

AILG - NILGA Collaboration 2025 - 2028



Background

For over two decades, the Association for Irish Local Government and the Northern Ireland Local Government Association have worked together to foster a spirit of cooperation, coordination and collaboration. In recent years, initiatives have included:

- Joint meetings on cross-border collaboration in practice, strengthening the role of local government, local government finances, abuse & intimidation of councillors, planning and tourism
- Sharing of best practice, experience & expertise including on councillor safety, terms & conditions, tourism, economic development & Brexit implications
- Joint statement on civility in public life issued in September 2023
- Representation to the Seanad on the future of local democracy
- Joint bid to Shared Island fund in 2024, culminating in a successful conference in November 2024
- Attendance and presentations at respective conferences

Through working collaboratively, sharing best practice and knowledge, both organisations have demonstrated a stronger collective voice when engaging with national or regional governments and a greater ability to shape policy decisions and secure funding for local government initiatives. Learning and development opportunities for members of both Associations, have enabled capacity building at elected member level in order to respond to emerging challenges.

The Associations are conscious of the wide range of organisations engaged in cross-border work at local government level, to include the cross-border implementation bodies established under the Good Friday Agreement, cross border groups (East Border Region, Irish Central Area Border Network, North West Strategic Growth Partnership, cross-council work on Peace Plus and other funding initiatives (including Belfast-Dublin Economic Corridor) and emergency planning response measures.

AILG and NILGA will support the work of those organisations and initiatives, however it does not seek to replicate or duplicate their work. Instead, the Associations will focus on strengthening political relationships, building capacity of elected members, increasing collaboration on shared priorities and increasing the level of engagement of political representatives in cross-border dialogues.

Opportunity

Both Associations are committed to formalising an agreement to strengthen their collaboration over the coming three years and beyond, regardless of leadership changes. To take forward this work and establish a durable foundation for collaboration through relationship building, a **Memorandum of Collaboration** will outline shared goals, responsibilities and decision-making processes.

A joint Steering Group will be formed with representatives from both Associations to guide a programme of work. The Steering Group will meet twice per year to identify shared challenges, priorities, and opportunities for collaboration. This will include:

- Regular meetings of the leadership of both Associations
- Develop joint policy papers and advocacy campaigns to influence national and regional governments
- Proactively seeking opportunities to share & learn from each other, including by organising joint workshops and webinars on key policy areas.
- Seeking strategic opportunities for impactful collaboration, including with external partners
- Developing the evidence base for funding opportunities in shared priority areas
- Launching a small-scale joint project (e.g., digital transformation or community engagement initiative)

A **three-year strategic** plan is proposed to guide our work from June 2025 - May 2028, allowing the Associations to prioritise and focus their efforts on areas of interest that are not currently addressed by the Associations.

In Year 1, the partnership will focus Violence Against Women and Girls due to the shared challenges and opportunities that exist on both sides of the border. By working together, we can leverage collective expertise, resources, and networks to create a more comprehensive and effective response to this pervasive issue. Joint initiatives can facilitate the sharing of best practices, enhance the capacity of local authorities, and ensure a coordinated approach to policy development and implementation. Collectively we can strengthen the impact of individual efforts and develop a powerful message of commitment to ending violence against women and girls.

In order to build on early successes and take the collaboration to a new level, scaling and innovation will be the key aims of the partnership in Year 2. Engagement opportunities will be increased and made available to a wider cohort of councillors through the delivery of a blended approach to policy discussions, both in person and online and through the use of innovation labs & hackathons. The focus will be on developing concise materials for use by councillors to signpost residents to wellbeing support, and to develop resources for councillors' own wellbeing. Successful models and tools will be shared and replicated / localised if required and joint tools will be developed to support collaboration. We aim to leverage technology by collaborating with strategic partners and co-create new value through our collaboration.

In Year 3, as the partnership becomes more impactful and demonstrates results, we will address long-term sustainability by exploring opportunities for collaboration with local government associations in the UK. A theme for a high-profile summit in Year 3 will be agreed with the partners, which will also allow us to remain agile and respond to emerging challenges. The Associations will investigate how income streams could be diversified to support this work.

An overview of the three-year plan is presented overleaf.

3-year plan overview

	Theme	Partners	Outputs	Outcomes
Year 1	Violence Against Women & Girls	Councils, regional & national government	Development of briefing papers Cross-border conference held to share best practice, highlight how councils and councillors can play a key role in addressing VAWG	Sharing of best practice supports a coordinated approach to policy development and implementation. Improved capacity of councillors to respond to emerging challenges
Year 2	Wellbeing	Councils HSE / Public Health Agency, third sector partners	Delivery of a regular learning series for councillors Development of practical resources for councillors for personal & residents' wellbeing	Raised awareness of support and information for wellbeing Widened & increased opportunities to engage in cross-border dialogue
Year 3	Irish Sea Cooperation	Irish & UK local government associations, national and regional government, academia & strategic partners	Conference event for local government associations (AILG, NILGA, COSLA, LGA, WLGA) on emerging challenges for communities	Collective voice of local government is strengthened Alliances forged to shape future collaboration

Evaluation & Monitoring

To ensure the sustainability and long-term Impact of the partnership, regular review meetings will be held, to include the leadership teams of both Associations. Annual reports and impact assessments of collaboration initiatives will be jointly presented to both Executive bodies and widely communicated to all members, along with external promotion.

Resources

The Associations will continue to collaborate through their existing arrangements on matters of mutual interest.

The Associations and Steering Group will consider how external funding can contribute to the delivery of the 3-year action plan.

MEMORANDUM OF COLLABORATION (MoC) BETWEEN THE ASSOCIATION OF IRISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE NORTHERN IRELAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION



1. Introduction

This Memorandum of Collaboration (MoC) is made and entered into on 27 May 2025 by and between The Association of Irish Local Government (hereinafter referred to as "AILG") and the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (hereinafter referred to as "NILGA"). This MoC establishes a framework for collaboration between the two parties to enhance relations between the local government associations, leading to improved local governance and policy development.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this MoC is to outline the terms of collaboration between AILG & NILGA to:

- Promote knowledge sharing and capacity building between councillors and councils
- Enhance joint policy development and advocacy efforts.
- Foster innovation in cross-border political initiatives

3. Principles of Collaboration

Both parties agree to collaborate based on the following principles:

- Mutual respect and trust: Recognising each other's strengths and contributions.
- Transparency and accountability: Open communication and shared decision-making.
- Equity and fairness: Ensuring balanced participation and benefits.
- Sustainability: Committing to long-term impact and resource efficiency.

4. Areas of Collaboration

AILG & NILGA will evolve their collaboration over the three years in the following key areas:

- Developing shared learning & development opportunities, workshops, and leadership development initiatives.
- Joint Research and Policy Development on local government challenges.
- Coordinating efforts to influence national and regional policies affecting local government
- Exploring how strategic partners can contribute to councillor engagement in cross-border initiatives

5. Governance and Decision-Making

A Joint Steering Group will be established, composed of equal representatives from both associations, to oversee the implementation of this MoC. The Joint Steering Group will meet at least biannually to review progress, resolve challenges, and identify new opportunities.

Each party will appoint a primary contact person responsible for coordinating collaboration efforts.

6. Financial and Resource Commitment

This MoC does not constitute a financial obligation but encourages both parties to seek funding and resource-sharing opportunities.

Joint initiatives requiring financial investment will be governed by separate agreements.

7. Confidentiality and Data Sharing

Both parties agree to maintain confidentiality regarding any sensitive information shared during collaboration.

Data sharing protocols will be established to ensure compliance with applicable data protection laws.

8. Duration and Termination

This MoC shall be effective from 27 May 2025 and will remain in force for three years, unless extended by mutual agreement.

Either party may terminate this MoC with 90 days' written notice to the other party.

Termination shall not affect any ongoing projects unless otherwise agreed.

9. Dispute Resolution

Any disputes arising under this MoC will be resolved through mutual consultation and negotiation.

If unresolved, parties may seek mediation or arbitration as per agreed procedures.

10. Amendments

Any modifications to this MoC must be made in writing and signed by both parties.

11. Signatures

The undersigned, duly authorised representatives of AILG & NILGA, have signed this MoC on the date specified below.



For AILG

Name: Cllr Kieran O' Hanlon

Position: AILG President

Date: 27th May 2025

Kieran O' Hanlon

Name: Cllr Jimmy McCearn

Position: AILG Vice President

Date: 27th May 2025

Jimmy McCearn

Name: Cllr Anne Colgan

Position: AILG Executive Member

Date: 27th May 2025

Anne Colgan

Name: Cllr Mary Hoade

Position: AILG Executive Member

Date: 27th May 2025

Mary Hoade

Name: Cllr Mick Cahill

Position: AILG Executive Member

Date: 27th May 2025

Mick Cahill



For NILGA

Name: Cllr Alison Bennington

Position: NILGA President

Date: 27th May 2025

Alison Bennington

Name: Cllr Matt Garrett

Position: NILGA Vice President

Date: 27th May 2025

Matt Garrett

Name: Cllr Billy Webb

Position: NILGA Vice President

Date: 27th May 2025

Billy Webb

Name: Alderman Hazel Legge

Position: NILGA Vice President

Date: 27th May 2025

Hazel Legge

Name: Cllr Carl Whyte

Position: NILGA Vice President

Date: 27th May 2025

Carl Whyte

AILG

web: www.ailg.ie

NILGA

web: www.nilga.org