



Advancing Conservation through Empathy for Wildlife (ACE for Wildlife™) Network Bylaws

Membership Structure

A. The ACE for Wildlife Network¹ (also “the Network”) is made up of zoos and aquariums accredited by the Association for Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) throughout the United States (US). They are called Partner Organizations (also “Partners”). The Network is staffed by Woodland Park Zoo’s (WPZ) Advancing Empathy Staff (AE Staff). Network expansion is outlined in the “Network Structure” section below.

To become a Partner Organization, a zoo or aquarium must:

- Be accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA);
- Be located within the United States (US);
- Have had at least two individuals at the organization engaged in the Network as Affiliates for at least six months prior to applying;
- Sign a Letter of Commitment that acknowledges their organization’s commitment to empathy as a strategy for conservation and the value of the Network in promoting this strategy;

To maintain status as a Partner Organization, an organization must:

- Remain accredited by AZA;
- Have organizational leadership continue to acknowledge the value of empathy as a strategy for conservation and the ACE for Wildlife Network in promoting this strategy;
- Appoint a Network Member to serve as the primary Point of Contact and holder of the Partner Organization vote for the Network;
- Nominate at least one Network Member to participate in any Network modes of engagement (e.g. serve on a committee, be a Channel Host, etc.) in each calendar year;
- Contribute to shared learning about empathy projects, when possible; and
- Support staff participation in annual all-Network meetings and other Network opportunities, when feasible, and travel funding and/or virtual option(s) are available.

Should a Partner Organization lose AZA accreditation and have its appeal denied (if attempted), its status in the ACE for Wildlife Network will be suspended until it regains accreditation. Once suspended, organizations and their staff will not be eligible for Network votes or for travel funding. Individuals may continue to be involved through the Affiliate status as outlined below.

¹ [For the ACE for Wildlife Network vision, mission, and values click here.](#) [Click here for the Code of Conduct.](#)

- B. Each Partner Organization must select one Network Member to serve as the Network Point of Contact. The Network Point of Contact:
- Will administer voting rights at all-Network meetings in consultation with other organizational staff;
 - Should volunteer to serve on a committee and/or assist in implementing activities; and
 - Notify their organization's staff of the ACE for Wildlife resources available to them.

If a Network Point of Contact leaves the institution or changes jobs, the Partner Organization is responsible for replacing that Point of Contact and notifying AE Staff. Each November, the AE Staff will contact Partner Organizations to verify the Network Point of Contact for the upcoming year.

- C. Individuals who are employed or volunteer at an ACE for Wildlife Partner Organization are encouraged to participate in the Network. They are called Network Members (also "Members"). They will have access to Network resources, the discussion board, communications and all activities and events after creating an account. They are also encouraged to serve on a committee in addition to the requirements of each Partner Organization and/or assist in implementing Network activities, when possible.
- D. Individuals who are outside of the Network (such as researchers, consultants, former staff at Partner Organizations, staff at other AZA organizations, students, etc.), but interested in the Network's mission may apply to become a Network Affiliate. They will have access to Network resources, the discussion board, communications, activities and events upon the acceptance of their application by the Membership Committee. They may serve on committees, but will not have voting rights in all-Network motions.

Code of Conduct

- A. The ACE for Wildlife Network is committed to providing and fostering a safe, collaborative, and welcoming environment for all Network Members and Affiliates. It is expected that everyone who engages with the ACE for Wildlife Network in the form of events, the discussion board, and direct communication(s) with others in the Network follows the outlined policies and rules in our Code of Conduct in both in-person and virtual spaces.
- B. The full Code of Conduct can be read [here](#), or on the Membership Committee's page on www.aceforwildlife.org.
- C. The Membership Committee is responsible for drafting and updating the Code of Conduct.

Committee Structure

- A. Committees exist to implement the mission, purpose, and goals of the ACE for Wildlife Network. Committees can be standing (permanent) committees or temporary working groups, created to address a specific issue (e.g., a Summit Planning Working Group).
- B. Currently, the standing committees are Steering; Communications; Strategic Learning; Membership; Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEAI); and Conservation Action Committees.
- **Steering Committee Mission:** To decide priorities, goals, structure, and direction of the Network. We accomplish this through:
 - Creating a strategic 3-5 year plan for the Network;
 - Prioritizing goals, establishing a timeline, and providing implementation support;
 - Reviewing the bylaws annually; and
 - Deciding what committees and groups need to be in place to achieve our goals and make sure the right expertise is in the discussion.
 - **Communication Committee Mission:** To nurture connection and collaboration to effectively facilitate communication within and about the Network in an accessible and inclusive way. We accomplish this through:
 - Nurturing connection and collaboration with all Network Members and Affiliates ;
 - Cultivating an inclusive learning culture with accessible information and inclusive language use ; and
 - Facilitating the flow of information to external audiences.
 - **Strategic Learning Committee Mission:** To drive the learning priorities of the ACE for Wildlife Network so it can collaboratively learn, build skills, and share expertise. We accomplish this through:
 - Creating a learning environment which advocates for and values diversity of Members and Affiliates in the Network;
 - Leading the implementation of the ACE for Wildlife [Strategic Learning Framework](#); and
 - Empowering reflection on the collective learning of the Network.
 - **Membership Committee Mission:** To develop the guidelines and practices of ACE for Wildlife membership levels and collaborate with other committees to nurture connection between them and within membership levels as the Network grows. We accomplish this through:
 - Creating a robust onboarding process for new ACE for Wildlife Members, Affiliates, and Partner Organizations;;
 - Monitoring strategic recruitment and growth of the Network; and
 - Making leadership opportunities in the Network clearer and more welcoming.
 - **DEAI Committee Mission:** To responsibly promote an inclusive environment within the Network and facilitate conversations that help Network Members and Affiliates feel supported to incorporate DEAI initiatives into their organizations. We accomplish this by:

- Understanding the spectrum of DEAI related work and needs across the ACE for Wildlife Network;
 - Developing useful resources and tools for Network Members and Affiliates to use at their organizations; and
 - Facilitating the sharing of knowledge and experience to support Network Members and Affiliates in their DEAI journeys.
 - **Conservation Action Committee Mission:** To share a common vision to promote Partner Organization conservation missions and motivate visitors to take conservation action. We accomplish this through:
 - Developing and sharing resources on promising practices for conservation calls to action both in general and with effective empathy practices;
 - Coordinating joint campaigns to maximize our impact; and
 - Identifying ways we can measure the effectiveness of our conservation calls to action.
- C. New committees or working groups can be proposed by any Network Member and must be approved by the Steering Committee.
- A brief proposal for a new committee or working group including purpose, gap to be addressed, proposed goals, whether a standing committee or working group, and at least three individuals interested in serving on the committee should be submitted to the Steering Committee for consideration through the empathy@zoo.org email address. Once approved, new committees have at least six months to recruit additional committee representatives and begin meeting. If for any reason, the committee has not begun meeting within this window, they must decide their timeline amongst themselves and update the Steering Committee.
- D. Committees can be dissolved by a unanimous vote of the Steering Committee when no longer relevant or necessary. If a committee is struggling, the Steering Committee can assist with recruitment of new committee members, adjustment of committee goals and/or help determine whether the committee is no longer needed only after the committee has done all they can to resolve concerns amongst themselves.
- E. Committees should meet at least quarterly or as much as necessary to advance the goals of the committees.
- F. Committee Membership
- Committees are made up of 3 - 6 individuals representing different Partner Organizations (including chair(s)) and Affiliates. These individuals are called Committee Representatives. At no point should the Member:Affiliate ratio on a committee exceed 1:1. Each Representative will serve a 2-year term on a rolling basis. In the first year of a committee, half will have the option of rotating off after one year to stagger the rotation cycle.

- Selection Process: Committee Representatives are self-nominated or nominated by peers in October, with new Representatives eligible to join the committee meeting following the all-Network October meeting. If there are not enough new candidates and existing Representatives are willing to continue, they may serve additional 1-year terms. Affiliates or Members who are interested in joining a committee should reach out to empathy@zoo.org expressing:
 - on what committee(s) they are interested in serving
 - why they are interested in serving on that committee(s).
- Replacement Process: If Committee Representatives no longer have capacity to serve, are no longer employed by a Partner Organization, or leave the Network for any reason, the committee will seek new candidates to complete the departing individual's term.
- Responsibilities: Committee Representatives should work with the committee chair on developing agenda, setting goals, and completing action items.
- Commitment: Committee Representatives are encouraged to attend all meetings. They must attend at least 65% of meetings to retain their position as verified by AE Staff.
- Quorum: Committee meetings can only be held if at least half of the committee can attend.
- Votes: Committees will endeavor to come to consensus on decisions without the need for a vote. When that is not possible, Committee Representatives can call for a simple majority vote on an issue. Absent Representatives may give their voting proxy to another Committee Representative by notifying the chair, the individual who will administer the proxy and AE Staff in advance of a meeting. If there is a tie, the chair of the Steering Committee will serve as the tie breaker.

G. Committee Chair

- Each committee must have a chair. The chair term is 12-months with an optional 2nd year term if the committee and chair agree to it. There may be one chair or two co-chairs if nominees would like to work together. Committee chairs must be Network Members. If an Affiliate wishes to be chair, they must co-chair with a Member.
- Selection process: In November, the committee will accept nominations for the chair. Individuals can self-nominate. Nominees must accept the nomination before committee consideration of their candidacy. If there are two nominations, the committee can decide whether they want to hold a vote or have two co-chairs. If there are three nominations, there will be a simple majority vote to determine the chair or co-chairs.
- Responsibilities: The chair(s) work with AE Staff to set committee agendas, annual committee goals, lead meetings, and present on committee activities in Network meetings.

- o Additional commitments: Chair(s) must attend two additional meetings with all standing committee chairs to set a communal agenda; present committee plans (or delegate this task) at Network meetings and attend at least 80% of meetings.
 - o Replacement process: If a chair leaves their position or is no longer able to meet the commitment, the co-chair will become the single chair. If the remaining chair is an Affiliate, the committee will decide if the Affiliate will remain sole chair for the remainder of the year or if they will hold another election for chair or co-chair. If there is not currently a co-chair, the nomination/selection process will take place as soon as there is notification of the chair's departure.
- H. Woodland Park Zoo's Role on Committees
- o AE Staff will coordinate each committee, develop the agenda in coordination with the chair(s), schedule and facilitate meetings, take notes and provide support for the work of the committees. They will not have a vote. If the chair is unable to attend a meeting, AE Staff can serve as the acting chair.
 - o As a Partner Organization, WPZ staff from other teams may serve as a voting Representative on any committee as well as committee chair.
 - o The distinction between AE Staff and a voting Committee Representative will be made clear on each meeting agenda.
- I. Committee Goals
- o At the first meeting of the year, committees should review their mission and goals and make updates as needed. They should also discuss what they want to accomplish for the year.
 - o Committees will share any goals or major initiatives with the full Network in the discussion board for input at least one week prior to final adoption.
- J. Committee Logistics
- o Agenda will be shared at least one week in advance of meetings.
 - o Meeting minutes, taken by AE Staff, will be shared with each committee within a week of the meeting and will outline action items for the following month. Committee Representatives will have the opportunity to review and make corrections to meeting minutes before the minutes will be made available to the Network.
- K. Committee Disputes
- o Committees should adhere to Network norms outlined in the Code of Conduct and seek to resolve any disagreements within the committee. If that is not possible, the Steering Committee will adjudicate any disputes. Disputes within the Steering Committee will be adjudicated by the chairs of the other standing committees.

Network Structure

- A. The ACE for Wildlife Network should hold two full Network meetings a year. This meeting is open to all Network Members and Affiliates though any votes will be limited to the Partner Points of Contact or their designee.
- B. Any Network Member or Affiliate may propose amendments to the bylaws to the Steering Committee, which will consider the amendment at the next Steering Committee meeting. If the committee agrees, it may propose the amendment prior to the next full Network meeting for consideration. Amendments must be voted on by a quorum of Partner Points of Contact at an all-Network meeting or by electronic vote.

Expansion Plan

- A. The ACE for Wildlife Network will expand to US-based, AZA accredited zoos and aquariums through a process that allows interested applicants to choose their level of participation through either an individual Affiliate status or as a full Partner Organization.. Prospective organizations are reviewed twice a year (April and October) by the Membership Committee. The Membership Committee reserves the right to determine how many new Partner Organizations are accepted each year to ensure manageable and sustainable expansion. The Steering Committee will support the Membership Committee as needed during this process.
- B. In addition to Partner Organizational requirements outlined under Membership Structure, we encourage new Partner Organizations to:
 - a. Have at least one staff member attend or watch an introductory empathy training to ensure that they have a base level understanding of empathy practices and the ACE for Wildlife Network.
 - b. Have at least one Member attend at least 4 Network events (including recordings) per year.
- C. The Membership Committee is responsible for drafting, overseeing, and enacting any changes to the expansion of the ACE for Wildlife Network. The Steering Committee is responsible for ensuring the expansion plan is sustainable and aligns with long-term Network goals.
- D. The full expansion plan can be read [here](#).