Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy
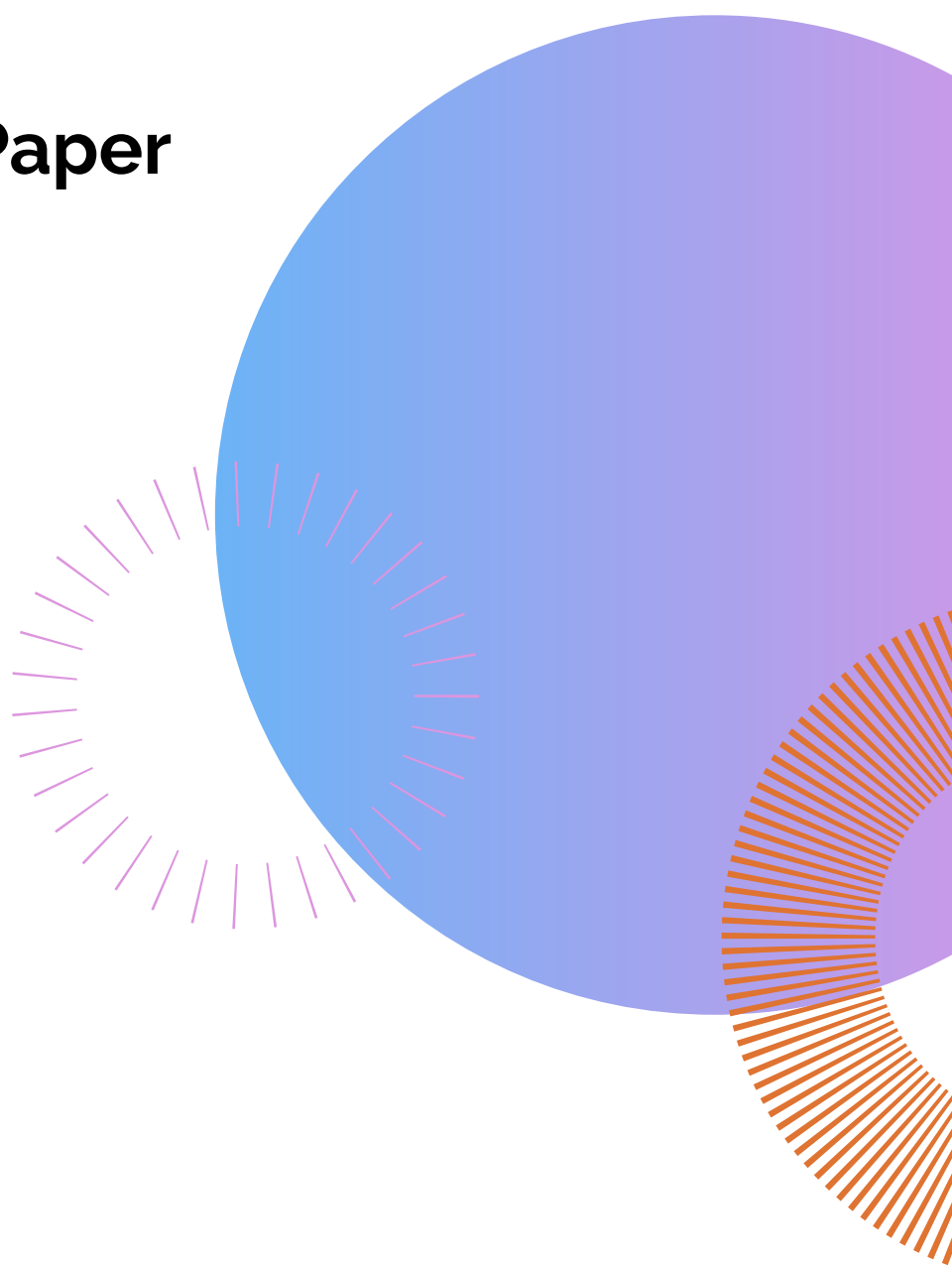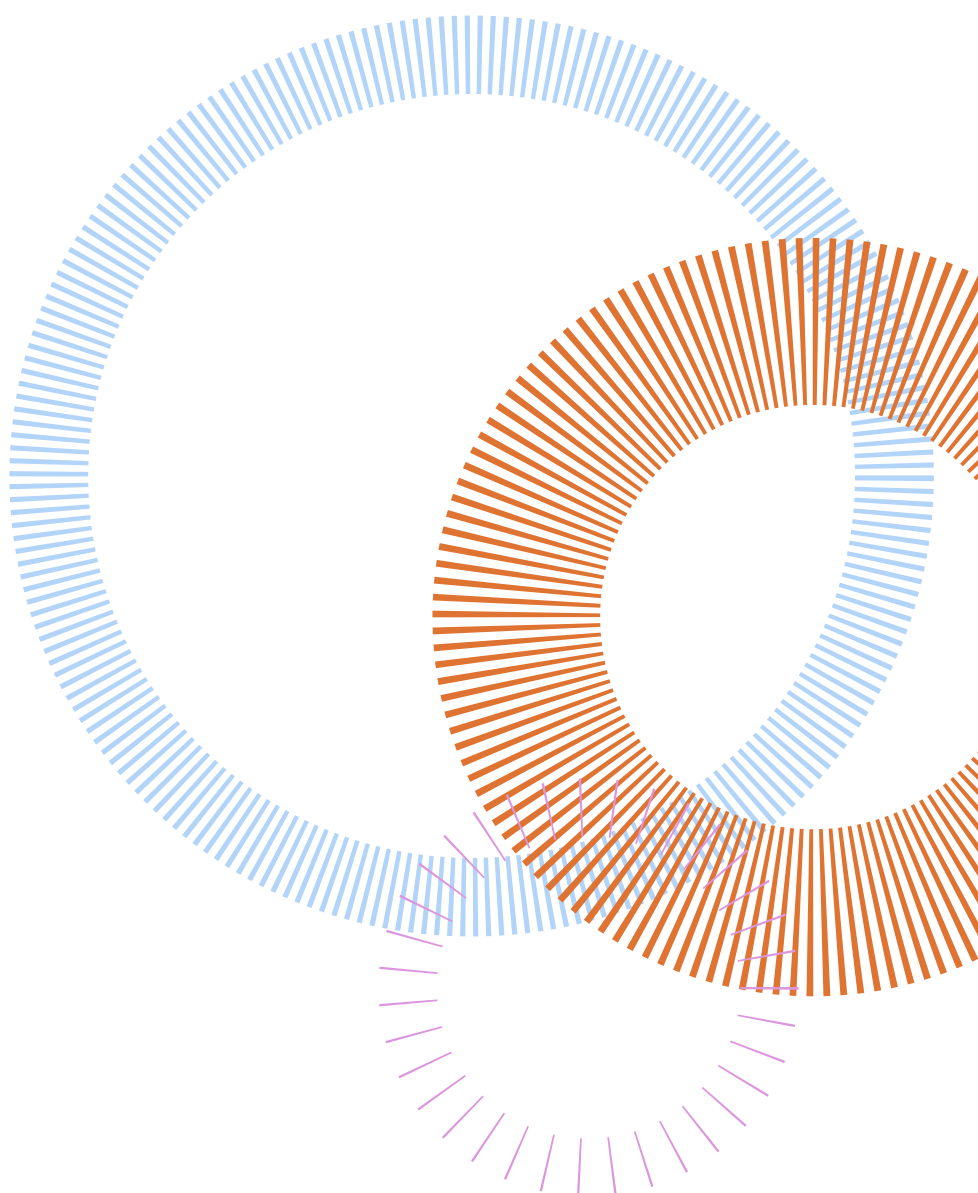
Consultation Paper

Contents

About this Consultation

This public consultation is part of an overall consultation plan to gather views on the development of a **10-year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy (ALND) Strategy for Ireland.**
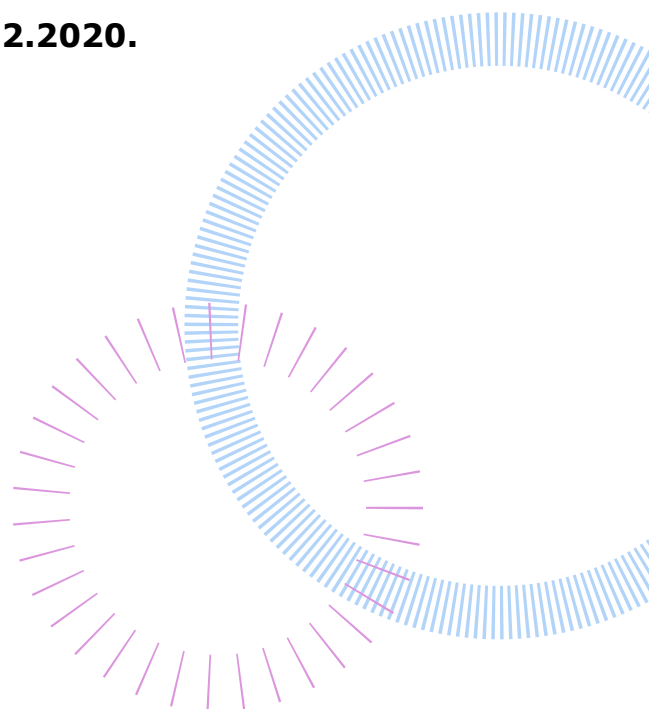
This is an online consultation that is open to anybody who wishes to give their views on the development of a 10-year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy (ALND) Strategy for Ireland.

We are SOLAS – the Further Education and Training Authority. The Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science has tasked us with the development of a 10-year Adult Literacy Numeracy and Digital Literacy (ALND) Strategy for Ireland, and we need your help to shape this new strategy.

We are aiming to create an environment where all adults in Ireland have the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy to fully take part in society.

*Please note that the 10-year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy will be referred to as the 'ALND Strategy' throughout this document.

This consultation closes at 6pm on 31.12.2020.

The purpose of this Consultation Paper

This SOLAS Consultation Paper has been developed to assist and support you in providing your views on the development of a 10-year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy (ALND Strategy) for Ireland.

As well as this Consultation Paper, we have developed a short video that gives a quick overview of this consultation. To view the video please click on this link. The purpose of this Consultation Paper is to provide you with background information on adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy. It is here to assist you in providing your views on the development of a new **10-year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy for Ireland.**
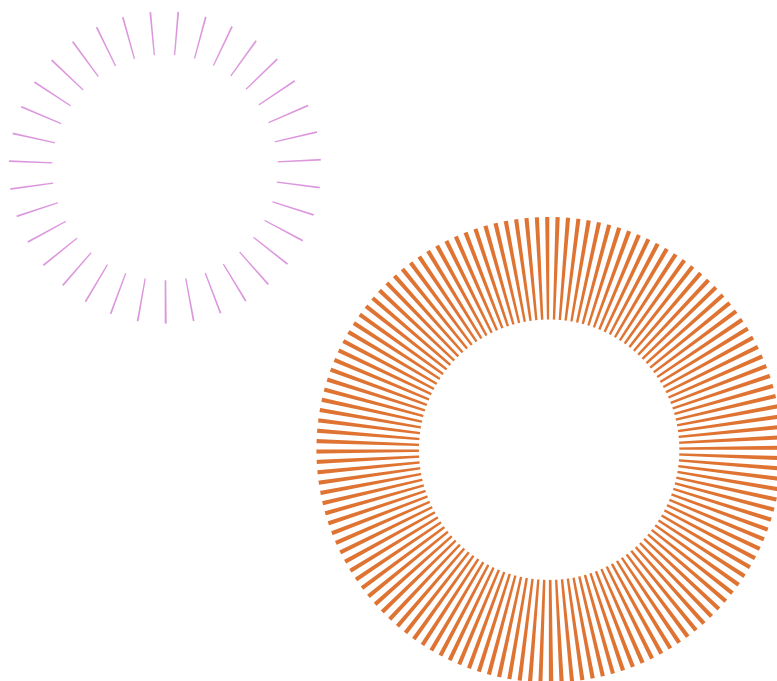
There are four parts to this Consultation Paper

Part 1 outlines the aims and objectives of this consultation.

Part 2 lets you know how you can give your views.

Part 3 explains the context of the ALND Strategy.

Part 4 outlines the five main consultation themes.

Part 1: Aims and objectives of this Consultation

The aims of the Consultation are to:

Capture your views on:

- The challenges and opportunities for Ireland in relation to adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.

- 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 objectives of the consultation are to:

- Capture viewpoints and ideas on how the delivery of services and appropriate supports for adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy should look.

- Identify actions needed to best meet the challenges and opportunities in relation to adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.

- Ensure a participative approach to strategy development by involving a wide range of stakeholders, including those with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital needs. We include a list of key stakeholders on page 9.

Given that the impacts of the ALND Strategy will affect many areas of society, the priorities and actions that emerge from the new ALND Strategy will require coordination across Government. This strategy will likely take a **"Whole of Government"** approach, thereby creating an environment where all adults in Ireland have the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy to fully take part in society. SOLAS is now developing the strategy in collaboration with relevant Government Departments and Agencies, and in consultation with key stakeholders, including you.

Part 2: How you can give your views

How you can give your views

At this stage of the consultation process, you may wish to share your views by completing a short or a long questionnaire, or you can email a written submission to ALND@solas.ie.

If you wish to complete a questionnaire you can complete one of the following:

- A **short** questionnaire.

- A **longer** questionnaire.

You can either complete the questionnaire online or download the questionnaire, complete it offline, and email it to us. Instructions for both options are provided below.

Online Options

To fill in the **short questionnaire online** please click on this link.
To fill in the **long questionnaire online** please click on this link.

Offline Options

Download the **short questionnaire** by clicking on this link.
Download the **long questionnaire** by clicking on this link.
Fill out your chosen questionnaire offline and email to: ALND@solas.ie.

Date by which we need your views

The closing date for completing the questionnaire or sending in a written submission is 6pm on **31.12.2020.**

What we collect and how we treat submissions

We will not ask for personal information as part of the submissions. If you are making a submission on behalf of an organisation, you will be asked to enter the organisation's name. We do not ask individuals to provide their name.

Submissions will be subject to The Freedom of Information Act 2014. This means a person can ask to see submissions. We will be publishing all submissions received as part of this consultation. You can get information on Freedom of Information by [clicking on this link](#).

You can also get information on how SOLAS handles personal data that is received by us by [clicking on this link](#).

If you need any help or have any questions, please email ALND@solas.ie and we will be glad to help you.

Who else is this consultation for?

This consultation is for anybody with an interest in improving literacy, numeracy and digital literacy for adults.

We are consulting with the following stakeholders (individuals and organisations):

- The public, including those who may have unmet needs relating to adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.

- Adult learners.

- Education and training providers and practitioners, including lecturers, teachers and tutors.

- Government departments and agencies.

- Employers / employers' associations.

- Trade unions.

- Non-governmental organisations, representative groups, including issue-based advocacy organisations.

- Community organisations.

- Public libraries.

Part 3: The context of the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy

In this part of our Consultation Paper, we set out the context to the new Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy Strategy.

The Programme for Government (June 2020)[1] states a commitment to "develop and implement a new 10-year strategy for adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills within the first year of the Government."

Following this commitment, the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science has tasked SOLAS with the development of a 10-year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy for Ireland.

In this part of our Consultation Paper, we:

- Define adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy. We also define the digital divide. This helps us all to have a shared understanding of these terms.

- Describe the benefits of having an ALND Strategy.

- Outline progress to date on how we are doing in terms of adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy. We also provide examples of Government services that support adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.

- Describe the policy context for the new ALND Strategy.

What is literacy?

Traditionally we thought about literacy as the skill to read and write but today literacy means much more. In the following pages we set out some detail as to the broader understanding of literacy.

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[1] To read the Programme for Government (2020): Our Shared Future please click on this link.

Literacy defined as a competency

Literacy is a key competence for lifelong learning, as recommended by the European Parliament and European Council in its recommendation on key competencies for lifelong learning. It is formally defined as:

> "…the ability to identify, understand, express, create and interpret concepts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written forms, using visual, sound/audio and digital materials across disciplines and contexts. It implies the ability to communicate and connect effectively with others, in an appropriate and creative way. Development of literacy forms the basis for further learning and further linguistic interaction. Depending on the context, literacy competence can be developed in the mother tongue, the language of schooling and/or the official language in a country or region."

Literacy is also about what we can do and at what level

Other ways we can think about literacy are:

1. **Functional literacy**
   This is where a person has adequate foundational skills in reading, writing and using technology to be able to function effectively in everyday situations. For example, reading a leaflet, looking up a TV guide or a timetable.

2. **Interactive literacy**
   This is where a person can use their literacy skills to actively take part in everyday activities, to extract information and meaning from different forms of communication, and to use information to adapt to changing circumstances.

3. **Critical literacy**
   This is where a person has more advanced literacy skills. These skills are important in critically analysing information and using this information to have greater control over life events and situations. For example, being able to read and understand election leaflets and make an informed choice to vote for a particular candidate.

What is media, media and information, financial, environmental and health literacy?

- **Media literacy** is about empowering people with the supports, capabilities and knowledge to understand how media works in a changing environment, to check the accuracy of information, to understand the role of media in society and ultimately, to make better informed media choices.[2]

- **Media and information literacy** is the knowledge, the attitudes, and the sum of the skills necessary to know when and what information is needed. It is about where and how to obtain that information. It is also about how to evaluate it critically and organise it once it is found and how to use it in an ethical way.[3]

Media and information literacy promote greater social inclusion and can bridge the gap between the information rich and the information poor.

- **Financial literacy** is to have the skills and knowledge that allows people to make informed decisions with their money.

- **Environmental literacy** is about a person's understanding, skills and motivation to be able to make responsible decisions concerning their relationships to natural systems, communities and future generations.

- **Health literacy** is having the skills to assess and obtain information and make good decisions about your health and the health of your family.

In a digital society, digital literacy combined with media and information literacy can be important to promote social inclusion and social cohesion. For example, to be aware of any planned changes for your community and how these changes might impact you. Much of this information is communicated through digital and other media channels, so the ability to access this information has become increasingly important.

[2] Broadcasting Authority of Ireland: Media Literacy Policy.

[3] To read the IFLA Media and Information Literacy Recommendations please click on this link.
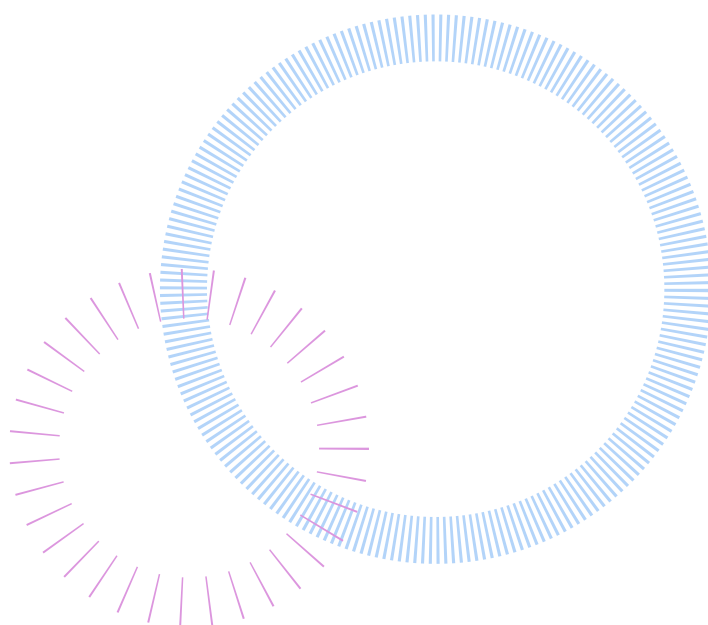
What is digital literacy?

Digital literacy is the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media".[4] It is also described as:

> "...a lifelong learning process of capacity building for using digital technology, communications tools, and/or networks in creating, accessing, analysing, managing, integrating, evaluating, and communicating information in order to function in a knowledge-based economy and society".[5]

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) and digital media have played a critical role in redefining literacy to include the full spectrum of digital literacies, including social media usage.

Our ability to use technology is increasingly essential for participation in all aspects of life, from the world of work and accessing digitised public services, to online socialising and networking with friends, family and wider society. These digital abilities require a minimum level of literacy and numeracy.

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[4] Department of Education and Skills

[5] Daly, T. Digital: Access, Participation and Communication for the Non-Liberate' in the Digital Age. LEARN. Journal of the Irish Learning Support Association, Vol 3, 2015. 115 – 137

Digital literacy is also a competency

Digital literacy is another key competence for lifelong learning as recommended by the European Parliament and European Council in its recommendation on key competencies for lifelong learning. The European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens defines digital competence as:

> [involving] the confident, critical and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society[6]. It includes the following six areas:

- Information and data literacy (understanding the meaning behind facts and figures).

- Communication and collaboration.

- Media literacy.

- Digital content creation (including programming).

- Safety (including digital well-being and competences related to cybersecurity).

- Problem solving and critical thinking.

What is the digital divide?

The digital divide is the gap between 'the haves and the have-nots' in an increasingly technology-dependent society. As more aspects of society become dependent on digital resources, (such as digital devices and internet connectivity), there is pressure on individuals to have these resources and be able to use them. With increasing digitisation, social inclusion becomes increasingly dependent on individuals' access to technological equipment and the internet, and the skills and knowledge they need to use them.

Some important challenges for the ALND Strategy will be to address unmet digital literacy needs and to foster digital inclusion (digital inclusion means practical approaches that address the needs of

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[6] To read the European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (DigComp) please click on this link.

communities as a whole) and to bridge the "digital divide". **It is very important that the focus of this consultation is on those who do not possess digital literacies at a foundational level,** such as the ability to:

- Use personal technology devices, such as smartphones or tablets.

- Use the internet to obtain day to day information such as checking a bus timetable.

- Use a computer for everyday tasks such as saving and printing digital photos, sending an email or browsing the internet.

- Use computers and technology for work.

When an individual acquires essential digital literacy, it can open new opportunities and learning pathways to further develop skills.

The digital divide and the COVID-19 pandemic

One of the things we have learned about the COVID-19 pandemic is that digital inclusion matters more than ever before for people's jobs, finances, health and wellbeing. The COVID-19 crisis magnifies the digital divide and highlights the need to ensure people in Ireland have digital devices, are connected to the internet and have the skills to access all the essential connections that the digital world provides. It also highlights that we must go 'Beyond Access'. This means that, along with devices and connectivity, people need to be supported to develop their digital literacy to benefit fully from digital connectivity.
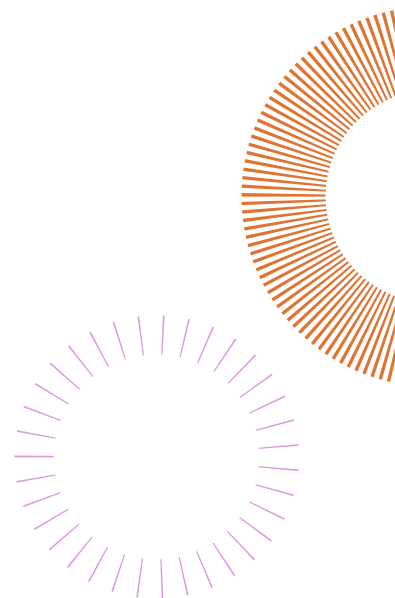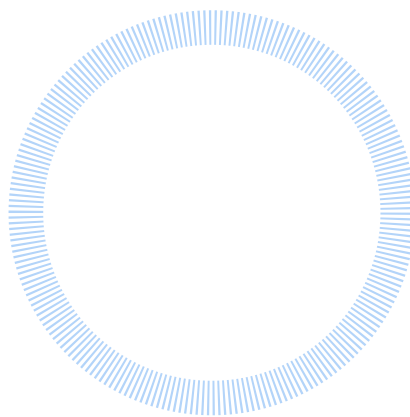
A suite of measures to promote digital inclusion

To promote digital inclusion, we may need to look towards:

- Equal and fair access.

- Assistive digital technologies (for example voice enabled digital assistants or support from information service providers, post offices and libraries).

- Inclusive accessible design (this means recognising that solutions that work for people with disabilities are likely to work for people in all circumstances).The use of plain language, as well as leveraging the power of collective partnerships to meet needs and make information work for everyone.

- Confidence to use digital.

- Balancing digital first versus digital only.

The overlap between digital and social exclusion

Digital exclusion can be described as an inability to access the internet. The term **digital constraints** describe an inability to use the internet due to unmet Irish or English language needs, reading and / or writing needs, as well as unmet digital literacy needs. There is overlap between digital exclusion, digital constraints and social exclusion. Therefore, taking action to improve digital inclusion along with an alignment to key anti-poverty measures can help foster social inclusion. We must learn from the impact of the COVID-19 restrictions and take immediate steps to eliminate digital exclusion by ensuring there are channels open for those not digitally connected.

What is Numeracy?

Numeracy is the ability to use numbers and solve problems. It is about having the confidence and skill to use numbers and mathematical approaches in all aspects of life. Numeracy helps us to navigate day to day financial information such as estimating change due when shopping. Research suggests that those experiencing numeracy-related challenges

tend to be relatively more disadvantaged regarding earning potential, employment and mental and physical wellbeing.[7]

Numeracy as a competency

Numeracy is another key competence for lifelong learning as recommended by the European Parliament and European Council in its recommendation on key competencies for lifelong learning. It is formally defined as:

> "The ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking and insight in order to solve a range of problems in everyday situations. Building on the sound mastery of numeracy, the emphasis is on process and activity as well as knowledge. Mathematical competency involves, to different degrees, the ability and willingness to use mathematical concepts modes of thought and presentation formulas, models, constructs, graphs and charts"[8].

Benefits of developing an Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy

Why are literacy, numeracy and digital literacy so important?

Essential skills such as literacy, numeracy, digital literacy, as well as an appreciation for Ireland's official languages, are all crucial enablers of greater participation and engagement in work and society. Some of the main benefits of investing in the ALND Strategy include:

Personal development

Strong skills in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy are essential skills that allow people to grow in confidence, build resilience and stretch themselves in all aspects of their lives.

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[7] Carpentieri, Litster, & Frumkin, 2010; Parsons & Bynner, 2005; Tout et al., 2017

[8] Recommendation of the European Parliament and of The Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC).

Increase access to work

These skills provide access to the world of work. Unmet need in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy may adversely affect individuals' accessing, and availing of, work and lifelong learning opportunities.

Increase access to public institutions and services

Unmet needs in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy may also make it more difficult for individuals to engage effectively with public institutions and to access public services. Unmet need in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy may adversely affect individuals' ability to understand and act upon new information and to use technology.

Increase self-advocacy

Strong skills in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy will support people to stand up for their rights and those of their family members. Once people have these skills, they can confidently interact with public bodies or other service providers to resolve matters (e.g. housing, environmental, health, financial) for themselves and their communities in relation to matters that affect their lives.

Promote health and well-being

Unmet needs in literacy, numeracy or digital literacy may affect how people understand issues relating to their health and wellbeing. Such challenges can also present practical constraints in negotiating daily life and may hinder people reaching their full personal potential.

Create a more equal and better society

Individuals and communities with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital needs may be at a greater risk of poverty. They are also at risk of many additional challenges that have their source in poverty such as higher risk of poor physical and mental health[9]. Unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs can have adverse consequences for our society,

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[9] To read the report 'UNESCO (2016) '3rd Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE III)' please click on this link. The fourth edition of this report was published in December 2019 by UNESCO. To read the fourth edition of this report 'UNESCO (2019) '4th Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE 4)' please click on this link.

economy and environment, both financially and democratically[10] and are a factor in social exclusion and inequality.

Help to break the cycle of disadvantage

There are risks that unmet literacy needs, numeracy and digital literacy needs may have generational effects, with the negative impacts also felt by the families of those with unmet needs.

Progress to date and examples of initiatives

We now outline the progress on how we are doing in terms of adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.

International survey findings

According to the most recent Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)[11]:

- 1 in 5 adults in Ireland struggle with reading everyday text, such as leaflets or medicine instructions.

- 1 in 4 adults in Ireland struggle with using numbers, for example, using basic arithmetic for daily tasks such as adding up a grocery bill.

- 1 in 2 adults struggle with digital skills.[12]

While many of people in Ireland have excellent digital skills, nearly half of the Irish population score at or below the most basic level of Digital Literacy (PIAAC, 2012). Heavily overrepresented among those scoring lowest are people with:

- Low levels of formal education.

- Older people.

- Those with lower incomes.

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[10] OECD (2013). Skills Outlook 2013: First Results from the Survey of Adult Skills.

[11] CSO (2013). PIAAC 2012 - Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies: Survey Results from Ireland.

[12] NCC Ireland's Competitiveness Scorecard report, based on DESI findings.

Central Statistics Office (CSO) Ireland findings

According to the Central Statistics Office (CSO) the '2019 Information and Communications Technology Household Survey' found that 11% of people in Ireland have never used the internet.

These results demonstrate that we need to do more to create an environment where all adults in Ireland have the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy to fully take part in society.

Examples of initiatives in various Government Departments supporting adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy

Here are twelve examples of how services provided by various Government Departments support adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy:

- **The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine**
  Provides online services through agfood.ie: Individual login and, through this service, the basic payment scheme, the animal identification service, the forestry service and the financial self-services can be accessed.

- **The Department of Education**
  The Department of Education's Literacy and Numeracy for learning and Life (Children and Young People) 2011-2020 and the Interim Review 2017 complements the efforts of the Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019, the Further Education and Training Strategy 2020-2024, and the new ALND Strategy since many adult learners are parents or grandparents of school-going children.

- **The Department of Environment, Climate and Communications**
  Offers the 'Digital Skills for Citizens Scheme', an initiative under the Government's National Digital Strategy for Ireland 2013. The Scheme provides free informal foundational digital skills training. People attending classes will learn the skills they need to take their first steps to getting on-line. In 2019 the Department published

the National Cyber-Security Strategy. One of the key objectives of the strategy is to increase the general level of skills and awareness among private individuals around basic cyber hygiene practices (for example accidentally sharing sensitive personal information), and to support them in this by means of information and training.

- **The Department of Finance**
  Provides training on financial literacy for post primary students through the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission.

- **The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science**
  Through SOLAS, (an agency of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science), the Department responds to the magnitude of Ireland's digital divide needs and actively contributes to improving the general digital skills of the wider population. The Further Education and Training (FET) sector, through 16 Education Training Boards and other FET support providers, (such as the National Adult Literacy Agency) provides stand alone and integrated literacy, numeracy and digital provision, as part of broader skills provision.

- **The Department of Health**
  The 'Healthy Ireland Framework 2019 – 2025' provides a road map for building a healthier Ireland. One of the key goals is to create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play their part in achieving a healthy Ireland, including the provision of user-friendly services and the use of plain English when presenting health information.

- **The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage**
  The Local Government Management Agency (LGMA), through Libraries Development and the 'Our Public Libraries 2022' national public library strategy, has a core strategic component focused on reading and literacy development. The country's 330 public libraries deliver a national programme – Right to Read - through a core set of services and resources. Libraries also support

ongoing learning in literacy, including digital literacy, through the provision of programmes and access to essential information and communications technology.

- **The Department of Justice and Equality**
  Educational services are provided in all prisons through the Irish Prison Service in partnership with Education Training Boards, the Public Library Service, the Open University and the Arts Council.

- **The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform**
  'Our Public Services 2020' aims to deliver better outcomes from the public service. "Greater use of digital to do business with the public service" is one of the six key high-level outcomes for the "Our Public Service" framework. Initiatives include:

  – Supporting "Digital First" across the public service.

  – The use of assisted digital services through libraries and post offices.

  – Increasing the uptake of MyGovID.

  – Bringing safe and secure online government services to the public.

  – Supporting the Adult Passport Renewal online service.

  – Rolling out the 'Getting Citizens Online Programme as well use of the Plain English Style Guide.

  – The Breacadh publication 'Cuir Tú Féin in Iúl / Get your message' across.

- **The Department of Rural and Community Development**
  Provides IT foundational courses through its community Services Programme. The Department also delivers rural funding programmes, community enhancement programmes, connect with community groups initiatives, volunteering services and social innovation supports. One such programme is the Social Inclusion and Community Activation programme (SICAP) which aims to

reduce poverty and promote social inclusion and equality. A key goal of SICAP is to support disadvantaged individuals to improve the quality of their lives through the provision of lifelong learning and labour market supports. The provision of IT-related training forms a critical part of the overall SICAP. This year, so far, over 2000 people have benefitted from IT Training. This programme prepares people for jobs and helps people gain new skills to engage with new technologies.

- **The Department of Social Protection**
  Promotes active participation and inclusion in society through the provision of income supports, employment services and other services. The Citizens Information Board (CIB) operates under the aegis of this Department and is responsible for supporting the provision of information, advice and advocacy relating to social services and entitlements. The CIB supports the provision of advice on personal debt and money management through the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS).

- **The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media**
  Under this Department, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) funds programmes to improve adult literacy. In addition, the BAI facilitates the work of the Media Literacy Ireland, an independent association of members committed to the promotion of media literacy across Ireland.
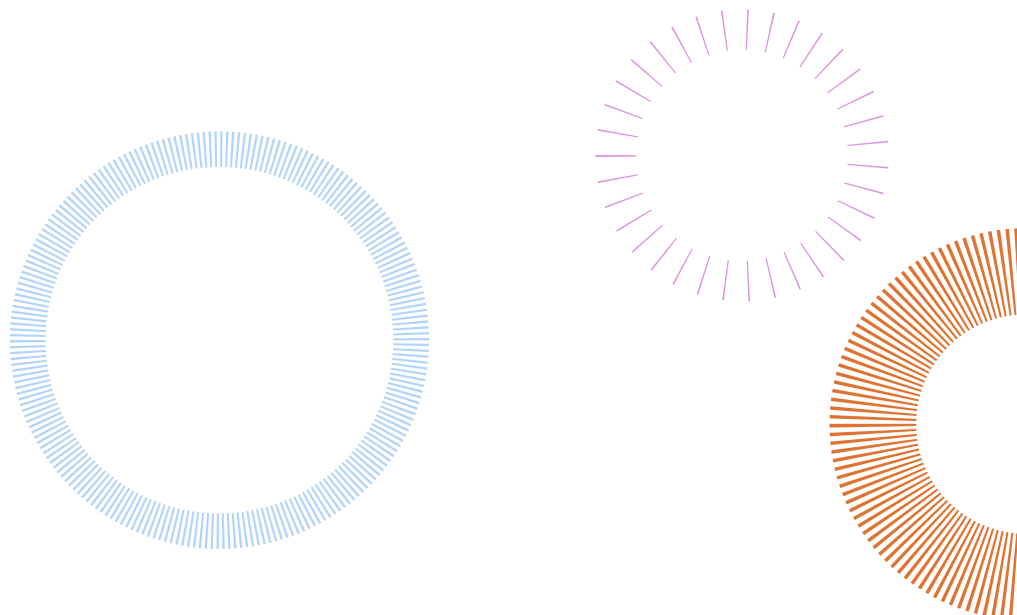
Policy context for the new Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy

Some of the policies that may shape the new ALND Strategy include:

International policies

- The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

European policies

- The European Pillar of Social Rights.

- The Digital Agenda for Europe - one of seven flagship initiatives under the Europe 2020 Strategy.

- EU Council Recommendations on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults.

National policies and strategies

- Our Public Services 2020.

- eGovernment Strategy 2017 -2020.

- Public Service ICT Strategy.

- The Action Plan for Online safety 2018 – 2019.

- Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment Statement of Strategy 2019 – 2020.

- The Department of Social Protection, Statement of Strategy.

- The Department of Rural and Community Development, Statement of Strategy 2017–2020.

- The National Skills Strategy 2025.

- The Further Education and Training Strategy 2020-2024.

- Cumasú- 'Empowering through Learning'-Statement of Strategy/Annual Action Plans.

- Future Jobs Ireland – 'Preparing now for Tomorrows Economy'.

- Literacy and Numeracy for learning and Life (Children and Young People) 2011-2020 and the Interim review 2017.

- STEM Education Policy Statement 2017-2026.

- National Digital Strategy for Ireland (2013) (a new National Digital Strategy is in development).[13]

- Our Public Libraries 2022: 'Inspiring, Connecting and Empowering Communities'.

- Health Ireland Framework 2019 – 2025.

- Sláintecare.

National polices and or strategies related to specific groups

There are also several strategies and policies that relate specifically to groups at greater risk of social exclusion and who are more likely to experience educational disadvantage. It will be critical to consider these in the development of the ALND Strategy. These strategies and policies include:

- The National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021.

- The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021.

- The Migrant Integration Strategy 2017 – 2020.

- The National Positive Ageing Strategy.

- Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025.

- DEIS Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools 2017.

- Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 – 2025 'Ambitions, Goals and Commitments'.

- Right to Read Campaign.

- First Five – A whole of government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019 – 2028.

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[13] Specific schemes stemming from, or consistent with these policies, such as Digital Skills for Citizens Grant Scheme, an initiative under the Government's National Digital Strategy, funded by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, are also part of the national context.

Part 4: Main themes for consultation

As part of this consultation, we have identified five themes we would like to hear your opinion on. You can tell us your views on all five themes or just some – as you prefer.

Theme 1 Different meanings of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy for adults.
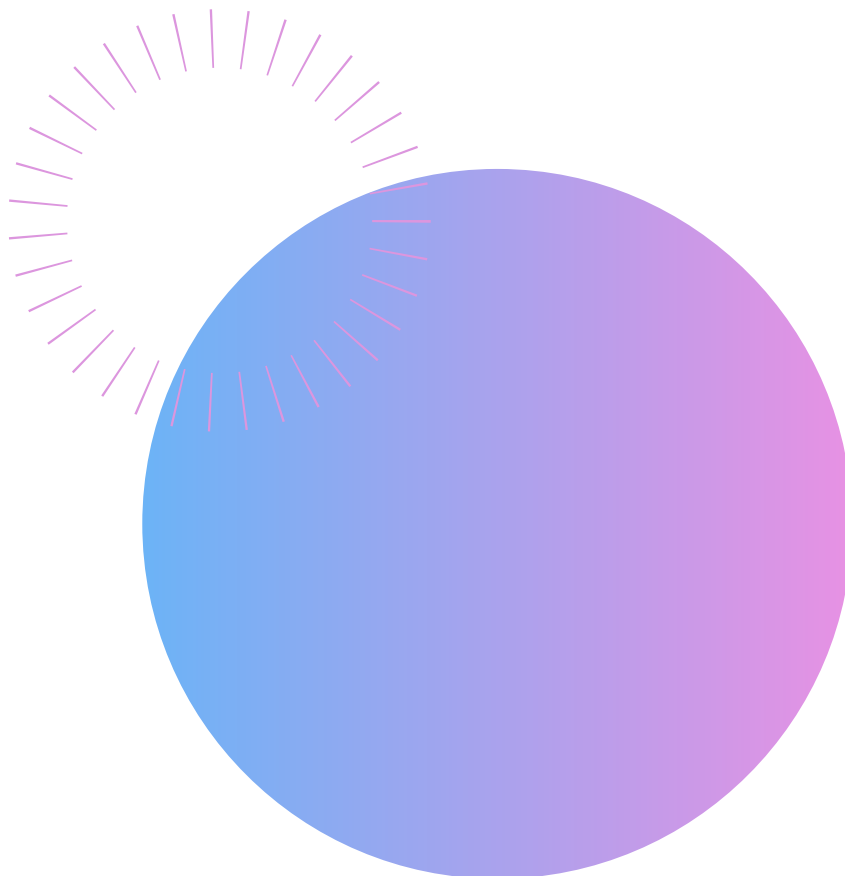
Theme 2 Improving awareness of and access to literacy, numeracy and digital literacy support for adults.

Theme 3 Bridging the digital divide.

Theme 4 Priorities and actions.

Theme 5 Measuring success.

Let's look at each theme in turn.

Theme 1: Different meanings of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy for adults

As outlined in this Consultation Paper, the words "literacy, numeracy and digital literacy for adults" can have many different meanings and encompass different aspects of living, working and learning.

To ensure the strategy takes the best approach, we would like to know what these terms mean to you and how the ALND Strategy should reflect these.

Questions and issues to consider

- How should the strategy reflect these meanings?

Some aspects of adult literacy you may wish to consider are:

- Functional types of literacy that an adult would need to read, write and use technology in everyday situations.

- Interactive literacy that allows for more advanced skills, like interpreting data and completing more complex tasks.

- Critical literacy to help an adult analyse information, make informed choices, and to use this information to have greater control over life events and situations.

- Literacy and numeracy to support everyday activities across specific areas such as health, media, environmental and financial literacy.

- The interconnections of confidence and self-esteem alongside literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills.

- Literacy as a whole, including literacy, numeracy and digital literacy, for example, needing to know when and what information is needed, where and how to obtain information, and how to use it.

Theme 2: Improving awareness of and access to literacy, numeracy and digital literacy information and supports for adults

Research shows it can be daunting for a person to decide to take that first step to seek assistance with reading, writing, maths or technology. In some cases, this can be due to perceived stigma, or embarrassment, about seeking information about help and support.

Questions and issues to consider

- How can it be made easier for adults to take that first step to seek information and assistance?

Some approaches you may wish to consider are:

- Organising services and supports in ways that make them accessible for as many people as possible.

- Targeting groups most in need.

- Using technology and assisted technology to help more people overcome worries about accessing information, services and supports.

- Through support, making it easier for adults to access information about available supports for adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.

- Identifying issues that prevent an adult with unmet literacy, numeracy, or digital literacy needs from accessing services.

- Encouraging and motivating more adults to seek assistance and support.

- Delivering quality, flexible and relevant literacy, numeracy and digital literacy services, supports and opportunities.

- Offering incentives for adults to improve their skills.

Theme 3: Bridging the digital divide

Increasing the levels of literacy and numeracy, along with essential digital literacy, and creating a more digitally inclusive society, is crucial to achieving a more equal Ireland.

Questions and issues to consider

With nearly half of the Irish population scoring at or below the most basic level of Digital Literacy, (PIAAC, 2012) what steps do you think should be taken to promote digital inclusion and help bridge the digital divide?

Some approaches you may wish to consider are:

- Advancing digital literacy in an inclusive way, so that everyone has an opportunity to fully take part in society.

- Using digital technologies creatively to help adults improve their foundational digital literacy.

- Accessing ICT equipment and services, as well as addressing issues which go beyond access including; supports, information, partnerships, skills, and opportunity.

- Prioritising certain groups in society for investment in digital supports.

- Emphasising the need for critical literacy skills when interacting with information in various formats including digital.

- Promoting digital and online safety.
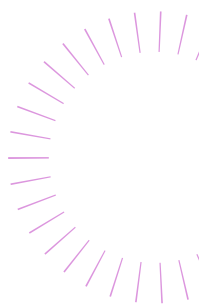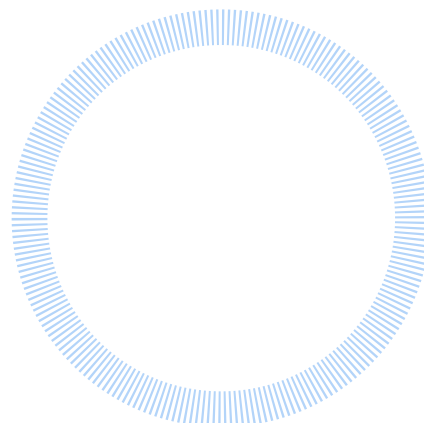
Theme 4: Priorities and actions

The ALND Strategy needs to set out the priorities for Ireland over the next 10 years and the actions we need to take to achieve these. We need to ensure that we take a comprehensive approach that will result in practical solutions to meet the needs and challenges that the country faces.
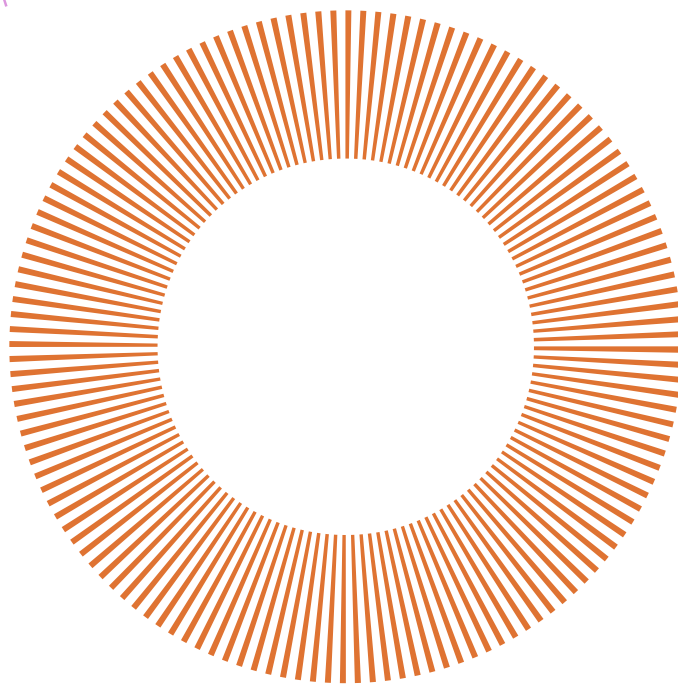
Questions and issues to consider

- What solutions would you suggest?

- What are the priorities that you think the new ALND Strategy should focus on?

- What actions do you think should be taken during the lifetime of the strategy?

Some issues you may wish to consider are:

- Creating an environment where all adults in Ireland have necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy in order to fully take part in society.

- The critical role that reading plays in literacy development.

- Prioritising literacy development in both Irish and English language.

- Ensuring the most effective delivery of adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy related services and supports.

- Developing innovative and creative ways to reach and support adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs.

- Cross-sectoral, inter-departmental or interagency approaches.

- Developing collaborative partnerships.

- Critical role of communities in reaching out to individuals who are at risk of exclusion.

- Tailoring approaches to meet the needs of certain groups, including:

  – People who face additional barriers related to disability and the lack of accessible content or assistive technology.

  – People who are digitally excluded or adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs in Irish or English language.

Theme 5: Measuring success

To know if we have achieved on the priorities and goals of the strategy, it will be critical that we define success criteria and ways to measure these.

Questions and issues to consider

In what ways do you think we should measure and track our progress towards the aims of the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy?

Some issues you may wish to consider:

- Successful outcomes of the ALND Strategy.

- Measuring and validating success.

- Tracking and monitoring performance over the lifetime of the ALND Strategy.

- Measuring social and economic success.

Thank you for your interest in helping us with the ALND Strategy. This consultation closes at 6pm on 31.12.2020.