

# Carbon Offsets

## What?

Carbon offsets are voluntary payments to third-party organizations to compensate for harmful greenhouse gas emissions that result from your activities. To mitigate these emissions, you can purchase carbon offsets that help fund projects that either remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere or prevent greenhouse gases from entering the atmosphere. These projects are often nature-based (e.g., tree planting) or technology-based (e.g., direct air capture or clean energy infrastructure). Carbon offsets are measured in tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent (or tCO<sub>2</sub>e).

## Why?

Nearly every aspect of your event—from travel to catering to energy use—can generate greenhouse gas emissions in our atmosphere. The McGill Sustainable Events program focuses on greenhouse gas emissions from travel. Find out more about the environmental impacts of travel and why it is important to reduce travel-related emissions on the [McGill Sustainable Travel](#) web page.

## How?

**Step 1: Use a carbon calculator to estimate your event’s greenhouse gas emissions related to travel.** To estimate travel-related emissions, event planners can use the “Estimated Travel Emissions” tab in the event certification checklist. Talk to your Sustainable Events Ambassador for assistance with the calculator or to inquire about other carbon calculator options.

**Step 2 (Optional): Communicate the total estimated greenhouse gas emissions from your event in relatable terms during or after your event.** [Natural Resources Canada](#) offers a greenhouse gas equivalencies calculator in which you can translate your emissions into the approximate equivalent number of litres of gasoline consumed, average homes’ electricity use for one year, number of propane cylinders used for home barbecues, and other metrics. Use the “If You Have Emissions Data” tab and enter the amount of emissions calculated using the appropriate measuring unit.

**Step 3: Purchase carbon offsets for your event through the [McGill Offsetting Program](#).** The projects suggested in the McGill Offsetting Program were selected by an Offset Selection Committee composed of students, faculty, and staff at McGill. Project criteria were developed to fit our context and mission at McGill. You can learn more about each carbon offset project by clicking on the links included in the “Estimated Travel Emissions” tab of the event certification checklist. Be sure to use the “Travel – Carbon Offset” account code 700514.