

# How to Conduct a Visual Waste Audit

*Use these guidelines if you will be conducting an audit for the first time, or if you'd like to track your event waste.*

A waste audit helps you measure the different types of waste generated at your event. The results will help you determine an approximate waste volume and composition, identify opportunities to improve your current waste management initiatives, and compare how much waste was truly garbage (landfilled) compared to diverted (i.e. recycled or composted). Additionally, an audit will allow you to compare your performance against best practices and other similar events. The following guide will provide you with a step-by-step process for conducting a high-level waste audit at your event.

- 1) Use the “Waste audit data collection” sheets for your audit. Print in advance so you can record data and notes as you go.
- 2) If you wish to keep waste sources separate during auditing, use one (or more, if needed) data sheets for each source.
- 3) Establish your bin size(s). If using multiple-sized bins, be sure to record their specific volumes on your data sheets (template on the following page). This information is critical for accurate data collection.
- 4) Monitor the bins to ensure proper diversion and take note of trends in materials. Also note which bins appear to be filling at a faster rate.
- 5) If a bin becomes full before the end of the event, mark down which bin is full and how full it is before having it removed and replaced.
- 6) At the end of the event, conduct a sweep of all bins to determine how full each is, visually (e.g., 25%, 50%, 75%, 100%).
- 7) Be sure to record on your data sheet how full each bin was prior to being removed and the general composition of the materials.
- 8) Be sure to monitor each waste station consistently, i.e., all volunteers are on shift from 10AM – 4PM to achieve consistent results.

- 9) At the end of your event, do a final sweep for all waste. Collect bags/bins and record information on your data sheet.
- 10) To calculate the volume of waste in each bin/bag, multiply the bin size by how full it was, by percent. For example, a 60 L bin was about half (50%) full when emptied, then there is 30 L of waste in it.
- 11) To calculate the total amount of each waste stream, simply add up the volume of waste from each column.
  - a. For example, there were three compost bins, each 25 litres in size. At the end of the event, one bin was 100% full, one was 80% full, and one was 60% full. Therefore, they contained 25 L, 20 L, and 15 L respectively. The total compost volume was 60 L.
- 12) Finally, calculate the percentage of waste that was garbage (sent to landfill) vs. the percentage that was diverted. This is your diversion rate!

### Waste Audit Data Collection Sheet

| WASTE AUDIT DATA COLLECTION SHEET   |                        |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
|---|------------------------|--------|---------|--|--|--|--|--|--|----------------|--|--------|---------|---------------|--|--|--|
| Event name: _____   |                        |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
| Date: _____   |                        |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
| Auditor(s): _____   |                        |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
| Source of Waste: _____  |                        |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
| Bin size(s): _____  |                        |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
| # Days worth of waste: _____  |                        |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
| Bin/Bag #   | Bin / Bag # *          |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
|   | Bin/Bag type or size * |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
|   | Volume (% Full) *      |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
|   | Volume (L)             |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
| Category of Waste   | Recycling              |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
|   | Deposit Items          |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
|   | Compost                |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
|   | Other                  |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
|   | Garbage                |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
| Volume of waste<br>= Bin/Bag type or size<br>x Volume (% Full)                      |                        |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
| Notes on waste composition (problematic items, packaging trends, observations, etc) |                        |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
|   |                        |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
| Total Recycling   |                        |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
| Total Deposit Items   |                        |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
| Total Compost   |                        |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
| Total Other   |                        |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
| Total Garbage   |                        |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
| Total Waste   |                        |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
|   |                        |        |         |  |  |  | <table border="1" style="float: right; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Total Diverted</th> <th>Volume</th> <th>Percent</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Total Garbage</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> |  |  | Total Diverted |  | Volume | Percent | Total Garbage |  |  |  |
| Total Diverted  |                        | Volume | Percent |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |
| Total Garbage   |                        |        |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |  |        |         |               |  |  |  |

***Click image to return to website and download***