

National Adult Literacy Agency	
Draft Minutes of the NALA Board	
Date:	23 October 2024
Time:	2.00pm – 5.00pm
Venue:	NALA Boardroom and MS Teams

Chairperson:	Margaret Kelly (MK) - Online
Present (Charity Trustees):	In person: Christopher Potts Online: Aoife Foley (AF), Eleanor Neff (EN), Trish Nolan (TN), Paula Tiller (PT), Maria O’Gorman (MOG), Tom O’Mara (TOM), Tadhg Quill-Manley (TQM), Ciaran Casey (CC), Margaret Hanrahan (MH), Catherine Devlin (CD)
Quorum:	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
In Attendance (Others):	Colleen Dube (CEO) – Online Paul Cahill (PC) (Interim Finance Manager) – Online Jonah Mudehwe (Finance & Corporate Services Manager) – Online Michelle Reade (Governance and Compliance Officer) – In person
Apologies:	Elma Teahan (ET), Michelle O’Driscoll (MOD)

Please see Glossary of Terms at the end of this document for guidance

1. Governance Training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MK opened the meeting and introduced Marian Barnard who will provide an hour long training session on Governance. • Marian Barnard provided training for the attendees.
2. Meeting Welcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CD noted apologies from ET. • MR informed the Board that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ TQM was expected to join today but has tendered his resignation from the Board with the effect from the end of this Board meeting. (TQM subsequently joined) ○ MOD sent apologies

- CC may need to leave temporarily during the course of the meeting
- MOG and TOM may need to leave the meeting early
- CD needs to leave early so has requested that the Student Subcommittee agenda item is tabled before she leaves. The Chair agreed.
- MK formally opened the meeting.
- MK welcomed AF as our new Honorary Secretary and offered since thanks to her.
- MK summarised the agenda

3. Conflicts of Interest

- No conflicts of interest were identified.

4. Minutes of 27 June Board Meeting

- NOTED:**
- MK summarised the minutes of the last meeting.
- AGREED:**
- The minutes were approved

5. CEO Update

5.1 2024 Work Plan and Implementation Framework

- NOTED:**
- CD gave an overview of the Workplan document and noted that the status of all activities is noted. She advised that there are a few activities that are delayed and these are highlighted but it is anticipated that most of these will be caught up by year end.
 - MK enquired about the status of making changes to the website for membership purposes. CEO advised that we have decided to manage it manually to allow time to fully consider cybersecurity, communication strategy and desired process.
 - MK enquired if the delays in the data protection schedule of work presents any compliance issues. MR confirmed that at the moment it does not. She advised the Board that our regular data protection activities are all continuing with no issues. The activities behind schedule are reviews of processes. They must be done but a delay presents no immediate compliance issues. CEO added that these additional activities are resource intensive and require significant planning and organisation.
 - MK enquired about Traveller Outreach activities. CEO gave an overview of the steps

NALA have taken to improve success in this area and to identify the best approach for 2025. AF recommended that NALA consider engaging more with local traveller groups rather than national traveller groups as she finds you can have better success getting engagement at the local level.

5.2 ALL Strategy update

NOTED:

- CEO referred to the ALL Strategy update paper and noted that all activity up to the 17 October is captured within that. Since then there has been a meeting with representatives of SOLAS and the ALL Office. She invited MK to summarise the meeting.
- MK noted that:
 - The ALL office were dissatisfied with our 13 September 2024 letter to Minister O'Donovan
 - NALA emphasised that they acknowledged that the ALL Office are doing their best to communicate clearly with NALA but that we still face a lot of uncertainty regarding our role. Having raised our concerns with SOLAS in June it was felt that there was no option but to contact the Minister.
 - There was a good discussion on NALA's advocacy role and the need for multi-annual planning.
- CEO elaborated on elements of this conversation.
- MK added that NALA still requires a meeting with DFHERIS and the Minister but there will likely be a new minister due to upcoming elections.
- TN added that she felt the letter was necessary.
- CEO asked the Board to review and approve on the requested follow up letter to the Executive Director of Transformation in SOLAS setting out our understanding of NALA's role in the ALL Strategy.
- CC noted it was factual and contained nothing of concern but enquired about the risk to the relationship. CEO added that there was no damage expected as a result of this letter but it can't be guaranteed.
- TOM suggested that perhaps it is a bit circular. There was discussion on what could and should be included. It was agreed to leave the letter as drafted.
- The Board briefly discussed the upcoming change in government and the opportunities or need to consider engaging with other Government departments in future. CP added that in

his long history working with NALA he has engaged on multiple issues with Government.

AGREED:

- The Board approved the letter.

5.3 Membership Survey

NOTED:

- CEO gave an overview of the membership survey results. She noted that she will be meeting with the Management Team and MR to delve into it further and establish the arising actions.
- PT enquired further as she has opted in to communications as a member but doesn't get newsletters. CEO confirmed communication opt ins would be reviewed as part of the renewal process.

9. Student Subcommittee

9.1 Minutes of the 4 September 2024 Meeting

9.2 Draft Minutes of the 1 October 2024 Meeting

NOTED:

- CD noted that the ploughing championships was a great success.
- The Student Day was held last Wednesday in the Ashling Hotel. Student Days have previously been held on a Saturday, but the day was a success. There was no evident impact on the attendance numbers.
- CEO added that there had been an issue getting registrations for the Voter Day but when combined with the Student Day it was very successful.
- MK enquired about the reference to driver theory testing and CEO advised NALA is exploring arranging an event.
- CD confirmed the Subcommittee now has a healthy quorum.
- EN enquired if the ETBs still engage with the Student Days. MK and PT advised that Kerry and Dublin ETBs are encouraged but budgetary measures can prevent attendance. CEO advised that we are exploring smaller regional events and are engaging with RLCs but it can be a challenge to find suitable locations and times.

6. Audit, Risk and Finance Subcommittee

6.1 Draft minutes of 8 October 2024 Meeting

NOTED:

- As ET is not present MK referred to the minutes and noted most items are coming up on the agenda.

6.2 Management Accounts

NOTED:

- MK asked the Board if there were any questions on the accounts. There were none.
- MK noted the debtors and sought confirmation that this is due to the process of invoicing before service are delivered. CC advised that this is correct and was discussed the ARF.

6.3 Audit 2024

NOTED:

- MK noted the preparatory work is scheduled before Christmas and the audit will be complete before February 2025.
- CEO added that we will be aiming to have the Financial Statements for the Board in February or March as has been the norm in previous years.

AGREED:

- The Board agreed the:
 - Audit Fee of €9,000.00
 - Audit Planning Report
 - Letter of Engagement

6.4 Updated Banking Arrangements

NOTED:

- PC highlighted that a recommendation was made at the ARF to move money from Prize bonds and this will take place. It does not impact on the banking arrangement proposal.

AGREED:

- The Board agreed to the changes to the banking arrangements.

6.5 2025 Budget

NOTED:

- CEO advised that there has not yet been a request from SOLAS to submit a 2025 Funding Allocation Request (FAR) but to be prudent and ensure NALA has a draft budget prepared, approval is sought on a draft budget subject to further meetings with SOLAS and the FAR. The budget has been prepared with certain assumptions.
- The income figure(s) assume:
 - NALA's Grants for Core activities, Learn with NALA, Furthest Behind First Outreach Project will all be funded again in 2025, but at the 2024 combined funding levels of €2,409,000. This has been the indication from SOLAS to date
 - SOLAS will allow NALA some flexibility in moving funding between different projects and cost heads as happened in 2024
 - SOLAS will honour its in principle commitment to provide full year funding for the Building Bridges / Prison Literacy Development and Outreach Worker and associated costs in 2025. The ALL office provided €15k towards recruiting the worker in August 2024
 - SOLAS will NOT provide any additional funding to support ALL strategy initiatives. This has been the indication from SOLAS to date
 - NALA's Plain English services projected income will increase by €20,000 in 2025 due to steady demand for our services
 - stable membership and other income
- The expenditure figures assumes the following:
 - NALA's primary cost is its salaries costs. The 2025 salaries budget is €1,994,331 compared to €1,845,078 in 2024, an increase of €136,253. The salaries budget:
 - reflects NALA's current / anticipated staffing levels including the Literacy Development and Outreach Worker (LDOW) commencing 14 October 2024 and 9 month salary costs for a new Membership and Funding Development Officer (MFDO). Regarding the MFDO, if it is agreed to recruit the MFDO, it would be funded from unrestricted reserves to advance the membership and funding plan actions in the Strategic plan
 - includes annual increments
 - does not include any provision for the public sector wage increases since 1

October 2023 or the removal of the 35/37th

- does not include any provision for additional employer contributions to pension that may result due to the introduction of the Government's Automatic Enrolment Retirement Savings Scheme which is currently proposed to be implemented 30 September 2025
- flatlined and, or reduced expenditure to reflect 2024 actual costs / expenditure and the anticipated available funding in 2025 to break even.
- CEO clarified that the FAR will be circulated to the Board when timelines are clarified from SOLAS.

AGREED:

- The Board approved the draft budget.

6.6 Risk Register

NOTED:

- MK enquired about the IT and Security risk noted in the ARF minutes. CC confirmed this was discussed as part of the review of the Risk Register and it is one of the most significant risks.
- TOM enquired if risk 29 – ICT risk was perhaps scored too highly and the rationale for that as he believed the systems used by NALA to be robust. CEO added that while individually our vendors are robust and there are controls in place they are very fragmented. She further added that we lack in house expertise which adds to that. MR added that the wording will be reviewed again but that her priority is to ensure where there is a risk is captured firstly. She further added that the lack of knowledge in house adds a layer of unknown. As NALA looks at this further and builds on the knowledge and controls this risk score will likely come down with little action needed. CEO added that the risks continue to be reviewed and risk 29 will be refined to reflect current situation as development of our ICT policy evolves.

AGREED:

- The Board approved the risk register.

6.7 Charities Regulator Authority (CRA) Governance Code

NOTED:

- MK highlighted a potential mistake in the record form on page 29. MR will check and correct.

AGREED:

- The Board approved the annual CRA return

6.8 Public Sector Duty Implementation Plan

NOTED:

- MK enquired if abiding by the duty will require us to do anything new. CEO confirmed we may need to consider it in our tendering processes. MR added that following the policy review, we don't anticipate any findings but if there are findings they will need to be addressed.

AGREED:

- The Board approved the plan.

6.9 Revised Policy Schedule

AGREED:

- The Board approved the revised Policy Schedule subject to a clarifying line on the document that reviews will be carried out more frequently where legislative changes or other circumstances arise which make this a necessity.

7. Literacy and Staff Policy and Governance

7.1 Draft Minutes of the LSPG Meeting 9 October

NOTED:

- The minutes were taken as read.

7.2 Update on Strategic Plan / Organisational Development Working group

NOTED:

- MK noted that there has been 2 meetings of the Organisational Development Working Group and briefly summarised the recommendations coming from the group.

7.3 Board resignation, skills survey and training proposal

NOTED:

- MK noted that TQM is leaving the Board but remaining on the ARF and the proposal is not

to replace him immediately but wait until the Skills Survey is complete.

- MK introduced the skills survey. She added that additional work is needed to support it and it will be issued in January. CEO added that an information session will be held to explain the expectations of knowledge and completing the survey.

AGREED:

- The Board approved the Skills Survey and Training Proposal

7.4 Learn with NALA Strategic Review Proposal

AGREED:

- The tender document for the LWN Strategic Review was approved.

7.5 Membership and Funding Development Officer Proposal

AGREED:

- The recruitment and role profile of a Membership and Funding Development Officer was approved.

7.6 Updated Staff Handbook

NOTED:

- MK noted the proposed changes were to the Hybrid Working, ICT Usage, Travel and Subsistence, Parent's Leave and Flexible Working Policies.

AGREED:

- Updates to the Hybrid Working Policy and Staff Handbook were approved.

8. Education, Training and Assessment Subcommittee

8.1 Draft Minutes of the 3 October 2024 Meeting

NOTED:

- MK pointed out there was a suggestion in the minutes from PT that NALA considers research on how provision has changed across ETBs with a focus on outreach work. PT added some context that it was with the intention of highlighting the problem of the underreached. MK noted that unfortunately NALA has no capacity at the moment to undertake additional work. They discussed where to source data and other ways to potentially address this issue.

8.2 Academic Integrity Policy

NOTED:

- MK enquired about the aspect of verifying identity and highlighted that our policy doesn't address this. CEO clarified that NALA have verification checks for QQI submissions at the moment but we are still exploring our options in meeting the required standards on verifying identity but that we needed to create the policy and address the other aspects in any case.

AGREED:

- The Board approved the Academic Integrity Policy

10. December Board Meeting**NOTED**

- Proposed to be in person
- MR will check availability
- Training from 11am to 12pm

11. AOB**NOTED:**

- MK thanked both TQM and PC as this will be both of their last meetings.
- PC thanked the Chairperson, the Board and NALA staff.
- PT enquired if the board papers could be issued further in advance. CEO highlighted the challenges with this but we will explore for 2025.

Next Meeting

Date:	11 December 2024
Time:	11.00am
Venue:	In Person

Actions Arising from This Meeting:

Item	Action	Person Applicable	Timeframe

<i>Margaret Kelly</i> 11 December 2024	<i>aoife foley</i> 11 December 2024
Chairperson's Signature and date	Secretary's Signature and date
MARGARET KELLY	AOIFE FOLEY

Glossary

Acronym	Full Description
ALL	Adult Literacy for Life
ABEDiLi	Adult Basic Education Digital Literacy project
AGM	Annual General Meeting
AEO	Adult Education Officer
AEOA	Adult Education Officers' Association
ALO	Adult Literacy Organiser
ALOA	Adult Literacy Organisers' Association
ARF	Audit, Risk and Finance Subcommittee
BAU	Business as Usual
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CITO	Check In, Take Off
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CRA	Charities Regulatory Authority
CRO	Companies Registration Office
DLS	Distance Learning Service
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
ERS	ERS IT solutions
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ETA	Education, Training & Assessment Subcommittee
ETB	Education and Training Board
ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland
FBF	Furthest Behind First
FET	Further Education and Training
IBCB	Irish Banking Culture Board
ICT	Information Communications Technology
LAT	Literacy Awareness Training
LSPG	Literacy and Staff Policies and Governance Subcommittee
LWN	Learn with NALA
PMDS	Performance Management Development System
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Q1, 2, 3, 4	Financial Quarter 1 (January – March), 2 (April - June) 3 (July – September) 4 (October – December)
RLC	Regional Literacy Coordinator
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SIPTU	Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union
SOFA	Statement of Financial Affairs
SORP	Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) on Accounting and Reporting for Charities
TUI	Teacher's Union of Ireland