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Leading and Learning

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES
2021-2025

Our Vision

Empowered Leaders; Inspired Learners

Our Mission

To support and advocate for exemplary school leadership - Tacaíocht, Misneach & Spreagadh

Our Values

Define us as an organisation:| Respect, Trust and Professionalism

Organisational Goals

The following goals underpin all of the work of IPPN, now and in the future, to achieve our stated mission 'to support and advocate for exemplary school leadership' and, ultimately, to achieve our vision of 'Empowered Leaders; Inspired Learners':

1. To provide a continuum of personal and professional development
2. To offer professional guidance and networking opportunities
3. To be a trusted voice for children's welfare and learning
4. To positively influence education policy
5. To provide leadership to all school leaders
6. To secure independent and sustainable funding to enable ongoing delivery of the supports & services required by school leaders.

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STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2021-2025

Sustainable Leadership

Member Engagement

Professional Learning for Leadership

Communications

Governance

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"As we progress from a period that required the development of new ways of working in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and, as new leadership challenges emerge, we map out here IPPN's strategic priorities and how we will seek to proactively meet the needs of primary school leaders over the next five years."

WELCOME

As the professional body for school leaders, IPPN provides supports and services that empower those school leaders to be as effective as they can be in their role, as we know the transformational impact that effective school leadership has on schools. Similarly, IPPN's advocacy role is to ensure that the optimum environment is created within the system that will allow school leaders to maintain their focus on their core purpose of leading teaching and learning in the particular context of their school. To inform this work, we establish priorities that form the basis of our strategic plan.

As we progress from a period that required the development of new ways of working in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and, as new leadership challenges emerge, we map out here IPPN's strategic priorities and how we will seek to proactively meet the needs of primary school leaders over the next five years. Chief among these priorities is to look in detail at what is required for the leadership role to be sustainable in every type and size of primary school.

This strategy was developed in consultation with IPPN members, our Board, staff and key stakeholders across the education sector. We are indebted to everyone who contributed to the process and we look forward to engaging with school leaders and with stakeholders in delivering on this plan.

Is sinne le meas,

Brian O'Doherty
IPPN President

Páiric Clerkin
IPPN CEO

IPPN'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (2021-2025)

IPPN has undertaken a process of engagement to define our strategic priorities for the five-year period 2021-2025. Our approach included consultation with:

- IPPN members, through 318 responses to our online survey;
- IPPN staff and Board members, through one-to-one interviews;
- External stakeholders in the education sector, through one-to-one interviews.

During this process, IPPN also facilitated design thinking workshops with IPPN staff, advisory groups and Board members. IPPN would like to thank its members, staff, Board members, advisors, and those external education stakeholders who contributed to defining our ambitious 5-year strategic priorities.

Five primary strategic priority areas were identified for IPPN for 2021-2025 during this process:

1. Sustainable Leadership
2. Professional Learning for Leadership
3. Member Engagement
4. Communications
5. Governance

Our five strategic priority areas are detailed in the corresponding sections of this document.

As we progress from a period that required rapid adaption to new ways of working in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, our defined strategic priorities will assist in ensuring IPPN proceeds in a proactive and strategic direction. IPPN recognises the importance of continuing to adopt new technologies and of embedding innovation in our work to assist in effectively communicating with and supporting our members and stakeholders. Utilisation of technology and innovation will underpin IPPN's delivery within each of the five strategic priority areas identified.

The implementation of our strategic priorities will be led by the IPPN Support Office team and will be overseen by IPPN's Board. This document supersedes IPPN's Strategic Plan 2016-2020.

Sustainable Leadership - to build a shared understanding of the role of school leadership and to support accessible pathways that enable aspiring and existing leaders to succeed in these roles.

Professional Learning for Leadership - to strengthen our facilitation of training, learning and continuing professional development - ensuring this is inclusive, relevant, and valued by members and staff.

Member Engagement - to provide all our members with access to the resources, guidance and network required to support them in their roles as school leaders and, through this engagement, to attain insights that will inform IPPN's future plans and maximise our impact.

Communications - to embed effective communication in all aspects of IPPN's work and to continue to improve communication with our members, our staff and the wider education sector.

Governance - to strengthen IPPN's governance structures to ensure efficiency, transparency and accountability at all levels within the organisation.

1. SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP

1.1 Objective

To build a shared understanding of the role of school leadership and to support accessible pathways that enable aspiring and existing leaders to succeed in these roles.

1.2 Overview

Effective school leadership can have a transformative impact on outcomes for students and on staff morale and performance. The journey from an aspiring to an experienced school leader may, however, span decades. IPPN is committed to ensuring school leaders are supported in maximising and sustaining their leadership impact throughout their career. Creating an environment that will enable sustainable pathways for aspiring and existing school leaders is a crucial factor for the continued improvement of primary education in Ireland.

IPPN's commitment to advancing sustainable leadership will require collaboration with partners in the education sector, and the shared articulation of what constitutes *good* school leadership. Together, we must also define a shared vision for sustainable leadership in primary education and ultimately an understanding of the characteristics and skillsets of, as well as environments that enable, successful school leaders.

It is also important that IPPN works with partners in the sector to achieve greater clarity on the governance structures that will support sustainable school leadership, including the definition of roles and responsibilities within primary schools. An IPPN analysis of, and position on, the role of school leadership and school boards of management within overall governance structures is required.

While maintaining an unwavering support for our members, IPPN will endeavour to enhance sustainable leadership and succession planning by assisting in the development of a systematic approach to preparation leadership. Such an approach would include pre- and post-appointment dimensions in order to nurture the capacity of those who aspire to lead our primary schools in the future. It is essential that we contribute to the development of systems that will encourage and strengthen the leadership capacity and confidence of those who strive toward future leadership positions. IPPN will support the work of empowering aspiring school leaders and developing their skillset, enabling the next generation of effective problem-solvers and change-makers who will occupy important leadership positions within our primary schools.

As part of our sustainable leadership work, IPPN will continue to undertake research and gather data to assist in providing greater clarity on the challenges associated with sustainable leadership in primary education. We will require these insights to work effectively with partners in the education sector to build sustainable leadership.

1.3 Strategic Actions

1. Identify the characteristics and broad skillset required for successful school leadership. Communicate this insight to members and sectoral partners to assist with recruitment, retention and succession planning.
2. Develop, facilitate and evaluate appropriate Professional Learning for Leadership programmes to strengthen the school leadership skillset for current school leaders informed by the Centre for School Leadership's (CSL) Continuum of Professional Learning for Leadership.
3. Create a development pathway that nurtures aspiring leadership by providing access to the appropriate support and Professional Learning for Leadership opportunities in partnership with CSL and other key partners.
4. Build an evidence-based position on the challenges associated with sustainable leadership in the primary education sector.
5. In collaboration with partners, develop an appropriate recommended governance structure for schools that adds clarity to the role of the school leadership and enhances sustainable leadership.
6. Establish the baseline data for current numbers of applicants for leadership development courses and numbers stepping away early from leadership positions.

1.4 What Does Success Look Like?

- An increased number of applicants for leadership positions and an increase in the number of applicants for leadership development courses.
- A decrease in the number of school leaders stepping away from leadership positions early.
- Partnerships with CSL and other key stakeholders in the area of aspiring leadership.
- There will be evidence of increased leadership acumen in the engagement of members with the Leadership Support Team in relation to queries.
- Evidence of active and effective membership engagement with IPPN learning resources as well as system-wide opportunities for personal development.
- A positive perception of the role of school leaders.

2. PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR LEADERSHIP

2.1 Objective

To strengthen our facilitation of training, learning and continuing professional development - ensuring this is inclusive, relevant, and valued by members and staff.

2.2 Overview

IPPN's learning and training agenda will be guided by our Professional Learning for Leadership Plan for 2021-2025, which has two areas of focus:

- Increase our structured Professional Learning for Leadership facilitation for IPPN members
- Support the professional development and learning of IPPN Board members and staff

2.2.1 IPPN Members

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a rapid transition to a virtual learning and professional development environment. Despite being a responsive model, this has been received positively by IPPN members and provides a base for future learning and training upon which IPPN will build.

IPPN's priority is to ensure our members have the appropriate professional training and support to act confidently in their positions as school leaders.

Effective communication underpins everything we do as an organisation, including Professional Learning for Leadership.

As part of IPPN's communication agenda (*see section 4*), IPPN will develop and communicate an annual calendar of the Professional Learning for Leadership opportunities that are available to members. Incorporating relevant external opportunities, this calendar will act as the go-to source for members planning their learning and training for the year. While proactively supporting members with a defined schedule of learning and training throughout the year, IPPN will also remain responsive to issues arising in a rapidly changing education environment - scheduling learning, and information sessions for members as required throughout the year. IPPN will also continue to communicate with members and provide channels through which they can identify priority training areas – ensuring our offerings remain relevant and timely. IPPN will strive to provide every member with valuable and relevant learning opportunities. We acknowledge the strategic importance of key partnerships in the development and facilitation of IPPN's training programmes including ESCI, NABMSE, PDST, CSL and NAPD.

We will also build upon the work undertaken in developing leadership pathways and, where appropriate, will align training plans with the Centre for School Leadership's Continuum of Leadership.

2.2.2 IPPN Staff and Board

IPPN will continue to strengthen the capacity and skills of our staff – acknowledging the invaluable role they play in supporting our members. A priority for IPPN is to formalise the process of learning and training for staff to ensure it is inclusive, relevant and valued. This will be achieved through the development of an internal training plan and accompanying policies.

IPPN also recognises the importance of ensuring that a skilled, trained and informed Board oversees the organisation's strategy and governance. We will extend appropriate learning and training opportunities to Board members as part of the internal training plan. IPPN senior management will undertake a review, in collaboration with Board representatives, of the Board's training requirements. We will ensure that Board members receive induction training and will partner with relevant external organisations, such as The Wheel, to deliver governance and other training opportunities.

IPPN will support staff through structured personal development planning (PDP). PDPs will assist in ensuring that staff have clarity on their role and responsibilities, and access to appropriate learning opportunities to improve professional competence through appropriate Professional Learning for Leadership. IPPN staff, supported by the General Manager, will identify their learning and training needs, and develop annual personal development plans. PDPs will empower staff to help achieve personal, business unit and organisation goals as underpinned by the strategic priorities set out in this strategic plan.

2.3 Strategic Actions

1. Establish a process through which members can regularly inform IPPN of their learning and training requirements.
2. Publish an annual professional learning and training calendar for IPPN members, detailing scheduled courses and training, linked to the CSL calendar of professional learning for school leaders.
3. Develop internal training plan and policies for IPPN staff and Board members.
4. Establish induction / refresher training for IPPN Board members.
5. Establish an annual process that allows IPPN staff members develop an annual PDP under the guidance of the General Manager.
6. Agree a benchmark for the desired tenure of IPPN Board members.

2.4 What Does Success Look Like?

- Increased engagement by members at webinars / learning sessions, facilitated by an annual schedule of learning and training and facilitation of content tailored to members' requirements.
- Reduced turnover of staff and Board members due to role clarity, and confidence in their skillset and ability to deliver within roles.

3 MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

3.1 Objective

To provide all our members with access to the resources, guidance and network required to support them in their roles as school leaders and, through this engagement, to attain insights that will inform IPPN's future plans and maximise our impact.

3.2 Overview

IPPN's core purpose is to engage and support its members. IPPN balances strategic and proactive planning to meet members' needs and to remain agile and respond promptly to queries and issues as they arise. Ensuring all IPPN members are supported and have access to resources, information and support - regardless of their location or school context - will continue to be at the forefront of what we do as an organisation.

It is imperative that all our members feel that they can influence the future direction of IPPN by playing an active role in the organisation. To enable this, IPPN must ensure we are inclusive and appropriately engage with all school leaders. IPPN will continue to improve communication and engagement with Deputy Principals, valued members and co-leaders within their schools. IPPN will endeavour to increase Deputy Principals' engagement and representation in leadership roles across local, county and national levels. It is anticipated and hoped that such an approach within IPPN structures will encourage and strengthen collaborative leadership within members' schools.

To enhance member engagement, IPPN will continue to strengthen and empower County Committees and the National Council. We will ensure these bodies are set up for success and structured to facilitate efficient and effective decision-making. IPPN recognises, and will address, disparities between levels of engagement and active membership across County Committees. Engagement, for example, is lower in rural, remote areas, where members are understandably less likely to travel the longer distances to meetings. IPPN will continue to actively work with key stakeholders including ESCI at local level to enhance member engagement. IPPN will continue to seek out technologies, innovations and methodologies and utilise these to aid in the creation of a stronger support network that will benefit school leaders in rural areas and increase awareness of the supports IPPN provides. IPPN strives for a future in which every school leader in the country has a local support network that is active and connected centrally to the national organisation. Our members should be aware of the channels available through which they may raise issues at national level and should feel confident that their voice will be heard.

An important area of focus for IPPN is in increasing active member engagement. In order to achieve this, we must identify the factors that lead to low levels of engagement among certain member cohorts. Seeking and actioning insights from member feedback will be essential for IPPN's continued growth and development as an organisation and to increase levels of member engagement.

It is imperative that IPPN supports members appropriately while empowering them as leaders, creative problem-solvers and change-makers. IPPN will continue to provide tools, resources and a network that will buttress school leaders. However, our success is not merely determined by our engagement with members but by our ability to strengthen our members' capacity to strategise and overcome the challenges often faced by school leaders.

3.3 Strategic Actions

1. Create a Member Engagement Plan for all members, with a specific emphasis on further engagement with Deputy Principals through targeted communication. This will form a key part of the overall Communications Plan.
2. Review the current structure of IPPN's County Committees and develop models appropriate to local structures around the country.
3. Incorporate technology solutions within the Member Engagement Plan that will encourage and facilitate member engagement and feedback.
4. Continue to strengthen strategic relationships with key stakeholders in particular ESCI and the Education Centre network to enhance membership engagement at grass roots level.
5. Establish the current numbers engaging with surveys, feedback forms and attending local group meetings.

3.4 What Does Success Look Like?

- Increased proportion of members responding to surveys and feedback forms.
- A process for (via the Communication Strategy) active membership engagement with relevant submissions.
- Increased proportion of members actively participating in County Committees and local groups.
- Increased numbers of support groups set up for both Principals and Deputies.
- Ultimately, a decrease in the number of direct queries to the IPPN support office as a result of enhanced leadership acumen among membership.

4 COMMUNICATIONS

4.1 Objective

To embed effective communication in all aspects of IPPN's work and to continue to improve communication with our members, our staff and the wider education sector.

4.2 Overview

As a member organisation, IPPN relies on effective communication to deliver its core mission. IPPN's focus is on communication that is clear and concise, is a two-way process with our members and stakeholders, and is relevant and timely.

IPPN has a record of developing and effectively communicating initiatives to support our members, including Live Resource Bundles (COVID Information), É-scéal, web supports, publications such as Leadership+, social media, advocacy, submissions and the coordination of local and national networks. The delivery and continued evolution of such initiatives will remain a key part of our communication agenda.

IPPN will enhance engagement with our members through frequent communication that is targeted and relevant to them. It is important that members are aware of the information, documents and guidelines that IPPN is developing and are informed of an expected timeframe for publication. Such communication will reassure our members that we are proactively preparing relevant content that is of value to them and provides them with an indication on when they can access supports.

The strengthening of member-to-member communication at local level is also a priority for IPPN. Our members value highly their network of peers at local and national levels. Perhaps now more than ever, it is imperative that school leaders can access IPPN peers in their locality for advice, guidance and support. IPPN will work to strengthen peer-to-peer communication at local level and to ensure that the appropriate communication channels are in place to facilitate communication from local to national level.

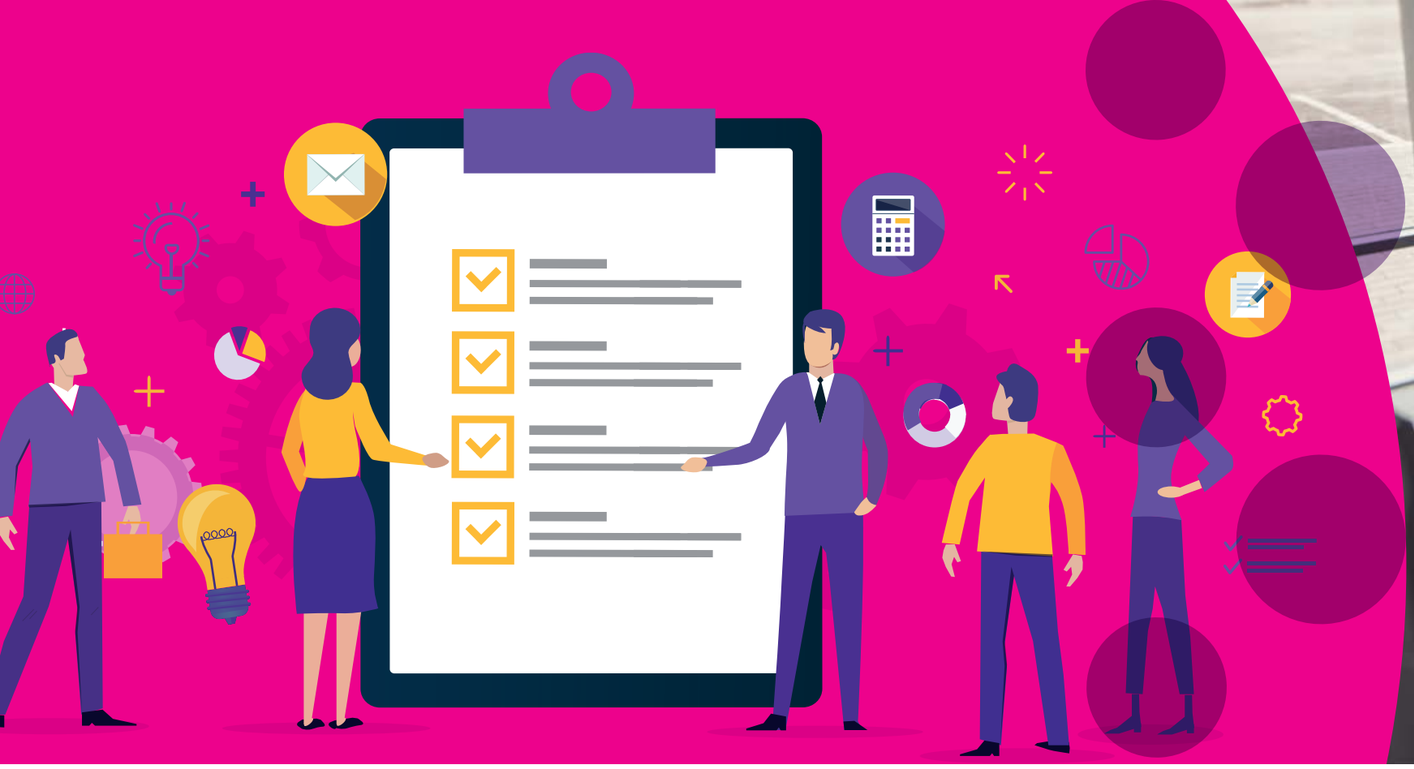
In addition to enhancement of engagement with members and staff, IPPN will continue to strengthen our communications strategy with key department officials and other education sector stakeholders to inform and influence policy for the benefit of schools and school leaders. Such communication will be underpinned by a clearly defined and articulated strategy to ensure that it is in keeping with IPPN's mission and values. IPPN further recognises the importance of continuing to strengthen our internal communication – particularly in light of new ways of working during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.3 Strategic Actions

1. Identify an appropriate external support to work with the IPPN communications team and, in particular, with members and stakeholders.
2. Improve local support structures to help increase the level of peer-to-peer communication and activity in local networks.
3. Develop and implement a communication strategy underpinned by the strategic priorities of the organisation. This plan will ensure all internal and external parties are informed and empowered with timely knowledge and relevant information.
4. Redevelopment of IPPN's member website to align with the communications strategy.
5. Strengthen presence and engagement with members and wider education stakeholders on social media platforms.

4.4 What Does Success Look Like?

- Our members feel engaged and informed.
- Increased member engagement through meaningful, clear, relevant, two-way communication.
- Increased member engagement on IPPN's various platforms – social media, website, networking etc.
- A successful process for school leader engagement with submissions regarding educational policy. IPPN recognised as a network with greater influence in educational policy, particularly with regard to the work of school leaders.
- Effectively utilising all communications tools to inform communication with a "360 view". For example, IPPN will aim to establish stronger links between our communications and membership engagement strategies – Leadership Support Queries / Networking Queries. These will all feed into leadership support, guidance, advice and updates through E-sceál.



5 GOVERNANCE

5.1 Objective

To strengthen IPPN's governance structures to ensure efficiency, transparency and accountability at all levels within the organisation.

5.2 Overview

IPPN is committed to strong governance and stewardship to ensure efficiency, transparency and accountability across the organisation. A continued commitment to robust governance within IPPN is integral to the organisation's sustainability.

IPPN will build on the work undertaken to date – ensuring accountability and transparency in our work. Explicitly identifying governance as one of our five strategic priorities for the period 2021-2025 reinforces our commitment to good stewardship and challenges IPPN to evolve and strengthen our structures to ensure we are set up and governed appropriately to represent our members.

In recent years, IPPN has made progress on promoting diversity and will continue with this as a focus going forward. The introduction of rotating Board members, with elections every three years, has proven effective in refreshing membership, bringing new thinking and perspectives and in maintaining a sharp focus on governance. IPPN is committed to ensuring that the diversity in our membership is reflected on our Board, including appropriate representation for Principals, Deputy Principals, teaching principals and rural and urban school leadership. It is also important that we recognise the value that non-school leaders can bring to our Board, and IPPN will examine the requirement for appropriate representation on our Board from experts in areas such as governance, finance, IT, HR, marketing and communications. Such individuals will bring fresh thinking and challenge our perspectives.

During this period, IPPN will also provide greater clarity on the role of the Board, including its remit as it pertains to overall governance, financial oversight, strategic planning, impact measurement and other areas. IPPN will strengthen the induction process for new Board members and, as outlined in section 2, will also ensure Board members are offered appropriate learning and training opportunities.

Continuing to embed, and maintaining a strategic focus on, a culture of good governance will ensure IPPN's sustainability, provide structures that will enable efficient delivery on our core objectives, and provide members with the reassurance that IPPN is a leader in the non-profit sector in relation to accountability and transparency.

5.3 Strategic Actions

1. Identify the skill-mix required for the IPPN Board to achieve best practice according to the Charities Governance Code and agree whether non-school leaders should be recruited to ensure a balance of skills identified.
2. Conduct exit interviews (*managed by an external organisation*) for Board members and staff to learn from experiences and inform future practice.
3. Develop and implement best practices in the governance of the organisation.
4. Review aspects of the role of President as chair of the Board and the role of the Governance & Nominations Advisory Group in supporting and enhancing strong governance based on the principles and core standards of the Charities Governance Code.

5.4 What Does Success Look Like?

- Board members report improved confidence in, and understanding of, their role and responsibilities on the Board.
- Increased satisfaction levels of Board members and senior management regarding internal communication.
- Governance practice that is compliant with the Charities Governance Code, enhancing strong governance based on the principles and core standards of the Code.
- Non-school leaders representing additional skill-sets required on the Board and bringing new perspectives.
- Positive trends in attracting and retaining school leaders and non-school leaders to the IPPN Board.

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