

Exponam Analyst Intelligence vs. the Databricks Excel Add-in

A short answer to the question we get most often · April 2026

Databricks shipped an Excel add-in. Some prospects ask us whether they still need Exponam. The short answer: for Databricks-only, small-team, SQL-centric use, the Databricks add-in is a reasonable choice. For almost every other enterprise scenario — multi-cloud, Windows scale, AI query, cost predictability, regulated industries — Exponam Analyst Intelligence is the stronger fit on the merits. This document explains why.

Q: Aren't you two solving the same problem now?

Yes, for Databricks data. No, for everything else. The Databricks add-in connects Excel to Databricks. Exponam Analyst Intelligence connects Excel to Databricks today, with Snowflake and Microsoft Fabric shipping in April and May 2026, and Redshift, BigQuery, and the AtScale semantic layer in active development. Enterprises do not run one cloud data platform. Our customers run two, three, or four — and the Databricks add-in will only ever serve one of them.

This is not a roadmap gap Databricks, Snowflake, or Microsoft will close. A platform vendor cannot build a governed connector a competitor (as evidenced by Microsoft's removal of PowerBI support for Databricks Metric Views). The independent, platform-neutral analyst layer is structurally a position only a third party can occupy.

Q: What does Databricks do well?

Credit where it is due. The Databricks Excel Add-in is a competent first-party product that does several things cleanly:

- **Unity Catalog metric views.** Define business semantics once in Unity Catalog, consume them consistently in Excel. This is a well-designed capability and a meaningful improvement over ad-hoc semantic logic duplicated across spreadsheets.
- **Marketplace distribution.** As of April 21, 2026, the add-in is available from the Microsoft Office Marketplace with M365 admin center central deployment. For tenants that permit Marketplace install, this is a quick self-service path.
- **No add-in license fee.** There is no per-user license cost on the add-in itself. For small Databricks-native teams, this is a genuine budget advantage.
- **Vendor scale.** Databricks is a \$62B company with deep enterprise sales and support infrastructure. Evaluation committees weigh that, and they should.

For teams of fewer than 100 users already operating inside Databricks, running SQL-scale queries in Marketplace-permissive tenants, the Databricks add-in is a reasonable choice. We would recommend it ourselves in that narrow scenario.

Q: Where is Exponam structurally stronger?

Six places. Each is durable — none of them can be closed by Databricks without fundamentally changing what Databricks is.

Dimension	Exponam Analyst Intelligence	Databricks Excel Add-in
1. Platform scope	Databricks, Snowflake, Fabric. Redshift, BigQuery, AtScale in development. One add-in across every cloud.	Databricks only. Will not extend to competing platforms.
2. Private AI	Natural-language query with local LLM (8B–32B SQL-specialized models) or bring-your-own commercial model. No row data leaves the security perimeter.	"AI integrations" named as roadmap in April 21 announcement. No specifics, timeline, or private-LLM option disclosed.
3. Zero-compute path	Delta Sharing path on Databricks: direct Parquet from cloud object storage. Zero DBUs consumed regardless of query volume.	SQL warehouse endpoint only. Every query consumes DBUs.
4. Cost model	Freemium (free up to 1M rows). Enterprise: transparent volume-tiered pricing from \$10/user/mo at 100 users down to \$0.50/user/mo at 100,000. Fixed and budgetable.	No license fee. But observed trial consumption of ~\$70/user/mo in DBUs. Variable, hard to forecast, scales with workbook use.
5. Data volume	10,000,000 rows per extract (enterprise license). Unlimited number of extracts.	Not published. Trial testing returned 948K rows of a 2.88M-row dataset before a non-descriptive error.
6. External users	.share files work without Databricks workspace accounts — partners and clients access governed data without workspace provisioning.	Every user requires a Databricks workspace account.

Q: The Databricks add-in is free. How does Exponam compete on cost?

The comparison is not license-versus-license. It is license-versus-compute consumption. Every Databricks add-in query runs against a SQL warehouse and consumes DBUs. In trial testing, one analyst's casual use over a single day consumed 16 DBUs — about \$14.58 at the \$0.70/DBU Serverless list rate. At a conservative 5 DBU/day average that is roughly \$70/user/month, before any workbook formula-recalculation events add further unplanned consumption.

User count	Exponam monthly	Databricks DBU at \$70/user/mo	Delta at scale
100 users	\$1,000	\$7,000	7x cheaper
1,000 users	\$5,000	\$70,000	14x cheaper
10,000 users	\$10,000	\$700,000	70x cheaper

Databricks figures based on observed trial rate of 5 DBU/analyst/day at \$0.70/DBU list × 20 working days. Actual costs vary with query frequency, warehouse type, and contract rate. Formula recalculation in shared workbooks adds further unplanned consumption.

The absence of a license fee is not the same as the absence of a cost.

Q: Databricks is positioning metric views as the reason to use their add-in. How do we respond?

Metric views are a genuine strength. We support them natively through our SQL-endpoint path — an analyst writing natural-language or direct SQL queries against a Databricks workspace accesses metric views as first-class objects, semantic definitions intact. End-user access is comparable.

The real question is not access, it is scope. Unity Catalog metric views govern Databricks data only. They do not govern Snowflake data, or Fabric data, or anything else. An enterprise that standardizes semantics in Unity Catalog has solved the consistency problem for its Databricks platform and recreated it everywhere else. For single-platform Databricks shops, this is fine. For multi-cloud enterprises, adopting metric views as the canonical semantic layer builds in a future problem. Exponam accesses metric views natively and preserves the option to extend the same analyst experience across platforms as the semantic-layer story evolves on each.

Metric views are an argument for using the Databricks platform. They are not, on their own, an argument for choosing the Databricks add-in over Exponam.

Q: What about regulated industries?

Financial services, healthcare, Big Four accounting, pharmaceutical, and government customers have absolute policies against sending proprietary data to public AI endpoints. Every analyst who uses ChatGPT, Claude, or Microsoft Copilot with client data creates a compliance exposure.

Exponam's local-LLM deployment solves this cleanly. SQL-specialized models from 8B to 32B parameters run on the analyst's machine. 8B models run efficiently on standard corporate laptops. 14B and 32B models deliver near-zero latency on GPU-equipped machines. No tokens, no schema, no row data ever leaves the customer's network. The compliance team signs off instead of blocking.

This is the durable differentiator in regulated environments. It has no equivalent in the Databricks add-in, in Power BI, Tableau, Sigma, or any BI tool we have seen. It is shipping in April 2026, not on a roadmap.

Q: When should a company choose Databricks' Add-in over Exponam?

- **Small Databricks-native teams well under 100 users.** Our \$1,000/month enterprise minimum bites here, and the DBU cost at that scale is manageable if monitored. This is a legitimate fit for the Databricks add-in. If unlicensed use is an option, cost concerns are eliminated.
- **Mac-primary organizations.** On Mac both products use the Office Web Add-in framework, and our VSTO performance advantage does not apply. Our Delta Sharing cost advantage and multi-cloud scope still do, but the gap is narrower. Evaluate carefully.
- **Prospects who genuinely only have Databricks and expect to only have Databricks.** Rare, but real. If metric views are the semantic layer and there is no multi-cloud ambition, the Databricks add-in is fit for purpose. However, as team size increases beyond a few dozen, the cost factor swings to favor Exponam.

Q: What is the one sentence?

The Databricks add-in is a first-party tool for Databricks-only workloads in small Databricks-native teams. Exponam Analyst Intelligence is the enterprise layer above the clouds — multi-cloud, AI-powered, governance-enforced, and cost-predictable at any scale.

The full technical comparison is available in the April 2026 white paper. · Exponam, LLC · exponam.com · info@exponam.com · +1.646.360.0110