

KSB Zero Waste Event Check List

First of all, what is zero waste?

Zero waste refers to the diversion of all non-hazardous waste from the landfill by refusing, reducing, reusing, recycling, composting, and upcycling. Moving towards **zero waste** requires thinking about how items can be eliminated from the waste stream and how the remaining waste can be converted into a resource.

A **zero waste** event or operation strives to reduce waste generated and capture as much as possible for diversion, to minimize the amount discarded to landfills. Eliminating it all can be difficult, so an event or operation is traditionally thought of as “**zero waste**” if it diverts 90% or more of its non-hazardous waste from the landfill. But our goal should not be any specific percentage; it should be to avoid and divert as much as possible and to constantly improve. **Thank You!**

Sedona and Verde Valley events use the following methods to handle and reduce waste:

- **Source reduction** refuses, reduces, or eliminates waste at its source. To minimize waste, analyze how it could be created—by the planning team, suppliers, exhibitors, and attendees. Seek alternatives and strongly recommend or even require them.
- **Source reuse** seeks to avoid materials that cannot be reused at future events or put to some other use when no longer needed. Practice product stewardship and select materials with their best lasting end use in mind.
- **Food recovery**, also known as food rescue or food salvage, is the practice of collecting edible food from caterers, food vendors, and exhibitors that must otherwise be disposed of and distributing it to homeless shelters, foodbanks, and other emergency food programs.
- **Composting** generates a useful soil amendment that adds nutrients to soil. Plate scrapings and other no longer edible food waste can be collected separately from trash and then composted, as well as some paper, plant-based serving trays, and other natural products. Even meat, bones, and some artificial “biodegradable” items can be composted if managed properly.
- **Recycling** saves resources, energy, and money by making products from previously used materials. Recycling turns waste into a commodity used to manufacture a product. Keep aware of the materials the local recycling center can and cannot accept.
- **Upcycling** continues the life cycle of objects or materials that are not easily recyclable or compostable, to create a product of a higher quality or value.

Landfilling waste, on the other hand, removes it from use, produces methane (a greenhouse gas far more potent than CO₂), and potentially causes pollution in surrounding areas. Landfilling does not make continued use of commodities, but instead ends their life cycle and begins a useless, destructive cycle that can last decades or centuries.

Smaller events like meetings or seminars are a great opportunity to showcase zero waste initiatives to colleagues and peers. Larger Events require more planning and effort to execute. For larger events, please see the following Zero Waste Planning Guide by sustainabilityallianceaz.org.

Zero Waste Planning Guide

FOOD & DRINK (Which practices can you commit to? Check all that apply.)

If you will not have food or drink at your event, skip this section.

- Plan how to minimize leftover food. (Plan modest portion sizes. If possible, prepare food only as supplies are depleted, keeping raw ingredients packaged so they can be donated later.)
- Serve meals with minimal packaging. (Opt for buffet or family style vs. individual boxed lunches. Avoid foods in packaging that can't be recycled, e.g., mylar potato chip bags. Provide water dispensers or pitchers instead of bottled water.)
- Provide reusable utensils, plates, and glasses. If the event venue can't provide these, check out the resources on [our website](#) where you can borrow or rent these supplies.
- Use napkins that are washable or made of FSC certified or 100% recycled paper. (Unbleached paper napkins can usually be composted.)

MATERIALS—Which practices can you commit to? (Check all that apply.)

If you will not have name tags, handouts, decorations, or freebies at your event, skip this section.

- Minimize or eliminate a welcome packet. (Rather than loading a bag/folder with handouts and freebies, lay everything out and let attendees choose what they want.)
- Minimize hardcopy handouts. (Provide electronic versions of all/most materials, downloadable from your website before, during, or after the event. Event schedule can be sent in advance or provided on-screen between sessions or on posters in gathering areas. Try to reduce the number of pages of print handouts.)
- Minimize waste associated with signs, banners, and other decorations. (Print signs/banners that can be used repeatedly. Reuse materials in school art projects. Donate flowers to retirement centers or hospitals.)

EXPO/VENDORS—Which practices can you commit to? (Check all that apply.)

If you will not have vendors present at your event, skip this section.

- Inform vendors well in advance of your goal to be a **zero waste** event. (Give suggestions for reducing packaging and materials. Explain what can be recycled and ask them not to bring anything not on that list. Vendors can provide virtual coupons.)
- Minimize SWAG promotional merchandise. (Discourage handing out single-use or low value/plastic marketing samples.)
- Minimize printing waste. (Ask vendors to keep any printed materials generic without the event name and date, so materials can be reused.)

WASTE RECOVERY—Which practices can you commit to? (Check all that apply.)

- Separate compostable materials and recyclables from trash and arrange for pick up or drop off. (Recruit and train volunteers to staff waste stations and separate items. They will do a better job than attendees. See the [Guidelines and Local Resources link](#) for recyclers and composting services in the Verde Valley. In other areas, check with organizations/farms with composting operations to see if they can accept your organic waste.)
- Ensure no leftover food goes to landfill. (Donate leftover food that is safe to eat or feed it to livestock. Note: Prepared food that has been set out cannot be legally donated for humans. You can set out fresh produce or keep unused quantities in their packaging and prepare food as needed. You may decide it is acceptable to run out of some items to reduce the chance of excess.)
- After the event, measure and report your diversion rate. (You can measure by weight or volume. If you have similar sized containers for recycling, composting and waste, volume will likely be easiest. Estimate the percentage each bin is full. NOTE: This step is very important for repeated events so you can continuously improve.)

Tips for Zero Waste Events

(For more information, go to this web page: [Additional Information Guide](#))

1. Educate everyone involved about your **zero waste** intentions and how they can minimize waste (e.g., what to bring and not bring, what can be recycled or composted.)
2. Avoid single use items of all kinds including plastic water bottles. Offer pitchers of water and glasses or provide water stations and ask participants to bring a travel mug or refillable water bottle.
3. Serve appropriate portions to avoid food waste and allow people to choose what they want on their plate (ex: “Do you want lettuce, tomato and pickle?” Ask instead of automatically putting it on the plate).
4. Use washable, reusable dishes (which can be rented if the venue can’t provide them.) If that is impractical, choose paper, biodegradable, or compostable dishware. Currently #5 plastic cups can be recycled. Avoid Styrofoam.
5. Train volunteers to separate waste at stations; you’ll get better results than counting on the participants. Don’t put plastic bags in waste receptacles (unless required by law).
6. Use natural decorations; donate or compost them after the event.
7. Recover left-over food: donate edible food and compost inedible food waste.
8. Measure your waste streams and set goals for the next event

Four more tips to make your event even more sustainable

1. Choose a plant-based menu, minimizing animal products.
2. Purchase locally sourced food, products and entertainment.
3. Minimize transportation (e.g., facilitating carpooling, providing buses, use videoconferencing.)

Use green energy or purchase carbon offsets. [[Click here for instructions for calculating carbon emissions.](#)]