

Galway County PPN Communications Strategy

1. About the PPN

A Public Participation Network (PPN) is a structure that brings together Community and Voluntary, Environmental and Social Inclusion groups in each local authority area. Public Participation Networks were established on foot of the report of the Working Group on Citizen Engagement with Local Government published in 2014, which recommended greater input by communities into decision-making at local government level. The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provided for the formal establishment of PPNs and they are now operational in all local authority areas.

The primary purpose of the PPN is to enable the PPN member groups to input into and have their voices heard within the formal decision-making structures of the local authority. The PPN is now the main way that local authorities connect with groups active in their area.

Whenever the local authority needs people to participate in consultations or sit on the committees like Local Community Development Committees and Strategic Policy Committees, it is obliged to call on the PPN to select representatives from within its membership to serve on those committees.

PPNs therefore provide a mechanism to facilitate the two-way flow of information between the local authority and their groups to influence policy development and the delivery of services to the wider community.

2. Why have a Communications Strategy?

An effective Communication Strategy forges and maintains connections, allowing the PPN to work efficiently toward its goals. The Galway County PPN must at all times strive to increase the visibility, understanding and the awareness of the PPN.

This Communications Strategy clarifies how the PPN will package and present information and forms an agreement between the PPN members about how to communicate with each other.

This Communications Strategy will also help the PPN develop its brand and identity with which it then presents itself to external parties, making it identifiable and known amongst external stakeholders.

3. Principles and Values

3.1. General Principles of the PPN (from PPN Handbook, 2020)

The ethos of the PPN is very important to how it works. In doing its work, each PPN keeps to a set of six principles. This means every PPN must be:

- **Inclusive** of all volunteer-led groups in their area, and actively look to include groups that might not otherwise be included or who might not often have their voice heard.
- **Participatory, open, welcoming, respectful**, willing to work together and supportive of each other. The PPN will encourage participation by Member Groups in all of its work. There should be clear communications to and from Member Groups using as wide a range of communication methods as possible to make sure that their reach is as broad as possible. The PPN should support new Member Groups, and Member Groups who might not have a lot of experience.
- **Independent from the Local Authority** and of any special interests (the PPN must account to the Local Authority for its budget, but is independent in its work).
- **Valuing of Diversity** and recognise that the Colleges are made up of people and Member Groups that have a wide range of different views, experiences and opinions. PPNs are expected to feed into local government decision-making with the whole range of views from its Member Groups and their Colleges.
- **Transparent** in everything that it does. It should communicate openly, regularly and clearly with all Member Groups.
- **Accountable** to its Member Groups by putting good governance policies and procedures in place.

3.2. Principles of Effective Communication

Through all of its communication the PPN strives to operate with the following in mind:

- Clarity in Ideas
- Appropriate Language- Plain English
- Attention to detail
- Consistency
- Adequacy
- Proper Time
- Informality
- Feedback

3.3. Values

All of the PPNs communication will operate on the basis of the following shared values:

- Access to information is a fundamental right
- Accessibility of information is imperative
- All communication must be respectful of cultural diversity, gender, sexual identity, ethnic identity, religious beliefs, migration status, dis/ability, etc...

4. Internal Communication Strategy- Policy and Procedures

4.1. All members of the PPN are encouraged to communicate with other members of the PPN.

4.2. Groups can use the PPN social media platforms to publicise their information to support their position as influencers of public policy, information can be submitted to these platforms through the PPN email address.

4.3. Decisions about the information displayed on PPN social media platforms, where the content is potentially contentious, are decided by the Secretariat.

4.4. Linkage group and Electoral College representatives and members should be guided by the representatives' charter in how they communicate with each other.

4.5. Linkage group and Electoral College reps will decide on a mode/s of communication with their linkage group/electoral college members.

4.6. While the PPN encourages the use of online communication, the PPN Worker, Secretariat and all members should make specific efforts to communicate accessibly (ie using different modes of communication) and with members who are not online (including the provision of training to support online communication).

4.7. In all communications members, should not disclose any personal or confidential information or information that could be considered inappropriate, offensive or defamatory.

4.8. Email addresses and contact details of PPN members should not be shared by any member with people outside of the PPN unless their permission is sought.

- 4.9.** PPN secretariat and reps are entitled to receive an @galwaycountypn.ie email address (please note that traffic to this address will be forwarded to your personal email address- if you would like to be able to respond from this email address you must set this up through your email server).

5. External Communication Strategy – Policy and Procedures

- 5.1.** All structures within the PPN are encouraged to use channels open to them to communicate their message to the public.
- 5.2.** When speaking as members of the PPN, on certain occasions communication should go first to the Secretariat for approval, to maintain the public identity of the organisation.
- 5.3.** Groups are encouraged to use the PPN social media platforms to publicise their information and support their position as influencers in public policy, information can be submitted to these platforms through the PPN email address.
- 5.4.** Decisions about the information, (where contentious or sensitive) displayed on PPN social media platforms are decided by the Secretariat.
- 5.5.** All efforts must be taken to publicize PPN info as widely as possible, this includes through Facebook, Twitter, PPN mailing list, PPN Website and by contacting local papers and Community Radio stations. A Youtube account for the PPN also exists.
- 5.6.** All PPN Press Releases must be approved by the Secretariat or at least two members thereof.

6. Methods

- 6.1.** Tools:
- 6.1.1.** Logo to be used as often as possible
 - 6.1.2.** PPN colours to be reflected on all
 - 6.1.3.** Twitter Profile
 - 6.1.4.** Facebook Page

- 6.1.5. Youtube Channel
 - 6.1.6. WhatsApp- for instant communication amongst Secretariat and PPN Staff
 - 6.1.7. Canva- to make posters
 - 6.1.8. Survey Monkey to make surveys
 - 6.1.9. ZOOM for meetings, workshops and trainings, video recordings of trainings
 - 6.1.10. Training: PPN constantly engages with external trainers to offer a broad range of training for groups in the area of **Communications** (for example, social media training, how to use Canva, Instagram for Community Groups, GDPR).
 - 6.1.11. *PPN Booklet: A Quick Guide to your PPN* has been published and is sent to all new members as part of an induction pack.
 - 6.1.12. The PPN will utilize relevant advocacy tools to further their cause. In the past the PPN has issued Policy Papers, Opinion Pieces, Vision Statements, and Open Letters to advocate for their position. The PPN will seek to maximize the reach and coverage of these methods/documents in the local media to gain the broadest coverage of their issues possible.
- 6.2. Schedule of external Communications:
- 6.2.1. Only **2 emails a day** can be sent to all email addresses registered on Salesforce. This is a limit imposed through the **Salesforce** system.
 - 6.2.2. On a case by case basis emails are sent to PPN members of **individual MDs** as directed or deemed relevant.
 - 6.2.3. Every **Friday** a **Weekly Digest** summarizing all info directed at PPN Members is issued via email.
 - 6.2.4. Once a month the Galway County PPN issues a **PPN Newsletter** alongside a special issue dedicated to funding opportunities (the latter is facilitated through The Wheel's 'FundingPoint' newsletter)
 - 6.2.5. A **Calendar of events** is regularly updated on the PPN website. See [here](#)
 - 6.2.6. On occasion the PPN Workers will advertise relevant PPN events or info in the local papers such as the **Galway Advertiser**. Approval for this expenditure is sought from the Secretariat/Treasurer.

7. Contacts

Community Radio

Galway Bay FM

Local News Papers

8. Who implements the strategy?

Support Worker and Resource Worker in their everyday tasks

9. Other issues, Key Questions:

Political communications- are we allowed to retweet CLLR posts?

Business- can we include ads?

What if a community initiative is driven by a corporation like the AXA bike ride or the ESB community fund?