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## Accounting Programs.

The

Financial Edge from Blackbaud is primarily designed for mid-sized to large nonprofit organizations that require transparency and accountability in their actions.

However, the vendor has just recently released a small business version (see below). The Financial Edge is a powerful system hidden behind a deceptively simple user interface.

### **EASE OF USE/FLEXIBILITY-**

Often, navigational ease is tied to program strength, with the rule being that the more powerful a product, the higher the level of difficulty encountered during use. Not so with The Financial Edge from Blackbaud. The main user interface is easily navigated, with little to no screen clutter. A drop-down menu at the top of the screen provides system function access, while product module access is found in the vertical menu to the left. The homepage can be easily customized, such as by adding features and functions used on a daily basis. Navigational arrows will take you back and forth between screens, with the name of the organization and the current module displayed immediately to the right.

The Financial Edge Dashboard allows users to monitor all activities and tasks. New panes can also be created to display on the dashboard, providing additional information such as graphs and charts or other critical data. Links to frequently used web pages can be easily created, and the Automatic Account Creation function simplifies the entering of account information.

### **MODULES/SCALABILITY-**

Modules available in The Financial Edge include GL, Accounting Form, AP,

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Edge.

Smaller nonprofits will be interested to know that the vendor just introduced The Financial Edge for Small Offices. Designed for one to three users through a license or subscription/hosted model, The Financial Edge for Small Offices bundles six common modules together (GL; AP; Miscellaneous Cash Receipts; Project, Grant and Endowment Management; Budget Management; and Cash Management). The availability of this product makes The Financial Edge a truly scalable product from one end of the spectrum to the other.

### **FEATURES/FUNCTIONALITY-**

The new WebPortal function allows users to manage all requisitions, invoices, check requests and expense reports electronically by providing an online window for access to these and other items. This reduces paperwork considerably, eliminates lost and misplaced items, and ensures timely processing.

The Financial Edge contains excellent budgeting capability, with the ability to easily view line-item budget details, publish budget guidelines for appropriate personnel, produce multiple “what if” scenarios, and track multiple budget adjustments. Excellent drill-down capability allows users to drilldown into records from any panel, invoice, account or transaction.

The Raiser's Edge, the donor relationship management solution, offers a long list of features including the ability to store varying file types such as Microsoft Word or Excel files, newspaper articles or websites on the donor record. The Contact Management function allows users to record all prospect and donor interactions, link scheduled activities to an Outlook calendar, and

create personalized acknowledgement or appeal letters. Different fundraising

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All system reports can be previewed on-screen, printed, emailed directly from the print screen, or exported to a variety of formats including Crystal Reports (RPT), Excel, HTML, Lotus 1-2-3, ODBC, RTF, Text, Word, or XML.

### **SUPPORT/HELP-**

The Financial Edge offers three levels of support plans: Advantage, Advantage Professional and Advantage Priority. Each plan offers access to the Knowledgebase, as well as product forums and blogs. User guides are included in the support plans, as is a subscription to software and industry newsletters. Advantage Priority customers have access to extended telephone support hours and also receive other benefits, including priority status.

The Financial Edge Help function provides in-depth information on product modules and features and functions found within. Training is available through Blackbaud Learn, an annual subscription service that provides ongoing skill development training. Instructor-led and self-paced training is also available.

### **RELATIVE VALUE-**

It's vital that nonprofit organizations be accountable to their board, their donors and to the IRS. While there are many products that claim to make accountability easy, the fact is that The Financial Edge does. The Financial Edge for Small Offices is suitable for one to three users and starts at \$2,995, offering a bundle of six modules. Standard Financial Edge modules start at \$2,000. If accountability is important to your organization, The Financial Edge should be seriously considered.

### **2009 OVERALL RATING:**

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