

International assignment policy design

Organisations use a variety of different lengths, patterns and types of international mobility as part of talent management.

Documented relocation policies are necessary to provide allowances and benefits that are tailored and specific to these approaches.

THE NEED FOR POLICY

Written policy ensures consistency of treatment in the deployment of international assignees. This is advantageous as it negates the requirement for oral agreements and negotiations with individual employees.

Having a policy also provides transparency and so can help to manage employee expectations. A policy should also ensure equity and generate a sense of fairness.

A written policy underpins communication with employees and their families and aids administration.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

It is usual to have a suite of policies rather than just one so as to address different approaches to global mobility. Thus, international assignment policies can articulate allowances and benefits tailored to the length, pattern and type of transfer. They might also offer benefits linked to seniority.

Policies therefore might cover long-term, short-term, rotational, commuter/frequent flyer assignments and one-way transfers. They may address skills transfers, developmental moves, and volunteers. They can also cover remote working and virtual mobility.

Policy should also focus on compliance requirements (such as immigration, tax, social security).

MEETING BUSINESS & EMPLOYEE EXPECTATIONS

A well-thought out policy should meet the needs of the business as well as provide an excellent employee experience. Hence, policies should ensure cost control and tax efficiency and provide sufficient flexibility for the sending and receiving line managers who need to meet business imperatives. Policy design should also ensure ease of administration for global mobility professionals.

Cost control must be balanced against policy content that attracts, motivates and retains individuals. Ideally, there should be sufficient flexibility in policy to meet employee and family needs without the need for exception management. Flexibility in policy design can aid diversity management.

INFLUENCES ON POLICY DESIGN

The design of international assignment policies is likely to reflect the current economic and political context. This means that policies should be kept up-to-date to reflect current pressures and issues related to mobility, including labour market and employee relations conditions.

The policy should also reflect societal and organisational cultures such that it aligns both with the country contexts of the sending and receiving locations as well as organisational traditions.

Policy design must reflect organisational strategic intentions and direction as well as structures and systems. It should be operationally effective whether it is implemented in-house or by a third party external provider.

Every organisation has a unique

strategy, structure and culture. Policies should reflect these.

Policy must also be responsive to organisational change. It is important to ensure that administrative guidelines are produced to support policy design.

THE INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENT CYCLE

Policies should cover the relocation cycle from the initial deployment through to returning home at the end of the assignment. It should therefore contain provision to address a range of factors including recruitment and selection, training and development, reward, family support, career management, and repatriation. In addition, it should address localisation or moving on to another assignment.



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