

TEAGASC STAFF BENEFITS, REWARD AND RECOGNITION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Teagasc recognises the contribution of staff to the achievement of business excellence in ways that are consistent with the ethos of the organisation. Meaningful staff reward and recognition is an important enabler for Teagasc to achieve its ambitious goals.

The objective of the Staff Benefits, Reward and Recognition Policy is to ensure that staff and their

managers understand the scope of the Teagasc benefits, reward and recognition programmes and the guiding principles surrounding staff reward and recognition. These guiding principles are aligned to the Teagasc Values: to be **'responsive, flexible and accountable and work in partnership with other organisations to meet the needs of our clients and stakeholders'**.

1. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Teagasc provides long-term benefits and security to staff through pensions, retirement options and death-in-service benefits for staff and their families.
- Staff well-being is vitally important and initiatives will be put in place to support the health and well-being of all staff.
- Teagasc encourages the recognition of excellent performance and achievement through the use of formal and informal reward and recognition programmes.
- Reward and recognition is a crucial part of engaging and motivating staff and ensuring that Teagasc is a great place in which to work.
- Recognition should be meaningful yet spontaneous.
- Recognition is most effective when it is meaningful or personalised to the individual.
- Teagasc employs and promotes the best people based on their competency to perform the job.
- Teagasc will provide opportunities, development and recognition to staff across the organisation.
- Teagasc recognises the importance of working together at all levels in the organisation. This is reflected in a team-based approach within and across disciplines, divisions and geography.
- Teagasc recognises excellent performance, as well as the long-term contribution of staff.
- Teagasc will apply success criteria for rewards consistently across the organisation.



Meaningful staff reward and recognition is an important enabler for Teagasc to achieve its ambitious goals.

2. STAFF RECOGNITION

Recognition shows employees that they are valued and that they make a valuable contribution to accomplishing Teagasc goals. In particular, the following behaviours, and commitment to and/or achievements should be recognised:

- Quality customer service
- Innovation
- Teamwork
- Respect
- Accountability



2.1 Formal recognition programmes

Formal recognition programmes which are currently in operation in Teagasc are as follows:

Gold Medal Awards

The Gold Medal Award Programme aims to formally recognise and reward staff members who have made distinguished contributions to advancing the work of Teagasc as researchers, advisers, teachers, managers, administrators or support staff.

The Gold Medal is awarded on an annual basis to a serving staff member who is deemed to have made an outstanding contribution to the work of the organisation. Staff members must be nominated for a Gold Medal Award by other staff members. Log onto <http://tnet.teagasc.net/staffawards/goldmedal.asp> for details.

Staff Excellence Awards

The Excellence Award Programme involves nominations each year for awards to staff whose outstanding dedication, creativity and excellence in performance and service have had, or are having, a significant impact on the organisation's progress towards the achievement of its mission. The award categories are:

- Excellence in Education
- Excellence in Research
- Excellence in Knowledge Transfer
- Excellence in Service
- Excellence in Promoting Organisational Integration
- Team Player Award
- Director's Special Award

The awards are available to:

- Teams who demonstrate the capacity to collaborate effectively towards shared goals and who achieve excellence in outcomes in the nominated area of activity.
- Individuals who demonstrate the capacity to work innovatively and in an exemplary manner and who achieve excellence in the nominated area of activity.

Award winners from each category are presented with:

- A certificate. (In the case of team winners, each individual team member will receive a certificate.)
- A multi-store gift card (www.One4all.ie) to the value of €250. In the case of a team recipient, the award will be capped at €1,000 per team.

Winners from each award category will also be considered as Teagasc nominations for the biannual An Taoiseach's Award (http://www.onegov.ie/eng/Taoiseach's_Awards/). It is anticipated that three of the winning submissions will be put forward to represent Teagasc for these awards.

Innovation Awards

This Innovation Awards Programme invites individual staff members or teams to submit ideas, projects or initiatives that could help improve how Teagasc does its business. The programme encourages innovation and employee involvement.

Staff members who are deemed to have submitted the most innovative ideas will receive a special award at an annual Innovation Awards ceremony. The top three awardees will receive an additional award of a travel bursary and their ideas will be submitted to the appropriate Head of Directorate for implementation.

2.2 Informal recognition programmes

Studies show that one of the most effective motivating factors for staff is receiving recognition of good work from their peers and manager. Managers can of course acknowledge a staff member's dedicated efforts in a number of ways. Examples include:

- A personalised handwritten note
- Time off or early finishing time
- Facilitate staff member to attend a conference

3. STAFF BENEFITS

3.1 Pension scheme

Membership of the Teagasc Staff Superannuation and Spouses and Children's Schemes guarantees staff entitlement to generous pension and life cover benefits. Together, the schemes provide security for both employees and their families in the event of retirement, leaving service, ill health and death. Here is a summary of these benefits.

Retirement lump sum and pension

This is paid on retirement, usually between the ages of 60 and 66 years. With full service of 40 years, a member will be paid a retirement lump sum amounting to 150% of final pay and also 50% of final pay by way of an annual pension, which is for life.

Preserved lump sum and pension

This is where members leave Teagasc prior to benefit age (60 or 65 years). Lump sum and pension benefits are preserved or frozen until the appropriate benefit age.

Ill-health benefits

A staff member who has completed five or more years of actual pensionable service, and who retires on medical grounds in accordance with the conditions of the scheme, may have a period of notional service added to his or her pensionable service.

Death gratuity and pension

In the event of the death of a serving member of staff, the following payments are made:

- Surviving spouse is entitled to late spouse's salary for one month following death and also a pension (50%). This is based on maximum service of 40 years or potential service of deceased staff member to age 65 (assuming employee was a member of the Spouses and Children's Scheme).
- Eligible children (to age 18 or to age 22 years, if in full-time education), to a maximum of three children, are entitled to 33.3% of spouse's pension.
- A death gratuity is also payable to the legal personal representative nominated in the will of the deceased. The value of this death benefit ranges from a minimum of 1 times salary to a maximum of 1.5 times salary (depending on age and service of staff member). The death benefit is income tax free.



Pre-retirement planning courses

Teagasc runs in-house, two-day pre-retirement planning courses (in conjunction with a course provider) for staff members who are considering retirement. The courses are usually of interest to staff who are close to retirement, but staff within three years of retirement age are encouraged to attend. Spouses are also welcome to attend, and Teagasc pays course fees, including that of an attending spouse. Topics covered include:

- Approaching retirement
- Health and diet
- Money matters and budgeting
- Social welfare entitlements
- Legal matters
- Personal taxation
- Leisure activities
- Personal security

Course participation is conducted in conjunction with the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS).

Additional pension scheme benefits

An attractive feature of the pension scheme is that staff know in advance what their pension will be. They do not have to worry about how pension funds will perform in times of economic uncertainty, for example. The reason for this is that the scheme is a defined benefit scheme, i.e. one where the benefit entitlement is defined by final pay and length of service.

The Public Sector Transfer Network Scheme enables employees to transfer reckonable service within the Public Service, i.e. between the Civil Service and the majority of state and semi-state organisations. For example, reckonable service can be transferred from Teagasc to the Health Services, Department of Finance, etc., or from the Department of Agriculture to Teagasc, An Garda Síochána, etc. This can be useful as it means that pension benefits can be combined and maximised.

If a member has less than two years' service and cannot avail of the transfer of service scheme, his/her pension contributions can be refunded (less tax), on request. In addition, pension levy contributions are also refunded.

If members want to maximise their pension benefits, there are two options available. The Purchase of Notional Service Scheme allows civil and public sector employees to purchase service either by lump sum or by periodic agreement. It only applies to members who will have less than full 40 years' service at retirement age. The rate charged depends on a member's age, their salary and PRSI class. Tax relief is applicable, which makes the scheme more attractive.

Alternatively, Teagasc staff have the option of joining an Additional Voluntary Contribution (AVC) scheme. Joining an AVC scheme is a private arrangement between an individual and the pension provider. The benefit at retirement age is in the form of either an additional cash amount of pension or lump sum rather than additional notional years of service. The cash benefit is ultimately dependent on the performance of the fund in which the AVC contributions are invested. Contributions are allowable against income tax, subject to Revenue rules.

3.2 Group Life Plan

A Group Life Plan was set up in 2010. This offers Teagasc staff attractive benefits which would not otherwise be available on an individual basis. The Keane Pension & Investment Consultants Ltd Group Life Plan provides its members with an additional death benefit of 2 times salary, which means that Teagasc members' death benefit can be increased to between 3 and 3.5 times salary. This is income tax free and within the Revenue maximum limit of 4 times salary.

The cost of the life cover under the group plan is 0.25% of salary, which is a preferential group rate. Teagasc facilitates staff deductions directly from salary and full income tax and PRSI relief is applied at source under the 'net pay procedure'. The plan is underwritten by New Ireland Assurance.

3.3 Income continuance schemes

Keane Pension & Investments Ltd and Marsh Ireland administer group income continuance schemes for Teagasc staff. Income continuance is a form of insurance to protect a member's salary in the event of prolonged sick leave or early retirement due to ill-health. The purpose of income continuance schemes is to top up a member's income to 75% of salary as soon as a member's sick pay entitlement reduces to half pay. The income received by a member will be as follows:

- 25% of salary (after a deferred period of 26 weeks in any 12 months) increasing to 75% of salary when aggregated with any Early Retirement Entitlement and Social Welfare Disability Benefit at a single person's rate, if applicable, (after a deferred period of 52 weeks in any consecutive four-year period while a member of the Scheme).

Teagasc facilitates staff deductions directly from salary and full income tax and PRSI relief is applied at source under the 'net pay procedure'. The contribution rates are very competitive, as they are group rates for Teagasc staff.

4. STAFF WELL-BEING

Teagasc is strongly committed to promoting the health and well-being of its staff, both at home and in the workplace. Staff have access to a dedicated website which provides information in relation to mental and physical health and well-being. This covers such areas as lifestyle, work-life balance, family and finances. Its purpose is to ensure that Teagasc provides an environment where staff are supported, motivated, fulfilled and healthy.



4.1 Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

Teagasc recognises the pressures all staff and their families experience and that internal organisational resources are sometimes not appropriate for sharing or resolving personal concerns. Teagasc also knows that it is in everyone's best interests to ensure that personal and work-related problems are solved as early as possible. The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a counselling and information service which is provided to all Teagasc employees and their family members. It covers areas such as:

- Family relationships
- Work-related problems
- Marital problems
- Emotional problems
- Financial problems
- Legal matters
- General information

The EAP service is provided by Vhi Corporate Solutions, which is stand-alone and separate from Vhi Healthcare.

Free professional counselling and information services are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year through the EAP service. The service is totally confidential and no information is made available to Teagasc without the employee's written consent. Staff can avail of counselling at a time and location which suits them. Teagasc will pay for up to six counselling sessions. Where critical incidents take place in Teagasc, Vhi provides support to staff as a group and on a one-to-one basis afterwards, should this be required.

The EAP service is accessible via freephone telephone, email and also through a dedicated website. Freephone: 1800 995 955. or email eap@vhics.ie 24 hours a day, any day of the year.

4.2 Sick leave and Occupational Health service

Teagasc staff on certified sick leave have the benefit of the Teagasc sick pay scheme. Staff are eligible to full pay for uncertified absences up to a maximum of seven days in a 12-month period, subject to appropriate procedures being followed. Staff on properly certified absences are eligible to full pay (less Social Welfare Benefit, if applicable) for up to six months in a 12-month period. After this time, there is an entitlement to half pay for a further six months. Teagasc staff with five years' service may qualify for pension rate of pay where sick leave with pay allowable has been exhausted.

During long-term sick leave absences, staff will be contacted by their HR adviser to ensure that they are kept informed of their entitlement and to provide an opportunity to discuss any issues/concerns related to their illness. It may be necessary for staff on long-term sick leave to attend an Occupational Health assessment. The aim of this assessment is to assist staff to regain their health and return to suitable employment as soon as their recovery allows. Teagasc may facilitate a phased return to work or a return on a part-time basis. In some instances, retirement on ill-health grounds may be necessary (refer to section on Ill-health benefits on page 3).

The Occupational Health service in Teagasc is provided by Medmark. Its role is to provide a confidential, independent advisory service regarding employees' fitness for work. Medmark is a 10-doctor, multi-centre practice specialising in occupational medicine. It has offices in Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Galway. Appointments are made at the clinic nearest to the employee concerned.



4.4 Group Vhi scheme

Staff can avail of a 10% discount through the Teagasc group Vhi scheme. If staff are interested in joining, they should contact Vhi directly to determine a suitable plan. Staff will need to quote the Teagasc group scheme number which is 539. To contact Vhi Healthcare, phone 1890 44 44 44.

4.5 Discount schemes

Teagasc staff can avail of discounts on a number of stores and services, eg: travel insurance. The most up-to-date list is available on our Employee Well-being page on the Tnet. Staff can also avail of payroll deductions, made from a staff member's salary, for Vhi health insurance.

4.6 Sports & Social activities

Many of Teagasc's larger centres have a Sports & Social Club through which various sports and social events are run during the year. These range from annual outings to summer and Christmas parties. Generally, this is funded by subscription to sports and social clubs or by individuals making a small payment. An annual subscription to sports and social clubs is facilitated through a payroll deduction.

Teagasc Golf Society

The Teagasc Golf Society provides an opportunity for current and retired Teagasc staff countrywide to meet outside of the formal work environment for a game of golf and a chat. The Society holds three outings each year. Membership is open to all Teagasc staff members, past and present, male and female. The Society strives to visit varied and reasonably central courses, while maintaining fees at an inexpensive level.

Informal activities

Outside of the above formal societies, Teagasc staff often engage in other more informal activities. These include hill-walking excursions, Pilates classes, and participation in the TriAthy triathlon and tag rugby leagues.

4.3 Health checks

From time to time Teagasc runs a comprehensive and confidential health screening programme which is delivered by a private, independent health screening company. The programme is designed to identify certain 'silent' conditions which, if undetected, can lead to more serious problems later in life. Such conditions include high blood pressure, high cholesterol and early stages of diabetes. By availing of the health screening programme, these conditions can be identified and dealt with in a non-invasive manner.

Teagasc provides a contribution (in the region of €50) towards the cost of the programme, which is totally confidential between the individual participant and the health screening company. The programme consists of two phases:

- Screening phase carried out by the nursing team where the specific tests are carried out.
- Follow-up consultation, approximately two to three weeks later, with a doctor who will go through the results of the tests and make appropriate recommendations.

A number of tests are provided, including a measurement of height, weight, body mass index and blood pressure. A comprehensive fasting blood analysis is included in the profile which gives information on areas such as total cholesterol, diabetes, kidney and thyroid function. Wellwoman and wellman advice on certain cancer screening is also provided, with actual cancer screening for men available as an additional optional test.

4.7 Work-life balance

Teagasc provides a number of initiatives to support work-life balance. Some of these initiatives are statutory in that staff are entitled to them by law. Others are discretionary programmes that have been developed by staff and management over the years.

Job-sharing policy

The job-sharing policy is discretionary. It allows staff to work a reduced working week in varying patterns or on a week on/week off basis. A job-share partner is not necessarily required and all applications are considered.

Career break policy

The career break policy is discretionary. It allows staff to take a period of unpaid leave from Teagasc for a minimum of six months up to a maximum of five years. This may be allowed for the purposes of child-rearing, education, self-employment (up to three years) or travel.

Shorter working year

This is a discretionary scheme, which permits staff to balance their working arrangements with outside commitments, including their children's school holiday periods. The scheme is operated in line with the Government Circular 14/2009. [It cannot be granted for the purpose of taking up employment outside of Teagasc (in Ireland). However, an individual may be self-employed]. Under the terms of the scheme, staff may apply for a continuous period of unpaid leave or a reduced working week.

1. Continuous Period of Unpaid Leave

Unpaid leave is available as a period of 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 or 13 consecutive weeks. The leave may be taken as one continuous period or as a maximum of 3 separate periods each consisting of not less than 2 weeks and not exceeding 13 weeks in total.

2. Reduced Working Week

Staff wishing to avail of a reduced working week can apply for the period January to December or for a shorter period within the year. Applications for 2.5, 3 or 4 day working weeks will be considered. The maximum term for consideration under the shorter working year scheme will be 13 weeks however requests for periods greater than this will be considered on a case by case basis.

The period of leave is unpaid, it may have implications for PRSI and will have implications for superannuation. Staff wishing to avail of a continuous period of unpaid leave may apply to have their salary averaged over the period January to December.

Statutory leave

The parental leave policy allows staff, who are the parents or primary carers for a child or children of up to 13-years-old, take a period of unpaid leave from Teagasc. The leave is for a period of 14 weeks, or 70 days per child, and may be taken as one or more days per week, a continuous block of leave or several blocks of leave, subject to agreement.

The carer's leave policy allows staff, who are required to provide full-time care and attention for a person in need of such care (as determined by the Department of Social Protection) take unpaid leave for a period of 13 to 104 weeks. In certain cases, these staff may qualify for Carer's Benefit.

Force majeure leave allows staff to take paid leave relating to family illness or injury for a period of three days in 12 months and not more than five days in 36 months.

Teagasc provides a number of initiatives to support work-life balance. Some of these initiatives are statutory in that staff are entitled to them by law. Others are discretionary programmes that have been developed by staff and management over the years.



5. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Teagasc understands that staff development is a key requirement in a knowledge organisation. Responsibility for staff development is shared by the organisation and the people who work in it. A budget is set aside each year dedicated to the cost of running internal and external staff development programmes. Training needs are identified through the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS), which is undertaken by each member of staff every year with their line manager.

Teagasc endeavours to build the organisation from within, in the context of a competency-based approach. We utilise the competency framework and supporting systems to support career and succession planning. The Staff Training Unit provides staff with access to a selection of courses. These courses cover key core competencies required for many roles in Teagasc and they are designed to contribute to the achievement of the organisation's business objectives.

Development actions are agreed within the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) process and approved within the staff training planning process. The PMDS links the goals set out in the Statement of Strategy, through the business planning process in a management unit, to the individual work plans and objectives of staff. Each staff member, in consultation with their manager, identifies their goals and objectives in terms of their unit's business plan. The system helps the staff member clarify their role, identify the activities needed to achieve their goals and establish the indicators that they are on target. It also gives them an opportunity to identify focused training and development needs in terms of the knowledge, skills and attributes required for the job.

Staff Development

- Performance Management and Development System (PMDS)
- Third level training
- Priority technical training
- Study leave/sabbaticals
- Core competency training
- Conferences
- Management Development Programme (MDP) and Leadership Development Programme (LDP)



Staff can submit relevant training proposals under a number of headings:

Third-level training

This includes third-level courses that up-skill staff to fill competency gaps, meet new knowledge and skill demands and/or integrate career development and succession planning.

Priority technical training

This covers technical training vital to the delivery of projects and work programmes. *Please note: This does not include the technical in-service training provided by specialists for advisers and teachers, which is programmed on a separate basis.*

Study leave/sabbaticals

Study trips and sabbaticals should meet new knowledge and skills demands arising from the Teagasc 2030 initiative. Sabbatical leave provides an opportunity for permanent research and technical staff to widen their experience and knowledge through a concentrated period of study (usually overseas). The self-directed study programme must

be relevant to a staff member's role in Teagasc

Core competency training

This incorporates personal and IT skills training courses targeted at developing core research, training, advisory, administrative and management competencies.

Management and Leadership Development Programmes

The Teagasc Management Development Programme (MDP) and Leadership Development Programme (LDP), which have been developed as part of the People, Leadership and Change strategy, are now available for relevant staff. Both programmes are customised to meet Teagasc requirements and are delivered by first-class providers, Pathway and the Irish Management Institute respectively. Staff can be nominated for these programmes based on their role and/or through the Performance Management

and Development System (PMDS) process.

Conferences

Staff are supported to attend relevant conferences.

It is possible that some training/development proposals may be developed within PMDS that are not covered under the programmes detailed above, but which could be addressed within resources at local level, e.g. a mentoring proposal, self-directed learning, attendance at a conference or seminar, etc. Alternatively, it may be possible to respond to some development needs through referral within Teagasc to appropriate support personnel. If in doubt about a particular development need/proposal, staff or managers should contact the Staff Training Unit for guidance.

Staff Promotion

- Staff promotion is an important part of recognising and rewarding staff for achieving high performance. Promotion processes will be reviewed during the moratorium and opportunities to give staff as much development as possible will be maximised during the intervening period.



6. STAFF PROMOTION

Teagasc remains committed to personal development and career progression for all staff. However, Teagasc is not in a position to progress applications for promotion at this time because of the restrictions set out in the Employment Control Framework and Moratorium. Timelines for future promotion rounds will be communicated at the earliest opportunity, subject to prevailing policies on recruitment and promotions as set out by the Department of Finance.

The freeze on promotions however, does allow Teagasc time to reflect on the current promotion structures and processes. As set out in the People, Leadership and Change Strategy, we can examine how to:

- improve access to promotional opportunities and
- design fair and transparent means for assessing staff for promotion.

A common professional promotion structure is also being considered, a review of promotional opportunities for administration staff will take place, and sanction will be sought as soon as possible to progress some of the recommendations from a previous review of technicians.

7. ROLE OF MANAGEMENT

It is clear that the relationship that a line manager has with individual staff is hugely important. A manager recognising good work, staff going the extra mile and staff who support the team is a vital part of a trusting relationship.

Recognition is crucial to maintain high customer service and productivity. Research shows that in organisations where regular positive feedback is given, staff are more willing to make an extra contribution.

Managers should be cognisant of best practice in the area of staff reward and recognition. The following principles form part of this policy and it is the manager's responsibility to apply these guidelines appropriately to all situations of staff reward.

- The most popular means for staff to receive meaningful recognition is from their line manager. Managers should not take staff output for granted and should always recognise when a good job has been done.
- Managers should attach recognition to real achievements.
- Recognition should be spontaneous.
- Recognition needs to be fair and perceived as fair by colleagues and peers.
- With the PMDS, managers should put an appropriate investment of time into preparing for a PMDS meeting and allow time to have the meeting (uninterrupted). Thoughtful consideration should be given to the staff members' achievements, so that appropriate recognition of this can be given as part of the PMDS review.
- Equally, staff appreciate receiving feedback on where they can improve, as this assists with their career development
- Public recognition can have a huge impact on staff, so managers should seek out opportunities to give appropriate public recognition.
- Don't underestimate how giving a staff member an opportunity to develop or excel is a powerful way of recognising their past achievements.
- Flexibility is a useful way of recognising staff who go above and beyond the call of duty. Managers should consider requests or ways that offer some flexibility to a high-performing staff member to accommodate a particular personal need.
- Simple verbal praise, such as 'thank you' and 'well done', should be given more frequently.

The development of the Teagasc Reward and Recognition Policy is only step one. Managers must 'bring it to life'.