

RETHINK IRELAND

Our
Social
Innovation
Fund

IMPACT FUND FOR MUNSTER 2024

IMPACT REPORT:
June 2025 – January 2026



An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail
Department of Rural and
Community Development

ciste na
gcuntas diomhaoin
the dormant
accounts fund

Tomar Trust
National influence. Local implementation

Ei **Electronics**[®]
fire + gas detection



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PROPERTIES

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1. Introduction

Impact Fund for Munster 2024 was created to foster a sustainable and inclusive future for the Munster region by investing in innovative projects that address interconnected social and environmental challenges. The fund set out to support the inclusion, involvement and recognition of the diverse communities of the Munster region and to empower communities that tend to be left out of conversations.

Impact Fund for Munster 2024 was a one-year €695,000 Rethink Ireland fund created by Rethink Ireland in collaboration with Tomar Trust, Ei Electronics, Sunflower Charitable Foundation, the Parkes family in Limerick, and a private donor. The fund also benefited from match funding provided by the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht via the Dormant Accounts Fund.

Rethink Ireland selected nine awardee projects and supported them with a mix of cash grants totalling €472,752 and a package of tailored business supports totalling €51,750.

This impact report outlines the journey and remarkable achievements made by the fund's awardees. These nine diverse projects from across the Munster region addressed a range of social and environmental issues. Though not set out in the fund objectives, most of the projects focused on supporting young people. Here are some highlights:

- The Animal Assisted Education Programme provides support in schools for neurodiverse young people, while Understanding Autism raises awareness among primary school students about autism and neurodiversity.
- Look@Me: Community Filmmaking Outreach Project with Cork Migrant Centre, empowers young people from migrant backgrounds to create their own short films.

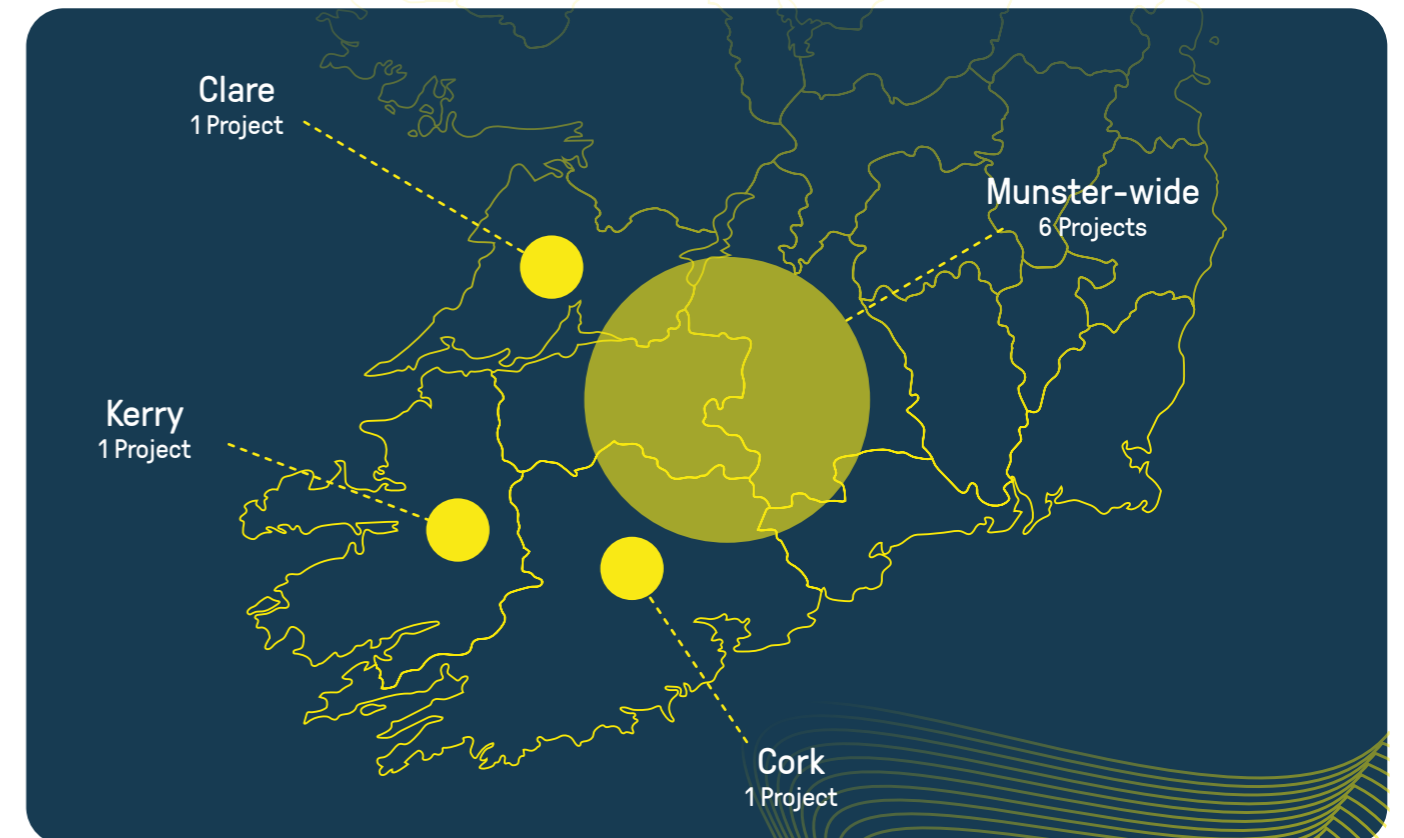
- Munster Biodiversity Havens Network creates ecological interventions designed to increase biodiversity while also creating accessible local spaces for nature, learning, and community action.
- New Wave Wild engages young people in Adventure Therapy and trains practitioners in adventure and nature-based therapy.
- Paint Punch Munster and Wild Earth projects increase well-being and resilience among young people.
- The Toy Library connects families to reuse and swap toys and reduce plastic waste
- Tomorrow's University: A Social Imagination Programme invites communities to reimagine the future.

Together, they supported young people and Munster communities to become more resilient and be able to express themselves and build skills and knowledge around biodiversity, climate action and the circular economy. These projects actively move towards building more inclusive and sustainable communities through education, collaboration, and local action. Across the portfolio, this combination of environmental ambition and social inclusion has created a fund that is both place-based and people centred.

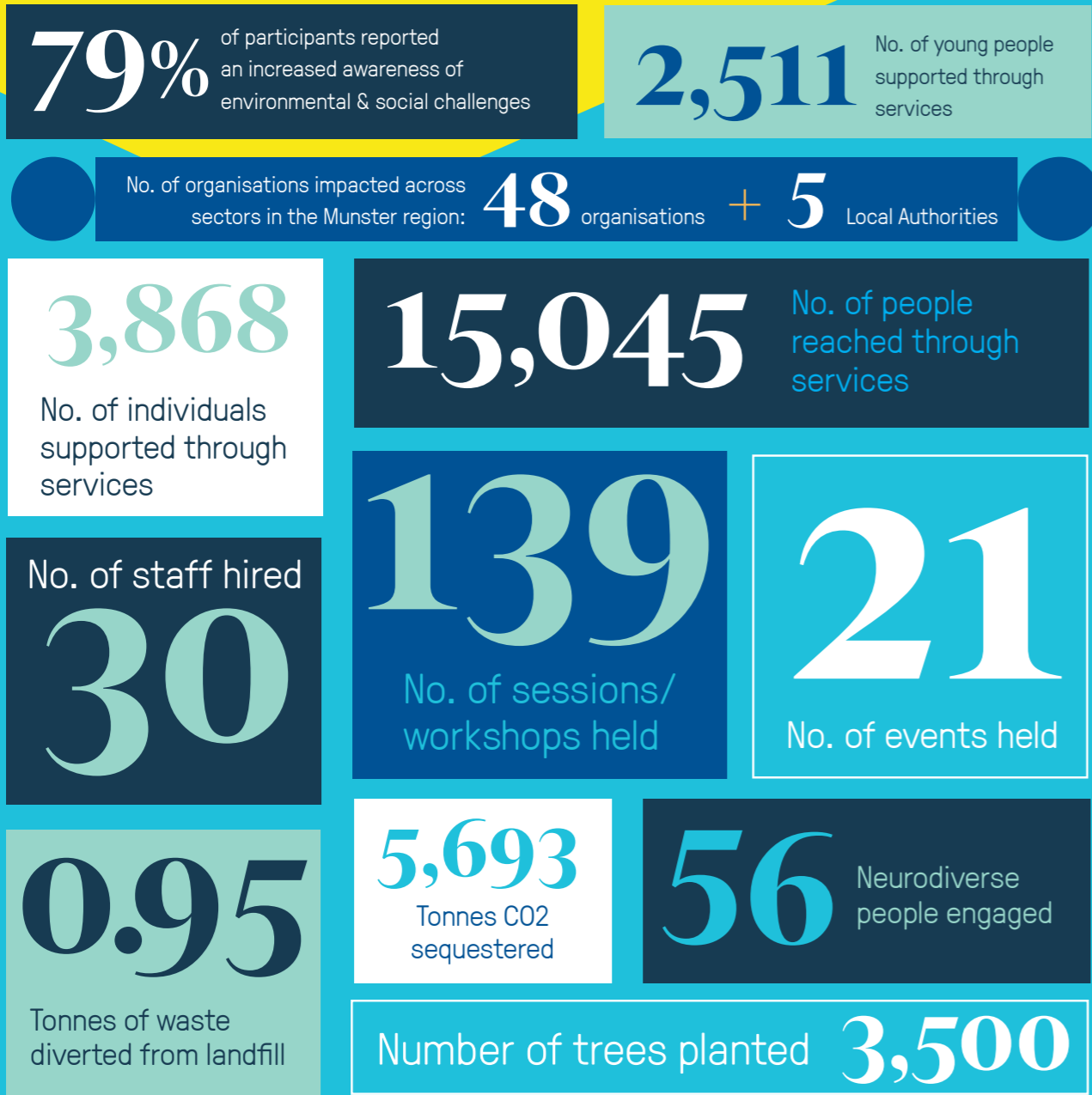
2. Fund Overview

The one-year Impact Fund for Munster 2024 supported nine projects that are helping to build a more sustainable and inclusive future for the Munster region. With a total of €695,000, the fund was designed to back innovative, community focused responses to interconnected social and environmental challenges across Munster.

Participation in the fund enabled awardees to strengthen and expand their work through a combination of cash grants and business supports. This support helped organisations to deepen their impact, build internal capacity, and develop more sustainable foundations for future growth. While the projects varied in focus, scale, and geography, they shared a common goal to contribute to the sustainable development of Munster communities through practical, locally grounded innovation.



2.1 Impact Overview



Communities & Marginalised Groups Supported

Target Group / Number of Projects Working With Target Group



Sustainable Development Goals addressed through this fund:



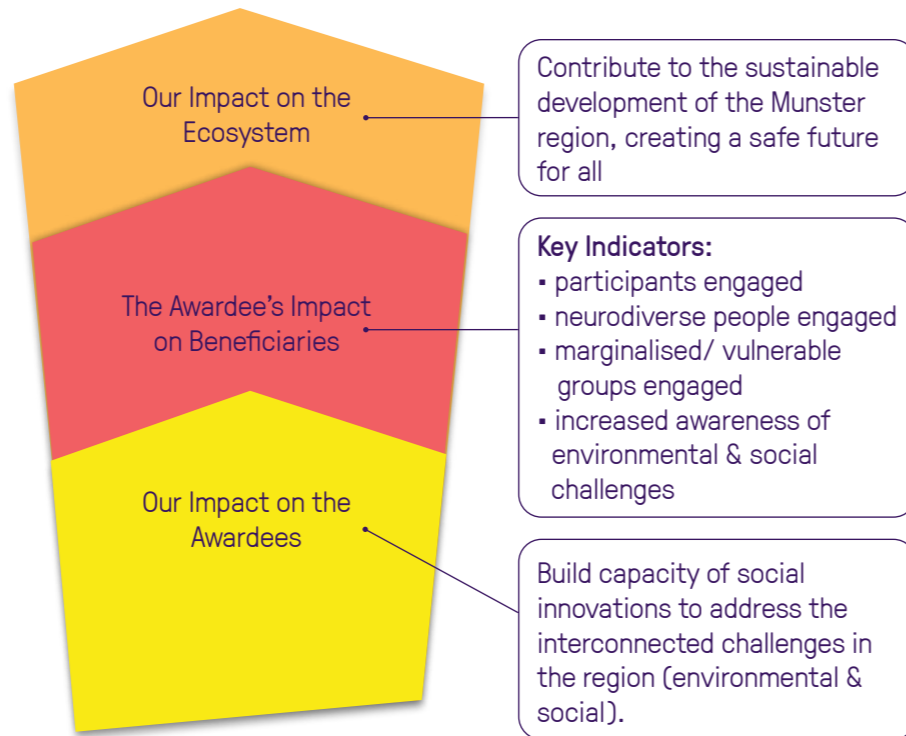
2.2 Impact Management Framework

The Impact Fund for Munster 2024 was designed to support projects responding to interconnected environmental and social challenges across the region. The fund's impact management framework provides a way of understanding how change happens.

Impact Goals/Objectives

Environmental Focus: Tackling issues such as biodiversity loss, food system deficits, overconsumption, pollution, climate inaction, ensuring that inclusion is at the heart of these projects, and that nobody is left behind.

Social Focus: Addressing the social needs of marginalised and vulnerable groups within the region, including championing the inclusion and integration of neurodiverse peoples and communities through innovative approaches.



The framework captures impact at three interconnected levels. First, the fund supports awardees to strengthen their organisational capacity, sustainability and ability to deliver meaningful work. Second, awardees create change for participants and communities through increased participation, inclusion, awareness, wellbeing, resilience, and engagement with social and environmental issues. Third, these project-level contributions support the sustainable development of the Munster region, creating a safe future for all.



3. Our Venture Philanthropy Model

At Rethink Ireland, we work to find and back the country's best social innovations to scale and maximise their impact. We do this by using a venture philanthropy model, a funding method that uses the tools of venture capital investing alongside cash grants and business supports to develop long-term social and environmental impact. Cash grant payments are aligned to targets and goals associated with programme delivery as well as strategic areas of growth. Alongside the cash payments, each awardee receives business supports tailored to their specific needs and stage of growth. These supports come in the form of a place on Rethink Ireland's Accelerator Programme, engagement with sector consultants and opportunities for peer-exchange and networking.

CASH GRANTS AND BUSINESS SUPPORTS

Nine projects were supported with an awards package ranging from €35,000 to €59,000 and a budget of up to €5,250 each to support capacity building in their identified areas of need.



Each awardee worked with the fund team to identify their exact needs as part of their organisational health assessment. From this assessment, it was determined which type of business support each project would receive by working with a dedicated consultant. Some of these supports included strategic planning, financial sustainability and impact measurement.

These in-depth pieces of capacity building work provide significant support for awardees to address a specific organisational challenge, creating space to reflect and identify actionable strategic next steps. Resources for tailored consultant support are often not readily available for social innovators, so the support was highly appreciated. One of the awardees stated that working with the consultant really “shifted their mindset”.

Here are some of the comments made by awardees:

“The dial has shifted, and the organisation recognises that the horizon doesn’t need to be static. There is significant movement, and we are evolving how we communicate the depth of impact we are having. The accelerator and consultancy work has played a major role in this shift.”

“We saw significant organisational growth through the consultancy work and workshops, as well as from the Rethink Ireland team and, importantly, other awardees.”

“The workshops energised the team and strengthened their sense of connection.”

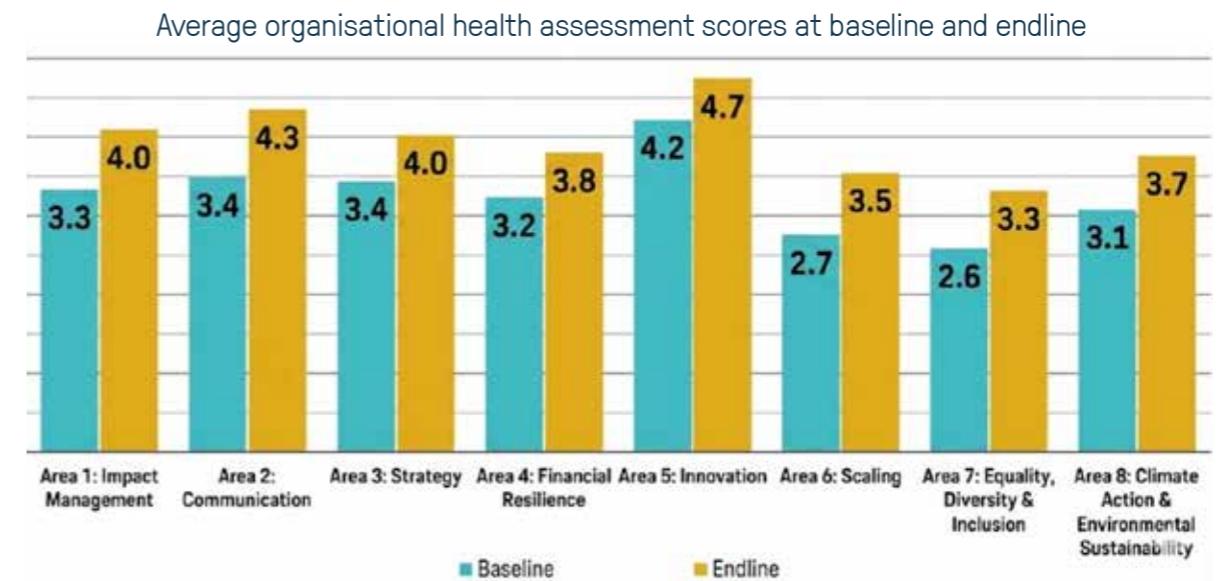
“We have learned so much and the consultants have given us so much wisdom and guidance to bring back to our team. We look forward to moving forward and using the tools they have created for/with us.”

AWARDEE ORGANISATION	AREA OF CONSULTANCY SUPPORT
AslAm	Communications
Autism Assistance Dogs Ireland	Training Plan Development
Cork International Film Festival	Impact Management
Living Woodlands	Strategic Planning
New Wave Adventure Therapy Wild Project	Sustainability Planning
The GAFF	Strategic Planning
The Toy Library	Financial Strategy
University of Limerick Foundation	Sustainability Planning
Wild Earth	Impact Measurement

ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT TOOL

The Organisational Health Assessment (OHA) is an internal Rethink Ireland tool used to assess and track our awardees’ organisational capacity. The tool helps to identify the supports needed to strengthen their organisation and scale. It is not meant as a tool for grading awardees, and it is not tied to their cash grants. The OHA is completed collaboratively and assesses organisational development across eight areas: impact management, communication, strategy, financial resilience, innovation, scaling, equality, diversity and inclusion, and climate action and environmental sustainability.

For this fund, participating organisations completed the OHA at the start of the fund (baseline) and again at end of the fund (endline). The results of their collective progress are shown in the chart below.



Findings show that all eight OHA areas recorded gains between baseline and endline. The strongest improvements were seen in Scaling and Communication, which increased by about 29% and 27% respectively. Financial Resilience also improved strongly, while Impact Management and Strategy recorded solid gains. These findings suggest that the fund supported more than project delivery alone. It also helped strengthen the organisational conditions needed for longer term impact. Improvements in areas such as strategy, communication, financial resilience and scaling are particularly important because they shape how well organisations can sustain momentum, respond to challenges and build on what they have achieved beyond the lifetime of the fund.



3.1 Accelerator Programme and Peer Support

Rethink Ireland's Accelerator Programme supports awardees to build the knowledge and skills needed to expand and deepen their impact. It provides capacity building training from best-in-class experts across the private, nonprofit and public sectors. Training workshops provided to the Impact Fund for Munster 2024 awardees included:

- Endgame (14th August 2025)
- Introduction to the Green Transition (October/ November 2025)
- Financial Sustainability (20th November 2025)
- Scaling Impact (3rd December 2025)
- Introduction to Intercultural Competence and Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (22nd January 2026)
- Intercultural Board Diversity (27th January 2026)

Awardees were very actively engaged in the programme and reported that they gained knowledge and skills that helped to increase their organisational capacity and to inform strategic decisions. The Scaling Impact workshop was noted as being particularly relevant to a number of the organisations, which aligns with the stage of development of the projects.

Awardees valued the opportunity for peer exchange and collaboration with fellow awardees throughout the course of this fund, and particularly highlighted the in-person meetings that created space for sharing ideas and peer-supported problem solving. Several awardees connected on an individual basis to exchange ideas and advice, and discuss interconnected issues, for example around engaging with specific marginalised groups or volunteer engagement.

AsIAm even delivered a workshop around neurodiversity awareness for Wild Earth, demonstrating the value of connection, collaboration and cross-pollination of ideas with fellow awardees.



4. Fund Timeline

OPEN CALL & SELECTION PROCESS

The open call and selection process took place from November 2024 to May 2025. The fund received strong interest from nonprofit organisations based across the Munster region, which resulted in a total of 52 applications.

After thorough internal and external reviews, 22 applicants were shortlisted and invited for interview. A number of representatives from donors and external experts contributed to the review and interview panels, and Rethink Ireland appreciates the valuable expertise they provided. After a rigorous selection process, a portfolio of nine projects was then presented to Rethink Ireland's Grant Making Committee and Board for approval in May 2025.

Contracts between awardees and Rethink Ireland were finalised in June 2025, and the first cash grant payments were released in July 2025. The onboarding process included an awardee peer workshop at the launch event on 26 June 2025. Additionally, awardees met with the fund management team to discuss project goals, conduct the Organisational Health Assessments and agree on priority business supports.



4.1 Awards Announcement

The awardees for the Impact Fund for Munster 2024 were announced on the 26 June 2025 at an in-person event at El Electronics in Shannon, Co. Clare. The event successfully brought together the awardees, donors and Rethink Ireland staff for the first time, creating an opportunity for the group to connect and celebrate the beginning of the projects' journey on the fund. Following the event, the awardees took part in a welcome workshop that set a strong foundation for collaboration throughout the fund.

Rethink Ireland issued a press release following the event to spread the news of the fund and announce the awardees. The release announcing the awards obtained 13 pieces of media coverage, with one national piece of coverage in the Irish Examiner and 12 regional pieces across several key Munster media outlets including one radio interview (Limerick Live 95fm). In total, the coverage had an estimated potential audience of 333,000 readers and listeners, valued at €22,047.

4.2 Programme Management

The implementation period for the projects was June 2025 – January 2026, with reporting and evaluation taking place in February and March 2026.

Awardees on the Impact Fund for Munster 2024 were supported by the fund team at Rethink Ireland over the course of the fund. Regular check-in meetings were conducted to track progress and discuss potential challenges. The impact of the overall fund was tracked by collecting several strategic capacity indicators.

Various opportunities were created to connect and exchange with fellow awardees and the Rethink Ireland team through the online and in-person workshops and peer-support sessions. Exit interviews and a final Organisational Health Assessment were conducted with each awardee in January and February 2026 to capture achievements, impact data, learnings and feedback.

The main challenge noted by awardees was the short lead-in time and short implementation period for the fund, especially for projects that worked with young people and had to coordinate with summer holidays or give schools enough time to plan for the upcoming academic year.

Some awardees said that a little longer timeframe would have allowed more space for reflection and shared learning, especially around their capacity building supports.

Overall, the awardees expressed gratitude for the funding and support they received and specifically highlighted the benefits of the combination of cash and business supports.

“The experience with Rethink Ireland has been exceptional, and we wouldn't change anything about it. We felt a genuine sense of partnership, where our work was supported rather than judged or pressured, which stood in strong contrast to our less connected experience with other funders. For us, working with Rethink Ireland has truly been one of the best opportunities a social enterprise can receive.”

5. Meet the Awardees



ANIMAL ASSISTED EDUCATION PROGRAMME (AAEP)

Autism Assistance Dogs Ireland

Target Group: Children and young people, young adults, people from marginalised backgrounds

Project HQ: Cork

Impact Location(s): Munster

Total Award: €57,250



**Autism
Assistance
Dogs
Ireland**

Autistic and neurodiverse children can face significant barriers in school, including anxiety, sensory processing challenges, social isolation, and difficulties feeling safe and included in the learning environment. The Animal Assisted Education Programme addresses these challenges by placing specially trained support dogs in schools, helping to reduce stress, foster positive interaction, and create more inclusive and supportive spaces for children and young people. Demand for the programme has continued to grow from schools in Munster, highlighting both the need for this type of support and its relevance within education settings.

THE AIM OF THE IMPACT FUND FOR MUNSTER INVESTMENT:

Through the Impact Fund for Munster 2024, Autism Assistance Dogs Ireland (AADI) supported the scaling and strengthening of the Animal Assisted Education Programme across four primary and post-primary schools in the Munster region. They built a more sustainable model through stronger in-school engagement, including parent and staff training, and improved impact measurement.

IMPACT OVERVIEW:

Strengthened support structures: During the funding period, AADI placed **four specifically trained dogs in four schools**, and engaged with **18 teachers and staff** at the schools through **eight training workshops** to embed the dog in the schools' practices and programmes, as well as providing **ongoing oversight and continuous learning**.

Whole school benefits: While the programme directly supported **20 neurodiverse children and young people** at the four schools, it also reached **3,000 people** indirectly, including other students and families.

Improving wellbeing of children: The conducted impact assessments demonstrated strong outcomes across the four schools, with a **90% increase in student wellbeing and emotional regulation**, particularly where dogs are embedded in daily routines such as arrivals, transitions and emotional regulation supports. Additional outcomes included an **84% increase in inclusion and social connection**, **68% increase in students' attendance, engagement and access to learning**, and an **81% increase in staff confidence and programme delivery**.

LOOKING AHEAD

AADI plans to maintain and further expand its Animal Assisted Education Programme by placing support dogs in additional schools, deepening school engagement, developing teacher training modules, and strengthening the evidence base to support future investment and scale.

"Our school dog has helped numerous children and is the reason many children are coming to school. She accompanies one boy from his car every morning to his classroom and makes him feel safe & secure in school. This boy was unable to attend school for 6 months due to anxiety."

"Various children in our autism units have started meeting Pumpkin [the dog] as part of their daily routine and it helps reduce meltdowns to no end. It provides an emotional reset and they move on with their day"

- Teacher, participating school



UNDERSTANDING AUTISM PRIMARY SCHOOL PROGRAMME

Autism Spectrum Information, Advice and Meeting Point (AsIAm)

Target Group: Primary school students

Project HQ: Dublin

Impact Location(s): Munster

Total Award: €61,000



There is a consistent lack of structured education on autism and neurodiversity in Irish primary schools. This can leave autistic children facing barriers in school environments that are not always well equipped to support understanding, acceptance, and inclusion among peers. AsIAm's Understanding Autism Primary School Programme was designed to address this gap by helping primary school students and teachers build awareness of autism and neurodiversity, while creating more supportive and inclusive school environments. The programme also equips schools with resources such as lesson plans and sensory activities so that learning can continue beyond the workshops themselves.



THE AIM OF THE IMPACT FUND FOR MUNSTER INVESTMENT:

This investment supported AsIAm to deliver its Understanding Autism Primary School Programme across primary schools in the Munster region. The funding enabled the organisation to cover key delivery costs including facilitation, travel, materials, programme development, and evaluation, while also helping to strengthen the evidence base to build momentum for longer term integration of the programme within the education system.

IMPACT OVERVIEW:

- **Reaching primary school communities:** By the end of the academic year 2025/2026, AsIAm will have **directly engaged 2,371 people** through the programme, including **2,296 students and 75 teachers**, and reached a further 5,000 people indirectly across the Munster region.
- **Delivering autism awareness in schools:** The project will have delivered **67 workshops in 37 primary schools**, helping to increase understanding of autism and neurodiversity and support more inclusive school environments.
- **Learning what works:** The organisation found that students often had a stronger baseline understanding than expected, that fifth and sixth class pupils were a particularly strong fit for the programme, and that **delivery by a facilitator with lived experience made a meaningful difference.**

LOOKING AHEAD

Building a stronger foundation for future growth, AsIAm is planning to further develop the programme as part of its wider training offer, while also strengthening the evidence base needed for future sustainability and long-term funding.

"The session was extremely engaging, informative, and well-pitched for the age group. The students responded very positively to your warm and approachable manner, and they were actively involved throughout. In particular, the focus on uniqueness, communication differences, sensory needs, and being a good friend had a very positive impact. We hope it will lead to increased awareness, empathy, and understanding among the students in their interactions with one another."

- Teacher, participating primary school



Scan the QR code to watch the AsIAm video:



Students and teachers at Togher Boys Catholic Primary School in Togher, Co. Cork, reflecting on participating in the Understanding Autism primary school programme.

LOOK@ME: COMMUNITY FILMMAKING OUTREACH PROJECT WITH CORK MIGRANT CENTRE

Cork International Film Festival

Target Group: Migrant communities, including young people from migrant backgrounds

Project HQ: Cork

Impact Location: Cork

Total Award: €40,250



Cork International Film Festival (CIFF) is Ireland's first and largest film festival and one of Cork's most significant annual cultural events. Through the Look@Me: Community Filmmaking Outreach Project with Cork Migrant Centre, CIFF partnered with young migrants in Cork to support storytelling, self-expression, and social connection through film. The project responded to a clear need identified by Cork Migrant Centre for young migrants to connect with their local community, share their experiences, and contribute to initiatives that support wellbeing, equality, and social cohesion.

THE AIM OF THE IMPACT FUND FOR MUNSTER INVESTMENT:

With support from the Impact Fund for Munster, Cork International Film Festival and Cork Migrant Centre delivered a six-week community filmmaking programme for teenagers from migrant backgrounds to create a platform for young people to tell their own stories through film and to showcase the final work (short films) at the 70th Cork International Film Festival. It also supported a mentor programme in collaboration with Cork Migrant Centre.



IMPACT OVERVIEW:

- **Supporting creative participation:** The project directly engaged 56 people, including 50 young people from migrant backgrounds and 6 mentors, and reached a further 250 people indirectly through its community filmmaking work.
- **Delivering a filmmaking programme:** Cork International Film Festival worked with Cork Migrant Centre to deliver a six-week outreach programme with five workshops for teenagers from migrant backgrounds over the summer of 2025, helping participants build practical filmmaking and storytelling skills.
- **Creating a platform for young voices:** Participants created six short films based on self-expression and lived experience, which were showcased at the 70th Cork International Film Festival in November 2025.
- **Embedding participation and partnership:** The project engaged the young people from marginalised or vulnerable communities in key decision-making structures, reflecting a strong emphasis on participant voice and collaborative delivery. The project also helped deepen CIFF's partnership with Cork Migrant Centre and opened new relationship building opportunities with other stakeholders.

LOOKING AHEAD:

CIFF plans to build on the relationships and learnings developed through the Look@Me project by deepening their partnership with Cork Migrant Centre, developing the mentor element further, and scaling their outreach programme to other young people to equip them with skills and a platform to share their voices.

"The film workshops were a really good experience! It was a big challenge at first since we had to work together in groups of people and we didn't know everyone. In the beginning we disagreed a lot, but as time passed, we learned how work together and created something great!"

- Look@Me 2025 Participant



Scan the QR code to watch the AsIAM video:



Participants share their experience from the Look@Me Filmmaking Project 2026.

MUNSTER BIODIVERSITY HAVEN NETWORK

Living Woodlands Ecosystem Restoration

Target Group: Local communities, marginalised and vulnerable communities

Project HQ: Tipperary

Impact Location(s): Munster

Total Award: €64,250



Living Woodlands works with local community organisations and schools to identify underused and neglected green spaces and transform them into biodiversity havens. These havens can include mini woodlands, permaculture orchards, native hedgerows, and other ecological interventions designed to increase biodiversity while also creating accessible local spaces for nature, learning, and community action. The project responds to the growing need for practical, community rooted responses to the climate and biodiversity crises.

THE AIM OF THE IMPACT FUND FOR MUNSTER INVESTMENT:

With support from the Impact Fund for Munster, Living Woodlands aimed to directly fund the creation of seven biodiversity havens across Munster. The investment was intended to cover salaries, native plants, materials, tools, and equipment.

IMPACT OVERVIEW:

- **Creating local biodiversity havens:** The project created **seven new biodiversity havens** across Limerick, Clare, Cork, Waterford, and Kerry, transforming underused spaces into pockets of native biodiversity in schools and community settings.
- **Engaging communities:** During the funding period, Living Woodlands collaborated with **18 new community groups** and schools with **317 active participants, including 122 adults and 195 young people**, and reached a further **1,700 people indirectly across Munster**. They also delivered 14 workshops and several talks as part of the project.
- **Contributing to sustainable development:** Living Woodlands planted over 3,500 native trees. It is estimated that by 2031, the seven planted biodiversity havens will have **sequestered an estimated 6,570 tonnes of CO2**, showing the project's practical environmental contribution at regional level.
- **Learning from delivery:** Severe weather made it at times harder to include marginalised groups fully, reinforcing the need for flexibility in future delivery.

LOOKING AHEAD:

Living Woodlands will continue to grow its network of biodiversity havens across the region. They are piloting a new training programme to equip community groups with the knowledge and skills to develop their own biodiversity projects, creating potential multiplier effects beyond the funded sites.

"Appreciation of wildlife, feels good to add trees to our community, nice to be outside (even in the rain!)"

- Community group member

"It was great to roll up our sleeves and get out and plant the trees. The 2 lads were very knowledgeable and great to work with. The kids loved the experience."

- Teacher, participating school



NEW WAVE WILD PROJECT

New Wave Adventure Therapy Wild Project CLG

Target Group: Young people, adults and families
Project HQ: Kerry
Impact Location(s): Kerry
Total Award: €55,250



New Wave Adventure Therapy is a clinical adventure therapy nonprofit based in Kerry. It supports young people and families to engage with therapy by combining therapeutic practice with adventures in natural blue and green spaces. Through one-to-one intensive adventure therapy, family sessions, early intervention group work, and practitioner training, the organisation offers a creative and grounded therapeutic option.

THE AIM OF THE IMPACT FUND FOR MUNSTER INVESTMENT:

With support from the fund, New Wave Adventure Therapy Wild Project aimed to deliver additional programmes for young people through its Wild Water and Wild Spaces strands, while scaling more deeply into communities in North and South Kerry. The investment also supported the expansion of its practitioner training offer, helping the organisation strengthen the reach of adventure therapy in Ireland and build a stronger foundation for future growth.

IMPACT OVERVIEW:

- **Reaching more people through adventure therapy:** The project directly engaged **24 young people** who participated across the Wild Spaces and Wild Water programmes. Wild Spaces supported 12 young people aged 11 to 16, while Wild Water supported a further 12 participants aged 13 to 20 through one to one and group-based adventure therapy.
- **Supporting confidence, connection, and self-care:** The project helped young people **build resilience, self-awareness, and practical skills for looking after themselves**. Attendance was strong, pointing to the value of an outdoor therapeutic approach that young people found engaging and supportive. Notably, most young people commented that it has been their **only positive experience of therapy**. Participants all said it is **their preferred means of engaging with therapy**.
- **Extending impact through practitioner training:** The project **trained 6 practitioners** in intensive adventure therapy skills and developed an introductory online module, helping to **develop new pathways for adventure therapy practitioners** across the region. The training created potential for wider future impact, with participants coming from a range of service backgrounds such as healthcare, social care and youthwork, and expressing readiness to apply the approach in their current roles and to collaborate on future programmes.



LOOKING AHEAD:

New Wave Adventure Therapy Wild Project plans to expand their practitioner training programme to meet growing demand and to strengthen local, regional and national networks. They will continue to provide their range of therapeutic offerings for young people.

“The mix of information, discussion and skills was perfect. Phillip and Jasmin have a wealth of knowledge and experience and are clearly passionate about adventure and outdoor therapy. There was a real sense that this is not just about the training but more of ‘a movement’ to inspire and support therapists and others to embrace the outdoors and natural environments in their work. I would highly recommend anyone who works with children or adults in a supportive way, to take part in this course.”

- Participant, practitioner training



TOMORROW'S UNIVERSITY: A SOCIAL IMAGINATION PROGRAMME

University of Limerick Foundation - Centre for Sustainable Futures and Innovation

Target Group: Communities in Limerick and wider Munster region

Project HQ: Limerick

Impact Location(s): Munster

Total Award: €64,250



Tomorrow's University responds to the interconnected challenges of climate and biodiversity breakdown, inequality, and social fragmentation by creating spaces where people can imagine and shape more regenerative futures. Moving beyond a solely SDG-framed approach, it introduces regenerative thinking focused on health, resilience, and locally led change.

THE AIM OF THE IMPACT FUND FOR MUNSTER INVESTMENT:

The award supported the delivery of a series of public workshops alongside the development of a digital microsite and open-access toolkit to bring futures thinking and strategic foresight into public and community settings in ways that are accessible, place-based, and action oriented. Anchored in the concept of a "Pluriversity", it repositions the university as a facilitator of collective imagination and place-based transformation. The funding covered subcontractors, materials, event costs and digital development, while also supporting the development of a sustainability plan project.

IMPACT OVERVIEW:

- **Bringing futures thinking into practice:** The project directly engaged **85 people through 6 online workshops** and an in-person "Futures Café" participatory event in Limerick City, introducing practical tools for strategic foresight and regenerative thinking. Participants were supported to apply these approaches to real-world challenges, **strengthening their capacity to engage with long-term change** in their own contexts.
- **Building cross sector connections:** The project worked with **33 organisations across 13 sectors**, bringing together educators, communities, cultural organisations, public bodies, and practitioners to explore the role of universities in the future and how learning can support long term social and environmental transformation rooted in place.
- **Creating tools for wider reach:** A dedicated **microsite and open-access toolkit** were developed to extend participation beyond in-person engagement. These resources enable users to explore six alternative futures through immersive visual and sound-based experiences, supporting ongoing, self-directed learning and allowing the approach to be replicated and adapted in other settings.

Project Website: The Pluriversity www.the-pluriversity.com

LOOKING AHEAD:

Across 2025, the project demonstrated how universities can act as civic infrastructure for futures thinking, translating academic knowledge into accessible, practice-oriented formats. Building on this foundation, the project is now actively exploring pathways for scaling, including deepening regional partnerships, extending the reach of the microsite and toolkit, and developing a longer-term model for sustained public engagement in regenerative futures.

"This funding created the conditions for something quite different to happen, not just to talk about the future, but to invite people into shaping it. It allowed us to open up space for collective imagination, and to translate futures thinking into something that felt tangible, participatory, and rooted in place, while also exploring the role of education in enabling regenerative futures."

Andrea Deverell, Project Lead, University of Limerick



THE TOY LIBRARY MUNSTER

The Toy Library

Target Group: Migrant people, including people seeking asylum, people from minority ethnic communities, people with disabilities, others

Project HQ: Cork

Impact Location: Munster

Total Award: €55,250



The Toy Library tackles toy waste and fosters recirculation in Ireland bringing communities together through in-person Swap and Play events alongside a free digital sharing platform that allows families to request toys from one another. The model combines circular economy principles with community inclusion, creating free and unconditional access to toys for children while also building local social cohesion.

THE AIM OF THE IMPACT FUND FOR MUNSTER INVESTMENT:

With the support of the fund, The Toy Library's aim was to scale its work across Munster in 2025 by expanding partnerships with local authorities, delivering Swap and Play events, and onboarding additional families onto its digital platform. The funding supported staffing, outreach, and event delivery, while the capacity building supports focused on long term financial sustainability and the development of a fundraising strategy to strengthen future growth.



IMPACT OVERVIEW:

- **Deepening relationships with local authorities:** The Toy Library partnered with five local authorities (Waterford City and County Council, Cork City Council, Limerick City and County Council, Clare County Council and Tipperary County Council) to deliver local events and promote their digital platform, demonstrating the successful integration of circular economy initiatives within local authority settings and highlighting growing municipal support for and engagement with circular economy practices.
- **Growing community participation:** Between July 2025 and January 2026, The Toy Library delivered eight community Swap & Play events across Limerick, Waterford, Cork, Ennis, and Cahir. 695 people participated at the events, re-homing almost 1,500 toys - representing a total toy value of €20,635. During Swap & Play events, families are invited to bring pre-loved toys to swap, choose new-to-them toys to take home, and enjoy a relaxed play session, alongside activity stations including the Teddy Bear Hub, eco-crafting, and eco tattoos, creating a fun, welcoming space that supports reuse, access, and community connection.
- **Creating a platform for engagement:** During the fund period, 1,488 users signed up for their free digital Toy Library platform, where people can list and request pre-loved toys locally.
- **Reducing waste through circular use:** An estimated 948.8 kg of plastic was saved from entering landfills, and 5,692.5 kg of CO₂e emissions were prevented, reflecting the organisation's strong environmental contribution through toy reuse and recirculation across the Munster.

LOOKING AHEAD:

The Toy Library is planning to expand its reach across Ireland by continuing to combine local Swap & Play events with the growth of its digital platform, while deepening existing relationships and forming new ones with local authorities and other stakeholders.

"I want to set an example for my children, what they see - they will do. For me, it is about making this a very normal and accepted way of getting toys."

- Parent Participant, The Toy Library



PAINT PUNCH MUNSTER

The Limerick Theatre and Performance Hub Ltd. t/a The GAFF

Target Group: Traveller and Roma people, young people

Project HQ: Limerick

Impact Location(s): Munster

Total Award: €64,250



The GAFF is a resource for community, voluntary, and professional arts in Limerick, creating direct connections between artists, communities, and the wider public. Paint Punch Munster responds to the mental health challenges and high suicide rates faced by young Traveller boys and men through a creative model that combines boxing, painting, teamwork, and mentoring. Led by artist Frank McCarthy, a representative of the Traveller Community, the project uses a culturally resonant form of expression to create safe spaces for emotional release, self-expression, and positive wellbeing.

THE AIM OF THE IMPACT FUND FOR MUNSTER INVESTMENT:

The investment was designed to help The GAFF scale Paint Punch Munster across Munster by partnering with local Youth Creative Partnerships, schools, and community groups. It funded artists' and project management fees, materials, travel and subsistence, as well as impact measurement and a final exhibition and video to showcase the project's impact on young people and their mental health.



IMPACT OVERVIEW:

- **Reaching more young people across Munster:** In 2025, Paint Punch Munster delivered **32 paint punch workshops** across **15 organisations/ 23 groups**, engaging **245 children and young people** across Limerick, Clare, Tipperary, Waterford, and Kerry.
- **Building confidence, creativity, and pride:** Evaluation findings show consistently positive outcomes for participants across various domains, including **increased confidence, emotional expression, inclusion, and pride**. Feeling of pride was the strongest domain with about 77% of respondents saying the project helped them a lot to feel proud of what they made or did, and about **96% reporting a positive impact overall**.
- **Creating powerful spaces for expression and wellbeing:** The project was described as highly successful in engaging marginalised groups and supporting personal expression, resulting in powerful artwork. Feedback gathered by the organisation was overwhelmingly positive, with most participants describing the experience as **transformative**. Three exhibitions were organised to showcase the young artists' works and further support their sense of pride and visibility across the community.
- **Empowering local facilitators:** Under the guidance of artists Frank McCarthy and Harry Bradshaw, The Gaff trained **10 local artists as facilitators** for the paint punch workshops to enable more communities to run the programme in the future.
- **Amplifying young people's voices:** A video documentary was created by Ellie Maron to capture the young people's reflections and experiences with the programme.

LOOKING AHEAD:

The project now has a trademark application, a manual, and supporting materials to enable others to implement the model. This puts them in a strong position to deepen existing relationships and pursue further opportunities to engage with other partners to sustain and expand the work with young people. They are also further exploring the possibility to offer the programme to vulnerable adults.

"Learnt to show my emotions!"

"10 out of 10 for experience, a brilliant programme!"

"If you are in a bad mood, it takes out all you anger"

"I found it very good because you can express yourself. Taking your mind off stuff"

- Participating young people



Scan the QR code to watch the Paint Punch video:



Young people reflecting on their experience with the Pain Punch project and the impact it had on them.

WILD EARTH – YOUTH WELL-BEING & RESILIENCE

Wild Earth – Self Directed Learning CLG

Target Group: Young children from vulnerable and marginalised communities

Project HQ: Clare

Impact Location(s): Clare

Total Award: €58,250



Wild Earth was established by a rural community in North Clare to respond to growing mental health and wellbeing challenges among young people, particularly those from vulnerable and marginalised communities. The project provides free, nature based therapeutic learning sessions that combine nature immersion with evidence informed resilience building practices to support mental wellbeing, physical health, confidence, and community engagement. It also sets out to address climate anxiety. Led by a qualified team including a Forest School Leader and an Eco Psychologist, Wild Earth creates space for young people to build life skills such as teamwork, conflict resolution, and climate engagement in a supportive outdoor setting.

THE AIM OF THE IMPACT FUND FOR MUNSTER INVESTMENT:

Wild Earth sought to expand its free-to-access, professionally supervised, nature based therapeutic learning sessions in North Clare while strengthening the project's sustainability. The funding was intended to support key staff salaries, programme delivery and support the development of stronger impact measurement frameworks.



IMPACT OVERVIEW:

- **Providing spaces for self-directed learning:** Wild Earth directly engaged 31 children aged 5-14 (22 identify as neurodiverse) in a broad range of activities through their programme between September 2025 and January 2026. Activities included **five specific climate action workshops, eco therapy, creative writing, drama and arts.** Many of the activities were led directly by the young people and resulted in an increased awareness of environmental and social challenges.
- **Increased resilience and wellbeing for children:** Parents/ guardians described Wild Earth as a place where children felt listened to, respected and able to grow at their own pace. Feedback highlighted meaningful changes in **children's confidence, communication, self-expression, resilience, and sense of belonging,** with several parents describing their children as calmer, surer of themselves, and more able to manage anxiety and difficult feelings. 86% of parents/guardians also observed a positive change in their child's physical health.
- **Increased emotional regulation:** Survey results indicate strong positive change for the children over a five-month period. The proportion of children scoring in the abnormal range for emotional problems **fell from 44% to 5%,** while total difficulty scores moved from 56% abnormal at baseline to 89% normal at follow up.
- **Strengthening community engagement:** Wild Earth engages with the wider community on a regular basis through event and activities to strengthen local connection and cohesion. They also ran two adult workshops on restorative practice and compassionate communications as part of this project.

LOOKING AHEAD:

There is a clear and growing need for self-directed learning. Wild Earth will continue to support children and young people with their tailored programmes while planning to reach out to other marginalised communities and families to increase access and reach.

"He feels seen and heard. He is now a completely different child, happy, energised, confident, and so deeply himself."

"Over time, I noticed a remarkable change in my children's everyday life. They have become braver, more curious, and more willing to try new things."

- Participating young person



6. Conclusions

Looking back at the Impact Fund for Munster 2024, the nine awardees have achieved incredible outcomes over a relatively short period of time and created long-lasting impacts on the lives of individuals and communities across the Munster region.

Through strong collaborations with schools, local community groups, civil society organisations local councils and individuals, they have created networks that will continue to grow, and deepened relationships will pave the path for future projects.

The tailored capacity building support they received has also helped to shift mindsets and approaches to strategic and financial planning, enabling the organisations to embark on a more robust financial sustainability journey and to strengthen governance and internal structures. This includes drafting a training plan to achieve accreditation, creating a roadmap for actioning strategic priorities and putting impact measurement frameworks and tools in place to capture impact, and be better able to communicate their stories.

The collaboration between awardees on this fund has demonstrated the power of peer support and how the exchange of ideas and cross-pollination between different sectors can create opportunities for shared learning and mutual support.

Projects like these do not happen by chance. They are made possible by passionate and skilled staff members and volunteers who work within the awardee organisations. Their hard work and dedication have contributed to making communities in Munster more resilient, connected, and better prepared to respond to the social and environmental challenges that they are presented with. In this way, the fund has contributed to building stronger local systems of support that reflect the interconnected realities facing individuals, families, and communities across the region.

7. Thank You to Our Donors

Deirdre Mortell, CEO, Rethink Ireland

This fund was built on partnership, and I want to sincerely thank Tomar Trust, Ei Electronics, Sunflower Charitable Foundation, the Parkes family in Limerick, our private donor, and the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaelteacht via the Dormant Accounts Fund for making it possible.

Because of your support, nine organisations across Munster have been able to grow their work and reach more people - often those who are too easily left out. This year we were proud to expand our focus to champion the inclusion of neurodiverse people and communities.

In a short space of time, these projects have supported children and young people, strengthened communities, and taken practical action on environmental challenges. What's most striking is not just what was delivered, but how it was delivered. These are organisations rooted in their communities, responding to real needs with care, creativity, and determination. You backed them at the right time, and that has made a real difference.

Your support has also helped build stronger organisations for the future. Alongside funding, the space to step back, plan, and learn has allowed teams to think more strategically about how they grow and sustain their impact.

Thank you for your trust in this work, and in the people behind it. It's already making Munster a more inclusive, connected, and resilient place, and there's more to come.



Deirdre Mortell
CEO,
Rethink Ireland

8. Looking Forward

This is the sixth time we've run a regional fund like this, building on what started with the Ignite Fund. With each iteration, we've learned a bit more, and one thing keeps coming through clearly: place really matters.

When you focus on a place like Munster, you're supporting people who know their communities inside out. They understand what's needed, what's working, and where the gaps are. This fund has been about backing that local knowledge and helping it go further.

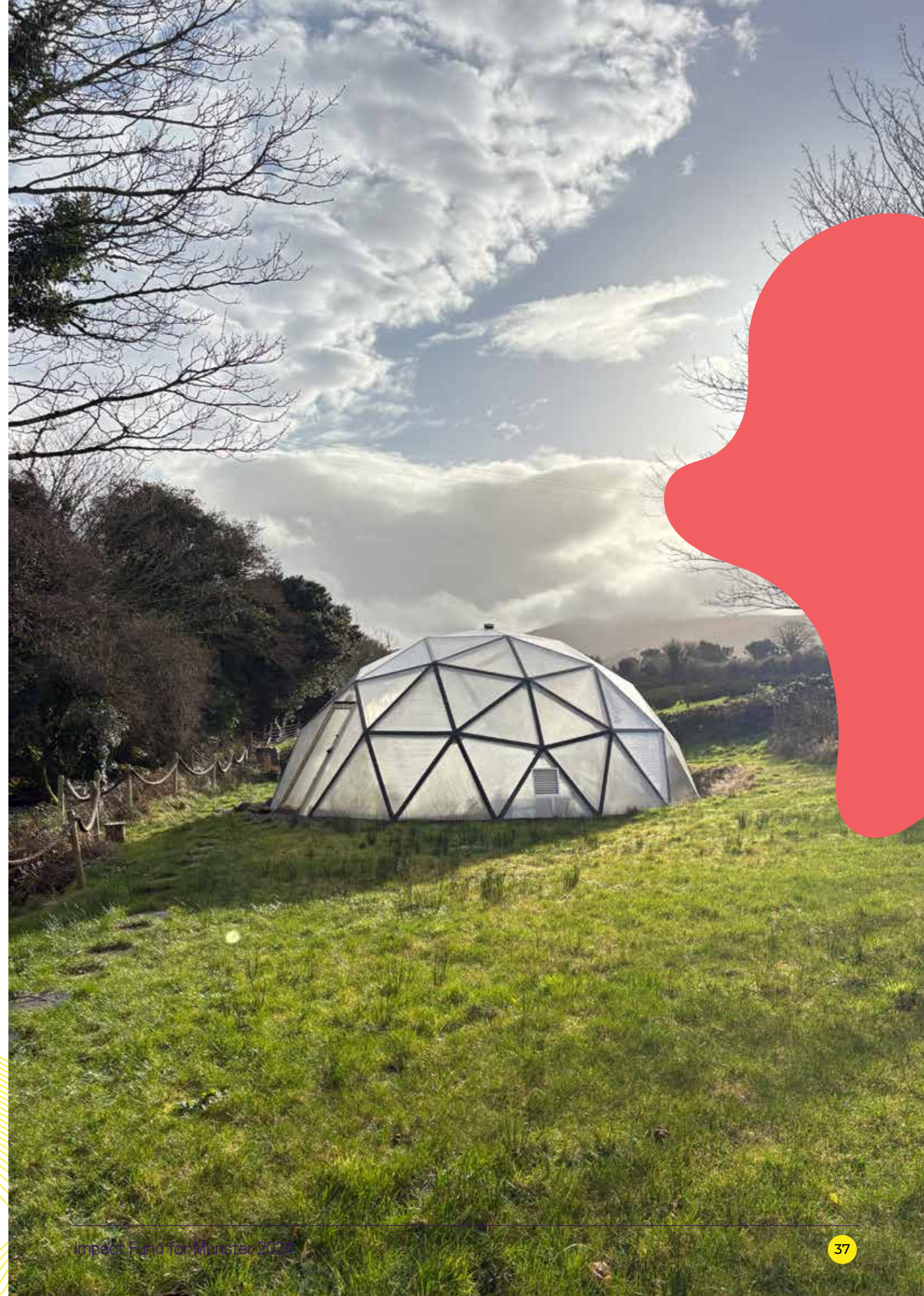
It also shows what's possible when donors and government work together. That mix of support gives organisations both the flexibility and the stability they need to grow their impact in a real and lasting way.

You can see the results across the region already - stronger organisations, more connected communities, and ideas that are starting to take hold.

There's still more to do, but this fund has shown the value of staying close to place. When you support people where they are, you give good ideas the best chance to last.



Pádraic Vallely
Head of Government and Strategic Partnerships
Rethink Ireland



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