



# The Remote guide to global benefits

How to select and set up the best global  
payroll solution for your business



# Hiring a global team has many advantages

From a wider talent pool to increased diversity, cross-border recruitment is a must for businesses that want to expand their market reach.

Unsurprisingly, though, there are challenges. And one of the biggest is offering competitive - and equitable - benefits across different locations.

In this guide, we'll walk you through the fundamentals of providing benefits to a global workforce. We'll also discuss how to structure your benefits in a way that aligns with your company's unique needs and goals - and explain how Remote can help.

Overall, you'll learn how to:

- Build a fair and equitable global benefits program
- Ensure your benefits are compliant with local labor laws
- Navigate different cultural norms and expectations around benefits
- Find the right brokers and partners
- Choose the most suitable supplemental benefits
- Compliantly offer benefits to independent contractors

So let's begin.

# Table of contents

04	Why are benefits important?	<hr/>
07	What are the challenges of offering global benefits?	<hr/>
12	How do you stay compliant in every country?	<hr/>
14	Which benefits should you offer?	<hr/>
23	What about benefits for contractors?	<hr/>
25	How can Remote help?	<hr/>



# Why are benefits so important?

Whether you have one international employee or 10,000, benefits are an essential part of recruitment and retention.

Some benefits are, of course, required by law. But your supplemental benefits package can be a game-changer for attracting and keeping the best talent.

Here are some of the key advantages of a strong global benefits package:

## They help build trust within your team

A global benefits plan signals your commitment to equality, which helps cultivate a culture of trust within your organization.

“Previously, we have seen organizations offering both statutory and supplemental benefits for their local team members, while offering the minimum required by law in other countries,” explains Barbara Matthews, Remote’s Chief People Officer. “Typically, this is because they don’t have the relevant knowledge or resources to do more.”

An unequal benefits package can cause resentment, and essentially create two classes of employee.

“If some employees are not getting the same standard of benefits as their colleagues because of where they live, the disparity will make them feel like they don’t truly belong in your organization. This, in turn, will have a big impact on productivity and retention.”

## They make you competitive

While remote hiring gives you access to more talent, it also means there's more competition. As a result, your benefits package has to go beyond the vanilla.

"Today's workforce is looking for more than just a paycheck," says Francesco Cardi, VP of Benefits at Remote. "They want to feel valued and supported in all aspects of their lives. Comprehensive benefits demonstrate your commitment to your employees' wellbeing, and can be a deciding factor for top talent."

Benefits are now a bigger draw than previously, as they offer practical support for employees in their day-to-day lives and allow them to mitigate costs. According to our recent [Global Workforce Revolution Report](#), extra benefits act as a huge draw for top tech talent.

A strong benefits package can also help level the playing field if your salary budget is limited. Some of the most desirable benefits cost very little — but can have a huge impact on your recruitment and retention.

The screenshot displays a 'Benefits' management dashboard. On the left, a sidebar contains navigation icons. The main area is titled 'Benefits' and includes a search bar and a filter icon. Below this is a table listing employees and their assigned benefit packages. The table has columns for 'EMPLOYEE', 'COUNTRY', and 'PACKAGE OFFERED'. The employees listed are Annette Black (Sweden), Brooklyn Simmons (Spain), Darlene Robertson (France), Darrel Steward (USA), Dianne Russel (USA), Eleanor Pena (Australia), Jerome Bell (New Zealand), and Pedro Ferreira (Canada). The packages range from 'Sweden Allianz Premium' to 'Retirement: Standard Re'. A right-hand panel shows details for 'Employee benefits' for Emina Simsek (The Netherlands), including a 'Tier' of 'Allianz Premium' and a list of plans with their status (e.g., 'Dental by Allianz' is 'ENROLLED', 'Pension by Aegon' is 'WAIVED'). A 'LOCAL BENEFITS' pop-up is also visible.

EMPLOYEE	COUNTRY	PACKAGE OFFERED
Annette Black	Sweden	Sweden Allianz Premium
Brooklyn Simmons	Spain	Spain Allianz Standard
Darlene Robertson	France	France Allianz Premium
Darrel Steward	USA	USA Basic
Dianne Russel	USA	No offered benefits
Eleanor Pena	Australia	Australia Allianz Basic
Jerome Bell	New Zealand	New Zealand Allianz Basic
Pedro Ferreira	Canada	Retirement: Standard Re

## They protect your brand

As you expand, your reputation will dictate your ability to attract the best talent. This is especially true in smaller, more concentrated markets where there are tight-knit communities of highly skilled workers.

Offering equitable benefits is not just about attracting great people, but retaining them as well. To create a unified culture, it's important to offer global benefits that are above and beyond what's required and ensure that they are accessible to everyone in your organization, no matter where they work from. This will allow you to prove yourself as a people-first company in all the countries you expand to.

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Companies that don't provide a benefits package tailored to the needs of a modern workforce risk falling behind. It's essential to support your employees globally in a way that fosters their loyalty and long-term commitment.

ARIYO RAJI

Benefit Solutions Manager at Remote



 remote



# What are the main challenges of global benefits?

Unsurprisingly, there are a number of challenges your business is likely to face when offering benefits in multiple countries. These include:



Choosing the right benefits



Tailoring benefits



Navigating local regulations



Finding the right providers



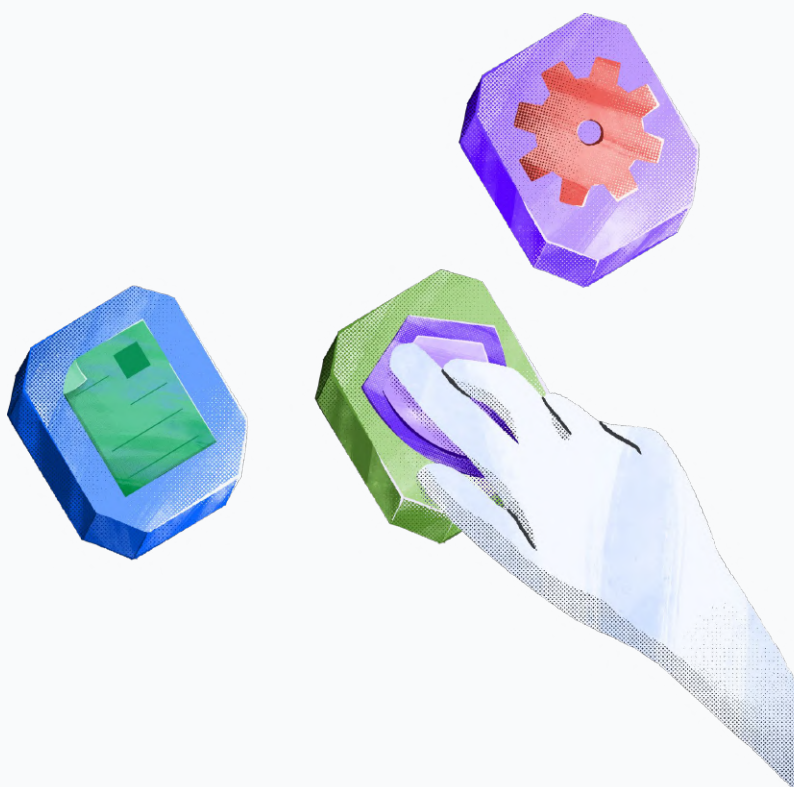
Overcoming budget challenges



Administering your benefits



Communicating your benefits



In this section, we'll discuss some of these challenges in detail, and explain how you can overcome them.

## Choosing the right benefits

Your global benefits should be equitable — but that doesn't mean you should aim for a one-size-fits-all approach. What may seem like a good choice in one country may not have the same impact or relevance for your employees in another, and the quality of coverage may also vary.

In addition, some benefits may be impossible to access in some countries — or may simply not be needed.

This is why you should aim to identify and offer benefits that are **tailored to the specific needs of your team members in each country**. Work closely with local experts to ascertain what will be useful, what is expected, and what is mandatory. Remote [can help you choose](#) competitive, attractive benefits packages for each country.

Instead of creating superficial equality, it's much more valuable to have your total rewards numbers match across countries. It's also advisable to augment things when needed, rather than trying to create a group policy that will only be available to certain people.

## Tailoring benefits to local and industry norms

As mentioned, your employees' needs and expectations can vary significantly from country to country. This is why you need to leverage local insights and tailor your offerings accordingly. For example:



Health insurance is very important to (and, in some cases, mandatory for) US-based workers, but less so to European and South American employees where universal healthcare systems are in place. In Australia, it is only considered a “perk”



Childcare and meal vouchers may not be on the radar of your US or European employees — but they are expected as an absolute minimum in Brazil.

Remote's local benefits experts [can help you hand-pick](#) a competitive, relevant benefits package for your team members in different locations.

Your benefits should also be tailored to your industry and the type of employee you're hiring. This ensures you're creating benefits packages that are competitive for the country, industry, and demographic of your workforce.

## Navigating local regulations

As well as cultural norms and expectations, you also need to meet the legal requirements in each of your employees' countries. This in itself can prove challenging.

In the US, for example, there is no federally mandated PTO minimum. But in Germany, most employees are legally entitled to at least 20 days of PTO. If you were planning to offer 15 paid vacation days as a benefit, this might be attractive to your US-based team members — but it would be illegal in Germany.

We'll discuss compliance in more detail later in this guide.

## Finding the right providers

If you're about to start hiring in a new country or region (or if you just want to level up your existing partners as you scale), you should look for benefits providers that are experienced and flexible. As a starting point, you should:



Consult with key internal stakeholders, including your HR, compensation, and finance teams



Consult with your local networks (if applicable)



Get advice from your existing partners



Compare a variety of providers. Note that you don't need to default to bigger vendors, especially if they are not familiar with your industry.



Consider appointing an internal hire to take ownership, manage due diligence, and invest your benefits budget wisely.

Alternatively, you can save yourself the time and trouble, and work with a global benefits provider like Remote. Through [our EOR service](#), we enable you to offer tailored, highly-competitive benefits in every country we operate in, all of which can be managed through one centralized platform.

To learn more about the benefits we offer in each country (and each US state), check out our [Country Explorer](#) and [US State Explorer](#) tools.

## Overcoming budget challenges

Sometimes, the cost of offering competitive benefits in a certain region may simply be too high for your current budget.

**Therefore, before you start seeking out candidates in new markets, you need to identify the most strategic and cost-effective regions for expansion.**

This can depend on your broader goals and your financial situation. Do you want to hire everywhere, independent of employee location, or have central hubs in certain parts of the world? If you're a large, established company, region-agnostic hiring can be a major advantage.

Conversely, if you're a smaller business, you may want to focus on particular regions where hiring is less expensive, rather than more expensive labor markets like the US, Canada, Australia, Hong Kong, and Singapore. When you have a larger concentration of employees in one country, you can offer your people better benefits at lower rates, which will reduce your overall costs as you scale.

## Administering your benefits globally

The more countries you expand into, the more difficult it becomes to manage the administrative burden. Your team needs to understand how to administer your benefits globally, work with multiple local brokers, and understand the complexities of ever-changing local laws. In addition, some benefits may be considered a Benefit in Kind in some countries, but not others.

This is why it's highly advisable to work with an established EOR like Remote, which handles all of this for you. We have local, on-the-ground experts in all the countries we operate in, ensuring that not only are your offerings fully compliant, but that they are competitive, relevant, and cost-effective too. This allows you to focus on hiring the right people and growing your business.

To learn more about how we can manage your global benefits, [speak to one of our benefits experts today](#).

## Communicating the value of your benefits

It's important to communicate your benefits to potential hires, but you want to make sure your internal team members are advocates too — especially your executives. You need your senior leadership personnel to fully understand the value of benefits, and how they help attract and retain the workforce you need. Otherwise, a lack of united focus can quickly derail your hiring plans.

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Make a clear, single source of documentation that's available to everyone in the organization. Explain how your benefits work, what to use, and where to get help, and establish a strong feedback loop to ensure everyone is aware of your plans. Add this document to your onboarding process to guarantee that every new hire is aware of it.

**BARBARA MATTHEWS**  
Chief People Officer at Remote



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# How to ensure your benefits are compliant

Your global benefits should be equitable — but that doesn't mean you should aim for a one-size-fits-all approach. What may seem like a good choice in one country may not have the same impact or relevance for your employees in another, and the quality of coverage may also vary.

## Risks of noncompliance

Even well-intentioned companies can easily run afoul of regulators without the right expertise and support, with consequences including:



"Minor" fines (of anywhere between three and six figures)



Major fines (reaching into seven figures plus for serious offenses)



Restrictions on running certain operations in the associated country



Losing tax-advantaged status on certain projects

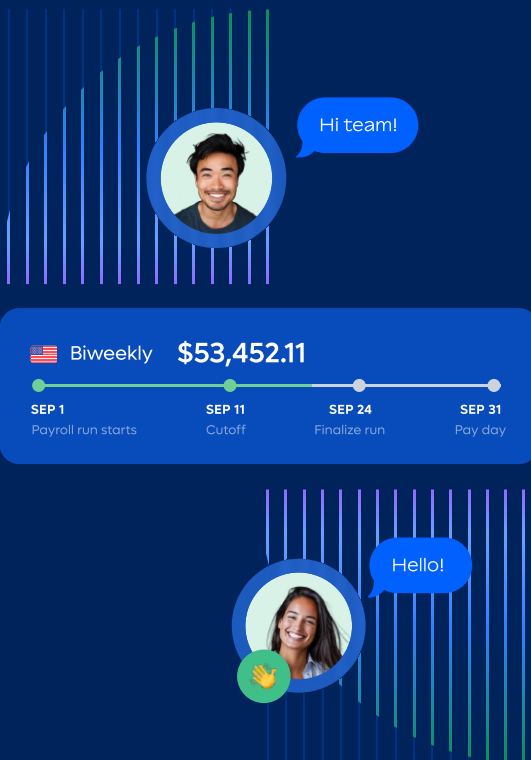


Significant reputational damage

This can restrict your ability to recruit quality candidates moving forward. If you can no longer operate a retirement plan in a specific country, for instance, this makes you less competitive.

Laws often change, too, making it even more tricky to stay compliant.

Ultimately, the only way to guarantee compliance is either to work with local third-party partners in every country you hire in — or work with one proven global benefits provider, like Remote. With benefits experts in all the regions we operate in, we ensure that you're fully compliant with all local regulations, even when they change.



## Remote keeps you compliant. Everywhere.

Our global HR platform is purpose-built to manage compliance at every stage of the employment process.

Set up a call

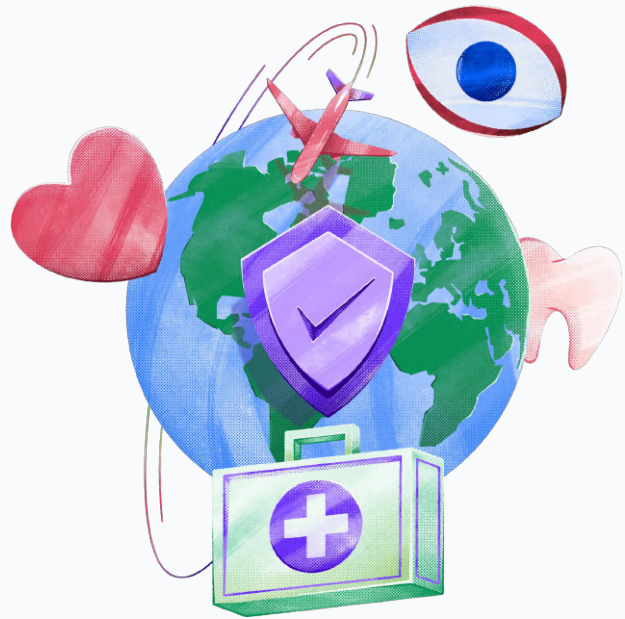




# What type of benefits should you offer?

As mentioned, there are two different types of benefits: statutory benefits (which are required by law) and supplemental benefits (which are extras or perks that you can offer your team).

Statutory benefits vary by country. For example, a minimum amount of paid time off is required by law in most European countries, but there is no legal mandate to provide paid time off in the US.



Here are some of the most popular benefits you may want to provide. Note that, in some countries, these may be legally required, but not in others.

## Health insurance

One of the most important things in a global benefits plan is medical insurance. Even in countries with universal healthcare policies, it can be helpful to offer secondary insurance to enable access to private specialists or shorter waiting times.

However, in some countries, offering secondary health insurance is redundant — and can even have adverse tax ramifications for your employees.

“At face value, it might seem great to offer private health insurance to, say, your Australian employees,” says Cardi. “But in Australia, working with international policy providers instead of local ones prohibits you from circumventing the country’s medicare surcharge levy. Once you realize this, you may have to remove your health insurance offering because of the tax burden on your employees — who aren’t necessarily seeing much value in the plan to begin with.”

This demonstrates why it’s essential to understand what employees need and want in their own country. Otherwise, you may end up offering a benefit that is actually a net negative to the individual.

## Dental and vision insurance

Dental and vision insurance should also be considered part of the standard medical coverage your teams can access. These are important areas, because even universal healthcare systems in some countries do not cover them, and this type of insurance encourages preventative care.

## Life insurance

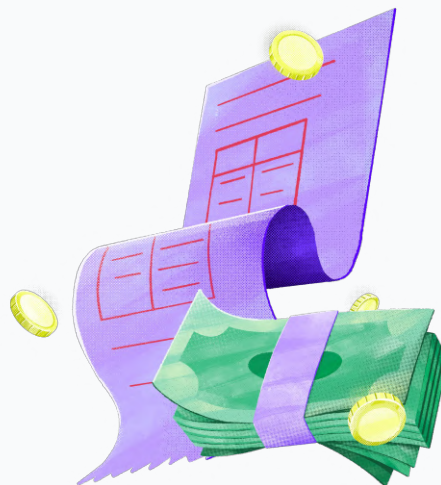
Life insurance helps provide security and peace of mind and gives a foundation of financial security. This provision can be highly valued and explicitly sought after in some cultures where familial care requirements are significant.

## Disability insurance

Without insurance, most people simply can’t afford the cost of a permanent or temporary disability — which can become a significant source of stress for non-insured individuals. Disability insurance ensures that your employees have a financial safety net in the event that a serious accident or illness occurs.

## Pensions / retirement funds

A pension or retirement plan sets aside money for your employees to access in their retirement. This is an important benefit for employees because many tax-funded social programs will only pay out a portion of what is needed to survive once they leave the workforce. Employees today are well aware of the costs of retirement in addition to the average life expectancy increasing alongside advances in modern medicine.



Most people are not planning to work into old age, so retirement funds become crucial. Many pension plans require workers to hit certain eligibility criteria — such as being employed by the company for a certain number of years. This incentivizes loyalty and leads to increases in retention rates.

## Flexible working hours



77% of workers in the US, UK, and Europe say that flexible work hours is one of their most desired benefits when deciding to move to a new company.

REMOTE CUSTOMER SURVEY

However, it goes beyond simply allowing people to work from home. When offering flexible work hours as a benefit, it means that employees can work at times that suit their productivity, their personal needs, and their lifestyles. It's particularly valuable for working parents in the workforce, who are often juggling many different responsibilities outside of work.



For this to be effective, you need to implement an [asynchronous approach](#), which might create some growing pains. But if you get it right, it provides flexibility, increases employee happiness, and removes barriers to productivity, while leading to better resource management and more transparent communication across your organization.

## Unlimited PTO

In some locations, PTO is a mandatory requirement. In areas where it's not, you might consider it a must-have benefit, as PTO allows people to maintain a better work-life balance and avoid burnout.

Managing PTO fairly across multiple locations can be a challenge, though, as you don't want some people to have more time off than others just because they live in a different country. This is why unlimited PTO is a robust supplemental solution.

"At Remote, we offer unlimited PTO — which was essentially unheard of until recently," says Cardi. "But ask yourself how you view your employees. Do you believe they will work hard and do what needs to be done? Or do you believe that they will abuse it, and your business will suffer? I think the second viewpoint is archaic and not reflective of today's environment."

“	Companies providing unlimited PTO have found that it leads to happier employees who work harder and that their business prospers	
	FRANCESCO CARDI VP Benefits at Remote	

Structure your policy in such a way that actively encourages people to take time off — especially if there is a minimum PTO mandate in their country. This means moving away from traditional practices, such as buying or selling leave. **At Remote, we mandate a minimum of 20 days off per year so that employees understand we are serious about wanting them to rest and recharge.**

## Parental leave

Parental leave is not always mandated, but it's important to include a benefit for working parents. Parental leave allows parents to bond with their children and it helps ensure they come back to their job rather than leaving the workforce completely. To build a global workforce where employees are on equal footing, parental leave policies should be the same across all countries where you hire.

**It's important to note that parental leave is known as an equalizer for women in the workforce.** A recent study by the Institute for Women's Policy Research found that nearly 30% of women who do not have access to paid leave drop out of the workforce within a year of having a child.

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Providing equal opportunity for time off to welcome a new family member is crucial for an employee to bring their best self to work. As an employer or people leader, it's your job to encourage your employees to take care of their families first

**BARBARA MATTHEWS**  
Chief People Officer at Remote



**R remote**

Your parental leave policy should also include LGBT+ couples, adoptive parents, and primary caregivers who do not give birth. In addition, you might consider adding miscarriage leave policies and policies for stillbirth, premature birth, or infant death.

## Mental health care

Mental healthcare is an important but often ignored aspect of healthcare.

It's also especially important to consider for remote employees, due to the unique stresses and potential loneliness that can come with this type of work. As an example, Remote offers quarterly self-care days (in addition to unlimited PTO) so that employees can recharge, and offer our employees access to therapy, coaching, and guided meditations.

## Learning and development

Learning and development benefits empower both you and your employees by increasing their domain expertise.

Stipends for resources such as conferences, books, and courses will help your people stay current on industry trends, and allow them to sharpen their knowledge. Learning and development programs also help boost employee morale and satisfaction, which improves both productivity and retention rates.

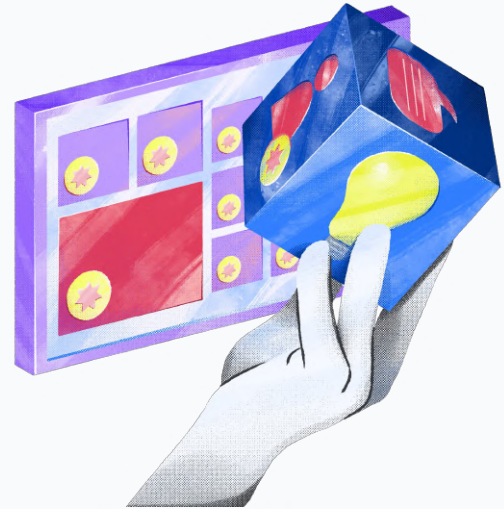




## Remote-specific benefits








If your team members are working from home, consider that their expenses — for electricity, WiFi, furniture, food, and other things — are going to increase.

In in-office locations, many of these costs are covered by the employer. Therefore, you might want to consider how you can better equip your workforce for both comfort and productivity.



Here are some of the specific benefits you can offer for remote workers:

### Home office stipends

	A desk		Lighting
	An ergonomic chair		Physical storage solutions
	A microphone		Additional monitors
	Headphones		

Note that key equipment like laptops, keyboards, and mice are a requisite for your workforce to do their jobs. They should not be considered a benefit.

## Internet and phone

In all likelihood, your remote team is using their personal internet to perform their job duties, and they're using their phone to access work-related email, texts, and Slack. [Contributing to your employees' internet and phone usage](#) helps acknowledge their contribution and eases the cost burden of being a remote employee.

The easiest way to accomplish this is typically by offering a stipend to cover a percentage or all of the cost. You can also have employees [submit receipts for reimbursement](#).

## Coworking allowance

Many remote workers — especially those based in larger cities — feel more productive working from a coworking space. To help facilitate this, you can provide a weekly, monthly, or yearly stipend to cover the cost.

Encouraging your remote team members to work from a coworking space can have multiple benefits, too. It:



Helps your employees find a like-minded community and even potentially network



Allows employees to choose the environment they're most productive in



Addresses the feelings of isolation that can come with remote work

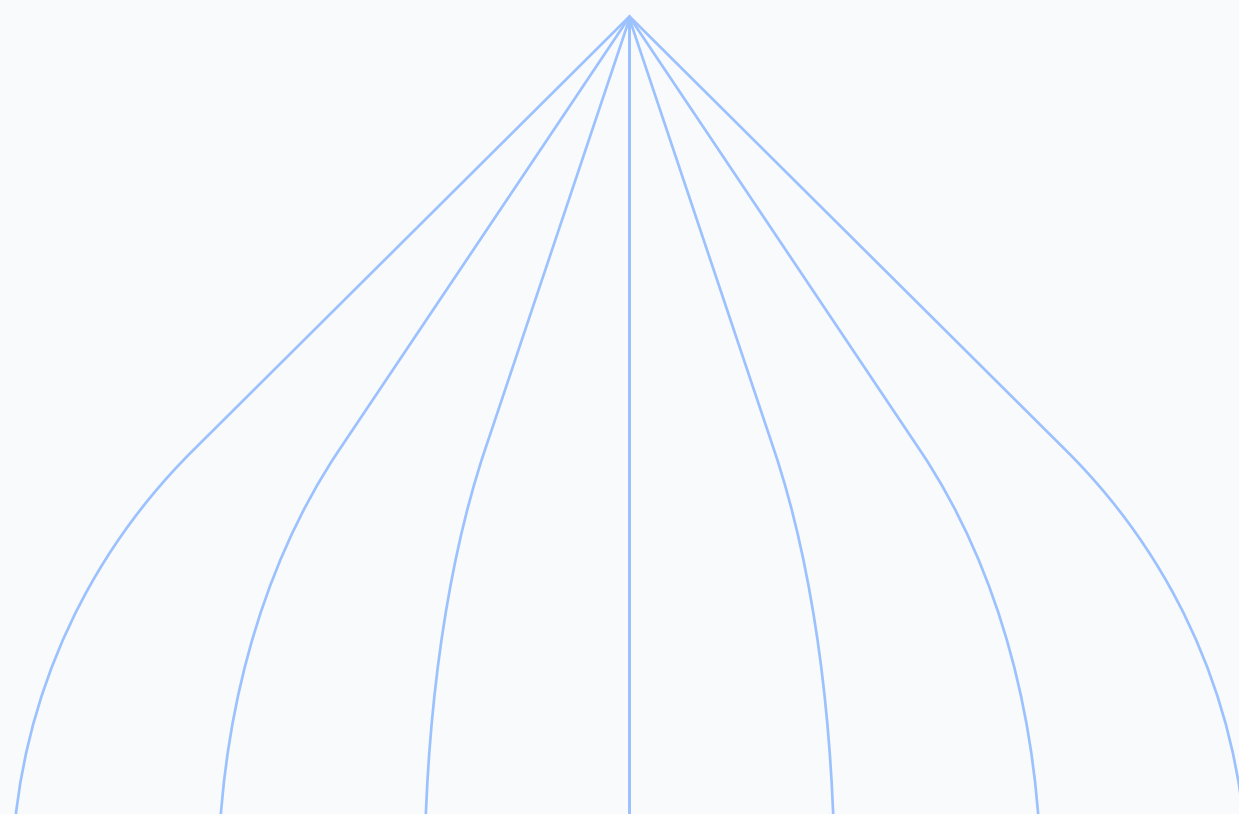
## Relocation assistance

One of the greatest advantages of remote work is the freedom it gives people to work from anywhere in the world. This is a key incentive for many workers; in a recent Remote survey, 45% stated they would stay at their company for between one and 10 years longer if they could work anywhere without their salary and benefits being affected.



When you hire through Remote's EOR service, what is for many people a dream can become a simple reality. Our [Remote Relocation](#) program provides end-to-end support to help your employees obtain working visas in many countries, and ensure the HR and employee management experience remains seamless for you.

Want more benefits ideas? Check out our full list





## Offering benefits to contractors

If your business works with independent contractors, you may be wondering if it's possible to offer benefits to them as well. The short answer is: yes — with caveats.

Offering benefits to your contractors is a great way to attract the best talent, and secure a fruitful working relationship. However, there are several important things to consider.

“Providing benefits to contractors is challenging, because contractors require individual plans,” says Pedro Barros, Remote’s GM of Contractor Management. “That said, providing access to benefits is very important for many companies. It should be a consideration for anyone planning on building a global workforce with contractors.”

The biggest issue, though, is undoubtedly misclassification risk. This occurs when the nature of the working relationship with your contractor is more akin to an employer/employee relationship. Different countries have different definitions of what exactly constitutes an employment relationship, so you need to be fully clear on the boundaries. You can learn more about misclassification in [our in-depth guide](#).

If you cannot offer certain benefits to your contractors without blurring the line, you can instead choose to build part of the cost of the benefits into your contractors’ compensation. Remote can [help advise you](#) on the legalities of offering benefits in different countries and, if necessary, assist you in [converting a contractor into an employee](#).

## Which benefits can you offer contractors?

Some potential benefits you may be able to offer your contractors could include:



### Continued learning budget

When you invest in your contractors to help them learn new skills, they bring that new knowledge to their work and enrich your organization. These benefits will build greater trust and loyalty with the long-term contractors on your team.

This benefit can be especially helpful if you work in a niche or complex field that requires specialist training to understand.



### Equity incentives

It is possible to [offer equity incentives to your contractors](#) in some instances, although this will likely need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. In such instances, it's best to consult with a global equity incentive specialist, [like Remote](#).



### Health insurance

It is, in some cases, possible to offer health insurance options to contractors. Again, this will likely need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.



# Benefits made simple with Remote

Benefits are essential for a thriving global workforce, and are a driving force behind successful recruitment and retention. But implementing a global benefits program comes with sizable challenges and compliance risks. That's why it's highly advisable to work with an experienced, scalable global benefits partner, such as Remote.

We take on all the heavy lifting, with no costs passed on to you — and we never charge any additional fees for specific benefits.

## Which benefits can you offer contractors?

Through our EOR solution, your global team members are employed by our fully-owned local legal entities in their respective countries. We ensure everything is compliant and handle the entire HR process, including payroll, benefits, and day-to-day HR management, allowing you to simply focus on growing your business.

Remember, setting up your own entity, bank accounts, and registrations, and building out your benefits and HR in a new country involves a lot of resources, time, and expertise. In some instances, it could be a year before you can even do business. With Remote, you can save significant amounts of money — and you can begin onboarding new hires in days.

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If we had to coordinate everything in-house, I'd need to hire four extra people to manage the entities, the local solicitors, tax firms, accountants, payroll, and translation services. It would cost upwards of \$500,000 extra per year. Remote takes that burden off of our plate.

LUKE MCKINLAY  
VP of Finance at Fountain



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“This is difficult, complex work,” explains Cardi. “But our job at Remote is to make the complex very simple. Our EOR service guides you as you navigate what it means to employ people in a new country. With Remote, in particular, customers often find that we can create an excellent experience for their people that they would find difficult to do on their own.”









## See Remote Payroll in action

To start building your own competitive benefits package — tailored to individual countries around the globe — [speak with one of our friendly benefits experts now.](#)

Alternatively, [sign up today](#) — and start transforming how you recruit and retain the world’s top talent

Get started



EMPLOYEE	COUNTRY
 Ann Henry	 Argentina
 John Wilson	 Belgium
 Jacob Jones	 Portugal
 Esther Howard	 United States



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