Are You a Savvy Travel Manager?
Learn some helpful hints and tricks of the trade for several of our most prominent travel managers including Defense Travel Administrators, Authorizing Officials, Debt Management Monitors, Agency Program Coordinators, and Transportation Officers.

Savvy Travel Managers in Action
Read a selection of tips and best practices that this year’s Excellence in Practice Award nominees use in the field everyday.

2014 Excellence in Practice Award Winners
Each year we recognize DoD travel professionals who have excelled in travel program management and have successfully addressed issues with exemplary professional skill, creativity, and resourcefulness. Learn who earned this year’s top awards.

Is It Too Hot to Travel With Your Pet?
Many airlines don’t allow pets aboard flights as checked baggage or cargo when temperatures are above certain degrees.

A Message from the DTMO Director
It is no secret that travel managers are at the heart of the Defense travel program. By partnering, we can ensure the Department’s program runs efficiently. As a follow-on to our last travel smart Dispatch, we have packed this edition with lots of tips, ideas and best practices for helping you successfully manage your travel programs. Learn about building useful coalitions, tools for helping you stay abreast, techniques for creating educated travelers, and much more.

The emerging role of the travel manager requires uniquely different skills today than just a few years ago. Directed cuts to travel budgets require managers to find innovative solutions – status quo is no longer a viable option. We must review and simplify policies; integrate, rework and create new business processes; and find ways to make travel sustainable while fairly compensating members.

As part of our efforts, we are keeping you, the travel manager, in mind. We want to make your job easier. We want to build sustainable programs, processes, and policies so that travel is agile, intuitive and avoids fiscal peaks and valleys by eliminating waste and ensuring compliance.

— Harvey Johnson, Director
We can all agree that managing an organization’s travel program is a team effort. There are dozens of organizations, as well as types of travel managers that work collectively to make the Department’s travel program a success. While this diagram notes several of these travel managers and organizations, there are several more that play an active role.

While it may sound easy, we know that managing a travel program is no easy feat and being a travel manager can be rather challenging at times. As a follow-on to our “Are you a Savvy Traveler?” article in the Winter/Spring 2104 issue of the Dispatch, here we provide some helpful hints and tricks of the trade for several of our most prominent travel managers. Our hope is that you find these tips useful in helping to successfully manage your travel program.

Defense Travel Administrator

Review your training program.

While many DTAs have a successful training program in place, it is important to periodically conduct a review to ensure it remains a valuable resource for your travel community. Identify training gaps, trends, and pain points by studying the questions you receive from the field, issues travelers have with authorizations and vouchers, and accessing the level of knowledge of Authorizing Officials (AO) and other travel administrators. Instructor resources are available via the Training Resources Lookup Tool on the DTMO website. Once you have identified the gaps, you can modify your program to ensure you continue to build a knowledgeable travel community.
Get creative.
If your training program has been implemented for some time, you may find that it needs a refresher. Injecting creativity into what and how to present information can go a long way in keeping travelers’ interest. Here are a few ways to do that:

Offer customized training.
Offering customized training is a good way to educate your travel community on local business rules, address training gaps, or target specific situations or interests. To assist with training development, DTMO offers customizable instructor resources for both classroom and Distance Learning modules. Classroom resources include instructor and student guides with supporting PowerPoint demonstrations. Distance Learning materials include an instructor guide and a supporting PowerPoint demonstration. The instructor guides can be used as-is or customized as desired. They are formatted for formal classroom or web-conferencing presentations.

Use different techniques for sharing knowledge.
There are several ways for offering training and sharing knowledge beyond the traditional classroom or desk-side setting. The key is finding creative ways to deliver the same key technical content. The following chart presents techniques, the type of knowledge that works best with the technique, existing resources that can be included/used with the technique, and ways to customize it for your organization. While you may already use some of these techniques, you may find a few new ideas to enhance your current training program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Type of Knowledge</th>
<th>Leverage Existing Resources</th>
<th>Enhance by Localizing</th>
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| Email (General)                  | Topic Specific (Example: How to process your debt) | Include a link to (as relevant): DTMO announcements, RSS Feed content, Information paper(s), FAQ from TraX, Dispatch article | • Add an organization-specific message  
• Reference a specific page or article with a summary message |
| Email (Targeted)                 | Situational (Example: unfiled vouchers; expired GTCC) | • Run a report to identify travel situations and send to specific AOs | • Group by sub-organization and enlist the help of your organizational commanders, APCs, or other DTAs |
| Lunch & Learn                    | General or Topic Specific                | • If you get frequent questions on a topic, view a narrated demonstration together; then answer questions  
• Use EWTS to create an AO Challenge | • Ask your organization for topics they are interested in learning more about  
• Share you organization’s successes and potential improvement areas  
• Create an “AO Jeopardy” game |
| Virtual Session Using Defense    | General or Topic Specific                | • Use available instructor curriculum (instructor guide & slides) to present a topic  
• Supplement with existing reference materials | • Add a chart to highlight your organization’s routing procedures  
• Supplement with organizational rules or best practices |
| Connect Online                    |                                          |                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                  |
| Organizational website, SharePoint or Community of Practice | All | • Post common questions using the TraX Knowledge Center Q&A content  
• Add links to quick reference guides such as, the AO checklists or trifolds | • Highlight recent organizational notifications or procedural guidelines  
• Provide points of contact |
| General Session                  | Topic Specific                           | • Attend class together by securing a room, inviting others, and together joining a DTMO Distance Learning class | • Add a facilitated discussion and Q&A time  
• Delve deeper based on interests and organizational focus |

(Continued on page 4)
Regularly review routing list efficiency.

When an organization’s routing lists are efficient, travelers receive faster approval for travel and reimbursement, and Routing Officials have more time to perform other duties. A good strategy is to regularly review the efficiency of your routing lists. If it has been a while since your last review, here is a strategy to get started.

1. **Take a hard look at your organization’s routing lists.** Are there redundant steps? Are there unnecessary layers of review? For example, if you have four reviewers before an authorization reaches the AO, could you cross-train two Routing Officials to perform multiple tasks? Try to find ways to consolidate or eliminate unnecessary layers of review.

2. **Leverage conditional routing.** Conditional routing allows DTS to bypass a Routing Official when a specific condition doesn’t exist on a travel document. In other words, conditional routing saves a person from conducting unnecessary reviews, such as your foreign travel expert reviewing documents for CONUS-bound trips.

3. **Identify the routing delays in your organization.** Run the Routing Status report in Report Scheduler to help you identify bottlenecks in your routing process. If you have a Routing Official who frequently takes a long time to perform their duties, you may want to sit down with them (or consider replacing them on the routing list).

4. **Assign more than one person to each routing level.** This redundancy ensures that routing won’t stop if a Routing Official is out of the office (leave, TDY, etc.) and forgets to delegate their signature authority.

5. **Provide targeted training to your Routing Officials.** Consider providing desk-side (one-on-one) coaching, recommend training modules in TraX (or any local options), or – if the need warrants it – provide classroom training to your Routing Officials.

For more information and more ideas regarding routing lists, see the DTA Manual, Chapter 5: Routing Lists or take the DTA – Maintenance Tool: Routing Lists training module in TraX.

Regularly run these six reports.

As a savvy travel manager, you can routinely accomplish magical feats that amaze and astound any audience through the use of DTS reports. The following six reports are especially helpful in managing your travel program.

- **Pending Airline Cancellation** *(frequency: run weekly)* – This report shows any authorization that is approaching cancellation because an AO did not approve it in a timely manner. Airlines cancel un-ticketed reservations 72-hours in advance of departure to avoid holding onto unsold inventory. If any authorization turns up on that report, contact the AO to get the authorization approved so you can avoid frantic calls from travelers at airport ticket counters with no ticket.

- The following reports identify travel documents that are stuck in processing – perhaps at the Commercial Travel Office (CTO) or at DFAS. Use these reports to manage un-ticketed authorizations and proactively manage unpaid vouchers. Most of the time, a call to the CTO or Travel Assistance Center (TAC) will sort out the issue quickly and painlessly.
  - **POSACK Delinquency** *(frequency: run weekly)* – Lists vouchers that have been submitted for payment, but have not received a response from the accounting system. To run this report, you must have at least a PL-5.
  - **Routing Status** *(frequency: run weekly)* – Lists vouchers by current routing status. It shows the stamp that will be applied next and the number of days since the current stamp was applied.

- **Complete Traveler Info List** *(frequency: run as needed)* – This report shows all information that is stored in each person’s DTS profile. Using this report, you can easily identify those Government Travel Charge Cards (GTCC) that are or about to become expired. This report can also be used to check to see if email addresses have been updated if your organization has migrated to DoD Enterprise Email (name@dod.mil).

(Continued on page 5)
There are many “lists” available within the DTA Maintenance Tool modules that provide quick information to manage your program without “scheduling” a report to run. Generally smaller (column-wise) than the Complete Traveler Report, these lists are very versatile because they provide targeted information that can identify multiple types of missing or incorrect data, such as permission levels, assigned roles, contact information, and dozens of others. Using these lists is a proactive approach to preventing issues like documents being rejected due to an expired travel card or missing electronic funds transfer information.

- **Basic Traveler Information List** *(frequency: run monthly)* – This report lists users’ names, main DTS roles (permission levels, accesses), lines of accounting (LOA), and default routing lists. Use this report to identify the traveler’s default LOA of group access.

- **Accounts Information List** *(frequency: run monthly)* – This report lists travelers’ GTCC account and expiration data, EFT bank and account numbers. Use this report to identify those travelers whose GTCC account will/has expired.

- **Special Features Lists** *(frequency: run monthly)* – This report shows users’ special DTS roles (permission levels, radio button selections). Use this report to identify the users who have special permissions such as self-AO, Non-DTS Entry Agent (NDEA), or Debt Management Monitor (DMM).

“Is that all?” I hear you ask. No, not even close! DTS provides more than 50 reports to give you the tools to proactively manage your travel program.

**Change to your organization’s in-processing and out-processing checklists.**

People come and go frequently from most DoD organizations. As a travel manager, you should be aware of these movements so you can keep your DTS organizational resources up to date. The best way to keep abreast of personnel changes is to ensure your name is on the in-processing and out-processing checklists that your organization uses for incoming and outgoing personnel.

For incoming personnel, this gives you a chance to check to see if they have a DTS profile, provide the new employee with a list of travel POCs and a copy of your organization’s travel policies, and offer travel training. Appearing on the out-processing checklist will alert you to detach the employee’s DTS profile or replace any departing Routing Officials.

For more tips on in- and out-processing, see the recent DTA Toolkit RSS Feed article.

**Periodically audit DTS permission levels and access (group, org, individual).**

It is important to ensure that users only have the permission and access levels that are necessary for their current position. Users may no longer be in a travel management position or have the same job responsibilities as they once did, and cleaning up these permissions will go a long way in safeguarding travel documents and avoiding unnecessary oversight. Further, depending on the permission level, users may have access to personally identifiable information (PII).
Only granting it to persons who need it for everyday duties protects PII. Remember, when a travel manager grants a certain DTS permission level, those who have the new permission level can now grant it to others. Staying on top of access is critical.

Attend Travel Assistance Center Outreach calls.

Did you know that the TAC holds bi-monthly outreach calls to help inform and educate the DoD travel community? Topics are related to new DTS release content to tips for reorganizations and everything in between. Each call is conducted in an interactive environment using a combination of PowerPoint presentations and live demonstrations using Defense Connect Online (DCO). Calls also include a question and answer period for the subject presented and an open forum for general DTS questions. Outreach calls are held on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 0800 and 1300 EST. For instructions on how to participate, go to the TAC Outreach Call announcement in the Announcement section of TraX.

Build relationships with travel managers.

Building relationships with other travel managers from across your organization is a positive step toward prudent program management. As a DTA, you are in the unique position to integrate the knowledge and information that each travel manager brings to the table. You will find that partnering with others can be a mutually beneficial relationship. You have access to valuable information and reports that may assist other managers in accomplishing travel management objectives. For example, an Agency Program Coordinator’s (APC) objective may be to ensure GTCC usage and your objective may be to reduce the number of instances where travelers arrive at the airport without a ticket. Often both objectives can be accomplished by ensuring that GTCCs in traveler profiles are not expired. While APCs may not have access to DTS to update the expiration dates, they can provide you with a list of new expiration dates for those profiles with expired accounts. Together you can address this issue and meet both of your travel management goals.

Sign up for RSS Feeds.

In an effort to better communicate with key stakeholders, DTMO recently launched a series of RSS Feeds. The feeds provide timely information in an easy to read format that can be delivered directly to your inbox or gathered through a RSS reader. DTMO currently provides the following feeds:

- **General DoD Travel News** – provides travel related news and information
- **Defense Travel Administrator Toolkit** – provides key messages that DTAs can share with travelers and Authorizing Officials to help improve the travel experience while promoting adherence to travel regulations, including information to improve DTS maintenance and training strategy at their organization.
- **Travel Regulations** - provides notification of Joint Federal Travel Regulation (JFTR), Joint Travel Regulation (JTR), and other travel-related policy updates.

(Continued on page 7)
Collect or ask for a copy of annual training certificates.

While AOs and Certifying Officers (CO) are required by the DoDFMR to take annual refresher training, we know that not all keep up-to-date with this mandate. If you are responsible for enforcement of this policy, ensure you have a system in place to track annual training requirements, collect certificates, and notify AOs/COs when it is time to recertify. If you are unsure if this falls within your job responsibilities, check with your Lead DTA. Even if you are not responsible, it is still prudent to maintain copies of annual AO/CO refresher training certificates on file.

Enhance communication with Authorizing Officials.

As a DTA, you are in the unique position to strengthen your travel program by establishing and maintaining communication channels with AOs. The responsibility for being an AO is usually assigned as an additional duty which means that an AO’s focus is not on the latest developments in Defense travel or the most recent policy or DTS changes. When you create and maintain strong communication channels, you can stay abreast of travel issues and work toward enhancing AOs knowledge. A good place to start is by sending out regular emails with handy tips, training opportunities, and news items related to Defense travel. In addition to creating your own content, we encourage you to use the articles designated as “for AOs” provided through our DTA Toolkit RSS Feed.

Understand governance process and how to affect change.

The governance bodies overseeing Defense travel and related allowances are composed of representatives from the Uniformed Services. As a travel manager, you have the ability to affect change by reaching out to your governance board representatives.

• Per Diem, Travel and Transportation Allowance Committee (PDTATAC) – This body is composed of senior executive and flag officers from the three Military Departments, US Coast Guard, Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Corps. Its permanent chair is the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy. Committee business is usually conducted electronically and through advisory panel representatives.
  o Military Advisory Panel (MAP) – A sub-panel of the PDTATAC, this working-level body meets every two weeks and includes representatives from the seven uniformed services and invited guests. It generates and evaluates issues pertaining to per diem, travel and transportation allowances, housing allowances and the cost of living allowances.
  o Civilian Advisory Panel (CAP) - A sub-panel of the PDTATAC, this working-level body meets monthly and includes representatives from the DoD components, and invited guests. It generates and evaluates issues pertaining to per diem, travel and transportation allowances, for DoD civilian employees.

For contact information for the PDTATAC panels, go to: www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Docs/perdiem/pdcContacts.pdf.

• Passenger Services Advisory Group (PSAG) – An advisory group that serves to maintain awareness among the Services and OSD of military passenger service secretarial initiatives, priorities, and responsibilities. The PSAG also leverages related initiatives and similar functional areas of responsibility such as managing costs and quality of life issues. Participation enhances each Passenger Service organization and improves coordination with Agencies related to military and civilian policy areas. The group incorporates new developments in both government and commercial travel service areas. PSAG is comprised of government representatives from each of the Services. DTMO serves as an advisory member.

• Defense Travel Steering Committee (DTSC) – This body sets strategic direction and provides oversight. It is chaired by the Director, DTMO and is an O-8 or equivalent level body. Permanent Principals
include: Department of the Army; Department of the Navy; Department of the Air Force; Acquisition, Technology & Logistics; Defense Finance & Accounting Service; Defense Information Systems Agency; Defense Logistics Agency; and the United States Transportation Command. The DTSC serves as a governing body for appeals submitted by Defense Travel Improvement Board (DTIB) members and provides oversight of DTIB activities.

- **Defense Travel Improvement Board (DTIB)** – Has authority for managing changes to current and future travel requirements. It is chaired by the DTMO and is a 0-6/GS-15 level body. The permanent Principals include: Military Departments, Marine Corps, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, Defense Information System Agency, Defense Logistics Agency, Defense Finance and Accounting Service and United States Transportation Command.

**Review local level support information posted on the DTMO website.**

You may not be aware, but the DTMO website has a listing of contact information for local level customer support. Ensure your contact information is correct by reviewing what is posted at: www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/localSupport.cfm. A Lead DTA must submit changes or additions.

**Keep organizational DTS profiles up-to-date.**

Review your organization’s DTS profile information to ensure the DTA contact information is current. The email that is part of the profile ID is what is provided to users in the case of reject emails or when they receive a domain error when trying to add a user who has not been properly detached.

**Keep local business rules current.**

Organizations often have local business rules to address things like standard mode of transportation for particular TDY locations, local receipt requirements, Leave in Conjunction with Travel (LICWO), and more. These business rules can get outdated quickly due to changes in travel policy or when a new CTO contract is issued or changed. Periodically reviewing them is a good idea. While Lead DTAs may have responsibility for keeping them current, it doesn’t hurt to have other DTAs do a review for gaps and inconsistencies. Remember, per DoD Directive 5154.29, any written material that implements any JTR/JFTR provision (i.e., local business rules) must be reviewed by the Per Diem Travel and Transportation Allowance Committee (PDTATAC) administrative staff via a Service/Agency Military Advisory Panel/Civilian Advisory Panel representative to see if any local policies contradict DoD policy.* This is an important step because JFTR/JTR and other DoD and Federal travel regulations trump any local level policies. To stay abreast of policy changes, subscribe to the Travel Regulations RSS feed.

*For specific instructions on submitting business rules for review, see JFTR/JTR, section 1020.

**Know your Commercial Travel Office contract and coach travelers/Authorizing Officials on proper interactions.**

It is important to understand what is included in your organization’s CTO contract so that you can train travelers and AOs how to properly interact with a CTO. A CTO contract will explain how transaction fees are applied, outline a CTO’s responsibilities, provide ticketing and reservation points of contact (if different), and will often dictate how they handle certain situations like short notice travel or Leave in Conjunction with Travel (LICWO). When trained properly, travelers and AOs will only contact a CTO when absolutely necessary thereby saving time and transaction fees.

**Periodically reconcile DTS budgets against the official accounting system.**

Prudent fiscal management of travel funds comes with ensuring that the travel funds available in the official accounting system match what is listed in your organization’s DTS budget. Because DTS budgets do not interface with official accounting systems, DTS obligates money based on what is manually input in DTS. Periodically reconciling DTS with the official accounting system prevents approval failure due to insufficient funds and ensures that travelers are paid in a timely manner.
Authorizing Official

Keep up with annual training.
While Public Law 104-106 -Certifying Officers Legislation (COL) requires that AOs and COs complete specialized training annually, many don’t keep up with such training. As an AO, you are responsible for verifying that the Federal Government payments that you certify are legal, proper, and correct. If any payment is found to be illegal, improper, or incorrect, you may be held personally liable for reimbursing the Government for the amount of the payment. Protect yourself by taking refresher training such as, the Training for Accountable Officials and Certifying Officers (TAOCO) course that is offered in TraX. Other COL training options are listed in the Department of Defense Financial Management Regulation (DoDFMR), Volume 5, Chapter 33. When you complete your training, be sure to provide your certificate to your DTA to keep on file.

Set up a back-up process.
When you will be unable to perform your authorizing duties because you’re on leave or TDY, officially delegate your authorizing authority in DTS. You should only delegate your authority to qualified individuals who have completed COL training, have a DD Form 577 on file, and have met any other local requirements. Having a designated back-up officially delegated means that travelers aren’t waiting to have authorizations and vouchers approved. Remember to un-delegate to reinstate the original routing process when you return to work.

Know the policy surrounding Restricted Airfare use.
Travelers frequently ask why they can’t use low airfares found on internet travel sites. The truth is, under the right circumstances travelers can take advantage of lower-cost, restricted airfares for official travel if purchased through a Commercial Travel Office (CTO). To do so, you must complete the Restricted Airfare checklist as required by the JFTR/JTR. The checklist walks you through a series of questions to determine if the use of a restricted fare is both cost effective and meets mission requirements. Authorization for use must be obtained on a case-by-case basis; blanket authorization and justification for use of restricted airfares is prohibited.

Build relationships with other travel administrators.
It is important to have a relationship with other travel administrators that can assist with answering traveler questions or resolving issues. You probably already have a relationship with your local DTA, but consider reaching out to your local transportation Office or your Agency Program Coordinator for Government Travel Charge Card issues.

Be aware of the DoD Compliance Program.
In response to the National Defense Authorization Act 2012, DTMO launched a Travel Policy Compliance Program that ensures travel claims do not exceed reasonable or actual expenses as well as, minimize inaccurate, unauthorized, overstated, or duplicate travel claims. As part of the program, all DTS vouchers are reviewed to identify potential improper payments to travelers. When a potential error is identified, the tool automatically sends an email to the traveler, the Non-DTS entry agent (if applicable), and you, as the Authorizing Official who approved the voucher. If you receive an email with the subject line “FOUO: DoD Travel Compliance,” it means that a travel claim that you approved has been identified as having a potential improper payment.

If the total amount of the errors resulted in an overpayment of more than $10, the traveler or Non-DTS Entry Agent must amend the voucher to correct the error and you will need to reapprove. The traveler will

(Continued on page 10)
then receive an email from DTS containing instructions for repaying the travel-related debt. Your Service or Agency is able to track and monitor vouchers with errors to ensure they are corrected and that any overpayments are returned. Unresolved errors are subject to further administrative action by your organization.

The Travel Policy Compliance Program is intended to educate you on travel policy. Alerting you to these errors will help prevent errors when approving future travel vouchers. More information about the Travel Policy Compliance Program is available at www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/compliance.

**Encourage travelers to keep DTS profile up to date.**

You may not be aware that DTS user profiles are not automatically updated when a traveler changes jobs, moves, or receives a new GTCC in the mail. Out-of-date profiles could mean that a traveler arrives at the airport without a ticket or a CTO is unable to reach a traveler. Encourage your travelers to periodically review their profile to ensure the GTCC information, contact information, emergency contact, and email address are current.

**Debt Management Monitor**

**Clean up old debts from list.**

If you’ve been a Debt Management Monitor (DMM) for a while, you may have a list of older DTS debts lingering. If you are a newly assigned DMM who has inherited a substantial list of older DTS debts, you may ask, “What should I do with these?” It is important for DTS documents in a debt status to have the debt collection process completed, or at least have the status updated. By completing the debt process, the associated accounting system will be updated.

These older debts can present a challenge to a DMM because you may not have knowledge of their history or the travelers associated with the debts may have moved to other organizations. However, if you work through some simple steps, the older debts can be easily cleared off the list. When dealing with debt more than a few months old, ask yourself:

- Did I pull the DMM report and isolate the list of older debts?
- Have I looked at my Organization email and Reject email inboxes for Cash Collection Vouchers (CCVs) sent from the Travel Assistance Center (TAC)? – Remember to add the CCV using the Substantiating Record in the voucher or Response Imaging in the DMM module.
- If I don’t know if the Due Process has been served in writing (usually via email) and have no evidence of a CCV, have I created a custom Due Process letter and emailed it to the email address in the traveler’s DTS permanent profile? – Per regulation, you will have to manually track 30 days from your emailed Due Process letter date. Sending the Due Process email to the last known address is all that’s required by the Financial Management Regulation (DoDFMR). However, any additional attempts to communicate with the traveler will make the resolution easier and faster for all parties involved.
- If I have no CCV, no communication from the traveler, and 30 days have passed, have I initiated payroll collection?

Asking yourself these questions will help you manage and clear old travel debts. If you need assistance with any of these steps, refer to the Guide to Managing Travel Incurred Debt and/or check with your component’s debt management experts.
Have solid instructions for debt repayment options and waivers/appeals.

As a DMM, it is your responsibility to provide travelers with instructions for debt payment options and waivers/appeals. Having clear and concise instructions goes a long way in helping the traveler settle debts quickly and reduce the number of questions you may receive. It is a good idea to have a document or information paper that lists the options in a clean, bulleted list. If you need assistance with developing the content, review the Understanding a Travel Debt information paper. Remember, you may have local business rules that may need to be considered when developing your instructions.

Recognize issues that fall outside the automatic processing of travel debts.

From time to time, you may encounter issues that fall outside the automatic processing of travel debts and recognizing these situations is the first step. A travel-related debt results when one of the following occurs:

- Trip was cancelled after the traveler received a non-ATM advance
- Total previous payments (i.e., non-ATM advances, scheduled partial payments, and previous vouchers) exceed the actual reimbursable expenses
- A post-pay review determines that the paid voucher contains an unauthorized expense; requiring an adjustment to the voucher so the expense may be recovered

The DMM Gateway provides access to the tools to initiate debt-related actions and monitor the debt process. Occasionally, the normal debt process from beginning to end does not resolve completely because:

- Options do not display in the DMM Gateway
- A collection does not show in DTS
- A response/collection has not been received from the pay office
- An accounting system rejects the A/R transaction
- Satisfied Debts still display on the debt report
- A debt remains for a traveler who has left the organization

To resolve these common issues, consult Chapter 7 of the Guide to Managing Travel-Incurred Debt for useful steps. Also, the Debt Management Report allows you to monitor the debts for your organization and therefore comply with debt management responsibilities outlined in the DoD Financial Management Regulation.

Agency Program Coordinator

Run mandatory reports once per cycle.

While most APCs know that they are responsible for running a series of mandatory reports, not all may run them as often as required by the DoD Financial Management Regulation (DoDFMR). The DoDFMR states that APCs should run the required reports at least once a cycle. These reports are useful tools for improving the oversight and management of your Government Travel Charge Card (GTCC) Program because they identify those accounts that require corrective action. The reports are available through CitiDirect’s CCRS. Additional optional reports identified in the DoDFMR are available in the Supplemental Folder in CCRS.

Note: Due to the nature of travel card reports and the information they contain, be sure to

(Continued on page 12)
take the necessary precautions to properly safeguard them at all times. Reports should be retained for no less than two years and in the case of an ongoing investigation or audit, reports may be required to be retained for an additional length of time.

**Individually Billed Accounts (IBA):**

- **Account Activity Text Report.** This report provides the Merchant Category Code (MCC), vendor name and charge amount. By simply reviewing this report, you can identify charges that are suspicious or are flagrant misuses of the card.

- **Account Listing Report.** This report allows you to verify accurate cardholder information, identify accounts that are no longer required and should be cancelled, and identify cardholders that are no longer assigned to your organization/hierarchy.

- **Delinquency Report-Hierarchy.** This report helps you monitor/manage delinquencies by identifying accounts/balances that fall within the 60-, 90-, and 180+ day delinquency windows. Use this list to isolate cardholders that you should contact directly to resolve the issue and avoid charge off. It is recommended that you address accounts with the longest delinquency time and work forward to accounts that just met the 60-day threshold. In some cases, you may need to partner with your DTA to conduct further research into why the cardholder is delinquent.

- **DoD Travel IBA Aging Analysis or IBA Aging Analysis Summary.** This report provides a point in time detailed listing of delinquencies and summary level information by component hierarchy.

**Centrally Billed Accounts (CBA):**

- **Delinquency Report.** This report helps you monitor/manage CBA delinquencies by identifying accounts/balances that fall within the 60-, 90-, and 180+ day delinquency windows.

- **DoD Travel CBA Aging Analysis.** Like the IBA report, it provides point in time listing of delinquencies for CBA accounts at a summary level by component hierarchy.

**Create email templates.**

To save valuable time, draft a series of emails that contain standard information about common GTCC issues. The template emails should be easily customizable to include specific account and cardholder information. Below is a short list of email templates that you may find useful to draft in advance:

- Approaching Delinquency Date
- Delinquent Account Notice
- Approaching Charge Off
- Notice: Expired GTCC Account in your DTS profile
- Reminder: Update DTS Profile Information (GTCC information, contact info)

**Take training offered by Citi.**

While the only mandatory training for APCs is the DTMO’s “Travel Card Program Management” (APC Course) available in TraX, it is recommended that APCs take advantage of additional training offered by Citi through its Commercial Card Learning and System Support (CLASS) module. Citi offers a series of self-paced, web-based courses on topics such as CitiDirect, Citibank Customer Reporting System (CCRS), and Citibank Customer Management System (CCMS) modules. The CLASS module is organized into 15 sub-modules, so you receive the same training as you would at an onsite Citi location. To see a complete listing or to access the courses, log in to CitiManager and select the Web Tools tab.
Partner with your Defense Travel Administrator.

Defense Travel Administrators (DTA) are valuable allies in prudent oversight and management of the GTCC program. Form a partnership with your local Defense Travel Administrator to address the following common GTCC-related travel issues.

**Develop a process for knowing when to re-activate GTCCs**

Some organizations deactivate cards when travelers are not authorized for official travel. It is important to work with your DTA to develop a process to ensure that you know when to re-activate cards when travel is scheduled.

**Expired GTCCs or incorrect card numbers in DTS profiles**

While you may be aware that most GTCC declines are a result of expired cards in DTS profiles, you may not know that this often results in higher Commercial Travel Office (CTO) transaction fees. A CTO cannot issue a ticket if/when DTS shows that the card has expired. When this happens, the CTO is forced to contact the traveler or in the case of a CBA, the Transportation Officer, which results in a higher CTO transaction fee for the traveler and ultimately the organization’s travel budget. The same is true when the traveler hasn’t updated their profile if they’ve received a new card number.

To combat this issue, ask your DTA to run the View People List Report (People Module) – Account Info List in the DTA Maintenance Tool. This report identifies travelers with an expired or no IBA in their profile. Compare information (account number, expiration date) from this report to the Account Listing Report in CCRS to ensure DTS GTCC information is accurate. Share any inconsistencies with your DTA so together you can determine the best way to resolve the issue. Although travelers can and should update the GTCC information in their profiles, a DTA can also do so on their behalf. If you are reaching out to travelers directly, you may want to include this link to instructions on how to update a DTS profile, [http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Docs/Updating_Profile_In_DTS.pdf](http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Docs/Updating_Profile_In_DTS.pdf).

**Clean up CBA/IBA Use**

Avoid cross-ticketing issues by cleaning up CBA use. Ask your DTA to run the View CBA List (Organization Module) Report through the DTA Maintenance Tool. This report identifies which CBAs (in DTS) are associated with which organizations and lists the expiration dates. The information in this report helps identify those instances where multiple CBAs are tied to one organization, as well as, which CBAs will be expiring and need to be updated in DTS. If a change needs to be made, complete the Load Worksheet located on the DTMO website and submit it to your Service CBA Administrator so that the change can be made.

Identify which travelers should be using an IBA instead of a CBA by asking your DTA to run the CBA TO Report available through DTS Report Scheduler. This report identifies all travelers utilizing a DTS organization's CBA for a specific time period. You may find that it is necessary to work with your DTA to do more research into the reasons why a CBA was used. For example, a DTA will be able to tell you if the type of travel (i.e., OCONUS) or other circumstances are the reason for CBA use. Otherwise, if a frequent traveler is identified, then you should coordinate with the traveler to apply for an IBA.

*Note: When working with your DTA, be sure to safeguard the cardholder Personally Identifiable Information (PII) that may be contained in these reports. Encrypt and digitally sign all email when transmitting reports containing PII.*
Transportation Officer

Ensure the Commercial Travel Office is in compliance with its contract.

It is important to closely monitor the performance of Commercial Travel Offices (CTO) to ensure they are adhering to policy/regulations when ticketing and appropriate approval has been obtained. If there are any issues, be sure to collect the appropriate documentation necessary for Quality Assurance Evaluator reports.

Report locally arranged bus moves to the DTMO or use GOPAX.

Per the Transportation Regulations DoD 4500.9-R, Part 1, Chapter 104, Transportation Coordinators arranging DoD-sponsored charter bus service must use the DoD approved carrier list* to arrange for transportation within their routing authority or use the Groups Operational Passenger System (GOPAX). For locally arranged bus moves arranged outside of GOPAX, Transportation Offices should report the move to the DTMO for inspection purposes via e-mail to milbus@dtmo.pentagon.mil.

*A current list of approved carriers is available at: https://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Docs/BusAgreementPOCs.pdf.

Connect with other organizational travel managers.

It is important to work collectively with other travel administrators to ensure your organization’s travel program is a success. Here are a few ideas of how you can partner across your organization.

- Work with your Defense Travel Administrators (DTAs) to develop sound local business rules that provide policy and procedural guidelines as it relates to travel. Business rules can get outdated quickly due to changes in travel policy or when a new CTO contract is issued or changed, so working with your DTA to periodically review them is a best practice.
- Work with DTAs to ensure any issue with CTOS is reported to Quality Assurance Evaluators.
- Partner with Agency Program Coordinators (APCs) to see if you can assist with preventing Government Travel Charge Card (GTCC) declines. Often, when a GTCC Centrally Billed Account is declined, the CTO contacts the Transportation Office and a transaction fee is applied. Preventing declines means that you are saving money by avoiding unnecessary fees.

Develop transportation website.

If your organization doesn’t already have a webpage dedicated to travel, you may want to consider creating one to assist with answering travelers’ and Authorizing Officials’ questions. Add references to the JFTR/JTR, DTR, Service directives, post frequently asked questions and more.
SAVVY Travel Managers in Action

Real tips and best practices from the field

Each year, DTMO recognizes top performers in DoD travel for the value and the services they provide to their travel program through the annual Excellence in Practice Awards. Below, we have included a selection of tips and best practices from this year’s runners-up that epitomize the Savvy Travel Manager. For more techniques, read about the Excellence in Practice award winners on page 16.

- D. Mullich, USA – Delivers deskidside assistance as her training and troubleshooting strategy.
- D. Zabava, USA – Provides recurring training to ODTAs and AOs via video teleconferencing or in classroom.
- K. Straits, USA – Characterizes positive, proactive customer service. Provides monthly training to AOs and ROs. Sends frequent updates to personnel on travel trends and DTS best practices.
- M. Richmond-Stremcha, USA – Coaches new DTAs on local processes and DTS best practices, then encourages them to share the information with others.
- N. Brouillette, USA – Gets vital information into the hands of personnel by leveraging web portals, Facebook, and email, as well as developing how-to guides for distribution.
- R. Perry, USA – Offers regular, targeted training to all travel-related personnel. Always willing to take telephone, walk-in, or email requests for assistance.
- B. Romine, DFAS – Leverages reports to identify and resolve program weaknesses. For example, reviews profiles for valid GTCC information and tracks inordinate requests for CTO assistance, following up with targeted training for travelers accordingly. Provides refresher training to AOs/ROs/ODTAs/FDTAs.
- K. Jones, USCENTCOM – Coordinates closely with ODTAs and APCs to improve efficiency of both DTS and GTCC, leading to unprecedented GTCC rebates in FY13.  
- Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center (NMCPHC) Travel Team – Frequently runs reports to identify outdated traveler profiles and stuck travel documents, then performs preventative maintenance. Maintains strong oversight of the DTS routing process, leveraging conditional routing and encouraging out-of-office officials to delegate their signature authority. Ensures that AO training and appointments meet policy requirements.
- Pacific Region DTS Tier II Helpdesk, USMC – Conducts frequent site assist visits to audit travel processes and offer targeted training to their organizations. Performs regular permission level audits and revokes unnecessary permissions. In FY13, reduced the outstanding travel debt for the region by 70%!
- HQ, Air Combat Command (ACC)/FMP MAJCOM DTA, USAF – Communicates with personnel and leadership to foster an environment open to improvements and continuous learning. Uses Travel Policy Compliance Tool to track improper travel claims. Develops training resources such as a training checklist for new DTAs. Develops remediation plans from site assist visit findings.
- ARNG DTS and GTC Program – Tracks policy compliance, such as filing vouchers within five business days. Updates local business rules to correct weak areas. Communicates regularly with personnel on important topics – for example, reduced GTCC delinquencies by notifying personnel of split disbursement requirements.
- COMNAVSURFPAC, USN – Runs reports and uses findings to enhance travel program. Maintains strong oversight of CBA usage – resulting in zero delinquencies for FY13. Sets high goals – for example, to approve all vouchers within 24 hours of traveler signature. Reviews Travel Policy Compliance Tool findings and uses information to modify local business rules. Offers training to AOs and NDEAs on a regular basis.
- PACFLT HQ/COMSUBPAC – Program Management and Sustainment Team, USN – Audits travel documents regularly, ensuring that claims are accurate. Identifies invalid claim trends and provides targeted training to reduce improper payments.
**2014 Excellence in Practice Award Winners**

DTMO designed the Excellence in Practice Awards to recognize DoD travel professionals who have excelled in travel program management and have successfully addressed issues with exemplary professional skill, creativity, and resourcefulness. This year’s award winners demonstrated an exceptional level of service, which resulted in more efficient and effective travel programs.

**THE CHAMPION – Ms. H Sanchez, US Army Special Operations Command**

The Champion Award recognizes a Lead Defense Travel Administrator (LDTA) whose wisdom, guidance, and commitment to subordinate Organization DTAs (ODTAs) has made a fundamental and long-term positive impact on their travel program.

This year’s recipient is Ms. H. Sanchez for her support to the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC). The USASOC has frequent travelers with complex itineraries, making travel training a necessity for its ODTAs, Authorizing Officials (AOs), and travelers. In FY 2013, Ms. Sanchez’s training strategy rose to the challenge and made USASOC a model for efficiency. She regularly performed inspections of USASOC’s travel processes, and then provided targeted ODTA training and messages based on her inspection findings. She frequently leveraged video teleconferencing and USASOC’s Web Portal to train and to recommend travel best practices to her ODTAs. Ms. Sanchez’s colleagues praised her for fostering an environment in which ODTAs could brainstorm and implement techniques that best support their travel processes. USASOC’s ODTA Hands-On Program Management Course stands as an example of how Ms. Sanchez’s collaborative approach improved USASOC’s travel program in FY 2013. The two-day course covered key findings from Ms. Sanchez’s inspections, coached ODTAs on how to perform their own audits, and provided training on USASOC’s local processes. Ms. Sanchez improved oversight of USASOC’s travel by requiring each ODTA to audit 10% of their organization’s vouchers. Ms. Sanchez reviewed the findings and discussed them with her ODTAs during mentoring sessions. The audit findings also allowed Ms. Sanchez to develop targeted, timely training to address the audit findings. Ms. Sanchez’s efforts to improve the performance of USASOC’s ODTAs and travel program demonstrate what it means to be a champion.

**THE ELITE - United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM)**

The Elite Award recognizes a local help desk team whose superior efforts result in continuous improvement and outstanding customer care.

This year’s recipient is the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). USSOCOM’s 2 LDTAs and 70 ODTAs service more than 3,000 customers spread across a diverse geographical area. The USSOCOM LDTAs adeptly manage their travel program through standardized processes and proactive travel training. In FY 2013, the team launched the “Campaign 5 – Five Day Rule” to draw awareness to the regulatory requirement to submit a travel voucher within five days of returning to work. The campaign encompassed communications, required training on filing travel vouchers, and follow-on impact studies – a strategy wholeheartedly embraced by USSOCOM’s most senior officials.

Other award nominees in this category included: N. Brouillette, USA, K. Jones, USCENTCOM, D. Mullich, USA, R. Perry, USA, M. Richmond Stremcha, USA, B. Romine, DFAS, K. Straits, USA, and D. Zabava, USA
leaders. Campaign 5 featured several notable and engaging techniques, such as interactive training for all travelers on voucher requirements and short videos broadcast throughout the Command Headquarters. The impact of Campaign 5 was immediately evident, with more timely payments to travelers and better back-end travel fund tracking. The USSOCOM LDTA team used FY 2013 to incorporate new, proactive strategies to assist its ODTAs and travel managers. For example, rather than each ODTA running a daily report of pending airline auto-cancellations, the team ran daily, enterprise-level reports and notified any impacted traveler’s ODTA for action. These new strategies complimented the team’s established reputation for exceptional training, which they offer regularly to ODTAs, AOs, and travelers alike. The USSOCOM LDTAs’ track record as a proactive, training-focused team exemplifies an elite help desk.

Other award nominees in this category included: Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center, Pacific Region DTS Tier II Helpdesk

**THE ICON - Naval Sea Systems Command Warfare Center Travel Team**

*The Icon Award recognizes a major command or agency whose strategies and tactics enhance the travel program capabilities for their subordinate sites.*

This year’s recipient is the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) Warfare Center Travel Team. The team services approximately 20,000 travelers spread across multiple time zones. Despite their geographical separation, the team established regular conference calls with their site POCs to resolve issues, collaborate on training, and to establish standardized processes. One notable outcome of this regular collaboration was the standardization of travel document processing during FY 2013’s administrative furloughs, minimizing travel interruptions and payments delays. The NAVSEA Warfare Center Travel Team also demonstrated its commitment to enhancing audit readiness and organizational business rules, such as business rules for the issuing and revoking DD Form 577 Appointment/Termination Records process and alignment of training materials and business rules with recent regulatory changes. Finally, the team regularly hosts workshops, develops training materials, and leverages DTMO’s resources to maintain a well-informed travel community. Through its superb management of a complicated travel program, the NAVSEA Warfare Center Travel Team exemplifies what it means to be an icon in the Department of Defense.

Other award nominees in this category included: Army National Guard DTS & GTC Program Office, COMNAVSURFPAC, HQ Air Combat Command (ACC)/FMP MAJCOM DTA, PACFLT HQ/COMSUBPAC – Program Management and Sustainment Team

DTMO awards the Excellence in Practices Awards annually. The next nomination period will begin in late fall 2014. If you are interested in nominating a fellow travel professional or team, please continue to monitor the Excellence in Practice webpage, for additional information and nomination forms.
In Other News . . .

Baggage Policies

Baggage Policies for airlines are in a continuous state of change as airlines deal with controlling costs and managing capacity. Each airline has its own policy regarding baggage allowances and fees for government travelers and service members. Bags that exceed the baggage allowance in both number and size or weight, may be subject to excess baggage fees. If baggage exceeds weight and size allowances, travelers may be required to check bags through the cargo counter.

Service members are often extended many exceptions to fees charged; however, they should adhere to the size and weight allowances. According to the JFTR/JTR (para. 3105), baggage fees are reimbursable when authorized and incurred on official business. Excess baggage fees are reimbursable if the Service/Agency determines the expenses are necessary and in the Government’s interest.

It is recommended that travelers check an airline’s website for specific policies regarding baggage fees. If traveling on a City Pair flight, find detailed information on baggage fees on GSA’s website, www.gsa.gov.

Is it Too Hot to Fly with Your Pet?

Travelers may elect to transport a pet as checked baggage* but during the summer months (May - September), the heat can make travel difficult for your pet. Many airlines don’t allow pets aboard flights as checked baggage or as cargo when temperatures are high. For most airlines, pet embargoes take effect when the temperature is forecasted to be above 85 degrees at any point of travel – origin, transit, or destination.

If you’re traveling with your pet this summer, familiarize yourself with the airline’s pet embargo and acceptance policies before making your travel arrangements. In some cases, advanced reservations are required. You should also give yourself ample time to prepare your pet prior to travel. Most airlines have pet safety programs identified on their website that provide tips for travel. Being aware and prepared will ensure the flight is a positive experience for both you and your pet.

*Pet travel is not a reimbursable expense IAW the JFTR/JTR, para. US810.

TSA’s New Requirement

Earlier this month, The Department of Homeland Security directed the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to institute new security measures for those flights on direct route to the US from overseas locations. The new requirement means that travelers may be asked to power-up their electronic devices including cell phones and tablets. According to the TSA, “Powerless devices will not be permitted onboard the aircraft. The traveler may also undergo additional screening.” The TSA does not explain what happens to those devices that are unable to be turned on, so it is best to ensure your devices are fully charged before you leave for the airport.

About the Defense Travel Dispatch

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