

## Linkage Group Policy / Framework

### Version history

Version	Date Adopted	Facilitator	Note
1.0			

### Document controls

Action	Responsibility
Approval of document	Secretariat and Plenary
Implementation	Secretariat, Plenary, Staff and Supervisory Working Group, Members
Review	Secretariat
Date of next review	

## 1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to set out how Linkage Groups operate within South Dublin County Public Participation Network (SDC PPN).

Linkage Groups provide a structured space for PPN members to come together around shared policy areas or themes, to discuss issues, share information, and collectively inform the work of the PPN, including representation on external bodies.

### 1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all Linkage Groups established by SDC PPN, whether existing or future, and across all policy areas.

It sets out:

- the purpose and role of Linkage Groups
- how they are established and overseen
- participation and facilitation arrangements
- their relationship to representation and mandate
- authority, limits and accountability

This policy should be read alongside the Constitution, Elections Policy, Representative Charter and Secretariat Terms of Reference.

## 2. What a Linkage Group Is (and Is Not)

### 2.1 What a Linkage Group Is

A Linkage Group is a member-led, facilitated space for:

- discussion and debate on policy issues
- information-sharing and learning
- building shared understanding and collective input
- informing PPN representation and engagement

Linkage Groups support meaningful participation by enabling members with a shared interest to engage in depth on specific issues.

### 2.2 What a Linkage Group Is Not

A Linkage Group:

- is not a decision-making body
- cannot commit the PPN to positions, actions or expenditure
- is not a representative body in itself
- does not replace the role of the Plenary or Secretariat

Where representatives are elected through linkage groups, this is governed by the Elections Policy, and any required ratification is carried out in line with agreed procedures.

### 3. Establishment and Oversight of Linkage Groups

Linkage Groups are established and reviewed by the Secretariat, informed by:

- decisions of the Plenary
- the agreed annual work plan
- emerging policy priorities

The Secretariat may:

- establish new Linkage Groups
- merge or pause Linkage Groups
- review the ongoing relevance of groups

This flexibility ensures that Linkage Groups remain responsive, relevant and proportionate.

### 4. Membership and Participation

Participation in Linkage Groups is open to:

- Full Members of SDC PPN
- Associate Members of SDC PPN

Full and Associate Members may participate in one or more Linkage Groups.

Where voting or mandate is required for representative purposes, this is reserved to Full Members, in line with the Constitution and Elections Policy.

Participation in Linkage Groups does not create additional governance authority.

## 5. Facilitation and Support

Linkage Groups are member-led and operate on a participatory basis.

PPN staff:

- provide coordination and administrative support
- support facilitation where required
- assist with information-sharing and follow-up

Staff do not direct agendas, outcomes or positions taken by Linkage Groups.

Facilitation approaches are applied in a way that supports inclusive and respectful participation.

## 6. Role of Linkage Groups in Representation and Mandate

Linkage Groups are the primary space for discussion, information-sharing and mandate-building to inform PPN representation.

Where applicable:

- PPN representatives are linked to relevant Linkage Groups
- representatives report into and receive guidance from those groups
- Linkage Groups support representatives to reflect the collective views of members

Representation processes are governed by the Elections Policy and Representative Charter.

## 7. Authority, Decision-Making and Limits

Linkage Groups:

- do not have independent decision-making authority
- cannot commit the PPN to positions, actions or expenditure
- make recommendations and provide input only

Formal decisions rest with:

- the Plenary
- the Secretariat

- or through agreed representative processes

This ensures clarity, accountability and good governance.

## **8. Reporting, Records and Transparency**

Linkage Groups operate with proportionate and appropriate record-keeping, reflecting their role as participatory and discussion-based forums rather than decision-making bodies.

This may include:

- notes of meetings or discussions
- key points or themes raised
- agreed actions or follow-up

Reporting back is carried out in a proportionate way, including:

- feedback to participating members
- updates to the Secretariat where appropriate

This supports transparency without creating unnecessary administrative burden.

## **9. Review, Dissolution and Amendments**

Linkage Groups are reviewed periodically to ensure they remain relevant and effective.

A Linkage Group may be:

- concluded once its purpose is met
- paused where activity is no longer required
- reconfigured in response to changing priorities

This policy is reviewed periodically and may be amended in line with SDC PPN governance procedures.