MFN Mobility Finance Network

How to Predict Unit Costs of Migration

June 24, 2026

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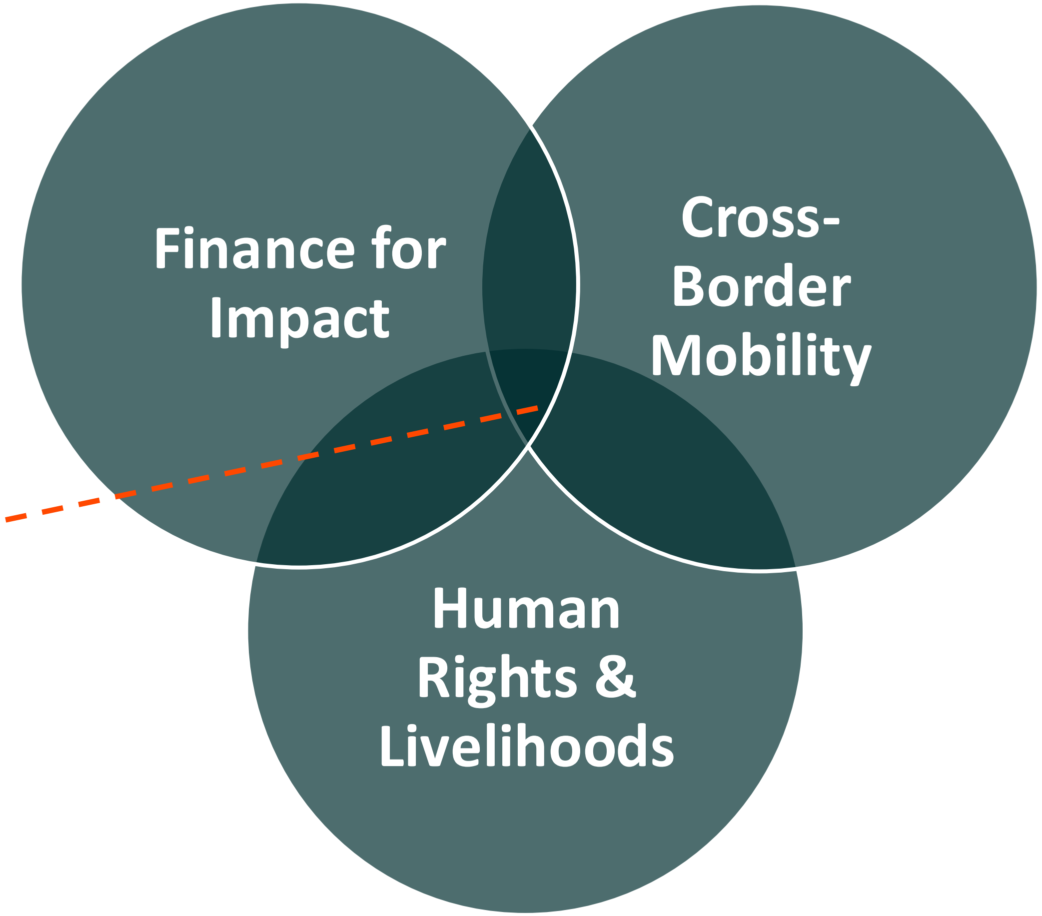
Mobility Finance Network

We connect people, ideas, and resources at the intersection of finance for impact, cross-border mobility, and human rights & livelihoods.

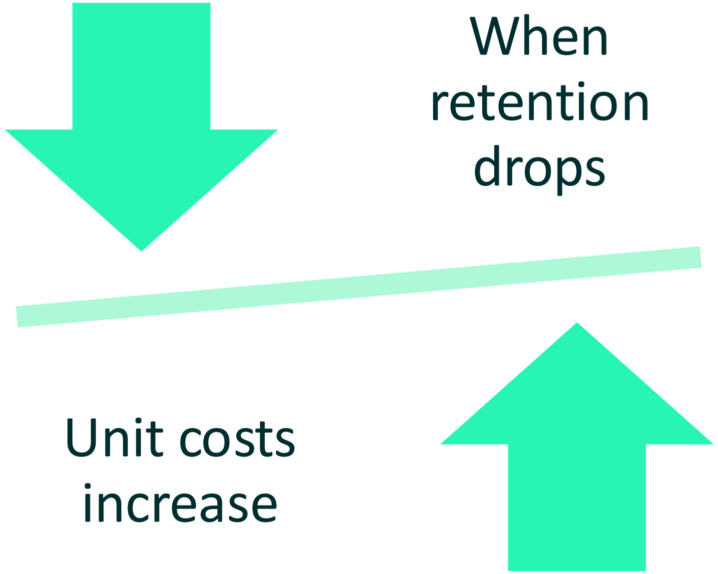


This webinar is for anyone who wants to:

1. Understand how attrition affects per-unit cost calculations,
2. Apply a structured framework for capturing overhead in migration pricing, and
3. Build sharper, more defensible cost models for your programs.

Candidate attrition is a major cost driver in mobility programs.

In employer-paid models, each dropout in the preparation process represents expenses that cannot be directly charged to employers.



In a profitable system, all expenses related to dropouts must be absorbed into fees for the cohort of successful placements.

Systems with no attrition hold their value

Sample Corridor:

In a system with 100% retention, the cost per successfully placed candidate is:
8.3K EUR

(830K per 100 placed workers = 8.3K EUR)

	Per Person Cost	# People Retained	Cohort Cost
Overhead / Registration	1800	100	180K
Language Learning (across 3 levels	2000	100	200K
Matching	2000	100	200K
Admin, Visa, Travel	2500	100	250K
	PLACEMENT	100	
		TOTAL	EUR 830K

Systems with attrition are “leaky” and expensive

In leaky systems, costs are incurred for each participant by phase, but only a subset are ultimately placed.

With an identical cost structure and **retention rates of 90% at each stage in the process,** the cost per successful candidate is: **11.7K EUR**

(1.17M/100 retained workers = 11.7K EUR)

Placing 100 workers requires 188 recruits

	Per Person Cost	# People Retained	Cohort Cost
Overhead / Registration	1800	188	338K
Language Learning (across 3 levels)	2000	137	310K
Matching	2000	123	246K
Admin, Visa, Travel	2500	111	278K
	PLACEMENT	100	
		TOTAL	EUR 1.17M

Improving these dynamics requires an understanding of costs and human factors.

Levers we can address include:

- Reducing overhead requirements at earlier stages (e.g. using automation)
- Pushing expensive investments towards end of process

	Per Person Cost	100% Retention	90% Retention by Stage
Registration / Overhead	1800	100	188
Language Learning (across 3 levels)	2000	100	137
Matching	2000	100	123
Admin, Visa, Travel	2500	100	111
	PLACEMENT	100	100
	TOTAL COST	EUR 830K	EUR 1,17M
		8.3K EUR Per Success ✓	**11.7K EUR Per Success** 🛇

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Testing attrition probabilities in a financial model can inform process design

MFN Mobility Finance Network — Expense modeling tool for mobility pipelines

POWERED BY: LaMP

Step 1. Annual Overhead Costs

Organizational Overhead	
Cost of operations for all related activities	$25,000
Cohort overhead	
Overhead costs per cohort	$10,000
Number of workers placed per cohort (est.)	25
Stage when cohort expenses are incurred	Stage 2 *Dropdown*
Number of cohorts deployed by year	4

Step 2. Variable Pipeline Costs per Candidate

	Stage Names	Per Person Cost at Step	
Stage 1	[Insert Stage name here]	$ 600	
Stage 2	[Insert Stage name here]	$ 800	
Stage 3	[Insert Stage name here]	$ 400	
Stage 4	[Insert Stage name here]	$ 300	
Stage 5	[Insert Stage name here]	$ 250	
Stage 6	[Insert Stage name here]	$ 1,000	
Stage 7	Participant starts working	$ 250	
	Direct Program Costs Per Placed Participant	$ 3,600	Assumes No Attrition

Expense Calculator

	Variable Costs	With Attrition	No Attrition (Theoretical)
Stage 1	[Insert Stage name here]	$ 128,244	$ 60,000.00
Stage 2	[Insert Stage name here]	$ 136,792	$ 80,000.00
Stage 3	[Insert Stage name here]	$ 54,716	$ 40,000.00
Stage 4	[Insert Stage name here]	$ 36,933	$ 30,000.00
Stage 5	[Insert Stage name here]	$ 27,700	$ 25,000.00
Stage 6	[Insert Stage name here]	$ 105,260	$ 100,000.00
Stage 7	Participant starts working	$ 25,000	$ 25,000.00
	Sub Total	$ 514,645	$ 360,000
	Overhead at Org Level	$25,000	$25,000
	Overhead Across Cohorts	$68,396	$40,000
	Total Cost to Organization	$ 608,041	$ 425,000
	Expense per Placed Participant	$ 6,080	$ 4,250
		(minimum breakeven number to charge employers)	
	Difference per Candidate	$ 1,830	*Difference in per-placement minimum charge to employer between zero and modeled attrition scenarios*

Step 3. Candidate Retention Funnel

Final Placements Desired at Year End: 100 — *Rounding*: 2

		Retention rates (Enter 0-100% per stage)	Number Workers	
Stage 1	[Insert Stage name here]		213.74	Program participants who start
Stage 2	[Insert Stage name here]	80%	170.99	
Stage 3	[Insert Stage name here]	80%	136.79	
Stage 4	[Insert Stage name here]	90%	123.11	
Stage 5	[Insert Stage name here]	90%	110.80	
Stage 6	[Insert Stage name here]	95%	105.26	
Stage 7	Participant starts working	95%	100.00	Baseline for final placements (goal)
	Participant retained - 6 months	100%	100.00	
	Participant retained - 1 year	90%	90.00	

Calculated Overall Mobility Rate	47%	(From registered participants to placed workers)
Calculated Overall Retention Rate	47%	(From registered participants to retained workers)

Step A: Categorize Your Expenses

Look at all annual* program-related expenses and consider whether they are incurred at the:

1. Organizational level (organizational overhead)
2. Cohort level (cohort overhead)
3. Participant level (variable)

**For simplicity, we will consider the annual portion of a multi-year expense under organizational overhead.*

Step B: Map the Pipeline Chronology

1

STAGE ONE

Registration

Per Participant Cost: $X

Components per candidate: (examples)

- Online registration
- Earnest deposit
- Pledge of intent / disclosures

2

STAGE TWO

Skilling

Per Participant Cost: $X

Components per candidate:

3

STAGE THREE

Job Matching

Per Participant Cost: $X

Components per candidate:

4

STAGE FOUR

Admin/Visa/Travel

Per Participant Cost: $X

Components per candidate:

5

STAGE FIVE

Other…

Per Participant Cost: $X

Components per candidate:

Each component:

1) **Creates a barrier to continue for probable dropouts**
2) **Puts lower-cost services first, to the extent possible**

Step C: Use a Financial Model to Predict Expenses

Fill in only cells with blue text, including:

- Organizational overhead
- Cost per cohort, size of a cohort, and stage at which cohort costs are incurred

Step 1. Annual Overhead Costs

Organizational Overhead		
Cost of operations for all related activities	$25,000	
Cohort overhead		
Overhead costs per cohort	$10,000	
Number of workers placed per cohort (est.)	25	
Stage when cohort expenses are incurred	**Stage 2**	*Dropdown*
Number of cohorts deployed by year	4	

Step C: Use a Financial Model to Predict Expenses

Fill in only cells with blue text, including:

- Names/Descriptions per stage in the candidate pipeline
- Costs at each stage, per candidate

Step 2. Variable Pipeline Costs per Candidate

	Stage Names	Per Person Cost at Step	
Stage 1	[Insert Stage name here]	$ 600	
Stage 2	[Insert Stage name here]	$ 800	
Stage 3	[Insert Stage name here]	$ 400	
Stage 4	[Insert Stage name here]	$ 300	
Stage 5	[Insert Stage name here]	$ 250	
Stage 6	[Insert Stage name here]	$ 1,000	
Stage 7	Participant starts working	$ 250	
	Direct Program Costs Per Placed Participant	**$ 3,600.00**	Assumes No Attrition

Step C: Use a Financial Model to Predict Expenses

Fill in only cells with blue text, including:

- Final placement goal for year end
- Retention rate at each stage in the process

Step 3. Candidate Retention Funnel

Final Placements Desired at Year End		100	*Rounding* 2	
		Retention rates (Enter 0-100% per stage)	**Number Workers**	
Stage 1	[Insert Stage name here]		213.74	**Program participants who start**
Stage 2	[Insert Stage name here]	80%	170.99	
Stage 3	[Insert Stage name here]	80%	136.79	
Stage 4	[Insert Stage name here]	90%	123.11	
Stage 5	[Insert Stage name here]	90%	110.80	
Stage 6	[Insert Stage name here]	95%	105.26	
Stage 7	Participant starts working	95%	100.00	**Baseline for final placements (goal)**
	Participant retained - 6 months	100%	100.00	
	Participant retained - 1 year	90%	90.00	
Calculated Overall Mobility Rate		47%	(From registered participants to placed workers)	
Calculated Overall Retention Rate		47%	(From registered participants to retained workers)	

Step C: Analyze results and test different scenarios

Consider major expense drivers. Experiment with variables like:

- **Order of stages in process** (can attrition be forced earlier into less expensive phases?)
- **When cohort-level costs occur** (delay cohort-level investment as long as possible)
- **Whether overhead can be converted to cohort-level expense** (through staffing structures, etc.)
- **Whether a % dropout buffer** should be included to ensure charges to employers will cover unexpected attrition

Expense Calculator

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		(minimum breakeven number to charge employers)	
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Thank you!

Reach out at mfn@lampforum.org

Step 4. Consider Cash Flow Implications of your Model

The timing of revenue versus expenses is a barrier to scale

Because employers will not typically pay all worker placement fees in advance, many mobility programs will run at a deficit until full fees are secured. This requires working capital solutions or solutions like subscription models.

TIME →

Skilling Program (Language +)	Preparation + Matching	Visa, Recognition, Travel	Cohort arrives in Host Country	Retention at 3 Months

Step 4. Consider Cash Flow Implications of your Model

The timing of revenue versus expenses is a barrier to scale

Because employers will not typically pay all worker placement fees in advance, many mobility programs will run at a deficit until full fees are secured. This requires working capital solutions or adjustment to payment models.

TIME →

	Skilling Program (Language +)	Preparation + Matching	Visa, Recognition, Travel	Cohort arrives in Host Country	Retention at 3 Months
Total Employer Payments for 100 workers: $1,500,000 ($15,000 per worker)					
Payments by Phase	**10%**	**20%**		**40%**	**30%**
	$ 150,000	$ 300,000	$ -	$ 600,000	$ 450,000

Step 4. Consider Cash Flow Implications of your Model

The timing of revenue versus expenses is a barrier to scale

Because employers will not typically pay all worker placement fees in advance, many mobility programs will run at a deficit until full fees are secured. This requires working capital products tailored to their needs.

TIME →

	Skilling Program (Language +)	Preparation + Matching	Visa, Recognition, Travel	Cohort arrives in Host Country	Retention at 3 Months
Total Employer Payments for 100 workers: $1,500,000 ($15,000 per worker)					
Payments by Phase	**10%**	**20%**		**40%**	**30%**
	$ 150,000	$ 300,000	$ -	$ 600,000	$ 450,000
Total Expense for 100 Workers: $1,200,000 ($12,000 per worker)					
Expenses by Phase	**50%**	**30%**	**10%**	**10%**	**0%**
	$ 600,000	$ 360,000	$ 120,000	$ 120,000	$ -

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	$ 150,000	$ 300,000	$ -	$ 600,000	$ 450,000
Total Expense for 100 Workers: $1,200,000 ($12,000 per worker)					
Expenses by Phase	**50%**	**30%**	**10%**	**10%**	**0%**
	$ 600,000	$ 360,000	$ 120,000	$ 120,000	$ -
Balance	**$ (450,000)**	**$ (510,000)**	**$ (630,000)**	**$ (150,000)**	**$ 300,000**

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Step 4. Consider Cash Flow Implications of your Model

The timing of revenue versus expenses is a barrier to scale

Because employers will not typically pay all worker placement fees in advance, many mobility programs will run at a deficit until full fees are secured. This requires financial instruments to overcome the gap.

TIME →

	Skilling Program (Language +)	Preparation + Matching	Visa, Recognition, Travel	Cohort arrives in Host Country	Retention at 3 Months
Total Employer Payments for 100 workers: $1,500,000 ($15,000 per worker)					
Payments by Phase	**10%**	**20%**		**40%**	**30%**
	$ 150,000	$ 300,000	$ -	$ 600,000	$ 450,000
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	$ 600,000	$ 360,000	$ 120,000	$ 120,000	$ -
Balance	**$ (450,000)**	**$ (510,000)**	**$ (630,000)**	**$ (150,000)**	**$ 300,000**

A working capital solution is required over 6-18 months to perform training and placement tasks