

ZERO WASTE EVENT GUIDE

Checklist and Steps for Coordinators



ZERO WASTE HUMBOLDT EVENT GUIDE

Advance planning is essential for a Zero Waste event. To generate Zero Waste at your event, you must plan months in advance to implement the following ZWH checklist:

BEFORE THE EVENT

___ Reserve a venue (indoor or outdoor) that is set up to reduce waste with reusable/washable food and beverage serviceware, and containers for recycling and food waste composting.

___ If your venue is not already supplied with reusable foodware, rent or borrow reusable plates, cups, utensils, and napkins for food and beverages.

___ Reach out to churches, community halls, or similar facilities to borrow or rent. ZWH has a limited supply of glasses and plates for low cost rent to community groups.

If your event is scheduled annually or more often, watch for bargains at secondhand stores for reusable/washable event food and beverage service supplies of your own.

___ Schedule the volunteers who will wash and return the plates, cups, utensils you rented.

___ If acquiring reusable/washable dinnerware is not possible, make sure that your single use dinnerware is BPI-certified compostable.

___ Use recycled and recyclable and/or upcycled advertising materials and decorations.

___ Especially use on-line publicity.

___ State that your event aims to reduce waste on all publicity and invite attendees to participate in this goal.

___ In pre-event publicity, encourage attendees to bring their own cup or other reusable items.

___ Make sure that your local government's contracted hauler [Recology] has clear instructions for recycling that you understand for your event—on-line or on the phone.

___ If your event has a caterer, food booths or other vendors, it's crucial that your contract with them specifies the requirements for their participation in waste reduction methods.

___ Ensure that water and other beverages are served from a large dispenser/urn or returnable bottles – not in single-serving containers.

___ Ensure that condiments, salt/pepper, and coffee cream is served from dispensers and tabletop containers – not individual packets.

___ Identify a food pantry for edible, leftover food, and ensure that the food vendor/caterer does not throw it away. Food for People is the central information source for where food can be delivered or can be picked up for people who need it.

___ Coordinate/schedule with an individual or compost facility to ensure that food waste is composted.

___ Reserve and label Recycling, Landfill, and Compost bins – at least 1 recycling container per 50 attendees.

___ Consider the traffic flow of attendees at your event to place these containers for their convenient use.

___ For larger events, train in advance and schedule volunteers or hire staff to help the public to properly sort their discarded materials by Recycling, Composting, Landfill. This quality control is essential.

___ If necessary, communicate/coordinate with building custodians in advance about this 3-way sort, so that they do not contaminate the recycling and composting.

___ Schedule volunteers who will monitor and measure how much and what types of waste have been generated by your event. To evaluate where improvements are needed and for bragging rights on post-event reports.

DURING THE EVENT

___ Monitor vendors, caterers, and volunteers to make sure they are following the Zero Waste methods you have prepared for your event.

___ Post "How-To" Instructions for the volunteer shift changes at each vendor's booth.

___ Post signs for attendees to learn about how you are reducing waste at your event.

___ Make an announcement at the event, to thank attendees and everyone involved for their participation in reducing waste.

___ Train and make sure that volunteers and staff are sorting the waste generated.

AFTER THE EVENT

___ The last hour of the event is most likely to be when most waste is generated because servers in the kitchen, vendors, building custodians, and volunteers are tired and eager to get home. Therefore, schedule a fresh shift of volunteers to come in at the end of the event to make sure that all discarded materials are kept properly sorted, that recycling ready for delivery or pick up, and that food is delivered to community groups for distribution and food waste is delivered or picked up for farm animals or composting.

___ Make sure that borrowed/rented dishware is washed and returned.

___ Send email thanks or publicly thank all who have made your event successful in reducing waste.

___ Quantify waste generated, maintain your records and checklist for the benefit of the next event.

HOW TO CHOOSE PACKAGING MATERIAL

Reusable materials should always be the first choice.

If this is not possible, then compostable is the second choice, followed by recyclable materials. Compostable materials cannot have a plastic(wax-like)lining. Many single-use materials say that they are compostable or recyclable on their package. This is usually geographically determined. Materials that are compostable in a large centralized composting facility in one region of the country, may not be compostable in Humboldt County. The closest large-scale composting facility is 165 miles away in Potter Valley. (Unless you arrange to deliver your foodwaste and compostable paper to them as part of a trip along that way, consider the carbon footprint of hauling that distance.

Paper or bamboo is preferable.

If you have selected recyclable food serviceware, BPA and plastic-free items are preferable. Remember that food-soiled paper not recyclable, but can be put in with the compost. Avoid all styrofoam, and single-use plastics.

OTHER TIPS

We are all learning and improving upon our Zero Waste methods for events.

Feel free to email contact@zerowastehumboldt.org or Recology for clarification.