



# ICCA Congress 2019

## Sustainability Report



International Congress and Convention Association  
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# WELCOME

## REGISTRATION HOURS:

Saturday, October 26	10:00 - 17:00
Sunday, October 27	8:00 - 18:00
Monday, October 28	8:30 - 17:30
Tuesday, October 29	8:30 - 17:00
Wednesday, October 30	8:30 - 14:30





# ICCA 2019 Congress Overview

Meetings industry professionals from across the globe descended on Houston, Texas, U.S.A. during 27-30 October 2019, for the 58th ICCA Congress, one of the most prestigious events in the international association meetings industry's annual calendar.

With almost 1,000 senior meetings industry professionals and association meeting planners from 75 countries in attendance, the International Congress and Convention Association's 2019 Congress is the largest ever held in the North American region.

ICCA delegates experienced a world-class, custom-designed education programme, knowledge and business exchange, networking opportunities with senior meetings industry professionals and association executives from all industry sectors.





# Sustainability Approach





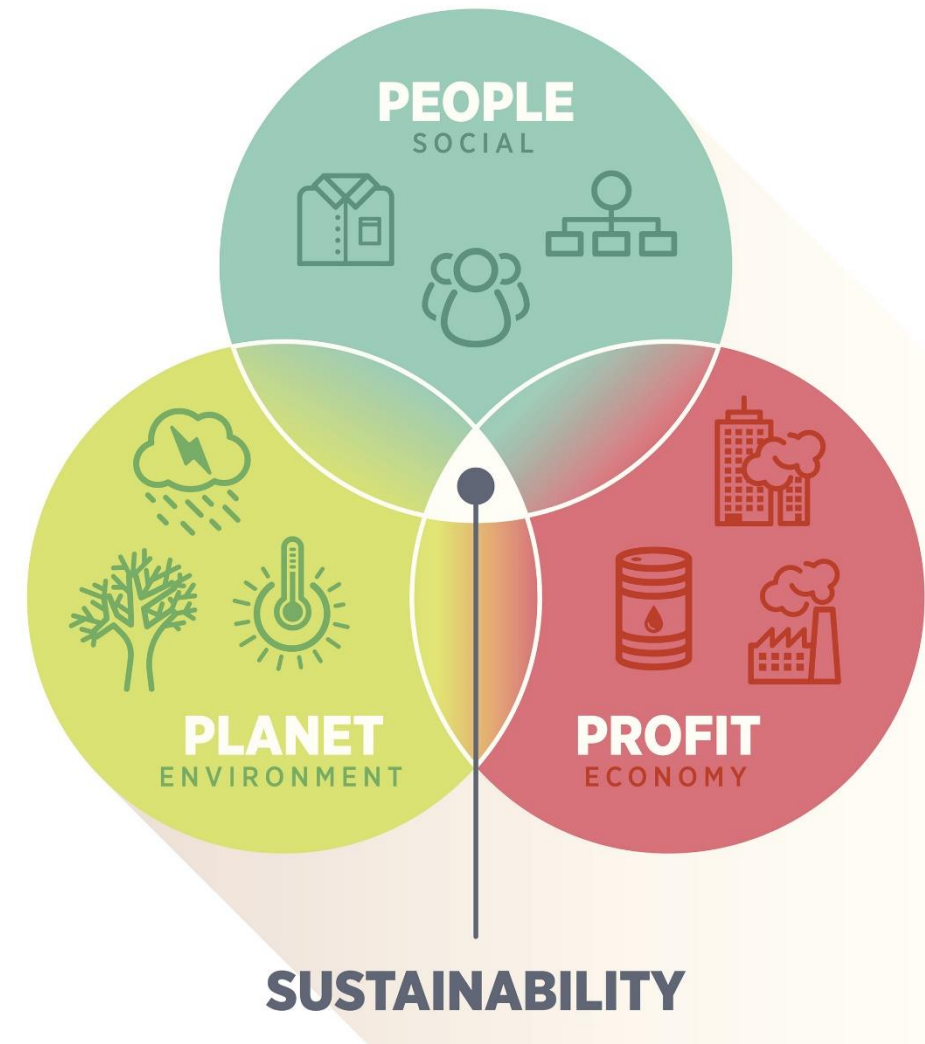
# Why should ICCA have a sustainability program?

## FOOTPRINT and HANDPRINT

Events can have a significant environmental **footprint** from carbon emissions, waste and resource usage

They can also have a significant **HANDPRINT** by contributing to environmental, social and economic development of the community.

*Our responsibility is to plan, manage and improve both the negative and positive impacts of our events.*



# Sustainability Issues

As part of the planning process, we reached and engaged our key suppliers and stakeholders in dialogue about the sustainability impact of our event.

We identified the following issues:

- Reducing waste and recycling.
- Increasing sustainability of the food offerings.
- Supporting local communities & businesses.
- Measuring carbon emissions.
- Improving communications to delegates about sustainability.
- Promoting the use of shared transportation.
- Additional and reduced costs.





# Objectives

Based on our sustainability issues assessment, we developed the following objectives for the 2019 Congress:

1. Measure and report on the environmental, social and economic impact of the Congress
2. Use the SDGs to assess, identify and implement a performance improvement action plan
3. Improve the sustainability knowledge and skills of our team
4. Raise awareness of our event participants about sustainability



# Commitment and Process

DESTINATION

VENUE

ACCOMMODATION

FOOD AND  
BEVERAGE

TRANSPORTATION

The ICCA Event team in combination with our agency MCI, and local partners focused on improving the environmental and social sustainability of 10 key areas of the congress.

BACKOFFICE &  
AGENCIES

PRODUCTION  
CONSTRUCTION, IT, AUDIOVISUALS,  
EXHIBITS

MARKETING &  
COMMUNICATIONS

ENERGY & OFFSETS

COMMUNITY  
OUTREACH

Builds upon APEX Environmental Sustainability Event Standard covering all major areas of meeting production



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# UN's Sustainable Development Goals

Working with MCI, we decided to use the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), as a filter to help us brainstorm and then create our sustainability action plan.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



# What were our goals?

## 1 NO POVERTY



Partner with charity "Start of Hope"  
Make a donation from ICCA and raise funds by 5k run.

## 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Design a walkable Congress.  
Organise a Mindfulness Lounge.  
Organise a Monday Morning 5k Run and Morning Yoga.  
Provide more healthy menu choices including a Meatless Lunch

## 4 QUALITY EDUCATION



Provide specific content on sustainability in partnership with GDS-Index and Incredible Impacts.  
Organise a University program.  
Organise Technical Tours (ie. Cancer Center, Space Port).

## 5 GENDER EQUALITY



Improve and manage diversity of Speakers (gender balance; cultural background).

## 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



Best Cities Alliance promoted "Incredible Impact" project.

## 9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



Integrate innovation firmly into Congress theme and programme

## 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



Provide mobility scooters

## 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



Replace name badge with no plastic holder.  
Reduce single use plastic and eliminate plastic water bottles  
Switch to use biodegradable cups for water stations  
Eliminate almost all paper through Mobile Event App



# What were our goals

## 13 CLIMATE ACTION



Lower Emissions by offering airport shuttles. Group transportation for tours. Organise a walkable congress.

## 14 LIFE BELOW WATER



Ask Marriott & Hilton: to source sustainable seafood

## 15 LIFE ON LAND



Select vendors with sustainable Waste Management programs.  
Use reusable and biodegradable cups.

Improve recycling bins & composting toilet facilities for Halloween night.

Minimize Set and stage design and wastage.

## 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



Raise awareness about the SDGs, and the importance of collaborating for sustainability through keynote and sessions

# Performance Review

How did we do?





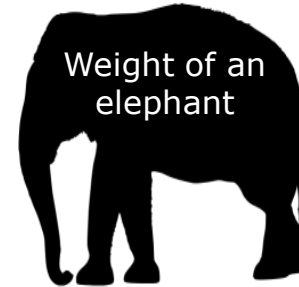
# Impact Summary

Taking a sustainability approach we made important steps to improve the social, environmental and economic performance of the Congress.

## Waste

Produced **4.3** metric tons of waste.

**53%** was diverted from landfill



Weight of an elephant

## Community Development

Donated **\$5k** to community projects in the US



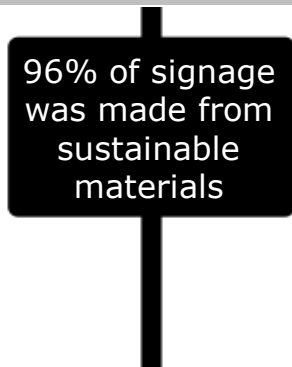
Supported Star of Hope

## Plastics

Eliminated **99%** of plastic water bottles

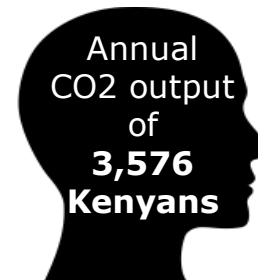
**91%** of all serviceware was reusable.

96% of signage was made from sustainable materials



## Carbon Emissions

Produced **1,430** Metric Tons of carbon emissions



Annual CO2 output of **3,576** Kenyans

## Local Economic Development

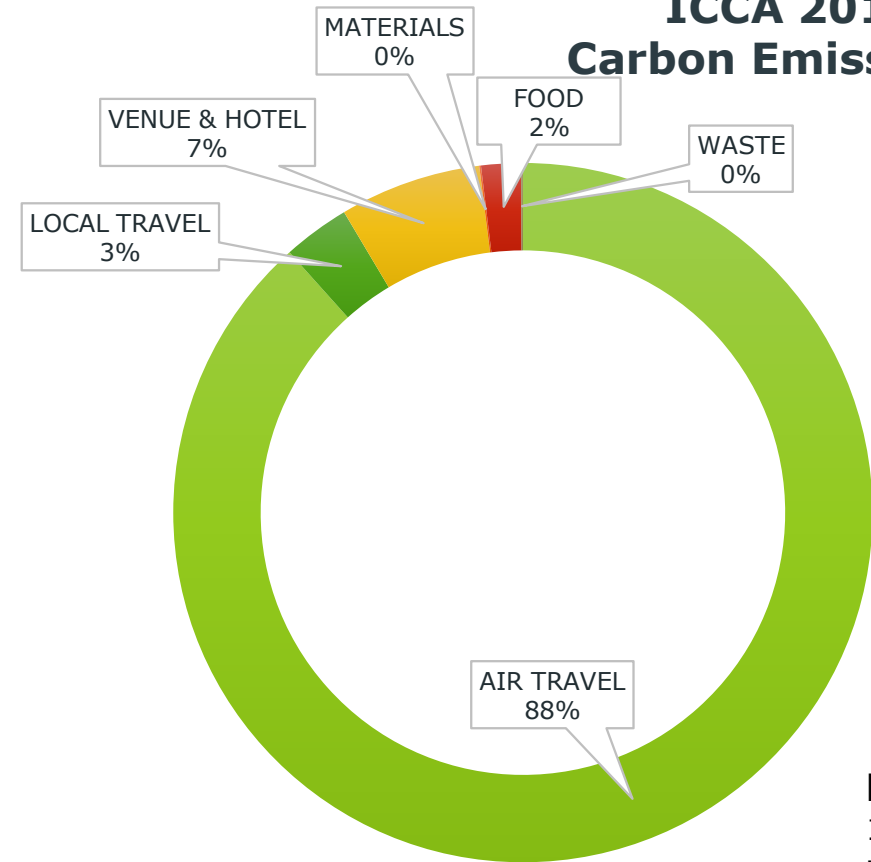
Sourced **30%** of food locally, on average



i.e., within **160km**

# Carbon Emissions

## ICCA 2019 Congress Carbon Emissions (Mt CO<sub>2</sub>e)



Category	Carbon Emissions Mt CO <sub>2</sub> e
AIR TRAVEL	1,264
LOCAL TRAVEL	44
VENUE & HOTEL	94
MATERIALS	1
FOOD	26
WASTE	1
TOTAL	1,430

### But how much carbon is this?

1439 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e is equivalent to the annual carbon emission of 89 people living in the US, or 151 living in the Netherlands, or a staggering 3,576 people living in Kenya. Or it is the equivalent of driving an mid-size car around the world 122 times.

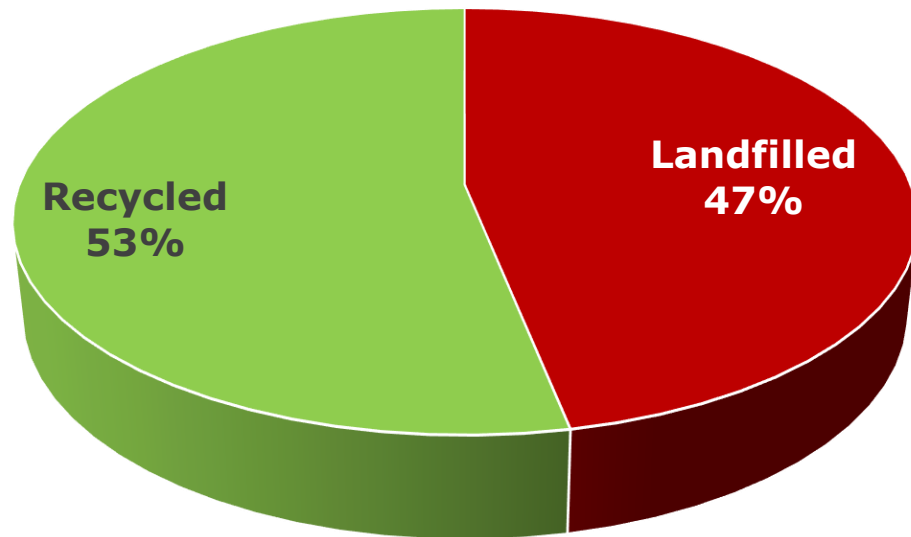




# Waste

**We estimate that we produced approximately 4.2 Metric Tonnes of waste. That 4.2kg per person. We recycled approximately 53% of all our waste.**

For this Congress, we were unable to obtain in depth details on our waste generation and management. We have learnt that this requirement needs to be included in our supplier contracts, and explained very early on in our project management meetings





# Key Successes





# Venue Selection

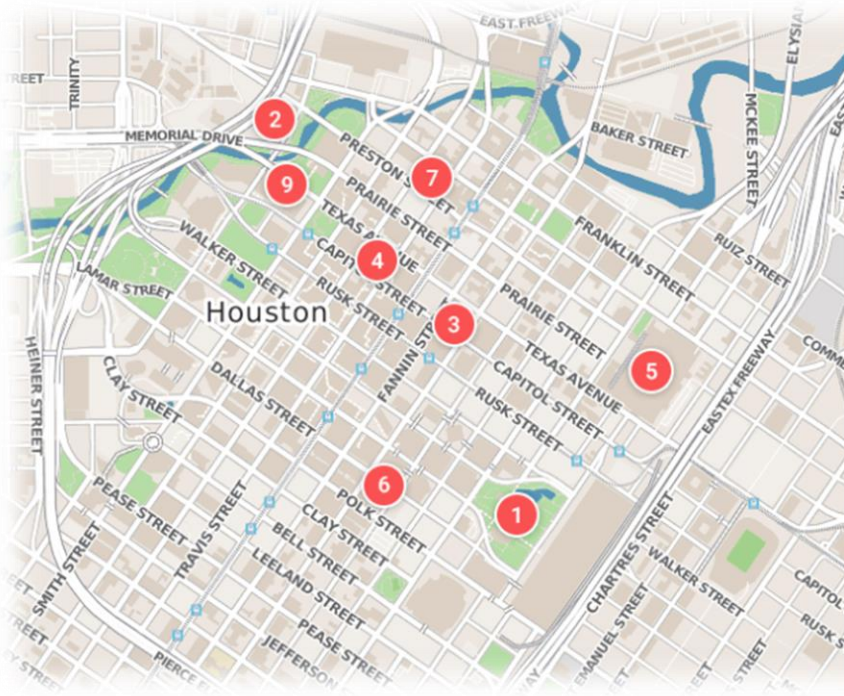
ICCA Congress 2019 was held at the Marriott Marquis Houston. The venue has a solid commitment to sustainability. Some of the sustainable features and initiatives the Marriott Marquis Houston promotes includes:

- Linen-less tables are used for some classroom set up.
- Sensors in all Meeting Space for lights to turn off/on.
- Water Stations throughout meeting and public spaces.
- Eliminating pads of paper from Conference/Classroom Sets.
- Electronic Request Center for internal requests such as Air Conditioning in Meeting Space.



# How did we reduce carbon emissions

## - A walkable congress



### Houston Texas

1. Discovery Green
2. Downtown Aquarium
3. Houston Tunnels
4. JPMorgan Chase Tower
5. Minute Maid Park
6. House of Blues
7. Old Market Square
8. Menil Collection
9. Hard Rock Cafe
10. Capilla Rothko

The venue for the Congress and all hotels were contracted in the heart of downtown Houston.

All side events and social functions were organized within walking distance.

We only used one bus for internal transfers during the Congress. All other transfers during the event were by foot.

49% of attendees used the shuttle to get to/from the airport



# How did we reduce waste?



Separated and recycled waste during the event.



100% of cups were compostable and biodegradable.



MiCo-Milano Convention Centre provided reusable water bottles for attendees

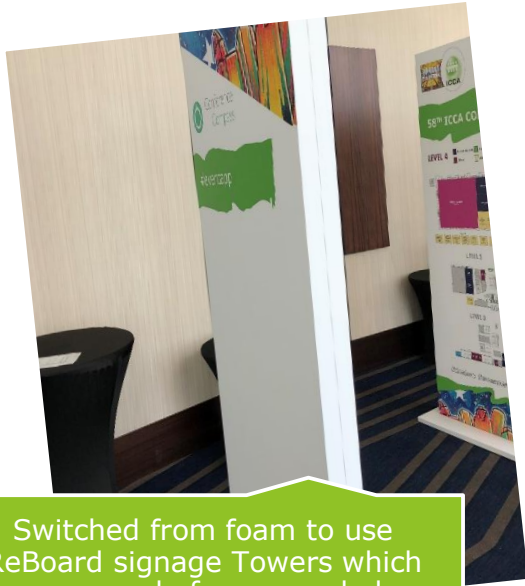


Water stations were installed throughout the Congress

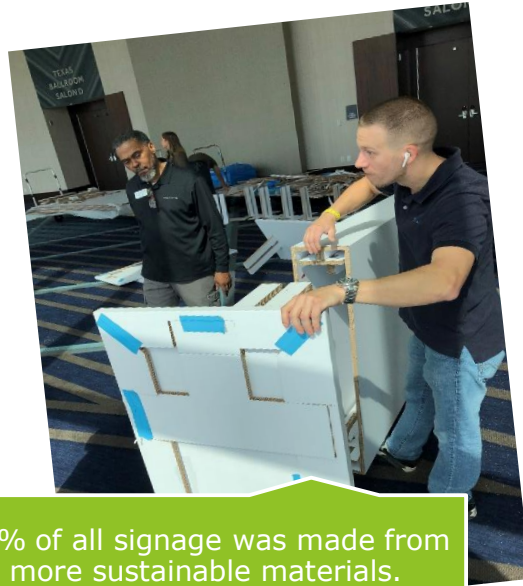


Plastic straws were replaced with corn based straws in the coffee breaks stations.

# How did we reduce waste?



Switched from foam to use ReBoard signage Towers which were made from recycled cardboard



96% of all signage was made from more sustainable materials.  
84% of all signage was recycled.



Switched from PVC signage to use reusable signage bases with paper inserts. The signage base was reused multiple times and reduced printing.



70% of signage was electronic



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# How did we make the food more sustainable and healthy?

Fresh, local, organic, seasonal and sustainably sourced food (FLOSS) was an important aspect of the Congress.



As a sign of their commitment to sustainability, IMEX generously sponsored a Meatless Lunch.

By eliminating meat from the menú, 1,024,200 liters of water and 1,890 kg of CO2 were saved. That's the equivalent to taking a car off the road for 4,725 miles)

The menu card was made by seed paper.



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# How did we make the food more sustainable?



30% of food was sourced within 100miles



35% of all food served was vegetarian



91% of all serviceware was reusable.



98% of food condiments were served in bulk



99% of plastic water bottles eliminated



9% of serviceware was single use, made from compostable materials. We could not validate if this was properly composted



# Mindfulness Lounge

An holistic approach where attendees found wellness by connecting mind & body, with carefully curated human-centric mini sessions. Quiet noise levels, healthy refreshments & cozy seating all worked together to inspire mindful rejuvenation & conversations.



# Moving conversations

Physical activity has been known to enhance basic cognitive functions related to attention and memory facilitated learning. We were pleased with the turnout of our 'Moving Conversation' where attendees had an opportunity to join an education session by stepping outside and riding a 14 passenger party bike.





# Participant Engagement



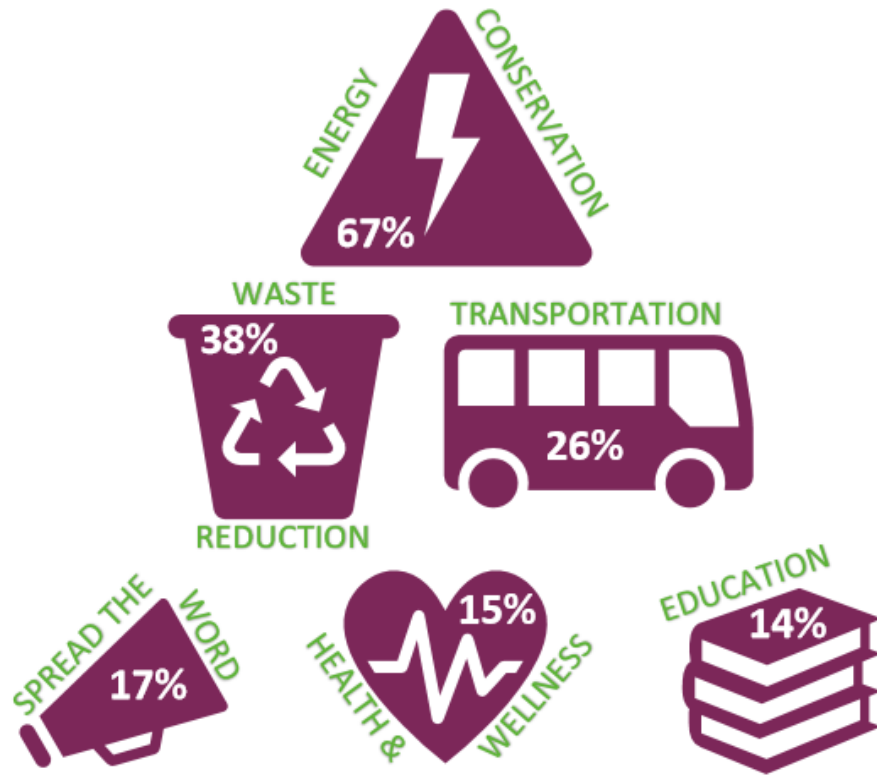
Delegates were asked to complete a sustainable checklist in the Congress App to rate their participation in the sustainability services provided during the congress.



5K Fun Run/Walk benefiting the Star of Hope Charity. This was a leisurely, run or walk around the beautiful Discovery Green Park.

# Participant Engagement

Attendees were invited to pledge their commitments to make the Congress more sustainable. Over 800 commitments were received during the event via a Mobile App, that was developed by MCI, and generously sponsored by Dubai Business Events.



**578**  
PAGE  
VIEWS

**878**  
EFFORTS  
MADE

Made possible by:

**DUBAI**  
Dubai Business Events



# Community Impact



Our chosen Congress cause was Star of Hope; a local charity who work with the homeless in Houston



We donated \$5000 to The Star of Hope



With a commitment to develop future industry leaders, we provided scholarships to support 16 students to attend the Congress.

*The congress attendees donated clothes and participated in a sponsored 5k fun run/walk!*



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# Key Learnings and Recommendations





# V. Key learnings & recommendations

Whilst we are proud of our achievements, we realise that sustainability is an ongoing process and journey. Our advisers – the GDS-Index have identified the following points that require attention to improve performance for future events:

## ► Planning

- Strategy: Sustainability should be included in RFPs from the first moment of planning the congress. Sustainability goals and policy needs to be clearly communicated to the host community
- Early integration of sustainability into contract language is important to ensure agreement, understanding and good performance of key suppliers. We struggled with waste management of one of our key suppliers.
- Contracts must require suppliers to provide sustainability measurement data within two weeks after the event.
- Green Team: Building a green team consisting of ICCA and key event partners can help to co-create the Congress sustainability strategy and support each other with the implementation challenges, and to celebrate successes.

## ► Production

- 4% of signage was made from PVC. 16% went to landfill. Efforts can be made to fully eliminate PVC and ensure zero waste goes to landfill



# V. Key learnings & recommendations

## ► Agency / Event Team

- Involve the suppliers sustainability lead as soon as possible
- Better integration of sustainability team in planning calls would have helped achieve more.

## ► Delegate Engagement

- Communication of sustainability could be stronger on-site, such as at the catering areas for the food story and coffee breaks (corn based straws).
- Follow up sustainability communications after the event to ensure continuous interest.
- Ask attendees to donate badge lanyards at the end of the event.
- Ask attendees to donate hats, bandanas, t-shirts and any material given during the event (ie CAT night).

## ► Food and Beverage

- Many delegates disposed of the compostable utensils in the recycle bin instead of the compost bin. Clearer instructions should be given in future, such as an MC announcement, better signage on display near the utensils and recycling bins.
- The sustainability story of the food served could be told in a more compelling way, explaining which farm/area the food is from rather than just with a "Vegetarian" or "Gluten Free" label.
- When serving vegetarian food, we must ensure the menu is delicious, creative and enticing.





# V. Key learnings & recommendations

## ► Communication Coherency

- We need to ensure consistency in our messages to delegates. At times we communicated about sustainability, and then minutes later we had activities that incorporated single use plastic items. This could have been improved with clearly communication with our sponsors and guidelines on sustainability.



Plastic hands were used as part an activity during the Congress.



We need to communicate our sustainability policy with our sponsors so that they are aligned with the sustainability practices.



Gallons of water were wasted because the hotel pre-served water on all the tables.



Many Balloons were used at Cat Night.



At the first evening, we employed a lot of single use items on the tables.



When the biodegradable cups were finished, the hotel used a non-biodegradable option.



# Event Impact Data





Impacts	KPI	Value
<b>ECONOMIC</b>		
Participation	Number of attendees	1,000
<b>SOCIAL</b>		
Stakeholder engagement	Suppliers signing sustainability clauses in contract	0%
	Number of key suppliers evaluated for sustainability	3
Health and quality of air	Space designated smoke free in venue	100%
	Percentage of venues assessed for Health and Safety	100%
	Number of injuries and incidents	0
Accessibility	Hotels and venues with accessibility programme	100%
Community Action	Donations of cash or in-kind	\$5000
	Number of charities and NGOs supported	1
<b>Impacts</b>	<b>KPI</b>	<b>Data</b>
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL</b>		
GHG emissions	Total Carbon footprint (tonnes co2 equivalents)	1,430
	Flight Emissions (tonnes co2e)	1,264
	Local Transport (tonnes co2)	44
	Hotel and venue (tonnes co2)	94
	Exhibition (tonnes co2e)	1
	Food and paper emissions (tonnes co2e)	26
	Waste (tonnes co2e)	1
	Emissions per delegate (tonnes co2e)	1.43
Energy	Total electricity consumed (kwh).	Not Measured
	Total gas consumed (kwh).	Not Measured
	Total energy consumed for district heating (kwh)	Not Measured
Water	Total water used (m³)	Not Measured
Paper and materials usage	Approx. sheets of A4/letter paper used for printing (KG)	1,250
	Signage and banners (M²)	1,220
	% of production made from Eco Substrates	96%
	% of production materials reused	84%
	Carpet used for event (KG)	0
	Carpet landfilled/incinerated through event (KG )	0
	Badges recollected	None
<b>Impacts</b>	<b>KPI</b>	<b>Data</b>
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL</b>		
Waste management	Total waste from event (Mt)	4.25
	Incinerated (Mt)	0.00
	Landfilled (Mt)	1.99
	Recycled (Mt)	2.26
	Diversion rate from Landfill	53%
	Total waste per event participant (kg)	4.25
Food	Number meals served	9,000
	Percentage local (<160km) food sourced for meals	30%
	Percent organic food sourced for meals	0%
	Percent vegetarian meals served	30%
	Responsibly sourced seafood	60%
	Plastic water bottles used and disposed of in event	0
	Condiments served in bulk containers	100%

# Event Impact Data Tables

**This was our first year of measuring impacts. For various reasons, we were not able to collect reliable data for all aspects. Consequently we estimated using industry averages/benchmarks.**

This introduces a potential for error. We estimate the confidence in the data as follows:

- Flights 90%
- Local transport 70%
- Accommodation 80%
- Food 80%
- Material Usage 80%
- Waste 50%
- Energy, waste, water not measured

In the future, we must better include measurement requirements into our RFP and contracts, and support our suppliers to provide this information in a timely fashion.

# VII. CREDITS

This report was prepared by GDS Index with valuable data and editorial support provided by the ICCA Team and suppliers.

Special thanks go to the Congress suppliers for their leadership stance in the hospitality industry and their commitment to sustainable practices – Visit Houston, MCI, Marriott Marquis Houston, Hilton Americas Houston, Four Seasons Hotel Houston, Freeman.

Pictures used in this report were provided by - Buller Photography  
[www.BullerPhotography.com](http://www.BullerPhotography.com)

## About GDS-INDEX



The GDS-Index benchmarks, creates and improves the sustainability strategy and performance of destinations, events and associations.

## Contact

In the interest of continual improvement, we welcome all ideas and comments on this report. Please address comments to:

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# THANK YOU



**Thank you to all our members and partners for helping us improve our social and environmental impacts. We have a long way to go but we can be proud of our initial efforts!**



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