



# Event Recycling Planning

Events of any size can generate a lot of waste. As of January 1, 2021, all public events held in Dakota County must provide recycling and follow best practices (**recycling requirements bolded below**). All other activities are recommendations but not required.

## Before the event

### Planning

- Review city and [county event recycling requirements](#).
- Select a person or committee to coordinate and implement the low-waste efforts.
- Assess all materials that will be used at the event (packaging, giveaways, decorations, banners) and try to eliminate as many disposable materials as possible.
- Evaluate the waste that might be generated at your event. **The collection schedule and container size must be enough to collect all the recyclables from the event to prevent overflowing containers.** If food waste makes up a large portion, consider adding organics collection – see tips below.
- Use reusable plates, glasses, utensils and cloth napkins. If reusable items are not possible for your event, purchase recyclable products and ensure you have a disposal method for products used. [See what's recyclable in Dakota County](#).
- If using single-use cups, purchase cups with a number 1, 2 or 5 on the bottom. Cups with a number 6 (e.g., red Solo cups) are not recyclable.
- Use bulk dispensers for water and condiments to avoid single-use packaging.
- Inform vendors of waste diversion goals and requirements as early as possible so they have adequate time to prepare for the event. Include foodservice product requirements in the food vendor application or contract.
- Determine how weights will be gathered from your event to track progress and promote the success of your efforts. Review options in this guide in “after the event” and talk to your waste hauler, if needed.

### Waste Stations

- Determine the number of waste stations needed (trash and recycling containers paired together). **Recycling must be within 10 feet of every trash container.** Limit the number of waste stations for ease of monitoring and emptying.
- For spread-out events, use tall banners or other visual cues to help attendees find waste stations.
- Stick with the same order for your bins at every waste station.
- Meet with staff that manages the event site prior to the event to confirm exact locations of waste stations.
- Establish how waste and recycling will be handled and if vendors can use on-site disposal. Decide who is emptying the recycling and trash containers, how often, and where the materials will be placed. Ensure bags are color-coded (use no bags or clear bags for recycling, black bags for trash).
- Contract with a waste hauler or find out how recycling and trash will be taken off-site after the event.
- Determine what resources will be provided to food vendors (e.g., vendor recycling guide, disposal instructions, window signs).
- Label all containers with large color-coded signs (blue for recycling, grey/black for trash, green for organics). Include the material type being collected (trash, recycling, organics) and images of products used at the event or plan to hang product examples from container signs to serve as a visual aid.** Put temporary signs on dumpsters or carts provided by the waste hauler.

### Promotion and Education

- Educate all event staff, volunteers, and vendors consistent with [County education requirements](#).
- Tell your attendees about your goals to reduce waste by adding information on the event website, social media, promotions and registration materials. If appropriate, consider making an announcement at the event explaining what goes where.
- Encourage attendees to bring their own mug or reusable water bottle to the event.
- Recruit volunteers to be waste station monitors. Plan for at least one volunteer per station with shifts of 3-4 hours.
- Share with volunteers what products to expect, what goes where and how to monitor waste stations.
- Gather waste monitoring supplies for volunteers like waste grabbers, hand sanitizer and extra bags.

### Let the containers speak

Include pictures on event container signs of products used at the event or plan to hang product examples from container signs to serve as a visual aid.



## During the event

- Greet each vendor and exhibitor during set-up. Provide a vendor recycling guide and clear instructions for what to do with their materials (e.g., how to sort, flattening cardboard boxes, where to bring items).
- Ask if the vendor would like to place a poster on their booth to encourage attendees to recycle.
- Set up waste stations with banners (if using). Place a few empty bottles and cans in the recycling containers to serve as a visual aid.
- Assign a volunteer to monitor each waste station to help participants correctly sort their materials and empty bags when needed. If this isn't possible, assign someone to check each station periodically.

## After the event

- Weigh the recycling and trash separately. Calculate the diversion rate by using the following formula: (recyclables weight/recyclables weight + trash weight)
- If it is not possible to weigh each waste stream, use one of the following options:
  - Track the volume of each dumpster or cart before each hauler pickup (e.g., 4 cubic yard dumpster is half full = 2 cubic yards).
  - Weigh only the trash using scales. Weights can be tracked every year to set goals and record improvements.
  - Ask your hauler to provide weights for each waste stream collected. Haulers must weigh their trucks before dumping at waste facilities.
- Share your green event success with Dakota County, sponsors, vendors, volunteers and attendees.
- Report event recycling results to Dakota County annually.**

## Adding Organics Collection to Your Event

If food is being served and food waste makes up a large portion of the trash, consider adding organics collection for food vendors and attendees. **Starting in 2024, [some events will have to collect food scraps](#) in the back-of-house areas (e.g. kitchen, food vendor stations).**

### Planning

- Review city and [county event organics collection requirements](#).**
- Require food vendors to use BPI-certified compostable utensils and serviceware. [Find a local vendor of compostable products](#). [See what's compostable in Dakota County](#).
- Avoid clear BPI-certified compostable cups and clear plastic cups at the same event to reduce confusion.
- Only place organics containers in areas where food is being eaten (e.g. picnic areas, food vendors areas). Ensure BPI-certified compostable bags are used.
- Contract with a waste hauler to pick up organics or haul to a commercial composting site. Confirm organics collection is secure and cannot be easily contaminated (e.g., lock on dumpster, enclosure).
- Determine if you will be providing containers and compostable bags to vendors to collect food scraps in their booth.

### At the event

- Check in with each food vendor:
  - Make sure they are using the appropriate BPI-certified compostable products.
  - Provide a vendor recycling guide with clear instructions for what to do with their materials.
  - Offer helpful resources like a small container and compostable bags to collect food scraps in their booth.
  - Ask if the vendor would like to place a poster on their booth to encourage attendees to recycle.
- A volunteer monitor at each organics container accessible to the public is highly recommended to prevent contamination from attendees.
- Compostable bags should be emptied when half full to avoid rips from the weight.
- Weigh the organics separately. Calculate the diversion rate by using the following formula: (recyclables weight + organics weight/recyclables weight + organics weight + trash weight)
- Label all organics containers using green as the main color. Include the material type being collected (organics) and images of products used at the event. Put temporary signs on dumpsters or carts provided by the waste hauler.**

### Adding organics

*For public areas:* only add organics collection if all serving products are BPI-certified (see logo) and a person is monitoring each organics container.



*For food vendors:* work with food vendors to provide resources and guidance to successfully collect food scraps inside their booth.