NYS P2I | New York State **Pollution Prevention Institute**
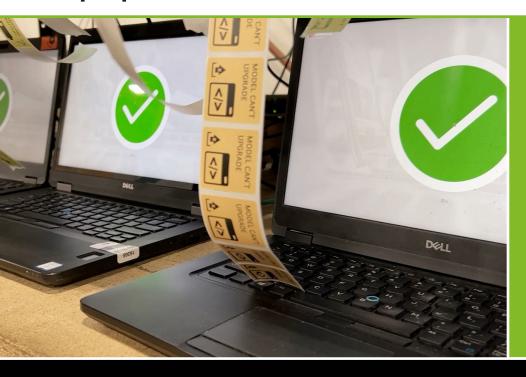
How Shift2 is Closing the Digital Divide by Keeping Laptops Out of Landfills

Awardee: Shift2

Outcome: Refurbished 100 phased-out corporate laptops and distributed them to households within an environmental justice (EJ) community.

Why: Expand access to essential information technologies among low-income communities while also keeping discarded electronics out of landfills.

Where: Rochester, New York

Award Amount: $15,000

Impact at a Glance

475
lbs of e-scrap diverted from landfills.

275
individuals benefited from expanded information technology access.

83%
of recipient households who received their first computer.

3-5
years of useful life expected for each laptop.

In 2022, Shift2 (formerly the Shore Foundation) was awarded $15,000 through the **NYSP2I Community Grants Program** to refurbish 100 laptops phased-out by a corporate donor and distribute them to the homes of families in Rochester, New York. The computers went to households with students attending Roberto Clemente School No. 8, located in an area that is designated as an environmental justice (EJ) community. The participants were identified through the Rochester Rotary's Adopt-a-School program.

The project showed how extending the life of electronic products not only helps to keep e-scrap out of landfills, but can also address the "digital divide" by expanding access to essential information technology. "These computers are now a permanent tool for every member of the household," said Megan Alchowiak, executive director of Shift2. "This access to a computer will positively contribute to the overall health and well-being of these families."

Shift2 was founded in 2018 in Rochester, New York. The nonprofit's mission is to maximize the usefulness of existing technology to make a positive impact on people's lives, the community, and the environment. By repurposing computers originally used by businesses, Shift2 plays a vital role in equipping community members with the tools they need to stay connected, unlock their potential, and succeed in the digital age. Any equipment that cannot be refurbished and reused is

responsibly recycled as "e-scrap" to support the recovery of metals and rare earth elements that could be used to manufacture new devices as part of a circular economy.

Shift2 selected, tested, and ultimately refurbished 100 Dell laptops, with the most common model being the Dell Latitude E5470. Each device was enabled for Wi-Fi connectivity and included essential computing applications, such as Microsoft Windows 10 OS with onboard installations of MS Word, Powerpoint, and Excel. Once refurbished, the computers—along with chargers—were distributed to 100 students and their families at an award ceremony led by Stephanie Thompson, School No. 8's principal.

Looking ahead, Alchowiak stated, "We continue to strengthen our relationships with local schools and nonprofits to find more recipients of our refurbished computers. This grant positioned us well for future collaborations with environmentally-focused organizations and funders."

"The work Shift2 does creates equitable access to technology for marginalized students and helps close the technology gap among youth," observed Ambika Walker, who leads NYSP2I's community grants program. "Providing access to technology for these students supports the environmental justice goal of closing the digital divide for low-income families in need."

> ### "This grant positioned us well for future collaborations with environmentally focused organizations and funders."
>
> *Megan Alchowiak, executive director of Shift2*

Thank you notes and cards from the students at School #8 who received a refurbished computer through this project.

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