**Submission to DRCD on the PPN User guide**
**From: South Dublin Public Participation Network**

30th April 2019

The PPN User Guide recognises the different ways in which PPNs are set up (e.g. limited company, host organisation etc). Each set up has its own particular set of benefits and challenges and SDCPPN are making this submission from the perspective of a PPN in a hosted arrangement. This provides the required level of independence which is a key principle for SDCPPN in objectively supporting community engagement with the LA. Challenges exist in delivering on some of the requirements of the PPN where LA engagement is critical to the delivery.

**Linkage Group operation**

Effective operation of Linkage groups requires the timely provision of Committee meeting Agendas and Minutes to inform the Linkage Group discussion. This is referenced in the section on '*Participation and Representation on Decision/Policy making bodies (Representation for improved decision making)*' as –

'*Some modifications in the operations of Boards or Committees are often required to facilitate volunteer PPN representatives. Some good practice guidelines for this are found in Appendix 8*'

- Appendix 8 –

  'To give one month's notice of meetings and to circulate the agenda and any documentation for reading at absolute minimum two weeks in advance. This is to facilitate PPN members to consult with their linkage group before the meeting and to ensure that members have adequate information with which to make comments and decisions.'

Both the Committee *Standing Orders* and the PPN *User Guide* good practice guidelines are clear on this point. PPNs in areas where this does not happen and where agendas may be issued just days in advance of meetings are disadvantaged and effective Linkage group meetings are more challenging.

The issue also exists of the ability of PPNs to place items on the agenda for committee meetings. It is a fundamental requirement for the effective operation of Linkage Groups that they know that they have been heard and that their time and efforts are contributing to policy formation.

*'The way in which the Committee conducts its business has a huge impact on the effectiveness of PPN representation. An overformal and rigid process can make participation difficult' (PPN User Guide)*

The User Guide recognises that participation may be difficult in a scenario where there is an *overformal rigid process*. The review of the User Guide could establish that this recognition

needs to go further and that real solutions (that go beyond recommendations or guidelines in order to resolve them) should be identified and negotiated.

**Information Sharing and Communication**

*'LAs need to ensure that all potentially relevant information is sent to the PPN for circulation'(PPN User Guide)*

This does not always happen. For example a PPN may be notified about funding administered by the Community section within the Council (e.g. the Community Enhancement Fund) but not funding from the Arts section (e.g. the Bealtaine Festival).

The review of the PPN User Guide could include a consultation with LAs to agree the parameters on 'relevant' information.