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New Foundation Raising Funds To Keep Glass Bottles Out Of Landfills



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Science



New glass bottles on the production line which were produced with recycled glass. STRATEGIC MATERIALS

Glass has value. It doesn't belong in landfills. If residents want to recycle glass in their community, they should let their local officials know. That's the message of the Glass Recycling Foundation, a newly formed, first-of-its-kind group which plans to raise \$1 million over the next 12 months.

The funding will go to help recover more glass, and higher-quality glass, via grants or loans to material recovery facilities that sort recyclables, glass drop-off programs and education programs.

You may read about [problems with recycling contamination](#). The Michigan-based Glass Recycling Foundation aims to increase the availability of cullet, the name the industry uses for furnace-ready recycled glass that can be turned into new bottles, jars and fiberglass.

"The need is significant—some estimates of the required infrastructure investments are in the \$30 million to \$100 million range," says Lynn Bragg, foundation president.

"Investments are made every year by both private and public agencies in strengthening our glass collection and processing infrastructure. (Glass Recycling Foundation) grants will be targeting areas that need help in leveraging this private and public investment through joint funding."

The foundation is led by a board of people representing companies and organizations like Owens-Illinois; Diageo; Strategic Materials Inc.; Northeast Recycling Council; the Recycling Partnership; [Urban Mining Northeast](#) and California State University, Chico. They're working with the [Glass Recycling Coalition](#), with representations from material recovery facilities, glass recyclers, local government organizations, end markets and brands.

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Glass can be recycled endlessly, with no loss in quality or purity, [the coalition notes](#). But while 81% of the U.S. population has recycling programs available for glass beverage bottles, only 32.5% of all glass containers were recycled in 2014.



Cullet is the key because when recycled glass is used in the manufacture of new glass containers, it melts at a lower temperature than virgin materials, according to the foundation, helping reduce maintenance and oftentimes prolonging the life of the furnace. And that lower melting temp means [less energy](#) has to be used (which amounts to fewer carbon emissions).

"Over a ton of natural resources are conserved for every ton of glass recycled," Bragg says, "including 1,300 pounds of sand, 410 pounds of soda ash, 380 pounds of limestone and 160 pounds of feldspar."



A finished pile of cullet. Cullet is furnace-ready recycled glass to be used primarily in glass container manufacturing and fiberglass insulation. STRATEGIC MATERIALS

Cullet, not to be confused with cutlet, can be increased by recovering more glass from the recycling stream and keeping glass in curbside programs. Curbside programs are more convenient and have higher recycling rates, she said.

"The foundation can help educate or provide capital in the form of grants or low-interest loans to (material recovery facilities) and cities to clean up glass quality in curbside programs, which would be our ideal scenario for increasing recovery of glass recycling."

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