News you can use…

IDIS LIVE

…for the Integrated Disbursement and Information System

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

IDIS LIVE GOES "PAPERLESS"!

IDIS Live is now available on the Web in HTML format! This means that you no longer need to download and print it. Just like reading *USA Today* on the Web, you may now browse *IDIS Live* at http://www.hud.gov/cpd/idis/idislive.

Of course, if you wish to download and print *IDIS Live*, you still can. The downloadable version of *IDIS Live* will remain accessible from the *IDIS Live* Web site. As always, if you have trouble downloading or printing *IDIS Live* for any reason, you may receive a faxed copy from the CPD Technical Assistance Unit (TAU) by calling 1-800-273-2573 or from your field office.

You'll find another feature of interest at the *IDIS Live* Web site: A compilation of IDIS Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). We've compiled a database of your questions from hotline calls, User Group meetings, and elsewhere, and we've matched these questions with their answers. As you navigate through IDIS, remember the FAQs. When you encounter a problem, try using the FAQs to resolve it.

Our ongoing goal is to provide you with the tools that you need to solve problems as they arise. We hope that the FAQs will prove to be a handy resource in that respect. Let us know what you think of it—and of the "paperless" *IDIS Live*. ■

LOVE LETTERS FROM LOCCS?

Have you been receiving letters from the HUD Financial System security office telling you to reauthorize your access to the Voice Response System (VRS)? Are you tired of receiving these letters? If so—and if you use the VRS only for CDBG, ESG, HOME, and/or HOPWA formula grantees—submit a LOCCS Authorization Form stating that you want your access terminated.

If you use the VRS for programs other than those listed above, you must continue to reauthorize yourself, and you should not submit a request to have your access terminated. ■

***In this issue of* IDIS Live…**

TAU Expands Hours of Operation 2
Users Flock to Fort Myers 2
Year-End Reporting Using IDIS 2
How To Save Time When Downloading Reports 3
TAU Profile: Vivian Baldwin 3
IDIS Subgranting At a Glance 3
From the Field 6
Guest Column 7
Future Group Meetings: Save the Dates 9
Subject Index 10

TAU EXPANDS HOURS OF OPERATION

Beginning December 1, 1997, the Technical Assistance Unit (the "hotline") will be available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday through Thursday, and from 8:00 AM to 5:30 PM on Fridays. This change comes in response to requests from West coast and Midwest users. The hotline hours will now more closely mirror those of IDIS itself.

During the week of December 22–26, the TAU hours of operation will be from 8:00 AM to 5:30 PM, due to the holidays. The TAU will be unavailable on Thursday, December 25, Friday, December 26, and Thursday, January 1, 1998.

Keep in mind that there are now several 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. ■

USERS FLOCK TO FORT MYERS

On Friday, November 21, grantees flocked to Fort Myers, Florida, for a lively Users Group meeting. They came from Minnesota, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Indiana to soak up IDIS-related information. **Wayne Paulsen**, from the Jacksonville HUD office, welcomed the group.

Grantees reviewed Activity Funding, Subgranting, and how to accomplish year-end reporting using IDIS. Upcoming changes to IDIS were also discussed. Many users provided suggestions for improvements to reports and screens, and they were given a demonstration of how to download and format IDIS reports quickly, as well as where to find valuable resources for IDIS help.

Attendees were also treated to a first look at *IDIS Live* on the Internet! **Phil Kessner** and **Cynthia Chandler** from Terre Haute, Indiana, demonstrated a live ESG draw and presented the group with a sample of a form they developed to help them track IDIS draws between offices and departments. Thanks to Phil and Cynthia! As always, a highlight of the Users Group meeting was grantees sharing suggestions with one another.

Also attending were **Carol Seaman** from Pinellas County, Florida, whose jurisdiction won a Best Practice award, and **Ken Pick**, of Berks County, Pennsylvania, who is on the IDIS Advisory Committee.

Phil Helbling, from HUD Central, thanked Lee County for sponsoring a great meeting packed with good questions. ■

YEAR-END REPORTING USING IDIS

Are you confused regarding which reports can be used for year-end performance reporting? For the four programs that are handled by IDIS (CDBG, ESG, HOME, and HOPWA), the following reports will help you to document your progress:

CDBG (GPR):

- Summary of Activities Report (GPR)
- Summary of Accomplishments (from the December 5, 1996, memo from Joe Smith)
- The Financial Summary (HUD 4949.3), Rehabilitation Summary (HUD 4949.5), One-for-One Replacement (HUD 4949.4), and the Displacement (HUD 4949.6) reports are still required for the CDBG program. Other reporting requirements include information concerning interest earned on revolving loan funds and excess Program Income. For the latter two report items, grantees may contact their field office representative.

HOME Annual Reporting:

- Status of HOME Activities (PR22 report)
- Status of HOME Grants (old "CAA" report)
- Status of CHDO Funds by Fiscal Year

ESG Annual Reporting:

- Financial Extraction Report
- ESG Grantee Status Report
- ESG Grantee Activity Summary Report

HOPWA Annual Reporting:

- View the HOPWA completion path screens for annual reporting and completion information
- May run a HOPWA Data Extraction Report ■

HOW TO SAVE TIME WHEN DOWNLOADING REPORTS

Has this ever happened to you? You download a report into WordPerfect. When you open the report, you have to go in and manually insert the page breaks. There is a way to automatically insert these page breaks, saving yourself a bit of time in the process (thanks to Millie Dusha, HUD/CPD San Francisco for this tip).

Once you've opened the report in WordPerfect, follow these steps:

1. Click on Edit;

2. Click on Replace. The Find & Replace text box will appear;

3. In the Find field, enter the first two words of the header line (a number of reports start with the words "1 IDIS");

4. Tab to the Replace With field;

5. Click on "Replace" in the top line of the Find & Replace text box;

6. Click on "Codes" and scroll down until you see the code HPg ("hard page break"). Double-click on HPg, so that it is inserted in the Replace With field;

7. Once the HPg code is in the Replace With field, type the words that you entered in the Find field (i.e., 1 IDIS); and

8. Click on "Replace All."

WordPerfect will then search for the header text (1 IDIS) and replace it with a hard page break. You may want to do a spot check of your document once the computer has finished its work. All in all, this process saves time and is easier on the eyes than having to search manually for each "1 IDIS." ■

TAU PROFILE: VIVIAN BALDWIN

Vivian Baldwin has been handling hotline calls to the Technical Assistance Unit since August 1997. Prior to joining the hotline, she worked with the team that uploaded your CPS data into IDIS. She also worked with John Mayer, distributing passwords and user IDs in the early stages of the system's implementation.

The best thing about working on the hotline, for Vivian, is "the personal interaction." She said she enjoys talking with people from across the country and has even gotten to know a bit about their lives. She's received invitations to visit Shreveport and Atlanta, and she recently got to share in one grantee's excitement at the birth of a grandchild.

Vivian has a word of advice for IDIS users: "Don't get frustrated." She said that users often get frustrated because they try to "do too much at once" instead of taking it "one step at a time." The system is much better than what came before it, in Vivian's view, because data is connected by what she calls a "computer trail." When it's time for reporting, the computer trail makes grantees' lives much easier than the paper trail that it replaced.

To get the most out of your phone calls to the hotline, Vivian suggests that you "provide as many small details as possible and be in the system." When you are in the system, hotline staff can often walk you through—or around—the problem. This process helps users learn how to get themselves out of problems, making them feel more comfortable with IDIS.

We'll feature profiles of other TAU staff in future issues of *IDIS Live*. ■

IDIS SUBGRANTING AT A GLANCE

On the next page, you'll find a flow chart titled "IDIS Subgranting At a Glance." In response to many requests from grantees, we have provided this chart

to help you understand the sometimes confusing subject of subgranting.

Here are some things to keep in mind as you view the chart:

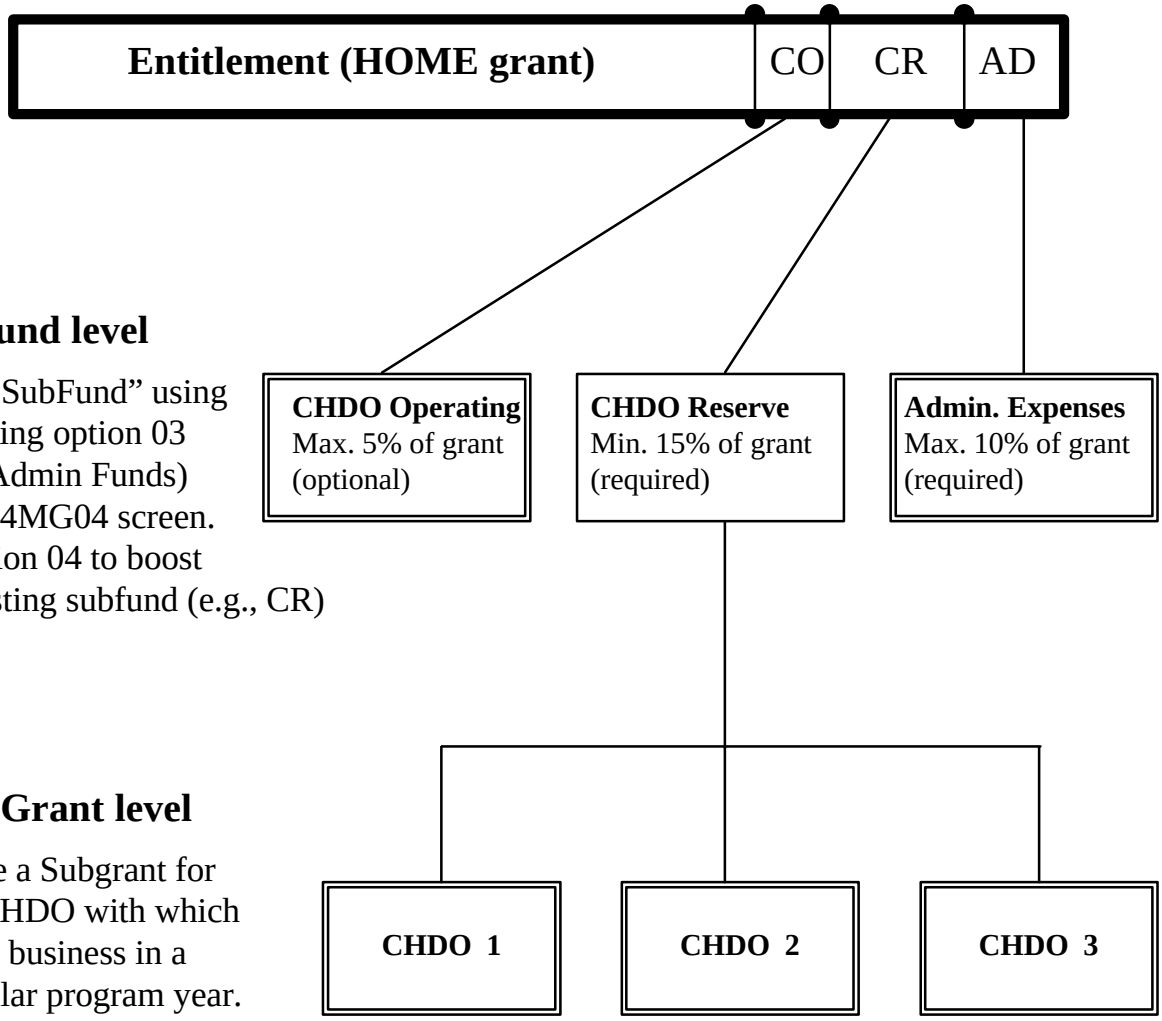
As of this printing, the subgranting module of IDIS is used exclusively for HOME. There is one exception to this rule: CDBG recipients may use subgranting, but **only** to place their Admin. funds in a separate pot of money for tracking purposes. In the future, CDBG may make use of the subgranting area of IDIS to track subrecipients.

Remember that when you revise a subgrant downward (reducing the amount of funds associated with a particular CHDO, for example), the money is returned to the parent subfund, or the "generic" CR bucket. The term "generic," in this instance, means that the general CR subfund is not associated with any particular entity, other than the city.

To refund money from a CHDO back to the entitlement/grant, first revise (or cancel) the subgrant for the CHDO and then revise the subfund (using option 04 to revise the "generic" CR bucket downward). The money will then be refunded to the parent grant.

Whether you are creating a subgrant for a new CHDO, revising or setting up your Admin bucket, or canceling a subgrant or subfund, subgranting can be confusing. It seems that subgranting is something that is only done once or twice a year for the typical grantee, so it's easy to forget the steps involved in the process. Please do not hesitate to contact the TAU (1-800-273-2573 or idis_help@hud.gov) if you require assistance at any time. We hope the attached chart helps.

IDIS Subgranting At a Glance



SubFund level

•Create "SubFund" using Subgranting option 03 (Create Admin Funds) at the C04MG04 screen.
•Use option 04 to boost your existing subfund (e.g., CR)

SubGrant level

•Create a Subgrant for each CHDO with which you do business in a particular program year.
•Use Subgranting option 01 for a new program year or a new CHDO, option 02 to boost an existing one.

Activity Funding

Note the boxes above with double borders. These are the "buckets" that will show up in Activity Funding. Activities are funded via Activity Funding, but the above funding "buckets" are increased or decreased via Subgranting.

FROM THE FIELD

With this issue of IDIS Live*, we introduce a new feature: From the Field. Just as the Guest Column provides grantees the opportunity to share their thoughts about IDIS, From the Field gives the Field Office Representatives a chance to share their perspective on the subject.*

This month's columnist is Peggy Meinl, from the HUD Buffalo Office.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS!

A.K.A WHEN SHOULD I CALL MY HUD REP? AND WHEN SHOULD I CALL THE IDIS HOTLINE?

I have been quoted as saying "I, for one, am a person who occasionally likes a new challenge…the type of challenge that will take me away from the mundane, daily routine of the work day." Since becoming a member of the IDIS Conversion Team—with the HUD Buffalo Office—I am beginning to rue the day I said that.

When first converting to IDIS, rookies quickly realize that the system most definitely takes them away from the rigors of their daily routine. One day you get a phone call from your local HUD office telling you that you are Live on a computer system that you really didn't want to convert to in the first place. You've had training and have diligently prepared, but being Live is always different. You feel a little insecure and you're not quite sure which buttons to press. (Didn't the trainer remind you that no activity could be deleted from the system.) What should you do to get rid of that uneasy feeling?

Call your local HUD office! Your CPD representatives or IDIS Conversion Team coordinators will be able to walk you through any Main Menu selection. From the HUD perspective, working with new grantees is relatively easy: Questions usually deal with the basics. Field office representatives can see almost everything that you see on the screen. Don't feel embarrassed about calling often: It's not uncommon for a new convert to call as many as four or five times a day. The calls last an average of 45 minutes. My record longest phone call was two hours with Gary Scott of Albany, New York. The worst part of the two-hour call was that we didn't solve the problem and had to call the Hotline anyway.

For the IDIS veterans, phone calls become less frequent. When questions do arise, however, they are increasingly complex. When you call your local office and you hear a "Hmm…" in response to your question, congratulate yourself. You have stumped the local expert, and it's time to move on to the next level: the Hotline.

Over the past few months, the Hotline has increased its staff. Hours are from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM EST, Monday through Thursday, and from 8:00 AM to 5:30 PM on Friday. The personnel are knowledgeable and friendly. If they don't know the answer immediately, they will research the problem and find the answer. If you don't have their number handy already, here it is again: 1-800-273-2573.

There are now more than 900 Live communities. Multiply that by the number of users each grantee has and we are talking about thousands of potential calls to the Hotline. If you are a new user, remember that your field office has probably heard questions like yours before and can answer them quickly. For example, SprintLink ID and password questions should always be directed to the field office. Remember, though, that neither the field office nor the Hotline can reset an IDIS password. A Washington-based "help desk" has been established—at 202-708-3300—to reset those passwords, literally in minutes. I have used this service numerous times myself over the past few months. When you hear a recording on the other end, press 3, Reset Password, and have your IDIS ID handy.

If the HUD field office does have to refer you to the Hotline, it's a learning experience for us too. A three-way conference call can be established between the Hotline, the field office, and the grantee so that we can all find out the answer together. Through the conference call, the field office learns how to help other grantees within its jurisdiction. Also, the Hotline is always available to assist you when you need an immediate answer and your regular contacts at the field office can not be reached at that moment. ■

IDIS LIVE GUEST COLUMN

This month's IDIS Live *Guest Column was submitted by Debbie Marquis, Financial Compliance Officer for the City of Portland, Maine. Thank you, Debbie!*

The City of Portland, Maine, an Entitlement City, receives $2,590,000 in CDBG funds. These funds are distributed according to the following categories: Social Services, Physical Improvements, Housing Services, Health and Human Services, and Neighborhood Services. The Department of Planning and Urban Development receives the grant, and the Division of Neighborhood and Housing Services administers it.

The responsibility for preparing the annual Consolidated Community Development Plan and the Grantee Performance Reports is with the Division of Housing and Neighborhood Services (formally, the Community Development Division). The implementation of projects, social services, and physical improvements—as well as the administration of the Plan—is a responsibility that is shared by the Housing and Community Development (HCD) Program Manager and the Financial Compliance Officer.

We were told in June of 1997 that we were going Live. The very first thing we did was to go through and check every project that was downloaded from our Annual Plan in Washington. Once we did that, we felt that we were ready to do our Annual Plan using IDIS. All of our information was there, but, the first time we checked the system, we found projects from another Entitlement as well, which was a little scary. We called our regional HUD office to report the problem, and it was cleared up within a few days.

In July, I jumped in with both feet, reviewing the *IDIS User Manual* and asking questions of our HUD representative. We had a lot of information that needed to be entered. We completed that task and then even performed all the drawdowns. I really like the system: I did not feel intimidated at all. I had completed the GPR for the prior two years with no training on the Enters system, and I did not feel that this system was much different. Both systems were looking for the same information.

We completed our Annual Report using IDIS without much difficulty. I believe that IDIS is user friendly. We attended an IDIS User Group meeting in Hartford, Connecticut, in October 1997 and discovered how nice it was to speak with other users and compare notes. Our HCD Program Manager and I attended a two-day training session in Washington, D.C., in October. The training was excellent—very helpful. I was glad that we had that training after completing the report, because I had some questions, and now the answers make sense to me.

Over the past few months, HUD has made some good changes and updates to IDIS. The biggest change is that IDIS now runs on Windows 95, and another good addition is the *IDIS Keystroke Saver*.

We feel that IDIS has a lot of benefits that we will use in the near future. The number of reports that can be produced and the querying of information that can be put into databases will be very beneficial to our Department and to other Entitlements.

In the Division of Housing and Neighborhood Services, there are only three employees who will be inputting information, setting up activities, and performing drawdowns. We feel that the relatively small number of people actually working in IDIS is a good thing: If any problem arises, a small staff can confer and discover the problem. The old saying "Too many hands in the pot spoils the soup" rings true to us. Each of us has a section within IDIS for which we are responsible.

The City of Portland has been Live since June 1997. We believe that we will be able to use it to develop some really good database information for our internal use and for the public, as well.

The only drawback that I have encountered so far is that I am unable to print a HUD 4949.3 Financial

Summary form. I was always able to print the form from Enters. Our auditors needed a financial summary report, and I was able to have our HCD accountant prepare one, but it would have been much easier to have an option in the IDIS Reports Menu that would allow users to print HUD form 4949.3. I am told that, this time next year, such an option will be available. I am hoping that when I do next year's Annual Report, it will take half as much time as did this year's report.

In closing, I'd like to say simply that I enjoy IDIS. I believe that its capabilities are great, and I am sure that, as I am writing this article, the developers are simplifying yet another aspect of the system. And, like anything else, the more you use something, the better you are at it.

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—SAN ANTONIO

The next IDIS Users Group meeting will be held in **San Antonio, Texas**. The meeting, on Monday, **December 15, 1997**, will be held at

La Quinta Inn
1001 East Commerce Street
San Antonio, Texas

A block of rooms has been reserved a the inn for people who wish to stay there. The phone number for reservations is 1-800-531-5900.

If you plan to attend this meeting, contact **Julia Wong** (HUD/CPD San Antonio) at 210-475-6800, ext. 2297, or **Sharon Lee-Thomas** at 202-708-0614, ext. 2985.

USERS GROUP—COLUMBUS

The first Users Group meeting of 1998 will be held on **January 27 in Columbus, Ohio**, at the following location:

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission
285 East Main Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Contact **Susan Tsen** at 614-233-4139 or **Sharon Lee-Thomas** at 202-708-0614, ext. 2985 if you wish to attend.

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Tentative dates and sites for upcoming Users Group meetings:

February—Los Angeles, California

IDIS TRAINING

There will be no IDIS Training sessions during the month of December 1997. Tentative training dates and sites for 1998 are listed below.

January 26–30, 1998—Kansas City, Missouri
February—San Diego, California
March—Chicago, Illinois
April—New Orleans, Louisiana

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. ■

IDIS LIVE SUBJECT INDEX

Activity Funding
Help with Activity Funding (with example): No. 10, pg. 6
Helpful Hints on "Advanced" Activities Funding (with example): No. 11, pg. 7
I don't understand Activity Funding: No. 12, pg. 13
I don't understand the column "Amount Avl. for Funding": No. 12, pg. 13
Release 3.0—Activity Funding Features: No. 8, pg. 8
Release 3.0—More on Activity Funding: No. 9, pg. 9

CDBG
Help with CDBG Annual Accomplishments: No. 9, pg. 5
IDIS "Cheat Sheet" for CDBG Annual Accomplishments: No. 10, pg. 9
Special Note for CDBG Folks: No. 11, pg. 17

CHDOs
Adding a CHDO: A Follow-Up: No. 13, pg. 2
IDIS Technical Bulletin: Creating and Revising CHDO Subgrants in IDIS: No. 12, pg. 6

Consolidated Plan
Uploading the Consolidated/Action Plan to IDIS: No. 3, pg. 4

Corrections
CDBG Q&A from No. 10: No. 11, pg. 17
Item #5 of field office report download instructions: No. 5, pg. 20

Download/Downloading
Correction to Item #5 of field office report download instructions: No. 5, pg. 20
Downloading and printing reports in IDIS: No. 4, pg. 6
How to Download IDIS Files From the Internet: No. 6, pg. 8

Error Messages
"SQL 911" Problems: No. 12, pg. 3
What should I do when I receive a "Call Your Field Office" or "Funds Short by" error message: No. 5, pg. 10

Forms
IDIS Access Request: No. 2, pg. 11
SF-272: No. 12, pg. 3

From the Field
Peggy Meinl: No. 14, pg. 6

General Articles
Attention IDIS Hotline Callers! No. 12, pg. 5
Changes Forthcoming: States and EDI: No. 13, pg. 3
Come Visit Us in Washington: No. 11, pg. 17
Community 2020 Software: No. 12, pg. 3
Has Your 1997 Grant Money Shown Up Yet in IDIS? No. 12, pg. 3
Holiday Reminder: No. 13, pg. 3
How do I subscribe to the IDIS Users Mailing List? No. 8, pg. 4
HUD BBS Being Phased Out: No. 5, pg. 21
HUD Hosts IDIS Advisory Committee Meeting: No. 13, pg. 4
IDIS "System Fixes": No. 11, pg. 1
IDIS "Top Ten" List: No. 1, pg. 5
IDIS At a Glance Flow Chart: No. 13, pg. 5
IDIS Chat Room: No. 8, pg. 10
IDIS Debut at NAHRO annual conference: No. 3, pg. 1
IDIS FAQs: No. 5, pg. 20
IDIS *Keystroke Saver* Error: No. 13, pg. 5
IDIS Live Goes "Paperless"!: No. 14, pg. 1
IDIS Navigation Competition: No. 6, pg. 2
IDIS on the Internet: No. 6, pg. 3
IDIS User Group Location on the Internet: No. 6, pg. 7
Important Information for IDIS Local Administrators: No. 11, pg. 2
Introducing…Roger Merideth: No. 12, pg. 4
Local Users Form Local Users Groups: No. 5, pg. 3
Love Letters from LOCCS?: No. 14, pg. 1
Milwaukee Links Web Page to Grantees: No. 5, pg. 3
New *IDIS Live* Format: No. 11, pg. 1
Ninety-Percent Mark on the Horizon: No. 13, pg. 1

Release 3.0—Activity Funding Features: No. 8, pg. 8
Special Note for CDBG Folks: No. 11, pg. 17
Special Note for IDIS Local Administrators: No. 12, pg. 2
TAU Expands Hours of Operation: No. 14, pg. 2
Users Share Reporting Tips: No. 7, pg. 2
Welcome to the premiere issue of *IDIS Live*…: No. 1, pg. 1
What is an IDIS Local Administrator? No. 7, pg. 5
When making changes to dollar amounts that have been previously entered…: No. 1, pg. 1

Guest Column

Clark, Lisa: No. 12, pg. 17
Finn, Bernie: No. 12, pg. 18
Friedman, Larry: No. 11, pg. 16
Marquis, Debbie: No. 14, pg. 7
Mustico, Joe and Wilma Wheten: No. 13, pg. 7

Internet

Announcing a New Way To Get Help: No. 13, pg. 1
Correction to HUD FTP site Internet address: No. 5, pg. 20
How do I subscribe to the IDIS Users Mailing List? No. 8, pg. 4
IDIS Chat Room: No. 8, pg. 10
IDIS Live Goes "Paperless"!: No. 14, pg. 1
IDIS on the Internet: No. 6, pg. 3
IDIS User Group Location on the Internet: No. 6, pg. 7
Milwaukee Links Web Page to Grantees: No. 5, pg. 3

New Releases/Release Notes

IDIS Release 3.2.1 Brings New Functionality: No. 12, pg. 4
IDIS "System Fixes": No. 11, pg. 1
Release 3.0—Activity Funding Features: No. 8, pg. 8
Release 3.0 Includes Major Areas of Enhancement: No. 10, pg. 1
Release 3.0—More on Activity Funding: No. 9, pg. 9
Release 3.3 Provides New Functions: No. 13, pg. 4
Release Notes 2.13: No. 7, pg. 8
Version 2.6: No. 1, pg. 4
Version 2.7: No. 2, pg. 19
Version 2.9: No. 4, pg. 13

Q&A

Refer to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), at the IDIS Live *Web site (www.hud.gov/cpd/idislive.html).*

Reports/Reporting Requirements

Additional IDIS Reports are Under Construction: No. 9, pg. 4
CDBG GPRs and Year-End Reporting: No. 13, pg. 1
Correction to Item #5 of field office report download instructions: No. 5, pg. 20
Downloading and printing reports in IDIS: No. 4, pg. 6
Glossary of IDIS Report Fields and IDIS Reports: No. 5, pg. 11
Hints on Printing IDIS Reports on 8 1/2 by 11: No. 7, pg. 6
How To Save Time When Downloading Reports: No. 14, pg. 2
IDIS as an Information Management Tool: No. 11, pg. 4
New Reporting Capabilities in the Works: No. 11, pg. 5
Recent Improvements to Performance-Reporting: No. 12, pg. 1
Reports Available for IDIS Grantees: No. 7, pg. 10
SF-272: No. 12, pg. 4
Users Share Reporting Tips: No. 7, pg. 2
Year-End Reporting Using IDIS: No. 14, pg. 2

SprintLink

Downloading SprintLink from the BBS: No. 3, pg. 5
Focus on SprintLink: No. 6, pg. 6
Helpful hints on using SprintLink: No. 8, pg. 5

Subgrant/Subgranting

How do I create a CHDO in the system? No. 12, pg. 13
IDIS Subgranting At a Glance: No. 14, pg. 3

TAU Profile

Vivian Baldwin: No. 14, pg. 3

Technical Bulletin

Adding a CHDO: A Follow-Up: No. 13, pg. 2
IDIS Technical Bulletin: Creating and Revising CHDO Subgrants in IDIS: No. 12, pg. 6

Technical Tips

Community 2020 Software: No. 12, pg. 3

Downloading and printing reports in IDIS: No. 4, pg. 6
Entitlement Program Codes/Source Type Codes: No. 5, pg. 13
F9 Troubles on Screen C04MH09: No. 13, pg. 3
Glossary of IDIS Report Fields and IDIS Reports: No. 5, pg. 11
Going Live in the Middle of the Program Year: No. 2, pg. 13
Help with Activity Funding (with example): No. 10, pg. 6
Help with CDBG Annual Accomplishments: No. 9, pg. 5
Helpful Hints and Shortcuts To Keep You Moving Along in IDIS: No. 2, pg. 15
Helpful Hints on "Advanced" Activities Funding (with example): No. 11, pg. 7
How to Download IDIS Files From the Internet: No. 6, pg. 8
How to Perform the "Print Screen" Function: No. 6, pg. 8
IDIS "Cheat Sheet" for CDBG Annual Accomplishments: No. 10, pg. 9
IDIS Electronic Data Interchange: No. 5, pg. 2
IDIS Year 2000 Compliance: No. 2, pg. 19
Instructions for creating a template in WordPerfect 6.0: No. 4, pg. 9
New Functionality on C04MA03 Screen, "Process Activity": No. 7, pg. 2
Reference List of Commonly Used Codes: No. 6, pg. 9
Release Notes 2.10: No. 5, pg. 14
Release Notes 2.12: No. 6, pg. 10
Reviewing Your IDIS Data: No. 2, pg. 5
Revolving Loan Fund Repayment: No. 3, pg. 6
"SQL 911" Problems: No. 12, pg. 3
Subgranting in IDIS: No. 4, pg. 8
Subgranting—Special Cases: No. 13, pg. 2
Updating Your IDIS Data: No. 2, pg. 5
Uploading the Consolidated/Action Plan to IDIS: No. 3, pg. 4

Users Group Meeting Write-Ups/Attendance Logs

Description of eighth (Lansing, MI) and ninth (Danville, VA) meetings: No. 9, pg. 1
Description of fifth meeting (Philadelphia, PA): No. 6, pg. 1
Description of fourth meeting (Denver, CO): No. 5, pg. 1
Description of Little Rock, Oakland (CA), and Milwaukee meetings: No. 11, pg. 18
Description of second meeting (Washington, D.C.): No. 3, pg. 1
Description of seventh meeting (Louisville, KY): No. 8, pg. 1
Description of sixth meeting (Chicago, IL): No. 7, pg. 1
Description of tenth (Mt. Vernon, NY), eleventh (Tampa, FL), and twelfth (Rock Hill, SC) meetings: No. 10, pg. 10
Description of third meeting (Ft. Worth, TX): No. 4, pg. 1
First IDIS Users Group meeting took place last month in Washington, D.C.…: No. 2, pg. 1
IDIS Users Group Meeting Attendance Log (Chicago meeting): No. 7, pg. 12
IDIS Users Group Meeting Attendance Log (Danville meeting): No. 9, pg. 13
IDIS Users Group Meeting Attendance Log (Denver meeting): No. 5, pg. 7
IDIS Users Group Meeting Attendance Log (Lansing meeting): No. 9, pg. 15
IDIS Users Group Meeting Attendance Log (Louisville meeting): No. 8, pg. 11
IDIS Users Group Meeting Attendance Log (Philadelphia meeting): No. 6, pg. 14
Local Users Form Local Users Groups: No. 5, pg. 3
State-Level IDIS Users Meet in Washington: No. 6, pg. 2
Users Flock to Fort Myers: No. 14, pg. 2
Users Hurry to Hartford: No. 13, pg. 2
Users Stampede to Buffalo, Portland: No. 12, pg. 1

Viewing/Reviewing Data

Reviewing Your IDIS Data: No. 2, pg. 5