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## Challenges and Potential Solutions

Volunteers get busy and things fall through - a challenge for Portland, for example, is that Repair PDX is totally volunteer-based and sometimes people get busy and things fall through. Repair PDX is a grassroots organization and not a non-profit so Portland can only help through providing some staff time and is not able to fund them directly. Potential solutions include:

- Connect the grassroots Community Sharing organization with someone to help them gain non-profit status so that they are eligible for some local government and other funding.
- Consider other models such as those taken by Flagstaff, AZ, and Hennepin County, Minnesota, where local government staff play a role in coordinating Fix-It Clinics.

Lack of funding for Fix-It Clinics or Repair Workshops - Approach ifixit.com - a wiki-based site that teaches people how to fix almost anything - because they may be willing to help fund other fixing events around the nation.

### CITY CASE HENNEPIN COUNTY, MINNESOTA – COORDINATING FIX-IT CLINICS

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While the City of Portland has had success supporting volunteer-led fix-it workshops by serving as a partner and promoter, there are challenges with depending on community volunteers as they are not always able to commit to delivering the workshops and events can be cancelled. Recognizing the value of goods repair to their waste management goals, the local government of Hennepin County, Minnesota, takes a different approach – it serves as coordinator of monthly Fix-it Clinics.<sup>34</sup>

#### THE INSIDE STORY

Nancy Lo, who is the Environmental Partners Coordinator with the Department of Environment and Energy's Waste Reduction and Recycling Unit, spends about 25% of her time coordinating Fix-it Clinics. She sets up the dates and locations for an ongoing stream of monthly Clinics, helps with some Web and other promotion such as short radio pieces, and leads set-up and takedown at each event. "The volunteers are the heart of the program," Lo says.

In addition to paying for Nancy's time, the only other cost to the County is for snacks and refreshments. The Clinics are held in places such as libraries, city buildings and churches so there is usually no building rental cost.

For Hennepin County, the Fix-it Clinics offer a good return for time and money invested. They have a consistent set of workshops with a regular group of volunteer "fixers." Because there are many possible dates, residents can wait for workshops that are closest to home or fit their schedule.

How does the County track the impact? Because Lo's job is focused on waste reduction she weighs everything that comes into the workshop – broken hair dryers, bread machines, toys, DVD players, clothes with broken zippers and more. And then she conducts a simple survey to track participant satisfaction and to determine what was wholly or partially repaired. This allows her to estimate the number of pounds of waste diverted and collect a stream of comments from happy, grateful people in informal participant surveys. Participants have said:

*"What a fabulous concept. It's cool to be surrounded by such a collection of clever people."*

*"It was wonderful. I have more confidence that I can fix things myself. (Score!)"*

*"It's great! Keep things out of landfills and saves money!"*

*"Thank you so much for providing this service!"*

As Nancy Lo says: "you can make a really good case in support of the Fix-It Clinics. They're low cost, reduce waste, promote community engagement – and foster such good, positive feelings."

#### RESULTS TO DATE

Since starting the monthly fix-it clinics in September of 2012, just fewer than 2,000 people have attended bringing with them 2,956 items to be repaired, of which 73% were successfully fixed. The final outcome: 13,946 pounds of waste were diverted from the landfill – all while creating community and teaching basic repair skills.

#### CHALLENGES

The most frequent question Nancy Lo is asked by other city government staff and interested stakeholders is 'what if you get sued?' The County developed a liability waiver that all

volunteers and Fix-it Clinics attendees must sign. As Lo points out: “When you come to a Clinic, you see how incredibly happy people are, and it’s hard to imagine anybody suing.”

See the Appendix in this Roadmap for copies of the Hennepin County Fix-it Clinic Release Form, Informed Consent Form and Sample Participant Survey.

#### KEY FACTORS FOR SUCCESS

- Low cost approach with impressive results

- Simple survey to track waste diverted and participant satisfaction
- Staff (Nancy Lo) dedicated and passionate about waste and with a flair for working with people effectively
- A focus on FUN too!

#### TO READ MORE

<http://www.hennepin.us/fixitclinic>.

[http://www.twincities.com/ci\\_23404870/at-free-fix-it-clinics-st-paul-volunteers](http://www.twincities.com/ci_23404870/at-free-fix-it-clinics-st-paul-volunteers).

## Q4. How can local governments measure the impact of Community Sharing on relevant city priorities?

All local governments must justify the use of local government resources – and it is no different with Community Sharing. The City of Portland, for example, must show how its Resourceful PDX program moves the dial on climate, lowering waste and consumption while advancing equity. But how can they know if somebody goes to a ‘swap n’ play’ event to swap toys and childrens’ clothes and consumes less as result? Many cities who are members of the Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN) are also concerned with climate action and related goals such as waste or ecological footprint, in addition to goals for equity, community connection, affordability and more.

Many ideas were discussed by the CSWG and the following were put forward as key recommendations.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Incorporate measurement into Community Sharing pilots
- Engage Community Sharing innovators in measurement efforts
- Intentionally incorporate measurement into Community Sharing pilots - when local governments get involved with enabling Community Sharing, set it up as a pilot that involves establishing an intentional baseline at the

beginning, do the pilot and then measure desired benefits in terms of reduction of waste and carbon emissions, enhancing social connections, equity, fun and other important city priorities.

One idea discussed among the CSWG was an analysis of other successful behaviour change measurement tools. For example, the Washington DC’s Going Green Today<sup>35</sup> approach uses an on-line tool to measure whether 10% of the population shifted their behaviour by at least 30%.

Measurement can also be relatively simple and low cost yet still remarkably effective. Consider how Hennepin County weighs all of the goods to be fixed before a Fix-It Clinic and then uses a simple 10 question survey to determine how many goods have been partially or wholly repaired to estimate waste diversion, plus asking questions about participant satisfaction (See Appendix for the sample participant survey).

- Engage Community Sharing innovators in measurement efforts - for example, some tool libraries send out an annual survey to their members. A discussion with the tool library could result in the addition of a few additional questions asking members whether they purchased fewer tools or used the tools to undertake green projects. The responses could lend valuable information to local governments and help justify their efforts to enable tool libraries and related efforts like fix-it workshops.
- Review the recent USDN report - “Sustainable Consumption and Cities: Approaches to Measuring Social, Economic and Environmental Impacts in Cities”<sup>36</sup> which summarizes key literature and case studies and presents approaches for understanding and quantifying the scope and impact of sustainable consumption activities, including a focus on repair, reuse and rental of household goods and clothing; as well as tool-lending libraries.