

Event Waste Reduction Best Practices

This summary includes tips and tricks from event organizers in Franklin County, Ohio who utilized SWACO's competitive Event Waste Reduction Grant program in 2016. However, suggestions may prove applicable to community events outside of Central Ohio.



Events in this Sample...

- received funding for recycling bins, signage, diversion research, consulting, and more.
- included music, arts, food, and eco festivals.
- ranged from 7,000 to 450,000 attendees.
- lasted from a few hours to three days.
- were hosted by cities, non-profits, and businesses in Franklin County, Ohio.
- met specific participation requirements.



Basic Ingredients for Success

OVER-COMMUNICATE

- ✓ Streamline communication with service providers via regular check-ins.
 - Use in-person communication to discuss waste reduction goals and contracts with vendors and haulers. **Don't just send emails-** it won't save time in the long run!
 - Waste reduction planning should start at the beginning of the event planning process.
- ✓ Explicitly require haulers to **provide recycling and disposal data** from the event.
 - Review data to **right-size operations** next year and share waste reduction successes.
- ✓ **Educate attendees** before and during event about how to reduce, reuse, and recycle.
 - For example, encourage attendees to bring their own water bottles or reusable utensil in confirmation email or on the event webpage and social media.
- ✓ **Highlight waste reduction efforts** on marketing materials before and during the event.
- ✓ Engage staff in waste reduction planning and goal-setting to increase personal investment.
- ✓ **Share** your sustainability successes via news releases, e-newsletters, social media, and more.
 - Tag us for social media love!  @SWACOGreen  /SWACO.org
 - Share waste reduction achievements with your team of volunteers and staff. Ensure they know these efforts would not have been possible without their help.

WASTE REDUCTION INFRASTRUCTURE

- ✓ Create **consistent** bin/ bag size, colors (i.e. clear bags and blue lids for recycling) and signage at waste reduction stations.
 - Utilize **high visibility banners, flags, or signs** to indicate waste reduction stations.
- ✓ Map out your venue/ space and plan strategic placement of **waste reduction stations** based on projected people and material flow. Stations should be placed every 30-40 yards.
 - Provide efficient system for recycling **cardboard** from vendors throughout the event.
- ✓ Ensure recycling and trash bins are **always grouped**. Solo bins are more highly contaminated.
- ✓ Provide **recycling bins during set-up** for vendors and exhibitors.
- ✓ Make a **rainy-day plan** to ensure recycling bins don't fill with water.
- ✓ Pro tip: Before considering the addition of composting to your event, **focus on creating a successful recycling program**.
- ✓ Offer and market **water bottle refilling areas**.
- ✓ Donate **leftover food** to local organizations like the [Mid-Ohio Foodbank](#) and [Food Rescue US](#).



CLEAN-UP CREW

- ✓ **Train** staff (internal or hired) and volunteers prior to event and provide a refresher right before it starts on the following topics:
 - How to properly sort materials and the event waste reduction efforts.
 - Method for safely collecting litter and removing contamination from recycling bags.
 - How to empty recyclables out of bags into the recycling roll-off/ dumpster. **Plastic bags and film are considered contamination** and are not accepted for mixed recycling.
 - Empowering strategies to engage/ educate guests and monitor bins.
- ✓ Create a **detailed set-up, pick-up, and tear-down schedule for waste reduction stations and roll-offs**. Ensure prompt removal after the event to reduce contamination.
 - Give **vendors easy access** to recycling and Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) roll-offs and/or schedule waste pick-ups on demand and at certain times.
 - Consider picking up cardboard from vendors before the event starts.
 - Establish a **feedback system** for reporting and addressing full bins (i.e. text message).
- ✓ Recruit more assistants than needed to ensure cancellations don't jeopardize success.
- ✓ Contract with a **clean-up team committed to waste reduction**.

SWAP IT OUT

- ✓ Use washable hand **stamps** instead of wrist bands to show proof of payment or age.
- ✓ Opt for **reusable name tags** instead of stickers- neither the sticker nor backing is recyclable!
 - Collect the reusable name tag holders on the way out!
- ✓ Transform your guide into a **digital format** to save financial and natural resources.
- ✓ Provide **reusable tasting cups** that serve as promo items instead of disposable cups.
 - **Plastic and bio-plastic cups are not recyclable or compostable in Franklin County. Only bottleneck plastics are accepted- see full list of accepted recyclables [here](#).**

Strategies for Increased Impact:

- Include **waste reduction as a contractual requirement** for service providers (see pg. 4)
 - Co-creating a flexible contract with your vendors may increase buy-in.
 - If mandates aren't feasible for your event, consider developing one-time **incentives** for vendor participation.
 - Note: Voluntary participation results in lackluster results historically.
- Display an **infographic-style flyer on food truck/ stands** showing proper sorting for their specific service ware.



Inspiration from Grant Recipients:

Rock on the Range

✓ Columbus Crew used SWACO funds to purchase Clear stream recycling bins used at Rock on the Range and future events at MAPFRE Stadium, home of Columbus Crew.



Food Truck & Cart Festival

✓ MGCK Food, LLC. purchased **signage & waste reduction equipment** with SWACO funds for the annual Food Truck & Cart Festival. Their ClearStream containers & recycling flag will also be used at future events.



Columbus Arts Festival

✓ Suggested creating a **living sculpture** shaped by a local artist from bottles deposited by attendees. Sculpture would provide a **creative reuse** educational opportunity.



Additional Resources:

Example Contractual Requirements for Vendors

Contract language is a critical piece of expectation setting and helps ensure stakeholders are on the same page. Working with vendors and haulers to maximize the number of materials distributed that are reusable or recyclable will make your job easier. Make sure you know what is accepted for recycling in Franklin County before communicating requirements to service providers (see image below from Rumpke). Consider adding these requirements to your contracts, as appropriate:

VENDORS:

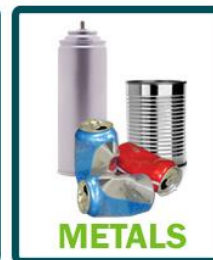
- No Polystyrene/ Styrofoam
- Break down and recycle cardboard
- No relocating bins without approval
- Swap plastic cups for reusable or paper (non-wax) cups
- Make napkins available upon request only
- Offer bulk condiment dispensers
- 'Leave no trace' after the event
- Require participation in diversion programs (i.e. recycling, compost)

HAULERS:

- Label roll-offs
- Share recycling/ disposal receipts and locations
- Timely removal of roll-offs

ComFest

Although not a grant awardee in 2016, it's worth noting Columbus-based ComFest **banned Polystyrene 7 years ago** and their event recycles **approx. 250 gallons of frying oil** a year into feed and alternative fuel.



PLEASE RECYCLE THESE ITEMS

Example Questions for Vendors and Caterers Adapted from OEPA Guide

1. What items will be served or are available for guests?
2. How are the items packaged?
3. Can you provide reusable service ware (i.e. tablecloths, silverware, glasses, mugs, plates and cloth napkins that can be washed and reused)?
4. If not, will you provide recyclable items?

Note: Plastic cups, plates, and utensils aren't accepted for recycling and most composting facilities cannot process 'compostable' bio-plastics.

Be Prepared to Answer Basic Questions for Haulers:

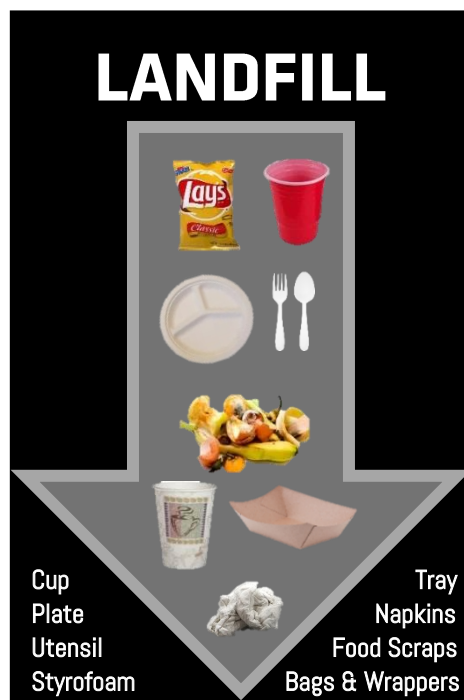
- When will roll-offs/ dumpsters need taken off site?
- How many times will roll-offs need emptied throughout the event and at what times?
- Where will the roll-offs be located? (Provide a map if possible.)

High Efficacy Public-Facing Waste Reduction Station Signage Characteristics

- Locate highly visual and colorful signs at eye-level
- Correlate with service ware used at the event (i.e. signs include photos of items at the event)
- Consistently color-code signs to match bins
- Weather and wind-proof signs to enable reuse
- Connect sorting signs to bins for a complete waste reductions station

These examples highlight items commonly disposed of BY ATTENDEES at events in Franklin County:

Recycling signs don't include photos of cardboard because these signs are intended to be public facing. Vendors should be asked to collect and recycle cardboard through a separate system. Note: Plastic bags are listed under landfill, but they are recyclable through the Bring Me Back campaign.



COMPOST



Paper Tray
Paper Cup
Paper Plate

Napkins
Food Scraps
Paper Towel


RECYCLE



Cans
Glass Bottles
Plastic Bottles

Paper
Cartons
Cardboard

LANDFILL



Utensils
Plastic Cup
Plastic Container

Styrofoam
Coffee Cup
Bags & Wrappers

Any Questions?

Thank you for your dedication to waste reduction. Reach out to our team at SWACO to learn more about the grant program and event waste reduction technical assistance. Feel free to share this document.

Event Waste Reduction Grant Program Information:

<http://www.swaco.org/188/Grants>

Event Waste Reduction Webinars:

<http://www.swaco.org/311/Webinars>

Please view digitally or recycle this document.

