

Strategic Plan 2022-2025 Goals and Objectives

The PPN Vision

Having invested considerable work in developing its consensus-based Vision for Community Wellbeing, Carlow PPN's member groups have determined the Network's Vision for the duration of this Strategic Plan.

Carlow PPN has an agreed **Vision** for Community Wellbeing where:

"We are a diverse community, celebrating all our rich heritage and where all people are valued and supported to live healthy and fulfilled lives. All our citizens are well informed and engage actively in their communities and in decision-making. We have well-planned facilities, infrastructure and services that facilitate us to be leaders in sustainability and best practice within our thriving economy and vibrant local communities."

(Carlow PPN Community Wellbeing Statement, 2020)

The PPN works with all stakeholders to see this Vision achieved.

The PPN's Values and Principles

The ethos of the PPN is very important to how it works. In doing its work, each PPN keeps to a set of six principles. This means every PPN must be:

- **Inclusive** of all volunteer-led groups in their area, and actively look to include groups that might not otherwise be included or who might not often have their voice heard.
- **Participatory**, open, welcoming, respectful, willing to work together and supportive of each other. The PPN will encourage participation by Member Groups in all of its work. There should be clear communications to and from Member Groups using as wide a range of communication methods as possible to make sure that their reach is as broad as possible. The PPN should support new Member Groups, and Member Groups who might not have a lot of experience.
- **Independent** from the Local Authority and of any special interests (the PPN must account to the Local Authority for its budget but is independent in its work).
- **Valuing of Diversity** and recognise that the Colleges are made up of people and Member Groups that have a wide range of different views, experiences, and opinions. PPNs are expected to feed into local government decision-making with the whole range of views from its Member Groups and their Colleges.
- **Transparent** in everything that it does. It should communicate openly, regularly and clearly with all Member Groups.
- **Accountable** to its Member Groups by putting good governance policies and procedures in place.

(PPN Handbook, November 2020)

Progress from Carlow PPN's First Strategic Plan (2018-2021)

This is Carlow PPN's second Strategic Plan. Enormous work has been undertaken since the PPN was established in County Carlow and particularly during the period of the first Strategic Plan (2018-2021). This work is documented in Annual Reports, PPN newsletters and other archives and cannot all be presented here.

A full review of the first Strategic Plan and its delivery was undertaken as part of work towards this new Plan, which highlighted objectives that have only been partially delivered and need continued work. However, it also pointed towards significant achievements by the PPN. These successes need to be recognised and acknowledged and it is vital that these are retained and built upon in future work. These achievements include the following.

- **Robust, accountable and transparent structures and processes underpin the PPN.** While there is a need to communicate about these structures and processes and to make them easily understood, Carlow PPN has secured good governance objectives as set out in the PPN Handbook.
- **Consultation Toolkit produced setting out best practice in community consultation and engagement.** This important resource was developed and is available for reference in relation to all community engagements. It needs to be showcased again post Covid and perhaps updated in light of the experience of engagement during the pandemic.
- **Consensus based PPN Vision for Community Wellbeing agreed.** This major piece of work represents the shared position of member groups and was a cornerstone in helping create the identity of the PPN as a Network. This needs to be maintained front and centre, promoted to both member groups and other stakeholders, clearly informing PPN actions. The more use is made of this, the stronger future versions will become as members appreciate its importance.
- **PPN is a go-to information resource on community news and engagement in Co. Carlow.** Through its website, digital media and regular E-bulletin the PPN has established itself as consistently delivering this role for the community in County Carlow. This role and the material shared can always be improved and enhanced but represents great potential for growth.
- **Strong relationships with other stakeholders are established, especially with Carlow County Council.** Relationships vary with different sections of the Council and ongoing work on these, as well as with other stakeholder groups and organisations are necessary to maintain and strengthen relationships that have been built, and establish new ones.
- **A highly motivated and knowledgeable staff team that works well with the Secretariat to support delivery of the PPN objectives as decided by the member groups.** This experience of a positive dynamic between staff and volunteers is a powerful, enabling environment for future work.

Development of this Strategic Plan

This new Strategic Plan (2022-2025) was developed through a number of stages:

1. **Review of the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan.** This involved the Secretariat taking a detailed look at work that the PPN carried out during this period and how closely it had been able to deliver on the objectives contained in the plan. This gave clear indications where great progress has been made and also identified those areas where more work is needed.
2. **SWOT Analysis of the PPN.** This analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats faced by the PPN was carried out by the Secretariat. This exercise allowed the Secretariat to consider the operation of the PPN as they have experienced it outside the framework of the first Strategic Plan and in the wider political, economic and social context, particularly reflecting their experience as volunteers within the structure as well as members of community groups that the PPN exists to serve. It reinforced much of the material gathered in the review of the first Strategic Plan and helped crystallise where the PPN needs to focus its effort over the coming 3-4 years.

3. Prioritisation of Strategic Objectives. The outputs from stages 1 and 2 (above) were combined and reviewed to identify a number of thematic areas in which the PPN needs to focus its attention to ensure it is a fully inclusive Network that truly reflects the community it is tasked to represent and that it can operate successfully internally and in its interactions with all stakeholders. These themes included:

- Open approach
- Awareness/ understanding
- Communications
- External factors
- Financial concerns
- Governance/ best practice
- Membership/ member groups
- PPN Team and skills
- Political uncertainty
- Representation

It is important to recognise that the PPN's ability to exercise control in relation to these different themes is variable.

4. Preparation of Draft Goals and Objectives. A set of Draft Goals and Objectives were drawn up for review by the Secretariat in response to the needs identified in previous stages.

5. Identification of Key Performance Indicators. Once the Draft Goals and Objectives were approved, the Secretariat proceeded to select appropriate Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) by which success in delivering the objectives within the Strategic Plan can be measured. It is appropriate that at the time of setting goals, some measure to assess how far the target is reached is also identified, as these should then most closely reflect what the Strategic Plan intends to deliver.

6. The Draft Strategic Plan (2022-2025) is made available to all member groups for comment. The Strategic Plan is the document that sets out the strategic objectives of the Plenary over the coming four years and so the full PPN membership must be consulted on its contents. Ordinarily, member groups would have been engaged from the first stages in the process of developing the Draft Strategic Plan but it was felt that the COVID pandemic and the weight of online engagements would present a challenge to this. One of the issues identified in the review process and highlighted in the Draft Plan is also that the awareness and understanding of the PPN's role and how it operates is still limited, even amongst member groups, who might have found it hard to input initially. It is hoped that, when presented with a concise Plan of what the PPN proposes to tackle over the next few years, they will find it easier to give feedback.

7. Revision of the Draft Strategic Plan. On the basis of feedback from member groups, the Draft Strategic Plan will be amended. In the event that significant change is proposed, it will be re-circulated to the member groups. However, if only minor amendments are required, it will then be forwarded to the Plenary for adoption.

How our Vision for Community Wellbeing, our Strategic Plan and our Annual Workplans work together

Our Vision for Community Wellbeing sets out what the PPN member groups want to see achieved in Carlow. This Strategic Plan sets out the PPN's approach to working towards that Vision over the next 4 years, with long term aims for that time (goals) and how it is going to achieve those (objectives). To deliver on each of these objectives, a range of specific actions will be needed. The Secretariat will work on identifying these actions and the order they need to occur, as well as deciding who will need to be involved in delivering them. These actions will form the Workplans.

Goals and Objectives

On the following pages, the five goals included in this Strategic Plan are set out. Each is broken down into a number of objectives.

Goal 1. Ensure widespread awareness and understanding of PPN in Carlow.

OBJECTIVES:

- a. Simplify language & illustrate
 - i) structure & purpose of PPN,
 - ii) how PPN relates to Local Authority & other agencies,
 - iii) role of PPN Representatives & how they relate to PPN structures and others,
 - iv) other critical structures and relationships both within the PPN & between the PPN and others.

Goal 2. Create a vibrant and inclusive Network that is inclusive and responsive to the needs of member groups.

OBJECTIVES:

- A. Continue to ensure that the PPN as the “go to” hub for all information relevant to community groups in County Carlow.
- B. Ensure regular and meaningful communication with member groups and others in the community (including those that are harder to reach), to understand what they are seeking to achieve, and provide useful and relevant information and support.
- C. Maximise use of post-COVID opportunities for outreach and PPN best practice in engagement/ consultation. Discover how the PPN can better serve the full range of community groups and sectors and work to do this.
- D. Actively engage with Carlow County Council (esp. the Community Section) and the Department of Community and Rural Development to build positive working relationships and highlight the positive contribution of the PPN in Carlow to the work of local government.

Goal 3. Promote the PPN, its work and achievements both within the Network and externally.

OBJECTIVES:

Share information on member groups and showcase their activities

- i) within the PPN membership
 - ii) to other organisations and the wider public
- A. Foster and support collaborative projects and agreed priority objectives.
 - B. Promote the PPN's work and achievements to all stakeholders and the wider public. Look for opportunities to engage and work collaboratively with all stakeholders and develop partnership initiatives.
 - C. Actively engage with Carlow County Council (esp. the Community Section) and the Department of Community and Rural Development to build positive working relationships and highlight the positive contribution of the PPN in Carlow to the work of local government.

Goal 4. Strengthen the voice and influence of the community through the PPN across County Carlow.

OBJECTIVES:

- A. Work with member groups to ensure that all of them have the confidence that the PPN will support candidates they put forward to be representatives, or Secretariat members, and to enable them to participate in Linkage Groups, Municipal District meetings, etc.
- B. Secure full complement of PPN Secretariat and representatives that reflects the diversity within the community in County Carlow.
- C. Deliver effective Linkage Groups (or equivalents) and communications to support PPN representatives and keep all the PPN informed of representation work.
- D. Ensure the learning within the Secretariat and amongst representatives is retained over time. Build on resilient and positive internal relations to ensure that members that serve in these roles are part of effective, positive teams.
- E. Actively support representatives to fulfil their role on committees, identify institutional challenges to this and seek to have these addressed.
- F. Identify and pursue all opportunities to represent the community voice.

Goal 5. Model best practice operation within the PPN and support member groups to achieve the same.

OBJECTIVES:

- A. Develop and agree all governance provisions as set out in the PPN Handbook and others as necessary. Ensure annual provision for review and updating of governance arrangements as necessary.
- B. Set out and adopt best practice in relation to internal operation of the PPN, ensuring staff and volunteers are supported to fulfil their roles successfully, workloads are appropriately managed, and motivated and knowledgeable staff and volunteers are retained. (Provide for annual review to identify any areas needing attention.)
- C. Understand the governance challenges for member groups and provide support (through information, training, & other activities) to enable them to comply with these.
- D. Help minimise the governance burden for community groups.