



# Event Planning Guide 1.0

**So, you want to do the right thing  
and have an event that has a  
minimal impact on the environment?**

**GREAT!**

**This guide will help you do that**

## The Formation of *Xtreme* Zero Waste

In 2014, Joan Gregerson founded Sustainable Revolution Longmont to join together and empower the Longmont community around environmental concerns. She envisioned a large Earth Day celebration that would be a vehicle for children, youth and young adults to share their involvement around environmental sustainability. Once we formed a youth council, the Youth of the Earth Festival planning was underway. From the beginning, both youth and adults agreed to make this a very low waste event. Joan coined the term “Xtreme Zero Waste” to capture the idea that the festival would not only focus on recycling and composting waste, but also on reducing the amount of waste generated to begin with. When the Boulder County Resource Conservation Division provided Sustainable Revolution Longmont with a Zero Waste grant, the Xtreme Zero Waste concept was launched.

# Here are some things to consider as you start your planning

Where will your event be held? see **FACILITY**

Will you be providing drinks? see **DRINKS**

Will you be supplying food? see **FOOD**

How will people get to the event? see **TRANSPORTATION**

Will you provide t-shirts or other identifiers for staff/participants? see **T-SHIRTS**

Will there be giveaways or prizes? see **GIVEAWAYS and PRIZES**

Where is the power coming from? see **POWER**

Who will be coming and how to bring them on board? see **COMMUNICATION**

Who will carry out the plan? see **PEOPLE**



## Why an XZW Event Guide 1.0?

Because this is just the beginning! You are going to come up with your own really cool, outside-the-box solutions to avoid generating waste, which you are going to share with others, so that XZW can grow in scope and impact.

### What you need to start

An event, a date, a venue, and two or three people to kick off the idea of Xtreme Zero Waste and want to make sure that it permeates the event. As soon as you can, start planning the XZW components.

### Our Minds—Widening our View; Seen and Unseen Waste

Doing Xtreme Zero is having a mindset that looks beyond the day-of-event waste creation to the before-and-after waste and energy use. That is, we concern ourselves with the “seen” waste—produced at the time of the event—and also the “hidden” waste, which may be created to make products that we use, or may linger in the plastic prizes or giveaways that event goers take home with them.

As we understand the true environmental costs of, say, t-shirts or food transported long distances or bottled water, we can imagine and implement more sustainable practices. Creativity is key!

### Our Habits—The All-Around Approach

How do you change people’s habits? True change usually requires more than one approach. Education is important, but is not enough. People also need motivation, an environment that supports the new habit, others modeling how it is done, some positive peer pressure, and sometimes an incentive. If it’s fun, easy, and/or economical, so much the better! The more of these elements that you can include, the more likely you are to succeed. Being repeatedly exposed to a new habit-forming environment helps tremendously.

### Our Community

Don’t go it alone! Change requires buy-in, and the more people you can have involved and prepared, the greater impact you will have. Who will be a leader and promoter? Who can get others engaged? How can you tap in to people’s abilities, ideas, and artistic skills?

## FACILITY

Check out the facility you will be using well in advance. How accessible is it by foot, bicycle, or public transportation? Is it the right size (big enough but not too large) for your gathering? Does it have recycling and compost stations or will you need to provide those? Does it provide easy access for filling reusable water bottles? Are there kitchen facilities available if you are planning to serve food? Does the facility have dishwashing capabilities? Who will dispose of the trash, compost, and recycling? Does the facility take care of that, and if so, what is the charge?

## DRINKS

Consider the length of the event and whether you will be providing drinks. Can you encourage your participants to bring their own reusable drink containers? How will you provide water and/or other drinks that aren't packaged in single use containers? Do you need other cups or mugs? Can you use durables instead of disposables? Can you borrow, rent or buy them? What will be the cost? Are there water-filling stations in the venue? Can you borrow or rent a portable station or provide large water containers?

★ *We bought metal water bottles from local thrift stores over several weeks and sanitized them before sale at the event.*

★ *All posters and emails to participants and potential event goes before the event reminded people to BYOWB—Bring Your Own (durable) Water Bottle to the Festival.*

## FOOD

If you are serving food, what kinds and how much will you provide? How will it be presented and/or packaged? Will it come from local sources? Will you have vendors who are providing food? Are you going to use compostable serving products (better) or provide reusable durable plates, silverware, and cloth napkins (best)? Where will these come from? How many will you need? How will they be cleaned afterwards?

★ *Where to find durable dinnerware and flatware? Rent them from caterers, or ask to borrow or rent from local faith communities or non-profits. You can also buy from second-hand shops or yard sales.*

★ *Need napkins? Buy second-hand tablecloths & cut into cloth napkins.*

★ *Make sure you have enough volunteers to bus and wash plates, cups, silverware. Using durables will work best for smaller gatherings.*

## TRANSPORTATION

Transportation may be the area of largest environmental impact of your event. How will your participants get to the event? How accessible is the venue to public transportation? How do you encourage car-pooling, bike riding, or walking? If you want people to ride bikes, where will the bikes be parked? Can you provide a shuttle from a bus stop?

★ *A local group, Bicycle Longmont, provided free bicycle valet service to make sure bikes were safe during the event.*

## T-SHIRTS

T-shirts are a popular way to identify staff, volunteers, or participants at events and are often used as a reward or giveaway. But new cotton t-shirts are water-, chemical-\*, and energy-intensive to manufacture; if shipped from Latin America or China, they also require transport energy. Consider using second-hand t-shirts and having them locally printed. It will save you money, too. Or, think up less environmentally-burdensome ways to identify your group. (\*unless they are organically grown)

★ *To use second-hand t-shirts, we had to make sure they all had the same fiber content (we chose 100% cotton).*

★ *Find a local printer who will print supplied t-shirts in different sizes and colors.*

## GIVEAWAYS and PRIZES

Will you or your vendors/booths want to give away items or prizes to the participants? Think through how you can avoid plastic or throw-away items. Have information printed on 100% recycled paper. Encourage creative substitutes for cheap stuff. Challenge the notion of giveaways altogether. Or limit giveaways and prizes to one (final) venue, and only provide eco-sensible items.

★ *Instead of individual booth giveaways, people earned tickets toward eco-prizes that were centralized and well vetted—museum tickets, seed packets, educational events, even a farm share of produce!*

★ *Get the message across—no plastic, no cheap junk!*

## POWER

Unless your event is outside in the summer, you will probably be using electricity and possibly gas or oil for heating. How can you reduce event consumption? The easiest way is to be mindful of lights and heat/air conditioning. Turn off lights when not needed. Keep heat at the lowest temperature you can and air conditioning at the highest—or use fans. Keep heat/air off when not needed. Beyond that, you could look into alternate power sources, such as solar generators or bicycle power.

★ *Bicycle-power your sound system! A volunteer set up four bicycles to generate electricity for the performance sound system.*

★ *Solar anyone? See if you can borrow or rent local solar generators to produce energy for your event.*

## COMMUNICATION

Communicating the goals and strategies of XZW to your crew and the participants will be critical. Start early, and figure out what changes you are implementing. Be able to relay these to booth staff or vendors when they sign up, as well as to volunteers and general participants. Declare your event “Xtreme Zero Waste.” Reinforce the messages at every opportunity—in posters, email messages, newsletters, advertisements, interviews, websites, social media postings, and so on. Be sure to provide a booth or informational table about XZW at your event in a place that will be clearly seen. Label the composting and recycling receptacles so that people will correctly dispose of goods.

★ *Communicate, Communicate, Communicate!*

## PEOPLE

Put together a team of people who will oversee the XZW project. They will design and manage the projects, goals, and strategies; they will also make sure you have on hand what is needed (proper receptacles, water stations, durable goods, etc.) They will be the ones to measure outcomes and weigh the solid waste. They will communicate the information to the proper channels so that people come prepared.

## METRICS

You don't have to measure your program, but if you have goals and take measurements, you can see what you have done and have benchmarks for future programs. You can also calculate the environmental benefits—so that you know that you are making a difference by doing this.

## **XZW ACHIEVEMENTS**

### ***We saved approximately:***

- ✓ 2.9 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>
- ✓ 168,000 gallons of water

### ***And reduced . . .***

- ✓ Total volume of waste (trash, recycling, compost) by about 50% over Zero Waste events
- ✓ Landfill trash by more than 90% over events with no recycling or composting

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Our team: Joan Gregerson, Lise Hildebrandt, Teresa Foster, Tom Brophy, the Hansell family, Erin Neitzel, Connie Gordon, Rose Gordon, and an amazing group of volunteers

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For more information on Xtreme Zero Waste, contact Sustainable Revolution Longmont at [info@srlongmont.org](mailto:info@srlongmont.org), or check out our website at: [www.srlongmont.org](http://www.srlongmont.org)

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REVOLUTION  
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