

TRAVEL FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Why is it mandatory for my agency to use the contracted travel agency?

Controlled transaction cost is one reason. Also, enforcement of the terms and conditions of the contract is the only way to guarantee continued interest to bid from the airlines. Another important issue is known agents that can be reached when a change is needed or problems occur. One central travel agency also helps with tracking usage for greater buying power.

2. Can I drive instead of flying to my meeting?

The State's preferred method for traveling out of state is flying. Flying allows you to be more refreshed for your meeting or seminar. If someone chooses to drive, the state will only pay actual mileage up to the price of a lowest logical airfare. Meals and lodging would be paid only for the dates and times which would have been required when flying.

3. Can I book an airline ticket on the Internet? Or can I book directly by calling my airline?

No. All reservations and ticketing must be booked through the State's contracted travel agency. If you find a lower rate on the internet, you should contact the travel agency with the information to see if they are able to purchase at the same price. If they are not able to purchase that exact flight, many times they are at least able to match the fare.

4. What are the procedures to purchase airfare from outside of the contracted travel agency?

In order to purchase airfare outside of the contracted travel agency, you must submit your lower quote to the agency and get them to verify and comment as to they cannot match or beat the requested flight information. Once received, this package must be sent to the State Travel Office for final approval. The office will not consider bypassing the travel agency for any fares less than \$50.00 difference, not including fees and taxes.

5. Why would I be able to find a lower price in which the travel agency cannot quote?

Although you may be able to find a cheaper internet price which the contracted travel agency cannot match, these fares generally come with different terms and conditions that may increase the cost to the State and will not have the same benefits that are currently available through the contracted travel agency. Also, keep in mind that State contracted airfares are fully refundable, except for the transaction fee, which saves the State in situation where travel may be changed or cancelled.

6. What are the payment method options for the state contracted fares? Can personal credit cards be used?

An employee's corporate travel card or agency CBA (Controlled Billed Accounts) **must be used to purchase contract airfare. This is a mandatory requirement by the airlines in order to continue to receive discounted, non-penalty state contract airline tickets.** An employee's corporate travel card may also be used to purchase lowest logical airfare tickets and other travel related expenses such as food and lodging, but it is not mandatory.

7. What if I want to travel to a city not listed on the Airfare Contract?

The State tries to solicit firm airfare for all known, frequently visited cities. In some cases the airlines do not bid for various reasons. You should work with the State's contract travel agency to make sure you receive the lowest logical rate. If there is a location you would like this office to try to add to our airfare contract for future bids, please notify us prior to April of each year.

8. Why is it that all of the major airlines are not on the Airfare Contract?

Not all airlines submit bids. Contracts are always awarded to the lowest responsible bidder.

9. If an employee be reimbursed for a lowest logical and non-refundable ticket if they trip is cancelled?

It is your Department Head's decision if this employee is reimbursed. However, it would only be considered if cancelled for business reasons or out of the employee's control, not for personal reasons.

10. What is the difference between Unrestricted Contract Price and Limited Capacity Prices?

Unrestricted Contract Price is last seat availability, which means as long as there is a seat left, we can get it and it is fully refundable.

Limited Capacity Contract Price is still refundable; however, if plane is filling fast, airline could stop offering the contract price at any point.

11. What needs to be done for someone to be approved as an "authorized person"?

In order for someone to be approved as an authorized person, a letter must be written to the commissioner requesting this approval including the business case as to why this needs to be done.

12. How would I pay for a contractor or non-state employee, who has been approved as an authorized person, airfare?

If your agency determines and receives approval to pay airfare for an approved, authorized person, then your agency's CBA must be used.

13. What can be I use as my State ID?

A State ID could be a state picture ID, a business card or your itinerary, which states at the bottom “for official state business”.

14. Why is my airfare ticket price higher than what was quoted?

When an agent quotes an airfare, whether it be state contract or lowest logical, this is the airline price. Added to the is price is the transaction fee, an 8% tax, airport fees, which vary from airport to airport and fuel charges, which vary from airline and destination. All charges are allowed for reimbursement on top of the originally quoted airfare cost.

15. What is required for group travel or a bus and air charters?

With all of the travel listed above, an agency must take at least three (3) quotes. If the agency chooses to, they may Gulf South Travel who will in turn take the quotes for you as well as handle your arrangement. However, Gulf South Travel is allowed to handle coach travel only and is not mandatory.

16. What is a “special meal” noted in section 1509 of PPM49?

Special meals are only allowed when NOT in travel status, but in the best interest of the State/Agency to serve a meal. Approval from the Commissioner which documents the reason and cost is required, except for areas where delegation has been given to department heads. Such delegations could include a working meeting of departmental staff with the need to keep staff together through lunch. The working meeting could not be routine or daily and must be in accordance with rates used for Tier 1 meals.