



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

Monitoring of Government Travel Card Transactions

Management Advisory Report

Report Number
DP-MA-14-002

June 25, 2014



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

Highlights

The Postal Service has eliminated use of the travel card for cash advances by officers, senior executives, Inspection Service and non-bargaining employees.

Background

Citibank issues VISA branded SmartPay 2® cards to U.S. Postal Service employees for use on official travel. The Postal Service has travel card coordinators who monitor employee card use to identify transactions that could indicate misuse such as nontravel related purchases or unauthorized cash advances. There were 44,104 government travel cards issued to Postal Service personnel as of January 15, 2014. From April 1, 2012, through March 31, 2013, employees made 247,419 purchases totaling about \$44.9 million and 8,793 cash advances totaling about \$1.6 million.

Our objective was to determine whether Postal Service travel card coordinators were effectively monitoring government travel card transactions. Specifically, we evaluated the internal controls managed by the travel card coordinators, but did not determine the appropriateness of individual travel card transactions.

What The OIG Found

Postal Service travel card coordinators need to more effectively monitor cash advances. We judgmentally selected 1,832 cash advances for review based on noncompliance with Postal Service travel policy. We found travel coordinators did not identify for further review 1,260 transactions, totaling \$215,466, that potentially did not comply with travel policy.

In addition, travel card coordinators for the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service Headquarters need to better monitor purchases. We judgmentally selected 486 purchase transactions based on potential noncompliance with travel policy and the amount of the transaction. We found 282 purchases totaling \$55,516 that were not identified by coordinators for follow up with employees' managers. We also determined the Postal Service did not process cardholder personnel changes in a timely manner to allow coordinators to monitor travel card transactions.

Although individual employee cardholders are responsible for repayment of all cash advances and payment for all items purchased with their travel cards, effective monitoring of travel card transactions reduces the risk of credit card delinquencies or negative publicity when employees misuse their travel cards.



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Recently, the Postal Service implemented changes to its travel policy to better manage travel card use by employees and improve oversight of cash advances and purchase transactions. Specifically, the Postal Service has eliminated use of the travel card for cash advances by officers, senior executives, the Postal Inspection Service, and nonbargaining employees.

We referred certain cash advance and purchase transactions to our Office of Investigations.

What The OIG Recommended

We recommended the acting vice president, Controller, develop and implement written criteria for travel card coordinators to monitor travel card transactions and take action as appropriate. We also recommended the Postal Service establish procedures to ensure cardholder personnel changes are updated timely.


Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

June 25, 2014

MEMORANDUM FOR: SCOTT G. DAVIS
ACTING VICE PRESIDENT, CONTROLLER

E-Signed by Janet Sorensen
VERIFY authenticity with eSign Desktop


FROM: Janet M. Sorensen
Deputy Assistant Inspector General
for Revenue and Resources

SUBJECT: Management Advisory Report – Monitoring of Government
Travel Card Transactions
(Report Number DP-MA-14-002)

This report presents the results of our review of the Monitoring of Government Travel Card Transactions (Project Number 13RG036DP000).

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Kevin H. Ellenberger, director, Data Analysis and Performance, or me at 703-248-2100.

Attachment

cc: Corporate Audit and Response Management

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Findings

Introduction

This report presents the results of our self-initiated review of the Monitoring of Government Travel Card Transactions (Project Number 13RG036DP000). For fiscal year (FY) 2013, the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted a series of reviews of how effectively certain Postal Service areas monitored travel card transactions. We judgmentally selected the Postal Service areas we reviewed based on discussions with management and the risk analyses we conducted. This capping report summarizes those results, as well as our additional analysis of coordinators from the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service Headquarters. Our objective was to determine whether Postal Service travel card coordinators were effectively monitoring government travel card transactions. See [Appendix A](#) for additional information about this review.

The Postal Service provides individual government travel cards to designated employees for use while on official travel. Postal Service policy governs employees' use of the cards for all charges and automated teller machine (ATM) withdrawals. This policy prohibits employees from using the card for personal business. As of January 15, 2014, the Postal Service had 44,104 government travel cardholders. Travel cardholders made 247,419 purchases totaling \$44.9 million and took 8,793 cash advances totaling \$1.6 million from April 1, 2012, through March 31, 2013.

Cardholders must repay all cash advances and pay for all items purchased with the travel card. However, cardholders also must comply with Handbook F-15¹ when traveling on official business. To monitor compliance with card use and effectively administer the travel card program, the Postal Service designates employee travel card coordinators in each Postal Service district and area as well as each division of the Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service Headquarters. These coordinators review Citibank transaction reports for unusual activity, misuse, or abuse by Postal Service employees. To assist the travel card coordinators, Citibank provides reports showing all card activity. Using these reports, the coordinators monitor government travel card purchases for nontravel related activity or potential misuse and for cash advances greater than \$50 per travel day. The coordinators also examine transactions that indicate potential misuse by reviewing travel expense reports contained in the Postal Service's eTravel² system to determine whether the transactions are related to official travel.

¹ Handbook F-15, *Travel and Relocation*, May 2011.

² eTravel is a web-based system that automates the expense management process. The eTravel system enables Postal Service employees to manage their business travel expenses; create, review, and submit expense reports; and access policy compliance information.

Postal Service travel card coordinators need to more effectively monitor cash advances.

Conclusion

Postal Service travel card coordinators need to more effectively monitor cash advances. We reviewed all 4,054 cash advances from April 2012 through March 2013 in three postal areas and in the Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service Headquarters, totaling more than \$760,000. We judgmentally selected and analyzed 1,832 cash advances and found 1,260 cash advances, totaling \$215,466, that were not identified by travel card coordinators but that potentially did not comply with Postal Service travel policy. These cash advances were unrelated to official travel, exceeded the amount Postal Service policy allows, or occurred too early for travel.

In addition, we reviewed more than 180,000 purchase transactions in three postal areas, the Postal Inspection Service, and Postal Service Headquarters totaling \$32.5 million that occurred from April 2012 through March 2013. We found that area travel card coordinators sufficiently monitored travel card purchase transactions; however, coordinators for the Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service Headquarters could better monitor purchase transactions. There were 114,661 Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service Headquarters purchase transactions from April 2012 through March 2013. We judgmentally selected and analyzed 486 purchase transactions and found 282 of 486 were not identified for follow up by travel card coordinators. In addition, we determined the Postal Service did not process cardholder personnel changes in a timely manner to give coordinators the opportunity to effectively monitor travel card transactions. We referred certain instances of cash advance and purchase transactions to our Office of Investigations.

Monitoring Travel Card Transactions

Coordinators need to more effectively monitor and identify cash advance and purchase transactions for follow up with employees' managers. We identified 1,832 cash advances in the three areas, the Postal Inspection Service, and Postal Service Headquarters. Of those, we determined that area travel card coordinators did not identify 378 of 922 (or 41 percent) cash advances that potentially did not comply with Postal Service travel policy. We also found 882 of 910 of cash advances we reviewed from Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service Headquarters personnel were not identified by travel card coordinators for follow-up.

We also identified 282 purchases totaling \$55,516 from Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service Headquarters cardholders that were not identified by the coordinator for follow up with employees' managers.³ We referred certain instances of cash advance and purchase transactions to our Office of Investigations. Although individual employee cardholders are responsible for re-payment of all cash advances and payment for all items purchased with the travel card, effective monitoring of travel card transactions, including cash advances and purchases, reduces the risk of credit card delinquencies or negative publicity when employees misuse their travel cards. Abuse of the travel card could also harm the Postal Service's contractual relationship with Citibank.

³ There were 337 purchase transactions totaling \$27,498 that were identified during the Northeast, Southern, and Western area audits; however, these amounts were not published in the area reports.

Cash Advances

Travel card coordinators did not identify 378 cash advances totaling more than \$81,000 in three Postal Service areas. These advances occurred from April 2012 through March 2013. During the same period, Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service Headquarters coordinators failed to detect 882 instances of cash advances totaling \$134,077 (see [Appendix B](#)). These cash advances appeared to have been unrelated to official travel, exceeded the amount Postal Service policy allows, or occurred too early. Specifically, we noted:

- 601 cash advances with no related official travel.⁴
- 644 cash advances in which employees took cash in excess of the limit of \$50 a day or \$350 a week.⁵
- 15 instances in which employees took their advance more than 5 days before the trip.⁶

Purchase Transactions

We found 282 purchases that Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service Headquarters travel card coordinators did not identify for follow-up with employees' managers.⁷ The majority of these purchases (269 of 282) were made by employees who were not on official travel. For example, employees who were not on official travel used their travel cards to buy groceries at supermarkets and meals at restaurants. The remaining 13 purchases occurred while employees were on official travel and used the card to pay for meals totaling more than \$100 per transaction. [Table 1](#) shows the number of purchases by category for Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service Headquarters. These purchases were not identified by travel card coordinators and totaled \$55,516 (see [Appendix B](#)).

4 Handbook F-15, Section 3-2.4.
5 Handbook F-15, Section 4-2.1.2.
6 Handbook F-15, Section 4-2.3.2.
7 Handbook F-15, Section 3-2.1.

Table 1. Purchase Transactions for Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service Headquarters by Category, Not Identified by Travel Card Coordinators for Follow Up

Transaction	Transactions Type	Postal Inspection Service		Postal Service Headquarters		Totals	
		Number	Amount	Number	Amount	Number	Amount
Cardholder Purchases Made While NOT on Official Travel	Grocery Stores +Supermarkets	26	\$1,146	17	\$2,876	43	\$4,022
	Charitable and Social Service Organizations	12	\$5,510	9	\$2,356	21	\$7,866
	Membership Organizations – Not Elsewhere Classified	29	\$10,281	35	\$8,146	64	\$18,427
	Government Services – Not Elsewhere Classified	14	\$226	6	\$927	20	\$1,153
	Eating Places Restaurants	0	0	35	\$4,757	35	\$4,757
	Miscellaneous ¹	50	\$4,149	36	\$7,674	86	\$11,823
Cardholder Purchases made While on Official Travel	Eating Places/ Restaurants	0	0	13	\$7,468	13	\$7,468*
TOTAL		131	\$21,312	151	\$34,204	282	\$55,516

Note: *The amounts of these purchases exceeded \$100.

Source: OIG analysis, April 2014.

¹ Transaction types that contained fewer than six purchases for both the Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service Headquarters.

Table 2 shows the number of cash advance transactions listed by type and purchase transactions with their respective totals in the areas, the Postal Inspection Service, and Postal Service Headquarters that were not detected by travel card coordinators.

Table 2. Cash Advance and Purchase Transactions Not Identified by Travel Card Coordinators

Transaction	Type	Northeast Area*	Southern Area*	Western Area*	Postal Inspection Service	Postal Service Headquarters	Total
Cash Advance	Transactions	12	209	157	199	683	1,260
	Amount	\$2,844	\$53,115	\$25,430	\$52,101	\$81,976	\$215,466
Purchase	Transactions	46	70	221	131	151	619
	Amount	\$4,037	\$4,397	\$19,064	\$21,312	\$34,204	\$83,014
Totals	Transactions	58	279	378	330	834	1,879
	Amount	\$6,881	\$57,512	\$44,494	\$73,413	\$116,180	\$298,480

Note: *The purchase transactions listed for the Northeast, Southern and Western area audits were not identified in the previously issued area audit reports because they represented 1 percent or less of the total number of transactions reviewed.

Source: OIG analysis, April 2014.

The travel card coordinators did not identify the cash advance and purchase transactions because they did not receive guidance to monitor all of the indicators that would alert them to potential uses of the card that did not comply with Postal Service travel policy.

Further, transactions that potentially did not comply with Postal Service travel policy were undetected because travel card coordinators did not review Citibank transaction reports for cardholders who had been transferred to new locations. Postal Service policy requires the cardholder to notify the travel card coordinator of his or her new location so the Postal Service can process the personnel change in a timely manner. When cardholders do not do this, the coordinator does not have the opportunity to monitor transactions for those employees during routine reviews.

In a previous audit related to travel card transactions, the OIG recommended the Postal Service develop procedures for travel card coordinators to use VISA® IntelliLink⁸ to detect misuse and notify approving officials as appropriate.⁹ While the Postal Service initially used IntelliLink for this monitoring in response to the 2011 recommendation, it eventually decided to implement the Citibank data system,¹⁰ which allows travel card coordinators to run custom activity reports for travel card transaction monitoring. This system gives the coordinators easier access to electronic reports and more tools and options to identify misuse and unusual activity. The Postal Service provided Citibank system training to all of the travel card coordinators beginning in March 2013. However, the coordinators were not given written guidance or criteria to monitor indicators such as use of the travel card for cash advances exceeding allowable limits or for personal or other purchases that did not comply with Postal Service travel policy.

⁸ A web-based information services application that allows access to information that can better detect misuse.

⁹ *Compliance with Travel Policies and Opportunities for Cost Savings* (Report Number FF-AR-11-007, dated February 9, 2011).

¹⁰ The Postal Service has access to Citibank online automated tools, such as the Program Audit Tool, to enhance the travel card coordinators' ability to monitor cardholder transactions for potential misuse and fraud.

Area management initiated corrective actions by distributing standard operating procedures for travel card coordinators to use when monitoring travel card use for potential fraud or abuse.

During our reviews of the three Postal Service areas, management initiated corrective actions by distributing standard operating procedures for travel card coordinators to use when monitoring travel card use for potential fraud or abuse. Also, in response to the audit, the Postal Inspection Service recently issued procedures to guide coordinators in monitoring for misuse or abuse of travel cards. We believe these reports, tools, and procedures will enhance the area and district travel card coordinators' ability to monitor travel card transactions.

Recently, Postal Service management informed us that they implemented changes to Postal Service travel policy to better manage travel card use by employees and provide better oversight of cash advances and purchase transactions. Specifically, the Postal Service has eliminated use of the travel card for cash advances by officers, senior executives, the Postal Inspection Service, and nonbargaining employees. Also, the Postal Service will provide additional guidance to travel card coordinators to more effectively monitor, on a monthly basis, all travel card transactions made by Postal Service employees.

Recommendations

We recommend management develop and implement written criteria for travel card coordinators to monitor travel card transactions and take action as appropriate.

We recommend the acting vice president, Controller:

1. Develop and implement written procedures to ensure travel card coordinators monitor all cash advances and purchases and take appropriate actions when those transactions do not comply with Postal Service travel policies.
2. Develop and implement written procedures to ensure that all personnel changes are properly and promptly updated for cardholders in the Citibank data system, and travel card coordinators review active cardholder lists quarterly for accuracy, reporting any personnel differences to the travel card program manager.

Managements Comments

Management agreed with the findings and recommendations.

Regarding recommendation 1, management will develop and implement procedures for travel card coordinators to effectively monitor travel card activity each month.

Regarding recommendation 2, these procedures will also include a process to ensure personnel changes are accurately updated. Management will issue the revised procedures by August 25, 2014. In addition, the Postal Service revised its policy to reflect the elimination of cash advances for nonbargaining unit employees using the cash withdrawal feature of the government-issued individually billed travel card.

See [Appendix C](#) for management's comments, in their entirety.

Evaluation of Management's Comments

The OIG considers management's comments responsive to the recommendations and corrective actions should resolve the issues identified in the report.

Appendices

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Appendix A: Additional Information

Background

The Postal Service uses the General Services Administration (GSA) SmartPay 2 program to administer the travel card program.¹¹ Citibank, the Postal Service's travel card provider, issues VISA-branded SmartPay 2 cards to Postal Service employees for use on official travel. The travel cards also provide access to ATMs for cash advances.

Figure 1. GSA SmartPay 2 Travel Card



Source: <https://smartpay.gsa.gov/cardholders>

Employees can use the individually billed travel cards for transportation, lodging, and other travel-related expenses when on official business. The card is in the employee's name and charges are billed directly to him or her for payment. Postal Service policy states that employees may not use their official government travel card for personal business and limits cash advances to \$50 per day of official travel.¹²

Each Postal Service area and district office, Postal Inspection Service division, and Postal Service Headquarters department has a travel card coordinator to help administer the travel card program. Besides providing administrative support for employees, these coordinators monitor and identify transactions such as purchases of nontravel related items, cash advances taken that were not in accordance with travel policy, and other transactions that indicate misuse or unusual activity.

¹¹ Manages a set of master contracts through which agencies, including the Postal Service, can obtain credit cards for employees to accomplish their mission.

¹² Postal Service stated that Handbook F-15 will be changed for ATM/Cash Advances from the current \$50 per day of official travel, to an established maximum allowable amount per week, currently being determined by management.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to determine whether Postal Service travel card coordinators were effectively monitoring government travel card transactions. To accomplish this objective:

- In the Northeast, Southern, and Western Postal Service areas, we reviewed 922 high-risk transactions listed on the VISA IntelliLink¹³ report that occurred from April 2012 through March 2013 to identify employees who potentially took ATM cash advances while not on official travel. We also tested for employees who withdrew more than \$50 per day of official travel and who received cash advances more than 5 days before their travel began.
- For the Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service Headquarters we reviewed all 3,132 cash advance transactions listed on the Citibank transaction history report from April 2012 through March 2013 to identify who took ATM cash advances while not on official travel. We also tested for employees who withdrew more than the \$50 per day maximum. We identified 910 transactions and submitted this list of transactions to Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service Headquarters travel coordinators to determine whether coordinators identified any of the transactions in their review that required follow up with the employee's manager.
- During the Northeast, Southern, and Western postal area reviews we examined all ATM cash advances to determine whether any were taken at gambling locations.
- For the three areas, Postal Inspection Service, and Postal Service Headquarters, we reviewed 180,252 purchase transactions listed on the Citibank transaction history report from April 2012 through March 2013 to identify employees who used their travel cards while not on official travel.
- For the Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service Headquarters, we eliminated from our review all of the allowable travel-related purchases such as airline tickets, hotels, and car rentals. We also judgmentally removed from our review purchase transactions that allow the use of the travel card as a method of payment. These include expenses such as investigative expenses, conference and seminar fees, and fuel. We included in our review those purchases that could indicate potential travel card misuse such as purchases made at grocery stores, supermarkets, and for membership organizations. Once these purchase transactions selections were identified, we conducted a review and analysis on the remaining purchase transactions to determine whether the cardholder was on official travel when making these purchases. We identified 486 purchase transactions and submitted this list of transactions to Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service Headquarters travel coordinators to determine whether the coordinators identified any of the transactions in their review that required follow up with the employee's manager.
- We interviewed all travel card coordinators to determine their knowledge of the roles and responsibilities associated with monitoring government travel card transactions.
- We used the Postal Service eTravel system to research claims for travel reimbursement to determine whether employees were on official business during the period they made cash advances and purchases using the travel card.

We conducted this review from May 2013 through June 2014, in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation*. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management on March 26, 2014, and included their comments where appropriate.

¹³ A web-based information-services application that allows access to information that can better detect misuse.

We assessed the reliability of VISA IntelliLink and Citibank data by cross-validating cash advances and purchases against official travel recorded in eTravel and used the responses of area and district travel card coordinators, the Postal Inspection Service, and Postal Service Headquarters as additional validation. We determined the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report. We also compared selected transactions to the eTravel system for accuracy and found the data to be reliable for our purposes.

Prior Audit Coverage

Report Title	Report Number	Final Report Date	Monetary Impact (in millions)
<i>Monitoring of Government Travel Card Transactions in the Western Area</i>	DP-MA-14-001	12/9/2013	None
Report Results: Western Area travel card coordinators effectively monitored most government travel card transactions. However, travel card coordinators can better monitor cash advances. Specifically, we identified 157 instances totaling \$25,430 of inappropriate cash advances for travel from April 2012 through March 2013. Management took corrective action during the review. As a result the report contained no recommendations.			
<i>Monitoring of Government Travel Card Transactions in the Northeast Area</i>	DP-MA-13-004	8/30/2013	None
Report Results: The Northeast Area travel card coordinators were effectively monitoring government travel card transactions. We noted only minor instances of potential improper uses of the travel card. The report contained no recommendations.			
<i>Monitoring of Government Travel Card Transactions in the Southern Area</i>	DP-MA-13-003	8/30/2013	None
Report Results: The Southern Area travel card coordinators were effectively monitoring government travel card transactions. However, travel card coordinators can better monitor cash advances. Specifically, we identified 211 instances, totaling more than \$53,000, of inappropriate cash advances for travel from April 2012 through March 2013. Management took corrective action during the review. As a result the report contained no recommendations.			
<i>Travel Expense Reimbursements and Travel Card Usage</i>	FT-AR-12-014	9/27/2012	None
Report Results: Postal Service employees improperly claimed expenses on their travel reimbursements and inappropriately used their travel cards. Approving managers did not have a mechanism to adequately monitor travel card activity. Also, the Postal Service did not have clear instructions explaining how to handle canceled airfare expenses. As a result, the Postal Service was exposed to inappropriate or fraudulent activity that could harm its reputation. Management agreed, in principle, with the recommendations.			
<i>Compliance With Travel Policies and Opportunities for Cost Savings</i>	FF-AR-11-007	2/9/2011	\$1.2
Report Results: Postal Service employees did not comply with prescribed travel policies resulting in excessive travel costs for lodging and airfare in FYs 2009 and 2010. We estimated the Postal Service could realize savings over 2 years by taking action to curtail employee noncompliance with travel policies. Further, the Postal Service did not cancel credit cards issued to former employees, including employees listed as deceased in employee records. Management agreed with the findings and monetary impact and agreed in principle, with the recommendations.			

Appendix B: Other Impact

Recommendation	Impact Category	Amount
1	Goodwill Branding ¹	\$189,593

¹ An actual or potential event or problem that could harm the reputation of the Postal Service.

For the current review of the Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service Headquarters, we identified 882 cash advances totaling \$134,077 unrelated to official travel or in excess of the amount Postal Service policy allows. We also identified 282 purchase transactions totaling \$55,516 that travel card coordinators did not effectively monitor for potential misuse.

We claimed \$53,000 and \$25,430 respectively in the previously issued Southern and Western area reports. We did not claim the \$2,844 amount of minor instances found in the previously issued Northeast Area report because we believed the transactions we identified were immaterial.

Appendix C: Management's Comments

SCOTT G. DAVIS
(A/V) VICE PRESIDENT, CONTROLLER



June 13, 2014

JUDITH LEONHARDT
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Monitoring of Government Travel Card Transactions
Report Number DP-MA-14-DRAFT

Recommendation 1:

Develop and implement written procedures to ensure travel card coordinators monitor all cash advances and purchases and take appropriate actions when those transactions do not comply with Postal Service travel policies.

Recommendation 2:

Develop and implement written procedures to ensure that all personnel changes are properly and promptly updated for cardholders in the Citibank data system, and travel card coordinators review active cardholder lists quarterly for accuracy, reporting any personnel differences to the travel card program manager.

Management Response to Recommendation 1 and 2:

Management agrees with recommendations 1 and 2. Management will develop standard operating procedures for travel card coordinators to follow to effectively monitor travel card activity on a monthly basis. The procedures will include a process for monitoring cash advances and purchases. The procedures will also include a process for handling personnel changes.

As part of the ongoing efforts to implement tighter controls in reference to the travel cards, Management would like to note that PCES and EAS employees are no longer authorized to withdraw cash advances using the travel cards.

Target Implementation Date: August 25, 2014

Appendix B: Other Impact

Recommendation	Impact Category	Amount
1	Goodwill Branding	\$189,593

Management agrees with the findings.

Responsible Official:

Ricardo Jackson, Manager, Travel and Relocation, Corporate Accounting

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