

# FIVE STEPS TO PLANNING A ZERO WASTE EVENT



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## What is a zero waste event?

A zero waste event is a coordinated effort with the event host, vendors, and guests to significantly reduce (and possibly eliminate) the landfill waste produced at an event. This is accomplished through sustainably-minded procurement processes, education and training, and partnerships with recycling and compost service providers.

**1**

### Ensure vendors are using reusable and compostable materials

The best way to control the amount of landfill waste produced during an event is to control the materials that come into the event. Provide reusable materials such as stainless steel buffet pans and lids instead of aluminum and plastic film. If food samples will be provided, use [BPI-certified compostable products](#). The event host can source appropriate compostable materials and provide them to the vendors to avoid confusion. Know that biodegradable and "green" labeling does not necessarily equate to compostable.

**2**

### Communicate zero waste goals with guests

When advertising the event, let guests know that a zero waste plan is in place and that their participation is needed to make zero waste a reality. Clear signage with both words and pictures will help guests know what to do with items from the event.

**3**

### Make a plan to donate surplus food

At events, there's a good chance that not all food will be served. We strongly recommend that you follow the [Safe Food Donation Guidelines](#) developed in partnership with the Shelby County Health Department to ensure surplus food is handled and stored properly so that it can be safely donated. Connect with a nearby food distribution program prior to the event to coordinate food donation.

**4**

### Connect with recycling and compost service providers

Reach out to a local recycling service and compost service provider prior to the event to schedule pick up following the event. The fees for these services should be part of the event budget from the outset. In Memphis, we recommend [Get Green Recycleworks](#) and [Atlas Organics](#).

**5**

### Use zero waste stations to collect compostable and recyclable materials

Set up zero waste stations instead of trash receptacles throughout the event. A zero waste station provides multiple waste streams--compost, recycling, and landfill--for disposal. This allows the event host to capture compostable and recyclable materials to be hauled by appropriate service providers. Staff these stations with knowledgeable volunteers who can provide education to the guests and reduce contamination.