

Fieldbus

NI-FBUS™ User Manual for Windows NT

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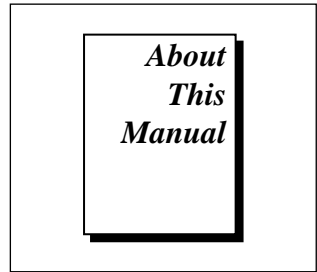
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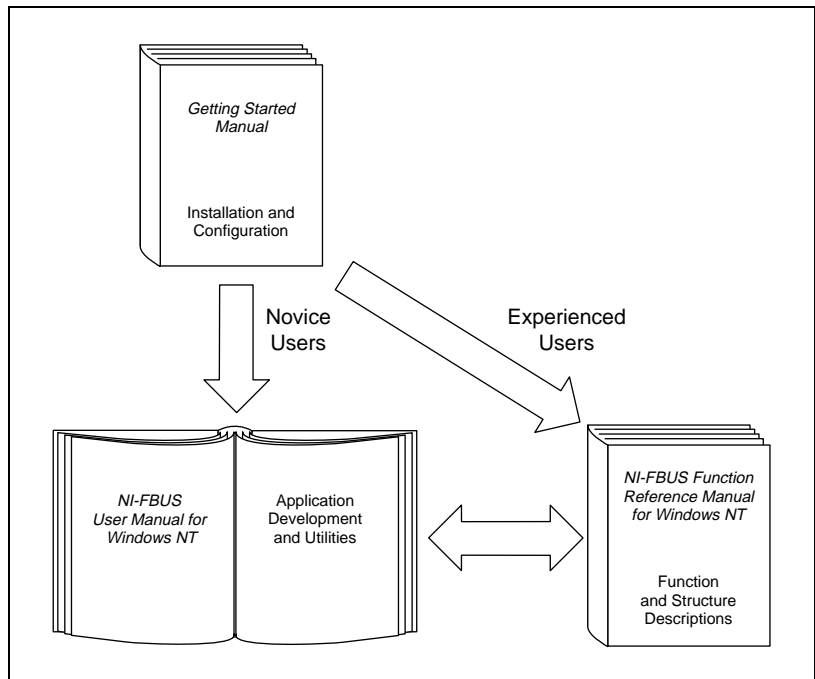
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This manual gives an overview of fieldbus, describes the NI-FBUS software, and explains how to use the software. The NI-FBUS software is intended for use with Microsoft Windows NT. This manual assumes that you are already familiar with the Microsoft Windows NT operating system.



How to Use the Manual Set

This User Manual helps you to learn how to employ NI-FBUS in your application.

Use the Getting Started manual to install and configure your fieldbus interface and the NI-FBUS software for Windows NT.

Use the *NI-FBUS Function Reference Manual for Windows NT* to look up specific information about NI-FBUS functions, such as input and output parameters, syntax, and error messages.

Organization of This Manual

This manual is organized as follows:

- Chapter 1, *Introduction*, introduces fieldbus and the NI-FBUS software.
- Chapter 2, *Developing Your Application*, explains how to use the NI-FBUS software for Windows NT to develop your fieldbus application.
- Chapter 3, *NI-FBUS Dialog Utility*, describes the NI-FBUS Dialog utility and gives examples of how to use it.
- Chapter 4, *NI-FBUS Configuration Utility*, explains how to use `fbconf`, the NI-FBUS software configuration utility.
- Appendix A, *Configuring the Link Active Schedule File*, contains information about how to configure your Link Active Schedule file.
- Appendix B, *Customer Communication*, contains forms you can use to request help from National Instruments or to comment on our products and manuals.
- The *Glossary* contains an alphabetical list and description of terms used in this manual, including abbreviations, acronyms, metric prefixes, mnemonics, and symbols.

Conventions Used in This Manual

This manual uses the following conventions:

- » The » symbol leads you through nested menu items and dialog box options to a final action. The sequence **File»Page Setup»Options»Substitute Fonts** directs you to pull down the **File** menu, select the **Page Setup** item, select **Options**, and finally select the **Substitute Fonts** options from the last dialog box.
- bold** Bold text denotes parameters, menus, menu items, dialog box buttons or options, and error messages.
- bold italic*** Bold italic text denotes a note, caution, or warning.
- bold monospace** Bold text in this font denotes the messages and responses that the computer automatically prints to the screen. This font also emphasizes lines of code that are unique.
- italic* Italic text denotes emphasis, a cross reference, or an introduction to a key concept. This font also denotes text for which you supply the appropriate word or value.
- italic monospace* Italic text in this font denotes that you must supply the appropriate words or values in the place of these items.
- monospace Text in this font denotes text or characters that you should enter from the keyboard, sections of code, programming examples, and syntax examples. This font is also used for the proper names of disk drives, paths, directories, programs, subprograms, subroutines, device names, functions, operations, variables, filenames and extensions, and for statements and comments taken from programs.
- NI-FBUS In this manual, the term *NI-FBUS* refers to the NI-FBUS Communications Manager.

Related Documentation

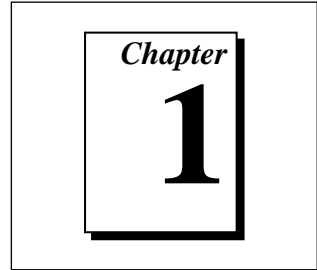
The following documents contain information that you may find helpful as you read this manual:

- *Foundation Specification: System Architecture*
- *Foundation Specification: System Management*
- *Foundation Specification: Network Management*
- *Foundation Specification: Fieldbus Message Specification*
- *Foundation Specification: Function Block Application Process, Parts 1 and 2*
- *Foundation Specification: Device Description Services User Guide*
- *Foundation Specification: 31.25 kbit/s Physical Layer Profile*
- *Foundation Specification: Device Description Services User Guide*
- *Device Description Language Specification*

Customer Communication

National Instruments wants to receive your comments on our products and manuals. We are interested in the applications you develop with our products, and we want to help if you have problems with them. To make it easy for you to contact us, this manual contains comment and configuration forms for you to complete. These forms are in Appendix B, *Customer Communication*, at the end of this manual.

Introduction



This chapter introduces fieldbus and the NI-FBUS software.

Fieldbus Overview

This section gives a short overview of fieldbus. Refer to the *Glossary* for more explanation of fieldbus terms and concepts.

What Is Fieldbus?

The term *fieldbus* generally refers to an all-digital, two-way communication system that connects control systems to instrumentation.

Benefits of Fieldbus

Fieldbus offers important benefits over some other protocols. Fieldbus supports digital encoding of data, two-way communication, many types of messages, and multiple devices, all on the same set of wires.

Most control systems today have a combination of analog, hybrid, and proprietary digital networks.

Fieldbus solves the problem of proprietary networks by using standardized networks to connect systems and devices, as Figure 1-1 shows.

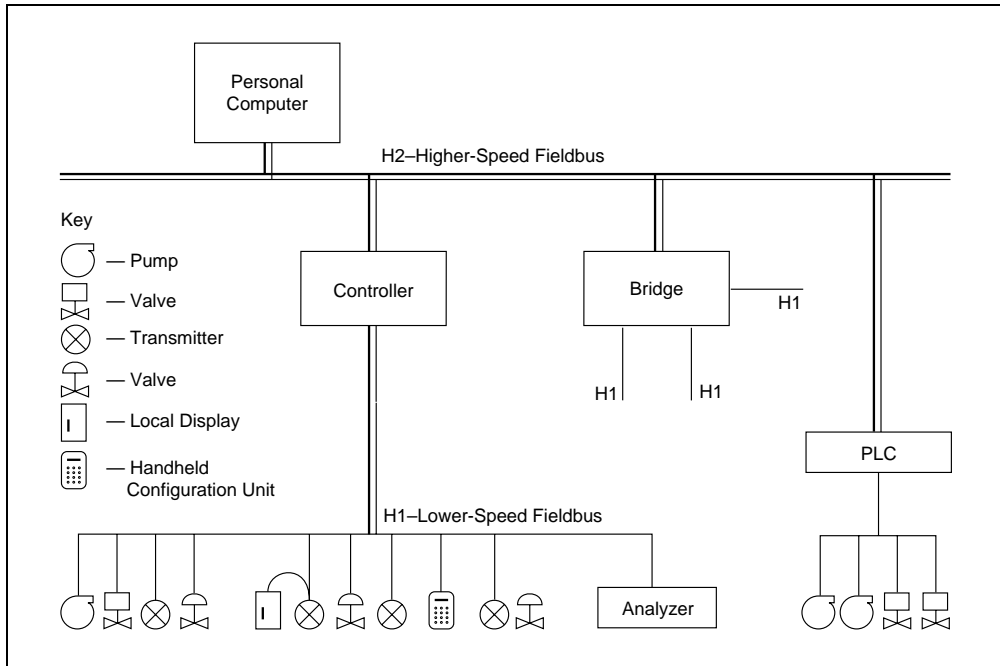


Figure 1-1. Fieldbus-Based Control System

The Fieldbus Foundation

The *Fieldbus Foundation* is an organization that developed a fieldbus network specifically based upon the work and principles of the ISA/IEC standards committees. The goal of the Fieldbus Foundation and its members is not simply to produce a standard, but to help create products that use a robust industrial network based on existing standards and other proven technologies.

FOUNDATION Fieldbus Technology

FOUNDATION Fieldbus, which is the communications network the Fieldbus Foundation created, specifically targets the need for robust, distributed control in process control environments. FOUNDATION Fieldbus technology consists of the Physical Layer, the Communication Stack, and the User Layer. Figure 1-2 shows a diagram of the fieldbus layers compared to the Open Systems Interconnect (OSI) layered communication model. Notice that the OSI model does not define a User Layer.

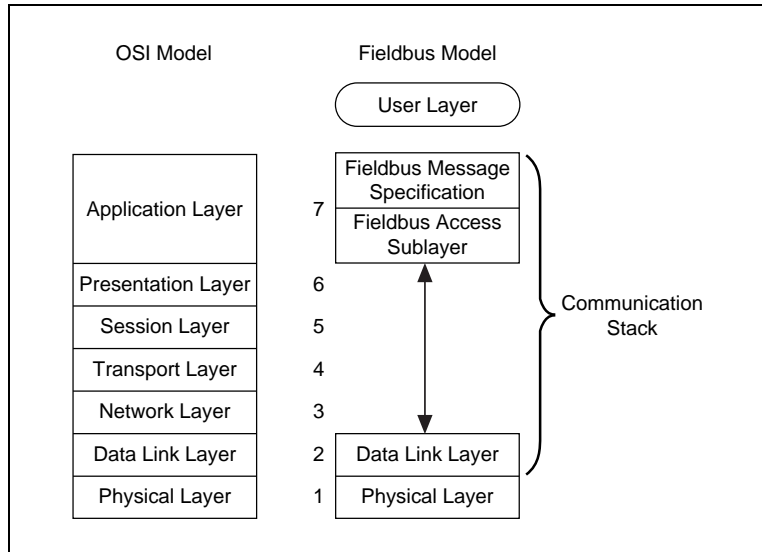


Figure 1-2. The Fieldbus Model Compared to the OSI 7-Layer Communications Model

FOUNDATION Fieldbus does not implement layers 3, 4, 5, and 6 of the OSI model shown in Figure 1-2 because the services of these layers are not required in a process control application. A very important part of FOUNDATION Fieldbus is the defined User Layer, often referred to as Layer 8.

Refer to the FOUNDATION Fieldbus specifications for more information on the layers of the FOUNDATION Fieldbus network.

FOUNDATION Fieldbus Layers

The Physical Layer

The Physical Layer converts digital Fieldbus messages from the communication stack to physical signals on the Fieldbus transmission medium and vice versa. See the *Foundation Specification: 31.25 kbit/s Physical Layer Profile* for the FOUNDATION Fieldbus Physical Layer Specifications.

The Communication Stack

The Communication Stack performs the services required to interface the User Application to the Physical Layer. As shown in Figure 1-2, the Communication Stack consists of three layers: the Fieldbus Message Specification, the Fieldbus Access Sublayer, and the Data Link Layer.

The Data Link Layer manages access to the Fieldbus through the LAS by splitting data into frames to send on the physical layer, receiving acknowledgment frames, and re-transmitting frames if they are not received correctly. It also performs error checking to maintain a sound virtual channel to the next layer.

The Fieldbus Access Sublayer (FAS) layer of the stack provides an interface between the Data Link Layer and Layer 7. The FAS provides communication services such as client/server, publisher/subscriber and event distribution.

The Fieldbus Messaging Specification (FMS) layer of the stack defines a model for applications to interact over the Fieldbus. The Object Dictionary (OD) and the Virtual Field Device (VFD) are important in this model. The OD is a structure in a Fieldbus device that describes data that can be communicated on the Fieldbus. You can think of the OD as a lookup table that gives information such as data type about a value that can be read from or written to a device. The VFD is a model for remotely viewing data described in the object dictionary. The services provided by FMS allow you to read and write information about the OD, read and write the data variables described in the OD, and perform other activities such as uploading/downloading data, and invoking programs inside a device.

In addition, there are two management layers called System Management (SM) and Network Management (NM). SM assigns addresses and physical device tags, maintains the Function Block Schedule for the FBs in that device, and distributes application time. You can also locate a device or a Function Block tag through SM.

Network Management contains objects that other layers of the communication stack use, such as Data Link, FAS, and FMS. You can read and write SM and NM objects over the Fieldbus using FMS Read and FMS Write services.

The User Layer

The User Layer defines blocks and objects that represent the functions and data available in a device. Rather than interfacing to a device through a set of commands, like most communication protocols, a FOUNDATION Fieldbus user interacts with devices through a set of blocks and objects that define device capabilities in a standardized way. The User Layer shown in Figure 1-2 consists of the Resource Block, and one or more Transducer Blocks and Function Blocks, as illustrated in Figure 1-3.

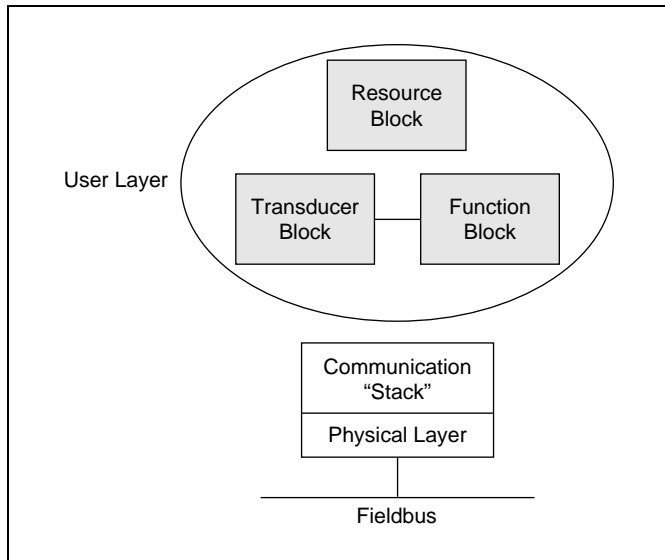


Figure 1-3. The User Layer

The Resource Block

The resource block describes general characteristics, such as manufacturer and device name. Only one resource block per VFD is allowed.

Function Blocks

Function blocks are the core components of a control system. FOUNDATION Fieldbus defines a standard set of function blocks. There are ten function blocks for the most basic control and I/O functions as shown in Table 1-1. Manufacturers can define their own function blocks.

Table 1-1. Ten Standard FOUNDATION Fieldbus-Defined Function Blocks

Function Block Name	Symbol
Analog Input	AI
Analog Output	AO
Bias/Gain	BG
Control Selector	CS
Discrete Input	DI
Discrete Output	DO
Manual Loader	ML
Proportional/Derivative	PD
Proportional/Integral/Derivative	PID
Ratio	RA

You can connect the input and output of individual function blocks to specify communication of data between blocks. Also, you can precisely schedule the execution of a function block and the transmission of its output data using the communication stack, which means you can control loops directly over the network.

Transducer Blocks

Transducer blocks interface to the sensing hardware in the device. They also perform the digitizing, filtering, and scaling conversions needed to present input data to function blocks or convert output data from function blocks. Transducer blocks decouple the function blocks from the hardware details of a given device, allowing generic indication of function block input and output. Various profile groups have defined transducer blocks for different types of devices. Manufacturers can define their own transducer blocks.

Objects

In addition to the blocks described, the User Layer of a FOUNDATION Fieldbus device also contains four types of objects. Link objects define connections between function block input and output across the network. Trend objects accumulate values of function block parameters for access over the network. Alert objects report alarms and events. View objects are predefined groupings of parameter sets that Man-Machine Interface (MMI) applications use.

FOUNDATION Fieldbus Concepts

This section discusses basic concepts of fieldbus architecture that you must understand to use NI-FBUS.

Links

A fieldbus network consists of one or more links. Each link is configured with a unique link identifier.

Each link on the fieldbus network consists of one or more physical devices. The devices can be field devices (temperature transmitter, valve, and so on) or host devices (PCs, Digital Control Systems). Each physical device is configured with a physical device tag, an address, and a device ID. The physical device tag must be unique within a fieldbus system, and the address must be unique within each link. The device manufacturer assigns a device ID that is unique to the device.

Types of Devices

There are three types of physical devices from a protocol point of view—Link Masters, basic devices, and bridges. Each link has one device called a Link Active Scheduler (LAS) that executes the Link Active Schedule, circulates tokens, distributes time, and probes for new devices. A Link Master device can become the LAS, but a basic device cannot become the LAS. A bridge device connects two or more links together.

The LAS controls access to the bus. For cyclic communications, the LAS maintains the list of scheduled communication times (the Link Active Schedule) and compels a device to transmit data at the appropriate time, making communication very deterministic. For acyclic communication,

the LAS grants permission to a device to use the fieldbus by passing a token to the device.

Virtual Field Devices

Each physical device on the fieldbus can have one or more Virtual Field Devices (VFDs). A network configuration application can assign each VFD a tag that is unique within the device. Most devices have only one VFD. Each VFD has one resource block and one or more function blocks and transducer blocks. Each block should be assigned a tag that is unique within the fieldbus system.

Device Descriptions

A key objective for FOUNDATION Fieldbus is interoperability—the ability to build systems comprised of devices from a variety of manufacturers and take full advantage of both the standard and unique capabilities of every device.

Instead of requiring device manufacturers use only a given set of functions in a device in order to ensure that a system can always communicate with a new device, FOUNDATION Fieldbus uses *Device Descriptions (DDs)*, which describe all the functions in a device. The DD defines the parameters of the blocks. It also defines attributes of parameters and blocks like help strings in different languages, ranges of values for parameters, and so on. Using the Device Description, the host in a control system can obtain the information needed to create an interface that configures parameters, calibrates, performs diagnostics, and accomplishes other functions on the device.

The developer of a Fieldbus device uses Device Description Language to create the Device Description for a device. The DDL is compiled using the Fieldbus Foundation-supplied Tokenizer, which creates a binary form of the code to ship to the end user with the instrument. The output files are made available to the host devices. The host devices can access information in these files through Device Description Services (DDS). The Fieldbus Foundation supplies the DDL for the standard function blocks and the resource block.

NI-FBUS Overview

NI-FBUS is a high-level Application Programmer Interface (API) you can use to interface with the National Instruments FOUNDATION Fieldbus (FF) communication stack and hardware. The main purpose of NI-FBUS is to make the details of the fieldbus communication protocols transparent by offering you an API that supports *TAG.PARAMETER* access. You need a general knowledge of the fieldbus architecture (outlined in the *Fieldbus Overview* section of this chapter) to understand and use NI-FBUS.

How NI-FBUS Helps You

The NI-FBUS interface makes fieldbus protocols transparent. NI-FBUS interfaces between the communication stack and the user application shown in Figure 1-2. It handles the details of interfacing to the Fieldbus Messaging Specification (FMS) and lower layers of the communications stack. NI-FBUS also hides the low-level details of Virtual Communication Relationships (VCRs), connection management, addresses, and Object Dictionary indices, and offers name access to physical devices, Virtual Field Devices (VFDs), function blocks, transducer blocks, and parameters.

The NI-FBUS API is independent of National Instruments fieldbus hardware and the operating system. With NI-FBUS, you can plug multiple National Instruments fieldbus interfaces into the same PC.

NI-FBUS is interface independent because it does not require you to specify which fieldbus interface to use in NI-FBUS calls. It determines which interface to send certain fieldbus messages over. NI-FBUS allows you to write applications that are as independent as possible of the actual configuration of your fieldbus interfaces.

NI-FBUS is useful for developing host applications. Typical examples are configurators and applications for monitoring a fieldbus network, diagnosing a network, and developing interfaces to Man-Machine-Interface (MMI) packages.

The NI-FBUS Software Components

This section lists the important elements of the NI-FBUS software for Windows NT and describes the function of each element.

Driver

`nifb.sys` is a Windows NT kernel-mode driver that interfaces between NI-FBUS and the fieldbus interface. The NI-FBUS software installer installs it in your standard Windows NT drivers directory.

Binaries

`nifb.exe` is an executable that constitutes the NI-FBUS process. This process must be executing in order for your applications to work.

`ffstack.bin` is the binary stack file that NI-FBUS downloads to a fieldbus interface device (such as the National Instruments AT-FBUS board.) This file is a binary image of the Fieldbus Foundation communication stack.

Dynamic Link Libraries

`nifb.dll` is the Dynamic Link Library that is installed in your Windows NT directory. `nifb.dll` is necessary for your application to communicate with the `nifb` process.

`drvintf.dll` is another Dynamic Link Library that is installed in your Windows NT directory. The `nifb` process needs `drvintf.dll` to communicate with the kernel-mode driver.

Utilities

`nifbldg.exe` is an interactive dialog utility that you can use to communicate with the fieldbus network devices. It helps you to learn the NI-FBUS routines.

`fbconf.exe` is a configuration program that lets you add or change the hardware configuration parameters for your fieldbus interface devices (such as the AT-FBUS boards). It also lets you assign a logical name to each port on the fieldbus interface and provide NI-FBUS with Device Description location information.

Sample Application Files

`nifbtest.c`, `nifb_mt.c`, and `nifbdd.c` are source code files that you can use with the `nifb.lib` library to make a sample application. All of these files ship with the NI-FBUS software, but you must use your own compiler to create the sample application.

`sched.ini` is a sample Link Active Schedule file. Refer to Appendix A, *Configuring the Link Active Schedule File*, for information about how to configure this file.

Header Files

`nifbus.h` is an include file that contains some data type declarations, error code declarations and function prototypes.

In addition to `nifbus.h` there are fourteen other header files which are included for you. Therefore, your application only has to include `nifbus.h`.

Static Library

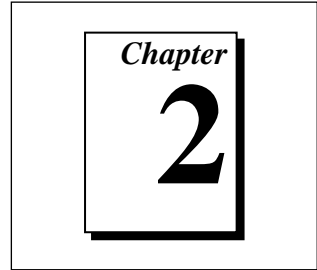
`nifb.lib` is the static library that your application must link with in order to communicate with the `nifb` process.

Readme File

`readme.txt` is a documentation file that contains important information about the NI-FBUS software, and a list of known bugs or anomalies in the software.

Proceed to Chapter 2, *Developing Your Application*, to develop your fieldbus application.

Developing Your Application



This chapter explains how to use the NI-FBUS software for Windows NT to develop your fieldbus application.

Using the NI-FBUS Software

This section discusses considerations about using the NI-FBUS software for Windows NT.

Using NI-FBUS Functions

The NI-FBUS functions are classified in four categories:

- Administrative Functions
- Core Functions
- Alert and Trend Functions
- Device Description Functions

Administrative Functions

You can use the administrative functions to get the list of physical devices in a link, get a list of VFDs in a physical device, and get a list of blocks (resource, function, transducer) from a VFD. The administrative functions are `nifGetDeviceList`, `nifGetVfdList`, and `nifGetBlockList`. Typically, you have to call these before you call a core, alert, or another administrative function.

Because you can use NI-FBUS to communicate with each of the FOUNDATION Fieldbus entities, such as link, physical device, VFD, and block, there are `nifOpen` calls for you open and get a descriptor to each of these entities.

Example: How to Use Administrative Functions

Suppose you want to get a descriptor to a block with `nifOpenBlock` before you read or write the block parameters. Then you want to open a block using the block's tag.

To open a block with the tag `TI101_Analog_Input`, you invoke `nifOpenBlock(sessionDesc, "TI101_Analog_Input", &blockDesc)`, where `sessionDesc` is the descriptor of the session that you have established with NI-FBUS. NI-FBUS returns the descriptor of the block that you have opened in `blockDesc`. From then on, you can use this descriptor for calls associated with this block.

Core Functions

Core NI-FBUS functions are the functions that deal with processing function block parameters—primarily the `nifReadObject` and `nifWriteObject` functions, which read and write block parameters. NI-FBUS encapsulates the Device Description Services (DDS) with the core function `nifGetObjectAttributes`, which gives you the Device Description attributes of any parameter. A function to get the object's data size, `nifGetObjectSize`, is also a core function.

Function blocks contain view or display objects. As the name implies, these objects are a collection of parameters in function blocks that are typically displayed in an operator console. Four view objects are defined for each of the 10 standard function blocks in the FOUNDATION Fieldbus specification.

The following examples are a good summation of NI-FBUS, because they demonstrate that details such as VCRs, indices, and connections are hidden by the *TAG.PARAMETER* access NI-FBUS provides. However, to correctly write an application using NI-FBUS, you must be familiar with the *Foundation Specification: Function Block Application Process Parts 1 and 2*—the standard blocks, their parameters and their syntax—and have an idea of the architecture of fieldbus. Refer to the *Fieldbus Overview* section in Chapter 1, *Introduction*, in this manual for an outline of fieldbus architecture.

Example: How to Use Core Functions

Suppose the object `VIEW_1` for a PID function block consists of `gain`, `rate`, `SP`, `CAS_IN`, `mode`, and `alarm` summary parameters of the PID function block. You want to get the values of all these parameters using a single read of the `VIEW_1` object. If the tag of a PID function block is `TIC101_PID`, you can read the `VIEW_1` object by executing the following function call:

```
nifReadObject(sessionDesc, "TIC101_PID.VIEW_1", buffer,
&cnt)
```

Notice that it is not necessary to have a block descriptor to read the object's parameters. If you *do* have the block descriptor, you can read the object with the following call:

```
nifReadObject(blockDesc, "VIEW_1", buffer, &cnt)
```

You can get the block descriptor using `nifOpenBlock`, which returns `blockDesc`.

If you wanted to change the set point of the preceding PID block, you could do so with the following call:

```
nifWriteObject(sessionDesc, "TIC101_PID.SP", buffer,
cnt)
```

Alert and Trend Functions

When a properly-configured device detects an alarm condition, it broadcasts the data. A host device should receive the alarm and send a communication acknowledgment and an operator acknowledgment to the field device. The field device can also collect trends based on a configured sample type and interval. When it collects 16 samples, it broadcasts the trend data on the fieldbus. Any number of interested hosts can collect this data. For more details, refer to the *Foundation Specification: Function Block Application Process Part 1*.

With a program such as the National Instruments Fieldbus Network Configuration utility, you can configure the FOUNDATION Fieldbus field devices to broadcast alert and trend data.

NI-FBUS has functions to receive trends and alerts from configured devices and to perform operator acknowledgment on alerts. `nifWaitAlert` lets you wait for an alert from any device in a link, any function block in a physical device, or a specific function block, depending on the type of descriptor that you pass it. When NI-FBUS receives an alert, it returns a structure containing information about the alert. NI-FBUS sends the communication acknowledgment to the device automatically. NI-FBUS provides a separate function, `nifAcknowledgeAlarm`, to send the operator acknowledgment.

Similarly, `nifWaitTrend` lets you wait for a trend from any device in a link, any function block in a physical device, or a specific function block, depending on the type of descriptor you pass it. When NI-FBUS receives a trend, it returns a structure containing information about the trend, along with the trend data itself.

`nifWaitAlert` and `nifWaitTrend` wait until an alert or trend is received before returning, so you might want to have separate threads invoke these functions.

Device Description Functions

NI-FBUS gives your applications access to Device Descriptions, which are binary files that describe the characteristics of blocks and parameters. Your application can use the NI-FBUS function `nifGetObjectAttributes` to decode attributes of parameters including data type, data size, help strings, and other attributes defined in the *Device Description Language Specification*. In addition, Device Description symbol files are used automatically to assist in allowing your applications to access parameters by name.

NI-FBUS is shipped with Device Descriptions for all standard Fieldbus Foundation function blocks. NI-FBUS can provide attributes for all parameters of all standard function blocks, even if the device manufacturers for your devices did not provide Device Descriptions. However, to get the attributes of parameters of nonstandard (not FOUNDATION Fieldbus defined) blocks, NI-FBUS requires that the device manufacturer provide the Device Description.

Using the NI-FBUS Process

For any of your applications that relate to NI-FBUS to run correctly, you must successfully launch the NI-FBUS process. The NI-FBUS process is the medium by which your application communicates with the devices on the fieldbus network. The NI-FBUS process receives requests from your application and passes them on to the specified fieldbus device through the fieldbus interface connected to your machine. Refer to Chapter 4, *Begin to Use the NI-FBUS Software*, in the Getting Started manual for instructions on how to start the NI-FBUS process.

At startup time, the NI-FBUS process downloads the Fieldbus Foundation communication stack file `ffstack.bin` (provided in your kit) to the fieldbus interfaces connected to your machine. It then downloads the communication stack configuration parameters, such as the fieldbus network address for the interface device, and so on, to each interface device. You can edit these parameters using the NI-FBUS Configuration utility by clicking the **Advanced** button on the dialog box for the **Edit Port** information.

You must make sure to specify a unique, non-default fieldbus network address for NI-FBUS to work properly. You can use a default address if another entity on the fieldbus assigns your interface a non-default address. You can change the address from the NI-FBUS Configuration utility in the **Edit Port** dialog box. You must restart NI-FBUS for any changes you make to take effect.

The NI-FBUS process features non-volatile storage of all network parameters, including the last known Link Active Schedule. After network parameters, including the Link Active Schedule, are stored, NI-FBUS automatically reloads them to the interface on startup.

At installation time, the non-volatile copy of the schedule is empty, but you can make NI-FBUS store the non-volatile Link Active Schedule by downloading it to your fieldbus interface. To download a Link Active Schedule to your fieldbus interface, you can use the NI-FBUS Dialog utility. Refer to Chapter 3, *NI-FBUS Dialog Utility*, in this manual for an example of how to download the Link Active Schedule to your fieldbus interface. You can also use the National Instruments Fieldbus Network Configuration utility to download a Link Active Schedule to your fieldbus interface.

At any point in the NI-FBUS process start-up, if the NI-FBUS process is unable to find information it needs to start up, error messages will appear. You may ignore these messages and continue; however, this will result in your application not being able to communicate with the interface devices for which the error messages appeared. These messages tell you the information that the NI-FBUS process is looking for, but cannot find.

Developing Your NI-FBUS Application

This section contains information to help you develop your NI-FBUS application.

Choosing Your Level of Communication

While a few functions require a specific type of descriptor (for example, `nifGetDeviceList` requires a link descriptor), many functions (such as the Core functions, and the Alert and Trend functions) allow you to communicate using any type of descriptor. With these functions, the descriptor type you should choose depends on what is most convenient for you in designing your application, because there is no significant difference in performance between the different types.

For example, if it is convenient for your application to use only a session descriptor, and to keep track of tags for each block, so that you refer to all parameters in *BLOCKTAG.PARAMNAME* format, then you should write your application this way. If it is easier for you to keep track of a descriptor for each block rather than a tag for each block, then you should open a block descriptor for each block you are communicating with, keep track of that descriptor value, and access parameters by *PARAMNAME* using the block descriptor.

The difference in performance between calls using the various descriptor types is minor.

Choosing Between Tag-Based and Index-Based Access

NI-FBUS supports access by name or by index for all block parameters. National Instruments recommends that you access all variables by name. Although access by index might be slightly faster in some cases, an application cannot always reliably determine indices.

NI-FBUS can convert the parameter name you specify to the final index that Foundation protocols must use to access the parameter over the network. NI-FBUS converts the name to an index using standard Fieldbus Foundation-specified methods, which include a check to the device at run time to verify the index. If you hard code indices, you will have to modify them when the devices they are accessing become replaced, upgraded, or have new blocks created on them.

Choosing Between Multi-Threaded and Single-Threaded Access

All NI-FBUS functions are synchronous, meaning that the calling function is blocked until the NI-FBUS call completes. A fieldbus device usually takes tens of milliseconds to respond to a block parameter read or write. It takes longer if any communication errors occur. NI-FBUS uses the protocol connections to communicate with the devices. If a connection is lost, NI-FBUS tries to reestablish the connection. When a connection is lost, an NI-FBUS read or write call may take several seconds to complete.

Using Single Threading

If potential delays like the ones discussed in the previous paragraph are acceptable for your application, you can write your application or the fieldbus access part of your application as a single thread. Single-threaded applications are easier to develop, debug, and test, because you do not have to consider exclusion between threads. If you are writing an application for testing, monitoring, or configuring a single device, a single-threaded application might be adequate.

Using Multi Threading

If your application monitors or tests several devices at a time, communication delays might affect the throughput of your application and therefore be unacceptable. If so, you can develop a multi-threaded application to improve the performance of your application. There are several ways to multi-thread your application.

If you are accessing information from function blocks or transducer blocks, you might want to create a thread for each block. Each block's thread will read and write information from that block. If creating a thread for each block is excessive, you might consider an architecture in which you have a set of threads dedicated to fieldbus I/O. Your application can then interface with I/O threads through a shared queue in which threads put their I/O requests. When the I/O completes, the I/O threads can inform the application by passing a message or some other synchronization scheme.

If your application performs trending or alarm handling, you might want to have separate threads that perform these functions. You can make a thread wait for a trend or alarm with the `nifWaitTrend` or `nifWaitAlert` function and then process the trend or alarm when it arrives. If you are monitoring the live list, you may have a dedicated thread that calls `nifGetDeviceList`, because the call will not return until the live list changes.

Using the NI-FBUS Dialog Utility to Communicate with Devices

The NI-FBUS Dialog utility (`nifbdlg.exe`) helps you perform simple tests of your whole fieldbus setup, including NI-FBUS, your interface board(s), and any devices you have. The NI-FBUS Dialog utility graphical interface has dialog boxes that call the NI-FBUS API, and allows you to specify parameters and make NI-FBUS calls. For example, you can use the NI-FBUS Dialog utility to get a list of devices on your network, as well as view and set parameters in each device. For more details, see Chapter 3, *NI-FBUS Dialog Utility*.

Writing Your NI-FBUS Application

Use the following guidelines to make sure your application uses the NI-FBUS interface properly.

- Always call `nifOpenSession` early in your program and check the return value of the call. This check verifies that the NI-FBUS process is running, which is a prerequisite for your application to access the fieldbus network. If this call fails, your application should inform the user that the fieldbus is currently inaccessible.

- Always close any descriptors that you open before your program exits, including session descriptors. NI-FBUS requires that your application closes all descriptors that it opens.
- Always check the return values from NI-FBUS calls. NI-FBUS is a high-level API, and performs many operations that can fail because of incorrect parameters, incorrect bus configuration, or communication failures. An application that fails to check return values might use output parameters from NI-FBUS calls that are NULL or uninitialized, leading to incorrect behavior or a program crash.
- If you plan to call any of the indefinitely-blocking functions including `nifGetDeviceList`, `nifWaitAlert`, and `nifWaitTrend`, you should probably use a separate descriptor for these calls. To terminate these calls early, you have to close the descriptor. Having a separate descriptor will ensure that terminating these calls does not affect any other NI-FBUS calls your application has pending.
- If NI-FBUS stops for any reason, any outstanding calls in your application complete with the error `E_SERVER_CONNECTION_LOST`. At this point, all of the descriptors that you have (including the session) are invalid. If you restart NI-FBUS, your application should recover by opening a new session to NI-FBUS and opening all new descriptors. After this recovery procedure, your application should be fully operational.

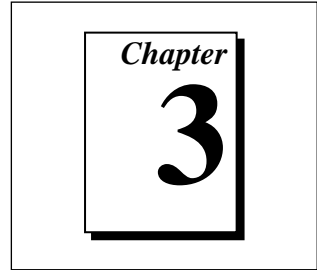
Compiling, Linking, and Running Your NI-FBUS Application

To compile, link, and execute your application, you must carry out the following steps:

- Add the line `#include "nifbus.h"` to any of your source files that make NI-FBUS calls. The `nifbus.h` file is located in the `includes` subdirectory of your installation. Also, make sure that the `includes` subdirectory is included in your project's settings.
- Link your application with `nifb.lib`, which is located in the `libs` subdirectory of your installation.
- Make sure that `nifb.dll` is present in your Windows NT directory. `nifb.dll` is an interface DLL required to interface to the NI-FBUS process. `nifb.dll` must be present when your application runs.

- Make sure that the NI-FBUS process has started up and is entirely initialized before your application makes its first NI-FBUS call.
- Make sure your compiler has the structure padding or alignment parameter set to 8 bytes. This will allow proper communication of data structures.
- The `nifbus.h` header file and `nifb.lib` library have currently only been compiled and linked with Microsoft Visual C, versions 4.0 and 4.1.

NI-FBUS Dialog Utility



This chapter describes the NI-FBUS Dialog utility and gives examples of how to use it.

NI-FBUS Dialog Utility Overview

The NI-FBUS Dialog utility allows you to interact with your devices over the fieldbus by opening descriptors, making single NI-FBUS calls, and viewing the results. You might want to use the NI-FBUS Dialog utility to verify installation and device operation, or to learn the NI-FBUS API.

To run the NI-FBUS Dialog utility, double-click on the **NIFBus Dialog** icon in your **NI-FBUS** program group. When you open the Dialog utility, a window appears containing a single item called **Open Descriptors**. This icon is the root of a graphical tree of icons for each of the NI-FBUS descriptors you open using the NI-FBUS Dialog utility. The area below the icon remains empty until you make an NI-FBUS call to open a descriptor. When you open a descriptor, the NI-FBUS Dialog utility adds an icon representing that descriptor in a tree structure on this area of the screen.

You can use the Dialog Utility to perform operations on the descriptors you have opened. Select the operation you want to perform on a descriptor by right-clicking on the descriptor icon and choosing an item on the popup menu that appears, or by selecting the icon with a single click and choosing an item on the **Actions** menu. The choices that appear on the menu depend on the type of descriptor you have selected.

The first thing you should do when you use the NI-FBUS Dialog utility is open a session to NI-FBUS. This creates a session descriptor icon in the tree structure on the screen. You can right-click on this session descriptor to open other descriptors or access NI-FBUS functions.

NI-FBUS Dialog Examples

Getting a Device List

Follow these steps to practice using the NI-FBUS Dialog utility to get a device list.

1. Open the NI-FBUS Dialog utility by double-clicking on the **NIFBus Dialog** icon in your **NI-FBUS** program group.

2. Click on the **Actions** menu and select **Open Session**.

or

Right-click on the **Open Descriptors** icon.

3. On the pop-up menu that appears, select **Open Session**.
4. In the Open Session dialog box that appears, click on the **Open Session** button. The NI-FBUS Dialog utility makes an `nifOpenSession` call to the NI-FBUS process. This call opens a session descriptor, which represents your connection the NI-FBUS process.

If the call succeeds, the NI-FBUS process is running and responding to requests, and a new session descriptor is created under the **Open Descriptors** icon. If the call fails, make sure that your NI-FBUS process is running, and that it has not displayed any error message boxes during startup. You can check this by maximizing and looking at the `nifb.exe` console window.

5. Right-click on the session descriptor icon to see its pop-up menu.

or

Click on the **Session** icon and then select the **Actions** menu.

The list that appears represents the NI-FBUS API calls you can make with a session descriptor.

6. Choose the **GetInterfaceNameList** function from the list of choices. This choice displays the logical name of all known interfaces.

7. Highlight the interface name of your choice and click on the **OpenLink** button.
or
Open a link by choosing the **OpenLink** function and entering the interface name.
8. Right-click on the **Link** icon and choose **GetDeviceList**. The NI-FBUS Dialog utility displays a list of active devices on your fieldbus link. Your fieldbus interface board is also included in this list, as shown in Figure 3-1.

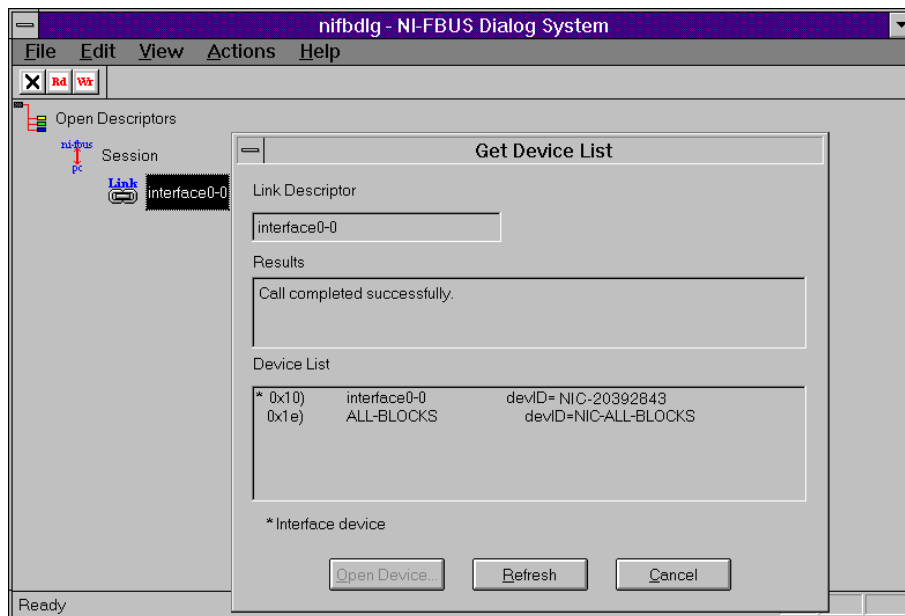


Figure 3-1. Getting a Device List

Downloading a Schedule to an Interface

Follow the steps in this section to use the NI-FBUS Dialog utility to download a schedule to an interface.

1. Complete all the steps of the previous example, *Getting a Device List*.
2. Select an interface board by clicking on an entry in the device list that has an asterisk (*) on its left.

3. Click on the **Open Device...** button. A new dialog box appears with the identifying information for the interface board already filled in.
4. Click on the **Open Device** button on the new dialog box. If the call completes successfully, a new icon for the device descriptor appears in the tree structure on the screen.
5. Right-click on the new device icon, and select the **DownloadLASSched** menu option. A new dialog box, shown in Figure 3-2, appears with identifying information for the device already filled in.
6. In the new dialog box, click **Browse** to locate your .ini file that contains the LAS schedule you want to download, or enter the full path to the file, if you know it.
7. Click the **Download** button. NI-FBUS downloads the schedule to the interface board and activates it immediately.

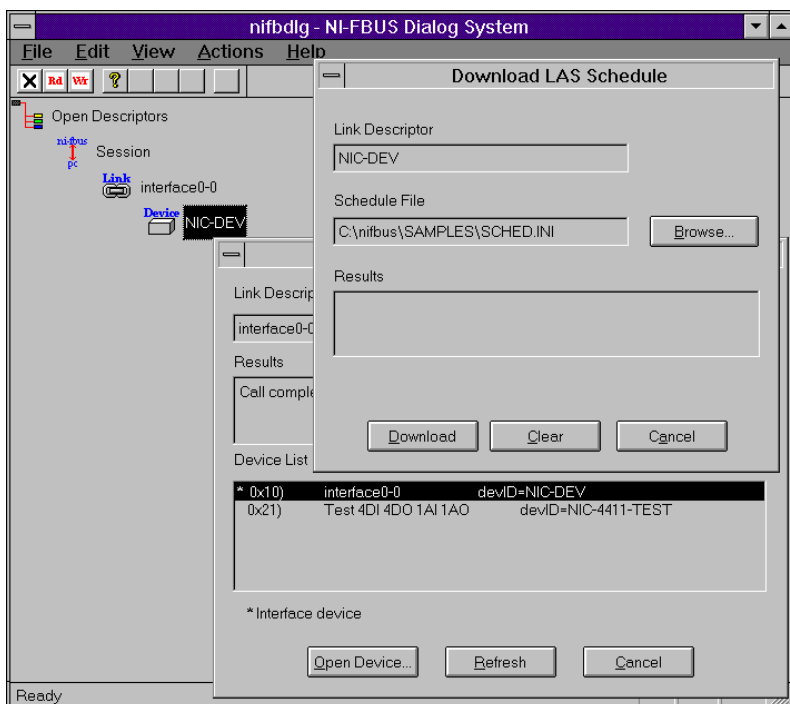


Figure 3-2. Downloading a Link Active Schedule

Reading a Parameter Using TAG.PARAM Access

Follow the steps in this section to read a parameter using *TAG.PARAM*-based access with the NI-FBUS Dialog utility.

1. Open the NI-FBUS Dialog utility.
2. Click on the **Actions** menu and select **Open Session**.
3. Click on the **Open Session** button. If the call succeeds, the NI-FBUS process is running and responding to requests, and a new session descriptor is created under the **Open Descriptors** icon.
4. Right-click on the session descriptor icon to see its popup menu.
5. Select the **ReadObject** menu item.
6. In the dialog box that appears (shown in Figure 3-3), enter the name of the parameter to read in the *BLOCKTAG.PARAM* format, where *BLOCKTAG* is the tag of the block containing the parameter, and *PARAM* is the name of the parameter. For example, to read the *out* parameter of an Analog Input block called FT-201, enter *FT-201.OUT*.
7. Click on the **Read** button to perform the read operation. If the call completes successfully, the NI-FBUS Dialog utility automatically determines the type of the data and displays it in the **Data** box. If the call fails, the error message appears in the **Result** box.

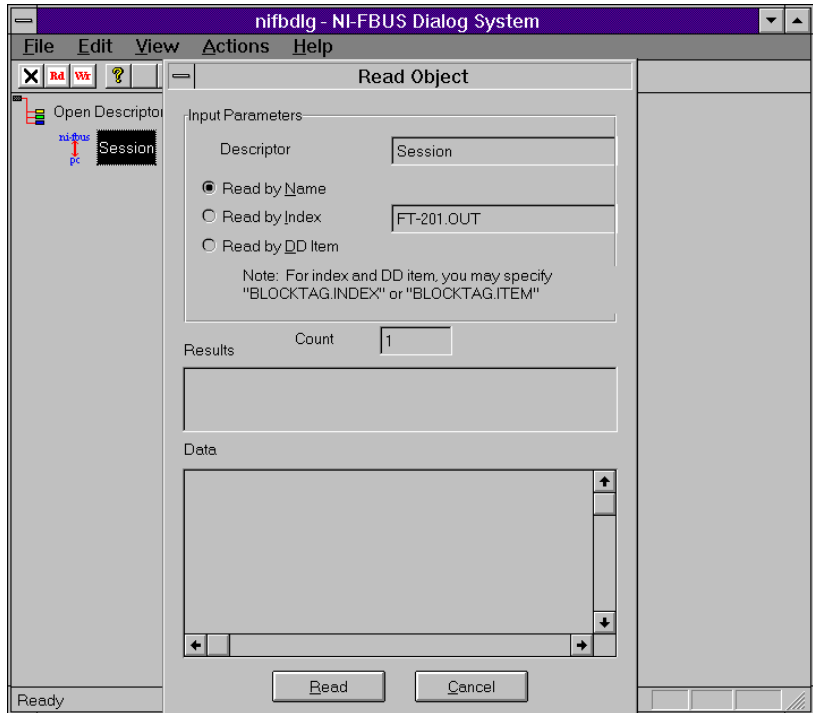


Figure 3-3. Reading a Parameter Using TAG.PARAMETER Access

Waiting for a Trend

Follow the steps in this section to wait for a trend using the NI-FBUS Dialog utility.

1. Open the NI-FBUS Dialog utility.
2. Click on the **Actions** menu and select **Open Session**.
3. Click on the **Open Session** button. If the call succeeds, the NI-FBUS process is running and responding to requests, and a new session descriptor is created under the **Open Descriptors** icon.
4. Right-click on the session descriptor icon to see its popup menu
5. Select the **WaitTrend** menu item.
6. The dialog box shown in Figure 3-4 appears. This dialog box waits until NI-FBUS receives a trend from any device on the bus. The trend data is displayed in the **Results** box when the trend is received.

The **Trend** dialog continues to wait for and display trends as they are received until you close it with the **Cancel** button.

You can wait on trends from all types of descriptors, not just session descriptors. For example, if you wait on a trend from a device descriptor, the dialog box only displays trends coming from the device that the specified descriptor represents. The same is true of link, VFD, and block descriptors.

To exit the NI-FBUS Dialog utility, select **Exit** from the **File** menu.

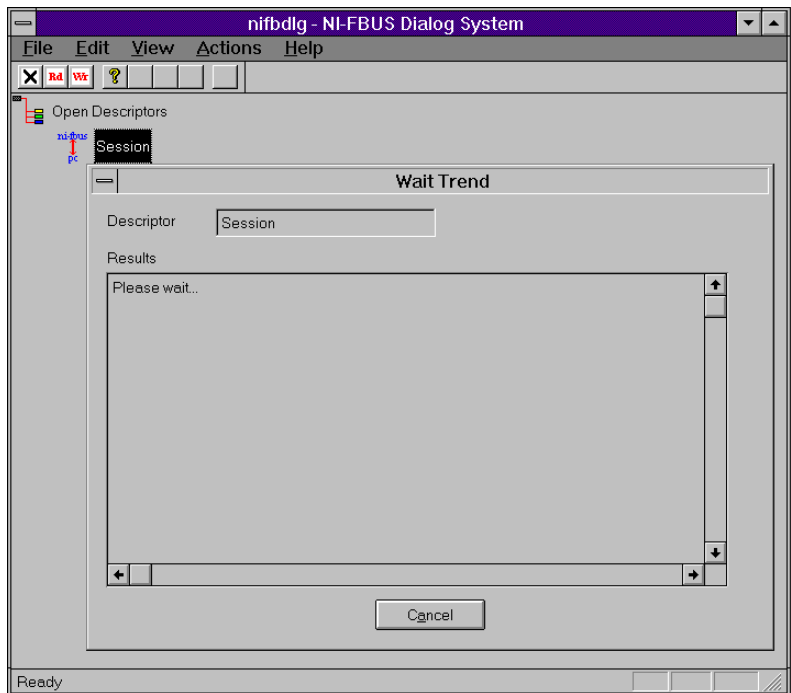
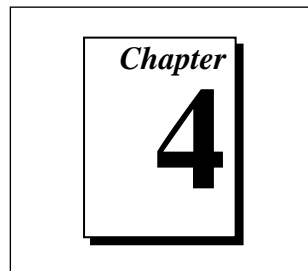


Figure 3-4. Waiting for a Trend

NI-FBUS Configuration Utility



This chapter explains how to use `fbconf`, the NI-FBUS software configuration utility.

Introduction to the NI-FBUS Configuration Utility

The NI-FBUS Configuration utility is a screen-oriented, interactive program you can use to view and edit the configuration parameters for the NI-FBUS software and the hardware configuration parameters of your fieldbus interfaces. The NI-FBUS Configuration utility can read in and display existing configuration parameters for the NI-FBUS software and the hardware configuration parameters for the fieldbus interfaces. The hardware configuration information is primarily used by `nifb.sys`, the kernel-mode driver, which is the means of communication between the NI-FBUS software and the fieldbus interface.

When to Use the NI-FBUS Configuration Utility

You should use the NI-FBUS Configuration utility if you are adding a new fieldbus interface, to change the hardware configuration of your fieldbus interface, to view your software configuration settings, or if you need to install more than one fieldbus interface.

Usually, after you add, delete, or change the hardware configuration with the NI-FBUS Configuration utility, you need to stop and restart the kernel mode driver `nifb.sys` so the new configuration can take effect. Failure to do so might crash the operating system. You can stop the driver by typing `net stop nifb` at the command prompt and start the driver by typing `net start nifb` at the command prompt.

If you change your settings in the NI-FBUS software, and are using a fieldbus interface with jumpers and switches, you must reconfigure the hardware. Refer to your Getting Started manual for information on how to change your physical hardware settings. Follow the instructions in the rest of this chapter to use the NI-FBUS Configuration utility to configure your fieldbus interface software settings.

Starting the NI-FBUS Configuration Utility

The NI-FBUS Configuration utility automatically starts when the installer installs the NI-FBUS software. You can enter configuration information for the NI-FBUS software and the interface board(s) at installation time and after installation. To start the NI-FBUS Configuration utility after installation, do the following:

- If you are using Windows NT 3.51, double-click on the **fbconf** icon, which is part of the **NI-FBUS** program group, created in your **Program Manager** during installation.
- If you are using Windows NT 4.0, select **Start»Programs»NI-FBUS»NI-FBUS Config**.
- To use the command prompt, enter the command `fbconf.exe` to start the NI-FBUS Configuration utility executable, which is located in the `utils` subdirectory of your NI-FBUS installation directory.

Using the NI-FBUS Configuration Utility

**Note:**

If you are using an AT-FBUS board, you must know the base address and IRQ settings of your AT-FBUS hardware before you configure your NI-FBUS software so that you can configure these settings to match. To read your base address from your board switch settings, refer to Chapter 2, Hardware Installation and Configuration, of the Getting Started manual. To read your IRQ level from your board, look at the number printed on the board next to the jumper.

If you are using a PCMCIA-FBUS card, there are no physical hardware settings to match to NI-FBUS Configuration utility settings; you can use any nonconflicting system resources.

Configuring a New Interface

To configure a new interface with the NI-FBUS Configuration utility, do the following:

1. Start the NI-FBUS Configuration utility as described in the previous section, *Starting the NI-FBUS Configuration Utility*. On startup, the NI-FBUS Configuration utility displays a dialog box with the NI-FBUS icon and buttons for **DD Info** and **Add a Board**.
2. Click on the **DD Info** button to add information about the base directory for the device descriptions.
3. Enter the full name, including the path, for the standard text dictionary file (which usually has a .det extension). If you leave both of these fields at their default, NI-FBUS uses a default Device Description that ships with the NI-FBUS software.
4. Click on the **Add a Board** button to configure hardware information for a single fieldbus interface connected to your machine. The hardware information you must fill in includes the physical address of your board, the board IRQ and the system bus type, as shown in Figure 4-1. ISA support and PCMCIA support are provided.

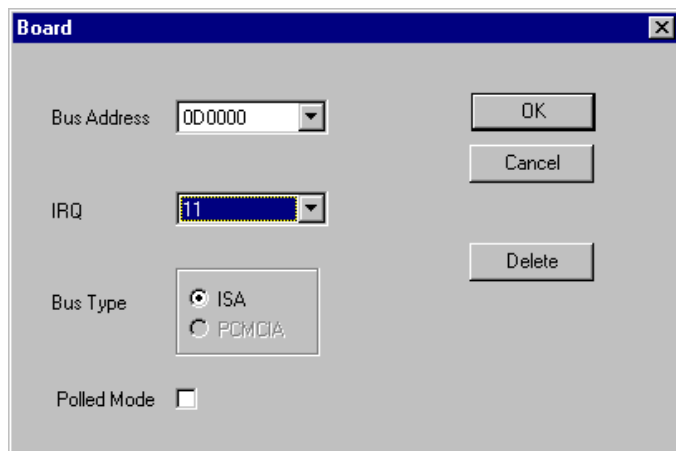


Figure 4-1. Assigning Board Information

You can also choose to use polled mode, without interrupts. In polled mode, NI-FBUS periodically polls the board for service instead of using interrupts. Polled mode consumes more processor time, so you should only use it if there are no free IRQs in your system for the NI-FBUS hardware to use.

5. After checking the information you just entered, click on the **Add** button. The dialog box for entering port information for the fieldbus interface, shown in Figure 4-2, appears.

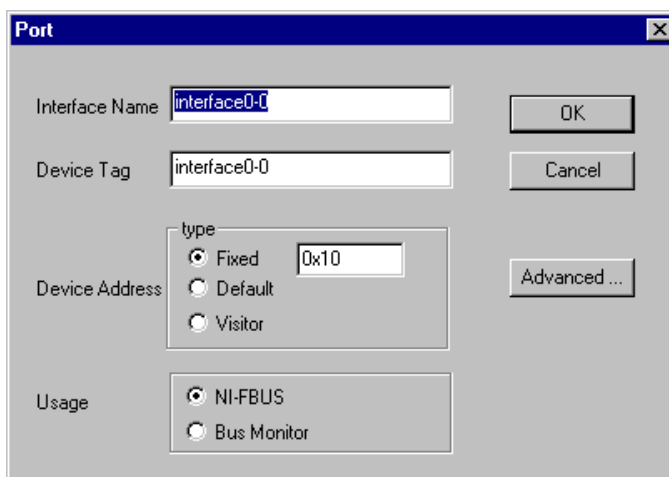


Figure 4-2. Assigning Port Information

Port configuration information you must enter includes the following:

- Interface (logical) name that the NI-FBUS software will use to refer to this port
- Interface device tag
- Interface device address
- Software that this port is for: the NI-FBUS software or the NI-FBUS Monitor
- Other communication configuration parameters

To change these other configuration parameters, click on the **Advanced** button on the dialog box for the port you want to configure. Figure 4-3 shows the **Advanced Stack Configuration** dialog box.

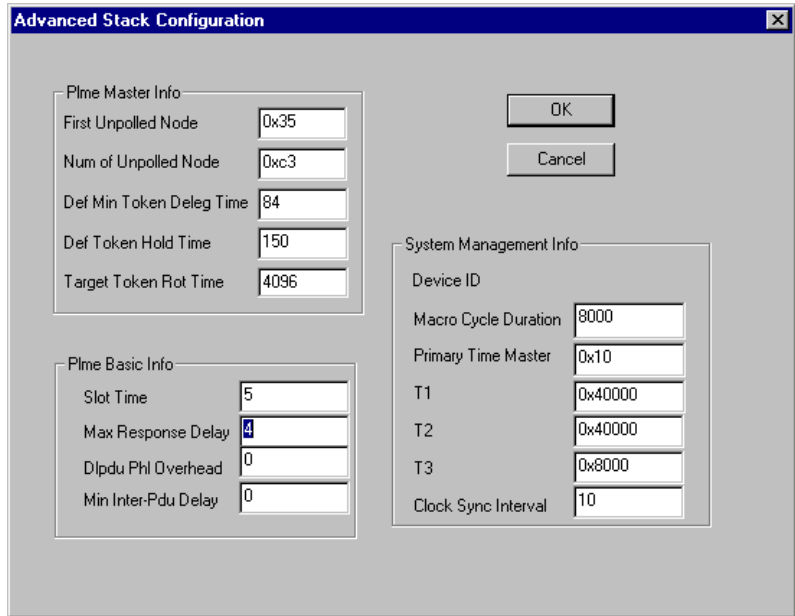


Figure 4-3. The Advanced Stack Configuration Dialog Box

6. Check the information you entered and then click on the **OK** button to save this configuration information for the board and port. `nifGetInterfaceNameList` returns a list of the logical interface names you enter.

You can connect multiple interface boards to your machine and configure them by repeating the procedure just described.

Changing or Deleting Existing Interface Information

To delete or change information about any board that you have already entered, complete the following steps:

1. Click on the relevant **Board x** icon, where x refers to the board number of the board you want to configure.
2. Choose the **Edit** option from the dialog box that appears. You can edit the board configuration information that you entered earlier, or delete this board entirely.

If you delete a board, the NI-FBUS Configuration utility renumbers all the remaining boards. For example, if you delete **Board0**, it appears that you deleted the last board, because all the remaining board numbers are decreased by one.

To change information about a port on a board that you have already configured,

1. Click on the relevant port icon, as shown in Figure 4-4.
2. Choose the **Edit** option. You can edit only the port configuration option. There is no option to delete a port after you configure it.

To exit the configuration utility program, click **OK** on the main menu for NI-FBUS Configuration.

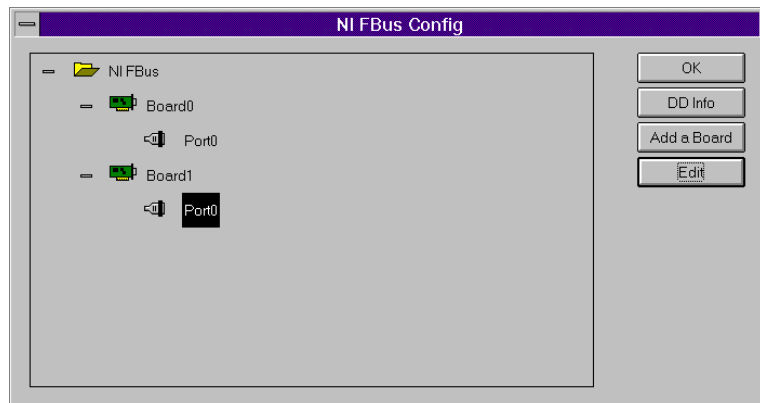
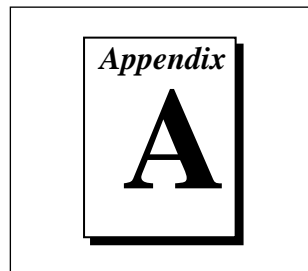


Figure 4-4. Choosing a Port

Configuring the Link Active Schedule File



This appendix contains information about how to configure your Link Active Schedule file.

If you want to do scheduling and use publishers and subscribers, you must follow the instructions in this appendix; otherwise, you do not need this information.

Introduction to the Link Active Schedule File

You must download the Link Active Schedule file to your fieldbus interface before the board can have Link Active Scheduler functionality on the fieldbus network. You may ignore this appendix if there is no schedule, or if the schedule is downloaded over the network to your fieldbus interface.

Save the Link Active Schedule file as a .ini file. You can download this file to your interface board using the NI-FBUS Dialog utility.

For detailed information about the parameters in the Link Active Schedule file, refer to the *Data Link Layer* section of the Final Specification version of the *FOUNDATION Fieldbus Specification*.

Format of the Link Active Schedule File

Create your Link Active Schedule file according to the following format.

The names of the sections of the Link Active Schedule file are:

[Schedule Summary]

...

[Subschedule 1]

```

...
[Sequence 1-1]
...
[Sequence 1-n]
...
[Subschedule x]
...
[Sequence x-1]
...
[Sequence x-y]
...

```

The general line format for all other lines is:

VARIABLE=VALUE

where the valid variable names and values are defined in Tables A-1 to A-4.

Table A-1. Valid Variable Names and Values for the Schedule Summary Section

Variable Name	Valid Values	Implied Units	Default
encodingVersionNumber	0-7	none	none
versionNumber	0x0-0xffff	none	none
builderIdentifier	0x100-0xffff	none	none
numSubSchedules	0-255	none	none
maxSchedulingOverhead	0x0-0x3f	octets	none
macroCycle	0x0-0xffffffff	1/32 ms	none

Table A-2. Valid Variable Names and Values for the Subschedule Section

Variable Name	Valid Values	Implied Units	Default
period	0x0- 0xffffffff	1/32 ms	none
numSequence	0-255	none	none

Table A-3. Valid Variable Names and Values for the Sequence Section

Variable Name	Valid Values	Implied Units	Default
maxDuration	0x0-0xffff	1/32 ms	none
numElements	0-255	none	none

For the variables in Table A-4, *N* is an integer between 1 and numElements. Repeat these variables within this subschedule section exactly numElements times.

Table A-4. Valid Variable Names Including the Variable *N* and Values for the Sequence Section

Variable Name	Valid Values	Implied Units	Default
priority N	TIMEAVAILABLE URGENT NORMAL	none	none
address N	Parameter name in <i>TAG.PARAM</i> format, or DLCEP (Data Link Connection End Point) in 0xNNNN format	none	none

Customer Communication

For your convenience, this appendix contains forms to help you gather the information necessary to help us solve technical problems you might have as well as a form you can use to comment on the product documentation. Filling out a copy of the *Technical Support Form* before contacting National Instruments helps us help you better and faster.

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Part Number: 321287A-01

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A rectangular box containing the word "Glossary" in a bold, italicized serif font. The box has a double-line border.

Glossary

Prefix	Meaning	Value
n-	nano-	10^{-9}
μ -	micro-	10^{-6}
m-	milli-	10^{-3}

A

A	Amperes.
administrative function	An NI-FBUS function that deals with administrative tasks, such as returning descriptors, and closing descriptors.
alarm condition	A notification that a fieldbus device sends to another fieldbus device or interface when it leaves or returns to a particular state.
alert	An alarm or an event.
alert function	A function that receives or acknowledges an alert.
alert objects	Objects used for reporting of alarms and events.
analog network	A network that carries signals in analog form as a continuously varying range of electrical voltage or current.
Application Programmer Interface (API)	A message format that an application uses to communicate with another entity that provides services to it.

B

basic device	A device that can communicate on the fieldbus, but cannot become the LAS.
block	A logical software unit that makes up one named copy of a block and the associated parameters its block type specifies. The values of the parameters persist from one invocation of the block to the next. It can be a resource block, transducer block, or function block residing within a VFD.
block level	The level of an NI-FBUS call that accepts a block descriptor.

C

Communication Stack	The hierarchy of layers in a layered communications model that performs the services required to interface the User Application to the Physical Layer of the fieldbus.
Connection Management	The service NI-FBUS provides by handling Virtual Communication Relationships (VCRs).
control loop	A set of connections between blocks used to perform a control algorithm.
Core Function	The basic functions that the NI-FBUS software performs, such as reading and writing block parameters.

D

Data Link Layer	The second lowest layer, layer two in the ISO seven layer model. The Data Link Layer splits data into frames to send on the physical layer, receives acknowledgment frames, and re-transmits frames if they are not received correctly. It also performs error checking to maintain a sound virtual channel to the next layer.
DCS	Distributed Control System.
DD	See <i>Device Description</i> .
descriptor	A number that NI-FBUS returns to the application. The descriptor is used to specify a target for future NI-FBUS calls.

deterministic communication	A synonym for scheduled/cyclic communication.
Device Description (DD)	A machine-readable description of all the blocks and block parameters of a device.
Device Description Language (DDL)	A formal programming language that defines the parameters of the blocks. It also defines attributes of parameters and blocks like help strings in different languages, ranges of values for parameters, and so on.
Device Description Services (DDS)	A set of functions that applications use to access Device Descriptions.
device ID	An identifier for a device that the manufacturer assigns. Device IDs must be unique to the device; no two devices can have the same device ID.
device level	An NI-FBUS call that accepts a physical device descriptor.
distributed control	Process control distributed among several devices connected by network.
driver	Device driver software installed within the operation system.
Dynamic Link Library	A library of functions and subroutines that links to an application at run time.

E

entity	A certain thing, such as a process, object, device, or event.
Ethernet	A recognized standard local area network that uses coaxial cable.

F

fieldbus	An all-digital, two-way communication system that connects control systems to instrumentation.
Fieldbus Access Sublayer (FAS)	The layer of the communication stack that provides an interface between the DLL and layer 7 of the OSI model. The FAS provides communication services such as client/server, publisher/subscriber and event distribution.

Fieldbus Foundation	The organization that developed a fieldbus network specifically based upon the work and principles of the ISA/IEC standards committees.
Fieldbus Messaging Specification (FMS)	The layer of the communication stack that defines a model for applications to interact over the fieldbus. The services FMS provides allow you to read and write information about the OD, read and write the data variables described in the OD, and perform other activities such as uploading/downloading data, and invoking programs inside a device.
Fieldbus Network Address	Location of a board or device on the fieldbus; the fieldbus node address.
FIP	Factory Instrumentation Protocol.
FOUNDATION Fieldbus	The communications network specification that the Fieldbus Foundation created.
function block	A named block consisting of one or more input, output, and contained parameters. The block performs some control function as its algorithm. function blocks are the core components you control a system with. The Fieldbus Foundation defines standard sets of function blocks. There are ten function blocks for the most basic control and I/O functions. Manufacturers can define their own function blocks.

H

hard code	To permanently establish something that should be variable in a program.
header file	A C language source file containing important definitions and function prototypes.

I

IEC Standards Committee	International Electrotechnical Commission Standards Committee. A technical standards committee which is at the same level as the ISO.
ISO	International Organization for Standardization. A technical standards organization that creates international technical standards for computers and communications. The ISO is composed of national standards organizations in 89 countries. The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) represents the United States in the ISO.

K

kernel	The set of programs in an operating system that implements basic system functions.
kernel mode	The mode in which device drivers run on Windows NT.

L

link	A group of fieldbus devices connected across a single wire pair with no intervening bridges.
Link Active Schedule	A schedule of times in the macrocycle when devices must publish their output values on the fieldbus.
Link Active Scheduler (LAS)	A device that is responsible for keeping a link operational. The LAS executes the link schedule, circulates tokens, distributes time and probes for new devices.
link identifier	A number that specifies a link.
Link Master device	A device that is capable of becoming the LAS.
link object	An object resident in a device that defines connections between function block input and output across the network. Link objects also specify trending connections.
Local Area Network	A communications network that is limited in physical spatial area for the purpose of easier connection of computers in neighboring buildings.

M

MMI (Man-Machine Interface)	High-level supervisory data acquisition and display programs.
-----------------------------	---

N

Network Management	A layer of the FOUNDATION Fieldbus communication stack that contains objects that other layers of the communication stack use, such as Data Link, FAS, and FMS. You can read and write SM and NM objects over the fieldbus using FMS Read and FMS Write services.
NI-FBUS process	The Windows NT task that implements the NI-FBUS API.
non-scheduled/acyclic communication	Communication that occurs at times that are not predetermined.
non-volatile memory	Memory that does not require electricity to hold data.

O

object	An element of an object dictionary.
Object Dictionary (OD)	A structure in a device that describes data that can be communicated on the fieldbus. The OD is a lookup table that gives information such as data type and units about a value that can be read from or written to a device.
operator acknowledgment alarm	The verification an operator performs when he or she receives a fieldbus message.
OSI Model	Open Systems Interconnect Layered Communication Model. A communications protocol standard that the ISO created. It establishes a seven-layered framework for implementing protocols. In the OSI model, control moves from one layer to the next in the following manner: control starts at the top layer in one station, moves through all protocol layers to the bottom layer, then goes over the channel to the next station and moves back up through all protocol layers.

P

parameter	One of a set of network-visible values that makes up a function block.
PC	Personal Computer.

physical device	A single device residing at a unique address on the fieldbus.
physical device tag	A user-defined name for a physical device.
Physical Layer	The layer of the communication stack that converts digital fieldbus messages from the communication stack to actual physical signals on the fieldbus transmission medium and vice versa.
PID	Proportional/Integral/Derivative. A common control function block algorithm that uses proportions, integrals, and derivatives in calculation.
poll	To repeatedly inspect a variable or function block to acquire data.

R

resource block	A block that describes general characteristics of a device, such as manufacturer and device name. Only one resource block per device is allowed.
----------------	--

S

scheduled/cyclic communications	Communication that occurs at the same time during each control cycle.
session	A communication path between an application and NI-FBUS.
session level	A category of NI-FBUS API calls that accepts a session descriptor.
static library	A library of functions/subroutines that you must link to your application as one of the final steps of compilation, as opposed to a Dynamic Link Library, which links to your application at run time.
System Management	A layer of the FOUNDATION Fieldbus communication stack that assigns addresses and physical device tags, maintains the function block Schedule for the function blocks in that device, and distributes application time. You can also locate a device or a function block tag through SM.

T

TCP/IP	Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol. The communications protocol used on the Internet.
thread	An operating system object that consists of a flow of control within a process. In some operating systems, a single process can have multiple threads, each of which can access the same data space within the process. However, each thread has its own stack and all threads can execute concurrently with one another (either on multiple processors, or by time-sharing a single processor).
Tokenizer	A program the Fieldbus Foundation provides that creates a binary form of DDL code to ship to an end user with an instrument.
transducer block	A block that is an interface to the sensing hardware in the device. It also performs the digitizing, filtering, and scaling conversions needed to present input data to function blocks, and converts output data from function blocks. Transducer blocks decouple the function blocks from the hardware details of a given device, allowing generic indication of function block input and output. Manufacturers can define their own transducer blocks.
trend	A fieldbus object that allows a device to sample a process variable periodically, then transmit a history of the values on the network.
trend function	An NI-FBUS call related to trends.

U

User Layer	The network layer of the communication stack above layer seven in the OSI. The User Layer defines blocks and objects that represent the functions and data available in a device.
------------	---

V

VCR	Virtual Communication Relationship. Preconfigured or negotiated connections between virtual Field devices on a network.
view objects	Predefined groupings of parameter sets that MMI applications use.

Virtual Field
Device (VFD)

A model for remotely viewing data described in the object dictionary.

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