

Staff and Volunteers Toolkit

2026



www.zoo.org/empathy

Contact: empathygrants@zoo.org



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction (page 1)

Executive Summary (page 3)

Projects (page 5)

- ROADMAP to Empathy Project
- Creating Empathy for Animals at Zoo Boise
- Empathy-Focused Volunteer Interpretation Project
- Cultivating Empathy for Wildlife Through Staff Enhancements
- Amplify Empathy: Volunteer Impact on Public & Zoo Employees
- Caring for our Care Staff
- Banding Together to Save Cranes
- Field Programs: Building Empathy for Marine Wildlife
- Docents Best Practices
- Empathy Training Videos

Content by: Advancing Empathy Team, Woodland Park Zoo

Design by: Katie Gibian, Woodland Park Zoo

INTRODUCTION

Woodland Park Zoo's Advancing Empathy (AE) Initiative was launched in 2019 to expand the use of the empathy practices and build community and collaboration with other Association of Zoos and Aquarium (AZA)-accredited zoos and aquariums. As part of its AE Initiative, Woodland Park Zoo was privately funded to develop a grant program that builds capacity to foster empathy for wildlife in accredited zoos and aquariums across Alaska, Idaho, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, Washington and Wisconsin.

The AE Grant Program supports organizational efforts to plan, build, and/or expand practices and programs that foster empathy for animals and wildlife. Through grant support, recipients are developing the resources and expertise they need to increase the long-term impact of empathy practices and programs at their zoo or aquarium and have a lasting influence on their organization and their peers.

To date, the program has granted \$9 million to support 90 grant projects that have developed, implemented, and evaluated initiatives ranging from formal programs for children to infusing empathy into biofact usage, exhibit design, and interpretive plans. Grantees have also benefited from the program's collaborative nature and cross-institution knowledge sharing, which happens during grant periods, across grant rounds, and in professional forums such as peer-reviewed journals and panels at AZA conferences.

AE grant recipients also share best practices, lessons learned and resources developed through their grants with the Advancing Conservation through Empathy for Wildlife (ACE for Wildlife™) Network. The Network is a global learning community that creates and shares effective practices to foster empathy for animals and people. This amplification allows grant outcomes to support collaboration among all zoos and aquariums working to inspire conservation action.

To make the 142 resources developed by all 80 projects more accessible, the AE team has created this series of toolkits based on the 10 underlying themes that cut across grant projects including:



Animal Ambassadors



*Animal Care Play Spaces
& Young Learners*



Animal Husbandry



Construction



*Diversity, Equity,
Accessibility & Inclusion*



Long Term Planning



On-Site Interpretation



Programs & Partnerships

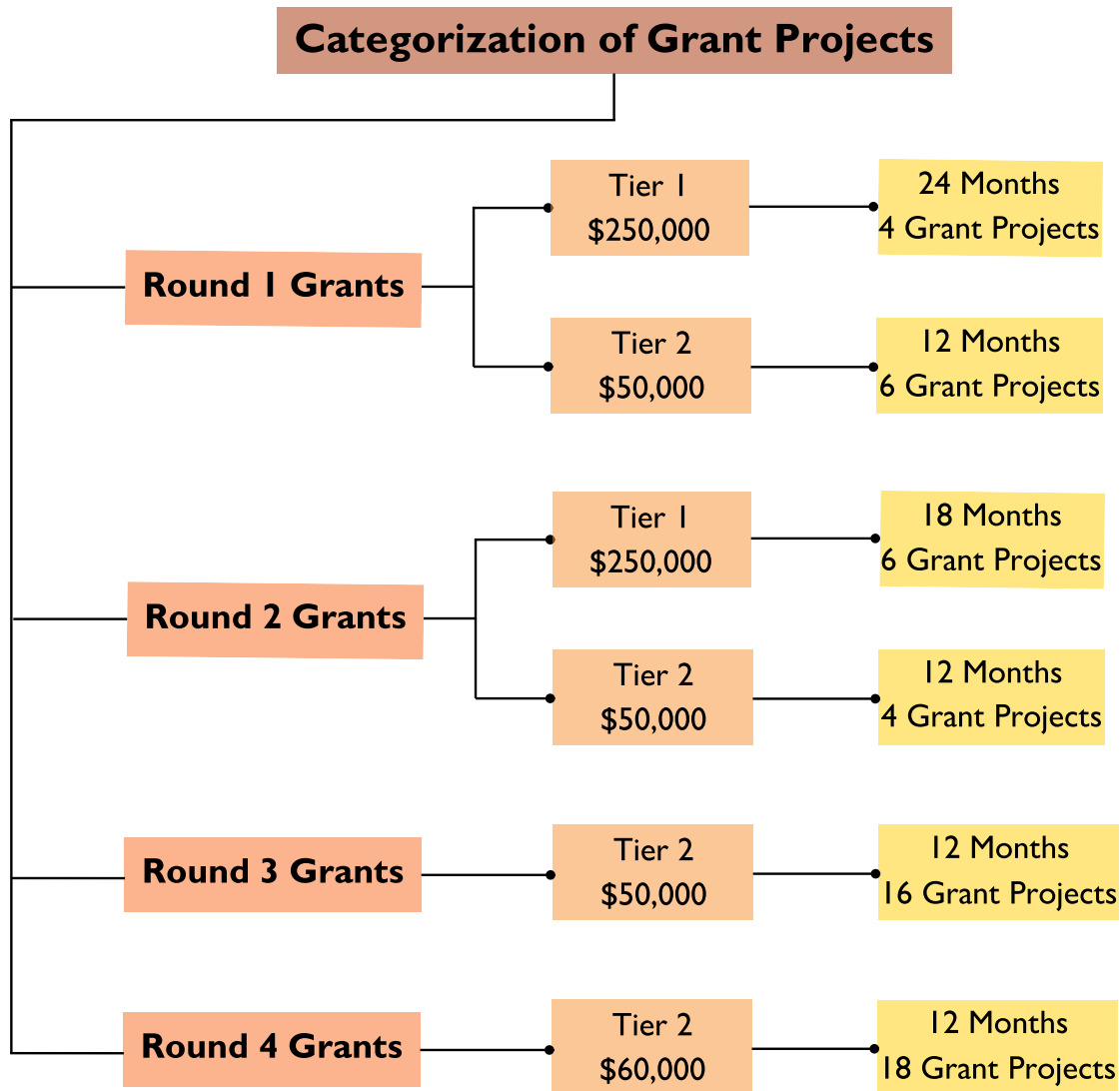


Signage



Staff and Volunteers

The toolkits include AE grants funded in the 2019 grant pilot program and AE Grants Rounds One through Four. As subsequent grant rounds conclude, additional resources will be added. In Rounds 1 and 2 (awarded in 2021), there were two funding tiers: Tier 1, up to \$250,000 and up to 24 months (in Round 1) or 18 months (in Round 2); and Tier 2, up to \$50,000 and up to 12 months. Round 3 only featured Tier 2 grants due to the timeline of the overarching AE grant that had been set to end in December 2023. Due to an AE grant extension, Round 4 Tier 2 grants were offered on a 12-month timeline as well, with an increase of up to \$60,000 to account for rising costs.



Categorization of Advancing Empathy Grant Program

For insights into the collective impacts of funded projects and key takeaways from the grant program to date, see our culminating grant reports in the [Resource Library](#). These reports highlight lessons learned, emerging themes, and recommendations as the granting program continues to evolve.

Organizations beginning or expanding staff and volunteer training may find the ACE for Wildlife Network [Empathy Training Toolkit](#) resources helpful. These materials were developed to support teams in integrating empathy-based practices into their work. Within this section, you will find five short form videos—Empathy & the ACE for Wildlife Network, Types of Empathy, Effective Empathy Practices, The Empathy Wheel, and Anthropomorphism.

In addition to the Empathy Training Toolkit, organizations may also find the [Empathy Primer](#) helpful as an introduction to core concepts and practices, and the [Empathy Infographic for animal care staff](#), which was designed to support conversations about empathy in daily keeper practice.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recognizing the vital role staff and volunteers play in connecting zoo and aquarium guests with animals, projects in this area focused on equipping them with the skills and resources to create and deliver empathy-based educational experiences.

Projects Included



ROADMAP to Empathy Project



Creating Empathy for Animals at Zoo Boise



Empathy-Focused Volunteer Interpretation Project



Cultivating Empathy for Wildlife Through Staff Enhancements



Amplify Empathy: Volunteer Impact on Public & Zoo Employees



Caring for Our Care Staff



Banding Together to Save Cranes



Field Programs: Building Empathy for Marine Wildlife



Docents Best Practices



Empathy Training Videos

Objectives and Strategies

Depending on each organization's stage of readiness, projects in this category included high-level revisions of interpretive master plans, redesigned volunteer training programs, development of advanced or specialized staff resources, reformatted training courses, program restructuring, resource reallocation, and technology improvements.

These efforts aimed to design, update, and implement empathy training plans for zoo staff and volunteers to strengthen empathy for animals among guests during formal and informal programs and interpretive experiences. A strong emphasis was placed on staff communication and presentation skills—including the integration of cohesive messaging about conservation actions—which directly influenced the quality and impact of keeper chats, training demonstrations, zoo camps, animal encounters, behind-the-scenes tours, field trips, and classroom visits.

Key Achievements

Overall, staff and volunteers appeared more confident interpreting through research-backed empathy practices. Those trained in empathy-based approaches engaged visitors through updated signage and hands-on activities that highlighted the individuality and needs of animals. Programs such as the Beach Naturalist and Cedar River Salmon Journey fostered emotional connections by immersing participants in sensory-rich environments.

Volunteers also demonstrated improved job performance and public speaking skills, as noted by their supervisors, which led to stronger visitor engagement and satisfaction. Additionally, operational barriers were reduced, allowing staff and volunteers to complete tasks more efficiently—ultimately increasing volunteer participation and overall capacity.

Outputs and Deliverables

The projects collectively produced a variety of outputs including:

- Education program training materials were reworked to incorporate empathy-focused methods.
- Staff members received training in empathy practices, public speaking, and storytelling.
- Long-term volunteers attended Fostering Empathy training sessions.
- Fostering Empathy training videos were produced.
- Animal quick sheets were developed using empathy-based language, featuring personal information, storytelling, and perspective-taking examples.
- New empathy-focused trading cards were created, featuring practical conservation steps and links to the zoo's website.
- Technology upgrades improved internet access and supported staff in performing their duties.
- Computers were purchased for an on-site volunteer training hub.

Challenges

Several projects encountered challenges related to technology access and logistics. Investments in infrastructure updates and new training formats significantly improved accessibility. However, competing priorities for programs and training hours, combined with limited staff capacity, contributed to delays in updates and launches.

As in many other areas, the COVID-19 pandemic affected project timelines, staff availability, and overall progress during the 2020-2022 period, resulting in temporary postponements of some activities.

Conclusion

Ongoing training has enabled multiple grantees to embed empathy practices across their institutions and into their organizational cultures. Ten grantees conducted evaluations of their training programs and found that staff and volunteers reported significant increases in confidence, knowledge, and ability to incorporate empathy into their work. More than half of all grant projects (56%) successfully increased staff and volunteer familiarity with empathy best practices—a growth observed across all project types.

PROJECTS

ROADMAP to Empathy Project

Como Park Zoo & Conservatory, October 2021 - September 2023 (Round 1, Tier 1)

Project Summary: This project enhanced the ROADMAP (Reaching Our Audiences by Developing Mission Aligned Programs) framework to operationalize empathy best practices and increase capacity to develop and deliver effective empathy-based programming and experiences at Como Park Zoo & Conservatory (CPZC) and Denver Zoo (DZ), which had created the original ROADMAP framework. Staff and volunteers strengthened their ability to develop and deliver effective empathy-based programming and experiences. They also planned to utilize an integrated, enhanced ROADMAP to effectively educate, engage, and foster empathy for wildlife beyond the life of the grant period.

Achieved Outcomes: CPZC and DZ operationalized empathy best practices and increased their capacity to develop and deliver effective empathy-based experiences. Using the new, empathy-infused ROADMAP process and resources, CPZC piloted four new empathy-based public talks. This piece is also an important project output: created the ROADMAP to Empathy Theory of Change, which included new ideas around caring and conservation action, and how empathy as well as other factors can influence those actions.

Click [here](#) to view the webinar and resources related to this project.

Success Story: [Using empathy strategies to engage visitors meant my] “conversations were better – they were less superficial, more natural and personal, they felt less restrictive, and they built stronger connections.”

COMO-ALIGNED		We want our programs to help participants connect to Como and our educational aims as an organization. There are many approaches to making your program experience Como Aligned, but we've identified the four approaches below as priorities.		
	MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS	TIME IN AND WITH NATURE	SCIENCE AND INQUIRY	EMPATHY FOR WILDLIFE
<p><i>To target this approach in a shorter program like a talk, you might:</i></p>	Share behind-the-scenes stories	Observe live plants or animals together	Teach select science vocabulary	Frame animals and plants as individuals with unique experiences
	Highlight "insider info"	Include interactions with live plants or animals	Ask open ended questions (require more than yes/no) or questions with multiple correct answers	Use animal (and plant) names and pronouns
	Highlight WOW facts and figures	Share stories about experiences in or with nature (yours and participants')	Use science framing language (referring to tasks as "doing science" and people doing them as "scientists")	Assure animal welfare and plant care as a foundation for empathy
	Focus on real, Como stories	Include interactions with natural props or materials (brush, leaves, flowers, soil, substrate)	Share multiple "right" answers to complex problems (ex. how to help wild giraffes)	Model, name, and praise desired empathic behaviors and caring actions
	Highlight and include visits from Como experts	Label sometimes unacknowledged natural settings as nature (neighborhoods, parks, backyards)	Use real world contexts and problems	Encourage observation and narrate behaviors to help participants better understand an animal's emotions and intentions
	Incorporate Como's core messages (care, awe, interconnection)		Develop or use scientific models or diagrams	Draw on similarities and differences between participants and the animal or plant
	Ask participants to share or reflect on their previous Como experiences		Incorporate math or computations	Encourage participants to imagine themselves as an individual animal or plant and ask open-ended questions to support perspective taking
				Share short stories to give participants a glimpse of an individual animal or plant's life
				Encourage appropriate caring actions around our plants and animals like using a quiet voice or a gentle touch

The enhanced ROADMAP framework used by Como Park Zoo & Conservatory to guide empathy-based program development, staff practice, and visitor engagement.

Creating Empathy for Animals

Zoo Boise, October 2021 - September 2022 (Round 1, Tier 2)

Project Summary: This project began as a reflection of earlier empathy work that was largely interrupted by COVID-19 pandemic. The outcomes of this grant were to reflect on progress made through previous efforts to enhance Zoo Boise visitors' empathy for animals; design and implement an updated empathy training plan for zoo staff and volunteers and implement updated field trip materials around their Gorongosa National Park habitat.

Achieved Outcomes: Evaluation showed this project increased staff and volunteers' understanding and comfort fostering empathy for wildlife and how to integrate this into guest interactions. Some of the most useful tools that resulted from this grant included the staff and volunteer training videos, updated exhibit interpretative guides, and infusing empathy into all education programs. This project allowed the education department to use targeted time and resources to build a more comprehensive training program that included aspects for each department, rather than quickly trying to fit one training into everyone's schedule. Animal quick sheets were also developed using fostering empathy language, and included personal information, storytelling, and perspective taking examples.

Click [here](#) to view the webinar and resources related to this project.

Success Story: Staff and volunteers responded positively to the project, "Talking about older animals and having things like arthritis, I've had guests connect to that because they have arthritis or at least know what it is. Animals get the same kinds of challenges humans do as we grow old."



Empathy-Focused Volunteer Interpretation Project

Como Park Zoo & Conservatory, (Round 2, Tier 2)

Project Summary: This project builds on CPZC's Round 1 ROADMAP to Empathy project (LINK). One of the intended outcomes of the first ROADMAP to Empathy project was that staff and volunteers would effectively educate, engage, and foster empathy for wildlife beyond the life of the Round 1 grant period. This project aimed to advance that work by rewriting CPZC's interpretive plans and redesigning interpretive volunteer training programs to build capacity for volunteers to effectively deliver high quality, empathy-based interpretation.

Achieved Outcomes: This project built a robust and accessible online learning platform for interpretive volunteers, replacing the previous reliance on hundreds of pages of manuals. Thirteen empathy-focused empathy trainings were created, centered on a featured individual animal profile. The online portal gave volunteers quick access to complete training materials and begin volunteering in specific area right away, a process that previously required a longer onramp period. New interpretive props and dedicated workstations were also added to support volunteers. Through these trainings, volunteers reported an increase in empathy - focusing on the individual animals while encouraging relevant facts also resulted in volunteers gaining confidence in interpreting and incorporating empathy into their programs.

These training courses are now a core component of CPZC's volunteer training process and are being used across departments. Interpretive volunteers, one of the zoo's main points of visitor contact, now enter their roles with empathy as a central component of every visitor interaction. Visitor Services staff also complete the trainings, ensuring empathy is consistently embedded across the guest experience. Zookeeping staff have expressed appreciation for how the profiles help them share information about the animals they care for in a way that feels authentic to them.

Click [here](#) to view the webinar and resources related to this project.

Success Story: *"Honestly, this was inspiring and informative and the most well-produced and put together online training I've ever experienced. Truly a model I'd like to see at other organizations."*

"I really like the online training. It allowed me to go at my own pace, go back to things, double check things, etc. Really like the website and portal, very nicely done!!"

Previously, volunteers have reported feeling "overwhelmed" after attending the in-person training and receiving manual printouts. Out of all 89 of the volunteers that took the survey after the online training, zero felt "unprepared" or "overwhelmed" to begin interpreting in the space with the content delivered in a more concise and focused format.

MEGACONCEPT: Professional Development

CONCEPT: Audience Engagement

GUIDING QUESTION: How can you (volunteer) make an interaction relevant to your audience (in Primate Spaces)?

INTENDED OUTCOMES

<p>FEEL (Changes in attitudes, interest, feelings or beliefs)</p>	<p>LEARN (Changes in knowledge or comprehension)</p>	<p>ACT (Changes in individual behaviors)</p>
<p>As a result of the program, our audience will develop or strengthen their...</p> <p>F1. Confidence in their ability to perform their role as a Primates interpretive volunteer</p> <p>F2. Own curiosity and connection to Como's Primates</p> <p>F3. Belief that they play an important role in the visitor experience with Como's Primates</p>	<p>As a result of the program, our audience will know/comprehend...</p> <p>L1. Expectations of being an interpretive volunteer</p> <p>L2. The MAP interpretive technique, and how to use it with Primates and within their exhibits</p> <p>L3. The most impactful facts, stories and events related to Primates and within their exhibits</p> <p>L4. The layout/components of Como's Primates exhibits</p> <p>L5. How Como meets the needs of the primates and provides excellent animal welfare</p> <p>L6. Empathy strategies and how to use them to help visitors understand an animal's unique experience</p>	<p>As a result of the program (training), our audience (volunteers) will...</p> <p>A1. Use the knowledge, empathic, interpretive techniques learned in the training to enhance visitors' curiosity and connection to Como's Primates</p> <p>A2. Use the knowledge and interpretive techniques learned in the training to encourage visitors to be present in the primate spaces</p> <p>A3. Consistently facilitate meaningful visitor interactions and experiences</p>

This program development template was created to define outcomes for meaningful volunteer–visitor interactions and embed empathy practices into interpretive volunteer training.

Cultivating Empathy for Wildlife through Staff Development and Guest Programming Enhancements

Dakota Zoological Society, September 2022 - September 2023, (Round 3, Tier 2)

Project Summary: This project's main goal was to develop staff communication and presentation skills to improve keeper chats, training demonstrations, zoo camp presentations, animal encounters, behind the scenes tours, and classroom visits. By establishing consistent messaging, Dakota Zoo aimed to increase keepers' confidence in public speaking, provide knowledge and resources for staff to enhance empathy-based outcomes.

Achieved Outcomes: Dakota Zoo clearly saw staff improvements in staff resilience and confidence when interacting in a variety of guest encounters. This project cultivated keeper' understanding of empathy and the importance of bridging animal interests and interactions to active conservation steps. Moreover, there was a genuine enthusiasm toward their individual guest programs that coincided with positive public responses to programming.

Click [here](#) to view the webinar and resources related to this project.

Success Story: *"I have received many positive notes from guests about my wild happenings (program offered at Dakota Zoo) ever since I changed the format a little. They also love the interactive parts."*

"People and children appreciate the trading cards when we hand them out for select Wild Happenings. Board members seem impressed with the new Wild Happenings we have coming up. Overall, I think the direction the program is going is a good one."



Trading cards developed through the empathy-based training highlight individual animals, including lesser-known species, and offer guests a tangible way to learn and connect.

Amplify Empathy: Volunteer Impact on Public & Zoo Employees

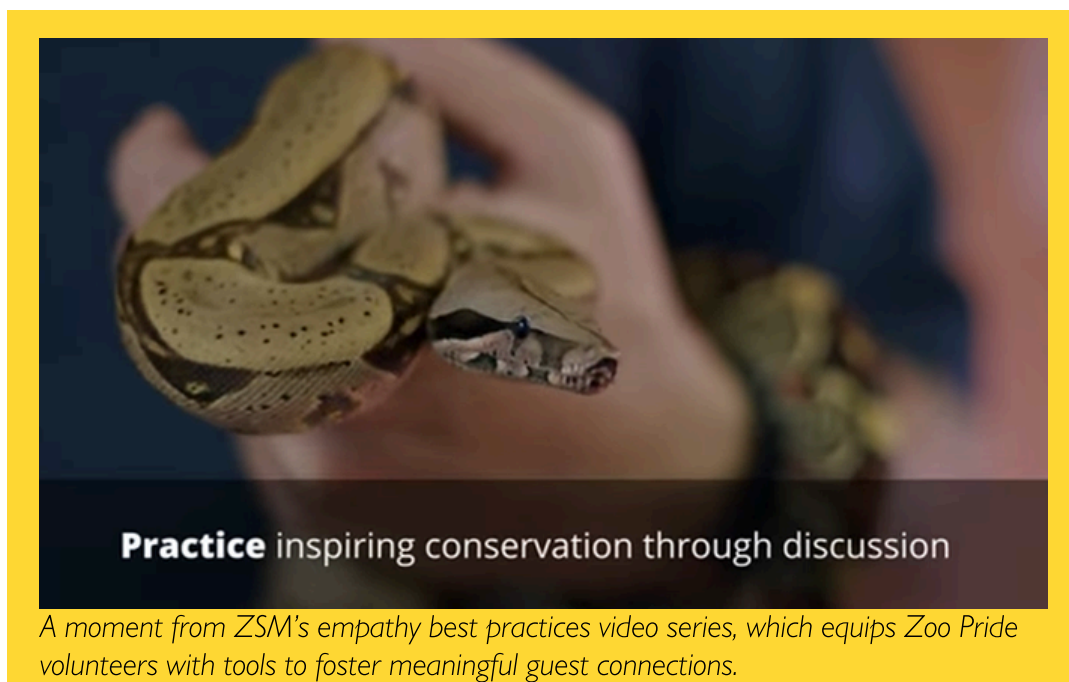
Zoological Society of Milwaukee, September 2022 - September 2023, (Round 3, Tier 2)

Project Summary: Zoological Society of Milwaukee (ZSM) enhanced their Zoo Pride volunteer program by restructuring it to amplify empathy as an organizational value. This was accomplished by recruiting and training a cohort of Zoo Pride volunteers to serve as Empathy Area Leaders. They were trained on key aspects of empathy for wildlife and act as models for the ways empathy can consistently and intentionally be incorporated into volunteer roles when engaging with the public. ZSM also hired a videographer to produce four empathy best practices training videos (*Why Empathy?*, *Empathy in Action*, *Empathy for Conservation & Animal Care*, and *Inspiring New Conservationists*), which now support volunteer training, staff onboarding, and community outreach across Milwaukee.

Achieved Outcomes: ZSM successfully enhanced their Zoo Pride volunteer program by embedding empathy more intentionally across all volunteer roles. 50 Zoo Pride leaders were recruited and trained as Empathy Leaders, piloting a new information sharing approach within each of Milwaukee County Zoo's animal habitats and supporting ongoing empathy-centered interpretation for the zoo's 250,000+ annual visitors. ZSM also developed four empathy training videos. ZSM's Zoo Pride staff now uses these videos to engage and inspire the public during conservation talks at civic organizations, community centers, and other venues throughout the greater Milwaukee community.

Click [here](#) to view the webinar and resources related to this project

Success Story: ZSM's Evaluation and Empathy Project Coordinator heard from many volunteers that the empathy best practices training helped them use all of the information that they know about our animals and elevate guests' experience while learning about wildlife. Our Zoo Pride volunteers love our animals, and ZSM staff continues to hear how they are thrilled to tell their personal animal encounters and infuse them with empathy-based concepts. By sharing their personal stories, they are helping guests form meaningful connections that will have an impact far beyond their single encounter.



Caring for Our Care Staff

ZooMontana, September 2022 - September 2023, (Round 3, Tier 2)

Project Summary: Zoo Montana's project "Caring for Our Care Staff" rose out of the desire to equip staff with digital resources and the technology required to learn and explore what empathy means in the context of zoological practices and professional relationships. At the time of this project, ZooMontana staff shared limited access to one desktop computer for all nine animal care staff members, so the primary objective was to add laptops and related equipment to increase access to the internet while working. Additional goals included improving participation in empathy and DEAI trainings across all staff and increasing staff involvement in the ACE for Wildlife Network.

Achieved Outcomes: The addition of additional technology for ZooMontana animal care staff increased the accessibility and rigor of the zoo's empathy and DEAI trainings across all staff, and enabled more consistent staff participation in the ACE for Wildlife Network. Access to staff training aided in the broader adoption of empathy-centered vocabulary and other empathy practices. The project also strengthened engagement from staff already using ACE for Wildlife Network resources and introduced new opportunities for continued involvement going forward.

Click [here](#) to view the webinar and resources related to this project.

Success Story: The most noticeable change that has come from increased participation in empathy training is that the general title of "Living Collections Keeper" has been changed to "Animal Care Staff." This is a new change that has been met with a positive response from our entire staff. The change has yet to make it into the vernacular of our guests, but in truth, they rarely see the animal care staff's titles written out and are likely calling them keepers because that is the common title found at most Zoos. We have noticed an increase in our guests referring to habitats as opposed to enclosures or exhibits. We feel that this is a direct result of the change in vocabulary amongst our staff and in our messaging.



This project equipped animal care staff with the technology needed to access enrichment records, participate in empathy and DEAI trainings, and engage more fully in the ACE for Wildlife Network.

Banding Together to Save Cranes

International Crane Foundation, January 2024 - December 2024 (Round 4, Tier 2)

Project Summary: This project enabled International Crane Foundation to expand and strengthen its Keeper Chat program by deepening collaboration between the Crane Conservation Department apprentices and the Conservation Education Department interns. Through the Banding Together initiative, apprentices received early-season interpretation training, developed thematic presentations, and practiced their guest-focused delivery with coordinated support from the Interpretive Programs Coordinator and Evaluator. The project improved seasonal keeper talks and provided opportunities for both Conservation Education Naturalist Interns and Crane Conservation Apprentices to participate in activities beyond their traditional job descriptions. This newly designed approach aimed to add greater value to Apprentice and Intern tenure with ICF, expanding future career options. Visitors engaged directly with staff who care for cranes, learning about the extraordinary efforts that AZA institutions throughout North America take in caring for their resident animals and the many contributions those species make to save their wild cousins.

Achieved Outcomes: This grant enabled the ICF to increase both the number of programs offered and the impact they had on visitors during their time on-site. It also added value to the Keeper Chats by emphasizing the importance of providing education directly through the people who work with the animals, ensuring that visitors gain a deeper, more personal understanding of conservation efforts. The project also strengthened their apprenticeship program. As the season progressed, apprentices grew more confident in their subject knowledge, job responsibilities, and public speaking skills, as noted by their supervisor, leading to improved visitor engagement and satisfaction. Ongoing evaluation throughout the season reinforced these improvements, with visitors reporting high satisfaction and stronger emotional connection to cranes.

Click [here](#) to view the webinar and resources related to this project.

Success Story: *“This experience reaffirmed for me that I enjoy education. I got new experience in public speaking with the specific goal of encouraging conservation empathy in our guests. I also learned how important it is to leave guests with a strong takeaway, either in learning something new or in ways to take action.”*

During a Keeper Chat, guests learn about crane care and conservation in ways that encourage empathy and a personal connection to these remarkable birds.



Field Programs: Building Empathy for Marine Wildlife

Seattle Aquarium, January 2024 - December 2024 (Round 4, Tier 2)

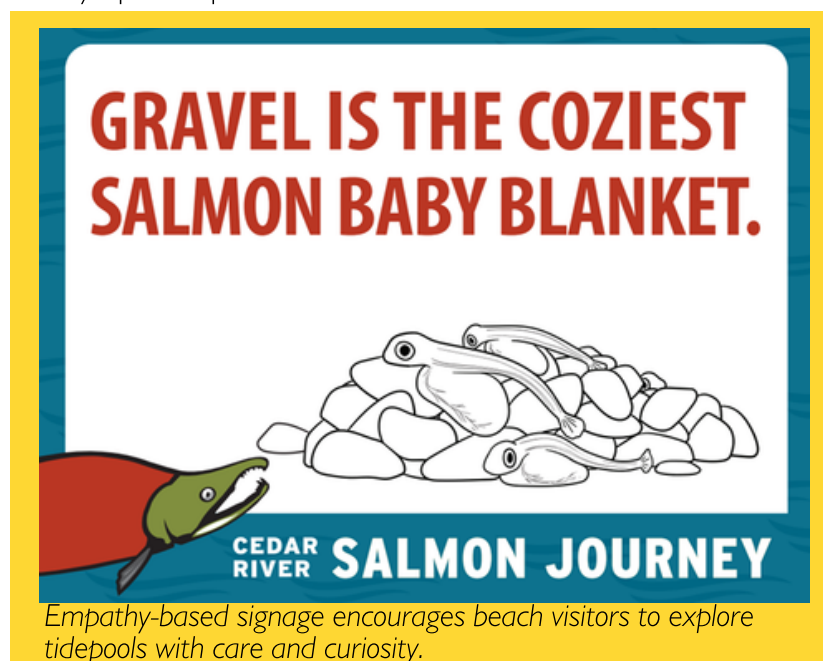
Project Summary: This project took empathy initiatives in the Seattle Aquarium's education and outreach programs—Beach Naturalist, Cedar River Salmon Journey, and community events—to a deeper level. Building upon an early foundation of empathy practices in their field programs, Seattle Aquarium redesigned information, outreach tools and wayfinding signs that incorporate empathy-for-wildlife language. This project also expanded the empathy training offered to staff and volunteer naturalists, helping them frame visitor interactions in ways that foster awareness, care, and conservation minded behavior.

Achieved Outcomes: Seattle Aquarium's field programs advanced empathy for local wildlife by offering free, accessible, and family-friendly events in natural settings, including beaches and salmon habitats. Staff and volunteers, trained in empathy practices, engaged visitors through updated signage and hands-on experiences that emphasized the individuality and needs of local animals. Programs like Beach Naturalists and Cedar River Salmon Journey fostered deep emotional connections by immersing participants in sensory-rich environments, supported by redesigned signage that encouraged perspective-taking and gentle exploration - including imaginative prompts like envisioning life from a crab or salmon's point of view. In 2024 alone, field programs reached more than 100,000 people and trained over 400 volunteers in empathy practices, significantly expanding the Aquarium's impact in the community. Volunteers reported feeling more confident in their ability to connect people to marine environments and inspire empathy for both animals and habitats. Volunteers shared that the signage and empathy prompts made it easier to guide visitors toward caring behaviors.

Additionally, bilingual volunteers in the Cedar River Salmon Journey program helped ensure empathy-based engagement was accessible to guests speaking Spanish, Mandarin, Vietnamese, and Korean.

Click [here](#) to view the webinar and resources related to this project.

Success Story: "We were reminded that even a small rock can be a creature's home, so step carefully and don't take anything." - Visitor at Olympic Sculpture Pocket Beach.



Empathy-based signage encourages beach visitors to explore tidepools with care and curiosity.

The following links include grant presentations from our 2020 pilot round:

February 2020 - December 2020

- [Empathy Field Trips: Empowering Teachers and Docents to Incorporate Empathy Best Practices](#) – Henry Vilas Zoo
 - This project strengthened empathy-based learning during school visits to Henry Vilas Zoo by developing online teacher resources and interpretive docent training modules. The teacher activity guides supported elementary students in building empathy for animals through caring behaviors, connection, and perspective-taking. A four-part docent training series introduced empathy research and practical strategies for incorporating empathy into interactions with students and visitors. Together, these resources expanded the Zoo's capacity to deliver empathy-for-wildlife learning across field trips and education programming.

- [Empathy Training Videos](#) – NEW Zoo and Adventure Park
 - This project developed a series of empathy training videos for staff and volunteers at NEW Zoo & Adventure Park. The videos introduced key concepts including what empathy is, how and why empathy works, and how empathy practices can be applied in a zoo setting. Drawing on research that positions empathy as a conservation tool, the videos also explored language and approaches that support staff and volunteers in fostering empathy for wildlife during guest interactions and programs.

For further information on grant projects and the Advancing Empathy Grant Program, please reach out to empathygrants@zoo.org.