

ZERO WASTE EVENT PLAN

Think: Prevention

General Guidelines

- **Be aware and creative in minimizing waste and environmental impact.**
- **Assign leadership roles among the event planning committee for working toward a zero waste event.**
- **A zero waste event involves much more than providing recycling and composting of the waste generated. It requires advance planning to prevent the unnecessary use of resources and discard of materials.**
- **Require all contractors, staff, and volunteers to adopt zero waste principles and strategies.**
- **Think in terms of preventing waste that could be generated BEFORE and DURING the event; and how it can be reused or recycled AFTER the event.**
- **Keep records of the quantity and type of waste generated each year to measure your organization's progress toward the Zero Waste Event goal.**

Event Advertising & Promotion

- The Zero Waste Goal for the event must be adopted in the event's promotion and communications as a key feature of the event.
- Take advantage of electronic media for publicizing the event.
- Create an event web site.
- Offer electronic registration or confirmation.
- Minimize use of flyers, posters, and handbills by strategically targeting their distribution. Post and be sure to recycle when removed from bulletin boards.

Preventing & Reducing Solid Waste at the Event

- Avoid mass distribution of paper hand-outs. Distribute copies of handouts or slides electronically via the web after the event.
- Use double-sided printing for all materials to be distributed.
- Limit glossy/clay-coated paper to applications where it significantly improves the publication.
- Assure that a sufficient number of well-labeled recycling receptacles are available throughout the venue (along with garbage containers to make sure recycling bins aren't contaminated).
- Provide and later re-collect reusable name badges.
- Design reusable or recyclable event signs or use overhead projections.
- Set up a computer at the entrance for people to sign in and share email if desired.

Food Service

- Plan food service needs carefully to avoid unnecessary waste by accurately forecasting the head-count. Use RSVPs or registration to assist in event planning.
- Use your rented facility's reusable cutlery, dishware and linens.

- Provide incentives for attendees to bring reusable items (e.g. mugs, utensils) rather than expect disposable serviceware.
- Seek caterers that can maximize the use of local, seasonal and organic food. Assure that there are vegetarian meal options.
- Offer fair trade, shade grown, organic coffee.
- Serve food buffet style rather than in “box lunch” form.
- Procure beverages and condiments in resource efficient bulk-packaging (2-Liter, Kegs, etc) rather than individual serving packets, single-use bottles, bags, boxes.
- Use first-cloth, 2nd-compostable, or 3rd-post-consumer-recycled-content napkins.
- Provide composting services. Donate excess food to shelters, food banks, or farms.

Green Product Sourcing

- Consider the environmental impact of any raffled prizes, give-a-ways, centerpieces, or decorations to be used at the event, and minimizing the packaging for such items. Innovative resource- or energy-efficient products might be demonstrated (e.g. LED holiday string-lights, http://www.energyfederation.org/estarlights/default.php/cPath/2050_2023).
- Distribute items to attendees that help them to reduce waste and restore future environmental quality (e.g. cloth bags, native plant seeds, potted plants, etc).
- Select products made from recycled or rapidly renewable materials. List the amount of recycled content and/or vegetable- or soy-based inks used.

Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy

- Select venues that are energy efficient. Seek venues with significant daylighting, modest and energy efficient electric lighting, automated building controls, and well insulated/large thermal mass building envelopes.
- Find LEED certified buildings to host your event.
- Purchase Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) or “green-tags” to offset the emissions of any electricity used for the event. There are numerous competitive certified-REC providers. For a list of providers, see http://www.greene.org/your_e_choices/trcs.html. The current average price of a REC is 2.5¢ per kWh.
- Select venues adjacent to public transportation and with sufficient bicycle racks. Provide incentives to conference participants for taking public transportation, carpooling, and bicycling.

Participant Education

- Explain the zero-waste objectives of the event to participants, in advance if possible.
- Provide frequent visual and verbal reminders to reduce waste and recycle.
- Encourage the return of items that can be reused at another event.
- Promote the event's environmental objectives so participants feel a part of it.