



An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail
Department of Rural and
Community Development

PPN Structural Review Implementation Roadmap

PPN Conference Workshop
5 October 2023

Background



- Structural Review – Mazars report
- Call for Input
- Conference workshop



Working Group

- Resource Worker Network (3 reps)
- Secretariat Network (3 reps)
- PPN representatives elected to Local Authority boards/committees (3 reps)
- County and City Management Association (CCMA)
- C&V Pillar
- Social Inclusion Pillar
- Environmental Pillar
- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
- Comhairle na nÓg
- Department of Health
- Irish Local Development Network
- Association of Irish Local Government



Working Group Milestones

1. Develop draft Roadmap based on report and feedback
2. Present draft to stakeholders for feedback to be incorporated into final draft
3. Submit the final draft to the Minister for consideration

Roadmap



“To guide future development to enable PPNs to best fulfil the objectives set out for them in the 2014 Report on Citizen Engagement with Local Government”

- Actions
- Owners
- Timescale



Draft Roadmap

Areas for Action: Governance and Accountability



- Take a 'back to basics' approach and prioritise actions
- Clarify mandatory requirements and proactively address non-compliance
- Review structures to ensure independence is maintained

Areas for Action: Communications and Engagement



- Introduce a PPN wide communication structure that improves the visibility and accessibility of PPNs
- Simplify roles and responsibilities to provide clearer descriptions for stakeholders
- Embrace opportunities for flexible models of engagement

Areas for Action: Coordination and Participation



- Minimise the barriers to participation to achieve greater partnership in participation
- Strengthen relationships and improve communication and engagement between PPNs and stakeholders
- Introduce a PPN wide coordination structure

Areas for Action: Training, Delivery and Supports



- Develop a 'PPN Way' of addressing and delivering the role of PPNs
- Adopt a 'one and done' approach to activities
- Clarify expectations of PPNs and provide necessary support to address issues of national importance

Areas for Action: Staffing and Skills



- Clarify staff requirements and address gaps in skills and competencies
- Further consider employee Terms and Conditions
- Provide more proactive and coordinated HR support

Areas for Action: Additional



- Increased funding/ more staff resources
- Multi-annual funding

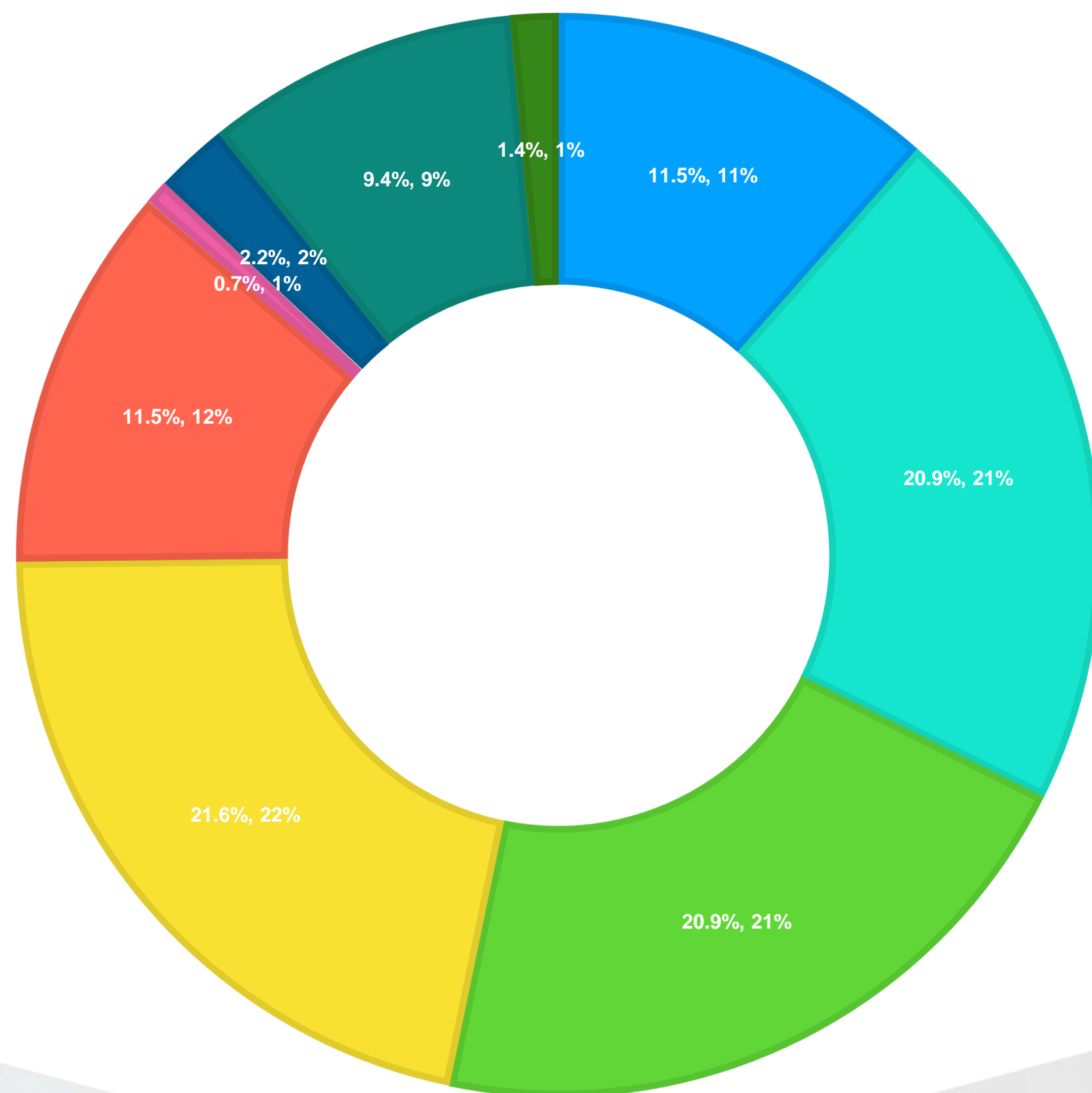


Consultation



What we heard from you: Roadmap survey

Responses



- PPN representative on a local policy committee/board
- PPN Secretariat member
- PPN staff member
- PPN other
- Local Authority staff member
- Central government staff member
- Non-Local Authority organisation that hosts a PPN
- Other
- Not provided



1. Governance and Accountability

- In general high levels of support for the actions in this area; between 69% and 96% feeling actions are appropriate
 - 10% said inappropriate for 'PPNs to consider introducing an annual declaration of independence'
 - 8% said inappropriate to 'Further consider the role of the Secretariat and review its purpose'

2. Communications and Engagement



- Very high levels of support for actions in this area

I think the focus should be on deepening the engagement and quality with the existing colleges and How can we capture actual work of PPNs and what they are about, communicate how they engage with groups, how can they support the voice and representation of community particularly those most impacted by policy making.

A skills audit for digital literacy should be conducted as part of this as the volunteers with the PPNs are in the age-brackets most associated with low digital skills and there is a skills gap in rural areas (OECD report)

3. Coordination and Participation



- Less certainty among respondents about this part of the draft Roadmap
 - 10% said inappropriate to ‘Provide targeted support and reduce over-reliance on volunteers’
 - 32% said inappropriate to ‘Remove the DRCD from operational aspects of the PPN’
 - 11% said inappropriate to ‘Allocate responsibility for PPN wide coordination’
- **Further exploration and discussion in this session – feedback very welcome**

Coordination and Participation



You can't reduce reliance on volunteers - these are voluntary groups: it's at the heart of what they are!

The DRCD is responsible for PPNs. Unless there is a mechanism to replace the operational support provided by the DRCD, such as a 'PPNs Ireland' body, a step back from the DRCD would be regressive and would leave a gap.

Secretariats Coordinate. Administrator carries out the duties under the Secretariat Work plan. A Policy Officer is needed in all PPNs to advise on policy inputs locally by PPN Reps, equally a National Coordinating Body or restructured National Secretariat with decision making powers should be properly staffed with a CEO, Development officers, Policy officers and Clerical Staff.

4. Training, Delivery and Supports



- In general high levels of support for the actions in this area; between 83% and 91% feeling actions are appropriate

Regular training is important

Because of turnover in staff and reps, has to be ongoing, and updated training given consistently.

The area of resourcing must link clearly to PPN aims and not mission creep into other areas of community based and local activities. PPNs do not have a role in developing community infrastructure, it has to support existing groups to engage meaningfully and hold local government to account

5. Staffing and Skills



- General support for actions set out in this section, between 76% and 93% felt they were appropriate
- 76% agree with 23% action to ‘Revise staff titles’, 23% were neutral and 1% deemed it an inappropriate action
- 85% agreed it appropriate, 5% said inappropriate to ‘Allocate responsibility for HR matters’

PPNs are not legal entities. host organisations should retain responsibility for all aspects of employment and Terms and conditions

The role of Resource Worker was developed because the person in post was meant to be an additional resource to the Secretariat and Plenary of the PPN, not the main point of contact for everything...It is far more important to clarify what the actual roles are, rather than the title of the role.



6. Additional Actions

- Again, generally very supportive of actions included in Roadmap but some concerns:
 - On multi-annual funding, while 75% deemed it appropriate, 10% said inappropriate to ‘Await outcome of Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities strategy’
 - Under increased funding, 83% considered it appropriate and 8% said inappropriate for ‘PPNs to consider collaborating to...produce a business case which DRCD could use in requesting additional funding [in] Estimates process’

The PPNs have already produced a business case for additional funding.

Department need to act now... Extra funding and resources must be given to PPN's especially in light of the development of local Authority Climate Action Plans which are going to greatly rely on PPN's to deliver many actions

Consultation: Crowe Next Steps



- Finalise survey analysis
- Conduct focus groups and one-to-one interviews with stakeholders, where needed
- Develop recommendations and revise Roadmap.

Discussion: National Coordination Body



- **What do you see as the role of a PPN-wide National Coordination structure?**
- *Prompts for discussion:*
 - What services should a PPN-wide National Coordination structure provide?
Operational aspects e.g. Conflict resolution? HR advice? Governance?
Financial advice? Other general guidance (Handbook)? Training/networking?
OR Policy / Strategic role? Communications and awareness raising? **OR** both?
 - Are there supports DRCD or The Wheel currently provide that could be taken on/better fit with a PPN-wide National Coordination structure?
 - How would the structure link to individual PPNs/Secretariats?
 - What role should DRCD take?
 - Scope for staff progression?



- Please nominate a note-taker & use sheet provided
- Feedback to whole room
- Notes will be shared with Crowe and published on DRCD website