Ad Net Zero
Global Media Sustainability Framework v1.2
FAQs for Supporters

The Global Media Sustainability Framework (GMSF) is a cross-industry collaboration. It allows advertisers, media owners, media agencies, and all other companies in the media supply chain, to voluntarily estimate GHG emissions across the six major media types. The goal is to help advertisers and their partners reduce emissions from media planning and buying, which is point 3 on our 5-point Action Plan.

This is now up to the industry – to you - to test and implement.

Below are some common questions and responses to help you begin that process and field queries from your organisations and stakeholders.

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Context

- **Who are Ad Net Zero?**
  Ad Net Zero is a not-for-profit, member-supported programme to help the advertising industry and its supply chain decarbonise across our five-point action plan. We offer supporters a range of tools, resources, and education around this action plan. We try to empower companies at all stages of their journey in this way in a drive to help the industry decarbonise and accurately promote sustainable products, services and behaviours.

- **What does sustainability mean in this context?**
  In 1987, the UN defined sustainability as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

The 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals in act since 2016 provide detailed descriptions and metrics for each aspect of sustainability. Climate Action, SDG 13, is one of the most relevant to the ad sector (sometimes "sustainability" and "climate" are used interchangeably in the ad sector), and the focus of this Framework. Responsible Consumption and Production, SDG 12, is also very relevant to the ad sector.

What is it?

- **What is the *Global Media Sustainability Framework (GMSF)*?**
  In March 2023, Ad Net Zero established a project to create a universal framework for estimating the GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions from media campaigns. The Global Media Sustainability Framework is a series of voluntary industry standards to improve consistent, comparable calculation of greenhouse gas emissions from digital, television, print, audio, outdoor, and cinema channels.

- **How is the GMSF different from other industry sustainability efforts?**
  The Global Media Sustainability Framework is based on voluntary work from Working Groups, and voluntary submissions to Ad Net Zero. This is similar to the process Union des Marques ran in France via OneFrame, the French industry standard, for different channels. By inviting organisations into a voluntary process with the wider industry, we have sought to create a single universal framework that can be used across all main channels and markets, with scope to improve over time. This will add much needed consistency across territories and channels and give full transparency to the methodology.

- **What is new in version 1.2 compared to previous versions?**
  With each iteration of this Playbook, our methodology and data guidance become stronger, providing a more robust foundation for the industry.
  In this version:

  - We have developed conceptual formulae for the three remaining media channels: Print, Audio, and Cinema, ensuring a more comprehensive approach to emissions calculation.
  - Crucially, we have introduced Data Guidance for Digital, the highest-spend channel globally. This means that the digital portion of the Framework is now fully usable, allowing stakeholders to apply standardised methodologies with confidence.

These updates mark a significant step forward in enabling more accurate, consistent, and actionable calculation of media emissions across all major channels.

- **What is the development and governance process for the GMSF?**

  To create our proposals, we implement a process to balance both efficiency and rigour. The different contributors are defined below, as well as the crucial role each plays in the development of the GMSF. By adopting this process, we ensure we build upon any industry leading work that has taken place already, create multiple feedback points for industry stakeholders and apply the latest climate science.

  - **Steer Team Review:** To ensure that recommendations help the media planning, buying, and reporting processes, and that recommendations are consistent with industry practices.

  - **Climate Science Expert Group Review:** To ensure that recommendations leverage sustainability best practices from other sectors, and that recommendations adhere to environmental science expertise.

  - **External Legal Counsel Review:** To ensure that the Framework is voluntary and recommendations comply with competition law and promote transparency.

  - **Channel Trade Associations:** To ensure that media owners and publishers are involved in the creation of voluntary channel level proposals and that they reflect current media delivery operations, levels of data availability, and industry best practice.

  - **GMSF and ANZ Community:** To ensure that we receive widespread feedback and gain support and understanding across our supporter base for our proposals, before releasing publicly.

  - **Industry Release:** To ensure that all proposals are open source so that any company within the advertising industry can voluntarily adopt them as best practice.

- **What is the purpose of Data Guidance?**

  To provide a structured approach to standardizing emissions calculations, ensuring consistency, transparency, and practical implementation across the industry.

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- Bridges theory and practice – Translates theoretical formulae into actionable methodologies by addressing data gaps and inconsistencies

- Standardizes methodology – Aligns data collection and assumptions across stakeholders, ensuring consistency and comparability in emissions reporting

- Supports data availability constraints – Establishes a tiered approach, allowing for emissions estimation at different levels of granularity and providing industry-approved defaults when necessary

- Enhances implementation feasibility – Creates a practical framework that enables companies to report emissions consistently, even with incomplete data, while maintaining transparency on uncertainty levels

- **What is a Data Request Form?**
  The data request form is a consistent RFI allowing the industry to implement the GMSF and guide them through the data collection process, identifying the relevant owners/providers of the required data. A singular output that can be shared repeatedly with stakeholders.

- **What are Data Hacks?**
  A Data Hack is a GMSF recognised approach to deal with data shortcomings (e.g. no data, insufficient data, unreliable data). While the intention of a hack is to reduce complexity and eliminate any barrier to estimating emissions, the use of hacks generally means the level of accuracy will decrease. Hacks for less impactful activities will not have a material impact to the final resultant estimate, while hacks for high impact activities need to be called out as increasing the level of uncertainty in the final estimate. The purpose of the data levels classification is to call out which hacks/approximations lead to material uncertainties in the end result.

- **What are Emissions Factors?**
  An Emission Factor (EF) is any coefficient that converts data you have into kgCO2e emissions. There are several basic types of EFs used in the GMSF:
    i. Operational Emission Factors help define how much CO2e is released, that can be based on complex activities such as 'how many kWh of electricity is used in a particular location', or more

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general asks like 'the approximate average amount of CO2e emitted per $ on advertising spent' (a common, highly simplified approach).

    ii. Embodied Emission Factors define how much CO2e is released in the manufacture of physical items used in the advertising process. For example, all of the emissions from producing the paper in a newsprint or billboard ad are estimated via a Lifecycle Assessment (LCA). Less visible examples are all of the ICT (information and communication technology) equipment used across all ad channels. These EFs are based on "cradle-to-gate" LCAs that capture all the materials and activities required to make the object.

   iii. End of Life Emission Factors define how much CO2e is released in the disposal of the physical items used in the advertising process. For example, the CO2e emissions from disposing (recycling, burning, landfilling) the paper in a newsprint or billboard ad, as well as all the other ICT and other goods used in advertising are estimated through these EFs.

- **How do Trade Associations help to create Data Guidance?**

  Channel specific trade associations and their members possess deep knowledge of the specific workings, value chain, and operational realities of their respective channels. This specialised insight is essential to ensuring that the GMSF accurately reflects real-world industry practices. They made sure that:

      i. The emissions formulae are practical, actionable and aligned with industry operations

      ii. Data gaps are identified and addressed through accurate industry backed methodologies

     iii. The framework is fit for purpose, facilitating more consistent, transparent emissions reporting in all media channels

     iv. Each channel's emissions data is robust enough to improve comparability across carbon calculators, reducing the variance in reported results and enhancing industry wide trust in emissions calculation

- **How often will the GMSF be updated?**

  We are committed to onboarding feedback from the industry and also continuing to update the work. Our intent is to continue to update the work on an annual cycle at a minimum. That said, we will update the Framework as critical updates are available to component parts of the Framework.

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Why?

- **How much the advertising industry accountable for in terms of emissions footprint?**
  It's difficult to pinpoint an exact percentage for the advertising industry. The World Economic Forum have stated that digitization generated 4% of global greenhouse gas emissions in 2020. Data centres (responsible for 2.5% of all human-induced carbon dioxide) have a greater carbon footprint than the aviation industry (2.1%). Therefore, it seems likely that, factoring in non-Digital advertising channels, and taking account for the fact not all digitisation is due to the advertising industry, we can estimate that the advertising industry likely has a footprint between 2 and 4% of global emissions.

Who will this framework benefit?

The framework has multiple potential benefits for those within the advertising industry.

- **Advertisers**: Advertisers who may work with multiple media agencies, that may each have their own GHG calculation tools, will now have a voluntary framework that can create transparency in how approaches are different or can use the same Framework for GHG media calculations. In addition, by calculating the GHG emissions within their media supply chain, advertisers may voluntarily decide to identify most GHG intensive activities and may individually decide to take action to reduce these in line with their reduction targets.

- **Media Agencies**: Agencies can have the opportunity to use the Global Media Sustainability Framework to adopt or map their methodologies to the voluntary framework and can use the data request form to more easily get access to first party media seller and supply chain emissions data.

- **Media Sellers**: Media sellers and service providers can have clarity on what data they should provide to GHG estimating tool owners, such as agencies or other tool providers. This should cut down on the number of requests, and the amount of time it takes to respond to requests for this information. It also provides clarity over how exactly they will be calculated, and how other channels will also be calculated when it comes to GHG output. Media Owners can then work to improve the data

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level of granularity they provide, and ways to reduce the GHG emissions they produce.

- **Media Sustainability Solutions Providers:** Similar to agencies, solutions providers will have the opportunity to use the Global Media Sustainability Framework to adopt or map their methodologies to the voluntary framework and can use the data request form to more easily get access to first party media seller and supply chain emissions data.

- **Can I use this framework to help my company with our own science-based target reporting, and existing and upcoming regulations? How does it align with existing standards?**
  In providing feedback during the development of the GMSF, 63% of respondents from across the ad sector indicated that their primary goal in implementing the GMSF is compliance with contractual and/or regulatory requirements to report GHG emissions. Fortunately, the common foundation for all climate accounting standards and emerging regulatory requirements is the Greenhouse Gas Protocol (GHGP) and the GMSF is fully aligned with the GHGP.

  A critical objective of the GMSF is to provide GHG emissions estimates for ad campaigns that can be directly incorporated into the current scope 3 subcategory "Purchased goods and services" section of enterprise level GHG inventory reporting particularly for advertisers, in compliance with all GHGP aligned regulations, international climate accounting standards (e.g., the ISO 14064 series), and best practices. Because of significant marketing and advertising spend, many advertisers have reported that the marketing function is a material part of their overall GHG inventory; in some cases, it is the largest single line item, making the GMSF particularly relevant. The GMSF can also be valuable to other participants in the advertising value chain in both their enterprise level reporting and in providing reliable, transparent, and consistent estimates to their stakeholders at the ad campaign level.

What now?

- **How can industry stakeholders consider using the Global Media Sustainability Framework?**
  As a voluntary industry framework, the Global Media Sustainability Framework is available without any restrictions. Any stakeholder within the advertising industry can access the resources and consider the relevance to their operations.

Below are some example use cases for Global Media Sustainability Framework to consider:

- **Advertisers** may request that their partners who estimate GHG emissions from their media activities use the Global Media Sustainability Framework Channel Emissions Formulae, ensuring that regardless of which partners they work with in each market, there will be consistency of calculation.
- **Agencies** may consider using the Global Media Sustainability Framework Channel Emissions Formulae within their own tools and make GHG emissions a consideration for all media plans, alongside other established media metrics.
- **Media owners** may supply the requested data to advertisers, agencies and other solutions providers in as much granularity as possible, continually improving the quality of this data over time, adding increased value and transparency to their offerings, and supporting their stakeholders' compliance needs.
- **Media Sustainability Solutions Provider**s can highlight how their tool maps to the Global Media Sustainability Framework Channel Frameworks, enabling them to showcase unique enhancements or customisation they may offer.

- **What are the biggest and easiest things I can do to reduce my emissions from media planning and buying?**
  Read, use, and adopt the principles produced in the Quick Action Guide that was launched by ANZ in 2023, as that was based on tactics being used right now by advertisers and agencies. This is available for free and downloadable via this [link.](#)

OTHER FAQs

- **Will the use of GENAI in advertising make it less sustainable?**
  As stated in the Advertising Association AI Taskforce's inaugural [report](#), 'Advertising and AI: Showcasing applications and responsible use', "AI is already transforming advertising and marketing across the fields of strategy, creativity, production, media buying, and regulatory compliance. It is also driving efficiency and unlocking new creative frontiers."

  This dual ability of AI to enhance our creative industry is and will continue to be harnessed, and it is our responsibility to ensure that is done so responsibly. There is increasing research laying out the energy consumption of AI, from highlighting its impact (Luccioni, Jernite & Strubell, 2023), to the relativity of AI-driven emissions vs other emissions driving actions (Masley, 2025). The industry

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should deliver AI training, build internal AI policies, and share learnings on responsible AI use to support and compliment the industry's journey to net zero.

Within the GMSF we have anticipated the growing role of AI within each channel's workflow, within the 'Tech Manipulation' segment. Currently this is within the Creation phase of the advert, once you have produced the asset, and the use of AI to further edit or change that created asset. As the use of AI within advertising evolves, and the GMSF evolves with it, we anticipate the need to add further space for AI's impact within the Distribution and Consumption phase of the ad.

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