

Roles and Responsibilities for GSA SmartPay Approving Officials

The GSA SmartPay program provides purchase, travel, fleet and integrated charge cards to federal employees for official government purchases. Playing a major role in the use of GSA SmartPay charge cards are the Approving Officials (AOs), who are responsible for ensuring all charges made by the cardholder are authorized, allowable and accurate.

Who is an Approving Official?

The AO for both purchase and travel card programs is typically a supervisor. In purchase card programs, the AO is responsible for ensuring proper use of the purchase card by the cardholder. The AO also authorizes cardholder purchases and ensures that the statements are reconciled and submitted to the designated billing office in a timely manner. In travel card programs, the AO is responsible for approving the traveler's voucher.



The Role of an Approving Official

In addition to approving charges, AOs must notify the cardholder of questionable purchases so the cardholder can work with the merchant to resolve any issues. The AO should also notify the Agency/Organization Program Coordinator (A/OPC) of the discrepancy. It is important for the AO to review the agency's specific policies before serving as an AO.

For each program, there are two major responsibilities:

1. Approval of purchases:

- For centrally billed purchase cards, the AO signs account statements on a monthly basis.
- For individually billed travel cards, the AO approves the travel vouchers in the online system.

2. Approval of monthly statements:

- The AO may be required to certify the monthly invoices resulting from cardholder transactions and conduct informal compliance reviews.
- The AO needs to maintain a reasonable number of cardholders and transactions under his or her purview in order to conduct reviews in a timely manner.

Required Training

As with all roles, one must know what is expected of them to be successful, and training as an AO is no exception. Before becoming an AO, one must take the GSA SmartPay Travel or Purchase Cardholder Training and remain familiar with the rules and regulations governing the use of a charge card. AOs must also take refresher training at least every three years and should also familiarize themselves with their agency's approval and tracking systems, as these may vary among agencies.

The GSA SmartPay program provides online cardholder training with detailed information about the roles and responsibilities of holders of government charge cards, AOs and A/OPCs. For more details, please visit: <https://training.smartpay.gsa.gov>.

The GSA SmartPay contractor banks also offer training for both cardholders and agencies. Also of interest to AOs is the user guide, which outlines the responsibilities of the cardholders, including account setup procedures and transaction dispute procedures.

Additional Tools

The **Electronic Access System (EAS)** provides many useful reports to assist in the effective management of the charge card programs. The EAS allows AOs to review a cardholder's transactions online. Purchase cardholders can maintain electronic purchase logs through the EAS as well. There are many other functions of the EAS that are beneficial for AOs, including electronic reconciliation and certification, editing account allocation, multi-account allocation and assignment of account codes.



Value Added Product and Service Offerings are provided from the contractor banks to customer agencies. Those offerings that are most beneficial for AOs include data-mining tools to detect patterns, trends, and/or anomalies, and automatic email alerts for a given transaction.

Contractor banks are required to provide various reports to agencies, to help manage the charge card program and to assist agency representatives with identifying and investigating possible misuse of charge cards and charge card-related products and services.

Additional information regarding the GSA SmartPay Program and AO responsibilities can be found via the following links:

- The GSA SmartPay2 Master Contract
<https://smartpay.gsa.gov/node/15>
- OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B
http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/agencyinformation_circulars_pdf/a123_appendix_b.pdf
- Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Part 8 (Required Sources of Supplies and Services)
<https://www.acquisition.gov/far/current/html/FARTOCP08.html>

Contact Information

GSA is available to answer your questions about Approving Official roles and responsibilities and provide more information on the SmartPay program. Contact your Agency/Organization Program Coordinator or GSA SmartPay contractor bank (see below), or get in touch directly with GSA via phone, **(703) 605-2808**, email, gsa_smartpay@gsa.gov, or online, <https://smartpay.gsa.gov/>.

Citibank: (800) 790-7206 (within United States)

JPMorgan Chase: (888) 297-0783 (within United States)

U.S. Bank: (888) 994-6722 (within United States)