

Field Researcher – Information booklet

National Adult Literacy Agency

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is recruiting two field researchers for the Erasmus+ Check-In, Take-Off (CITO) Project.

The field researchers will assist with the research phase of the CITO project, facilitating focus groups and submitting a research report to the CITO research team. The CITO project aims to identify and test a scalable approach to providing skills assessment for adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital needs. The project will test and prototype an accessible learner-facing web application to help adults self-assess their basic skills.

The ideal candidate will have 3+ years' experience in supporting adults with unmet literacy, digital skills and numeracy needs in the further education sector, as well as experience in facilitating both online and face-to-face focus groups and excellent report writing skills.

To apply for this position, you must send a CV and cover letter to recruitment@nala.ie by September 4th, 2020 at 5pm.

The National Adult Literacy Agency is an equal opportunity employer.

At the moment, we do not require the assistance of recruitment agencies to fill our vacancies.

Summary

Title: Field Researcher – National Adult Literacy Agency

Department: Practice & Innovation

Employment Status: Temporary

Reports to: Innovation Manager

Location: Sandford Lodge, Sandford Close, Ranelagh, Dublin 6.

Contract: Temporary

Contract duration: 15 days (Sept – Dec 2020)

Salary: Fixed Rate

Application process: CV and cover letter.

Closing date: Friday September 4th 2020 @ 5pm.

Questions: Email any questions to recruitment@nala.ie

Background information

About NALA

NALA is an independent charity committed to making sure people with literacy, numeracy and digital skills difficulties have access to educational opportunities that meet their needs. Our vision is an Ireland where adult literacy is a human right, where everyone can develop their literacy, numeracy, and digital skills, and where individuals can take part fully in society. Our mission is to advocate for literacy as a human right and to collaborate with our partners to influence policy and practice to support the development of literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

NALA is the only organisation in Ireland that is solely dedicated to improving adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills. We are a membership organisation and a registered charity that is publicly funded. We carry out our work with an independent voice in the interests of the public. We learn from, and contribute to, literacy developments at European and international levels. We are both an advocate for, and a provider of, adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills supports. Our advocacy role includes trying to advance policy through engagement with government departments and relevant organisations.

NALA is grant-aided for the majority of its work on an annual basis by SOLAS through the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

Literacy, numeracy and digital needs in Ireland

The most recent OECD Survey of Adult Skills showed that 550,000 Irish adults are at or below level 1, the lowest level on a five-level literacy scale. Even more Irish adults — 750,000 — are at or below level 1 for numeracy and digital skills¹.

At these levels people may find it difficult to:

- understand the instructions on medicines,
- fill in an application form,
- add up a bill,
- help their children with homework, or
- search the web for information.

Low literacy costs. High literacy pays. Unmet literacy needs cost everyone and have devastating consequences for our society, economy, environment and democracy.

A cost benefit analysis of adult literacy in Ireland concluded that by investing in literacy there is a positive and rapid return on investment across the board, for participants, the companies they work for and for the exchequer.

Recent research has shown the need to raise productivity through employee training, including those with literacy, numeracy and basic digital skills needs. Those in lower skilled roles are less likely to receive training and yet are most vulnerable to changes in the world of work. But the impact of skills goes far beyond earnings and employment – individuals with literacy difficulties are more likely to report poor health, low financial wellbeing, to believe that they have little impact on political processes, and not to participate in volunteer activities. They are also less likely to trust others.

Taken together, the results emphasise the importance of literacy for a more inclusive society – in people’s participation in the labour market, education and training, and in social and civic life.

Evolving definition of literacy

In the past, literacy was understood to be about individuals having the skills needed to read and write. These skills were seen as technical skills that remained the same and unrelated to the social context in which they were used.

Today, however, literacy is a broader concept and is understood to be about individuals having the skills needed to fully take part in society. Literacy involves listening, speaking, reading, writing, numeracy and using everyday technology to communicate, access services, and make informed choices. These aspects of literacy evolve and are closely related to social practice which recognises that people use different literacies for various situations, for example people need health specific literacy skills when dealing with a doctor. For the purpose of this document, we use the terms literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

See www.nala.ie for more information.

About the role

In 2019, as part of the CITO project, NALA partnered with Learnovate, a research and innovation centre focused on EdTech and learning technologies. The aim is to develop an online experience that supports adults with unmet digital, literacy and numeracy needs in developing their agency to engage in a learning experience. This online experience would also build the confidence of the user by acknowledging the skills they already have and motivating them to take the next steps in achieving their goal.

Following a ten-month collaboration with Learnovate and the project partners, the final prototype of the CITO web application was recently completed, in preparation for the research phase of the CITO project.

The CITO field researchers will be involved in facilitating six focus groups, as part of this research phase of the project. The research objective is to establish the extent to which the app orients the learner towards learning opportunities and the learners' views on use of the app. These focus groups will be held with key project stakeholders in November 2020 and the role will involve:

1. Taking part in two online training sessions provided by the CITO research team in September.
2. Facilitating six face-to-face focus groups with key project stakeholders. Social distancing restrictions may lead to facilitating these focus groups online and potential schedule changes.
3. Writing up and submitting a research report for each study group to the CITO Research team. A reporting template will be provided.
4. Completing other tasks such as:
 - providing regular updates to key NALA staff;
 - liaising with NALA staff and the CITO research team; and
 - other duties as assigned.

Key working relationships

Innovation Manager, Project Officer, CITO Research Team

Essential criteria

Applicants must have 3+ years' experience in supporting adults with unmet literacy, digital skills and numeracy needs in the further education sector. This may include training, teaching, advisory and guidance services and other support services. Applicants should have a degree level qualification in adult education/education or an associated field (NQF 7 or above).

Key skills required include:

- **Research skills:** understanding of research in adult education; research ethics; qualitative research methods including focus group discussion and interview.
- **Technical skills:** research and analysis skills, report writing, experience of facilitating both online and face-to-face focus groups.
- **Interpersonal skills:** the ability to collaborate and communicate effectively and professionally with individuals, groups and to the wider public.
- **Organizational skills:** excellent time management and project coordination skills.

Recruitment process

The National Adult Literacy Agency is recruiting for this position.

How to apply

Applicants should submit a CV and cover letter to recruitment@nala.ie.

Closing Date

The closing date for receipt of applications is 5pm Friday, 4th September 2020.

All applications will be acknowledged. If you do not receive an acknowledgement within 5 days of applying please email recruitment@nala.ie

Requirements, knowledge, skills and experience

Candidates will be required to possess all the essential requirements, knowledge, skills and experience required for the position. They will be requested to demonstrate this both in the application form and, if shortlisted, by interview.

Health

Candidates must be in a state of health such as would indicate a reasonable prospect of ability to render regular and efficient service.

Selection process

The selection process may include the shortlisting of candidates on the basis of the application and may include an interview.

Confidentiality

Please note that all personal data shall be treated as confidential in accordance with the Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018.

Candidates should note canvassing will disqualify.