

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



### How to Include Volunteers in Your Special Event Recycling Program

From outdoor concerts to craft fairs, summer festivals to holiday jamborees, special events are not simply opportunities for entertainment—they're also perfect occasions to collect the beverage containers, packaging, and pamphlets that otherwise would become trash.

Because they are temporary in nature and usually are held in locations without a permanent recycling infrastructure, special event recycling programs typically are staffed by volunteers who are willing to donate their time to environmental service.

This fact sheet is written for recycling and special event coordinators and other key decision-makers involved in planning and managing short-term public events in locations without permanent recycling programs in place. It explains how to involve volunteers in a successful short-term recycling collection effort.

#### Steps for Including Volunteers in a Short-Term Recycling Effort

Volunteers play key roles in all phases of a temporary recycling collection effort. They usually monitor and empty bins, ensure that signage stays in place, support vendor and concessionaire participation in recycling, and educate the public about recycling.

- First, appoint or hire a volunteer coordinator. This person should be knowledgeable about recycling issues and will be responsible for recruiting and managing volunteers.
- Determine how many volunteers will be needed. The number will depend on the size and length of the event; the number of hours volunteers will be needed; the square footage of the event; whether the event is held indoors or outdoors; the number of recycling bins that will be placed throughout the event area; how the recyclables will be managed; and the types of materials targeted for recycling.
- Recruit volunteers two to four months before the event. Begin preparations for the first meeting with volunteers four to six weeks before the event. Prepare and print site maps showing recycling locations.
- Conduct the first meeting with volunteers one month before the event. At the meeting, determine volunteers' availability for the event dates. Outline their roles and responsibilities. Train the volunteers as necessary.
- Assign shifts to volunteers two weeks before the event and discuss the location of the designated volunteer check-in area. Confirm with volunteers one week before the event.
- Prior to the event, meet with event and waste management staff and highlight your goals for the event. Be sure to target what materials you would like to recycle and obtain containers to collect them. When talking with event coordinators, detail what the recycling area(s) will look like and how you will manage materials collected from containers and vendors.
- On the day of the event, provide volunteers with a brief orientation, review responsibilities, distribute site maps, and answer questions.



## Build a Volunteer Base

Recruiting volunteers can be easy if you know where to look. Contact local colleges, universities, and high schools. Don't forget local service and religious groups such as the YMCA, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H clubs, the Boys and Girls Club, and church groups. Advertise for volunteers through a variety of media, such as:

- Local newspapers and periodicals
- Community bulletin boards and calendars
- Internet message boards
- Environmental groups
- Web sites
- E-mail
- Letters/fliers
- Radio announcements
- Word of mouth

Create a volunteer database of past volunteers and those who show interest in helping. People who volunteered in previous years often are willing to donate their time again.

### The Personal Touch

When soliciting volunteers for a recycling program, personally contacting prospects by phone or in person is more likely to yield positive results than simply sending a letter or e-mail. After the event, send thank-you notes to everyone involved.

## Assign Roles to Volunteers

While volunteers' roles and duties should be tailored to each specific event, the following roles will benefit a temporary recycling program of any scale:

- *Recycling Captains* coordinate other volunteers and troubleshoot any problems that might arise. This role is best suited for individuals with recycling program

and leadership experience. The number of Recycling Captains needed depends on the number of event attendees and the size of the event.

- *Recycling Collectors/Runners* collect recyclables from designated locations and from vendors and concessionaires and transfer the materials to the storage area or processing/sorting area.
- *Recycling Processors* organize and sort materials collected by Recycling Collectors/Runners. Processors are stationed at the storage area or processing/sorting area.

### Make Volunteers Visible

Volunteers must be easily identifiable by both the public and each other. Provide volunteers with event-specific recycling t-shirts, hats, or buttons, which also can serve as great souvenirs for them. Coordinating colors, buttons, or stickers may also help improve visibility. Refer to the *Lowell Folk Festival Success Story* at [www.epa.gov/recycleonthego/documents/lowell.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/recycleonthego/documents/lowell.pdf) for information on how to finance such items.

## Communicate with Volunteers

Once you assign roles to volunteers, give them an overview of the entire program and inform them about their individual responsibilities. Include details about:

- Which materials will be collected.
- Where recycling bins will be located.
- How frequently the bins will need to be emptied.
- How the materials will be transported during and after the event.
- Whether volunteers will be responsible for weighing and recording the amount of collected recyclables.
- How to troubleshoot problems that might occur on site.
- What safety precautions to follow, such as wearing gloves.

## Gather Program Feedback

Because volunteers are on the recycling front line at a special event, their feedback is invaluable. At the end of the event, evaluate the program

### Vendor and Concessionaire Assistance

Assign several volunteers to help vendors and concessionaires with their recycling efforts. These volunteers should stop regularly at vendors' stations to collect their recyclables. Be sure to tell vendors which materials should be recycled during the event. Refer to the *How to Involve Concessionaires & Vendors Fact Sheet* at <[www.epa.gov/recycleonthego/progam/vendors.htm](http://www.epa.gov/recycleonthego/progam/vendors.htm)> for more suggestions.

by discussing its effectiveness with volunteers. Discussion topics might include:

- What worked and did not work?
- What materials could have been recycled but were not?
- How did the public react to the program? Did they provide any feedback?
- Were vendors receptive to the program? Did they provide any feedback?
- How can the program be improved?

Also visit the **Recycle on the Go** Web site at <[www.epa.gov/recycleonthego](http://www.epa.gov/recycleonthego)> for more information and success stories.

**Recycle**  
on the **GO**

EPA is partnering with other federal agencies, states, municipalities, and organizations to promote recycling away from home.

[www.epa.gov/recycleonthego](http://www.epa.gov/recycleonthego)