

Working towards a Zero Waste Event – Tip Sheet

A. Event Communications

1. Develop a vision statement and share your diversion goals with staff, volunteers, vendors, attendees:
 - “[Event Name] is committed to reducing its environmental impact. This year, we’re aiming to divert [50% or more] of our event waste from the landfill.
 - “[Event Name] aims to be a leader in environmental sustainability within Calgary. This year we’re aiming for a zero waste event.”
2. Reduce print materials, print on recycled paper, and opt for electronic options to promote your event.
3. Tell event attendees about your waste reduction initiatives:
 - Make announcements throughout the day to promote your efforts and encourage attendees to visit the waste stations and learn about what goes where.
 - Have volunteers or entrance staff greet attendees and let them know about your event’s waste reduction initiatives.
 - Promote waste reduction initiatives on your event/ticketing web site or on tickets directly.
4. Use signage that is clear and customized to your event:
 - Ask your waste collection service provider if they include signage of acceptable materials on their containers.
 - Use pictures of items that will be generated at your event.
 - Highlight common challenge items that might cause confusion.
 - Consider using signage with multiple languages, if applicable to your event.
5. Calculate your diversion rate (or obtain this from your waste collection service provider after the event) and share your success via social media, newsletter, other post event communications.

B. Garbage, Recycling, and Composting Bins

1. Offer garbage, recycling, and compost bins at each waste station and colour code to provide a visual cue for what goes where.
2. Provide extra bags at each waste station and change bags out frequently to avoid heavy loads.
3. Remove or close off any garbage bins on site that are not part of the event’s official waste stations.
4. Carefully think through the location of your waste stations. Consider placing in these areas:
 - In high traffic zones.
 - Where waste is most likely to be produced (e.g., near food vending stations or eating areas).

- Near any closed off garbage bins – this helps to discourage their use.
- Where bins would normally be found at the event venue.

C. Waste Collection Services

1. Consider the specific types of waste items that your event will generate and find a waste collection service provider that can accommodate the collection of these items (e.g., certified compostable food ware, coffee cups, hazardous waste)
2. Check with your collection service provider about other services they can provide (e.g., signage, bins, bags, event consulting).

D. Volunteers

1. Use volunteer educators to divert waste at waste stations and assist event attendees in properly disposing of their waste. This can reduce contamination and increases diversion rates.
2. Visit The City of Calgary web site to download a free Volunteer Recruitment Template and Waste & Recycling Pocket Guide.

E. Vendors

1. Communicate with vendors in advance of the event to determine what waste materials they will generate and address any diversion needs for unique materials.
2. Inform vendors about your waste reduction initiatives and consider making certain terms mandatory. Outline these terms in the event contract. Stipulations for vendors could include:
 - Use of onsite recycling and compost bins for acceptable items – don't just use the garbage bins.
 - Certified compostable food ware only (no foam containers or packaging).
 - No single-use plastic bags for customers.
 - Straw-free.
 - Bulk condiments only (no single-use packets).
 - Provision of a compost & recycling bin at their stall.
3. Visit The City of Calgary web site to download a free Food Vendor Memo Template.
4. Consider incentives to improve vendor compliance such as:
 - Charging a refundable waste management deposit.
 - Implementing a program to recognize vendors that go above and beyond.
 - Offering compliant vendors a discounted fee at future events.
5. Provide water stations for event attendees to fill their reusable water bottles and eliminate the sale of single use plastic water bottles.

6. Consider reusable food ware options:
 - Food ware “rental system” – charge a small fee or deposit for the use of reusable food ware items such as plates, bowls, cups, cutlery etc.

F. Additional Services

1. Visit The City of Calgary web site to download a free Timeline Checklist to help plan your zero waste event.
2. Contact Event Services (403-476-4311) for additional information.
3. Contact a local organization that offers waste services for events (a wide range of services are available from bin rentals to complete event waste management).