



NYC Materials Exchange Development Program

Strengthening NYC's materials exchange and reuse sector

Proceedings from the 2007 NYC Materials Exchange Conference

On November 7th 2007 the NYC Materials Exchange Development Program sponsored and hosted the *2007 NYC Materials Exchange Conference, "Overcoming Shared Challenges to Strengthen NYC's Materials Exchange and Reuse Sector."*

This event, which was held at The City College of New York (CCNY) and funded by NYC Department of Sanitation (DSNY) Bureau of Waste Prevention, Reuse and Recycling, brought together New York City's reuse organizations to explore approaches to improve operations, to develop sector strategies, and connect with colleagues.

The day began with welcoming comments given by Dr. Professor Vasil Diyamandoglu, an Environmental Engineer at the CCNY and the Director of the NYC Materials Exchange Materials Program. Professor Diyamandoglu spoke about urban sustainability and the role reuse will play in moving the City towards a more sustainable future. He then introduced Robert Lange, Director of DSNY's Bureau of Waste Prevention, Reuse and Recycling, who delivered opening remarks.

Mr. Lange welcomed the reuse organizations present, and offered highlights of the Bureau's critical services such as online resource for preventing waste, offering citywide curbside recycling, and outreach and education in the public schools. While proud of the Bureau's efforts, he conveyed his appreciation to the other players in the field of reuse that have helped DSNY do their jobs, even if it was not intentionally in the name of reducing waste. "Some organizations set up thrift stores to raise money to support their programs, while other organizations are reusing materials to give directly to those in need. Whatever the mission may be, the end result is the reduction of NYC's waste."

This was followed by a presentation of a recent study, "*Sector Assessment Project, A comprehensive study of NYC's materials exchange and reuse sector*" by MaryEllen Etienne, MEDP's Manager. The study, presented, found seven key challenges common among sector organizations: funding, transportation, physical space, staffing, data and technology, marketing, and fostering reuse and other green practices. MEDP carefully considered each of these challenges and the presentation provided an overview of the various types of assistance to help address them. A copy of the Sector Assessment Report will be available on MEDP's website (www.nycmedp.org).

Following this presentation a series of facilitated panel discussions and presentations explored the top four challenges highlighted in the study and provided practical strategies to address them. The panels were composed of diverse constituents of the

city's reuse sector, representing both well established organizations and smaller organizations with unique perspectives

The first panel, moderated by and Andriana Kontovrakis of DSNY's Bureau of Waste Prevention, Reuse and Recycling, was focused on transportation and logistics. Panelists were Luis Jimenez of NYC Clothing Bank, Jennifer McLean of City Harvest, and Neelam Mehta of Nonprofit Computing. During these discussions the audience was provided a variety of logistics methods that are designed to serve reuse customers in an effective manner.

Presentations on data management and marketing were then given by Harriet Taub of Materials for the Arts, and Martha Shaw of Earth Advertising, respectively. Taub's presentation informed participants on the vital role information technology has in tracking and sharing the positive impacts of reuse organizations. While, Shaw's presentation provided an overview of simple and effective strategies to promote reuse programs.

The second panel, moderated by MaryEllen Etienne of MEDP, highlighted strategies that leverage available resources to ensure a reuse program's financial health and longevity. The panelists were Linda Jacobs of Empire State Development's Environmental Services Unit, Geraldine Bower of Bridal Garden, and Luis Jimenez of NYC Clothing Bank. Linda Jacobs spoke about those aspects of reuse organizations which make their proposals attractive to funders, such as the experience of staff, strategic partnerships, and sustainability goals. Geraldine Brower covered the benefits of being a self-sustaining program, including the flexibility to meet client needs and time to build a business. Luis Jimenez discussed the ways in which he assessed his program and what measures were taken to increase its operational effectiveness, such as staff reviews for work tasks and compensation and creating a culture of accountability. From the perspective of funding-seeker and funder, Jimenez and Jacobs talked about trends in fundraising, while Brower explained the pros and cons of being outside the issue.

The day's events concluded with a workshop that considered additional sector concerns and worked collaboratively on solutions. This workshop was facilitated by Linda Jacobs, of Empire State Development's Environmental Services Unit. The session entailed an examination of issues previously addressed, as well as any other topics not addressed during the conference, for the purpose of building collective strategies within the sector. Each breakout group was required to create an agreed upon list of top three barriers of managing a materials exchange organization. Then the goal of each group was to develop a viable solution, or combination of solutions, for each barrier. The solutions discussed were: (1) a sector wide data management system to help develop industry standards, accountability and inventory management; (2) a collective marketing strategy to help promote the sector as a whole and educate the city's potential clients on the benefits of Reuse; and (3) events such as a sector-focused "funder meet and greet" to improve funding to the reuse sector.

Closing remarks, given by MaryEllen Etienne, outlined the next steps for MEDP. The program will begin to develop a range of programs and services designed to meet the challenges of NYC's materials exchange and reuse sector, as well as stimulate sector wide resource collaborations. These will range from web-based resources, networking opportunities, and topic-specific training seminars.

A networking reception followed the conference proceedings.

A Note on Funding

Please note that MEDP, which includes our work on the Sector Assessment Project, the 2007 NYC Materials Exchange Conference and future activities are funded by the NYC Department of Sanitation Bureau of Waste Prevention, Reuse and Recycling. The networking reception was sponsored by CCNY's Civil Engineering Department, Filco Carting, Whole Foods, Green Office Systems and Fine Star Imaging.

Contact Information

If you require any further information about the Sector Assessment Project or this report; or to request a copy of the participant profiles booklet, please contact MEDP.

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