

Sustainability & Museums

Why Sustainability?

Sustainability means healthy people, communities, and environments, now and in the future. Why incorporate sustainability into your organization's operations and public programs?

1. **BUILD PARTNERSHIPS:** Sustainability projects can build connections to important community stakeholders. Projects can foster new collaborations among scientists, communities, businesses, policy makers, and local organizations allowing museums to reach broader audiences, give back to the communities they serve, and advance action on sustainability challenges.
2. **CONNECT EXISTING PROGRAMS:** Many museums, gardens, zoos, and aquariums already have sustainability-related activities, programs, and exhibits that focus on our environment, societal issues, and technology. Sustainability efforts can help connect these different programs for museum visitors and staff alike.
3. **IMPROVE OPERATIONS:** Operational changes, like changes to daily practices and longer-term purchasing policies, can reduce waste, and conserve water and energy. Museums that undertake sustainable operations projects can demonstrate that such programs are possible and beneficial in their community.
4. **CREATE COMMUNITY AND PROMOTE LEARNING:** Audiences place a great deal of trust in museums as sources of scientific information and cultural heritage, making museums critical to lifelong and community learning about important sustainability-related issues.
5. **CONTRIBUTE TO A GLOBAL CONVERSATION:** International groups of informal science education institutions, including the [Association of Children's Museums](https://www.childrensmuseums.org/images/ACMClimateCrisisStatementandActionPlan2019.pdf), the [Association of Science-Technology Centers](https://www.astc.org/astc-dimensions/astc-members-join-we-are-still-in-u-s-climate-action-movement/), and the [Association of Zoos & Aquariums](https://www.aza.org/green-practices), are creating resources and promoting efforts related to climate change and sustainability. Individual museums can join the conversation and learn from other organizations.
 - a. <https://www.childrensmuseums.org/images/ACMClimateCrisisStatementandActionPlan2019.pdf>
 - b. <https://www.astc.org/astc-dimensions/astc-members-join-we-are-still-in-u-s-climate-action-movement/>
 - c. <https://www.aza.org/green-practices>



The Long Island Children's Museum created a monarch butterfly garden and participates in a continent-wide citizen science project to monitor monarch populations.

SUSTAINABILITY IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

The prompts below can help you align your project within your institution and build support across your institution for designing and implementing a sustainability project.

1. Connect your sustainability project to your institution's existing mission statement or vision.
2. Match the expected outcomes of your project with outcomes important to existing efforts in your institution.
3. Use the points above to create proposals, slides, or talking points for discussing your sustainability project with others at your museum.

NOT SURE WHERE TO START?

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

Sustainability & Museums Fellowship Resources, NISE Network:

<https://www.nisenet.org/sustainability-fellowship-workshop-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.

AZA Green Guide (Vol 1) and AZA Green Guide (Vol 2), Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA)

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

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

These **guides** contain sustainable practices that are relevant for many different types of cultural organizations. Volume 1 helps institutions think about how to develop a sustainability plan. Volume 2 helps outline specific practices and measures of progress. Both contain extensive lists of additional resources.

Principles for Sustainable Museums, Museums Association

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

This UK-based **resource** lays out eleven sustainability principles for museums and includes links to case studies and other resources. The checklist at the bottom of the page can help you evaluate your institution's current sustainable practices and identify areas to improve.



Garden, museums, and other organizations conduct professional development about sustainability for their own staff and teachers.



Some museums are working to make their operations more sustainable. The Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) created a [decision-making framework](https://www.nisenet.org/blog/post/partner-highlight-sustainable-decision-making-framework-exhibits) to help the organization make more sustainable decisions in the creation and reuse of exhibits:

<https://www.nisenet.org/blog/post/partner-highlight-sustainable-decision-making-framework-exhibits>

Museum and Community Partnerships, NISE Network

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

This **guide** offers an introduction to collaborations between museums and youth-serving community organizations. This guide includes an overview of why to collaborate, levels of partnerships, how to start a partnership, and a variety of resources to sustain and deepen your collaborative relationships.

Educating for a Sustainable Future, Shelburne Farms

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

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.

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