

Sustainability & Museums

What is Sustainability?

Sustainability means healthy people, communities, and environments, now and in the future.

Sustainability is a big concept. According to the United Nations (UN), a sustainable way of living “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland, 1987). People’s needs include food, water, shelter, work, happiness, and respect. This definition of sustainability prioritizes equity, because it recognizes that people all over the world have needs that are equally important. It also emphasizes the importance of considering how our actions today will affect society, the economy, and the environment in the future.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

In 2015, UN countries adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Global Goals (also called the Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs). The goals outline a pathway to a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the interconnected challenges we face, and recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth, address social needs, and tackle climate change and environmental protection (United Nations, n.d. and 2015).



EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Education for sustainability “cultivates individual and collective potential...to increase the possibility that humans and other life can flourish on Earth now and into the future” (Cloud, 2017). The concept of education “for” sustainability goes beyond ideas and skills that are directly “about” sustainability. It also includes principles, policies, partnerships, and other aspects of the broader education system that support the creation of a sustainable future (UNESCO, 2017).



MUSEUMS AND SUSTAINABILITY



Museums, zoos, aquariums, gardens, and other cultural organizations can have an important role in supporting sustainability in their communities. Museums provide opportunities for lifelong learning that can complement and reinforce learning that takes place in other settings, such as in school and at work. As trusted organizations, museums can serve as conveners to bring together diverse community members to advance sustainability solutions locally. Museums can also model sustainable practices and help establish them as the norm.

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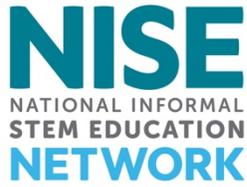
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