



Global Mobility and ESG

What's in your control?



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What are your company's ambitions on environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues? How can Global Mobility support the company in achieving those goals?

With ESG matters commanding board-level attention, Global Mobility teams are finding ways to help their organizations become more sustainable, diverse and equitable enterprises. While early action on ESG tended to focus on the environmental footprint of mobility programs, many of today's Global Mobility professionals are taking bolder steps to make an impact across a broader spectrum of ESG concerns.

In fact, recent experience shows that the Environmental and Social aspects of ESG are where Global Mobility teams can deliver the most meaningful positive change.

Reducing environmental impacts with sensible travel

Given the potential carbon footprint that employee moves can create, environmental issues have been a traditional focus area for Global Mobility professionals. This was highlighted even more so with the 2020 pandemic when business travel ground to a halt, many of us were forced to work remotely, and advancing technology made remote work not only possible but also popular with many employees.

Immediately after the pandemic, emissions were maintained at a lower level by limiting discretionary employee travel. As demand for business travel has revived, Global Mobility teams are seeking ways to sustain these environmental and cost benefits for the long term.

For example, many Global Mobility teams are promoting the notion of **sensible travel**. The idea is not to discourage essential business travel; rather, it is to ensure the benefit justifies its cost and supports travel in ways that offset or reduce the environmental impact.

As the accompanying chart shows, sensible travel might involve:

- **green relocations** — working with relocation providers to offset the adverse environmental impact of international business travel
- **multi-purpose travel** — grouping activities to increase the impact of individual business trips
- **green mobility policy review** — evaluating how mobility policies could be adjusted to reduce their environmental impact
- **green cost projections and vendor partnerships** — working with external travel service providers to understand the environmental impact of business travel and ensure the business benefits that ensue are worth it.



Sensible travel ideas

Sensible travel aims to ensure the benefits of business trips justify their environmental costs and that travel is undertaken in ways that offset or reduce its environmental impact.

Green relocations

Working with relocation providers to offset the adverse environmental impact of international business travel by:

- reducing the volume limits for assignees' moving costs (often in exchange for cash)
- offering furniture rental to avoid buying and discarding new furniture)
- partnering with local charities to donate furniture not needed post assignment
- onward sale of furnishings by repatriating employees to new assignees
- selecting vendors based on their green credentials and offerings (e.g. offering accommodations with solar panels, onsite recycling facilities).

Green mobility policy reviews

Evaluating how mobility policies could be adjusted to reduce their environmental impact by:

- adopting a "stop/go check" policy to challenge whether travel is really needed
- weighing whether a policy's commercial, monetary, developmental outcomes provide good returns on their upfront cost in terms of, among others, harmful emissions, wellbeing and time resources (i.e. conscious consumption)
- reviewing whether a proposed move could work as a virtual assignment, keeping an open mind about routes to success
- identifying and selecting a local successor to assume the assignee's role post assignment (often by recruiting the assignee for this task).

Multi-purpose business trips

Grouping activities to increase the impact of individual business trips by:

- grouping multiple meetings in one location and building in additional trips or add-on events to get the most business benefit in return for the emissions expended
- grouping multiple meetings in one flight-based trip, and traveling from there to additional meetings in the area using greener forms of travel (e.g. train, electric vehicle).

Green cost projections and vendor partnerships

Working with external travel service providers to understand the environmental impact of business travel and ensure the business benefits are worth it by:

- factoring carbon costs into pre-travel cost projections and assessing the value of benefit gained from travel (commercial, financial, productivity, employee development)
- collaborating with third-party relocation vendors to ensure they provide green support options that help reduce carbon emissions and meeting employee demand for environmentally friendly alternatives
- collecting detailed data from travel providers on the carbon costs of each business trip taken and helping the wider business reach its emission reduction targets by calculating how to offset travel-generated emissions (e.g., how many trees to plant).

Tackling the social agenda

As more companies recognize the benefits of having a diverse workforce and assignee base, Global Mobility teams are increasingly being called on to support their organizations' social agenda in driving inclusivity and diversity objectives.

Data is critical for tackling this issue — you need to know the makeup of your workforce in order to identify where to devote your efforts. Businesses can have quite different priorities based on their industry, traditional employee types, geography or culture. In industries where the employee population is predominantly white and male, such as mining and oil and gas, delivering gender and ethnic diversity in mobility programs can be difficult.

Data transparency is therefore a key starting point. Just as many organizations are addressing the diversity mix of employees overall, Global Mobility teams are doing the same for the assignee population to determine the best focus for their activities.

The **candidate selection process** is another area where diversity and inclusion can be improved. In many organizations, the process for selecting assignees can be ad hoc, with mobility opportunities being offered to employees who are already known to the person or team making the selection. To combat this, we are seeing many Global Mobility teams update their processes to:

- set a clearly defined recruitment and selection policy and process, requiring all international opportunities to be advertised internally
- require the resulting shortlist to include candidates from specific minority groups (e.g., based on gender, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic factors) so that the business makes its final decision based on broader, more transparent initial screening
- manage pushback from the line managers/teams who previously had the sole power to make these decisions.

Global Mobility teams often find that members of minority groups do not apply for mobility assignments or opt out of the running because they need different supports than those being offered. As a result, many businesses are **reviewing their assignment benefits policies** to identify any barriers to the creation of a diverse assignee workforce. Questions to ask include:

- What childcare benefits are in place for single parents?
- What cultural training should be offered or factored into assignment plans to encourage more ethnic diversity among assignees?
- What is the best way to offer a wider variety of more flexible benefits (e.g. by adopting points-based benefit selections so employees can pick the that suit them)?

Cultural change can take time, and Global Mobility teams are doing what's in their power to drive the social agenda forward.



What is the best way to offer a wider variety of more flexible benefits? ”

Key takeaways

ESG has many dimensions, and it can be hard for Global Mobility teams to know where to start. Taking these three steps can help:

- **Know your business's ESG agenda:** Your business's ESG agenda should inform your ESG guiding principles and priorities. By understanding these priorities now, you can be agile in meeting requirements as they evolve.
- **Take the wheel:** By taking the lead, Global Mobility can add value and ensure balance between their mobility strategy and the company's broader ESG objectives.
- **Don't try to do it all:** In today's dynamic environment, real impact can only come from a sharp focus on a few key areas. Devote your efforts to the strategic and deliverable priorities within your control that will make a tangible difference.

Global Mobility teams who know their business and align their ESG agenda accordingly can create better outcomes for mobility assignments while contributing to fairer, more inclusive workplaces. Best of all, the conversations that Global Mobility will have with senior business leaders can help to build the team's profile as a valued and respected contributor to strong ESG performance more broadly.

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