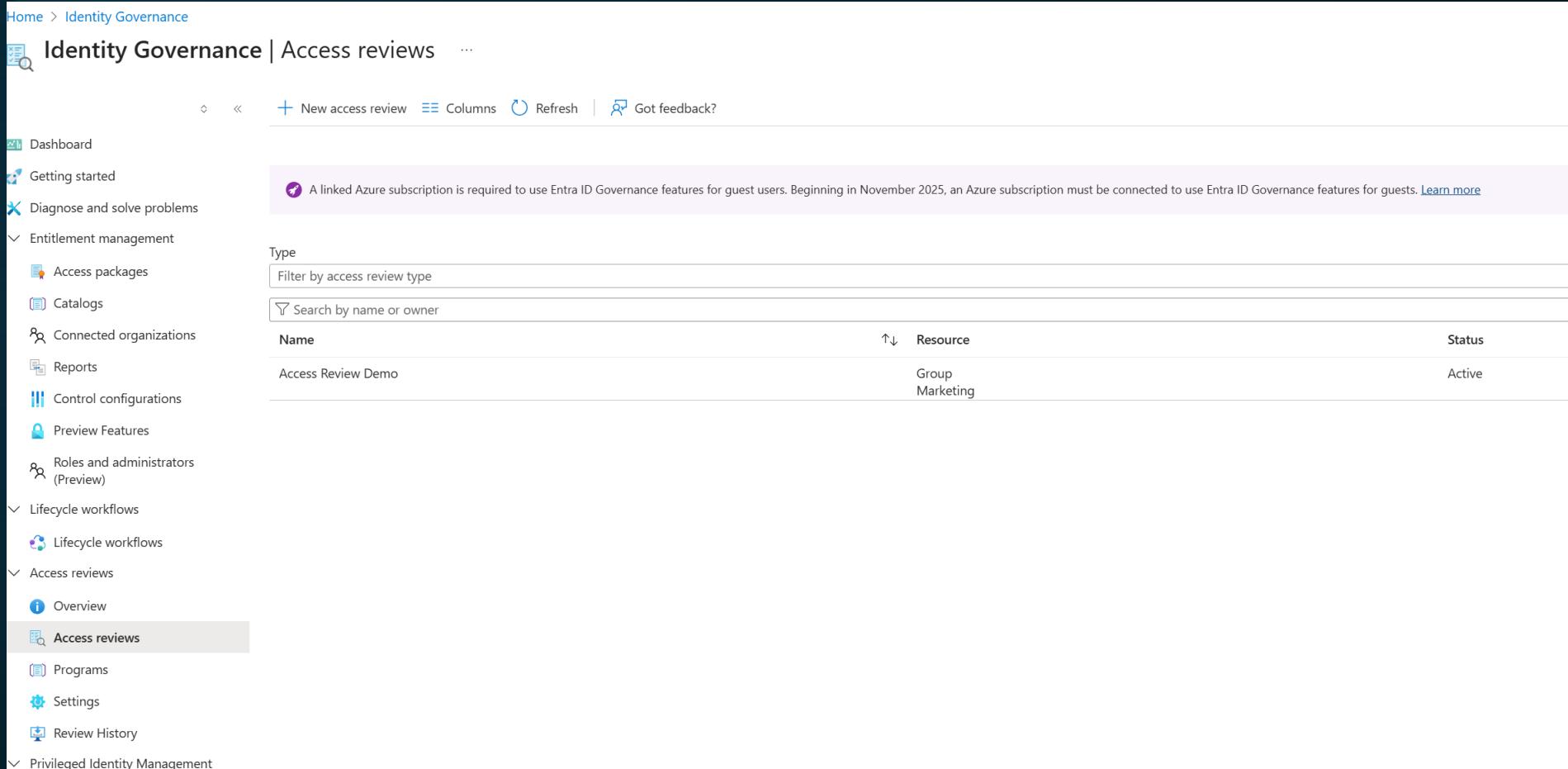


The screenshot shows the Microsoft Azure Identity Governance Access Review Details page. The left sidebar shows navigation options like Overview, Current, Results, Reviewers, Settings, and Audit logs. The main area displays a table of audit logs with columns for Date, Service, Category, Activity, and Status. A message indicates the current view will be replaced by a new one. The right panel, titled "Audit Log Details", provides a detailed view of a specific log entry. The log details are as follows:

Activity	Target(s)	Modified Properties
Date	2025, 10:54 AM	
Activity Type	Create access review	
Correlation ID		
Category	Policy	
Status	success	
Status reason		
User Agent	Load.Balancer.Agent	
Initiated by (actor)		
Type	User	
Display Name	Perparim Abdullahu	
Object ID		
IP address		
User Principal Name	padmin@cloudmatearchitects.onmicrosoft.com	
Additional Details		
oid		
tid		
wids		
ipaddr		

Review Status Active

Access Review transitions to *Active* state for recurring automation — embodying continuous verification.



The screenshot shows the Microsoft Entra ID Governance Access reviews page. The left sidebar is collapsed, and the main content area displays a table of access reviews. A message at the top states: "A linked Azure subscription is required to use Entra ID Governance features for guest users. Beginning in November 2025, an Azure subscription must be connected to use Entra ID Governance features for guests. [Learn more](#)".

Name	Resource	Status
Access Review Demo	Group Marketing	Active

Key UI elements include a "Type" dropdown set to "Filter by access review type", a search bar, and a "New access review" button. The "Access reviews" item in the sidebar is highlighted.



Final Takeaway

Microsoft Entra Access Reviews = Automation + Accountability.
They continuously verify entitlements, enforce least privilege, and provide transparent audit evidence—strengthening any Zero Trust architecture.

