



PET Recycling Coalition

Only 25% of PET packaging is recycled in the U.S. We're changing that.



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

**“Landfill is not an
option we entertain.”**

**Juan Hernandez, President, Valemi Inc
PET Recycling Coalition Grantee**

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New Recycled PET

(Since 2022)



29M

New Pounds per Year
of Recycled PET

24M

New Bottle PET Capture

5M

New Non-Bottle PET Capture

Letter from Coalition Leadership: Partnering to Advance PET Circularity

In a world where natural resources are shrinking and a desire to reduce the amount of materials going to our landfills is building, **taking responsibility for the materials we use in our products and packaging has taken on a new urgency—and opportunity.** The Recycling Partnership's (The Partnership) PET Recycling Coalition (Coalition) is fully committed to move more PET into the recycling stream and out of landfills.

We know that we must change how the world recycles to realize a lasting impact. This includes joining forces with leaders across the recycling value chain to leverage our collective knowledge of how to achieve targeted change from collection programs to responsible end markets.

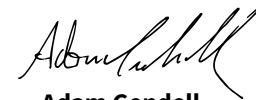
The Coalition and its members also serve as a guiding force and sounding board to address the evolving packaging regulations. With all eyes on the five states currently rolling out Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) laws for packaging

and printed paper, our business leaders have more questions than answers about the kind of improvements our recycling system needs to meet the ambitious state goals and the best ways to catalyze those improvements.

By keeping PET in the recycling stream, we can ensure companies can deliver on our stewardship objectives and build a resilient economy that ensures a future for this material. **Join us as we continue to work toward a world where waste is transformed into a beneficial resource.**



Brittany LaValley
VP of Material Advancement
The Recycling Partnership



Adam Gendell
Director of Material Advancement
The Recycling Partnership

10 Years of The Recycling Partnership's Impacts



Since The Recycling Partnership's inception 10 years ago, grant making has surpassed \$69 million through over 450 grants to improve local recycling access and education, as well as over 100 recycling facilities, to improve capture and processing for all materials, including PET. **As of 2024, over \$5 million of that has been deployed through the Coalition resulting in 29 million new pounds per year of recycled PET, as of 2024.**

Building a Better Recycling System

The mission of The Recycling Partnership is to build a better recycling system, one that delivers the economic and environmental benefits our communities and the hundreds of thousands of people who work throughout the recycling industry deserve. Through our material specific coalitions, we harness the power of collective action by bringing together brands and organizations that are committed to increasing the recycling of materials.

Two years into the work of The Partnership's PET Recycling Coalition we have much to celebrate as well as more to strive for. The PET Recycling Coalition leverages The Partnership's years of expertise and industry knowledge to focus on improving the circularity of PET. Also known as plastic #1, PET is a highly recyclable material. Yet, improvements are needed to ensure we can increase the circularity of this material.

By working together with brands, communities, recyclers, and plastic manufacturers, The Coalition is taking targeted action to reduce PET losses and ensure our recycling system is optimized to handle all types of PET. Like eight out of 10 people across the country, The Recycling Partnership and our Coalition members believe in the positive potential of recycling. Together, we will achieve The Partnership's mission to build a better recycling system.

“The Recycling Partnership is dedicated to building a better U.S. recycling system, including material-focused efforts such as the PET Recycling Coalition. The early indications of success for this and our other coalitions demonstrate that a systems-focused approach delivers impact for all material types across all our communities.”

Keefe Harrison
CEO of The Recycling Partnership

For the U.S. residential recycling system to function effectively, five requirements must be met. The PET Recycling Coalition supports the advancement of these essential requirements towards our mission to build a better recycling system.



Answering the Call to Improve PET Recycling



From salad containers and water bottles to clothing and carpet, PET makes up many of the things we use daily. But while our recycling system for PET has been long established, too much PET packaging ends up as waste.



28%*

PET bottles are being recycled
**Residential-only recycling rates*



18%

PET packaging in the U.S. is non-bottle PET



9%

Non-bottle PET fruit containers, tubs, and trays are recycled



<60%

U.S. households have a recycling program that accepts non-bottle PET



Demand remains low for recycled PET derived from pigmented and opaque PET



Manufacturers place a higher value on clear recycled PET

PET recycling challenges are only intensifying amid ambitious new Extended Producer Responsibility targets and recycled content mandates, and the opportunity has never been bigger.

Our Origin Story

The Recycling Partnership launched the PET Recycling Coalition in June 2022 with like-minded funding partners who are driven to remove barriers to PET recycling. The Coalition followed the collaborative model developed through The Partnership's successful Polypropylene Recycling Coalition to address the needs of:



Companies that want more recycled PET for packaging to meet corporate commitments and evolving regulatory requirements



MRFs that want to increase the amount and types of PET collected and deliver more PET to reclaimers



Reclaimers that need more PET from MRFs to increase production of recycled PET to sell to companies for use in new products and packaging

“The PET Recycling Coalition benefits from the decade of work by The Recycling Partnership to build a robust network of effective community recycling programs and engaged recyclers. This network benefits PET and all other materials in our residential recycling system. With the PET Recycling Coalition deepening our work on PET recycling system and infrastructure, we are taking a holistic, robust approach to strengthening the recycling system.”

Adam Gendell

Director of Material Advancement, The Recycling Partnership



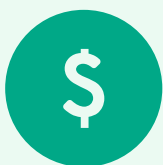
Making Meaningful Change Where Most Needed

Supported by and open to partners from all segments of the PET value chain, the Coalition is uniquely positioned to meet PET recycling challenges at every level. By combining data, expertise, and deep-rooted industry relationships, we are enhancing the circularity of PET by improving recycling rates for bottles and increasing recyclability of non-bottle PET, as well as pigmented and opaque PET.

The Coalition awards grants to MRFs, secondary sorters, and reclaimers to improve acceptance, increase capture, and deliver higher-quality recycled PET to responsible end markets. The grants support facility upgrades, improved sortation capabilities, and community engagement to boost recycling rates.

The Coalition's grant program is its most powerful vehicle for change and is driven by data and insights from Partnership expertise and Coalition research.

Coalition research generates a deeper understanding of challenges and opportunities at every step of the PET recycling system—from collection to processing to end markets. Our research has spanned topics such as:



Modeling the economic impact of pigmented and opaque PET recycling



Understanding brand owner use of recycling-compatible labels on non-bottle PET



Measuring the amount of PET in people's homes and the percentage of PET that ends up in the recycling bin



Identifying opportunities for better sorting equipment to capture more PET in MRFs



Sizing Up Coalition Grant Applicants

When evaluating grant applications, criteria reviewed includes:

- **Potential to capture new tonnage:** We seek granted projects that will address as much PET as possible.
- **Breadth of improvement for the PET stream:** We look for MRFs and reclaimers who are holistic in their approach to PET recycling, maximizing the value from each part of the stream including non-bottle, pigmented, and opaque PET.
- **Best practices in environmental performance and community engagement:** Coalition grantees are good partners, operating with solid track records and earned trust around material stewardship, social justice, and environmental emissions.

Coalition Goals and Impacts

“With PET recycling at the core of our goal to ensure a circular economy, The Recycling Partnership's PET Recycling Coalition provides a way for Indorama Ventures to support systemic changes to the collection infrastructure across the United States.

We're able to work together with The Partnership and other Coalition members to address the acute lack of effective and consistent collection infrastructure and steward the PET recycling industry towards a sustainable future by diverting recyclable PET waste from landfills, and the environment.”

Hannah Martinez

Head of Sustainability Advocacy, Americas at Indorama Ventures



Coalition Grants (Since 2022)



Overview: How Our Grants Positively Impact Supply and Demand



Reclaimers receive grants to **reduce losses and generate more recycled PET, or expand their capacity** to recycle more non-bottle or pigmented and opaque PET.



MRFs receive grants to **reduce losses and capture more PET, or to be able to separate PET forms** so they can provide more sophisticated feedstocks to reclaimers.



The Partnership works with communities to **ensure local programs communicate acceptance of the full breadth of PET** and residents are engaged in recycling.



More recycled PET is then available for end markets, including food and beverage.

Coalition Impacts (Since 2022)

New Recycled PET



29M New Pounds per Year of Recycled PET

24M

New Bottle PET Capture

5M

New Non-Bottle PET Capture

Non-Bottle PET



1.4M

Households Now Have New Access to Recycle Non-Bottle PET

550K



Households that Will Be Supported by MRFs with Advanced Sorting Systems
Making non-bottle PET recycling more environmentally and economically productive



54M

New Pounds of Non-Bottle Reclamation Capacity Added Each Year

Pigmented & Opaque PET



Strengthening End Markets for Pigmented and Opaque PET

By providing grants that strengthen reclaimers who have already unlocked productive end uses for this material.

3 Grants Awarded to MRFs that will Separate Pigmented and Opaque PET
With a projected impact of 300K pounds per year.



1 Grant Awarded to a Reclaimer

Creating a new end market for pigmented and opaque PET.



20M

Pounds per Year of Increased Capture at MRFs

8M

Pounds per Year of Increased Capture at Reclaimers

“The demand for finished recycled plastics continues to outpace the available supply.”

Justin Gott, VP of Engineering, Ice River Sustainable Solutions



IMPACT IN
PROGRESS

Baldwin County, Alabama: Case Study

New Recycling Facility in Alabama Will be Catalyst for Expansion



More than half of all households in Alabama lack access to residential recycling according to [The Partnership's 2024 State of Residential Recycling Report](#). In Baldwin County, on the state's Gulf Coast, a few cities offer curbside collection, but all the material ships out of state, usually to Florida, which increases costs.

Baldwin County is leading the way toward expanded recycling with a new MRF. The first of its kind in the county and southwest Alabama, the facility will serve a growing population of over 100,000 households and can process up to 40,000 short tons (80 million pounds) of material each year. That is far more than what the county's households will produce, which allows room for commercial material and neighboring communities to expand recycling access.

Projected to be operational by the fall of 2024, **the new MRF will enable Baldwin County to capture an estimated 1.3 million new pounds of PET every year.** The county is already planning to roll out expanded curbside recycling to unincorporated towns and other areas that have not had coverage. Through a grant from the Coalition to support a new optical sorter, the facility can separate PET, where before it could only deliver mixed plastic bales.

The optical sorter will enable Baldwin County to capture as much PET as possible from household recycling streams, preventing unnecessary material losses and ensuring the economic value of PET can be realized. Research from The Recycling Partnership shows that as much as a quarter of PET bottles and half of non-bottle PET coming into a MRF can be

lost to other waste streams such as paper. This application of best-in-class technology ensures a healthy PET recycling stream and mitigates risks of contamination in other recycling streams.

"Baldwin County's new MRF will act as a model for other rural counties throughout the state and other rural counties across the nation," said Terri Graham, Development and Environmental Director for the Baldwin County Commission. "The facility model will be particularly valuable to counties that, like Baldwin County, want to reduce the burdens on local landfills."

Baldwin County is a prime example of how The Partnership layers its initiatives across access, engagement, and processing to yield the biggest impact through targeted system change. Two additional grants are supporting recycling in the country: one grant supports upgraded drop-off sites, giving residents more access to recycle all materials; another grant helps the MRF capture more aluminum packaging.



Ice River Sustainable Solutions, Ontario, Canada: Case Study

Ice River's End-to-End Solution for PET Recycling

For over a decade, Ice River Sustainable Solutions (IRSS) has been building a business on the circularity of plastics in Ontario, Canada. The company supplies 100% recycled PET bottles to water bottling sister company, Ice River Springs, and IRSS operates a state-of-the-art plastics recycling facility, Blue Mountain Plastics Recycling.

The company receives PET bales from MRFs across North America and places the highest priority on generating as little waste as possible. IRSS even keeps the bottles caps and closures - usually considered by other reclaimers to be a waste stream byproduct - and reclaims them separately to make plastic outdoor furniture.

"The demand for finished recycled plastics continues to outpace the available supply," said Justin Gott, the company's VP of Engineering. "We continue to see our recycling operations as a significant growth engine for our company."

Blue Mountain Plastics already recycles 55 million pounds of PET per year. Now IRSS is expanding their facility to allow 30 million more pounds of PET bales from the U.S. and Canada to be processed annually.

IRSS is tackling a key issue for PET reclaimers: processing commingled loads of PET bottles and non-bottles. Research conducted by The Recycling Partnership has found that while the percentage of non-bottle PET found in bales is increasing to at least 15%, most PET recycling efforts focus only on bottles. IRSS is setting an example by optimizing their operation for the makeup of MRF bales and utilizing as much of the non-bottle PET as possible.

IRSS's expansion also positions them to be an active buyer of pigmented and opaque PET within the next few years, creating a new end market for a material that often does not make it into recycled products.

The end goal for IRSS is to create new end products with harder-to-recycle forms of PET while continuing to transform other streams of PET into bottles and furniture. With efficiency, creativity, and progressive thinking, IRSS is extracting the greatest value from today's PET recycling stream, minimizing waste, and providing circularity opportunities for all types of PET packaging.





Mecklenburg County, North Carolina: Case Study

Unlocking Non-Bottle PET Recycling in North Carolina's Largest City

With a growing population and aging equipment, leaders in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina had pushed its MRF as far as it could go. In 2022, the county approved a \$25.7 million retrofit to its existing MRF, a project set to begin in 2025 which includes a major expansion of the facility's plastic sorting capabilities.

A grant by the Coalition is supporting a new optical sorter, conveyors, and other equipment, which will enable the facility to capture nearly five million more pounds of PET bottles each year and introduce non-bottle PET recycling to the county for the first time. The Coalition is also supporting an education and outreach campaign so that residents know about the new types of PET the MRF will recycle.



Data from The Recycling Partnership shows most non-bottles in the residential PET recycling stream are clamshell containers for produce such as berries.

“
EDUCATION IS THE HARDEST THING WE DO. I'M REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO SOME OF THE OUTREACH WE'RE PLANNING WITH THE PARTNERSHIP.
JOE HACK
Senior Project Manager, Mecklenburg County

Mecklenburg, which includes the city of Charlotte, ranks no. 11 among 100 North Carolina counties in household recycling recovery per capita and no. 3 among the largest communities in the county that do not accept non-bottle PET for recycling. In 2022, the city's MRF was serving a growing base of more than one million people with equipment that was more than 15 years old and failing.

The county has been relying on two optical sorters—with human support—to recycle PET and other plastics. The curbside recycling guidance for residents specify “plastic containers with necks,” a limitation imposed mostly by old technology and human sorters.



Capturing More PET Across the Recycling Stream: Case Study

“With our old equipment, people had to visually qualify if something was recyclable or not, and that can result in errors and contaminated recycling. We’ve been limited to food and beverage containers where the mouth is smaller than the bottle,” said Joe Hack, Senior Project Manager for the county. “Optical sorters do not care as much about the shape of the container as humans do. By going with optical sorters, we’re hoping to add containers of different sizes and shapes so we can capture more PET.”

The new MRF will have 16 optical sorters, including two entirely dedicated to PET. The upgraded facility will be able to capture 5.6 million pounds more PET per year than the existing one. Aside from more efficient operations, the equipment will also separate PET by type: bottles will be sorted into one stream, and non-bottle PET will be sorted together with pigmented and opaque PET in a second stream, providing specialized feedstocks for reclaimers in the region.

“What every MRF wants is to maintain a certain level of recovery of recyclable materials and a certain level of purity in the bales they send out to market so they can get the highest value. The optical sorter funded by the Coalition will assist in both of those aspects.”

Martin Sanford
Mecklenburg County Project Manager





Valemi, Pico Rivera, California: Case Study

A Hybrid Facility Supporting Plastics Recycling in California and Beyond

With the passage of Extended Producer Responsibility laws such as California's Plastic Pollution Prevention and Packaging Producer Responsibility Act (SB 54), entities must achieve unprecedented levels of circularity. As California prepares for EPR and the potential to see substantial new tons enter the recycling stream, PET reclaimers are positioning themselves for growth and differentiating themselves in feedstock preferences, which will result in more demand for the Pico Rivera MRF, a hybrid secondary sort business in Los Angeles County.

Operated by California-based company Valemi Inc., the Pico Rivera facility processes materials from several other MRFs and redemption centers, creating bales with specialized specs for sale on the secondary market; it also processes materials for clients such as bottle manufacturers, creating high quality PET bottle bales from various lower-grade material streams.

With upgrades partially supported by a grant from The Recycling Partnership's Coalition, Valemi Inc. is building more capacity to sort clear, pigmented, and opaque PET, including non-bottle containers, from residential and commercial sources. An optical sorter and related equipment will enable 3.73 million more pounds of sorting capacity per year at the Pico Rivera facility, an increase of about 70% over what it currently handles.

The Pico Rivera MRF is a critical player in the evolving recycled plastics supply chain. Because it aggregates material from other facilities, it can capitalize on economies of scale to mine PET bales more thoroughly than other facilities would be able to manage on their own. That makes it an important link for companies that need help in maximizing PET recycling to meet the eventual targets of California's EPR program.

One bale type that Valemi specializes in aggregating is the PET non-bottle bale, which can be challenging for conventional MRFs to generate because volumes can be slow to accumulate. The upgraded facility will be able to mine this material much more quickly and significantly increase the amount of non-bottle PET that gets recycled.

"We pride ourselves on the fact that if a load comes in with multiple commodities, we have an outlet for those commodities, from a market standpoint,"
Juan Hernandez, President of Valemi Inc., said.
"Landfill is not an option we entertain."



What's Ahead for PET



As the recycling landscape is undergoing new shifts, the PET Recycling Coalition is prepared to navigate emerging hurdles and opportunities in its pursuit of its three ambitious goals. EPR will have significant effects on recycling, and the Coalition is positioned to capitalize on the opportunity to align its national goals with the goals of EPR systems.

Now is our chance to pre-invest to make sure that materials with a future in the circular economy are recycled and we can support recycling rate targets.

For example, by 2032, all packaging considered recyclable in California needs to meet a 65% recycling rate. And in states like Oregon, the EPR framework will not unlock the full opportunity for non-bottle PET circularity unless sufficient responsible end markets exist. Our Coalition granting has helped develop those end markets but more work is needed.

The task at hand may be daunting, but looking back at all we have achieved together, the members of the Coalition know that together, there is little we cannot do.

Building a better recycling system is within our reach. As we connect the right people, ideas, funding, and solutions, we are proud to watch our momentum expand. Let us take our next big strides together.

“Procter & Gamble is a founding member of the PET Recycling Coalition and we continue to support because the Coalition provides the opportunity to collaborate and help build a more circular recycling system.”

Mark Agerton
Group Scientist Hair Care Packaging R&D, Procter & Gamble

Making It Work: Keeping Plastic in Circulation and Out of Landfills

In our third year of The PET Recycling Coalition, we know what works to increase access, acceptance, and engagement. Now, we need you to answer our call to action to join us to scale our efforts and achieve our goals!

We have our sights set on achieving greater impact and systems change through on-the-ground action and strategic funding for creative and impactful solutions. And, we have the right partners at the table working with us day in and day out to overcome the barriers we face to building a better recycling system—one that we all deserve and must have to achieve our collective impact.

There is also the stark realization that achieving our goals will require more members, more ingenuity, and more funding. **Since 2022, we have distributed \$5.12M in grants to 23 grantees yet we were unable to fulfill the nearly \$15M in additional funding requests.**

The impact we can achieve when we are able to meet all funding requests is within our reach—but we need your help. This is a call to action to help us shrink the gap between what is needed and what can be accomplished. We have the solutions and, together, we have the network needed to accomplish our goals.

With your help we can raise the \$52M required to reach our current goals. We are calling on more brands, retailers and converters that have PET in their portfolio to work with us. By joining forces with the PET Recycling Coalition, we can increase PET recycling and ensure that all formats of PET are well positioned to meet EPR mandates.

This will take significant collaboration with and beyond our current Coalition members. We are heartened and motivated by the progress we have made so far. To meet our goals, we need each of you to answer our call to action and help us move further and faster, with more Coalition members, greater scale, and the impact we know is possible.



To become part of the PET recycling movement, [join the coalition today](#) or [apply for a grant](#).



Steering Committee



Supporting Funders



Advisory Committee

