PPI IGNITE NETWORK
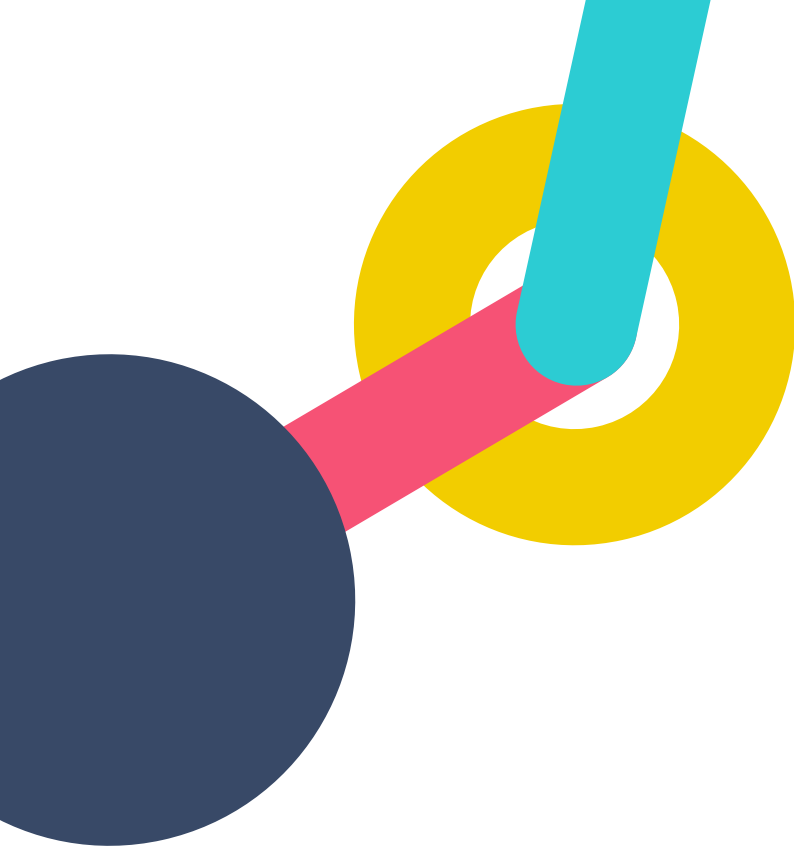
Embedding public and patient involvement in research at an institutional level: A landscape report
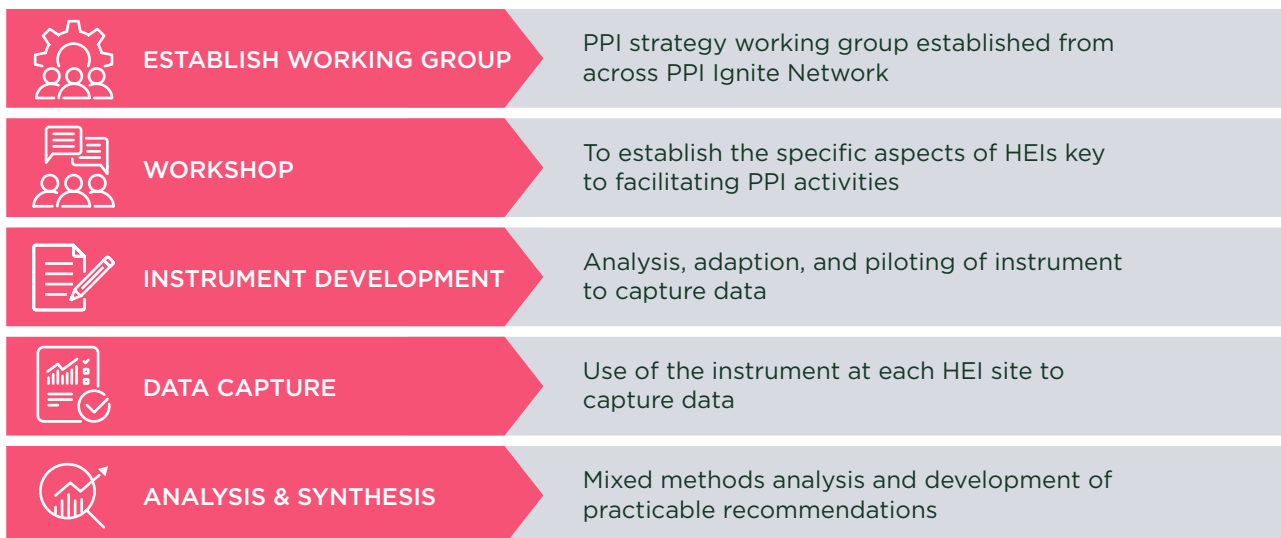
INTRODUCTION

The focus of Work Package 3 (WP3) is to review institutional policies and procedures to determine the extent to which public and patient involvement in research (PPI) has been embedded into Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the national arena. A better understanding of the institutional landscape will enable us to ingrain and expand best practices across all stakeholder organisations. The key driver is to achieve sustainability for PPI as a research practice by embedding it into the core functions of research-intensive institutions.

OBJECTIVES

- Determine the specific domains within HEI operations, systems and management that facilitate PPI activities.
- Capture the extent to which PPI has been embedded into these domains across HEIs in Ireland.
- Outline the current landscape of PPI in policies and procedures at an institutional level.
- Analyse and produce specific considerations for PPI teams and HEIs to further progress the embedding of PPI into institutional operations and systems.

Brief Methodology

ESTABLISH WORKING GROUP	PPI strategy working group established from across PPI Ignite Network
WORKSHOP	To establish the specific aspects of HEIs key to facilitating PPI activities
INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT	Analysis, adaption, and piloting of instrument to capture data
DATA CAPTURE	Use of the instrument at each HEI site to capture data
ANALYSIS & SYNTHESIS	Mixed methods analysis and development of practicable recommendations

Work Package 3 is guided by a PPI strategy working group comprising twenty-six members, including academic researchers, clinicians, research administrators, PPI specialists, public services representatives and international experts. In 2021, an online workshop was held with this group to determine the specific domains within HEI operations and management that are key to facilitating PPI activities.

The outcome of this workshop was the identification of six key domains:
1. **Governance**
2. **Human Resources**
3. **Finance**
4. **Ethics**
5. **Estates/Environmental accommodations**
6. **External Engagement/Communications**

The assumption: If PPI were fully embedded into an institution, we would expect to see mention of PPI in policies and procedures related to these six key domains.

To develop an instrument to capture the relevant data at HEIs, we reviewed how similar systems level information had previously been captured. UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) developed and tested a knowledge exchange framework (KEF), which has a public and community engagement self-assessment narrative[1] that was the most closely suited instrument for our needs. It contains narrative templates designed to collect factual, evidenced statements, and is organised around five sections to allow comparison between HEIs. We amended the UKRI KEF public and community engagement self-assessment narrative template to focus solely on PPI. In addition, we added specific instructions for each of the six domains (as outlined above) to be considered in each section. Finally, the quantitative scoring was removed.

The instrument was reviewed and discussed at the working group level and agreed. The instrument was distributed to nine HEI sites. Eight HEIs returned data, all of which were located in the Republic of Ireland and five of which had received PPI Ignite funding in the 2017 funding round. The data returned were predominantly narrative. However, there was also some self-assessed categorical data. Thematic analysis was used for the narrative data. The ordinal variables were analysed using the range to indicate the variability.

---

1   UKRI Knowledge Exchange Framework https://www.ukri.org/what-we-offer/supporting-collaboration/supporting-collaboration-research-england/knowledge-exchange-framework/

To understand how embedded PPI is across the HEI system, the narrative was divided into five sections, as per the UKRI KEF: (1) Strategy, (2) Support, (3) PPI Activities, (4) Results, (5) Acting on results. Within the data are HEI with PPI Ignite funding in 2017 and 2021 (n=5), 2021 only (n=2) and no specific PPI funding (n=1). Yellow boxes highlight the pattern for >80% of HEIs.

Irish HEIs are progressing in implementing PPI into institutional policies and procedures. Considering the relatively short period of dedicated funding for PPI within HEIs, it is perhaps unsurprising that the most developed aspect is support and activities. **In the future, HEIs must work on ensuring that those supports and activities are being systematically captured, evidenced and built upon to develop sustainability. In addition, evidence of impact needs to be captured to reinforce core institutional support for PPI.**

Findings and recommendations across the six domains

1. Governance

Finding: Information about how PPI offices reported to university management structures is often lacking. The most typical routes written were via the senior staff in the office for research occurring on a quarterly to an annual basis.

Recommendation: Ensure that evidence is showcased and briefed upwards. Include University Management as critical stakeholders and develop suitable communication briefs iteratively as appropriate to each institution.

Recommendation: Liaise with offices within your HEI responsible for research analytics to identify additional ways to evidence PPI to build support and evidence to advocate for the inclusion of PPI in strategy documents.

2. Human Resources

Finding: Evidence of advancing PPI policies and practices within HR and people development in some institutions. It is recognised and rewarded in some institutions' promotions criteria or faculty. Recognition is often included, albeit in different guises, at staff or researcher awards across several HEIs.
There is increasing involvement of PPI contributors on interview panels, evidence of contractual grant obligations related to PPI and evidence of PPI being incorporated into new researcher orientation programmes.

Recommendation: There is a positive movement that varies greatly by institution. There is an excellent opportunity for inter-institutional knowledge exchange about the progress made to date in HR practices. A network-level mechanism to share good practices and processes should be developed.

3. Finance

Finding: Finance was often not addressed across submissions. The majority have no policies or formal procedures for PPI payment. However, there were often costing guidelines and evidence of conversations with finance offices. Finance was most often reported about PPI remuneration, and less was reported related to resourcing of PPI or grant income.

Recommendation: There is a gap in evidencing financial income/PPI-related grant income. Processes for better capturing of data would assist in making an institutional case for PPI.

Cross over>> National office focuses on some discrete aspects of PPI remuneration that may aid institutions in this regard.

Recommendation: Finance needs to be considered in the broader context. More significant interaction with research offices and research finance offices within HEIs may give you a better understanding of PPI's context in resourcing and/or grant incoming. It may also give you scope to inform and update these offices about PPI and its needs.

4. Ethics

Finding: Ethics was not addressed in all submissions. There were development plans in place in some institutions, but overall there was a gap between PPI and ethics.

Cross over>> Tusla Child and Family Agency, the HSE Research & Development Office, and the National Office for Research Ethics Committees have been working in this area that the institutions could greatly benefit from.

Cross over>> PPI Ignite Network @ Trinity and WP3 have items explicitly related to PPI in research ethics within their PPI Ignite Network workstreams. These will be informative for the whole network and help address this gap.

5. Environmental accommodations

Finding: Environmental accommodations were not addressed in all submissions. Where reported, there was much cross-over with Institutional Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) offices. There is evidence of growing awareness and implementation of universal design in institutions, which benefits PPI.

Recommendation: Continued collaboration with EDI offices and Access offices (and similar) in liaising with Estate services within institutions seems to be a sensible approach to the continued development of more accessible and inclusive campuses. Those HEIs whose PPI officers have yet to engage with these other aligned offices may find it beneficial to do so to further this objective.

6. Communications[2]

Finding: There was little evidence of formal practices related to accessible communications or policies and procedures related to relationship building with PPI partners. There was evidence of the focus on relationship building within many activities described. However, that learning is not being captured /progressed to formal processes or guidelines that can be shared with others about building and advancing relationships.

Recommendation: Improved capturing and sharing of knowledge pre-existing within the HEIs would greatly benefit the community.

Finding: A clear gap is the inclusion of the PPI contributor perspective in the assessment and evaluation of PPI at an institutional level. There was little evidence of routine collection of feedback or reflective practices with PPI contributors related to how institutions interact with PPI contributors.

Recommendation: Greater focus on mechanisms for routine inclusion of a PPI contributor perspective in reflection, reviewing and evaluating institutional aspects of PPI. This will benefit institutional practices and assist in the sustainability of PPI communication & relationship management practices.

Cross over>> There is a cross-over to WP1 (Building national PPI capacity across communities) and WP4 (Promoting PPI Excellence) about building collaboration, quality improvement and the skills sharing forum that may assist in improving HEI policies and procedures in this area.

---

2 Not all submissions addressed communications. Those who did address them often focused on outreach and media metrics, rather than the intended focus of relationship building, accessible communications and policies for effective interaction with PPI contributors. This may be at least in part due to our use of the term "communications".

Summary

In this report, we have given a high-level overview of the current landscape of PPI in HEI research systems. We have focused on practicable recommendations that can be implemented within the current landscape. These are general recommendations that will not apply to all HEIs equally. By understanding where Ireland's HEIs are currently, our goal is that this report can act as a baseline to understand, evidence and capture progress into the future.

Our findings show that Irish HEIs are progressing well in implementing PPI into institutional policies and procedures. However, progress varies widely across the six domains (Governance, Human Resources, Finance, Ethics, Environmental Considerations, and Communications). There is a significant opportunity for intra-institutional knowledge exchange.

Support in terms of dedicated personnel at HEIs appears to be a critical area that requires additional investment. For many HEIs, the development and delivery of PPI activities, such as learning and development, has personnel at capacity. Thus, the evidence of these activities may not happen, and institutions are missing out on valuable information and proof of impact.

About Work package 3

Work package 3 of the PPI Ignite Network focuses on Embedding PPI locally and nationally. This work package is jointly led by the University College Dublin (UCD) and the RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences (RCSI). In this work package, we review institutional policies and procedures to determine the extent to which PPI has been embedded across the national arena. We strive to further entrench and expand on good institutional policy practices across all stakeholder organisations.

Core WP3 Team	UCD	RCSI
Site Lead	Thilo Kroll	Gianpiero Cavalleri (to May 2022)
		Michelle Flood (From June 2022)
Programme Manager	Nora Lieggi (to Sept 2021)	Lorna Kerin
	Emma Dorris (from Sept 2021)	

Report Date: November 2022