

IDEAS ON

# SUSTAINABILITY IN GLOBAL MOBILITY



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## SUSTAINABILITY IS:

“meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”<sup>i</sup>

There are three pillars to sustainability, known as the 3Ps:



**PROFITS** (being economically sustainable)



**PLANET** (being environmentally sustainable)



**PEOPLE** (being socially & culturally sustainable).

To be truly sustainable, we need to take a holistic approach that goes beyond just carbon emissions and address all three pillars. That requires us to focus on topics as broad as bio-diversity, pollution, waste, and resource depletion (to name but a few).

The climate crisis is driving **behavioural changes** in individuals and organisations.

Global Mobility's supply chain is one of the areas where the function can exercise its greatest influence. Using its wide reach, Global Mobility can require vendors to have environmentally friendly practices that are felt globally. Effectively leveraging the supply chain to change behaviours has a multiplying effect that can dramatically magnify the function's sustainability impact.

**Sustainability credentials** are a competitive advantage in the battle for clients and talent as more companies put sustainability goals in place to meet the commitments of the **Paris Agreement**.

<sup>i</sup> 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) report, “Our common future”: <https://www.are.admin.ch/are/en/home/sustainable-development/international-cooperation/2030agenda/un-milestones-in-sustainable-development/1987-brundtland-report.html>



Sustainability credentials are a competitive advantage in the battle for clients and talent. Global Mobility can develop mobility options that support the business' talent needs and employees' personal sustainability agendas. Most obviously this has manifested itself over the last year in supporting remote working and developing virtual assignment programmes that allow employees to gain valuable international experience.

Beware falling into the trap of Greenwashing! This marketing spin can be deceptive. It is always worth scratching at the surface to make sure that the credentials pass scrutiny.

**Global Mobility has, by its nature, one of the highest per-capita carbon footprints of any HR function. With this comes responsibility to influence and help drive positive changes.**

Given the travel and movement required in international assignments, by their very nature, assignees will have large carbon footprints. Although it is not realistic to ask Global Mobility to ground all assignees and cancel international assignments, perhaps Global Mobility can guide the business in reassessing the true need and value of an assignment, especially in light of all we have learned this last year about the effectiveness of working from home.

**There are many positive steps Global Mobility can take to contribute towards their organization's sustainability goals.**

Global Mobility can influence, implement, and encourage sustainable practices across different facets of the mobility programme. Keeping in mind that different host locations will lend themselves to certain solutions more than others, we are seeing Global Mobility make diverse changes such as:

### Relocation & Travel:

- ▶ Replace a household goods shipment with an allowance to purchase or rent furniture in the host location
- ▶ Help assignee to connect into the local second-hand markets and freecycle communities
- ▶ Incentivise assignees to use the travel method with the lowest environmental impact – for example, carpooling or taking a train instead of a plane

### Accommodation:

- ▶ Support assignees to live in energy-efficient properties
- ▶ Base utility allowances on the cost of green energy providers

### Diet and consumption habits:

- ▶ Support alternate consumption patterns in the COLA allowances, for example by including sustainable, organic, vegetarian, and local options.

**Challenges exist, but there is plenty that can be done!**

#### ADDITIONAL READING

- ▶ 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) report, "Our common future": <https://www.are.admin.ch/are/en/home/sustainable-development/international-cooperation/2030agenda/un--milestones-in-sustainable-development/1987-brundtland-report.html>
- ▶ UN Environment Programme: <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics>
- ▶ List of environmental issues: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_environmental\\_issues](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_environmental_issues)
- ▶ Charles Eisenstein's holistic approach to climate change: <https://charleseisenstein.org/video/a-new-story-of-climate-change-new-frontiers-2018/>
- ▶ Freecycle: <https://my.freecycle.org/>
- ▶ The footprints of different travel methods: <https://www.treehugger.com/plane-train-or-automobile-which-has-the-biggest-footprint-4868815>