PPN User Guide Review - Submission

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Plain English Review

The use of language in the User Guide can at times be a little inaccessible and it is advisable that a Plain English Review be conducted to identify areas where this could be addressed. This is a straightforward service provided by NALA (the National Adult Literacy Agency) and would be a worthy means of working towards a greater level of inclusivity for the wider public.

Revised Terminology

The specialist terminology selected for use within the context of PPNs ought to be revised and replaced with more everyday terminology to improve accessibility for the wider public. For example,

- 'Members Meeting' should replace 'Plenary'
- 'Steering Committee' should replace 'Secretariat'
- 'Category' or 'Sector' should replace 'College'

In their current form, these titles tend to have to be explained, which places a barrier of jargon before outside actors, making the PPN's appear inaccessible and exclusive. This must be addressed as a matter of priority.

Targeted Audiences

As it stands, it seems the User Guide is intended to serve as an information source for all actors, from members of the general public to those working within the structures and everything between. This is problematic as the Guide has been produced without a clear audience in mind, with the result being that it is overtly detailed for those seeking a cursory understanding of what PPNs are while it lacks detail for PPN Members and Workers who need specific guidance on the formation and operation of PPNs.

It would be preferable to produce a more simplified guide or a form of Executive Summary for the former group and an in-depth Operational Guide for the latter group. That way the User Guide could be developed with target audiences in mind, which would make it a more effective tool for all.

Content

The content of the User Guide is, generally speaking, rather light in detail and it would be preferable for this to be addressed to improve its effectiveness. Now that PPNs have been in operation for several years, it would be worthwhile drawing on concrete examples from across the country to review structures and methods of operation, and assess what works and what doesn't.

There are currently 3 PPN structure types, Local Authority-based, Hosted, and Legally Constituted, so it would make sense to identify examples from within each type. For example, it would be useful to incorporate detailed descriptions, guidelines, or 'how-to' sections on,

- How to structure decision-making within the various PPN bodies to drive decision-making
- Developing strategy, work-plans, etc.
- The nuts and bolts of running PPN elections
- A step-by-step guide to the re-registration process
- … and so on

By incorporating this level of detailed content into the User Guide, it would be possible for members and workers within PPNs to identify new or different approaches to issues that arise.

While it is important that each PPN remains locally responsive and having a non-prescriptive approach to operational matters facilitates this, that must be balanced with the inefficiency of each PPN having to navigate very similar issues independently of one another. If the User Guide could evolve to form reference point for different approaches to navigating common issues it would become a repository of expertise that is sorely absent at present.