Social entrepreneurship is pursuing innovative solutions to existing issues. However, social entrepreneurship differs from traditional entrepreneurship in that it seeks to provide solutions solely to improve society as opposed to making changes for profit. We discussed social businesses that work to improve society and utilize profits to grow and improve the company rather than to pay stakeholders.

First Access is a social business that works with microfinance lenders that help provide loans in developing areas. Because the microfinance lenders are providing small loans to people that are often in remote areas, they spend a relatively large amount of money sending loan officers to investigate applicants. First Access uses a loan applicant’s mobile data to determine the applicant’s risk to the lender. The algorithms First Access use allow for remote automated risk assessment. Matt Hennessy says this generally saves $5-15 per loan.

First Access only relies on mobile phones to get consent from loan applicants to access their mobile data. The user checks yes in the consent SMS and sends it to the mobile provider. The mobile provider has an agreement with First Access and releases the applicants mobile data once they receive the consent SMS. Matt discussed how they would like to send out more of a privacy statement to the users to aid with transparency to the applicant. However, they do not currently have a good method to provide a privacy statement since they do not have any direct interaction with the applicant.

Android or other smart technology solutions would probably not be a viable option for First Access. As they are working with low-income clients in developing countries, there is not a reliable internet connection and almost all users are limited to feature phones. Also, First Access does not have any need for a mobile application under their current system. They do not interact with the applicant at all. They only interact with the lenders and get data from mobile providers. The only place they could add some type of application would be to interact with the lender in some way.

This discussion about social entrepreneurship gave me an interesting look into the not for profit opportunities that are available to help affect social change through technology. I do not believe that what First Access is currently doing really relates to mobile development however. I do think it is impressive what they are able to determine just from basic cellphone usage data, and it raises questions on what other information can be gained from this data.