

COVID-19 – Remobilisation Considerations: Setbacks and Second Waves

As organisations strategise and plan for remobilisation, it will be critical to anticipate and prepare for setbacks and challenges, as additional COVID-19 case surges may stall goals and intended mobility-related activities. This document will explore possible scenarios and strategies that organisations can consider when preparing for unknown remobilisation barriers.

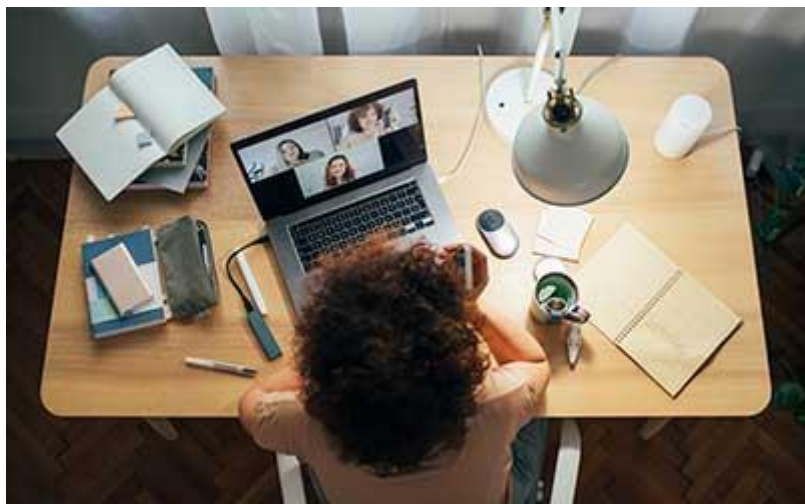
The Current State of Mobility Readiness

Organisations have been monitoring ‘mobility readiness’ in their global operating locations, particularly in locations that are considered critical for organisational success. Based on our conversations with clients, many organisations are anxiously awaiting the lifting of mobilisation restrictions and, in turn, an easing of the business pressures caused by resulting talent shortages and an inability to meet business needs and priorities. Some businesses are focused on the repatriation of employees to their home locations. Other organisations are focusing on longer-term workforce planning to minimise the need to import talent, thereby reducing the impact of a future global crisis or disaster. Regardless of the driver, the remobilisation process will be location specific, and organisations should be prepared to navigate additional pandemic waves as part of their remobilisation strategy.

Signs of Potential Surges and Setbacks

As organisations monitor locations and evaluate them for remobilisation readiness, they will also need to consider indicators that point to potential surges and setbacks. These include:

- An increase in confirmed cases of COVID-19
- An increase in the number of COVID-19-related deaths
- Changes in country and/or local restrictions: quarantine requirements, social distancing, curfews, mask requirements, etc.



- Changes in travel requirements or travel restrictions (e.g., inability to travel to/from a particular location, or quarantine requirements when traveling to/from a particular location)
- Changes in immigration requirements

Any of the above challenges could indicate the potential for, or confirmation of, a setback or second wave, which may have an impact on planned remobilisation activities. Mobility teams, in partnership with key stakeholders, should be prepared to implement crisis and disaster management protocols and business contingency plans quickly. Utilising SIRVA's [COVID-19 Reopening Matrix](#) will be extremely helpful, as it includes current information on over 40 countries regarding such topics as household goods (HHG) norms, visa and immigration updates, business travel restrictions, and more. The topics are broken down, per country, for ease of use and quick reference.

Potential Impact of Setbacks

Setbacks due to additional COVID-19 surges may have the following impacts on remobilisation and new deployment initiatives that may have been planned:

- Revised remobilisation/deployment timelines
- A temporary halt or modification of relocation services
- Increased or unplanned mobility programme costs
- Increased relocation budgets for continuing or new deployments, due to additional needs and extended support requirements
- The need for urgent travel: booking services, immigration support, or SOS services
- The need for urgent support: travel, temporary housing, living expenses, immigration, storage, etc.
- An increase in exception requests
- An inability to meet organisational goals resulting from talent/resource shortages as a result of a company's inability to deploy resources
- Re-evaluation of critical relocations

Impact-minimisation strategies may need to be fluid and agile depending on organisational goals, cost tolerance, employee preferences, and health and safety concerns.

Looking Back: Lessons Learned and Course Corrections

For most organisations, the COVID-19 pandemic has been the most significant crisis to ever impact their business. It will be important to learn from this experience and improve on the implementation of existing response strategies; to accomplish this, mobility teams are encouraged to review their COVID-19 response effectiveness to date, evaluate what worked well, and identify where improvements or efficiencies may have yielded more favourable results. Key questions to consider include:

- Were employees and stakeholders engaged proactively and in a timely way?
- Was complete employee demographic data readily available to enable the response strategy?
- What enhancements can be made to improve response time?
- Did the response strategy have financial impacts that could have been avoided or minimised?
- Were employees provided with the right kind, scope, and level of support to minimise impact and challenges?
- What changes can be implemented to better control unexpected costs?
- What feedback was received from employees and stakeholders regarding their experiences?
- Did existing (or modified) mobility and organisational policies help or hinder the response strategy?
- Were all mobility partners that are charged with facilitating processes (both internal and external) engaged in driving success?
- How can these partners be better engaged in the future to improve the response strategy?



- What programmes and/or resources can be provided to better prepare employees and stakeholders for a future crisis or disaster?
- What are employee and stakeholder perspectives regarding the value of the support provided to them? What gaps were identified? Did the communication strategy for employees and stakeholders meet expectations? What improvements can be introduced to minimise gaps?
- Did supplier partners react swiftly to organisational needs?
- What are the top five (5) improvement opportunities that have been identified?

Answers to the above questions can assist decision makers in understanding the successes and shortfalls of the company's response strategy to COVID-19-related impacts, to date, and help to drive a more efficient response – not just to pandemic-related surges but also to other crises or disasters that may occur in the future. Now is the ideal time for mobility teams to evaluate and utilise this information.

Be Ready for Action

When setbacks or additional waves of COVID-19 are encountered, it will be important for mobility teams to move into crisis-/disaster-management mode quickly, considering the lessons they learned earlier this year. Using the information that was gathered in response to the above questions, mobility leaders can prepare now by improving and implementing policies and procedures to address:

- Timely and ongoing communications to employees and stakeholders
- Communications and procedures that allow for mobility teams and partners to shift from remobilisation activities to crisis and disaster management – or a combination of both, dependent on impacted employees
- Better and quicker access to real-time information
- A process that provides access to additional support
- Timely issue resolution and exception processing

Mobility teams have an opportunity to provide significant value-added services to their organisations by demonstrating the proactive application of lessons learned and enhancing the level of support available to employees and stakeholders when managing a crisis or disaster. Retrospective due diligence and response evaluation should facilitate the implementation of an improved response strategy that is ready to be applied, as needed.

Crisis and Disaster Familiarity

Some companies may find that subsequent surges of pandemic concerns will create the need for the repetition of impact-minimisation activities.

Organisations can review SIRVA's *Playbook for Mobility Management During Crises and Disasters* for insights and guidance that may help them to prepare for effective responses. Subsequent response strategies may mirror those that were used during earlier stages of the pandemic but, for maximum impact, companies will benefit from asking themselves the questions mentioned in the *Looking Back* section above and identifying opportunities for improvement. New response strategies should recognise that:



- Organisations are applying lessons learned and will support subsequent pandemic waves differently
- Organisations have less tolerance for additional mobility costs
- Organisations are now differentiating between critical relocations and relocations that are meant for developmental purposes or to fill immediate resource gaps

What Does the Future Look Like?

COVID-19 will continue to be a challenge for mobility programmes and workforce planning initiatives for the near future. There is a likelihood of some level of continuing or renewed remobilisation delays. Some setbacks may disrupt workforce deployment temporarily, while others may have a longer-term impact on the ability of an organisation to meet strategic and talent priorities. Situations will be fluid; mobility teams, stakeholders, and partners will need to be prepared to move quickly and to adapt support swiftly as decisions are made. The landscape may require that this process be repeated a number of times until the virus can be contained and the global landscape is stabilised. However, with the previous knowledge organisations have gained and applied, businesses can be better prepared to pivot and implement effective response strategies, as necessary.



Contributors:

Elaine Baker
Senior Vice President, Sales & Account Management Global Support

LisaMarie DeSanto
Content Marketing Manager