

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
Washington, DC 20405

OAS 5735.1 CHGE 1  
December 2, 2021

GSA ORDER

SUBJECT: Travel Advances

1. Purpose. This Order provides guidance for the issuance and management of travel advances. The GSA SmartPay® travel card provides a means of funding travel advances through ATM withdrawals so that travelers do not need to separately request travel advances or use personal funds to travel on official business. However, when an employee or expense is exempt from travel card use or due to a regulatory exception or extenuating circumstances, an advance of funds may be authorized to perform official travel.

2. Scope and Applicability. This directive provides standards, instructions and procedures governing the management, authorization, issuance, repayment, and collection of travel advances. The provisions apply to all GSA employees. This order applies to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) to the extent that the OIG determines it is consistent with the OIG's independent authority under the Inspector General Act and does not conflict with other OIG policies or the OIG mission.

3. Cancellation. This directive cancels and supersedes OAS 5735.1, Travel Advances.

4. Responsibilities.

a. Office of Travel and Charge Card Services. The Office of Travel and Charge Card Services (H1CT) is responsible for developing travel policy for GSA employees.

b. Authorizing and Approving Officials.

(1) Determine that the amount of the advance is necessary, reasonable, and does not exceed amounts specified herein;

(2) Determine, for each traveler, that all advances for previous travel have been liquidated or the new advance is necessary in addition to outstanding balances;

(3) Ensure travelers submit travel vouchers within five business days after completion of travel, or every thirty days for continuous travel; and

(4) Ensure the travel advance amount reflected on the travel voucher agrees with the amount authorized, that travel advance balances are liquidated in full, and that a form of payment is attached to liquidate any outstanding advance balance owed to GSA.

c. Travelers.

(1) Limit ATM advances to pay for only expenses that cannot be charged to a travel card;

(2) File travel vouchers within five business days after completing travel or every 30 days while on a continuous or long-term travel status to avoid delinquency; and

(3) Ensure prompt repayment of any unused amount of travel advance.

5. Explanation of Changes.

a. All references to "OAS 5740.1, Government Travel Charge Card Program" have been changed to "OAS 5740.1 CHGE 1, Government Travel Charge Card Program."

b. All references to treasury checks have been removed. Travel advances are no longer issued to employees via check.

c. All references to "SF 1012, Travel Voucher" have been changed to "OF 1012, Travel Voucher."

d. All references to "PFM P 4290.1 GSA Internal Travel Regulations and Control of Official Travel, chapter 13" have been changed to "OAS 5730.1, GSA Relocation Allowances."

e. "Appendix A: Definition of Terms" has been changed to "Appendix A: Glossary of Terms".

f. Appendix A is revised to add the definition of "e-Gov Travel Service".

g. Appendix B is revised to align with the collection procedures of 31 U.S.C. 3716.

6. Signature.

/S/  
BOB STAFFORD  
Chief Administrative Services Officer  
Office of Administrative Services

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## TRAVEL ADVANCES

1. General. A travel advance is considered a loan issued in the form of an ATM withdrawal or Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). The advance can be obtained via a cardholder's travel card or [Advance of Funds Application and Account \(SF 1038\)](#).
2. Authority. Authority to approve SF 1038 travel advances for travel of employees of their organizational units is delegated no lower than the Division Director or comparable level for all GSA organizations.
3. Eligibility for Obtaining a Travel Advance.
  - a. A GSA employee authorized to perform temporary duty travel (TDY) for GSA and who is not eligible for a travel card (see OAS 5740.1 CHGE 1, Government Travel Charge Card Program) or has a travel card application pending may obtain an advance of funds by submitting an SF 1038 to defray necessary travel expenses. A GSA employee issued a travel card may obtain an advance of funds via an ATM withdrawal.
  - b. A GSA employee authorized relocation travel may obtain a travel advance to defray various relocation expenses by submitting an SF 1038.
  - c. A staff member of a former U.S. President may obtain an advance of funds to defray necessary travel expenses.
  - d. Union officials traveling under a GSA travel authorization to perform labor relations activities may obtain an advance of funds to defray necessary travel expenses.
  - e. A travel advance may not be issued to a Government contractor or to a person who is not an employee of GSA.
  - f. A GSA employee who refuses to apply for the travel card and who is not exempt from travel card use (see OAS 5740.1 CHGE 1), or has the travel card suspended or cancelled due to nonpayment is not eligible to receive a travel advance for TDY travel.
4. ATM Advances.
  - a. GSA employees who are issued a travel card and have an approved travel authorization may use their travel card through an ATM or in person transaction to obtain a travel advance solely for official Government travel. The cardholder may obtain funds from any participating ATM or financial institution.
  - b. The travel card can be used for most, if not all expenses, eliminating most of the need for travelers to use cash. ATM advances should be limited in frequency and to the amount necessary to cover out-of-pocket expenses that cannot be charged to a travel

card (see Appendix A). ATM advances may be obtained no more than five working days before the scheduled departure date of official travel, and no later than the last day of official travel.

c. ATM transactions will appear on the cardholder's travel card billing statement. The cardholder is responsible for reimbursing the travel card bank for the advance/withdrawal by the travel card billing statement due date. The travel card bank will also bill the cardholder a transaction fee expressed as a percentage of the amount of each withdrawal. In addition, ATM fees may be incurred. Reimbursement of ATM fees and transaction fees is limited to actual fees not to exceed \$5 per week, and are reimbursed as a miscellaneous travel expense.

#### 5. SF 1038 Advances.

a. An SF 1038 may be used when an ATM advance cannot be used or under emergency circumstances. The traveler must prepare and submit an original SF 1038 along with the GSA Form 87, Official Travel Authorization, to the Federal Shared Services Provider (FSSP) for processing. The travel authorization must include a justification and explanation for the advance. Travelers who request an advance of funds using an SF 1038 will not process travel authorizations and travel vouchers in GSA's e-Gov Travel Service.

b. An individual who is exempt from travel card use may be given a travel advance not to exceed 80 percent of the estimated out-of-pocket expenses (see Appendix A) rounded up to the next \$50 increment. Union officials and bargaining unit employees traveling on official GSA business may be authorized an advance in accordance with collective bargaining agreements. Travel advances will not be issued for less than \$100 or for one-day trips.

c. Block 10 of the SF 1038 must show the typed, legibly printed, or stamped name of the approving official along with the approving official's signature and title. When a travel advance is to be paid by EFT through the Treasury Disbursing Office, the SF 1038 must be sent to the FSSP at least two weeks in advance to permit processing before travel expenses are incurred. Travel advances obtained using an SF 1038 will be paid via EFT in the financial accounting system.

d. A traveler who obtains a travel advance using an SF 1038 must submit an OF 1012, Travel Voucher via electronic mail, to the FSSP (at [kc-travel.finance@gsa.gov](mailto:kc-travel.finance@gsa.gov)) within five business days following completion of the travel, or every thirty days for continuous travel. The entire amount claimed on the reimbursement voucher must be applied against the outstanding travel advance, notwithstanding any instructions to the contrary indicated by the traveler on the travel voucher (e.g., traveler is submitting an interim voucher while on a long-term travel assignment). If the amount claimed on the OF 1012 is less than the amount advanced or when a proposed trip is cancelled, the employee must refund the unused or excess amount in full using one of the payment

methods specified in paragraph 5e, below. (See Appendix B for procedures taken when the remittance does not accompany the travel voucher and repayment is considered delinquent).

e. An employee who obtained an advance will promptly refund any unused advance funds when the proposed trip is cancelled. All refund payments must be mailed to:

General Services Administration  
Miscellaneous Receipts - GSA Lockbox 979009  
PO Box 979009  
St. Louis, MO 63197-9009

A copy of the travel voucher where the overpayment occurred must be attached with the refund payment. An unused advance must be refunded using a check or money order payable to the General Services Administration, or a charge authorization for the traveler's personal credit card using [GSA Form 3602B, Credit Card Collection](#).

#### 6. Relocation Advances.

a. An employee who is authorized relocation at GSA expense, including a travel cardholder, may be authorized an advance not to exceed 80 percent of the estimated cost of the authorized allowances specified in Chapter 1, Section GSA 302-2, Paragraph 5 of [OAS 5730.1, GSA Relocation Allowances](#), rounded up to the next \$50 increment. An advance will not be issued for less than \$100. No advances will be issued for temporary quarters under the lump sum method. Advances may be issued for temporary quarters under the actual expense method when requested. Relocation advances are normally issued via EFT. The travel card may be used to obtain an ATM advance for out-of-pocket expenses (see Appendix A) associated with an authorized house hunting trip and en route travel only.

b. The signed travel authorization (GSA Form 87); GSA Form 87A, Official Change of Duty Station Authorization; and the applicable service agreement, along with an original SF 1038 must be completed to obtain the advance. The e-Gov Travel Service will not be used to process relocation advances.

c. The employee's travel voucher must show any outstanding advance and the advance must be liquidated when the final voucher is submitted.

7. Unused Advances. A traveler who obtains an advance is indebted to the Government for the "loan" and either must show that it was expended for official travel or relocation, and must repay any unexpended amount. If the advance is lost or stolen, the traveler is not entitled to another advance for the same expenses, but rather must use personal funds to pay for the expense(s). Reimbursement of expenses incurred is handled through the voucher process. If the amount of the advance exceeds the actual

expense or the expense is not incurred (e.g., the traveler overestimated the amount for their taxi cab expenses or did not need taxi cab fare) the amount of the advance outstanding upon settlement of the claim (or submission of the voucher) must be returned/repaid to GSA in accordance with paragraph 5.e. above.

## Appendix A. Glossary of Terms

**ATM Withdrawal** – An ATM withdrawal is a cash advance obtained through the use of the travel card.

**E-Gov Travel Service (ETS)** – The Government-contracted, end-to-end travel management service that automates and consolidates the Federal travel process in a self-service Web-centric environment, covering all aspects of official travel, including travel planning, authorization, reservations, ticketing, expense reimbursement, and travel management reporting. The ETS provides the services of a Federal travel management program as specified in FTR §301-73.1(a), (b) and (e).

**Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)** – Payment method wherein funds are electronically transferred to an individual's designated account at a financial institution.

**Out-of-pocket Expense** – Out-of-pocket expenses are officially necessary expenses incurred by a traveler while performing official temporary duty or relocation travel. Typically they include lodging; meals and incidental expenses covered by the per diem or actual subsistence allowance; transportation expenses (e.g., local transit system, taxi fares, and parking fees) excluding common carrier air or rail, which are obtained using a centrally billed travel card account; gasoline and other variable expenses associated with the use of a rental car or personally-owned vehicle; and other authorized miscellaneous expenses.

**Travel Advance** – Prepayment of estimated or actual travel expenses paid to an employee. An advance of funds is considered a loan and may be issued in the form of an EFT or through the use of an ATM.

## **Appendix B. Collection of Outstanding Travel Advances**

This appendix describes the procedures for collecting payment for outstanding or delinquent repayment of travel advances provided by GSA.

The FSSP will prepare an electronic message and send it directly to the traveler's Government email address with an information copy to the travel authorizing official, when:

- Fifteen workdays have elapsed since completion of the trip end date and no voucher has been received; or
- The amount claimed on the travel voucher is less than the amount of the travel advance received and the traveler did not submit a payment (check or money order) or GSA Form 3602B to liquidate the remaining amount of the advance.

This notice must inform the traveler of the type and amount of the claim, GSA's intention to collect the claim by administrative offset, and an explanation of the rights of the debtor, which include;

- the right to inspect and copy the records of the agency related to the claim;
- an opportunity for a review within the agency of the decision of the agency related to the claim; and
- an opportunity to make a written agreement with GSA to repay the amount of the claim.

If the traveler's voucher, payment, or GSA Form 3602B is not received by the FSSP, or the traveler does not assert any of their rights as set forth above, within 15 workdays from the date the first electronic message was issued, the traveler will be sent a final electronic message with a copy to the travel authorizing official. The final electronic message will advise the traveler that if the matter is not resolved within 10 workdays, a claim for the outstanding advance will be established with the Payroll Services Branch (BGC) to be collected via payroll deduction.

If the FSSP does not receive the traveler's voucher, payment or GSA Form 3602B within 10 workdays from the date of the final electronic message and the travel advance remains outstanding, the FSSP will send BGC a GSA Form 3586, Notice of Non-Federal Claims Receivable. BGC will be instructed to deduct the amount of any outstanding travel advances from the traveler's next available paycheck(s). When an employee subsequently makes a payment on a voucher on which a payroll deduction has been started, the traveler will be reimbursed for the amount of the advance deducted from the traveler's payroll check as part of the traveler's travel reimbursement.