



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK

FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS 2017 AND OTHER ISSUES.

xx/3/2017

Circular Letter CVSP1/2017

To: Each Director of Service, Community

Cc: Each Resource Worker PPN

I would like to acknowledge the significant progress achieved by local authority staff, volunteers and others in developing the PPN structure over the past two and a half years, with PPNs now the main link through which each local authority connects with the community, voluntary and environmental sectors in its area.

It is appreciated that there have been some challenges in the development of PPNs and that further challenges may arise. These challenges will need to be met by the different stakeholders in an atmosphere of partnership to ensure all sectors can actively and positively engage in decision making forums.

Initial Funding 2017

To ensure PPN's have access to sufficient funding from the outset, the Department made a payment of €30,000 in January to each local authority in respect of its PPN. The Department would expect that local authorities in turn would make provision for a similar amount of funding to be also available to PPN's from January 2017. The combined contribution of Department and local authority funds should negate some of the problems encountered in 2016 relating to the ability of PPNs to meet their commitments.

Balance of Funding

The priority for the Department was to ensure that each PPN had access to funds from as early as possible in 2017. In relation to the balance of the Department's 2017 funding, the Department will, as in 2016 request each local authority/PPN to provide an account of actual expenditure from January – end September 2017 along with an estimate of

expenditure covering October to end December 2017. All reconciliations will be carried out at this stage and any offsets arising will be accounted for from the balance of funding due.

Use of Funding/Accountability

Funding is ring-fenced and can only be used for the purposes of developing and maintaining the PPN. The most common usage which the Department envisages for the funding would include:

- Cost of employment of a resource worker (full time equivalent)
- Office space, infrastructure and materials for the resource worker
- Expenses incurred by the PPN in carrying out its activities i.e. holding meetings, training, elections, publicity materials, insurance etc.

Funding should only be used on the basis of a clear Memorandum of Understanding between the PPN and the local authority. Where no such arrangement exists, one should be agreed and put in place as a matter of urgency. Arrangements such as the periodic drawdown of funding, payment of commitments and expenses incurred, requirements by either party relating to this funding can be clearly set out in an MOU. Recoupment to be made by the Department following the initial payment of €30,000 will be dependent on an MOU being agreed and in place.

As local authorities are expected to account for the expenditure incurred by the PPN's, they should retain records (copies/originals) of all payments made. It is entirely a matter for the local authority and the PPN to agree the arrangements between them that ensures accountability of Exchequer funding. Irrespective of the status/structure of the PPN, the requirement to account for expenditure from public funds applies to all.

Audit.

In line with appropriate governance procedures, it is the Department's intention to carry out a desk top audit of expenditure incurred in 2016 by PPNs. Further advice on this will issue in due course.

Deadlines – PPN User Guide

When first issued in May 2016, the PPN User Guide developed by the Department with the assistance of Social Justice Ireland contained a number of deadlines (some extended) for local authorities/PPNS as follows -

- Local Authorities should ensure that all voluntary representatives on their Boards and Committees come through the PPN electoral process. Where this is not the case, the situation was to be regularised without delay

- Each PPN and local authority should have agreed a formal Memorandum of Understanding to govern their operations to facilitate the drawdown of funds
- Any PPN which has an individual occupying multiple seats, or does not have Linkage Groups in place for all Boards and Committees upon which it has representatives must regularise this matter as early as possible

In each of the above, I would be grateful if you would confirm whether the local authority and the PPN as appropriate have regularised these matters.

Advisory Group

The existing PPN National Advisory Group's current members, although representative of the various PPN stakeholder groups, were invited by the Department to participate and not elected or nominated to their positions.

To ensure that the Advisory Group is representative of the various PPN stakeholder groups, the essential principle is that the Group's members are nominated, elected or chosen in a fully open and transparent, fair and democratic manner. To achieve this, a new nomination process is currently being considered. Further details will issue in due course.

Salesforce Database - Support for PPNs in 2017.

Following on from the roll-out of the Salesforce Database to PPNs, the Department has agreed to fund the provision of on-going support services to PPNs by South Dublin Volunteer Centre (SDVC) and Enclude for 2017.

Along with first level support, SDVC will provide day to day case management and phone line support and a number of regional workshops. In addition, SDVC will be engaged in the development of surveying and event gathering tools, individual training of new members of staff and other supports as identified.

It is understood that the work in the first year of this new system would be particularly intensive as it would require a monitoring role to ensure that staff are populating the database properly and making good use of the features therein.

South Dublin Volunteer Centre will shortly be communicating with PPNs on the matter.

Dedicated mail address

A dedicated e-mail address for communication between the Department and local authorities /PPNs in matters pertaining to the network has been set up. All communication by mail can now be sent to **PPN@housing.gov.ie**.

Yours sincerely

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