

DEI - The Key to a Better Destination Services Experience

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DEI - The Key to a Better Destination Services Experience by Lynda Lescault, Dwellworks Global Account Management

This paper will explore a policy and service framework in which no one in the corporate mobility experience feels sorted into “advantaged” vs. “disadvantaged” or “exceptional” vs. “standard” categories. Instead, all can be supported as the valuable, diverse talent they are.

In a December 2022 [AIRINC](#) webinar, “It’s Time to Revolutionize Your Mobility Program,” global mobility managers saw data that explained why the talent acquisition, talent development, and mobility management roles at global companies must look at promoting radical flexibility versus overly rigid policy, in order to proactively promote diversity, serve new audiences, and leverage dynamic technologies.

Over 70% of the participants in this webinar agreed they were either already moving towards these dynamic actions or ready to consider them—with further study. These commitments were echoed at a similar February 2023 seminar at the Bay Area Mobility Management (BAMM) conference.

As global corporations continue to make diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives a top talent management and strategy priority, how can we in the talent mobility industry ensure that DEI in principle is also DEI in practice?

This white paper highlights how a combination of updated policy considerations and real-time service support could foster a more equitable, inclusive, and successful mobility experience.

Dwellworks has positioned DEI as a driver in our own talent strategy. We focus on Destination Services in this report but the logic applies for a review of relocation benefits management overall, towards the goal of broad representation and appropriate support solutions for an ever more diverse, globally mobile workforce.



Emphasis on inclusion and identity

A key concept in DEI training, especially around inclusion, is the awareness that nobody should feel disadvantaged by who they are, their ideology, their family composition, or anything else personal to them.

From a [Destination Services Provider](#) (DSP) perspective, a primary goal has always been to help relocating employees build bridges and make relevant connections in their new communities.

As a former Destination Services Consultant, I can tell you it's in the DNA of every destination services professional to want to provide community connections and personalized, customized service for every individual and family we support.

However, this good intent can often meet up with the practical limitations associated with the prescribed scope and authorized time of the Destination Services benefit.

A typical destination services scope includes core requirements for sourcing appropriate housing and assisting with local government registration compliance, but allows little leeway, either in the design of the scope of work or in the time allowed, for the additional, personalized support often needed by anyone who does not fall under the typical profile for whom the policies were designed in an earlier era.

In an era of incredibly competitive talent recruitment coupled with challenging housing availability, could a better, more inclusive, less frustrating experience be designed from an “employee-forward” versus a “policy-mandated” perspective?

Why not factor into a policy/program greater inclusivity and duty of care and in so doing, also reinforce a company's reputation as an employer of choice?

The right policy and practice can reinforce equity and inclusion

Policies can be looked at with fresh eyes to ensure they do not disadvantage a transferring employee through overly specific or time-crunched benefits, which have the unintended consequence of limiting the acclimation support needed for an individual's unique housing needs or lifestyle interests.

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Onboard with inclusion in mind and express support that individual concerns and needs will be heard. One size does not fit all. Equal (the same for all) is not the same as equitable (the allocation of resources based on need.) Employers can differentiate by creating mobility policy positions that express the intent of the relocation benefits are to support each employee's personal success in their move.

Increasingly, the analytics are available to support both choice and cost-effective program management. For while a "policy-driven" program sounds as though it also controls costs, it does not account for waste/defects in offering unused benefits, frequent exceptions, or the hidden cost of employee dissatisfaction.

Every day in Destination Services, our consultants work with employees with stories similar to this one: "I'm a single female of color. An experienced professional. No kids, no schools. I want access to a vibrant, diverse community, a space bigger than a studio, and of course want safe, secure housing options within my budget. What do you suggest?"

Consider this individual within the context of a traditional half-day rental benefit designed to support, on average, a recent college graduate, most likely male, and moving with limited requirements.

Can the limitations of current benefits bend to address the needs of the employee described above, or a young LGBTQ couple seeking an inclusive community, an experienced hire with different ability needs, a family with three kids worried about sourcing schooling or, even, a single male engineer with two cats and a large dog whom he considers family but may not be welcomed by too many landlords?

With advances in digital content and virtual tools, destination services can now also be offered in a diversity of formats. Employees are asking for help, but not necessarily a traditional side-by-side accompanied service. All parties are interested in efficient use of time and resources, as well as personal attention. Service methodologies now exist to meet the full range of possibilities.

The "how" is not the challenge, it's the "what" of policies that do not always flex with the people that could benefit from a new approach.

"I'm a single female of color. An experienced professional. No kids, no schools. I want access to a vibrant, diverse community..."

Managed flexibility can also improve customer satisfaction

After analyzing thousands of surveys returned over the last several years, we've learned that the most significant driver of dissatisfaction with the destination services experience has been the challenge of addressing personal needs within prescribed policy and requirements.

The vast majority of global destination services customers expressing dissatisfaction were also those whose international/cross-border benefit was three days or fewer (less than 24 hours of personalized guidance to assist with area acclimation, home search, lease review, move-in inspection, settling-in guidance, and school sourcing support), and/or an assignee who had a unique profile (pets, children requiring schooling and/or daycare support, accompanying partner with unique needs, non-traditional family, complicated rental profile, tenant-paid rental search services in markets like New York, etc.) that was not addressed to their full satisfaction.

In reviewing these instances where dissatisfaction occurred, it's often the case that the required scope was, in fact, delivered as mandated but that wasn't what the employee needed and no "exception" for additional or alternative guidance was granted.

The local expert is thus left to focus on prioritizing key tasks (home selection, banking, government compliance) vs. addressing the personal needs that ensure a successful landing.

And we must be clear: transferring employees need some version of all of these services. Solutions that claim to be 'customer responsive' (i.e., the employee picks their services without necessarily being aware of the pricing or scope of work framework in which the services are to be provided) cannot disregard the requirements of the client policy. The root cause of dissatisfaction is not how the supplier packages the service, it's recognizing the diversity of requirements of each individual and including a capacity for 'standard + personalized' in the benefits framework.



More equitable does not mean more expensive

Is it time to explore how policy could be modified to embrace a sliding scale benefit for a more inclusive, proactive, and efficient approach to addressing each individual employee's needs?

Rather than offering more or the same pre-packaged destination support to ALL, this modification would ensure that any additional expense borne by the employer would be applied only for those who need a reasonable amount of additional time with a local expert to address their reasonable needs and for the sizeable percent of population who have fewer needs, the service would be short-billed.

In this framework, there is no need to redesign the total policy—just remove the obstacles for ensuring that those who need extra guidance to get settled in a neighborhood that feels right to them or find housing that accepts their fur babies or to source schooling for their children are authorized for that flexibility up front.

It's a better solution than a complex, time-consuming, and subjective exception review process that "calls out" people who are simply expressing their very real needs.

A very simple solution for balanced flexibility might be for the employer to acknowledge the service parameters on which their policy was designed and then pre-approve an additional capped amount that would be available for any employee whose needs fall outside of or are different from the core services.

In the DSP space, this new "sliding scale, but capped benefit" could be automatically authorized at the onset of the move to permit the local, on-the-ground consultant to expertly design the right level of support required to help the whole person and their family as that family chose to define itself.

Most employees may not need extra time – but those who do would be eligible to receive it automatically. And only the extra hours utilized would be invoiced, never over-charging for services not delivered and always staying within a pre-approved capped amount.

How a DEI-driven benefit could work

Let's assume a company's international destination services policy offers 3 days (24 hours) of assistance. Let's also assume the employer relocates 100 employees/year at a DSP fee spend of \$240,000 (3 days x \$2400 x 100 moves.) Note that most DSPs only bill for time used, so if the full amount of time authorized is not required, the fees would be short billed.

To move the needle from a prescribed policy to an equitable one, the following scenario outlines a sample breakdown based on common trends.

| # of employees (100 total) | % | Time Needed | Spend / per | Total |
|----------------------------|-----|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| 65 | 65% | 3 Days | \$2,400 | \$156,000 |
| 10 | 10% | 2.5 Days | \$2,000 | \$20,000 |
| 5 | 5% | 2 Days | \$1,600 | \$8,000 |
| 15 | 15% | 3.5 Days | \$2,800 | \$42,000 |
| 5 | 5% | 4 Days | \$3,400 | \$17,000 |
| | | | | \$243,000 |

Compare this to the total 'budgeted' cost of a baseline program of \$240,000.

For a potential 1% increase in program fees, a much more equitably distributed benefit would be offered, with nothing taken away...just more inclusively distributed.

Interested? Let's talk!

Let's explore a policy and service framework in which no one feels sorted into "advantaged" vs. "disadvantaged" or "exceptional" vs. standard." Reach out to us at <https://go.dwellworks.com/ds>

About Dwellworks

At Dwellworks, our local network of 1500+ experts in hundreds of cities worldwide is a resource to the global mobile workforce. We're here not only to help people find a place to live that matches their budget and personal/family needs but also to welcome them to a new destination.

Dwellworks provides destination services and temporary living solutions for tens of thousands of customers every year. Visit our [homepage](#), learn about our [services](#) for corporate travel and relocation, and read our [blogs](#) to learn how we can help with relocation and business travel needs.

