

Community Education Framework



Transforming Learning

Further
Education
& Training

SOLAS
learning works



etbi
Education and Training
Boards Ireland
*Bord Oideachais agus
Oiliúna Éireann*

Foreword

The publication of the *Community Education Framework* marks an important milestone in delivering on our commitment to ensure a more consistent approach to SOLAS funded community education across the country. This commitment is set out in the [Future FET: Transforming Learning, Further Education and Training Strategy 2020-2024](#), under the key objective of fostering inclusion. The Framework sets out key principles and an approach for policymakers, funders at national and regional levels, community education providers, and their staff, volunteers, learners and their representatives. It is constructed around enacting positive change in how we learn; how we provide; how we coordinate; and how we fund; community education in Ireland. In developing this document, we now have a structure in place to record, reflect, and recognise the diverse nature of community education that exists across the country.

The importance of Community Ed within FET & Communities

We recognise that community education plays a critical and unique role in the FET system, and in local communities across Ireland. It not only benefits learners and communities, but also plays an important role in supporting a democratic society. In the current context, it is now more important than ever that we recognise community education for its ability to foster social cohesion and active citizenship.

There is a huge vibrancy of community education provision across FET - delivered through the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and a wide-ranging network of community education partners. By its nature community education takes a holistic, learner centered approach and incorporates both formal and informal learning, addressing learners' personal development and building skills while offering educational opportunities through simplified pathways and the possibility of moving forward into the FET system and beyond.

Increase in Investment

When we look at investment in community education, it has grown beyond recognition in recent years, and this is reflected when we look at the demand for community education with learner numbers expanding rapidly. Community education provision has also been bolstered by [Reach Funding](#), originally introduced in 2020 to support the most disadvantaged learners throughout the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the last four years it has provided vital funds to assist ETBs and community education providers to increase their capacity and ensure that they can support the participation of those who need it the most.

The Development of the Framework

It's important to say that while the development of this Framework was led by SOLAS, getting this document to completion stage was very much a collective process based on collaboration with key stakeholders within the FET sector. This culminated in a writing group which gave us an important space to discuss ideas and challenges and was imperative for shaping the final content. This Framework belongs to the whole FET sector, and it would not be possible without the valuable engagement, collaboration and feedback from all of those involved. The development process included Education and Training Boards (ETBs), Community Education Providers, AONTAS, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), Pobal, and the Department of Rural and Community Development. Our overriding focus is on the needs of the learners, and they were an important part of the consultation process.

Moving Forward

The Framework gives us a great foundation to help shape how SOLAS and the ETBs fund, coordinate, support, develop and monitor community education. It's important to note that the Community Education Framework is an agile document and will continue to evolve in the future, based on feedback from stakeholders, experimentation and reviews, and on learning from the experiences of development in communities internationally. As we deliver on our final year of this current Strategy it is vital that we have this Framework in place to help us solidify progress for this critical driver of access to education.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Brownlee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andrew Brownlee, CEO of SOLAS

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Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Community Education Framework

Transforming Learning is the national Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy for 2020–2024⁴. It aims to deliver a more strategic and integrated FET system by focusing on three pillars: building skills; fostering inclusion; and facilitating pathways. The basis of the Strategy is that FET is for everyone and supports both economic development and social cohesion. It is available in every community and offers a pathway to take any individual as far as they want to go, no matter your previous level of education.

The critical and unique role community education plays is acknowledged in the Strategy, particularly in how it supports learners to participate and re-engage in learning each year. Community education began in local communities and uses pedagogical and andragogical approaches including the importance of group and peer-to-peer learning. Through these approaches, it can reach many disadvantaged and marginalised learners who may not otherwise access FET provision.

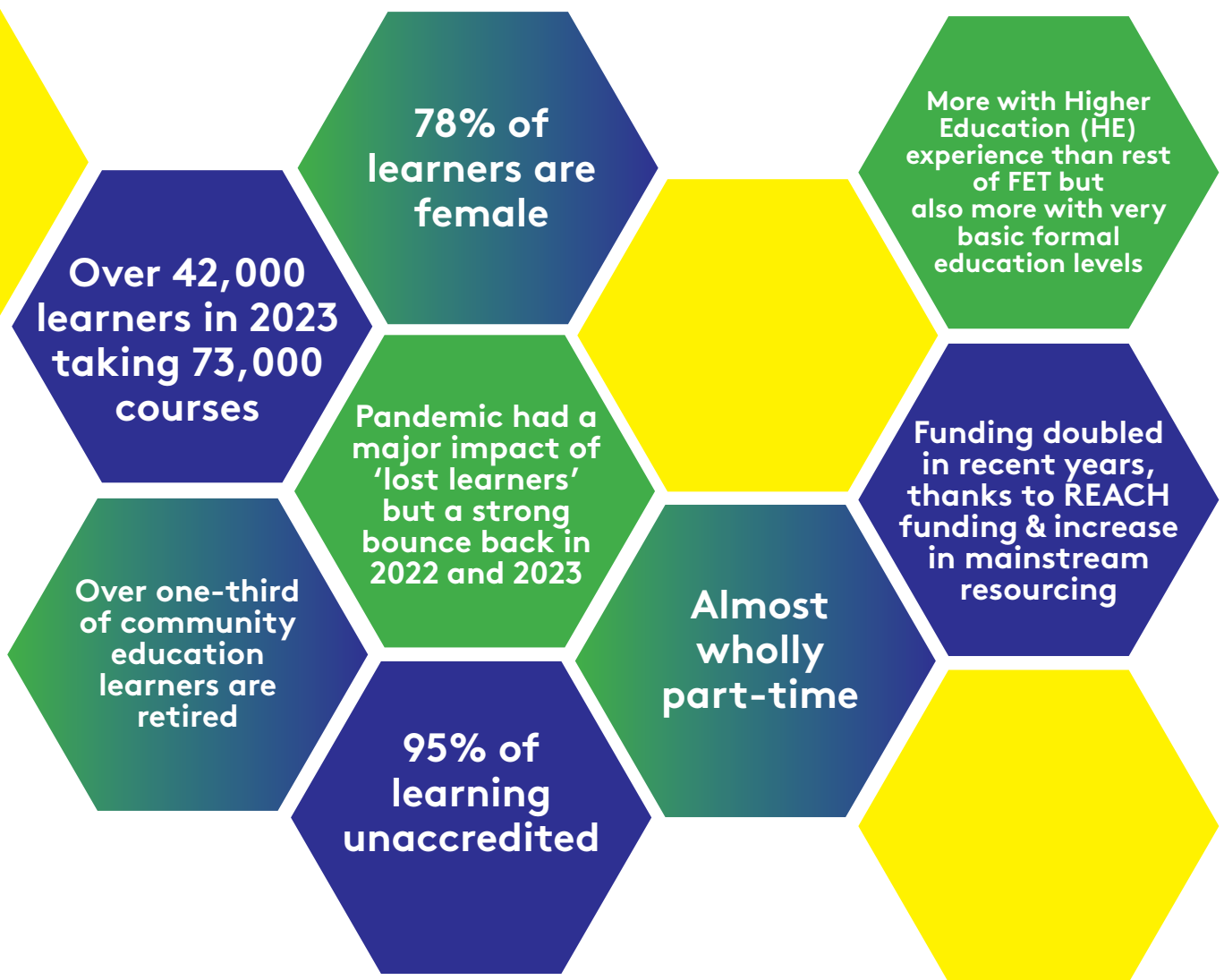
The Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and the wide-ranging network of community education partners, work together to respond to the needs of learners and empower communities in local settings.

SOLAS believes Community Education includes both formal and informal learning, addressing learners' personal development, building skills while offering educational options through simplified pathways, and further opportunities to progress to other areas of FET and beyond.

The current FET Strategy: **Transforming Learning** states that we need to ensure consistent approaches to community education across the FET sector, and that we have a structure that supports innovative ideas and best practice across the country. This will mean that communities benefit in the same way from financial and other support regardless of where they are based. The Strategy committed to the development of a new **community education Framework** by SOLAS, ETBs, community education providers, learners and other relevant stakeholders to facilitate a consistent approach.

4 https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/64d0718c9e/solas_fet_strategy_web.pdf

What we know about community education:



It specified that the Framework should provide an enhanced basis to both record and promote national and local good practice, learner achievement and progression, and the overall benefits of community education and of 'learn local' through community-based learning. It should allow the unique features of community education to be reflected in how it is supported within FET, while ensuring that it meets common FET requirements in terms of gathering basic learner data, linking to learning pathways, and offering consistent learner support.

Since the Strategy was launched in July 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the delivery of FET and community education. One of the great attributes of community education is its ability to engage with the hardest to reach groups in society. However, these groups can often find the online learning environment difficult which we moved to during COVID. Due to the uncertain and volatile world at that time, many people were discouraged from participating, or continuing to participate, in

education. As a result, the numbers of people participating in community education dropped significantly. This meant the immediate focus went from developing a Framework for the future to finding means to re-engage with lost learners and allow community-based learning to flow and flourish. This gave rise to the Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage Fund (MAEDF) from 2020, rebranded as REACH funding in 2022. This fund provided resources to facilitate access to community education and stimulate innovative and collaborative responses to meet the needs of learners.

Overall learner numbers declined during COVID restrictions. However, the learner numbers now are greater than pre-COVID levels, at 33,000 learners in 2019 compared to 42,000 learners in 2023. It is time now to focus on a Framework which sets out a future direction for community education. This direction will focus on strengthening consistency and responding to local needs, relationships between ETBs and their partners, and mainstreaming best practice. This document sets out the draft Framework after a consultation and research phase with key partners.

1.2 Focus of the Community Education Framework

The Framework will set out key principles and approach for policymakers, funders at national and regional level, community education providers, their staff and volunteers and learners and their representatives. One of the biggest issues identified in having a more consistent approach to community education is that funding also comes from outside the FET system to support provision and associated services. This includes from community development, health, equality, youth, social protection, and local government.

One commitment that SOLAS can make as part of the Framework is that it will help to shape how SOLAS and the ETBs fund, coordinate, support, develop and monitor community education. The Framework cannot be prescribed in the same way for the other Departments, agencies and organisations involved in providing support for, and funding community education programmes. However, it will be used as a basis for discussions with them on how we can drive a more cohesive ecosystem as set out below. Each of these partners bring their own skills, expertise, and resources and when combined, creates a vital service to the communities around Ireland. We will work together to coordinate more effectively in the future, which will drive real change and impact at community level.

The Community Education Framework will continue to evolve in the future, based on feedback from stakeholders, experimentation and reviews, and on learning from the experiences of development in communities internationally. This Framework will support social and economic development.



Figure 1. The Community Education ECOSYSTEM

1.3 Development of the Community Education Framework

SOLAS engaged in an intensive 12-month development process, which included four phases, to bring the Framework to this initial stage. It has been written based on combined bespoke pieces of input from key stakeholders, extensive desk research and comprehensive consultation with a range of relevant individuals and organisations, as set out in the diagram and described below.

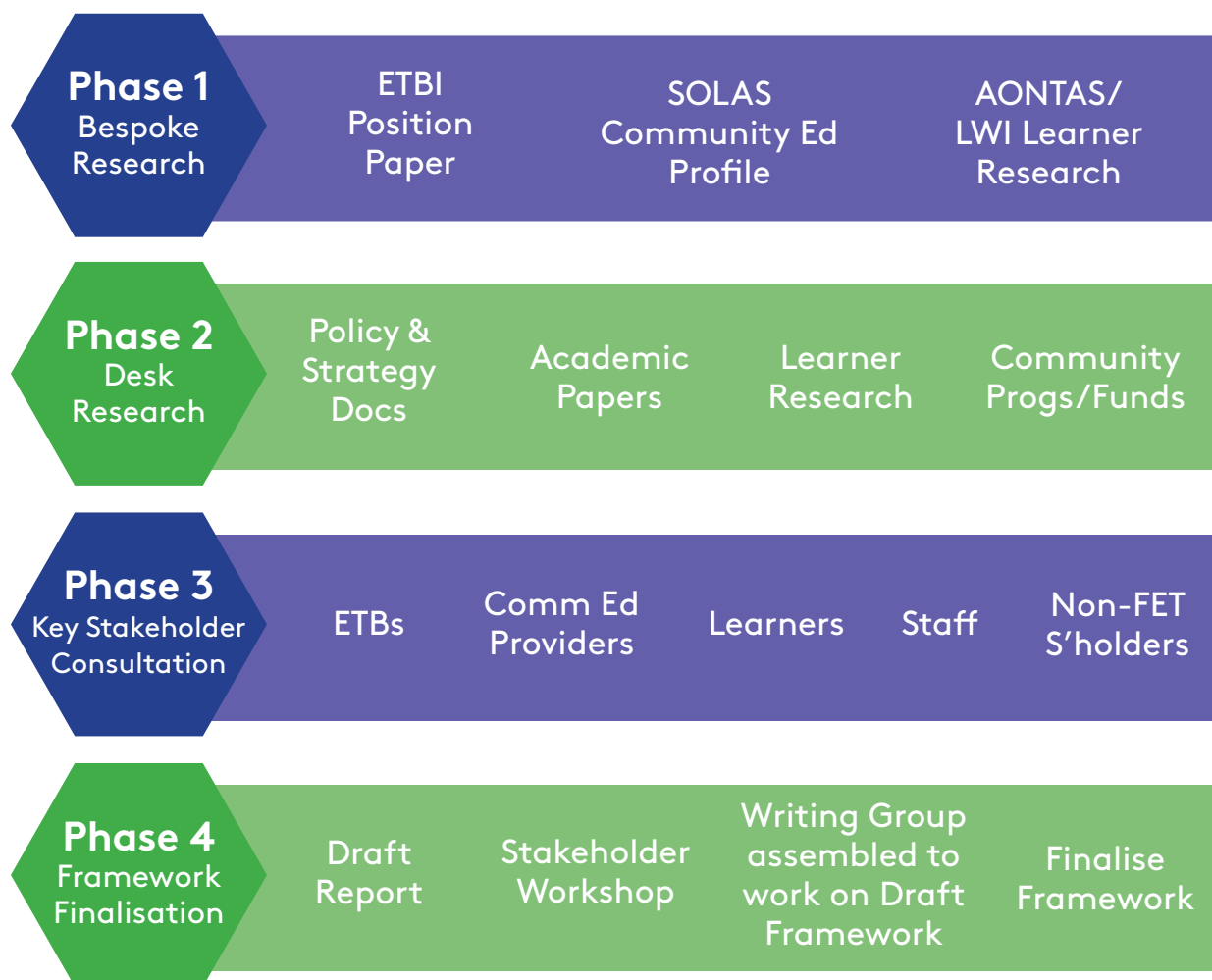


Figure 2. Community Education Framework Development Process

Phase 1: Bespoke Research

One of the most valuable sources of input to this process was a position paper commissioned by Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI). This paper set out an ETB (Education and Training Board) perspective on the role, value, delivery, and future of community education in FET. SOLAS, as part of its FET in Focus series of reports, published a detailed profile of community education activity. AONTAS, working in partnership with the Learning and Work Institute, did primary research into why people do not engage in education. These pieces of research informed the development of a draft Framework which reflects the evolving nature of provision and needs of our learners.

Phase 2: Desk-Based Research

SOLAS carried out comprehensive desk-based research which consisted of reviewing all relevant documents, reports and position papers concerning community education.

Phase 3: Key Stakeholder Consultation

SOLAS did an extensive consultation process with community education learners, staff involved in providing community education, ETBs and community education providers. We also met with other key stakeholders with an interest in community education and community development, including government departments and state agencies. We used focus groups and workshop techniques to gather feedback and test ideas and proposed approaches. A full record of all consultation undertaken is set out as Appendix 2.

Phase 4: Framework finalisation

With a draft Framework written, SOLAS held a workshop-based interaction with key stakeholders to develop and finalise the key principles and approach that will guide community education over the next few years. SOLAS then put together a writing group representing Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (D/FHERIS), Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), Community Education Facilitators Association (CEFA), AONTAS, Adult Education Officers, Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD). This group worked to further develop the Framework.

Section 2: Community Education in Ireland

2.1 Defining Community Education

Defining community education is challenging because it is so diverse and has many different meanings. To design a Framework that can apply across all community education programmes in FET, it is important to agree a clear definition. During the consultation phase, workshops were held with key stakeholders where we worked together to build a consensus on a definition for community education. Although there were many different views on what should be included in the definition, people recognised the value of simplicity of and aligning this with community education. We propose this definition for community education:

‘Community education is both formal and non-formal learning led by communities for communities to support personal, social, educational, environmental, economic and community development’.

The distinguishing features set out by Doody in the ETBI Position Paper further reinforces this definition and its wide-ranging outcomes as summarised in Table 1. While these features of community education provide a good overview, the list is not exhaustive.

Community education has an inherent flexibility. Learners have an influence on developing curricula, based on their own learning needs. In addition, flexible programme length and scheduling offers short, part-time, and variable courses to suit learners' diverse requirements.
Community education is designed, delivered and funded on a partnership basis, with the community and voluntary sector as its key strategic partner.
Community education is group-focused learning. While valuing an individual's learning journey, it emphasises the value of collective learning as a mechanism for community cohesion, participation and action.
In community education, the relationship between the tutor and learner is equal. Tutors use facilitative approaches to create an informal and sociable setting and to ensure that learners' needs, and views are heard, valued and understood.
Much of community education is offered as non-accredited provision. This enables adults to engage in learning at their own pace, with an emphasis on participation and personal development. It also facilitates learners contribute to the social, cultural and economic development of their community.
The outcomes of community education are varied and many, including skills development, confidence building, greater community involvement, social justice outcomes and progression to other FET. They are often described as "soft" outcomes, meaning that they are less tangible.

Table 1: Distinguishing Features of Community Education⁵

The SOLAS consultation process engaged with practitioners and learners on the key words they associated with community education, aligned with the values which are also outlined in the Community Education Charter⁶.

5 ETBI Position Paper

6 A Community Education Charter was developed in 2021 by the Three Pillar working group



Figure 3: Practitioners Key Words Associated with Community Education

The words highlighted by **learners** showed the role of community education in empowering themselves and their communities:

Figure 4: Learners Key Words Associated with Community Education



A Community Education Charter was developed in 2021 by the Three Pillar working group consisting of three stakeholder pillars – academics, practitioners, and advocacy. The charter outlines the values which are central to community education and shows the uniqueness of learning in this sector.



April 2021

Figure 5: A Charter for Community Education⁷

7 A Community Education Charter was developed in 2021 by the Three Pillar working group



Responding to Social Issues in Communities – A Local Case Study

City of Dublin Education and Training Board

Inclusive Community Practice in Ringsend

For many years, City of Dublin ETB Adult Education Service and Ringsend Irishtown Community Centre (RICC) have collaborated closely to provide a wide range of community education courses for local residents. Throughout the year, Ringsend Irishtown Community Centre management staff liaise closely with the local Community Education Facilitator to organise a class schedule based on needs identified by learners, staff and locals. Tutors from City of Dublin ETB are then placed in this vibrant Centre to facilitate a wide range of courses, such as art, crafts, music, choir, gardening, yoga, drama, wellbeing and personal development.

In December 2023, Ringsend became the latest community in Ireland to be affected by far-right protests. Misinformation was spread that a vacant property in Ringsend was to be used to accommodate asylum seekers. A short time later this building was burnt down.

In January 2024, the Community Education Facilitator reached out to RICC to offer educational support. Staff in the centre were deeply upset by the arson attack. Staff members working in the pre-school, after school and youth services were concerned about how best to respond to the spike in racism seen in their community. It was agreed that frontline staff in the centre urgently needed a facilitated education space to help them reflect on recent events, analyse the current situation, and implement a response that would ensure RICC remained a welcoming, inclusive, and supportive service to the whole community.

In February 2024, the Community Education Facilitator worked with experienced tutors to develop a course that would fit with the needs of the community centre staff and lead to a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Level 5 Certificate in Social Justice Principles. This minor award was selected because it allows learners to engage in a group project that could be implemented in the centre. The course started in mid-March, with eleven community workers enrolled and – while it is in early days – feedback to date has been extremely positive.

This initiative was only possible because of the close professional relationship and trust between RICC staff and management and City of Dublin ETB's local Community Education Facilitator. It is also an excellent example of how quickly and effectively community education can respond at the heart of social issues as they emerge in local communities.

South Inner City AES plan to offer this course across their catchment area and are hopeful it will become an established educational support system in communities dealing with similar challenges.



Active Citizenship and Social Cohesion in Community Education

Community education not only benefits learners and communities, but also plays an important role in supporting a democratic society. By its nature, community education helps to increase active citizenship by empowering individuals to grow, engage and contribute to their local communities.

Community education:

- supports adults to develop confidence and mental and emotional resilience.
- fosters a sense of belonging to and connecting with our communities and wider society.
- builds critical consciousness on issues facing communities.
- facilitates a space for community members to develop their voice around the community development issues impacting their communities, encouraging active citizenship and participation in the community.

Community education is particularly effective at addressing important societal topics such as Climate Justice Education, Education for Sustainable Development and building Climate Literacy. In the current context, it is now more important than ever that we look at community education as an effective method to foster social cohesion and active citizenship. Social cohesion thrives in communities where strong relationships are built and there is a sense of solidarity. It does this by bringing groups together who share common interests and aims, which helps to foster a sense of belonging.

Equally, active citizenship plays a crucial role in a cohesive society as it supports people to engage and be informed on how they can contribute to their communities. There are many examples of active citizenship programmes taking place across Ireland, focused on topics such as voter education and media literacy, these programmes can be extremely effective in supporting social cohesion at local level. Other benefits which show how community education supports social cohesion are through its intergenerational effect on families within communities. Parents involved in community education are more likely to encourage children to remain in education, with positive impacts on the community including an increase in community safety and pride.

Community education is inclusive by nature and brings together people from diverse backgrounds and experiences. This can make community education particularly attractive for older learners, for people living in rural areas, for people with disabilities, and anyone who may not be served by the “one size fits all” approach of the traditional education system.

AONTAS research has shown that taking part in community education led to people feeling more comfortable talking to individuals they don't know; becoming more accepting of beliefs different to their own; and even becoming more likely to intervene in situations that threaten community cohesion like anti-social behavior. The values and qualities that underpin community education in Ireland can contribute to the development of closer social ties, pride in communities, and ultimately stronger social cohesion that benefits everyone.

2.2 Community Education Learners

A 'community' in this context is any group of people that share similar characteristics, experiences, or circumstances and are brought together by a shared need for learning.

Community education supports inclusion with a wide and diverse learner base. A feature of the sector is its ability to support and enable marginalised learners to access a safe and friendly learning environment. Through its strong community roots, the capacity of the sector to work with target and priority cohorts is evident, including, but not restricted to, those set out below.

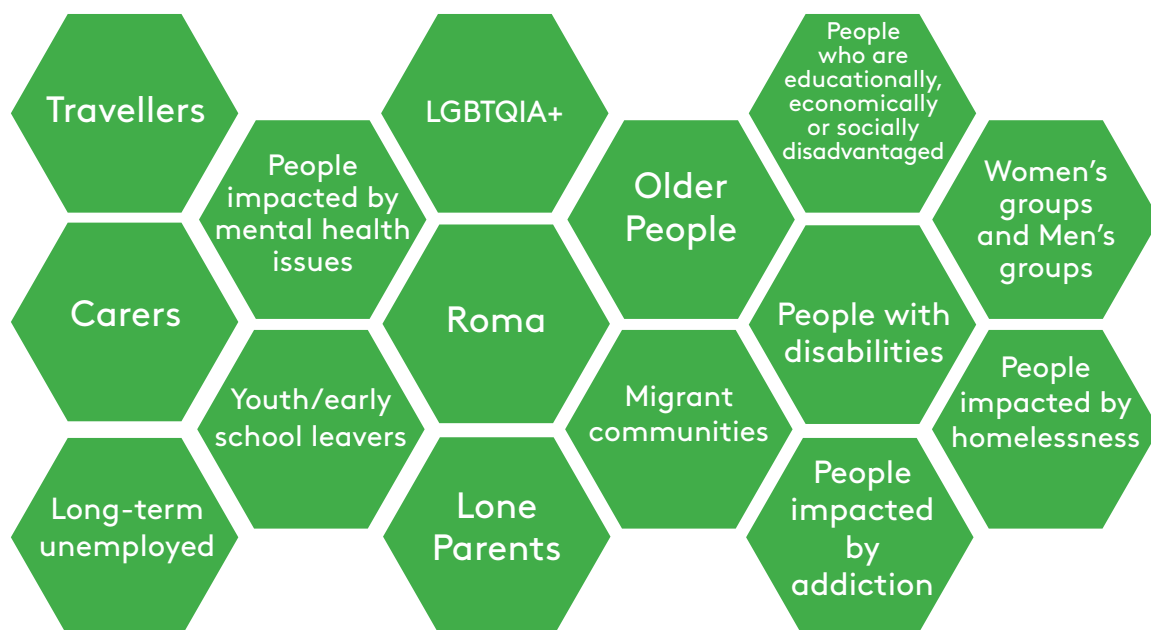


Figure 6: Some Priority Groups in Community Education

By working in this way, learners can build their confidence and capacity, learn new skills, and take steps towards fulfilling personal goals, be they personal development, health and wellbeing, further education or employment.

2.3 Key roles in Community Education

Community education is founded on partnership. Its funding, planning and delivery is underscored by collaboration and resource-pooling between key stakeholders to ensure a rich and purposeful learner experience.

SOLAS

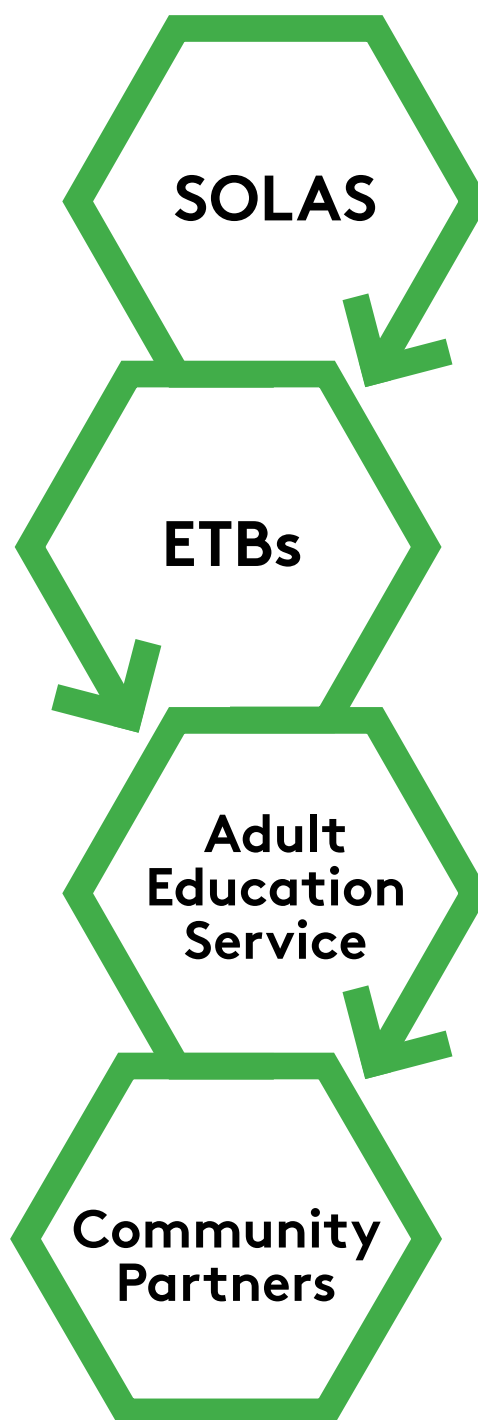
SOLAS is the state agency responsible for Further Education and Training (FET) in Ireland. SOLAS manages, coordinates and supports the delivery of FET by the Education and Training Boards (ETBs). We monitor its delivery and provide funding based on good quality data and positive outcomes. SOLAS makes funding available to the 16 ETBs specifically to support community education on the basis of bids submitted at the start of the year. Since 2020, it has also made a dedicated funding call available for applications by community education providers to ETBs – this is called the REACH fund. The aim of this fund is to improve access to, and supports for, community education locally.

Education and Training Boards (ETBs)

ETBs coordinate and support community education at regional level by partnering with community education providers, planning provision and providing grants and tutor hours. They can provide access to facilities, quality assurance, technology and learner supports to assist in the delivery of community-based learning. As outlined in the ETB legislation there is a requirement placed on ETBs to support community education providers to address the needs of the wider community. They must also ensure that there is a greater understanding of the supports and pathways available to learners through the many programmes provided by ETBs.

Adult Education Service

The Community Education Programme funded through SOLAS is housed within the Adult Education Service provided in ETBs across the country. The service is managed by Adult Education



Officers (AEOs) and coordinated by Community Education Facilitators (CEFs) within their respective ETBs where appointed. CEFs work at the forefront of community education managing this provision. A key focus of the CEFs role is to initiate, facilitate and support new community learning groups and partners by promoting needs-based provision, driven by local communities, with a particular focus on providing support to marginalised cohorts. This support and work undertaken by CEFs is vital, and the important relationships with community partners fostered over many years.

Community Partners

A range of Community Partners, including voluntary community groups, are primarily responsible for delivering community education on the ground. Independent of ETBs, these are typically non-profit organisations developed to serve the needs of a particular community, whether that be linked to a geographical location or a group of people with shared experiences, or both. Typically, the learning is intertwined with community supports and services at local level, often at least part-funded by community development, Tusla or health funding streams. While this often adds complexity to the ongoing operations and sustainability of community education providers, the development of communities is a shared goal of the state departments and agencies with responsibilities in this funding landscape.

As the FET Strategy: **Transforming Learning** notes, community development in Ireland has played a vital role in tackling exclusion, meaning it has become one of the principal mechanisms used to achieve a range of beneficial societal outcomes. Community education provides a mechanism for communities to advance issues of inclusion and equality by bringing people together in local communities and facilitating them to be actively involved in solving issues of common concern⁸.

2.4 Barriers to Community Education

As noted in Section 1, a key input into the development of this Framework was a study and survey coordinated by AONTAS⁹. This was based on a methodology used by the Learning and Work Institute to facilitate a comparison with other countries, on barriers to engaging in education. It focused on the barriers faced by the hardest to reach learners in accessing education, even when available at community level. Key barriers cited in the research are included in Table 2:

Work/other time pressures
Cost/money/can't afford it
I feel I am too old
I don't feel confident enough
I am put off by tests and exams
I haven't got round to doing it
Childcare arrangements or other caring responsibilities
I don't know what is available or how to find out what is
Transport/too far to travel
An illness or disability
Lack of digital skills/confidence for online learning

Table 2: Overview of barriers to learning experienced by the hardest to reach learners¹⁰

Building on this, a series of critical factors were identified where community education can begin to address these barriers through focused action and development.

A 2017 SOLAS report¹¹ highlighted the significant barriers to FET faced by learners from marginalised groups, including young people under 25 years of age, long-term unemployed people, people with disabilities and members of migrant communities. This report alongside further research conducted by AONTAS in 2023 as outlined in Figure 7, emphasised that there are deep-seated socio-cultural barriers which prevent these groups from engaging and participating in FET.

9 AONTAS Lifelong Learning Participation in Ireland: A focus on marginalised and vulnerable Groups, 2023

10 AONTAS Lifelong Learning Participation in Ireland: A focus on marginalised and vulnerable Groups, 2023

11 SOLAS (2017). Barriers to Further Education and Training with Particular Reference to Long Term Unemployed Persons and Other Vulnerable Individuals: <https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/432b2fa3ba/barriers-to-fet-final-june-2017.pdf>

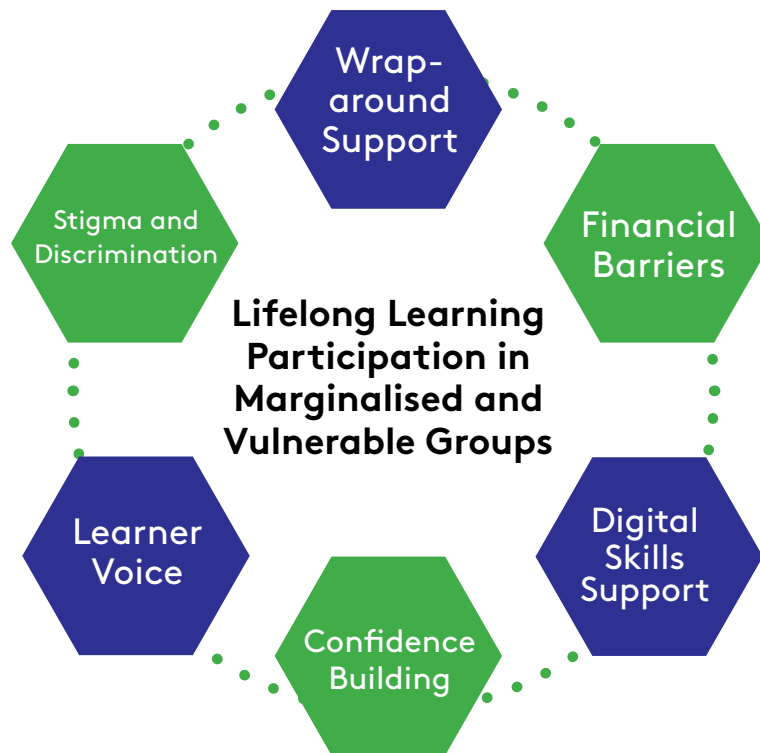


Figure 7: Critical Factors to Address Barriers to Learning¹²

Community education actively supports communities and learners who are marginalised and furthest from education, training, and employment. The flexibility and approach of community education means that it has the capacity to tailor provision and supports to respond to learner's diverse, and often complex, needs, and to meet these needs. Working together, ETBs and their community partners offer an extensive range of supports which enables people to overcome barriers so they can engage, remain, and progress in their learning journey. These supports respond to the intrinsic and extrinsic factors impacting their learning.

- Intrinsic factors relate to the learner themselves, such as physical, sensory or intellectual disabilities, chronic illness or psycho-social factors.
- Extrinsic factors arise outside the learner, and can relate to family, community, social, cultural or economic matters.

12 [1] AONTAS (2023), Lifelong Learning Participation in Ireland – a focus on marginalised and vulnerable groups https://www.aontas.com/assets/resources/Lifelong%20Learning/AONTAS_LLL%20Research%20Report_Final%20Digital%20Launch.pdf

Section 3: Community Education Funding, Provision and Outcomes

3.1 Funding for Community Education

Funding for community education has been growing in recent years. In 2023, SOLAS invested €22.3 million in community education. €16.6 million was channelled through ETB investment in mainstream provision and €5.7 million was allocated to improve community access to FET through Reach funding. This represents an almost doubling of the budget from pre-pandemic levels, with a corresponding increase in the number of community education learners in 2023, with over 42,000 taking part in around 73,000 courses. A major development in recent years has been the availability of Reach funding (see Appendix 5), and there is ongoing Government commitment to maintaining this funding to promote access, collaboration and innovation in community education.

A review of the FET funding model was completed in 2022, with its recommendations now being implemented. This moves the funding approach from micro-budgeting with hundreds of ringfenced budget lines to one based around five funding 'pots' outlined in Table 3, with three pots focused on the direct costs of provision:

- FET Pathways
- FET for Employment and Workforce Skills Development Transformation
- Apprenticeships

Core funding to drive an effective and strategic ETB
FET Pathways
FET for Employment and Workforce Skills Development Transformation
Apprenticeship
Discretionary Funding

Table 3: Five Funding Pot Model for FET

Community education is included within the 'FET Pathways' category, where the allocation will still be based on a block grant type system, but with a clearer focus on, and link to, learning outcomes generated from this investment.

3.2 Community Education Provision

Many FET courses are provided at levels 1 to 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Courses aim to meet the needs of individuals at different stages of the learning pathway from foundation skills development to vocational education and training opportunities. However, community education provision is primarily non-accredited and therefore outside the NFQ. This provision type is particularly attractive to learners who are reluctant or unable to participate in more formal learning processes.

Community education often acts as a first step on a learner's journey and can result in them progressing through the NFQ. This initial engagement with education is crucial and must be nurtured. The ethos of community education ensures that it provides a 'scaffolding' around the learning experience that ensures that the learner has access to a range of wider supports that they need to engage in education. While acknowledging that each learner journey varies and is unique with learners seeking diverse outcomes, it is important to encourage and support learners who are open to progression through the NFQ to gain accredited qualifications. Whilst community education is often seen as 'just' a first step, it should also be viewed as a valuable option of provision. Table 4 refers to 2023 data outlining community education courses by field of study. It is acknowledged that there are areas of new course provision, including Climate Justice Education which is a rapidly growing area of provision in community education. Additionally, all updates to and evaluations of community education provision must now respond to the local, national, and global requirements of climate action and sustainability.

Field of Study (Broad ISCED)	Community Education Course examples
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	Horsemanship
	Horticulture
Arts and humanities	Art
	Film and Television Production
	Media Production
Business, administration, and law	Business Administration
Education	Advanced Certificate in Early Learning and Care
Education	Early Childhood Care and Education
	Education & Training
Engineering, manufacturing, and construction	Environmental Sustainability Awareness
Generic programmes and qualifications	Access to Further Education and Training (FET) and Employment
	Adult Educational Guidance and Information
	Employment Skills
	English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
	General Learning
	General Studies
	Key Skills
	Social Inclusion and Thematic Learning
Health and welfare	Community Care
	Community Development
	First Aid and Defibrillator
	Healthcare Support
	Manual Handling
	Medical Terminology
	PHECC - Emergency Medical Technician
	Patient Moving & Handling
	SafePass
Information and communication technologies (ICTs)	ICDL Online

Field of Study (Broad ISCED)	Community Education Course examples
Services	Cardiac First Response PHECC
	EHA1 - Primary Certificate in Food Safety
	Employment Skills: Barista, HACCP and Retail Skills
	First Aid Responder PHECC (Evenings)
	Outdoor Sport and Recreation
	PHECC First Aid Response
	Sports and Recreation
	Sports, Recreation and Exercise
Social sciences, journalism, and information	Tourism with Business

Table 4: Field of Study (Broad ISCED) by Community Education courses, 2023¹³

3.3 Community Education Outcomes

The unaccredited nature of much community education provision is valid and central to wider FET objectives to foster inclusion and widen participation of target groups. The substantial public investment means that we need to have the ability to clearly articulate its positive outcomes. In 2016, SOLAS worked in partnership with ETBI to find a practical solution that captured non-accredited courses on the Programme Learner Support System (PLSS). This resulted in the KEATS Framework, which was then embedded in PLSS, allowing all funded FET providers to flag outcomes when scheduling non-accredited learning/courses on the National Course Calendar of PLSS.

The KEATS outcomes are:

- Key skills
- English for Speakers of Other Languages
- Access courses to other Further Education and Training (FET) and/or employment
- Thematic learning, i.e., specific subject content and/or courses for
- Social Inclusion - i.e., specifically to empower and include students with different needs and experiences of learning.

13 PLSS Data. 2023

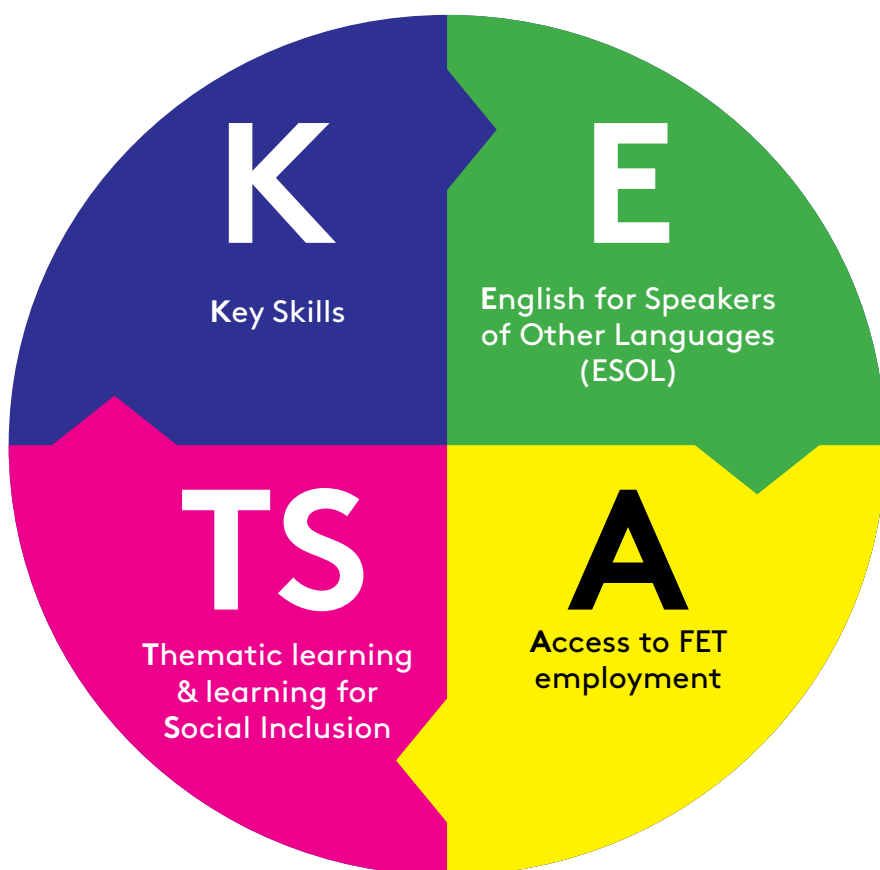


Figure 8: KEATS Framework

The PLSS provides an integrated approach to the collection and processing of learner data, including programme outputs and outcomes. However, it does not have the capability to capture soft skills or transversal outcomes. While PLSS has the capacity to capture some of community education's diverse benefits and outcomes using the KEATS Framework, it is unable to provide a complete picture of its role and impact on the wider benefits for learners and communities. In recognition of this challenge, the National FET Strategy emphasises the need to develop more effective means of measuring these outcomes.

Table 5 provides an overview of the key outcomes generated by community education at an individual, community, societal and economic level that will need to be reflected in this work.

Collective Action	Community education facilitates communities to take collective action on issues of shared concern.
Community Connections	Community education builds community connections, strengthens relationships and promotes social capital and solidarity.
Disadvantage	Community education supports the most economically and socially disadvantaged groups to engage and remain in learning.
Employment	Community education acts as a stepping-stone for many towards sustainable employment.
Empowerment	Community education empowers learners and communities to affect individual and societal change by enabling them to analyse their needs and organise courses accordingly.
First Step	Community education acts as a first step back into learning, community engagement, education and training.
Health and Wellbeing	It supports learners to achieve positive health outcomes, including personal development, physical health and wellbeing benefits.
Pathways	Community education enables learners to follow their desired pathway towards personal development, further learning, qualifications and/or employment and Community Development.
Reach	Community education is particularly effective at reaching those who are most distant from learning, education and the labour market.
Reduces Barriers	Community education approaches help to reduce barriers to access, participation, and outcome.
Skills	Community education contributes to the development of transversal (soft) skills and also contributes to the National Skills Strategy through the development of generic skill.
Social Justice	Community education provides a mechanism to facilitate social justice, by promoting respect and collective consciousness.
Inclusion	Community education is effective and unique in its approach to the inclusion of many target groups.
Volunteering	Community education encourages, enables and supports volunteering at grass roots level.

Table 5: Community Education – Key Outcomes¹⁴

While moving towards an approach to recognise these wider benefits of learning, it is important to note that community education already plays a significant role in delivering on agreed National FET System targets. In 2018, a system performance Framework was put in place for FET, reflecting the desired outcomes from FET over a three-year period. These outcomes were embedded in new Strategic Performance Agreements (SPAs) between SOLAS and each of the 16 ETBs which ran from 2018-2020. These agreements included commitments to individual ETBs, ensuring they contributed to each of the targets. COVID disrupted this new approach and caused a pause in establishing new agreements in 2021. SOLAS and the ETBs agreed an evolved system performance Framework for the period 2022-2024, with new agreements in place with the 16 ETBs to embed this at regional level.

From a community education perspective, there are three core targets that ETBs will be expected to make further contributions:

- Widening participation by key target groups,
- Increasing overall engagement in lifelong learning,
- While respecting the need for unaccredited provision, growing accreditation of learning outcomes at Levels 1-3 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) Strategy

The Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) is a 10-year cross-government and cross-society strategy to address unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs and was published in 2021. ALL recognises that literacy is not only a human right, but a shared responsibility, right across society. Providing formal and informal learning opportunities, and with a focus on harder to reach communities, ALL recognises community education as one of the key elements of the literacy support landscape. Community education offers provision, re-engaging people with education, as well as creating a more literacy aware and literacy friendly society.

The continuation of Reach funding is flagged as an important driver of this contribution in the ALL Strategy, and community education will by its nature play its part in achieving the overall outcomes across the decade, improving literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills across Ireland.

As outlined in the ALL strategy, digital literacy training may also be required for practitioners. SOLAS has identified the need for digital literacy skills for learners, but we must also assist practitioners and our community education partners in ensuring they have the most up to date training to deliver courses digitally or with the assistance of technology.

3.4 Community Education at Regional Level

A significant investment is made in community education each year, supporting a wide range of provision and a diverse group of learners. One of the primary motivations behind the development of a community education Framework, however, is the concern at the lack of consistency in how community education is accessed by learners across the country and the quality of programmes available to the learners from region to region. Transparency is important as we move towards a Framework for SOLAS funded community education. The average funding deployed by each ETB is approximately €1 million for community education support in some form. Individual ETB analysis reveals a varied picture.

For example, data indicates a significantly higher level of community education learners (per head of population) in Donegal than in other ETBs. In addition a regional variation is evident in resource allocation with City of Dublin ETB shown to invest more heavily in Community Education than most ETBs and CMETB being recipients of considerably higher levels of Reach funding than some ETBs (relative to population).

This research undertaken and data generated indicate that there are greater community education opportunities for learners, and more access to funding for community education providers, in some parts of the country than others’.

This is unsustainable if we want to ensure equal access to education across Ireland. We must find a way to reduce the imbalance in the community education provision at regional level. This inconsistency is a primary reason to develop a community education Framework, and the direction set out later in the document will attempt to address this.

3.5 Community Education at Local Level

The delivery model for community education is based on a partnership between the ETB and the community and voluntary sector. Once an ETB has secured funding from SOLAS for community education for the year, community and voluntary partners are invited to apply for funding.

Generally, there are two different types of partners involved:

1. Those in receipt of ETB community education tutor hours, which is sometimes accompanied by a small grant to cover course costs or teaching and learning materials and resources supplied by ETBs. (Funding is made available for tuition hours to deliver specific community education courses and tutors are paid directly by the ETB).
2. Community partners who receive grants either directly or indirectly from SOLAS (ranging from less than €10,000 to over €1 million) to develop and deliver community education in specific communities.

Through this partnership approach, ETBs and their community partners facilitate increased localised access to education and wider FET through their extensive reach into and across Irish communities. This hybrid model is based on two sets of complementary resources, as follows:

- By utilising the wide geographic presence of ETBs with community education hosted within dedicated FET facilities across the country.
- By supplementing and complementing this infrastructure through premises and resources provided through the community and voluntary sector, which has a presence in nearly every community in the country.



Section 4: The Community Education Framework

4.1 The Starting Point

The FET Strategy: **Transforming Learning** outlines seven core principles as a starting point for the development of the community education Framework. These principles (see Figure 9 below) acted as the building blocks for the Framework's development and, whilst not exhaustive, provided a useful lens through which to inform the research, consultation and writing processes.



Figure 9: Principles Underpinning the Community Education Framework

4.2 Outline of Framework

Building on the direction set out in the FET Strategy, the consultation, research, and analysis completed as part of this development process have seen a Framework emerge. This Framework is constructed around enacting positive change in how we **learn**; how we **provide**; how we **coordinate**; and how we **fund**; community education in Ireland. An overview of the draft Framework is provided below, and we then describe each of the components in the sections that follow.



Figure 10: How we Learn, Provide, Coordinate and Fund Community Education



Addressing Barriers to Participation - A Local Case Study

Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board - Community Education

Plein Air

Plein Air is the art of leaving the four walls of the art studio behind you and experiencing painting and drawing the landscape. Learners immerse themselves in the outdoors while attending a guided painting class run by community education tutors.

This was a new initiative across Kilkenny and Carlow counties and ran in a diverse range of locations. Ten sessions in total were held in locations such as Butler House Kilkenny, St Mullins by the river, Medieval Mile Museum Kilkenny, Huntington Castle Clonegal, Thomastown Village, Án Gairdín Beo and Borris. Each class was hosted by a local community group who work with Core Community Education, and they welcomed and provided hospitality to the learners and the tutors.

This project was advertised on social media and learners registered to attend. Due to demand learners could only attend one session. The learners who attended represented a wide picture of the communities that community education works with. While some were experienced painters who wanted to explore a different painting environment, many were people who wanted to paint for the first time, and we felt that this provided a unique atmosphere for them to achieve this.

A consideration when planning these events was that each class would be available to the wider community to include disability groups and those that normally don't attend Further Education and Training (FET) due to economic circumstances. Each venue was accessible to wheelchair users, and this played a crucial element when we were choosing venues. KCETB community education applied for Reach Funding in 2023 to purchase materials to eliminate the financial cost to participants in who were attending. Tutors had a supply of materials, and each learner received a starter pack to take away after their class thus removing a financial barrier to participation. There was no fee attached to attend and learners were asked to register using www.fetchcourses.ie. 150 learners participated in the ten sessions.

The feedback from the sessions was extremely positive with many citing the support of the tutors and relaxed atmosphere as a key factor in the success of each session. Many learners expressed their interest in attending more than one session but due to demand this was not always possible. Since these workshops many of the learners have gone on to join other groups and continue with their painting.

For some of the people with disabilities who attended, this was their first opportunity to attend a mainstream group outside of their own environments. Usually community education works with groups within their own community, this project allowed us the opportunity to have participants interacting outside of their own community group in a relaxed atmosphere. The short duration of the course also removed barriers as learners signed up for one day and had a choice of ten events to choose from.



4.3 How we Learn through Community Education

How we learn

Optimising
Learner
Support

Financial Aid
for Access
Costs

Community
Education &
Digital Learning

Collaborative
Approach to
Learning

Collaboration
& Partnership

4.3.1 Optimising Learner Supports

Community education is inclusive and the organic way in which it has developed and grown over the years is very much reflected in the diversity of provision and location. Local needs in local settings are different from community to community right across the country. Nevertheless, and in common with the rest of FET provision, there is a recognition that all learners should have access to a consistent level of support regardless of their location.

The ETBs have worked with SOLAS to develop guidelines and a toolkit to roll out consistent learner support across FET. It is recommended that this consistent approach is applied across all funded community education activity in each ETB area and that Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles are applied in the way in which community education is designed and delivered. SOLAS has developed a suite of UDL support documents and guidelines to assist FET practitioners. A range of course options in UDL are also available to all FET practitioners through ARK-AHEAD's Accessibility Resources and Know-How digital online platform. These courses range from a 2-hour introduction course to a digital badge in UDL. ETB supports which could be made available to community education providers are listed below:

- Guidance and Counselling
- Disability Supports (for example, Technology Enhanced Learning, sign language interpreters and through the roll-out of the Fund for Students with Disabilities across all funded FET provision)
- Learner assistance funds (including transport costs)
- Language supports, including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- Literacy and numeracy supports

ETBI will undertake a review to illustrate good practice in integrated support provision for community education learners, within the resources available to the ETB, to inform reflection and future planning.

Community partners are uniquely positioned to support learners to (re)engage, remain and/or progress in learning by facilitating a wrap-around approach to learner support at community level. Learner supports can be provided directly by community partners through their own staff and services. Additionally, learners are signposted, referred and/or assisted to access services offered by other organisations. A key enabling factor is that many community partners are co-located with, or have close links to, organisations that target people with specific needs. The location, role and expertise of community partners positions them to provide a supported pathway to these services. Examples include services relating to gender-based violence, drug and alcohol use, mental health, family support, money advice and so on. The funding of community education should reflect the need for providers, or associated organisations, to ensure the targeted, localised support that a learner requires. Providers need to have processes in place to ensure that they can respond to the specific needs of a diverse range of learners. This means that they can adequately provide additional supports and be flexible, including making reasonable accommodations, for example for learners with disabilities.

4.3.2 Financial Aid to Access Costs

As noted in section 2, some of the most common barriers to education for learners relate to the financial costs of engagement. While the ETBs in collaboration with community education providers and partners ensure that community education provision itself is free at the point of entry (or at minimal cost to learners), there are other cost barriers repeatedly cited by potential learners as discouraging them from participation. These include:

- Transport
- Access to IT Devices
- Hardship funding
- Childcare

The challenge here is that this type of financial support for learners then enters the scope of social welfare supports and national childcare programmes. However, the success of Reach funding in addressing some of these barriers is as an example of how financial, practical, and holistic learner support can be embedded in the future community education funding model. There are now valuable examples of ETBs with established and effective approaches to meet the diverse and immediate needs of learners with a range of different supports and resources in this space. This ranges from transport costs to laptop loan schemes to funding childcare supports. SOLAS is committed to working with ETBs to identify appropriate, effective, and consistent resourcing to support community education learners through a community

of practice approach. This will be within the audit and governance requirements of public sector funding, and we will work together to mainstream these approaches. SOLAS will also ensure that examples of good practice taking place in certain ETBs will be shared widely to ensure they can be copied country wide.

The recommendations of this Framework reflect the strategic priorities under the current National FET Strategy, which states¹⁵ (p45) that:

“There are substantial variations in the nature and level of support across different programmes, usually as a result of legacy arrangements and approaches. This must be addressed over the next five years, with consistent and integrated support offered to all learners in all FET settings.”

SOLAS will also work with Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) and other relevant stakeholders to explore funding to support community education learners so they can access and continue to learn in the heart of their communities.

4.3.3 Community Education & Digital Learning

Community education has a unique role in engaging directly with people and groups at a grassroots level. However, this has not precluded the development of online and blended delivery of learning within the community education offering. Organisations like An Cosán, who provide a range of community education programmes, have developed very effective models where they combine online learning delivery with local face-to-face learning support. The pandemic had a notable effect on levels of community education provision, unsurprisingly given the importance of personal contact and the social impact of collective learning in communities. It nonetheless also fostered innovation in the way in which community education can be delivered, providing access and associated skills to devices which allowed learners to access online learning and increased the digital capability to engage effectively with a rapidly evolving world. Furthermore, it opened access to those who can't, or don't feel able to go to a physical location to access education, it could also offer a pathway to accredited learning options.

15 Future FET: Transforming Learning 2020-2024

This experience shows great potential for the development of a cohesive approach to digitally enabled community education, which showcases and provides access to online and blended offerings developed at community level to a potentially national audience.

A *Digital Learning Framework for FET* is currently underway as a means to collectively progress the ambitions contained in *Future FET* for learner centric, flexible, convenient learning opportunities that are digitally enabled, with a focus on community engagement. Through four key pillars of 1. Capacity & Capability 2. Data & Analytics 3. Sourcing, and 4. Infrastructure, the *Digital Learning Framework for FET* will enable the sector to progress digitally enabled pathways for all FET learners including those in community education settings. Ongoing work on the development and expansion of eCollege as a national online learning service, acting as a digital gateway to FET, is based on the objective of expanding the reach and range of learners accessing FET from all communities across the country. Digital platforms such as eCollege could be leveraged to showcase the offerings that are available in community education and FET, ensuring the full diversity of learners have access to digital learning opportunities and develop their digital capability.

The implementation of the Digital Learning Framework for FET will be informed by the Community Education Framework, and the rich experience of digital delivery to date in the sector. A multi-stakeholder governance group is in place chaired by SOLAS with representation from ETBs, learner representative organisations, and digital technology interest groups. Cross collaboration will be required to ensure that the diverse needs of community education providers and learners are considered as part of the coherent digital development of FET.

4.3.4 Collaborative Approach to Learning

Primarily, a dialogical approach is used in teaching and learning in community education. Dialogical approach means using conversation or shared dialogue to explore the meaning of something. It is a highly participative, flexible approach which is appropriate for the needs of the learners. Dialogue rejects narrative lecturing where the tutor talks and the learner listens. Instead, it is a problem-posing participatory format where the tutor and learner transform learning into a collaborative process. The learner voice is at the core of the teaching and learning process and this approach should be encouraged and enhanced at every opportunity. The funding of community education recognises that the diversity of the learner cohort and the learners voice is its greatest strength. There is no one size fits all approach, and there needs to be flexibility in the way in which it is supported so it can adapt and respond to the needs of the hardest to reach communities.



etb

Bord Oideachais agus
Oiliúna Dhún na nGall
Donegal Education and
Training Board

The Reach and Importance of Community Education – A Local Case Study

Donegal Education and Training Board

Downstrands Family Resource Centre

Overview: Downstrands Family Resource Centre (FRC), located in the rural setting of Kilclooney, is a vibrant and bustling community centre providing a range of services to a wide geographical area including Rossbeg, Portnoo, Narin, Ardara and Glenties. The Centre is housed in the Dolmen Centre and facilitates an outreach centre in the old community centre in Glenties, known locally as The Hub.

There are currently four full-time and two part-time staff members in Downstrands and these include an administrator, an events coordinator, a family support liaison office, and a social prescriber. The centre offers a wide range of services to the local community and their projects encompass counselling, family activities and supports, and adult education.

Collaboration: Donegal Education and Training Board (ETB), through its Community Education Support Programme, has been working in partnership with Downstrands Family Resource Centre for many years and has been providing contributory funding for adult education classes during this time. As a result of the huge catchment area, it would be typical for there to be an average of 35 courses or more funded in Downstrands annually.

The variety of courses in such a wide catchment area varies greatly, with demand being learner led. Popular courses, year on year, include a mix of health and well-being, arts and crafts, outdoor activity, and gardening, cultural and heritage and practical DIY courses.

Facilities: The Dolmen Centre boasts two fully furnished classrooms, and both have interactive smart screens and access to a suite of 8 laptops. The Resource Centre has developed two community gardens, one on site and a further development in Ardara and both sites host spring and autumn horticulture classes. Courses funded by Donegal ETB are also arranged in the old community centre in Glenties to address the unmet needs of the community there and these have been increasingly growing in popularity.



Target Cohorts: An analysis of the statistics for the year ending 2023, shows that a total of 270 learners benefitted from Donegal ETB Community Education funded courses delivered in Downstrands. Of these, 242 were female and 28 were male. In the main, learners accessing adult courses in the centre were long term unemployed, lone parents, women wishing to return to the labour force and older adults (55+). The centre focuses on targeting these cohorts along with early school leavers and low paid workers to help with upskilling and improving personal digital skills.

Outcomes: Feedback from learners participating on courses facilitated by Downstrands FRC is consistently positive. Participants report a host of benefits including but not limited to; an increase in employability and everyday skills, an increase in self-confidence and well-being, a decline in social isolation, improvements in mood and outlook, engaging in new shared experiences and an overall increase in community involvement. Although such benefits may be hard to verify and quantify, there is absolutely no doubt that the work of Downstrands FRC is vital to the lifeblood of the wider community of this south-west area of Donegal.

Downstrands FRC and Donegal ETB enjoy a continuing partnership through which both organisations meet their goals and objectives; supporting and nurturing communities through the delivery of low-cost, effective, and demand-led courses.

Ní neart go cur le chéile!



FET Community Education Framework



It is important that this Framework commits to this model of:

- a collaborative approach to learning,
- accommodating small groups of learners,
- one-to-one support and guidance as a regular component,
- the protection of the informal nature of much of the community education provision, and
- the ethos of the learner voice underpinning and informing how community education is developed and delivered.

Learner voice

A more formal role for the learner voice in the evolution of community education in Ireland is essential, and SOLAS will consider how this can be embedded in the implementation of the principles and commitments set out in this Framework. Within this, there needs to be attention given to creating learning environments that are welcoming and inclusive, where learners feel comfortable to be their authentic selves.

4.3.5 Collaboration and Partnership

Fundamentally community education is about more than just learning, and its success is dependent on access to a range of other supports and services. The connection with the community development sector and area-based partnership companies is critical, as is the role of local authorities, the Department of Social Protection, and health and care services. While better coordination and planning of funding, particularly in relation to wider Community Development activities, is essential and will be addressed later in this document, more effective collaboration and partnership at local level is important.

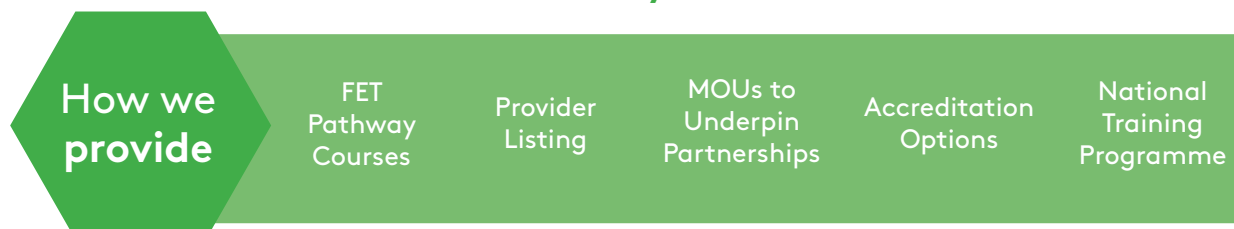
It is recommended that every ETB should have a stakeholder map and engagement strategy with such bodies in their respective regions. Planning and investment in community education in each ETB area should also actively support the development of local partnerships and consider models of integrated service delivery.

At national level, SOLAS and ETBI should work on:

- researching and identifying good practice in integrating services in a community education context,
- mainstreaming this approach across the country in an implementation phase,
- developing an engagement strategy with a focus on creating, sustaining and giving expression to shared commitment to non-discrimination, equality and human rights.

The Community Education Map being developed by AONTAS with support from CEFA will also serve as a resource for the community education sector and act as a practical tool for policy makers, providers and learners.

4.4 How we Provide Community Education



4.4.1 FET Pathway Courses

There are many successful pathway projects already in place between community education and the FET sector and indeed the Higher Education sector, however these need to be consolidated and mainstreamed. In addition, new and innovative pathway initiatives which incorporate the core values of community education, can and should be developed reflecting the diversity of learners. These initiatives should be tailored specifically for the community education learner. Promotion and communication of these pathways is very important so that the community education sector is well informed of the progression opportunities available. Effective communication and engagement can build trust between the sectors, and the learners will benefit greatly from this. Community Education Facilitators, with the support of Adult Guidance Counsellors, can provide the information and identification of learner supports. They can also offer planning, co-ordination, and support funding applications for projects and programmes with community groups in the provision of community education programmes.

While it is critically important that we protect the non-formal nature and environment around much of community education, there is a sense that it can be too disconnected from the other learning pathways that are available through FET. Ensuring clear pathways are available and distinctly communicated to all learners will outline the cohesive relationship between community education and FET as the learner progresses on their learning journey. While the targeted pathway initiatives, promotion and access resources referenced above will help in this regard, it should be made clear that every community education course has a potential next step within FET if the learner chooses to pursue it. As a standard part of funding community education courses, ETBs should agree potential pathway options which can be communicated to the learner at the outset and during the course. These courses can include progression within FET at the same level of the NFQ or levels below and or higher. Local Further Education

and Training (FET) Guidance and Information Services are well placed within the Strategic Framework for Lifelong Guidance to advise and guide community education participants and help them make informed decisions regarding their educational or vocational needs. These services are free and confidential and accessible through the 16 Education and Training boards around the country.

4.4.2 Provider Listing

We are committed to make funding for community education available to all, and to ensure transparency around this process. This Framework requires each ETB to maintain an up-to-date list of community education providers funded by the ETB. The intention around the establishment of this listing is to ensure that there is an open, transparent and inclusive approach to accessing funding for community education provision and to highlight the variety of groups supported by ETBs. More detail available in the appendix 3.

The approach to do a call each year will ensure that all community education providers have access to the funding application process for specific projects and services on an annual basis and the list of providers is openly available. This will also enhance the approach to the funding application process, with particular attention to provider organisations from communities experiencing inequality, and ultimately widen the network of supports being made available to learners that need it most.

4.4.3 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to Underpin Partnerships

The Framework also requires the establishment of Memorandum of Understandings (MOU) with key community education providers and ETBs to further embed a partnership approach to address FET needs at local level. This approach will ensure good governance and accountability at local level and that there is a consistent approach to funding community education providers. There are examples of MOUs or Service Level Agreements (SLAs) in place across the sector, but they are not consistent. This Framework recommends that all ETBs use a MOU (draft template provided at appendix 4) with the community groups they are funding. This MOU will include guidelines on the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty to support providers and address the need to include the Duty as part of their provision.

4.4.4 Accreditation Options

A recent publication by SOLAS¹⁶, clearly outlines that community education learners are more likely to be enrolled in uncertified courses (94.2%), with those who are enrolled in certified courses primarily concentrated at Level 3 on the NFQ. Figure 11 breaks down the certified learners on the NFQ for 2023 in community education. It is therefore necessary and desirable to have guided pathways from community education provision to FET and to HE to encourage greater participation in accredited provision.

FET must promote and facilitate engagement throughout careers and lifetimes by adopting more modular, flexible, technology-driven and year-round approaches which facilitate sustained learning pathways where credits and qualifications can be built up over time. It is acknowledged that certification through FET pathways may not be the immediate goal of a learner in community education at first, but it may very well be so at a later stage of a learner's journey in education and employment. The important point is that all available options and pathways are communicated to the learner over the course of their learning journey. ETBs will be required to lead this work and engage with community providers.

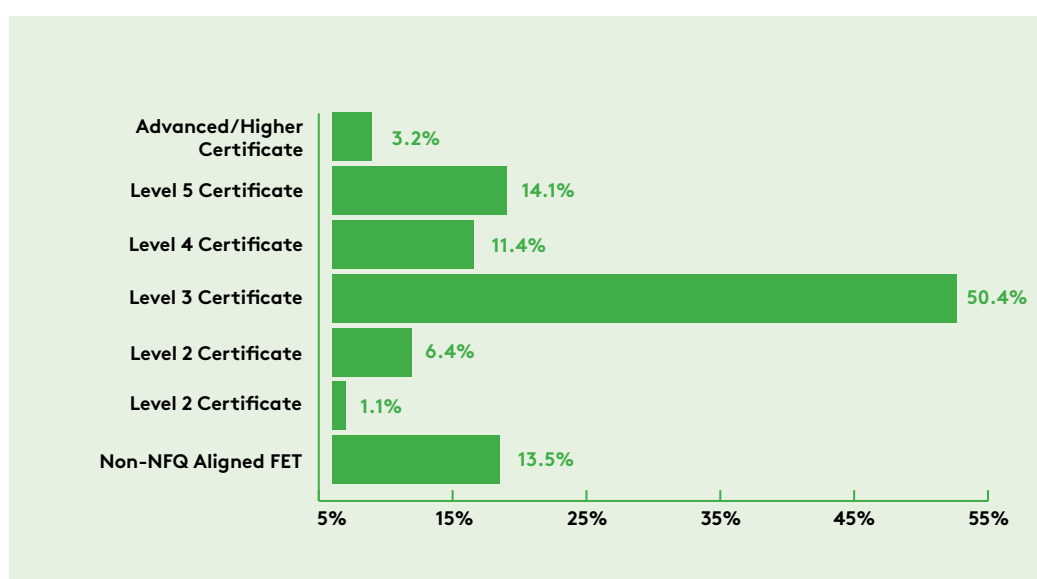


Figure 11: Certification of Community Education Learners on the Nationals Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or Equivalent, 2023, PLSS Data

16 SOLAS, FET in Focus Series–Community Education

Use of digital badging¹⁷ and micro-qualifications¹⁸ will also be important as we move into a time of FET provision which can be tailored to meet the needs of learners and employers. This would be a new and interesting offering for the community education learner. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) offers opportunities for learners to validate skills, knowledge and competencies gained through all forms of learning (formal, non-formal and informal learning). ETBs have developed a variety of approaches and models in the adoption of RPL which embodies an inclusive, integrated and holistic approach to engaging in lifelong learning. Increased awareness of RPL in community education acknowledges the existing skills and experience of learners and can provide a means through which learners can embark on accredited learning pathways.

4.4.5 National Training Programme

This Framework has highlighted the importance of community education throughout. While the learner is the main focus of the Framework, there is also a requirement to address the importance of the people who deliver community education programmes. To ensure that provision of community education maximises the potential of the learner we must support the staff delivering these programmes.

In early 2020, SOLAS launched its FET Professional Learning and Development: Statement of Strategy 2020–2024, following its original Professional Development Strategy 2016–2019. A key goal is to ‘build the capability of those who work in the FET sector through the identification and deployment of strategic professional learning and development initiatives in priority areas’ (SOLAS, 2020).

As part of this strategy, Education and Training Boards (ETBs) have put systems in place to support a planned approach to professional learning and development (PLD). Through the excellent work of the PLD Coordinators across the country, well-crafted and engaging learning and development initiatives have been operationalised at local, regional and national levels.

This also feeds into community education, and ETBs are advised to continue this investment. The building of skills and capabilities is paramount to support community education staff. In consultation with a range of stakeholders from across the FET sector, ETBs, supported by ETBI

17 Digital badges (also known as e-badges, or singularly as e-badge) are a validated indicator of accomplishment, skill, quality, or interest that can be earned in various learning environments.

18 Micro-Qualifications are short stackable accredited programmes delivered by ETBs for Irish business’ for both employees and employers. A FET MQ is typically 25 hours training delivery and 25 hours self-directed learning.

will carry out regular training needs analysis to identify areas where targeted professional learning and development initiatives are required. The National Training Programme for community education providers is based on the social justice and community development philosophies and Freirean pedagogy of community education as well as trauma informed practices. PLD needs analysis and provision should also include a specific focus on community development, climate justice education, equality, and human rights and on practice that is non-discriminatory and diversity inclusive.

Programme development is a central part of the work of personnel in community education. The content of a programme can be the determining factor in engagement or non-engagement of the learner. A key feature of programme development is involving the learner in the process. This is unique and requires skill sets from the professionals which must be honed, enhanced and continually developed over time.

The community education team is normally small within the ETB's and Community and Voluntary sectors. Given the breadth of provision, the nuances of the model and the levels of disadvantage experienced in its target communities, the team's focus should be on the core strategic and learner-centred activities rather than on administrative tasks. The ETBs should therefore consider further supporting the administrative side of community education to enable the Community Education Facilitators (CEFs), tutors and resource workers to focus more on PLD, programme development, outreach and delivery.

Specific thematic training programmes should be made available to community education providers through ETBs and the national approach to PLD.

4.5 How we Coordinate Community Education



4.5.1 Capturing the Wider Benefits of Learning

Capturing the wider benefits of learning has long been seen as a key metric to display the broader outcomes which learners achieve in community education. In 2015, ETBI commissioned a research report on the Wider Benefits of Learning. This report defined the wider benefits of learning approach as “analysing how education contributes to the ‘wellbeing’ of individuals and societies, providing the State with

a return on its investment, even though those participating in these education programmes may not acquire qualifications”¹⁹. The report found that there is substantial evidence that shows the participation in community education and other programmes such as Adult Literacy programmes, has a positive social and personal impact on individuals and communities. Further policy documents have acknowledged the importance of measuring outcomes by capturing the changes experienced by learners in a reliable and consistent way and then collating that evidence to produce quantifiable results.

The FET Strategy: **Transforming Learning** acknowledged “that there will always be a place within FET for informal learning, particularly when dealing with marginalised groups in the early stages of engagement.”²⁰ Coupled with the acknowledgement of the role of informal learning in FET, the Strategy emphasises the importance of measuring the wider benefits of learning, and those which have impact at an individual level for the learner for example, improved learner confidence, resilience, agency and engagement amongst several other benefits.

The Adult Literacy for Life Strategy (2021)²¹ recommends that measuring success should be focused on both quantitative and qualitative indicators and that “ongoing learner and participant feedback would be key to continuous improvement and delivering on the actions and targets set out.”

Acknowledging the importance of evaluating the wider benefits of learning in FET and using the findings of the ETBI research report in 2015, ETBI conducted a pilot project with seven ETBs in 2021. They collated a review report on this pilot. As a result, ETBI is currently overseeing the further improvement and development of this, to capture the wider benefits of learning evident in the short and intermediate term that contribute to the following four key outcomes:

- Personal Development
- Health and Wellbeing
- Family and Health and Wellbeing
- Education and Employment

19 ETBI, 2015 Report: Wider Benefits of Learning

20 Future FET: Transforming Learning, The National Further Education and Training Strategy Document 2020-2024, SOLAS

21 Adult Literacy for Life Strategy https://www.adultliteracyforlife.ie/f/120607/x-/133e8d1481/15607_all_strategy_web.pdf

Based on the finding of the 2021 pilot project including feedback from ETB staff, it is recommended that there should be full implementation involving all 16 ETBs, with a revised Framework and common implementation template. This is a key step which will enable ETBs to respond to economic and societal imperatives based on a deeper, evidenced-based understanding of their role and the impact on learners, communities, and society. The implementation of the Wider Benefits of Learning will assist in providing a holistic view of community education through measuring the wider outcomes of learning alongside outcomes which are more easily quantified through other methods for example, PLSS, giving a voice to learners and the diversity of learners engaged in community education.

Task	Deliverable	Expected Timeframe
1	Project scoping detailed proposal and presentation to ETB FET Directors for approval	November – December 2023
2	Analyse the current tool and update / develop the current/new tool	December 2023 – February 2024
3	Conduct a pilot phase of the new / updated tool	September – October 2024
4	Analyse the outcomes of the pilot project and make recommendations	November– December 2024
5	Provide validation of the final tool and advise on the operationalisation of the tool	December 2024

Table 6: ETBI Wider Benefits of Learning, Project Milestones

4.5.2 Simplified Data Gathering Process

SOLAS's Programme Learner Support System (PLSS) provides an integrated approach to the collection and processing of learner data, including programme outputs and outcomes. However, it does not have the capability to capture soft or transversal outcomes, as well as some quantitative equality data. Therefore, while PLSS has the capacity to capture some of community education's diverse benefits and outcomes (for example, number of beneficiaries, certifications and so on), it is unable to provide a complete picture of community education's role and impact. As referenced above the implementation of the wider benefits of learning approach to the capturing of data will also be implemented by all ETBs with support from ETBI by quarter 4 2024, as part of the Framework.

In parallel to the development of this Framework, some work has begun to review the PLSS registration process. Similar to all other areas of FET provision, data gathering is a requirement. This ensures that all decisions made around future funding are informed by data gathered. However, whilst adhering to the importance of data gathering, ongoing

work by SOLAS to simplify processes, forms a crucial part of this work. Recognising the views expressed by key stakeholders (including community education providers, ETBs, learners, staff and non-FET stakeholders) have all informed the review of the PLSS registration processes to date. This work seeks to improve and enhance the quality of data collected. Also, as part of the review, there is on-going work to assist individuals collecting data through communicating the purpose and reason for SOLAS data requirements and other funding sources, for example, European Social Fund (ESF) data requirements. Communicating an understanding of GDPR and other areas such as videos and other assistive tools will all play a role in assisting in data collection.

4.5.3 Community Education and Adult Literacy for Life

As noted previously in this document (section 3.3), there are complementary objectives between community education and the Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) Strategy with respect to social inclusion. By its nature, community education will play an important role in achieving the aims of the ALL Strategy. The infrastructure established to deliver the ALL Strategy includes 16 Regional Literacy Coordinators (RLCs) employed across the network of ETBs. They have a remit to leverage and develop existing networks across the broad landscape of literacy provision and support, including between local ETB adult literacy services and community education. Working with community education providers and the important networks they have established over many decades, RLCs can assist the development of a more effective and collaborative community education response to unmet literacy needs. As such the RLCs and Regional Literacy Coalitions should be considered in the stakeholder map and engagement strategy mentioned previously. Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) and community education are not synonymous, but they share many target groups and the challenge of coordination and integration at local level is similar.

4.5.4 Coordinated Quality Assurance (QA) Supports

Quality Assurance (QA) systems are essential across all elements of the education and training system, and this equally applies to community education. It contributes to the governance, reputation, and integrity of the sector. ETBs are required to have effective QA processes in place which must include provision for engagement and support external partnerships and second providers. This should include sub-contracting of provision in line with the QA statutory guidelines. In the context of community education, ETBs have varying QA arrangements with community partners. ETB QA systems should be equipped to adequately support community education provision and learners. These supports

could be in the areas of access, transfer and progression as well as offering learner supports where required as part of any learners' journey on a community education programme.

This Framework recommends that ETBs fully support community education providers in either meeting their QA requirements or through formal documentation of QA processes. These arrangements must be monitored and reviewed to assure their effectiveness. ETBs should recognise that QA processes and procedures should assist community education to retain its distinguishing features of equality, partnership and participation.

In relation to quality standards in non-formal settings and unaccredited provision, this too should have quality checks and balances built into it. QA processes and procedures should assist community education to review and strengthen its distinguishing features of non-discrimination, equality, partnership and participation (including for the voice of the full diversity of learners).

4.5.5 Addressing Regional Gaps

From the analysis of the data conducted by SOLAS, it shows significant difference in terms of level, focus and coverage of community education in different parts of the country. SOLAS, through the Strategic Performance Agreements (SPAs), will capture the funding and measurement of outcomes of community education in the FET pathways funding pot. This will allow for continuous monitoring of community education investment, provision and outcomes to ensure that SOLAS works proactively with ETBs to address any regional imbalances.

How community education provision is coordinated is a central element of this Framework and how we want to ensure that we enhance what is already there. There is a requirement on each ETB and community education providers to come together on a yearly basis to identify the regional gaps and how they can be addressed. This forum should ideally be arranged for early in Quarter 4 of each year to ensure a coordinated, and targeted approach to funding, provision and associated outcomes.

4.6 How we Fund Community Education

How we fund

Consistent Funding Approach

National Funding Role

Staffing and Mainstream Resources

Cross-Department Funding

4.6.1 Consistent funding approaches

Managing funding by community education providers is challenging when there is a lack of year-on-year commitment to the providers because of the current approach. Some ETBs have excellent local business processes in place in terms of the application process for funding. The new FET Funding Model²² will underpin this Framework's approach to consistent funding of community education. Under this model, there is a new simplified five 'pot' funding approach, with each pot linked to specific learner outcomes.

This Framework requires ETBs to ensure there is a consistent approach to funding on a yearly basis and that community education providers are given some commitment from the ETB that funding will be consistent. Some indication of the funding being available can be given by ETBs if the appropriate forward planning and funding requests are made in advance of written commitment of funding being provided by SOLAS. One of the goals of this Framework is to put a consistent approach in place.

In 2023, community education received €16.6 million of funding with an additional €5.7 million, through Reach Funding, representing 2% of the overall FET budget. There will be a dedicated community education budget in the FET pathways funding model pot. The specific allocation for community education is subject to wider budgetary trends year on year, with a strong commitment to maintaining the preceding years allocation at a minimum.

The new outcome-based funding model for the FET sector will provide a more strategic, consistent and simplified approach to funding and community education can only benefit from this. The community education sector has been calling for a more consistent approach for some time. This vision of working towards this flexible and responsive approach to funding is recognised in the new funding model.

²² The report was published in June 2022 with a phased approach to implementation of the Funding Model underway for 2024 to full implementation in 2025. Link to report: [Further Education and Training Funding Model Review \(solas.ie\)](https://www.solas.ie/~/media/SOLAS/Reports-and-Publications/2022/Further-Education-and-Training-Funding-Model-Review-FET-Funding-Model-Review-2022.pdf)

The implementation plan for this Framework will include a focus on the implications of the new funding model for the community education sector and how this can help the move toward this approach.

4.6.2 National Funding Role

While the vast majority of FET and indeed community education funding is channelled through the ETBs, SOLAS funds some organisations directly with the aim to improve access to learning for marginalised communities and those experiencing inequality and socio-economic disadvantage. This is done on a national level through an annual agencies and bodies grants scheme. While a robust assessment of the continued value and validity of these grants is conducted each year, the award of grants has mainly been driven by legacy arrangements with particular organisations. SOLAS supports a number of organisations centrally, including the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), AONTAS, The Irish Deaf Society, Dyslexia Ireland, An Cosán, and The Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities. The funding approach for these agencies and bodies is being reviewed to ensure it reflects ongoing national need and FET Strategy priorities in ensuring access to education by marginalised communities. This will reflect the commitments set out later in this Framework around future funding, mainstreaming and alignment with the new funding model.

4.6.3 Staffing and Mainstream Resources

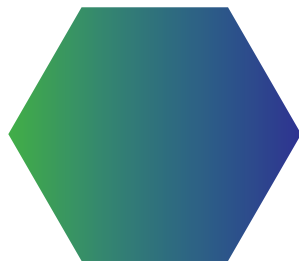
All parties must ensure that there is an efficient and effective process in place for allocating of staffing and resources in community education. Whilst recognising some staff are employed part-time as casual employees on a short-term basis and others on Contracts of Indefinite Duration (CID), this Framework advocates for all ETBs to work with community education providers they fund to meet the employment legislative requirements of their employees. In advocating for this, SOLAS in collaboration with ETBs will consider best practise in this area to support a more consistent approach to the allocation of resources to community education providers and a possible mainstreamed approach.

4.6.4 Cross-Department Funding

There is a need to look at funding in the context of the macro-level as well. The various government departments who fund community education and local authorities have an important role here. The work of ETBs and local voluntary and community organisations should feed into the local structures of Local Community Development Committees (LCDC's) and Public Participation Networks (PPN's). The PPN is a network that enables local authorities to connect with community

groups within the council authority area. Community groups register to join the PPN in their local authority area which gives citizens a greater say in local government decisions which affect their local communities. The PPN's could act as an umbrella network for all the relevant players in community education and facilitate more cohesion and alignment of provision in the local area.

The diversity of funding mechanisms for community education providers across government departments and agencies requires further consultation to ensure clarity around opportunity for community education providers to access funding and to ensure no duplicate funding. This Framework recommends that each ETB ensures that the community education provider and other government agencies have sight of all funding being made available on a yearly basis. This can be done by establishing and maintaining a listing of funded community providers. This listing can be shared across other government agencies.





Section 5: Implementation of the Framework

The implementation plan is a core part of this Community Education Framework. The plan details key actions arising from the Framework. SOLAS will establish a National Implementation Steering Group comprising of representatives from key stakeholder groups. This will include Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), ETBs, community education providers, AONTAS, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), POBAL and the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD).

Implementation of the Framework

There are **24 actions recommended** in the plan under the four areas of:

- Learn
- Provide
- Coordinate
- Fund

Learn

	Actions in Implementation Stage	Co-ordination Lead	Timeline
1	ETBI will undertake a review to illustrate good practice in integrated support provision for community education learners, within the resources available to the ETB, to inform reflection and future planning. (4.3.1)	ETBI	
2	SOLAS will work with ETBs to identify appropriate, effective, and consistent resourcing of learner supports for the specific context of community education. This will be carried out through a community of practice approach, within the audit and governance requirements of public sector funding and will work together to mainstream these approaches. (4.3.2)	SOLAS	
3	SOLAS will work with Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) and other relevant stakeholders to explore funding to support community education learners to access and continue learning in a community education programme. (4.3.2)	SOLAS	
4	SOLAS will work in collaboration with the community education sector to ensure the needs of community education providers and learners are considered as part of the digital development of FET through the SOLAS' Digital Learning Framework for FET (4.3.3)	SOLAS	
5	Establish a more formal role for the learners' voice in community education in Ireland. SOLAS to consider how this can be embedded in the principles of the Framework. (4.3.4)	SOLAS/ AONTAS/ETBs	
6	Each ETB should have a stakeholder map and engagement strategy to enhance collaboration and partnership in their respective regions. (4.3.5)	ETBI	
7	Seek examples of good practise of collaboration already on-going in community education. (4.3.5)	SOLAS/ETB	

Provide

	Actions in Implementation Stage	Coordination Lead	Timeline
8	Make clear pathways available and communicate to all learners. Clarity should be provided to learners that community education courses have a potential next step within FET if the learner chooses to pursue it. (4.4.1)	ETBs/ETBI	On-going
9	As a standard part of funding for any community education course; ETBs should agree potential pathways courses which can be explicitly flagged to the learner. (4.4.1)	ETBs/ETBI	On-going
10	Establish a provider listing to ensure that there is an open and transparent approach to accessing funding for community education provision. (4.4.2)	ETBs/ETBI	
11	Establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to underpin partnerships between ETBs and community education providers. (4.4.3)	ETBI/SOLAS/ ETBs	
12	Communicate accreditation options and the communication of available options and pathways to the learner over the course of their learning journey with ETBs leading this and engaging with community providers. (4.4.4)	ETBs/ETBI	
13	In consultation with a range of stakeholders from across the FET sector, ETBs, supported by ETBI will carry out regular training needs analysis to identify areas where targeted professional learning and development initiatives are required. (4.4.5)	ETBI/PL&D	
14	ETBs to consider assisting Community Education Facilitators (CEFs)/tutors/resource workers with administration tasks so they can focus on project development, outreach and delivery. (4.4.5)	ETBs	On-going

Coordinate

	Actions in Implementation Stage	Coordination Lead	Timeline
15	Roll out the Wider Benefits of Learning tool to provide a platform for the holistic journey of a learner. (4.5.1)	ETBI	
16	Assist with simplifying data gathering processes for both those gathering data and the learner through several mechanisms and assistive materials such as explanatory videos and materials. (4.5.2)	SOLAS/ETBI	
17	Further embed/roll out the KEATS Framework which will allow all funded FET providers to flag outcomes when scheduling non-accredited learning/courses on the National Course Calendar of PLSS. (3.1)	SOLAS/ETBI/ ETBs	
18	Working with community education providers and the important networks they have established, Regional Literacy Co-ordinators (RLCs) can assist developing a more effective and collaborative community education response to unmet literacy needs and the RLCs and Regional Literacy Coalition. (4.5.3)	SOLAS/ALL Programme Office	
19	ETBs will fully support community education providers in either meeting Quality Assurance (QA) requirements or through formal documentation of QA processes. (4.5.4)	SOLAS/ETBI	
20	In addressing regional gaps, each ETB and their community education providers to come together each year in early Q4 to address regional gaps and how to address this forum to ensure a coordinated and targeted approach to funding, provision, and associated outcomes. (4.5.5)	ETBI/ETBs	

Fund

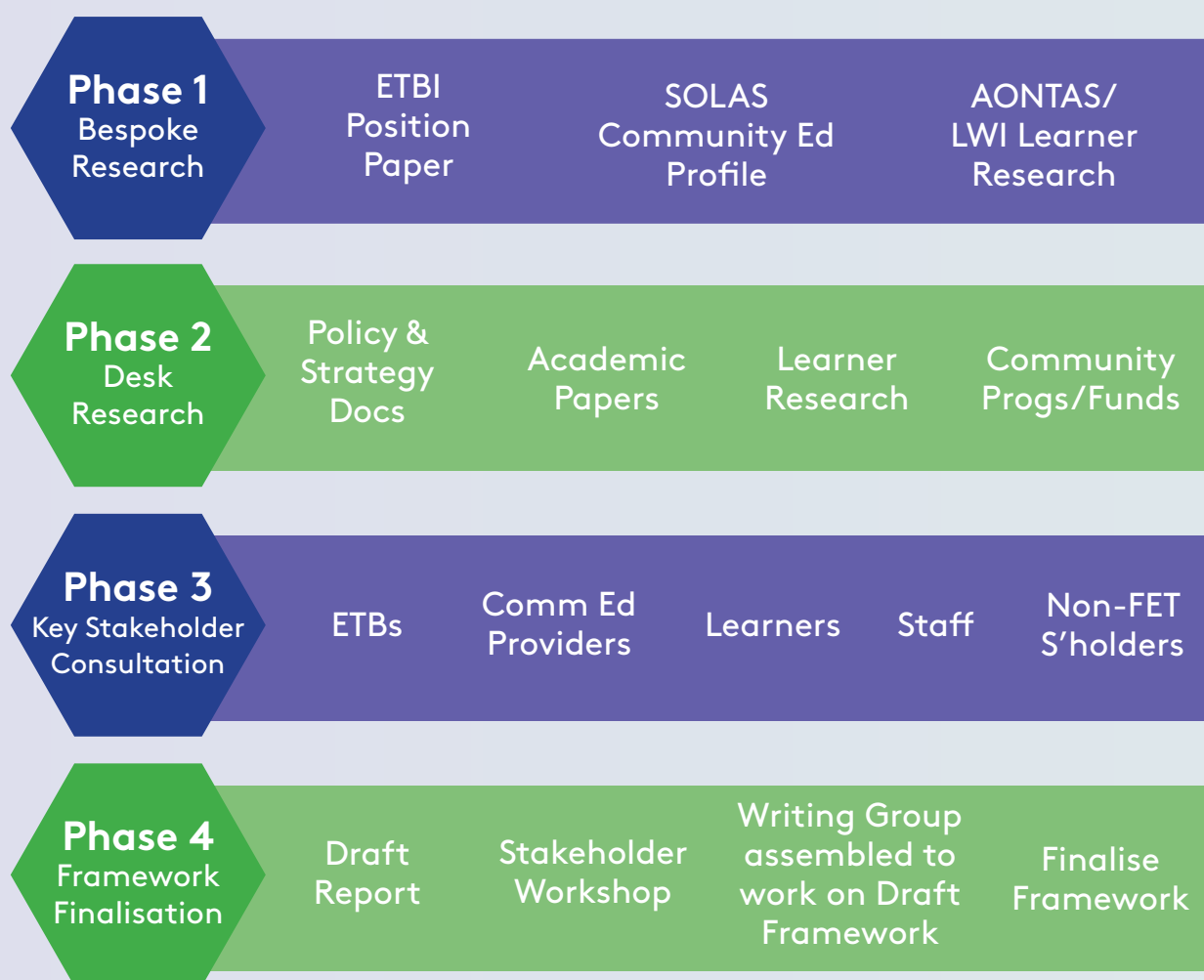
	Actions in Implementation Stage	Coordination Lead	Timeline
21	The new FET Funding Model will underpin this Frameworks approach to consistent funding of community education.	SOLAS	
22	The Framework requires ETBs to ensure a more consistent approach to funding across the community education sector and that community education providers are given some commitment that funding will be consistent. (4.6.1)	SOLAS/ETBs	
23	SOLAS in reviewing its funding approach will ensure that agencies funded through the annual agencies and bodies grant scheme reflect ongoing national needs and FET Strategy priorities in ensuring access to education by marginalised communities. (4.6.2)		
24	Explore and develop relationships with Local Community Development Committees (LCDC's) and Public Participation Networks (PPN's) who could act as an umbrella network for all relevant players in community education and facilitate more cohesion and alignment of provision across the community education sector. (4.6.3)	ETBI	
25	Each ETB ensures that community education providers and other government agencies have sight of all funding being made available on a yearly basis through the establishment and maintenance of a listing of funded community providers. The listing can be shared across other government agencies. (4.6.4)		



Appendices

Appendix 1

Development Process of the Framework



Appendix 2

Sample Provider Listing

ETB	Community Education Facilitator (CEF)	Community Education Provider	Provider Location	Funding Allocation

Appendix 3

Sample Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)



**Memorandum of Agreement
between**

**Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board
(LOETB)**

And

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

|

Purpose of the Agreement

The purpose of this agreement is to clarify the role of the Provider (Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB)) and XXXXXX in order to ensure effectively managed processes to comply with agreed Quality Assurance policies and procedures and to ensure that all provision is delivered to the standards agreed between QQI and LOETB.

This agreement also facilitates the involvement of XXXXX in LOETB's Quality Assurance Governance process.

Through this agreement framework, LOETB and XXXXX now seek to develop an overarching agreement that will encompass and supersede any previous agreements and will enter a process of substantive progress and collaboration in education & training provision.

The agreement is not a legally-binding agreement and is not exhaustive in its identification of the two organisations' responsibilities. Additional responsibilities identified during the agreement will be negotiated and agreed between the partners.

Names of Partners to the Agreement

This agreement is between
Laois and Offaly Education & Training Board, Ridge Road, Portlaoise, Co. Laois
and
XXXXX

Duration of the Agreement

The duration of this agreement will be until the next periodic review of the agreement, which will be three years from date of agreement being signed. In the event of XXXXXX being unwilling or unable to accept future learners, the agreement may be suspended. In this case, LOETB as Provider will continue to provide services for current learners until they complete their programme.

Reviewing the Agreement

The agreement will be reviewed every three years as part of LOETB's Monitoring and Evaluation process. It may also be reviewed annually on request by either party.

Amendment of the Agreement

This agreement may be amended following agreement between the parties. As similar agreements are entered into with other providers, it is accepted that any agreed changes will be applied to all such agreements.

Managing Disputes Related to the Agreement

In the event of disputes relating to the agreement, both parties will attempt to resolve the issues by discussion and negotiation. In the event of a failure at this stage, matters may be referred to an agreed independent third party with appropriate expertise. When agreement cannot be reached, this agreement may be suspended.

Suspension of the Agreement

In a situation where there is serious dispute which cannot be resolved, the agreement can be suspended by either party. Following negotiations, a suspended agreement may be re-instated by mutual consent of both parties.

Termination of the Agreement

This agreement may be terminated by either party by giving three months' notice. In this case, both parties will agree to provide services to continuing learners.

Details of the Signatories

Provider

Community/Voluntary Provider

LOETB

.....
{name and position}

.....
{name and position}

.....
Date

.....
Date

General Principles

- a) The overarching QA agreement is between LOETB and QQI, all centres must comply with these procedures.
- b) This agreement is only for LOETB agreed provision; whilst any provision outside the terms of this agreement is the responsibility of XXXXX, the nature of this provision must be agreed with LOETB and delivered to the agreed standards.
- c) LOETB as Provider is responsible for the quality assurance of provision across all Community/Voluntary providers.
- d) All Community/Voluntary providers have local responsibility for implementation of quality assurance procedures.

Responsibilities of the Provider (LOETB)

To QQI:

- Comply with QA Guidelines as established with QQI and continue to ensure that QA policies and procedures are approved by QQI.
- Develop and maintain programme and curriculum validation process with QQI.

To Tutors:

- Implement LOETB tutor induction, for example, QA briefings for new staff.
- Provide Professional Development for tutors, as required.

To The Acorn Project:

- Develop, maintain, and comply with LOETB's QA Procedures.
- Provide QA Governance structure for local programme approval access and development.
- Provide access to LOETB's Programme and Module Descriptors.
- Oversee the quality of delivery and assessment of programmes.
- Designate member of Quality Assurance Support team to liaise with/support the Community/Voluntary Provider.

Appendix 4

The aim Reach Funding (formerly the MAEDF – Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage Fund) is to provide funding to support educationally disadvantaged learners in accessing and participating in community education. It aims to increase the participation of disadvantaged learners, particularly those who are undertaking literacy and skills programmes.

The funding has a strong focus on building the digital infrastructure of community education providers, including providing devices and software, and increasing their capacity to deliver learning. The funding was specifically designed to tackle inequalities and support access to community education and intended to address specific actions in the Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) Strategy to target funding on access to technology and devices, expand community access to wi-fi and broadband resources and to directly address unmet literacy needs.

Funding Categories

1. Learner assistance fund – initiatives that will support learners to engage/participate in educational programmes.
2. Innovative green projects.
3. Projects focused on increasing participation in learning with target cohorts (For a full list of target groups, please see Point 5, Page 1 of the Application Form.)
4. Events/awareness campaigns that contribute to equality policy and legislation.
5. In line with the Adult Literacy for Life Strategy specific actions that;
 - directly address those experiencing unmet literacy needs.
 - target funding on access to technology and devices.
 - expand community access to Wi-Fi and broadband resources.
6. Community groups in pre-development phase to support the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups.
7. Support for refugee groups to support education and training delivery and promote/support cultural and social inclusion, including research and/or needs analysis.

Glossary of terms

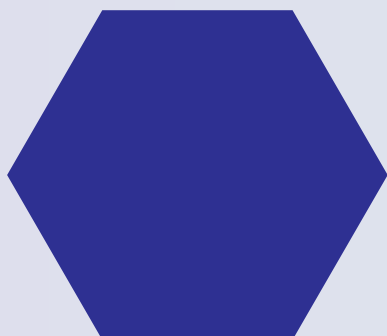
ALL	Adult Literacy for Life
AHEAD	Non-profit organisation working to create inclusive environments in education and employment for people with disabilities.
AONTAS	Irish National Adult Learning Organisation
CEF	Community Education Facilitator
CEFA	Community Education Facilitators Association
CID	Contracts of Indefinite Duration (CID)
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
DRCD	Department of Rural and Community Development
ETB	Education and Training Board
ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ESF	European Social Fund
FET	Further Education and Training
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
KEATS	Key skills/English speakers of other languages/ Access courses to other FET/Thematic learning/ Social Inclusion
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex
MAEDF	Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage Fund
NALA	National Adult Literacy Agency
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
PLD	Professional Learning and Development
PLSS	Programme Learner Support System
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RLC	Regional Literacy Coordinators
SOLAS	The Further Education and Training Authority
SPA(s)	Strategic Performance Agreement(s)
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
VEC	Vocational Education Committee (now Education and Training Board)

Consultation and Development Process

Thank you to all of those who played a vital role in the consultation and development process for the Community Education Framework.

General
Age and Opportunity
AONTAS
An Cosan
Community Training & Education Centre Wexford
Development Perspective
Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
Dublin Adult Learning Centre
Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)
Exchange House
IACTO
Limerick Community Education Network
Longford Women's Link
Maynooth University
Meath Partnership
Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Social and Health Education Project CLG
SOLAS
Southwest Employment Education & Training Services
The Acorn Project
Women's Collective Ireland
Waterford Institute of Technology
Education and Training Boards (ETBs)
Cavan & Monaghan Education & Training Board
Cork Education and Training Board
City of Dublin Education & Training Board

Donegal Education & Training Board
Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education & Training Board
Galway and Roscommon Education & Training Board
Kerry Education & Training Board
Kildare and Wicklow Education & Training Board
Kilkenny and Carlow Education & Training Board
Laois and Offaly Education & Training Board
Limerick and Clare Education & Training Board
Longford and Westmeath Education & Training Board
Louth and Meath Education & Training Board
Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education & Training Board
Tipperary Education & Training Board
Waterford and Wexford Education & Training Board
Special thanks to:
Dearbháil Lawless, AONTAS
Ciarán Lynch, Cork ETB
Yvonne McCarthy, City of Dublin ETB
Caoimhe Kerins, City of Dublin ETB
Deirdre Kelly, Department of Rural and Community Development
Stacey Cannon, DFHERIS replaced by Susan McNamara DFHERIS
Fergus Craddock, ETBI
Joseph Collins, ETBI
Bolger, Martha, Kilkenny and Carlow ETB
Fran Kennedy, Waterford and Wexford ETB
Lindsay Malone, Waterford and Wexford ETB







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