

Materials Reuse Network

An Innovative Recycling Grant Proposal
Hillsborough County, Florida January 18, 2001

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6. Grant Requested: \$75,000
7. Project Timeframe: 12 months
8. Project Abstract:

Hillsborough County is seeking funds of \$75,000 to lead the development and expansion of a Florida Reuse Network (FRN) – a statewide network that will promote diversion of out-of-service materials for reuse by educators and non-profits. The FRN will provide a forum to exchange ideas and materials. Materials targeted for this reuse project include surplus and outdated office supplies, manufacturing scrap, and other items that can be utilized by education programs. While efforts are underway in Hillsborough County for a local reuse store, a larger statewide network would allow for movement of materials throughout the state, provide expanded sources of diverted materials, and create a larger market for recovered materials. We propose six innovative tasks:

1. Develop a statewide electronic (internet) reuse network
2. Hold two (2) regional training workshops (train the trainer) and multiple local educational workshops for end users (teachers, scout leaders, etc.).
3. Promote a sustainable organizational structure
4. Implement a materials diversion program
5. Implement a surplus materials exchange
6. Evaluate the feasibility of a statewide transportation network

Reuse in education is an innovative process. This project focuses on diverting reusable materials from disposal and directing these materials into education programs, where supplies and other resources are lacking. Several local re-use programs exist throughout the state. This project will encourage the growth of a statewide network to link materials with classrooms, across county lines. This project will also demonstrate new ways of finding resources within the community, and perhaps within the school system itself.

Innovative Technologies and Processes

The FRN proposal offers a statewide reuse option that is not in common use, overcomes obstacles to source reduction and recycling, and applies existing technology and processes in new ways.

1. Develop a statewide electronic (internet) reuse network

Florida public school teachers commonly spend \$300 - \$500 of their own money each year to purchase school supplies (paper, pencils, crayons, etc.) for disadvantaged students. The need for surplus school supplies is, at present, partially addressed by a few local nonprofit reuse stores around the state open to educators and other nonprofits. These “free” stores have been very successful in the specific cities or counties where the reuse stores are physically located. By utilizing (customizing) existing technology to create an electronic reuse network, other Florida communities (school systems) could take advantage of surplus materials available statewide and significantly reduce the amount of reusable materials entering the solid waste stream. The FRN will benefit other recycling organizations, municipalities and nonprofit organizations by exchanging information and facilitating the development of additional reuse operations.

The use of an electronic network concept has been successfully implemented through the development of the Southern Waste Information Exchange (SWIX) and Electronic Exchange websites. Surplus materials for the FRN can come from a variety of sources including businesses, government agencies, tourist attractions, convention centers, and nonprofit organizations throughout the state. Materials exchanged can include surplus or outdated office supplies, reusable manufacturing scrap, art materials, computers and other electronics that can be utilized by educators and other nonprofits. Businesses and organizations that participate in the exchange of materials benefit by reducing the cost of disposal, and may be eligible for tax benefits. The major difference between the proposed FRN model and the SWIX model is that there is no direct contact between the material donor and the material recipient. The FRN provides a neutral zone for the material storage and transfer. This insures the maximum distribution of materials, provides accountability for quantity and valuation (record keeping), protects the donor from unauthorized resale of donated materials, and allows for accountability of end users.

2. Hold two regional training workshops and multiple educational workshops. (overcomes obstacles to waste reduction)

Education and sharing of knowledge is key to the success of a FRN. The two regional training workshops will train the trainers. We propose working with AmeriCorp and/or USF Environmental Education to train their staff as trainers. These trainers will then conduct local (multi-county, two or three per county) educational workshops of one-half to one day lengths. The educational workshops will focus on: 1) the value of reuse, 2) unexplored opportunities for diversion through reuse in Florida communities, 3) resources for starting or advancing reuse programs, and 4) education/curriculum material exchange. These workshops will also serve to promote the concept and utilization of the reuse network to recycling coordinators, public school administrators, businesses, and non-profit organizations. Specific topics of workshops would include: “what is reuse and what is a reusable resource center”, “operational planning for developing a reuse center,” and “utilization of reusable materials in the classroom.”

FRN will act as a clearinghouse for resources, including existing documents that are not in general circulation, such as: the ACCES *ReUse It! Guidebook* (copyright owned by the Recycling Task Force), *How to Create a Reusable Resource Center*, SHOPA's *Kids In Need Best Practices Guide*, Boston

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Recycling Center's *Resource Guide*, Weimagination *Reuse Projects* and NYC *Reuse Guide for the Arts* (pending copyright approval as necessary).

3. **Promote a sustainable organizational structure** (overcome obstacles to recycling & reuse).

Currently, a Florida Reuse Network has been informally organized and conducts informal meetings in conjunction with other recycling conferences and events. Preliminary meetings with FRN members have shown great enthusiasm and support for the expansion of the reuse concept. This project intends to establish the FRN as a formalized group, such as a sub-committee of Recycle Florida Today (RFT), to allow for the on-going continuation and promotion of the reuse network. We also propose to continue discussions with AmeriCorps and USF Environmental Education as possible sustaining organizations (the Recycling Task Force is currently working with AmeriCorps as the training and sustaining partner with it's Project ReCompute, a recipient of a FDEP HHW Innovative Grant).

4. **Implement a materials diversion program**

Reuse is not a common diversion strategy at convention centers. The Tampa Convention Center (TCC) is a 600,000 square foot facility which hosts regional and national events. For the year 2001, more than 370 events are scheduled. Each event will generate up to 35 tons of discards. Many of these materials are brand new or in almost new condition, thrown away by exhibitors who wish to avoid the cost of transportation back to their home location. Materials collected at these events would be reused in education, after school programs, and community organizations. Due to the fast pace and turnover, convention centers are typically difficult locations to implement waste reduction programs and therefore this process is not in common use in Florida.

5. **Implement a surplus materials exchange** (novel application of existing technology)

The School District of Hillsborough County (SDHC) presently designates materials deemed non-usable to a school as surplus materials, which it auctions quarterly. Currently, materials at auction typically recover from 0% to 40% of market value (with 0% meaning the item was not sold and required disposal at a cost). We will develop the network to facilitate the timely transfer and sale of materials via a web site and/or retail site. This will allow for an increased income stream, greater reuse of materials by other community organizations and reduction or avoidance in disposal costs/materials. The reuse exchange model is not in common use among school districts. This would be a novel application of existing technology and would recapture assets.

6. **Evaluate the feasibility of a statewide transportation network** (not in common use in Florida and overcomes obstacles to waste reduction).

Once the FRN is formally organized and targeted materials have been identified, the challenge of transporting and delivering these materials to be reused must be addressed. Several transportation alternatives will be evaluated to determine the best method of transferring reusable materials from the originator to the ultimate end user. The use of back-hauls on commercial carriers is one possible alternative to move reuse materials from one location to another (e.g., central management of donated space by moving, shipping, and distribution companies). A network has never been established to move materials around the State based on donation of back-haul opportunities due to many logistical obstacles, as well as the "overwhelming" of companies offering such a service with too many requests.

Another option includes partnering with other local, regional, and statewide nonprofit organizations that currently have transportation capabilities. These "partners" will have access to reuse materials in the network in exchange for the transportation of materials to other locations in need. Other

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possible alternatives include utilizing the SDHC delivery service for local transportation needs. SDHC has multiple fleet services that deliver to each school on either a daily or weekly schedule. All school districts have similar fleet services that may be able to service the delivery locally.

Benefits / Cost Effectiveness

Environmental Benefits. This project focuses attention on reuse, a high tier of preferred waste management techniques. By being focused on reuse to education, a source reduction message is communicated to the teachers and students, as well as an implicit recycling message. Thus, the environmental benefits include creating a reuse minded generation. As the message of “recycling” has clearly reached our current generation, the concept of source reduction and reuse will enable further environmental gains in future generations.

The obvious benefit is the reduction of materials sent to landfill or waste-to-energy facilities. The tonnage diverted (the common value used by the solid waste community) is not in common use by the reuse community (their common value is dollars). We propose creating a materials database that will equate/calculate weights and allow tracking of tonnage values for a common language. Currently, we know of no school district that tracks tonnage on materials disposed of through auction or salvage. This project will allow the tracking of SDHC materials throughout the grant period thus creating a database for other districts and counties to use.

Economic Benefits. Reuse saves on disposal fees to the generator, and eliminates or lowers the procurement costs for purchasing items. The largest benefits will accrue to the schools that have limited budgets for supplies. The economic terms are not obvious, since money typically does not change hands. However, the schools and teachers that depend on reuse supplies have more than an “economic” benefit, they have a social and educational benefit. The FRN offers to expand the focus of reuse beyond obsolete items to be used for art, although this has a place in the overall reuse approach as well. The FRN includes the salvage of blackboards, chairs, notebooks, pens, books, and academic materials.

This project aims to help place substantial items into reuse. For example, SDHC is currently faced with management of 867 portable classrooms that are no longer needed on campus. The portables are currently slated for disposal (a cost to SDHC) and the FRN could be a tremendous resource to the reuse vs. disposal option.

Cost-Effectiveness. Disposal cost avoidance and intrinsic value of diverted materials will drive the ongoing use of “reuse” as an alternative to disposal. The implementation of Tasks 1-3, setting up a statewide network, has a net cost of \$632.35 per county. This program is expected to divert approximately 50 – 75 tons per county, on average, during the first year for a cost of \$8.43 - \$12.65 per ton. FRN and RFT members will complete Task 4. Tasks 5-6 will divert 400 - 500 tons of materials annually, which is less than 5% of the total tons generated. The value of the reused materials varies greatly. We estimate values of \$40 - \$1,000+ per ton for materials to be sold via the exchange (the range of materials includes scrap metals to usable computers). Therefore, the benefits of reuse will offset the cost of the program.

We anticipate that volunteers will maintain the web site and network after the initial program set up. The group currently advocating for reuse has demonstrated willingness to volunteer and promote reuse. AmeriCorps and USF Environmental Education are also involved in discussions with the Recycling Task Force as possible resources for the site maintenance.

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Transferability

As a statewide network involving several counties, the project is inherently transferable. Specifically, we are seeking funds to set up a web site that will provide the resources for Florida counties to set up reuse centers. All other project components are also transferable to school systems, convention centers, and non-profits throughout Florida.

Promotion of Transferability. The FRN is committed to promoting reuse throughout the state. The project includes training workshops, educational workshops, and printed collateral materials for the promotion of the project. We will continue to recruit support from within the ranks of RFT, the Florida's pollution prevention (P2) groups, school districts, Boy and Girl Scouts programs, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA's, Cooperative Extension Services and other allies.

Local Support

Project partners will contribute \$97,900, which is 57% of the total project budget of \$172,900.

The City of Tampa Solid Waste Department, the School District of Hillsborough County, the Recycling Task Force of Hillsborough County, AmeriCorps Hillsborough, USF Environmental Education, Hillsborough Education Foundation, Resource Management Group, Inc., and Florida Reuse Net members will complete the project. Funding will be sought from corporate partners to underwrite the ongoing costs to support and maintain the actual website.

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Budget

Tasks & Activities	Cost	Local Match	Grant Request	Project Timeline For Proposed Tasks Work Period In Which Activities Will Occur			
				1	2	3	4
Task 1- Develop a statewide electronic reuse network	\$ 45,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 20,000	X	X		
Task 2 - Hold two (2) reuse workshops and multiple local workshops	26,000	22,000	4,000		X	X	X
Task 3 - Promote a sustainable organizational structure within existing statewide org.	7,900	5,400	2,500	X	X	X	X
Task 4 - Implement a materials diversion program at the Tampa Convention Center	30,500	12,000	18,500		X		X
Task 5 - Implement a surplus materials exchange and maintain it during the grant period	39,000	24,500	14,500	X	X	X	X
Task 6 – Evaluate developing transportation network	24,500	9,000	15,500			X	X
TOTAL	\$ 172,900	\$ 97,900	\$ 75,000				