

To: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE		Subject: Review of the Training Assistance Grant (T.A.G.) Programme. Report from Joint Local Authority Working Group
From: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT		
Date: 8 June 2000	Ref: REP656/SF/DN	

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the findings of the joint North Lanarkshire Council and South Lanarkshire Council officer Working Group convened to review the operation of the Training Assistance Grant (T.A.G.).

2 Sustainability

- 2.1 This programme meets the sustainable development policy adopted by the Council through local Agenda 21 by addressing elements of Section 3 "Economy and Work" and Section 8 "Social Needs", in particular the scheme addresses the following areas:
- reducing poverty and low pay
 - increasing employment opportunities for local people
 - helping local and community based business to set up and grow.

3 Background Information

- 3.1 Members will recall from a previous report dated 25 November 1999 which was submitted to the Committee on 25 November 1999 that the T.A.G. Programme has been funded solely by North Lanarkshire Council during the 1999 – 2000 financial year.
- 3.2 Members will also recall from a previous report dated 21 January 1999 which was submitted to the Committee on 21 January 1999 that a review of services within the Economic Development Unit was undertaken.
- 3.3 This general review of services, allied to the unsuccessful attempt to gain funding for T.A.G. from the European Social Fund (ESF) for 1999 prompted the decision to conduct a thorough review of the T.A.G. programme.
- 3.4 As South Lanarkshire Council participates as a partner in the T.A.G. programme it was decided to undertake a joint review of the programme's operation.
- 3.5 Officers from each Local Authority Economic Development Unit undertook the review and worked to a wide remit. (See the Executive Summary for details).

4 Review Conclusions

- 4.1 Members will find attached an Executive Summary of the Working Group findings.
- 4.2 This summary contains the main conclusions arrived at and a recommended course of action.
- 4.3 The main report can be made available for members of the Committee on request.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
 - (i) Notes the contents of this report
 - (ii) Agrees with the conclusions reached by the Working Group in their report.
 - (iii) Approve the recommendations contained in the report and instruct the Director of Planning and Environment to take the appropriate action in relation to implementing the report recommendations.



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Director of Planning and Environment

Date of Report: 12 May 2000

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TRAINING ASSISTANCE GRANT (T.A.G.)

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL/SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

JOINT WORKING GROUP – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – FEBRUARY 2000

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Training Assistance Grant (T.A.G.) is a training programme aimed at individuals who have been unemployed for 3 months or more. Exceptions to this rule are those recently declared redundant or who are under notice of redundancy. North Lanarkshire Council (N.L.C.) and South Lanarkshire Council (S.L.C.) administer T.A.G.
- 1.2 The programme provides training, which is short-term in duration, vocational in nature and which is not normally available within the standard core curriculum of most colleges of further or higher education. The Council staff carries out all administration and any payment is made directly to the training provider.
- 1.3 Currently up to £650 is available for applicants toward the cost of any short term training programme. Applicants are restricted to one application only.
- 1.4 The main criteria governing the award is as follows: -
- Applicants have to be unemployed for 3 months or more except in situations of redundancy when day one of unemployment, or under notice of redundancy, are acceptable.
 - Any training award requires to be linked to a definite job offer.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 This joint authority review was initiated early in 1999 as a direct consequence of the failure to achieve European Social Fund (E.S.F.) funding for 1999 through Objective 2.
- 2.2 The Working Group, comprising of officers who have responsibility for T.A.G. within both local authorities Economic Development Units, conducted the review to a wide remit. This remit covered all operational aspects of the existing programme and suggested areas to be examined which might improve the scheme for any future funding bid.
- 2.3 The review also allowed an opportunity to learn from previous years of programme operation thus enabling this intelligence to be put to use to improve the efficiency of the administrative systems of any new programme.

3. T.A.G. WORKING GROUP REMIT

- 3.1 The Group's remit covered:
 - The range and type of training provided in previous years
 - Whether over-provision existed in any particular training area
 - Whether "demand led" training is the most appropriate mechanism
 - The need for more emphasis to be placed on New Technology-based training
 - Whether we currently make the best use of labour market intelligence sources
 - Whether there is a need for a direct dialogue with employers
 - How T.A.G. can be more effectively linked to other support programmes
 - How training providers are sourced. Where they are based, what monitoring procedures, if any, are in place for them and how these procedures could be improved.
 - How T.A.G. trainees are monitored. Can this be improved? If so, how?

4. MAIN CONCLUSIONS

4.1 **The main conclusions reached in the report are as follows: -**

- **The funding vehicle for the programme must be addressed as a matter of priority.**
- **The programme would benefit from pro-active work to link it more effectively with current support programmes including New Deal and the Lanarkshire Social Inclusion Partnerships and Regeneration areas.**
- **Changes to the eligibility for TAG applications need to be considered.**
- **New technology training for the higher technology industrial sectors should become a priority.**
- **Entering into direct dialogue with employers can be the key to this development.**
- **We need to make more effective use of current labour market intelligence sources.**
- **We need to broaden the training provider base. It is currently too narrow.**
- **Overall monitoring structures have to improve, as must tracking of trainees on completion of their training.**

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The report makes the following recommendations: -

- **• T.A.G. should be maintained as a vital component of the training programmes available within Lanarkshire.**
- **• Both Local Authorities should increase funding for this programme and participate as equal funding partners.**
- **• The Review Group recognises that finding a European Funding source, which will allow the continuation of T.A.G. in its existing format and with its current application criteria intact, will be difficult. We therefore recommend that an early meeting be convened between the officers responsible for T.A.G. and those officers responsible for European matters to discuss the best options available.**
- **• The issues raised in the report concerning the operational changes to T.A.G. need to be adopted and put into practice in any new programme.**
- **• That we embark on a programme designed to increase general awareness of TAG and aimed at forging greater links with other business support and employment agencies. This should include increased links with the various New Deal initiatives in operation and also with the Lanarkshire Social Inclusion Partnerships and Regeneration areas.**
- **• A steering group is formed to implement the recommendations of this report.**