

Membership Brief

**Empowering the arts and
culture to accelerate the
sustainability transition**



Executive summary

Arts and cultural organisations must harness their immense potential to accelerate the sustainability transition

As institutions with significant public trust and wide reach, arts and cultural organisations are uniquely positioned to raise awareness, inspire change, and act as role models for sustainable practices.

However, while sustainability initiatives within the arts and cultural sector have grown considerably in recent years, efforts remain fragmented and uncoordinated. There is an urgent need for a cohesive framework that integrates existing initiatives and reflects the unique artistic and institutional contexts of the sector. Culture for the Planet responds to this need by bringing together academic research and sector leadership to develop the knowledge, tools, and collaboration required to accelerate socio-ecological regeneration and enable coordinated action.

Culture for the Planet is distinguished by its research-driven approach combined with practical implementation.

Supported by the Swiss BRIDGE Discovery Grant, this research-for-action initiative develops four interconnected solutions:

1. CONNECT – A global community of practice

The Culture for the Planet Alliance is a global community of practice bringing together arts and cultural organisations, policymakers, funders, and sector associations. It provides the space where members actively contribute to the co-development and testing of the solutions.

2. MANAGE – A Sustainability Management System

A Sustainability Management System (SMS) tailored to the needs of arts and cultural institutions, enabling organisations to measure, monitor, and strategically manage their progress towards sustainability.

3. CERTIFY – International credibility

An international sustainability standard for arts and cultural organisations, providing global recognition of sustainability achievements and strengthening institutional credibility and partnerships.

4. QUALIFY – Tailored education and training

A tailored curriculum designed to equip organisations with the knowledge and skills needed to integrate sustainability into strategic and operational practice..

[Join the Culture for the Planet Alliance](#) and advance sustainability solutions across the global cultural sector.

This brief outlines Culture for the Planet, including its vision, activities, and the benefits and commitments of participating organisations. The following pages explain how the initiative supports the arts and cultural sector in embedding sustainability and how your organisation can take part.



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Action pillars

Embedding sustainability in arts and cultural organisations

Culture for the Planet provides museums and performing arts organisations with the tools, knowledge, and global community they need to strengthen their sustainability practice and contribute to the global sustainability transition.

This support is delivered through four interconnected solutions:

1. CONNECT – A global community of practice

Be part of the Culture for the Planet Alliance, a global community of practice bringing together arts and cultural organisations, policymakers, funders, and sector associations. It serves as the key nexus through which Members have an active voice in the co-developed sustainability knowledge, tools, and practices.

2. MANAGE – A Sustainability Management System

Access and co-develop a Sustainability Management System (SMS) tailored to the needs of arts and cultural institutions. This structured tool enables institutions to measure, monitor, and strategically manage their progress towards sustainability.

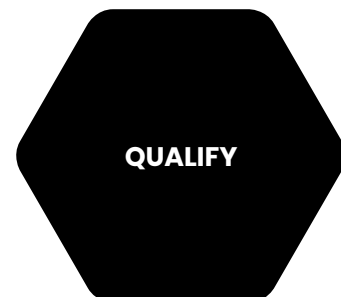
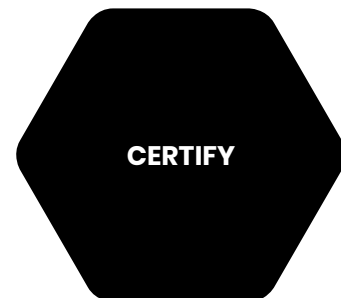
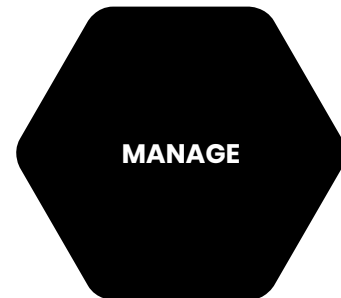
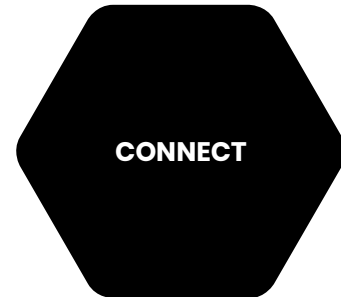
3. CERTIFY – International credibility

Shape and be among the first to implement an international sustainability standard for arts and cultural institutions, providing global recognition of sustainability achievements and strengthening institutional credibility and partnerships.

4. QUALIFY – Tailored education and training

Benefit from a tailored curriculum designed to equip your institution with the knowledge and skills needed to integrate sustainability into strategic and operational practice.

Through these interconnected solutions, Culture for the Planet institutionalises sustainability within the cultural sector, providing a cohesive framework for meaningful and lasting change.



The challenge & insights

Evidence from the pilot study. Academic research forms the backbone of Culture for the Planet

Arts and cultural institutions face growing expectations from governments, funders, and the public to adopt sustainable practices. Yet efforts across the sector remain fragmented, largely due to the absence of sector-specific standards, tools, and shared frameworks.

The Culture for the Planet pilot research, led by Professor Martin Müller and researcher Julie Grieshaber at the University of Lausanne (UNIL), combined around twenty in-depth interviews with a global survey of more than 200 institutions. The findings show that arts and cultural organisations are uniquely positioned to contribute to socio-ecological regeneration. With high public trust, strong convening power, and significant cultural influence, they can become models and thought leaders for sustainability beyond their sector.

At the same time, the research revealed structural gaps. Many institutions act in isolation and struggle to embed sustainability at a strategic level. Limited expertise, constrained funding, and the lack of clear benchmarks create a measurable gap between ambition and implementation. There is currently no shared understanding of what it means to “be sustainable” in the cultural sector, nor adequate tools to monitor and report progress in a holistic and coherent way.

The research points to three key directions for the sector:

- Make a unified commitment to a sustainability agenda and break existing silos.
- Define and adopt a shared sector-specific framework and baseline indicators.
- Ensure transparency and leadership through a research-based standard with global recognition.

The pilot study also developed a conceptual model for sustainability in the cultural sector: the Sustainability Star, which identifies key leverage points for action.

These directions and the conceptual model form the foundation of Culture for the Planet’s ongoing research and action.

You can explore the pilot study results in more detail:

> Dive into the interactive version of the results in the [Storymaps](#).

> Read the published academic article [“How sustainable are cultural organizations? A global benchmark”](#).



Culture for the Planet Alliance

One sector. One voice.

The [Culture for the Planet Alliance](#) is a global community of practice bringing together leading arts and cultural organisations to co-develop solutions for sustainability.

Alliance Members have an active voice in the co-development and testing of research-based solutions, including a Sustainability Management System (MANAGE), international standards and certification (CERTIFY), and executive training programmes (QUALIFY).

The Alliance connects arts and cultural organisations, sector associations, foundations, and policymakers around a shared vision: advancing sustainable futures through culture. Grounded in research and co-production, the Alliance supports institutions in embedding sustainability across governance, operations, and practice.

The Alliance connects research with practice, enabling the development and testing of practical sustainability solutions for the cultural sector. Through shared resources, convenings, and collaborative initiatives, it fosters knowledge

exchange and strengthens strategic partnerships.

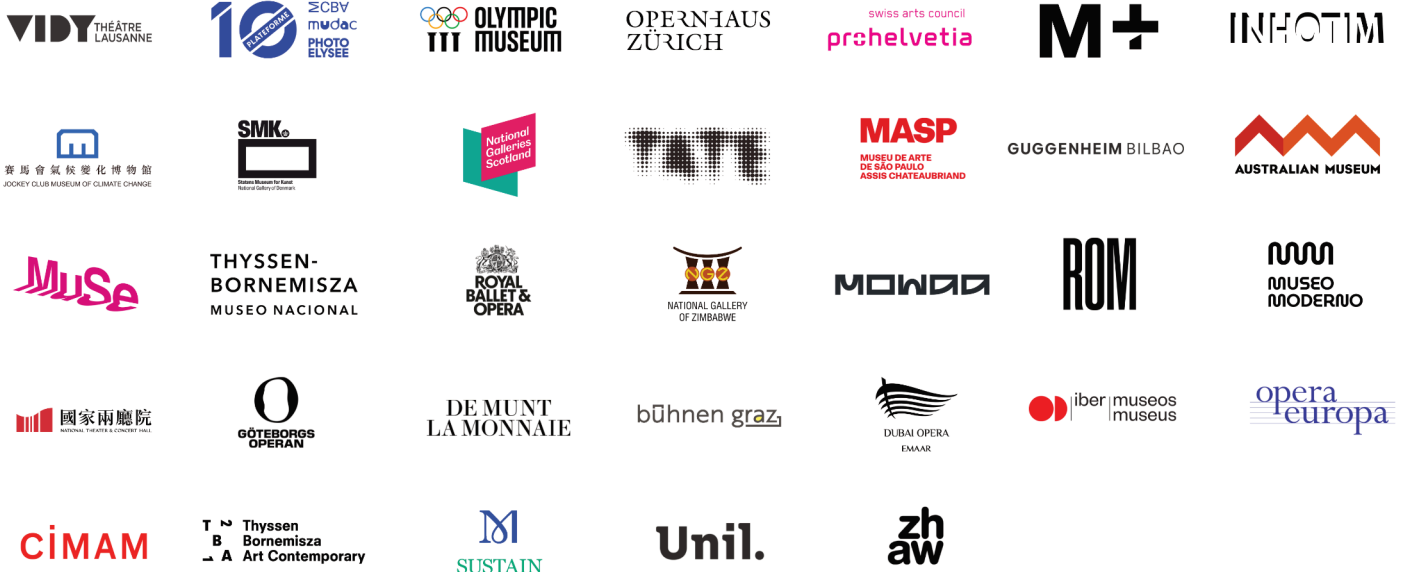
- Develop and validate research-based solutions, including indicator frameworks, international standards, and capacity-building programmes.
- Share best practices, foster innovation, and build a shared understanding of sustainability tailored to the cultural sector.
- Gain visibility and recognition as a sustainability leader through Alliance publications, case studies, and international platforms.

The Alliance brings together arts and cultural organisations, sector associations, policymakers, and funders to advance sustainability across the cultural sector. By joining, members become part of a global community of practice, gaining access to shared knowledge, collaborative initiatives, and the solutions developed through Culture for the Planet.

Founding Members

Shaping solutions together

The current Alliance Members actively shape and test the sustainability solutions developed by Culture for the Planet and needed by the sector.



What has been achieved so far

Advancing sector transformation

Officially launched in October 2024, Culture for the Planet has already reached significant milestones.

In October 2025, during the [Inaugural Culture for the Planet Summit](#), the Alliance was formally established, and Founding Members signed the Declaration of Lausanne. The Declaration serves as the foundational document of the Alliance and expresses the collective commitment of its members.

Declaration of Lausanne

The Declaration affirms a shared responsibility to act within planetary boundaries and to embed sustainability across governance, daily operations, and artistic practice. In a time of ecological urgency and social inequality, it calls for coordinated and systemic action, recognising the power of culture to shape imaginaries, foster dialogue, and support the transition toward a sustainable future.

Read the full [Declaration of Lausanne](#).

From research to implementation

Since its launch, Culture for the Planet has advanced from research foundations to structured implementation. Initial research work is translating into concrete instruments and frameworks.

- The first [Research Brief](#) introduced a proposed indicator framework for arts and cultural organisations, translating conceptual insights into operational direction.
- Work toward an international ISO sustainability standard for arts and cultural organisations has also been initiated.

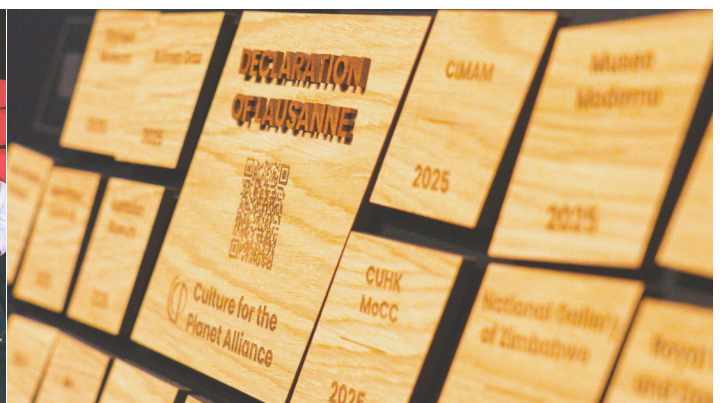
In parallel, structured co-production interviews with Alliance Members are informing the development of the Sustainability Management System, refining the sector-specific framework, and contributing to the design of the international standard and the training programme.

International recognition and engagement

Culture for the Planet has gained growing international recognition. Engagements include a side event during UNESCO MONDIACULT 2025, participation in the ICOM General Conference and the ICOM SUSTAIN Assembly, and involvement in the Marrakesh Partnership Culture Global Stocktake for Climate Action. These engagements position the Alliance within high-level international policy and sector discussions.

Building a global community of practice

Beyond formal milestones, the Alliance has created an active international space for exchange and knowledge production. Through its activities and collaborations, a community of practice is emerging that connects institutions across geographies and disciplines. Culture for the Planet is helping establish a shared language, direction, and ambition for sustainability in arts and cultural organisations.



Invitation to be an Alliance Member

Membership benefits

Join the Culture for the Planet Alliance and contribute to advancing sustainability across arts and cultural organisations worldwide.

Research has highlighted the need for a global community of practice capable of aligning efforts across the sector. Existing initiatives often focus on specific aspects of sustainability or individual operational areas, without integrating environmental and social dimensions across governance, strategy, and daily practice. Culture for the Planet does not seek to duplicate these efforts, but to collaborate with and connect initiatives already driving transformation.

Exchange between performing arts organisations and museums also remains limited. Despite shared challenges, institutional silos weaken the sector's collective voice in sustainability debates and funding landscapes. **The Alliance provides a coordinated platform to shape that voice together.**

Culture for the Planet distinguishes itself through a holistic approach to sustainability, embedding environmental and social dimensions across the full institutional structure of arts and cultural organisations. This approach is grounded in academic research and professional expertise across the cultural and sustainability fields.

Membership offers the opportunity to:

Collaborate with leading academics

Engage directly with researchers shaping sustainability frameworks for the sector and strengthen institutional capacity through research-based guidance and peer exchange.

Shape international standards

Participate in the co-development of a sector-specific Sustainability Management System and an international sustainability standard tailored to arts and cultural organisations. Members help define what sustainability means for the sector in practice.

Expand strategic networks

Connect with an international network of institutions, associations, funders, and policymakers committed to sustainability in culture.

Increase visibility and recognition

Position your organisation as a contributor to sector-wide transformation through Alliance publications, events, and collective initiatives.

Strengthen financial and operational resilience

Access structured tools and shared knowledge designed to improve resource efficiency, support accountability, and strengthen long-term sustainability performance.

By joining Culture for the Planet, organisations become part of a coordinated international effort to define and implement sustainability in the arts and cultural sector. The current phase offers the opportunity to help shape its direction and long-term structure.



Member commitments

Annual engagement structure

Annual General Assembly

The Alliance holds one General Assembly per year (approximately 60 minutes, typically in April), focused on strategic alignment, governance, and collective priorities. The General Assembly is a key moment to strengthen collective governance, transparency, and accountability within the Alliance. It allows the community to review milestones, guide the evolution of Alliance activities, and share key updates.

Solutions co-production activities

Alliance membership includes participation in research co-production activities, estimated at approximately 5–6 hours per year. These activities ensure that members' perspectives inform the co-creation of tools and frameworks and contribute to the research that underpins the Alliance. Alliance Members have an active voice in the co-development and testing of the solutions, including a Sustainability Management System (MANAGE), international standards and certification (CERTIFY), and training programmes (QUALIFY). Through interviews, surveys, and discussions, Alliance Members ensure that the needs, challenges, and experiences of cultural organisations guide the development of concrete sustainability solutions.

Alliance Meetups and exchange sessions

In addition, the Alliance hosts regular online encounters that are less formal but strongly encouraged. Alliance Meetups are a recurring space for exchange among members. Each meetup has a distinct theme and structure, ranging from research-focused discussions to practice-based exchanges and strategic conversations relevant to Alliance Members. This series of online encounters is designed to strengthen collective learning, peer exchange, and collaboration within the Alliance. These include:

- Research Spotlights (presentation of ongoing research and briefs)
- Drop-in Sessions (open exchanges with the Alliance team)
- Sustainability in Practice (peer learning sessions and case-based discussions)

These sessions support peer exchange, direct dialogue with researchers, and continuous knowledge sharing among Alliance Members. Participation is not mandatory but strongly encouraged.

Culture for the Planet Summit

The Alliance convenes once per year for an in-person Culture for the Planet Summit. The Summit is a key moment for community-building, strategic exchange, and collective learning within the Alliance. It allows Alliance Members to learn, share experiences, and discuss sustainability challenges within their organisations with fellow members, researchers, and invited guests.

In 2026, the Summit will take place in **Hong Kong from 4 to 7 November**.

Participation in the Summit is an important component of Alliance membership, particularly for new members.



Timeline and milestones

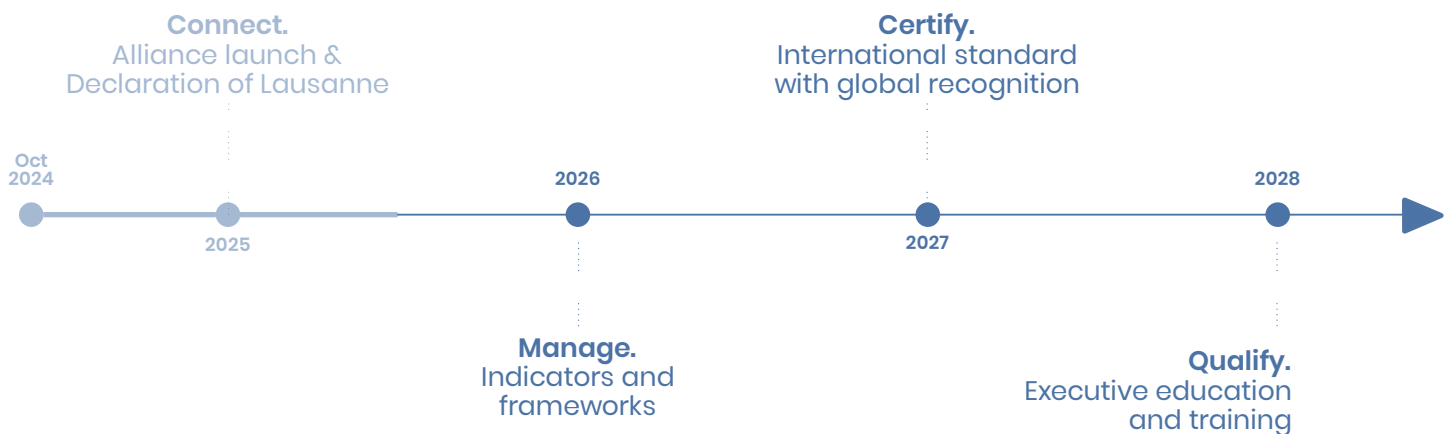
Long-term outcomes

Culture for the Planet is structured as a multi-year research-for-action initiative with clearly defined milestones guiding the development of its solutions. Each year marks the advancement of a core pillar: connecting institutions, developing indicators and frameworks, establishing an internationally recognised standard, and launching executive education and qualification programmes.

This phased approach allows for rigorous co-creation with Alliance Members, ensuring that each

solution is research-based, operationally relevant, and globally applicable. The timeline reflects the combination of academic research and practical implementation that defines Culture for the Planet.

This development phase runs until 2028, after which Culture for the Planet will continue as a long-term international initiative supporting implementation, certification, and sector-wide collaboration.



Academic research & innovation

Supported by the Swiss BRIDGE Grant

Research drives innovation. Culture for the Planet combines academic research with practical implementation to develop solutions that support the sustainability transition of arts and cultural organisations.

The research-for-action initiative is led by Professor Martin Müller from the University of Lausanne (UNIL), Department of Geography and Sustainability, and Professor Leticia Labaronne from the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW), Center for Arts Management. The initiative is supported by a four-year Swiss BRIDGE Discovery Grant, which enables the development and testing of the solutions presented in this brief.

BRIDGE is a joint funding programme of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and Innosuisse. It supports research projects with strong potential to translate academic results into innovative products or services that benefit the economy and society.

The grant supports the initial development phase, while the Culture for the Planet Alliance and its solutions are designed as a long-term international initiative that will continue to grow beyond the duration of the research project.

> [University of Lausanne \(UNIL\), Department of Geography and Sustainability](#)

> [Zurich University of Applied Sciences \(ZHAW\), Center for Arts Management](#)

> Learn more about the BRIDGE programme: [BRIDGE – From Research to Innovation](#)

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