



# EVENT GREENING

**MANAGING WASTE, RECYCLABLES,  
& ORGANICS AT EVENTS AND FESTIVALS**

**divert**<sup>NS</sup>  
Nothing Wasted

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Nova Scotia is proud to host a wide variety of festivals and events throughout the year, from neighbourhood suppers at community halls to larger celebrations for residents and tourists. Regardless of the size of your event, following these 5 steps to “green” your event can provide a better environment for the public to enjoy.

For the purpose of this guide, event greening shall be defined as integrating waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting principles and programs into the event.

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# RESEARCH & PLANNING

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Successful events are generally the result of careful research and planning that begins long before the event is scheduled. The following are some considerations to help you green your event.

## IDENTIFY YOUR PARTNERS



Partners are individuals, organizations, businesses or community groups that might have an interest in your event. Your partners can help with the organization of a green event, so you should determine early on who they are and identify what role they might be able to play. Your partners may include the following: local waste/recycling/organics hauler(s), municipal/ regional waste reduction educators, event sponsors, local citizens, vendors, service providers, local environmental organizations or community groups.

## IDENTIFY COMPOSTING AND RECYCLING PROGRAMS IN YOUR REGION

All municipalities in Nova Scotia have solid waste management programs in place, but programs can vary in terms of what materials are collected, and how waste from special events is managed.

### Divert NS can help get you started!

Call the toll-free help line at [1-877-313-7732](tel:1-877-313-7732) for the name and number of a Waste Reduction Educator serving your municipality. Or head to, <https://divertns.ca/wasteeducators>



Educators can provide you with valuable information about solid waste management programs in your area and help you find composting and recycling facilities and haulers.



## ESTABLISH A WASTE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Establishing a Waste Management Committee to coordinate the greening of your event allows for responsibilities to be shared according to strengths and interests, it will help to generate ideas and solutions.

## ASSIGN A WASTE REDUCTION COORDINATOR

One individual should be assigned the role of Waste Reduction Coordinator for the event. This individual should have strong organizational and communication skills, a solid understanding of local area waste management programs and practices, and be committed to the goals of the Waste Management Committee.



## FOR SMALLER EVENTS/FESTIVALS



Community suppers, garden parties, weddings and other small gatherings can also benefit from event greening. Although you may not need to establish a committee, you still need the support of those involved to reduce waste at your event successfully.

## IDENTIFY GOALS

The first activity of the Waste Management Committee is to identify overall goals and objectives to green the event. What does the committee hope to achieve by greening the event? It is important to include all partners in developing a policy to ensure that all needs are addressed. Goals might consist of financial, and environmental considerations.



## IDENTIFY POTENTIAL WASTE MATERIALS



Another important task of the Waste Management Committee/Coordinator is to determine what waste materials will be generated at the event and what other waste might arrive at the event from surrounding businesses or activities. Establish a list of waste products, and if possible, identify each material and the quantity that will be produced. You might consider contacting organizers of other similar sized events for advice. Vendors attending your event may also be able to help estimate waste quantities by providing estimates of expected sales of food and beverages.

## IDENTIFY DISPOSAL OPTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES

Once you have identified potential waste materials, consider each one individually to determine disposal options and possible alternatives. Your Regional Waste Reduction Educator will be able to help you assemble this vital information. Visit [divertns.ca/wasteeducators](https://divertns.ca/wasteeducators) to find a Waste Educator in your area.



## DETERMINE THE WASTE SEPERATION SYSTEM



As per the provincial solid waste-resource management regulations, all events must provide separate bins for each waste stream generated (i.e. garbage, recycling, and organics). Reach out to your local Waste Facility/Municipality to see if they will loan out roll carts or sorting stations. Waste receptacles can also be purchased, rented, borrowed, or constructed and can range from complex designs to a single row of containers. When planning a waste station for your event, be sure to consider your budget, anticipated quantities and types of waste, and the durability of the system.

**INSPIRATION!** The Yarmouth Rotary Ribfest won a Mobius Award of Environmental Excellence in 2023 for the greening of their event. Read more at: [www.saltwire.com/atlantic-canada/yarmouth-rotary-ribfest-wins-mobius-award-of-environmental-excellence-100913651](https://www.saltwire.com/atlantic-canada/yarmouth-rotary-ribfest-wins-mobius-award-of-environmental-excellence-100913651)

# IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

- Will food or beverages be served? If so, what type of beverage containers and utensils will be used?
- What types of containers/packages is likely to arrive?
- Are there other businesses in the area that may inadvertently contribute waste to your site?
- What activities will occur at your event, and what waste products will be produced?
- Is the material used banned from disposal? Recyclable? Compostable? Reusable? Subject to a deposit/refund?
- Could a recyclable, compostable, or reusable product be used instead of a disposable product?
- Could packaging be reduced or eliminated by changing how a particular product is served?
- If you are planning on purchasing compostable cups, plates, bowls, etc. for your event, please check with your local waste educator before making these purchases to ensure that they are accepted in your municipal compost program.
- Could a particular waste item be eliminated from the event?
- Each waste stream should be represented by a specific colour: blue for recycling, green for organics, and black for garbage.
- The shape of each slot is key: narrow for paper, round for recycling, square for garbage, and rectangle for organics.
- A lid on the organics container will prevent contamination.
- Containers should have slanted tops so that waste will not be left on top.
- Place recycling, composting, and garbage containers side by side. This will lessen the likelihood of all material getting thrown into the same container.

# PARTNERSHIPS

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## VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF

Volunteers and staff are essential to the overall success of greening your event. Volunteers and staff, who are trained correctly in responsible waste management practices, can also encourage visitors to participate in greening the event. Volunteers and staff should understand the Waste Management Committee's goals and be included in the planning. For larger events to be effective, it may be helpful to provide specific shirts for your volunteers so that they are easily recognizable to people looking for waste separation information.

## WASTE HAULERS

Depending on the size of your event, you may have to contract a local hauler to collect recyclables, organics, and garbage from the event. Once you have determined the types and quantities of waste expected, you should contact a hauler to make the necessary arrangements.

As front-line service providers in the waste management industry, haulers have the experience that might help you plan the greening of your event. During your discussions with a potential hauler, explain the goals of your initiative. Haulers may be able to provide you with helpful information about the types of collection containers best suited to your event, setting up waste stations, and other related aspects of waste resource management. Your hauler could be a valuable member of the Waste Management Committee for the event.

Ask your Regional Waste Reduction Educator for some help identifying possible partners or information about haulers and facilities serving in your area. Contact Divert NS for the name of a Regional Educator serving your area.

For smaller events, waste volumes may not justify waste pick-up or storage bins. In this case, trucking the recyclables, organics, and waste directly to your local waste management facilities may be more financially feasible. For smaller events you may find that curbside collection is acceptable as long as amounts are within your municipalities curbside collection limits. In this case, you will need to have a place to store your materials until collection day. Contact your local municipality for details.

## SIGNAGE FOR WASTE STATIONS

- Use simple and clear signs that show people what goes into each container. Use graphics with minimal text.
- Signs should be located at eye-level, preferably at the top (back) of the container.
- For larger events, you should consider training volunteers to educate visitors about proper waste separation and the system your event is using. This will help reduce contamination in different containers.
- Divert NS offers colourful bilingual signage for public waste containers. The signs are suitable for indoor and outdoor use and are available for free. Contact Divert NS for more information.



## COST RECOVERY

If budgets are tight, here are a couple of ideas for recovering some of the costs associated with greening your event.

- Vendor Stewardship - The majority of waste produced on site often comes from vendors, so have them share the responsibility for some of the expenses related to waste management. Costs could be incorporated into booth/vendor fees or could be calculated as a separate charge based on the quantity of waste generated.
- The provincial Deposit/Refund System applies to all ready to serve beverage containers sold in Nova Scotia (exclusions apply). Collect redeemable beverage containers separate from other recyclable containers (or separate them after the event) and take them to one of over 77 Enviro-Depot™ locations across the province for a 5 cent refund. Nickels can quickly add up to dollars that can be applied to waste management costs. Contact Divert NS for the location of an [Enviro-Depot™](#) near the event.



## IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

- What materials does the hauler collect? Garbage? Recyclables? Organics?
- How does the hauler charge? (It generally costs more to take waste for disposal than it does to take organics to a compost facility, or recycling facility.)
- Will the hauler pick up and transport waste, recyclables, and organics directly from your site?
- Will the hauler empty and/or collect waste, recyclables, and organics after regular working hours?

## VENDORS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

Most festivals or events include participation from food, beverages, and merchandise vendors. Although vendors and service providers may not be confirmed in the early stages of planning, potential suppliers should be told that your event will be green. By communicating your intentions early, you will help develop a constructive partnership and increase the likelihood of getting products and services that will complement the goals of your event greening.

## IDEAS FOR ENCOURAGING WASTE REDUCTION

- Encourage vendors to use dishes and utensils that are compostable, recyclable or reusable (e.g. paper plates instead of foam plates).
- Discourage the use of unnecessary disposable items such as plastic straws and stir sticks.
- Discourage single-serve containers for food and condiments (e.g., milk, cream, sugar, ketchup, mustard). Serve these products in jugs, bowls, or bulk dispensers.
- Purchase and sell beverages in store bought recyclable/refundable/refillable containers where possible.
- Purchase products with recycled content (e.g., napkins made of recyclable paper).

# COMMUNICATION

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Promoting the greening of your event will help gain public participation in your goals and provide an opportunity to teach others about the importance of waste reduction. As with all aspects of organizing an event, communication must begin early in the planning process and continue throughout the event.

## BEFORE THE EVENT



- Make sure that vendors, service providers, and people involved in other aspects of planning the event are aware of your waste reduction goals.
- Inform local and regional media about your intentions. Your efforts to green your event will make a great news story.

Visit [divertns.ca/wasteeducators](https://divertns.ca/wasteeducators) for the name of a Waste Reduction Educator in your area. The educator may be available to set up a display at your event, highlight solid waste management programs and help visitors understand why you have chosen to green the event.

## DURING THE EVENT

- Make sure that the public is aware of why you are greening the event and what waste separation system has been put in place.
- Encourage participation by acknowledging the support of vendors, service providers, and the general public.



## AFTER THE EVENT



- Communicate with vendors, service providers and event organizers about your event greening achievements.
- Communicate with local and regional media about some of the success stories from the greening of your event. How much waste was diverted through recycling and composting? Was public participation high?

# MONITORING

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All the effort you put into planning for the event needs to be taken one step further - putting the plan into action!

## THINGS TO DO DURING THE EVENT

- **Monitor waste stations regularly.** Post volunteers at waste stations to ensure that waste is placed in the right receptacle.
- **Empty waste, recycling, and organics containers as needed.** Emptying containers may be more accessible and less disruptive if you line containers with bags. Check with your Regional Waste Educator about the types of bags and liners that are accepted by facilities in your region.
- **Keep your event litter free.** Occasional sweeps of the site should be conducted for litter or misplaced waste.
- **Publicize waste management practices at the event.** Encourage participation by making announcements and advertise that the event is “green” on event promotional materials.

**As per the provincial solid waste-resource management regulations, all events must provide an adequate number of receptacles for source separation.**



## ON SITE STORAGE

If you are collecting and storing your waste, recyclables, and organic materials on site, you will need storage bins. Some haulers or municipal waste management authorities will rent cars, bins, or dumpsters. Before the event the committee must decide on the best location for the containers. They should be kept close enough to the site so that waste, recyclables, and organics can be transferred easily, but far enough away so that they don't interfere with event activities. Your hauler must have easy access to the bins so that, if necessary, they can be emptied during the event with minimal disturbance to participants.

Separate storage containers will be required for different types of waste. Have the materials separated according to the recycling guidelines of your municipality. There should be at least one large storage bin or cart for every type of material (garbage, recyclables, and organics). The number of containers will vary with the type of event, the amount of waste expected, and the frequency of pick-up.

## ALTERNATIVES TO STORAGE BINS:

If your budget is tight, you can use alternative to storage bins such as fish tubs, apple crates or steel barrels.

## PICK UP AND DELIVERY

For larger events, pick-up and delivery services will need to be arranged in advance. Arrange to have event staff on site to direct the hauler to the location of the containers. Set a collection schedule and have a contact number in case the bins fill up faster than anticipated.

For smaller events, make arrangements to have recyclables, organics, and waste transported off site, if necessary, until regular collection day.

# CLEAN UP & EVALUATION

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Event sites should be left as clean and undisturbed as they were before the event. Conduct a thorough sweep of the event site for litter or misplaced materials. Remove all temporary structures such as waste receptacles and replace any original structures.

Clean all bins and carts before storing or returning them. Use a non-toxic, environmentally friendly cleaner (dish soap works well) and a long handled brush or mop to clean them.

As with any event or activity, all the hard work you put into it should be assessed to help guide the greening of your next event.

## DETERMINING WASTE DIVERSION RATES

If event organizers are interested in quantifying the amount of waste diverted from disposal, you will need to weigh the materials collected.

### TO DETERMINE YOUR RATE OF DIVERSION, YOU NEED TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- Keep an accurate count of the number of bags used during the duration of the event. Keep track of the different waste streams separately (garbage, recycling, organics).
- Record the weight of several bags of each waste material to get an average or approximate weight per bag.
- $\text{Weight per bag} \times \text{total no. of bags} = \text{Total weight of that type of waste.}$
- $\text{Total weight of recyclables} + \text{total weight of organics} = \text{Total waste diverted from disposal.}$

# EVENT GREENING CHECKLIST

- Identify stakeholders and the role they can play
- Contact your Regional Waste Reduction Educator  
(Call Divert NS at 1-877-313-7732 or <https://divertns.ca/wasteeducators>)
- Collect information about recycling, composting, and other waste management programs in your area.
- Establish a Waste Management Committee
- Appoint a Waste Reduction Coordinator
- Identify your greening goals
- Identify potential waste materials
- Identify disposal options and alternatives
- Design a waste separation system for the event
- Choose suitable collection containers for garbage, recyclables, and organics
- Communicate with vendors and service providers
- Publicize your plans through local and regional media
- Monitor waste stations and collection during the event
- Evaluate your achievements
- Acknowledge support of all partners and organizers
- Promote your success

# QUICK TIPS FOR REDUCING WASTE AND LITTER AT PUBLIC EVENTS

- Keep signs and posters simple. Do not use logos or dates so that signs can be reused for future events.
- Use graphics with minimal text to illustrate where waste should go.
- Set up a drop-off box for event related flyers, posters and other paper products, on or near the event site. Flyers can be reused or recycled.
- Use reusable dishes and cutlery or compostable paper plates and cups. Check with your waste reduction educator or local municipality before purchasing compostable items.
- Borrow equipment and materials, if possible.
- Colour code your containers: blue for recycling, green for organics, and black for garbage.
- Use different slot shapes to indicate material types: narrow for paper, round for bottles, square for garbage and rectangle for organics.
- Limit the amount of potential waste at events by adopting purchasing practices that limit packaging.
- Avoid unnecessary services and production of materials.
- Discourage single-serve containers for food and condiments. Serve them in bulk dispensers, or bowls (milk, sugar, ketchup).
- Plan in advance: buy what you need and return what you do not use.
- Avoid materials, supplies or equipment that are hazardous, wasteful and non-recyclable.
- Recycle waste materials such as paper, plastic, and glass through curbside programs or at local recycling facilities.
- Purchase and sell beverages in store bought recyclable/refillable containers where possible.
- If possible, have your waste stations made out of recycled materials and/or constructed locally.
- Recycle redeemable beverage containers at Enviro-Depots.
- Donate leftover materials to other organizations.
- Visit [divertns.ca/wasteeducator](https://divertns.ca/wasteeducator) for the name and number of a Regional Waste Reduction Educator serving your municipality. Regional Educators can provide you with important information about recycling and composting programs in your area and help you find composting and recycling facilities and haulers.

# SAMPLE POST EVENT EVALUATION FORM

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ACTION POINTS	WHAT WORKED	WHAT DIDN'T	HOW TO IMPROVE NEXT YEAR
<b>COMMUNICATIONS</b>			
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT &amp; ZERO WASTE</b>			
<b>WATER</b>			
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>			
<b>FOOD</b>			



The logo for divertNS features the word "divert" in a lowercase, rounded font. The letters are filled with a gradient of green and teal colors. A small orange dot is positioned above the letter 'i'. To the right of "divert" is the letters "NS" in a simple, grey, uppercase sans-serif font.

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