



Advancing Conservation through Empathy for Wildlife (ACE for Wildlife®) Network Bylaws, 2026

Membership Structure

- I. 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; and
- 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 by resigning the Letter of Commitment every 2 years;
- Appoint two Network Members to serve as the primary Points of Contact, with one as the 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.

- II. Each Partner Organization must select two Network Members to serve as the Network Point of Contact. The Network Points of Contact:
- A. Will administer voting rights at all-Network meetings in consultation with other organizational staff;

¹ For the ACE for Wildlife Network’s mission, vision, and values, [click here](#).

- B. Should volunteer to serve on a committee and/or assist in implementing Network activities; and
- C. Notify their organization's staff of the ACE for Wildlife Network 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 Points of Contact for the upcoming year.

III. Loss of Partner status:

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.

Points of Contact will be notified each September whether they are on track to meet Partner status commitments for the year. Partners should work to remedy any identified shortcomings by the end of the following quarter (i.e., the end of the year following notification in September). If they have not improved in that quarter window, they will enter a quarter-long probationary period (i.e., Q1 of the following year) and will need to work with the AE Staff or a Network Mentor (e.g., Empathy Champion, committee representative or chair) to outline steps to regain their full status.

If an organization fails to meet requirements for sustaining Partner status by the end of the probationary period (i.e., the end of March), their status in the ACE for Wildlife Network will be suspended. Once suspended, organizations and their staff will not be eligible for Network votes or travel funding. Individuals may continue to be involved as Affiliates.

An organization interested in returning must reapply to become a Partner Organization for consideration by the Membership Committee at a future date.

- IV. 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. If volunteers are interested in participating in eligible Network leadership activities, they must receive an endorsement from the current volunteer coordinator (or equivalent role) at the organization they volunteer at stating that they are currently meeting their volunteer requirements and can adhere to the time commitments of the leadership opportunity.
- V. 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 creation of their account or 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

- I. 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.
- II. The [full Code of Conduct can be read here](#), or on the Membership Committee's page on www.aceforwildlife.org. The Membership Committee is responsible for drafting and updating the Code of Conduct.

Committee Structure

- I. Committees exist to implement the mission, purpose, and goals of the ACE for Wildlife Network. Committees are standing (permanent) bodies. Temporary working groups may also be created to address a specific issue or task (e.g., a Summit Planning Working Group).
- II. Currently, the standing committees are Communications; Conservation Action; Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI); Membership; Steering; and Strategic Learning Committees.
 - **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.
 - **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.
 - **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.
- **Membership Committee Mission:** To develop the guidelines and practices of ACE for Wildlife Network 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 Network Members, Affiliates, and Partner Organizations;
 - Monitoring strategic recruitment and growth of the Network; and
 - Making leadership opportunities in the Network clearer and more welcoming.
- **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 working groups need to be in place to achieve our goals and make sure the right expertise is in the discussion.
- **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.

III. New committees or working groups can be proposed by any Network Member or the Advancing Empathy team at Woodland Park Zoo and must be approved by the Steering Committee.

- A. 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.

- IV. Committees and working groups can be dissolved by a unanimous vote of the Steering Committee when no longer relevant or necessary. If a committee or working group is struggling, the Steering Committee can assist with recruitment of new committee or working group representatives, adjustment of goals and/or help determine whether the committee or working group is no longer needed only after the body has done all they can to resolve concerns amongst themselves.
- V. Committees should meet at least quarterly or as much as necessary to advance the goals of the committees.
- VI. Committee Membership:
- Committees are made up of no more than 10 individuals representing different Partner Organizations (including chair(s)) and Affiliates. These individuals are called Committee Representatives. At no point should the Affiliate;Member ratio on a committee exceed 1:1. Each Representative will serve a 2-year term with the option to extend their service for a year upon the end of their second term. A representative can extend their service on a committee up to two times. In the first year of a new committee, half the representatives will have the option of rotating off after one year to stagger the rotation cycle.
 - Call for Service: The annual committee call for service is announced to the ACE for Wildlife Network in September and closes one week after the all-Network October meeting. All new committee representatives are required to attend the committee's December meeting and will start their terms then. If there are not enough new candidates and existing Representatives are willing to continue, they may serve additional 1-year terms.
 - Replacement Process: If Committee Representatives no longer have capacity to serve, or leave the Network for any reason and committee size drops below five individuals, rolling recruitment for the committee will begin to fill the vacant seat(s).
 - Responsibilities: Committee Representatives should work with the committee chair on developing and contributing to agenda items, 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 a 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/or AE Staff in advance of the meeting. If there is a tie, the senior chair of the Steering Committee will serve as the tie breaker.

VII. Committee Chair

- Each committee is required to have a chair and a co-chair. These terms are 2-years long. The chair and co-chair will serve their terms on a staggered cadence. Members or Affiliates can be chairs, however, one of the roles must always be filled by a Network Member.
- Eligibility: To serve as a committee co-chair, representatives must have served at least one year (within the past two years) on any ACE for Wildlife Network committee and, in the event of a break in service, remained active in the ACE for Wildlife Network. If no one on committees meets the eligibility requirements come the chair selection process, the scope expands to anyone on the committee who is interested and available.
- Selection process: Committee representatives must cast their nominations for chairs by December 15 to be considered. Chair elections will take place in the January meetings for each committee via a simple, majority vote and consensus must be reached within the meeting.
- Responsibilities: The chair(s) work with AE Staff to set and send committee agendas, annual committee goals, lead meetings, and present on committee activities in Network meetings.
- Additional commitments: Chair(s) must attend three meetings throughout the year with all standing committee chairs to set communal agendas or goals; present committee plans (or delegate this task) at all-Network meetings and attend at least 80% of meetings.
- Replacement process: If a chair leaves their position or is no longer able to meet the commitment, the committee will hold an additional chair election to fill the role as soon as there is notification of the chair's departure.

VIII. Woodland Park Zoo's role on Committees and Working Groups

- AE Staff responsible for managing the Network will help coordinate each committee, develop the agenda in coordination with the chair(s), schedule and help facilitate meetings, take notes and provide support for the work of the committees as needed. They will not have a vote. If the chair is unable to attend a meeting, AE Staff can serve as the acting chair.
- As a Partner Organization, WPZ staff from other teams may serve as a voting Representative on any committee or working group as well as committee chair.
- The distinction between AE Staff and a voting Committee Representative will be made clear on each meeting agenda.
- AE staff cannot serve as representatives on committees or working groups.

IX. Committee Goals

- A. Within the first three meetings 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.
- B. Committees will share any goals or major initiatives with the full Network on the

discussion board for input at least one week prior of final adoption.

X. Committee Logistics

- A. The agenda will be shared at least one week in advance of meetings.
- B. Meeting minutes, taken by AE Staff or committee chairs, 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.

XI. Committee Disputes

- A. 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

- I. 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 that take place during the meetings will be limited to the Partner Points of Contact or their designee.
- II. 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

- I. 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 (see full expansion plan for details). The Steering Committee will support the Membership Committee as needed during this process.
- II. 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 ACE for Wildlife Network Onboarding/Welcome Session to ensure that they have a base level understanding of

empathy practices and the ACE for Wildlife Network.

- B. Have at least one staff member attend at least 4 Network events (including recordings) per year.

III. 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.

IV. [The full expansion plan can be read here.](#)