

## International Employee Relocation

# ASSIGNMENT MANAGEMENT

Explore six critical phases of Assignment Management and discuss the role of a Relocation Management Company (RMC) in ensuring successful outcomes for both you as an employer and your employees on their assignments.



# Executive Summary

International assignments are essential for companies entering new markets, transferring knowledge across regions, and developing global leadership pipelines. For mobility teams, managing these assignments is both a strategic function and a logistical challenge.

An international assignment typically involves relocating an employee to a host country for a defined period, often one to three years. These assignments can serve a variety of organizational goals, including market expansion, project support, or leadership development. For the employee, an international assignment can be a career-defining opportunity that fosters personal and professional growth, provides cross-cultural experiences, and opens the door to future leadership roles. However, the success of such assignments hinges on meticulous planning and management.

Despite the many benefits, international assignments also have many moving parts. Some key areas employers need to consider include immigration, expense management, employee and family support, and repatriation planning. This is where a relocation management company (RMC) like WHR Global becomes an essential partner. RMCs specialize in managing all logistical and strategic components of an international assignment. In addition, they serve as a single point of coordination, working with mobility teams to deliver consistent, policy-compliant support while enhancing the employee experience.

The **Assignment Management** lifecycle can be divided into six key phases: Introduction, Pre-Relocation and Preview, Relocation, Settling-In, Assignment, and Repatriation



Each phase requires thoughtful planning and tailored services.

The process begins with defining the business case for the assignment. The employer reviews the strategic need, expected outcomes, and identifies the most suitable employee.

Assignment policies are established or reviewed, including compensation, benefits, and entitlements.

The whitepaper will explore each phase and discuss the role an RMC can play to ensure success.

The Introduction phase serves as the first step in setting up a successful international assignment, ensuring both employee and employer are aligned with logistical and regulatory aspects of relocation.

Once the employee accepts the assignment and the RMC has received the authorization to proceed, the RMC's Relocation Counselor will schedule an initial call with the employee to conduct a needs assessment.

- The initial call with the employee is completed on the same day or the next business day after receipt of initiation
- Virtual meeting typically via Microsoft Teams with the employee, spouse/partner, and executive assistant
- During the initial call, the Relocation Counselor (RC) will collect information on the employees' needs, address timelines, and explain all available benefits
- This call allows the RC to align the transferee's expectations with your policy and ensure exceptions are managed upfront



*For additional information on international assignments, read "The Best Types of Expatriate Assignments for Your Mobility Program"*



## Key Services include:

- **Access to Online Portal/Mobile App:** The employee is given access to a centralized platform for seamless coordination, tracking, and communication
- **Immigration Briefing:** An in-depth discussion of visa and work authorization requirements, and the role of the immigration provider ensures compliance and reduces delays
- **Tax & Security Briefing:** Customized tax guidance coordinated by the RMC with the employer's tax partner and security protocols help the employee prepare for life in the host country

Early preparation in this phase can prevent costly compliance errors, delays, or last-minute issues related to visas and work permits. By providing the employee with clear and accurate information, employers can mitigate the risk of legal complications and unexpected costs related to immigration or taxes.

This phase sets the groundwork for the next steps in the assignment. The information shared during the introduction will ensure that the employee is prepared for the upcoming relocation process and can transition into the pre-relocation phase with confidence.



The Pre-Relocation & Preview phase addresses logistical needs and provides a clear overview of what the employee and their family can expect when they arrive in the host country.

**Key Services include:**

- **Area Orientation:** Employees are introduced to their new location's cultural and professional aspects, giving them a head start in adapting to their new environment
- **Home Finding Assistance:** Real estate experts or Destination Service Providers assist in finding suitable accommodations based on family needs, policy allowance, and location preferences
- **School Search:** If applicable, the employee's family is given the opportunity to explore educational options in the host location
- **Pre-Move HHG Survey:** A detailed survey of household goods helps plan for the household goods move and optimize the logistics associated with the move



To help ensure the services you are offering provide adequate support to your employees, see our *"Ask an Expert"* Destination Services Benchmark Study



By proactively addressing housing, schooling, and cultural adjustments in this phase, the employer can prevent costly disruptions and avoid delays once the employee arrives. Early home finding and school visits reduce the risk of an employee feeling dissatisfied or overwhelmed by their living situation, which is a common cause of early assignment failure.

These efforts lead to improved employee satisfaction, reducing the likelihood of repatriation or early termination of the assignment.

This phase prepares the employee and their family for the logistical steps of the move. With housing, schools, and other essential preparations sorted, the employee is more likely to focus on settling into their new country, making the subsequent relocation process smoother.

This is the crucial operational phase during which the physical aspects of the move are handled. Proper execution during this phase ensures the employee and their family are settled quickly and comfortably.

**Key services authorized by policy may include:**

- **Discard and Donate:** Employees are assisted in sorting through their belongings, which helps reduce the volume of items being moved and lowers shipping costs
- **Pack and Load:** Professional packing ensures that household items are safely packed and shipped according to international standards
- **Book Flight:** Travel arrangements for the employee and any accompanying family members can be arranged by the RMC through the client's preferred travel provider
- **Expand Tracking/Check into Temp Housing:** Upon arrival, the employee checks into temporary housing, and tracking systems provide updates on household goods



See our *"Ask an Expert"* Global Temporary Housing Report, which provides an overview of global temporary housing prices in select cities throughout the Americas, EMEA, and APAC regions



The logistical coordination in this phase can lead to significant cost savings by ensuring the move is efficient and well-planned. Companies can reduce shipping and storage costs by helping employees discard unnecessary items and providing professional packing services.

Pre-arranged temporary housing also mitigates the stress of finding accommodations immediately upon arrival, which could otherwise result in additional costs or delays.

The relocation process sets the stage for the employees' transition into their new environment. The focus now shifts from logistics to integration, where settling-in services will play a crucial role in helping employees and their families feel at home.



Once the employee and their family have arrived, the Settling-In phase ensures a smooth transition into daily life in the host country.

**Key services may include:**

- **Meet with Destination Services Provider (DSP):** A local expert assists with setting up necessary services, such as registration, transportation, and local orientations
- **Language and Cultural Support:** Language classes and cultural coaching helps employees and their families integrate into their new environment
- **Open Bank Accounts:** Employees are assisted with setting up local financial accounts, enabling them to manage everyday expenses
- **Household Goods Delivery:** Upon securing permanent housing, the employees' belongings are delivered and unpacked, creating a home-like environment



Read our *"Ask an Expert"* Culture and Language Training Process for more information on the importance of these services for international assignments!



Ensuring a seamless transition into the host country helps improve employee satisfaction and reduce the likelihood of a failed assignment. Language and cultural support not only aid in integration but also enhance the employee's productivity and job satisfaction.

Additionally, setting up local financial accounts ensures employees can manage expenses efficiently, preventing unnecessary complications or delays.

Once the employee is settled into their new home and lifestyle, the focus shifts to providing ongoing support throughout the assignment.

The employee's continued satisfaction is crucial for the success of the entire assignment.

The Assignment Period is the heart of the relocation. During this period, the employee is fully integrated into their role, and the RMC provides continuous support to ensure ongoing success.

**Key services may include:**

- **Consistent Contact:** Regular check-ins with the employee ensure that any challenges are addressed promptly, fostering a sense of ongoing support
- **Spousal Support:** Assistance is provided to help the employee's partner integrate into the new location, which is key for overall family satisfaction
- **Settling In Support:** Continued support for housing, schooling, or any other personal issues arising during the assignment
- **Relocation Expense Reimbursement:** All assignment related expenses are tracked and reimbursed in accordance with company policies



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Ongoing communication and proactive problem-solving reduce the risk of assignment failure or early repatriation. Spousal support and settling-in assistance ensure the family is well-adjusted, improving the employees' performance and reducing the likelihood of costly disruptions.

Additionally, managing relocation expenses and ensuring compliance with reimbursement policies keeps costs predictable.

As the assignment period progresses, the focus shifts toward preparing the employee for their eventual repatriation or reassignment.

Proper planning ensures the employees' transition to their home country is as smooth as possible.



The final phase focuses on preparing employees for departure and ensuring they are successfully reintegrated into their home country or reassigned to another location.

**Key services may include:**

- **Departure Services:** RMCs assist with move-out logistics, including lease terminations, utility shut-offs, and final household goods shipments
- **Travel Home:** Final travel arrangements are made for the employee and their family, ensuring a smooth return journey
- **(Optional) Career & Cultural Re-adjustment Support:** Continued support for housing, schooling, or any other personal issues arising during the assignment



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A well-executed repatriation process minimizes the emotional and financial costs associated with the return process.

Effective reverse culture shock counseling and career planning ensure that the employee remains engaged and that the skills gained abroad are effectively transferred to the organization. This reduces the risk of turnover and improves the overall return on investment from the international assignment.

The repatriation phase closes the loop on the international assignment, reinforcing the value of the experience for both the employee and the company.

The lessons learned in this phase can be applied to future assignments, helping employers refine their global mobility strategies.



# Summary



Managing international assignments involves much more than just logistics; it is about providing comprehensive, tailored support to employees and their families at each stage of the relocation.

By partnering with an RMC, employers can streamline processes, reduce costs, and ensure high levels of employee satisfaction throughout the assignment lifecycle. Each phase of assignment management connects seamlessly to the next, creating a comprehensive support system that enhances both the employee's experience and the company's return on investment.

By leveraging the full range of services and expertise offered by RMCs, organizations can achieve strategic goals, mitigate risks, and ensure the success of their global mobility programs.

*Interested in how your policies compare to what is currently being offered by other organizations?*

*See our Mobility & Culture Study*





Established in 1994, WHR Global (WHR) is a private, family-owned, full-service international relocation management company.

We partner with human resources, travel divisions, and global mobility departments at a wide variety of organizations from Fortune 100 corporations to the US Government.

We are dedicated to Advancing Lives Forward® by providing white-glove service for employers and their global workforces. With a proprietary technology suite, WHR strives to offer cost-effective relocation benefits without compromising empathy, ethics, or service.



## Wisconsin, USA

Global Headquarters  
Coordinates all relocations  
into the Americas

## Basel, Switzerland

EMEA Office  
Coordinates all relocations  
into Europe, the Middle  
East, & Africa

## Singapore

APAC Office  
Coordinates all relocations  
into Asia Pacific