

Guidelines for a Sustainable Event

For Event Organizers

The community comes together to enjoy events, but in the process a tremendous amount of waste is generated, much of it recyclable. The single most effective tool in reducing waste at special events is PLANNING AHEAD.

This guide was prepared to help special event organizers plan ahead so that waste can be minimized and recycling and diversion can be maximized. Tools included in this guide can be used before, during AND after events.

Key steps:

- 1. Appoint recycling/waste management coordinator**
- 2. Meet with hauler**
- 3. Evaluate waste stream**
- 4. Assess local markets/meet with vendors**
- 5. Select equipment**
- 6. Education & outreach**
- 7. Post-event & follow-up**
- 8. Other considerations**

Step 1: Appoint recycling/waste management coordinator (x months before event)

Develop a program implementation timeline
Organize recycling task force/develop event "green team"
Recruit volunteers
Partner with non-profits and local businesses

Things to consider in your planning:

- Large amounts of waste generated in short period of time
- Variation in type of waste
- Waste tends to be afterthought
- Diverse attendees
- Large amounts of single use items
- High level of food discards
- Contamination prevention
- Multiple vendors/contractors- what items will they be using?
- Part-time staff
- Need for training
- Need for education: provide education and outreach early to get early buy-in
- Resistance to change
- Access to grants, volunteers and other partners

Step 2: Meet with hauler/park staff (or get standard practices guidelines from park staff and John Curatto) (x months before event)

Questions:

What materials can/can't be recycled -potential list below

Items to recycle:

- Cardboard
- Plastic bottles
- Aluminum cans

- Glass bottles
- Paper (all grade)
- Pallets
- Organics

Items that can't be recycled (minimize the use of):

- Plastic cups
- Cups with plastic lining
- Plastic food containers
- Single serve condiments
- Food wrappers

Items that may not be used:

- Styrofoam

How many bins will event need?

Where will they be delivered?

Who will place them?

Who will empty them?

Where will dumpsters be located?

How often will dumpsters be emptied? Time?

Acceptable contamination level?

Costs?

Request reporting of weight of items sent to landfill and weight of items diverted

Step 3: Evaluate waste stream

Remember: reduce then reuse then recycle

Begin with waste minimization (reduce):

- Purchase durable signs that can be used again
- Encourage souvenir cups
- Reduced refill price for reusable cups
- Replace single serve condiments with tubs
- Encourage finger foods
- Use reusable utensils/plates
- Use cloth napkins or linens when possible

Reuse:

Consider donation opportunities

- Food organizations
- Construction and demolition materials
- Left over items
- Donate reusable items from the waste stream including, but not limited to, center pieces, plants, food (perishable and non-perishable), tableware, and construction and demolition materials.

Recycle:

- Event letters, brochures, posters, advertising materials
- **Bio-degradable** Paper products including napkins, plates, bags

Step 4: Assess local markets/ meet with vendors

Research what items can be purchased locally

Meet with vendors to educate and/or discuss materials and procedures for waste minimization

Step 5: Select equipment

Bin design considerations- for greater success it is suggested that you use bins that:

- Are different looking than a trash bin
- Have a small opening on the lid
- Are clearly labeled (provide examples)
- Are monitored and serviced
- Are secured
- Use clear graphics

Suggested bin locations:

- Next to trash container
- Concentrate bins in food service locations
- Place in well-traveled areas (bathrooms, main walkways, entrances/exits)
- Place bins behind high generating vendors
- Never place recycling bin alone

Step 6: Education & outreach

Keep message simple

Why recycle? Key reasons with statistics

Clearly identify bins

Give consistent message

Make recycling noticeable; posters, banners, stickers, cups

Advertise recycling prior to event

Announcements, reminders and prompts

Advertise recycling prior to event

Educate and remind concessionaires and vendors on recycling procedures

Create recycling instructions for vendors (get commitments?)

Include information in packets

Deliver recyclables to specific collection point

"This Vendor is Recycling" signs

Award vendors who participate

Require sale of beverage containers not cups

Require concessionaires and vendors to use same type of recyclable cup

Ban non-recyclables

Convenience

Create incentives

Training

Who:

Staff and key personnel

Vendors

Temporary or volunteer crews

What:

How and why recycling

Where:

Ahead of time with key staff

On-site training before event

Offer detailed training in multiple languages if needed

Step 7: Post-event and follow-up (x days after the event):

Recognition:

- Praise participants

- Include successes in press release
- Apply for awards
- Write thank you letters
- Press release

Step 8: Other considerations:

In addition to minimizing waste, consider these many other ways you can make your event more sustainable:

Why host sustainable events?

- Save time and money
- Help the environment
- Create positive changes beyond the boundaries of the event
- Improve the experience of your participants
- Position you as a leader

How to create a sustainable event

Leadership

- Articulate sustainable goals to partners early in the planning process
- Use written agreements to ensure full cooperation
- Be realistic when devising your strategy and setting your goals
- Document your success

Venue selection and location

- Reduce and reuse waste
- Purchase responsibly
- Recycle onsite
- Offer local or organic food choices
- Promote energy efficiency
- Conserve water
- Encourage public transportation
- Offer carbon offsets

Resource Recovery

- Establish partnerships with waste haulers early
- Use electronic or sustainable media for event promotion and registration
- Reuse, recycle, or compost food and beverage products
- Require vendors to follow your sustainable guidelines
- Calculate the number of clearly marked bins needed
- Use (and reuse) signage
- Volunteers can help sort recycling, compost, and landfill waste

Energy Conservation

- Select venues that practice conservation and energy efficiency
- Offer opportunities to calculate and offset carbon
- Use cleaner-burning fuels for any trucks, buses, or generators

Transportation

- Choose a venue that reduces transportation needs
- Publicize bus and train schedules for attendees

- Encourage carpooling, biking, and walking
- Use hybrid or alternative fuel-powered buses for tours or airport shuttles

Water Conservation

- Offer bulk water dispensers or use pitchers of water with glassware
- Avoid venues that use excessive plastic water bottles or request that they discontinue their use for your event

Communication and Education

- Send out an early invitation that clearly states your sustainable goals
- Be consistent in your messaging when talking about green initiatives
- Be creative and make it fun for the attendees to be more green
- Work closely with stakeholders, such as vendors and waste haulers

From the City of Denver's Sustainable Event Planning Guide

Conclusion

For a sustainable and successful event remember to:

- *Begin planning early*
- *Involve vendors*
- *Collect materials that make up significant amount of waste stream*
- *Review opportunities for disposed waste*
- *Solicit volunteers*
- *Reward participants and volunteers*
- *Encourage use of reusable items*
- *Properly place recycling bins*
- *Provide education and outreach to vendors, participants and the community*