

**Streamlining Costs and Increasing Fiscal Accountability -
An Integrated Approach to Financial Cost Tracking and
Reporting on Rapid Development Satellite Projects**

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As the dust settles upon a decade of developing "faster, better, cheaper" satellites, NASA's Small Explorer (SMEX) Project has been one of constant change. The project manager, mission manager, and lead subsystem engineer of yesteryear may find themselves out of date should they ignore the budget constraints/changes over the past decade. Yesterday's fiscal reporting and cost tracking processes are seldom valid today, and even less likely to be valid tomorrow.

The GSFC fiscal accounting system currently uses a mainframe computer to generate a myriad of canned fiscal reports. These reports, although useful, are not always conducive to the needs of rapid development satellite projects such as SMEX. As part of the SMEX Projects' commitment to meeting the current and future requirement to be more cost efficient and responsive in controlling costs, this paper focuses on recent developments in fiscal reporting and cost tracking areas of the SMEX Projects' satellite bus development process. Specifically, the paper discusses the development and implementation of a low cost automated financial and schedule processing system that provides user-friendly, on-line, current and trend financial, schedule, and management data. This system was developed using the MSOffice Suite software and utilized Microsoft's OLE and ODBC standards as well as Visual Basic processes. The end result is a user-friendly tool that can highlight potential cost growths and projections for different levels of management. Some of the other key benefits of this system include:

1. Flexibility to adapt to any flight program's needs (public or private sector).
2. Provides fiscal and manpower resource information to the lead engineers in order for them to prepare more accurate operating plans.
3. Provides historical data for current and future missions.
4. Provides up-to-date contractor and fiscal cost information which reduces traditional lag-time of approximately one month to a couple weeks.
5. Minimal user training due to the familiarity of the MSOffice software (Excel, Word, Access, etc.)

The presentation portion of this paper will also include a live demonstration of the key features of this application.

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