

guide to creating a **zero waste event**



Events can generate a lot of waste, which can be both costly and have negative impact on our environment. A zero waste event can decrease disposal costs as well as lessen your event's impact on the environment.

what is a zero waste event?

A Zero Waste Event is any event that works towards minimizing waste generation and maximizing reusing and recycling to achieve the greatest possible waste diversion.

what makes a successful event?

Successful events are usually the result of careful planning and research completed months before the occasion and a successful Zero Waste Event is no different. Thorough preparation can successfully reduce waste before it is made, and ensure any waste that is produced is reused or recycled.

what's in this guide?

This guide is arranged to make incorporating Zero Waste principles into your event easy and straightforward. In the following pages you will find useful information to help you set waste reduction goals, gather support, design a waste collection system for your event, communicate essential information and evaluate your success.

happy planning

We hope you find this guide useful in planning your event. We look forward to learning about your successes, maybe what didn't work so well, what steps reduced the most waste, etc. Your feedback is important and we look forward to hearing from you. Until then, happy planning – and have a wonderful event!

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Did you know?

The benefits of a zero waste event include:

- Meeting community expectations
- Making events marketable to sponsors
- Instilling positive change in vendors and attendees
- Reducing greenhouse gases
- Increasing environmental awareness
- Diverting recyclables and compostables from the landfill
- Reducing disposal costs

Source: Special Event Best Practices Guide, StopWaste.Org



brought to you by:



identify potential waste

the first step to a successful Zero Waste Event is to know what waste you're dealing with. It's hard to plan for zero waste if you have no idea what you need to reduce!

Start with making a list of the types of materials that could be generated at your event. Try using the worksheet provided at the end of this guide. Also consider what materials may be brought in from off site. Knowing these things can help you adequately plan for disposal options and alternatives.

Consider the following sources of waste. Are they possible at your event?

food vendors

At traditional events with food vendors, up to 40% of the waste produced is compostable food and food soiled paper. Vendors are also a large source of single-use packaging. Remember to account for waste produced behind the scenes along with waste seen by event goers.

other vendors

Often vendors distribute brochures or business cards to event goers. Is it possible that this material might end up as waste?

vending machines

Vending machines can be a source of single-use packaging as well as refundable beverage containers. Are there any on or near your event site?

local businesses

Are there other businesses in the area that might inadvertently add to the waste on site?

event participants

Often event participants bring waste to your event. This can be anything from the single-use packaging or food waste from a picnic lunch to empty sunscreen bottles and discarded containers.

event activities

What activities are occurring that may produce waste? Are event participants required to buy tickets for rides or are prizes given out to winners? Are event schedules or meal menus being distributed?

Now that you know what you are dealing with, you can make an effective plan to reduce what you can and recycle and reuse the rest.



plan to reduce

after identifying potential event waste,

take some time to go through your list and brainstorm ways to avoid producing these materials before they are made. If you have minimal time, focus on reducing items that are not easily recyclable, such as candy wrappers, plastics #3, 6 and 7 and styrofoam.

Here are some tips to help you reduce:

printing

Instead of handing out hundreds of programs, save money and decrease your garbage by posting central, easy-to-read display boards or signs. If you do need programs, consider printing them on easily recyclable paper, using both sides and providing well-marked drop-off bins for them.

prizes

If you are awarding prizes, avoid items that are cheap, gimmicky, and likely to end up in the garbage. Instead, consider gift certificates, passes, local theatre/event tickets, native plants, an intro package to an organics delivery company, etc.

feeding the masses

Try working with food vendors to minimize waste using the following ideas:

- Choose reusable products over disposable ones
- Rent cups instead of using Styrofoam or paper cups
- Ensure drink containers are recyclable
- Offer products with minimal packaging such as fruit, cookies and other treats that can be bought in bulk without a wrapper
- Offer condiments in bulk instead of individual servings
- Don't hand out more paper napkins than might be needed
- Donate leftover food to a local charity
- Require vendors to sign a Zero Waste Agreement

By planning to reduce in the first place, you'll save time and effort trying to responsibly dispose of collected materials after your event.

things to consider:

Can disposable options be replaced with reusable?

Are you able to replace hundreds of leaflets with a central information display?

Can a poster suggesting waste-free options be affixed to vending machines?

Perhaps you can work with local businesses to reduce waste.

The options are endless!



recycle what's left

after reducing waste as much as possible,

the next step in a successful zero waste event is collecting and properly disposing of what's left. Materials are most easily recycled if they are sorted correctly. The Zero Waste Station is one option for small (fewer than 500 people) North Shore events. Larger events may need to supplement the Zero Waste Station with bins of their own or hire a company to provide bins. The type of collection system you need will depend on the types and quantities of materials you are collecting.



zero waste station

The Zero Waste Station consists of up to 10 portable collection frames that are individually customized to

collect one of five different materials including: Beverage Containers, Blue Box Materials, Mixed Paper, Organics and Garbage. Each frame lid is coded to the standardized colours recognized by Metro Vancouver. Further information can be found at www.metrovancouverrecycles.org

location

It's important to ensure that your Zero Waste Stations are in high traffic areas, near where the majority of the waste is being created. Experience has shown that recycling must be convenient if it is going to work. It's key to have recycling options near food vendors, along main walkways, and near the entrance and exits of the event site.

Recycling bins are most successful when positioned next to any onsite garbage bins. 'Twinned bins' create a clear message that recycling is the first option. You may even consider removing some of the onsite garbage cans or converting them to recycling containers.

signage

Standardized signage is provided with the Zero Waste Station. If you plan to supplement the Zero Waste Station with additional containers, keep signage consistent by contacting events@nvrc.ca

banners and flags

Four vertical flags and two horizontal banners are available to borrow along with North Shore Recycling Program's Zero Waste Station. Set up a banner or flag alongside each station to make your Zero Waste Stations more visible.

research available location to correctly dispose of collected materials

Don't collect materials that have no end market. Research what your local recycling depots accept. See "Cleanup" and "Resources" for tips on disposing of recyclables.



creating a success

set a goal

Identify a goal for your event. This can be something as simple as “No refundable beverage containers will go to landfill at our event” or as technical as “We will achieve a 70% diversion rate for our event”. This goal will give you something to work towards. If your event is annual, try gradually increasing your goal each year. Don’t be afraid to start small!

gather support

Involve Stakeholders in planning and executing your zero waste event. Stakeholders are organizations, businesses or individuals that have an interest in your event and may be able to offer support.

assign a zero waste manager

Appoint a Zero Waste Manager for your event. This person will be in charge of planning and implementing your waste reduction strategy. Assigning someone to this task will ensure it is not overlooked during your event.

Larger events can benefit from a Zero Waste Committee that includes representatives from all stakeholder groups.

Smaller events still take planning. Block parties, weddings, business association meetings and other small gatherings can all benefit from someone assigned to oversee waste reduction.

make the most of the media

Remember to send a detailed press release to local media well in advance of the event, so you don’t have to rely so much on posters and brochures.

Be sure to advertise the occasion as a Zero Waste Event. Encourage the public to bring their own reusable mugs, water bottles, plates and utensils as well as make good use of the Zero Waste Stations.

If announcements are made during your event, include reminders to use the Zero Waste Stations for recycling and remind event-goers of their location.



utilize monitors

Monitors are helpers assigned to stand by the Zero Waste Station and assist event participants in choosing the right recycling option for their waste. Monitors can also help empty full bins and keep the area clean. Be sure monitors are familiar with the system and are aware of their responsibilities.

Utilizing Zero Waste Station Monitors has proven to add educational value and decrease contamination in the various recycling waste streams. It may be appropriate to provide rewards or incentives for participation such as free entry to events or facilities or free refreshments. You may want to involve your local Guide or Scout troop as monitors or make contact with your local high school about providing volunteer hours.

Be sure to provide gloves, visible “volunteer” tags or t-shirts and litter grabbers for volunteers. Consider providing the document “Monitor Guidelines” (pg. 10) to volunteers.

don't take in what you can't take out

It is imperative that any material collected for recycling is properly recycled to maintain a good reputation for your event. As previously mentioned, please don't collect materials that you don't have a plan for.

storage of materials

Depending on your event attendance, collection bins may have to be emptied throughout the day. Designate a safe spot to store collected materials until they can be disposed of correctly. If you are unable to dispose of collected materials immediately after the event, make sure this location is available for the required time frame. It is best to dispose of collected materials as soon as possible after the event to prevent issues such as smells or pests.

reuseables

Collect materials such as nametag holders, reusable cups and utensils for reuse.

disposal

Refundable Containers



Beverage containers such as bottles, cans & tetra packs have a deposit on them. Take these containers back to your local bottle depot to raise money for further waste reduction efforts or donate them to a local group. See "Further Resources" for a list of businesses that offer a pickup service for refundable containers.

Mixed Containers:



Includes metal cans, glass jars and rigid plastics #1, 2, 4 and 5. Does not include plastics #3, 6, 7, plastics with no number or plastic bags. Take these containers to the North Shore Recycling Drop-off Depot.

Mixed Paper:



Includes office paper, cardboard and newspaper. Does not include paper cups. Take this paper to the North Shore Recycling Drop-off Depot.

Compostables:



Acceptable material depends on its final destination. Can include food; food-soiled paper such as napkins, paper plates, paper coffee cups, paper take out containers; small

woody items such as popsicle sticks & tooth picks; wax paper; and corn & glucose-based flat ware (forks, spoons etc.). Take home to compost in your backyard or contract an organics hauler to take to a composting facility.

Garbage Only:



Includes any material that doesn't fit into the above categories such as candy wrappers, plastic straws, plastic bags, paper cups, etc. This material can be taken to the North Shore Transfer Station or, if only a small amount, included as part of your household garbage collection. For a truly "zero waste" event, consider re-purposing garbage containers to collect another recyclable or reusable material.

call the professionals

One option, if budget allows, is to contract a waste hauler to pickup and correctly dispose of materials from your event. In the case of organics, if you want your material to go to a commercial composting facility, this may be your only option.

evaluate & celebrate

evaluation

It's important to take the time after your event to evaluate progress towards your goal. If your goal was a diversion rate, use the worksheet on pg. 9 to calculate it.

If you met your goal - congratulations! Consider committing to make even less garbage next year.

If you didn't meet your goal - be sure to try again next year.

Be sure to ask everyone involved for feedback and suggestions. Include a summary of your zero waste efforts in your final report along with any tips for your next event.

celebrate your success!

Let your event team as well as the public know how you did. Be sure to acknowledge stakeholders, volunteers and event organizers. Congratulate them on their success and encourage them to commit to zero waste events in the future.



Recognize those that helped make your event a success

- Send e-certificates of appreciation to vendors that successfully participate in recycling and waste prevention programs
- Consider offering registration discounts to top performing vendors at subsequent events, or other rewards for their efforts
- When possible, express appreciation to participants in writing (using email saves paper)
- Profile an example or case study in local papers before or after the event.

Source: Special Event Best Practices Guide, StopWaste.Org

checklist

before event

- ☐ Identify potential waste
- ☐ Discuss options for waste reduction
- ☐ Figure out what's left and decide what you want to recycle
- ☐ Research disposal options
- ☐ Set a goal
- ☐ Share your goal with stakeholders
- ☐ Assign a Zero Waste Manager
- ☐ Determine location and amount of collection bins needed
- ☐ Contact events@nvrc.ca to book a Zero Waste Station
- ☐ Contact waste hauler if you are planning to contract services
- ☐ Contact Rental Company about reusable food service options
- ☐ Put the call out for volunteers for before, during and after the event
- ☐ Include Zero Waste Event information in pre-event media releases
- ☐ Create vendor agreement
- ☐ Train volunteers
- ☐ Determine location to store full bags of materials during the event

during event

- ☐ Distribute collection bins
- ☐ Ensure volunteers have required information
- ☐ Announce location and purpose of Zero Waste Stations throughout your event
- ☐ Empty bins as needed and store in pre-arranged location

after event

- ☐ Dispose of Materials correctly
- ☐ Donate leftover food to charity or distribute amongst event staff and volunteers
- ☐ Clean and return Zero Waste Station
- ☐ Fill out Zero Waste Station feedback form
- ☐ Did you reach your goal?
- ☐ Celebrate your success!
- ☐ Send thank yous to Vendors who successfully contributed to your Zero Waste Event
- ☐ Commit to a Zero Waste Event for your next event

sample worksheet

Record "Weights" (lbs, Kg, etc.) or "Bags" (1/4 bag, 3 bags, etc)

Event Totals

Refundable Containers	+	Mixed Containers	+	Mixed Paper	+	Compostable Material	+	Other	=	R	Total Recycled

Total Recycled

R

+

Total Garbage

=

Total Generation

G

Event Diversion Rate

=

Total Recycled

R

Total Generation

G

=

%

What went well?

What can be improved for next event?

Other notes:

monitor guidelines

your role as a zero waste monitor is to:

1. **Provide information** to event participants about Zero Waste
2. **Ensure maximum waste diversion** by making sure that all recyclable materials are separated properly and “diverted” from the waste stream

The goal is to be pro-active without being too “in your face” or too timid. Below are some examples of the interactions you may have with the public. You’ll have plenty of examples and your own style for engaging the public by the day’s end!

A. Passerby – tosses material without paying attention. It’s ok to catch their attention and politely point out the proper bin for disposal. You could chime in with something like, “Pardon me, did you know that your ____ can actually be recycled in ____ cart?” If the comment is ignored, it’s fine to just move the material yourselves and move on.

B. Inquirer – enthusiastic person who appreciates ZW setup and wants more info about where to put their material or the ZW effort in general. Your job is to be engaging and answer their questions!

C. Do Gooder – wants to recycle it all, whether our carts accept their material or not. Styrofoam or other plastics is a good example of that. A possible response could be, “Actually, ____ is not recycled in mixed containers. North Shore Recycling Program only takes plastics #1, 2, 4 and 5 as they are more easily recycled and alternatives are readily available for many of these other plastics. This goes in the garbage.” It’s best to follow the “design out of the system” motto for many of these materials by doing things like using containers with fitting lids instead of plastic wrap, taking a reusable bag to the store, and seeking products that minimize packaging and/or use easily recyclable materials.

Remember that it’s ok to not know all the answers. Do your best to pass on information to the best of your knowledge, confer with fellow Zero Waste Monitors to confirm answers as needed, and refer visitors to metrovancover.org for more information.



resources

information

Recycling Council of British Columbia

Call 604-RECYCLE (732-9253) for disposal suggestions or visit rcbc.bc.ca

NVRC Community Events For further information on borrowing the Zero Waste Station, email events@nvrc.ca

StopWaste.org

Check out stopwaste.org/docs/specialevents-swp.pdf for Stop Waste's Special Event Best Practices Guide.

Metro Vancouver Recycles

resource for recycling common household items.
metrovancoverrecycles.org/

rentals

Local sources for reusable food service options:

lonsdaleevents.com

pedersons.com

abpartytime.com

salmonsrentals.com

contractors

One Planet Catering Provide Zero Waste catering services.
oneplanetvancouver.com

ABD Solutions Ltd.

Offer a refundable beverage container pickup service.
abdsolutions.ca

Green Chair Recycling Provide Zero Waste recycling and disposal services greenchairrecycling.com

Smithrite Disposal

Offer temporary organics collection bins which will be picked up and taken to a commercial composting facility.
smithrite.com

Urban Impact Recycling

Education about green events and event recycling services
urbanimpact.com

disposal Solutions

North Shore Recycling Program Drop-off Depot

Located at 29 Riverside Drive in North Vancouver, the North Shore Recycling Drop-off Depot accepts paper, cardboard and mixed containers for recycling. Visit northshorerecycling.ca for more information.

Encorp

Some bottle depots provide a pickup service or provide collection bags. Visit encorp.ca for more information.

Curbside Collection

Small quantities of items collected by the curbside program can be put in your yellow bag or blue box. Visit your municipal website for information for your area.

Backyard Composting

Backyard composting is a solution for disposing of some organic material. Visit howto.northshorerecycling.ca for short instructional videos on backyard composting or purchase a compost bin from the North Shore Recycling Drop-off Depot located at 29 Riverside Drive, North Vancouver.

