

ADULT LITERACY FOR LIFE

DETAILED CONSULTATION REPORT

DETAILED RESULTS FROM THE CONSULTATION PROCESS TO DEVELOP
A NEW 10-YEAR ADULT LITERACY, NUMERACY AND DIGITAL LITERACY
– LITERACY FOR LIFE - STRATEGY FOR IRELAND

Adult Literacy for Life Strategy: Detailed Results from the Consultation Process to Develop a New 10-year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy for Ireland

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This Report was prepared by the SOLAS Learner Support Team. It provides detailed results and findings from the national consultation to develop a new 10-year Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy for Ireland.

This Report should be read in conjunction with the *Summary Consultation Report*, which provides a summary of the consultation undertaken to inform the Strategy, including aims, process, methodology, scope, and participation.

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Executive Summary

Public Consultation to Develop a 10-year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy - Adult Literacy for Life - Strategy

Preamble

In line with the Programme for Government, 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.¹ This report outlines the process and key outcomes of the consultation undertaken to inform and support the Strategy development.

Consultation Process and Methodology

From the outset, it was envisaged that the ALND Strategy would be informed by the results of a broad and robust national consultation. SOLAS launched a consultation process in November 2020, which included:

- (1) An online Omnibus Ipsos Smart Poll.²
- (2) Open Public Consultation.
- (3) Targeted Outreach (to underserved, hard-to-reach groups).
- (4) Bilateral Consultation.

¹ A 10 Year Adult Literacy, Numeracy & Digital Literacy Strategy was the working title used during the consultation process. A more convenient title has been adopted since; however, both terms are used in the report.

² Effectively pre-consultation.

Consultation Paper

A Consultation Paper has been 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.

Scope and Reach of the Consultation Process

Consultation Process and Period

The consultation process took place throughout Q4 2020 and Q1 2021, and the response to the public consultation was very strong and positive, in volume terms, as well as in terms of providing rich data. The strong response was achieved despite the challenges of undertaking and facilitating a consultation process during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A comprehensive consultation was carried out seeking the views of individuals and stakeholders in relation to the development of the 10-year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital (ALND) Literacy Strategy. The consultation aimed to explore the challenges and opportunities for Ireland in relation to adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy and examine how we can create an environment where all adults in Ireland have the necessary literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy to fully take part in society.

The consultation process was designed to be wide-ranging and inclusive so to ensure a participative approach to the Strategy development by involving a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including those with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital needs. The consultation process aimed to capture viewpoints and ideas on how the delivery of services and appropriate supports for adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy should look.

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

In line with this approach, both a Consultation Paper and the accompanying video were developed and made available online to inform, assist and guide participants through the consultation process. Subsequently, stakeholders were provided with multiple options for expressing their views via a multi-pronged consultation approach, including:

- An Online Omnibus Ipsos Smart Poll (effectively a pre-consultation)
- Open Public Consultation (incorporating an option to make submissions in a non-structured format),
- Targeted Outreach, and in addition to these,
- Bilateral Consultation.

The consultation process was successful in capturing the views of many individuals with direct experience of improving their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy, and the opinions of those who placed value on the supports available to assist them with everyday living and working. The consultation exercise also sought to identify actions needed to meet the challenges and opportunities in relation to adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.

Main Consultation Themes

When developing the consultation exercise, five initial themes were identified that could assist in guiding respondents to the areas on which views were sought. These five themes would also feed into a structured analysis framework being developed. Furthermore, the themes were reflected in the structure of the Public Survey and many organisations used the five themes to frame their non-structured written submissions and responses. Finally, they were also beneficial for other consultation elements such as bilateral interviews. These themes were:

- **Theme 1** Different meanings of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy for adults.
- **Theme 2** Awareness of and access to literacy, numeracy and digital literacy supports.
- **Theme 3** Bridging the digital divide.
- **Theme 4** Priorities and actions.
- **Theme 5** Identifying and measuring success.

These main themes were then used to assist in developing a detailed framework for data analysis as described below.

Consultation Data Analysis

The overarching 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 in this context is conceptualised as:

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

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

Consultation Analysis Framework Development

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

The main tool and, at the same time, outcome of thematic analysis is an analysis, or analytical, framework. For the purpose of ALND consultation responses’ analysis, a sizeable sample of survey responses³ was systematically analysed and coded to develop an Analysis Framework consisting of: (1) overarching themes (as they emerged from the Literature Review and agreed with the Interdepartmental Committee - Stakeholder Group and presented in the Consultation Paper at the outset), (2) a set of second-level sub-themes

³ This enabled the timely preparation of framework for analysis, deemed necessary given the protracted or prolonged and staggered nature of submissions.

within each overarching theme and (3) a set of third-level sub-themes, within each second-level theme.

This Analysis Framework was then applied to the full set of public survey data and all responses were analysed using a detailed analysis framework. It was also utilised for considering all written submissions and extended to the “onward research” segment of these, as appropriate and relevant. A detailed version of the Analysis Framework, including second level and third-level sub-themes, is provided in Appendices ([Appendix A](#)).

High-level Overview of the Main Consultation Themes

There is a high degree of congruence between the outcomes of all the consultation process elements. All strands of the consultation called for an approach to literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy development built on, and supported by what is to a considerable extent, already in place.

The consultation process inputs by respondents, which includes the perspective of the relevant services and supports administrators, drew attention to the links between poverty, inequality, exclusion and unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs.

Consultation responses called for a person-centred strategy that positioned the acquisition of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy competency for adults as a human right, that can be set and attained within a whole-of-government system that recognises the need for social, cultural, and human capital investments.

What follows below is a high-level overview of the responses received as part of the consultation process.

Summaries of Each Strand of the Consultation Process

The public consultation process was opened to interested parties to take part by completing either a short or long, public survey to provide, in summary or in a broad sense, 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. Responses were open, without length restrictions. Interested parties were also invited to provide written submissions in a less structured or non-structured format, outside of, or in addition to the structured survey method.

The overall consultation design was informed and 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 and facilitates multiple options to respond. It is consistent with the approach aimed at ensuring and promoting a broad response.

Figure 1 below provides an overview as to the scale of the consultation across the various methods of engagement and the numbers involved.

Figure 1. Summary of methods and scope of engagement with the Strategy consultation process

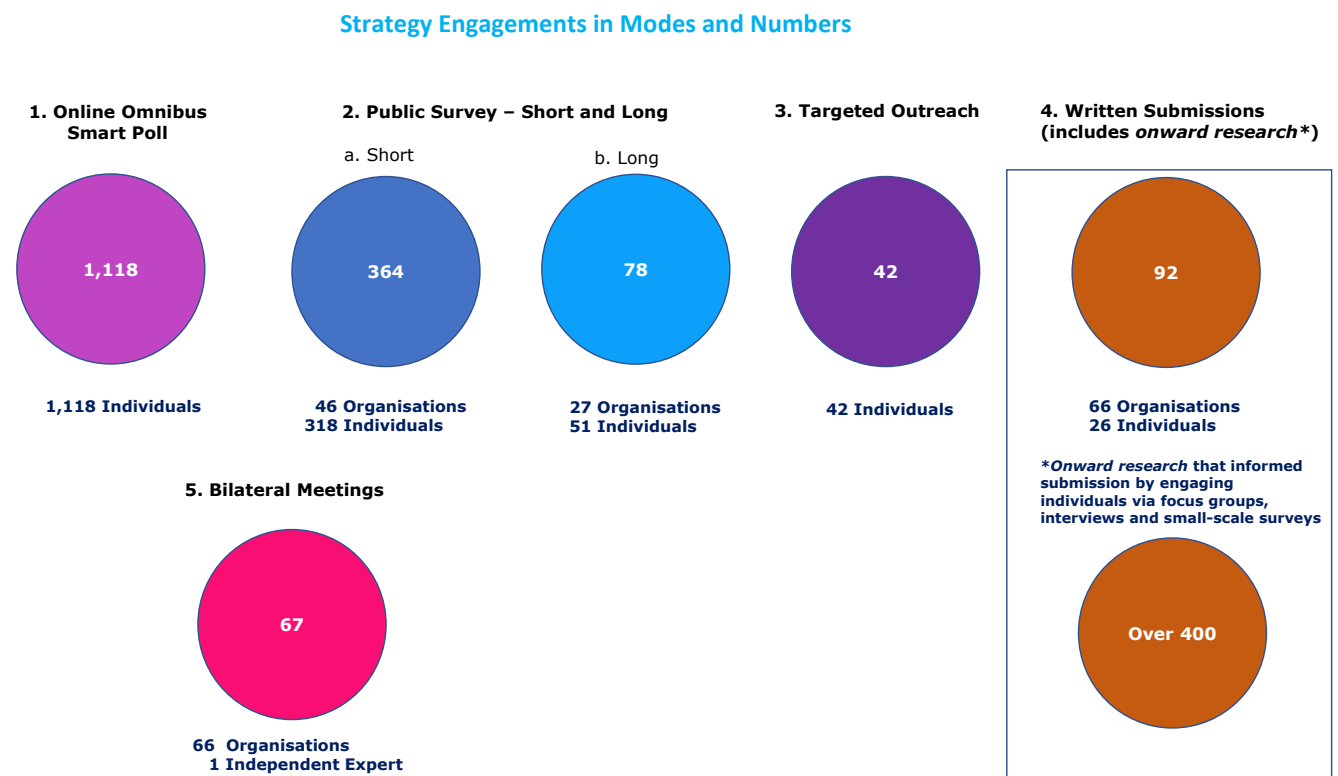


Figure 2. Public survey responses by type of respondents

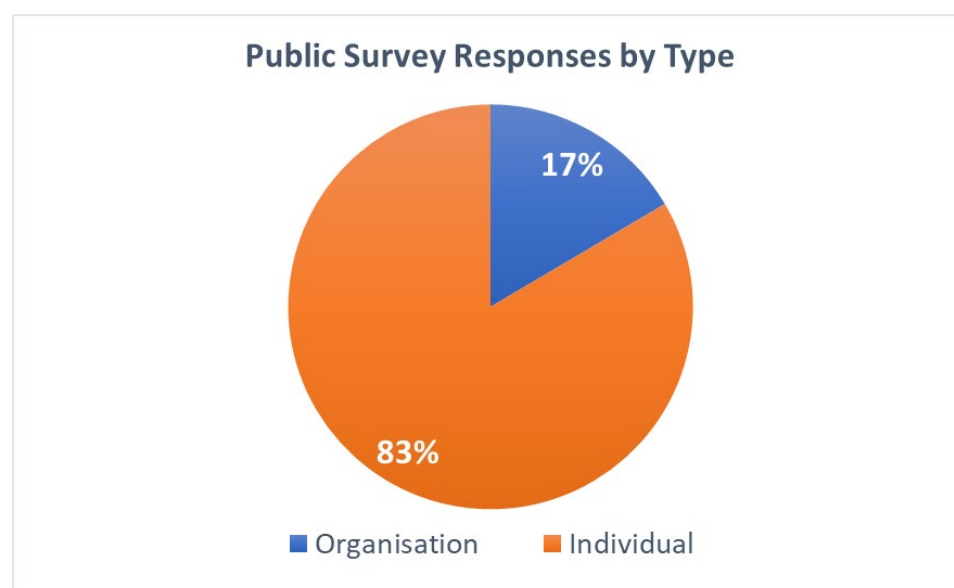
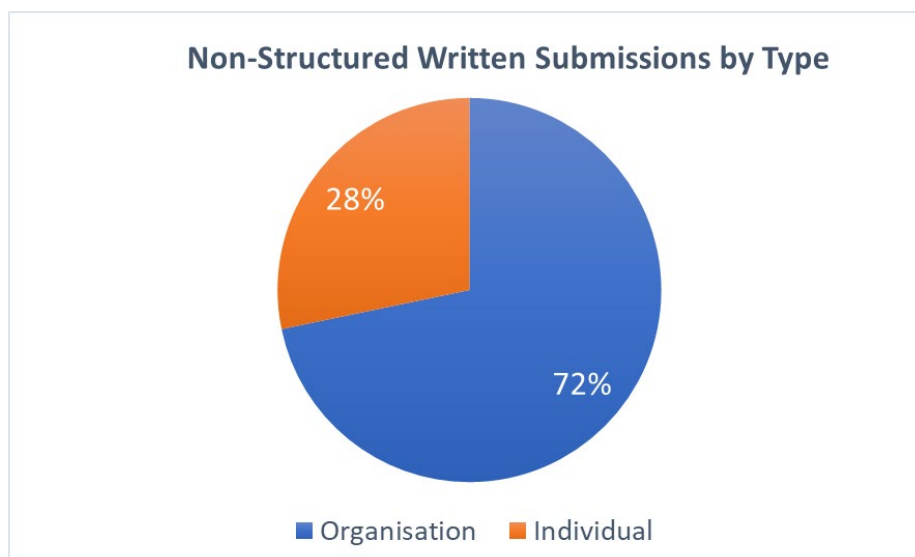


Figure 3. Non-structured written submissions by type of respondents



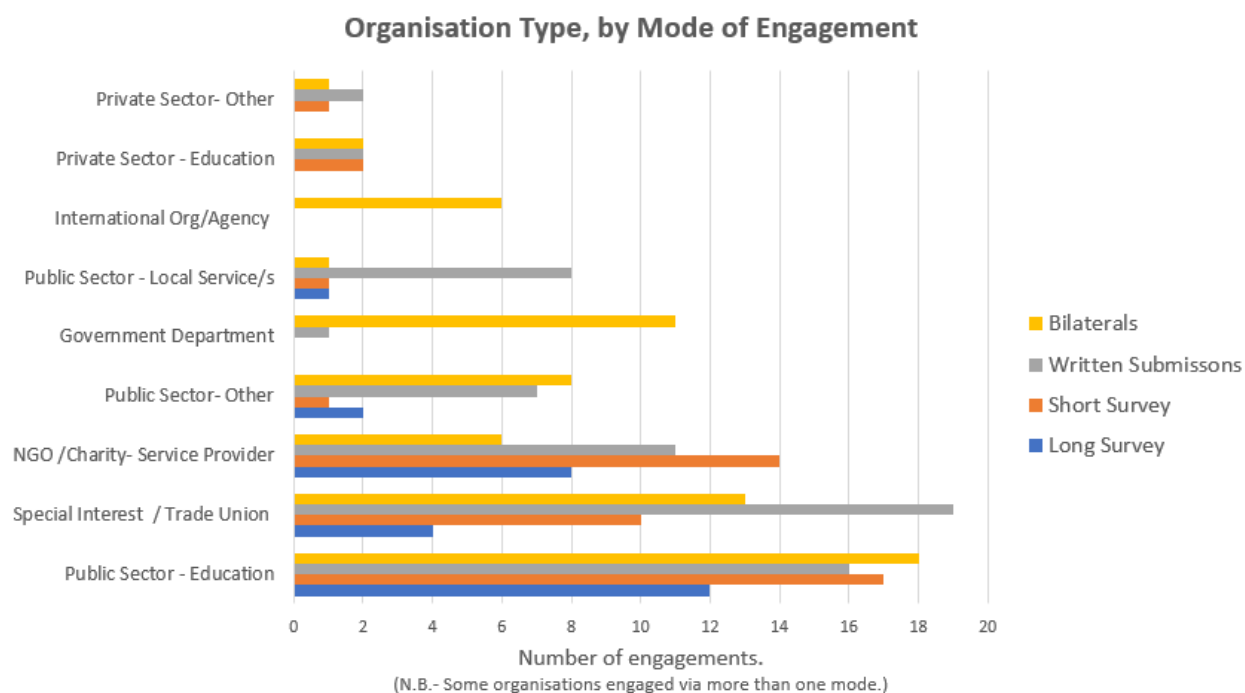
As depicted in figure 2, responses to public survey were predominantly from individuals, with individuals being considerably more likely to engage via this mode, accounting for over 1-in-5 responses. Conversely, organisations were more likely to engage via written submissions, with over 7-in 10 non-structured submissions being made by organisations (figure 3).

As can be seen from figure 4, a wide spectrum of organisations engaged with the Strategy consultation process, although those with an interest in and / or operating in the area of education were prevalent. In addition, those with a direct interest in the ALND sphere and providing services and advocating in this area were relatively more likely to engage in the process.

In addition, and as part of the overall consultation process, SOLAS brought together expertise of key partners and stakeholders operating in this sphere at a national level in the form of Technical Advisory Committee. The Committee provided a valuable feedback that assisted the consultation process and reporting on it. Thus, it suggested to include and expand reporting on non-structured written submissions that could reflect on social and policy drivers of adult literacy and related issues in a broad sense, it also advised to provide additional detail on Amarach/IPSOS segment, as well as to obtain, facilitate and incorporate the input from native Irish speakers and migrants, all of which are reflected in the report.

Summaries of all engagements by organisations are provided in figure 4 below, while additional detail can be found in the Appendices.

Figure 4. ALND Strategy organisational engagements by type of organisation and mode of engagement



Summary of Online Omnibus Ipsos Smart Poll

Ámarach Research was engaged by the SOLAS Learner Support Team and SOLAS Branding, Communications and FET Strategy Implementation Team to undertake some preliminary research via their Online Ipsos Omnibus Survey. As participation in an online survey presupposes at least a certain level of proficiencies and skills in literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy, this research sought general views and attitudes around the importance of literacy, numeracy and digital skills in everyday life. In addition, it also provided insights, albeit most often by proxy, regarding inferred literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy needs in wider general population.

A summary of the findings from this exercise is given below:

- The majority of respondents were comfortable with their current capability and capacity.
- Still, there was a significant minority who scored their own capacity and capability at 5 or less out 10 for the three categories as follows:
 - 7% for literacy (equivalent to about 250,000 adults in Ireland)
 - 9% for numeracy (equivalent to about 320,000 adults in Ireland)
 - 13% for technology (equivalent to about 465,000 adults in Ireland).
- A significant minority felt it held them back in terms of career and job opportunities, which may suggest a lack of confidence in their own ability.
- A challenge was identified in breaking down barriers to further education, upskilling, training and supports. There seemed to be an awareness gap that needed to be bridged in terms where people can seek and get assistance.
- It is noted that inferred needs related to literacy, numeracy, and digital skills are likely to be understated given that the methodology presupposes some level of skill in these areas in order to take part.

Details of the research process and results are provided in Appendices ([Appendix B: Summary of Omnibus Research and Results](#)).

Summary of Non-structured Written Submissions

The written submissions provided a wealth of insights and rich detail into the economic, social and policy context to be considered and addressed when developing a 10-Year Strategy for Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy.

Key messages at the conceptual and policy levels were:

- Developing abilities, proficiencies and skills⁴ in ALND is a human right.
- People need to be afforded opportunities, time, and a multitude of supports to develop their ALND abilities, proficiencies and skills.
- The development of ALND abilities and skills is socially situated and must take place in a way that is meaningful to the individual.
- Embedded and integrated provision of adult literacy within adult lifelong learning is key with opportunities to use thematic approaches across a range of programmes.
- The integration of literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy learning in the context of key transversal skills is deemed a core part of adult literacy pedagogies.
- The need to recognise the importance of ALND and, commensurate with this, the need for social, cultural and human capital investment.
- Addressing inequality and poverty is fundamental to any improvement in ALND.
- A Whole-of-Government approach consistent with putting communities at the centre should be emphasised.
- A Whole-of-Government approach should make skill development in ALND the obvious and easy choice.
- A flexible and evolving strategy, within a whole of government system, is seen as the best way to meet the needs of diverse stakeholders.

It was also evident from submissions that the Strategy would need to build on, and integrate as appropriate, the sound foundation already in place in Ireland in relation to adult literacy, numeracy, and digital skills. There are many organisations at national, regional, and local level with a brief to encourage, promote and develop these skills. The submissions urged to aim to integrate and connect these organisations and their initiatives and activities. It became apparent that the Strategy must find ways to weave these varied and valuable opportunities and segments of this *ecosystem* into a durable and robust infrastructure, which is accessible and easily navigable by those most in need of support.

Some of the key perspectives that emerged from the submissions are summarised below:

- Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy (that is to say, all these ‘literacies’) are considered to be of equal importance.
- Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy are interdependent and dynamic.

⁴ Literacy (in a broad sense) related abilities, proficiencies and competencies are often referred to as essential skills and these terms for concision purposes will be deemed interchangeable in the report.

- Literacy and Numeracy are also enabling skills for the development and acquisition of digital literacy.
- Literacy and Numeracy evolve and change over time.
- The demands of Digital Literacy do increase and evolve, at an accelerated pace.
- Fit for purpose funding and evaluation models are important.
- Commitment to resourcing an integrated ALND infrastructure is needed.
- Autonomy at the local level can provide responsive and flexible offerings.

Submissions signalled that the Strategy should acknowledge that developing durable and robust Literacy, Numeracy, and Digital Skills takes time. In short, there is no quick fix. On a related matter, the capabilities approach was referenced, essentially suggesting that the Strategy should reflect that one of the guiding principles, or in practical terms, a key question to ask would be: "What is each person able to do and to be?" In other words, the approach would see each person as an end, *asking* about and focusing on the opportunities available to each person. At the same time, it should also be recognised that not all individuals will participate, utilise the opportunities to generate the same advantages, or benefit, in the same way.

Submissions called for promotion of services and encouragement to take part and avail of services to be achieved in such a way that is meaningful to individuals and communities. By extension, they also emphasised the need for measurement, assessment and evaluation of Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy in a holistic way, that can record and capture the incremental achievements of learners while also reflecting and acknowledging the time, skill, and dedication required by everyone involved in developing, encouraging, and promoting ALND skills.

Given the evolving nature of Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy, submissions called for an agile, developing, and dynamic strategy that will remain relevant over 10 years and beyond.

Where discrete skills were mentioned, these tended to be focusing on spelling, grammar and reading ("literacy"), and addition, multiplication and division ("numeracy"). The many sub-skills related to these areas were less evident. This would be consistent with respondents' views and emphasis that literacy, numeracy, and digital skills are first and foremost social practices that happen in various contexts.

A more detailed analysis of responses provided as part of the non-structured written responses can be found in Appendices ([Appendix C](#)).

Summary of “Onward Research” Undertaken as Part of Informing Non-structured Submissions

At the outset, it should be noted that the onward research yielded rich data and greatly enhanced the overall response to the Consultation. The focus groups, interviews and small-scale surveys conducted within this process emphasised that literacy, numeracy and digital literacy are exceptionally relevant to living and managing one’s everyday life – from shopping to comprehending written instructions in a variety of areas. Critical skills such as analysing information for relevance was also widely emphasised – particularly in an increasingly digitised world with its attendant proliferation of information.

Family, social connectedness, citizenship, and health (particularly mental health) were also extremely prevalent throughout the focus group responses.

The onward research also pointed to the need to address inequalities- ensuring that people are not left behind. Access to resources and information was considered crucial.

Chief among the barriers to addressing literacy, numeracy and digital literacy identified was low confidence, stigma, fear, and a sense of shame. A lack of information, infrastructure and time also surfaced as obstacles. Key to addressing these barriers was having approaches to literacy, numeracy and digital literacy development that addressed any negative feelings and perceptions people might have. Putting the person at the front and in the centre was a clear message from this part of the consultation.

Several participants also referenced the perception of low rewards or a lack of perceived benefits readily associated with upskilling.

Advertising and awareness-raising campaigns at the community, local, regional and national level that addressed these barriers, negative feelings and perceptions were considered the most useful way to encourage people to develop and maintain their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy and to embark on this journey.

The use of pre-existing community networks was also considered beneficial in getting positive messages across to the adult population. Furthermore, peer support and learner ambassadors were considered particularly valuable in promoting literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.

As with responses on barriers, addressing the digital divide required targeting those most in need and ensuring that suitable and appropriate opportunities – courses and classes were available to meet the person's needs. The impact of digital divide was described in terms of reduced opportunities, relatively high or increased financial cost, isolation, and adverse mental health effects.

As with responses regarding overcoming barriers, recommended innovative practices and approaches included targeted and receptive public awareness campaigns and increased availability of education and training and the associated supports and resources that accompany these. Building on the existing services available for literacy, numeracy and digital literacy was considered vital, as was ensuring that the person-centred ethos across these services was safeguarded into the future. This was a key message for policymakers.

Onward research - focus groups, interview participants and small-scale survey respondents - emphasised the need for learner testimonials and broader benefits of learning approach to be part of any success measuring approach or model.

A more detailed account of these focus groups, interviews and small-scale surveys can be found in Appendices ([Appendix: Summary of “Onward Research” Undertaken as Part of Informing Non-structured Submissions](#)).

Summary of Public Survey Responses

Consistent with the overall approach aiming to facilitate all interested parties to provide their views, the open public consultation afforded the options to respond by completing either a short or long questionnaire, which could be done either online or offline.

Survey questions were structured according to key themes developed on the basis of relevant literature and in consultation with key stakeholders. In broad terms, the survey [instruments] aimed to capture the views on the challenges and opportunities regarding adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy and how to create an environment where all adults in Ireland would have the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy to fully take part in society.

Consistent with the key messages that emerged from the non-structured written submissions, respondents to public surveys called for policymakers to recognise ALND as a [human] right. It was seen as vital to view adequate literacy, numeracy, and digital skills not just as a privilege, but as a right or an entitlement for all in today's society. The opportunity to use literacy, numeracy and digital skills to equitably access online learning and online resources in general was viewed as central to functioning well in today's world. Respondents called for the Strategy to consider literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy development as integral to all learning, rather than supplemental.

Equally, respondents called for ALND supports that focussed on the real-life needs of adults such as:

- Using the internet, sending and receiving e-mails, engaging in distance learning and accessing online resources,
- Dealing with and interpreting the world through interaction with organisations and individuals in person, online and via telephone. Key aspects of this included confidently using one's own judgement to make sound decisions to manage one's professional and private life effectively.
- Literacy: reading, writing, and spelling.
- Numeracy: managing one's finances, learning how to budget, and using maths and necessary calculations in everyday life.

Respondents believed that learner needs and values should be acknowledged. For example, access to plain English resources, reading, writing, spelling, and knowledge of how to budget and do necessary calculations were all seen as important.

The use of pre-existing community networks was considered to be beneficial in getting positive messages across to the adult population. Peer support and learner ambassadors were considered particularly valuable in promoting literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy.

Respondents pointed to a clear need for increased awareness-raising of ALND opportunities in FET. Advertising methods and ways of employing more targeted outreach mechanisms in future were called for.

It was deemed that addressing the digital divide required targeting those most in need and ensuring that suitable and appropriate classes were available to meet the person's needs. It was also voiced that digital barriers continued to exist for older and vulnerable members of society and learners, especially regarding accessing and availing of remote learning. Respondents expressed concerns for members of society and learners regarding their ability to safely use the internet and social media and handle smart devices.

The population of Ireland has in recent decades become increasingly diverse and this new diversity was acknowledged in responses and the ways suggested to ensure that everyone feels a sense of inclusion and belonging and that they can participate, and flourish as lifelong learners, were proposed. Practical measures recommended for use within the teaching and learning environment included intercultural, anti-racism, diversity, and cultural awareness training for FET practitioners as part of their initial training and as ongoing continuous personal development (CPD/PD).

Accessibility of, and access to ALND resources and information was seen as a key barrier by respondents. Perceived time constraints on learning were also highlighted as hindering progress, seen from both educationalist or FET practitioner and learner standpoints.

Recommendations⁵ volunteered included:

- Broaden the scope of CPD/PD.
- Management and leadership should be 'lead learners' in areas of anti-racism and intercultural awareness.
- Help people get to grips with basic daily tasks and manage their health and safety in everyday life.

⁵ A number of these were made in a Further Education and Training (FET) sector context or were FET oriented, reflective of the responding organisations' background.

- Provide learners with additional ALND supports where necessary along their learning journeys.
- Make ALND an integral part of FET learning or provision.
- Focus on what the learner needs and wants, listen closely to the learner's “voice”, and ensure that they are engaged in the decision-making process.
- Embed the use of plain English across and wider society, Government and public services, and education, including FET learning systems, thereby encouraging a shift in the societal view towards language accessibility through ALND competency being a right and not a privilege.
- Provision of accessible, welcoming learning spaces should equally be viewed as a learner right.
- Identify goals and measure success in a way that accounts for the incremental nature of ALND ability and skill development.

Additional detail can be found in [Appendix E](#).

Summary of Targeted Outreach

In order to make sure the process was accessible for adults with literacy, numeracy and/or digital literacy needs, the consultation incorporated a 'Targeted Outreach' component.

This offered beneficiaries of the future strategy accessible means for expressing their views (i.e., methods that do not presuppose or require certain levels of or proficiency in literacy, numeracy and/or digital literacy to engage with).

Data collection for the Targeted Outreach component included:

- Contracted 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.

Additional detail can be found in [Appendix F](#).

- National Adult Learner Forum

- AONTAS, funded and supported by SOLAS, implements the National Adult Learner Forum on an annual basis. The Forum itself 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 and findings from this and previous Learner Forum consultation events were collated by AONTAS (via unstructured written submission) and incorporated into the Consultation Analysis. While it can be considered as part of targeted outreach, it was incorporated in the summary of "onward research" (2.1. Summary of "Onward Research" Undertaken as Part of Informing Non-structured Submissions), the rationale being that it informed the submission.

Summary of Bilateral Meetings for ALND Strategy

Open-ended interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including Government Departments and Agencies and NGOs, via a series of bilateral meetings.

Many participants in bilateral meetings with SOLAS also expressed and conveyed their views via the non-structured written submissions process. Thus, given that numerous stakeholders had also provided submissions, bilateral interviews were also used to clarify and further crystallise key points and to help SOLAS reach a deeper understanding of key stakeholders' views and priorities.

Similar to 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 proficiency and 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 how to ensure success over the coming 10 years and beyond. Much of the detail arising from these discussions was also evident in responses via public survey questionnaires and non-structured written submissions. Some important views expressed regarding the Strategy and associated planning are provided below:

- A Collaborative and Integrated Systems Approach is required.
- Fit for purpose funding and evaluation models are necessary.
- An appreciation of the value of all '*capitals*' (e.g. human, social, emotional) is essential.
- Awareness of the role of language competency in developing, encouraging and promoting ALND, and related to this, a system that is responsive to the language needs of all those living in Ireland including a focus on those who require supports in the area of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).
- Cognisance should be taken of the role of language competencies in all of Ireland's official languages, including the Irish language and the availability of ALND supports and services through the medium of Irish to communities in Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas and Gaeltacht Service Towns.

Additional detail can be found in Appendices ([Appendix G](#)).

Appendices

Appendix A: ALND Consultation Analysis Framework

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

1.1 Aspects of ALND the Strategy Should Focus on

No.	Sub-Theme	Description
1.1.1	Functional ALND	ALND skills applied to real-life requirements such as managing your finances, interacting with/ accessing services, health literacy, recognising/ avoiding online scams, reading bus timetable etc.
1.1.2	Basic ALND Skills	Build basic skills in ALND
1.1.3	Supports / Access to Resources	Supports for adults with ALND needs to access, progress through and complete ALND education and training, including access to technology, equipment etc.
1.1.4	Digital Literacy	Digital Literacy, particularly for those over 60 years.
1.1.5	Accessibility of Information/ Services	Accessibility of information and services for building ALND skills and finding out about ALND supports and opportunities. This can include physical accessibility of buildings, use of plain English, accessibility of websites and online learning spaces, support for people with ALND need to access services (particularly if access requires filling out forms, using the internet etc.).
1.1.6	Targeting those most in need	Identifying priority groups, based on need, then targeting and tailoring services, supports and initiatives for these groups.

1.2 Daily Activities Supported by ALND

No.	Sub-Theme	Description
1.2.1	Basic Daily Tasks and Safety	Functional ALND tasks are essential for day-to-day living and safety, such as managing personal finances and taxes and banking, reading medicine bottles, filling out forms, shopping, reading bus timetables, and reading safety signs being secure online (e.g. being able to recognise scams etc.)
1.2.2	Accessing/Interpreting Information	Ability to get a hold of and accurately interpret important information such as news, public policy, public health messages etc.
1.2.3	Communication/Social Connection	Ability to communicate with others, through spoken and written language, letters, online social networks, email, mobile phone (including Instant messaging), developing and maintaining social connections (particularly in the context of Covid-19 related restrictions).
1.2.4	Integral to All	If the individual/organisations imply or indicate that ALND is integral to all daily activities, not just supportive of a specified selection of them.
1.2.5	Citizenship/Participation in Society	This sub-theme is distinct from Communication/Social Connection as it refers to an ability to participate in wider society/ community (rather than direct communication with friends and relatives). Thus, "Citizenship" refers to specific activities required for democratic participation such as voting.
1.2.6	Parenting/Supporting Children	Helping children with homework, engaging with children's school etc.
1.2.7	Work/Business/Education	Required for participating in the labour force, do a job effectively, run a business, engage in business dealings, and participate in formal education/ learning, working/ learning remotely. [Note: formal education can include unaccredited courses etc., but not informal personal learning, which is covered under the sub-theme 'Accessing/Interpreting Information'].
1.2.8	Mental Health/Wellbeing/Life Satisfaction	ALND supports internal growth, confidence building, independence, self-efficacy, mental health and wellbeing, which empowers people to manage a wide range of daily tasks effectively. Access to activities that enhance life quality, such as culture / cultural activities, literature, etc.
1.2.9	Accessing Services/Rights/Entitlements	Accessing public or private services, particularly with many now online, such as social welfare applications and allowances, disability related supports, applying for education courses, tax refunds

Theme 2: Awareness and Access to Information and Supports

2.1 Aspects of ALND People Find Most Difficult

No.	Sub-Theme	Description
2.1.1	Digital Literacy	Digital literacy or digital literacy components such as browsing the web, using a smart device or using basic computer packages like Word.
2.1.2	Literacy	Literacy or components of literacy such as spelling, grammar or reading.
2.1.3	Numeracy	Numeracy or components of numeracy such as counting, multiplication, division.
2.1.4	Functional ALND	Real-life tasks that require ALND ability such as banking/ personal financial management,
2.1.5	Dependent on Cohort Characteristics	Different cohorts find different aspects of ALND more difficult.
2.1.6	Access to Resources (Equipment/ Tech/ Wi-Fi etc.)	Lacking access to physical resources required to obtain, support and maintain ALND skills – e.g. Wi-Fi / connectivity, laptop / tech equipment, smartphone, suitable space for engaging in online learning.
2.1.7	Interpreting information	Not just reading but understanding what is read. Being able to comprehend, interpret and analyse written, spoken, numeric and digital information.
2.1.8	All Aspects	People find all aspects of ALND difficult.
2.1.9	Recognising ALND Needs	Difficulty / fear/ embarrassment related to recognising that one has ALND needs.
2.1.10	Accessibility of Information/Services	Accessibility of information and services for building ALND skills and finding out about ALND supports and opportunities. This can include physical accessibility of buildings, use of plain English, accessibility of websites and online learning spaces, support for people with ALND need to access services (particularly if access requires filling out forms, using the internet etc.).
2.1.11	Finding the Right Supports/Services	Finding/Locating the right supports/services.
2.1.12	ESOL	ESOL is the aspect people find the most difficult or English language barriers make all other aspects more difficult.
2.1.13	Gaeilge	Irish language is the aspect people find the most difficult.

2.2 Barriers to ALND

No.	Sub-Theme	Description
2.2.1	Low Confidence (including Shame/Stigma/ Fear etc.)	Low confidence in the ability to learn. Psychological barriers like shame, embarrassment and fear. The perceived stigma around people with ALND needs/ difficulties.
2.2.2	Lacking Information/Awareness of Supports	Not knowing what supports/ services are there, which ones might be right for them, or how to access them.
2.2.3	Lack of Time	Lack of time to engage in learning, usually due to work or family commitments.
2.2.4	Accessibility of Information/Services	Accessibility of information and services for building ALND skills and finding out about ALND related supports and opportunities. This can include physical accessibility of buildings, transport / geographical restrictions, use of plain English in promotional and information materials, accessibility of websites and online learning spaces, support for people with ALND needs to access services (particularly if access requires filling out forms, using the internet etc.).
2.2.5	Costs/Financial Restrictions	Costs and financial restrictions, not including issues related to access to physical resources like laptops, as this is covered in the 'Access to Resources' sub-theme.
2.2.6	Mental Health, Unsatisfactory Previous Experience of Education	Unsatisfactory/Poor/Bad previous experiences of education, adverse childhood experiences.
2.2.7	Access to Resources (Equipment/ Tech/ Wi- etc.)	Lacking access to physical resources required to obtain and maintain ALND skills – e.g. Wi-Fi / connectivity, laptop / tech equipment, smartphone, suitable space for engaging in online learning.
2.2.8	Difficulty Level	Difficulty of learning ALND
2.2.9	Certification/Employment Focus	Courses emphasise certification / employment progression, not enough focusing on personal development without certification requirements.
2.2.10	Motivation	Lacking the motivation to improve ALND, not feeling any immediate need to do so.
2.2.11	Covid-19	Covid-19 related issues as a barrier.

2.3 How to Encourage, Promote and Raise Awareness of ALND

No.	Sub-Theme	Description
2.3.1	Publicity/Public Awareness/Advertising Campaigns	Local and national public information and advertising campaigns to raise awareness of ALND needs and available services and supports.
2.3.2	Community/Schools/ Interagency Networks	Link with schools, community, and interagency networks to promote and deliver ALND.
2.3.3	Participation of Adults with ALND Needs in Promotion/Peer Encouragement/ALND Champions	Ensuring adults with ALND needs are involved in promoting / encouraging / raising awareness of ALND issues and services, particularly those who have overcome their difficulties (i.e. ALND Champions), to share their stories and inspire others.
2.3.4	Relationships (Support Workers, Education Practitioners, Friends, Family etc.)	Positive relationships with teachers, literacy workers and referral agencies, support from friends, family, relatives and peers.
2.3.5	Funding/Resources (inclusive of Human Resources)	Funding and resources to be provided for Strategy implementation, increased resourcing (including human resources), funding for ALND generally and funding to increase access to resources such as tech equipment.
2.3.6	ALND Education and Training	Increased ALND Education and Training provision, effective approaches to ALND education and training, inclusiveness and opportunities to engage in ALND education and training in various settings, including the workplace, public libraries, and the community.
2.3.7	Accessibility of Information/ Services	Accessibility of information and services for building ALND skills and finding out about ALND supports and opportunities. This can include physical accessibility of buildings, use of plain English, accessibility of websites and online learning spaces, flexibility and course scheduling accessible to those with work and family commitments, support for people with ALND need to access services (particularly if access requires filling out forms, using the internet etc.).
2.3.8	Promote Raise Awareness from Early Age	Building positive educational experiences, confidence, sense of self and a positive attitude to learning from an early age.
2.3.9	Strategic/ Action Plan	Suggestion to develop/ implement a national strategy or action plan.

Theme 3: Digital Divide

3.1 Current Innovative Projects for Bridging the Digital Divide

No.	Sub-Theme	Description
3.1.1	Current Innovative Projects for Bridging the Digital Divide	Descriptions of any current innovative projects for bridging the digital divide.

3.2 How to Bridge the Digital Divide

No.	Sub-Theme	Description
3.2.1	Access to Resources (Equipment / Tech/ Wi-Fi etc.)	Lacking access to physical resources required to obtain and maintain ALND skills – e.g. WIFI/ broadband, connectivity, laptop/ tech equipment, smartphone, suitable space for engaging in online learning.
3.2.2	ALND Education and Training	Increased ALND Education and Training provision, effective approaches to ALND education and training, and opportunities to engage in ALND education and training in a variety of settings, including the workplace, public libraries and the community.
3.2.3	Supports/Access to Resources	Supports for adults with ALND needs to access, progress through and complete ALND education and training, including access to technology, equipment etc.
3.2.4	Accessibility of Information/Services	Accessibility of information and services for building ALND skills and finding out about ALND supports and opportunities. This can include physical accessibility of buildings, use of plain English, accessibility of websites and online learning spaces, support for people with ALND need to access services (particularly if access requires filling out forms, using the internet etc.).
3.2.5	Collaboration Across Government Depts.	Collaboration Across Government Depts, Inter-agency work.
3.2.6	Funding / Resources (including. Human Resources)	Funding and resources to be provided for Strategy implementation, increased resourcing (including human resources), funding for ALND generally and funding to increase access to resources such as tech equipment.

3.3 Impact of the Digital Divide

No.	Sub-Theme	Description
3.3.1	Social Isolation/Marginalisation	Socially isolates and marginalises people.
3.3.2	Reduced Opportunities (including education, employment)	Reduces people's opportunities, including the opportunity to engage in education and employment.
3.3.3	Barrier to Accessing Services/Rights/Entitlements	Acts as a barrier to accessing public or private services, citizen rights and entitlements, particularly where these are only accessed and / or available online.
3.3.4	Negative Effects on Mental Health / Wellbeing	Increases feelings of inadequacy, reduced confidence.

Theme 4: Priorities and Actions

4.1 Existing Innovative Practices for Encouraging/ Promoting ALND

No.	Sub-Theme	Description
4.1.1	Existing Innovative Practices for Encouraging/Promoting ALND	Descriptions of any existing innovative practices for Encouraging / Promoting ALND

4.2 Specific Actions to Encourage, Develop and Promote ALND

No.	Sub-Theme	Description
4.2.1	Advertising/Public Awareness Campaigns	Local and national advertising and public information campaigns to raise awareness of ALND needs and available services and supports.
4.2.2	ALND Education and Training	Increased ALND Education and Training provision, effective approaches to ALND education and training, and opportunities to engage in ALND education and training in a variety of settings, including the workplace, public libraries, and the community.
4.2.3	Welcoming Learning Environments	Friendly, welcoming, respectful learning environments.
4.2.4	Accessibility of Information/Services	Accessibility of information and services for building and maintaining ALND skills and finding out about ALND supports and opportunities. This can include physical accessibility of buildings, use of plain English, accessibility of websites and online learning spaces, support for people with ALND need to access services (particularly if access requires filling out forms, using the internet etc).
4.2.5	Community/Schools/Interagency Networks	Link with schools, community, and interagency networks to promote and deliver ALND.
4.2.6	Supports/Access to Resources	Supports for adults with ALND needs to access, progress through and complete ALND education

		and training, including access to technology, equipment etc.
4.2.7	Promote/Raise Awareness from Early Age	Building positive educational experiences, confidence, sense of self and a positive attitude to learning from an early age.
4.2.8	Addressing Stigma/Fear	Addressing fear/ shame of people with ALND needs regarding their difficulties and stigma (real and perceived) of those with ALND needs.
4.2.9	Funding/Resources (including Human Resources)	Funding and resources to be provided for Strategy implementation, increased resourcing (including human resources), funding for ALND generally and funding to increase access to resources such as tech equipment.
4.2.10	Gaeilge	Irish language.
4.2.11	Participation of Adults with ALND Needs in Promotion/ Peer Encouragement/ ALND Champions	Ensuring adults with ALND needs are involved in promoting / encouraging/ raising awareness of ALND issues and services, particularly those who have overcome their difficulties (i.e. ALND Champions), to share their stories and inspire others.

4.3 Specific Approaches for Targeting Priority Cohorts

No.	Sub-Theme	Description
4.3.1	Supports/Access to Resources	Supports for adults with ALND needs to access, progress through and complete ALND education and training, including access to technology, equipment etc.
4.3.2	Accessibility of Information/ Services	Accessibility of information and services for building ALND skills and finding out about ALND supports and opportunities. This can include physical accessibility of buildings, use of plain English, accessibility of websites and online learning spaces, support for people with ALND needs to access services (particularly if access requires filling out forms, using the internet etc).
4.3.3	ALND Education and Training	Increased ALND Education and Training provision, effective approaches to ALND education and training (inclusive of integrated or embedded provision), and opportunities to engage in ALND education and training in a variety of settings, including the workplace, public libraries, and the community.
4.3.4	Community/Schools/Interagency Networks	Link with schools, community, and interagency networks to promote and deliver ALND.
4.3.5	Advertising/Public Awareness Campaigns	Local and national advertising and public information campaigns to raise awareness of ALND need and available services and supports.

4.3.6	Consult with Priority Cohorts/Their Representatives	Determine goals, targets and success through consultation with priority cohorts and their representatives.
4.3.7	CPD for Practitioners/Communities of Practice	Continuous Professional Development for Practitioners in relevant areas including diversity and interculturalism, promotion/establishment of communities of practice among practitioners and other stakeholders.
4.3.8	Peer Groups/Peer Learning	Establishing peer groups for priority cohort groups (e.g. people with disabilities, mental health support groups) and / or encouraging peer learning and support within these groups.
4.3.9	Welcoming Learning Environments	Friendly, welcoming, respectful learning environments.
4.3.10	Funding/ Resources (including Human Resources)	Funding and resources to be provided for strategy implementation, increased resourcing (including human resources), funding for ALND generally and funding to increase access to resources such as tech equipment.
4.3.11	Targeting those most in need	Identifying priority groups, based on need, then targeting and tailoring services, supports and initiatives for these groups.
4.3.12	Policy / Strategy	Suggestion of new policy/ strategy.
4.3.13	Suggested Priority Cohort	Suggestion of a particular group that should be considered a priority due to ALND needs – e.g. migrants, prisoners, and people with disabilities.
4.3.14	Initial / Ongoing Assessment	Initial and ongoing assessment of ALND skills and competence.
4.3.15	Personal Development Plans	Individualised personal development plans
4.3.16	National Data Collection/ Demographic Analysis	Use of national data to conduct demographic analysis and identify key groups

Theme 5: Identifying and Measuring Success

5.1 Identifying Success, Goals and Relevant Indicators

No.	Sub-Theme	Description
5.1.1	Suggestion of Specific Indicators or Goals	Suggestions of indicators or goals we could use to determine and define success– what would success look like (e.g., higher participation and/or certification rates, PIAAC national results, increased employability).

5.2 Measuring Progress and Outcomes

No.	Sub-Theme	Description
5.2.1	Measuring, assessing, and tracking progress and outcomes	Suggestions of research approaches or methodologies that could be used to capture, measure and track progress and outcomes (e.g. surveys, focus groups, PAR, achievement gaps and long-term follow up studies).

Appendix B: Review of Omnibus Research and Results

Background & Research Objectives of Pre-consultation (Omnibus Online Poll)

As part of the extensive ALND strategy stakeholder consultation phase, SOLAS engaged the expertise of Amárach Research to gain additional insights regarding the needs and perspectives of individuals, including those who may be less likely to participate in the consultation via digital/online formats. The line of questioning was structured in such a way that insights by proxy could also be gathered.

Having this additional layer to the process provided valuable insights into how services might be shaped.

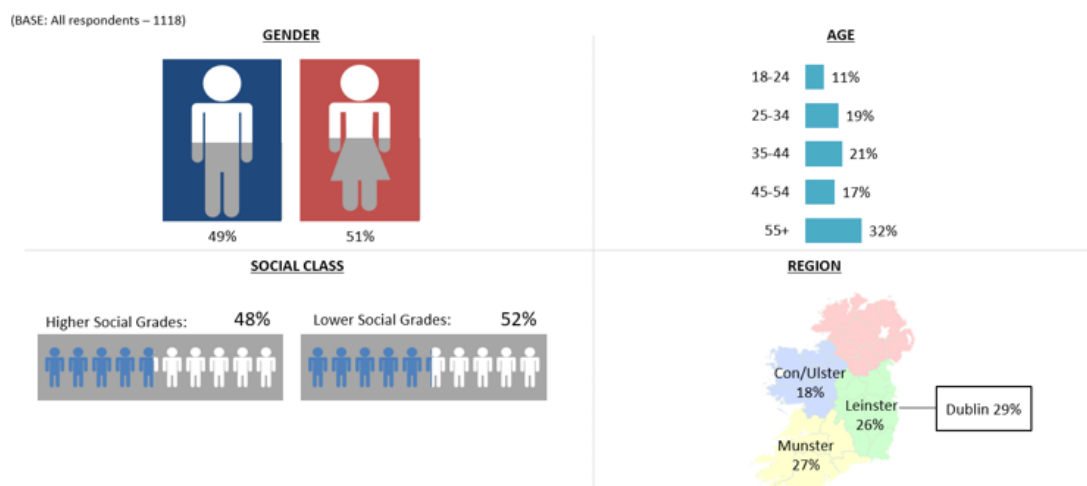
Online Omnibus Research Methodology

A number of agreed ALND-related questions were added to the Amárach Research October (2020) Online Omnibus, and the research work was carried out using Amárach's SmartPoll Panel. Questions were designed to ask about the issues in a range of different ways, attempting to scope out the full scale of the challenge.

Profile of Sample

A total sample of 1,118 was achieved. Quotas were set in relation to gender, age, social class and region and data was weighted to achieve a sample aligned with national population. Fieldwork took place from 7th - 9th October 2020.

Figure 5. Sample respondent profile ⁶



Omnibus Results Overview – Key Findings

Summary of Omnibus Research Findings

A total sample of 1,118 was achieved. Quotas were set on gender, age, social class, region, and data weighted to complete a sample aligned with the national general population.

The main findings were:

- There was a clear difference between how people rated their abilities in literacy, numeracy versus digital literacy.
- The percentages of those who rated their skills across the three measures as ‘very good’ were 59% for literacy, 44% for numeracy and 27% for digital literacy.
- The vast majority of respondents thought that their skills were as good as other family members’ skills.
- There was a clear view that young people were relatively more advanced at digital literacy.
- There was also concern about skill development in all three areas (‘literacies’) for younger people in respondents’ families.

⁶ Source: *Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Project: An Amárach Briefing on behalf of SOLAS*, October 2020/S20-077, slide 4.

- Even though respondents had the necessary skills to participate in an online omnibus survey, a significant minority reported that weakness in any of the three skill areas negatively impacted job opportunities and choices.
- Over 50% combined mentioned courses, family/friends, community support and libraries as means/places/ways to seek help.
- 32% did not know/gave no view as to where one could seek help.
- There was also concern about skill development in all three areas for younger people in respondents' families.
- Even though respondents had the necessary skills to participate in an online omnibus survey, a significant minority reported that weakness in any of the three skill areas negatively impacted job opportunities and choices.

Results were made available and presented to SOLAS using the 11 thematic questions, detailed below:

- Q1. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is Very Weak and 10 is Very Good, how would you rate your own capability in relation to the following?
- Literacy - reading and writing.
 - Numeracy – dealing with numbers.
 - Use of technology.
- Q2. Think about your immediate family (parents, sisters and brothers and children over the age of 15). Would you say that your own skills in literacy, numeracy and technology compared with theirs are:
- Better than the rest of the family.
 - As good as the rest of the family.
 - Not as good as the rest of the family.
 - Don't know / N.A.
- Q3. When you think of the person who is the *best* in your family in each area can you describe them? (tick all that apply)
- Younger than me.
 - Older than me.
 - Male.
 - Female.
 - Spent longer in education than me.
 - Working outside the home.
- Q4. When you think of the person who is the *weakest* in your family in each area can you describe them? (tick all that apply)
- Younger than me.
 - Older than me.

- Male.
 - Female.
 - Spent longer in education than me.
 - Working outside the home.
- Q5. Which of the following do you do as part of a regular routine either in work or elsewhere (tick all that apply)?
- Using the internet.
 - Using a smartphone.
 - Using email.
 - Sending text or WhatsApp messages.
 - Using a computer.
 - Banking online.
 - Reading news online.
 - Buying goods online.
 - Reading newspapers, books or magazines.
 - Budgeting (either personal money, household or work).
 - Reading forms or other official documents.
 - Using a spreadsheet.
- Q6. Think of the members of your immediate family who are aged over 15. Tick if there is someone in your immediate family who DOESN'T do the following in life:
- Using a spreadsheet.
 - Reading newspapers, books or magazines.
 - Budgeting (either personal money, household or work).
 - Banking online.
 - Reading forms or other official documents.
 - Buying goods online.
 - Using a computer.
 - Reading news online (e.g., news websites).
 - Using email.
 - Using the internet.
 - Using a smartphone.
 - Sending text or WhatsApp messages.
- Q7. Has your skill level in literacy, numeracy or use of technology impacted *negatively* on the job opportunities or choices that you have made in life?
- Yes, very much so.
 - Yes, somewhat.
 - No.
- Q8. Do you know anyone – friends, family or work colleagues who struggle with literacy, numeracy or technology to the extent that...? (tick if yes)
- They have sought help, assistance, or support.
 - They are aware that they should seek help, assistance or support but have not to date.

- They should seek help, assistance, or support but they don't see that they have a problem.

Q9. To the best of your knowledge where would someone who struggles with literacy, numeracy or use of technology seek help?

- Colleges / schools / classes (adult education, night courses etc.).
- Online course / online / internet.
- Family / friends / me / colleagues.
- Community centres / support group.
- Library.
- National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA).
- ETB / CDETB (Education and Training Boards Ireland).
- Citizens Advice.
- Department of Education.
- SOLAS / FAS⁷
- Tutoring.
- HSE / GPs.
- VEC (Vocational Education Committee).
- Other gov (Local Authority, Job Centres etc.).
- Other organisations (An Post, Age Action, general, etc.).
- Other.
- Do not know.
- N/A.

Q10. What do you think would prevent someone from seeking support?

- Embarrassed.
- Shame.
- Themselves (i.e., Denial, Lack of motivation, Awareness etc.).
- Pride.
- Fear / Afraid.
- Shy / Lack of confidence.
- Access – where to find information.
- Financial reasons.
- Stigma / judgement.
- Time constraints.
- Age.
- Covid-related.
- School/ Organisations being a barrier.
- Other.
- Don't know.
- N/A.

Q11. What could encourage someone to seek support?

- Family / friends.

⁷ For historical reasons, "FAS" was used to aid respondents with identifying FET provision, funded by SOLAS since 2013.

- Reduce stigma / normalise.
- Encouragement and support.
- Advertising (Media, raise awareness).
- Benefits (Improve skills/ jobs/other opportunities).
- Access to support / information.
- Courses (school, online etc.).
- Financial support / free advice, classes etc.
- Advice / speak to someone / guidance.
- Themselves / Personal drive (acceptance, feeling embarrassed etc.)
- Anonymity / Confidential.
- Other.
- Don't know.
- N/A.

Pertinent insights and related data under each respective question theme heading have been provided below emerging from research findings.

- Respondents' personal ALND ratings

Figure 6. Answers to Question 1 Part 1 ⁸

There is a clear difference between literacy, numeracy and use of technology ...

(BASE: All respondents – 1118)

Your own capacity in each area

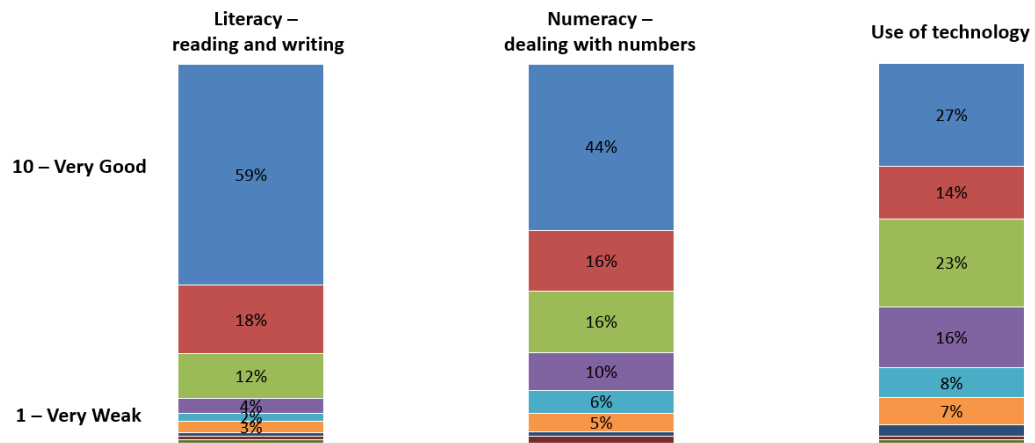


Figure 7. Answers to Question 1 Part 2 ⁹

... as the chart below illustrates

(BASE: All respondents – 1118)

NB 1% is the equivalent of 35,000 adults

	Literacy – reading and writing	Numeracy – dealing with numbers	Use of technology e.g. dealing with internet, computers and technology generally
10 – Very Good	59%	44%	27%
9	18%	16%	14%
8	12%	16%	23%
7	4%	10%	16%
6	2%	6%	8%
5	3%	5%	7%
4	1%	1%	3%
3	1%	2%	1%
2	1%	1%	1%
1 – Very Weak	1%	*	1%

⁸ Source: Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Project: An Amárach Briefing on behalf of SOLAS, October 2020/S20-077, slide 5.

⁹ Source: Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Project: An Amárach Briefing on behalf of SOLAS, October 2020/S20-077, slide 6.

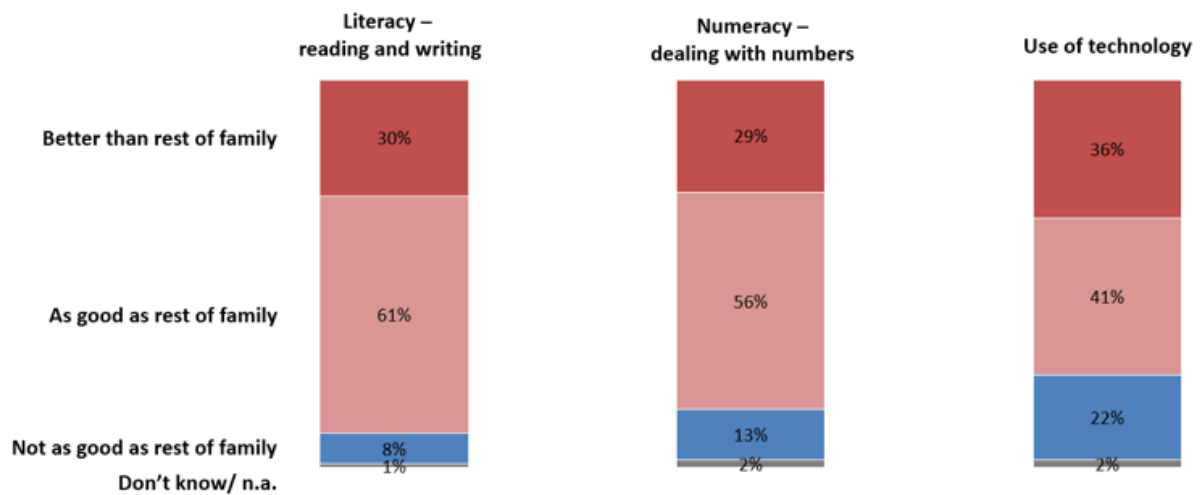
- Respondents' personal ALND ratings against immediate family's perceived best ALND level

Figure 8. Answers to Question 2 ¹⁰

Vast majority think that their skills are as good as other family members

(BASE: All respondents – 1118)

Your own skills vs. your immediate family in each area



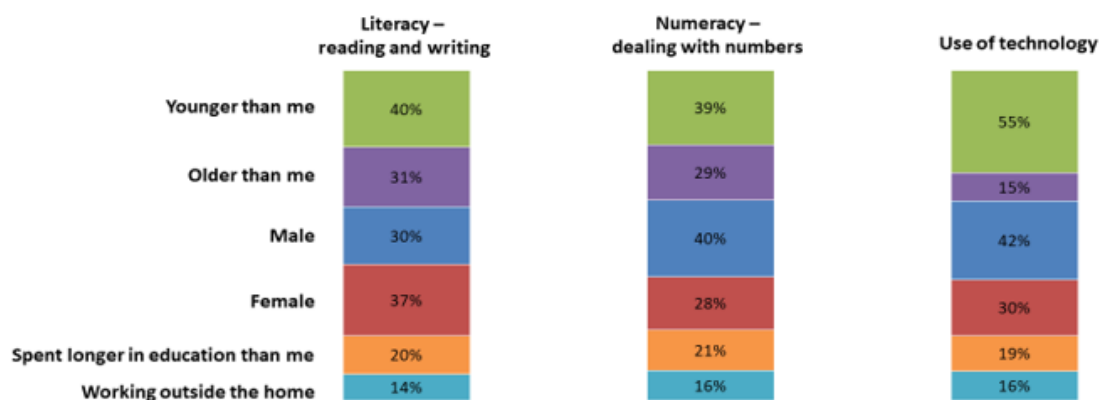
- Respondents' perception of family member's ALND capabilities

Figure 9. Answers to Question 3 ¹¹

There is a clear view that young people are more advanced at technology

(BASE: All respondents – 1118)

The person who is the best in your family in each area



¹⁰ Source: Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Project: An Amárach Briefing on behalf of SOLAS, October 2020/S20-077, slide 7.

¹¹ Source: Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Project: An Amárach Briefing on behalf of SOLAS, October 2020/S20-077, slide 8. This was a multi-response question, meaning that the respondent could select more than one category, so the sum of all individual responses adds to more than 100%.

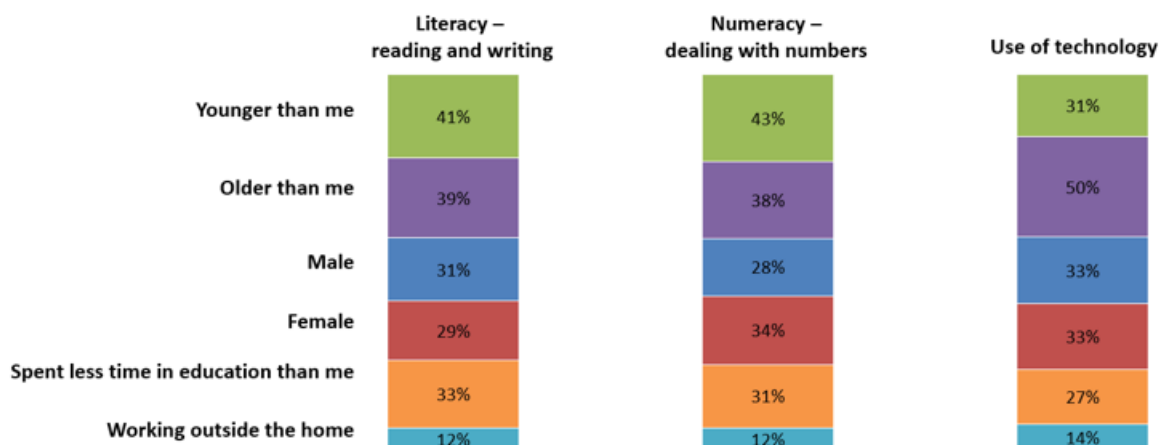
- Respondents' personal ALND ratings against immediate family's perceived worst ALND level

Figure 10. Answers to Question 4 ¹²

There are some concerns evident about younger family members

(BASE: All respondents – 1118)

The person who is the weakest in your family in each area



- Respondents' personal engagement with ALND-related activities on a routine basis

Figure 11. Answers to Question 5 ¹³

Activities as part of a regular routine

(BASE: All respondents – 1118)

Activities as part of a regular routine



¹² Source: Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Project: An Amárach Briefing on behalf of SOLAS, October 2020/S20-077, slide 9. This was a multi-response question, meaning that the respondent could select more than one category, so the sum of all individual responses adds to more than 100%.

¹³ Source: Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Project: An Amárach Briefing on behalf of SOLAS, October 2020/S20-077, slide 10. This was a multi-response question, meaning that the respondent could select more than one category, so the sum of all individual responses adds to more than 100%.

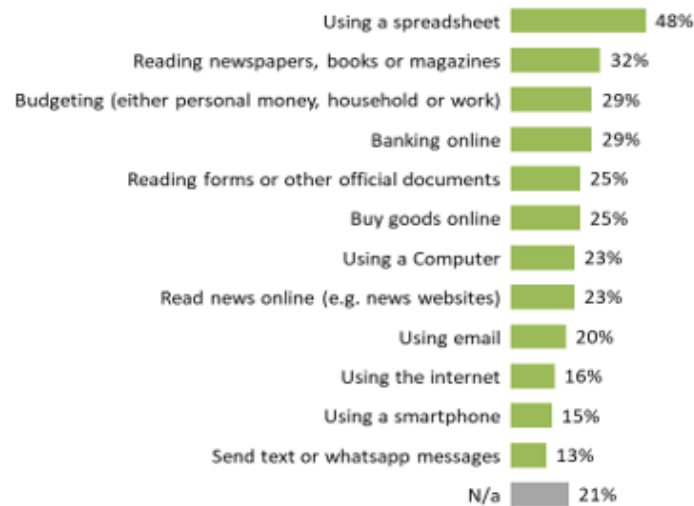
- ALND- Related activities of Respondent's immediate family (15+)

Figure 12. Answers to Question 6 ¹⁴

They identify family members who DON'T do similar activities

(BASE: All respondents – 1118)

Members of immediate family who don't do these activities



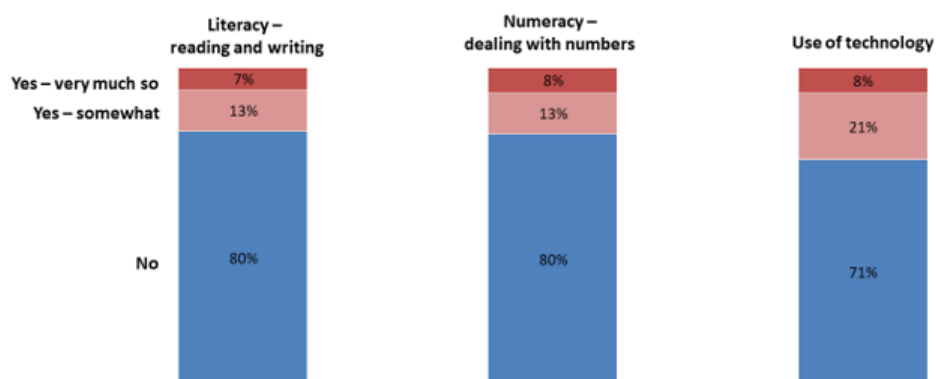
- Respondents' perception of negative impact of low ALND skill level on employment opportunities/options.

Figure 13. Answers to Question 7 ¹⁵

And weakness in each of the three areas has impacted on job opportunities and choices

(BASE: All respondents – 1118)

Own skill level in each area negatively impact on job opportunities or choices



¹⁴ Source: Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Project: An Amárach Briefing on behalf of SOLAS, October 2020/S20-077, slide 11.

¹⁵ Source: Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Project: An Amárach Briefing on behalf of SOLAS, October 2020/S20-077, slide 12.

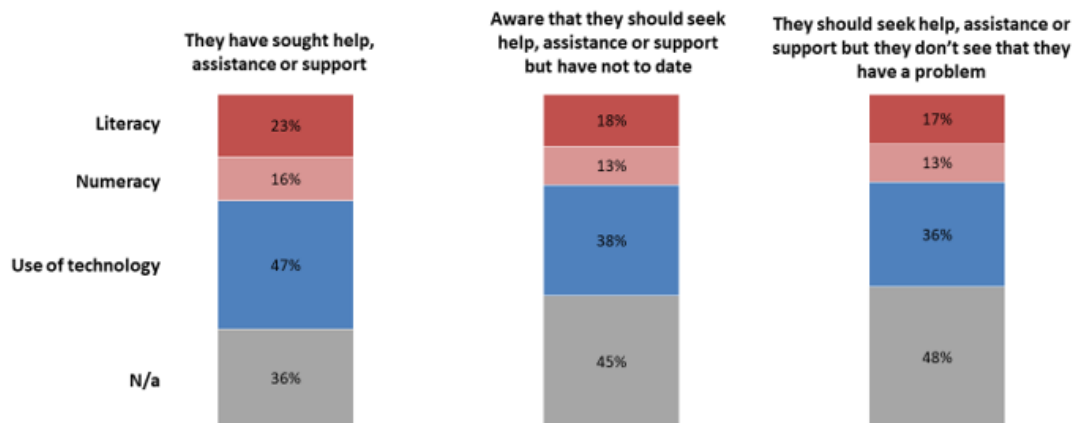
- Respondents' perception of the extent to which family and friends with ALND issues seek help

Figure 14. Answers to Question 8 ¹⁶

There is still a gap between those who should seek help and those who have.

(BASE: All respondents – 1118)

Aware of family, friends or colleagues who have struggled in each area



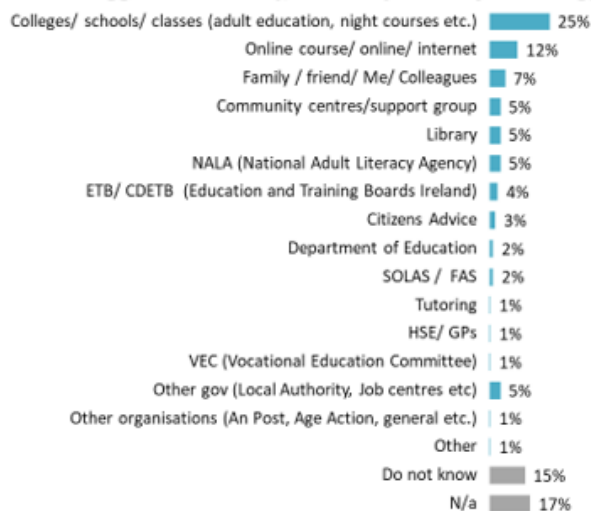
- Respondents' beliefs relating to potential channels for seeking ALND assistance

Figure 15. Answers to Question 9 ¹⁷

And where would they seek help?

(BASE: All respondents – 1118)

Where someone who struggles with literacy, numeracy or use of technology would seek help



¹⁶ Source: Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Project: An Amárach Briefing on behalf of SOLAS, October 2020/S20-077, slide 13.

¹⁷ Source: Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Project: An Amárach Briefing on behalf of SOLAS, October 2020/S20-077, slide 14. Note: The respondent could give more than one answer (i.e., select more than one category) to the question so the sum of all individual responses adds to more than 100%.

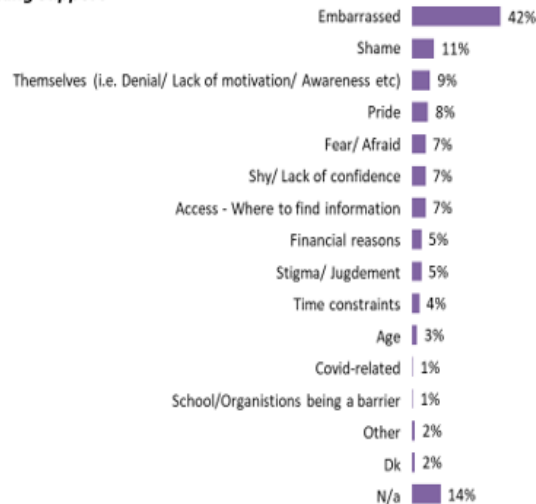
- Respondents' beliefs relating to factors deterring people from seeking ALND support

Figure 16. Answers to Question 10 ¹⁸

Social embarrassment is perceived as the key barrier to overcome

(BASE: All respondents – 1118)

Barriers to seeking support



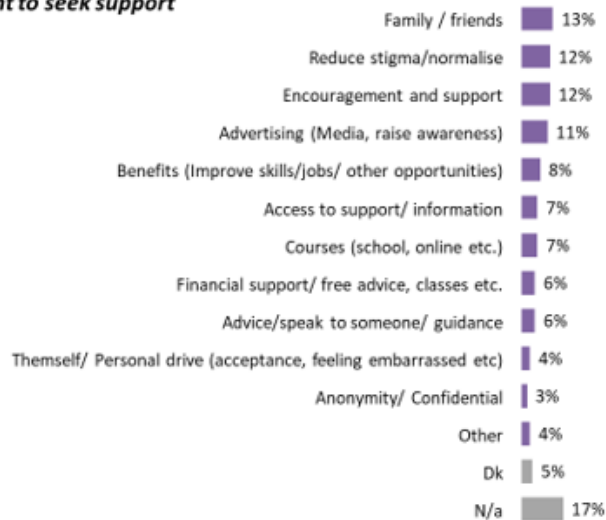
- Respondents' suggestions for encouraging those with ALND challenges to seek support

Figure 17. Answers to Question 11 ¹⁹

With some suggestions

(BASE: All respondents – 1118)

Encouragement to seek support



¹⁸ Source: Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Project: An Amárach Briefing on behalf of SOLAS, October 2020/S20-077, slide 15. Note: The respondent could give more than one answer (i.e., select more than one category), to the question so the sum of all individual responses adds to more than 100%.

¹⁹ Source: Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Project: An Amárach Briefing on behalf of SOLAS, October 2020/S20-077, slide 16.

Conclusion - Omnibus Research Findings

The majority of respondents were comfortable in their own ALND capability and capacity. Still, there was a significant minority in each category who scored their own capability at 5 or less out of 10:

Literacy 7% - estimated to be equivalent to 250,000 adults.

Numeracy 9% - estimated to be equivalent to 320,000 adults.

Technology²⁰ – estimated to be equivalent to 464,000 adults.

In truth, the issues or difficulties with literacy and technology figures will be understated. The completion of an online survey presupposes a level of literacy to navigate through the questionnaire, while there is a fundamental presupposition that one can use technology even to register to participate in panel research.

One of the more striking findings was in relation to whether ALND challenges held respondents back in terms of career and job opportunities. A significant minority believed it did, which may also signal some lack of confidence in their own capability.

Finally, there was a challenge identified in breaking down the barriers to engage in further education and learning. On a personal level, this could demonstrate the social isolation that is associated with the challenge and the need to bridge an awareness gap as to where people should go and get help and support.

²⁰ Where the researchers refer to 'technology', please note that this is to be understood as 'digital literacy', as it is referred to throughout the ALND Strategy consultation documentation.

Appendix C: Review of Non-structured Written Submissions

This section contains a review of the non-structured ²¹ written submissions received as part of the consultation on the 10-Year Strategy for Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy.

The written submissions provided a wealth of detail at the conceptual level and also regarding the economic, social and policy context to be considered and addressed when developing a 10-Year Strategy for Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy.

Key messages at the conceptual and policy levels are:

- Developing abilities, proficiencies and skills in ALND is a human right.
- The development of ALND related skills is socially situated and must take place in a way that is meaningful to the individual.
- People need to be afforded time and a multitude of supports to develop their ALND skills.
- Addressing inequality and poverty is fundamental to any improvement in ALND.
- A Whole-of-Government approach must put communities at the centre.
- A Whole-of-Government approach must make skill / competence development in ALND the obvious and easy choice.

These could be understood as overarching guiding principles that emerged from the written submissions. Though not stated as explicitly as we move through the themes and sub-themes of this section, they are nonetheless woven through the summary presented in the sections below.

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

Aspects of ALND the Strategy Should Focus on

Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy are complex and multi-faceted disciplines, but they need to be understood first and foremost as social practices. Written submissions were less likely to refer to sub-skills such as ‘phonemic awareness’ (e.g. in relation to literacy, the understanding that spoken words and syllables are made up of sequences of speech sounds) and far more likely to mention day to day needs such as ‘literacy for health’, ‘financial literacy’ or ‘media literacy’.

²¹ The term “non-structured” is used to denote the difference between written submissions and other methods of engagement, such as surveys, with the former providing more flexibility regarding how respondents could put forward the views held and deemed important.

Submissions stated that the Strategy should be based on understanding that:

- Literacy, numeracy and digital literacy goes beyond the mere acquisition of technical skills to the everyday application of these skills - whether for personal, community or work-related use.
- It is important to think of *Literacies* rather than *Literacy*. There are multiple literacies used by people in their everyday life (e.g., literacy for health, family, financial, media, digital, environmental or eco literacy, etc).
- Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy are interrelated and interdependent skills that are used in social contexts.
- Skill development cannot be rushed.

It was also evident from submissions that the 10-year Strategy would need to utilise and build on the solid foundation already in place in Ireland for Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital literacies and related learnings. It was referenced that there were many organisations at national, regional, and local level with a brief to encourage, develop and promote these skills. It became apparent that the Strategy must find ways to weave these varied and valued options into a strong and durable infrastructure – an “eco-system” for promoting, developing, and maintaining ALND.

- Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy are interdependent and dynamic.
- Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy are considered to be of equal importance.
- Literacy and Numeracy are also enabling skills for the development and acquisition of digital literacy.
- Literacy and Numeracy evolve and change over time.
- The demands of Digital Literacy increase and evolve at an accelerated pace.

Many useful initiatives and approaches were put forward in the written submissions, and some of these have been outlined in this report.

Theme 2: Awareness and Access to Information and Supports

2.1 Aspects of ALND People Find Most Difficult

Given the composite nature of Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy and the tiered approach to the development of these skills, respondents were more likely to refer to areas of skill usage that can be problematic – rather than a discrete skill or sub-skill in and of itself. This likely reflects literacy, numeracy and digital literacy as socially situated practice and the changing societal demands on how these skills are used.

There was a particular emphasis on real-life tasks such as banking and personal financial management, with many referring to the increasingly automated and digitised offerings in these areas and how this puts certain cohorts at an additional disadvantage whether because of their existing literacy and numeracy skills or indeed from digital poverty.

The accelerated move to online / remote services (e.g. online learning, online shopping, home schooling) as a result of Covid-19 was also referenced widely.

The emphasis on functional skills and also the acknowledgement that people may struggle with some but not all the new and changing demands of literacy and numeracy in a digital world was again evident from the submissions.

2.2 Barriers to ALND

The written submissions tended to emphasise structural barriers such as intergenerational poverty, societal inequality, and policy, including implicitly the lack of policy response around these issues in the first instance. They also emphasised that these structural issues need to be addressed first and foremost. Informational, dispositional, and psychological barriers that may have been traditionally attributed to the person were viewed in the context of these structural barriers (contemporary and historic). The concept of ‘digital poverty’ was also evident in responses.

“We must understand that improving literacy levels alone will not eradicate the intergenerational social inequalities that are the root cause of those unmet literacy needs”.

“To suggest that a disadvantaged individual or group need only improve their literacy to become equal with their privileged peers is entirely disingenuous. It places an unfair onus and expectation, on those who are unequal, to rectify their own unfair position. It risks replicating a deficit approach to unmet literacy needs rather than naming and tackling the root and causal inequalities.”

Where ‘informational barriers’ were mentioned, these could often be as much to do with information overload as lack of information.

“Whilst there is a broad range of material and support tools available to users, it appears to be difficult to find single information sources and users find it difficult to understand”.

In addition, the following issues were raised:

- Some submissions questioned whether all information was culturally appropriate and accessible.
- Respondents, in their submissions, highlighted the needs of native Irish speakers and also of adults in society who do not have English as a first language.
- The need for a Plain Language Approach across all public services was commonly cited.
- There was criticism of certain aspects of digitisation of services that did not have due regard to the needs of groups such as older people or those who experience digital poverty.

Some submitting parties were very aware of the feelings of fear and embarrassment often cited by people with unmet literacy, numeracy or digital literacy needs and were likely to reference these in the context of historical structural barriers.

“We cannot disregard the magnitude of social stigma and self-stigma; from speaking directly to our own groups – this is clear: Previous experiences of rejection and discouragement from education services act as a barrier to support”.

Submissions also referenced structural issues and how these impact on the participation in learning programmes for people with a disability. Submissions described low levels of participation in lifelong learning for certain groups in our society such as those with a visual impairment. The needs of members of the Deaf Community were also highlighted.

2.3 How to Encourage, Promote and Raise Awareness of ALND

Submissions called for existing good practice (particularly at the local level) to be supported and augmented. Given the nature of skill development in Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy, the majority of the day-to-day work in encouraging people to upskill happens at a very local level within communities. This is considered to be demanding work that requires

skill and dedication and needs to be acknowledged and valued as such. The work of Adult Educational Guidance Services (AEGS) in relation to outreach and their linkages with local community structures can assist in making connections with hard-to-reach groups with unmet literacy needs. This “contact point” can help to increase the awareness thus address one of the principal challenges at the ‘information’, ‘access’ and ‘engagement’ stage²².

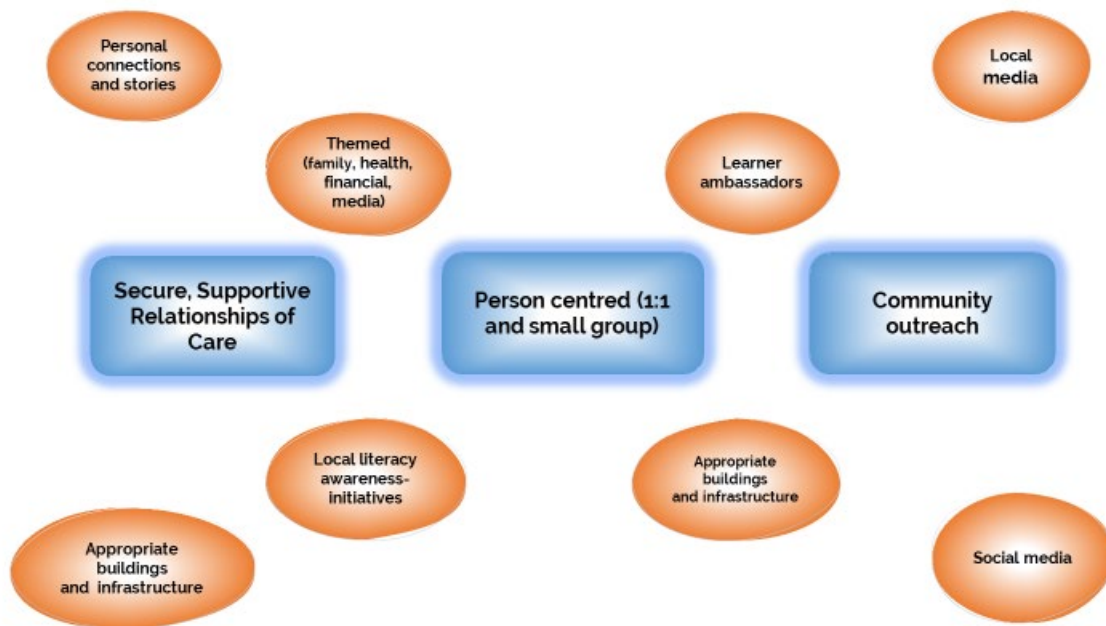
It was put forward that utilisation of less formal, local settings, such as public libraries could alleviate some barriers.

The figures below present the most commonly cited ways to encourage, promote and raise awareness of ALND.

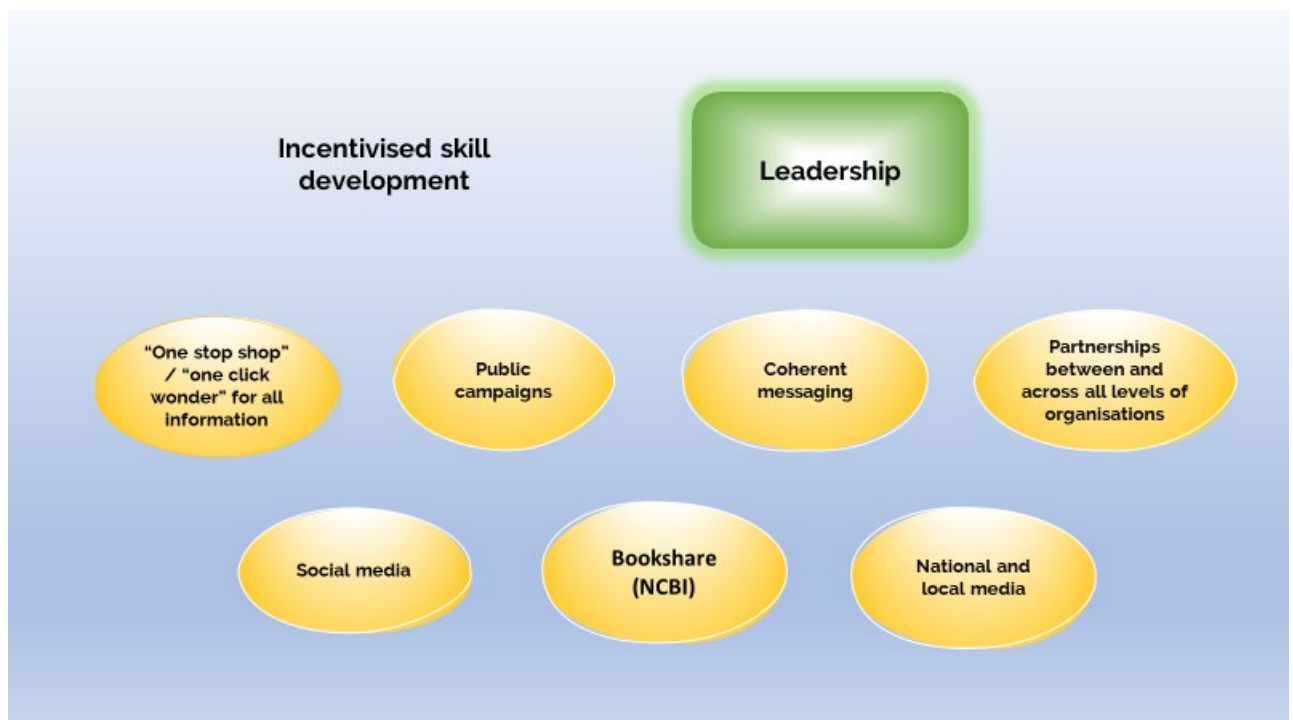
²² The AEGS are managed by the 16 ETBs and provide impartial careers and education information to adults who wish to return to education and training or are already registered on an FET programme within the ETBs.

Figure 18. Some ways to encourage, promote and raise awareness of ALND

Local



National / Regional



Source: ALND Submissions. Note: Examples provided are for illustration purpose and the above is not exhaustive.

Theme 3: Digital Divide

3.1 Current Innovative Projects for Bridging the Digital Divide

Projects aimed at bridging the digital divide ranged from those conceived at a policy level and the operational level. There were projects with a national reach and those with a local focus that could quite readily be mainstreamed with the right support. Indicative examples are provided in the figure below. Submissions also referenced innovative projects internationally that could be adapted for use in the Irish context and also put forward new ideas that could address the digital divide (e.g. a citizen's badge for digital skills).

Numerous innovative projects were referenced in the written submissions. While all of these initiatives (in the Irish context) have the same common aim, responsibility for these initiatives is spread across Government Departments and Agencies.

Figure 19 (Some existing and innovative practices for bridging the Digital Divide) below provides examples of some current innovative practices. As with earlier sections of this report, submissions called for user-friendly repository to house and cater for all the various initiatives.

Figure 19. Some existing and innovative practices for bridging the Digital Divide

Policy-driven (Funding, Collaboration across Departments)	Operational (Education and Training, Supports)	National Reach (Accessibility of information and supports)	Local / Community	International
National Broadband Plan	Hybrid learning in ETBs	www.learnwithnala.ie	Peer learning – e.g. Age Friendly Forum	http://www.digitaldelsa.eu/
Digital Skills for Citizens	Device-lending	www.bemediasmart.ie	Classes in rural Broadband Connection Points	"3 Questions to Help Stamp Out False News"
Fund for Mitigating Educational Disadvantage	Taster experiences, in 3D printing, VR headsets, coding, podcasting, videocasting, digital and online safety.	https://www.librariesireland.ie/	Irish Rural Link 'Buddy System'	

Source: ALND Submissions. Note: Examples provided are for illustration purpose and the above is not exhaustive.

3.2 How to Bridge the Digital Divide

The digital divide revealed interesting insights into poverty and inequality across demographics – with many citing instances of individuals, families and communities who are disproportionately disadvantaged in an increasingly digital world due to their not having access to the resources available to those in middle to higher socio-economic brackets. The following issues were raised:

- Along-side addressing poverty and inequality, submissions also called for high quality broadband connections across Ireland.
- Given the fast-paced changes in the digital world, ongoing access to upskilling and reskilling for all levels of interest and need was considered necessary.
- To ensure a responsive approach to skill development in an increasing digital world, dedicated ICT budgets were called for to fund both equipment and support.
- Practical approaches were suggested at the local level such as the development of Digital Learning Hubs in accessible community locations.
- The concept of ‘Digital Citizenship’ was raised in several responses.

Digital Citizenship encompassed skill development with an emphasis on online etiquette; safety and security; the ability to evaluate online content; personal bias and understanding copyright laws. The idea of a digital citizen’s badge was put forward as an idea to promote and incentivise such an approach.

In addition, the submissions referenced literacy-supported basic ICT skills classes, the use of technology enhanced learning (TEL) and specifically 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 could bring together EdTech and assistive technologies, which in turn, 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

Submissions referred to the need for people to use skills in ways that are useful and meaningful to them. Literacy, numeracy and digital literacy are like muscles that needed to be regularly exercised so as to be developed and maintained.

Due to the dynamic nature of digital literacy, it was seen as a “slightly [more] challenging category of essential skill” needing to be constantly updated as the demands of the digital world change. The digital divide was considered something that every adult in Ireland may

be at risk of encountering in some shape or form, if not now, then possibly in the future. Submissions highlighted how the digital divide impacted disproportionately on members of our society who could be likely to experience disadvantage in a multitude of other ways.

Submissions regarded the digital divide as a serious threat to progress at the individual, community, societal and economic levels. Again, the dynamic nature of digital literacy was emphasised. Submissions warned that without serious attempts to address poverty, inequality and - by extension - digital poverty, efforts aimed at bridging the digital divide will be, at best, running to stand still.

Submissions referred to marginalisation, and a reduced sense of worth and self-confidence for those experiencing digital poverty.

Additional costs of the digital divide to the person included:

- Dependency on family or friends to complete basic tasks.
- Reduced access to cost saving offers.
- Reduced access to public services.
- Increased vulnerability to online scams.

Theme 4: Priorities and Actions

Submissions recommended building on existing good practice at national, regional and local level. It was put forward that existing good practice at local level needs to be supported at regional and national levels by a whole of government approach that tackles cause of poverty and inequality and that understands the incremental nature of developing these important skills. Tangible ways to support the local and the regional and national levels included:

- Fit for purpose funding and evaluation models.
- Commitment to resourcing an integrated ALND infrastructure.
- Autonomy at the local level to provide responsive and flexible offerings.

4.1 Existing Innovative Practices for Encouraging and Promoting ALND

As with section 3.1 above, projects aimed at encouraging and promoting ALND ranged from those conceived at a policy level and the operational level, to projects with a national reach and projects with a local focus that could quite readily be upscaled and mainstreamed with the right support. Submissions also referenced innovative projects internationally that could be adapted for use in the Irish context and also put forward new ideas that could address the ALND.

Concrete examples are provided in the section of the report on focus groups and interviews that took place as part of informing the written submissions ([Appendix D: Review of Onward Research from Consultation Responses](#)).

4.2 Specific Actions to Encourage, Develop and Promote ALND

From the review of submissions, actions contained in the Strategy will need to reflect a deep understanding of the benefits and challenges associated with encouraging, developing and promoting Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy.

The submissions contain a multitude of examples of good practice and as many recommendations to build on this good practice.

Examples of specific actions are provided below. As the Strategy is developed, these and many other suggested actions can be considered.

- Recognise and value what already exists for ALND development and build on this.
- Embed quality ALND provision - ALND should be embedded across all programmes in education and training including FET programmes.
- Incentivise people to develop and maintain their literacy.
- Ensure everyone's needs are catered for – especially those with disabilities, other additional needs and those experiencing marginalisation, poverty and inequality.
- Availability and utilisation of skilled guidance for adults in their education and training options.
- Go beyond basic skills and functional literacy to also encompass multiple literacies such as environmental, health, financial, media and information, digital and critical literacy.
- Commit to developing in a short space of time a fit for purpose infrastructure (in terms of integrated policy decisions, well-resourced services and fit for purpose built and virtual environment).
- Embrace the benefits of an intergenerational approach to Literacy, Numeracy and Digital.
- Continuous Professional Development for Practitioners and establishment of Communities of Practice.

4.3 Specific Approaches for Targeting Priority Cohorts

Creativity and sensitivity were called for in equal measure when developing, encouraging and promoting ALND for priority cohorts.

A range of initiatives were described including targeted campaigns at a local level and within communities.

The configuration of ALND classes was referenced as extremely important. So, also, was providing sufficient options for specific groups of people who find comfort in learning with people from the same background, age group or gender.

Equally, where there are options to foster greater connection and integration between members of 'priority cohorts' and other groups, submissions were of the view that this should be supported also.

Some examples of initiatives for targeted cohorts include:

- Programmes such as "Dads and Lads".
- Themed family literacy.
- MABs Budgeting Basics.
- Réalt Nua.

Theme 5: Identifying and Measuring Success

Submissions cautioned that the Strategy must acknowledge that developing strong and durable skills in Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Skills takes time. In short, there is no quick fix.

Submissions called for promotion, development, and encouragement of ALND in a way that is meaningful to individuals and communities. By extension, they also emphasised the need for measurement, assessment and evaluation of Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy in a holistic way, that can record and capture the incremental achievements of learners while also reflecting and acknowledging the time, skill, and dedication required by everyone involved in developing, encouraging, and promoting ALND skills.

The below quote from the submissions is illustrative of this point.

"For many of the groups we work with, literacy is not just a means to engagement in employment but rather, literacy is a means of enabling them to engage in mainstream services. It helps to achieve greater personal responsibility over their lives, for example homeless people trying to access independent housing and health supports."

An understanding of the skill, dedication and commitment required by all who engage in the learning process was considered of paramount importance.

Submissions stated that targets should be responsive to the unique profile of literacy learners and their often atypical progression through standardised timeframes and NFAQ progression levels.

Given the dynamic nature of Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy, submissions called for an agile and dynamic strategy that would remain relevant over a 10-year period and beyond, a strategy that can anticipate and adapt to changing and evolving literacy, numeracy and digital literacy and related needs over time.

5.1 Identifying Success, Goals and Relevant Indicators

Suggested success measures were many and varied and ranged from the specific and tangible to those success related measures which have traditionally been considered more diffuse, composite and, therefore more difficult to attribute to one single input.

Submissions pointed out that social inclusion and equality cannot be measured by the capacity to engage with employment alone but should also enable the full participation of everyone to engage with all aspects of their communities and society as a whole. Appropriate measurement of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy must also be mindful of a person's ability to engage and flourish in all aspect of life.

Suggestions regarding indicators of success included:

"When our older generation are empowered and confident to navigate the internet."

"Trends in the next generation of people – stop the inter-generational transfer of literacy issues."

"Decreased isolation- by staying connected with their family, friends and people in their community."

“When people are able to access the education that they need – from where they are at – and that they understand the processes and procedures in how and where to access that education (for example, applying for grants, getting help with disabilities and so on).”

Success measures were described at the level of society, the economy, community, families and the individual – and a mix of these. In the main, submissions emphasised that a person-centred approach to developing, promoting, and encouraging Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy could only have positive impacts on individuals, their families and, by extension, communities, wider society, and the economy. Furthermore, it could be inferred those effective approaches would need to be reflective of wider inclusion and anti-racism and that these should be discernible and permeate all institutions and levels of society.

Overall, there was consensus that success should be measured in broad terms that reflects and takes into account the wider benefits of learning, as well as any more tangible and easily measured indicators (such as employment and qualifications).

5.2 Measuring Progress and Outcomes

Across the submissions there was a consensus that a menu of progress-tracking and outcomes-capturing approaches could be employed depending on the need and situation. There was an acknowledgement that methods for both quantitative and more especially qualitative progress tracking would be required.

The requirement for meaningful progress tracking for short, medium, and long-term was also referred to. Below are some suggestions from the submissions.

“A qualitative research programme should be undertaken after a predetermined period of time to analyse the success.”

“Explicit reporting of literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy attainments through the educational sectors (pre-school to tertiary education)”

“Government should commission a survey similar to PIACC to establish literacy levels five years after the strategy commences and another at the end of the strategy’s life-time.”

“Research on levels of civic engagement, increased voting.”

“Data on health outcomes over time.”

Appendix D: Review of Onward Research from Consultation Responses

Introduction to Onward Research

Several participants in the ALND consultation process have undertaken their own research to inform their submissions. This section summarises the responses from participants in the ALND consultation that conducted onward research activities including focus groups, small scale surveys and interviews with their own service users or other stakeholders, as part of the consultation process, thus informing their submissions.

In order to assist the process, relevant organisations were offered a 'Focus Group Feedback Template and a 'Checklist', compiled by SOLAS Learner Support Unit (LSU) that could be utilised for this purpose. While smaller scale focus group and one-to-one interview methodologies were predominant, some organisations also conducted short, small-scale surveys with relatively high numbers of individuals to support and inform the process as well. Most of these organisations utilised the Consultation Paper developed by the SOLAS LSU Team for assisting them with and guiding this process.

The figure below outlines the level of engagement of individuals in "onward research". It should be noted that some of the respondents who undertook onward research did not specify the numbers of participants in the process. Only those who specified numbers engaged are counted in the summary of participation below. As such, the actual number of individuals engaged through this method would have been higher in practice than reported here.

Figure 20. Summary of participation in onward research by mode

Number of Focus Groups	Number of Focus Group Participants	Number of Interview Participants	Survey Participants	Total Participants across all Modes
16	85	51	265	401

Figure 21. Summary of mode used by respondents

Mode	Number of Organizations
Respondents who referred to Focus Groups	8
Respondents who referred to Interviews	8
Organisations who referred to Surveys ²³	4

²³ These surveys were administered by the respondents themselves and are distinct from the ALND public surveys conducted by SOLAS as part of the consultation process.

The following organisations and individuals attached to these organisations indicated they had engaged in onward research specifically for the ALND consultation process. A brief outline of the approach taken is given for each, and the findings summarised in the key finding section to the extent that these details were described in the responses.

Figure 22. Organisations that undertook onward research activities to inform their submissions and summary of the approach taken

Organisation	Approach
AONTAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 specific purpose virtual focus groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 9 learners took part. • 3 additional focus groups conducted as part of wider regional learner forum events (Laois and Offaly). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 40 learners. • A Learner Survey. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 43 learners took the survey. <p>A total of 92 learners took part in this consultation process from six ETBs and seven Community Education centres. Learners came from both FET and non-ETB funded community education provision. All were actively enrolled in an FET or Community Education course. Learner feedback was gathered through virtual focus group discussions and a learner survey.</p>
Down Syndrome Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held two focus groups, with unspecified number of participants. • The focus groups included adults with Down Syndrome and local adult education organisers from branches of Down Syndrome Ireland.
Donegal ETB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donegal ETB's FET Service consulted with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Senior Management Team. ○ FET Programme and Project Coordinators, Organisers and Facilitators. ○ FET Tutors, Teachers and Trainers. ○ Quality Assurance Support Service. ○ Guidance Service. ○ Community Education Providers. ○ Students. ○ Public. <p>Consultation was conducted through questionnaires, facilitated focus groups and interviews.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 162 responses were received to surveys circulated.
ETBI	<p>ETBI reviewed consultation documents received from the following ETBs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limerick and Clare ETB. • Donegal ETB. • Galway and Roscommon ETB. • Kilkenny and Carlow ETB. • Kildare and Wicklow ETB. • Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB. • City of Dublin ETB. • Cork ETB.

Organisation	Approach
	<p>To ensure a participative approach, ETBs consulted with groups including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Management Team. • FET Programme and Project Coordinators, Organisers and Facilitators. • Adult Literacy Organisers. • FET Tutors, Teachers and Trainers. • Quality Assurance Support Service. • Guidance Service. • Community Education Providers. • Students. • Public. <p>Consultations / sessions were conducted through questionnaires, facilitated focus groups and interviews. In addition, ETBI considered the proposed approach to a 10-year ALND Strategy at an ETBI facilitated Thematic Discussion engaging FET Directors. Observations gathered from this thematic discussion are included in the submission.</p>
Irish Prison Service	The Irish Prison Services submitted testimonies from 5 students in custody and feedback from two focus groups (Portlaoise and Dochas Centre).
Irish Rural Link	<p>The Training Coordinator of Irish Rural Link conducted interviews to support the consultation process. These captured the views of participants who availed of the DELSA project training and also three participants from their Getting Citizens Online Programme ages from 18 plus to over 90.</p> <p>20 participants were interviewed, 12 were female and 8 were male.</p>
Kilkenny Carlow ETB	<p>KCETB engaged with Adult Literacy Organiser's (ALO), learners and tutors in a consultation process.</p> <p>This consultation took place over a period of two weeks commencing the 4th of December and closing on the 16th of December. The consultation with ALO's was conducted through a focus group facilitated by the AEO while the Tutor and Learner consultations were completed through an MS Forms survey.</p> <p>27 tutors and 33 learners responded</p>
Maynooth University Student #1 ²⁴	Maynooth University Student # 1 interviewed a Literacy Coordinator.
Maynooth University Student #2 ²⁵	Maynooth University Student #2 sought the views of 12 adult learners an adult education centre. It was reported that all of the learners in this group have either experienced or are currently experiencing mental health issues in their lives.
Maynooth University Student #3 ²⁶	Maynooth University Student #3 provided input from a cohort of Nurses and Nursing Students. Five questions were asked of each participant (three qualified nurses & three nursing students) relative to eHealth literacy and digital competency in patients with chronic disease.

²⁴ Name withheld for this report due to GDPR requirements.

²⁵ Name withheld for this report due to GDPR requirements.

²⁶ Name withheld for this report due to GDPR requirements.

Organisation	Approach
Maynooth University Student #4 ²⁷	Maynooth University Student #4 interviewed 7 people in total, all female, by presenting them with questions related to digital literacy and its impact on their health. Maynooth University Student #4 sought to present the viewpoints from members of our community in the age group 70+ years.
Maynooth University Student #5 ²⁸	Maynooth University Student #5 held several conversations with adult educators, adult learners (fulltime, part-time, upskilling, night school) and local community bodies.
Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETb)	<p>Four separate focus groups were facilitated by Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETb). These were conducted by a GRETb ALO with the help of two tutors. Focus Groups 1 to 3 consisted of participants who were migrants to Ireland with countries of origin including: Poland, Spain, Romania, Italy, Ghana, Morocco, Sudan, Albania, and the Congo [DR - imputed].</p> <p>Focus Group 4 consisted of younger people at risk of social exclusion.</p> <p>24 students took part in total. All focus group sessions were conducted online which was reported to have been "...not ideal [but] effective".</p>
Youth Employability Support South Sligo (Foroige)	The details of the focus group were not specified.
Group of Representatives on Irish Language [once-off group], facilitated by GRETb	Focus Group meeting providing feedback on the Government's 10-year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy (ALND) Strategy, organised by Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board, Conradh na Gaeilge and Breacadh. This was a focus group session attended by the Language Planning Officers (12 in total). A focus group guide was utilised to facilitate the virtual session.

²⁷ Name withheld for this report due to GDPR requirements.

²⁸ Name withheld for this report due to GDPR requirements.

Theme 1: Different Meanings of ALND

Sub theme 1.1. Aspects of ALND the Strategy Should Focus on

1.1.1	Functional ALND
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It was reported that the understanding of ALND and the needs in this regard were contextual and depended on individual circumstances such as whether one is a parent, a car owner, a current user of health services and supports such as mental health supports, and a social welfare recipient. The common theme was that learners wanted to be able to find and use information in ways that would help them to be better informed, engage with other organisations, professionals, and services to help them to maintain their health, manage their finances and support their families better.

The focus group work undertaken by KCETB with ALOs highlighted the importance of Literacy Programmes addressing functional types of literacy.

Quote “Topics of learning need to be relevant to real life problems adults are dealing with such as debt, budgeting, understanding cost of money and financial transactions.”

The focus group conducted by Youth Employability Support Service (YESS) indicated that Literacy, for them, meant the ability to read and write, to understand what you have read and to understand signs and written instructions. Numeracy suggested to them the ability to use numbers to solve problems, using addition and subtraction especially when shopping to make sure they receive the correct change. These viewpoints were echoed by the focus groups conducted by Down Syndrome Ireland who also mentioned reading music, being able to use recipes, being able to travel, understanding the news that one hears on the television, being able to communicate with other people and understand what they are saying when going through a day.

Finally, digital literacy was highlighted by the YESS group as evaluating and composing clear information through writing and other media, ability to use a computer, bank machine and tills when working in retail. For these young people ALND has an impact on everyday life.

For example, in school and college, it is important to understand lectures, instructions, ability to complete assignments and this has been highlighted with Covid-19 as school and college attendance has been facilitated online. They acknowledge the world of work, noting that most things are computerised such as ‘tills, lotto machines and everything is ordered with use of a computer’. The group appears to focus their attention on mainly service industry type roles. For their own day-to-day interactions, they noted that everything involves following instructions e.g., to obtain a driving licence, doing shopping and banking. The Down Syndrome Ireland group highlighted Smartphone use and engaging with entertainment media such as viewing online movies or playing video games, through to more functional items such as using bank cards.

The focus group conducted by the Group of Representatives on Irish Language referenced practical difficulties with filling digital forms, such as accented characters and the non-recognition of place names and personal names, which creates obstacles for those seeking to become digitally literate in Irish. The need for Plain Irish as well as Plain English was also mentioned.

The emergence of new literacies in addition to ‘traditional’ literacies: Critical Literacy; Media Literacy; Financial Literacy; Health Literacy; Environmental Literacy; Digital Citizenship and Citizenship was highlighted by ETBI in its review of the ETB research.

1.1.2	Basic ALND Skills
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Topics of learning need to be relevant to real life problems adults are dealing with such as managing debt, budgeting, understanding [the value] / cost of money and financial transactions, as outlined in the KCETB focus groups.

The Irish Prison Service focus groups identified core skills for living, such as reading newspapers, understanding and paying bills, while, separately also identifying what they classified as skills needed for work, such as applying for jobs, [filling] forms and reading and writing skills needed for almost any job, that is not exclusively physical in nature.

Amongst GRETB participants (focus group 1), the absence of an effective school system in the learner’s country of origin, particularly for some female participants, presented itself as a challenge in terms of having both the ability and confidence to embark on adult learning. Furthermore, it was conveyed that there was also a sense of shame felt around reliance on

family members for help with everyday literacy and digital literacy related tasks such as being able to “read text messages [and] and send texts and emails”. In some cases, participants had experienced criticism in the home environment when trying to express themselves in English, as opposed to their more familiar mother tongue. They felt judged by children and partners, believing their own level of English to be inferior to the level of other household members. (focus group 3).

1.1.4	Digital Literacy
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One participant in the focus group research conducted by Maynooth University Student #2, highlighted how the lack of digital literacy skills can impact on their lives, especially during the Covid pandemic.

Quote: “I didn’t go to my son’s parent teacher meeting, it was held online because of Covid, I hadn’t a clue how to do it. I don’t think it’s fair for schools to think that all parents have skills to let them do an online meeting. Now I don’t know how my son is getting on at school.”

Sub-theme 1.2 Daily Activities Supported by ALND

1.2.1	Basic Daily Tasks/ Safety
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For the young people engaged with as part of the Youth Employability Services, ALND has an impact on everyday life. For example, – [for attending] school and college, it is important to understand lecturers’ instructions, ability to complete assignments and this has been highlighted with Covid-19 as school and college has been facilitated online. For their own day-to-day interactions, they noted that everything involves following instructions e.g. for [obtaining] a driving licence, shopping and banking.

ETBI’s review of ETB research indicated that the ALND Strategy should move away from a “deficit model”, towards the one that emphasises learners’ abilities and the value of life experiences. Language and terminology should promote ‘foundation,’ ‘core’ and/or ‘essential’ rather than ‘Basic Skills,’ which risks demeaning the existing strengths and life skills of FET learners.

1.2.2	Accessing / Interpreting Information
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The feedback from the group of older people interviewed by Maynooth University Student #4 showed that many individuals felt that being able to look up health information on-line was a key benefit. However, concerns were raised about how to look for 'reliable health information that they could trust'. One interviewee spoke about this after she had attended a hospital appointment.

Quote "I did not understand the medical jargon used so I went straight home to google afterwards. It's hard to know exactly where to look though."

1.2.5	Citizenship/ Participation in Society
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The Irish Prison Services – feedback referenced another perceived barrier:

Quote: "I don't know why the driver theory language is so hard, I can drive but I can't understand those questions."

1.2.7	Work/ Business/ Education
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The Youth Employability Support service group acknowledged the impact of ALND on the world of work, including focusing on specific job roles.

A number of GRETB focus group participants expressed a preference for having ALND learning recognised insofar as they would have tangible evidence of progress to present to an employer. Many face problems relating to language level demanded of them in the workplace and wished to improve their writing skills.

1.2.9	Accessing Services/ Rights/ Entitlements
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Evident from the focus group work conducted by Maynooth University Student #2 was how issues with literacy can affect the ability of individuals to access their rights and entitlements and related services.

Quote “One time I got a letter from social welfare and I couldn’t understand it. I was applying for Disability Allowance, I didn’t know they wanted me to answer the letter... a few weeks later I got another letter saying I was turned down because I didn’t reply to the last letter.

Quote “I’d like to learn [how] to tax my car online.”

Theme 2: Awareness and Access to Information and Supports

Sub-theme 2.1 Aspects of ALND People Find Most Difficult

2.1.5	Dependent on Cohort Characteristics
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The Irish Prison Service focus groups identified a difference in the abilities of people of different ages:

Younger students indicate they can use email and social media on a smart phone, but they “wouldn’t have a clue how to use a PC or Mac.”

Older students (on long sentences) say they do not know how they are going to cope with contactless payments/apps/phones/etc. when they get out.

2.1.10	Accessibility of Information/ Services
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Evident from the focus group work conducted by Maynooth University Student #2 was how issues with literacy can affect the ability of individuals to access their rights and entitlements.

Sub-theme 2.2 Barriers to ALND

2.2.1	Low Confidence (incl. Shame/ Stigma/ Fear etc.)
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AONTAS learners would like to see feelings of shame, embarrassment or fear around improving literacy numeracy and digital literacy skills alleviated.

Quote: “People need to know they are not alone, they are not stupid, and that help is out there.”

Maynooth University Student #1’s interview highlighted how individuals could aim to avoid educational settings following negative experiences at school.

Quote: Adult Literacy Coordinator “When you leave school without a formal qualification or a low level of education you tend to avoid being in another educational setting again”.

Quote: - Adult Literacy Coordinator “[Students who had school difficulties may have been] mocked for being stupid and therefore lost interest in school”.

The group of older people interviewed by Maynooth University Student #4 felt that the reluctance to use computers in their age group could be attributed to fear and lack of confidence. One interviewee referred to being ‘terrified of breaking the computer’. A number of the interviewees also voiced anxiety at not being able to keep up with technology and being left behind. This contributed to a lack of confidence in their own ability.

The survey conducted by Donegal ETB also showed a range of barriers preventing people from taking part in Literacy services and covering many of the themes highlighted by other respondents. The highest-ranking issues reported by Donegal ETB survey were:

- Embarrassment.

- Thinking it is too late.
- Not knowing where to go.
- Poor [previous] experience of formal education ('in school').

KCETB also found similar results in their learner survey where 73% felt that embarrassment, stigma, and lack of confidence were the main reasons that would stop someone from looking for help with their skills, with some of these citing previous bad experience in school acting as a prohibitor to people seeking assistance.

Similarly, in the Irish Rural Link interviews, fear was identified as the main factor that kept people from becoming digitally literate. Many interviewees reported they had extremely bad experiences when it came to formal education. The thought of returning to a classroom made them feel extremely anxious.

The Irish Language Group referenced a challenge involved in recruiting a required number of people to attend a course in Irish and it is thought that the numbers are not there to justify the demand for a course in Irish.

2.2.3	Lack of Time
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The group of student nurses and qualified nurses interviewed by Maynooth University Student # 3 identified time as a barrier, especially for those nurses who are working in relation to developing their own digital literacy skills:

Quote - "time constraints, ability and desire to access the information, for those nurses that have been practicing for more than 10 years, I have found them to be very resistant to changing and up-dating their practices."

2.2.4	Accessibility of Information/ Services
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AONTAS focus group learners indicated a preference for digital skills courses to be prioritised upon the reopening of centres after COVID.

Maynooth University Student #1's interview with an Adult Literacy Coordinator indicated that one area that may need to be assessed in relation to access to information about

courses was when the information is spread digitally as many of potential learners were digitally excluded. The literacy coordinator interview indicated that digital exclusion encompassed:

- no access to a technology due to economic reasons and /or
- a lack of internet connectivity due to geographical reasons.

Respondents interviewed by Maynooth University Student #3 highlighted that there can be an assumption in the workplace that most people working in occupations classified as professional occupations such as nursing for example, would know where and how to source information, but that this was not always the case.

Quote: “It’s assumed that we know how and where to access information relevant to our [role or profession related] duties, but this is not the case with everyone. Some of us are not tech savvy and don’t use or have access to internet resources outside of work and so are not as familiar as others may be. There’s sometimes a fear of identifying yourself in this way because of it.”

2.2.5	Costs/ Financial Restrictions
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In the KCETB learner survey, 2-in-5 of those surveyed felt that access to services was a problem. Some had issues with transport and finding directions to get to classes, others could not attend because of lack of affordable childcare. Some respondents expressed a lack of knowledge around what supports and services were available and they did not have the skills to look this up.

2.2.6	Mental Health, Trauma, Bad Previous Experience of Education
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The participants in the Irish Prison Service focus groups also identified drugs/addiction as potential barrier for the engagement of individuals. This was borne out by figures provided by the Irish Prison Service which indicated that drugs and alcohol dependence were very common problems prisoners faced and were present in between 61% and 79% of prisoners.

A number of students in GRET B (focus group 3) said they loathed classes because they were made to feel like children again, despite often being skilled and qualified to work in their mother tongue / [the country of origin].

Additionally, fear of judgement and perceived negative appraisal from close family seemed to be a thread which ran throughout the GRETB focus group sessions and was worthy of mention.

Finally, respondents emphasised the benefits of an ethos that promoted voluntary, pressure-free participation on programmes and recommended that such practice would be promoted and extended.

2.2.10	Motivation
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The group of older people interviewed by Maynooth University Student #4 also identified a potential lack of perceived benefit for individuals. This was characterised as people becoming comfortable with having the necessary digital or online tasks undertaken on their behalf by willing family members or friends.

Quote - "My grandchildren do most of the computer work for me so there is no reason for me to know it."

GRETB learners (focus group 1) reiterated the challenges associated with taking the first step due to English language barriers. Many participants live in communities where they only hear their 'mother tongue' - languages other than English and do not get the opportunity to practice English or indeed to hear about the availability of local courses.

Finding literacy classes to suit work and childcare responsibilities was also seen to be a significant barrier for a number of GRETB focus group participants (focus group 2)

Members of the same focus group referred to another vital element impacting the experiences of adult learners from other countries, namely the perceived lack of recognition of prior learning / qualifications achieved in the country of origin (focus group 2).

2.2.11	Covid-19
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Those interviews by Irish Rural link expressed their views regarding how Covid-19 effected their mental health and how being away from their family and friends caused them to feel isolated and many people struggled to stay positive. Interviewees spoke about friends,

family and that lacking digital skills was a huge barrier. They were so many family members and friends who were unable to use technology and did not have access to broadband and this left them completely isolated during Covid-19.

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

2.3.1	Advertising/ Public Awareness Campaigns
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It was reported that AONTAS focus group learners would like to see increased advertisement with clear messaging around course affordability and access. The learners suggested that literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy skills should be promoted as starting point to taking other courses and gaining other skills and suggested that the wider benefits of literacy learning to be promoted.

Many AONTAS learners had heard about their courses through word-of-mouth referrals from a family member or friend who had accessed the service previously. While word-of-mouth referrals were important, many expressed concerns about learners who were not hearing about the supports available. Diversity in methods of advertisement and publicity channels was seen as key, given the potential limited literacy and digital literacy skills of those who would benefit from taking a course. Learners suggested that courses be advertised through social media, in community centres, in INTREO offices, and on noticeboards in local shops, primary schools and the post office.

When asked how could services and supports providers better encourage adults with literacy, numeracy and digital skills needs to come forward to seek and get assistance, learners who responded to the KCETB survey suggested advertising was the most popular method with 2-in-5 of respondents suggesting advertising on social media, TV and radio.

They suggested using past learners to talk about their positive experiences and how the service is not like 'school'. They recognised that word of mouth is a powerful way to highlight the services and also acknowledged that tutors being friendly and understanding was very important aspect of this.

The Group of Representatives on Irish Language suggested that Comharchumainn could be used as "one stop shop(s)" for the provision of information, given the relationships with different people in the community, that is to say, by providing a comfortable space to ask questions, and given that local people have confidence in them.

2.3.2	Community/ Schools / Interagency Networks
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The importance of ensuring availability within the community for those who need the services was highlighted by the Down Syndrome Ireland group.

KCWETB focus groups with tutors put forward that Literacy Awareness Training should be provided to public bodies, to improve interagency awareness. This would facilitate referral to Literacy learning. The creation of clear referral lines between ETBs, HSE, DSP and other public services would streamline access to provision for Learners / those who need relevant services and supports.

2.3.3	Participation of Adults with ALND Needs in Promotion / Peer Encouragement / ALND Champions
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The use of peer approaches to encourage the engagement of older people was highlighted by the people interviewed by Maynooth University Student #4, in that digitally competent older people could share their journey to becoming digitally literate. This would include describing their initial fears, how they overcame them and the positive changes it made to their lives.

KCETB learner respondents also suggested using past learners to talk about their positive experiences and how the service is different from school. They acknowledged that word of mouth is a powerful way to highlight the services and that Tutors being friendly and patient was very important for this.

The group of older people interviewed suggested that doctors or healthcare workers should communicate the importance of digital literacy to the older generation. This could be part of an overall policy in positive ageing and maintaining health and independence in older people.

GRETb focus group participants (focus group 4) reported that self-consciousness in relation to literacy learning could be reduced or overcome by confiding in a trusted person. They were keen to see short videos or TV or radio advertising showing the kind of help available, with contact numbers and literacy-friendly websites to look up and easy to read flyers in the post.

Theme 3: Digital Divide

Sub-theme 3.2 How to Bridge the Digital Divide

3.2.1	Access to Resources (Equipment/ Tech/ Wi-Fi etc.)
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Learners taking part in the AONTAS focus groups would like tutors and learners to have access to all IT resources necessary to teach and learn online.

Maynooth University Student #1's interview with an Adult Literacy Coordinator indicated that one area that may need to be assessed was the information that was spread digitally as many of them were digitally excluded. This digital exclusion included those who have no access to a technology due to economic reasons and /or a lack of internet connectivity due to geographical reasons.

KCETB tutors in the focus groups held by KCETB called for the provision of national affordable, high speed broadband access, particularly in rural areas. They also identified that literacy services would benefit from:

- Access to a wide range of ICT devices in class.
- Staffed Digital Skills hubs with high-speed broadband access in outreach settings such as community centres and public libraries.
- Device loan schemes.
- Local community-based initiatives with targeted provision to disadvantaged groups.
- Enough time for learners to gain knowledge and confidence in the new skills: longer courses or ongoing support.

Irish Rural ink interviewees felt that an initiative for devices to be available on loan, similar to library books, would be beneficial and suggested the libraries take on / offer this type of service.

GRETb focus group participants (focus group 2) commented on the need for support through basic technology classes, as well as the opportunity to engage in self-directed learning through accessible applications and learning platforms. While most participants appeared to have access to broadband, some were limited by poor data plans available to them or subscribed to and/or poor broadband levels/speed.

A sizeable number of GRETb students reported they were confident using technology, though significantly, in their own language, and continued to use their own language applications. They were all eager to learn about and embrace technology but felt that reliance on their own language was holding them back. Access and confidence were also reported as issues.

Quote: [second-hand account] “A woman reported that she had never used a computer, while her husband and her children use[d] it....”

3.2.2	ALND Education and Training
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AONTAS learners felt that digital skills would continue to become more and more important in the modern world and would like to see digital skills / digital literacy incorporated into all literacy and numeracy courses.

The older people interviewed by Maynooth University Student #4 identified peer learning and the potential to offer “train the trainer” programmes to older people, and in addition to this the use of intergenerational approaches by having younger people become “digital buddies” of older people.

Irish Rural Link interviewees expressed their fears regarding online safety when using online banking. They worried people would be able to access their passwords or could gain access to their bank accounts. It was suggested that a simple module on online safety and something like ‘red warnings’ alerts would be extremely beneficial.

Among the older GRET learner cohort, there was a lower perceived need to improve digital skills, partly because these focus group participants were not fully convinced that they could learn new skills and also due to their preferences for asking a family member with better digital and technical skills to assist them.

The Irish Language group mentioned the Skills exchange -namely Pobalscoil Chorca Dhuibhne – with young people helping older people with basic computer, digital skills as one of the ways to support and promote the relevant aspects of digital literacy.

3.2.3	Supports / Access to Resources
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ETBI noted in their summary of the individual ETBs research, that the digital divide is reinforced by the capacity (or otherwise) of individuals to access and fully use devices and have access to reliable and affordable broadband. Tutor use of Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) is deemed key to enable learner-centred approaches, learner independence and self-assessment. Further supports were also called for, with the aim to boost learner confidence to engage with IT / digital tools and systems, software, and applications. WhatsApp was referenced as a particularly simple and accessible tool.

The Irish Language Group mentioned that attention should be given to the needs of the native Irish speakers, including making relevant information available, for example that relevant forms should be written in the language of the local community.

3.2.4	Accessibility of Information/ Services
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Down Syndrome Ireland suggested that service providers should use easy to read documents with photos for people who are just starting out with computers.

3.2.6	Funding/ Resources (including. Human Resources)
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Ensuring funding is available to help those who do not have access to digital devices if needed, help them to learn, and have more contacts with the world was stressed by the Down Syndrome Ireland Group. The provision of equipment to older people was also identified by the group of older people interviewed by Maynooth University Student #4.

GRETB learners expressed preferences for literacy-supported basic computer and technology classes and increased advertisement of basic IT courses incorporating language and literacy issues. Equally, flexible access to ICT equipment was seen as being important.

3.3 Impact of the Digital Divide

3.3.1	Social Isolation/ Marginalisation
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The Irish Prison services highlighted the feeling of exclusion that could arise when lacking digital literacy.

Quote: "I feel stupid, I don't know anything about computers, and I just go quiet if people are talking about them."

GRETB focus group participants (focus group 1) was divided when it came to describing experiences related to digital literacy. Some had no problems with digital technology, they used it all the time, but had no qualifications and would like to acquire some. Language was

an issue as they felt their English was not good enough to pursue a computer class like the ECDL, given the language difficulties. One participant reported finding the pace of a course too fast, therefore suggesting that a combined language and computer class may be the solution. Other members of the group had never used technology themselves, with two female participants reporting not knowing how to read or access their text messages.

Theme 4: Priorities and Actions

Sub-theme 4.1 Existing Innovative Practices for Encouraging/ Promoting ALND

AONTAS focus group participants appreciated the opportunity to practice the skills they have learned in class in a hands-on manner.

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

4.2.2	ALND Education and Training
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Leaners who took part in the AONTAS focus groups felt that one-to-one support helped improve their literacy skills.

Quote: “We get one-to-one support and they really do make sure we understand everything”.

This was also echoed by the Down Syndrome Ireland in relation to making available one-to-one tutoring and making sure there are interesting things to read so that people become and remain engaged or ‘want to stay with it’.

AONTAS survey respondents identified many exercises such as creative writing assignments, research skills, reading comprehensions, and typing practice to specific programs that learners received training on, such as Microsoft Teams, Outlook 365, Microsoft Word, and PowerPoint. It was suggested that learners had a chance to learn digital literacy, but not literacy or numeracy, as their courses were focusing more on the specialist topics.

Quote: “We learned IT and, other than that nothing yet because of everything going around they thought it is more important for us to learn safety and CPR”.

Quote: “In computers I don’t want to learn about word processing, and how to copy and paste, I’ll never need that, I would like to learn about how to use skype, or how to buy stuff online.”

Quote: “I was so happy to hear I’d be learning computers, but we spent ages on Publisher, it was ok, but designing posters is not something I really need to know. I would [have] loved to spend more time learning how to use the internet to look up information, sometimes it’s hard to find the information you need about things, I would have liked to learn this better.”

Student engaged in the Irish Prison Services repeatedly mentioned a one-to-one approach as being very conducive to progress.

Quote: “They are very understanding; you can get 1:1 which means other people don’t know my business.”

Quote: “I started off 1:1 and when I got a bit better, I joined a small group. There was work and also banter which was good.”

4.2.3	Welcoming Learning Environments
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AONTAS focus group learners felt that an open and welcoming class atmosphere is a key ingredient for success. Adult literacy classes, in contrast previous experiences in school, were described as informal and moved at a flexible pace, allowing learners more time to focus on skills or topics they found challenging.

Quote - “We can take our time, there’s never any rush.”

Also, it was indicated that a more welcoming environment could be created or would be encouraged if learners felt the prior learning was considered in the delivery of their lessons.

According to the Adult Literacy Coordinator, interviewed in Maynooth University Student #1’s focus group getting this message across, including relevant improvements in this area, is important.

Quote: “What the government need to get across to students is the idea the Adult Literacy classes are a welcoming and supportive space for them to learn in. The classes are not conducted in the same manner [as] in the past.”

ETBI noted that the ETB research found that ‘...the first step is by far the most difficult’ – and the need to support initial engagement via welcoming, trusting, fun, social, informal and non-judgemental environments. In addition, reportedly, there is a need for confidential, discreet and accessible learner friendly registration processes.

Amongst GRETB focus group participants (focus group 1), it was reported that balancing childcare responsibilities with opportunities for learning was a challenge. Learners called for literacy and technology classes to be made available for all at flexible times in the day / evening.

Quote: “some [would like] like classes available when children are in school, maybe more classes...classes every day. [These] classes should have a language and a literacy component....[some] would like to do numeracy and all wanted [help with] technology [and] using their phones.”

4.2.4	Accessibility of Information/ Services
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The focus group of Youth Employability Service users identified that it would help if there were an information desk inside of the service, or point of contact person, who would flag the service people are looking for or to whom one could explain one's situation and get additional, tailored assistance, that would be context and person centred.

4.2.5	Community/ Schools/ Interagency Networks
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The Irish Prison Service focus group suggested that agencies work together to target those most in need and that the provision should be seamless across all institutions, including prisons, so that when a student leaves one institution and joins another, they can pick up and continue with whatever course they were doing.

ETBI identified resourcing and supports for ETB staff to take on an outreach role, developing greater links with local schools and community groups including local resource centres, homework clubs, family support centres, Women's Projects, Men's Sheds, Active Age Groups, Pavee Point, Exchange House and Parish Centres.

4.2.7	Promote/ Raise Awareness from Early Age
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A need for more guidance in college, schools and libraries was identified in the YESS focus group, noting that early intervention was key.

4.2.11	Participation of Adults with ALND Needs in Promotion / Peer Encouragement/ ALND Champions
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AONTAS learners identified peer learning as a useful approach, while acknowledging that smaller class sizes were preferable.

Quote: “I could already know one thing, whereas someone else may have known about another, so we can all help each other out.”

4.3.2	Accessibility of Information/ Services
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AONTAS learners with disabilities wanted to see more disability and inclusivity related supports specifically for literacy and numeracy offered or made available across all courses. They felt that sometimes course materials contained too much text or had a small font size that makes these materials difficult to read. They suggested that all materials be presented in an easy-to-read format with large font and minimal text. Thus, it was suggested that if these materials were paired with visual aids such as photos or images, it would be more accessible for learners with disabilities.

4.3.3	ALND Education and Training
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Maynooth University Student #2, based on the dialogue with the group of 12 learners, indicated that the learners felt that the course they were on was not always suitable to their needs and aims, though there were some modules that they enjoyed. QQI module names sound very formal and perhaps off-putting. Illustratively, one of the learners suggested plain language alternatives that could be used. Thus, it was proposed by way of example to rename “Self-Advocacy” into “Speaking up for yourself” – the latter deemed easy to understand and closer to a real-life skill.

Integrating ALND using thematic approaches across a range of programmes, including childcare and horticulture for example was highlighted by ETBI.

4.3.4	Community / Schools / Interagency Networks
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The focus group hosted by the Youth Employability Services, suggested intergenerational opportunities to learn digital literacy skills and more digital and adult literacy classes to be provided in communities which would assist with access, be available to all, free and also would reduce the stigma around the lack of ability and resources.

Starting ALND training from the ground up was a theme identified by the Irish Prison Service focus groups and having an institution wide and joined up approach – for example

community centres, libraries, adult education centres, job centres all working together was referenced.

ETBI research suggested that National level policy supporting structured local level interagency collaboration and complementarity, minimising ad hoc relationships is needed. For example, in facilitating ETB links with national and local government departments statutory agencies and other stakeholder groups (NALA, DAI, HSE, DEASP, Local Development Companies, LEADER Partnerships, TUSLA, CYPSC, Social Services, CICs, SEN Organisations, Community Employment Schemes, TUS, MABS, Disability Agencies -DSI, INTREO, Direct Provision Centres). This would be aided by clarity around all agencies' roles, [inter agency] sectoral MOUs and clear referral lines and protocols.

4.3.5	Advertising/ Public Awareness Campaigns
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ETBI research identified there was a need to ensure people from marginalised groups are involved in publicity or advertising campaigns.

4.3.10	Funding/ Resources (including. Human Resources)
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The prisoners taking part in the focus groups indicated a need to fund more literacy projects across all institutions, in particular, to provide more funding to agencies like NALA so that they can run peer-to-peer groups in various settings.

4.3.11	Targeting those most in need
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Interviewees of Irish Rural Link highlighted issues in rural Ireland, stating that they felt left behind due to living in hard-to-reach areas and / or poor broadband areas. They felt that not having access to public transport was a huge issue for people who could not drive and engaging with services while living in hard-to-reach areas was difficult with no access to public transport. In recent months, interviewees stated that, online training has been of great benefit to people in rural Ireland but access to broadband remains a barrier.

ETBI noted that the ETB research put forward that promotional campaigns should target specific cohorts of society or the workforce and include geographical targeting. Specific campaigns around skills for example numeracy/maths and/or target groups, for example, under 30s.

The various focus groups in GRETb mentioned a number of ways the ETBs could provide support to those in greatest need:

- Access to educational supports and increased class times and more classes.
- A clear pathway to educational and vocational language assessment.
- A supported structure to encourage participation in the local community and wider society.
- Facilitate the recognition of educational qualifications from countries of origin as entry points to accredited and non-accredited programmes.
- Homework help would be good for those struggling with their children's homework every evening.
- Technology rooms where they could practice, language labs and literacy support for parents who are struggling.

Quote: "Better internet provision and higher speed internet across the country. People in rural areas are not receiving equal internet access – this is digital exclusion."

Quote: "Sensitivity training with people working in retail so that they understand what it is like to have literacy issues."

4.3.13	Suggested Priority Cohorts
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ETBI indicated through their research a need to prioritise ALND skills supports for the language and literacy needs of learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds. For example, language-aware teaching methodologies enabling ESOL/plurilingual learners to develop English language skills.

It was also suggested that intercultural and ALND skills supports were needed for learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds experiencing challenges including incarceration, homelessness and addiction, young people with little, or an interrupted, education and for parents of school going children.

Support for learners with Dyslexia was a common theme amongst responses, as was support for learners with disabilities.

4.3.14	Initial/ Ongoing Assessment
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ETBI's summary of ETB research suggested that blending formal and informal initial assessment, for example the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) and the 'Progress Framework'. Initial assessment is key in the development of Individual Learning Plan (ILP) and in planning and tailoring ALND supports.

Irish Prison Service focus groups recognised incremental goal setting as an important aspect of encouraging participants.

Theme 5: Identifying and Measuring Success

5.1 Identifying Success, Goals and Relevant Indicators

5.1.1	Suggestion of Specific Indicators or Goals
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The Down Syndrome Ireland Group suggested different levels for people to get to when they are studying online or in person and then subsequently, they could go on to the next level, and to allow for tracking of how many people pass each level.

In the focus groups conducted by KCETB with tutors, one third of the tutors suggested that not all positive outcomes are measurable through QQI. Trained tutors can use their observation and their relationship with a learner to identify progression in their abilities, and development of positive soft skills. Through open and honest communication learners and tutors could engage in an exercise of review, reflection, and evaluation to capture evidence of success. Measurements of success would include:

- Increased inclusion.
- Greater diversity in those participating.
- Meeting 'harder to reach' groups.
- Progress can be tracked by measuring engagement, attendance, and persistence at classes.
- Attainment of certification.

- Pathways into and through the FET sector should be clearer and more accessible for all – easier to move along – initial assessment in FET and diversion pathway in place – easier for learners to navigate.
- Qualitative as well as quantitative measures are required in order to properly track progress.

The Irish Prison Service focus groups considered that success was achieved when people are able to access the education that they need – from where they are at – and that they understand the processes and procedures in *how* and *where* to access that education (e.g. applying for grants, getting help with disabilities and so on. It was suggested to measure trends in the next generation of people – with the aim of stopping the inter-generational transfer of literacy issues.

ETBI referenced outcome indicators centred on the development of transversal skills, Wider Benefits of Learning (WBL)/Wealth Models in addition to participation and course completion / progression and certification.

5.2 Measuring Progress and Outcomes

5.2.1	Measuring, Assessing, and Tracking Progress and Outcomes
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Longitudinal surveys, questionnaire pre-programme and evaluations after the programmes were suggested by the focus group hosted by the Youth Employability Service.

ETBI, through the focus group process identified numerous methods of evaluating /measuring progress, and these included qualitative and quantitative measurement tools such as:

- International and European measurement studies and surveys: PIAAC/PISA – with suggestions for these to be adapted/ [tailored] for Irish contexts.
- Learner Stories/Testimonials/Case studies.
- Learner Self-assessments/Ratings – Distance Travelled Tool.
- Learner Questionnaires / Interviews /Surveys/Focus Groups.
- Learning Journals / Diaries.
- Staged, Longitudinal and Sampled measurement.

All students in the GRETB focus groups 1 to 3, which featured migrants' viewpoints, agreed that they would like to obtain a certificate to recognise their progression and to show existing / potential employers a specific standard reached.

Quote- "...they felt that in the workplace they were left behind because it was believed their language levels were not high enough, all agreed that having something to show would be good. "

GRETB students would like to see English language assessment that can be combined with recognised educational standards, which can in turn be used as stand-alone certification, or combined with others on the National Framework [of Qualification]. The GRETB focus groups participants also suggested that policy makers should "Look at what is working well and what is not working well after 3, 5, 7 and 10 years, and to survey learners about their experiences – online /on paper / over the phone and [to regularly conduct] focus groups."

Literacy students felt their progress was slow, and even slower because of language.

The Irish Language Group suggested that the extent of digital course *trí gaeilge* could be also considered.

Appendix E: Review of Public Survey Responses

Introduction to Public Survey Responses

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 on the basis of relevant literature and in consultation with key stakeholders, such as the Interdepartmental Stakeholder Group.

Theme 1: Different Meanings of ALND

Sub-Theme 1.1: What the ALND Strategy should Focus on

1.1.1 Functional ALND

Survey respondents heavily emphasised the importance of functional ALND – i.e. delivering ALND training in a practical way, with an emphasis on practical things, 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.

1.1.2 Basic ALND Skills

Survey respondents also emphasised the importance of focusing on necessary ALND skills due to the critical importance of these skills for functioning in life and the fact that those who lack such necessary skills tend to be significantly more marginalised. Some saw basic reading and writing skills as essential prerequisites to building digital skills. Others noted that, for younger people who have literacy and numeracy needs but are relatively tech-savvy, digital literacy could be an effective avenue for building basic literacy and numeracy skills.

1.1.3 Supports/ Access to Resources

Many respondents highlighted the need to focus on supports and to facilitate access to resources for individuals. Respondents highlighted inequalities in access to resources such as Wi-Fi and technical equipment, due to economic disadvantage and/or geography (e.g.

reduced connectivity in some rural areas), which may contribute to further social exclusion and isolation of certain groups. Many noted that people with significant ALND needs are much less likely to access essential resources for building these skills. Many respondents highlighted heightened digital literacy needs among older cohorts and the need for additional supports and accommodations for people with disabilities, including assistive technology. Respondents also highlighted the need to make information and services more generally accessible to people with ALND needs (i.e. a universal design approach).

The most prominent areas mentioned were:

- Improving access to devices and technology such as laptops, tablets, smartphones and Wi-Fi.
- Standardising the use of plain language and multiple communication mediums (e.g. audio and video and text) in important documents and communications across consequential areas such as government services, banking, insurance, utilities, safety information, legal contracts, health information (including public health guidance).
- Accessible websites, particularly when required to access rights, entitlements and services. Some suggested methods for making websites more accessible are already outlined in the point above, but some also recommended using technology to increase website accessibility.
- Scheduling of ALND services and training to ensure they are accessible to people with work and family commitments.

Sub-Theme 1.2: Daily Activities Supported by ALND

Survey respondents highlighted a broad range of important daily activities that ALND support (or are essential to). Many respondents noted that ALND is integral to all crucial daily tasks. Many respondents highlighted the growing importance of ALND for basic functioning, communication, health and social participation in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic. This was particularly emphasised regarding online communication and social interaction. Online communication is becoming increasingly crucial for staying in touch with family and friends and participating in community life during the lockdown, which has caused a significant amount of social interaction and communication to move online. The key skills areas mentioned most frequently included social media use, smartphones and smartphone communication apps, video calling platforms, email, text, etc. This area's importance for older cohorts was heavily emphasised as these groups are more isolated during the lockdown and are more likely to lack the key skills required for staying socially connected online.

Beyond online communication and social connection, the most prominent areas mentioned were:

- Managing Finances
 - Banking - understanding interest rates and bank statements, using online banking via websites and mobile phone apps, using ATMs, applying for loans, understanding information from financial institutions, and avoiding financial abuse.
 - Money management - shopping/ online shopping, calculating change owed in financial transactions, managing a household budget, understanding and paying utility bills, interpreting payslips).
 - Tax and insurance – using revenue. i.e., claiming overpaid tax, paying car tax and insurance, making insurance claims.
 - Avoiding financial abuse.
 - Conducting price comparisons and evaluating value for money.
- Health and Safety
 - Safely administering medicine at home.
 - Understanding national public health guidelines.
 - Reading food labels to meet dietary requirements/ avoid allergic reactions.
 - Reading safety and road signs.
- Accessing Services, Rights and Entitlements
 - Interactions with the state regarding rights and entitlements, including filling out forms, accessing benefits, supports and social services, applying for official documents (e.g. passports), understanding official correspondence and public notices and making appointments.
 - Accessing online public services, mainly as options to interact in-person and phone, are reduced and essential services moving entirely online during the lockdown.
 - Finding information on rights, entitlements and support services and networks.
- Accessing and interpreting information
 - Reading the news and keeping informed of current affairs.
 - Researching information online.
 - Analysing information to make decisions.
 - Critical thinking, distinguishing real from false information, ability to question information received critically.

- Being able to understand official correspondence.
- Active Citizenship and Participation in Society
 - Registering to vote and participating in local and national elections.
 - Required for full participation in community life.
- Parenting
 - Essential for parents to support their children's learning through reading and homework help.
 - Engaging with their children's school.
- Employment and Formal Education
 - Using the internet and social media to promote a business, network and make useful industry contacts.
 - Essential to even relatively low skilled jobs.
 - Ability to work and learn remotely.
 - Running a business.
 - Reading the time and managing a schedule.
- Transport and navigation
 - Reading road signs and bus and train timetables.
 - Understanding directions.
 - Calculating the length of a journey.
- Online security
 - Ability to spot scams.
 - Protection of personal data and credit card details.
- Recreation and leisure
 - Reading for pleasure.
 - Booking holidays or ordering food online.
 - Following a recipe.
- Physical health and wellbeing

- Important for independence, self-sufficiency and agency.
- Engaging in life-enhancing activities such as learning and accessing culture.
- Maintaining good health and wellbeing.
- Personal development and confidence building.

Theme 2: Awareness and Access to Information and Supports

Sub-Theme 2.1: Barriers to ALND

2.1.1: Psychological Barriers

The most prominent barriers to developing ALND identified by respondents were psychological barriers including low confidence, 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 previous negative experiences of formal education in building these psychological barriers by instilling a personally held belief that they are stupid or 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', 'being judged [disapprovingly]', 'being considered stupid' or 'being looked down upon'. Many respondents attributed the formation of these psychological barriers to previous trauma, mental health issues and adverse childhood experiences. Respondents highlighted how difficult it can be for somebody to recognise they have ALND needs as this exposes their (often hidden) skills deficit to family (particularly children), neighbours and friends, which can cause feelings of embarrassment and shame. It was highlighted that many who have needs in these areas feel they are alone, that they are the 'only one' with deficiencies in these core skill areas.

2.1.2: Lacking Information/ Awareness of Supports

Interestingly, respondents highlighted lacking information and awareness of available supports as a barrier to ALND more frequently than they did the availability of these supports in the first place. Respondents noted that people simply do not know what supports are available, how to access them, who, and where to turn to for help. Some respondents also highlighted the challenge in finding the right support (e.g. complex eligibility requirements for different supports, supports offered by a broad range of different agencies and bodies). Several respondents highlighted the fact that these issues are exacerbated due to the Covid-19 crisis as in-person information services are suspended.

2.1.3: Accessibility of Information/ Services

Accessibility of information and services was frequently highlighted, mainly related to geography, scheduling and information/ website accessibility. Regarding geography, respondents highlighted a lack of access to local services in rural areas, which then increases the required time commitment (due to travel) and transport costs incurred by those who wish to engage. Respondents also highlighted the importance of flexible course scheduling, tailored to fit with different work and family commitments, including a need for more evening courses for workers and school-time courses for parents. A number of respondents noted an over-emphasis on online learning to address calls for greater flexibility, pointing to the fact that people with ALND needs (mainly digital literacy) may be excluded from distance learning options.

Issues around information and website accessibility were seen as significant barriers to accessing supports and services. People with ALND needs can be put off, and indeed excluded when complicated forms and online application processes are required, particularly so for people with disabilities. This is compounded by reductions regarding in-person and by-phone information services and the prevalence of poorly designed websites and interfaces and the use of unnecessarily complicated language and online processes. Some respondents also criticised the current certification and employment focus of ALND courses, which they saw as an institutional barrier for people with significant need and poor previous education experiences. The respondents called for more learner-focused, flexible, self-paced, unaccredited course options to encourage educational re-engagement and to build confidence.

2.1.4: Financial and Time Restrictions/ Access to resources.

A number of respondents identified lack of time, due to family and work commitments, financial restrictions and perceived costs (e.g. not knowing what a course costs or that free courses are available) as barriers to ALND. In terms of financial barriers, access to technology, IT equipment and WIFI were the most prominently cited issues, due to the expensive nature of these resources, as well as their critical importance to improving digital literacy. It was noted that people in employment may be able to access technology to enhance their digital literacy skills in the workplace, even if they cannot afford such technology at home, making this barrier particularly pronounced among economically disadvantaged groups who been out of the labour market for extended periods (e.g. retired people, long-term unemployed, parents who have taken time out to raise children).

Sub-Theme 2.2: Aspects of ALND People Find Most Difficult

2.2.1 Functional/ ALND

Functional ALND tasks – i.e. essential daily tasks requiring ALND skills such as filling in forms, financial and health literacy – were identified by respondents as the aspect of ALND people find most challenging. 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 terminology can be complicated for highly educated people; for people with unmet skills in these areas they can seem impossible. However, ability with these functional, applied aspects of ALND is also of critical importance. They are required to access rights, entitlements, and social services, and avoid manipulation, fraud, scams, and financial abuse.

2.2.2 Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy

Digital Literacy, including use of devices, apps, programmes, and the internet, was the second most cited aspect of ALND people find most challenging. Many respondents attributed this to the fact that good literacy skills can be a prerequisite for improving digital literacy. This was followed by literacy, including reading comprehension, spelling, writing and grammar, and numeracy, including basic calculations, percentages, and ratios.

2.2.3 Dependent on Cohort Characteristics

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. 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. Older people did not grow up with technology and, if retired, were less likely to have developed these skills in the workplace. It was noted that highly educated older people can struggle with digital literacy. In comparison, younger people can be quite tech-savvy, even if they have very low formal education levels. 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).

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

2.3.1 Advertising/ Public Awareness Campaigns

In addressing how best to encourage, promote and raise awareness of ALND respondents most frequently recommended using 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. This included suggestions to use personal stories and case studies in promotional materials, peer promotion, and identify and publicise 'ALND Champions'. Given that people with ALND needs are more limited 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 need (to reduce fear and signal the availability of and connect individuals to services and supports) and the general public (to raise awareness of the issue and address stigma).

2.3.2 Schools and Community and Interagency Networks

Respondents highlighted the usefulness of community and interagency networks to promote, encourage, and raise awareness of ALND, including tapping into existing networks and building new ones. Recommendations included improved connection and collaboration between and within Government Departments and ETBs, utilisation and development of local community hubs and networked and joint initiatives with a range of public, government and non-profit organisations and services (e.g. public libraries, credit unions, MABS, local councils, post offices, churches, community organisations, DSP/ Intreo, public health workers and the Community Employment Scheme), and establishing ALND peer-support groups at the local community level. A number of respondents also recommended promoting, encouraging and raising awareness of ALND via schools, targeted at both school-age students (via outreach and guidance services) and adults with ALND needs (by engaging them through their children's school in family learning programmes).

2.3.3 ALND Education and Training

A number of respondents recommended to promote, encourage and raise awareness of ALND via, among other things, a diverse range of education and training provision.

The most prominent areas mentioned were:

- Remove the prejudices by getting the message out about lifelong learning for all.

- Integrated ALND, where ALND education and training is integrated into a range of practical use and personal interest courses to potential learners.
- Courses focused on functional ALND, that guide learners through key functional tasks such as filling in forms and accessing services online.
- Accredited courses on clear learner pathways and unaccredited personal-development focused courses.
- Short, flexible taster courses to encourage adults to ‘take the first step’ and one-on-one and intensive options for those looking to take their learning further.
- Courses provided at different times to suit different schedules, including evening courses for those in work and courses scheduled within school hours for parents.
- Universal Design for Learning applied to ALND education and training.

Theme 3: Bridging the Digital Divide

Sub-Theme 3.2: Impact of the Digital Divide

Respondents identified social exclusion and marginalisation as the most significant impact of the Digital Divide. This included social isolation, exclusion from community life, significant disadvantage in educational and employment opportunities, and lack of access to services, rights, and entitlements. It was emphasised that all of these issues had 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 above) that prevent adults with ALND need from seeking out and engaging with ALND services and supports.

Sub-Theme 3.3: Bridging the Digital Divide

To bridge the digital divide respondents highlighted the need to increase access to technological and digital resources such as devices (laptops, tablets etc.), assistive technology, broadband and relevant education and training. It was recommended that this should be done through individual grants targeted at those most in need, expanding broadband access in underserved areas, and delivery of diverse, accessible education and training provision (as already outlined above). Expansion of information services accessible to people with ALND needs was also suggested, such as lo-cost help lines, accessibility standards for websites, and accessibility modules in higher-level courses focused on digital platforms and physical building design.

Theme 4: Priorities and Actions

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

Respondents identified the following existing innovative practices for encouraging and promoting ALND (including existing innovative projects for bridging the digital divide):

Family / Intergenerational

- Book Start Project/Imagination Library - book gifting for family literacy - as a way to encourage adults to begin reading to children and ensure there are books in the home.
- Training offered by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment through organisations such as Age Action.
- Free 'smartphone' classes in schools for parents/grandparents taught by students in our local school.

Community

- Community education programmes in centres that also provide accredited literacy and other courses, community centres that recognise a particular need of staff and bring in the relevant educators.
- Post prison education courses to help integrate back into the community.
- Doctors, social workers, teachers recommending additional skills for Learners/people.
- Libraries often provide digital classes to a range of adults.
- BARWS (Ballymun Adult Read & Write Scheme CLG) run computer classes that encourage Learners from across the social and age divides.
- March 2020 the St Agnes' CCMA volunteers coached about 65 over 55s on how to use Zoom.
- Mountjoy Prison released prisoners to attend literacy classes in DALC while on day release.
- Alone went to people's homes to teach them digital literacy.
- Cumas New Ross works with ETB with a bridging programme.
- Emergency training for community group participants on how to use Zoom, as their gardening, sewing/craft, yoga etc. classes are going online.
- The Maths Trail developed by the ABE service in Killarney National Park. This programme can be viewed and downloaded by clicking on [this link](#).
- Build on existing services, like meals on wheels, to integrate literacy into their service. Engage with what the library is doing at the moment and expand on this.
- Diversity and Ability - a social enterprise based in the UK ²⁹.

²⁹ Relates to the project focusing on working with people experiencing homelessness. More information can be found by clicking on [this link](#).

Work-related

- Migrant students attending to up-skill as a result of Intreo or other organisations recommending the service.
- The Career Paths for Dyslexia was an excellent programme for adults with diagnosed dyslexia, and the only one of its kind.
- DALC, in collaboration with the CDETB, delivers a QQI Level 5 Healthcare support course for adults with literacy difficulties. Students are provided with literacy and digital support, and the course is run over a more extended period. We are now replicating that model with an SNA course.
- An innovative practice (charity) where young, unemployed individuals from socially deprived areas are recruited onto a sporting/educational programme whose purpose is to develop their educational skills and work towards employment.
- Employers allowing facilitated time-off (and childcare) for ESOL / literacy / numeracy / digital learning.
- Skills for Work Programmes.

Person-Centred Education and Training

- Colleges of Further Education using Adult Literacy Tutors' resources to provide extra individual support to students to complete assignment work and not drop out because they may have had dyslexia or another learning difficulty.
- Maths for apprenticeships, DALC delivers a maths programme specifically covering maths required for an apprenticeship.
- School completion programmes, Foroige, Youthreach and other youth groups who have engaged with IFI.
- The ETB Basic Adult Education Service and services provided by NALA, AHEAD and FESS in particular.
- Themed learning - development of literacy /numeracy /digital skills through participation in integrated programmes such as horticulture, history, geography, craft, child development and play, food and nutrition.

Supporting Flexible Learning

- The Learn My Way website offers a clear, accessible online curriculum housed in a central place for projects/individuals to access. To view the website, click on [this link](#).
- Laptops being given to students to enable them to take part in remote learning.
- Local library computer courses, Book clubs, Local adult education courses.

- Government-funded schemes (e.g.) Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage, allows centres and their learners to access tablets, laptops, training and support, both one to one and in socially distanced groups within the centre,
- Learning from home during the second lockdown via Zoom, WhatsApp, Google meet and GSuite for Education.

Promotion or Publicity

- NALA, along with the ETB, are centres of excellence for the promotion and training of literacy.
- The Plain English campaign benefits literacy in general.
- T.V. Series

Case Study: Traveller Genealogy Project - Developing literacy skills in a way that is meaningful to participants

Meath County Council Library Service engaged with the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Local Government Management Agency during the initial stages of the project. The programme was designed as a Traveller specific project. The basis of the course were collaboratively designed with inputs by Library Facilitators, the Course Tutor and the Director. As the course evolved, the participants added to the content from their store of knowledge and experience. This content, combined with the research undertaken by the tutor and the use of Local Studies and Reference material in the Library, drew out the Traveller's knowledge and instilled a sense of pride in them in their heritage while opening the minds to the values of formal research and use of library services.

This is an illustrative example of placing *the learner at the centre* and developing and supporting literacies that are meaningful. In this case, a strong working relationship was fostered between the Traveller Group, the Course Tutor and Library staff. In addition, particular aspects of the course, notably oral history recording, mapping Traveller routes and campsites, collecting and preserving old photographs, collecting Traveller artefacts, and recording Traveller songs and recitations could be developed as stand-alone projects entirely by Travellers or in conjunction with the library. All these strands enhance Traveller equality and esteem while the project work preserves a way of life of many centuries that is now disappearing from Irish society. A course manual and training DVD were produced.

Literacy and digital literacy needs were acknowledged from the outset. Presentations were kept as visually interesting as possible and digital support was provided by library staff. The level of interest in the course and the desire to engage fully with it helped greatly in improving all aspects of literacy.

This initiative is a model of cascade learning and demonstrates how learners can co-design a course, as well as *wider benefits of learning*. The course tutor and library staff researched and devised the course content, while the participants added to and enhanced the content. As new skills were learned and acquired, additional material was added to the sessions. Now the 6 Travellers who completed the course can deliver it in turn to other community members using the manual of the sessions, the DVD, and the support and backup of the tutor and library staff as guest speakers.

The impact of the initiative has been extremely positive. Devising a project centred on Travellers and inviting them to participate had a profound effect in creating respect for and accepting Traveller culture. The positive impact on Traveller self-esteem and, consequently, on their mental health has been significant. Empowering a Traveller group with knowledge and teaching skills instils pride, fosters personal identity, and underpins unique ethnicity recognition. The course participants have discovered the value, accessibility, and richness of the Library service in terms of resources and range of

facilities. These include meeting spaces, IT provision and training, free access to websites, staff support, and access to 330 public libraries across the country.

The initiative enabled the library to reach community members who do not routinely use the service. This helped foster greater social inclusion and a deeper understanding of the effects of discrimination and inequality for all involved in the project. Six Travellers have been trained and enabled to deliver the genealogy course at other centres in Meath and throughout the country.

Participant testimony:

- "I never realised how valuable a resource the library is, the amount of history and information that is available to us. I am much more aware of it now."
- "This was a fantastic, eye-opening experience."
- "I liked the research, the information gathered, and the handouts. The tutors were excellent."
- "I liked the support received from Meath Library."
- "Thank you sincerely for allowing us to be part of our history and allowing our voices to be heard."

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

4.2.1: Advertising and Public Awareness Campaigns

Respondents most frequently recommended using advertising and public awareness campaigns to encourage, develop and promote ALND. More detail on respondents' suggestions regarding advertising and public awareness campaigns has already been provided under Sub-Theme 2.3: How to Encourage, Promote and Raise Awareness of ALND.

4.2.2: ALND Education and Training

The second most frequent area of recommendations for action among respondents related to ALND education and training provision. More detail on respondents' suggestions ALND education and training provision (generally) has already been provided under Sub-Theme 2.3: How to Encourage, Promote and Raise Awareness of ALND. Detail on specific ALND education and training approaches respondents recommended for targeting priority cohorts is provided under Sub-Theme 4.3 Specific Approaches to Targeting Priority Cohorts.

4.2.3: Accessibility and Access to ALND Supports and Resources

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

Detail on the specific actions and approaches recommended by respondents is provided under Sub-Theme 4.3: Specific Approaches to Targeting Priority Cohorts.

4.2.4: Schools and Community and Interagency Networks

Many respondents suggested that ALND should be encouraged, developed and promoted via schools and community and inter-agency networks. Detail on the specific actions and approaches recommended by respondents is provided under Sub-Theme 2.3: How to Encourage, Promote and Raise Awareness of ALND, with further detail on actions and approaches for targeting priority cohorts using schools and community and interagency networks is provided under Sub-Theme 4.3: Specific Approaches to Targeting Priority Cohorts.

Sub-Theme 4.3: Specific Approaches to Targeting Priority Cohorts

4.3.1 Accessibility and Access to Supports and Resources

The most frequently recommended approach to targeting priority cohorts was to increase accessibility and access to supports and resources. This included integrated or universal supports (available to all but particularly benefiting priority cohort groups) and supports targeted at priority cohorts and individuals to address specific, identified needs.

The most prominent areas mentioned were:

- Grants, loans and device schemes, including lending schemes, to expand access to technology, digital equipment and broadband (particularly for students / learners who require them for their ALND courses).
- Integration of supports through universal design and universal design for learning (e.g. availability of learning materials in multiple formats such as video and audio, inclusively designed virtual learning spaces, use of plain language).
- 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 disabilities.
- Expansion of support staff across adult education and training, including inclusion specialists, SNAs and psychologists / mental health professionals, and establishing multi-disciplinary support teams / special support units.
- Individual assessments to identify specific needs of adults with disabilities.
- Ensuring accessibility of buildings and physical infrastructure.
- Increased access to local services and supports, particularly in rural areas.
- Free broadband in nursing homes, educational institutions, hospitals etc.
- Expansion of access programmes.
- Availability of information and services in different languages.

4.3.2 ALND Education and Training

Respondents suggested a range of ALND education and training approaches for more effectively targeting priority cohorts.

The most prominent among these were:

- Welcoming Learning Environments – provide ALND learners with a friendly, warm, and supportive environment, including small group tuition and competent tutors who are sensitive to any fear of educational re-engagement their learners may have and who focus on building confidence and self-esteem.
- Peer Groups and Peer Learning – establish peer support and small learning groups for people from priority cohort groups.
- Integrated ALND – develop a range of courses covering areas of practical use and personal interest to adults with ALND needs, with ALND education and training integrated into these, throughout the entire provision.
- One-to-One Relationships – holding one-to-one in-person consultations between learners and tutor, and one-to-one tuition options.
- Learner-Centred Approach - the emphasis was placed on the need for a learner-centred approach, developed by listening to learners and collaboratively identifying their desired learning outcomes (through, for example, individualised personal learning / development plans and initial and ongoing assessment).
- Local Provision – ensure local availability of ALND education and training, mobile library services / ALND roaming bus for providing local level ALND services in more remote communities and increase provision in prisons, nursing homes and other institutions.
- Family Learning – intra-familial education, inter-generational (from generation to generation) education, including ALND education and training for parents, indirectly supporting children, and younger people supporting older people, particularly in the area of digital literacy.
- Ensuring fully inclusive learning environments to prevent adverse experiences, including racism, which could in turn affect future participation in ALND education and training.

It worth emphasising that population of Ireland has in recent decades become increasingly diverse. Many responses acknowledged this new diversity and proposed ways to ensure that everyone feels a sense of inclusion and belonging and that they can participate and flourish as lifelong learners. Practical measures recommended for use within the learning environment included intercultural, anti-racism, diversity and cultural awareness training for

FET practitioners as part of their initial training and as ongoing CPD. Similarly, management and leadership should be 'lead learners' in areas of anti-racism and intercultural awareness.

In terms of additional specific actions, a requirement for managers, co-ordinators, teachers, tutors, and facilitators to undertake intercultural, anti-racism, diversity and cultural awareness training as part of their initial training and as ongoing CPD was mentioned.

Some related activities are reportedly already in place, such as the provision of intercultural family learning programmes. However, in summary, it can be asserted that for positive impacts on individuals and their families to be achieved, maintained, and to have wider effectiveness, a systemic approach to anti-racism and inclusion is essential. Such an approach needs to be actioned and discernible at all institutions and levels of society, from policy-making to community settings and everywhere in between.

4.3.3 Schools and Community and Interagency Networks

Respondents suggested linking with various local services and organisations to target priority cohorts by providing local ALND education and training for these groups (including via volunteers, delivered one-on-one in people's homes), raising awareness of ALND among priority groups, and referring target groups to ALND services and supports. This included suggestions of a joined-up approach and bi-lateral and multi-lateral collaborative initiatives between ALND services and primary and secondary schools, public libraries, health (including mental health) services, primary care services, disability services, social workers, NGOs, community organisations and organisations representing priority cohort groups. It was also suggested to include ALND tutors/ support staff within wrap-around support systems, including on support teams for adults with disabilities.

A number of respondents also suggested developing community spaces for ALND promotion, such as community hubs, where people can access ALND information and services and through which relevant services, professionals and organisations can network and coordinate. Using such existing local services and community groups as a vehicle for delivering ALND services locally was also suggested – e.g. using the facilities of state-funded youth clubs to set up adult clubs for ALND in the evening hours when they are not in use and delivering ALND support in nursing homes and other residential care facilities.

4.3.4 Advertising and Public Awareness Campaigns

Many respondents suggested that priority cohort groups be targeted via dynamic advertising and public awareness campaigns, which point to available services and supports, address stigma, raise awareness of need, and include people's testimonies from the priority cohort groups we wish to target. (More detail on respondents' suggestions regarding advertising and public awareness campaigns has already been provided under Sub-Theme 2.3: How to Encourage, Promote and Raise Awareness of ALND).

4.3.5 Consult with Priority Cohorts and their Representatives

A number of respondents emphasised the importance of consulting with priority cohort groups when developing targeting approaches. This included suggestions for systematic research, data analysis and needs mapping, national data collection and direct consultation with people from priority cohort groups and their representative advocacy and lobby organisations, to accurately identify priority cohort groups, their learning interests, barriers they may face, and their specific support needs.

4.3.6 Communities of Practice and CPD for Practitioners

Respondents suggested providing continuous professional development to ALND practitioners in key areas relevant to the inclusion of priority cohort groups (e.g. Universal Design, assistive technology, mobile apps, trauma/ mental health). It was also suggested to further develop communities of practice/ professional learning and networking hubs for ALND practitioners – i.e. forums for practitioners to network, collaborate and exchange knowledge, experiences and good practices.

Theme 5: Identifying and Measuring Success

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

Survey respondents identified a number of key indicators that could be tracked for the duration of the Strategy, with an emphasis on ensuring we set clearly defined, realistic and measurable goals that demonstrate achievement of both hard and soft outcomes.

The most prominent among these include:

- Educational Attainment – namely greater number of young people completing Junior and Leaving Certificate, increased years of education, uptake of, or participation in lifelong learning, increased attendance, progression and certification, improved childhood literacy (due to development of parents' skills), enhanced learning outcomes measured via initial and ongoing assessment of adult learners, decline in the impact of socioeconomic background on children's educational performance.
- Indicators from International Surveys – with the focus on improvements in Ireland's literacy, numeracy and digital literacy scores in the OECD's adult skills survey (PIAAC) and Eurostat's Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI).
- Wider Benefits / Inclusion – in essence, promoting and recognising wider benefits of learning, greater societal and community participation and engagement, increased feelings of belonging and overall inclusion, improved mental health, wellbeing, confidence and life satisfaction.
- Employment – promoting employability, which is in turn conducive to increased employment rates across different sections of society and cohort groups, and also contributing to increased employment across the skill spectrum.

- Increased Uptake of Supports and Services – namely greater number of adults entering education for the first time or returning to education, increased use of online resources by older people, increased use of, and engagement with public and private online services and supports, increased use of libraries.
- Increased Awareness – namely increased public awareness of ALND needs in Ireland, reduced stigma faced by people with ALND needs.
- Improved Functional ALND – in particular improved financial literacy, improved health literacy, critical literacy, improved knowledge of data protection issues, and online safety and security.

Sub-Theme 5.2: Measuring Progress and Outcomes

Survey respondents also identified a number of different research and evaluation methods that could be employed to measure progress on key indicators, with an emphasis on the need to employ a range of methods beyond simple counts of certificates obtained to capture impact at the national, cohort and individual level.

The most prominent among these include:

- Surveys / questionnaires (before and after skills survey, household survey, attitudes survey, an online survey held at regular intervals, course evaluations).
- Adding a question to the national Census.
- Focus groups.
- Long-term follow-up studies.
- Case studies and success stories.
- Initial and ongoing assessment of standardised skills/ competencies and personal goal achievement.
- Participatory Action Research.
- Consult with adults with ALND needs to determine appropriate indicators and evaluation methods.
- Establishing a baseline and measuring progress and success against it.
- Measuring movements in achievement gaps of priority cohort groups.
- Use of national data gathered by the CSO.
- Direct client feedback through agencies providing ALND education, training and supports.

Appendix F: Review of Targeted Outreach with Hard-to-Reach Communities

Introduction to Targeted Outreach with Hard-to-Reach Communities

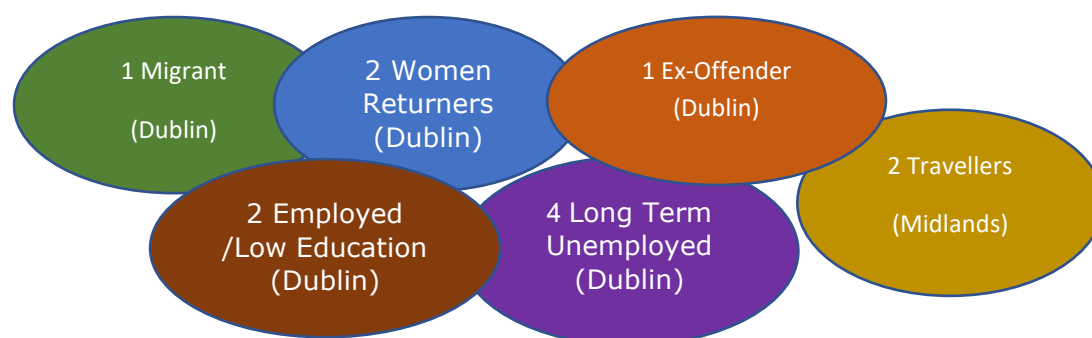
The challenge for any consultation process is to engage as wide a range of citizens as possible in a meaningful and effective way in order to inform the process of shaping services according to their needs and expectations.

As such, mechanisms for meaningful participation, in addition to the ongoing online consultation were required, particularly at a local level, to enable as many people as possible to express their views and experiences around adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy. Therefore, to capture these views and to augment the online consultation, SOLAS engaged the services of Coyne Research Associates to propose and implement a method to ascertain the needs and viewpoints of hard-to-reach individuals and communities who may be less likely to participate in the consultation via digital/online channels and formats. Having this additional layer to the process enabled a targeted approach to engaging this cohort in a meaningful and active way and provided valuable insights into how services might be shaped according to their needs and aspirations.

Outreach / PAR Research Methodology

Participants were recruited through a network of recruiters to meet the criteria for each of the target groups. A total of 12 Participatory Action Research (PAR) interviews were conducted, engaging 40 individuals from the cohorts depicted in Figure 23.

Figure 23. PAR participants³⁰



In-depth interviews were also conducted with a further two individuals, one of whom was over 65 years old and the other had an intellectual disability. Thus, 42 participants directly contributed to this research. [AsIam](#), [Inclusion Ireland](#), and two academic experts³¹ in the field of adult education in University of Maynooth, Ireland and Trinity College, Ireland were contacted during the recruitment process for a person with an intellectual disability.

Recruitment Criteria

- All participants had completed primary school or intermediate/Junior Cert as their highest level of education, with literacy, numeracy and digital literacy at either level 1 or level 2.
- PARs respondents or research participants, were aged between 18 and 54 years.

Approach

Each lead PAR respondent was asked to interview 2-3 of their peers on the subject of education and literacy. The lead respondent then conducted one-to-one or group interviews with their peers and was subsequently de-briefed by the research team over the phone.

All documents were dropped off to each lead PAR by their relevant recruiter. Once each lead PAR had received their documents, Coyne Research contacted them in order to brief them on what was required, reviewing the various questions to ensure they fully understood. Upon completion, a debrief call took place between the research team and the lead PAR where they reported back on their findings following discussion with their peers.

³⁰ Image created by SOLAS LSU based on PAR breakdown provided by research partners Coyne Research. Source: Outreach project completed on behalf of SOLAS by Coyne Research: *SOLAS Targeted Outreach with hard-to-reach Communities Report (C20-386)*, February 2021, slide 5.

³¹ Anonymised by SOLAS.

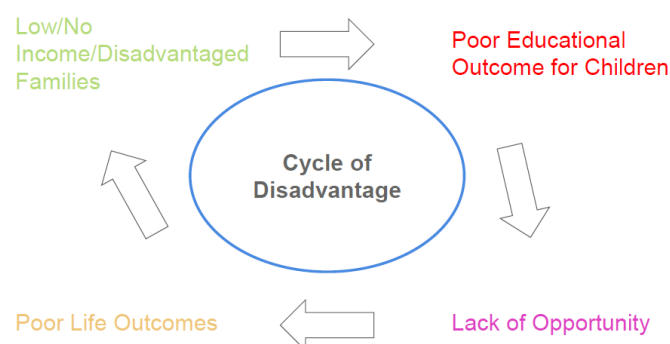
In-depth interviews were conducted via Zoom. A community engagement manager from Inclusion Ireland was also present on the call to offer assistance where required, in the case of the person with an intellectual disability.

Background Research Objectives

As part of the extensive ALND strategy stakeholder consultation phase, SOLAS engaged the service and expertise of Coyne Research to elicit the experiences, needs and perspectives of hard-to-reach groups and communities who may be less likely to participate in the consultation via digital/online formats. This additional layer to the process is in line with the *Cycle of Disadvantage* approach, enabling a targeted approach to engaging this cohort in a meaningful and active way and providing insights into how services might be shaped according to their needs and aspirations.

The *Cycle of Disadvantage* represents the negative effects that growing up in poverty/low-income households can have on education, literacy, employment, and life outcomes. A poor transition from home to school leads to a lack of skills and qualifications, which in turn leads to poor employability and ultimately a reduced capacity to provide a good quality home environment. This in turn is often passed onto the next generation.

Figure 24. The Cycle of Disadvantage ³²



The key research objective was therefore to explore the **experiences, needs and perspectives** of hard-to-reach groups who are most distant from education, training & workplace opportunities and who have the **most to gain** from the 10-year strategy on adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.

Results Overview

The results were presented to SOLAS using the following thematic headings:

- Experience with Education.
- Impact of Low Education – Key Challenges Faced.
- Poor Life Outcomes.
- Attitudes to Returning to Education – Motivations and Barriers.
- Course Awareness and Promotion.
- Course Preferences.
- Case Study: Person with an Intellectual Disability.

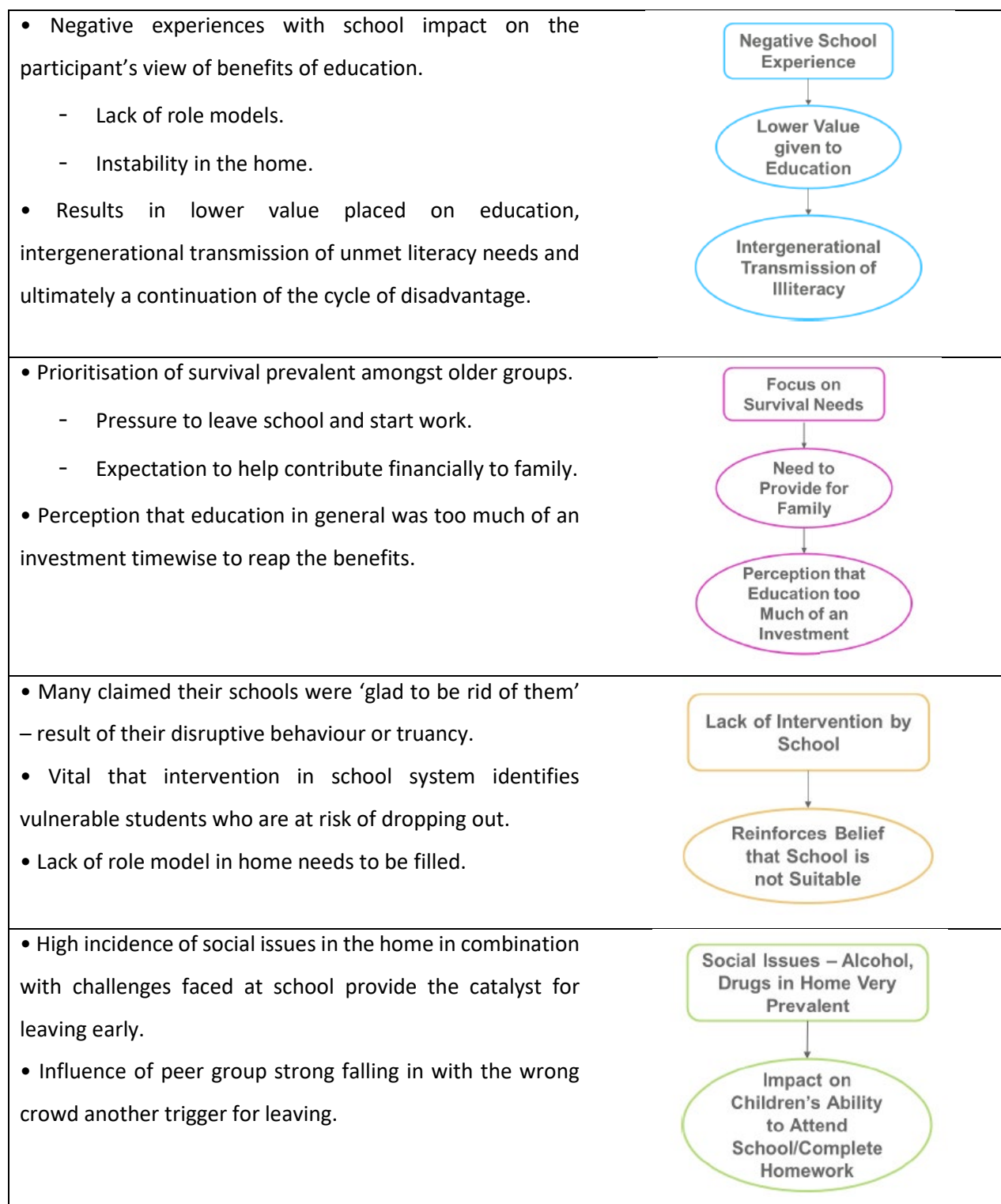
A selection of pertinent insights under each respective heading have been provided below.

³² Source: Outreach project completed on behalf of SOLAS by Coyne Research: *SOLAS Targeted Outreach with hard to reach Communities Report (C20-386)*, February 2021, slide 16.

Experience with Education

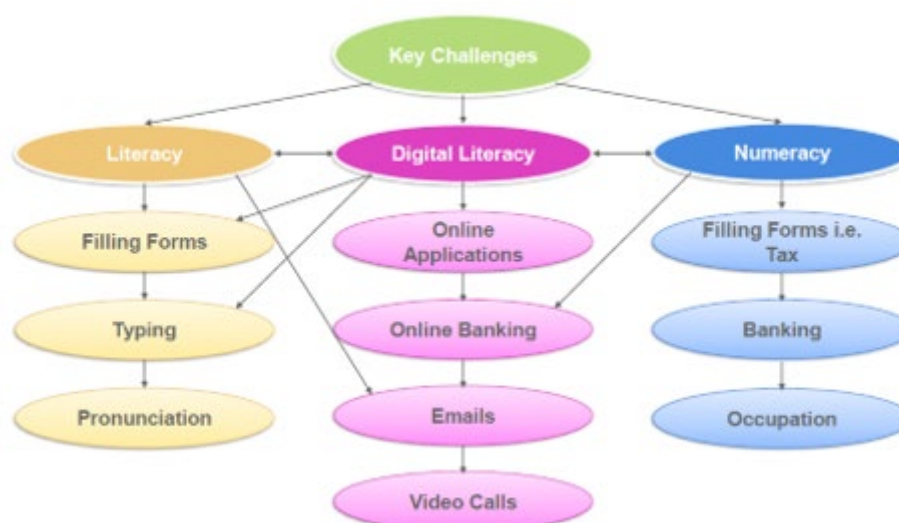
Participants' experience of education and arising issues are summarised below.

Figure 25. Educational experiences of participants³³



³³ Source: Outreach project completed on behalf of SOLAS by Coyne Research: *SOLAS Targeted Outreach with hard-to-reach Communities Report (C20-386)*, February 2021, slides 20-25.

Figure 26. Impact of relatively low education ³⁴



Lack of Opportunity

- Combination of lack of qualifications and relevant skills leads to significant lack of opportunity.
- Leaving Certificate, often the minimum standard –challenging to compete in current job market.
- Results in bleak outlook for those with low education & literacy.

Employment

- Low level of literacy & numeracy impacts negatively on ability to do jobs effectively amongst those in employment.
- Those in long term unemployment pessimistic in terms of getting jobs, given Covid-19 and qualification inflation.
- High levels of trepidation towards interviews –combination of lack of qualifications and ability to express themselves.

Mental Health & Mindset

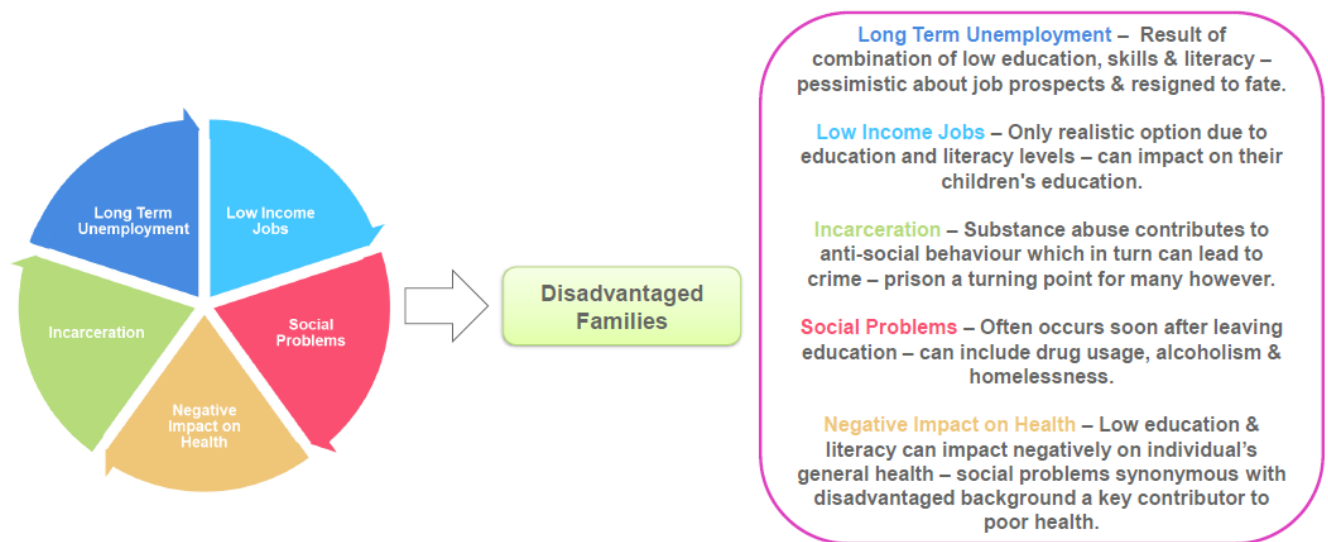
- Lack of education and poor literacy levels impact negatively on individual's state of mind.
- Low level of self-esteem and lack of confidence prevalent.
- Sense of inadequacy and unimportance.

³⁴ Source: Outreach project completed on behalf of SOLAS by Coyne Research: *SOLAS Targeted Outreach with hard to reach Communities Report (C20-386)*, February 2021, slide 84.

Digital Literacy Challenges and Impact of Covid-19

- Severe lack of digital literacy across all groups –key challenge in everyday life.
- Many claim that without help of children they would be helpless.
- Struggle to complete basic digital tasks i.e., filling out forms, making applications, emails, and online searches.
- Low digital literacy in combination with poor numeracy means online financial tasks a significant challenge.
- Many unable to conduct online banking.
- Struggle with financial forms, paying of bills, usage of credit/debit cards.
- Increased dependence on digital capability during Covid-19 has resulted in further marginalisation of these groups –feel left behind.
- Exacerbated long standing digital difficulties.
- Participation in online courses or other online supports not an option due to severe digital illiteracy.
- Covid-19 is having a highly negative impact on those with low education, literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy.
- Increased dependence on digital capability has resulted in further perception of marginalization amongst these groups.
- Feeling of being 'left behind' with limited ability to set up video calls –relying on help of others.
- Vast majority currently unemployed due to various Covid related restrictions.
- Participation in online courses or availing of online supports unrealistic due to severe digital illiteracy amongst many.

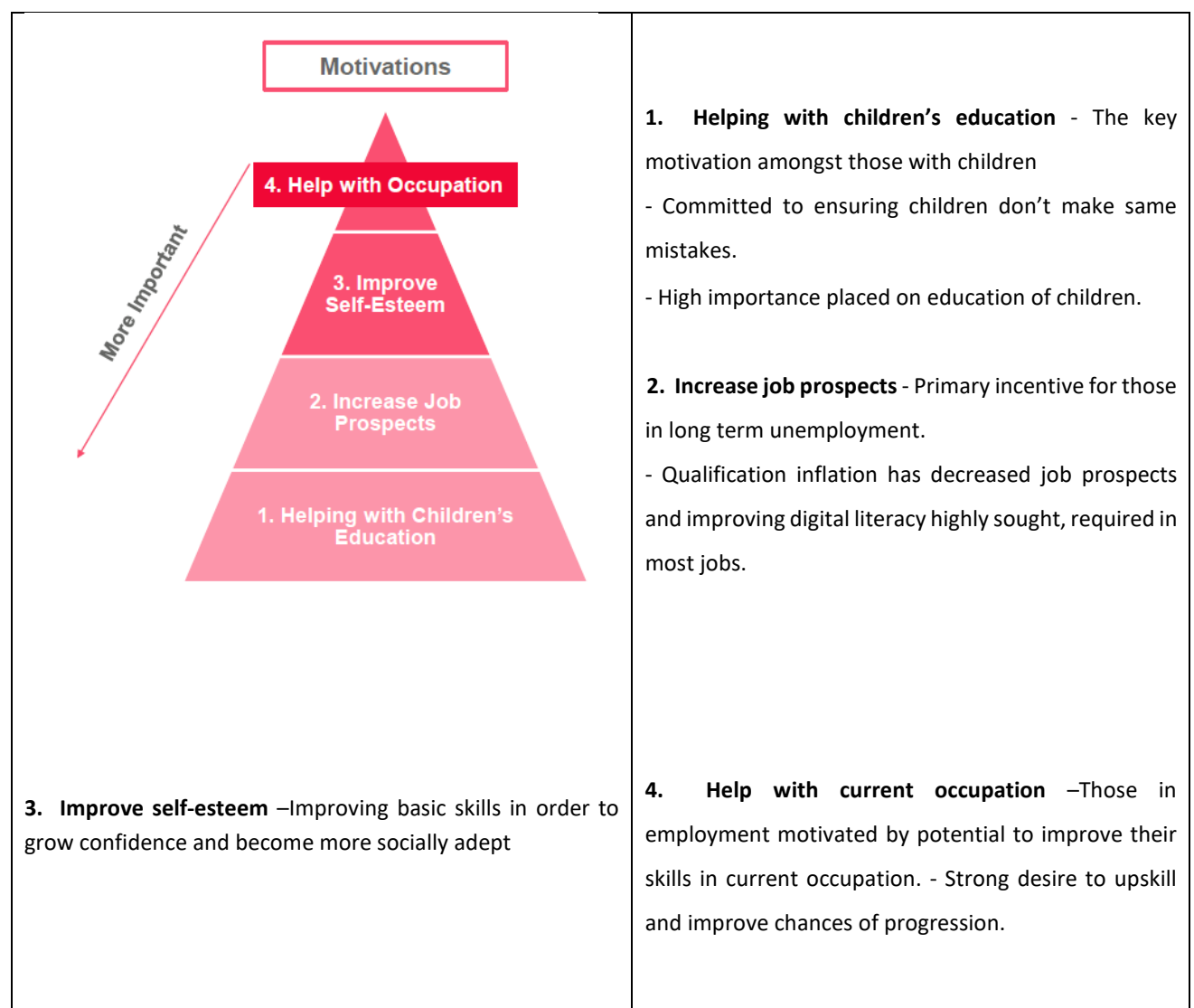
Figure 27. Poor life outcomes³⁵



Low levels of education and subsequent lack of opportunity often leads to Poor Life Outcomes. Lack of alternatives, a sense of resignation and a lack of positive role models are some of the contributing factors to these outcomes.

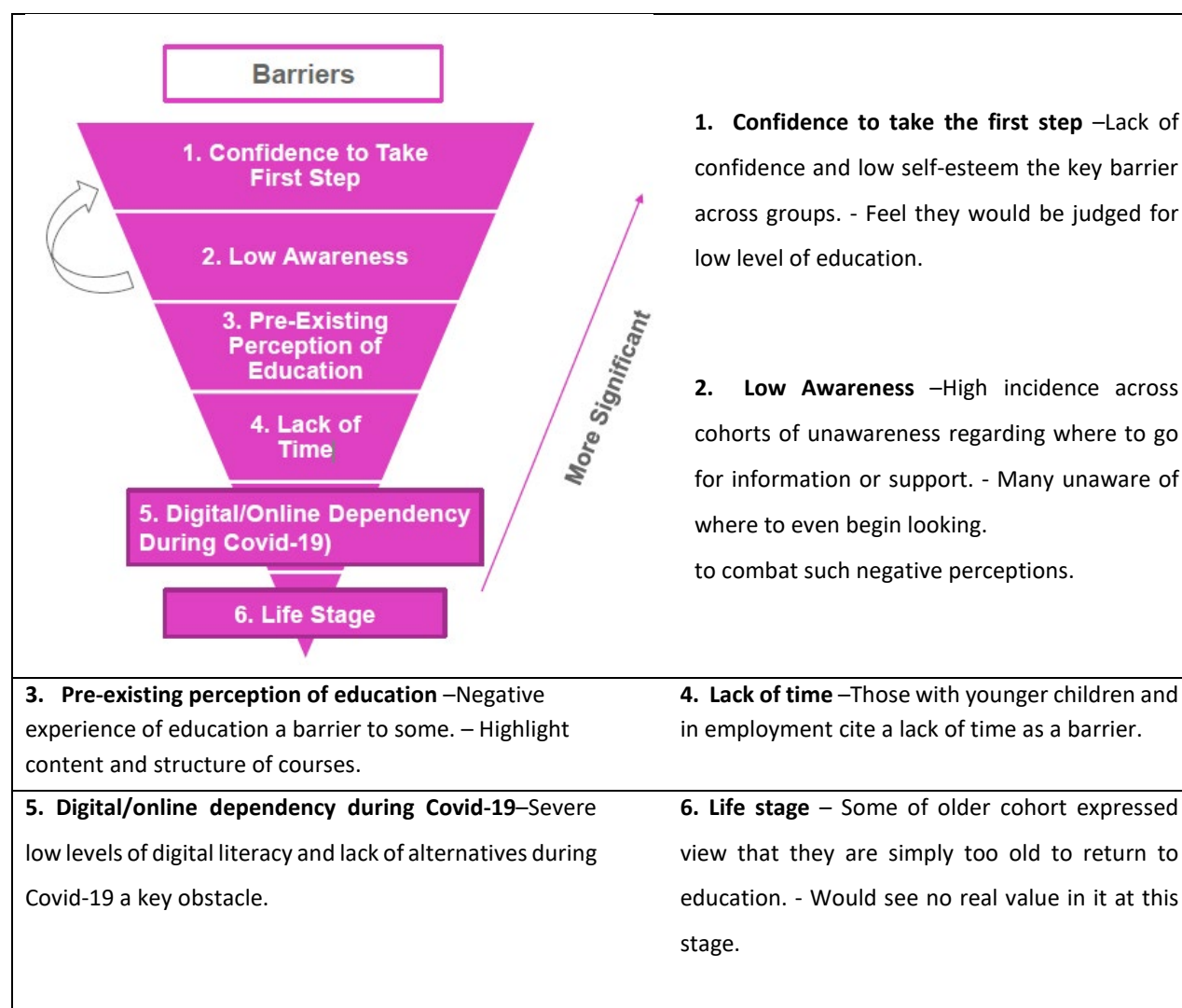
³⁵ Source: Outreach project completed on behalf of SOLAS by Coyne Research: *SOLAS Targeted Outreach with hard-to-reach Communities Report (C20-386)*, February 2021, slide 86.

Figure 28. Attitudes to returning to education – motivations ³⁶



³⁶ Source for figures 29 and 30: Outreach project completed on behalf of SOLAS by Coyne Research: *SOLAS Targeted Outreach with hard-to-reach Communities Report (C20-386)*, February 2021, slide 46.

Figure 29. Attitudes to returning to education – barriers



Course Awareness and Promotion ³⁷

Where?

Social welfare offices identified as the key place across cohorts where they are most likely to see and expect information on courses and training etc.

How?

Vital that any promotion or advertisement of courses or supports consists of **basic and easy to understand language**.

³⁷ Source: Outreach project completed on behalf of SOLAS by Coyne Research: *SOLAS Targeted Outreach with hard to reach Communities Report (C20-386)*, February 2021, slides 61-65.

Schools are also important where many are likely to see information, particularly those with children.

Word of Mouth (WOM) is a key factor also, due to low levels of awareness of where to go for information, first port of call for many is friends or family who have gone back to do courses.

Less likely to see advertising on **TV, radio or social media** and also less likely to interact with it.

Shopping Centres and grocery store notice boards are also popular amongst this cohort.

Low levels of literacy a significant barrier to engaging with advertising.

Many recommended that the more **visual** the **material** is, the more likely they are to engage with it.

Also, important to highlight the beginner/early **education style, content and nature** of the courses being offered. This is needed to address negative perceptions regarding the difficulty of education amongst many.

Course Preferences

Preferred Learning Style

- Face to face learning the only realistic option for majority of cohorts.
- Extremely low levels of digital literacy means that online courses or learning are not viable options. Likely to result in frustration and dropouts. Unlikely to develop any tangible skills. All of those interviewed claimed to be more comfortable in face-to-face and social settings in general.
- Ensuring that all attendees at a course have a similar level of education also essential – many apprehensive of going back to education due to perception that others would be better than them.
- Preference for all to be at similar level in terms of literacy etc. Creation of a comfortable setting was key.

Preferred Content

- For many, a basic reintroduction to reading, writing & maths is the key want –driven by motivations to improve capability of helping children and helping own self-esteem/confidence.
- Also, to improve their own basic skills to aid day to day living.

- Improvement of digital literacy skills key for many also –acknowledge that in modern world digital capability is compulsory.
- Complete reliance on family or co-workers for assistance has become tiresome for some.
- Improved digital capabilities would open up a ‘whole new world’.
- Basic digital skills required include:
 - Online searches.
 - Bookings and form filling.
 - Composing emails.
- Courses that are related specifically to individual's' own occupation also sought after – desire to upskill. High level of interest also for provision of more practical courses. Of particular interest to those who want to increase job prospects or upskill in terms of current occupation. Practical courses of interest mentioned include, hairdressing, make up/beauty, sewing, driving course, home help, health & safety, hygiene course, forklift driver, welding, truck driving.

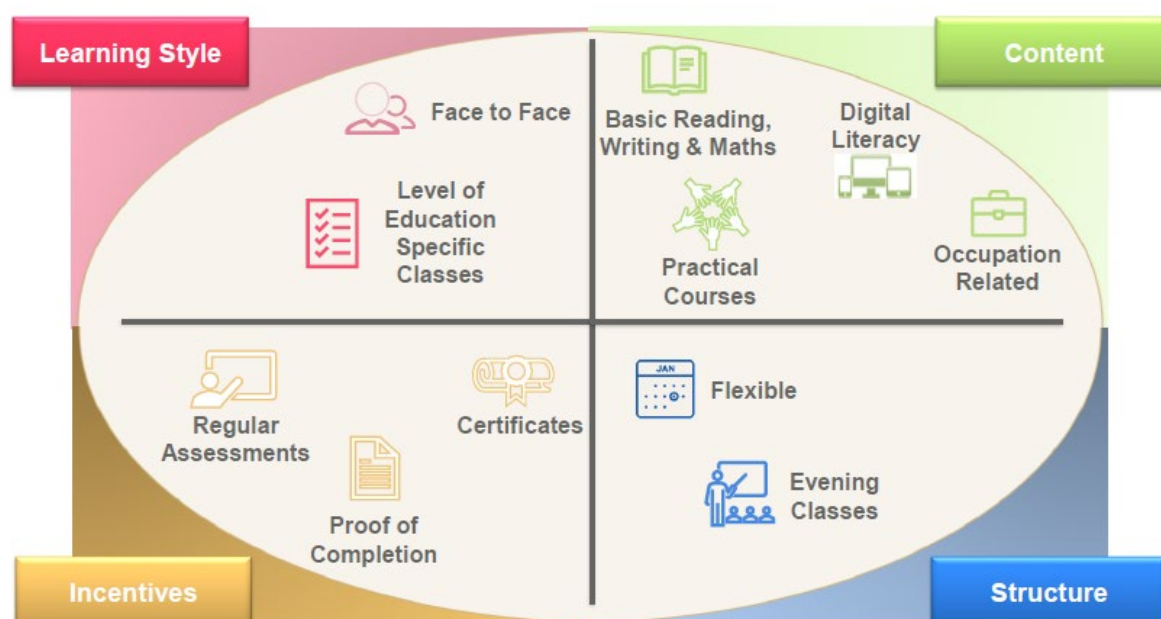
Preferred Structure

- Flexibility of classes as part of a course is key for many, particularly those working and with caring duties, including looking after children.
- Some who had experience of going back to education claimed strict schedule of classes had resulted in them giving up.
- Availability of evening and weekend courses also essential.
- Requirement for shorter courses to enable commitment.

Incentives

- Provision of official certificates/proof of completion which can be used in interviews or other formal settings a key incentive.
- Possession of any type of qualification seen as an advantage in current job market.
- Regular assessments welcomed to encourage commitment to the course.

Figure 30. Course preference summary³⁸



³⁸ Source: Outreach project completed on behalf of SOLAS by Coyne Research: *SOLAS Targeted Outreach with hard to reach Communities Report (C20-386)*, February 2021, slide 67.

Key Learnings

1. Positive Impact of Employment

- Provision of a job proved highly beneficial –a sense of purpose.
- Responsibility of various tasks empowering.
- Receiving wage promotes sense of independency.

2. Returning to Education

- One to one setting proved most beneficial –more comfortable than a classroom setting.
- Motivation to become better at job key in terms of willingness to improve literacy.
- Provision of certificates for completing digital courses a source of pride.

3. Role of External Assistance

- Support provided by Possibilities Plus highly valuable for independent living.
- Provides help with practical tasks (cooking, cleaning) and literacy (reading, writing).
- Set up training in a bank for an introduction to banking and online finances.
- Organises activities and meet ups with friends.
- All highly beneficial for improving confidence, skills, and a sense of independence.

Key Insights, Recommendations, and Implications for Strategy

How can the Cycle of Disadvantage be broken?

1. External Proactive Intervention/Suggestion

- A more proactive approach to promoting courses and training essential for these hard-to-reach cohorts given variety of barriers –reaching out to individuals with suggestions of beneficial courses.
- Social welfare offices best placed to conduct this.

2. Tailored Offering

- Providing suggestions and information on courses tailored to each individual's specific needs & interests would be highly beneficial. - Far more effective than advertising which these groups often struggle to interact with.

³⁹ Source: Outreach project completed on behalf of SOLAS by Coyne Research: *SOLAS Targeted Outreach with hard to reach Communities Report (C20-386)*, February 2021, slides 73-78.

3. Face to Face Courses/Training

- Given extremely low levels of digital literacy, face to face courses the only viable options for these groups.
- Similar level of education and ability across attendees also important –creates a more comfortable environment.

4. Provide Beginner Digital Introduction

- Basic introduction to digital skills and execution of online tasks required given high dependency on others for assistance.
- Potential to effectively open up a whole new world for these groups.

5. Incentivise Participation

- Given hesitancy to take first step amongst many, important to incentivise participation in courses and training.
- Monetary incentive via ‘bonus’ from social welfare.
- Provision of official certificates upon completion.

Appendix G: Review of Bilateral Meetings on ALND Strategy

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. Many participants in bilateral discussions and meetings with SOLAS also contributed and expressed their views through the non-structured written submissions process. Similar to 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 ALND policy and planning are provided below:

- Collaborative and Integrated Systems Approach is required for success.
- Cross-government integrated funding to drive change through collaborative systems.
- 'Learning for living' requires investment in Social and Cultural capital in addition to Human capital investment.
- 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 sector as a central resource to coordinate and fund such opportunities through individual learning accounts.
- 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.

Thematic Overview of Bilateral Meetings on ALND Strategy

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

Throughout the bilateral conversations with a range of organisations, literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy were discussed not only as a set of inter-related technical skills for day-to-day living but, crucially, as skills that must be in place to enable people to flourish in their lives and participate in society. Literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy were seen as necessary skills for improved education outcomes for individuals, families, communities and, by extension, society.

A lack of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills can impact on how equipped people feel to understand and navigate the language used within financial, environmental, health and media contexts and industries. Gaps in understanding these relatively new, yet vital, literacies only exacerbate the problems faced by those who may already feel at a disadvantage in terms of their own unique literacy needs.

The use of jargon and industry-specific language within official government websites was seen as potentially daunting and disengaging to users experiencing literacy challenges. There was a call for the introduction of plain English options across all official websites in order to redress this equity imbalance.

Present circumstances, brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, dictated the loss of many traditionally inclusive mechanisms for staying socially connected within local communities, such as interacting with others whilst standing in the post office queue or speaking to a friendly staff member in the local shop or bank. Where issues exist around accessing equivalent online services, in terms of either actual connectivity or accessibility, there was a deep sense of having lost touch with the outside world and society at large.

A significant minority of people need help with getting online and navigating the various channels of communication available (e.g., video chat, WhatsApp, social media) and investment in this aim could result in a range of benefits for the whole of society.

Theme 2: Awareness and Access to Information and Supports

Bilateral respondents indicated a requirement for joined up thinking, where the funding, skill and capacity needs of local community-based initiatives are used to inform the development of national strategic objectives.

Also frequently mentioned was the role of Libraries and Local Authorities and the resources they could bring to support and innovate ALL Strategy related initiatives, given an already well-established position in local communities across the country.

Embedding literacy, numeracy and digital literacy learning elements within existing programme modules was identified as a positive way of helping those who may require relatively more assistance than others, without drawing explicit and unnecessary attention to differences. Fear of being 'found out' and the avoidance of related embarrassment in seeking help were seen as real and significant barriers, in turn mitigated by non-judgemental, open, and encouraging learning environments.

Where learning by stealth is not seen as an option, there may be opportunities for greater levels of staff training on the implementation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), allowing those with literacy difficulties greater access to further education and training. Adopting a UDL approach involves considering the benefits of classroom aids such as screen readers, recorded lessons, as well as modification of physical learning environments for enhanced accessibility.

Raising awareness of literacy services was seen as being about more than advertising through traditional mediums such as national campaigns, but also making information more accessible through the local services learners come into contact with in their daily lives, e.g., local ETB campaigns, local libraries, community centres, family learning initiatives and social inclusion programmes.

Theme 3: Digital Divide

Digital poverty was identified as a central inhibitor to literacy skills acquisition, compounded by a lack of opportunity for vulnerable groups such as prisoners, asylum seekers/persons seeking international protection, and the elderly to avail of provision. Barriers presented by a fear of operating withing the digital world, for example, carrying out day-to-day tasks such as engaging with online banking, sending and receiving e-mails, and filling in and submitting online forms were seen as a function of the growing digitalization of services, including day-to-day activities such as online shopping, and the ensuing exclusion felt by certain cohorts who lack the necessary digital literacy skills.

Exclusion of vulnerable groups in digital literacy initiatives was a prevalent topic of discussion across bilateral sessions, particularly considering how certain cohorts such as nursing home residents and people living in direct provision centres might be best reached and supported. Limited access to such supports was seen to restrict the ability to actively engage in significant societal and individual issues such as civil rights, legal matters, education, and health.

Given the volume of individuals apparently experiencing such marginalisation at present, it seems logical that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach continues to be inadequate in closing the digital divide. There was a call for a focus on a more individualised approaches for dealing with the wide range of difficulties and issues faced.

E-Safety or online safety awareness and the need for plain English language to help people navigate digital public and banking services was reiterated during discussions with this phase of the consultation. A proposed solution was the introduction of multilingual video messaging in the area of health education, providing easy translations in multiple languages. Such an initiative could have broader benefits if applied to the issue of raising public awareness and access to online information in general.

Finally, resource allocation in terms of provision was seen to contribute to digital poverty in many communities, widening the digital divide in society. Participants believed the following measures could contribute positively going forward:

- Provision of digital skill classes to help raise skill levels, confidence, and a greater sense of community involvement.
- Increased capacity of Libraries to provide the much-needed resources and environments in which digital literacy could be accessed.
- Utilising FET as a means for upskilling and enhancing employability so to be more competitive in the Irish labour market.

Theme 4: Priorities and Actions

A number of key priorities and tangible steps for action were identified through the bilateral sessions, summarised in the points below:

- Provision of funding and resources, primarily digital resources such as laptops and tablets, to those who need them most for online learning, was seen as a key in supporting people through their literacy journey. Investment in education, skills, infrastructure, and literacy services were also seen as priorities.
- Adequate connectivity through the timely roll out of Broadband at a national level was deemed vital to progress. The need for joined-up thinking and planning across Government organisations, with the presence of a 'champion', Department, Agency, or an entity that might lead out on harnessing the collective vision of the Government, reducing the risk of duplication of effort and resources.

- Future legislation in Online Safety should help create a safe environment for cohorts in society fearful of potential fraud and exploitation. The provision of training for those who struggle with media and health literacy was seen as vital in bridging the divide, through assisting individuals to critically evaluate both medical and news media information.
- Finally, participants proposed bringing into force a Plain Writing Act which would make engaging with online Government services an easier task for those with literacy challenges.

Theme 5: Identifying and Measuring Success

Participants emphasised the importance of pre-defined qualitative and quantitative measures as a means of:

- Capturing engagement scope and levels within literacy services
- Defining the social benefits of engagement with such services
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the resultant ALL Strategy.

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) was seen as a potential mechanism for quantifiably monitoring employment levels, FET participation, nationwide literacy levels and rates of disadvantage across the State and regions over time.

Growing the digital infrastructure as a means of ensuring digital skills development for a strong labour market and satisfying increased public demand for digital literacy was seen as vital.

Success was also perceived to hinge on enabling the further integration of members of the migrant community into Irish society through FET ESOL supports and greater access to general public services and housing.

Lastly, it emerged that the Libraries intend to increase the reach of their service provision to the general population from 20% to 30% by the end of 2022, in line with a growing national strategic focus on using library services to provide access to literacy and employment programmes with a focus on digital skills development.

Appendix H: Organisation Listings - Engagement in the Consultation Process

Organisations that Engaged via the Short Survey

Organisational responses to consultation via the Short Survey:
Age & Opportunity
Ballyhoura Development CLG
Ballymun Adult Read and Write Scheme (BARWS)
Ballyvourney Active Retirement Group
Brothers of Charity
Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board (CMETB)
Cherry Orchard Equine Centre
City of Dublin Education Training Board (CDETb) - Dublin Adult Learning Centre
Cork Anti Poverty Resource Network Write Together Adult Literacy Scheme
Cork Education and Training Board (CETB)
Cork Education and Training Board (CETB) - Macroom Further Education Training Centre
Cork Education and Training Board (CETB) - Mahon Basic Education Service, (Literacy and Family Learning Class)
Cork Equal and Sustainable Communities Alliance (CESCA)
County Sligo LEADER Partnership
Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB) Communications Class, Swords
Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art Design and Technology (Faculty of Enterprise and Humanities) Educational Platform
Frontline Training Services
Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETb)
Galway City Partnership
Google Ireland
Inishowen Development Partnership
Irish Association for Social Inclusion Opportunities (IASIO)
Irish Association of Community Training Organisations (IACTO)
Irish Rural Link
Irish Senior Citizens Parliament
Knockmitten Youth and Community Centre
Laois and Offaly Education Training Board (LOETB) / Irish Prison Service (IPS)- Education Unit, Portlaoise Prison
Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB) - Core Skills
Limerick Citizens Information
Longford and Westmeath Education and Training Board (LWETB) Further Education Training Guidance Service
Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB) Sligo Community Training Centre (CTC)
Nursing Homes Ireland

S.W.E.E.T.S CLG – KILBEGGAN
Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality
South Tipperary Development Company CLG (STDC)
Southside Travellers Action Group (STAG)
St. Augustine's Past Pupils Association
Student consultation body of the Dublin Adult Learning Centre (CDETb)
The Christine Buckley Centre for Education and Support CLG
The Irish Deaf Society
Tipperary Education and Training Board (TETB)
Tipperary Education and Training Board (TETB) Nenagh College
Tipperary Education and Training Board (TETB) Nenagh Community Training Centre (CTC)
Waterford Older Persons Council
Wexford County Council Public Libraries

Organisations that Engaged via the Long Survey

Organisational responses to consultation via the Long Survey:
An Cosán
City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETb) - Liberties Training Centre
City of Dublin Education Training Board (CDETb) - Dublin Adult Learning Centre
Community Training Centres/Youthreach Advocates Network (Northern Region)
Cork Education and Training Board (CETB)
Cork Education and Training Board (CETB) - Altrusa Literacy Scheme
Cork Education Training Board (CETB) / Irish Prison Service (IPS) Education Unit Cork Prison
Cumas New Ross
Disability Federation of Ireland
Exchange House – Ireland National Traveller Service
Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETb)
Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETb) - Galway Adult Basic Education
Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETb) - Galway City LECP Seed Two Working Group
Green Group
Inland Fisheries Ireland
Kerry Education and Training Board (KETB)
Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB)
Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB)
Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB)
Meath County Council Library Service
St. Agnes Community Centre for Music and the Arts CLG
St. Patrick's Mental Health Services (SPMHS)
The Open University in Ireland
The Reading Academy
Third Age / Fáilte Isteach
Tipperary Education and Training Board (TETB)
Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB)

Organisations that Engaged via Non-structured Written Submissions

Organisational responses to consultation via unstructured written submissions:
Adult Guidance Association
Adult Literacy Organisers' Association (ALOA)
Age Action Ireland
ALONE
AONTAS
Citizen's Information Board
City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETb) - Adult Literacy Organiser Group
City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETb) - Development Unit
City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETb) - South Inner-City Adult Education Service
Competition and Consumer Protection Commission
Conradh na Gaeilge
Cork County Council Library and Arts Service
D10 Education Task Force (ETF) – The KITE Literacy and Numeracy Group
Department of Education
Digital and Assistive Technology Task Group
Donegal Education and Training Board (DETB)
Down Syndrome Ireland
Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB)
Dublin City Libraries
Dún Laoghaire Rathdown Libraries
Dyslexia Association Ireland (DAI)
Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)
Empower Local Development CLG
Engineers Ireland
European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)
Facebook Ireland
Frontline Training Services
Grangegorman Development Agency
Health Service Executive (HSE) – Cork Kerry Community Healthcare
Higher Education and Colleges Association
ICDL Ireland

Irish Banking Culture Board
Irish Computer Society (ICS)
Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)
Irish Farmers Association (IFA)
Irish Institute of Training and Development
Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOUE)
Irish Prison Service (IPS)
Irish Rural Link
Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB) - Bray Institute of Further Education
Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board (KCETB)
Léargas
Library Association Ireland
Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB) - Burren Outdoor Education and Training Centre
Local Government Management Agency (LGMA)
Louth County Council Library Service
Maynooth University - Department of Adult & Community Education
Meath County Council
Media Literacy Ireland
Merck Sharp & Dohme Ireland (MSD)
National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)
National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)
National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI)
National Traveller Money & Budgeting Service
Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)
Rehab Group
Representative Group on Irish Language (GRETBI, Conradh na Gaeilge, Language Planning Officers)
Social Justice Ireland
South Dublin Libraries
The Wheel
University College Dublin School of Social Policy
University of Limerick
Waterford Institute of Technology Literacy Development

Wexford County Council Public Libraries
Young Ballymun
Youth Employment Support Service

Organisations that Engaged in “Onward Research”

Organisations that engaged in “onward research” as noted in their written submissions:⁴⁰
AONTAS
Donegal Education and Training Board (DETB)
Down Syndrome Ireland
Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)
Irish Prison Service (IPS)
Irish Rural Link
Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board (KCETB)
Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETb)
Representative Group on Irish Language (GRETb, Conradh na Gaeilge, Language Planning Officers)
Youth Employment Support Service

⁴⁰ Five submissions indicating onward research were also received from students at the Maynooth University. Details of these are given in the [“Summary of “onward research” focus groups interviews, and small-scale surveys”](#) section of this report.

Organisations Engaged via Bilateral Meetings

Organisational responses to consultation via unstructured written submissions ⁴¹:
Adult Literacy Organisers' Association (ALOA)
Age Action Ireland
An Cosán
AONTAS
Association of Colleges and Independent Commission of the Future of Colleges
Broadcasting Authority of Ireland and Media Literacy Ireland
Citizen's Information Board
City and Guilds
City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETb)
Community Radio Ireland
Competition and Consumer Protection Commission
Conradh na Gaeilge
Cork Education and Training Board (CETB) - Adult Learning Service
Department for the Economy – Northern Ireland
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
Department of Education
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Department of Environment, Climate and Communications
Department of Finance
Department of Health
Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
Department of Rural and Community Development
Department of Social Protection
Department of the Taoiseach
Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
Digital Strategy for Schools Team
Donegal Education and Training Board (DETB)
Dyslexia Association Ireland (DAI)
Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)
Empower Local Development CLG
Enable Ireland

⁴¹ One additional interview was undertaken with an international subject matter expert.

eSafety Australia
European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)
Facebook Ireland
Freedom Tech
Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB)
Health Service Executive (HSE) – National Clinical Lead for Disability Services
Irish SME Association (ISME)
Ireland Reads
Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC)
Irish Computer Society (ICS) & International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL)
Irish Farmers Association (IFA)
Irish Prison Service under the Department of Justice
Irish Refugee Council
Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB)
Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board (KCETB)
Learning and Work Institute UK
Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB)
Local Government Management Agency (LGMA)
Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB)
National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)
National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)
National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
National Disability Authority (NDA)
National Economic and Social Council (NESC)
One Family
Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre
POBAL
Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)
Technical and Further Education – Southern South Australia
Technological University of Dublin
The Wheel
Tipperary Education and Training Board (TETB)
University of Limerick
University of Ulster

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