

**SUSTAINABLE  
CORK  
FUND**

# Impact Report



September 2020  
– June 2021

**RETHINK  
IRELAND**



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



**Cork  
Chamber**  
Advancing business together

# Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION TO THE FUND</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>MEET THE AWARDEES</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>SUPPORTING JOBS IN THE NOT-FOR-PROFIT SECTOR</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>THE RETHINK IRELAND PACKAGE</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>ACHIEVING SOCIAL IMPACT</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>THE 'RETHINK IRELAND EFFECT' – WHAT DIFFERENCE DID THE GRANT MAKE?</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>FOLLOW-ON FUNDING</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>MEDIA RESULTS</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>A THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS</b>	<b>15</b>





# Introduction to the Fund

The Sustainable Cork Fund is a €200,000 fund created by Rethink Ireland in partnership with Cork Chamber of Commerce and the Department of Rural and Community Development via the Dormant Accounts Fund.

To mark its 200th anniversary in 2019, Cork Chamber launched a six-month community funding drive to raise €100,000, in partnership with Rethink Ireland (then Social Innovation Fund Ireland). Cork Chamber was the first Irish Chamber of Commerce to launch an initiative of this kind. The Chamber's fundraising was matched by the Department of Rural and Community Development which matches all philanthropic donations to Rethink Ireland, euro for euro, from the Dormant Accounts Fund.

The Sustainable Cork Fund was designed to support not-for-profit organisations to increase the sustainability of Cork's urban and rural communities. Taking sustainability to include environmental, social and economic resilience, the Fund was created to support projects achieving an impact in:

1. Climate action and environmental awareness
2. Community inclusion and cohesion
3. Sustainable employment and economic development



Caption: Sustainable Cork Fund launch

The Fund opened for applications on **7th February 2020**, with grassroots networking and communications commencing in the call for applications. The open call ended on **17th April 2020**. A total of 66 applications were submitted, with 3 successful applications being selected to become recipients of the Fund.

Through the Sustainable Cork Fund, Rethink Ireland supported these 3 Awardees with cash grants, business supports and a place on a world-class Accelerator Programme.

**AWARDEES RECEIVED CASH GRANTS AND NON-FINANCIAL SUPPORTS TO THE VALUE OF**

**€50,000**

**EACH**

These non-financial supports assisted Awardees with essential capacity building such as creating a theory of change, forming a strategic plan, and communications & branding work.

# Meet the Awardees

The successful Awardees work across three diverse social causes but share a common vision of making Cork City and County more sustainable, both socially and environmentally. From inclusive supports for migrant women to rehabilitating people experiencing addiction, and reducing the environmental waste of single-use plastics, all three Awardees are playing a role in making Cork a great place to live and work.

## GATEWAY TO INCLUSION PROJECT, NASC

Nasc was founded in May 2000 with the goal of realising the rights of all migrants and refugees within Irish society. Nasc's Gateway to Inclusion Project provides free, specially tailored English language classes in a women-only, supportive environment. The language component is a 'gateway' to 'hard to reach' refugee women at risk of geographical or social isolation. The project works to assist women to accomplish their goals and provides support to overcome the barriers that can stop them from accessing formal education or employment which may include trauma, domestic violence, poverty or lack of access to healthcare. Nasc's work fits with the community inclusion and cohesion pillar of sustainability: generating a positive sense of belonging, particularly for marginalised and vulnerable groups.



Caption: Fiona Finn, CEO, Nasc



## SUSTAINABLE FUTURES PROJECT, NCE OUTREACH

NCE Outreach was set up in 2000 as an inclusive and unique training model that aims to support participants engaged with addiction treatment or probation services. The Sustainable Futures Project aims to provide training, personal development, and employment in the area of sustainability for the local community and participants of NCE Outreach, in a safe and non-judgmental environment. The project aims to create part-time employment opportunities at NCE while also feeding into the development of a community-based, living lab for sustainability in Cork City, based at Farranferris Education & Training Campus. NCE Outreach's work fits with the sustainable employment and economic development pillar of sustainability.



Caption: Noreen Hegarty, General Manager, NCE Outreach

## REFILL IRELAND

Refill.ie is a social enterprise helping to eradicate a need for single-use plastic water bottles by providing an alternative, free-to-use refill network. Refill will expand their "Tap Map" service in Cork to show people where to find free tap water nearby. They also work with local businesses and county councils to educate, advocate and promote the installation of more refill points. They are working to find a location for a new Community Refill Hub in a high footfall area, which will provide free-to-use filtered water to the public. Refill's work fits with the climate action and environmental awareness pillar of sustainability.



Caption: Garry Fitzpatrick, Lead Project Coordinator, Refill Ireland



Caption: The Sustainable Cork Fund Awardees

## Supporting jobs in the not-for-profit sector

We are proud to say that the Sustainable Cork Fund directly supports **5 JOBS** in Awardee organisations which are;

- Marketing & Communications Specialist (Refill Ireland)
- Project Coordinator (Nasc)
- Community Employment Scheme Supervisor (NCE Outreach)
- Cultural Facilitator (Nasc)
- Project Assistant (Nasc)



# The Rethink Ireland Package

Following the selection of the three Awardee projects, the organisations began their Rethink Ireland journey. The Rethink Ireland approach is to build the capacity of our Awardees so that they can scale and be sustainable. We equip Awardees with the knowledge and advice they need to succeed.

The Sustainable Cork Fund Awardees benefited from support in impact management, strategic planning, communications/storytelling/pitching, writing for media and workplace wellbeing. Specifically, the Accelerator Programme included;

## WORKSHOP 1

*Introduction to Cork Chamber* with Deirdre Griffin & *Impact Management* with Tim Goodspeed  
– 28th January 2021

## WORKSHOP 2

*Wellness in Challenging Times* with Rona McBrierty & *Fundraising and Networking* with Kingsley Aikins  
– 18th March 2021

## WORKSHOP 3

*Storytelling/Communicating for Social Change* with Sam Whelan Curtin  
– 22nd April 2021

## WORKSHOP 4

*Communications and PR* with Ciara Flaherty & *Fireside chat about Strategic Planning, Scale and Leadership* with Mark Fitzharris, DC Cahalane, Caroline O Driscoll  
– 28th May 2021

As a result of their participation in the Accelerator Programme, the Awardees reported that they gained:

- An increased understanding and ability to measure social impact
- Better strategic planning
- An increased confidence in communicating storytelling/pitching
- Better understanding of the fundraising landscape and fundraising methods

## ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME FEEDBACK:

*“Very well spaced and shared. Thoroughly enjoyed all the valuable knowledge.”*

*“Overall the accelerator programme was of great benefit to my work, because it allowed me the space to focus on my goals for the project and work out how best to achieve them. The workshops were very practical and informative so I have been able to apply them directly to my work. I found the lift programme to be especially beneficial and will continue to be involved in that programme. The input and advice of the experts that Rethink has presented in the accelerator programme has been invaluable and an important learning experience.”*

*“I feel the Sustainable Cork Accelerator Programme was hugely beneficial to us. It has been an extremely practical programme and I think we will keep returning to our notes and learning from the programme for months and probably years to come.”*

## INDIVIDUALISED CONSULTANT SUPPORTS: A STEP TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

Awardees on the Accelerator programme also worked with an experienced consultant to increase their capacity in areas identified as important and critical in their scaling and growth. **All Awardees produced a Theory of Change and an updated Strategic Plan, as well as benefiting from tailored communications support in their areas of impact.**

The overall Consultant Support Rating was **8.67 out of 10** and feedback included;

*“He (consultant) went above and beyond. Our organisation was missing strong commercial and business development skills and our consultant provided great insight here and was always thinking outside the box. He really took the time to get an understanding of the organisation and our requirements and the whole process was very collaborative.”*

*“Working with the consultant has given us a clear plan for the future and an understanding of how to repeat the strategic planning process in future.”*

## ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT:

The Organisational Health Assessment (OHA) is a tool designed to enable Rethink Ireland to monitor progress in our Awardee organisations, assign relevant non-financial supports and to better understand the effectiveness of our non-financial supports.

Comparing the OHA scores of the Sustainable Cork Awardees in October 2020, before they began their Accelerator Programme, and in May 2021 at the end of their programme, we found that the Awardee’s average scores increased across the areas below;

- Leadership & Organisational Structure
- Innovation
- Impact Measurement & Evaluation
- Ambition for Scaling
- Communication/Storytelling
- Beneficiaries

The most significant increase was in Awardees’ ability to communicate and story-tell for social change followed by an increased ambition to scale their projects. Two of the three organisations are continuing with further consultancy supports in order to deepen their communications, storytelling and brand awareness over the Summer of 2021.

# Achieving Social Impact

COLLECTIVELY, THE AWARDEES REACHED

**125**  
PARTICIPANTS

**13** of which achieved employment

**36** of which achieved Work Placement / Internship

**13** of which achieved Educational Progression

Participants largely come from minority groups including people in the asylum system, people from refugee backgrounds and people in recovery from addiction treatments. Supporting participants in these minority groups is an important part of creating a more sustainable, inclusive society for all.

AWARDEES DELIVERED **918** WORKSHOPS/EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS & ASSISTED PARTICIPANTS IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

Language Tuition	Interview and CV Preparation	Communications
QQI Qualifications	Personal Development	IT Training (ECDL & MOS)
Sustainability/ Environmental Training	Health Studies	Health and Safety Training
HACAP Training	And finally... crochet!	

**1,288**

users availed of the free tap water supplied by Refill Ireland through a new Hydration Hub, installed in the Quay Co-Op, Cork City.

The Awardees have also increased their own networks and business reach in the Cork area via the Rethink Ireland and Cork Chamber networks. One Awardee has further benefited from a pro-bono partnership with a Cork Chamber Member organisation, who are assisting the Awardee with communications.



# The ‘Rethink Ireland Effect’ — What difference did the grant make?

## NASC

The grant enabled the Gateway project to continue to provide migrant women with education and much-needed support throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

Nasc delivered language and work-readiness supports to **30** women from September 2020 – June 2021.

It provided the salaries of a Project Coordinator (who is a qualified social worker), a Cultural Facilitator and a Project Assistant, so that they could continue to develop the programme in line with the specific needs of participants.

They were able to add a number of classes to their offering, including a befriending programme (with 15 students), a parenting group (with 12 participants), a crochet group (with 21 students) and English conversation classes (with 24 students).

Social work supports were provided to 12 women for issues such as domestic abuse, housing, social welfare entitlements and mental health.



Caption: NASC

## Participant Story

*“From the beginning I was looking for a place where my level of English would improve, but the courses were very short and for a few hours and that made my level of English not to improve; then one day I read about the Gateway project and decided to apply. I received an email that said there was no space although if I wanted to take the course they would take me into account later without hesitation and it wasn’t long till they told me I could attend the classes. I felt very happy since I had a chance to improve my English and I decided to start the classes in Gateway women’s project and my English language has improved greatly. Before my friends used to translate English to me but now I understand clearly. Thanks to my teachers and to the volunteers now I can proudly say my English has improved greatly to the point that I have friends who speak English and it is easy for me to express myself in English. Before taking the classes it was very difficult for me to do so. Being in this group hasn’t only helped me improve English but also helped in some other sectors of my life... I have participated in different events and occasions... I will always be grateful to Claire and all the staff of teachers and volunteers and sponsors who make this project possible.”*

## NCE OUTREACH

As a result of the Sustainable Cork Fund, NCE Outreach was able to employ a Participant Development Coordinator and, in Q3 & Q4 of 2021, an employee on the Revive Paint initiative.

NCE Outreach supported **73** participants in the project from September 2020 – June 2021.

They undertook a full review of the process for NCE Outreach participants, ensuring a person-centered approach to the scheme and placing participants where they are best suited and happiest.

The team worked to highlight participant housing issues and, as a result, directly helped 3 Outreach participants to secure accommodation.

NCE Outreach worked on a detailed business plan for Revive Paint - the first re-use paint enterprise in Cork City - with the dedicated support of their Rethink Ireland consultant. They now have detailed financial projections for the next 3 years and a clear plan for how they can grow and scale the business. Revive Paint will provide a number of work experience positions and paid employment opportunities.

Through the free membership kindly offered by Cork Chamber, NCE were able to attend a suite of free workshops and expand their network in the local business community. They were delighted to have the opportunity to speak at a seminar on youth unemployment organised by Cork Chamber.

Overall, NCE Outreach have reported a growth in their confidence and sense of pride in their work, as a result of being a Sustainable Cork Fund Awardee.

## Participant Story

*“First and foremost, the time spent [with NCE Outreach] was rewarding on many fronts. However, I must state, as persons, new into recovery, our thinking and behaviours, [when we initially engaged with NCE Outreach], is not the same as it is, later on, down the road. It takes time to get back physically, cognitively, and emotionally. It would be a disservice to self and those that have helped us on this journey, not to include spiritually, too. For those people that do stay in recovery, the time in a structured environment such as NCE is paramount in creating a space for self-discipline, which can facilitate personal growth. For those that don’t stay in recovery, at the very least it sows a seed back to reality, and this will hopefully grow, the sooner the better. I can only speak for myself when I say I wasn’t keen on being at Farranferris at the beginning, but with time, as the head settled and the mind stopped racing, I started to see the benefits of the modules, not as a way to a goal of certification, but as an exercise in self-discipline and a positive use of time, the journey, not the destination, living in the now and being present.”*



Caption: NCE Outreach

## REFILL IRELAND

With the funding, Refill Ireland were able to test a new model for growing drinking water services in Ireland.

1,288 users availed of the free tap water through the Quay Co-Op's new Hydration Hub.

They built a strategy document around this new model, to direct the organisation for the next 3 years.

Furthermore, they were able to expand their model beyond Cork into Wexford and Waterford, with plans to add at least 5 new counties to their growing network.

They added 15 new Tap Map locations and 1 new Community Hydration Hub location in Cork. Before the Fund, there were 238 locations and now that has risen to 257.

Refill Ireland developed a more compelling narrative around their work, which resulted in 3 newspaper/magazine articles and 3 radio segments promoting their services.

### Business Owner Testimonial

*"It was absolutely brilliant to work with Refill Ireland. I'd encourage anybody out there to speak to Refill. It's a really great facility to have in your business [A Community Hydration Hub] and we are going to share it and tell everybody about it."*

– General Manager, The Quay Co-Op



Caption: Refill Ireland

## Follow-on Funding

For the not-for-profit sector, funding is a core issue. We are always thrilled to see our Awardees achieve financial success and all 3 Sustainable Cork Fund Awardees have secured follow-on funding.

The total amount of follow-on funding secured by the Sustainable Cork Fund Awardees was:

# €104,700



# Media Results

The Awardees of the Sustainable Cork Fund were formally announced on Tuesday, 27th October 2020. Heather Humphreys TD, Minister for Rural and Community Development, provided a quote for our press release:

*"I would like to extend my congratulations to the three awardees of the Sustainable Cork Fund. It is so important that we celebrate those organisations and projects that share our commitment to sustainability through environmental, social and economic resilience. The outstanding projects showcase the ways that communities are making a difference. This funding, as well as other supports, will assist them even further with their sustainability plans."*

Print and online coverage included [The Irish Examiner](#) and [The Echo](#), with radio coverage on Cork-based stations [96FM](#), [Red FM](#) and [C103](#).

The Sustainable Cork Fund attracted considerable media attention during its nine months of operation. Additional media successes of the fund include features on Awardees in [The Echo](#) and [The Irish Examiner](#). We were thrilled to have the Fund feature at length, including on the front cover, of the Chamberlink Magazine, December 2020 edition.



Media coverage of the Awards is estimated to have reached

**738,472 PEOPLE**

Value of this coverage is estimated at

**€22,267**

# A Thank You to Our Donors

From Rethink Ireland and from the Awardee organisations, we would like to thank the donors of the Sustainable Cork Fund – Cork Chamber of Commerce and their members.

**It is your kind and generous support that makes Awardee impact possible.**

**In this fund, your support has enabled a wide range of social impact, including:**

- Support for migrant women, including people living in Direct Provision, to pursue education and employment opportunities.
- Further education, training, and employment for people in post-addiction treatment programmes and probation services.
- Reducing the reliance on single use plastic water bottles in Cork City and County.

*"I'd like to say a big thank you to Cork Chamber for the opportunity to participate in the Sustainable Cork Fund 2020. It created an employment opportunity for me, as the Participant Development Coordinator at NCE Outreach, this role allowed me to work with our Outreach participants on a 1:1 basis, enhancing their time with us and ensuring their education and training needs are met, It's been great working with you all, Thanks again!"*

– **Karen Hayes, Participant Development Coordinator, NCE Outreach**

*"I would like to extend our gratitude to Cork Chamber for enabling us to provide much needed support to migrant and refugee women via Nasc's Gateways project. The connection, education and social work provision we provide became even more vital in light of the pandemic and was of great benefit to our participants and their families. A big thank you to Aoife, Rosie and Maya at Rethink Ireland for your help and advice throughout."*

– **Claire Mackey, Project Coordinator, Gateway to Inclusion Project, Nasc**

*"I would like to send a big thank you to Cork Chamber for their support and generosity to help us develop our services that we provide at NCE Outreach. We were so honoured to be one of the awardees of the Sustainable Cork Fund. We have learnt so much over the course of the fund which we believe will strengthen our organisation into the future. It was great to also have been given membership to Cork Chamber, we were able to attend workshops and talks that we previously did not have access to, which furthered our growth and learning. It is great to see the support that Cork Chamber provides social enterprises, and it has given us an opportunity to link up with other businesses to create employment opportunities for our participants. We look forward to inviting you to the launch of Revive Paint at NCE in September."*

– **Caitríona Courtney, Project Manager, NCE Outreach**

*"A sincere thank you to Cork Chamber for the opportunity they have given to NCE Outreach to develop and expand its mission in creating training, work experience and meaningful employment opportunities in a supportive environment, for our people who are in a Step Down phase of their recovery from all forms of addiction. Our people come to us from all parts of Ireland and this initiative of Cork Chamber has also provided a Kickstart for a number of corporate funders in our further education programmes. Your support has already made a difference and for that we sincerely thank you on behalf of the people who benefit from it."*

– **Fr John O'Donovan, Chairperson, NCE Outreach**

Supporting these outstanding organisations is important to Cork Chamber and to Rethink Ireland. Paula Cogan, President of Cork Chamber of Commerce says;

*“Cork Chamber was delighted to lead this fundraising initiative for the Cork region in partnership with Rethink Ireland. Social innovation initiatives have the power to promote social cohesion and build more resilient communities, and we are delighted with the support that our fund received from businesses and individuals, whose donations all contributed to advancing this vision. The winning projects have already had an important impact on our community and we look forward to seeing how they continue to grow and prosper in the future. Their work demonstrates how commitment and creativity can make Cork more resilient and a better place to live and work.”*

– Paula Cogan, President of Cork Chamber of Commerce



This Fund has shown that partnerships between Chambers of Commerce and Rethink Ireland can and are successful in promoting the overall sustainability of a city, county or region, and we hope to see more such partnerships emerge in the future.

*“We know that there is an urgent need to increase the sustainability of our communities, through environmental, social or economic approaches. We also know that these three approaches are interlinked. The past 18 months of the pandemic have both highlighted and exacerbated inequalities in our society. Now is the time to take action to close those widening gaps, and all three of the Sustainable Cork Fund Awardees, Nasc, NCE, and Refill Ireland, have shown that when we work together in pursuit of that common goal, positive change is possible. Thank you to Cork Chamber of Commerce, to its members, and to the corporate partners who have supported this fund. The Sustainable Cork Fund was our first regional fund, and we think it is a great model for the future.”*

– Deirdre Mortell, CEO, Rethink Ireland



**As we close the Sustainable Cork Fund, we look forward to continuing with our mission** to support the best social innovations so that they can grow and maximise their impact across Ireland.



