

Review of PPN User Guide – submission from PPN Coordinators

Individual PPNs are no doubt making their own submissions, this review is submitted on behalf of all PPN Coordinators

The Coordinators welcome the consultative approach of this review and would also be happy to continue to engage as the review progresses. We also hope that a final draft review will be circulated for final comment before it is completed.

General Comments:

- It is important that the Guide remains a Guide enabling PPNs to adopt best practice; different PPNs can have different interpretations to suit local circumstances.
- The Development of PPNs is hugely dependent on the approach of the LA and the standard varies enormously; If the LA treats Reps poorly, fails to accommodate Reps we will have difficulty getting Reps – we need to highlight shared responsibility.
- The PPN needs to be seen as the ‘critical friend’ for the LA without query and question being taken as criticism; LAs need to realise that this is the new reality. Participative democracy is here and it needs to be embraced.
- Clarification of the role of the IEN and eligibility of PPN groups (eg Tidy Towns) for membership of the IEN and representation as PPN Environment reps.
- The updated Guide should include templates and procedures for grievance and conflict issues; such procedures would give the Secretariat guidance on how to deal with situations where individuals or groups may be bringing the PPN into disrepute.
- The flat management structure of Secretariats continue to give concern – the need for rotating facilitators is accepted but some flexibility is also required – maybe facilitators could be rotated on a six monthly basis (as some PPNs already do) to give some continuity?
- This could also cover management of reps, upholding reps charter, bullying and simplifying process to remove people from the Secretariat or Board.
- Clarification management structures including Limited Companies is needed.
- The Guide should be more specific in participation in local elections – candidates must step aside immediately and remain ineligible for PPN roles for at least 12 months.
- A list of acronyms would be useful.
- The role of the National Advisory Group (NAG) is increasingly important (and indeed welcomed). This should be clarified and the NAG is the consultation vehicle – currently the Department sends out consultation (such as this one). It would be administratively simpler to use existing structures such as the NAG.

Specific comments on the existing Guide:

- Page 9 Linkage Groups: this needs to reflect the reality that too many meetings cause meeting fatigue and is not practical on the ground; guidance on best practice for set up and engagement would be useful;

- [P14 Budget & Workplan](#) – Can wording of paragraph 1 be changed to encourage LAs to exceed the €30K, and highlight the 2017 report where many LAs exceed this or offer additional soft support.
- [P14 Resource Worker](#) last paragraph – admin support trainees not always allowable in LAs; could depend on host Agency employment terms.
- [P14 Resource Worker](#) – clear line management arrangements needed – whether this is through Local Authority or Secretariats. Avoidance of any conflict of interest.
- [P15 Relationship with the LA](#) – bullet point 2 ‘right throughout the LA’: This is key to the development of PPNs and perhaps we can consider a structure to facilitate this – for example PPN Ambassadors in each LA section? LAs need to be encouraged to support PPNs a little more.
- [Appendix 1 – Managing Membership](#) - clear guidance is needed on the re-registration process: maybe specify “at least every second year” to allow individual PPNs latitude to do this annually if they wish. Role of Salesforce? Any GDPR implications here?
- [Appendix 1 – Managing Membership](#) - Paragraph 6 ‘As such they should be active users of email’ makes sense but we must recognise that many active groups do not use email. We must remain inclusive.
- [Appendix 1 – Managing Membership](#) - Paragraph 6 ‘An individual should not be the contact for multiple groups’ – we agree with this as an aim but it is difficult in practice: some groups would not be members only for one key contact who is happy to take on the contact role. We do not want to lose groups.
- [Appendix 1 – Managing Membership](#) - Paragraph 7 “direct outreach to groups” - This is not possible with current resourcing of PPNs. With the admin load on current workers real development work is not possible.
- [Appendix 8](#) – The responsibilities of the board or Committee are all great but meet resistance at Committee level. This is guidance for best practice and as such LAs should be encouraged to insist Board/Committees adopt the guidance as well.

The Coordinators are happy to elaborate on any of these points

Kind Regards on behalf of the PPN Coordinators

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