

# Sustainable Event Guidelines

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# Why Host a Sustainable Event?

There is nothing better than a community coming together to enjoy activities, music, and food with family and friends. But are we being responsible about it? Incorporating sustainability into events and festivals is an important component in making them successful and enjoyable. It is our duty to protect and preserve the outdoors as we simultaneously utilize the resources that it provides. Event sustainability is also an effective risk management and business strategy, and increasingly expected by event attendees and required by municipalities.

Events play a large role in community involvement and increasing the quality of life for residents as well as visitors. Unfortunately, these events can generate large amounts of waste that will typically end up in a landfill. Landfills are the third largest source of human-related methane emissions, which is a harmful greenhouse gas emitted into the atmosphere with extremely detrimental effects to our health and the environment ([EPA](#)). A majority of this waste can be recycled or composted, rather than disposed of in a landfill; all it takes is some planning ahead! Hosting sustainable events is necessary for protecting our environment and preserving it for generations. And, attendees are more likely to be engaged and give good reviews of events with a sustainable initiative!

There are many ways to integrate sustainability into your event, such as responsible purchasing of products, zero waste efforts, and educating vendors and visitors on the importance of sustainability, and how they can incorporate it into their daily lives. This handbook can be used as a guide on how to adopt sustainable practices for any and all events, including information regarding reusable and compostable products, Zero Waste stations, and how to responsibly choose which gifts and giveaways to purchase for your guests.

# What to Consider

## Reusable Stations

Reducing our waste should be the first priority in the waste management process. The best way to reduce waste at your event is to have reusable stations. This model utilizes products that can be reused many times, rather than one that is disposed of after a short period of use.

### How does it work?

A reusable station is something like a table or tent that has been set up in a central area to distribute reusable plates, bowls, cups, and utensils for guests to use. Adopting these products is extremely important because no waste will go to the landfill. When guests are finished, they can drop off the dishes into bins that are distributed throughout the event grounds, which will be picked up by event workers and taken to be cleaned and used again.

Dishwashing stations can be accessed through partnerships with institutions located nearby that are willing to allow the use of their facility, or in a dishwashing truck, like the one used at Plant Bluegrass Festival in Lyons, Colorado (see below).



*Example of a reusable station.*

Having a reusable station is an investment. But, in the long run, you will save money because you will not have to purchase disposable products for each event. You'll also be able to immensely reduce your environmental impact!

### **Suggestions for Reusable Stations:**

- O2GO
- Preserve 2 Go
- Eco-Takeouts
- BambooWare

### **Zero Waste Stations**

For some events, reusable serveware may not be feasible. In these situations, zero waste stations should be used to assist the public with distinguishing between items that can be composted, recycled, or sent to the landfill. There are various models and set-ups for zero waste stations. Zero Hero tents are a great portable and easy-to-use station. Whatever set-up you choose, be sure that recycling and compost are as accessible as the landfill. All the receptacles should be next to each other, as people will tend to only utilize the landfill bins if they can.



*Example of a Zero Hero station.*

Compostable products are highly recommended for zero waste events because they do not contribute to landfill waste and are less susceptible to changes and differences in recycling rules. Instead, these products are put directly back into the production cycle when composted. They are turned into soil for local farmers to grow food, contributing to a more sustainable, circular economy.

### **Suggestions for Compostable Products:**

- BPI Certified Products
- Hot Beverage Cups
- Cold Beverage Cups
- Utensils
- Straws
- Plates
- Bowls
- To-Go Containers
- Food Trays
- Cup Sleeves
- Napkins



*Compostable Food Tray.*



*Compostable Plate.*



*Compostable Bowl.*

### **How many stations to consider:**

The amount of stations can be dictated by the expected attendance and number of vendors at your event. After you have an attendance estimation, you can predict how much waste will be produced, and plan accordingly. It is important that stations are spread out and accessible to everyone. You also want to ensure that there are enough dumpsters provided by waste haulers to collect all of the waste at the end of the event. This includes dumpsters for recycling, compost, and landfill.

# Staff & Vendor Responsibilities

## Staff Responsibilities

Due to the variety of recycling rules across the country, event goers may have varying knowledge about what goes in each bin. So, it is crucial to have trained staff or volunteers at each zero waste station to monitor the waste. Staff should be responsible for ensuring that all the waste is in the correct bin, therefore diverting as much as possible from the landfill. Staff can also act as educators for event goers, helping them to understand the proper ways to divert waste!



*Trained staff and volunteers play a huge role in event waste diversion.*

## Vendor Responsibilities

When it comes to zero waste initiatives, it is important to engage vendors so that they can help spread the word to event goers. This helps to make the waste diversion process go much smoother. For example, if a vendor is using compostable/recyclable products, they can display a small sign at the front of their station letting the public know so the serviceware can be properly sorted at a waste station.

# Food & Beverage

When planning your event, it is helpful to have visitors register or RSVP so that you can plan for food distribution. Knowing how much food to bring will allow you to minimize food waste and save money!

Water refill stations are highly encouraged for events, too. This will allow you to cut back on the use of disposable plastic water bottles. When advertising your event, you should tell your guests to bring their own bottles for unlimited refills.

## Suggestions for Water Refill Stations:

- Event Water Solutions
- Quench Buggy
- USPW Water Bar
- WaterMonster



*Examples of refillable water stations.*

# Conscious Consumerism

It is a very common practice to engage event goers through giveaways and freebies. But, it is necessary to be thoughtful and responsible when it comes to purchasing these items. Getting creative and giving away sustainable items engages and intrigues the public!

All vendors should be expected to minimize waste by being conscious consumers and consider the end product of what is being purchased. If it is not reusable, compostable, or recyclable, do not buy it!

Your purchases should aim to keep money local and go towards services or items manufactured or grown from sustainable practices. Giveaways should be general and reusable in the case of surpluses. Do not put specific dates or years on items, that way extras can be given away at future events and still be relevant.

## Suggestions for Sustainable Gifts and Giveaways:

- Reusable bottles with your logo on them
- Reusable shopping bags
- Reusable Utensil Set
- Upcycled Notebooks



*Examples of sustainable giveaway items.*

# Want More Info?

Incorporating sustainability into your event should be simple and rewarding. You can do this just by taking a little extra time to plan ahead. It is important to remember that even the smallest of efforts can make a difference, like the providing the zero waste stations and giving away sustainable gifts at your event! Your efforts will leave a positive impact on guests, both from an event and environmental standpoint. With the help of trained staff and volunteers, your event will be successful and enjoyable for all!

The team at Walking Mountains Science Center is happy to help you with your event's sustainability initiatives at any time and answer any more questions regarding event sustainability you may have.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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