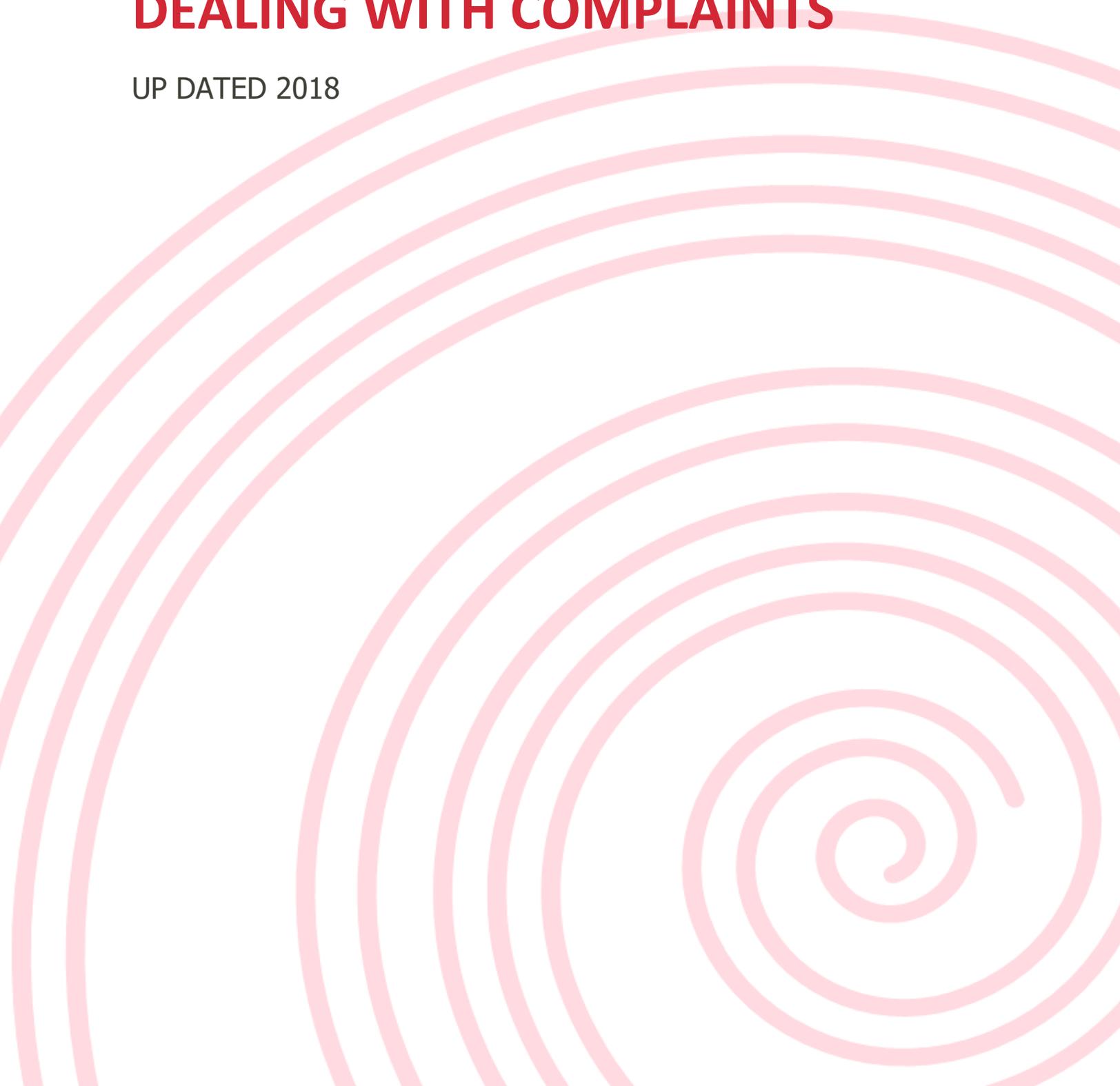




FRAMEWORK PROTOCOLS FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

UP DATED 2018



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SECTION 1: THE ROLE OF THE SUPPORT AGENCY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This Document outlines how Framework Regional Support Agency will respond to disclosure from Project personnel regarding concerns of bad practice and how it will address complaints about the organization.

UP-DATE / SEPTEMBER 2018

This document was initially put together in 2001 in consultation and partnership with the FRC National Forum and a number of Regional Support Agencies (RSAs). This document is in place to assist both the FRC Projects and the Framework Regional Support Agency to have a greater clarity of the role that Framework is contracted to undertake by the Tusla / CFA and how difficulties can best be resolved and dealt with.

1.2 CURRENT ROLE OF RSAs AS DEFINED BY TUSLA.

Tusla have currently outlined their requirements of RSAs as follows:

- The delivery of training and support to assigned Projects;
- Promoting good practice and setting standards for the work of Projects;
- Working with Projects in review, planning and drawing up of Workplans ***(No longer required as from 2018)***;
- Providing ongoing advice, training and support to existing Projects in a range of key areas, including community development approaches and principles and best practice in relation to:
 - ~ board procedures
 - ~ employment practice
 - ~ company law
 - ~ financial practice.
- Monitoring the performance of Projects ***(No longer required as from 2018)***;
- Facilitating regional networking between Projects as appropriate;
- Supporting the capacity of Projects to contribute to the policy making process.

RSAs are expected to (based on tender document 2010):

- Meet regularly with Projects, this should include scheduled meetings with the Board of Management at least every two months;
- Be flexible and responsive to the particular needs of Projects and draw up a programme of support to address those needs;
- Attend by-annual meetings with Tusla as part of the monitoring process;
- Be committed to the principles, values and process of community development;

- Must be a legal entity and have an appropriate management structure to support the organisation with one designated person to have overall responsibility for the FRC work;
- Support the evaluation of the work of the Programmes;
- Have high standards of internal management;
- Ensure that staff engaged to do the FRC work have expertise in organisational and management procedures and a track record in providing support to community sector organisations;
- Fulfil the terms of the contracts with the Tusla;
- Provide details of structure of their organisation;
- Be compliant with all Tusla Governance requirements

SECTION 2: When a project has a complaint about Framework

2.1 WHEN A PROJECT HAS A COMPLAINT ABOUT FRAMEWORK.

The following information outlines how the Project and Framework can deal with difficulties arising between them. This can cover procedures for dealing with difficulties in relation to the Support Worker, Framework Coordinator or the role of the Support Agency as a whole.

Whilst the Project and Framework may be committed to developing relationships based on equality, trust and partnership there may be times when this relationship breaks down. If the Project feels that it has a difficulty with either the Support Worker or the organisation the following protocols should be used to resolve the issues.

2.2 PROTOCOL FOR DEALING WITH A COMPLAINT FROM A PROJECT

ISSUES PRESENTED	PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED	EXPECTED OUTCOMES
<p>When a Project has a complaint about Framework</p>	<p>STEP 1: The Project should initiate an informal meeting with the relevant Support Worker and appropriate Project personnel (for example the Project Coordinator and Chairperson) to outline the concerns they have.</p> <p>Both parties should discuss and agree a procedure for resolving the difficulties. If this is not possible the Project should go to Step 2.</p>	<p>That Projects feel they have a process by which to resolve difficulties or complaints;</p> <p>Framework have can demonstrate it's commitment to building positive working relationships;</p> <p>There is a clear time frame by which difficulties can be dealt with;</p> <p>Framework demonstrate a commitment to addressing problems and reaching positive solutions.</p>
	<p>STEP 2: A formal letter should go to the Framework Coordinator outlining the difficulties and requesting a meeting with the FRC Board. Both the Project and Framework have a right to determine who should attend the meeting.</p> <p>The Board of Framework will be informed and consulted.</p> <p>Framework will be committed to responding as quickly as possible and no later than 15 working days on receipt of the letter.</p>	
	<p>STEP 3: In the event of a complete breakdown in relationship between the SW and the Project that is unresolvable (depending on the circumstances) another SW may be allocated.</p> <p>If it is not possible to resolve the issues at a formal meeting between the Board of the Project and Framework this could lead to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An agreement to inform the Funders of the breakdown in the relationship and the setting up of a trip-partite meeting between the Funders, Framework and the Project; <li style="padding-left: 20px;">or • Agreement to tell the Funders that the relationship has broken down and to discuss the appointment of an external mediator (subject to funding being available) to support both parties to work through the difficulties and come to agreed solutions. It would be important that in appointing an external mediator both parties agree to who the mediator is. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What the agenda and procedures will be for the mediation process. ➤ Sharing the costs of the mediation. ➤ Maintaining confidentiality. 	

ISSUES PRESENTED	PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED	EXPECTED OUTCOMES
Continued	STEP 4: If the results of Step 3 are unsuccessful and a future working relationship is not possible between the Project and Framework then Funders will have to discuss future options based on the contractual requirements of the Funders with the Project and the Regional Support Agency.	As above

2.3 WHEN FRAMEWORK HAS A DIFFICULTY WITH A PROJECT.

The role in providing support can at times involve direct challenge in relation to whether or not a Project is perceived to be operating from good practice. As Framework views it's role as "working in solidarity with Projects to bring about sustainable social change" we are committed to ensuring that any challenge will be dealt with in a professional, respectful fair and reasonable manner as outlined in the protocols below.

2.4 PROTOCOLS FOR FRAMEWORK IN DEALING WITH A DIFFICULTY IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FRAMEWORK AND A PROJECT

ISSUES PRESENTED	PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED	EXPECTED OUTCOMES
<p>Where Framework have a difficulty or complaint with a Project.</p>	<p>STEP 1: The Support Worker may sometimes raise issues of concern through their involvement with the Project in ongoing review, evaluation or planning procedures, and develop a strategy with the Project for dealing with these issues over a period of time.</p> <p>Where there is a persistent issue the SW will consult with the Framework Coordinator where they will be encouraged to bring concerns to a Project in an informal way at an appropriate forum. This would normally be through a meeting with the Chairperson and Project Coordinator.</p> <hr/> <p>STEP 2: If the above action does not resolve the issue then Framework will request in writing a formal meeting with the full VBODs.</p> <p>It would be expected that the Project will respond to this request as quickly as possible but no later than 15 working days on receipt of the letter from Framework.</p> <p>It is Framework policy that where a Support Worker is outlining their concerns to a Project that this process should be undertaken in conjunction with the Coordinator from the Support Agency.</p> <p>Both staff will attend a meeting with the whole management committee and outline their concerns, clarify the issues, hear the Projects perspective and work with the Board on exploring options and strategies for responding to or dealing with the issues raised.</p> <p>This may result in a change of Support Worker should this be in the best interests of the SW concerned and the Project.</p>	<p>Framework staff have an informal / formal process where they can bring a grievance to an organization that we support;</p> <p>Framework have a commitment and process to resolving issues in a positive and professional manner;</p> <p>Framework staff feel protected and backed up;</p> <p>Working relationships will improve and the Project will engage further in support provided by Framework.</p>

ISSUES PRESENTED	PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED	EXPECTED OUTCOMES
1. Continued	<p>STEP 3: If it is not possible to resolve the issues at a formal meeting between the Board and Framework this will lead to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement to inform the Funders of the breakdown in the relationship and the setting up of a trip-partite meeting between the CFA, Framework and the Project or, • An agreement to inform Tusla that there has been a relationship breakdown and, (providing both parties agree), there is now a need to appoint an external mediator to support both parties to work through the difficulties and come to agreed solutions. <p>STEP 4: If the results of Step 3 are unsuccessful or there is no mediation process, and a future working relationship is not possible between the Project and Framework, the Funders will have to discuss future options based on the contractual requirements with the Project and the Support Agency.</p>	As above

2.5 POSSIBLE ROLE FRAMEWORK COULD PLAY WHEN ONE PROJECT HAS A DIFFICULTY WITH ANOTHER PROJECT / AGENCY.

From time to time difficulties can arise between Projects or Projects and other agencies, particularly in relation to where Projects may be operating within a close geographical area or involved in joint pieces of work or are in the same working groups or policy making arenas. Unless Projects have worked out a Code of Practice with each other tensions can arise, for example, in competition over resources, not acting in solidarity, undermining each other, communication difficulties and misunderstandings. As part of our role in providing support Framework are committed to assisting people to work constructively through their differences and use the opportunities that conflict can bring to develop strong and healthy working relationships.

Whilst Framework has a role in supporting all the Projects it is contracted to work with equally, it can also play a part in resolving tensions through mediation when both parties agree that this is appropriate. The following steps should be worked through when involving Framework in an inter-Project / inter agency conflict.

2.6 PROTOCOL FOR DEALING WITH A COMPLAINT ABOUT A PROJECT

ISSUES PRESENTED	PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED	EXPECTED OUTCOMES
<p>1. Where an FRC has a conflict with another FRC or organization.</p>	<p>STEP 1: Where one Project has a particular difficulty with another Project or agency they should always try where possible to bring it to the attention of appropriate personnel through requesting an informal meeting. This should happen through telephone and follow up email request in writing.</p> <p>If this request is not responded to appropriately or the meeting is unsuccessful in resolving the issues Framework can be asked to become involved.</p> <p>It would be important for both parties to agree that this should happen.</p> <hr/> <p>STEP 2: If Framework are asked to intervene at this point then in the interests of fairness a meeting should take place independently with both organisations (those in attendance to be decided by the organisations involved) .</p> <p>The purpose of this is to establish what the issues are and how best to assist in resolving them. Both the appropriate Support Worker and Framework Coordinator will attend these meetings.</p> <p>Framework will assist both organisations to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a). Outline the problems arising; b). Explore what would be a mutually agreeable process for resolving the tensions between them and the role that Framework could play in this. <p>On meeting both organisations independently Framework will also be in a position to state whether or not there is a conflict of interest for them, or whether they feel that they can remain impartial enough to support each Project equally and without prejudice. If this is not the case then Framework will name this and assist both Projects to access an independent facilitator or mediator and agreed the terms of reference for this intervention.</p> <hr/> <p>STEP 3: If it is agreed by all parties that Framework is the appropriate agency to facilitate discussion, this will take place no later than 20 working days after the request is made.</p> <hr/> <p>STEP 4: Framework will take responsibility for writing up any agreements reached.</p>	<p>FRC Projects have access to an experienced facilitator to resolve conflicts;</p> <p>Potential for improved working relationships and cooperation between organisations;</p>

APPENDIX 1:

Recording complaints about Framework

FORM TO RECORD COMPLAINTS ABOUT FRAMEWORK

NAME AND ROLE OF COMPLAINANT	DATE COMPLAINT MADE	PERSONNEL COMPLAINT WAS MADE TO	ISSUE/S:
DATE BOARD WAS INFORMED	RECOMMENDATIONS FROM BOARD:		RESPONSE / ACTION:
FOLLOW UP			OUTCOME