

National Adult Literacy Agency	
Draft Minutes of the NALA Board	
Date:	27 March 2024
Time:	2.00pm – 4.30pm
Venue:	Zoom

Chairperson:	Margaret Kelly (MK)
Present (Charity Trustees):	Ciaran Casey (CC), Elma Teahan (ET), Frances Ward (FW), Tom O'Mara (TOM), Trish Nolan (TN), Paula Tiller (PT), Pat Ayton (PA), Eleanor Neff (EN),
Quorum:	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
In Attendance (Others):	Colleen Dube (CEO), Paul Cahill (PC) (Finance & Corporate Services Manager)
Apologies:	Catherine Devlin (CD), Maurice Sammon (MS), Maria O'Gorman (MOG)

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

1. Welcome
MK opened the meeting
2. Conflicts of Interest
There were no conflicts of interest
3. Minutes of Previous Meetings
3.1 Minutes of 28 February 2024 Meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MK enquired about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the status Directors' Confirmation Statements for submission to the Auditors. PC confirmed that all Directors had now submitted their statements and that these had been forwarded to Mazars.
AGREED:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The minutes were approved.

4. 2024 Work Plan and Implementation Framework

NOTED:

Board Nominations

MK

- informed the Board that following the EGM, Michelle Reade (MR) will be writing to each Board member to explain their current position and the options available to those whose terms of office are up at the coming AGM. (See Item 5)
- advised that the position of Chairperson will be vacant and enquired if any current Directors were interested in putting themselves forward for the position. She indicated that, in the absence of anyone else coming forward, she would be willing to put herself forward.
- informed the Board that PA would not be putting herself forward at this AGM and that as set out in the new Constitution the Board will need to appoint a new Company Secretary as PA currently holds that position. Following a discussion on the requirements of the role and the training available, MK asked Board members to consider whether they would be interested in taking up the position and inform MR when responding to her communication.

2024 Work Plan

- CD had written to the ALL-Programme Office Director requesting information regarding Learner numbers, coordinated planning, ALL activities for 2024 and NALA role in the ALL-Programme Office's plans for the year. The response from the ALL Office included information on learner numbers and other information [REDACTED].
- MK detailed the following areas of dissatisfaction:
 - Learner numbers are dominated by Digital and ESOL learners.
 - Data gathering system is [REDACTED] resulting in duplication of numbers.
 - ALL Programme Office activities include 4 areas of activities that NALA are currently working in, resulting in duplication of effort and a lack of prioritisation in planning.
 - Flatlined funding from NALA coupled with requests and expectations that somehow NALA can still take on further work.
 - Top-down approach to planning, more collaborate planning required.

A meeting has been arranged between CD, MK and the ALL-Programme Office Director for the afternoon of 11 April 2024 to discuss these issues. An update will be provided at the 1 May 2024 Board meeting.

- The Board discussed the learner numbers that it had received from the ALL Office. The consensus view was that the numbers were unreliable due to the data gathering system, resulting in a lack of clarity. They did however highlight the amount of resources that are now being directed towards ESOL learners, to the detriment of traditional literacy learners. It was suggested that the data gathering system needs to be redesigned as the current system was not fit for purpose.
- CD highlighted the students' event in Cork which included a learners' awards ceremony in the afternoon. The student numbers and engagement very high. NALA are planning for a second such event in Dublin in September.
- The Board were very supportive of NALA's work in Financial Literacy, feeling that this was an important space for us to be in.
- Other areas of the workplan noted were:
 - NALA's recent success in obtaining Google Citation status for its work in Health Literacy
 - Resources – Making the system for Tutors and other to access resources easier
 - Collaboration between NALA, Aontas and Ahead.
 - The finalising of the report for the 2023 Student Development fund.

Agreed:

- CD's proposal to participate in an ECB conference in Germany on 24 April 2024. CD will participate on a panel discussion on "Financial and technological inclusion in retail payment: Consumers in a digitalised world."

5. Update from 22 March 2024 EGM

5.1 Draft Strategic Plan

CD informed the Board that:

- Draft plan circulated to the Board is the draft plan used at the EGM Strategic Plan workshop session.
- Feedback from the EGM session will be incorporated in the next draft. Main feedback related to the importance of digital literacy and how that feeds into NALA's thinking and what is NALA's role in the changing digital space. The main question from participants

was how are NALA going to implement the plan.

- 2Into3 are conducting a top-level organisation review to inform the next draft, particularly in connection to the drafting of the implementation plan for the new strategy.
- CD requested that any further inputs from the Board be submitted to her no later than 8 April 2024.
- The next draft, which will include the implementation actions will be presented to the SPAG on 25 April 2024 and the 1 May 2024 Board meeting for approval prior to launch at the 28 May 2024 AGM.

6.1 Student Subcommittee

NOTED:

- Meeting was held on 5 March 2024.
- This was not an official subcommittee meeting as there wasn't a quorum.
- Meeting took place with members present to complete the planning for the Student Day event in Cork on 7 March 2024. (See Item 4)

6.2 Audit, Risk and Finance Subcommittee

6.2.2 Management Accounts

PC informed the Board of the following:

- Summary of January – February Management accounts, explaining that the figures did not include any income from SOLAS as no funds nor funding approval was received from SOLAS by the date preparation, this being in accordance prior years' income recognition policy.
- 15 March 2024: NALA had received the first funding payment from SOLAS of €622K.
- 22 March 2024: NALA received funding approval from SOLAS for the full amount of our funding allocation request for 2024: €2,475,750.
- The provisional budget was based on receiving full funding from SOLAS and asked the Board to confirm approval of the budget now that funding has been confirmed.

2023 Financial Statements, Audit Results Report and Letter of Representation.

ET gave an overview of the following related to NALA's 2023 Audit:

- 12 March 2024: The 2023 Financial Statements, Audit Results Report and Letter of Representation documents had been presented to the Audit, Risk and Finance

subcommittee by Mazars Director Aedin Morkan.

- Financial Statements were a full set including the Directors' report and directors' responsibilities statement, were prepared under FRS 102, using the charity SORP and are compliant with Irish Company law.
- The audit results report confirmed that Mazars were satisfied with the internal controls and had no new recommendations to make based on their audit. They noted that the one outstanding item, related to budget approval, had been addressed in 2023 and that Mazars were in a position to issue an unqualified audit opinion on the financial statements.
- There were no substantive changes to the format or content of the Directors letter of Representation in 2023.
- The Audit, Risk and Finance subcommittee were recommending that the Board approve all three documents.

Subject to Board approval of the audit documentation, PC requested approval to affix the digital signatures of MK and CC to the Financial Statements and the Letter of Representation to confirm approval of the documents on behalf of the Board.

AGREED:

- To approve the January-February 2024 Management accounts.
- To approve the operational budget for 2024 contained in the management accounts.
- To approve the 2023 Financial Statements.
- To approve the 2023 Audit Results Report.
- To approve the 2023 Letter of Representation.
- To approve the use of the digital signatures of MK and CC to indicate approval by the Board of the Financial Statements and Letter of Representation.

6.3 Literacy and Staff Policies and Governance Subcommittee

- MK noted that it was previously agreed that there would not be a separate report on Board effectiveness and that the findings would be integrated into the implementation plan in the strategic plan.
- [REDACTED]. CD informed the Board that the meetings were taking place on 27 March and an update would be provided at the next LSPG meeting.

Staffing Update

CD noted the following:

- The Financial Administrator (FA) has confirmed that she will leave her post on 31 May on a three-year career break.
- The hiring booklet has been prepared for the Financial Administrator position. This recruitment process has been paused pending the recruitment of a new Finance and Corporate Services (F&CSM).
- The recruitment process for the F&CSM role is well advanced. Interviews were held on 26 March with 4 shortlisted candidates, three of which were deemed appointable. The preferred candidate [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] If appointed, this candidate's expected start date would be mid-June.
- The interview panel were concerned at the potential risk involved in the Finance team completely turning over within a six-week period.
- On the morning of 27 March 2024, PC agreed to defer his 28 June departure from NALA to provide financial cover on a part-time basis for an agreed period of months to allow any new F&CSM to be properly inducted and for a proper handover to take place. This continuing part-time role will provide day to day financial accounting cover for the vacant FA position and allow time for a recruitment process for the FA function / duties involving the new F&CSM.
- The CEO and the Chair both thanked PC for postponing his retirement from NALA and for providing the finance function cover to allow for the orderly recruitment and induction of both the new F&CSM and FA.
- Another member of the management team will be availing of maternity leave in August. This will result in additional salary costs during the remainder of 2024 and early 2025 as we will be carrying the costs of a replacement while also paying the staff member who is on maternity leave.
- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] CD flagged that these additional costs, in light of our flatlined funding, would have to come from unrestricted income or reserves.

- The Learn with NALA coordinator position recruiting process had begun, however the response to the campaign has been poor to date. The closing date for applications is 8 April with interviews due to take place in late April.
- The F&CSM and LWN recruitment processed will be progressed and an updated, costed staffing plan to address all of the coming staff changes and strategic plan implementation will be tabled at the 1 May 2024 Board meeting.
- Noted the view that the charities funded by government bodies are unlikely ever to be granted pay and conditions equity with the public service. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

AGREED:

- Updated and costed staffing plan to be tabled at 1 May 2024 Board meeting

6.4 Education, Training and Assessment Subcommittee

NOTED:

- QQI have included a requirement for multi-factor access (MFA) as part of their Online and blended learning guidelines. CD noted that NALA’s students may be disproportionately affected by this change if required to implement this. NALA will formulate a response to suggest ways to address the issue in without having to implement MFA on our Learn with NALA (LWN) learning platform.
- A new technical sub group for LWN will be set up.
- With the retirement of PA as Chairperson of the ETA, the question of a new chairperson was discussed at the ETA meeting. CD suggested that an interim solution may have to be found.

The Chair and the Board members thanked PA for all her work on the Board and the ETA and expressed their best wishes for her retirement. PA responded by stating that her time with NALA has been enjoyable and fulfilling and that her interest and passion for adult literacy will remain. PA intend to remain a member of NALA and has offered to help wherever she can with

NALA's work in the future.
9. AOB
None

Next Meeting	
Date:	1 May 2024
Time:	2.00pm
Venue:	Zoom

Actions Arising from This Meeting:			
Item	Action	Person Applicable	Timeframe
4	Board members to confirm their intention to retire or go forward for re-election when contacted by Michelle Reade	Directors	26 April 2024
4	Participation in an ECB conference in Germany on 24 April 2024	CD	24 April 2024
5.1	Board members to revert to Colleen Dube with any further comments on Strategic Plan	Directors	8 April 2024
6.2	digital signatures of MK and CC to be applied to 2023 Financial Statements and Letter of Representation	PC	1 April 2024
6.3	Updated and costed staffing plan to be tabled at 1 May 2024 Board meeting	CD / PC	1 May 2024

Chairperson's Signature and date	Secretary's Signature and date
MARGARET KELLY	PATRICIA AYTON

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
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