

East Midlands Sounding Board

Terms of Reference

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1. Purpose

The East Midlands Sounding Board exists to:

- Shape, inform, support and sense-check the Federation's work in the East Midlands and nationally
- Support the Federation in reaching out to all members in the East Midlands, engaging and involving them in our work
- Help set the agendas for the quarterly East Midlands Chief Executive Forums
- Provide feedback to the Federation on activities, priorities and policy issues on behalf of the East Midlands

2. Membership

The Sounding Board will normally consist of between six and nine members. All Sounding Board members must be a Chief Executive or equivalent at organisations affiliated to the National Housing Federation.

Applications for membership will be invited from organisations based in the East Midlands, and from those who are based elsewhere but have a significant presence in the region. The Sounding Board does not seek to be wholly representative (there is no vote or mandate for members), but will encourage diversity of its members.

Sounding Board members will be selected in a fair and transparent way, by a panel of members and the Federation's External Affairs Manager, and any changes in membership will be announced at the next Chief Executive Forum. Membership of the Sounding Board will be reviewed annually. Members will need to meet the expectations outlined in point 6 below, in order to continue their membership of the Sounding Board.

The Federation's Assistant Director of External Affairs & Member Relations will have the final oversight of the Sounding Board membership.

3. Chair

The Sounding Board will be expected to elect a rotating Chair annually from within the Sounding Board membership. In addition to the expectations listed in point 6 below, the Chair will be expected to:

- Chair the Sounding Board meetings and the Chief Executive Forums

- Attend quarterly dinner events with other regions' Chairs and senior Federation staff

4. Meetings

There will be a minimum of two Sounding Board meetings a year, in addition to the four Chief Executive Forums. One meeting will be an away day, normally held in January, to review the past year and plan for the year ahead. The second meeting will be mid-year, normally June or July, to review the first six months of the year and confirm or amend plans for the rest of the year as appropriate.

Meetings will take place in locations central to the East Midlands region, most likely in or around Leicester. The Federation is unable to pay travel expenses for these meetings but will cover the cost of room hire and catering if necessary.

5. Relationship with governance

The Sounding Board is a non-executive board, and therefore is not part of the Federation's formal governance structure. It is one of a number of engagement mechanisms designed to ensure our local work is member-led. However, to ensure the Federation's national Board is sufficiently linked in to issues on the ground, the Chair of the East Midlands Sounding Board will be expected to attend quarterly dinner events with other regions' Chairs and share information on the East Midlands Sounding Board's progress. These meetings will also be attended by the Federation's Chief Executive and Chair.

6. Expectations of Sounding Board members

All Sounding Board members will be expected to:

- Attend at least two Sounding Board meetings a year
- Attend at least two Chief Executive Forums a year
- Provide creative, critical and constructive feedback in order to support and strengthen the Federation's work in the East Midlands and nationally
- Take actions forward outside of Sounding Board meetings as appropriate
- Act as an effective ambassador for the Federation with both members and external audiences
- Act as a media spokesperson when appropriate
- Chair events when appropriate

7. What Sounding Board members can expect from the Federation

- A clear plan for Sounding Board activity, updated and refreshed annually and produced in consultation with Sounding Board members
- Opportunities for face-to-face time with senior Federation staff, including the Chief Executive
- Opportunities to help shape and inform the Federation's work in the East Midlands and nationally – and the support to do this effectively

- Opportunities to engage with the wider membership and stakeholders in the region – and support to do this effectively
- Support and input from the Federation’s External Affairs Manager at every meeting
- Support and input from a range of Federation staff when appropriate

8. Review of the Sounding Board

The Federation wants to make sure the engagement mechanisms we have are strong and successful, delivering both for our members and for the Federation. We will review the Sounding Board after its first year in operation, and on an annual basis thereafter. We will always involve our members in these reviews.