



## **Travel Policy Handbook**

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **Chief Financial Officer/Assistant Secretary for Administration (CFO/ASA)**

Department Organizational Order ([DOO](#)) 10-5, *Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Secretary for Administration, Chief Financial Officer And Assistant Secretary for Administration* authorizes the CFO/ASA to serve as "agency head" under the authorities in 5 U.S.C., Chapter 57 regarding official travel, transportation, and subsistence of the Department employees and other individuals traveling on official business for the Department.

**Office of the Secretary (OS) Chief of Staff (COS) or Deputy Chief of Staff (DCOS)** The COS is responsible for approving travel authorizations and vouchers for the CFO/ASA, Secretarial Officers, Heads of Departmental Offices, and Heads of Operating Units reporting directly to the Secretary. When the COS is not available, the DCOS is also responsible for approving travel authorizations and vouchers for the above-mentioned individuals who report directly to the Secretary.

#### **Secretarial Officers and Heads of Bureaus/Operating Units**

This authority is delegated to Secretarial Officers and heads of Bureaus/Operating Units (as defined in [DOO 1-1, Mission and Organization of the Department of Commerce](#)), to authorize travel for personnel under their supervision. Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, Directors, Chief Financial Officers, Chief Administrative Officers, and other designated key senior management officials are responsible for ensuring compliance with the policies and procedures contained in this Handbook and subsequent internal guidance.

Bureau Heads must establish internal procedures to promote good stewardship of travel spending and to monitor fraud, waste, misuse, and delinquency of the travel card. Bureaus must ensure their employees receive information on how the travel program operates and how the policies affect their travel decisions. Bureaus/Operating Units will conduct their travel programs in accordance with the Department Travel Policy Handbook, the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR), Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM), Joint Travel Regulations (JTR), and the GSA SmartPay contract by understanding the rules/regulations and applying the policies effectively. If supplemental, more restrictive guidance is issued by the Bureaus, they must ensure that internal guidance does not conflict with the mandatory policies and procedures contained in the Travel Policy Handbook.

#### **Office of Financial Management (OFM)**

The Office of the Secretary (OS), Office of Financial Management (OFM) has oversight responsibilities for providing travel policy, guidance, and management of the Government Issued Travel Charge Card Program for the Department.

The Office of Financial Reporting, Internal Controls, and Travel (OFRICT) provides Department-wide policies and guidance on travel. As required by [Executive Order 13589, Section 3\(b\)](#) and [FTR Bulletin 14-08, Designation of Agency Senior Travel Officials](#), the Department has appointed the Director of OFRICT to serve as the Senior Travel Official (STO) for the Department.



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The STO responsibilities regarding travel policies include:

- Interpreting and disseminating GSA policies on official Government travel;
- Conducting oversight and ensuring compliance with guidelines and procedures set forth in this Handbook within the Bureau/Operating Units;
- Acting as a liaison with GSA and attending advisory board meetings;
- Reviewing and recommending approval for other than coach-class accommodations requests for the Office of the Secretary (OS);
- Ensuring Departmental reporting is filed timely;
- Implementing and administering the E-Gov Travel Service 2 (ETS2);
- Developing and delivering travel training classes;
- Conducting internal control reviews;
- Promoting standardization and automation of travel processes throughout the Department;
- Designating a Departmental Agency Program Coordinator (DAPC);
- Designating a Lead Federal Agency Travel Administrator (FATA); and
- Ensuring timely updates to the travel policy.

#### **Travel Management Division (TMD)**

TMD is a component of OFRICT and has the oversight of the Department's travel management responsibilities. The Director of TMD is responsible for collaborating with Bureau travel SMEs including:

- Updating the travel policy handbook;
- Updating TMD travel website;
- Promoting compliance and clarifying travel policies;
- Administering the visa/passport program;
- Managing the Departments Conference policy;
- Managing the Department's travel card program;
- Supporting the Office of the Secretary (OS) operational travel support; and
- Compiling and reporting travel data to GSA.

#### **Office of Acquisition Management (OAM)**

OAM has oversight of the Department's Charge Card Program for all lines of business (LOB). The Charge Card Program Coordinator serves as a liaison between GSA and the charge card vendor. This Office is also responsible for the annual update to the Department's Charge Card Management Plan and for consolidating the required OMB reporting.

#### **Servicing Human Resources Office (SHRO)**

The Servicing Human Resources Office (SHRO) or Workforce Management Office (WFMO) will consult with the supervisor/ manager and the Office of General Counsel (OGC) to assist the manager/supervisor to determine the appropriate disciplinary or adverse actions involving fraud, misuse, or delinquency made by employees on the travel charge card and official travel vouchers ([Reference to DAO 202-751, Discipline](#)).



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#### **Office of Inspector General (OIG)**

The OIG is responsible for conducting audits, evaluations, and investigations of the Department's programs and operations. Key program participants should report any suspicious or fraudulent activity (abuse, illegal acts, or misconduct) to the OIG in a timely manner. The OIG retains all audit and investigation authorities.

#### **Finance Office**

The servicing finance office will process travel vouchers, travel advances, perform centrally billed accounts (CBA) reconciliation processes, and assist with determining the late fees that may be payable to a traveler.

#### **Authorizing Official (AU/O)**

The AU/O reviews travel, trip arrangements, travel expenses, and travel funds obligations. These individuals must be knowledgeable of the Department's travel policies. The AU/O will limit the authorization and payment of official travel expenses to only those expenses that are necessary and most cost effective. An AU/O shall not authorize his or her own travel. The following elements must be considered when approving travel:

- Is travel necessary and required to meet the agency's mission?
- Can mission be accomplished by an alternative method such as teleconferencing or videoconferencing?
- Is the most cost-effective routing and mode of transportation being used to accomplish travel?
- Could the location or accommodations be seen as serving a personal purpose, extravagant or otherwise embarrassing to the agency in comparison to available alternatives?
- Do the travel plans include plans to take leave in conjunction with travel? Are vouchers properly prepared?
- Are amounts claimed accurate (e.g., supported by receipts)?
- Are expenses claimed authorized and allowable expenses per this Handbook or FTR?
- Are supporting documentation and receipts included with the travel claim?

#### **Approving Officials (AO)**

The AO is typically the supervisor who is responsible for following and enforcing the current travel policy. The approving official cannot approve his or her own travel. All AOs and their acting designees must be designated in writing. Under no circumstances can an AO or their designee be junior in position to the traveler unless a justification has been provided to and approved by the STO. Each Bureau/Operating Unit must submit a list of its AOs to the STO annually on October 1.

#### **Funds Certifying Officials (FCO)**

The certifying financial official's signature will serve as validation that funds are available in the account at the time the certification is made. Certifying officials are required to verify that commitments and obligations are valid and have the required documents to support the funded travel. The appropriate finance office reviews obligations and requests de-obligation of funds, depending on the transaction or policy. All FCOs and their acting designees must be designated in writing. Each Bureau/Operating Unit must submit a list of its FCOs to the STO annually on October 1.



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Finance Office Certifying Officials are bound by [31 U.S.C. 3528](#) and are responsible for:

- Illegal, improper or incorrect payments made by inaccurate or misleading certifications;
- Complete and accurate certified documents for payment;
- Errors in certified payments; and
- Payments made that are prohibited by law and illegal under the appropriation or funds involved.

### Travelers

Travelers are responsible for understanding the rules and regulations associated with official travel and are expected to understand all of items listed below. The traveler must:

- Be fiscally responsible when incurring official travel expenses;
- Ensure a travel authorization is approved prior to travel;
- Ensure all allowable expenses are authorized;
- Ensure the Trip Purpose code is accurate;
- Ensure the conference name is annotated on Travel Authorization (TA), if attending a conference;
- Ensure justifications are included in TA prior to AU/O approving the authorization;
- Use the designated Travel Management Center (TMC) or the E-Gov Travel Service 2 (ETS2) to make all authorized travel arrangements;
- Use the E-Gov Travel Service 2 (ETS2) when available;
- Ensure travel arrangements are made as soon as practicable after plans are known and to seek to obtain the best cost;
- Ensure any requests for reasonable accommodation are vetted through the Reasonable Accommodation Coordinator (RAC) for the Bureau;
- Ensure the accuracy of the TA, itinerary and voucher;
- Ensure all cancellations are made as soon as practicable after travel plans have been cancelled;
- Submit a properly executed travel voucher within five working days after completion of travel or 30 days if on a long-term TDY assignment;
- Obtain and submit proper receipts for all lodging, air, rail, rental cars and any travel related expense that exceeds \$75;
- Use the Contract City Pair fares, unless an exception applies;
- Obtain a Government-issued Travel Card;
- Use the Government Travel Card for all official expenses, unless exempted;
- Ensure travel charge card bill is paid on time (regardless if reimbursed); and
- Take required travel training.