

## Writing an Environmental Responsibility Statement

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### 1. Why Have an Environmental Responsibility Statement?

One of the requirements for being registered as an “Active Member” of GCC is writing and publishing an Environmental Responsibility Statement. This is a way to take public responsibility for your environmental impact as an organisation. Your statement should acknowledge the seriousness of the environmental crisis, clearly state your position on this issue, and summarise the actions you are taking to address it. This will show your staff, audiences, and other stakeholders that you are serious about this issue, help motivate your organisation internally to follow your action pledges, and encourage your stakeholders and supporters to hold you accountable.

An Environmental Responsibility Statement is NOT a claim that you are doing things perfectly or have all the answers! None of us are at this point. We’re all doing our best to assess, report and reduce our impact, setting targets in line with science, taking any actions we can and working out other solutions as we go. It’s fine – it’s fact it’s good – to be honest about this, as long as we are ready to work together with others and learn as we progress.

Your statement is also NOT set in stone. It’s something that can – and should – evolve as your knowledge and plans develop.

## 2. What to Do With Your Statement

To become an Active Member, we ask you to:

- Have your statement signed and dated by a senior representative of your organisation.
- Publish your statement on your website if you have one, and/or on your organisation's social media channels.
- Inform your members, audiences and stakeholders that you have published this statement and send them a link so they can read it.

Once members have achieved Active Member status, they may include their year stamped Active Member badge on their environmental responsibility template.

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## 3. Suggested Structure For your Statement

We've put together a template, below, that you may find useful as a fill-in-the-gaps starting point for your statement. Alternatively, you can follow the following steps that lay out a suggested structure for your statement, and write each section yourself from scratch. Or you could do a bit of both. In any case, the more you can personalise your statement to your organisation, the better. Try not to make it too long or detailed – it should be a summary of your position, rather than an in-depth explanation of all your plans.

We recommend including:

- A.** A brief introduction that gives some context for your statement.
  - B.** A few lines about how environmental issues relate to your own specific practices, values and mission as an organisation.
  - C.** A summary of the key actions you are taking to tackle your environmental impact, making it clear how these line up with your commitments as a GCC member.
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## **A. Introduction**

Acknowledge the scale and urgency of the interconnected environmental crises the world is facing – particularly the climate emergency. (You may also want to mention related crises such as biodiversity loss or plastic waste in the oceans). You don't need to add in lots of facts and figures here, just say something that illustrates that you know the urgency of the climate emergency, and how major action is needed across every sector of society.

You may want to say something about how the arts have a particularly important role to play, not only by reducing our own environmental impact as a sector, but by also setting a good example and using our public platform and cultural influence to encourage wider change across society.

## **B. Why this is specifically important for your organisation**

Say something about your own values and mission as an organisation, and how this connects to the climate crisis. If you already have specific information about your main environmental impacts (e.g. flights, shipping, energy use) you could say something about that here too.

## **C. What pledges you are making and what action you are taking**

There's no need for lots of detail here, just a simple list of targets you have set, pledges you have made and actions you are taking. You can communicate more specifically, to your supporters, members and stakeholders, as things progress.

Make sure this list shows how you are meeting your GCC commitments as a member and/or Active Member.

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## 4. Template Statement

*Feel free to copy any or all of this template statement, in order to get started:*

The world is facing a series of linked environmental crises. In October 2022, the UN warned that the world's governments are not yet on track to keep global heating below 1.5 degrees, and the window for action is rapidly closing. We are already seeing the impacts of existing warming with devastating droughts, storms and floods across the world. Related crises include collapsing biodiversity, dangerous levels of air pollution, and plastic contamination in our rivers and oceans. Without urgent action from across society, these problems will rapidly escalate.

The art world has an important role to play. Arts organisations – particularly in the Global North – have a disproportionately large impact on the environment, mainly due to a great deal of international travel, arts shipping, and high use of energy and materials. We need to act urgently to reduce these impacts in line with what the science is telling us. As arts organisations, we also have an opportunity to use our public platform and cultural influence to set a positive example, encouraging and supporting others to take action and helping shift the public debate.

At *[name of organisation]*, our values and mission are *[eg “to promote contemporary art and inspire audiences to engage with local culture; to provide a particular platform for marginalised voices and artists”]*. To be true to these values/fulfil this mission, we need to take urgent environmental action, because *[eg. “art and culture across the world is directly threatened by the climate crisis, and those from marginalised communities and cultures are most at risk, while also holding many of the most effective solutions to the climate crisis”]*.

As an organisation, we know that our main direct environmental impacts include *[e.g. flights to art fairs, air freight of artworks for exhibitions, and energy use in our buildings]*. We have committed to tackling these impacts by:

- *Joining the Gallery Climate Coalition, and pledging to at least halve our carbon emissions by 2030, from a 2019 baseline.*
- *Regularly calculating the carbon footprint of our operations, to track progress towards this target.*
- *Setting specific targets for the major parts of our footprint, including:*
  - *Reducing staff flights to 50% of pre-COVID levels by 2025, and 25% by 2030.*

- *Ensuring the majority of our international shipping is carried out by sea, rail or road rather than air by 2028.*
- *Reducing our building energy use by 30%, installing solar panels and replacing all fossil gas heating systems with electric heat pumps or other appropriate technology before 2030.*
- *Ensuring all of our packing materials are reusable or curbside recyclable by 2026, as a step towards zero-waste operations by 2030.*
- *Using only low or zero emissions vehicles for local deliveries by 2025.*
- *The actions we are taking to meet these targets include:*
  - *Speaking to our shippers about alternatives to air freight. Planning our exhibitions and events with care to minimise the need for air freight.*
  - *Reviewing our staff travel policies and practices, and planning our attendance at international events to reduce the need for air travel.*
  - *Carrying out an energy audit of our buildings to find opportunities for energy reduction and renewable generation.*
  - *Working with other GCC members on projects to help develop more sustainable packaging, transport and energy saving solutions for the whole sector.*
  - *Speaking to our suppliers and service providers about their carbon footprint, and looking for opportunities to encourage them to take action, or to switch to alternative suppliers who will.*
  - *Maintaining a Green Team with representatives from different parts of the organisation, that meets to track progress on all of these targets and actions at least once a month.*

We are also setting aside [*insert annual total you will be allocating into an SCF*] into a Strategic Climate Fund, rather than purchasing carbon offsets. Following guidance from the Gallery Climate Coalition, this money will be spent on measures to accelerate our emissions reductions, and support frontline climate solutions around the world that are making a difference right now. We will report on how we spent this money at the end of each financial year.

We aim to take action in line with the principles of climate justice, recognising the connections between the climate crisis and other global injustices. We want our

environmental actions to support – rather than undermine or ignore – the needs of people on the frontlines of marginalisation and injustice.

We have set these targets and are taking actions in the knowledge that we aren't yet doing everything right. We still have a great deal to do and much to learn. We welcome feedback from our *[artists, audiences and stakeholders]* on this environmental statement, our targets, and on our plans for action.

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GCC suggests members include a line on [GCC Active Membership](#) and their Active Member badge at the end of their Environmental Responsibility Statement, once they have qualified. This should include a short explainer on the Active Membership initiative and criteria, emphasising that it is not a certification of sustainability but instead recognises actions that have been taken.