

Zero-Waste Event Planning Checklist

Note: Not everything on this checklist may apply to your event. Please tailor it to your event's specific needs.

Adapted from Sustainable Cleveland's Zero-Waste Checklist

Done	Getting Started	Lead Time	Helpful links and resources
	Event organizers become familiar with zero waste event concepts and benefits.	Initial planning stages	
	Event organizers agree to make the event zero waste.	Initial planning stages	
	Determine zero waste goals.	Initial planning stages	"Zero-waste" is the ideal, but in reality it is a process. Set realistic reduction goals for your event based on past experiences. For example, if this is your first zero-waste event, a 50% diversion rate might be a realistic goal.
	Identify a Zero Waste team leader and team.	Initial planning stages	It is important to have a lead person who can be the main contact and who can be in charge of the logistics on the day of the event.
Done	Recycling, Compost, and Waste Management	Lead Time	Helpful links and resources
	Work with vendors and caterers to evaluate all event waste streams	45-60 days	
	Choose compost, recycle, and waste hauling companies	45-60 days	http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/solidwaste/recycling/recycling-events.htm
	Determine how many zero-waste stations (each station has a compost, recycle, and trash bin) will be needed and map them out	45-60 days	Depending on the size of your event and its layout, just a couple stations may be sufficient. For large scale events: 300-1,000 guests: 10 zero waste stations 1,000-5,000 guests: 20 zero waste stations 5,000-10,000 guests: 30 zero waste stations
	Communicate zero-waste guidelines to exhibitors/vendors	45-60 days	Sample vendor letter [MS Word] Vendor quick tips sheet [MS Word]
	Reserve FREE waste collection bins	30 days	http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/solidwaste/recycling/recycling-events.htm
	Begin recruiting zero-waste volunteers to help with event	30 days	Consider posting your opportunity on volunteermatch.com, Craigslist or via social media. Utilize community groups such as Girl/Boy Scouts, 4H, Rotary, etc. Estimate that you will need 15 volunteers for every 1,000 guests. If the event is over multiple hours or days, also take into account how many volunteer shifts you will have.
	Set up zero waste stations and remove all stand-alone trash or recycling containers to avoid contamination	Day before event	Each zero waste station should contain a recycle, compost, and trash container with proper signage, extra bags, and gloves and tongs for volunteers to remove contamination
	Use the signs provided to label all containers	Day before event	
	Instruct volunteers and kitchen staff on collection practices	Before event opens	
	Assign volunteers to zero waste stations	Before event opens	
	Schedule announcements to occur during the event to educate attendees on zero-waste	Before event opens	
	Measure your results! Measure volume or weight of all waste streams and document	Immediately after event	Appendix 4, p. 20: http://www.sustainablecleveland.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/zw-event-guide_for-web.pdf

Done	Food and Beverage	Lead Time	Helpful links and resources
	Select caterers with sustainable practices to serve at the event Sustainably source a percentage of the menu including local, organic, vegetarian/vegan, and/or certified fair trade food	45-60 Days 45-60 Days	
	Ask caterer/vendors to purchase food in bulk to prevent excess packaging	45-60 Days	Sample vendor letter [MS Word] Vendor quick tips sheet [MS Word]
	Arrange with caterers/vendor to use only reusable or compostable service ware, table cloths and napkins. No Styrofoam!	45-60 Days	Sample vendor letter [MS Word] Vendor quick tips sheet [MS Word]
	Consider working with the local food bank to donate leftover food	45-60 Days	
	To reduce unnecessary waste: - Use finger foods or buffet-style serving - Serve beverages in pitchers instead of individual servings - Serve condiments in bulk (no individual packets)	45-60 Days	
Done	Invitations, Announcements, and Promotions	Lead Time	Helpful links and resources
	Electronically distribute invitations	30-45 days	
	If RSVP is required, provide phone number or email to avoid RSVP cards	30-45 days	
	Promote event through social media and existing newsletters	30-45 days	
	Include zero-waste information in all announcements	30-45 days	
	Limit giveaways: Consider the environmental impact of prizes and packaging. Provide giveaways that are resource or energy efficient products like reusable shopping bags or water bottles	30 days	
	Make all signage reusable for future events	30 days	
	Obtain reusable nametags and collect them at the end	30 days	
Done	Venue	Lead Time	Helpful Links and Resources
	Choose a venue that will work with you to meet your zero waste goals	45-60 days	
	If possible, choose a venue that includes: - Recycling infrastructure - Reusable table and service ware - Reusable decorations available for event	45-60 days	
	Encourage alternative modes of transportation when marketing the event	30-45 days	
Done	Post event	Lead Time	Helpful links and resources
	Return to your original goals and evaluate how well you did	1-15 days post event	Contact your hauler for the weights of materials collected. Calculate your recycling rate: http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserve/tools/recmeas/docs/worksh_a.pdf Volume to weight conversion factors: http://www.epa.gov/osw/conserve/tools/recmeas/docs/guide_b.pdf
	Write down any "lessons learned" for the next time	1-15 days post event	