

# Sustainability Certification for Cultural Institutions

By Adam Meltzer

or years now, facilities professionals at cultural institutions have become increasingly involved with sustainability efforts, for a number of reasons. Our cultural institutions have become a focal point for sustainable development within our communities, and those who fund operations at these institutions have shown a sincere interest in demonstrating the community's commitment to sustainability.

It has also become common in recent years to embark upon significant expansion/renovation programs at cultural institutions, and most of these projects have sustainable features incorporated into their designs. While many cultural institutions have undergone changes, most facilities professionals have been required to do more with less, due to budget constraints that have left few unaffected.

While nearly all IAMFA members have had some involvement in sustainability efforts, few have had the resources to become LEED-Certified, or certified in the prevailing system in their country. Those who have tried have found that the unique operating characteristics of their institutions make it more difficult to achieve sustainability certification than it would be with a commercial building.

This is where Arts:Earth Partnership (AEP) comes in. AEP is a not-for-profit green-business certification program created specifically for the Arts & Cultural sector.

We advise, assess and educate cultural facilities and arts organizations on how to become more environmentally sustainable businesses. In this way, our member organizations save precious resources that can be redirected toward fulfilling their missions. They also reduce their negative impact on our cities and planet by reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, energy costs, material and water waste, while setting an important and visible example for their audience and visitors. In addition, the

adoption of environmentally friendly business practices and attaining a Green Business Certification allows for positive marketing and outreach. A bonus is that the certification gives the organization an opportunity to grow a donor base to include those who champion environmentalism and earth-conscious business practices.

AEP's certification checklist and process have been vetted by the Santa Monica Office of Sustainability, the Los Angeles Bureau of Sanitation, and by the Department of Toxic Substances Control in Sacramento (the capital of California): the body that administers and approves all the green business programs operating in the State of California—the eight-largest economy in the world.

Established in 2008, AEP is the first and only Green Business Certification Program created specifically for the Arts & Cultural sector in the United States. AEP was started as a program of



A sampling of Arts: Earth Partnership-certified facilities and members.

the Electric Lodge in Venice, California: a hub of cultural activity, and a visual and performing arts center powered by 100% renewable energy.

Justin Yoffe, co-founder and Executive Director of AEP says, "When looking into becoming an officially recognized green business, we were concerned about the language, length and high cost of existing green-business certification programs, and decided to develop our own. Our goal was to create a certification checklist and program that was commensurate with existing programs like LEED, but tailored to the Arts & Cultural sector, very easy to understand, incredibly low-cost and with personal support built in every step of the way. We knew the Arts & Cultural sector was predisposed to sustainable practice, and their access to the general public is profound and immediate: a great way to demonstrate positive action to the communities in which they reside."

Arts & Cultural events bring whole communities together, making them something of a captive audience. A cultural institution that demonstrates cost-saving environmentally sustainable practices can influence millions of patrons annually. And, if just a fraction of those people are inspired to make changes at their homes or businesses, the impact can be profound.

Larger museums may have over a million square feet of space, and may see a million or more visitors each year. The savings from making simple changes in lighting, water conservation and waste management alone can return much-needed dollars to art or educational events. This is the critical message: Less waste equals more art. Donors are behind it, patrons are behind it, and employees are always excited about implementing environmental sustainability measures.

Two things separate AEP's certification process from others. The first is our onsite assessment, which plays a major role in reducing the documentation needed, as well as the time required to upload it. The second is that our measures are easily achievable and tailored to your needs. We have required measures and elective measures. The

elective measures give you choices in implementing the measures most important and achievable for your organization.

All the measures play a part in achieving environmental sustainability and certification. AEP believes that movement toward being a truly environmental sustainable organization is better than not moving at all. AEP's certification process is meant to give

#### Arts & Cultural events bring whole communities together . . .

organizations a roadmap to begin their journey towards true comprehensive environmental sustainability. Many times, organizations aren't sure where to start, how much to do, or how to do it. We address all those issues and more.

After an initial site visit, AEP gives members 90-120 days to complete the measures contained in a customized certification document. A follow-up visit then occurs, and an assessor walks through the facility to make sure the measures are complete. If they are in fact complete, the organization is then certified—and, in many cases, the certification will give them access to benefits for being a green business.

Without going into detail about other certifications, I think everyone can agree that some of the other certifications out there are not sensitive to the time, cost, labor issues and power needs related to the cultural community. Arts:Earth Partnership's certification process is. They have created measures that are easily achievable, even without a full-time facilities operations person or an outside consultant—if you have one, however, it's even easier. In a nutshell, significantly fewer hours of internal resources are needed to complete the certification documents.

AEP works with facilities that range from a thousand square feet to a million square feet, and results in these facilities creating measurable results at a fraction of the cost. Costs for the certification process are very low: typically \$400 for two years for a facility that is between 5,000 and 10,000 square feet. Please see our website for current rates at: artsearthpartnership. org/join and scroll down halfway down the page. The initial costs shown on the website include capital improvements with lighting and water conservation. This is also where the savings come in. For a small 5,000-square-foot



An assessor walks through the museum to verify that the selected sustainability criteria have been satisfied

theater or museum, we estimated they would spend \$2,300 US on retrofitting and replacing incandescent lighting. Within nine months that would be made back, and within 10 years they would have saved over \$55,000 US.

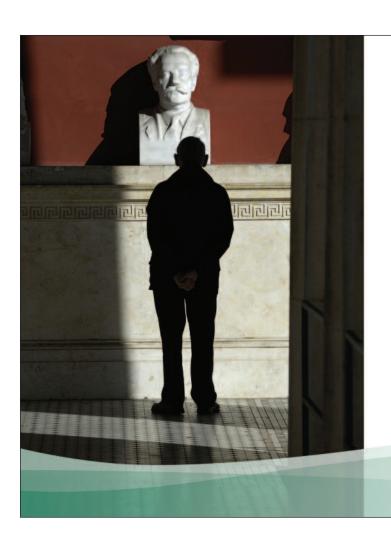
Joe May from IAMFA has been exploring with AEP how our two non-profit organizations might possibly assist one another in gaining greater recognition of, and sustainability certification for cultural institutions around the globe. AEP is currently developing an international training program for facilities willing to be host members. All interested IAMFA members should contact AEP at info@artsearthpartnership.org, or get in touch with Joe May to discuss this further. AEP and IAMFA working together represent a wonderful opportunity to bring art and comprehensive environmental sustainability together, which is why we exist.

Stay tuned for AEP's first annual **Sustainable Arts Summit** in Los Angeles on June 8, 2013! **m m** 

Adam Meltzer is Director of Operations/Programs for Arts:Earth Partnership, and is an accredited LEED AP in Los Angeles, as well as a QCxP(Qualified Commissioning Process Provider). Adam's past experience includes LEED consulting projects, environmental assessments, program coordination, marketing and research, graphic design, and social networking. He can be reached at info@artsearthpartnership.org

We all are aware that our cultural institutions are no longer just facilities in which to store, preserve, and display art. They are gathering places and centers to attract tourism to our cities, and our civic leaders are increasingly interested in demonstrating their commitment and leadership in sustainable development. They want to be seen as responsible members of the world's cultural community, and we are exploring the possibility for IAMFA to become influential in setting a world standard for sustainability certification at cultural institutions. We'd like to gauge the interest of our membership in pursuing Arts: Earth Partnerships sustainable certification. If it were simpler to achieve, and less costly to achieve, would IAMFA members be interested in pursuing sustainability certification? If IAMFA could be instrumental in establishing a world standard for sustainability at cultural institutions, would our members find this a worthy pursuit? We want to hear from you!

—Joe May, Editor, Papyrus



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