

Circular Economy Innovation Grants Scheme 2025

Grant Round Criteria

For Small Businesses

About Community Foundation Ireland

Community Foundation Ireland and its partners believe in equality for all in thriving communities. We work with individuals, families, corporates and other trusts and foundations, as well as Government, to translate giving in the moment to giving that is strategic, sustainable and impactful. We use our skills and knowledge developed over 24-years to help donors turn aspirations into effective investments.

The Foundation works with partners to achieve solutions for both long-standing and emerging challenges. The work is built upon four pillars: Empowering Generations, Sustainable Futures, Inclusive Communities and Accelerating Change.

Through our many partnerships we are working towards an Ireland where barriers are broken down and communities are empowered to thrive. Working with you, other non-profits and donors we are committed to making this vision a reality.

About the Fund

The Circular Economy Innovation Grants Scheme is a collaboration between Community Foundation Ireland and the Department of the Climate, Energy and the Environment (DCEE).

The purpose of this Fund is to provide financial support to projects that are working on innovative and scalable solutions to ensure waste prevention, with the aim of advancing the circular economy in Ireland and raising awareness of the need to transition to a circular economy.

By funding circular economy projects and enterprises, the Fund directly supports the growth of the circular economy in Ireland and provides high-profile examples of best practice.

Since 2021, €1.8 million has been awarded in grants to non-profit organisations, social enterprises and small businesses developing or showcasing models of best practice by incorporating the features of a circular economy.

Features of a Circular Economy

A circular economy incorporates the following features:

- *Eco-design, manufacture and use of products that are resource-efficient, durable, repairable, re-usable and upgradable.*
- *Reduction of waste generation and the presence of hazardous substances in materials and products.*
- *Encouraging remanufacturing, refurbishment, and repurposing of products.*
- *Maximising repairing for re-use, valorisation of residuals, industrial symbiosis and recycling.*
- *Maximising the recovery of EU list of 27 critical raw materials and alleviating reliance of imports.*
- *Encouraging repair and reuse of products / materials.*
- *Encouraging new business models to optimise capacity utilisation and extend useful life of products and assets such as sharing / leasing platforms and take back services.*

About the 2025 Grant Round

In 2025, the Fund aims to support regional and national projects developing or showcasing models of best practice focused on waste prevention in the areas of plastic, construction and demolition, food, as well as resources and raw materials.

Waste prevention in these areas can include initiatives addressing any stage of the cycle below: from raw materials to residual waste.

These models of best practice can either involve developing innovative solutions to waste prevention by incorporating features of the circular economy or scaling up an existing solution that has been successfully implemented for at least 12 months.

The objectives of this grant round are:

- To support the development or scaling up of models of best practice focused on waste prevention in the four thematic areas.
- To support regional as well as national projects that will have a significant impact on materials or waste streams.
- To encourage innovation within the circular economy space in Ireland.
- To support successfully implemented solutions to scale up significantly.



Source: National Waste Prevention Programme

Grants between €40,000 and €50,000 will be available for non-profit organisations, social enterprises and **small businesses** (*profit-making organisations with fewer than 50 employees*) working in the area of circular economy or aiming to make their existing work more circular.

Grants will support these organisations to:

- transform their current work to bring it more in line with the principles of circular economy
- develop new work, or
- scale up existing best practices significantly

Applying to this Grant Round

Thematic Areas

The grant round is open to applications for projects working on waste prevention in the following thematic areas:

- *Plastic Waste*
- *Construction and Demolition Waste*
- *Food Waste*
- *Resources and Raw Materials Waste (Electrical and electronic equipment, textiles, furniture)*

Applications to this grant round must be aligned to at least one of the thematic areas identified above.

Successful grant applications will exhibit how they will have a significant impact on these material or waste streams.

Strands

In addition to being aligned to one of the thematic areas, applications should align to one of the following strands:

Strand 1: Innovation

Applications to this strand should showcase an element of innovation.

These innovative elements can be completely new ideas that have never been seen before, or they can be creative and efficient changes to an existing project / idea that can help it become more circular or reach a larger audience.

For example, innovation can be demonstrated through a pilot project and the funding would support the development of a proof of concept. In an ongoing project, the funding could support the incorporation of innovative elements like new materials, technology, or procedures that would enhance the circularity of the project and ensure waste prevention.

Applications to this strand should be for projects or solutions that have not already been implemented elsewhere. Your proposal should be able to demonstrate that clearly using an evidence base. This evidence can be from formal market research, evaluations, surveys or informal feedback.

Your application should also include clear metrics of the amount of waste that would be diverted from landfill if the solution is implemented successfully.

Examples of eligible projects include but are not limited to:

- Developing new equipment or processes that allow for a reduction in packaging materials.
- Developing technology that encourages reuse of materials that would otherwise enter the waste stream.
- Creating and testing new ways of conducting your usual / existing work that reduces waste.

Strand 2: Scaling Up

Applications to this strand should be to scale up an existing project that has been effectively providing a circular solution for 12 months or more. Applications should demonstrate proof of concept for the solution and be able to clearly articulate how this idea / project could be scaled up.

Where relevant, applications should also demonstrate how viable it would be for other communities or groups to replicate the project. For example, if the project involves the use of a new material, the application should demonstrate how accessible that material would be for other groups across the country.

Applications to this strand should contain clear metrics on the amount of waste that would be diverted from landfill as a result of the scale up.

Examples of eligible projects include but are not limited to:

- Upskilling people and communities for expertise needed for the circular economy.
- Developing a template or guidance kit for communities and organisation to replicate an existing and tested circular solution.
- Scaling up an established solution to significantly increase the amount of waste being diverted from landfill.

Please refer to the 'Features of a Circular Economy' information box at the beginning of the document for more project ideas.

Please contact info@foundation.ie if further information is required on this.

Grant Round Timeline

Opening Date for applications:	10 th September
Closing Date for applications:	8 th October
Grants will be awarded:	January 2026
Work should begin:	January / February 2026
Work should be complete:	July 2027

Eligibility for Small Businesses

Eligible organisations must...	Eligible projects...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a profit-making organisation with fewer than 50 employees. • Have a gross annual income of more than €100,000. • Have up to date and sufficient governing documents, and annual accounts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must meet the aim and objectives of this grant round. • Should be aligned to at least one of the four thematic areas. • Can be a new or ongoing piece of work. • Must be aligned with one of the strands – Innovation or Scaling Up. • Must start in January / February 2026 and run for a maximum of 18 months.

Organisations and projects that don't fit these criteria will not be considered for funding.

Ineligible Organisations include...	Ineligible projects include...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small businesses with a gross annual income of less than €100,000. • Schools • Sports organisations • Statutory bodies • Animal welfare organisations • Proposals from individuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing core costs such as insurance, rent, bills etc. • Projects not aligned to atleast one of the thematic areas. • Projects that do not align to one of the two strands – Innovation and Scaling Up. • Religious or political activities. • Projects that have already happened or any activities that will happen before the grants are awarded.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects taking place outside of the Republic of Ireland. • Projects that have previously received funding from this Scheme <u>two or more times</u>. <i>Please note that this does not make the organisation ineligible, they can apply again provided it is for a different project.</i>
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Ineligible organisations and projects will not be successful, so please do not apply.

Additional Notes:

- Projects may be to continue a current programme or to start a new one.
- Proposals to this fund can include the proportion of staff time costs specifically related to the project. This also includes new staff salaries required to increase service provision.
- Applications can include equipment or furniture that is relevant to the project.
- Developing or constructing a new building or buying a building or land is not eligible.

Priorities for this grant round

We anticipate that this will be a very competitive grant round so proposals that show the unique value of their project will be prioritised. This includes the following:

- Projects that have a strongly justified need based on research or feedback.
- Projects that articulate their strong and significant impact on the specific material and waste stream.
- Projects that provide clear metrics on the amount of waste that they would be diverting from landfill.
- Projects that have measurable outcomes and strong monitoring strategies for the same.
- Projects that have the potential to be sustained beyond the life of this grant.

Funding Available:

- Organisations can apply for funds between **€40,000 and €50,000** which should be spent down in 12 – 18 months. Budgets must be detailed and realistic. If the total cost of the project exceeds the grant amount, applicants will need to detail how they would raise the gap.
- Only one application per organisation will be accepted.

- For organisations with branch networks, where each branch falls under the one constitution, the application must be submitted by the head office of the organisation.

Please note: Funding will be awarded in four instalments and grantees will need to submit drawdown requests for each instalment after the previous funds have been spent. For example, a grant of €50,000 will be awarded in four instalments of €12,500 each.

Please ensure that your organisation has the capacity to manage such a schedule and any possible delays that might arise. Please also ensure that you take this into account while developing your project plan and timeline.

Governance Documents:

All organisations will be required to upload digital copies of the following governance documents. This needs to be done through the Grants Portal by updating the organisation's profile. For more information, please refer to the [Grantee FAQs](#).

- **Company Certificate of Incorporation or equivalent**
- **The Constitution or Memorandum and Articles of Association.**
 - This must show the mission statement or main objects of the organisation, how any donations will be used, the winding up clause, and details of the appointment of the Board of Directors.
 - This document must be signed.
- **A bank account statement header**
 - This statement header must clearly show the Account Name, BIC and IBAN.
 - Please blank out any transactions, as this is purely to verify the account to pay the grant into.
 - If your organisation has a credit union account, you must supply an IBAN for your specific account. We are unable to accept applications without a unique account IBAN.
- **List of Board Members and identification**
 - This should clearly show the current list of Trustees/Directors/Committee members and their roles.
 - The document should also mention the length of time each member has served on the Board.
 - Additionally, all applicants must provide proof of identity for two Trustees/ Directors/ Committee Members, plus proof of address for one of the two Trustee/ Director/ Committee Members.

- **Tax Clearance Certificate**

(This is required when the grant amount is above €30,000)

- **The organisation's annual accounts for the last two years**

- Annual accounts should include unabridged financial statements for the two years, or where relevant, a monthly profit and loss for the year.
- Organisations should provide audited annual accounts where mandated. If an audit is not required, organisations should provide a profit and loss statement and a balance sheet.
- Accounts should be from the two previous financial years and must be signed by the Directors and Auditors.

If you do not submit the correct governance documents, your application will not be considered for funding.

Reporting requirements

All grantees will be required to submit Progress and Outcome Reports during the project. Progress reports will be due at the end of July 2026 and Outcome reports will be due in January 2027 or July 2027 (depending on the length of the project).

How to apply

The Fund is open for applications from the **10th of September 2025** and will close at 5 pm **on the 8th of October 2025**.

All applications must meet the criteria above, any organisation or project that does not meet the eligibility criteria will not be successful in this grant round.

To apply to the Grant Round, please read the instructions in the Application Guide [here](#).

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

It is recommended that you read our [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) as well as the Application Guide before starting your grant application.

Should you have any further questions, please contact the Grants Team at info@foundation.ie. Please note that due to the high number of enquiries we may not be able to respond to queries immediately.