

# Code of Conduct for PPN Secretariat, Representatives and Plenary

## 1. General

This Code of Conduct shall be signed by every member of the PPN elected to a representative position on the various committees or boards where the PPN has such representation and by the members of the Secretariat.

This Code of Conduct details what each member shall commit to in their role as a representative of the PPN and in all areas relating to their interaction with, and on behalf of, the PPN.

All members and members with a representative role have a duty of care and responsibility to act in the best interests of the PPN complying with this Code of Conduct and the provisions of the Constitution. Integrity and honesty shall be the hallmarks of all conduct within and on behalf of the PPN particularly when dealing with fellow members and colleagues and external individuals and agencies.

## 2. Organisational Values

All members commit to and promise to comply with the fundamental values that underpin all the activities of PPN.

### **Inclusive**

All members will seek to actively include volunteer-led groups in the PPN area that might not otherwise be included or who might not often have their voice heard.

### **Participatory**

All members will encourage participation of Member Groups in all areas of PPN work, ensuring there are a range of methods used for clear communication with Member Groups. It is important that members are welcoming, respectful and willing to work together and support one another, and particularly Member Groups that may be new or have limited experience.

### **Valuing of Diversity**

Members must take account of the whole range of views from across the many Member Groups and Colleges with different experiences and opinions.

### **Independent**

Members are required to support the independent representation of the views of Member Groups and Colleges. It is important that any member representing the PPN in whatever capacity must represent the views of the PPN and not their own or those of their own member group.

### **Transparency**

Members shall promote an atmosphere of openness throughout the PPN in order to promote confidence to members of the public, Cork County Council Elected Members and staff, beneficiaries and regulators and to promote strategic and operational effectiveness.

### **Accountability**

As a member everything you do and every interaction you are involved in shall be able to stand the test of scrutiny by members of the public, the media, members, beneficiaries, stakeholders and the regulatory authorities.

Accountability will be delivered through having good governance policies and procedures in place. Members shall always support the ethos and values of PPN and ensure compliance with good governance and shall:

- Commit to supporting and advocating compliance with good governance for the Community and Voluntary Sector and the myriad of groups and organisations within the sector;
- Participate in appropriate induction, training and development programmes;
- Support the Resource Worker in their executive role and the Rotating Chair / Facilitator in their leadership role.

### 3. Commitment to PPN

All members shall commit to consistently:

- Support the PPN's vision, values, principles and aims and actively promote these;
- Always comply with PPN's policy and procedure;
- Seek to maintain and promote integrity, good governance, effectiveness and efficiency for the delivery of the aims of PPN;
- Not break the law or act against any regulation in force that would bring the PPN into disrepute.

### 4. Guardian of the PPN's reputation

Members shall:

- Not speak as a member to the media or any public forum without the prior knowledge and approval of the Rotating Chair / Facilitator of the Secretariat.
- Ensure that any comments made as a member shall reflect current policy even if they do not agree with them.
- When speaking as a private citizen uphold the reputation of the PPN.
- Respect individual confidentiality.
- Take an active interest in the PPN's public image.

### 5. Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest can be described as any form of personal interest, which may affect, or might reasonably be thought to affect, on an individual's impartiality in decision-making. Personal interest includes an interest of a relative or connected person or organisation.

In accordance with the Ethics Act 2005, a member must disclose any pecuniary or other beneficial interest in, or material to, any matter which is to be considered by the organisation, whether the Secretariat, Plenary or a Committee or Board on which they sit as a representative. and in such case he or she shall;

- Disclose to the Secretariat, Plenary or Committee or Board on which they sit the nature of the interest in advance of any consideration of the matter.
- Neither influence nor seek to influence a decision relating to the matter.
- Take no part in any consideration of the matter.

- Not take part in any vote on the matter to influence the decision of the Secretariat, Plenary or Committee or Board on which they sit or be considered part of the quorum for that matter.

All members shall always:

- Act in the best interests of the PPN;
- Declare any potential ‘Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Loyalty’ or any such circumstance as may be viewed by others as conflicting as soon as it arises;
- Abide by decisions of the Secretariat, Plenary or Committee or Board on which they sit and comply with any requirements it makes regarding potential conflicts of interest or loyalty.

### **Conflicts of Interest at Secretariat Level**

If a disclosure of a conflict of interest is made at a meeting of the Secretariat, particulars of the disclosure shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting concerned, and for so long as the matter to which the disclosure relates 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.

In addition, in such cases the Secretary to the Secretariat shall maintain a separate record of the discussion (to which the member shall not have access).

Where a question arises as to whether or not a matter for consideration by the Secretariat relates to the interests of a member or a person or body connected with that Secretariat member, the matter will be decided by a vote of all Secretariat members excluding the member(s) to whom the matter relates.

## **6. Personal Gain**

Members shall:

- Not personally gain from their role as a member nor permit others to do so as a result of actions or negligence.
- Document expenses and seek reimbursement according to agreed procedure.
- Not accept gifts or hospitality without the consent of the Rotating Chair / Facilitator.
- Use PPN resources responsibly, when authorised in accordance with procedure.

## **7. Leaving the Secretariat or Representative Role**

Members shall:

- Understand that any breach of this code may result in that person’s removal from the PPN or any of its constituent levels – Linkage Groups, Secretariat or any representative role.
- Inform the Rotating Chair / Facilitator of the Secretariat in writing, stating reasons for resigning from the Secretariat or representative role.
- Participate in an exit interview if requested.

## **8. Plenary and other Meetings of PPN Members**

Representatives of member groups attending Plenary and other meetings internal to or external to the PPN shall at all times conduct and behave in a professional manner keeping in mind at all times

their conduct reflects on the integrity of the PPN and the sector and shall observe accepted practice while participating as a representative or member and shall:

- Be courteous and respectful to everyone present throughout;
- Speak by addressing the Rotating Chair / Facilitator;
- Only address the meeting in order and as directed by Rotating Chair / Facilitator;
- Comply immediately with directions of Rotating Chair / Facilitator;
- Not cross talk or interruption of any speaker addressing the meeting;
- Follow the Agenda and strive to reach effective decisions;
- Represent the views of your member organisation;
- Turn off your mobile phones (where you have an emergency call please leave the room);
- Be prepared for all meetings by reading relevant documents that are received in reasonable time before the meeting.

The Facilitator/ Rotating Chairperson will introduce these rules of conduct at the beginning of Plenary meetings (and other PPN meetings) and seek agreement from those present that they be adopted as Ground Rules for all participants for the duration of the meeting. The Facilitator/ Rotating Chairperson should establish at the meeting if there is any other rule of conduct that those present wish to add to assist the running of the event e.g. no attributing contributions in social media posts. All meetings of the PPN will be run according to these rules, which will be made available on the PPN website and in the notification of meetings.

Members of the Secretariat and PPN Representatives attending Plenary and other meetings need to ensure that they fulfil their roles and responsibilities. Other member(s) of their own group should participate to put forth the views of that group.

## 9. Secretariat Members Specifically

### Rights of Secretariat Members

- The right to receive correct information-agendas, minutes etc.
- The right to be heard.
- The right to be consulted and included in decision making.
- The right to respect from colleagues.
- The right to confidentiality around sensitive issues.
- The right not to participate in any discussion or vote on grounds of conflict of interest.
- The right to make a valid claim for reimbursement for expenses incurred in the work of the Secretariat. *Please check the details of the PPN Travel & Expenses Policy and not the deadlines for submission of claims.*

### Responsibilities of Secretariat Members

Members of the Secretariat shall:

- Embody the principles of good governance and proper procedure in all actions and live up to the trust placed on them by their election to the Secretariat.
- Comply and abide by the PPN governance procedures and practice.
- Maintain a respectful attitude to all others and their opinions at all times.
- Participate in at least one sub-group of the Secretariat, as appropriate.
- Adhere to the standing orders and abide by the constitution.

- Commit to attend all Secretariat Meetings, and in the event of unavoidable inability to attend, shall send an apology to the Secretariat.
- Strive to be familiar with all agenda items received by them and be prepared to contribute to discussion and decision making at meetings.
- Respect the authority of the Rotating Chair / Facilitator.
- Participate in decision making.
- Understand that decisions will ideally be made by consensus but may be by vote and shall consider any majority vote as a corporate decision and will accept and support it.
- Carry out any tasks agreed in a timely manner.
- Contribute your skills to the projects of the Secretariat.
- Be loyal to the Secretariat and its members.
- Respect the Secretariat and its work.
- Maintain confidentiality unless authorised to speak on matters outside Secretariat meetings.
- Be accountable to other members of the Secretariat and to the PPN membership as a whole.
- Ensure that all expense claims are correct and relate to the work of the Secretariat.

### Responsibilities of Facilitator/ Rotating Chair

In respect of this Code of Conduct, any member acting as Facilitator/ Rotating Chair shall exercise the same rights and responsibilities as other Secretariat members and shall:

- Ensure they are familiar with the Code of Conduct and have access to a copy of this;
- Be watchful to ensure that all members are abiding by the Code of Conduct during the meeting;
- Politely and respectfully remind members of their agreement to abide by the Code, as necessary;
- Conduct the meeting in such a manner as to support constructive discussion and consensus building e.g. ensuring all participants are encouraged to contribute and can do so when they wish;
- Foster collaborative working and development of a “team”, exercising caution that they are not overbearing.

## 10. Attendance at Secretariat meetings

Members should make every effort to attend all meetings and to that end:

- The Secretariat shall produce a schedule of meetings once per year of all secretariat meetings.
- Any member missing three meetings without giving apologies shall be deemed to have resigned.
- Where a member has missed three meetings without giving apologies, the member will be contacted by the Resource Worker, who will report on the matter at the next Secretariat meeting for decision.
- A Secretariat member that is deemed to have resigned will be replaced by convening a meeting of the body from which the representative was appointed at its earliest convenience. *(Secretariat members are elected either from Colleges or from the relevant Municipal District so, for example, if a Secretariat member elected by the Social Inclusion*

*College were to have resigned then the Social Inclusion members of the PPN would be brought together to elect a replacement.)*

## 11. Breaches of This Code of Conduct Policy

The Cork County PPN Secretariat reserves the right to uphold the conditions of the Code of Conduct Policy.

In matters relating to code of conduct at meetings, all matters of order are the responsibility of the Facilitator/ Rotating Chairperson. In such cases the Facilitator/ Rotating Chairperson has the right to the following courses of action:

- Deem a matter or proposal “Out of Order”.
- Deem the behaviour or conduct of a member to be in breach of the code of conduct. In this circumstance the member can be warned of their conduct and can be asked to leave the meeting either temporarily or permanently.
- Suspend or adjourn a meeting or part of a meeting and refer the particular dispute to the Secretariat Conduct Committee\*.
- If a Secretariat member raises a concern over a breach of the Code of Conduct during a meeting, the Facilitator/ Rotating Chair is required to respond and address the situation and to refer the matter to the Secretariat Conduct Committee\*.

For all other matters where a Breach of the Code of Conduct is suspected the Secretariat Conduct Committee \*will gather all evidence and make recommendation(s) to the Secretariat of the appropriate sanctions that should be imposed if misconduct is found to have occurred, up to and including permanently removing representatives from their role and/or the PPN Secretariat.

*\* The Secretariat Conduct Committee is a standing Committee of the Secretariat, made up of 3 people who occupy the position for 3 years, with one member standing down each year to allow for turnover but retain experience.*

## 12. Adoption

This Code of Conduct was adopted at the Annual General Meeting of the PPN held on:

\_\_\_\_\_

Signed on behalf of Cork County Public Participation Network Plenary:

\_\_\_\_\_

Facilitator/ Rotating Chair

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Date approved by Plenary:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed by Each Representative / Secretariat Member**

I have read, understand and agree to abide by this Code of Conduct:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature:

Name of Committee / Board: \_\_\_\_\_

All Secretariat members and PPN Representatives will receive two copies of this Code of Conduct. They are required to sign one and return it to the PPN before commencing in their role.

***Date approved by Plenary:*** \_\_\_\_\_