

# Statewide Travel Management Program

## Recommendations on Obtaining Lowest Applicable Airfares

The Statewide Travel Management Program offers tools and services intended to provide travelers with the lowest applicable airfare. The Program offers these recommendations when internet airfare purchases are being considered. These guidelines will assist you with acquiring the lowest applicable airfare, maximizing efficiency, as well as allowing the program to collect necessary travel data. With access to both the internet and their own inventory, travel agencies may have more attractive fares, routing, available seats or times of departure. Your agency or institution may modify these guidelines in order to meet your mission needs, so we suggest you check with your travel office or travel arranger for details.

- **Obtain Internet Fare Quote:** Search your internet provider selected by your agency for the fare that best meets your needs and travel schedule and then obtain a fare quote that includes the dates of travel, flight times, carrier, flight numbers and any ticketing costs;
- **Call Selected Travel Agency:** Provide these details of the internet fare quotation to the travel agency selected by your agency or institution to determine if they can match or better the internet offering on availability, routing, fare, or tickets on airlines with fewer restrictions. They are to also identify the service fee associated with their service. The travel agency will have a broader inventory of flights, ticket types, seats and other travel services;

**Choice Considerations:** To make the choice of provider, consider more than fare and fee costs only:

- **Cost Comparison:** Compare the cost of the fare and ticketing services, and whether your agency or institution has set a savings threshold for internet use;
- **Value Your Time:** Consider your time especially if traveling on work hours—will your travel impact your working hours and are any savings achieved worth time lost at work;
- **Processing Time:** Assess the effort involved in either choice with regard to the time needed to make travel arrangements, to capture travel data, and to obtain reimbursement.

**Internet or Travel Agency—Next Steps:** To use a travel agency, e-mail is fastest if your trip details are known, but telephoning the travel agency may work better if you are seeking more general information. Capture of data is automatic and payment is centralized. In all cases, you are to follow State Fiscal Rules and Travel Rules as well as any internal agency policies. To use the internet, you will have some additional tasks and obligations, and you will need to use the following routine:

- **Obtain Travel Authorization:** The traveler must secure travel authorization as may be required by State, agency, or institution rules and where the authorization numbers are used, enter the number if internet provider offers the option;
- **Payment Vehicle:** The State traveler is to make the internet airfare purchase using the state authorized travel payment system only through one of the following options:

1. Use your State authorized travel card if that is the only option the internet provider allows;
  2. Use of a State authorized internet air travel website and your payment will be billed centrally if your state agency has selected the provider and set up controlled access.
- **Copy of Itinerary Required:** In order to obtain reimbursement, the traveler must provide a copy of the itinerary to his or her agency or institution travel office, preferably in an electronic format;
  - **Reimbursement Filing:** If an individual State travel card is used to purchase the internet airfare, the traveler must include the cost of the airfare as a part of the trip reimbursement only after returning and not prior as a separate travel voucher;
  - **Making Changes:** The traveler accepts full responsibility for:
    1. Making any changes to an internet ticket as prescribed by the internet site, and
    2. Securing authorization to pay fees associated with any changes made prior to departure.

**Please Note Restrictions on Internet Tickets:** Travelers are cautioned that internet tickets often have added restrictions on changes to itinerary or to dates and times of travel. As of late 2002, most airlines have required that unused restricted tickets be re-booked to a specific date and destination or all value will be lost as of midnight of the date of departure. Use of auction-based internet airfare vendors is strongly discouraged owing to unknown itineraries and travel duration. Direct all questions regarding internet purchases to the travel office serving your agency or institution.

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