



**WORLDWIDE ERC®**  
THE WORKFORCE MOBILITY ASSOCIATION

# 2010 GLOBAL Benchmarking Survey

## Short-term Assignments

March 2010

As companies continue to look for ways to remain competitive in the global arena during difficult economic times, they continue to incorporate non-traditional types of assignments into their programs to help meet company needs. The short-term international assignment (STA) is an outlet for a growing number of organisations that want to continue to expand and develop but are looking to avoid some of the costs associated with traditional long-term assignments.

Results from Worldwide ERC®'s latest Global Benchmarking Survey examining short-term international assignments indicate that over half of responding organisations have seen the number of STAs within their company increase over the past 24 months. Additionally, almost the same percentage of firms predicts the number of short-term assignments in their company will increase over the next 12 months.

Western Europe, Asia-Pacific and North America were identified most frequently by respondents as the locations where their companies have short-term assignees. Africa was noted least often. Over half have respondents' companies have a formal short-term international assignment policy. On average, STAs last 12 months or less.

When asked what the most important drivers of short-term assignments were within their company, respondents resoundingly indicated project-based assignments (90 percent) as the key reason. The second and third most frequently mentioned drivers were knowledge transfer (60 percent) and the training or development assignment (57 percent). Seven out of 10 respondents state that the most significant challenge they face with short-term assignments is ensuring tax compliance; followed by the tracking of informal arrangements (57 percent) and controlling the length of the assignment (50 percent).

This survey was conducted online during November and December 2009. Eighty-one organisations responded to the questionnaire. Of those, 76 indicated that they have employees on short-term international assignments. The following results are based on the responses of these 76 companies. Approximately three-quarters of the respondents' companies are headquartered in the Americas; 15 percent in Europe; and 6 percent in Asia-Pacific and Australasia regions. Five percent indicate that their companies have global headquarters.

1. Does your company have a short-term assignment policy?	% (N=76)
Yes, a specific policy for short-term assignments	61%
Yes, an informal policy or guidelines	9%
Yes, included in the international assignment policy(ies)	14%
Handled on a case by case basis	12%
None of the above, but we do have short-term assignments	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>2. In which of the following regions does your organization currently have short-term assignees</b>	<b>%* (N=71)</b>
Western Europe	70%
Central and Eastern Europe	48%
Middle East	37%
Africa	15%
Asia-Pacific	69%
Australasia	35%
North America	63%
Central America	27%
South America	31%

\* Total does not equal 100% due to multiple responses.

<b>3. Overall, short-term assignments in my organization in the previous 24 months have:</b>	<b>% (N=76)</b>
Significantly increased	18%
Somewhat increased	33%
Remained about the same	36%
Somewhat decreased	8%
Significantly decreased	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>4. Overall, I anticipate that short-term assignments in my organization in the next 12 months will:</b>	<b>% (N=75)</b>
Significantly increase	9%
Somewhat increase	40%
Remain about the same	45%
Somewhat decrease	3%
Significantly decrease	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>5. What is the average duration of a short-term assignment at your organization?</b>	<b>% (N=76)</b>
1 – 3 months	12%
4 – 6 months	42%
7 – 9 months	17%
10 – 12 months	26%
13 – 15 months	1%
16 or more months	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%*</b>

\* Total does not equal 100% due to rounding.

<b>6. What are the most important drivers for short-term assignments within your company?</b>	<b>%* (N=76)</b>
Knowledge transfer	61%
Project-based assignment	89%
Skill gap	42%
Training/development assignment	57%
New business/operation start-up	54%
Limited nature of project	26%
Cultural exchange	3%
Employee preference	3%
Family reasons	3%
Dual career issues	--
Lower costs than permanent/long-term assignment	29%
Employee unable to sell/rent their home in home location	--
Other	1%

\* Total does not equal 100% due to multiple responses.

<b>7. Please indicate the typical status of short-term assignees in your company.</b>	<b>% (N=75)</b>
Unaccompanied	85%
Accompanied by spouse/partner	12%
Accompanied by family	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>8. For short-term assignments lasting more than 6 months, what types of assistance does your organization offer assignees?</b>	<b>%* (N=73)</b>
Storage of household goods in home location	23%
Vehicle storage	8%
Vehicle loss-on-sale	7%
Property management of home-country home	25%
Security briefing	36%
Work permit assistance	92%
Immigration counseling and/or support	88%
Pre-assignment medical screening	41%
Cross-cultural training	45%
Language training	34%
Shipment of personal effects	56%
Insurance on accompanied belongings	33%
Baggage allowance	48%
Excess baggage provision	63%
Destination services	47%
Other	14%

\* Total does not equal 100% due to multiple responses.

<b>9. What type(s) of housing does your organization provide employees on short-term assignment in the host location?</b>	<b>%* (N=75)</b>
Hotel	35%
Serviced apartment	63%
Company-owned apartment	8%
Furnished accommodations	75%
Unfurnished accommodations	7%
None	1%

\* Total does not equal 100% due to multiple responses.

<b>10. How is payroll for short-term assignees typically handled?</b>	<b>% (N=76)</b>
Assignee remains on home-country payroll	90%
Assignee moves to host-country payroll	4%
Assignee moves to international payroll	5%
Other, please specify	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>11. Does your organization pay an incentive (e.g., Foreign Service premium) for short-term assignments??</b>	<b>% (N=59)</b>
Yes, paid as a flat amount each month.	9%
Yes, paid as a percentage of monthly salary	20%
Yes, paid as a lump sum at the beginning or end of an assignment.	19%
No	51%
Other	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%*</b>

\*Total does not equal 100% due to rounding.

<b>12. If the incentive paid is a flat amount, please specify the average amount in USD\$ paid to the employee each month?</b>	<b>% (N=1)</b>
\$600	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>13. If the incentive paid is a percentage of a monthly salary, please specify the average percentage?</b>	<b>% (N=10)</b>
10%	40%
11%	10%
12%	10%
15%	30%
35%	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>14. Is a per diem or cost-of-living allowance provided for short-term assignees?</b>	<b>% (N=74)</b>
Yes, per diem is provided	58%
Yes, a cost-of-living allowance is provided	14%
Handled on a case-by-case basis	20%
No, the company reimburses actual expenses	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>15. How often does your organization typically pay for short-term assignees to return home?</b>	<b>% (N=73)</b>
Never	7%
Every week	1%
Once every 2 weeks	1%
Once every 4 weeks	15%
Once every 6 weeks	10%
Once every 2 months	16%
Once every 3 months	16%
Once every 4 months	4%
Once every 6 months	12%
Once per year	7%
Other, please specify	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%*</b>

\* Total does not equal 100% due to rounding.

<b>16. Does your organization reimburse unaccompanied assignees for visits from family members to the assignment location?</b>	<b>% (N=75)</b>
No	36%
Yes, in lieu of assignee trips home	60%
Yes, in addition to assignee trips home	3%
Yes, other	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>17. What are your organisation's most significant challenges when managing short-term assignments?</b>	<b>%* (N=72)</b>
Ensuring tax compliance	69%
Tracking of informal arrangements	57%
Controlling the length of the assignment	50%
Ensuring immigration compliance	47%
Ensuring the involvement of the HR department	35%
Containing cost	31%
Coordinating the process	28%
Convincing employees to take the assignment unaccompanied by spouse/family	22%
Finding suitable housing for assignees	11%
Establishing appropriate per diems	10%
Determining what incentives (if any) should be provided	10%
Security concerns	3%
Other	1%

\* Total does not equal 100% due to multiple responses.

<b>18. Where is your organization headquartered?</b>	<b>% (N=75)</b>
Western Europe	11%
Central and Eastern Europe	4%
Asia-Pacific	3%
Australasia	3%
North America	73%
South America	1%
Global Headquarters	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>