

Policy design for self-initiated & volunteer assignments

Organisations are increasingly developing policies to address the terms and conditions that apply to volunteer assignees. Self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) typically do not receive relocation support as they are recruited as locals.

DEFINITIONS

Self-initiated mobility refers to when individuals use their personal initiative to undertake international mobility for employment without employer support.

Volunteer assignees are those who put themselves forward from within the organisation's workforce, typically responding to internally advertised vacancies.

TALENT DEVELOPMENT

Living and working abroad can be an attractive proposition. International experience is known to be career enhancing. Young people who might not normally fall within an organisation's expectations of whom they are prepared to expatriate at company expense may be keen to see the world and to gain career growth while doing so.

Individuals may wish to live and work in a country that appeals to them, where they have family or friends, or where they believe they can pursue personal and professional growth effectively. All of these factors can underpin individuals' decisions to self-initiate their expatriation or volunteer for an international assignment. For employers SIEs and volunteers can be a valuable source of talent.

ASSIGNMENT TERMS & CONDITIONS

When advertising job vacancies in other countries, organisations may offer international assignment terms and conditions that differ for posts in established first world locations compared with those in newly emerging economies, and remote and challenging locations. Greater support and financial incentives usually apply in the more difficult locations; typically a home-based approach to pay applies with considerable levels of allowances and benefits provided.

Today, relocation support for assignments in well-established expatriate destinations is often less generous. While a home-based approach to pay may be used, there is a trend towards less costly approaches such as host pay or host-plus arrangements.

Volunteer assignees typically put themselves forward for assignments in established expatriate destinations, such as major first world cities. Policy design may differentiate between the remuneration package that applies to volunteers and organisationally-initiated assignment types such as skills transfers and leadership development programmes.

REMUNERATION & BENEFITS

The remuneration package for volunteers is likely to be significantly less generous than that offered to organisationally-initiated assignments. Volunteer assignees usually receive host/local pay and employment terms but with some additional initial support, reflecting their mobile status. Volunteers are likely to receive assistance with travel to the host location and some support for initial temporary living, local transport and incidental expenses. Local pay and terms and conditions apply to SIEs.



TRAINING

Volunteers and SIEs can both benefit from cultural training if they are to work effectively in a culture that is different from their home country. Potentially language training and other training support such as professional skills training can enhance their workplace effectiveness.

COMPLIANCE & DUTY OF CARE

SIEs and volunteers must hold the appropriate visas and work authorisation and also comply with taxation and social security legislation. Employers hold responsibility for duty of care for all employees, regardless of whether they have volunteered or have relocated themselves to live and work in the host country. Policy should address all aspects of compliance as well as employee wellbeing.

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