

Travel Charge Card Use

USBank Card Services 888-994-6722 (*)

- Card is issued in the traveler's name – an individually billed account (IBA)
- A credit check determines if a PIN# is issued for ATM use (20% cash advance)
- Card possession is a privilege and necessity
- Payment is due on statement due date regardless of reimbursement
- Incorrect use generates automatic reports to ARS and the MWA
 - May result in delinquent notices from Travel Policy Headquarters and/or
 - Suspension of the card and possible management action
 - No advance allowed

Application

- Ag-Learn Training – USDA Travel Card 10/10
- Acknowledgement Form signed by the traveler and supervisor
- USBank Application 10/10

DO use the travel card for:

- BCD/Concur Charges (airfare, lodging, rental cars)
- Lodging
- Rental Cars
- Restaurants – personal meals only (NO CARD SHARING)

Do NOT use the travel card for:

- Conference registration fees – use a purchase card and SF-1164 instead
- Multiple traveler's meals (card sharing)
- Retail stores including drug, newsstands, liquor, souvenir, online
- Move theater
- At or near your duty station or local airport unless there was an unexpected layover
- Internet purchases (including internet service when card is swiped in the room)

Travel Charge Card Payment

- Bill is mailed to the traveler's residence
- Agree to keep the account current
- Submit travel receipts immediately upon return from travel for voucher (5 days max)
- Pay the bill without service fee by calling 888-994-6722(*) allow 24 hours to process.
- Allow 10 days for mail to be processed and posted.

Billing Schedules

USBank sends their bills out each month with a payment due date of the end of the month. If payment is received before that date or **posted** during the grace period (usually midnight on **the 7th of the month**), the payments will be recorded before the delinquent report is generated the next day on the 8th of the month. If a payment is received and **posted** on the 8th, it won't appear as paid because the cutoff was midnight the previous night and the statement will be generated on the 10th of the month based on information at the time of the cut off. Be aware that the USBank in-house posting

process may take a couple days. So payments received on the 6th will probably not be posted by the 7th.

NOTE: Because of the billing cycle, charges can be planned to show on the following statement by waiting until after the 9th of the month to ticket airfare, etc.

USBank Split Disbursement

Travelers need to see the voucher document showing what will be paid to their IBA, their salary account, or to the CBA.

Travelers, also expect to see their voucher payments posted to their statement when the USBank is being paid directly during the Split disbursement process. Look at the date the voucher was stamped APPROVED. It takes 3 to 7 days from that date to process from Concur through NFC where an EFT payment is issued to USBank. It takes the same length of time for expense payments to route to their salary check bank. Their bank may even take a day or two to post the payment after receipt of the EFT.

If their voucher was stamped APPROVED on 4/4, the payment made directly to USBank would probably not show up on the statement issued based on the 4/7 midnight cut off date. The account will be considered delinquent.

Online Payment

The traveler is encouraged to call USBank at the phone number on the back of their travel card to make payments FREE of charge.

View USBank Statements

The traveler may view their account online. See the Instruction Sheets in this section.

NO Card Sharing

If the travel card is used to buy a meal for someone else, it is considered 'card sharing' and is strictly prohibited. If the traveler wants to pay for multiple meals, they need to use their personal credit card. The Inspector General will question a large dollar amount charged to a restaurant.

Credit Card Numbers in Concur

The Travel Arranger has the ability to add a first time credit card to a traveler's profile. They also have the ability to change the expiring date for future cards. However, the Travel Specialist needs to input the travel card number if there is a new card issued for fraud or being lost. Enter a request in the AFM SP (portal) to have a new number entered into the profile.

Activation

The Traveler needs to activate the card immediately. SA would enter the new info into Concur.

IBA – Individually Billed Account

All government travelers need to apply for travel cards that are issued in their name.

CBA – Central Billed Account

Primarily invitational travelers' airfare and fees are placed on the CBA. Employees are expected to apply for and use the USBank IBA.

Name Change

If the traveler has a name change, a work request should be entered into the AFMSCP portal verifying the current address and the name change information. The Travel Specialist will verify the address and call USBank to have them change the name and issue a new card and PIN#.

TMC & TAV Fees on Canceled Trip

If the trip is canceled after the ticket has been 'ticketed', the Authorization Fee, and the Voucher Fee will be charged and due for payment. The fees should NOT be added to another document to save time or money. The fees should be associated with the trip.

CGE Document Canceled in Error

If the airfare was ticketed and the authorization was canceled in error a new authorization will need to be created and the remark should clearly show the TA of the canceled document. Upload original approval and receipt.

Local Travel Expenses

Local expenses for parking or tolls may be processed on the T&A. Per diem and fees cannot be processed in the T&A and would require that an authorization or voucher in Concur be created.

Credit on Account

The traveler may call USBank at the number on the back of their Travel Card and request a refund of any credit on their Account. A check will be mailed. Expect it to take two weeks.

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Required Method of Payment for Expenses

Federal Travel Regulations

Subpart A—General

§301-51.1 What is the required method of payment for official travel expenses?

You are required to use the Government contractor-issued travel charge card for all official travel expenses unless you have an exemption.

§301-51.2 What official travel expenses and/or classes of employees are exempt from the mandatory use of the Government contractor-issued travel charge card?

The Administrator of General Services exempts the following from the mandatory use of the Government contractor-issued travel charge card:

- (a) Expenses incurred at a vendor that does not accept the Government contractor-issued travel charge card;
- (b) Laundry/dry cleaning;
- (c) Parking;
- (d) Local transportation system;
- (e) Taxi;
- (f) Tips;
- (g) Meals (when use of the card is impractical, e.g., group meals or the Government contractor-issued travel charge card is not accepted);
- (h) Phone calls (when a Government calling card is available for use in accordance with agency policy);
- (i) An employee who has an application pending for the travel charge card;
- (j) Individuals traveling on invitational travel;
- (k) New appointees;
- (l) Relocation allowances prescribed in [Chapter 302](#) of this title, except en-route travel and househunting trip expenses; and
- (m) Employees who travel 5 times or less a year. Even though exempt, agencies have the discretion to issue a travel charge card to such an employee.

§301-51.3 Who in my agency has the authority to grant exemptions from the mandatory use of the Government contractor-issued travel charge card?

The head of your agency or his/her designee(s) has (have) the authority to grant exemptions from the mandatory use of the Government contractor-issued travel charge card.

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Posting Transactions Fees

- BCD - Travel Management Company (TMC) Fee is charged at the time the ticket is issued.
- CGE - Travel Authorization Voucher (TAV) Fee is charged when the new voucher is stamped PAID
 - TAV Fee on the billing statement is followed by the Travel Authorization number so that it can be cross-referenced to a particular TDY trip.

Transaction Timing

Airfare Ticketed **before** the 9th of the month will be due to USBank by end of the month.

Airfare Ticketed **AFTER** the 9th of the month will be due to USBank by the end of the NEXT month.

Airfare ticketed more than 30 days prior to voucher creation return of trip require a RE TRAVEL Voucher for airfare fee hotel deposit.

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Travel - Individually Billed Account – 448622

To ensure timely processing of your application, please make sure to do the following:

- 1. Complete all fields as they are REQUIRED unless noted as (optional).
2. Choose the address to which you would like your card shipped.
3. Authorize U.S. Bank to obtain your credit information, sign under the Employee Understanding, and send to your Program Coordinator.

Step 1: APPLICANT INFORMATION (To be completed by applicant)

Applicant Name: TYPE IN ALL CAPS (max. 21 char.)
Social Security Number: (9-digits – no spaces or dashes) Date of Birth: (mm / dd / yyyy)
Dept./Office/Agency Name: (max. 21 char.)

Step 2: CHOOSE CARD DELIVERY ADDRESS (To be completed by applicant) Home OR- Alternate Address

Form with two columns for Home and Alternate addresses, including fields for Address1, Address2, City, State, Zip, and Country.

Home Phone Number Business Phone Number REQUIRED (10-digits – no spaces or dashes)
Business Fax Number REQUIRED (optional) Business E-mail Address: REQUIRED (max. 60 char)

Employee Understanding/Signature:

Creditor is U.S. Bank National Association ND. Applicant understands that this card is to be used for official travel related expenses. Applicant understands that the U.S. Bank billing statement is due and payable in full upon receipt.

Applicant acknowledges that all information provided herein is true and correct.

Additionally, (Please CHECK either A. or B. below):

- A. I authorize U.S. Bank to obtain credit information in connection with this application.
B. I do not authorize U.S. Bank to obtain credit information.

NO PIN # ISSUED

Applicant Signature/Date

Step3: SEND FORM TO YOUR AGENCY/ORGANIZATION PROGRAM COORDINATOR (A/OPC) FOR COMPLETION

AGENCY/ORGANIZATION INFORMATION (To be completed by A/OPC)

Form with grid boxes for Bank (8 2 0 1), Agent Number, Company Number, Division, Reporting Levels (TBR) Level 1-7.

Credit Limit

- Default (\$2,900)
Restricted (\$2,900)
Other (Unusual \$7,500)

Cash Limit

- Default (20.0%)
Restricted (0.0%)
Other (Unusual 50.0%)

MCCG

- Default
Other

Step 4: AUTHORIZED A/OPC SIGNATURE

Signature
Print Name
Phone
Fax Date Submitted

Step 5: SUBMIT COMPLETED FORM

A U.S. Bank Travel Card will be issued within 3 days following the receipt of the completed application

Fax form to: 800-974-0777
Or mail form to: U.S. Bank Government Services
200 South Sixth St. EP-MN-L25C
Minneapolis, MN 55402

Questions?

Call Customer Service at 888-994-6722

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**THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA)
GOVERNMENT TRAVEL CARD PROGRAM
INDIVIDUALLY BILLED ACCOUNT
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & ACCEPTANCE STATEMENT**

1. The Government Travel Card Program provides travelers with a means of financing their official travel expenses without obtaining costly travel advances or using their own funds. Only official Government expenses incurred as a result of temporary duty travel may be charged to the travel charge card. Expenses include meals, lodging, rental car, transportation tickets, and any other authorized travel related expenses for which the use of the travel card is allowable under DR2300-001.Travel Card Regulations. Travelers are expected to directly use the travel charge card whenever and wherever practical for all these expenses prior to the use of an automatic teller machine (ATM). ATM use is available for limited cash advance amounts where use of the travel charge card is impractical.
2. Use of the travel charge card for any other purpose than official Government travel business is NOT AUTHORIZED and is considered misuse of the travel charge card program. Delinquency in payment of the monthly travel card billing is considered card abuse. The frequent issuance of Non-Sufficient fund checks to repay the contractor is also considered a form of travel card abuse. Card misuse and abuse may be subject to disciplinary actions under the appropriate agency and civilian personnel regulations.
3. The *USDA Zero Tolerance Policy* strictly prohibits the following use of the card:
 - Unauthorized charges not associated with official travel.
 1. Personal and family member use of the card is forbidden.
 2. Use of the card for activities listed in Section 7b(7) and (8) of the USDA Government Travel Card Guidance are forbidden.
 - Use of the card while not on official travel status, except for cash withdrawals from an automated teller machine within 3-5 days before travel begins is forbidden.
 - Shared use of the card with another employee for official travel purposes. Shared use includes placing charges for another traveler, including group meals, on your card.
 - Account delinquency beyond a 30-day period.
 - Failure to use the card while on travel.
 - Failure to pay accounts with sufficient funds.
 - Failure to use Government issued voucher reimbursement to repay travel expenses.
 - Excessive cash advances, or cash advances not commensurate with official travel.

Cardholders are responsible for reading and familiarizing themselves with the contents of the bank's cardholder agreement, the USDA Travel Card Regulation 2300.001 and agency specific policies regarding the use of the card. Questions concerning the card should be addressed to the local or primary travel card coordinator.

4. I hereby acknowledge that I have read and understand the above policy. I agree to the terms of the vendor's agreement and to abide by the *USDA Zero Tolerance Policy*.

SIGNATURE OF CARDHOLDER (SIGN/DATE)

5. The application for the above to participate in the Travel Card program is recommended for approval.

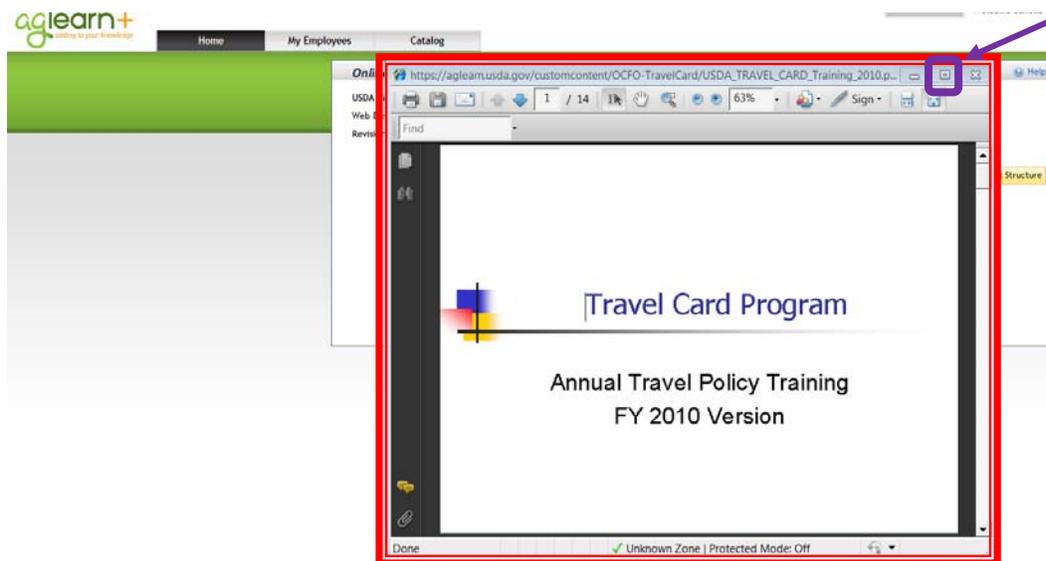
SIGNATURE OF IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR (SIGN/DATE)

NOTE: THIS STATEMENT MUST ACCOMPANY THE TRAVEL CARD APPLICATION SENT TO THE PRIMARY AGENCY/ORGANIZATION PROGRAM CARD COORDINATOR.

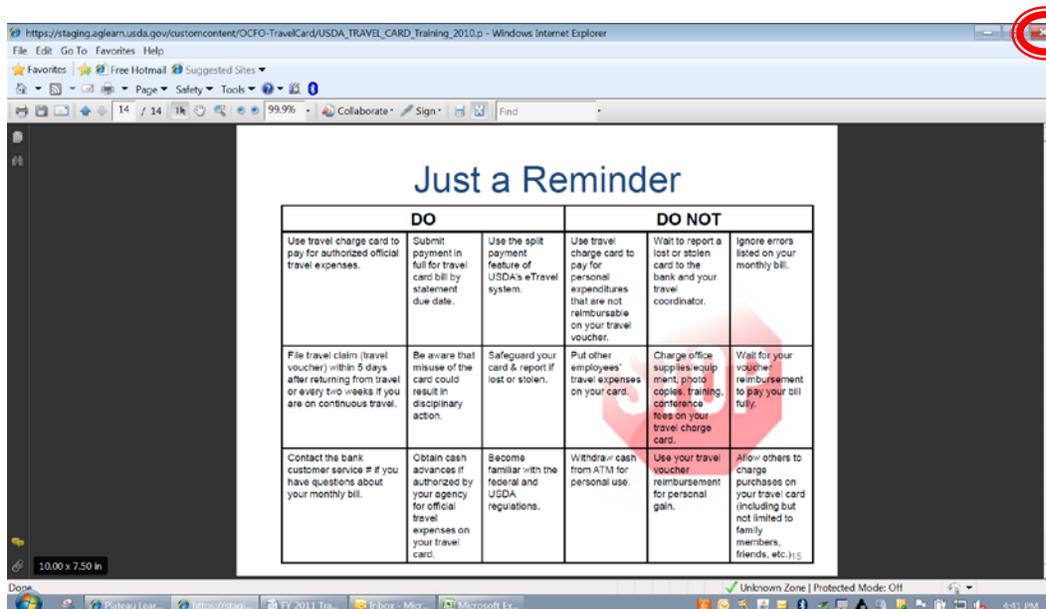
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AgLearn Training Module - USDA Travel Card Training

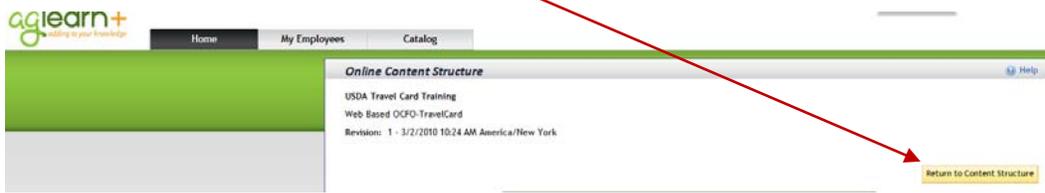
1. The training is a series of PowerPoint slides. A **window** will open with the slide show. You may expand the slide window by clicking on the **full window** button on the upper right of the new window. Review the slides at your own pace. Use the page down and page up key on your keyboard as you wish to navigate through the slides. The Department will be updating the slide to reflect FY 2012. It is fine to take the training while the slide says FY 2010, the training is still valid.



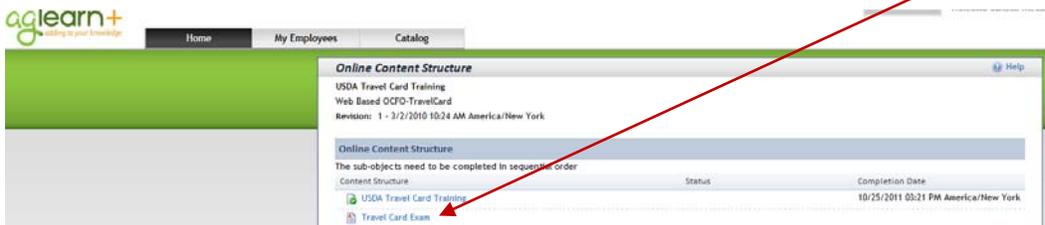
2. When the slides no longer advance, you are at the end of the program. Close the slide show by clicking on the red X at the upper right hand corner of the window.



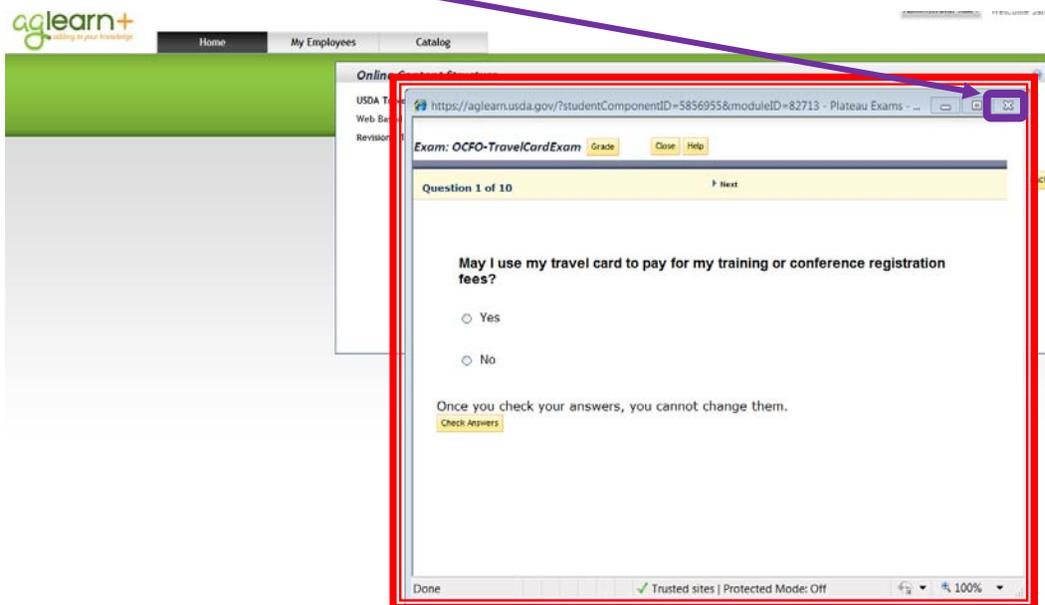
3. Click on the button titled **“Return to Content Structure.”**



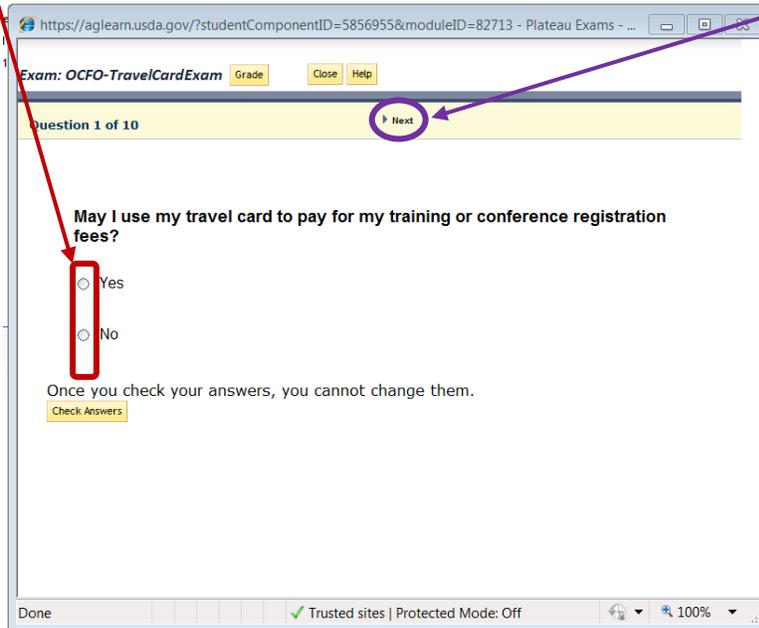
4. You will be returned to the Online Content Structure page. Click on **“Travel Card Exam”**.



5. A new **window** will open. The exam will display. You may expand the window by clicking on the **full window** icon at the upper right hand side of the new window.



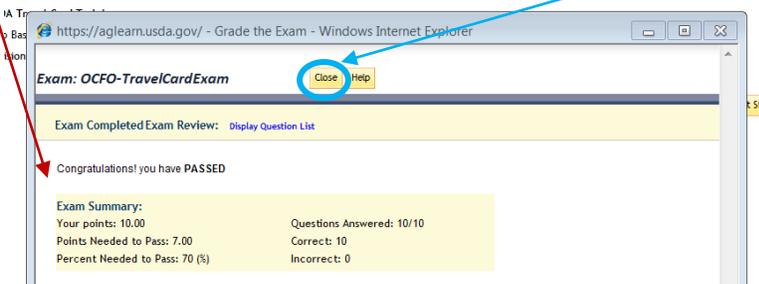
6. Answer each question by choosing one of the **radio buttons** next to the choice that best answers the question. To progress to the next slide, click on the **“Next”**.



7. After completing all questions, you will be prompted to grade the test. Select the **“Yes”** button.



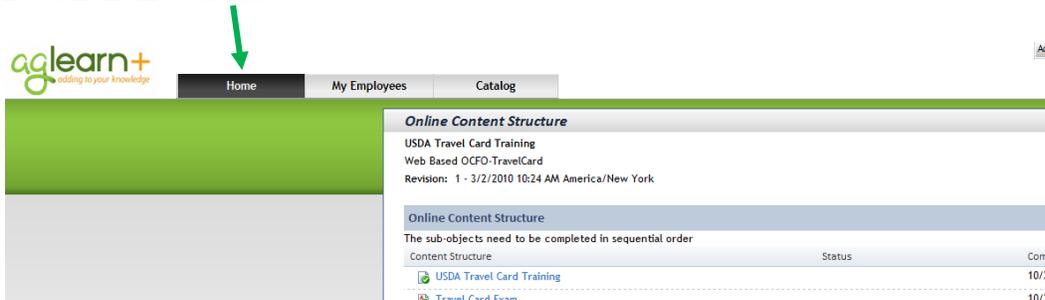
8. Your **score** will display. You may now exit by selecting the **“Close”** button. Please note that there is no exam certificate provided on this page.



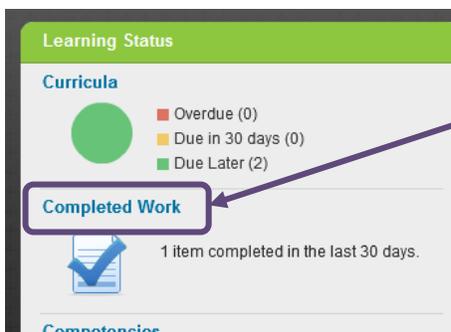
9. After selecting close, select the **“Return to Content Structure”** button on the next page.



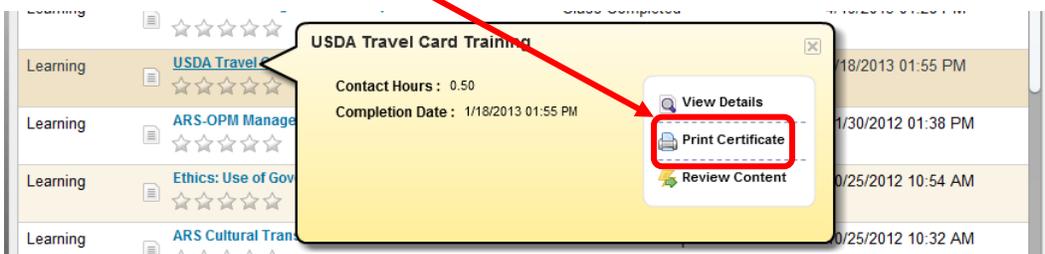
10. Click the **“Home”** tab.



11. Under *Learning Status* on the lower right of the screen click **“Completed Work”**



12. From the list mouse over the **USDA Travel Card Training** text. An information balloon will pop up. Select **“Print Certificate”**:



13. The completions certificate will display in a new window or tab. You may print your certificate using the **print** icon on the menu bar.



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Online Registration

You can use this quick reference guide as a fast reminder of the basic steps for registering online.

Welcome to Access Online!

Please enter the information below and login to begin.

Organization Short Name:

User ID:

Password:

[Forgot your password](#)

[Register Online](#)

1. Navigate to <https://access.usbank.com> and then click the **Register Online** link.

Online Registration
Add Accounts

To join Access Online, you will need a minimum of one valid account number. *Register a single account. *Additional Account will allow multiple accounts to be included in process.

*= required

Organization Short Name: *

Account Number: *

Account Expiration Date: *

Account Zip Code: *

[Back to Login Page](#)

Click to register another account.

2. Specify your organization short name, account number, expiration date, and ZIP code.

3. Click **Register This Account**.

Licensing Agreement

Please read and accept the Licensing Agreement to continue.

AccessOnline Terms of Service

1. ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND ACCEPTANCE OF TERMS OF ACCESSONLINE

By clicking on the "I Accept" button, you and U.S. Bank agree that any cause of action arising out of or related to this AccessOnline must be filed within one (1) year after the cause of action arises, otherwise, such cause of action is permanently barred.

The section titles in the ATS are solely used for the convenience of the parties and have no legal or contractual significance.

4. Review the license agreement and then click **I Accept**.

Online Registration
Password and Contact Information

Organization Short Name: CMEA

User ID & Password

*= required

Please enter an ID between 7-20 alphanumeric characters and a password between 8-20 alphanumeric characters. Use a combination of letters and numbers, easy for you to remember but not for others to guess.

User ID: *

Password: *

Re-enter New Password: *

Authentication

Please select an authentication question and enter a response that will be easy to remember. This information will be used in the event that you forget your password.

Authentication Question: *

Authentication Response: *

Contact Information

First Name: *

Last Name: *

MI: *

Address 1: *

Address 2: *

City: *

State/Province: *

Zip/Postal Code: *

Country: *

Phone Number: *

Fax Number: *

Email Address: *

5. Specify your user ID, password, authentication, and contact information.

6. Click the **Continue** button to complete the process. You are automatically logged into Access Online.

➤ **Learn More:** For more detailed information, refer to the *Online Registration* web-based training lesson and user guide available at:

<https://wbt.access.usbank.com>

Contact your Program Administrator for the most current passwords.

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View a Cardholder Statement

You can use this quick reference guide as a fast reminder of the basic steps for viewing a cardholder statement in Access® Online.

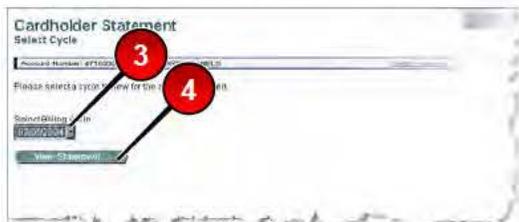
Viewing your statement in Access Online is simple. If you have access to more than one account, you can view the statements for each account you have access to.



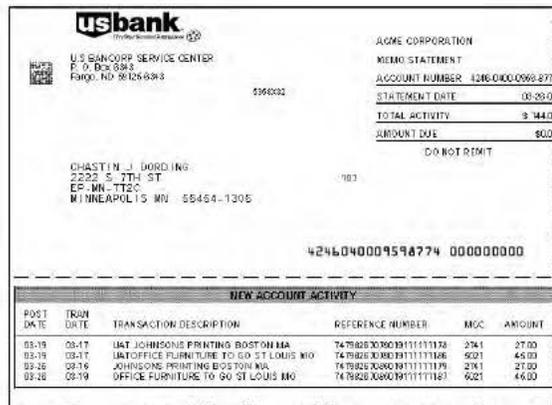
1. Select the **Account Information** high-level task.



2. Click the **Statement** sub-task or the **Cardholder Statement** link.



3. Select a cycle from the drop-down list.
4. Click the **View Statement** button.



The statement opens as a PDF file in a new window. You need Adobe® Acrobat Reader to view statements.

➤ **Learn More:** For more detailed information, refer to the *Viewing Statements* web-based training lesson and user guide available at:

<https://wbt.access.usbank.com>

Contact your manager for the most current passwords.

The WBT also has a glossary available.

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Resetting Your Password

You can use this quick reference as a reminder of the basic steps for resetting your password if you forget your password when you go to log in to Access Online.

Welcome to Access Online!

Please enter the information below and login to begin.

Organization Short Name:

User ID:

Password:

Login

[Forgot your password?](#)

[Register Online](#)

[Website/Browser Requirements](#)

1. If you forget your password, type your organization short name and user ID and then click the **Forgot your password?** link.

Login
Forgot Password

Enter the response to your authentication question. If you are an administrator.

User ID: ch1purchase
Organization Short Name: acme71
Authentication Question: Pet's Name

Enter the response to your Authentication Question:

Continue

[<<Back to Login Page](#)

2. Type your authentication question answer and click **Continue**.

Login
New Password

Please enter a new password between 8-20 alphanumeric characters easy for you to remember but not for others.

User ID: Ch1purchase
Organization Short Name: ACME71

Enter New Password:

Re-enter New Password:

Save

[<<Back to Authentication](#)

3. Type a new password two times.
4. Click **Save**.

Passwords must be 8–20 alphanumeric characters, with at least one letter and one number. You cannot reuse a password for 12 months.

➤ **Learn More:** For detailed information, refer to the *Navigation Basics* and *My Personal Information* web-based training lessons and user guides at:

<https://wbt.access.usbank.com>

Contact your Program Administrator for the most WBT current passwords.

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E-mail Notification

E-mail notification is a way you can be notified via e-mail when your statement is available for viewing in Access Online. This notification is automatically enabled for your directly associated accounts. If you do not want to be notified, you must disable the status of the e-mail notification for the account. This function also lets you set up notification for all accounts you can access within your hierarchy. In addition, you can specify notification about data exchange downloads and transaction approvals (if you use this function).

Viewing and Setting your E-mail Notification

The screenshot displays the U.S. Bank Access Online interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Personal, Business, Institution / Government, and About U.S. Bancorp. The user is identified as ACME71 Corporation. The main header reads 'U.S. Bank Access Online'. A left-hand navigation menu includes Transaction Management, Account Information, Reporting, My Personal Information (selected), Password, Contact Information, and Account Access. Below the menu, the 'My Personal Information' section contains a User ID field (dordjch), a Password section with a description, a Contact Information section with an 'Email Notification' link, and an Account Access section with an 'Add Accounts' link. Red callout circles with numbers 1 and 2 highlight the 'My Personal Information' menu item and the 'Email Notification' link, respectively.

To view and set your e-mail notification:

1. Click the **My Personal Information** high-level task. The *My Personal Information* screen displays.
2. Select the **E-mail Notification** link. The *My Personal Information: Email Notification* screen displays.

ARS CSREES ERS NASS

Bulletin

Title: Use and Management of the Travel Charge Card

Number: 07-301

Date: December 13, 2006 **Expiration:** December 12, 2007

Originating Office: Travel and Relocation Services Branch
Financial Management Division, AFM/ARS

Distribution: All REE Employees

This bulletin replaces REE Bulletins 05-313, *Use and Management of Travel Charge Cards*, dated October 5, 2005 and 06-302, *Changes to the Travel Charge Card Application Process – Creditworthiness*, dated March 1, 2006. This Bulletin states USDA and REE policy on applying for, using and managing the Government contractor-issued individually billed travel charge card.

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This bulletin prescribes guidance to the Research, Education, and Economic (REE) agencies for the use of and management of travel charge cards. This guidance is effective for official travel performed on and after October, 1 2006. The REE Travel Charge Card Policy will be updated to reflect the recent publication of the Office of Management and Budget Circular (OMB) A-123, Appendix B, Improving the Management of Government Charge Card Programs. Until this new policy is published, REE employees will use this Bulletin as the source of policy and guidance for the Travel Charge Card program.

1. POLICY

The Government travel charge card program was developed to procure transportation services, subsistence, and other allowable travel and transportation expenses incurred during official travel. The Travel and Transportation Reform Act of 1998 requires the mandatory use of the travel charge card by employees who meet REE requirements for issuance of the card. Exemptions to mandatory use are; 1) new employees who are required to perform temporary duty travel en route to their first post of duty; 2) employees who have had their travel charge card canceled for cause by Bank of America (BoA); 3) Intermittent/seasonal employees; or 4) employees not expected to travel once or more a year. The use of the travel charge card is limited to reimbursable travel expenses incurred in conjunction with official travel. The provisions of this policy apply to all employees, supervisors, and managers of REE who have been issued or are applying for a travel charge card.

This policy sets forth a “*USDA Zero Tolerance Policy*” for any inappropriate charges and delinquencies. Zero tolerance strictly prohibits the following uses of the card:

- **Unauthorized charges** and charges not associated with official travel.
 - Personal and family member use of the card is forbidden.
 - Additional prohibited activities are listed in Section 3.
- **Charges while not in an official travel status.**
 - Use of the card in the vicinity of the official duty station or residence is forbidden unless used in connection with official travel.
 - Cash withdrawals from an automated teller machine are also forbidden, unless used in connection with official travel, local ATM usage is allowed no earlier than 3 days prior to your scheduled TDY.
- Shared use of the card with another employee for official travel purposes.
- Account delinquency beyond a 30-day period.
- Failure to use the card while on travel.
- Failure to pay accounts with sufficient funds.
- Failure to use Government voucher reimbursements to repay travel expenses.

- Excessive ATM cash withdrawals or ATM cash withdrawals not commensurate with official travel.

The underlying objective of the “*USDA Zero Tolerance Policy*” is to eliminate misuse and abuse in the travel charge card program and to avoid imposing disciplinary procedures on any REE employee. Proper use of the travel charge card will preserve the reputation of REE, the Department of Agriculture (USDA), and its employees to achieve its mission and goals with integrity.

2. CREDITWORTHINESS

Background and Policy:

Beginning March 1, 2006, USDA adopted a creditworthiness screening for all employees applying for a contractor-issued Government travel charge card. The creditworthiness screening is required by revisions to the OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B, Improving the Management of Government Charge Card Programs. This Circular implements Section 639 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2005 (P.L. 108-447), which mandates that agencies must assess the creditworthiness of all **new** travel charge card applicants prior to issuing a card. The Circular also requires that new applicants receive training prior to issuance of a travel charge card. **Note: Current cardholders are not subject to creditworthiness screening, and their current credit limits are unaffected.**

Creditworthiness is defined in OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B, as obtaining a FICO score of 660 or higher from a credit reporting agency. FICO is a risk-predictive score developed by Fair Isaac and Company, and is based on five criteria, including payment history, amount of outstanding credit debt, length of credit history, amount of new credit, and types of credit used by the applicant. BoA, USDA’s travel charge card vendor, will only obtain the FICO score on the applicant. BoA will not receive any information on the composition of the score, nor will BoA provide an employee’s FICO score information to the USDA or the employee’s agency. The FICO score information will be used internally by BoA to determine whether the applicant will receive a restricted or unrestricted travel charge card.

3. PROCEDURES

Beginning March 1, 2006, all REE employees applying for a new travel charge card must complete the new version of the BoA “*Individually Billed Card Account Setup/Application Form.*” The new form is available from the employee’s assigned Agency/Office Point of Contact (A/OPC) or on the BoA website at https://www.gcsuthd.bankofamerica.com/forms/doc/cs/S01N1198_CS.doc (A list of REE A/OPCs is found in attachment D of this Bulletin.)

The new application procedures require the applicant to complete the section titled “Signature and Agreement” whereby the applicant will either authorize or not authorize BoA to obtain the employee’s credit report.

- If the applicant authorizes BoA to obtain the employee’s credit report and the credit report provides a FICO score of 660 or higher, the applicant will receive an unrestricted travel charge card.
- If the applicant does not authorize BoA to obtain a credit score or if the applicant does authorize a creditworthiness screening, but the credit score is below 660, the applicant will receive a restricted travel charge card. If the applicant refuses to complete the “Signature and Agreement” section, BoA will not process the application and a travel charge card will not be issued.
- Only applications with the “Signature and Agreement” section will be accepted by BoA. BoA will not process any applications submitted on prior editions of the application form.

4. CYCLE AND SPENDING LIMITS

Spending limits for a standard travel charge card are:

- There is a monthly use limit of \$5,000 and a cumulative limit (in the event travel spans two or more months) of \$10,000 for REE travel charge cardholders, based on the monthly billing cycle.
- Employees performing foreign travel, transfer of station (relocation), or a short/long term detail, may request, with supervisory concurrence, higher monthly limits for a specific travel situation. Supervisors will contact the appropriate Agency Organization Program Coordinator (A/OPC) at least 3 days prior to an employee’s departure to request limit changes. Once an employee completes their travel assignment, the supervisor will notify the A/OPC to initiate action to reset the monthly limit.

Spending limits for a restricted travel charge card are:

- There is a monthly use limit of \$1,500 and a cumulative limit (in the event travel spans two or more months) of \$3,000 for REE travel charge cardholders, based on the monthly billing cycle.
- Employees performing foreign travel, transfer of station (relocation), or a short/long term detail, may request, with supervisory concurrence, higher monthly limits for a specific travel situation. Supervisors will contact the appropriate Agency Organization Program Coordinator (A/OPC) at least 3 days prior to an

employee's departure to request limit changes. Once an employee completes their travel assignment, the supervisor will notify the A/OPC to initiate action to reset the monthly limit.

5. TRAINING

Applicants must also complete the online training for cardholders found at the GSA website <http://fss.gsa.gov/webtraining/trainingdocs/traveltraining/index.cfm>

- The online training module includes a series of review questions at the end of the course. A printable certificate of completion will be provided to applicants who correctly answer 70% or more of the questions.
- Applicants must provide a copy of the training certificate with their BoA application.
- A/OPCs will keep a copy of the application and the training certification on file and in accordance with National Archive record retention guidelines.

Research, Education, and Economics employees may access the OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a123/a123_appendix_b.pdf. Please direct questions on the new application procedures to your assigned A/OPC

6. MERCHANT CATEGORY CODE

BoA operates a monitoring system that incorporates use of a four digit Merchant Category Code (MCC). The MCC groups various merchants, products, and services into like categories i.e.; motels, restaurants, retail vendors, training establishments, banks, etc. This process will be used by BoA to monitor and control various travel charge card purchases.

a. Retail Block: USDA has instructed BoA to decline travel charge card use for the following MCCs:

- Book and Magazine Subscriptions
- Membership Fees
- Training and Conference or Registration Fees *
- Higher Education Expenses
- Theme Parks
- Management Consulting Services
- Automobile Purchases; Car Repairs & Services
- Clothing, Lingerie, Outerwear, Shoes, & Furniture
- Hair Services, Cosmetics, Tattoos, & Massages
- Emergency Medical Services
- Office Supplies

- Computers, Televisions, or Digital Equipment
- Any other service or product is prohibited for personal, family, or household purposes
- Any charges associated with a Government-owned vehicle (GOV should be charged to the Voyager Fleet card assigned to the vehicle.

* Training, conference, or registration fees **MAY NOT** be paid with the travel charge card. All such fees must be paid using an alternate procurement method, i.e., Government Purchase Visa card. If lodging costs are included in the registration fee, the costs must be deducted from the employee's travel voucher claim. It is agency policy that only official Government expenses be financed through use of the purchase card. However, in rare, extenuating circumstances where non-official expenses are included in the registration fee (outside activities, social events, etc.), the employee must reimburse the agency for those non-official expenses.

b. Dollar limitations: USDA has instructed BoA to place dollar limitations on the following types of charges and monitor them using the MCC process. Cardholders will be automatically precluded from exceeding the following dollar limitations. Attempting to exceed these dollar limitations will result in the charge being declined by BoA.

- Automated Teller Machine (ATM)
- Cash withdrawal limits are \$375 weekly. No more than \$50 per day. ATM service fees will be reimbursed as a miscellaneous expense on the travel voucher. Cash obtained from the ATM in amounts greater than required for the travel duration are considered excessive cash withdrawals.
- Food - weekly food allowance of \$400.
- Other - a billing cycle limit of \$2,000 for hotels/motels, rental cars, etc.

7. TRAVEL ADVANCES

Employees that have a travel charge card have access to the ATM for cash withdrawals. Therefore, employees who have a travel charge card may not obtain a travel advance from the National Finance Center (NFC) through the travel system, except for foreign travel.

A canceled travel charge card account reflects unfavorable past performance. For this reason, employees with canceled travel charge card accounts are considered high risk in the repayment of travel advances. Therefore, an employee who has had their travel charge card canceled for misuse or non-payment may not apply for a travel advance from NFC. Common carrier tickets will be paid by the agency; however, all other travel expenses will be paid by the employee and subsequently reimbursed.

However, in the case of extreme hardship, employees who have lost their charge card privileges may request written approval for a travel advance on a trip-by-trip basis from the REE Chief Financial Officer (CFO). Such requests must be forwarded to the CFO

(Director, Financial Management Division, ARS/AFM) through the employee's travel approving official. Consideration of such requests will be made on a case-by-case basis, and approval should not be assumed. The CFO will maintain a written record of all such approvals, as well as the basis for each approval for future Office of Inspector General review during program specific audits.

8. DEACTIVATION AND REACTIVATION

Travel charge card accounts that remain inactive during a twelve-month period will be deactivated automatically by BoA, or when requested by an employee's immediate supervisor.

Infrequent travelers must contact BoA Customer Service using the telephone number provided on the reverse of the travel card to determine their card status. Employees with a deactivated travel charge card must contact their A/OPC 3 days prior to commencing travel (does not include weekends) to have their travel charge card reactivated, if required. Please Note: ARS Area Offices may establish local, alternate procedures for card reactivation.

9. RESPONSIBILITIES

The following offices and individuals have direct responsibilities for monitoring the use of the travel charge card:

a. Employees.

Employees who are issued a travel charge card assume the responsibility to use the card for official purposes and pay their charges in a timely manner. Use of the card does not relieve the employee of the responsibility to employ prudent travel practices and to observe rules and regulations governing travel as set forth under the "*USDA Zero Tolerance Policy*" and agency specific policies and procedures.

Cardholders are personally responsible for all items billed to the card, unless the card was reported lost or stolen. Employees shall pay their bills in accordance with the contractor bank payment terms. These responsibilities are explained in the Cardholder Agreement that each employee signs during the application process. Furthermore, employees are not relieved of their obligation to pay the travel charge card bill in those rare instances when the agency has not reimbursed the traveler within the 30-days after receipt of a timely submitted voucher. (FTR 301-52.24)

Employees who apply for the card will:

- Complete and sign the Acknowledgment Statement recognizing receipt and understanding of the policies and procedures related to the use of the travel charge card on the cardholder application; obtain the signature of the approving official or immediate supervisor on the cardholder application; and forward the application to their A/OPC for processing.

- Secure the travel charge card in the same manner as a personal charge card. The card shall not be stored or kept by anyone other than the employee.
- Black out all but the last six numbers of the charge card number from any receipts submitted with your travel voucher.
- Obtain cash withdrawals from ATMs as discussed in Section 2 of this policy. Cardholders are issued Personal Identification Numbers by BoA to use this feature of the travel charge card. **Employees who have been issued a travel charge card may not obtain a travel advance from National Finance Center unless foreign travel is authorized.**
- Pay travel charge card bills in full when due and before the next statement date.

- Conform to the “*Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch,*” 5 CFR Parts 2635. As a Federal employee, standards of conduct for public trust positions apply. The standards in Attachment A require employees to pay each financial obligation in a proper and timely manner.
- Dispute a charge not made by the cardholder. It is the employee’s responsibility to contact BoA to dispute a charge. All disputes must be filed in writing within 60 days of the date the charge first appears on the billing statement. BoA can be reached by calling the customer service number provided on the monthly billing statement or on the back of the travel charge card for the specific forms to file a dispute. The bank will need to know the following:
 - Employee name and account number;
 - Reference number of the disputed charge;
 - Name of establishment where charge was incurred;
 - Amount of the charge;
 - Statement date; and
 - Reason for dispute.

- Notify the A/OPC when transferring between offices within REE or USDA. This notification is essential for internal management reports and mailing addresses to be kept current.
- Return the card, cut in half, to your supervisor or A/OPC for cancellation when leaving, retiring, or transferring to an agency outside of USDA.
- Employees will have seven business days to respond to official inquiries regarding card use or payment status. Responses to official requests must be in writing (E-mail is acceptable).

b. Agency Organization Program Coordinators (A/OPC).

A/OPC’s will regularly utilize their access to online reporting capabilities provided by BoA to keep abreast of travel charge card misuse and delinquency trends. To increase REE’s retention of travel card rebates, A/OPC’s are responsible for monitoring the monthly delinquency reports provided by BoA for employees who are in a pre-suspension status. These reports should be forwarded to supervisors for appropriate action, including counseling, disciplinary action, and salary offset.

A/OPC's will also:

- If applicable, monitor the use of centrally billed accounts (CBA). The use of a CBA results in significant administrative costs to the agency. A CBA will be used only to pay for common carrier expenses for non-government persons traveling on invitational travel orders, for those employees not issued a travel charge card or for those employees that have had their cards canceled for misuse or non-payment, and for foreign travel common carrier tickets. The National Agricultural Statistics Service has obtained a departmental waiver for continued CBA use.
- Provide eligible employees requesting a card with a copy of the BoA Cardholder Agreement and either a copy of this bulletin or the web location of this bulletin.
- Ensure completeness of the Employee Acknowledgment Statement on the cardholder application.
- Maintain a central file of the signed cardholder applications for all employees who are current cardholders.
- Monitor the contractor-issued monthly charges and delinquency reports identified in Attachment B of this bulletin and review BoA reports to identify employees who: have left USDA; have violated the "*USDA Zero Tolerance Policy*;" and have had additional administrative restrictions placed on their accounts. (Electronic and web based reports should be used whenever possible to reduce paperwork in accordance with the Paper Reduction Act.)
- Notify the employee of possible misuse or delinquencies (30 days or greater), with a carbon copy to the employee's supervisor. Provide the employee 7 business days to respond. If an acceptable response is not received within the 7 business days, the matter will be referred to the employee's supervisor for resolution. For consistent notification procedures within USDA, use the Inappropriate Use, Unauthorized Use and Delinquent memoranda found in Attachment C of this policy for warning employees of potential travel charge card misuse and delinquency.
- Notify BoA when an employee transfers between offices within REE or USDA, and transfer the cardholder account.
- Reactivate travel charge cards for employees when needed for authorized travel.

c. Cardholder's Immediate Supervisor. The cardholder's immediate supervisor will:

- Notify the employee of any questionable or inappropriate charges and/or delinquencies and give the employee the opportunity to explain the charge or delinquency. A record shall be maintained of the notification and the explanation received from the employee.
- Take appropriate disciplinary action if an explanation is inadequate to support a questionable charge. The supervisor shall contact the agency servicing personnel office for a determination of the appropriate disciplinary action that shall be taken. At the discretion of the agency, the card may be suspended or revoked. Maintain documentation of referrals to the agency's servicing personnel and document the resolution of the incident.
- Revoke the card if there is a pattern of inappropriate use or insufficient explanation for repeated delinquencies. Appropriate disciplinary action, as recommended by the servicing personnel office, shall also be taken.

- Notify the A/OPC when the card should be canceled or revoked because of inappropriate use or delinquency.
- Notify the A/OPC when an employee is transferring between offices within REE or USDA.
- Retrieve the travel charge card from the employee and return it to the A/OPC for cancellation when an employee leaves, retires, or transfers outside of USDA.
- Assure the appropriate official signs an exit clearance or other form to document cancellation of the travel charge card when an employee leaves USDA.

10. USE OF CASH TO PROCURE TRANSPORTATION TICKETS

FTR 301-51.100 states, “you must use a Government contractor-issued travel charge card, centrally billed account (GVTS/CBA), to procure common carrier tickets when the cost is more than \$100. This regulation does not allow the use of cash or personal credit cards to purchase common carrier transportation except when the agency authorized a traveler to use a reduced fare for group, charter, excursion arrangements, or under emergency circumstances where the use of other methods is not possible.” Only the agency Administrator may approve the emergency use of cash. This regulation also applies to non-Government travelers under invitational travel orders. Therefore, non-Government persons under invitational travel orders must use a government contracted travel management center for their common carrier tickets.

11. COLLECTION OF DELINQUENT AMOUNTS

In accordance with the cardholder agreement, employees are obligated to pay the undisputed balance within 30 days. Travel charge card account balances that are delinquent are eligible for the USDA automatic travel charge card salary offset program. Upon written request from BoA, USDA will collect from an employee’s disposable pay any undisputed amounts owed to BoA. Administrative offset from the employee’s disposable pay may not exceed 15% unless a cardholder authorizes a higher amount. USDA must follow the due process requirements contained in FTR 301-54.100 before any deductions can be made. There may be an administrative fee added to the delinquent balance when the salary offset is scheduled. NFC will notify the employee by letter informing them of their rights. Before initiating a salary offset action, the agency will verify the employee has been reimbursed for a properly filed travel voucher. **Employees with delinquent travel charge card accounts will be subject to disciplinary actions.**

12. PAYING BANK OF AMERICA ONLINE

BoA offers a free online bill payment process to employees with a government travel charge card. MyEasyPayment.com allows an employee to access and make a payment to their government charge account with ease and convenience at no cost. All payments

made through MyEasyPayment.com will be applied to the account within two to three calendar days.

Any questions pertaining to this bulletin may be directed to Diane M. Eggert, Chief, Travel and Relocation Services Branch, Financial Management Division, on 301-504-1260.

/s/

S. M. HELMRICH
Director
Financial Management Division

Attachment A - Government Employees Standards of Conduct

The following excerpts pertinent to the use of the Travel Card are from Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 2635, “Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch”

Section 2635.101, “Basic Obligations of Public Service,” state the following:

Public service is a public trust, requiring employees to place loyalty to laws and ethical principles above private gain.

(For example, do not take advantage of the charge card privileges for your personal use.)

Employees shall put forth honest effort in the performance of their duties.

(For example, abide by the agency policy in carrying out your responsibilities as a cardholder.)

Employees shall not knowingly make unauthorized commitments or promises of any kind purporting to bind the government.

(For example, do not make purchases with the travel card if purchases have not been authorized.)

Employees shall not use public office for private gain.

(For example, do not use the charge card to make a personal unauthorized purchase.)

Employees shall satisfy in good faith their obligations as citizen, including all just financial obligations.

(For example, pay your charge card bill on time. A check returned for insufficient funds does not demonstrate good faith in paying your bills.)

Employees shall endeavor to avoid any actions creating the appearance that they are violating the law or the ethical standards set forth in this part.

(For example, do not avoid agency policies and procedures for administrative convenience.)

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