

PLACE-BASED GOVERNANCE – LOCAL GOVERNANCE WITH NATIONAL REACH

As one of the UK's leading college groups, NCG exists to create life-changing opportunities for individuals that strengthen the prosperity of their local communities. However, with seven colleges across the UK, and a vision to be recognised for our local impact, national influence and reach, we understand that the educational and skills needs of those communities are distinct and will vary – one size cannot and should not “fit all” in a Group structure such as ours. As such, we have adopted a dynamic place-based governance model which honours local context: a model which is flexible enough to meet the diverse needs of all our NCG communities and at the same time, is robust enough to provide sufficient assurance around college performance, student outcomes and experience, and will be a recognised model of good practice in the sector.

WHAT IS PLACE-BASED GOVERNANCE?

Place-based governance is a collaborative model of governance in which NCG boards draw on the skills, knowledge and experience of local communities to address the learning and skills needs of their populations. Membership of college boards will be drawn from the four key stakeholder groups as identified by Ofsted (Education, Employers, Civic and Community – the Es and Cs). Similarly, as a national Group with national reach, the NCG Corporation Board will ensure that its membership and reach is as diverse as the populations it serves. In this way, stakeholder voice will create boards and colleges which are truly responsive to the communities they serve. Bodies such as DfE, Ofsted and OfS will be able to test our engagement at college level with all of our stakeholders in a transparent and meaningful way.

HOW DOES PLACE-BASED GOVERNANCE WORK?

The NCG place-based approach maintains the central authority of the Corporation Board as the accountable legal entity, while enabling college boards to focus on local issues and respond to the needs of students and the communities in which they operate. In principle, the NCG Corporation Board, supported by a discrete number of sub-committees, will continue to focus on strategic planning and risk, monitoring of overall resources and Group performance. In contrast, the place-based governance model in operation at college board level, will focus on engaging directly with local communities regarding the educational provision on offer. This will include but is not limited to: consideration of local strategies and responses, contribution to the annual Accountability Statement (including the Duty to Review), scrutiny of Local Skills Improvement Plans (particularly where those plans do not fully consider the needs of the respective business community), and exploration of new lines of curriculum development and qualifications to meet local needs.

For the avoidance of doubt, the NCG place-based model is not about devolving accountability, decision-making or funding to college boards. As the accountable legal entity, the NCG Corporation Board will retain oversight of these items. Rather, place-based governance is

about providing college boards with the freedom to explore in greater depth, those curriculum, skills and employment issues which will have the most local impact within their region, aligning with regional priorities, and demonstrating that NCG colleges are truly 'community assets'.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL COLLEGE BOARD MEMBER / GOVERNOR IN THE PLACE-BASED GOVERNANCE MODEL?

The place-based governance model has been developed in consideration of members desire to continue to add value and have meaningful impact at a local level as well as their need to understand college performance as a basis for their role. As such, college board members will receive sufficient information via the Principals report to be assured of college performance. This information will also support members in their role as ambassadors and champions of the college within the community. The remainder of meeting time will be spent on exploring in more detail those local issues which will add value.

WHY ADOPT PLACE-BASED GOVERNANCE

The NCG place-based governance model is grounded in the knowledge that our colleges are community assets and anchor institutions within their local communities. NCG's mission is to enable social mobility and economic prosperity through exceptional education - if we are serious about achieving our mission, we must take decisions based on a shared understanding of the communities we serve. Place-based governance facilitates this greater understanding of our communities. It is also aligned to NCG's values, the culture and behaviours articulated within the NCG 2030 Strategy and People Plan, and our strategic objective to be "Ambitious for Outstanding".

CONCLUSION

The NCG place-based governance model is agile enough to meet the needs of all of our college communities. It is also sufficiently flexible to support any future growth. Ultimately, the NCG place-based governance model will provide assurance that:

- Students are safe, happy and achieving;
- Staff are delivering high-quality education, developing their careers and see NCG as an employer and partner of choice within their locality;
- Colleges are providing a curriculum that has been developed in conjunction with their local communities to meet their specific needs.

By embedding a governance model which balances assurance and advice, local impact and national reach, we believe that place-based governance offers a clear accountability framework within which to operate and will be the key driver in improving access, reducing inequalities and enabling social mobility across all our college communities.