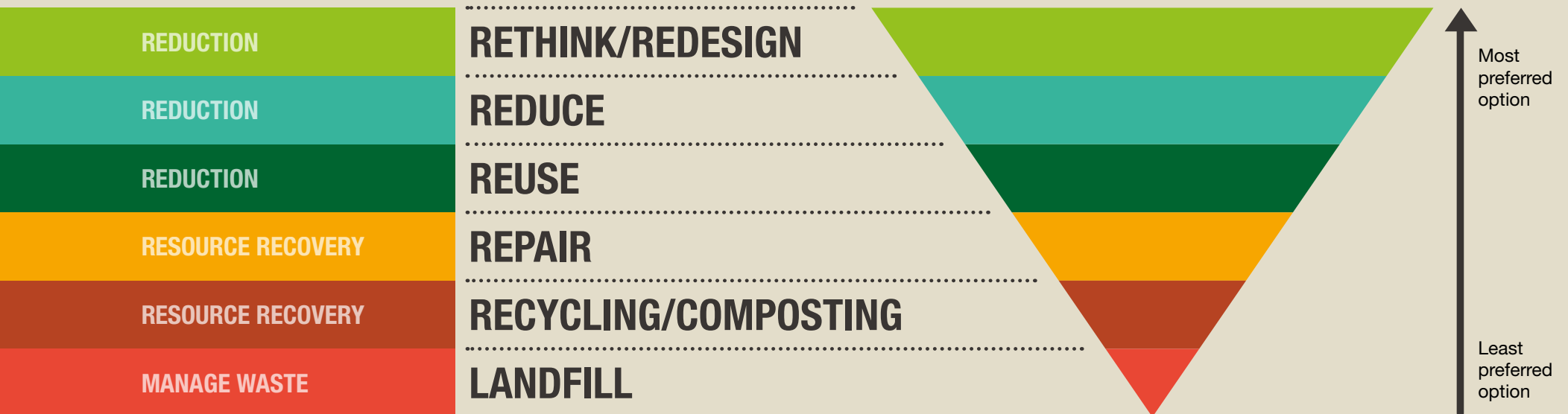


# HOW TO WRITE A BUSINESS WASTE MINIMISATION PLAN

A practical guide to help businesses plan their way to zero waste

UPDATED MARCH 2025



# WHAT IS A WASTE MINIMISATION PLAN AND WHY DO I NEED ONE?

Businesses are key to the circular economy by rethinking how they design, produce, and manage waste. Leading with sustainable practices like designing for longevity, encouraging reuse, and real recycling helps reduce waste and use resources more efficiently. The most effective way to minimise waste is to prevent it in the first place, offering the greatest environmental benefits and significant cost savings. Focusing on waste prevention allows businesses to boost sustainability, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and create new opportunities as leaders in responsible practices.

A waste minimisation plan, waste management plan, or resource efficiency plan, while called by different names, share the same core purpose: to help businesses understand, monitor, and reduce waste. These plans are a pathway and guide to help you, and your team understand where opportunities and improvements lie within your operations to reduce your waste.

A key component of any waste minimisation plan is understanding the waste hierarchy framework. This framework prioritises waste prevention, followed by preparing materials for reuse, recycling, and recovery, with disposal, such as landfill, being the last resort. Conducting a thorough audit of your waste streams will enable you to align your business with this hierarchy, forming the essential foundation for an effective waste minimisation programme.

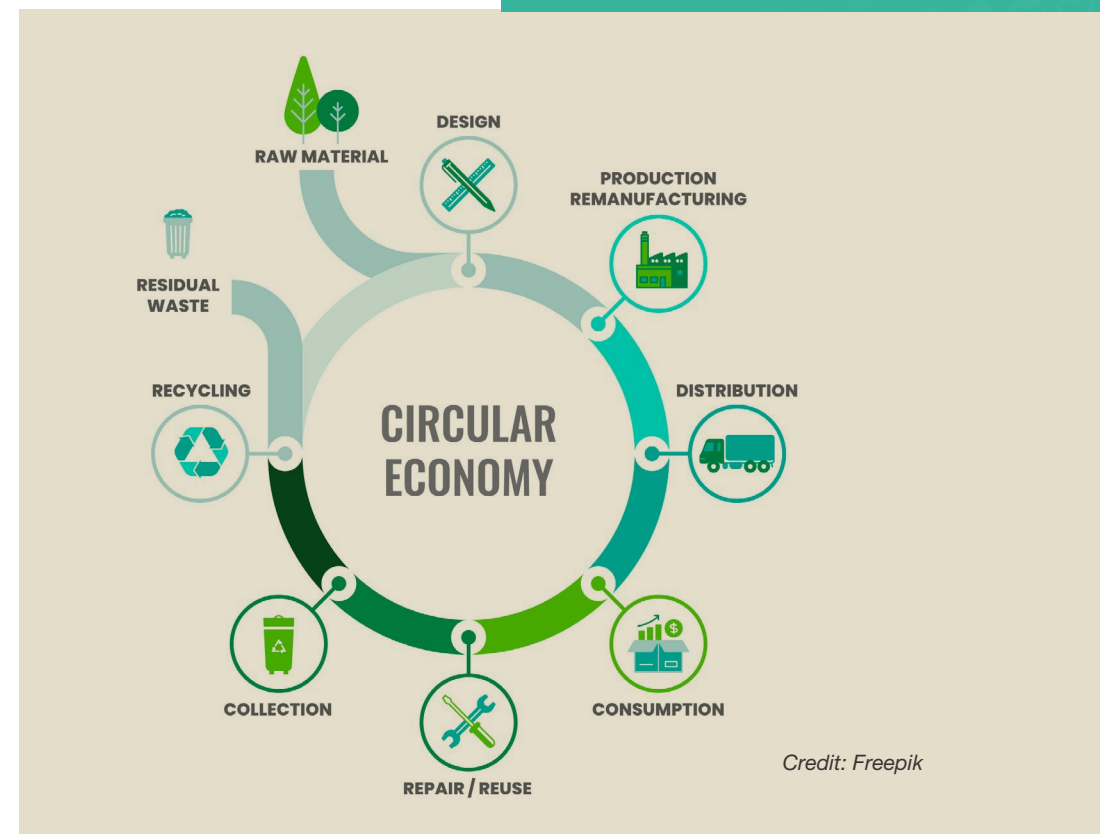
## What should a waste minimisation plan look like?

Writing a waste minimisation plan can seem like a daunting prospect. It will take time at the outset but, as you work your way through each step, it will come together easily to form a comprehensive document. By understanding your waste streams better, you will be able to set realistic targets and decide where best to focus your attention and budget. It's important to remember that your plan is a living document, one that needs to be reviewed and updated regularly.

Each section below can form the basis of a part of your plan. How you choose to present and word this is up to you as it has to fit within your organisation's broader communication and strategic plans.



Outdoor retailer, **Kathmandu**, has reported significant benefits from integrating a comprehensive sustainability and waste reduction plan. Focusing on waste minimisation not only aligns with their environmental goals but also results in cost savings and operational efficiency improvements by reducing waste disposal costs and enhancing resource recovery processes.



Credit: Freepik

# THINK ABOUT YOUR WHY

There's no one overarching reason for introducing a waste minimisation plan, and it's important that you understand your own "why" at the start of the process. Think about the waste that your business generates and the related considerations. These might include:

## SAVE MONEY ON LANDFILL AND RECYCLING COSTS WHILE INCREASING EFFICIENT RESOURCE USE

Reducing waste has the potential to save money across all parts of your business. Reducing the volume of waste destined for landfill, at the source, or by correctly diverting it to composting facilities or by maintaining clean recycling streams, can save your business thousands of dollars a year in waste disposal costs while ensuring you are maximising the lifespan of your resources. Reducing your waste makes financial sense!

## REDUCING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Reducing waste cuts your carbon emissions and reduces the amount of resources required to be extracted from the planet. It also has the added benefit of reducing pollution while the composting of materials contributes to the regeneration of our soils. In 2020, waste accounted for 4% of Aotearoa's total greenhouse gas emissions and 9% of biogenic methane emissions, mainly from decomposing organic waste like food, garden, wood, and paper. Landfills generated 94% of these emissions.

**[Ministry of Environment, Te rautaki para Waste strategy, 2023]**

The upstream impacts of minimising waste can cut your carbon even further by avoiding the emissions and resources needed to produce all of the goods and services you use.

## ENHANCING YOUR REPUTATION AMONG CUSTOMERS AND STAFF

Clients, consumers and employees are increasingly seeking businesses who demonstrate strong environmental commitments, ultimately influencing their decisions on who they want to work with. The MBIE's long-term business insights identify purpose-driven organisations as having significant potential for market growth.

Values are also crucial to Gen Z and Millennial employees, with 46% in senior roles having rejected jobs or assignments due to personal ethics (Deloitte, 2022). Additionally, 65% of leaders report feeling employee pressure to address sustainability issues (Deloitte, 2022).

Aotearoa is among the highest waste generators per capita in the OECD. In 2021 New Zealanders sent nearly 700kg of waste per person to landfills each year. The New Zealand Waste Strategy aims to reduce business waste by 30 to 50 percent by 2030. **[Ministry of Environment, Te rautaki para Waste strategy, 2023]**



Credit: Plastic Free Wānaka

# UNDERSTAND YOUR WASTE

**Before developing a waste minimisation plan, it is essential to understand how waste is generated in your organisation. Getting a handle on the waste streams and amounts of materials you are dealing with, and which part of your operation generates the waste is a good first step. If you're going to tackle your waste streams, you need to know what you're up against. This needn't be hard work, it's just a matter of knowing what to look for and think about.**

Wastebusters has conducted waste audits with businesses of all sizes in the Queenstown Lakes District. A library of case studies can be found [here](#). Understanding what an audit should include will help you when you make a start within your own business.

- Start by looking in your bins, a simple first step. How much waste are you producing, what kind of materials do you notice and where is it coming from?

- Keeping track of the volumes of waste that you're generating, (whether daily, weekly or monthly) can be as simple as asking your waste service providers to give you a report on the weights and volumes they are collecting from your business.
- Think about your waste's origins. This isn't just your out-of-town supplier; how and where was the waste originally made and what has it taken to get to your business? It's easy for us to forget what's happened upstream but once you start taking stock of your waste's origin story, it can have a big impact on how you view it.
- What about your recycling bins? Are you and your team making sure the right materials end up in the right bins? Do you all understand what can and can't be recycled within your district? Have you got adequate signage in your recycling areas to help your team with this?
- Talk to your waste providers and cleaners. Ask them for feedback and suggestions on how you can improve. Get them to explain where your recycling ultimately ends up - do you know what happens to the cardboard boxes, aluminium, glass and plastics that leaves your premises?

- Do you know how best to dispose of e-waste and where it ends up?
- Map out your waste handling and disposal practices, including existing recycling or composting programmes, and how any hazardous waste is managed and disposed of.
- As you look at and start auditing your waste, can you identify opportunities for reduction or elimination? Think about the challenges too and how you might overcome obstacles to change.



*Credit: Sherwood Queenstown*

MATERIALS	ESTIMATES KGS/VOLUMES (PER WEEK/MONTH/YEAR)	SOURCE OF WASTE	WHERE DOES IT GO?
Paper	5 kg/week	Office paper	To Wastebusters
Cardboard			
Recyclable plastics			
Glass			
Steel and aluminium			
E-waste			
Food waste			
Green waste			
Landfill waste*			

\* If possible try to break this down into a few categories e.g. non-recyclable plastics, textile waste, single use cups and containers, paper towels.

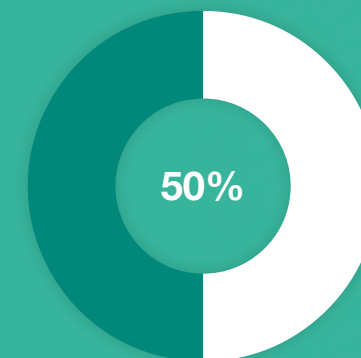
When Skyline Queenstown conducted a waste audit with Wastebusters, they learned that they could potentially divert 79 tonnes of food waste a year from landfill. This meant:

**Landfill cost saving:**

Upwards of \$22k every year.

**Food waste avoidance cost saving:**

Approximately \$170k every year.



**Carbon benefits from reduction in methane from landfill disposal.**

According to **Project Drawdown**, composting waste versus sending it to landfill can reduce more than 50% of carbon dioxide equivalent greenhouse gas emissions.

# UNDERSTAND YOUR CONTAMINATION

When the wrong thing goes into the recycling bin, this is known as contamination and can create real problems for the recycling system. Placing incorrect or dirty materials in your recycling bins causes contamination which ultimately impacts the people that hand-sort the materials, making it harder and more expensive to meet quality standards required by reprocessors to recycle

materials into new items. To get the best outcomes from your recycling it is essential to minimise or eliminate contamination in your recycling bins. Doing a quick check of your bins can identify the common items of contamination.

Take the time to educate yourself and your team about what can and cannot be recycled, as well as how

to prepare materials properly. By doing this, you'll help ensure that your recycling streams remain clean, significantly enhancing your waste reduction efforts. This knowledge can spark valuable discussions with your team and customers about the importance of proper recycling practices that might extend into their households and other businesses.

# SET SOME ACHIEVABLE GOALS

You've looked at your waste streams and you're beginning to get a picture of what's coming into your business and in what kind of volume. The next step is to set realistic, measurable and achievable goals and timelines for waste reduction. This might be identifying a percentage of materials to be diverted from landfill, eliminating a specific waste stream

entirely or improving your business' waste tracking and reporting systems.

Having a clear and measurable understanding of what you and your team are working towards can lead to quick wins in the form of operational efficiencies, landfill cost savings and team engagement. Incorporate these

goals and your progress into your internal reporting.

Make sure your team understands what success looks like and celebrate it. If you don't meet your targets, take a moment to discuss with your team what happened and brainstorm ways to improve.



Credit: Plastic Free Wānaka



A few examples of goals:

> Reduce waste to landfill by 10% in 12 months

> Reduce staff use of single use cups and containers by 50% within 6 months

> Eliminate contamination in recycling bins within 12 months

> Reduce packaging waste from suppliers by 20% in 6 months

# STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN

To get everyone, staff, directors, cleaners, and customers, on board with your waste minimisation plan, start by keeping the conversation open about its goals and benefits. Encourage your team to share their ideas and solutions, so they feel a sense of ownership in the

process. Regular meetings can help you discuss progress and gather feedback, making sure everyone feels valued and involved. For the directors, keep them updated on how waste reduction efforts are impacting the bottom line and enhancing the company's image. Don't forget to

connect with your customers too! Share your sustainability initiatives through newsletters or social media and invite them to join you on this journey. By encouraging collaboration and feedback, you'll inspire commitment and enthusiasm from everyone involved.

# STAFF ENGAGEMENT AND ASSIGNING ROLES

Having an ongoing system for measuring and reporting waste helps your team see the real impact of their decisions. It also builds a culture of shared responsibility, where recycling and waste management are openly discussed, raising awareness and encouraging smarter choices. Even better, sharing these results with your customers shows them you're making genuine efforts.

A successful waste minimisation plan needs involvement at every level, regardless of the size of your business. For larger organisations, the Board might set the overall goal; for a smaller business, this might be done at management level.

Identifying who'll be leading the implementation and oversight of your waste minimisation plan is essential—it might be one person, it might be a case of establishing an environmental group who reports on progress and developments.

Regardless of the size of your business and whether you have high seasonal staff turnover or a long term team, it's vital that everyone clearly understands your waste minimisation strategies and goals. Wastebusters has put together a **staff induction document** to help businesses communicate their waste strategies to their teams with content for staff induction manuals. Including this information at the outset embeds it

into your business culture and makes it easier for everyone to get on board and see waste minimisation as the norm.

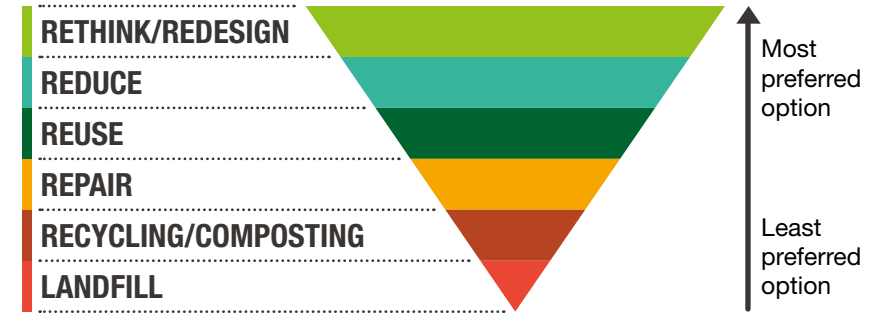
Getting your staff involved in waste minimisation starts with regular training, so everyone's on the same page about why it matters and what they can do. It helps to assign clear roles, maybe even create an environmental group if you're a bigger business. For smaller teams, you might have one person take charge, tracking progress and sharing updates on wins and new ideas. By making waste reduction part of everyone's job, you build a sense of ownership and teamwork around it, and make everyone accountable for ensuring successful outcomes.

**Patagonia**, a leader in outdoor apparel, focuses on being open about how its products are made and sourced. This transparency helps build trust with customers and keeps them coming back. By showing how they operate, Patagonia sets itself apart from competitors and strengthens customer loyalty. Research shows that 40% of consumers who care about sustainability would stick with a brand that promotes transparency in its supply chain (**Green Business Insights**). This just goes to show that sticking to your core values can lead to success and inspire customers at the same time.



Credit: Plastic Free Wanaka

# USE THE WASTE HIERARCHY TO BRAINSTORM ACTIONS



To brainstorm ideas around different materials and waste streams for your business waste minimisation plan, gather your team in a relaxed setting where everyone feels comfortable sharing their thoughts. Start by discussing the various types of waste your business generates, such as paper, plastics, food waste, and electronics.

Use the waste hierarchy to think about what you can do at each level. Even though the biggest gains will be found at the top, you still need to get your recycling working well as a foundation.

Encourage each team member to share their ideas for reducing waste in their specific area, whether it's suggesting ways to cut down on paper usage or finding creative solutions for reusing materials. Use techniques like mind mapping or whiteboards to capture all ideas, no matter how big or small.

This collaborative approach will help everyone feel invested in the process, leading to practical and innovative solutions for your waste minimisation efforts.

## EXAMPLES OF IDEAS:

	PLASTICS	GLASS	PAPER/ CARDBOARD	ORGANICS	LANDFILL
RETHINK/ REDESIGN			Switch to digital for all customer communications		Buy refurbished laptops and cellphones
REDUCE				Review catering requirements for events	Ask suppliers to provide goods without packaging
REUSE	Introduce a reusable cup and container library that staff can take for lunch and coffees	Refillable glass bottles for milk			
REPAIR					Employ a local sewer to fix staff uniforms to keep them in use
RECYCLING/ COMPOSTING	Train all staff on which plastics can and can't be recycled			Find a staff member willing to compost food waste from the staff room.	Audit rubbish bins for recyclable materials



# PRIORITISE AND MAKE A PLAN



**Change.  
But start slowly  
because direction  
is more important  
than speed.**

- Paulo Coelho

You've audited your waste streams, you've got data on the types and amounts of waste generated and you might have seen patterns or areas for improvement. You have engaged with your team and other stakeholders to gather their insights and ideas on what might be changed. Now it's time to start planning!

Don't try to tackle everything at once; picking a few small achievable wins can help get the ball rolling and get everyone excited to do more. Assess which actions will have the most impact for the least effort, think low-hanging fruit that can deliver quick wins—and set specific, measurable goals for these priorities to keep everyone focused and motivated.

By taking these steps, you'll create a clear roadmap that helps drive your waste reduction efforts forward.

An action plan for reducing business waste will help you tackle different materials and waste streams effectively. You know your waste streams and you have your goals, it's time now for the strategies for success. These could include:

## **ELIMINATING SINGLE USE ITEMS**

Identify areas where single-use items can be eliminated. Encourage staff to use reusable containers, utensils, and coffee cups instead of disposable ones. Review your supply chain and see whether there are opportunities within it to reduce these items. Talk to your suppliers and ask for alternatives.

## **MINIMISING FOOD WASTE**

If your business involves food, consider implementing strategies like portion control, donating surplus food, or composting organic waste. Look at what organic waste is produced in staff kitchens and think about what systems you can put in

place – onsite composting, identifying staff members who can take the food waste home for their own compost or engaging with a community compost scheme.

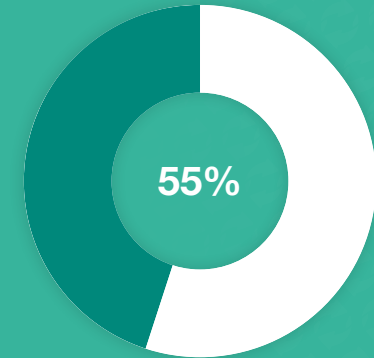
## **IMPROVING YOUR RECYCLING**

Set up designated recycling bins for different materials, such as paper, plastics, and glass. This will depend on who you work with for your recycling and what materials they accept. Ensure that all staff are trained on what can and cannot be recycled to reduce contamination.

## **GOING PAPERLESS**

Reduce paper waste by shifting to digital processes. Promote the use of electronic documents, digital signatures, and online communication tools.

Key to any action plan is having clearly defined objectives and targets attached to each one that enables everyone involved to track and review your progress.



**When architects, Warren & Mahoney, worked with Wastebusters to audit their Queenstown office waste, they found that 55% of their waste was potentially compostable.**

This had the potential to divert 140kg from landfill each year, reducing their waste disposal costs and lowering their greenhouse gas emissions. [You can read the full audit here.](#)

**EXAMPLE OF HIGH LEVEL ACTION PLAN:**

<b>GOAL</b>	<b>Reduce organic waste to landfill by 10% in 12 months</b>	<b>Reduce staff use of single use cups and containers by 50% within 6 months</b>
<b>WHAT</b>	Implement composting system for staff room	Introduce a reusable cup and container library that staff can take for lunch and coffees
<b>WHO</b>	Bob Gardener	Janet Bringitback
<b>BUDGET ALLOCATED (WHERE APPLICABLE)</b>	\$250 for 5 food scrap bins	\$400 to purchase cups and containers
<b>WHEN</b>	By December 2025	By January 2025



*Credit: Troy Tanner, Real NZ*

# COMMUNICATION AND MONITORING

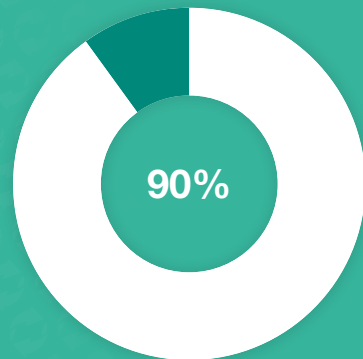
**As waste is effectively tackled and reduced, your action plan will change. Actions will be completed, some waste streams may disappear completely, while others may become less important. A regular review of your waste minimisation plan will help you to see where improvements have been made and where the next target for action may be. Monitoring and reviewing will also enable you to see and record the genuine achievements made and allow you to communicate these successes to your colleagues, customers and other stakeholders.**

The success of your waste minimisation plan depends on regular monitoring and reviews to make sure actions are followed through and improvements continue. Both management and staff should share responsibility for this, with tasks like checking waste separation and proper bin use becoming part of the daily routine.

Making monitoring a part of your everyday practices will help identify areas for improvement, and feedback from staff is valuable for spotting challenges early. Any issues, such as contamination or misuse, can be flagged and addressed, whether through extra training or better signage.

Reporting back to the broader team will keep everyone informed and invested in your strategies, and able to celebrate milestones along the way.

Engage local media and industry organisations and include them in your communications. Demonstrating the steps you have taken to reduce your waste and the wins you have made can inspire others to act.



**Mons Royale conducted a waste audit with Wastebusters, covering all business channels. They have phased out 90% of their virgin plastic clothing tags and replaced them with recycled, natural material. They offer a cuff repair kit, using offcuts or excess material, and are constantly exploring new ways in which to minimise the waste produced in their production process, communicating this across their social media channels as part of their brand story.**



Credit: Soulfood

# MONITORING AND EVALUATING YOUR PLAN

Identify how you will monitor and evaluate the goals in your plan. This will make it much easier for you and your team to track your progress and know what corrective action might need to be taken.

GOAL/ACTION	MONITORING/KPI	EVALUATION/CORRECTIVE ACTION
Reduce waste to landfill by 10% in 12 months.	<p>Are waste bins emptied less frequently?</p> <p>Has your waste service provider given you data to track your waste volumes?</p>	<p>Remove waste bins from individual workspaces.</p> <p>Report findings to your team and incentivise waste reduction – free morning tea for the team member who produces the least waste in a month.</p>
Reduce staff use of single use cups and containers by 50% within 6 months.	<p>Is your cup library being used?</p> <p>Are you seeing fewer takeaway cups and single use items in your waste streams?</p>	<p>Remind staff of the cup library in internal communications.</p> <p>Increase signage around SUCfree options.</p> <p>Provide all staff with their own reusable cup, container and cutlery. Ideally source these from a second-hand source.</p>
Eliminate contamination in recycling bins within 12 months.	<p>Are you seeing improved quality of recycling in your recycling areas?</p> <p>Has your waste service provider given feedback on contamination levels?</p>	<p>Ensure adequate signage in recycling areas.</p> <p>Consider organising a Recycling 101 workshop for your team with a zero waste expert.</p> <p>Include recycling information in your staff induction packs.</p>
Reduce packaging waste from suppliers by 20% in 6 months.	<p>Has your supplier-related waste decreased?</p> <p>Are you using recyclable alternatives when needed (e.g. pallet nets, reusable/refillable produce containers)?</p>	<p>(Re)engage with suppliers to discuss options.</p> <p>Engage with colleagues and fellow businesses to consider collective purchasing to reduce packaging.</p>

# LINKS AND RESOURCES

**Remember you're not in this alone and help is at hand! Here are some useful links to support you tackle your business waste:**

- **Industry resource guides** - have a look at [this library of industry specific guides](#) to help businesses on their path to zero waste. Even if your industry isn't listed, you might find some ideas that you can implement within your organisation.
- **Back to basics** - find out who is offering [waste management & recycling services in the Queenstown Lakes District](#). Ask your waste management service for your recycling stats and where your recycling goes.
- **What can be recycled in Queenstown Lakes?** For recycling processed at the Materials Recovery Facility in Frankton, check out the [QLDC website](#). For recycling processed by Wastebusters see their [recycling page](#). QLDC has created some [posters](#) that are a great way of helping staff and customers know what goes where. For alternative

reuse and recycling options, delve into the district's [A-Z Rubbish & Recycling Directory](#).

- **Talk to Zero Waste champions in Aotearoa** like [Wastebusters](#), [Zero Waste Network NZ](#), [Sustainable Queenstown](#), [Zero Waste Glenorchy](#), [Wao](#), [Sustainable Business Network](#), and [WasteMINZ](#). Sign up to their newsletters, join their zero waste events and be part of the conversation.
- **Read further afield.** Waste minimisation plans are a part of doing business wherever you are in the world and, consequently, there are excellent resources to turn to online. While some information may have country-specific information, there's a lot to be learned from what others are doing around the world. In Aotearoa: [Pacific Coast Lodge](#). Around the world: [Managing business waste - Australian government](#), [Wrap - business resource efficiency guides](#), [Waste Warriors - business waste reduction plan](#), [Business Waste UK - effective waste management plan](#), [Planet Pristine - waste reduction strategies for businesses](#).



Credit: Kiwi Harvest

**This guide was developed collaboratively by Wastebusters and QLDC as part of the Resourceful Communities initiative which is funded by the council's Zero Waste District Programme.**

**Resourceful Communities** aims to make the link between global work on the circular economy and local reduction and reuse activities.

The year-round programme inspires and supports behaviours that are part of the transition to a more circular economy.

Our aim is to help to build a culture where resources are valued and kept in use, and waste minimisation is the norm.

