



# Strategic Plan

## 2023-2026

*Leading  
Collective  
Action for  
Social  
Change*



The background is a light teal color. It features a large, dark teal triangle pointing upwards, which is centered horizontally. A dark teal horizontal bar is positioned at the bottom of the page, extending from the left edge to the right edge of the large triangle's base.

**Our Strategic  
Plan for 2023 to  
2026 sets out the  
changes we want to  
see in the coming years,  
and how we will work to  
make these changes happen.**

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# Foreword from Chairperson and CEO

**Our new strategic plan – “Leading Collective Action for Social Change” (2023-2026) – sees AONTAS move into a stronger advocacy and campaigning space, becoming more politically outspoken and responsive to social justice issues.**

We know that education is central to achieving equality in our society, and that adult and community education offers opportunities for people who are from under-resourced communities and have been marginalised by existing systems and structures.

With our reputation as a leading voice in this sector and with key Government representatives and stakeholders, we feel that now is the time to speak out strongly in calling for change and for every person in Ireland to be equally supported and included in our education system.

Since our last strategic plan – “A Vision for Educational Equality” (2019-2022) – things have changed in the adult and community education sector in Ireland and across Europe. As a society, we have been dealing

with major challenges, and this sector has been on the front lines. We have had the COVID-19 Pandemic; a worsening housing crisis; rises in the cost of living; increases in violence and aggression against women; the damaging influence of social media; the mounting climate crisis; an escalating digital divide and challenges associated with technological advancement; and the growing movement towards racism and threats to democracy.

This is made worse by existing barriers, which prevent people from staying in education. These include a lack of accessible and affordable childcare, reliable and regular public transport, mental health supports and counselling for learners, and financial supports to facilitate people to leave low-paid jobs and return to education.



Those working in the adult and community education sector have sought to adapt to these challenges, often with very little funding and recognition for the pivotal role they play in local communities.

A core focus is to ensure that our members and those working in the adult and community education sector are represented at high-level Government and policymaking discussions.

Another core focus is to ensure the experiences and recommendations of adult learners are brought to the attention of policymakers and elected officials, because learners are the experts in what needs to change for a more effective education system.

“Leading Collective Action for Social Change” is based in the understanding that adult learning has proven benefits for the personal and professional development and wellbeing of individuals, communities, and society.

However, existing social inequalities prevent people from participating in adult learning. In turn, this means that people are not aware of or are not being afforded the chance to reach their learning potential.

This has an impact on the wider community and

means that disadvantage and social exclusion are perpetuated.

Our 2023-2026 strategy is about AONTAS driving social change from a social equality perspective. This requires collective action to empower communities and wider society, not just the individual. It is about enabling the whole community to grow and flourish together. It is human-centred and rights-based. It encourages a society that respects and values all people, all learning types, and all learning journeys across the island of Ireland.

There are three key pillars to this new strategic plan: Connect and Engage the Sector to Enable Change; Advocate for Change; and Empower the Change. Change is central here, and we are stepping into a stronger activist role that is more politically outspoken and determinedly seeking the change that our society needs to really see educational equality.

With this strategic plan, we will be a catalyst for change in the adult and community education sector and Irish society.

**Dearbháil Lawless,**  
*AONTAS CEO*

**John D’Arcy,**  
*AONTAS Chairperson*





# About AONTAS

**AONTAS are the National Adult Learning Organisation of Ireland, founded in 1969 and passionately working ever since to make education equal and accessible for all. Backed by our robust research and focused community work, we advocate and lobby for quality education for all adults, and raise awareness of the impact of adult learning on people's lives and on society. We work on behalf our members, who connect with all communities across the island of Ireland. Our members and adult learners inform all our research and campaigns for social change.**

As part of our new strategic plan, we updated our Vision and Mission. These set out what kind of world we want to see (our Vision), and the part we can play in achieving this (our Mission). All our work ties back to achieving our ultimate goal of equal access to quality, lifelong education for all.

We bring people together and empower those working in adult and community education to advocate for themselves and their communities. With our members' concerns as our focus, we advocate for change at high-level meetings and steering groups with Government, policymakers, and funders. We enable others with capacity-building and professional development. We conduct evidence-based research to develop and share new insights and findings into adult and community education. This is the basis of our calls for policy change. We prioritise learners and Learner Voice, facilitating and supporting learners to represent themselves and their communities directly with policymakers.

Key impacts and achievements in recent years have been the [Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage Fund](#) (MAED Fund), first successfully advocated for by AONTAS as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and since fully integrated into the education funding system as the "[Reach Fund](#)". Another significant impact has been the mainstreaming of [Learner](#)

[Voice](#) as a central part of our education system in Ireland. This ranges from organisation of courses and structures around programmes by Education and Training Boards, to event planning by SOLAS and others in the adult and community education sector.

We have been an influential voice for the adult and community education sector in significant policy changes from the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation, and Science. This includes the establishment of [joint courses between further and higher education](#) – providing more flexibility for learners across the country – and a move towards [more part-time options](#) for learners (though there is more work to be done on this).

We will continue to work with and on behalf of our members and those in the adult and community education sector, and adult learners, to make adult learning a realistic option for everyone across the country.



# Vision and Mission



The vision of AONTAS is a world where the pursuit of learning for all adults is valued, equal, and strengthens communities.



Our mission is to advocate for empowering adult learning that drives social equality, justice, and collective action across the island of Ireland.



Our work is informed by the experience and needs of our members. These are learners, individuals and organisations who are committed to the principles of adult learning and its transformative power.

# AONTAS

## Key Work Areas

### Learner Voice and AONTAS Research

Learner Voice is at the heart of AONTAS' work. It is a concept in education that means that learners should have a say in decisions about their own education. It means that those who learn, not just those who teach, should influence the educational experience.

We conduct evidence-based research with thousands of adult learners across the country, to gather their experiences and perspectives on what is working well and what needs to change in adult and community education. This is done through the National Further Education and Training (FET) Learner Forum, a series of events taking place across Ireland which facilitate adult learners to share their experiences of learning. This

is the basis of our advocacy work and is used to ensure policy responds to the needs of the learners.

Since its launch, the Forum has reached thousands of learners. The project consists of one national event and a series of regional events held with Education and Training Boards across Ireland each year. We are here to listen to the voices of adult learners from across Ireland. We share the experiences of adult learners with SOLAS and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation, and Science. This means change happens from the ground up. [Find out more about the Forum and our research here.](#)

### Adult Learner Journal

[The Irish Journal of Adult and Community Education: \*The Adult Learner\*](#) is a valuable resource that documents the development of adult learning policy and practice. It provides a forum for critical reflection on the practices of teaching and learning, giving priority to subject matter that addresses social exclusion, equality, workplace learning and the study of the teacher-student relationship.

Throughout the course of this strategic plan, we will ensure that the Journal remains a source of reliable, critical, peer-reviewed research and information on new ideas and developments in adult and community education both in Ireland and internationally. We will seek to ensure the journal is both of high quality and also a source of accessible information.







It will be a place to identify key issues, trends, and gaps within the adult and community education sector, and can be used to inform people working in or interested in the sector, as well as policymakers, learners, and the general public.

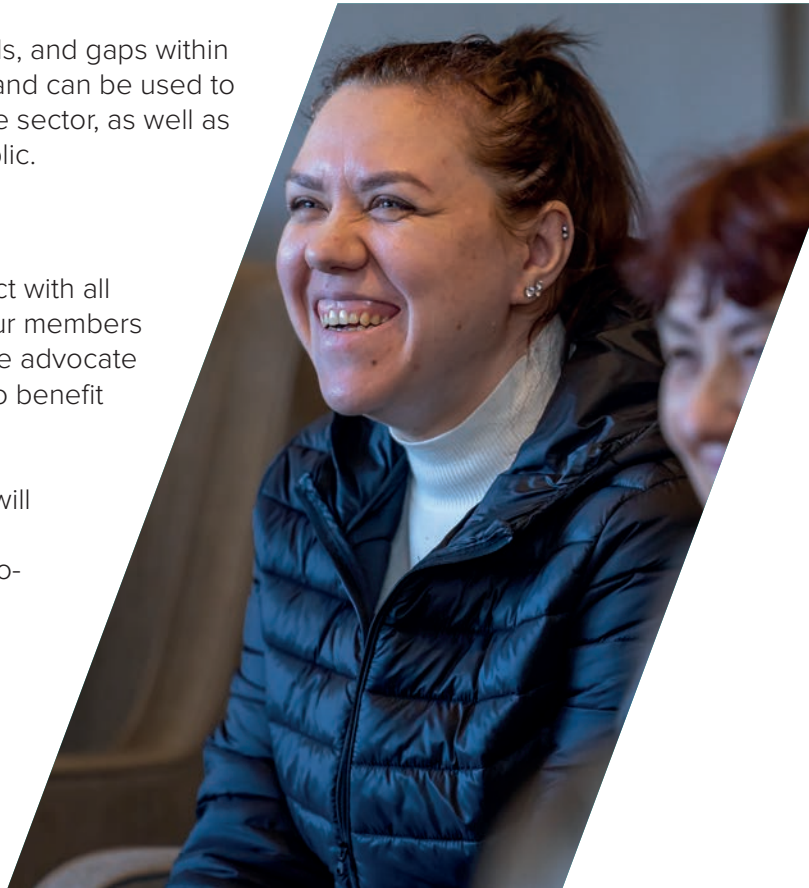
## Our Membership

We have hundreds of members who connect with all communities across the island of Ireland. Our members inform all our research and campaigns as we advocate for policy change in our education system to benefit everyone.

At the outset of this new strategic plan, we will complete a review of our membership and ensure all information and contacts are up-to-date, which also involves reviewing how we contact members and what the benefits are of their membership with AONTAS. We will offer capacity-building and information-sharing opportunities for our members. We will share opportunities for funding and activities in the sector through our regular member newsletters. We are also developing a new AONTAS Membership Hub, which will be an online space for our members to connect on everything related to adult education on the island of Ireland. Members will be able to join discussions, download exclusive resources, and post updates to others. [Find out more about our membership.](#)

“

Our members inform all our research and campaigns as we advocate for policy change in our education system to benefit everyone.



# Learner Spotlight

## Petey Smith

Petey Smith is a learner with the Social Therapeutic Horticulture Programme, an initiative that supports people on their addiction recovery journeys. Petey lost his brother and friends to addiction. He credits adult learning for saving his life.



“

“I thought I would have been dead at the age of 25 over drugs. This place saved my life, it helped me learn to live without addiction.

Especially as someone with ADHD this is an outlet and gives me something physical to do. I thought this place would never do a thing like this for me but it's just wonderful”

## Community Education

Community Education is a core focus for AONTAS. We support people who provide all types of learning in local communities across the country, based on a model of social justice which prioritises the furthest behind in our education system.

Our [Community Education Network](#) has over 100 members. We co-ordinate regular meetings of the network to discuss issues coming up for community education practitioners and learners. We offer resources and a place to connect and share ideas. We are a direct link with educators in local communities across the island, who would otherwise remain unheard. We're seeking to expand opportunities for capacity-building for the CEN, including connecting with and learning from our adult learning colleagues across Europe in order to improve community education in Ireland.

We are continuing to build our connections with those working in adult and community education in Northern Ireland, building on the evidence-based research and insights provided by our [NI Community Education Census](#). We will seek to strengthen the capacity of adult learning groups in Northern Ireland to advocate for change, as well as continue to bring people together to facilitate the sharing of ideas and resources.

We are also developing a new Community Education Map, which will be a resource for everyone working or interested in community education in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

There is fantastic and essential work happening in local communities all across Ireland, and this map will be a new space for collective visibility and connection.



## Capacity Building

We will seek to create networking opportunities for sharing best practice and learning. We will conduct research and collect and analyse data to identify key issues, trends, and gaps within the education sector to inform evidence-based recommendations and enhance capacity-building efforts.

We will facilitate collaboration among different stakeholders in the sector, including government bodies, adult and community education providers, and non-profit organisations.

We will deliver training initiatives, workshops, and information sessions on relevant topics for learners. We will design and deliver professional development programs for members, educators, trainers, and administrators within the sector (for example to enhance teaching methods and learner-centred approaches, incorporating technology in adult learning).

We will develop educational resources, toolkits, and guidelines to support educators in their professional growth. We will identify and collaborate with key stakeholders to develop socially-inclusive policies and frameworks.

## Community Education Spotlight Sinead Mahon Women's Collective Ireland – Ronanstown

Sinead Mahon is the coordinator of the Ronanstown Women's Collective in Ireland, where she leads efforts to empower women through community education. She creates opportunities for women to build confidence, develop skills, and grow within a supportive environment. Adult learning is a social justice movement.

“

We believe women's community education is a catalyst for change”



## EU Projects

We seek to make a difference in global challenges like climate change, the digital divide, and threats to democracy. [European projects](#) also offer great opportunities for capacity building for people working in the adult and community education sector in Ireland.

We are involved in a number of European projects, supporting our members with their work in adult and community education, and promoting access to and participation in lifelong learning in Ireland and across Europe.

We will work with key stakeholders in adult learning across Europe to strengthen awareness of adult learning and its positive impacts, but also to increase opportunities for AONTAS members in Ireland to engage and connect with our European colleagues and bring knowledge and ideas to bear on their work in adult and community education in Ireland.

## Advocacy

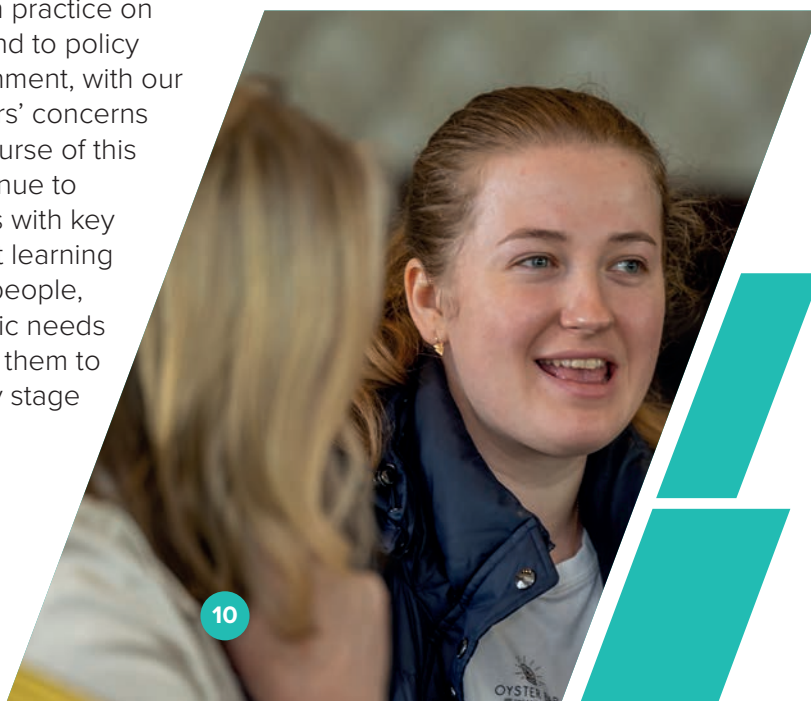
We have built strong relationships with national policymakers and decision-makers across Ireland and, using our research and feedback from our membership, we are a strong advocate for improvements in adult and community education policy nationally and across Europe. We act as a link between national policy and what happens in practice on the ground. We also respond to policy developments from Government, with our members' and adult learners' concerns in mind. Throughout the course of this strategic plan, we will continue to build effective relationships with key policymakers to make adult learning a more realistic option for people, and so that everyone's basic needs are met in order to facilitate them to engage in education at any stage of their lives.

We do this work through policy submissions to the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation, and Science, SOLAS, and other decisionmakers. These submissions are calls for policy change or action, which are informed by our research with adult learners and by our members.

We are also involved in approximately 30 steering groups and committees, and continue to influence discussions relating to adult and community education and work to ensure that the people who are most marginalised and under-resourced in our society are prioritised.

With this new strategic plan, we are moving into a more campaigning space, and acting as a “catalyst for change” in Irish society. We want to see a just and equal society in the coming years. We know increasing engagement in adult and community education is a solution to many of the social problems and challenges we are seeing, including issues with social cohesion and mental health.

Our advocacy and campaigning will focus on the need for increased financial supports for adult learners, and on the need for stable and sustainable funding for community education. We will launch national campaigns on these issues throughout the course of this strategic plan.





## Community Education Spotlight Gerry Callaghan

### New Horizon Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support



Gerry Callaghan is chairperson of New Horizon Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support in Athlone. They work to help displaced people integrate into the community. Starting with small activities for children, New Horizon now offers a wide range of programmes, including English classes and arts projects.

“

Community education provides a very important entry point for many people seeking sanctuary. It is vital in supporting our migrant community in personal development, boosting confidence and self-esteem, and helping integration into the local community”

## Campaigns

In order to build the profile of AONTAS and expand our reach outside of the adult learning sector, we will create new multi-media campaigns that highlight the benefits of adult learning to the general public. These direct-action campaigns will target social inequality to influence policy and funding. Specifically, we will run a national campaign on identifying the key barriers to social inclusion in adult learning.

We will also conduct yearly engagement campaigns with adult learners and or adult learning providers to



ensure the voices of underrepresented communities are integral to all AONTAS advocacy, research, and communications.

We will publicly showcase examples of how adult and community education can and does address social inequalities. We will use our campaigns to advocate for diverse models of learning and the social inclusion of underrepresented communities in the new Unified Tertiary Education system.

Our communications campaigns and activities – including [events](#), [articles](#) and [publications](#), public relations, interviews

and speaking engagements, and social media among others – reach millions of people every year. We will make our public campaigns more effective through creating impact frameworks and measuring the success of our work over time.

We will continue to bring people together through large-scale events such as the adult education summit and the annual [Adult Learners' Festival](#).

Our priority is to build collective action for social change – and for AONTAS to be the catalyst for that change.

## Learner Spotlight

# Blessing Chidiogo

After beginning her course, Blessing Chidiogo became a dedicated member of the Tipperary Student Council. She was encouraged to join by her FET Centre and use her voice to advocate for other learners. Driven by a desire to make a difference, they have already made improvements in issues such as transportation and work placements.



“

The manager in my FET Centre brought it up with us in class, saying that it was a good platform and she encouraged us to participate in it as it gives learners a voice; to let them know what we need, and what needs to be improved. I'm enjoying being a part of it.”

# Strategic Planning Process and Findings

**Our strategic planning process was facilitated by Mantra Strategy, who used an appreciative inquiry approach. This strengths-based model explored the best in the organisation and its people, focusing on successes, challenges, and opportunities. The process unfolded in five key stages, each building on the previous one to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive strategy development.**

## 1. Define

The first stage focused on clarifying and defining the strategy's parameters. This involved assessing our current position, mapping out the schedule, and identifying key stakeholders. It set the foundation for a structured and focused strategic planning process.

Social, Technological) analysis provided a broader view of the adult and community education landscape nationally and internationally. An intensive stakeholder engagement process – including interviews, group discussions, and workshops with various stakeholders – was a key part of this stage.

## 2. Discover

This stage involved deep research and analysis. Mantra Strategy reviewed our internal documents, past strategies, funding, budgets, campaigns, programmes, successes, and challenges. A thorough SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) and PEST (Political, Economic,

## 3. Dream

In this stage, we explored future possibilities and opportunities for us. Mantra Strategy worked with key stakeholders to review and refine the Vision and Mission statements. This collaboration aimed to guide us towards a future aligned with our core values and ambitions.







#### 4. Design

This stage brought together all the research, insights, and explorations into a clear strategy. We combined the data and feedback to develop a focused plan for us, turning ideas into actionable steps.

#### 5. Delivery

The final stage was presenting the new high-level strategy for us. This document outlined the strategic vision, mission, and key pillars to guide us into our next phase of development.

#### Internal Review

The internal review highlighted our extensive reach and impact, with significant media presence and engagement in national and European projects. However, it also noted the challenges related to brand awareness outside the immediate sector, funding constraints, and the need for better prioritisation of workload.

The vision and mission statements were identified as needing revision to better

reflect our role and aspirations. The new vision and mission statements were crafted to emphasise our commitment to social equality, justice, and collective action in adult learning.

#### Stakeholder Engagement

The extensive stakeholder engagement process involved nearly 200 individuals, including one-on-one interviews, workshops, and group sessions. This process uncovered several recurring themes and pain points for our members, such as staffing issues, substandard learning environments, persistent barriers to education, communication gaps, challenges in measuring impact, and funding difficulties.

Stakeholders expressed a strong belief in the importance of our role in addressing social equality issues and driving meaningful change in adult learning. The feedback gathered during this process was instrumental in shaping the strategic direction and priorities for us.



## Our Goals

Based on the insights from the internal review and stakeholder engagement, our new strategic plan focuses on three key pillars:

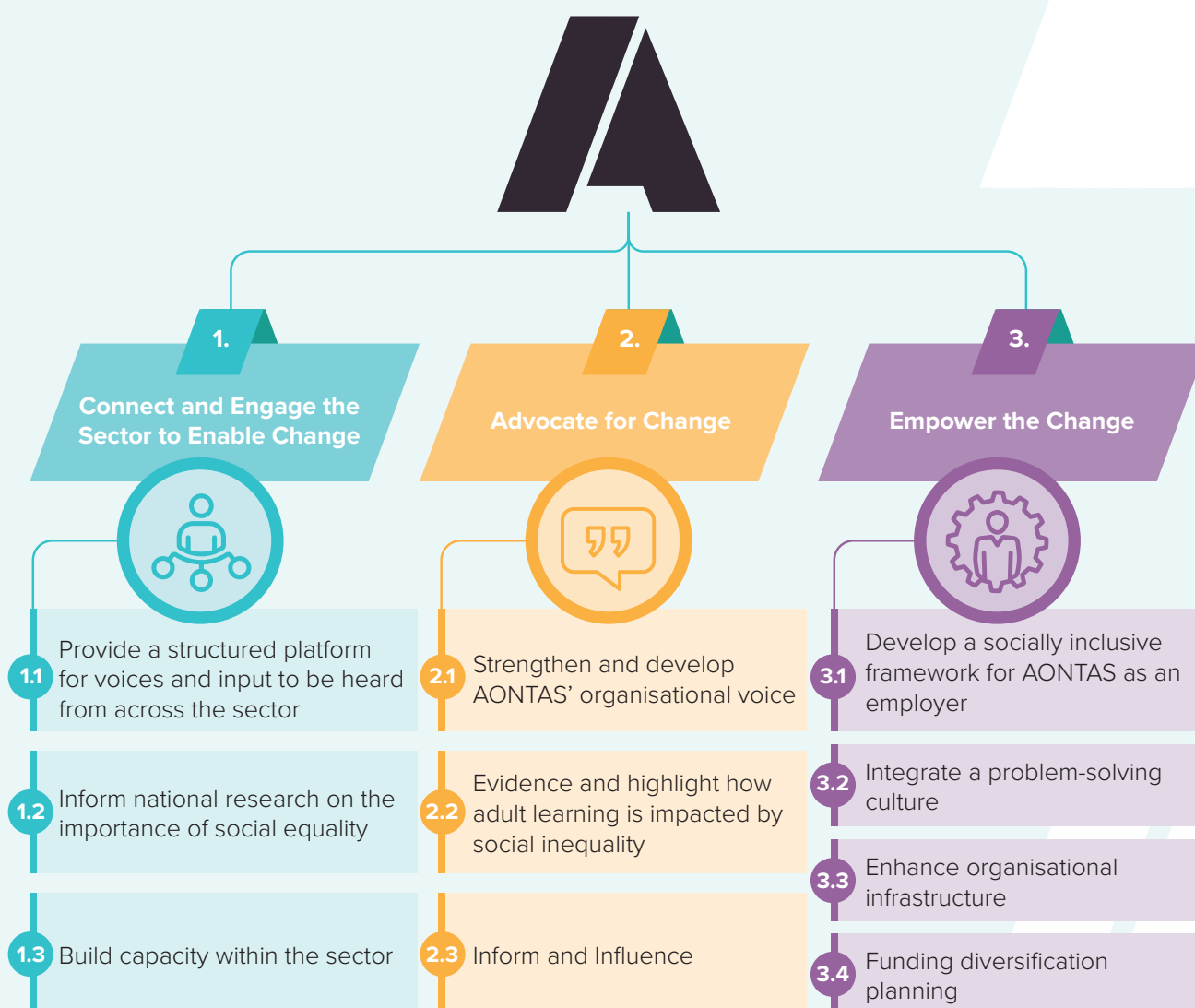
**1. Connect and Engage the Sector to Enable Change**

**2. Advocate for Change**

**3. Empower the Change**

This new strategic approach involves changes in activities, messaging, and tone. We will adopt a more campaigning and activist stance, with a stronger focus on questioning and challenging the status quo. This shift will require alignment of our people, communications, and funding strategies to support the realisation of the new vision.

This strategic plan sets a clear direction for AONTAS. Our work is and will be a catalyst for change in the adult learning sector.





## Connect and Engage the Sector to Enable Change

AONTAS have been working to support adult education for over fifty years. We are highly experienced in bringing people and organisations from across the adult and community education sector together. This goal is all about improving social equality by creating a space for collective action.

1.1

### Provide a structured platform for voices and input to be heard from across the sector

- Grow and develop the solidarity, remit, and representation of the [Community Education Network](#) across the island of Ireland
- Review and expand the [membership benefits](#) for AONTAS
- Increase the number of formal opportunities and methods for members to input on policy
- Facilitate working groups and task forces to focus on specific areas or issues within the sector. These groups bring together relevant stakeholders, including learners, to collaborate, share expertise, and provide input on policy development, program design, and quality assurance
- Create an interactive map of Community Education
- Ensure [Learner Voice](#) is an integral part of all policy and provision in Ireland, using research, advocacy and representation working in partnership across the sector, through working with Government for adult education legislation, and working with organisations like the Irish Research Council (IRC) and the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI).
- Further develop and strengthen our peer-reviewed [Adult Learner Journal](#)
- Continue to promote Learner Voice on social media
- Develop [accredited Learner Voice training](#).

### How?

- Welcome 75 new members, including 10 from Northern Ireland, expanding our reach and network
- Showcase 300 organisations on our Community Education Map, with the option for others to add their organisation directly to the map
- Support 900 beneficiaries through our membership, offering access to a new Membership Hub, partnership grants, opportunities via European projects, as well as capacity building and learning resources.

## 1.2 Inform national research on the importance of social equality

- Run a national campaign to seek input on identifying the key barriers to social inclusion in adult learning
- Develop a structure to collect case studies of learner and member issues on an ongoing basis
- Publicly showcase examples of how adult and community education can and does address social inequalities
- Collaborate with others in the sector to create an evidence-base on the voices and experiences of adult learners in Further Education and Training (FET)
- Conduct regular focus groups and surveys with a cross-section of learners and providers to maximise input and brainstorm on emerging research or policy insights
- Present findings at key research forums and events to influence national understanding.

### How?

- Engage 7,500 participants through the [National FET Learner Forum](#)
- Involve 150 organisations in the Community Education State of the Art Report and the NI Community Education Census
- Gather 30 individual learner stories, and compile 3 best practice guides as resources
- Run 3 targeted community education campaigns, supported by 15 educational and promotional videos, organise events featuring 25 learner speakers, and publish 20 blog posts to raise awareness, share knowledge, and inspire broader engagement
- Develop and implement a research redesign framework to improve the effectiveness and relevance of the Learner Forum
- To represent learner interests in broader education discussions, present findings at 4 key research events to raise the profile of community education, collaborate with 5 higher education institutions, and engage with organisations like SRI, IBEC, and trade unions.

### 1.3 Build capacity within the sector

- Create networking opportunities for sharing best practice and learning
- Conduct research and collect and analyse data to identify key issues, trends, and gaps within the education sector to inform evidence-based recommendations to enhance capacity building efforts
- Facilitate collaboration among different stakeholders in the sector, including Government bodies, adult learning and education providers, and non-profit organisations
- Deliver training initiatives, workshops, and information sessions on relevant topics for learners
- Design and deliver professional development programs for members, educators, trainers, and administrators in the sector (for example, to enhance teaching methods and learner-centred approaches, incorporating technology in adult learning)
- Develop educational resources, toolkits, and guidelines to support educators in their professional growth
- Identify and collaborate with key stakeholders to develop socially-inclusive policies and frameworks.

### How?

- Host 12 webinars, conduct 12 Community Education Network (CEN) meetings
- Develop a Members' Hub
- Organise an annual festival featuring 500 organisations and events to enhance engagement, provide resources, and promote community education
- Implement capacity-building initiatives, promote the [Learners as Leaders](#) programme, support learner councils, provide facilitator training, and host additional webinars to advance skills and organisational engagement
- Send 36 direct emails and 40 CEN emails to enhance communication and keep stakeholders informed
- Hold Annual General Meetings (AGM) to engage and update stakeholders
- To support community education initiatives, engage with representative groups and collaborate with CEN and Communities of Practice, manage partnership projects with AHEAD and all ETBs, and coordinate with 5 national organisations and 3 Government departments.





## Advocate for Change

As an established advocacy-based organisation, this objective allows us to redefine our advocacy goals to challenge and address social inequality in the context of adult learning, particularly in a time of sectoral change with the new Unified Tertiary Education system.

### 2.1 Strengthen and develop AONTAS' organisational voice

- Develop an advocacy strategy that is supported by an integrated communications plan and approach
- Develop the key messaging and tone required that supports our journey in being a Catalyst for Change
- Build our profile and expand our reach outside the adult learning sector
- Create new multi-media campaigns that highlight the benefits of adult learning
- Enhance team skills in areas such as public speaking and media engagement to enable more of the team to effectively represent the organisation's voice and articulate its messages
- Collaborate with members to prioritise changes required within the sector and establish a clear impact strategy by hosting webinars to follow up on issues with key stakeholders
- Develop targets and impact metrics for our advocacy work.

### How?

- Establish key deliverables and stakeholders for our Advocacy Strategy. Key stakeholders to include the European Commission; the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation, and Science; Quality and Qualifications Ireland; Education and Training Boards Ireland; and other Government departments such as Social Protection
- As part of our Advocacy Strategy, establish an advisory group for engagement on advocacy issues
- Ensure Learner Voice is central to our Advocacy Strategy, and facilitate learner representation to key stakeholders
- Expand our reach by developing one-pagers on key issues or standpoints, with the goal of connecting with broader societal developments and activities that are related to (but not necessarily in) adult education
- Develop annual Impact Reports to demonstrate our effectiveness as an advocacy organisation and how we are being a catalyst for change
- Run 8 advertising campaigns, including 20 radio interviews and feature pieces, use of our digital channels, and engagement with podcasts. Publish articles in national newspapers and widely-read publications.

- Develop and exhibit adult learning stories to showcase the impact of adult and community education
- Conduct yearly engagement campaigns with adult learners and/or adult learning providers to ensure the voices of underrepresented communities are integral to all our advocacy, research, and communications activities
- Diversify and expand content creation to maximise inclusivity and reach, and to increase public awareness of AONTAS.
- Build relationships with key stakeholders to strengthen our reach and impact by updating and refreshing the existing map of our stakeholders, and facilitating our staff team to speak at events both in Ireland and across Europe
- Advocate for diverse models of learning and the social inclusion of underrepresented communities in the new Unified Tertiary Education model.

## How?

- Run 4 [Learners As Leaders programmes](#) to engage with adult learners across Ireland, specifically with underrepresented groups, and integrate this with our advocacy and campaigning activities
- Define specific groups for our representational work so that we are engaging with and enacting change for underrepresented groups in a targeted way
- Based on the Stakeholder Map, holding 25 meetings with key stakeholders
- Use our annual [policy event](#) as part of the Adult Learners' Festival to engage with key stakeholders, showcase learners stories, and advocate for diverse models of learning





### 2.3 Strengthen and develop AONTAS' organisational voice

- Prioritise the asks of key stakeholders that will enable change, with an accompanying action and tracking plan for each ask
- Take a proactive role in the implementation and review of the Unified Tertiary Education System in Ireland, ensuring it is inclusive for all adult learners
- Lead on distilling important information to and from Government departments and adult learning providers in a timely and inclusive way

#### How?

- As part of our Advocacy Strategy, map out key areas to effect change for members, learners, and the adult and community education sector and, based on these, establish 3 key asks, lobby for them, and track our progress and impact
- Develop key measurement tools to track progress on policy influence (e.g. monitoring and evaluation, engagement metrics, policy impact assessments, public and media perceptions, collaboration building metrics, policy adoption and implementation, focus groups and surveys)
- Develop, publish, and disseminate policy papers based on our advocacy activities
- Develop direct-action campaigns to target social inequality and influence policy and funding.



## Empower the Change

We recognise that to achieve our mission, we must be a supportive environment that champions professional development and encourages innovation and new ideas.

### 3.1 Develop a socially inclusive framework for AONTAS as an employer

- Create a people development programme
- Map roles and responsibilities to ensure clarity for the staff team
- Continue to build an environment of trust that encourages challenge at all levels
- Create and implement a decision-making matrix.

#### How?

- Focus on CPD and a workplan aimed at growth and impact within our people development programme
- Map roles and responsibilities, define these through job specification updates, and implement a change process
- Provide updates from leads meetings, conduct “Townhall” sessions (3 per year), implement a new Support and Supervision (S&S) form every six weeks, and hold morning meetings to bring the team together
- Use a decision-making matrix to guide and streamline decisions.



### 3.2 Integrate a Problem-Solving Culture

- Ensure dedicated thinking and reflection time on the issues that contribute to social inequality
- Facilitate regular team brainstorming using various approaches (e.g. design thinking)
- Develop impact measurement infrastructure.

#### How?

- Create a staff library to support ongoing learning and resource sharing, including occasionally themed morning meetings focused on specific language or issue topics
- Engage with external events to broaden perspectives and integrate new ideas
- Implement Cantor strategies by 2024 and design thinking by 2025 to enhance problem-solving and strategic thinking, while continuously advancing CPD to align with growth and impact goals
- Develop and publish an impact report to evaluate outcomes and effectiveness, and conduct regular staff impact conversations to assess progress.

### 3.3 Enhance organisational infrastructure

- Re-develop and integrate CRM system with an implementation plan for membership and communications
- Develop standardised operating procedures to support our work.

#### How?

- Leverage Salesforce for communications, provide staff training, and implement Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for high-level activities
- Develop a new cloud-based IT strategy and redesign the website.



- Explore Accelerator Programme and Social Enterprise opportunities
- Increase and redevelop membership base, offering, and revenue
- Consider social equality inclusion training opportunities for corporates
- Prospect potential strategic partnerships
- Scope and calendarise other funding opportunities.

## How?

- Conduct a needs analysis on social enterprise to identify opportunities and requirements
- Explore and secure funding to support the creation and development of a social enterprise
- Establish 3 new funding sources or partnerships to support campaigns, amplify learner voices, and organise events, with potential partners including government bodies, Rethink Ireland, and Community Foundation Ireland.



## Contact Us

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