

Justice General Assembly

Sustainability Report 2012

Prepared for the Unitarian Universalist Association
August 1, 2012

Not business as usual

Unitarian Universalists redefine sustainability for events

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Since 2005, the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) has taken consistent steps to improve event sustainability. For UUA this means using their annual General Assembly as a tool to practice and promote their Seven Principles.

The intention is to assist host destinations to improve their ability to stage sustainable events, leaving a lasting legacy for other event planners to benefit from. Over the last eight years, General Assembly has transformed each city it has been held in without exception. The event has:

- Worked with over 40 hotel properties to advocate for environmental and accessibility improvements.
- Established or expanded composting programs at four convention centers.
- Piloted or expanded recycling capabilities for three convention venues.
- Improved local purchasing programs for caterers in three cities.
- Exceeded goals for renewable energy purchases since 2010.

In 2012 UUA took their sustainability commitment to a completely new level at the Justice General Assembly in Phoenix, Arizona. The following pages share the outcomes of this important advocacy-oriented event.

Since 2005, integrating sustainability into event planning decisions for General Assembly has:

*Prevented energy use sufficient to power
11 American homes for a year*

*Conserved water sufficient to fill over
2.2 million individual water bottles.*

*Reduced waste sufficient to fill
1.5 garbage trucks*

*Avoided carbon equivalent to keeping
59 cars off the road for a year*

A Justice General Assembly

Event Sustainability 2012 Milestones

Saved 33 metric tons of carbon by virtual meetings

Conserving 81 barrels of oil, which today costs \$7,252

Improved waste diversion from 49% to 87%

Reducing waste per person to 0.65 lbs per person

Delivered 350 hrs of environmental education

14 volunteers composted and recycled 7.4 metric tons

Provided 3000 reusable water bottles

Used twice, these save enough water to make 10,000 cups of tea

Part 01

Who we are and why we assemble

EVENT SCOPE

DATE, VENUE, AUDIENCE

Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations Justice General Assembly 2012

- June 20-24, 2012, Phoenix, Arizona
- Phoenix Convention Center and two offsite events held at Civic Space Park & Tent City Jail
- 6,976 total room nights at 4 housing sites
- 3,602 participants
- 65 exhibitors

ABOUT US

HISTORY & VALUES

The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) is a religious organization that combines two traditions: the Universalists, who organized in 1793, and the Unitarians, who organized in 1825. They consolidated into the UUA in 1961. Both groups trace their roots in North America to the early Massachusetts settlers and to the founders of the Republic. Overseas, their heritages reach back centuries to pioneers in England, Poland, and Transylvania.

Each of the 1,041 congregations in the United States, Canada, and overseas are democratic in polity and operation; they govern themselves. They unite in the Association to provide services that individual congregations cannot provide for themselves. Each congregation is associated with one of the UUA's 19 districts.

Unitarian Universalism is a liberal religion with Jewish-Christian roots. It has no creed. It affirms the worth of human beings, advocates freedom of belief and the search for advancing truth, and tries to provide a warm, open, supportive community for people who believe that ethical living is the supreme witness of religion.

BACKGROUND

WHY THE 2012 JUSTICE ASSEMBLY IS IMPORTANT

General Assembly (GA) 2012 was not a “business as usual” annual conference. It was a response to a resolution adopted at the 2010 General Assembly in Minneapolis where delegates endorsed a resolution to stage a “Justice General Assembly” in Phoenix. This was provoked by a potential boycott of the destination stemming from passage of Arizona Senate Bill 1070 which provided increased power to police to check immigration status of those otherwise detained. Business activities at General Assembly 2012 were kept to the minimum required by bylaws so that UU’s could actively engage in activities that honored the justice theme of the event.



The Rev. Leslie Takahashi Morris and the Rev. Susan Frederick Gray were part of a delegation of religious leaders who visited “Tent City”, an outdoor jail complex maintained by Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio. Photo: © Dea Brayden/UUA.

SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

VISION STATEMENT

"We strive to continuously improve the sustainability of General Assembly, the annual business meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations.

We have a responsibility to act in ways commensurate with our Principles as we attempt to make the world a better place for all living things.

We want to work with host destinations to leave a lasting legacy of improved capacity to hold more sustainable events.

Our attention to environmental and social responsibility includes working within the law and voluntarily exceeding legal requirements in order to model best practice for our congregations and other religious denominations."

MATERIAL ISSUES

"As a liberal religious denomination committed to social and environmental justice, we have prioritized issues that are important to our congregations, including:

- Equal and inclusive participation of diverse individuals*
- Conservation of water and water quality*
- Promotion of reduced and renewable energy opportunities*
- Reduction of solid waste"*

OUR SEVEN PRINCIPLES

GOVERNING AND GUIDING ALL WE DO

Unitarian Universalists affirm and promote seven fundamental principles. These principles are centered in values of inclusivity, diversity & integrity and significantly influence planning and execution of General Assembly. We've included examples of these "Principles At Work in Event Planning" on the following pages.

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

HYBRID ATTENDANCE OPTIONS

This year 85 participants opted to tune into GA virtually. Providing a hybrid event format—one that allows remote and in-person attendance—not only helps foster a more inclusive environment for those unable to travel, it also allows GA to grow attendance through lower environmental impact means. Remote attendees obviously consume power by tuning in and participating online. However their preference to stay home avoids the carbon footprint inherent in traveling. By making the decision to attend online, remote attendees avoided 32.6 metric tons of carbon emissions.

“I loved being able to participate and keep up with GA from home! I really felt a part of the Assembly and like I had a good sense of what was going on, while being able to take good care of myself at home.”

Remote attendee evaluation

TO BUS? OR NOT TO BUS?

This year’s GA broke from the norm of not providing shuttles for attendees. Although the main convention venue and housing sites were in walking distance, it was necessary to provide buses to offsite events unique to the Justice GA. UUA contracted with First Student, a local school bus company. First Student was confirmed to provide locally based, latest model, fuel-efficient buses powered by ultra-low sulfur diesel. Drivers also were required to minimize idling, a particularly difficult challenge in Phoenix’s hot, arid climate.



The primary social witness event at GA was a candlelight vigil with 2,000 people outside the ‘Tent City’ jail complex, June 23, 2012. This event required special sustainability practices for waste and transportation. Photo: © Nancy Pierce/UUA.

Principles at work in event planning

Part 02

What we wanted to do, and what we did

IMPROVE OVERALL EVENT SUSTAINABILITY	REDUCE ENERGY, WATER & WASTE FOOTPRINT	MEASURE BENEFITS OF MORE SUSTAINABLE PURCHASES	ENGAGE PARTICIPANTS IN SUSTAINABILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Increased MeetGreen® Calculator score to 82% from 72%. » Increased APEX/ASTM compliance to 81% of Level One requirements from 55%. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Reduced waste per participant from 0.64 lbs to under 0.13 lbs per person per day. » Average carbon footprint per attendee increased to 1,486 lbs CO2. » Reduced venue water use by 22,791 gallons. » Increased venue energy use by 209,367 kWh. » Avoided 33 metric tons of carbon emissions by providing remote participation options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Avoided 85,203 kWh of energy use, 356,688 L of water use, 13 MT of solid waste and 139 MT CO2 through purchases. » Improved purchasing practices at three housing sites. » Expanded recycling programs at two housing sites and one venue. » Increased renewable energy purchases to 100% of venue energy sourced and 100% of guest rooms. » Achieved 17% local and 49% regional food purchases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » 14 volunteers provided 350 hours of service recycling. » \$72,009 was raised for two community organizations: Tonatierra and Puente. An additional \$64,817 was raised for Immigration Ministry In Arizona. » 39% of carbon emissions were offset, down from 63% in 2011. » 866 metric tons of emissions were offset, more than in any previous year. » 7% of exhibitors participated in the Green Exhibitor Program, down from 17% in 2011

* Red: Target not met. Green: Target met.

SERIOUS WASTE DIVERSION

UUA partnered with Phoenix-based Global Green Integrators to provide a special front and back of house waste management program at the Phoenix Convention Center (PCC). Existing recycling was expanded to also divert food scraps and compostable service ware. Employing UU volunteers to assist, 86.8% of waste was recovered – an event record! This translates into less than 0.7 pounds per person.

1.



2.



3.



Responsible waste management begins with inspections of recycling facilities pre-event (1). It continues with recruitment, scheduling and training of a volunteer corps (2), who educate GA attendees onsite about how to sort their waste (3). Back of house, staff sort waste collected from attendees (4) to catch contamination before materials are sent to local composters (5) and pig farmers (6).

4.



5.



6.



Principles at work in event planning

In addition to working with the PCC to improve diversion, MeetGreen® also advocated to expand recycling at host hotels. Following a site visit, it was discovered that each property had different recycling practices and that there was work to do at some of the properties to bring recycling up to speed for GA. This task was more difficult than other cities given Phoenix does not have mandatory commercial recycling. This means it is up to each business to decide whether they want to recycle, usually incurring additional costs to do so. Both the Westin and Taylor Place dorm had effective in room or common-area recycling programs for guests.

The Renaissance Hotel practiced back of house recycling, meaning there were no signs of recycling in public areas or in guest rooms. Instead, housekeeping staff sort trash from each room and recycle relevant material. Back of house recycling programs often result in a smaller diversion rate as busy housekeepers may overlook sorting. This can lead astute UU's to question if recycling is taking place as it's invisible to them. Meanwhile the Hyatt had a few recycling bins near meeting rooms and in the lobby but had nothing on guest room floors.

MeetGreen® worked with staff at the Renaissance and the Hyatt to improve these recycling programs. The Hyatt purchased recycling bins that were placed near the elevators on each floor. The operations team also placed a paper bag in each room and left a voice mail for each guest letting them know about this recycling option. Similarly, the Renaissance placed biodegradable bags in every room with a note explaining it was for recyclables.

Judging from the comments received from attendees through the event's online audit form, GA guests were happy with these recycling options and most bugs were able to be ironed out of the new programs. Also, MeetGreen® staff received reports that hotel staff were proud of the program and that housekeepers at the Renaissance were happy to no longer have to sort through guests' trash. In addition, the amount of trash diverted from the landfill at each property was either measured for the first time, or increased.

Principles at work in event planning

Part 03

How we measure

KPI SUMMARY	MEETGREEN® CALCULATOR	APEX-ASTM STANDARD	ATTENDEE FEEDBACK
<p>» UUA measures event sustainability in multiple layers. UUA has a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) that are tracked from event to event. This includes three groups of measures:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Footprint measures for carbon, energy, water and waste2. The extent to which the event complied with criteria UUA has for sustainable purchasing3. Any reduction benefits associated with procurement	<p>» This score-based tool rates sustainability for a specific event using a 100 point scale. It awards credit to the planner for making requests, successfully implementing best practices and measuring performance.</p>	<p>» Adopted in 2012, this technical standard provides criteria an event must meet in order to be considered “environmentally sustainable”. The Standard has four Levels with more than 400 requirements in order to meet Level One.</p>	<p>» UUA invites feedback from attendees in multiple ways. Qualitative comments are provided onsite and recorded in a journal in the exhibit hall. In addition a post-event online evaluation is sent to all attendees. Event participants are invited to provide comments on all event practices, in addition to sustainability.</p>

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	On Target
Event Sustainability Data									
Carbon Emissions produced (MT)	1609	1855	3771	1402	1614	1672	1232	2220	x
Carbon Emission per person (lbs)	1092	1029	1616	1165	1150	1059	709	1486	x
Carbon Emissions offset (MT / %)	-	299 / 20%	1905 / 51%	490 / 30%	484 / 30%	750 / 44%	781.5 / 63%	866 / 39%	x
Facility energy use (kWh)	-	-	-	-	125,478	133,921	140,633	350,000	x
Facility water use (gallons)	-	-	-	-	193,093	120,197	84,898	62,107	✓
Landfilled materials (lbs)	-	-	33%	17,680	4,808	1,400	13,120	2,349	x
Recycled materials (lbs)	-	1,300	46%	3,840	4,837	1,980	8,668	10,713	✓
Composted materials (lbs)	-	-	21%	-	1,050	2,080	3,787	5,701	✓
Donated materials (lbs)	-	-	-	1,080	-	360	128	100	✓
Waste per participant (lbs/day)	-	-	-	6.1	1.4	0.07	0.64	0.13	✓
Diversion from landfill (%)	-	-	67%	18%	50%	76%	49%	87%	✓
Paper used (tons)	-	-	-	-	-	1.36	1.42	1.35	✓
Shuttle miles (miles)	-	-	-	-	0	0	250	1249	x
Shipments (pieces/lbs)	-	-	-	-	677 / 18,385	581 / 14,745	671 / 16,761	778/17,808	x
Carpet (sqft/% reused)	-	-	-	-	-	-	46,000 / 96%	57,700/98%	x
Food miles (average/function)	-	-	-	-	-	-	4742	30,993	x
Community agencies helped	-	-	2	3	2	4	2	3	✓
Value of Community Legacy	-	-	-	\$25,000	-	\$40,580	\$33,000	\$72,009	✓
Volunteer hours (recycling & legacy)	-	-	-	-	74	482	312	350	✓
Exhibitors participating in Green Award	-	-	-	-	-	17 / 18%	17 / 17%	5/7%	x
Attendee green rating (excellent/very good)	-	-	-	-	-	-	37% / 41%	41%/42%	✓

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	On Target
Sustainable Procurement Data									
Hotels - linen reuse	-	-	67%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	✓
Hotels - energy efficient housekeeping	-	-	67%	56%	100%	100%	100%	100%	✓
Hotels - amenity reuse/donation	-	-	0%	100%	100%	100% / 50%	90% / 30%	100%	✓
Hotels - recycling (diversion from landfill)	-	-	67%	100%	86%	100%	90% (26%)	100%(27%)	✓
Hotels - green cleaner	-	-	44%	100%	86%	89%	80%	100%	✓
Hotels - recycled bathroom papers	-	-	-	67%	86%	89%	100%	100%	✓
F&B - local (100 miles)	-	10%	61%	20%	23%	35%	65%	17%	✓
F&B - organic (certified)	-	-	21%	20%	31%	6%	15%	0%	✓
Paper - recycled content (post consumer)	-	-	10-30%	10-30%	10-30%	10-50%	10-50%	10-50%	✓
Carpet - recycled content (post industrial)	-	-	-	-	-	25%	25%	25%	✓
Signage - reused	-	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	✓
Venue renewable energy (direct/REC)	-	-	9%/0%	30%/0%	<1%/0%	13%/100%	3%/100%	<3%/100%	✓
Environmental Benefits¹									
Energy saved (kWh)	-	-	17,661	9,054	11,729	84,274	78,842	85,203	✓
Water saved (L)	-	-	38,254	19,926	32,020	328,330	300,907	356,688	✓
Emissions avoided (MT CO2)	-	-	2.4	1.2	1.6	79.23	72.24	139.06	✓
Solid waste avoided (MT)	-	-	0.17	0.08	0.11	11.17	10.2	12.8	✓
Trees saved	-	-	-	5	26	13	10.5	12.5	✓
Costs avoided through sustainability	-	-	\$105,000	\$54,694	\$69,704	\$61,135	\$61,215	\$3,223	✓
MeetGreen® calculator score	30	49	66	60	69	73	72	82	✓

1. This section reflects the estimated cumulative benefits of decisions to reduce, reuse and recycle, based on available data. This may include things like use of recycled content paper, water bottle reductions, waste recycling benefits (excluding raw materials recovered onsite which are reported on page 12), fuel use reductions, shuttle elimination, virtual participation etc. Where reduction is measured it reflects benefits based on decisions made and actions taken within the single event cycle. Source data supplied from vendors and supplemented by the Environmental Paper Network Paper Calculator, US EPA WasteWise Tool, Carpet America Recovery Effort, International Bottled Water Association and Plastics Europe - Association of Plastics Manufacturers. Emissions calculations by The Carbon Fund. The large increase in savings in 2010 is accounted for by estimating saving resulting from carpet reuse, which was not previously measured but was practiced. Copyright 2012 MeetGreen®.

SUSTAINABILITY STARTS WITH DESTINATION SELECTION

Climate change is a big global issue, and is particularly important to events. Did you know 81% of GA's carbon emissions—an important factor in climate stability—come from transportation? It's true. One of the event's biggest environmental impacts results from the distance participants travel to get to host destinations for GA and the mode of transportation they use.

On-site initiatives like reducing bottled water and paper and reusing and recycling event materials help reduce some carbon. In fact, on-site steps such as these curbed potential emissions by approximately 139 metric tons, or roughly the amount produced by 27 cars in a year. But to make a big impact on the carbon footprint of GA, UUA must also pay attention to where the event is held. For example, making the choice between an east coast or west coast destination can impact total event emissions by as much as 2800 metric tons. That's equal to the emissions from 549 cars per year.

By carefully tracking the event's carbon footprint UUA has learned that east coast destinations typically have a smaller carbon footprint due to reduced long-haul air travel by attendees. So it's not surprising that Phoenix shows a higher footprint per person than other GA's, behind only Portland, Oregon in 2007, another long-haul destination for UUs. Onsite carbon footprint remains within expected ranges, although is slightly higher than for other destinations with more moderate June climates.



Photo: © Nancy Pierce/UUA.

So why does UUA hold GA outside of the east coast if the carbon footprint is smallest in this region? UUA's policy of hosting the event in an east, west and central location on a three-year cycle ensures fair and equal access to the event by all UU's on a regular basis. This example illustrates that sometimes there are tradeoffs in planning in order to balance UUA's principles of inclusivity and fairness with environmental stewardship.

One way UUA attempts to compensate for this tradeoff is by encouraging UUs to offset their event footprint through the Carbon Fund. UUA maintains one of the highest participation rates in a voluntary event offset program compared to all event programs conducted through the Carbon Fund. While many voluntary event offset programs experience less than 5% uptake, 39% of GA attendees offset their footprint at their own cost. This is down from 63% and 44% the previous two years, but still represents a significant participation rate, and the highest amount of emissions ever offset.

Principles at work in event planning

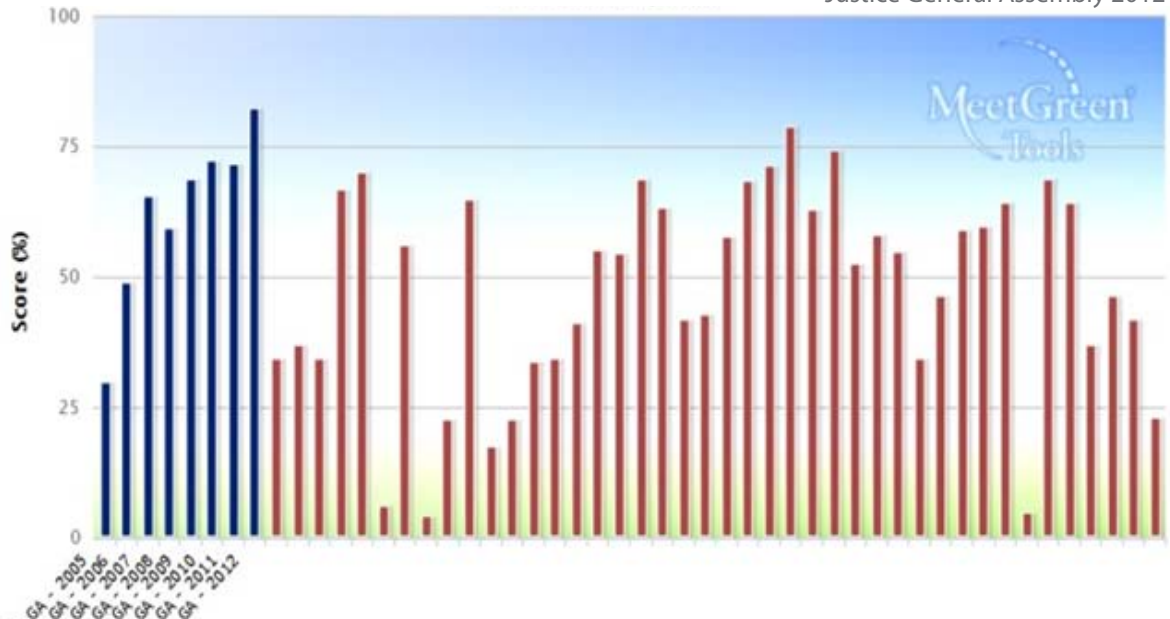
MEETGREEN® CALCULATION

The MeetGreen® Calculator measures overall event sustainability. It considers a combination of best practices and measured performance achievements to determine an overall meeting sustainability score (graph below), along with scores in 10 different areas of meeting management (graph next page).

Justice General Assembly 2012 has increased its total score to 82%, improving 10% on the last event in Charlotte and 53% on the event baseline in 2005. When interpreting the graph results it's important to note the Calculator was updated prior to General Assembly 2010 to reflect increased expectations for sustainable meetings. This makes it harder to score as highly. This means that this event has continued to improve overall in spite of the performance bar being raised!

Red bars are non-GA events. Comparison events have been filtered to include those held within the USA since 2009 that are of like size (fewer than 5000 participants). Both corporate and association events are represented.

Total Event Sustainability Score Justice General Assembly 2012



MEETGREEN® CALCULATION

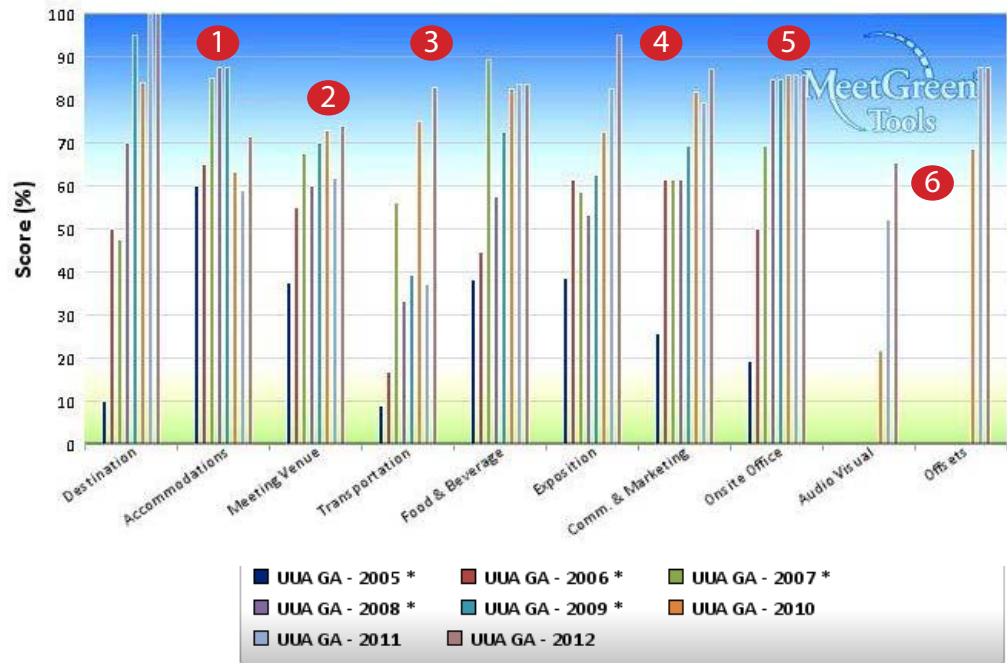
Event Category Score
Justice General Assembly 2012

1 Accommodations
This category became harder to score as highly in 2010, so although performance appears lower than in 2009, 2012 was a very successful year for GA in terms of improving local hotel practices. Specific improvements are described throughout this report. Progress can still be made to increase waste diversion, and energy and water tracking by hotels.

2 Venue
Venue practice from 2010-2012 has been very consistent. Phoenix stands apart from the previous two years solely on the basis of LEED certification and high waste diversion for this specific event. Strict idling guidelines, greywater recycling and improved renewable energy sourcing could improve scores here.

3 Transportation
Bus sourcing improved over 2011 as timelines allowed 'greener' attendee shuttles to be procured. Improvements could be earned by eliminating all shuttle transport or ensuring alternative fuel fleets are used. Promotion of car-share programs would also help.

4 Expositions
Heritage's work to confirm a sustainability policy and purchasing criteria helped improve this score. Increasing compliance with purchasing criteria by eliminating materials like vinyl could tip this category to 100%.



5 Onsite Office
This category could improve by ensuring office equipment is set to energy efficient modes. Ensuring all non-critical equipment are turned off at night would also increase this score.

6 Audio-visual
Improvements in AV scores are attributed to completion of a sustainable event policy by UUA. Actual practices by the AV company did not change, so this remains an opportunity for improvement.

ADVANCING BETTER BUYING BY PHOENIX HOTELS

Simple changes to purchasing decisions can dramatically reduce a hotel's environmental impact. Staff from MeetGreen® analyzed the operations of each of the hotels used for GA to ensure each property met the UUA's requirements for sustainability. As a result of this analysis, each of the hotels made changes to their supply chain to improve their operations:

The Hyatt Regency Phoenix already stocked toilet paper with 90-100% recycled content but when they looked at the facial tissue in guests' bathrooms, hotel staff realized that the box was recycled but that the tissue was not. The Hyatt's operations team did some research and decided to permanently switch to an alternative facial tissue that was softer, less expensive, FSC certified, and made from 20% post-consumer content.

When working with staff at the Renaissance Phoenix Downtown Hotel, MeetGreen® discovered the coffee cup used for the hotel's in-room coffee service was made of polystyrene, a material that is difficult to recycle. The Renaissance staff looked into other options and found a compostable cup, lid and sleeve all from EcoProducts (photo below). UUA attendees could bring this cup to the Phoenix Convention Center for composting, diverting the cup from the landfill.

A third example of sustainable purchasing comes from the Arizona State University dorm at Taylor Place. Normally, Taylor Place orders linens from a company that delivers sheet sets that come wrapped in plastic so that Taylor Place staff can quickly deliver a complete set to each guest room. Taylor Place requested their vendor change the way they packaged the linens for GA and had guests pick them up at check-in, eliminating a considerable amount of unnecessary plastic packaging from the waste stream.



In addition to the above, all three hotels agreed to offset total carbon emissions resulting from the energy used in all GA guest rooms at their property. This is a first for the event which has struggled to negotiate purchase of renewable energy by hotels. Carbon offsets were purchased and verified through the Carbon Fund.

Principles at work in event planning

APEX-ASTM ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE EVENT STANDARD

The APEX-ASTM Environmentally Sustainable Event Standard is a performance-based standard for event sustainability. Unlike a process standard, it identifies very specific technical requirements all events must meet. It is therefore more aligned with the “green checklist” approach many organizations have adopted.

The Standard has 392 requirements in eight of nine different event sectors. Each sector has requirements for the planner and supplier. In order to comply an event must meet 100% of requirements in all sectors for all parties. An event may meet Level 1, 2, 3, or 4 performance.

This analysis considers compliance with applicable Level 1 requirements only. Detailed requirements for each area can be provided.

Eight of the nine sector standards have passed, with Accommodations still pending approval. Certain required items are open to interpretation. Based on this preliminary analysis the Justice General Assembly was compliant with 81% of all requirements.

SECTOR	NUMBER OF REQUIREMENTS IN LEVEL I OF THE STANDARD		NUMBER OF REQUIREMENTS MET OR DEEMED NON-APPLICABLE	
DESTINATION	Planner	17	Planner:	17 / 100%
	Supplier (CVB):	13	Supplier (CVB):	5 / 38%
	Host City:	11	Host City:	10 / 91%
ACCOMMODATION	Planner:	Not available	Planner:	Not available
	Supplier:	Not available	Supplier:	Not available
VENUES	Planner:	22	Planner:	20 / 91%
	Supplier:	38	Supplier:	32 / 84%
FOOD & BEVERAGE	Planner:	36	Planner:	33 / 92%
	Supplier:	39	Supplier:	32 / 82%
EXHIBITS	Planner:	24	Planner:	23 / 96%
	Supplier:	18	Supplier:	17 / 94%
	Exhibitors:	13	Exhibitors:	13 / 100%
TRANSPORTATION	Planner:	20	Planner:	20 / 100%
	Supplier:	21	Supplier:	12 / 57%
ONSITE OFFICE	Planner:	29	Planner:	28 / 97%
	Supplier:	13	Supplier:	13 / 100%
COMMUNICATION	Planner:	22	Planner:	16 / 73%
	Supplier:	22	Supplier:	9 / 41%
AUDIO VISUAL	Planner:	15	Planner:	12 / 80%
	Supplier:	19	Supplier:	7 / 53%

ATTENDEE FEEDBACK & ENGAGEMENT

FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

UUA PROVIDES A STATION IN THE EXHIBIT HALL FOR GA ATTENDEES TO COMMENT ON THEIR EXPERIENCE. AN ONLINE EVALUATION IS ALSO CONDUCTED POST-EVENT. BOTH PROVIDE QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK ON SUSTAINABILITY.

83% of attendees rated event greening efforts as "excellent" or "very good". Areas receiving critical comment included confusion about how to recycle, inconsistency in 'green' practices by hotels, use of excessive handouts and air conditioning, and lack of food options that support Ethical Eating. These comments are factored into recommendations that follow.

TAKING INITIATIVE

MANY UU'S "JUMP IN" ONSITE TO SUPPORT GA'S SUSTAINABILITY POLICY. IN ADDITION TO INVOLVING THE PLANNING COMMITTEE IN AUDITING THEIR GUEST ROOMS, COMMITTEE MEMBERS ALSO CREATE THEIR OWN PROGRAMS, LIKE A BOX REUSE PROGRAM THAT OPERATES OUT OF REGISTRATION (PHOTO, LEFT).

"Per the housekeeper, Matilde, our group is the first one to use the recycle bags. She liked it/appreciated it. She said everyone used them and that it was a real time saver for her... very easy to deal with."
Hotel survey submission from Phoenix Hyatt by Volunteer Committee member Karen Araujo

YOUTH EDUCATION

IN ADDITION TO MANAGING SUSTAINABILITY ONSITE, MEETGREEN AND GLOBAL GREEN INTEGRATORS EDUCATE NEW ATTENDEES, VOLUNTEERS AND YOUTH ABOUT "GREEN" EVENT PRACTICES

"Thank you for teaching us about sustainability at GA! We enjoyed seeing how the waste system at GA works and we liked seeing the trash weighed!"
Justice Campers (photo, left)



WHAT'S THE EXHIBIT HALL MADE OF?



UUA has a long-standing partnership with Heritage Exposition Services to provide materials and set-up for the Exhibit Hall. This year Heritage developed a sustainability policy and procurement criteria for their business in response to a direct request from UUA. Many of the changes under this policy are invisible to GA participants. For example, all carpeting is made from more durable, 25% post-industrial content and is in its third year of re-use. The photo to the top right includes trim pieces that could not be salvaged, representing a mere 2% of carpet. Carpet reuse not only presents significant environmental benefits by reducing manufacturing footprints, it also means Heritage can eliminate visqueen, a wasteful plastic film that many trade shows using new carpet employ to protect carpet from damage. Carpet padding also includes recycled content and furnishings, booth panels, drape and framing are all collected for reuse. Heritage staff and local labor also worked with Global Green Integrators to collect 221 pounds of film plastics like shrink wrap and tabletop material for recycling locally.



Exhibitors are also requested to follow "green" guidelines which are communicated in their kits and at check-in onsite. Kits also highlight rental options from Heritage that are more sustainable if exhibitors need anything beyond their basic booth. Exhibitors are requested to report the extent to which they integrate sustainability into their booths using a checklist provided in the kit. They receive a promotional benefit if they return this checklist to UUA organizers. This year staff turnover led to a drop in checklists received to 5 from 17 previously, representing 8% of exhibitors. Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth (photo, lower right) was selected to receive a free advertisement in the GA program as the exhibitor meeting the highest number of guidelines.

Principles at work in event planning

Part 04

What we will try next time

ENGAGE SATELLITE EVENT ORGANIZERS

In addition to 'the main event', UUA partners often hold other events before and during GA. These events are not organized by UUA's conference services department. They are therefore not subject to the same sustainability requirements as GA. For example, this year a boxed lunch program for Ministry Days created waste management challenges. Not only had the boxed lunch not been screened for compostability, but it also was not included in the event waste plan early enough to arrange labor and equipment to ensure materials were diverted from the landfill. Inclusion of Youth Ministry in any activities done for young adults would also be advised as participants in this program took it upon themselves to attempt to compost without knowledge of what was technically compostable, leading to contamination issues and confusion by attendees. Education and communication about sustainability considerations must be improved for planners of these and other events. Organizers of these events should also be provided with a timeline to confirm plans that impact waste management and sourcing.

COMMUNICATE PRINT QUANTITIES TO EXHIBITORS

Exhibit hall waste was determined to be a key contributor to not achieving waste goals in 2011. As a result monitoring and sorting of materials left behind in the exhibit hall was stepped up in 2012. Still, several exhibitors abandoned significant quantities of waste, primarily paper, which was noted by attendees in evaluations and all of which was photographed. UUA is encouraged to provide suggestions to exhibitors to prevent over-printing, and consider penalties for exhibitors who leave materials behind for disposal in future.

INVITE SPONSORSHIP FOR WASTE MANAGEMENT

Increased staffing and equipment were primary contributors to improving waste diversion this year. Staff supervision increased from one person to two supervisors and two roving staff at any one time. This represents a significant increase in paid people power. In addition, more volunteers were used and stations were added to historical counts. Although this enabled the best event diversion ever, it is a difficult act to follow without a permanent increase in annual investment in waste management for the event. UUA could create a sponsorship package to expand the historical waste management program to the level achieved in Phoenix.

HOLD A RECYCLING BANNER DESIGN CONTEST

Related to the above, waste management stations could benefit from improved signage. This could prevent some of the confusion about how to recycle, which attendees report in their evaluations. This is an extra cost and has to be changed each year typically. One idea may be to integrate a signage contest into the sponsorship package described above that invites congregations to get creative in how stations are identified. The cost should also integrate tactile signage that can display samples at each station, which was essential this year given the extremely complicated stream. This could also be left in the host community as a legacy of the event for use by other planners.

REVISE ATTENDEE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Much of the feedback about sustainability at GA has been qualitative. This is helpful, but does not give organizers a clear idea if how material issues are, or how widespread concern might be. It also does not give a structured way to know if sustainability decisions impact the attendee experience. More attention might be paid to this in future to know if organizers are hitting the right notes.

IMPROVE FOOD LABOR RESEARCH

The best way to influence food sourcing for an event is to contract for a lot of it. In addition event planners should be prepared to pay a little extra as convention center caterers typically upcharge for food that meets sustainability criteria. It's an unfortunate reality. UUA is challenged to significantly influence food sourcing for GA as the event does not have many contracted or catered functions. In addition, attendees have very sensitive price points for retail concessions that make up the bulk of food service. While UUA can require information about sourcing be shared post-event for exhibit hall food lines which are specially arranged, concessionaires are not willing to provide detailed information on their supply chains as it takes too much time and they are not required to under their agreements. Transparency is desired by attendees, therefore UUA should continue to ask and require disclosure, even if it is slow in coming.

RETAIN A FOOD SUSTAINABILITY SPONSOR

Given the situation above, an opportunity may exist for a sponsor to promote more sustainable food at GA. With sufficient planning time to develop and package option, UUA could brand and incentivize special, sustainable meal features at the event. This could work in a variety of ways, and might include provision of a performance-based incentive to concessions to research, create and market a special sustainable meal feature during the event.



Food donation station, Aventura

EATING MORE ETHICALLY

At the 2011 GA in Charlotte, NC, UUA delegates approved an "Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice Statement of Conscience". The Statement is comprehensive, calling UU's to strive to choose foods that minimize harm and are protective of the environment, consumers, farmers, and all those involved in food production and distribution. These are new and challenging things to consider at events, especially when planners have little knowledge of caterer supply chains beyond ordering what may be listed on a generic menu. Where does our food at GA come from? How is it cultivated? Is farm labor able to work in a safe and healthy environment? Are livestock treated humanely? Do purveyors support local food systems?

GA planners use their influence to advance awareness and action on food issues. UUA's influence is most felt in the exhibit hall and for a handful of catered functions where UUA contracts for food service. In contrast, UUA cannot require compliance by on-site third-party retail concessions that provide the majority of food to UUA participants.



Aventura, the caterer at the PCC, was informed of UUA's Statement and provided a copy to read. They were asked to be mindful of these issues and specifically prioritize use of local and regional purveyors who adopt sustainable approaches. They were also requested to provide information about labor conditions, a request that proved difficult to complete when Aventura polled their own supply chain about this issue. Organizers were able to confirm that several local farms in Arizona were used: Santa Rose, Pinto Creek, Rosseau and Sarah Farms (photo left). This amounted to 17% of menu ingredients used in the exhibit hall Marketplace. 49% of ingredients for the Marketplace were sourced within a 650 mile radius that extended to California and Nevada and suppliers such as Church Brothers and Irigoyen Farms.

Principles at work in event planning

CONTACT

The Unitarian Universalist Association is proud to publish this annual report of our activities. We welcome your questions in hopes of improving our 2013 update:

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