

City of Detroit

Event Recycling and Waste Reduction Guidebook



Photo Credit: Pixabay

For a More Sustainable Detroit

The City of Detroit encourages all events to be more environmentally friendly by reducing the amount of waste sent to the landfill. This guidebook will help you design your waste reduction program, answer your questions, and provide you with the knowledge to be successful. Will your event have the lowest amount of trash? How low will your event go?



Photo Credit: City of Detroit

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Waste Reduction Techniques

Refuse

The first step to reducing the amount of trash your event produces is to make the choice to not bring certain items into your event. Hard-to-recycle items, items that are not recyclable, and items that can be replaced with more sustainable options, should be reviewed first.

- Avoid purchasing single-use plastic items that cannot be easily collected for recycling or composting. For example, plastic cutlery, straws and plastic bags.
- Styrofoam is a cost-effective option when purchasing material in bulk, but cannot be recycled or composted. Work with your vendors to eliminate the use of Styrofoam within their food serveware and replace items with more sustainable options such as compostable serveware.
- Consider not providing single use straws with your cocktail drinks or only providing straws when patrons specifically ask. There are affordable compostable or biodegradable straw options available in the marketplace.

Reduce

Reducing the amount material brought on-site will greatly impact your waste diversion program.

- Encourage your attendees and staff to bring empty reusable water bottles and provide free water filling stations.
- Create opportunities for vendors to sell event-branded reusable items such as tote bags and water bottles.
- Explore the possibility of using a deposit system for cups. A patron purchases a recyclable beer cup and uses the cup throughout the day as they purchase new beer, allowing your food and beverage provider to serve draft products rather than individual containers or cups.
- Move communications onto your digital platforms, or event based app, to decrease the amount of printed paper.
- Consider eliminating or reducing the amount of promotional based giveaway items, such as rubber bracelets, small plastic toys and decorations, which are disposable.



Photo Credit: Schupān

Refillable Water Stations

Refillable water stations at your event will allow to introduce deposit based reusable cups, reduce the amount of single-use plastic water bottles and reduce the overall amount of waste sent to the landfill.

When renting your water stations, be sure to rent from reputable vendors, use only food grade hoses to run your water lines, and filter all water before being dispensed. Be sure to consult with your venue, health department and the City of Detroit before proceeding with any type of refillable water stations.

Reuse

Reusing materials from year to year will help to reduce costs while increasing your overall waste diversion rate.

- *Reusable cups and serveware.* Work with your sponsors to secure reusable cups to eliminate single-use cups. The attendee pays a deposit on the cup, uses the cup for their drinks, and can either keep the cup as a souvenir or return the cup to be recycled in exchange for the return of their deposit. Reusable plates and cutlery can also be considered in your VIP areas and arranged through your caterer.
- *Signage.* Create your signage without years or dates on it. This will allow you to use the sign for multiple years. For directional signage, use interchangeable velcro arrows so the signs can be used in different locations.
- *Decor.* Purchase decor that can be reused for multiple years such as reusable cloth tablecloths and flower vases. If you choose not to store the material between event years, donate the items instead.

Donate

Donations of leftover equipment, food and clothing from an event is an important aspect of any waste reduction program. You can even set up a donation drive to collect certain items from your attendees.

- *Find a donation partner.* Prior to the event, set-up a donation partner to accept your donated goods. Communicating with the organization ahead of time will minimize the risk of your material not being accepted. Your partner organization may be able to arrange for a pick-up or drop-off of items.
- *Consider the volume of donated goods.* Depending on your anticipated volume, you may require storage space or an extra transportation vehicle.
- *Donating food.* If donating food, be sure to follow all food safety guidelines for donation and restock buffets more frequently to keep unserved food available for donation if necessary.

Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act

[The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act](#), protects an individual, business or organization that donates food from all liability, provided the food was donated in good faith and not intended to harm an individual.

Through coordination with your vendors and local organizations, you can donate unused and unconsumed food products.



Photo Credit: Unsplash

Recycling At Your Event

Recycling at your event is one of the two largest components to your waste diversion program and a critical component of going zero waste. Depending on the type of material you are generating, the quantities involved, and the material you are selecting to recycle, your program could face a number of challenges that this guidebook will cover to help you on your journey. The City of Detroit has a growing recycling infrastructure to support a number of different types of recycling at your event.

Single Stream Recycling

Single-stream recycling is collecting all types of accepted recyclables in one container. Almost all residential curbside recycling programs are single-stream.

Single-stream allows for ease of collection as the material does not need to be sorted by commodity type. However, it is important to remember, that **within the City of Detroit, outside of specialized recyclers, material recovery facilities (MRFs) - the facilities used by waste haulers to drop off recycling - do not accept bagged recyclables or plastic film. All bulk collection containers must be absent of film to be accepted.**

Source Separated Material

Source separated material is sorting, or collecting material, by commodity type (plastic, glass, metal, paper) and sending those bulk collection containers to recyclers with the material sorted.

This method is more time consuming and requires the use of volunteers or staff to sort material, or a program design that allows the collection of specific materials. **Source separating your material, or only collecting certain material, such as beverage containers or cardboard, is the better option than single stream.** This is the most impactful method to make sure your materials get recycled at a higher rate by the end of the process, than they would if they were getting single-streamed.

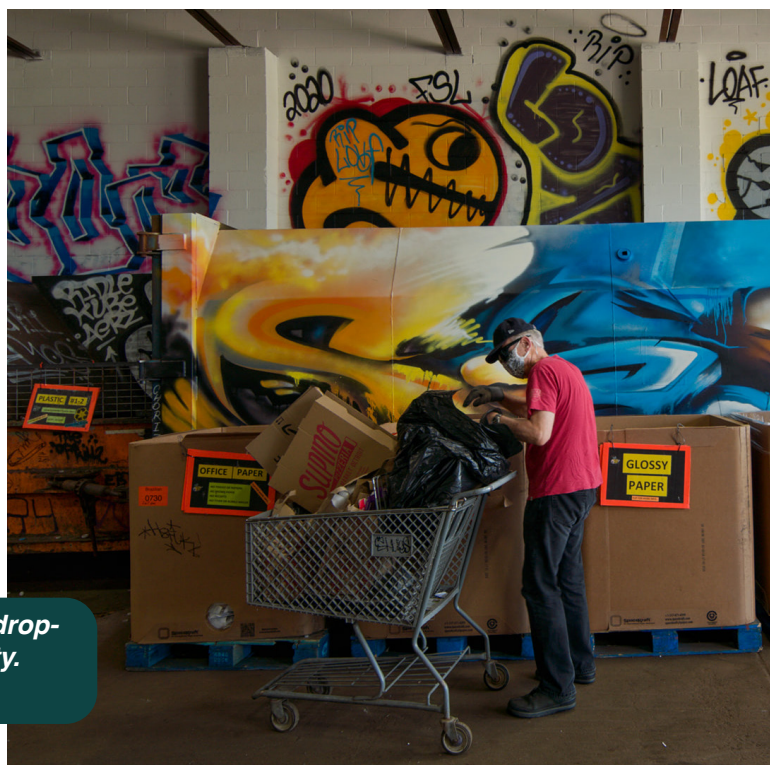


Where to take your recyclables?

1. Drop them off at Recycle Here!, the City of Detroit's only public space recycling drop off center. **Before going, be sure to check the list of commodities they accept.**
2. Your contracted waste or recycling hauler can haul recyclables for you to their designated recycling facility.
3. Your event sustainability company will make arrangements with the appropriate haulers to have the material taken to a recycling facility.

Recycle Here! is the City of Detroit's only recycling drop-off center open to the public and residents of the City.

Photo credit: Recycle Here!



Recycling Contamination

High contamination rates in the recycling industry has caused issues for recyclers to find end-markets for less than quality material. The more contaminated your event recyclables are, the less likely your recycling will actually be accepted into the recycling facility.

What makes your recycling contaminated?

- **Liquids.** This could be from rain or liquid from beverages or food.
- **Food.** The presence of food in your recyclables or the presence of food residue. Food is compostable, not recyclable.
- **The presence of non-recyclable items.** Common items found at events that are not accepted in recycling facilities (but if separated out, could be recycled at other specialized companies in Detroit): plastic film (such as stretch wrap, shrink wrap, grocery bags, liners), electronic scrap such as wire, light bulbs, batteries, clothing and vinyl signage.
- **Low quality recyclables.** For example, all plastic is not the same. #1 plastic is the most sought after plastic on the market, leaving little established markets for #6 plastics. A large quantity of #6 plastic in your recycling, as compared to #1, could result in a low recycling rate.



Solutions for Contamination

- Speak with your hauler and the recycling facility to learn what materials are accepted and the acceptable level of contamination.
- Clearly label your recycling bins to show what items are accepted.
- Monitor your bulk collection containers throughout the event to remove dirty recycling and non-recyclable items.
- Work with your vendors to educate them on accepted recycling practices, such as breaking down cardboard boxes.
- Before the material is picked up by your hauler, visually inspect the collection container and remove any trash.
- Ask your waste hauler or event sustainability company to provide feedback on the quality of recycling and areas of improvement for the following year.

Choosing Your Hauler

Detroit has many verified and reputable haulers based on the materials you are looking to recycle. When speaking with your hauler, be upfront about your recycling program, goals and expectations. Prior to signing a contract, be sure to communicate the following with your hauler:

- Date and times of delivery, service, and removal. Not all haulers work nights, weekends or holidays.
- Your goal is to obtain a copy of the scale ticket from the transfer station or recycling facility to verify the location of where your material was taken and its weight to calculate your waste diversion rate (see page 23).
- Clearly labeled map to show which containers are recycling and which are landfill.
- Communicate with your hauler about your recycling program and steps you are taking to decrease contamination.

Based on the design of your program and materials you are collecting, you may need to contract with multiple haulers or hire a professional event sustainability organization.



Selecting Your Equipment

The type of equipment you bring to your event will be determined by the materials you are collecting and how you are transferring material off-site. For bulk collection containers, haulers use gaylord boxes, toter carts, roll-off containers or trailers.

Recycling bins placed for front of house collection through your event are the first line of defense to decreasing contamination. The bins should be clearly labeled (see page 31), changed regularly, and be designed for the material you are collecting. Things such as weather, material type, storage, and cleanliness should be considered when selecting your bin type. Recycling containers can be purchased by the event or rented through your hauler or professional organization.



Tips & Tricks for Collection Containers

- Consider the weather. Some collection containers will be better suited for wind and rain.
- The size of the container should be considered. Larger collection bins will result in heavier bags, which can make changing the containers more difficult for your staff.
- If you are considering purchasing bins, consider the feasibility of storing the bins year-round. Some collection containers fold down while others stack.
- The durability of the bin should be considered if you are purchasing for the long term or have an event where bins could be easily damaged.
- Collection containers with room for signage will help to engage your attendees, decrease contamination and provide opportunities for sponsorship.



Recycling Bin Locations

As a rule of thumb, always pair your recycling bins with trash cans so your attendees and staff can manage all their waste in one spot. We highly recommend working with your staff to ensure the bins are changed out frequently to avoid overflow and cross contamination.

Front of House (for your attendees) Recycling Bins

- Make sure the bins are easily accessible to staff to be serviced. Consider where crowds gather and plan your staffing accordingly. If the bin appears to be damaged or overflowing, it will automatically start being mistaken for a trash bin. Appearance is key!
- Place bins in ingress (entrance) and egress (exit) areas.
- Avoid putting bins in food court areas unless you have proper signage to accompany them. Otherwise, you run the risk of high food waste contamination in your recycling bins.
- We recommend to avoid placing recycling bins near a large area of port-a-johns.
- Consider placing a water station by the recycling bins, in order to encourage people to rinse some of the materials if need be.

Back of House (for vendors and staff) Recycling Bins

- Make sure bins are accessible to the vendors, who will not walk long distances during peak hours to recycle their materials.
- The back of house recycling bins cannot be made accessible to the public or contamination is bound to happen.

Recycling Bin Signage

Signage on your recycling bins is highly encouraged to educate your attendees and staff on what items are accepted. Clear signage will help to increase the amount of recycling and will decrease the contamination.

Signs can be created to be reused year after year or made as a one time use. Examples of signage for collection bins can be found on page 31.



Tips for creating recycling signage

- Use colors to contrast with your recycling bin to have the signage stand out.
- Create your signage in a way that can be reused or recycled (see page 28 for information on procurement).
- When placing examples items of recyclable material on your signage, be sure to include items that are actually being consumed at the event.
- Keep the signage at eye level.

Composting At Your Event

Composting is the process of natural decomposition, one of the two largest components of a waste diversion program and a necessary aspect of any zero waste program. Composting food waste not only reduces the amount of waste your event sends to the landfill, but it also positively impacts the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions by restoring nutrients to the soil.

Compostable Serveware

Compostable serveware is a subset of packaging and serving options for your event that may be composted after use. The natural components, such as bamboo, starches and corn varieties are what allow it to be designed in a compostable manner. When selecting products, look for BPI certified products. BPI is a third-party entity verifying the compliance of a product to meeting the standards of compostability for manufacturers.

Composting facilities in Detroit will look to this certification to ensure the products you are bringing to their facilities can be properly composted. Contamination is the largest problem compost facilities face - contamination in terms of trash and also the presence of non-compostable serveware.

Be in communication with your compost facility and seek approval for all of your products before your event to avoid fees and the potential for your compost load to be rejected.



On average, over 30% of waste generated at events could be composted.

Photo credit: Make Food Not Waste



Tips & Tricks For Success

- Use only certified compostable products. Just because a product says it's compostable does not mean it meets the industry standard.
- Check with your composting facility to see if they accept compostable products and if so, the type of products they accept.
- Purchase your products from a reputable source. Just because something is labeled as compostable, does not mean that it meets the standards. Search for BPI and ASTM approved products.
- Sort the material before sending it to the compost facility to decrease contamination and avoid fees.

Types of Food Waste

Food waste is generally viewed in two different categories: grains, vegetables and fruit and then meat, dairy and oils.

Grains, vegetables and fruit are easier to compost. They break down faster and can be composted in your backyard or community garden. Meats, dairy and oils are harder materials to compost, as they require a more consistent and higher heat level to breakdown before the food begins to rot. Therefore, those types of products require the food to be taken to an industrial compost facility.

Industrial composting facilities have the ability to maintain the consistent and high enough heat levels to accept all foods, whereas, small composters, urban farms and backyard composters cannot accept this type of material.

When researching your compost facilities, be sure to inquire on their accepted types of food waste. A salad, without dressing, could be composted at a smaller composter, but a chicken Cesar salad should only be composted at industrial facilities because of the dressing and chicken.

Food Waste Contamination

Like recycling, contamination in food waste can be costly and the threshold for acceptance of food waste is generally below 2% contamination.

Food waste can be hard to sort on-site because of the nature of the product. Therefore, vendor education is critical to ensuring a successful program.

Common Food Waste Contaminates:

- Recyclables such as water bottles and beverage containers that are typically consumed with meals.
- Non-compostable serveware such as to-go containers, plates, bowls and plastic utensils.
- Non-compostable single serve portion cups such as those used to serve portions of salad dressing and pasta salads.
- Single serve condiment packets such as ketchup, mayonnaise and mustard.
- Chip bags and candy wrappers.



Volunteers at an event in Detroit working to sort material and educate attendees on composting efforts.

Photo credit: Make Food Not Waste

Choosing Your Hauler

As the composting industry in Michigan continues to grow, your selection of haulers will become more abundant. When contracting with your hauler, be clear they are hauling compost, not “trash” or landfill material and coordinate with your compost facility on the incoming load(s) of compost.

Considerations when choosing a hauler:

- Can they provide bulk collection containers and/or individual containers as well? Some companies in Detroit can provide both bulk collection containers and toter carts.
- Will your hauler provide you with compostable bags or should those be purchased separately?
- Is your hauler able to provide you weights for the material?
- Some waste haulers are not accustomed to hauling compost and may charge a cleaning fee for the bulk collection containers if the food waste is not in bags. Communicate openly with your hauler to avoid potential fees.

Selecting Your Equipment

Selecting sufficient equipment to adequately process all types of compostable waste is imperative. Separation is what allows composting services to be efficient and thrive. Equipment selection can also be placed in your scope of decision-making, as deciding the methods of the facility you use can affect equipment use.

The type of collection bin for event composting is dependent on volume of waste and the hauler you have selected. Food waste can become heavy quickly, so moderately sized receptacles, changed frequently, are typically sufficient.

Considerations for bin type:

- If the event is extended over a prolonged period or takes place in hot weather conditions, smell of food waste is something to consider. Consider using odor controlled composting bins or having your hauler pick-up your food waste nightly.
- Depending on your location, people and animals can become nuisance with rummaging the bins. Be considerate of your placement and change your bins frequently.

Left: Oakland Avenue Urban Farm compost area in Detroit's North End neighborhood. *Photo credit: Nick Hagen*

Right: Denby Neighborhood Alliance





Front of House Composting

Front of house composting is a method of collecting compostable materials that is focused on event participants.

Determine the volume of front of house food waste your event will create by accounting for food consumption, composability of the food, estimated food waste and whether the serveware is compostable.

- *Design your collection systems.* Your collection system can be implemented in a variety of ways including a pod system that couples conventional garbage cans with compost designated receptacles and placing the pods in high-traffic areas near food vendors.
- *Create legible signage.* Stations for proper waste streams should have legible signage showing the types of food waste accepted with accompanying pictures.
- *Train your volunteers.* Events can benefit from the help of trained volunteers who can stand at the stations to educate attendees on the proper disposal of their items.

Back of House Composting

Back of house composting focuses on the collection of food waste and materials generated by your vendors and behind the scene operations.

Back of house composting is most successful when working with your food and beverage vendors to capture food scraps during food preparation and items that cannot be donated.

- *Survey food vendors.* Doing an assessment will help you determine the types of food waste, serveware and packaging that will likely be generated during your event.
- *Create educational materials.* Vendor engagement and training before your event is very important. Provide vendors with recycle and compost containers, a referral for purchasing compostable serveware, and collection bins with signage.
- *Keep it simple.* Back of house areas are fast paced during events, so your program set-up should be simple with someone to monitor the vendors throughout the event to decrease contamination and increase vendor engagement.



Photo credit: Schupan

Zero Waste Events

Zero Waste is the conservation of all resources by means of responsible production, consumption, reuse and recovery of products, packaging and materials through recycling, composting, donation and reuse efforts.

The standard definition of zero waste is diverting 90% or more of the material you generate from the landfill.

Why Consider Zero Waste?

Achieving zero waste for your event takes commitment, passion and flexibility. When it comes to waste reduction, every little bit counts and no consideration should be overlooked.

There are many small, easy steps you can take to reduce your event's local and global footprint. Imagine the environmental impact of raising that diversion rate to 30, 50 or even 80%.

Achieving zero waste can:

- Allow your event to be a City and industry leader.
- Create marketing and public relations opportunities.
- Generate additional sponsorship money.



Tips & Tricks for Going Zero Waste

- *Review your procurement.* You must provide the necessary infrastructure to support a program, such as purchasing only recyclable and compostable products.
- *Communication.* Your entire staff, volunteers and vendors must be regularly educated and trained on zero waste techniques and how they can contribute to the success of the program.
- *Enforcement.* Require that all event staff understand and embrace the concept of having a zero waste event and include zero waste initiatives from the earliest planning stages.

Authenticity of Your Program

The authenticity of your program should be considered while you are developing your waste reduction program. Ensuring the material you collect gets recycled, composted and is properly diverted from the landfill, gives your program strength and the transparency builds public trust. Greenwashing is a term used to describe recycling programs that fall behind the industry standards for transparency and authenticity. Greenwashing programs give the forward-facing look that an event is recycling when they either send the material to the landfill or fail to ensure the material is properly handled by

Obtaining Your Data

In order to ensure your material was taken to the proper facility and that your waste diversion rate was calculated, you will need to obtain a scale ticket from your service provider. It is imperative that you communicate this request to your service provider PRIOR to your event. It is highly recommended that it is written into your terms of agreement.

A scale ticket is a document from the facility to calculate the weight of the material brought in. Some haulers will simply pull the tonnage from their computer system, without a facility name listed. However, only original scale tickets can be used as verified documentation of diversion. Scale tickets from the facility should include the following:

- Name of the facility, landfill, or transfer station.
- Date & time of the visit from the service provider.
- Scale in and scale out weight with tare weight.



Tips & Tricks for Authenticity

- Communicate with your haulers to ensure the material is taken to the correct facility. Obtaining your scale tickets will ensure the documentation required to verify their claim.
- Clearly label your bulk collection containers for trash, recycling and compost. This will help to decrease contamination and make sure the drivers deliver the correct containers to the correct facility.
- Be open about your programs' goals and objectives and contract with haulers who will support your program.

Hiring Reputable Vendors

The first step in ensuring authenticity and transparency is to hire reputable service providers. When selecting your service provider, ask the following questions to become educated on how they handle their material:

- What facility are you taking the material to?
- Have you worked with this facility before?
- How will you ensure the material is properly handled?
- What is an acceptable level of contamination for your facility?

Contact other events in Detroit or the City of Detroit Special Events office to inquire about vendors that have been used in the past and recommendations on who you should hire.



Photo credit: Schupan



Photo credit: Schupan

During Your Event

Communication

During your event, keep open communication with your staff, vendors and stakeholders regarding the program.

- Include program updates in your staff and vendor meetings.
- Create opportunities for your staff and vendors to provide feedback on program improvements.
- Create clear signage to educate and remind people about the program.
- State your programs goals so your staff has a clear understanding of the objectives.
- Provide positive reinforcement to staff members and vendors who positively contribute to the program.

Monitoring

Actively monitoring your program through the event will help decrease contamination rates and identify opportunities for future improvement.

- Assign a staff member or volunteer to be the lead person during the event. Create your recycling champion!
- Check your bulk collection containers at least once every day and remove any contamination.
- Engage with your staff, vendors and stakeholders before your event opens and after closing to receive feedback.
- As you walk the event site, take a look inside the individual collection bins and remove contamination. If you identify an area of high bin contamination, consider placing the bin in another location.

Flexibility

Events are a constantly changing environment and your waste reduction program is no exception.

Be open to changes within your program during the course of your event. You may need to adjust the material you are collecting to divert from the landfill or you may be faced with an unexpected contamination issue. With open communication and monitoring, you can be proactive in mitigating unexpected challenges.

Staffing Your Program

Engaging your staff and volunteers is a critical step in reducing waste at your event. These representatives will be able to carry out the procedures you've identified and be on hand to answer attendee questions. Every event needs someone to handle trash, so consider making your waste handling staff the same staff that services your recycling and compost bins. Keep the bins together as much as possible, so that servicing them is efficient and handled simultaneously. Inquire with your venue about any preexisting contracts and custodial staff available to hire or work alongside.

Empowering Your Staff

Whether you have paid labor or volunteers, empowering your staff to feel safe and comfortable is critical to retaining your team members throughout the entirety of the festival.

Waste reduction programs at events are not the most glamorous positions and can be hard to hire and retain staff through a weekend.

- Provide proper personal protection equipment such as hand sanitizer and gloves. If staff will be handling glass, we highly recommend the use of eyewear protection.
- Provide your staff access to proper hydration throughout their shift to avoid potential health and medical incidents, especially when working outdoors in the summer.
- Provide them a free meal or snack during their shift.
- After their shift is complete, allow them free access to the event if the event is ticketed.
- Incentivize your staff with gift cards, ice cream or vouchers.

Educating Your Staff

Your staff has an integral role in the success of your program. Properly educating staff on what is accepted as part of your program and vigilance through the festival to communicate with vendors and other stakeholders, sort out contamination, and properly collect material, will greatly increase your chances of a successful program.

- Provide pre-event training on your program, accepted material, collection methods and contamination to keep an eye out for.
- Provide your staff options for disposal of material if they come across highly contaminated material.
- Post signs in and around the event, the event office and general staff congregation areas to provide visual reminders.



Tips & Tricks to Empower and Educate Your Staff

- Encourage people with an interest in sustainability to select green-related tasks.
- Review recycling and composting criteria with staff and volunteers ahead of time and provide a short reference document for the day of the event.
- Outfit staff and volunteers with proper supplies including gloves, extra bags and tongs.
- Consider special clothing (t-shirt, cap, other) to identify staff and/or volunteers working on green-related tasks
- Provide clear signage for guests to support staff and volunteers.
- Select one team member to act as coordinator and to be available to staff and volunteers throughout the day/evening.
- Thank staff and volunteers for reducing waste at your event and supply data on diversion, if available.



Engaging Your Attendees

Event attendees are increasingly interested in zero or low waste events and tend to respond favorably to waste reduction initiatives. Invite attendees to work with you on reducing your event's environmental impact and recognize their contribution.

This effort requires coordination between the event planning team and vendors, as well as the public. There exists a fine line between education around waste reduction and the reasons behind why people are attending the event in the first place. It is important to understand your public and to be realistic. Your "green" team has to work with the public, not against it, in order for your program to be successful. It is not a "one size fits all" type of situation.

Questions to ask yourself as you determine how to engage the public:

- Is the event public or closed? In one situation, it is easier to plan what materials will be produced by the event and how to manage them. In the other scenario, it is much more difficult to determine what materials will make their way into the event.
- What is the demographic of your crowd: Younger? Older? Family-oriented?
- What type of event is it?
- What is your budget to implement some of these waste reduction incentives among your vendors and event-goers?
- How do you assimilate sustainability programs with facility or event location contracts?

Creating Educational Opportunities

- Create pre-event promotional materials and day-of signage describing your efforts and how attendees can participate.
- Consider gamifying on site recycling by using a "Caught Green Handed" program. If one of your staff members catches someone recycling properly, that person receives a voucher for something at the event.
- Include a dedicated educational booth in the event where people can learn about your recycling and waste reduction efforts and how they can green their homes.
- Publicize the impact of your sustainability initiatives in your PR, social media and website communications.
- Enforce a procurement strategy with your vendors i.e. only certain materials are allowed into the event.



After Your Event

Calculating Your Diversion Rate

Your waste diversion, measured in a percentage, can be used to measure the success of your program and determine if your event achieved zero-waste. Waste diversion is measured by weight, not volume. Your overall diversion rate encompasses your event set-up, live event, and post event clean-up. Weight calculations must be obtained from all materials you diverted from the landfill. Items could include recycling, food composting and donations. You will need to obtain the bulk weight from your selected hauler or sustainability provider or weigh bags individually before removing them from the event site.

TOTAL DIVERTED WEIGHT = Total weight of recycled material + Total weight of compost + Total weight of material donated (that would otherwise have been sent to the trash).

TOTAL WASTE GENERATED = Total diverted weight + Total weight of landfill material.

$$\left(\frac{\text{Total Diverted Weight}}{\text{Total landfill weight} + \text{Total diverted weight}} \right) \times 100$$

Share Your Impact

After the event, share the impact of your program with your event stakeholders, staff, sponsors and vendors. Members of your team and attendees can feel empowered by the positive contributions of the program and their involvement.

- Share the amount of material you collected to be diverted from the landfill.
- Research impact numbers, such as gallons of gasoline saved, to make the data relatable to your audience.
- Using the [EPA WARM model](#), calculate how much carbon your event saved.



Tips for sharing your impact

- Create infographics and publish the images on your social media channels.
- Take photographs throughout your event and of your attendees participating in the program. You can share photos in all of your marketing material.
- Distribute a press release to reach out to local media organizations and blogs to generate press.
- Create a post event report.
- Share your story and programs success on digital platforms such as Facebook.

Planning for the Future

After your event, sit down with your staff and discuss the pros and cons of the program and improvement strategies.

- How could I improve the procurement policy to ensure more recyclable or compostable materials are purchased?
- Could I have donated or reused additional items?
- What contaminated our recycling and compost? How can we avoid this contamination in the future.
- Engage your vendors and solicit their feedback on the program.
- Evaluate your budget and determine if you need to secure a sponsorship.
- Set goals for future years, such as a waste reduction percentage goal.

What Happens To Your Material?

Did you know the material you recycle & compost at events will be handled locally and turned back into products to be purchased by consumers?

Recycling

Not all the recycling collected will be handled locally as it can be difficult to find end-markets for certain materials. The recycling collected will be converted into its raw form where it is purchased by manufacturers to make new products. Did you know you can make a t-shirt from 15 plastic water bottles?

Compost

When you compost your food waste, you are not creating dirt, but a nutrient rich soil amendment that is purchased by farmers and landscapers to maintain healthy soil for their crops and flowers. This healthy soil enriches the fruits and vegetables we consumer everyday.



Procurement Recommendations

Controlling your procurement process to ensure materials you bring on-site to your event can be diverted from the landfill is key to executing a successful waste reduction program. Below are recommendations for event coordinators to begin looking at more sustainable purchasing options.

Regular Item	Suggested Sustainable Option
Promotional Material	
Signage Vinyl, foamcore, polystyrene are not recyclable.	Coroplast (i.e corrugated plastic), aluminum, bioboard, paper, paperboard, cardboard and polypropylene.
Paper Avoid purchasing paper made of raw materials.	Look for Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified OR 100% recycled-content paper with at least 30% post-consumer reclaimed content (includes recycled alternative paper sources, such as recycled cotton or other post-consumer waste). For more information, click here.
Inks	Chemical-based inks are difficult to process, whereas plant or water-based inks, which are free of heavy metals, resins and solvents, can be composted with other regular paper products.
Clothing Merchandise	Purchase clothing from local and national retailers. Many options are available to purchase products made from recycled materials, such as water bottles.
Give Away Items	Whether you are a food vendor, an expo booth vendor or a sponsor, the purpose of your giveaway item is to promote your business and make a positive impression on your event participants. Giveaway items should be of value to the participants, resulting in them going home with the recipient and not disposed of on course. All giveaway items and their packaging should be reusable, recyclable or compostable.
Merchandise Bags	Paper bags instead of a plastic grocery bags. Paper bags are easy to recycle, whereas plastic bags cannot be mixed in with other recyclables and must be handled separately, which depending on programs available, could render them unrecyclable.
Decor	Instead of one-time use decorations, consider purchasing reusable, recyclable or compostable alternatives. It is suggested that floral arrangements be made from local, state and regional trees and flowers to avoid the import of invasive species. Purchase decor items that can be donated after the event or reused in future years. Event decorations may include but are not limited to, table cloths, floral arrangements and table center pieces.
Sustainable Manufacturing www.global-standard.org , www.fairtradecertified.org , or www.bluesign.com	
Sustainable Fiber	Recycled polyester (rPET); Certified organic cotton; Fair Trade cotton; Better Cotton Initiative; Upcycled materials; Hemp; Tencel; Soy; Coconut
Sustainable Materials (for non-wearables)	Sustainable Materials (for non-wearables). Recycled glass, metal or plastic; Reclaimed or repurposed items; Reclaimed wood; FSC certified wood; BPA-free; Locally made; Hand-crafted, made from recycled materials; Employing local artisans; Made from local/organic materials
Sustainable Substrates	Substrates (e.g., note pads, playing cards, signage material) that are environmentally responsible, socially beneficial and economically viable. Examples include substrates made from recycled material (at least 30% post-consumer), FSC certified paper, and 100% recyclable materials.

Regular Item	Suggested Sustainable Option
Food Related Items	
Food Preparation Materials	We understand that many of the ingredients and supplies you use are made of or come packaged in non-recyclable and non-compostable materials. Where possible, please select ingredients and supplies that are made of and come packaged in reusable, recyclable or compostable materials. Make sure to separate non-recyclable items from your recycling stream and make sure that what you do recycle is clean and dry as much as possible.
Cold Beverage Cups (wine, beer, spirits) and Lids	BPI certified compostable cups and lids, #1 plastic (PET) or #1 rPET (plastic made from recycled content). PET plastic is currently more marketable in the recycling market, because it is a higher grade and more durable plastic.
Hot Beverage Cups and Lids	BPI certified compostable cups and lids, sugar cane fiber (bagasse), cornstarch, paper (preferably recycled fiber). All cups should have a PLA lining. (AVOID styrofoam). Paper cups are not recyclable because of the lining inside the cup to protect the paper.
Hot and Cold Plates/Boats/Bowls/Clamshells/Single Service Condiment Cups	BPI certified compostable products, sugar cane fiber (bagasse), cornstarch, paper (preferably recycled fiber). Products should have a PLA lining. (AVOID styrofoam products and individual foil or plastic condiment packets).
Sandwich and Food Wrappers - Tissue/wax paper wraps	BPI certified compostable products, 100% fiber paper (preferably recycled fiber). (Recommendation is to avoid aluminum foil wraps, as the wraps can only be recycled if absent of food products). Wax coated wraps are not recyclable or compostable within the City of Detroit.
Utensils Regular plastic utensils should not be used unless they explicitly state they are made from #1 or #5 plastic.	BPI certified compostable utensils, #1 plastic (PET) or #1 rPET (plastic made from recycled content), or #5 polypropylene. Bamboo, sugar cane fiber and plant-based material. (AVOID plastic utensils)
Straws Regular plastic straws are not recyclable.	BPI certified compostable straws, sugar cane fiber (bagasse), cornstarch, paper (preferably recycled fiber) and aluminum products.
Items to Avoid	
Individual condiment packets (ketchup, mustard, relish, mayonnaise, soy sauce, hot sauce, etc.)	
Individually wrapped plastic utensil kits, unless the utensils are certified compostable by BPI	
Non-recyclable packaging such as polystyrene (Styrofoam) or multiple combined material types	
Non-compostable food serveware Plastic cups, plastic plates, plastic utensils, plastic hot cup lids, polystyrene (Styrofoam)	

Reduce & Reuse Recommendations

Incorporating reusable items into your event will decrease the amount of landfill material you produce while engaging your attendees by using more environmentally friendly products. The following recommendations come from existing event producers working within the City of Detroit.

Item	Information
<i>Reusable Water Bottles</i>	Can be purchased from many retailers and merchandise companies.
<i>Refillable Water Stations</i>	Can be rented from reputable service providers or purchased.
<i>Aluminum Straws</i>	Can be purchased from many retailers. Aluminum straws can be reused or recycled.
<i>Tote Bags</i>	Sustainable sourced cotton, canvas or reusable shopping bags made from recycled content such as water bottles.
<i>Reusable Cups</i>	Consider purchasing reusable aluminum cups for attendees.
<i>Mobile Event App or Mobile Friendly Website</i>	Digitizing your information on a mobile platform will decrease the amount of signage and paper used on-site while increasing engagement with your attendees.
<i>Promotional Giveaways</i>	Provide promotional giveaways that are useful tools for your attendees and will not end up in the landfill immediately. Look for items that are more useful than useless, such as a branded bottle opener key chain.



Photo credit: Amber Ainsworth/WDIV

“As we continue to welcome large events back to the City of Detroit, we remember they provide a unique opportunity to promote recycling and waste reduction. The City of Detroit is committed to protecting the environment and make sure our neighborhoods are clean and healthy. This guide offers practical ways special events, both large and small, can maximize their positive community impact by minimizing waste and conserving natural resources.”

Mike Duggan, Mayor of the City of Detroit

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