IDIS LIVE

…for the Integrated Disbursement and Information System

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development   *Office of Community Planning and Development*

IDIS: THE PROOF IS IN THE NUMBERS

The conversion of Community 2020 database files to a structure that is compatible for uploading to IDIS has been completed. All 1998 Community 2020 plans may now be submitted to Headquarters. Plans that were submitted to Headquarters prior to the completion of the conversion process were uploaded to IDIS on Thursday, January 29, 1998.

Just how much action is taking place behind the screens at IDIS? If you've always been curious about the big picture, read on.

Between 2/1/97 and 1/31/98 in IDIS
- $3.6 billion in grant funds was authorized;
- $230 million in grant funds was disbursed;
- More than 29,000 projects were set up; and
- More than 212,000 activities were set up.

Over the last six months, the system has averaged 1.2 million transactions (draws, activity setups, completions) per month.

Now you have an idea of the amount of energy that you've put into the system. Here's what's been happening at Headquarters, where more than 50 developers and support staff work with IDIS:
- between 2/1/97 and 1/31/98, 794 Entitlement communities and one State were converted to Live Production (as of February 27, 1998, 958 communities were Live);
- More than 8,000 users have been issued IDs and passwords;

- 3.9 million computer records have been generated;
- 180 screens have been created;
- 231 computer programs are in operation; and
- 385,000 lines of computer code have been developed.

The Users Group and training numbers are equally impressive:
- more than 20 Users Group meetings have been held, with approximately 70 people attending each meeting; and   *(continued, next page)*

- more than 1,500 users have benefited from training workshops and on-site technical assistance.

With so many users and so much activity taking place in this relatively new system in such a short time period, there must be lots of problems and glitches occurring, right? Well, take a look at these statistics:

- The Technical Assistance Unit (TAU) received 4,174 calls about IDIS from 2/1/97 to 1/31/98. Of this total, 236 calls were to report system errors, and 511 were from users who needed help securing IDs and/or passwords. The majority of the calls were from people who needed information or technical assistance.

- During the same period, the TAU handled more than 3,600 calls about the HOME Cash & Management Information System and 738 calls about SprintLink.

In the last six months, we've logged 22 system errors, almost all of which were fixed the same day that they were reported. ■

Reminder: Call the User Assistance Branch (UAB)—and not the TAU—to have your IDIS ID and/or password reset. The UAB's phone number is 1-202-708-3300.

REPORTING ON 1997 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Assistant Secretary Ramirez released a memorandum on February 18, 1998, that supersedes prior guidance on how to comply with all current HUD regulatory and statutory requirements for reporting program performance and accomplishments. The memo was mailed to all CPD field office directors and Entitlement grantees.

The memorandum and its two attachments have been posted in the "Making IDIS Work for You Chat Session" (at www.hud.gov/cpd/idisweb.html). The memorandum itself is excerpted below.

- Grantees should use IDIS to comply with current reporting requirements. As a first step, grantees should update all current activities in IDIS to include the required financial and performance information. The one exception to this statement regards the Financial Summary Form, which is not yet operational in IDIS. Grantees should use HUD Form 4949-3 and follow the "normal procedures described in Appendix 3 of the GPR Handbook (Handbook 6510.2 REV-2)" to report this information.

- Grantees do not need to be operational in IDIS for a full program year before they can use IDIS to report performance information for the entire program year.

- Grantees can add activities initiated during the program year but begun prior to their entry into IDIS.

- IDIS contains ample reporting features to allow grantees to comply with accounting and audit requirements and the required review of performance information by citizens. There are currently 27 preprogrammed report features and five preprogrammed downloads available in IDIS. Grantees should use these reporting features only to report to their citizens. **Field offices should not require grantees to provide paper copies of IDIS-generated reports.**

- HUD field office staff should access grantee information independently and produce whatever reports are necessary for their review as needed upon notification from grantees that their performance reports are complete.

- Grantees must provide an annual picture of their program performance within 90 days of the end of their program year. Field offices should ensure that grantees and field office staff are adequately briefed on IDIS to prepare performance reports and conduct these reviews.

- The importance of timely and accurate reports cannot be overstated. Performance reporting meets three basic purposes:

- it provides HUD with the information that it needs to meet its statutory requirement to assess each grantee's ability to carry out relevant CPD programs in compliance with all applicable rules and regulations;

- it provides information that HUD needs for its Annual Report to Congress, which is also statutorily mandated; and

- it provides grantees with an opportunity to describe to citizens their successes in revitalizing deteriorated neighborhoods and in meeting objectives that are stipulated in their Consolidated Plan. ∎

HOME SET UP CHANGES AND THE EN FUND TYPE

IDIS release 3.4 went into Production on February 9, 1998. The release requires that grantees enter the necessary HOME set-up data before an activity using EN or CR funds can be set up or have funds drawn against it. The release applies to both new and existing activities. Since that time, the number of requests from grantees to change previous draws from the EN (Entitlement) fund type to the AD (Admin.) fund type has increased significantly.

Many grantees have funded and drawn from the EN fund type for Admin. activities. With release 3.4, funding changes and additional draws for these activities cannot be made from the EN fund type unless the HOME path required fields are first completed.

Requests to change prior funding and draws to the AD fund type should be sent by fax (1-202-708-3222) to the IDIS Hotline. Requests should be in writing and include
- the grantee name and State;
- the name and phone number of the grantee contact person;
- the HUD Activity Number of the activity for which the request is being made; and
- a list of the specific draws (including their voucher numbers, etc.) for which the fund type should be changed to AD.

Due to the volume and complexity of these requests,

there may be a significant delay in honoring them, for the following reasons:
- some changes will require that a draw adjustment be made in the HUD Financial System;
- each correction will take about three or four hours; and
- only a few people are able to make these changes.

So, in the event that we become inundated with requests for retroactive corrections, it may take several days to process a change request.

Field Offices: Make certain your grantees understand that Admin. activities should still be funded and drawn from the AD fund type. ∎

REPORTING YOUR CDBG ANNUAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

For the Grantee Performance Report, grantees report CDBG accomplishments on the Summary of Activities Report (C04PR03). For the Consolidated Plan, accomplishments are reported on the Summary of Accomplishments Report (C04PR23). One additional report item has been implemented, and another is in the works.

The February 23 release included a separate report item for the 1997 Summary of Accomplishments Report. CDBG grantees are now able to enter annual accomplishments data for a program year without changing what they reported for the prior year. Grantees will enter annual accomplishments in the C04MA04 screen by program year, and the information for prior years will be retained. The program year field now appears on this screen, so all data entered here—other than the current status code—now varies based on the program year.

Grantees can manipulate the program year records with function keys (F keys). The F17/F18 keys, displayed at the bottom of the screen, allow the grantees to navigate up and down through the program year accomplishment records. Grantees can insert program year accomplishment records with the F11 key and they can delete these records with the F13 key. Grantees can also copy the exact information from one year to another by typing the new year in the program year field on C04MA04 and pressing F9. (This feature applies currently for the

years 1995-2085. It will soon apply for 1994, as well.)

The activity status code, which appears on each program year screen, will have the same value for all screens. This code is important, because, once it is set to "complete" or "canceled" (codes 1 or 2) in any program year screen, grantees may no longer fund the activity or draw down funds for the activity.

The program year that appears on the accomplishment records will be the year the activity was initially funded. Grantees should revise the program year, accomplishment fields, and the narrative on the C04MA04 screen as necessary to enter 1997 CDBG accomplishment data. Accomplishment data must be completed before producing the final reports for the 1997 program year.

By March 15, IDIS will include a revision to the Summary of Activities Report that will allow users to request a report for any program year by entering the year in a report-selection parameter. ∎

IDIS MATRIX CODES

During initial activity processing, you will come across the C04MA03 screen. This "Setup Activity" screen is where you identify the purpose of the activity that is being set up. One of the fields on this screen is the "HUD Matrix Code." The code that you enter in this field provides detailed information to program offices and HUD as a whole regarding the expenditure of funds (it also determines your set-up path). By completing this field, you enable HUD to compile national data and report statistics on various eligible programs.

An important point to keep in mind is that **Matrix Codes are not program specific**. Although some of the codes may be applicable to only one program, many apply across program lines. Public service codes may apply to CDBG, ESG, and HOPWA activities, as may certain public facility codes. Planning, housing rehabilitation, and administration codes also cross program lines. Here are some specific examples of codes that cross program lines:

- **code 03T** (Operating Costs of Homeless/AIDS

Patient Program) can be used to describe activities funded by the ESG, CDBG, or HOPWA programs;

- **code 14B** (Rehabilitation: Multi-Unit Residential) can apply to HOME, CDBG, and HOPWA projects;

- **codes 05Q** (Subsistence Payments); **05S** (Rental Housing Subsidies), and **21A** (General Program Administration) can be used for all programs (for HOPWA, short-term rent, mortgage, and utility payments would be covered by code 05Q, while rental assistance activities would fall under code 05S); and

- **code 12** (Construction of Housing) can be used for HOPWA (community residences and SRO dwellings only), CDBG, and HOME, but **not** ESG.

Always select the code that provides the most precise, specific description of your activity—irrespective of program considerations. If your activity benefits children, select code 05L (Child Care Services), which is much more precise than code 05 (Public Services)—even though code 05 sounds like it could be the right code.

There are 87 valid HUD Matrix Codes (to view a list of the codes while you are on line, place the cursor in the Matrix field and press F1). The choice of which code to select is not always an easy one, but there is a new resource to help you with the decision. HUD/CPD has published a document titled *Definitions of IDIS Matrix Codes*. This document is available in PDF format at the IDIS Web site (www.hud.gov/cpd/idisweb.html). To select the correct code, simply read the code descriptions carefully (in other words, don't select a code based solely on its "name"). Take a moment to review the descriptions provided in *Definitions*, and you should have no trouble selecting the proper Matrix Code.

To illustrate why the choice of a code can be somewhat confusing, let's consider "Acquisition" as an activity. Suppose your activity involves acquiring a piece of property. You will use the following Matrix Codes given the following circumstances:

Code	Circumstance
01	funds will be used only for the acquisition of the property
03A	funds will be used to acquire the property **and** to construct or rehabilitate a senior center
14G	funds will be used to acquire existing housing to be rehabilitated
17A	funds will be used either to acquire land and clear structures or to package land for commercial or industrial development

If you've read the code descriptions and still aren't absolutely positive which code to select, contact your CPD field office representative for assistance. If your representative is unable to help, he or she will at least be able to refer you to someone who can. ∎

VOUCHER BACKLOG AND THE "PENDING" STATUS

Occasionally, grantees call the IDIS Hotline to say that they have a voucher that is still "pending" despite the fact that it has been approved. In most cases, the funds have already been deposited in the grantee's bank, but they are simply unaware of this.

The six-step process of completing a voucher is fairly simple:
1. the grantee creates a voucher;
2. the grantee approves the voucher;
3. IDIS marks the voucher as "pending" and sends it to the HUD Financial System;
4. the voucher is processed in the HUD Financial System, which then "responds" to IDIS;
5. IDIS processes the response from the HUD Financial System;
6. IDIS marks the voucher as either "completed" or "rejected."

Step 3 occurs six evenings per week, sometime after 8:00 PM EST. Steps 5 and 6 occur six mornings per week at around 5:30 AM. Most of the delays in completing the process occur between steps 4 and 5—the "location" of the backlog. Due to this backlog, funds may have been drawn and deposited in the grantee's bank account even though the voucher is still marked as "pending."

If you call the Hotline to report a "pending" voucher, the TAU staff will check the HUD Financial System to see whether it shows that the funds have been deposited in your bank account. If they have been deposited, it's just a matter of waiting for the backlog to be cleared. If the funds have not been deposited, it usually means that the HUD Financial System has rejected the voucher. The TAU will be able to help you resolve this problem, should it occur. For this reason, you should call the IDIS Hotline when a voucher remains "pending" longer than expected. Likewise, remember the backlog and reconsider calling the TAU if you approve a voucher and its status is still "pending" the next day. ∎

Q&A: FIELD OFFICE QUERY

Q: One of our grantees received an audit finding that it spent $1 million in 1994 CDBG funds on "ineligible" activities. Because the activities in question are old (i.e., not in IDIS), there are no drawdown vouchers that this grantee can revise to offset the ineligible amount.

A: All draws prior to conversion are captured in IDIS. When the funds are returned to the Treasury, the HUD Financial System (also known as LOCCS) will send a collection draw to IDIS. The amount of this draw will be negative.

Here is what your grantee can do to remedy the situation:

1. create a "dummy" activity (let's call it "ABC");

2. revise one of the 1994 draws for HUD Activity Number 2 (CDBG), revising $1 million from that draw to activity ABC;

3. send the funds ($1 million) back to the Treasury, identifying it as returned funds for the 1994 CDBG grant; and

4. when the $1 million negative collection draw shows up in IDIS from the HUD Financial System, revise the draw, revising the $1 million negative amount to activity ABC.

Once your grantee has completed these steps, activity ABC will show a net drawn amount of zero. The 1994 CDBG grant will show that the $1 million has been returned. Your grantee will then be able to spend this amount on other (eligible!) activities. ∎

CHANGES TO ENTITLEMENT

TRAINING

By now, all but a handful of the metropolitan city, urban county, and HOME consortium grantees have gone Live in IDIS. Now here come the States. What does this mean for the ongoing training of Entitlement grantees?

HUD will continue to provide training for Entitlement grantees. After all, there will be turnover among the staff of existing grantees, and new grantees will join the CPD family from time to time. There will be some changes, however.

During FY 99 and beyond, training sessions for Entitlement grantees will take place semi-annually. The lessons and exercises from the classroom training will be placed on the Internet, as well, so that users can conduct independent self-study at their own convenience. Also, the training dataset used in the classroom will be loaded into the Pseudo-Production region of IDIS to supplement this self-study.

To make room in Pseudo-Production for the training database (and the preconversion data for the States), a number of files will be purged from the region. The old Consolidated Plan, GPR, and preconversion data for Entitlements that have converted to IDIS will be cleared from the mainframe. ∎

FUND TYPE VS. SOURCE TYPE

Picture it. You're trying to create a drawdown voucher. When you press Enter, one of two things occurs:

- You receive an "Insufficient funds" error message; or
- All of your information disappears.

You may have just discovered why it is important not to confuse "fund type" with "source type." If you've transposed the two, you're likely to either get an error message—or lose your information.

"Fund type" simply refers to the type of funding being used. There are seven different fund types:

AD	Admin.
CC	CHDO Capacity Building Fund
CO	CHDO Operating Expenses
CR	CHDO Reserve
EN	Entitlement
PI	Program Income

SU	Subgrant

Under the HOME Multi-Unit Completion path, there are specialized fund types:

1	Program funds for activity costs
2	Program funds for downpayment assistance
3	Program Income
4	Federal funds
5	State or local appropriated funds
6	State or local tax-exempt bond proceeds
7	Private loan funds
8	Owner contribution
9	Private grants

"Source type," on the other hand, describes the source from which the funding is being received. The "source type" code answers the question "Who or what is providing the funding?" As with the "fund type" codes, there are a variety of "source type" codes:

CDBG-Related Source Types

AA	Action Grant Metro City-Urban County
AB	Action Grant Small City
DC	State Administered-Small City
DF	State Flood
DH	State Hurricane, HUD Administered-Small City
M	State Disaster
DN	Small City Program-Nonmetro Area (outside MSA)
DS	Small City Program-Metro Area (inside MSA)
MC	Metro City
ME	Metro City-Earthquake
MF	Metro City-Flood
MH	Metro City-Hurricane
UC	Urban County
UE	Urban County-Earthquake
UP	Urban County-Flood
UH	Urban County-Hurricane
UR	Financial Settlement Grant

ESG-Related Source Type

DC	State Direct Allocation
IC	Suballocation from State to Local Government
MC	Metro City-Direct Allocation
NC	Suballocation from State to Non-Profit Organization
RL	Relocation from "MC/UC" to a Locality
RN	Relocation from "MN/UC" to a Private Non-Profit
RS	Relocation to a State
SL	Relocation from "DC" to a Locality
SO	Relocation from "DC" to a Private Non-Profit

| UC | Urban County-Direct Allocation |

HOME-Related Source Type

DA	Disaster
DC	Direct Formula Consortium
HO	City/County Participants
MC	Direct Formula City
SG	State
ST	Insular
UC	Direct Formula Urban County

HOPWA-Related Source Type

| HH | HOPWA |
| HS | State |

You will notice that several of the source type codes are repeated from one program area to the next. When you are creating a drawdown voucher, however, you must enter a program code along with the source type and fund type. For example, when you enter a program code of "B" for "CDBG," IDIS will then understand that a source type of "DC" represents "State Administered-Small City" and not "Direct Formula Consortium" (HOME) or "State Direct Allocation" (ESG).

Finally, don't forget—once you've checked that your fund type and source type are correct—to check your recipient type, as well. Putting the wrong code in this field can also throw a wrench in the drawdown process. The recipient types are as follows:

CO	CHDO
LG	Local Government (Entitlement)
OE	Other Entity
SR	State Recipient
SE	State Entitlement

All of these codes are listed in Appendix B of your *IDIS User Manual*. ∎

SPRINTLINK
TECHNICAL BULLETIN

For your convenience, we've compiled information on SprintLink from a variety of sources—including all previous issues of *IDIS Live*—and have included it in this section, which should answer most, if not all, of your SprintLink-related questions.

WHAT IS SPRINTLINK?

SprintLink is a software package that allows you to connect your PC to HUD's mainframe. You must install this software package on your hard drive. The latest version of SprintLink (2.0A) is available for downloading from HUD's Web site (www.hud.gov/cpd/idis/idissoft.html). Before you download SprintLink, check to make certain that your system meets the minimum hardware and software requirements.

MINIMUM HARDWARE/ SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS

Your system must meet the **minimum** hardware requirements in order to run SprintLink. It must be an IBM-compatible 386 microcomputer (486 is recommended) with the following components:
- 8 MB of RAM (16MB recommended);
- hard-drive space enough to store Windows, DOS, and all IDIS-related software;
- a 3.5" high-density floppy disk drive;
- a Microsoft-compatible serial mouse;
- an enhanced 101 keyboard;
- a color VGA+ monitor and video card; and
- a 9,600 baud rate Hayes-compatible modem (14,400 baud rate or higher is recommended).

The following software is required to run and install SprintLink:
- MS-DOS version 5.0 or higher;
- MS-Windows version 3.1; and, of course,
- the SprintLink software (available at the HUD Web address provided above).

SprintLink is designed to run on a stand-alone PC with an internal/external modem attached to one of the serial communication ports. It will **not** work on a Local Area Network (LAN), nor will it operate with a LAN-pool modem.

If your system meets the minimum requirements, you are ready to download the software and install it on your PC.

Note: If you do not already have a SprintLink ID and password, you may want to contact your field office at this point to request one. You will need the ID and password to access IDIS using SprintLink.

HOW TO DOWNLOAD AND INSTALL SPRINTLINK

There are five SprintLink-related files on the HUD Web site (at www.hud.gov/cpd/idis/idissoft.html). The first file provides downloading instructions and is summarized here. Files 2 through 4 ("executable" files) are the actual SprintLink software, and file 5 is the *SprintLink Installation/User Guide*. In addition to elaborating on the information provided in this Technical Bulletin, this latter file includes screen captures, trouble-shooting tips, and descriptions of the various error messages that you may encounter when using SprintLink.

The process of downloading the software involves several steps. You will
1. obtain three preformatted, high-density disks;
2. create a folder on your hard drive into which you will download the executable files from the HUD Web site;
3. download the three executable files from the HUD Web site to the folder on your hard drive;
4. unzip each executable file, directing its contents to one of your three disks; and
5. scan the disks for viruses (optional).

Let's walk through this process for the first SprintLink executable file (sprint1.exe).

1. once you have obtained a preformatted, high-density disk, create a folder called "SprintLink" on your hard drive (your c: drive);
2. from the HUD Web site (www.hud.gov/cpd/idis/idissoft.html), click on "SprintLink Version 2.0a Disk 1 [File name=sprint1.exe]";
3. follow the instructions that will appear on your screen, downloading the executable file (.exe) to your "SprintLink" folder;
4. go to the directory into which the executable file was loaded (your c: drive);
5. insert your disk in your a: (or b:) drive; and
6. at the DOS prompt, type "sprint1 a:" (or "sprint1 b:").

The contents of the executable file should then "extract" onto your disk.

Repeat this process, placing the contents of one executable file onto each of your three disks. When you have finished, you will have three disks filled with installation information. Now you will want to use these disks to install SprintLink on your hard drive. You will do this in one of two ways, depending upon which version of Windows you are running.

If you are using Windows 95:
- go to your Control Panel;
- select "Add/Remove Programs";
- click on "Install";
- insert disk 1;
- click on "Next";
- click on "Finish"; and
- follow the prompts.

If you are using Windows 3.1:
- go to your Program Manager;
- select "File";
- select "Run";
- type a:\setup.exe (or b:\setup.exe);
- click "OK"; and
- follow the prompts.

When you have finished installing SprintLink, set your three disks aside in case you ever need to reinstall the program. Now you need to customize some of the SprintLink settings so that your computer can "talk to" the HUD mainframe.

CUSTOMIZING THE

SPRINTLINK SOFTWARE

You've installed the SprintLink software. Congratulations! You're more than halfway there. Now you need to get it ready to dial into the HUD mainframe.

You will be customizing the settings on the SprintLink communications setup screen. In one of the fields on this screen, you will be asked to provide a local phone number. This is the number that SprintLink uses to dial into the IDIS mainframe. The first thing to do, then, is to call the SprintLink Management Center (at 1-800-473-7983) to get this number.

Next, go to the communications setup screen. Do this by clicking on the SprintLink icon (it should be in your SprintLink folder) and then on the "Setup" button. The communications setup screen should appear. From this point, take the following steps (press Enter after you've completed each field):
- enter the local number (if you must dial a "9" to reach an outside line, remember to add the "9" followed by a comma—9, XXX-XXXX);
- leave the default 800 number as is (again, you may need to add a "9"—9, 1-800-546-2500);
- enter your area code;
- enter your local exchange (the first three digits of your phone number);
- under "Dialing Attempts," enter "2";
- under "Response Pause," enter 60;
- under "Comm Port" and "Comm IRQ," select the comm port on which your modem is set and the corresponding IRQ (if you do not have this information, contact your local tech (ATA) or the TAU);
- set the "baud rate" to "9600";
- select "7" for "data bits";
- select "1" for "stop bits"; and
- set "parity" to "even."

If your jurisdiction is in Live Production, select "Production" for the field called "IDIS region to login." For the "Show Background Processing for Trouble-Shooting" field, enter "yes" if this is your first time using SprintLink. This way, if the program stops processing or an error occurs, the SprintLink script will be displayed, allowing you to diagnose what went wrong (remember to call the TAU at 1-800-273-2573 if you get stuck). Once SprintLink is up and running smoothly, you can change this setting

to "no," which optimizes SprintLink performance.

Click on "Save" and then "Close." You should now be at the SprintNet Security screen. Enter your SprintLink ID and password (your SprintLink ID starts with "CPD"), and click on "Ok." (Do not click on "Test Modem.") If all goes well, you should now find yourself at the IDIS signon screen. From here, take the following steps:

1. enter your six-digit user ID and press Tab (**not Enter**);
2. enter your IDIS password and press Enter to be taken to the IDIS title screen.

Congratulations! You're in!

SPRINTLINK Q&A

The TAU Hotline is available to help with your SprintLink (and other IDIS-related) problems. You can reach the Hotline by phone (1-800-273-2573), fax (202-708-3222), or e-mail (idis_help@hud.gov). For the do-it-yourselfers out there, the following questions and answers should help you to resolve whatever SprintLink problem you may be having.

Q: Should I change my SprintLink password?
A: No! Never change your SprintLink password. Unlike your IDIS password, your SprintLink ID and password are not unique: Other jurisdictions may be using them, as well. Your SprintLink password and ID simply allow your computer to dial in to HUD. If you change your password, you may inadvertently prevent other communities from accessing IDIS.

Q: I am receiving an "invalid sign on attempt" error message indicating that my SprintLink ID and password are invalid. What do I do?
A: First, check your communications setup screen to make certain that the setting of the "IDIS region to login" field is correct. If your jurisdiction is in Live Production, this field should be set to "Production." If your setting is fine, call your field office for a new SprintLink ID and password. If the problem persists, contact the TAU.

Q: I'm having problems connecting with SprintLink. What should I do?
A: This may be happening for several reasons. You may have pressed Enter instead of Tab to move from one field to the next in the IDIS signon screen. You may have entered the letter "O" rather than the numeral "0" in your password or ID field. Or, your communications settings may be incorrect (read "Customizing the SprintLink Software," above).

Q: What is a "general protection fault" error?
A: This error typically means that you need to change your video driver. To do this, go to your "Windows Setup" icon and select "Change System Settings." Next, change the display to "VGA (standard)" and click "Ok" and "Exit." If the system then gives you the option of using the currently installed driver or selecting a new one, choose to use the currently installed driver. Then, restart Windows and resume your work with SprintLink.

Q: Now that I've installed SprintLink 2.0A, can I delete the earlier version (2.0)?
A: Yes, you may delete 2.0, but first be certain that version 2.0A is operational.

THE BEST OF IDIS

John J. Gunther Blue Ribbon Best Practice designations are awarded each year to communities that serve as models and leaders in community development (see www.hud.gov/ptw/menu.html for more information about these awards). Awards are presented in eight categories, one of which is "IDIS and Reporting."

In 1997, most grantees were still not actively using IDIS, so just getting through the conversion process was an achievement in and of itself. Nonetheless, some communities showed extraordinary commitment and leadership in going Live and in training others to learn to use the system effectively. Communities such as Jefferson County, KY; Chester County, PA; and Rochester, NY, who earned best practices last year, set the standard.

This year, the HUD Policy Committee developed stringent guidelines for field offices to follow in selecting IDIS best practices. To be awarded a best practice designation in 1998, grantees must

- demonstrate an unusual commitment to going "live" on the Integrated Disbursement and Information System (IDIS). This process begins with a willingness to apply new technology to current accounting and reporting systems;

- employ consistent training, practice, and application processes to promote a smooth transition to the system;

- make full use of all learning resources available for information, guidance, and support;

- show enhanced program administration capacity through the use of IDIS, as evidenced by greater efficiency and delivery of real-time performance reports, documenting accomplishments, expenditures, and regulatory compliance for CDBG, HOME, HOPWA, and ESG programs;

- produce Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports (CAPERs) that are useful to citizens and use HUD software and IDIS to establish short- and long-term strategies; and

- demonstrate a willingness to serve as role models and trainers, providing peer-to-peer technical assistance for grantees in the area or across the country.

"Open season" for field office selection of the 1998 best practice awards closed in early February. In making their selections, the field offices used a year's worth of knowledge about the communities with which they work to select those who will serve as models and leaders for the coming year. Final selections won't be announced until later this year.

During the summer, practitioners from all over the country will meet at the second annual symposium for peer-to-peer exchanges of information, ideas, and techniques. Stay tuned for information about the exact date and location of the symposium. ∎

IDIS PROFILE: RON ALLEN

Our TAU profile has been such a popular feature that we've decided to expand it to include profiles of other "behind-the-scenes" IDIS team members. In this issue, we feature Ron Allen, an IDIS trainer.

Ron Allen has been providing IDIS training and technical assistance to HUD grantees since the fall of 1996. He's part of an eight-member team that trains Entitlements and States at the IDIS training workshops that are held across the nation. He also provides technical assistance to HUD grantees at their offices. According to Ron, "training has been particularly enjoyable, because the people that I train are typically fun to work with and are always appreciative after the sessions."

Ron's HUD/CPD training days began with CPS, Easy Maps, and MapInfo training workshops conducted in Fair Oaks, Virginia. "Over the two years that I have been working with HUD grantees, I have learned a lot about community development programs," Ron said. This knowledge helps Ron in understanding the issues that confront grantees. According to Ron, what worries trainees most about IDIS is having to change the way they do business: "They want to know how IDIS relates to what they do," he says. In his training sessions, Ron demonstrates how easy it is to enter reporting information and how effective IDIS is in reducing paperwork. What makes Ron's day is when

somebody says to him, "Ron, I really feel comfortable with IDIS now" or "Ron, this has really helped me a lot"—and, yes, somebody truly has said that!

We'll profile another "behind-the-scenes" IDIS team member in the next issue of IDIS Live. ∎

FROM THE FIELD: A.J. EVANS

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 A.J. Evans, from the HUD Newark Office.

IDIS LIVE—OR LET DIE

My colleagues who have written articles for *IDIS Live* over the past several months have described the painstaking process that all of us have endured in an attempt to master IDIS. We in New Jersey are no different. Our grantees and field office staff can spin tales of misery and success, pain and pleasure, when it comes to IDIS. The journey over the past couple of years may have been bumpy at times—and downright rough for moments—but I believe that we have developed a functional system, with plenty of potential, of which we can all be proud.

Now that the smoke has cleared and we've dusted ourselves off after our journey to Live Production, it's time for a reality check. The greatest hurdle that we face is **ourselves** and our attitudes. Yes, IDIS has complicated processes. Yes, IDIS is not exactly user friendly. Yes, we absolutely abhor resetting passwords or, even worse, applying for new user IDs. But the reality remains that IDIS is the only game in town when it comes to accounting for our four major Entitlement programs.

What I have discovered during my daily interaction with grantee personnel and other field staff is that the 80/20 rule applies doubly. First, 80 percent of the people who talk to me are really trying hard to understand IDIS and competently perform the

functions as designed. Then there is that 20 percent crew who exist with "IDIS will go away" blinders over their eyes, do not apply themselves, and will not read the *IDIS User Manual*—but will call me to ask what button they should push next. The 80/20 rule applies doubly, because the 20 percent crew takes up 80 percent of my time.

I have great empathy for the person with little or no computer experience who has been thrust into the world of IDIS. It must be frightening to be practically forced to deal with this technology with no way to escape. But, remember, the critical issue at this point in our IDIS experience is not the complexity of the system but, rather, the willingness of IDIS users to try.

IDIS is very susceptible to perceptions. If one perceives the system as overpowering and too complicated, then that person will harvest very little productivity from IDIS—because of self-imposed barriers. These barriers surround and overwhelm the 20 percent crew. You probably know someone who exhibits these technophobic or mental inertia symptoms: "It's not my job," "I'm too close to retirement to learn the computer," "This thing takes too much of my time," "I'm in Finance. I don't need to know IDIS. Let CD handle it," and so on.

We could say "forget these 20 percenters. They are technological dinosaurs destined for extinction." The reality of the situation, however, is that we need these folks. The workload is too great in most local jurisdictions and HUD field offices for one or two people to carry the load successfully.

Thus we must address this situation. IDIS will thrive in an environment where people embrace the challenge, seek comprehensive computer training, sponsor in-house mentorship, actively network with other IDIS users, and realize that the beast is really a mouse once we change our perception by overcoming our mental barriers. Otherwise, communities could choke on confusion, erroneous data, overloaded staff, and lack of job proficiency. The choice is ours—Live or Let Die! ∎

SPECIAL SECTION: STATES AND IDIS

DELAWARE SHARES LESSONS LEARNED GOING LIVE

Staff from the State of Delaware—the first State to go Live in IDIS—took time out of their busy schedules to discuss the conversion experience. **Julia Loescher**, Planning and Community Development Program Manager; **Andrew J. Lorenz**, Management Analyst III; and **Kitrina Hurd**, Senior Fiscal Administrative Officer, offer the following advice to other States:

Close out as many grants as possible before going Live. Delaware closed out all of its 1994 and 1995 CDBG projects before going Live. The State also plans to complete a PER this year just for the closed-out projects, so that the IDIS-generated report—when they create it—will deal only with projects funded after 1996.

Schedule your IDIS training so that it falls close to your conversion date. "If you don't use the system right away, you tend to forget things," says Lorenz.

Include your financial staff in the training. "They may hone in on issues that wouldn't occur to your program people or management staff," says Loescher.

Appoint a Local Administrator and make sure they get the training they need before you go Live. Each State has at least one Local Administrator. This person is able to specify the program areas in which each member of the grantee's staff can work and is also able to specify which functions staff members can perform—approving drawdowns, for example.

Secure your Production passwords. "We went into Live Production over the holidays, but we had our Pre-Production passwords. You can't get into the Production region with a Pre-Production password,." says Lorenz. (To obtain a password, submit an "IDIS Access Request Form" to your field office. Call your field office for more information.)

Find out what resources are available to you. The folks from Delaware had nothing but praise for the training they received. Still, says Loescher, "the real training begins when you get into the system." That's why it is important to familiarize yourself with the resources that are available to you once you go Live. Keep this list handy:

- **On-line resources**
  - IDIS FAQs (www.hud.gov/cpd/idis/faq.html)
  - IDIS State Discussion Forum (www.hud.gov/cpd/idisweb.html)
  - *IDIS Live* (www.hud.gov/cpd/idis/idislive.html)

- **Technical Assistance Hotline (TAU)**
  - by phone (1-800-273-2573)
  - by fax (1-202-708-3222)
  - by e-mail (idis_help@hud.gov)

Thank you to Julia, Andy, and Kitrina for going first, and for allowing the rest of us to benefit from their experience. ∎

CONVERSION: WHY NOW?

All States will convert to Live IDIS Production during FY 98. Already, 99.5 percent of Entitlement grantees are using IDIS successfully. Though the task of bringing the States into Live Production seems daunting—and some of you may wish that the process could be delayed—there are a number of reasons why conversion in FY 98 is necessary:

- the Office of the Inspector General is concerned that not all grantees have been converted to Live Production, which serves as a means of addressing the "at-risk" status of CPD programs;

- the Office of Management and Budget wants HUD to move from a high-cost development phase to a lower-cost maintenance phase;
- CPD cannot afford simultaneously to continue operating and staffing IDIS, VRS, and CMIS; and
- CPD needs to begin the next step—absorbing competitive programs into IDIS.

WHAT HUD IS DOING TO EASE STATES' CONVERSION

HUD is taking a number of steps to help States move into Live Production:
- providing training;
- making a variety of staff available to offer program-related and other guidance;
- establishing State-specific, on-line resources;
- developing IDIS reports for States; and
- transferring some data automatically.

Each of these efforts is summarized below.

IDIS TRAINING

HUD is committed to providing training and support to States to make sure that their transition to Live Production is as smooth as possible. Training will take two forms:

- **Workshops for managers.** State staff who will be responsible for making decisions on staff roles and overseeing the conversion should attend a workshop. Participants will receive a hands-on overview of IDIS. The workshops will give managers a chance to use the system without getting too deeply into the details.

  Workshops will be held in New Orleans (March 26-27); Newark (April 16-17); Los Angeles (May 7-8); and Atlanta (June 17-18). For more information or to register, contact Tonya, Inc., at 202-289-8100. Also, a registration fax-back form is available at the IDIS Users Web site (www.hud.gov/cpd/idis/idistran.html).

- **On-site training for "front-line" staff.** Technical assistance/training will be conducted in each State capital, as appropriate, to allow program and finance staff the opportunity to learn the system in complete detail. For more

information about this training, contact Tonya, Inc., at 202-289-8100.

Many States will be extending IDIS access to their grantees. Training for these grantees will be available in FY 99, after all the States have been trained and converted.

STAFF RESOURCES

CPD field office staff are available to provide program-specific as well as technical advice and assistance. Headquarters staff are also available to help:
- **Cliff Barnhill** (202-708-1322) can help with CDBG policy and procedural questions.
- **Joan Morgan** (202-708-2685) can provide information about HOME-specific policies and procedures.
- **Doris Hill** and **Bob Meehan**, of the Systems Development and Evaluation Division (202-708-0790), are available to answer your questions or route them to the best source.

All programs must convert at the same time (CDBG, ESG, HOME, and HOPWA). For example, HOME cannot come in before or after CDBG.

ON-LINE RESOURCES

Entitlement grantees have an on-line chat room in which they discuss IDIS-related issues, oftentimes posing questions of the group—or providing answers to them. State grantees have a chat room, too. By participating in the "Making IDIS Work for States Discussion Forum," at www.hud.gov/cpd/idisweb.html, State-level users will be able to exchange concerns, suggestions, and tips. CPD staff monitor the "chat," chiming in to answer questions, correct misperceptions, and resolve problems.

Another resource with which Entitlement grantees are familiar is the IDIS Technical Assistance Unit (TAU, or "Hotline"). The TAU is staffed from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM EST, Monday through Thursday, and from 8:00 AM to 5:30 PM EST on Friday. (The TAU is closed on Federal holidays.) There are three ways to reach the Hotline:
- by **e-mail**, at idis_help@hud.gov;
- by **fax**, at 202-708-3222; and
- by **phone**, at 1-800-273-2573.

REPORTS FOR STATES

To assist States in converting to IDIS—and with their periodic reporting to HUD—several new reports are being added for the HOME and CDBG programs. In addition, States will be able to take advantage of existing reports in the system, which are available to all grantees, and a major new download capability, which will provide access to basic activity and funding data.

The State HOME report will display the committed and drawn down amounts for each IDIS activity (HOME project), along with ID codes. The report will be available in two sequences:

- ID codes (grant number, subgrant, HOME project number, grant year) for three broad groups (CHDO/OE, State subrecipient, or State funded); and
- IDIS activity number for year funded.

The State CDBG report will display information for each activity in a format similar to the PER. The report will include a financial summary for the program by year and an activity report in two sequences:

- Financial Summary, which will provide a summary of funds for a specific grant as of a specific date. The report will include information on financial status as well as funding by national objectives; and
- Activity Summary, which will provide the status of funds and accomplishments for each activity that was open during a reporting period. The report lists funds budgeted and spent as well as proposed and actual accomplishments. The report is sequenced either by grantee or grant year.

Of the twenty plus reports in IDIS, several provide basic data and should be of particular value to States in verifying the data that has been loaded into the system. These reports are

- the **Federal Entitlement Grant Report**, which provides summary financial information on the CDBG, HOME, ESG, and HOPWA programs;
- the **List of Activities Report**, which provides commitment and disbursement information on all activities in the system, sorted by plan year and IDIS activity number; and

- the **Grantee Activity Report**, which provides status, commitment, and disbursement data, sorted by grantee-assigned number.

IDIS users are already able to download some of the program and grant data that has been loaded into the system. A major new download capability—also being developed for Entitlement communities—will allow States to download text files containing all data that has been entered into the system. For States, this capability will be particularly beneficial, because it will enable them to review the basic data on activities and activity funding.

AUTOMATIC DATA TRANSFERS

Information from the following programs will be transferred to IDIS automatically:

- all data from HOME CMIS;
- data from the HUD Financial System (also known as LOCCS) regarding funds that are currently available; and
- CDBG data from the PER (these data will be transferred **only** upon request by the State).

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO EASE YOUR CONVERSION

There are some steps that States can take now to simplify the overall conversion process.

- Take a second look at the lessons learned by Delaware. If you can act on any of their advice, it will be to your benefit.

- CDBG grantees have some options with regard to submitting their PERs information this year:
  - Grantees may submit (in electronic format) a partial-year PER shortly before conversion; HUD will load the data into IDIS rather than the last full-year PER. HUD is considering allowing States to submit a partial-year PER (in lieu of a 12-month report) as part of their next Consolidated Annual Performance Report, if the State's Performance Report would otherwise be due within a few months of the conversion date.
  - HUD has made some transitional resources available: three templates—one database, one spreadsheet, and one Word document—have been distributed to field offices. Each

template contains fields into which grantees can enter their PER data and other information about the State's CDBG activities (grantees can select whichever template they prefer). The template can be sent to **Anita Obarakpor** (202-708-1023, ext. 4685) at Headquarters for loading directly into IDIS.

Remember, any preconversion PERs information that is sent must be in electronic format.

- Provide your field office representative with the name and phone number of your conversion contact person.

- Identify potential users and submit a "User Access Request Form" for each user to your field office so that these users can obtain IDs and passwords. Keep in mind that States may restrict user access to be
  – program specific (for example, the user may be allowed to access CDBG but not HOME); and
  – function specific (the user may be able to set up activities only or draw funds only).

- Retrieve reference and other materials from the IDIS Web site (www.hud.gov/cpd/idisweb. html), including
  – an *IDIS User Manual*;
  – free SprintLink software for accessing IDIS via a toll-free number (see the SprintLink Technical Bulletin, page 8);

  – *Technical Bulletin*s and *IDIS Live*, two publications that provide technical and other tips;
  – an orientation training schedule; and
  – a Users Group meeting schedule.

- Attend an orientation session (offered monthly). For information about these sessions, contact Tonya, Inc., at 202-289-8100.

EDI—AN UPDATE

State conversion will occur without benefit of the Electronic Data Interchange (EDI). CPD realizes that this issue is of great concern to States. Still, we cannot at this point provide a "permanent" layout of the data record, because IDIS is still being changed to respond to user requests and to make the system more user friendly. Once States are using IDIS, they may appreciate this measure of flexibility.

Once CPD is able to stabilize the data record, EDI will be available to facilitate the ongoing operation of IDIS. States that are concerned about the duplicate entry of data into IDIS may use **reverse** EDI; that is, they may download IDIS data on demand to ASCII files, which may then be brought into States' information systems.

HUD's part of the EDI equation will be ready by the end of 1998. States will then need to prepare programs to extract the IDIS transaction data from their systems and put it in the EDI format. ∎

IDIS LIVE GUEST COLUMN

This month's IDIS Live *Guest Column was submitted by Dennis Rochek, Grants Manager for the City of Portland, Oregon. He received "valuable assistance" from Wendy Cherubini, Program Manager, and Mike Kersting, Accountant. Thank you, Dennis, Wendy, and Mike!*

I wanted to take this opportunity to "enlighten" you about Portland's IDIS experience so far. But first, a little background on Portland.

For FY98, Portland's Entitlement total is $16,836,000 (which includes Community Development Block Grant, HOME, Emergency Shelter Grant, and HOPWA funds). During our fiscal year ending June 30, 1997, we spent $25,836,776 on these programs.

Portland's Bureau of Housing & Community Development (BHCD) administers HUD funds in IDIS, submits vouchers for approval, and prepares the Grantee Performance Report (GPR). The city's centralized Grants Office handles all of its federal funds to assure compliance with federal regulations/requirements, approves vouchers, accounts for all cash receipts, and manages the Federal Single Audit.

BHCD staff are heavily involved in providing quality services to the Portland community—but none of these services is provided directly. More than 100 outside contractors deliver public services, offer housing and economic development loans and services, and provide a variety of community and targeted neighborhood activities. Compiling information from this many outside agencies for IDIS can be quite a challenge.

When HUD informed us we were going Live in IDIS, there was some anxiety as to whether the system would work. It was even suggested at one point that we draw some "extra" cash from the old system "just in case." But—after the initial nervousness—we processed our first voucher on September 18, 1997,

the day before an IDIS Users Group meeting was scheduled to take place here in Portland. Six staff huddled around the terminal trying to make sure that each step was followed correctly. There was some panic during the meeting—when we began to wonder whether we'd done everything correctly—but, after discussion, instructor Phil Helbling assured us that we had taken the right steps. There was jubilation in Portland!

Since that time, our dealings with IDIS have been relatively smooth, and I have had no complaints from staff. There is some concern, however, about completing the GPR when we get to year end. I'm sure that this is because we've never completed one before using IDIS, so the fear of the unknown is a factor.

One benefit of IDIS is that it has required our program staff to become more involved in the financial process and the accounting staff to become more knowledgeable about the program side. This has resulted in better all-around understanding by staff.

One issue we faced was working out the interface between IDIS and our own financial/budget system, which is better known as IBIS (Integrated Business Information System). What with IDIS and IBIS, it was confusing for a while—but we now have a good working process in place, which has helped to eliminate that confusion.

As I reflect on our experience with IDIS, it is apparent to me that this system works much better than the previous one. It's easier, faster, and provides more information. Although we had our share of difficulties during implementation, we feel that the long-term benefits far outweigh a little stress experienced last September.

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 MEETINGS:
SAVE THE DATES!

USERS GROUP—PITTSBURGH

There will be a national Users Group meeting in Pittsburgh on **Wednesday, March 18, 1998**. The meeting will be held at the following location:

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

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

USERS GROUP—NEWARK

There will be a Users Group meeting in Newark, New Jersey, on **Thursday, April 23, 1998**, at the following site:

New Jersey Transportation Planning Authority
One Newark Center
17th floor
Newark, NJ 07102

According to Phil Helbling, veteran IDIS point man, this site is one of the best ever! It's located on the 17th floor of the modern Newark Center, seats 150, and overlooks the Manhattan skyline! It is only two blocks' walk from Penn Station Newark and a quick 12-mile, 15-minute train ride to NYC. For lodging, contact the Robert Treat Travelodge (at 973-622-1000) or the Gateway Hilton (at 973-622-5000). If you wish to attend the meeting, contact **A.J. Evans** at 973-622-7900, ext. 3319, or **Sharon Lee-Thomas** at 202-708-0614, ext. 2985.

IDIS TRAINING

Tentative training dates and sites for the balance of 1998 are listed below. Contact Tonya, Inc. (202-289-8100), for specific information about each meeting.

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.