



**LAS VEGAS**  
MANDALAY BAY

# IMEX AMERICA 2021 SUSTAINABLE EVENT REPORT



# THIS IS WHO WE ARE...

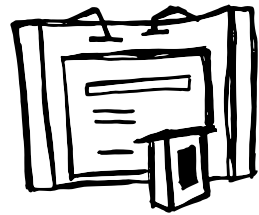
IMEX America is the biggest trade show in the United States for the global incentive travel, meetings and events industry. Suppliers and buyers from every sector of the meetings industry come together to do business at IMEX. It's free to attend, and our four-day program offers specialist education, networking, and much more, on and off the trade show floor.

Here's a quick glimpse of some key stats, before we jump into the details.



**8,605**

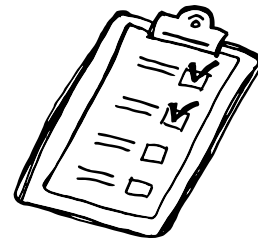
**PARTICIPANTS**



**2200**

**EXHIBITORS**

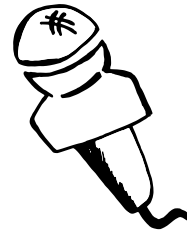
FROM 190 COUNTRIES



**2,656**

**HOSTED BUYERS**

FROM 49 COUNTRIES



**47**

**PRESS ATTENDEES**

FROM 7 COUNTRIES

# ...AND THIS IS WHAT WE STAND FOR

**Carina Bauer, CEO, IMEX Group**

"I'm delighted to share the results from this report. Alongside the challenges of planning and delivering a COVID safe event in 2021, we were also working for the first time with our new venue, the Mandalay Bay Convention Center, after 10 years at the Sands Expo. These factors make the results from this report even more exciting for our team.

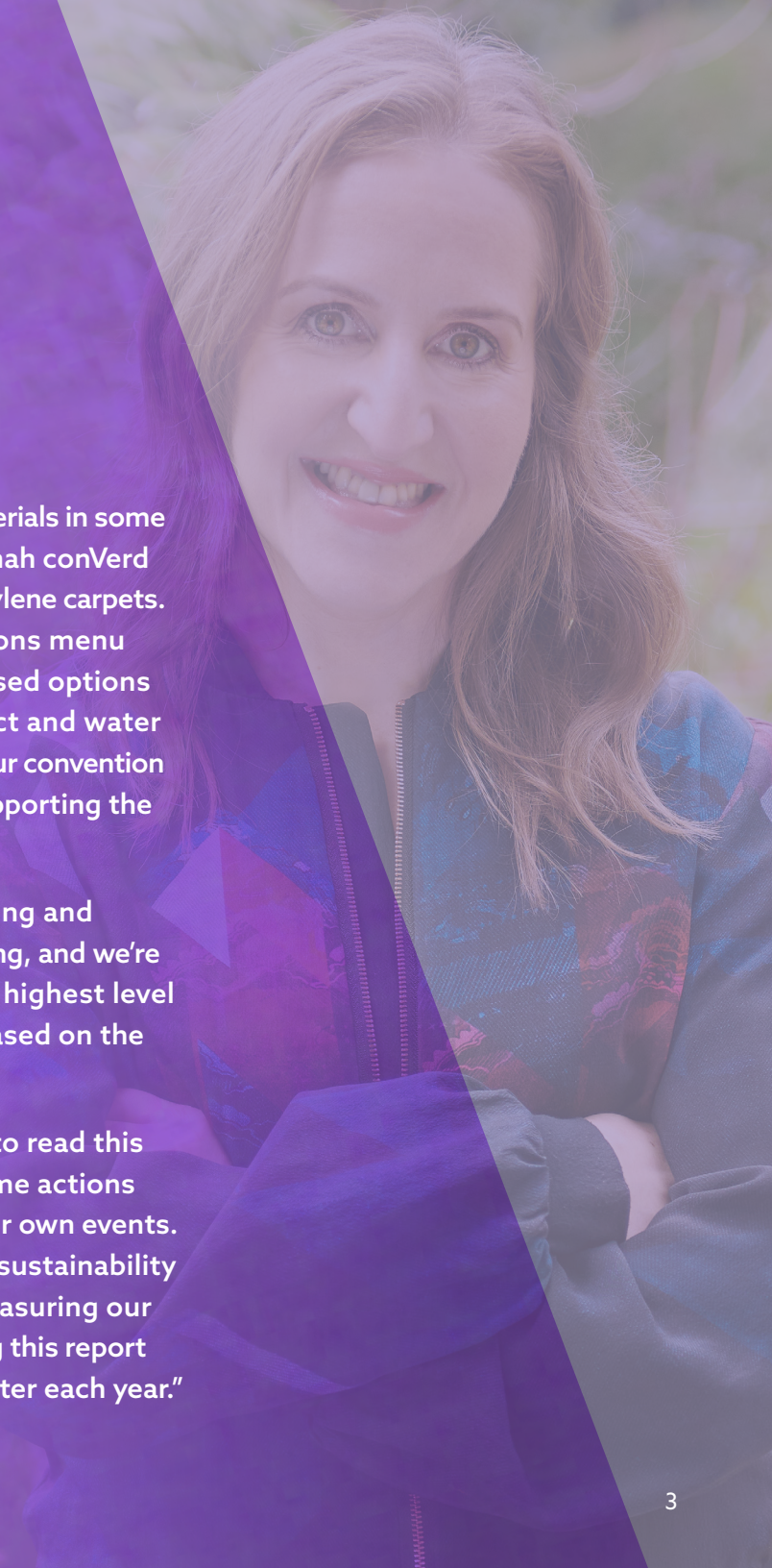
I'm so proud of everybody involved in making IMEX America 2021 a success and want to thank all of our brilliant suppliers, our hosts Mandalay Bay and of course everyone that attended. Your efforts made this one of the most sustainable events we've ever run.

Some highlights include our greatest landfill diversion rate to-date of 95%. This along with our recycling, composting and donation efforts meant we again reached the industry threshold for a zero-waste event. Efficiencies gained in carpet management led to only 1% of carpet being sent to landfill and the rest either returned to inventory or recycled.

We experimented with new materials in some areas of the show such as Neenah conVerd paperboard and 100% polypropylene carpets. Our waterwise, carbon emissions menu coding and expanded plant-based options helped to reduce carbon impact and water usage. We also offset 100% of our convention center carbon emissions by supporting the Tribal Renewable Energy Fund.

We undertake third party scoring and industry standards benchmarking, and we're thrilled to receive MeetGreen's highest level of achievement - Visionary - based on the MeetGreen Calculator 2.0.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report, I hope you discover some actions you can put into practice at your own events. And a special thank you to our sustainability consultants MeetGreen for measuring our sustainability efforts, preparing this report and for challenging us to do better each year."



# OUR SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

We strive not only to lead through best practices in sustainability and local community support, but also to inspire every member of our industry to maximize their efforts.

## WE'RE AIMING TO:

- **EDUCATE** attendees, exhibitors and hosted buyers about sustainable best practices
- Measure and decrease our show's **ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT**
- **GIVE BACK** to our destination communities
- Increase our **ALIGNMENT WITH SUSTAINABLE EVENT STANDARDS**

# SUSTAINABILITY LEGACY

"Nature" was the talking point for IMEX America 2021. After the unprecedented challenges faced by the events industry since our last in-person meeting in September 2019, the characteristics of resilience and recovery modeled by our natural world, seem to resonate more than ever this year. Wherever we look, Mother Nature inspires our event to operate with greater circularity, intention, and integration.

## IMEX AMERICA COUNTS:

537,120 kg

of show material recycled since 2012

108,607 kg

of organics composted since 2012

49,849 kg

of show material donated since 2012

702,090 kg

of combined material diverted since 2012

85%

average landfill diversion rate since 2012

6,512 kg

of food donated since 2012

12,276

badge lanyards collected and donated since 2013

5,758

Clean the World kits assembled since 2013

522

books donated to Spread the Word Nevada since 2017

# 2021 SUSTAINABILITY HIGHLIGHTS

**150,992** kWh

POWERED BY RENEWABLE SOLAR ENERGY  
GENERATED BY MGM RESORTS

**12,009**

PET PLASTIC WATER BOTTLES ELIMINATED THROUGH  
REUSE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE  
MATERIAL STRATEGIES

**95%**

LANDFILL DIVERSION RATE FOR  
CONVENTION CENTER ACTIVITIES

**254**

ATTENDEES ATTENDED ONE OF FOUR  
SHE MEANS BUSINESS SESSIONS

**143** kg

OF EVENT FOOD RECOVERED  
AND DONATED

**100%**

OF CONVENTION CENTER CARBON EMISSIONS OFFSET,  
NEUTRALIZING FOSSIL FUEL ENERGY, NATURAL GAS,  
AND GENERAL CONTRACTOR SERVICES SUPPORTING  
IMEX AMERICA ONSITE

**10,155** kg

OF EVENT FURNITURE AND MATERIALS  
DONATED TO LAS VEGAS  
COMMUNITY OUTLETS



## OUR VENUE AND SERVICE CONTRACTOR



**MGM RESORTS**  
INTERNATIONAL™

"MGM Resorts is proud to be collaborating with IMEX to help build IMEX America into a showcase for advanced sustainable event programming and practices. Events can serve as catalysts towards a more environmentally and socially sustainable future, and we believe IMEX America is helping do just that."

**Yalmaz Siddiqui, Former Vice President of Corporate Sustainability at MGM Resorts International**



"First and foremost, we are so thrilled that our partners IMEX America made the commitment to move forward with their annual event during such challenging times that were evolving weekly if not daily. IMEX along with GES have been committed to employing sustainable practices whenever possible and the recent contract extension announcement, exemplifies that commitment of our mutual efforts to continue to use sustainable products, while researching and investigating new best practices such as 100% recycled carpet that was tested in the "People and Planet Village" as well as reusable stretch fabric graphics in our FIT 3 display system."

**Rob Noble, Director of National Accounts, GES**

# EDUCATE

One of the most effective ways to advance innovation and positive impact in our events is through **stakeholder education, engagement, and inspiration** related to sustainability. See below for some of the ways IMEX America offered attendees the opportunity to learn more about sustainability best practices in their venue and during the event.

25

Attendees visited and toured the MGM Mega Solar Array

46

Attendees and 31 Booths signed the IMEX People & Planet Pledge

58

Student leaders participated in the Future Leader's Forum

60

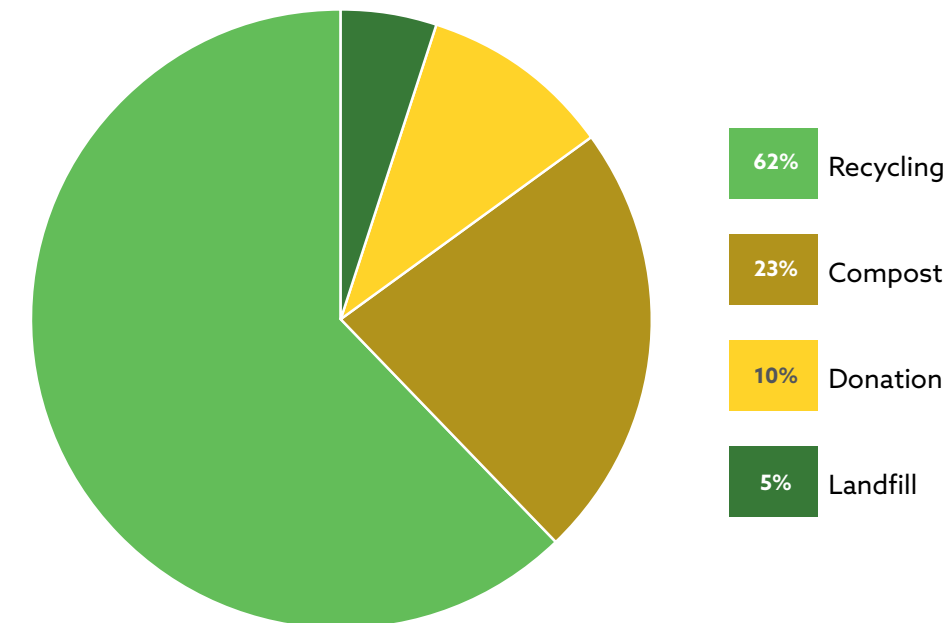
Attendees participated in Smart Monday Sustainability Tours



# SHOW WASTE

It takes a collective effort to reduce waste at IMEX America. This includes starting early in our planning process and an extraordinarily high degree of departmental collaboration.

While waste management is only one of many environmental footprint metrics IMEX America measures its performance against, it is perhaps the most direct expression of event departments and systems working together. For example, food & beverage service ware decisions, signage substrates, end use strategies, as well as supply chain decisions, all play a critical part in our event's waste reduction. IMEX America was excited to achieve a 95% diversion rate from landfill for event activities at Mandalay Bay Convention Center in 2021. Data below from MGM recycling and commodity reports for IMEX America 2021



95%

**LANDFILL DIVERSION RATE FOR 2021 CONVENTION CENTER ACTIVITIES**

**IMEX AMERICA 2021 MEETS THE INDUSTRY THRESHOLD FOR A ZERO WASTE EVENT!**

Landfill = 4,919kg

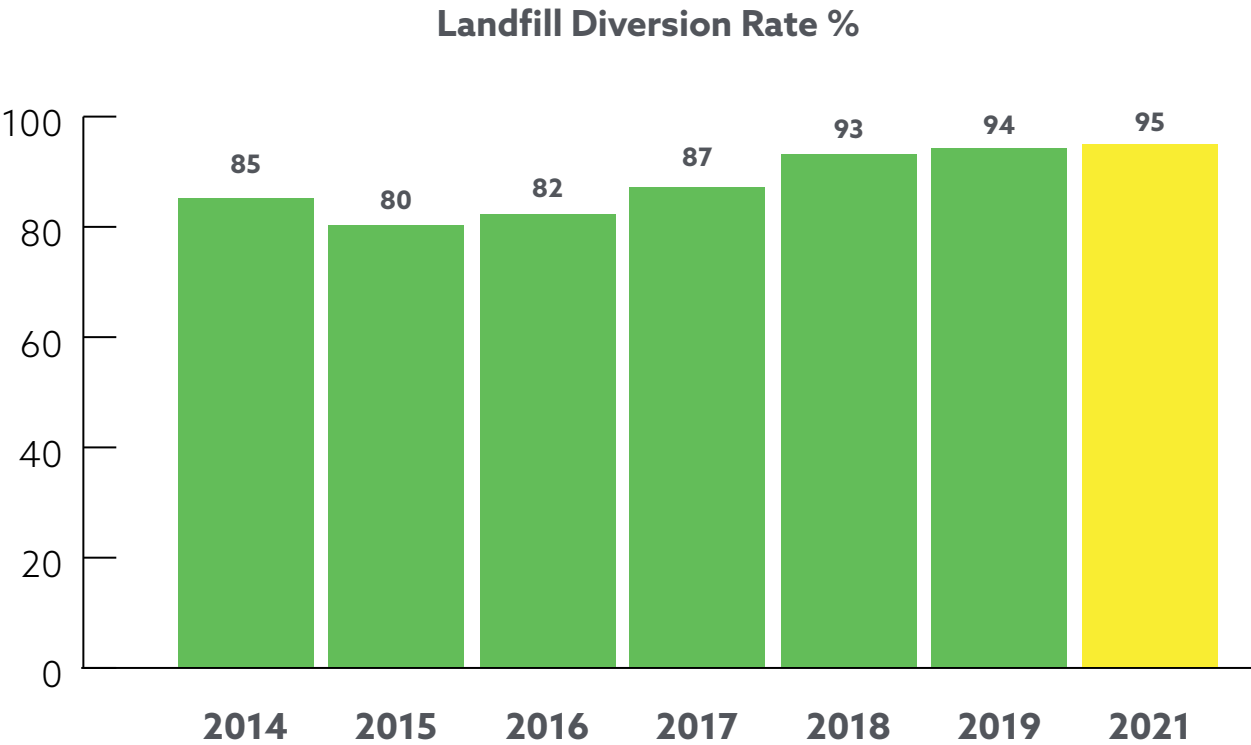
Compost = 24,204kg

Recycling = 64,763kg

Donations = 10,298kg

# SHOW WASTE

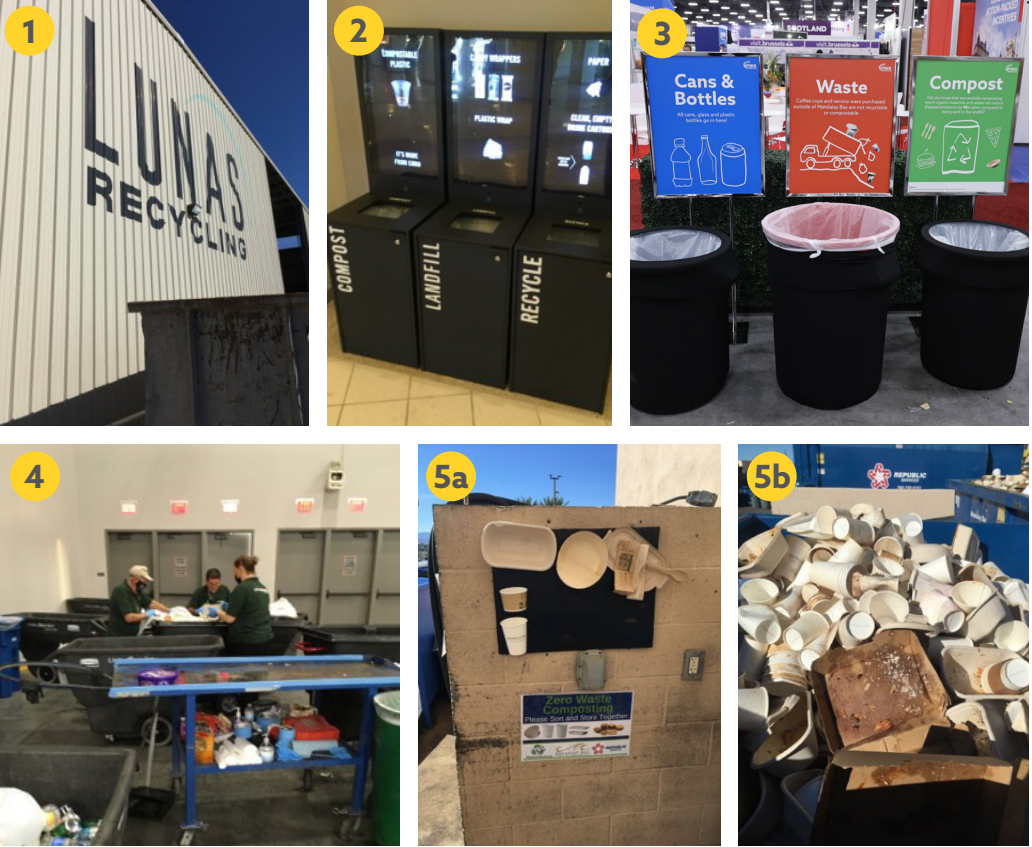
While rethinking and reuse are first-tier waste management objectives at IMEX America, see below for the top-five recovered & recycled material commodities at Mandalay Bay in 2021:



# SHOW WASTE

In addition to enrolling its suppliers and supply chain towards **reducing event waste**, IMEX America partners closely with the venue, its operational teams, and the Las Vegas recycling & composting infrastructure to help achieve its goals. See below for some of the ways IMEX America works to **collaborate**, **verify**, and **audit** its waste management efforts:

1. Site visit to Lunas Recycling to better understand recovery practices and more successfully integrate with local infrastructure
2. MGM Resorts piloted its brand-new “Evo Eco” three stream waste sorting & education bins
3. While Clark County, Nevada operates as a comingled single bin municipality, IMEX America implemented three stream signed bins in high volume food areas to help educate and “pre-sort” waste
4. Back of house material recovery at Mandalay Bay Convention Center
5. Compostable material recovery education for sort teams and compostable service ware headed to Terra Firma Organics in Las Vegas to be made into topsoil



# WATER

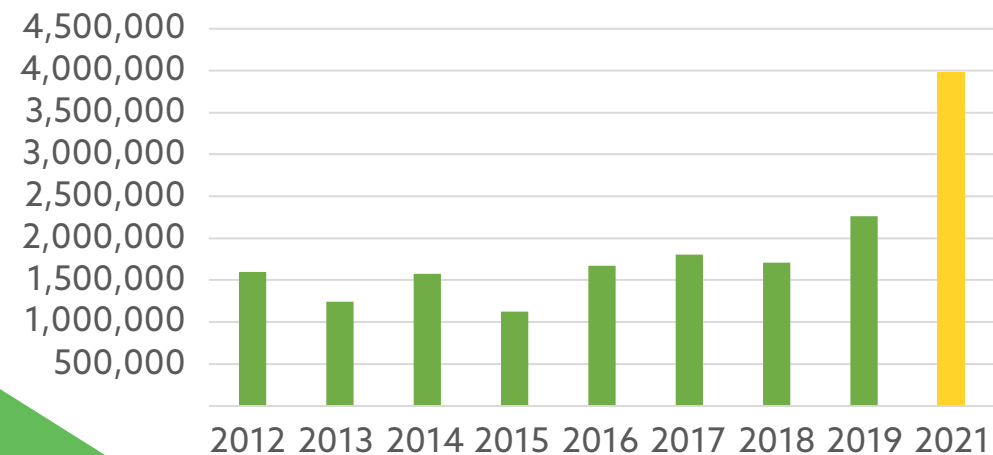
Water consumption is one of the most challenging areas to reduce in event settings. Primary water-use at IMEX America convention areas are sink and lavatory use as well as food service. Given limited control over these areas, IMEX America's approach has been to **measure and report** on its water use and encourage **reduction wherever possible**.

While it may seem from the chart below that water use increased dramatically in 2021, a more likely explanation relates to metering differences between the Mandalay Bay Convention Center and Sands Expo whose data was the event baseline from 2012-2019. Given the unique methodologies and metering at each property, assessment here is not a direct 'apples to apples' comparison.

"Water use for IMEX America is estimated by MGM Resorts using the following method: average water per square foot per day multiplied by total square footage allocated to IMEX America. Allocation is based on gross booked event space (including an allocation of non-bookable back-of-house areas) and total hotel room space (based on number of rooms booked) as a percent of total resort area"

- MGM Resorts International

Water Consumption Convention Center Activities (Liters)



## Other ways to save:

Did you know IMEX America 2021 saved more than 1.7 million liters of water "up-stream" by moving its printed show publications to 100% digital this year? (MeetGreen)  
That's enough to fill nearly 6,000 bathtubs!

# ENERGY

Given the variables of participant and exhibitor behavior, consumption of energy can also be difficult to directly influence or reduce in event settings. Challenges like this however underscore the tremendous importance of **energy efficient properties with access to, or production of, renewable energy**.

For its part, Mandalay Bay not only generates its own renewable energy onsite via the Convention Center's rooftop array pictured below (1) but is augmented by the recently deployed MGM Mega Array (2) which can renewably produce up to 90% of MGM Resorts' Las Vegas day-time power needs. This equals about 30% renewable energy across its Las Vegas resorts over a 24-hour period.

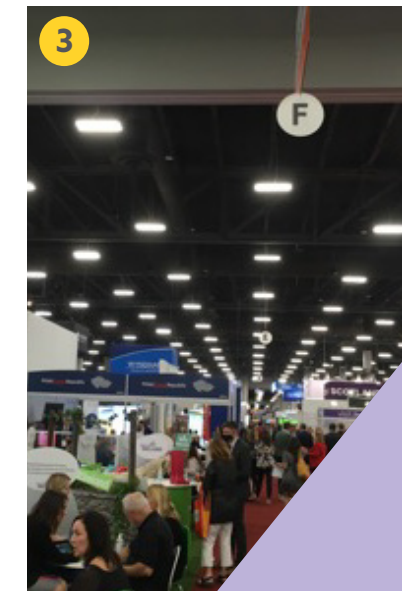
In addition to its high degree of solar power, the Mandalay Bay Convention Center's upgrade to LED lighting (3) has reduced energy usage by an estimated 85% compared to its previous lighting units.



## More Information

Did you know 150,992 kWh of IMEX America 2021 was powered by renewable solar energy directly generated by MGM Resorts?

This is equivalent to eliminating the fossil fuel emissions from 53,647 kg of coal burned  
(EPA Carbon Equivalency Calculator)

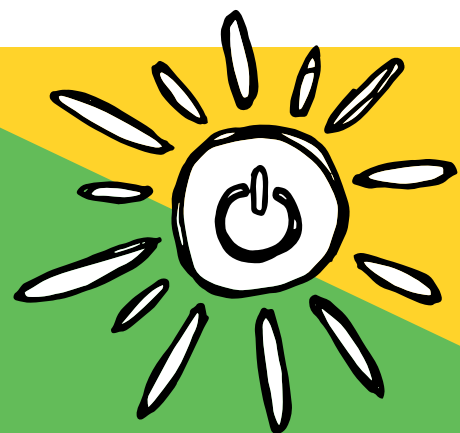


# ENERGY

Although it may appear that venue energy consumption increased in 2021- its important to weight this against significant metering, measurement, and methodology differences between Mandalay Bay and 2012-2019 historical data.

As might be imagined, there are inherent disparities when looking at metering data from two different properties given the many variables involved.

2021 has allowed IMEX America to set **a new energy baseline** with its host venue that we are excited to measure performance against in future event cycles.

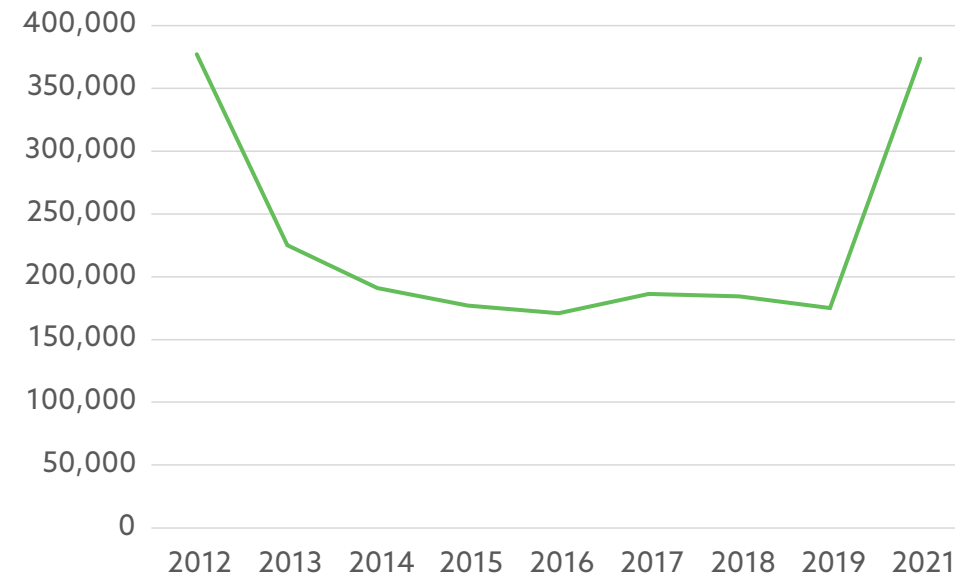


"Energy use for IMEX America is estimated by MGM Resorts using the following method: average energy per square foot per day multiplied by total square footage allocated to IMEX America.

Allocation is based on gross booked event space (including associated non-bookable back-of-house support areas) and total hotel room space (based on number of rooms booked) as a percent of total resort area."

- MGM Resorts International

**IMEX America Energy Use- Convention Center (kWh)**

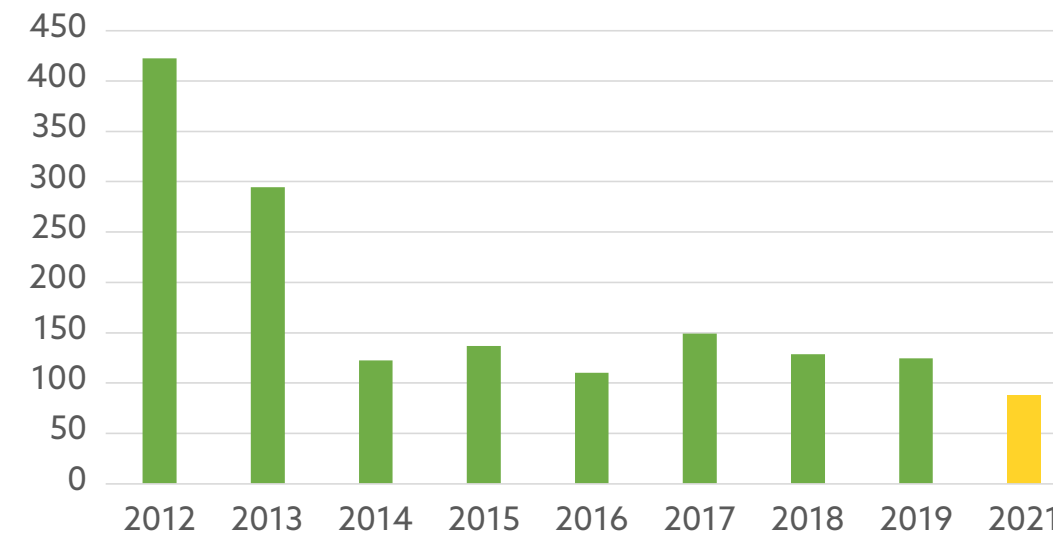


# EMISSIONS

The United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP26) that took place at the same time as IMEX America 2021, was a powerful reminder of the need to measure and manage event emissions across our event and industry.

The year over year emissions graph below covers onsite fossil fuel energy and natural gas use for the Convention Center and their two "on-property" hotel towers occupied by IMEX attendees.

**IMEX America Onsite Carbon Footprint (MT)**



In addition to the 87 metric tons of venue and hotel emissions shown in the comparison graph, its estimated that another 17 metric tons of CO2e could be added to account for IMEX America's core supplier impacts.

These include GES General Contractor freight + propane, PRA local transport shuttles, Show Gear AV and Spring Valley Floral freight transport, and HADCO ambassador staffing commutes to venue.

**2021 marked the lowest onsite carbon footprint at IMEX America!**



# EMISSIONS

At the close of IMEX America, CEO Carina Bauer announced that IMEX would **offset 100% of carbon emissions from its Mandalay Bay Convention Center activities for the duration of the 2021 show.**

This carbon offset helps build upon the outstanding foundation that MGM Resorts has provided in terms of renewable power for the property, with about 30% of IMEX America's onsite electricity coming directly from the MGM Resorts Mega Solar Array.



CERTIFICATE #12088 - 11/15/2021

THE BONNEVILLE ENVIRONMENTAL FOUNDATION (BEF) HONORS

**IMEX America 2021 - and to Support Tribal Renewable Energy Fund**

For reducing greenhouse gas emissions by purchasing Carbon Offsets from BEF. Your purchase, combined with that of other BEF partners, represents a significant funding source that helps ensure continued innovation in addressing greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

All BEF carbon offsets carry third party verification. For more information regarding our Carbon Offset supply sources, visit: [b-e-f.org/carbon-portfolio](http://b-e-f.org/carbon-portfolio).

Todd Reeve | BEF CEO



These carbon credits will help cover the remainder that is fossil fuel powered and includes neutralizing fossil fuel energy, natural gas, and general contractor services supporting IMEX onsite.

Funds from the carbon offset purchase have been directed to advancing the **Tribal Renewable Energy Fund** which benefits Native American renewable energy projects in the Western United States, and **landfill methane capture** in Davis County, Utah.

# FOOD AND BEVERAGE

In many ways food and beverage operates at the crossroads of event sustainability. Procurement, supply chain, onsite operations, waste management, and event stakeholder education are often closely intertwined across an event and its menu.

**See below for exciting 2021 initiatives**

## Zero Waste Service Ware

Compostable service ware vessels for Exhibit Hall Food Outlets and reusable service in breakout room spaces.

## Food Recovered For Donation

143 kg of event food was recovered and donated to Three Square Las Vegas. That is equivalent to an estimated 210 meals to those in need!

## New Initiatives & Environmentally Preferable Products

137 "Misfit Market" juices were made from imperfect produce. The sustainably coded IMEX America menu also featured its first-ever "emissions friendly" categories, while water for sale was in aluminum bottles, helping further eliminate single-use PET plastic.



# FOOD AND BEVERAGE: BY THE NUMBERS

There were **795 vegetarian entrees sold** at IMEX America 2021. When modeled using emissions factor averages, these plant-based meals saved an estimated 5,040 kg of carbon emissions when compared to meat main courses. Savings here are equivalent to the emissions from 228 room nights in an average Las Vegas hotel! (MeetGreen, [Cornell](#))

Single-use plastic reduction is a high priority at IMEX America. According to Mandalay Bay consumption records, reusable “water bubbler” refill stations at IMEX America saved an estimated 4,436 standard PET water bottles. In addition, the 7,573 aluminum bottles utilized from concession outlets totaled 12,009 PET plastic water bottles eliminated for 2021! (MeetGreen)

# 26%

Meatless “Impossible Burgers” accounted for 26% of all burgers sold at IMEX America 2021. Did you know the Impossible Burger was recently found to use 89% less emissions and 87% less water to produce to than an average meat burger?

[More information](#)



# SIGNAGE AND MATERIALS

Signage and materials are another critical dimension of IMEX America’s sustainability strategy requiring significant pre-planning, supplier, and supply-chain engagement.

## Highlights:

- Key iconic branded elements created without date for easy reuse at IMEX America 2022 (photo 1)
- Wire-frame fabric enables lower waste setup and take-down and helps maximize reuse (photo 1)
- FalconBoard meter boards are 100% cardboard, easily recyclable, and plastic free (photo 2)
- Hardwall applications in the People & Planet Village piloted Neenah conVerd paperboard as an easily recyclable alternative to PVC and Sintra used in past shows (photo 3)
- 2,372 square meters of printed meter board and signage graphics saved for reuse (photo 4)



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4

# CARPET

Carpet planning, installation and removal operations can have a significant impact on an event's sustainability. Carpeting requires substantial resources to create and IMEX America's goal is to reduce whenever possible and keep as much in circulation through reuse strategies.

## Highlights:

- **Rethink & Reduce:** Given the requirements to increase floorplan to better accommodate social distancing, carpeting was eliminated in aisle runs throughout the Hosted Buyer Lounge (photo 1)
- **Reuse:** 29,602 square meters of carpet and padding was saved for reuse at future events (photos 2a and 2b)
- **Recycle:**
  - The People & Planet Village piloted a brand-new 100% polypropylene carpet that can be more fully recycled at the end of its reuse. It has been re-designed without the heavy adhesive backing which often limits the amount of fiber-stock that can be recovered in traditional carpet. (photo 3)
  - While carpet to landfill was significantly minimized by planning and supplier efforts, all scraps were recovered by Mandalay Bay through its sort team for recycling with local partners (photo 4)



Photo 1



Photo 2a



Photo 2b

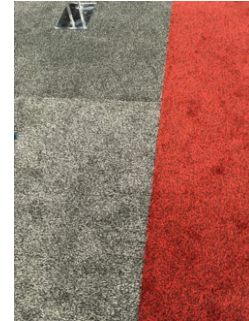


Photo 3

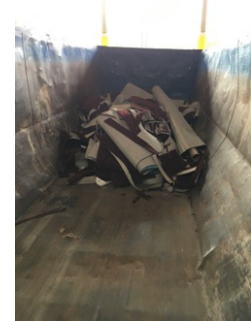


Photo 4

# CARPET

While estimates and averages vary based on carpet type and grade, supplier data indicates an estimated 42,046 kg of IMEX America carpet was returned to inventory for use at future shows. That is equivalent to the weight of about 320 baby elephants. By contrast, an estimated 290 kg was sent to the landfill- only 1% of total. The rest was recycled.

100%

Exhibit Hall carpet contained recycled content

74%

Sourced from existing reuse inventory

26%

First-time use

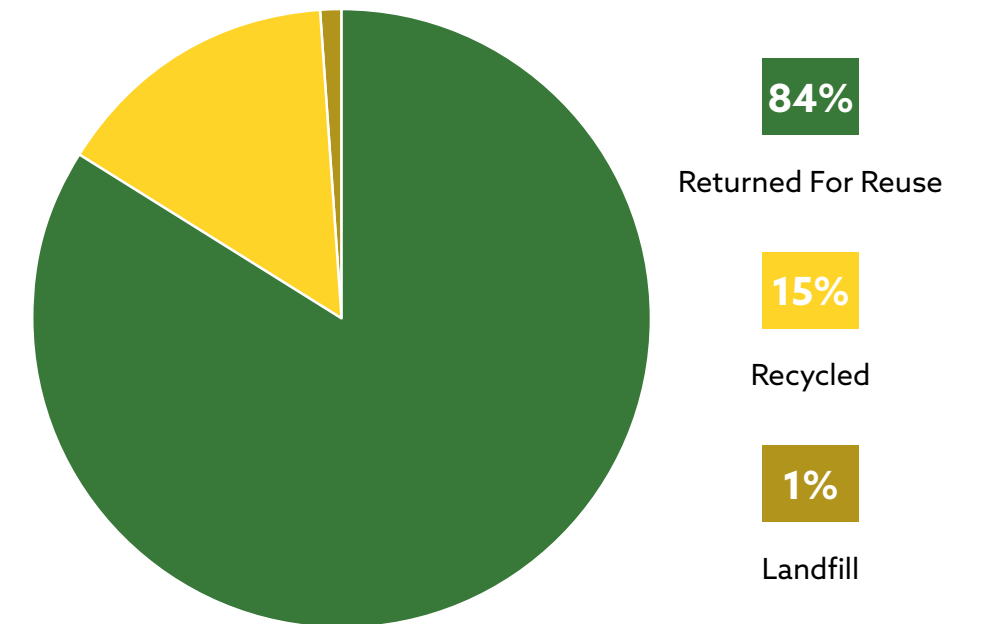
84%

Returned to inventory for reuse at future events



To keep methodologies consistent with previous years, as well as the use of broad estimates in carpet weight, carpet recycling was not counted as part of IMEX America diversion figures.

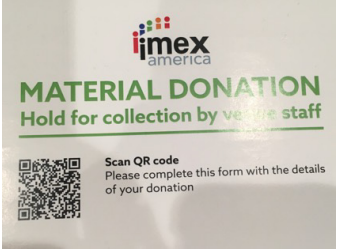
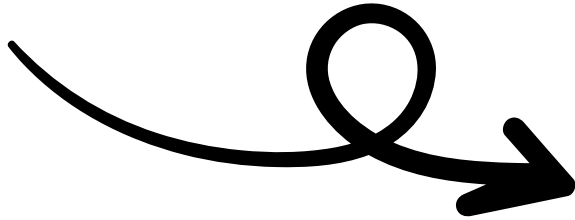
## Carpet and Padding Overview



# MATERIAL DONATIONS

Given the high volume of exhibiting at IMEX America, there is frequently furniture and materials left for disposal by exhibitors. As part of IMEX America's efforts to reduce landfill waste, and extend the life of exhibitor materials, the 2021 donation program:

- Recovered **10,155 kg of event furniture** for donation to Las Vegas community outlets
- Collected and shipped **895 name badges and lanyards** to Terra Cycle for recycling
- Deployed new QR code process for **exhibitor engagement** and identification of material for donation



# MATERIAL DONATIONS

See below for some of many organizations that received IMEX America 2021 material donations.



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®



The yoga mats in the photo were donated to Trauma Recovery Yoga (T.R.Y) in Las Vegas.

Another inspiring example of IMEX America and MGM Resorts community impact in action!



# COMMUNITY IMPACT

Throughout its many years in Las Vegas, IMEX America has grown exceptionally close with its destination community and looks to support its organizations, charities, and citizens wherever it can.

## FOR 2021:

- 600 Hygiene Kits were donated to **Clean The World**. These were assembled from recovered room amenities and are needed now more than ever.
- 105 children's books donated, by attendees contributing to the **Spread The Word Nevada virtual book drive**
- 1,000 attendee trees planted through **Piccles People & Planet Village** activation. While estimates vary, each of these trees is anticipated to sequester between 10 kg to 40 kg of CO2e per year when fully grown ([source](#)).
- \$1,000 donated to **Shade Tree**, Nevada's largest 24-hour shelter providing safe shelter to homeless and abused women & children in crisis
- \$1,000 donated to **Opportunity Village**, benefitting their four employment training centers in Southern Nevada
- Attendee construction of a special play space for **Luna**, a local Vegas child with pediatric cancer



# GOOD HEALTH, EQUITY & WELL-BEING

Supporting health, well-being, and social equity are more important in our industry than ever before. In many ways sustainability at our event begins here.

## See below for our 2021 highlights:

- 229 attendees participated in the Relaxation Reef
- 300 attendees participated in the IMEX Run
- 254 attendees attended one of the four She Means Business Sessions
- 57% female and 43% male speaker parity
- Availability of attendee gender pronoun badges
- IMEX America code of conduct addressed harassment and discrimination free event environment



# EIC SUSTAINABLE EVENT STANDARDS

In addition to planning, auditing, and measuring our sustainability efforts, IMEX America participates in third-party scoring and industry standards benchmarking.

**EIC Sustainable Event Standards:** For 2021, IMEX America undertook its first fully audited submission with the **Events Industry Council (EIC) Sustainable Event Standards**. At the time of the event, these standards were in a “provisional” version, which gave our event a unique opportunity to pilot this standard as it evolves. We are excited to update this report as our audit score becomes available.



# MEETGREEN CALCULATOR<sup>®</sup>

IMEX America uses an additional method to assess its progress towards event sustainability through the MeetGreen<sup>®</sup> Calculator 2.0. This tool allows organizations to benchmark their progress against their own efforts and other events of similar size and type.

**This cycle MeetGreen is proud to present IMEX America 2021 with our highest level of achievement: Visionary**



# OPPORTUNITIES

As successful as IMEX America 2021 was in terms of sustainability, we can always do better. Below are potential initiatives and opportunities for 2022:

## Waste

- Explore the feasibility of expanding use of 100% cardboard paper board in place of Sintra or BubbleX for applicable kick-panel and hardball applications to reduce PET substrates and increase recyclability
- Streamline and reduce menu options to further reduce food waste
- Provide show-floor bins during move-out for discarded wire-frame fabric from exhibitors and pair with a potential upcycling opportunity to extend this material's use
- Leverage “promoted-post features” on event app to communicate donation program opportunities

## Carbon

- Assess feasibility of expanding sustainability and carbon offset sponsorship options

## Attendee Engagement

- Continue to build awareness and enrollment in People & Planet Village sustainability opportunities as well as emerging topics such lower emissions food and beverage



# THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

IMEX America 2021 Event Sustainability would not be possible without the support and participation of our venue and supplier partners. Thank you for helping us balance the tremendous benefits of meeting in person while managing and mitigating our environment and positively impacting our destination communities!



**MGM RESORTS**  
INTERNATIONAL™



**17 PARTNERSHIPS**  
FOR THE GOALS

