News you can use…

IDIS LIVE

…for the Integrated Disbursement and Information System

PROGRAM INCOME: IF YOU USE IT, RECORD IT!

> *Note: February 16 is a Federal holiday. Both IDIS and the TAU will be unavailable on that day.*

Recently, there has been some discussion and perhaps some confusion about the need to report—and the method of reporting—Program Income in IDIS. First, let's clear up the confusion: **If you are receiving Program Income, you should record it in IDIS.** This is so for a number of reasons:

- The purpose of having a consolidated grant-tracking system like IDIS is so that members of Congress, the general public, and HUD itself will have access to up-to-date information about what is being accomplished with program funds. If you do not report Program Income in IDIS—but record it only as part of your year-end reporting—these constituents will not have access to up-to-date information.

- For fiscal years 1996 and 1997 combined—a period during which the majority of entitlement communities were not yet Live in IDIS—more than $75 million in Program Income was reported in IDIS. This amount represents more than 1 percent of the total dollars tracked. As the number of Live communities grows, so too will the amount of Program Income funds reported—and the list of accomplishments resulting from the use of those funds.

- Grantees benefit from recording Program Income in IDIS. For the HOME and CDBG programs, the caps on administrative money are determined,

in part, by Program Income. Tracking Program Income enables the grantee, the field office, and HQ to adjust administrative money throughout the year, based on Program Income estimates and receipts.

- According to the Office of the Inspector General and the Office of Management and Budget, the failure to track Program Income is a "material weakness" of the CDBG program. So, while there are many good reasons for recording Program Income, there is one overriding reason: You are required to do so.

Regarding the method of reporting Program Income, there are different approaches depending upon whether you are reporting non-revolving or revolving Program Income:

- **Non-Revolving Program Income:** As you receive non-revolving Program Income, record it immediately using option H-01. Thereafter, when you perform a drawdown from your "EN" fund type for an activity in the program area under which the Program Income was recorded, all available Program Income funds will be used before grant funds are drawn.

- **Revolving Program Income:** As you receive revolving Program Income, do not record it until you are ready to perform a drawdown for the specific activity or set of activities to which this Program Income will be applied. When you are ready to perform the drawdown, record the Program Income for the amount of the draw (or record all of the Program Income if the draw amount exceeds the current Program Income balance). If the draw amount (say, $3,000) is less than the current Program Income balance (say, $50,000), keep track of the post-draw Program Income balance ($47,000) for that particular program area in a separate book.

Eventually, IDIS will allow you to track separately the different types of Program Income (e.g., ordinary, revolving loan fund, HOME match fund). This change—which is coming in response to the fact that there are different rules for different types of Program Income—will allow you to tailor your reporting based upon Program Income type.

If you are currently receiving and using Program Income and you are not reporting it in IDIS, change your ways! If you have trouble making the adjustment, take advantage of the many resources that are available to help you over the hurdle—the TAU hotline, in particular (1-800-273-2573 or idis_help@hud.gov). ■

RELEASE 3.4 ENHANCEMENTS

Release 3.4 will take effect on Tuesday, February 10. Expect to see the following changes:

1. **GO-TO screen functionality.** You will now be able to go directly from the Main Menu to the screen of your choice. At the Main Menu, you will simply key in the screen ID and press Enter to be taken to that screen. Also, from Activity Funding, pressing F9 will generate a menu that you can use to get to the screen of your choice.

2. **"Total Extremely Low Income Beneficiaries."** The C04MC02 screen (Direct Benefit Continued) now includes a line item for "Total Extremely Low Income Beneficiaries." The Summary of Activities Report (PR03) will now capture this information, as well.

3. **HOME SetUp Path Changes.** See the following article for an explanation of these important changes to HOME. ■

HOME SET-UP DATA REQUIRED FOR ACTIVITY FUNDING AND DRAWDOWNS

An important change to IDIS will take effect on February 9, 1998. Beginning on that date, grantees will find that—just like with the old CMI System—they have to enter the required HOME set-up data before funds can be drawn against an activity. This means that grantees will no longer be able to draw down funds against either new or **existing** activities if the required set-up data have not been provided. (Note: This change does not apply to HOME Admin., CHDO Operating, or CHDO Capacity Building activities.)

You may now preview this change in the Pre-Production region. **To avoid delays in acquiring funds for your activities,** review the set-up data that you have provided for all existing activities to be certain that the required data have been entered—and provide any data that is missing. Even if you were able to draw down funds against a funded activity in the past, you will not be able to do so after February 9, 1998, if any of the required set-up data for that activity are missing. The required data for each set-up screen are as follows:

Homeowner/Rental Assistance Screen (C04MH02)

- CHDO loan
- Activity Setup type
- Total HOME funds requested
- Estimated units at completion
- Estimated HOME-assisted units
- Loan guarantee
- Tenure type
- Type of ownership code
- Total estimated costs
- County code (required only for states)

Homeowner/Rental Assistance Screen (C04MH03)
- Property owned by individual or firm

Owner address (required only if rental)
- Name
- Address
- City
- State
- Zip

Property Address
- Address
- City
- State
- Zip

Tenant-Based Rental Assistance Screen (C04MH06)
- Name
- Social Security Number
- Bedroom code
- Tenant contribution
- Subsidy amount
- Median income
- Household race
- Household size
- Household head (typ)
- Contract type
- Contract end date

Note: The Status field is the only field that is not currently required for each unit. This field is intended to distinguish between newly assisted tenants and renewals.

Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (C04MH04)
- County code (required only for states)

Note: This screen now follows the C04MH06 screen. The totals under "total of subsidy payment" and "number of tenants assisted" come from the corresponding data on the C04MH06 screen. ■

STATES GOING LIVE IN IDIS

In December, Delaware became the first state to go Live in IDIS. Other states will soon follow, and, by October 1, 1998, all states will be Live.

To streamline the process of bringing the states into IDIS, each state has been asked to select a "tsar/tsarina" to coordinate the effort at the state level and to serve as the point of contact with Headquarters. In addition, each state's conversion will be handled by a field office representative who will have responsibility for that state. **The names of all state- and field office–level contact persons must be submitted to Bob Meehan no later than Friday, February 6, 1998.**

Instead of bringing all remaining states into IDIS at once, Bob Meehan worked with the Office of Block Grant Assistance and the Office of Affordable Housing to divide the states into three groups:

Group One
Alabama
Alaska
District of Columbia
Georgia
Idaho
Louisiana
Maine
Maryland
Minnesota
Virginia
Washington
West Virginia
Wyoming

A state training session for Group One states will be offered in Chicago, Illinois, on February 26-27. Each state will also receive on-site training in their state capital. States may register by calling TONYA, Inc., at 202-289-8100. The registrars are **Natasha Herring** and **Brandy Lowder**. Registration is on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Group Two
California
Florida
Kentucky
Illinois

Kansas
Mississippi
Montana
North Carolina
Oklahoma
Oregon
South Dakota
Tennessee
Texas

There will be a training session for Group Two states in March. Again, contact TONYA, Inc., for further information and to register.

Group Three
Arizona
Arkansas
Colorado
Connecticut
Hawaii
Indiana
Iowa
Massachusetts
Michigan
Missouri
Nebraska
Nevada
New Hampshire
New Jersey
New Mexico
New York
North Dakota
Ohio
Pennsylvania
Puerto Rico
Rhode Island
South Carolina
Utah
Vermont
Wisconsin

There will be a training session for Group Three states, as well. Contact TONYA, Inc., for further information and to register.

Again, the names of all contact persons must be reported to Bob Meehan no later than **Friday, February 6, 1998**. ■

IDIS KEYSTROKE SAVER

CORRECTION

If you're one of the many people using the *IDIS KeyStroke Saver for Multi-Funded Grantees*, you may want to take a moment to correct an error that appears on page 6. Under "Most Common Drawdown Codes," the **recipient type** "CO" is listed as "CHDO Operating Expenses." The "CO" recipient type actually represents "CHDO." Also, under **fund type**, add "CO," which stands for "CHDO Operating." ■

OPEN VOUCHER = NO MONEY

So you performed a drawdown months ago, and the funds still haven't reached the bank. Where could they be? The TAU receives several calls a week from grantees who are wondering just this.

Usually, it turns out that an important step in the process has been skipped: changing the status of the voucher from "open" to "approved." This step must be performed before the funds will be wired to the bank.

To approve a voucher that has been created, select option 6 (Approve) from the Drawdown Menu, place an "A" before the voucher that you wish to approve, and press Enter to save the change.

Sometimes the transfer of funds is delayed for other reasons, but you should check the status of your voucher before calling the TAU. You may be able to save yourself some time. ■

TAU PROFILE: PATRICIA JACKSON

Let Patricia Jackson tell you about the early days of IDIS and the Technical Assistance Unit hotline—because she was there. She worked with the CMIS unit for nearly two years before the advent of IDIS. When IDIS was implemented, she spent a week in formal training. She was given an *IDIS User Manual*, a *Student Guide*, and access to Lincoln Burruss and Phil Helbling, our IDIS gurus. As issues of *IDIS Live* and *Technical Bulletin*s came out, they became a part of her resource arsenal. Armed with these materials, she took to the phone, and she's been learning the intricacies of IDIS ever since—call by call.

Patricia's experience illustrates an interesting point: Everybody—even the hotline staff—has to learn IDIS somehow. There was a day when each hotline staff member opened the *User Manual* or logged on for the first time. It is through the process of continual training and answering your queries, one by one, that the hotline—as a unit—builds its knowledge base and thus its value to you.

"The hotline was kind of wild at the beginning," Patricia says, adding that "a few grantees called when they couldn't get into the Voice Response System. They were getting a message that they'd 'gone Live,' and they wanted to know what it meant." Nowadays, she says, most people are adjusting to the system and even seem to like it.

Patricia is the hotline's HOPE 3 expert—a result of her years with the CMIS unit. "I've renewed a lot of old relationships under this new system," she says. She understands why people get frustrated when they can't figure out what to do next in IDIS, because she's been there herself. She has one piece of advice: "Turn to the library [your reference materials] first, and, if you can't find the answer there, then call the professor [the hotline]."

This bit of wisdom reflects Patricia's do-it-yourself, hands-on approach to learning, an approach that has made her a valuable member of the TAU hotline staff.

We'll feature profiles of other TAU staff members in future issues of IDIS Live. ∎

Remember: The Technical Assistance Unit exists to provide assistance with IDIS—not Community 2020. If you need help with any aspect of Community 2020, call the Community Connections/2020 Hotline at 1-800-998-9999.

Q&A: PROJECTS, ACTIVITIES, STATES, DATES, LOCCS

Q: What's the difference between a project and an activity?
A: Suppose you are about to embark upon a large project—"Public Improvements to the East Side," for example. It is likely that such a large-scale project would comprise several activities: Street Improvements, Sidewalk Replacements, and Streetlight Repairs, to name just a few. In IDIS, your project would be "Public Improvements to the East Side," and the activities associated with the project would reflect its specific elements—or activities.

Usually, there will be one project comprised of many activities—a one-to-many relationship. In some instances, however, there may be a one-to-one relationship between the two. It all depends upon the nature of the project.

Projects come over to IDIS from Community 2020. Of course, IDIS also allows you to add projects to your Consolidated Plan or annual Action Plan (though you should remember to seek field office input on these amendments).

Some IDIS users who are familiar with the planning process and Community 2020 may become confused, because the term "activity" is used in Community 2020 (version 1.0) to refer to an activity "type" (e.g., Planning & Administration, Economic Development, Housing, or Youth Programs). In IDIS, we call the Activity Type a **HUD Matrix Code** (found on the C04MA03 screen). In our example above, for instance, the first activity would have a HUD Matrix Code of 03K ("Street Improvements") in IDIS.

(**Note:** Version 2.0 of Community 2020—soon to be released—will reflect a change that should help to clear up some of the confusion. On the Grantee and Proposed Projects screens, Community 2020 will henceforth use the term "Activity Type"—rather than "Activity"—to better correspond with the IDIS HUD Matrix Code.)

The reason for having an IDIS HUD Matrix Code is so that you can describe and categorize what is being accomplished with an activity. By categorizing activities in this fashion, IDIS enables HUD to compile data and report statistics on various eligible programs.

Q: How do I fund an activity?
A: To fund an activity, take the following steps:
1. Select option I-02 (Maintain Activity Funding) from the Main Menu;
2. At the C04MO03 screen, select the activity to be funded;
3. At the C04MO04 screen, Tab down to the source from which the activity will be funded and select it;
4. At the C04MO05 screen, enter the funding amount.

Q: How do I increase/decrease the funding amount of an activity?
A: To **increase** the funding amount of an activity, take the following steps:

1. Select option I-02 (Maintain Activity Funding) from the Main Menu;
2. At the C04MO03 screen, identify the activity for which you want to increase the funding amount;
3. At the C04MO04 screen, select the pot of money from which the additional funds will be pulled;
4. At the C04MO05 screen, enter the increased funding amount.

Remember that the funding amount of an activity cannot be increased to exceed that activity's estimated maximum funding amount.

To **decrease** the funding amount of an activity, follow these steps:

1. Select option I-02 (Maintain Activity Funding) from the Main Menu;
2. At the C04MO03 screen, identify the activity for which you want to decrease the funding amount;
3. At the C04MO04 screen, select the pot of money from which the activity was funded;
4. At the C04MO05 screen, enter the decreased funding amount.

Remember that the funding amount of an activity cannot be decreased such that the balance becomes less than the amount that has already been drawn for the activity.

Below, you'll find a series of questions regarding the conversion of states to IDIS.

Q: What kind of person does Headquarters want the state coordinator to be? A finance person, a computer person, a program person? Would it make sense that this person be from the HOME program, since CMIS is similar to IDIS?
A: Conversion to IDIS is no different at the state level than it is at the entitlement grantee level. A state may have four different agencies running its programs, as is often true for a city/county. The state can select whomever it likes for whatever reason. That person must simply be able to coordinate among all state stakeholders.

Q: Who should attend the February 26-27 IDIS training session for states?
A: Whomever the state is putting in charge of its conversion planning/implementation should attend.

Q: By what date are states expected to be Live?
A: Every state—all states—are expected to be Live by October 1, 1998.

Q: Why does my drawdown show a date of 0001-01-01?
A: IDIS automatically sets vouchers to the default date of 0001-01-01 during the create drawdown process. Once the voucher has been confirmed in the HUD Financial System—and its status has been updated to "rejected," "pending," or "completed"—the default date will be revised to the current date.

Q: We have several new grantees who will be coming into IDIS. These grantees have never been established in the HUD Financial System (formerly LOCCS) and will be going directly to Live Production in IDIS. What forms do they need to submit to be set up in the HUD Financial System?
A: These grantees need to submit a Direct Deposit form (1199A), which their bank will complete.

Q: If a grantee has all of their accounts controlled by IDIS, do they still need access to the HUD Financial System?
A: No. What they should do in this case is submit HUD Form 27054 to terminate their access to the HUD Financial System. They may call **Jacqueline D. Rooths**, the HUD Financial System Security Administrator, at 202-708-0614, ext. 3916, if they have questions. Otherwise, they may fax the form to 202-708-4350. ■

AHEAD OF THE CURVE: IDIS AND YEAR-2000 COMPLIANCE

Kudos to the team 2000 folks, who saw to it that IDIS was certified as being year-2000 (Y2K) compliant. IDIS passed the test with flying colors on December 19, 1997.

The Y2K compliance certificate no doubt belies the amount of work that went into certifying IDIS, which has 231 program/modules and 383,000 lines of code. The three-sentence memo concludes simply that "all program modifications have been successfully tested."

Those of you who are familiar with the concept of a "test region" (which should be all of you, by now) might be interested to know that the certification process involves "migrating" the application (IDIS) into the Year 2000 compliant test region. Certification is achieved when the application achieves "successful results…for all appropriate data scenarios," including those that involve leap year and non–leap year dates.

What does it mean that IDIS is Y2K compliant? In short, it means that IDIS will not be disrupted by errors that can occur as a result of date miscalculations.

Again, congratulations to the Y2K Certification Team! ■

COMING SOON…ACD

Don't be surprised if you call the TAU someday soon and hear a new voice at the end of the line. During the month of February, the TAU will implement an Automated Call Distribution (ACD) system. The ACD will offer you the choice of waiting on the line until the next available TAU representative becomes available.

The ACD is being implemented to handle incoming calls in a more efficient manner. As a side benefit, the system will generate statistics for us, helping us to keep track of call volume and length, in addition to callers' hold times. We will continually monitor these data to assure that we are providing you with the best service possible. ■

RATE THE IDIS INTERNET RESOURCES

We've been working to make sure that you have the resources you need in order to get the most out of IDIS. We'd like to know how we're doing.

Please take a moment to review the form on the next page. Print it out, complete it, and fax it back to us at 202-708-3222 (you don't need a cover page). We will accept completed forms until **February 17, 1998**. Look for a follow-up article in the March 1998 issue of *IDIS Live*.

Rate the IDIS Internet Resources

To: **Editor,** *IDIS Live*
Fax: **202-708-3222**
From (optional):

Please rate the following Internet resources on a scale of 1 to 5, where **5 = extremely useful** and **1 = not at all useful**. Give a ranking of 0 to those resources that you have not yet had occasion to use.

IDIS Users Group Web Page (www.hud.gov/cpd/idisweb.html)

IDIS Background .... _____

IDIS Keystroke Saver .... _____

IDIS New Users Training Schedule

Registration Form .... _____

IDIS Users Group Calendar of Events ...... _____

Online Discussion Forums

Making IDIS Work for You..................... _____
Making IDIS Work for States.................. _____
Grantee-to-Grantee................................. _____
Community 2020 Software Discussion ..... _____

IDIS Live **On-Line (www.hud.gov/cpd/idis/idislive.html)**

TAU by E-Mail .... _____
IDIS Phonebook .... _____
Previous Issues .... _____
Subject Index.. _____
Overall Content .... _____

IDIS FAQ (www.hud.gov/cpd/idis/faq.html)

Search by Keyword .... _____
Search by Topic Area.............................. _____

IDIS Software Files (www.hud.gov/cpd/idis/idissoft.html)

SprintLink User Guide............................. _____
IDIS User Manual .... _____
IDIS Release Notes.................................. _____
SprintLink Technical Bulletin .... _____

What other information would you like to see on the IDIS Web site?

Are there any particular topics that you would like to see covered in future issues of *IDIS Live***?**

Thank you for your comments! Completed forms will be accepted until February 17, 1998.

FROM THE FIELD

From the Field is a regular feature of IDIS Live *in which Field Office Representatives share their thoughts about IDIS.*

This month's columnist is Jeanette Harris, from the HUD Detroit office.

IMPLEMENTING IDIS

A CAUTIONARY TALE AND A METAPHOR FOR MANAGING CHANGE

Last month's *IDIS Live* Guest Columnist described implementing IDIS at the grantee level as a roller coaster ride. Highs, lows, lots of yelling and screaming, but a constant ride toward the finish line. I liked that metaphor a lot. From a field office perspective, though, I thought our experience implementing IDIS was more like managing the grief process. On longer and deeper reflection, though, I saw implementing and managing the IDIS process as a metaphor for **managing** in an ever-changing environment.

By the end of November 1997, all 44 Michigan grantees were Live. Only the State of Michigan (mercifully a Group 3–designated State) remained. Staff from the office breathed a collective sigh of relief, but five minutes later we were thinking of the next steps in our management plan to make IDIS a workable system. Such wasn't always the case. It all started back in the winter of 1996 with…

…Denial

When the IDIS drafts, guidebooks, and training schedule came out, we scoffed at the idea of getting ready for IDIS. The Detroit office was scheduled last for training. We laughed and joked and somehow believed that IDIS would go nowhere and that by the time our turn at training rolled around, the system would be scrapped and we would be left—if not forever, then at least for the immediate future—with our beloved Voice Response System, fondly nicknamed "Dialing for Dollars." VRS worked, we understood it, and the grantees understood it. It was a perfect system. IDIS could not possibly be better. We sank into denial and took secret bets on how many e-mail messages away the news was that implementing

IDIS would be postponed indefinitely. Hope does spring eternal. Eventually, denial gave way to…

…Anger

April 1996 came and went. Staff and grantees went to training. Oh, the complaints! The computers didn't work! Valuable time was wasted and lost! IDIS was **so** complicated and hard to understand. The screens didn't work. Field people wouldn't be able to view all the screens from their desktops. There were so many questions to be answered. How could the Department of Housing and Urban Development be so mean-spirited, so short-sighted as to wreak havoc on staff and partners alike? This wasn't fair! We weren't ready. This couldn't happen to us. We resisted. As the anger subsided gradually, we embarked upon an effort at…

…Bargaining

The error reports started rolling in along with the list of GPR problems, the CPS problems that needed to be resolved, and the report card process that said Michigan needed to get grantees queued to go Live. I called Bob Meehan, the high guru of placing communities in the IDIS queue. I pleaded, I begged, I cajoled. I tried to give up my first-born son in exchange for more time—more time in which to get ready to implement IDIS. It was all to no avail! Communities were going Live and our office was behind the curve ball. What could we do? It was time to move on to…

…Acceptance

Led by Mr. **Raymond Perry**, trained accountant, former IG auditor, and CPD representative *extraordinaire*, our actions—and then, slowly but surely, our attitudes—started to change. Mr. Perry said "this isn't going away, we gotta' do something." So, we sat down and started thinking about what we could do. We weren't ready to do anything, but we knew we had to start thinking about it. We developed a plan: Someone who didn't understand the system but understood deadlines and GPRs would be responsible for managing the problem reports; Mr. Perry, blessed with a photographic memory (since we couldn't see the screens, he memorized them) and pleasing personality, would be in charge of training grantees and lining them up for conversion from the Voice Response System; and Messieurs **William Osis** and **James Wasmuth**, who understood

computers, **volunteered** to be field contacts. They went out to grantees and helped to install programs, demonstrated how to hook up computers, identified where to find answers in the guides and manuals, and translated grantees' questions for the technical staff. We were on our way. Suddenly (well, almost suddenly…if you ignore the months of sweat, worry, and lengthy telephone conversations), we had our first Live grantees: Taylor and Livonia. We had joined the club. We felt like we were on a roll.

Conclusion

Back to where I started: It's November of 1997. All grantees—save the State—are Live. We have survived problems with Program Income, faulty equipment, grantees joined at the hip with the State, and even grantees jointed with other grantees through shared CHDOs that stretch from the Atlantic to the Pacific. But, Live we are, and here's what we learned:

1. You can't wait until everything is "perfect" and really "ready" before acting. It would be nice if that were possible, but it usually isn't.

2. Moan and groan, but also think, plan, and act. Carefully analyze what needs to be done, and get together a team of people with different skills and abilities. It's nice to have colleagues with whom to vent—and rarely does everyone finish at once.

3. Get grantees involved working with one another. They are on the front line, and this shared experience means that the message from one grantee to another might ring more clearly than the message from the folks at HUD.

   In our case, two grantees—Mr. **Larry Friedman** of Ann Arbor and **Michele DaRos** of Dearborn—read the material, went Live, and then started telling their subgrantees that IDIS was no big deal. Wow! We started a local group of IDIS users to help the IDIS "don't wannabees, but have-to-bes" through the transition. Larry and Michele joined the traveling road show, helping to implement IDIS.

4. Last but not least: Maintain a sense of humor. Certainly, maintain a seriousness about the role of the funds that are tracked in IDIS—the purpose that they're serving—but keep in mind that mastering IDIS itself is not a life-or-death quest! ∎

IDIS LIVE GUEST COLUMN

This month's IDIS Live *Guest Columnist is Marie Dolphin, Community Services Program Coordinator for the Hillsborough County (Florida) Community Improvement Department. Thank you, Marie!*

USING IDIS TO GENERATE YOUR GPR

Hillsborough County, Florida, went Live in IDIS on April 23, 1997. In FY 1996-97, the County received $6,517,000 in CDBG funds, $1,681,000 in HOME funds, and $170,000 in ESG funds. The responsibility for preparing the Consolidated Planning Document, Annual Action Plans, and Annual Performance Reports rests with the Grants Administration and Finance Section of the County's Community Improvement Department (CID).

With no increase in staff, one of the challenges presented by going Live was to develop an internal tracking system for the three fund sources that would remain separate from—yet mirror—the data found in the Financial Accounting Management Information System (FAMIS), the accounting system that is administered by the Accounting Department of the Board of County Commissioners.

After learning to navigate the IDIS software, our primary task was to set up activities that were already active in the middle of the fiscal year. The work involved in setting up activities from the current Action Plan along with those that were still under way (from converted projects) was formidable. There were hundreds of activities administered by staff in various departments, including Engineering, Management and Budget, Parks and Recreation, Social and Health Services, and the Community Improvement Department itself. Recording the activities of so many departments was nothing new to CID Grants Administration and Finance staff, but, where once all drawdowns had been performed by staff of the Board of County Commissioners' Accounting Department, CID staff were now charged

with performing the function, comparing every draw against the test of FAMIS's record of actual expenditures.

How do you map a moving train? It's not easy, especially when changes to IDIS were popping up on what seemed like a weekly basis. We were rolling across new terrain in a vehicle that we were just learning to operate—using instruction manuals that seemed to become outdated just as they were being downloaded. At this point in time, the IDIS Technical Assistance Unit staff were on a learning curve of their own. We prevailed, however, thanks to the support and expertise provided by **Wayne Paulsen** and **Linda Dresner**—familiar names to IDIS User Group members—of the CPD division of HUD's Jacksonville office.

Meanwhile, December 31, 1997, was closing in, and reports would soon be due. The statewide grapevine carried word that IDIS did not have the capacity to generate the statutorily required reports. Some jurisdictions were firm in their decision to stay with ENTERS to generate their GPR—the thought of which only made this user want CPR! How could anyone even think of taking the time to enter the data a third time (first in the Action Plan/CPS, then in IDIS, and now in ENTERS)? **Marion Guilford**, Hillsborough County's HUD Representative in Jackson, said "Go for it!" Armed with a "fax from Jax" titled "End of the Year Reporting Using IDIS," we found ourselves on the edge of the moment of truth.

For CDBG, the IDIS Report Menu provided a Summary of Activities Report and a Summary of Accomplishments Report, but we would have to use blank ENTERS-based forms to complete the Financial Summary, the Rehabilitation Summary, the One-for-One Replacement, the Displacement, and other reports that are required by the CDBG program (for us, excess Program Income and interest earned on revolving loans).

Except for the match report, IDIS provided all other reports required for HOME (Status of HOME

Activities, Status of HOME Grants, and Status of CHDO Funds by Fiscal Year).

For ESG funds, the IDIS Report Menu provided the ESG Grantee Status Report and the ESG Grantee Activity Summary Report, but the Financial Extraction Report had to be done manually, using the traditional Standard Form 269.

Everything looked like a "go"; test reports had sampled well. It appeared that we would be able to push a few keys and let the system do the work for us—for once. As the final moment of truth grew even closer, local IDIS users were advised to "freeze," staying out of the system until the reports were completed.

But what was this? The printer began spinning reports from Boston, Cape Fear, Newark, New York, and assorted other miscellaneous local jurisdictions from throughout the continental United States. How could this be? How could this nightmare be happening? The shock wave that ripped through the heart of this user went unnoticed by people in the surrounding office, occupied as they were with holiday parties and potlucks.

It was at this point that Phil Helbling, IDIS User Group contact in Washington, D.C,. responded to the screams for help from Hillsborough County. We still don't know whether the problem resulted from a transmission error, a breach of security in user identification, an old-fashioned Earth wobble, or a combination of all of the above. Phil simply suggested that I use a new password at someone else's computer. Suddenly, we were back home in Hillsborough County, Florida—with our very own reports. Thanks again, Phil!

The bottom line of all the effort is that it was worth it. Despite the nervous moments and the dramatic last-minute glitch, it seems that IDIS will facilitate our reporting after all. Going through this process for the first time was no drive in the country, but it had to be done. Now that we've got one GPR under our belts, we're prepared to face the road ahead: At least now we're in the driver's seat!

Editor's Note: The IDIS developers are researching the cause of Hillsborough County's reporting glitch. Once they discover what went awry, we'll be sure to let you know. If should you encounter the same problem, contact the TAU at 1-800-273-2573 or idis_help@hud.gov.

If IDIS has inspired you, too, contact Jennifer Stanley by phone (202-708-0614, ext. 4411) or cc:Mail (Jennifer_C._Stanley@hud.gov) to discuss your idea for an IDIS Live *Guest Column.* ■

FUTURE GROUP MEETINGS: SAVE THE DATES!

USERS GROUP—LOS ANGELES

Two Users Group meetings will be held in Los Angeles in February. Information about the meetings is provided below.

Tuesday, February 24, 1998:
Almansor Court (Banquet Room)
700 South Almansor Street
Alhambra, CA 91801
Contact: **Scott Whyte** at 213-890-7168

Thursday, February 26, 1998:
City of Oceanside Civic Center
Community Room (next to the Library)
300 North Coast Highway
Oceanside, CA 92054
Contact: **May Lee-Samaniego** at 213-894-8037

If you wish to attend either meeting, call the contact person listed or **Sharon Lee-Thomas** at 202-708-0614, ext. 2985.

USERS GROUP—ATLANTA

There will be a Users Group meeting in Atlanta on **Monday, March 2, 1998**. For information and to sign up, contact **Anita Crosby**, Management Information Specialist with the HUD Atlanta office, at 404-331-5001, ext. 2540.

USERS GROUP—PITTSBURGH

On **Wednesday, March 18, 1998**, a Users Group meeting will be held in Pittsburgh at the following location:

Department of Economic Development
County of Allegheny
Alcoa Building
7th floor Theatre
425 6th Avenue

If you wish to attend the Pittsburgh meeting, contact **Bill Kauffman** at 412-644-4881 or **Sharon Lee-Thomas** at 202-708-0614, ext. 2985.

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IDIS TRAINING

Tentative training dates and sites for 1998 are listed below.

February—Chicago
March—Las Vegas or Salt Lake City
April—Newark
May—San Antonio
June—San Jose
July—Philadelphia
August—New Orleans
September—Denver

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Your IDIS Users Group contacts are **Lincoln Burruss**, **Phil Helbling**, and **Roger Merideth** at CPD. You may contact them via the following:

Telephone:	202-708-0790, ext. 4570 (Lincoln)
	202-708-0614, ext. 4410 (Phil)
	202-708-0614, ext. 4691 (Roger)
Internet:	Lincoln_Burruss@hud.gov
	Philip_B._Helbling@hud.gov
	Roger_E._Merideth@hud.gov
Mail:	HUD/CPD
	Office of Executive Services
	451 Seventh St., S.W., Room 7226
	Washington, D.C. 20410

For technical information, contact your field office or the CPD Technical Assistance Unit (at 1-800-273-2573). **For SprintLink ID and password information**, contact your local HUD field office. **To have your IDIS password reset**, call HUD Security at 202-708-3300.