IDIS CONDUCTS SURVEY

The Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD) has spent the past few months meeting with Program Office directors, the Office of Information Technology (IT), grantees and advocacy groups strategizing on the stabilization of the Integrated Disbursement and Information System (IDIS). This effort has led to enhancements to the system that were put into production with two system releases over the past two months. However, HUD CPD realizes that there is more work to be done!

For that reason, in November 1998, CPD requested IT to conduct a survey on IDIS. Its primary purpose was to determine the capability of the Field Offices and entitlement grantees to create, print and download reports. In addition, comments were gathered from Field Offices and grantees on other aspects of IDIS.

The following is a summary of the results of that survey:

Grantee / Field Office Ability to Execute Reports.
Virtually all of the Field Offices have at least one person who is knowledgeable about and comfortable with the steps needed to create/download reports. This ability is heavily dependent on the user's computer expertise and familiarity with the IDIS Reports module. Both Field Offices and grantees need some retraining on report procedures, since some staff are new on the job and report options are changing. Those that have been trained and have experience with the Reports module can make it

work. However, even experienced users do not like the print/download process.

Reports Module Not User-Friendly.
The process to print/download reports is considered to be cumbersome, time-consuming and not user-friendly. ....*(continued on page 2)*

BOB MEEHAN NAMED AS ACTING DIRECTOR OF IDIS

Robert Meehan returned to CPD in mid-November 1998 and took over the reins of IDIS. Bob became the Acting Director of the Systems Development and Evaluation Division, returning from a stint with the new Departmental Grants Management System effort with HUD's Office of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO). We welcome him and look forward to working with him in his new capacity.

IDIS SURVEY *continued*

The requirement for HUDWARE users to go from WINDOWS-based IDIS to DOS to execute the IDISDNLD.BAT file (in order to perform a download) drew many negative comments.

Report Functionality and Design.

Field Offices and grantees do not have confidence in the information shown on IDIS reports. This lack of confidence appears to stem more from report functionality and design than the quality of data (i.e., data integrity). Users state:

1) Some reports do not include data needed by the user.
2) The data's screen origin is unknown.
3) A correlation cannot be seen between different reports that contain the same type of information (for example, drawdown data).
4) The IDIS reports are difficult to use due to being generated from a "mainframe" environment. For example, reports require conversion of headings on every page, printing of blank narrative lines and need too much word processing effort.

Other observations included that the CAPER Report (PR06) is a "useless" report and that Field Office personnel are not aware, in some instances, of what information each report displays.

Feedback to Field Office/Grantees.

Several of those surveyed expressed the view that HUD HQ does not provide sufficient feedback to the Field Offices/grantees once problems with reports are identified.

Other Issues.

Other issues mentioned include:

- A scrolling problem on the Reports Selection screen.
- Problems with canceling Program Income.
- An interface issue between IDIS and WINDOWS that sometimes generates system lockup. This requires the user to type in "logoff" and press the "enter" key at the screen <u>after</u> the IDIS Main Menu, when "X" is typed at that menu to exit IDIS.
- A page overflow of 18 blank lines after each page of the Grantee Summary Activity Report (PR08) is printed.■

Editor's note: The survey proved very helpful in focusing our efforts to improve IDIS. Based on its results, CPD is in the process of changing the IDIS reports functionality to better serve users.

- *Report fixes are on the IDIS Stabilization Plan's priority list.*
- *The CAPER report (PR06) has been temporarily removed from IDIS and is being re-programmed. Before it is put back into Production, CPD will let some grantees and public interest groups use it and provide their feedback. The CAPERS report should be back in Production in late January or early February.*
- *The print/download capability is being reworked to be less cumbersome and time-consuming, and more user-friendly.*
- *A scrolling problem on the Reports Selection screen had already been identified by IT and is being researched.*
- *Problems with canceling Program Income had already been identified by IT and are also being researched.*■

ID/PASSWORD RESETS

Many of you call into the Technical Assistance Unit (TAU) when you need to have your IDIS ID/password changed or reset. **Remember** - to have this done, you need to call in to the User Assistance Branch (UAB) located at HUD headquarters - not the TAU.

The telephone number of the UAB is: (202) 708-3300. Once you are connected, select prompt 3.■

SUMMARY: RELEASE NOTES VERSION 4.2

The following fixes were released to the production system environment and were available for use on 12/18/98. The below fixes and enhancements are summarized for your quick reference.

1. Modified two programs (PR07 and PR09) to print UOG codes and numbers instead of Grantee numbers.

2. Changed error messages from "Activity ID is not valid; re-key this field to a valid activity" to "Revised drawdown amount required" for the revised drawdown process.

3. Corrected problem with Full Time Equivalent (FTE) calculation in the Setup Activity function, and modified the associated dollar fields for proper editing.

4. Modified system for new method to enter values into the displayed "Initial Activation" and "Inactive on" activity dates [HUD use only]. Both dates are system generated. When the user is reactivated, the "Initial Activation" date will be changed to the current date instead of keeping the old date. The date used to be static and contained the date when the user was first activated.

5. Corrected scrolling problem on Multi-User (C04MA20) screen where the screen only scrolls up part of the way.

6. Corrected problem for option F01 (Grantee ID/Exceptions) of the Utility function where a Field Office could access all entities in the US. Now a Field Office can only access its associated grantees.

7. Corrected a scrolling problem on the View Activity Funding screen (C04MO04).

8. Modified drawdown processing to display an error message for invalid voucher number on the Approve Drawdown screen (C04MD12).

9. Modified the Approve Drawdown (C04MD12) screen process to prevent the display of the XPROG750 message. This abend message is generated by the mainframe - not IDIS. The IDIS code was modified to correct the cause of the abend and thus its display.

10. Corrected field edit/function key problems on the Grantee ID/Exceptions and Grantee Inquire/Update/Add screens of the Utility function.

11. Modified system for the processing of a common directory for the data download process. Note: Anyone using the data download process must have the directory C:\IDISDATA on their PC to receive the download data.

12. Modified the Create Drawdown (C04MD10) screen processing to display the "Invalid Date" message for the appropriate condition.

13. Corrected page overflow problem on the Grantee Summary Activity report (PR08).

14. Modified the edit criteria of the YEAR on the Approved Drawdown screen. A valid numeric year must now be entered. The edit for this field used to allow the entry of alpha-numeric data. The new edit will not allow this.■

We Need Your Help!

If you are an IDIS entitlement grantee or HUD field office user - we'd like to hear from you! If you would like to submit an *IDISLive "Guest Column"* or a "*From The Field*" article, please contact Vera Pérez by phone at (202)708-0614 ext. 4786 or by email at Vera_A._Perez@hud.gov.

HUD'S DEPARTMENTAL GRANTS SYSTEM

Since I left IDIS last spring, I have been working on various projects, most importantly, the Department's feasibility study for a Department-wide grants management system. Here's a brief update.

As you may (or may not) know, HUD has over 50 grant programs. These programs, both large and small, can be broadly broken down into two categories: *discretionary* (sometimes called "competitive") grant programs like YouthBuild, HOPE VI, HOPWA competitive, Housing Counseling, etc., and *formula* (sometimes called "entitlement") grant programs like CDBG and HOME.

HUD currently has over 17 different computer systems managing and monitoring these various grant programs. Some programs have no automated process whatsoever. Obviously there is a huge need to be able to timely and accurately report to Congress, community groups and other interested parties on how much grant money is going where. Is it possible to manage all of HUD's grant programs on one automated system?

After months of research, interviews with grant directors, and technical analysis of existing systems, the conclusion of the Feasibility Study team was **YES**. A Department-wide, automated grants system is possible, based on a core grants management process and standardized grant procedures.

The Feasibility Study team's recommendation was presented to and approved by HUD's Assistant Secretaries. Under the direction of the Deputy Secretary, Saul Ramirez, the project is led by both HUD's Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Chief Information Officer (CIO).

The project, now known as the Departmental Grants Management System (DGMS), is currently underway. It will be a couple of years before IDIS programs and grantees are converted to DGMS.

IDIS and another grant system - Health and Human Service's (HHS) Grants Administration Tracking and Evaluation System (GATES) - will serve as the models for the new DGMS. IDIS has proved that multiple grant programs can be automated and administered by one system and is the model for disbursement and accomplishment reporting. GATES will provide needed functionality for discretionary grant programs area, particularly in areas of screening, reviewing, scoring, ranking and selecting of discretionary grant applications.

As you can imagine, much thought and analysis went into synthesizing our proposed solution. Many new and innovative technologies were considered and are being used to design and develop the new system. The complete recommended solution and implementation plan may soon be available for your review on the internet via one of HUD's web pages. IDIS users will have a "head start" on understanding, conceptually, the DGMS processes of set-ups, drawdowns, completion paths and annual reporting, which may be similar to those in IDIS. We'll keep you updated on the proceedings.■
Submitted by Phil Helbling

> **THE NEXT ISSUE OF IDISLIVE WILL BE PUBLISHED ON FEBRUARY 1, 1999.**

IDIS Profile:
Regina Walker

The Technical Assistance Unit (TAU) is fortunate to have Regina Walker as a member of its team.

Regina came aboard in June of 1998 and jumped right in to learning IDIS. She steadily progressed and now handles a high number of inquiries from the Field Offices and grantees. Regina is an experienced, helpdesk professional, having worked in the field for over seven years.

"I try to educate callers on how to handle a situation so that they can work through it themselves the next time," says Regina. "If the problem arises again, they are more confident in their knowledge of the system and are more willing to spend time figuring out a solution to that problem."

Although all the members of the hotline are able to handle any inquiry that comes in, it seems that some subjects end up with certain members of the team. Regina may have found her niche. She receives a high volume of calls related to SprintLink. She enjoys troubleshooting these calls. "I feel a sense of satisfaction after working through with a caller how IDIS interfaces with their computer system. Investigating all the compatibility problems between individual systems and finally making a connection is a great feeling."

When calling into the hotline, Regina advises the users to have the screen they are working on up on their computer. Also, it is important to have the exact error message (or as close as possible) that they are receiving. This information gets the TAU member to the heart of the problem quicker.

Regina also advises IDIS users to access the system daily. In the six months that she has worked with the system, Regina has seen many enhancements. A big improvement has been in the Drawdown module. Users do not have to spend as much time inputting information that the system now generates automatically.

She reminds users that IDIS is still a relatively new system and to stick with it. "HUD is constantly upgrading IDIS," Regina says. "We need you to continue exploring the system because you are our eyes and ears. We depend on you to help us determine what improvements are necessary."

Regina truly enjoys working on the helpdesk and working with the other skilled members of the team. "My main goal is to provide superior customer service," Regina says. "I seek to deliver the same quality service to IDIS customers as I demand as a customer myself."■

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IDIS AND THE TAU WILL BE UNAVAILABLE ON THE FOLLOWING 1999 FEDERAL HOLIDAYS:

Date	Holiday
January 1	New Year's Day
January 18	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
February 15	President's Day
May 31	Memorial Day
July 4	Independence Day
September 6	Labor Day
October 11	Columbus Day
November 11	Veteran's Day
November 25	Thanksgiving Day
December 25	Christmas Day

The HOPWA Pages spotlight issues pertinent to the HOPWA program. Rusty Bennett, PMI/CPD Program Analyst for the Office of HIV/AIDS Housing, is available at (202) 708-1934 ext. 4619 to answer your questions.

HOPWA Highlights

Vice President Gore Announces $220 Million For HIV/AIDS Housing

On December 1, 1998, Vice President Gore announced new HOPWA grants as part of the nation's World AIDS Day activities. As part of a discussion with clients and HIV/AIDS Housing providers, the Vice President noted that $220 million is being made available for HIV/AIDS housing activities and that "For too many Americans living with AIDS, poverty is nearly as much of a threat as the disease itself. Without our help, many would be forced to live in unfit housing or become homeless. These grants will mean that people fighting AIDS won't have to also fight to keep a roof over their heads."

"For too many Americans living with AIDS, poverty is nearly as much of a threat as the disease itself."

Vice President Al Gore

The Vice President's statement included the announcement of the 1999 HOPWA formula allocations that go to 97 State and local jurisdictions for $200.475 million, as part of the consolidated planning process, and the selection of 20 applications under the 1998 HOPWA national competition for $20.15 million. These funds represent the new money going out to address pressing needs in the named communities.

You should also be aware that HUD will publish a notice in early 1999 on how to apply for $22.275 million for projects and $2.25 million for technical assistance grants under the 1999 HOPWA competition. Information on these and other HUD programs, notices and training opportunities can be obtained on the HUD home page at: **www.hud.gov/home.html**.■

HOPWA and IDIS
Questions & Answers:

This month's Q&A will focus on some of the HOPWA program's basic components.

Q. **How does HOPWA define and report Housing Assistance?**

A. A basic definition for housing assistance is any activity which uses HOPWA funds to provide housing to clients. For the HOPWA program, housing assistance includes costs associated with facility based projects, such as acquisition, rehabilitation, new construction, and operating costs of community residences and SRO dwellings. The term also covers rental assistance, such as scattered-site, tenant-based rental assistance, and short-term rent, mortgage, and utilities. When counting the number of individuals receiving housing assistance, include all individuals receiving housing and related supportive services. Individuals who receive no type of housing services but who do receive supportive services should be counted as receiving supportive services only.■

Q. **When I am completing the HOPWA Supportive Service screen (CO4MP09) and my activity is not listed, can I use the "other" category?**

A. Yes, but only for activities which are not reasonably covered in the 12 listed categories of supportive services. One example of a supportive service which is eligible but not listed is transportation. The "other" category is provided for a supportive service activity which is not listed, however, any supportive service listed under the "other" category must be approved by HUD as part of the Consolidated Plan Review. Contact your local field office for any questions regarding your program's supportive services.■

Q. **What are the requirements for reporting after a drawdown?**

A. In an effort to ensure current and accurate data, you are required to report on your program's accomplishments within 90 days of a drawdown.■

IDIS Q&A
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Q. I want to revise a draw in order to put it into another activity number. The original draw was taken out of an activity for the HOME Program. I want to revise the draw and place the dollar amount into the HOME ADMINISTRATION. Every time I attempt to make this revision, the following error comes up: "Insufficient amount of funds in Activity Funding for this revised number." However, I have verified the amount funded for the activity in which the original draw was made and the activity where I want to place the revise draw and there are sufficient funds available. Can someone assist me with this matter? *Debra King*

A. If I understand what you are trying to do, you may **not** revise across fund types. If you originally drew the funds from fund type EN or CR, you will not be able to revise the draw to direct it against an activity funded with AD money. The TAU should be able to get the change processed by the system administrators. You will probably need to submit the request in writing so that it is clear to everyone what you want done.

People go to great lengths to find ways to juggle drawdowns and revisions to avoid asking for that kind of intervention. Are there ways you could move the excess draw to a different activity of the appropriate fund type, and draw against the AD fund type for the administrative activity? I guess it reduces to a question of whether you have more of a stomach for contorting your data entry in IDIS or for enduring the processing of a special request through HUD's bureaucracy. Either option usually works.■ *Dave Robinson, Lake Co., IL*

Q. Could someone please provide a better explanation of the HUD Matrix codes. Some of them are very confusing. For example, there are a number of homeownership codes that should only be used in specific situations. I have also found

out that some of my grantees are confused between public facilities and public services when work occurs at a place that provides a public service. HOME matrix codes also warrant explanation.

In addition, a better explanation for the categories on the Accomplishments screen would be helpful. The biggest confusion I have seen are on the codes for the accomplishments data on the third screen of the common path (C04MA04) of the setup procedure. Many grantees are confused by the PEOPLE, LARGE HOUSEHOLDS, SMALL HOUSEHOLDS, HOUSING UNITS, ETC. categories. *Peggy Meinl, HUD Buffalo Office*

A. For CDBG, there are only two homeownership codes, 05R and 13. 05R has a little quirk, but that is mainly based on a date identified in the matrix code definitions. That is, before 12/11/95, it covered various types of homeownership assistance, but effective 12/11/95, it is limited to only homebuyer downpayment assistance. One sentence was not carried over to the paragraph in the *Definitions of IDIS Matrix Codes* document that discusses use of 05R as of 12/11/95. It should have stated that, "When carried out as a public service, generally the recipients are not 100% low/mod." However, this should not be a stumbling block in figuring out the matrix code. We needed the date distinction when the matrix code definitions were first done, but this should no longer be the case and folks need only pay attention to the paragraph effective 12/11/95.

Under CDBG, a grantee needs to identify the part of the regulation under which the activity is eligible when determining which matrix code to use. With regard to the homeownership codes, if homeownership assistance is provided based on 570.201(n), matrix code 13 should be used. (570.201(n) allows grantees to provide assistance *only* to low/moderate income persons in the form of subsidizing interest rates and mortgage principal amounts, payment of closing costs and

downpayment assistance, acquiring guarantees for mortgage financing from private lenders and financing the acquisition by low/moderate income persons of housing they already occupy.) The other category, 05R, under which downpayment assistance may be provided, is 570.201(e), public services. However, under public services, the type of assistance is limited to downpayment assistance. Therefore, a grantee usually only uses this option for eligibility if non-low/moderate income persons are being assisted.

For HOME, matrix code 13 should be used for most forms of homeownership assistance. However, if acquisition of land or structures is involved use one of the following:
- 01 - Acquisition of structure (no rehab) for homeownership (or rental)
- 14G - Acquisition and rehabilitation for homeownership (or rental)
- 12 - Acquisition of land on which new housing will be constructed using HOME funds

Regarding the confusion between public facilities and public services when work occurs at a place that provides a public service: if a grantee is rehabilitating a building that is used to provide a public service, the rehab of the structure is eligible under 570.201(c), public facilities and improvements, not under 570.201(e), public services. So, one of the 03 matrix codes should be used.   [Under 570.201(c), eligible activities are acquisition, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation or installation of public facilities and improvements (with the exceptions at 570.207(a)) by the recipient or other public or private nonprofit entity.   Under 570.201(e), the costs of providing public services (including labor, supplies and material needed to provide the service) are what's eligible.]

Finally, as for the accomplishment codes, we are looking at them and are planning to recommend limiting the options so there would be less confusion on what code to use when. However,

this effort has been slowed by other priorities.■
CPD Office of Block Grant Assistance, Entitlement Communities Division

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LIVE UPDATE
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On October 28, 1998 the following entitlement grantees went "live" in IDIS:

Spartanburg County, SC
Layton, UT

and the
State of Colorado
went "live" on December 4, 1998.

Welcome to the IDIS community!

IDIS HOURS OF OPERATION

Many of you, especially on the West Coast, have noticed that the hours of operation of IDIS have changed. As of December 14, 1998, system hours became 7:00 am through 9:00 pm Eastern Standard Time.

The reduction of one hour of operation each evening was made to allow sufficient time for overnight processing functions, including those associated with drawdowns.■

TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

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IDIS CD-ROM: USING THE AUDIO FUNCTION

In an effort to provide continuing support to grantees in using IDIS, HUD developed an interactive CD for grantee use. Recently, each CPD Field Office has received an allotment for its entitlement communities. The CD was developed with full audio support, and pop-up text boxes when audio is not available on grantee machines. Please note: to use the audio function, your computer must have a sound card (internal) and speakers/headset (external). How can you determine this? Look for sound card plug-in jacks (e.g., "microphone/speakers") at the rear of the computer, or ask your system administrator to determine if these are available.

If your computer does not have a sound card and speakers (or a headset), the CD is still fully functional through the use of pop-up text boxes. Just be sure to toggle the audio/text switch on the Main Menu to "Text". As you progress, an informational text box will appear for each screen of the CD. The same information is available to you whether in audio or text mode, except for two short videos in the "Introduction" section. One video *About IDIS*, includes self-explanatory graphics and, therefore, does not require audio. *Using the text mode does not diminish the quality of the training in any way.*■

IDIS WORKSHOP SCHEDULED FOR FEBRUARY

Another session of the popular workshop series, "Exploring IDIS" for Entitlements, has been scheduled for February 23-26, 1999, in Washington, DC. Especially valuable to new or inexperienced IDIS users, the workshop is designed to make participants confident in their ability to use IDIS to draw down funds and report accomplishments to HUD. All relevant functions of IDIS are covered, including setting up and revising activities, adding projects, drawing down funds, reporting program income, and downloading and formatting reports. For HOME program staff, using administration funds and subgranting is also covered.

Participants who work with the **HOME** program (and any other Entitlement Program) may sign up for a two-day session on either **February 23-24 or February 25-26**. Participants who work with **CDBG, ESG, and/or HOPWA** funds but not HOME funds may sign up for a one-day session on **February 23 or 24**.

To register for the workshop, download a registration form from the IDIS Web site (**http://www.hud.gov/cpd/idisweb.html**). If you do not have access to the internet, call (202) 289-8100 to request a registration form.■

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Your IDIS Users Group contacts are Tracey Peterson and Vivian Baldwin at CPD. You may contact them via the following:

Telephone:	202-708-0614, ext. 4859 (Tracey)
	202-708-0614, ext. 4693 (Vivian)
Internet:	Tracey_R._Peterson@hud.gov
	Vivian_C._Baldwin@hud.gov
Mail:	HUD/CPD
	Systems Development and Evaluation Division
	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 ID and password reset**, call HUD Security at 202-708-3300.