

State of Missouri Travel Portal Frequently Asked Questions

Travel Portal

What is the purpose of the Travel Portal?

The overall goal of the Travel Portal is to establish a preferred vendor relationship with a wide variety of travel agencies, hotels and other travel vendors for the purpose of gathering data, enhancing passenger service, upgrading standards of accountability and transparency and, of course, power-buying pricing.

What tools and resources are available on the Travel Portal?

Travel Vendors:

- *Flights*
- *Hotels*
- *Car Rental*
- *Travel Agencies*

Accounting:

- *CONUS rates*
- *Mileage reimbursement rates*

Policies:

- *Travel Policy*
- *State Vehicular Travel Policy*
- *Trip Optimizer*

Forms

- *Expense Reports*
- *Out of State Authorization forms*
- *Affidavit for Travel Expenses*

How do State Agencies benefit from the Travel Portal?

1. **Traveler Comments:** *The portal is designed to simplify the process of shared information. State agencies have employees who travel all across the State of Missouri, each with the opportunity to offer feedback regarding their hotel stays. A new “Traveler Comments” link is planned for the online directory, which will provide a new and unique way of recommending a particular hotel, or advising other State employees of problems encountered during their stay.*
2. **Price Benchmarking:** *With tight budgets and scarce resources, how do you know if the hotel you have chosen offers the best value for the money? The portal includes both per diem and the published government rate, and is continually revised to provide the most up-to-date information possible. Where multiple hotels are clustered on a single exit off the interstate, comparison shopping is greatly simplified.*
3. **Improved Information:** *There are thousands of hotels within the State of Missouri that seek the privilege of State room night business. Knowing with whom you are dealing is the foundation of any corporate or institutional list of Best Practices.*

Who is Campus Travel Management?

Campus Travel Management (CTM) is a travel consulting and data management company located in Annapolis, MD. The President is Larry Handel. Campus Travel Management was awarded the State of Missouri contract for Travel Consulting and Data Management Services in July, 2007.

How much does the State pay for CTM services?

Nothing. All programs benefiting vendors are financed by the vendors themselves. No taxpayer money is involved in any aspect of the State of Missouri Travel Management Program. This includes the Travel Portal, online hotel directory, and data management.

Can I use a travel agency?

Yes. A list of travel agencies authorized to do business with the State of Missouri are provided on the Portal.

What if people are traveling with their families for vacation?

The official online directory of hotels and pricing is designed for official State business travel only.

When is all this set to happen?

The Travel Portal is fully operational now. The new travel policy regarding hotel reservations will be effective July 1, 2008.

What if I have a comment, concern, or idea that may improve the program?

CTM and the State of Missouri Office of Administration are committed to providing the best possible program. All comments, concerns and recommendations are welcomed, and should be sent to Jennifer Hall, State of Missouri Office of Administration (Jennifer.Hall@oa.mo.gov), or Larry Handel of CTM (larry@campustravel.com).

Is there a help desk?

Both the Office of Administration and Campus Travel Management are available to answer any questions or provide assistance as needed. You may contact Jennifer Hall at Office of Administration Monday – Friday, 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Central Standard Time. You may contact Larry Handel at Campus Travel Management Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Unfortunately, there is no help desk on weekends or after hours.

Are there some examples of new ideas and/or features of the Travel Portal that are in development?

- 1. Third party credit card form: Many hotels have their own third party credit card form. When provided by the hotel, we will link it to their site on the directory.*
- 2. Hotel Comments/Recommendations Link: As mentioned above, a “Traveler Comments” section is planned for the online directory, which will provide a new and unique way of recommending a particular hotel, or advising other State employees of problems encountered during their stay.*
- 3. Sales Tax Certificate Page: Subject to approval, we are developing a password protected page that will provide enrolled hotels with back- up copies of the State of Missouri Sales & Use Tax Exemption Certificate.*
- 4. Once a month hotel news sheet: This would be for the purpose of advising hotels of new aspects of the hotel program. In addition, it would verify registered hotel email addresses to ensure prompt replies with reservation requests.*

5. Non-Reservation Form and Excel Grid: *These ideas emanated from discussions with those Agencies who felt that the conventional Reservation Request form did not suit their needs for, in particular, immediate trips. There were few who denied the need for the State to have information on the hotels with whom they work. The Non-Reservation Form was designed to provide the information, while still allowing individuals to call hotels directly. The Excel Grid template will provide the agency the ability to list multiple traveler reservations; for example, booking rooms for 20 individuals at the same hotel.*
6. Hotel Non-Renewal due to Complaint: *Clause #2.4.7 of the contract between State of Missouri and Campus Travel Management states that “Upon request/approval from the Division of Accounting, the contractor shall remove any travel vendor from the contractor’s travel web portal if, at the Division of Accounting’s determination, such travel vendor did not provide service in accordance with their state or contractor-established contract or if the services provided by such travel vendor were unacceptable.”*

Online Hotel Directory

What is the Online Hotel Directory?

Previously, the State published a conventional, hard copy, hotel directory. This proved to be problematic, for a number of reasons:

1. Limited content: *Few hotels knew about the existence of the Directory and, as a consequence, only a small number were included.*
2. Limited capabilities: *Hotels change rates, staff, even franchises, on a regular basis. The paper directory allowed for changes only once a year.*
3. Staff and Budget: *The cost and staffing of the paper directory was borne by the State. The online directory requires no state employee time, and is financed by the hotels that benefit from the listing.*

The Travel Portal now contains an Online Hotel Directory, with hotels listed by City and include rate information, location, payment options, phone number, and when designated by the hotel, a direct link to the hotel’s website.

What is the reasoning behind requiring hotels to register?

The goal of registration is increased accountability and transparency. Without hotel enrollment, for example, any of the following could occur:

1. *Hotel could be in bankruptcy, chapter 11*
2. *Franchise could change*
3. *Price could change*
4. *Safety and/or health standards could be downgraded*
5. *Corporate status could be changed*
6. *Inconsistent rates to various state agencies*
7. *No resolution entity for reservation issues*

Can we keep our existing hotel relationships?

This program has been created for purposes of efficiency, transparency and to assist State agencies in arranging cost-effective travel. There may be occasions where hotels are not listed on the Travel Portal for the city in which your travel is required or you may be attending a conference/meeting in a particular hotel. In these situations, employees should make their reservations directly through the hotel and record the data on the Non-Reservation Form.

Must hotels be enrolled in the program?

Effective July 1, 2008, the new State Travel Policy states that when possible, employees should use the Travel Portal reservation process. Hotels registered on the Travel Portal will naturally receive the majority of State of Missouri official business due to compliance with the new State Travel Policy.

What if my hotel is not included in the online directory?

Send hotel name, telephone and, if possible, contact person, to Larry Handel, at larry@campustravel.com and he will attempt to call them within one working day.

Why would my hotel not be included in the online directory?

The program is voluntary, and there is a \$10 per month, per property cost to the hotels, so your hotel may have chosen to not enroll. If that is the case, a reservation can still be made, just acknowledge it using the Non-Reservation Form.

What if my State Agency is not listed on the State Agency drop down list?

Send your Agency name to Jennifer.Hall@oa.mo.gov. Jennifer will forward the information to Campus Travel Management for processing.

How do State Agencies benefit from the Reservation Request Form?

There are five principle benefits:

- 1. Reminder: There are required fields on the form. These become an informal reminder of the information necessary for the State to pay the bill.*
- 2. Embedded Email: The email address of the Sales or General Manager of the hotel is embedded in the hyperlink of the hotel name. This, along with a copy to Reservations, ensures that the request will be sent to the correct person at the hotel.*
- 3. Paper Trail: Currently anyone can book any hotel at any time, with instructions to “direct-bill the state.” The Reservation Request form creates a paper trail that can be used to ensure that all purchases are in accord with Best Practices.*
- 4. Purchasing Card Payment Option: The State Purchasing Card is the preferred method of payment for cost savings and efficiency, except when its use is not an option. Hotels registered on the Travel Portal indicate if they will accept the Purchasing Card as a payment option.*
- 5. Confirmation of reservation and rate: Employees do not have to waste time on hold for a reservation desk. They input their reservation request and a confirmation is emailed to them with the confirmation number and rate, giving them an electronic confirmation that can easily be forwarded to the traveler or other individuals.*

How do I reserve a room or provide the data for lodging booked directly through the hotel?

Originally, reservations were made using the Reservation Request form for in-state hotels. In order to provide a more user-friendly option for employees who were either staying at a non-registered hotel, for employees making multiple reservations, for employees without access to the internet, or for immediate reservations, the system was changed to provide two forms and, soon, a spreadsheet template to record multiple reservations.

1. Reservation Request Form: Reservation Request form for in-state hotels registered on the Travel Portal.
2. Non-Reservation Form: Reservation Acknowledgement for bookings made directly with the hotel.
3. Multiple Reservation Form: Simplified reservation template for multiple reservations.

How do I recommend a hotel to be added to the Travel Portal?

Send hotel name, telephone and, if possible, contact, to Larry Handel, at larry@campustravel.com and he will attempt to call them within one working day to discuss becoming a registered hotel on the Travel Portal.

How do I recommend a registered hotel to other State travelers?

Send hotel name, telephone number, and recommendation comments to Larry Handel at larry@campustravel.com. With your consent, the information will be added to the Comments section of the directory.

How do I notify CTM about problems or issues with a registered hotel?

Send hotel name, telephone number, description of problem(s) and, if possible, contact person, to Larry Handel, at larry@campustravel.com. With your consent, the information will be added to the Comments section of the directory. In addition, if a hotel receives negative feedback that cannot be resolved, it may be removed from the Travel Portal.

What if I forget my tax exempt form?

We are adding the State of Missouri Sales & Use Tax Exemption Certificate form for hotels to access. It will be password protected, and sent to only those hotels that are enrolled in the State of Missouri Travel Portal program.

What if my reservation requires an immediate response?

If you are making a reservation for a stay that begins in 48 hours or less, please call the hotel directly and record your trip with the Non-Reservation Form.

How do I know which form to use?

1. Payment with Personal Credit Card: If you are paying with personal funds, you are not required to use the Reservation Request form. Upon seeking reimbursement, however, an acknowledgement of your booking must be completed using the Non-Reservation Form.
2. Reservation required within 48 hours, or on Friday for weekend arrival: When making reservations within 48 hours, you should make arrangements directly with the hotel to ensure you receive your confirmation information in time. An acknowledgement of your booking must be completed using the Non-Reservation Form.

3. Travelers on the road: Where it is inconvenient for a traveler to use the Reservation Request form, it need not be used. An acknowledgement of the booking must be completed using the Non-Reservation Form.
4. Non-enrolled Hotel: Where a hotel is not enrolled in the program, you may contact the hotel directly to make your arrangements. An acknowledgement of your booking must be completed using the Non-Reservation Form.
5. Hotel is part of a meeting or conference: The requirement to book through the Portal or complete the Non-Reservation Form is waived when the hotel is part of a meeting or conference.

Who has access to the information in the Reservation Request and Non-Reservation Forms?

The State received copies of requests for database purposes, but not confirmations or any ancillary correspondence between agency and hotel. The limited information which we collect is confidential and, other than forming the core or the hotel usage data base, it is not released or viewed by anyone outside government.

Can we keep our existing form of payment?

Of course. While the preferred method of payment is the State Purchasing Card, direct bill and/or personal card with reimbursement is still allowed. However, it is worth noting that the State considers State Purchasing Card payments to be the most cost effective for its purposes, and will be encouraging its greater use.

The State of Missouri also provides a Visa Individual Business Travel Card that all employees are eligible for, subject to personal credit history and personal liability. The Visa Individual Business Travel Card allows employees to charge State of Missouri business travel expenses and seek reimbursement on expense reports. Each individual agency has different payment procedures and may require travel expenses to be direct-billed to the agency or charged to a State of Missouri Purchasing Card (state liability). Check with your agency before incurring travel transactions on your personal liability card.

What if employees are paying with their personal credit card?

Travelers paying with their personal card may book any hotel any way they want, provided their agency allows travel transactions to be charged to their personal card and reimbursed. At the time they seek reimbursement from the State, however, they must complete the Non-Reservation Form, which acknowledges reservations made directly with the hotel.

What kind of payment can be used to pay for hotel rooms and/or facilities?

1. Preferred Method: The State Purchasing Card is the preferred method of payment.
2. Alternative Method: The hotel may direct-bill the agency.
3. Personal Payment, then Reimbursement: The traveler pays for lodging using personal funds, then seeks reimbursement via expense report.