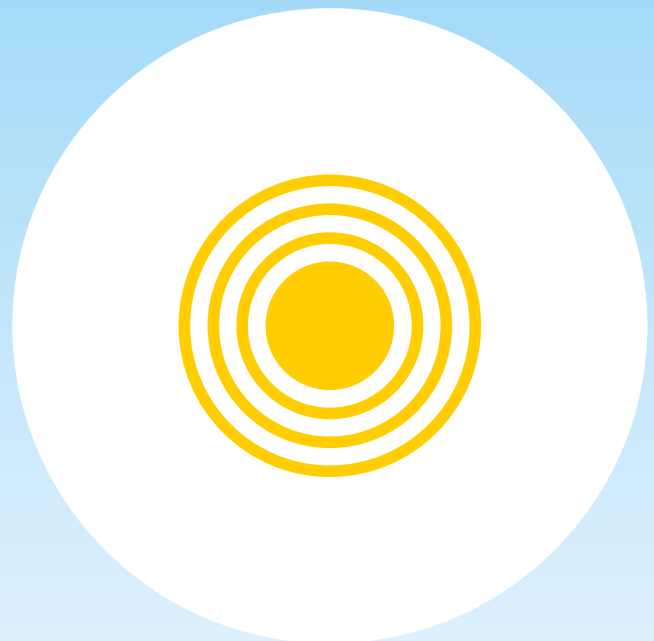
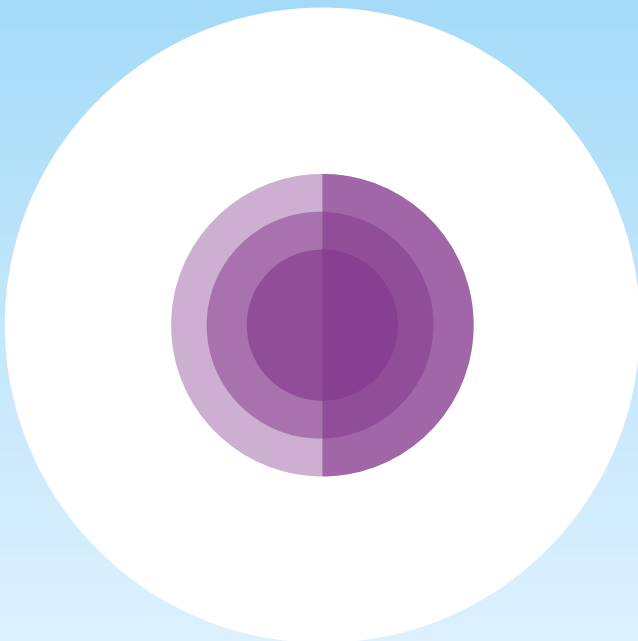
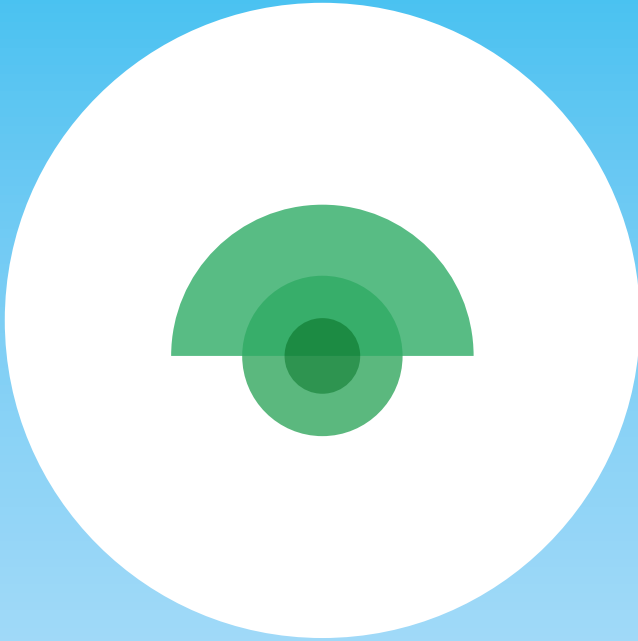


**SOLAS  
CORPORATE PLAN  
2017-2019**





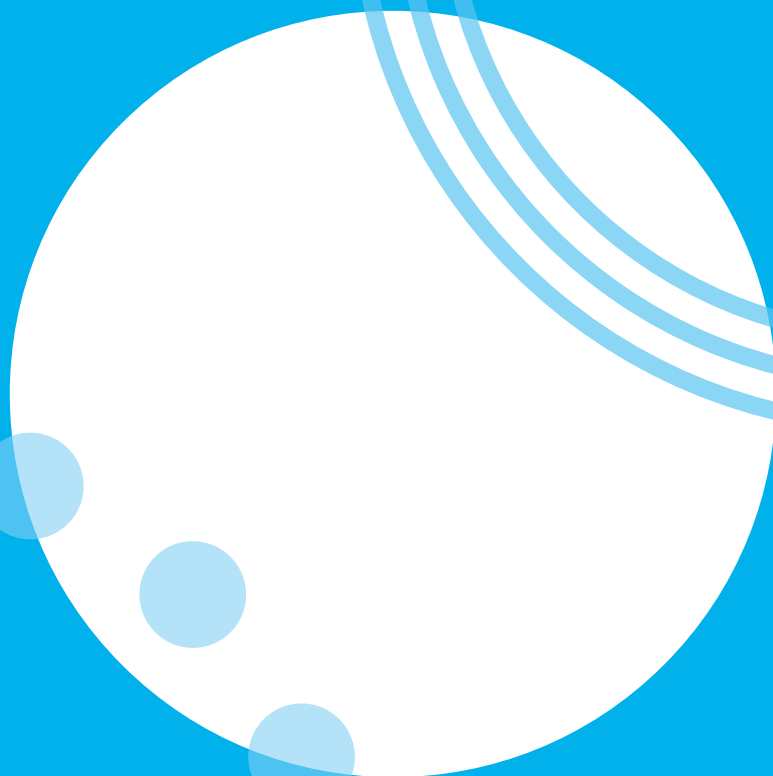
**SOLAS  
CORPORATE PLAN  
2017-2019**



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Skills-upgrading is critical to giving Ireland a competitive advantage. Developing a broad spectrum of skills, and aligning FET provision with the needs of the labour market to boost learners' employability, represents a significant opportunity to support economic growth.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**The Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 sets out a clear ambition for Ireland to become the best education service in Europe over the next decade. SOLAS is working with a wide range of stakeholders, including Education and Training Boards (ETBs), other Further Education and Training (FET) partners and the Department of Education and Skills to ensure that our sector delivers on our part of this ambition.**

This Corporate Plan 2017-2019 is designed to enable and support the sector towards achieving this outcome in the context of contributing to broader government efforts to underpin and sustain economic growth and social inclusion.

The plan will build on the significant achievements of the first SOLAS Corporate Plan. The new targets take account of the improving economic and labour market situation which is different in many respects to 2014 when the first SOLAS Corporate Plan was published.

Skills-upgrading is critical to giving Ireland a competitive advantage. Developing a broad spectrum of skills, and aligning FET provision with the needs of the labour market to boost learners' employability, represents a significant opportunity to support economic growth.

We have clear goals, objectives and sectoral and SOLAS specific targets for the three-year lifetime of the plan.

Achieving the targets outlined will hinge on many factors, including the country's economic performance over the three-year period, the availability of the necessary resources and the strategic reform of the FET sector. Although unemployment is expected to fall below 6 percent by the end of 2018, some uncertainty remains. A number of factors, such as Brexit, for example, could significantly impact economic growth.

Sectoral targets include a 10 percent increase in people securing employment or progression to other learning opportunities after relevant FET courses, and a similar target for FET lifelong-learning participation to help Ireland reach EU averages.

We are committed to improving employment prospects for individuals by aligning FET courses and FET lifelong learning with the skills required by enterprises based on ongoing labour-market research to inform FET provision decisions. We will work closely with the National Skills Council and the Regional Skills Fora in anticipating and responding to the rapidly changing skills needs across all sectors.

An increase of 10,000 more people a year receiving certification for courses focused on enterprise skills requirements is part of this suite of targets.

Our plan takes full account of the FET element of government initiatives to boost social inclusion by targeting specific groups. We are committed to expanding FET access for socially, economically or educationally disadvantaged groups, such as long-term unemployed people, those facing literacy and numeracy challenges, people with disabilities, low-skilled workers and those aged 18-24 not in education training or employment (NEETS).

The Corporate Plan will be backed by annual business plans devised by each SOLAS unit to optimise taxpayer investment in FET and ensure the highest standards of stewardship and governance.

A performance-based funding model will be developed and introduced to enable FET programme objectives become more responsive and innovative and to deliver value for money.

SOLAS will prepare resource programmes with ETBs and other providers to implement this Corporate Plan.

**We have clear goals, objectives and sectoral and SOLAS specific targets for the three-year lifetime of the plan.**

# INTRODUCTION

Ireland is positioning itself to become the home of Europe's best education and training system. This second SOLAS three-year Corporate Plan will contribute to this stated ambition of the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019.

SOLAS will work with Further Education and Training (FET) partners to achieve this objective through targeted and measureable activities.

FET is a highly valued way of acquiring new skills relevant to enterprise needs and progressing careers. It enables social inclusion, fairness and lifelong learning while contributing to overall personal and community development. Our new Corporate Plan demonstrates how individuals, enterprises and communities can benefit from FET.

## Strategic policies

By implementing this plan, SOLAS will contribute to the successful achievement of the five strategic goals of the Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019. It also strengthens the SOLAS commitment to a range of government policies including the Action Plan for Education, the National Skills Strategy 2025, the Action Plan for Jobs, Pathways to Work and the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with a Disability.

## Targeted and measured goals

This Corporate Plan, which runs from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2019, sets out three-year goals, objectives and targets. SOLAS has agreed specific sectoral targets with the Department of Education and Skills.

For example, by the end of 2019 a target of a 10 percent increase has been agreed in:

- Learners securing employment after undertaking a relevant FET course
- Learners progressing to other FET courses or higher education from relevant courses
- The rate of certification on courses primarily focused on social-mobility skills development that is transversal in nature.
- Adult Learners taking part in lifelong learning

delivered through FET.

In addition, from 2018, for three years, an average of 10,000 more learners each year are to achieve qualifications related to business sectors where employment growth and skills needs have been identified.

Benchmarks are being prepared for all these targets to measure progress and impact.

## Economic performance and other influences

Achieving these targets is critically dependent on a number of factors, including the performance of the economy over the next three years.

It is also dependent on other FET sectoral reforms, such as an improved guidance service for learners, and on-going professional development for staff being advanced within the timeframe, and on the required resources being made available in support of such initiatives. In that regard, resource plans will be prepared for the approval of the Department of Education and Skills. Therefore, some targets may need to be adapted based on available resources.

## Responsibilities

SOLAS is the State agency responsible for funding, co-ordinating and monitoring further education and training that is funded by the Department of Education and Skills and provided by the 16 ETBs and other providers.

In developing this plan, SOLAS has complied with Department of Education and Skills policies and those of other relevant government departments. The plan meets SOLAS' obligations under the Further Education and Training Act 2013.

SOLAS will engage and consult with all FET stakeholders over the period of this corporate plan in respect of its implementation.



**THIS PLAN ADOPTS SPECIFIC AGGREGATE TARGETS AGREED WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS.**

**BY THE END OF 2019:**

.....  
**10% MORE LEARNERS SECURING EMPLOYMENT AFTER UNDERTAKING A RELEVANT FET COURSE.**

.....  
**10% MORE LEARNERS PROGRESSING TO OTHER FET COURSES OR HIGHER EDUCATION FROM RELEVANT COURSES.**

.....  
**10% INCREASE OF ADULT LEARNERS TAKING PART IN LIFELONG LEARNING DELIVERED THROUGH FET.**

Benchmarks are being prepared for all these targets to measure progress and impact.



.....  
**10% INCREASE IN THE RATE OF CERTIFICATION ON COURSES PRIMARILY FOCUSED ON SOCIAL-MOBILITY SKILLS DEVELOPMENT THAT IS TRANSVERSAL IN NATURE.**

 **10,000 LEARNERS PER ANNUM**

FROM 2018, FOR THREE YEARS, AN AVERAGE OF 10,000 MORE LEARNERS EACH YEAR ARE TO ACHIEVE QUALIFICATIONS RELATED TO BUSINESS SECTORS WHERE EMPLOYMENT GROWTH AND SKILLS NEEDS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED.

## VISION, MISSION & CORE PRINCIPLES



The SOLAS vision, mission and core principles guide and inform this plan.

### VISION

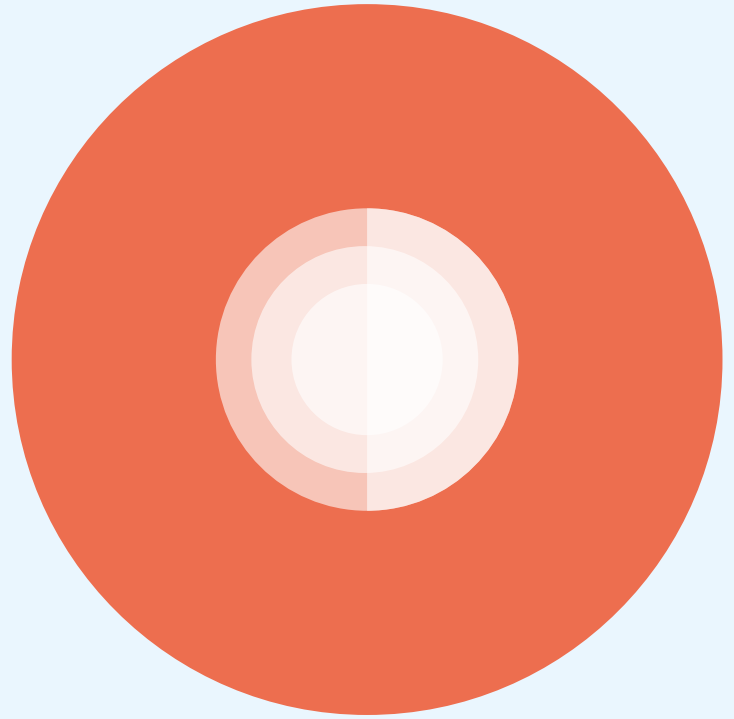
**Further Education and Training programmes are recognised for their demonstrable benefits for learners, enterprise and communities. FET is valued for its effectiveness and quality, and plays an integral part in helping Ireland achieve its ambition of delivering the best education and training service in Europe.**

SOLAS adheres to the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and all relevant statutory and regulatory requirements.



## **MISSION**

To be ambitious for Further Education and Training; and through that ambition to lead, support and influence an ever-improving FET sector that delivers excellent outcomes for learners, enterprise and communities.



## **CORE PRINCIPLES**

The SOLAS approach is:

- Evidence-based
- Responsive and flexible
- Outward-looking and learner-centred
- Collaborative
- Focused on excellence

# GOALS & OBJECTIVES

There are seven goals in the new Corporate Plan. The first five are specifically linked to further enable the FET strategy in a changed environment.

The final two goals ensure the proper framework and services to support the delivery of the plan.

## SOLAS GOAL 6

The SOLAS organisation is **effectively equipped** to carry out its mandate

## SOLAS GOAL 1

FET provision is aligned with the labour market & learners' **employability** and lifelong learning needs.

**FET Goal 1**  
Skills for the Economy

## SOLAS GOAL 2

FET provision is **equitable and inclusive**, reflecting Government policies.

**FET Goal 2**  
Active Inclusion

## SOLAS GOAL 3

FET provision is **strategic, responsive, effective** and efficient.

**FET Goal 3**  
Quality Provision

## **SOLAS GOAL 4**

FET planning & funding is **supported by evidence** and aligned with the FET Strategy.

### **FET Goal 4**

Integrated Planning & Funding

## **SOLAS GOAL 5**

The FET sector is **highly valued** as a route to employment, progression and lifelong learning.

### **FET Goal 5**

Standing of FET

## **SOLAS GOAL 7**

SOLAS continues to provide essential support services to key stakeholders

# SOLAS GOAL 1

Align skills provided through FET courses with those required by the labour market to improve individuals' employment prospects and lifelong learning needs.

## THREE-YEAR TARGETS

# 30,500

30,500 new apprentice and trainee registrations from 2017-2019, with an increase in registrations from circa 6,000 in 2016 to 12,400 in 2019.



# 10,000 LEARNERS PER ANNUM

An increase of 10,000 people a year securing certification in required skills for identified potential business sectors.\* This increase relates to each year for three years from 2018.

New strategic-performance agreements with all 16 ETBs, integrated with the FET planning process.

## ACTIONS

**1.1** Carry out skills and labour-market research to inform decisions on FET provision by SOLAS.

**1.2** Develop agreed skills targets using outputs from improved FET data, the strategic pilots' projects, programme evaluation, research and improved planning processes. These would be developed with the National Skills Council, regional forums and employers as a key component of the FET strategic agreements and service planning with ETBs.

## Linked to FET Goal 1 Skills for the Economy



10%

A 10 percent increase in FET lifelong-learning participation to help Ireland reach EU averages.

A 10 percent increase in people securing employment on completion of a relevant FET course.

\*Potential sectors for additional skills qualifications:

- Construction
- ICT
- Food and beverages
- Hospitality
- Wholesale/retail
- Biopharma/pharmachem
- Health/other care
- Digital media
- Sport and fitness
- Engineering
- Enterprise-skills needs; domestic/international.
- Logistics
- Financial Services

**1.3** Strengthen the strategic approach to skills development for an increasing diversity of participant groups, including those in employment.

**1.4** Finalise and implement the development framework and plan for employees to avail of relevant FET programmes.

**1.5** Implement the SOLAS elements of the Action plan to expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland 2016-2020 and other implementation plans as they are concluded.

# SOLAS GOAL 2

Ensure FET provision is equitable and inclusive, and reflects government policies, leading to enhanced access and participation for individuals who are socially, economically or educationally disadvantaged.

## THREE-YEAR TARGETS



↑10%

A 10 percent increase in the rate of certification on courses primarily focused on social mobility-skills development that is transversal in nature.



↑10%

A 10 percent increase in people progressing to further or higher education from these groups.

Implement the FET strategy in respect of literacy and numeracy with improved screening and assessment systems, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) policy, and awareness.

## ACTIONS

**2.1** Set up a new SOLAS unit to ensure an effective bridging mechanism between social-inclusion policy and its implementation by FET providers.

**2.2** Ensure FET providers meet social-inclusion policy requirements. Identify and address any barriers to this.



## Linked to FET Goal 2

### Active Inclusion

Develop and adopt specific targets to meet government-policy objectives through FET service plans.

**2.3** Oversee and direct the implementation of the FET strategy in respect of literacy and numeracy.

**2.4** Support ETBs to expand delivery options, using ICT and technology enhanced learning as appropriate, to facilitate access and participation for a diverse group of individuals.

# SOLAS GOAL 3

Ensure FET provision is strategic, responsive, and effective, and provides value for money. Continually improve experiences and outcomes for individuals, employers and communities.

## THREE-YEAR TARGETS

Ensure relevant government targets are achieved.

Evaluate six types of FET national provision, and present improvement plans to the Department of Education and Skills.



↑ 10%

A 10 percent increase in stakeholder satisfaction with FET provision.

## ACTIONS

**3.1** Conduct independent evaluations of the effectiveness of the National Youthreach Programme, the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI), Specific Skills Training (SST), Traineeship and Specialist Training Provision for Persons with a Disability (STP); and develop an appropriate response to the findings of each evaluation.



**FET programmes evaluated and programme improvement plans presented to Department of Education and Skills.**

**3.2** Implement agreed programme improvement plans with policy approval from the Department of Education and Skills.

**3.3** Implement FET Professional Development Strategy in collaboration with the ETBI and its member ETBs.

**3.4** Agree and implement a FET policy framework for employee development with the Department of Education and Skills, the ETBI and ETBs.

**3.5** Put in place a programme of fiscal, compliance and grant-assurance monitoring with ETBs.

**3.6** Implement programme-innovation strategies which prioritise work-based learning and technology-enhanced learning (TEL), with ETBs.

**3.7** Develop and prepare new annual strategic performance reports for the FET sector.

# SOLAS GOAL 4

Agreed goals, targets and timelines will be set out in individual ETB strategic performance agreements with SOLAS.

## THREE-YEAR TARGETS

Connect policy, strategy and actions with an enhanced, knowledge-based, integrated, outcomes-based planning model.

Align new funding model to all national and regional objectives.

## ACTIONS

**4.1** Review current funding approach, together with the Department of Education and Skills, to ensure it is aligned with the Action Plan for Education 2016 - 2019 and the FET strategy.

**4.2** Develop a funding model to support FET innovation and continual improvement, with funding targeting those programmes which achieve their objectives and value for money.

**A new performance-related funding model will incentivise and reward better provision, and target funding for optimum impact based on specific programme goals.**

**Linked to FET Goal 4**  
Integrated Planning  
and Funding



**DEVELOP A  
FUNDING MODEL  
TO SUPPORT FET  
INNOVATION**

**4.3** Prepare and agree annual FET services plan informed by identified priorities from the National Skills Council, government policies, labour-market analysis, research evidence and inputs from ETBs and other stakeholders.

**4.4** Develop and agree resource plans for SOLAS, FET providers and other FET bodies with the Department of Education and Skills. Adapt plans in accordance with availability of resources.

**4.5** Develop performance benchmarks based on robust information systems.

# SOLAS GOAL 5

Employers recognise FET's role in the provision of crucial skills for their business. Individuals value the contribution that FET can make to their careers and their lives.

## THREE-YEAR TARGETS

Create a mechanism for learners and employers to connect, with initial emphasis on apprenticeship.



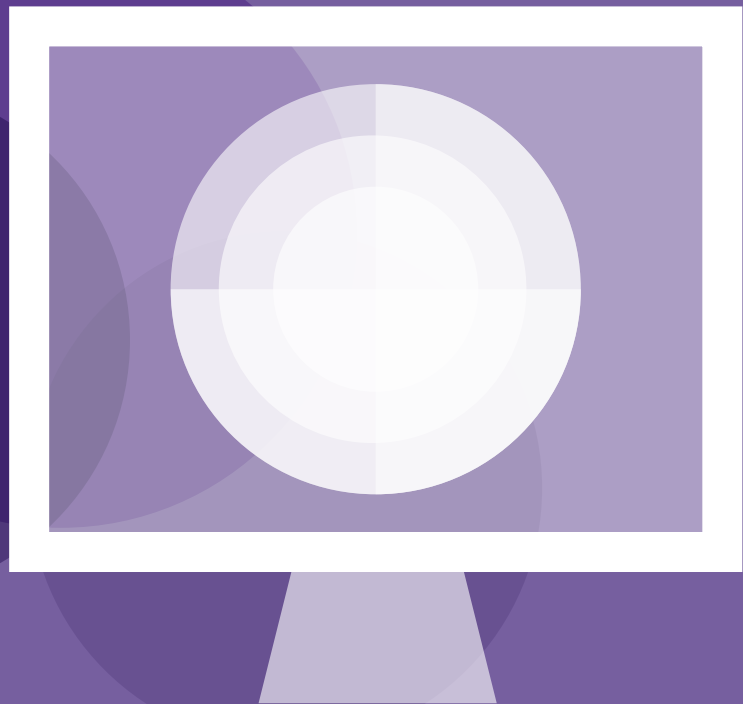
A 10 percent increase in stakeholder satisfaction with FET provision.

## ACTIONS

**5.1** Continually improve and draw on information resources to provide analysis and evidence for further education and for training stakeholders.

**5.2** Lead the development of an FET Communications Strategy to promote the value of FET in partnership with the ETBI, ETBs and other FET providers.

CREATE A  
MECHANISM  
FOR LEARNERS  
AND EMPLOYERS  
TO CONNECT.



**5.3** Create a mechanism to enable employers and, initially, potential apprentices to connect. Expand to other employers and learners.

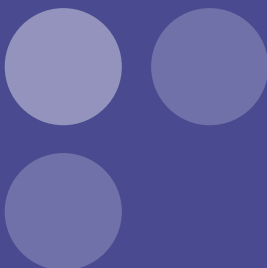
# SOLAS GOAL 6

Ensure the SOLAS organisation is effectively equipped to carry out its mandate.

## THREE-YEAR TARGETS

Ensure SOLAS is a high-performing executive agency, respected for its teamwork, innovation, integration and adaptability. An energised, motivated and skilled team is supported by a structure aligned with this plan.

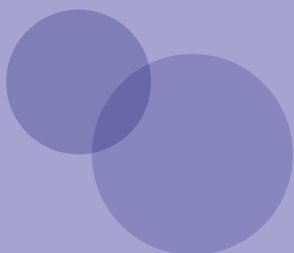
Demonstrate best practice as a learning organisation.



## ACTIONS

**6.1** Prepare and agree Performance Delivery Agreements with the Department of Education and Skills which will identify organisational priorities.

**6.2** Revise organisation structure to reflect the new plan.





Provide effective leadership and support to the sector through our people, resources and systems.

SOLAS WILL  
DEMONSTRATE  
BEST PRACTICE  
AS A LEARNING  
ORGANISATION

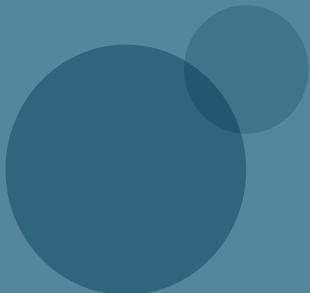


**6.3** Implement the SOLAS workforce development plan in full.

# SOLAS GOAL 7

Continue to provide essential support services to key stakeholders.

## THREE-YEAR TARGETS



All service elements will meet performance standards as agreed with stakeholders.

## ACTIONS

**7.1** Review operation and process design of construction services.

**7.2** Implement review recommendations in conjunction with stakeholders.

Enhance and continue to provide services and supports, internally and externally for government departments and agencies, ETBs, private and other providers.

These services to include information and communication technology, finance, European Union funding and construction services.



**ENHANCED  
SUPPORT SERVICES  
FOR GOVERNMENT  
DEPARTMENTS,  
ETBS AND OTHER  
PROVIDERS**

**7.3** Support the administration of the ESF funded Programme for Employability Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014 - 2020 and the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund with the Department of Education and Skills.

**7.4** Annual SOLAS unit business plans to specify, as appropriate, relevant actions regarding each service component.

**7.5** Revise SOLAS ICT strategy, and plan as necessary.

**CONTEXT FOR  
CORPORATE PLAN  
2017-2019**



## FORCES FOR CHANGE

This plan is set against a backdrop of continuing efforts by government to underpin and sustain economic growth, which is expected to remain strong over the next two to three years. It is also informed by the Government's social-inclusion priorities, reflected in a dual focus within the plan of active inclusion through skills development.

Unemployment is forecast to drop below 6 percent by the end of 2018.

Some uncertainties have to be taken into account. Brexit and the pace of global economic growth could impact negatively on current growth projections and the labour market.

## WIDER FOCUS

Productivity is regarded as a key driver of growth for all countries.

Enhancing the skills of jobseekers, unemployed people and existing workers helps to increase productivity.

Upgrading skills is vital for everyone, regardless of occupation or existing level of education. Skills provide a national competitive advantage, and are part of a broader and integrated strategy for national economic development.

A range of skills is needed for successful innovation. Individuals, firms and industries often require different skill sets at different times.

SOLAS is committed to meeting employer demand for FET-related skills and to assisting companies and employees to optimise their skills set for the mutual benefit of enabling improved productivity and innovation in the workplace.

**UPGRADING  
SKILLS IS VITAL  
FOR EVERYONE,  
REGARDLESS OF  
OCCUPATION OR  
EXISTING LEVEL  
OF EDUCATION.**

## SKILLS MONITOR

SOLAS will continue to monitor the skills required by Irish business using five different measurements.

- An annual measure of expansion and replacement needs and the turnover rate for every occupation in each of the eight planning regions
- Twice-yearly surveys of recruitment agencies to identify skills difficult to recruit, combined to provide a comprehensive list
- Analysis at local level of jobseeker skills and the qualifications required by employers
- National employment forecasts every two to three years to identify future expansion needs for the coming five years
- Five-year forecasts for the annual apprentice registration requirements, updated annually as critical information for future training plans.

**SOLAS WILL  
CONTINUE TO  
MONITOR THE  
SKILLS REQUIRED  
BY IRISH BUSINESS**

## DIVERSE QUALIFICATIONS

SOLAS emphasis is on supporting a 'well skilled' workforce, ensuring that there is an appropriate balance between all skills levels required for a well-performing economy. Broad education supported by a close matching of skills to the needs of the labour market helps both workers and employers across all sectors and occupations to adjust successfully to changes in technology and markets.

The on-going demand for people with diverse levels of qualifications and types of experience includes those with further education and training credentials.

Policymakers and education providers need sound evidence of future requirements to help them make the right decisions on reforms, education and investment. There is no one-size-fits-all solution.

It is crucial to offer a level of general skills and education to equip individuals with the necessary foundations to pursue more specific programmes.

Technical skills remain an essential part of different types of work at all levels. These can also benefit the many young people who do not go on to higher education, giving them the skills they need for high-paid, high-skilled jobs of the future.

## UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUPS

Under-represented groups such as long-term unemployed people, people with disabilities, low-skilled and older workers are being targeted through a range of government policy and actions.


These include Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025, Action Plan for Education 2016-2019, Pathways to Work, Action Plan for Jobs, FET Strategy 2014-2019 and the Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland 2016-2020.

This new SOLAS Corporate Plan shows how SOLAS commitments take full account of these and other initiatives.

## LITERACY AND NUMERACY

Many adults in Ireland experience literacy and numeracy difficulties, and often lack the necessary levels of literacy and numeracy skills, in particular to get sustainable employment.

SOLAS will continue to address this area, which has the potential for high returns in terms of employment and social mobility.



**SOLAS EMPHASIS  
IS ON SUPPORTING  
A 'WELL SKILLED'  
WORKFORCE**

## SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISE

SMEs find it harder than larger organisations to release people for off-the-job training while running their normal day-to-day operations. Even when they commit to training they find it hard to access training that is tailored to their specific needs.

There are over 280,000 enterprises in the private business sector in Ireland, employing around 1.3 million people.

Skills training and development are therefore especially critical for the health of local economies and communities, which, in turn, are the building blocks of regional and national economies.

Small and medium sized businesses account for the vast majority of these enterprises. The smaller the firm the less likely it is to engage in training, and a sizeable proportion of small firms does not undertake any training.

SOLAS and its partners must devise innovative ways to support these employers to grow their business through higher-skills innovation and quality.

SOLAS as the funder, and the ETB sector as the providers of FET-related skills, should be sensitive to, and informed by, the importance of the competitive context for employers as they carry out their everyday business.

Most employers need support to construct and sustain the conditions that foster learning without affecting normal operations.

Research shows that substantial informal learning can be provided through the re-design of work processes and peer-to-peer learning support mechanisms.

## SKILLS INFORMATION

Three major initiatives under this new Corporate Plan will gather information on the skills and proficiencies required by Irish enterprises.

They include:

1. A systematic evaluation of employment, progression and unemployment for learners on SOLAS-funded FET programmes.
2. Data mining of on-line major vacancy databases to map the changing skills associated with different occupations.
3. Engagement with the Department of Education and Skills, the Higher Education Authority, Enterprise Ireland and the 'MEND' project at the University of Maynooth to gather data on skills and proficiency requirements.

The evaluation will be made using a SOLAS/ ETBI database for courses and participants known as the Programme and Learner Support System. This information will then be integrated with major databases from Revenue, the Department of Employment and Social Protection, the Department of Education and Skills and others subject to compliance with data protection requirements.

The results will be circulated to all FET providers so that course curricula can be adapted. SOLAS will seek the necessary approval regarding data-exchange protocols before beginning this project.

## OPPORTUNITIES

The SOLAS drive for a broad spectrum of skills, combined with the benefits of reforms already under way and improvements to the economy, provide a significant opportunity to support economic growth over the next three years.

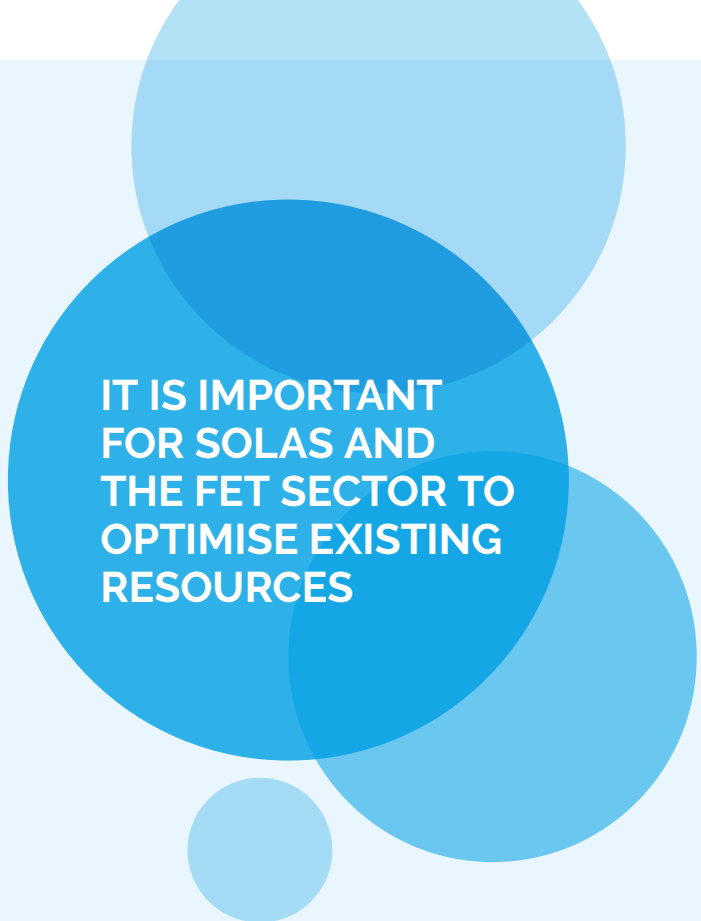
Increasing both capacity and expertise within the FET sector will allow SOLAS to effectively implement the FET education and training commitments underpinning the Government's economic and social-inclusion policies.

The FET sector creates openings for vulnerable individuals and groups to access the skills they need to compete in the labour market. These groups include long-term unemployed people, people with disabilities, young people aged 18-24 years who are not in education, employment or training, and those experiencing literacy and numeracy difficulties.

Most parts of the FET sector are faced with competing demands and significant resourcing pressures since institutional knowledge and experience lost during the recession has not been fully replaced.

It is important for SOLAS and the FET sector to optimise existing resources and develop new ways to grow efficiencies and effectiveness without compromising the quality of FET provision and services.

Significant challenges remain for the FET sector to respond quickly to the improved economic circumstances and to evolving social-inclusion priorities. This response must be made while undertaking the longer-term strategic reforms in planning, delivery and quality assurance.



## IT IS IMPORTANT FOR SOLAS AND THE FET SECTOR TO OPTIMISE EXISTING RESOURCES

SOLAS will ensure its staff are empowered to perform at their optimum capability with a deep understanding of how their roles support the specific elements of the new Corporate Plan.

The organisation's corporate services team will provide support services and contribute to the continuing growth of the performance culture within SOLAS.

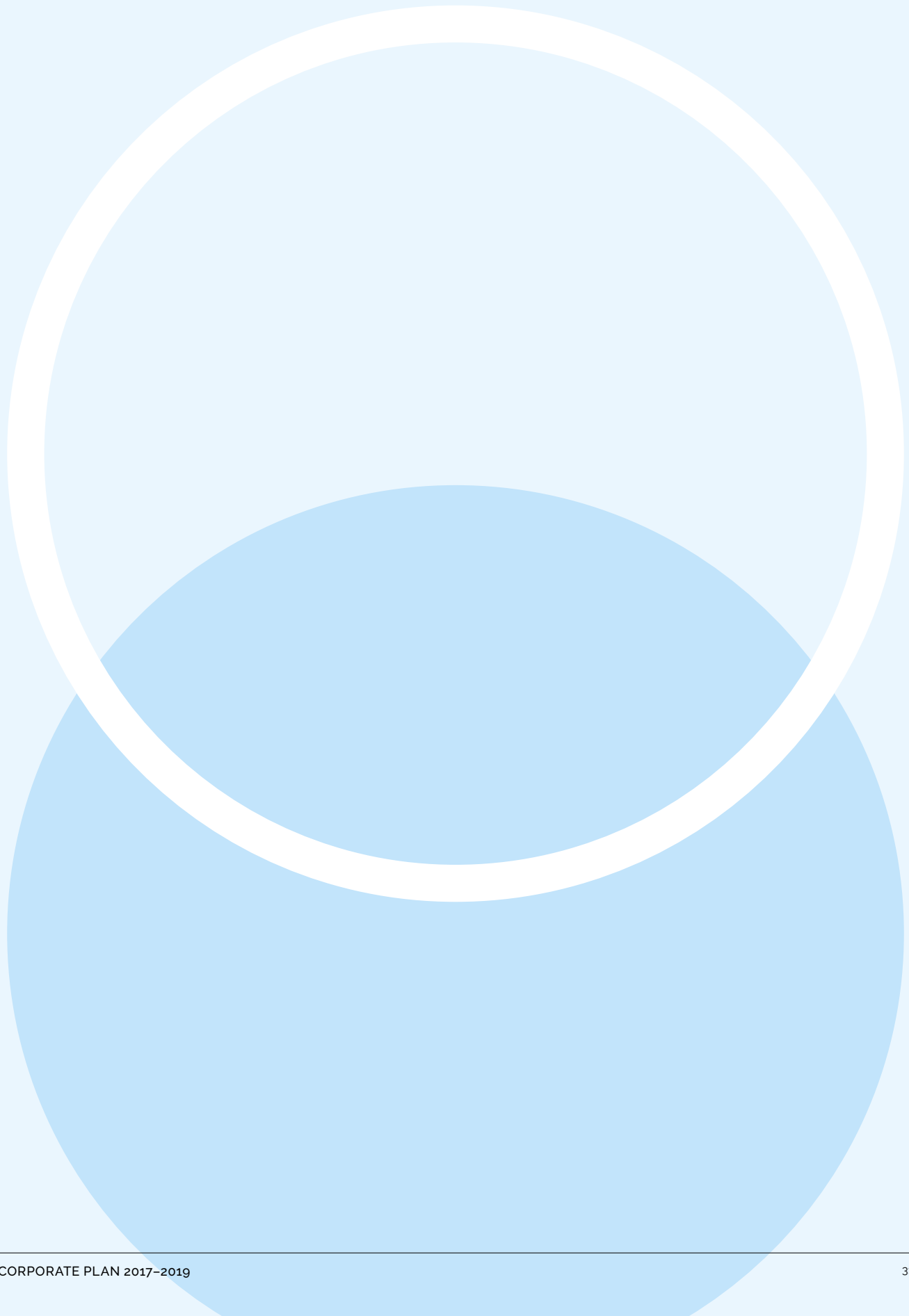
Implementing the DES-approved SOLAS workforce development plan is key to this transformational process.

Building on successful initiatives from the first corporate plan is also central to the overall success of the second.

The Corporate Plan 2017-2019 outlines SOLAS priorities and how these will be achieved. All of the individual SOLAS business units, under their annual business plan, will use their resources to achieve these priorities and targets.

The units will support each of the SOLAS-led commitments set out in the FET Strategy as well as the commitments of other lead FET partners such as ETBI and QQI.





**REVIEW OF THE  
FIRST SOLAS  
CORPORATE PLAN  
2014–2016**



Significant progress was made under the first SOLAS Corporate Plan 2014-2016 with the support of the SOLAS Board, the Department of Education and Skills, the Education and Training Boards, and other FET providers

**These included:**

- The first ever Further Education & Training Strategy 2014 to 2019; Strategy on Technology Enhanced Learning in FET; Comprehensive Strategy for the Professional Development of FET Teachers, Instructors, Trainers, Tutors, Managers and Administrators; Adult Learners Forum convened under Aontas under the auspices of SOLAS.
- A first-ever integrated FET Services Plan in 2014 which brought together a comprehensive picture of FET in Ireland.
- A three-part Programme Learner Support System to support, monitor and evaluate individuals taking part in FET.
- A new planning and funding model to embrace both strategic and operational components.
- The transfer of 19 former FÁS training facilities, 863 staff and about 15,000 learners to the Education and Training Boards without any disruption to education and training services.
- SOLAS taking a leading role in supporting and coordinating the expansion of the apprenticeship system in Ireland.

A detailed implementation plan, with more than 300 proposed milestones, followed the publication of the first corporate plan. Most of these targets have either been completed or are progressing as agreed or will be carried over into this plan.

Significant improvements in FET provision, planning and administration have been implemented to date and will continue to be rolled out. For example, integrated FET Service Plans are now published annually, and new career traineeships have been developed.

Research on the skills needs of the economy is also published annually; and an independent evaluation of the National PLC Programme commissioned by SOLAS will be published shortly, together with the SOLAS response to the findings of the evaluation.

There is on-going implementation of the FET Strategy in respect of Literacy and Numeracy. SOLAS continues to sustain levels of funding in this area.

A new SOLAS communication resource was set up to raise awareness and understanding of the organisation's role in the FET sector and to support the SOLAS objective of improving FET.

Six goals were identified to ensure SOLAS delivered on the first corporate plan.

### Goal 1: Enabling delivery of skills for the economy.

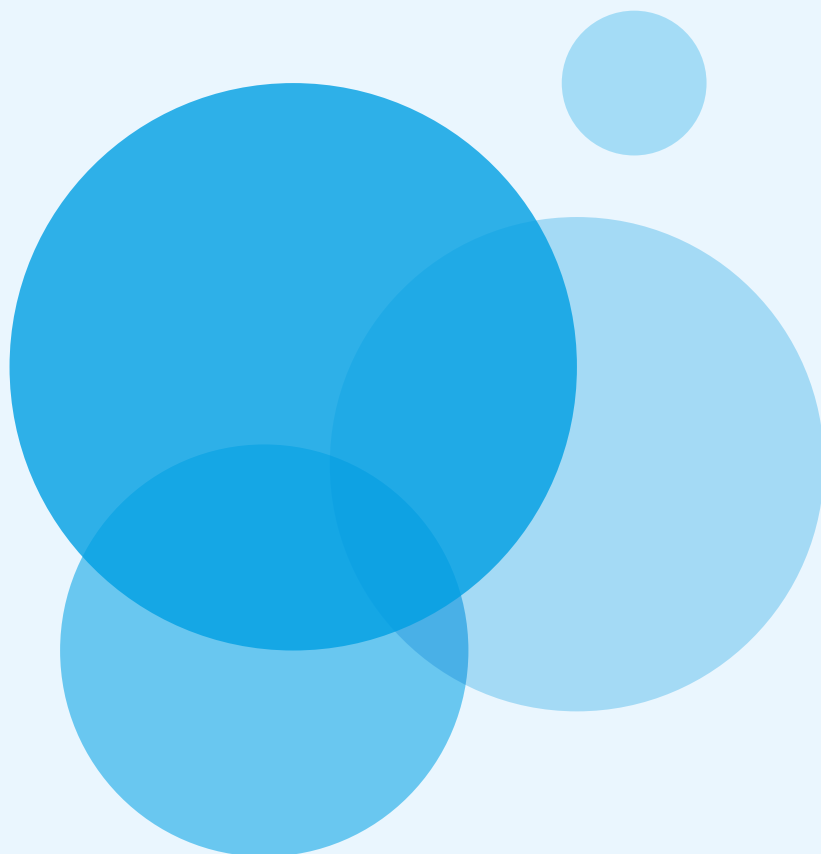
- Most of the existing craft-based apprenticeships were reviewed and two new occupational apprenticeships were implemented. Further new apprenticeship proposals being developed and new career traineeships have been developed such as Hospitality at NQF levels 4 and 5.
- A Programme Learner Support System was created over the three-year period, which included a National Course Database for FET, a National Course Calendar for ETB courses and a National Learner Database.
- Integrated FET Service Plans are now developed and published annually.

### Goal 2: Supporting active inclusion.

- Research on Barriers to FET was undertaken.
- On-going implementation of FET Strategy in respect of Literacy and Numeracy and sustained funding for Literacy and Numeracy and community education was put in place.
- Momentum 1 and 2 were successfully managed on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills.
- The European Globalisation Fund was successfully managed on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills.

### Goal 3: Empowering learners and employers.

- Utilising the new PLSS suite, launched [fetchcourses.ie](http://fetchcourses.ie) course hub to provide information to learners, employers, career guidance service.
- Draft framework for an integrated FET guidance strategy has been developed.
- A National Adult Learner Forum was established to provide feedback on the effectiveness of FET provision.
- Employee Development Strategy developed.



#### **Goal 4: Influencing FET policy and practice through generating intelligence and supporting innovation and entrepreneurship.**

- Research on current and emerging skills needs of the economy are published and disseminated annually using SOLAS skills research and labour market intelligence expertise including National Skills Bulletins, Annual Education and Training Outputs Report, Regional Skills Profiles, Vacancy Reports published on an annual basis.
- An evaluation of the National PLC Programme was carried out and the report, with the SOLAS response, will be published in Q 3 2017.
- Preliminary work has commenced on evaluations of other key lines of FET provision such as Youthreach.
- A report on entrepreneurship education and training in FET was completed in Q4 2016. The report details the nature and extent of entrepreneurship education and training (EET) provision in the FET sector. Based on the report findings, SOLAS recommendations on future developments and improvements to EET provision in the sector will be published in Q2 2017.
- A study into FET capability to deliver education and training programmes relating to 'green' energy completed.

#### **Goal 5: Building sector capacity and responsiveness**

- The successful management of transition and transfer of former FAS training centres to the ETBs without disruption in services or service quality.
- Professional Development Strategy for the ETB workforce completed.
- A new strategy to support technology enhanced learning developed.

#### **Goal 6: Building SOLAS capability and organisational effectiveness.**

- A SOLAS workplace plan was developed and implementation commenced.
- A new SOLAS communication resource was established to, amongst other things, raise awareness and understanding of SOLAS' role within the Further Education and Training sector and to support SOLAS' objective of improving the standing of Further Education and Training.
- A new organisational structure was installed to ensure that both the operational supports to ETBs and DSP were maintained and the strategic planning role of SOLAS was advanced.

**OVERSIGHT AND  
MANAGEMENT OF  
THE CORPORATE  
PLAN 2017-2019**



Targets and actions will be drawn up by the SOLAS Executive for each of the three years of the corporate plan.

These actions will be adjusted where necessary to ensure consistency with relevant government policies, and any necessary amendments will be incorporated into the annual unit business plans.

The Executive will consult with the SOLAS Board Strategy Planning Committee during the preparation of the annual business plans. The Board will be advised by this committee in approving the overall plan and budgets for each year.

Divisional and unit work will be approved by the Chief Executive and Executive Directors.

Continuous risk assessment and management processes will be carried out annually over the three years under the direction of the SOLAS Board and Audit & Risk Management Review Committee.

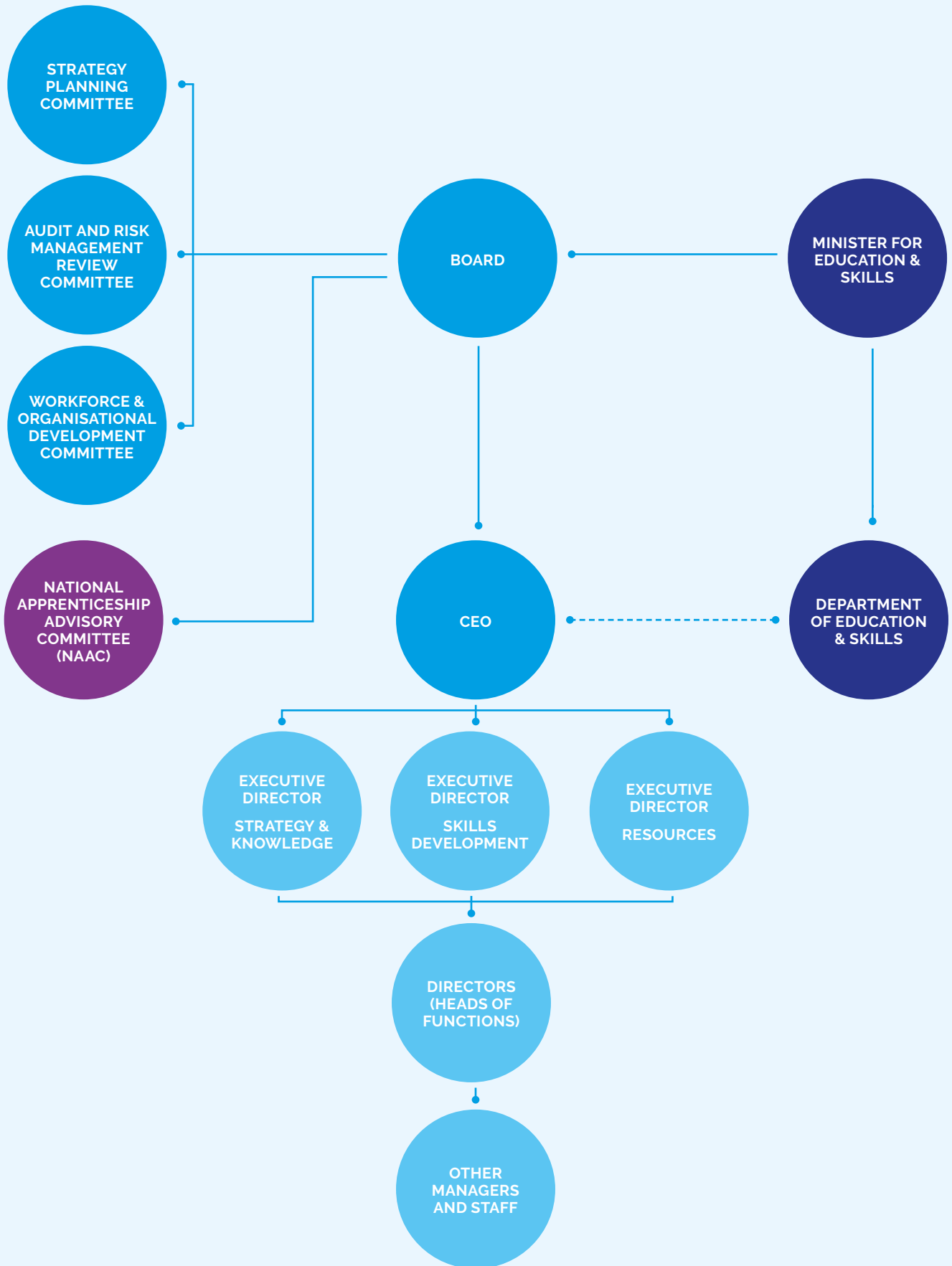
In parallel with all of these measures, SOLAS will work with the Department of Education and Skills to prepare and agree annual Performance Delivery Agreements which will ensure consistency between the SOLAS work programme and government policy.

A new comprehensive reporting template will be put in place using the 'SharePoint' platform to allow for monthly progress reports and quarterly reports to the Board. It will also support the on-going liaison with Department of Education and Skills officials. The new template will include risk analysis and actions.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Board, will provide an annual report to the Minister for Education and Skills on progress with the Corporate Plan 2017-2019 and its sectoral and other targets.

This approach, outlined above, is described in Diagram 2 overleaf.

# OVERSIGHT & MANAGEMENT





<b>ROLE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
<b>BOARD</b>	Provides oversight and strategic direction to the Executive. Advises the Minister on the FET Strategy. Approves Corporate Plan. Approves annual business plans. Monitors progress. Chairman provides annual report to the Minister on behalf of the Board.
<b>STRATEGY PLANNING COMMITTEE</b>	Reviews strategy and plans with Executive. Guidance to the Executive. Advice to the Board.
<b>CEO</b>	Member of the Board. Leads Executive team. Leads interaction with Board and Department of Education & Skills (DES). Agrees annual Performance Delivery Agreements with DES.
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS</b>	Business planning, implementation, oversight and reporting in areas of responsibility. Sponsors proposals and reports to Board. Leads director team.
<b>DIRECTORS</b>	Business planning, implementation, oversight and reporting in areas of responsibility. Lead their business units and teams.
<b>OTHER MANAGERS &amp; STAFF</b>	Defined specific responsibilities in accordance with their roles

# RESOURCES

SOLAS is committed to revitalising its organisational structure to ensure alignment with the goals and objectives of the Corporate Plan 2017-2019. An increased focus on research and data analytics, a new active-inclusion resource, apprenticeship, traineeship and innovation form part of our improvement ambition.

SOLAS will draw on its primary resources of our people, annual budget, internal systems and our expanding bank of research and data to achieve change.

The organisation will also provide support for a range of FET policy measures, such as professional and employee development.

Team building and internal collaboration will be intensified through the workforce development plan.

Key relationships with the Department of Education and Skills, Education and Training Boards Ireland and its member ETBs and other FET partners and stakeholders will also be strengthened.

SOLAS will prepare resource plans with ETBs and other providers to implement this plan.



**SOLAS**

**An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna  
Further Education and Training Authority**

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