Relocation grants paid remotely worldwide with prepaid cards

International Organization for Migration’s move from cash lowers costs and risks

THE CHALLENGE

The UK’s International Organization for Migration (IOM) operates voluntary return programs for asylum seekers and irregular migrants. These programs pay for flights and deliver relocation grants averaging around £500 each. Up to 3,000 grants are made each year.

The organization has traditionally paid grants in cash, a costly and risky method that makes reconciliation difficult. IOM therefore sought a low cost, automated way of making more secure payments.

THE SOLUTION

Citi Prepaid Services saw an opportunity for IOM to replace cash with prepaid cards. The cards are presented to beneficiaries before they return to their country of origin, along with a PIN and instructions.

About 10% of migrants receive additional payments, after returning to their home country, for purposes such as educational support. This is far easier with prepaid cards, which IOM can load and re-load remotely using a secure electronic process, therefore removing the need for cash or even wire transfers to a bank account.

The cards are Visa branded and can be used to make fee-free purchases wherever Visa is accepted, or to withdraw cash at ATMs. As well as being more secure than cash, they offer competitive currency conversion rates in the migrants’ home country. If a migrant loses their card or has problems withdrawing money, Citi can send a replacement card or provide necessary assistance.

Citi also provided IOM with a detailed implementation and training process, as well as ongoing support from its customer service team.

THE RESULT

Just four months after the solution went live, almost all IOM relocation grants were made by card. The user experience has so far been flawless, with prepaid cards guaranteeing payment on time, every time. Users feel safer carrying a card than cash, and find it faster and easier to receive further reintegration funds.

IOM did not have to pay any software or integration costs or change any existing processes. The organization has rapidly benefited from reduced costs, detailed payment reports, as well as greater control and transparency.

Explore how Citi has worked with these global city centers.