Market Soundings Exercise for an elearning platform for the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)

Issue date:	**Wednesday 11 July 2018**
Deadline for questions:	**5pm Friday 20 July 2018**
Deadline for responses:	**5pm Wednesday 25 July 2018**
Please note:	**This market soundings exercise is preliminary to any procurement exercise that may be undertaken following this process.** All information about this market soundings exercise will be published on www.etenders.gov.ie

Contents

Details for this market soundings exercise are set out in this document which is divided as follows:

Introduction

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) would like to gain information from experienced elearning providers in order to ascertain the marketplace for the provision of an interactive elearning platform to support learners with low levels of literacy in developing reading, writing, number and basic digital skills.

NALA launched an elearning platform www.writeon.ie (WriteOn) in 2008 in order to provide free, confidential and flexible learning. Since then, WriteOn has helped over 5,700 learners gain more than 33,000 major and minor Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) awards at Levels 2 and 3 on the National Qualifications Framework (NFQ).

NALA is now considering developing a new elearning platform based on the structure and success of the existing platform so that we can:

- improve our service; and
- capitalise on new and emerging technologies.

Platform users	User needs
Learners with low levels of literacy	Access an easy-to-use elearning system and have a successful learning journey, gain skills and achieve QQI accreditation.
Adult literacy tutors	Access free resources and use the platform to enhance their teaching and their students' learning experience.
NALA staff	Create interactive content for learners and tutors, to manage learner accounts, validate eportfolio work and support learners and tutors in using the platform.

Background information

About the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)

The National Adult Literacy Agency is an independent charity that works to make sure that people with literacy and numeracy difficulties can fully take part in society and have access to learning opportunities that meet their needs.

Since we were set up by volunteers in 1980, we have been a leading campaigning and lobbying force on adult literacy issues. We have been involved with providing tutor training, developing teaching materials, distance education services, policy making and research. We have campaigned to raise awareness of the causes, extent and responses to adult literacy difficulties in Ireland.

Many individuals and organisations have contributed greatly to adult literacy work in Ireland. For our part, we have put literacy on the political agenda and secured funding to support adult literacy service provision.

There are over 54,000 adults attending adult literacy courses nationwide. This service is delivered by about 1,500 paid tutors and over 2,400 volunteers. To support this work NALA offers a distance learning service where we tutor people over the phone and online.

Our online customers and services

Our online learning customers	What we do and our services
Adults with literacy difficulties, as well as adult learners from a range of centres including: ● the probation service	We help people improve their literacy and numeracy skills through our online platform www.writeon.ie. This platform provides online assessments and an eportfolio system which enable learners to gain QQI Level 2 and Level 3 awards. The platform also contains exercises and information mapped to QQI awards, so that learners can revise and practise their skills online.

● early school leavers ● learners with English as a second language ● the disability sector ● adults returning to learning after many years	The platform also provides learning content mapped to learning outcomes from QQI Level 1 and 4 awards in order to support development of skills at these levels. There is also a bank of PDF and video resources that learners can use for additional support. Using a team of experienced NALA tutors, we provide one-to-one phone tuition for learners who request additional support. There is also a phone service available Monday to Friday 9.30am to 5pm for any learner with questions about their WriteOn account or more general queries about returning to learning and training provision nationwide.
Further Education and Training (FET) tutors and training centres. A wide variety of learners use these centres.	We help to improve the quality of teaching by providing www.writeon.ie where tutors can choose to use the online content as part of a blended learning solution, or use one or more resources available in the extensive library of text and video resources on WriteOn. Any tutor in any centre can access WriteOn for free and use the platform as a learning support. We also have over 170 centres registered with WriteOn. As part of this service NALA validates and verifies applications for QQI awards. As part of this we provide training to accredited centres explaining the accreditation process and showing how they can use the platform to support learners.

Key platform requirements

NALA's current elearning platform houses materials based on learning outcomes from Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Levels 1 to 4 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) as well as offering accreditation at QQI Levels 2 and 3. There is also a portfolio section, a database of PDF and video resources and an administrative system to manage learner accounts. This includes a portal for NALA distance learning tutors and an authoring system to create new content. Should NALA invest in a new solution it must capitalise on and extend the current offering and consist of the elements in Figure 1 below.
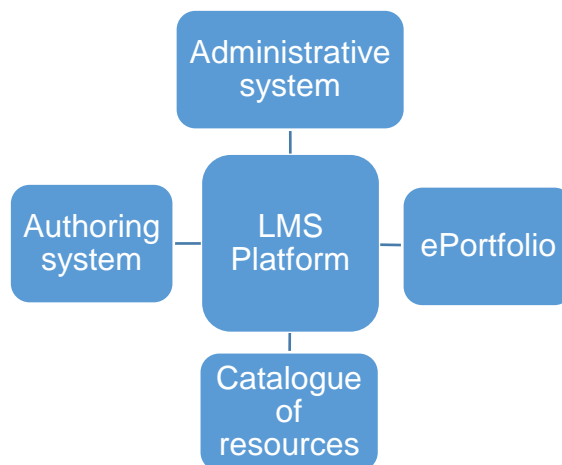
Figure 1 elearning system

NALA requires a seamless solution which offers users a well-designed, accessible and intuitive user interface. We currently have existing SCORM compatible content which we wish to migrate to the new platform. NALA does not require a content creation service but does require an authoring system to allow content to be created in-house as well as support on how to migrate current content to the new platform.

The purpose of this market sounding exercise

NALA wishes to undertake a market sounding exercise to ascertain the nature and capabilities of existing and potential elearning platform providers and trends in elearning. It is envisaged that feedback gained from this exercise will feed into the development of a procurement strategy, and may lead to one or more procurements.

In order for NALA to gain the necessary information from the marketplace, we request that interested parties provide information on the following areas:

- Current trends and future developments in elearning that best fit NALA's needs and requirements as outlined in Appendix A.
- Experience in designing an interface that incorporates the best of universal design approaches and supports users with low levels of literacy.
- The opportunity to contribute criteria not previously considered.
- The experiences of providers in achieving a streamlined approach in migrating content from an existing platform to a new platform.

This information can be provided using the questionnaire in Appendix B and also reinforced at a subsequent meeting with NALA where appropriate.

Please note that this market sounding exercise is not an invitation to tender. NALA as the contracting authority is issuing this request for information only in order to assess the marketplace. The publication of this market soundings exercise does not commit NALA to any particular procurement process. This information gathering exercise does not formally begin a procurement process and taking part in this exercise will not place you in a more favourable position at the tender stage of this or any other project.

Any competitive process will be advertised via the Irish government's procurement portal www.etenders.gov.ie and the Official Journal of the European Union website www.ted.europa.eu, where relevant and applicable.

The market sounding process – how to apply

Interested parties are invited to submit the completed questionnaire in Appendix B (page 19) on or before **5pm Wednesday 25 July 2018** using the postbox facility on eTenders. All documentation must be uploaded in accordance with the instructions on eTenders prior to the deadline. Please allow sufficient time to upload documents prior to the deadline as it is not possible to upload material after the given deadline.

All queries regarding the market sounding process can be sent via the messaging facility on eTenders. All responses to questions will also be sent via the messaging facility on eTenders. The closing date for receipt of **queries is 5pm Friday 20 July 2018**.

Following submissions NALA intends to meet with a selection of respondents either onsite in NALA offices in Ranelagh, Dublin 6 or online using GoToMeeting or Skype. The meeting will take no more than one hour and will provide respondents with an opportunity to further expand on answers provided in the questionnaire and demonstrate examples of elearning provision within a 45 minute time slot. The meeting will conclude with a 15 minute questions and answers session. Respondents should ensure their availability for this **meeting during the week commencing 30 July**.

NALA may not enter into discussions with all respondents and submission of a response does not guarantee further participation in this process.

Terms and conditions

Confidentiality

The distribution of this document is for the sole purpose of obtaining information. The distribution does not grant permission or licence to use the documents for any other purpose. Respondents are required to treat the details of all documents supplied in connection with this process as private and confidential.

Freedom of information

Respondents should be aware that, under the Freedom of Information Act 2014, information provided by them during this exercise may be liable to be disclosed. Respondents are asked to consider if any of the information supplied by them in response to this market soundings exercise should not be disclosed because of its sensitivity. If this is the case, respondents should specify the information that is sensitive and the reasons for its sensitivity. NALA cannot guarantee that any information provided by respondents, in response to this market soundings exercise, will not be released pursuant to NALA's obligations under law, including the Freedom of Information Act 2014, EU and Irish Government Procurement Procedures or in response to questions, debates or other parliamentary procedures in or of the Oireachtas (the Irish Parliament). NALA accepts no liability whatsoever in respect of any information provided which is subsequently released or in respect of any consequential damage suffered as a result of such disclosure.

Cost of preparation of response

NALA will not be liable for any costs, charges or expenses incurred by respondents in the preparation of proposals or any associated efforts. It is the responsibility of the respondent to ensure that they are fully aware and understand the requirements as laid down in this document. Respondents will be responsible for any costs incurred by them in the event of their being required to make a presentation of their proposals.

Appendix A: NALA's requirements and key considerations

Summary of requirements

Currently, the solution required by NALA includes, but is not restricted to:

- Learning Management System (LMS) provision

- User experience design

- eportfolio provision

- Authoring system provision

- Administration and reporting system

- System integration

- Maintenance and support

Solution requirements and considerations

NALA requires a stable, well-tested Learning Management System (LMS) that can be updated in a short downtime period and is capable of expanding to meet growing numbers of diverse learners who want accreditation and access to learning at lower levels on the National Qualifications Framework. The LMS must integrate seamlessly with an authoring system, eportfolio system, and an administrative system and provide NALA with a method of showcasing over a thousand resources of PDFs and videos in an easy-to-view manner which must sit on the platform alongside elearning content mapped to QQI learning outcomes.

Functionality and support requirements are outlined in the following sections.

Learner user interactions
The new system will need to enable the learner to: • Create a new account, update account information and delete an account. • Use built-in wizards to guide site navigation and filling out forms.

- Search for accredited training centres listed in the platform and sign up as a learner in those centres.
- Get a system-generated password when they first sign in and have an automated system to change their password or generate a new one if they forget their original password.
- Access help online using a chat bot or a search function for guidance and help.
- Get an overview of lessons available on the platform in an easy to follow format and intuitive steps to navigate around lesson pathways, the platform, and in and out of lessons.
- Practise skills using a variety of exercises and question types and receive easy-to-understand feedback.
- Choose to practise skills from a variety of topics using question banks in the areas of technology, sport and leisure, family, health, environment, money and work.
- Receive the various options thrown up by sets of assessment questions randomised from a question bank.
- Receive options in a question in a randomised order so that if they repeat a question, the order of the options changes.
- View assessment results on screen including the percentage of assessments they have completed. This needs to be shown as part of a learner dashboard.
- Fill out a form to submit assessment results for accreditation at QQI Levels 2 and 3.
- Link to an eportfolio to upload examples of work for accreditation.
- Receive automated email reminders, such as notifications to complete assessments, to complete portfolio work and to submit for awards. Email reminders could also include information on further courses and training when learners complete a course. For learners who are under 18, email notifications must go to parents or guardians.
- Use a variety of onscreen supports such as hints, print screen, a calculator and dictionary.

- Use an in-built Text-To-Speech (TTS) feature and set user preferences such as speed and choice of voice.
- Save a particular exercise to a learning journal for review at a later stage.
- Ability to request or print out completion certificates for certain content.
- Provide feedback by survey, give lesson ratings and fill out comment boxes.
- Access a database of resources and filter for suitable content.
- Post a message to a learner forum.

Learner path logic

Learners should be able to:

- Attempt sets of initial and summative assessments. If they fail any initial assessment questions, they should be directed to exercises which support learning in these weaker areas. If they successfully complete all exercises, they should have the opportunity to try a summative assessment. If they fail any summative assessment question, they should be directed to exercises which reinforce their learning. If they successfully complete these exercises, they should have the opportunity to try again only those summative assessment questions they have failed.
- Exit exercises and assessments and resume at a later stage. Their previous scores should be stored so they can continue their learning journey where they left off.

Training centre and tutor interactions

Tutors in centres should be able to:

- Create a new account for a training centre using WriteOn, update account information and delete an account.
- Link to NALA membership on www.nala.ie and complete NALA membership forms and payment.
- View a learner's progress report.
- Link to a database of resources.

- View and follow elearning designed for tutors.
- Post a message to a learner forum.

Platform and interface

The new platform must have:

- Ability for users to access the platform on a variety of devices (tablets, smartphones and PCs).
- Ability to integrate with content from any client that follows SCORM, AICC or xAPI standards.
- Scalable solution in terms of allowing growing numbers of learner accounts to be created, and to allow new content to be added, such as accreditation at QQI Level 1.
- Ability to manage text throughout the site.
- Ability to link to external content from the elearning platform.
- Ability to provide voice activated chat to answer learner queries.
- Ability to tag content within the platform so that it is searchable on common search engines.
- An easy to search and filter repository for existing resources (PDF files and videos).
- An on-screen area to add hints to questions where desired.
- A forum to allow users (learners and tutors) to post messages.
- A test area to view and test changes.
- An outline of a product roadmap presenting the provider's future-proof solution must be available. This must include an outline of the technological changes needed and potential implications for NALA's solution.
  As part of this road map, NALA may wish to develop a mobile app once the elearning platform has been established and the provider should have the knowledge and skills to support this development.

User experience design

This must include:

- Universal design approach in designing the website layout, navigation and user interactions.
- Design and creation of an attractive landing page, with a minimal amount of text, using an eye-catching graphic-driven interface.
- Easy-to-follow design incorporating breadcrumbs, drop-down navigation, global navigation and personalisation.
- Gamification or game-based learning approach to engage learners through setting goals and rewards.
- Design and incorporation of different forms of feedback for learners as they work through exercises successfully using audio, graphics and animation.
- The ability to present assessment scores and learner status such as the percentage of work completed, in an instantly understandable format.
- Provision of an initial skills check process for learners to determine what level of learning is appropriate and recommendations for where and how they should start.
- User-friendly ways to present information aligned with the needs of learners working at Levels 1, 2 and 3 on the NFQ.

Accessibility

The service provider will need to provide:
- A user interface that integrates best practice in universal design such as easy-to-use controls, captions and user-friendly feedback.
- A user interface that meets WCAG 2.0[1] Level AA.
- A Text-to-Speech or read-aloud system that is easy to use for learners with low levels of literacy.
- A monitored chat interface to support learners in using the platform, using voice and text input.
- Advice and support to NALA on ways to continuously improve in the area of accessibility.

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[1] https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/

eportfolio provision

The platform will need to have:

- An eportfolio system to allow learners to have their own space to upload and store images, videos and enter text into defined forms (minimum 100MB per learner).
- Clear links between elearning content in lesson pathways with portfolio work so learners know which awards require portfolio work.
- Automated email notifications based on user interactions. When a learner completes portfolio work, an email goes to NALA to assign a tutor to validate their work. When a learner completes an assessment they receive an email reminder to start on portfolio work. When learners have successfully completed portfolio work they should receive an email reminder to submit a form to apply for an award.
- Security features to ensure only virus-free content is uploaded to the eportfolio and all content is scanned for inappropriate content.
- An external URL of read-only portfolio content to allow learners to showcase their portfolio work to tutors, employers and other parties.
- A digital stamp or signature function for tutors or mentors to support NALA in validating learners' portfolio work.

Authoring system

The platform must provide:

- A system to create interactive elearning.
- Upload function for SCORM, AICC and xAPI compatible content.
- Interoperability for non-compliant content.
- Option to copy content and learning objects.
- Ability to customise Text To Speech (TTS) such as changing voice types, speed and the correct pronunciation of, for example, Irish place names.
- A selection of layouts and style templates to create learning objects.

- A wide array of question and activity types such as matching questions, fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, proofing, crosswords and other innovative formats.
- Ability to select or create a range of media elements such as audio, video and images and manipulate their position on screen.
- A test site or staging area to test content.
- Ability to edit learning objects and publish content to the live and test sites.
- Support in migrating existing SCORM content into a new CMS.
- Ability to export content in xAPI and AICC format.

Administration and reporting system

The platform must allow a designated NALA staff member to:

- Create and manage permissions and roles.
- View and edit user information and set user status.
- Create custom fields for user profiles without the need for intervention from the provider.
- Set filters to create customised reports.
- View real-time reports or schedule reports.
- Print and export reports as .csv file or similar format.
- Sort reports by fields.
- Drill down to learning object level to evaluate question items.
- View dashboard reports and analytics.
- Assign learners to NALA tutors to validate learners' work.
- Comment on learners' work and mark work as validated.
- Track learner progress through attempts on assessments and exercises and the percentage of portfolio work they have completed.
- Generate status reports based on achievements.
- Set email notification templates and send emails to selected users.
- Print out certificates of completion for certain content.
- Create digital badges for certain blocks of content completed and allocate badges to learners who successfully complete work.

Integration

The service provider will need to:

- Support NALA by providing access to experienced integration staff who can update, maintain and support an interoperable solution using a range of plugins and systems.
- Develop an elearning platform that is interoperable with other applications such as www.fetchcourses.ie to allow learners to seamlessly create a Fetch account from the elearning platform and then continue with their learning.
- Support staff to meet tight deadlines in migrating content and adopting existing SCORM compliant material into new formats.

GDPR compliance

The platform will need to ensure:

- Compliance with EUGDPR and experience in supporting organisations with GDPR issues.
- Clear separation of learners' personal information from learner interactions and results.
- That SSL, firewalls, and encryption of learner data are provided.
- Simple initial log-in sequence compatible with www.fetchcourses.ie, password generation and authentication options.
- Clear and easy-to-understand consent options, cookie policy and terms and conditions presented as text with an audio button and video.
- A clearly defined option for users to opt out of the service provision.

Maintenance and support

The platform must include:

- Remote management of the elearning platform including backup, updates, security and performance monitoring, in particular to ensure the learning platform management and service provision are compliant with NALA's data protection requirements.

- Ongoing maintenance including providing patches, plugin installation and configuration, bug fixes and user acceptance tests.

- Well-established support and query system in order to raise issues and bugs, to assign priorities, and escalate concerns.

- A consultative, customer-centric approach advising NALA on how to optimise the learner's experience in response to evolving needs.

- Introductory training on the elearning platform to be provided to selected NALA staff, with refresher and update training provided periodically or as requested.

- A complete set of documentation including system specification, introductory slides and brochure, user guides and links to organisational quality assurance and data protection policies.

- Pre-creation of a standard set of monthly reports for NALA based on metrics provided including Google Analytics.

Appendix B: Market soundings questionnaire

Title:	elearning platform development			
Name of Organisation Responding:				
Confirmation of availability to meet NALA during the week commencing 30 July 2018	**Yes**		**No**	

1.	What experience do you have in the design, development and maintenance of elearning platforms? Please also include experience in universal design in relation to designing the user interface.
2.	What are the key trends and future developments in elearning that could potentially impact on the work of NALA and describe any innovative approaches you have implemented to date?
3.	Briefly describe the process you have implemented in projects where content was migrated from one platform to another.

4.	Outline any challenges you see in delivering any of the requirements identified in Appendix A.

5.	Please provide a best estimate cost or indicative price range for a proposed solution to meet our requirements. You may also provide additional information that you consider relevant to this market soundings exercise response.

Signed	
Name	
Title	
Registered office address	
Email and website addresses	
Phone	
Date	