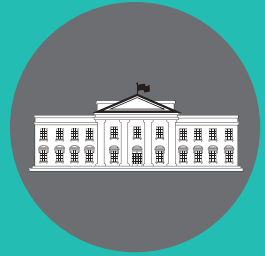


# AONTAS Election Priorities 2020

**Appoint a Minister of State for Adult, Community,  
and Further Education and Training**



**Listen to learners and providers about the need  
for financial assistance**



**Recognise and resource lifelong learning to improve  
social, civic, environmental, and economic  
sustainability**



**Support a thriving community education sector**



# AONTAS Election Priorities 2020

Lifelong learning has a role in achieving social, civic, environmental and economic sustainability. It encourages community cohesion and civic engagement. We want all adults to achieve their educational aspirations through an equitable lifelong learning system. The purpose of lifelong learning is broad: learning to be, learning to know, learning to do, and learning to live together. Never has there been a more crucial time for adult learning.

Educational inequalities persist – only 4.4% of adults who left school early participate in lifelong learning (Eurostat, 2018), compared to the national average of 12.5%. To address inequalities, we need to prioritise adult learning in Election 2020; offer financial supports for adult to make learning a reality; and support community education.

## Appoint a Minister of State for Adult, Community, and Further Education and Training

**ASK: Appoint a Minister of State for Adult, Community, and Further Education and Training.**

AONTAS highlights the following priorities for Election 2020 so that Ireland can create a more inclusive society. We recommend that this Minister of State replace the current role of Minister of State for Training Skills, Innovation, Research and Development.

Ireland and the world is undergoing rapid social, economic and technological change. To ensure equal success for everyone in Ireland, education must meet the needs of all learners. There is no one-size-fits-all for engaging adults in education. Multiple options for engaging with education must be available. Naming a Minister of State for Adult, Community, and Further Education and Training matters when developing the mandate and priorities of the next Government.

## Listen to learners and providers about the need for financial assistance

**ASK: Make financial support available to all learners participating in adult, community, and further education and training**

Whether participating in full or part-time education, learners should be able to participate without going into poverty.

AONTAS has heard from thousands of learners and providers about the supports they know would help learners succeed in education. First among these is access to financial assistance that covers the true cost of participating in education (e.g. childcare, transportation, necessary technology, uniforms etc).

## Recognise and resource lifelong learning to improve social, civic, environmental, and economic sustainability

**ASK: Ringfence funding for accredited and non-accredited adult learning that supports social, civic, environmental and economic sustainability**

Commit to an adult, community, and further education and training system that offers a range of accredited and non-accredited learning opportunities that best suit learners' needs and aspirations. Ireland would benefit greatly from formally recognising the broad role that lifelong learning can play.

## Support a thriving community education sector

**ASK: Increase funding for SOLAS funded community education by €5 million annually with a specific designated budget for quality assurance and QQI reengagement. Follow this increase with a commitment that all future funding for community education covers the true cost of provision including overheads like tutor hours, building and rental costs, administration etc.**

The underfunding of community education was recognised by the Joint Committee on Education and Skills in 2019 in the report *Education inequality & disadvantage and Barriers to Education*. To create a thriving sector the Report recommended that community education deserves parity of esteem with other sectors in the formal education system and that funding for community education should be increased in future budgets.