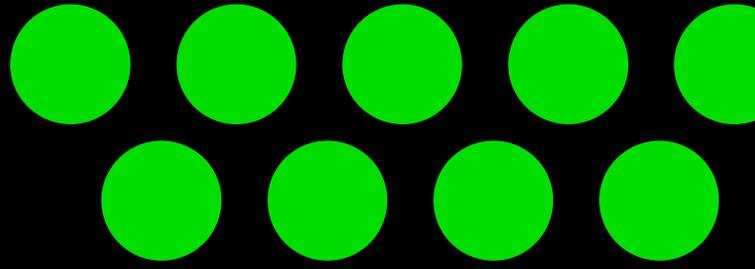


# Designing a People-First Travel Program





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DEI is gaining momentum, and it's not going away

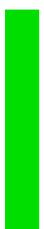
The role of the travel manager

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# It’s time to ask yourself if diversity, equity, and inclusion are a part of your travel policy’s vision.

Creating diverse and inclusive workplaces is more than having a diverse workforce. It’s seeking out opportunities for inclusion, promoting them, and implementing them in your day-to-day operations. That includes business travel policies, too.

Globally we’ve seen an enormous amount of change in recent years, and as companies pivoted to find new ways of working, they’ve also come to face new challenges and new obligations with environmental, social, and governance concerns (ESG).

With climate change, the Paris Agreement, and Net Zero in mind, the environmental pillar is probably the most easily understood, and the most talked about. But the social pillar, which includes employment equality, diversity, and inclusion, is crucial and necessary to a successful work environment. For many Millennials, and new generations entering the workforce, such as Gen Z, a company’s DEI initiatives could be a make-or-break.

**This includes the generation that’s right on the heels of Millennials: Gen Z, who, according to Forbes, have “ethics, equity, diversity and inclusion as their motivation and their calling.”**



Deloitte’s 2018 Millennial Survey showed that Millennials (who will make up 75% of the global workforce by 2025) are specifically looking for roles in businesses that prioritize DEI, believing that working with people from varied backgrounds “will make a company smarter, richer, more creative and more successful.” Most Millennials also strongly believe that the inclusion of people of different ethnicities with different lived experiences in different cities and societies is the key to driving innovation. This includes the generation that’s right on the heels of Millennials: Gen Z, who, according to Forbes, have “ethics, equity, diversity and inclusion as their motivation and their calling.”



**EMESE GRAHAM**  
DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND  
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# DEI is gaining momentum, and it's not going away.

In a new study by McKinsey & Company, it was shown that an inclusive culture is quickly becoming a competitive advantage in terms of attracting and retaining top talent. Some key points are:

- 47% increase in the likelihood that employees will stick with an organization if it's inclusive
- 90% increase in the likelihood that employees will go out of their way to help a co-worker if they work in an inclusive organization
- 7x increase in the likelihood of employees saying their organization is high-performing if it's inclusive

When it's done right, flexible remote work and the move to hybrid workplaces can help companies become more diverse and inclusive. Flexible working removes barriers for top applicants who are unable to relocate, have family and/or personal responsibilities, or disabilities, both physical and mental.

Diversity in the workplace includes race, gender, ethnic group, age, religion, sexual orientation, and mental and physical disabilities. But it's not just about improving inclusion and opportunities for everyone, it's also about meeting an employee's unique needs and preferences, including dealing with potential risks or challenges they face at work or on business trips.

According to Emese Graham, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Manager at Flight Centre Travel Group, Americas, a genuinely inclusive travel policy accommodates everyone's needs.

“Every single traveler is unique. An effective travel policy doesn't work regardless of differences, but because of them. It has built-in flexibility that makes travel easier and safer for everyone.”



# The role of the travel manager

**As a travel manager, you have a duty-of-care responsibility. That means taking steps to mitigate the risks or challenges that individuals from different cultures, backgrounds, or identities might face when traveling for business.**

Aside from having people-centric policies, a travel manager also has a voice in selecting preferred vendors that embrace inclusivity so that employees feel comfortable engaging with them.

So, what can you do if you want to transform your company's travel policy to align with your organization's DEI goals? Here are three ways you can get started right now to ensure your travelers feel safe and supported when they're on the road.

## 1 Listen to your people

You can't create a diverse and inclusive environment if you don't first understand your travel program from the most important standpoint: your travelers. It's impossible to tackle the challenges if you don't know what challenges the different communities face.

The best way to take on these issues is to leverage existing programs such as employee resource groups, or ERGs. These groups often have the best idea of what the needs of employees are, so their advice is critical when it's time for a change.

If you want to truly create an inclusive travel program, have conversations with those who travel most frequently. Listen to their experiences and let that guide in the decision-making process.

## 2 Engage with HR

A well-designed travel policy can make business travel easy, productive, and safe. This can round out an attractive employment package and make it easier for HR to entice and retain loyal, engaged, top-performing employees.

From the get-go, involve your HR team. They'll help you to find out what employees are saying about DEI and how to implement that feedback, address any current shortcomings, and encourage employee engagement. They may also advise you on the best ways to approach conversations with workers empathetically and legally.

## 3 Reimagine your supplier relationships

As the world around us keeps changing, it's increasingly important to take a deep look at our vendor relationships to ensure we promote equality in travel. A recent Business Travel News survey found that close to a third of travel buyers consider diversity and racial equity issues when creating itineraries.

"We can all contribute to building a more equitable industry by being intentional about the businesses we choose to support. The time to strengthen partnerships with equity-deserving businesses is always now," Graham says.

# Not sure how to keep your diverse workforce safe?

When it comes to travelers, there are unique needs that companies must consider. These include factors such as race and ethnicity; gender identity and expression; age; sexual orientation; and accessibility for travelers with disabilities.

If you do your due diligence, you can create a robust travel program. Start with a travel risk assessment that helps you identify all the potential risks different travelers may face when visiting different countries. Your travel policy should consider the various geopolitical and socioeconomic differences, because unfortunately, in certain countries, belonging to a particular ethnic group, gender, or sexual orientation can increase the likelihood of being a victim of discrimination or violence.

**Here are some of the considerations for a risk assessment for travelers:**

## LGBTQIA+ travelers

In many parts of the world, same-sex relationships are still criminalized. ILGA World (Lesbian, Gay, Trans and Intersex Association) reports that there are at least 70 countries where these relationships are illegal. Most of these countries are in Asia and the Middle East.

Gender expression can also be a risk factor in some countries. If you don't dress according to the expectations of your assigned sex at birth, you can be arrested.

### Where travel managers come in:

- Create a travel policy that addresses risks and gives solutions so LGBTQIA+ travelers can make informed decisions about how to stay safe while traveling.
- Educate travelers about local laws. Different countries offer different levels of protection, so what might be legal in one country might not be the case in another.
- Make sure there's someone in the company who understands these issues, so travelers feel safe and supported without having to give their orientation if they don't feel comfortable doing so.



## Women travelers

Surveys by SAP Concur and Wakefield Research found that 77% of women have been harassed or mistreated while traveling. Women are often seen as “easy targets” by criminals, which makes them more likely to be victims of petty crimes or assaults.

### Where travel managers come in:

- Research how women’s roles are seen in the society of the country they’re visiting and let them know of customs and laws, such as the way they dress and how they behave in public.
- Make sure they’re aware of safe taxi services, public transportation, self-driving options, and the appropriate protocols.

## Disabled travelers

Disabilities and some medical conditions can affect the business travel experience, but that doesn’t mean it has to stop disabled travelers from traveling for business altogether.

### Where travel managers come in:

- Make reasonable changes to travel policies to ensure the comfort and safety of disabled travelers
- Flag exceptions to the travel policy in the travelers’ profile
- Arrange for pre-authorizations for travelers with disabilities
- Evaluate and assess medical risks and facilities in destinations

## Racial profiling

Traveling for business as a person of color to international destinations may present challenges. Unfortunately, the concept of racial profiling is still very much a reality. Similarly, there are several religious minorities that are subjected to a range of overlapping stereotypes, assumptions, and negative opinions on a regular basis.

### Where travel managers come in:

- Create a travel policy that addresses risks and provides solutions so travelers can make informed decisions about how to stay safe while traveling.
- Make sure there is someone in the company who understands these issues, so travelers feel safe and supported.



# 5 steps to address risk head-on

Take the following steps as a travel manager once you've completed a risk assessment:

- 1** Communicate to management the potential risks and duty of care responsibilities.
- 2** Advise employees of the risks, precautions, and available resources.
- 3** Make sure inclusive services, accommodations, and other options are available for travelers.
- 4** Create and test a response plan for dealing with incidents.
- 5** Make it easy for travelers to communicate with your company about concerns or incidents.



# Time for transformation

Companies need to be prepared to plan for the particular, not just the universal. Every aspect of the travel program needs to be able to fit each of your travelers like a glove, from adaptable plans, experts on call, to technology that makes the journey seamless. ”

Graham says these are some of the steps travel managers can take to address the needs and preferences of all employees in an organization:

## Give business travelers access to safe service providers

Responsible travel starts with careful research and due diligence. You want to be sure you're working with a TMC that does the work to assess destinations, transportation options and accommodations, so your travelers can make informed decisions and minimize risk. At FCM, we reduce the likelihood of incidents and give travelers peace of mind that their well-being is a top priority due to our around-the-clock traveler support, up-to-date safety and risk notifications, and personalized, 1-1 account management that takes your organization's (and travelers') seriously.

## Accommodate traveler preferences

“Capturing each traveler's unique needs is key to ensuring a seamless trip for all, whether that's dietary restrictions, seatbelt extensions, or mobility aids,” Graham says.

A TMC like FCM has partnerships with key enterprise hotel brands and airlines, which offers travelers a range of options to meet their needs. With travel partnerships like this, it's easier to provide travelers with variety and the freedom to choose how they travel and where they stay. Of course, these need to align with the company's travel policies.

## Offer them advice before the trip

Make sure your travelers have all the information they need before traveling to a new country or region. From local laws and cultural differences, to knowing how to access health services, being well-prepared will help them have a safe and enjoyable trip.

## Travel updates and 24/7 support

Mobile devices have revolutionized how we travel, and for travelers who may face unique challenges or situations along the way, this is a critical advantage. The FCM Platform was designed to provide travel managers and travelers with a wide range of content options, an intuitive user experience, up-to-date reporting, and 24-hour support.

With the FCM Platform's mobile app, travelers can easily track their itineraries, get up-to-date information and travel alerts, and even chat with a travel expert for assistance, all with a few screen taps. Because regardless of where they're traveling or what group they identify with, travelers just want a hassle-free trip. We'll provide them with the right tools and information at their fingertips, on top of 24/7 support when they need it.





# The bottom line

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If you want your employees to be happy and your company to do well, you should take the lead and address their specific needs in your travel policy. Employees are your company's most important asset, and it pays to make sure they're taken care of. When you get your policies right, you encourage compliance and usage of your booking tool. Travelers will appreciate that their safety and well-being are a priority for the company and will be more willing to book with preferred rates and suppliers. Plus, by tracking traveler bookings, you can create comprehensive data reports that inform future decisions about spending, policies, traveler satisfaction, and more.

**Are you ready to include DEI into your duty of care strategy?**

**Reach out to FCM today to find out how our team and tech can support you on your equity journey.**



FCM is a single global brand providing a comprehensive range of corporate travel and expense management solutions. We have a presence in more than 95 countries and are regarded as one of the top five travel management companies in the world. FCM is responsible for the travel programs of some of the world's most successful corporate brands.

It has always been personalized service that sets FCM apart from the rest and we blend this with innovative technology and unrivalled access to content to drive the optimum performance of your travel program.

**Contact us today to find out how FCM can elevate the performance of your corporate travel program.**