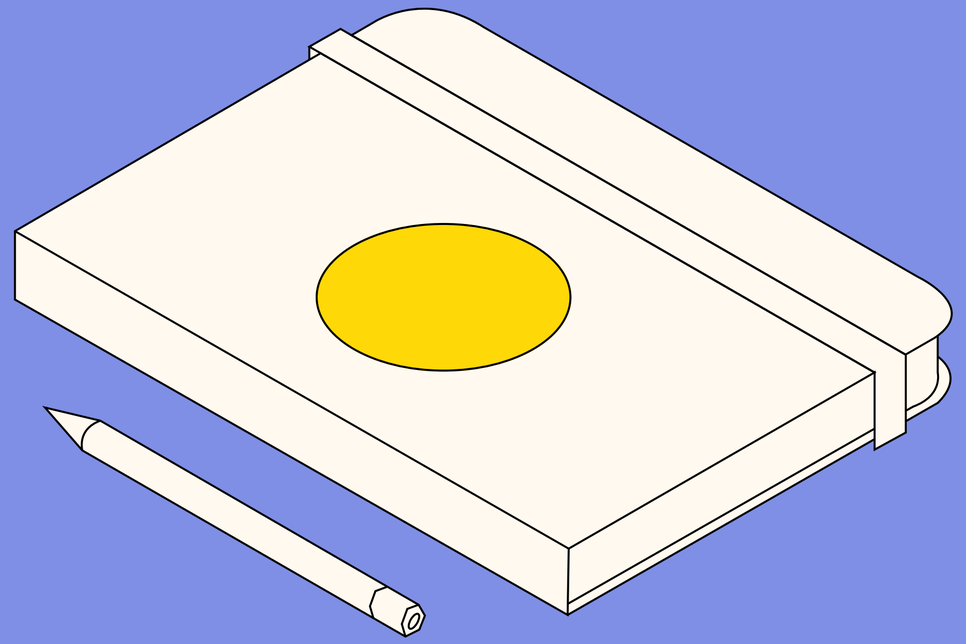
Your Circular Story

How to explain your impact and connect your work to the circular economy



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What's in this toolkit?

Whether you need help talking about the circular work you're already doing, want to make it a bigger part of your offer, or need to explain your impact to funders - this toolkit gives you the tools to create your story confidently.

Maybe you run repair cafés 🔨 but struggle to explain why they matter. Perhaps you organise swaps 👗 but want to connect them to something bigger. Or you might be doing brilliant circular work 🟡 without realising it.

What you'll find here

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1 **How to identify your circular work:** What it means in everyday language and how your activities fit

2 **How to create your messaging:** Flexible frameworks you can adapt for different situations

3 **How to demonstrate your impact:** Simple approaches to measure and communicate what you achieve

4 **How to find ready-to-use content:** Statistics, prompts, and social media materials

1 How to identify your circular work

Start by recognising what you already do

The circular economy is about keeping things useful for as long as possible, instead of the usual "make, use, throw away" approach. It's repair instead of replace, reuse instead of bin, and share instead of buy new.

Check if your group helps people:

- ◯ **Fix things** (repair cafés, fix-it events)
- ◯ **Share resources** (tool libraries, swap shops, community fridges)
- ◯ **Extend product life** (upcycling workshops, clothing swaps)
- ◯ **Reduce waste** (composting groups, plastic-free initiatives)
- ◯ **Buy wisely** (second-hand sales, group buying schemes

If you ticked any of these, you're already doing circular economy work.



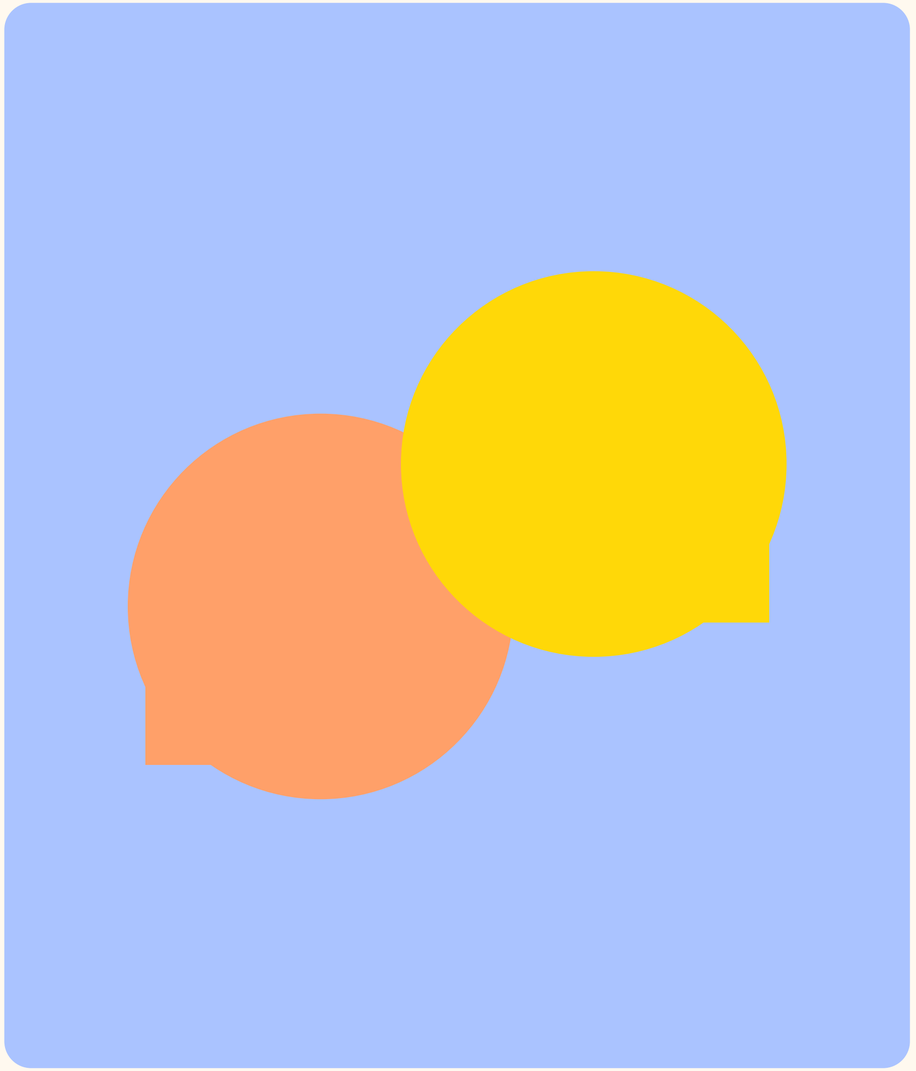
Turn complex terms into everyday language

Instead of saying:

"We promote circular economy principles through community-based resource sharing initiatives."

Try

"We help people save money and reduce waste by fixing, sharing and reusing what we already have."



Build your vocabulary with phrases that work:

"Keep things useful longer"

"Fix instead of throw away"

"Share what we don't use every day"

"Get more life from what we own"

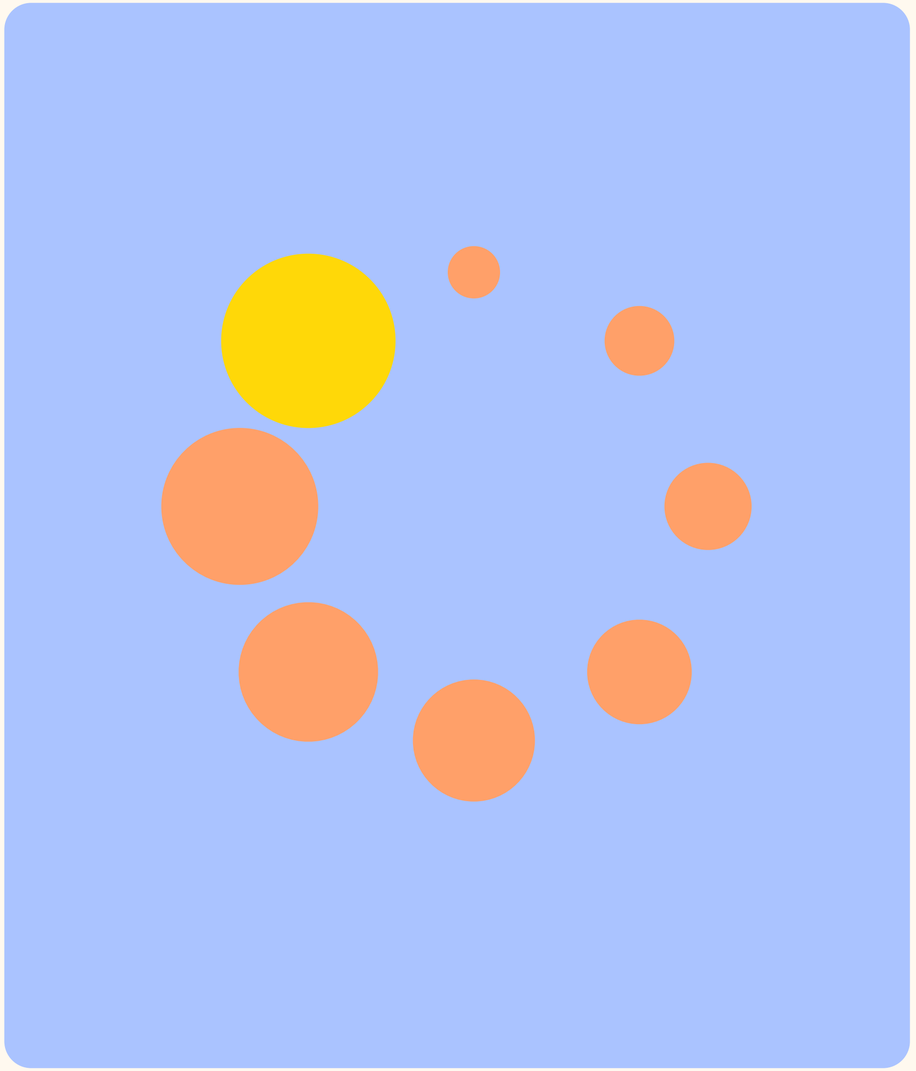
2 How to create your messaging

Build from what you actually do

Start with what your group actually does and why people join you. You don't need to completely rewrite your existing messaging - often it's just about tweaking language or adding a line that connects your work to keeping things useful longer.

Use these building blocks to craft your message:

1. **What problem do you solve?**
   (tools are expensive, clothing needs repairing, appliances don't work)
2. **What do you actually do?**
   (Run repair cafés, organise swaps, share tools)
3. **What benefit do people get?**
   (Save money, learn skills, meet neighbours, help environment)
4. **How can people get involved?**
   (Come along, volunteer, follow for updates, use this service)



Choose benefits that match your communities priorities

Different groups prioritise different benefits - and that's perfectly fine.

You can pick what actually matters to your members:

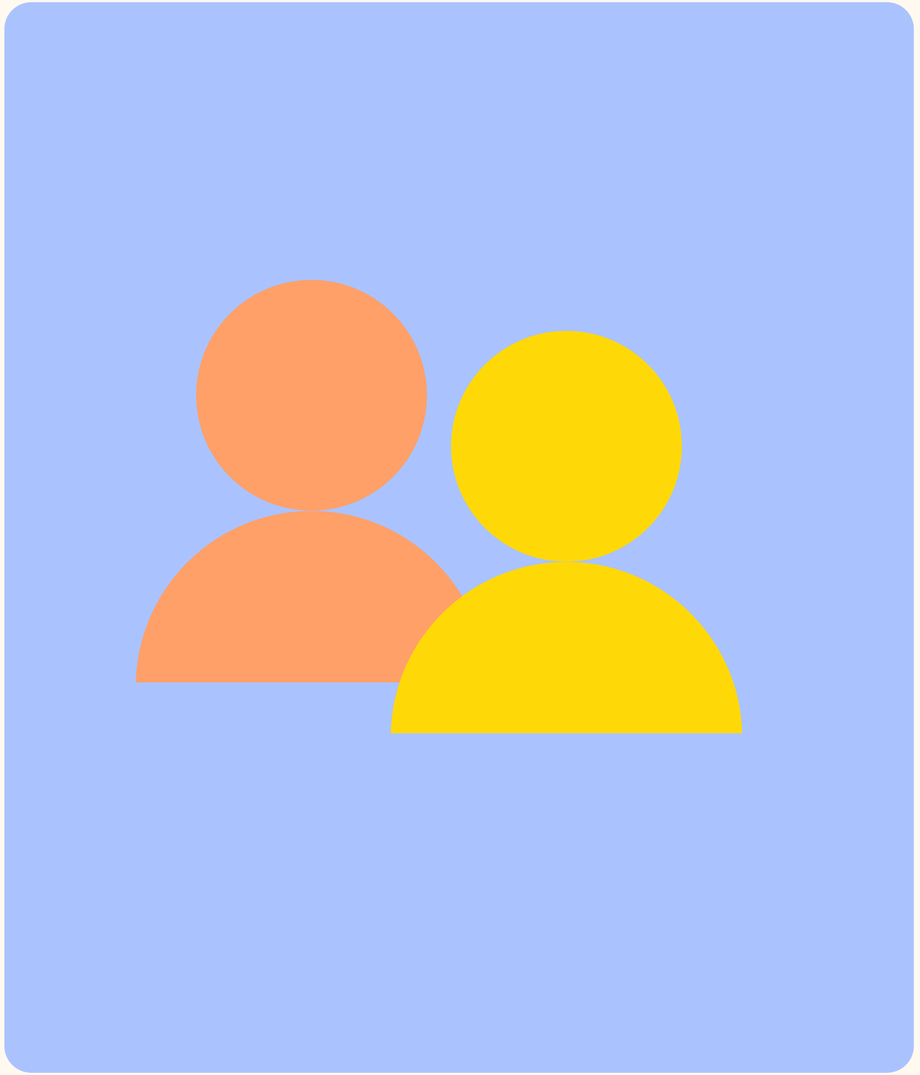
Money benefits: Save on purchases, repairs, replacements

Skills benefits: Learn practical abilities, build confidence

Social benefits: Meet neighbours, make connections, have fun

Environmental benefits: Prevent waste, reduce consumption, protect resources

Pro tip: If your members join primarily to save money, start there. If they're motivated by environmental concerns, lead with that. You don't need to mention every benefit.



Apply this approach to create your messaging

For repair groups:

"Every week, we help people give broken items a second chance. Our repair café brings together volunteers with fix-it skills and community members with things that need mending. People save money, learn new skills and prevent perfectly good items from ending up in the bin."

For tool libraries:

"Why should everyone buy a drill that gets used twice a year? Our tool library means quality tools are available when you need them, without the storage hassles or expense."

For clothing swaps:

"Our monthly swap gives everyone a chance to refresh their wardrobe without spending money or creating waste. Bring clothes you no longer wear, take home something new-to-you."

Adapt your message for different audiences

For social media: Keep it personal and visual. Focus on individual stories and behind-the-scenes moments.

For funders: Lead with measurable outcomes and community impact. Use specific numbers where possible.

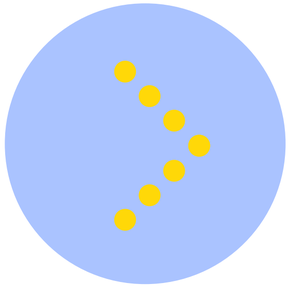
For local media: Connect to bigger trends but keep it local. What makes your community special?

For new members: Focus on immediate, practical benefits. What will they gain by getting involved?

3 How to demonstrate your impact

Use this simple framework to structure your stories

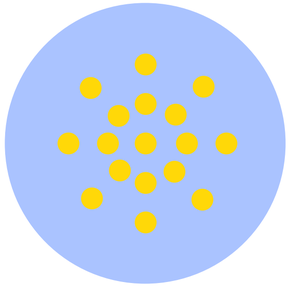
Good impact stories have three ingredients you can mix and match:



What happened

Concrete actions

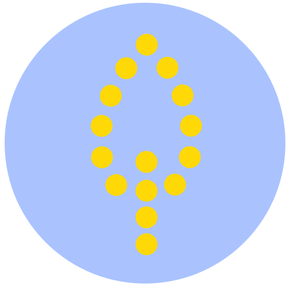
Eg. fixed 20 items, swapped 100 pieces of clothing.



Who benefited

Real people with real outcomes

Eg: Sarah saved €60, the community centre got equipment.



Why it matters

Connect to bigger picture if relevant

Eg: prevented waste, built skills

Create impact stories that resonate

Focus on money impact:

"Our repair café has helped 150 people fix items instead of replacing them, saving our community over €8,000 this year."

Show community building:

"What started as monthly swaps has become a real community hub, with members organising skill-shares and social events."

Highlight skills development:

"Members have learnt everything from basic sewing to electronics repair, with 80% now feeling confident fixing things at home."

Demonstrate environmental benefits:

"Together, we've kept 800 items of clothing in circulation instead of heading to landfill."

Apply this approach to create your messaging

For repair activities	Items fixed vs replacement cost New skills learnt by members Waste prevented (items/weight)
For sharing/swap activities:	Money saved by members Items shared or swapped New community connections made
For growing/making activities:	Money saved vs buying new Skills developed Community relationships built

Avoid these common measuring mistakes

- Don't claim unrealistic environmental savings
- Avoid jargony language ("carbon footprint reduction")
- Don't count the same impact twice
- Focus on outcomes people actually care about

3 How to find ready-to-use content

Irish statistics with sources

Electronics & Appliances:

Irish households recycled over 41,000 tonnes of electronic waste in 2023 (WEEE Ireland, 2024) — equivalent to 200 shipping containers of old phones and laptops

Clothing & Textiles:

Irish households discard about 110,000 tonnes of textiles annually (EPA, 2024) — enough to fill the Aviva Stadium halfway to the roof

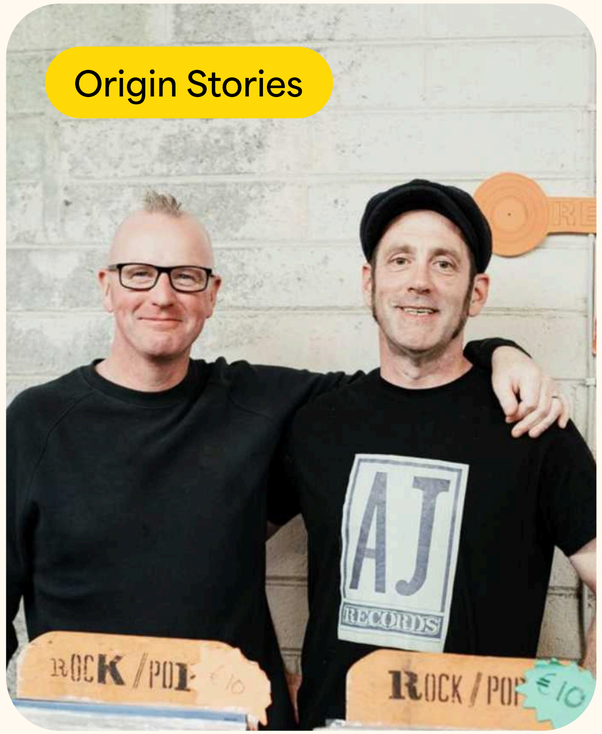
Of this, 42,000 tonnes are clothing (EPA, 2024) — like everyone in Cork throwing away their wardrobe twice

Food & Household:

Irish households waste about €700 worth of food annually (EPA, 2024) — that's €60 worth of groceries in the bin every month

Food waste costs families about €60 monthly (EPA, 2024) — equivalent to binning a full weekly shop

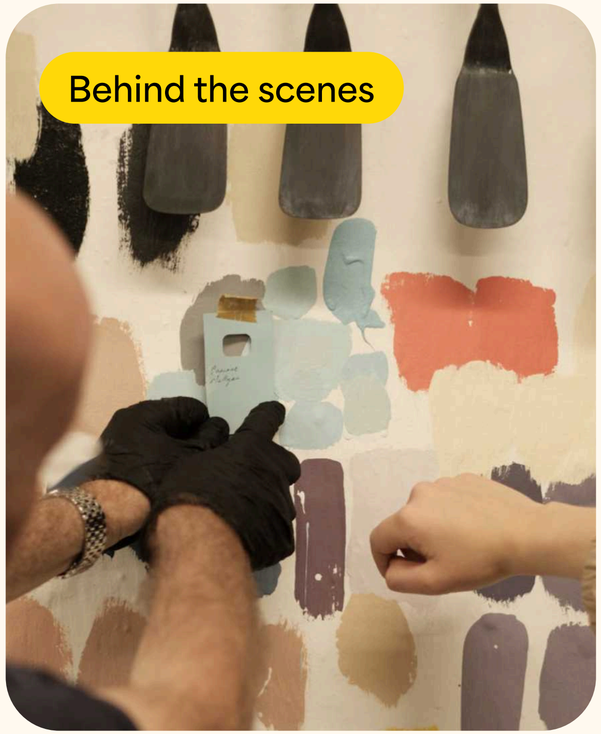
Social media content ideas



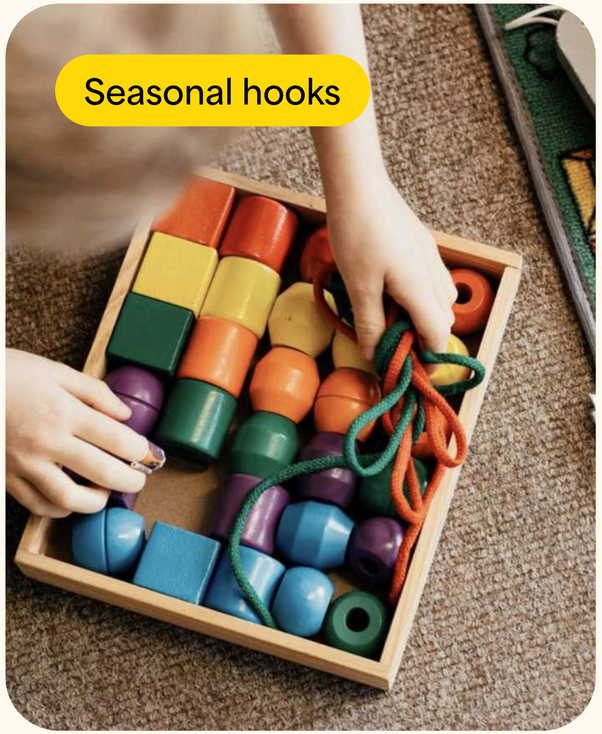
- How your group started
- The problem you noticed in your community
- Your first member or volunteer



- Someone who learnt a new skill
- A successful repair or swap
- How membership improved someone's life



- Event preparation
- Meet your volunteers
- Your workspace or meeting spot



- Back-to-school swaps and repairs
- Spring cleaning events
- Christmas gift alternatives
- New Year sustainability goals

Ready-to-use captions

Repair success

"Another win at [event name]! This [item] was heading for the bin until [name] learnt to [repair]. Cost to fix: €[X]. Cost to replace: €[Y]. Skills learnt: priceless. 🔧 #RepairDontReplace #CircularLiving"

Swap story

"[Name] found the perfect [item] at our swap today - one person's unwanted becomes another's treasure! Next swap: [date/location]. #CircularCommunity"

Monthly impact

"This month: €[amount] saved by our members, [number] items kept in use, [number] new skills learnt. Small actions, big impact. Join us: [next event]."

Seasonal content

"Spring cleaning? Before you bin it, bring it to our [event type] on [date]. Give your unwanted items a second chance! #ShareDontWaste"

Volunteer appreciation

"Huge thanks to [name] who taught three people to [skill] at yesterday's event. Knowledge shared is knowledge doubled! 🙌 #CommunitySkills"

Troubleshooting common challenges

"People don't understand what we do"

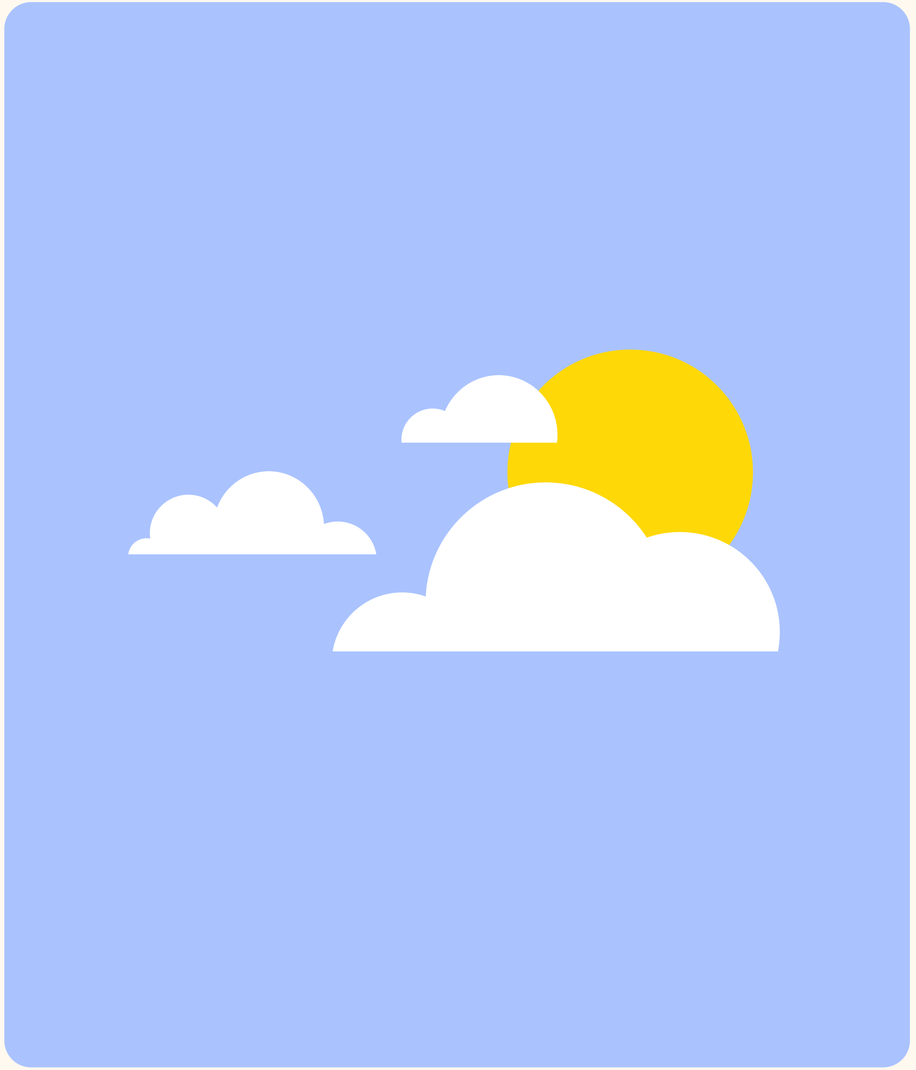
- Use specific examples instead of general terms
- Lead with the problem you solve, not the solution
- Show before/after photos or stories

"We sound too 'worthy' or preachy"

- Focus on practical benefits first
- Use members' own words and stories
- Show the fun and social side

"Hard to explain our environmental impact"

- Use local, tangible comparisons
- Connect to immediate benefits people care about
- Be specific about what waste you prevent



Next steps

Getting started:

A. Pick one messaging example that fits your group type

B. Customise it with your specific activities and benefits

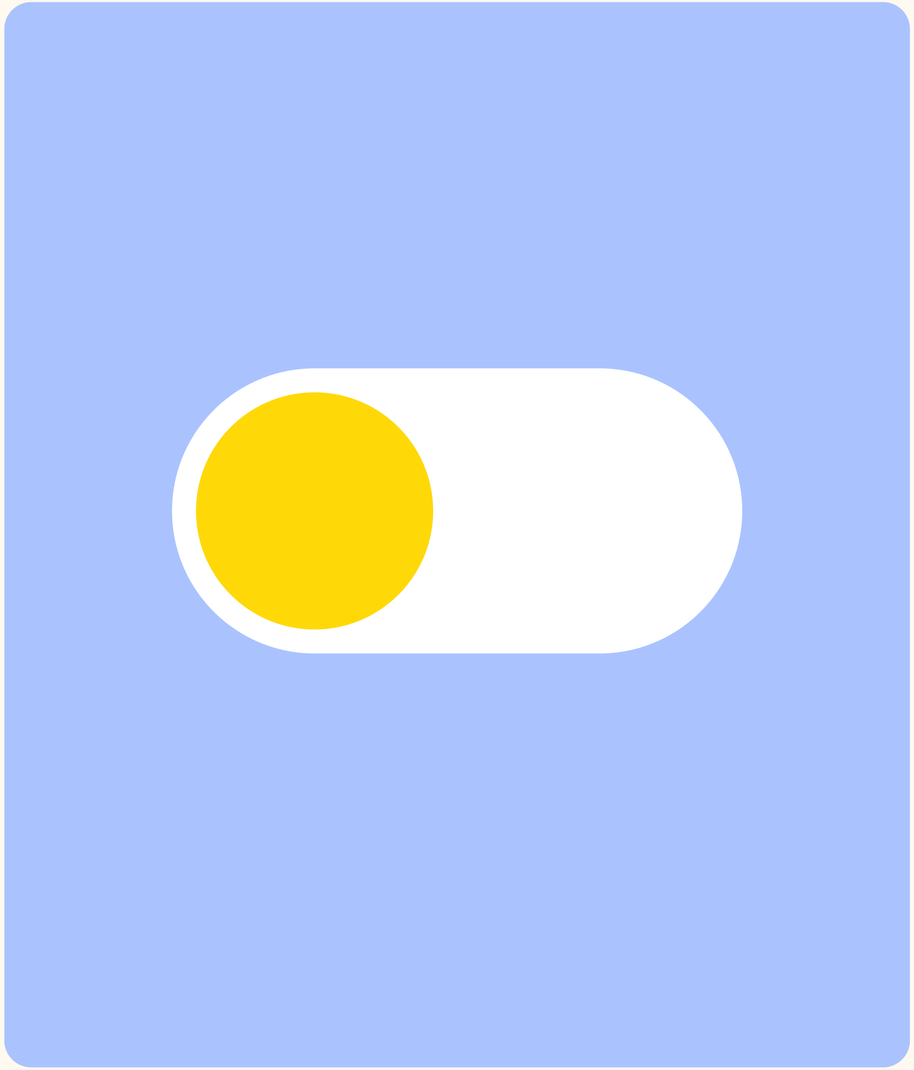
C. Test it with a few members - does it sound like you?

D. Use the statistics and social content to support your core message

Questions to guide you:

- What's the main problem your group solves?
- What's the biggest benefit your members actually get?
- How would you explain what you do to a friend in the pub?
- What would happen if your group disappeared tomorrow?

Remember: The best messaging sounds like your group, not like every other organisation. Be authentic, be specific and focus on what your members genuinely value.



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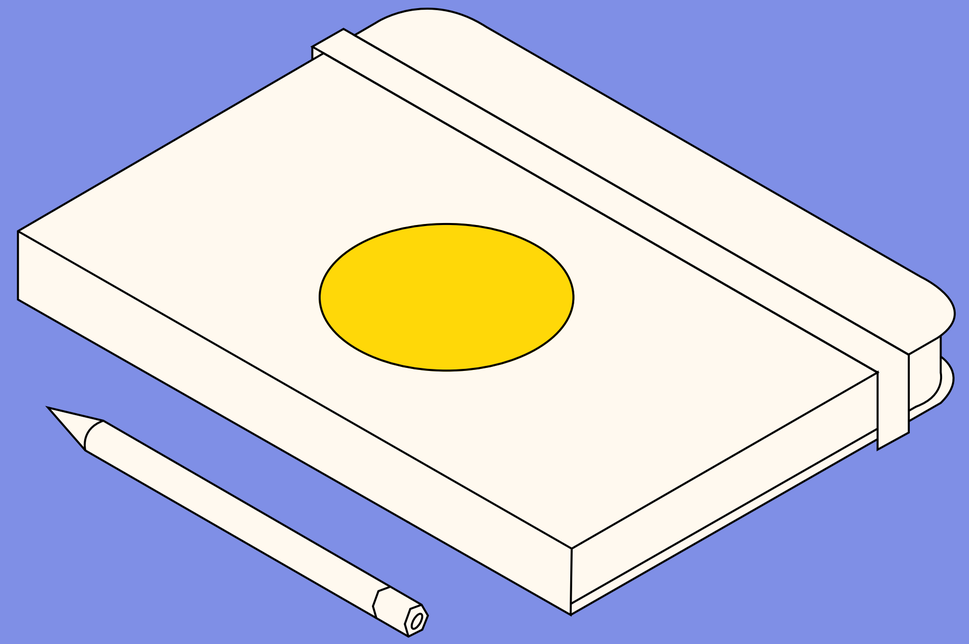
Got a suggestion on how to improve this toolkit? Or have something you'd love us to cover?

Get in touch with Eibhlin today:
Eibhlin@circular.ie



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