

NATIONAL REUSE SUMMIT

October 20, 2009

Hosted by



SUMMIT PROCEEDINGS

The [Reuse Alliance](#) hosted the first “National Reuse Summit” on Tuesday, October 20, 2009 in Devens, Massachusetts. The summit brought together leaders of the nation’s reuse sector, along with government environmental agencies, city planners, and community activists to explore approaches, and discuss and develop reuse sector strategies. The summit was held in conjunction with the [Grassroots Recycling Network’s](#) (GRRN) National Zero Waste Conference, and was sponsored by [Green Office Systems](#), [iWasteNot Systems](#), [US Environmental Protection Agency Region 2](#), and the [World Reuse, Repair, and Recycling Association](#).

Welcoming Remarks

The summit began with opening comments given by MaryEllen Etienne, Executive Director of Reuse Alliance. MaryEllen began with a brief overview of Reuse Alliance’s mission to increase public awareness of reuse and strengthen the reuse sector by connecting, supporting and promoting its members. She then explained how the organization acts as a networking conduit, provides capacity building training and resources, and advocates for pro-reuse policies.

MaryEllen highlighted several initiatives being developed by Reuse Alliance that will provide vital support to the reuse sector. These included the Reuse Sector Data Standard (i.e. a sector-backed standard for collecting and disseminating data), the Master Reuser Program (i.e. a webinar-based certificate program for reuse sector employees), a host of downloadable resources, and “[National Reuse Day](#)” (i.e. the campaign to establish a reuse day on Oct 20th of every year).

After briefly highlighting the summit’s agenda she introduced Brooke Nash, Branch Chief of [Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection](#) (MassDEP).

Background & Context of the Summit

Brooke provided a brief history of the summit’s development. She started by mentioning that she was introduced to Reuse Alliance at the WasteWise forum hosted by MassDEP on June 11, 2009. The day featured discussions about virtual reuse, and offered presentations from Mass Material Trader, iWasteNot Systems, Northeast Recycling Council and the Reuse Alliance.

It also offered a “Great Exchange” that had been conducted by Devens EcoStar (i.e. a reuse swap that helps find home for unwanted materials from the local business community) and was concluded with a statewide reuse strategies meeting. The meeting solicited input on how the state could foster greater reuse among businesses, residents, schools and municipalities, and

helped MassDEP to develop reuse goals and strategies as part of its Solid Waste Master Planning process.

When Brooke became involved in the GRRN Conference Advisory Committee, she heard MaryEllen talk about the possibility of expanding on the MassDEP reuse strategies meeting into a day-long reuse track at the conference. MaryEllen suggested the reuse track could feature three panels and a national reuse summit. There was strong support among the other committee members, so Reuse Alliance agreed to take on the project. Brooke offered the Reuse Alliance the assistance of MassDEP to develop and promote it.

Brooke then gave the floor to MaryEllen who was going to provide a brief report on the reuse panels that had just commenced as part of the National Zero Waste Conference. MaryEllen started by saying that she had attended all three panels and that they had been well received and well attended.

MaryEllen moderated the first reuse panel, "Virtual Reuse: The challenges and opportunities of online materials exchanges." The panelists included James Ruttan from [iWasteNot Systems](#), Harriet Taub from [Materials for the Arts](#), and Brian Lavallo from [Mass Material Trader](#). During the discussion audience members were given the steps required to launch a materials exchange and a variety of methods to expand capacity.

The panelists stressed the power of ongoing use of word-of-mouth, strategic partnerships, community outreach initiatives, and social media to help increase materials exchange participation. They suggested that offering success stories across all mediums (web, social media, e-newsletters) not only provides a public face to what the service does, it also allows information to be easily forwarded to a viewer's associates. They added that business networks, such as chambers of commerce, green business associations, and the Reuse Alliance, were also good ways of spreading the reuse message.

The second reuse panel, "Reuse Centers: Social enterprises with triple bottom line benefits" was moderated by Brooke. The panelists included Mary Lou Van Deventer of [Urban Ore](#), Mauricio Hernandez of [Goodwill Industries NY/NJ](#), and Donna Hunnewell from the [Lowell Wish Project](#). Panelists covered the triple bottom line impacts (social, economic, and environmental) of three different reuse organizations.

The social benefits offered by panelists included providing affordable materials (ranging from building materials, baby gear, and clothing) to those on limited budgets (from low-income families to nonprofits, artists, and students). The environmental benefits included the facts that reuse diverts valuable resources from the waste stream, promotes resource conservation and reduces the need for energy and raw materials. In terms of economic benefits these reuse centers provide cost savings to business and residents (avoided disposal, avoided purchase /green purchasing), tax benefits (nonprofits), sales taxes generation - all while providing meaningful, green collar jobs with a living wage.

The third reuse panel, "Deconstruction & Building Material Reuse: A vital part of the green building movement" was moderated by Neil Seldman of [Institute for Local Self Reliance](#). The

panelists included Justin Green of [Build it Green](#), John Majercak of [Springfield ReStore](#), and Dave Bennink of [ReUse Consulting](#). The presentations featured an overview of building materials reuse centers, the challenges and successes of recent deconstruction projects around the country, and the public policy issues related to this field.

The discussion focused on the lessons learned from building materials reuse and deconstruction operations, with special attention paid to gaining support of local community and politicians through green collar job and LEED messaging, and the development of effective strategic partnerships. The audience learned that this portion of the reuse sector is well on its way to becoming mainstream.

Participant Introductions

MaryEllen then asked each summit participant to give a brief introduction of themselves and their organizations (see Attendee List).

Strategy Session

MaryEllen explained that the rest of the event would be devoted to a roundtable discussion on how we can we increase public awareness of reuse while connecting, supporting, and promoting reuse sector organizations. Attendees were asked for a few of their top challenges facing the sector as a whole. The top three concerns to be addressed included the need to (1) increase public awareness, (2) obtain sector-related data, and (3) increase communication and resource sharing between sector members.

In order to increase public awareness the group discussed the need for a “reuse portal” (one-stop-resource) that would allow the public to access information on the reuse opportunities in their area (buy, sell, or donate). Members of the public could then search for reuse options by keyword, category of material, and location. The idea of using a wiki was also suggested as a way of interfacing with the public.

Another point discussed was the need to develop a collaborative marketing strategy (PSAs, billboards, etc). In the interim it was suggested that states with Reuse Alliance chapters could develop statewide reuse directories as a simple joint marketing tool. Reuse Alliance should also start a strategic partnership committee to connect, as a sector, with corporations and other networks/sectors.

To address the sector’s need for obtaining sector-related data, the group further discussed the idea of developing a sector-backed data standard for reuse organizations. This tool could allow organizations to track and share positive impacts of reuse by having a common language (standard metrics and methodology) and common place (reuse portal) to aggregate sector data. The type of information that should be collected - which may vary depending on the organization's focus - needs to be determined. MaryEllen will continue to seek out funding for this project. Until this project can be initiated, the group suggested gathering employment statistics (from the Department of Labor based of SAIC codes) in order to communicate the sector’s impact on the economy.

Some of the data sets discussed that will help us assess impact include (1) # of tons diverted from the landfill, (2) \$ avoided disposal costs, (3) \$ avoided purchase costs, (4) \$ value of materials donated, (5) \$ revenues earned, (6) # of jobs created or retained, and (7) # of families, individuals, or organizations assisted.

MaryEllen added that reuse is in many ways the original green collar job, and referred to statistics from research US EPA and ILSR (e.g. if you Incinerate 10k tons of materials you create 1 job, if you landfill it you create 6 jobs, if you recycle it you create 36 jobs, and if you reuse it you create 28-296 jobs). She encouraged everyone to use this information to help get the sector's message out. It was also mentioned that grantmakers are now looking for quantifiable data and a return on investment. Being able to prove the impact you have on your community (e.g. tons diverted from the waste stream, # of families assisted) with reliable data will improve your chances of obtaining funding.

To address the sector's need to increase communication between sector members, the reuse portal, mentioned earlier, was discussed again. This portal could allow members to access excess or unwanted donations to be recorded by other members. All reuse options should be included whether they are members or not, but would need to be researched and entered into the database or members of the sector could input their own directory listing information.

To improve resource sharing, MaryEllen explained details of the Master Reuser Program - a webinar-based certificate program for reuse sector employees. This training opportunity is designed to provide technical assistance, which will not only improve the participant's individual skills in strategic thinking, marketing, revenue-generation, and program evaluation, but will also improve organizational operations and long-term growth within the sector.

In order for Reuse Alliance to meet the needs of the reuse sector, MaryEllen called on the summit participants to join the association as official members.

Closing Remarks

MaryEllen thanked everyone for participating and assured the participants that the Reuse Alliance would take steps necessary to fundraise for, develop, and implement a range of programs and services that will meet the needs of the sector.

Further Information

If you require any further information about this summit or any members services provided by Reuse Alliance please contact:

Contact

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Reuse Panel Presentations

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