Zero-Waste Events: Planning Checklist

PURPOSE: Use this simple checklist to make hosting a zero-waste event easy. Find more tips and resources at RecyclingReimaginedCA.com.

INVITATIONS & FAVORS

- ☐ Swap printed invitations, flyers, and materials for digital versions.
- ☐ Replace single-use party favors with practical or edible giveaways. Offer reusable items or host a dessert bar with branded paper bags.

FOOD & DRINKS

- ☐ Estimate guest count to plan food portions accurately, reducing waste and cost.
- ☐ Replace individual beverage bottles with water stations and drink dispensers.
- ☐ Swap individually wrapped food items for trays that support portion control and reduce food waste.
- ☐ Ask vendors to use reusable materials; if not possible, choose compostable or recyclable options.

DÉCOR & TABLE SETTINGS

- ☐ Borrow or rent items instead of buying new (tables, chairs, linens, photo backdrops, décor).
- ☐ Choose quality, multi-use décor and avoid balloons, confetti/glitter, and plastic table covers. Consider branches/leaves, flowers, hanging lanterns, linen tablecloth, and edible displays.
- ☐ Save decorations for future events, or donate, give away, or raffle them.
- ☐ Replace single-use tableware and food service ware (plates, cups, utensils) with reusable, recyclable, or compostable alternatives.

WASTE & RECYCLING

- ☐ Confirm the venue's recycling and compost services and what items are accepted locally for recycling or compost.https://irecyclesmart.com/find-your-local-recycling-information/
- ☐ Use or create multilingual signage for three-bin stations: landfill, recycle, and compost.
- ☐ Place all three bins together in multiple locations, especially near food areas, bathrooms, or exits.
- ☐ If possible, assign volunteers to help guests sort waste correctly.
- ☐ Collect CRV beverage containers and redeem them at a recycling site for cash back after the event.

ENGAGING YOUR GUESTS

- ☐ Include zero-waste messaging in invites and at check-in. Encourage guests to help by sorting their materials.
- ☐ If gifts are welcomed, request zero-waste options such as services or experiences. For physical gifts, encourage zero-waste wrap such as reusable gift bags or reusable fabric.

- [ ] Before the meal, make an announcement reminding guests to sort their waste.
- [ ] Invite guests or staff to pack leftovers to minimize food waste, and provide reusable, recyclable, or compostable to-go containers as they depart.