

Submission to Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2025- 2029 consultation

Submitted to SOLAS

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National Adult Literacy Agency

Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

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Summary of Recommendations

The FET Strategy 2025-2029 should...

1. Address the ongoing adult literacy and numeracy needs in Ireland
2. Commit to the strategic implementation and additional funding of the Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) strategy, including through ETB Strategic Performance Agreements, and detail how the FET and ALL strategies support each other
3. Make basic digital skills a top priority and adopt the DigComp Framework
4. Set a target for participation in lifelong learning by adults in and out of employment with previous qualifications at Levels 1 to 3
5. Produce an ESOL Framework
6. Explore the establishment of a dedicated futures unit in SOLAS
7. Acknowledge and develop literacy as a specialist area
8. Set out a plan to enhance literacy provision, by
 - agreeing a baseline level of provision
 - restoring one-to-one literacy tuition
 - providing a suite of flexible options including online learning and short intensive courses
9. Prioritise and create pathways into and across further education
10. Develop fundamental changes to the funding model, including multi-annual funding and individual learning accounts
11. Improve data categorisation, collection and sharing, and develop an agreed reporting framework for adult literacy
12. Make learner voice central to the ongoing development and delivery of FET
13. Build plain language and literacy awareness into the delivery of FET by universal design
14. Provide consistent and high-quality learner supports across FET
15. Target supports for disadvantaged groups
16. Involve learners in awareness-raising, and rebrand FET to attract adults back to education
17. Resource outreach work

Introduction

We are the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), a registered charity and membership-based organisation that receives annual funding from SOLAS to support the Further Education and Training and the Adult Literacy for Life strategies.

We believe that 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 is to:

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

NALA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the public consultation on the Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2025-2029.

We appreciate that SOLAS, as our funding body, is already aware of the following matters which we would ordinarily discuss at this point in a consultation submission:

- The meaning of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy (which we will refer to collectively as “literacy”)
- Why these skills are essential for our economy, society, and personal wellbeing
- The relationship between literacy needs and wider inequalities / vulnerable groups
- The Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) Strategy, which commits to a cross-government, cross-economy and cross-society approach to literacy

We will take these as understood and proceed to outline our recommendations under the three consultation themes. We are happy to provide further information and clarification on these matters if required.

Theme 1: Delivering on Ireland’s skills needs

Literacy and numeracy skills

Findings from the OECD Survey of Adult Skills 2023, released on 10 December 2024 (CSO 2024), show that:

- 1 in 4 adults in Ireland (25%, around 835,000 people) do not have a basic level of proficiency in numeracy; and
- 1 in 5 adults in Ireland (21%, around 700,000 people) do not have a basic level of proficiency in literacy.

These figures indicate that Ireland’s level of adult literacy need has gotten worse (risen from 18% to 21%), and numeracy levels have not improved (flatlined at 25%) since the last survey in 2012 (CSO 2013). In addition, there is evidence that Ireland’s adults are losing their literacy and numeracy skills as they age – even adults with tertiary education (OECD 2024a, p11). This skills crisis must be urgently addressed.

The OECD recommends that “[t]o address the challenges, we need to re-think our approach to lifelong learning and employability. It is not merely a matter of funding but of boosting upskilling and re-skilling opportunities particularly for low skilled workers” (OECD 2024b, p5). There is no better place to do this than the new FET Strategy.

Recommendation 1: A core aim throughout the FET Strategy 2025-2029 should be to address the ongoing adult literacy and numeracy needs in Ireland, in response to the OECD Survey of Adult Skills 2023

Digital skills

Digital skills, unlike literacy and numeracy, are improving. According to Eurostat, the share of the Irish population who don’t have basic digital skills has shrunk from 52% in 2019 (European Commission 2019) to 27% in 2024 (European Commission 2024). At the same time, the digital demands of everyday life and work are increasing, and more than 1 in 4 adults in Ireland still don’t have basic digital skills.

Good digital literacy learning opportunities will be essential, given the extensive digitalisation plans set out in the Programme for Government. The Government has committed to “invest in digital skills at all levels, from basic digital literacy for all citizens [...]” (Government of Ireland 2025, pp34-35) and FET must be ready to deliver.

As we have noted in previous submissions (for example in our general election asks, NALA 2024), we recommend the adoption and adaptation of the European Digital Competence Framework (DigComp) (European Commission 2016) throughout the Irish education system. DigComp is a readymade framework based on best available evidence, which can respond to changing context. It applies to all levels of competence, so it would enable a consistent approach across the various sectors, institutions and Government departments involved in digital skills education in Ireland.

In the course of the FET 2025-2029 Strategy, we would like to see DigComp used as a basis for course design in further education, perhaps through Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) requirements. It is accompanied by a Digital Competence Framework for Educators (DigCompEdu) (European Commission 2017), so it would also enable a consistent approach to digital competence for both students and teachers. DigComp also provides opportunities for international benchmarking.

Recommendation 2: The European Digital Competence Framework (DigComp) should be adopted in Ireland and basic digital skills should be a top priority in the FET Strategy 2025-2029, as outlined in the Programme for Government

Adult Literacy for Life

The targets in Table 1 below are set out in the Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) strategy (SOLAS 2021). As the strategy is only 3 years in operation, the deadline to reach these targets has not passed, but the latest OECD Survey of Adult Skills findings show that Ireland will not inevitably make progress towards them. Targeted action, renewed commitment and increased investment are required, to build on the momentum and collaboration that has already been achieved under the ALL strategy. It is now more important than ever to map a pathway towards the achievement of the strategy's aims.

Measure	Data source	Target (reduce to...)	Deadline	Latest figures
% of adults at or below Level 1 in literacy	OECD Survey of Adult Skills	7%	End 2031	21%
% of adults at or below Level 1 in numeracy		12%		25%
% of adults without basic digital skills	Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)	20%		27%

Table 1: ALL Strategy targets and latest figures

As the primary providers of adult literacy education in Ireland, the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) have a crucial role to play in implementing the ALL Strategy. Their Strategic Performance Agreements with SOLAS should set out how they will implement the strategy year-to-year.

Recommendation 3: The FET Strategy 2025-2029 should explicitly commit to the strategic implementation and additional funding of the Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) strategy, including through ETB Strategic Performance Agreements, and detail how the FET and ALL strategies support each other

Lifelong learning and the skills pipeline

We fully appreciate the crucial role of FET in meeting the critical skills needs of the economy. We believe that literacy, numeracy and digital literacy are always the most critical skills, as they are the foundation on which other skills are built. This means that adult literacy education is not just a social inclusion tool – it is an essential element in Ireland’s skills strategy.

Skill needs must be viewed as a continuum, and due attention needs to be given to those with the lowest levels of skills if we want them to progress and acquire more advanced skills. The current context of full employment in Ireland requires us to support those with low skills currently in employment along with those who are most distant from the labour market. As the OECD Survey of Adult Skills shows, we currently have hundreds of thousands of adults at the beginning of the skills pipeline, who have untapped potential to fill skills gaps in our economy.

Greater participation in lifelong learning is needed to fill these gaps. Unfortunately, adults who have the most need of upskilling are currently the least likely to engage in lifelong learning. SOLAS's most recent report on Lifelong Learning amongst Adults in Ireland (SOLAS 2024a, p3) found that those with Level 1 to 3 qualifications had a 5% lifelong learning rate, compared with a 22% lifelong learning rate for those with Level 9 or 10 qualifications.

Recommendation 4: The FET Strategy 2025-2029 should set a target for participation in lifelong learning by adults - in and out of employment - with previous qualifications at Levels 1 to 3

English language skills

Enrolments in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) have more than quadrupled since 2021¹. Adult literacy teams have taken responsibility for ESOL in ETBs, and their work has been invaluable in responding to these demands. However, the long-term arrangements for ESOL provision are only beginning to be strategically considered.

We believe that literacy, ESOL and ESOL literacy (where a person has literacy needs in their first language) each require specific expertise and specific resourcing. We understand from our members that currently there can be confusion of roles and responsibilities. For example, some literacy tutors are teaching ESOL and vice-versa. The additional workload also means that adult literacy services, already stretched, now have fewer resources to devote to their core mission of engaging adults with literacy needs in lifelong learning.

The need for a more strategic approach to ESOL has been highlighted by the recent crises but this is not a new issue. We note that SOLAS and Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) called for “a national framework for publicly funded ESOL” in 2018 (SOLAS and ETBI 2018, p45) and the initial guidance that was provided in 2021 (ETBI 2021) is currently being reviewed to inform revised guidelines. We welcome this development. The framework should look at how the intensity of language provision

¹ 9,095 in 2021 (SOLAS 2022) to 40,277 in 2023 (SOLAS 2024b)

should be increased and how it should be funded in a way which does not detract from the investment in core adult literacy.

Recommendation 5: The FET Strategy 2025-2029 should produce a framework for ESOL at an early stage in the life of the strategy

Future skills and training needs

To a large extent, future skills needs can be predicted. For example, PISA results for 15-year-old students in reading and maths show no improvement, over recent rounds², in the proportion of students performing poorly. Just over 1 in 10 students demonstrate below functional reading skills (ERC 2023, p78) and almost 1 in 5 students demonstrate below functional maths skills (ERC 2023, p52). We know from the OECD Survey of Adult Skills 2023 that literacy skills can be lost over time, as people age (OECD 2024). There has also been an increase in the number of adults in Ireland who have no formal education, or primary only, as seen in census data³ and FET enrolments⁴. This means that there is going to be a need for adult literacy and numeracy education for the foreseeable future.

The Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) (SOLAS 2020a) has found that over 370,000 people in Ireland work in occupations at high risk of automation (risk greater than 70%) and a further 600,000 are in jobs at medium risk of automation. So, retraining for new careers will be important. The digital transition means we can expect an ongoing need for digital skills training in all sectors.

The way that training is delivered will also change. It seems likely that there will be an increasing preference for online and other flexible modes of delivery, especially for the generation which experienced full-time education during COVID.

These are just a few examples. Our recommendation is to establish a futures unit in

² The share of students scoring below Level 2 in reading literacy was 10.2% in 2015, 11.8% in 2018, and 11.4% in 2022. The share of students scoring below Level 2 in mathematics was 15% in 2015, 15.7% in 2018, and 19% in 2022 (ERC 2023). Improvement would be a **reduction** in these figures.

³ Census 2022 found that the number of people in Ireland with no formal education had risen from around 50,000 in 2016 to around 80,000 in 2022 (CSO 2023).

⁴ This is FET: Facts and Figures reports show that the number of FET enrolments with primary education or below has risen from around 15,000 in 2018 (SOLAS 2019) to around 23,000 in 2023 (SOLAS 2024)

SOLAS to scope and recommend responses to the emerging trends, with input from a wide range of government departments, public bodies and other stakeholders including learners and practitioners. This is broader than the focus on immediate labour market needs which is currently undertaken by the SLMRU. It should examine changing societal trends and their implications for lifelong learning, as well as the professional development and organisational needs for staff which arise as a consequence.

Recommendation 6: Under the FET Strategy 2025-2029, a dedicated futures unit should be established in SOLAS

Theme 2: Fundamentally changing the way we deliver FET

Literacy as a specialist area

We support SOLAS's ambition for fundamental change in the way we deliver FET.

Within that programme of change, we believe that adult literacy should be protected and further developed as a specialist area of FET.

Literacy tuition is unique in many ways. For example, typical progression timelines and success measures (accreditation) do not always apply to literacy work, which is centred on the individual learner's needs and goals. Literacy learners are more likely to be distant from the labour market, to have had negative experiences of education and to need "learning to learn". In addition, literacy learners may have 'spiky profiles' (Grummell 2023, p608) that mean they have strengths in some areas and weaknesses in others. Adult literacy work has its own philosophical tradition (see for example NALA's Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work, 2012).

Literacy is a particular area of expertise with qualifications available from the Literacy Development Centre (LDC) in the South East Technological University (SETU). We note that the FET Strategy 2020-2024 contained a commitment to more flexibility and breaking down barriers in FET staffing (SOLAS 2020b, p56). It is important that, to retain excellence, FET staff should have fair conditions of service, good career progression opportunities and access to sustained professional development, with appropriate access supports (time off, expenses, academic credits, RPL, and so on). In particular it is vital to retain literacy tutor expertise and dedicated literacy tuition for learners as a fundamental pillar of the overall approach, and to ensure that standalone literacy provision is expanded, not reduced. The opportunity to retain literacy staff and provide upskilling opportunities on a systematic and flexible modular in-service basis is vital.

Staff qualified in literacy should be developed and retained from within the existing workforce and or recruited with attractive working conditions, professional development opportunities and career prospects. As far as possible, they should be freed from administrative burdens in order to put their specialist skills to use.

Recommendation 7: The FET Strategy 2025-2029 should acknowledge literacy as a specialist area to be protected and further developed throughout the programme of change, in consultation with staff

Literacy provision

The ambition to fundamentally change the way we deliver FET in Ireland is an opportunity to strategically consider how literacy learning is provided.

With strategic direction and oversight from SOLAS and the Adult Literacy for Life National Programme Office, there needs to be agreement of baseline literacy provision, informed by identified need, in ETBs. This needs to be followed up with consistent delivery, resourcing and responsive provision and professional development.

We have previously raised our concerns about the erosion of one-to-one voluntary literacy tuition in ETBs (see figure 1 below, source data from This is FET: Facts and Figures 2018-2023). One-to-one tuition is an essential bridge back into learning and the classroom environment. Without it, there is a gap in provision which impedes the recruitment of those who have the greatest skills needs. We recommend that it is restored and expanded to help people off the “sticky floor” which is evident in the ongoing literacy needs in Ireland.

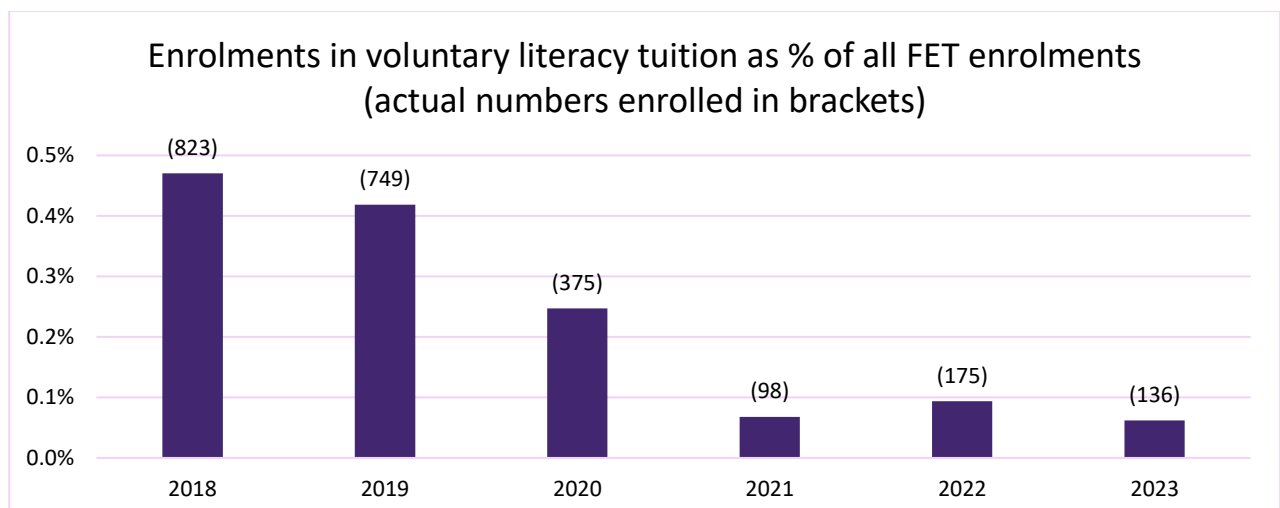


Figure 1: Enrolments in voluntary literacy tuition, 2018-2023

It is our understanding from the Adult Literacy for Life’s ETB Adult Literacy Provision

Snapshot Report (2024) and feedback from our members that there are variations in literacy provision across ETBs. It will be essential that the literacy provision is developed and delivered along the continuum from 1:1 to group classes to appropriately respond and address literacy needs in a relevant ETB area. A recent review of research evidence (Aker, Sawyer and Berry 2024) has found that adults typically need more time, practice and repetition to learn to read than children do. This implies that intensive courses would be an effective option for adult literacy learners. Such courses could play a part in the government's plans for "intensive activation supports" for people in long-term unemployment (Government of Ireland 2025, p102).

Flexibility is also important for adult learners who have various responsibilities and constraints (including work and caring responsibilities) and can support quicker progression. For example, our Learn with NALA distance and eLearning service has been found to be effective for independent learners. It has also been highly effective in blended learning context as it allows learners to progress quickly, through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and 24/7 access to the online platform (Cohalan and Crawford 2024). SOLAS have reported that "the main reason for not participating in lifelong learning in both Ireland (23.8%) and across the EU 27 (22.8%) was due to scheduling conflicts" (SOLAS 2024, p3) so online learning should be a cornerstone of future FET delivery in Ireland. Like all forms of literacy provision, online literacy provision needs a specialised pedagogy and accessibility tools; standard online learning platforms such as Moodle may not be appropriate.

Recommendation 8: The FET Strategy 2025-2029 should set out a plan to enhance literacy provision, by

- agreeing a baseline level of provision
- restoring one-to-one literacy tuition
- providing a suite of flexible options, including online learning and short intensive courses

Pathways

All learners in FET would benefit from having simple, seamless pathways to take them from where they are to where they want to go. This is particularly true of learners who

have previously experienced barriers in education, and who may find administrative processes difficult or intimidating. It will also benefit learners who start their learning journey in

- one location but move to another locations
- an unaccredited, informal setting and want to transfer their learning to an accredited setting.

Seamless pathways could be achieved by building the following into FET delivery:

- a “learner passport” concept which means that learners only have to provide personal data once in the FET system;
- the availability of more modular learning with stackable, transferrable learning achievements;
- the ability to transfer academic credits between institutions that was envisaged by the Bologna Process and the creation of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS);
- harmonising technical, administrative systems and RPL and Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) across FET providers, for example, getting all providers onto EduRoam.

The National Tertiary Office is a good model for building pathways from further education into higher education. We would like to see a similar model for building pathways for adults with low educational attainment into and across further education. They must be the priority if Ireland is committed to a “furthest behind first” approach to FET.

Recommendation 9: The FET Strategy 2025-2029 should prioritise pathways into and across further education, which are learner-centred, seamless, easy to follow and accessibly communicated

Funding

All FET providers will need additional supports and resources to manage the extensive programme of change.

Fundamental changes to funding are also required to align with fundamental changes to

delivery. The current ring-fenced programme-based model which funds providers annually on the basis of the number of unique learners enrolled can hamper a flexible, learner-centred system which allows learners to choose from multiple pathways.

We need a funding model that is based on the learner's entitlement, rather than necessarily fitting within a programme category. We also need a model that allows for multi-annual strategic planning and long-term outreach work (see section on Outreach below, p21).

Recommendation 10: Fundamental funding changes, including multi-annual funding, should be developed to support the fundamental changes to delivering FET envisaged under the FET Strategy 2025-2029

Data

The next FET strategy will need good data to inform delivery and accountability. Speaking from our own experience in adult literacy, we believe more detailed and accurate data could and should be collected and made publicly available. For example, we currently can't say definitively how many adults are engaging in literacy learning in Ireland, and if this figure has risen or fallen due to various changes in literacy policy and provision.

The following information will be needed on a regular basis to identify where literacy needs are going unmet, and what impact different actions are having:

- agreement on what constitutes a literacy course
- breakdown of literacy enrolments by vulnerable groups
- breakdown of literacy enrolments by ETB
- clarity on counting learners who are in multiple courses (ESOL and literacy)

With information on needs and impact, funds can be targeted most effectively. We would also welcome reporting on qualitative outcomes for learners, and longitudinal research into learner progression from literacy learning. An agreed reporting framework for adult literacy should be developed in consultation with stakeholders.

For learners, consideration should be given to amending the current Learner Details Form, so that it provides the information needed but is not a barrier to participation.

There is also a need to improve collection of data about the various courses provided across FET. Courses with the same content can be named differently on www.fetchcourses.ie, which makes it challenging for learners (and others!) to find all the courses available on a particular topic such as literacy.

In addition, each learner in FET should have a unique identifier number which facilitates tracking and progression across all levels of the education and training system for research purposes.

Recommendation 11: Improvements to data categorisation, collection and sharing – including the development of an agreed reporting framework for adult literacy - should underpin the process of changing the way we deliver FET under the FET Strategy 2024-2029

Learner voice

The most important information that can be gathered is on how learners are experiencing FET and how they think delivery can be improved. Learners should be involved in FET governance on an ongoing basis (like they are in higher education), for example through Adult Learner Councils as recommended by AONTAS in their submission for this strategy (AONTAS 2024).

Recommendation 12: Learner voice should be central to the ongoing development and delivery of FET, through long-term governance structures

Theme 3: Further widen participation by linking to communities and services

Universal design

The first step to widening participation in FET is ensuring that FET provision is accessible to as many people as possible, by default. In practical terms, and focusing on literacy, this could include:

- Training for teaching staff and management in Universal Design for Learning
- Integrating literacy into teaching across FET
- Training for all staff in plain English and literacy awareness
- Supports and resources for staff, such as standard document templates for communicating with learners on matters such as module information
- Embedding use of the **Customer Communications Toolkit for Services to the Public** (DPER & NDA 2023)

Universal design improvements benefit service providers as well as learners. For example, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council have redrafted their Tenant Handbook according to plain language principles. The new handbook has reduced the number of housing maintenance requests by 15%, saving 23 working days a year (REF).

Recommendation 13: The FET Strategy 2025-2029 should ensure that plain language and literacy awareness are built into the delivery of FET by universal design

Learner supports

We welcome the new government's commitment to "review the financial supports available to adult learners and promote access to education and lifelong learning" (Government of Ireland 2025, p72) as well as SOLAS's commitment to provide consistent learner supports equal with higher education institutions (SOLAS and ETBI 2024). Widening participation will entail a higher number of learners using supports, and most likely a higher share of learners who need supports - financial or otherwise. Key supports raised with us by adult literacy learners in a recent study (NALA 2024b) include

- Financial supports, such as travel expenses and training allowances
- Career guidance
- Transport links, especially to rural centres
- Childcare facilities
- Mental health supports

Supports for learners with additional learning needs are also essential. Mental health and special needs supports must be backed up by appropriate professional development for staff and appropriate access to wider services in the community.

Recommendation 14: The FET Strategy 2025-2029 should commit to providing consistent and high-quality learner supports across all FET institutions and courses

Disadvantaged groups

The OECD has advised Ireland to “provide tailored and targeted support to disadvantaged groups to address the specific barriers they face to participating in lifelong learning” (OECD 2023, p32). We recommend that the FET Strategy 2025-2029 should prioritise the 12 target groups identified in the ALL Strategy (SOLAS 2021, p59):

- Older adults (55+)
- Members of the Traveller Community
- Persons with disabilities
- Low-paid workers
- Carers
- One-parent households
- Incarcerated persons and ex-offenders
- Persons recovering from addiction
- Long-term unemployed
- Migrants
- International Protection Applicants
- People with language needs

In addition, an emerging category not reflected in the ALL target groups are young adults aged 16 – 23 years of age who are school leavers, refusers and, or lacking in basic literacy, numeracy and digital skills. This group became apparent to us during the

COVID-19 pandemic and are evident in the PISA findings referenced earlier (ERC 2023). They were and are users of our Learn with NALA eLearning website as independent learners and learners in education and community settings.

Our members have also highlighted with us the need to support women as an intersectional target group to build their confidence and capabilities through education. The need for women to enhance in particular their financial literacy has been highlighted in recent research from the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) and Indecon which noted that “women report being more reliant on their spouse or children in retirement” and that men score higher on average than women in understanding financial concepts (CCPC and Indecon 2023, p5). There is a real opportunity for FET to bridge this gap in collaboration with the National Financial Literacy Strategy.

Recommendation 15: The FET Strategy 2025-2029 should commit to targeted supports for disadvantaged groups, prioritising the 12 groups listed in the ALL Strategy along with young adults aged 16 – 23 years of age

Awareness raising and brand building

Learner voice should inform messaging. According to a survey of adult literacy groups who availed of NALA’s Student Development Fund in 2023, the most important message to encourage someone to return to education is that adult education is not like school:

"Explaining to them (especially if it’s been a while since they were in school) that the classroom is not what it used to be. That you are given a chance to have an opinion on topics and have a good discussion and debate on any aspect of life. That the teachers and tutors are very welcoming and helpful and do all they can to help you fit in and progress."

(NALA 2024b, p28)

Alumni ambassadors can help to promote courses, particularly with their own friends, families and communities. The same study found that adult literacy learners are often encouraged to return to education by loved ones, or that they have been inspired by

examples of people they know who have returned to education and are now “progressing in life” (NALA 2024, p29). This kind of awareness-raising by word of mouth should be encouraged and supported.

In addition, as SOLAS has successfully rebranded and restructured FET as a post-secondary school option it should consider a rebranding exercise to attract adults back to education by putting the “Fun” back into Education and Training.

Recommendation 16: To widen participation, the FET Strategy 2025-2029 should commit to involving current and former learners in awareness-raising activities and planning and rebrand FET to attract adults back to education

Outreach

Widening participation also requires targeted outreach to the most disadvantaged communities, which takes significant time and effort by staff. Adult literacy organisers should be freed from administrative burdens, as far as possible, to do this essential work. The number of Community Education Facilitators should also be increased, and consideration should be given to creating specific Outreach Worker roles. This would be a full-time role strategically promoting the courses and centre to potential learners in the community.

FET centres should be at the heart of their local communities and have good connections with other local organisations such as libraries, sports clubs and businesses. The Regional Adult Literacy Coalitions formed under the ALL Strategy are a valuable model for developing community connections and collaboration.

Trusting relationships with the local community, and particularly with disadvantaged groups in the community, are not built overnight. They require long-term funding and planning. But they are also the only way to reach the adults in Ireland with the greatest need of further education and training.

Recommendation 17: Outreach work should be properly resourced under the FET Strategy 2025-2029, to support long-term relationship-building

Conclusion

The consultation paper for this strategy states a goal for FET to be “recognised as an essential piece of national infrastructure in the same way that housing, transport or health is valued” (SOLAS 2025, p2). We are in total agreement that FET is an essential piece of national infrastructure, and increasingly so as adults need to upskill and reskill throughout their lives.

This submission has set out a range of recommendations in response to the three themes of the consultation, informed by research evidence and our professional experience. We have taken the time to do this because the FET Strategy 2025-2029 will be crucial to the development of adult literacy policy and provision over the next five years.

We hope we have made the case that the foundational skills of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy must be central to the next FET Strategy. We look forward to our continued work with SOLAS on addressing the persistent adult literacy needs in Ireland.

Contact

We are happy to discuss our comments and recommendations further.

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About NALA

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

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