

# 2025

Day 2

9:30 AM

Oct 23

Track C

Concurrent AM

## Community Support for Businesses 1: Food Ware Ordinances

Moderator: Xinci Tan

**Speakers:**  
Lily Laurence  
Hugo Mata  
Brandi Hutton  
Connor Hoemann



NATIONAL  
**ZERO**  
WASTE  
CONFERENCE





# Sustainable Connections

We advance a regenerative local economy that builds community, strengthens food systems, catalyzes climate solutions, and expands access to housing in NW Washington.

# OUR TEAMS

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- Waste Assessments
- Event Support
- Single-Use Plastics Ban Support
- Organics Diversion
- C&D Waste Diversion
- Food Recovery Program

 **TOWARD  
ZERO WASTE**

# HOW IT ALL STARTED



# BELLINGHAM'S SINGLE-USE PLASTICS BAN

## Requirements

On-Site  
Dining  
**Durables**

**&**

Take-Out Service  
**Compostables**



NORTH CASCADE  
**COMPOST**

# LODGING IS INCLUDED

No single-use personal care  
**bottles smaller than 6oz**

**&**

On-Site Dining **Durables**



# EXEMPTIONS

## Businesses can request a waiver if:

- They don't have **dishwashing capacity**
- There are not at least **two suitable compostable alternatives or vendors**
- There is no **financially viable compostable alternative**



# HOW WE HELP



**DIRECT  
MAILERS TO  
500+ EFFECTED  
BUSINESSES IN  
8 LANGUAGES**

# EFFECTIVE JULY 31, 2022 NEW BAN ON SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

(Ordinance 2021-05-023)

## ON-SITE DINING

Durable food service wares such as plates, utensils and cups must be used instead of single-use plastic items.

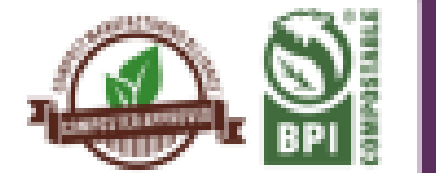


## TO-GO SERVICE

Reusable or compostable service wares such as plates, utensils and cups must be used instead of single-use plastic items.

## MUST BE COMPOSTABLE

Look for these symbols



\*Plastic straws can be offered by request to accommodate people with disabilities.

# WEBPAGE AND HELPDESK

	Type of Product	Manufacturer/ Brand	Product # SKU	Product Description with Link	Price per Unit
	Food Boat	Eco-Products	Various	<a href="#">1lb, 2lb, 3lb, 5lb food trays</a>	Various
	Tray	Cedar Grove Packaging	4350400	<a href="#">5 Compartment Tray</a>	\$0.24
	Fry Scoop	Eco-Products	EP-FFLRG	<a href="#">French fry scoop</a>	\$0.25
	Plate	Eco-Products	EP-P005NFA	<a href="#">Vanguard 10in sugarcane round plate</a>	\$0.37
	Plate	Eco-Products	EP-P013NFA	<a href="#">Vanguard 9in sugarcane round plate</a>	\$0.28
	Plate	Eco-Products	EP-P011NFA	<a href="#">Vanguard 7in sugarcane round plate</a>	\$0.20

# BUSINESS SUPPORT

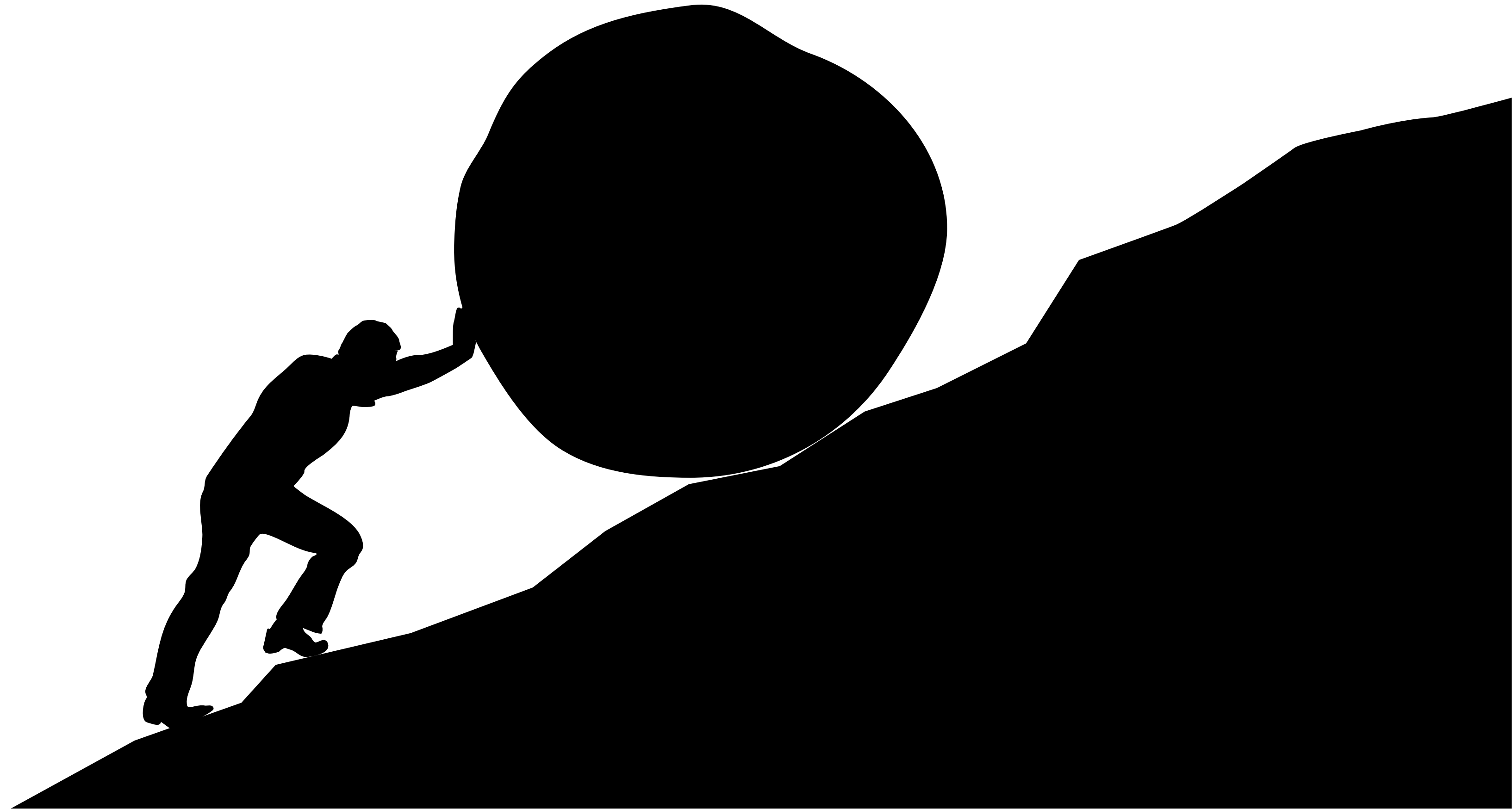
- In person and online events
- Monthly social media promotions
- SUP-free sticker decal
- Waste assessments/Technical support



# PRODUCT SAMPLES & RECOMMENDATIONS



# BARRIERS & CHALLENGES

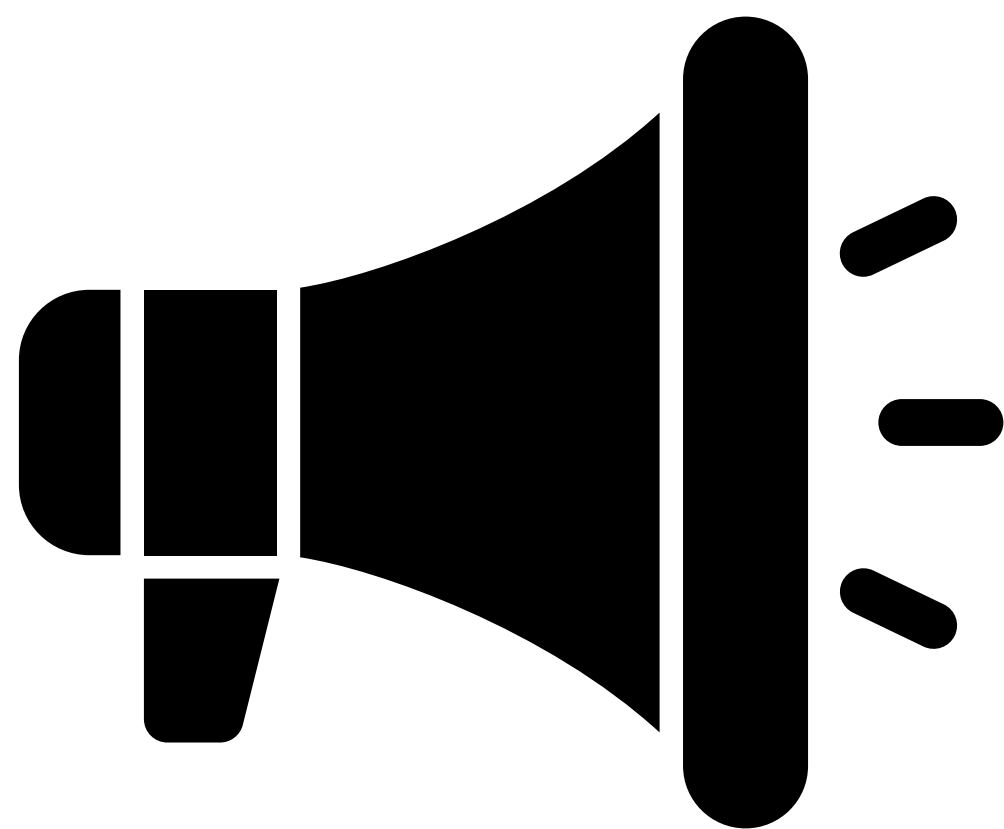




**GREENWASHING**



**COST & AVAILABILITY**



**AWARENESS**



**ENFORCEMENT**

# RETAIL READY CONFUSION



# NATIONAL CHAINS



# SUCCESSSES



# PLASTIC PRODUCT DEGRADABILITY LAW

**Aims to reduce both misleading labeling practices and contamination**

- Logo of a third-party certifier
- Color signal (green, beige, or brown)
- Written word "compostable"
- Items made from wood or more than 98% fiber are exempt.

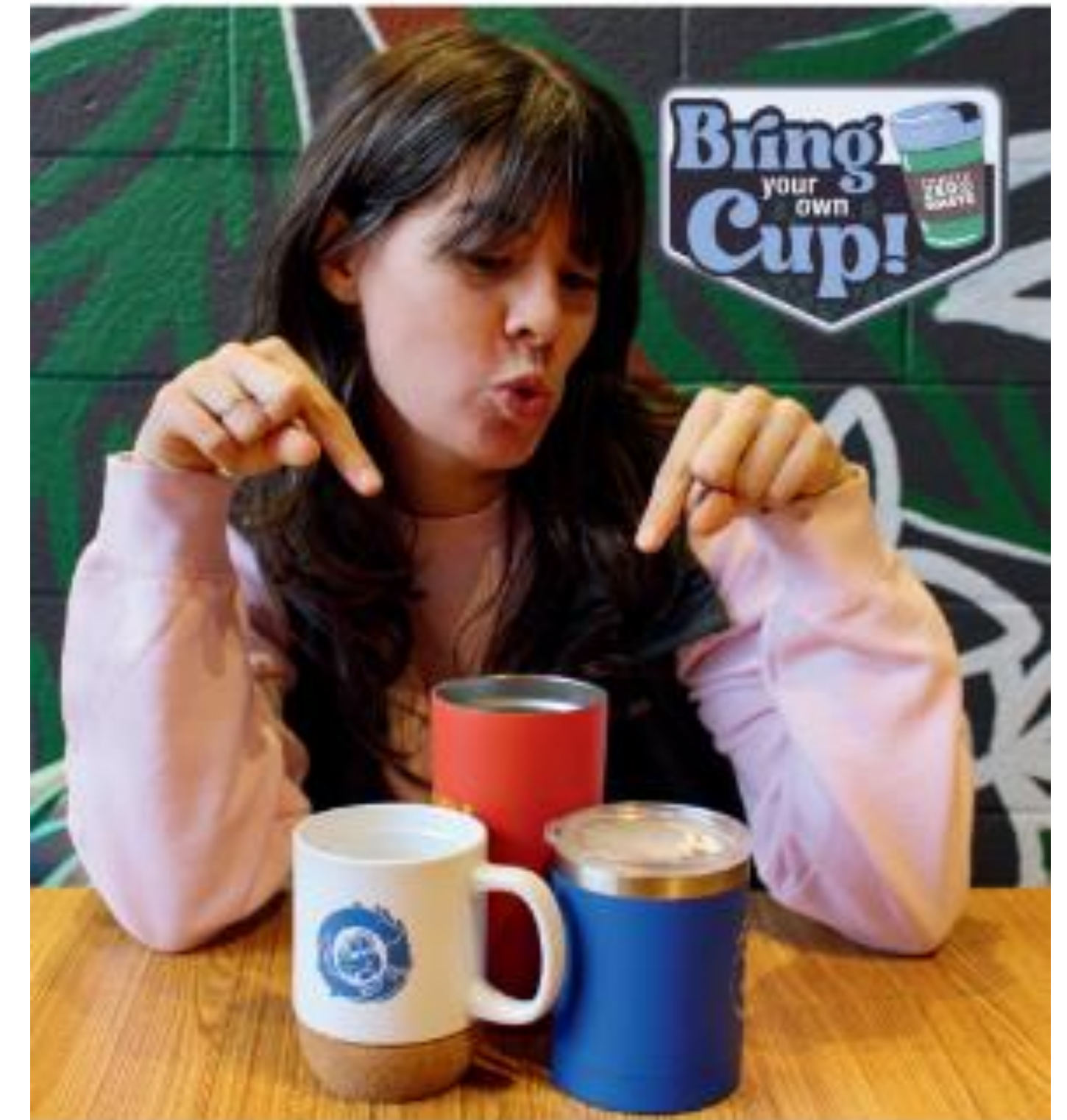


# ORGANICS MANAGEMENT ACT MANDATORY COMPOST





# BRING.YOUR.OWN.CUP.



THINK LOCAL FIRST  
**COFFEE CRAWL**  
CHECK IN. EARN POINTS. WIN PRIZES!

Sustainable Connections

[sustainableconnections.org](http://sustainableconnections.org)

Bellingham



# RE-USE AT EVENTS

- Piloting reusable dishware at large scale 10K+ events
- Technical support and community education
- Publish results in a case study



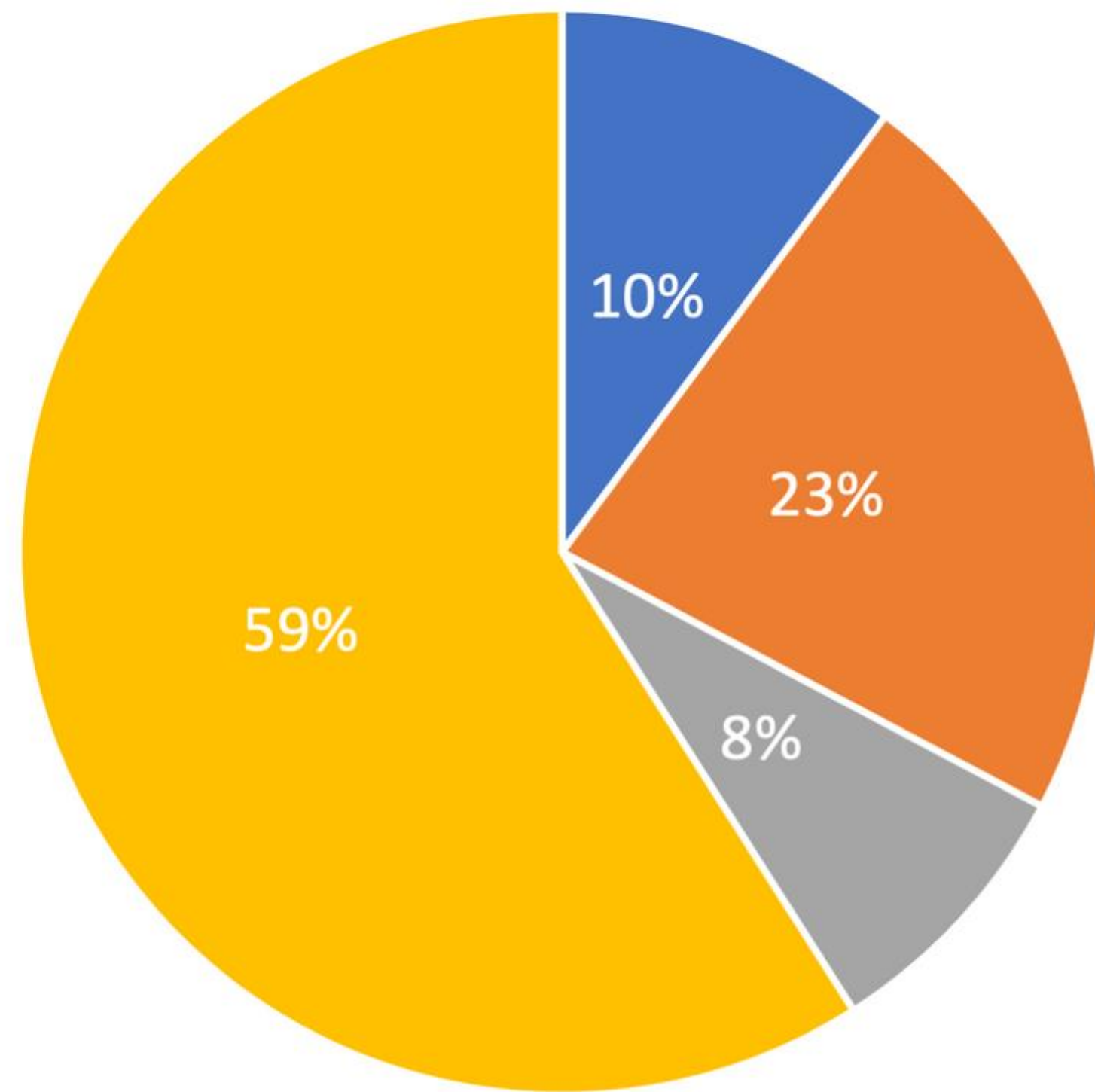
# RESULTS



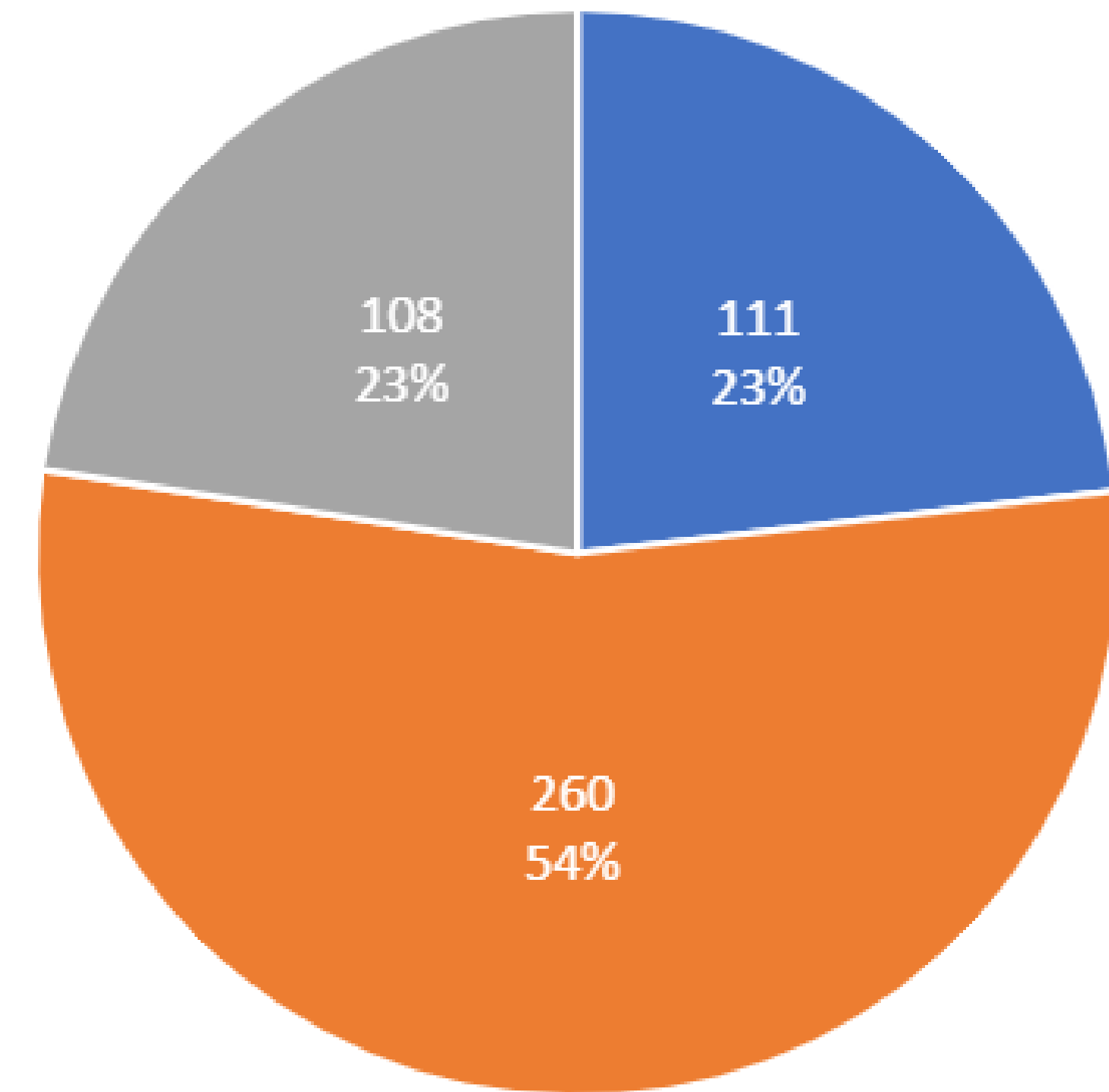
SINGLE-USE  
PLASTIC  
FREE

# DATA COLLECTION AND OUTREACH

10/24

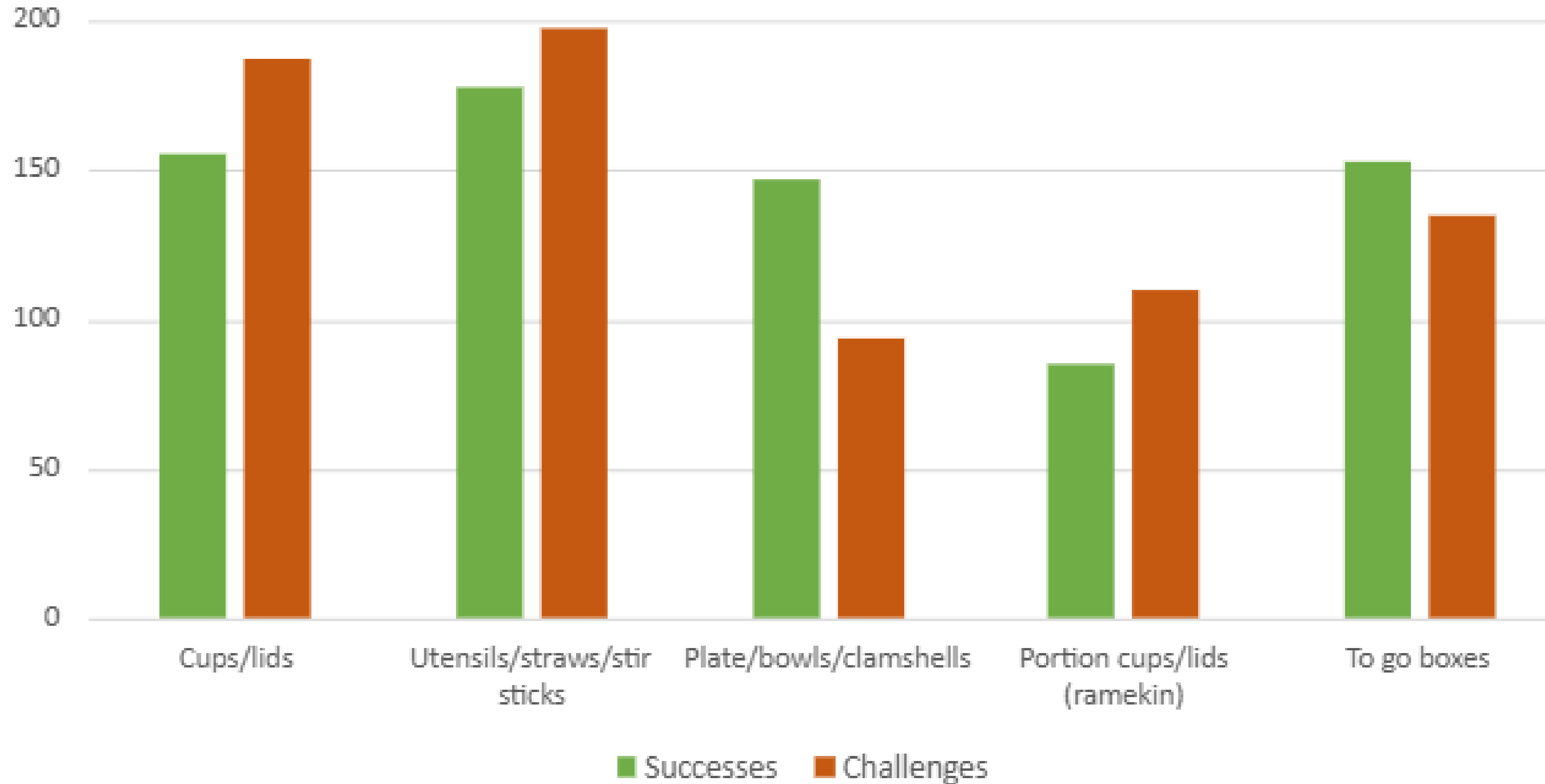


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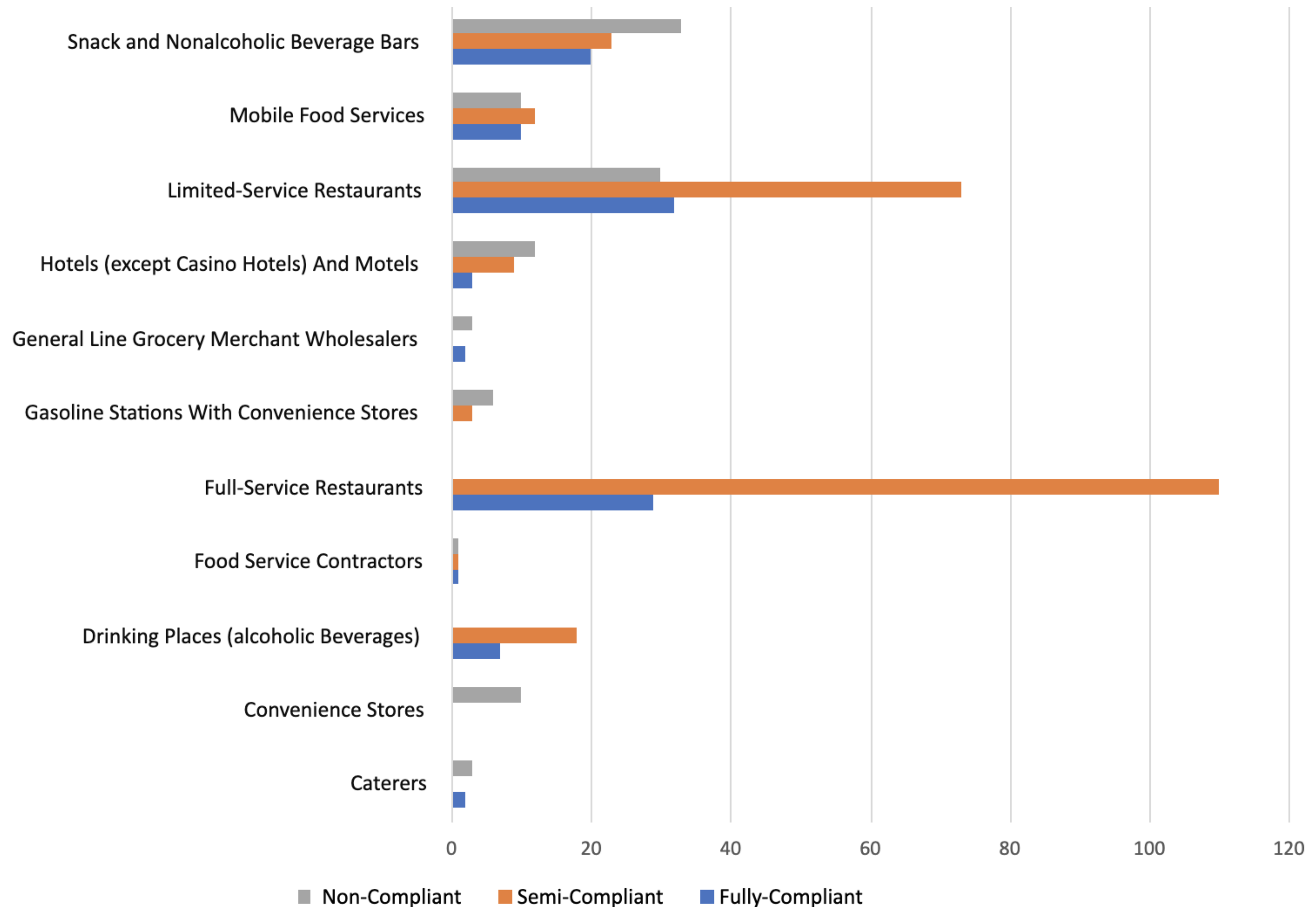


■ Fully-Compliant ■ Semi-Compliant ■ Non-Compliant ■ No info

# DATA COLLECTION AND OUTREACH



# DATA COLLECTION AND OUTREACH



# LOCAL GROCERY STORES

*Community*  
FOOD CO'OP

- Certified compostable to-go ware
- Reusable metal utensils
- Discount for bringing your own cup!



# CONCLUSION

- 70% businesses compliant or semi compliant
- Required curbside compost
- Labeling laws for compostable products



# THANK YOU



[Towardzerowaste@sustainableconnections.org](mailto:Towardzerowaste@sustainableconnections.org)



[Sustainableconnections](https://www.instagram.com/Sustainableconnections)



[Sustainableconnections](https://www.facebook.com/Sustainableconnections)



[Sustainableconnections.org/programs/toward-zero-waste/](https://Sustainableconnections.org/programs/toward-zero-waste/)





# COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES: FOODWARE ORDINANCES

NATIONAL ZERO WASTE CONFERENCE

OCT 23, 2025

# ZERO WASTE SONOMA – JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY (JPA)



- Established in 1992
- Serve and represent the 8 cities, 1 town, and County of Sonoma
- 5 pillars:
  - Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) facility and programs
  - Organics program
  - Zero Waste planning and policy
  - Public Education
  - Reporting





RISING SEA LEVELS



REDUCED SNOWPACK



WILDFIRES



DROUGHT



HEAT WAVES

# CALIFORNIA

is already experiencing  
the impacts of  
CLIMATE CHANGE

IN 2015 THE DROUGHT COST THE AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY AN ESTIMATED \$2.7 BILLION & 20,000 JOBS



**SHORT-LIVED  
CLIMATE  
POLLUTANTS LAW  
(SB 1383)  
IN ACTION  
JURISDICTION  
REQUIREMENTS**



Collection Services



Hauler Program



Contamination Minimization



Waivers



Education & Outreach



Edible Food Recovery Program



Compost/mulch Procurement



Recycled Paper Procurement



Commercial Edible Food Generators



Jurisdiction Inspection & Enforcement

# LOCAL ORDINANCES



- 2014 – Single Use Plastic Bag Ban
- 2021 – Disposable Food Ware Ordinance and Styrofoam Ban
- 2024 → Construction, Demolition & Deconstruction Ordinance

**BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 1, 2014**

**NO SINGLE-USE PLASTIC CARRYOUT BAGS ALLOWED.**

**PAY FOR PAPER BAGS.**

**OR BRING YOUR OWN REUSABLE BAG.**

**REUSABLE IS BEST**

Food service providers are encouraged to provide and incentivise reusables for their customers.

**RECYCLABLE IS GOOD**

**FIBER COMPOSTABLE IS GREAT**

Single-use food ware must be compostable or recyclable through Sonoma County's commercial collection programs, and may not contain PFAS.

**POLYSTYRENE FOAM IS BANNED**

Retailers cannot sell or distribute polystyrene foam items including:

- Disposable polystyrene foam food service ware
- Polystyrene foam peanuts and packaging
- Coolers

# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

- Funding from CalRecycle to implement SB 1383 + Agency regular budget
- RFP released Aug 2023
- “Integrate an equity lens into all work performed on this project to ensure that generators and facilities owned or operated by historically underrepresented and underserved communities are just as successful in implementing the desired programs.”
- 3 tasks within the project
  - SB 1383 food recovery
  - Disposable Food Ware ordinance
  - City of Santa Rosa
- Why we chose Cascadia (and subcontractors Soluna / Waste Sleuth)

# Zero Waste Sonoma Technical Assistance

November 2023 – May 2025



# Task 3

**Disposable Food Ware Ordinance and  
Polystyrene Foam Ban Compliance**

## Disposable Food Ware and Polystyrene Foam Ban Ordinance Compliance

Technical assistance to Food Facilities required to comply with these local ordinances

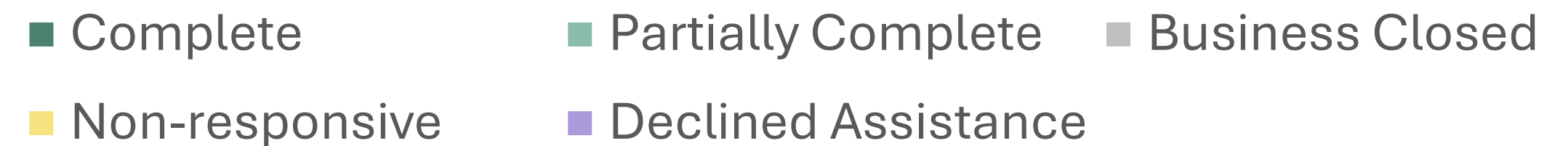
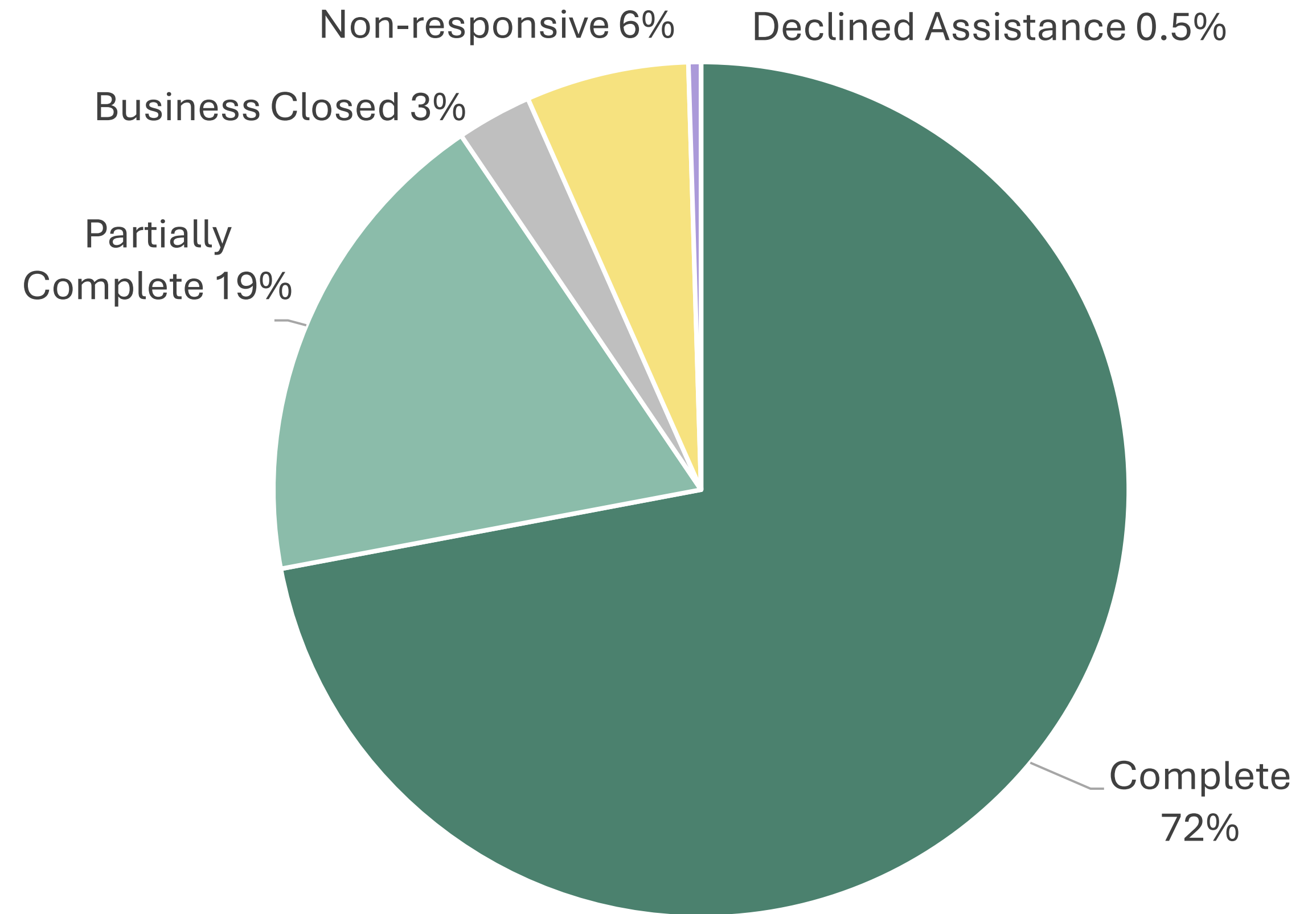
- Understand ordinance requirements specific to their jurisdiction
- Hear best practices and success stories
- Comply with disposables and polystyrene foam ban for take out
- Switch to reusables for dine-in even where not required



Task 3 Metric	Goal	Actual	Percentage of Goal
Accounts Contacted	200	211	106%
Accounts Assisted*	140	191	136%
Total Outreach Activities	--	836	--

\*Assisted includes:

- Complete: Account is using fully compliant food ware.
- Partially complete: Account is mostly compliant but may still be using a non-compliant type (such as plastic straws) or still using already purchased backstock.



## Reusables for Dine-in Compliance

Reusables for Dine-in Compliance Status	Santa Rosa and Sebastopol only
Compliant	56
Partially Compliant	0
N/A (No dine-in)	10

## Reuse Grant Recipients

Reuse Grant Recipients	Jurisdiction
Del Valle Mexican Restaurant	Sebastopol
A La Heart Kitchen & Catering	Forestville
Caffeine Inc	Petaluma



## Task 3

# Getting Started

1

## Account selection with equity analysis

- *Consider rural and urban jurisdictions*
- *Consider historically underserved accounts, poverty, and language needs*

2

## Toolkit and background knowledge

- *Handouts, scripts, signage (ie: Reusables decal)*
- *English & Spanish, utilizing existing materials, checking for simplicity*
- *Team training and certifications (ie: Food handler training)*

3

## Collaboration expectation

- *Budget and plan time for discussion and learning amongst the outreach team, and multiple visits to food facilities*
- *Work intentionally with the county, waste haulers, suppliers, business associations and trusted partners*

### Challenges

- Low awareness of ordinance
- Confusion about eco-friendly products
- Difficulty acquiring compliant products
- Concerns about high costs
- Small businesses felt it unfair when big chains were slow to comply

### Successes

- Many support the ordinance once explained
- Most want to use compliant products
- Easily available compliant products were often acquired
- Some switched to reusables even when not required
- Grant recipients appreciated financial support for local small business



1. Choose outreach teams with local context and invest in understanding the specific communities you're engaging
2. Consider equity and language access
3. Collaborate across the system
4. Design for simplicity and consistency
5. Set clear expectations and consequences
6. Recognize and celebrate successes



# Effective Business Outreach: Building Compliance Through Connection



Hugo Mata, Principal

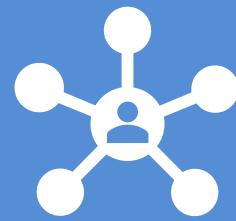


# Who We Are

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Soluna Outreach Solutions is a bilingual environmental outreach and education firm based in Sonoma County, California.



We specialize in connecting agencies, programs, and communities through culturally relevant outreach, bilingual communication, and public education.



Soluna worked on behalf of Zero Waste Sonoma as part of the outreach team supporting the Disposable Food Ware and Polystyrene Foam Ban ordinances.

# Our Role in This Project

Worked on behalf of Zero Waste Sonoma to support local businesses.

Used bilingual outreach materials and toolkits created for the project.

Outreach to small and Spanish-speaking businesses.

Helped explain requirements and guide businesses toward compliance.

## The Outreach Process

Initial outreach began with phone calls, followed by email and then site visits.

During project, we found that in-person visits were more effective.

Direct contact improved understanding, trust, and compliance.

Surprise visits encouraged compliance

## Bilingual & Cultural Connection

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Language access built trust with business owners.

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Spanish communication reduced anxiety and confusion.

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Outreach framed as collaboration — 'Estamos aquí para apoyarles.'

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Created meaningful relationships beyond a single visit.

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Continue outreach through Nuestra Tierra radio program

## What We Heard from Businesses and Key Challenges

Many businesses had low awareness of the ordinance and confusion about “eco-friendly” products, costs, and suppliers.

Some struggled to find compliant food ware and were concerned about high costs.

Large chains were often uncooperative, while small businesses felt it was unfair that big chains were not complying.

Quotes heard: 'Can you show me what's allowed?' and 'Thank you for explaining in Spanish.'

# Lessons Learned

Many businesses supported the ordinance once it was clearly explained.

Most wanted to use compliant food ware products and appreciated guidance on where to find them.

Personal and bilingual (Spanish-language when needed) outreach opened the door to real conversations and better understanding.

Compliant products that were easily available were adopted quickly, and reusable grant recipients appreciated the financial support that helped local businesses transition.



# Ongoing Impact & Relationships

Some businesses continued reaching out even after the project ended — showing that trust had been established.

Follow-up requests included clarifications, guidance on compliant food ware, and updates about new products.

Small, family-run businesses especially valued having a contact person they trusted — someone they could call for help.

This ongoing communication demonstrates how personal outreach builds long-term partnerships and community confidence.

# Success Stories

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Many businesses made immediate changes after outreach.



Some businesses complied almost immediately.



Follow-up calls confirmed progress and supplier coordination.



Positive reactions strengthened partnerships across the county.

**Thank you-  
Questions**

- When businesses feel respected and supported, compliance becomes collaboration.
- Bilingual outreach builds bridges between agencies and communities.
- Lasting change begins with meaningful connection.

**Thank you!**



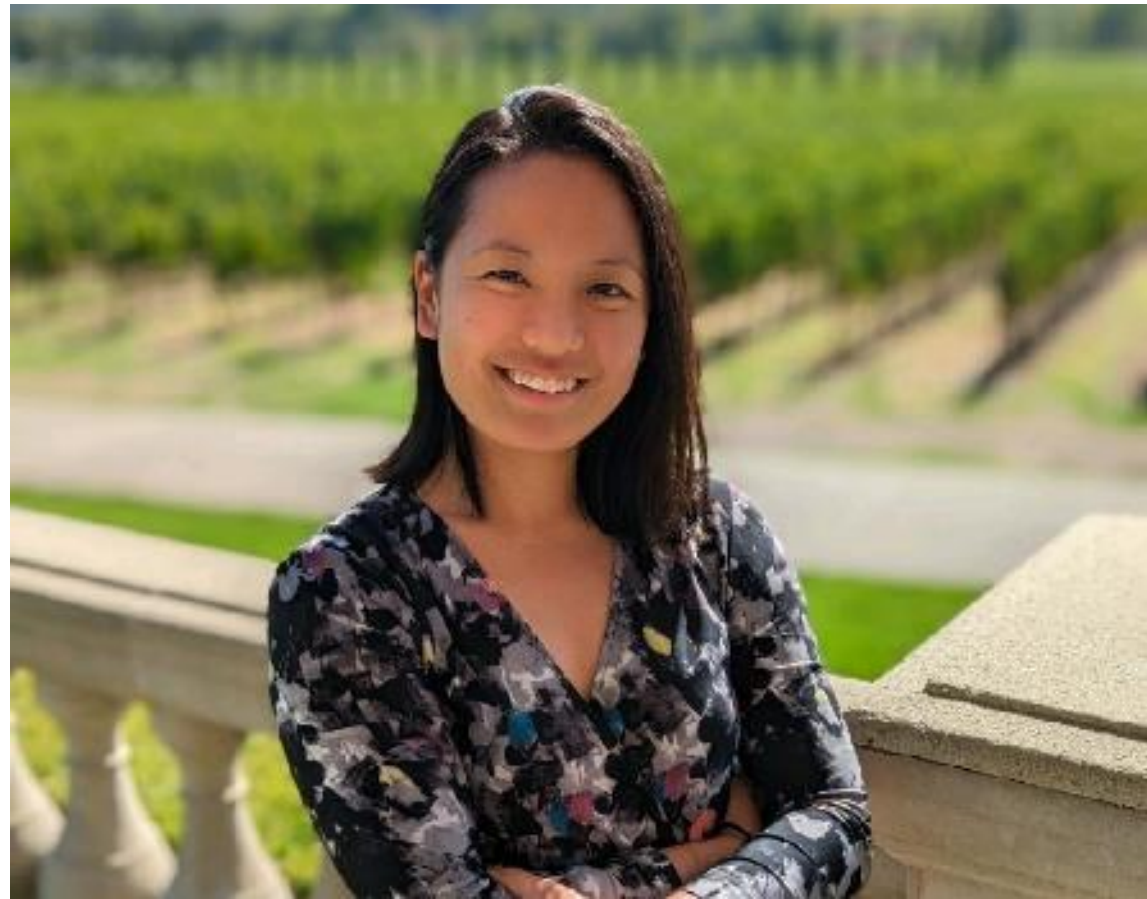
Hugo Mata, Principal

[hugo@solunaoutreachsolutions.com](mailto:hugo@solunaoutreachsolutions.com)

[www.solunaoutreachsolutions.com](http://www.solunaoutreachsolutions.com)

# FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Highlight businesses that continue to do well
- New RFP to be awarded to Cascadia (and subcontractors Soluna / Waste Sleuth)
  - Emphasis on reusables and reuse
  - Create case studies
  - Public promotion as incentive
  - Reusable grants \$600 (e.g., dishwashers, reusable food ware, food ware rental services)  
<https://zerowastesonoma.gov/reusable-foodware-grant>



## Xinci Tan

Organics Program Manager

[xinci.tan@sonomacounty.gov](mailto:xinci.tan@sonomacounty.gov)



## Lily Laurence

Senior Associate

[lily@cascadiaconsulting.com](mailto:lily@cascadiaconsulting.com)



## Hugo Mata

Principal

[hugo@solunaoutreachsolutions.com](mailto:hugo@solunaoutreachsolutions.com)

