

VENTURE HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

ROLE DESCRIPTION OF BOARD MEMBER

Purpose

- To further the aims of the Association, making sure it keeps within its charitable objectives.
- With other Board Members, to direct and control the affairs of the Association and to support staff.

Main Tasks

- To take part in formulating and regularly reviewing the strategic aims of the Association.
- With other Board/Committee Members, to ensure that the policy and practice of the Association are in keeping with its aims.
- To monitor the performance of the Association.
- With other Board/Committee Members to ensure that the Association functions within the legal and financial requirements of a charitable association, complies with the National Housing Federation Code of Governance and the Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code and strives to achieve best practice.

Main Obligations

Board Members are expected to:

- Uphold the values and aims of the Association.
- Contribute to and share responsibility for Board decisions.
- Prepare for and attend meetings, training sessions and other events.
- Attend and participate in reviews of their own and the Board's performance.
- Represent the Association when required.
- Declare any relevant interests.
- Respect the confidentiality of information received.

- Uphold the Association's Code of Conduct and the National Housing Federation's Governance Code.

Other Guidance

Board Members act in accordance with the following guidelines:

- All members take part in Board business on an equal footing. Although members may have different backgrounds and different reasons for their involvement, they must act in the best interests of the organisation. Board Members should not be lobbyists, campaigners or advocates for any particular group.
- No-one who serves as a Board Member should be in a position to gain or benefit from his or her dealings with the organisation. There are strict regulations governing conflicts of interest of any sort. The Code of Governance explains how conflicts of interest may arise and how they should be dealt with. Detailed guidance on the legal framework will be provided to you by the Association. This primarily relates to Schedule 1 of the Housing Act 1996 and the subsequent guidance which the Housing Corporation has issued relating to it.
- The decision-making process is a corporate one. This means that even if a member is unhappy with a decision, provided it has been properly considered by the Board as a whole, all members should stand by that decision and not undermine it.
- Members are expected to make every effort to attend Board and Committee Meetings. The team's individual knowledge and collective effectiveness is hampered by frequent absence. If circumstances arise in which a member will be unable to attend regularly, he or she should discuss this with the Chair or Chief Executive.
- The Board has a valid role as a 'critical questioner'. This is not to imply a lack of trust or doubt, but only by questioning and testing does the Board add the value of its collective knowledge.
- The Board has a right to seek external advice whenever it wishes to do so. This is another way in which the Board effectively fulfils its 'critical questioner' role.
- Members should contact the Chief Executive and discuss any questions with him whenever there is a need for clarification on particular issues or reports.

Members have a duty of loyalty and support towards the staff and this should be reflected in a constructive, professional relationship. In the unlikely event of a serious difficulty with an individual staff member, the problem should be discussed in confidence with the Chief Executive or Chair.

PERSON SPECIFICATION – BOARD MEMBER

Essential Requirements

It is essential that Board Members are able to:

- commit, on average, the equivalent of approximately 160 hours per annum to the work of the Board;
- attend at least 80 per cent of full meetings of the Board;
- participate in two of the Association's standing Committees.

Key Competencies

Key competencies for Board Members are:

- giving purpose and direction;
- thinking strategically;
- leading by example;
- getting the best from people;
- focusing on outcomes;
- learning and improving.

A dimension which it is difficult to quantify in any summary of management competencies is personal effectiveness. In theory, it would be quite possible for a Board Member to demonstrate compliance with the competencies set out below, but not actually make very much difference to the leadership process. The ability to lead, inspire and add value to the Board process is the primary quality we are seeking to foster in our Board Members.

The following table gives some examples of what each of these competencies means in practice.

Giving purpose and direction	
<i>Effective behaviour</i>	<i>Ineffective behaviour</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is clear what needs to be achieved • Communicates a compelling view of the future • Establishes standards of behaviour which promote diversity • Agrees clear responsibilities in conjunction with the rest of the Board, and objectives to deliver results • Demonstrates commitment to the values and policies of the Association • Communicates clearly and persuasively • Acts as a role model for fellow Board Members and Directors • Inspires colleagues to achieve more • Influences the direction of the Association and adds value to the decision-making process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looks to others to provide direction • Takes an overly cautious approach • Loses sight of the big picture • Allows a culture which is intolerant of diversity

Thinking strategically	
<i>Effective behaviour</i>	<i>Ineffective behaviour</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitive to wider political and organisational priorities • Assimilates and makes sense of complex or conflicting data and different perspectives • Finds new ways of looking at issues • Homes in on key issues • Identifies opportunities to improve delivery through partnership • Recommends business directions for the Association • Anticipates risks and consequences • Makes objective decisions based on sound evidence and analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works only from own perspective or assumptions about the world • Fails to make connections between ideas or people • Focuses solely on the detail • Focuses on intellectual debate at the expense of action • Fails to consider the needs of a diverse community

Leading by example	
<i>Effective behaviour</i>	<i>Ineffective behaviour</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visible and approachable to all • Acts with honesty and integrity • Declares any relevant interests • Prepares thoroughly for meetings • Regularly attends meetings, is reliable and punctual • Contributes to discussion and decision-making at the appropriate time • Challenges and is prepared to be challenged • Says what people may not want to hear • Respects confidences and confidentiality of information • Takes difficult decisions and measured risks • Accepts responsibility for own decisions • Does not let personal relationships interfere with Board responsibilities • Takes personal responsibility for making progress in diversity issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Says one thing and does another • Takes contrary views as a personal criticism • Fights own corner, ignoring wider interests • Accepts the status quo • Aloof and arrogant • Aggressive not assertive • Unwilling to compromise when compromise is appropriate

Getting the best from people	
<i>Effective behaviour</i>	<i>Ineffective behaviour</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gets to know individuals and their aspirations • Builds productive relationships with people across and outside the organisation • Adapts working style to different people, cultures and situations • Knows when to step in and when not to • Listens and takes account of diverse views • Gives and expects constructive feedback • Respects the role of others, inside and outside the Board • Praises achievements and celebrates success • Encourages colleagues to challenge conservative thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works with only the most competent people • Writes rather than speaks • Has a fixed working style • Is uncomfortable working with people from diverse backgrounds • Blames others • Wields the red pen • Avoids giving constructive criticism or voicing unpopular views when he or she feels it necessary • Does not respect the feelings of others

Focusing on outcomes	
<i>Effective behaviour</i>	<i>Ineffective behaviour</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puts customers first • Rigorous in monitoring and reviewing progress and performance • Is not deflected by obstacles or problems • Seeks continuously to improve performance and service delivery • Supports decisions once agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on the process rather than getting results • Avoids dealing with difficult problems • Makes hasty decisions under pressure • Takes sole credit for achieving results

Learning and improving	
<i>Effective behaviour</i>	<i>Ineffective behaviour</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aware of own strengths, weaknesses and motivations • Applies learning from own and others' experience • Keeps knowledge up to date and is in touch with relevant issues • Understands, values and incorporates different perspectives • Seeks new or different ideas and opportunities to learn • Readily shares information and ideas with others • Encourages experimentation and tries innovative ways of working • Works with partners to achieve the best practical outcomes • Adapts quickly and flexibly to change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can't see things from other people's perspective • Assumes, at the outset, different perspectives need not be taken on Board • Does not listen • Sticks to outdated methods • Unwilling to be exposed to risk or uncertainty