

The National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP)

Purpose of Report

For discussion.

Summary

The purpose of this report is to update the Improvement Programme Board on the National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP), the progress made and how significant savings of £480,000 on 2010/11 costs will be achieved by changes to the marketing and recruitment process (reducing these costs by 39%) and by replacing the University of Warwick development programme with a more practical based alternative.

Recommendation

The Board is asked to note the progress made in developing and delivering this programme.

Action

The Leadership & Localism team will continue to develop and deliver the NGDP in line with progress made, subject to any comments from the Board

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Leadership: Report On The National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP)

Background

1. The NGDP is a two-year graduate management development programme set up to provide local government with a pool of high-calibre managers to provide the future leadership their communities need. It provides graduates committed to public service the training and development opportunities they need to make a positive impact both during the programme and in their later careers.
2. The programme framework is built on a series of placements in key areas within a council and offers a range of experiences and challenges. All of which will provide a broad understanding of different aspects of local government in strategy, front-line service and support. Although employed by a participating authority on a 2-year, fixed-term contract, graduates also benefit from being part of a national programme group, giving them the opportunity to participate in a national induction event, join an established knowledge-sharing network and take part in a series of learning and development components.
3. Since 2002 over 450 graduates have completed the programme and many now hold influential managerial and policy roles. They form a large pool of alumni and a potentially valuable tool in promoting the value of both the NGDP and the LGA more generally. The scheme is currently rated 49 in the Times Top 100 Graduate Recruitment list.
4. Whilst the programme has undoubtedly been successful and highly regarded in many quarters it was also relatively expensive. As a result of the reductions that all parts of the organisation have had to meet, the NGDP was no exception and savings of £480,000 were made in the budget for the NGDP programme for 2011/12. This has meant a rethink about how some aspects of the programme could be delivered in the future. This report sets out the steps taken to reduce the costs of the programme but also to maintain a viable programme and bring about improvements where possible.

An Overview

5. Trainees are recruited in annual cohorts each with a three year life-cycle which divides into two stages:

Item 4

- 5.1 Stage 1: Marketing/Promotion, Recruitment and Selection. (1 Yr: commencing October with appointments May - July). Those shortlisted by the selection process have final interviews with the participating councils;
 - 5.2 Stage 2: Placement and Development (2Yrs: commencing July / October following appointment). Trainees undertake a series of placements and projects within the employing council and participate in a national development programme organised by the LGA.
6. This cycle means that at any particular point the programme team could be working with three cohorts. The current position is:
- Cohort 12 82 trainees appointed Autumn 2010, currently completing their development programme at University of Warwick. Will complete their placements in Autumn 2012.
 - Cohort 13 47 trainees appointed Autumn 2011, currently on placement and will be undertaking a new development programme which starts in April 2012.
 - Cohort 14 Applications will close 16 January 2012, selected trainees will begin their placements and development programme in autumn 2012.
7. The drop in numbers recruited in 2011 was largely due to uncertainties because of the general financial situation. However the number of applications has remained fairly constant, around 2,000 – 2,500 for cohorts 12 and 13.

Changes to Stage 1: Marketing and Selection

8. Significant changes have already been achieved by more focused marketing and by bringing some activities in-house. These include managing the website, the on-line application form and the short listing process. Table 1 below compares the marketing, recruitment and selection costs of Cohort 12 and 14.

Table 1: Comparison of Costs for Stage 1

Activity	Cohort 12 (2010)	Cohort 14 (2012)	% saving
Marketing	£50,000	£45,000	10%
Short listing	£66,000	£12,000	82%
Assessment and Interview	£45,000	£40,000	11%
Total	£161,000	£97,000	39%

Changes to Stage 2: Placement and Development

9. To date there have been three elements to the development programme itself. Previous cohorts, including Cohort 12, have undertaken a six module post-graduate diploma course provided by the University of Warwick. There has also been an Induction module at the start of their placements and a series of Skills modules aimed at developing their personal and practical skills sets.
10. With the reductions in the overall budget it was clearly impossible to continue to provide free of charge for graduates the Diploma. Questions had also been raised about the “academic” content of the Diploma compared to the practical development they need.
11. The development programme is being restructured into a four module programme which will focus much more on the practical skills and understanding they will need to contribute effectively during their placements and in their local government careers. It will also include action learning sets to support the application of their learning to the work environment. The contracts for delivery are currently out to tender, the aim is to provide a balance of practical application and intellectual challenge. The programme will be accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) as a Level 7 Certificate in Strategic Leadership. The accreditation will be delivered through SOLACE Enterprises. A further key change is to ensure that the graduates get a wider experience of dealing with politicians by making use of our member peers on some of the modules.
12. It is anticipated that these changes will again give significant savings as can be seen by comparing the costs of Cohort 12, the last cohort to go through the Warwick Diploma programme, and the projected costs of Cohort 13 which will commence the new programme in April 2012 (see table 2 below). Given the variation in the number of trainees placed the total cost per trainee is also shown.

Table 2: Comparison of Costs for Stage 2

Activity	Cohort 12	Cohort 13	% saving
Induction	£45,000	£20,000	55%
Development Programme	£522,700	£150,000	72%
Skills Modules	£18,000		
Total	£585,700	£170,000	71%
Total per trainee	£7,142	£3,617	49%

Other Changes and Developments

13. More emphasis will be placed this year in promoting the value of the NGDP to councils in order to increase both the number and spread of trainee placements. For historical reasons and because of the concentration of large single-tier councils, there is a disproportionate number of placements in the London region. Nearly half of the 25 councils with Cohort 13 placements are London Boroughs and they account for 27 of the 47 trainees. There is a long-term risk that the NGDP becomes seen as a London-centric offer which would be detrimental to both the scheme and the LGA. For this reason the promotion drive will focus on councils outside London, particularly those that have participated in the past or that have their own internal graduate recruitment schemes.
14. Through focus groups and discussion forums we are seeking to involve other key players in determining the longer-term future and focus of the NGDP. These include SOLACE, iMPOWER and participating local authorities. A key consideration here is to clarify what sort of leaders will be needed for senior management positions in the future if local government as a sector is to meet the changing needs of its communities both in terms of their background and their training and development. We are also involving the LGA Workforce and Communications & Marketing teams in this discussion.
15. As a result of these discussions we are about to publish *A Brighter Future*, a document which will promote the NGDP and explore the options for its future development.

Conclusion and next steps

16. Overall the changes to the NGDP will have made a saving of nearly £480,000 over the 2010/11 costs (over 60%) by the time they are all in place in 2012/13.
17. The development programme to be offered to the trainees in 2012 will be much more focused on the practical skills they need to contribute effectively within their councils.
18. The debate we have started will identify the longer-term need of the sector and enable us to make further changes to the NGDP so that is directed to meeting those needs.
19. The Board is asked to note these developments and the direction being taken.

Financial Implications

20. The implications for the current financial year have already been allowed for in the service planning process. Further changes will be reflected in the 2012/13 service plan as it is developed.