

New RDC Course Paves Way for Increasing Inbound Foreign National Destination Services

By Peg Guinta, CRP, GMS

The Relocation Directors Council's logo tag "Connecting Global Mobility with Local Ability" couldn't be a more appropriate description for its new Global Destination Specialist (GDS) program. With steadily increasing global activity and mobility clients eager for consistent, comprehensive national destination support, its timing is advantageous.

NAR reports "\$92.2 billion of purchases sold to foreign buyers, 12 months ending March 2014." Foreign sales represent approximately 7 percent of the 1.2 trillion existing-home sale market and although they fluctuate substantially, "the long-term market trend is up" (Profile of International Home Buying Activity, 2014). Cartus surveyed 172 multinational companies with average annual global relocation volume of 581 assignees and found that 50 percent expect their global volume to increase over the next two years. In 2014, the U.S. was the top global destination and is predicted to remain so near term (2014 Global Mobility Policy & Practices).

Difficulties assimilating into a foreign country, even the U.S., are often underestimated. But awareness of how it affects new job productivity and long term assignment success has increased, underscoring the importance of support services. As corporate and non-corporate global relocation continues to expand, so do market niche opportunities for U.S. real estate professionals. According to Peggy Smith, SCRP, SGMS-T, President and CEO of Worldwide ERC, "As organizations continue to rapidly grow and evolve on a global scale, our industry has been presented with an abundance of opportunities to navigate new landscapes. RDC members are no exception and can also benefit from the continued need for qualified destination service providers."

RDC's Global Task Force developed the GDS program that it will soon offer exclusively to its members. "When RDC developed its strategic plan in 2010, its leaders saw the need to play a pivotal role in the global growth of our industry," says Maureen Campbell, RDC Executive Board Member and Global Task Force Liaison. "The GDS course is the result of two years of hard work and dedication on the part of a diverse team of Corporate, Relocation Management Company, and Real Estate experts. Campbell adds, "Under the leadership of Michi Olson and Karen McRae, our Global Task Force will continue to meet and exceed RDC's goals for global relevance."

Course content includes a comprehensive selection of expanded destination orientation and settling-in services for U.S.-inbound assignees. Besides traditional real estate-related services, the program offers assistance for many other challenges assignees face, including mortgage, banking, credit, and insurance requirements; visa/tax and auto lease/purchase. After the destination agent conducts a "needs assessment" interview, assignees may select "a la carte" services using a time-based fee structure paid directly by employers or assignees' lump sums.

Multiple Benefits for Designees

The GDS designation fills a much-needed specialty credential, offering designees a formalized method that officially recognizes this expertise and equally important, provides a platform to develop new products and revenue streams.

With successful course completion, RDC members may promote themselves as Global Destination Specialists and potentially:

- Develop expanded, comprehensive settling-in programs within the brokerage
- Offer core service packages or "a la carte" service items to corporate clients, RMCs and assignees
- Cultivate new or existing corporate relocation relationships with enhanced service offerings

Each member's name and designation will appear in RDC's directory along with a description of benefits associated with GDS-credentialed agents. Future and ongoing advertising will also raise corporate administrators' awareness of GDS' benefits to assignees and their families.

The GDS is renewable every three years to help designees maintain awareness of global mobility trends and compliance issues. Continuing education and ongoing training is available through RDC via webinars, roundtable discussions and panels where attendance earns renewal credits. The GDS program cost is \$375, but as a member benefit, RDC anticipates keeping GDS maintenance costs minimal.

The initial "Train-the-Trainer" session is open to all members on May 4th and 5th 2015, in Las Vegas, prior to RDC's Spring event and the Worldwide ERC® National Relocation Conference. Future classes are planned around upcoming RDC meeting locations.

