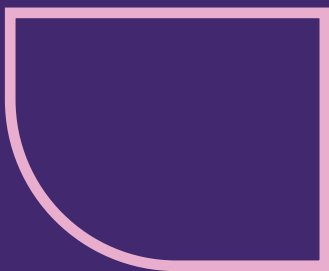
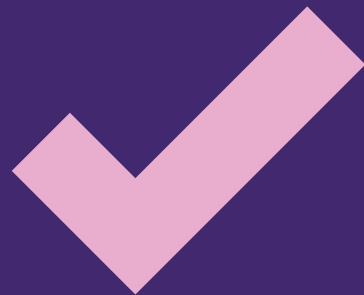


Literacy as a Human Right for an Inclusive Ireland

National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)

Strategic Plan

2024 - 2030



National Adult Literacy Agency

Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

About this Strategic Plan

This Strategic Plan sets out the National Adult Literacy Agency's goals for 2024 - 2030. It also sets out the actions we will use to achieve our goals.

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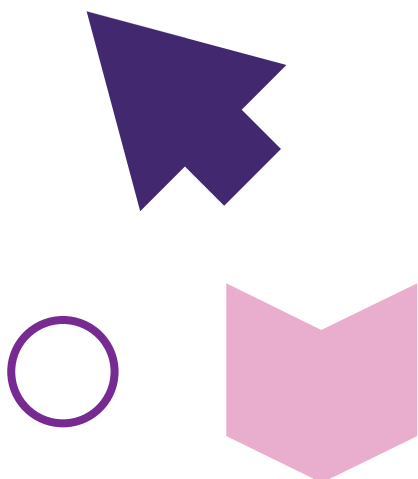
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Find out more

To learn more about the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) and the work we do, scan the QR code or visit our website: nala.ie





Margaret Kelly, NALA Chairperson and Colleen Dube, NALA CEO

A message from our Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

We are the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), a registered charity with over 1,700 members.

We are the independent voice of adult literacy in Ireland.

We believe literacy is a human right.

Since we were established in 1980, we have:

- helped to define adult literacy;
- informed the development of adult literacy policy and provision;
- supported people with literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs to fully take part in society, and to access quality learning opportunities that meet their needs; and
- tried to create a more literacy aware and literacy friendly Ireland.

Our work is far from done. There are new challenges and opportunities since our last strategic plan was launched in 2020.

For instance, we all have to adapt to the increasing use of technology. This presents extra challenges for people with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs. In addition, the launch of 'Adult Literacy for Life: A 10-Year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy'¹ in 2021 requires us to work in new ways.

These developments and many more have informed this Strategic Plan which sets out our goals and actions until 2030.

The rest of this strategic plan provides you with the following information:

- An overview of our understanding of adult literacy.
- A brief discussion of the changing context of our work.
- An overview of our strategic planning process. It explains what we did between September 2023 and March 2024. It also explains what we learned from our research and conversations with NALA members and other important contributors to our work.
- Our vision, mission and values. These are the high-level ambitions and principles that guide our work.
- Our strategic themes and goals, along with the actions to achieve our goals.
- The initial actions we will take to put our plan in place.

Over the next six years, we want to ensure that we:

- bridge the literacy gaps in Ireland;
- create a more equal and inclusive society; and
- successfully respond to future challenges and opportunities.

We look forward to our continued collaborations and communications on this Strategic Plan.



Margaret Kelly
NALA Chairperson

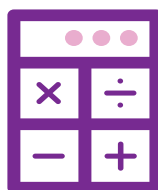


Colleen Dube
NALA Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

¹ Government of Ireland (2021) **Adult Literacy for Life: A 10-Year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy**. adultliteracyforlife.ie/resources/

Our understanding of literacy

In the past literacy was defined as the ability to read and write. These skills were thought to be unchanging no matter when and where they were used. Now, literacy has a wider meaning. It includes literacy, numeracy and digital skills.



Literacy involves listening, speaking, reading, writing, using numbers and everyday technology to:

- communicate;
- build relationships;
- understand information; and
- make informed choices.

Literacy enables us to:

- reach our full potential;
- be active and critical participants in our families, work and society;
- help address poverty and social exclusion; and
- take part in, and make sense of, the world.

Literacy is:

- always changing;
- something we must constantly develop throughout our lives; and
- different for each person and setting. For example, you may be good at writing but not reading, or good at maths but not at computers. Also, the literacy you need in a bank is different to the literacy you need to visit a doctor.

We are waiting for the results of the latest adult literacy survey².

² The Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It started in September 2022 and results are expected the end of 2024 or early 2025. Further information can be found at cso.ie/en/surveys/piaaccycle2/

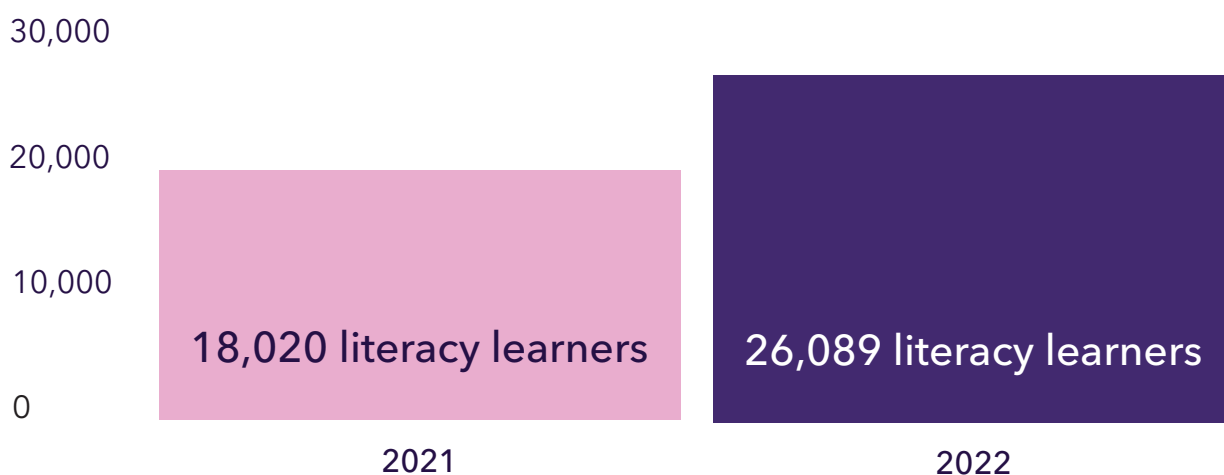
We know from previous research that in Ireland:

- **One in six** (18%) adults aged 16 to 65 struggle with reading and understanding everyday text³. For example, they find reading a bus timetable or understanding medicine instructions difficult.
- **One in four** (25%) adults has difficulties using maths in everyday life³. For example, they find working out a bill or calculating percentages difficult.
- **About two in five** (38%) adults struggle with basic digital tasks⁴. For example, they find looking up a website or sending an email difficult. Most people who have digital literacy needs also have other literacy needs.

The profile of adult literacy has also significantly changed over the last number of years. We know this from our members, government strategies and recent reports published by SOLAS – the Further Education and Training Authority.

One example of the change can be seen in the increase in literacy learners in Ireland between 2021 and 2022.

In 2021, there were 18,020 literacy learners. In 2022, there were 26,089 literacy learners – 45% more learners than in 2021⁵.



³ Central Statistics Office (2013). **PIAAC 2012** - Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies: Survey Results from Ireland.

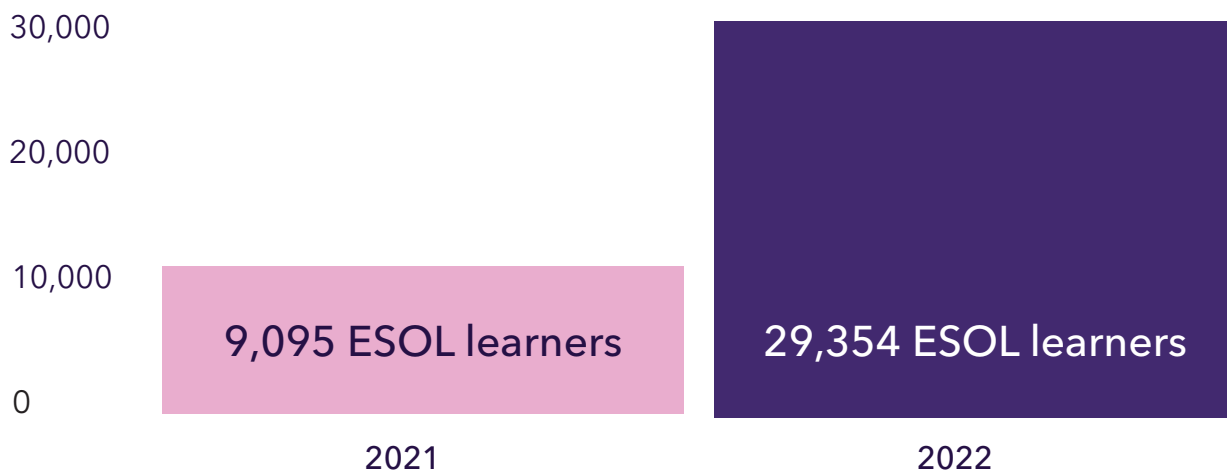
cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/education/2012/piaac2012.pdf

⁴ Cedefop (2020). **Cedefop country fact sheet: Ireland** - Adult population with potential for upskilling and reskilling. cedefop.europa.eu/files/ireland_country_factsheet.pdf

⁵ SOLAS (2022). **This is FET Facts and Figures 2021**, p.9 and SOLAS (2023). **This is FET Facts and Figures 2022**, p.9. solas.ie/research-lp/fet-statistics/

The increase in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners in Ireland is even more dramatic.

In 2021, there were 9,095 ESOL learners. In 2022, there were 29,354 ESOL learners – more than three times the number of learners in 2021⁶.



Literacy learning provision is also affected by our near full employment record and the Irish Government’s focus on providing higher level skills through apprenticeships and programmes focussed on technology and the environment. These have resulted in changes to the roles of adult educators who now have to take on additional and different duties.

From our work and research, we know the significant impact and cost of literacy needs⁷. Individuals and society are not able to achieve their full potential if they do not have the literacy skills they want and need. The costs to society are considerable in terms of lost talent, and other costs.

We all try to develop our skills and adapt to the ever-changing world – a world where literacy is becoming more and more important. With that in mind, we move to the next section where we set out three key challenges in our changing context. These challenges have informed the development of this Strategic Plan.

⁶ SOLAS (2022). **This is FET Facts and Figures 2021**, p.9 and SOLAS (2023). **This is FET Facts and Figures 2022**, p.9. solas.ie/research-lp/fet-statistics/

⁷ NALA (2020). **Literacy Now**. nala.ie/publications/literacy-now/

Our changing context

Since our last Strategic Plan, there has been extraordinary change in NALA, in society and in our economy. This change has created uncertainty in what we can do and how we can do it.

The following three changes are having the biggest impact on our current and future work.

1. The Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) Strategy

Following NALA's years of advocating for an adult literacy strategy, the Government committed to developing a strategy in 2020. On International Literacy Day, 8 September 2021, the Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) Strategy was launched. However, it has taken some time to get started.

Most of the ALL Strategy's structures and staff are now in place, but NALA's specific role in the ALL Strategy is still not clear. We need further discussion to clarify our role and to jointly plan work with the Adult Literacy for Life National Programme Office. Doing this will provide a more effective approach to address adult literacy needs, prevent duplication of effort and ensure the successful implementation of the ALL Strategy and our Strategic Plan.

2. Technology

Increasingly, we all need to use technology in our everyday lives. This requires digital literacy skills. Since we launched our new **Learn with NALA eLearning platform** in 2020, we have been able to reach and support a wider range of adult literacy learners. In recent years, we have also seen an increase in the number of adults contacting us for help with how they can get online.

We also see literacy learners using applications (apps) to meet some of their literacy needs. For instance, we see people using Google Maps or Google Translate to get where they need to go or communicate with others.

While technology has brought a lot of positives to our lives, we know that about two in five adults in Ireland (38% of the Irish population⁸) don't have the digital literacy skills they need to complete everyday tasks. Without these skills, people with literacy needs will become increasingly excluded as more and more services and activities go online.

In addition, we all have to manage the possibilities and problems posed by Artificial Intelligence, ChatGPT and other new technologies. Individuals and society also have to deal with the challenges of fake news, misinformation and fraud.

3. Funding

Despite these changes, the one constant has been our core funding from SOLAS – The Further Education and Training Authority. We have received some additional funding for specific ALL projects. However, we have received no additional funding for our main work since 2021. This is despite increasing costs to run our services and building, and to pay our experienced staff.

Without additional funding from SOLAS and other sources we will have to begin reducing some of our activities.

We considered these challenges along with many possibilities during our strategic planning process. We will describe that process next.

⁸ Cedefop (2020). **Cedefop country fact sheet: Ireland** - Adult population with potential for upskilling and reskilling. cedefop.europa.eu/files/ireland_country_factsheet.pdf

Our strategic planning process

What we did

As a membership organisation, we wanted to make sure that this Strategic Plan was informed by the opinions of the people we work with.

Between September 2023 and March 2024, we:

- reviewed our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats;
- hired consultants **2into3** to help us with the strategic planning process; and
- set up a Strategic Planning Advisory Group that met monthly to oversee the process. You can read the names of the group's members in the Appendix on page 26.

We invited over 7,000 people to share their views on:

- the work NALA does best;
- what we could improve on; and
- hopes for NALA's future.

We asked people to share their views through a survey, and in focus groups, meetings and workshops.

We spoke with:

- Adult literacy learners and practitioners, including tutors
- Community and voluntary organisations
- Education and Training Board (ETB) staff
- Government and public sector partners
- NALA Board members, staff and subcommittee members
- Our funders
- Our project partners
- Our research partners

What we learned

We received very diverse and useful views during the strategic planning process.

People have said that they appreciate many of NALA's current activities, such as our:

- work to influence government policy and practice;
- efforts to raise awareness of the importance of adult literacy;
- resources and supports for people with literacy needs, learners and literacy practitioners; and
- support to organisations wanting to provide literacy friendly services.

However, we also received feedback that some of our work may need to change in response to developments such as the ALL Strategy. These developments raise many questions that we need to explore in more depth. Questions such as:

Who should we help?

Which groups of people with literacy needs are "the furthest behind" that we need to put first?⁹ How can their literacy and personal development needs be met? What should NALA do to ensure those needs are met?

What is the impact of technology on what we do?

What impact will developments in technology have on people with literacy needs? How will this affect how NALA and others respond to these needs?

Who should we collaborate with?

How should NALA work with other government, public sector, and education and training organisations to effectively support people with literacy needs?

What other areas of influence can we have?

What relevant areas of policy and practice should NALA seek to influence?

What other resources and supports do we need?

What additional resources, structures, staff and systems do we need?
Can we secure them to support our work?

⁹ The commitment "reach the furthest behind first" is resolution number 4 in the United Nations's **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. United Nations (2015). 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. sdgs.un.org/2030agenda

What we decided

We need to take more time to answer these questions to ensure that NALA's work remains effective.

For these reasons, we have agreed to divide our strategic plan into two phases over the next six years:

Phase 1: Continuation and Review Phase (2024 - 2027)

Phase 2: Confirm and Succeed Phase (2027 - 2030)

Our work in Phase 1

We will:

- continue working on many of our existing activities and our current commitments;
- review how we support learners, practitioners and other relevant stakeholders;
- develop our structures, systems and resources to ensure the success of Phase 1; and
- develop a plan for Phase 2.

Our plan

The remainder of this document sets out the following elements that will guide Phase 1 of our plan:

- Our vision, mission and values
- Our strategic themes, goals and actions.

Our vision, mission and values

The following statements are the important beliefs and principles that guide our work.



Our vision

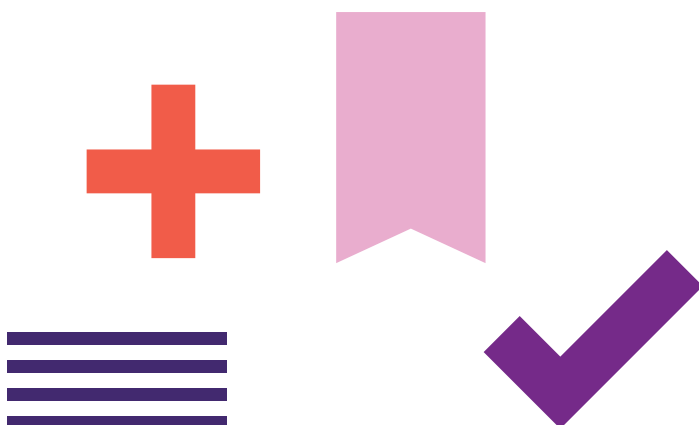
Our vision is that adult literacy is a human right. Everyone in Ireland should have the chance to develop their literacy, numeracy and digital skills to take part fully in society.



Our mission

Our mission is to:

- campaign for literacy as a human right;
- be leaders and champion best literacy practice; and
- support organisations in their efforts to be literacy friendly.





Our values

Potential: We aim to make sure that everyone that we work with can achieve their learning and other ambitions.

Respect: We listen carefully to everyone's views and treat everyone equally and fairly.

Inclusion: We involve different voices and views, perspectives and people in our work.

Collaboration: We work creatively and constructively with others to make things happen.

Equity: We make sure that everyone has the same opportunities.

Our strategic themes, goals and actions

Our plan has four themes:

Theme 1: **Advocate** (support and champion)

Theme 2: **Empower** (provide a means to take more control over life, learning and development)

Theme 3: **Enable** (make it possible)

Theme 4: **Evolve** (change)

Each theme has a goal or goals. In total we have six goals running across the four themes. Each goal has one or more actions.

Let's look at each theme in turn.

Theme 1: Advocate



NALA advocates for adult literacy as a human right, and for ways to meet literacy needs.

Goal

1. Be the independent voice of adult literacy to inform the development of adult literacy policy and provision.

Actions

Membership and stakeholders

Develop a membership and stakeholder engagement strategy. This will strengthen the independent voice of adult literacy. Through our advocacy and communications, we will raise awareness and represent people with literacy needs, learners and practitioners.

Research and advocacy

Develop and put in place a research and advocacy policy to influence government policy and the provision of adult literacy learning opportunities.

Share our research and advocacy work to raise awareness of the changing nature of literacy (for example, financial literacy) and its importance.

Inform and influence

Continue to inform and influence the allocation of funding and roll out of the Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) and Further Education and Training (FET) strategies.

Have input into relevant government strategies to influence how they work.

Theme 2: Empower



NALA empowers:

- literacy learners; and
- adult literacy practitioners.



Goals

2. Support learners' empowerment, participation and their access to the most suitable learning opportunities.
3. Provide learning and development opportunities through Learn with NALA's tutoring service and eLearning website.
4. Support adult literacy practitioners' professional development.

Actions

Learner development

Undertake a strategic review of learner development and engagement. We will explore:

- who learners are;
- what they need and want; and
- what NALA's role is in meeting that need.

Information services

Collaborate with the ALL Strategy National Programme Office and others to:

- undertake a strategic review of our information services, including our National Freephone service; and
- develop a resource plan for these services.

Learn with NALA

Undertake a strategic review of Learn with NALA to identify this service's current and future needs, and to develop a resourced plan to meet those needs.

Professional development

Work with the ALL Strategy National Programme Office and others to make sure the adult literacy sector's professional development and working conditions are of a high standard.

Theme 3: Enable



NALA enables organisations to deliver literacy aware and literacy friendly services.

Goal

5. Organisations serving the public must provide services that can be accessed by all. We will support organisations to provide services which can be accessed by all, particularly those with literacy needs.

Actions

Scoping study

Undertake a scoping study to examine the potential for NALA to expand its literacy awareness training and literacy friendly services. These services might include:

- carrying out literacy audits of organisations;
- expanding our plain English editing and training services; and
- awarding literacy quality marks.

Theme 4: Evolve



NALA continues to develop as an effective and resilient organisation.

Goal

6. Make sure NALA's structures, staff, systems and funding continue to meet the needs of adults with literacy needs.

Actions

Structures and staff

Agree and establish the structures and work plans to manage Phase 1: Continuation and Review (2024-2027) and move to Phase 2: Confirm and Succeed (2027-2030).

Commission a comprehensive organisational review to make sure NALA is well-positioned to deliver Phase 2.

Systems (including reviews)

Start putting the recommendations from the 2023 review of our Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in place.

Review our facilities and premises and assess our future needs for both.

Review and develop our environmental sustainability policy and procedures.

Funding

Develop a funding plan in line with our values.

We anticipate that the four themes will remain the same in Phase 2 - Confirm and Succeed Phase (2027 - 2030).

Our goals may need to be updated to reflect the results of our actions in Phase 1. Next let's look at the results we want to have achieved by the end of 2027 or sooner.

Our intended results

We will know that we have successfully put Phase 1 of this plan in place when we achieve the results below.

We aim to see these results by the end of 2027 or sooner.

Results we aim to achieve in Phase 1, 2024 - 2027

We aim to get results in terms of both outputs and outcomes.

Outputs are things we will do. Outcomes are the impacts or effects that our actions will have.

Outputs

By the end of 2027 or sooner, we will have:

- a membership and stakeholder engagement strategy;
- a research and advocacy policy;
- actions from a strategic review of our learner development and engagement work;
- a more focussed approach from a strategic review of our information services, including our National Freephone service;
- a study examining our potential to create more literacy aware and literacy friendly services for organisations and a plan and actions in place to support this;
- actions implemented from the 2023 review of our Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems;
- a review of our future needs in term of our facilities and premises and plan in place to meet them;
- updated our environmental sustainability policy and procedures;
- an organisational review report and plan to create more robust and resilient services and systems;
- a new funding plan and approach; and
- an updated action plan for Phase 2 of this strategy.

Outcomes

By the end of 2027 or sooner, we will also have:

Greater clarity on NALA's role

- Greater clarity on NALA's role in the Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) and Further Education and Training (FET) strategies from an agreed framework for co-ordinated planning.

Influenced key strategies and policies

- Positively influenced how the ALL and FET strategies have been delivered.
- Informed the development of literacy policy, provision and funding in other relevant government strategies.

Increased awareness, understanding, knowledge and engagement

- Contributed to greater awareness, understanding and knowledge of adult literacy and adult literacy needs.
- Enhanced how we engage with our members, with adult literacy learners and other adult literacy stakeholders.

Strengthened learning and development

- Strengthened the adult literacy sector's professional development.
- Strengthened the websites we use to provide our learning and development opportunities for learners and professionals.
- Supported adult literacy learners to engage in learning and development opportunities.
- A clearer understanding of how NALA can enable organisations to be more literacy friendly.

Strengthened our structures, staff and systems

- Identified and secured additional sources of funding for our work.
- Strengthened our internal operating systems and processes.
- Recruited, retained and nurtured NALA's people.

How we will achieve our results



We will create yearly work plans.

Our yearly work plans will set out this plan's themes and new actions alongside our existing actions.



We will monitor progress on these plans.

NALA's Board and relevant subcommittees will monitor our progress on our work plans and agree updates needed to make sure that the actions are completed.

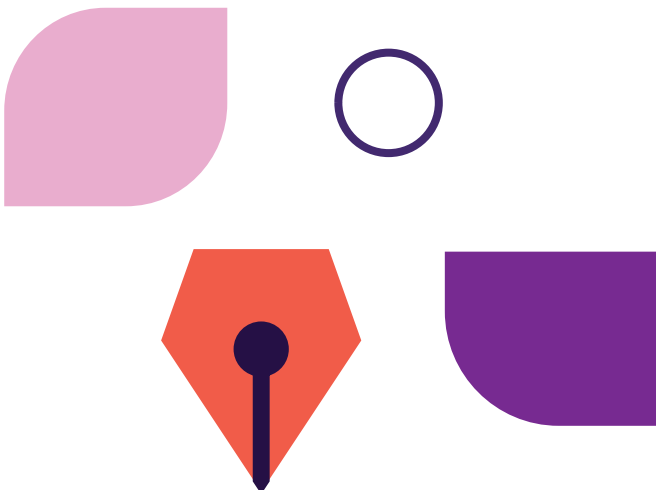


We will value and welcome your support.

We will continue to rely on your input and support.

We look forward to updating you on our progress.

Thank you very much for all your help to date.



Some terms, acronyms and abbreviations explained

Advocacy

Actively supporting or arguing for a cause, idea or policy. This may involve raising awareness, recommending particular actions and or speaking up for individuals' rights.

ALL

Adult Literacy for Life, a ten year adult literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy strategy.

Chairperson

The Chairperson leads a Board of Directors.

CEO

Chief Executive Officer.

ChatGPT

Chat Generative Pre-Trained Transformer. This is an online tool that allows users to enter written prompts and receive new human-like text or images and videos generated by AI (Artificial Intelligence).

ESOL

English for Speakers of Other Languages.

ETB

Education and Training Board.

Fake News

Any story or article that is false, inaccurate, or misleading and meant to deliberately disinform the reader. This is also referred to as disinformation.

FET

Further Education and Training.

Furthest behind first

The furthest behind first (principle in the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development) recognises that the needs of those with less than a QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) level 4 qualification would be met first. For the furthest behind first, there must be enhanced and targeted opportunities and supports.

Google Maps

This is an online map service that provides detailed information about different locations worldwide including satellite imagery and route planning.

Google Translate

This is an online translation service used for translating text from one language into another language.

Learning opportunities

The range of literacy learning options, such as individual and group tutoring, workplace literacy programmes and distance education.

Level (1 - 10) qualification

One of the 10 levels of qualifications a person can get in Ireland.

Misinformation

Information that is wrong, is not complete or is taken out of context. This may not be intentional.

Mission

An aim of a group, an organisation or a person.

Outcome

Outcomes are the impacts or effects that our actions will have. They are what happened or a result of something.

Output

Outputs are things we will do.

Plain English

A communication is in plain English "if its wording, structure, and design are so clear that the intended readers can easily find what they need, understand what they find, and use that information" (Source: **The International Plain Language Federation**¹⁰).

Policy

A course of action adopted or proposed by an organisation or person.

Professional development (PD)

This is the way people can maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge and skills and develop the personal qualities required in their professional lives.

Quality mark

A quality mark shows how good a product or service is. For example a 'literacy friendly' quality mark would highlight how accessible a service is for someone who might struggle with reading or writing.

SOLAS

The authority for further education and training.

Stakeholder

A person or group with an interest (a stake) in the actions or policies of an organisation, which means that they may affect the actions or policies and or be affected by them.

Strategic

Something that forms part of or relates to a long-term plan to achieve an aim.

¹⁰ International Plain Language Federation. **Plain language definitions.**
iplfederation.org/plain-language/

Appendix: Strategic Planning Advisory Group

1. Aoife Crawford, Research and Policy Officer
2. Chris Potts, Former Literacy Student and Tutor
3. Colleen Dube, Chief Executive Officer
4. Dr Eleanor Neff, Board member
5. Dr Leo Casey, Director of the Centre for Education and Lifelong Learning at National College of Ireland
6. Elaine Cohalan, Practice and Innovation Manager
7. Fergus Dolan, Literacies Development Worker
8. Joan Butler, Learn with NALA Coordinator
9. Margaret Kelly, Chairperson, NALA's Board and Chairperson of the Advisory Group
10. Margaret Murray, Literacy Student and Development Officer
11. Michelle Reade, Governance and Compliance Officer
12. Michelle Lynch, Communications, Advocacy and Outreach Manager
13. Pat Ayton, NALA's Board Secretary
14. Paul Cahill, Finance and Corporate Services Manager
15. Paula Tiller, Board member
16. Trish Nolan, Board member

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is a charity and membership based organisation. We work to support adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs to take part fully in society and to have access to learning opportunities that meet their needs. NALA does this by raising awareness of the importance of literacy, doing research and sharing good practice, providing online learning courses, providing a tutoring service and by lobbying for further investment to improve adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills.

National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)

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Freephone: 1 800 20 20 65

Registered Charity Number: 20020965

Charity Number: 8506

Company Number: 342807



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Có-mhaoiníthe ag an
Aontas Eorpach
Co-funded by the
European Union

SOLAS
learning works



**Adult
Literacy
for Life**

Adult Literacy is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union.