

USC Sustainable Event Policy Compliance Checklist

These steps must be followed to be a Zero Waste Event

Definitions

- Compostable: Materials made from 100% fiber or organic content, such as uncoated paper derived from sources like trees, bagasse, potato, or banana leaf. Prohibited items include glossy, colored, waxed, or PLA lined paper products and compostable plastics (e.g., PLA #7).
 - **IMPORTANT:** Compostable plastics, often made from plant-based materials (bioplastics) or polylactic acid (PLA), are not locally compostable. Please ensure all purchased compostables are made from 100% fiber or organic content.
- Recyclable: Clean and empty materials such as paper, metal (e.g., aluminum), and glass that can be processed for reuse. Single-use plastics, other than PET (1), HDPE (2) and PP (5), are prohibited. Single-use plastic beverage products are strictly prohibited per [USC's Single-use Plastic Elimination–Beverage Bottles Policy](#).
- Reusable: Items made from durable, washable materials designed for multiple uses. Examples include refillable bottles, cups, plates, and other products intended to reduce landfill waste through repeated use.

Event Infrastructure and Service Requirements

Event Boxes

- Determine number of compost, recycle, and landfill boxes based on expected attendance:
 - 3 compost, 1 recycle, and 1 landfill box per 50 attendees
 - Add 1 set (compost, recycle, landfill each) for back-of-house use if the event is catered
- Ensure event boxes are clustered as a “Zero Waste Station” to maximize proper disposal
 - Each station should have compost, recycle, landfill clustered
 - Include 1 station per 50 attendees

Food and Beverage Material Standards

Food Serviceware

- Prioritize reusable serviceware whenever possible
- If disposable, serviceware must be compostable (100% organic or fiber-based) or recyclable (clean and empty materials)

Beverage Containers

- Prioritize reusable options when possible
- If disposable, beverage containers must be compostable (100% organic or fiber-based) or recyclable (clean and empty materials)
- Prohibit single-use plastic beverage products except recyclable PET (1), HDPE (2), or PP (5)

Lids, Drink Stirrers, and Straws

- Must be compostable (100% organic or fiber-based)

Recommended Optional Measures

Surplus Food Donations

- Communicate expectations to caterers regarding surplus food donation
- Coordinate donations with approved partners such as:
 - [St. Francis Food Bank](#) (email: donations@sfcla.org) or similar organization
 - [Trojan Food Pantry](#) (email: basicneeds@usc.edu) for non-perishable food
- All food prepared by USC Hospitality Banquet and Catering may not be taken off the premises by any attendee

Messaging and Expectations

- Provide clearly labeled waste bins with disposal instructions for attendees
- Share event zero-waste goals and expectations with caterers, staff, and attendees

Waste Avoidance

- Choose food options that require minimal serviceware
- Provide reusable or compostable to-go containers for surplus food
- Prioritize bulk condiments instead of single-use packaging
- Avoid unnecessary giveaways, hard copy ticketing, and printed materials