

Climate Action and Museums

Request

- Increase funding for the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act's Sec. 40541 Energy Efficiency Materials Pilot Program for Nonprofits also known as "[Renew America's Nonprofits](#)" — a \$50 million pilot program to award grants for energy-efficiency materials upgrades to buildings owned and operated by 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, including museums.
- Increase funding for other museum eligible grant programs, such as the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Climate Smart Program and to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) **specifically to support climate change work in museums, including facility adaptations and resiliency work**, as well as exhibits and programs.
- Include museums as **named community partners** and as eligible nonprofit organizations in legislation for energy and climate funding opportunities and education initiatives.

Talking Points

- As trusted sources of information, museums are well-placed in their communities to be local centers of climate change education and mitigation efforts. Museums can **advance government programs and initiatives** when provided with accompanying government support.
- Museums, the vast majority of which are 501(c)(3) nonprofits, **rarely benefit** from tax incentive programs for increasing site sustainability. Grants and forgivable loans are more useful sources of government funding to support museums' sustainability goals.

Museums can help advance carbon neutrality and respond to the impacts of climate change:

- Museums are considered one of the [most trustworthy](#) sources of information in America, and as such are excellent entry points for climate conversations, both community-oriented and internal.
- As educational institutions, museums are **valuable engines for understanding environment and climate issues**. They have a distinct ability to engage the public and the media with data, images, and context for knowledge-building.
- Museums are **research hubs** and have contributed to climate change research across a variety of areas, including mining historical data in journals, archives, and natural history collections, and conducting current citizen science research, such as urban heat zones and ecology, rain/water gauges, and bird migration patterns.
- Museums are **valuable pilot sites** for experimental technologies through operations and exhibits. This may be comparative wind-powered generators, test gardens, and green building designs such as living roofs, passive solar heating, rainwater catchment, and more.

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- Museums are **essential community infrastructure and local partners** for achieving environmental sustainability goals. They are connected to their fellow nonprofits, educational systems, and local businesses, and can model green practices to inspire and collaborate with their communities to help reach desired outcomes.

Museums are uniquely impacted by climate change:

- Museum facilities and invaluable collections are **at risk** from the effects of climate change, including sea level rise, flooding, wildfires, and severe weather.
- Museums' structural and financial sustainability can be significantly strained by natural disasters spurred by climate change and **museums need access to local, state, and federal disaster relief planning and recovery funding.**
- Museums consider environmental trends when developing risk management policies, finding sites for new buildings, landscaping the grounds, and investing in, and raising funds for, environmental sustainability.
- IMLS has funded some climate change efforts in the field, including the Culture Over Carbon project, a research grant allowing museums to measure their greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption, and understand the efficacy of sustainability initiatives. This project encourages widespread adoption of more sustainable practices, which will require additional funds for implementation.