

Organics Management Guide Submission

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Select the Primary Entity Type Please identify the category that best represents your project: Nonprofit or Non-Governmental Organization

Questions:

- 1. Background: Provide context for the program, project, or policy — why it was developed, when it began, and the problem or opportunity it addresses.**

The SW Vermont Chamber of Commerce has been operating a nationally recognized event, Garlic Town USA, for thirty years hosting 6 to 15,000 guests each time and creating thousands of pounds of waste most of which was burned in an aged incinerator billowing out some of the highest levels of heavy metals in the nation, or hauled hundreds of miles to a huge landfill. For the last decade the Chamber had a waste team that tried to divert some recycling and later organics with limited success. Community groups like the Climate Advocates Bennington 350Vermont have worked to recruit help and organize operations.

- 2. Summary: Briefly describe the initiative, including its goals, location, and primary outcomes.**

In 2025 Kathy Sollien (Compost Captain for the Chamber of Commerce), the Compost Committee of the Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance, and I undertook a year-long effort to organize the diversion of as much of the waste as possible from the Garlic Town event in September. We tried to shift from recyclables to using BPI certified serviceware and returning it to soil by composting. In the end we diverted 88% of all the waste for 6700 people through the volunteer efforts of about 40 people. Here are the key elements in our effort

1. Recruiting volunteers to spend from 4 to 14 hours on the event day sorting trash through extensive personal outreach and promotional efforts. We created a spreadsheet of information about present and past volunteers, roles, schedules, and incentives they preferred. The form is available on request.
2. Devising and revising an entire system to manage vendors, guests, volunteers and the waste itself, with roles as sorters, station leaders, and ambassadors.
3. Creating a joyous and thorough training for the 65 people who volunteered for the compost crews at Garlic Town and the Food Truck Fest last year,
4. Building a spirit of community and after the event recognizing volunteers and participating organizations in a public ceremony.
5. Learning from volunteers' evaluations vendors, and guests experiencesa
6. Sharing our experiences with Vermont recycling coordinators through a 20 minute powerpoint. Th epowerpoint and text of the narrative are available.
7. Assisting with development of a statewide effort at waste reduction at large events around the state.
8. Collaborating with leaders of other large events in NY and MA which are also pushing the use of compostables to reduce creation of plastics and return of waste to healthy soil.
9. Teaming with staff at Casella's to sort 72% of all the waste into compost.
10. Negotiating and lobbying the Chamber to require the use of compostable serviceware
11. Raising funds to assist vendors with the transition to all compstables.
12. Working to create a culture of composting and a Near Zero Waste brand in the Southwest of Vermont through initiatives in schools, businesses, large events, and homes.
13. Honoring Bennington's first NZW business
14. Assisting a school of largely marginalized children as they develop gardens, compost, rewild their surrounding and organize into a team that may lead other schools in the sorting of composting process.

3. Percent of Overall Diverted Material: If available, include data or estimates on the portion of the community or organization's total diverted material no longer associated with the waste stream that this program or policy addresses.

A detailed spreadsheet of the accomplishments of these efforts is attached. Last year we completed the transition begun in 2021 from 54% diversion to 88% diversion. We reduced

the waste (including vendor waste) to one solitary ounce of landfilled waste for each person at the festival.

4. Key Program Elements or Policy Provisions: Describe the structure and main components of your program or policy. Explain the investments origins (who, how much). Please include as many of the following elements as applicable: What types of materials are being managed? (e.g., surplus recoverable foods, food scraps, wasted food. How are these materials managed? Who is responsible for managing them? (Organizations, agencies, businesses, or other entities) What products are generated, and how are they utilized or managed? (e.g., compost, animal feed, energy products) Who funds the management of these materials? (Funding sources, grants, partnerships) Who generates these materials? (Identify the origin: households, institutions, businesses, etc.)

1. Food waste and serviceware from guests, cardboard, plastic film, recyclable trash and food from vendors.
2. Training and coaching vendors to shift to serviceware that can be safely composted. Taking returnables and plastic film to be recycled. Arranging with Casella's to process compost and garbage.
3. The compost committee with the Compost Captain of Garlic Town, the leaders of the Food Truck festival and other community groups.
4. Compost and topsoil are generated at Casella's Long Train compost site.
5. We obtained one grant. The Solid Waste alliance and the Chamber also provide funding and Casella's underwrites all the costs of waste collection composting, recycling and disposal.
6. Large events, a school, a business, groups like Rotary and churches.

5. Regulatory Impact: Describe how laws, policies, regulations, and/or code have affected your program or project. This may include positive, negative, or neutral impacts. Consider noting which regulations apply, how they influenced implementation or operations, any challenges or barriers encountered, and how compliance requirements shaped program decisions.

The State of Vermont has made it illegal to dispose of organic waste in our landfills. However, it does not consequte businesses, events, institutions or individuals for violating that law nor has it inspired communitiers to set aside convenient collection

places for organics in local communities. This makes it a slow, difficult process to increase diversion and reduction of wastes.

Our SWA (Solid Waste Alliance) has sent outreach worker educates all kinds of businesses and individuals but adoption of these practices is very slow. Most people listen politely and keep on doing what they have always done because there is no carrot or any stick. A study of diversion efforts across the country shows that only Massachusetts, which has strong penalties and has developed the infrastructure to make composting easy for individuals and businesses and institutions, has had a high level of success at the conversion From burying to composting trash that our earth desperately needs.

6. Measurable Increase in Supply: Include data or qualitative outcomes showing growth in collection, diversion, or reuse volumes if available.

See the attached Results spreadsheet.

7. Behavior Change: Describe whether the initiative resulted in measurable behavior change and explain how you determined this. If behavior change occurred, outline the strategies that proved most effective. Please include any available data or evidence that supports your findings.

All unattended trash cans were removed from Garlic Town and the Food Truck Festival. As a result we needed to get guests to take trash to the stations All of our waste/compost stations, directional signs, maps and volunteers' aprons have the same color green banners and same or similar logos getting guests to take waste to the stations.

We send ambassadors to visit with vendors at events, collect their trash throughout the day, audit their materials and work to create a positive spirit. Our sorters at every station thank each guest who brings them waste to sort. The guests are consistently delighted and grateful. We talk up our efforts with all of our volunteers and commend them on their dedication and listen to the challenges they face in helping. We reach out through the newspaper, Front Porch Forum, the Interfaith Council and numerous local groups like the Rotary to nurture a Near Zero waste culture.

8. Benefits and Impacts (Economic, Environmental, and Social): Describe the economic, environmental, and social sustainability impacts of the program, policy, or initiative. This may include both positive and negative outcomes. You

may address impacts such as costs or savings, job creation, waste reduction, emissions, resource conservation, community engagement, equity, or public health. Please include data or qualitative observations where available and note any trade-offs or challenges.

The biggest impact is the massive reduction of waste being burned and buried throughout the community particularly in large events.

9. How Stakeholder Buy-In Was Achieved: Explain how the program gained support from key stakeholders (e.g., government agencies, businesses, residents, nonprofits).

We have offered a vision of the community in harmony with creation, and we thanked each person for each step they have taken. Buy in has also been won by the willingness to offer help managing waste, insisting that groups require the use of compostable materials, and gathering a group of people to advocate and negotiate and push at times for these steps.

10. Stakeholders' Perspectives and Dynamics at Play: Highlight collaboration dynamics, challenges, or differing stakeholder interests and how they were addressed.

You can see this throughout the description above and in the text and pictures in our 20 minute powerpoint which is available on request.

11. Lessons Learned: Share what worked well, what didn't, and recommendations for others seeking to replicate your approach.

A few keys:

- In a large event you cannot leave trash cans untended. Our best results for sorting waste in non-contaminated condition are these: One, to have a table for receiving people's trash and our volunteers, on the opposite side, sort the waste into bins. Two, to have a well-signed separate bins at the front of a station with a well-trained, friendly, assertive person to stand directly behind the bins to welcome guests, thank them, and if they are hesitant or misguided in their sorting to suggest that they surrender their trash so the volunteer can sort for or with them.

- Stations should be well signed and consistent color and symbols used on facilities and people for easy identification.
- Because we limit the number of trash cans, it is important to teach vendors where the nearest stations were located so they can guide guests who will be looking for a place to dispose of waste.
- Training volunteers should be thorough and fun and designed to help build community. This event should last a couple of hours if volunteers are learning to sort multiple kinds of recycling, trash compostables, film and cardboard. A separate part of that time should include training volunteers in their roles. Define the roles clearly in advance and divide training in the skills needed in addition to sorting.
- We have three main roles: Ambassadors visit with each vendor in their assigned areas as they are arriving. A map describing their area centered around one of the stations is provided to each Ambassador. Ambassadors teach vendors about what is expected and gather samples of the vendor's serviceware for an audit. After the event we made notes on a spreadsheet of the types of materials each vendor used and Zero Waste grade them for compliance with event requirements. We report results to vendors later. The evaluation chart is attached. Throughout the day of the event ambassadors work in the waste station for their territory and circulate regularly through the vendors to collect waste and take it back to their station to sort thereby avoiding a massive build up of trash to process at the end of the day.
- Station leaders use a station guide we have provided with essential information like first aid, the work schedule, and procedures for sorting and transporting wastes. The leaders also set up the station in the morning and take it down at the end of the event and guide sorting of the vendor waste for their territory, especially as the day lengthens. The leaders are responsible for making sure all volunteers in their area drink enough water and get shade and seating as needed. Other details are in their job description.
- If some people are squeamish about sorting they may work as greeters or "barkers" inviting people to the stations.
- We provide a tent, signs, table, chairs, towels, water, sponge, wash cloth, soap, cups and drinking water and the rest of a list which we would share for each station.
- We place a station beside or in front of every set of port-a-potties so we can monitor the trash there and keep diapers and other non-compostable items out and get the towels IN the compost.

- Another element of the effort is creating the work schedule. Weighing the level of needs, kinds of need, abilities of each volunteer, and the time availability of volunteers, A sample sheet is available
- It is vital to get data to see what you actually accomplish by your event Casella's have been wonderful weighing the waste we submit: compost, recycling and organic. waste.. We created our own spreadsheet reports. You will want to contact whoever will be transporting the waste at your event so they will be sure to weight it and inform you. Volunteers and all involved groups will be glad to hear what you all have accomplished. We also weighed plastic film, and returnable cans. By keeping these records over the years we and our volunteers and groups can see what they are accomplishing and what needs help.
- We used different containers for different types of wastes. One can holds returnable cans (Must be rinsed and returned promptly or soda and beer drain from cans, mix and sour.). One bin holds plastic film (Only film free from food residues can be accepted. See chart from Solid Waste Alliance. Return to a collecting grocer like Hannaford's.) Use clear bags or totes for recyclables so they can be easily distinguished from the garage. Bags of recyclables must be emptied from containers when dumped into the rollaway. They CANNOT be stacked in columns and must be loose so robots can sort them. Black bags or totes contain Trash. Organics go in green topped totes. Be sure to have enough totes because storing compost in bags is a nightmare. They get too heavy, tear, and get confused with garbage bags...
- Separating food waste from serviceware is very time consuming and messy. If at all possible find a waste company to accept compostable serviceware that is certified as a maximum of 100 PPM of PFOAs. All four major certifying organizations hold to that standard. Green Paper Products set up a webpage of certified products for our vendors and provided a discount for them so we simply send vendors the link and they can find everything they need on one page.
- Insist that vendors use certified compostables. Otherwise you must sort every item of trash to keep out potential PFOA contamination of compost and the entire compost site.
- Casella's in Vermont are happy to help with events! If you cannot compost even BPI Certified serviceware these events will end up landfilling or incinerating vast counts of waste.

If you have any questions please call Marsh Hudson-aknapp at 802-753-8137. I intended to attach three other files but they were not allowed

