TRAVEL CONSULTANT FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS
With Management's Response and Implementation Plan

1. Eliminate UBOs from Chrome River Expense Report Approval Queue

Background:
Upon completion of travel, travelers prepare their expense reports, or work with travel delegates to prepare the expense reports in the Chrome River travel system, which launches the expense report through the approval queue.

Currently the approval queue sends the expense report to the Travel Specialist, then to the Account Director for approval and then to the cognizant University Business Officer (UBO) or Grant Accountant (if grant related account/index) for approval. The University Business Officer primarily reviews for proper account coding. The University Business Officer review is redundant to the review performed by the Account Director.

Recommendation:
Remove the University Business Officers from the approval queue to speed up the expense report process.

Impact:
Annual cost savings for University Business Officer time of approximately $48,333[1], and increase in the processing speed for travel expense report reimbursements by an average of 1.5 days.

Management Response:
We concur and will make the changes in the Chrome River Travel System effective September 2, 2019.

- Account directors will assume responsibility for reviewing and approving within the Chrome River system for expense reports
- Account directors will receive mandatory training and posted guidelines to support their new responsibilities on expense reports
- UBO's will be removed from this process and are only required to review and approve when the account director is the same as the traveler
- Travel associated with a grant index, will continue to be reviewed and approved by grant accounting

[1] Approximately 5,000 expense reports reviewed at approximately 10 minutes each ((5,000 * 10/60) * $58).

2. ***Eliminate UBOs and Travel Office Staff from Chrome River Pre-Approval Routing Queue***

Background:
Pre-approvals for travel are important to the Idaho State University (University) to ensure that the traveler is traveling on University business, thus covered by ISU insurance policies

Currently the Chrome River pre-approval approval queue includes the traveler/delegate, the Travel specialist, the Account Director, and the University Business Officer or Grant Accountant (if grant related account/index)[2].

Recommendation:
Remove the Traveler, Travel Specialist and the University Business Officers from the pre-approval routing queue to speed the pre-approval process.

Impact:
Annual cost savings of approximately $30,600 in University Business Officer and Travel Specialist processing time.

Management Response:
We concur and will make the changes in Chrome River Travel System effective September 2, 2019.

- Account directors will assume responsibility for reviewing and approving within the Chrome River system for pre-approvals
- Account directors will receive mandatory training and posted guidelines to support their new responsibilities on pre-approvals
- UBO's will be removed from this process and are only required to review and approve when the account director is the same as the traveler
- Travelers will be removed from approval routing when pre-approval is created by a delegate
- Travel associated with a grant index, will continue to be reviewed and approved by grant accounting
- Pre-approval advance requests will route to the Travel Office
- The Travel Office will monitor and be included in pre-approval routing from August 5 through October 31 to support the account directors with their new responsibilities on pre-approvals

[2] In the case of International Travel, the V.P. Finance and the Export Control Officer must review per rule by State of Idaho law, in the case of the V.P. Finance and Federal Regulations, in the case of the Export Control Officer.

3. Prepare Blanket Travel Approvals Annually

Background:
Travelers that frequently travel in state for various regular business purposes, such as travel to and from the satellite campuses in Idaho Falls, Twin Falls and Meridian prepare blanket travel approvals The current process requires the traveler to create a monthly blanket travel pre-approval even though the traveler anticipates travel throughout the academic semester/year.

Recommendation:
Allow travelers to request blanket pre-approval to cover a twelve-month period.

Impact:
This will reduce work hours related to the monthly preparation of the blanket pre-approvals.

Management Response: We concur and have made this change in Chrome River effective July 1, 2019.

- Travelers and delegates can create annual pre-approval for FY20.
  - The date range on the pre-approval must be within the current fiscal year
  - The Report type must be Blanket Travel

4. ***Automate Travel Pre-Approval Process for Students who are not ISU Employees***

Background:
Student employees traveling on ISU business may use the Chrome River pre-approval process. However, students who are not employees cannot use the Chrome River pre-approval process. Instead, a paper pre-approval process is used.

Recommendation:
Change this process from a paper process to electronic signature technology to facilitate exchange and tracking of documents.

Impact:
Timely approval of pre-approvals will ensure that the student traveler is traveling on behalf of the university and has appropriate insurance coverage.

Management Response:
Although the number of students in this category is minimal, we concur that eliminating the paper process is more efficient. We will research a new workflow process to accomplish this recommendation on or before June 30, 2020.

- Implement Electronic Student Travel Documents
  - The university has purchased DocuSign licensing, which will allow the implementation of electronic documents for signature and approval

5. Eliminate Travel Office Review Redundancy

Background:
Currently, the Travel Office, during both pre-approval review *and* expense report approval, reviews mode of transportation selection and business purpose justification according to the following standards:

- Airfare - reviews whether the "cost of airfare approved for reimbursement is limited to the lowest priced airfare available"[3]. The university's travel policy also states "travelers must provide evidence that they have used the least expensive and most practical mode of transportation."
- Rental - reviews vehicle travel expense for justification for rental vehicle use. The State of Idaho Travel Policy (SBEX Policy No. 442-50) states, "A rental vehicle may be authorized by the approving authority when such is determined and documented to be the most effective and cost efficient means of transportation for performing official business".
- Mileage - reviews whether mileage reimbursement is lower or at the rate of the lowest priced coach airfare.
- Business Purpose - per IRS regulations and State policy, the Travel Office reviews expense reports for statement of Business Purpose and returns it to the traveler if the statement is missing.

Recommendation:
The Travel Office should limit their review to only the expense report approval by validating sufficient documentation (e.g. receipts) of travel expenditures. Pre-approval review and approval should shift to the Account Director to help improve time efficiency.

As such, the Account Director should be responsible for approving the mode of travel, funding, and the business purpose of the travel. The Account Directors should certify that they have reviewed the mode of travel to determine that it is the "least expensive and most practical mode of transportation."

The traveler providing justification to both the Travel Office and the Account Director on both pre-approval and expense reporting is duplicative, inefficient, and provides for poor customer service.

Impact:
This will reduce duplicative efforts performed by the Travel Office and will speed travel reimbursement, while producing a more efficient, effective, and pleasing travel process.

[3] ISU travel policy (ISUPP 2000) Section: V (D)(1)(a)

Management's Response:
We concur and will make the changes effective September 2, 2019.

- Account directors will assume responsibility for reviewing and approving within the Chrome River system for pre-approvals
- Travel Office will provide a limited expense report review to verify that receipts and documentation are in order, and conduct a more thorough review as part of a post-audit process on expense reports

6. Expand Travel Training Offerings and Participation

Background:
Currently the Travel Office offers a group training on the first Wednesday of each month. In February 2019, there were three attendees and in January only one person registered for training.

The Travel Office does not provide training at the time of travel card dispensing. The traveler signs that they "have read and will follow University policy and procedures covering the travel card use."

The Travel Office does provide a FAQ page, and if requested, will visit offices to support traveler training.

Recommendation:
The Travel Office should expand training opportunities.

Impact:
Additional training will provide work hour savings as well as increased customer satisfaction.

Management Response:
We concur and have made the following changes effective July 1, 2019.

- Revised training guides and forms posted online
- Links to Chrome River Videos
- In-person trainings focused on specific unit requests
- Web survey to assess trainings

7. Increase Pre-Approval 60 Day Limit

Background:
Currently, pre-approvals require that the traveler submit the expense report within 60 days of the return date on the pre-approval. If the traveler does not meet this requirement, the Chrome River system expires the pre-approval, requiring the traveler to create a new pre-approval prior to preparation and submittal of the expense report.

A study performed by the Travel Office determined that approximately 33% of pre-approvals are not in the system at the time of the preparation of the expense report. The cause can either be expiration due to the 60-day rule, or that the pre-approval is simply not prepared before the expense reimbursement request is prepared.

The Travel Office was unable to determine how many of these 33% pre-approvals not in the system are because of expiration, or because the traveler did not prepare it prior to the travel.

The Controller's Office put the 60-day rule in place to encourage travelers to prepare their expense reports on a timely basis.

Recommendation:
The university should change the 60-day rule to a higher number of days, not to exceed 180 days to reduce the number of redundant pre-approval preparations.

Impact:
Reduce redundant work efforts, save work hours, increase traveler/delegate satisfaction.

Management Response:
We concur. We have set Chrome River to expire the pre-approval at 180 days instead of 60 days. This change was effective July 1, 2019.

8. Improve Traveler's Customer Service Experience

Background:
The consultant hosted three listening sessions with approximately 40 travel users attending. In addition, 49 travelers provided input in an online feedback system. And, six unsolicited ISU employees or recent retirees provided input to the consultant.

The consultant tallied 292 negative comments. Of these, 157 were about the Travel Office's customer service and consistent application of travel rules.

Although there are a significant number of process changes that could enhance the travel process, the key to providing a good customer service experience for the traveler is to provide succinct, courteous support, in a timely non-abrasive manner.

Recommendation:
The Travel Office should strive to provide excellent customer service and should continue to receive customer service training.

Further, to determine the ongoing level of customer service provided by the Travel Office, the Travel Office should send the traveler a short optional customer satisfaction survey upon completion of the reimbursement process. The Assistant Controller and/or the Finance Service Manager, and periodically by the Controller, should promptly review the surveys to ensure that customer service issues are identified and resolved as quickly as possible.

Impact:
Improved traveler satisfaction.

Management Response: We concur and believe that in addition to making process changes, improving the customer experience delivery from the Travel Office is a top priority. The following changes were effective July 1, 2019.

- Web survey sent to random travelers each month to assess new processes and training
- Additional customer service training for Travel Office staff
- Provide link on Chrome River welcome page for comments and suggestions

9. Develop Travel Process Assessment Metrics

Background:
The Travel process does not currently have any performance metrics. This is likely due to the relative new implementation of the Chrome River system.

Recommendation:
The Travel Office should measure and review on a monthly basis the queue time between the travel submission and Travel Specialist approval.

The Travel Office should also measure the time between the Travel Specialist approval and the Account Director approval to identify any training needs.

The Travel Office should also measure, through time study, the actual amount of work effort needed to accomplish tasks at the Travel Specialist desk. In addition, send a short customer service survey to travelers at the time of expense reimbursement. The Assistant Controller or Financial Services Manager should review these survey results daily. The Controller should review these surveys or a summary of the surveys periodically, to determine customer satisfaction.

Management Response:
The Chrome River system allows management to view various reports on travel metrics. We concur that both the Assistant Controller and the Controller should review these reports regularly to determine where additional process improvements can be made. These changes were made effective July 1, 2019.

- Developed metrics for pre-approval and expense report
    - Process time for all travel documents from start to finish
    - Number of documents completed each month
    - Evaluate returned documents and compliance issues for further training

10. Pursue Chrome River Functionality Improvements

Background:
Idaho State University implemented Banner in 2013-14. At that time, Banner had a supported travel expense system. Because Banner discontinued support for their travel expense system, Idaho State University migrated its travel system to Chrome River, a Banner partner. The university piloted Chrome River from December 2017 to March 2018 and made it available to all travelers in March 2018.

The following are identified function shortfalls or system improvement needs:

1. There is no ability to split a single transaction, such as a shared hotel room, between two or more travelers. This causes issues during the review process.
2. Chrome River does not allow travelers to transfer information from Google documents directly into the system.[4]
3. Allocation of departmental travel card charges to travelers is cumbersome. Review of the process showed that eight steps were required before the departmental travel card allocator can begin to allocate the charges loaded into the Chrome River to traveler's e-wallet.

Recommendation:
The University should determine the impact to users of these Chrome River functionality issues and request functionality updates as necessary.

Impact:
More functionality, ease of use, reduced review time, and improved traveler experience.

Management Response:
We do not agree that the findings of the consultant about Chrome River functionality issues. We will continue to monitor Chrome River updates and implement changes that will improve the functionality of the system. Changes were effective July 1, 2019.

- Formed a travel advisory board to establish regular feedback from departments on the use of prospective Chrome River enhancements

[4] One department at the University has developed a google doc that is prepared by the Traveler prior to preparation of the pre-approval. The information is then copied and pasted into Chrome River. If Chrome River was capable of uploading the document into the system, the University could gain time savings efficiencies.

11. Ensure Compliance with Clery Act

Background:
Idaho State University Policies and Procedures (ISUPP 2390) Student Travel, states that "Student travelers must complete the Clery Act[5] Student Travel form upon return from travel and submit the form to Public Safety."
It is unclear the extent to which students or sponsors follow this policy.

Recommendation:
The University should investigate the Clery Act compliance level and take actions as necessary.

Impact:
Ensure compliance with the Clery Act and avoid possible non-compliance penalties and fines.

Management Response:
We have made changes to Chrome River to remind student travelers of the reporting requirement and to produce a student travel report for the Cleary Act compliance officer within Public Safety.

- Created an automatic monthly report on student group travel for Public Safety

[5] The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act or Clery Act, signed in 1990, is a federal statute codified at 20 U.S.C. § 1092(f), with implementing regulations in the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations at 34 C.F.R. 668.46.

12. Clarify Student Travel Stipend Risk Management Concerns

Background:
The review of the travel process flow and the Student Travel Procedure document revealed that a student might obtain a departmental stipend to travel with little or no benefit to the University.

Although the university could not quantify the exact number of these travel stipends, staff stated that it is ten or less annually.

Travel Stipends circumvent the entirety of the travel process. When this happens, it becomes unclear as to whether the student is covered by University Risk Management.

Recommendation:
The University should evaluate the Student Travel Stipend program and determine whether Risk Management covers these student travelers.

Impact:
Clarification of risk assumed by the student and the university as it relates to Student Travel Stipend travel.

Management Response:
We do not agree that this is a travel process issue. The colleges and academic departments should review this matter. We understand that stipends of this nature are rare. When a department awards a stipend to a student, the recipient may use that stipend for travel, books, or any other purposes.