



NMRC

NEW MEXICO RECYCLING COALITION

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NEW MEXICO RECYCLING COALITION RECEIVES USDA RURAL UTILITIES SERVICES SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT GRANT FOR WASTE REDUCTION THROUGH SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS MANAGEMENT IN RURAL NEW MEXICO

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The New Mexico Recycling Coalition (NMRC) received a \$88,000 from USDA as part of a competitive grant process through the Rural Utilities Services. The grantee shall finance an additional \$53,340.00 of these costs through in-kind contributions. This equates to \$141,340 in funding targeted to empower local communities to divert waste from their landfills, while keeping their waterways and landscape clean. The grant covers a twelve-month period from October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021.

The funding supports efforts to divert material from landfills within New Mexico's smallest communities of 10,000 residents or less (a list of eligible communities can be found [here](#)). This will be accomplished by establishing reuse centers, leading backyard compost trainings, hosting repair clinics and leading zero waste activities.

NMRC's executive director, Sarah Pierpont, notes that, "Our mission is to inspire New Mexicans to reduce, reuse and recycle. This grant will help rural parts of our state focus on some of the "Rs" that precede recycling: reduce and reuse! This is exciting timing as all of the efforts funded by this grant can take place regardless of global recycling end-markets and even pandemics. The funding focuses on grassroots efforts that take place in residents' own neighborhoods and backyards."

Not only will this project save valuable landfill space, it will also reduce threats to water resources and provide new resources to rural communities. Zero waste, works to divert material and eliminate toxins. Toxin reduction directly links to cleaner water systems. Zero waste also includes eliminating single use plastic items, one of the leading pollutants in the ocean plastic crisis. Back yard composting helps to ensure clean waterways. Soils and gardens that are amended with organic compost, as created through back yard composting, do not require the application of synthetic fertilizers or pesticides and use less water.

Reuse centers are separate areas, co-located at staffed, trash drop-off sites, where residents can put items they no longer want and that still have a useful life. Other residents can pick up items free of charge. Repair clinics, also known as "Fix-It" clinics, convey basic disassembly, troubleshooting, and repair skills using attendees' own broken things as the vehicle. It is a free program that recruits volunteer "coaches" or individuals with experience repairing items (mechanical, electrical, bicycle, sewing, woodworking, etc) and pairs coaches with community members that bring in their broken items. Coaches do not fix items for attendees, but work to teach them how to fix it themselves. By sharing these skills while transferring them to others Fix It Clinics teach critical thinking through the lens of our relationship to consumption and sustainability. Both reuse centers and Fix-It clinics provide new resources to the local community.

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