

Reducing Office Waste



Reducing office waste

By minimising waste, your business can reduce the amount that goes to landfill, save money on disposal costs, and lower the demand for resources. This will help create a low carbon circular economy.

Waste minimisation involves putting in place initiatives for waste prevention and reduction, and for recycling and reusing materials.

This resource sheet shows you how to:

- **Develop a Waste Policy for your business.**
- **Carry out a Waste Audit.**
- **Deal with different waste streams.**
- **Locate organisations that can help you with your waste resource.**





Waste Policy

Developing a Waste Policy can help your business commit to minimising waste and monitoring progress. Give a copy to each of your staff and encourage them to make a personal commitment to waste reduction. Check in on their progress every six months to make sure everyone is on track.

To the right is a sample Waste Policy you can use as a template for your own business.

Carrying out a Waste Audit

You can undertake a waste audit to find out where your waste is coming from and where it's going.

A robust waste audit is a great way of finding out how much waste you are producing, so you can find out how to reduce, recycle or reuse it. Information from the audit will help identify current waste practices and how they can be improved.

Results from your Waste Audit can be included in your Waste Policy.

Aim

Develop Waste Management Programme to help achieve a zero waste target.

Action

1. Set up effective options for reducing, reusing and recycling in the office and the staff room.
2. Work with your suppliers to reduce the amount of waste you deal with e.g. packaging.
3. Remove rubbish bins from all desks and replace with recycling and small composting bins.
4. Include recycling boxes for both single sided and double sided paper on all desks.
5. Where practical, actively maintain a worm farm, or Bokashi compost bin, to maximise organic waste diversion. If you set up a Bokashi system, staff can take it home.
6. Keep each area tidy and litter free in the office, as well as any external areas, to limit environmental impacts.
7. Opt for as many paper-free communication options as practical.
8. Create a rooftop or indoor garden to use any fertiliser generated from the worm farm.
9. Identify 'green heroes' (e.g. people who already compost at home) within your workplace and work together to set up composting and recycling systems.
10. Develop a policy around e-waste and ensure staff know how to dispose of mobile phones and other electronic waste.

Record

Record six-monthly data on waste recycling and reduction methods.

Personal commitment

Encourage each staff member to make a personal commitment to reduce waste, for example: *This year I will make sure I bring my own containers/cups to use for takeaway food and drinks when I am in the office.*



What can I do with my waste?

The first step is to minimise the amount of waste your business is creating. Here are some of the options for dealing with the waste you can't avoid.

Recycling

Ask your cleaning company to provide you with recycling options, contact your [local council](#) to see what recycling services are available in your area, or make direct contact with a commercial recycling provider like [Reclaim](#).

In Wellington, [Sustainability Trust](#) has a step-by-step programme designed to help organisations reduce waste in their work space. It includes a site assessment and training in waste auditing and recycling.

Composting

Composting is a really great way to lower your business's environmental impact. Composting office food, tea and coffee waste can be easy, if it's done right.

If you work in an office environment where you have access to a grassy area, you can set up a compost bin.

Even if there is no grass, you can still compost. Worm farms are a great way to compost in a small area. You can buy a worm farm from [Hungry Bin](#) or hire a professionally-serviced worm farm from [Why Waste](#).

Bokashi bins are also another effective way of composting your organic waste in a small area. Keep a couple of bins on rotation and encourage staff to use the compost at home, or donate it to a community garden.

A further alternative is to work with others in your building and set up an account with a food waste collection provider, like [Green Gorilla](#), that will come and collect your compost.

E-waste

Mobile phones, their batteries and other e-waste (electronic waste) contains dangerous metals such as cadmium and lead which can harm the environment if not disposed of correctly. Mobile phones also contain valuable and often scarce elements known as 'rare earth' metals which are important to recover and recycle.

Useful resources

[Circular Economy Directory](#)

Search for organisations that can help your business reduce waste from the design phase through to dealing with products that are old, broken or no longer needed.

[Challenge Hub](#)

Challenge Hub is part of the Circular Economy Directory. Use it to find solutions to tricky sustainability challenges.

[SBN's work on accelerating the circular economy in Aotearoa New Zealand.](#)

We are working with other organisations to find out how to move from waste management to maximising the lifecycle of all materials. If you want to find out more, or get involved, please contact us at office@sustainable.org.nz

Case studies

Check out these case studies on minimising and managing waste.

All Heart NZ

All Heart NZ is a social enterprise that partners with corporates to redirect and repurpose their redundant and unwanted items. Their reduce partnerships help to develop the sustainable, ethical and social aspects of procurement and supply chain management.

Mutu xChange

Mutu xChange is an online platform that makes it easier for large companies to track their assets and rehome surplus resources more effectively. In other words it connects people who have things with people who need them.

Junk Run

Junk Run is a waste collection and recycling initiative that takes unwanted household and business items. About 70% of the items it collects are re-homed or recycled so they don't end up in landfill.



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