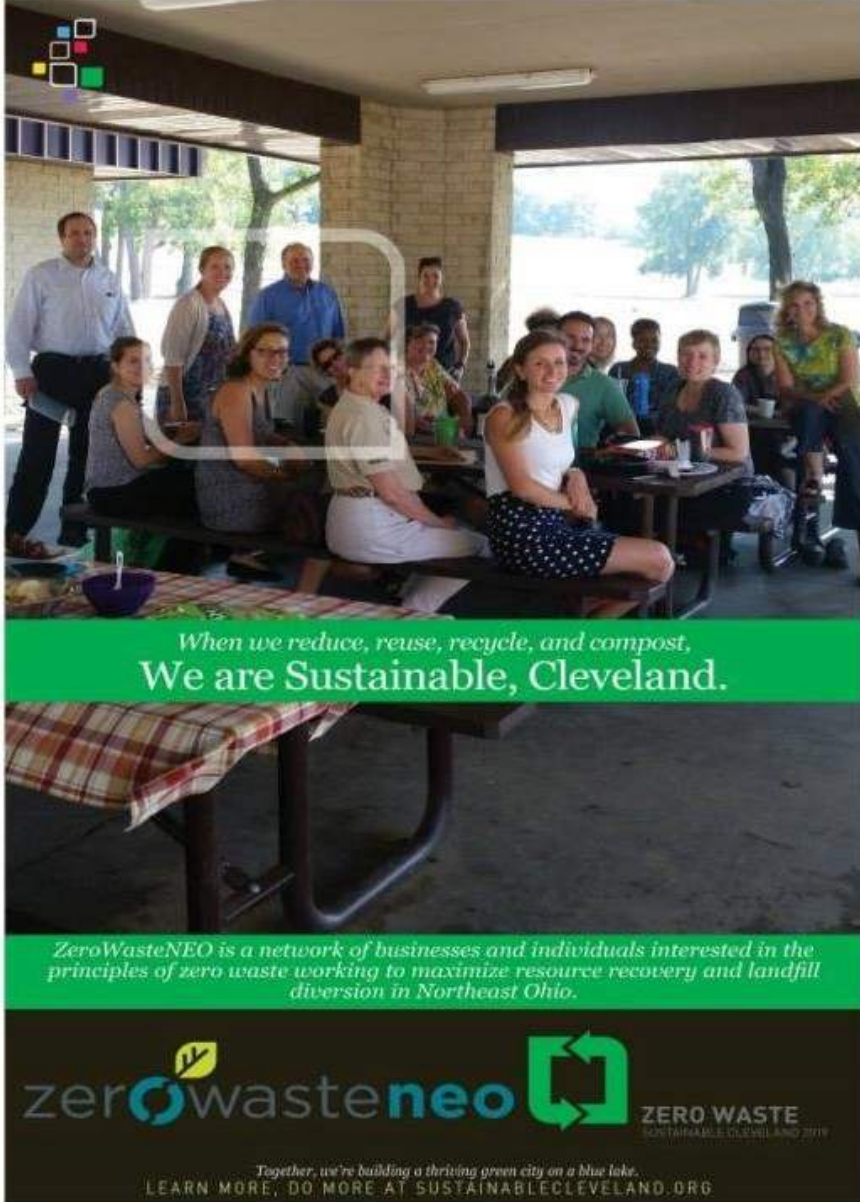




Zero and Reduced Waste Event Planning

February 2023



zerowasteneo



Cuyahoga County
SOLID WASTE DISTRICT
CuyahogaRecycles.org

Workshop Overview

- What is zero waste* & other definitions
- Planning a zero waste event
- Operations and logistics
- Communications
- Day of event execution
- Measuring impact & celebrating success
- Appendices
- Resources

* “zero waste” in this presentation also refers to reduced waste

What is zero waste?

Zero waste refers to the diversion of all non-hazardous waste from the landfill through reducing, reusing, recycling, composting, and upcycling.

An event or operation is typically thought of as zero waste if it diverts 90% or more of its non-hazardous waste from the landfill.



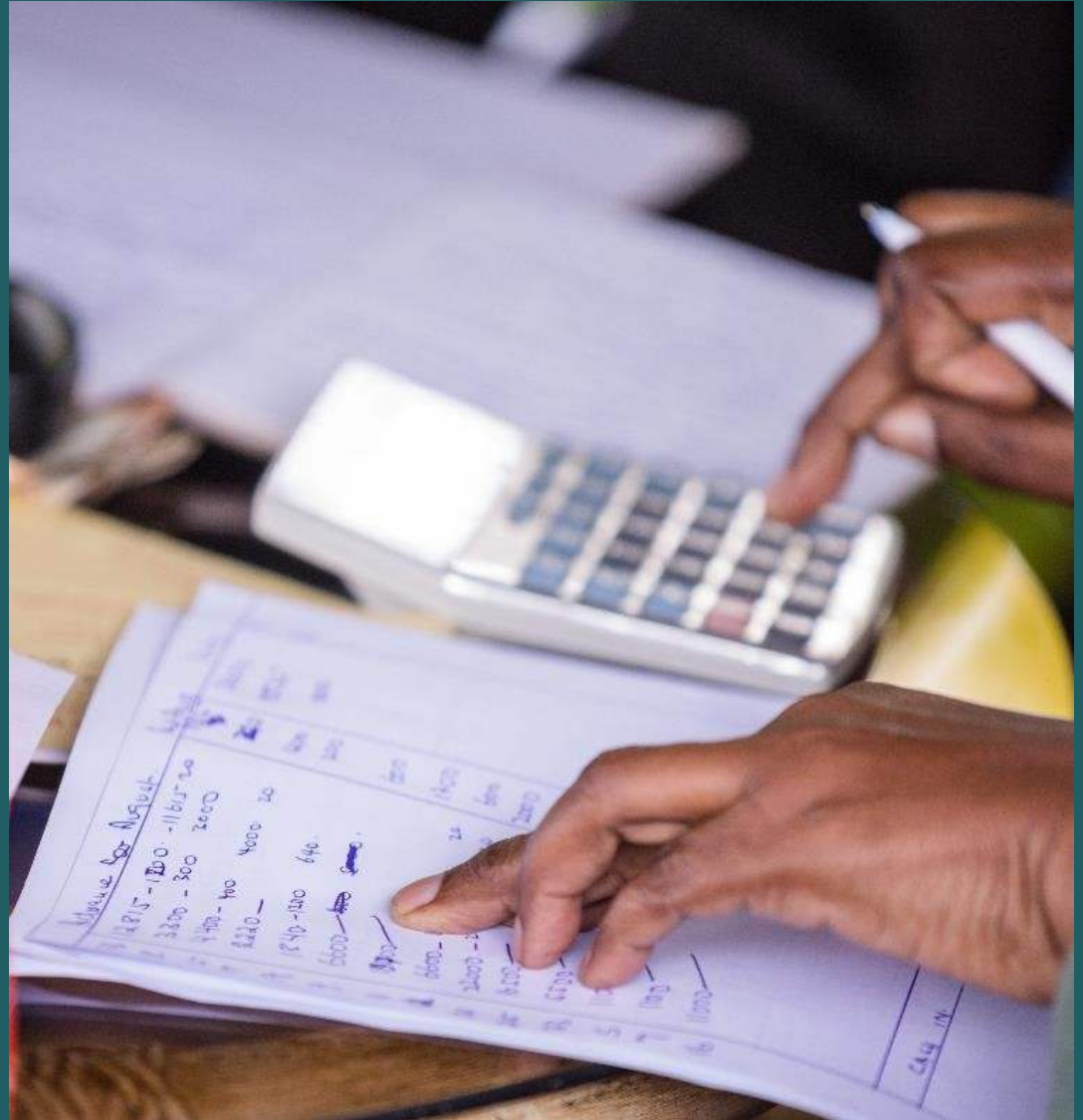
Waste Reduction

- Source reduction
- Food rescue/recovery
- Composting
- Reuse
- Recycling/Upcycling



Economic Benefits

- May lower your event costs
- Creates a market for green event products and services
- Cost savings from right-sizing your event
- Creates jobs



Environmental Benefits

- Reduces waste and diverts valuable commodities from the landfill and back into the recycling stream
- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions from landfills
- Creates healthy soils through composting

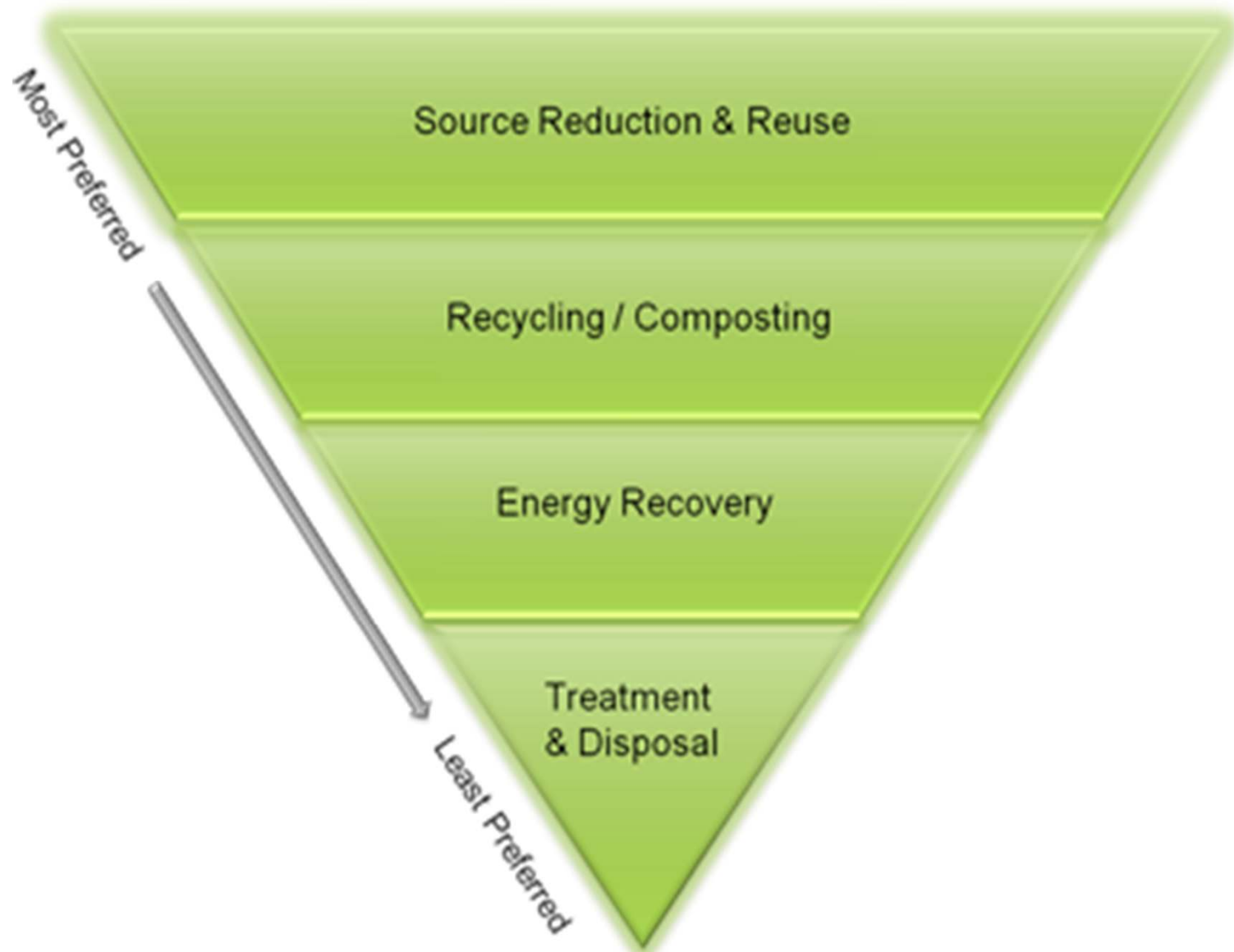


Social Benefits

- Promotes a positive image for the event, increases visibility and event turnout
- Shows leadership in waste reduction
- Increases public awareness about zero waste events and waste reduction



Waste Management Hierarchy





Food Recovery Hierarchy

Most Preferred

Source Reduction

Reduce the volume of surplus food generated

Feed Hungry People

Donate extra food to food banks, soup kitchens and shelters

Feed Animals

Divert food scraps to animal feed

Industrial Uses

Provide waste oils for rendering and fuel conversion and food scraps for digestion to recover energy

Composting

Create a nutrient-rich soil amendment

Landfill/ Incineration

Last resort to disposal

Least Preferred

Recycling

the process of collecting, sorting, and remanufacturing used items into new products



Recycling in Cuyahoga County

Materials that can be recycled in Cuyahoga County include metal cans, plastic bottles and jugs, paper, glass bottles and jars, and cardboard.

ALL recycled material should be empty and dry.

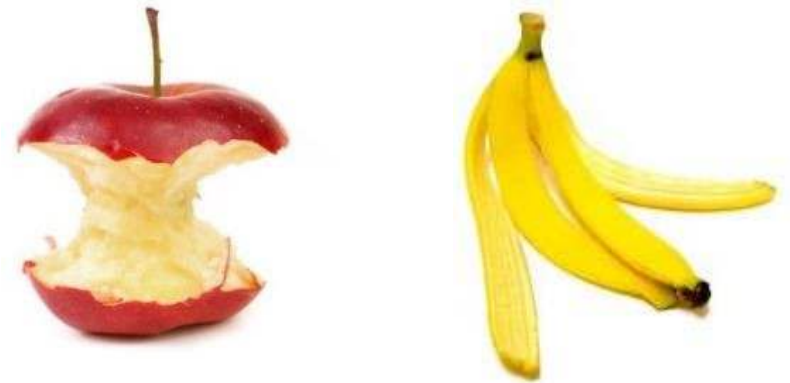
<https://cuyahogarecycles.org>



Compostable – Made of organic materials and requires special composting conditions to break down into usable compost (soil, mulch) and are usually shredded first before being added to compost piles



Biodegradable – Items that can break down and decompose into elements found in nature (CO_2 , H_2O , and biomass) within a reasonably short amount of time when they are exposed to air, moisture and bacteria



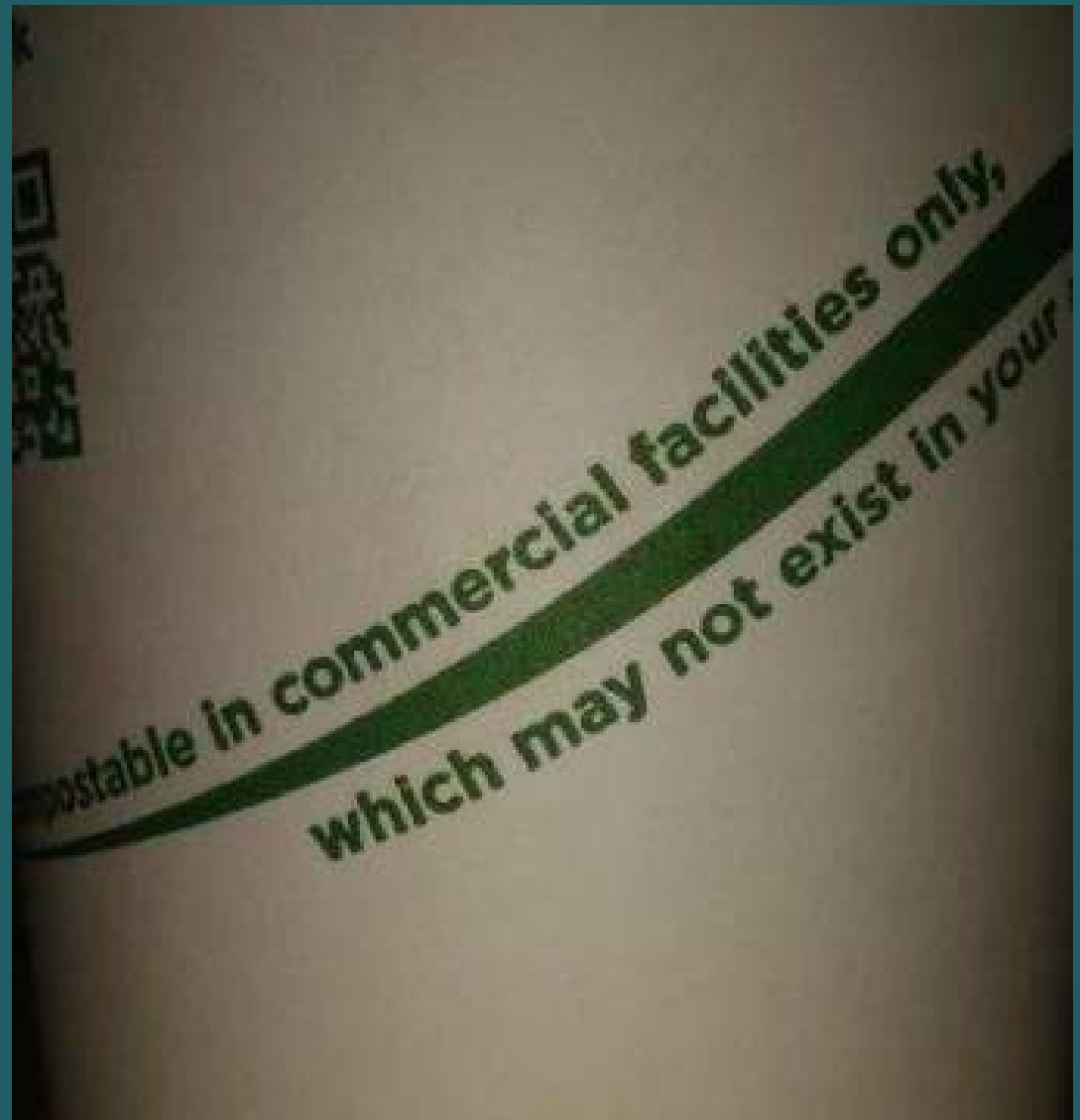
Composting- BPI Certification

BPI =

Biodegradable Products
Institute –

a third party certifier of
compostable materials

Must meet ASTM D6400
and ASTM D6868
standards for
composting in
commercial facilities



Compostable –Made of organic materials and requires special composting conditions to break down into usable compost (soil, mulch) and are usually shredded first before being added to compost piles



NOT ALL PRODUCTS LABELED COMPOSTABLE ARE BPI-CERTIFIED

ALL BPI-CERTIFIED PRODUCTS ARE COMMERCIALY COMPOSTABLE



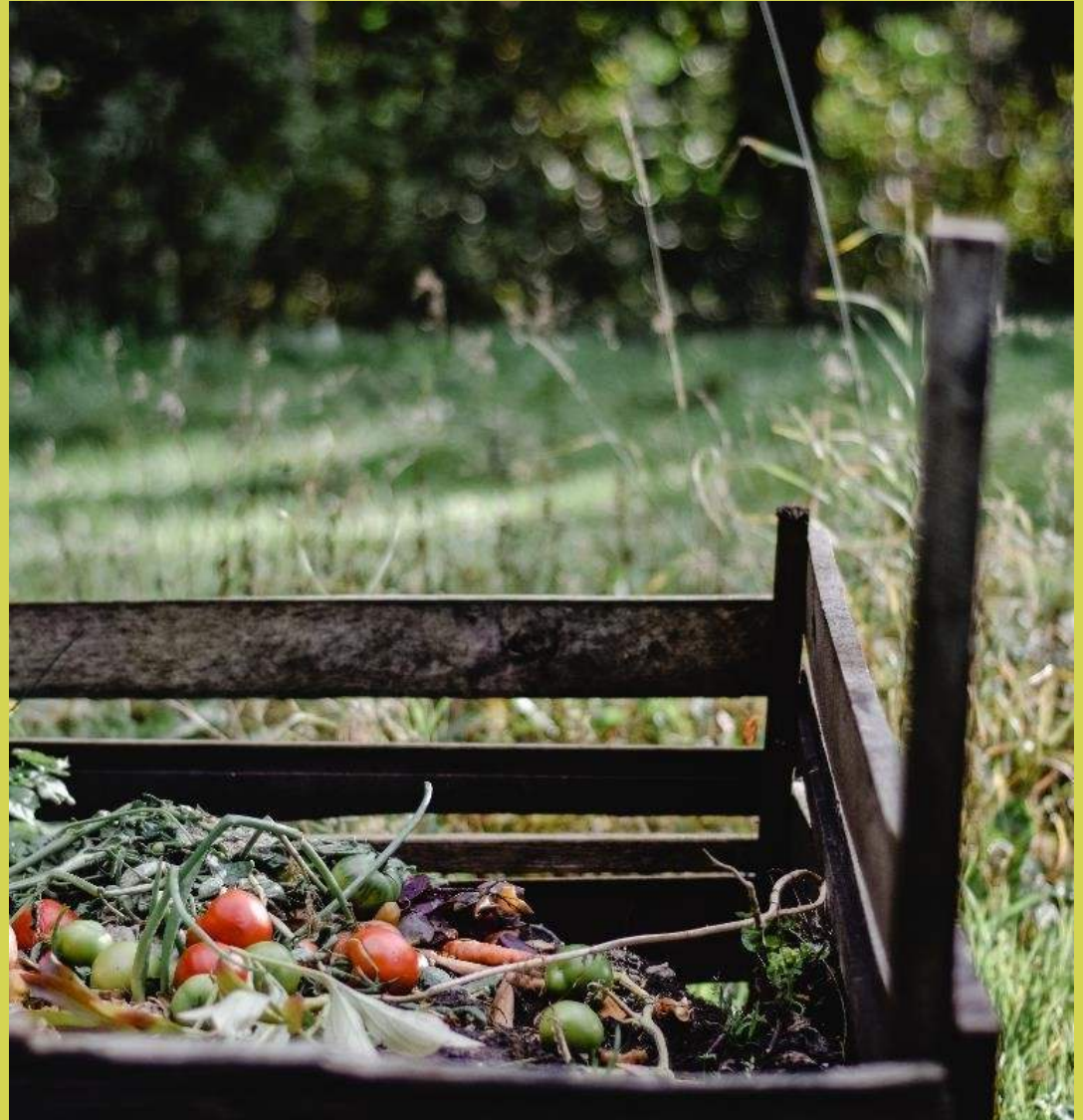
Backyard vs. Commercial Composting

Backyard composting may be the most convenient and cost-effective for small events

However, backyard composting is not recommended for meats, fish, fats, oils, grease or serviceware

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Commercial composting facilities use grinders and other technologies to ensure all organic waste is properly broken down



Any Event Can Be a Zero Waste Event



#1. Commitment

Decide that you would like to reduce or eliminate waste from your event and get buy-in from event leadership/stakeholders

(this is the most important step in the zero waste process)



Commitment

- Set a goal that is challenging, practical, and easily measured
- Identify a zero waste leader and zero waste team to champion the efforts

(this is VERY important)



Operations & Logistics

- Venue and vendors
- Determine all materials needed
- Stay within your budget
- Determine # stations and volunteers



Venue & Vendors

- Find a venue and vendors willing to work with you
- Look for venues that offer recycling/composting collections
- Find caterers that offer reusable or compostable serviceware and bulk food service
- Coordinate with your compost hauler as early as possible





- Designed for businesses, office, and residential buildings
- Healthy, fresh and energizing food options
- Affordable
- Contact free delivery in reusable packaging
- Boxed lunch catering

<https://www.harvestowl.com/>

Scott Himmel, Founder

(216) 672-0655



Materials Needed

- Determine the reusables, recyclables and compostables needed for the event
- Identify vendors
- Choose reusable when you can
- Use only BPI-certified compostables
- Confirm with your compost hauler what they can take



BPI®
Compostable
Cert #891051

Food Waste Streams

- Select foods that require little or no serviceware
- Offer condiments in bulk containers
- Only use BPI-certified compostable serviceware
- Consider donating uneaten food
- Be prepared with takeout containers for leftover food



Food Donations/ Rescue

- Coordinate food donations ahead of time
- Donor's liability covered under the Good Samaritan Act
- Do not donate
 - Bulging or dented cans
 - Spoiled or rotting food
 - Food that has been altered
 - Food that has not been in your control



HUNGER 
NETWORK

Waste Stations

- Identify the number of stations and volunteers needed
- Look at the flow of the event
- Limit the number of stations
- Receptacles can be donated
- Use buckets to collect liquid



Waste Station Signage

- Signage should be clear, concise and consistent
- Use text, photos and/or actual examples of materials
- Have an “I don’t know” bin for volunteers



Considering Compostables?

- Limited number of local haulers
- May be an increased cost
- Commercial haulers are strict about contamination rates
- Reminder: biodegradable is NOT equal to compostable



Volunteers

- Start recruiting long before the event
- Tap into local schools, places of worship and other volunteer organizations
- Prepare educational materials
- Limit the number of stations to reduce the number of volunteers needed



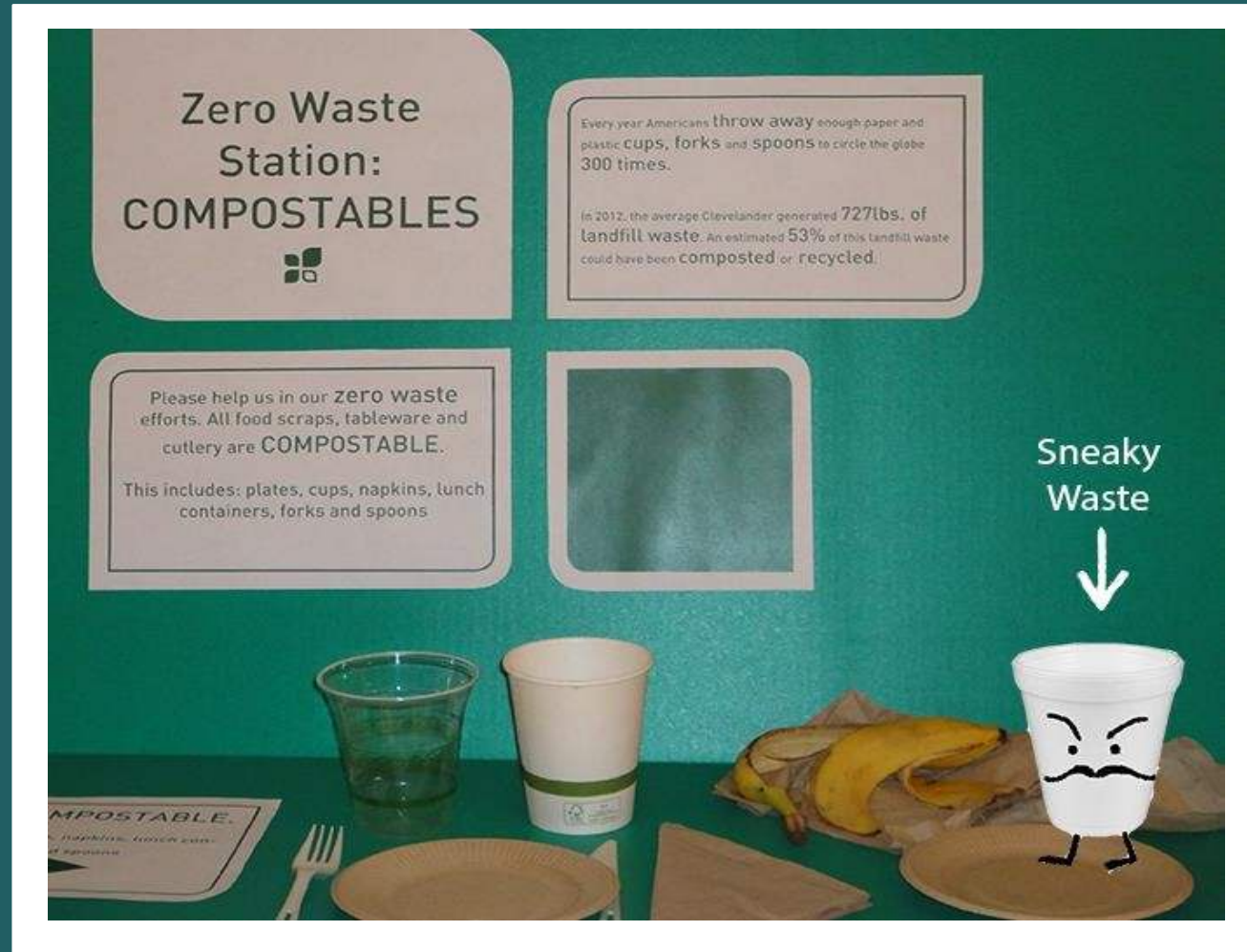
Communication

- Consider using electronic invitations
- Communicate with vendors and caterers – if necessary confirm in an agreement
- Update event marketing materials
- Include reminders throughout your planning and day of event



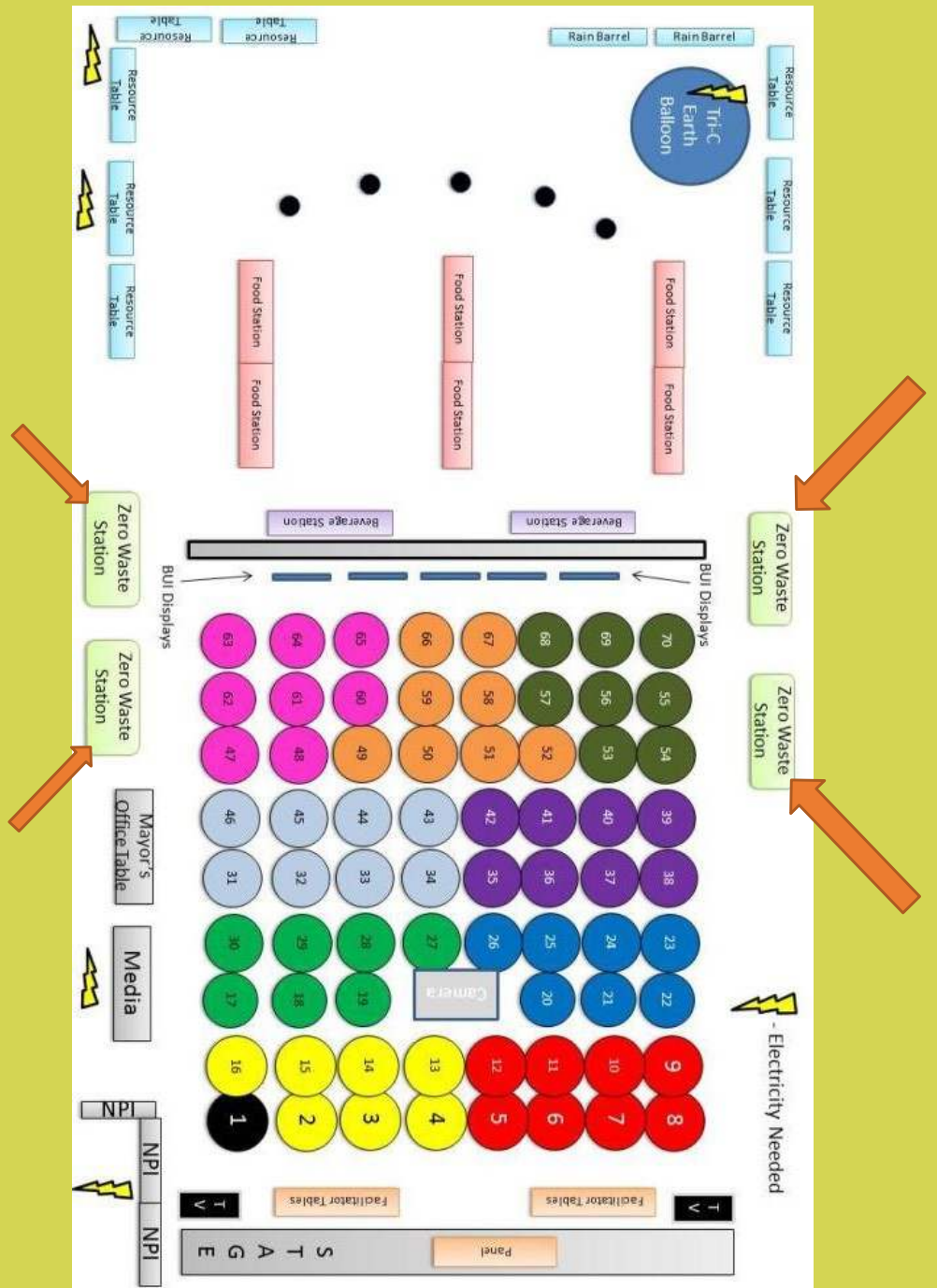
Day of Event

- Set up stations and signage
- Bucket for liquids
- Check in station for volunteers
- Check in with vendors and caterers
- Be prepared for “sneaky” waste



Day of Event

Locate stations near areas where waste is generated and consider limiting the number of waste stations to maximize volunteer coverage



Day of Event

- Keep extra bin liners and gloves at the waste stations
- Identify a location for collecting full bags/bins
- Measure and record amounts collected
- Make announcements throughout the event



Day of Event

- Plan for volunteer training
- Identify opportunities to train catering and/or housekeeping staff
- Refer to the ZW Volunteer Training Guide
- Understand COVID-specific safety protocols



Challenges & Solutions

**We were expecting 20
zero waste volunteers,
we only got 5 – what do
we do?**

- Don't panic
- Consolidate /eliminate stations
- Place stations close to heavy traffic
- “Deputize” all event participants as volunteers



Measure

- Measure compost, recycling, and waste generated
- Determine contamination rates
- Record and document
- Contact haulers for data



Celebrate

- Compare actual results to goals set
- Communicate accomplishments
- Learn for next time
- Give yourselves a pat on the back
- Share



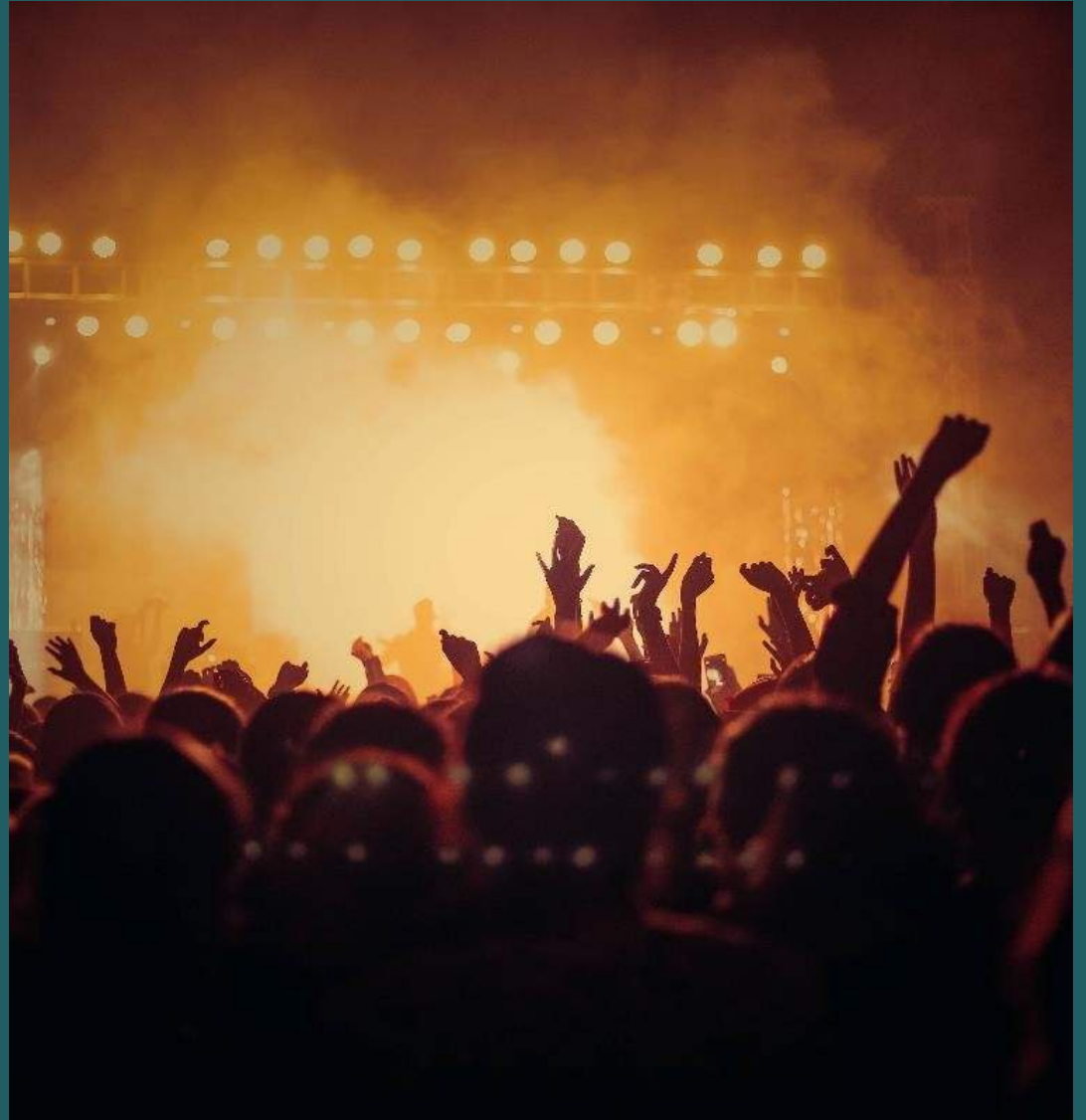
Follow UP & Next Steps

- What worked and what didn't
- Build off of your success
- Identify areas for improvement
- Take notes and photos
- Share with ZWNEO



Large Outdoor Events

- Unplanned waste is certain
- Communication is critical
- Attend all event planning meetings
- Discuss zero waste goals with vendors and exhibitors
- Have waste bins emptied beforehand
- Know who the waste hauler is
- Have enough volunteers
- Don't forget about Mother Nature



Unwanted waste streams

- Waste can be “sneaky”
- Check Local Recycling Resources in Appendix
- Have an “I don’t know” box
- Check <https://cuyahogarecycles.org>



Challenges & Solutions

It's the morning of our event and one of our vendors brought in plastic utensils that are NOT compostable or recyclable!

- Don't panic
- Make all volunteers aware
- Add a separate bag/bin
- Provide gloves to remove contamination



Decorations

- Plastic and single-use decorations should be avoided
- Opt for reusable decorations or decorations made from recycled or natural materials
- Avoid balloon releases, confetti/glitter, sky lanterns, and other polluting practices
- Try alternatives like bubbles or tree planting to keep your event memorable, without the waste



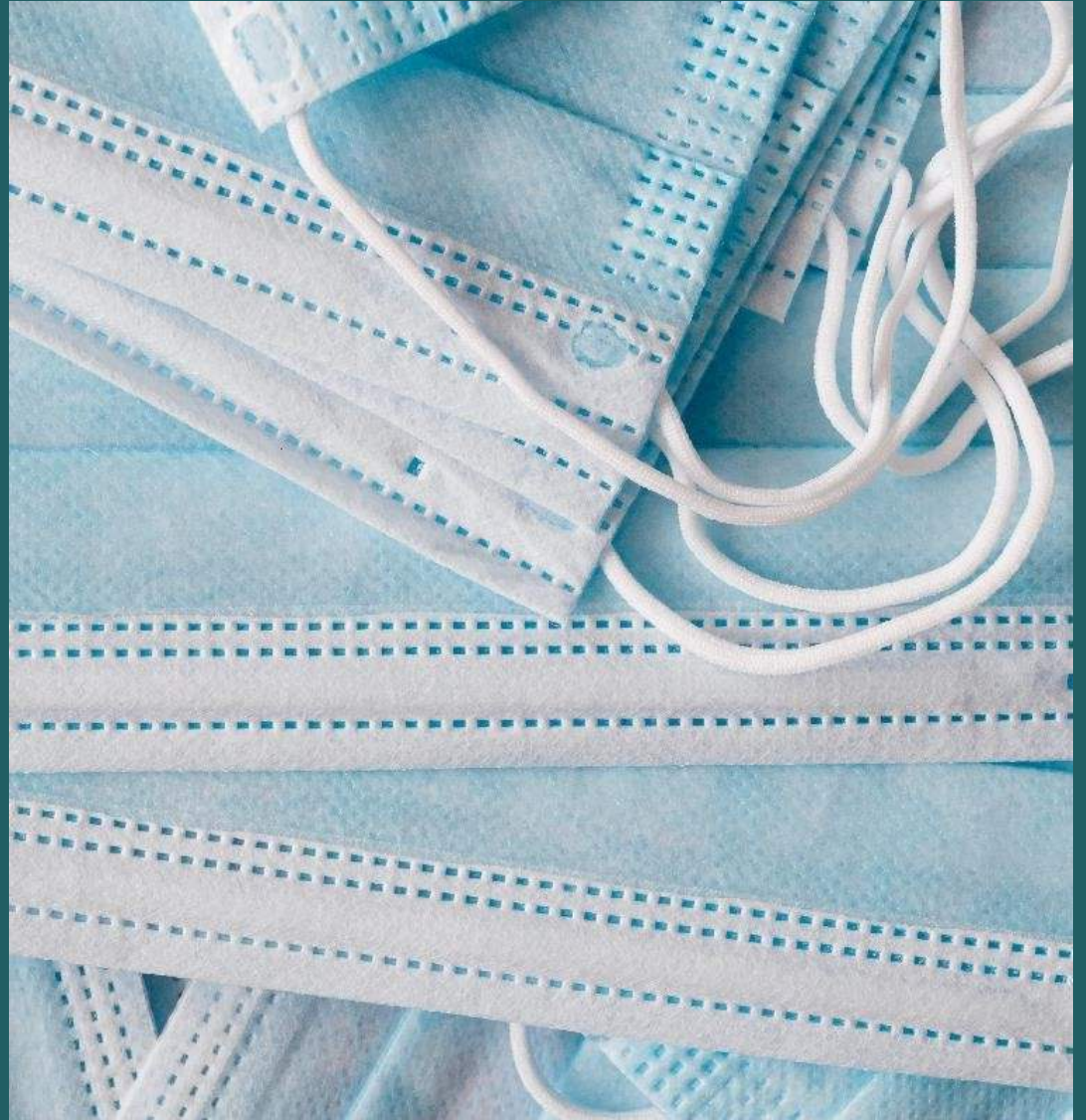
Ditch the Plastic Bottle

- An easy way to reduce waste at the source is to eliminate single use disposable water bottles at the event
- For larger and outdoor events, consider hiring a water distributor to supply water



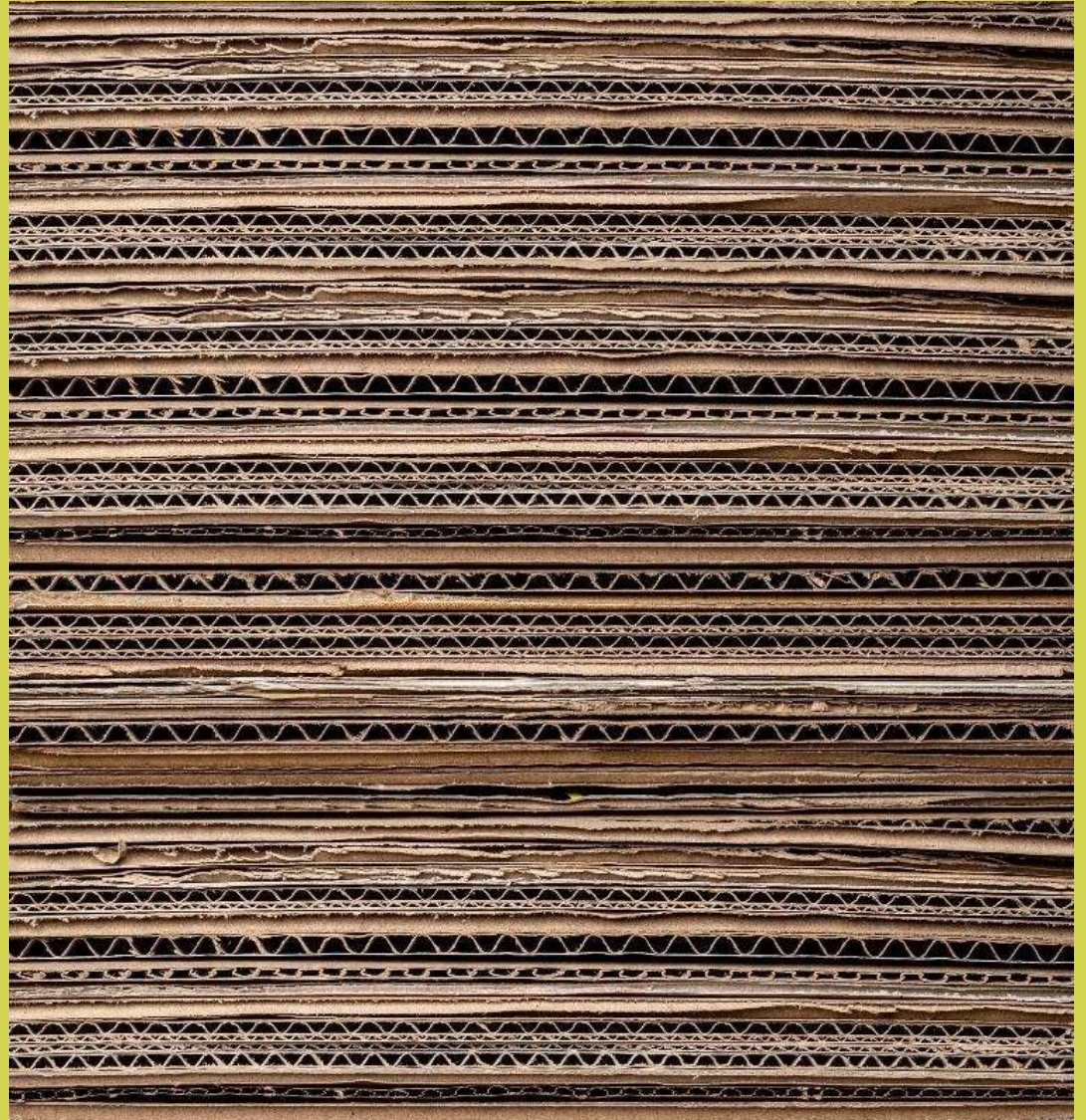
Health & Safety

- Check CDC website for updates
- Consider safe activities
- Include gloves and masks as a waste stream



Limited Time and Funds?

- You don't have to do it all!
- Pick one or two items to recycle as “low-hanging fruit”
- Borrow free recycling stations from CCSWD
- Review this Guide for more ideas
- Celebrate your successes
- Plan to eliminate more waste at your next event



Challenges & Solutions

We have a limited budget and can't afford to pay for recycling or compost hauling? Can we still reduce our event waste?

- Crunch the numbers
- Reach out for sponsorships or partnerships
- Explore wholesale or discount pricing with your compost hauler



APPENDICES

1. Local Composting and Food Recovery Resources
2. Local Recycling Resources
3. Compostable Serviceware Vendors
4. Water Suppliers
5. Sample Agreement Letter for Partners
6. Zero Waste Volunteer Roles
7. Printable Waste Tracking Sheet



Connect with the ZeroWasteNEO Working Group for zero waste event support

Join the ZeroWasteNEO Working Group and/or email list to stay connected on all things waste reduction in Northeast Ohio.

Doreen Schreiber (dschreiber@cuyahogacounty.gov)

Be sure to check out
cuyahogarecycles.org/zero_waste_goals/
for information and resources to help you plan your zero or
reduced waste event, including a printable checklist and
volunteer training tools.



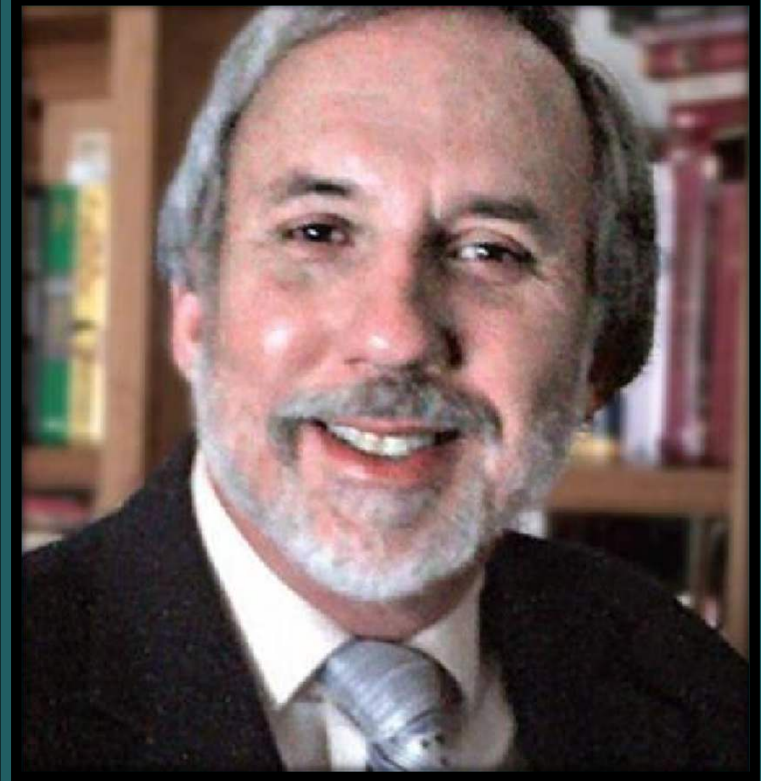
Resources

CuyahogaRecycles.org

cuyahogarecycles.org/zero_waste_goals/

bpiworld.org

Why Zero Waste?



If you're not for zero waste, how much waste are you for?
- Gary Liss

THANK YOU!!!

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