

ENVIRONMENT

Marketplace keeps once-discarded items in use



GROUND FLOOR: Tiles, including those above, are among items on business-to-business online exchanges such as the new seven-state Reuse Marketplace. COURTESY NORTHEAST RECYCLING COUNCIL

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The Ocean State has one landfill with an anticipated 25 years until it reaches capacity. Stretching its lifespan is clearly to the state's benefit, says David Bordieri, waste-prevention coordinator for the R.I. Resource Recovery Corp.

“When it's full, we'll have to find an alternative. But if we start to reduce the amount of waste now, we can create a little more longevity,” Bordieri said.

One step toward that extended longevity, which can also give businesses a little boost to the bottom line, is the Reuse Marketplace, a new, seven-state, online exchange for business furniture, tools, equipment – pretty much anything.

Reuse Marketplace has listings ranging from a \$45,000 modular medical building to an organization looking for 10 free laptops for acoustic monitoring of bats.

The new site has 1,480 members, with 89 of those from Rhode Island. Members include businesses, nonprofits, government agencies and institutions, said Mary Ann Remolador, assistant director of the Northeast Recycling Council and administrator of Reuse Marketplace.

There's no public list of Rhode Island members, Remolador said. Businesses can choose to have an anonymous listing or just offer an email or phone number. The choice of anonymity for the initial listing makes it preferable for some businesses, she said.

"Anyone can browse the site and obtain items, but only members can post," Remolador said.

Reuse Marketplace launched Dec. 1, 2012 with seven member states – Rhode Island, Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York and Vermont.

Reuse Marketplace replaces Rhode Island's previous business-to-business Resource Exchange, which had about 200 businesses that used the site and exchanged hundreds of items during about three years of operation, Bordieri said.

Vermont, Massachusetts and Connecticut also had existing business-to-business exchanges. All the businesses who were members in those states and Rhode Island immediately became members of Reuse Marketplace.

Delaware, New Jersey and New York joined, but that's not likely to be the end of the memberships, Remolador said.

There is no charge to the listing organizations on Reuse Marketplace. The cost is covered by the member agencies from the states and other sponsors, including businesses.

"Because of budget cuts, some states were going to have to discontinue their materials exchange or find a different strategy," said Remolador.

Joining the seven-member exchange saves some money upfront for the R.I. Resource Recovery Corp., a quasi-governmental agency.

The RIRRC used to pay \$5,000 a year for the website and maintenance of the previous Resource Exchange, said Bordieri, who served as administrator of that Rhode Island site.

The cost for RIRRC to join Reuse Marketplace is \$3,395 annually, Bordieri said.

And whether businesses buy, sell or give away items, there can be multiple payoffs.

“If businesses decide to use the site, it not only diverts material from the landfill, they won’t have to pay for disposal,” Bordieri said.

Some of the items given away impact more than just the bottom line.

“The University of Vermont posted old wheelchair lifts for free,” Remolador said. “They went to a disabled farmer and he was able to get around his house more freely.”