

Greening the Unitarian Universalist Association 2009 General Assembly



EVENT AT A GLANCE:

Unitarian Universalist
Association
General Assembly

June 24 – 28, 2009
Salt Palace
Convention Center

3401 Attendees
77 Exhibitors

LEARNING TOGETHER - LEAVING LEGACIES

Principles are ideas, until they become action. Through our actions we become an example to others, who see the potential of our ideas to transform and improve the world around us. The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) has been transforming conference management for the good of the planet since 2005. The effort started small, by requesting basic green practices of suppliers, reducing internal waste and offsetting carbon emissions. By 2009, UUA's sustainable meeting strategy for General Assembly has evolved into a more proactive and systematic approach to build partnerships with vendors, attendees, exhibitors and host destinations to achieve tangible and long-term sustainability benefits. UUA's approach not only reduces impacts in specific and measurable ways, but catalyzes the creation of new event services as a legacy of the Assembly, improving the ability of host communities to provide and benchmark green events. General Assembly 2009 in Salt Lake City represents UUA's most significant success in partnering to improve destination capacity in this manner.

Greening by the Numbers

- \$88710 saved over 2008 event budget by choosing a walkable city and reducing printing.
- 35 recycling stations capturing four streams: metal, plastic, paper fiber, and trash.
- 75 hours logged by 15 volunteers to staff recycling stations.
- 50% of waste generated by the event was diverted from landfill, representing a 46% improvement on baseline diversion.
- 31% of catered food was organic and 23% was sourced within 100 miles. 26% of concession food was local and 4% organic.
- 100% of host hotels provided recycling, linen reuse and energy efficient practices for guests.
- 86% of accommodation providers used green cleaners and 43% used recycled-content bathroom tissues.
- 97% of exhibit hall carpet will be reused following the event. 3% was recycled.
- 95% of table-top material will be reused. 5% was recycled.
- 30% of attendees opted to offset their carbon footprint through Carbon Fund.

EVENT REPORTS

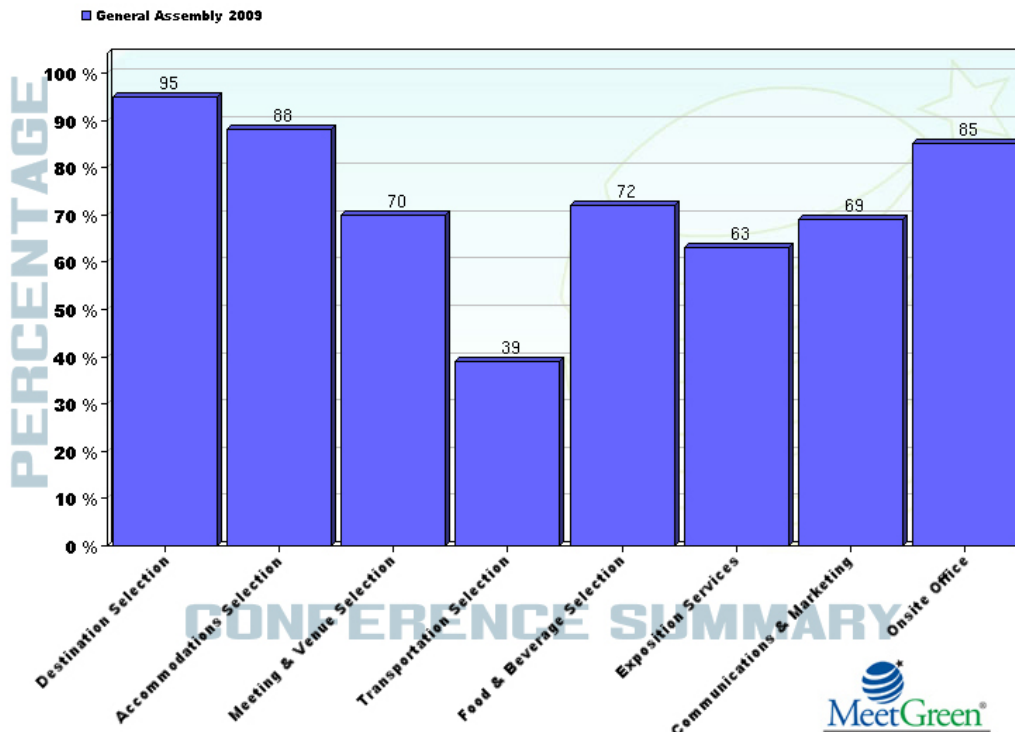
UUA, in partnership with MeetGreen®, continues to measure success in implementing sustainable conference practices using the MeetGreen® Calculator. Those events that score highly are run by planners who not only request sustainable practices, but also ensure these requests are implemented, that they are tracked and that a high level of performance is achieved. This involves requesting and implementing recycling, in addition to tracking a high percentage of waste diversion from landfill. Practices and measurements tracked by the MeetGreen® Calculator meet or exceed United States Environmental Protection Agency purchasing policies and Convention Industry Council Green Meeting Guidelines.

The calculator tracks practices in the following areas:

- Destination Selection
- Meeting Venue Selection
- Accommodation Selection
- Transportation
- Food & Beverage
- Exhibit Production
- Communications & Marketing
- On-site Office

The following graphs show scores for UUA's General Assembly:

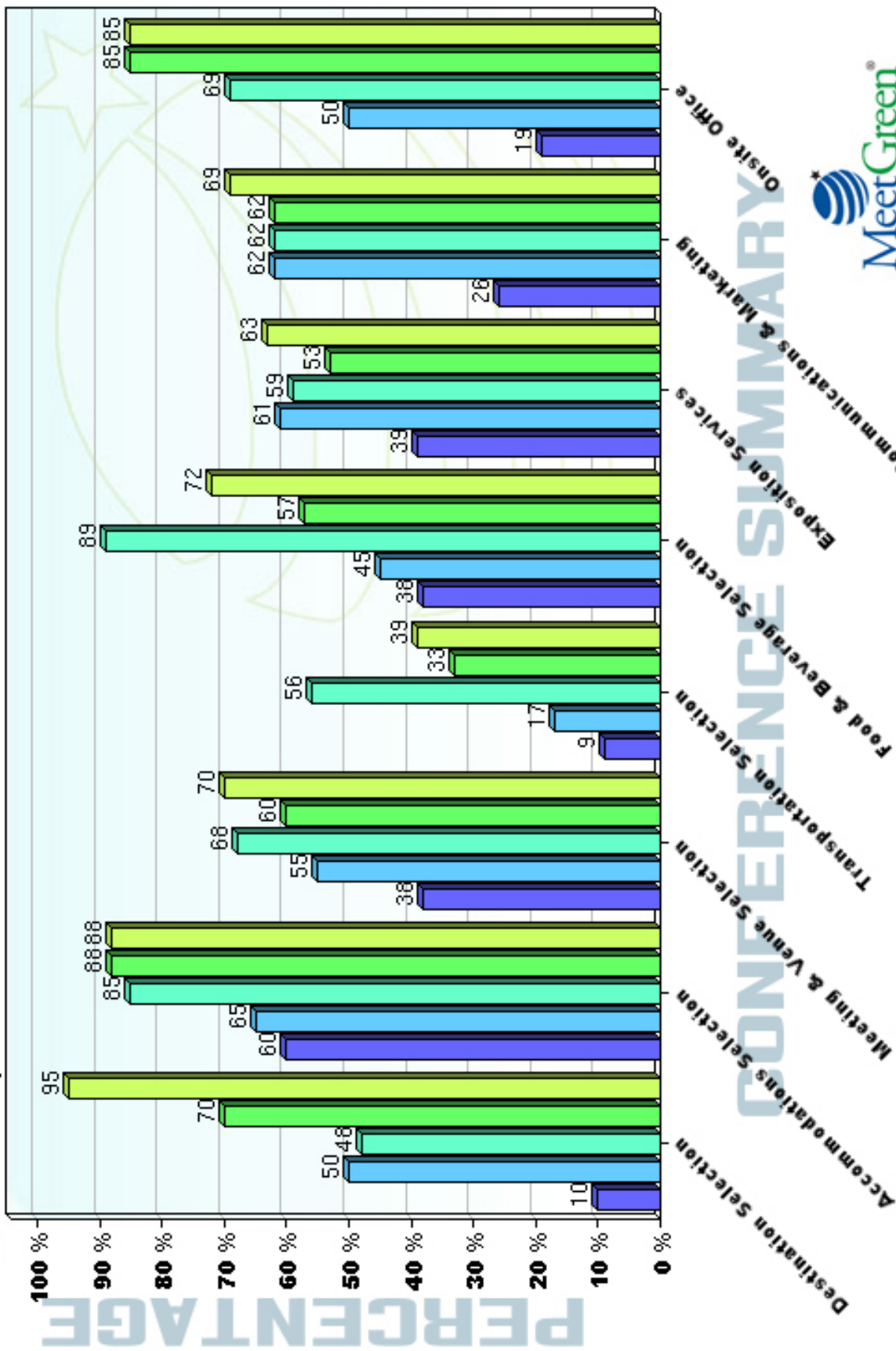
- Conference Summary Report A (below): Shows the scores achieved by General Assembly 2009 in all eight categories. The numerical bar value represents the percentage of total points earned in that category.
- Conference Summary Report B: Shows the scores achieved by General Assembly in all categories from 2005-2009. The numerical bar value represents the percentage of total points earned in that category.
- Total Conference Comparison Report: Shows the total score achieved for each year of General Assembly as well as the total score of all conferences in the MeetGreen® calculator. The numerical bar value represents the percentage of total points earned in all categories.



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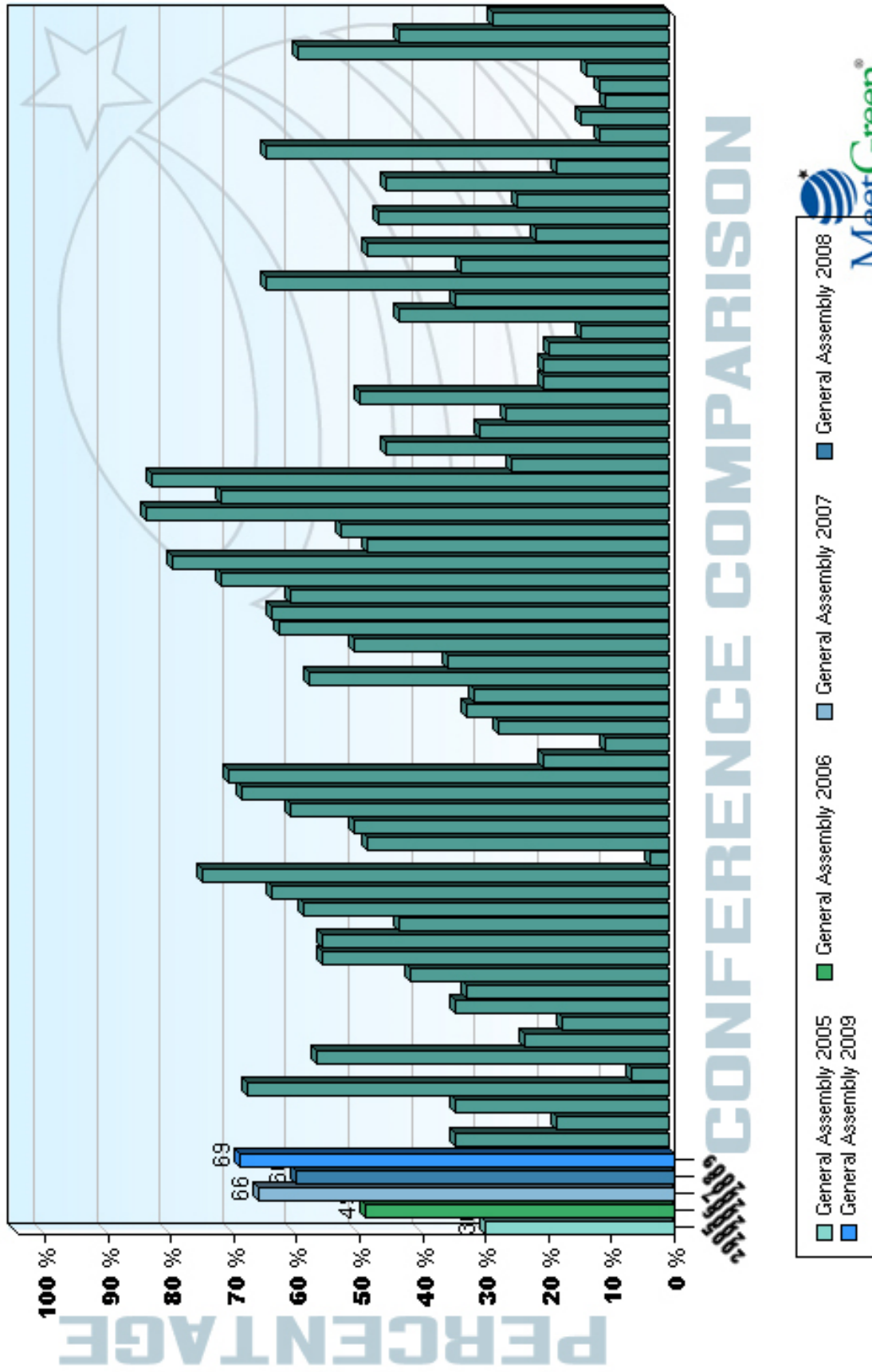
Conference Summary Report

■ General Assembly 2005
 ■ General Assembly 2006
 ■ General Assembly 2007
 ■ General Assembly 2008



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Total Conference Comparison Report



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Destination Selection

Destination Selection for General Assembly is a balancing act. Organizers must find a city that has capacity and availability for the late summer event, is attractive to and affordable for attendees, while also being home to hotels, venues and caterers who are willing and able to meet environmental requests. Rarely is there a perfect solution that meets all criteria. To assist with decision-making, UUA includes an environmental survey in their destination request for proposals. Convention and visitor bureaus are asked to itemize the sustainable assets of the city and specific practices in place at local meeting venues and hotels. The ability and intention of the prospective city to meet sustainability requirements is considered in the final destination decision.

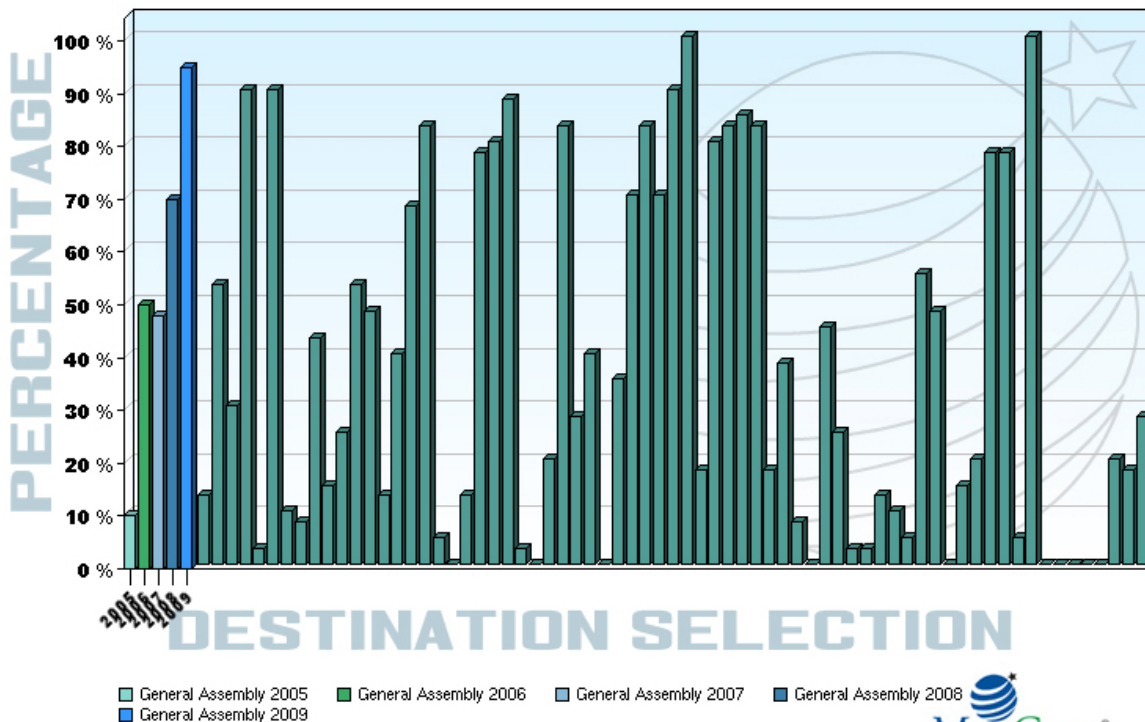
In the case of Salt Lake City, environmentally responsible features of the destination included:

- A good local transit system, including light rail, buses and biking options that could be used by attendees.

- A walkable convention neighborhood, making it most accessible for attendees while saving organizers the expense of arranging ground shuttles. This reduced costs by \$80,000 over 2008.
- A municipally supported recycling program, including publically available recycling containers and comprehensive recycling services for business.
- Airport located within 10 miles of the convention center and host hotels.

In addition to these features, the hospitality community was able and willing to implement sustainable event practices described below.

Lack of commercial composting in Salt Lake City was a significant barrier to exceeding UUA's waste diversion goals for General Assembly. This was partially overcome by providing composting of



non-protein, non-dairy food front and back of house. However, any greenware (compostable service-ware) was distributed in the trash stream due to the fact it cannot be recycled and there is not presently a facility that will take this kind of organic waste on a commercial basis in the state of Utah. Any meat and dairy food waste was also sent to landfill.

To support the efforts of Utah Food Services and Western Foods, as well as local hoteliers and restaurateurs in Salt Lake City who are increasingly switching to greenware, UUA participated in a letter-writing campaign to the City of Salt Lake to stress the importance of providing commercial composting options for these businesses and the conferences they service. In addition to UUA's letter, both MeetGreen® and Meeting Professionals International (MPI) provided their own letters. These letters supported the Salt Lake Convention & Visitor Bureau's work to position the City for green meetings and stressed the importance of composting infrastructure as a piece of the green event product. As a result of UUA's advocacy the Mayor of Salt Lake is supporting a task force to research and implement a commercial composting service option for the city within two years.

UUA expects that most destinations will not have all requested green practices in place when the destination is selected and is willing to contract with vendors in the host community based on their intention to work with UUA to improve performance in time for General Assembly. To help catalyze this, UUA created a resource guide listing local, state, regional and national agencies that are able to help hospitality businesses become more sustainable. This guide is included in the appendix and was provided to the Salt Lake City CVB as a legacy of the event. In addition, UUA made this resource available to MPI to help them prepare for their World Education Congress (WEC) in Salt Lake City July 2009.



Meeting & Venue Selection

The Salt Palace was a key partner in General Assembly 2009, with a foundation of environmental practice that was expanded for this event. Best practices considered included waste management, energy efficiency, water conservation, air quality and environmental purchasing.

Six months prior to General Assembly the Salt Palace averaged a 4% recycling diversion rate. The existing recycling program took recyclables in a single stream where contamination was high and did not include composting. UUA contracted for four-stream sorting front and back of house for plastics, metal, paper fiber and trash. This required additional containers and staff training on the part of the venue and monitoring on the part of UUA. UUA staff and volunteers oversaw sorting back of house and in the front of house food service area. 15 volunteers were required over 75 hours to ensure appropriate sorting. Additional signage was only required on back dock dumpsters and was bold and clear in its purpose.

Unfortunately glass is not recycled in Salt Lake City due to lack of market for it, however the impact of this was minimal as there was very little glass use onsite. Confirming sorting for special materials pre-event is an on-going challenge. For example, miscommunication occurred regarding the acceptability of certain plastics and greenware, causing complications onsite that were resolved, but not without last minute effort.

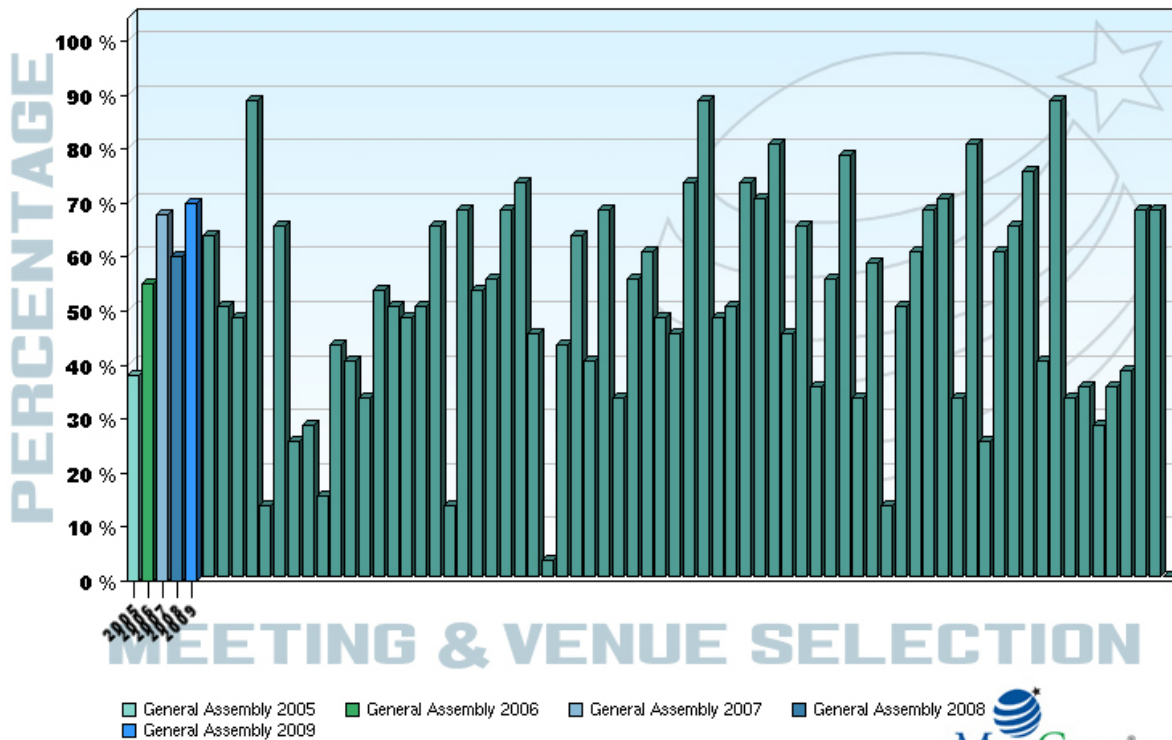
Final waste management totals equated to 1.4 lbs of trash per person, compared with 6.1 lbs per person in 2008. Event totals were:

- Trash: 4840 lbs
- Recyclables: 4837 lbs
 - o Plastics: 180 lbs
 - o Paper/Cardboard: 3280 lbs
 - o Metals: 327 lbs
 - o Compost: 1050 lbs

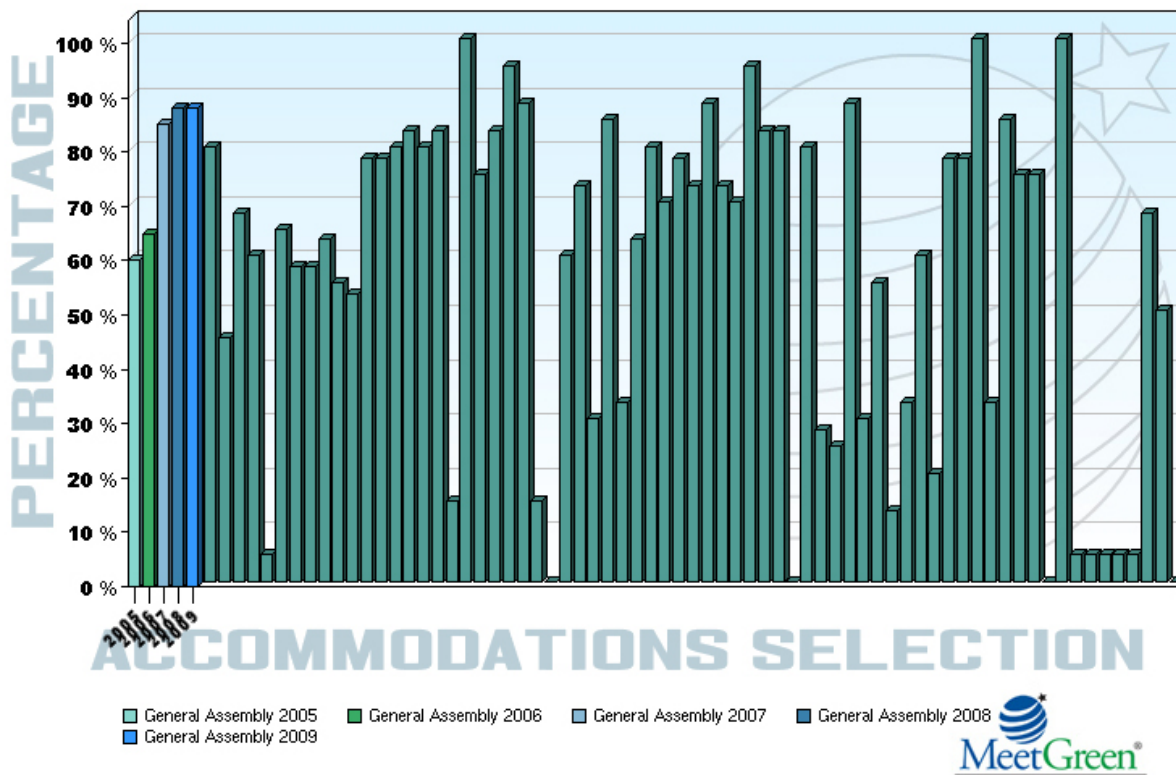
UUA continues to require energy efficient and water-wise practices at General Assembly. This includes use of energy efficient lighting, scheduling HVAC to minimize energy use, and reducing lighting during move in and move out. The Salt Palace has a very proactive program for managing and tracking energy and water use that complied with all contracted requests. Additional utility demand for General Assembly was benchmarked at 125,478 KwH of electricity and 31,000 cubic feet of water. This equates to approximately 37 KwH and 9 cubic feet of water per attendee. It is hoped UUA can continue to track total utility use to help better understand the per participant waste, water and energy use associated with this event.

Use of environmentally responsible cleaners and recycled content bathroom papers was also required. The Salt Palace purchases recycled content bathroom papers and Green Seal certified cleaners.






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Accommodations Selection

UUA conducted a pre-event site visit to contracted hotels specifically to discuss and verify sustainable practices. This visit, conducted 7 months before the event, significantly improved compliance with contracted requirements. This process has helped to systemize UUA's approach to working with General Assembly hotels. This process includes:

1. Complete pre-contract survey of hotels to determine what practices they have in place and would be willing to implement.
2. Contract for sustainable practices.
3. Communicate measurements required post-event.
4. Perform site visit to contracted properties to verify practice, educate about the General Assembly sustainability initiative and research local sustainability programs.
5. Develop a hospitality resource list outlining local, regional and national agencies that are able to assist properties and distribute to local CVB and hotels.
6. Perform bi-monthly check-ins with all properties to report on progress.
7. Provide on-demand assistance to properties as they implement new practices.
8. Convene, where possible, local forums to assist in implementing new practices.
9. Educate and provide assistance to new properties that are contracted for overflow.
10. Attend pre-conference meeting.
11. Verify practice on-site.
12. Collect post-event measurables.

Momentum Recycling, a local recycling hauler, noted an increase in inquiries from hotel properties about composting and recycling services, which led to new recycling programs being adopted as a direct result of contracted requests. All hotels were able to implement recycling, with three hotels adopting programs for the first time or specifically expanding them for General Assembly. Recycling programs at the University of Utah housing were more limited, and voluntary in nature.

Several properties should be commended for their efforts to go above and beyond to implement expanded, new and unique sustainability programs for General Assembly:

- The Plaza Hotel and Shilo Inn both initiated new and permanent recycling programs.
- The Marriott expanded their recycling program and significantly increased diversion from their historical average during the event.
- Both the Hotel Monaco and Hilton had well-established green programs which included donation and composting programs.

All hotels provided post-event reports which are itemized in the appendix:

- 100% provided guest recycling for plastic, paper, and cans.
- 100% provided linen re-use options for guests.
- 100% used energy efficient lighting.
- 86% used green-certified cleaners and 43% used recycled content bathroom tissue.

Only one property was noted in non-compliance with UUA's no polystyrene rule half-way into the event, despite 100% pre-event agreement to comply.

Attendee participation with linen re-use, lights off requests and recycling was noted across all hotels as follows:

- Linen reuse: 76-100%
- Lights off: 51-100%
- Recycling: 38-100%

Transportation Selection

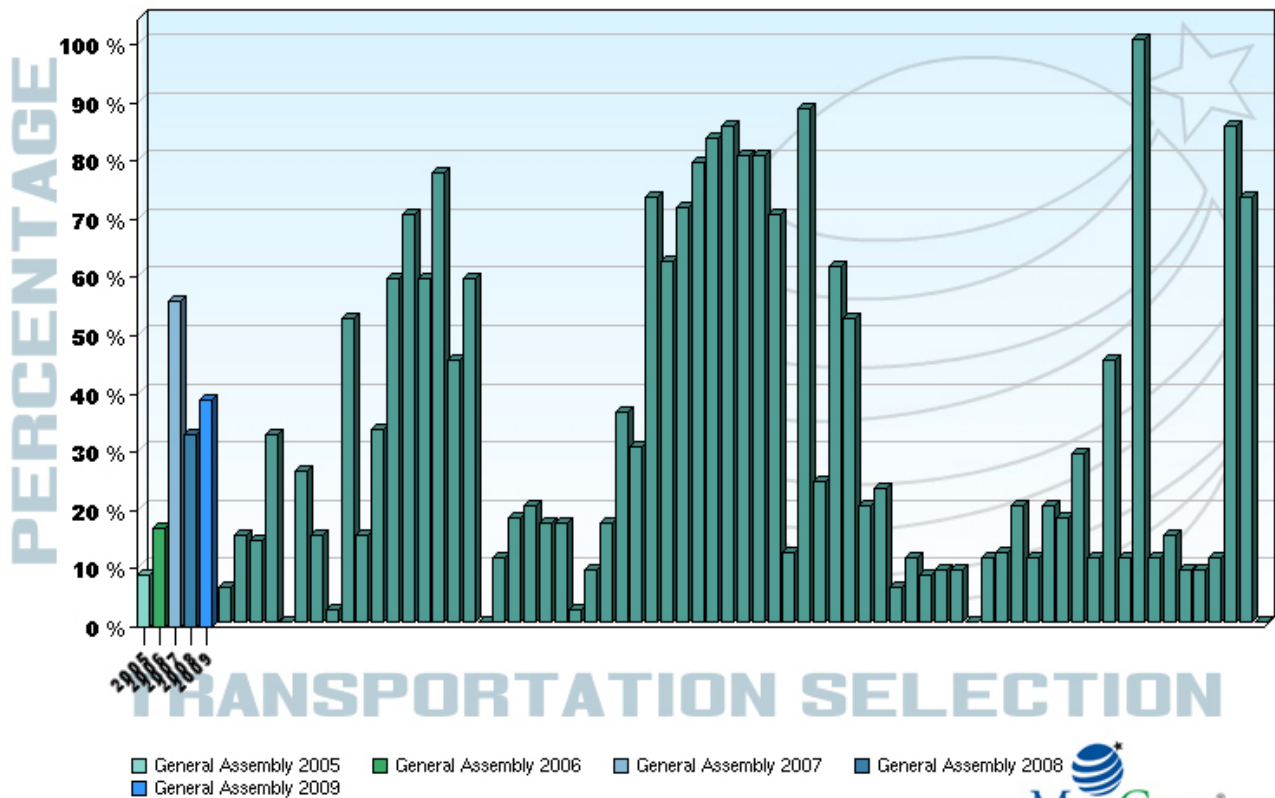
General Assembly did not provide ground shuttling for participants given the close proximity of hotels to the convention center. The only housing venue outside of this area was accessible by Trax, the local light rail system. In addition, the public witness event for immigration reform was held within walking distance of the Salt Palace.

UUA continues to provide an option for attendees to offset their participation in General Assembly. This takes the form of a carbon offset opt-in choice during the registration process. Participation in this program reached a high of 50% in 2007, but has held at 30% the last two years. The offset is provided in partnership with Carbon Fund which directs support to a diverse portfolio of sequestration, energy efficiency and renewable energy programs.

For the first time in 2009 UUA has not only calculated their event footprint in Salt Lake City, but has also conducted emissions calculations for all

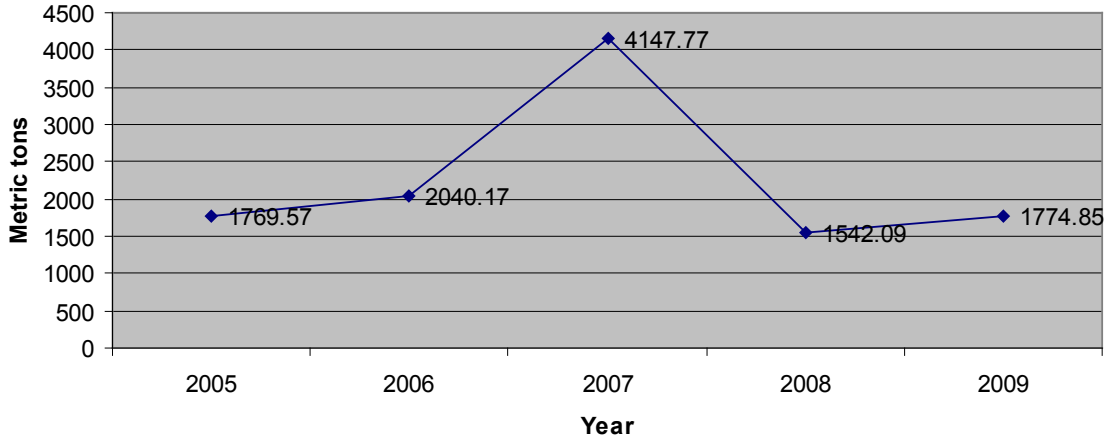
General Assemblies back through 2005. This has enabled us to understand the total emissions from the event, emissions per attendee and percentage of emissions by source as are itemized in the graphs. This data can be used as a decision making tool in future, particularly for site selection. Please see the appendix for more detailed data.

UUA also opted to transport on-site equipment and materials using EA Logistics. This company was selected primarily due to its designation under the USEPA's SmartWay Transportation program, acknowledging independent verification of this hauler's sustainable practices. In addition to meeting SmartWay requirements EA Logistics calculates the CO2 emitted during transport of shipments and purchases carbon credits in that same amount to create Carbon Neutral Freight™. In addition to attendee emissions noted above UUA verified and offset 5.968 additional metric tons of carbon dioxide for freight transport.

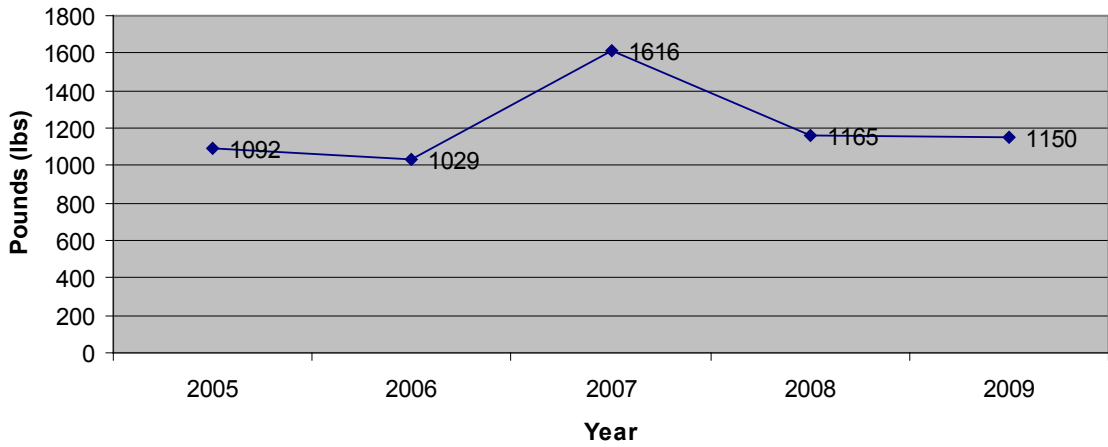


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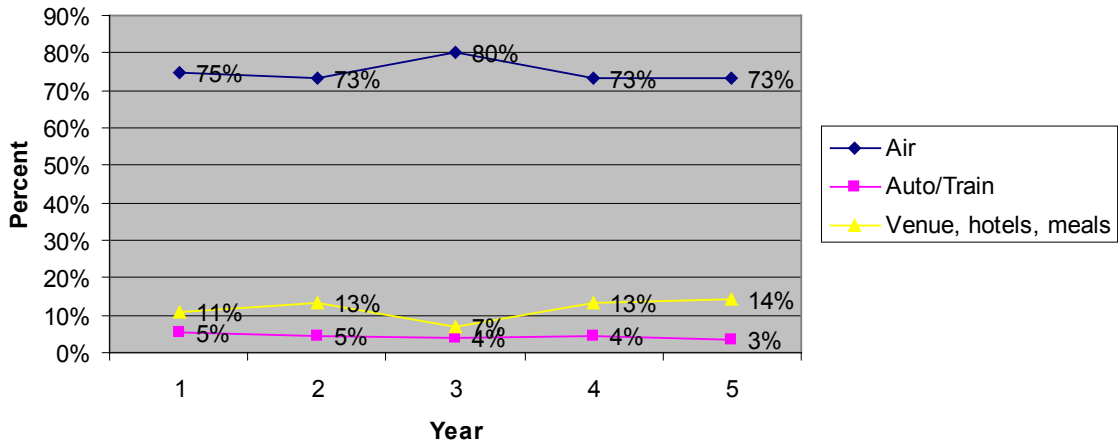
General Assembly - Total emissions



General Assembly - Emissions per attendee



General Assembly - Percentage of emissions by source



Food & Beverage

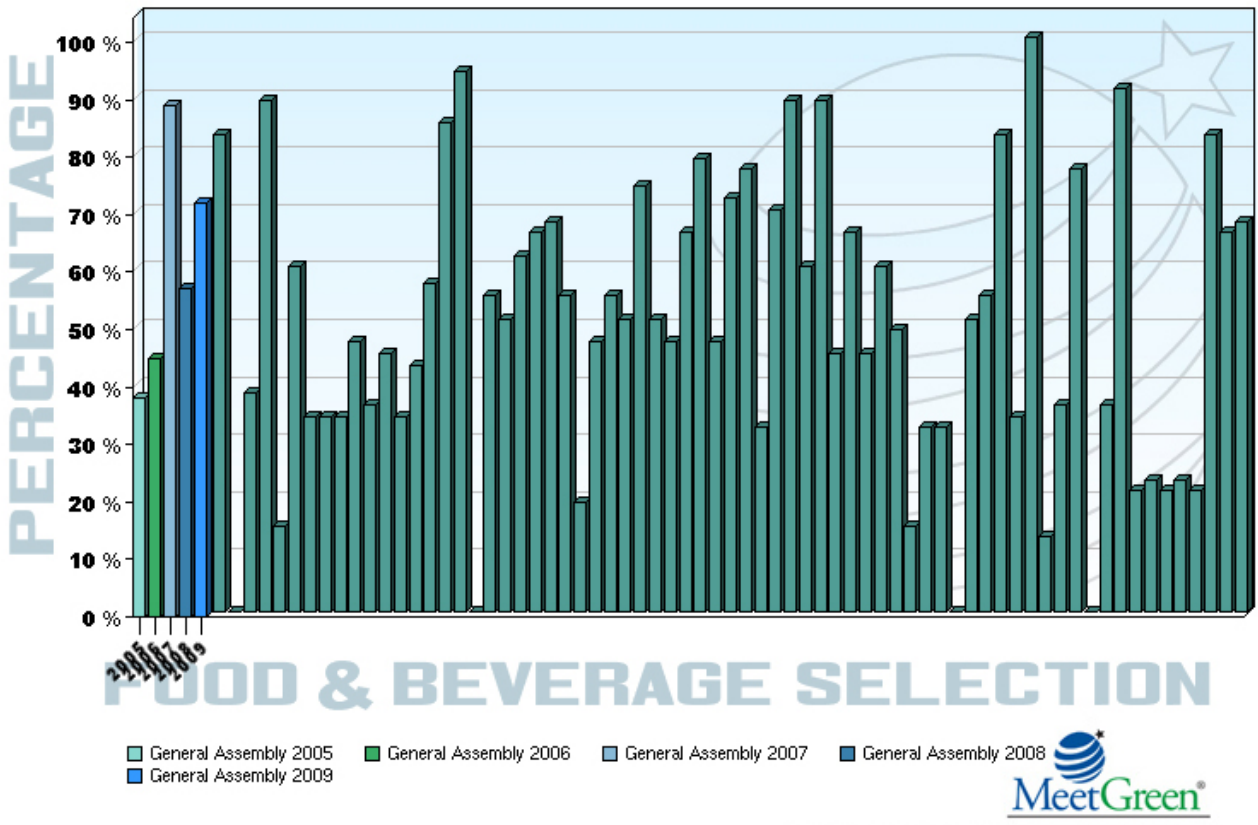
Catered food service for General Assembly was provided by Utah Food Services, while concessions were operated by Western Foods. Both service providers signed green contract clauses to implement sustainable practices, including:

- Providing back of house and limited front of house composting of food, excluding oil, dairy and meat. Total compost weighed in at 1050 lbs, or 10% of the waste stream.
- Prioritizing procurement of sustainable food, including 23% local, 31% organic, 17% natural and 1% free range items by Utah Food Services and 26% local, 4% organic, 1% fairly traded items by Western Foods. Local items were sourced within 100 miles of the city, while natural items were produced or processed free of nitrates and nitrites, minimally processed without fillers, antibiotics or hormones, trans-fat & genetically modified organisms.
- Purchasing and serving condiments in bulk and reducing packaging.
- Using china and linen or compostable serviceware.

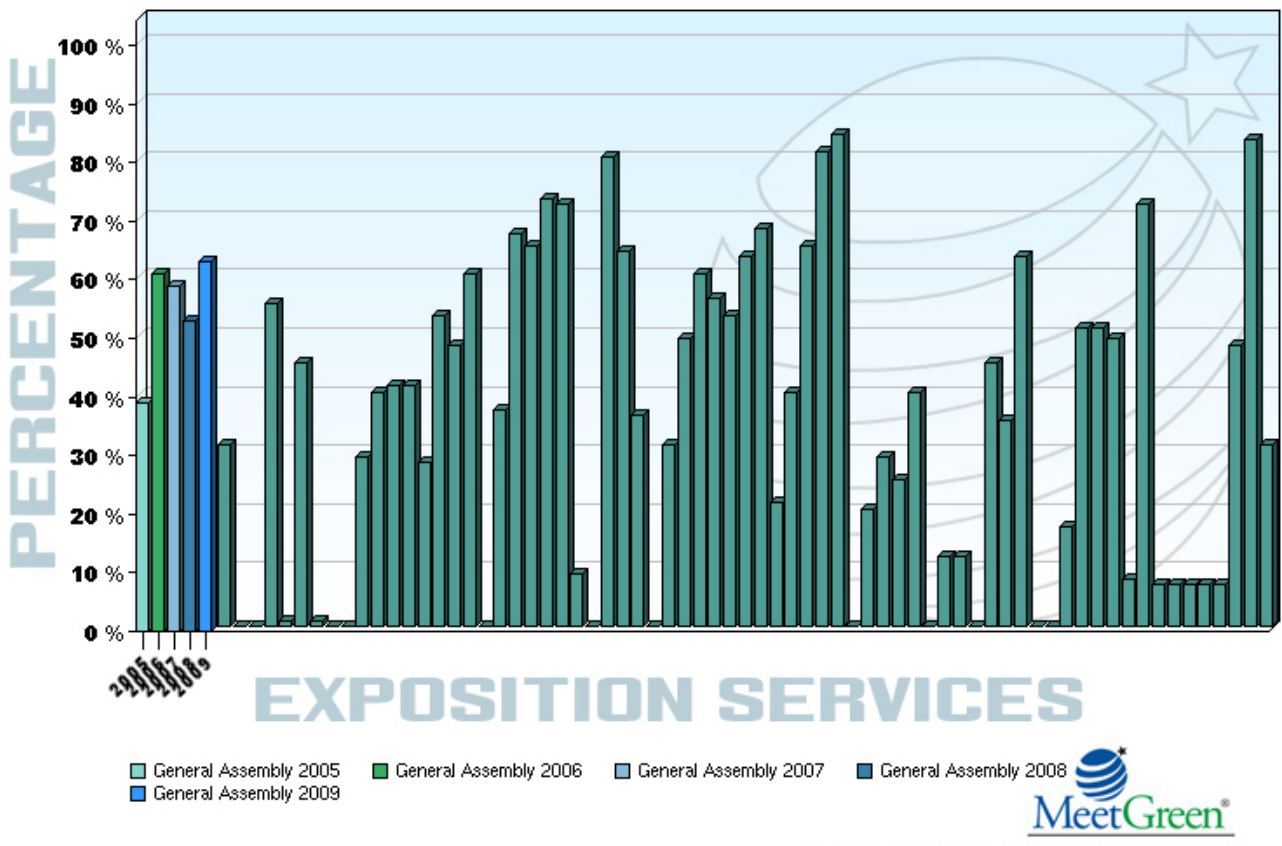
Both the convention venue and local hotels have partnerships with local community groups to donate left-over food. Little food was left over due to conservative registration estimates, resulting in no donations for this event.

Although concession operators were able to provide greenware, miscommunication with the waste management company about the ability to include #7 greenware in the waste stream resulted in a last minute decision to provide some plastic serviceware. Cups and cutlery were switched to recyclable plastic options, while greenware plates were used.





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Exposition Services

UUA's approach to greening the exhibit hall is two-fold, directed at working with the general services contractor, as well as exhibitors. Heritage signs an environmental clause in their contract to provide decorating for General Assembly. This includes requirements to reduce by providing online kits, practice materials re-use and participate in recycling. Frames, substrates, carpet, vinyl and drapery are reused multiple times. Vinyl re-use from GA was tracked at 95% with 4500 linear feet of 30" wide table top material reused. 240 linear feet was damaged and disposed of. Carpet re-use was estimated at 97%, with 3% shipped back to Heritage's warehouse for recycling as this was not available locally.

Exhibitors are provided with voluntary guidelines for greening their booths by UUA. This includes recommendations for minimizing handouts and participating in recycling. As most booths are small and temporary as opposed to more permanent installations, elements of design are minimally considered, while booth operations are more primary.

Every year a committee is established to work on ambiance for General Assembly. This committee provides décor for the Plenary stage, lounge, meditation room and registration areas, depending on their volunteer capacity. This year the ambiance committee worked with MeetGreen to discuss ideas for using sustainable materials in the décor. The majority of constructed items, including centerpieces, textiles, pottery and banners were made out of recycled materials, designed for reuse and were returned to local UUA groups. All remaining materials were selected for their natural qualities, including rocks, grasses and cones.



Communications & Marketing

UUA continues to work to reduce paper use at General Assembly:

- Pre-mailing of programs was reduced to 382 from 2000 in 2008.
- The event program was reduced by 32 pages.
- Annual report was not printed.

This resulted in the following savings:

- Not printing the annual report and reducing the size of the program saved 21 trees and represents a 31% reduction in paper used over 2008.
- Printing on 30% post-consumer content saved:
 - o 1,528 lbs wood: A total of 5 trees that supply enough oxygen for 3 people annually.
 - o 1,933 gal water: Enough water to take 112 eight-minute showers.
 - o 4mln BTUs energy: Enough energy to power an average American household for 15 days.
 - o 466 lbs emissions: Carbon sequestered by 6 tree seedlings grown for 10 years.
 - o 248 lbs solid waste: A total of 9 thirty-two gallon garbage cans of waste.
- Reducing mailing and printing saved \$8710 against budget.

Despite efforts to reduce paper use, fiber continues to be the most substantial waste from General Assembly, amounting to close to 38% of the waste stream.

UUA greatly increased the visibility of green practices at General Assembly in 2009. Slides were prepared for display during the plenary that included information about how to use recycling stations. The entire back page of the event program was also used to discuss past event success and initiatives in place for Salt Lake. In addition, the show daily and plenary announcements were used to assist with reminders to participants about how to help the event stay green. The program committee was also briefed about green practices onsite to assist with volunteer orientation.

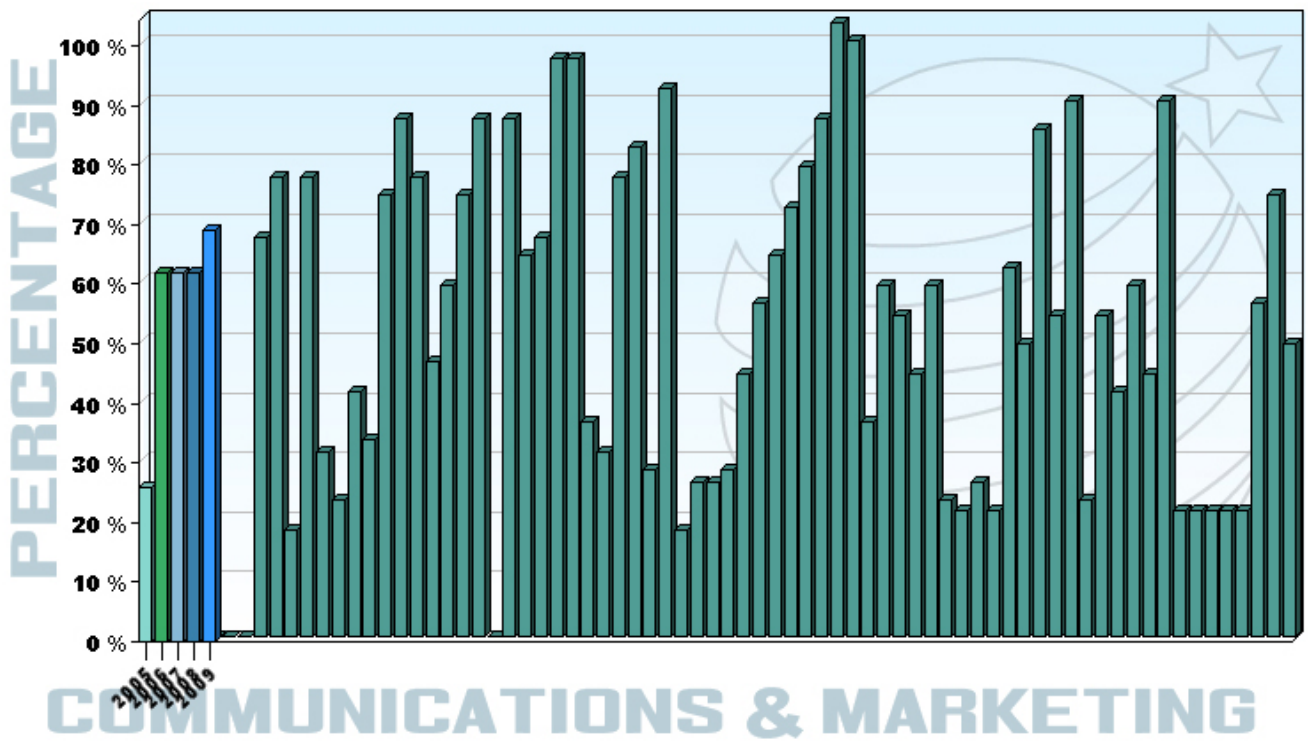
On-site Office

The UUA event team operates a small site office for staff and an additional office for volunteers. Offices are equipped computers, but facility business centers are used for large scale printing and copying. All offices have recycling stations.


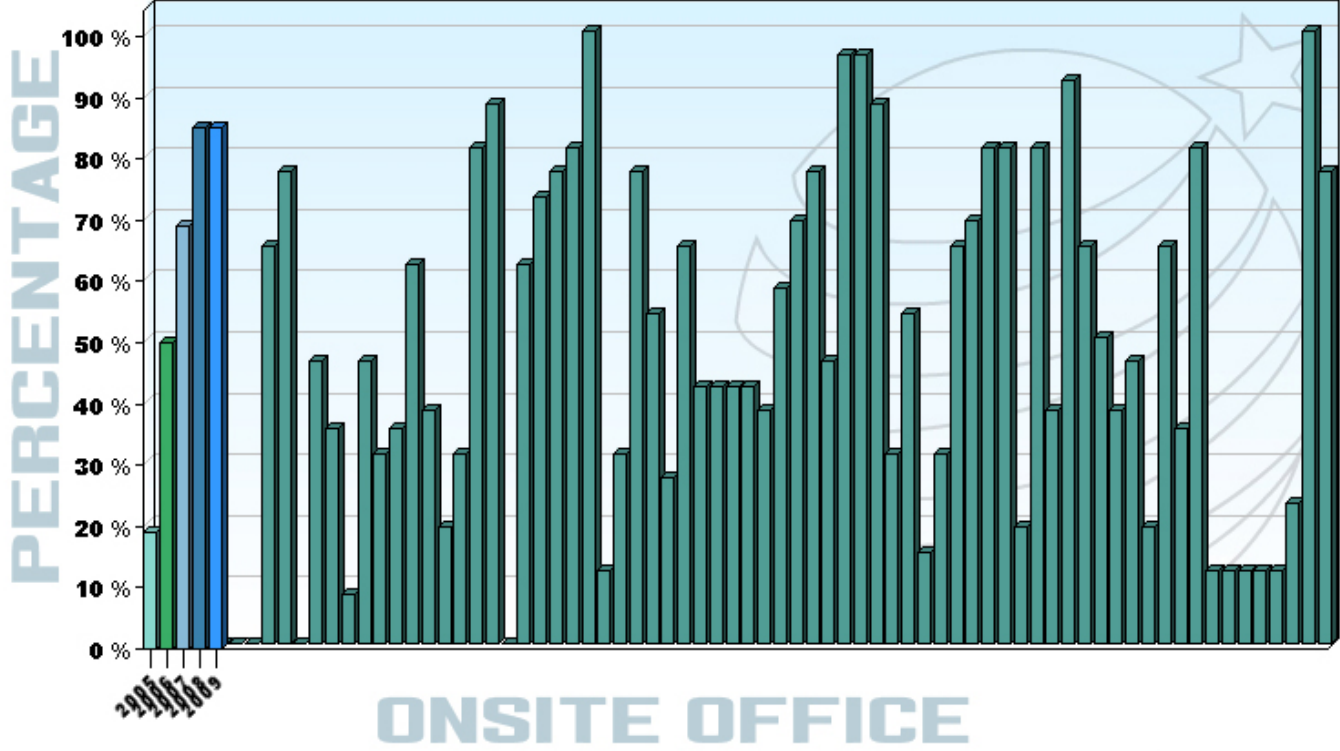
UUA reuses the majority of its signage year to year. This includes branded registration kiosk panels which are re-layered with new graphics, enabling substrate re-use. In addition, the Salt Palace re-used signage from previous events to assist with directions, as well as electronic signage that could be pre-programmed with event information.

15 volunteers were engaged to help with onsite waste management. Although 2 volunteers had been pre-arranged to assist with back-dock monitoring, 13 additional people were required onsite to staff recycling stations in the exhibit hall food lounge. The Salt Palace positioned and signed all recycling stations with minimal adjustments required once staff came onsite.






■ General Assembly 2005 ■ General Assembly 2006 ■ General Assembly 2007 ■ General Assembly 2008 ■ General Assembly 2009

■ General Assembly 2005 ■ General Assembly 2006 ■ General Assembly 2007 ■ General Assembly 2008 ■ General Assembly 2009



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THE JOURNEY AHEAD.....

Many of the improvements in sustainable event performance for General Assembly were built on recommendations made in previous years, including improving attendee and committee communication, forging vendor partnerships and enhancing measurement. To continue to improve, UUA is encouraged to consider the following recommendations for General Assembly 2010:

Waste Management

The improvement between 2008 and 2009 noted, there are still opportunities to enhance waste management. Analysis of the 2009 experience shows:

- There is still a need for facility staff training to ensure waste is appropriately disposed of. This training should include requests to not empty bins until they are substantially full, thus avoiding partially filled garbage bags adding un-necessary bulk to the waste stream.
- Back dock monitoring is essential in ensuring a clean waste-stream, particularly where a co-mingled program was previously in place.
- Providing back dock marshalling areas for waste would be helpful to ensure that UUA controls disposal of waste in appropriate receptacles. This would help to alleviate the higher incidence of contamination that was noted when back dock monitors were not present.
- Facility signage front and back of house is essential. Front of house signs might be made more effective by providing illustrations of materials that go in each bin.
- Providing volunteer monitoring of the recycling stations in the lounge during lunch is essential to ensure higher diversion and minimize contamination.
- Creation of a written event waste management plan could be beneficial to ensure all partners are clear on goals, roles and expectations.

Audio visual

New guidelines for 'green' AV are anticipated by December 2009. This is an area that has not previously been addressed by UUA so discussions with AV providers about capacity to implement best practices are recommended.

Advocacy partnerships

For the first time this year UUA partnered with another event host to advocate for greener event practices in Salt Lake City. Next year UUA has the opportunity to partner with two organizations who are hosting 'green' events in Minneapolis: the Presbyterian Church and the Heartland Chapter of the United States Green Building Council. This trio of organizations should seek opportunities to cooperate to raise the level of green meeting practice in this city.

Measurements

UUA improved event tracking this year by requiring energy and water use monitoring by the facility and food procurement tracking by the caterers. In addition event organizers were able to calculate an event emissions footprint for all events since 2005. Although interesting unto itself, the usefulness of information collected in 2009 will be determined by the successful collection of similar data in future years. It is important all contracts underline this post-event expectation. While measurement by venues, hotels and food and beverage providers improved in 2008 and 2009, opportunities exist to enhance AV and exhibitor metrics in 2010, particularly as pertains to procurement and equipment use.

Paper use

Analysis of the 2009 waste stream shows the paper trail of General Assembly is significant. This year was unique as elections were held, possibly contributing to a greater paper waste. It is important to continue to look for areas to reduce paper use. Education of exhibitors about the volume of paper produced by the event could be a strategy to combat this, and engage participants. Ensuring election bylaws are changed to facilitate online voting is another step in a greener direction.

Participant engagement

UUA significantly stepped up communication of green practices to attendees in 2009. The result of a more visible green program included receiving more ideas for greening from attendees, as well as increased engagement in recycling, which resulted in higher diversion. Into 2010 UUA should continue to explore new ways to engage attendees. Three specific ideas are recommended. The first is to develop a specific strategy for exhibitors, including the addition of minimum guidelines to their written agreements and developing incentive programs to reduce waste.



Opportunities also exist to increase participation in the carbon offset program. In order to improve from 30% participation in the carbon offset program, UUA is encouraged to discuss the feasibility of integrating an offset fee into the registration cost for General Assembly. This may be the most effective way to secure a 100% offset permanently, however this will need to be considered along with attendee willingness to pay. Another option to increase participation may be to provide an opt-out offset, as opposed to the opt-in. An additional idea to engage participants is to create a special “Greening General Assembly” page on the event web site which includes archives of event case studies, summaries of achievements by year, initiatives underway for future events and a mechanism for UU’s to share their ideas and feedback on event greening.

BS 8901–Sustainable Event Management System

The meetings industry is moving toward standardization of sustainable practices. Approaches put forward by the British Standard 8901 for Sustainable Events stress the importance of setting clear commitments, objectives and indicators for sustainable events that involve all event stakeholders. With this in mind it is timely for ‘greening’ UUA to become a team-oriented process that each event staff member and committee volunteer can contribute to and be responsible for. UUA is encouraged to establish such a team to share and discuss ideas for continuing to innovate and evolve sustainable practices into 2010.

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