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Financial Information Reporting System (FIRS) User Guide

Government of Alberta ■ [Advanced Education and Technology](#)

Post Secondary Planning & Investment Branch

This document is to be used in conjunction with the *Financial Information Reporting System reporting manual* and the *Common Terminology, Definitions, and Classifications manual*. The Financial Information Reporting System collects data about institutional financial information, such as revenue and expenditure.

This user guide is intended to give you an understanding of how you can use the FIRS system to prepare and submit information electronically, and view and print reports.

The FIRS system can be installed on a stand-alone PC or it can be installed on your Local Area Network (LAN). You may have already installed the Launch facility. Refer to the Appendix for instructions on downloading the KPIRS software, version 2011-12a from the File Transfer Protocol (*FTP*) site and how to install the software.

In each of the following sections, we describe the general procedures you will use in the normal processing of financial information as you prepare to send your regular submission to the Department. Screen shots from the FIRS software are included to illustrate the procedures.

For a description of the data elements that make up the various components of FIRS, refer to the *Financial Information Reporting System reporting manual*. For descriptive information of all systems, refer to the *Common Terminology, Definitions and Classifications manual*. The reporting manuals are available for download at the Alberta Advanced Education and Technology website:
<http://www.advancededucation.gov.ab.ca/software>.

If you have any questions regarding the use of the FIRS software, please contact the following:

Contact Person: Gordon de Rouyan
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Phone No: (780) 945-0712

FIRS User Guide
Prepared for
Comprehensive Academic & Research Institutions
Specialized Arts & Culture Institutions
Baccalaureate and Applied Studies Institutions
Polytechnical Institutions
Comprehensive Community Institutions
Independent Academic Institutions
and
Alberta Advanced Education and Technology
Post-secondary and Community Education Division

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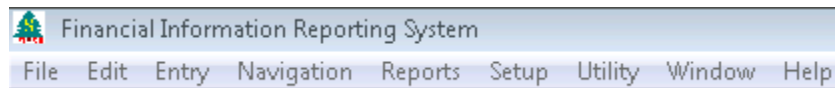
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1. Overview of the Organization of FIRS Software

This is an overview of the procedures available as part of the Financial Information Reporting System (FIRS) software. FIRS is accessible through the Launch bar, which is the common entry point for LERS, FIRS, KPIRS, and PRS systems. Below are the FIRS menu items that are available in the FIRS Software and the functions available under each. Certain main menu headings or drop-down options are only available to institutions that require them.

Note: *Most of the menu items have one letter underlined. Typing this letter is a quick way to open the screen for that item.*

FIRS Menu Items



File

Close
Print Setup...
Exit

Edit (accessible only after any screen is opened)

Undo (Ctrl + Z)
Redo (Ctrl + R)
Cut (Ctrl + X)
Copy (Ctrl + C)
Paste (Ctrl + V)
 Select All (Ctrl +A)

Entry

Revenues by Source and Type
Revenues by Fund
Expenses by Function & Object Category
Indirect Costs by Function & Object Category
Staffing Profile FTE
Tuition Fee Revenue & Expense Summary
Tuition & Related Fees per Student
Deferred Contributions (discontinued: 2009-2010)
Statement of Changes in Financial Position (discontinued: 2009-2010)
 Statement of Financial Position at Year End (discontinued: 2009-2010)

Navigation (Enabled when the Entry screens are being used)

First
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Business Plan

Setup

Current Submission Year

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Provider Export
FTP Browser
Provider Upload

Window

Shows all the windows currently opened

Help

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Search for Help on...
About FIRS

2. Launching FIRS

To launch FIRS:

1. Click on the four red triangles Alberta Learning icon on your Windows desktop to execute the Launch program. The Alberta Advanced Education Systems Launch bar appears as shown below:

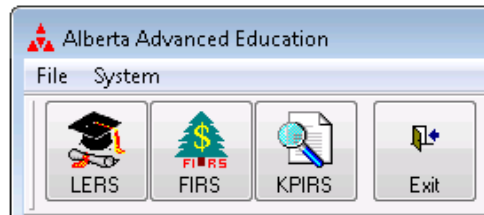


Figure 2 – 1: The Alberta Advanced Education and Technology Launch Bar

2. Click on the **FIRS** (Financial Information Reporting System) icon on the Launch bar. The Logon dialog box appears as shown below.

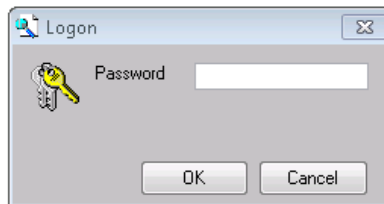


Figure 2 – 2: FIRS Logon Screen

3. Enter the Password in the **Password** field. The password is available by contacting Gordon de Rouyan at Gordon.deRouyan@gov.ab.ca.
4. Click on the **OK** button. If your password is valid, you will be logged in to the FIRS system and the menu bar appears.

3. Financial Information Entry

Institutions will enter information through entry forms.

Select Revenue under Entry on the menu bar. The template will then appear and will be blank for the current submission year unless the institution has already entered data into the system. Information for previous years is read-only and those cells are shaded. Cells that need to be entered by the user appear white as shown in Figure 3 - 1.

Type	Alberta AET (Operations)	Alberta AET (Capital)	Alberta AET (Research)	Other Alta Govt.	Other Govt.	Total
General Operations Grant	0					0
Base & Ongoing Cond Grants	0				0	0
Performance Award	0					0
Envelope Funding						
Enrolment Planning Envelope	0	0	0	0	0	0
Learning Enhancement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Access to the Future Fund	0					0
Infrastructure Maint. Prog.	0	0	0	0	0	0
Intellectual Infrastructure	0	0	0	0	0	0
Research Excellence	0		0			0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
Term-certain Conditional Grant	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brokerage/Collaborative Agree						0
Credit Tuition & Universal Fee						0
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0

Figure 3 – 1: Revenue Entry Form Screen

Each template for Actual1, Actual2, and Budget related to the current submission year can be chosen at the upper left drop down list box. Arrow keys (→ ←↑↓) on the keyboard can be used to navigate on the form. Tab (move forward) and Shift + Tab key (move backward) can also be used for navigation, but they can only be used to move across cells displayed on the screen. Hidden columns and rows can be seen by clicking the ▲ ▼ ▶ ◀ buttons on the scroll bars. Arrow keys can also go off the screen and make the hidden columns and rows visible. By clicking the ⏴ ⏵ ⏶ ⏷ buttons on the scroll bar, the top, bottom, right end, or left end rows or columns on the form will be displayed on the screen.

Data can be entered into a cell by moving the cursor to the element for which you wish to enter data (click on the element, or move the cursor using the arrow keys, and/or the navigation buttons). Single and double mouse click on a cell will allow user to enter data with a fixed maximum length according to the position the user clicked. Triple mouse click on a cell will highlight the entire cell and user can enter a larger number. Tabbing into the cell will also select the entire contents regardless if it is new data or old data.

If entering new data, key in the appropriate values. If editing values, you may need to highlight the existing values before keying in the new information. Characters are not allowed to put into any cells on

the forms. Any calculated elements on the record are refreshed and the new values are displayed as related data changes.

It is advisable to include a note using the Notes function provided. This feature allows you to provide additional information about your submission, which will assist Department staff with their analysis. The Notes button will turn to red if there is information contained in the Notes for the template.

Information will be saved when the **Save** button on the form is pressed.

The Tuition Fee Revenue & Expense Summary template has a different formatting style as shown in figure 3 - 2.

	2009-2010 Actual1	2010-2011 Actual2	2011-2012 Budget
Apprenticeship Instruction	0	0	0
Other MFP Exp. Not Subj to TF	0	0	0
Off-Campus Cost-Recovery Cre	0	0	0
Third Party Credit	0	0	0
Net Operating Expenses	0	0	0
Ratio: Tuit Fees (Pol) to NOE	0%	0%	0%
Total Full-Load Equiv Students	0	0	0
Less FLEs			
Off-Campus Cost-Rec Credit F	0	0	0
Third Party Credit FLEs	0	0	0
Apprenticeship FLEs	0	0	0
Other MFP Not Subj to TFP FLE	0	0	0
Adjusted Non-Exempt FLEs	0	0	0

Figure 3 – 2: Tuition Fee Revenue & Expense Summary Screen

Three years of information is shown on the same form. Cells with information populated are grayed out.

4. Financial Information Reports

Reports are available for you to print the information you've entered at any stage of the data entry process. All appropriate records will be displayed with or without values entered by the institution. All of the data elements that you see on the screens are also presented on the reports, including calculated values.

It is often useful to generate the reports prior to entering data. These reports can be used as templates for collection of the information from others at your institution.

When all data has been entered and you are ready to submit the data, we encourage you to print all of your reports and keep them where they can be referred to later.

To generate reports, select the Business Plan Report option from the Reports menu.

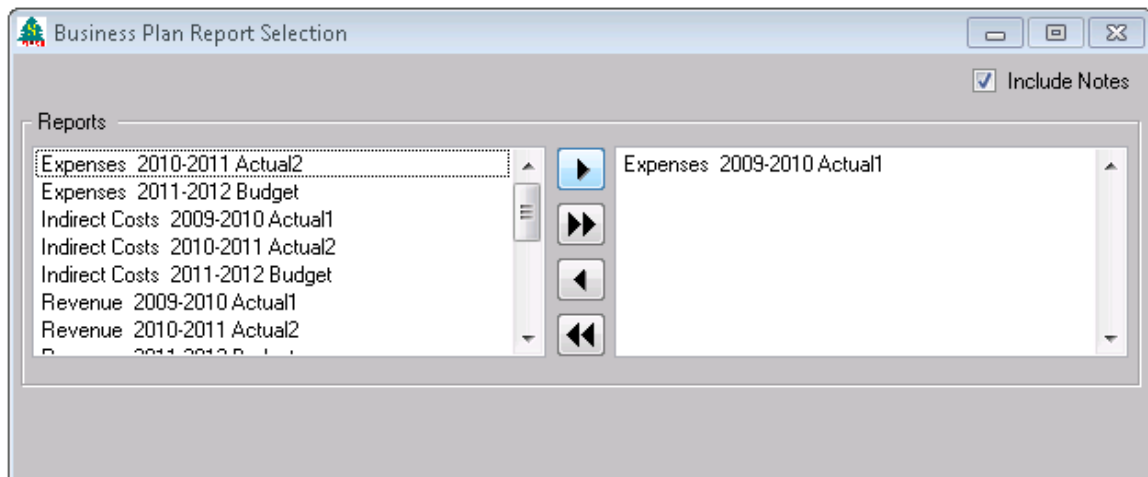








Figure 4 – 1: Business Plan Report Selection Screen

Use the appropriate selection buttons to select the desired reports. The  and  buttons will select and deselect a single report. The  and  buttons will select and deselect all reports. The  and  buttons will allow you to preview and print the selected reports.

Reports can be re-generated at any time and may be printed or viewed.

5. Setup Current Submission Year

To allow you to view the information your institution has entered in different years, select the Current Submission Year option from the Setup menu.

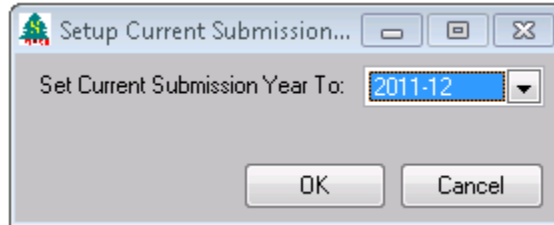


Figure 5 – 1: Setup Current Submission Year Screen

Select a year in the drop down list box, and press OK button to set up the current submission year.

6. File Transfer Protocol (FTP) Browser

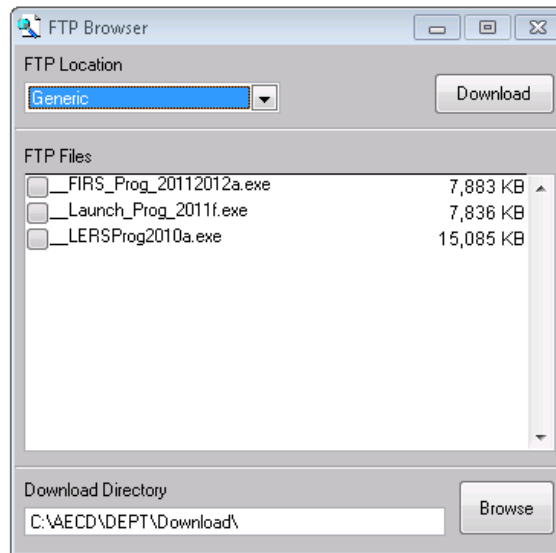


Figure 6 – 1: FTP Browser Screen

This form connects the application to the FTP server at Alberta Advanced Education. Once the FIRS application has been installed on your computer, FTP downloads related to this application can be done from this form.

Three different options are available from the dropdown list; Generic, Data from Advanced Education, and Submission Folder. The Generic folder will contain the applications from Advanced Education; Launch, KPIRS, LERS, and FIRS. The Data from Advanced Education folder will contain Data installation files. FIRS will alert you to the presence of new versions of the data files upon startup of the application. The Submission Folder will allow you to verify that you have made your submission to the FTP Server. File sizes that have 0 KB beside them usually mean that the file was created but is not valid.

Select a **Download Directory** by pressing the **Browse** button. Double click the file to be downloaded; it will turn red. Press the **Download** button.

To install the files, exit the application completely. Go to the **Download Directory** and proceed with the installation routine. Installation instructions can be found in Appendix A.

This form is the easiest way to download and install newer versions of the software, data or updates.

7. Provider Export

To open the provider export form, go to the menu bar and choose Utility and then click on Provider Export. The Provider Export screen will appear as shown below.



Figure 7 – 1: Provider Export Screen

By pressing the OK button, information entered in FIRS system for the current submission year will be export to your local C drive and to the Department’s FTP site if the FTP Files check box is checked.

8. Provider Upload

To open the provider upload form, go to the menu bar and choose Utility and then click on Provider Upload. The Provider Import screen will appear as shown below.

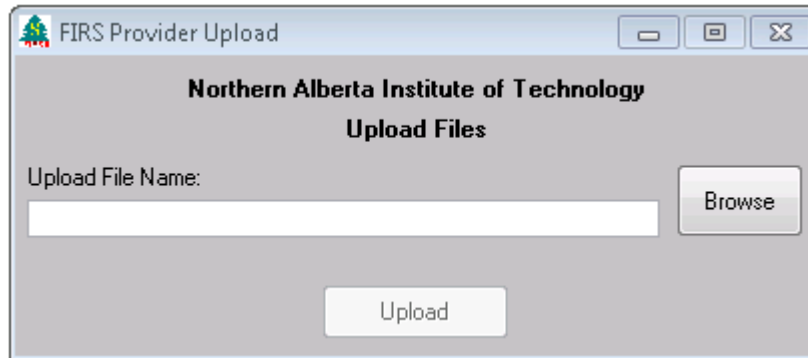


Figure 8 – 1: Provider Upload Screen

This form allows the user to upload any type of file to the FTP server. For example, ZIP files of the data directory can be sent for an analyst to review and identify and resolve issues. Pictures of error messages and supporting excel files to name a few.

Browse to the file for upload. Click on the **Upload** button to send to the FTP server.

9. Appendices

Appendix A – Installation of the FIRS Program

Overview

When installing the FIRS system for the first time, ask your institution's IT department to contact FIRS Support at Gordon.deRouyan@gov.ab.ca regarding the user access rights the users of FIRS need.

Installing the FIRS system requires that you first go to the AL Generic Transfer Protocol (FTP) site and download the Launch and the FIRS Program software files. The FIRS data file is located on your institution specific FTP site.

The FIRS application consists of three required files. The files are:

__Launch_Prog_9999X.exe	Where 9999 is a numeric value representing a year. Where X represents the version for that year.
__FIRS_Prog_99989999X.exe	Where 99989999 is a numeric value representing an academic year. Where X represents the version for that year.
__FIRS_Data_XX_9999999999999999.exe	Where XX represents the code specific to that institution. Where 9999999999999999 represent the date and time the data file was created.

Downloading from the Advanced Education FTP Server

There are three ways to download the software:

1. Internet Explorer, Safari, Google Chrome, ...
2. FTP Browser within FIRS
3. FTP Explorer

Note: *It will be important to know the drive and directory where the downloaded files have been saved to. FTP Browser within FIRS shows the directory at the bottom of the form.*

If this is a first time download of the Alberta Advanced Education software (i.e. if you do not have the Launch Program, the FIRS or KPIRS or LERS Program, and FIRS Data installed on your computer or servers) use either an Internet Browser or FTP Explorer to download the files. Contact for user ids and passwords to access the Generic and Institution specific location on the Advanced Education FTP server.

Internet Explorer, Safari, Google Chrome, ...

These internet browsers allow a user to access an FTP Server by using a specific URL command. All browsers use the same command though might be slightly different from browser to browser. The following is a template for what one would look like:

Safari and Google Chrome	ftp://userid:password@199.213.72.3
Internet Explorer	ftp://userid:password@199.213.72.3/userid

Both of these commands will direct the browser to the same location on the FTP server. Clicking on a link within the browser will either select a file to download or enter into a sub-directory displaying more results. If the browser asks to **Save** or **Download** the file, always click on **Download**.

Once the file has been downloaded, it will be up to the user to find where the file has been downloaded. Google Chrome shows the file at the bottom of the page which can be clicked on to begin the install. Safari leaves a window showing a list of downloaded files open. Internet Explorer will prompt the user for the location where the file is to be saved.

As you can see each browser is different and would require different instructions for each. Contact FIRS Support at Gordon.deRouyan@gov.ab.ca if you would like to be guided through this process.

FTP Browser in FIRS

The process of downloading is described in detail in the section **File Transfer Protocol (FTP) Browser**. If using the FTP Browser in FIRS, it would be obvious that LERS, FIRS, or KPIRS had already been installed.

The FTP Browser within KPIRS could be used to download the FIRS application. But only the FTP Browser within FIRS can get access to the FIRS Data file.

This is the easiest way to download files from the Alberta Advanced Education FTP Server.

FTP Explorer

Steps 1 to 4 below explain how you can *download* the FIRS Program and the Launch program from the AL Generic FTP site using FTP Explorer.

To download the FIRS Program and Launch Program:

1. Open FTP Explorer by double clicking on the **FTP Explorer** icon on your desktop or click on the **Start** button on the windows task bar, move the mouse up to **Programs**. From the Programs *submenu* click on **FTP Explorer**. If you do not have FTP Explorer installed you need to install FTP Explorer and request user ids and passwords from Alberta Advanced Education.
2. Select the **AL Generic** on the Connect screen. Click on the **Connect** button. At this time you are in the AL Generic site.
3. Click on the **firs9gen** folder. On the right hand side of the screen you will see a file named **__FIRS_Prog_20112012a.exe** and **__Launch_Prog_2011f.exe**; or similar. Press the **Ctrl** key on the keyboard and click on the file names one by one. Now the two files should be selected.
4. Go to the menu bar and click on **File**. From the drop down list click on **Download To...**

The Download to dialog box appears. Locate the folder where you want to save the files and click on the **Save** button. It will ask you to save again for the second file. Click on **Save**. If you do not have an existing folder where you can *download* the files create a new folder and click on the **Save** button twice for each file.

This process might take a few seconds. Once the files are downloaded successfully you will see a transfer complete message for each file you downloaded at the bottom of the FTP Explorer window.

To download FIRS Data Install:

1. To open FTP Explorer double click on the **FTP Explorer** icon on your desktop or click on the **Start** button on the Windows task bar, move the mouse up to **Programs**. From the Programs *submenu* click on **FTP Explorer**.
2. Click on your institution name on the Connect screen and then click on the **Connect** button. At this time you are at your institution site.
3. Locate the folder where the FIRS Data files are located. On the right hand side, you will see a file named FIRS_data_GP_9999999999999999.exe; or similar. The file is institution specific with different numeric information at the end each time. Press the **Ctrl** key on the keyboard and click on the **file name**. Now the file should be selected.
4. Go to the menu bar and click on **File**. From the drop down list click on **Download To...** and the Download to dialog box appears. Locate the folder where the files are to be saved to and click on the **Save Button**.

This process might take a few seconds. Once the file is downloaded successfully, a transfer complete message will display at the bottom of your institution FTP Explorer window.

At this time, you are ready to install the three files that you downloaded.

Executing the Installation Files

If this is not the first time to install, check the properties of the “Alberta Learning” icon on your desk top as to where to install. For example, if it was initially installed on the “J” drive, then install it there.

e.g. j:\aecd\dept\bin\launch.exe → install to j:\aecd\dept

The screen shot below shows the “Start in:” directory as “J:\AECD\DEPT\BIN”. The installation directory for your specific computer will be “J:\AECD\DEPT” for ALL of the installs.

Warning: *Do not install to the bin or dat folders. The install routines will add these directory names after the installation directory you enter.*

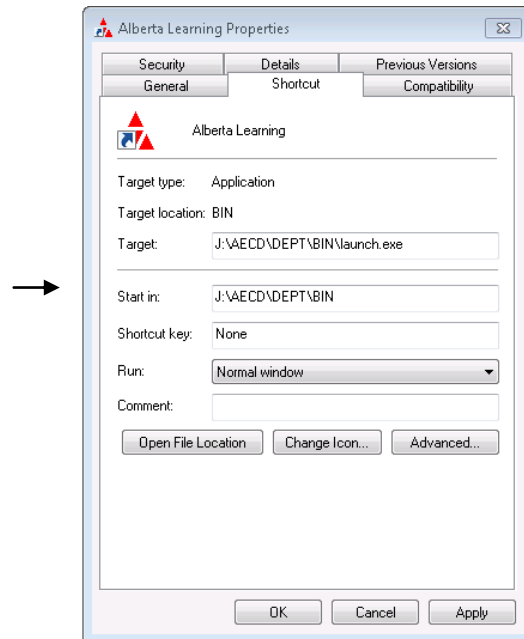


Figure A - 1: Alberta Learning Icon Properties

The Install Process:

The following steps should be performed for each of the files that were downloaded. The order of the installs is not important.

1. Open **Windows Explorer** and locate the folder where you saved the files from the FTP server. For example C:\temp
2. Double click on the file to be installed. A **Welcome** screen will appear. You can follow the on screen instruction or follow step 3 to 6 below.
3. Click **Next** twice.
4. Identify where the program was previously installed on your network. Select the drive and install the program. (See the top of the section *Executing the Installation Files.*) The directory may already be displayed correctly.

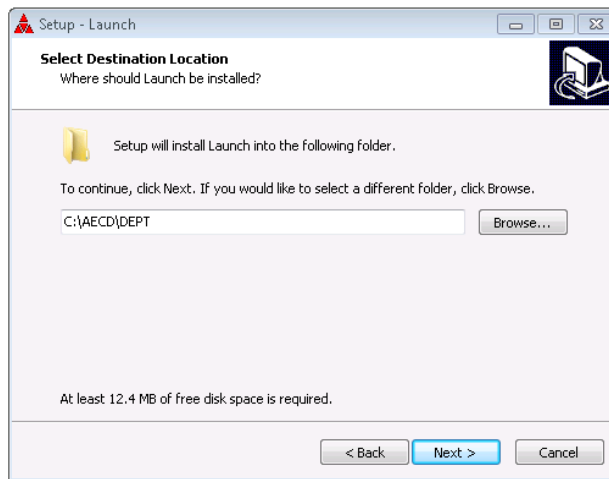


Figure A - 2: Installation Directory

5. Click on **Next** twice and click on **Install** to begin the installation process.
6. Click on **Finish** to exit the installation wizard.
7. Repeat the process for any additional files.


When the entire install process is complete, the following paths will be found on your **X:** drive, where **X** refers to the drive you selected during the install.

X:\AECD\DEPT\BIN where the program files reside

X:\AECD\DEPT\DAT where the data files reside

Inside the **BIN** you will find the launch.ico file and inside the **DAT** folder you will find the database files.

Windows NT:

If you are running Windows NT you will have to go to the folder containing the Launch.exe ( launch.exe) program and create the shortcut yourself.

To create the shortcut on your desktop:

1. Locate the **BIN** folder and double click on it.
2. Right click on the **launch.exe** file and click on **Send To**
3. From the *submenu* click on **Desktop (Create Shortcut)**
4. If you prefer, rename the new shortcut icon that you just created, and delete any old Alberta Advanced Education icons.

You should now have an updated red four triangular icon on your desktop entitled Alberta Advanced Education.

New Computers

There are times when users get new computers but the Alberta Advanced Education software has already been installed correctly on the server. This section will handle this issue.

In prior years, Alberta Advanced Education has supplied a file called `__VFP9_DLL_Install.exe` on the FTP server. Supplying this file to the institutions is done differently now. The `__VFP9_DLL_Install.exe` file is included with all of the `_Prog_` install files. The `__VFP9_DLL_Install.exe` file will automatically be saved to the `X:\AECD\DEPT` where **X** refers to the drive you selected during the original install.

Maybe this is a new user to the Alberta Advanced Education software. In this case, it would be necessary to ensure the user has full server access rights to the `X:\AECD` directory. Once the user has access to the folder, the user or IT staff can execute the `X:\AECD\DEPT__VFP9_DLL_Install.exe`. Follow the instructions in the *Executing the Installation Files* section.

Appendix B - Setting up FTP Explorer

Once you have completed installing FTP Explorer on your computer, an icon should appear on your computer desktop.

1. Double click on the FTP Explorer icon. An FTP Explorer Window appears as shown below.

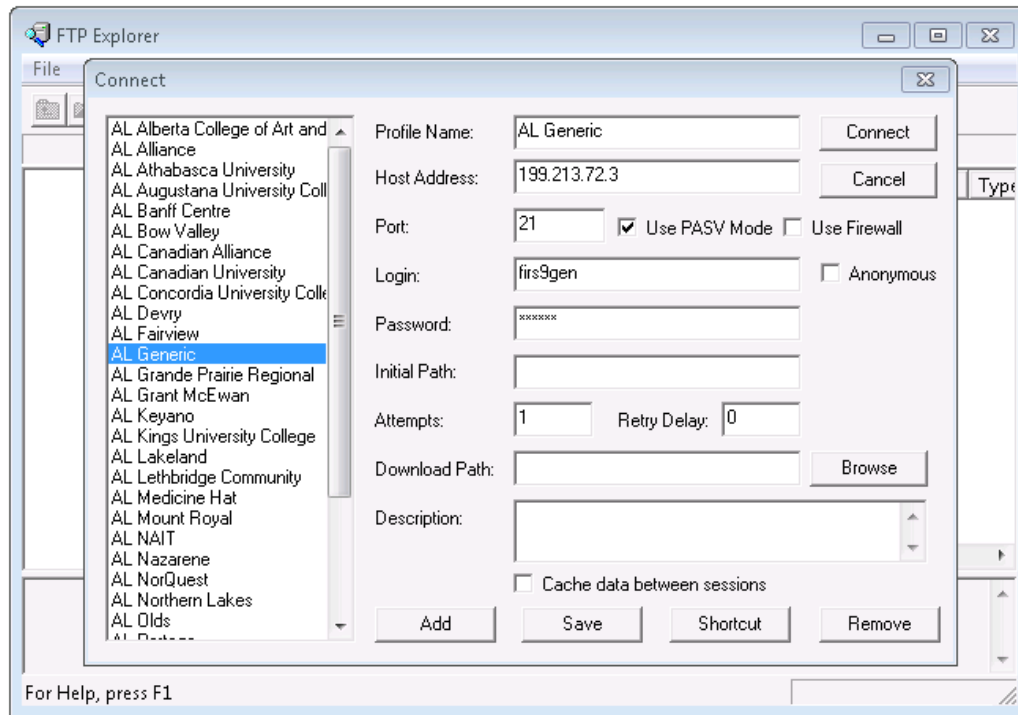


Figure B - 1: The FTP Explorer Screen

2. Before you can transfer files to and from the FTP site, you need to fill in the **Profile Name**, the **Host Address**, the **Login** and the **Password** assigned to your institution. The password is available by contacting Gordon de Rouyan at Gordon.deRouyan@gov.ab.ca. Also create a profile for AL Generic.
3. Click on the **AL Generic** and click on the **Connect** button. The AL Generic - FTP Explorer window appears. At this point the AL Generic Setup is complete.

Note: *In the display screens above, the AL Generic site refers to the one location used by all institutions to access the Alberta Advanced Education executable programs.*

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