PROJECT SUMMARY

FINAL REPORT

MARCH 2019

Voice Recycling Ambassador Programme
FOREWORD

We are delighted to share the results and accomplishments from our Recycling Ambassador’s Programme (RAP). The timing for this initiative was perfect as we were able to fit seamlessly into the goals and objectives behind the New Recycling List developed by the three Waste Regions, REPAK and the Irish Waste Management Industry (IWMA) and amplify its message. We would like to thank the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment for their funding and support of this programme and the three waste regions for their extensive input and guidance. Lastly, we would like to thank REPAK and the IWMA for their advice and involvement through our steering committee.

We had 30 ambassadors located throughout the country who were part of their community and were very well received by workshop attendees. We have found that prior to our recycling workshops, participants were very confused about what was allowed to go into the mixed dry recycling (MDR) bin, but they were also ready to ‘do the right thing.’ There was huge take up in the programme and great enthusiasm for the message that we delivered, with participants more than willing to reduce contamination in the recycling stream. Additionally, we found that with the reduced amount of plastic allowed in the MDR bins and the exclusion of soft plastics and films, many participants were upset that products were sold wrapped in this material and they often asked how to avoid having this type of packaging in the future.

Affecting behavioural change, such as changing waste segregation/recycling habits, is challenging, with many in the field citing that face to face engagement and interaction as the best method to achieve this goal. This is what RAP tried to achieve. WRAP UK, an expert in resource management, has documented waste reduction and segregation techniques in several case studies throughout the UK and have documented how they achieved better waste reduction and recycling through different campaigns. Each community achieved improvements through a range of communication techniques, including leaflets,
posters, social media and especially through face to face interactions. Peer to peer communications through community based social marketing has proven to be an effective method to deliver important messages to encourage individuals and communities to take actions and we believe that this approach lends itself well to changing waste management habits.

It has been a very busy year for VOICE having delivered 691 workshops and reached nearly 25,000 people through the RAP. We are delighted to have been part of this highly successful approach to improving our national recycling standards. Furthermore, we are grateful to both our Recycling Ambassadors and our broader stakeholder group, who were essential components of the programme. Finally, we look forward working with both industry and the Government to continue to raise awareness, demand higher standards and campaign to improve waste management in Ireland.

Mindy O’Brien
VOICE Coordinator
Before the launch of RAP, the three waste regions, REPAK and the Irish Waste Management Association (IWMA) came together to remove confusion around materials allowed in the mixed dry recycling bin and created the definitive New Recycling List to make it easier for householders to improve their recycling levels. VOICE approached the government with its proposal to take this information into the communities and thus the Recycling Ambassador Programme was born. The aim of the programme was to help people increase Ireland's recycling rates and reduce levels of contamination in household recycling bins via the delivery of face to face workshops in communities throughout Ireland.
PROGRAMME SET UP AND OVERSIGHT

Prior to the programme launch, during September and October 2017, all project staff were recruited and put in place. This included a Project Manager, three Regional Liaison Officers and 30 Recycling Ambassadors spread throughout the country. In addition, the programme design, website and workshop materials were also developed, and in the case of the workshops, piloted in advance of the official programme launch. This included a dedicated Facebook page and website; and pop up banners, tablecloths and branded hoodies for events. All Ambassadors received workshop training and a tour of a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) in advance of delivering workshops to ensure they had the most up to date knowledge of the industry when they were heading out into Ireland’s communities.

A steering group was put in place to ensure the programme achieved its aims efficiently and effectively. The steering group was made up from representatives of VOICE, the three Regional Waste Offices (the Southern Region, the Connacht Ulster Region and the Eastern Midlands Region), REPAK, and the Irish Waste Management Association. The steering group met regularly throughout the initial stages of the programme to ensure that issues arising could be dealt with swiftly and the most accurate information was getting out to the public.

WORKSHOP DELIVERY

During the course of the programme 691 workshops were delivered, spreading the message of the programme to 24,736 people face to face, both through workshops in communities and businesses and through stands at events and festivals.

Overall, the programme was divided into 3 regions, in line with the Regional Waste Offices, each managed by a Regional Liaison Officer. These were: the Southern Region (SR), Connacht Ulster Region (CUR) and the East Midlands Region (EMR). All three regions were well represented in terms of workshops delivered with 211 workshops delivered in the CUR, 239 in the SR and 241 in the EMR.

Amongst the workshops, 250 community groups participated nationally reaching 7,080 participants. This included Tidy Towns groups, Active Retired groups, Irish Countryside Association (ICA) groups and Men’s Sheds amongst others. Workshops were delivered to 110 corporate groups reaching 3,618 staff in offices across the country and 64 support groups also received information, reaching 1,454 participants. Finally, 46 educational institution, 41 Government or Public Participation Network groups, and 31 other groups were received workshops reaching 1,886, 1,233, 827 participants respectively.
FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

A significant part of the programme, which provided another way of accessing communities and expanding the reach of the programme, were festivals and events. In some cases, these provided a route into harder to reach areas or communities and often sparked further workshops through contacts made at the events.

The 123 festivals and events attended during the course of the programme reached 7,815 people. The festivals and events ranged from local festivals and events based anywhere from shopping centres, to community halls and local parks to larger events with a national reach and profile. Regional and national events of note that took place over the course of the programme include:

Science and Technology Festivals across the Northwest. The Cavan, Mayo and Sligo Science and Technology Festivals in 2017 and the Mayo Science and Technology Festival in 2018, these events allowed us to spread the message to over 700 people.

The Cork City Marathon in June 2018 provided an opportunity to help inform the public about recycling and support the festival in moving towards being a more sustainable event. The recycling aspect of the event was run in collaboration with Cork Environmental Forum and Cork County Council. “Volunteers and runners alike were enthused and I was told it was a huge improvement on last year. There wasn’t much contamination in the bins and any there was, was quickly solved by helpful volunteers with litter pickers” – Recycling Ambassador Abigail Joffee.

Another large event held in Drogheda, Co. Louth in August was the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann. Three workshops were held in Drogheda during the Fleadh festival which took place over a week. One took place in Drogheda Library to directly connect with locals and a further two took place over the weekend to engage with a wider audience. Over 150 people were reached through face to face workshops during the festival. It is estimated that over the 8 days there were 500,000 people who attended this year’s Fleadh events. “Thanks to your team for taking part in the Green Fleadh in Drogheda. We were really impressed with the workshops and your staff were very helpful.” Barry Eaton, Environmental Officer Drogheda Fleadh.

Over the summer there was a cluster of events which the programme got involved with. Some of the more notable events included the Dublin Zero Waste Festival, Seafest in Galway in June, the Making Waves Music Festival in County Monaghan in August and the Ploughing Championships in September. Furthermore, throughout the rest of the year several other high-profile events took place including
the Catherine Fulvio ‘Making The Most Of It’ Cooking Demonstration in Roscommon in May and the Green Party Conference in Dublin in March. Finally, the Airfield Food Festival in Dublin, which was held over a weekend in September, had a footfall of 14,000 people over two days and the programme information was on site for a month in the run up to Christmas, where a further 13,000 visitors were expected. “It was a pleasure to work with the Voice Ireland ambassadors and their level of engagement with the public was incredible. On a personal note I am now better informed to make good recycling choices and look forward to working with Voice Ireland again in the future.” Genevieve Whitfield, Heritage & Events Manager at Airfield Estate.

A key aspect of the RAP programme was meeting with and engaging communities on their own terms and encouraging engagement with recycling. To this end, workshop materials were translated into Irish and RAP had two Irish speaking Ambassadors in order to reach Irish speaking communities. This initiative reached 234 people across 4 events over the course of the programme. These were the Mackeral Festival and Taispeántas Chois Fharraige in Galway; Oireachtas na Samhna in Killarney and the Maynooth Environmental Society in Kildare. These events highlight the inclusive nature of the programme and allowed us to communicate the message to another community.

**ENGAGING WITH BUSINESSES**

110 workshops were delivered to Corporate groups and businesses reaching 3,618 people over the course of the programme. These were particularly in demand in the Dublin region where we delivered 60 workshops to corporate groups. Many of the organisations we worked with had a national reach, including amongst others: Brown Thomas where we delivered 7 workshops in their Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Galway offices reaching over 230 staff; Coillte where we delivered 7 workshops across their Cork, Dublin, Mayo, Tipperary and Limerick offices reaching 136 staff and Avoca where we delivered 6 workshops across their Dublin, Wicklow, Kerry, Meath and Galway locations reaching 92 staff. A prominent corporate event run during the course of the programme was the business-focused event held together with Accenture in Dublin. A business tailored event was hosted which brought 65 attendees representing different companies together for 2 hours, to learn about tangible sustainable practices that they could implement in their own work environment. The event was hosted in partnership with the Conscious Cup Campaign and the Cool Planet Experience team. Corporate engagement with the programme was echoed across the country for example in the northwest, with Abbott Ireland Nutrition Division in Cootehill in Cavan, where RAP presented to over 220 staff and followed up this action through hosting a stand in their canteen during their Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) Awareness Week in October 2018.

**EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

During the course of the programme several universities participated in the recycling workshops. Universities with mandatory induction programmes offered a unique opportunity to reach college students, allowing...
RAP to develop the Student ambassador initiative. By working with the Sustainability Officer on campus and training up honorary student ambassadors, who in turn trained groups of students, a much broader reach was managed than with a regular workshop.

The compulsory induction process for new student accommodation provided a systematic way of training new students via the newly trained student recycling ambassadors. Through this collaborative approach, over 700 students were reached face to face across Trinity College Dublin and Dublin City University (DCU). In addition, other colleges who participated in workshops over the course of the programme were Dundalk Institute of Technology, Dublin Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Tallaght, Maynooth University, Galway Mayo Institute of Technology and University College Cork.

DCU will be continuing with the programme of honorary student ambassadors independently during 2019, owing to the success of the programme and the uptake by students.

**SUPPORT GROUPS**

Finally it is worth highlighting the category of support groups. This category included special needs groups, the long term unemployed and groups considered marginalised or harder to reach. These include groups such as Local Education and Training Boards (ETB), for example Cork ETB and Tuam Adult Learning Centre, who took part in the programme. National Learning Network groups, such as NLN Carrick on Shannon, Clare and Castlerea. Disability Groups such as Rehab Care Galway and the Irish Wheelchair Association, Clonakilty and finally numerous Jobs Clubs and Family Resource Centres were also recipients of workshops. Although in some cases, for example with special needs groups, the attendance numbers of the groups was slightly lower than what would normally be required for a workshop, a total of 64 groups and 1,454 people were reached in this category.

**WORKSHOP DISTRIBUTION NATIONALLY**

Importantly, workshops were well distributed throughout the country, with workshops being delivered in every county in Ireland. This was achieved initially through the hiring process of ambassadors which ensured an even spread across each region, subsequently through monitoring delivery across rural and urban settings, and finally through reallocation of workshop numbers between regions towards the end of the programme.

As a result, workshop numbers and number of people reached were broadly proportional to national population trends. On average we reached 0.63% of the population in each county, with Sligo being slightly over represented (2.1%) and Kildare slightly under represented (0.11%).
The highest delivery of any county in Dublin (158 workshops) matching the most populous county in Ireland, followed by Cork (90) and Galway (58), the 2nd and 3rd most populous counties respectively.

The average attendance per workshop was 35 over the whole programme, including workshops and events. Furthermore, the average attendance per region was 35 for the Connacht Ulster Region, 34 for the Southern Region and 38 for the East Midlands Region.

Attendance per county is roughly in line with population, with higher populated counties showing higher attendance. Dublin, Cork and Galway showed the highest attendance of all counties, in line with their higher population numbers and again less populated counties showing lower attendance numbers such as Leitrim, Longford and Carlow.

Figure 3: Percentage of total Workshop Attendance and National Population, by County