



# Recycling In America

What's Working, What's Not,  
and What We Do About It

April 24, 2025

# Our Plan for Today

**Welcome! What's on your mind?**

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**Setting the Stage: What do the data say?**

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**Perspective from the Field: Guest speakers**

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**Deeper Dive: Your questions & experience**



# Community Recycling Programs: How can we take recycling from surviving to thriving?

## Speakers



**The Honorable  
LaToya Cantrell**

*Mayor, City of  
New Orleans, LA*



**Ann Canela**

*Head of Niagara Cares,  
Niagara Bottling*



**Caroline Mitchell**

*Lead Waste Reduction and  
Recycling Specialist, City of  
Fort Collins, CO*

## Chat Support



**Kevin Goolsby**

*Solutions Adoption and  
External Engagement  
Coordinator*



**Charlotte Pitt**

*Director of Grant  
Development*



**The Recycling  
Partnership**

Building a Better Recycling System

# What must be true for the U.S. recycling system to really work?



1

**Design for Recycling:** All packaging needs to be designed for recyclability.

2

**Ability to Recycle:** All households need access to recycling in their home.

3

**Public Participation:** Residents need to fully engage in recycling.

4

**Recycling Infrastructure:** Recycling facilities need to effectively process the material.

5

**Old Stuff → New Stuff:** Recycling facilities need sufficient end markets.





## Our mission is to build a better U.S. recycling system.

The Recycling Partnership is a purpose-driven NGO.

We are a team of experts, practitioners, and thought leaders with the real-world experience needed to overhaul the U.S. recycling system through on the ground action.

# The U.S. recycling system needs all of us...





# Community Recycling Programs



# U.S. Residential Recycling System – Fast Facts



**10M+**

tons recycled  
per year



**89M+**

U.S. households  
with access to  
recycling



**9000+**

U.S. community  
recycling  
programs



**21%**

of recyclable  
material is being  
recycled



**681K\***

U.S. jobs created  
by recycling and  
reuse



# Requirements of an Effective Recycling System

There is opportunity to improve every part of the residential recycling system.



	Current Level	Target Level
N/a	More information needed on packaging design – to be provided with policy .	100%
C	Access to Recycling73%	100%
F	Households Participating43%	90%
B+	Facilities Able to Process Recyclables87%	95%
N/a	More information needed on end market availability – to be provided with policy.	Sufficient End Markets

## What's happening to our recyclables?

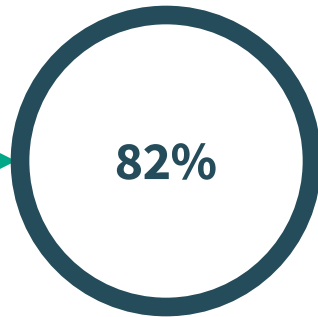
### Example: PET Thermoforms in California

Packaging Recyclability



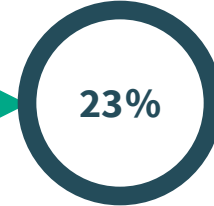
**What could  
be recycled**

Access



**What could  
get collected**

Engagement



**What actually  
gets collected**

Processing & Sortation



**What gets  
sorted and sold**

End Markets



**What gets  
made into  
new stuff**

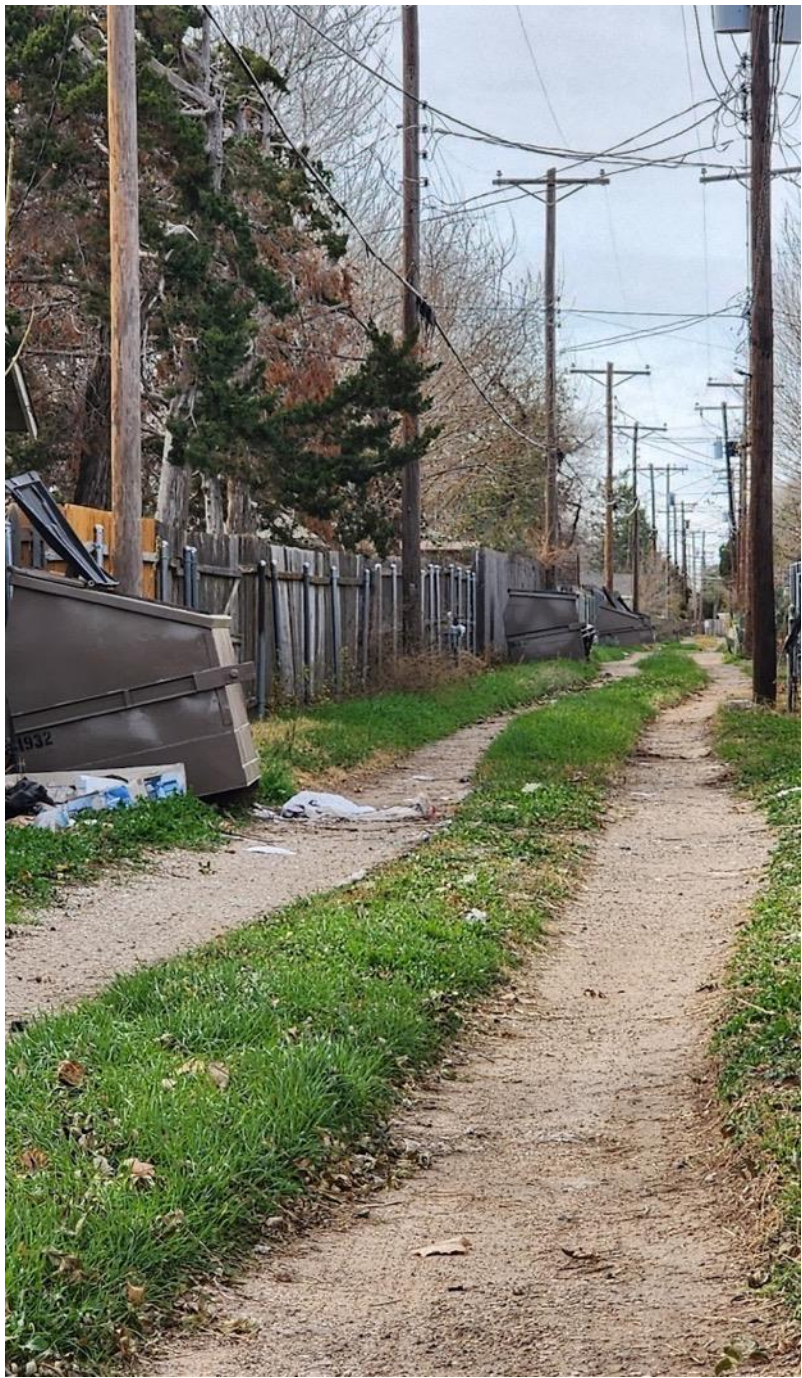
Why don't we have  
100% **access**?



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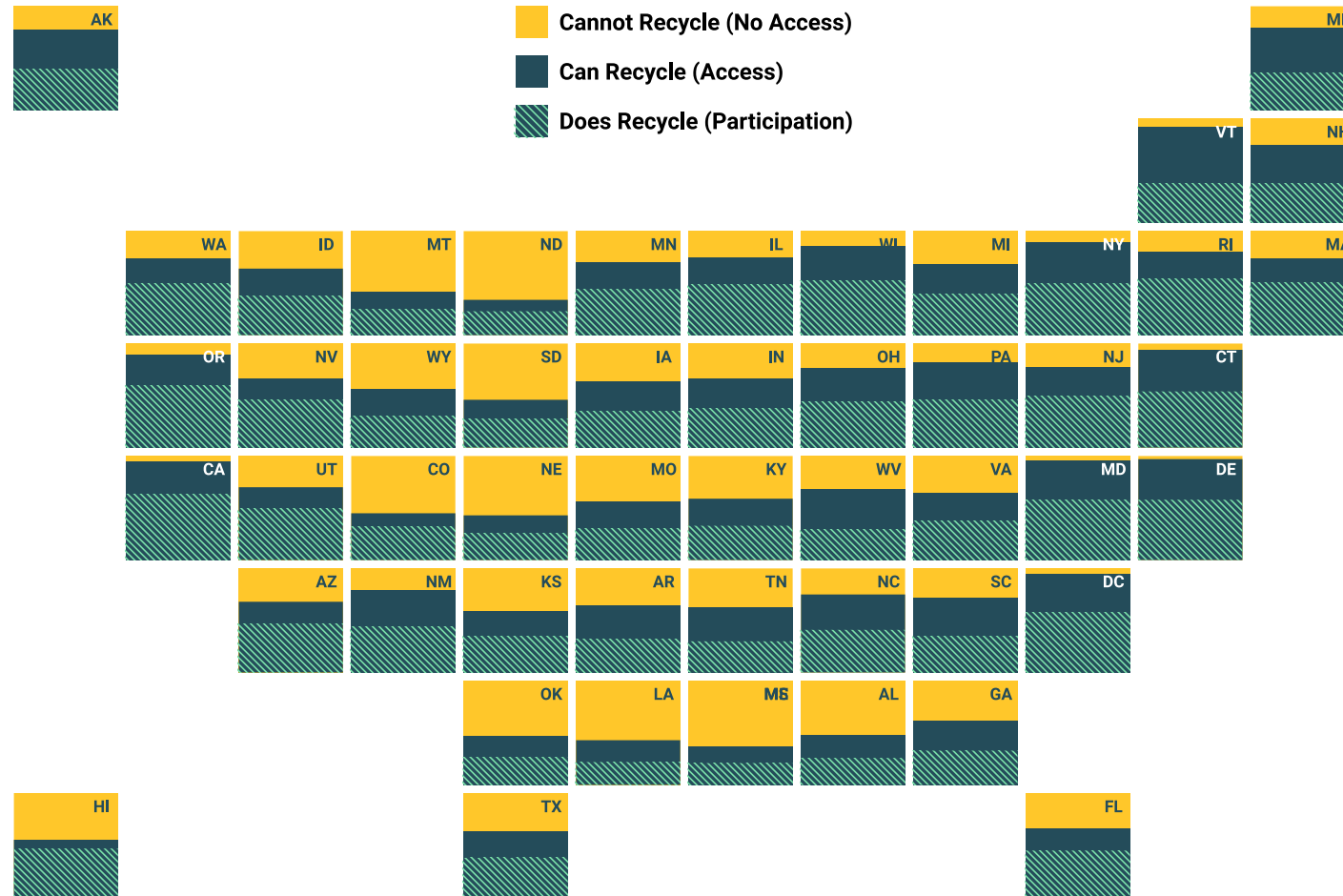




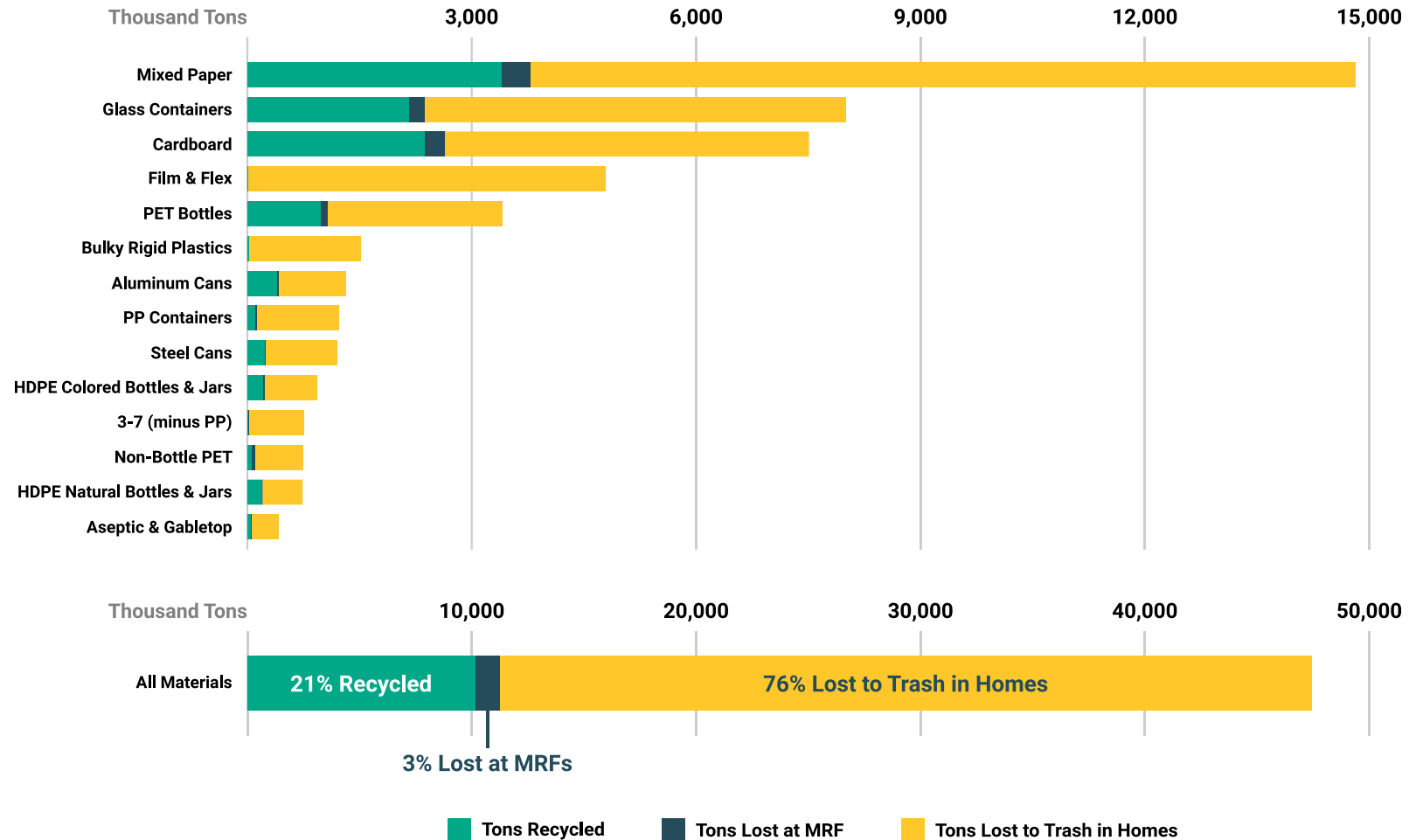




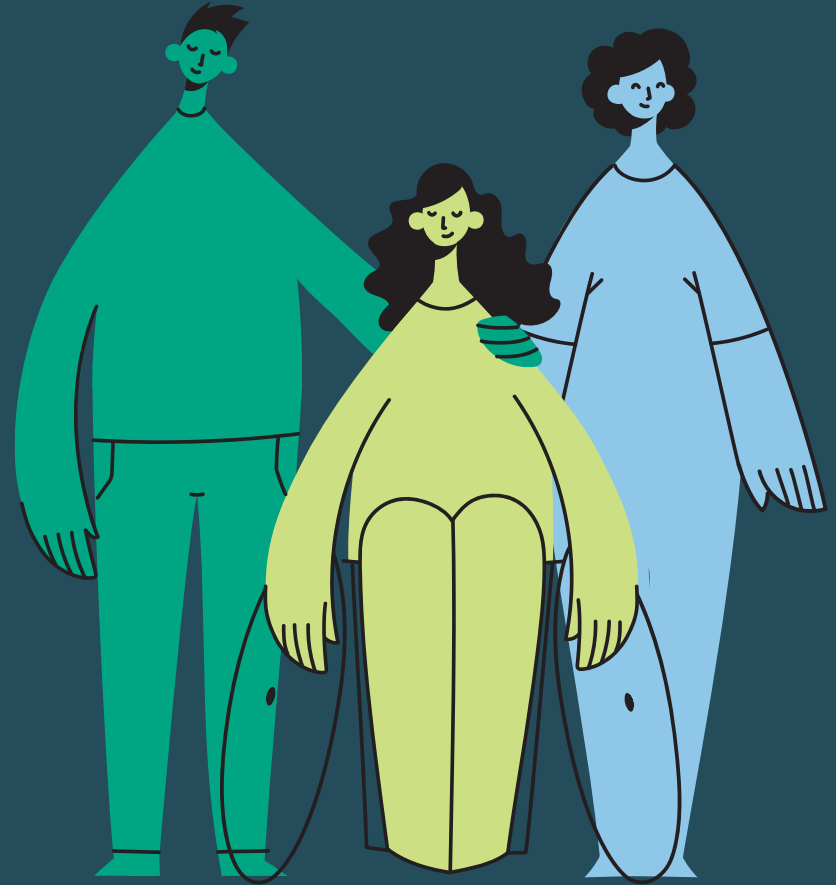
# State-by-State Levels of Recycling Access and Participation



# Lack of Education & Access Affect Material Fate



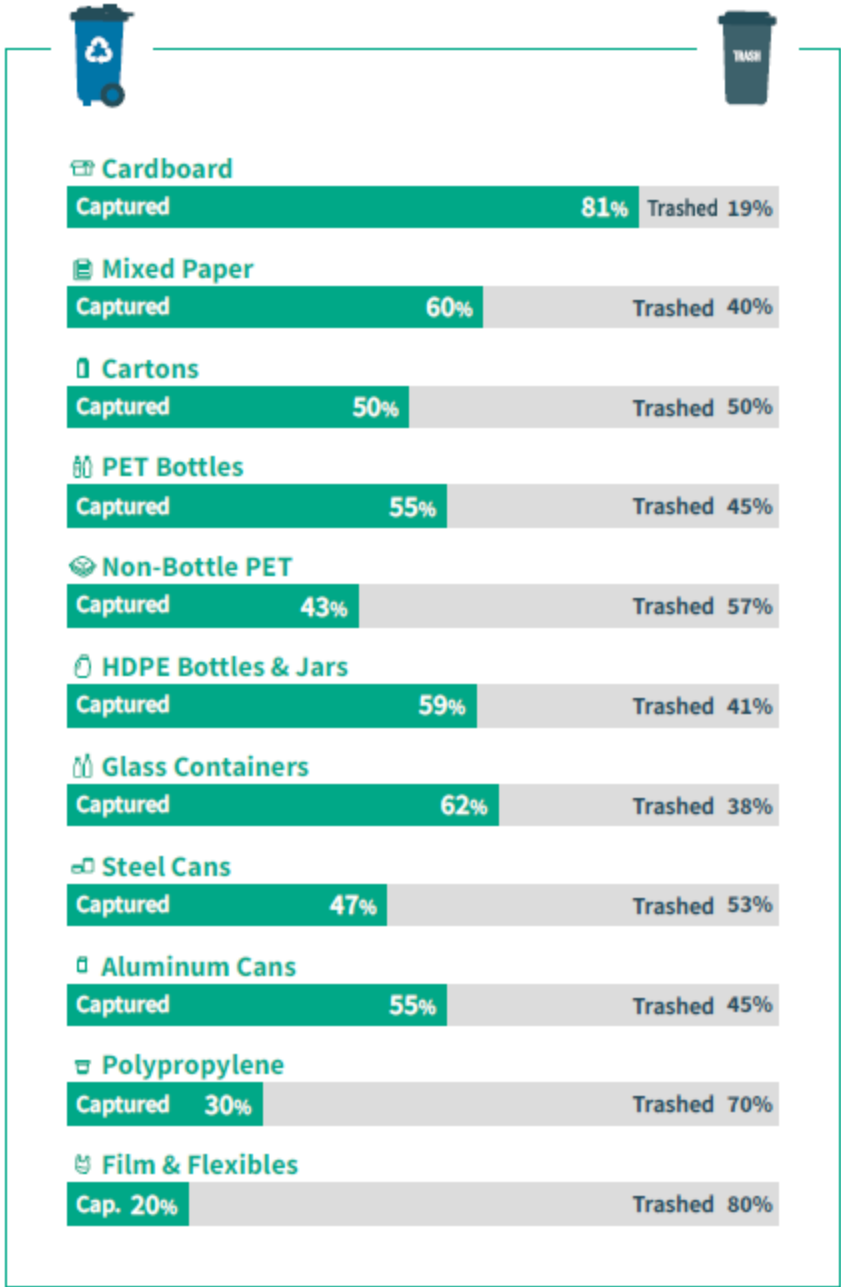
# What about participation?





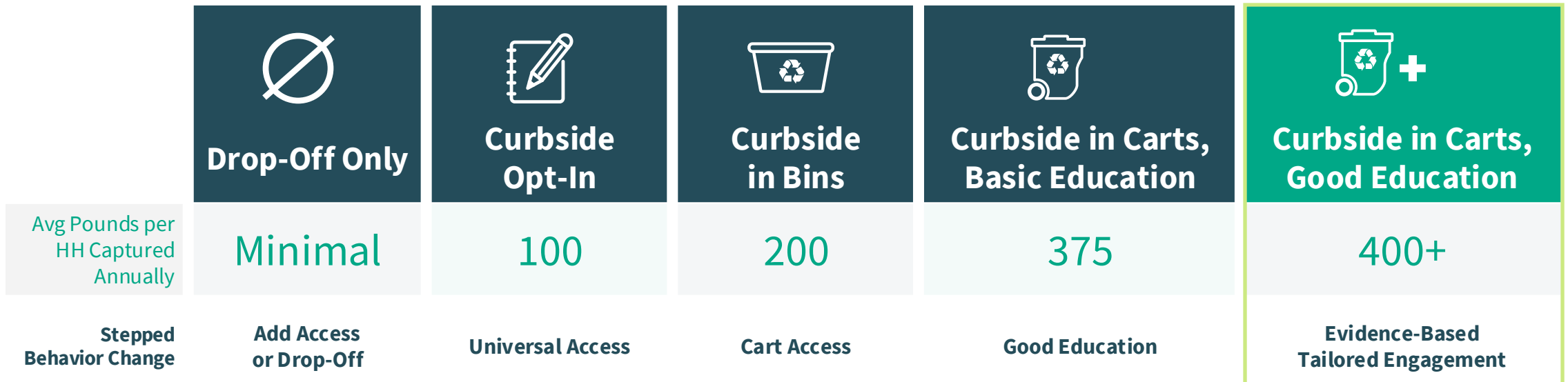


Despite consistently high levels of public support for recycling, **more than half** of all residential recyclables are **lost to landfills** each year due to **behavior gaps**.



\* Where accepted by the community.

# Providing access alone is not enough – people must be educated and engaged for recycling to really work.



...on average, single-family households generate 750-800lbs of recyclables each year.

## How can we capture the rest?



# Community Recycling Programs: How can we take recycling from surviving to thriving?

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To achieve the environmental and economic goals of recycling, we must increase recycling access, participation, and capture.



# How?

## Companies

Advocate for smart, well-designed policy and invest in community recycling programs today. For maximum impact, [partner with others](#).

## Communities

Level up your local program by incorporating [best practices](#) into collection and outreach operations.

## Policymakers

Support local, state, and national recycling infrastructure by adopting, or starting the conversation on, [EPR policy](#).

# Mark Your Calendars

## May 2025

28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

May 1, 2025

### Part 2 – MRFs

- Unpacking the mystery of recycling’s magical “black boxes”
- 2:00 – 3:00pm EST

May 8, 2025

### Part 3 – End Markets

- If recyclables have nowhere to go, are they really recyclables?
- 2:00 – 3:00pm EST

May 15, 2025

### Part 4 – Recycling by Design

- Exploring definitions, policies, and the road ahead
- 2:00 – 3:00pm EST

May 22, 2025

### Part 5 – Policy

- Shaping the future of recycling
- 2:00 – 3:00pm EST

Get in Touch:

# The Recycling Partnership

✉ [info@recyclingpartnership.org](mailto:info@recyclingpartnership.org)

🌐 [recyclingpartnership.org](https://recyclingpartnership.org)



**The Recycling  
Partnership**

Building a Better Recycling System

We're a purpose-driven organization committed to building a better recycling system that delivers economic and environmental benefits for communities and the industry.