

USL Financials Hosted Locally Or On The Internet

By Brent Dirks, CPA, EA, MCSE

USL Financials is provided by Public-Sector.com as either a locally hosted (intranet-based) or web-hosted (Internet-based) program. For this review, I used the company's

Public-Sector.com
800-800-0768
www.Public-Sector.com

demo software, which can be accessed at asp.uslfinancials.com, as well as documentation provided on their web site and the software help system.

Public-Sector.com provides module-based software to state and local governments, not-for-profit organizations

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and educational institutions. On the client workstation, USL Financials uses Microsoft Access for data entry and reporting. On the server side, Microsoft SQL Server provides data storage as well as security.

The software uses a “navigator” style interface with buttons on the main screen that activate the individual modules. Modules provided include Accounts Payable, General Ledger, Accounts Receivable, Purchase Order, Financial Reporting, Purchase Requisitions, Inventory Control, Job Cost, Check Reconciliation and Control System. Within each module, another navigator window appears with buttons for Maintenance, Transactions, Processing, Reports and Utilities. Below this row of buttons, two panes present the various options, such as entering transactions, viewing reports and so forth.

Data-entry screens have the characteristic feel of applications written for the Microsoft Access environment. The screens tend to be simple, and data entry can be done without using the mouse. There are very few advanced Windows interface features, such as right-click pop-up menus. Online help is available but not as thorough as it could be.

The chart of accounts accommodates up to 32 characters and nine levels. Multiple fiscal entities and multiple fiscal years are available for reporting purposes. The program also features the ability

to do allocations and distributions. The system provides security down to the account level, allowing the administrator to define who has access to specific information.

The encumbrance system insures that budget limits will not be exceeded. When a purchase order is initiated, the USL Financials Purchase Order module checks the allocation accounts for budget availability. If no such availability exists, the purchase order cannot be issued. If the purchase order can go forward, it creates an encumbrance entry that obligates the budget. Upon receipt of goods and services and the corresponding vendor invoice, Accounts Payable disencumbers the budget and subsequently expenses the amount. The USL Financials Accounts Payable module then processes the vendor transaction to produce a check for the vendor.

According to company literature, USL Financials is suited for non-profit organizations and government agencies with revenues/budgets from \$5 million to \$10 billion. The open architecture database provides scalability for the growing organization. Import and export features are provided by the fact that

the database is ODBC compliant, meaning that data can be freely transferred to other Microsoft Office applications, and ad hoc reports can be generated by a variety of third-party report generators, such as Crystal Reports.

If your organization fits the profile described above, I strongly suggest you access the company's web site and try the demo for yourself. As discussed in the introductory article, you will need to do some additional research to understand the benefits, as well as potential problems, associated with intranet- and Internet-hosted software technology. ■★★★★

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