

Call for Proposals – Expert Facilitator to deliver CIRCULÉIRE’s Thematic Working Group on ‘Financing the Circular Economy’

CIRCULÉIRE - the National Platform for Circular Manufacturing - is requesting applications from suitably qualified ‘Expert Facilitators’ to lead its forthcoming Thematic Working Group on ‘Financing the Circular Economy.’

Thematic Working Group (TWG) Process and Aims

Each year for the duration of the programme, CIRCULÉIRE’s industry members vote on topics that they deem strategically important to enabling – or preventing - their transition to a circular economy. In 2022, ‘Financing the Circular Economy’ was selected as a top priority topic for the network to run a Thematic Working Group on.

What’s needed to optimise Ireland’s finance & funding landscape for a Circular Economy?

Transitioning to a circular economy requires a significant increase in circular finance and funding instruments to support the development and scaling of circular economy pilots, business models and infrastructure. Yet both industry and the financial and funding sector encounter considerable challenges. For one, regulations, markets, investment tools and practices, including financial risk assessment, are adjusted to linear models, and negative externalities and risks linked to linear business models are largely not considered.¹

Consequently, emergent circular business models can be perceived as highly risky, not bankable, and can thus face added difficulties accessing funding and/or finance. While an increasing number of circular finance instruments are coming on stream (that range from grant funding, venture capital to retail and institutional finance) there is a need to take a holistic, pipeline approach to developing the funding and financial landscape that serves industry needs and reflects different stages of circular business model maturity. Meanwhile, more may need to be done to increase awareness and knowledge of the circular economy within the financial and funding sectors, and ensure that there are financial instruments, and risk assessment tools, fit for financing commercial circular economy innovations.

The aims of this TWG are thus as follows:

1. Map the existing finance and funding system in Ireland for industry and enterprise seeking to access funding for circular pilots, business models and infrastructure – and with input from CIRCULÉIRE’s industry members – identify gaps and presently unmet needs;
2. Increase panel members’, particularly those representing the finance / funding / enterprise support ecosystems’, awareness and knowledge of the circular economy, assessing opportunities to optimise the circular finance & funding landscape *with* and *for* industry;
3. Prompt dialogue and reflection, by presenting circa 5 international best practices circular finance/funding approaches for industry across Europe, emphasising their replication or adaptation potential in the Irish context;
4. To design and deliver 2x Ideation Workshops where the working group identify min. 5-10 innovative solutions with potential to optimise Ireland’s Finance & Funding ecosystem for a circular economy;

¹ European Commission (2019). Accelerating the Transition to the Circular Economy: Improving Access to Finance for Circular Economy Projects. Luxembourg.

5. Co-produce high-quality thought leadership with input from the panel members based on the gaps and opportunities identified (proposing practical, actionable recommendations as appropriate);

Key Activities to be delivered by the Expert Facilitator

Over a 12 – 16-week period the successfully appointed Expert Facilitator will deliver a series of meetings, workshops and webinars; each aimed at achieving the objectives of the TWG.

- 1 Meeting 1: Welcome session
- 2 Workshop: Ireland's Circular Finance Landscape – state of play and gaps
- 3 Ideation Workshop Part I: What's needed to optimise Ireland's funding landscape for CE?
- 4 Ideation Workshop Part II: What's needed to optimise Ireland's funding landscape for CE?
- 5 Meeting 2: Reflections from the Ideation Workshops
- 6 Roundtable Discussion
- 7 Public Webinar

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Table 1. Scope of Work and Deliverables

Activity	Anticipated Scope	Output
8-10 one-to-one calls with CIRCULÉIRE Industry Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure the activities and final deliverables meet industry needs, it is anticipated that the Expert Facilitator will lead 8-10 one-to-one short (circa 30-minute) calls with CIRCULÉIRE members at key points in the TWG process to identify key challenges and opportunities related to accessing funding / finance / investments for circular economy projects, business models and/or infrastructure; • Proposals for a limited number of 1:1 interviews with key financial or funding stakeholders are also invited; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call sheet / interview guide to be prepared • Minutes to be shared with CIRCULÉIRE
Meeting 1: Welcome session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome & Icebreaker; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slides to be circulated

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the aims and expected approach of the Working Group; • Understanding what industry and non-industry panel members' (e.g. funders / financiers, programme managers and financial policymakers) main priorities are for the TWG 	following the meeting
Workshop One: Ireland's Circular Finance Landscape – state of play and gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert facilitator to present overview of existing range of circular economy funding, financing and investment programmes and instruments for Irish industry • Expert facilitator to present circa 5 best practice examples of circular finance/funding approaches from other EU Member States (to prompt discussion and reflection) e.g. see “ECESP Financing CE / National Level Examples” here. • Facilitated discussion about key gaps / unmet needs, challenges and opportunities in the Irish circular finance & funding context; • A worksheet (developed by the Expert Facilitator) may be shared with panel members following the workshop to guide reflection in advance of the Ideation Workshops around key questions • Q & A; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short post-workshop document to be shared with IMR synthesising 7-10 key challenges / opportunities (which could be the explored by panel members in the Ideation Workshop) • A recording of the seminar to be made available for CIRCULÉIRE's industry members
2 x Ideation Workshops (In-person / Online Workshops) 'What's needed to optimise Ireland's funding landscape for CE?'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the 1:1 calls, prior workshops and desk research, the Expert Facilitator will prepare 7-10 opportunity / challenge 'scenarios' which the panel members will build upon when developing concrete ideas for innovative Circular Finance & Funding solutions • It is anticipated that the Expert Facilitator will undertake some preparatory work to organise working group into appropriate subgroups (e.g. by sector /industry; priority topic of interest, etc.); • Aim should be for the working group to identify concepts for min. 5 hypothetical innovative and impactful Circular Finance & Funding products or solutions that address the core challenges and/or opportunities identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short Ideation Workshop report
Meeting (Virtual): Reflections from the Ideation Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarise and refine the key takeaways and proposals for innovative Circular Finance & Funding solutions identified during the Ideation Workshop; • Collate key lessons, tips and good practices aimed at improving industry's likelihood of accessing circular finance & funding; • Gather insights for recommendations about how the financial & funding sector might be enhanced for circular economy in Ireland; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short 3–5-page draft Circular Finance & Funding briefing
Roundtable Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenting headline results from the Ideation Workshop Report and Circular Finance & Funding briefing for discussion; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalised Circular Finance briefing (to include

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TWG key recommendations for discussion with panel members and key decisionmakers in attendance e.g. the EPA; DECC; DETI; EIT Climate-KIC 	recommendations for priority stakeholders e.g. a) Industry; b) Financial & Funding Sectors and b) Financial Policymakers)
Public Webinar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the existing landscape of circular finance & funding ecosystem in Ireland; • Highlighting key gaps and opportunities identified; • Summary of key results and innovative Circular Finance & Funding solutions identified during the Ideation Workshops; • Finalised recommendations and conclusions of the TWG; • Promoting the final outputs to a public audience; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webinar recording • Slides

Expected Final outputs:²

- 1-2 visual and practical artefacts (such as a fact sheet / infographic) to be developed e.g. visualising the Irish circular finance & funding ecosystem, any current gaps identified and how they might be addressed.
- 20 – 30-page Ideation Workshop report that summarises the Ideation Workshop’s approach, and details of 5-10 innovative circular finance & funding solutions identified by the working group (emphasising their potential for impact if implemented);
- A 3–5-page finalised briefing that summarises key challenges and/or opportunities identified by industry and recommendations about how key stakeholders might address them;

About the Expert Facilitator

The Expert Facilitator will support the goals of the Working Group by delivering well-designed workshops and meetings to the Working Group’s panel members. You will be comfortable facilitating a diverse group of circa 20 cross-sectoral panel members, who are expected to consist of a mix of CIRCULÉIRE industry members, and representatives of the financial, funding and enterprise support ecosystem.

You will be comfortable undertaking background research to identify best practices examples of circular finance & funding from across Europe, translating this into practical and easy-to-follow case study examples that raise the awareness and understanding, and prompt dialogue and reflection for the panel members. You will be responsible for producing high-quality industry-focused deliverables and outputs in a timely and efficient manner.

The successful consultant will have a deep understanding of the Irish circular economy and circular finance and funding landscape. You will play a strategic role coaching and guiding the panel

² Near-final drafts should be produced for all final outputs review and comment by CIRCULÉIRE’s secretariat, IMR / another appointed external peer reviewer. The finalised version of all outputs should have key comments addressed.

members to identify a range of innovative supply-side and demand-side circular finance & funding solutions that can support Ireland Inc. to effectively transition to a net-zero carbon, circular economy, and in so doing achieve Ireland's climate and sustainability targets.

Ensuring good cross-organisation alignment

The successful Expert Facilitator will play an important role in achieving the strategic objectives and impacts of the network. To ensure good cross-organisational alignment between CIRCULÉIRE Secretariat (IMR), and Strategic Partners (e.g. the EPA and DECC), the Expert Facilitator is expected to attend some internal meetings at key points in the process. Some ad hoc check-in meetings with IMR will also be required ahead of key activities.

2022 TWGs Indicative Dates

Kicking off in late June 2022, this Thematic Working Group (TWG) will run until September (Q3-4), 2022 for a period of approximately 12- 16 weeks.³ Questions on this specification should come in writing to IMR (details below). We will collect questions until **midnight Tuesday, 31st of May**.

All compliant tenders (please complete and submit accompanying Excel Application to aide evaluation) will be assessed against relevant knowledge and experience, and proposed approach to delivering the activities. This work has a maximum allowable budget of €20,000.00 ex. VAT.

Indicative dates on the Call for Proposal:

- Open questions from submitting parties closed **31st of May**
- Deadline for RFP submission to circuleire@imr.ie: **Wednesday, 8th of June** (with completed Excel Sheet using subject heading 'Expert Facilitator application – 'Financing the Circular Economy')
- Interviews with shortlisted applicants: **14th June**
- Communication of winning proposal(s): **17th June**
- Kick-Off Meeting with to Agree Timeline: **W/C 20th June**
- TWG commences: **W/C 27th June (TWG)**

IMR Contact Person: Sophie Reynolds, Circular Economy Technologist; E: sophie.reynolds@imr.ie

About CIRCULÉIRE

CIRCULÉIRE's mission is to demystify, derisk, and deliver circular business model innovation by unlocking the value that resides in an Irish circular economy. CIRCULÉIRE is a public-private partnership created by Irish Manufacturing Research and the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and EIT Climate-KIC with 25 Founding Industry Members.

Between 2020 and 2022, CIRCULÉIRE will take manufacturers and their supply-chains on a journey from linear to circular business models through baselining, auditing, business case development and deep demonstration innovation projects delivering significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) and in waste production across the network.

³ A more detailed timeline will be agreed with the consultant as service contracts are being drawn up.