



Constitution

Mayo Public Participation Network
Líonra Rannpháirtíochta Poiblí Chontae Mhaigh Eo

Constitution adopted _____

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Acronyms

PPN Public Participation Network
MD Municipal District

DEFINITIONS

Linkage (Interest) Group: This is the name given to a number of PPN member groups who have linked together to research and advise on specific areas of interest. A Linkage (Interest) group may elect representatives to countywide committees. These can be areas of interest specific to a local geographical district or a more general issue relating to Social Inclusion, Environment or Community interests. **Linkage groups are also often referred to as "Interest Groups".**

Electoral College: Mayo PPN has three electoral colleges, Community and Voluntary, Social Inclusion and Environmental. A registered group may join one. Electoral College as long as that College reflects the primary aim of the group. Currently all colleges elect representatives onto the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC).

Representative: This is a person elected by a Linkage (Interest) group or Electoral College to a county- wide committee.

Secretariat: This is a group of 14 people, elected by the PPN Membership, to coordinate the activities of the PPN

Plenary: This is the full membership of the PPN. The Plenary meets at least twice a year.

1. Introduction

The Mayo Public Participation Network is a county wide network that facilitates people from the community, voluntary and environmental sectors to participate in local decision making structures. It is part of the framework for public participation in local government and it has a statutory basis in the Local Government Reform Act 2014 (Section 46).

2. Objectives

The PPN will work with the community, voluntary and environmental sectors to...

- 2.1 Facilitate and contribute to opportunities for networking, communication and the sharing of information
- 2.2 Strengthen their capacity to contribute positively to the community
- 2.3 Identify issues of collective concern and ensure the sectors have a strong collective voice
- 2.4 Acknowledge and promote the contribution they make to society
- 2.5 Actively support inclusion of socially excluded groups, communities experiencing high levels of poverty and communities experiencing discrimination
- 2.6 Encourage and enable participation in local decision making and planning of services
- 2.7 Take an active formal role in policy making and oversight committees of the Mayo Local authority.
- 2.8 Ensure clear and transparent mechanisms for the selection of members of the local community to participate in policy making fora and facilitate elections onto decision making bodies
- 2.9 Facilitate a high level of accountability and feedback mechanisms to PPN members
- 2.10 Engage members in processes that will feed into policies and plans and provide a strong voice of community, voluntary and environmental sectors on local decision making structures
- 2.11 Support individual members of the PPN to develop their capacity to do their own work effectively and also participate effectively in the activities of the PPN
- 2.12 Act as the vehicle to gather feedback and input into policies and plans being developed by local authorities, reflecting both areas of disagreement and, where there is no consensus, the range of views.
- 2.13 Work to affect national and regional policies in collaboration with other PPNs.

3. Values and Principles

Mayo PPN will adhere to the following values and principles

- 3.1 Adhere to the principles of good governance
- 3.2 Be inclusive of all groups and value diversity
- 3.3 Work in a collaborative, transparent and fair way
- 3.4 Be accountable to its members
- 3.5 Be participatory in its approach
- 3.6 Act as an independent body

4. Criteria for membership of the PPN

To qualify for membership, groups must fulfil the following criteria:

- 4.1 Groups are not-for-profit and operate within the community, voluntary and environmental sectors
- 4.2 Have more than five (5) members
- 4.3 Have a written constitution, operating rules & procedures and/or memorandum & articles of association
- 4.4 Be a minimum of six months in existence
- 4.5 Be open to new members
- 4.6 Have a formal structure e.g. Chairperson, Secretary or Equivalent
- 4.7 Be active in County Mayo

- 4.8 Be broadly representative and accountable
- 4.9 Hold an AGM and have regular meetings
- 4.10 Be non-party political, anti-sectarian and non discriminatory
- 4.11 Be independent, with a committee or board (not a substructure or subcommittee)
- 4.12 Groups must be able to establish their bona fides as a community or voluntary organisation and provide documentation if requested to do so.
- 4.13 A PPN Member who intends to run for public office must declare their interest and on formal nomination step down from the PPN for the period of the elections and can return if not elected.
- 4.14 Groups are requested to renew their membership every year.
- 4.15 Please ensure to notify PPN Office of any changes in details of primary contact person for your group.

5. Structure of the PPN

- 5.1 The Mayo PPN shall be composed of its registered member groups in the county
- 5.2 The PPN is made up of a number of interconnected structures, these are:
the County Plenary (Section 6) ,
Municipal Plenary (Section 9) ,
Linkage (Interest) Groups (Section 11)
and Secretariat (Section 13)

6. County Plenary

- 6.1 The County Plenary is the ruling body of the PPN
- 6.2 The County Plenary will consist of all PPN registered members
- 6.3 The Plenary will meet a minimum of 2 times per year
- 6.4 All PPN members are entitled to 21 days notice of a Plenary meeting
- 6.5 The Plenary will adhere to the objectives set out in section 2
- 6.6 All Plenary members will opt to be a member of a voluntary, social inclusion or environmental college.
- 6.7 Each member organisation may select two people to represent them on the County Plenary
- 6.8 Each membership organisation will have one vote at the County Plenary
- 6.9 A special meeting of the Plenary can be called if requested by two thirds of membership groups by petition of members.

7. Decision Making Powers of the Plenary

- 7.1 The County Plenary is the ruling body of the PPN
- 7.2 The Plenary hosts elections of PPN members to the LCDC through the electoral colleges
- 7.3 The Plenary hosts elections to other committees and decision making structures by establishing and facilitating Linkage (Interest) Groups and electoral colleges
- 7.4 The Plenary hosts elections to the Secretariat every 3 years, at a meeting of the County Plenary
- 7.5 The County Plenary endorses any reviews undertaken on the work of the PPN
- 7.6 The County Plenary delegates the day to day running of the PPN to the Secretariat
- 7.7 The Plenary adopts and makes amendments to the PPN Constitution (see section 22)

8. Procedures for Plenary Meetings

- 8.1 A Plenary Meeting shall be deemed valid if at least 5% of the Member Organisations are represented, a minimum of 4 of Secretariat members are present, and a minimum of 21 days' notice of the meeting has been given.

- 8.2 A record of attendance and minutes will be kept for all meetings
- 8.3 Minutes of meetings will be published on the PPN website, following approval by the Secretariat
- 8.4 Plenary meetings will be facilitated/chaired by a person nominated by the Secretariat.
- 8.5 If considered appropriate by the Secretariat, a non-member may be invited to attend a meeting and speak on a specific agenda item
- 8.6 Motions for discussion should be submitted to the Secretariat 7 days before a plenary meeting
- 8.7 A motion can be submitted by any registered member of the PPN, a Linkage (Interest) group, municipal plenary or electoral college
- 8.8 Decisions of the Plenary will be made by taking a vote. Decisions will be carried by a simple majority of all members present.
- 8.9 In the event that there is a tie in a vote, the chairperson will have the casting vote. The chairperson will act in accordance with the agreed view of the wider Secretariat.

9. Municipal District Plenary

- 9.1 The Municipal District Plenary is made up of all registered members (i.e. of the Community, Environmental and Voluntary electoral colleges) in each of Mayo's Municipal Districts –
- 9.2 Municipal District Plenary meetings are called by the Secretariat representative for each district
- 9.3 Each member organisation may select two people to represent them on Plenary of the Municipal District PPN.
- 9.4 Each Member Organisation will have one vote.
- 9.5 The Municipal District PPN will be guided by the vision and objectives of the PPN
- 9.6 The Municipal District report to the Plenary annually on their activities
- 9.7 Member organisations of the Municipal District PPN may also be members of the County PPN.
- 9.8 A special meeting of the Municipal District Plenary can be called if requested by two thirds of its membership by petition

10. Decision Making Powers of the Municipal District Plenary

- 10.1 The Municipal District Plenary can develop and submit policy proposals as agreed by their membership
- 10.2 The Municipal District can establish their own Secretariat to coordinate the activities of the municipal district Plenary

11. Linkage (Interest) Groups

- 11.1 All PPN membership groups have the option of joining a Linkage (Interest) Group (to link with a specific committee/s where the PPN is being represented)
- 11.2 The Linkage (Interest) Group discuss and debate issues of relevance to the committee
- 11.3 The Linkage (Interest) Group and representative engage in 2-way communication on matters
- 11.4 The Linkage (Interest) Group informs the representative on the committee of their views
- 11.5 The representative feeds back to the Linkage (Interest) Group and is accountable to them
- 11.6 The Linkage (Interest) Group representatives will be guided by the Representatives Charter
- 11.7 The Linkage (Interest) Group reports to the Plenary annually, through a report issued by the Secretariat
- 11.8 All Linkage (Interest) Groups members should have the opportunity to agree the contents of the report, where agreement has not been reached this should be stated

12. Decision Making Powers of Linkage (Interest) Groups

- 12.1 The Linkage (Interest) Group elects representatives onto the committees seeking nominations

12.2 The Linkage (Interest) group can censure or remove a rep, if two thirds of Linkage (Interest) group members agree that they are not fulfilling the terms of the representatives charter

12.3 The Linkage (Interest) group can develop and submit policy proposals as agreed by their membership

13. Secretariat

The Secretariat shall....

13.1 Be made up of 14 members, 2 from each of the electoral college and two from each municipal district and be elected by the County Plenary

13.2 Facilitate the implementation of decisions made by the Plenary

13.3 Act as the coordinating body of the PPN and facilitate the PPN's day to day business

13.4 Facilitate and monitor effective communication between member groups and PPN representatives to ensure quality input into decision-making structures

13.5 Ensure procedures for elections are adhered to

13.6 Act as a support to representatives

13.7 Develop and oversee a work-plan for the PPN and carry out reviews as appropriate

14. Decision Making Powers of the Secretariat

The Secretariat of the PPN

14.1 The Secretariat can make decisions in relation to the effective day to day running of the PPN, in adherence to the objectives set out in section 2.

14.2 The Secretariat shall establish appropriate sub-committees/task groups or other sub-structures to effectively carry out their functions. Sub-structures should have clear remits and tasks in order to avoid duplication of effort – the establishment of ad hoc groups that are task-specific and wound-up once the task is completed is encouraged.

14.3 The Secretariat shall manage and monitor the budget of the PPN

14.4 The Secretariat will establish financial and governance subcommittees, that will report to the Secretariat at least twice annually.

14.5 The Secretariat will agree and oversee the implementation of the work plan with the local authority and review it regularly

14.6 The Secretariat will develop a communication policy

14.7 The Secretariat can appoint and manage staff for the PPN in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding agreed with the Mayo CC

14.8 The Secretariat will devise and implement an annual work-plan for the PPN

14.9 The Secretariat will establish processes for the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the PPN

14.10 The Secretariat maintains the County Register of all membership groups, a copy of which will be maintained by the local authority in accordance with Section 128 of the Local Government Act 2001.

14.11 The Secretariat will facilitate the establishment of Linkage (Interest) Groups by notifying all PPN members and organising meetings

14.12 The Secretariat will inform Linkage (Interest) groups/electoral colleges if a representative is not adhering to the Representatives charter.

15. Procedures for Meetings of the Secretariat

15.1 The Secretariat shall hold a minimum of 4 meetings per year. Attendance records shall be kept at meetings of the Secretariat and work reported to the Plenary annually.

15.2 The Secretariat will appoint a Convener and deputy Convener (see Terms of reference for Secretariat)

- 15.3 Any member from among those present may be chosen to act as Chair for that specific meeting.
- 15.3 The Convener will liaise with staff to set the agenda for Secretariat meetings
- 15.4 The quorum for all meetings of the Secretariat shall be one third plus 1 of all Secretariat members.
- 15.5 Notice for meetings along with agenda should be circulated to members prior to the date of the meeting.
- 15.6 All members can suggest items for the agenda up to 7 days before the meeting takes place
- 15.7 Minutes of all meetings must be adopted by members, signed by Chairperson (for that meeting) and a copy kept on file
- 15.8 Where possible, decisions of the Secretariat will be taken by consensus, but in the event of a vote being required, decisions will be carried by a simple majority of all members present
- 15.9 In the case of a tied vote the nominated Chairperson for the meeting will hold the casting vote
- 15.10 In the event of a member of the Secretariat failing to attend three consecutive meetings of the Secretariat of which s/he has been properly notified, without sending apologies prior to the meeting, s/he will be contacted by the Convener who will inform the Secretariat of the response
- 15.11 The Secretariat of the PPN will remain in place for a period of 3 years, to establish the PPN.
- 15.12 Elections will be held every three years, where all members of the Secretariat will retire their seats. A retiring Secretariat member, shall be eligible for re-election, however no Secretariat member will serve for period of more than 3 consecutive terms

16. Electoral Colleges

- 16.1 When joining the PPN, membership groups must opt to be a part of one of three electoral colleges within the PPN: Environment , Social Inclusion or Voluntary
- 16.2 To join the Social Inclusion Electoral College an organisation's primary objectives and activities must focus on social inclusion / social justice / equality.
- 16.3 To join the Environment Electoral College an organisation's primary objectives and activities must be environmental (i.e. ecological) protection and/or environmental sustainability. Membership of this Electoral College will be validated by the Environmental Pillar at a national level
- 16.4 Organisations whose primary objectives are other than those listed above will be members of the Voluntary Electoral College.
- 16.5 Each college chooses two people to represent them on the PPN Secretariat.
- 16.6 Each college elects members from among their own college members to represent them on the County's Local Community Development Committee (LCDC).
- 16.7 Members are to be nominated to the LCDC from the PPN (two from the Community and Voluntary College, two from the Social Inclusion College and one from the Environment College).
- 16.8 All nominees who put themselves forward for election should adhere to the charter for representatives

17. Conflicts of Interest on Committees of the PPN

- 17.1 Members should demonstrate transparency in all dealings and act in an honest, fair and independent way.
- 17.2 Committee members must disclose any conflict of interest, be it personal, family, business or otherwise, in relation to any initiative taken by the committee.
- 17.3 A conflict of interest can be related to personal, family or business matters, and may be associated with the member or anyone connected with the member benefitting directly or indirectly from activities of the committee.
- 17.4 If a disclosure of interest is made at a meeting, particulars of the disclosure will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting concerned, and or so long as the matter to which the disclosure related is being

dealt with by the meeting, the person by whom the disclosure is made shall not be counted in the quorum for the meeting.

17.5 Where a conflict of interest is declared by a member, that member will leave the meeting and will not be entitled to vote on the matter in which they have an interest. Upon returning to the meeting the member will be notified of the decision by the Chair and no further discussion will take place. All registered conflicts will be recorded in the minutes.

18. Elections of representatives to County Structures

18.1 When a position becomes available for a PPN representative on a county structure/committee, an election will be held.

18.2 In all elections of PPN representatives, care will be taken to ensure gender balance and geographical spread of representatives.

18.3 All nominations are formally ratified at the Plenary meeting of PPN.

18.4 Staff and Members of the local authority cannot be nominated through this process.

18.5 If anyone nominated through this process subsequently decides to enter electoral politics he/she must immediately resign their PPN representative role and

the substitute from the relevant nominating PPN unit (Electoral College / Linkage (Interest) Group) will replace them.

18.6 A person who has been an elected representative of any level of Government (local or national) should not be chosen to represent PPN in any representative role for one year after completing their term of office.

18.7 Employees/professionals, where there is a conflict of interest, cannot be nominated.

18.8 The validity of nominations will be decided by the Secretariat.

18.9 All PPN representatives should be guided by the Representatives' Charter and any criteria laid down by the unit that nominates them to their representative role.

18.10 A retiring representative who is required to step down will be eligible for re-election, however no representative can serve a term of more than 5 consecutive years

19. Nomination Procedures

19.1 Groups registered with the Mayo PPN will be invited to participate in nomination and election procedures, though the Plenary, Electoral Colleges, Municipal Districts or Linkage (Interest) Groups as appropriate.

19.2 PPN membership groups should be given 21 days notice of a nomination and election process

19.3 For the purposes of the election to the Secretariat, each PPN membership group is entitled to nominate one person for their municipal district and one person for their electoral college.

19.4 Nomination papers will be sent to each membership group, to the email or address indicated on the PPN registration form.

19.5 In the case of groups who are affiliated to County wide governing bodies which are also registered with Linkage (Interest) Groups, only the county wide governing body will be eligible to nominate and vote in Linkage (Interest) Group elections (e.g. Large organisations with several local branches or clubs e.g. GAA or Foróige have only one vote. Clubs or branches can vote in Linkage (Interest) Groups where the County governing structure has not registered).

19.6 Nomination forms must be fully completed, by an officer of the nominating group, to be eligible for inclusion in the election

19.7 A returning officer, selected by Mayo PPN Secretariat will decide on the validity of the nomination form and their decision is final.

19.8 Nomination forms must be submitted online via a link sent to each PPN member, or another method as decided by the PPN Secretariat

19.9 Where the same person is nominated for an Electoral College and a Municipal District, they will be asked to identify which position they prefer. No candidate can contest two seats.

20. Voting Procedures

20.1 Nomination and election procedures will be issued by the PPN unit acting on behalf of the Secretariat before each election. Members will have a mechanism to appeal procedures.

20.2 All fully completed nominations received by the closing date, which are deemed eligible, will be put forward for the election

20.3 A set of voting papers will be issued to the person nominated to represent the group at the meeting— as indicated on the PPN registration form.

20.4 If the named representative cannot attend the meeting they can name an alternate. They must inform the PPN office of the name of the alternate at least one day prior to the election.

20.5 Ballot papers will only be issued to representatives who have been named in advance of the meeting.

20.6 Each eligible individual can only vote on behalf of one organisation only. If an individual is nominated to vote on behalf of another organisation they must ensure that a committee member of that organisation is present for the purposes of voting.

20.7 If it is impossible for the PPN group's representative to attend the meeting, they should indicate that they require a postal vote by 7 days before the election. This request will then be considered by the PPN unit.

20.8 All representatives should have a picture ID with them. (Drivers license, Passport, Student ID). When they present their ID, they will receive voting papers for their specified Municipal District, Electoral College or Linkage (Interest) Group where appropriate.

20.9 Voting will take place at a specified time during the meeting. Counting of votes will proceed immediately thereafter

20.10 Officers will be appointed by Mayo PPN Secretariat to oversee the election and count the ballot papers.

20.11 Where the number of candidates nominated equals the number of seats, these candidates will be automatically deemed elected.

20.12 Voting will take place in accordance with a proportional representational system.

20.13 Where the number of candidates exceeds the number of seats, the person(s) who receives the highest number of first preference votes will be deemed elected, taking into consideration measures to ensure gender balance and a geographic spread of candidates, as appropriate.

20.14 In the event that that a clear preference is not indicated on a ballot sheet, it will be deemed a spoiled vote and will not be counted.

20.15 In the event of a tie, the successful candidate will be determined by lot. The names of tied candidates will put in a hat. The first name drawn out will be deemed to be elected. If there are two seats the first two names drawn out will be deemed elected.

20.16 Nominated delegates who are unsuccessful will be deemed 'substitute members' in the event that the successful nominee resigns her or his seat over the lifetime of the Secretariat. The unsuccessful nominee with the highest number of votes will be the first substitute; the second highest number of votes will be second substitute and so on

20.17 Appeals on the nomination and or election process should be made in writing to the PPN Secretariat.

21. Appeals Committee

There shall exist an Appeals Committee.

21.1 The Appeals Committee shall consist of a panel of ten members who have been members for more

than one year. To hear an appeal three members of the Appeals Committee shall be drawn by lot to form an Appeals Tribunal. The members of an Appeals Tribunal shall have no direct organisational involvement in the decision appealed against, nor any other conflict of interest.

21.2 Appeals must be commenced within 4 months of the decision which is being appealed against.

21.3 An Appeals Tribunal may nominate one of their members to act as mediator, to explore the possibility of resolving the dispute without resort to the Appeals procedure.

21.4 When considering appeals, an Appeals Tribunal shall hear all relevant evidence and shall have power to lift or confirm the suspension or expulsion of a group or suspension or expulsion of a member, or deprivation of office of an officer. Its decisions shall be announced within seven days of being reached and shall be final.

21.5 An Appeals Tribunal shall hear cases relating to other issues as provided for in this Constitution.

22. Protecting the Integrity of the PPN

To protect the integrity of the PPN, a disciplinary procedures document will outline the process to be undertaken when an allegation is made that a group is ...

a. Acting in a manner contrary to the values, aims or objectives of the PPN.

Or

b. Failing to comply with the criteria for membership set out in section 4 of this Constitution.

While the disciplinary process is being pursued, voting rights for groups will be suspended until the issue has been resolved. In line with due process and the

disciplinary procedures document, a membership group may be exonerated or removed from the PPN.

An appeals process is available to groups.

23. Amendments to the Constitution

23.1 Future amendments to the 'Constitution' shall be decided by a two-thirds majority of Plenary members, present at a meeting and eligible to vote.

23.2 A proposal to make an amendment to a Constitution can be made by the Secretariat or by a collective of three registered membership groups.

23.3 Proposals to amend the Constitution should be submitted to the Secretariat in writing within 14 days of the Plenary Meeting and made available to Plenary members at least 7 days in advance of a Plenary meeting.