

Sustainability & Museums

Why Sustainability?

Sustainability means healthy people, communities, and environments, now and in the future. Museums and similar cultural organizations can have an important role to play in building a sustainable future.

SUSTAINABILITY & MUSEUMS

Why incorporate sustainability into your organization's operations and public programs?

Create community and promote learning:

Audiences place a great deal of trust in museums, gardens, zoos, and aquariums as sources of scientific information and cultural heritage, making museums critical to lifelong and community learning about important sustainability-related issues.



Connect existing programs: Many cultural organizations already have sustainability-related activities, programs, and exhibits that focus on the environment, societal issues, and technology. Sustainability efforts can help connect these different programs for visitors and staff.

Improve operations: Operational changes, including changes to daily practices and long-term policies, can reduce waste and conserve water and energy. Museums can demonstrate that sustainable operations programs are possible and beneficial in their community.

Build partnerships: Sustainability can build connections to community stakeholders. Projects can foster new collaborations among scientists, businesses, policy makers, and local organizations. They can help museums reach broader audiences, give back to the communities they serve, and advance action on sustainability goals.

Contribute to a global conversation: International groups of informal science education institutions, including the Association of Children's Museums, the Association of Science-Technology Centers, and the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, are creating resources and promoting efforts related to climate change and sustainability. Individual museums can join the conversation and learn from other organizations.

<https://www.childrensmuseums.org/images/ACMClimateCrisisStatementandActionPlan2019.pdf>

<https://www.astc.org/astc-dimensions/astc-members-join-we-are-still-in-u-s-climate-action-movement/>

<https://www.aza.org/green-practices>

SUSTAINABILITY IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

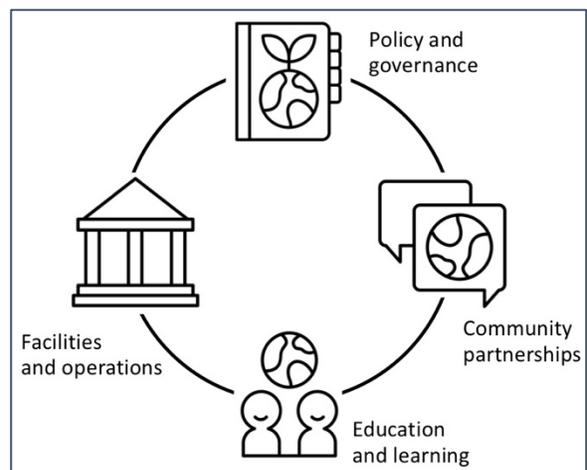
You can use the points in this document to create proposals, slides, or talking points for discussing sustainability with others at your organization. In addition, to build support for designing and implementing a sustainability project or create an organization-wide sustainability plan, it's important to articulate how sustainability aligns with your mission and helps you accomplish things you value as an organization.

Consider how you can:

- Connect your sustainability project to your institution's mission statement or vision.
- Match the expected outcomes of your project or plan with outcomes important to existing efforts in your institution.

WHOLE INSTITUTION MODEL

Sustainability can be incorporated into all aspects of cultural organizations' work, including public-facing efforts and behind-the-scenes operations. While you might ultimately plan for a "whole institution" approach to sustainability, you can also integrate sustainability in ways that are most feasible and best aligned to your organization's mission and capacity. It's ok to start small and build on your success!



NOT SURE WHERE TO START?

The resources below can help you plan sustainability projects at your organization.

NISE Network Professional Development Resources: This webpage offers a variety of resources to sustainability in museums, gardens, and other cultural institutions, including activities, planning documents, and other resources from NISE Network's Sustainability & Museums workshops to help your institution plan sustainability projects.

<https://www.nisenet.org/catalog/sustainability-science-technology-museums-professional-development-resources>



Educating for a Sustainable Future, Shelburne Farms:

This webpage offers a variety of resources related to education for sustainability, with a focus on early childhood education, nature, and community. Resources include case studies, hands-on activities, and frameworks.

<https://shelburnefarms.org/our-work/resources>

Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) AZA Green Guide (Vols. 1 and 2): These guides contain sustainable practices that are relevant for many different types of cultural organizations. Vol. 1 helps institutions think about how to develop a sustainability plan. Vol. 2 helps outlines specific practices and measures of progress. Both contain extensive lists of additional resources.

https://www.aza.org/assets/2332/aza_green_guide_volume_1.pdf

https://www.aza.org/assets/2332/aza_green_guide_volume_2.pdf

Museum and Community Partnerships, NISE Network: This guide offers an introduction to collaborations between museums and youth-serving community organizations. It includes guidance for starting, sustaining, and deepening collaborative relationships.

<https://www.nisenet.org/collaboration-guide>

Principles for Sustainable Museums, Museums Association: This resource lays out 11 sustainability principles for museums and includes links to case studies and tools. The checklist can help you evaluate your institution's current sustainable practices and identify areas to improve.

<https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/sustainability/principles-for-sustainable-museums>

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