Building a FET Research Network

Martha Bolger (Director of Further Education and Training, KCETB)

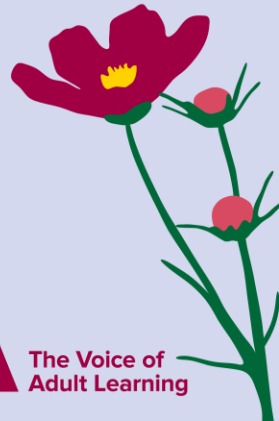
Eve Cobain (Senior Research Officer, AONTAS)



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Today's Workshop

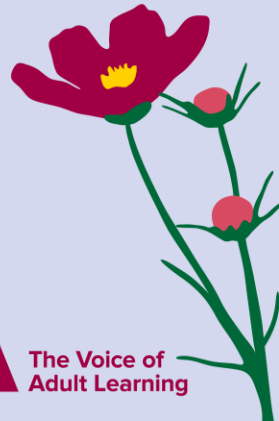
- **Introductions at tables (5 minutes)**
  - What interested you about this workshop? What are you hoping to take away?
- **Research Landscape & Strategies**
- **What kind of research is happening within FET? (10 minutes)**
  - Examples of research within KCETB and AONTAS
- **Group Discussion (35 minutes)**
  - How should we develop the network?
  - What do we want the future to look like?
- **Feedback from tables (5 minutes)**



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Introductions at tables (5 minutes)

- What interested you about this workshop?
- What are you hoping to take away?



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FET STRATEGY

Future-Ready Knowledge and Skills

- FET will excel in providing future-ready knowledge and skills that support priority enterprise sectors and drive innovation.
  - Advance research and development contribution through targeted training for technicians and support personnel (who account for 50% of research and development business headcount - CSO)
  - Provision, which will include short courses and micro-qualifications as well as longer courses and apprenticeships, will draw on up-to-date research on skills needs and forecasting
  - Align FET provision with the technology needs of employers, using co-design and drawing on up-to-date skills research and forecasting with a focus on AI, cybersecurity, and core digital skills.



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Quality with Innovation

- Establish coordination structures to drive capacity-building, development skillsets, use of existing research, and targeted research to ensure relevance and to avoid duplication in programme development regionally and nationally

Collaborating for Impact

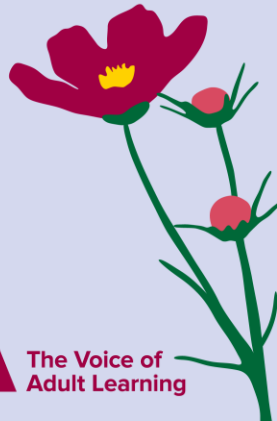
- Evaluate current industry partnerships and engagement as part of the Enterprise Connect initiative and supporting research.
- Develop targeted actions to expand EU and international partnerships, research, and engagement

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Tertiary Strategy

The Tertiary Education Strategy provides an opportunity to strengthen and support the further education and training, higher education, research and innovation system through the creation of a coherent vision and objectives.

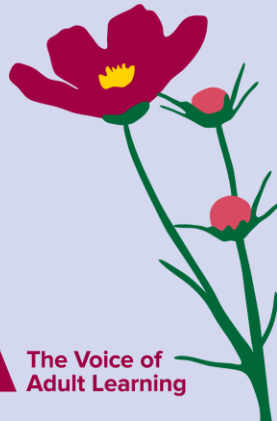
The Strategy emphasises continued support for high quality education, tailored research and engagement missions, improved curriculum design, digital and AI-enhanced innovation, staff development, targeted capital investment and sustainability



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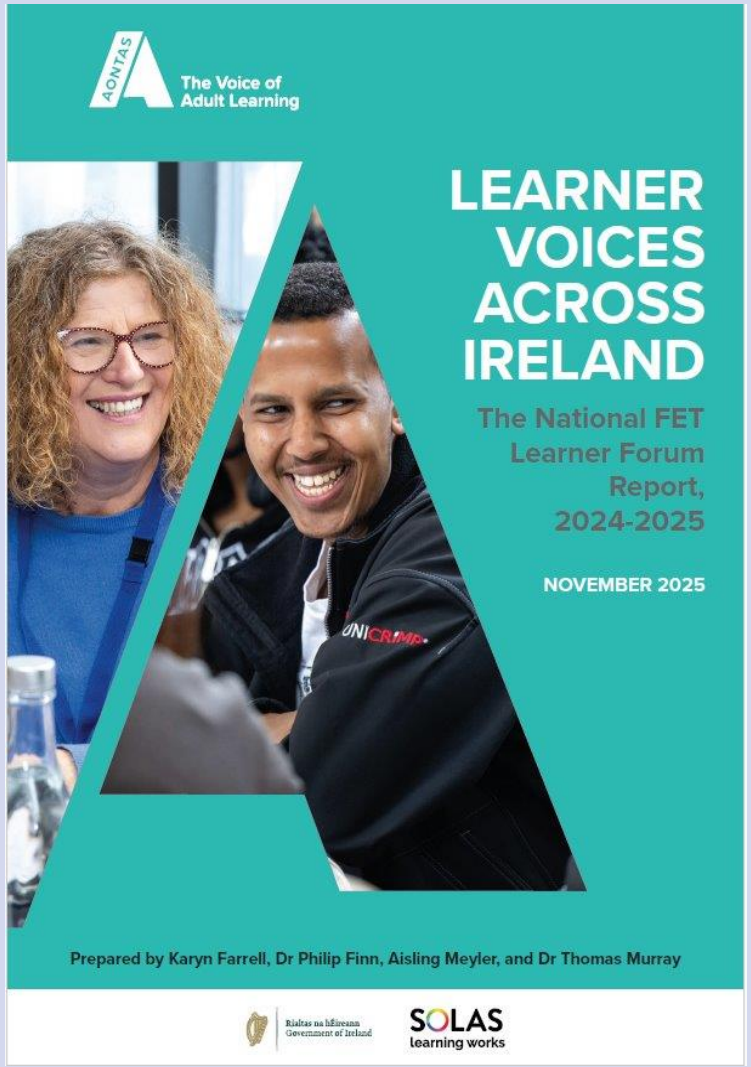
AONTAS Research

- We work across adult learning, community education, and Further Education and Training (FET) to build evidence, inform policy and practice, and strengthen the adult learning sector across the island of Ireland.
- Learner Voice is central to our work. Through collaboration with learners, members, practitioners, researchers, and partners, we gather evidence on the lived experience of adult learning and the impact of social inequality on access, participation, and progression.
- Our research supports advocacy, contributes to national and international discussions on lifelong learning, and helps ensure that adult learners' experiences are reflected in policy development and decision-making.



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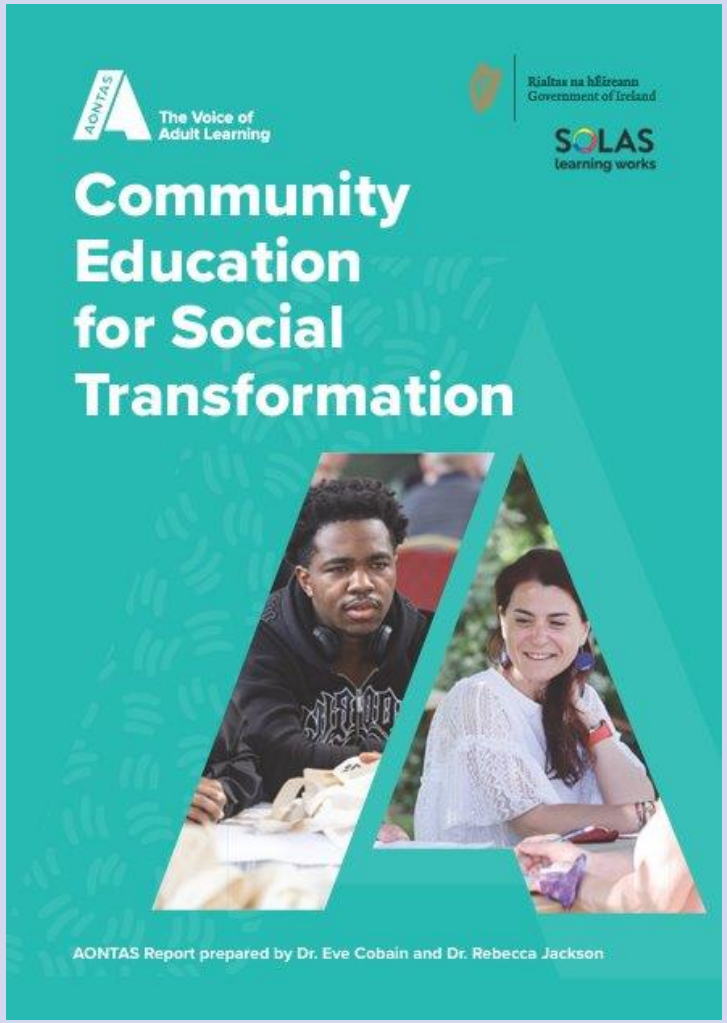
Learner Voices Across Ireland

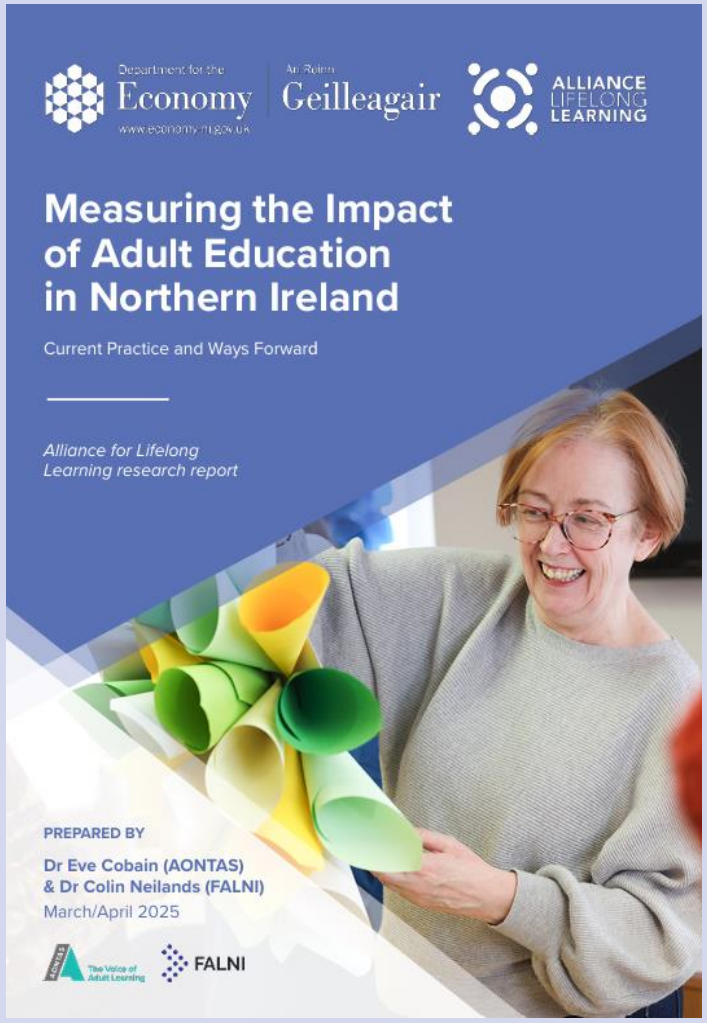


"They need to know our needs. If we're at the centre of it, they need to know what we want, what we decide"
(Adult Learner, NFLF)

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Community Education Research





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KCETB Research

- Stigma - **Adult Literacy for Life Research Project - ** Exploring perceptions and experience of unmet literacy needs among staff providing services to the public
- Lone Parents - A report undertaken by an LCDC Task Group, to identify the key needs, map the issues and service gaps for Lone Parents while engaging with lone parents in identifying all of these.

kcetb
Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna
Chill Chainnigh agus Cheatharlach
Kilkenny and Carlow
Education and Training Board

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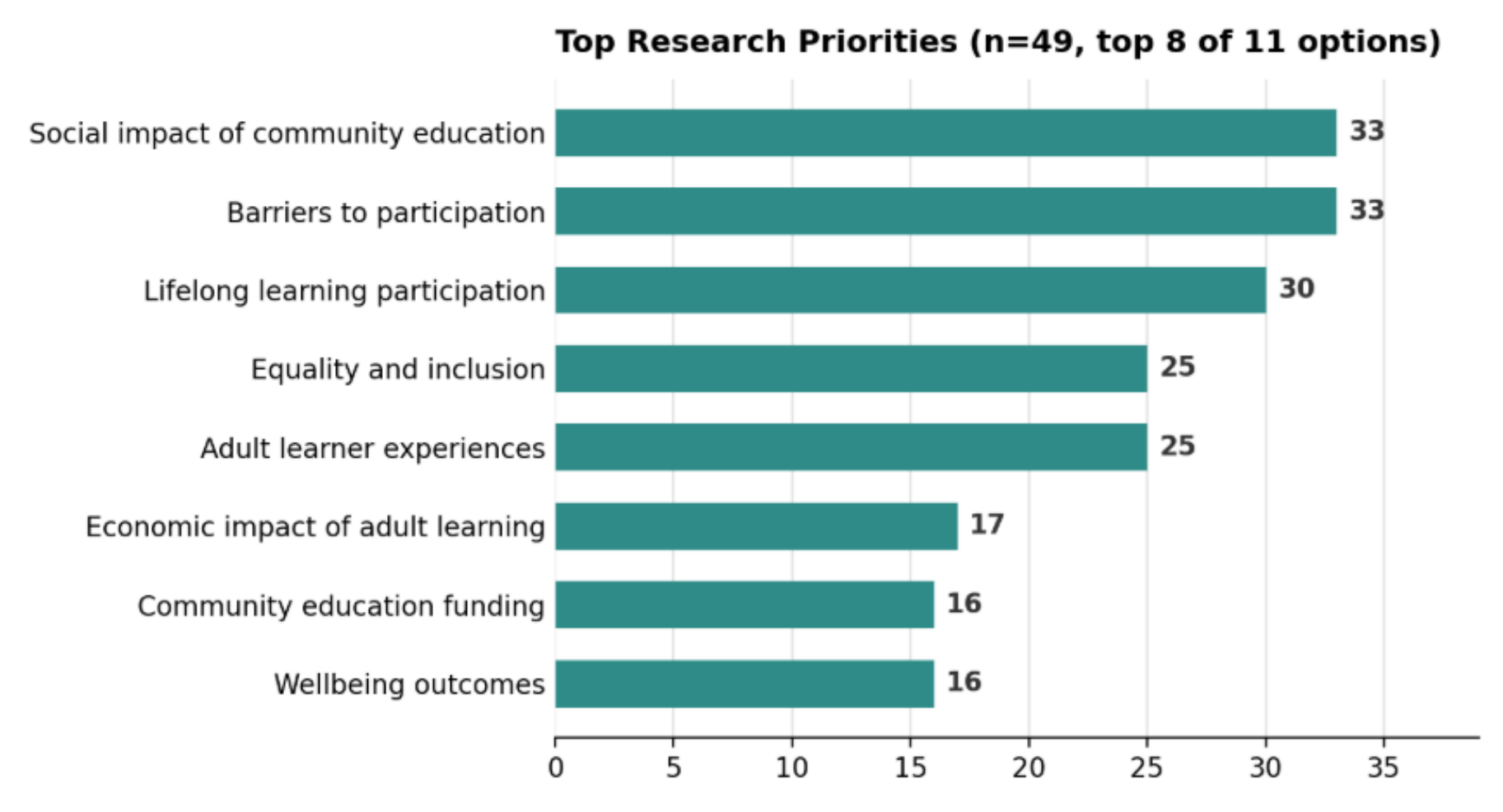
ETBI Research

To conduct research, training and development and to identify and deliver appropriate areas in education and training as required within the Education and Training Boards sector.



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AONTAS Membership Survey 2026



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Group Discussion

1. Who is already involved in (FET) research? What does this research look like?

2. What would a FET research network look like in practice?

3. What could having a FET research network help us to achieve?

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Thank you for attending!



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