



Galway City Community Network
Líonra Pobail Chathair Na Gaillimhe

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2026

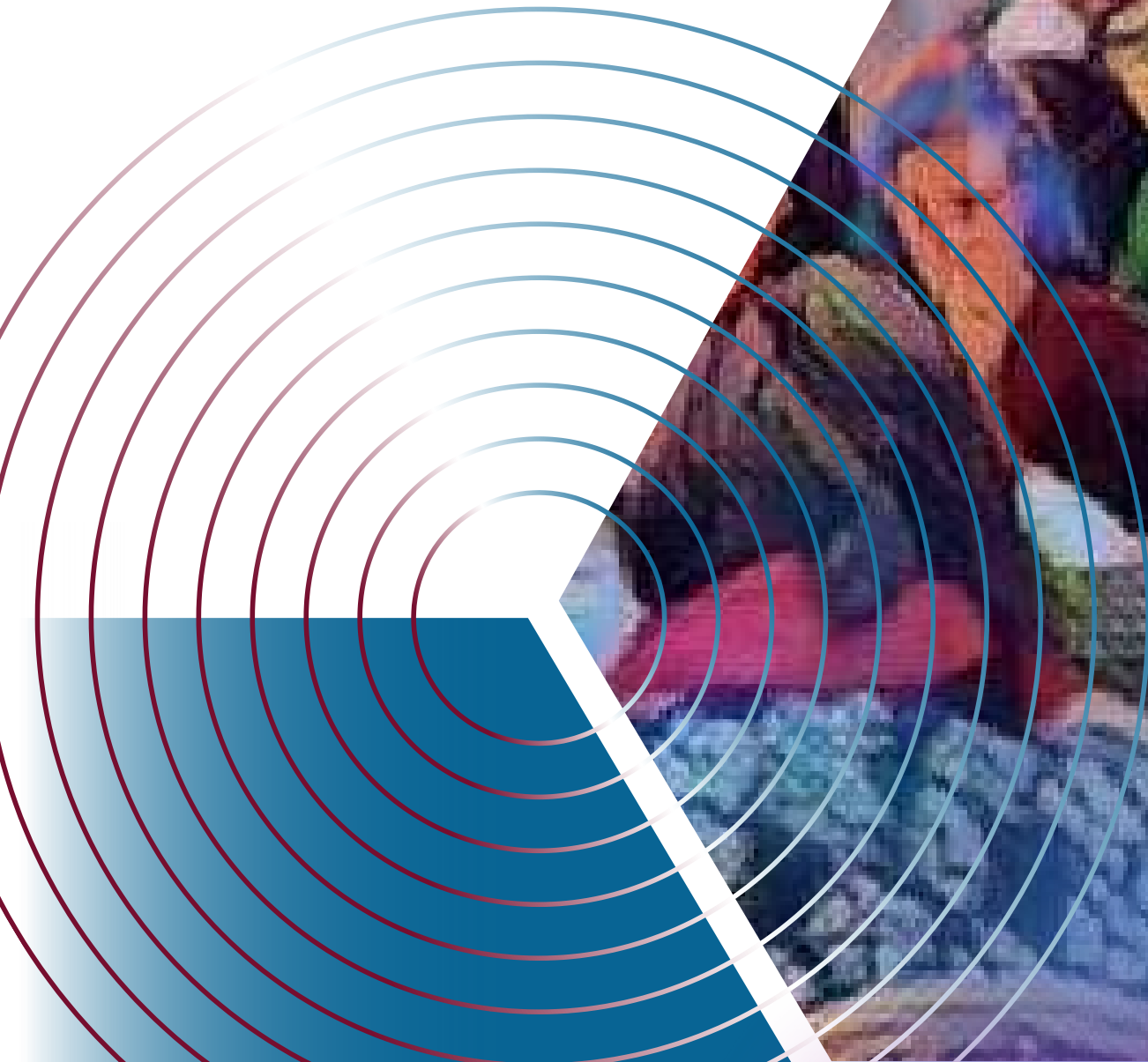


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Introduction

Galway City Community Network (GCCN) is the Public Participation Network for Galway City with whom Galway City Council and state agencies in the city should interact as the main network of community, voluntary and environmental organisations, and groups active in Galway City. GCCN is an inclusive network of committed workers, volunteers and activists who are committed to shared values and to building a city and a country that respects and reflects diversity, equality, social inclusion and sustainability.

GCCN Role

The role of Galway City Community Network is to act as a platform for our members to develop policy and positions on key issues of concern for them and the communities they represent and to work together to ensure that these policies and positions are implemented.

GCCN Vision

The GCCN vision for Galway city is:

‘A creative and inclusive city that respects and values its people and communities, their wellbeing and quality of life. A universally accessible city with a vibrant, sustainable, economy and environment where the voices of all residents, in particular those experiencing the highest levels of poverty, marginalisation and inequality are heard in the decision-making bodies and processes that affect their lives.’





Community Development

Our Core Approach

GCCN has adopted community development as an underpinning approach to all its work. Community development is widely recognised nationally and internationally as:

‘A developmental activity comprised of both a task and a process. The task is social change to achieve equality, social justice and human rights, and the process is the application of principles of participation, empowerment and collective decision making in a structured and co-ordinated way.’^[1]

GCCN’s Understanding of

Community

GCCN understand community as a group of people who share something in common such as where they live, their culture, their identity or their interests. We recognise that communities are diverse, and we value this diversity as core to vibrant and thriving communities. What binds the members of GCCN as a community is our commitment to our shared values and our commitment to promoting social inclusion particularly of the most marginalised communities in our society.

GCCN’s Understanding of

Social Inclusion

Social inclusion involves the active development and implementation of policies and programmes that counter marginalisation, poverty, and climate change ensuring that all members of society have the resources and ability to participate fully in sustainable social, economic, political, cultural and civic life.



Values & Principles

GCCN's work is guided by the following 10 values and 4 policy principles:

GCCN Values

- 1. Anti Racism** - GCCN is committed to anti-racism and to anti-racist practices and policies. We are committed to combatting and challenging racism in all its forms while supporting initiatives that promote anti racism, interculturalism and respect for diversity.
- 2. Equality, Diversity and Anti-Discrimination** - including working in a non-discriminatory way, valuing and respecting diversity, empowering people, and securing people's access to social and economic resources. GCCN believes that all human beings have equal worth and importance and therefore are equally worthy of dignity, respect, and human rights. GCCN is committed to challenging oppression, stereotyping and prejudice in all its forms.
- 3. Social Justice, Social Inclusion and Economic Equality** - GCCN believes in the right of all people, to be included and to fully participate in social, economic, political, and cultural life free from poverty and exploitation. Inclusion involving fostering and ensuring a sense of belonging to and opportunities to engage with one's community and the city.
- 4. Sustainability** - GCCN is committed to working towards a sustainable environment and a society where consumption and production patterns and use of all natural resources are sustainable. Sustainability includes valuing, preserving and protecting the natural environment. GCCN is committed to environmental justice.
- 5. Human Rights** - GCCN supports rights-based approaches to planning and decision making and is working towards a society where human rights and equality are recognised and realised and discrimination and oppression are rejected.
- 6. Culture** - GCCN believes in valuing, empowering and fostering the diversity of cultures in the city and enabling all people to express their creativity.
- 7. Community Empowerment** - GCCN calls for approaches to planning and decision making that lead people and communities to be resilient, organised, included and influential.
- 8. Collectivity** - GCCN adopts and supports approaches to planning and decision making which focus on the benefits for communities from actions and policies as opposed to focusing on individual benefits only.
- 9. Autonomy** - including the belief that civil society has the right to organise autonomously and to determine their own goals and actions while maintaining the highest level of accountability and transparency.
- 10. Solidarity** - involving building the relationships with, and supporting the work of, the environmental, social inclusion and voluntary sectors.



GCCN Policy Principles

1. Participation - GCCN believes in meaningful and direct participation in the structures and decision-making procedures that directly affect the communities that GCCN members represent. Ensuring meaningful participation involves the self-identification of needs and interests by communities and the formulation of responses by those communities to ensure the realisation of their rights.

‘GCCN calls for full and equal participation of the community in decision making spaces. People with lived experience of inequalities need to be included and are the experts. As the International Disability Caucus slogan says, ‘Nothing about us without us’.

2. Good Governance, Accountability, Transparency - GCCN believes in the importance of good governance, accountability, and transparency. This includes how GCCN sets and advances its shared policy positions and how it reports to stakeholders including funders. As a network GCCN acknowledges and balances its own accountability to the community, funders, and the legal system.

3. Universal accessibility - GCCN believes that all projects, initiatives, policies, programmes, and services in Galway City should be universally accessible enabling the full and equal participation of all people, regardless of disability, age, literacy, or linguistic considerations. GCCN supports a social model of disability which focuses on the inadequacies of social, environmental, political, and economic factors in society that restrict the full participation of people who have disabilities thereby failing to accommodate their needs.

4. Future proofing - GCCN believes in the value and necessity of future proofing as an approach to planning and development. GCCN envisages a city where all planning looks to the future ensuring that the decisions we take today do not compromise but rather will have lasting benefit for future generations.

GCCN is of the view that although it is not easy, it is important that all those who live, work, and invest in cities come together and shape solutions for their future.^[2]





GCCN Objectives

1. Recognition

A key overarching objective of GCCN over the lifetime of this strategic plan will be to ensure recognition of the role of GCCN as a key civil society stakeholder in the development of Galway City and the country as a whole in line with GCCN's Policies and Positions.^[3] GCCN will work to ensure respect for and recognition of the experience and expertise of GCCN representatives and members amongst policy and decision makers.

To meet this objective GCCN will:

- Develop GCCN submissions, research and policies reflective of GCCN values and work to embed these values in policies of the local authority, all relevant state agencies and others.
- Enhance GCCN engagement with Galway City Councillors and other elected representatives nationally and locally to pursue our policy goals and objectives.
- Promote transparency, community engagement, consultation and participation as outlined in the GCCN Guidelines for Successful Engagement: GCCN Policy on Participation, Representation and Consultation with Galway City Council and local relevant state agencies and bodies

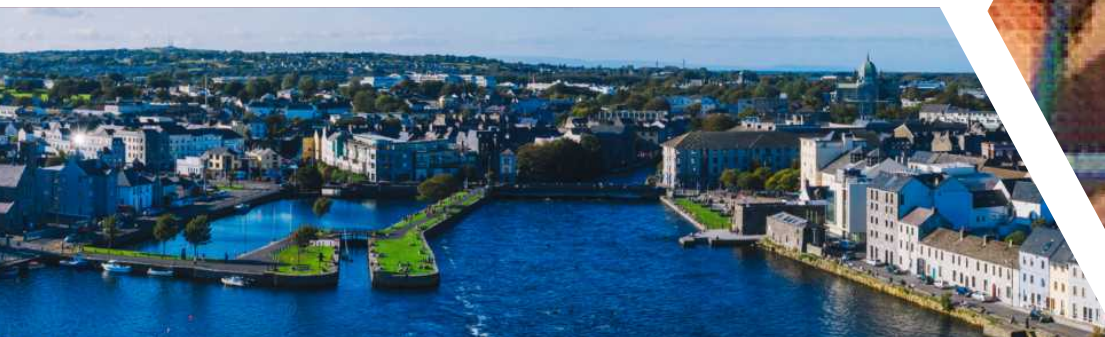


2. Representation

Facilitate representation of the community, voluntary and environmental sectors on all relevant decision-making bodies and develop and implement effective and inclusive models of representation, participation and engagement of civil society in decision making.

To meet this objective GCCN will:

- Ensure that GCCN processes for election and selection of representatives is transparent and inclusive.
- Ensure GCCN has representation on all relevant decision-making processes and structures.
- Ensure that GCCN internal structures and representative processes are inclusive and reflective of diversity.
- Develop processes for monitoring, recording and tracking the experience of our engagement with all local and national decision-making bodies.
- Develop an Annual Report Card to assess the extent to which GCCN's positions have been reflected in the policies and plans of Galway City Council and other state agencies.



3. Linkage Groups

Facilitate and strengthen the GCCN Linkage Groups to support GCCN representatives provide clear mandates and ensure ongoing feedback and accountability. The Linkage Groups are open to all GCCN members and interested individuals. The Linkage Groups are the main way that the wider GCCN membership provides feedback and input to GCCN Representatives.

To meet this objective GCCN will:

- Hold bi-monthly thematic meetings of GCCN linkage groups focused on current thematic issues and policy priorities.
- Develop the GCCN internal communications system ensuring nimble and timely sharing of information between linkage groups, strengthening communication, coherence and co-ordination between them.
- Ensure that GCCN internal structures and representative processes are inclusive and reflective of diversity.

4. Membership

Strengthen GCCN's membership and enhance the capacity of the community, voluntary and environmental sectors to contribute to the sustainable and inclusive development of Galway City.

To meet this objective GCCN will:

- Hold thematic members meetings on a regular basis including on climate and universal accessibility.
- Encourage and support participation of young people and youth groups in the work of GCCN.
- Increase GCCN membership with a particular emphasis on marginalised groups.
- Identify and meet the training and support needs of GCCN members and representatives as identified by them.
- Hold regular plenary meeting and ensure that they are accessible and organised in a way that facilitates maximum participation.

5. Information

Provide relevant, up to date and accessible information to the community, voluntary and environmental sectors.

To meet this objective GCCN will:

- Review and enhance the GCCN Internal Communications Strategy which includes monthly newsletters and regular updates, active social media presence, updated membership database, and a comprehensive website compliant with the EU Accessibility Act.
- Host information sessions, training workshops, and community outreach events tailored to the community's needs. Encourage participation and interaction through social and cultural events (e.g. coffee mornings).
- Conduct regular GCCN Induction sessions to educate new and potential members about GCCN's mission and how to engage with the network effectively.
- Collaborate with other organizations, agencies, and stakeholders to share information and resources. Develop joint projects, initiatives, and campaigns to address common goals and challenges.
- Ensure communication accessibility by adhering to web standards and prioritizing inclusivity in messaging, imagery, and language to cater to diverse audiences.

6. Communication

Communicate and publicise the values, policies and work of GCCN to all of the residents of Galway City.

To meet this objective GCCN will:

- Review and enhance the GCCN External Communications Strategy to ensure accessibility for all members of the Galway City community who share GCCN's values.
- Maintain an active presence on all GCCN online platforms (website, social media).
- Increase awareness of GCCN membership criteria, application process, and network benefits through social media, newsletters, brochures, and promotional materials, including short videos.
 - Disseminate messages through both traditional and social media channels, including awareness campaigns on social media and press-releases submitted to local and national media outlets.
 - Host and/or participate in networking events to connect with stakeholders and foster collaboration and engagement.

7. Inclusion

Ensure that GCCN is a network of solidarity, a welcoming, open and inclusive network that promotes respectful dialogue based on our shared values.

To meet this objective GCCN will:

- Organise opportunities for members to come together for networking and sharing.
- Organise free training for members.
- Ensure that GCCN linkage groups are inclusive, accessible and facilitated to allow diverse views to be expressed while holding to the core values of GCCN.
- Conduct regular members surveys.
- Provide an opportunity for members to provide feedback through feedback sheets and through the website. Highlight and celebrate GCCN achievements in internal and public communications, in GCCN annual reports and at GCCN Plenary Meetings.

8. Collaboration

Engage in cross-sectoral collaboration and strengthen alliances with all relevant stakeholders.

To meet this objective GCCN will:

- Build on collaboration and further develop alliances with organisations and coalitions which shared values and vision on a range of initiatives and priorities
- Continue to engage at national and regional level with e.g. The National Resource Worker's Network, Regional Resource Worker's Network and any related national forums that are of interest to the work of the network.

9. Membership

Ensure high levels of governance, transparency, accountability and the sustainability of GCCN.

To meet this objective GCCN will:

- Ensure compliance with all legislative requirements including annual reporting
 - a. Hold regular meetings of the secretariat.
 - b. Ensure transparency and participation in all representative elections.
 - c. Provide training as needed to the GCCN secretariat
 - d. Ensure adequate resources for the organisation, projects and initiatives.

Membership & Representation

There are now +170 member organisations of GCCN. There are three Electoral Colleges (Pillars) in the PPN - social inclusion, environment and community/voluntary - and each member must opt for membership of one.

Members represent GCCN on the following local committees:

- **Local Community Development Committee**
- **Housing and Social Inclusion - Strategic Policy Committee 1**
- **Planning - Strategic Policy Committee 2**
- **Economic, Community and Cultural Development - Strategic Policy Committee 3**
- **Transportation - Strategic Policy Committee 4**
- **Climate Action, Environment, Recreation & Amenity - Strategic Policy Committee 5**
- **Joint Policing Committee**
- **Alcohol Forum**
- **Comhairle na nÓg**
- **Galway Age Friendly**
- **Galway City Partnership**
- **Galway Sports Partnership**
- **Healthy Galway City Steering Committee**
- **LCDC Social Inclusion Subgroup**
- **LECP Advisory Committee**
- **Western Regional Drugs and Alcohol Taskforce**

GCCN Structure

GCCN holds four Plenary (membership) meetings a year, one of which is the Annual General Meeting. The Plenary meetings are critically important for GCCN. The Plenary meetings provide the opportunity to discuss issues of importance and adopt policy and/or positions where appropriate.

Linkage Groups are subgroups of GCCN that are convened on a thematic basis. The Linkage Groups discuss and develop GCCN policy, support the GCCN representatives in the thematic area and provide the platform for electing replacement representatives as appropriate. The Linkage Groups are open to all GCCN members and interested individuals. The Linkage Groups are the main way that the wider GCCN membership provides feedback and input.

The GCCN Secretariat is elected at the GCCN Annual General Meeting and is responsible for the management of GCCN activities and governance.

Implementation

In implementing this plan GCCN will:

- Ensure that all of the work of GCCN is founded on its core values.
- Place GCCN's values at the centre of all GCCN submissions, research, policy and representation.
- Establish GCCN working groups/task groups where appropriate on key GCCN priorities.
 - Build alliances and work collaboratively with partners on a cross-sectoral basis.
 - Develop campaigns on key GCCN priorities in pursuit of specific goals. Prepare a detailed set of actions on an annual basis, within the resources available to GCCN.
 - Focus on advancing issues prioritised in the plan as well as being sufficiently flexible to respond and react to issues that arise and are deemed a priority.
 - Review the impact of our engagement through the publication of the GCCN Annual Report.
 - Keep the implementation and focus of the strategic plan under review.
- Maintain an independent office and employ staff sufficient to implement the plans of GCCN.

Notes

[1] All Ireland Standards for Community Work 2016 – produced by Community Work Ireland for the All Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training:

<http://communityworkireland.ie/product/all-ireland-standards-for-community-work/>

[2] David Tonkin – CEO UK, Atkins:

http://www.futureproofingcities.com/about_future_proofing_cities.html

[3] GCCN Policies and Positions 2023, accessible at:

https://galwaycitycommunitynetwork.ie/wpcontent/uploads/2024/02/GCCN_POLICIES_POSITIONS_2023.pdf





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