Lodging Town Hall Q&A

Statewide Travel Program

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1. Preferred Hotel Program

Since some hotels are now considered contracted vendors, are employees "required" (if available) to book a Preferred or Most Preferred hotel over a hotel that is not? Or is it more of a recommendation to utilize these contracted vendors?

Travelers are not required to use PHP hotels but are strongly encouraged to use them as they offer additional complimentary amenities. Contracted hotels are required to offer rates at or below GSA and accept virtual card number (VCN) payments for hotels.

Are Preferred and Most Preferred hotels also required to accept tax waiver forms?

No, it is not a program requirement. It is still at the hotel's discretion to accept the forms.

Will the PHP be extended for out-of-state travel?

Yes. Right now, only California properties are being accepted and loaded into Concur. Phase 2 of PHP will include out-of-state hotels.

Is there a timeline for phase 2? I'm asking because my agency has a lot of out-of-state (and international) travel and would like to share it with our travelers.

Please email StatewideTravelProgram@dgs.ca.gov with a list of hotels your travelers frequent out-of-state or internationally. We will contact them about participating in PHP.

2. Concur

Regarding the lodging rates provided on Concur: When the rates fluctuate throughout the stay, Concur does not accurately reflect the nightly rate so it's a little misleading if employees do not notice the price summary before confirming the booking.

The nightly rates will show on the Review and Reserve page so the traveler can see the different nightly rates before confirming the reservation.

If a room type says, "Preferred/Most Preferred for DGS", does that mean for all state agencies or only for DGS the agency?

"Preferred/Most Preferred" will display with the agency's name. For example Most Preferred Hotel for General Services" or "Most Preferred Hotel for XYZ Agency." Preferred and Most Preferred properties will display as such on every state agency's individual Concur site.

So, our department travelers should not select a room type that says DGS?

If you are referring to the rate code, the rates will be listed as "State" for all agency Concur sites. It is a requirement of the PHP to load a designated and uniform state of California Rate to make it easier for our travelers to determine what rate to book.

Will Concur display a room rate with a green check that is above the maximum rate for that county in that month?

No, Concur cannot be programmed to show the max rates for the county, however, your agency can elect to add a policy violation/rate cap, but it would only be the standard $107 rate. Please email us if you have additional questions.

Is there a report in Concur that will list all cancelled reservations?

Concur offers some reporting that may indicate withdrawn/canceled trips. Please email CAreports@ciazumano.com for more information.

Will hotels update their rates in Concur frequently to reflect the GSA rate for that county and month since some county rates fluctuate throughout the federal fiscal year?

Yes, the hotel has committed to accepting GSA rates and will adjust the rates based on seasonality.

PowerPoint slide 8 mentions all lodging should be booked in Concur. If a traveler found a lower rate for the same hotel and prefers to book outside of Concur because they are receiving a lower rate than Concur, is this a sufficient justification?

Please refer to the Lodging section of our FAQs here - this question/answer is referenced here. https://www.dgs.ca.gov/OFAM/Travel/Resources/Page-Content/Resources-List-Folder/Frequently-Asked-Questions

Are hotels allowed to charge whatever rates they want in Concur? We just saw a hotel charging $3,000/night, while the same hotel charges $161 on its website.

Concur shows all available rates offered by the hotel. It is the responsibility of the traveler to follow state lodging policy.

Will the new federal maximum rates (Varies per county & sometimes per month) be updated in Concur when booking lodging? Currently, it's triggering out-of-compliance for 2023 rates, EX: Sacramento $95/night so we are receiving calls/emails from confused employees.

If your Concur site is programmed to capture maximum lodging rates, please email us at StatewideTravelProgram@dgs.ca.gov to update your Concur site.

3. Booking Lodging

If a traveler did not cancel the booking or is a no-show, do we still need to file a dispute? Does the merchant's policy for late cancellation or no-show apply, requiring us to clear the bill?

A dispute is used for charges that have been charged incorrectly. If the traveler has not tried to cancel and the property charges a no-show fee you still have the option of calling to see if they will reverse the fee, but ultimately, the property's no-show policy applies in this case.

Are we able to use any of the room options or just Government Rates? For example, Flexible Rate.

Government rates should always include the word "State" in the rate description. Flexible rates are not state government or PHP rates.

Is there a specific code or regulation that speaks to unallowable deposits or pre-paying for services?

The California Constitution, Article XVI, section 3 and section 6, prohibits gifts/donations of public funds. An advance payment or pre-payment is considered a gift of public funds since the State has received no benefit and the subsequent receipt of goods/services cannot be guaranteed.

We used to receive hotel itineraries to our centralized email. Now they are sent to our travel team at random. Would it be possible to send it to one email?

Please email us at StatewideTravelProgram@dgs.ca.gov and we will research further.

Can lodging receipts be attached/included with the itinerary invoice that is emailed to us? Sometimes it's hard to retrieve lodging receipts from the hotel and/or employee. Not sure if this is your area.

No, the itinerary is just the booked/reserved travel. The receipt must come from the hotel or employee directly. Provide a shared mailbox for your employees to submit the receipt after the completion of their stay.

4. Virtual Card Number (VCN)

Can you work with listed hotels to avoid requiring CC Authorization Forms using VCN?

All Preferred and Most Preferred hotels in Concur have accepted the Conferma virtual payment and should never require an additional authorization form. If the hotel does, please notify us.

How long is the VCN payment for THAT stay available to receive a refund due to the hotel charging the state directly for cafes, gift shops, and food/beverage charges? It is my understanding after weeks go by, our only option here in Accounting is to pay the credit card bill and seek reimbursement from the staff member.

The VCN card will remain active for 365 after checkout to receive credits, the vendor just needs to refund the credit back to the original form of payment.

If we are unable to contact the hotel to reverse the charges and unable to contact U.S. Bank to dispute the charges, is it ok for the traveler to issue the agency a check for the excess charges to the VCN?

This is at the discretion of the agency.

What do we do when the virtual card is denied at check-in? This happened last year and when I called CI Azumano the only workaround was for them to fax a CC authorization form, but the hotel refused to accept the faxed form and would only accept payment via Sertfi.

All PHP hotels agree to use VCN seamlessly. If your traveler booked a PHP hotel and did not have a seamless check-in, let us know so we can hold them accountable to contract obligations.

Will you provide a status update on where we're at on compelling hotels with following through on sending a folio, so Accounting has access to print it? Many hotels do not send folios.

At the moment, the SNAP tool system will follow up with the hotel for 14 days to collect the hotel receipts. Currently, we are seeing an 85-90% success rate in collecting the receipts.

Some Travel Coordinators (TC) said that the hotels refuse to send the folio to TC but to the EE directly. What is your suggestion?

The employee should be required to upload the folio via the Conferma app or email the folio to Accounting's shared mailbox.

When calling the hotel, we suggest asking to speak with the hotel accounting team to request the receipts. If you have exhausted all options, please reach out to us and let us know so we can assist.

When retrieving hotel folios within SNAP, is the only way to do this to go to documents, set your date range, and then individually open each document attached to that record? If so, is there anything that STP can do to cut down on the number of nonrelated documents that come through (advertisements, survey requests, etc.)? It's quite time-consuming to open each record and then download each PDF within the record.

Within the Documents search area, there are options to exclude rejected documents and junk documents. We recommend checking these two boxes to help filter out unnecessary documents.

If travelers book a hotel at a cost higher than the allowable geography maximum - but are prepared to pay that difference - are they able to make a VCN reservation? Or should they continue to book with a personal credit card?

If they book the reservation using the VCN, the hotel will typically charge the entire amount to the VCN card. We suggest setting the payment method to optional, which will give your travelers the option to use their personal credit card as the form of payment.

5. Resources

5.1 Statewide Travel Program

- Website: www.dgs.ca.gov/OFAM/Travel
- Email: statewidetravelprogram@dgs.ca.gov
- Phone: 916.376.3974

Frequently Asked Questions Page

Lodging Resource Page

Trainings Resource Page

Virtual Card Number Resource Page

5.2 CI Azumano

- Website: www.caltravel.ciazumano.com
- Email: caltravel@ciazumano.com (for reservation assistance only)
- Phone: 877.454.8785