



Comhshool, Pobal agus Riattas Áitiúil  
Environment, Community and Local Government



## **FUNDING AND OTHER MATTERS RELATING TO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORKS IN LOCAL AUTHORITY AREAS**

**23 June 2015**

**Circular Letter CVSP1/2015**

**To: Each CEO, Local Authority**

**Cc: Each Director of Community Service**

Local Authorities in conjunction with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government have been establishing Public Participation Networks (PPN) in their areas since June 2014. The Department is now rolling out a mechanism to fund and manage these structures which will allow for their continued development and operation. This circular sets out the details of the funding and related matters and how it can be utilised and recouped by each local authority.

A total amount of €2.48 million is being allocated in 2015 for the PPNs. This will be a provided through a combination of direct funding by the Department (maximum €50,000 per local authority) to supplement funding provided by each local authority (minimum €30,000 per local authority), i.e. a spend of €80k on the PPN in the calendar year by the Local Authority will mean a recoupment of €50k from the Department at year-end.

### **Background**

In 2014 the Department issued two circulars setting out the initial procedures to be implemented by each local authority in order to establish Public Participation Networks. Circulars CVSP1/2014 and CVSP2/2014 can be downloaded from the Department's website or the Department's SharePoint Circulars Extranet. These circulars remain current and may be amended from time to time.

€12,000 start-up funding was provided to each local authority in 2014 and the funding now being provided is intended to aid each local authority to maintain and further progress the development and on-going operation of PPNs.

## **PPN Funding 2015**

The Department will provide a maximum of €50,000 per annum to each local authority, **provided** it is supplemented by a minimum of €30,000 per annum from each local authority's own resources. Local Authorities should note that in order to recoup the full €50,000 grant from the Department, a local authority must spend at least €80,000 on the PPN per annum. Spend by the council below this level will result in a corresponding reduction in the amount of Departmental funding on a like for like percentage basis. Spend by the Local Authority above that level will NOT result in a corresponding increase in the amount of Departmental funding.

**The Department would expect that a level of funding (in excess of the €12,000 start-up funding provided during 2014) has already been expended on PPN operations in 2015. It is acceptable that such expenditure is accounted for under circular CVSP1/2015 and will be allowable for recoupment purposes at year-end.**

## **Use of Funding**

This funding is ring-fenced and can only be used for the purposes of developing and maintaining the PPN. The most common usage which the Department envisages for the funding would be:

- Cost of employment of a resource worker (full time equivalent)
- Office space, infrastructure and materials for the resource worker
- Expenses incurred by the PPN in carrying out its activities i.e. holding meetings, training, elections, publicity materials, insurance etc.
- Expenses of Secretariat and PPN representatives on Local Authority committees (where these cannot be recouped elsewhere).

The role of this worker will, where necessary, complete the establishment of the PPN and then support the Secretariat with the on-going operation of the PPN. The Department considers that a post at Staff Officer level (Grade 5) in the Local Authority would be appropriate, given the roles and responsibilities for the post-holder, which is outlined in Appendix 1.

The funding can be used for staffing costs, including expenses connected with the staff member's involvement with a Council's work in relation to the PPN. In Year 1 some set up

equipment and materials costs are envisaged, however, these should be kept at a minimum and where possible, existing resources should be redeployed to the PPN.

The funding should only be used on the basis of a clear Memorandum of Understanding and Service Level Agreement between the PPN and the Local Authority (drafts are attached). Monies will only be recouped to a Local Authority on the basis of expenditure thus incurred.

It is important that funding is used only to support the work of the PPN and that it is not used for projects or work that would ordinarily be carried out by another body or agency, including the Local Authority.

A local authority is expected to provide details of expenditure in the attached form and a local authority should also retain records of all payments and expenditure incurred for which it intends to claim. Although these do not need to be submitted in detail with each claim they should be available for inspection by the Department or other relevant agencies.

No funding will be carried over to the next year and the council must make a separate application for recoupment of funding every year.

Further operational/logistical arrangements are included in Appendix 1.

### **Recoupment Arrangements**

Salary recoupment and other costs claims for the PPN covering the period 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015 should be submitted in hard copy to Paul Haughton in the Community Division by Friday, **2 October 2015**, at the latest in order to meet the Department's end-of-year arrangements for the payment of invoices using the template in Appendix 2, attached.

Please note that two signatures are required on the hard copy claim form (one to be Director of Service for Community & Enterprise or equivalent). Furthermore, in order to expedite the processing of claims, a completed electronic copy of the claims template should be emailed to [Paul.haughton@environ.ie](mailto:Paul.haughton@environ.ie) and copied to the undersigned.

Any queries regarding this Circular or the completion of the claim should be referred to Paul Haughton, Community Division, Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, Room 2:01, Custom House, Dublin 1, by email as above or telephone: 01 888 2161.



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## **Appendix 1**

### **Operations/Logistics and staffing arrangements, PPN's**

A number of options for the employment and management of the PPN resource worker are attached, including a draft Service Level Agreement, Memo of Understanding, draft job description for the resource worker and a draft workplan.

Where the assignment involves the creation of an additional post within a local authority, the local authority may require the sanction of the Department's Local Government Personnel Section.

It would be an express condition of funding that the resource worker would operate independently from the local authority and be answerable to the PPN Secretariat in the performance of their duties.

PPN work requires at minimum a dedicated fulltime equivalent resource worker. PPNs and LAs may decide to have one worker, or a part time combination. If an existing local authority member of staff is assigned to the post they must work a total of full time equivalent hours on the PPN. They cannot undertake duties which are not related to the running of the PPN even if they are within the same division of the local authority. If this is not feasible the local authority's work-plan must give a minimum number of hours per week that the staff member will be dedicated to PPN work. The Department will adjust funding provision accordingly.

### **Duties and Responsibilities**

The worker will be required to:

- Set up and maintain a register of all community & voluntary groups under the PPN
- Provide support to the Secretariat of the PPN
- Provide developmental support to the PPN, including
  - o advising the Secretariat on appropriate responses to calls for their participation in various consultations, committees etc.

- devising means to be used in responding as directed by the Secretariat, including online consultations, public meetings, workshops, surveys etc.
  - collating information of relevance to the C&V sector and disseminating it to the PPN member groups
  - organising nomination procedures and elections for community representative positions
- Provide developmental and administrative support to the elected representatives, including
  - Designing training interventions
  - Supporting representatives to report back to the PPN
- Organise consultation events and facilitating workshops at same
- Promote active citizenship and community engagement, by, for example,
  - organising 'use your vote' campaigns prior to general and local elections
- Promote the PPN, by
  - Maintaining a PPN website
  - issuing monthly e-newsletter
  - preparing regular press releases & conducting media interviews
  - devising and organising 'use your vote' campaigns coming up to General and Local Elections, referenda and Presidential elections
- Facilitate linkages between the PPN and other organisations which support the community & voluntary sector, including the Local Community Development Committee, the ETB, HSE etc.
- Ensure the voice of the Community sector is heard in the preparation / reviews of the Local Community Plan by the LCDC, by organising a comprehensive consultation campaign and producing a position paper summarising the views of the C&V sector, for presentation to the LCDC
- Facilitate the involvement of all sectoral interests in the PPN, by

- Setting up/maintaining thematic networks such as, Disability, Women's, Older People, Young People
- Keeping activity of each sector under review & determining the support required in order for each to contribute meaningfully
- Manage the PPN's budget in order to maximise the effectiveness of the PPN in decision-making
  - Source additional funds if required, accounting for such funds received and drawing down in a timely and transparent manner

The above role requires community development skills, also administrative and project management skills. The workload is such that it will require a dedicated worker, working full time. It requires on-the-ground local knowledge of the communities in the local authority area and is not suited to a shared service approach.

**APPENDIX 2**

**FORMAT FOR RETURNS TO THE DEPARTMENT  
PURSUANT TO FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR PPN OPERATIONS**

	<b>Mth 1</b>	<b>Mth 2</b>	<b>Mth 3</b>	<b>Mth 4</b>	<b>Mth 5</b>	<b>Mth 6</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<b>PPN Account</b>							
Opening balance	0	33300	26600	19900	13200	6500	
<b>Income</b>							
Allocation (six months)	40,000						40,000
Other							0
<b>Total income</b>	40,000	0	0	0	0	0	40000
<b>Expenditure/Payments</b>							
Salaries	4000	4000	4000	4000	4000	4000	24000
Travel	500	500	500	500	500	500	3000
Rent and Rates	100	100	100	100	100	100	600
Office Supplies	100	100	100	100	100	0	500
Postage/email	500	500	500	500	500	500	3000
Light and Heat	100	100	100	100	100	100	600
Telephone	250	250	250	250	250	250	1500
Insurance	100	100	100	100	100	100	600
Web-site	250	250	250	250	250	250	1500
meetings	250	250	250	250	250	250	1500
Legal fees	100	100	100	100	100	0	500
Training	250	250	250	250	250	250	1500
Circulars	100	100	100	100	100	100	600
Sundry Expenses	100	100	100	100	100	100	600
<b>Total Payments</b>	6700	6700	6700	6700	6700	6500	40000
<b>Net Movement</b>	-6700	-6700	-6700	-6700	-6700	-6500	40000
<b>Closing balance</b>	33300	26600	19900	13200	6500	0	0

Signature 1:

Signature 2:

Print Name and Title:

Print Name and Title:

**Note: Figures and headings indicated above are for illustration purposes only.**



**APPENDIX 2, contd**

**FORMAT FOR RETURNS TO THE DEPARTMENT  
PURSUANT TO FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR PPN OPERATIONS**

	Mth 7	Mth 8	Mth 9	Mth 10	Mth 11	Mth 12	Totals
<b>PPN Account</b>							
Opening balance	0	33300	26600	19900	13200	6500	
<b>Income</b>							
Allocation (six months)	40,000						40,000
Other							0
<b>Total income</b>	40,000	0	0	0	0	0	40000
<b>Expenditure/Payments</b>							
Salaries	4000	4000	4000	4000	4000	4000	24000
Travel	500	500	500	500	500	500	3000
Rent and Rates	100	100	100	100	100	100	600
Office Supplies	100	100	100	100	100	0	500
Postage/email	500	500	500	500	500	500	3000
Light and Heat	100	100	100	100	100	100	600
Telephone	250	250	250	250	250	250	1500
Insurance	100	100	100	100	100	100	600
Web-site	250	250	250	250	250	250	1500
meetings	250	250	250	250	250	250	1500
Legal fees	100	100	100	100	100	0	500
Training	250	250	250	250	250	250	1500
Circulars	100	100	100	100	100	100	600
Sundry Expenses	100	100	100	100	100	100	600
<b>Total Payments</b>	6700	6700	6700	6700	6700	6500	40000
<b>Net Movement</b>	-6700	-6700	-6700	-6700	-6700	-6500	40000
<b>Closing balance</b>	33300	26600	19900	13200	6500	0	0

Signature 1:

Signature 2:

Print Name and Title:

Print name and Title:

**Note: Figures and headings indicated above are for illustration purposes only.**

## **Public Participation Networks**

The PPN is the main link through which the local authority connects with the Community and Voluntary, Social Inclusion and Environmental groups in the local authority area. Specifically the PPN:

- Facilitates the participation and representation of communities in a fair, equitable and transparent manner through the environmental, social inclusion & community and voluntary sectors on decision making bodies, including the new Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs).
- Strengthens the capacity of communities and of the environmental, social inclusion & voluntary groups to contribute positively to the community in which they reside/participate
- Provides information relevant to the environmental, social inclusion and community & voluntary sector and acts as a conduit for information flows to and from the community and local authority.

The PPN will set in place a plan to promote the well-being of this and future generations in the local area through groupings in the following three categories:

### **1. Community and Voluntary Organisations**

“Community and voluntary organisation” is one whose primary activity is other than social inclusion or environmental protection and/or environmental sustainability and covers groups working in the following areas: social policy, social welfare and allied health services; unemployment; women; ethnic minorities; community development; informal and adult education; housing and homelessness; development; children and youth; older people; intellectual and physical disability; human rights; arts and culture; the environment and climate change; sports. It does not include formal education (schools/colleges), or large institutional health providers.

### **2. Social Inclusion Organisations**

“Social inclusion organisation” is one whose main activity is working to improve the life chances and opportunities of those who are marginalised in society, living in poverty or in unemployment using community development approaches to build sustainable communities, where the values of equality and inclusion are promoted and human rights are respected.

### 3. Environmental Organisations

“Environmental organisation” is one whose primary objectives and activities is environmental (i.e. ecological) protection and/or environmental sustainability and includes Green Communities Groups that work to empower community groups to improve their local environment, enhance biodiversity and reduce their resource usage and local Environmental Action Networks that work to promote the well-being, protection and enhancement of the environment.

The aim of the new structures and processes is to enable community organisations to articulate a diverse range of views and interests within the local government system, and to allow a diversity of voices and interests to be facilitated and involved in the decision-making processes of the local authority and other relevant bodies.

#### **Primacy of Council**

The primary responsibility and accountability for decision-making within the local authority remains with the elected council. Local government, given it is the form of government closest to the citizen and the community, should therefore be at the heart of the public service interface with the community. The participation of members of local communities, whether as individuals or as members of local groups in public life and their right to influence the decisions that affect their lives and communities are at the centre of democracy. Open and inclusive policy-making enhances transparency and accountability, and builds civic capacity.

Each Council will adopt a Framework for Public Participation in Local Government for the purposes of promoting, developing and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to participation in decision making process of the local authority by the local community and to strengthening the capacity of community and voluntary groups to contribute effectively to the community in which they reside / participate.

#### **The role of the PPN is:**

- To develop a vision for the well-being of this and future generations.
- to facilitate opportunities for networking, communication and the sharing of information between the community and voluntary sector and between the sector and the local authority and other relevant bodies.

- to identify issues of collective concern to the Network and work to influence policy locally in relation to these issues.
- to actively support the inclusion in the Network of socially excluded groups, communities experiencing high levels of poverty, communities experiencing discrimination, including Travellers to enable them to participate at local and county level and to clearly demonstrate same.
- to encourage and enable community participation in local decision making structures and planning of services.
- to facilitate the selection of representatives from the environmental, social inclusion and community and voluntary sectors onto city/county decision making bodies.
- to support a process, including Linkage Groups, that will feed the broad range of ideas, experience, suggestions and proposals of the Network into policies and plans being developed by agencies and decision makers in areas that are of interest and relevant to the Network. 'Linkage group' means all PPN stakeholders with an interest in an issue that affects the local community and about which a local authority wishes to engage with the local community. A linkage group selects a community nominee to sit on a Strategic Policy Committee or otherwise engage with a local authority on the issue, who must report back to the linkage group/the PPN and feedback to and from a local authority and the PPN on the issue. Each college chooses its own nominees for the Local Community Development Committee - no linkage group is required.
- to work to develop the Network and its member groups so that the work of the Network is clearly recognised, acknowledged and understood by local government and the Network has a strong community voice within the County/City.
- to support the individual members of the Network so that:
  - They can develop their capacity and do their work more effectively.
  - They can participate effectively in Network activities.
  - They are properly included in the decision making arena within local government and their voices and concerns are heard (this is a joint responsibility between the PPN and the local authority).