

**At AONTAS, we're committed to providing a voice for adult learners based on our vision of learning as being truly lifelong. If you're also passionate about lifelong learning, adult education and driving positive change, explore our open roles below.**

## **Call for Evaluation of National Further Education and Training (FET) Learner Forum (Report)**

### **Key Objectives of this Application**

- Conduct an evaluation of the [National FET Learner Forum](#) (2016-2025)
- Submission of a written report with actionable insights and recommendations

### **Purpose**

This research focuses on the [National Further Education and Training \(FET\) Learner Forum](#). The Forum is one of the largest projects of its kind in Europe and has been cited internationally as an exemplar of Learner Voice practice.

We held first Forum in 2016. It was first started when [SOLAS](#) (An Seirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna) made a commitment in its first five-year strategy to include Learner Voice in the development of Further Education and Training (FET) policy. SOLAS turned to AONTAS as Ireland's national adult learning organisation, with a long history of learner advocacy.

They tasked us to develop an annual national forum for FET learners. It has since grown into an annual series of regional and national events, receiving over 14,000 learner contributions since its inception.

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the processes and outcomes of the Forum between 2016 and 2025 and, where appropriate, to make recommendations for the development of the Forum as a space, and process, for adult learner engagement in national policy formation.

### **The National FET Learner Forum**

The National Further Education and Training Learner Forum is a Learner Voice project designed to bring together adult learners from across Ireland to ask their views on their FET experience. The purpose of the Forum is to ensure that FET meets the needs of adult learners today and continues to do so in future.

We are responsible for delivering the Forum.

We work in collaboration with each of Ireland's 16 Education and Training Boards to host regional Learner Forum events, to issue an accompanying learner survey, and to build capacity among learners for self-advocacy in Further Education and Training.

## **Rationale of this Evaluation**

This evaluation will assess the current form of the Forum to determine its impact, effectiveness, and fitness for purpose in the context of a new FET Strategy and a changing adult education landscape in Ireland.

The knowledge, insights, and recommendations generated will inform the Forum's future development.

## **Aim of this Evaluation**

This evaluation aims to provide an analysis of the current context for the Forum, outline the next steps in its development, and improve the current procedures of adult learner engagement in national policy formation.

## **Expected Impact**

The report will be a resource for AONTAS and will be used in the future development of the Forum.

The analysis will create new and further opportunities for collaboration between AONTAS, SOLAS, and FET providers in adult education.

The report author will present the report to the National FET Learner Forum Project Advisory Group (PAG) and the National FET Learner Forum Academic Advisory Group.

The report will also be submitted to the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation, and Science; SOLAS; Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI); Education and Training Boards; and other key stakeholders.

## **Who can apply?**

Open to all applicants with a demonstrable research background consisting of:

- A master's degree in education, social policy, social science, humanities or a relevant area.
- A track record of previous research in line with our ethos of social justice and understanding of adult education for empowerment.

## **Scope of the Evaluation**

The successful candidate will be required to:

- Identify and document current stakeholder needs, wants and concerns from all relevant parties to the Forum, including learner councils and representatives, policy makers, FET providers, funders, advisory group members, and AONTAS staff.
- Examine the Forum as a Learner Voice process at both regional and national levels.
- Evaluate its effectiveness and impact in terms of advancing learner empowerment and improving FET services for current and future adult learners.
- Examine changes in the Forum over its history, including developments related to Learner Voice, stakeholder relations, process, and report outputs.
- Situate the Forum in the comparative context of international best practice with respect to Learner Voice in adult education and citizen participation initiatives.
- Provide a summary overview of the history of the Forum in recognition of its upcoming 10-year anniversary.
- State findings in a written report with actionable insights and recommendations.

Suggested themes for the evaluation include but are not limited to:

- Clarity of vision and purpose underpinning the Forum.
- Appropriateness and effectiveness of the methodologies used for the Forum.
- Inclusivity and representativeness of the Forum.
- Influence and impact that Forum feedback has had.
- Management of the Forum, including capacity to reflect and improve its delivery and sustainability.

This is a suggested outline but this list is not exhaustive and other ideas or activities within the scope of the work are welcome.

## **Desirable Candidate Requirements**

The successful candidate will be required to demonstrate:

- Experience of high-quality report completion, including organisation of interviews, surveys, and analysis.
- Detailed knowledge of Further Education and Training sector and policy in Ireland.
- Capacity to conduct critical mixed methods research including survey, focus group and interview research as well as documentary analysis.
- Capacity to develop an evaluation framework and to critically evaluate the processes and outcomes of the Forum.
- Capacity to review learner voice literature and citizen participation initiatives inside and outside education.

## **Application Requirements**

Applications for this work must include:

- Name of applicant, address and contact details. In the case of consortia, please assign one person as the principal contact / for organisations; please provide details on the organisation.
- A statement outlining the understanding of the evaluation (max 1000 words)
- Personnel involved – details of all personnel involved, including a CV that outlines their qualifications/experience.
- Description of proposed reporting approach, methodology, and outline (See the suggested outline. Max. 1000 words)
- Costs – detailed per day cost and any associated costs, including VAT.
- Notification of any potential conflicts of interest
- An up-to-date copy of the candidate’s Tax Clearance Certificate and relevant insurances.

**Evaluations of case submissions will be based on criteria specified in the application requirements, using the following award criteria:**

<b>No Requirements / Criterion</b>	<b>Weighing Criteria</b>
Understanding the Brief	20%
Relevant Knowledge, Expertise, Experience, Project Management and Resources Allocated	40%
Content and Quality of Proposed Plan and Methodology	20%

Cost	20%
<b>Total Marks</b>	<b>100%</b>

The minimum scoring required for requirements/criterion is 60% for each. Candidates must achieve a minimum score of 60% of the total marks available for each qualitative criterion (1-4). Any application which does not meet this minimum threshold shall be excluded from further consideration.

- **Understanding the brief**

Those applying should demonstrate in their proposals a good understanding of the brief.

- **Relevant knowledge, expertise, experience and resources allocated**

The highest scores will be awarded to the candidates with the most appropriate knowledge and experience in delivering similar projects. The candidate must supply a CV of the person who will be carrying out the work.

- **Content and quality of proposed plan and methodology.**

This refers to the proposed approach to the design and development given the content in this Request for Application. Candidates must demonstrate their capability to bring the contract to a satisfactory conclusion by describing the methodology of approach to accomplish the study within the stated timeframe.

- **Cost**

This must include all costs and expenses for the work. Quotations should be inclusive of VAT, and should be quoted in Euro. All prices quoted must remain valid for the duration of the work.

## **Timeframe and Deliverables**

- Final application date is **7th April, 2025**.
- Interviews (if necessary) will be held on 17th April.
- Data gathering should be complete by 31st July, 2025.
- Report should be submitted by the applicants on the 7th of August, 2025.
- Presentation of report findings and discussion with key stakeholders.

## **Budget**

The application will be to a maximum grant of €7,500 (to include all expenses and taxes and charges). A payment schedule will be agreed with the successful candidates prior to the commencement of the work based on project deliverables.

## **Tax Clearance Certificate**

Before the contract is awarded, the successful candidate will be required to produce a valid Tax Clearance Certificate, and if the certificate should expire within the course of the contract, a new certificate will be required. All payments under the contract will be conditional on the person/organisation being in possession of a valid certificate at all times.

## **Conflicts of Interest**

Any conflicts of interest involving a candidate must be fully disclosed to AONTAS. Failure to disclose a conflict-of-interest may disqualify a bidder or invalidate an award of contract, depending on when the conflict-of-interest comes to light.

## **Ownership of Material**

Resulting from this study, AONTAS will retain ownership of any research, materials and/or documentation resulting from the project. All research, materials and/or documentation must be returned to AONTAS on request or in the event that the contract is terminated. No part of the research, materials and/or documentation may be used without the prior consent of AONTAS.

## **Application Submissions**

Should be sent via email to [recruitment@aontas.com](mailto:recruitment@aontas.com) no later than **4pm, 7th of April, 2025**.

Following completion of the application evaluation, the successful candidate will be notified by email.

A shortlist of the most competitive applicants may be invited to present or provide further information on their bid prior to selection.