# 2002 FIELD MIS Software Review:

FIELD Project to Improve Management Information Systems for Microenterprise Practitioners

Charles Waterfield

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Acknowledgements

Background on the MIS Project

At a February 2000 meeting hosted by FIELD (the Microenterprise Fund for Innovation, Effectiveness, Learning and Dissemination) over 30 microenterprise practitioners came together to participate in a collaborative project, called MicroTest, to increase the level of understanding about the efficiency, quality and effectiveness of microenterprise programs. During that meeting, FIELD staff, practitioners and Mitty Owens, Program Officer for Economic Development, of the Ford Foundation, discussed the important role a good management information system plays in meeting a program's ability to better manage its resources and provide services, and the common difficulties practitioners face in putting together a high quality MIS.   This conversation led to the creation of an MIS project designed to make a systematic intervention, on both the supply and demand sides of the marketplace for MIS products, in order to improve MIS for microenterprise practitioners.

This MIS project's goal is to increase the capacity of microenterprise practitioners to generate key data on program performance and client outcomes both to support better program management and stronger accountability to donors. The project offers a systematic set of actions directed at both program managers and software developers in the belief that there is no one silver bullet that will resolve the MIS needs of the great diversity of programs and stakeholders in this field. Rather, the project is designed more purposefully to focus on market-based approaches to the problem. It hopes to increase the acumen of program managers as planners, buyers, and users of information systems, and to stimulate better software or database design through clearer communication to interested software developers around the information needs of the microenterprise community.

Products of the FIELD MIS Project

2002 FIELD MIS Software Review

This **Software Review** is a companion document to the **MIS for Microenterprise** manual (see below) and an outgrowth of the *Findings Report* first published by FIELD in 2001. It contains detailed reviews of major commercial software designed for use in the microenterprise field, applying the evaluative approach described in the **MIS for Microenterprise** manual. It has been written to both clarify information needs and serve as a "consumers report" analyzing currently available systems so that practitioners can make more informed decisions about which MIS products to consider purchasing, including how to go about assessing them in relation to particular information needs. It is our hope that the software review will be updated periodically to reflect changes in the software available for the field.

In addition to this **Software Review** are other complementary products to help practitioners improve their MIS, including:

MIS for Microenterprise: A Practical Approach to Managing Information Successfully
This in-depth and practical manual pulls together the body of knowledge within individual programs around what information systems need to contain and how they need to operate. It is written for microenterprise program staff and management, and is designed to be an accessible, thorough and practical guide to help users develop an effective MIS for their organizations. It provides step-by-step guidance on understanding:
- the parts of a MIS and their relation to each other,
- what organizational factors influence how a MIS should be designed and managed,
- the process of defining information needs
- assessing the appropriateness of available software products to meet those needs, and
- how to implement an effective MIS.

Training and **Dissemination:** FIELD has always been committed to providing microenterprise practitioners with high quality training workshops, and hopes to offer in-depth workshops for practitioners, based on the ***MIS for Microenterprise*** manual, which will equip participants with the skills they need to set about improving their organization's MIS.

Developer Services: To bridge the information gap between microenterprise program managers and software developers, the project intends to work with interested vendors of MIS products, some of which are currently being used by micro programs. The intent of this work will be to increase the availability of high quality commercial MIS products, to broaden the range of choice facing practitioners.

(For further information about the above products, please contact Jerry Black at the FIELD program of the Aspen Institute: 202-736-2533 or jerry.black@aspeninstitute.org)

Overview

This report is an updated version of the *Findings Report* published during the MIS project in May 2001. The original report was divided into two main sections.

The first section presented a concise narrative overview on the principal issues underlying MIS, starting with a brief overview of the importance of MIS to an institution and continuing with a presentation on how information needs vary for different microenterprise assistance agencies. There are three principal aspects upon which different agencies differ greatly in their information needs and thus in the type of MIS that will meet those needs: the breadth of information, the depth of information, and the scale of the institution. This information has been included in the companion manual: **MIS for Microenterprise: A Practical Approach to Managing Information Successfully.**   To best benefit from this current edition of the *FIELD MIS Software Review* we strongly recommend that you use this information in conjunction with the *MIS for Microenterprise* manual.

The second section of the report remains here in updated form, providing reviews of the main software applications that are currently commercially marketed to microenterprise agencies. There were ten commercial applications reviewed in the first edition. Of the ten, nine remain and are joined by two new entries, and of the initial nine, four have introduced substantial new software versions in the past year, demonstrating that there has been a lot of advances in the software field in the past year.

FIELD will make an effort to update this report periodically. Please visit our website at http://www.fieldus.org/publications/index.html to check for available updates.

Part I: Reviews of Commercial Software

Overview

Most institutions needing to upgrade their MIS will review available commercial software and determine if the applications meet their needs. The companion FIELD publication, **MIS for Microenterprise: A Practical Approach to Managing Information Successfully**, provides a systematic approach to working through the needs identification and software evaluation process. This Report presents basic reviews of the core products currently available from selected commercial software packages, applying the same framework as used in the MIS for Microenterprise manual.

Accounting software is not reviewed here, as there are a large number of alternatives available and most institutions have settled on a system that meets their needs. An accounting module does not need to be microenterprise specific. Accounting is standardized and all non-profits share the same basic rules, enabling generalized software to be developed.

This study includes a large number of **loan portfolio modules** that are suitable for the US microenterprise market. The number of commercial offerings is due to several factors:

1. The market for loan portfolio software is broader than specifically microfinance. There is a large market among CDFIs, cooperatives and credit unions, development finance institutions, and finance companies.
2. Loan portfolio management in the United States generally follows consistent rules in the calculation of interest, repayment schedules, and aging.
3. Institutions give high priority to managing their portfolio because they are fiscally accountable for the funds.
4. Demand is also increased for loan portfolio software because of the need to accurately and efficiently calculate interest and penalties owed.

Non-financial modules, including **Demographic modules** and **Contact management modules**, however, are far less common on the commercial market. This is due to the following reasons:

1. There is a wide diversity of services, and modules must be developed or adapted for each service.
2. Delivery methodologies vary among agencies, complicating the development of generalized software.
3. There is insufficient agreement on definitions and indicators for non-financial services, inhibiting the development of commercial solutions.

4. There is a smaller market for non-financial modules. Fewer agencies provide non-financial services than loans.[1]
5. The price that agencies are willing and able to pay for software modules may not be high enough to attract many commercial offerings.
6. Commercial software companies are relatively inexperienced in developing non-financial software. (Most loan portfolio software is developed by companies that also have developed complete accounting systems.)

Outcomes modules, designed to track data for measuring changes such as job creation, income increases, and client attitudes, are the least developed of the commercial offerings. In large part, this is due to the lack of definition of how to measure outcomes and what data therefore needs to be collected by the MIS. Until this issue is better resolved, it will be impossible for commercial software companies to develop comprehensive outcome modules.

Approach

The commercial software packages included in this review meet the following conditions:

1. They were identified through interviews with microenterprise practitioners, attendance at network conferences, review of previously published software reviews, and discussions on listserves targeted to the community development field.
2. The software is currently available and installed in at least one client location. No beta versions were accepted for review.
3. The vendors agreed to provide fully functional demonstration software, to answer queries during the review process, and to read and comment on the reviews before this document was finalized. In all cases, we were very impressed with the full cooperation we received from the vendors. (Please note, however, that the vendors are not necessarily in agreement with the final published reviews. They were allowed to comment on the reviews, but the final decision regarding content lay with FIELD staff.)

Each software application was installed and systematically reviewed, including entry of sample data. All written documentation provided by the vendor was also reviewed. A short review was prepared and was then shared with the vendor for verification of accuracy of factual points. Since reviews were focused only on currently-marketed software, vendors were given an opportunity to respond to any issues that will be addressed in upcoming releases. These short commentaries are included at the end of each review.

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[1] Whereas this may not necessarily be true for microenterprise assistance, loan portfolio software is developed for a much broader market than just microenterprise assistance and in this broader market financial services are more common than non-financial services.

It is important to stress that the software was not completely tested under real-life conditions, nor were calculations verified for accuracy, nor were current users of the systems contacted for their feedback. While useful, these aspects exceed the scope of this review. **We strongly recommend that prospective users perform thorough tests of the software and contact existing users before deciding to use any given software application.**

Summary of Reviews

Summary Matrix

The following matrix summarizes the various modules offered by each company as well as the overall ratings of each application for the three dimensions highlighted in Part I: Breadth, Depth, and Scale. In the following, "**3**" indicates "Advanced," "**2**" indicates "Intermediate," and "**1**" indicates "Basic." "**Opt**" means the company offers an optional add-on module.

	Client Track	DHLM	FAS	GMS	LoanPro	Loan Perform	Micro-MIS	Nortridge	PIDC	TEA	Vista Share
Modules											
Loan Portfolio		3	3	3	3	3		3	3	3	
Demographics	3	1	1	1	2	1	2	3	1	3	3
Contact Mgmt	2	Opt					1	1	1	3	3
One-on-One TA	2	1					2		1	3	3
Training Courses	3	1					1		1	2	3
Outcomes	2	Opt	1				2	1	2	2	3
Accounting				Opt	2	2				Opt	
Ratings											
Breadth of Services	2-3	1-2	1	1	1	1	2	1-2	2	3	2-3
Depth of Information	3	1	1	1	1-2	1	2	3	1-2	3	3
Scale of Institution	3	1	2	1	2-3	1-2	1-2	3	1-2	3	3

How to use the reviews

The suggested approach for using these reviews is the following:

1. Resist the temptation to rush out and buy software. Please follow the systematic procedure explained in the MIS for Microenterprise manual to thoroughly assess the information needs of your institution. What modules do you need? What do you score in the Breadth, Depth, and Scale categories?
2. Review the summary matrix above and select the applications that look to be the closest fit for your needs. Take into consideration that you may need to combine several modules from several vendors to make up a complete system.
3. Read the detailed reviews that follow for the applications that you have selected.
4. Contact the vendors and request documentation and demo copies of the software.
5. Conduct your own thorough review of the software to determine if it is suitable for your needs.

Detailed Reviews

The following pages in this report present reviews on the following eleven software applications, presented in alphabetical order:

1. ClientTrack
2. DownHome Loan Manager
3. FAS Loan Service Plus
4. GMS Revolving Loan Servicing System
5. Loan*Pro
6. Loan Performer
7. Micro-MIS
8. Nortridge
9. Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC) Portfolio System
10. The Effective Assistant
11. VistaShare Outcomes Tracker

As stated earlier, we made a concerted effort to review these software applications in a consistent and thorough manner in order to be able to make valid comparisons, and to do so as objectively as possible. Total objectivity, however, is neither realistic nor desirable in a report such as this one whose purpose is to be valuable to the microenterprise practitioner. Some of the views below are subjective ones.

Client Track

Status: Review not updated since 2001 report

Overview Client Track is a very comprehensive, highly integrated social services module which may be adaptable for microenterprise assistance programs or made a component of a larger MIS for a multi-service institution. It has very rigorous security and client confidentiality features.

Modules		Contact Management	Intermediate
Accounting	None	One-on-one TA	Intermediate
Loan portfolio	None	Training courses	Advanced
Demographics	Advanced	Outcomes	Intermediate
Other: Workforce, Welfare-to-Work, Homeless			

Type of Institution		Type of Client	
Breadth of Services	**Int/Adv**	Microenterprise	**X**
Depth of Information	**Adv**	Small Business	
Scale	**Adv**	Industrial Development	
		Real Estate	

Pros:
- Very comprehensive social services modules, fully integrated
- Web-based, allowing branch offices to access all data

Cons:
- No loan portfolio module
- Not fully adapted for microenterprise assistance
- Very data-intensive
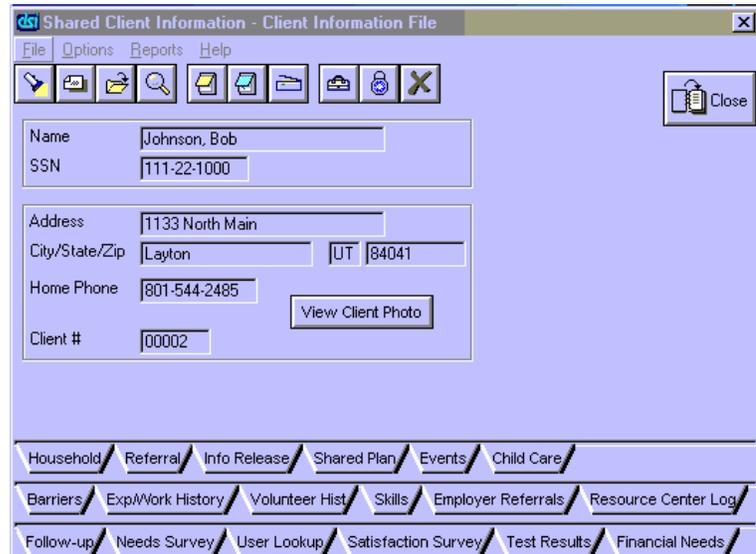
Ease of Use

Navigation: The application provides a large volume of information broken down into small, entry screens placed in a logical, hierarchical menu structure. The size of the data entry screen facilitates using the application as a window while running other applications. There is a common, consistent toolbar that always provides quick access to the main menu options.

Data entry: There is thorough validation on nearly all data fields. Data entry is mouse driven.

Reporting: There are built-in reports for nearly all data entered on the client. However, management reports are somewhat rudimentary. Crystal Reports is bundled with the software and can be used to create customized reports. DSI provides user training on how to use Crystal Reports with the ClientTrack data structures.

Documentation: User documentation is provided with the application as part of the purchase price.

Training: Depending on the applications purchased, the software price includes up to a week of system manager and user training,

Overview of modules

Lending module: This application provides no lending module.

Demographic module: Allows very, very detailed input of a broad variety of measures. For example, household income can be tracked by identifying each household member, and his/her income by source and amount, with beginning and end dates for each source.

Training and Technical Assistance Module: Allows tracking of clients to courses and to appointments. Data can be accessed via client (to see entire history), or via courses (to see who attended a particular course).

Contact Management Module: There is an "event scheduler" that allows input of appointments (with canceled, attended, no-show status). Classes can also be entered, but there is limited ability to track length of each contact, staff person, etc. Notes can be added via the common notes module. The notes module allows write-protection of notes and also marking of notes as "confidential."

Outcomes module: Client Track incorporates a highly detailed household income module, with income tracked by member and by source. Data can be tracked historically. However, other typical areas of microenterprise outcome tracking are not incorporated.

Other modules: Client Track is distinct from the other applications considered in this review, in that it provides an extensive range of modules not specific to microenterprise, some of which may be adapted to microenterprise assistance. In addition, Client Track may be an alternative for a social service agency that provides microenterprise assistance as only one of its services. The primary modules in Client Track are: Workforce, Welfare-to-Work, and Homeless assistance. Among the data tracked per client are: household members and their detailed income; referrals of the client to other agencies, including date of referral and staff person; information release, indicating to what organization, what date, and if signature is on file; shared service plan with other agencies, including amount; identification of "barriers" such as limited English, listening skills, etc; work history; volunteering history; a job skills database which pairs clients with prospective employers; a resource center log, which indicates what dates the client came on and what services the client used, e.g., copier, internet, phones, resource library; a "follow-up" log which records employment, housing, and educational status, allowing the agency to contact the client regarding these matters; a "needs assessment" form which can be used to identify areas the client needs assistance in. e.g., employment, food, childcare, medical; a "client satisfaction survey" that asks the client to offer feedback on staff, services, training, etc.; a test results database that logs the date, type of test, and score; a "financial needs" survey that

quantifies the client's budgetary needs by about 25 line items; a document manager, that allows client documents to be electronically scanned and stored.

Key Issues

Adaptability: The application has a vast number of input fields. There are not any user-defined fields or customizable lists in the traditional sense, but existing fields may be renamed by the user, providing similar functionality.

Security issues: High level of security throughout, including password-protected user log-ins. Client data can be marked as confidential to specific staff. Also, data can be restricted to a specific department within the institution. There is a release process to allow client information to be viewed by other department or institutions if appropriate. There are also private and public notes. Provides a full audit trail of transaction history and secured changes to key information like address, family history, current income and income sources.

Number of users: As a web-based application (the only one in this review), Client Track can handle any number of users, without physical proximity. ClientTrack is also available as a traditional client-server multi-user application that is installed on your institution's computer.

Integration: Client Track provides fully integrated modules. In addition, ClientTrack data is stored in an enterprise SQL database server such as Microsoft SQL Server. All standard export formats are supported.

Technical Specifications

Workstation Operating System: Win 95/98/NT/2000
Workstation Hardware: Pentium 150 or better, 64M RAM
Networks Supported: TCPIP
Server Operating System: NT4 Server or Windows 2000 Server
Software language: Client C++, Server Java
Database format: Microsoft SQL Server, Oracle, Sybase, Informix

Product Information

Company Information: Data Systems International, 1133 North Main Street, Suite 200, Layton, Utah 84041, Phone: 801-544-2485, www.Data-Systems.com
Product offerings: Case Management, Welfare to Work, Workforce, Homeless Applications, Crystal Reports
Demo availability: A fully functional demo can be downloaded from the website.
Pricing: Confidential. Please call vendor.

Vendor Comments

The current ClientTrack 7.x version does not have a loan processing module. However, DSI has extensive experience in financial processing system development, including loan processing. DSI has developed varied systems including a complete credit union package. DSI would be willing to incorporate the loan processing components into 7.x if the market for such a system could be demonstrated to DSI.

DownHome Loan Manager

Status: Review updated from 2001 report to reflect new software version

> **Overview** The system is basic and easy to use for small institutions needing a low-cost means of tracking loan information, invoicing their clients and reporting back to funding sources.

Modules			
		Contact Management	Opt.
Accounting	None	One-on-one TA	Basic
Loan portfolio	Advanced	Training courses	Basic
Demographics	Basic	Outcomes	Opt.
Other: Earnings Projection, Trend Analysis, Client Manager, Social Outcomes, Escrow, Participation, Adjustable Rate, Flexible Schedule, Loan Loss Reserve, Capital Manager			

Ratings			Type of Client	
Breadth of Services	Bas/Int		Microenterprise	**X**
Depth of Information	Basic		Small Business	**X**
Scale	Basic		Industrial Development	
			Real estate	

Pros:
- Good handling of funds
- Popular loan module among microenterprise lenders
- Inexpensive
- Extensive add-on module selection

Cons:
- Inflexible demographics fields
- Very basic system design can be limiting
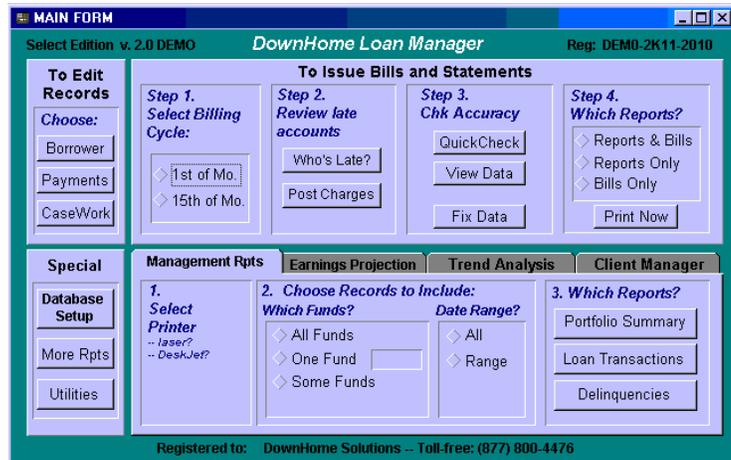
Ease of Use

Navigation: Provides a concise main operational screen, but does not follow Windows standards. Thus, the interface is not entirely intuitive and requires some orientation to understand basic functions, e.g., view vs. edit data. Main screen can be accidentally closed requiring using Paradox menu commands to reopen. Nevertheless, the system is relatively straightforward and not intimidating.

Data entry: Data entry requires a mouse; not keyboard driven. Modest data validation is provided, but many fields are not checked for completeness or consistency.

Reporting: Loan module is somewhat limited, but provides the essentials, with 9 basic reports built in. Reports can be filtered by active/inactive accounts, fund, and date. There is also printing of bills and statements. Client Manager module adds two reports, which can be filtered by fund, staff, TA type, and date. No custom report writer, but data files are straightforward, so possible to create custom reports with stand-alone software.

Documentation: No on-line help, but printed documentation is good, and provides a step-by-step user tutorial.

Training: Because of streamlined design, need for training appears minimal. Telephone trainings are offered as part of an annual support contract, as is on-demand telephone tech support.

Overview of modules

Lending module: Tracking lending is the primary focus of the software, and its primary strength. It has significant flexibility in the assignment of loan disbursements to specific funds and even sub-funds. The optional Participation module will track loans that are made up of sub-loans from differing loan programs. Each sub-loan may follow its own individual terms (interest rate, maturity, etc), but the borrower sees the "master" participation loan on billing statements.

Demographic module: A small demographic module is built into the core of the program. It tracks a basic list of characteristics, but provides no user-defined fields, nor can selection lists, such as race/ethnicity, be customized. Data is stored "per client" and contains no historical evolution. Allows only one business per client and one owner per business.

Training and Technical Assistance Module: **Core module** allows recording of assistance divided into 6 categories, e.g., classroom, site visits, etc., and has columns to distribute assistance to up to three projects; allows assigning number of hours, but no dates or staff info assigned, i.e., the TA data is stored in fields in the loan table, one record per loan. When additional training is provided, the user updates the hourly total on-screen, but previous values are overwritten. **Add-on Client Manager module** allows input of date, type of assistance, staff person, number hours, and comment field; records can be added for assistance already provided and for projected assistance, but projected assistance cannot be converted to actual, requiring manual reentry and deletion of the projected info; training information is not organized by classes offered, meaning each class participant needs to be entered separately. The list of TA services is user-customizable.

Contact Management Module: Optional Client Manager module allows registering all points of contact, as well as purpose and duration of contact. Memo field allows addition of notes. The notes database can add a record at any time; multiple records per date; has date field and note memo field; holds significant amount of info; records can be manually deleted and info changed at any time; there is a separate notes area in the Client Manager module.

Outcomes module: No capability to track any outcome indicators in core module. Optional Social Outcomes module tracks key indicators (business revenue, job creation, and housing development). Reports compare changes over selected date range and/or outcomes since baseline data was collected.

Key Issues

Adaptability: The system is very limited in flexibility. There are no user-defined fields. The only customizable lists are loan funds and staff. With the optional "Client Manager" module, the list of technical assistance can be configured.

Security issues: In the multi-user system, users must log on and enter a password to access the database system. The administrator may assign full editing rights, update rights, or read-only rights to each user. In the multi-user system, data tables are encrypted and cannot be accessed externally without entering a correct password. No audit trail is maintained of who modified records. With the exception of recorded loan payments, most information can be altered at any point in time, on purpose or by accident; loan payment records allow edit/delete only of the last record.

Number of users: The application is available in single- or multi-user versions. The multi-user license authorizes an unlimited number of workstations on a single local area network (LAN).

Integration: The available modules integrate seamlessly. Version 3.0 provides enhanced export capabilities, allowing the user to export all major reports directly to popular spreadsheet formats (Excel, QuattroPro, Lotus 123), text files, or external tables. The export feature is presented as an option whenever the user runs a report (View/ Print/ Export) and the user may specify the name and location of the export file.

Technical Specifications

The software is developed in Paradox for Windows (originally produced by Borland, but now by Corel). The system comes with the Paradox 10 Runtime engine; no additional software needs to be purchased. The system runs on any Windows platform and requires limited memory. The software is capable of handling a fairly large number of records.

Workstation Operating System: Windows 95/98/ME/XP/2000
Workstation Hardware: Pentium
Networks Supported: client-server (preferred) or peer-to-peer
Server Operating System: Windows NT, Windows 2000 Server, Novell, Linux
Software language: Paradox ObjectPal programming language
Database format: Paradox for Windows

Product Information

Company Information: Downhome Solutions has four years as an independent company. Prior to that, the software was offered through a not-for-profit lending agency. The company has two principal staff, with additional contract programmers, and has a client base of approximately 150 community lenders.

Contact information: Toll-free: 877-800-4476; Local: 206/634-0884; FAX: 206-634-0885; e-mail: info@downhomesolutions.com; website: www.downhomesolutions.com; 3971 Evanston Ave. N., Seattle, WA 98103

Product offerings: The company offers the core DownHome Loan Manager, with a selection of add-on modules that may be incorporated at any point in time, including: Client Manager, Earnings Projection, Trend Analysis, Escrow, Participation, Social

Outcomes, Adjustable Rate, Loan Loss Reserve, Capital Manager, and Network (Multi-user).

     Demo availability: The company provides a fully-functioning demo version on CD-ROM upon request.

     Pricing: Single-user systems start at $1,500. Select Edition starts at $2,000. Network versions available as a $650 add-on.

     Training: Telephone training is offered through an annual support contract. In addition, the support contract also covers: a) telephone tech support and b) automatic software updates for the licensed software components. An annual support contract is priced at 20% of the licensed system components.

     Support: Telephone support is available as part of the annual support contract. Custom programming is also available on an hourly basis (currently $75 per hour).

Vendor Comments

We're pleased to see the Aspen Institute undertake this software review, and appreciate the opportunity to offer our own comments.

DownHome Loan Manager (DLM) strikes a balance between power and ease of use. We've kept the interface user-friendly and simple to get around, without sacrificing the essential features needed to manage a multi-fund portfolio. Our approach has been to keep the core product streamlined and affordable, while offering a series of add-on modules to accommodate community lenders with more extensive requirements. We also offer customized programming for specialized needs.

We think DLM does the basics well. It is a true Windows system, updated to run on the latest OS versions (2000, XP). All DLM systems include a comprehensive billing component; bills include detailed delinquency and payoff information. Management reports offer a consolidated set of information, ideal for loan committees and boards of directors. Loan terms can be changed on the fly, making it easy to adjust for restructured loans, lines of credit or work-outs.

DLM's capacity is large, accommodating many thousands of transactions. Memo fields provide a virtually limitless space for notes and comments. The multi-user version will run on virtually any network, with minimal configuration.

We are constantly updating the core product to add features, improve its user-friendly interface and insure the integrity of the data. New add-on modules are frequently released as well. Advanced features not seen in DLM's core product are available on a custom basis.

DownHome Solutions and Vista Share vendor of web-based client tracking software reviewed elsewhere in this document) have announced an initiative to provide a data-exchange module. The module will allow DownHome Loan Manager and Vista Share to exchange and update data in each other's systems.

FAS Loan Service Plus

Status: Review updated from 2001 report to reflect minor changes in training and pricing

Overview This portfolio module tracks primarily financial data, but includes an Economic Development Analysis module with limited supplementary information. Design of the system is a bit aged and relatively limited in flexibility.

Modules		Contact Management	None
Accounting	None	One-on-one TA	None
Loan portfolio	Advanced	Training courses	None
Demographics	Basic	Outcomes	Basic
Other: Client-Server/ODBC Databridge for Custom Reporting			

Ratings			Type of Client	
Breadth of Services	**Basic**		Microenterprise	
Depth of Information	**Basic**		Small Business	**X**
Scale	**Intermediate**		Industrial Development	
			Real estate	

Pros:
- Relatively advanced financial features
- Designed for large volume of lending activity

Cons:
- Aged design of system and reports
- Limited flexibility in non-financial data fields
- Not fully adapted to microenterprise
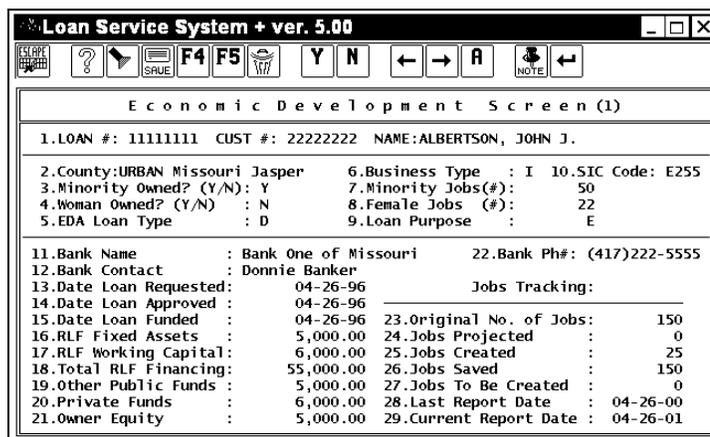
Ease of Use

Navigation: Mouse navigation and Button Bar functions have been added to the Windows version, but the feel of the system is very much like a DOS system. Text-based interface is difficult to navigate in some respects. Keyboard-driven, which makes menu navigation fast, but within data entry screens moving among fields is difficult.

Data entry: Data screens can be viewed through an "inquiry" mode or a "modify" mode to reduce the chance of data being inadvertently changed. Some pop-up selection lists with F2 or LOOK UP BUTTON. Still, entry is somewhat complicated, e.g., dates need to be entered MMDDYY or data is rejected.

Reporting: Provides a moderate variety of basic reports and ability to create custom reports. (The number of apparent reports on the menu is extensive because identical reports are listed for different groups.) The reports appear a bit aged, without use of graphics (e.g., dashes are used for horizontal lines) or proportional fonts.

Custom reporting is possible by exporting the data into an ODBC tool (such as MS Excel, MS Access, or Crystal Reports).

Documentation: Brief pop-up help messages can be displayed for most entry fields. The software comes with a complete operating manual of approximately 200 pp.

Training: Training is offered at the FAS home office or on-site at the customer's location. Two days is the recommended training. Tutorial on CD-Rom is also available for purchase.

Overview of modules

Lending module: The lending module is advanced in design for both complex financial calculations and for volume of lending activity. However, it has only been somewhat adapted for microenterprise lending. For example, loan disbursements may be subdivided among up to 4 funds via the Economic Development Analysis add-on module, but not with the degree of sophistication found in the other packages reviewed here. Features include amortization calculations, 12 payment types, odd/late/short payments, transaction reversals, user-definable grace periods and late charges. Loans may be grouped for GL accounting and reporting by Loan Class and Loan Type.

Demographic module: The core module provides no demographic data, but the add-on EDA Module contains basic demographic/financial fields. However, many are limited in utility, e.g., the "minority" field accepts only a "yes/no" response. The system provides 8 user-defined fields which may be configured as either text, number or date.

Training and Technical Assistance Module: Not available.

Contact Management Module: Not available.

Outcomes module: Some outcomes information is available in the EDA module such as jobs saved and jobs created.

Key Issues

Adaptability: The system is somewhat weak in flexibility. The EDA module provides 8 user-defined fields, and six of the dropdown lists throughout the system allow customization of the contents.

Security issues: The system allows 8 levels of password security, but unlike the other systems reviewed here, there is a single password for each level, i.e., passwords are not assigned to individual users. The system does generate an audit trail, but not by user.

Number of users: Designed to support a single-user or multi-user set-up. Multi-user definitions range from 5 users to an unlimited number of users.

Integration: The optional Client/Server databridge module allows every field in the system to be exported or dynamically-linked to an outside ODBC source such as MS Access, MS Excel, or Crystal Reports. FAS also offers a generic general ledger interface for the purpose of exporting loan transaction data.

Technical Specifications

The software is developed in COBOL and requires no additional software to be purchased or installed. The system runs on any Windows platform and requires limited memory.

Workstation Operating System: Windows (95, 98, 2000, ME, NT, XP), UNIX, LINUX as well as many others

Workstation Hardware: Pentium CPU with 32M of RAM is recommended.

Networks Supported: Windows (NT, 2000), Novell Netware, Banyan Vines, LANtastic and others.

Server Operating System: Windows (NT, 2000), UNIX, AIX, LINUX and others.

Software language: COBOL

Database format: Proprietary database

Product Information

Company Information: Financial Accounting Systems, established in 1980, provides software for the banking and finance industry. FAS currently has five employees.

Contact Information: Contact Erica Doll, Erica Lau or Doyle Castleberry at (USA)888.345.8726, (Canada)800.842.7207, www.fassw.com, marketing@fassw.com.

Product offerings: Loan Service System – Economic Development Edition, Loan Portfolio System – Economic Development Edition (FAS also offers CD Accounting System, Savings Accounting System, & Safe Deposit Box Accounting System.)

Demo availability: A fully functional demo is provided on CD-ROM upon request. A slide-show presentation is available for download at www.fassw.com or on CD-ROM upon request.

Pricing: Loan Service System – Economic Development Edition – Single-User Version prices are as follows:

25	Loans	=	$1,875.00	(Software)	$187.50	(Annual Support)
50	Loans	=	$3,750.00	(Software)	$375.00	(Annual Support)
100	Loans	=	$4,875.00	(Software)	$487.50	(Annual Support)
Unlimited	Loans	=	$6,375.00	(Software)	$637.50	(Annual Support)

Loan Portfolio - Economic Development Edition – Single-User Version prices are as follows:

25	Loans	=	$1,125.00	(Software)	$112.50	(Annual Support)
50	Loans	=	$2,250.00	(Software)	$225.00	(Annual Support)
100	Loans	=	$2,925.00	(Software)	$292.50	(Annual Support)
Unlimited	Loans	=	$3,825.00	(Software)	$382.50	(Annual Support)

Lease/Purchase and rental plans are also available. Pricing for additional modules or multi-user systems is available upon request.

Training: Training is offered at the FAS home office or on-site at the customer's location. There is no cost for training at the FAS home office if performed during the first 90 days after delivery. Cost for on-site training is $750 per day, minimum of three days, plus travel and lodging expenses. Two days is the recommended training time for Loan Service System users.

Support: Annual support agreements include toll-free telephone support and software updates at no charge. 30-days of support is provided with a software purchase if annual agreement is declined. After this initial 30-day period has expired telephone support is billed at $92.50 per hour.

Vendor Comments
Our current research & development projects are:
- *Full-Featured GUI (Graphical User Interface) Conversion*
- *ACH / Batch Payment Processing*

GMS Revolving Loan Servicing System

Status: Review updated from 2001 report to reflect minor software changes

Overview A very well-known system with good fund management, but based on a very old software technology, although a Windows version is under development. The data structure is very basic in design and oriented around loans rather than clients. Although portfolio management is strong, demographic data is limited.

Modules		Contact Management	None
Accounting	Optional	One-on-one TA	None
Loan portfolio	Advanced	Training courses	None
Demographics	Basic	Outcomes	None
Other: 30 supplemental add-ons available			

Ratings		Type of Client	
Breadth of Services	**Basic**	Microenterprise	**X**
Depth of Information	**Basic**	Small Business	**X**
Scale	**Basic**	Industrial Development	
		Real estate	

Pros:
- Strong fund accounting
- Large user-base of clients
- 30 add-on modules available to enhance features

Cons:
- DOS-based, developed in BASICA, dating back to 1988 (Windows version forthcoming)
- Is a loan-based system, not a client-based system

```
          GMS Revolving Loan Servicing System

             (1) Maintain Loan Information
             (2) Ask for Loan Information
             (3) Print/Display Amortizations
             (4) Process Loan Transactions
             (5) Prepare Statistics & Reports
             (6) Backup Procedures

             Please Enter Your Selection

          Copyright GMS, Inc. Kensington, MD


                                    Last Master File Backup 04/17/01 ▪
   RLSS CONFERENCE DIRECTORY 2001 ▪  Last GMS Program Backup 04/17/01


  U=User Manual  Q=Quit  D=Diag  S=Supp  F=Find  P=Profile  +/- Ptr  A=Acctg
```

Ease of Use

Navigation: DOS program with numerical list of menu choices. No graphics, buttons, toolbars, etc. Limited number of screens make for straightforward navigation.

Data entry: Requires keyboard use; no mouse support. Some eccentricities, such as requiring caps lock to be on.

Reporting: Eight basic loan reports built-in; provides some useful filters for the reports. Also includes a custom report writer, which is reportedly difficult to learn at first but provides access to all data fields.

Documentation: An on-line help manual is provided, but DOS-based, without windows, hyperlinks, etc.

Training: Up to 4 hours of telephone installation and training is included in the software cost on contract. Service and warranty then are required to cover further questions

Overview of modules

Lending module: This is the only module in the system. The table structure is quite basic, as the only main table is the loans table. There is no client table or business table. Thus, when a business gets a second loan, all data on the client/business must be reentered in the loan table. The pre-defined fields include no client demographic data, but the user-defined fields could be used to customize the system for this purpose. The system provides means to manually customize the repayment schedule, providing a good amount of flexibility. A strength of the system is that it allows loans to be assigned to up to five different fund sources (and up to 30 if the optional participation loans module is added to the system).

Demographic module: Client data can only be incorporated via the user-defined fields. Doing so would allow demographic data to be tracked historically across loans.

Training and Technical Assistance Module: None available. However, GMS offers an supplemental "Loan Conversations" module that could be adapted for use to track training and TA contacts.

Contact Management Module: None available.

Outcomes module: Allows input of job creation and retention information, but cannot be tracked historically. All data is stored only in the loans table.

Key Issues

Adaptability: Provides 64 user-definable fields, which can be defined as date, number, percent, dollar, or alpha. Several of the fields allow for customized lists, eg, funds, loan officers, cities, counties. GMS also offers 30 different "supplement" add-ons that can be purchased separately to provide additional features not present in the core application.

Security issues: The application requires a log-in password. An optional security module can provide 3 security levels, assigned to each user. Once loan payments are entered they cannot be altered, providing audit control on finances, but non-financial information can be edited at any time with no record of changes.

Number of users: The application is primarily a single-user system. It may be set up for multi-user, but only one person at a time can access a particular area of the system.

Integration: Fully integrates to GMS Accounting System; otherwise reports can be exported in ASCII format.

Technical Specifications

The software is developed in BASICA, which is a generic programming language that was last updated in 1988. GMS requires no additional software to be purchased or installed. The system runs on any Windows platform and requires limited memory. The software is capable of handling a fairly large number of records.

Workstation Operating System: DOS, Windows 95/98/NT
Workstation Hardware: 386 microprocessor or higher
Networks Supported: All, including NT, Novell, etc.
Server Operating System:
Software language: Basica
Database format: Basic

Product Information

Company Information: GMS, Inc., 10559 Metropolitan Avenue, Kensington, MD 20895. Established in 1980, currently with 19 employees.

Contact Information: Liz Collins, Director of RLSS Sales, Sandy West, Director of Sales, 800-933-3501 ext. 2, gms@gmsactg.com

Product offerings: GMS Revolving Loan Servicing Software, GMS Accounting and Financial Management Software

Demo availability: A fully functional demo with sample data is provided on diskette upon request.

Pricing: There are two price ranges for the software

Under 50 Loan version	$1,250
Monthly License/Warranty	$25 mo
Monthly Full Service Support	$25 mo
Over 50 Loan Version	$2,250
Monthly License/Warranty	$25 mo
Monthly Full Service Support	$50 mo

"Pay as you use" service available after 6 months at prevailing rate, currently $75 per hour.

Training: Up to 4 hours telephone training is included in the software costs, GMS rep installs the software with the client and then trains them.

Support: Client places service call to 800 number and is called back by service rep. GMS guarantees a 2-hour response time. Support fees are stated above in pricing.

Vendor Comments

GMS-RLSS software is in the process of moving to the Windows platform using a database. All current functions will still be available (all the best of GMS) plus a number of new additional functions that will make us more complete and readily usable to every type of loan program. Data will be more "available" and compatible with other windows-based programs. Security will be greatly enhanced. The software is due for release in January 2003.

Loan Performer

Status: Review updated from 2001 report to reflect new software version

Overview A popular program with small, international microfinance institutions. It combines loan portfolio and accounting in a very inexpensive application and is the only program in this review to handle solidarity group lending. However, non-financial data is very limited and not suitable for the US market.

Modules		Contact Management	None
Accounting	Intermediate	One-on-one TA	None
Loan portfolio	Advanced	Training courses	None
Demographics	Basic	Outcomes	None
Other: Savings accounts, Shares			

Ratings (Basic/Intermediate/Advanced)		Type of Client	
Breadth of Services	**Basic**	Microenterprise	**X**
Depth of Information	**Basic**	Small Business	**X**
Scale	**Bas/Int**	Industrial Development	
		Real estate	

Pros:
- Handles solidarity group lending
- Very affordable

Cons:
- Demographic module not suitable for US agencies
- Technical support is based overseas
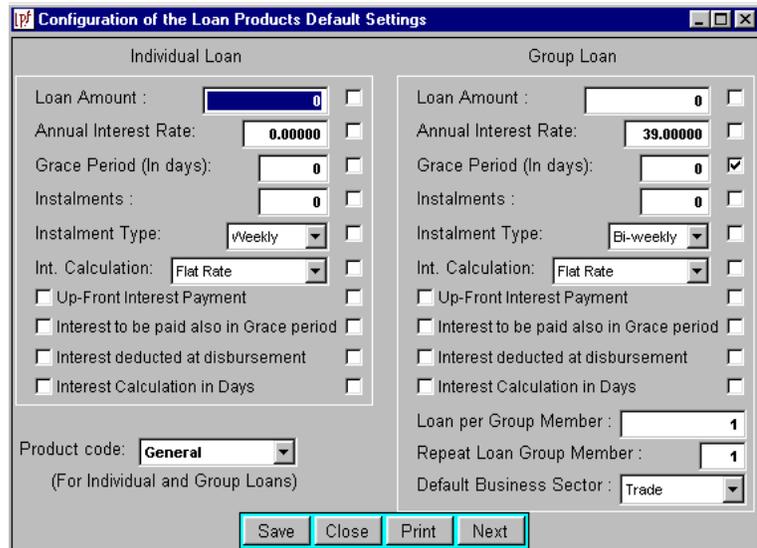
Ease of Use

Navigation: The Windows-style system is comfortable to navigate. Drop-down menus provide immediate access to all features of the system.

Data entry: Good use of checkboxes, dropdown lists, etc. to ensure accuracy of data entry.

Reporting: The program comes with more than 150 standard reports, which are quite well designed. All reports have many flexible filtering parameters (flexible entry-dates, choice of credit officers, branches, geographic areas, loan products, user defined categories, etc. All reports can be exported to Excel, Dbase or Acrobat format.

Documentation: Provides a complete on-line, Windows-style help system (also available as a Word file).

Training: The company offers five days of training including installation and configuration.

Overview of modules

Lending module: Allows definition of specific loan products, with pre-set interest methods, installment method, etc. Only package reviewed here that supports solidarity group lending, as well as individual and group savings accounts. Provides a variety of interest calculation methods, but floating rates are not supported.

Demographic module: As an application oriented toward international microfinance, the demographic module is a poor fit with the US market. There is limited flexibility in the fields, so most agencies will need to either track demographic information elsewhere or request changes in the software from the vendor.

Training and Technical Assistance Module: Not available.

Contact Management Module: Not yet available, though under development.

Outcomes module: Not available.

Key Issues

Adaptability: Provides 10 user-customizable dropdown lists and 8 user-defined dropdown lists. No other user-defined fields are provided.

Security issues: Provides 6 user-customizable security levels, where each menu item can be enabled or disabled according to each user level. All users are assigned to one of these levels and must log in with a password.

Number of users: The system is designed as multi-user with a recommended maximum of 12 simultaneous users.

Integration: Although Loan Performer comes with a basic general ledger, it can also easily be linked to 3rd party accounting software. Transactions can be exported in detail or as a summary per account. Loan Performer accounts can be mapped to account numbers that are used in the organization, so that the export takes place according to mapped accounts. All reports can be exported to Excel, Dbase or Acrobat format. Loan Performer can also import basic client data, savings transactions and loan data as well as general ledger transactions.

Technical Specifications

The software is developed in Visual FoxPro and requires no additional software to be purchased or installed. The system runs on any Windows platform and requires limited memory.

Workstation Operating System: Windows 95/98/2000/XP

Workstation Hardware: Pentium with 32M of RAM

Networks Supported: LAN

Server Operating System: Novell, Windows NT/2000

Software language: Visual FoxPro

Database format: DBase

Product Information

Company Information: Crystal Clear Software Ltd. is a Uganda based organization, founded in March 1998. It currently has 6 full time employees. Though the first code for Loan Performer was initially written in 1996, it has been available as a commercial package since 1998.

Contact Information:

Name:	Crystal Clear Software Ltd.
Address:	PO Box 7463 Kampala, Uganda
Phone:	256-41-231739 (office) or 256-75-694074 (mobile)
Fax:	256-41-233644
Email:	ccs@infocom.co.ug or info@loanperformer.com
Web:	www.loanperformer.com

Product offerings: Loan Performer

Demo availability: A fully functional demo with sample data can be downloaded from their website or provided on CD-ROM upon request ($65 shipping charge).

Pricing: A single-user one-office license is $700 plus $210 annual fees. For the annual fees the user gets free updates – downloadable via the website - and email/phone/fax support. Single-user versions for 2 to 5 offices are $455 per office plus $136 as annual fees. Single-user versions for 6 to 10 offices are $420 per office plus $126 as annual fees. For more than 10 offices the single-user licenses are $385 per office. A 5-user license for a single office is $1200 plus $360 annually. A 10-user license for a single office is $1600 plus $480 annually. For consultancy fees (programming time, database conversion etc.) Crystal Clear Software Ltd. charges $325 per day.

Training: A five-day training is available for $1625, excluding travel, food and lodging.

Support: Crystal Clear Software Ltd. gives free assistance for the configuration of the program and any problems encountered. Technical assistance is provided by phone and email.

Loan*Pro

Status: Review updated from 2001 report to reflect minor software changes

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Overview A strong loan portfolio module designed more with the community development field in mind, but which may be adaptable to microenterprise by use of the extensive user-defined fields.

Modules		Contact Management	None
Accounting	Intermediate	One-on-one TA	None
Loan portfolio	Advanced	Training courses	None
Demographics	Intermediate	Outcomes	None
Other:			

Ratings (Basic/Intermediate/Advanced)		Type of Client	
Breadth of Services	**Bas**	Microenterprise	**X**
Depth of Information	**Inter**	Small Business	**X**
Scale	**Inter/Adv**	Industrial Development	
		Real estate	**X**

Pros:
- Capable of running on more than 20 operating system platforms
- Large number of user-defined fields
- Allows input of pre-loan analysis

Cons:
- Not fully oriented toward microenterprise
- No means to incorporate modules for training, TA, contact, and outcomes

Ease of Use

Navigation: Not a Windows-standard interface, so requires some reorientation. Navigation can be done quickly with either a keyboard or mouse. Several Function key commands need to be learned.

Data entry: Data validation is provided for most cells, providing a good degree of data integrity. There is a "inquire" mode separate from the "change" mode to help avoid accidental altering of data.

Reporting: Provides a moderate variety of basic reports. The reports are a bit aged-looking, without use of graphics (e.g., dashes are used for horizontal lines) or

proportional fonts. There is no report writer included, but an optional ODBC driver can be used to transfer data to other database programs.

Documentation: There is no on-line help, but a full users manual is provided.

Training: The company provides unlimited training via its toll-free number. On-site training is available. Costs for this vary according to location and number of training days requested.

Overview of modules

Lending module: The portfolio module is quite strong. Loans can be assigned to up to 8 source loan funds. Provides means to create very flexible repayment schedules. An innovative feature is that it allows entry of detailed alternative loan scenarios prior to actual loan approval/disbursement. Work with a borrower may also be broken down into "projects," each project potentially receiving multiple loans. The project concept allows data such as overall project costs, demographic data etc., to be monitored through different stages.

Demographic module: There is a "borrower" table in the system that can be used to store a combination of client and business data. There are a large number of user-defined fields available in this table to enhance its use.

Training and Technical Assistance Module: Not available.

Contact Management Module: Not available, though there is a limited memo database for client information.

Outcomes module: Not available

Key Issues

Adaptability: Provides user-customization to 22 dropdown lists. Offers a large number of user-defined fields: 10 alpha, 5 phone, 10 date, 10 money, and 10 numeric. The user-defined information is available for tracking at the borrower, project, and loan levels.

Security issues: There is an optional password-controlled log-in. There are 9 levels of security access, which can be configured as far down as field level.

Number of users: The application is a networked, multi-user system that will allow unlimited simultaneous users, depending on the number of licenses purchased.

Integration: The portfolio module fully integrates with DSI's optional accounting module. In addition, all accounting data can be exported to a text file to then be imported into an accounting package.

Technical Specifications

The software is developed in PRO-IV and requires no additional software to be purchased (PRO-IV licenses are included in the pricing structure), though the PRO-IV run-time must be installed. The system runs on more than 20 platforms and is capable of handling a large number of records.

Workstation Operating System: Windows 95/98/NT/2000

Workstation Hardware: 486 minimum (Pentium recommended), 32M RAM

Networks Supported: multiple networks supported

Server Operating System: over 20 different operating systems

Software language: PRO-IV

Database format: PRO-ISAM

Product Information
Company Information: Data Systems, Inc., 24 years of operation, 7 employees
Contact Information: Maltex Building, 431 Pine Street, Burlington, VT 05401, 800-639-1289, www.datasystems@datavermont.com, www.datavermont.com
Product offerings: LOAN*PRO, PRO*ACCT accounting system and a variety of other specialized accounting packages
Demo availability: A fully functional demo with sample data is provided on CD-ROM upon request. A CD based slideshow is available upon request. On-line (telephone) demonstrations are also available using PC Anywhere or Netmeeting.
Pricing: Single user - $3,600, two users - $4,725, each additional user - $1,125. All prices include first year support costs. General Ledger $1,000 plus $200 for each additional user. Price includes first year support costs
Training: Free unlimited 800 number off-site training, one free day on-site training, travel costs and staff travel time not included.
Support: Loan*PRO annual support (starting 2nd year); single user - $680, two users - $875, each additional user - $195. General Ledger (starting 2nd year); single user - $100, each additional user - $25.

Vendor Comments
*Data Systems is committed to supporting the development of sustainable communities throughout the US. LOAN*PRO was created with this goal in mind. We developed LOAN*PRO in a highly versatile language that allows easy customization at minimal costs. Because of the ease of development, we are constantly adding new functionality to LOAN*PRO. Much of our new features come directly from user requests.*

We have recently added an "export feature" that enables users to export data to a text file, without using an ODBC driver. This information can be easily imported into Excel, Access and other spreadsheet and reporting programs for ad-hoc reports and queries.

MicroMIS
Status: Review new to the 2002 report

Overview Strong on tracking client socioeconomic data for reporting to donors, but limited in adaptability. This is a new Windows update of an older DOS program.

Modules		Contact Management	Basic
Accounting	None	One-on-one TA	Intermediate
Loan portfolio	None	Training courses	Basic
Demographics	Intermediate	Outcomes	Intermediate
Other:			

Ratings		Type of Client	
Breadth of Services	Int	Microenterprise	**X**
Depth of Information	Int	Small Business	**X**
Scale	Bas/Int	Industrial Development	
		Real estate	

Pros:
- Straightforward design makes it simple to use
- Classifies clients using detailed HHS and HUD data
- Generates MicroTest report automatically
- Relatively low cost

Cons:
- Limited number of user-defined fields
- Only available in single-user version

Ease of Use
   Navigation: Navigation is done through a simple menu structure and window tabs. Nothing is more than two levels deep, so it is not difficult to find what you are looking for.
   Data entry: Unlike the earlier DOS version, the program requires extensive use of the mouse. A reasonable amount of data validation is provided.

Reporting: Reporting is limited, with 10 predefined reports. There is no feature built in for developing new reports or customizing reports, however there is an extensive 10-page "MicroTest" report format included and an extensive 12-page report.

Documentation: There is no on-line help available. There is a basic, 18-page users manual available.

Training: On-site training is available for an additional cost.

Overview of modules

Lending module: Not applicable. However, summary information on loans (amount, term, repayment status, etc) can be entered manually, and, if updated regularly, the information will appear in various summary reports

Demographic module: A strength of the software is the ability to compare household income with HHS and HUD income tables and determine client eligibility. There are a good number of data fields, but the limited number customizable dropdown lists and user-defined fields limit the flexibility of this system. Relationships can be established whereby businesses can have multiple owners, and individuals can have multiple businesses.

Training and Technical Assistance Module: Technical assistance contacts can be tracked for each participant, including details about purpose, duration and staff person involved. Attendance in training courses can also be tracked. Notes can be written for each contact.

Contact Management Module: There is limited contact management via the same procedure used for tracking technical assistance. Staff person, purpose and duration can be defined. Memo size is unlimited and notes can be optionally marked as confidential. They can, however, be modified or deleted at a later time. There is no way to schedule future appointments, and the system provides no calendar of upcoming appointments and no "tickler" or alarm system.

Outcomes module: Some outcomes can be tracked and linked to the business. Job creation can be tracked historically by a variety of pre-defined categories. Business revenue can only be tracked by direction of change. There are two user-defined fields, but otherwise no customization is possible. Client-related data cannot be tracked historically.

Key Issues

Adaptability: The system has an ambitious number of pre-defined fields, but there is very little adaptability offered through the use of user-defined fields and customization of dropdowns. Hopefully, this will be addressed in a future version.

Security issues: Each user's access level can be customized. No audit trail information is stored. The tables can be opened directly from MSAccess without entering a password. Although this potentially resolves the lack of any export feature built in to the program, it does create a security issue.

Number of users: The application is only single-user. It can reside on a network drive where any user can access the information, but only one person may be logged on at any given time.

Integration: The available modules integrate well. However, there is no export procedure provided. Users would need to have MS Access and open the tables directly

(see security section above) in order to generate additional queries or reports, or to export data to another application.

Technical Specifications
The software is developed using MS Access and thus will handle a moderately large number of records.

Workstation Operating System: Windows 98 or newer

Workstation Hardware: Pentium 233 processor, VGA monitor (in 1024x768 mode), CD-ROM, 64mb of memory, 15mb of hard disk space, Microsoft Access 2000, and Windows compatible printer

Networks Supported: Yes

Server Operating System: Windows compatible

Software language: MS Access, VBA

Database format: MS Access

Product Information
Company Information: The Institute for Social and Economic Development (ISED) was established in 1987. ISED provides a variety of services designed to help government agencies (federal, state, and local), corporations, and nonprofit organizations improve the effectiveness of their programs and better meet the needs of the people they serve.

Contact information: George Bailey, ISED, 910 23rd Avenue, Coralville, IA 52241, tel: 319-338-2331, email: gbailey@ised.org

Product offerings: ISED has marketed previous versions of Micro-MIS for five years. In addition to MicroMIS, ISED also offers employment and IDA data systems.

Demo availability: ISED provides a functional demo on CD-ROM upon request for a $50 fee. If you choose to purchase the software, the fee is then applied toward the purchase price of the software.

Pricing: MicroMIS is available for $1000. Future upgrades (after the first year) are available at a reduced rate.

Training: ISED offers on-site training at an additional negotiated rate.

Support: ISED provides telephone technical support to users of MicroMIS at no cost for one year after the initial purchase.

Vendor Comments
"MicroMIS is specifically designed for the microenterprise project that is client-focused and performance driven. It includes extensive client demographics and important business and loan outcomes. Through the easy-to-follow interface, MicroMIS can create a complex set of reports that funders love. MicroMIS's forms are designed to reduce data entry errors, which make it easy to manage. Contact ISED to find out more."

Nortridge

Status: Review not updated from the 2001 report

Overview This application is the most adaptable loan portfolio system reviewed in this report. It has a very strong and versatile loan module, a flexible demographics module, and innovative means of creating "relationships" among different entries in the client database.

Modules		Contact Management	Basic
Accounting	None	One-on-one TA	None
Loan portfolio	Advanced	Training courses	None
Demographics	Advanced	Outcomes	Basic
Other:			

Ratings			Type of Client	
Breadth of Services	**Bas/Int**		Microenterprise	**X**
Depth of Information	**Advanced**		Small Business	**X**
Scale	**Advanced**		Industrial Development	
			Real estate	**X**

Pros:
- Great adaptability via versatile user-defined fields
- Can pre-define specific loan products
- High level of customizable security
- Can establish "relationships" between customer records

Cons:
- The most expensive application reviewed here
- Limited loan fund allocation
- Uses relatively large amount of computer resources

Ease of Use

Navigation: Has an attractive, logical layout. Provides toolbars, navigator screen, and menu bar to move quickly to each area. Most information in the system is available with minimal effort. Very powerful "query" module that can be used to locate clients or loans based on any field value.

Data entry: Due to the very powerful, user-defined fields design, there is a high degree of data validation built in to the system. Data entry requires extensive use of a mouse.

Reporting: Provides a healthy number of standard reports with a variety of filtering, grouping and sorting options. Any SQL report writer, such as Crystal Reports, can be used to develop custom reports. A Word and Excel interface is also provided for custom reports and letters.

Documentation: The application comes with a Windows-style help system and an operating manual.

Training: Nortridge provides a 2-day training class in Tustin, CA, for a cost of $500. On-site training is available for $1,500 per day, plus expenses.

Overview of modules

Lending module: System provides for a wide variety of interest methods, fee structures, and penalty systems, and allows detailed documentation of loan securities. One of the few applications reviewed here which allows definition of distinct loan products, each with distinct standardized rules regarding interest rate methods, repayment terms, etc. In addition, this approach allows each loan product to be assigned to different accounts in the chart of accounts. However, the software does not allow loans to be assigned to more than one fund (see vendor comments). Repayment schedules can be completely customized, even including different frequencies for principal and interest payments.

Demographic module: The client module is quite versatile. It allows the input of non-clients as well as clients, e.g., funders, sponsors, cosigners, corporations, etc. It also allows "relationships" to be established between different customer records, providing a good amount of flexibility. The demographic module has a large number of very flexible user-defined fields that may be used to customize the software. An unlimited number of addresses may be entered for each customer.

Training and Technical Assistance Module: Not available.

Contact Management Module: Not available. There is a "comments" table that allows unlimited comments to be added, marked by date, time and user-id. These comments may be marked as private.

Outcomes module: The system allows the input of financial statements, and user fields may be set up for other outcomes. However, there is no means to track the historical values of these data points. Despite the quantity of user-defined fields, meaning that fields can be established for a variety of outcome indicators, none of the tables are structured to store historical data. However, there is a "field history" which tracks changes to the all fields, including the user defined fields. With the filter query, you can search the entire database for a change to a particular field.

Key Issues

Adaptability: The most flexible application reviewed, with a unique approach to user-defined fields. There are 30 user-defined "detail" fields, 30 demographics fields, and 30 financial reports fields, 90 loan detail fields, and 30 fields for each defined type of collateral. In all cases, each field can be configured as text, numeric, date, dropdown (user-input), dropdown (select from admin-customized list) and checkbox. The fields can also be flagged as "required input"

Security issues: Requires users to log on with individual passwords. Users can be required to change passwords on a specified frequency. Administrator can

customize the precise access profile for each user. All changes are logged with a date stamp and user-id, providing a complete audit trail.

Number of users: The application is a full multi-user system.

Integration: The application does not integrate with any accounting software. However, the detailed control over linking loan products with the chart of accounts facilitates a manual transfer of data to an independent accounting package. A flat file and ASCII file is provided to interface with other packages including general ledgers.

Technical Specifications

The software is developed in Microsoft Visual C++ and requires no additional software to be purchased or installed. The system runs on all Windows platforms. It appears to require more system resources than the other programs tested in this review, meaning the users cannot keep as many applications open simultaneously. The software is capable of handling a fairly large number of records.

Workstation Operating System: Windows 95/98/Me/NT4/2000

Workstation Hardware: PII 300MHz, 64M RAM

Networks Supported: NT, Novell, others

Server Operating System: Windows 95/98/me/NT4/2000, UNIX

Software language: Microsoft Visual C++

Database format: Microsoft SQL, Oracle, Sybase

Product Information

Company Information: Nortridge Software, Inc., established 1981, currently with 12 employees

Contact Information: Kim Stempel, 2 Robert Court, San Rafael, CA   94901, 1-800-645-4341, kstempel@nortridge.com, www.nortridge.com

Product offerings: Nortridge Loan System (NLS)

Demo availability: A fully functional demo with sample data is provided on CD-ROM upon request.

Pricing: $12,500 base system. $2,500 each additional concurrent user.

Training: $500 for two day class at Tustin, CA location. On-site training available for $1,500 per day.

Support: The Enhancement/Support contract is 20% of the purchase price of the software. This covers unlimited hot line support, as well as all updates and enhancements.

Vendor Comments

Nortridge Software Inc. recently released version 2.1 of the Nortridge Loan System (NLS). Among the highlights of this new release were:

- *CIF to loan relationships with user defined fields for tracking guarantors, co-borrowers, or other types of relationships between a borrower and a 3rd party.*
- *Expanded Collateral Codes. Five new tabs of information was added including 30 user-defined fields, a location record tab, insurance record, tax record, comments and correspondence history.*

- *Microsoft Word and Excel have been integrated into the reports. Letters can be created and merged with data from NLS. NLS data can integrate into a spreadsheet.*
- *Comments can now have "categories" to separate collection activity from other types of comments on a loan.*
- *Forty-five additional user defined fields have been added to the loan file, bringing the total number of user-defined fields to 90 for each loan. (This does not include user-defined fields for the customer file or collateral file).*
- *Temporary note can be added to a customer or loan record. These look like sticky notes that remind the user(s) of a particular action or comment exists on a loan.*

Version 2.1 features "source of funds" tracking. A loan may be funded by more than one source. NLS will provide the sub accounting for each source.

Version 2.2 will feature a Tickler System. Ticklers can be set up for any item such as financial statement renewals, UCC filing, updated insurance file, etc. NLS will produce letters informing the borrower of the item that needs to be on file/updated and will send additional reminders, if needed. Daily (or other period) reports of items that need to be addressed and their status will be produced.

Version 2.3 will include covenant/application tracking. Any loan application can be entered and tracked through NLS. Terms can be modified and reports produced. If the loan is closed, it can be "transferred" to a regular loan status.

PIDC

Status: Review updated from 2001 report to reflect new software version

Overview Oriented toward economic development agencies providing industrial development loans for real estate purchases, construction, and machinery and equipment purchases, but the latest version provides improved support for microenterprises. The established, formal business is usually considered the "client" in this system, and very little information is collected on the business owner. If demographic information were tracked elsewhere, the loan module could serve for some microenterprise lenders. Strong "prospective client" orientation but stops short of full contact management.

Modules		Contact Management	Intermediate
Accounting	None	One-on-one TA	Basic
Loan portfolio	Advanced	Training courses	Basic
Demographics	Basic	Outcomes	Intermediate
Other:			

Ratings		Type of Client	
Breadth of Services	Intermed	Microenterprise	
Depth of Information	Bas/Int	Small Business	**X**
Scale	Bas/Int	Industrial Development	**X**
		Real estate	**X**

Pros:
- Excellent reporting module
- Incorporated "deal tracking" system
- Prints customized letters and contracts

Cons:
- Heavily oriented toward industrial lending
- No demographic data
- Confusing menu hierarchy

Ease of Use

Navigation: MS Access provides nice look-and-feel; creative use of summary and detail screens; but overall menu structure is sometimes confusing and mixes reports with input menus, causing some potential confusion. The menu structure is designed to follow the stages of a transaction – from "call" to "deal" to approved

project/loan – but the layout is not always intuitive, and it is often difficult to locate the appropriate screen.

Data entry: Keyboard and mouse-driven; good search features; payments entered by batch processing.

Reporting: Contains about 40 built-in reports, which are nicely designed overall. Has useful consolidated reports at the client level. Can create and store custom reports filtered by 14 different criteria, single level sort. Also allows creation of customized letters and loan documentation.

Documentation: A complete users manual is provided.

Training: A minimum of 2 days on-site training is recommended, and can be provided via PIDC.

Overview of modules

Lending module: Allows fixed or "rolling" grace period, % or fixed late fee. Allows assigning of loan to Program, Source, Corporation, and Lender fields; all dropdown lists are easily updated; handles several interest methods; balloon payments; can add unlimited number of financing sources. Strong orientation toward "project" financing of loans by compiling a variety of sources.

Demographic module: Strong focus on business characteristics; almost no client-level characteristics beyond race of business owner (see vendor comments). Strong focus and reporting on geographic location of business: Industrial Park, Enterprise Zone, Empowerment Zone, or one user-defined field; all lists are user configurable.

Training and Technical Assistance Module: Not available (see vendor comments).

Contact Management Module: "Deal Tracking" module allows logging prospective clients and monitoring their progress through the application phase. Can move client through "leads" phase into "deal in the pipeline phase." Allows referrals. Not a true contact management approach in that with the exception of a notes database that provides unlimited notes with date/hour assigned, there is not a logging of all points of contact with the client.

Outcomes module: Strong orientation on business outcomes. Tracks income and sales, but for two periods only. Provides detailed job creation analysis, by skill level and by race and gender, for current, projected, and unlimited future reports. Allows input of due dates for future reports so that overdue reports can be tracked.

Key Issues

Adaptability: Can define Project Status codes and assign up to 3 status codes to a Project. Has about 10 dropdown lists which are configurable, but only one is User-Defined.

Security issues: Requires user to logon. Users can be added with customized security levels per user on 9 different areas. Database is password protected. Loan transactions, once input, cannot be modified. The system provides a full audit trail, logging every change to a separate table with date, time, and user stamps, which the system administrator can print daily.

Number of users: The system can be networked with an unlimited number of simultaneous users.

Integration: The Access data files are locked for security purposes, but a linked, unlocked database is provided which allows the user to create custom reports with an external report writer. Financial data can be linked with American Fundware or MIP accounting software.

Technical Specifications

The software is developed in MSAccess and distributed with a run-time version of Access, which means that Access does not need to be purchased. The system runs on any Windows platform and requires limited memory.

Workstation Operating System: Windows 95, 98, NT, or 2000
Workstation Hardware: Pentium processor with 128M of RAM
Networks Supported: Windows NT, Novell
Server Operating System: Windows NT, Novell
Software language: MS Access
Database format: MS Access

Product Information

Company Information: Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation is the economic development arm of the City of Philadelphia, created more than 40 years ago. PIDC developed this software over the past 16 years, and has been marketing it for the past 5 years.

Contact Information: Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation, Philadelphia, PA, 1-800-220-PIDC, www.pidc-pa.org

Product offerings: The loan portfolio system is the only software marketed by PIDC.

Demo availability: A fully functional demo is provided on CD-ROM upon request.

Pricing: System priced at $3000 for up to 50 loans (and an unlimited number of clients); price increases to $5000 for up to 125 loans.

Training: Two days of on-site training is recommended. The cost is $1,000 per day plus travel expenses.

Support: Telephone support at a toll-free number during regular business hours or through email. Up to two hours of support per month (carrying over up to 10 hours), plus all upgrades released, costs 15% of licensing fee, annually.

Vendor's Comments

As one of the largest economic development agencies in the country, the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation developed this system to administer our loan portfolio of more than 4,000 loans. We've developed our system to follow a transaction through the various stages of its growth, and designed all the screens and menus accordingly. We identify the entire "project" to allow, among other things, analysis of the leveraging of public vs. private funding.

While we may not specifically handle micro-enterprise loans at our agency, we do feel we understand the many intricacies associated with dealing with City, State, and

Federal funders and their individual reporting requirements. We've designed both the SBA's 503/504 and EDA's Semi-Annual report to be standard menu-requested reports in our system. Other various reports are available from the data screens themselves to allow, for instance, the viewing of a loan's history from the loan screen without the need to go back to a menu.

And we have begun to draft additional screens to meet the needs of micro-lending. The system now includes the ability to record other non-lending "activities" for a client. The individual activities for your agency are set up at the system level, with every field being user-identified when that activity is created. A client can have any number of activities ongoing, and the new Inquiry view will display all activity for a client.

Although our loans tend to be made to a different clientele, the flexibility allowed by our system makes it attractive for just about any type of agency needing to administer a publicly-funded revolving loan fund. We provide a report writing tool where, using Microsoft Access, you can write custom reports or maintain a linked database of any other information not included in our system itself.

While no one system may entirely meet everyone's needs, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss further how PIDC's Portfolio Management System might work for your agency.

The Exceptional Assistant (TEA)

Status: Review updated from 2001 report to reflect new software version

Overview TEA is the most comprehensive integrated application reviewed in this report. It provides an in-depth loan module with a range of other modules that provide medium to advanced functionality. The Canadian company has a national user base of Business Development Centers, and entered the US market in 2001.

Modules			
		Contact Management	Advanced
Accounting	Optional	One-on-one TA	Advanced
Loan portfolio	Advanced	Training courses	Intermediate
Demographics	Intermediate	Outcomes	Intermediate
Other: Accounting, Payroll, Job Cost, A/R, A/P, P/O's, Fixed Assets, CRM, POS.			

Ratings			Type of Client	
Breadth of Services	**Adv**		Microenterprise	**X**
Depth of Information	**Adv**		Small Business	**X**
Scale	**Adv**		Industrial Development	
			Real estate	

Pros:
- Well-developed, integrated modules
- Tracks variety of historical information for outcomes tracking
- Large number of user-defined fields

Cons:
- Limited fund management
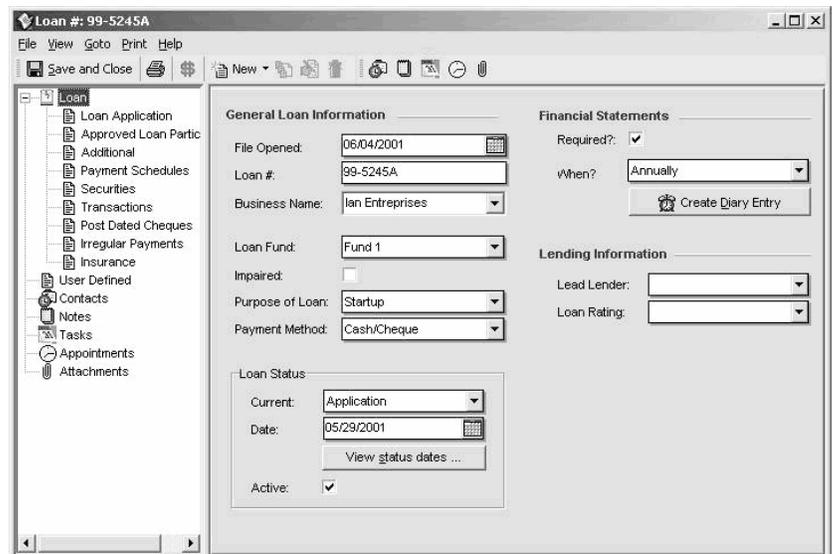
Ease of Use

Navigation: The program uses a combination of menus, toolbars on top and bottom of screen and a left-hand icon list to provide comfortable and efficient navigation to the program. However, navigation and input is highly dependent on use of mouse.

Data entry: Dropdowns are used extensively; also pop-up calendars, checkboxes, etc. Required fields are tested by the program, providing a good degree of data integrity.

Reporting: Has a variety of nicely designed reports built-in, though filtering criteria are limited; a powerful custom report writer is provided with the software.

Documentation: TEA comes with a comprehensive 200-page user's manual. A limited on-line help system is provided.

Training: The company offers training courses, either in-person or via internet connections.

Overview of modules

Lending module: TEA provides a sophisticated lending module with a great deal of control over repayment schedule creation. A flexible loan insurance system is incorporated. Payment options include post-dated checks and electronic funds transfers. TEA is limited in fund management in that loans can only be assigned to a single fund.

Demographic module: A large number of pre-defined demographic fields are supplemented with a wealth of user-defined fields of all types, including customizable dropdown lists. A section entitled "Personal Financial Statements" allows historical tracking of some demographic fields, but unfortunately this table contains no user-defined fields which would allow customization and flexibility.

Training and Technical Assistance Module: Incorporated into the Contacts module. Allows input of all TA, with date, duration, staff person, purpose, category & sub-category, and comments field.   The integrated "projects" module can be used to schedule and track classroom-based training registration and attendance. There is also a "services" module which is oriented toward tracking the clients' use of any services provided by the program, such as use of phone, fax, copier, library, etc. The list is customizable. This data is not linked to a staff person or assigned a duration.

Contact Management Module: Allows input of all contacts, with date, duration, travel time, staff person, purpose, category & sub-category, and comments field. There is a "notes" database in addition to the comments field. A nice "Diary" module allows future planned contacts and appointments to be programmed, including optional advance reminders.

Outcomes module: Provides historical tracking of job creation and payroll, divided into several categories; business financial statements, including calculation of key ratios; and a variety of personal and financial information. Unfortunately, the outcomes tables do not include user-defined fields. Otherwise, the approach is fairly ambitious.

Projects module: TEA incorporates a projects module for tracking community development efforts, where the institution is one of multiple agencies involved in the project. The module allows the participating agencies to be listed, with their planned and actual contributions to the project. Expenses can also be tracked.

Key Issues

Adaptability: Provides a good number of user-defined fields for most tables and allows customization of the key dropdown lists. Modification is done via an "administrator's module" to ensure that users do not make unauthorized changes.

Security issues: Requires users to log in with passwords; provides 5 levels of user access. After a specified time of inactivity, users are required to reenter their

password. Once loan transactions are entered they cannot be modified or deleted. All other information, including notes can be changed or deleted at any time.

Number of users: TEA is a networked application that will allow unlimited simultaneous users. The program is sold with a three-user license. Any additional users are required to have additional licenses.

Integration: TEA provides a wider array of fully-integrated modules than any other software application reviewed in this report. In addition to the modules reviewed here, the company offers a full range of accounting modules which can be incorporated. TEA also provides means to export financial data to Quickbooks, Accpac and Simply Accounting.

Technical Specifications

The software is developed in Delphi 5.0 and requires no additional software to be purchased or installed. The system runs on any Windows platform and requires limited memory.

Workstation Operating System: Win 98,Win 95, Win 2000, Win ME, Win NT
Workstation Hardware: Pentium 233, 128 meg
Networks Supported: Peer-to-Peer, Dedicated Server
Server Operating System: Windows 2000, Windows NT, Novel
Software language: Delphi 5.0 Enterprise
Database format: DBISAM

Product Information

Company Information: Next Generation Computer Solutions, Established since 1993, Currently employs 14 people (two f/t support persons)

Contact Information: 193 Water Street West, Prescott, Ontario, K0E 1T0 CANADA, Telephone: (800) 354-5152, Fax: (613) 925-2498, Email: Info@nextgen.on.ca,
Website: www.nextgen.on.ca

Product offerings: TEA IX; 9 accounting modules

Demo availability: A fully functional demo with sample data is provided on CD-ROM upon request.

Pricing: $4,995 (allows three concurrent users). TEA is a multi-user software package and the standard package provides licensing for three-concurrent users. Additional licenses can be purchased as required. An annual license fee is also required which covers all support costs and is calculated at 20% of the software value. Bulk-Purchase discounts are also available.

Training: The company offers extensive on-site training for any size organization, and also provides Internet based training if desired.

Support: Offers extensive support which includes, 24/7 toll-free support services, Email/Fax Support, program updates, off-site storage of backups, Support Watch email newsletter, and on-line knowledge base.

Vendor Comments

Next Generation Computer Solutions is a progressive software development company focusing on products related to microfinance and lending institutions. We

realize that the activities of these organizations go far beyond quantitative analysis and we therefore provide the ability to track socio-economic information including job statistics, leveraged funds, training attendance, resource center usage and various other parameters.

As with many other companies, our first microfinance program was a DOS based application. Since the inception of the product in 1993, our package (TEA) has evolved to the point that we have 90% of the market share for microfinance organizations in Canada. The success of our program is directly related to our ability to continuously improve the product and exceed our customer's expectations. Our support is second to none and we are very proud of the team of professionals that make up Next Generation.

There are approximately three hundred organizations currently using TEA and this is credited to the fact that we listen to our customers and strive to provide them with a product that meets their current and future needs. Our client base ranges from small three-user offices to larger government organizations with 30-50 users. We have a large lists of references that can be contacted at your request.

Next Generation is currently working on a full scale Training Module that will allow complete tracking of instructors, course content, fees, scheduling, billing, attendance and much more. Also in development is an Investor/Donor Module which provides organizations with the ability to track all investment sources (all relevant organizational and demographic data), repayment terms, payment transactions and associated reporting required for funding sources. Finally, we are creating a Participation Module which will allow for multiple funding sources to be tracked for one loan.

At Next Generation, our goal is to continuously evolve with our client base in order to meet their everchanging needs in microfinance, accounting and custom software solutions. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss your organizational needs and provide you with an EXCEPTIONAL integrated solution for all your Microfinance requirements.

VistaShare

Status: This review is new to the 2002 report

Overview This is a comprehensive, extremely flexible system allowing institutions of all sizes to track virtually everything about their clients except for loan details.

Modules		Contact Management	Advanced
Accounting	None	One-on-one TA	Advanced
Loan portfolio	None	Training courses	Advanced
Demographics	Advanced	Outcomes	Advanced

Other: Outcome Viewer tool to aggregate multiple institutions; useful as a network or funder consolidation tool.

Ratings			Type of Client	
Breadth of Services	Int/Adv		Microenterprise	**X**
Depth of Information	Adv		Small Business	**X**
Scale	Adv		Industrial Development	
			Real estate	

Pros:
- Completely open structure allows extensive customization
- Web-based application has significant advantages over conventional software
- Networks and donors can aggregate reports from multiple agencies

Cons:
- Some organizations may have concerns over web-based applications
- Software requires licensing fee rather than conventional outright purchase
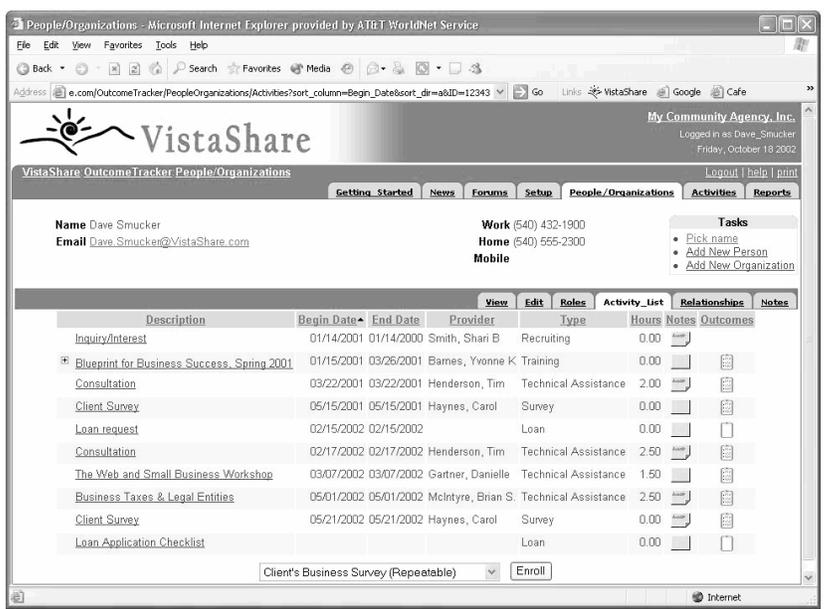
Ease of Use

Navigation: Everything appears in an internet browser window. Navigation is done through buttons and generous use of hyperlinks. Layout has been given careful thought to improve moving around a long webpage.

Data entry: Data entry is easiest by use of a mouse, with minimal keyboard support provided. Modest data validation is provided.

Reporting: Reporting is quite extensive and flexible, managed by generating queries and then storing them as standard reports. Users can develop their own private reports or choose to make them available to others.

Documentation: Brief on-line help available. A "Getting Started" Manual is complete and additional printed documentation is currently under development.

Training: Telephone-based training is provided. On-site training is available for an additional fee.

Overview of modules

Overview: VistaShare is significantly different from the other products reviewed in three respects. First, it is the only purely web-based application included in this review. An explanation of web-based applications, including a list of advantages and disadvantages, is included in the companion manual, Managing Information Successfully. Second, this is the only application to make virtually all fields user-definable, providing an unlimited amount of flexibility within the existing tables. Third, VistaShare provides a companion product, Outcome Viewer, which allows networks and funders to generate aggregated reports from all affiliates that are using VistaShare to collect data.

Lending module: Not applicable. However, an interface with DownHome Loan Manager is currently under development that will allow client data and loan information to be synchronized back and forth between the two applications.

Demographic module: A very strong, powerful module. An unlimited number of fields can be defined at any time – text, numeric, date, memo, and customizable dropdown lists. To provide some structure, the vendor provides a number of starter templates, but each can be fully customized. Provides an unlimited number of relationships between individuals and institutions entered into the system. Non-clients, such as staff, volunteers, and client prospects, can be entered into the system and identified through assignment of one or more "roles." Businesses can have multiple owners, and individuals can have multiple businesses.

Training and Technical Assistance Module: Training courses can be scheduled and registration and attendance tracked for each participant. Classroom hours can be tallied for each participant, grades assigned, and notes written for each participant and each session. The system currently allows facilitator scheduling, but currently with only one facilitator per session. Otherwise, the training module appears quite comprehensive. Technical assistance, and contact of any kind with the client, can be monitored event-by-event. Duration, staff person, purpose, location, etc., can all be assigned, including use of user-customizable dropdown lists, and notes can be written for each event. As with other modules in VistaShare, any number of additional fields can be defined.

Contact Management Module: Contact Management allows tracking of any and all contacts with clients, prospective clients, and non-clients (e.g., volunteers). Staff person, purpose, duration, and any number of other fields can be defined. Notes can be taken for any client at any time. Memo size is unlimited, notes can be optionally marked as confidential, and all notes are locked from modification or deletion after a period of seven days for security purposes. There is only limited ability to schedule

future appointments, and the system provides no calendar of upcoming appointments and no "tickler" or alarm system.

Outcomes module: Again, because of the open structure of VistaShare, any type of Outcomes data can be tracked, and all data can be tracked historically. Job, income, or asset data can be tracked chronologically. Qualitatively-oriented user opinion surveys can also be easily created.

Key Issues

Adaptability: The system is designed from the ground up to be entirely adaptable. The open structure provides the possibility to track most any client information of interest to a microenterprise agency except loan portfolio details. However, because the tracking decisions were not made by the programmers, the user needs to make decisions about what to track and configure the system to track that information. Some "templates" are provided, but the real value of the system can be tapped only if the user invests time configuring the system.

Security issues: As a web-based system, all users are required to enter a user name and password to access the system. There are three access levels: a user level, an advanced user level, and one administrator level.   As all data is stored off-site, on the VistaShare servers, the data is fully protected from tampering and also means the institution does not need to worry about backup policies. However, the software does not provide an audit trail for determining when data was entered or changed, or by whom.

Number of users: The application is multi-user, and the monthly fee allows an unlimited number of users.

Integration: The available modules integrate seamlessly. Transferability of data to other applications is done easily by exporting any query as a "CVS" (comma separated value) file.

Technical Specifications

The software is developed using several "open source" products developed for creation of web-based applications: Zope, Python, and PostgreSQL Zope is a content manager and application server tool. Python is an object oriented language similar to C++ and Perl that uses HTML and SQL. PostgreSQL is a database that is comparable in structure and scalability to Oracle. The application can be accessed by any computer with an internet connection and a browser installed, meaning Windows, Mac, Linux, and Unix operating systems are supported, among others. The system will handle very large number of records.

Workstation Operating System: Windows, Mac, Linux, and Unix with supported browser

Workstation Hardware: 486 PC or higher.

Networks Supported: any

Server Operating System: any

Software language: Zope and Python

Database format: PostgreSQL

Product Information

Company Information: VistaShare is a new company, established in 2001, to develop software for microenterprise agencies. The founders worked previously with client/server and web-based administrative software for colleges and universities.

Contact information: Toll-free: 866-82-VISTA (866-828-4782); Local: 540-432-1900; FAX: 540-432-1900 (call first); e-mail: sales@VistaShare.com; www.VistaShare.com; 1251 Virginia Ave., Harrisonburg, VA 22802

Product offerings: The company offers their core product, Outcome Tracker as well as a companion product, Outcome Viewer, which networks and donors can use to aggregate data on all their affiliates using Outcome Tracker. Fields common to all the affiliates are mapped together allowing the results to be totaled.

Demo availability: The company provides web-based demonstrations and provides prospective clients with a temporary password allowing them to log on to the website and work with a sample data set.

Pricing: Pricing for Outcome Tracker and Outcome Viewer consists of an initial setup fee and a monthly subscription.

- **Setup Fee.** This one-time fee covers the initial assessment, training and support for your organization.
- **Monthly Subscription.** The monthly subscription includes product enhancements, product support, and database server setup/maintenance.

Pricing is based on modules purchased (e.g., Outcome Tracker, Data Exchange module, Outcome Viewer) and the number of people who are provided services in a given year. For example, an organization in the first tier (up to 200 people served/year) would pay $995 for the setup of Outcome Tracker and a subscription of $80/month. Contact VistaShare to receive a pricing schedule for your organization.

Training: Six hours of telephone training is provided to new clients, providing a system overview, explanation of key concepts, how to configure a new system, and how to generate queries and reports. Additional on-site or telephone training is available at an additional cost.

Support: The monthly subscription includes the following services: (1) Database server maintenance by VistaShare, including off-site backups.   (2) Product are available to all users immediately, as there are no downloads involved, or need to wait for update patches. (3) E-mail support directly from VistaShare, access to web-based support materials, and access to other users on secure user forums.

Vendor Comments

Do you:

- *Report outcomes to your funders?*
- *Access data from more then one location?*
- *Participate in a network that aggregates outcome data and shares information?*

If you said "yes" to any of these questions, VistaShare can help. VistaShare was created to meet the information needs of the MEDA microenterprise network in the United States and Mexico. We actually worked as part of the MEDA network and helped search for an information system. When we couldn't find a system to meet MEDA's needs, the idea for Outcome Tracker was born.

Outcome Tracker and Outcome Viewer are built for the web. All you need is an Internet connection. We chose this route because of the many advantages the Internet provides, including:

- *Adding an office or working from home is simple.*
- *Networks of organizations can aggregate their data.*
- *You need not worry about purchasing or maintaining a database server.*

Outcome Tracker enables you to define the fields (e.g., demographics, outcomes) that you need. Templates are provided to get you started. During training sessions, we'll teach you how to customize the templates for your organization or network.

For lending, VistaShare is collaborating with DownHome Solutions to create an interface between Outcome Tracker and DownHome Loan Manager. This data exchange module will eliminate duplicate entry and will allow reports that cross applications, such as loan summaries broken down by client demographics, by services provided, or by outcomes. We are pleased to be working with DownHome Solutions so that you can enjoy the strengths of each system!

Please contact us at 1-866-828-4782 (toll free). We will work with you to determine whether Outcome Tracker is a good fit for your organization or network.

Part II: Detailed Software Function Matrix

The following pages provide a detailed software function matrix. An "**X**" indicates when a software application fulfills a function as described in the "explanation" column. In some cases, the function is provided not in the core application, but via an add-on module offered by the company. These cases are marked by an "**Opt.**" In the **Modules** and **Ratings** sections, "**1**" indicates "Basic," "**2**" indicates "Intermediate," and "**3**" indicates "Advanced." If a particular application does not provide a certain module, the column is marked "**N/A**" at the beginning of the section.

The matrix is subdivided into the following sections

Overall
        Modules
        Ratings for Breadth, Depth and Scale
        Pricing Structure
        Type of client
        Ease of use
        Reporting
        Security
        Integration
        Technical Specifications
        Company Information

Portfolio Module
        Lending Methodology
        Loan Pricing Options
        Funds Management
        Repayment Schedule Options
        Late Payment Options

Other Modules
        Demographic Module
        One-on-one TA
        Class-based Training
        Contact Management
        Outcomes Tracking

	Explanation	Client Track	DHLM	FAS	GMS	LoanPro	Loan Perform	Micro-MIS	Nortridge	PIDC	TEA	Vista Share
Modules												
Loan Portfolio			3	3	3	3	3		3	3	3	
Demographics		3	1	1	1	2	1	2	3	1	3	3
Contact Mgmt		2	Opt					1	1	1	3	3
One-on-One TA		2	1					2		1	3	3
Training Courses		3	1					1		1	2	3
Outcomes		2	Opt	1				2	1	2	2	3
Accounting					Opt	2	2				Opt	
Ratings												
Breadth of Services	Ratings based on criteria outlined in Part I of the Findings Report	2-3	1-2	1	1	1	1	2	1-2	2	3	2-3
Depth of Information	See above	3	1	1	1	1-2	1	2	3	1-2	3	3
Scale of Institution	See above	3	1	2	1	2-3	1-2	1-2	3	1-2	3	3
Type of Client												
Microenterprise		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Small Business			X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Industrial Development										X		
Real Estate						X			X	X		
Ease of Use												
Keyboard data entry	System is designed to allow rapid keyboard data entry without use of mouse.			X	X	X				X		
Data Validation	Most fields contain data validation to ensure accuracy of data input.	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X

	Explanation	Client Track	DHLM	FAS	GMS	LoanPro	Loan Perform	Micro-MIS	Nortridge	PIDC	TEA	Vista Share
On-line Help	Provides pop-up help or Windows-style help file.			X	X		X		X		X	X
Printed user manual	Software includes printed operations manual.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
User tutorial	Documentation includes step-by-step user tutorial.	X	X				X		X	X	X	
Training courses	Vendor provides training.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Reporting												
No. of loan reports	Number of basic loan report formats (not counting filtering criteria as unique reports)	0	9	53	8	11	>55		18	30	30	0
No. other reports	Number of pre-defined non-loan report formats.	>50	2	13	0	7	>10	10	6	16	45	12
No. of filter criteria	Number of filtering criteria provided for reports	4	9	Up to 9	6	5	15	7	12		2-5	No limit
Customizable reports	Includes a custom report writer	X	X	X	X	X	Opt		X	X	X	X
Can preview reports	Allows screen preview of reports	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Security												
Password log-on	Requires entry of a password to open the system.	X	In Multi-user	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Explanation	Client Track	DHLM	FAS	GMS	LoanPro	Loan Perform	Micro-MIS	Nortridge	PIDC	TEA	Vista Share
User log-on Requires each user to have a user ID	X	In Multi-user		Opt	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Force password change Require users to change passwords on a specified frequency						X		X		X	
Audit trail Tracks changes made to records.	X				X	Partial		X	X	X	
Data files protected Data files cannot be opened from outside of the system.	X	In Multi-user	X		X	Opt		X	X	X	X
No. User security levels Number of different security levels for users.	4	3	8	3	9	6	6		14	5	3
User-customized security Each user's security access can be customized.	X			Opt	X	X		X	X	X	
Remote user authentication For dial-in users, or for web-based software, thorough authentication is important.											X
Integration											
Link to Accounting Portfolio data can be linked to other accounting modules.			X	Opt	X	X		Opt	X	X	
Export tables Allows tables to be exported in a common exchange format.	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X

	Explanation	Client Track	DHLM	FAS	GMS	LoanPro	Loan Perform	Micro-MIS	Nortridge	PIDC	TEA	Vista Share
Technical Specs												
Web-based Application	Data is stored on the vendor's servers.	Opt										X
Workstation RAM	Minimum RAM requirement for workstations.	64M	32M	32M	16M	32M	32M	64M	32M	128M	64M	32M
Software language	Language used for development of the software application.	C++/Java	Paradox	COBOL	Basica	PRO-IV	Visual FoxPro	MS Access	Visual C++	MS Access	Delphi	Zope & Python
Database	Format used for storage of the data files.	MS SQL Server, Sybase, Informix	Paradox	Propriet ary	Basic	PRO-ISAM	DBF	MS Access	SQL, Sybase, Oracle	MS Access	DBISAM	Postgre SQL
Company Information												
Year company established		1984	1998	1980	1980	1978	1998	1987	1981	1957	1993	2001
Number of employees		Confide ntial	2	6	19	7	6	45	12	70	14	7
Number of clients	Number of clients currently using the module(s) reviewed in this report.	Confide ntial	150	64	325	6	60	20		65	295	10
Demo on CD-ROM	Vendor provides fully-functional demo on CD-ROM.	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Demo download from web	Vendor allows fully-functional demo to be downloaded.	X		X			X		X	X	X	X

Demo by remote access	Vendor provides demonstrations of software by use of remote access software.	X			X		X	X	X	N/A
Demo slide-show	Vendor provides a slideshow that gives an overview of the software.	X			X	X			X	
Portfolio Module	N/A					N/A				N/A
Lending Methodologies										
Individual Lending (eg, 1 or more loans to 1 client)	Most typical and straightforward methodology	X	X	X	X	Loan Summ	X	X	X	
Partnership Lending (eg, 1 loan to 2 clients)	A loan record can be linked to multiple records in the client table.				X	Loan Summ	X		X	
Group Lending (eg, 4 loans to 4 clients)	Multiple records in the loan table can be linked to multiple records in the client table, even though there is a primary link of one client to one loan.						X			
Loan Pricing Options	N/A					N/A				N/A
Fixed Rate Interest	Interest rate does not vary during the term of the loan.	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	

Feature	Description							
Floating Rate Interest	Interest rate is linked to an external measure and can change throughout the term of the loan.	Opt	X	X		X	X	X
Compounded Interest	Interest is charged on outstanding interest owed.	Opt	X			X	X	X
360 day payment year	Calculations are based on a 30-day month.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
365 day payment year	Calculations are based on actual number of days.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Fixed Up-front commission	Allows automatic calculation of a fixed amount commission payable prior to or upon loan disbursement.			X	X	X	X	X
Percent up-front commission	Allows automatic calculation of a percentage commission payable prior to or upon loan disbursement.		X	X	X	X	X	X
Insurance charges	Allows automatic periodic calculation of insurance charges.	Opt	X			X	X	X

Funds Management		N/A					N/A				N/A
Payment by cash	Loan payments can be recorded as cash transactions.		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
Payment by check	Loan payments can be recorded as checks.		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
Payment by post-dated check	Allows input of a series of post-dated checks which can then be transferred to the loan payment register.									X	
Payment by electronic transfer	Loan payments can be recorded as electronic transfers.		X	X	X	X		X	X		
Payments entered by batch	Loan payments are batch processed with verification of the sum of the transactions.			X	X				X	X	
Assign loan to single fund	Allows fund allocation; a loan can be assigned to a single fund		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
Assign loan to multiple funds	Allows fund allocation; a loan can be assigned to multiple funds		Opt	X	X	X			X		

Repayment Schedule Options		N/A					N/A			N/A
Term loan with constant payment	Can create schedule with constant payments where each payment is a combination of principal and interest.	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	
Term loan with constant principal	Can create schedule with a fixed principal payment and a declining interest payment.		x	x			x	x	x	
Irregular payments (set by user)	Allows full customization of the loan repayments.		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Grace period, principal	Allows programming of a grace period on principal repayment.		x	x			x	x	x	
Grace period, interest	Allows programming of a grace period on interest repayment (but no interest calculation).		x	x	x		x	x	x	
Line of Credit	Allows a "line of credit" product, which does not have a repayment schedule.	Opt	x	x	x			x	x	

Feature	Description							
Single Payment	Allows a single loan payment at the end of the loan term.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Balloon Payment	Allows set periodic loan payments with a large balloon payment at the end of the term.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Daily payment frequency	Allows programming of daily payments.		X			X		X
Weekly payment frequency	Allows programming of weekly payments.	Opt	X	X		X		X
Biweekly payment frequency	Allows programming of payments every two weeks.	Opt	X	X		X		X
Semi-monthly payment	Allows programming of payments twice a month.	Opt	X	X		X		X
Monthly payments	Allows programming of monthly payments.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Bimonthly payments	Allows programming of payments every other month	Opt	X	X	X	X		X
Quarterly payments	Allows programming of quarterly payments.	Opt	X	X	X	X	X	X
Semi-annual payments	Allows programming of semi-annual payments.	Opt	X	X	X	X	X	X

		Opt							
Annual payments	Allows programming of annual payments.	N/A		x	x	x	x	x	N/A
Late payment options		N/A							N/A
Penalty on late payment	Allows for automatic calculation of late payment penalties.	x	x	x	x	x		x	
Optional override of penalty	Allows user to override late payment penalties.	x	x	x	x		x	x	?
Permit refinancing	Allows user to refinance loans.	x	x	x			x	x	
Document securities	Allows input of detailed information on securities offered as collateral.					x	x	x	x
Demographic Module									
Multiple clients per business	Allows more than one client record to be linked to a business record.				x	x		x	x
Multiple businesses per client	Allows more than one business record to be linked to a client record.				x			x	x

Feature	Description	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Can include non-clients	Allows input of information for individuals / companies not expected to become clients, e.g., referrals, volunteers, donors, etc.	X		X				X	X	X	X
Can include pre-clients	Allows input of information on prospective clients.		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
No. of pre-defined contact fields	Number of fields dedicated to contact information (address, phone, etc) per client, not including user-defined fields	12	5	5	10	3	13	16	16	30	25
No. pre-defined demographic fields	Number of fields dedicated to demographic information on the client (not the business)	13	8	2	0	7	10	21	0	12	27
No. of User-defined Fields	Number of user-defined fields dedicated to client or business information.	Unlimited	0	64	45	3	0	60	0	16	Unlimited
No. user-custom dropdowns	Number of dropdown lists for demographic data which may be user-customized	Unlimited	6	4	7	8	2	60	0	56	Unlimited

One-on-One TA					N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A			N/A
Track total hours	Allows tracking of total hours of one-on-one TA received by client.		X					X	X	X	X
Track individual contacts	Allows individual record for each TA event.	X	X					X	X	X	X
Track hours per contact	Records duration of each TA event.		X					X		X	X
Track staff person	Records staff person involved in TA event.	X	X					X	X	X	X
Identify purpose	Records the purpose of the TA event.	X	X					X	X	X	X
User-customize purpose list	Allows user to customize the purpose list.	X	X					X	X	X	X
Comments per contact	Can record comments for each TA event.	X	X					X	X	X	X
Confidentiality	Allows comments to be marked as confidential.	X						X	X		X
Plan future TA	Allows planning for future TA, including date and planned purpose.	X	X						X	X	X

	Description							
Class-based Training		N/A		N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A
Input by class	Allows class attendance to be recorded from a class-orientation rather than a client-orientation.	x						x
Track class hours	Allows tracking of number of classroom hours for each client.	x	x			x	x	x
Track attendance/absence	Allows tracking of attendances and absences of each client.	x	x			x	Opt	x
Track facilitator scheduling	Allows identification of staff/volunteers involved in teaching class, by session.						Opt	x
Contact Management			N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A
User-customize list	Allows user to customize the list of types of contacts.	x				x	x	x
Assign staff person	Records staff person involved in the contact.	x	x			x	x	x
Memo field	Can record comments for each contact	x	x	Opt.	x	x	x	x
More than one memo per day?	Permits more than one memo to be added with a single date.	x	x	Opt.	x	x	x	x

Size limit of memo	Maximum number of characters per memo.	No Limit	No Limit	50K	200	50		No Limit	No Limit	No Limit	No limit	No limit
Confidentiality	Allows memos to be marked as confidential.	Private opt.						x	Private opt.	x		Private opt.
Can edit earlier memos	Memos can be edited at a later date.	Lockable	x	x		x		x	x	x	x	For 7 days
Can delete earlier memos	Memos can be deleted at a later date.	Lockable	x	x	N/A	x	N/A	x	x	x	x	For 7 days
Outcomes Tracking												
Household income level	Allows input of household income.	x	x				x	x			x	x
Historical?	Data can be tracked historically.	x	Opt								x	x
Job creation	Allows input of job creation data.	x	x	x		x		x		x	x	x
Historical?	Data can be tracked historically.	x	Opt					x		x	x	x
Business financials	Allows input of basic business financial data.	x	Opt	x		x			x	x	x	x
Historical?	Data can be tracked historically.	x	Opt							x	x	x
Client perceptions	Allows input of client perception surveys.											x
Historical?	Data can be tracked historically.										x	x

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