



## **Voice East Midlands Consultation Response EMSP Business Plan**

Voice East Midlands facilitated 2 sessions to engage BME organisations in responding to the draft business plan for the EMSP. The events were held in Nottingham (26<sup>th</sup> Feb) and Leicester (28<sup>th</sup> Feb). A Total of 37 people representing 33 different organisations attended the consultation events with representation from Nottingham, Leicester and Derby.

### **Key areas of consultation included:**

- vision/mission
- key work areas
- membership
- governance
- name

### **Vision/Mission**

It was felt by attendees at both events that this needed to include diversity and equality within the respective statements. Although it was accepted that a separate statement is contained within the business plan this needed to be upfront at the heart of the vision and mission statements.

**We propose that the vision and mission statements in the business plan reflect the importance of diversity and equality within the content of these statements as a clear indication of its priority.**

### **Key work areas**

A number of principles were suggested that would increase BME organisations confidence that the SP was taking on their issues as a serious concern.

It was felt that the capacity of the BME infrastructure organisations regional and sub regional) needed to be increased to be able to effectively engage at the same level as generic infrastructure organisations in feeding into opportunities presented by the SP to engage in its work programme. This was

seen as crucial in allowing the BME sector to 'catch up' and not constantly be running to stand still as is currently the case. This means there is a need for investment of resources (not just money but time and priority) in BME infrastructure for them to more fully participate in the SP, as well as being able to communicate with confidence to their frontline members that the SP is a vehicle that can deliver for all, including them.

Another concern reflected the ability and capacity of the SP to engage the 'diversity' of the sector. BME groups contain a wide range of sub sectors that have their own priorities. Caution was advised in seeing the BME sector as one homogenous body that could present a single view and therefore pigeonholing it. There were strong views about the need to maintain, sustain and develop specialist infrastructure within the BME sector to ensure diverse views are facilitated in being heard. This also included serious concerns about the BME sector and issues it is concerned with being marginalised and sidelined.

It was also felt that the key work areas needed to reflect the activities of its constituents and therefore lobbying, advocacy and challenging need to be added in.

**We propose that the business plan acknowledge the need for additional support and investment in BME infrastructure, including its sub sectors, in being able to effectively engage in the SP. The key work areas need to reflect activities that work towards the inclusion of this support and diversity to avoid BME issues being sidelined and need to include lobbying, advocacy and challenging.**

## **Membership**

There was general acceptance that membership of the SP needed to be infrastructure bodies but only on the condition that existing BME infrastructure was supported to be fit for purpose (requiring further investment). Attendees reflected concerns about not knowing what was going on and the need for their infrastructure bodies to have the capacity to keep them informed as well involved. Concerns were raised about how new and emerging communities, as well as gypsy and traveller communities could interact with the SP as they often had no organisations to advocate on their behalf, let alone any infrastructure bodies. This presents additional challenges where 'communities' need to have their needs met in the absence of community organisations to take this forward and needs to be reflected in the activities of the SP. One suggestion for how frontline organisations/communities could be involved was around the development of sub sector forums within the BME sector so that frontline organisations could contribute their knowledge and skills from across the region as well as through sub regional BME organisations.

**We propose that the business plan reflects the need for BME infrastructure to be strengthened so that it can more fit for purpose to engage as members of the SP. Also for there be a recognition of 'communities' that do not have organised structures to engage through**

**although their needs are a priority**

## **Governance**

There was general agreement that the proposed colleges were a good route for election onto the board of the SP although concern was expressed at the membership of the RIC and EMISG (and knowledge of them). It was felt that membership criteria needed to be circulated to all organisations so they could join where this was appropriate. This would also then need a longer lead in time for the membership of these bodies to reflect the diversity of organisations (that meet the criteria) for them to, with confidence, lead to the process of selecting who can go forward to the Board of the SP. It was strongly suggested that sufficient time be built into the process to enable this to happen. If this does not happen then all organisations that could be members of each of the colleges do not have an equal chance of being selected to be on the Board of the SP. BME organisations were encouraged to join Voice East Midlands if they wanted to participate in the selection through the BME College.

Criteria for those wishing to stand for the SP Board were discussed and it was felt there needed to be a brief for those interested to include accountability/mandate, link to grassroots, skill set, experience of reflecting diverse views (as examples). It was felt that there number of spaces for BME representation did not do justice to the diversity that needed to be reflected and the priority of issues as reflected in the majority of funders priorities. It was acknowledged that Voice East Midlands had worked hard to secure 25% representation but this figure needed to be higher.

**We propose that membership criteria for RIC and EMISG are circulated as widely as possible to give all organisations that meet the criteria to join as members. We also suggest that sufficient time is built into the process for election onto the SP Board to allow for this to ensure as wide as representation is secured through these. A job description be devised and agreed for election onto the SP Board.**

## **Name**

From the options available there was a clear lead for the name of the organisation – One East Midlands from both events.

**Voice East Midlands  
February 2008**