



**SUCCESS STORY**

**MOUNTAIN AMERICA CREDIT UNION DEPLOYS ACES  
ENTERPRISE-WIDE TO REDUCE RISK, IMPROVE  
QUALITY AND ENHANCE COMPLIANCE**

# COMPANY



**MOUNTAIN AMERICA**  
CREDIT UNION

Mountain America Credit Union is a federally chartered credit union, headquartered in Sandy, Utah, regulated under the authority of the National Credit Union Administration. It is the second-largest credit union in Utah and the 13th largest credit union in the United States. Founded in the 1930's, it has more than \$13 billion in assets and more than 1 million members. For more information, visit [macu.com](http://macu.com).

## CHALLENGE

As one of the nation's preeminent credit unions, quality is more than just a goal at Mountain America. It is the foundation upon which the Utah-based credit union has built its success.

"Because of our business model, a strong quality review process plays a key role in both the member experience and the strength of our portfolio," said Jenille Fairbanks, vice president of lending compliance at Mountain America. "We have people throughout our member service teams working on all aspects of loan origination. With hundreds of hands in the mix, the loan quality process is integral in assuring that our loans are originated according to our procedures and that decisions are made within our risk appetite."

As is often the case, Mountain America's growth had outstripped the ability of its spreadsheet-driven internal quality control and review

processes to manage risk not just in its mortgage operations, but across all of its consumer lending channels. Thus, Mountain America sought a third-party audit review platform that could:

- ✓ Deliver a unified quality review process across multiple lines of business.
- ✓ Share findings with other team members across the organization.
- ✓ Improve team accountability.
- ✓ Report on quality trends over time.
- ✓ Help maintain compliance with lending regulatory changes.

# SOLUTION

According to Fairbanks, ACES Quality Management & Control® software possessed the features, functionality and flexibility Mountain America sought to manage quality reviews for its mortgage and consumer lending channels. The features of most interest to Mountain America included:

## ACES CONNECT™

Collaborate securely to monitor key data and metrics, review audit activity, remediate defects and manage corrective actions.

## ACES SAMPLING

Replace manual input from multiple files with automated criteria-based sampling to create better, larger samples in minutes, not hours.

## ACES REVIEW

Increase loan review speed while reducing defects using ACES Managed Questionnaires, customized question sets or both.

## ACES REPORTING

Leverage standard or customized templates to produce executive-level reports in minutes v. days and gain real-time insights to make more informed business decisions.

Once the implementation was underway, however, Fairbanks and Mountain America quickly realized that the ACES platform had the potential to improve quality in other areas of the organization.

“Our original motivation for bringing on ACES was to have a database solution that would increase the flexibility of reporting and the ability to drill into what is happening organizationally with both our secondary market mortgage and consumer lending quality control processes,” Fairbanks explained.

*“Because the ACES system enables us to customize and develop our own questionnaires, we found there were a lot of other uses for ACES in our non-lending areas of business, like deposits.”*

Mountain America is now leveraging ACES to help monitor new account opening, commercial lending, regulatory compliance, and various processes in managing and maintaining accounts. The tool is seeing greater adoption and is meeting needs across the enterprise.

# RESULTS

Since implementing ACES and expanding its use across the organization, Mountain America has:

- ✓ Eliminated manual population pulls and stratifications for loan sampling.
- ✓ Gained greater control over loan review activities, including question sets, workflows and testing.
- ✓ Increased visibility into findings, reporting and trending.
- ✓ Centralized communication between departments.

## Centralized Communication

One of the biggest challenges in Mountain America's previous quality review process was the quality control team's ability to share findings with other team members across the organization. Using ACES CONNECT, Mountain America's quality control team has created a hub for all communications related to quality issues to ensure issues are shared in an accurate and timely manner. For Fairbanks, the immediacy of the feedback her team can provide employees about areas for improvement greatly enhances Mountain America's ability to keep quality at the forefront of its operations.

"ACES CONNECT has enabled us to increase efficiency in defect/error remediation across the board, but we've found it especially useful in communicating with front-line staff about corrections to the account opening process," said Fairbanks. "In addition, we've cut our review turn times for consumer loans to within five business days

of closing, which has been one of the largest improvements for my team internally."

With this expedited review process, Mountain America has been able to increase accountability, as employees are less resistant to feedback because issues are identified and shared earlier.

"Before, our team would conduct its review and then prepare and post a report with our findings, which was published well after the issues identified in the report had occurred. Furthermore, we had to rely on employees opening and reviewing the report to discover what issues they needed to address." Fairbanks explained. "Because ACES enables us to communicate errors to employees right when we find them, our employees can course-correct before errors or issues become ingrained in their day-to-day activities,"

## 360 Insights

ACES not only enabled Mountain America to quickly and easily share immediate findings across the organization, but it also enhanced Mountain America's ability to aggregate and report on its findings.

"With our previous process, we could only provide data on our quality reviews one month at a time, which made it difficult to pinpoint the root cause of errors and compare our findings over time," Fairbanks said. "Now, because all our findings are housed in ACES' flexible reporting database, we can identify trends, and as we implement processes to correct those errors, we can see how our numbers are improving month after month, which makes it a lot easier to demonstrate the effectiveness of those changes and our review process as a whole."

The ability to document both quality issues and remediation plans is critical when faced with a regulatory exam. As a result of the January 2021 memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA) and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), Fairbanks has noted the credit union will be subject to a higher level of scrutiny from NCUA, its prudential regulator. ACES will help Mountain America manage this increase in regulatory oversight.

“As far as regulatory risk, we have greater insight into what’s happening and the ability to justify what we’re doing through documentation thanks to ACES. In the event of an audit or exam, we have a tool that seamlessly drills into the specifics of our procedures and how they are being followed,” Fairbanks said.

## Increased Accuracy and Efficiency

Using ACES as the single system of record for all things quality-related has empowered Mountain America to enhance its enterprise-wide culture of quality by creating a unified quality review process across the organization. With the tracking abilities ACES provides, Mountain America can easily look back to pinpoint oversights and unrealized risks to build a review process around these findings. Ultimately, streamlining operations and nurturing investor confidence with their sound process.

“We now have data in one central location, we can build improved organizational reporting, moving away from disparate processes. ACES makes it possible for us to effectively rate performance and measure performance against established key performance indicators. The ability to

provide this level of reporting is a key tool for demonstrating the effectiveness of our quality control and monitoring functions,” said Fairbanks.

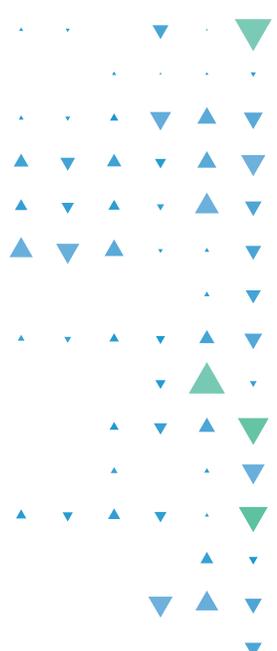
For Fairbanks and her team, these improvements in accuracy have also yielded significant efficiency gains in both reviews and reporting.

***“Volume-wise, our reviewers went from struggling to complete one to two mortgage reviews per day to easily completing three or four, and we’ve seen similar results with our consumer lending reviews,” she said. “It also used to take several hours to pull a report and get through the data. Now, once we have the initial report built in ACES, we can simply run it rather than rebuilding it every month, which is a huge time-saver.”***

“While we initially chose ACES based on its reputation for improving loan quality and reducing lending risk, the challenges that the technology addresses and the benefits that it delivers are pretty universal across our organization,” Fairbanks added.

“Across the board, our teams have been very excited about the increased accuracy, increased accountability and the efficiencies ACES delivers.”





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**Jenille Fairbanks**

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at Mountain America Credit Union.

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WHILE CONTROLLING COSTS AND RISK**

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