



Travel Charge Card Program Handbook

U.S. Department of Commerce

October 2016

**Office of Financial Management
Office of Administrative Programs
Travel Management Division, 202-482-1818**

Version History

Version Number	Date	Description of Changes
1.0	April 2012	Canceled and reissued under 2.0
2.0	September 2015	
3.0	March 2016	
4.0	October 2016	

Disclaimer: This Travel Charge Card Handbook (Handbook) is intended to supplement, not replace the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR), and the sections do not align with the FTR.

This Handbook is designed to help effectively manage the Travel Charge Card Program across the Department of Commerce (DOC). It provides detailed information on the Department’s policies as it pertains to the compliance, oversight, execution, and maintenance of the Government Travel Charge Card (GTCC) program.

Your comments are vital to the success and sustainment of the program; please send them to us at OFM-DOCTravelCardProgram@doc.gov.

In addition, you can find answers to [frequently asked questions \(FAQ\)](#) on the OFM Webpage. This Handbook will be reviewed for updates on an annual basis and in conjunction with the Charge Card Management Plan. Any changes made to the Handbook are effective on the date the change was published or notification issued.

This PDF meets Section 508 compliance.

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SECTION 1 – PROGRAM MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW

The Department of Commerce (DOC) Travel Charge Card Program Handbook is the single authoritative reference for the management of the Department's travel card program. It outlines the policies and procedures governing the issuance and use of the Government travel charge card for all Departmental employees. Likewise, it summarizes the roles and responsibilities of the program participants.

The Travel Charge Card Program Handbook implements and supplements those portions of the [Federal Travel Regulation \(FTR\)](#) that pertain to the use of the travel card for the payment of temporary and permanent change of station travel-related expenses. The [Office of Management and Budget \(OMB\) Circular A-123, Appendix B dated January 15, 2009](#), establishes standard requirements and practices for improving the management of the travel charge card program that are incorporated within this Handbook. It also prescribes policies and procedures regarding internal controls that reduce the risk of fraud, waste, and abuse in the Government charge card program.

The terms “vendor” or “bank” are used interchangeably to indicate the charge card provider in this Handbook. The vendor for the Department’s travel charge card program partners with program participants to provide the following services:

- Evaluates applications and determines [credit worthiness](#)
- Establishes accounts and distributes travel cards
- Accepts transactions and payments from users and merchants
- Provides a web-based application process
- Provides a web-based product for account management (e.g., [electronic access](#), reports, credit limits)

1.1 Background

The [Travel and Transportation Reform Act \(TTRA\) of 1998](#) mandates that Federal employees use the travel charge card to pay for all expenses incidental to official Government travel, unless exempted, and to reimburse employees within 30 calendar days after employees submit a proper voucher to their accounting service provider. The Government Travel Charge Card (GTCC) Program was created by the General Services Administration (GSA), under the SmartPay® Master Contract, as a travel and transportation payment and expense control system. The [FTR](#) requires employees to use the Government contractor-issued travel charge card for official travel expenses unless an [exemption](#) has been granted.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this Handbook is to implement and provide the Department Bureau/Operating Units with policies and procedures for the management of the travel card program as required by the [FTR](#), [41 Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) Chapter 301-51](#) and [OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B – Improving the Management of Government Charge Card Programs](#).

In addition, the GTCC program (GSA SmartPay® 2) is intended to facilitate and standardize travel card usage by Federal travelers in a safe, effective, and convenient method to reimburse Federal travelers for expenses incidental to official travel.

1.3 Scope

The Travel Charge Card Program Handbook is presented in terms of its authority, applicability, implementation, and supplementation of the current government-wide charge card program requirements and guidance issued by the GSA and OMB.

The content applies to all Department employees executing official travel on behalf of the Department. This handbook highlights important program elements that should be used in the management of the Travel Charge Card Program. According to [Department Administrative Order \(DAO\) 200-0: Department of Commerce Handbooks and Manuals](#), this Handbook has the status and effect of a DAO.

1.4 Rescission

This Handbook rescinds all previously issued versions of the DOC Travel Card Handbook (2012) and all subsequent bulletins. It does not negate current applicable collective bargaining agreements.

1.5 Authorities and References

The complete list of authorities and references is located at [Appendix A](#).

1.6 Acronyms and Definitions

The complete list of acronyms and definitions is located at [Appendix B](#).

1.7 Link to Travel Charge Card Handbook, Associated Documents, and Forms

A link to the soft copy (electronic) of this Handbook, associated documents, and forms can be found at [Travel Card Handbook and Documents](#).

SECTION 2 – ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This section provides guidance on the roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities of key personnel involved with the administration of the Department Travel Charge Card Program.

2.1. Chief Financial Officer/Assistant Secretary for Administration (CFO/ASA)

The CFO/ASA oversees all financial management activities for the Department, as outlined by the [Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990](#), and provides policies on all financial management activities for the Department. The CFO/ASA, in conjunction with the Office of Financial Management, will establish internal controls to promote the use of the travel card and to protect against fraud, waste, and abuse.

2.2 Office of Financial Management (OFM)

The Office of the Secretary (OS), Office of Financial Management (OFM) is accountable for ensuring program management responsibilities are accomplished across the Department and has oversight responsibilities for providing travel policy, guidance, and management of the Travel Charge Card Program.

2.3 Office of Administrative Programs (OAP)

OAP provides Department-wide policies and guidance on travel. As required by [Executive Order 13589](#), Department has appointed the Director of OAP to serve as the Senior Travel Official (STO) for the Department. The STO is responsible for developing and implementing policies and controls to ensure efficient spending on travel and conference-related activities.

OAP's mission regarding the Travel Charge Card Program includes:

- Issuing and interpreting policies and procedures on the use of the travel card;
- Monitoring Bureau/Operating Unit compliance with guidelines and procedures set forth in this Handbook;
- Acting as a liaison with GSA;
- Ensuring Departmental reporting and data administration;
- Developing and delivering travel card training classes (i.e., CLC);
- Conducting management internal control reviews;
- Ensuring program development and operations refinement;
- Promoting standardization and automation of the program throughout the Department; and
- Ensuring timely updates to this Handbook.

2.3.1 Travel Management Division (TMD)

TMD is a component of OAP and has the oversight of the Department's travel charge card program. TMD acts as liaison to the travel card vendor, bureau program coordinators, and Office of Acquisition Management's Charge Card Program Coordinator.

If program participants have questions or need clarification regarding this Handbook, they should address them to their servicing [Agency Program Coordinator \(APC\)/Organization](#)

[Program Coordinator \(OPC\)](#) who will forward the information to OFM, DOC Travel Card Email and the Director of the Travel Management Division (TMD) for review.

2.4 Heads of Bureaus/Designees

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.

2.5 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.

2.6 Servicing Human Resource Office (SHRO)

The Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) is responsible for developing the Department's policies regarding discipline and adverse action. 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 in determining the appropriate disciplinary or adverse actions involving travel charge cards ([Reference to DAO 202-751, Discipline](#)).

2.7 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.

2.8 Finance Office

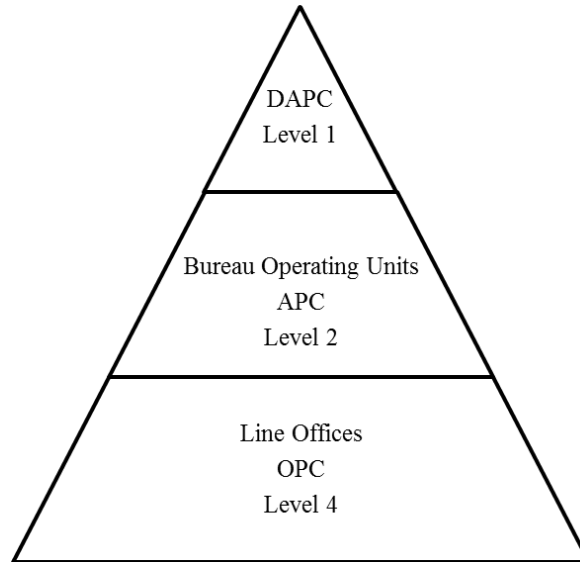
The servicing finance office will assist with determination of late fees that may be payable to a traveler under the [Travel and Transportation Reform Act](#) and will facilitate the [administrative offset](#) process. Additionally, they will process travel vouchers, manage split disbursements (if applicable), and CBA [reconciliation](#) processes.

2.9 Program Coordinators (PCs)

Travel card program coordinators will be responsible for the management of the charge card program within their respective bureaus. PCs will monitor and oversee internal controls and execute day-to-day management of the travel card program. They report the status of their program to the designated accountable official and ensure the Bureau is in compliance with the Department Travel Card Program Handbook, the card vendor, and GSA SmartPay® guidance. Contractors may not be designated as a Departmental Agency Program Coordinator (DAPC)/APC or OPC. See [6.3.4](#) for a detailed list of APC activities and duties.

2.9.1 Hierarchy Levels and Structure

Travel cardholder hierarchies are essential to the management of travel card accounts, reporting, and access purposes. Hierarchies are determined by each agency and are often associated with billing and organizational structures and vary from agency to agency as each has unique requirements. Within the Department, there are three hierarchy levels used for the travel card as noted below.



Level 3 is not used by program participants. Program coordinators are responsible for ensuring that the hierarchy structure is accurate, account holders are aligned to the proper organization, and information on accounts are kept up to date.

2.9.2 Department Agency Program Coordinator (DAPC) – Level 1

The DAPC is an individual appointed, in writing, by the Department to serve as the Department-wide focal point for management, oversight, and program execution in accordance with the GSA SmartPay® and OMB guidance and is the primary point of contact for providing support services to the Department Bureaus/Operating Units.

The Department DAPC is located within the [Travel Management Division](#) of the [Office of Administrative Programs](#).

2.9.3 Agency Program Coordinators (APCs) – Level 2

APCs are appointed in writing by bureaus/operating units to oversee travel card internal controls; execute day-to-day management of the travel card program; report the status of the program to the designated accountable official; and ensure the Bureau is in compliance with the Department Travel Card Program Handbook, the card vendor, and GSA SmartPay® guidance. APCs also provide oversight for Level 4 Organization Program Coordinators (OPCs). Contractors may not be designated as an APC. See [6.3.2](#) and [6.3.4](#) for a detailed list of APC activities and duties.

2.9.4 Organization Program Coordinators (OPCs) – Level 4

The OPC is an individual serving as the local focal point for managing, establishing, maintaining, and closing accounts and provides oversight of the day-to-day functions for the travel card program at the staff/line office, station, or unit level. See [6.3.3](#) and [6.3.4](#) for a list of activities and duties.

2.10 Centrally Billed Account (CBA) Manager

The CBA Manager oversees the day-to-day management and reconciliation of the respective CBA accounts. Contractors are not authorized to certify CBAs for payment.

2.11 Approving Officials (AO)/Supervisors

These key officials are appointed in writing by the designated official within the organization ([sample appointment letter](#)) and are responsible for ensuring travel cardholders follow all guidance and procedures for using the travel card. The AO is typically the cardholder's supervisor. AO/supervisor responsibilities are detailed in [6.2](#).

2.12 Individually Billed Account Cardholder (IBA CH)

The CH is responsible for complying with all Travel Card Program regulations, policies, and guidance contained in this Handbook, internal guidance, vendor agreements, and applicable [authorities](#). Cardholders must use the travel card for all expenses incidental to official travel, unless [exempted](#). The cardholder is responsible for payment of any balance of undisputed charges to the travel card, regardless of whether they have been reimbursed for travel. IBA cardholder responsibilities are detailed in [Section 4](#).

2.13 Centrally Billed Account (CBA) Accountholders (AH)

These accountholders procure transportation and other services for their respective bureaus. The account may be for transportation only, all travel-related expenses, or special circumstances. The designated accountable official must verify/certify invoices to the designated finance office. CBA account responsibilities are detailed in [Section 5](#).

2.14 Government Credit Card Vendor

The Bank that issues the travel card used by authorized Department employees to pay for official travel expenses.

SECTION 3 – DEPARTMENTAL GENERAL POLICY

3.1 Mandatory Use of the Travel Card

The [Travel and Transportation Reform Act \(TTRA\)](#) requires the Government travel card be used by the U.S. Government personnel to pay for costs incidental to official government travel, unless exempt or prohibited. Travel card use is mandatory for all Department employees who:

- Travel five or more times per year for official business, unless exempted; and
- Are infrequent travelers (travel less than five times per year) who have either requested to or have been required to obtain a travel card to meet mission requirements.

Failure to use the card will not prevent a traveler from being reimbursed for appropriate travel expenses; however, the cardholder may be subject to disciplinary or adverse actions.

3.2 Prohibited Use and/or Possession of the Department IBA Travel Card

The use and/or possession of a Department IBA travel card is prohibited for the category of individuals listed below (if available, alternative options are noted):

- Contractors
- Foreign Service Nationals/Locally-Engaged Staff (LES)
- Volunteers
- Invitational travelers (centrally billed accounts (CBAs) may be used to cover travel expenses)
- Individuals serving under an Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) (e.g., assignment) to the Department (these individuals may work with his/her “home” agency to apply for a travel card)

3.3 Exemptions from Mandatory Use of the IBA Travel Card

The Department exempts the following employees from mandatory use of the travel card:

- Infrequent travelers, unless
 - required by the Bureau/Operating Unit to apply for a travel card to meet mission requirements, or
 - the individual has applied for and received an IBA travel card, or
- New appointees or employees who have a pending travel card application;
- Intermittent, seasonal, or temporary (less than six months) employees with a limited appointment that do not justify issuance of a travel card;
- Employees whose card has been reported lost, stolen, or damaged and has not received a replacement card;
- Foreign service officers assigned to a location outside the United States;
- Employees traveling in countries where the financial infrastructure does not support the use of the travel card;
- Employees whose travel card is denied or whose travel card has been canceled or suspended by the card vendor;
- Employees with disabilities that prevent the use of the travel card;

- Employees designated as emergency response or continuity of operations (COOP) team members; or
- Employees whose use of the travel card would compromise a law enforcement activity.

NOTE: Requests for exemption for other reasons must be submitted by the respective Bureau/Operating head to the Senior Travel Official (STO). Upon approval, the STO will notify the GSA Administrator of all exemptions granted by the Department.

3.3.1 Payment Methods for Official Travel Expenses When Exemption from Mandatory Use is Authorized

Employees granted an exemption from the mandatory use of the travel card may use personal funds, including cash or a personal charge card. The Department will reimburse travelers for valid official travel expenses by an electronic funds transfer or check.

City Pair airline participants are not required to accept these methods of payments for city pair fares and may not allow a traveler to use the Government contract fare. The government-issued charge cards have a unique identifier indicating it is an official travel card eligible for City Pair fares and tax exemptions. Centrally billed accounts (CBAs) should be used to procure all common carrier transportation in order to meet the City Pair requirements.

3.4 Zero Tolerance Policy

The Department has a Zero Tolerance Policy for travel card misuse, abuse, and delinquency. The underlying objective of the Department Zero Tolerance Policy is to deter, eliminate, and understand the degree of misuse and abuse, while ensuring the integrity and accountability of the travel card program. The policy is a measuring tool for imposing disciplinary procedures on any Department employee who misuses or abuses the travel card and consistent with the disciplinary actions suggested by Human Resources (HR).

Appropriate use of the travel card reduces the need to cancel charging privileges, eliminates the administrative burden of taking action against employees, and preserves the reputation of the Department and its employees.

Misuse can include, but is not limited to:

- Cash withdrawals from an ATM during non-travel periods, including prior to three days before or when the travel is completed;
- Cash withdrawals not related to official travel;
- Use within the local duty station, with the exception of ATM withdrawal within three days of official travel;
- Personal expenses; or
- Intentionally not paying undisputed charges in a timely manner, whether or not reimbursed by the agency.

3.5 Rebates

The Department receives rebates for travel card usage and timely payments. The Department's goal is to maximize the rebates by ensuring maximum card usage. To the greatest extent possible, travelers should use the travel charge card to pay for appropriate travel expenses. Cash advances, ATM withdrawals do not provide rebates to the Department.

3.6 Tax Exempt States and Territories

[Some states and U.S. territories also provide tax exemptions](#) for individually billed account (IBA) travel card accounts; several states may require a tax-exemption form be completed. Centrally billed accounts (CBAs) are exempted from state taxes in every state and require a form in only two states.

3.7 Chip and PIN-Enabled Travel Cards

Executive Order 13681, October 17, 2014, directed agencies to implement enhanced security features, including Chip and PIN technology. Newly issued travel cards have an embedded microprocessor chip that encrypts transaction data differently for each purchase. The cards are inserted—not swiped—into a chip-enabled merchant terminal to process a transaction.

Chip and PIN-enabled travel cards can also be used for magnetic-strip swipe transactions. For Chip and PIN transactions, cardholders will complete sales based on responses from the merchant's terminal (by either signing a receipt, no signature, or entering the PIN). Low-value transactions at certain merchants may not require a signature or PIN. Cardholders who receive the new Chip and PIN-enabled cards should cut up or shred his/her existing card and use only the new Chip and PIN card.

3.8 Merchant Category Codes (MCCs) and MCC Override

Merchants worldwide who accept travel cards are registered in various business categories; an MCC is a numerical identifier assigned by the bank for classification of products and services. Some MCCs are blocked to prevent card misuse.

The DAPC and APCs have authority to override restricted MCCs for authorized travel expenses but are required to [log](#) and report overrides quarterly.

3.9 Data Mining

This is a web-based suite of applications that rely on rules-based technology. The process is designed to detect and reveal relationship behaviors between transactions. Suspicious transactions can be identified by distinct characteristics based on custom or ad hoc system rules. These rules are based on best practices and are in compliance with [OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B](#). The Department has a data mining product through MasterCard called Expert Monitoring System (EMS). This product is available for use by the Program Coordinators to monitor cardholders' activities. The Department is pursuing other data mining options; this subsection will be updated when a product decision has been announced.

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SECTION 4 – INDIVIDUALLY BILLED ACCOUNT (IBA) TRAVEL CARD

4.1 Mandatory Use of the Travel Card

As outlined in [Section 3.1](#) thru [3.3](#), the [Travel and Transportation Reform Act \(TTRA\)](#) requires the Government travel card be used by the U.S. Government personnel to pay for costs incidental to official government travel, unless exempt or prohibited.

The IBA travel card is issued to a Department employee to pay for the employee's official, travel-related expenses while in a temporary duty (TDY) or permanent change of station (PCS)—relocation—status. IBA cardholders (CHs) are responsible for complying with all travel card program regulations, policies, and guidance contained in this Handbook and other applicable authorities.

4.2 Applying for an IBA Travel Card

New employees who are expected to travel on official business five or more times per year and infrequent travelers required by his/her Bureau/Operating Unit to have a travel card to meet mission requirements are required to apply for a travel card within 30 days of their appointment. Staff who are appointed as a member of an emergency response COOP team are encouraged to apply for a travel card; it is not a mandatory requirement. Current employees should apply for a travel card no later than 15 days prior to traveling.

New employees who have delinquent account balances from a previous Government charge card will be required to satisfy their existing obligation before a new card may be issued.

Requirements for obtaining a travel card include completing an [application](#), GSA on-line training course, and the Department's Statement of Understanding as well as undergoing a credit worthiness assessment completed by the travel card vendor.

4.2.1 On-Line or Paper Application Process

Routine applications – Employees must apply for the travel card on-line using JPMC's Travel Card [Commercial Card On-line Enrollment](#) (Account Center) system. Employees will use the on-line applications and [instructions](#) provided by their respective APC/OPC to ensure the applicant is using the correct ID and process within each Bureau/Operating Unit. Additional information can be found in the [On-line Enrollment User Guide](#). No application will be processed without a properly completed application, signed Statement of Understanding (SOU), and the cardholder training certificate.

Expedite/Rush Applications – Rush applications require a paper application submission and cannot be delivered to a P.O. Box address. This application process should be used for employees who are scheduled to travel within five business days. When an expedited application is necessary, the applicant must notify his/her approving official/supervisor and the Bureau/Operating Unit A/OPC.

Replacement Cards – APCs will assist cardholders with obtaining a replacement card. Emergency cards are normally shipped within 24 hours. These cards may or may not be shipped to the traveler in an active state. The cardholder is responsible for notifying the travel card vendor of receipt of the card. There are two types of emergency cards issued:

- Block and Reissue – replacement cards are not activated when sent to the cardholder
- Damaged card – cards are sent activated to the cardholder

4.2.2 Training for IBA Travel Cardholders

[OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B, Improving the Management of the Government Charge Card Programs, Chapter 3](#), requires agencies to provide initial and refresher training (every three years) for all charge card management programs.

The Department travel card applicants must complete [GSA's online Travel Charge Card Training Course](#). Upon successful completion, the applicant will receive a certificate which must be submitted to his/her approving official/supervisor and A/OPC.

4.2.3 Statement of Understanding (SOU) for IBA Travel Cardholders

IBA travel card applicants must complete and submit the SOU. Completion of the SOU certifies the applicant has read/understands the travel card policy and procedures in the Department Travel Card Program Handbook, agrees to abide by the instructions issued by the Department pertaining to all rules and regulations with respect to the GTCC, understands that failure to abide by the rules or otherwise misuse the travel card may result in disciplinary and/or adverse actions, and acknowledges the right of the travel card vendor and/or the APC to revoke or suspend travel card privileges for failure to abide by the terms of the SOU agreement or the cardholder agreement with the travel card vendor.

4.2.4 Credit Worthiness Assessment

[OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B, Chapter 6](#), requires all Federal agencies to evaluate the credit worthiness of all new travel card applicants prior to the issuance of cards in order to mitigate the risk of fraud, misuse, and abuse of the Government travel card program. The Department requires the travel card vendor to conduct all credit worthiness checks for new applicants. Credit checks will not adversely affect an employee's credit score. Credit scores will be kept confidential by the vendor and are never provided to the servicing APC/OPC. The issuance and credit limits on the travel card will not be reported to credit bureaus. The charge card vendor checks the applicant's credit score to determine if the minimum requirements are met to issue a [standard \(non-restricted\)](#) or [restricted card](#).

NOTE: The Department policy requires that employees transferring from another Government agency must apply for a new travel card and this application may include a new credit worthiness review. For more information on credit worthiness checks conducted by the charge card vendor, please visit:

http://www.osec.doc.gov/ofm/OAP/TMD/Documents/JP%20Morgan_Creditworthiness_%20FAQ_%20Sheet.pdf

4.2.4.1 Standard (Non-Restricted) IBA Travel Card

The standard (or non-restricted) IBA travel card is issued to an applicant who met the qualifying credit score (660+) as determined by the issuing bank. The Department has set the credit limit for this card type at \$5,000.

4.2.4.2 Restricted IBA Travel Card

The restricted IBA travel card is issued to an applicant who meets the qualifying credit score (500-659) as determined by the issuing bank or to a first-time applicant who either declined providing consent for a credit worthiness check or does not have a credit history after undergoing an alternative credit worthiness assessment ([OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B, Chapter 6, paragraph 6.4](#)). The credit limit on this card is \$2,500.

4.3 IBA Travel Card Processing and Delivery

The average processing time between submitting a properly prepared application and receiving a card may take up to ten business days. Cards that need to be expedited can be shipped via FedEx second-day delivery. Any expedited application received by 1:00 pm eastern standard time will be processed that same day, unless it is a Friday; then it will be processed the following Monday. If the application is received after that time, it will be processed the following business day. To ensure proper management controls, any new card that has not been verified as received within 60 days, will be closed.

For standard (non-restricted) delivery, a new cardholder will receive:

- A card transmittal mailer that includes the new card;
- Charge card vendor's Cardholder Agreement;
- Schedule of Fees;
- An activation sticker located on the front of the card that explains how to activate the new card; and
- An ATM PIN letter with the initial PIN and explanation of how to customize the PIN will arrive approximately four days later, if applicable.

Upon receiving the card, the cardholder must activate the card by following the instructions on the front of the card, and read and maintain the Cardholder Agreement.

4.4 Electronic Access System (EAS) for IBA Travel Cardholders

EAS is the travel card vendor's [web-based system](#), PaymentNet, which allows IBA travel CHs to update account information (e.g., name, address, and email address changes), file disputes, and make payments.

IBA travel CHs will be provided instructions by his/her A/OPC on how to access the EAS; users may also want to bookmark the [Logging In Quick Reference Card](#).

4.4.1 Registering Electronic Devices for EAS Access

The travel card vendor has added additional security measures to further strengthen the protection of travel card data. Every user will be required to register his/her (government-owned and/or personal) electronic device(s) in order to use those device(s) to access the EAS. Program participants must have a valid Department email addresses tied to the UserID. The registration process should be a one-time process unless something changes on the User's registered devices.

4.5 Using the IBA Travel Card

The IBA is an account issued to a Department employee to pay for official travel-related expenses. It is not for personal use and can only be used by the cardholder. The only allowable exception for using the IBA travel card for others is when the CH is in a permanent change of station (PCS)—relocation—status, and the travel card may also include the expenses of family members traveling with the cardholder.

A cardholder is responsible for exercising the same care for incurring expenses that a prudent person would follow if traveling on personal business, to include:

- Not giving his/her account number or expiration date to anyone, except a travel service provider for official government travel.
- Not allowing others to store the account number or retain a copy of the travel card.

4.5.1 Travel Authorization/Order and Travel Vouchers

As a general rule, travelers must have an approved travel authorization or order (see [FTR §301-2.1](#) and [FTR §301-2.5](#) for exceptions) before departing on official government travel. All travel authorizations/orders (Special Provisions/Remarks section) must contain the following statements:

- “According to the TTRA, the contractor-issued travel card will be used by all Government employees to pay for official travel unless specifically exempt.”
 - If the employee or circumstances of the trip exempt use of contractor-issued travel card, use “The employee is exempted from using the travel card.”
- “[Cash advances](#) are authorized for expenses that cannot be placed on the travel card.”
 - The travel order/authorization must also contain the amount of authorized cash withdrawal.

Additionally, if an ATM withdrawal cannot be obtained using the contractor-issued travel card, a written justification must be noted on the travel authorization/order (refer to Section 3 in the Department’s Travel Policy for more information).

Travelers are required to submit a travel voucher to the appropriate servicing finance office within five working days after the completion of travel, or at least every 30 days or sooner if on extended travel.

4.5.2 Payments to the Travel Card Vendor

An IBA travel cardholder is required to pay his/her account in full upon receipt of his/her travel card statement but no later than 30 calendar days from the closing date on the statement in which the charge(s) appeared, regardless of whether or not the cardholder has been reimbursed by the agency.

4.5.3 Allowed, Limited, and Prohibited Travel Expenses

[Appendix C](#) provides a table of allowed, limited, and prohibited travel expenses. If a traveler has questions about the appropriateness of an expense, he/she should contact their Travel Office for clarification before the expenditure is made.

4.5.3.1 Limited Allowable Travel Expenses

4.5.3.1.1 Conference Registration Fees

The [Department of Commerce's purchase card policy](#) prohibits any travel-related items from being purchased with a purchase card. A conference registration fee that includes meals and/or lodging cannot be placed on the purchase card. However, if the traveler does not have a travel card, then the purchase card may be used to pay for conference registration fees that include travel-related expenses if the cardholder meets all of the following criteria:

- The conference is not government-sponsored;
- Meals cannot be separated from the registration fee; and
- The Department has determined it is essential for the employee to attend.

The Department has not authorized travel card use for local travel, including payment of conference registration fees within the cardholder's local duty station. When possible and if applicable, SF-182, Training Authorization, should be used to pay for local conferences.

When it is unclear which charge card is the appropriate method of payment, when appropriation authorities need clarification, or when a conference is being held within the local area, the Office of General Counsel should be consulted. For additional resources, refer to the [OGC FAQs](#).

4.5.3.1.2 Automated Tell Machine (ATM Withdrawals)

Employees who participate in the travel charge card program should, to the maximum extent possible, utilize the travel card to pay for expenses connected with official travel (e.g., lodging, meals, car rentals, etc.). For appropriate travel expenses that cannot be charged using the travel card IBA, ATM cash withdrawals are authorized. Withdrawals for any purpose other than official travel are strictly prohibited.

Travel authorizations/orders (Special Provisions/Remarks section) must state the amount of cash withdrawal authorized for the trip. The ATM cash withdrawal may not be made more than three days in advance of the departure date and no later than the last day of the official travel; travelers should retain receipts for all cash withdrawal expenses.

4.5.3.1.2.1 ATM Cash Withdrawal Limits

Travel card ATM cash advance withdrawals are set, by default, at 20% of the card's credit limit; e.g., \$1,000 for the standard/non-restricted \$5,000 travel card and \$500 for the restricted \$2,500 travel card.

Additionally, travel card cash advances are limited to 80 percent of the estimated cash expenses for a trip; e.g., if the estimated cash expenses for a trip are \$1,000, the cash advance is limited to \$800. In a case of financial hardship, the approving official may approve up to 100% of estimated cash expenses.

4.5.3.1.2.2 Exemptions to ATM Cash Withdrawal Limitations

Certain travel situations may preclude the use of the travel card to purchase transportation, lodging, car rental, or other major expenses that ordinarily would be chargeable. This may

happen in remote locations within the Continental United States (CONUS) or in foreign countries where establishments may not accept the travel card.

In these instances, APCs may increase the amount of ATM cash withdrawal limits. The traveler's direct supervisor or designee must approve the exception and a written justification for increasing the cash withdrawal limit must be included in the travel authorization/order.

4.5.3.1.2.3 ATM Fees

The travel card vendor will charge a transaction fee for any ATM transaction. In addition, a service fee may be assessed by the ATM owner. These fees are reimbursable expenses for official travel and should be claimed in the travel voucher.

Claims for ATM fees will be disallowed in the following circumstances:

- Cash withdrawals are not supported by a properly approved travel authorization/order.
- Cash withdrawals exceed the amount approved on the travel authorization/order for cash withdrawal.
- Cash withdrawals are made earlier than three days before the official departure date or after the last day of travel.
- The fee exceeds the authorized percentage designated in the [GSA SmartPay Contract](#).
- Use of a personal card instead of the Government travel card, if the traveler has been issued a Government travel card.
- Any transaction/service fees incurred from unauthorized ATM use.

4.5.3.1.3 Surcharges

As a result of a settlement, merchants may be permitted to apply surcharges to charge card transactions. The Department recommends cardholders consider alternatives that do not apply surcharges.

- Surcharges may not be applied to debit cards, prepaid cards, or cash transactions
- Cardholders are required to be notified in advance of a transaction, should a merchant apply a surcharge
- Merchants must include the surcharge fee on the receipt(s)

[Surcharges](#) have been authorized as a reimbursable expense while on official travel for appropriate expenditures. The following states do not allow or limit surcharges: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, Texas, and Utah. Cardholders who receive a surcharge or a check out fee in any of these mentioned states should report the merchant to the state attorney general's office.

4.6 Disputing A Charge(s)

Cardholders are responsible for reporting a disputed charge(s) to the vendor by phone (telephone number located on the back of the card), by [EAS](#), or by email:

ccscolumbusdisputes@chase.com) immediately—in no case later than 90 days from the date the transaction was charged. The report must include:

- Cardholder name as it appears on the travel card
- Account number
- Reference number of the disputed charge(s)
- Establishment where charge was incurred
- Amount of charge

The cardholder will also sign an affidavit stating he/she did not make the charge.

The cardholder will be held liable for disputed charges not reported within the 90-day reporting window or included in the signed affidavit.

4.7 Delinquent Accounts

Cardholders must comply with the terms and conditions of the vendor's cardholder agreement and other authorities and references, including the timely payment of account balances. When a cardholder signs, activates, or uses his/her travel card, he/she agrees to comply with the vendor's cardholder agreement. Under the terms of the vendor's agreement, payment is due to the bank by the payment due date specified in the cardholder's statement of account.

The vendor will levy a 2.5% late fee each month on the entire undisputed amount until payment has been received.

4.7.1 Past Due IBA Accounts

A travel card account is considered past due when payment on undisputed transactions has not been received within 31 calendar days past the statement date on which a charge(s) appeared. Any payment received by the vendor for a past due bill should be applied first to the oldest past due amount. When the delinquency reaches 45 calendar days past due, the account is in pre-suspension.

4.7.2 Suspending an IBA Account

A travel cardholder's account will be suspended, by the vendor, from charging privileges when payment is not received within 61 calendar days past the statement date. APCs/OPCs are responsible for monitoring all monthly suspension and cancellation reports and notifying the employee, employee's supervisor, and the servicing HRO/WFMO whenever an account is delinquent (undisputed balance unpaid for 61 days or more). The 61 days is also considered pre-cancellation. Suspended accounts are in direct violation of standards and conduct per [DAO 202-751](#), Discipline.

4.7.3 Cancelling an IBA Account

The vendor will cancel a travel card account when:

- Payment is not received by the Vendor within 121 calendar days from the billing date on the statement.
- An account is suspended two times during a 12-month period and becomes past due again.
- Payment checks are returned for non-sufficient funds (NSF) two or more times in a 12-month period.

4.7.4 Administrative Offset

In accordance with [OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B, Chapter 4, 4.4.2](#), Federal agencies are required to establish an administrative offset program¹. Upon written request from the travel card vendor, the Department is obligated to collect from the employee's disposable pay, any undisputed, delinquent amount that is owed to the vendor if the Department has reimbursed the cardholder.

Administrative offset may also be used if the traveler has not submitted a proper travel claim within the required timeframe and there are no extenuating circumstances preventing the traveler from doing so.

When an APC/OPC identifies an account 90 days delinquent, the cardholder will be issued a [“Due Process Notices and Grounds for Appeal”](#) letter, serving as the Department's official notification for notifying the employee of the administrative offset process. Copies of the notifications will be sent to the supervisor and HRO/WFMO.

At 121 days past due, the Level 2 APC must start the administrative offset process. An administrative offset package will be requested from the vendor to initiate the recovery process.

The due process requirements of the administrative offset process must be consistent with 31 U.S.C. § 3716. The A/OPC will work with the servicing HRO/WFMO prior to issuing the due process letter for proper guidance and processing procedures. Administrative offset actions will not be initiated:

- When an employee notifies the payroll office in writing that he/she has not been reimbursed for a properly filed travel voucher for expenses/charges that are causing the administrative offset action.
- Until HRO/WFMO obtains a confirmation from the employee's immediate supervisor or travel approving official that the claim has not been paid.
- Until confirmation that the payment was received by the vendor for a past due statement has been applied first to the oldest past due amount.

4.7.4.1 Reduced Payment Plan (RPP)

Cardholders can avoid [administrative offset](#) by requesting a RPP through the charge card vendor any time before the administrative offset takes place (121 days). The RPP is a written agreement between the cardholder and the charge card vendor where the cardholder agrees to make monthly payments. This process is negotiated with the cardholder based on the amount required to resolve the entire account balance in a reasonable timeframe. The cardholder should give courtesy notification to his/her APC/OPC when an RPP is in place with the vendor.

4.7.5 Charged-Off Accounts

When payment for undisputed charges has not been received by the vendor within 181 calendar days past the statement due date, the vendor will charge-off any outstanding balance as a bad

¹ The Circular mistakenly refers to the offset as salary offset. However, the Circular requires the due process of the offset be substantially equivalent to that under 31 U.S.C. 3716, Administrative offset. Therefore, we are using “administrative” in replace of “salary” offset per OHRM guidance.

debt. Negative payment patterns may be reported to credit bureaus. If administrative offset is not an option, the vendor may elect to utilize a collection agency for delinquency control. Any payment received by the vendor for accounts past due should be applied first to the oldest past due amount.

Accounts that have been charged off will not be eligible for reinstatement by the vendor.

4.7.6 Reinstatement of a Canceled Travel Card Account

At the sole discretion of the Vendor, canceled accounts may be reviewed for reinstatement once full payment of the undisputed amount and any penalties or late fees are made. As noted in the [Reinstatement Validation Form](#), requests for reinstatement may not be reviewed immediately and are rarely approved by the vendor. Accounts that have been placed in [charged-off status](#) or accounts that have been previously reinstated will not be reinstated by the vendor.

It is the employee's responsibility to forward a request for reinstatement via memorandum to his/her servicing Bureau/Operating Unit APC/OPC, signed by the Director or Chief Financial Officer within the employee's organization. The memorandum must contain the following information:

- Circumstances that caused the delinquency/suspension/cancellation of the travel card;
- Measures taken to prevent a future delinquency and/or cancellation of the account; and
- Current status of the account balance.

Employees applying for reinstatement must also complete travel card refresher training and provide the APC/OPC with the certificate of completion with the application for reinstatement memorandum.

Bureau APC/OPC will forward the application for reinstatement memorandum, [vendor's reinstatement request letter](#), [APC/OPC reinstatement validation form](#), [IBA statement of understanding](#), IBA application signed by the applicant which includes applicant's approval for a credit worthiness assessment (his/her credit score), and a copy of the training certificate to the Level 1 DAPC for review.

Following the Level 1 DAPC review, he/she will file a formal request for reinstatement with the vendor for a final reinstatement determination.

4.8 Mission Critical Status Policy

A cardholder who has mission-related extenuating circumstances for which the account billing cycle should be extended 30 days must request an extension through his/her APC/OPC. The APC/OPC will consult with the supervisor before approving the extension. When the extension is approved by the vendor and the account is placed in mission-critical status, the account will continue to be available for use even without regular payments being applied. The account will not age, suspend, or revoke. Requests for mission-critical status will not be accommodated more than once a year.

4.8.1 Qualifications for Mission Critical Status

This policy is not for cardholders who are late in making payments but for those who are on TDY and pose an absolute need for an extension. To qualify for mission critical status, the account must be in good standing and cannot have been suspended, revoked, or/canceled or be more than 30 days overdue. The account must have at least two business days before it will be suspended to be set up for mission critical status; this status is normally identified prior to the traveler's departure.

APCs/OPCs fax or email a request for mission critical status to the vendor's program coordinator that includes:

- Start and end date of mission critical status that includes a 45-day period to file travel claims and receive reimbursement payment, and
- The time period requested for mission critical status that does not exceed 120 days.

4.9 Lost, Stolen, or Compromised IBA Travel Card

To reduce fraudulent charges, a cardholder must provide immediate notification if his/her card is lost, stolen, or compromised—even if the account number is unknown—by:

- Calling the vendor's customer service office at 888-297-0781 or 847-488-4441 or 4442 for international travel; and
- Calling or emailing his/her Bureau/Operating Unit APC/OPC and supervisor/AO

If the cardholder is performing official travel when the card is lost, stolen, or compromised, they should follow the guidance provided for [stranded travelers](#) refer to Section 4.10.

Once the travel card has been officially reported as lost, stolen, or compromised, it will be blocked to guard against unauthorized usage and a new travel card will be issued. Any previous authorized activity—disputed and undisputed—will be transferred to the new account.

4.10 Stranded Traveler Cardholder Policy

A cardholder who is unable to make legitimate travel purchases due to account credit limits, delinquency status, [lost, stolen, or compromised card](#), or [merchant code misclassification](#) is considered stranded.

During normal business hours, a stranded travel cardholder should contact his/her APC/OPC. If the APC/OPC is not available for assistance, then the cardholder should contact the vendor's customer service office at 888-297-0781 or 847-488-4441 or 4442 for international travelers for assistance when he/she is unable to make legitimate travel purchases. The vendor will determine the reason why the traveler is stranded and, if necessary, implement the stranded cardholder policy to provide assistance for one or more of the following:

- **Delinquency Override** – The vendor will temporarily open a suspended travel cardholder account to allow authorizations when a cardholder is stranded. Whenever possible, a payment arrangement should be made before the vendor executes a

delinquency override. Delinquency override is set for only one day. To use this function, the cardholder’s account must not have a revoked, bankruptcy, charged-off, or other closed status.

- **Travel Needs** – The vendor will assist stranded travelers through approval of specific charges (forced authorizations) or issue a temporary increase for airline, hotel, and car rental only when a stranded traveler requires assistance after hours.
- **MCC Override** – The APC and/or vendor will assist travel cardholders by performing an override in instances when an MCC is required to make a transaction, which is otherwise restricted from use.
- **Lost/Stolen or Potential Fraud Use Travel Cards** – The vendor will assist a travel cardholder through the approval of specific charges by forced authorization using the replacement account number.

4.11 Traveling When Travel Card Has Been Suspended or Canceled

A traveler who loses his/her travel card privileges due to misuse or account delinquency must use his/her personal funds to finance travel expenses with the exception of common-carrier expenses, which must be purchased using a centrally billed account. When personal funds are used, the traveler will be reimbursed through the travel voucher process. This policy applies to hardship cases as well. The travel authorization should indicate that the traveler is authorized to use his/her personal charge card.

4.12 Records Retention

IBA Travel Card Records Retention					
CH	Supervisor	A/OPC	DAPC	Document	Retention Length ²
X		X		IBA Travel Card Application	6 years
X		X		Training Certificate(s)	6 years
X		X		IBA Statement of Understanding (SOU)	6 years
X				Dispute Form	6 years
	X	X	X	Delinquency Notices/Reports	2 years
	X	X	X	Requests to Modify or Alter Account	2 years
	X	X	X	Documentation Acquired During a Fraudulent Activity Investigation	6 years
	X	X	X	Designation Letters	6 years
		X		Inactive (Closed) Files	6 years

² The Department is using NARA General Schedule 1.1 (item 10) as the authority for the six-year retention period. General Schedule 9 (item 4a) is the authority for the two-year retention period.

4.13 Reporting Name/Address Change(s) and Employment Status

A cardholder is responsible for immediately notifying his/her AO/supervisor and APC/OPC for:

- Any name or home address changes³
- Termination of employment
- Internal Department transfer from one Bureau/Operating Unit to another
- Transfer from the Department to another Federal agency

³ Changes to addresses can be made via the EAS. Name changes can only be made by DAPC/APC/OPC.

SECTION 5 - CENTRALLY BILLED ACCOUNTS (CBAS)

5.1 Centrally Billed Account Policy

The CBA is the required method of payment to procure all official common carrier transportation for both employees and invitational travelers.

CBA travel cards/accounts may be used to cover travel expenses incurred by individuals who do not have their own IBA or who may be an invitational traveler. The CBA travel account may only be used for authorized official transportation expenses such as airline tickets, rail tickets, and Travel Management Center (TMC) service fees. Special authorization must be obtained from the STO to use the CBA for lodging, meals, transportation such as limousines or buses, and incidentals or travel-related insurance. The credit limit should be set at a reasonable amount that will cover the projected travel-related expenses. As part of the annual review, CBA credit limits should be reviewed by the Bureau's CFO to ensure the amounts are reasonable to meet the Bureau's mission.

The TMC CBA travel card is issued in the name of a designated authorized employee under a delegation of authority. Account holders who fail to comply with the policy may be subject to administrative and disciplinary action. TMC CBAs are transportation accounts and are used to purchase common carrier tickets (i.e., air, rail).

The designated TMC must have an approved travel authorization to issue tickets on a CBA. Travelers must provide the TMC with a copy of the approved travel authorization when booking tickets. The TMC will obtain and confirm prior approval from a designated POC prior to processing other than coach-class travel. Travelers must follow their internal approval process for other than coach-class travel. CBAs will not be used for any expenses related to local travel. The CBA should not be used to secure meeting or sleeping rooms for conferences.

5.2 Centrally Billed Card Accounts (CBCAs)

A centrally billed charge card account is established by Bureau/Operating Units to pay for official travel charges and for other official travel-related expenses under special circumstances that have been approved by the STO.

Normally, charge cards are not issued in conjunction with centrally billed accounts. However, under certain circumstances, cards may be issued against a centrally billed account. To apply for a CBCA, submit the requested information below regarding the terms and conditions for the issuance and use of the vendor's Corporate Charge Card on letterhead addressed to: Senior Travel Official (STO):

- State the need for the issuance and use of the Corporate Charge Card
- State what management will be responsible for as it pertains to reconciliations, briefing the cardholder on their responsibilities and proper use of the card, collecting any unauthorized charges, and preventing and reporting any abuse of the card. Please indicate what the cardholder's responsibilities will include.

The DAPC or APC must complete the vendor's Authorization Form to add users as authorized individuals to call the vendor's Program Coordinator team to discuss any account issues.

Management Responsibility

- Review and certify the monthly statement reconciliation form for payment.
- Enforce the provisions of this Handbook.
- Brief all corporate charge cardholders concerning his/her responsibility and proper use of the card.
- Report any abuse of the card to the DAPC and the OIG.
- Assist in collecting any unauthorized charges.
- Ensure annual CBA re-certifications are requested through the DAPC.

Cardholder Responsibility

- Safeguard corporate charge card at all times.
- Safeguard receipts and charge card slips.
- Reconcile monthly billing statement, which is available on-line each month.
- Retain the original signed statements, all receipts, dispute forms, reconciliation form, and other supporting documentation for six years for audit purposes.

A CBA charge card can only be carried by a Department corporate charge cardholder when it is required for the performance of official duties. At all other times, the card will be kept in a locked file cabinet or safe, which can only be accessed by authorized personnel. Cardholders will be held personally liable for all unauthorized charges.

5.3 CBA Account Administration

The request to establish a new CBA account is made by the Bureau CFO to the Senior Travel Official. The Bureau CFO will send an official request through the Director of the Travel Management Division to establish an account with the pertinent information to create an account. This information will include the designated Bureau name, reasonable requested credit limit amount, and sufficient justification that outline the use of the account to support mission. The DAPC will review, complete and submit the application to the travel card vendor for processing once approved by the STO. After the account has been established, the DAPC will notify the requestor that the account has been established and reference this subsection for account management. If it is determined by the Director of the Travel Management Division that the justification is not sufficient, the request will be denied and an official response will be sent to the Bureau CFO from the Senior Travel Official. The process for establishing a new CBA does not have the same lead times as an IBA.

NOTE: NOAA Fishery Management Councils will follow the guidance in [Section 5.3](#) to manage centrally billed accounts under their purview and will issue internal policy governing the use and management of CBAs. A copy of the policy should be provided to NOAA's APC and the DAPC.

5.4 Changes to CBA Accounts

Changes to the CBA account profile, including the name of the cardholder, must be made by the cardholder with appropriate authority to the DAPC. The Department's preference is to have the account holder's name associated with the unit, not tied to an individual. Changes to amounts authorized must be requested by the cardholder's supervisor or approving official and include a brief justification to the Senior Travel Official for approval.

5.5 CBA Reconciliation and Reallocation

The cardholder is responsible for reconciling and reallocating his/her monthly statement of account to ensure transactions are accurate and funded appropriately. Cardholders are required to maintain a CBA travel card log listing all expenditures and containing copies of authorizing documentation.

5.6 CBA Payments

Payments for the CBA Travel Card are made by the Bureau's servicing finance office when monthly statements have been submitted by the charge card vendor and after APC/OPCs have validated appropriate charges. APC/OPCs must ensure that timely payments are made in full on all accounts in order to ensure we are receiving intended rebates. In the event of a government-wide shut down, all CBAs will be paid with Prompt Payment Act interest upon a budget passing.

5.7 Records Retention for CBA Accounts

CBA Travel Card Records Retention					
CH	AO/ Supervisor	A/OPC ⁴	DAPC ⁵	Document	Retention Length ⁶
		X	X	CBA Travel Card Application/Authorization	6 years
X		X	X	Training Certificate(s)	6 years
X		X	X	CBA Statement of Understanding (SOU)	6 years
		X		Delinquency Notices/Reports	2 years
	X	X	X	Requests to Modify or Alter Account	2 years
	X	X	X	Documentation Acquired During a Fraudulent Activity Investigation	6 years
	X	X	X	Inactive (Closed) Files	6 years
X				Statements of Account	2 years
X				CBA Travel Card Logs	2 years
X				Receipts	6 years
X				Dispute Forms	6 years
X	X	X	X	Other Supporting Documentation	6 years
X				Reconciliation Form	6 years

⁴ Bureau/Operating Units APCs must maintain appropriate files and ensure OPCs under their hierarchy are practicing the same retention principles.

⁵ The DAPC must maintain files for all APCs CBA accounts established.

⁶ The Department is using NARA General Schedule 1.1 (item 10) as the authority for the six-year retention period. General Schedule 9 (item 4a) is the authority for the two-year retention period.

The cardholder is responsible for maintaining his or her records. The cardholder must maintain CBA travel card records (copies of applications, SOUs, training certificates, receipts, dispute forms, and other supporting documentation) for six years from the payment date, deemed to be 30 days after the statement of account date. After that time, the records may be destroyed according to procedures. CBA travel cardholders must provide their CBA travel card log to their approving official for review and final approval. If the cardholder separates from the Department of Commerce or is reassigned, the approving official is responsible for ensuring the records are maintained for auditing purposes.

5.8 Lost or Stolen CBA Cards

Cardholders must promptly report lost or stolen account numbers and cards to the travel card vendor and to the DAPC in order to be relieved of any financial liability resulting from its unauthorized use. CBA travel cards reported lost or stolen are immediately blocked from accepting additional charges. If unauthorized charges have occurred, they must be disputed. It is the responsibility of the cardholder to dispute any unauthorized charges with the card vendor. If the reported lost card is located, it must be destroyed. The card vendor will send out a replacement card with a new account number within two to three business days of being notified.

5.9 Misuse of the CBA Card

The DAPC will report any accountholder suspicious or fraudulent activity (abuse, illegal acts, or misconduct) of a CBA travel card to the cardholder's supervisor and the OIG. Misuse of the Travel Card should be reported to the supervisor for appropriate handling. The supervisor must consult with the SHRO/WFMO concerning the next step in addressing potential disciplinary or adverse action. Cardholders who use the CBA travel card for unauthorized purposes may be subject to the prescribed [table of penalties](#) for disciplinary or adverse action.

SECTION 6 – PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 Bureau/Operating Unit Heads/Designees

Bureau/Operating Unit heads are responsible for establishing, managing, and monitoring a robust travel card program to include internal procedures for promoting the use of the charge card and to monitoring fraud, waste, misuse, and delinquency for travel card accounts. Bureaus/operating units must ensure their employees receive information on how the travel card program operates. This includes proper use, safeguards, and conveying the [Department Zero Tolerance Policy](#).

Bureaus/operating units will conduct their travel programs in accordance with the FTR, GSA SmartPay® contract, the Department policies/guidance, and other authorities by taking advantage of services, technology, and rebates offered. If bureaus/operating units issue supplemental guidance, this guidance must not conflict with the mandatory policies and procedures contained in this Handbook or other authorities. Below is a table of Bureau/Operating Unit head responsibilities:

Topic	Responsibility
Designate APCs, OPCs, and Back-up APCs/OPCs	<p>Designate in writing for at least one year an APC, OPC, and back-up APCs/OPCs at an appropriate grade level who will have direct oversight of program management, including day-to-day activities associated with the travel card. Bureau/Operating Unit heads must ensure program coordinators are proactive in their responsibilities.</p> <p>Consider the volume of work when determining the number of employees needed to adequately manage the travel card workload. The frequency of travel and historic delinquency rate of the organization should be considered when making this determination. At a minimum, there must be at least one APC/OPC for every 500 travel cardholders.</p> <p>If possible, select the APCs/OPCs from the travel or financial management staff. APCs/OPCs must have access to and the ability to relate sensitive information to the management chain of command.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance standards and job elements required to perform the duties of an APC/OPC must be clearly outlined in the employee’s performance plan. • Ensure initial APC/OPC training is complete prior to the appointment and that refresher training is received every three years • APC/OPCs must also receive all Department travel policy training, the vendor’s training for EAS, and GSA SmartPay® training. <p><i>NOTE: Bureau/Operating Unit managers, APCs/OPCs, and officials do not have authority to supersede any of the vendor’s policies (e.g., suspension, cancellation, reinstatement, and credit worthiness).</i></p>

Topic	Responsibility
Designate CBA Manager	<p>The CBA manager must be designated in writing and will oversee the day-to-day management and reconciliation of the CBA(s).</p> <p>This individual will ensure compliance with CBA policy and finance office reconciliation procedures and will monitor, maintain, and update account usage. If there are limited resources available to handle this function, an APC may serve in this capacity.</p>
Conduct Program Reviews	<p>Conduct annual review of the travel card program and provide results to the Department’s Office of Financial Management.</p> <p>Ensure APC/OPCs provide quarterly updates on the status of Bureau’s travel card program.</p> <p><i>NOTE: All internal reviews should be certified by the designated authority and the Departmental-directed reviews should be certified by the head of the Bureau/Operating Unit.</i></p>
Cardholders	<p>Ensure cardholders understand the responsibilities and proper use of the travel card.</p> <p>Ensure cardholders found to have engaged in travel card misuse or delinquencies are disciplined accordingly.</p>
Emergency Response and COOP Members	Provide APC/OPC and DAPC with the names of designated emergency response and COOP team members.
On-Boarding/Separation Clearance Process	All APCs/OPCs must be part of the on-boarding and separation process for effective program accountability.
Surcharges	Ensure cardholders and approving officials are aware of the possibility of surcharges when making purchases using credit/charge cards.

6.2 Approving Officials (AOs)/Supervisors

These individuals are [appointed in writing](#), by Bureau/Operating Units or their designees, and are responsible for ensuring travel cardholders follow all guidance and procedures for using the travel card. The AO is typically, but is not required to be, the cardholder’s supervisor. Their responsibilities are outlined in the following table:

Topic	Responsibilities
Training	<p>AOs/supervisors must complete GSA Travel Charge Card Training to serve as a travel card AO.</p> <p>Additionally, AOs must also ensure travel card applicants complete initial and refresher training (every three years).</p>
Travel Orders/Vouchers	<p>AOs/supervisors must ensure travel authorizations/orders contain required language and reflect the ATM cash withdrawal amount approved.</p> <p>When travel has been completed, AOs/supervisors must review and approve submitted vouchers in a timely manner and ensure travelers are reimbursed only for authorized and allowable travel and transportation expenses supported, when required, by receipts.</p>

Topic	Responsibilities
Travel Card Applications	Review/approve travel card applications for completeness in a timely manner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application, either on-line or paper <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If the application is to be expedited, notify the A/OPC • Statement of Understanding • Training certificate
Questionable Charge(s) or Delinquency	Notify the traveler of any questionable or inappropriate charge(s) or delinquency and provide an opportunity for the traveler to explain the charge(s) or delinquency upon notification from the APC/OPC. A record must be maintained of the notification and explanation received from the traveler. Due to reporting requirements, an APC/OPC may request an explanation for delinquencies.
Questionable Charge(s) and/or Delinquency of Account	If the traveler’s explanation for a questionable charge(s) is inadequate, the supervisor, who may or may not be the approving official, should notify the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and take appropriate disciplinary action. The supervisor must coordinate with the Bureau/Operating Unit’s SHRO/WFMO who may consult with the Office of General Counsel, the OIG, and/or others as appropriate for a determination of the appropriate disciplinary action to be taken. DAO 202-751, Discipline, Appendix B, Item 47 , provides guidance on penalties appropriate to an offense, ranging from written reprimand to removal from service. At the discretion of the supervisor, the travel card may be revoked at this time. If revocation is taken, the APC/OPC must be notified to cancel the card due to inappropriate use or delinquency.
Second Instance of Questionable Charge(s) and/or Delinquency of Account	Request closure of the travel card account if there is a second instance of insufficiently-explained charge(s) or account delinquency. The supervisor must coordinate with the Bureau/Operating Unit’s HRO/WFMO who may consult with the Office of General Counsel, the OIG, and/or others as appropriate for a determination of the appropriate disciplinary action to be taken. DAO 202-751, Discipline , provides guidance on penalties appropriate to an offense, ranging from written reprimand to removal from service.
Records Retention	Comply with retention guidance for IBA accounts (Section 4.12) and CBA accounts (Section 5.7) .
Transferring or Departing Cardholder	Notify the APC/OPC when a cardholder is separating or transferring from or to the Bureau/Operating Unit.
Canceled or Closed Travel Cards	Shred any canceled or closed travel cards received from cardholders.

If information reveals an AO is not performing his/her duties and responsibilities, his/her approving authority can be revoked. This may result in another AO being assigned to review transactions for cardholders under his/her purview, or if none is available, loss of all cardholder authority for the cardholders overseen by that AO. Either situation may result in disciplinary action against the approving official for failure to perform assigned duties.

6.3 Program Coordinators

6.3.1 Departmental Agency Program Coordinator (DAPC) – Level 1

The DAPC Level 1 of the hierarchy is the Departmental travel card program coordinator who is responsible for managing the travel card program across the Department to best support the agency’s mission. The DAPC serves as a liaison to APCs, issuing bank, agency’s management, and GSA’s Office of Charge Card Management and provides guidance, policy, and oversight to all travel card accounts within the Department.

The DAPC’s responsibilities are to ensure the agency’s travel card program is in compliance with [OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B](#), [OMB Memorandum M-13-21](#), and other authorities. Below is a table of DAPC responsibilities that will be updated as the program evolves (e.g., ETS2, data mining, etc.):

Topic	Responsibility
Internal Controls	Manage internal controls for the overall travel card program
	Analyze account activity to prevent unauthorized use and misuse including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restricting questionable MCCs • Ensuring accounts are being used only for authorized travel expenditures • Monitoring and reducing account delinquencies
	Implement risk management controls, policies, and procedures including maximizing refunds and minimizing risks.
	Reporting suspicious activities, expenditures, or misuse to the OIG.
APC/OPCs	Establish APC accounts with the vendor.
	Ensure all APC/OPCs under his/her hierarchy have access to the EAS.
	Chair quarterly program coordinator meetings.
Training	Establish training requirement and ensure APCs/OPCs are trained.
Annual Card Review	Conduct annual reviews of Bureau/Operating Unit IBA and CBA cards.
Reporting	Coordinate quarterly OMB reporting with bureaus/operating units.
	Maintain and report data and performance metrics monthly.
IBA Accounts	Understand the credit worthiness process.
	Monitor and assist with the salary offset process.
	Approve IBA travel card credit limits of \$20,000 or more.
Travel Card Issues	Monitor travel card issues, including pending legislation to the travel line of business in order to provide accurate information and policy updates.

Topic	Responsibility
Personally Identifiable Information (PII)	Ensure PII is protected. If PII is compromised, ensure Department breach procedures are followed and that individuals are notified in writing as soon as practical.
Department Charge Card Management Plan	Develops and maintains the travel line of business section.

6.3.2 Agency Program Coordinator (APC) – Level 2

The Bureau/Operating Unit’s designated APC has primary responsibility for overseeing the travel card program for the Bureau/Operating Unit in a manner that best supports the mission and is in conjunction with the Department’s policies. The APC will serve as a liaison between the cardholder, vendor, internal management, program participants, and the DAPC.

The responsibilities of the APC mirror that of the DAPC with limiting distinctions. The APC cannot set departmental policies, engage with the Vendor on program changes, or interact with the Department/GSA charge card program. In addition to managing program risk, the APC must find ways to strengthen program internal controls and maintain a healthy relationship with the issuing bank. APCs should encourage and provide the necessary guidance to all OPCs and CHs to obtain access to the EAS system in order to manage their account, view statements, and make payments as necessary. Level 2 APCs are also responsible for activities in [6.3.4](#) – All Program Coordinators.

6.3.3 Organization Program Coordinator (OPC) – Level 4

OPC refers to a Bureau/Operating Unit that has multiple organizations and a designated coordinator with direct oversight responsibilities for their internal travel card program. Bureau OPCs are responsible for overseeing and administering the Travel Card Program for their respective unit or line office. OPCs perform the same function as their Bureau/Operating Unit’s APCs according to internal guidance and this Handbook. All OPCs are required to monitor the possible misuse activity and misuse of travel card accounts. In an effort to monitor or reveal this type of activity on the travel card accounts, OPCs are required to review the Vendor reports that are prescribed herein and send the lead APC status updates monthly. Level 4 OPCs are also responsible for activities in [6.3.4](#) – All Program Coordinators.

6.3.4 Responsibilities for all Program Coordinators

Provided below is a table that outlines responsibilities and activities to be completed by all program coordinators.

DAPC – Level 1	APC – Level 2	APC – Level 4	Topic	Responsibility
X			APC/OPC Designation Form	Contact the DAPC to obtain a copy of the designation form.

DAPC – Level 1	APC – Level 2	APC – Level 4	Topic	Responsibility
X	X	X	Training for Program Coordinators	Complete GSA’s APC/OPC initial and refresher (every three years) training and submit completion certificate to the appropriate level program coordinator.
X	X	X		Participate in any vendor user training (e.g., updated training on usage of on-line EAS system, how to run standard and customer reports, etc.).
	X	X	Travel Card Applications	Verify through HRO/WFMO Current Employee lists that the applicant is an employee within his/her span of control.
	X	X		Ensure the application is complete and approved by the employee’s supervisor/AO.
	X	X		Verify applicant and AO/supervisor have completed GSA Travel Cardholder training and submitted a copy of the completion certificate as part of the application.
	X	X		Verify applicant has completed and submitted the appropriate (IBA or CBA) Statement of Understanding (SOU).
	X	X		For “rush” paper applications, provide the vendor special instructions (e.g., date needed, location to be sent).
	X	X		Establish a hard or electronic file on applicants with a copy of the application, SOU, and training certificate.
	X			EAS
X	X	X	Use EAS to update travel card accounts (e.g., account closures, credit increases, MCC adjustments, hierarchy changes) and to run monthly standard and custom reports.	
X	X	X	Monitor monthly EAS reports to identify cardholders who require travel card recertification. APCs/OPCs are responsible for notifying cardholders of recertification/training requirements, collecting hard copy certificates, and logging training dates into the EAS.	
X	X	X	Account Oversight and Monitoring	Ensure accounts are being used for authorized travel-related expenses only.
X	X	X		Ensure ATM withdrawals and travel advances by travelers are appropriate and do not result in delinquencies.

DAPC – Level 1	APC – Level 2	APC – Level 4	Topic	Responsibility
X	X	X		Monitor misuse and delinquency, at least monthly, by accessing the available data mining tool or issuing bank report(s).
X	X			Report to the Supervisor, DAPC, and OIG any suspected or known cases of suspicious or fraudulent activity (abuse, illegal acts, or misconduct). Misuse is not required to be reported to the OIG, just to the Supervisor and DAPC.
X	X	X		Provide written notification to both the cardholder’s AO/supervisor and the HRO/WFMO when an account is delinquent or misused. Written notification must be sent within 10 business days of the billing cycle end date.
X	X	X		Document cardholder notifications and conversations regarding delinquency and/or misuse to include dates, name(s) of person(s) involved, and any evidence of notification.
X	X	X		Track delinquency and/or misuse issues and ensure appropriate action is taken (e.g., determine the reason why the delinquency and/or misuse occurred and whether a payment plan is in place).
X	X			Resolve technical and operational problems between the vendor, Bureau/Operating Unit APCs/OPCs, and cardholders.
X	X			Provide vendor any changes in organizational structure that may impact invoice/report distribution.
X	X	X	Closing Accounts	Obtain final written acknowledgement from the AO/supervisor to close a travel card account. Bureau/Operating Unit APCs/OPCs are required to close accounts during the same month that the acknowledgement was issued. APCs/OPCs can suspend an account until an investigation is conducted and concluded.
X	X	X	Reactivating Account	Obtain written statement from the AO/supervisor to reactivate a temporarily suspended or permanently closed account.
X	X	X	Separating Cardholders	Monitor the monthly HRO/WFMO “Separating Employee” report and close accounts via EAS for those employees who are leaving the Department. Travel card accounts should be closed by the separation date.

DAPC – Level 1	APC – Level 2	APC – Level 4	Topic	Responsibility
X	X	X	Transferring Cardholders (Internal DOC)	Monitor the HRO/WFMO “Transferring Employees” listing.
X	X	X		APC/OPC from losing Bureau/Operating Unit will reduce the cardholder’s credit limit to \$1 and contact the gaining organization’s APC/OPC to inform him/her of the incoming cardholder. The gaining Bureau/Operating Unit’s APC/OPC will then contact the DAPC to have the cardholder move under the new hierarchy.
	X	X		If the cardholder account has not been transferred to the gaining Bureau/Operating Unit within 30 days after the cardholder’s departure, the losing Bureau/Operating Unit APC/OPC will make two additional attempts to request the transfer to the gaining Bureau/Operating Unit (one via email; the other via telephone). If no transfer occurs, the losing Bureau/Operating Unit APC/OPC should contact the DAPC for assistance.
	X	X		Travel cardholder files must be securely sent to the gaining bureau whenever a cardholder transfers within the Department.
X	X	X	Protecting Privacy	Use discretion when handling travel card files by ensuring they are never left in public view and kept in a locked cabinet or secure office to protect PII.
X	X	X		Transmission of any cardholder files must be done securely.
X	X	X	Meetings	Participate in APC/OPC meetings held by the Department on a quarterly or as needed basis to ensure up-to-date policies and procedures are disseminated to all Bureaus/Operating units.
X	X	X		Participate in required travel card meetings/conferences hosted by GSA or within the Bureau/Operating Unit.
X	X	X	Reporting and Program Reviews	Refer to Section 7 .

6.4 Travel Card Vendor

Under the terms of GSA’s Travel Card Program, listed below are the Vendor’s responsibilities and prohibitions:

Responsibilities	Process travel card applications.
	Conduct Credit Worthiness checks on applicants.
	Issue travel cards with a \$5,000 limit and 20 percent cash advance limit available to applicants with a standard/non-restricted account based on the results of credit worthiness check.
	Issue travel card with a \$2,500 limit and 20 percent cash advance availability to employees with a restricted account based on the results of the credit worthiness check.
	Issue travel cards and PINs to obtain cash withdrawals from ATMs.
	Convert currency to ensure charges made in a foreign currency will be converted into U.S. dollars on the travel card statement. The conversion rate used will be at least as favorable as the interbank rate or, where required by law, an official rate. This rate should be the one in existence at the time the transaction processed.
Prohibited Activity	Release credit information to anyone other than to cardholders.
	Sell or otherwise provide names and/or addresses of cardholders to other commercial interests.
	Charge membership fees.
	Include commercial advertisements or other forms of solicitation with monthly billing statements.
	Issue or cancel travel cards without notifying the appropriate APC/OPC.
	Hold cardholders liable for any charges made with lost or stolen cards, provided the cardholder notifies the vendor immediately upon discovering the travel card has been lost or stolen and signs an affidavit, as required by the Vendor, stating the charges were not made by the travel cardholder.

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SECTION 7 – REVIEWS AND REPORTING

7.1 Reviews

The APC/OPC is the first-line of defense to prevent charge card misuse and abuse. All reviews listed in this section must be conducted in order to ensure program compliance. The information obtained from the reviews for internal use and/or required reporting must be shared with the heads of the operating units or designated individuals responsible for the travel card program. The results of these reviews and reports should be made available during audits or departmental reviews.

Monthly Reviews	
Use vendor-issued reports to conduct monthly review; at a minimum, the review should include:	
Status of Delinquent Accounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions taken • Suspended, canceled, or salary offset • Dollar value of delinquent account
Statistical Data for Number of Accounts Closed by APC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misuse • Inappropriate use • Not paying the billed once reimbursed
Excessive Credit Balances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review for timely payments
Deactivation of Restricted Accounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review for misuse or inappropriate use
Excessive Transaction Declines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misuse
Inactive Accounts or Accounts Recommended for Closure Due to Non-Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review for necessity of account
Accounts/Records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training compliance • Update cardholder information in EAS • Required documentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Certificates of completed training for initial and refresher training ○ Statement of Understanding ○ “Rush” Applications ○ Disciplinary action taken for misuse ○ See records retention for more details
Quarterly Reviews	
Statistical Report	To fulfill quarterly review requirements, APCs/OPCs must complete the statistical report and submit a copy to OAP within 15 days after the quarter ends.
Semiannual and Annual Reviews	
Semiannual and annual reviews are completed to determine if the travel card program is in compliance with policies.	APC/OPCs use monthly and quarterly reviews to determine program compliance and to report status . The report will also meet the requirement to keep Bureau/Operating Unit senior officials informed on the overall state of the travel card program.

	<p>For Bureaus/Operating units who have both APCs and OPCs, OPCs should submit the section reports to the Level 2 APC for consolidation into a single Bureau/Operating Unit report that will be provided to the Director of OAP 15 days after the end of the reporting period.</p> <p>These reviews/reports must be attested to by the Deputy Under Secretary, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Director, or Chief Financial Officer.</p>
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7.2 Reporting

As outlined in [OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B, Chapter 5, 5.3.1](#), data reporting is a vital tool for improving charge card management. Charge card managers and stakeholders need timely and accurate data to assess:

- Compliance with legislative and administrative requirements
- Effectiveness of efforts to mitigate risks of fraud, waste, and abuse
- Performance trends in managing costs and other relevant indicators of program success

Listed below is a table of required travel charge card reporting:

Due Date	Report and Authority	Action and Authority
To Be Completed by APC/OPC		
Bi-weekly	Delinquencies with Current Balance	Inform DAPC via email of all cardholders who are near suspension or cancellation and what action has been taken to address issues. OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B, Section 5.3.1
Monthly	Declines Report	Inform DAPC of inappropriate transactions attempts. OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B, Section 5.3.1
Monthly	Transactions Detail	Inform DAPC of inappropriate transactions. OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B, Section 5.3.1
Monthly	Cash Advance Detail by Hierarchy	Inform DAPC via email any proven cases of misuse. PL 112-194, OMB Circular A-123 , OMB M-13-21
Monthly	Unused Tickets Report	Report is generated from the TMC provider’s electronic system. PCs are responsible for monthly reviewing and ensuring travelers are aware of the requirement to use the credit before the expiration date.

Due Date	Report and Authority	Action and Authority
To Be Completed by APC/OPC		
		<p>TMD point of contact is responsible for ensuring program coordinators receive the reports each month and assist with any discrepancies.</p> <p>During program reviews, these reports should be reviewed for program compliance and to capture statistical data on the amounts and numbers of lost credits due to expiration.</p> <p>Data must be shared with Bureau/Operating Unit heads and the Department upon request.</p>
Quarterly	Accounts Renewing in Three Months Report	<p>Check addresses and retain the report as part of annual review.</p> <p>OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B, Section 5.3.1</p>
Quarterly	Inactivity Report	<p>Send results to the cardholder's supervisor and take directed actions.</p> <p>OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B, Section 5.3.1</p>
Quarterly	Suspended Status Report	<p>Send results to cardholder's supervisor and take necessary actions.</p> <p>OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B, Section 5.3.1</p>
Quarterly	Statistical Reporting	<p>Complete report (available from the Vendor's EAS) and submit to OAP within 15 days after the quarter ends.</p> <p>OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B, Chapter 2; OMB M-13-21</p>
Data Elements		Description
Number of Cards		Count of cardholder accounts in an open state
Number of active accounts		Count of cardholder accounts with merchant transactions
Percentage of employees who are cardholders		This is the difference between employees and cardholders.
Net number of new accounts (new less canceled)		Difference between number of cards for the previous quarter and current quarter
Dollars spent, total refunds earned, % of potential refunds		Sum
Number of cases reported to OIG for possible misuse/abuse		Count of cases reported

Due Date	Report and Authority	Action and Authority
To Be Completed by APC/OPC		
Number of administrative and/or disciplinary actions taken for misuse, including delinquency (if known)		Count of administrative and/or disciplinary actions
Number and percentage of travel charge cards with monthly and/or transaction limits		Data broken up in categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$0 - \$3,000 • \$3,001 - \$5,000 • \$5,001 - \$7,500 • \$7,501 and above
Number and percentage of travel charge cards with ATM withdrawal limits		Data is broken up in categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$0 - \$3,000 • \$3,001 - \$5,000 • \$5,001 - \$7,500 • \$7,501 and above
Percentage of travel cardholders who, as defined by the agency, are infrequent travelers		The difference between cardholders and infrequent travelers
Semi-annually	Travel Charge Card Violations	Send report to OAP 15 days after the reporting period OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B, Section 5.3.1
Semi-annually	Semi-annual Program Review Report	Send report to OAP 15 days after the reporting period
Annual	Annual Program Review Report	Send report to OAP 15 days after the reporting period
Annual	Training	Send reminder notification to all cardholders about refresher training and updating profile OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B, Section 3.5.2

7.3 Metric Reporting

As mandated by [OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B, Chapter 5, 5.5](#), Federal agencies are required to establish performance metrics as a measure of effectiveness and as a management control mechanism. Delinquencies adversely impact the Department and subsequently impact mission readiness. The Department has developed the following performance measures to assess the health of the travel card program. This report is assembled by the DAPC and forward to OFM Performance Metric POC within 5 days at the beginning of each month.

IBA – Based on percentage of open accounts delinquent and will be reflected as:		
0.00% - 1.5%	1.51% - 2.00%	>2.00%
CBA – Based on amount of delinquent dollars and will be reflected as:		
0.00% - 1.5%	1.51% - 2.00%	>2.00%

Appendix A - Authorities and References

Authority/Reference	Comments
5 U.S.C. 5702, Per Diem; Employees Traveling on Official Business	Explains the requirement for per diem on official business.
Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990 – November 15, 1990	Requires a comprehensive reform of Federal financial management.
Public Law 105-264, Travel and Transportation Reform Act of 1998 (TTRA) – October 19, 1998	Mandates that Federal employees use the travel charge card to pay for all expenses related to official government travel unless exempted .
Public Law 109-115, Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2006	Section 846 requires agencies to evaluate the credit worthiness of individuals before issuing a Government travel card.
OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B – January 15, 2009	Prescribes policies and procedures regarding how to maintain internal controls that reduce the risk of fraud, waste, and error in Government charge card programs and sets the requirements for participant training.
Public Law 112-194, Government Charge Card Abuse Prevention Act of 2012 – October 5, 2012	<i>Section 3 – Management of Travel Cards</i> - requires agencies to implement safeguards and internal controls for the travel charge card program. <i>Section 4 – Management of Centrally Billed Accounts (CBAs)</i> – requires agencies to establish internal control for CBAs.
41 C.F.R. Chapter 301 – Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances – July 2013	Provides the allowable travel polices associated with TDY and the use of the travel charge card.
OMB Memorandum M-13-21 – September 6, 2013	Supplemental guidance to OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B , specifically, to establish safeguards and internal controls for Government charge card program and requires increasing oversight by the Inspector General (IG) to conduct risk assessments and audits to identify fraud and improper use of the Government charge cards.
FTR GSA Bulletin 14-08 – May 13, 2014	Encourages agencies to designate a Senior Travel Official to oversee agency-wide travel policies and programs.

Authority/Reference	Comments
FTR GSA Bulletin 14-09 – September 19, 2014	Emphasizes the need for agencies to maximize travel cost savings through the use of the travel charge card and discusses agency discretion to issue travel charge cards to employees who travel five times or less a year. In addition, it recommends reducing card spend value to \$1.00, when not in a travel status, to alleviate risk
Executive Order 13681—Improving the Security of Consumer Financial Transactions – October 17, 2014	Requires Federal agencies to upgrade payment cards and systems to employ enhanced security features, including Chip and PIN technology .
Commerce Acquisition Manual (CAM), 1313.301, Purchase Card Program – February 11, 2015	Provides the Department policy on the use of the Purchase Card Program.
GSA SmartPay – SmartTax Information	Lists the 11 states and US territories that exempt IBA travel card from state taxes and differentiates CBA and IBA accounts using the 6 th digit of the account number.

Appendix B – Acronyms and Definitions

Term	Acronym	Definition
Abuse	N/A	Use of the travel card to purchase items that are not authorized by the employee’s travel authorization or the Department’s travel policies.
Accountable Official	AO	Individuals appointed in writing responsible for conducting proper reviews to eliminate any opportunities for erroneous payments.
Administrative Offset		The collection of an undisputed, delinquent charge card amount via a direct deduction from an employee’s payroll disbursement or retirement annuity on behalf of the charge card vendor. (Refer to TTRA, 5 U.S.C. 5701 Note)
Agency Program Coordinator	APC	An individual appointed to serve as the focal point for management and program execution in accordance with Department established policies and procedures. This individual serves at Level 2 and provides oversight for Level 4 Organizational Program Coordinators (OPC). The APC serves as liaison between the cardholders and the card vendor; provides on-going advice; audits card accounts as required; and keeps necessary account information current.
Agency/Organization Program Coordinator	A/OPC	The POC primary responsibility includes overseeing the travel charge card program for their agency/organization. Serve as a liaison between the cardholder, the bank, and the agency’s management.
Approving Official	AO	Individual with the authority to authorize or approval travel orders/vouchers and applications to obtain travel cards.
Automated Teller Machine Cash Withdrawal	ATM	An authorized cash withdrawal used to meet official travel needs.
Billing Cycle	N/A	A specific timeframe for the billing and statement cycles. Department IBA billing cycles start on the 4 th of the month and end on the 3 rd of following month. CBA billing cycle dates vary.
Cardholder	CH	An individual that is issued a travel charge card to assist with payment of official travel expenses.
Centrally Billed Account	CBA	A card or account issued to a Bureau/Operating Unit for the purchase of official transportation services arranged through a Travel Management Center (TMC) while an employee is in temporary duty (TDY) travel or relocation status. Payments are made directly to the bank by the Government. The Government is liable

Term	Acronym	Definition
		for all charges on CBAs. These accounts are subject to the Prompt Payment Act of 1982 as amended.
Charged-Off Account	N/A	Accounts written off by the card vendor bank in accordance with banking regulations.
Chief Financial Officer	CFO	An executive with responsibility for the financial affairs of an agency or department.
Chief Financial Officer/Assistant Secretary for Administration	CFO/ASA	Establishes and monitors implementation of Departmental policies and procedures for administrative functions affecting program operations in Department's operating units. These administrative functions include: budget, financial management, strategic planning and performance management, human resources management, civil rights, employee safety and health, procurement, small business utilization, grants management, travel and transportation of household goods, real property and facilities management, directives management, and security.
Chip and PIN	N/A	IBA cards that contain a microprocessor that requires cardholders to authenticate using a four-digit Personal Identification Number (PIN) at the point-of-sale. The microprocessor chip encrypts the transaction data protecting the cardholder's personally identifiable information (PII) and payment data. If the card is lost or stolen, the embedded microchip makes the card extremely difficult to counterfeit. This is another tool to reduce potential fraud.
City Pair Program	CPP	A GSA-sponsored program that offers fares considerably lower than comparable commercial fares, saving the Federal Government billions of dollars annually.
Code of Federal Regulation	CFR	The codification of the general and permanent rules and regulations.
Continental United States	CONUS	Contiguous United States, which includes the 48 U.S. states on the continent of North America (that are south of Canada) including the District of Columbia.
Continuity of Operations	COOP	An effort within individual executive departments and agencies to ensure that Primary Mission Essential Functions (PMEFs) continue to be performed during a wide range of emergencies, including localized acts of nature, accidents, and technological or attack-related emergencies.
Corporate Card Account	N/A	A CBA account used by bureaus to pay for other travel related expenses.
Data Mining	N/A	A web-based application designed to provide analytics and investigative reporting, program compliance, monitor spend management, and combat fraud and misuse.

Term	Acronym	Definition
Deactivation	N/A	A travel card in inactive status when the traveler is not in an authorized travel status. The travel card is not canceled and can be reactivated by the APC/OPC or the customer service department at any time. In the event of a government-wide shut-down, the Vendor shall not deactivate any account unless otherwise notified by GSA or the Department.
Delinquent Account	N/A	An undisputed charge card account balance that is unpaid for more than 61 calendar days past the statement date.
Department Administrative Order	DAO	Used to document and mandate continuing policies, standards requirements, and procedures prescribed by the Office of the Secretary for Department-wide application or for application to two or more major program areas of the Department.
Department of Commerce	DOC	Serves as the voice of U.S. business within the President’s Cabinet as part of the economic team.
Department Organization Order	DOO	Prescribes the basic management structure and organizational arrangements of the Department of Commerce. DOOs are issued for each Secretarial Officer, Departmental Office, and Operating Unit of the Department of Commerce.
Departmental Agency Program Coordinator	DAPC	An individual appointed to serve as the department-wide focal point for management, oversight, and program execution in accordance with GSA SmartPay® and OMB guidance. This individual serves at Level 1 and provides oversight for Level 2 APCs. The DAPC serves as liaison between GSA, the card vendor, APCs, and internal management.
Dynamic Data Authentication	DDA	An industry standard authentication method used to detect and reduce counterfeit fraud. The method is based on public-key cryptography.
Eastern Standard Time	EST	A time zone encompassing 17 U.S. states in the eastern part of the contiguous United States, parts of eastern Canada, the state of Quintana Roo in Mexico, Panama in Central America, and the Caribbean Islands.
E-Gov Travel Service 2	ETS2	A government-wide, web-based, world-class travel management service.
Electronic Access System	EAS	The servicing bank’s web-based system, which provides a collection of reports which aid in the efficient management of the Travel Charge Card Program.
Expert Monitoring System	EMS	A web-based suite of applications that rely on rules-based technology to perform data mining.
Federal Employees Group Life Insurance	FEGLI	Group life insurance benefits provided for Federal employees and their dependents.

Term	Acronym	Definition
Federal Employees Health Benefits	FEHB	Group health benefits provided to employees. Each plan provides comprehensive coverage for the employee, spouse, and their dependents under age 26.
Federal Travel Regulation	FTR	This regulation implements statutory requirements and executive branch policies for travel by Federal civilian employees and others authorized to travel at Federal Government expense; it is presented in a user-friendly question-and-answer format on the GSA Website.
Foreign Service National	FSN	Foreign Service National employees (often referred to as Locally Engaged Staff, LES) are citizens of the countries in which the Department maintains diplomatic posts and consulates.
Fraud	N/A	Any felonious act of corruption or attempt to cheat the Government. Use of the Government charge card to transact business that is not sanctioned, not authorized, not for the purpose for which the card was issued, nor as part of official government business, are instances of fraud.
Frequent Traveler	N/A	Any Department employee who travels five or more times per year is mandated to use the travel card while traveling on official Government business unless an exemption has been approved.
Frequently Asked Questions	FAQ	Listed questions and answers, all supposed to be commonly asked in some context, and pertaining to a particular topic.
General Services Administration	GSA	GSA oversees the business of the U.S. Federal Government. Its policies covering travel, property and management practices promote efficient government operations.
Government Travel Charge Card	GTCC	A payment vehicle used by the Federal Government to pay for official travel-related expenses.
Hierarchy		The mechanism by which accounts are grouped for reporting and accessing information within an organization. In addition, defines the levels of the hierarchy structure (e.g., levels 1, 2, 3, 4 and so forth).
Individually Billed Account	IBA	An account issued to an employee to pay for the employee's official travel-related expenses such as meals, lodging, and rental vehicle while in a temporary duty (TDY) travel or relocation status.
Infrequent Traveler	N/A	Any Department employee who travels less than five times per year. This traveler is not required but may obtain a travel card. If an employee chooses to obtain a travel card, if directed by his/her supervisor to apply for a card, or is designated as a Continuity of Operations member, the card becomes mandatory use unless an exemption has been approved.

Term	Acronym	Definition
Merchant Category Codes	MCC	A four-digit number the credit card industry uses to classify the type of business a merchant provides (e.g., gas stations, restaurants, airlines). The merchant selects its MCC with their bank based on their primary business. Some MCCs are blocked to prevent inappropriate use of the travel card. MCCs can be tailored to meet the mission and should be done during the initial account set-up.
Mission Critical Status Cardholder	N/A	A travel cardholder who has mission-related extenuating circumstances for which the account billing cycle may be extended 30 days.
Official Travel	N/A	Travel under an official travel authorization/order from an employee's official station or other authorized point of departure to a temporary duty location(s) and return, between two (or more) temporary duty locations, or relocation between official stations.
Organization Program Coordinator	OPC	An individual serving as the local focal point for managing, establishing and maintaining accounts, and issuance and closure of accounts. This Level 4 provides oversight of the day-to-day function for the travel card program at the staff/line office, station, or unit.
Out of Balance	N/A	Any difference in payments received against balances owed on an account. The vendor monitors all central bill accounts and identifies out of balances when payments made by clients are more or less than the balance due.
Personally Identifiable Information	PII	PII includes information regarding an individual that identifies, relates to, is unique to, or describes the traveler's home address, date of birth, social security number (full/truncated), account numbers and so forth. Traveler's PII must be kept in a secure location and not left out in the open or circulated to individuals not having an official need to know. Email containing PII should follow the prescribed method for transmission, such as using the secured transmission protocol of the Department.
Quasi-Generic Card	N/A	A card that does not contain any association with the Government other than the account number. The design provides a level of protection for cardholders whose association with the Government should be protected.
Rebates	N/A	A benefit the Department receives for the use and timely payment of the travel charge card. It is based on two types of measures: sales and productivity. The rebates are computed and distributed on a quarterly basis.

Term	Acronym	Definition
Reconciliation	N/A	The process of reconciling the balances of a centrally billed account. All transactions for a billing cycle are validated against the statement balance due. This process provides the checks and balances for authorizing payments, ensures all transactions are loaded timely in the financial system, and payments are made in full.
Reduced Payment Plan	RPP	A plan offered by the bank to delinquent cardholders that allows for payment of outstanding balance over a defined time period as an alternative to entering administrative offset
Senior Travel Official	STO	The designated individual who is responsible for developing and implementing policies and controls to ensure efficient spending on travel and conference-related activities and fulfills the responsibilities outlined in FTR Bulletin FTR 14-08 .
Servicing Human Resources Office	SHRO	The office is responsible for implementing the human resources policies and programs of its operating unit, and providing a full range of human resources services to one or more components of the Department.
Split Disbursement	N/A	The payment process of dividing a travel voucher reimbursement between the charge card vendor and the traveler. The balance owed to each is sent directly to the applicable party. (The Department does not have a mandatory policy for split disbursement at this time; however, when ETS2 is deployed, the system will have this capability.)
Stranded Travel Cardholder	N/A	Any cardholder who is unable to make legitimate travel purchases due to account credit limits, delinquency status, a lost or stolen card, or a merchant code misclassification.
Surcharge	N/A	Fees that a retailer adds to the cost of a purchase when a customer uses a charge/credit card.
Transportation and Travel Reform Act	TTRA	The Act that requires Federal employees to use Federal travel charge cards for all payments of expenses of official government travel, to amend title 31, United States Code, establishes requirements for prepayment audits of Federal agency transportation expenses, authorizes reimbursement of Federal agency employees for taxes incurred on travel or transportation reimbursements.
Travel Charge Card	TCC	Charge card issued by a GSA SmartPay® vendor, used to pay for official government travel-related expenses.
Travel Management Center	TMC	The commercial travel service used by your agency to issue airline tickets and make airline, rail, hotel, and car-rental reservations.

Term	Acronym	Definition
Travel Management Division	TMD	The Division that issues Department-wide policy for travel-related programs.
Workforce Management Office	WFMO	Another name for Servicing Human Resources Offices within the Department Bureaus, i.e., NOAA.

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Appendix C – Allowable, Limited, and Prohibited Travel Expenses

The Department Travel Card can only be used for official travel and allowable travel-related expenses while in travel status away from the duty station.

Expense	TDY			Local Travel			Comments/Limitations
	Allowable	Limited	Prohibited	Allowable	Limited	Prohibited	
Advertising			X			X	Unauthorized
Aircraft (Hire or chartered)			X			X	Unauthorized
Airlines Tickets	X					X	Official government transportation must be charged to the CBA and purchased through the Travel Management Center (TMC). Travel and Transportation tickets for vendors are prohibited (with or without use of the charge card).
Ammunition			X			X	Unauthorized
ATM Cash Withdrawal (including fees)	X					X	Service and usage fees associated with allowable withdrawals are reimbursable items on travel vouchers. Refer to Section 4.5.3.1.2.1.
ATM Fees		X				X	Service Fees associated with personal card use is not reimbursable.
Awards (including non-monetary, i.e., plaques)			X			X	Unauthorized
Baggage Fees	X					X	Mandatory use
Books (Publications)			X			X	Unauthorized
Business Cards			X			X	Unauthorized
Car Rental	X	X				X	Mandatory use. Limited to the size of car authorized. Compact is the mandatory car size authorized. If the travel card is used to rent a car for official

Expense	TDY			Local Travel			Comments/Limitations
	Allowable	Limited	Prohibited	Allowable	Limited	Prohibited	
							and personal use, the personal portion should not be charged to the travel card.
Car Repairs			X			X	Unauthorized
Car Washes			X			X	Unauthorized
Chemicals			X			X	Unauthorized
Clothing or Protective Clothing			X			X	Unauthorized
Common Carrier Transportation Tickets	X					X	Mandatory charge to CBA.
Computer (Equipment, Software, or Services)			X			X	Unauthorized
Conference or Registration Fees		X				X	Refer to Section 4.5.3.1.
Dry cleaning and laundry		X				X	Refer to Travel Policy Handbook for limitation for domestic and foreign travel.
Emergency Purchases		X				X	Limited to allowable expenses that were not authorized prior to travel or needed during a COOP emergency.
Entertainment			X			X	Unauthorized
Expenses for other travelers			X			X	Unauthorized
Expenses related to personal or family		X	X			X	Unauthorized. Some personal items may be allowable, if expenses are associated with PCS travel.
Expenses related to U.S. Military Guard or Reserve Duty			X			X	Unauthorized
Express Mail Services			X			X	Unauthorized
Fines and Penalties			X			X	Unauthorized
First Aid Kits			X			X	Unauthorized

Expense	TDY			Local Travel			Comments/Limitations
	Allowable	Limited	Prohibited	Allowable	Limited	Prohibited	
Gasoline (private or GSA vehicles)			X			X	Unauthorized. Purchasing fuel for your private vehicle and government vehicles are not allowed.
Gasoline for Rental Car	X					X	Mandatory use
Gifts			X			X	Unauthorized
Higher Education			X			X	Unauthorized
Insurance (i.e., rental car)		X				X	Insurance for rental car while traveling in a foreign area is authorized.
Leases		X				X	Apartment leases for employees on PCS or long-term TDY is permitted, but subject to per diem limitations and travel authorization.
Lodging	X					X	Mandatory use
Local Travel Expenses						X	Refer to Section 4.5.3.1.
Maintenance (cars)			X			X	Unauthorized
Meals (including grocery stores)	X	X				X	Operational use, but encourage to increase rebates. If you obtain an advance to cover your meals, then the Travel Card should not be used. If you are in a PCS travel status, you may be allowed to purchase meals for your family. You may not use the travel to purchase food for other people or as a group meal.
Meeting Rooms			X			X	Unauthorized
Membership or Consulting Fees			X			X	Unauthorized
Motor Oil			X			X	Unauthorized
Official Duty Station (within 50 miles)						X	Unauthorized

Expense	TDY			Local Travel			Comments/Limitations
	Allowable	Limited	Prohibited	Allowable	Limited	Prohibited	
Office-Related Supplies			X			X	Unauthorized
Official Telephone Calls	X						Optional use
Parking	X	X				X	Optional use. You may use your travel card to pay for parking at the airport terminal or at the TDY location. Use of the travel card to pay for local travel parking is prohibited.
Parking Tickets			X			X	Unauthorized
Personal Expenses		X				X	Only permitted M&IE allowance can be purchased using the travel card.
Personal items (i.e., airline tickets)			X			X	Unauthorized. Only permitted M&IE allowance can be purchased using the travel card.
Photocopies/Printing Services (duplicating)			X			X	Unauthorized. Emergency printing while in travel status is permissible using the purchase card, if you have purchase card authority and there is no GPO facility available. Check the OAM Acquisition policy for further information.
Postage			X			X	Unauthorized
Premium Seat Upgrades			X			X	Unauthorized
Reserves/Guard unit members (training)			X			X	Unauthorized
Shipping			X			X	Unauthorized
Signage			X			X	Unauthorized

Expense	TDY			Local Travel			Comments/Limitations
	Allowable	Limited	Prohibited	Allowable	Limited	Prohibited	
Surcharges	X					X	This is an optional charge by the merchant and permitted by the SmartPay contract.
Taxi and Shuttle Services	X					X	Optional use
Telecommunications			X			X	Unauthorized for procuring cellular phone services, calling cards, or video services. Telephone calls are cited under official telephone calls in this appendix.
Tolls	X					X	Optional Use
Training			X			X	Unauthorized. Training should be procured with the SF-182 .
Vendor Acceptance	X					X	Optional Use. Only if the vendor does not accept the travel card.

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Appendix D – Official Travel Reimbursable Expenses

This is a quick reference guide and does not cover all reimbursable or non-reimbursable expenses. This appendix is applicable to TDY reimbursable expenses.

Official Travel Reimbursable Expenses	Type of Travel	
	TDY	PCS
Baggage curbside (disability/special need only)	√	√
Baggage storage	√	√
Baggage transfer	√	√
Biometric fees	√	√
Birth Certificate	√	√
Carrier terminal fees	√	√
Transportation to and from terminal	√	√
Internet connections	√	
Currency Conversion fees	√	√
Deposit when TDY is curtailed/canceled/interrupted	√	
Disease prevention measures	√	√
Driver services	√	
International Driver's License and photos	√	√
Early checkout Penalty due to canceled/interrupted	√	
Energy surcharge fees	√	√
Green card fees	√	√
Government conveyance costs	√	
GTCC – Chip/Pin card issue fees	√	√
GTCC surcharge fees	√	
Guide services	√	
Insurance (Driving in a foreign country only)	√	
Interpreter services	√	
Legal service fees (Check w/OGC for all that may apply)	√	√
Lodging (dual)	√	
Lodging (daytime fees)	√	
Lodging (mandatory fees)	√	
Lodging (reimbursement while on leave, when receiving long term TDY flat rate per diem)	√	
Lodging tax (CONUS and non-foreign OCONUS only)	√	√
Medical Evacuation Insurance (Medivac)	√	
Paper ticket fees	√	√
Parking fees (terminal)	√	
Passport fees (employee and dependents)	√	√
Photograph fees for OCONUS travel (passport, visa, or green card)	√	√
Physical Examination	√	√
Registration fees	√	

Official Travel Reimbursable Expenses	Type of Travel	
	TDY	PCS
Rental Vehicle	√	
Resort fees	√	√
Room Rental	√	
Special Conveyance	√	
Storage of property used on official business	√	
Tips and baggage handling (disability/special need only)	√	√
Transportation (to and from terminal)	√	
Travel and transportation related expenses	√	√
Value added tax certificate	√	
Visa fees	√	√