

Code of Governance review

First phase consultation

In this document:

- Introduction to the review.
- Background and purpose of the code.
- The consultation process.
- How to complete the first phase consultation questionnaire.

In addition to this document, we have put together a [full list of the consultation questions](#) to help you prepare for the online questionnaire.

Introduction

The National Housing Federation's Code of Governance sets a framework for good housing association governance.

The [current Code of Governance was published in 2015](#). We are now looking to review the existing code, and build on its strengths, to ensure that the new Code of Governance is the gold standard for housing association governance.

The environment that housing associations operate in is fast-changing and complex, and we want to reflect that through a new code. The new code will reflect key questions and issues facing the sector, such as the need for boards to be accountable to residents.

This document sets out the process for consulting with housing associations, residents and stakeholders on the new code. It forms the first stage of a three-stage consultation on the Federation's Code of Governance. In this stage, we set out a series of questions and core principles that we would like to hear your views on.

The deadline for responding to this first phase of the consultation, via an online questionnaire, is 13 March.

Background

We published our current Code of Governance in 2015, following a substantial review of the 2010 Code of Governance. The current code is widely adopted across the sector, with the overwhelming majority of large housing associations using the code. Federation codes of governance – the 2015, 2010 and 2009 versions – are also the most popular codes used by smaller housing associations. Organisations that sign up to the code are required to report annually on their compliance and, where they do not comply, they must explain why through a reasoned statement.

The housing association sector, like many other sectors, is facing increasing public scrutiny in a number of areas, including accountability, trust and transparency. These are issues that the sector is already showing leadership on through our Together with Tenants initiative, and they were also reflected in the 2019 Social Housing Green Paper. The government has announced plans to publish the associated White Paper in 2020, which we expect will again shine the spotlight on accountability and trust. We therefore want our new Code of Governance to reflect the importance of these matters, and to support housing associations to deliver effective governance in these areas.

Improving equality, diversity and inclusion in housing association workforces is key to achieving the Federation's ambition of improving trust in our sector. This issue also goes to the heart of who we are as organisations, and there is a major role for governance to play in enabling organisations to be diverse and equitable workplaces. This consultation seeks your views on how we can support housing associations to do this.

We are mindful that the Code of Governance is much more than a best practice document, and that it has legal weight. Many housing associations adopting the code are also regulated registered providers of social housing. The Regulator of Social Housing's Governance and Financial Viability standard requires those subject to regulation to 'adopt and comply with an appropriate code of governance'. This means that non-compliance with the code has the potential to prompt the regulator to use its legal powers of intervention and/or enforcement with organisations that it identifies as not meeting the requirements set out in their chosen code of governance.

The consultation process

It is essential that the Federation's Code of Governance reflects the breadth and diversity of our membership, and addresses the right issues for your organisation.

Our consultation gives all Federation members, housing association residents, and anyone with an interest in doing so, the opportunity to feed into the process.

The consultation will take place over three phases:

- An open consultation on the core principles framing the code – open now until 13 March.
- A collaborative drafting process.
- A final consultation on the draft Code of Governance.

In addition to this process, we have identified a group of representatives to form an advisory group. Members of the group have been selected to offer us perspectives from residents, governance experts, senior executives and board members from a range of housing associations. The group's role will be to scrutinise and inform decisions about what needs to be in the code, and how this is presented. This advisory group will likely meet for the first time in February, when we will confirm the names of the individuals involved.

In this first phase of the consultation, we would like to hear your views on the core principles that will make up the new Code of Governance. We are also posing some more general questions about what is important for good housing association governance, and how we should approach some of the main issues facing housing association boards now and in the future.

The answers we receive to the questions in this consultation will inform the drafting of the new Code of Governance. While it won't be possible to reflect all of the views expressed in this consultation in the final Code of Governance, we will identify any issues that arise consistently and will undertake further work to support you with these.

How to complete the questionnaire

You are invited to share your views via our [online questionnaire](#). This consists of 30 questions, most of which have some element of open response. To help you consider and prepare your answers in advance, you can [download a list of questions](#).

While we do not expect everyone to give extensive answers on every question, please do try to answer as many of them as possible. If you wish to, you can save your response part way through and come back to it.

If you have any questions about this process, please contact us on codeofgovernance@housing.org.uk.

The questions are divided into four sections:

- Information about you – in case we need to follow up with you on any of your answers.
- General questions.
- The principles of good housing association governance.
- Specific questions relating to what the new code could cover.

The deadline to respond is **13 March 2020**.

Please answer as many of the questions as you can, and please give your answers in full. Where possible, please cite evidence of examples to support your answers. If you need any help accessing the online questionnaire, please contact us at codeofgovernance@housing.org.uk or on 020 7067 1036.

- [Download the questions](#)
- [Complete the online questionnaire](#)

Next steps

The information that you provide through this stage of the consultation will inform and guide the new Code of Governance. Your responses will remain anonymous and we won't publish any responses in full.

As set out above, you will have further opportunities to feed into the development of the new code in the subsequent stages of the consultation. Please ensure that you include your contact details if you would like to stay informed about this process.

If you have any questions about this process and how you can get involved, please get in touch at codeofgovernance@housing.org.uk.

Additional information

- [National Housing Federation Code of Governance \(2015\)](#)