**Waste Assessments: A Best Practice, and How-To Guide**

1. Choose a sampling methodology that will give you a good picture (Note: trash and recycling should be done separately, and may have different requirements. You can normalize data by day to make equivalent if sampling length is different)
	1. Will you look at everything for a given period of time, or just a sample?
		1. If just a sample, how will you ensure it’s a good indicator of the whole?
	2. How many days-worth of waste?
	3. Will you keep it secret, except for the assessment team? Or will you let folks know it’s going to happen?
	4. How much help will you need?
	5. No need to put trash in dumpster if it is to be sorted, work with facilities to pile it somewhere
2. Get human-power on board, and make it fun! Know your audience, and tailor efforts accordingly. Make sure people know they will not need to sort anything that makes them uncomfortable (i.e. it’s ok to just measure bathroom trash in bags as “bathroom trash”)
	1. Create a sign-up so that people can work in shifts of 30-45 minutes
	2. The first time, get more help than you think you need, and be sure to put everyone to work who has volunteered, even if just for a few moments
3. Set the scene
	1. Have a waste audit worksheet created, and pens/pencils/clipboards
	2. Have rubber gloves and any other safety items (sunscreen if outside, etc.)
	3. Get a scale
	4. Have bins to sort into that are labeled with waste streams you expect to find. Tare these bins so you know their weight, and also their volume
		1. for recycling: glass, plastic, metal, paper, cardboard, etc.
		2. for trash: bathroom trash, compostables, recyclables (plastic, metal, glass), paper, etc.
	5. Have tables set up to sort on- it helps if people don’t have to work on the ground
4. Have a clearly designated pile of bags/sampling size that you’ll be sorting. Instruct people to open the bags and sort into labeled bins
5. Once a bin is full, weigh the contents and mark weight and volume of the waste on your worksheet by category. Once measured, the waste can be put back wherever it is going (dumpster, recycling bins, etc.) and the bin can be returned to the sorting area to be filled again
6. Take pictures to document findings and experience. It will be useful later!
7. Clean up and pat yourselves on the back!!!
8. Log data in waste tracking worksheet, and use that to calculate your landfill diversion rate (% of waste kept from landfill), etc. Get creative with the data you use, and tailor it for your organization!