

A Zero Waste Event in 10 Steps



Introduction

Every year, Northland has many events for various occasions. It's great to have a day to celebrate however a lot of waste can be generated if an event is not carefully planned.

Most New Zealanders care about the environment and will be pleased to support an event where waste minimisation is undertaken and promoted. As an organiser you can make a real difference. You can increase the volume of materials recycled or composted, reducing waste going to landfill, and make the event a waste minimisation success! Zero Waste events have many positive benefits including:

- Reducing its impact on the environment
- Making the event attractive to participants
- Reducing costs from waste disposal
- Providing a cleaner positive environment attracting sponsors and patrons.

Don't panic! It's not rocket science. Here are the 10 steps to running a zero waste event. The team at EcoSolutions can help.

1. Set Goals

This is a great way to set expectations and create guidelines for your event volunteers, attendees and vendors from the beginning. It also provides a source of motivation and makes it easier to measure success. Here are some things to consider when setting goals:

- Set goals that are attainable. Looking at your needs will help you set goals.
- Sometimes budgets are limited so be creative and utilize all available resources.
- Apply for waste minimisation funding well before the date of your event!

It is ok to start small, if you can't compost your serve ware i.e. plates and cups and cutlery this year (usually about half of an event's waste) then start the process by ordering compostable for next year and by making composting a priority. If you *do* have an enclosed compost bin, then compostable utensils and plates are easily composted if layered with nitrogen such as grass clippings and/or manure.

2. Evaluate needs

Assess how much and what type of materials will be thrown out at the event. This will identify opportunities to reduce waste and determine who and what is needed to manage that waste.

Here are some things to consider during your evaluation:

- ✓ Type of event (concert vs. small meeting)
- ✓ How many people
- ✓ Location (indoor vs. outdoor)
- ✓ Food; what you sell will determine which waste stream you generate i.e. food scraps can be collected for a pig farmer or be composted, cans and water/soda bottles can be recycled. Milkshakes in recyclable cups on the other hand, will be landfilled as they are food contaminated. Milkshakes or smoothies in P.L.A. cups (These are plastics made from corn starch) may be composted in a hot compost. Hangi tinfoil can only be recycled if it's cleaned.
- ✓ Type of serve ware used; reusable plates and cutlery versus compostable or recyclable items.
- ✓ Volunteer availability
- ✓ What items can be brought into the event

3. Create a waste minimisation plan

Appoint someone to organize a waste minimisation plan and take charge of all waste minimisation steps. Write up a waste minimisation plan or timeline. EcoSolutions can support you with this.

4. Communicate

Share goals and set expectations with vendors and attendees. Communicate with your stall holders and vendors about your zero waste goals and encourage them to use compostable and recyclable items. What types of waste are you willing to accept from your stall holders, if any?

Share your zero waste goals with your visitors in advance and put signs around the event sharing the message.

All these strategies will help your event toward its zero waste goal.

5. Purchases

Purchase things you will need to facilitate recycling e.g. extra bags (that are large enough for your bins!) If you have volunteers, it's a good idea to buy 'pick-up' tongs so they don't have to fish in the bins. Mitre 10, Bunnings or Empire Mart often stocks these. Non-permeable gloves and last, but not least, water and treats for volunteers; its hard out there!



6. Call a waste provider

Once you know which waste streams your event will generate you need to call your waste provider to arrange the bins you need. It is also important to check out how your waste provider wants the recycling to be collected; is there a bin for comingled recycling i.e. tins and plastics together or do these waste streams need to be collected separately? What about glass and cardboard? Will you have any at the event? Do you have anyone to empty bins during the event or do you need extra wheelie bins?

It is also important to check when the bins will be dropped off and collected and where you are going to store these bins in the meantime.

7. Determine lay-out

Placing event bins in the proper location will increase attendee participation in recycling and composting at your event. Here are some suggestions for the best event bin placement:

- Always group event bins into compost/ food scraps, recycling and landfill bins
- Make sure bins are accessible and conveniently located
- Bins should be close to food and eating areas
- Have clear signage for the bins
- Always place bins near crowded areas where queues form such as rides
- Bins should be located at entrance and exit points.

Suggested ratio of bins stations to attendees

# Attendees	<100	100-500	500-1000	1000-5000	5000-10,000
Recommended # of Stations	1-3	3-5	5-8	8-12	12-15

Ideally there should be a volunteer per bin. One system is to 'employ' volunteers to watch bins for a shift in exchange for a reward once the bins are checked for contamination.

8. Train recycle ambassadors

Recycling ambassadors are crucial to successful recycling at events as they teach people about what to recycle as well as monitor the correct use of the bins. They are also a clear signal of the event's dedication to recycling. It is important that the volunteers are motivated.

9. Provide clear signage

Clear signage improves efficiency of recycling systems.



10. On the day.....

- Setup event bins: food scraps compost (if this is not going to landfill), recycling and landfill.
 - Sort/Monitor Stations (change bags as needed).
 - Promote zero-waste efforts during the event. Make verbal announcements, educate and engage with attendees. For Waitangi Day, EcoSolutions created and displayed an interactive waste-sorting demonstration at the event. The demo was an engaging way to teach attendees about disposing of their waste properly.
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- Have volunteers circulate picking up litter; people copy behaviour so let them see positive action!
- Check for contamination during break down and clean- up of the event.
- Get your bins and compostables and food scraps to the right place to be recycled, composted or disposed of.
- Give yourself a High Five, you have helped the environment and shown our community how it should be done!

EcoSolutions environmental educators are available to offer guidance and signage to event planners wishing to incorporate zero waste into their events. Please contact us for assistance.

EcoSolutions is a business of the Social Enterprise CBEC (Community Business and Environment Centre)

working in our community for jobs and the environment

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