

NIH Policy Manual

1500-11 - Use of Official Travel Management Center (TMC)

Issuing Office: OD/OM/OFM **Phone:** [\(301\) 496-4379](tel:3014964379)

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Transmittal Notice

1. Explanation of Material Transmitted: The material transmitted contains amended language that serves to update and clarify existing policies and procedures when it comes to procuring official travel services from the Travel Management Center. The rewrite also includes language about the new service fees that will go into effect pending the transition to the HHS contract in May of 2006.

2. Filing Instructions:

Remove: NIH Manual 1500, Chapter 11 "Use of NIH Official Travel Management Center," dated 11/9/00

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1500-11-00. Use of Official Travel Management Center (TMC)

A. Introduction

In line with Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) 301-73.104, the Department of Health and Human Services has awarded a performance-based contract to a Travel Management Center (TMC) for the provision of travel management services. These services include reservations for common carrier transportation, lodging, rental cars, and other official business travel requirements. Travelers are mandated to procure all official travel services from the TMC

unless they meet one of the exceptions outlined in [NIH Manual Chapter 1500-02-01](#).

B. Authority

The TMC TMC acts in accordance with the established FTR and corresponding HHS and NIH travel policies and procedures. Appropriate delegations of authority at the National Institutes of Health are those which are published in NIH Manual Issuance 1130 under "Travel". These delegations are also defined in [NIH Manual Issuance 1500 Chapter 01-02 C\(9\) and C \(10\)](#).

C. Definitions

Listed below are some frequently used terms and their definitions related to the procurement of official Government travel.

1. **Contract Carriers**- U.S. certified air carriers, which are under contract with the Government to furnish Federal employees and other persons authorized to travel at Government expense with passenger transportation services.
2. **Domestic Travel**- Travel within the continental United States (CONUS).
3. **E-Ticket**- A paperless ticketing mechanism whereby a reservation is made with the TMC and instead of receiving a paper ticket with itinerary, a receipt is provided that includes a "record locator" number. Upon arrival at the airport, only the record locator number and a valid ID along with your Travel Authorization are required to check-in.
4. **Electronic Booking**- (Self-service) - A method for travel arrangers or travelers to independently make reservations directly with an airline via a Personal Computer (PC) while using an electronic booking mechanism.
5. **Employee**- An individual employed by an agency including an individual employed intermittently in the Government service as an expert or consultant and paid on a daily when-actually-employed basis, and an individual serving without pay or at \$1 a year (see FTR 301-1.2).
6. **Federal Travel Regulation (41 CFR 301) (FTR)**- Governs Temporary Duty travel and transportation allowances for Federal civilian employees. This is available on the OFM Travel Policy Home Page at <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/104790>. *Step 1:* Click on "GSA Federal Travel Regulation; *Step 2:* Click on Federal Travel Regulation; *Step 3:* Click on Chapter 301.
7. **Fly America Act**- 49 U.S.C. 40118 requires Federal employees and their dependents, consultants, contractors, grantees, and others performing United States Government-financed foreign air travel to use U.S. flag air carrier(s). Details are contained in 41 CFR 301-10.131.
8. **Foreign Travel**- Official travel that takes place in an area situated both outside the Continental United States and the non-foreign areas (see below). (Includes the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau, and the Marshall Islands).
9. **General Services Administration (GSA) City-Pair Program**- Government contracted airline passenger service between selected U.S. cities/airports and between selected U.S. and international cities/airports at reduced fares. City-Pair rates can be viewed at <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/27075> (Click on "Government Contract Flight

- Schedules”).
10. ***Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act of 1990-*** Public Law 101-391, September 25, 1990. The Act encompasses guidelines for Federal employees traveling on official government business who must stay in approved public accommodations which have automatic sprinkler systems and smoke detectors, when these facilities are available. A current list of places which meet these guidelines can be found on the Internet at <http://www.usfa.fema.gov/hotel>.
 11. ***Non-foreign Travel-*** Travel to Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands, and any other territory under U.S. jurisdiction.
 12. ***Performance-Based Contracting (PBC)-*** This is a contracting method which evolved as part of an overall shift in Government management towards more commercial business practices. Essentially, PBC allows the Government to describe what it wants but not to dictate how the end result should be achieved. By utilizing written performance standards, the Government can measure results to ensure it is getting the services for which it has paid.
 13. ***Performance Standard-*** An agency-developed tool used to facilitate the assessment of a contractor’s performance against the stated contract objectives. Examples of standards which could be monitored include quality, timeliness, and accuracy. Agencies may offer incentives for exceeding a standard, or impose a monetary penalty for nonconformance.
 14. ***Service Fee-*** A non-refundable service fee is charged by the TMC for all common carrier, e.g., plane, train, reservation transactions. A service fee may also be charged when a traveler procures only lodging and/or rental car services, but not common carrier tickets. If a ticket has been issued and thus a service fee has been charged, and then the trip is canceled, both the ticket cost and service fee are still owed to the TMC. However, if the ticket was fully refundable, the NIH will receive credit for the unused ticket. The service fee though, will still have to be paid. (See process guidelines below in Section 1500-11-01(C)).
 15. ***Travel Authorization (Order)-*** Written permission to travel on official business. It must include specific dates, purposes, itinerary, estimated costs, and appropriate signatures.
 16. ***Travel Management Center (TMC)-*** A commercial travel office under contract to GSA or another Federal agency with a centralized location dedicated to providing services and support for all authorized official NIH travel requirements.
 17. ***Travel Profile Form-*** This form can be obtained by accessing the [TMC web site](#). All travelers are required to complete this form in that this will assist the TMC in its ability to contact the traveler and provide them with the requested services.
 18. ***Travel Services-*** Transportation reservations, issuance and delivery of tickets for all modes; reservations for hotel/motel and car rental services, or any other related services which support the travel function.
 19. ***Travel Voucher (Reimbursement Claim)-*** A written request, supported by documentation and receipts where applicable, for reimbursement of expenses incurred in the performance of official business, including permanent change of station (PCS) travel.

D. TMC Services and Responsibilities

The purpose of the TMC is to provide a high quality, central source of support for authorized travel programs at the NIH. This also includes any changes related to current or emerging travel management programs, systems, products, and services which support this objective. The NIH has a number of different categories of travel that represent the diverse ways in which the NIH accomplishes its mission. These include, 1) Staff Travel; 2) Special Service Travel; 3) Invitational/Meeting Travel; and 4) Patient Travel. In this respect, the TMC offers an array of core services as described below:

1. Reservation and Ticketing Services

The TMC will provide or effect the following reservation and ticketing services:

- Make reservations for Domestic, Non-Foreign, and Foreign travel (airlines, rail, and ship)
- Issue and deliver tickets as specified by requestor
- Information and reservation services for ground transportation
- Itinerary changes
- Refunds i.e., unused E-tickets

2. Agency Travel Policy Compliance

- GSA's Airline Contract City-Pair Program
- Fly America Act
- Lowest available fare
- Premium Class Accommodations

3. Lodging Services

- Lodging services for Federal travelers (Federal Premier Lodging Rate or equivalent accommodations)
- Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act of 1990 compliant

4. Car Rental

- Services are to be obtained from rental agencies that have negotiated agreements with the Department of Defense, Surface Deployment and Distribution Command.

5. Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities

- Arrange necessary and reasonable accommodations, including, but not limited to, airline seating, in-terminal transfers, ground transportation and accessible lodging.

6. Itineraries/Passenger Receipt Coupons

Automated itinerary documents will be provided, and include such information as:

- Carrier(s)
- Flight or train voyage numbers
- If use of a non-contract flight has been authorized, a standard justification for not using the GSA contract city-pair airfares will be noted under the Remarks block #6 on the print version of the Travel Authorization.
- Departure and arrival time for each segment of the trip
- If applicable, the hotel confirmation and other pertinent information
- If applicable, the car reservation confirmation and other pertinent information
- The TMC local, toll-free and emergency after hours phone numbers
- As requested by the NIH, all final itineraries must include all charges associated with the transportation ticket, including the ticket number, price, and applicable service fee(s) charged (based on reservation method used).

7. Ticket Delivery

While electronic ticketing (ticketless) is fast and efficient, it may not be acceptable to the requesting office or available for certain travel destinations. When a "paper" ticket is requested, a separate fee, in addition to the TMC service fee will be charged. Therefore, the following ticket delivery options are available:

- The NIH Accountable Mail System is a safe and reliable way of receiving tickets. When this option is desired, the NIH requesting office must provide the TMC with a contact name, building, room number, Mail Stop Code, and phone number where the tickets should be delivered.
- The TMC can overnight mail tickets for a fee, or the requestor may provide the TMC with their account number.
- The IC may request to pick-up the tickets at either the off-campus TMC location or in the Building 10, Patient Travel Office (pick-up only).

1500-11-01. TMC Performance Based Contract

A. Features

The TMC will implement and maintain key service features which will enhance the overall efficiency and effectiveness for the NIH. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- advanced accounting and reservation systems
- multiple reservation methods: email, fax, phone, and if available in the future, electronic booking (self-service))
- lowest fare guarantees
- conference and meeting planning services (fee for service)

- multiple enhanced management reports used by the Project Officer in service level and performance evaluations
- upgraded telephone and fax system
- dedicated NIH travelers web site
- emergency back-up and 24 hour customer support
- dedicated VIP/Executive special services desk

B. Performance Standards

Performance standards are an important aspect of this contract as they ensure that the NIH customer service needs are met and/or exceeded. The Project Officer is responsible for reviewing reports and consumer feedback related to each stated performance standard. Armed with this information, the NIH can then partner more effectively with the TMC to more expeditiously resolve any discrepancies or problems by suggesting training and/or changes to established TMC business practices. These performance standards include:

- 98% of all quarterly reservations will be complete and accurate;
- 97% of all quarterly reservations for air travel will have the lowest logical fare based on NIH travel policy and travel requests;
- 85% of all quarterly customer phone calls will be answered within twenty seconds or three rings by a live person or a message;
- 90% of all quarterly telephone holding times will average no more than two minutes;
- 90% of all quarterly customer phone messages, emails/faxes, will be returned within an average of two business hours and,
- 97% of all quarterly requesters/users will rate the vendor at least “Average” on a written survey (supplied quarterly by TMC with each ticket issued).

If during the quarterly reviews the Project Officer determines that any of these standards have not been met, the TMC will be penalized by reducing the transaction fees associated with the Clinical Line Item Numbers (CLIN) paid to the contractor.

C. Service Fees/Booking Methods

Non-refundable service fees:

1. A non-refundable service fee will be charged for each transaction that involves an airline or train ticket being issued. If a lodging and/or rental car reservation is administered at the same time as the requested transportation ticket, no additional fee is charged.
2. A non-refundable service fee will be charged if lodging and/or rental reservations are made **without** the issuance of a transportation ticket.

This includes all travel booked through the TMC (patient, official government, and travel for authorized non-government travelers). The applicable service fee to be charged by the TMC is dependent upon the type (staff, patient or meeting) and method used to make a reservation.

Acceptable methods for making reservations with the NIH TMC are:

- *Self Service* - This is a method where the travel arranger makes the reservation by utilizing a web based application directly with the transportation provider.
- *Email/Fax*- Acceptable forms for fax and email are available at <https://oma.od.nih.gov/DMS/Pages/Forms-Management-All-Forms.aspx> (Category Travel) and <https://www.ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dats/travel/Pages/travel.aspx> for email purposes. The TMC will respond back within three business hours of receipt for staff travel requests.
- *Phone/In-person*- These methods are the most time consuming for the travel agents. However, it is possible to call and speak directly with an agent, or go to the TMC off-campus location to make reservations. The Clinical Center patient travel office may not be used for walk-in traffic other than patients.

[Click here for the most current TMC fee schedule.](#)

When a service fee will be charged-

A fee will be charged when, 1) a common carrier ticket is purchased; 2) only lodging and/or rental car services are purchased; and 3) if 24-hour emergency service has been solicited. It is important to note that no fee will be charged for requesting information through any of these means.

Second service fee for requested changes-

If the traveler requests a change after the ticket has been issued, a second service fee will be charged to issue the new ticket, if applicable.

Time Changes after ticket issuance-

Changing a requested flight departure time will not incur a second service fee as a new ticket is not required.

Where the service fee goes on the Travel Authorization-

The applicable service fee should be entered as an expense (select TMC fee from expense drop-down list) on the Expense Screen in the automated travel system. Select GTA as the method of payment. The ticket cost is entered on the Transportation Screen and the selected method of payment is also GTA. These two separately entered GTA line items will combine as a single “non-reimbursable” amount on the Totals Screen of the Travel Authorization. Currently, the ticket and TMC fee are charged to a single Expenditure Type (Object Classification Code).

When a trip is canceled-

If a trip is canceled after a ticket has been issued, the ticket cost and service fee must still be paid. If the ticket was fully refundable, the cost of the ticket will be credited to the NIH. However, the service fee will not be credited.

Where the service fee will appear-

The service fee will appear on the TMC's final itinerary which accompanies the ticket (or receipt for e-tickets). For questions or disputes related to a charged fee, you should immediately contact your respective IC Administrative Official.

D. Meeting Travel

The TMC is also able to provide a full range of travel services for authorized non-government personnel on official business for the NIH (Invitational Travel, FTR 300-3.1) through the Purchase Order (PO) and Record of Call (ROC) mechanisms. Purchasing tickets through either method allows the NIH to take advantage of Government contract city-pair airfares. Procedures for processing PO and ROC travel can be found at

<https://www.ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dats/travel/Pages/travel.aspx>.

NOTE 1: In accordance with the FTR, if a nonfederal person traveling on the NIH's behalf is receiving an honorarium or fee for service, they are not eligible to receive contract city-pair fares. In this case, a Travel Authorization is **not** to be prepared for any associated travel costs.

NOTE 2: It is NIH policy that the PO or ROC mechanism is only to be used when a contingent of 5 or more non-federal persons are traveling on the NIH's behalf. If 4 or fewer individuals are traveling, a Travel Authorization must be prepared for each individual.

E. Travel Arranger Procedures

To ensure that travel needs are effectively met, we would like to offer some procedures that will assist NIH travel arrangers:

- As soon as travel requirements are known, we suggest that arrangers contact the TMC to begin making reservations. Whenever possible, it is more expedient to email or fax requests using the electronic forms available (See (C) above). These forms contain all the information required to ensure that travel is effectively scheduled.
- The TMC will either fax or email a copy of the requested travel itinerary. Please carefully check this document to ensure that traveler's name, travel dates, times, locations, type of ticket (paper or electronic), delivery information are correct. If car or hotel reservations were made, ensure that this is confirmed on the itinerary too.
- Approved Travel Authorizations should be faxed to the TMC within three weeks prior to travel commencing, if the travel is known by that time.
- Travel Authorizations should match the itinerary provided to the TMC (estimated ticket cost, dates, times, locations).
- If a change has been requested, an amended approved Travel Authorization must be forwarded to the TMC. *(If change was made after a ticket was issued, a second service fee should be included)*
- If a non-contract carrier has been requested, please ensure that a proper justification is provided under the Remarks block of the Travel Authorization.
- If Premium Class Air Accommodations are requested, please ensure that the appropriate form is provided, when applicable (See NIH Manual 1500 Appendix 7 and

Appendix 8).

- The non-refundable service fee should be added to the ticket cost and placed in the GTA field found on the Travel Authorization (*the applicable service fee(s) will be reflected on the **final** itinerary*).
- Ensure that the travel agent has been advised as to when, how and where tickets should be delivered. If the NIH accountable mail system is used, provide the appropriate contact name, address and mail stop code (MSC).

For additional guidance and information on authorization and approval of government travel, please see [NIH Manual 1500-01-00 through 1500-01-02](#).

TMC and NIH Contact Information: For the most current TMC contact information, locations and hours of operation, etc.; and for the most current NIH contact information, please visit the Office of Research Services (ORS)/Division of Travel and Transportation Services (DTTS) travel web page at: <http://www.ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dats/travel/Pages/travel.aspx>. Should you encounter poor customer service, or have questions or concerns about the information being provided to you, please prompt the “NIH Contact” listed under “Contact Information”. The appropriate staff person will make every effort to respond to your concerns in the most expeditious manner.