

GAO Topic of the Month – April 2025

WHO CAN BE ISSUED PURCHASING & TRAVEL CARDS?



Background

The State of Arizona makes purchasing cards available to authorized state employees to provide an efficient method of paying for goods and services. The State also provides central travel accounts (aka Ghost Cards) and employee travel cards to authorized agencies and employees to provide an efficient method of paying for travel related expenditures. State of Arizona purchasing cards and central travel accounts are state liability cards, whereas employee travel cards are contingent personal liability cards. If these card balances are not paid, the outstanding balance and associated fees can become a state liability. It is important that agencies understand the risks of using these cards, including who cards can and cannot be issued to.

Who Can State Cards be Issued to?

Regardless of which card type(s) is utilized, all state cards must only be issued to state employees. State cards must not be issued to contractors, vendors, or any other individual that is a non-state employee. These requirements are addressed in the following SAAMs:

Purchasing Cards - SAAM 4537-2.1, "P-Cards shall not be issued to contractors, volunteers or other individuals or entities that are not employees of the State of Arizona."

Employee Travel Cards – SAAM 5054 and SAAM 5065-16, "Vendors, contractors, volunteers, interns, witnesses and employees of other governments or entities may not be issued a travel advance or an Employee Travel Card (ETC)."

Central Travel Accounts – SAAM 5050-7, "Each agency head is to appoint one or more agency employees as Agency Travel Card Program (TCP) Administrator who assumes the title, duties, and responsibilities of the position as described herein."

SAAM 0540, *Limitation of Security Roles in Certain Systems*, – "Only an officer (such as an elected official or a board, commission or council member) or a regularly appointed employee of the State may be granted a role in AFIS, HRIS, APP or any other statewide automated system **that can result in the disbursement or transfer of State monies**. The category of regularly appointed employees of the State does not include temporary employees. A contractor or vendor is not an officer or regularly appointed employee of the State."

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What Are The Risks?

The authority for the disbursement or transfer of State monies is only allowable for State employees. Providing a purchasing card or travel card is allowing that individual the authority to spend your agency's funds and public monies. If a State employee misuses a card, the State can take appropriate disciplinary action and has the ability to deduct money owed to the State by deducting the amount from an employee's compensation or expense reimbursements. The State does not have the ability to take these same actions from non-employees. Employees agree to these conditions when they sign one of the agreement forms to obtain a card.

It is in the best interest of the State to ensure only employees with sufficient knowledge of the State's laws, policies and systems be granted the job roles to approve the disbursement or transfer of State monies. Inappropriate use of public monies could result in felony charges in accordance with statute (A.R.S. § 35-301).

Conclusion

No agency, board, or commission can issue purchasing cards, employee travel cards, or central travel accounts to non-state employees.

Resources

Purchasing Cards –	SAAM 4535 – <i>P-Card General Policies and Procedures</i>
	SAAM 4536 – <i>P-Card Agency Responsibilities</i>
	SAAM 4537 – <i>P-Card Cardholder Responsibilities</i>
	SAAM 4571 – <i>Reviewing P-Card Purchases</i>
	SAAM 4524 – <i>Amazon Prime</i>
Employee Travel Cards –	SAAM 5051 – <i>Employee Travel Card Agency Responsibilities & General Policies</i>
	SAAM 5054 – <i>Employee Travel Card Employee Responsibilities</i>
Central Travel Accounts –	SAAM 5050 – <i>Central Travel Account</i>
Other Related SAAMs –	SAAM 0540 – <i>Limitations of Security Roles in Certain Systems</i>
	SAAM 5065 – <i>Vendor and Other Non-employee Travel</i>