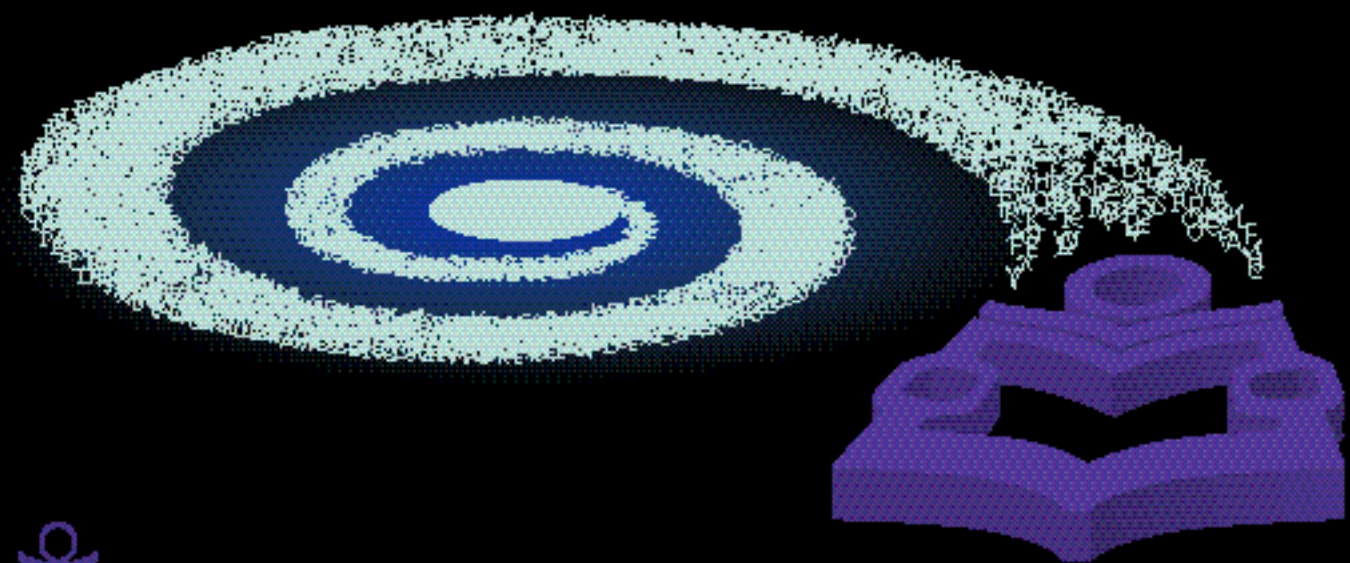
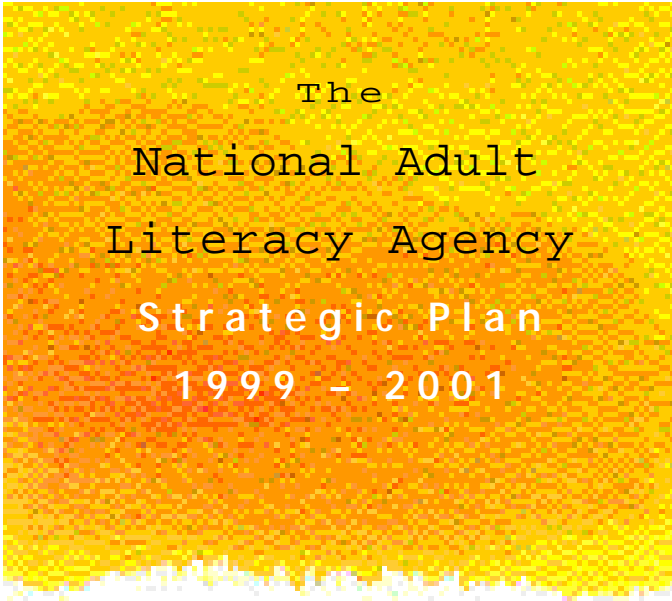


THE NATIONAL ADULT LITERACY AGENCY

Strategic Plan
1999 – 2001





The
National Adult
Literacy Agency
Strategic Plan
1999 - 2001

An Áisíneacht Náisiúnta
Litearthachta do Aosaigh



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History

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is a membership organisation with voluntary status, concerned with national co-ordination, training and policy development in adult literacy work in Ireland. The Agency was established in 1980 and from that time has campaigned for recognition and response to the adult literacy problem in Ireland.

Structure

An Executive Committee is elected at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) to ensure that the aims of the Agency are put into practice. They employ the staff which currently consists of a Director, 4 Development workers and 3 Administration workers.

Funding

NALA receives a grant in aid from the Department of Education and Science, which enables the Agency to staff a national office. In addition, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs also provide NALA with a grant towards staffing and publicity costs.

Introduction

NALA began the process of an intensive organisation development review in 1997. This involved a review group, composed of Executive Committee and staff members, working through a series of facilitated workshops and included three consultations with the membership.

In 1998 the context within which the Agency was developing the strategic plan changed significantly. The publication of the Irish Results of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) revealed that 25% of the adult population have poor literacy skills whilst a further 30% of adults can only cope with very simple material. In effect, over 1 million adults have literacy levels below the minimum desirable threshold in industrialised countries. The appointment of the first Minister for State at the Department of Education with responsibility for Adult Education and the publication of the first Green Paper on Adult Education led to an unprecedented focus on adult literacy and an increase in the resources to raise literacy levels. As a result it was necessary to revise elements of the emerging strategy in preparation for the new challenges ahead.

The Green Paper on Adult Education sets out the rationale for investment in adult literacy and gives top priority to addressing adult literacy over any other form of adult education.

Low levels of literacy will have a marked impact on competitiveness.

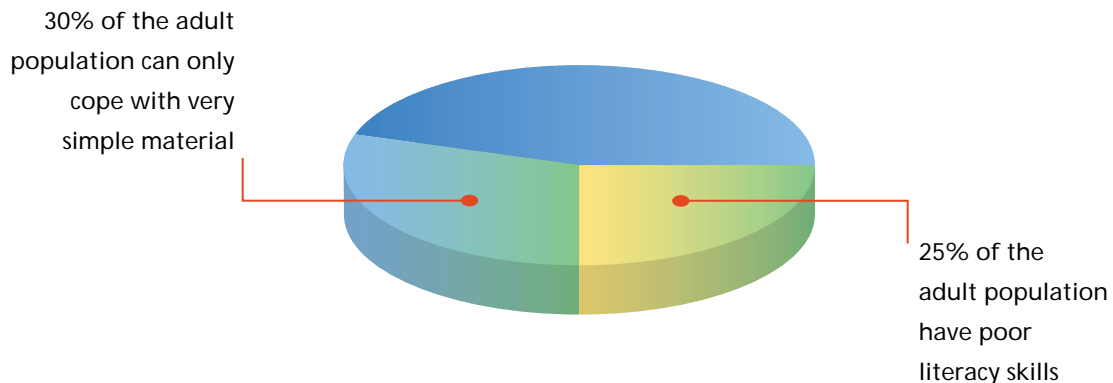
High levels of literacy and numeracy are pre-requisite for participation in a modern knowledge-based economy. The importance of literacy

skills for full participation in the economic, cultural and civic life of a society is self-evident. Literacy not only provides the tools for participation in a functional, instrumental sense; it is also central to self-image, self-esteem and personal confidence. (p.32)

Tackling low literacy/numeracy levels must rank as the primary Adult Education priority in Ireland. Failure to do so will not only seriously constrain the individual life chances of those affected, but it will also limit overall economic and social progress. (p. 69)

Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning – Green Paper on Adult Education, Department of Education & Science, November 1998.

The Agency has formulated an agreed strategy for the next three years to implement the mission of the organisation taking into account the significant developments in adult literacy and the voluntary sector.





To ensure all adults with reading and writing difficulties have access to high quality literacy provision.

Organisational Aims

The organisation aims to:

- 1) Raise public awareness about literacy issues
- 2) Secure adequate resourcing of adult literacy work
- 3) Develop and support high quality adult literacy provision.



To increase the capacity of the National Adult Literacy Agency to deliver the aims of the organisation and raise adult literacy levels in Ireland.



Over the next three years, we want to move forward to a point where:

- there is a central Government strategy to address low adult literacy levels informed by NALA members;
- there is well-resourced high quality adult literacy provision throughout Ireland in a range of different settings;
- there is greater participation in tuition by adults with literacy difficulties;
- there is greater national awareness of the adult literacy issue;
- there is an increase in the literacy levels of the adult population in Ireland;
- there is strong communication between NALA and its members;
- NALA is a healthy developmental learning organisation, at the forefront of adult literacy research and innovation.

Steps Towards Implementation

In order to achieve the above goals we need to take the following steps:

- 1) aid the development of central Government policies on adult literacy;
- 2) develop the campaigning role of the membership at local and regional level;
- 3) carry out research in the adult literacy field;
- 4) develop a training and development strategy for high quality adult literacy provision;
- 5) support the development of innovative literacy programmes;
- 6) deliver an adult literacy publicity campaign to raise awareness at national level;
- 7) develop a communications structure for the organisation;
- 8) develop an organisation plan with particular emphasis on Executive Committee and staff development.

In relation to step 1,

Aid the development of central government policies on adult literacy,

NALA will:

- continue to work with the Department of Education and Science towards our common goals;
- hold two consultation meetings with the members to discuss the content of the Green Paper and develop the Agency's response to the Green Paper;
- meet with officials from the Department of Education and Science to discuss our response to the Green Paper on Adult Education and the inclusion of our recommendations in the White Paper on Adult Education;
- maintain and develop links with other government departments and state agencies, in particular Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, FAS and Teagasc;
- maintain and develop strategic alliances with the Community and Voluntary sector, Trade Unions and Employer Organisations;
- inform the membership of policy developments of relevance to adult literacy and ascertain their views through the AGM;
- review and prioritise areas for policy development informed by membership.

In relation to step 2,

Develop the campaigning role of the membership at local and regional level,

NALA will:

- establish a fund for training and development in leadership, committee skills and lobbying for members, in the first instance students, at local level;
- encourage the development of strategic partnerships with other agencies and groups;
- host six regional meetings with students to discuss the setting up of a national student forum;
- send relevant training and development bulletins to Tutors through the Adult Literacy Organiser;
- explore the setting up of a national Tutors forum;
- appoint a Development Worker to work on membership development and coordinate the necessary training and development activities.

In relation to step 3,

Carry out research in the adult literacy field,

NALA will:

- analyse the key gaps in research in adult literacy in Ireland;
- draw up an integrated action plan for the strategic use of research in the areas of policy development, service provision, etc.;

- prioritise up to five areas of research previously identified by the membership for attention and highlighted by the Green Paper on Adult Education;
- Allocate £15,000 per annum to produce quality published research;
- develop a process for collecting and maintaining research data to support NALA aims and objectives;
- appoint a staff member to a research and information function.

In relation to step 4,

Develop a training and development strategy for
high quality adult literacy provision,

NALA will:

A - Quality Standards

- set up an advisory group with representatives from the Department of Education and Science, CEOA, AEOA, ALOA and NALA to advise and guide the project;
- identify and examine quality systems and evaluation frameworks for Adult Basic Education (ABE) and other related fields;
- carry out a national consultation process with Literacy Organisers, Tutors, students and other stakeholders to ascertain their understanding of good practice in adult literacy;
- develop and pilot a framework for evaluating ABE work and adopt a set of quality standards for ABE policy and practice;

CEOA - Chief Executive Officers Association
AEOA - Adult Education Organisers Association
ALOA - Adult Literacy Organisers Association

- organise a seminar to disseminate information and encourage dialogue on the introduction of a quality standards system and an evaluation framework for ABE;
- publish guidelines on quality standards and evaluation framework;
- draw up and publish guidelines for literacy schemes working with people with a learning disability;
- design and deliver a training of trainers' programme in quality standards and evaluation in ABE;
- plan the implementation of an evaluation system and place information on our website.

B - Training

- conduct an evaluation of our current training programme;
- develop a framework for training and a quality training plan;
- set up documented procedures;
- provide training for Literacy Organisers, Tutors and students; Trainers wishing to integrate literacy into other vocational training areas and staff in organisations wishing to respond more appropriately to clients with literacy difficulties;
- liaise with relevant statutory and voluntary sector representatives in respect of accreditation;
- develop materials to support training programmes as required;
- allocate an additional Development Worker to manage the training area.

In relation to step 5,

Support the development of innovative literacy programmes,

NALA will:

- support the development of innovative literacy programmes in a range of settings in partnership with local providers;
- research innovative literacy practice locally, nationally and internationally for dissemination to the members;
- explore the use of distance learning in literacy work;
- promote the development of family literacy projects in each VEC area;
- promote the development of workplace literacy programmes;
- promote the development of materials for adult literacy work, e.g., Irish based materials;
- seek to provide a wide range of innovative resource materials for adult literacy work, e.g. computer software, distance learning packs;
- draw up a development plan for the Resource Room;
- allocate a staff member to work on the development of the Resource Room.

In relation to step 6,

Deliver an adult literacy publicity campaign
at national level,

NALA will:

- continue to produce a range of publicity materials aimed at adults with reading and writing difficulties;
- continue to raise awareness among the public of the adult literacy issue by engaging in publicity exercises;
- build on existing relationships with the media;
- produce up to date NALA information packs and leaflets;
- develop and update our website on a regular basis;
- seek to establish a free phone facility as part of our national referral service and launch a new awareness campaign.

In relation to step 7,

Develop a communications structure,

NALA will:

- research communication strategies in a range of national voluntary organisations;
- draw up and pilot a programme to improve communications with our membership;

- increase face to face communication with membership by visiting each literacy region within 1 year;
- produce a Tutor information bulletin every six months;
- explore and develop the use of the Internet and other technologies to aid communications.

In relation to step 8,

Develop an organisation plan with particular emphasis on executive and staff development,

NALA will:

- bring a resolution to the membership to change NALA status to a company limited by guarantee;
- draw up an evaluation framework for the organisation;
- conduct a series of staff development workshops and draw up a staff handbook;
- plan a programme for continuous staff development;
- devise and deliver a training and development programme for all new Executive Committees;
- develop a joint Executive and staff development programme;
- set up a management team consisting of senior staff and Executive Committee Officers to oversee and monitor the implementation of the strategic plan.

R e s o u r c e s

To implement the strategic plan and sustain the momentum of change over the next three years will require a phased increase in the Agency's budget. This will be necessary to employ additional staff and carry out innovative development work in order to raise adult literacy levels in Ireland.

C o n c l u s i o n

The Agency, as part of the review process, has already begun implementation of the strategic plan, which is being monitored by the Executive Committee. Progress evaluation reports will be published in the successive annual reports.

By the end of 2001, it is expected that there will be far greater numbers of people participating in adult literacy services and a quantifiable increase in adult literacy levels in Ireland. Such outcomes will provide benefits to individuals with literacy difficulties, their local communities and the broader society within which we all live.

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