

Recommendations on Obtaining Lowest Applicable Airfares

The State 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 [to include ancillary fees];
- **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. The travel agency will have a broader inventory of flights, ticket types, seats and other travel services [e.g. *Secure Flight Mandate*];

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 [e.g. “surfing the net” verses email request to travel agency], to capture travel data [by using a State travel card], and to obtain reimbursement [use of the travel agency avoids the need to be reimbursed for airfare which is allowed after travel only].
- **Ancillary Fees:** The comparison of different providers’ options is difficult as there are all-inclusive, partly-inclusive and non-inclusive ancillary pricing. The price to check a bag rose 50 percent during the last year [2009], when the airline industry took in \$3.8 billion in baggage and other fees. Other fees can include: 1st checked bag, 2nd checked bag, overweight baggage fee, seat assignment, overhead bin, etc.

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 [for more information contact your *Travel Compliance Designee*]. 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 program provider only, which currently is Citi Bank VISA. The use of this payment vehicle automatically provides \$350,000 travel accident insurance coverage for the traveler.
- **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:** The individual State travel card is required to purchase the internet airfare. Therefore, the traveler must include the cost of the airfare as a part of the trip reimbursement only after returning from their business trip;



State Travel Management Program

"Working Together To Serve Colorado"



- **Making Changes:** The traveler accepts full responsibility for:
 1. Making any changes to an internet ticket as prescribed by the internet site [if feasible], and
 2. Securing authorization to pay fees associated with any changes made prior to departure [as prescribed by Fiscal Rule 5-1].

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. 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.

Other Considerations: The awarded travel agencies provide a variety of services that cannot be overlooked; processing of State price agreement airfares, refunds and exchanges, provide the latest guidance to TSA rules [Secure Flight Mandate], monitor the status of each carrier and/or flight State employees might be impacted by. As an example:

"Mexicana Airlines Ceasing Sales Activities: Boulder Travel has 2 affected travelers. One is flying this afternoon and the flight is showing that it is operating as planned. The other is flying on Mexicana Click on August 10 which is not affected by this situation. We will continue to monitor the flights. Thank you."

In addition, STMP is notified whenever a State traveler is involved in an emergency incident which is **NOT** feasible when traveling via internet ticketing. As an example:

"WASHINGTON (Reuters) - A United Airlines flight to Denver from Washington landed safely on Wednesday after a possible disturbance on board by a passenger who was taken into custody, the U.S. Transportation Security Administration said."

Qatari Diplomat Causes Security Scare On US Flight (United Flt. 663 April 7th, 2010). STMP was notified that there was one state traveler on the flight that was escorted by fighter jets. STMP was able to notify the Director of CSEAP [in addition to the DCS Director] in order to facilitate communication to the appropriate individual at the University of Higher Education that was affected. This was in order to notify traveler of counseling services available to them. This would **NOT** have been feasible if the traveler had purchased their ticket via internet ticketing.

Therefore, it is a State Agency/Higher Ed Institution/Poli-sub [business] decision in regards to using an internet site, State price agreement airfare and/or awarded travel agency. The Travel Compliance Designee is the subject matter expert for their respective State Agency/Higher Ed Institution/Poli-sub travel program. Fiscal & Program rules allow for internet ticketing so long as the Travel Payment Program Provider is the method of payment. The benefits of a travel agency should not be overlooked when making such a decision.