

MUSEUMS ON THE CLIMATE JOURNEY ESSENTIALS GUIDEBOOK



Produced by

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MUSEUMS**

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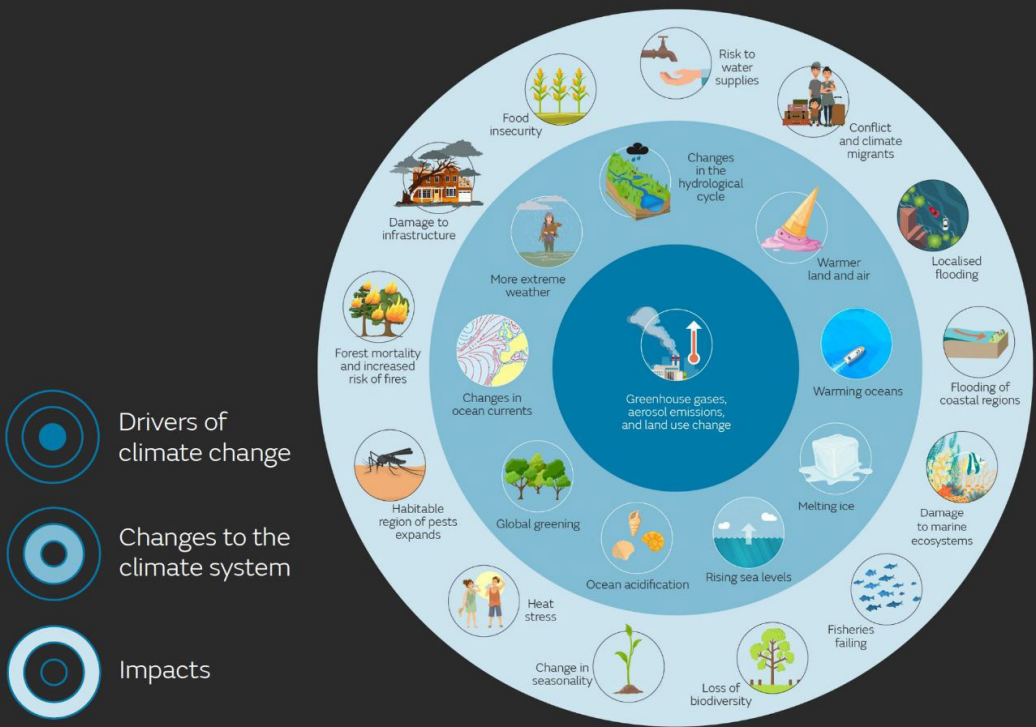
Ki Culture

GENERAL CONTEXT THE GLOBAL PLANETARY EMERGENCY



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The climate crisis is the biggest problem facing our society as a whole today. The heating of our Earth's atmosphere caused by greenhouse gas emissions and the resulting planetary emergency is a threat to our entire planet and every species on it - including us. Each year we seem to reach new levels of climate extremes, with record temperatures, melting ice and devastating weather events affecting communities and ecosystems on every continent. Despite this reality and a growing awareness of the climate crisis in our individual consciousness, our greenhouse gas emissions continue to increase because of the failings of our current systems. 2020 has been an unprecedented year that has demonstrated the interconnectedness of all of the issues that we face - from global pandemics to loss of biodiversity and natural resources, to structural racism - but it has also shown us that our society can change, and quickly.



Credits: Effects of climate change by Met Office (UK)

CLIMATE LITERACY ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF CLIMATE LITERACY

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Climate Literacy is an understanding of your influence on the climate and the climate's influence on you and society.

The essential principles of Climate Literacy are:

1. Climate is regulated by complex interactions among components of the Earth system.
2. Life on Earth depends on, is shaped by, and affects climate.
3. Climate varies over space and time, through both natural and man-made processes.
4. Our understanding of the climate system is improved through observations, theoretical studies and modelling.
5. Human activities are impacting and accelerating the climate system.
6. Climate change is already having consequences for the Earth system and human lives.

From Climate Literacy: The Essential Principles of Climate Science by NOAA.

“WE ARE AT A CRITICAL MOMENT IN TIME WHEN IT COMES TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS. BUT THIS IS NOT A STORY OF DOOM OR GLOOM OR, A STORY OF FALSE HOPE EITHER. WHAT WE NEED ARE NEW WAYS OF WORKING TOGETHER, SPACES AND PLACES FOR PEOPLE TO COME TOGETHER, TO IMAGINE, TO EXPERIMENT, TO PROTOTYPE, TO BE ABLE TO TAKE ACTION.”

Michelle Zucker, Director, Community Activation,
EIT Climate-KIC

Learn more about [the essential principles of Climate Literacy](#).



INTERNA- TIONAL FRAMEWORKS



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In response to our increasing planetary emergency, the United Nations Member States came together in 2015 to finalise the Paris Agreement and adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Its goal: to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere by 2030.

At the heart of the Agenda are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They were developed by the United Nations to function as a blueprint for achieving a sustainable society under Agenda 2030. The SDGs are the most universally recognised framework for addressing sustainability in the world and are used by governments, businesses and organisations across all sectors.



Learn more about the [Paris Agreement](#), [Agenda 2030](#) and the [SDGs](#).



HOW DO THE SDGS RELATE TO OUR WORK IN THE CULTURAL SECTOR?

Culture is widely recognised as a viable and important tool for enhancing climate education and training, and increasing public awareness, participation and access to information. For these reasons, UNESCO created Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to improve access to quality education on sustainable development through our institutions.

For Henry McGhie, founder of Curating Tomorrow, "The SDGs are an incredible opportunity for anyone, any organisation, and any sector to collaborate in pursuit of common goals, leveraging their skills, capacities and unique resources.

Museums have a great deal to offer this Agenda, and some of the SDGs will not be achieved without museums... The SDGs are also not about continuing with business as usual, but about clear, committed, focused action to enhance positive impacts and reduce negative impacts."

Henry McGhie's guide "Museums and the Sustainable Development Goals" outlines how museums can support the SDGs, and inversely, why museums are essential to the success of the goals.



Learn more about [UNESCO's ESD](#).

Learn more about [how the SDGs apply to our work](#).

Learn more about [how to incorporate the SDGs in our daily lives](#).

[SDGs for Culture People](#) (Culture & Heritage Goals)

[Free educational resources for the SDGs](#).

CLIMATE TALKS



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Credits: Photo by Priscilla Gyamfi via Unsplash

The climate crisis, its effects and possible solutions are often referred to in various terms, but what is the best way to communicate about our urgent global situation?

For Nipuna Kumbalathara, Asia media and communications lead for Oxfam International, "climate change is a passive phrase in an extremely dire world", as the term does not include what failing to prevent rising global temperatures would mean: hundreds of millions driven into poverty, huge food scarcity, loss of life and biodiversity. It also does not address the root causes of our planetary emergency, which are not only related to the increasing overall temperature of the

Earth, but are a combination of problems related to economic and demographic growth based on our collective lifestyles and the systems that govern them.

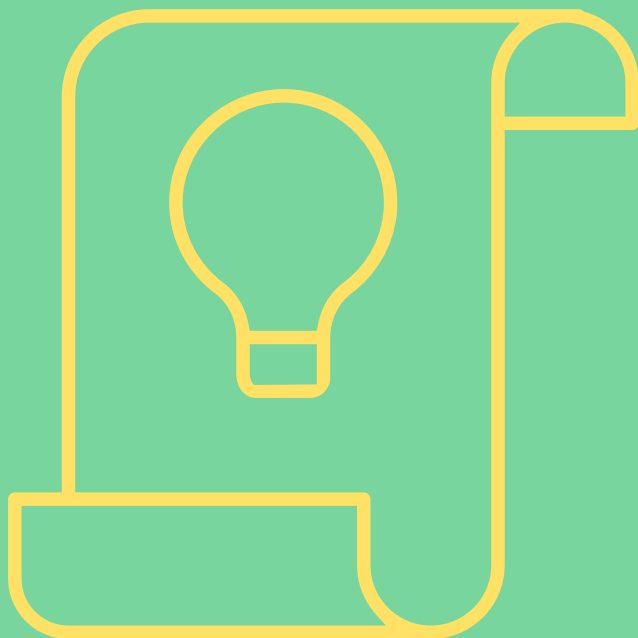
To make our communication around the planetary emergency clear, and foster climate action, we prefer to use "climate emergency", "climate crisis", or "climate breakdown" when talking about "climate change". We also prefer to use "global heating" instead of "global warming". These are other words you might hear or read: climate justice, climate-resilient futures, ecocide, systemic change, eco-social renewal, climate resilience, extinction, climate mitigation, tipping points.



Learn more about **changing the way we talk about the planetary emergency.**

CLIMATE COMMUNICA- TION TIPS

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Here are handy tips for understanding and communicating about the climate crisis. This checklist is by no means exhaustive, and the most appropriate approach will vary in every case. It is just a starting point.

1. **Make it identifiable**

Identifying the values and worldview of your audience and how they shape their identity can help you to create a form of climate engagement that appeals to who they are as people.

2. **Make it relevant**

Frame your content in the context of an issue that is a priority to your audience. Be empathetic when doing so.

3. **Make the science meaningful**

Communicate on a human scale, using familiar concepts to help people understand science and statistics.

4. **Use images and stories to make it real**

Storytelling is a powerful tool to strengthen climate engagement. Images of people, not pie charts, can empower and inspire.

5. **Make it local**

Focus on local impacts (and solutions), highlighting personal experience. Be sensitive when doing so.

6. **Leverage the power of community**

Mobilise social groups and networks to support ongoing engagement. It's important to establish a sense of collective response.

7. **Stay positive**

Lead with solutions and how your audience can become a part of them. Highlight the benefits of taking action on an individual, local and global scale.

8. **Acknowledge uncertainty**

The future is an uncertain place. Be honest about what we do not know, but focus on what we do.

9. **Approach scepticism openly**

Invite scepticism into the conversation. Try to identify, understand and speak to the source of their doubt.

10. **Invite participation... and make it easy!**

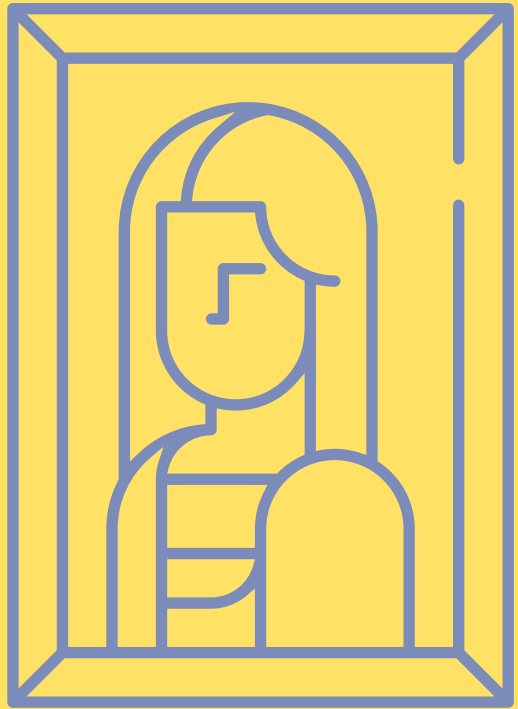
Leave people with a sense of options and opportunities. Provide tangible actions and a roadmap for ongoing engagement.

These tips have been adapted from *Connecting on Climate: A Guide to Effective Climate Communication* by ecoAmerica and the Center for Research on Environmental Decisions, Columbia University.



Learn more about **effective climate communication**.

MUSEUMS ON THE CLIMATE JOURNEY



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As organisations whose purpose is to preserve and present our culture, we understand and feel acutely the impact that the climate crisis is having on our material and intangible culture. We all recall the flooding that happened last November, when a historically high tide of 1.87 metres, the highest in more than 50 years, flooded over 85% of the city which is a world heritage site. Venice is increasingly vulnerable to rising sea levels - which are caused by melting sea ice as a result of increasing global temperatures - and is just one example of how our culture is at risk from the climate crisis around the globe.

We are also starting to understand the impact that we, as cultural organisations, are having on the climate. The concept of the “Green Museum” or “Sustainable Museum” has existed since the mid-2000s, where the word *green* is a shorthand for environmentally thoughtful practice. We saw museums worldwide hiring teams to reduce the museum's energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions (including those from transportation), waste management, use of toxic materials and biodiversity education and preservation.

6 TIPS TO A SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF A MUSEUM



Credits: Six tips to sustainable management of a museum by Iberdrola. [Source](#)

The green museum concept is an important start, but it only focuses on one aspect of our climate impact and the different levels of action available for museums. More still needs to be done to mainstream and upscale such work, as well as building more awareness and accountability when it comes to the sector's impact.

Today more than ever we need to be considering not only the environment but the social implications of our work. Only now are some of us beginning to take a more holistic view when it comes to the impact we have, and the potential impact we *could* have. Many organisations are joining climate efforts by declaring a climate emergency and pledging their commitment to restoring our planet. Some have gone one step further by showing direct support for or joining activists in creative protest.



Credits: Florian Schlederer

These are examples of how we are beginning to recognise and embrace our role as agents of social change - to enhance the climate literacy of our audiences, and inspire action in the face of planetary emergency.

This is the start of our climate journey. Whilst we may have far to go, the roadmap is already clear...



Credits: Reimagine Urban Installation by the Anchorage Museum in Alaska in collaboration with UN Live - Museum for the United Nations.

MUSEUMS ON THE CLIMATE JOURNEY VISUAL ROADMAP

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“MUSEUMS HAVE
A UNIQUE POWER TO
CREATE IMAGINATION,
DIALOGUE, AND
NARRATIVES IN
LOCAL PLACES,
WHILE ALSO
DRIVING A GLOBAL
CONVERSATION.”

Annesofie Norn, Curator,
UN Live - Museum for the United
Nations

Here is an illustration showing the different levels of actions available for museums to start their transformational journey and become climate champions or climate change-makers. This practical visual roadmap suggests four stepping stones for change, going from the macro to the micro-level.

Credits: Visual Roadmap 'Museums On the Climate Journey' by We Are Museums. Designed by Alina Holtmann.



1. The first space for transformation sees museums as a complex and dynamic system composed of a worldwide network of 80,000+ agents of change

Of course, systemic change starts with step-by-step adjustments. But those steps should be directed towards transformations of the fundamental features and principles of the system itself. We should take into consideration that museums are not isolated entities and that they fall under the same mission and role in our societies. If every museum moves toward better futures for people and the planet, we can expect a significant impact on our society.

2. The second level of action called "Use Your Voice" recognises museums as civic platforms.

Museums are respected and trustworthy institutions with the ability to add perspectives to the public dialogue. Museums have the potential to help in overcoming political difficulties and become an accelerator for collective actions. Examples of actions include creating a platform for expression and discussion for different movements, withdrawing from fossil fuels sponsors or starting ecocide campaigns.

3. The third level of action "Act as a Neighbour" sets museums as part of a local ecosystem, part of a neighbourhood.

At a community level, museums can start to collaborate and be part of the life of the district. They can create a community-managed resource centre with shared equipment and material with local organisations, sell local or sustainable products in their shop, run upcycling workshops, turn the green space around the museum into a community garden and offer permaculture or gardening workshops or even offer a climate-anxiety first aid line.

4. The last level "Turn Your Museum Green" looks at the museum.

As a building which could incarnate sustainable practices from the facilities, the office spaces, how they produce exhibitions, their digital presence and how to run their shops and restaurants.

CULTURAL AND MUSEUMS EXAMPLES

JOCKEY CLUB MUSEUM OF CLIMATE CHANGE, HONG KONG

The Jockey Club Museum of Climate Change, which opened in 2013, is the first museum in the world dedicated to climate change. The museum works closely with university students, training them as guides to explain and activate their exhibitions.

[Website](#)

BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU, HAWAII

The Bishop Museum has committed to phasing out the use of single-use plastics across their sites and runs a daily “Sustainability Scavenger Hunt” to teach visitors about their sustainable practices - encouraging and inspiring them to do the same.

[Website](#)

THE AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Initiated by The Australian Museum, FrogID is a national citizen science project that is helping scientists to learn more about what is happening to Australia’s frogs. All around the country, people are recording frog calls with nothing more than a smartphone.

[Website](#)

TATE MODERN, LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM

In addition to declaring a climate emergency, Tate Modern has opened its doors to creative climate activist groups such as Extinction Rebellion as a platform for discussion. An example of how museums can easily embrace a more activist role in their communities.

[Website](#)

CENTRO CULTURAL KIRCHNER, BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

The Centro Cultural Kirchner has hosted a series of artistic and scientific explorations of environmental issues, including film screenings, workshops and artist talks. Showing how contemporary art can be used as a tool for communication and climate action.

[Website](#)

ZOMA MUSEUM, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

Zoma Museum focuses on researching and learning from ancient art production, architecture and landscaping, and bringing it to the present in an Eco-sensitive art institution. Their activities include exhibitions and educational programs, but also community gardening and farming.

[Website](#)



Credits: Culture Declares Emergency at the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall Courtesy of Louisa Buck

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THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY BEHIND CLIMATE ACTIONS IN MUSEUMS

Key organisations to help you start your climate journey:

AAM - American Alliance of Museums (United States) / Climate Collective Poland (Poland) / Climate Heritage Network / Climate Museum UK (United Kingdom) / Coalition of Museum for Climate Justice(Canada + international) / Cultural Impact (Austria) / Culture Declares Emergency (United Kingdom + international) / Culture Unstained (United Kingdom) / Curating Tomorrow (United Kingdom) / Green Culture World Foundation (Western Balkans) / ICOM - International Council of Museums (International) / ICOMOS - International Council of Monuments and Sites(International) / Julie's Bicycle (United Kingdom) / Ki Culture (International) / Les Augures (France) / MOTI - Museum of Tomorrow International (International) / Museums and Climate Change Network / Museums for Future (International) / NEMO - Network of European Museum Organisations (Europe) / Sustainable Museums (United States) / UN Live - Museum of the United Nations (Global) / We Are Museums (International)

This list is not exhaustive and constantly evolving. You can find an augmented and updated version of it in our [online Ressourcerie](#).

CREDITS

Words by Georgina McDowall

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START THE CLIMATE JOURNEY
OF YOUR MUSEUM,
JOIN OUR PROGRAMME

“
MUSEUMS
FACING
EXTINCTION”

