

Client Case Studies



2 Stakeholder Engagement – Western Development Commission



The Context

- The Western Development Commission (WDC) is a statutory body promoting economic and social development in counties Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Mayo, Galway and Clare.
- The WDC is involved in policy analysis and development, the promotion of regional initiatives and the operation of the Western Investment Fund. In addition, it is involved in several EU projects, some of which are focused on the circular economy.
- The WDC sought a suitable partner to assist with the development and provision of webinars and workshops for the BCT (Blue Circular Technology) and GOALs (Suitable Sustainability Goals for SMEs) projects.

The Challenge

- Sustainability/Circular Economy (CE) is fast-paced, broad, deep and complex. It has moved from being a desirable product or service attribute to an entirely new way of doing business. It represents a new mindset and culture. This means it is a difficult story to tell.
- Yet, consumers also demand that businesses be honest and transparent. Studies show that businesses that are perceived as purposeful, or as having a positive impact, have grown at more than twice the rate of other businesses. Where margins are thin and the line between success and failure is thin, small swings in consumer preferences, when added together, become large competitive advantages.
- For a business to tell an authentic and compelling sustainability story, it must have substance behind it. The speed of digital communication means that businesses can no longer control their stories. Unlike the days before social media, businesses are judged not just by the perception they try to create, but also by the realities of what they say and do.
- This means that the actions of a business are far more important than the communications of a business.

The Idea

- Antaris Consulting worked with Ireland's Western Development Commission, Finland's Karelia University and other partners from across the EU Northern Periphery Area, to progress sustainability and circular economy initiatives relevant to SMEs in those areas.

This project focused on two specific initiatives:

- The GOALs initiative helps SMEs to progress the sustainability of their management systems, operations, and value chain while also being more effective and authentic in communicating the value of these practices, in the context of their products and services.
- Blue Circular Technology (BCT) seeks to build links between SMEs in Ireland, Finland, Norway, Iceland and across the northern periphery and arctic region to find solutions to the problems posed by waste fishing gear. The initiative also seeks to help SMEs in expanding their market reach through more effective storytelling regarding their products and the efforts they are making to alleviate plastic pollution in the world's oceans.

The Execution

- Informed by a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process, Antaris Consulting hosted a Sustainability Storytelling workshop on the theme of Sustainability Storytelling for SMEs. The event included a blend of keynote presentations, polls, case studies and interactive small group work. There was a broad range of participation from across the Northern Periphery Area with registrants from six countries across a spectrum of institutional and SME interests.
- The supporting research included a survey to understand attitudes toward End-of-Life (EOL) fishing gear within stakeholder groups on the west coast of Ireland. The survey was offered in the context of raising awareness of the problems associated with EOL gear and the changing regulatory context arising from the EU Single-Use Plastics (SUP) Directive.

The Results

- The Workshops supported the WDC and attendees with seeing the theme of Sustainability from a fresh perspective, to create space for enquiry and to provide the basis for further exploration both individually and collectively.
- Antaris prepared a “Tips & Advice” paper to succinctly capture the learnings, insights and actionable takeaways from each of the Webinars/Workshops. This paper continues to serve as a useful aide memoir for the programme delegates and is also relevant to the broader WDC stakeholder community.

Thank you.

We look forward to hearing from you.

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