



ZERObyFIFTY

Missoula's Pathway To Zero Waste



ZERO WASTE EVENT TOOLKIT



Home ReSource

A Community Sustainability Center

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cover photo: Logjam Presents Mumford & Sons at Ogren Park by Jeremy Drake



ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is designed for anyone interested in hosting a Zero Waste event.

Events have the potential to generate a lot of waste. They are also a great opportunity to educate and engage citizens. The good news is event organizers and vendors in Missoula have been making changes to help reduce the amount of waste generated at local events. In doing so, they are supporting Missoula's Zero Waste movement.

Across the community, events are implementing measures—from minimizing single-use disposables to promoting reusables to providing the opportunity to recycle and compost—in an effort to move the City of Missoula toward its ZERO by FIFTY goal to reduce 90 percent of solid waste by 2050.

This toolkit is a compilation of tips and resources specific to Missoula. It includes a handy checklist, specific recommendations, local service providers, and several other ideas that we hope you find useful.

Happy event planning!

ZERO WASTE EVENT CHECKLIST

Refer to this checklist to get a sense of the scope of actions involved in planning a Zero Waste event. For more details on each bullet point, refer to the *Recommendations* section.

BEFORE YOUR EVENT

- SET A **GOAL**
- FIND A **LOCATION** FOR THE EVENT
- ESTABLISH A **VENDOR AGREEMENT** AND FIND VENDORS
- ESTABLISH A PLAN FOR **FOOD RESCUE**
- PREPARE **ZERO WASTE STATIONS** WITH SIGNAGE
- SET UP **COLLECTION SERVICE**
- BUILD A VOLUNTEER **GREEN TEAM** OF ZERO WASTE AMBASSADORS
- PREPARE **ADDITIONAL SIGNAGE** TO EDUCATE ATTENDEES ABOUT YOUR ZERO WASTE EVENT
- ESTABLISH A PLAN FOR **DRINKING WATER**
- CONSIDER OTHER WAYS TO **REDUCE** MATERIALS USE AND AVOID WASTE
- INCLUDE IN YOUR **MEDIA PLAN** INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR ZERO WASTE EFFORTS

DURING YOUR EVENT

- SET UP A **"ZERO WASTE ZONE"**
- PROVIDE SUFFICIENTLY ACCESSIBLE **ZERO WASTE STATIONS**
- DISABLE ALL **EXISTING TRASH CANS**
- STAFF ZERO WASTE STATIONS WITH **ZERO WASTE AMBASSADORS**
- ENSURE **VENDORS, VOLUNTEERS, & STAFF ARE AWARE** OF ZERO WASTE STATION LOCATIONS
- DOCUMENT YOUR **ZERO WASTE EFFORTS**

AFTER YOUR EVENT

- IMMEDIATELY **IMPLEMENT FOOD RESCUE** PLAN
- CONGRATULATE YOURSELF & YOUR TEAM** FOR HOSTING A ZERO WASTE EVENT!
- CALCULATE, MEASURE, **CELEBRATE**, AND **COMMUNICATE** YOUR RESULTS
- ASK FOR **FEEDBACK** FROM BOTH VENDORS AND ATTENDEES

RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, we have detailed steps toward planning a Zero Waste event.

BEFORE

Set a goal

- Hosting a completely Zero Waste event is really difficult. If this is your first event, set yourself up for success by identifying a Zero Waste goal that you believe you can achieve. It could be as simple as offering reusable food serviceware at your office party or as ambitious as you want.
- If you plan regular or seasonal events, consider moving further toward Zero Waste each time so that you can build upon past successes and avoid taking on too much too soon.
- Determine what metrics you will use to track progress toward your goal with an understanding that different efforts may require different tracking methods. For example, tracking waste reduction through recycling and/or composting will be different than tracking waste reduction through source reduction (using less stuff) or reuse.

Find a location for the event

- Consider venues that already have Zero Waste systems in place, such as reusable food serviceware or access to composting and recycling, or venues that are interested in helping make your event Zero Waste.
- Consult the **Zero Waste Conscious Venues** section for ideas.



GOAL SETTING: RIVER CITY ROOTS FESTIVAL

The annual River City Roots Festival has been making strides toward Zero Waste for several years now. Their approach to goal setting has largely been focused on materials (e.g. no single use plastic straws, no plastic bags, no polystyrene). Setting a goal to restrict non-compostable, non-recyclable materials is a key waste prevention goal that may be worth considering. Other goals to consider include reduction in volume/weight of the landfill-bound discards. Such metrics-based goals could be incremental from year to year based on your own aspirations or aligned with the ZERO by FIFTY goals and waste reduction targets (*pictured at right*).

ZERO by FIFTY Waste Reduction Targets

Goal:
90% by 2050

Target 1:
30% or better by 2025

Target 2:
40% or better by 2030

Target 3:
60% or better by 2040

“Zero Waste...or darn near”

Eric Lombardi. Eco-Cycle International. Boulder, CO.

Photo of Missoula Compost Collection bins at the 2019 River City Roots Festival by Jeremy Drake

Establish a vendor agreement and find vendors

- Determine what Zero Waste specifications you want your event vendors to comply with and create a vendor agreement. Here is a [ZERO by FIFTY vendor notice](#) from the Missoula Downtown Association, and here is a [sample zero waste vendor agreement](#) from Eco-Cycle.
- Communicate with potential vendors about your Zero Waste aspirations and send them the vendor agreement.
- Choose vendors who are willing to comply with Zero Waste specifications. Vendors willing to comply with your Zero Waste specifications will go a long way to ensuring a successful Zero Waste event. For example, if all vendors use exclusively BPI-certified compostable food serviceware, attendees and volunteers will have an easier time understanding how to use Zero Waste Stations and chances of contamination are greatly reduced.

Establish a plan for food rescue

- Know ahead of time what you will be doing with the surplus food items, this will help prevent wasted food.
- See **Resources** section for food rescue options.

Prepare Zero Waste Stations with signage

- Determine the appropriate number of bins for each station. Will you have only Recycle and Landfill? Compost, Recycle, and Landfill? Will you want attendees to source separate plastic bottles and aluminum cans? Will you be using reusable food serviceware?
- A fleet of portable, color-coordinated Zero Waste Stations—Recycle, Compost, and Landfill—are available on loan to events wishing to reduce their waste. Email Charlotte Psick PsickC@ci.missoula.mt.us for information about how to use the stations for your next event.
- Create signs for Zero Waste Stations. Basic ZERO by FIFTY-branded signs can be downloaded [here](#). You can also download ZERO by FIFTY sign templates with images to make custom signs. If you choose to create signs from scratch, please consider including the [ZERO by FIFTY logo](#).
- Having signs on all of the Zero Waste Stations is very important. It is helpful to show exactly which event-specific items can be recycled or composted and which ones must be landfilled.



Photo of City Zero Waste Stations at the 2020 Big Sky Documentary Film Festival by Olivia Lease

Set up collection service

- If your event is large and requires services beyond what the venue typically offers, determine what services you will need and contract that service with an appropriate collection plan.
- See the **Resources** section for a list of local collection service providers.
- Ensure back-end infrastructure is in place such as dumpsters or other bins as needed.

Build a volunteer Green Team of Zero Waste Ambassadors

- Engage community members as event volunteers to help with your event.
- Decide how best to train Zero Waste Ambassadors, either by meeting prior to the event or meeting at the event.
- Determine the scope of their activities such as set-up/clean-up, maintenance, attendee education.
- See the **Zero Waste Volunteer Guide** section for more on how to recruit and manage a team of Zero Waste Ambassadors.

Prepare additional signage to educate attendees about your Zero Waste event

- Create signs that are fun and educational.
- Create informative signs, such as table tent cards or “Zero Waste Zone” sandwich boards.
- Create wayfinding signs to orient patrons to the location of Zero Waste Station and services like bottle-filling stations.
- Recognize Zero Waste vendors to applaud and educate patrons about their commitment.

Establish a plan for drinking water

- Encourage guests to bring their own refillable water bottles or make reusable cups available.
- Rent a water fill station.
- See locally-available water options in the **Resources** section.

Consider other ways to reduce materials use and avoid waste

- If gifts will be exchanged or goody bags given out at your event, consider Zero Waste options such as gift certificates to local establishments, vouchers or discount codes, coupons, e-books, seeds, or digital gift bags.
- Use reusable decorations, like paper lanterns instead of balloons. Rent decorations from local event rental businesses instead of purchasing disposable decorations.
- If serving alcohol, consider providing beer kegs and reusable cups instead of bottles and cans.
- Consider discounts to patrons who use past commemorative cups from annual events.
- Consider your Zero Waste goal in your merchandise choices. Try to sell items that are durable, likely to be reused, thrifted, locally-made, and/or made out of recycled materials.
- More tips for reducing and reusing at events in the **Reduce, Reuse, Recycle** section.

Include in your media plan information about your Zero Waste efforts

- Help make people aware beforehand that your event is going to be a Zero Waste event and how they can contribute or participate.
- If applicable, make on-stage announcements about the Zero Waste aspects of your event.
- Use these tags on social media: #ZERObyFIFTY and #zerowastemissoula.

DURING

Set up a “Zero Waste Zone”

- At large events, you might consider designating a section of the event as a “Zero Waste Zone” where all the Zero Waste stations and food vendors will be set up.

Provide sufficiently accessible Zero Waste Stations

- Zero Waste stations provide people access to waste reduction solutions at the point of disposal. The most basic station is a recycling bin paired with a garbage can. Where appropriate, a third bin for composting is present. Sometimes a liquid disposal bin is also provided to reduce contamination and keep recycling clean. Events where durable food serviceware is utilized (plates, cups, utensils, cloth napkins) can also provide collection bins for those items.
- Some Zero Waste stations provide users the opportunity to source-separate into multiple streams such as paper, bottles and cans, food scraps and food-soiled paper, and more.
- The City of Missoula is leading by example by co-locating recycling bins with garbage cans at Fort Missoula Regional Park and has a fleet of Zero Waste Stations available to loan. Email PsickC@ci.missoula.mt.us to reach Charlotte Psick for information about how to use the stations for your next event.

Disable all existing trash cans

- The only accessible disposal bins should be part of the Zero Waste stations.
- This step can reduce confusion about where to dispose of items and facilitate proper separation of discards.

Staff Zero Waste stations with Zero Waste Ambassadors

- Green Team volunteers at the Zero Waste Stations can answer questions and help direct proper disposal thereby reducing the need to sort through bins to remove contaminants from the compost or recycling streams.
- If not enough volunteers are available to be paired with each Zero Waste Station, schedule volunteers to circle the event area with gloves and grabbers to sort contaminants and keep the stations clean. Headlamps are essential for nighttime shifts.
- See the **Zero Waste Volunteer Guide** section to learn more about recruiting and managing Zero Waste event volunteers.

Ensure vendors, volunteers, and staff are aware of Zero Waste Station locations

- Post a large map of Zero Waste Station bin locations near food areas.
- Setting up a public map of bin locations within the Zero Waste Zone is helpful for both guests and vendors. Give each vendor a copy of the map to keep with them as well.

Document your Zero Waste efforts

- Take photographs of set-up, Zero Waste Ambassadors, patrons using Zero Waste stations and services and any other images that will help you tell the story of your Zero Waste event.

AFTER

Immediately implement food rescue plan

- Proper food rescue can be time sensitive, so plan accordingly.
- Food rescue resources at zerobyfiftymissoula.com/event-resources

Congratulate yourself and your team for hosting a Zero Waste event!

- Hosting a Zero Waste event takes a lot of planning and work. Recognize that your efforts have made a difference in Missoula and have contributed to ZERO by FIFTY.
- Reflect on what went well and opportunities for improvement for when you begin to plan your next Zero Waste event!

Calculate, measure, celebrate, and communicate your results

- One common metric is “diversion rate” or what you kept from going to the landfill through recycling and/or composting:

Diversion Rate = total weight of Diverted Discards / total weight of All Discards

Diverted Discards are materials captured for recycling and/or composting

All Discards includes landfill-bound discards as well as diverted discards

- Keep in mind that the diversion rate formula will not capture your source reduction and/or reuse efforts, so you may want to consider additional metrics to track those.

Ask for feedback from both vendors and attendees

- This will help you understand what was successful and what needs to be improved.

REDUCE

Avoid disposable or short-lived freebies, party favors, handouts, and gifts.

*Check out Post-Landfill Action Network's **Swag Hierarchy** for ideas, tips, and tricks!*

Zero Waste swag ideas: gift certificates to local establishments, vouchers or discount codes, coupons, e-books, seeds, & digital gift bags.

Plan event activities that don't require material items, or rent games & activity equipment.

Prepare an appropriate amount of food.

REUSE

Decorate with repurposed and reusable items (disco balls, lanterns & string lights, potted plants, etc.). Rent or borrow whenever possible.

For smaller events without vendors, use reusable dishware.

Encourage guests to bring reusable water bottles.

Bring surplus food home, send home with guests or donate applicable items.

Set up a table for guests to return badge/ID holders, lanyards, site maps, freebies, and other items that can be reused at future events.

Consider your Zero Waste goal in your merchandise choices.

RECYCLE

Compost all food scraps, food-soiled paper, and BPI-certified food serviceware.

Recycle all materials that can be.

Currently recyclable materials in Missoula: plastics #1 & #2, metal, paper, cardboard, glass (with special collection).

List of Missoula service providers at zerobyfiftymissoula.com/service-providers

More Reduce, Reuse, Recycle tips at zerobyfiftymissoula.com/the-three-rs

ZERO WASTE EVENT VOLUNTEER GUIDE

Zero Waste event volunteers are responsible for maintaining Zero Waste stations and educating attendees about proper sorting. **These volunteers are essential to the success of Zero Waste event efforts, especially at large events!** It is critical that this volunteer team is well-staffed and that they are properly trained, compensated, and thanked.

PREPARING FOR VOLUNTEERS

Hire or assign a Volunteer Coordinator

- This person is responsible for recruiting, training, & overseeing Zero Waste volunteers.

Determine volunteer tasks & requirements

- Consider what you will ask of volunteers and if there are any requirements for the position. For example, will volunteers need to use their own vehicle to haul materials to a recycling or compost drop off? Will they need specific tools or training to track & measure waste volumes?

Come up with an incentive or compensation for Zero Waste volunteers

- Zero Waste volunteer tasks are often messy and can be physically demanding. Offering compensation of some sort can help build up your team and improve volunteer satisfaction.
- Examples: free admission to the event, food and/or beverage vouchers, event merchandise, or some other small (preferably Zero Waste) gift.

Determine how volunteers will be trained

- Zero Waste volunteers need to know ahead of time what the event's main waste streams will be and how to sort them. It is a good idea to host an orientation or training sessions to ensure volunteers are familiar with the Zero Waste stations, how to sort, and any other necessary information to complete their tasks.

Create a volunteer/shift schedule

- Decide the number of volunteers you want at any given time.
- During high-traffic times throughout the event, a good rule of thumb is to plan for at least 1 volunteer per Zero Waste station.

RECRUITMENT TIPS

[CLICK HERE](#) to view a sample Zero Waste event volunteer position description.

Include an **INCENTIVE** in the description.

Spread the position description to **TARGETED AUDIENCES**, in addition to general audiences.

- * [Zero Waste Missoula Listserv](#)
- * [Sustainable Missoula column](#)
- * [Conservation Calendar](#)
- * [ZERO by FIFTY website](#)
- * [Community organizations](#)



VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Create & share a volunteer packet

- Include task instructions or shift checklist, Zero Waste station locations, event schedule, volunteer shift schedule, volunteer coordinator contact information, and any other important information.

Host a Zero Waste volunteer orientation

- The orientation should cover:
 - * Zero Waste station location & set up
 - * Expected waste streams at the event and how to sort
 - * Where to find extra bags, gloves, waste pickers, etc.
 - * How to replace bags and where to put full waste bags
 - * How to track/measure waste generation
 - * Where/how to collect and wash reusable dishes
 - * Any other pertinent details, like bathroom locations, water stations, information table, etc. *(It is common for guests to ask Zero Waste volunteers about other event information, like where to buy merchandise, where the bathrooms are, etc. so be sure to prep volunteers for this!)*

SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERS DURING THE EVENT

Check on Zero Waste stations & volunteers periodically

- Make sure someone (preferably the volunteer coordinator, or other event staff) is present and available to answer questions throughout the volunteer shifts.

Recognize Zero Waste volunteers

- If possible, give a shout out to the Zero Waste volunteers during announcements or presentations.
- Don't forget to give volunteers their gifts (event pass, drink tickets, merch, etc.) and be sure to thank them!

VOLUNTEER FOLLOW-UP

Ask for volunteer feedback

- After the event, ask volunteers what went well, what could be improved, how guests responded to the Zero Waste systems, unexpected challenges, and overall impressions.

Send a follow-up thank you

- Contact volunteers afterward with another thank you, and if appropriate, provide information about upcoming events & opportunities.

RESOURCES

ZERO WASTE STATION SIGNAGE

Good signage is a crucial component to any Zero Waste Station. Home ReSource has developed signage guided by industry best practices for events as well as businesses and schools. The [ZERO by FIFTY Plan](#) Action C1.1 states “maintain consistent messaging and branding across all facets of ZERO by FIFTY including, but not limited to, Zero Waste Stations, facilities, and marketing.”

[CLICK HERE](#) to access Zero Waste Station signs and customizable templates.

FOOD RESCUE

- [CLICK HERE](#) to learn how to create a food rescue plan.
- The [Missoula Food Bank](#) will accept surplus food that is prepared in a commercial kitchen and held at a safe temperature. Donations cannot have been on buffet line or served.
- The [Poverello Center](#) will accept surplus food donations the same day it was prepared.

COLLECTION SERVICES

- **Recycling options:**
 - * [Garden City Recycling](#) (mixed recycling)
 - * [Recycling Works](#) (glass)
 - * [Republic Services](#) (mixed recycling)
- **Compost services:**
 - * [Missoula Compost Collection](#)
 - * [Soil Cycle](#)
 - * [Recycling Works](#)

DRINKING WATER

- [Culligan Water](#)
- [McGowan Water](#)

FOOD SERVICEWARE

- **BPI-Certified Compostable Products**
 - * [BPI Product Catalog](#)
 - * [Eco Montana](#)
- **Reusables**
 - * [Jeannette Rankin Peace Center Dish Pantry](#)
 - * [Missoula Event Rental](#)



RESOURCES *cont'd*

ZERO WASTE CONSCIOUS VENUES

- **Various Capacity Options**

- * [The Roxy Theater](#) - 100 seat, 90 seat, 66 seat, 30 seat (April 2020)
 - » *Composting & recycling (including glass)*
 - » *Reusable popcorn bowls & cups*
 - » *No single-use plastic, compostable straws*
 - » *Donate surplus popcorn to ducks & chickens*
 - » *Use sustainable cleaning products*
- * [The ZACC Show Room](#) - 175 seated, 350 standing
 - » *Composting & recycling*
 - » *Bar only serves beverages in aluminum cans*
 - » *Events can be catered*

- **Up to 50 people**

- * [Home ReSource Community Room](#)
 - » *Zero Waste Station (compost, recycle, landfill)*
 - » *Reusable dishes & utensils (with dishwasher)*
- * [Jeannette Rankin Peace Center Library](#)
 - » *Reusable dishes, cups, utensils, servingware, & cloth napkins*

- **Up to 80 People**

- * [Goodworks Place](#)
 - » *Recycling (including glass)*
 - » *Limited supply of reusable plates & cups (with dishwasher)*
- * [UM FLAT Studio](#) - (30-40 people inside; up to 75 people outside & inside)
 - » *Recycling & composting*
 - » *Reusable dishes, cups, & utensils*

- **Up to 400 People**

- * [Free Cycles](#)
 - » *Limited supply of reusable dishes, cups, & utensils*
 - » *Plastic cups not allowed*
 - » *Biking & walking strongly encouraged*

- **800 and up**

- * [Wilma Theater](#)
- * [Missoula Fairgrounds](#)
- * **Various [city parks](#)**
- * [Caras Park](#)

OTHER SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Zero Waste is one key component of a sustainable community. There are many other parameters to consider if you want your event to be as sustainable as possible. Here are a few ideas:

FOOD

If you are not using vendors and cooking yourself, source local food as much as possible.

- [Clark Fork Market](#)
- [Community Food & Agriculture Coalition \(CFAC\)](#)
- [Missoula Peoples Market](#)
- [Missoula Valley Winter Market](#)
- [Western Montana Growers Cooperative](#)

TRANSPORTATION

Choose a venue that is accessible by bike/walking paths or public transportation and encourage attendees to commute sustainably!

- [Missoula in Motion](#)
- [Mountain Line](#)
- [UDash](#)
- [Missoula Bike Paths](#)



Photo of Caras Park courtesy of Missoula Downtown Partnership

Final Thought:

Source reduction is a major component of Zero Waste.

Plan ahead and think about what components of your event have the biggest potential to produce the most waste. Then do your best to find alternatives that can help achieve your Zero Waste event goals.



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Photo of Clark Fork Market @andrewkemmishphoto