

Memorandum of Understanding

Between

Mayo County Council (MCC)

And

Mayo Public Participation Network (Mayo PPN)

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Purpose and Scope

To outline in a clear and unambiguous manner the roles and responsibilities of Mayo County Council and Mayo Public Participation Network with regard to the delivery of the PPN Programme as laid down in Local Govt Reform Act 2014, Guidelines provided by DECLG in May 2014 (as set out in Circular CVSP1/2014), further clarification provided during 2014 in FAQ documents by Pobal Sept 2014, and in subsequent Departmental circulars.

This MoU provides the framework for a working arrangement between MCC and MPPN.

Context

Sec. 46 of the Local Govt Reform Act 2014 provides for local authorities to

“take such steps as it considers appropriate to consult with and promote effective participation by the local community in local government”

Local authorities are instructed under the Act to

“adopt a document to be known as a Framework for Public Participation in Local Governmentfor the purposes of promoting, developing and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to participation in decision-making processes of the local authority by the local community”

and to provide for

“participatory mechanisms to promote, support and facilitate the local community’s input into decision making by the local Authority”

Guidelines issued by the DoECLG direct local authorities to satisfy the requirements of the Act by establishing Public Participation Networks:

“A new framework for public engagement and participation, to be called “The Public Participation Network (PPN)” will be developed within each local authority area (engaging in and within municipal districts and at the County/City level) to enable the public to take an active formal role in the policy making and oversight activities of the Local Authority’s areas of responsibility.

The PPN will be the main link through which the local authority connects with the community, voluntary and environmental sectors without prejudice to other consultation processes.

The aim of the structures and processes is to facilitate and enable the public and the organisations to articulate a diverse range of views and interests within the local government system, not to reduce or homogenise this diversity. A parallel and equally important aim should be to facilitate the local authority in making better and more timely decisions.

Members of the local community interact with local government at different levels. The PPN facilitates input by the public into local government through a structure that ensures public participation and representation on decision-making committees within local government. The Network is expected to perform its functions following core principles to facilitate active participation with decision making bodies as identified earlier i.e. participation, trust, accountability, transparency and independence.

Structure of the PPN

The PPN shall consist of all community and voluntary groups in Co. Mayo who register with Mayo County Council's PPN. Groups shall register under one of three Electoral Colleges:

- Social Inclusion
- Environment
- Community & Voluntary

The Municipal District in which the group is based will also be registered. These details may be used from time to time to determine voting rights where voting is confined to certain types of group or areas of the county.

It is intended that the PPN will be as flat in structure as possible, to facilitate the inclusion of as many people as possible in decision-making.

However, a small representative steering committee shall be drawn from the wider membership to work closely with the Support Worker and Council and drive the workplan of the PPN between Plenary meetings. This steering committee shall be known as the Secretariat.

Where a spokesperson or signatory is required on behalf of the PPN, it shall be drawn from the Secretariat.

Purpose of the PPN

The overarching purpose of Mayo PPN is

To facilitate the inclusion of the public and the community sector in the decision-making processes of Mayo County Council, and other key decision-making bodies in Co Mayo.

Its activities and resources will be organised in such a way as to enable it to achieve this purpose. If the PPN is to be effective, the Council and the community sector must work closely together. In particular, the Council and the PPN must view their relationship as a Partnership of mutual benefit, and for the good of the people of Co. Mayo.

The Role of the Council is:

To establish and ensure the continued development of a Public Participation Network which:

- *Facilitates the participation and representation of communities in a fair, equitable and transparent manner through the environmental, social inclusion and community & voluntary sectors on decision making bodies*

- *Encourages active citizenship at all levels of society and in all aspects of community life and Council activity*
- *Facilitates voices from all backgrounds to get involved and have their say on issues which affect them*
- *Strengthens the capacity of communities and of the environmental, social inclusion, and community & 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 to the PPN which acts as a hub around which information is distributed and received.*

The Role of the PPN is:

- *To contribute to the local authority's development of a County vision for the well-being of this and future generations.*
- *To facilitate opportunities for networking, communication and the sharing of information between environmental, community and voluntary groups and between these groups and the local authority.*
- *To identify issues of collective concern and work to influence policy locally in relation to these issues.*
- *To form linkage groups as deemed relevant in response to the PPN, LA and agencies alike*
- *Develop a well-being statement*
- *To actively support inclusion 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 public participation in local decision making and planning of services.*
- *To facilitate the selection of participants from the environmental, social inclusion and community & voluntary sectors onto county decision making bodies.*
- *To support a process 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.*
- *To work to develop the Environmental, Social Inclusion and Community & Voluntary sectors so that the work of the sectors is clearly recognised and acknowledged and the sectors have a strong collective voice within the County.*
 - *to support the individual members of the Public Participation Network so that:*
 - *They can develop their capacity and do their work more effectively*
 - *They can participate effectively in the Public Participation Network activities*
 - *They are included and their voices and concerns are heard.*

Core Areas of Activity & Responsibilities of the Partners

Membership

- *The PPN shall maintain a database of member organisations.*
- *The PPN will own, manage and be accountable for its membership Database in accordance with the data protection acts of 1998 and 2003*
- *The PPN will collaborate with the Local authority, the DECLG and the Social Partners on the PPN Database reports as required.*

- All active, non-party political community & voluntary organisations based in Co Mayo shall be entitled to join. Membership shall be free.
- Other organisations which do not meet membership criteria may become 'associate' members as a way of keeping in touch with PPN activities.
- MCC shall encourage all community groups with which it comes into contact to register with the PPN
- MCC shall only provide funding support to groups which shall register with the PPN.

Representation

- MCC shall source all community representatives for Council committees such as SPC's, JPC, LCDC etc via the PPN
- Agencies affiliated to the LCDC shall be encouraged in the interest of good governance and equivalence, to source for their committees PPN representatives through the PPN framework
- All committees with PPN representatives will provide them with copies of those committees Standing Orders and circulate Agendas for meetings giving the PPN Reps. adequate time to liaise with their respective Linkage groups to accommodate amendments deemed appropriate from the respective Linkage Group. Ideally 5 days minimum.
- All Council Committees will afford PPN time on their respective Agenda's
- PPN reps shall be provided with induction training upon taking up position, and shall be facilitated to feed back to the PPN.

Consultation

- All Council Plans and Strategies for public consultation shall be forwarded to the PPN for comment.
- Where the PPN Secretariat considers that the potential impact of a proposed Plan/ Strategy on the community sector is great, the PPN shall run a community consultation event in support of the Council's wider public consultation exercise.
- Where PPN members Organisation/s have a concern about a proposed plan / strategy, they can, via the Secretariat, request a consultation process be triggered.

Information

- PPN and Council PR staff shall cc each other on all press releases, and carry all appropriate material prominently on each other's newsletters, websites and social media pages

Roles and Responsibilities

- MCC will deliver a Public Participation Network in its operational area. MCC undertakes to provide a minimum of €30,000 funding to maximise the budget available to Mayo PPN subject to Annual Budget approved by councillors.
- The Director of Community & Economic Development or their appointed representative (minimum Administrative Officer level) will act on behalf of MCC. Any change in this individual shall be communicated in writing.
- MCC & the PPN will collaboratively take responsibility for the rollout of the PPN Framework in County Mayo in a manner that responds to the urgency of making the PPN become operational and functional in accordance with objectives of Public Participation Networks.

- Mayo PPN Secretariat shall delegate up to three individuals to act on its behalf with regard to the negotiation and annual review of this MOU. Any change in these individuals shall be communicated in writing to both parties

Workplan and budget

Mayo PPN will:

- Devise an annual detailed workplan by end February each year which will clearly demonstrate how it will achieve the aims and objectives of the PPN within that calendar year.
- Identify the itemised budget and resource requirements under the workplan
- Have in place a robust financial management system and financial reporting structure
- Have a clear reporting mechanism on key performance indicators and other items related to PPN activity.

Mayo CC will:

- Provide an allocation of €80,000 in the Council's Annual Budget towards the costs of the PPN. Pass on all funding allocated by the Dept for supporting the PPN directly into the PPN's budget, to supplement the Council allocation. MCC reserves the right to adjust its annual allocation should the budget and workplan allow, following receipt of the Dept's allocation. Any adjustment shall be made in consultation with the PPN.
- Agree the workplan and budget for each calendar year within one month of receiving the proposed plan from the PPN
- Appoint a liaison person between the CC and the PPN who is at least at Administrative Officer level

Payments

- Areas of expenditure shall be agreed in principle at Secretariat meetings. Details of expenditure, including adherence to procurement procedures, and financial payments procedures, shall be the responsibility of the Support Worker, and overseen by Council line management.
- Financial payments shall be made by MCC, through the Agresso financial payment system and following normal Council procurement and financial payment procedures
- PPN expenditure shall be subject to MCC audit

Resources

MCC will provide the PPN with:

- A full time Resource Worker at Grade V level. The Resource Worker shall have a knowledge of community development. The cost of the support worker shall be met from the budget provided by MCC for the PPN.
- Workspace & equipment for the Resource Worker will be detailed in the SLA
- HR & IT support

- Mayo PPN shall manage its budget so as to ensure that there are sufficient funds to meet staff costs at all times .
- MCC will also:
 - Manage the HR elements of the resource worker in the furtherance of the workplan. However there will be a joint monthly meeting with 3 members of Secretariat, the resource worker, and the MCC administrative liaison officer to review the support worker’s programme for the month ahead so that all parties can coordinate their input.
 - Offer support and relevant training and development opportunities to the worker.
 - Act as the employer of the resource worker, taking responsibility for all relevant HR and Health and Safety matters, including having clear processes and procedures
 - Undertake to pay the resource worker from the PPN budget which is ring fenced to be used for PPN purposes only , deducting all taxes and charges and paying them to Revenue
 - Have employer’s liability and other relevant insurances.

As employer, MCC employee policies apply, eg use of ICT, dignity at work, Equal Opportunities, Grievance & Disciplinary, Sickness & Absence from Work, Health & safety, Code of Conduct, Child Protection, Dress Code etc.

Operational Co-operation

Mayo PPN will:

- Work constructively and collaboratively with MCC in the furtherance of the aims of Mayo PPN as set out in the Department’s guidelines as set out in Circular CVSP1/2014.
- Work with MCC on any funding applications which may be appropriate.
- Work with the Council, Agencies and other mediums to raise awareness of the PPN throughout the County of Mayo

Mayo PPN may:

- Engage in other activities provided they are complementary to their workplan and that they can access the extra resources required to undertake such work

Mayo CC will:

- Support the development of a wellbeing statement at local and county /city level.
- Approach PPN for representatives for all seats on decision making / advisory bodies under their auspices which require Environmental, Social Inclusion, or Community and Voluntary members
- Pay expenses to the PPN representatives on such structures according to a mechanism to be agreed with the PPN
- Work with the PPN to agree, adopt and implement a protocol for all committees/decision making bodies with PPN representatives that will enable the representatives to engage fully, taking into consideration timing, location, documentation etc.
- In the essence of good governance, establish protocols with the PPN to ensure Issues raised by the PPN membership relevant to such Council Committees are responded to in a timely way by the Committee via the Secretariat Resource Worker

- Use the PPN as their main way of communicating with the Environmental, Social Inclusion and Community & Voluntary Sector, including formal consultations.
- Offer workshops and training as required to PPN members to build their capacity to feed into policies and plans
- Provide a designated official who will liaise with and support the PPN
- Work with PPN on any funding applications which may be appropriate.

Reporting and Evaluation

Mayo PPN will:

- Submit quarterly reports to Mayo CC and to the Plenary via website publication, detailing progress on the workplan in accordance with agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Submit quarterly financial reports to Mayo CC and to the Plenary via website publication.
- Attend a half-yearly review meeting with Mayo CC
- Carry out Annual Reviews and produce an Annual Report on the PPN
- Devise, agree and implement a participatory evaluation framework which involves all stakeholders in the PPN process
- Sign off Jointly via the Secretariat with the Council on Reports to the Department as required to draw down funding

MCC will:

- Submit Joint signed off reports to the Department as required to draw down funds
- Inform the PPN within three working days of all Dept. correspondence regarding the PPN
- Participate in evaluation and monitoring of the PPN's performance

Conflict resolution

Every effort should be made to avoid serious conflict between the parties, by providing good communication protocols that will enable any issues to be dealt with early and in a timely manner.

In the event that any dispute relating to this MOU cannot be resolved by settlement between the parties, the parties shall attempt to resolve all disputes through informal means.

Dispute resolution may include mediation, arbitration, or any other procedures upon which the parties agree which could include the PPN National Oversight Committee

Review

This MOU will be reviewed in writing every year on the anniversary of its signing. Any recommended changes must be agreed by both parties.

Commencement

This agreement will come into force on 1st/February/2017 and be effective until 31st/January/2018.

Name: _____

Name: _____

Signed: _____

On Behalf of Mayo County Council

Director of Community & Economic Development

Dated: _____

Signed: _____

On Behalf of Mayo PPN

Convener of PPN Secretariat

Dated: _____