



Green Team Guide for Implementing Zero-Waste Meetings

These guidelines are intended to help county staff reduce waste generated by county-led meetings and events. This may include, for example:

- Small working/lunch meetings
- Staff trainings or retreats
- BOCC meetings
- External public meetings.

A separate guide exists for county-hosted large events such as the County Fair and for externally hosted events at county facilities. In addition, these guidelines may be customized for specific facilities as needed.

The guidelines have been developed in-line with the vision and goals adopted in the Sustainable Adams County 2030 Plan, revised 2021. In particular, these guidelines contribute to **Goal 4: Reduce waste in county operations through source reduction, sustainable diversion practices, and fostering a waste reduction culture** through implementation of **Strategy 4.4: Develop low-waste event and meeting guidelines**.

Green Team Recommendations

- Support development and maintenance of zero-waste event toolkits in each facility that can be reserved for meetings and events, such as reusable/low-waste facilitation equipment and catering supplies.
- Consider creating and maintaining a resource guide, including recommended donation centers, catering partners, and compost collection services, if available.
 - Start by reaching out to existing vendors to understand current sustainability practices.
- Conduct roadshows or other education to share waste reduction best practices with each department.
- Consider customizing zero-waste meeting guidelines for specific facilities as-needed.
- Ensure that all trash and recycling containers are clearly labeled using Republic Services [business recycling resources](#) and downloadable signage. Ensure that Republic Services recycling guidelines are displayed in large meeting rooms and kitchen areas.
- Consider expanding compost collection and end-use
 - Consider installing additional composting machines at other facilities.
 - Provide education to staff on using compost machine(s).
 - Explore options for end-use of compost generated by compost machine(s).
 - Explore options for requiring vendors to provide compostable materials.



Zero-Waste Meeting and Event Guidelines

Why is Adams County talking about zero waste?

The Adams County Sustainability Plan established a goal to reduce waste generated by the County. Zero Waste is an ethical, economical, efficient, and visionary way to guide employees in changing practices to reduce, re-use and/or recycle discarded materials. Reducing waste can lower meeting and waste management costs, while conserving natural resources. In addition, diverting waste through recycling of paper, cardboard, plastic, tins and cans, and composting of food waste avoids the emission of greenhouse gases produced as waste breaks down slowly in landfill.

Sustainable Adams County 2030 Plan



Goal 4: Reduce waste in county operations through source reduction, sustainable diversion practices, and fostering a waste reduction culture.

Guidelines for All County-led Meetings and Events

The following principles can be universally applied to any County meeting or event, no matter how big or small!

Go Virtual



Virtual meetings reduce waste and transportation emissions.

- Consider whether you can accomplish your objectives through a virtual meeting.

Minimize Your Materials



- Encourage participants to bring electronic agendas and materials and plan to share agenda/event materials on a screen or write on a white board.
- If printing is necessary, use double sided printing, and try to print as few copies as possible.

Set Your Intentions



- Ensure that co-hosts and partners are aware of Zero-waste goals and share these guidelines ahead of time.
- For small meetings, consider inviting participants to bring their own food and drink in reusable containers.
- Remind participants at the beginning of the event about the County's waste goals and let them know how they can participate.
- You could direct meeting attendees to the Government Center's water bottle filling stations to refill their reusable bottles or encourage participants to grab a mug from the kitchen for hot beverages.

End Your Meeting Strong



- After the meeting/event, invite guests to take home any leftovers and find a home for any remaining food and drink. For example, consider taking food to employee break rooms or public areas, or even donating packaged goods to a local food pantry.
- Return or save any unused disposable silverware for future use.
- Check recycling bin for contamination.
- If your meeting takes place at the Government Center, check your compost container for contamination and contact the Green Team to place food waste in the compost machine.

Guidelines for Larger Meetings or Events

Larger internal or public meetings and events will require more planning and care to ensure waste reduction practices are properly in place and applied. Consider the following guidelines to ensure a successful zero waste event:

Develop a Zero Waste Plan



- For recurring meetings, such as Board of County Commissioner meetings, establish a zero-waste protocol.
- Select venues that have trash and recycling containers available and check ahead of time to make sure there are enough for your meeting.
- If food is provided, select a restaurant or caterer that provides low- or zero-waste options.
- Look for plastic free snacks (fruits are a great healthy choice!)
- Consider if there are commonly used materials that can be eliminated; or if all utilized materials are reusable, recyclable, or compostable

Use Zero Waste Decorations



- If decorating event/meeting space, prioritize use of reusable decorations.
- Where not feasible to reuse decorations, ensure all materials can be recycled or composted.
- Consider flower, herbs, or plants for center pieces.

Show Your Zero Waste Pride



- Identify the meeting or event as “zero-waste” on the invitation and pre-event communication. This can help communicate Adams County’s goals and make sure participants help achieve those goals!

Set Up Waste Stations



- Make sure waste stations are set up, clearly labelled, and easily accessible. For every trash can available, also include a recycling bin.
- If your meeting takes place in the Government Center, provide and clearly label a container to collect food waste for composting.
- Clearly display signage on or above containers indicating which materials should be placed in which bins. Standard signage is available from the County’s waste and recycling provider, Republic Services. If possible, customize standard signage to include items specific to your meeting or event, for example, printed agendas, snack leftovers, or paper plates.
- For external meetings, such as public workshops, consider stationing employees or volunteers at the waste station to ensure proper disposal.

Additional Considerations

Catering

If a meeting or event will be catered, try sticking to the following guidelines:

Buy Local



- Purchase local food options whenever possible, prioritizing businesses that source local produce and offer zero-waste options.

Minimize Packaging



- Prioritize options with minimal and/or recyclable or compostable packaging.
- Consider “finger food” options that do not require utensils. Serve condiments in containers rather than individual packets.

Provide Zero Waste Utensils



- Use reusable dishes and silverware whenever possible. If reusable silverware and dishes are not feasible, use options certified by the Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI).
- Prohibit the use of Styrofoam products.

Off-site Meetings (Not Adams County Property)

When hosting a meeting or event off-site, such as a retreat, consider the following guidelines.

Secure Collection Service



- Consider the availability of recycling and composting services in selection of an off-site meeting venue.
- If recycling isn't readily available, consider packing recyclable items out with you for recycling back at an Adams County facility.

Secure Zero Waste Materials



- Check availability of reusable dishes, silverware and dishwashing capability or budget for rental or purchase of reusable or recyclable items.