A zero waste event is one in which organizers emphasize reusable, recyclable, or compostable materials in order to minimize landfill-bound waste from the event. While “zero waste” is the common term for these events, most zero waste events are considered a success if they can divert 90% of event waste from the landfill. In reality, any waste that can be diverted from the waste stream and in favor of being reused or recycled is a victory. Every little bit counts!

In 2012 Americans generated 251 million tons of trash, but only composted or recycled 87 million tons of it, sending 164 million tons of trash to landfills. The EPA estimates that 21% of this trash was food waste, while recyclable plastics and paper made up an additional 39%. Essentially, the majority of material sent to U.S. landfills could be reused, recycled, or composted instead of sitting in a landfill, which takes up valuable land space, generates greenhouse gases, and often causes groundwater contamination when landfill liners crack. Additionally, materials inside landfills take hundreds of years to break down, which means that future generations will be impacted by the waste we generate today.

STEP ONE:
PLAN FOR MINIMAL WASTE AT THE EVENT

Determine the event format
Trays of sandwiches, deli meats, and other food served buffet-style result in less waste overall than boxed lunches, and buffet trays can be reused or recycled.

Eliminate single-serving/single-use items

- Think through the menu to determine if there are any products that a caterer could serve as single-use items, such as condiment packets and foil wrapped-butter, or non-compostable materials, such as plastic coffee stirrers, candy wrappers, chip bags, and creamer. Items such as condiments, butter, and creamer can be served in bulk; plastic coffee stirrers can be replaced with wooden stirrers, which are compostable.
- While some single serving products are recyclable, the less sorting that people have to do, the better. Try to stick to familiar recyclable items, such as cups and beverage containers, and make the rest compostable or reusable.

Determine your serviceware needs

- Consider all the serviceware you will need, including individual settings like plates, bowls, cups, utensils, and napkins; table decorations and table coverings; and dishes, trays and utensils for serving food.
- Determine whether you will use reusable, compostable or recyclable serviceware. Avoid Styrofoam (expanded polystyrene) as it is a landfill item.
  - Reusable serviceware is ideal to minimize waste.
  - Compostable serviceware is a good option but check that it has been certified by the non-profit Biodegradable Products Institute.
  - If you choose recyclable serviceware, be sure it is recyclable. Some serviceware looks like plastic, but it can contain Styrofoam, making it a landfill item. Check for the chasing arrows recycling symbol on containers and plates. UVA Recycling can accept all numbers of plastic, so any number inside the chasing arrows is acceptable. UVA Recycling also accepts plastic bags, saran wrap, plastic utensils, and plastic stirrers.
  - Consider the event format when selecting serviceware. If guests will be bussing their own plates, it might be best to use compostable serviceware so that guests don’t have to scrape plates. However, if the event is a sit-down dinner, then reusable serviceware is a good option, since the catering staff can be instructed to scrape plates into the compost.
POTLUCK EVENT

If individuals in the group are providing food and service-ware, let them know that the event will be zero waste and explain what that means, so they can buy supplies accordingly.

CATERED EVENT

- If using caterers, contact potential caterers well in advance to determine if they are able to help make the event zero waste and if there will be additional costs. They may also need time to procure supplies if they don’t have them on hand.
  - If using UVA Catering, notify the Event Coordinator that the event will be zero waste.
  - For a list of local zero waste caterers, see last page of this guide.
- Communicate your specific needs to the caterers:
  - Tell the caterer to avoid using any individual, single-use servings, such as condiment packets and foil wrapped-butter, and any non-compostable materials like plastic coffee stirrers, candy wrappers, chip bags, and individual creamer containers.
  - Specify the type of serviceware you would like to use for both individual settings and for presenting and serving food on buffet tables. Reusable serviceware is best, but compostable serviceware may be more appropriate depending on your event.

If you have questions about whether material can be composted or not, contact Black Bear at 888-666-4172.

STEP TWO: CONTACT CATERERS OR THE PEOPLE WHO WILL BE PROVIDING FOOD
**MEET WITH THE SPACE COORDINATOR AT THE EVENT LOCATION**

Reserve the event location and inform the space coordinator that the event will be zero waste in case any accommodations need to be made with housekeeping staff.

**CREATE A WASTE STATION PLAN**

- Visit the location of the event several weeks in advance to determine what type of waste bins already exist in the space. You may need to order recycling bins and trash bins depending on the location.

- Consider where you will locate your bins, keeping in mind that the more waste stations you have, the more volunteers you will need. It is best to keep your waste stations to as few as possible.

- It is important to co-locate your bins so that every waste station includes a bin for recycling, compost, and landfill items if it is unavoidable to have some material that cannot be recycled or composted.

**DETERMINE SIGNAGE NEEDS**

- Every waste station should have signage that clearly indicates which bin is for recycling, compost and landfill.

- Think about where the signage will be posted. Is there wall space to hang signs or will they need to be attached to the bins?

- UVA Recycling can provide signage for recycling, composting and landfill items that can be attached to a bin. Please let UVA Recycling know when you set up your event that you will require signage.

- At the end of this guide we provide examples of signage for zero waste events if you would like to print your own.

**CONSIDER THE AESTHETICS OF THE BINS**

If you do not want to use the large compost bins on the floor of the event, determine which existing trash cans can be converted to compost bins for your event.

*Compostable bags from UVA Recycling and appropriate signage can turn any bin into a compost bin.*
ON GROUNDS EVENTS: CALL UVa RECYCLING
434-982-5050 | recycling@virginia.edu

- Contact UVA Recycling to request compost and recycling bins for events at UVA:
  - Number of expected attendees
  - Date, time and event location
  - Event caterer
  - List of materials being used at the event
  - Waste signage requirements
  - Number of zero waste volunteers, if needed

UVa Recycling will transport bins to the event and pick them up after the event, so confirm a pick up time for bins. There is no fee for recycling bins.

ARRANGE FOR TRASH SERVICES
434-924-1777 | https://www.fm.virginia.edu/services/grounds.html

- If it is unavoidable to have material at the event that cannot be reused, recycled, or composted, trash services can be arranged online through UVA Facilities, Grounds and Landscaping Services. There is a fee for this service.
- Trash service is not needed for locations with pre-existing trash cans.

STEP FOUR: ARRANGE FOR WASTE STATION BINS

Contact UVa Recycling to request compost and recycling bins for events at UVA:
- Number of expected attendees
- Date, time and event location
- Event caterer
- List of materials being used at the event
- Waste signage requirements
- Number of zero waste volunteers, if needed

UVa Recycling will transport bins to the event and pick them up after the event, so confirm a pick up time for bins. There is no fee for recycling bins.

If it is unavoidable to have material at the event that cannot be reused, recycled, or composted, trash services can be arranged online through UVA Facilities, Grounds and Landscaping Services. There is a fee for this service.

Trash service is not needed for locations with pre-existing trash cans.
STEP FIVE: PREPARE FOR THE DAY OF EVENT

SOLICIT VOLUNTEERS

- If attendees will be bussing their plates, you will need volunteers to stand near compost bins to help attendees sort their waste and a volunteer who can work with the caterers to ensure that waste is sorted properly.

  Black Bear Composting cannot accept compostable material that has been contaminated by non-compostable (trash or recycling) items, so it is crucial that event organizers staff each waste station with volunteers to help event attendees sort their waste. If the collected compost is contaminated, an additional contamination fee will be charged for each bin.

PURCHASE DISPOSABLE GLOVES

- Volunteers will need gloves to help protect their hands if they have to fish out items from compost or recycling bins.

prepare signs

- If you have not ordered signs from UVA Recycling, create signs. Take pictures of items that will be served, or secure actual items to the signs above each bin to help patrons sort their waste.

- At the end of this guide, there are sample signs that you are welcome to use or to get ideas from for your signs.

Congratulations

You are ready for your zero waste event!
Zero Waste Event checklist
Contact UVA Recycling to set up Zero Waste Stations: 434-982-5050 recycling@virginia.edu

Plan for Minimal Waste at the Event

☐ Create a food set up plan that will be functional for your event while minimizing waste
  ☐ Reusable serviceware? Ensure all food waste is captured in compost bins.
  ☐ Disposable serviceware? Purchase all compostable ware if attendees are bussing their plates, but if using recyclable serviceware, make sure all food waste is scraped into the compost bin before recycling the serviceware.
☐ Select a caterer that will work towards your zero waste goal
☐ Eliminate single-serving and single-use items
☐ Coordinate with space coordinator and housekeeping staff on zero waste plan
☐ Plan the locations and signage of waste stations, including food prep areas
☐ Solicit volunteers and purchase disposable gloves for staffing waste stations, if attendees are bussing their plates
☐ Call UVA Recycling at least 2 weeks before the event to arrange waste stations

Day of Event Preparations

☐ Bring signs and materials to hang signs, such as tape, zip ties, and string
☐ Supply gloves for volunteers who will be staffing the waste stations
☐ Have cell phone numbers of volunteers and UVA Recycling
☐ At each station include a recycling bin, compost bin, and trash can unless you have determined there will be no trash. Eliminate any stray trash cans where people could accidentally throw out compostable or recyclable items.
☐ Post signs at all stations, labeling each of the bins.
☐ For catered events, talk to the event catering manager and facility event staff to ensure everyone who is handling waste knows where it goes.
☐ For potluck events, explain to guests the nature of the event and describe how waste should be handled.

Tie Up Loose Ends After Event Ends

☐ Check that all leftover food has been disposed of in the compost bins.
☐ Place the compost bins, any additional compost bags, and signage in the area where they were dropped off.
☐ Place recycling bins in the location you have arranged with the space coordinator.
CATERERS
WHO WILL SUPPORT ZERO WASTE EVENTS

Sticks- (434) 295-5262
Crooked Trail Food Truck - crookedtrailsinc@gmail.com
Feast - (434) 284-7800
Little John's - (434) 977-0588
Harvest Moon Catering - (434) 296-9091
Mellow Mushroom - (434) 972-9366
Panera Bread - (434) 245-6192
Revolutionary Soup - (434) 296-7687
Slice - (434) 977-5423
Take It Away - (434) 295-1899
UVA Medical Center Catering - (434) 924-8143
Virginia Catering Company - (434) 924-8812
Wayside - (434) 977-5000
Zazus Fresh Grille - (434) 293-3454

This list is not exhaustive. Please share the names of other caterers who should be added to this list! Email sustainability@virginia.edu
Compost

Please put the following items into the bin below:
- Food Scraps
- Paper Napkins
- Paper Plates
- Utensils
- Coffee Cups & Lids
COMPOSTABLE SERVICEWARE EXAMPLES

If you are looking for compostable serviceware for your event, consider the following options. Be sure to check that all compostable serviceware is BPI certified so that it will break down in an industrial composting facility, such as Black Bear Composting.

6" Fork - Plantware® High-Heat Utensils

Fully compostable Plantware® forks are now even stronger, but still 100% renewable
Item Code: EP-8012

12 oz. Sugarcane Bowl

12 oz. Sugarcane Bowls work with everything from soup to cereal.
Item Code: EP-Bl12

Click Here for Larger Image

Check out now

Click Here for Larger Image

Check out now
9 inch 3-Compartment Sugarcane Plate

Disposabre 9 inch, 3 compartment dinner plates made from sugarcane. Stronger than traditional paper plates and made from better materials.

Item Code: EP-PP93

Fulfilled By: ECO PRODUCTS

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<tr>
<td>Save: 10%</td>
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- add to cart
check out now

6” Spoon - Plantware® High-Heat Utensils

Heat tolerant Plantware® spoons that can be composted – a more sustainable choice.

Item Code: EP-SF13

Fulfilled By: ECO PRODUCTS

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<td>Save: 10%</td>
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check out now

12 oz. GreenStripe® Cold Cup

12 ounces of fully compostable, single use cold cups.

Item Code: EP-CC12-GS

Fulfilled By: ECO PRODUCTS

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</table>

- add to cart
check out now

Highlight:
Drink from an eco-friendly plastic cold cup. Great for wine or mixed beverages.

- 500 ct. convenience case contains 10 printed sleeve of 50 cups labeled for resale

12 oz. GreenStripe® Hot Cup

Lined with ingeo™ instead of ingeo™lastic, these renewable hot cups just might save the world (we hope).

Item Code: EP-BHC12-GS

Fulfilled By: ECO PRODUCTS

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</tbody>
</table>

- add to cart
check out now

Highlight:
Lined with PLA instead of plastic, these renewable hot cups just might save the world (we hope).

- Use lid EP-ECOUD-W