



# INTEGRATED TRAVEL MANAGER 9.0

## DISPATCH #1

### Funds Check Process

#### February 2009

#### Did you know that...

Travel Manager is integrated with the Core Financial System (CFS). That integration is essential for verifying the availability of funds. To account for all pieces of the funds checking process, we'll start where it all begins.



Believe it or not, no matter how important the mission is, one cannot travel unless there is enough funding available to pay for the cost of the trip. Just ask anyone in charge of balancing the budget for your organization. As individual Line Offices (LO) submit their budgets to the NOAA Budget Office for processing, funding is set up in the Core Financial System (CFS) and becomes available for spending.

When a Travel Authorization is stamped SIGNED or APPROVED, Travel Manager checks CFS to see if there is enough funding available for the Account Classification Code (ACCS) used on the Travel Authorization. If sufficient funding is available in the LO budget, the document is permitted to move forward. If sufficient funding is not available, the Travel Authorization is prevented from moving forward, until the funding error is resolved.



#### How does the whole "Obligation" process work?

**Obligation** (noun) - the responsibility (as by a government) to pay a particular sum of money in exchange for goods or services.

When a Travel Authorization is stamped APPROVED, it undergoes the routine funds check process. As long as sufficient funding is available, the electronic approval process results in the posting of an approved obligation(s) in CFS. The obligation holds or sets aside funds which will later be payable when the traveler and/or Charge Card provider vouchers for expenses incurred. Although the Travel Authorization is only intended to be an estimate, it should be *"As True" to cost as possible in order for sufficient funding to be available on the obligation* to cover the vouchered expenses. For example, expenses such as Actual Lodging (*if applicable and known up front*), Hotel Tax (*if applicable*), Rental Car,

Rental Car Gas, Airport Shuttle, Taxi, Mileage etc...should be included when preparing the Travel Authorization. Remember, inadequate estimates for the obligation may result in an increased need to process Amendments in order to pay the travelers.

#### Note to Approving Officials:

The electronic approval process initiates a four (4) step process:

1. Pre-Audits
2. Funds Check
3. Posting approved obligating transactions to CFS
4. Returning the obligation details (CBA Obligation #, Organization ID, Traveler PO#) back to Travel Manager.

Generally, this process can take anywhere from 30 seconds up to a minute, depending upon the volume of users currently performing the same process. It is vital that Approving Officials allow the posting process to complete. Closing the Travel Authorization or Internet browser prematurely may result in posting failures, either within CFS or Travel Manager. Approving Officials can be certain the process has completed in its entirety when the system displays the Document Preparation Home Page with the obligation posting results (Traveler PO#, CBA Obligation #, if applicable).

#### **Now to Reimburse the Traveler...**

Before we begin discussing the funds check process that occurs on Travel Voucher stamping, here's what the obligation is expecting to occur on the voucher side.



When establishing an ACCS in Travel Manager, users are only required to enter the Fiscal Year, Project/Task and Organization code. However when the Travel Authorization posts an obligation to CFS, the system adds an Object Class Code to the ACCS, which is determined based on per diem location(s) and selected expenses. Object Class Codes are used to identify reimbursable/non-reimbursable expenses and domestic/foreign travel. For the most part, the majority of travel expenses are associated with Object Class 2140 (domestic/reimbursable) or 2146 (foreign/reimbursable). There are also separate Object Class Codes for the three (3) types of Registration Fees and two (2) for non-reimbursable travel expenses (common carrier). It's important to note that the amounts funded on the obligation are at the Object Class Code level and not limited to the ACCS components within Travel Manager.

## How does this impact the Travel Voucher?

Putting it simply, the accounting applied to the Travel Authorization and Travel Voucher must match. When a Travel Voucher is stamped SIGNED or APPROVED, Travel Manager performs two (2) verifications during the funds check process (ACCS and Funding). The ACCS validation verifies the ACCS used on the Travel Voucher matches the ACCS that was used to fund the obligation via the Travel Authorization. The Funding validation verifies there is sufficient funding for that ACCS on the obligation to cover the traveler's claim. As long as sufficient funding is available the document is permitted to move forward.



Some things to be mindful of when processing a Travel Voucher claim:

- If the Travel Authorization included a foreign per diem location and the Travel Voucher does not:
  - An Amendment will need to be created to remove the foreign location as foreign and domestic Object Class Codes are different.
- If the Travel Authorization included domestic per diem locations ONLY and the Travel Voucher includes a foreign location:
  - An Amendment will need to be created to add the foreign location as foreign and domestic Object Class Codes are different.
- If the Travel Authorization did not include Registration Fees and the Travel Voucher does:
  - An Amendment will need to be created to add Registration Fees as the Object Class Codes used for Registration Fees are different than those used for other traveler reimbursable expenses.
  - Remember that each of the three (3) Registration Fees have their own Object Class Code:
    - 2510 - Registration Fees ADP
    - 2533 - Registration Fees Non-ADP Federal Source
    - 2526 - Registration Fees Non-ADP Non-Fed Source

## What if the Travel Voucher Amount exceeds the Obligated Amount?

The funds check process will allow a voucher to exceed the obligated amount within the tolerance level established in CFS. Currently the tolerance level for Temporary Duty (TDY) travel is 50% up to a \$1350.00 maximum. In CFS, tolerance is applied per Multiple Distribution Line (MDL), which equates to in Travel Manager terms is each unique ACCS (Project/Task, Organization Code and Object Class) will be allowed to exceed the obligated amount by 50% not to exceed \$1350.00.

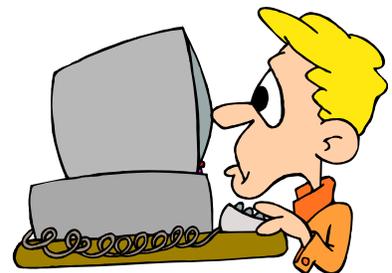


Still a little confusing? Let's see if an example will help shed some light. To calculate the amount of tolerance, take the amount obligated and multiply it by 50%. Determine the maximum amount the system will allow to pass the funds check process by adding the tolerance amount to the obligated amount. For instance, if \$300 is obligated for ACCS1, the maximum amount allowed to pass the funds check process will be \$450 ( $\$300 \times 50\% = \$150 + \$300 = \$450$ ). Therefore if \$300 is obligated for ACCS 1 and the travel voucher is submitted for \$425, the funds check process will PASS because the amount exceeding the obligation falls within the tolerance level. However if the travel voucher is submitted for \$451, the funds check process will FAIL because the amount exceeds the obligation and tolerance by \$1.00.

*Note: Travel Vouchers failing the funds check process due to insufficient funding will require an Amendment to increase funding on the obligation.*

## Deciphering Funding Error Messages

Currently most messages received at stamping are the product of CFS. Unfortunately since the vast majority of our users do not have a direct interaction with CFS the messages tend to come across in "GREEK" making it difficult for users to decipher. An ITM v9.0 Reference Guide for System Messages has been documented and is available on NOAA's Financial System Division website at <http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~cbs/>, under the Integrated Travel Manager (ITM) Information link.



It is important to know that system messages, no matter what language they appear to be in, provide specific indications of why a document is failing routine processing procedures. Therefore it is essential to read each message in its entirety and include the error message(s) in a user's request for assistance.