

National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)

Minutes of the NALA Board

Meeting details:

Date:	10 December 2025
Time:	2.00pm
Venue:	NALA Boardroom and Zoom

Attendee details:

Chairperson:	Margaret Kelly (MK) – in person
Present (Charity Trustees)	In person: Ciaran Casey (CC), Sarah Shaughnessy (SS), Online: Catherine Devlin (CD), Eleanor Neff (EN), Margaret Hanrahan (MH), Michelle O'Driscoll (MOD), Trish Nolan (TN) Tom O'Mara (TOM)
Quorum:	☒ Yes ☐ No
In attendance (Others):	In person: Colleen Dube – CEO (CEO), Elaine Cohalan – Innovation Manager (EC), Michelle Lynch – Communications, Advocacy and Outreach Manager (ML)
Apologies:	Aoife Foley (AF), Elma Teahan (ET), Geraldine Mernagh (GM) Maria O'Gorman (MOG), Paula Tiller (PT)

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

Items discussed:

1. Welcome
MK noted there was a quorum.

• MK summarised the agenda for the day.
2. Conflicts of Interest
• There were no conflicts of interest identified.
3. Minutes of 29 October 2025 meeting
• MK summarised the key information points regarding NALA's Confucius and Plain English awards and 2026 funding along with decision items from the meeting. Agreed: • The minutes of the 29 October 2025 Meeting were approved. 3.1 Incorporeal decisions on pension arrangements 7 November 2025 • CEO summarised the matters considered and agreed by the Board after the 29 October 2025 meeting relating to the pension arrangements. • CEO provided an update on the communications with staff, Union and NALA's current and future pension provider since 14 November 2025 and planned communications / actions in the first quarter of 2026 to implement the agreed pensions arrangements. These include providing staff with details of Zurich's data protection arrangements, completing and returning the set-up documentation / employee details to Zurich, holding an information meeting and getting legal advice to amend pension clauses in employment contracts. Agreed: • The Incorporeal decisions and follow on actions on pension arrangements 7 November 2025 were approved. The key decisions are to maintain the company pension arrangement with New Ireland for 7 NALA staff (4 active and 3 paid up), set up a new company pension arrangement with Zurich Master Trust for all other / new employees, enrol 1 member of staff in the New Ireland scheme in November 2025 in accordance with the requirements of auto-enrolment.
4. CEO Report
2025 Work Plan

Noted: The following updates were highlighted:

- Most actions are on track or completed.
- NALA has been reviewing the Plain English service's administration, resourcing and income streams to inform the 2026 budget and work plan.
- NALA continues to support the ALL strategy on a number of working groups / committees and is progressing the Financial Literacy guide that will be completed / distributed in early 2026.
- Registration of new centres has been paused on Learn with NALA due to capacity constraints. Work is progressing on our QQI Extension of Scope submission that is further considered under Agenda item 5.4. NALA's Level 1 Validation application was approved. By year end NALA will have awarded over 3,000 QQI certificates. This is the first time we have exceeded that number since Learn with NALA was launched in March 2020. NALA is the biggest provider of Level 2 awards in Ireland.
- A provisional offer has been made for the Governance and Compliance Officer with an expected start date of end January / early February 2026. One manager will be going on paid maternity leave early March 2026. There is currently no provision made in the 2026 budget for maternity cover.
- At a recent meeting with the ALL office, they indicated that they have not received their funding allocation for 2026 and there is currently no additional funding available from the ALL office.
- There may be a provisional amount of €40,000 of additional funding for NALA in 2026. About €10,000 would be for NALA to manage a budget of gratuities and travel and subsistence for the new Literacy Ambassador programme that is being implemented. In addition, the ALL office are considering developing an accredited Level 6 Plain English course that they may ask NALA to support. NALA noted at the meeting the previous communications they had with the ALL office about existing modules in SETU and the University of Limerick and that the demand for / ideal delivery model of such a course would need to be explored in the first instance.

- NALA will do one final update of the work plan activity to inform the Directors' report of the Financial Statements, SOLAS End of Year Report and Annual report. It will include cumulative totals of relevant activity for the year.
- NALA has received an updated Funding Allocation Request (FAR) Form from SOLAS to include a tab for Additional supports to the ALL office to reflect the most recent discussions with the ALL office and follow on information / discussion that were requested. The FAR is due for submission on 14 January 2026 and the End of Year report is due for submission on 23 January 2026
- NALA will be developing its 2026 work plan in early 2026 to align with NALA's strategic plan, available resources and discussions with the ALL office.
- 108 companies were posted NALA's Christmas fundraising appeal pack. Follow up emails will also be sent. To date we have received a €100 donation through NALA's website that may be a result of the Christmas FM ad. Following on from earlier communications in the year, Goodbody Stockbrokers are making a €1,000 donation.

2026 Calendar of meetings and key deliverables

Agreed:

- 2026 Calendar of meetings.
- NALA to review 2025 Good Governance Awards feedback, develop and publish an Annual report and submit it to the 2026 Good Governance Awards.

5. Student Subcommittee

Noted:

- 5.1.1 Draft Minutes of 19 November 2025 meeting.
- ETBs are not holding awards ceremonies as much as they did in the past. This is due to ETBs having less funding particularly for ESOL.
- Two members of the Student Subcommittee are due to leave in September 2026. There are ongoing efforts to get new members for the subcommittee.
- 2026 Student days are being planned for Dublin and most likely Athlone.
- There is a lot of new terms, abbreviations such as PRSA and documents for the students to deal with in the Board meetings and papers.

- The current format / location at Ploughing is not reaching the people we need to reach. NALA and the ALL office are currently reviewing their 2026 Communications activities including Ploughing to make sure that they are reaching the relevant people. NALA would consider other locations and partners for Ploughing and recently ran a local promotional campaign for the tutoring service with posters, leaflets and radio ads.

Agreed:

- NALA to arrange for follow up information meeting with interested Board members to go through some of the Board terms and abbreviations.
- NALA to add the agenda item number to the printed papers when sent to Board members.
- NALA Chair to refer to each Board agenda item during the meeting.

5.2 Literacies and Staff Policies Governance Subcommittee

Noted:

- 5.2.1 Draft Minutes of 19 November 2025 Meeting.
- Further feedback received from 1 subcommittee member about the Draft Ethical Fundraising policy (Agenda 5.3.4). The policy is an interim policy as we continue to develop our fundraising strategy. It can be reviewed / revised more regularly than the usual 3-year policy review cycle.

Agreed:

5.2.2 Governance and Management of Quality Policy

5.3 Audit, Risk and Finance Subcommittee

Draft minutes of 25 November 2025 meeting

Noted:

- CEO noted that NALA had a close out meeting with 'Sumer N'I who conducted the SOLAS internal audit. We did "very well" and most of the audit team's queries were minor and related to getting confirmation of approvals of payments. NALA fed back that the timing of SOLAS's funding approval does not allow us to have completely aligned nominal codes. NALA is awaiting their final report.

Management Accounts to 31 October 2025

Noted:

- Additional funding of €60,600 had been approved by funding to support the Financial Literacy project €59,100 and ALL Plain Language €1,500.
- The UNESCO prize money was received to the value of €25,469.
- Plain English income was below target by €46,207. This negative variance is expected to be slightly bigger than this by year end. This is due to the changing nature of the PE editing work and unavailability of the editors during the year. The estimated value of lost Plain English editing income was about €25,000.
- Salary costs are €1,722,967 compared to a budget of €1,716,961 giving an over-expenditure of €6,006. The variance is expected to be slightly higher by year-end. This is due to staff movements and early enrolment of staff onto pension ahead of auto-enrolment.
- Project Costs are below forecast to due to the unavailability of plain English editors and low spending on SOLAS funded projects.
- Administration and Facilities costs are also below forecasts. This will be reconsidered in the 2026 budget.
- The current surplus of €50,551 is due to a timing difference in income recognition. We are anticipating a deficit of €29,405 due to the decisions to fund a new staff position and pay alignment for all staff from unrestricted reserves.

Draft 2026 Budget

Noted:

- The budget assumptions are as follows:
 - Flatlined funding from SOLAS including the ALL-Building Bridges.
 - Continuation of all current services.
- Total Salaries cost for 2026 is €2,192,442 compared to €2,074,458 in 2025. The increase of €117,984 is due to the effect of the removal of 35/37 hours and annual salary increases for staff.
- SOLAS Project costs are reduced from €417,833 in 2025 to €314,283 in 2026.

- Administration and Facilities costs reduced from €420,000 in 2025 to €398,450 in 2026.
- The projected income from PE work has been reduced by €60,000 from 2025 budget level. The proposed number of PE editors is being reduced from 3 to 1 on a six-month contract from January – June 2026. NALA will be reviewing the Plain English offering again in early 2026 to eliminate any free training and to identify the most relevant / cost – effective offerings. This may include some tailored offerings to financial services firms in response to supervision of the Revised Consumer Protection Code coming into effect from March 2026.
- A fundraising target of €50,000 has been set for 2026.
- An overall project budget deficit of €98,889. This is manageable for 2026. If there is a significant change in the total income / projected deficit the budget will need to be reconsidered in early 2026. NALA currently has healthy reserves but the continuation of deficits beyond 2026 into 2027 is not sustainable and will need to be addressed. NALA is currently exploring additional income streams including a project with Bank of Ireland and submission to POBAL for funding for 3 years.
- NALA usually receives approval for its funding from SOLAS in March or April of each year. NALA often gets additional funding from SOLAS later in the year as happened this year in September. SOLAS pays funding in four instalments during the year.
- The retirement age in NALA's employment contracts is 66 but the retirement age in NALA's legacy New Ireland company pension scheme is 60. This would allow relevant staff to draw down their retirement benefits if they chose to retire at 60.

Agreed:

Subject to confirmation of SOLAS funding and if required cost cutting measures in early 2026.

5.3.4 Draft Ethical Procurement and Fundraising Policies

Noted:

- The policies were considered by the Literacies and Staff Policies and Governance Subcommittee (LSPG) and the Audit, Risk and Finance Subcommittee.

- Additional feedback regarding widening the focus beyond Irish companies, reference anti-slavery measures and reviewing other Irish organisations fundraising policies was received from a member of the LSPG subcommittee.
- The initial focus of NALA's fundraising is Irish or Irish based multi-national companies.
- The fundraising policy was informed by the policies of 1 Irish Non-governmental organisation and a Scottish national cultural institution
- The policy does reference human rights that encompasses anti-slavery considerations

Agreed:

Subject to further review in 2026 once the new Governance and Compliance Officer is onboarded.

5.3.5 Record Retention Policy

Agreed:

Subject to amendment on:

- page 13 to reference keeping Board members contact details.
- page 15 to reference permanently retaining 1 copy of all annual reports.

5.3.6 Learn with NALA privacy statement

Noted:

- EC noted that the statement has been updated to reflect the personal data that we collect for learners on both the Learn with NALA tutoring and eLearning service.

Agreed:

To approve the Learn with NALA privacy Statement

5.3.7 Protected Disclosures Policy

Noted:

- This policy was first created by NALA in 2017.
- The purpose and intention of the 1. Other Responsible Person on page 12 is not clear.

Agreed:

Subject to being included on the 2026 Policy Schedule for review / consideration by the

Audit, Risk and Finance Subcommittee and Board.

5.3.9 2025 Audit Plan

Noted:

The interim audit has taken place and the key dates for the 2025 Audit are

- Audit field work from 21-30 January 2026
- Presentation of financial statements to Management team on 12 February 2026
- Circulation of financial statements to Audit, Risk and Finance Subcommittee on 4 March 2026
- Consideration of the financial statement by the Board on 25 March 2026
- Consideration by members at the AGM in May 2026

Agreed:

All agreed with the above key dates

5.3.11 Business Continuity Plan

Noted:

- The changes recommended by the Audit, Risk and Finance Subcommittee have been reflected in this version including removal of liquidity as a risk and that all media queries should be directed to the CEO or the Chairperson if the CEO is not available.
- This was updated as part of our QQI Extension of Scope application for Learn with NALA.
- Further consideration to be given to recovery systems for core operating systems such as Microsoft 365, telephones and Broadband

Agreed:

- a scenario being tested during one of NALA's in person staff meeting days 2026
- review and update key supplier contact details.

5.4 Education, Training and Assessment (ETA) Subcommittee

5.4.1 Draft Minutes of 27 November Meeting and incorporeal decisions

- The Quality Assurance Manual was considered at the ETA's 25 September 2025 meeting and recommended to the Board. It was decided by NALA's management to submit all the required documentation to the 10 December 2025 meeting for consideration / submission to QQI as part of NALA's Extension of Scope application.
- Monumental quality work has gone into NALA's Level 1 and Extension of Scope preparations and documentation without a dedicated Quality Assurance unit.
- QQI validation is out of reach of many community groups / providers. This is evident in the number of providers dropping from over 500 in 2014 to less than 200 now. QQI quality assurance processes do ensure quality provision and support for learners.
- Learn with NALA registered centres can accredit their own learners or have NALA accredit them.
- The ETA adopted the Extension of Scope documentation subject to one amendment being made to a question in Section 6 on page 49 that we only offer our programmes and QQI certification in the Republic of Ireland and we require learners to provide an address in Ireland and a Public Service Number (PSN).
- TM was suggested as an additional panel member if required.
- Next steps are that NALA will submit the documentation to QQI for review by year end. Subject to feedback / approval of the panel by QQI, NALA will convene the panel to meet in 2026 to review our documentation and Learn with NALA, prepare a report which will include their recommendation regarding our being approved for blended and online learning provision. We are currently approved for blended learning provision.
- The members and quorum in the ETA's terms of reference are to be reviewed.

Agreed:

- Quality Assurance Manual
- Online Learning Strategy
- Application Form V3.1
- Action Plan for ongoing and further work

Terms of Reference for independent panel (Extension of scope).
6. AOB
Agreed: - NALA to review Board and subcommittee members and terms in early 20206 to inform succession planning. - CC to forward email he received from MR regarding his term to CEO.

Next meeting details:

Date:	25 March 2026
Time:	2.00pm
Venue:	Online and in person

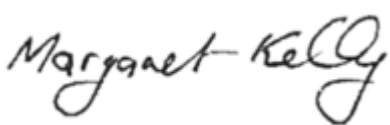
Actions arising from this meeting:

Item	Action	Person Applicable	Timeframe
3.1	Implement pension arrangements	CEO / JM	December 2025 – February 2026
4	Issue invitations for 2026 Board meetings	CEO	December 2025
4	Review Good Governance Awards feedback to inform development of 2025 Annual Report	CEO / JM / ML	January – September 2026
5.1	Information session for Board members and agenda items to be included in printed board packs / mentioned at Board meetings	CEO / JM / Chair	2026

5.2	Governance and Management of Quality Policy to be finalised	CEO / JM	31 January 2026
5.3.4	Ethical Procurement and Fundraising Policies to be finalised / reviewed again in 2026	CEO / JM	2026
5.3.5	Record Retention Policy to be finalised with agreed amendments to pages 13 and 15	CEO / JM	31 January 2026
5.3.6	Learn with NALA privacy statement to be finalised	CEO / JM	31 January 2026
5.3.7	Protected disclosures policy to be finalised / reviewed again in 2026	CEO / JM	31 January 2026
5.3.8	Complaints policy to be finalised	CEO / JM	31 January 2026
5.3.9	Audit Letter of Engagement to be signed by NALA directors / submitted to Auditors	JM	31 January 2026
5.3.10	Audit Plan to be implemented	CEO / JM	January – May 2026
5.3.11	Business Continuity to be updated / finalised with key supplier details and to be scenario tested	CEO / JM	January – June 2026
5.4	Following to be submitted to QQI • Quality Assurance Manual • Online Learning Strategy • Application Form V3.1 • Action Plan for ongoing and further work Terms of Reference for	EC	19 December 2026

	independent panel (Extension of scope)		
AOB	Board and subcommittee members and terms in early 20206 to be reviewed to inform succession planning	CEO / JM / CC	January – May 2026

Approval of minutes:

Chairperson's signature:	Secretary's signature:
	
Date: 25 March 2026	Date: 25 March 2026
Margaret Kelly	Aoife Foley

Glossary of terms

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 and 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

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. We also provide online learning courses and a tutoring service to adults. We lobby for further investment to improve adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills.

National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)

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Registered Charity Number: 20020965

CHY (Charity) Number: 8506



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

SOLAS
learning works

