

ADULT LITERACY FOR LIFE

SUMMARY CONSULTATION REPORT

REPORT ON THE CONSULTATION PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING A
10-YEAR ADULT LITERACY, NUMERACY AND DIGITAL LITERACY
STRATEGY FOR IRELAND



Summary Report on the Consultation for Developing a 10-Year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy – Literacy for Life - Strategy for Ireland

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Adult Literacy in Ireland is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Social Fund.

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Introduction

“We will Develop and implement a new 10-year strategy for adult literacy, numeracy, and digital skills within the first year of the Government.”

Programme for Government 2020: Our Shared Future

In line with the 2020 Programme for Government ‘Our Shared Future’, the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science tasked SOLAS with developing a new 10-year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy (ALND) Strategy for Ireland.

It was envisaged from the outset that the Strategy would be informed by the results of the broad consultation process. The consultation was conducted by the SOLAS Learner Support Team, from October 2020 to February 2021. SOLAS launched a multi-pronged consultation process, which included: (1) An Online Omnibus Ipsos Smart Poll (effectively a pre-consultation), (2) Open Public Consultation, (3) Targeted Outreach, and (4) Bilateral Consultation.

This document is the final report resulting from the consultation process. It first provides an overview of the national consultation, including its (1) aims, (2) approach and (3) process. It follows with a summary of the consultation design and methodology, including (1) an overview, (2) identification of who was consulted, how and by whom, (3) detail on the data collection and analysis methodology used, and (4) an outline of the Analysis Framework developed. The final section, the consultation results, includes (1) Results Framework (outlining key findings according to the Analysis Framework), and (2) Detail on the key findings.

Overview

Aims

The key aims of the consultation process, as depicted in Figure 1, were to:

1. Gather general views and attitudes around the importance of literacy, numeracy, and digital skills in everyday life, and infer the needs in this regard.
2. Capture viewpoints and ideas on how the provision and delivery of services and appropriate supports for adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy should look.
3. Identify actions needed to best meet the challenges and opportunities in relation to adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.
4. Ensure a participative approach to the Strategy development by involving a wide range of stakeholders, including those with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital needs.

Figure 1. Aims of the consultation process summarised



Approach

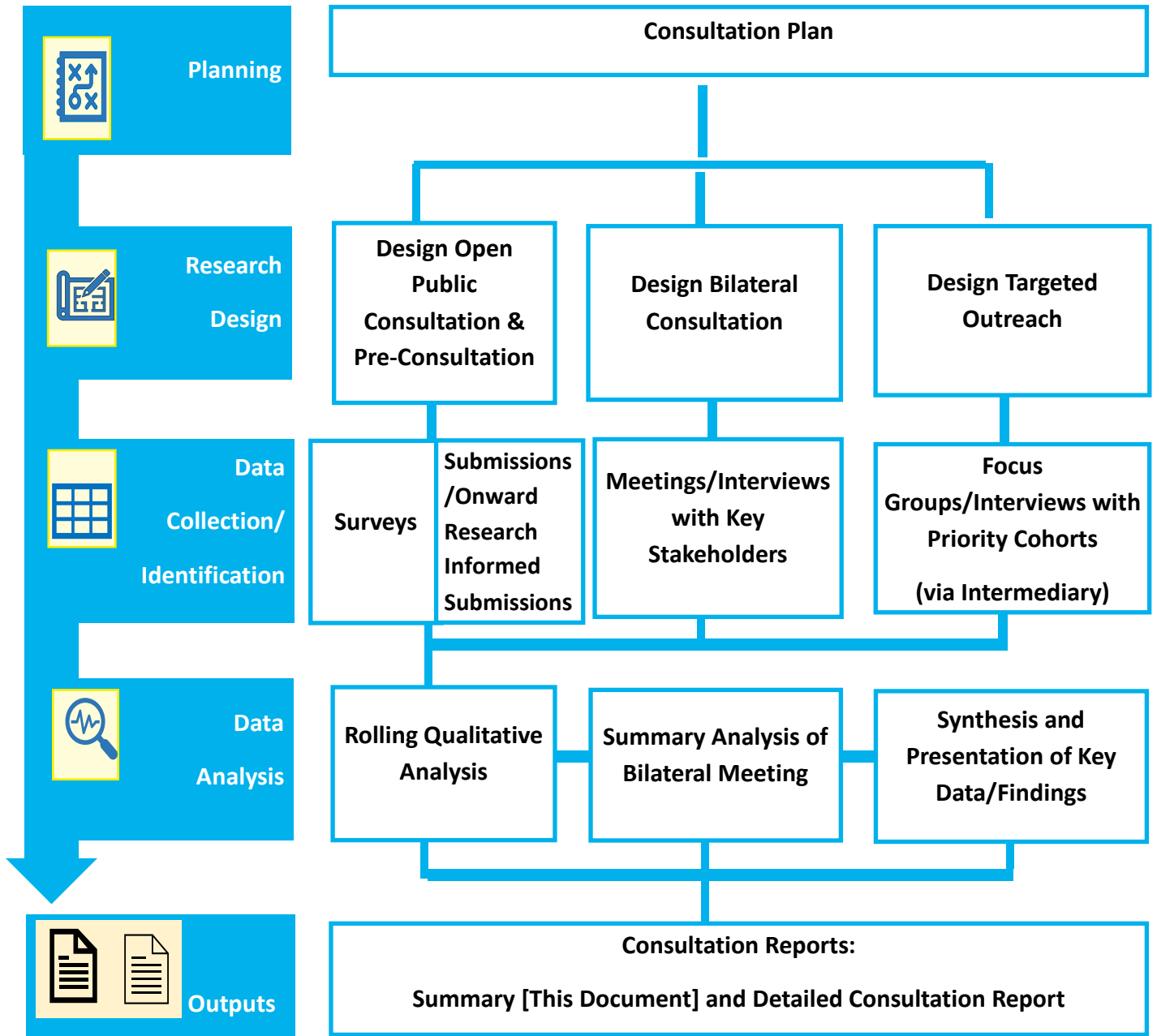
The key elements of the consultation process were:

- Pre-Consultation
- Open Public Consultation
- Targeted Outreach
- Bilateral Consultation

Process

The consultation process is depicted in Figure 1 below.

Figure 2. Consultation process – planning, design, and key outputs



Design and Methodology

Overview

The overall consultation design was inspired by the principles of Universal Design, in particular, Principle 3: Provision of Multiple Means of Action and Expression. This principle encourages communication through multiple channels and forms of media and provides or facilitates multiple options to respond.

“In line with Universal Design principles, the consultation design included multiple means for stakeholders to express their views. This was achieved through a 3-pronged consultation approach, aimed at engaging all relevant stakeholders, including those with literacy, numeracy and/or digital literacy needs.”

In line with this approach, both a Consultation Paper and the accompanying video were developed to inform and guide participants through the consultation process. Stakeholders were provided with multiple options for expressing their views in an open-ended manner via a three-pronged consultation approach, including: (a) Open Public Consultation, (b) Targeted Outreach, and (c) Bilateral Consultation.

Different data collection methods were applied to each of the three strands, with different stakeholder groups targeted for each. Detail on this is provided in the table on the next page.

It transpired that some inputs into public consultation were informed by the elements of outreach – this is especially the case with some non-structured written submissions being informed by onward research or consultations with beneficiaries, service users and / or stakeholders. This segment of consultation provided rich data that was analysed by applying the analytic framework.

Figure 3. The ALL Consultation process overview

Multiple Means of Expression	Open Public Consultation	Outreach and Targeted Outreach	Bilateral Consultation
Designed and implemented by:	SOLAS Learner Support Team (with inputs from the Interdepartmental Stakeholder Group).	External contractor (Coyne), managed by the SOLAS Learner Support Team; AONTAS/ SOLAS via the National Adult Learner Forum; and a range of organisations via public consultation submissions.	SOLAS Learner Support Team.
Who was consulted:	Open to any organisation or individual interested / motivated to take part.	Targeted specifically at adults with literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs who may not otherwise engage and/or access the open public consultation.	Targeted specifically at relevant stakeholders (e.g. Government Departments and Agencies, NGOs/Advocacy).
How were they consulted / how did they engage:	Via long and short open-ended surveys and non-structured <u>submissions</u> . Surveys were submitted online (Lime Survey platform) and ‘offline’ (Word template submitted by email).	Targeted Outreach: Via phone/MS Teams/Zoom interviews and Participant Action Research (Targeted Outreach-Commissioned research).	Via remote meetings / one-to one interviews.
Onward Research Informed Submissions: Focus groups, interviews, small-scale surveys (a number of onward research informed <u>submissions</u> were based on consultation with service users / beneficiaries / stakeholders).			

Data Collection

“The open public consultation invited interested parties to complete either a short or long, public survey to provide their views.”

Pre-Consultation Research

Ámarach Research was engaged to undertake preliminary (pre-consultation) research via their Online Omnibus Survey. This research sought general views and attitudes around the importance of literacy, numeracy and digital skills in everyday life, and inferred needs in this regard.

Open Public Consultation

Consultation Paper

A Consultation Paper was developed to assist the interested parties with providing their views on the development of a 10-year ALND Strategy. The purpose was to provide background information on adult literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy. It comprised four parts:

Part 1 outlined the aims and objectives of the consultation.

Part 2 informed how the views could be provided and who else this consultation was for.

Part 3 explained the context of the ALND Strategy.

Part 4 outlined the five main consultation themes.

Public Consultation - Engagement

The open public consultation invited interested parties to complete either a short or long, public survey to provide their views on: (1) The challenges and opportunities for Ireland in relation to adult literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy and (2) How to create an environment where all adults in Ireland have the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy to fully take part in society. Survey questions were structured according to key themes developed in consultation with the Interdepartmental Stakeholder Group.

“To ensure the process was accessible to adults with literacy, numeracy and/or digital literacy needs, the Consultation incorporated a ‘Targeted Outreach’ component. This offered future strategy beneficiaries accessible means for expressing their views.”

Responses were open, without length restrictions. Interested parties were also invited to provide written submissions outside or, or in addition to the structured survey framework.

Some public consultation respondents conducted further “onward” research and consultation with their service users, beneficiaries and key stakeholders to inform their written submissions. This was achieved by employing various research methods, namely interviews, small scale surveys and focus groups (for which a methodology guide was offered by SOLAS). An illustrative example of the above is a collaborative submission development with groups of adults with literacy, numeracy and/or digital literacy needs. Another one was the focus group conducted by the Group of Representatives on Irish Language, Conradh na Gaeilge, facilitated by the GRETB.

Submissions such as these, based on, or indeed informed by further consultations, yielded rich data and were considered for additional analysis and the analytic framework was utilised as appropriate.

Targeted Outreach

To ensure the process was accessible to adults with literacy, numeracy and/or digital literacy needs, the Consultation incorporated a ‘Targeted Outreach’ component. This offered future strategy beneficiaries’ accessible means for expressing their views (i.e. methods that do not necessary require or presuppose certain levels of literacy, numeracy and/or digital literacy to engage).

Data collection for the Targeted Outreach component included:

Contracted Outreach Research

Coyne research agency was contracted to develop an inclusive consultation methodology and conduct targeted consultation with adults who have literacy, numeracy and/or digital literacy needs. An inclusive Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology was developed and used to conduct interviews with participants. To ensure accessibility for those with digital literacy needs, research was conducted via phone in addition to zoom, depending on individual respondents’ needs and/or preferences.

National Adult Learner Forum

AONTAS, funded and supported by SOLAS, implements the National Adult Learner Forum on an annual basis. The Forum is one of the largest qualitative learner voice initiatives in Europe and, in 2020, the National Adult Learner Forum was engaged with for consultation on the new Strategy. Remote, supported focus groups were held to capture the views of adults with literacy, numeracy and/or digital literacy needs around the country.

A separate report was produced. Findings from this and previous Learner Forum consultation events were collated by AONTAS (via non-structured written submission) and incorporated into the Consultation Analysis.

“AONTAS, funded and supported by SOLAS, implements the National Adult Learner Forum on an annual basis. The Forum is one of the largest qualitative learner voice initiatives in Europe and, in 2020, the National Adult Learner Forum was engaged with for consultation on the new Strategy.”

Focus Groups, Interviews and Small-Scale Surveys

A number of non-structured written submissions were based on or informed by “onward research” - wider consultation with adults with literacy, numeracy and/or digital literacy needs and relevant stakeholders. This included individual submissions (e.g. literacy tutors collaboratively developing a submission with their literacy class) and organisation submissions (e.g. Adult Learner / Literacy Advocacy NGO conducting focus groups and small scale surveys with its service users and beneficiaries and presenting the findings in a non-structured written submission).

“A number of non-structured written submissions were based on, or informed by onward research or consultation.

This included Adult Learner / Literacy Advocacy NGO conducting focus groups and small-scale surveys with its service users and beneficiaries and presenting the findings.”

All such submissions, including the collated Learner Forum findings submitted by AONTAS, were analysed separately and summarised under the heading 'Onward Research Informed Submissions'.

Bilateral Consultation

Bilateral meetings were held primarily between SOLAS Learner Support Unit and key stakeholders to inform the Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) Strategy consultation process, that is to say, to enable as broad a base of stakeholder voices to be heard as possible, and to ensure that insights could also be gleaned from international examples of best practice in the field. Essentially, open-ended interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including Government Departments and Agencies and NGOs.

Many participants in bilateral discussions and meetings with SOLAS also contributed and expressed their views through the non-structured written submissions process. As many of these stakeholders had also provided non-structured written submissions, bilateral interviews were used to assist SOLAS reach a deeper understanding of key stakeholders' views and priorities.

Similar to non-structured written submissions, participants in bilateral meetings emphasised the need for a durable and fit-for-purpose strategy that would appreciate the dynamic and complex nature of skills development in Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy.

Bilateral meetings tended to focus on how a Whole-of-Government approach to ALND could emerge and take place over the coming 10 years and beyond. Some key views expressed on ALL Strategy policy and planning are provided below:

- Collaborative and Integrated Systems Approach is required for success.
- Cross-government integrated funding is needed to drive change through collaborative systems.
- Strategic planning is critical to ensuring a host of contextual learning opportunities are embedded in the roll-out of all government public service services and systems.
- Placing the Further Education and Training sector as a central resource to coordinate and fund such opportunities, including through individual learning accounts.
- 'Learning for living' requires investment in Social and Cultural capital in addition to Human capital investment.
- Policies to bridge the digital divide to consider taking into account access, skills and utilisation.
- Integrated local delivery of regionally devised implementation plans.
- Addressing inequality and poverty is fundamental to any improvement in ALND.

A more detailed synopsis is provided below, organised in line with the key themes identified.

Data Analysis

“Qualitative Thematic Analysis conceptualises the theme as: a category identified through data analysis, which relates to research focus and the research question(s), builds on codes identified in data, and provides deeper and theoretical understanding of data.”

Thematic Analysis

The approach adopted for qualitative data analysis was based on thematic analysis, which is a common thread for most qualitative analysis approaches and techniques. The theme is conceptualised as a category that:

- is identified through data analysis,
- relates to research focus and the research question(s),
- builds on codes identified in data, and
- provides theoretical understanding of data and / or contributes to providing the focus of research or a subject.

The themes and sub-themes are essentially reoccurring motifs in the text/documents that both emerge from and are linked to the data and derive from the corpus of data. The result is a “grid” or a framework which can then be overlaid with data / applied to the data, which can be displayed in terms of sub themes within the framework or matrix.

The main rationale for using thematic analysis is due to its accessibility and flexibility. It facilitated the application of top-down and bottom-up approaches to the framework building and data analysis.

“A sizeable sample of survey responses was systematically coded to develop an Analysis Framework. This Analysis Framework was then applied to the full set of survey data and all written submissions.”

Analysis Framework Development

The main tool for thematic analysis is a framework. This framework can be a research outcome in itself. For the purpose of the ALL Strategy consultation, a sizeable sample of survey responses was systematically analysed and coded to develop an Analysis Framework consisting of: (1) overarching themes (as emerged from the Literature Review and agreed with the Interdepartmental Stakeholder Group and presented in the Consultation Paper at the onset), (2) a set of broad second-level sub-themes within each overarching theme and (3) a set of third-level sub-themes, within each second-level theme. First and second-level sub-themes are outlined in the table on the next page. Third-level sub-themes are outlined in the *Detailed Consultation Results* report.

This Analysis Framework was then applied to the full set of survey data and written submissions, as appropriate.

Results Summaries

Using the Analysis Framework, third-level sub-theme analysis was conducted on all Public Survey and Onward Research (e.g. Focus Groups) data and second-level sub-theme analysis on all remaining non-structured Written Submissions (i.e. those not based on onward research or wider consultation), as appropriate. Data collected through bilateral interviews was also used to ensure key stakeholder priorities were accurately interpreted.

Analysis Framework

This Analysis Framework presents the themes (1st Level) and sub-themes (2nd Level) used for the analysis. Each sub-theme contains further (3rd Level) sub-themes identified through analysis of the Public Survey and relevant Submissions (including focus groups and interviews data). This detail is provided in the key findings section.

Theme 1: Different Meanings of Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy (ALND)

- **Sub-Theme 1.1: Aspects of ALND the Strategy Should Focus on**
- **Sub-Theme 1.2: Daily Activities Supported by ALND**

Theme 2: Awareness and Access to Information and Supports

- **Sub-Theme 2.1: Aspects of ALND People Find Most Difficult Sub-Theme 2.2: Barriers to ALND**
- **Sub-Theme 2.3: How to Encourage, Promote and Raise Awareness of ALND**

Theme 3: Digital Divide

- **Sub-Theme 3.1: Current Innovative Projects for Bridging the Digital Divide**
- **Sub-Theme 3.2: How to Bridge the Digital Divide**
- **Sub-Theme 3.3: Impact of the Digital Divide**

Theme 4: Priorities and Actions

- **Sub-Theme 4.1: Existing Innovative Practices for Encouraging and Promoting ALND**
- **Sub-Theme 4.2: Specific Actions to Encourage, Develop and Promote ALND**
- **Sub-Theme 4.3: Specific Approaches for Targeting Priority Cohorts**

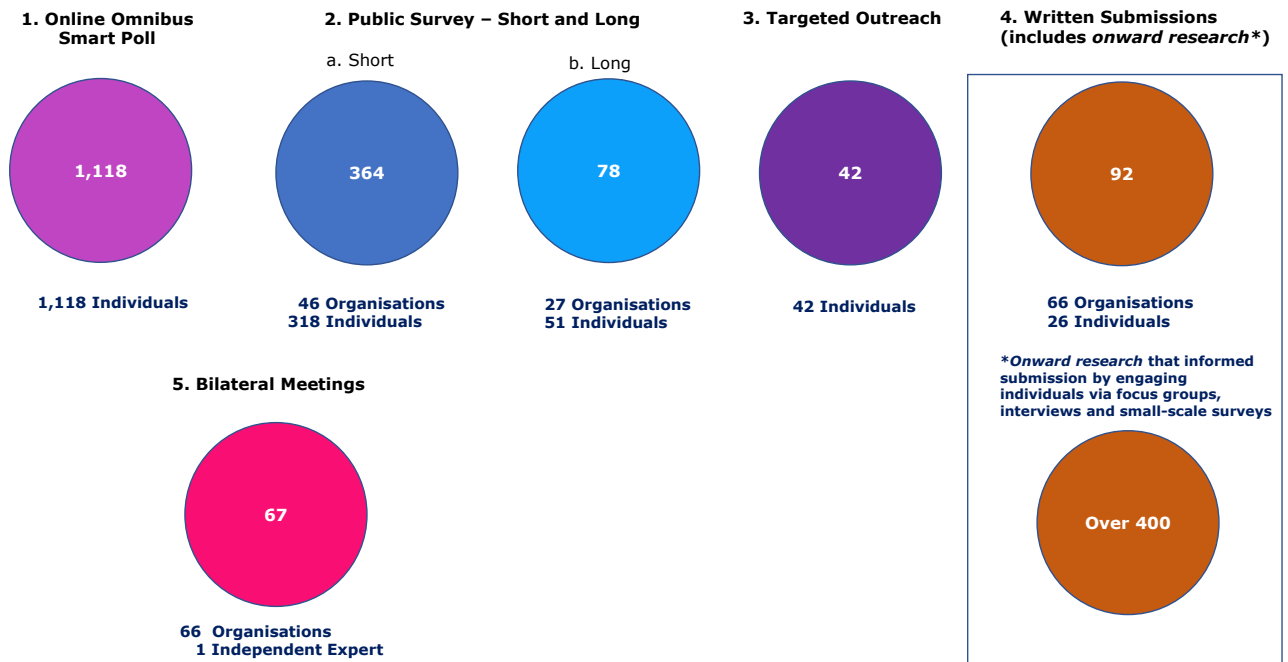
Theme 5: Identifying and Measuring Success

- **Sub-Theme 5.1: Identifying Success, Goals and Relevant Indicators**
- **Sub-Theme 5.2. Measuring Progress and Outcomes**

Participation and Scope

Participation and Engagement

Figure 4. Participation in the ALL consultation process: modes and numbers



Key Findings

Results Framework

Theme 1: Different Meanings of Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy (ALND)

Sub-Theme 1.1: Aspects of ALND the Strategy Should Focus on

KEY FINDING 1.1: Focus on functional ALND – i.e. delivering ALND training in a practical way, directly applicable to essential daily tasks such as budgeting, banking, understanding medical information and accessing services.

Sub-Theme 1.2: Daily Activities Supported by ALND

KEY FINDING 1.2: ALND are essential for important daily tasks such as money management, health and social interaction, particularly during Covid-19 restrictions.

Theme 2: Awareness and Access to Information and Supports

Sub-Theme 2.1: Aspects of ALND People Find Most Difficult

KEY FINDING 2.1: The aspects of ALND people find most difficult depend on cohort characteristics but all cohorts with ALND needs struggle with functional ALND tasks.

Sub-Theme 2.2: Barriers to ALND

KEY FINDING 2.2: The most significant barriers to ALND are psychological – e.g., fear, shame, low confidence.

Sub-Theme 2.3: How to Encourage, Promote and Raise Awareness of ALND

KEY FINDING 2.3: Advertising and public awareness campaigns are the most important avenue for encouraging, promoting and raising awareness of ALND.

Theme 3: Bridging the Digital Divide

Sub-Theme 3.1: Current Innovative Projects for Bridging the Digital Divide

A sample of innovative practices, initiatives, and projects with a national reach, as well as those with a local focus is provided in the *Detailed Consultation Results* report.

Sub-Theme 3.2: How to Bridge the Digital Divide

KEY FINDING 3.2: Increased access to technology/ devices is required to bridge the digital divide.

Sub-Theme 3.3: Impact of the Digital Divide

KEY FINDING 3.3: Social isolation, exclusion and marginalisation are the most significant impacts of the digital divide.

Theme 4: Priorities and Actions

Sub-Theme 4.1: Existing Innovative Practices for Encouraging and Promoting ALND

A sample of innovative practices for encouraging and promoting ALND, recommended by Public Survey and Targeted Focus Group respondents, is provided in the Detailed Consultation Results report.

Sub-Theme 4.2: Specific Actions to Encourage, Develop and Promote ALND

KEY FINDING 4.2: Advertising and public awareness campaigns are the most important avenue for encouraging, promoting, and raising awareness of ALND.

Sub-Theme 4.3: Specific Approaches for Targeting Priority Cohorts

KEY FINDING 4.3: Accessibility of information/services and access to supports/resources are essential for effectively targeting priority cohorts.

Theme 5: Identifying and Measuring Success

Sub-Theme 5.1: Identifying success, Goals and Relevant Indicators

KEY FINDING 5.1: Adopt a holistic perspective and propose / agree / set clearly defined, comprehensive, realistic and measurable goals that demonstrate hard and soft outcomes and relevant metrics regarding educational access, participation, and attainment at the national and individual level.

Sub-Theme 5.2: Measuring Progress and Outcomes

KEY FINDING 5.2: A range of methods, including both quantitative and qualitative methods, should be employed to capture, and indicators to track, the progress and impact at the national, cohort and individual level, including surveys (at the national level) and personalised assessment (at the individual level).

Detail on Key Findings

Theme 1: Different Meanings of Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy (ALND)

1.1 Aspects of ALND the Strategy Should Focus on

Figure 5. Aspects of ALND the Strategy should focus on

Key Themes from Public Survey	Key Themes from Non-structured Submissions ¹
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Functional ALND• Basic ALND Skills• Supports/ Access to Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Functional ALND• Basic ALND Skills• New Literacies• Digital Literacy

KEY FINDING 1.1

Focus on functional ALND – i.e. delivering ALND training in a practical way, directly applied to essential daily tasks such as budgeting, banking, understanding medical information and accessing services.

Functional Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy was the key area stakeholders (both via the Public Survey and Written Submissions)² felt the new strategy should focus on. Heavy emphasis was placed on the importance of functional ALND – i.e., delivering ALND training in a practical way, directly applied to essential daily tasks such as budgeting, banking, understanding medical information, and accessing services. This involved direct training in carrying out tasks such as developing a household budget or filling in an application form.

¹ “Written Submissions” referred to in this section (Details on Key Findings) include the analysis of responses provided as part of “Onward Research” undertaken by several respondents/stakeholders who undertook own, onward research and/or consulted with their beneficiaries/service users/stakeholders to inform their submissions.

1.2 Daily Activities Supported by ALND

Figure 6. Daily activities supported by ALND

Key Themes from Public Survey	Key Themes from Non-structured Submissions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Communication and Social Interaction • ALND Integral to all Daily Activities • Managing Finances • Health and Safety • Accessing Services, Rights and Entitlements • Accessing and interpreting information • Active Citizenship and Participation in Society • Parenting • Employment and Formal Education • Transport and Navigation • Online security • Recreation and leisure • Physical health and wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic/ Essential Daily Tasks • Accessing and Interpreting Information • Citizenship/ Participation in Society • Work, Business and Formal Education • Accessing Services, Rights and Entitlements

KEY FINDING 1.2: ALND are essential for important daily tasks such as money management, health and social interaction, particularly during Covid-19 pandemic restrictions

Respondents in both the Public Survey and Written Submissions highlighted a broad range of important daily activities that ALND support (or are essential to), with a number of respondents noting that ALND are integral to all essential daily tasks. The growing

importance of ALND for basic functioning, communication, health and social participation and accessing services and supports during the Covid-19 pandemic was highlighted by a large number of respondents. This was particularly emphasised by Public Survey respondents regarding online communication and social interaction, with online communication becoming increasingly crucial for staying in touch with family and friends and participating in community life during Covid-19 restrictions (“lockdown”).

The importance of this area for older cohorts was heavily emphasised as these groups are more isolated during public health emergency restrictions and are more likely to lack the key skills required for staying socially connected online.

Theme 2: Awareness and Access to Information and Supports

2.1 Aspects of ALND People Find Most Difficult

Figure 7. Aspects of ALND people find most difficult

Key Themes from Public Survey	Key Themes from Non-structured Submissions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional ALND • Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy • Dependent on Cohort Characteristics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependent on Cohort Characteristics • Stigma, Worry/Fear, Low confidence • Motivation • Structural and dispositional barriers intertwined

KEY FINDING 2.1: The aspects of ALND people find most difficult depend on cohort characteristics but all cohorts with ALND needs struggle with functional ALND tasks.

The fact that cohort characteristics (e.g. age, disability, social class and employment status) often determine which aspects of ALND people find the most difficult was highlighted by a large number of respondents (in both the Public Survey and Written Submissions). For example, digital literacy (in the absence of accessible design, information and technology) can be particularly challenging for people with a range of disabilities, with literacy and numeracy presenting significant difficulties for people with dyslexia.

Age was identified as the most important determinant of digital literacy needs, as older people did not grow up with technology and, if retired, are less likely to have developed these skills in the workplace. It was noted that highly educated older people can struggle

with digital literacy, where younger people can be quite tech savvy, even if they have very low levels of formal education.

2.2 Barriers to ALND

Figure 8. Barriers to ALND

Key Themes from Public Survey	Key Themes from Non-structured Submissions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological Barriers • Lacking Information/ Awareness of Supports • Accessibility of Information/ Services • Financial and Time Restrictions/ Access to resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological Barriers • Lack of Time • Accessibility of Information/ Services • Mental Health, Trauma, Bad Previous Experience of Education • Motivation

KEY FINDING 2.2: The most significant barriers to ALND are psychological.

The most prominent barriers to developing ALND identified by respondents (in both the Public Survey and Written Submissions) were psychological barriers. These included low confidence, pride, shame, stigma (real and perceived), embarrassment, fear and feeling they ‘are too old’ to return to education. These barriers were seen as the key element preventing individuals from recognising their need for and/or seeking out ALND services and supports.

Many respondents highlighted the significant role of negative previous experiences of formal education in building these psychological barriers by instilling a personally held belief that they are unable to learn – ‘if I couldn’t do it then, how can I do it now’? This, in turn, leads to fear that re-engagement with education would lead to them ‘making a fool of themselves’, and ‘being judged [disapprovingly]’.

Functional ALND tasks – i.e. essential daily tasks requiring ALND skills such as filling in forms, financial and health literacy – were those identified by respondents as the aspect people find most difficult across different cohorts. This was deemed to be due to the significantly more complex language, numeracy and digital skills requirements to complete them. For example, understanding loan terms, interest rates and specialised bureaucratic, legal and medical language can be difficult for highly educated people; however, for people with

relatively lower, basic skills in these areas, they can seem nigh impossible. However, ability with these functional, applied aspects of ALND are of critical importance, as they are required for accessing rights, entitlements and social services, and for avoiding fraud, scams, manipulation and financial abuse.

The workplace was seen as an important location for ALND learning and upskilling. The particular digital literacy challenges faced by unemployed/ inactive, economically disadvantaged cohorts were therefore emphasised, as this group simultaneously lacks access to digital literacy learning opportunities at home (due to the high cost of technology) and the workplace (due to extended absence from the labour market). Finally, dispositional and psychological barriers that may have been traditionally attributed to the person were viewed in the context of structural barriers, both contemporary and historical.

2.3 How to Encourage, Promote and Raise Awareness of ALND

Figure 9. How to encourage, promote and raise awareness of ALND

Key Themes from Public Survey	Key Themes from Non-structured Submissions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising/ Public Awareness Campaigns • Schools and Community and Interagency Networks • ALND Education and Training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising and Public Awareness Campaigns • Schools and Community and Interagency Networks • Participation of Adults with ALND Needs (“Peer Encouragement/Champions”) • Available, impartial, and professional Adult Education and Training Guidance

KEY FINDING 2.3: Advertising and public awareness campaigns are the most important avenue for encouraging, promoting, and raising awareness of ALND.

Regarding how best to encourage, promote and raise awareness of ALND respondents (via Public Survey and Written Submissions) most frequently recommended avenues were the use of advertising and public awareness campaigns.

Respondents highlighted the importance of dynamic campaigns that communicate through diverse platforms and mediums, including local and national advertising (posters, flyers,

radio and television ads), new media (more advertising via social media was a common suggestion), lo-call phone lines, and in-person fora and events (e.g. information seminars, workshops). Many respondents highlighted the importance of including adults with ALND needs in promotional activities, particularly those who have accessed services to improve their own skills.

Given that people with ALND needs are more constrained in the types of media they can comfortably and confidently access, the importance of encouraging and promoting ALND via word of mouth was emphasised. Respondents highlighted the importance of campaigns targeted at those with ALND needs (to reduce fear and signal availability of, and connect individuals to, services and supports) and at the general public (to raise awareness of the issue and address stigma). Utilisation of less formal, local setting, such as public libraries could alleviate some barriers. In addition, the work of AEGS in relation to outreach and the engagement with Adult Community and Literacy Education can forge a connection with hard-to-reach groups with unmet literacy needs and this “contact point” can help to increase the awareness thus addressing one of the principal challenges at the ‘information’ and ‘engagement’ stage.

Theme 3: Digital Divide

3.1: Current Innovative Projects for Bridging the Digital Divide

A sample of innovative practices, initiatives, and projects with a national reach, as well as those with a local focus is provided in the Detailed Consultation Results report.

3.2: How to Bridge the Digital Divide

Figure 10. How to bridge the digital divide

Key Themes from Public Survey	Key Themes from Non-structured Submissions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Resources (Equipment/ Tech/ Wi-Fi etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Resources (Equipment/ Tech/ Wi-Fi etc.) • ALND Education and Training • Supports / Access to Resources

KEY FINDING 3.2:

Increased access to technology/devices, in addition to enhanced and effective ALND education and training, is required to bridge the digital divide.

To bridge the digital divide respondents (via both the Public Survey and Non-structured Submissions) highlighted the need to increase access to technological and digital resources such as devices (laptops, tablets etc), assistive technology and broadband. Particular emphasis was placed on the need to increase access to such resources among ALND learners who require these to participate in education and training. It was suggested that this could be achieved through individual grants targeted at those most in need, loan schemes, and expanding broadband access in underserved areas.

The submissions informed by onward research referenced literacy-supported basic ICT skills classes, the use of technology enhanced learning (TEL) and integration of popular applications into teaching and learning, including those that facilitate self-assessment. Thus, some re-imagining of teaching & learning by incorporating creative use of ICTs, which when combined with progressive pedagogies are seen as ways to bridge the digital divide and respond to challenges, including those posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.3: Impact of the Digital Divide

Figure 11. Impact of the Digital Divide

Key Themes from Public Survey	Key Themes from Non-structured Submissions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social Isolation, Exclusion and Marginalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social Isolation, Exclusion and Marginalisation

KEY FINDING 3.3: Social isolation, exclusion and marginalisation are the most significant impacts of the digital divide.

Respondents (via the Public Survey and Non-structured Submissions) identified social exclusion as the most significant impact of the Digital Divide. This included social isolation, exclusion from community life, significant disadvantage in terms of educational and employment opportunities and lacking access to services, rights, and entitlements.

It was emphasised that these issues have been compounded by Covid-19 due to the sudden shift to online/remote work, education, and public and private service provision. It was noted that these combined factors reinforce the psychological barriers (already outlined)

that prevent adults with ALND needs from seeking out and engaging with services and supports.

Theme 4: Priorities and Actions

4.1: Existing Innovative Practices for Encouraging and Promoting ALND

A list of innovative practices for encouraging and promoting ALND suggested by respondents is provided in the *Detailed Consultation Results* report.

4.2: Specific Actions to Encourage, Develop and Promote ALND

KEY FINDING 4.2: Advertising and public awareness campaigns are the most important avenue for encouraging, promoting and raising awareness of ALND

Figure 12. Specific actions to encourage, develop and promote ALND

Key Themes from Public Survey	Key Themes from Non-structured Submissions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising and Public Awareness Campaigns • ALND Education and Training • Accessibility and Access to ALND Supports and Resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ALND Education and Training • Accessibility of Information/Services • Promote / Raise Awareness from an Early Age • Community / Schools / Interagency Networks • Participation of Adults with ALND Needs in Promotion / Peer Encouragement/ ALND Champions • Advertising / Public Awareness Campaigns • Guidance Awareness and Outreach Guidance Provision

Respondents (via the Public Survey and Written Submissions) stressed the importance of effective promotional campaigns. This reflected some of the suggestions outlined under theme 2.3, in relation to dynamic campaigns that are multi-faceted and meaningful to those with ALND needs. Participation of adults with ALND needs in promotion and awareness raising initiatives/Peer Encouragement/ALND Champions and Peer learning were referenced.

Many respondents suggested that ALND should be encouraged, developed, and promoted via specific actions related to accessibility and expansion of ALND supports and resources.

4.3: Specific Approaches for Targeting Priority Cohorts

KEY FINDING 4.3: Welcoming learning environments, accessibility of information/services and access to supports/resources are essential for effectively reaching out to and targeting priority cohorts.

Figure 13. Specific approaches for targeting priority cohorts

Key Themes from Public Survey	Key Themes from Non-structured Submissions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility and Access to Supports and Resources • ALND Education and Training • Schools and Community and Interagency Networks • Advertising and Public Awareness Campaigns • Consult with Priority Cohorts and their Representatives • Broad scope of CPD/PD. • Leadership/‘Lead Learners’ (e.g. in Areas of Intercultural Awareness Anti-racism). • Communities of Practice and CPD for Practitioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ALND Education and Training • Welcoming Learning Environments • Accessibility of Information and Services • Schools and Community and Interagency Networks • Targeting Those Most in Need / Priority Cohorts • Initial and Ongoing Assessment • Continuous Professional Development for Practitioners; establishment of Communities of Practice

The most frequently recommended approach to reaching out and targeting priority cohorts (across the Public Survey and Non-structured Written Submissions) was to improve accessibility and access to supports and resources. In addition, creating/ensuring/availing of welcoming learning environments (such as public libraries) was deemed important.

This included integrated and universal supports (available to all, but particularly benefiting priority cohort groups), and supports targeted at priority cohort groups and individuals to address specific, identified needs.

The most prominent areas mentioned were:

- Grants, loans and device lending schemes to expand access to technology, digital equipment and broadband (particularly for students/ learners who require them for their ALND course).
- Integration of supports through universal design and universal design for learning (e.g. use of plain language, availability of learning materials in multiple formats such as video and audio, inclusively designed virtual learning spaces).
- Initial and ongoing assessment and implementation – for example, blending formal and informal initial assessment.
- Increased access to assistive technology in educational institutions, public libraries and government services. As certain assistive technology increases accessibility for people with ALND needs these should be more broadly available to all who require them, not just people with diagnosed disabilities.
- Expansion regarding support staff across adult education, including inclusion specialist/officers, SNAs and psychologists/mental health professionals, and establishment of multi-disciplinary support teams and/or tailored/special support units.
- Removing prejudices by getting the message out about lifelong learning for all.
- Ensuring fully inclusive learning environments to prevent adverse experiences, including racism, which could in turn affect future participation in ALND education and training.
- [Continuous] Professional Development to include diversity, anti-racism and intercultural awareness/interculturalism.
- Communities of Practice (CoPs) for practitioners.
- Individual assessments to identify specific needs of adults with disabilities.
- The importance of skilled guidance in education and training options.
- Ensuring accessibility of buildings and physical infrastructure.
- Increased access to local services and supports, particularly in rural areas.
- Free broadband in a range of public places - education institutions, hospitals and well as in nursing homes etc.
- Expansion of access programmes.

- Availability of information and services in different languages.

Theme 5: Identifying and Measuring Success

5.1 Identifying Success, Goals and Relevant Indicators

KEY FINDING 5.1: Set and adopt clearly defined, realistic and measurable goals that demonstrate both hard and soft outcomes of learning and set the scope by focusing on key concepts and metrics regarding educational access, participation and attainment, at the national and individual level.

Respondents (via the Public Survey and Non-structured Written Submissions) identified a range of indicators that could be tracked to determine if the strategy is successful in its aims. Respondents emphasised the importance of setting clearly defined, realistic and measurable goals and the need to track both hard and soft outcomes using appropriate metrics.

Respondents suggested relevant approaches, concepts and metrics to capture wider participation, educational access, and attainment at the national level (e.g. PIAAC and DESI surveys, and relevant CSO work regarding data gathering and related activities) and individual, personal level (e.g. achievement of personalised goals, initial and ongoing assessment).

Respondents also recommended the use of indicators related to inclusion and wider benefits of learning, such as increased community participation, increased engagement with online services and improved confidence, mental health and wellbeing.

Finally, person-centred approach to developing ALND capacity was emphasised.

5.2 Measuring, Assessing and Tracking Progress and Outcomes

KEY FINDING 5.2: A range of methods and approaches should be employed to capture progress and impact at the national, cohort and individual level, including surveys (at the national level) and personalised assessment (at the individual level).

Respondents (via the Public Survey and Written Submissions) identified a number of different research and assessment methods that could be employed to measure and track progress in key areas. Emphasis was placed on the need to employ a range of methods, beyond simple counts of certifications, to capture impact at the national, cohort and individual level. The most prominent among these included:

- Surveys / instruments / questionnaires (e.g. Surveys: before and after, household, attitudes, online and held at regular intervals; course evaluations).
- [Participation in] International and European studies and surveys: PIAAC, PISA – with suggestions for [additional] adaptation or tailoring for the Irish context.
- Use of national data gathered by the CSO; Adding to the National Census.
- Focus groups.
- Long-term / longitudinal follow-up studies.
- Case studies and success stories.
- Initial and ongoing assessment of standardised skills / competencies and personal goal achievement.
- Participatory Action Research.
- Establishing a baseline and measuring success against it.
- Measuring movements in achievement gaps of priority cohort groups.
- Consult with adults with ALND needs to determine appropriate indicators and evaluation methods.
- Direct client feedback through agencies providing ALND education, training and supports.

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