



Road to Zero Waste Green Event Resource Guide

This guide is a resource for both organizations and individuals planning events in Teton County - large or small. The goal of this guide is for you, as an event organizer, to reduce environmental impact, increase cost-effectiveness, and create greater connectedness across the local community with regards to solid waste reduction.

What is Zero Waste and Why Is It So Important?

Zero Waste involves an understanding of how materials flow through our society. With industrialization and convenience-based products, this flow has become increasingly linear – more and more raw materials are extracted from the earth, then manufactured, consumed and all too quickly, disposed of in landfills. This pattern leaves us with a one-way fast-track of valuable resources straight into the ground. Zero Waste is a movement towards a more circular flow of materials – a cycle in which the value and useable life of raw materials are extended through reduction, reuse, recycling and composting. Materials are absorbed either into nature as valuable nutrients or into the market economy as valuable commodities. Disposal into landfills is a last resort.

Teton County generates an average of 70 million pounds of waste per year. Dealing with all this waste comes at considerable cost – both fiscally and environmentally. Currently 32% of Teton County’s waste stream is diverted from the landfill through waste reduction, reuse, recycling, composting and other waste diversion programs. The rest is trucked 100 miles to be buried in a landfill outside of Idaho Falls. The 2022 cost to landfill garbage from Teton County is \$129 per ton; alternatively, the net cost of recycling materials in Teton County averages \$15 per ton. Reducing the amount of trash generated is the most effective cost-saving strategy.

The Teton County Road to Zero Waste Plan identifies the initial goal of 60% waste diversion from landfill or incineration by the year 2030. As technologies develop and knowledge expands, the ability to achieve 100% diversion, or true zero, will become more possible.

Why Zero Waste Events?

Zero Waste Events are a critical element of the overall approach toward zero waste. In particular, they target the Reduce component of the three R’s – to Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. In the hierarchy of solid waste, reducing the amount of generated waste is the primary and most highly recommended measure. Events tend to generate a considerable amount of waste in a very short time period. They are also a great way to show your commitment to the environment while creating a model of zero waste for your guests, and an opportunity to expose people to the possibility of a world without (or at least a lot less) waste in a tangible and compelling way.

This Zero Waste event planning guide will give you the resources and tools to easily reduce waste at your next event. By using this guide, you will:

- Learn how to easily incorporate Zero Waste best practices into your event;
- Discover how Zero Waste can be both environmentally and economically beneficial; and,
- Start planning aspects of your own Zero Waste event.

Explore a variety of tools for planning your Zero Waste event, including:

- Recycling, trash disposal and composting information specific to Teton County;
- Methods and worksheet for tracking event waste diversion; and,
- Event planning checklist.

We hope this guide provides useful information on how to host a Road to Zero Waste event in Teton County, Wyoming. Please call Teton County Integrated Solid Waste and Recycling at 307-733-7678 for more information or assistance.

Distinguish your event from the pack - apply for [Zero Waste Green Event Recognition](#) through Teton County's Sustainable Business Leaders program and enjoy the benefits associated with this local certification.

Planning the Event - Important Things to Keep in Mind

- Thoughtful event planning is critical to creating a successful Zero Waste event. The key to a successful Zero Waste event is careful planning so that all materials used and disposed of are reusable, recyclable, or compostable. By thinking ahead of time about all the materials your guests will be using and disposing of, it's easy to plan waste out of the event.
- Think of all components of the event, considering a full-system approach: How many people will be attending? What kind of waste will be generated? Does the event promote local businesses and utilize local resources?
- Source reduction is a key component of Zero Waste –eliminating waste at its source. This includes choosing products that come with little or no packaging, such as beer kegs instead of bottles, or other types of bulk items. Source reduction also eliminates unnecessary items like frilly toothpicks, paper doilies, and inedible garnishes. Rethink all the materials that will be at the event – from decorations and food, to packaging that things come in – to dramatically reduce the amount of overall disposable materials used.
- Identify potential waste sources, e.g. give-a-ways, excess food, bags, etc. Then ask, is that waste able to be eliminated? Could that waste be reduced or recycled? Could the materials be substituted with something more recyclable or reusable? Example: beverage cups or shopping bags - encourage people to bring their own re-usable cups and bags when promoting the event or provide these reusable items at your event.
- Establish a waste mitigation goal for the event and establish a metric to measure success. Communicate these goals to everyone involved in the event. Teamwork is crucial to the success of instituting zero waste elements in your event. Ensure that everyone involved is aware of your expectations and is on board with your practices. Also, don't forget to have fun with Zero Waste!
- What are you going to do with the waste that is generated at the event? Will there be adequate recycling and trash containers, and signage?
- Try to determine which unsustainable materials end up in the landfill most frequently. Consider entirely avoiding and banning these non-recyclable and non-compostable products at your event, such as single-use plastic water cups and polystyrene (Styrofoam).

Venue Selection

Zero Waste events are more common than ever with all types of venues and events working to be Zero Waste. If you have not yet chosen your venue, consider that some event locations can help to make Zero Waste planning easier. Venues that have experience in reducing waste or other sustainability practices will already have some of the key components in place, including sorting/collection containers and contracts with recycling service providers.

In many cases you may already have a venue and vendors set up for your event when you begin thinking about zero waste. If so, it is important to work as far in advance of your event as possible to plan how to set up your event site and prepare your vendors for supporting your zero waste goals. In this planning guide we will address vendor considerations and successfully setting up 'Resource Recovery' or Waste Stations.

Recycling & Trash

If your event is at a reserved location, check with the owner about recycling services that may already be provided. If your event is on a larger scale and will generate more waste than can be handled by your venue's trash disposal service, you will need to either work with a waste hauler or manage waste yourself.

Local options for recycling service:

- **Do It Yourself** – Provide your own recycling bins or contact the Town of Jackson Public Works Department at 307-733-3079, which offers recycling bins to loan to organizations. With this option you are in charge of sorting and transporting recyclables to the Recycling Center (3270 S. Adams Canyon Road, Jackson). The same containers (color and style) and signs

should be used consistently throughout the venue so that participants have this as an additional visual cue. (Consistent signage is key! See the link below for free recycling signs).

- **Signs.** You will want two kinds of signs at your zero waste event:
 - Sorting signs** at each Resource Recovery Station will help guests know how to quickly and correctly sort their items;
 - Educational signs** about your zero waste event will also be used to explain why your event is zero waste and the impact this will have.
- **Sorting Signs:** Signage for sorting stations should be very basic and should match throughout your event venue – the focus should be on one large word (RECYCLING or LANDFILL). It may help to include photos of the items that go into each container. Often, signs can be simple and/or the actual items can be attached to the containers to make it very easy for guests to know which items go where. Consider laminating the signs, especially if you will have future zero waste events. Laminated signs are a lot less likely to get torn off your containers or get wet or messy.
- Recycling signage is key for participation and free downloadable recycling signs are available on the [Teton County Solid Waste and Recycling website](#). View a few examples of free downloadable/printable signs below:



- **Educational Signs** can be located on tables, bathroom doors, or anywhere else you think guests might pause long enough to read a few facts. Contact Teton County Solid Waste and Recycling for assistance with educational signs.
- **Venue Map** – if your event is a larger one, consider creating a master map of the venue which includes locations of Resource Recovery/Waste Stations (landfill and recycling stations).
- **Commercial Recycling Collection Options:**
 - **Jackson Curbside Recycling** provides full recycling service for events; 307-733-8559
 - **RAD Curbside** provides full recycling service for events; 208-220-7721

Local options for waste removal service:

With a well thought out Zero Waste plan, very little trash will be produced, helping the event save money on trash disposal costs.

- **Commercial waste collection Options:**
 - **Star Valley Disposal** – 307-885-9645
 - **Teton Trash Removal** – 307-733-6840
 - **Westbank Sanitation** – 307-733-2615
 - **Yellow Iron Excavation & Waste Removal** – 307-734-0583
 - **RAD Curbside** – 208-220-7721
- **Do It Yourself** – Provide your own trash containers and dispose of waste at the Teton County Trash Transfer Station (5400 W U.S. 26/89/19, Jackson), or in your organization’s dumpster.

Drinking Water & Food at your event

Disposable plastic water bottles can account for a significant amount of event waste, and Jackson Hole has a solution. [The JH2O Project](#) seeks to reduce Jackson Hole’s landfill impacts and provide awareness of sustainability goals through access to water refilling stations.

If your event is being held on Town of Jackson or Teton County property (one of our public parks for example), you may be able to utilize the JH2O 'Hydration Station' to provide free, filtered, delicious Jackson Hole tap water to attendees. Contact Integrated Solid Waste and Recycling at 307-733-7678 to inquire about availability of this mobile water station.



We strongly encourage you to consider alternatives to bottled drinking water such as encouraging/providing reusable water bottles, water coolers or jugs to allow the use of reusable drink containers.

Vendors

Communicate the event's Zero Waste objectives to the vendors - the success of the Zero Waste effort will largely be determined by the willingness and participation of vendors. Consider providing an information packet to all vendors/caterers regarding the event's recycling and waste plans. This should outline the benefits of Zero Waste, as well as your expectations and guidelines for vendors participating in the event. It should emphasize the importance of source reduction and waste minimization as a first step when planning a Zero Waste event. Will vendors be required to adhere to Zero Waste practices? What can event organizers do to encourage vendors to recognize and participate in this effort?

Inquire about what vendors will be selling, and what waste may be associated with their products. Is minimal packaging used? Is the packaging reusable or recyclable? Is there a way to eliminate any waste?

Food & Beverage Vendors and Caterers

Naturally food is a very important component to your event. However, according to the USDA, 40 percent of food in the United States goes uneaten. Many food products also are packaged in or are served in excessive packaging. Therefore, food waste diversion should be a top priority at your event.

- Obtaining an accurate head count beforehand will minimize waste and cut costs.
- Simply planning ahead can be one of the biggest ways to reduce your waste footprint. This will help you to avoid over-ordering and over-preparing of dishes.
- Using local food vendors and producers who use seasonal products will not only decrease transportation and use of natural resources but will also support the local economy. It may be tastier, too!
- Plated meals with set sizes generally produce far less waste because the food preparer does not prepare excess amounts of food and patrons will not take more than they can eat. Discuss this with your food vendors. If you are the cook, calculate how much each guest will eat and buy and prepare for that amount. If your event is a potluck, you can plan the meal so that each guest brings a different type of dish. This will prevent an overabundance of, for example, cookies that will not all be eaten.
- Avoid the use of disposable plates and silverware. Give incentives for guests to bring their own reusable utensils and dishware.
- Compostable dinnerware is another option if reusable is unsuitable. Plain white paper plates without a waxy coating are also an inexpensive, biodegradable alternative.
- Have water filling stations for those guests who brought reusable water bottles. Serve other beverages from fountains, taps, coolers, or jugs to allow the use of reusable drink containers.
- Use cloth napkins or only provide them upon request.

For Events with Contracted Food Vendors and Caterers:

When working with vendors at booths or carts, explicitly outline your expectations and requirements regarding Zero Waste. It should be included in their contract. Vendors will need to know what practices are or are not acceptable ahead of time. For many it may be their first Zero Waste event experience.

- Encourage vendors to give out reasonable portion sizes and only what the consumer asks for.
- Use reusable dishware when possible.
- Napkins should only be made available upon request at a food counter.
- You and your vendors may have to be creative to find zero waste solutions. For example, a burrito can be served wrapped in foil rather than on a disposable plate.
- Do not hand out silverware packets (the ones with fork, spoon, knife and napkin); only hand out what is necessary for customers to enjoy their food.
- Large bulk items should replace single-serve packaging. Condiments should be served in large containers as opposed to individual packets.
- Do not allow Styrofoam and avoid throw-away plastics as much as possible.
- Whenever possible, use caterers that offer reusable items for serving and eating food, such as tablecloths, silverware, glasses, mugs, plates and cloth napkins that can be washed and reused. If a caterer must use paper napkins, ask or require that they use ones made from 100% post-consumer recycled content. If the caterer is unable to provide reusable materials, consider hiring another vendor to provide these. If reusable items aren't an option for the caterer or vendor that you select, use recyclable materials.
- Are incentives provided for people who bring reusable cups, dishware, utensils, or containers?

Does your event use local and regional food?

Using local and regional food, from within about 300 miles, can help cut back on the negative environmental impacts of purchasing food from unknown and far away sources. Purchasing food from nearby farms and ranches supports local business, is more environmentally friendly, and often yields seasonal, fresh, non-processed, good, clean and fair food. To find a comprehensive list of local and regional farmers and ranchers, check out the [Slow Food in the Tetons Teton Slow Food Guide](#). You can also ask your caterers to use local and regional food in their prepared dishes; these folks often already have professional connections with farms and ranches in the area.

Informational Booths

Limit handouts and giveaways and encourage interactive displays instead. If give-a-ways are provided, are they contributing to the Zero Waste goal (i.e. reusable bags, water bottles, LED light bulbs, etc.)?

Decorations & Gifts

Leave guests with a lasting gift and leave a lasting impression. Decorations that can be reused for many years to come.

- Gifts should be able to be immediately used or reusable. Examples of more environmentally friendly items are houseplants, seeds, cloth bags, mugs, and gift certificates to local establishments.
- Keep in mind how much packaging your gifts use. Choose those with reusable, recyclable, or minimal packaging. Note that standard gift wrap is not recyclable.

Promoting the Event

Pre-event, during event, and post-event publicity decisions are all important opportunities for furthering the message of Zero Waste. Use your publicity efforts to acquaint and remind attendees of Zero Waste strategies and to emulate these by using alternatives to printed publicity materials:

- Promote as much as you can online - try to eliminate/reduce paper use on this aspect.
- Advertise on websites, digital advertising, radio, social media sites, and through emails in addition to print media.
- If you do choose to print fliers, posters, postcards, or other materials, print only the number you need; consider using material made from recycled content for this.
- Invite and encourage attendees to be a part of the process in your promotional material. They can help with recycling, composting, or bringing their own reusable items. Be sure that they are aware of your efforts.
- Consider the use of durable, non-date-specific signage that can be reused at future events.
- Encourage and incentivize the use of public transportation, bikes, and carpooling to the event.

At The Event

On-site support and education

During event publicity: Include the following message during your event to showcase diversion efforts:

"[Event Name] is helping to reduce our impact on the environment by diverting waste from the landfill. Help us reduce waste by using the Resource Recovery Stations around this event to compost and recycle. Thank you for contributing to a more sustainable Jackson Hole."

Here are some ideas for spreading your zero waste messages at the event:

- Provide signage at all Resource Recovery Stations
- Create a Sustainable Practices Pavilion or booth with information and activities about event diversion efforts (e.g. a game showing how to dispose items at the event)
- Display a (durable, reusable) banner which promotes/identifies Green Event efforts. Teton County RRR Zero Waste Green Event banner available to qualifying events: Apply [Here](#).
- Stage announcements
- Other methods (e.g. mascot, flash mob, game helping attendees learn correct sorting methods)

Follow Up with vendors to make sure that they are following through on the practices to which they committed. Check in with vendors during the event and thank them for their participation and efforts to reduce waste.

Waste

Make sure recyclables are actually being recycled, and contamination is minimal.

- Staff and volunteers play a key role in the success of a zero waste event; they make excellent recycling station monitors. They help to educate patrons on the appropriate bin for their discards (Trash Talkers!). Each Resource Recovery Station should feature a trained volunteer who assists attendees, ensures that there is no contamination between the bins, and helps to increase public awareness. This is also a great initiative to involve the community and promote local groups.
- Gloves come in handy for volunteers when items stray from their proper bins. Reducing contamination (removing any trash present) is very important, and this can be a dirty job.

Signage, Receptacles & Setup

- Place bins in convenient locations throughout the event near entrances and exits, eating areas, and high traffic areas. Create "Resource Recovery Stations", each with a recycling, and trash bin. Both containers should be right next to each other so that guests can always make the right decision about the item that they are disposing of. Be sure that wherever there is a trash can, a recycling bin is present as well (and vice versa).
- Clearly signed containers are essential – photos/pictures and or the actual item attached to bin work best. Click [HERE](#) to download free recycling signs.
- Considering labeling trash cans with the word 'Landfill' to remind folks what materials should be thrown away (and shouldn't) and where this material ends up.

Calculating a Waste Diversion Rate for the event

Tracking waste diversion is critical to collecting quantifiable data to show the success of your zero waste efforts. This can be easily accomplished and requires little additional effort. Each year the organizers of Old Bills Fun Run calculates the waste diversion rate for this large (over 4,000 people) community event with the help of just a few volunteers, and a bathroom scale.

Diversion Rate = total weight of all diverted waste / total weight of all waste generated

- Diverted waste = weight of all materials reused, recycled (and if applicable, composted)
- All waste generated = weight of diverted waste + weight of landfill bound trash

Calculating your events diversion rate will require that you weigh both the trash and recyclables generated at your event. One easy way to do this is to use a bathroom scale (Teton County Solid Waste and Recycling has a scale available to use for this): weigh yourself, then weigh yourself holding a bag of either waste or recycling; subtract your weight to get weight of material. Corrugated cardboard can be calculated by a volume to weight conversion: 1 cubic yard of flattened cardboard weighs approximately 100 pounds.

Example:

Let's say that an event was held which promoted the use of reusable cups by giving away reusable cups at the event – these cups could be counted as diverted waste as long as organizers knew how many were given away, and the weight of each. At the event, 285 cups were given away (each

cup weighs 3.65 oz each: 285 cups x 3.65 oz each = 1040.3 ounces / 16 ounces per pound = 65 pounds of reusable cups. 109 pounds of landfill bound trash was generated; 6 pounds of #1 plastic and 4 pounds of aluminum was collected for recycling. A 4 yard cardboard recycling dumpster was filled half way with cardboard to be recycled (1 cubic yard of flattened cardboard weighs approximately 100 pounds, so this would amount to 2 yards or approximately 200 pounds).

So:

Reusable Materials – 65 pounds

Recyclables – 210 pounds

Trash - 109 pounds

Diversion Rate = 275 pounds of diverted materials/275 pounds diverted waste + 109 pounds of landfill trash = $0.72 \times 100 = 72\%$ diversion rate by weight.

What is done with excess food that is generated by attendees? Generated by vendors?

Utilize this food as an opportunity to donate to a local shelter, food recovery program, or food composting program.

Currently, [WyoFarm Composting](#) services events throughout the Teton County region providing food waste compost bins and pick-up services. Teton County is working to establish a food waste composting program to service events by 2023 at which time food waste will be able to be accepted. For unused food items contact the following organizations to see if they can accept surplus food generated at your event:

- [Hole Food Rescue](#) 720-470-0769
- [Good Samaritan Mission](#) 307-733-3165
- [Jackson Cupboard](#)

After the Event

One of the most important parts to your event will be the debriefing afterward. Participants should be able to share their feedback which will help you bring your event closer to Zero Waste and run more smoothly next time. Be sure to evaluate both the successes and challenges of your work.

- Send out an email correspondence to attendees and volunteers to let them know how successful their Zero Waste efforts were. Include the weights of all diverted materials and other highlights from the event.

Celebrate the Zero Waste efforts that were made by the patrons and organizers.

- Announcements – social media, press release, etc. Recognize successful efforts to strive towards a Zero Waste event.

We Are Here to Help!

Contact Teton County Solid Waste and Recycling for assistance to support your Zero Waste Green Event:

ISWRoutreach@tetoncountywy.gov or (307)733-7678. Apply for Zero Waste Green Event Recognition [Here](#).

Additional Resources

Looking to take Green Event Certification to the next level? Check out the [Council for Responsible Sport](#) certification.

Looking to host a Green Party? Check out these resources:

- [12 Ways to Make your Party Green](#) from the [Eco Cycle website](#)

Appendix A – Zero Waste Event Timeline and Checklist (courtesy of Seven Generations Ahead)

BEFORE EVENT

Six months to one year before event

- Select a venue.
- Identify materials in the event waste stream.
- Research procurement opportunities for service ware and zero waste equipment.
- Begin meeting with potential vendors and caterers.

Three to six months before event

- Decide which zero waste strategies you will employ at your event.
- Determine which materials you will use at your event (reusable, compostable, or recyclable).
- Create a zero waste information sheet, an acceptable items list, and a document containing food guidelines.
- Provide vendors and caterers with the information sheet, item list, and food guidelines.
- Finalize vendor and caterer event contracts.
- If applicable, purchase reusable or compostable service ware, or require that vendors provide and use reusable or compostable service ware.

Two to three months prior to event

- Send out attendee invitations.
- Begin marketing & publicity.
- Map venue and existing bins.
- Explore opportunities for procuring donated items.
- Select and purchase sorting bins and bags.
- Reserve food waste compost services if applicable.
- Create signage to accompany sorting stations.
- Order additional zero waste equipment.
- Begin training staff and assemble your Zero Waste Team, including a Zero Waste Leader.
- Identify end-site locations and haulers.
- Identify zero waste goals for your event.
- Determine method(s) for measuring event diversion.
- Decide how you will showcase diversion success at the event.

One week prior to event

- If applicable, confirm donation pick-up.
- Confirm equipment delivery.
- Confirm hauler schedule.
- Print signage.
- Distribute zero waste procedure reminders to vendors and caterers.
- Provide staff and volunteers with all necessary informational materials.

DAY OF EVENT

- Train staff and volunteers and equip them with all materials and supplies.
- Set up sorting stations and weigh stations, if applicable.
- Place signage near and on containers.
- Tape sample items to collection containers.
- Place necessary supplies at each sorting station.
- Cover or remove existing bins if they are not part of the Resource Recovery Stations.
- Hang/set up zero waste educational signs.
- Situate volunteers near sorting stations and highly trafficked areas.
- If applicable, allocate and deliver reusable/compostable/recyclable serving ware to vendors.

- Periodically remind attendees of zero waste guidelines through PA announcements.
- Monitor Resource Recovery Stations and re-sort any contaminated bins.
- Empty and remove full sorting bins as needed.
- Measure and record diversion.
- Showcase diversion success.
- Train newly arrived volunteers and staff.
- Restock serving ware as needed.
- Conduct and record final diversion measurements.
- Tear down sorting stations and other zero waste equipment.
- Clean up.

AFTER THE EVENT

- Encourage attendees to bring leftover food home using reusable containers.
- Compost any remaining leftover food.
- Ensure that compostable, recyclable, and landfill items are hauled to the correct end-sites.
- If applicable, return rented reusable items.
- Store or donate extra supplies.
- Gain feedback from staff, volunteers, and attendees.
- Evaluate zero waste strategies and calculate your event waste diversion rate.
- Write a summary report.
- Publicize event successes.
- Thank staff, volunteers, vendors, and attendees for participating in your event.