

**Quarterly Travel Coordinator Meeting Q/A  
April 27, 2023**

- 1. Can you please share the link to sign up for the live Concur training?**

<https://www.dgs.ca.gov/OFAM/Travel/Events>

- 2. Will there be a fee if employees call CalTravelStore to assist with booking between 8am to 5pm?**

During normal business hours (8am-5pm), a fee may be charged if a travel agent books, cancels and/or changes a reservation. There are no fees to ask questions; the fee is only charged when a travel agent performs some sort of action on a reservation.

- 3. It seems we have been billed the incorrect amount on our Citibank bill for our March 2023 agent fees. Citibank charge is \$596.00 and CalTravelStore charges are \$394.00. I cannot pay the bill because it won't balance when I replenish. How do I get the correct amount?**

This is also a known issue discovered this week. CalTravelStore is aware and working to fix the error. Refunds correcting the issue should be processed today or tomorrow.

- 4. Is Citibank Program Administrator Call-in Access applicable to Travel services unit representatives?**

This is at the discretion of the agency but, yes, typically Program Administrators with call-in access are Travel/Accounting representatives and the same people who usually have online CitiManager access.

- 5. Is Citibank Program Administrator Call-in Access applicable to Travel services unit representatives?**

This is at the discretion of the agency but, yes, typically Program Administrators with call-in access are Travel/Accounting representatives and the same people who usually have online CitiManager access.

**6. Has or will MM 08-08 Payment process for meeting, conference and event related expenses be updated? The memo reflects American Express, not Citibank.**

STP intends to update it with the next contract, and the updated MM will not reference the bank name. The TPS vendor should always be used for meetings and conference-related charges.

**7. What is the method of paying for a block of hotel rooms?**

The travel payment vendor should be used for room blocks. An agency can use their CTA, a Meeting or Travel Card (plastic) or VCA if the agency is set up with VCA.

**8. What is call-in access and online CitiManager access? How do we get access if allowed by the agency?**

Program Admins (PA) with call-in access will be able to call Citibank and speak directly with a Citibank representative regarding payment questions or issues. Only two PAs can be assigned at a time for each agency. CitiManager access will allow the PA to access the 'agency's card account(s), view monthly statements and pull reconciliation reports to make payments. Only approved personnel from the agency can request access. Please send an email to [StatewideTravelProgram@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:StatewideTravelProgram@dgs.ca.gov) to request access.

**9. Please address the individual government card processing times. Some requests have been submitted with no approvals.**

The average processing time for Citibank to issue an IBT (after dept PA submits "approval") is 7 to 10 days. If the applicant does not receive the card or a denied notification within 2 weeks, it's suggested to submit a new application. If still nothing received, please reach out to us at [StatewideTravelProgram@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:StatewideTravelProgram@dgs.ca.gov).

**10. What are the reasons for a traveler to be denied from getting an individual government travel card?**

This is determined by the card issuer (Citibank) and based on previous credit delinquencies reported to the credit bureaus. For more information, please email [StatewideTravelProgram@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:StatewideTravelProgram@dgs.ca.gov).

**11. Can an agency place hotel charges on the agency credit card if the venue/event is offering a discounted rate by booking direct through them (and not through Concur)?**

Please email us at [StatewideTravelProgram@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:StatewideTravelProgram@dgs.ca.gov) as we need more information to answer this question.

**12. By using the Travel Card, does this exempt us from having to get a contract in place for the block of rooms?**

The room block contract is a requirement of the hotel. The type of credit card used does not negate the need for the agreement.

**13. Any clue when the county room rates will get updated? It's been so many years and due to inflation, 90% of the hotels are over the rate causing a lot of STD 255Cs.**

This is outside the wheelhouse of the Statewide Travel Program. It is a Bargaining Unit matter and CalHR issue. Please refer travelers to their respective unions to address this issue. Travel Coordinators may refer questions to the CalHR Travel Manager at [TravelManager@calhr.ca.gov](mailto:TravelManager@calhr.ca.gov).

**14. What do we do if the hotel won't give individual receipts and say they'll group it together for all employees with same check-in/check-out dates?**

This is a very unique issue. Please email us at [StatewideTravelProgram@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:StatewideTravelProgram@dgs.ca.gov) with the details. Typically, something like this would be resolved by contacting the hotel's accounting office.

**15. In order to have a Concur account, does somebody need to be a civil servant or can they register with a personal email address if they are a board member?**

A personal email should never be used for registering in Concur. If they do not have an agency business email, their travel can be booked by an authorized travel administrator/coordinator using the 'Book for a Guest' feature.

**16. What is a "Travel Payment Vendor" and how are they used for securing/booking reservations?**

The state's travel payment vendor is currently Citibank and is the required form of payment for paying for all business-related travel. Airline, rail, and rental car must be booked using the agency's Citibank card. For lodging, some agencies use a direct bill, virtual card account. For those that do not use a virtual card account, the employee is required to use their personal credit for lodging and seek reimbursement. Please email us if you would like to have a further discussion about the travel payment system and how to appropriately secure/book travel reservations.

**17. When contacting CalTravelStore, is there an additional cost charged when VCN is deployed in Concur, but hotel still needs an authorization?**

Yes, there may be an elevated fee for agent assistance for a VCN deployment. The traveler is encouraged to use the ConfermaPay mobile app where they can resend the authorization form to the hotel via the mobile app, which requires no travel agent intervention.

**18. Is there anything restricting an employee from staying at a casino resort?**

No, but many casinos do not list their properties in Concur. The tribal councils that run the casinos have all chosen not to list their properties on any third-party booking sites; so, the only way to book with them is directly. In these cases, we request that travelers instead look for and book comparable lodging within Concur.

**19. How do the hotels get rated in Concur?**

The Concur ratings are based on the size of the property, the amenities that are offered, and additional fact-based information received directly from the hotel. The rating is not based on traveler reviews such as cleanliness, location, service, etc. We recommend using sites such as TripAdvisor or Yelp for traveler-based reviews.

**20. Are there any rate changes for the state rate. I have an increase of submissions of excess lodging request especially in Monterey County.**

Lodging rates are outside the wheelhouse of the Statewide Travel Program. This is a Bargaining Unit matter and CalHR issue. Please refer travelers to their respective unions to address this issue. Travel Coordinators may refer questions to the CalHR Travel Manager.

**21. If the hotels that are available are not safe due to being high crime or high unhoused populations in the area, would the department be able to approve the STD 255C for a safer hotel due to the traveler's safety?**

DGS does not administer the policies/rules for Excess Lodging/STD 255C. Please contact CalHR for more information at [TravelManager@calhr.ca.gov](mailto:TravelManager@calhr.ca.gov).

**22. Any information about whether or not CalHR will be increasing the pre-approved state lodging rates?**

Lodging rates are outside the wheelhouse of the Statewide Travel Program. Lodging rates are a Bargaining Unit matter and a CalHR issue. Please refer travelers to their respective unions to address this issue. Travel Coordinators may refer questions to the CalHR Travel Manager.

**23. Just to confirm, if a reservation is made outside of Concur for a block of rooms that is less expensive than what is offered in Concur, we still need a contract in place. Is that correct?**

If the room block is not part of an existing event, then yes, an agreement is needed with the hotel for the room block.

**24. What if the hotel is not listed in Concur but it is available when calling the hotel directly, is this acceptable?**

If the hotel is not listed in Concur, we prefer that the traveler search for a comparable hotel within the area that is listed in Concur. If there is nothing available, it is up to the travel coordinator to approve or deny booking the hotel outside of Concur based on your agency's internal policies.

**25. Do travelers only need to submit a copy of a VCN hotel receipt when they submit a TEC, or do they need to submit a copy to accounting/travel service unit right after their trip?**

A copy of the hotel receipt that was paid for using VCN should also be submitted to the agency's internal accounting for processing the VCA Citibank statement.

**26. Lodging was booked on Concur and paid via VCN, but the rate exceeds the state rate. If travelers do not have a pre-approved STD 255C prior to the trip taking place, would the employee need to pay the difference back to the department?**

Yes.

**27. Regarding VCN hotel receipts, if a copy should be submitted to accounting for processing the VCA Citibank statement, how soon after an employee travels do we need to submit a copy?**

As soon as possible is always best, but you should check internally what your accounting office requires.

**28. Can we have the list of lodging properties that you mentioned?**

If you are referring to the list of GLP properties, you can find this on our website here:  
<https://www.dgs.ca.gov/OFAM/Travel/Services/Page-Content/Services-List-Folder/Apply-for-Green-Hotel-Certification>

**29. Sometimes the Concur hotel rate is higher than making the reservation directly with the hotel. So, the employee reserved it directly since it is cheaper than Concur. Is this acceptable?**

No, this practice is not acceptable as it violates MM 14-03. This is a "hot button" issue with DGS' Office of Audit Services. It is one of the audit tests they perform when they conduct an audits of state agencies. They work with our office to pull reports and discover instances where an employee booked lodging outside of Concur or CalTravelStore.

If a traveler finds a cheaper rate than Concur, contact Statewide Travel Program immediately. If the travel is within 14 days, it is recommended that the traveler books at the higher rate in Concur, and then contact the property and ask if they will lower the reservation to the lower direct booking rate. If the travel is more than 14 days out, allow Statewide Travel Program time to work with the property to get the correct rate available. Statewide Travel Program's lodging specialist will provide updates and possible alternatives.

**30. For hotels, if a VCN was deployed and the traveler canceled the reservation in Concur, however, the charges were still billed to the department, what would be the best method to go about getting the charges refunded?**

Please contact the hotel first to resolve the matter and request that they refund the charge (as long as the cancellation was done prior to the cancellation deadline). If the matter cannot be resolved, then you may email us at [StatewideTravelProgram@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:StatewideTravelProgram@dgs.ca.gov).

**31. Where do I find the memo that states excess lodging requests under \$250 can now be approved by my site superintendent? I only heard about it but was not provided an official document.**

DGS does not administer the policies/rules for Excess Lodging/STD 255C. Please contact CalHR for more information at [TravelManager@calhr.ca.gov](mailto:TravelManager@calhr.ca.gov).

**32. Should reservations that are made by calling the CalTravelStore (business hours & after hours) show up in the employees' travel history in Concur?**

Yes, they should. If they are not showing up in the employees' travel history, please let us know so we can address the matter with CalTravelStore.

**33. When you pay in advance there be a processing fees, are those reimbursable?**

DGS does not administer the policies/rules for reimbursements. Please contact CalHR for more information at [TravelManager@calhr.ca.gov](mailto:TravelManager@calhr.ca.gov).

**34. Just to confirm in a rental car, Enterprise gets the bill, they pay for it and bill to the Agency?**

Is your question asking about tolls? If so, the employee is responsible for paying for the toll in a rental car and then seeking reimbursement. If you are asking about fueling the vehicle, Enterprise will fuel the vehicle when the employee returns it to the branch and bill it the agency's Citibank account.

**35. Can the Meeting Planner card be used to pay each individual toll invoice? Does it need to be set up in advance? Or can we use the existing meeting planner card? Where can we get more information about paying tolls via Meeting Planner card?**

Please send an email to [StatewideTravelProgram@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:StatewideTravelProgram@dgs.ca.gov) requesting Meeting Planner card information.

**36. For short-term rental car rates, normally we see “daily rate” and “weekly rate” on the receipt. If we see “hourly rate” for extra hours, would this be an issue? For example, the rental car period is one day and 3 hours. \$37.75 for the first day and hourly rate for the extra 3 hours.**

No, that is not an issue and is how the billing works with Enterprise.

**37. Where can I find the template for the enterprise billing issues?**

The template can be found on our website here:

<https://www.dgs.ca.gov/OFAM/Travel/Resources/Page-Content/Resources-List-Folder/Car-Rental-Resources>

**38. Is there a section in STP with EV information?**

Please see the car rental resource page on for electric vehicle information here:

<https://www.dgs.ca.gov/OFAM/Travel/Resources/Page-Content/Resources-List-Folder/Car-Rental-Resources>

**39. How would we know from the invoice at the end of the month, that the rented car was an electric vehicle?**

The car class for an electric vehicle (EV) would be shown as ICAE.

**40. Rental cars returned after hours - do employees need to provide a justification since there is an additional charge for returning the vehicle later than its original reservation?**

These costs should be factored into the initial approval for travel. We do not have a specific justification, but each agency should have their own internal policy around this.

**41. For the electric vehicles, are there any limits to the cost when upgrading to an electric vehicle?**

Our contract has a set rate; so, as long as the travel is approved and the traveler uses our contracted rate, there should be no issue.

**42. Rental car reservations on Concur are normally only for short-term rentals. If travelers rent a car for over 30 days and charged a monthly rate, would this be acceptable?**

Rentals that are 30 or more days may never be booked through Concur or CalTravelStore. The long-term rate is not programmed into those tools, so you will pay more. All long-term rentals must go through the Office of Fleet and Asset Mgmt. We recommend speaking with your own fleet office, as well. More information can be located here:

<https://www.dgs.ca.gov/OFAM/Travel/Resources/Page-Content/Resources-List-Folder/Car-Rental-Resources>.

**43. Does Concur not show all flights available? I have a scenario with an employee not seeing the flight on Concur but able to see a few seats left on the Southwest airline website.**

Concur pulls all flights from an airline's inventory. When this happens, it is best to send screenshots to STP showing the airline website and the Concur site. Include specific details such as departure/arrival airport, date and time of the flight so STP or CalTravelStore can replicate the booking and determine the cause for the discrepancy.

**44. Our department has not received an Unused ticket Credit report since January. Is there an issue? Can a current one be provided to us?**

Please email us at [StatewideTravelProgram@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:StatewideTravelProgram@dgs.ca.gov) so we can verify that we have a current list of contacts on file for your agency. If your agency travel coordinators have not received an unused ticket report since January, it is possible that there have not been any to report; however, we will need to research. Please include a request for UTC research when emailing (as noted above) the Statewide Travel Program.



**45. Can you please explain why airfare cannot be cancelled directly with the carrier?**

There are a broad range of reasons for this, but it primarily boils down to duty of care, compliance, and fraud risk. Changes to reservations made outside of Concur or CalTravelStore cannot be tracked. In the event of an emergency, we need to know where our employees are. If someone makes a change directly with the carrier, we have no way of knowing. In the event of an emergency, we need to pull reports and be able to account for the whereabouts of your employees to determine they are safe.

**46. Airline question. Are there requirements as to which one they book on Southwest. Wanna Get Away? Anytime? Or Business Select?**

We have strict requirements for this. Please see our page regarding Management Memo 21-07: <https://www.dgs.ca.gov/OFAM/Travel/Resources/Page-Content/Resources-List-Folder/State-Travel-Policy-Resources>.

**47. Is there any course of action to take for travel coordinators (other than reminding EE for future reservations to comply with advance booking) if flight is not reserved 7 days in advance?**

Meeting with the employee/supervisor; auditing their justification for not following policy; more extreme measures could be removing their ability to book travel themselves and having a travel coordinator do it for them.

**48. Do infrequent flyers have to book a nonrefundable ticket also, and in the case of a cancellation, are we able to receive a credit to be used by another traveler?**

Infrequent travelers booking a refundable fare is allowable. If the refundable flight were to be cancelled, the agency would receive a credit back to the Citibank card.

**49. How about infrequent flyers that travel less than once per year?**

Yes, this is a justifiable reason to book a refundable flight.

**50. If an employee says their meeting ended earlier, is this sufficient justification for the department to take up additional cost for the change in airfare/new flight?**

We could not make that determination for your agency. If there is a business reason that your traveler, their manager, and you (or any travel coordinator) agree upon, and that does not conflict with other state policy, it would be your agency's choice and responsibility to ensure that determination is made with the best interest of the state in mind.

**51. Are unused ticket credits transferable?**

On Southwest, no. On United, name changes may be possible. Transferability depends on the fare type. It is always best to check with CalTravelStore. Questions regarding unused tickets can be emailed to [unusedtickets@caltravelstore.com](mailto:unusedtickets@caltravelstore.com).

**52. Can employees use the OFAM 100 form where flight reservation is not made 7 days in advance? Can written confirmation from employee's supervisor sufficient to justify the situation?**

The OFAM 100 form only applies to rental cars.

**53. If we know for sure that employee will not be using their Southwest credit (retired or left the department), how should we handle that?**

See page 4 of the Unused Ticket Credit User Guide available for download on the airline webpage here: <https://www.dgs.ca.gov/OFAM/Travel/Resources/Page-Content/Resources-List-Folder/Airfare-Resources-for-Government-Travel>.

**54. If a traveler booked a flight from Southwest, but paid for it personally instead of booking it through Concur like they should have done, is that still reimbursable?**

You should follow whatever internal guidance the agency requires for justifying the MM 14-03 policy violation. You should also contact CalHR at [TravelManager@calhr.ca.gov](mailto:TravelManager@calhr.ca.gov) as the question is reimbursement related and STP does not administer the policies/rules for reimbursements.

**55. We are expected to wait for trip approvals before making flight reservations. They have more often than not been arriving as close to travel as the day before the trip. Having to use non-refundable fares makes it impossible to get reasonable rates. Our travelers are often not going to be able to use credits later. What do you suggest?**

I would recommend submitting for approval sooner, if possible. And make sure to note that approval is needed by a certain date to ensure being able to book 7 days in advance.

**56. Do you click UATP to use the credit or does it automatically deduct?**

It is automatic. Concur will use the UATP card if there are enough funds. If not, it will use the agency's Citibank card.

**57. Can DGS provide a resource with different scenarios in regard to personal and business travel and what the employees should be doing with booking their business travel and personal travel appropriately.**

Personal and business trip scenarios vary on a case-by-case basis. A recent STP newsletter recently addressed this a bit more but please email us at [StatewideTravelProgram@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:StatewideTravelProgram@dgs.ca.gov) for more information.