

Information from Cartus on Relocation and International Assignment Trends and Practices

DE&I & Global Mobility: Considerations For Developing A Robust Program



As corporations continue to develop and build out their Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DE&I) strategies, global mobility professionals are contemplating their role in this initiative. In a recent Cartus survey, more than fifty mobility professionals shared details about the role of DE&I within their organization.

Although 77% of respondents are not currently tracking diversity data related to their relocation and/or global mobility program, more than half—55%—of these respondents indicated that they plan to track this type of data within the next two years. In order to do so, mobility teams will need to plan, research, and secure buy-in from their leaders.

How can Mobility managers begin to dive into this area? What are some quick “wins” they can initiate now to showcase their interest in and knowledge about this important topic?

The following are areas in the global mobility process and practice that may impact diversity, equity, or inclusion and are provided to assist in the development of a strategic mobility program reflective of corporate goals.

POLICY

Policies offer multiple opportunities to begin the DE&I journey within mobility. If your organization’s policies have not been recently written, now is the time to review them from the perspective of inclusivity (e.g., the use of pronouns).

One instance of reviewing policy is found in defining “family,” which holds a different meaning to different people. It can no longer be assumed that a family is a 1950s “nuclear” family. In most organizations, Global Mobility can lean on human resources to lead the way in defining “family” as they do so for other employee benefits. Crafting this definition reflects the organization’s culture and objectives.

Furthermore, most policies have room to address overall family needs more thoroughly. Providing partner career support and/or assimilation services—for relocations or assignments—is beginning to happen more frequently than before. Additionally, education support is being offered for domestic as well as international moves; domestic support trends toward helping find the right school rather than assisting with school payments, as is found in international moves.

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Adding flexibility to policy—as seen in a core/flex approach—allows assignees to choose benefits that support the specific needs of their family. Because a well-developed policy often contain costs, being flexible can be a true “win-win” for both the organization and its employees. It is important to note that offering an effective employee experience may not decrease a program’s cost in all scenarios.

If sending a single or divorced employee with children on an assignment, consider adding support to the policy that enables the employee to bring a parent or nanny with them or to cover the costs for childcare.

For the last ten years, the statistic for women going on assignment has hovered between 25-35% in most organizations. This occurs for a number of reasons including a partner that has a thriving career and does not want to leave it and/or the woman is the primary caregiver and an assignment could have an unknown impact on family dynamics. Interviewing high-potential women candidates can help companies better understand what support they might be given that could impact their decision to relocate or to accept an assignment.



Another area in which the mobility team can have a global impact on inclusion is mobility governance.

Another possibility is to offer employees (with families who hesitate to take a long-term assignment) an opportunity to go on a shorter-duration assignment or Extended Business Travel, which still provides international mobility experience. This is a strategic topic which needs to be discussed with business leaders.

CANDIDATE SELECTION

Mobility Governance

Another area in which the mobility team can have a global impact on inclusion is mobility governance. In order to avoid excluding people from mobility opportunities, the mobility team is encouraged to collaborate with Talent Acquisition and business leaders to develop governance over the decision-making process.

Unconscious bias is often displayed in the process of making decisions in regards of which employee would want to or could go on an assignment. This could look like a scenario in which a female employee with children is overlooked for a position because it is assumed she would want to remain at home without being formally asked for her preference.

Although it is common practice in many organizations to choose an employee with good technical skills to go on an assignment, a robust approval process with a team of decision-makers can increase opportunities throughout the organization and eliminate the likelihood of making a biased selection. The use of an AI platform and blind resumes can also make the process more transparent and inclusive.

Duty of Care

Global mobility managers need to be aware of the laws that govern each country where an employee may be sent. There are some countries where it is illegal to be LGBTQ+. Therefore, education and preparation are needed before any final decisions are made by the candidate or the business. In order to keep transferees safe, this might mean that a partner cannot accompany the employee to the destination. In this situation, it may make sense for a split-family arrangement in which the partner and family move to another country nearby, and the employee is provided with additional home leave. In some cases, it may be determined that the assignment would be better in a different, safer location.

PRE-ASSIGNMENT SUPPORT

Cultural Coaching

Provide employees with cultural coaching to support them with insights about the destination location and its people and how to become self-aware while adapting to the workplace and beyond.

Language Training

Offer language training to all relocating employees, whether moving temporarily or permanently, in order to equip them with the ability to communicate effectively. Although many organizations use English primarily in business functions, not being able to speak and think fluently in the local language can leave transferees feeling shut out of the organization, which can negatively impact job performance.

Onboarding Program

Implement a formal onboarding program for everyone going on an assignment or transferring. This both prepares assignees for what to expect and provides an inclusive experience.

Onboarding is often an area of dissatisfaction for relocating assignees, especially when their assignments are typically designed for employees of the host country and/or culture. Making employees feel included drives employee engagement and productivity.



ON ASSIGNMENT SUPPORT

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

Membership or participation in an Employee Resource Group can help an employee who has landed in a new country to better understand that location and its opportunities and challenges. In addition, being an ERG member means having a safe space with like-minded people which can be very beneficial if an employee is uncomfortable speaking or interacting with locals.

Mentorship/Sponsorship

Having a mentor in the home location—typically a leader in the employee's business line—supports the employee and their career growth. Sponsorship in the destination refers to a local employee who can help the transferring employee better understand the culture, work, and people in the new location.

Leadership

Connecting assignees with local leadership in the host location ensures a better understanding of the organization's goals and how the assignee fits into the workplace.

Networking Events

Local leadership and management can provide opportunities to include the employee/assignee in local work site and community networking events.

Buddy System

Newly arrived assignees can benefit from a "buddy" who provides a safe space to ask questions.

POST ASSIGNMENT

Repatriation Coaching

Returning from an assignment to a home location can be more difficult than going on the assignment in the first place. Repatriation coaching helps set expectations around returning to both the work location and life at home. This coaching helps an assignee feel valued and offers an opportunity to think about how to use their newly honed skills.

THROUGHOUT THE ASSIGNMENT OR TRANSFER

DE&I Knowledge

In the event an organization has not yet started its DE&I journey, the global mobility team may want to address with its leadership the importance of DE&I training around the world. For employees/assignees moving globally, DE&I training, knowledge, and awareness are key to ensuring that these employees are treated inclusively throughout their time in the host location.

Tracking assignees upon their return also helps the organization to better understand return on investment.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

All globally mobile employees should be made aware of the corporation's EAP plan in case they or their family needs any emotional, legal, medical, or social support.

THE IMPORTANCE OF METRICS

Data Tracking

In Cartus' recent DE&I survey, results indicated that a minimum of companies are tracking their mobile employees and others will be doing so within the next couple of years. While gender and age are typically tracked, more robust tracking is needed and may include race, ethnicity, and disability (in countries that allow this information to be collected).



For now, mobility can explore what their organization is willing to track; this information can usually be provided from HR and, once obtained, can be tracked for both assignments and one-way permanent moves. Tracking assignees upon their return also helps the organization to better understand return on investment. If assignees frequently leave the company a year or two after their return, it is important to understand (and reduce) the factors that cause returning employees to resign.

As global mobility managers begin to consider the above-mentioned opportunities to support DE&I, the area of mobility may become a shining example of inclusivity for their organization.

FIND OUT MORE

For more information on DE&I, please refer to our [resource hub](#). If you have any additional questions, please contact CartusSolutions@cartus.com.