

Event Waste Management and Minimisation Guide

2025



**Hamilton
City Council**
Te kaunihera o Kirikiriroa



About this guide

The purpose of the guide is to enable community groups and event organisers to understand best practice for waste minimisation at events and empower them to make simple changes with a big impact.

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Why a waste minimisation event?

Events are a great opportunity to engage with the community on reducing and recycling waste.

Waste minimisation at events not only enables you to align with the Hamilton City Council's Waste Management and Minimisation Bylaw (2019) requirement but also encourages positive impacts on the environment, increases public awareness, creates safer and tidier sites, and promotes your sustainability values.

Use the waste hierarchy as your guiding principle in designing waste minimisation. The higher up the hierarchy, the more favorable the options.

Waste minimisation hierarchy



Step 1: Reduce what comes in

This is the step you need to consider before the event. The best way to minimise waste at your event is to reduce what's coming in. What are the types of waste that can be created by your event?

This will depend on many factors such as:



There are three main sources where waste can come from:

- **Setting up and packing down:** This may include pallets, cardboard, strapping, shrink wrap etc.
- **Front of House:** Mainly food and beverage packaging/containers.
- **Back of House - vendors and stallholders:** Boxes, cans, plastic wrap, product packaging and containers etc. This area should be managed separately from your front of house area.

Once you identify types of waste and where they can come from, we recommend you restrict certain materials in your event such as polystyrene. Approach the stall holders/vendors and suppliers to have a conversation regarding your expectations for packaging, food serving and managing their waste. For example, in an event with food stalls, food and drinks can make up a large percentage of waste.

You can discuss with the food vendors to avoid using single-use plastics, consider reusable

options or get their collaboration in using food scrap bins for back of house waste.

You can use our Event Vendors and Packaging Guide to negotiate with vendors and suppliers to minimise waste brought into the sites.



Step 2: Design your waste operation

Implementing the site waste management on the event day is a big job and it requires adequate planning time to result in efficient execution.

Consider what types of bins will be required, how you will place those bins on site, who will be monitoring the bins and how they will be collected. Designing your waste operation must be done before the event, so you will have a good understanding of how to implement it during the event.

Know your bins

The bins you choose will depend on the types of waste expected at your event. You can identify potential waste streams by thinking about the activities that will be present on the day (for example food stalls). The size and the duration of

the event, and the expected numbers of attendees can help you decide how many bins your event will need. The general rule of thumb is that, at a minimum, an event should have general rubbish bins, recycling bins and food scraps bins.



Site planning

Bin placement needs to be planned carefully as it is crucial to have visible and accessible bins for the public. It is helpful to create a site map to plan bin locations.



Tip – If there are any nearby public bins, cover them up.

Bin stations

Always place the bins together in “stations”. Depending on the size of the event, an event will need more than one bin station. Bin stations should not be more than 20 meters apart. Use signage or flags to indicate the station location. Common bin placements are near the food vendors, entrance and exit, stages and toilets. Always use standard and recognized colors for rubbish and recycling bins. It is helpful to use the clear bin liners to easily spot contamination. Refer to the following figure to understand site planning for bin stations.

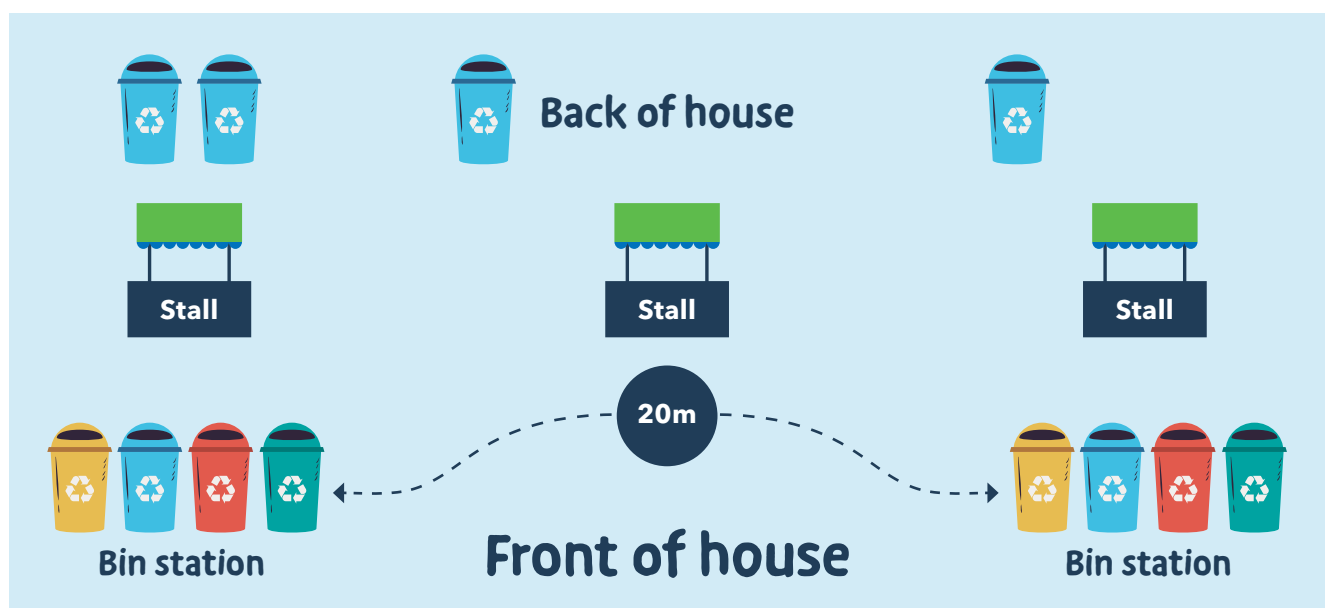
Waste hub

A waste hub is a place on site where you transfer the rubbish and recycling when the bins are full.

Not every event requires a waste hub. Usually those that fall into the below categories will need one:

- large events
- high waste generation events with limited space for bin stations.

Waste hubs need to be easily accessible for staff as well as vendors to bring their rubbish and recycling to. Some events also do hand sorting of recyclables at the waste hubs.



Calculating the number of bins required

A general rule of thumb for waste generation at an event is one litre per person per meal. However, this will vary depending on the length of event, types of activities involved, the crowd profile and type of food available. Generally, the less food provided at the event, the less waste we can expect to be generated.

The following is an example calculation to determine how many bins are needed at an event that runs over one mealtime.

- 4000 attendees x 1 mealtime = 4000 litres of estimated waste
- 4000 litres divided by 240 (the standard size of wheelie bin) = 16.6 bins
- 16.6 bins divided by 3 (a set of bins - general waste, recycling, and food waste) = 5.5 bin stations
- you will need approximately five or six bin stations for the event.

Depending on the space available and if you can empty the bins throughout the event, you can reduce the number of bin stations. Monitoring of the bins is crucial to avoid overflowing of waste.

If your event has any specific waste stream, you should consider it in your planning. For example, if your event has a kai station where you give away ice pops wrapped in plastic packaging, you should consider a bin dedicated to soft plastics next to the kai station. If you can hand out the kai without packaging (such as fruits or loose candies), that is even more ideal!





Roles and responsibilities

Event waste minimisation requires manpower to manage the smooth operation on site. The bigger the event, the more people will be needed.

It is a good idea to have someone in charge of managing rubbish and recycling for the event. For example, choosing the location of bin stations, training and assigning volunteers, ensuring health and safety needs are met, liaising with vendors etc.

Recycling can sometimes be confusing, and this can discourage the public from using the right bins. Having waste minimisation staff/bin monitors (paid or volunteers) at the bin stations helps to educate the public to dispose of their waste in the correct bins and reduces contamination. Waste staff are essential players in your onsite waste management as they are the frontline waste minimisation educators for the event.

It is important to give adequate training to the waste minimisation staff to help them understand the values of waste minimisation at events, the event's vision and the system in place to achieve that vision.

Collection

There are many waste management service providers in Hamilton for rubbish and recycling collection. A few of them also collect food waste. If you manage your own disposal, you can dispose of the rubbish and recycling at Lincoln Street Resource Recovery Centre.

Some community centres have their own composting facilities. Reach out to them to see if you can work with them to compost your food waste.



Fact – Reducing food waste from landfill helps lower the greenhouse gas emissions.

Step 3: Communicate your goodwill

It is important to get the buy-in from the stakeholders to take part in your waste minimisation plan. You can group your stakeholders in two groups.

1. The stakeholders you work with

are sponsors, stall holders, suppliers, waste companies, volunteers and others such as security and entertainers. These are the stakeholders you need to talk to about your vision and aims for waste minimisation to ensure they are aware of the expectation of the event. Communication with them needs to be done frequently to keep them informed and keep the momentum going. Start the conversation with them from the planning stage on how they can participate to minimise waste.

For example:

- The sponsors can provide flags and signs for bin stations which in turn, is also a branding opportunity for them.
- Suppliers can rethink their packaging and bring in suitable material for waste minimisation.
- MC of the event can prepare the script to remind the people to sort out waste correctly throughout the event.

2. The event attendees are the members of the public who come to the event. Share the event's waste minimisation vision from the start of the event promotion via advertisement, radio station etc. Do not assume that the attendees know how to sort out the waste. Staffing the bin stations and providing signs on the bins regarding what goes in where is very effective to encourage people to use the correct bins. Use big visible flags to indicate where the bin stations are located at the event.



Event communication needs:

- Before – announce waste minimisation goals.
- During – remind event goers.
- After – celebrate successes.



Step 4: Audit your waste

After the event, it's a good idea to audit your waste because it helps you understand the types of waste generated from your event and the amount produced. This enables you to improve your benchmark for your next event.

The data is important to communicate your waste minimisation effort and celebrate your success to the public. You can request your waste contractor to provide this data after collection. Just let them know upfront. If you are managing your own waste, you can audit the weight yourself, simply by using some scales.

You can download a waste audit template from the [Beyond the Bins website](#).

In addition to auditing waste data, it is also ideal to collect feedback and ideas from the attendees and the vendors regarding their experience participating in waste minimisation event.





Reach out to us!



A change can be challenging and sometimes scary but just take that first step! Our friendly Resource Recovery team are available to chat if you have ideas or challenges for your waste minimisation event. Email us at wasteplans@hcc.govt.nz or call us **07 838 6699** for more information.



Appendix 1

Checklist

Different events can generate different waste streams. Even though there is no one-size-fits-all approach for planning a waste minimisation event, the following is the checklist for common steps taken in event waste management and minimisation. Tick as applicable.

You arrange the adequate types and numbers of bins. (For example, setting up general waste bins and recycling bins at minimum.)

You provide clear signages on the bins.

You strategically set up the bins in highly crowded areas of the event, such as near the food stalls, stage, toilets etc.

If you are providing food waste bins, you have a mean to dispose the food waste.

You understand that biodegradable/compostable cutlery and packaging cannot be recycled. For example, coffee cups, wooden cutlery, etc.

You understand that only plastics number 1, 2 and 5 can be recycled.

You assign someone to oversee the waste management during the event.

You provide a proper training to the volunteers/ event waste officers.

You communicate your audience about your event's aim for waste minimisation through ads, social media etc.

You communicate with the MC of the event to remind the event goers to use event bins correctly.

You negotiate with the vendors to reduce their packaging waste and to take care of their own waste after the event.

You minimise the risk of rubbish overflowing in public bins within your event's proximity.

You arrange for the post-event clean up.

Check out "[Beyond the Bin](#)" website for step-by-step videos for planning a low-waste event.

Appendix 2

Event waste minimisation plan (example template)

Note: All the events that require an event permit need to submit an event waste minimisation plan as a part of event permit process.

Event detail

Name of the event:

Event organiser & contact:

Date and Time:

Venue:

Expected number of attendees per day:

Plan and actions proposed

1) Event Activities

List the activities that will take place during the event e.g. entertainment, food and drink stalls, merchandising stalls etc.

2) Estimated types of waste and quantity generated

List the type of waste (food waste, recyclables, general waste) and the expected volume of waste that will be generated. For example, events with food stalls will likely generate more waste per person (in volume) than events without food stalls.

3) Types and quantity of bins expected to be provided for waste separation

For example, food scrap, general, recycling bins etc.

4) Steps taken in planning stage to reduce waste generation

For example, restriction of single-use plastics/containers, asking vendors to sort kitchen waste.

5) Steps taken for on-site waste management

For example, volunteers helping at bin stations, regular monitoring, sorting waste at waste hub.

6) Bin Stations and Waste Hub

Where will bins be placed, how often will they be emptied, where will the waste be sorted or stored?

**Attach your event's site map, illustrating the bins' locations. See the below site map example for reference.*



Promotion of waste minimisation

Outline in detail for your mode of communication to promote waste minimisation before and on the event day.

Examples are as follows

- Announce that the event aims for waste minimisation on social media.
- Use of flags to indicate bin station locations.
- Clear labels and signs on bins.
- Staff the bin station to help the event attendees dispose waste correctly.
- MC announcing to use the correct bins throughout the event.
- Communicate with vendors regarding restricted materials.

Your promotion plans:

Waste collection

1) Name of the company responsible for collection of waste

For example, "xxxx" company for general waste, "xxxx" service for food waste.

2) Method of collection and transportation of waste

For example, sorting recyclables from the event waste hub or sorting at the company's facilities.

3) Destination of the waste

For example, the landfill, name of compost/recycling facilities.

Appendix 3

Vendors and packaging guide

Vendors play an important role in waste minimisation at your event. By working with them, you can reduce the waste that is brought into the event from the start.

Inform the expectation

If you are minimising waste at your event, it is necessary to inform the vendors and suppliers about your vision or any waste minimisation targets you may have. Engage them before the event, explain about the vision and values of your waste minimisation plan and encourage their collaboration.

Negotiate the term

Providing the vendors with a list of to-dos and examples helps them with better preparation for the event.

Let them know which materials are restricted such as single-use plastics. Encourage them to be responsible for their own waste. Providing an alternative such as reuseable

cutlery or wash stations at the event can help vendors bring in less packaging. For more information about packaging, please refer to compostable packaging and suppliers page on zerowasteevents.org.nz and [Beyond the Bin](#).

It is optional, but having a signed agreement and a refundable bond with the vendors regarding waste minimisation can be helpful to regulate and monitor the operation. It is also crucial to maintain the engagement with them throughout the planning and be approachable to listen to their ideas and challenges for waste minimisation as this is a team effort.

The vendors can use this opportunity to record their waste reduction which can promote their brand images in the long term.



Vendor agreement for waste minimisation

**This is a sample template for event organisers who want to make a written agreement with vendor. This is NOT compulsory. The context in this sample can be modified according to the need of the event waste minimisation plan.*

Dear "Vendor/Stall holder"

Thank you for participating in "xxxx" Event.

This event is committed to minimise waste and to make it successful, vendors play a crucial role. By signing this agreement, you agree to participate in waste minimization activities as described by below.

1) All vendors are restricted to bring the following materials to the event:

- single use plastics - bags, cutlery, straws etc.
- polystyrene/styrofoam.
- liquid paper board cartons.

2) All vendors are obliged to do the following:

- Provide a list of packaging materials they will be using.
- Be responsible of their own waste and recycle correctly.

**Only plastics 1, 2 and 5 are accepted for recycling.*

- Reduce excessive packaging, for example - merchandise wrapped in plastic.

3) All vendors are encouraged to do the following:

- Use reusable cutlery and recyclable packaging.
- Compost the kitchen waste from food stalls.
- Encourage the buyers to dispose the waste in correct bins after consuming.

A bond of \$50 will be collected to ensure that the vendor follows the agreement. Once the stall has been deemed clean and waste is disposed responsibly by the vendor, the bond will be refunded in full. *(This is optional and depends on the terms of the event.)*

This part is to be used by the vendor/stall holder

I am committed to follow the agreement for waste minimisation at "xxxx" event and work together with the event team to minimise waste from my stall.

Signature: Date:

Name of the vendor:

Contact: I am selling:

Packing materials:

Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the opportunity to be able to explore various resources and guidelines for the development of Event Waste Management and Minimisation Guide.

We would like to express our acknowledgement to:

Wellington City Council - [Reducing waste at your event resources](#)

Auckland City Council - [Zero Waste Events](#)

Nelson City Council - [Reducing waste at events](#)

Tauranga City Council - [Event waste planning guide](#)


[Para Kore](#)

[Beyond the Bin](#)

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