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# Finger Lakes ReUse



## Marketing and Branding Plan

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# Cover Letter

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Dear Robin,

We are very pleased to present you with the following portfolio. We have conducted extensive research and analysis related to Finger Lakes ReUse and its mission and goals, culminating in a proposal for new marketing and branding efforts that are intended to help create more community awareness of and engagement with Finger Lakes ReUse. While it has certainly been a challenge during the COVID-19 crisis, we have pulled together to the best of our ability to create useful materials for your organization, and we hope that you are able to use our suggestions to bring new life to the ReUse brand as the community works through these trying times.

This dossier contains several different documents for your use. We have included analysis of Finger Lakes ReUse as it currently stands, a review of literature regarding reuse as an industry and similar nonprofit organizations, a selection of relevant grant sources, sample funding letters, an organizational profile that can be used when applying for grants or when conducting other forms of outreach, and, finally, our proposed action plan with details on the suggested tasks, timeline, and budget. The two general goals we have focused our proposal on are the following:

1. Increase awareness of Finger Lakes ReUse programs and impact.
2. Develop strong and consistent marketing strategies for ReUse outreach.

Finally, we would like to thank you for working with us this semester and giving us your time and guidance throughout the process. It has been a pleasure working with Finger Lakes ReUse, and we hope that this portfolio helps you continue to serve the Ithaca community, economy, and environment. We wish you and your team the best of luck in your future endeavors and good health through this pandemic.

Sincerely,

Sarah Diggins, Katherine Polley, Siena Porcello, and Alexandra Rose

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# Inside ReUse

## Commenting on Current ReUse Branding

### Public Relations Pieces

To begin, we will take a look at what Finger Lakes ReUse is currently putting out into the world, specifically in terms of the organization's mission statement, educational brochures, and press releases/news articles. We offer some critiques and suggestions for how to improve these pre-existing forms of communication, which will establish a strong foundation for moving into our proposal for new branding efforts.

### Mission Statement

The Finger Lakes ReUse mission statement — enhancing community, economy, and environment through ReUse — is clear, concise, and easy to remember, and it is featured prominently in Finger Lakes ReUse's online presence. This is quite effective. In addition, the three components of the current mission statement (above) are further expanded upon on the Finger Lakes ReUse website. ReUse describes their community work as strengthening interpersonal bonds and improving quality of life, their economic work as providing affordable goods and employable skills, and their environmental work as reducing the amount of waste produced in Tompkins County. However, in order to improve understanding of the mission, we suggest shortening these descriptions as follows to make the mission details more concise, digestible, and consistent between the three explanatory sections seen under the mission section of the website.

### Community

Finger Lakes ReUse will strengthen the Finger Lakes community through volunteer and educational opportunities for all and by fostering learning and connection between community members. Finger Lakes ReUse will provide an open and welcoming environment for underserved members of the community to learn marketable skills, practice teamwork, undertake challenges, and be recognized for their accomplishments. Finger Lakes ReUse will also complement and enhance human service agencies and nonprofits by providing free or affordable materials and training.

## Economy

Finger Lakes ReUse will work to help Tompkins County residents move out of poverty by providing quality goods for affordable prices or in exchange for volunteer labor, as well as by creating jobs and providing skills training in trades related to construction, deconstruction, repair, and other reuse services. Through the impartation of both basic competencies and specialized knowledge, Finger Lakes ReUse will enrich the local workforce and economy.

## Environment

Finger Lakes ReUse will contribute to efficient, economic, and environmentally friendly waste management and reduction by diverting materials related to construction, electronics, household goods, sporting equipment, textiles, furniture and more away from the waste stream in Tompkins County. ReUse will work to refurbish and redistribute goods, giving new life to materials that may otherwise become environmentally harmful waste.

## Educational Brochure

This particular brochure that we will be commenting on is the Impact Report found on the resources page of the Finger Lakes ReUse website. We would like to offer comments and critiques on a few notable aspects that could be improved upon in future publications. .

## Dated Information

One of the issues that Finger Lakes ReUse has with its available resources is that they are generally out of date. For example, this Impact Report was listed on the website with an Annual Report from 2017, a Five Year Report from 2008-2013, and a business plan from 2006. Unfortunately, these are the only readily available documents that the public can find on the Finger Lakes ReUse website. We feel that this lack of updated information threatens the organization's ability to reach its online audience as well as its credibility with those seeking to find more information about the history and impact of ReUse. We suggest that Finger Lakes ReUse make an effort to maintain more updated records about their activities, and keep recent informational documents available to the public on their website, rather than headlining brochures that are several years old.

### **Inconsistent Focus of Information**

Another problem we have found with this brochure and the Finger Lakes ReUse website is the inconsistency and lack of focus. For example, in this report, which is meant to be about the impact of this particular ReUse organization, certain sections, such as the one on Deconstruction, highlight quotes and statistics about the industry as a whole, whereas other sections are able to offer specific insights into the impact that ReUse has had on the local community. We fear this weakness takes away from the specific successes that Finger Lakes ReUse might have had, because the public is not made aware of them. This issue is also found on the website, where the organization focuses less on what they have done and more on why this kind of work is necessary; if you want to educate people about your actions, that should be front and center.

In addition, beyond the logo and green text, Finger Lakes ReUse seems to lack a consistent branding scheme. There is very little that visually ties this particular piece to anything else that the ReUse center has put out, perhaps because they are inconsistent with releasing such reports to the public. We suggest that ReUse keeps consistent branding on top of regularly updating their impact reports, and we suggest that reports of specific actions, projects, or statistics about their work in particular is highlighted over general statements that could apply to any similar organization.

### **Press Releases**

The following comments regard the articles posted to the Finger Lakes ReUse website under the News > Press Release tab in the navigation. We looked specifically at the most recent releases.

### **Format**

Some press releases are formatted as a standard press release, specifying the release date, contact information, and location at the beginning, and closing with a brief overall description of Finger Lakes ReUse. However, other “press releases” do not follow this formula, and instead appear to be a general news article. This illustrates a flaw with the labelling system on the ReUse website; there does not appear to be a particular methodology to how articles are tagged as news, or press releases, or anything else, which makes the website confusing and difficult to navigate when searching for information.

### SWOT Analysis

This analysis seeks to examine Finger Lakes ReUse's internal strengths and weaknesses as an organization as well as the opportunities and threats they may face from outside sources. We hope that this analysis will provide valuable insight to the Finger Lakes ReUse team and begin to introduce some of the areas for improvement that will be addressed throughout our proposal.

<b>Strengths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trust of community</li><li>• Provides work for those who might have trouble getting employed otherwise.</li><li>• Second-hand shopping popularity</li><li>• Economical</li><li>• Good location</li><li>• Living wage employer</li></ul>	<b>Weaknesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Website</li><li>• Youtube clips are too short and not easy to access</li><li>• Confusing mission statement</li></ul>
<b>Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Waste is popular topic in media</li><li>• Collaborations with other local businesses/colleges</li><li>• Collaborations with other ReUse centers</li></ul>	<b>Threats</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preconceived notions about buying old things</li><li>• Competition with other thrift shops</li><li>• Online shopping</li></ul>

### Strengths

#### Trust of the community

Finger Lakes ReUse is well-respected and well-known in Tompkins County and there hasn't been any bad press in regards to the service. The director, Diana Cohen, says that there was strong community support for the Reinforce ReUse Challenge and that they were able to secure 100 new financial donors (Magliozi, 2019). They have a 4.3 rating on google reviews.

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### **Work for those who might have trouble getting employed otherwise**

Finger Lakes ReUse provides opportunities such as the ReSet Retail and Customer Service and ReSet Technology, which are free job training programs designed to help with employment. These job training programs help build a foundation for underserved members of Tompkins County, where they can acquire job skills, be challenged, and be recognized for their accomplishments. This also creates a positive reputation in the community because it shows that ReUse strives to welcome all members of the community and work towards achieving economic equity in Ithaca.

### **Second-hand shopping is becoming more popular**

Consumers are becoming more aware of the harmful environmental impacts of the products we buy and are thus boycotting traditional retailers and opting for second-hand instead. Many people are also trying to save money and see thrifting as a helpful option. ThredUp, an online resale retailer, estimates the resale market to be at \$24 billion and predict that it will grow to be \$64 billion by 2028. Goodwill generated 5.9 billion in sales, Crossroads Trading Company at \$60 million, and Buffalo Exchange at \$87 million (“Industry Statistics and Trends,” 2020). America’s Research Group (consumer research firm) says that 16 - 18% of Americans will shop at a thrift store in a given year (“Industry Statistics and Trends”, 2020).

### **Economical**

Finger Lakes ReUse sells furniture and appliances for a lot less than average. As of 2014, the median household income in Ithaca is \$29,230 (Nocella, 2014). There are a lot of college students in Ithaca who are trying to furnish their apartments for less. Therefore, getting used furniture and appliances is an economical choice for struggling families, as well as the student market in Ithaca.

### **Good Location**

Finger Lakes ReUse has multiple locations in Ithaca. ReUse is conveniently located on Elmira road in Ithaca, in close proximity to several goods and services, such as Knapp’s car wash, Hunt’s auto service, Tompkins Trust, and Ithaca Shopping Plaza. There is also another location in the Triphammer marketplace, a convenient and popular location.



### **Living wage employer**

ReUse is a living wage employer, which is defined as paying a minimum of \$15 an hour for employees. In 2018, they provided 37 living wage jobs (Magliozzi, 2019). They also offer a health benefits package. By paying a living wage, they enhance their mission of creating a more equitable economy and moving people out of poverty. This also adds to a positive reputation with the community.

### **Weaknesses**

#### **Website**

Overall, the website is not user-friendly. The font on the website is 9 pt, which could deter people from the site, especially those with visual impairments. Additionally, the website is difficult to navigate and there are currently no events listed on the events calendar. Links to articles about the ReUse center are also not current, as well as difficult to find. We feel like the website has a lot of text, but doesn't say enough about the core values of ReUse.

#### **YouTube clips are too short and not easy to access**

On average, they are about a minute long and explain more the roles of the staff than the company itself. We think that these clips should be combined into a single video or that ReUse should create a longer info-mercial. Also, people have to go to YouTube to access the clip, the clips should be available to watch on the website. ReUse should emphasize video more as 83% of businesses say that video provides a good return on investment (Valle Del, 2019).

#### **Confusing mission statement**

The umbrella mission statement is a little vague. Finger Lakes ReUse might want to define what "ReUse" means in the context of this organization. Additionally, it's confusing as to what the mission statement is as community, economy, and environment are expanded upon underneath the umbrella mission statement. Does ReUse consider these paragraphs a part of the mission statement or separate? There is also a different mission statement and vision for the Finger Lakes ReUse E-Center.

### Opportunities

#### Waste is a popular topic in the media

People are starting to realize the impact throwing away stuff has on the environment. Consumers are pressuring companies to take measures to reduce their waste. Major companies, such as Unilever, Nestle, and Pepsi Company are moving towards reusable packaging and Kroger announced its ambitions to divert 90% of their food from the landfill by 2020 (Jennings, n.d.). Climate change is a top concern of people, especially people who live in the liberal climate of Ithaca. As people are becoming more aware of climate change, they will look towards alternatives to help reduce their waste, which might lead them to the ReUse center.

#### Collaborations with other businesses/colleges

Ithaca is a very collaborative environment. Because of Finger Lakes ReUse's good reputation in the community, other justice-oriented businesses, nonprofits, and universities want to collaborate. Finger Lakes ReUse's partners are Appalachian Regional Commission, Community Foundation of Tompkins County, Cornell University, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Ithaca College, Legacy Foundation of Tompkins County, New York State Pollution Prevention Institute, the Tompkins County Public Library, and the Park Foundation. For instance, Finger Lakes ReUse just had a collaboration with the Tompkins County Public Library to have an exhibit where artists use materials that would've been wasted to create masterpieces.

#### Collaborations with other Reuse Organizations

There are several Reuse organizations that Finger lakes ReUse could collaborate in the upstate New York area. There are Reuse organizations focused on architectural material recovery (Albany, Rochester, New Paltz), reusing building materials (Buffalo), and household furnishings (Hoosick Falls) ("New York State Reuse Directory," 2012). Organizations such as the Rescue Mission, Freecycle, and Western/Central New York Materials Exchange have several locations dedicated to community service and waste reduction ("New York State Reuse Directory," 2012).

### Threats

#### People might have preconceived notions about buying old things

Many people are reluctant to buy previously used items due to it being more time consuming, our consumerist culture telling us to constantly buy new things, and thrift shopping being associated with poverty. Due to Ithaca being a more progressive area, these are unlikely to be big threats.

#### Competition with other thrift shops

There are many other thrift shops in the area such as the Salvation Army, Thrifty Shopper, Goodwill Industries, Plato's Closet, and Trader K's. However, Finger Lakes Reuse has the advantage of being one of the few second-hand shops focused on household appliances. But still, people might gravitate towards a thrift shop with a nationally recognizable name such as the Salvation Army or Goodwill.

#### Online Shopping

92% of American consumers shop online (Selyukh, 2018). Some of the reasons that consumers prefer shopping online is that it's convenient, they can compare products and prices, saves them time, and they can also avoid crowds (Chaffey, 2017). People also sell used-goods on sites such as ThredUp, Ebay, Depop, and Etsy, to name a few. The online marketplace is definitely a competitor for Finger Lakes ReUse and they should keep this in mind.

# ReUse Research

## Reviewing the Literature on ReUse in Ithaca and Elsewhere

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

In order to assist Finger Lakes ReUse with its new marketing and branding efforts, this literature review will evaluate the overall state of reuse, resale, thrift, and similar industries in the United States. We will explore the history of thrifting, the current state of the resale market, the profile of reuse shoppers, and successful marketing techniques that reuse stores and nonprofits can utilize to reach a broad audience.

#### History of Thrift Stores

Before the 19th century, reusing materials was incredibly common. No materials ever went to waste and textiles would be re-invented into a variety of objects such as dresses and pinafores, which would then be used to stuff chairs. The industrial revolution changed this re-using mentality though because buying new clothes became more affordable. Possessions became seen as more disposable because people could just purchase something new at an affordable price. Because of this, a stigma was developed surrounding used clothes. Jewish immigrants were some of the first to sell used clothing because anti-semitism prevented them from getting other jobs. Christian ministries also caught on to the idea of selling second-hand products to fund its products, which resulted in the creation of the Salvation Army in 1897 and Goodwill in 1902. By the 1920's, the layout of thrift stores were like department stores. After World War II, the popularity of thrift stores increased because people donated its products so they could revitalize its homes and wardrobe. Consignment stores then started emerging in the 1950's when there was a market for wealthy customers to pick up upscale vintage clothes at a better price. Today, the second-hand industry is worth \$14.4 billion and many people also thrift online through sites such as ThredUp and the RealReal. (Waxman, 2018)

### The Modern Resale Industry

The resale industry has grown immensely over the years. The Association of Resale Professionals reports that there are over 25,000 resale, consignment, and nonprofit resale stores in the United States, and that number has been increasing by 7% per year over the past two years (NARTS, 2019). This rise in the resale market shows no sign of slowing down anytime soon. ThredUp, an online resale store, reports that both the online and offline resale industry is worth \$20 billion and is expected to double in size to \$41 billion by 2022. While clothing is often what first comes to mind in terms of the resale industry, used furniture is one of the fastest growing segments in the resale industry (Stone, 2018). This growth offers a promising outlook for the Finger Lakes ReUse Center that features a large used furniture collection.

### Catalysts

#### Great Recession

The Great Recession of the late 2000s caused mass amounts of unemployment in the United States. At its highest point in 2010, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that Americans faced a nearly 10% unemployment rate. This caused Americans to have to find cut corners in its spending and resale provided them the perfect opportunity. This helped to boost the market that has been on the rise ever since.

#### Sustainability

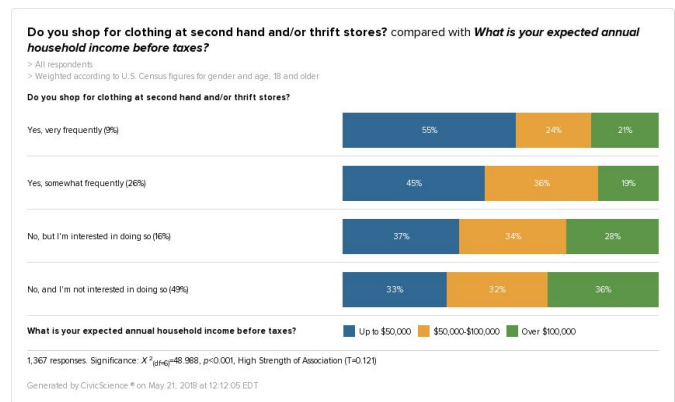
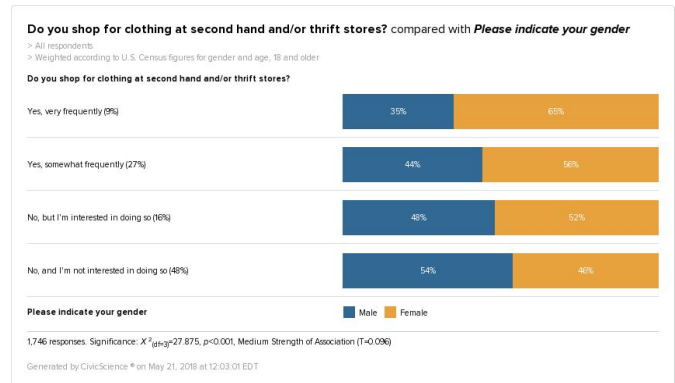
Another concern of the American market as of late is the state of the climate. Clothing happens to be the largest source of pollution in the world (Planet Aid, 2018). Every year, Americans dispose of 80 pounds of clothing per man, woman and child. Of this mass amount, only about 20% will actually find itself on the racks of a resale store (Stone, 2018). The rest will lay in landfills. Disposed textile items can actually lead to enhanced levels of greenhouse gas emissions and toxin release into water and soil (Planet Aid, 2018). By supporting Finger Lakes ReUse Center, shoppers are helping to support a cause much bigger than just the Finger Lakes region.

## Shopper Profile

### Who Shops Second-Hand

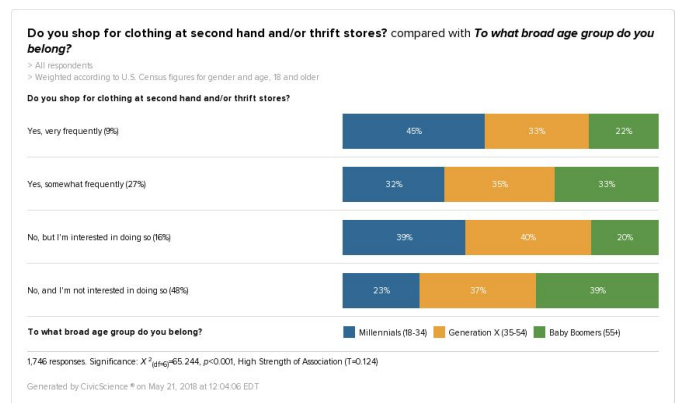
While you can certainly find reusers from all walks of life, there do appear to be certain patterns that emerge in who is doing the most thrifting; a Civic Science survey of over one thousand individuals found that women shop secondhand more than men, and people with an annual household income below \$50,000 are more likely to be frequent thrift-shoppers (Wilson, 2018). Civic Science also notes that Millennials are the age group most likely to reuse — though Generation X expresses significant interest in joining the trend — and online resale marketplace ThredUp reports that secondhand apparel shopping in particular is growing fastest among Gen Z (Bardhi, 2003; Wilson, 2018).

The graphs on the right of these pages from Civic Science illustrate this information.



### Why Shoppers Buy ReUsed

While many people turn to thrift stores, secondhand shops, or reuse centers in order to save money on necessary purchases, as indicated by the volume of frequent reusers who fall into the low-income category, that is not the only thing that gets people into thrift stores. While a 2018 Thrift Shopping Survey by the Savers found that half of shoppers loved thrifting for the money saved (Savers, 2018), the graph below from a Civic Science the same year shows that as many as 64% of thrift shoppers do not do it for the low prices. So what is it drawing people to reused items when it is not an economic benefit?





## Environmental Reasons

Shoppers are becoming more and more environmentally conscious. The Retail Industry Leaders Association estimates that 68 million American adults base its purchasing decision on its personal values, including environmental values, and “will spend up to 20% more on environmentally sound products” (RILA, n.d.). Consumers might not have to spend more when buying reused — indeed, the reality is the exact opposite — but that they are willing to put more money down betrays that consumers want the products they purchase to be sustainable, which is what they get when shopping at a reuse center.

## Support for Nonprofits

A literature review from Cornell University reports that in addition to environmental beliefs, customer beliefs about nonprofits and reuse stores in particular have a great influence on intent to purchase. In addition, the preference of millennial’s to shop at companies that donate to charity is reported to contribute to the increased interest in thrift shopping (Waxman, 2018).

## Experience

Savers reports that the unique experience provided by thrift shopping is one of the major draws of shopping for reused items. Forty-seven percent of respondents describe a love for finding hidden treasures, and sixty percent say that despite the rise of online secondhand shopping, they are still drawn to shopping in stores so they can touch and feel products as a part of the thrifting experience (Savers, 2018).

The thrift experience as a draw to reuse is certainly not a new concept; a 2003 publication by the Association for Consumer Research notes that the disordered nature of the thrift store setup and the visual anonymity of the products creates a unique retail experience for the customer; it opens “the pleasure-seeker’s imagination and day-dreaming” (Bardhi, 2003). Searching for and buying reused items is akin to an adventure or treasure hunt, and part of the excitement is not knowing exactly what you are going to find on any given excursion into the store, but coming out with something unique and personally valuable.

### **ReUse Marketing Strategies**

Beyond understanding who the patrons of a reuse store are and why they go there, it is important to look at how to successfully market to those patrons.

#### **Appealing to a Broad Audience**

The Bizfluent online guide suggests that thrift stores should sell a wide variety of items in order to entice different kinds of new customers into the store, from young thrifters looking for vintage decor or older shoppers hunting for antiques. The article also encourages taking advantage of seasonal holidays or events. For stores in a college town, they suggest looking out for when students return to campus to promote furniture sales (Bizfluent, 2017). The Houston Chronicle also recommends focusing on the options that make the advertised store different from other nearby thrift stores.

#### **In-Store Marketing Strategies**

One of the current main goals of Finger Lakes ReUse is to improve its branding within its storefronts so that individuals who come into the store are made more aware of what ReUse does. There are many in-store marketing techniques to advertise a brand to the customer without becoming vexing. According to AllBusiness (Editors, 2010) some of the method that help create successful in store marketing include:

##### **Trigger Recall**

It is well documented that the human mind will remember things easier with repetition.

##### **Introduction of New Products/Programs**

Drawing extra attention to new products and items helps garner more interest from potential customers.

##### **Easy access to More Information**

Signs, email listings, and pamphlets can all help customers become more interested in offered products and programs.



### Easy Ways to Improve Store Environment

#### Create a Welcoming Atmosphere

New customers are more likely to enter a store that appeals to them. Things like having a greeter, and playing soft background music can help increase the customers enjoyment while shopping.

#### Renovate, Update or Redesign

Considering the store's layout; is it easy to navigate? Utilizing the stores pace effectively helps not only the store but the customer. Simple changes like repainting the interior of a store can help make it seem more appealing to the customer.

#### Focus on Customer Service

Always being available to the customer not only allows for a pleasant shopping experience, but also an opportunity to inform the shopper of new items or programs the business may offer.

#### Understand the Customers Needs

When cross-selling does not push too much information onto the customer; try to suggest products or programs they would be interested in instead of everything at once.

#### Stock Similar Products Together

Organizing aisles and placing similar items with one another in a store makes for more convenient shopping ("9 Ways to Improve Your In-Store Marketing Techniques," n.d.).

### Conclusions

Based on the information revealed in this literature review, we can determine some possible strategies that would help Finger Lakes ReUse. Based on the shopper profile and recommended marketing strategies, we can conclude that Finger Lakes ReUse would benefit from expanding its marketing efforts to include not only low-income shoppers, but also other groups such as college students. The organization should also emphasize its environmental and community impacts more in its advertising as well as maintaining an appealing environment within its stores.

# Investigative Report

## Introduction

In this investigative report, we endeavor to reveal how Finger Lakes ReUse is currently performing on numerous fronts, including program impact and availability, marketing strategies, physical store features, outreach, and general customer opinions and overall satisfaction with the services provided by ReUse. Through this self-study, we hope to reveal possible areas of weakness where Finger Lakes ReUse may need improvement.

## Compare and Contrast

In order to get a sense of how Finger Lakes ReUse compares to similar organizations in areas similar to Ithaca around the country, this analysis looks at several important factors related to organization impact and operation based on what was revealed to be important by our literature review.

## Community Economic Impact

ReUse Centers strive to make an economic impact and create more just communities. In Tompkins County, 17.6% of the population live below the poverty line. The Finger Lakes ReUse center provides living wage employment as well as job skills training to underserved members of the community. The Finger Lakes ReUse center currently has over 40 paid employees, as well as 60 volunteers. The Finger Lakes ReUse center also has a materials access program for people in crisis or great need, which provides them with in-store credit. People must be referred by a human services agency to be eligible for the program. Since 2017, this program has been worth over \$100,000 in goods and has impacted the lives of over 700 households.

As a part of its core mission, ReSource Vermont alleviates poverty by providing job training programs, as well as a voucher program called Essential Goods. This provides vouchers to those who qualify as low-income to be able to purchase most of the items available in its store. ReSource Vermont has awarded over 1.6 million worth of goods to 14,000 low-income Vermont residents through its network of 30 partner agencies (“Essential Goods Program,” n.d.) ReSource Vermont even opened up a new location in Williston because of it’s a more central location that will provide access to more low-income people to utilize its programs and services. (“We’re now in Williston!” n.d.)

The ReBuilding Center in Portland, Oregon is dedicated to providing affordable access to salvaged building materials, as well as providing the tools and skills needed for people to be able to repair and stay in their homes. They are also committed to creating more equity in the community by breaking down barriers to participation. They are inclusive of women, people of color, at-risk youth, formerly incarcerated individuals, people with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, people at risk of displacement, people who are homeless, the LGBT+ community, and those of low-income. (“What We Do,” n.d.)

### Marketing Strategies

The Finger Lakes ReUse center has Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube accounts. On these social media pages they post pictures of items, announce events, sales, as well as workshops. They don’t have a lot of information on its social media on the services they offer that make ReUse “more than just a store.” There also aren’t a lot of photos that tell the story of ReUse on the website. Based on our discussions with Robin Elliot, they don’t have a target audience they’re trying to reach, besides everyone who lives in Tompkins County. Other than social media, they don’t really have a cohesive marketing strategy.

The ReBuilding Center is a visually-oriented site with a blog that’s regularly updated. Its blog features stories about building materials, upcoming workshops, as well as instructors who work at ReBuilding (“Blog,” n.d.) They also have an infographic on its website that shows the impact that they’ve had in the city of Portland. (“What We Do,” n.d.) its social media strategy is similar to Finger Lakes ReUse, but has more information on workshops being held, as well pictures of items that were made in its DIY workshops.

ReSource Vermont has a website that is centered on visuals and high-quality photographs. They also break up information in a logical way with the sections, “Community Resources, For Donors and Volunteers, For Shoppers, and For Students/Trainees.” This makes the information easy to find for users. They also have testimonials on the front page from the people who have benefited from the ReSource Center. If you click on the testimonial, it will link to a blog post that tells you its whole story. ReSource Vermont has a blog that they keep up with regularly and tells the story of the store, as well as the people who have benefited. Its social media is similar to ReBuild and Finger Lakes ReUse.

### Store

Finger Lakes ReUse sells low-priced household goods, furniture, computers, as well as home electronics. In the Triphammer location, they also sell used clothing. Community members are encouraged to donate items no longer being used to the store so they don't go to waste and wind up in a landfill. ReSource Vermont also sells used household goods and building materials, as does the ReBuilding Center in Portland, Oregon (though its focus is less on decor and more so on household appliances, such as refrigerators, cabinets, and toilets, and building materials such as tile, trim and moulding). ("Your Community On A Mission," n.d.; "What We Sell," n.d.)

### Job Training Programs

Finger Lakes ReUse offers the ReSet Job Training, which provides opportunities for underserved members of the community to acquire skills to gain employment. There are two tracks -- ReSet Technology, which teaches computer technology skills and ReSet Retail and Customer Service that teaches sales and customer care skills. Other ReUse centers also offer job training programs. The reuse center ReSource Vermont offers apprentice style training, construction and manufacturing skills programs for young adults, and service based learning experiences. A program called LEAP, helps 16-24 year olds that are blind or visually impaired gain skills to be independent adults ("LEAP," n.d.). Like Finger Lakes ReUse's ReSet Job Training, ReSource has a program that helps people with little to no work experience gain skills to enter the workforce. ReSource Vermont though, reaches out to in-school youth through its Career Start program. This helps youth develop personal and professional skills to succeed in the job market through customized training ("Career Start," n.d.).

### In-Store Repairs

Finger Lakes ReUse offers repairs of electronics through its eCenter Electronics and Repairs. Finger Lakes ReUse offers low-cost tech support, and fixes common computer problems, such as slow performance and viruses. They also offer discounted IT services for local nonprofits. ReSource Vermont offers full-service repairs to the community in its warehouse or the customer's home. Like Finger Lakes ReUse, they have computer technicians who repair computers. ("Computer Sales and Services," n.d.)

### Deconstruction

Finger Lakes ReUse has a Deconstruction Services program that dismantles buildings in an environmentally-safe way to acquire materials for re-use. They then sell these materials through its ReUse center. This prevents 70-90% of materials from going into landfills and polluting the environment.

The Rebuilding Center in Portland, Oregon pioneered deconstruction services more than 20 years ago. Over the course of its deconstruction service, they had over 1,000 projects. This service was such a success that the City of Portland adopted its program and created a mandate that said that residential structures built before 1916 to be deconstructed properly. Therefore, its services were no longer in need, so they closed the deconstruction service. (“Deconstruction,” n.d.)

### Public Outreach and Education

Finger Lakes ReUse offers several workshops to community members on how to repair things themselves. Every Saturday from 3 - 5 p.m., Finger Lakes ReUse hosts the Ithaca Fixers Collective, which is an informal gathering of people who want to learn how to repair their home electronics, furniture, small appliances, and more. Community members in this collective teach each other skills and resources to be able to repair their own objects. Finger Lakes ReUse also offers computer technology workshops, which teaches people how to handle issues, such as hardware and software repair. Additionally, during the holiday season, Finger Lakes ReUse offers Creative ReUse workshops that teaches community members how to transform previously used materials into low-waste gifts and holiday decoration.

ReSource Vermont offers woodworking workshops to the community through its South End Joinery - its training woodshop. (“The South End Joinery,” n.d.) The ReBuilding Center in Portland, Oregon makes community education a priority and teaches 200+ DIY classes a year in its education shop. In one year, they taught 415 carpentry, plumbing, and electrical classes for 5,000 adults and 1,000 kids. 22% of its classes are for just women and they also offer scholarships to 17% of participants. (“What We Do,” n.d.)

### In Summary

Finger Lakes ReUse has similar programs to other ReUse centers in the country, such as having a store selling used goods, deconstruction services, job training programs, and educational workshops. However, it appears as though the other ReUse centers are able to have a wider reach, albeit the geographic locations that they're covering is bigger than Tompkins County. For instance, ReSource Vermont has been able to provide vouchers to 14,000 low-income Vermonters, whereas Finger Lakes ReUse has provided only 700. ReSource Vermont also has more job training programs than Finger Lakes ReUse. Additionally, the ReBuilding Center in Portland, Oregon, offers 200+ educational workshops to the community whereas Finger Lakes ReUse offers much less than that. While the focus should be on quality rather than quantity, it is telling that Finger Lakes ReUse isn't as successful with public outreach as other ReUse centers.

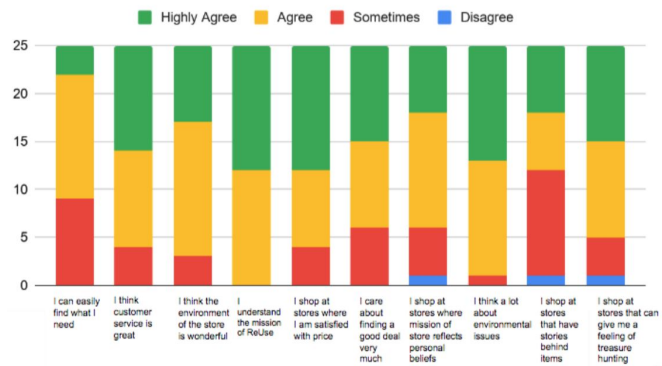
Most importantly, the other ReUse centers make its programs known through easy navigation on its website, blog posts, testimonials, infographics, and features on its social media page. Many in the community are unaware of what makes ReUse “more than just a store.” ReUse should consider focusing more of its marketing efforts on the programs they offer to the community and making this information more accessible. They should have its social media be more focused on the programs they offer and human interest stories, rather than just posts purely sales, announcements, and items in the store. ReUse might also want to consider featuring testimonials on its web page on how the ReUse center has impacted the lives of people in the community. Finger Lakes ReUse should consider expanding its job training programs/voucher program to reach more people, but should focus on marketing these programs to the community first and making them known to Tompkins County residents.

### Customer Study

In late 2019, a team of consultants from Cornell University conducted a survey of Finger Lakes ReUse patrons, using questionnaires both in-store and online (Deng et al., 2019). The final report summarizes the results received from this study. Here, we analyze those results as they reveal insight about the shoppers and donors that visit the ReUse center, as well as general community awareness of their programs.

## Shoppers

In-store customers were satisfied with the customer service at the Ithaca ReUse Center and understood the store's mission, and they expressed interest in environmental issues, "treasure hunting" in the store, and finding satisfying bargains when they shop. However, the patrons noted some difficulty in locating the items that they need.



## Donors

Donors questioned on site reported that the process of donating to Finger Lakes ReUse was easy and that they were likely to do so again, but 36% of donors lacked a strong belief that their donations were helping the Ithaca community. In addition, 28% of respondents were unaware of the mission of the Ithaca ReUse center, though those that did know of the mission found it to align with their personal beliefs.

## Program Awareness

The survey also indicated that many ReUse customers are unaware of the special programs offered at the ReUse center beyond shopping. The most recognized program was the eCenter at 51% of respondents, with the Fixers Collective and ReSet following at 45% and 38%, respectively. Materials Access and Deconstruction were even less well known to the public.

## Results

The results of this customer study reveal the draws of Finger Lakes ReUse, from the customer service, to the environmental mission, to the low prices and shopping experience. However, the study also revealed the areas in which ReUse can afford to improve; namely, the organization needs to focus on transparency and communication with the public. It is important that patrons are aware of the programs offered, are clear on the mission of the organization, and understand the impact that their involvement with ReUse, as either a donor or the shopper, has on the greater Ithaca community. Focusing on these aspects would likely improve relations between Finger Lakes ReUse and the community it serves.

# Potential Funding Sources

## Grant Opportunities Related to ReUse

In order to support the goals we will propose and related Finger Lakes ReUse projects, there are a number of foundations and other funding sources that offer grants that would fit the objectives of ReUse. Following is a list of potential grant sources related to the mission of Finger Lakes ReUse in alphabetical order by organization name, with details about what kinds of organizations and projects each grant/foundation funds and how to apply.

### Bank of America Charitable Foundation

Bank of America will be funding projects related to “economic mobility focused on the needs of the community.” We believe that some of the lesser known programs that ReUse hopes to raise awareness for, such as the ReSET job training program, the Materials Access Program, and Deconstruction relate to the economic development efforts, community greening efforts, and environmental sustainability projects that this foundation hopes to support with this area of grants.

#### Details

Amount: \$2,500 to \$25,000

Application Window: 6/1/2020 - 6/26/2020

Link: [Bank of America Charitable Foundation](#)

#### Requirements

Check eligibility and apply for a grant online at [CyberGrants Survey](#)

### Cornell Douglas Foundation

The Cornell Douglas Foundation funds organizations with 501(c)(3) status in a number of areas related to the environment, including specifically environmental health and sustainability of resources, which is particularly relevant to the work of ReUse.



### Details

Amount: \$10,000-\$25,000

Application Window: Temporarily closed due to COVID-19, will eventually accept new proposals after the crisis has subsided.

Link: [Cornell Douglass Foundation Application](#)

### Requirements

All materials — except the 990 form — should be sent by mail addressed to Ms. Cynthia Duffy, Executive Director

- Introductory letter about the organization.
- One or two page summary of the project for which funding is requested.
- IRS determination letter of 501(c)(3) status.
- Recent 990 form. \*This should be submitted by email.
- Project and organizational line item budget.
- Other sources of support: amounts secured and amounts requested.

### General Motors Social Investment

Similarly to the Bank of America grant, the General Motors corporate grants support, among other areas, community development related to workforce readiness and economic prosperity, which connects to the economic aspect of Finger Lakes ReUse's mission. Particularly, the job training offered by ReUse matches with GM's desired social outcome of increasing the number of individuals with "marketable technical and vocational skills."

### Details

Amount: No limit on request amount, grant size varies per program needs

Application Window: Due by September 30, annually.

Link: [GM Social Investment](#)

### Requirements

- Eligibility quiz to determine organization match with GM
- Online Letter of Inquiry, accepted on a rolling basis

- Full proposal including project budget, logic model (for requests \$25K and above), and current Board of Directors list
- GM may visit the organization in person during review
- Grant process takes about eight weeks from submission of LOI to acceptance
- Upon acceptance, 6-month Interim Report is required to report on progress

### Mitsubishi Corporation Foundation

The Mitsubishi Corporation Foundation for the Americas promotes environmental causes related to both the physical and social environment. ReUse projects relate to the categories of environmental education and sustainable development that MCFA supports.

#### Details

Amount: Not specified

Application Window: First quarter of the calendar year is ideal, but all grants are approved at the annual board meeting each autumn.

Link: [Mitsubishi Corporation Foundation](#)

#### Requirements:

- Online application form
- Information about organization, project being funded, and budget

### Quadrtec Cares ‘Energize the Environment’ Grant Program

This Quadrtec Cares grant program funds individuals or groups “currently pursuing a program or initiative designed to benefit our environment.” Their program is open very broadly to environmental causes, which of course fits with the mission of Finger Lakes ReUse to improve the local environment. Queries about any eligibility specifics can be emailed to [grants@quadrtec.com](mailto:grants@quadrtec.com), which is also where applications will be sent.

#### Details

Amount: \$3,500

Application Window:

- Fall grant applications due 11:59pm EST on June 30th
- Spring grant applications due 11:59pm EST on October 30th

Link: [Quadrantec Cares Grant Program](#)

### Requirements

- 1000-1600 word essay that “paints a picture of who you or your organization are, what drives and inspires you or your organization, what you or the organization are looking to accomplish, and how you plan to apply our grant to your project.”

### The Scherman Foundation Core Fund - Environment

According to the Scherman Foundation website, “The Foundation’s Core Fund Environment Program supports a variety of organizations seeking to protect the natural and human environment and to create a sustainable future.” This foundation has many different areas of interest, but they have increasingly become focused on climate change and sustainable advances. We believe that, especially with the incorporation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Finger Lakes ReUse would fit well with this mission. The foundation “pays particular attention to New York City” but is open to any projects in the US. Both general operating grants and project grants will be considered.

### Details

Amount: Average \$35,000 over two years

Application Window: Letters of intent accepted on a rolling basis

Link: [Scherman Foundation Environment](#)

### Requirements

- Apply online
- Submit a Letter of Intent first, with the following attachments: the current annual organizational budget, project budget if applicable, current sources of support, the current Board of Directors list with names, positions, and affiliations, biographies of senior leadership or key personnel, and an IRS 501(c)(3) tax determination letter
- If invited to apply, submit a full proposal with executive summary, organizational background, description of organizational or project goals, strategies and milestones, a plan for evaluation, and any requested financial information.

# Sample Letters

## Letters for Community Appeals and Proposals and Grants.

The following two letters are samples that can be used and/or edited to appeal to the general community for donations or to particular grants to support projects.

### Annual Appeal Letter

The Finger Lakes ReUse Center  
Ithaca, NY 14850

May 15, 2020

Dear Ithaca Community:

Finger Lakes ReUse has contributed to the reuse of 3,096,697 pounds of materials. That three million pounds of material could have become harmful waste, but instead, with the support of community members like you, Finger Lakes ReUse is giving new life to discarded objects and to underserved Ithaca residents as we strive to improve the local community, economy, and environment.

Since opening, Finger Lakes ReUse has been an invaluable partner to the Tompkins County Solid Waste Management Division, which has over the past twelve years, reduced local waste by 58% and hopes to raise that number further with the help of ReUse and its supporters. ReUse has also been able to provide affordable or even free goods at two locations to the 17% of Tompkins County residents that live below the federal poverty line. In addition, ReUse aids in helping underserved people gain skills necessary for employment. During 2017 alone, 87 people received job skills training through the ReSET program. Over the past year, Finger Lakes ReUse has been able to sponsor numerous community events such as reuse workshops, art exhibits, Earth Day celebrations, and collaborations with other local organizations such as the Tompkins County Public Library and the Community School for Music and Arts.

It is with the support of donors and partners like you that Finger Lakes ReUse is able to fulfill its mission of enhancing community, economy, and environment through ReUse. You can help us provide programming to engage the Ithaca community in reusing millions of pounds of old goods. You can help us not only maintain and expand our 37 living wage jobs, but also provide training for others to enter and enrich the Tompkins County workforce. You can help us continue to reduce the amount of waste that ends up in landfills. In the world of ReUse, even a small donation can go a long way to creating a connected community, a strong economy, and a clean, waste-free environment.

Thank you for considering making a donation to Finger Lakes ReUse. With your contribution, we know that ReUse will continue to serve and benefit the community, economy, and environment in Ithaca and Tompkins County in 2020 and beyond.

Sincerely and with much gratitude,

The Team at Finger Lakes ReUse

## Letter of Inquiry

The Finger Lakes ReUse Center  
Ithaca, NY 14850

May 15, 2020

To Whom It May Concern

The Finger Lakes ReUse center has been enhancing the community, economy, and environment through the practice of ReUse for over a decade. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose efforts to rescue waste, such as household goods and appliances from the landfill has resulted in a 58% reduction of waste in Tompkins County in the past 12 years. We've also helped uplift our economy by providing employment opportunities to undeserved members of our community through our ReSet job training programs. We are more than just a store and are developing a marketing plan that will let our community know all that we have to offer.

## Finger Lakes ReUse

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In order to best execute on our marketing plan, we will need to hire employees with marketing, communications, and web design experience. We pride ourselves on being a living-wage employer and as such, we want to provide fair economic opportunities in our community. However, Finger Lakes ReUse has, like many other businesses, suffered a financial hit due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to afford to properly compensate our new hirees, we are seeking funding from people like you. By helping us to hire new employees, you will help us fulfill our mission of creating an effective marketing plan and building a website that educates the community on all that we have to offer.

Finger Lakes ReUse has been struggling to reach our customers through digital platforms, such as our website and social media. We strive to create a website that is visually-engaging and is centered on the stories of the humans who make up the ReUse center. By hiring employees to enhance our digital communications strategy and create a professional marketing plan, this will give our current staff the time and energy to work on program cultivation, keep waste out of the landfill, and help improve the lives of members of our community.

By helping us to hire employees, you will be helping the community at large. This is because you will be providing economic opportunity to someone who's experienced unemployment due to COVID-19. You will be providing economic opportunity to someone who doesn't have regular job opportunities readily available to them due to a myriad of circumstances. You will be providing economic opportunity to a student who wants an opportunity to use their academic skills, but can't afford to have an unpaid internship. By funding us, you will help us to level the playing field and create a more just society. We greatly appreciate your consideration and hope that you will decide to donate to the Finger Lakes ReUse center to help us further propel our mission of community uplift and rescuing items from the landfill.

With Gratitude,

The Finger Lakes ReUse Center Team

# Organizational Profile

## A Summary of ReUse for Proposals

Many funding sources require some sort of organizational profile and/or history in order to get to know your organization better and determine if you are a good fit for their grant. Here, we provide an overview of Finger Lakes ReUse that can serve as a basis for this requirement for grants that ReUse applies for in the future.

## Mission

Enhancing community, economy, and environment through ReUse!

## Community

Finger Lakes ReUse will strengthen the Finger Lakes community through volunteer and educational opportunities for all and by fostering learning and connection between community members. Finger Lakes ReUse will provide an open and welcoming environment for underserved members of the community to learn marketable skills, practice teamwork, undertake challenges, and be recognized for their accomplishments. Finger Lakes ReUse will also complement and enhance human service agencies and nonprofits by providing free or affordable materials and training.

## Economy

Finger Lakes ReUse will work to help Tompkins County residents move out of poverty by providing quality goods for affordable prices or in exchange for volunteer labor, as well as by creating jobs and providing skills training in trades related to construction, deconstruction, repair, and other reuse services. Through the impartation of both basic competencies and specialized knowledge, Finger Lakes ReUse will enrich the local workforce and economy.

## Environment

Finger Lakes ReUse will contribute to efficient, economic, and environmentally friendly waste management and reduction by diverting materials related to construction,

electronics, household goods, sporting equipment, textiles, furniture and more away from the waste stream in Tompkins County. ReUse will work to refurbish and redistribute goods, giving new life to materials that may otherwise become environmentally harmful waste.

## History

Finger Lakes ReUse has been living their mission for over a decade, and it is important to see how the organization has grown and changed in its efforts to have a positive impact on the community.

## ReUse Waste Reduction

Finger Lakes ReUse is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that aims to enrich Tompkins County Community, Economy and the Environment through various programs and activities. Since opening its doors in 2008, Ithaca, New York's Finger Lakes ReUse has contributed greatly to Tompkins County's 20-Year Solid Waste Plan started in 1995. After the implementation of other plan components, Tompkins County Solid Waste Management Division found ReUse played a key role in the 58% reduction of waste in the past 12 years. Finger Lakes ReUse currently operates out of two centers: the Ithaca ReUse Center and the Triphammer ReUse Center. The first center acquired, Triphammer ReUse Center, located in the Triphammer Marketplace Shopping Center, opened in 2008. The second location in Ithaca opened in December 2015. As Finger Lakes ReUse continues to expand it annually helps divert hundreds of tons of waste material relating to furniture, household goods, sporting equipment, electronics, computers, construction, and textiles.

## Building the Workforce

In Tompkins County the median household income was \$29,230 in 2014 (Nocella.) Because 17.6% of the County population lives below the Federal Poverty Level, Finger Lakes ReUse strives to help reduce this number by providing jobs that pay a living wage and skill training to its community. In its first five years, Finger Lakes Reuse created fourteen job opportunities, and since then continues to expand its employment. Currently, the ReUse workforce includes over forty paid employees and as many as sixty dedicated volunteers. One novel area of employment is deconstruction, which involves a party disassembling buildings by hand in order to recycle the materials. Building



materials make up a majority of the waste in landfills, so this program offers environmental relief in addition to job training. The deconstruction program offered by Finger Lakes ReUse is just one of many ways it gives back to the community, providing training for an ever growing field of employment and expanding the local workforce here in Tompkins County.

## ReUse Centers in Summary

Finger Lakes ReUse Centers offer Ithacans a place to shop, reuse, volunteer and find employment. At the ReUse centers, Finger Lakes ReUse offers classes on topics from creative (From Junk to Joy) to technical (How to ReBuild Your Computer). The ReUse Center is also proud to supply educational institutions and non-profit organizations with affordable or free materials whenever possible. Finger Lakes ReUse also works closely with educational institutions, human services agencies, local government, trade unions, and other existing reuse organizations to provide new training opportunities for its community.

## Programs

Since inception in 2008, Finger Lakes ReUse has expanded to benefit the community through a variety of different outreach programs and partnerships with different local organizations. Through these programs and partnerships, Finger Lakes ReUse extends their impact far behind the sales of used goods that first put them on the map.

## ReUse Centers (Stores)

At either the Ithaca ReUse location or the Triphammer location, members of the Finger Lakes community can donate and purchase used items such as household goods, furniture, computers and other home electronics. The centers offer low prices and frequently update their inventory in order to make sustainably sourced goods an accessible and convenient option for the local community.

## ReSET Training

The ReSET (skills and employment training) Training program is a free job training program that offers an opportunity for members of the community to learn the valuable

skills that will help them earn success on the job front. Prospective students can apply to their choice of two different tracks: the ReSET Technology track that teaches skills in computer technology or the ReSET Retail and Customer Service track that teaches skills related to sales and customer care.

### **eCenter Electronics and Repairs**

Finger Lakes ReUse uses their eCenter Electronics and Repairs to provide low-cost electronic resources to the community in a variety of different ways:

#### **Computer Refurbishment, Resale & Recycling**

The Finger Lakes region's one stop shop for electronics refurbishment and recycling.

#### **Low-Cost Computer Tech Support & Repair**

The eCenter can help with broken computer components, slow performance, viruses, and other hardware and software problems with support and repairs performed by professionally trained/certified staff and volunteers.

#### **Discounted IT services for Nonprofits**

Services provided to serve the needs of local nonprofits include computer installation, network design and software provision.

#### **Educational Workshops on Computer Technology**

Topics include internet safety, software tutorials, hardware repair, and “creative reuse”.

### **ReUse Materials Access Programs (ReMAP)**

The ReUse Materials Access Program provides locals in need with store credit. The program has helped over 700 households by providing over \$100,000 in store credit since 2017. Finger Lakes ReUse also matches every donated dollar with an additional dollar for this program, thus doubling the impact made. Local agencies can nominate people in crises such as natural disasters, returning from incarceration, fleeing an abusive household or serious financial restraints who are in need of affordable home furnishings.

### Pickup and Delivery

For your convenience, the Finger Lakes ReUse centers provide low-cost delivery and free pick-up services for anyone looking to donate or purchase large items. Delivery fees begin at \$40 and are available to any address in the 14850 and 14853 zip codes. Further locations are available for delivery at a slightly higher cost. Free delivery is also offered to the households in need that are helped through the ReMAP program.

### Fixers Collective

From 3-5pm on Saturdays, the Fixers Collective meets at the Ithaca ReUse center. Members of the community can stop by to learn repair skills or meet others with a passion for repair.

### Special Events and Collaborations

Finger Lakes ReUse hosts numerous special events throughout the year, including collaborative programs with other local organizations, such as “CELEBRATE ReUse” with the Tompkins County Public Library and a joint performance with the Community School for Music and Arts in the Ithaca Festival Parade.

## Locations

### Ithaca ReUse Center

The Ithaca location opened in December of 2015, and is the location that most members of the Ithaca community think of when they hear about ReUse. Unique to this location is the selection of building materials and the makeshift lumber yard located outside. This location also stocks many other items including electronics, furniture, home decor, craft materials, and more.

### Triphammer ReUse Center

This was Finger Lake ReUse’s first location, opened in 2008. Conveniently located in the Triphammer mall and farther away from many of the other local thrift stores, the Triphammer ReUse center houses ReUse’s stock of clothing, as well as other general items. The shopping experience at this location is also very different from that of the

Ithaca storefront; it is much more organized and aesthetically pleasing, which is something that Finger Lakes ReUse hopes to replicate at the Ithaca location in the future.

### Inspiring Others: Cortland ReUse Center

While Finger Lakes ReUse may not want to own and operate additional locations under their particular brand, the leaders recognize the importance of and need for ReUse centers in other communities. Because of this, the Ithaca ReUse website offers a step-by-step plan and numerous resources to help others start their own Community ReUse Center. So far, this template has been of use to a planning committee that is looking to open a ReUse center in Cortland, according to Andrew Sullivan of Ithaca.com. Though no location or timeline had been determined as of January 2020, support for ReUse is clearly spreading beyond the current Finger Lakes locations.

## Partners and Memberships

Finger Lakes ReUse partners with different organizations, businesses, and academic institutions to provide programming, and ReUse is a member of several associations that support its mission.

Partners	Memberships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Appalachian Regional Commission</li><li>● Community Foundation of Tompkins County</li><li>● Cornell University</li><li>● Cornell Cooperative Extension</li><li>● Ithaca College</li><li>● Legacy Foundation of Tompkins County</li><li>● New York State Pollution Prevention Institute</li><li>● Park Foundation.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce</li><li>● Get Your GreenBack Tompkins</li><li>● New York Council of Nonprofits</li><li>● New York State Association for Reduction, Reuse, and Recycling</li><li>● Reuse Alliance</li><li>● Reuse Trail of Tompkins County.</li></ul>

# Proposal

## Our Suggestions for Finger Lakes ReUse

### Development Plan

#### Initiative Statement

Finger Lakes ReUse is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that aims to enrich Tompkins County Community, Economy and the Environment through various programs and activities. Ithaca, New York's Finger Lakes ReUse was founded in Tompkins County 1995 as part of the communities 20-Year Solid Waste Plan. After the implementation of other plan components, Tompkins County Solid Waste Management Division found ReUse played a key role in the 58% reduction of waste in the past 12 years. Finger Lakes ReUse currently operates out of two centers: the Ithaca ReUse Center and the Triphammer ReUse Center.

Finger Lakes ReUse wishes to make the Ithaca community more aware of all of the services it has to offer. In order to establish a strong and consistent identity for Finger Lakes ReUse, the organization will need to address both its community outreach and on-site branding endeavors. We believe that a combination of these efforts we believe will address some major problem areas that ReUse has and bring more awareness to Finger Lakes ReUse and what the organization does, strengthen the bonds between the ReUse center and the community, and increase support for the various programs provided by Finger Lakes ReUse.

### Problem Description

#### Introduction

Based on our study of reuse at the Finger Lakes ReUse centers and beyond, we have identified several areas in which the ReUse center can improve its current operations. First, it is important for Finger Lakes ReUse to expand its community outreach efforts to establish a consistent and transparent brand identity and help the public become more aware of the ReUse activities and programs. In addition, we feel that ReUse can benefit

from improving the in-store experience provided to patrons in order to make shopping at the ReUse center a more productive and enjoyable endeavor and to make the different uses of the ReUse space more clear to those who come into the store.

## Community Outreach

### Awareness of Programs

Although Finger Lakes ReUse has many programs and services, most customers are unaware of what the non-profit offers. The most advertised program, the eCenter, only 51% of customers could identify. This means Finger Lakes ReUse is losing a significant amount of participation for its programs — 49% of customers are not informed about the eCenter alone. Deconstruction, a program which ReUse proudly displays on its website, had less than 38% recognition rate according to the Cornell Consulting Project. With other programs being even less popular, it is clear Finger Lakes ReUse needs to market itself more effectively to the community.

### Donor Impact Awareness

As with any non-profit, donors want to know where and what their money is going towards. When questioned, only 64% of donors felt their donations were helping Finger Lakes ReUse assist the Ithaca community. The other 36% of donors felt giving to Finger Lakes ReUse was “somewhat” to “not very” productive. As a non-profit, Finger Lakes ReUse depends upon donations to help maintain its businesses and services. Leaving a sizable number of donors feeling unsatisfied with their contribution means less future donations, and also makes Finger Lakes ReUse appear less credible to the community. In order to prevent further donor doubt, Finger Lakes ReUse must make it clear what donations help fund.

### Website and Online Presence

Finger Lakes ReUse can be found on social media — Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Youtube — as well as on its website. As with its website, the main problem with Finger Lakes ReUse's online presence is its lack of general information and personalization. Although it does use its social media to display new items, sales, workshops and announce events that is where the online interaction begins and ends. Finger Lakes ReUse needs to demonstrate to the community what separates it from other stores. A

good start would be updating its website, which is hard to navigate and not user friendly. Most of the websites links are outdated, there are little to no pictures and videos, and the non-profits history is almost impossible to piece together. When customers visit a website they want to know who they are supporting. A clear staff roster — with emails and other ways of communication — of the founding and current members would behoove Finger Lakes ReUse. Also a brief history, or “how we came to be” page would help establish credibility and community with those who read it.

### **On-Site Branding**

#### **In-Store Marketing**

Currently, many in-store shoppers at Finger Lakes ReUse Center are not even aware of the extent of its outreach programs. There is little utilization of the store to inform shoppers of what they are supporting. At the Ithaca location, the classroom in which the ReSET programs are held is tucked deep in a labyrinth of offices which makes it difficult for shoppers to come across. We propose the use of in-store marketing to current shoppers in order to educate them on the full scope of who and what they are supporting by purchasing used goods. Through the use of in-store marketing techniques such as a bulletin board placed at the store entry can help educate shoppers that have already walked through the door. This education will not only promote the store’s outreach programs, but will also allow donors to see the direct impact of their donations.

### **Closing Thoughts**

In order to establish a strong and consistent identity for Finger Lakes ReUse, the organization will need to address both its community outreach and on-site branding endeavors. We believe that a combination of these efforts we believe will address some major problem areas that ReUse has and bring more awareness to Finger Lakes ReUse and what the organization does, strengthen the bonds between the ReUse center and the community, and increase support for the various programs provided by Finger Lakes ReUse.

### Formal Proposal

Finger Lakes ReUse Center is a not-for-profit organization that seeks to enhance community, economy, and the environment through the practice of ReUse. Since its inception, The ReUse center has improved the quality of life of underserved populations through providing affordable used goods, employable skills through job training programs, and improving the environment through reducing the waste sent to the landfill in Tompkins County. Finger Lakes ReUse works to move Tompkins County residents off the poverty line through job training programs in the areas of construction, deconstruction, electronic repairs, and customer service. To further propel their social justice mission, they work to create a safe and healthy environment for all by keeping hazardous waste (i.e. e-waste) out of landfills and refurbishing and redistributing goods. In this proposal, we have broken up our suggestions into two sections -- increase awareness of community programs and impact and to create a cohesive marketing strategy.

### Increase Awareness of Community Programs & Impact

In a customer study done by consultants from Cornell University, it was found that most customers were unaware of the community programs and social impact of the Finger Lakes ReUse Center. In other words, customers are unaware of what makes the ReUse Center “more than just a store.” The eCenter was only recognized by 51% of respondents, Fixers Collective by 45% of respondents, and ReSet by 38% of respondents. Materials Access and Deconstruction were the least known programs to the respondents of the survey. If residents of Tompkins County are more aware of these programs, there could be a significant increase in participation. This will further develop community loyalty with the nonprofit. If more community loyalty is developed, customers will shop more at Finger lakes ReUse Center and also donate more either with physical items or monetary donations. Additionally, having data on hand that programs and services have on the community will make it easier to achieve funds requested in future grants. The objectives in part 1 of this proposal focus on:

- Having their social media and website focus on the impact community programs have had on Tompkins County community members.
- Increasing donor impact awareness.
- Informing customers of programs and services through in-store advertising.



## Website and Social Media

### Revamp Online Presence

Finger Lakes ReUse can be found on social media — Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Youtube — as well as on its website. As with its website, the main problem with Finger Lakes ReUse’s online presence is its lack of general information and personalization. Our objectives are to redesign the Finger Lakes ReUse Center’s online presence to be more user-friendly and reflect the strong community aspect of the organization.

### Social Media Presence

Although Finger Lakes ReUse does use its social media to display new items, sales, workshops and announce events, they don’t focus on the community programs that make Reuse “more than just a store.” In order to demonstrate to the community what separates it from other stores, Finger Lakes ReUse can establish a more prominent online presence with the Ithaca community. Finger Lakes ReUse should shift their content to being more focused on the programs they offer and human interest stories. This includes interactive posts such as “day in the life” Instagram stories, photos of programs and participants, highlighting the UN Sustainable Goals, and posting more about their programs and services, rather than just items in the store and sale announcements.

### Redesigned Website

In the digital age, a strong online presence is vital now more than ever. Therefore, the Finger Lakes ReUse center’s website should be updated to be more accessible to users. The unique programs and services offered by ReUse should be emphasized more on their website. The website should be welcoming and inviting to users and should have a warm, family-like aesthetic throughout. We recommend highlighting the programs and services offered by Finger Lakes ReUse on the front page, blog posts, testimonials, and infographics. Having a website that is visually-engaging, easy to navigate, and is informational, but concise will help Finger Lakes ReUse cultivate on-going relationships with their customers and supporters.

### Donor Impact Awareness

When running a non-profit, it is vital to let donors know the impact their money has had on the organization to make people want to continue donating. Therefore, building on-going relationships with donors is critical to maintaining their programs and services.

In the survey conducted by Cornell, only 64% of donors felt like their donations were making an impact on their community. 36% of those surveyed felt that donating to the Finger Lakes ReUse Center was “somewhat” to “not very” productive. If donors don’t know how their donation has impacted the organization they might be reluctant to donate in the future. Finger Lakes ReUse Center needs to let their donors know how valuable and important their donations are. Even though donations don’t make up most of Finger Lakes ReUse’s revenue, they should still make donating more of a focus.

### **In-Store Advertisement of Programs**

Currently, many in-store shoppers at Finger Lakes ReUse Center are not aware of the extent of its outreach programs. The ReUse Centers could do more to promote these programs and the many different events it offers throughout its stores. When visiting the Finger Lakes ReUse Centers, it is not clear what the non-profit wants you to take away from the experience. The stores are not utilizing the space it has to relay important information to its customers. In-store marketing techniques such as placing a bulletin board at the front of the store will help inform shoppers that have already walked through the door and any who pass by. Making information available in a clear, easily accessible space in the store would be ideal. Other techniques like the use of pamphlets (or electronic ones to save paper), and verbal promotion by employees will also increase the likelihood of shoppers remembering the information advertised.

### **Solidify Marketing Strategies**

In order for Finger Lakes ReUse to maintain a constant influx of shoppers into their stores and to draw more individuals into their other programs, it is essential that the organization develops strong and consistent marketing and branding techniques that will reach, inform, and persuade their desired audience. The current public outreach conducted by Finger Lakes ReUse comes across as haphazard and disjointed, and could benefit from a clear and directed marketing campaign to reinvigorate the ReUse brand in the eyes of the community. This would include:

- Conducting audience analysis.
- Incorporating the United Nations Sustainable Development goals into marketing
- Taking advantage of seasonal events and holidays to market programs and workshops in a timely manner.
- Hire individuals who have expertise in communications, marketing, and web design to take charge of public relations campaigns.

### **Conduct Audience Analysis**

Before undertaking any marketing effort, it is important to understand who your audience is. Different demographics are going to respond best to different kinds of messages, so it is important to get an idea of who you are reaching in order to learn how to best appeal to them. We understand that Finger Lakes ReUse is trying to reach as broad of an audience as possible, but we suggest that the organization breaks down their audience into key components in order to develop targeting marketing efforts. Finger Lakes ReUse should conduct research into the demographics of the individuals who are participating or who might want to participate in their various programs, and use appropriate (and possibly different) strategies for each.

### **Incorporating the UN Sustainability Goals**

One of the desired outcomes for Finger Lakes ReUse is to incorporate the United Nations Sustainability Goals into their marketing efforts, and there are a number of reasons why this could benefit the ReUse center. If ReUse is able to illustrate their connection to the UN goals, it may open up the possibility to apply for and receive various grants related to these larger efforts. Further, specifically on the marketing side of things, the inclusion of the sustainable development goals will make it easier for community members to connect the various programs and even their own participation at ReUse to social values they may hold. If people can clearly see how Finger Lakes ReUse is contributing to larger causes that they care about, they are more likely to support ReUse and get personally involved, be that by shopping, making donations, attending events, or volunteering. In addition, the UN goals could provide a solid, consistent focus for a new ReUse marketing campaign.

### **Take advantage of seasonal events to market programs and workshops**

As a non-profit organization that also functions as a retail store, there is abundant potential for Finger Lakes ReUse Center to market during holiday times and other special seasonal events throughout the year. The winter holiday season is an extremely busy time for the resale program as many locals hope to find the perfect gift waiting in the aisles of each of the two ReUse locations. This influx of new customers provides the Finger Lakes ReUse Center with the perfect opportunity to ramp up their marketing efforts for their lesser known but equally important programs, such as the ReSET and eCenter programs. Strategically ramping up marketing efforts during particularly busy times of year is a cost effective way of spreading the word about the full effect of the organization's efforts.

### **Hire people who have communications, marketing and web design experience**

A strong online presence is a must for any business or organization in the present times. Frequent use of social media and a clean, informative website has the ability to skyrocket marketing efforts. Through these updates made to the Finger Lakes ReUse Center's online presence will help to reach a wider market of supporters, as well as allow donors to see the positive effects of their contributions. By hiring employees with communications, marketing and web design experience, Finger Lakes ReUse Center will quickly elevate their marketability, as well as provide a career opportunity for individuals looking to build experience in their field. By hiring someone in-house, they will be guaranteed someone who is completely dedicated to and passionate about Finger Lakes ReUse Center's mission specifically. The connection these employees have will be evident in their work.

## **Goals, Outcomes, and Measures**

In this section, we will outline the general goals we suggest for Finger Lakes ReUse based on the components of the given development plan. Each of these goals is then broken down into specific objectives and individual tasks that Finger Lakes ReUse can follow in order to meet the goals. We also offer the expected outcomes of working toward each of these goals, as well as measures that can be used to determine the success of each undertaking. This will be followed by a suggested timeline for achieving these goals.

### **Goal 1: Increase awareness of ReUse programs and impact**

Community is the backbone behind everything that the ReUse center does. However, customers aren't aware of all of the myriad of the community-centered programs that are offered. The impact that the ReUse center has had on the environment and keeping waste out of landfills could also be more visible in external communication materials.

Additionally, Finger Lakes ReUse online presence and in-store advertising could reflect the store mission more. The results from the Cornell University survey also indicate that they haven't built ongoing relationships with donors. To best improve in these areas, we have proposed the following objectives.

#### **Objective 1.1: Strengthen online presence to increase engagement**

In order to keep the public aware of and engaged in ReUse programs, it is essential that Finger Lakes ReUse revamp their current website in order to make it more accessible to

the public. This website should be a hub where members of the Ithaca community can learn about the organization's mission and services, discover and sign up for programs, and find out how to get involved by donating, shopping, or volunteering. In order to make this a reality, the website should be redesigned so that it keeps visitors engaged in ReUse, clearly educates visitors about what ReUse is all about, and is easy for users to navigate and find the information they need. One example of such an improvement would be including announcements for upcoming events, testimonials, or blog posts right on the home page. It is also important that the new website be updated regularly to ensure relevance of the information provided.

In addition, the ReUse social media accounts should be updated regularly with engaging content that will expand the non-profits community outreach. On social media, Finger Lakes ReUse should center their branding and marketing efforts around the community of ReUse. For example, FingerLakesReUse could take advantage of Instagram stories and do a "day in the life Instagram takeover" where someone in the ReSet program shows people what it's like to be a participant. Other ideas include featuring photos of items made by workshop program participants, testimonials from ReUse community members, and old throwback photos of the store's beginnings, and most importantly, posting more about the ReSet program, e-center, and deconstruction program.

- *Task 1.1.1: Redesign website for visual and emotional appeal and ease of access*
- *Task 1.1.2: Develop consistent branding and apply across all online outlets*
- *Task 1.1.3: Create new written material for website - focus on clarity and consistency*
- *Task 1.1.4: Establish staff responsibility for regular social media and website updates*
- *Task 1.1.5: Recruit a photographer to create images to be posted online*
- *Task 1.1.6: Research and craft human interest stories to highlight on social media*

### **Objective 1.2: Increase awareness of donor impact**

Finger Lakes ReUse needs to make donors feel good about donating, but also still create a sense of urgency to make them want to donate again. Finger Lakes ReUse should create a thank-you letter template that emphasizes how much donations help the organization. Finger Lakes ReUse should consider creating a list that they can reference of the ways donations positively impact the organization. In addition to thank-you letters and an annual appeal letter, Finger Lakes ReUse should consider highlighting their yearly accomplishments on their website and social media to encourage people to donate their items, time, and/or money. They should make it easy to donate by having an easily

accessible link through their website. Finger Lakes ReUse should also consider sending out a monthly newsletter highlighting accomplishments and programs that are thriving as a result of donations. Finger Lakes ReUse should also emphasize other ways people can donate, such as giving used items for ReUse to resell or volunteering their time.

- *Task 1.2.1: Focus annual appeal letter to highlight donor impact*
- *Task 1.2.2: Create a thank you note template that can be sent to donors*
- *Task 1.2.3: Use website and social media to emphasize donation*
- *Task 1.2.4: Create monthly newsletter that includes donors and volunteers*

### **Objective 1.3: Advertise programs and events in store locations**

Finger Lakes ReUse has the ability to advertise its services and updates to the public by utilizing in-store marketing techniques. Firstly, a bulletin board can be placed near store entrances and exits to inform customers of ReUse's goings on. In-store employees can also help keep customers informed by having established talking points with which to advertise to shoppers. At the checkout, clerks can point customers to posters with relevant information of events and programs. The space in both centers can be better optimised to highlight these and other signs around the store.

- *Task 1.3.1: Set up bulletin board display near store entrance to post updates*
- *Task 1.3.2: Create poster or flyer to be visible to customers at check-out*
- *Task 1.3.3: Improve/add signage to highlight spaces used for programming*
- *Task 1.3.4: Establish talking points for employees to share with customers*

### **Goal 1 Outcome**

As a result of these efforts, the Ithaca community, especially those involved in some way either as donors or shoppers, will be more aware of the programs offered by Finger Lakes ReUse and the impact the non-profit has on the community.

### **Goal 1 Measures**

To measure the success of this goal, Finger Lakes ReUse can conduct a follow-up study and/or survey based on the Cornell research project conducted last year to assess store customer awareness of other programs offered by ReUse. Website and social media engagement can also be tracked to determine the success of an online redesign.

### **Goal 2: Develop strong and consistent marketing strategies**

In order to reach more of the Ithaca community and widen their impact, Finger Lakes ReUse should take advantage of coordinated marketing efforts that can appeal to a broad audience and engage those most likely to benefit from and get involved with ReUse. In order to do this, Finger Lakes ReUse should focus on analyzing their audience to find out the particulars of whom they are reaching and what appeals may or may not be effective. Further, techniques such as incorporating the United Nations sustainability goals or taking advantage of seasonal events can help boost their outreach, and establishing or enhancing staff positions focused on communications can ensure that strong marketing campaigns are being produced consistently to keep the public interest. We propose the following to achieve this goal and create a distinct and memorable ReUse brand that draws in community members.

#### **Objective 2.1: Conduct analysis of audience**

In order to conduct any successful marketing campaign or other variety of public outreach, it is essential to understand who your audience is. Thus, Finger Lakes ReUse needs to conduct analysis of their audience in regard to who is shopping in their stores, who is donating, who is participating in their programs, et cetera. It is important to look at who is aware of and actively supporting ReUse and who is not, and how those different groups can be reached. We suggest surveying consumers in order to develop a profile of different individuals connected to ReUse, such as shoppers, donors, workshop participants, and so on, and targeting specific marketing efforts to each of those groups in a way that appeals to their specific needs and/or interests.

- *Task 2.1.1: Survey representative sample of customers and program participants*
- *Task 2.1.2: Determine audience demographics for individual programs and services*
- *Task 2.1.3: Research marketing techniques or recruit experts to reach determined audience*
- *Task 2.1.3: Create marketing plan based on research results*

#### **Objective 2.2: Incorporate UN Sustainable Development goals**

The UN sustainability goals can provide a unifying and educational aspect to ReUse marketing. By applying simple iconography or colors to represent individual goals, the organization could establish a system for labelling marketing pieces with the goal(s) with which that piece corresponds. For example, if creating a new collection of posters, flyers, cards, social media posts, or other media to advertise their programs, in addition to

keeping a consistent design foundation across the board, Finger Lakes ReUse should consider adding a badge or other sort of label to each item in the collection indicating the related UN goals. Only a representation of the goal, not all of the details, as that could get intrusive, need be included as long as it is clear where consumers can go to find out more information. By making this simple addition to Finger Lakes ReUse marketing, the organization and its services and programs can gain credibility with the public and generate a greater response from the socially and environmentally conscious members of the community.

- *Task 2.2.1: Research the goals as described by the United Nations*
- *Task 2.2.2: Determine which goals apply to each program and service offered*
- *Task 2.2.3: Establish online and in-store resource to educate public about goals*
- *Task 2.2.4: Develop simple iconography to represent each relevant goal*
- *Task 2.2.5: Incorporate goal iconography into signage and marketing for programs*
- *Task 2.2.6: Create physical + digital promotional material advertising the labelling system*

### **Objective 2.3: Use seasonal/holiday events to market programs**

A key marketing strategy is to target efforts towards situations that result in an influx of new supporters. The main examples of these situations are during the holiday season and during events the Finger Lakes ReUse Center puts on. By informing people new to the Finger Lakes ReUse Center community of the full extent of its programs, it is assured that these supporters begin their experience informed. This helps to create a wider margin of supporters that associate Finger Lakes ReUse for all of their programs, rather than just the resale program. By looking at statistics from previous years, identify which times of year are the busiest. During these times, increase the usage of informative marketing tools by displaying an extra informative poster or creating an email list just for new customers. In addition to busy store times, special events are a major marketing opportunity for Finger Lakes ReUse Center's lesser known programs. By designating an area of every event to be an information station on the center's programs. By having a staff member or volunteer work the station, interested onlookers can ask any questions they may have about the programs.

- *Task 2.3.1: Identify the busiest times of year for sale*
- *Task 2.3.2: Increase the usage of informative marketing tools during these times*
- *Task 2.3.3: Bring informative marketing tools to events*
- *Task 2.3.4: Create an "information station" at every event with staff or volunteer(s) to give a spiel about different ReUse programs*



### Objective 2.4: Create staff positions related to communications.

An online presence designed by an employee who is specifically hired to perform online tasks will have clear positive results. By having someone in-house complete these tasks, you are sure they are committed to the Finger Lakes ReUse Center mission. By having them focus solely on online tasks, that area receives much closer attention. To begin, identify any wants you may have for the online presence. Is there a specific area of concern? Be sure to identify these concerns when looking to hire someone, as it may attract someone with specific skills in that area. When interviewing candidates, look out for the ones that can speak with clear passion about the position they are interviewing for. Upon hiring employees, allow them the space to make suggestions and explore their own creative ideas, while also checking in frequently to make sure the overall needs of the organization are being met.

- *Task 2.4.1: Identify changes that could be made to online presence*
- *Task 2.4.2: Use these desired changes to create job postings*
- *Task 2.4.3: Interview candidates, paying close attention to the candidates' experience and passion for both the field and the Finger Lakes ReUse Center cause*
- *Task 2.4.4: Work collaboratively with new employees in order to allow them to be creative while also making sure needs are being met.*

### Goal 2 Outcome

The intended outcome of this goal is to increase engagement with and participation in ReUse programs by making more members of the public aware of the services that Finger Lakes ReUse offers the community and persuading them to get involved.

### Goal 2 Measures

The success of this goal can be measured by the numbers of people coming into the store, donating, contacting ReUse with inquiries, and participating in various programs. It is important to keep track of where participant numbers are changing in order to determine which particular strategies were successful or not.

# Tasks and Timeline

## Goal 1:

### **Task 1.1.1: Redesign website for visual and emotional appeal and ease of access**

Have a new web design employee update the web page regularly with current information, make sure all fonts are readable, add photographs to break up the text, and make sure that important information such as announcements for upcoming events or store mission is on the home page.

### **Task 1.1.2: Develop consistent branding and apply across all online outlets**

Make voice, tone, and content distinctive and consistent across all platforms. Customers should know what to expect from ReUse and in return, ReUse should be perceived as Ithaca's go-to place to buy used items, get job-training skills, and participate in community programming.

### **Task 1.1.3: Create new written material for website - focus on clarity and consistency**

Create website copy that is engaging, but concise about the organization's mission, history, programs and services, as well as easily accessible directions on how to sign up for programs and get involved. Write relevant blog posts that tell the story of ReUse's community impact (i.e. how ReUse helped community members during COVID-19).

### **Task 1.1.4: Establish staff responsibility for regular social media and website updates**

In addition to tasks such as customer service and repairs, employees should also help to update all of Finger Lakes ReUse's social media pages and make sure that the website has current and up-to-date information.

### **Task 1.1.5: Recruit a photographer to create images to be posted online**

Take high-quality and edited photographs of store employees, program participants, the physical store space, items in the store, and ReUse center events to be put on the website.

### **Task 1.1.6: Research and craft human interest stories to highlight on social media**

Focus on the ReUse center experience and emphasize the community by doing “day in the life” social media takeovers, feature photos of staff members and items made by workshop participants, and testimonials from customers and program participants.

### **Task 1.2.1: Focus annual appeal letter to highlight donor impact**

To best encourage people to donate again, write about what each dollar amount pays for to keep Finger Lakes ReUse’s operations up and running.

### **Task 1.2.2: Create thank-you letter templates.**

Create a list of ways donations have positively impacted Finger Lakes ReUse that can be used in restricted and unrestricted funding thank-you letter templates.

### **Task 1.2.3: Use website and social media to emphasize donation.**

Emphasize the impact of donations by making website and social media posts about how everyday customers make the mission of the ReUse center possible. Make digital donations easier by creating an easily accessible link on the website.

### **Task 1.2.4: Create monthly newsletter that includes donors and volunteers**

Write three stories that talk about the programs that are made possible by donation, volunteer spotlight stories, as well as what physical items people can donate that the ReUse center needs.

### **Task 1.3.1: Set up bulletin board display near store entrance and exit to post updates**

Placing bulletin boards near store entrances/exits ensures information will be seen by shoppers both coming and going.

### **Task 1.3.2: Create poster or flyer to be visible to customers at check-out**

Additional advertising by the checkout station helps information stand out to customers.

### **Task 1.3.3: Improve/add signage to highlight spaces used for programming**

Making information easily accessible increases the chances customers will see and remember what is being advertised.

### **Task 1.3.4: Establish talking points for employees to share with customers**

By conveying information in both written and verbal format it invites customers to participate in the events and programs available.

## **Goal 2**

### **Task 2.1.1: Survey representative sample of customers and program participants**

Collect demographic data from people who shop in the ReUse center as well as individuals participating in the different ReUse programs. Keep the data separate.

### **Task 2.1.2: Determine audience demographics for individual programs and services**

Analyze the above survey data to determine a specific representative profile of the audience for each program or service.

### **Task 2.1.4: Research marketing techniques to reach determined audience**

By either surveying actual customers, researching existing literature about motivational appeals that reach different demographics, or hiring someone with marketing experience, determine what persuasive techniques would best serve the different research.

### **Task 2.1.5: Create marketing plan based on research results**

Craft promotional content for each program (or at least those that require it) that uses the techniques determined in the previous task.

### **Task 2.2.1: Research the goals as described by the United Nations**

Conduct research into the UN goals based on their official publications.

### **Task 2.2.2: Determine which goals apply to each program and service offered**

Categorize each of the programs and services offered by ReUse based on the UN goals that said programs can be argued to fulfill.

### **Task 2.2.3: Establish online and in-store resource to educate public about goals**

Create some sort of poster or flyer as well as a web page that describes the relevant United Nations goals so it is accessible to ReUse patrons without their having to go to the UN resources to understand the goals.

### **Task 2.2.4: Develop simple iconography to represent each relevant goal**

Develop simple and consistent icons representing each UN goal. These should be recognizable enough to connect patrons to the relevant goal in the resource from the previous task, but not intrusive enough to be distracting.

### **Task 2.2.5: Incorporate goal iconography into signage and marketing for programs**

Strategically place the icons on marketing materials such as event posters, store signs, social media graphics, et cetera.

### **Task 2.2.6: Create physical and digital promotional material advertising the system**

Make posters, social media posts, and other materials that make patrons and community members aware that ReUse is incorporating the UN goals into their marketing, so they know how to respond to the iconography.

### **Task 2.3.1: Identify the busiest times of year for sale**

Keep track of sales throughout the year so it is easy to refer back to and identify high and low points for sales.

### **Task 2.3.2: Increase the usage of informative marketing tools during these times**

During these busy times, install a new bulletin board and increase usage of the customer email list.

### **Task 2.3.3: Bring informative marketing tools to events**

When holding events, make use of any in-store marketing tools.

### **Task 2.3.4: Create an “information station” at every event with staff or volunteer(s)**

Prepare a spiel for events and be prepared to answer any questions attendees may have about ReUse’s programs.

### **Task 2.4.1: Identify changes that could be made to online presence**

As a team, look through the Finger Lakes ReUse Center’s website and social media sites. Identify any problem spots or missing pieces.

### **Task 2.4.2: Use these desired changes to create job postings**

Create job postings that will attract applicants with a knack for the online areas you are currently missing.

### **Task 2.4.3: Interview candidates, paying close attention to the candidates’ experience and passion for both the field and the Finger Lakes ReUse Center cause**

Ask questions relating to the ReUse Center’s mission.

### **Task 2.4.4: Work collaboratively with new employees in order to allow them to be creative while also making sure needs are being met**

Give the new employees the space to be creative while also frequently checking to see if their progress is helping to solve the problems identified

## **General Timeline**

The following timeline outlines when general tasks related to the given objectives should ideally be completed in relation to each other. These are rough estimates that assume a start time around June 2020 and may be changed as necessary. The leftmost column provides the general category of tasks to complete, and the middle column relates this to the actual task numbers given above.

### Timeline

<b>General Task</b>	<b>Objective Number(s)</b>	<b>Suggested Completion Date</b>
Preliminary Research	2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4	August 2020
Fill New Positions	1.1, 2.4	September 2020
Website Overhaul	1.1, 2.2	October 2020
In-Store Design	1.3, 2.2	Halloween
Online Marketing	1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3	November 2020
Event Planning	1.2, 2.3	November 2020
Donor Outreach	1.2, 2.1	December 2020

### Impact Statement

Finger Lakes ReUse is a vital part of Ithaca's community; since its inception the non-profit has been improving lives through providing affordable used goods, employable skills through job training programs, and improving the environment through reducing the waste sent to the landfill in Tompkins County. Although it is already doing an impressive job within the community, we believe Finger Lakes ReUse could benefit tenfold by improving its marketability and presence, and hiring staff to help reduce the workload on its employees.

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Although Finger Lakes ReUse offers a multitude of programs and services, many customers are unaware of all the non-profit has to offer. The most advertised program, the eCenter, only 51% of customers could identify. In order to reach a more diverse audience Finger Lakes ReUse will need to work to rebrand itself through in-store marketing and a revamp of its online presence. This can be done with the help of an intern and/or future employees with strong backgrounds in communications, marketing, and web design. Although the initial training period may be a dual learning process, we are confident Finger Lakes ReUse will become an even more active part of the community as a result of these changes.

With an easier to access web site and online presence, Finger Lakes ReUse can reach more of the community and help keep them up to date on all of its programs and events. The additional in-store marketing techniques will help less tech-savvy customers stay informed and educate those newer to ReUse on all it has to offer. With these changes Finger Lakes ReUse will be more equipped to better accommodate its community.



# Funding

## Plan for Funding the Given Proposal

### Project Mission Statement

Finger Lakes ReUse's mission statement is to enhance community, economy, and environment through "ReUse." Finger Lakes ReUse sells reusable goods at an affordable price, which keeps waste out of landfills. But they also provide community outreach and job training programs to underserved members of the community. The primary goal of Finger Lakes ReUse is to create a marketing plan that tells the story of the ReUse center to customers. They also want to utilize the UN Sustainable Goals to better educate their customers on what they're doing sustainability-wise.

Finger Lakes ReUse's marketing plan will be the most effective if they improve their community outreach and on-site branding. The majority of respondents in a recent study didn't recognize the programs that make them "more than just a store" and were unaware of their donor impact. To increase awareness of their programs and services, Finger Lakes Reuse needs to have their website and social media updated and improved. Their online presence should be more visual, accessible to users, as well as shift their web content to be more centered on human-interest stories. They also need to revamp their in-store advertising so that customers are aware of their programming as soon as they walk through the store. Finger Lakes ReUse also needs to hire employees with experience and expertise in communications, marketing, and web design in order to aid in this effort. By Finger Lakes ReUse prioritizing their efforts in these specific areas, they will better be able to solidify a relationship with the Tompkins County community. In return, will increase support for the programs and services offered by Finger Lakes ReUse.

### Funds Management

#### Assessment of Project Funding Need

Finger Lakes ReUse has had a major societal impact on the greater Tompkins County Community. However, the problem is that most people aren't aware of the impact Finger

Lakes ReUse has had on community members due inconsistent and fragmented marketing and digital communications. Finger Lakes ReUse will need to hire someone with web-design expertise to create a website that is visually-engaging, easy to navigate, and has up-to-date information on accessible web pages. It will also cost money to purchase web design programs that will best achieve creating a website that showcases what makes ReUse “more than just a store.”

Finger Lakes ReUse should also hire employees that have a broad communications background and/or marketing expertise. By hiring someone with a broad communications background, they will have the expertise to create impactful informational pamphlets, write captivating blog posts and social media/web copy, as well as guide overall communication efforts. By hiring someone with a marketing background, they will have the expertise to implement SEO/analytics to monitor website traffic, guide the social media marketing strategy, accurately assess audience demographics and survey a representative sample of customers, and to best incorporate the UN Sustainable Goals into the marketing plan. Finger Lakes ReUse will also need to account for funds that may be needed to create effective in-store advertising/marketing, such as paying for printing for informational pamphlets and holiday decorations. Finger Lakes ReUse should consider hiring from within one of their job training programs, because these people will already be familiar with and have a passion for the store mission.

### **Funding Goals and Objectives**

The largest expense will be hiring and then paying new employees to do web design, marketing, and communications. To save costs, Finger Lakes ReUse could consider doing a paid internship or apprenticeship program so that they won't have to pay a full-time employee. Another alternative is to pay one employee who is skilled in web design, marketing, and communications, though this might be harder to find. The benefit of hiring full-time employees in each of these three areas though is that they will be experts in the subject matter and will help to find the most efficient ways to market themselves and redesign the Finger Lakes ReUse website. Hiring employees will also save current full-time staff time and energy so that they can focus on program creation, obtaining operations, and dealing with the lingering repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Finger Lakes ReUse could hire unpaid interns from Cornell University, Ithaca College, or TC3, but we suggest that Finger Lakes ReUse pays the new hires for their work because not doing so would be out of alignment with their mission of being a living wage

employer and uplifting the community by providing economic opportunity. By having employees with expertise, Finger Lakes ReUse will save money and achieve greater revenue in the long run.

Finger Lakes ReUse should allocate the rest of their budget towards purchasing web design programs, in-store advertising supplies, holiday decorations, and print production costs for informational pamphlets and other physical marketing materials.

### **Action Plan**

In order to see these goals to fruition, Finger Lakes ReUse must make itself a more significant presence to the Ithaca Community. The first step would be hiring a web designer and/also someone with a strong background in communications and marketing. Either an Intern — from Ithaca College, Cornell University, or TC3 — or a professional. Redesigning Finger Lakes online and social presence will make marketing themselves to the community significantly easier.

After the initial rebranding work is done, Finger Lakes ReUse can familiarize themselves with the local foundations and organizations that could be a viable source of support. Then the non-profit can prepare to apply to these foundations and organizations by organizing all the necessary paperwork needed to acquire funding.

Finally, Finger Lakes ReUse could focus its efforts on rebranding and marketing in-store. This will help the Centers increase business and participation in events and programs.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation of Funding Objectives**

Finger Lakes ReUse is overseen by President Marlene Sack and her Board of Directors. Ultimately, it would be their job to monitor the funding for Finger Lakes ReUse is acquired and used accordingly.

Firstly, Finger Lakes ReUse needs to evaluate its financial standing. It needs to make sure it still holds the nonprofit's tax free eligibility status; and also ensure all other IRS forms are up to date. Then it can choose which foundations it wants to appeal to and monitor when forms are due and to where--this can be done by creating a document to keep track of funding applications.

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In order to carry out all funding objectives put in place Finger Lakes ReUse will need to accurately keep track of all expenses. This can be done simply by keeping an organized account of all the organization's costs. The account will help the nonprofit avoid overspending and ineffective money management.

Finger Lakes ReUse's success with this funding plan ultimately depends on proper organization and communication. As long as the nonprofit clearly documents its funding and records its information accurately, Finger Lakes ReUse should have no problems executing the suggested objectives.

## Budget

### Summary

Budget Item	Details	Total
Marketing Intern	$\$11.80 \times 135 \text{ hours} = \$1,593$ per semester (2) $\$11.80 \times 20 \text{ hours a week} \times 12$ weeks = $\$2,832$ per summer	\$6,018 a year
Web Design Intern	$\$11.80 \times 135 \text{ hours} = \$1,593$ per semester (2) $\$11.80 \times 20 \text{ hours a week} \times 12$ weeks = $\$2,832$ per summer	\$6,018 a year
Printing Costs for 1,000 Pamphlets	$\$0.5 \times 1000$	\$50
Year-Long Canva Membership	\$9.95 a month, billed annually	\$119.40
Printing Costs for In-Store Advertisement Posters (4)	$\$30 \times 4$	\$120
Year of Web Hosting on Squarespace	\$12 a month, billed annually	\$144
		<b>TOTAL:</b> \$12,469.40

### Budget Narrative

The following narrative serves to outline the funding necessary for the suggested changes. The main expense involves the creation of an internship program, but other small expenses include web programs and in-store advertisement materials.

### Internships

In order to enhance the quality of their online marketing, the Finger Lakes ReUse Program should consider the creation of an internship program in the areas of marketing and web design. It is also possible to hire a full time employee to work in these areas. However, we suggest an internship program because it will be cheaper in the long run, as well as provide valuable career opportunities to several students from both colleges rather than just one. This aligns perfectly with ReUse's mission of providing career training to those in the Ithaca area. The average semester runs around 15 weeks, with a summer usually lasting around 12 weeks. At the beginning of each program, the intern can meet with the staff in order to decide on a long term goal for their internship, such as redesigning a specific area of the website for the Web Design intern or creating a social media campaign for the Marketing intern. Their weekly hours would be spent working towards these projects that will be extremely beneficial to the ReUse Center's marketing efforts in the future, as well as work on general upkeep of the website and social media pages. The average 3-credit internship involves a total of 135 hours to be completed over the course of the semester or summer. If paid the New York State minimum wage, this causes the cost for a fall or spring intern to come out to \$1,593 and a summer intern to come out to \$2,832.

### Pamphlets

Physical pamphlets are a great tool for educating the public on the goals and outcomes of Finger Lakes ReUse Center's lesser known programs. While we don't suggest handing these out to every customer in order to avoid wasting too many resources, it would definitely be beneficial to still have a few on hand. Web resources are better for the environment, but also having a small supply of paper resources allows the ReUse center to become more accessible to those who may not have access to the internet. We suggest starting by printing 1,000 and gradually increasing this number in the future if the first batch is deemed to be successful. These can be kept at the register for those who are

interested, as well as kept available at events. The website UPrint.com offers brochure printing for 5 cents a copy, totaling \$50 per set of 1,000.

### **Web Design and Hosting**

In order to design the informational pamphlet, as well as in-store infographic advertisements and any future design related projects, we suggest purchasing a year-long membership to Canva, a user-friendly web-based graphic design program. Canva can be used to create a number of designs such as flyers, Instagram stories and posts, logos, newsletters and more to help enhance the ReUse center's online presence. The paid membership allows you to upload your own fonts in order to create a sense of design unity across all marketing materials. In terms of website redesign, a host such as Squarespace would be a great start. Squarespace provides sleek, minimalistic designs that can be customized for your own needs. Squarespace also provides built-in SEO tools and analytics that help to shape strong marketing strategies. Squarespace runs at \$12 a month and Canva runs at \$9.95 a month. Both bill annually, resulting in costs of \$144 for the year of Squarespace and \$119.40 for the year of Canva.

### **In-Store Infographic Poster**

As for in-store marketing surrounding the ReUse Center's fulfillment of the UN's sustainable goals, we suggest the creation of an infographic on Canva. Infographics are a fun way to share information in a form that is easy to decipher. Printing this infographic and hanging them throughout the store, as well as displaying at events will be an excellent form of in-store marketing. A website called PosterPrintShop.com lists 24' x 36' gloss posters at \$30 a piece. To start off, we suggest purchasing four of these, totaling in \$120.

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