



HELPSY TEXTILE RECYCLING

RECYCLING & REUSE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GRANT CASE STUDY JUNE 2024

As a certified B Corp and Public Benefit Corporation, Helpsy's mission is to keep clothing out of the trash, provide honorable work, and earn growing profits. In the process of serving its mission, Helpsy has created jobs, saved municipalities millions of dollars in disposal fees, and reduced the enormous environmental burden of the second-most polluting industry in the world. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) awarded Helpsy with two grants as part of the Recycling & Reuse Business Development Grant (RBDG) program.

BACKGROUND:

- Textiles account for five percent of Massachusetts trash sent for disposal each year.
- The average Massachusetts resident throws away about 100 pounds of textiles each year, equivalent to around 230,000 tons of useful textiles that were disposed of in the trash.
- In November 2022, MassDEP expanded its waste disposal bans by adding textiles to the list of materials banned from disposal in Massachusetts.

BUSINESS OVERVIEW:

Collection

- Through a combination of clothing drives, municipal curbside pickups, partnerships with thrift stores, and clothing collection bins, Helpsy recovered 15,000 tons of textiles company-wide in 2023.
- Of the textiles the organization collects, 95 percent are salvageable. Broken down further, 75 percent is reusable, and 20 percent is recyclable.



Sourcing

- Helpsy uses proprietary sorting technology to sort the collected textiles into grades.
- The higher grades are resold on their new online marketplace, www.helpsy.com, as well as to online clothing resellers, to thrift partners in North America, and to other secondhand markets around the world. The lower grades go to industrial use or produce materials such as rags, stuffing, and insulation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

<https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-recycling-reuse-business-development-grant>

MassDEP: Sowayib Sikder, sowayib.sikder@mass.gov

Helpsy: Lisa Sciannella, Lisa@helpsy.co; <https://www.helpsy.com/>

Trading

- Helpsy buys used goods from large thrift stores, smaller collection companies, and wiper rags manufacturers across the United States.
- The organization also brokers used clothes, shoes, toys, and household items.
- They sell textiles to clothing sorters, secondhand sellers, and industrial users.

WORK WITH MASSDEP:

- MassDEP awarded Helpsy with two RBDG grants: a \$145,000 grant to support processing operations and a \$65,627 grant to support collection operations.
- The organization used the grants to purchase a box truck, 20 collection bins, a forklift, a baler, and more rolling carts.

RESULTS:

- In 2023, Helpsy diverted **2,900 tons** of textiles from solid waste disposal in Massachusetts, an increase of about 14 percent from 2022.
- The organization saved local municipalities and businesses nearly **\$300,000** in avoided disposal fees in 2023

EXPANSION AND DEVELOPMENT:

- Currently, Helpsy has 15 employees working at their Woburn, MA warehouse.
- The organization hopes to expand its diversion efforts in 2024 to include post-industrial waste and fabric scraps. They are also supporting the innovation and technological advancements of textile-to-textile recyclers in Massachusetts.

COMMUNITY IMPACT:

- Helpsy is intentionally a second chance employer, offering meaningful employment to people from all backgrounds; including veterans, the formerly incarcerated, members of the LGBTQ community, those whose English is a second language, people of color, and immigrants.
- The company donates clothing and funds to charities (over 5,000 winter coats and \$500,000 company-wide in 2023) while providing a much-needed service to their municipal partners.



Pictured: Chief of Staff Lisa Sciannella high-fives a Helpsy team member at a collection location.

"Helpsy extends its gratitude to MassDEP for both instituting the textile waste ban, a crucial step in raising awareness of the textile waste issue, and for bolstering Helpsy's collection efforts via the recycling business development grant (RBDG). In 2023, the first full year that the textile waste ban was in effect, and with the invaluable support of the RBDG, Helpsy collaborated with municipalities, residents, private businesses, nonprofits, and thrift stores across the commonwealth to achieve a remarkable 14 percent increase in textile diversion compared to the previous year."

- Lisa Sciannella, Helpsy Chief of Staff.