



General criteria for membership of the Westmeath Public Participation Network (WPPN)

- Groups must be active in County Westmeath, have aims and objectives which are compatible with the principles of the PPN, and be not for profit.
- For Full Membership, groups must be in existence at least twelve months prior to affiliation, must have a minimum membership of three and be open to new membership.
- All organisations registered for the PPN should have an agreed set of rules and a working structure that informs the appropriate workings and structures for that organisation, which may differ across organisations. In most cases, this will be a constitution; terms of reference, a bank or credit union account, etc.
- Groups can only register once.
- Political parties will not be able to affiliate.
- Groups should be not for profit, non-political, non-sectarian, and non-religious.
- Public representatives (Councillors, TDs, Senators, MEPS etc), or those who have held such office within the past 12 months may not participate in the PPN. In addition, individuals who are declared as candidates for public representative office (Councillors, TDs, Senators, and MEPs etc) must step aside from all PPN roles for the duration of their declared candidacy.

Groups who have representational rights through the national pillars, local authorities, local development or other mechanisms may affiliate to and participate in the MD and county PPNs but should not participate in the election of representatives to Local Authority Committees.

The WPPN Secretariat are the body who determine eligibility for membership to the WPPN.

Membership of Electoral Pillars/Colleges

- Westmeath PPN had three electoral pillars/colleges and every member group is affiliated to one pillar only.
- The three pillars/colleges are
 - Community and Voluntary Pillar
 - Social Inclusion Pillar
 - Environmental Pillar
- Applicant Groups are asked to identify a pillar that matches their activities and primary interest best.
- The Secretariat ensure the appropriate Electoral Pillar has been chosen during the assessment process.
- In order to join the Environmental Pillar, groups must also be verified by a national body known as the ***National Environmental Pillar***.

Criteria for the Community and Voluntary College:

Community and voluntary organisations range in size and activities and a precise definition would be impossible. Their primary objectives focus on community responses to local issues and have activities that promote the overall wellbeing in their community.

Examples of types of Groups within the Community and Voluntary College	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Residents groups• Self-help groups• Youth groups• Community Associations• Arts groups• Playground Associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community councils• Issue based groups• Sporting/leisure clubs/groups• Active retirement groups• Broad based Service provision groups• Festival groups

Criteria for the Social Inclusion College:

A working definition of Social inclusion organisation is one whose main activity centers on working to improve the life chances and opportunities of those who are marginalised in society, living in poverty or in unemployment using community development approaches to build sustainable communities, where the values of equality and inclusion are promoted and human rights are respected.

Examples of the types of groups within the Social Inclusion College	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability groups • Traveller Groups • Ethnic minority groups • Women's Groups • Family Support groups • Literacy Groups • Older Peoples groups • Groups promoting equality • LGBT Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth service and groups • Children services and support groups • Mental health • Suicide prevention groups • Drug and alcohol support & information groups • Rural isolation and disadvantage groups • Urban disadvantage groups

Criteria for the Environmental College:

Groups wishing to join the Environmental College must have their registration verified by the national Environmental Pillar.

The national Environmental Pillar are a Social Partner and an advocacy coalition of 30 national environmental NGOs. They are the validating body for the membership of the Environmental Electoral Colleges of the City and County PPNs.

The primary objectives and activities of the organisation must be Environmental (i.e. ecological) protection and / or environmental sustainability.

The Environmental Pillar provides a list of qualifying criteria and areas of activity for local/regional groups and also a list of all the national networks whose local/regional groups are automatically eligible. Visit <https://environmentalpillar.ie/ppn/> for more information

Examples of types of groups within the Environmental College	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent protection of wildlife • Environmental education or protection • Environmental sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invasive alien species prevention/removal • Organic horticulture or education • Species specific care/protection/rehabilitation/reintroduction • Resource efficiency and recycling

WPPN Constitution: Extract from Section on Membership

Full Membership

5.1.1 Full Membership Criteria

Full membership of Westmeath PPN is open to community groups and organisations who:

- Have an address in Westmeath and are volunteer led (i.e. voluntary Board or Committee who are directly responsible for the organisation/group).
- Are not for profit, non-political, non-sectarian and non-religious organisation.
- Are independent (i.e. their own constitution) and not a subgroup/subsidiary of another group.
- Have at least three (3) members and are open to new members.
- Are in existence for at least twelve (12) months.
- Have an appropriate governance structure (formal structure) with an agreed:
 - Set of rules/financial procedures.
 - Meet regularly at least bi-monthly.
- Are National Organisations that are headquartered in Westmeath or through their Local Westmeath Branch (the local branch shall be eligible to vote and hold the representative position).
- Complete the Westmeath Community County Register Registration Form.

5.1.2 Term of Membership

Once an organisation has become a member of the PPN they shall be required to reaffirm their membership details every two years prior to the Annual General Plenary Meeting in that year.

5.1.3 Registration Process

- Prospective members register through filling out the Westmeath PPN Register form.
- The PPN Register form is used to register groups for the purpose of membership of the PPN and for the purposes of accessing supports and funding from Westmeath County Council and other agencies.
- PPN Register Forms are processed by the PPN Secretariat, who assess eligibility for membership and ensure the appropriate Electoral Pillar has been chosen (i.e. Community, Environment and Social Inclusion).

Associate Membership

Associate Membership provides a pathway and a link between key community groups/organisations and services in Westmeath who are excluded from Full Membership, to have a voice on matters of interest.

5.2.1 Advantages of having Associate Members

Associate Membership enhances and enriches the PPN as:

- Membership is extended to groups that do not meet PPN eligibility criteria.
- Associate members contribute to discussions at Linkage Group level and contribute to broadening and development of the Westmeath PPN perspective.
- Associated members expand the PPN reach into the wider community and support base.
- Associated members provide an opportunity to engage with and inform the professional community & voluntary sector.

5.2.2 Rights of Associate Membership

Associate members can:

- Attend the PPN training and events.
- Attend Linkage Groups and Plenary and contribute to discussion; however voting rights are not extended to Associate members.
- Receive information – newsletters, meeting minutes, etc.

5.2.3 Associate Membership Criteria

Associate membership of Westmeath PPN is open to groups and organisations not eligible for full membership but who:

- Engage with or support the PPN.
- Are a valid community group, organisation or service.
- Work is related, supportive or similar fields to that of the PPN or its members.
- Agree to comply with PPN policies and constitution.
- Have a Branch, Group, Association, etc. established in Westmeath for at least one year.

5.2.3 Associate Membership Registration Process

The process of registering for associate membership is the same as that outlined in section 5.1.3 above.