

# Green Event Planning: Waste Reduction/Zero Waste

## Focus: Volunteer Coordination

The single most effective tool in reducing waste at an event is planning ahead.

### *Things the Recycling Coordinator will need to know: <sup>1</sup>*

- How much planning time do you have?
- How big is the event?
- How much waste will be generated?
- What type of waste will your event generate (food, packaging, beverages, etc.)?
- Who will take the waste away?
- Can you control waste at your event (vendor/exhibitor requirements, open to public, enclosed perimeter/fencing)?
- Do you have volunteers to recycle and watch the waste?

### **Step 1: Defining your goal.**

*What is the ultimate goal of your waste management plan?*

Are you simply trying to reduce the waste that will be sent to a landfill? Will you define your goal with numbers (weights, percentages, etc.)?

Before you start doing the legwork of planning the event it is important to set a goal that each person who will have a role in planning the event can agree upon.

### **Step 2: Contacting the venue.**

Many event spaces (i.e., convention centers, city or university facilities) will already have some sort of waste infrastructure in place and may even have personnel assigned to waste removal. Coordinating with the venue will help prevent any confusion on the day of the event. This should be done with ample time in advance of the event.

If you have a vision of what you'll want the waste collection to look like, ask what the procedures already exist and your venue contact person how you might want to alter those procedures if necessary.

*Will you need trash cans?*

Where will the waste be taken once bags are removed? Does the venue have on-site recycling? If not, where will you bring the recyclables? Is the recycling single-stream or will recyclables need to be separated by material? Does the venue have composting options?

### **Step 3: Food & Materials**

Creator: Jennifer Watkins, 2015

1: [http://www.knoxcounty.org/solid\\_waste/event\\_planning\\_help.php](http://www.knoxcounty.org/solid_waste/event_planning_help.php)

*Will food be served at this event? If so, who will be providing it?*

If the event will be catered: You'll want to find a caterer who will be willing to work with you toward zero waste goals. This means reducing the amount of food packaging, considering dishware, and how the food will be served.

If there will be multiple food vendors: it is best to let them know at the time of their registration the restrictions and/or limits you set to work toward your zero waste goal. You might even consider having vendors sign an agreement upon registration.

- GOOD:** Having some recyclable/compostable food and drink containers, napkins and utensils.
- BETTER:** All food and drink containers, napkins and utensils are either washable/reusable, recyclable or compostable.
- BEST:** All food and drink containers, napkins and utensils are washable and reusable.

#### Step 4: Organizing Waste Stations & Managing Volunteers

Generally, the best way to organize waste receptacles so that it is convenient for the participants and efficient for staff is by creating **waste stations**. Depending on the types of waste that will be generated, you may need 3 or more separate waste bins at each station (recycling, compost, landfill, buckets for silverware/dishware, etc.)

Creating signs for the receptacles with pictures can help guide people, but **the best way to ensure the least amount of contamination is by having each station supervised by a volunteer.**



Photo Credit: <http://www.stlouisearthday.org/>

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1: [http://www.knoxcounty.org/solid\\_waste/event\\_planning\\_help.php](http://www.knoxcounty.org/solid_waste/event_planning_help.php)

*How many volunteers will you need?*

To answer this question you first need to determine the number of waste stations you'll need (this is dependent on the size and scope of your event.) Then, you'll want to take into consideration the duration of the event. If the event will be longer than 4 hours, you might consider creating two or more working shifts.

*How will you train your volunteers?*

If there will only be 1 working shift, you can gather all of the volunteers together on the day of the event before it begins, explain the waste station, and give them a walk-through of their job. You can show them specific examples of items that will be used and answer any questions they might have.

If there are multiple shifts, you may want to train the first group of volunteers and have each volunteer teach the person that will eventually come to replace them. **Remember: clear communication of expectations is key to any successful volunteer coordination.**

*How will you empty the waste containers?*

Depending on the length of the event, containers may need to be emptied during the event. Can the bags be carried away? Will you need some form of transportation to haul them? Who will empty them? Usually, its best if someone involved in the planning process is present the day of the event to manage this responsibility or oversee it. **Remember to keep your goal in mind: don't forget to have a system in place to weigh the trash, recyclables, etc. if you need numbers.**

## Knoxville Specifics:

To borrow the Keep Knoxville Beautiful Recycling Trailer:

[info@keepknoxvillebeautiful.org](mailto:info@keepknoxvillebeautiful.org)

865-521-6957

For support in creating zero-waste events in Knox County contact:

Recycling Coordinator, Linnea Boogades

Email: [recycle@knoxcounty.org](mailto:recycle@knoxcounty.org)

To check-out single-stream recycling bins:

**The City of Knoxville**, 865-215-6700

**Keep Knoxville Beautiful**, 865-521-6957

*Note: to coordinate single-stream collection post-event, contact the City or County recycling coordinator.*

Recycling Center locations:

City of Knoxville recycling centers:

<http://knoxvilletn.gov/cms/one.aspx?portalId=109562&pageId=200229>

Knox County convenience centers:

[http://knoxcounty.org/solid\\_waste/centers.php](http://knoxcounty.org/solid_waste/centers.php)

For more information about hard-to-recycle items:

<https://www.terracycle.com/en-US/>

<http://www.trex.com/recycling/recycling-programs/> (plastic film)

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