

# The Reduce, Reuse and Repair Microgrant program in New York City

**Abstract #829846**

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# **The Reduce, Reuse and Repair Microgrant program in New York City**

## **Maggie Clarke, Ph.D. , Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board**

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In 2017 the Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board, a volunteer citizens' board created by New York City's 1989 recycling law and appointed by the Manhattan Borough President, agreed to establish a grant program for researchers and community groups to start new reuse, repair, waste prevention or upcycling projects, undertake related research projects, or initiate other activities which will help lead to waste prevention or reuse / repair models that can be replicated in other parts of the City. The ultimate purpose is to help the City of New York reduce total waste generated and reuse 100% of all discarded products that can be reused, repaired, refurbished, or salvaged for spare parts, with the balance being recycled. Dozens of community groups and researchers have been given grants up to \$2,000 in the first three years of the program.. This presentation will summarize the types of grants that have been given out and metrics provided by the grantees to show the benefits of the programs.

# Outline

- **What is the status of Reuse in New York City?**
- **How did the Reduce, Reuse & Repair grant come about?**
- **What is the purpose of the grant?**
- **What goals is the grant hoping to achieve?**
- **What grants have been given out?**
- **What types of grants have been funded?**
- **What performance metrics are reported?**
- **What are some of the best case studies?**

# Genesis of the Grant

- **The MSWAB is a citizen advisory board established by law in 1989 appointed by Manhattan Borough President and New York City Council members representing districts in Manhattan. MSWAB advises the Manhattan Borough President, City Council, City administration and State government on the development, promotion and operation of the city's waste prevention, reuse and recycling programs.**
- **Manhattan (Citizens) Solid Waste Advisory Board (MSWAB), Waste Prevention and Reuse Committee started designing the grant in 2016.**
- **2013 First MSWAB grants – w Citizens Committee for New York City – composting equipment for community gardens**
- **2017 First Reuse and Repair Grants awarded to community groups and researchers**
- **2019 became the Reduce, Reuse, and Repair Grant**

# Waste Prevention & Reuse in NYC

- **Early Department of Sanitation prevention educational efforts were spotty, didn't last long, didn't reach (not intended for) everyone, effects not measured**
- **Over 30 years: some subway ads, grocery store environmental shopping posters, Materials for the Arts, Wa\$teMatch (industrial), NYCWasteLe\$\$ (business), reduce junk mail**
- **Recent programs: giving away reusable bags, swap meets and textile dropoffs with GrowNYC, DonateNYC webpage**

# Increasing Prevention and Reuse in NYC

- **New York City has characterized recyclables and organics for decades, but it has little information about the reduction, reuse and repair potential of products and materials discarded at the curb.**
- **Without characterizing reuse potential and understanding prevalence of unrecyclable items at curbside, how can NYC design programs to move to full potential for prevention and reuse?**
- **Challenges are: most New Yorkers still don't know about prevention or reuse, programs so small; we don't know how effective the programs have been. Waste prevention and reuse in NYC hasn't been measured well.**

# Grant Mission and Purpose

- **Supports community based groups and individuals to start new reduce, reuse, repair or upcycling projects, undertake related research projects, or initiate other activities which will help lead to waste prevention or reuse / repair models that can be replicated in other parts of the City.**
- **Want to help the City of New York reduce total waste generated and reuse 100% of all discarded products that can be reduced, reused, repaired, refurbished, or salvaged for spare parts, with the balance being recycled.**

# Goals of the Grant

- **Increase reuse and / or repair of products and materials**
- **Help create a culture of reduced consumption and waste**
- **Increase repurposing of products for new uses**
- **Support data collection and analysis of local reuse / repair capabilities and infrastructure**
- **Increase understanding of reusability and repair of curbside discards**
- **Support education initiatives, including training for repair and repurposing**
- **Help create new reuse / repair / refurbishing jobs**
- **Bring reuse and repair to neighborhoods in all Community Districts across NYC**
- **Increase awareness and education of repair and reuse**
- **Increase donation avenues which support waste prevention and reuse**

# Summary of Grants 2017-2019

Individual Grants range from \$750 to \$2,000.

Co-sponsor Citizens Committee for NYC

Award Year	Awardees	\$	Applications
2017	16	\$24,000	69
2018	17	\$26,500	34
2019	29	\$35,000	81
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>\$85,500</b>	<b>184</b>

# Types of Grant Projects

Teaching bike, textiles and electronics repair, writing a best practices guide to starting repair groups, lending libraries for tools and baby carriers, repair café, art installations from reused materials, making boats and canoes out of reused materials for harbor cleanups, clothes swap, power tool workshop, sewing classes, for women, refurbishing shipping crate wood, repair apprenticeship program, and producing a documentary on waste in the film industry.

# Funded Research projects

Analyzing data on food retailers' use of 'use by' date labels and effect on food waste, how to map and implement circular economy principles in NYC's fashion industry, gathering data on attitudes, understanding of and engagement in repair activities including barriers and relationship to geospatial and demographic factors, recommending best practices, how to process hard-to-recycle items into stock material to manufacture household goods, prototype for upcycling waste paper into building blocks for durable items like furniture

# Grant Reporting and Metrics

- Grantees required to submit 2 reports / year
- A Few of the Requested Metrics:
  - Number and type of items reduced, reused or repaired
  - Weight and volume diverted from disposal for each type of product (e.g. textiles, electronics, appliances, etc)? Use [EPA weight to volume calculator](#).
  - Fair market value of the materials or products that you have repaired
  - Number of people you have engaged with through training, education or actual services

# Example 2017 projects

Project name	Project Type	# Tons diverted	# ppl reached	Value of reused goods
Good + foundation	Clothing repair	0.88	569	\$45,545
Fixup Repair	Appliances, clothing, furniture	1	250	(16 MT CO <sub>2</sub> )
Rego Park Green	Using tools, CAD software		4950	
Remade in Brooklyn	Textiles, furniture	0.43	2000	\$12,760
Fixers Collective	Appliances, furniture repair guide	0.16	130	\$6,278

# Example 2018 projects

Project group	Project type	# tons diverted	# ppl reached	Value of reused goods
Wear Together	Baby carrier reuse	0.1 (93 items)	1174	\$10,650
Sadhana	Hindu murthi repair	450 clay items	90	\$4000
Times Up	Bike repair	1.5	125	\$6,800
Los Herederos	Sonicycle	0.25	150	\$5,000
Fixing to Ride/ Bike New York	Bike repair station	52.36	107	\$372,400

**Projects awarded / begun in 2019 ran into the coronavirus snag, so most / all are on hold.**

# Conclusions

- **For relatively little money (~\$1,200 each avg) community groups and researchers can increase reuse capacity in neighborhoods by training individuals on repair, and reduce incineration and disposal.**
- **Municipal governments can learn lessons on how to reach deep into communities to spread information and provide hands-on understanding of ways to reduce and reuse the tons and costs of disposal.**

# Contact

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**Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board**

[www.Manhattanswab.org](http://www.Manhattanswab.org)

**Grant Page**

[www.manhattanswab.org/reduce-reuse-repair-grant](http://www.manhattanswab.org/reduce-reuse-repair-grant)