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How to Involve Concessionaires & Vendors in Your Recycling Program

The beverages, snacks, souvenirs, and pamphlets sold and distributed at public venues and special events can turn into heaps of trash. To avoid this, establish a recycling program that builds upon a synergistic relationship with concessionaires, vendors, and exhibitors.

This fact sheet is written for operations managers, recycling and event coordinators, and other key decisionmakers involved in planning and managing public venues and events. It explains the key role in recycling and waste prevention played by concessionaires, vendors, and exhibitors. This fact sheet covers venues with a permanent recycling infrastructure as well as special events that implement temporary recycling collection activities.

Concessionaire Involvement and Support Is Key

Concessionaires, vendors, and exhibitors play a key role in the success of “on the go” recycling efforts. Involve them early in the planning process by asking for their input and incorporating their ideas. If possible, develop contracts that require their participation in the recycling program. Note that typically vendors and exhibitors are licensed or permitted on a short-term basis, allowing operations managers or event coordinators more control to insert a recycling clause. Because concessionaires usually have longer-term, contractual relationships with facilities, more time may be required to incorporate recycling into their contracts.

If feasible, require concessionaires to sell beverages only in recyclable bottles and cans, rather than disposable cups. If they prefer to use cups, encourage the use of plastic cups, if markets exist for them. While it can be difficult to find recyclers for plastic cups, those made with #1 (PET) or #2 (HDPE) resins currently seem to be more accepted than other resins.

When the recycling program is ready to launch, send all concessionaires a letter announcing the program and describing its goals, policies, and procedures. This letter also should outline

their roles and responsibilities and provide contact information for the venue or event recycling coordinator. See the *Sample Letter for Concessionaires & Vendors* on page 4 as a guide.

Provide concessionaires with collection containers and lids, liners, and signs to make it easy for them to participate in the program. Consistent collection bins, labeling, and signage are important for public participation. The recycling coordinator should be readily accessible to address any questions, problems, or concerns on behalf of the concessionaires.

Special Considerations for Temporary Recycling Efforts

At special events, where a permanent recycling infrastructure is not in place, concessionaires and vendors will need additional support. Give them sufficient advance notice about the recycling program so they can make product stocking and transport decisions that will enhance waste reduction and recycling goals. Contact concessionaires and vendors as soon as planning for the



event begins. Provide information on the recycling effort and explain their roles and responsibilities. If possible, hold a meeting with all concessionaires and vendors several months before the event to review recycling goals and procedures. See the *Sample Letter for Concessionaires & Vendors* on page 4 as a guide.

The following suggestions can enhance participation by concessionaires and vendors at special events:

- Use event volunteers to facilitate vendor participation. See the *How to Include Volunteers in Your Special Events Recycling Program Fact Sheet* at www.epa.gov/recycleonthegeo/venues/e_volun.htm for more information.
- Provide concessionaires and vendors with a list of acceptable utensils, plates, cups, and other food service items or purchase acceptable items and sell them to vendors.
- Recognize concessionaires and vendors' contributions and reward their efforts.

Waste Reduction

Concessionaires and vendors can practice waste reduction at all stages of their business, from ordering their supplies to cleaning up their vending stations. They can adopt practices that reduce or avoid waste even before it is generated. Such proactive practices include:

- Buying recycled-content supplies.
- Purchasing supplies and selling products with reduced packaging.
- Handing out straws, lids, and napkins only when requested.
- Dispensing condiments from bulk containers rather than providing single-serve packets.
- Using supplies with reduced environmental impacts, such as non-toxic cleaners.
- Recycling and reusing wooden pallets.

- Using reusable containers to transport food to the event site.
- Purchasing beverage mixes in concentrated form.
- Donating leftover food to area shelters or composting where feasible.
- Utilizing washable cloth towels or sponges—instead of paper towels—to clean up behind the counter.
- Encouraging employees to come up with creative ideas to reduce waste.

Recycling

Much of the waste from concessionaire activities consists of recyclable or compostable material, such as:

- Corrugated cardboard
- Plastic and glass bottles
- Aluminum cans
- Plastic cups
- Vegetative food scraps
- Biodegradable food service items (e.g., plates, utensils, straws, lids, condiment wrappers)

Concessionaires and vendors can avoid using difficult-to-recycle materials, such as:

- Waxed paper goods
- Polystyrene “clamshell” food containers
- Non-biodegradable food service items
- Multi-material packaging

Recycling Coordinators' Responsibilities to Concessionaires

Concessionaires and vendors need the event recycling coordinator to clearly outline program goals and guidelines and motivate

them to participate in the program. Recycling coordinators should provide educational materials to concessionaires that address:

- Why they should reduce, reuse, and recycle.
- Which materials can be recycled.
- Which bins, containers, signs, or other materials will be supplied.
- Where recycling bins will be placed.
- When and how often bins will be emptied.
- Who will be responsible for emptying the bins.
- What contamination is and how to avoid it.

Coordinators should encourage concessionaires to educate their staff. Everyone working at the venue or event should know the components and benefits of the recycling program to ensure a successful collection effort. They can reward concessionaires and vendors for their participation by:

- Providing “This Vendor Recycles” signs or plaques.
- Publicizing program progress and accomplishments, including the amount of material recycled.
- Developing concessionaire and vendor competitions to recycle the most material or reduce the most packaging.

Feedback on the Program

To ensure success, regularly solicit concessionaire feedback to assess the program and address future modifications. Discussion topics for concessionaires could include:

- Was it convenient for you and your customers to recycle?
- Did you have enough bins and collection locations for your recyclables?
- Were the bins emptied efficiently and frequently?
- Did you receive adequate information on the recycling program?
- How did your employees and customers respond to the recycling program?
- What would you do to improve the recycling program?
- What would have made recycling easier?
- Did you know whom to contact with any questions or problems?

Also visit the **Recycle on the Go** Web site at <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

Sample Letter for Concessionaires & Vendors

Dear Concessionaire or Vendor:

The [Name of location or event] is implementing a waste reduction and recycling program. Events at our venue generate a great deal of waste and recyclable materials. We are committed to diverting as much of these materials as possible from the waste stream. To help conserve natural resources and protect the environment, we ask that you join us in a partnership by participating in our waste reduction and recycling program.

Please review the information about the recycling program procedures below:

[Give details of the recycling program here, including which materials will be recycled, where bins will be located, and how and when the materials will be collected. Distinguish between your responsibilities and the concessionaire/vendor's. Also note in this section if you plan on making the program mandatory through a contractual change.]

Waste reduction is an important part of our new program. We ask that you partner with us to:

- Look for opportunities to reduce packaging.
- Explore opportunities to use reusable shipping materials such as plastic pallets, plastic crates, and corrugated cardboard boxes.
- Increase the amount of recycled material content in products and packaging.

We will be making every effort to educate guests about our recycling program. In addition, it is important that your employees be aware of the new program and how it will operate. We ask that you please educate your workers about the recycling policies and procedures at [Name of location or event].

For more information, or if you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Recycling Coordinator, [Name], at [Phone and/or e-mail]. We look forward to working with you to accomplish the goals of our recycling and waste reduction program.

Sincerely,

[Your name here]

Source

- *Recycling at Events: A Guide to Reducing Waste at Any Event.*
<www.recyclingadvocates.org/pdf/pubs/events.pdf>