

Guide to a Zero Waste Event

Why host a Zero Waste event?

Adopting Zero Waste (ZW) practices helps us minimize the amount of waste we contribute to the environment. Waste has negative impacts on the environment by contaminating land, water, and air. Composting, recycling, and reusing allow us to repurpose and conserve valuable resources. Zero Waste practices limit the amount of trash that ends up in landfills, incinerators, and bodies of water. Hosting a zero waste event is an excellent way to demonstrate to the community both the importance of and feasibility of adopting Zero Waste practices, thereby making zero waste a community endeavor. **Further, maximizing diversion from the landfill not only reduces your carbon footprint but can also save you money in the process.**

In this guide, you will find:

- A step by step guide to planning, navigating, and executing a zero waste event, from start to finish.
- Tips on how to replace common single-use items with zero waste alternatives.
- Zero waste resources both inside and outside of Northfield.

Before Your Event:

- **Prioritize and plan ahead.** Implementing a Zero Waste Management plan requires additional attention, planning, and enthusiasm.
 - Identify your zero waste goals with your team. Collaboration is essential for meeting these goals. Single-use plastics and unsustainable materials are everywhere, so it will take extra effort to circumnavigate these common practices.
 - Designate a team member to coordinate your waste management plan. If there is one capable, enthusiastic team member who can be responsible for implementing the plan, it is more likely that your Zero Waste goals will be met.
 - Advertise for your event using sustainable materials. If you cannot rely on exclusively digital advertising, opt for printing your physical advertisements on recycled paper and use plant-based ink.
 - Make your Zero Waste goals a key part of your event's advertising. All it takes is a single sentence to spread the word and notify the community.



Before Your Event:

Make a thorough plan with your food vendor(s).

- Ensure that your vendors understand your Zero Waste goals.
- Select a vendor who can provide reusable or compostable cutlery, containers, or other necessary materials.
- Consider discussing a buffet-style meal to reduce packaging waste from individually packaged food.
- **Discuss minimizing waste with your vendor.** For example:
 - Use bulk-condiment containers instead of single plastic ones.
 - Avoid drinking straws unless absolutely necessary.
 - Provide drinks in large coolers and use reusable cups instead of cans, plastic water, and soda bottles.



- **Discuss an appropriate order size to minimize excess food waste.** Estimate the number of people you expect to attend your event, how much each attendee will likely eat, and place your food order accordingly.
- Develop a plan with your vendor to **transport your excess food to the NCEC or another local food shelf.**

Before Your Event (Continued):

- Select a venue that can accommodate your ZW goals.
- If your venue does not already have an adequate one, preemptively hire a waste-removal contractor to assist with the job.
 - **Do not rely on putting your waste in a dumpster and calling it a day**, plan ahead to make sure that all waste will be disposed of in the proper pathway.
 - **Select a vendor who can provide a three-bin system** (Compost, Landfill, and Recycling) and dispose of each pathway accordingly.
 - Look at a map of the site beforehand and plan to place your waste bins in frequented and accessible areas.
 - If your waste contractor cannot provide proper containers, purchase or borrow them.



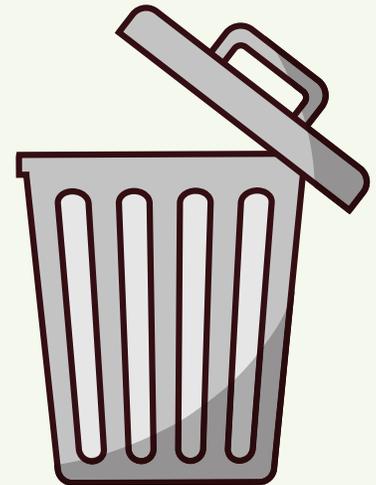
- **Involve all stakeholders.** Hosting a Zero Waste event requires a commitment from your team, the event's vendors, and the attendees.



- Anticipate the amount of waste your event will generate and minimize wherever possible.
 - **Ditch single or one-time use decorations for “evergreen” ones.**
 - Before purchasing decorations, ask your community or team if they would be willing to loan out decorations for your event. From there, create an inventory so that event planners know what they do need to buy, instead of what they can just borrow.
 - Purchase a banner that says “Happy Community Day” rather than “Happy Community Day 2024” so that it can be reused next year.
 - Think about how necessary it is that your event has plastic streamers, signs, or confetti? Are there possible alternatives that will not generate additional waste?
 - **Distributing party favors?** Think deeply about how likely it is that these items will end up in the landfill in a short period of time. Instead of cheap favors that will likely get thrown in the trash, consider ones which are sustainably sourced and reusable. Attendees are more likely to remember your event fondly if they use an item from your event everyday, rather than the item they throw out on their way home.

During Your Event:

- **Communicate your event's ZW goals with attendees, staff, and volunteers**
 - Use signage, announcements, and advertisements to promote your ZW goals.
 - Make verbal announcements to attendees about recycling and composting.
 - In hosting a large event, coordinate volunteers to stand by sorting stations in order to ensure that waste is properly disposed of.
- Train staff on ZW procedures.



- **Adopt a three-bin container system with proper signage.**
 - Strategically place the three-waste bins in accessible and highly frequented areas.
 - Make sure sorting signs are attached to each bin and placed at eye-level.
 - **Use color-coded, clear, and simple signage to intercept your attendees before they arrive at the bins, redirecting them to the correct waste method.**
 - Ideally, the landfill bin and recycling bins will be sparsely filled due to the implementation of ZW practices in the planning stages. However, in early implementations of ZW events, there are bound to be items that can only go to the landfill.

After Your Event:

- Donate excess food to the Northfield Community Action Center or another local food bank.
- Ensure that waste containers are picked up on time by the contractor or taken to the proper facilities.
- Evaluate the results of these procedures and share them with others. Learning and teaching are key towards adopting sustainable practices.



Northfield Community Action Center Contact:

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Northfield, MN 55057

Phone: 507.664.3550

Email: info@communityactioncenter.org

Additional Resources and Sorting Guide:

Additional Resources

Compostable Products

<https://greenpaperproducts.com>

Northfield Composting

<https://www.curbsidecompostmn.coop>

Food Planning Tips

<https://savethefood.com/community>

More Information on Composting

<https://www.compostingcouncil.org>

Recycling and Waste in Northfield

<https://www.northfieldmn.gov/1300/Recycling>

Sorting Guide



Compost:

Food waste, products labeled
compostable, paper products



Recycling:

Glass, bottles, cans, cardboard,
Hard Plastics (1, 2 & 5)



Trash/Landfill:

Plastic bags, other hard plastics,
condiment wrappers, styrofoam