

Discovery Museum Carbon Offset Program

We are proud to announce continued steps in Discovery Museum’s sustainability journey. Along with our conversion to 100% site-generated solar electricity and reductions in water usage and waste generation, we have launched a first-of-its-kind program to offset the impact to our climate of travel to and from the Museum by members, visitors, staff, volunteers, and event vendors.

Through our Carbon Offset Program we fund the purchase of carbon offsets to mitigate travel to and from the Museum. Members and visitors pay a small opt-out fee per membership (\$1 per membership per year) or visit (50 cents per visitor group per visit) to offset their travel; free and \$1 admission visitors are exempted from the offset fee. Discovery Museum will purchase offsets to mitigate the impact of exempted visitors and our staff, volunteer, and event vendor travel.

We are proud that this work is a first among children’s museums in the country, and we are proud to lead the way in what our industry can do to fight climate change.

We appreciate the support of our visitors and members as we partner together to move ahead on a path to a more sustainable future!

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a “carbon offset”?	A carbon offset is a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions to compensate for emissions made somewhere else. Offsets can be purchased to support certified clean energy projects.
What are carbon emissions?	Carbon emissions refer specifically to carbon dioxide, or CO ₂ , which is one of a number of greenhouse gasses (nitrogen, methane, water vapor are others). Carbon emissions occur naturally in nature (breath in oxygen, breathe out CO ₂) and nature keeps things generally in balance.
Why are we concerned about carbon emissions?	Unlike nature, human activity does not keep things in balance. We release extra carbon and other greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere through fossil fuel extraction, refining, transport, and burning; agriculture and livestock; and cooling systems such as air conditioners and refrigeration. We also cut down CO ₂ -absorbing trees. Overall we create an imbalance, with excess carbon emissions in our atmosphere.
And excess carbon emissions are a problem why?	CO ₂ is one of the greenhouse gasses that absorbs radiation and prevents heat from escaping our atmosphere. This excess heat creates disrupted weather patterns, higher global temperature averages, and other climate changes.
What is a “carbon footprint”?	A carbon footprint is the total greenhouse gas emissions caused directly and indirectly by an individual, organization, event, product, or service.
What is a carbon offset project?	A carbon offset project pulls greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere OR prevents emissions from being released.



What carbon offset project will the Discovery Museum fund?	Discovery Museum is purchasing carbon offsets to support a certified clean energy project in Uganda that turns farm animal waste into clean biogas fuel and fertilizer, reducing methane emissions and providing clean energy and an income stream for low-income subsistence farmers.
Why is a carbon offset in Uganda good for us in MA?	The key concept is that an offset has a net climate benefit. Because greenhouse gasses mix globally in the atmosphere, it does not matter exactly where they are reduced.
What else goes into my family's overall my carbon footprint besides our visits to the Museum?	To calculate your full carbon footprint you would look at household electricity and heating, diet, waste, transportation (commute and travel), and shopping. The average carbon footprint for a person in the United States is 16 metric tons, one of the highest rates in the world. Globally, the average carbon footprint is closer to 4 metric tons. Try out an online carbon calculator such as this free one at Carbon Footprint https://www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx .
How were my trip emissions calculated?	We calculated the average of the total number of miles our member and visitor families travel to and from the Museum in an average year. Then, our partner Environment & Culture Partners used the Greenhouse Gas Protocol (www.ghgprotocol.org) and other related carbon emissions calculation standards to estimate the amount of carbon emissions from that travel and the associated cost to purchase carbon offsets to mitigate those emissions.
What if I don't want to pay the offset fee?	When purchasing or renewing a membership, you can opt out of the carbon offset fee by entering the promo code GREEN if purchasing online, or informing the staff member that is helping you if purchasing in person or over the phone. For non-member visitors, please notify the staff person who is processing your admission fee that you would prefer to opt out.
How can I learn more about the Museum's Sustainability Plan?	Our 5-year Sustainability Plan towards is available online on our website here https://www.discoveryacton.org/about/strategic-plan-sustainability-and-deai
What sort of progress has the Museum made on the plan?	Our 2 nd Annual Sustainability Report will be available online soon.

We are excited to have the support of our members and visitors to offset the carbon impact of visits to the Museum, and to do our part to offset the impact of our staff, volunteer, and event vendor travel. Thank you for your support of this important initiative for our community and our world.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact us at fun@discoveryacton.org.

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