



TRAVEL TIDBITS

Refundable or Non-Refundable Airline Tickets

ARS would like to save money when at all possible. Some guidance on purchasing airline tickets.

Per DM-2300-011, Agriculture Travel Regulation (ATR), USDA has determined that non-refundable fares are cost effective in many instances and has delegated the authority to authorize their use to the Agency Heads.

Government Contract Fares:

- These fares are the USDA preference. The General Services Administration (GSA) has provide both capacity controlled fares and regular contract fares. The lower cost capacity controlled fares should be used whenever they are available unless the traveler anticipates frequent changes to the travel plans. The FTR mandates the use of these government contract fares unless travelers meet one of the exceptions listed below:
 - Space on a schedule contract flight is not available in time to accomplish the purpose of travel, or use of contract service would require traveler to incur unnecessary overnight lodging costs which would increase the total cost of the trip.
 - The contractor's flight schedule is inconsistent with explicit policies of your Federal department or agency with regard to scheduling travel during normal working hours.
 - A non-contract carrier offers a lower fare to the general public that, if used, will result in a lower total trip cost to the Government (the combined costs of transportation, lodging, meals, and related expenses considered).

Fully Refundable Tickets

- When it is questionable if the trip is going to Happen (LARGE Doodle Poll Attendance)
- At the end of the year and new FY budget is not approved and allocated (OR just WAIT)

Discounted Government Tickets (refundable)

- Most of the time

NON-Refundable (*Restricted*) Tickets (High Risk)

- The Travel Arranger will need to take extra care when choosing a non-refundable fare. There is usually early ticketing associated with the deeply discount fares. (sometimes within 24 hours)
- The traveler and supervisor must sign the non-refundable fare responsibility form. Scan/fax this document into the travel authorization.
- The authorization must be stamped APPROVED by midnight of ticketing date or the non-refundable ticket will be lost.
- Foreign travel must be approved before the airline ticket can be actually ticketed. Therefore, allow at least a week for the approval process. The Travel Arranger should choose flights that offer both refundable and non-refundable tickets, and choose a fully refundable ticket until after all approvals for travel have been received. The benefit to using the same flight on foreign trips is that the itinerary wouldn't change for country clearance. Once approvals have been received, change the ticket to non-refundable on the same flights.
- **WARNING:** Watch the CC default types when you change any ticketing information.
- Although the cost will go down, the authorization will go through the electronic approval process again if the change is more than \$300. However, because it was previously approved, a call to the FATA and Approver can make this approval happen in one day.
- When considering the cost of non-refundable tickets or deeply discounted tickets, all costs including change fees, cancellation penalties, baggage, and second baggage fees should all be figured into the mix before permission to use such fares are allowed.
- Changing return dates may necessitate purchasing a new, additional ticket, and the traveler is not guaranteed a seat and may be bumped off the flight.

Should you have questions or need assistance, please contact your Travel Specialist.

**Research, Education and Economics
Acknowledgement of Responsibilities
Purchase of Non-refundable Common Carrier Transportation**

_____ is requesting purchase of non-refundable ticket for travel from _____
(origin)

to _____, on _____.
(destination) (dates of travel)

Government Contract Airfare: \$ _____.

Restricted Airfare: \$ _____.

We have read and understand the following:

- Government contract fares, where available, are to be used unless an exemption applies.
- The ticket requested is non-refundable/restricted and that there may be service charges and additional costs that must be paid if changes are made after the tickets are issued. The traveler and authorizing official/fundholder recognize the potential financial risk to the agency should the agency cancel the above listed travel after the purchase of a non-refundable ticket.
 - If changes to travel are ordered by the agency, any additional costs are paid from the authorizing official/fundholders budget.
 - The traveler is responsible for any costs that result from cancellation or changes to the ticket that are not related to official travel or that are made for personal convenience. The traveler is responsible for any costs associated with this ticket if this form is not signed by the fund holder/authorizing official.
- Non-refundable tickets must be used in accordance with REE Policy.
- Non-refundable fares require immediate ticketing, upon request to the travel agent.
- Non-refundable tickets, upon issuance, are charged immediately to the travel charge card account used for payment.
 - If this ticket is charged to the traveler's individually-billed travel charge card account, the traveler recognizes the responsibility to pay the ticket cost when the travel charge card bill is due, and realizes that this bill may be due prior to the end of travel or before reimbursement of the cost of the ticket.
 - If this ticket is charged to the agency GVTS account, the authorizing official/fund holder recognizes that the cost of the ticket may be obligated and paid from their organization's fund balance and realizes that this obligation and payment may occur prior to or before the end of travel. (Fares may only be charged to the GVTS account for foreign travel or if the traveler does not have an individually billed Government travel charge card.
- The traveler recognizes the responsibility to understand the fare restrictions and rebooking rules for the ticket being requested. Some airlines require cancellation, rebooking and reissue of tickets PRIOR to the departure of the original outbound flight and/or continuing flights. Failure to do so may result in the entire ticket value being lost.

I have considered the government contract airfare for this travel and request a nonrefundable/restricted fare because _____

I understand the above responsibilities and authorize my travel office to purchase non-refundable common carrier ticket for the travel listed.

Employee (Traveler) Signature

Date

I authorize the use of non-refundable/restricted fare for the travel and traveler listed above. I understand the agency responsibilities for the use of this ticket and the risk to the government if the travel is canceled or changed.

Authorizing Official/Fundholder Signature

Date
