The widening access to higher education (HE) challenge is not a uniform one across England. NEON recognised this in its formation, and has delivered a series of regional supporting practice events since 2012 to support cross-sector dialogue on widening access practice.

This event will look at how this dialogue can be strengthened by the creation of a NEON supported community of practice in the Midlands. It will examine the specific challenges and opportunities in widening access to HE in the Midlands from the perspectives of HE, FE, schools, students and employers.

There will be case-study examples of how cross-sector collaboration works in practice in different parts of the region. There will also be a session looking at what the data tells us about HE participation in the Midlands and the state of the region.

The aim will be to pinpoint the key issues for widening access in the Midlands, and how the community of practice can help address these and what it actually means. This will include discussing what future NEON regional events should feature, the creation of an online collaborative space for practitioners in the Midlands and what this should look like and how the community can support engagement with policymakers from across sectors, in particular ensuring the new national widening access strategy meets the needs of learners in the Midlands.

**Who should attend:**
- Deans/PVCs with responsibility for HEI Access Agreements
- HE Heads of Widening Access/Participation in HEIs
- Project Co-ordinators/Officers in HE WP teams
- WP contacts/leads in academic departments
- Researchers working on social mobility and HE progression projects
- Heads of HE from FE Colleges
- Students’ Union officers with responsibility/interest in widening access
- Heads of/HE Co-ordinators in Sixth Forms
- Teachers/IAG professionals with HE progression responsibility in schools
- Directors/Co-ordinators from third sector organisations working in the widening access to HE and social mobility field
- Employers.
The Event Programme

9:30am Registration

10:00am Introduction and NEON Update

10:15am Widening Access to HE in the Midlands: the state of the region
An overview of trends in HE participation and the factors that underpin it in the Midlands

11:00am Widening Access in the Midlands: Challenges & Opportunities
A panel discussion looking at the particular issues associated with access to HE in the Midlands with representatives from HEFCE, OFFA, FE, Students’ Unions & Schools

12:30pm Lunch

1:15pm How Cross-sector Collaboration Works in the Midlands
An interactive session featuring examples of cross-sector collaboration widening access projects in the Midlands

2:00pm How Cross-sector Collaboration Works in the Midlands
An interactive session featuring examples of cross-sector collaboration widening access projects in the Midlands

2:45pm Refreshments

3:00pm Plenary Discussion: What would a NEON Community of Practice look like in the Midlands?

3:30pm Close

Attendance at the event costs:

£70 (non member)
£56 (NEON individual member)
£52 (NEON organisational member)

Book on at:
www.educationopportunities.co.uk/supporting-practice-event-series