

TIPS FOR WASTE REDUCTION AT WORKPLACE EVENTS



When your workplace hosts an event, the waste needs may be different from your day-to-day operations. With some planning, you can reduce waste and ensure that materials from your event are recycled. Events are also a good opportunity to collect food scraps for composting if your business does not do so already. If your event is taking place off-site, use this document as a guide for the conversation with your contact at the off-site venue to clearly communicate your waste reduction goals.

Contact RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts at **888-254-5525** or email info@recyclingworksma.com for assistance.

Reduce Waste

Maximize the impact by reducing the amount of waste you create in the first place.

- Provide reusable serveware instead of disposable.
- Purchase refreshments and other packaged items with minimal packaging (avoid single-serving condiments).
- Serve water in pitchers or dispensers and encourage guests to bring a reusable water bottle.
- Use post-consumer recycled content paper, and print double-sided.
- Use reusable materials for name tags. Collect them after the event.
- Require frequent updated headcounts prior to the event, and on the day of the event, to ensure you have the appropriate, but not excessive, amount of food.



Refer to the [RecyclingWorks Source Reduction of Food Waste Guidance](http://recyclingworksma.com/source-reduction-guidance) page for more information on strategies for reducing food waste.
recyclingworksma.com/source-reduction-guidance

Reducing Contamination in Recycling and Composting

If you plan to use disposable plates and/or cups, consult with your hauler about what materials are accepted as recyclable or compostable.

Food-soiled items are never accepted with recycling, unless cleaned first.

The following plastic items are typically **not** accepted for recycling:

Utensils

Plates

Bowls

Straws

Stir Sticks

Plastic Cups*

**Check with your hauler! Exceptions may be made for certain clear plastic cups.*

Most compost sites accept paper napkins and paper towels along with food scraps but only certain compost sites accept compostable plates, bowls, and cups, and they frequently have restrictions on the type or quantity of these materials.

Check with your waste hauler before purchasing compostable serveware and never put these items in the recycling bin!

Planning for the Event

- ❑ **Anticipate potential waste materials** from your event.
 - Will food and/or beverages be served at your event? (bottles/cans, disposable, or reusable cups/plates/bowls/utensils/napkins)
 - Will attendees receive paper handouts or giveaways?
- ❑ **Evaluate your existing program.**
 - Do you currently collect recyclables or food scraps for composting?
 - Do you anticipate generating significantly more waste than during your regular operations?
- ❑ **Discuss waste needs with your hauler.**
 - If you do not directly handle the contract with your waste hauler, involve your property manager in initiating this conversation.
 - If your hauler doesn't already collect recyclables or food waste from your organization, ask if they offer these services or look into other local hauler options.
 - Does your hauler collect recycling as **dual-stream** or **single-stream**?
- ❑ **Coordinate with your vendor(s)** to establish expectations about recyclable or compostable materials.
- ❑ **Choose the type of waste receptacles** to use at your event.
- ❑ **Create signage** using both graphics and text to indicate what goes in each bin and what does not. Include the specific materials at your event on these signs.
- ❑ **Communicate with staff**, including custodial staff, about proper recycling procedures for the event.



At the Event

- ❑ **Set up waste stations.** Group trash, recycling, and compost bins together in high-traffic or food-driven areas to minimize contamination.
- ❑ **Line bins with color-coded bin liners.** Line trash bins with color coded bags to aid in proper separation. Black for trash, clear for recycling, and compostable/ green for food scraps.
Note: plastic bags can be used to transport recyclables, but must be emptied at the recycling bin or cart. The bag can be reused or discarded as trash.
- ❑ **Place signage** on all visible sides of receptacles, as well as the top, if space permits.



- ❑ **Hold a pre-event “huddle”** to train everyone working at the event about the waste diversion procedures.
- ❑ **Empty trash, recycling, and compost bins regularly** throughout the event to minimize overfilling.
- ❑ **Consider stationing volunteers at sorting stations** to help guests with any sorting questions.
- ❑ **Publicize recycling and composting** throughout the day with announcements.
- ❑ **Monitor** the recycling program during the event.

After the Event

- ❑ **Identify opportunities** for increased waste reduction, reuse, and recycling at future events.
- ❑ **Ask for feedback** from staff, event attendees, and your hauler to improve waste diversion at your next event.
- ❑ **Ask for data from your hauler** on waste diverted for recycling and composting. Share this info in newsletters and other post-event communications.
- ❑ If you implemented recycling and/or food waste collection for the first time at this event, consider **adding this to your regular business operations**.

What to Do With Leftover Food

Instead of throwing extra food in the trash or compost bin, develop a plan to ensure that it is eaten!

Offer leftovers to staff: save surplus food in an employee break room, or offer to-go containers to bring food home.

OR

Coordinate in advance with a food pantry or food rescue organization to donate surplus food.

Refer to the RecyclingWorks Food Donation Guidance page for more information on safe handling of surplus food and connecting with a food donation outlet.

recyclingworksma.com/donate



For additional assistance implementing a recycling or food waste diversion program at your business or institution, please contact RecyclingWorks at **888-254-5525** or email info@recyclingworksma.com.