

AONTAS Learners as Leaders 2026 Programme FAQs

This FAQ page provides key information about the Learners as Leaders 2026 programme. Browse the questions below to learn more about the application process, programme structure, and participant experience.

For any further information, membership inquiries, or questions, please contact Ruby at rcooney@aontas.com.

1. Who can apply for the Learners as Leaders programme?

The programme is open to adult learners who are connected to organisations that are members of the AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN). Applications must include details of the CEN member organisation.

2. Can I apply directly as a learner?

Yes. Learners can complete the application form themselves; however, they must include the contact details of a CEN member organisation that will support their participation in the programme.

3. What level of experience do I need?

You do not need previous leadership experience. The programme is designed to support learners at all levels who are interested in leadership, advocacy, or community action.

4. What is the time commitment?

The overall time commitment will vary depending on each learner's availability to participate and engage, the size and scope of the project they choose to develop, and their capacity to deliver it.

Key dates of the programme are as follows:

- **9 July 2026 (5:00 pm):** Application deadline
- **Mid-July 2026:** Selection process (organisation discussion and learner conversation)
- **29–30 July 2026:** Two-day residential training in Maynooth University
- **August–October 2026:** Project development and delivery, with ongoing support
- **Autumn 2026:** Final showcase at the AONTAS Adult Education Summit

Participants will also take part in two online sessions (before and after the residential training).

5. Are all costs covered?

Yes. Travel, accommodation, and meals for the residential training in Maynooth University are fully covered and organised by AONTAS.

6. What kind of project will I be expected to deliver?

Participants will design and deliver a small-scale initiative in their community or learning environment. Projects should reflect learners' interests and be manageable within their capacity.

Examples include:

- **Strengthening learner voice:** hosting a Learner Voice event, gathering feedback, creating a newsletter or resource, or engaging with decision-makers
- **Community action:** organising an event (e.g. clean-up, information session, awareness activity)
- **Creative approaches:** developing a campaign or creative project (e.g. art, storytelling, video)

All projects are supported throughout the programme and designed to be practical, achievable, and meaningful.

7. What support will I receive during the programme?

Participants will receive:

- In-person training workshops
- Online group support sessions
- Tools and resources
- Ongoing encouragement and check-ins from AONTAS

8. Do I need support from my organisation?

Yes. Your organisation plays an important role in supporting your participation, including providing encouragement and helping create time and space for your project where possible.

9. What happens after I apply?

After the closing date, AONTAS will review all applications. This will include:

- A discussion with the nominating organisation
- An informal conversation with the learner

10. How are participants selected?

Selection is based on:

- Learner interest and readiness
- The level of organisational support
- Ensuring a balance of participants from across different regions

11. Will I receive recognition for completing the programme?

Yes. Participants will receive a certificate of participation and will have the opportunity to present their project at the AONTAS Adult Education Summit.