



Diversity, Equity, Access & Inclusion Position Statement

Approved by the AZA Board of Directors - November 2, 2020

The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) recognizes and embraces human diversity in all its forms and facets, while also acknowledging we continue to fall short in our efforts to be equitable and inclusive. We recognize that our work to conserve wildlife and wild places is inextricably linked to issues of environmental and social justice. To move forward effectively we must recognize the history of our field and the impacts of our current structures and cultures. We recognize the lasting impacts of the colonial history of the conservation and zoo and aquarium fields. We acknowledge that systemic racism is embedded in our structures, culture and organizations, and we are committed to positive and sustained change that dismantles these barriers.

AZA zoos and aquariums operate as both businesses and conservation organizations. They provide their communities with unique and valuable learning and recreation opportunities while supporting their local economies through employment opportunities, money spent in the community on goods and services, and as tourism destinations of significant economic impact. At the same time, AZA zoos and aquariums work with conservation partners around the world from a wide variety of cultures and backgrounds to save species. Therefore, it is critical that zoo and aquarium professionals recognize the importance of diversity, equity, access and inclusion in both their business and conservation practices.

AZA zoos and aquariums need to recognize the strength that comes from the diversity of backgrounds among staff, partners, and stakeholders to achieve their missions. As the composition of the United States' and other countries' populations become increasingly diverse, and calls for a more equitable society become more urgent, zoos and aquariums must take action to develop or deepen comprehensive diversity and inclusion initiatives in their hiring and employment practices; the services and experiences they provide their visitors and communities; the way that they do business; and how they work with in-situ conservation partners.

This position statement applies to the Association's offices, its employees, and its individual and organizational members. It acknowledges that accredited members must also have their own staff diversity, equity, access, & inclusion statement and program. The statement and program should be reflective of the community, region, and country in which the member operates and serves. While AZA leadership, the AZA Board of Directors and AZA Committees will continue to advance diversity, equity, access, and inclusion trends, strategies, resources and best practices for AZA, there is an expectation that all individual members, member institutions and AZA staff will proactively work toward greater diversity, equity, access and inclusion in all that they do.