

Beyond the Bin: Community Solutions for Hard-to-Recycle Materials

La Tienda at Eldorado



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New Mexico Recycling & Solid Waste Conference

Santa Fe Community Convention Center

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What if Recycling Didn't Stop at the Curb?



- Volunteers saw recyclable items not accepted by Santa Fe County
- First collection: Writing Instruments
- Added others as community ideas surfaced
- Grew into 10 collection programs

Filling the gap, one collection at a time.

Dental Products — EPR Tom's of Maine



- All brands dental products
- Sponsored by Tom's of Maine
- Shipping covered by sponsor
- 99 lbs collected in 2024

Producers pay, community benefits.

Razors — EPR Gillette



- Disposable razors and blades
- Sponsored by Gillette
- Safe disassembly, metals reused.
- 16 lbs collected in 2024

Small items, big safety impact.

Writing Instruments — Jacobs Partnership



- Pens and markers
- Shipping covered Jacobs (EAWSD)
- Recycled through TerraCycle
- 103 lbs collected in 2024

Community + corporate partners fills in the EPR gap.

Corks — Evolving Partnerships



- Past: Canada & Houston companies
- Now: artists + Broken Arrow Glass → mulch
- 2024: 173 lbs collected
- Partnerships adapt to keep corks in circulation

From yoga blocks to mulch — partnerships adapt.

Egg Cartons — Direct Reuse



- Started with Bienvenidos Pantry
- Expanded to Food Depot & egg producers
- Local families reuse cartons for hens
- 3,900 cartons reused in 2024

Simple reuse, big community impact.

Shoes & Socks — Reuse + Social Impact



- Good shoes → local shelters
- Others → Goodwill repurposed/recycled
- Socktober campaign added new socks
- 209 shoes & 229 socks in 2024

Every step counts toward sustainability.

Rubber Bands — Self-Sustaining Loop



- Started from postal worker need
- Bin set up at La Tienda
- Dropped off & picked up as needed
- Self-sustaining reuse stream

Practical reuse that supports daily work.

Cords & Lights — Scrap Value



- Holiday lights first, cords followed
- Metals recycled at local scrap yard
- Revenue supports E/285R programs
- 304 lbs recycled in 2024

From scrap to support — turning waste into value.

Metal Bottle Caps — Creativity + Circularity



- Delivered to Resourceful Santa Fe
- Sold to artists & crafters
- Supports arts + keeps metal out of landfill
- 20 lbs collected in 2024

From waste to art — circularity in action.

Styrofoam® — Community Challenge



- Pilot collections: Sept 2024 & Jan 2025
- 90+ donors, 559 lbs collected
- Densified in ABQ → reused in products
- Recycler closed → program ended
- Shows limits without infrastructure

Strong interest, weak infrastructure — not every stream lasts.

Why It Works



- Community access makes participation easy
- Partnerships share costs and logistics
- Creativity adapts to new needs

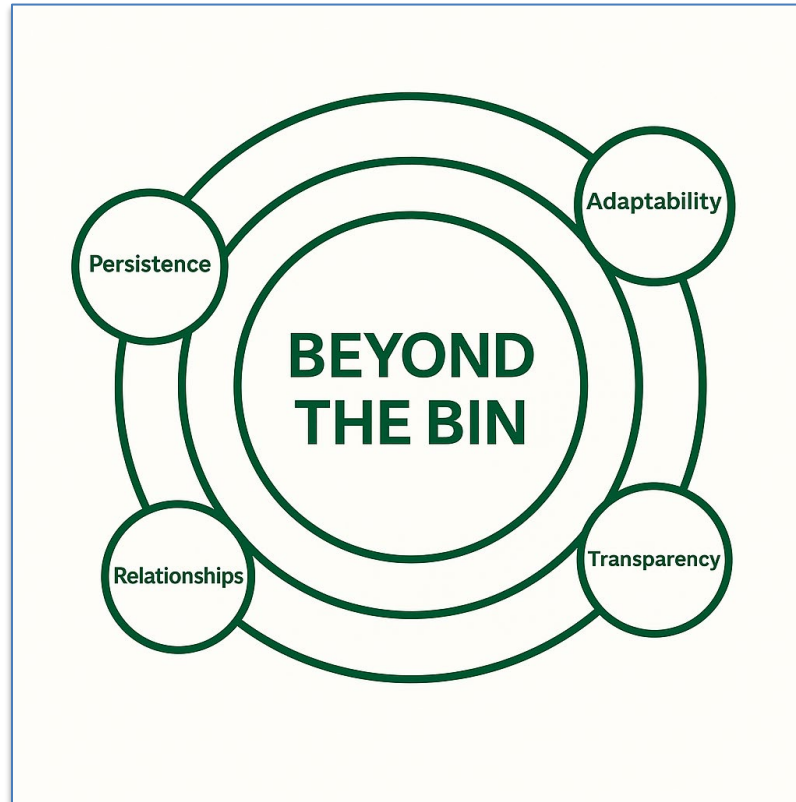
Community + Partnerships + Creativity = Success

Lessons and Challenges



The road forward isn't always smooth.

Guiding Values for Change



Beyond the Bin is Possible Anywhere



Thank You

Questions & Discussion