

# U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Washington, DC

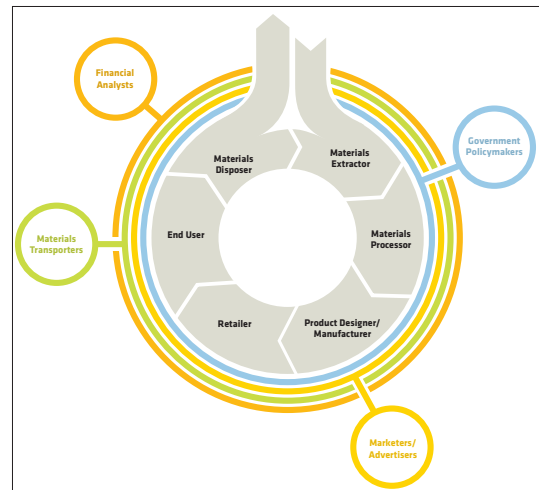
## Charting a Course to Sustainable Use of Materials



“Passports to the Future of the US” depicting the people working in a prototypical industrial recycling system and the challenges in their work life.

working on this project. And thus began a remarkable partnership with the RCSD. We developed a workshop for the Division, designed to reframe their work from enforcement to advocacy. In a series of online social network sites, participants joined dialogues over key topics in sustainable materials management. To reinforce the changing frameworks, all participants were given a new passport (to the future of the United States) in which they assumed the role of a key actor in a closed-loop industrial recycling system. From that new perspective, people learned about the details of each other’s jobs and roles throughout the system.

The EPA’s Resource Conservation and Government Sustainability Division (RCSD) asked Collective Invention to help them take the first step toward a national dialogue on sustainable materials management and expanding existing environmental



programs to encompass more fully life-cycle materials management.

We were surprised and delighted to find anything but government bureaucrats

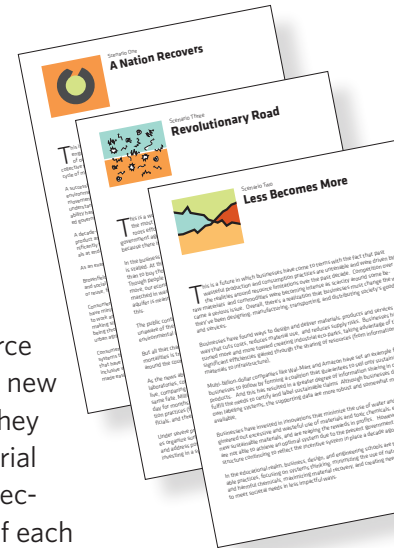
The envisioned generalized closed-loop industrial recycling system with six sequential functions and four continuous system services.

With the publication in 2009 of the paper, *Sustainable Materials Management: The Road Ahead*, the EPA laid out a bold future vision of change for the use of materials in the US economy. Stating, “We live in a material world. How our society uses materials is fundamental to many aspects of our economic and environmental future. If we want the U.S. to be competitive in the world economy, the sustainable use of materials must be our goal.”

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Armed with this new insight, the leaders and managers of the RCSD encountered three scenarios describing possible futures of the US industrial economy. The resulting dialogues in the series of workshops were, indeed, the first steps toward a national dialogue on life-cycle materials management.

As an outcome of the project, Collective Invention designed and produced a series of online resources, digital and print artifacts, and in-depth facilitation guides. With these tools, the EPA can host the expanding conversation about life-cycle materials management within and beyond the federal government by engaging industry, state and local government, and private citizens.



Scenarios of the future researched and written by Collective Invention, describe three possible paths for the US economy and society.

