



Galway City Community Network  
Lionra Pobail Chathair Na Gaillimhe

## Galway City Community Network CLG

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# Galway City Community Network, The Public Participation Network in Galway City

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## LECP Guidelines 2021

## GCCN Submission

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March 2021

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## Preface

Established in 2014, **Galway City Community Network (GCCN)** is the Public Participation Network in Galway City. It represents groups and organisations in the community, voluntary and environmental sectors in Galway City.

### Aim

The aim of GCCN is to co-ordinate and support the representation of the community, voluntary and environmental sectors in Galway City.

### GCCN Role

The role of GCCN is to:

- **Facilitate representation** of the community, voluntary and environmental sectors on relevant local government, local development bodies and any local, regional, national or international structures deemed appropriate by GCCN.
- Act as a platform for the community, voluntary and environmental sectors to **develop policy and positions** on issues of common concern and to advocate for these policies and positions to be implemented.
- **Strengthen capacity** of the community, voluntary and environmental sectors, including to represent GCCN on all relevant structures.
- **Provide information** relevant to the environmental, social inclusion and voluntary sectors and act as a hub around which information is received and disseminated.

GCCN welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the development of new Guidelines for the Local Economic and Plan.

## Background

The Galway City Local Economic and Community Plan was produced in 2015. GCCN have been consistently critical of the process involved in producing the plan, in particular:

- The lack of consultation with, and participation of, stakeholders, including GCCN as the PPN in Galway City
- Failure to achieve buy-in from partners resulting in groups/organisations being unaware that they were named as partners, even lead partners
- A 64 point action plan that was vague and included in the main unilateral actions that would have happened even in the absence of the LECP.

After protracted engagement/negotiation, a process to develop a new LECP Implementation Plan 2020-2021 was agreed. This process was based on the following principles consistently advocated for by GCCN:

- collaborative - involving more than one partner
- added-value - not just an action that would be done anyway by an organisation or agency
- cross-sectoral – engaging organisations, groups and agencies across sectors

The actions in the new LECP Implementation Plan were planned, and the majority are being implemented, within this framework. On a practical level, each action is underpinned by a cross-sectoral Working Group with an identified lead partner. This is regarded as critical for the success of the LECP process.

While the situation has vastly improved, a number of issues remain:

- Progress on implementing the actions is greatest where they are being led by civil society organisations, who are least resourced to do so
- The actions that are led by State agencies, including the local authority, are the least likely to have made progress within the LECP framework
- In many cases, the current actions are complementary but ancillary to current workplans and it would be more beneficial if the LECP was integrated with Workplans for all the partners involved
- There is no obligation on State agencies to actively engage with the LECP process. While some do engage, others do not.
- There is no dedicated funding line to support implementation of the actions. While the local authority is providing some funding, this would be more beneficial if the funding was an actual funding-line and was mainstreamed, with contributions from the agencies involved.
- The role of the Economic SPC is vague and the process would benefit from a more coherence between the work of the LCDC and the SPC in the context of the LECP
- It would also be useful to clarify the role of the other SPCs and local authority departments in the context of the LECP

The remaining of the submission is presented on the basis of this experience and the learning that has been derived as a result.

## Recommendations based on the GCCN experience

### Pre-development

At pre-development level, DRCD must provide a training programme on cross-sectoral planning for members of the LCDC, the LECP Steering Committee and the local authority. This could be derived from the Diploma programme that DRCD commissioned a number of years ago.

There are two overarching policy areas that the LECP Guidelines must take into account – the Sustainable Development Goals and the Public Sector Duty<sup>1</sup>. DRCD must provide guidance on how both are to be taken into account in the process of developing and implementing the new LECP. Each Local Authority needs to carry out an assessment of human rights and equality issues relevant to their functions and purpose in compliance with the Public Sector Duty, with leadership from the Chief Executive and senior management, on the basis of which the LECP (as other local authority strategies) can be based.

It would be useful for DRCD to provide an analysis of national policies and strategies - such as the Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities, the (forthcoming) National Anti-Racism Strategy, the Roadmap to Social Inclusion, the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, the National Disability Strategy and the National Strategy for Women and Girls etc. - as they pertain to the LECP.

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<sup>1</sup> There are LECP Working Groups on both areas in Galway City.

An early planning process that is led by the LECP Steering Committee, comprising members of the Economic SPC and the LCDC, supplemented with external expertise will be essential to a successful process<sup>2</sup>.

The joint approach between the LCDC and the Economic SPC needs to be clarified and strengthened. The role of the other SPCs and local authority departments also needs to be clarified and communicated.

### **Participation and Collaboration in Consultation Processes**

A meaningful, robust engagement process that serves as a consultation process on which the LECP is developed.

The application of this process must be mandatory, though the approaches may differ according to the area in which it is being applied. The current LECP Guidelines are useful in suggesting the means/approaches to consultation but these were not mandatory at the time. In addition, they refer interchangeably to consultation, participation and collaboration – consultation is not always participative nor collaborative and the focus should be on the latter.

Recent guidance issued by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, *Tool for a Consultative Approach*, are also useful. While these focus on consultation in relation to the application of the Public Sector Duty, they provide a useful framework, based as they are on the following (slightly amended to fit the LECP process):

- Appropriate – the approach pursued is suited to the particular task involved
- Participative – the approach pursued is inclusive in engaging the voice of those experiencing marginalisation and inequality
- Accountable – the approach pursued is open and transparent
- Enabling – the approach pursued support the effective participation by stakeholders
- Accessible – the approach pursued involves identifying and addressing barriers to participation that arise for stakeholders.

The IHREC guide identifies five stages:

- Identify the **purpose** of the consultation
- Identify **key areas for consultation**
- Identify the **stakeholders**
- Establish the most **appropriate approach and methodology**
- Provide **feedback**

### **Critically**

- The process must be entered into by the local authority with ambition and a willingness to meaningfully engage.
- The process must engage with marginalised communities and the organisations that represent them
- Those involved in the consultation process must see their representation(s) reflected in the LECP and in real action to improve the lives of people in Galway City.

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<sup>2</sup> Galway City re-established the LECP Steering Committee to and it has worked very positively. The LECP Steering Committee has already commenced this process.

- The actions must be based on an evidence-based needs analysis
- There must be a clear indication of how the planned actions are to be implemented and an *evidence base/rationale* for their chosen approach.

### Values-Base

The current Galway City LECP Implementation Plan is based on a set of values. This approach has served the implementation process well and one that is suggested for replication.

### Cross-sectoral approach

The cross-sectoral approach is one of the unique features of the LECP and LCDC processes. However, GCCN experience suggests that there is significant work to be done in this area at national and local level.

At national level, GCCN notes and welcomes the cross-departmental composition of the national LECP Advisory Group and the potential that this composition has for ongoing engagement by a range of government departments.

At local level, and critically, buy-in at this level must be dispersed to the local level and all government department must instruct the local arms or agencies under their auspices to engage with the LECP process. This includes ensuring that actions are embedded in their own Workplans as appropriate and to ringfence budgets at local level for the LECP actions that are appropriate to their function. Where it exists, agencies should be recognised and commended for cross-sectoral collaboration.

### Implementation

One of the critical flaws in the LECP process currently is the lack of resources for the implementation of the plan. GCCN is suggesting a three-strand approach:

- A dedicated budget assigned to the implementation of actions provided by DRCD, similar to the Healthy Ireland model
- A requirement on public bodies and agencies to allocate proportions of their budgets to the implementation of actions that are appropriate to their functions
- A dedicated local authority budget allocated to actions as agreed by the LCDC and the LECP Steering Committee.

The LECP Steering Group has worked well for Galway City and is something that can be replicated.

### Themes

The guidelines must bring clarity to the types of actions that are appropriate to the LECP.

- Climate action, and in particular actions to address climate injustice and support just transition, must feature including strategies as they pertain to climate change and biodiversity. The LECP should include actions to reflect the participatory structures being developed at national level and focus on strategic approaches to climate action.
- Strategies as they pertain to marginalised communities.
- The LECP must take account of the impacts of COVID on already marginalised communities.
- Action to address Biodiversity Loss
- Delivering a Circular Economy