

National Groups

Terms of reference

National Groups: purpose

The Federation's national groups are a crucial element in meeting our core values – to put members at the heart of everything we do, and work together to achieve that. National Groups support us in developing and testing new policy ideas, gathering vital market intelligence, and informing our responses to government and other key stakeholders. Groups should support us in delivering our business plan, and should be flexible in response to the external environment and salience of key issues. They should also provide added value for members through the opportunity to shape debates at a national level, in a dynamic setting and with high quality support from Federation staff. We are committed to several key principles in relation to national groups; and our approach to member engagement more broadly:

- **Fairness** - all members are clear about who is on the group, the reasons why, and the mechanisms /rationale for involvement;
- **Inclusivity** – all members are clear about the group's purpose and how to contribute in the fullest way;
- **Transparency** – the group operates in a way which is clear and visible to other members.

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

Each of the Federation's national groups have specific purposes to facilitate discussion around new thinking and best practice in each business stream. They will also support and advise the Federation on its lobbying and influencing work.

2. Membership

National Groups comprise of 12 - 15 members. All members must be staff of organisations affiliated to the National Housing Federation. Members will be selected in a fair and transparent way, and the Federation's Member Engagement and Relations Manager will ensure consistency in the process.

The group does not seek to be wholly representative (there is no vote or mandate), but will encourage genuine diversity of members. The following factors will be taken into consideration when assessing applications:

- The need to ensure there is at least one member from each size band of housing Association: large, medium and small.
- The need to ensure the group membership is formed of housing associations from a range of geographical locations.

- The need to ensure a diversity of skills and expertise among the individual members of the group.
- The need to ensure a diversity of strategic and operational understanding of issues among the individual members of the group.

3. Length of term

A standard term will last for 3 years in accordance with the Federation business planning cycle.

4. Meetings and commitment

- 4 x core meetings per year
- Includes 1 extended 'wider engagement meeting' per year
- Includes some activity in between meetings e.g. acting as a virtual sounding board on emerging policy issues, promoting group activity with members' own networks etc.

We expect the approximate time commitment will be 12 – 15 hours a year excluding travel time. This will rise to up to 20 hours for the Chair.

Members will be expected to attend at least 3 meetings a year and participate in activity in between meetings. Membership will be individual by Housing Association, and sending substitutes will not be permitted.

5. Chairing

The group will be expected to elect a Chair and Vice-Chair from within their number. The Chair will be expected to:

- Be an active Chair at meetings
- Act as an effective ambassador for the Federation externally
- Work with the Federation lead and the wider group to shape agendas and group activity.

The Vice-Chair will be expected to:

- Chair meetings on behalf of the Chair where appropriate
- Act as an effective ambassador for the Federation externally
- Work with the Chair and Federation lead to shape agendas and group activity.

6. Expectations of group members

Group members will be expected to:

- Provide creative, critical and constructive feedback in order to strengthen the Federation's policy work across the wellbeing and social enterprise agenda, and support us in delivering the objectives in our business plan.

- Attend as many of the meetings as possible, and at least 3 across the year.
- Act as an effective ambassador for the Federation and the group with both member and external audiences.
- Contribute blogs, articles or other activities from time to time in order to support us in reaching out to the wider membership.
- Take actions forward outside of meetings as appropriate (e.g. provide views on email, canvas opinion from other members).
- Have their names published on our website as part of the group information section, and in alignment with Federation commitments around transparency and openness.

7. What group members can expect from the Federation

Overall we promise to ensure our approach is FIT for purpose:

- Fair – in our processes and decision-making
- Inclusive – in that we will always seek to reflect the diversity of our membership
- Transparent – in how we make decisions, and how we work with you

Specifically in relation to each national group members can expect:

- A clear framework, aligned to our business plan objectives, to support group activity.
- Opportunities to input ideas, test policy proposals and influence the delivery of a critical area of our business plan.
- Support and input from the Federation’s policy lead at every meeting.
- Support and input from a range of Federation staff where appropriate.
- Clear and consistent feedback and evaluation on how the group is making a difference to our work.
- Clear communication with Federation leadership – an opportunity for the group to engage directly with our Chief Executive or another member of the Senior Team at least once a year.
- Flexibility and responsiveness – we will review the format regularly and in partnership with you, to ensure it is fit for purpose.
- Efficiency and Value for Money – we have no desire to create meaningless bureaucracy within our groups; the focus will be on creative thinking and practical action that will help to deliver our business plan.

In practice, this means:

- Providing dedicated resource to administer the group, which will include holding the mailing list, noting actions at meetings and circulating agendas.
- Regularly demonstrating the added value of the group’s activity to business plan delivery, through evaluation and feedback.
- Ensuring the work of the group is communicated and accessible to the wider membership.
- Paying travel expenses for those outside London, within reason.

9. Review

We want to make sure the engagement mechanisms we have are strong and successful, and support us in delivering our business plan. We will review the group after the first 6 months and on an annual basis thereafter. We will always involve our members in discussions around changes.

Octavia Williams
Member Engagement and Relations Manager
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