

MassDEP Reduce & Reuse (R&R) Workgroup Kick-Off Meeting
Wednesday, March 4, 2020 | 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
MassDEP Boston Office, One Winter Street, Boston MA
Meeting Summary

Erin Victor, MassDEP welcomed everyone to the meeting and facilitated introductions. She reminded the group that the impetus for the R&R Workgroup came out of the proposed [2020-2030 Solid Waste Master Plan](#), which calls for a “Strategic Reduce & Reuse Action Plan”. MassDEP envisions that the Workgroup – or smaller sub-workgroups based on individual materials, items, or topics – will participate in several meetings over the next 6-9 months, and then convene on an as-needed basis after that. She stressed that the process is iterative, which is helpful because it allows us to make changes as new situations arise, set new priorities, and redistribute effort as needed.

Attachment: Slide deck – “R&R Workgroup Kickoff Presentation_March 2020”

Background Information

For the purposes of this Workgroup, the terms reduce and reuse are meant to include a range of initiatives including repair, remanufacturing, repurposing, the “sharing economy” (e.g. tool libraries, libraries of things, neighborhood sharing and exchange networks) and more. The Reduce & Reuse Action Plan will be modeled after MassDEP’s [Organics Action Plan](#) in that it will identify barriers, challenges, strategies and actions to expand reuse and waste reduction. This process will help to identify gaps in capacity or certain types of programs.

MassDEP is currently working on the following reduce and reuse efforts and has funding available for the following initiatives through our [Sustainable Materials Recovery Program \(SMRP\) grant program](#):

- [Pay-As-You-Throw](#) (PAYT) – while not exactly source reduction, it does encourage people to think more carefully about what they are throwing away and look for opportunities to reuse and recycle. There are currently 153 munis in MA that have PAYT. MassDEP offers technical assistance and grant funding for municipalities to implement or expand/improve their PAYT program.
- Swap Shops – funding for municipally-based swap shops is available through the SMRP Drop-off Equipment category. Use of swap shops also earns points in RDP (described below).
- School Recycling Assistance – funding is available for the installation of dishwashers and reusable trays and service ware. MassDEP also funds “[The Green Team](#)”, an environmental education and rewards program which also provides technical assistance to schools and teachers; and provides items such as recycling bins and compost systems free for participants.
- Recycling Dividends Program (RDP) – this program is a “best practices” waste reduction framework for municipalities. Towns and cities earn points for their reuse and recycling efforts, which translate into dollars. In 2019, MassDEP added a new RDP category for Reuse.

- Waste Reduction Projects – non-profits and municipalities may apply for a large scale waste reduction project. They have an opportunity to create their own proposal and award amounts range from \$10K-\$100K.
- [Reuse Micro-grants](#) – up to \$5K funding available to non-profits and businesses/entrepreneurs for smaller innovative reuse projects.
- [Recycling Business Development Grants](#) (RBDG) – up to \$400K in grant funding for businesses to invest in recycling equipment and technology to expand recycling of target materials. Last year, MassDEP added furniture reuse to the list of target materials. Other materials include glass, construction and demolition (C&D) debris, and mattresses.
- [Recycling Works](#) Program – another MassDEP-funded program that provides technical assistance to businesses and institutions in Massachusetts. It is administered by the Center for Eco-technology (CET).

In addition to grant funding and technical assistance, MassDEP has collected the following data to better understand the state of source reduction and reuse in Massachusetts:

- Mapping reuse programs in Massachusetts – Erin showed of map of municipally operated reuse programs including Libraries of Things and Swap Sheds (see attached picture). The public can locate swap sheds, repair events and libraries of things via MassDEP’s webpage - [Municipal Reuse and Repair Programs](#).

Action Item: Please review this map and let Erin Victor (erin.victor@mass.gov or 617-292-5624) know if any programs you know of are missing.

- Reuse Organizations/Capacity in Massachusetts - In 2019, MassDEP conducted a Materials Management Capacity Study which assessed the overall capacities of possible material endpoints including facilities involved in trash disposal (landfill and combustion), transfer, recycling, composting, anaerobic digestion, animal feed operations, food rescue, and materials reuse operations. Erin briefly reviewed the tables focused on reuse organizations. She noted that this study did not capture reuse that is happening informally, such as through “buy nothing” groups on Facebook, Craig’s List, FreeCycle etc.

Resource:

Massachusetts Materials Management Capacity Study
<https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2019/02/19/capstudy.pdf>

Group Discussion / General Comments / Q&A

Note: some of these questions were from webinar attendees. Where appropriate, ideas were added to flip charts organized by proposed reduce & reuse focus area for the R&R Action Plan. Pictures are attached for reference.

1. *Any considerations for banning food waste from residents?*

MassDEP has focused on the commercial and institutional sectors thus far and is proposing to lower the threshold from 1 ton per week to ½ ton per week. The Agency does not anticipate adding residential sources any time soon due to the challenges that would come from collecting food waste. Vermont is the first state to enact such a ban, which recently came into effect, and it will be interesting to see what they have learned from their program.

2. *I'm interested in working with elderly populations that are downsizing and moving into smaller homes. There are lots of opportunities to reuse and reclaim items such as furniture and household goods.*

Resource:

Fresh Air Interview with Adam Minter, author of *Secondhand: Travels in the New Global Garage Sale* <https://www.npr.org/programs/fresh-air/2019/12/04/784764792/fresh-air-for-dec-4-2019-secondhand-author-adam-minter>

3. *Lots of contractors have useful lumber but no place to store it. There needs to be an option for contractors to get rid of this material so it can be reused.*

4. *Gunther Wellenstein, Haverhill DPW, is moderating a session focused on reuse.*

Resource:

Mass Recycle Conference & Trade Show – April 2nd, 2020
<https://massrecycle.org/events/conference/>

5. *State procurement seems to be a big opportunity for reuse (also municipal procurement at a smaller scale). This is also somewhat related to what we are doing with state surplus property, and the right to repair. What is the state doing to promote this?*

MassDEP does require municipalities to have a “buy recycled” policy in place in order to apply for the SMRP grants, described earlier. Brooke noted that there are lots of opportunities for schools to purchase refurbished office equipment. She and Erin recently toured one furniture reuse company that does this who is also on Connecticut’s state procurement contract.

6. *Can we increase the point value for reuse in RDP? Only getting 1 point in response to organizing a large reuse event is not incentive for this type of effort.*

Flip Chart Discussion

MassDEP is proposing to focus reuse efforts on discreet waste streams and host separate meetings for each category – noted below – and asked the group for initial feedback. Erin noted that there are overarching policy themes that cut across many of these categories and that there will be some overlap among them. See attached images.

Textiles

- Add hard toys (e.g., action figures, plastic baby toys) – possibly to either the “Textiles” or “Household Durable Goods” category. Bay State Textiles noted that they do not advertise that they take these items and still end up with 40-50,000 pounds per year. They used to end up throwing these items in the trash but have recently found a market exporting them.
- Eye glasses are another item to include in this category. They are collected by the Lions Club.

Single Use Packaging

- More state or municipal incentives to encourage reusable service ware. Also consider local mandates. Cambridge is proposing mandating reusable items for onsite consumption – modeled after a program in Berkeley, CA.
- Create an infrastructure that makes it easier for places to access reusable containers and service ware. There is an entire retail industry built for individuals to purchase their own items. Can we create a container share program? There seem to be a lot of interest among retailers and institutions, but nobody knows how to do it on a large scale.
- Lack of infrastructure, such as dishwashers is one barrier to using reusable items over single-use. Along with this is also the increased personnel required to run them, and therefore, increased labor costs.
- Many food contractors providing food service to schools send everything pre-packaged (e.g., carrots in small containers or plastic wrap).
- Some people have health concerns about reusables. For example, some restaurants do not allow customers to bring in their own containers because of these concerns. Can local boards of health get involved to end the stigma and encourage restaurants and others to allow this? This is allowed in Plymouth and is being proposed in Newton.
- The largest barrier to reusables is the labor expense. It is cheaper and more efficient to use single use items.
- Plastic water bottles are biggest offender.

Household Durable Goods

- Consider utility exchange programs. For example, Mass CEC heat smart program collects window AC units after they install new heat/cool pump systems.

Electronics

- Create separate category for electronics that will cover both household and commercial sources (it was previously suggested to be in “Household Durable Goods” category). Include solar panels, car batteries, smart devices (e.g., Alexa), etc.

Building Materials

- Lumber and sheet metal used by contractors can be donated to vocational-technology schools.
- Excess paint could be reused by art schools and theater productions. ReColor started as a local paint exchange program; the business has been very successful and paint is now made and sold in retail stores.

Organics/Food

- One barrier to school food sharing programs is allergies – some schools do not allow students to share food because of potential allergies.
- Weekend backpack program to collect excess food and send home with kids in need. Need infrastructure such as containers to pack the food in and a place to freeze/store the extra meals.

Culture of Reuse

- Use social media to promote reuse and repair. Lots of local exchanges of goods online through buy nothing groups, yard sale sites, Next Door, Freecycle, Craig’s list, etc.

Other Ideas

- Extended producer responsibility (EPR) – whoever makes this product is partly responsible for how it is managed at its end of life – as well as other product stewardship initiatives must be considered. Product stewardship encourages businesses to make their items more durable and repairable.
- Need to consider items that are not yet in the waste stream but are going to start showing up soon. Look at what is sold now because that will end up in disposal in the near future. Two examples include solar panels and electric car batteries. For example, the first generation of solar panels installed are only 30-40% efficient and are now being replaced with ones that are 100% efficient. Instead of throwing these in the trash, an alternative is to export them to Africa for reuse. Another example is flat screen TVs being disassembled and parts sold to repair shops.
- Ink cartridges are a good candidate for product stewardship. Staples takes them now but only takes 3 at a time.
- Plastic bag bans are becoming the norm in Massachusetts and encouraging reusable options is important. “Bags for a Cause” is an initiative by grocery stores to sell reusable bags and \$1 goes to a local charity or other effort.

Next Steps

Now that many ideas and strategies are identified, the R&R Workgroup will need to discuss how to prioritize them. Should we focus on a few things to make a big impact, or address many items but not be able to delve as deeply?

One way to prioritize could be by looking at the waste characterization study. Food waste is the biggest part of our waste stream at 26% - however, there is a separate Organics Action Workgroup that is focusing on this. Textiles represent 6% of the waste stream; treated wood is also 6%; other identified waste streams include plastic bags, carpet, and C&D.

When prioritizing what materials to focus on, another strategy could be to focus efforts on the items that are not easily recyclable but have an opportunity to be reused (e.g., composite wood).

MA Reduce & Reuse Network – Many workgroup attendees expressed how critical networking opportunities amongst reduce & reuse stakeholders is to advance our collective work in this space. To facilitate discussions around source reduce and reuse topics here in Massachusetts in-between and beyond the R&R workgroup meetings, we have created the MA Reduce & Reuse Network which will be a listserv for anyone interested in source reduction and reuse regulations, policies, and programs in Massachusetts. This is an opportunity to connect with other like-minded people from non-profits, businesses, local and state government, community groups, and passionate Bay Staters. This forum is intended to help people share resources, ideas, best practices, fact sheets, and more. **All workgroup participants will receive an invitation to join the listserv and are encouraged to share this resource widely with others engaged in the reuse, repair, and materials recovery sector.**

Next Meeting:

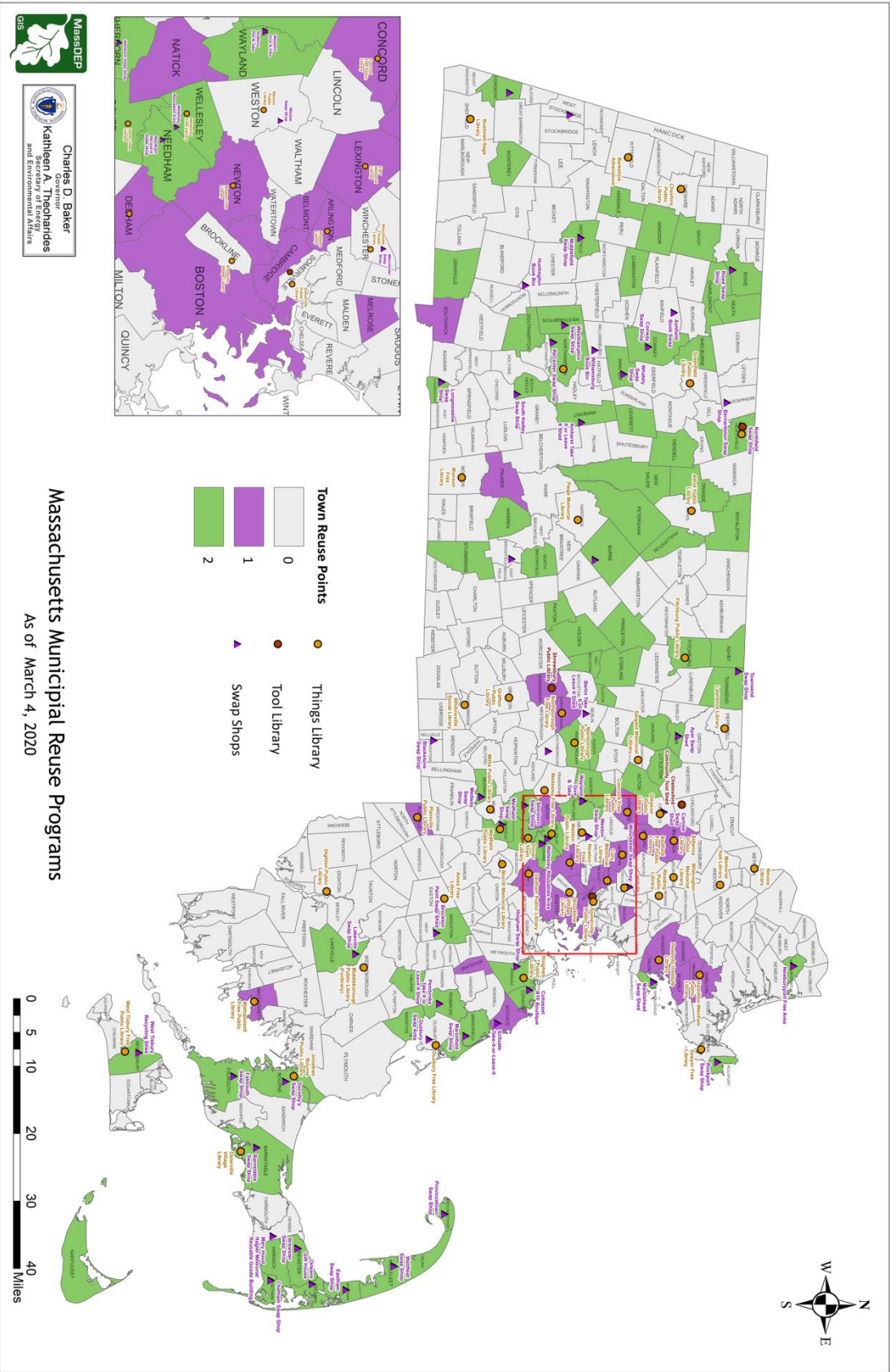
Wednesday, April 1, 2020 from 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM – further details TBD. The topic will be on creating a culture of reuse, including a discussion of community engagement.

Future meetings (after April 2020) will take place on the 4th Wednesday of the month from 11:00AM – 1:00 PM.

Action Items:

- Several workgroup members have requested a list of the attendees and their contact information to help facilitate networking amongst reduce and reuse stakeholders. We think this is a great idea and will send this information out by the end of next week. We do want to respect your privacy though so **please let Erin Victor know by COB on Wednesday March 11, 2020 if you DO NOT want your contact information shared with the rest of the group.**
- Review the map of [Swap Sheds and Libraries of Things in Massachusetts](#). If you see any programs not represented, please let us know we can add them. Contact: Erin.victor@mass.gov; 617-292-5624

- MassDEP will re-open the Reduce, Reuse, Repair Micro-Grant program this April. We are seeking input on the grant program focus prior to releasing this next round of grant funding. Please see the Micro-Grant Guidelines attached and let us know if you have any input you would like to share such as other example project ideas, eligible funding considerations, etc.
- Join the MA Reduce & Reuse Network. An email invitation will be sent out to all participants of the R&R workgroup. You can also join by emailing: ReduceReuseNetwork-MA+subscribe@googlegroups.com



Flip Charts:

Creating Culture of Reduce/Reuse

EPR/Product Stewardship

\$ Ink cartridges - hard to return them

Social media to promote reuse/repair

Online neighbor to neighbor exchange of goods

(Buy Nothing, Next Door, Craig's List, Freecycle)

Terra cycle & Loop

Dentist offices → collect toothbrushes

Natl assoc. of Prof. Organizers

Hygiene kits / hotel supplies / personal care items

Realtors assn: → moveouts

Dry cleaners - abandoned items

Assisted Living facilities

Massachusetts Municipal Reuse Programs
as of March 2002

Textiles & Clothing

- Hard Toys
- Eye glasses - Lions club
- Stained linens, bedding, ^{throw}pillows, Stuffed animals
to Animal Rescue _{throw rugs}

Used/Surplus Furniture / Commercial & Institutional

Green Standards - comm/furniture recovery → schools
nonprofits

Organics/Food

- Share tables @ Schools
- Policies against share tables (food allergies)
- Weekend backpack program

Electronics (Comm'l & household)

Batteries

Solar Panels

Appliances

Ink cartridges - difficult to recycle
need to inc. access

Air conditioners (replaced) / dehumidifiers

Utility exchange programs

Household Durable Goods

(inc. ~~electronics~~ & furniture)

- Aging Population → lots of stuff needs new homes
- Hard Toys - BST - 40,000 lbs/yr. (export)
- Hard to Recycle, low cost furniture (composite/MDF)
furniture
- Eye glasses - Lions Club
- books - Public Library
- Charter Schools → accept lots of donations

Other Ideas

- State procurement - increased reused goods
- Municipal procurement
- RDP → more point value for Reuse Events
- EPR / prod. Stewardship

Solar panels: G-Point getting solar panels that are 30-40% efficient

Electric Car Batteries (newer generation panels replacing 1st gen ")

Single Use Packaging / Food Svc. Products

Reusable food svc. ware :

- make it easier to access reusable ^{food serving} (plates, cups)
- Container share/lending for retailers & ^{cutlery} institutions

~~Mandating~~ reusables @ on-site events
(Cambridge, modeling Berkeley, CA)

Access/funding for dishwashers

Using ^{idle} dishwashers at restaurants where only dinner is served

Dishwashers at Schools: Barriers: personnel to operate them

Health Board opposition to washing reusables or take out containers

- no space in kitchen
- vendors use lots of plastic pkg.

DEP to MSBA: Require schools to install dishwashers

Labor to wash reusables is barrier

Plastic Bags: "Bags for my cause" @ retailers

Plastic bottles

Building Materials

(Surplus lumber,
used windows, doors,
cabinets, fixtures,
dimensional lumber)

- Small quantity dimensional lumber
(Where can it be donated? or picked up @ curb?)
- Career Tech Programs can use ^{surplus} sheet metal,
lumber, tools
- Paint to art schools, theater programs
- Map of Donation sites
- Career tech schools repair appliances
& send to reuse stores for sale