

COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM



CASE STUDY

Innovations in Textiles Manufacturing, Waste Reduction, and Reuse

Founded in 2009 under the New York State Association for Solid Waste Management, and fiscally sponsored by the Product Stewardship Institute (PSI), New York Product Stewardship Council's (NYPSC) goal is to shift the waste management system from one focused on government-funded and ratepayer-financed waste diversion to one in which everyone involved in the lifespan of the product takes responsibility for reducing a product's environmental, health, and safety impacts. NYPSC is governed by a board of individuals from local government, environmental nonprofits, and the waste management, engineering, recycling, and electronics industries. Together, they have decades of experience in waste management and progressive waste policy. Since its inception, NYPSC has built grassroots coalitions to support producer responsibility and product stewardship, reducing waste and associate costs, and promoting sustainable product design.

Challenge

Textiles have an enormous impact on the environment along the entire supply chain. Textiles manufactured using both natural and synthetic fibers is energy and water intensive, and often involves toxic materials. For example, cotton production accounts for 25% of pesticide use in the United States and requires 20,000 liters of water to produce enough cotton for one t-shirt and one pair of jeans. Polyester, the most popular synthetic fabric, is made with petroleum and production of the material emits volatile organic compounds and acid gases. In fact, many textile manufacturing facilities are classified as hazardous waste generators by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). To address these challenges, textile manufacturers are finding ways to recycle materials, such as plastic, and make them into clothing fibers such as polar fleece. But new research indicates that micro plastics from these recycled plastic fabrics are entering the waste water stream through washing machines, polluting rivers, lakes, and oceans. Astonishingly, nearly 85 percent of unwanted clothes and other fabrics are thrown in the trash, despite the resource-intensive nature of their production and their high potential for recovery, reuse, and recycling.

Solution

To raise awareness about the environmental impacts of the product, consumption, and disposal of textiles, NYPSC worked with the Re-Clothe NY Coalition; the New York State Association for Reduction, Reuse, and Recycling (NYSAR3); the Product Stewardship Institute (PSI); and textiles recycler associations SMART (Secondary Materials and Recycled Textiles) and CTR (Council for Textile Recycling); to hold a Textiles Summit called Innovations in Textiles Manufacturing, Waste Reduction, and Reuse. The Summit provided a forum for a broad group of stakeholders including manufacturers, consumers, retailers, recyclers and reuse organizations, and the fashion industry to actively discuss innovations and challenges in textile production and recovery, promote cross-pollination of ideas across sectors, and foster collaboration among stakeholders seeking solutions. Through these new collaborative relationships, the Summit will help reduce the environmental impacts of textiles while creating economic opportunity in textiles reuse and recycling.

CHALLENGE

- Textiles have an enormous impact on the environment along the entire supply chain. Textiles manufactured using both natural and synthetic fibers is energy and water intensive, and often involves toxic materials. Furthermore, only 15% of textiles are reused or recycled.

SOLUTION

- To raise awareness about the environmental impacts of the product, consumption, and disposal of textiles, NYPSC held a Textiles Summit called Innovations in Textiles Manufacturing, Waste Reduction, and Reuse.
- The Summit provided a forum for a broad group of stakeholders including manufacturers, consumers, retailers, recyclers and reuse organizations, and the fashion industry to actively discuss innovations and challenges in textile production and recovery, promote cross-pollination of ideas across sectors, and foster collaboration among stakeholders seeking solutions.

RESULTS

- A post-Summit survey indicated that 94% made useful professional connections, learned something from the event, and are likely to pursue a textiles recovery initiative within the next year.

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Results

The Summit exceeded its attendance goals; 122 people attended in person and 49 attended remotely, surpassing the 100 participant goal. The Summit also increased awareness about textile recovery options and pollution prevention among attendees, with 94% of post-summit survey respondents indicating they had learned new information from the event. In addition, 94% of respondents indicated they had made useful professional connections at the Summit, which may lead to the cross-pollination of ideas across industry sectors. 74% of respondents said they will definitely or are likely to pursue a textiles recovery initiative, or participate in other initiatives, within the next year.

The success of the summit is due to the collaboration among project partners, speakers, and sponsors, facilitated by NYPSC and PSI (the Project Team). The Project Team began by forming a Summit Planning Committee comprised of individuals representing each key stakeholders group, including: textiles manufacturers and brand owners, textiles recyclers, clothing retailers, reuse organizations, municipal solid waste managers, fashion professionals, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, New York State Pollution Prevention Institute (NYSP2I), and members of the Re-Clothe NY Coalition. By involving all key stakeholder groups in the planning process, the Project Team increased its ability to address the interests, perspectives, and needs of each group and to attract their attendance. With input from the Planning Committee, the Project Team solicited speakers; refined the summit agenda and session descriptions; and secured a centrally located, high-visibility venue (Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City). The team also finalized sponsorship packages and obtained sponsorships to help cover the cost of catering, A/V services, venue rental, signage, and additional expenses.

The Project Team promoted the Summit from the moment the venue and date were selected through the day of the Summit. Promotion included a save-the-date email, regular email marketing through PSI and NYPSC channels, and social media and email outreach through the networks of project partners, speakers, and sponsors. The Project Team also collaborated with Summit sponsors, speakers, and project partners to contact targeted media and secure announcements in trade publications, newsletters, and other forums that are widely read by the target audiences.

To measure the project's success, the Project Team developed pre- and post-summit surveys designed to assess the awareness and knowledge levels of registrants and attendees before and after the Summit. The pre-summit survey was administered electronically to Summit registrants in the thank you email they received to confirm their registration. The post-summit survey was administered via email to attendees after the event.

Online Media:

- [Website](#)



"Thanks to the NYSP2I Community Grants Program, NYPSC and PSI hosted 171 textiles professionals representing researchers, government, brand owners, retailers, recyclers, nonprofits, and fashion students at the 2017 New York Textiles Summit at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City. Together we worked to develop solutions for environmentally and socially sustainable manufacturing, convenient textiles collection, and used textiles market development. We also built new professional connections for future collaboration. Not only did NYSP2I help fund this successful event, they served on the event Planning Committee, brainstormed ideas for speakers and session topics, helped promote the event, and presented their own research during the Summit—all of which contributed to the event's great success and goal-shattering attendance. NYSP2I is a supportive collaborator and a pleasure to work with."

- Andrew Radin, Chair
New York Product Stewardship Council

NYSP2I PARTNERS



New York Manufacturing Extension Partnership

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