



Supporting the HEFCE Networks for Collaborative Outreach

Background

In November 2013 the Government announced funding for the development of a national outreach network, to support collaborative approaches in delivering higher education (HE) outreach activity to all state-funded secondary schools and colleges. The aim 'is to help state-funded secondary schools and colleges understand how they can access outreach activity, and to simplify the way in which they can do so'.

The National Education Opportunities Network held a National Planning Conference for the new Networks for Collaborative Outreach in September 2014. This was attended by 75 delegates representing over 50 organisations. HEFCE spoke in detail about the new NCOs and delegates had the opportunity to input their views as to how NEON could best facilitate and support the networks. Delegates felt that there was a major role for NEON with both the networks and the Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) that would be created. Through NEON's input the NCO project would be more likely to become successful and help ensure sustainability beyond the initial two year period of funding.

About NEON

NEON was formed in January 2012 in order to enable those involved in widening access to higher education (HE), at all levels and in all sectors, to affect change in their own organisations and communities.

At the heart of NEON is a cross-sector approach bringing together HE institutions, schools, colleges, the third, private and voluntary sectors and professional bodies who all share the same goal of social mobility with regards to HE.

NEON has four primary objectives:

- To increase the professionalization of widening access work through the development and accreditation of practice.
- To be a research and advocacy resource for those working in access at the local, regional and national level.
- To develop and enhance practice and quality in widening access work.
- To offer input and support to policy-makers and government from the widening access community.

NEON's vision is that access to and success in higher education should not be related to social background but be based upon ability and willingness to participate.

The NEON NCO Support Package

NEON is offering NCOs the opportunity to benefit from a coherent package of support that will enable networks to achieve the maximum results in the most efficient way, via sharing of practice, and also to develop a genuinely collective, independent approach to sustainability that harnesses their combined resources.

Objectives

- Sharing best practice across the networks
- Limiting replication of work in each network
- Ensuring a stronger voice for the networks
- Co-ordinating evaluation and efforts to attract sustainability funding.

NEON would offer:

- Dedicated NEON NCO secretariat support.
- Membership of NEON for the NCO itself with the benefits associated with it (please visit www.educationopportunities.co.uk for a full list of membership benefits).
- National forum, with dedicated secretariat support, for the chair/lead officer from each NCO to meet up to six times over the project's lifetime.
- Working group, with dedicated secretariat support, for delivery staff from each NCO to meet up to six times over the project's lifetime.
- Free places at national conferences in April 2015 and April 2016.
- Facilitation of dedicated online space supporting the discussion and sharing of practice between NCOs.
- Facilitating NCO liaison with policy makers and HEFCE to ensuring the NCO voice plays a central role in the way in which the project develops.
- A monthly newsletter to schools highlighting developments in the project nationally, the work of other NCOs and opportunities available and showcasing school based innovation in access.
- Specialist working groups, to meet up to four times over the project's lifetime:
 - Designing and delivering an online 'single point of contact'
 - Monitoring and evaluation of the NCO project
 - Sustainability planning

The cost of the package would be £2500 per network per year in 2014/15 and 2015/16.