

City of Long Beach
Working Together to Serve**Memorandum****To:** Mayor and City Council

November 16, 2010

From: Suja Lowenthal, Second District**Subject:** Long Beach SHARES Program**REQUESTED ACTION:**

Request the City Manager to work with L.A. SHARES staff to develop a business and residential reusable goods and materials donation program for the benefit of Long Beach schools, community non-profits and city departments.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

According to L.A. SHARES, the program was created in 1991 as a pilot for the City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department known as Materials For The Arts. Since 1991, L.A. SHARES has worked with 1,000+ local companies to give away more than \$80,000,000.00 worth of goods and materials to over 2,500 organizations throughout Los Angeles County. These goods and materials can be almost anything - technology, office furniture/supplies, artwork, personal care products and sports-related equipment. Due to federal, state and local regulations, and the demographic served, L.A. SHARES does not accept equipment or furniture that is NOT in good working order in addition to food, used clothing, used mattresses or bedding, used refrigerators, used washers, used dryers, used stoves, paint, construction and demolition debris, and toxic or hazardous materials.

Interested schools and non-profits create an online profile of their organization, including a "Wish List" and "Top 20 List" of needed items. This profile is then entered into a unique, relational database, which proactively identifies each organization's needs and continuously seeks to match those needs with the donated items on record. When a need is matched, the recipient is notified, via e-mail, to come to one of two area warehouses to retrieve their items or instructed to go directly to the donor for pick-up. However, it is recommended that a Long Beach SHARES program initially focus on linking recipients directly with donors rather than utilizing a warehouse.

The benefits of the program are that it provides free materials and goods to those groups with the greatest needs, rewards good corporate citizens with tax deductions and community relations, and diverts tons of useful items from going to area landfills, which are already overburdened. By utilizing this program, California businesses adhere to Assembly Bill 939, which requires them to reduce their landfill-bound waste.

Key city partners in Los Angeles include the Department of Public Works, Bureau of Sanitation and the Solid Resources Citywide Recycling Division. L.A. SHARES has partnered with the local business community to become the largest single donor of goods and materials to the Los Angeles Unified School District, the Arts community, After School Enrichment Programs, the Recreation and Parks community, the Theater community and the Alcohol and Drug Recovery community, among others.

L.A. SHARES redistributes donations through Direct Match and Lotteries. Direct Match is the primary method of awarding donations using a relational database to cross match the items on an organization's Wish List with incoming and existing donations. When a donation matches an organization's Wish List, L.A. SHARES contacts the organization via e-mail to arrange for a pick-up. However, this method works best if there is enough of a donation to accommodate all of the organizations requesting it. If not, then - in the interest of fairness and equitability - L.A. SHARES uses the following additional criteria to further determine the best Direct Match:

1. Appropriateness of Need: Does an organization have a "primary" need for the item in question; a need central to its mission?
2. Urgency of Need: "Top 20" Most Needed Items: Did an organization indicate the item in question as one of its "Top 20" most needed items?
3. Length of Time They Have Waited: How long has an organization waited to receive the item in question?
4. Has the Organization Been Helped Recently: When was it last awarded a donation?

Lotteries

Standard Lottery

Often, with specialty or highly desirable items, L.A. SHARES will use the lottery method for awarding donations. In the event of a lottery, selected non-profits or schools registered with L.A. SHARES receive an e-mail notification, including a description of the lottery item and a time for when the lottery will close. If an organization responds to this e-mail indicating an interest in the lottery item, its name will be included in the lottery drawing.

First Come/First Served Lottery

L.A. SHARES also uses the first come/first served method to award items; especially for items whose demand are uncertain. In this scenario, an organization will receive an e-mail notification of an item's availability, along with how many there are, then inform the organization that "the first (X) number of organizations who respond can have the item."

Recipient Responsibilities

In exchange for all that LA. SHARES provides to an organization, they ask that the organization comply with the following simple participation guidelines:

1. Always be on time to any scheduled pick-up, so as not to inconvenience our donors.
2. Write Thank You Letters - Bring a thank you letter to the business(es) and individual(s) that donated the goods and materials that your organization has received and send a copy to L.A. SHARES. Thank you letters are the lifeblood of the program, keeping the businesses and individuals giving to organizations.

DISCUSSION:

In this era of budget cuts and reduced charitable contributions, a program like L.A. SHARES in Long Beach would be extremely beneficial to the community. Additionally, it is recommended that we include residential contributions to the online service, increasing the pool of contributors in service to our schools and organizations. L.A. SHARES invites city departments to be donors and recipients, so it is also recommended that we explore the same concept and determine whether it makes sense for Long Beach.

The key to the program's success will be our collective efforts to promote its benefits to donors throughout the City of Long Beach and other cities in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. Finding willing recipients will be simplified through umbrella organizations such as Long Beach Nonprofit Partnership and the Long Beach Unified School District. Although the same concept exists for outreach to potential donors, we must work closely with, among others the Long Beach Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement Districts, the Apartment Association of Southern California, property management and commercial real estate companies, legal associations and our local banks to raise awareness of these incredible opportunities to help their community, environment and financial bottom line.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Given the software is already in place at L.A. SHARES, the cost for creating a Long Beach SHARES web-based program is anticipated to be minimal. In terms of staffing, the City Manager will need to discuss the requirements of the program with L.A. SHARES to determine whether existing or new staff will be necessary, or contract options with L.A. SHARES are possible. I would anticipate the anticipated costs and benefits to be provided to Council prior to this program going forward.

For more information about L.A. SHARES, please go to www.lashares.org.