



The Division of Financial Operations (DFO) is committed to providing support and services to schools, Field Support Centers, clusters, central and field offices, and all DOE employees.

As part of this commitment, the Central Business and Finance Office (CBFO) within DFO created the following list of Frequently Asked Questions regarding travel by DOE employees.

DOE Travel: Frequently Asked Questions



For information related to traveling with students, please refer to [Chancellor's Regulation A-670: School Trips](#).

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Making Travel Arrangements

Q. What is TRAC?

A. TRAC stands for Travel Request and Approval Certification. This is the name of the online system used to request both permission to travel and post-travel reimbursement for travel-related expenses.

Q. Can I make my own travel arrangements or do I need to work with one of our travel agencies?

A. All out-of-city arrangements for air and train travel must be made through one of the DOE's contracted vendors (travel agencies). Our approved travel agencies are:

- Advantage Travel – (888) 444-4240
- Euro Lloyd Travel – (212) 629-5470

Although these agencies must be used for air and rail arrangements, you have the option of making your own lodging arrangements. Note that in order to reduce personal out-of-pocket expense and avoid the need to wait for reimbursement, you may wish to request that your school's FAMIS administrator or your division's financial officer create a purchase order for the cost of lodging (for more information, see the section on [purchase orders](#) below). Keep in mind, that lodging arrangements must be made in accordance with U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) guidelines found on [GSA's Web site](#).

Q. What is the GSA?

A. The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) is an independent agency of the United States government that supports the basic functioning of federal agencies. Among other things, the GSA establishes the maximum per diem meal and lodging rates to guide government employee spending while traveling for business. The DOE has adopted these per diem guidelines to help it manage its own spending on employee travel. Per diem rates for each county, state and country can be found on the [GSA's Web site](#). DOE employees should not exceed these rates when traveling for business. If expenditures exceed the per diem rate for a particular location, the traveler will be required to provide an adequate explanation in his/her application for reimbursement (found in the TRAC application) as to why an exception should be granted.

Q. I cannot find a hotel whose cost does not exceed the GSA maximum per diem rate. What should I do?

A. The first step is to go to Fedrooms.com accessible via the [U.S. General Services Administration \(GSA\) Web site](#). This site maintains a listing of Federal Travel Regulation (FTR)-compliant hotels for federal government employees who must travel for work. Because the DOE's maximum daily allowances for travel mirror those of the federal government, you may be able to find a GSA-approved room at an FTR-compliant hotel at your destination. If you have any questions regarding lodging or GSA per diem rates, please email TRACExceptions@schools.nyc.gov.

Q. I checked Fedrooms.com and cannot find a hotel whose cost does not exceed the GSA rate. How should I proceed?

A. If the daily rate of your hotel exceeds the GSA rate for the city that you will be traveling to, you will be directed to the GSA Exception Form screen within the TRAC application. Here, you must provide an explanation as to why the additional expense of staying at a particular establishment is necessary or unavoidable. Once submitted, the exception request is automatically routed to the person named as the approver in the TRAC Approver Detail screen, and then on to DFO for final approval or rejection. If you have any questions regarding lodging or GSA per diem rates, please email TRACExceptions@schools.nyc.gov.

Q. Why must I provide the traveler's date of birth to the travel agency?

A. Per federal regulation set forth by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), all airline travelers must provide their gender, name, as it appears on the government-issued ID to be used on the date of travel, and their date of birth. For more information, please visit the [Travel and Safety Administration's Website](#).

Q. Can I use a Procurement Card (P-Card) to pay for my trip?

A. No. P-cards cannot be used to secure travel. You must use a purchase order (PO).

Q. Can I use my P-Card to hold hotel room reservations?

A. No. P-Cards cannot be used to hold or pay for hotel room reservations. Hotel room reservations are secured by one of the approved travel agencies, if you provide a PO number, or you can use your personal credit card. Keep in mind that using your own credit card may result in an increase in your out-of-pocket expenses and the need to wait for reimbursement.

Q. Who must complete a TRAC request?

A. All DOE employees must initiate a TRAC request prior to commencement of out-of-town travel. The [TRAC application](#) is an online application used to manage the travel request and approval process for those employees attending meetings, conferences or conventions outside of NYC. TRAC replaces the OP-221 form formerly used to request permission to travel.

Q. What is a PE number?

A. A PE number is a number assigned to your request to travel application, as submitted via the TRAC system (PE stands for "projected expenses"). While completing your TRAC application, you will be required to include your projected expenses, if any. Once your TRAC application is submitted, a PE document number will be generated. The PE number is used to identify and locate your application as it moves through the approval process.

Q. What is a TR number?

A. A TR number is a "travel reimbursement" number assigned to your request when you claim reimbursement of travel expenses, as submitted via the TRAC system. A TR number is used to identify and locate your reimbursement application as it moves through the approval process.

Q. What is a Car number?

- A. A Car number is a number assigned to your Request to Use Personal Vehicle application, as submitted via the TRAC system. If you meet the criteria for local travel and must use your own personal vehicle, this application must be submitted. Once submitted, a Car number is generated. When applying for reimbursement of your local travel expenses, you will select the Car number associated with your trip as found on the TRACExpense Details screen (your Car number will be found in a drop-down menu). Once selected, you may then add in the mileage used during your trip so that you may be reimbursed for this expense.

Q. Who approves the TRAC application?

- A. Principals and heads of office approve TRAC requests for their employees; superintendents approve TRAC requests for principals.

Q. If another organization is paying for all or part of my travel, do I still need to complete a TRAC request?

- A. Yes, all DOE employees must have an approved TRAC application prior to commencing out-of-town travel, even if another organization is paying for all or part of the trip.

Q. How long is the price quote provided by the travel agency valid?

- A. Airline reservations are generally valid up to 24 hours after the agency issues a price quote.

Q. What do I do once I receive a price quote from the travel agent?

- A. Once you receive a price quote from a travel agency, you should be prepared to act upon it immediately as a delay may result in your reservation being cancelled and higher prices upon rebooking. Upon receipt of the price quote, submit your TRAC application and have your school's FAMIS administrator or your division's financial officer prepare your PO. After the PO is approved by the Central Business and Finance Office (CBFO) Travel Unit, you must fax all supporting travel documentation to the Travel Unit at (718) 326-8144. Supporting travel documentation is as follows; please write your PO number on each document prior to faxing:

- Copy of CBFO-approved PO which must include the name of each individual traveling with you;
- An approved travel request PE document for each DOE employee traveling with you;
- Itineraries for each traveler as provided by the travel agency;
- Conference announcement, meeting information, etc. (include only page(s) that verify the information on the PO);
- List of students and chaperones, if applicable;
- Completed Credit Card Authorization Form if the hotel reservation was made on your own, without the use of a travel agent. This form, which is obtained from the hotel, allows the DOE to pay the hotel bill directly (do not include your personal credit card information when completing this form).

Q. Can the travel agency reserve my hotel room using reduced rates negotiated by the conference organizer?

- A. Yes, unless there is a separate housing agency assigned by the conference organizer (some large national conferences hire a housing agency to manage all lodging). Give the travel agency any appropriate organization or conference code to take advantage of the reduced conference rate, but please remember that GSA maximum per diem rates will still apply.

Q. How will I receive my travel documents from the travel agency?

- A. Upon obtaining authorization to travel from CBFO, the travel agency will process the reservation and email the travel itinerary and e-tickets directly to each traveler. *Please note that until the travel agency receives CBFO approval, e-tickets will not be issued, and hotel reservations will not be confirmed.* If you have not received your email confirmation prior to leaving for your trip, please call the CBFO Travel Unit at (718) 935-2930.

Q. What if my plans change and the trip needs to be modified?

- A. Any modifications that require an increase to the number of travelers or expense should be done via the travel agency with which you reserved your travel. This will either be Advantage Travel (888) 444-4240 or Euro Lloyd Travel 212 629-5470. You must also call the Central Business and Finance Office Travel Unit at (718) 935-2930 to provide details about how and why your itinerary was modified. If the modified changes result in an increase or decrease in price, your school's FAMIS administrator or your division's financial officer must create a change notice document in FAMIS.

If a cancellation is necessary before or after airline tickets have been issued, please notify the CBFO Travel Unit at (718) 935-2930. The school is responsible for all applicable ticket and/or agency fees. Airline tickets are generally not refundable, but are good for one year from the date of purchase.

Purchase Orders

Q. Why is it necessary for me to create a PO when I travel?

- A. One component of the DOE travel contract is an agreement with Citibank to secure travel arrangements using the Citibank corporate travel card. Under this agreement, the DOE is offered certain benefits and protections. Payment is made to Citibank by the Central Business & Finance Office, which in turn must be reimbursed by the purchase order.

Q. How do I create a PO for travel?

- A. Your school's FAMIS administrator or your division's financial officer must create a purchase order for you in FAMIS.

Q. Once my PO is approved by the Central Business & Finance Office (CBFO), am I done?

- A. No. *Approval of a PO by CBFO does not mean that travel has been approved, nor does it mean that ticket(s) will be issued or hotel reservation(s) confirmed.*

Following approval of a PO, the traveler is responsible for providing supporting documentation to justify travel expenses. Once received and approved, CBFO will notify the travel agency so that it may complete the reservation process.

Q. What is "supporting documentation"? What exactly do I need to submit to the CBFO Travel Unit?

- A. Once you have requested a PO from your school's FAMIS administrator or division's financial officer, you must submit supporting documentation to the CBFO Travel Unit in order to substantiate your request to travel. CBFO reviews this documentation prior to notifying the travel agency that travel has been approved. Before faxing your supporting documentation to the CBFO Travel Unit, ask your school's FAMIS administrator or your division's financial officer for your PO number. Write the PO number at the top of each page of the following documents and fax to the CBFO Travel Unit at (718) 326-8144:

- Copy of CBFO-approved PO which must include the name of each individual traveling with you;
- An approved travel request PE document for each DOE employee traveling with you;
- Itineraries for each traveler as provided by the travel agency;
- Conference announcement, meeting information, etc. (include only page(s) that verify the information on the PO);
- List of students and chaperones, if applicable;
- Completed Credit Card Authorization Form if the hotel reservation was made on your own, without the use of a travel agent. This form, which is obtained from the hotel, allows the DOE to pay the hotel bill directly (do not include your personal credit card information when completing this form).

Keep in mind that failure to provide the requested documentation may delay travel approval, and result in additional costs in the form of higher airline fares upon re-booking and room cancellation fees.

Q. Can I scan and email my supporting documentation?

- A. Yes you can scan your supporting documentation and email it to travelunit@schools.nyc.gov. Remember to place your Purchase Order (PO) number on all documentation.

After Completion of Travel

Q. How do I get reimbursed for my eligible travel expenses once I return from my trip?

- A. There are several steps that either you or your school's FAMIS administrator or division's financial officer must take prior to reimbursement. The steps are as follows:
- Upon return from your trip, you must access your record in the [TRAC application](#). Select Out-of-Town Travel Reimbursement, enter the PE number that was assigned when you began the travel process, and enter your actual expenses. Actual expenses must be entered even if they are exactly the same as the estimated expenses you provided when you initiated your request to travel. Entering the actual expenses will generate a TR document number which is necessary for reimbursement.
 - Upload all supporting documentation (for example, hotel invoice, receipts for tolls, parking, taxis, etc.) into the TRAC system to substantiate your travel expenses.
 - The person whom you named as the approver in the TRAC Approvers Detail screen must approve the actual expenses entered for travel.
 - Your school's FAMIS administrator or your division's financial officer must post the funding to the TR document in the TRAC Admin section of the TRAC system.
 - Your school's FAMIS administrator or your division's financial officer must approve your TR document for payment processing.
 - Within seven to ten business days from the receipt of your supporting documentation, you should expect to receive your reimbursement check at the address you provided when first initiating your request to travel.

Q. When I completed my out-of-town travel, I attempted to submit my request for reimbursement in the TRAC system. When I entered my PE number, a message displayed stating that the record could not be found. Why did I get this message?

- A. This document was not posted (budgeted) in TRAC. This means that your school's FAMIS administrator or your division's financial officer failed to apply budget codes to your projected expenses in order to cover the cost of your travel. Once the budget codes have been properly applied, you will be able to return to TRAC and try again. Contact either your FAMIS administrator, if you work at a school, or your division's financial officer, if you work centrally, to request that this situation be corrected.

Q. Do I need to include lodging taxes if I am traveling outside of New York State?

- A. Yes. DOE is only tax exempt in the State of New York. Your TRAC record and PO must itemize all appropriate lodging taxes and fees as well as any travel agency fees accrued.

Q. Where can I find the New York State tax exemption certificate for lodging?

- A. The form can be found on the [New York State Department of Taxation and Finance Web site](#).

Q. Why must I submit the final hotel bill to the CBFO Travel Unit when I return from my trip?

- A. There are two reasons for this requirement:
- The trips are paid for by DOE via corporate credit card and hence the bill must be reconciled. CBFO will verify the actual expenses and recoup any outstanding balances not covered by the PO in order to pay the bill.
 - All travel documents are subject to audit so the bill must be on file centrally.

Q. I used my personal credit card to reserve my hotel room. What do I do if the hotel charged my credit card for my stay?

A. Depending upon who reserves the hotel room (either the traveler or a travel agent), either CBFO or the travel agency is responsible for faxing a completed Credit Card Authorization Form to the hotel. Every attempt is made to ensure that the form is received by the hotel before you begin your stay. Unfortunately, sometimes a hotel may lose this form or fail to process it, resulting in charges to the guest's personal credit card. Should this happen, please call the CBFO Travel Unit immediately – (718) 935-2930 – for assistance with having the charge reversed. When you call, have the PO number associated with the trip available.

Travel Policies

Q. What is the DOE's policy concerning travel with students?

A. Please refer to [Chancellor's Regulation A-670](#) or the [DFO's Standard Operating Procedure \(SOP\) document concerning travel and conferences](#) for requirements specific to your planned trip.

Q. Why can't I reserve my trip in May for travel either in July or August?

A. You cannot use funds from the current fiscal year to pay for an expense that will occur in the subsequent fiscal year. July 1st is the beginning of the DOE's fiscal year. If your travel is to occur after the beginning of the new fiscal year, then you must wait until July 1st or later to make your travel arrangements.

Web links used in this document:

- Chancellor's Regulation A-670: <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/381F4607-7841-4D28-B7D5-0F30DDB77DFA/109108/A67081811FINAL.pdf>
- U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) Per Diem Rates: <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21287>
- Fedrooms.com: <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/104419>
- Travel and Safety Administration, Secure Flight FAQs: <http://www.tsa.gov/stakeholders/frequently-asked-questions-secure-flight>
- TRAC system: <http://dfoforms.nycenet.edu/TRAC/>
- New York State Tax Exemption Certificate for lodging: http://www.tax.ny.gov/pdf/current_forms/st/st129_fill_in.pdf
- DFO's Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) document concerning travel and conferences: <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/CE4213B5-4627-4603-B584-0E7A539463A3/0/SOPTravelandConferences.pdf>
https://www.concursolutions.com/registration/register_form.asp?regcode=NYCDOE
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