Travel Update

State of Utah
Department of Administrative Services
Division of Finance
www.finance.utah.gov

April 2005

A newsletter for state government travelers and travel planners

Using Facility From Our List Does Not Guarantee Approval

As we told you last month, it is no longer necessary for agencies to get three bids for conference facilities if you use a site from the State Travel Office's list of facilities approved for group gatherings. However, we need to stress that **using a facility from the list does not guarantee that the State Travel Office will automatically approve the arrangements**.

The deciding factor State Travel uses in approving arrangements for a group gathering is the rental charge for meeting rooms. A facility may honor the state per diem for meals but charge a high rental rate for meeting rooms in order to offset the cost of the food service.

Cutting Costs

The goal of the State Travel Office is to do everything we can to reduce costs for agencies who are booking facilities for group gatherings.

If you choose a facility on our approved list and they want to charge for meeting rooms, please contact Tami Nelson or Diann Donoviel in the State Travel Office. If the facility will not negotiate with the Travel Office to reduce the cost of the meeting rooms, Tami or Diann will contact another facility that is willing to reduce or waive the cost of meeting rooms. Our goal is to save agencies as much money as possible.

Other Considerations

Here are some other important reminders about booking conference facilities and using our list of approved facilities:

- Because the conference facility list will be revised frequently, we recommend that you use the list on-line instead of printing it.
- To search the list, select the icon of the binoculars in the Adobe Acrobat Reader toolbar just above the list, and type in the name of a city or a specific hotel to go right to that information.
- The contract for conference facilities should be signed by the agency director or designee.
- If you have questions about group events or need assistance selecting a facility, contact Tami Nelson at 801-538-3109 (taminelson@utah.gov) or Diann Donoviel at 801-538-3103 (ddonoviel@utah.gov).
- The list of approved facilities is posted on the Travel Office's Web site at www.finance.utah.gov. Select *State Travel, Hotels/Group Facilities*.

See page 2 for procedures to use when booking conference facilities.

Use These Procedures to Book Conference Facilities

The policy regulating procedures for booking group gatherings was revised for the April 4 release of the *State of Utah Accounting Policies and Procedures*. Policy FIACCT 04-11.00, Purchasing – Group Gatherings (previously titled Purchasing – Group Gatherings – Overview) was revised to do the following:

- Require only one bid if the facility providing accommodations accepts state per diem rates for food and lodging.
- Incorporate policies for booking conferences, training sessions, and retreats/service awards. These topics were previously covered in separate policies.
- Change the name of form FI 58 to Group Gathering Authorization. (Agencies should continue to use the old FI 58 until the new version is available.) Finance forms are posted on our Web site at www.finance.utah.gov/forms.

For your convenience, we are publishing here a summary of the revised procedures for booking facilities for group gatherings. We suggest you print these procedures and refer to them the next time you plan a group event.

Group Gatherings Procedures

If the cost for the gathering is more than $1,000, State Travel Office approval is required. If the cost is less than $1,000, the agency may proceed without State Travel Office approval.

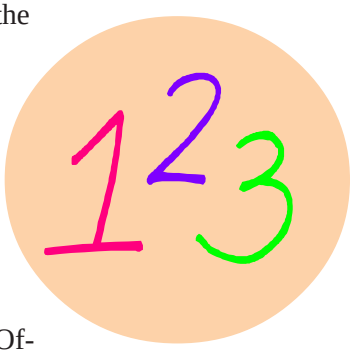
1. The agency determines it is necessary to purchase hotel conference facilities and services. The agency plans the gathering using form FI 58, Group Gathering Authorization, to organize and document details.
2. The agency director or designee and the budget officer approve the FI 58 authorization form **before** the vendor is contacted.
3. The agency consults the list of approved facilities available on the Division of Finance Web site and selects an appropriate location. The State Travel Office is familiar with the properties on the list and will provide assistance in making this selection if needed.
4. The agency contacts the vendor and makes tentative arrangements for the gathering.
5. The vendor prepares a draft contract detailing all arrangements for the group gathering and sends it to the agency. The agency should not sign the contract with the vendor until they receive approval from the **State Travel Office.**

Procedures continue on page 3

Booking Conference Facilities (article continues from page 2)

6. The agency sends the form FI 58 and the draft contract from the vendor to the State Travel Office for approval.

7. The State Travel Office reviews the form FI 58 and the draft contract, identifies any inappropriate charges, and works with the agency and the vendor until acceptable arrangements have been negotiated.



8. The vendor makes any required changes to the draft contract and sends a final contract to the agency and the State Travel Office.

9. The State Travel Office approves and numbers the form FI 58 and returns a copy of the approved FI 58 to the agency. The State Travel Office will maintain a file with copies of approved FI 58 forms and copies of final contracts.

10. The agency director or designee signs the final contract.

11. If it is necessary to make changes to the negotiated arrangements that increase the overall cost, the agency completes an amended form FI 58 referencing the original approval number and showing the changes.

12. The agency holds the group gathering and pays the bills. All payments will reference the form FI 58 approval number in the document description.

13. The Division of Finance audits payments.

The entire revised policy is available on the Division of Finance Web site at www.finance.utah.gov. Mouse over the *Publications* button on the left, and then select *State of Utah Accounting Policies and Procedures*. To access the policy on Group Gatherings, click on the *Search* button in the upper left portion of the screen. Type the policy number, 04-11.00, in the "containing this exact phrase" field on the right side of the screen, and click the *Search* button at the bottom to go right to the policy. To print the entire policy, click in the browser window where the policy appears, and then select *File/Print* from the browser menu. ✈

Sign Up for List Server from Travel Home Page

We recently revised the Travel home page at www.finance.utah.gov/travel to add a link to past issues of the *Travel Update* newsletter and a link to the sign-up page for the Travel list server.

We use the list server to notify members each month when a new travel newsletter is posted to our Web site, and to distribute other important information concerning the State Travel Office. To join the Travel list server, enter your e-mail address and name, and then click on the *Subscribe* button.

Please note that the Travel list server is not set up to accept replies from you. If you need to respond to a list server message, or if you have trouble subscribing to the list, contact Teddy Cramer at tcramer@utah.gov. ✈