

IGFOA Annual Conference

Evaluation Report 2007



SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- The average conference rating went up in nearly every category from 2006 to 2007.
- The overall conference ratings were higher than the 2005 and 2006 ratings.
- Speaker ratings at the 2007 Conference were lower than the 2006, while session quality ratings were higher.
- Exhibitor ratings were higher in regards to services, but lower in regards to attendee traffic.

Introduction and Overview

The IGFOA Annual Conference Evaluation Report 2007 represents a more detailed look at the Annual Conference. Standardization of evaluations for the Annual Conference and Career Development Seminars presents a valuable opportunity for comparability. The 2007 Conference compared favorably to previous conferences and training seminars. This report will highlight significant performance measures.

General Conference Evaluation

Tables 1 and 2 display the results for the general conference questions in 2007. The tables break down the evaluations by attendee type. Table 1 demonstrates the average ratings on a five point scale (poor, below average, aver-

age, above average, outstanding) in Table 1 and only one in Table 2; however, ratings are not significantly lower than the average ratings for all attendees.

Breaking down the public sector groups does not

reveal necessarily significant findings. Examining Table 1 might lead one to believe that Finance Directors rated the conference higher than Assistants and Finance Staff; however, Table 2 demonstrates that Assistants rated the general conference categories above average and outstanding more frequently than Finance Directors and Finance Staff. Despite the contradictory results, one thing is clear. Public sector attendees rated the conference consistently at least above average. While the IGFOA has not conducted a thorough analysis of conference ratings and repeat attendance rates, logic would suggest that the happier an attendee is with the various conference activities, the more likely he or she is to attend the next year.

The following page examines the general conference questions over the last three years. The majority of the evaluation trends appear positive.

Table 1: General Questions - Averages by Position

General Questions	All Attendees	Finance Directors	Assistant FD	Finance Staff	Vendors
Overall Conference Rating	4.17	4.34	4.05	4.10	3.96
Springfield as the Host City	3.94	4.00	4.00	4.05	3.78
Conference Registration	4.31	4.36	4.52	4.35	4.07
Golf Outing and Cookout	4.31	4.29	4.40	na	4.25
Welcome Dinner at Lincoln Museum	4.67	4.70	4.68	4.56	4.69
Educational Sessions	4.04	4.23	3.95	4.05	3.74
Coffee Breaks and Breakfasts	3.88	4.02	3.90	3.63	3.54
Monday Lunch and Annual Meeting	3.92	3.98	3.90	3.74	3.74
Game Night	3.68	3.90	4.29	3.57	3.63
Tuesday Brunch and Keynote Speaker	3.97	3.98	4.00	4.18	3.71

age, above average, outstanding). Consequently, a rating of 4 equates to an above average rating. The tables highlight the highest rating for the respective category.

Five categories have ratings between above average and outstanding. In addition, no ratings are below a 3.5. According to both Tables 1 and 2, it is clear that public sector attendees rated the conference higher than vendors. Vendors did not have any of the highest average ratings

reveal necessarily significant findings. Examining Table 1 might lead one to believe that Finance Directors rated the conference higher than Assistants and Finance Staff; however, Table 2 demonstrates that Assistants

Table 2: General Questions - Comparison of Percent in Top Two
Represents the percent of respondents rating category as above average or outstanding

General Questions	All Attendees	Finance Directors	Assistant FD	Finance Staff	Vendors
Overall Conference Rating	89%	93%	95%	85%	81%
Springfield as the Host City	73%	72%	80%	85%	67%
Conference Registration	91%	88%	95%	95%	85%
Golf Outing and Cookout	87%	86%	100%	na	83%
Welcome Dinner at Lincoln Museum	96%	96%	95%	94%	100%
Educational Sessions	84%	91%	81%	85%	70%
Coffee Breaks and Breakfasts	69%	76%	67%	63%	54%
Monday Lunch and Annual Meeting	74%	73%	76%	74%	70%
Game Night	65%	71%	86%	57%	63%
Tuesday Brunch and Keynote Speaker	73%	70%	75%	82%	65%

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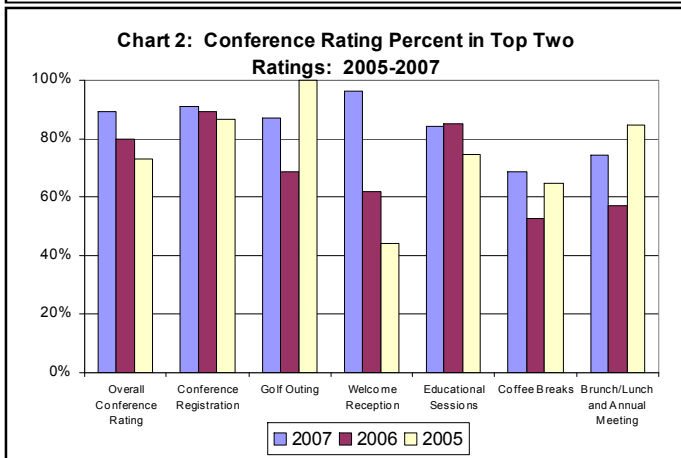
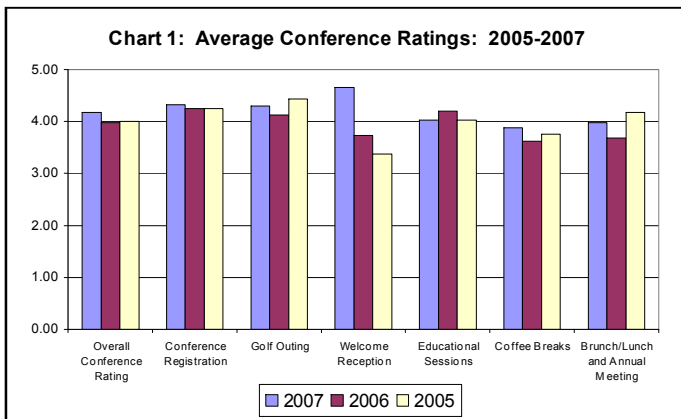
General Conference Evaluation

2005-2007

Charts 1 and 2 compare the general conference ratings over the last three years. Chart 1 displays the average ratings in each category from 2005-2007. Chart 2 shows the percent of attendees that rated the general

tion to maintaining quality training.

In Charts 1 and 2 there is one category that especially stands out. The welcome reception and dinner received significantly higher ratings than



categories above average or outstanding. Both Charts 1 and 2 demonstrate improvement in every category, except educational sessions. The educational sessions are the cornerstone of the Annual Conference. Although the ratings did not dip heavily in 2007 (they were actually higher than ratings in 2005), because professional development is of strategic importance to the Association, Conference leaders must pay special atten-

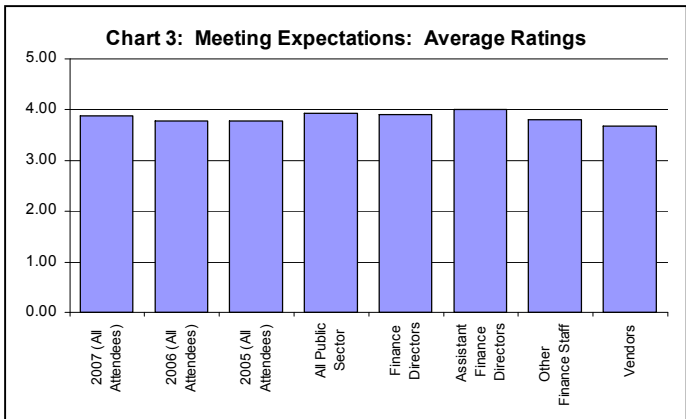
the receptions in 2006 and 2005. The Conference Committee secured the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum for the 2007 welcome dinner. In addition, 89% of attendees rated the conference above average or outstanding in 2007. This percent is significantly higher than 2006 (80%) and 2005 (73%).

Conference Evaluation:

Meeting Expectation

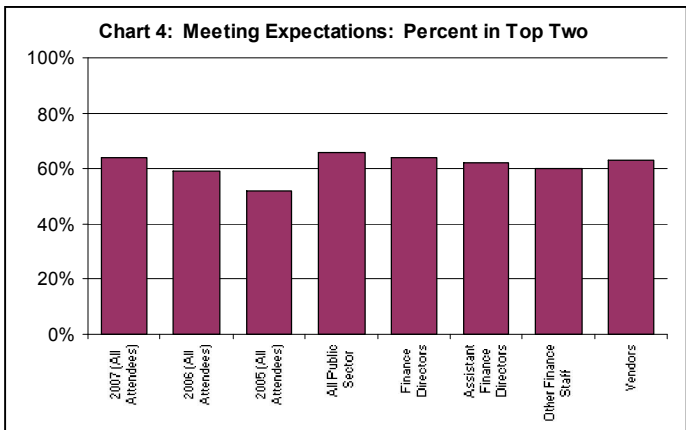
Charts 3 and 4 examine the Conference ratings from a slightly different perspective; that of meeting expectations. Chart 3 displays the average rating on a five point scale (1=far below expectations, 2=below expectations, 3=met expectations, 4=above expectations, 5 far above expectations). The 2007 Conference enjoyed both the highest average score and highest percent in the top two when compared to the 2005 and 2006 Conference. Similar to the general conference ratings, the 2007

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conference met or exceeded expectations at a higher rate for public sector members compared to vendors; however, the percent in the top two for vendors is higher than the percents for all attendees in 2005 and 2006 (and higher than finance staff and assistants in 2007).

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Educational Sessions

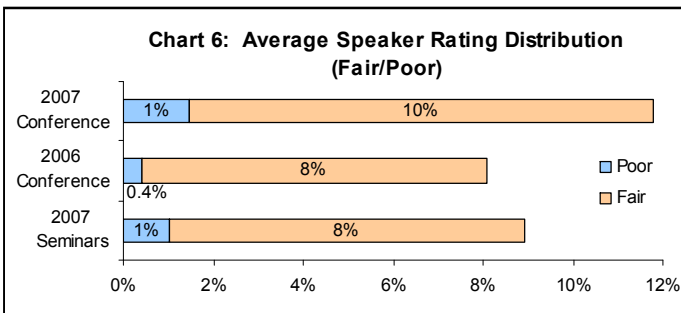
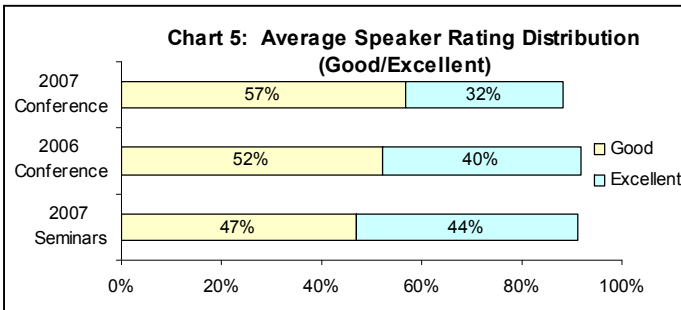
Charts 5 and 6 display the distribution of speaker ratings for the 2007 Conference, the 2006 Conference, and 2007 Seminars. The 2007 Conference speakers had the lowest rating of the three; however, 89% of speakers received either a good or excellent, which is only slightly lower than the 92% from the 2006

they do not feel the training provides value.

Tables 7 and 8 display the session quality ratings from the 2006 and 2007 Conferences. While the speaker ratings appeared slightly lower for the 2007 Conference, the same trend does not appear in the session quality ratings. The rat-

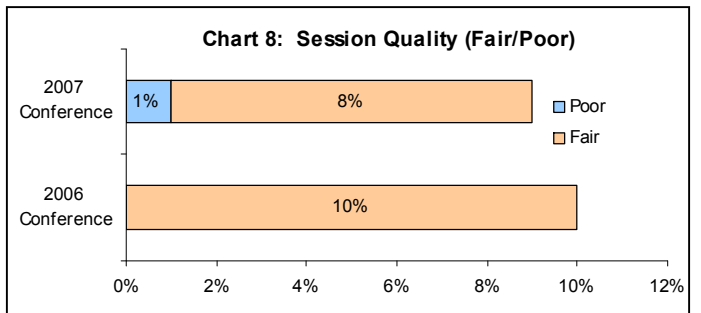
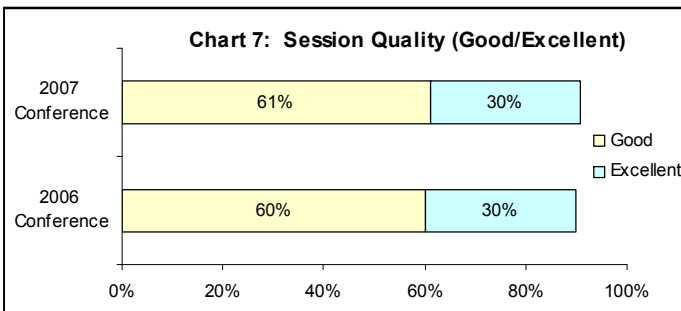
the Association should not discount attendees that feel the educational sessions were lacking. On the other hand, one or two dissatisfied attendees probably do not warrant raising alarm over the quality of sessions and speakers. In 2007, only three out of eleven sessions received any poor ratings. All of the sessions enjoyed a healthy majority of ratings of good and excellent. Seven out of the eleven session received had over 95% of re-

sults and reviews continue to be positive. Ratings increased in all categories in Table 3. Only eight of the attendees completed the survey, so each individual answer has a greater impact on the rating distribution. Consequently, all but one respondent agreed or strongly agreed that the Leadership Dialogue met the learning objectives and devoted appropriate time. In addition, all but one agreed or strongly agreed that they would attend another Lead-



Conference. The speaker and session rating operates on a four point scale to eliminate the middle ground in evaluations. On average, one out of ten attendees walked out of a session thinking that it was only fair. One out of one hundred believed that the session was poor. At a conference with just over 300 attendees, that percentage only accounts for 33 attendees; however, it is harder to attract attendees to the conference if

ings were slightly higher for the 2007 Conference. On average, 91% of evaluation respondents rated the educational sessions good or excellent. There was a 1% increase in good ratings compared to 2006. On average, less than 1% of respondents rated an educational session as poor. In 2006, respondents rated no sessions as poor. Both in the speaker and session ratings, the small number of poor ratings can be misleading. On the one hand,



spondents rate the session as good or excellent. The session on Special Service Areas and Tax Increment Financing had nearly 50% of respondents rate it as excellent, which was the highest among the general sessions. The lowest rated session had 74% of ratings in good or excellent.

ership Dialogue and recommend it to other finance professionals.

Table 4 shows Advanced Budgeting ratings in 2007 were lower than Advanced Accounting in 2006; however, Advanced Accounting had extremely positive reviews. Replicating that evaluation was a diffi-

	2006		2007	
	Average	Top 2 %	Average	Top 2 %
Met the training objectives	3.75	63%	4.38	88%
The time devoted to the dialogue was appropriate	3.88	81%	4.50	88%
I would recommend the leadership dialogue	4.25	88%	4.63	88%
I would attend another leadership dialogue	4.06	81%	4.63	88%

Tables 3 and 4 examine the ratings for the full-day training tracks. In 2007, the IGFOA held its second Leadership Dialogue. A small group of Conference attendees (10-15) reads a book with leadership themes in it for instruction and discussion at the Annual Conference. Although the ratings only represent a small number of Conference attendees, the re-

cult task for Advanced Budgeting. 12% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the "advanced" training designation was appropriate. The limited criticisms centered around certain sections being too basic or lacking application examples. Nonetheless, nearly three quarters of the respondents felt the seminar met the learning objectives.

	2006 - Acct.		2007 - Budget	
	Average	Top 2 %	Average	Top 2 %
Met the training objectives	4.53	100%	3.94	74%
The time devoted to the dialogue was appropriate	4.38	96%	3.84	74%
Advanced Training Level was Appropriate	4.40	96%	3.77	71%
I would recommend this session	4.52	98%	3.83	70%

Exhibit Hall Evaluations

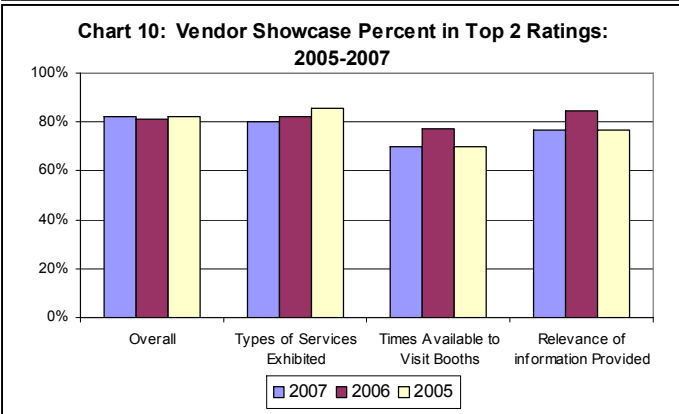
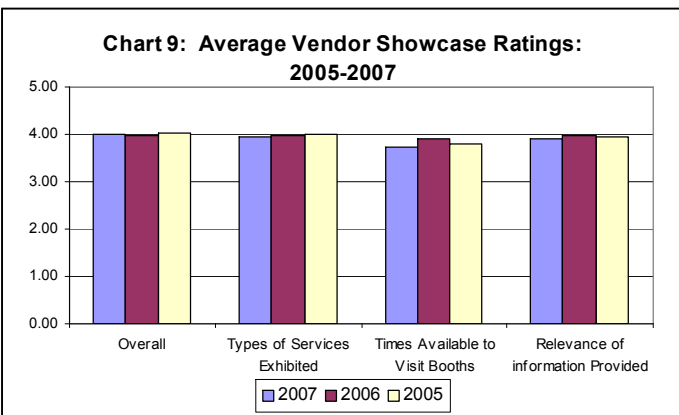
Charts 9 and 10 display the attendee evaluation of the exhibit hall. The respondents rated the exhibit hall categories on scale from very dissatisfied to very satisfied (1=very dissatisfied, 2=dissatisfied, 3=neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 4=satisfied, 5=very satisfied). Chart 9 demonstrates that the average attendee rating has not changed dramatically over the last three Conferences. On the other

seem to enjoy the fifteen minute break in between sessions. In addition, the speakers need time to switch presentations, and prepare; however, fifteen minutes does not allow much time to visit exhibitors. In regard to relevance and types of services, the IGFOA does not select the exhibitors for the Annual Conference. A majority of exhibitors are drawn from members, but the IGFOA opens registra-

tion to everyone without bias. went down. One rating should be of particular concern for the IGFOA in planning the vendor hall. The ratings for conference attendee traffic went down significantly. Only 30% of respon-

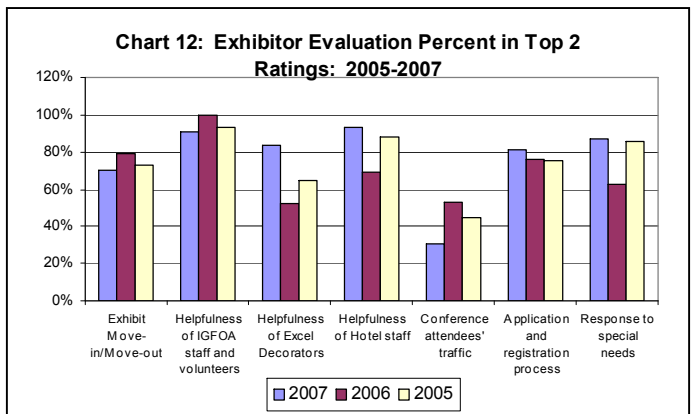
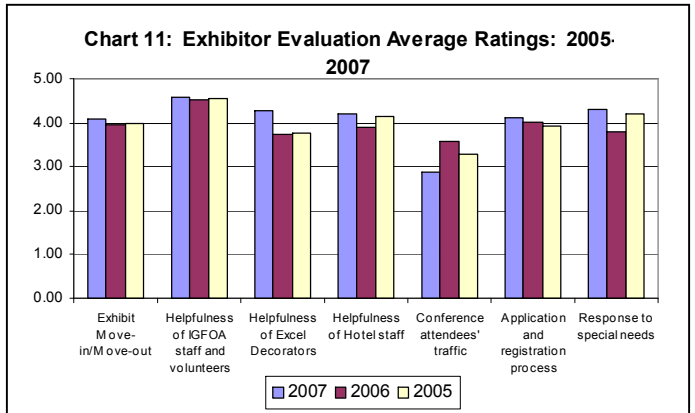
suggest that certain exhibitors did not like the layout of the hall in 2007.

Table 13 displays the schedule preferences for future conferences. A plurality selected



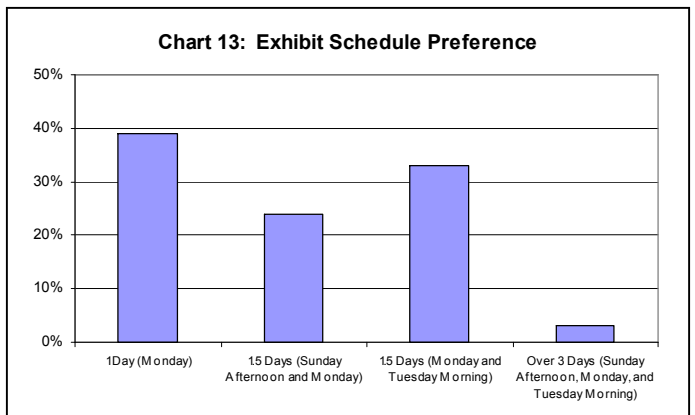
hand, Chart 10 shows slight variations in the percent of ratings in the top two ratings. The percent satisfied or very satisfied with the types of services exhibited decreased each of the last two years. In addition, the percent in the top two ratings for times available to visit booths and relevance of information provided decreased after a spike in 2006. The break times were nearly identical in 2006 and 2007, which makes the results somewhat confusing. Individuals

Charts 11 and 12 display the exhibitor evaluation results for the related services. The exhibitors appeared happier with the Excel decorator staff and hotel staff. The increased happiness with Excel may be in part from the familiarity with the staff. The IGFOA used Excel for the third straight year. The move in/out rating is a little hard to understand. While the average rating went up in 2007, the percent in the top two ratings



to the exhibitors evaluation rated attendee traffic as above average or outstanding. 30% rated it as average, and 39% rated traffic as below average or poor. The poor traffic ratings

the one day exhibiting option (current schedule). Over 50% liked the idea of exhibiting being stretched over a day and a half (Sunday-Monday or Monday-Tuesday).



Hotel and Conference Center

Tables 5 and 6 display the Conference Center ratings for the last three years. The tables highlight the highest ratings in the category for the respective year. All the average ratings for the 2007 Conference fell between average and above average.

The comfort in the meeting room rating was lower than the two previous years.

Conference Center	2007	2006	2005
Conference Center: Overall	3.79	3.67	3.75
Ease of Locating Individual Meeting Rooms	3.97	4.00	3.54
Comfort in Meeting Rooms	3.49	3.70	3.57
Quantity of Food and Beverages	3.76	3.58	3.57
Quality of Food and Beverages	3.55	3.43	3.59
Quality of Meal and Break Service	3.62	3.39	3.64

The comfort rating is probably due to two factors. First, the temperature in the meeting rooms was difficult to control. The rooms were either too warm or too cold. With the amount of people moving in and out of the rooms, the temperature is difficult to control. Nonetheless, the IGFOA should use this rating for future conferences at the Springfield Hilton to discuss ways to improve the room comfort. The second

possible reason for the low room comfort rating is the record attendance in 2007. Because of the large numbers, one of the rooms had to be sat theater style instead of classroom style. Consequently, attendees did not have a table or desk. If conference attendance continues to increase, the conference planners will have to contemplate

the hotel accommodations and the number of educational tracks. The number of educational tracks and the size of room can contribute to room comfort and thus the learning environment. Fewer tracks equates to larger sessions requiring larger rooms. Conversely, more educational tracks equates to smaller sessions and more variability in room size. More educational tracks requires more speakers and moderators,

Conference Center	2007	2006	2005
Conference Center: Overall	67%	58%	61%
Ease of Locating Individual Meeting Rooms	75%	77%	51%
Comfort in Meeting Rooms	54%	57%	51%
Quantity of Food and Beverages	65%	52%	52%
Quality of Food and Beverages	53%	43%	52%
Quality of Meal and Break Service	56%	39%	56%

“If conference attendance continues to increase, the conference planners will have to contemplate the hotel accommodations and the number of educational tracks. The number of educational tracks and the size of room can contribute to room comfort and thus the learning environment.”

which in turn means more work for conference planners.

Although the average rating for the quality of food and beverages decreased in 2007, the percent of respondents rating it above average was the highest over the last three years. At a large conference it is difficult to please all the attendees and still be cost conscious.

Tables 7 and 8 display the ratings for the Springfield Hilton overnight room accommodations. The hotel ratings were the highest in seven out of eight categories in 2007. The average rating for the hotel restaurants/lounge was just above

acceptable. A number of comments on the evaluation and at the conference expressed frustration with the hotel restaurants not opening until after sessions started. They were also displeased that the Hotel Restaurant was not open for the Bears game on Sunday.

For the rest of the hotel ratings, the respondents appeared very pleased. Four out of the eight categories had 99% (or higher) of respondents rating them as acceptable or outstanding. All the ratings, except the hotel restaurant, received a at least 90% acceptable or outstanding.

Overnight Accomodations	2007	2006	2005
Room Reservation Process	3.48	3.29	3.29
Cleanliness of Room	3.41	2.97	3.25
Room Amenities	3.27	3.00	3.18
Check-in Process	3.46	3.25	3.23
Hotel Staff Assistance	3.55	3.25	3.34
Check-out Process	3.62	3.31	3.41
Hotel Restaurants/Lounge	3.02	3.09	3.15
Accommodation of Requests	3.35	3.20	3.32

“The hotel ratings were the highest in seven out of eight categories in 2007.”

Overnight Accomodations	2007	2006	2005
Room Reservation Process	100%	98%	95%
Cleanliness of Room	96%	82%	95%
Room Amenities	93%	84%	91%
Check-in Process	99%	94%	95%
Hotel Staff Assistance	99%	98%	96%
Check-out Process	100%	100%	98%
Hotel Restaurants/Lounge	77%	93%	90%
Accommodation of Requests	97%	98%	100%

Future Conferences

As part of the Conference Evaluation, the IGFOA asks attendees about training topics, training levels, training types, and conference location for future conferences.

Table 11 displays the rankings for training topics. The number represents the number of attendees that selected the training topic as a first, second, or third choice. Nearly 150 attendees completed the survey, for a nearly 50% response rate; however, there were 240 first choice responses. This means that respondents did not understand the instructions. Nonetheless, one can still get an idea of what topics are popular based on their occurrence. The table reveals that no one or two topics separate themselves from the others. Financial Reporting, the most selected topic, received 9% of all votes. Meanwhile, Banking Services, the least selected topic, received 4% of all votes. The difference between some of the middle categories is only a handful of votes. Conference planners usual select topics in early Spring. This survey is only one tool used to plan session topics.

Table 12 displays the rankings for training level/category. A majority of respondents selected Hot Topic as their first choice. 22% of respondents selected Advanced training as their first choice, and 36% selected Advanced as their second choice. As the conference attendance report demonstrated, a majority of public sector conference attendees were finance directors. Consequently, it makes sense that respondents want advanced training and hot topics. It is important that conference planners find ways for hour-long sessions to provide advanced training. Respondents do not want basic or introductory training.

Table 13 displays the rankings for training type. Lectures and panel discussions appear to be most popular choices.

Workshops and more hands on training or discussions are less popular.

Table 14 displays the preferences for future conference locations. 30% of respondents selected Springfield as the number one choice. 22% of respondents selected Champaign-Urbana as their first choice. This is a good sign for the 2008 Conference, which will be held in Champaign. The responses do not necessary suggest that one location is not appropriate for a conference; however, respondents selected Moline the most as the fourth and fifth choice.

Table 11: Most Selected Training Focus
Ranks the training categories by the number of times selected (1st, 2nd, or 3rd choice)

Training Topics	Number	%
Financial Reporting	56	9%
Accounting	44	7%
Benefits Administration	38	6%
Budget Management	36	6%
Information Services and Technology	35	6%
Supervisory Practices	34	5%
Pension Administration	33	5%
Risk Management	32	5%
Capital Improvement Financing	32	5%
Procurement or Purchasing	32	5%
Pension Investment	32	5%
Budget Development	31	5%
Capital Improvement Planning	31	5%
Cash Management	30	5%
Debt Management	30	5%
Collection and Receivables	30	5%
Debt Issuance	28	4%
Investment Practices	26	4%
Banking Services	24	4%
Total Votes	634	100%

Table 12:

Training Category	1st Choice	%	2nd Choice	%	3rd Choice	%	4th Choice	%	5th Choice	%
Hot Topic	65	56%	33	28%	7	6%	9	8%	11	10%
Advanced	26	22%	42	36%	20	17%	10	9%	15	13%
Intermediate	11	9%	21	18%	64	56%	14	12%	4	4%
Basic	5	4%	15	13%	18	16%	67	59%	6	5%
Introductory	10	9%	7	6%	6	5%	13	12%	77	68%

Table 13:

Training Type	1st Choice	%	2nd Choice	%	3rd Choice	%	4th Choice	%
Lecture	46	37%	34	27%	17	14%	29	24%
Panel Discussion	41	33%	44	35%	30	24%	9	8%
Workshop	9	7%	31	24%	40	33%	40	34%
Facilitated Small Group Discussion	29	23%	18	14%	36	29%	41	34%

Table 14:

Conference Location	1st Choice	%	2nd Choice	%	3rd Choice	%	4th Choice	%	5th Choice	%
Springfield	38	30%	21	17%	22	18%	23	19%	20	16%
Champaign-Urbana	31	25%	27	22%	27	22%	21	17%	16	13%
Moline	21	17%	14	11%	19	15%	33	26%	38	30%
Peoria	16	13%	30	24%	20	16%	22	18%	35	28%
Bloomington-Normal	19	15%	34	27%	36	29%	23	18%	13	10%

Conclusion

The IGFOA 2007 Conference Evaluation Report confirms that the 2007 Conference was a success on multiple levels. The welcome reception, hotel, and conference center ratings went up in 2007. While educational session ratings dipped slightly, the results do not suggest a dissatisfaction with the training component. Vendors enjoy the conference less than public sector members; however, they rated the conference higher than the average conference ratings in the past.

What can the IGFOA learn from this evaluation report?

1. Attendees want advanced and relevant training at the conference. When session received below average ratings, the common criticism was that the sessions did not go into enough detail.
2. Conference planning is part of ensuring a conducive learning environment. Peo-

ple learn easier in a room that has the proper accommodations. Consequently, conference planners need to be cognizant of attendance projections to make sure that the number of educational tracks works well with the room choices and sizes.

3. Exhibitors want a layout that maximizes attendee traffic. Rating were low for attendee traffic in 2007. The IGFOA does not want

to run the risk of losing exhibitors because they do not feel the conference provides value for them.

Between record attendance and strong evaluations, the 2007 Conference was a significant success. As the conference continues to grow, building on that success is essential for the IGFOA well-being and strategic success.