

Membership Policy (including eligibility and pillars)

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

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Membership Policy is to set out clear, fair and transparent arrangements for membership of South Dublin County Public Participation Network (SDC PPN).

This policy explains:

- who can become a member of SDC PPN
- the types of membership available
- eligibility criteria
- pillar classification
- membership rights and responsibilities
- how membership is reviewed, renewed, suspended or removed

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the SDC PPN Constitution. Where membership principles are set out in the Constitution, this policy provides clarity on how those principles are applied in practice.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all organisations seeking membership of SDC PPN and to all current members.

Membership registration is completed through an online form on the SDC PPN website. This policy sets out the rules that apply to membership; the registration form operates the process.

2. Principles of Membership

SDC PPN membership is guided by the principles set out in the PPN Handbook and national best practice.

Membership is:

- open, voluntary and inclusive
- based on clear eligibility criteria
- focused on collective community benefit
- independent of political parties and commercial interests
- supportive of democratic participation and accountability

Membership is not automatic and is subject to verification to ensure that organisations meet the criteria set out in this policy.

3. Types of Membership

SDC PPN recognises two types of membership:

- Full Members, and
- Associate Members.

3.1 Full Members

Full Members are organisations that meet the eligibility criteria set out in this policy and hold full membership rights within the PPN.

Full Members:

- may vote at Plenary
- may stand for election to the Secretariat
- may act as PPN Representatives to external committees and bodies
- are assigned to a primary pillar for representation and reporting purposes

3.2 Associate Members

Associate Members are organisations that have a legitimate interest in community, social inclusion or environmental issues but do not meet all criteria for Full Membership.

Associate Members:

- may participate in PPN activities, events, workshops and consultations
- may attend Plenary meetings
- may be invited to speak at Plenary at the discretion of the Chair or Facilitator

Associate Members:

- may not vote at Plenary
- may not sit on the Secretariat
- may not act as PPN Representatives to external committees or boards

4. Eligibility for Membership

4.1 Eligibility for Full Membership

To be eligible for Full Membership of SDC PPN, an organisation must meet the eligibility principles set out in the SDC PPN Constitution and must also demonstrate, in practice, that it meets the following criteria:

- the organisation is not-for-profit and operates for community benefit, not private gain
- the organisation is community-led and volunteer-governed, whether or not it employs staff
- the organisation has been operating for a minimum period of six months
- the organisation has a local connection to South Dublin County, demonstrated by:
 - a registered or correspondence address in the county, or
 - primary activity in, or benefit to, South Dublin County
- the organisation is an organisation or group, not an individual, and has a level of collective participation beyond a single person
- the organisation has an agreed governance structure or set of rules appropriate to its size and purpose
- the organisation meets or engages on a regular basis, appropriate to the nature of its activities
- the organisation is open to participation or engagement, where appropriate to its purpose
- the organisation aligns with at least one of the PPN pillars
- the organisation agrees to comply with the PPN Code of Conduct and relevant PPN policies

Supporting documentation may be requested where necessary to clarify eligibility, in line with a fair and proportionate assessment process.

Membership of SDC PPN does not in itself constitute endorsement of an organisation or guarantee eligibility for funding.

4.2 Eligibility for Associate Membership

Associate Membership may be offered to organisations that:

- have been operating for less than six months, or
- do not meet all structural or governance criteria for Full Membership, but
- have a legitimate interest in, or connection to, community, social inclusion or environmental issues in South Dublin County

Associate Membership enables engagement with the PPN while maintaining clear governance and representative boundaries, as set out in this policy and the Constitution.

5. Pillars: Community, Social Inclusion and Environment

SDC PPN operates three pillars:

- Community
- Social Inclusion
- Environment

Members may identify with more than one pillar. Each Full Member is assigned to one primary pillar for the purposes of elections, representation and reporting.

5.1 Community Pillar

The Community Pillar includes organisations that support community development, participation and wellbeing at a local level.

Examples include residents' associations, community centres, sports or cultural groups, and local development organisations.

5.2 Social Inclusion Pillar

The Social Inclusion Pillar includes organisations that work with or represent people experiencing disadvantage or exclusion, or that advocate for equality and inclusion.

Examples include organisations working with older people, people with disabilities, migrants, Travellers, and people experiencing poverty or social exclusion.

5.3 Environment Pillar

The Environment Pillar includes organisations whose primary purpose is environmental protection or sustainability.

Where an organisation seeks classification under the Environment Pillar, additional verification questions or declarations may be required to confirm that environmental protection or sustainability is a primary purpose. Supporting documentation is requested only where clarification is needed.

6. Causes and Areas of Interest

As part of the membership registration process, organisations are asked to select the causes or areas of interest that most closely represent their work.

Causes are:

- self-identified by organisations
- used to support engagement, communications and consultation
- not used to determine eligibility, membership type, pillar assignment, voting or representation

Organisations may select multiple causes, and these may change over time.

7. Registration and Assessment of Applications

Applications for membership are submitted through the SDC PPN website registration form.

Membership applications are:

- assessed by PPN staff against the eligibility criteria set out in this policy
- reviewed in a fair, proportionate and consistent manner
- clarified with the applicant where information is incomplete or unclear

The Secretariat receives regular updates on new memberships for oversight purposes.

8. Review and Renewal of Membership

Membership of SDC PPN is subject to renewal through a re-registration process every two years.

In addition, membership records may be reviewed and updated as required to ensure information remains accurate and eligibility criteria continue to be met.

9. Suspension or Removal of Membership

Membership may be suspended or removed where an organisation:

- no longer meets eligibility criteria
- fails to re-register when required

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- seriously breaches the PPN Code of Conduct or relevant PPN policies

Any suspension or removal is carried out in a fair and proportionate manner, with the organisation informed of the reasons.

10. Appeals and Complaints

Any appeals or complaints relating to membership decisions are dealt with in accordance with the SDC PPN Complaints Policy.

11. Review and Amendments

This policy is reviewed every two years, in line with the membership re-registration cycle, or sooner where required due to changes in national guidance, legislation or operational practice.

Amendments are approved in line with SDC PPN governance procedures.