

ANNUAL BENCHMARK REPORT

# REUSE BENCHMARK REPORT

# 2026

Sports & Entertainment Venues Leading the Circular Economy: Outlook data from real venues serving millions of guests annually.

**100%**

OPERATORS WOULD  
RECOMMEND REUSE

**75%**

EXTREMELY SATISFIED

**72%**

FANS WANT REUSE AT  
OTHER VENUES

Stadiums and arenas have always been stages for cultural change. Today, they are becoming stages for something even bigger: the transition from a throwaway economy to a circular one.

The 2026 Reuse Benchmark Report captures a defining moment for sports and entertainment venues across the United States. What began as pilots has matured into measurable, scalable, financially viable programs — and the data tells a compelling story.

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Fans don't just tolerate reuse — **they embrace it.**

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Operations teams don't resent it — **they're proud of it.**

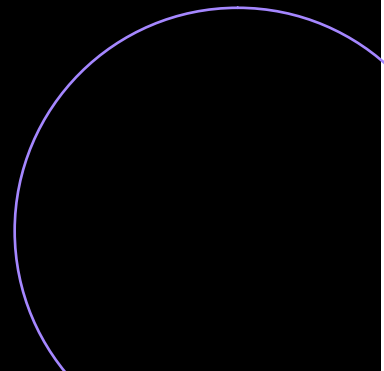
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The economics don't strain budgets — **they unlock savings and new revenue.**

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Leadership isn't hesitant— **engagement is increasing year over year.**

For years, sustainability initiatives were framed as trade-offs: higher cost, more complexity, uncertain impact. Bold Reuse's ecosystem has changed that equation entirely.



The throwaway economy was never inevitable. It was designed — built into our infrastructure, our supply chains, our stadiums — and it can be redesigned. At Upstream, we have always known that reuse is not a niche preference or a feel-good add-on. It is a viable, scalable alternative to disposability, held back not by lack of demand, but by lack of proof at scale. Bold Reuse's 2026 Benchmark Report delivers exactly that.

The data in these pages matters beyond the stadium gates. At Upstream, we have long recognized that large sports and entertainment venues are anchor clients for citywide reuse infrastructure. When a stadium serving half a million guests per season commits to reusable serviceware, it does not just reduce its own waste footprint. It builds the collection, washing, and logistics capacity that makes reuse economically viable for the restaurants, festivals, and public events surrounding it. It normalizes the behavior for millions of fans — people who carry those expectations into every other part of their lives. The stadium does not just participate in the circular economy. It catalyzes it.

This report shows that the tipping point is behind us. Operators are no longer asking whether reuse works. They are asking how to scale it faster. Every venue surveyed would recommend reuse to a peer. Fans are not tolerating the transition — they are demanding it at other venues. Return rates that started at 50–70% in the first quarter have climbed above the threshold for economic viability across the board. Sponsorship revenue is reaching six figures. Leadership engagement is rising year over year.

These are not pilot results. They are proof of a system that works.

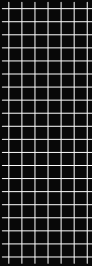
The sports and entertainment sector has a rare combination of scale, brand influence, and fan loyalty that can move markets. When venues lead, cities follow. When cities build the infrastructure, entire communities shift. This sector is doing something Upstream has long believed was possible: catalyzing community-wide reuse systems that begin to dismantle the packaging determinism baked into our built environment. That is the multiplier effect we are working to unlock across the country, and it is exactly what Bold Reuse's growing network of venues is demonstrating — event by event, season by season. Read this report as an invitation. The venues leading today are setting the standard for tomorrow. The question is not whether your organization can afford to implement reuse. The data here makes clear you cannot afford to wait.

**Crystal Dreisbach**  
*CEO, Upstream*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

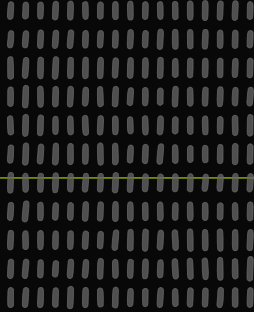
The numbers are unambiguous. Reuse programs in sports and entertainment are delivering across every dimension that matters.



FAN EXPERIENCE	OPERATIONS	FINANCIAL	STRATEGIC
<b>75%</b> Rate experience 8-10/10	<b>100%</b> Operators would recommend to peers	<b>71%</b> Measurable cost reductions	<b>51%</b> Increased leadership interest
<b>50%</b> Give perfect scores (10/10)	<b>71%</b> Teams are proud of their program	<b>\$500K</b> Sponsorship value achieved	<b>57%</b> Received sustainability awards
<b>72%</b> Want reuse at other venues	<b>57%</b> Fully integrate reuse operations within 3 months		<b>100%</b> Active programs report progress

## KEY INSIGHT

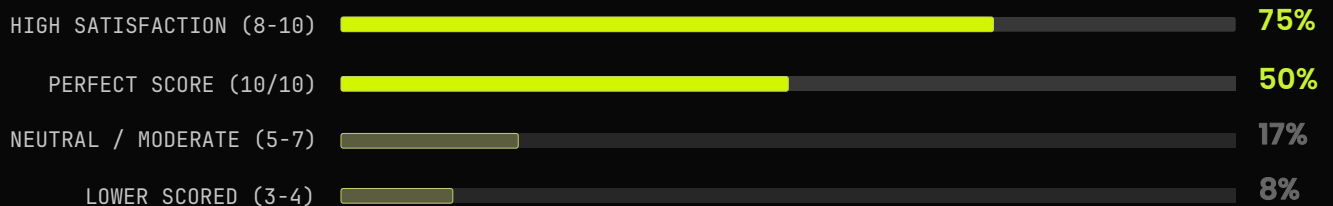
The conversation has shifted. Where venues once asked 'Should we try reusable serviceware?' they're now asking 'When and how do we start?' This reflects a broader recognition across the industry – reusable serviceware is no longer experimental. Peer organizations are implementing it, seeing results, and setting a new standard for what food and beverage service looks like at scale.



# THE FAN EXPERIENCE

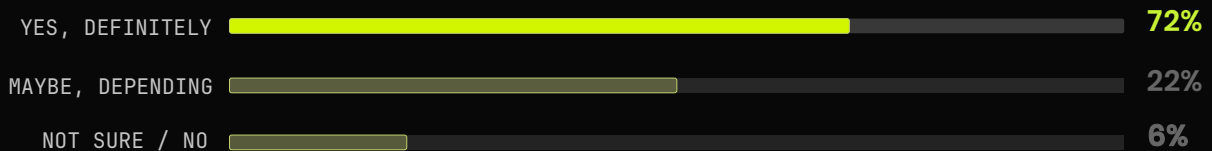
Direct feedback from fans at stadiums and major venues tells a consistent story: reuse is a premium experience, not an inconvenience.

## OVERALL SATISFACTION RATINGS



Three-quarters of fans report high satisfaction, with half giving perfect scores. Only a small fraction rate their experience below neutral — a remarkable result for any service change at scale.

## DEMAND FOR EXPANSION



Nearly three-quarters of fans want reuse programs at other venues — festivals, stadiums, schools, offices. The enthusiasm is genuine and transferable.



# VENUE OPERATOR INSIGHTS

Operations teams aren't just tolerating reuse. They're proud of it — and the data backs that up completely.

## TEAM SENTIMENT



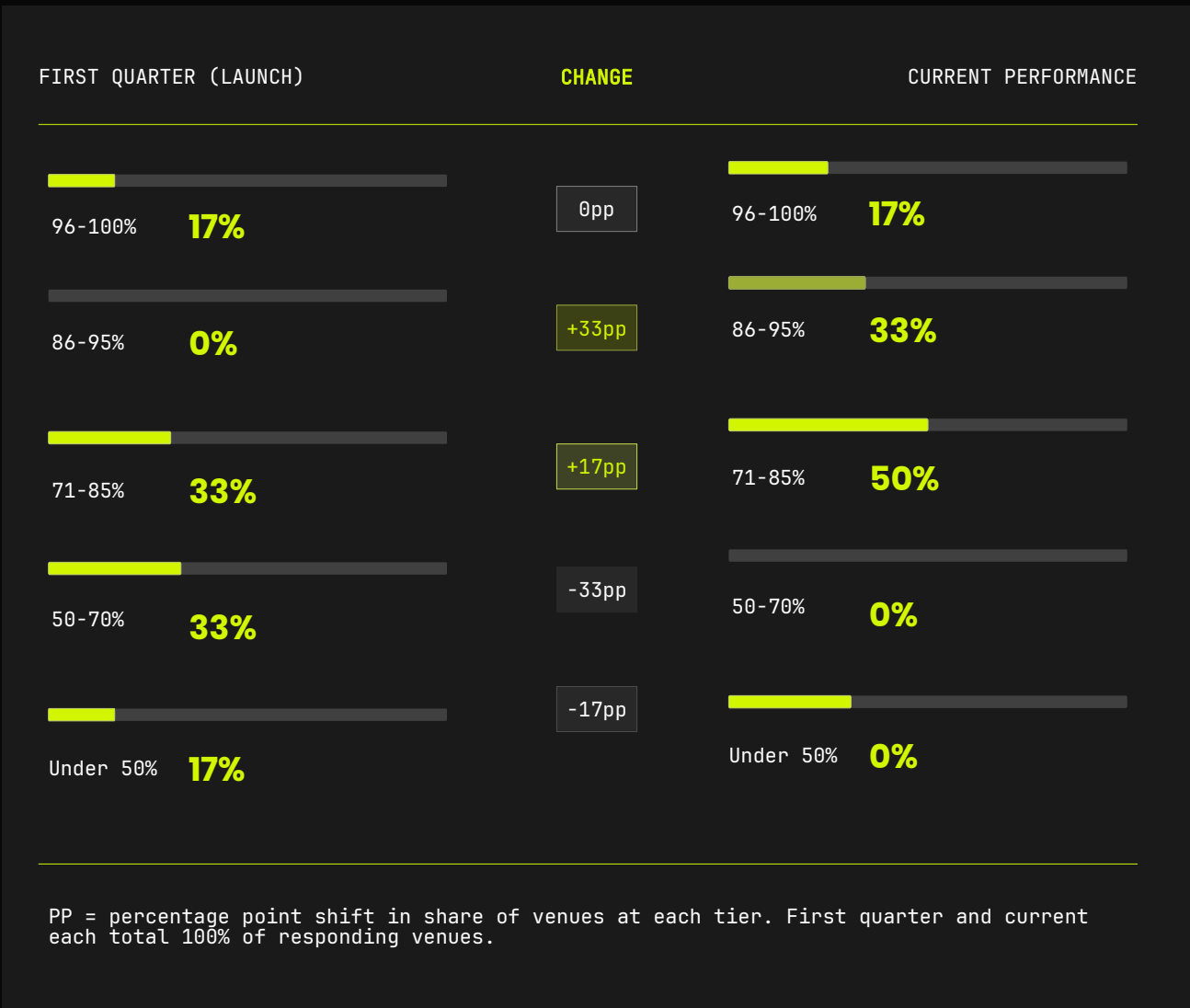
<h3>57%</h3> <p>Reach <b>full operational integration</b> within 1-3 months – a remarkably short learning curve for any major service change.</p>	<h3>86%</h3> <p>Rate the effort-to-impact as <b>"moderate effort, strong reward."</b> Not a single venue said high effort or low reward.</p>
<h3>100%</h3> <p>Would <b>recommend reuse</b> to a peer venue. 71% said, "absolutely", 29% "likely".</p>	<h3>100%</h3> <p>Report <b>significant improvement</b> year-over-year. Every active program is moving in the right direction.</p>

## HOW OPERATORS DESCRIBE REUSE IN ONE WORD

- UPLIFTING
- IMPACTFUL
- EASY
- INNOVATIVE
- EVOLVING

## THE RETURN RATE JOURNEY

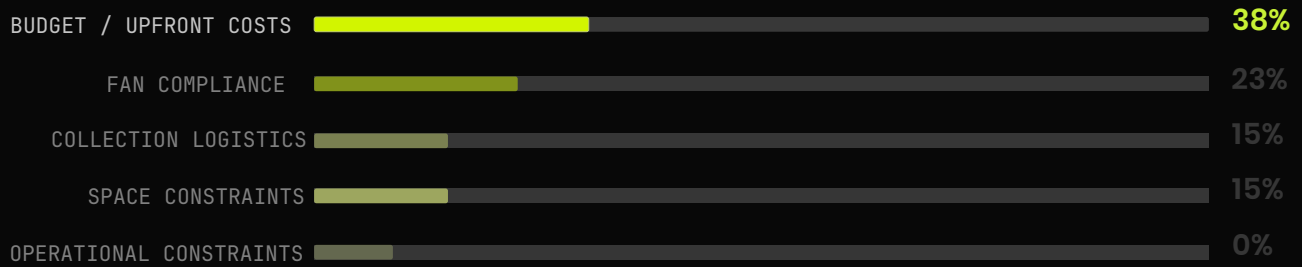
Return rates tell the maturation story. The shift from launch to current performance is significant — venues in the 71%+ tiers have grown substantially as fans learn the system, signage improves, and operations mature over 1–2 seasons.



### KEY INSIGHT

100% of surveyed venues now achieve 71%+ return rates — the threshold for economic viability. At launch, only 50% were at that level. Every venue that started below 71% has since crossed it, and the 86–95% tier grew from 0% to 33% of venues as programs matured through better signage, fan familiarity, and operational refinement.

## BIGGEST IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES



*"The longer the program has run, the more efficiencies we have identified and the more our fans recognize the program, resulting in higher return."*

- VENUE OPERATOR, MAJOR U.S. STADIUM

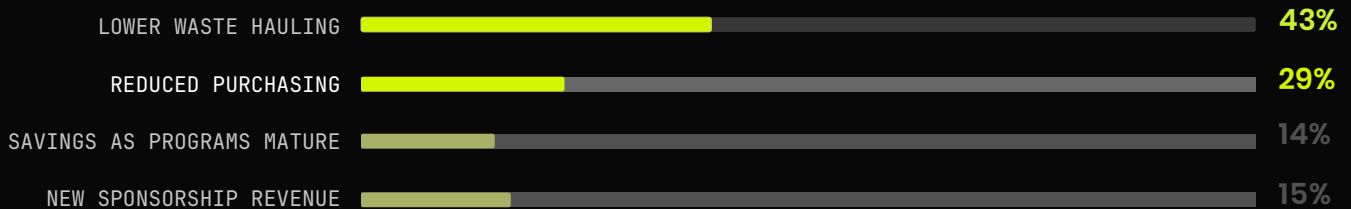
# THE FINANCIAL CASE

The economics of reuse improve over time — and the comparison baseline matters.

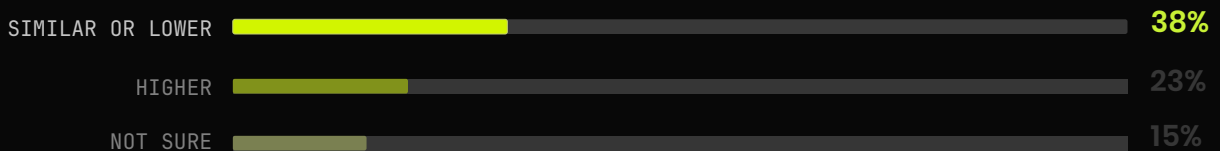
## CRITICAL CONTEXT

**50% of venues** were previously using compostables (PLA, fiber-based). 12% were using aluminium cups. These are among the most expensive single-use options on the market — which means reuse is cost-competitive from day one for many venues.

## WHERE SAVINGS ARE APPEARING



## COST COMPARISON VS. PREVIOUS SINGLE-USE



## UNLOCKING FINANCIAL SUPPORT

43% of venues haven't yet leveraged sponsorship — representing a massive untapped revenue channel that early adopters are already capturing.

**\$125K**

Highest sponsorship value achieved by a single venue. Sustainability brands, beverage brands, construction brands, and grants are all in play.

**57%**

Believe reuse creates major sponsorship potential. Another 29% see "some potential." Only 14% are unsure.

## VALUE BEYOND DIRECT COST

**57%**

RECEIVED AWARDS OR  
RECOGNITION FOR  
SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP

**43%**

REPORT POSITIVE IMPACT ON  
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

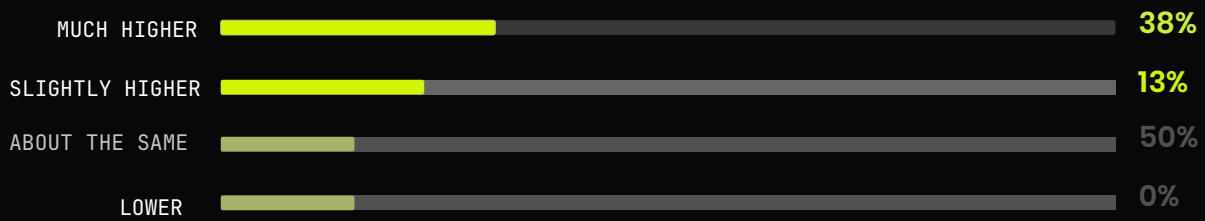
**100%**

BRAND VALUE ELEVATED  
THROUGH PUBLIC  
SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP

# STRATEGIC INTEGRATION

Reuse has risen from pilot program to strategic priority — and leadership is taking notice.

## LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT TREND



**51%**

INCREASED EXECUTIVE ENGAGEMENT VS. ONE YEAR AGO

**67%**

PLAN TO MAINTAIN OR INCREASE FOCUS OVER NEXT 2 YEARS

**42%**

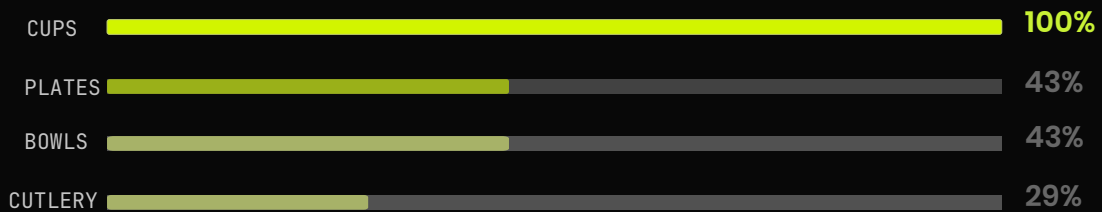
DECISIONS MADE AT C-SUITE / EXECUTIVE LEVEL

## WASTE DIVERSION GOALS IN PLACE

75% of venues have published zero-waste or waste-diversion goals, with targets like "95%+ diversion," "Zero waste — LEED certified," and "90% diversion by 2030." Reuse is one critical pillar of a comprehensive system.



## REUSABLE FOODWARE UTILIZATION



# IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP

Based on benchmark data from programs across the U.S., here's the proven path from pilot to industry leadership.

<p><b>01</b></p> <p><b>FOUNDATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Cups only in select spaces</li> <li>→ Hybrid collection infrastructure</li> <li>→ Full staff training</li> <li>→ Heavy communication deployment</li> <li>→ Set realistic expectations</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>Set baseline for building and current operations</p>	<p><b>02</b></p> <p><b>OPTIMIZATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Refine signage from feedback</li> <li>→ Track &amp; celebrate milestones</li> <li>→ Address collection bottlenecks</li> <li>→ Expand to more venue locations</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>Increase return rates by 5-10% points</p>	<p><b>03</b></p> <p><b>EXPANSION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Add foodware (plates, bowls)</li> <li>→ Initiate sponsorship conversations</li> <li>→ Apply for sustainability awards</li> <li>→ Calculate full cost savings</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>Increase return rates by 5-10% points</p>	<p><b>04</b></p> <p><b>LEADERSHIP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Full venue integration complete</li> <li>→ Sponsorship activated (\$100K-\$500K)</li> <li>→ Sharing learnings with peers</li> <li>→ Pursue additional certifications</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>Achieve 90-95% return rates</p>
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## WHAT WOULD ACCELERATE INDUSTRY-WIDE ADOPTION?

<p><b>51%</b></p> <p>Clearer ROI Data</p>	<p><b>14%</b></p> <p>League or Government Guidance</p>	<p><b>14%</b></p> <p>Sponsorship Opportunities</p>	<p><b>14%</b></p> <p>Incentives or Grants</p>	<p><b>14%</b></p> <p>Other</p>
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# OBJECTIONS ADDRESSED

Every common concern about reuse programs is answered directly by benchmark data. Here's the evidence.

## "WILL FANS ACTUALLY PARTICIPATE?"

83% enthusiastic · 0% negative sentiment · 75% high satisfaction

Fan compliance concerns rank 2nd in challenges, but actual behavior far exceeds expectations. Fans want to participate — they just need to know how.

Quick Win: Better signage + more bins + top sorting

## "IS IT TOO EXPENSIVE?"

43% similar or lower cost · 71% seeing measurable savings

Comparing to cPET? Yes, more expensive.  
Comparing to compostables (50% of venues) or aluminum cups (12%)? Cost-competitive or cheaper — and improving over time.

Quick Win: Calculate total cost of ownership, including inventory management, waste hauling, inflation, and regulation.

## "WILL IT DISRUPT OPERATIONS?"

57% routine in 1-3 months · 86% moderate effort, strong reward · 0% high effort

There is a 1-3 month learning curve. But operations actually simplify once established — less restocking, less waste management complexity.

Quick Win: Start cups-only in one enclosed section. Get one thing running smoothly first.

## "WILL LEADERSHIP BACK THE INVESTMENT?"

50% decisions at executive level · 51% increased interest year-over-year

Reuse has risen to strategic priority. Leadership sees fan demand (72%), cost savings (71%), sponsorship potential (\$500K achieved), and awards/recognition (57%).

Quick Win: Frame as revenue opportunity + cost reduction, not just expense.

## "WHAT IF RETURN RATES ARE TOO LOW?"

86% hit 71%+ threshold · Most started 50-70% and climbed

Low first-quarter rates are completely normal. They improve dramatically with time, better signage, more bins, staff training, and fan familiarity.

Quick Win: Don't expect perfection. What's great about reuse is you can always improve, but that doesn't mean you're failing.

## THE VERDICT

Every objection has a data answer.  
Every concern has a proven solution.

"We love Bold Reuse."

"You ROCK!"

"Reuse Programs are a Grand Slam for the Environment and MLB."

# FROM SKEPTICAL TO SCALING

A mid-sized stadium serving 500K–1M guests annually, concerned about fan compliance and cost compared to an existing compostables.

## CASE STUDY

## MID-SIZED STADIUM · 500K–1M ANNUAL ATTENDANCE

### THE JOURNEY

- Month 1-3: Cups only, heavy communication, hybrid collection
- First quarter return rate: 70%
- Month 6: Return rates climbed to 86-95%
- Year 1: "Disruptive (Changing how stadiums operate)"
- Year 2: Guests taking fewer cups, routine operations established

### THE RESULTS

- Effort-to-impact: "Low effort, strong reward"
- Team sentiment: "Very positive - we're proud of it"
- Would recommend? "Absolutely"
- Cost saving: Reduced single-use purchasing
- One word: "Innovative"

### KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

- Second-year effects: fans learned the system
- Trust the implementation process
- Follow recommendations to drive improvements
- Strong staff training protocols
- Matching waste bins 1:1 with reuse bins

# THE VERDICT IS CLEAR

Reuse programs deliver measurable benefits across every stakeholder group. The data is in. The programs work.

★ **Fans embrace it:** 75% high satisfaction, 72% want it at the other venues, 89% say waste reduction is important to them

★ **Teams champion it:** 71% "very positive" sentiment, 100% would recommend to peers, 57% achieve routine in 1-3 months

★ **Economics work:** 71% seeing measurable cost savings, up to \$250K in sponsorship unlocked.

★ **Leadership committed:** 51% report increased executive engagement, 85% plan to increase focus, 50% of decision-making at C-suite level

## THE QUESTION HAS SHIFTED FROM "DOES THIS WORK?" TO "HOW DO WE GET STARTED?"

The programs work. The teams are proud. The fans are enthusiastic. The momentum is accelerating.

# ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report draws on three distinct data sources: millions of reuse cycles logged through the Bold Reuse operational platform, on-site fan surveys collected across partner venues nationwide, and a structured operator survey completed by sustainability and operations leaders from our client base.

## MILLIONS

**Reuse cycles analyzed.** Every cup issued, returned, and washed flows through our platform. Return rates, event-over-event trends, and operational benchmarks are drawn from real program data - not estimates.

## 1,000s

**Events in the dataset.** Data spans multiple seasons, venue types, and geographic markets - capturing performance across NFL, MLB, NBA, NHL, MLS, and live entertainment settings.

## SURVEY

**Fan responses collected.** Fan satisfaction data comes from structured event surveys administered across Bold Reuse partner venues, capturing experience ratings, sentiment, and state preferences.

## OPERATIONS

**Venue operator surveys.** Sustainability directors, operations leads, and C-suite executives from our client venues completed structured surveys covering implementation experience, ROI, team sentiment, and program evolution.

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## PLATFORM OPERATIONS DATA

### DATASET 01 – FAN EXPERIENCE SURVEY

11 questions · Post-event · Anonymous · Collected at Bold Reuse partner venues and events in 3 regions across the U.S.

Administered to fans on-site at events where Bold Reuse programs were active. The survey captured experience quality (1–10 rating of how reuse improved the event), venue preference behavior, likelihood to purchase additional beverages when served in reusables, interest in seeing reuse expand to other venues and settings, willingness to pay a small deposit, attitudes toward waste reduction, and open-ended sentiment in fans' own words. Because each response is tied to a specific event and location, the data reflects real in-the-moment reactions — not general consumer opinion polling.

### DATASET 02 – OPERATOR BENCHMARK SURVEY

53 questions · In-depth · Venue sustainability & operations leaders · Sports and entertainment clients nationwide

A comprehensive structured survey completed by venue operators — including sustainability directors, operations managers, food and beverage leads, and C-suite executives — across Bold Reuse's sports and entertainment client base. Covered six topic areas: venue profile and scale; sustainability program context and goals; reuse program maturity, return rates, and operational experience; economics including cost comparisons, savings, and sponsorship value; strategic outlook and leadership engagement; and qualitative reflections including one-word program descriptions and open narrative feedback. Respondents spanned NFL, MLB, NBA, NHL, MLS, and live entertainment venues of varying sizes and program stages.

## PLATFORM OPERATIONS DATA

Alongside the two surveys, all quantitative performance benchmarks — return rates, reuse cycle volumes, event-over-event trends — are drawn directly from the Bold Reuse operational platform, which logs every cup issued, returned, and washed across active venue partners. This means the operational data in this report reflects actual program performance across thousands of events and millions of reuse cycles, not modeled estimates or industry averages.

**Three data sources, one picture** — fan sentiment, operator experience, and platform performance data are triangulated throughout the report to provide a complete view of reuse program outcomes from every stakeholder perspective.

**Representative cross-section** — operator respondents span small, mid-sizes, and large venues across professional sports leagues and live entertainment, covering venues at every stage of reuse maturity from early pilots to fully scaled multi-season programs.

**Longitudinal where possible** — operator survey questions captured both first-quarter and current performance metrics, enabling the before-and-after comparisons featured throughout this report.

**Confidentiality** — individual venue responses are not attributed. All figures reflect aggregated findings across the respondent group.

# ABOUT BOLD REUSE

Bold Reuse is the leading reusable packaging platform purpose-built for scalable reuse programs - turning single-use waste into a fan experience, a revenue driver, and a sustainable credential all at one.

We design, deploy, and operate end-to-end reuse programs at stadiums, arenas, amphitheatres, and festival grounds across the United States. Our platform handles everything: the reusable assets, the collection infrastructure, the washing logistics, and data reporting. Venues get a turnkey programs. Fans get a better experience. The planet gets over 7 millions fewer single-use items in the waste stream.

IMPACT TO DATE	SCALE	REACH	GEOGRAPHY
<b>7M+</b>	<b>1,000s</b>	<b>MILLIONS</b>	<b>NATIONAL</b>
SINGLE-USE ITEMS ELIMINATED	EVENTS POWERED BY BOLD REUSE	REUSE CYCLES COMPLETED	CLIENTS ACROSS THE U.S.

Our clients span the full spectrum of professional and major college sports – NFL, MLB, NBA, NHL, and MLS franchises, alongside amphitheatres and multi-use entertainment complexes. We work with venues at every stage of maturity, from first-season pilots to multi-year programs with six-figure sponsorship portfolios built on reuse.

## WHAT WE DO

Bold Reuse provides the full reuse ecosystem: branded reusable cups and containers, scalable collection and washing infrastructure, real-time return rate tracking, staff and fan education programs, and sponsorship integration support. We don't just supply the product – we operate the system and optimize it every event.



# READY TO LEAD?



Bold Reuse is the top reusable packaging platform for sports and entertainment venues. Join the venues leading the reuse revolution.

## **Schedule a Discovery Call**

Discuss your venue's specific needs and opportunities

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## **Get Your Custom ROI Analysis**

See your potential savings and sponsorship value

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## **Connect with Peer Venues**

Learn from venues who've successfully implemented

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