# WOODLAND PARK ZOO

# BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY TO FOSTER EMPATHY FOR WILDLIFE GRANTING PROGRAM CULMINATING REPORT

# ROUNDS 1-3

## ADVANCING EMPATHY TEAM

April 2024

# Contents

# INTRODUCTION TO THE GRANTING PROGRAM

Woodland Park Zoo's (WPZ) Building Organizational Capacity to Foster Empathy for Wildlife Granting Program (the Granting Program) is a part of the zoo's Advancing Empathy (AE) Initiative. Supported by a private funder, this granting program supports Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)-accredited organizations in a seven-state region (Alaska, Idaho, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, Washington and Wisconsin) in their efforts to plan, build and/or expand programs and exhibits aimed at advancing empathy for animals and wildlife (see Appendix C for definitions). Tools, resources and lessons learned are shared with the collaborative Advancing Conservation through Empathy for Wildlife (ACE for Wildlife) Network. From 2021-2023, there were three rounds of funding, with a total of $3.6 million in grant funds distributed (See Appendix A for details). A fourth round is underway in 2024 but is not included in this report.

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 Advancing
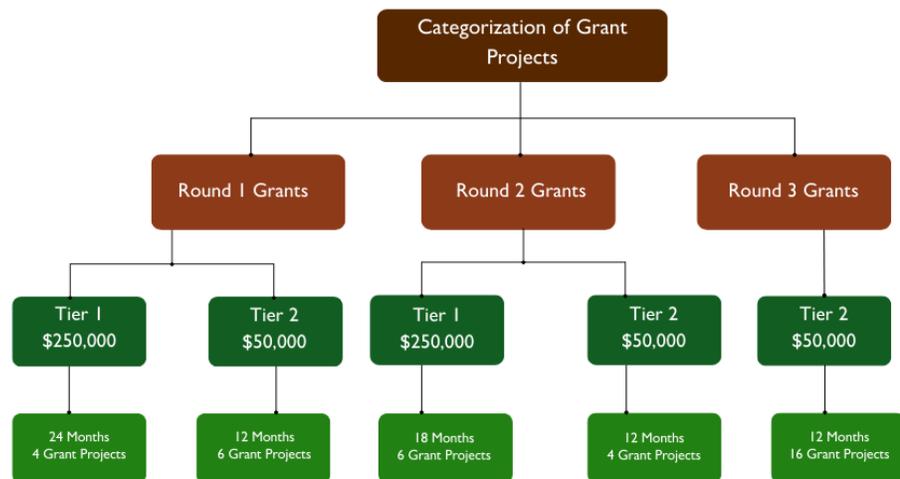


Empathy grant that had been set to end in December 2023. The Granting Program received 10 applications each in Rounds 1 and 2, and 16 applications in Round 3. All applications were funded in Rounds 1 through 3, some with additional conversations and material re-submissions to ensure the projects were aligned to the granting program and were achievable.

## Grant Review Process

For each funding round, the application was open to eligible organizations for at least four months. Once applications were submitted, the Grants Specialist and Grants Manager conducted "due diligence round one" reviewing each application for completeness and ensuring that all uploads were correct. If they were not, applicants were allowed to revise the documents and re-submit their applications, usually within one week of the deadline. One to two months before the application deadline, the Grants Specialist released a call for external reviewers. Every round of reviewers had at least one ACE for Wildlife Member and included representatives from other zoos and aquariums, informal education organizations, consultant firms and higher education institutions. External reviewers assessed and scored

four to six proposals each, using a rubric. At least three individuals reviewed every proposal. Once the applications were scored, groups of reviewers who had assessed the same proposals attended a virtual meeting, facilitated by the Grants Specialist, to discuss strengths, weaknesses and funding recommendations.

Following the external review, the Director of Advancing Empathy, Grants Specialist, Grants Manager and Evaluation Specialist completed "due diligence two" review of the applications, taking into account external reviewers' funding recommendations. This internal review phase also included drafting and sending any "make or break" follow-up questions to applicants that were necessary before making funding decisions. Each round, there were two to three proposals that required additional conversations and revisions. The team then made funding recommendations for the zoo's Vice President of Learning and Innovation and the President & CEO to review and approve. Decisions were released to applicants following the leadership review. After decisions were released, grantees had two weeks to sign grant agreements via DocuSign, and funds were sent shortly thereafter in advance of the grant start date.

In its first three years, the Granting Program has been operating as an iterative program, with regular intervals of grant applicant, awardee and reviewer feedback opportunities. This feedback has helped the AE team ensure that the program is operating in an efficient way and is not overly burdensome for any of the groups involved in the granting process. Changes included those made based on data gathered by the internal Evaluation Specialist through surveys and interviews with applicants and reviewers as well as an external evaluation consultant, Catalyze Evaluation (Catalyze), during evaluation surveys in Q2 2022 and Q2 2023 and a Rapid Inquiry Cycle (RIC) (See findings section for specific changes).

**Overview of Funded Projects**

Of the 36 projects in Rounds 1-3, the highest proportion of projects focused on: exhibits, interpretation and/or onsite programming (22%, or eight projects); infrastructure (19%, or seven); and organization-wide frameworks or staff (17%, or six). Grants also funded projects that focused on: ambassador animals or husbandry (14%, or five); culturally responsive programming (11%, or four); and school or youth programs or partnerships (11%, or four). The focus area with the fewest funded projects was volunteer programs, at 6% (two).

**Grant Funding By Program Area (Rounds 1 through 3)**
**(n=36)**



| Program Area | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Exhibits, interpretation, onsite programs | 22% |
| Infrastructure | 19% |
| Org-wide frameworks, staff training | 17% |
| Ambassador animals/husbandry | 14% |
| Culturally responsive programming | 11% |
| School, youth programs/partnerships | 11% |
| Volunteer programs | 6% |
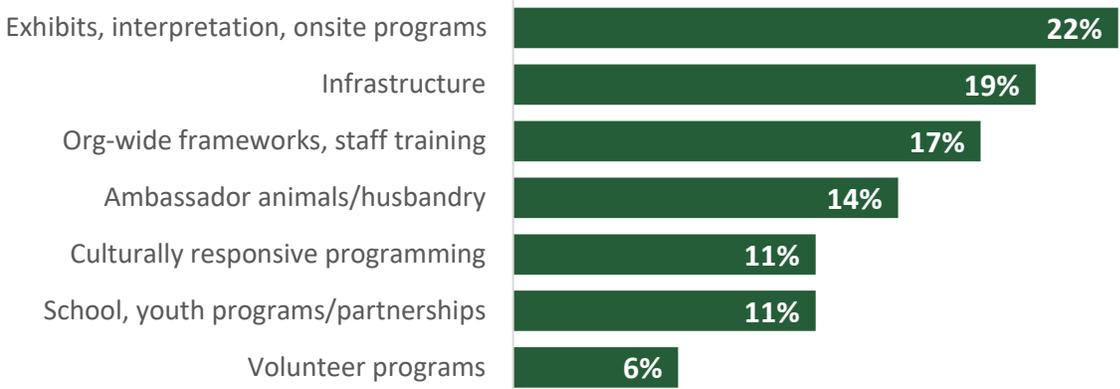
In further breaking down project categories, the AE team noticed several grantees requested funds for empathy-focused play spaces. This was not building on a prior grant's presentation or results, and rather seemed to happen organically with applicants in Rounds 2 and 3. These projects include two interactive exhibit spaces (Racine Zoo's "Becoming Bear" and Idaho Falls Zoo's "Adventure Island," both Round 2) and three empathy-focused play spaces (Seattle Aquarium, Lake Superior Zoo and NEW Zoo, all Round 3). The proliferation of these interactive exhibits and spaces for free play has provided grantees with interesting opportunities for practicing caring actions and activating imagination, which are two areas not typically highlighted in many other funded projects.

## METHODS/SUMMARY OF EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

One of the primary goals in evaluating the Granting Program has been to look across all grant projects and identify common successes and challenges in order to assess the overall impact of the program, determine what forms of support are most valuable to grantees and, in the case of a future iteration of this Granting Program, inform its design and identify potential grant priorities. This evaluation was primarily achieved by thorough review and analysis of materials associated with each project, focusing on the initial proposals and final grant reports submitted by grantees. Table 1 summarizes the full list of information sources on each project included in this analysis. To begin this review, AE staff generated

| Table 1. Data sources included in project analysis | |
|---|---|
| **Data Source** | **Priority Level** |
| Project proposals | Primary |
| Project final reports | Primary |
| Project interim reports | Secondary |
| Project deliverables | Secondary |
| No cost extension applications | Secondary |
| Grantee focus groups and case studies | Tertiary |
| External application reviews | Tertiary |
| Internal application reviews | Tertiary |

a list of key pieces of information to gather for each grant project that could provide insight into the impact of the Granting Program (Table 2). Then, relevant sections of each project's proposal and final report were collected into a single database, organized around these topics of interest. For some projects, final reports were not available until after analysis began, so content from interim reports was used to supplement missing information where possible in order to expedite the review process. Once the final set of reports were submitted in February 2024, their results were added to this database.

After the database of relevant information on each project was assembled, further analysis was conducted to identify trends within individual organizations and across the entire portfolio of projects. For more straightforward project characteristics, analysis consisted of sorting

| Table 2. Information gathered for each project | |
|---|---|
| **Project Information** | **Data Source(s)** |
| Audience | Grant proposals |
| Challenges encountered | Final grant reports |
| | Interim grant reports |
| | No cost extension applications |
| Changes to proposed activities | Final grant reports |
| | No cost extension applications |
| Complexity | External application reviews |
| | Grant proposals |
| | Internal application reviews |
| Connection to fostering empathy | Grant proposals |
| Evaluation activities and findings | Final grant reports |
| | Grant proposals |
| Evidence of organizational capacity building | Final grant reports |
| | Grant proposals |
| | Grantee focus groups and case studies |
| | Needs assessment report |
| Individual staff responsibility | Final grant reports |
| | Grant proposals |
| Outcomes | Final grant reports |
| | Grant proposals |
| Outputs/Deliverables | Final grant reports |
| | Grant proposals |
| Project type | Grant proposals |
| Reference to other grantee organization | Grant proposals |
| | Final grant reports |
| Risk level | External application reviews |
| | Internal application reviews |
| Successes achieved | Final grant reports |
| Support needed or received from WPZ | Final grant reports |
| | Internal application reviews |

grant projects by organization, granting round, and tier level, then identifying changes that occurred over time. Information on more complex factors like challenges encountered, evaluation activities, and evidence of organizational capacity building (see definition of capacity building in Appendix C) was imported into the qualitative analysis software, NVIVO, in order to identify themes across projects using an inductive coding approach. After these themes were identified, trends across time and other project characteristics could be explored with a focus on examining common conditions among projects that

successfully achieved their intended outcomes, encountered challenges, or impacted organizational capacity to engage in empathy-related work.
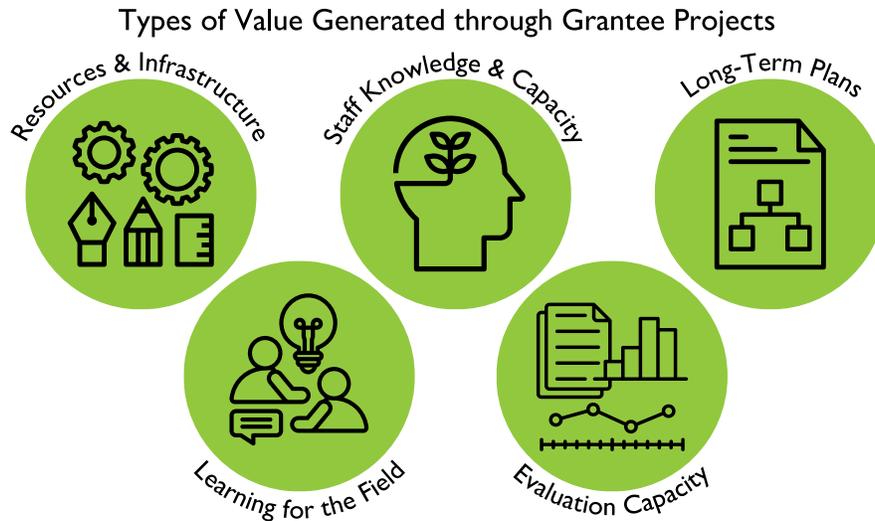
In addition to the analysis of grant-related documents, supplementary evaluation activities supported assessment of the Granting Program's successes and challenges. Most significantly, WPZ staff had completed a needs assessment of the initial ACE for Wildlife Network Partner Organizations based on visits to the sites in 2019. Because this work was completed prior to the start of the Granting Program, it serves as a baseline assessment of the capacity of each of these organizations to engage in empathy-related work and was used as a point of comparison for organizational growth resulting from the completion of grant projects. Additional evaluation findings referenced in this report include the results of surveys of grant applicants and external reviewers conducted after each application cycle (See links in Appendix B) as well as feedback on the Granting Program gathered during grantee focus groups and case studies of two grantee organizations conducted by Catalyze (See Appendix B).

# FINDINGS – GRANTEE PROJECTS

The following sections summarize the most notable successes and challenges that occurred within grant projects, focusing specifically on factors related to project sustainability beyond the grant period. Due to the wide range of projects undertaken with grant funds, long-term impact beyond the grant period varies. However, every project has some life beyond the grant period. Similarly, grantees encountered a variety of challenges, often depending on the type of work being done, though a few common difficulties affected multiple projects.

## Grantee Project Successes

Looking across grant projects, it is evident that the Granting Program successfully built capacity for empathy-related work at all 19 grantee organizations in a variety of areas. All 36 completed projects resulted in some degree of increased organizational capacity to foster empathy for wildlife, and many projects added further value by generating learning for their organization and/or the broader zoo and aquarium field, increasing animal welfare, and reaching new audiences, among other things. Such widespread positive impact suggests that the Granting Program is successfully achieving its goal of supporting and advancing empathy-related work at grantee organizations.

Types of Value Generated through Grantee Projects



Resources & Infrastructure

Staff Knowledge & Capacity

Long-Term Plans

Learning for the Field

Evaluation Capacity

## Creating Resources and Infrastructure

Most frequently, grant projects increased organizational capacity to foster empathy for wildlife by enabling zoos and aquariums to create empathy-based interpretive materials and programs or make updates to incorporate empathy into existing interpretation and education efforts. Over 80 percent of projects resulted in capacity building of this nature, with specific products including updated exhibit signage and interactives, empathy-based curriculum developed for school and camp programs, animal fact sheets created to support interpretation by staff and volunteers, and empathy-infused interpretive plans for exhibits or whole organizations. The materials and resources produced through these projects can continue to be used long after the conclusion of the grant period, allowing grantee organizations to sustain and expand efforts to foster empathy for wildlife among visitors and program participants into the future.

Since grant projects cover multiple focus areas, there are a variety of physical outputs that grantees produced with potential impact beyond the grant period including audience-facing products like new signage, updated exhibits, and new infrastructure as well as interpretive tools like animal fact sheets and program curricula. In total, 32 projects involved creating resources and infrastructure of this nature, with eight producing animal habitats or exhibit spaces, 13 producing program curricula, and 24 producing signage or other interpretive tools. These project outputs inherently have the potential for lasting impact because they were typically created specifically for use beyond the grant period. These products are shared with other grantees through the ACE for Wildlife Network resource library and during final grant presentations, enabling other organizations to use, adapt or learn from them for their own work. Two extremely popular products that were created by Round 1 – 3 grantees and have been adopted by other organizations are animal-focused signage created by ZooMontana and animal fact sheets created by Henry Vilas Zoo (See Appendix B for links to full examples).
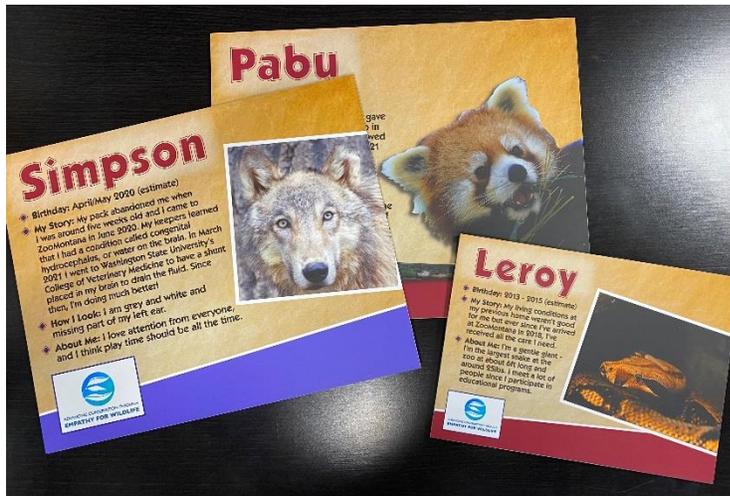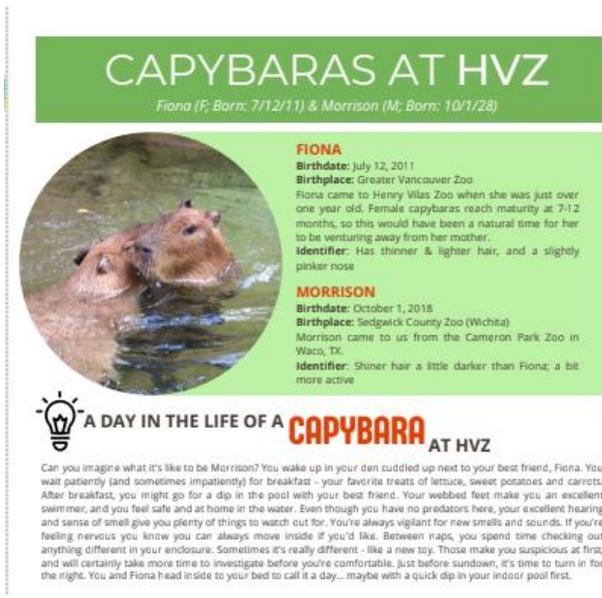
*ZooMontana Exhibit Bios*

ZooMontana's project, "Animal Bios of ZooMontana" exemplifies how relatively simple or straightforward projects can generate powerful impacts within organizations and beyond. Through this project, ZooMontana produced updated animal signage to include biographic information about the animals in their care, focusing on explaining how and why these animals came to live at the zoo in order to provide visitors with "a better understanding and appreciation of the roles of zoological parks."

ZooMontana was able to successfully complete their project objectives despite staff turnover affecting several key positions, and even developed five additional signs focused on how the zoo provides care for individual animals. According to the final grant report, "the project has 'kickstarted' a new norm here at ZooMontana. From this point forward, any new animal, large or small, will receive a bio card sign at their habitat. This will occur for generations to come."

Beyond accomplishing the stated objectives, this project has had significant impacts on the people involved and on other organizations. Several staff members at ZooMontana have now become highly involved in empathy-related work through active participation in the ACE for Wildlife Network. Two current ZooMontana staff members now serve on Network committees, and one went on to guide empathy work across organizations, taking on the role of Empathy Network Specialist at Woodland Park Zoo. In addition, this project has set an example for other zoos and aquariums on how to successfully incorporate empathy framing and biographic information into animal signage, with multiple Round 3 grantees citing this project in their signage grant applications. This project was relatively inexpensive and straightforward, making it easy for a small zoo to replicate. Furthermore, the new signage has led to appreciable increases in visitor comments about empathy-focused topics, including: animal names, their likes and dislikes, personalities, and/or similarities and differences to humans or other animals.

Henry Vilas Zoo's project, "Building Capacity for Empathy through Interpretive Master Planning," is another prime example of a project output that has had a clear impact beyond the grantee organization. As part of their project, the zoo created 45 new animal fact sheets for their docents to ensure they use effective empathy practices when interacting with guests at their zoo. These fact sheets include tips for using empathy practices, general and individually-focused facts about the animals, and examples of "empathy in action" to help docents make connections with guests (e.g., "We all age: Berit is in her golden years. She's moving a little slower and napping a little more"). These fact sheets generated a lot of interest and appreciation from Members of the ACE for Wildlife Network when they were shared at the 2022 virtual Empathy Summit. One attendee wrote of the fact sheets, "We love them and are so grateful for the [inspiration]! My favorite part is the planting connections - how awesome and simple are those prompts and yet how impactful! We're working on our own version and can't wait



*Henry Vilas Animal Fact Sheet Excerpt*

to share." At least 11 other Partners have since created some variation of this project to create the foundation for staff and volunteers to be able to share empathic stories with guests, most without using grant funds to do so. The widespread use of these fact sheets illustrates how tangible products created through grants can have a life well beyond both the grant period and the grantee organization.

## Building Staff Knowledge and Capacity

In addition to the generation of resources and programs, many grantee organizations have grown their capacity for future empathy-related work by using grants to build staff and volunteers' knowledge and skills surrounding empathy. More than half of all grant projects (56%) noted that they were able to increase staff or volunteers' familiarity with empathy best practices, and this growth occurred across all types of projects. Primarily, knowledge and skills were built through the creation and/or implementation of empathy-based trainings and resources. Just as with interpretive materials and programs, these trainings and training resources can have continued impact beyond the grant period. Ongoing training has helped multiple grantees embed empathy practices across their institutions and into their organizational culture. Since Round 1, at least 11 organizations have had grants that featured a training component. The potential for long-term impact of empathy trainings is effectively summarized by one grantee who wrote, "The trainings produced are a permanent resource in [our] training repertoire. As interpretive volunteers are one of [our] main points of visitor contact, empathy is now the central component of volunteer and visitor interaction." Furthermore, ten grantees completed evaluations of their trainings and found that staff or volunteers' self-reported confidence, knowledge, or ability

surrounding incorporating empathy into their work increased significantly after completing training. For the Granting Program, this represents a critical area of success as it demonstrates that grants have enabled empathy practices and knowledge to spread within organizations and become a part of everyday practice.

Empathy-based trainings were successfully implemented in multiple Tier 2 grants, proving that these shorter-term or lower budget projects can still have lasting impacts on organizations by building staff's knowledge and skills. For example, grant projects at Lake Superior Zoo (Round 1) and Racine Zoo (Round 3) that focused on ambassador animal programs generated revised policies and training procedures that reach beyond grant-funded staff. Moving away from holding the animals and towards providing them with more choice and control led to positive feedback from program audiences. Additionally, data from Lake Superior Zoo showed that educators who participated in the grant-funded program felt that their understanding of animals' behavior increased, that animals appeared more comfortable, and that the program gave students a sense of connection to the animals. This success is just one example of the positive impacts implementing empathy-based trainings can have on staff, visitors, and animals themselves.

Grant reports alone do not fully capture the extent to which grantee organizations have implemented trainings and other methods to build staff and volunteers' ability to incorporate empathy into their work since the outset of the Granting Program. Findings from the 2023 ACE for Wildlife Network Member and Affiliate Survey indicate that staff at all grantee organizations participated in empathy-related trainings over the past year. While these trainings may not always be included as part of grant project activities, the universal use of empathy trainings is a positive indicator of organizational buy-in to empathy, and the learning generated through these trainings likely supported the success of projects and will continue to do so.

Relatedly, several grantees reported that their projects supported increased buy-in amongst staff and adoption of empathy across their organizations. Thirteen grantees noted observing staff in multiple departments, including executive leadership, demonstrate greater support, interest, or enthusiasm for empathy-related work as a result of grant projects. For some organizations, grant projects served to demonstrate the potential for empathy practices to positively impact audiences, as evidenced by the fact that 12 of 23 grantees that conducted evaluation activities with visitors or program participants reported results indicating that they experienced empathy for animals. In this way, the Granting Program enabled organizations to solidify their investment in empathy-related work by engaging in projects that may not have been possible or prioritized without the support of grant funds and other resources.

Finally, grant projects have supported increased staff knowledge and capacity for empathy-related work by providing opportunities to dedicate time and resources to empathy-based projects that would not

have been available without grant funds. Funding some or all of staff members' time through grants creates the capacity for these individuals to focus on empathy-related work, through which they can develop new knowledge and skills and support the adoption of empathy across organizations. Racine Zoo's grant-funded work typifies how the Granting Program can build both individual and organizational capacity to create, use, and evaluate empathy-related projects. This zoo took a relatively unique approach and utilized grant funds to create two new full-time empathy staff positions, the Empathy Programs Evaluator and the Empathy Behavioral Coordinator, embedded in the education and animal care teams, respectively. Through the creation of these positions, Racine Zoo stated that "empathy was instilled as a cornerstone of all departments." Over multiple projects, these staff positions have facilitated significant growth in the use of empathy practices in animal care and interpretation through the creation of trainings, a rewritten animal training manual, "keeper chat" programs, and evaluation resources all focused on empathy in addition to the construction of a new exhibit space geared toward perspective-taking and the implementation of hands-free, choice-based presentation for the majority of ambassador animals. Racine Zoo also demonstrated the resilience of its empathy work, navigating the challenging departure of a key staff member as well as the unexpected passing of the zoo's Andean Bear, the focal animal of their Round 2 perspective-taking exhibit. The Empathy Programs Evaluator has demonstrated dedication to meeting grant deliverables and drive continued empathy-related projects, and in doing so has worked to increase their personal knowledge and skills around empathy and evaluation with support from the Grants and Evaluation Specialists.

## Creation of Long-Term Plans

Another way organizations solidified their empathy-based work through grant projects was through the creation of long-term strategic or interpretive plans that actively incorporate empathy. Six grantee organizations developed or expanded on empathy-focused organizational policies and plans as part of their projects, demonstrating commitment to utilizing empathy practices well beyond the end of their grant project period. These plans may help ensure the longevity of empathy-related work independent of grant funding, and they may help guide future grant projects that continuously build on and strengthen prior work. As such, plans like these could be a useful model for other organizations to replicate, and future evaluation related to the Granting Program should assess the impact of these long-term plans on those organization's capacity to foster empathy for wildlife.

The increases in buy-in and long-term investment in empathy-related work reported in projects from Rounds 1 through 3 of the Granting Program are further underscored by the Round 4 projects currently underway. Particularly notable with this round is that 44%, or eight projects, have advanced to the reflective stage (See Appendix C for project stage definitions), showcasing substantial progress by directly building on groundwork laid by previous grant-funded projects. One such example is Dakota Zoo, whose first grant, "Cultivating Empathy for Wildlife through Staff Development and Guest Programming Enhancements" was funded in Round 3. That first grant helped the organization implement various empathy practices across their institution and has led to much deeper involvement in

the ACE for Wildlife Network, including presenting at the 2024 Virtual Summit. Their Round 4 proposal, "Advancing Empathy through Animal Behavior and Education Enhancements," demonstrates advancement of this empathy work zoo-wide and their commitment to its sustainability by extending the work from their earlier project into additional areas.

Through their work across multiple grants, Zoo Boise is a model for incorporating empathy into long-term strategic and interpretive plans and engaging in projects that intentionally build on each other to create lasting impact. After laying the foundation with a grant to fund empathy training, Zoo Boise expanded their empathy projects into different areas. Through three separate grant projects, Zoo Boise has worked to integrate empathy into multiple aspects of Phase 1 of their master plan. This has included a Tier 1 project which generated concept designs for new exhibits as well as interpretive guides aimed at fostering empathy for wildlife, guided by evaluation of existing exhibit spaces. Two completed Tier 2 projects have allowed the zoo to extend this work by generating empathy-driven construction documents for and breaking ground on a new red panda exhibit, in addition to developing an interpretation plan and developing updated animal signage to focus on incorporating storytelling and empathic language. Exhibit construction and evaluation are also set to continue as part of a funded Round 4 project. This scaffolded approach has allowed Zoo Boise to thoughtfully integrate empathy into its interpretation and exhibit design, maximizing the sustainability and potential impact of its empathy work.

### Generating Learning for the Field

Beyond interpretive materials, curricula, and exhibit or habitats spaces, some projects included efforts to generate learning for other grantees and the wider field of zoo and aquarium professionals. Eight projects have produced publications or presentations beyond those required by the Granting Program, and several more grantees specifically noted how their work could be a model for other zoos and aquariums in their final reports. Among the most impactful of these projects was Minnesota Zoo's literature review, which was written and published as part of their grant, "Piloting Culturally Responsive Empathy Programming for Diverse Audiences in a Virtual Environment," and focuses on how to effectively consider cultural factors when teaching empathy for animals. Throughout the literature review, effective empathy practices are described alongside culturally responsive pedagogy and the successes and challenges of virtual education. The document also coalesces these themes into culturally responsive approaches to teaching empathy, and "Ten key cultural factors and their relevance for empathy," to provide the reader with specific actions and steps to take to integrate empathy practices into programming for diverse audiences. Staff from the Minnesota Zoo also presented this literature review in a session at the 2022 Association of Zoos and Aquariums' annual conference, broadening its reach and expanding the beneficiaries of grant project impacts.

The Minnesota Zoo has also undertaken a supplementary literature review tied to a second grant project called "Breaking Down Barriers: Bringing Empathy for Animals to Traditionally Underserved

Audiences." This review delves into optimal methodologies for introducing ambassador animal programs to novel demographics. It notably underscores the significance of tools such as "The Equity Compass tool" in fostering a mindset geared towards social justice in institutional policies and practices. This resource comprehensively explains the procedural aspects of incorporating such programming within one's own zoo, encompassing staff training, collaborative endeavors with community partners, program development employing empathetic design principles, as well as strategies for evaluation and dissemination of outcomes. Projects like these generate new ideas about the use of empathy in zoos and aquariums, a necessity for the continued growth and development of this work. In doing so, they can also they also provide grantee organizations with opportunities to become leaders in the field that other organizations will continue to look to for insight on empathy-based work.

### Expanding Evaluation Capacity

The final significant area of success for multiple organizations surrounds increases in evaluation capacity. Final grant reports from 13 organizations included evidence of evaluation capacity building through activities like creating new evaluation tools, training staff to conduct evaluation activities, and hiring dedicated evaluation staff or consultants. Additionally, 75% of Round 1 Tier 1 grantees reported a notable increase in their evaluation capacity and a diffusion of this capacity beyond the grant-funded department and/or staff. Although evaluation was only required for Tier 1 grant projects, 86% of all projects reported utilizing evaluation activities of some kind. This indicates that grantees are committed to understanding the impacts of grant projects. The widespread use of evaluation by grantees is especially significant given that the 2019 Needs Assessment found that 70% of organizations needed support, guidance, and resources to conduct evaluation and half had little to no experience measuring empathy.

Beyond simply implementing evaluation, many organizations also successfully utilized it to generate meaningful insights into the efficacy of their work. Of the 25 projects that reported any evaluation findings, 12 included evidence of empathy occurring among visitors or program participants, as noted above, and six generated insights into specific effective practices for fostering empathy for wildlife. For some organizations, this learning facilitated buy-in for future evaluation work. Grizzly & Wolf Discovery Center, for example, noted that their evaluation work "has been one of the biggest successes of [their] grant and the results will continue to improve their programs and messaging." Staff at this organization have expressed interest and enthusiasm about expanding their evaluation efforts for projects beyond their grant-funded work. Not only can these learnings improve empathy work within grantee organizations, they can also help inform work across the zoo and aquarium field. Several organizations are already capitalizing on this opportunity by sharing learnings from grant projects through publications and presentations at professional conferences. Sharing findings in this way places grantee organizations at the forefront as empathy-based work continues to develop and expand across the field of zoos and aquariums.

# Grantee Project Challenges

While grant projects were largely successful at achieving their stated goals, most grantees also reported encountering some form of challenge during the grant period that may provide meaningful lessons for future projects. Based on final grant reports, grantees most frequently struggled with a lack of staff time and capacity to complete the proposed work, with time and capacity constraints impacting a third of all projects. As the Granting Program continues, it will be important to ensure grantees carefully consider how proposed grant activities will fit into relevant staff members' other responsibilities when applying for funding. Additionally, taking advantage of opportunities to hire additional staff members focused on empathy-related projects or work with external consultants may help alleviate future capacity and time restrictions.

Issues exacerbated by the pandemic like staff turnover and construction delays are likely to persist in some capacity through future projects, though their impacts may be less severe, and lessons can be learned from how they have affected projects thus far. In the case of staff turnover, it is important to both the success and sustainability of grant projects that knowledge and responsibility do not rest disproportionately with one individual, except in the case of dedicated grant-funded positions, to ensure that projects are able to move forward as planned if an individual staff member leaves the organization. As more staff members across organizations become knowledgeable about and invested in empathy-related work, distributing responsibilities may become more natural for grantees. Construction delays are similarly unavoidable to an extent as factors like weather and the availability of materials and skilled labor cannot be controlled. Instead, the most effective way to avoid this type of challenge in the future may be for grantees to intentionally build additional time into their proposed timelines for projects involving construction to account for potential delays. With both of these challenges, continuing to offer grantees flexibility and support will also be instrumental to overcome this and other challenges to maintain trust in WPZ as an intermediary and ensure the success of projects.

A final area of difficulty across multiple projects was conducting evaluation. Prior to these grant projects, many grantees had limited or no experience conducting formal evaluation of programs and exhibits. Furthermore, most organizations did not have staff members specifically responsible for planning, conducting and reporting on evaluation projects. Grantees noted that they experienced challenges finding staff time to conduct evaluation activities as well as collecting the amount, type or quality of data originally planned. Such challenges are to be expected for organizations newly engaging in evaluation, especially related to a specific topic like empathy for which widely accepted measurement tools and strategies are still developing. Promisingly, several organizations also noted that their capacity and interest in conducting evaluation improved as a result of grant projects, and multiple projects involved the creation of evaluation tools and establishment of relationships with evaluation consultants and researchers that may ease future evaluation work. Beyond the 1:1 assistance and office hours sessions already provided, additional supports like focused evaluation trainings and resources provided by the Evaluation Specialist may further increase grantees' skills and confidence surrounding evaluation.

Altogether, analysis of final reports from all **36** grant projects did not reveal persistent challenges or substantial causes for concern within the Granting Program. These results suggest that future projects across a diversity of organizations and project types will be able to succeed, particularly given continued support from AE staff. Additionally, as grantees continued to expand their capacity and expertise related to empathy-based projects, many of the difficulties encountered thus far may be reduced.

## Recommendations for Grantee Projects

The findings of this analysis point to several practices grantees should take into consideration when planning future projects in order to maximize the impact of their work. Most recommendations for grantees are dependent on the specific work being proposed, but a few are applicable across all project types. Recommendations for grantees based on common successes and challenges explored in the previous section are listed below.

**Utilize empathy grants as an opportunity to produce interpretive resources incorporating empathy** like signage, program curricula, and animal fact sheets that can continue to be used beyond the grant period. To extend the life of these resources further, include plans and materials for updating them as needed in project proposals, where relevant.

**Incorporate empathy trainings for staff or volunteers into grant projects** in order to support increased knowledge and confidence surrounding empathy-related practices. Trainings can be repeated or expanded over time to facilitate continued learning and explore empathy-related practices that may be more challenging to implement in greater depth.

**Generate long-term strategic or interpretive plans that can be implemented over multiple granting rounds**, using successive projects to build on or support evaluation of prior work. Scaffolding projects in this way can have multiple benefits including creating synergy between projects within an organization, providing a blueprint for empathy-related work that can be used independently of grant funding, and building in opportunities for learning from one project to be utilized to refine approaches used in future work.

**When construction of any kind is included in a grant project, build time for potential delays into proposed project timelines**. If construction concludes earlier than proposed, additional time can be used to conduct evaluation activities.

**Ensure staff members involved in grant projects have the time and capacity necessary to complete the work**. Funding a portion of existing staff members' time or hiring new staff through grants may help ensure dedicated staff time is available for grant-funded work.

**Prioritize setting aside staff time and resources for evaluation and make use of available support where needed.** Evaluation activities can provide valuable insights into the impact of projects, but they may require more time or specialized skills than initially expected, especially for organizations without dedicated evaluation staff members. Evaluation may be most successful when data collection methods are tailored to the skills and capacity of staff to complete the work as well as the specific nature of the project. Additionally, some hurdles associated with evaluation may be avoided by making use of support available through the Granting Program and ACE for Wildlife Network and using or modifying tools and methods that have already been successfully implemented in other projects.

**Explore opportunities to share learning generated through grant projects with the field of zoos and aquariums as a whole**, either independently or as part of the projects themselves. Doing so can help increase awareness and use of empathy practices in zoos and aquariums outside of the granting region and allows organizations to learn from and build on each other's work. Especially for smaller organizations, sharing innovative grant projects may also help gain deserved recognition from others in the field.

Finally, **connect and collaborate with other grantee organizations** who have engaged in similar projects. Nearly all grant projects share at least some characteristics with work that has already been completed, so grantees can learn directly from each other. In doing so, they can avoid potential pitfalls, adopt strategies that have proven successful, and reduce demands on staff time and capacity in the process.

# FINDINGS – GRANTING PROGRAM

This section reflects on the overall Granting Program, starting first with an overview of the feedback received throughout 2021 – 2023 and the subsequent program improvements, then moving into the successes of the overall program followed by the challenges and ending with recommendations for future rounds of funding for the Granting Program.

### Iterative Changes over the Course of the Grant

As mentioned in the introduction, the Granting Program has been operating very intentionally as an iterative program, with regular intervals of grant applicant, awardee and reviewer feedback opportunities through both the internal evaluation specialist and the external evaluation consultant Catalyze. The AE team tries to ensure that the program is operating in an efficient way and is not overly burdensome for any of the groups involved in the granting process. Following each grant round, the AE team debriefed to discuss what worked well and what did not. They also reviewed feedback from applicants, reviewers and grantees to determine how the process could be improved. With each round of funding, small changes were made to the application, review process and reporting guidelines to respond to questions or confusion.

A few more significant improvements also were made. Grantees noted that the mid-project check-in call with the Grants Specialist was the least important factor of seven factors for implementing their grants. The AE team adjusted this meeting to an optional call or an email response. The surveys also noted that external factors, including supply chain issues and increased cost of materials, were barriers to grantees undertaking grant-funded work. Therefore, when WPZ had rollover funds from other categories in 2022, each grantee was provided with $6,600 additional dollars to address these and other barriers.

In late 2022, the external evaluator, Catalyze, held focus groups with 11 grantees as part of a Rapid Inquiry Cycle (RIC). The purpose of this RIC was to learn how Partners decided to pursue or not pursue grants, to receive feedback about the design of the grant program (including the strengths, benefits and challenges of having another AZA institution as a grantor), and to learn how multiple grants interact within organizations. Several participating grantees noted the ease and flexibility of the grant program, which aligns with prior grantee feedback. In all focus groups, participants said that having WPZ as a funder was a tremendous asset given their own experience and knowledge of the zoo and aquarium field.

Participants also informed Catalyze that the frequency of check-ins, calls, and meetings held by the WPZ AE team can be overwhelming and that the team should be clearer about the focus of the meetings (i.e., are the meetings focused on evaluation, grants or the ACE for Wildlife Network) and clarify who should attend each meeting. In response, in 2023, AE staff: streamlined meetings; moved to email check-ins (rather than Zoom) for mid-project calls, with an option to hold additional meetings as needed; and tracked asks from the grant, evaluation and Network side to ensure that participants were not overwhelmed with requests and had more clarity on the purpose of each interaction. They also noticed that using the WPZ budget template was the source of many post-submission follow up questions. For Round 4, the AE team made the template optional and allowed applicants to submit their own budget format which was both easier on applicants and resulted in less budgeting errors. Over half of applicants noted that this change was helpful and the remaining were indifferent to the change as they could continue to use the template.

## Granting Program Successes

The Granting Program funded at least one project at all 19 eligible organizations, resulting in the implementation of empathy work at 100% of AZA-accredited organizations in the seven-state region. In the Round 4 survey, all respondents felt that the application requirements were clear and reasonable, and felt satisfied with the level of guidance and support they received from WPZ staff during the application process. Additionally, all 17 respondents felt that participating in the Granting Program process has increased their confidence writing grant proposals.

A primary success of the Granting Program has been the commitment to utilizing principles of the Trust Based Philanthropy Project. Three principles in particular that have been embedded into the Granting Program are: "Be transparent and responsive," "Solicit and act on feedback" and "Offer support beyond the check." Instead of rejecting applicants whose attachments do not match the requirements, or whose applications are missing components, the AE team reviews all initial submissions and gives applicants a chance to resubmit their application with corrections within a week, with no penalty. Grantees have expressed satisfaction with the Grant Specialist's availability and having a specific person to contact with questions and concerns. They have expressed that the AE team is friendly and encouraging, and appreciated personalized direct emails to those who had not yet applied in the lead up to Round 3. These personalized emails helped ensure that all 19 Partner Organizations felt supported enough to apply for funding. Being transparent with grantees, and having multiple touchpoints (formal meetings, informal emails, facilitated learning groups, etc.), has led to increased trust from round to round. Certain eligible organizations who had not even applied in Rounds 1 or 2 are now deeply involved in Network activities after having received one or more grants and gaining a deeper understanding of how the Network operates and collaborates. They have also appreciated the adaptability of the Granting Program and responsiveness to feedback as described in the iterative changes section.

Based on feedback from RIC focus groups with grantees, participants said that having WPZ as a funder is a tremendous asset given their own experience and knowledge of the zoo and aquarium field. One participant noted, "The sheer understanding of what AZA means—common language, common practices, expectations—elevates the starting point 5 or 6 steps" (see Appendix B for Granting Program evaluation report links). The final evaluation report from Catalyze also called out the importance of site visits in building trust, getting to know sites firsthand and helping to convey that background information in grant review rounds.

Evaluation of the grant program has also shown that its collaborative nature and focus on knowledge sharing is one of its most valued aspects. Grantees have access to knowledge and resources produced by other grantees, and they are able to connect and collaborate during the grant period itself, which is not often the case in other granting programs. In fact, several projects in later rounds have either been inspired by other grantees' work, or fall into similar categories. The willingness to share learnings has led to more direct communication and collaboration, instead of it all being instigated by WPZ. This shared learning has also resulted in collaborations for panels at AZA conferences, publishing, professional development that otherwise would be out of reach. Furthermore, the Granting Program has supported smaller zoos as they shine as leaders in the AZA field. Engagement in the Granting Program has also benefited the ACE for Wildlife Network, moving Partner Organizations further along in their empathy adoption and becoming more prominent in the Network. For example, Alaska SeaLife Center first applied for a grant in Round 3 and found great success with this project and since has become much

more involved in the Network, with one staff member chairing a committee and receiving a Round 4 grant to continue their work infusing empathy across their organization.

Having a dedicated Evaluation Specialist has been a huge supporting factor in the success of the Granting Program, especially for grantees who do not have the capacity or budget to hire an evaluator at their institution. From Tier 2 final reports, there was:

- A self-described notable increase in evaluation capacity and confidence for 67% of grantees, especially for those who had started with very low capacity;
- An increase in comfort and confidence for staff to advocate for empathy and/or evaluation cross-departmentally; and
- An expansion beyond the scope of just modifying or recreating past Measuring Empathy Collaborative Assessment Project (MECAP)-related work.

The Evaluation Specialist also provided advice and tools for building staff capacity even for those working with external consultants. The improved skills resulted in sharing that goes beyond the ACE for Wildlife Network and into the broader field (e.g., AZA presentations, published studies, literature reviews).

## Granting Program Challenges

There was significant overlap in challenges identified by the grantees and challenges identified by AE staff about the Granting Program. The primary challenges were the length and the number of grants under a condensed timeline; a desire for more connections with other grantees and a greater understanding of what projects were successful; and confusion about difference between the Granting Program and the ACE for Wildlife Network. The following paragraphs outlines these challenges in greater detail.

The biggest challenge noted consistently by both sides is the length of grant period/the Granting Program. It is difficult to operate a multi-round grant program within a three-year overarching grant period. The AE team has received feedback from grantees that they would be able to have more impactful projects and create deeper organizational change with three-to-five-year grant terms, but that is not possible with a three-year length of WPZ's overarching AE grant. When considering the need for at least six months to advertise, review and award grants on the front end and two months for grantees to report back and at least another two months for AE team to review and comprehensively analyze results, that leaves just 26 months for all the work to happen on multiple rounds of grants. The AE team offered an 18-month Tier 1 grant opportunity knowing that time was limited, because they wanted organizations to have more than one opportunity for organizations to apply for a grant of that size. Having the fourth year of the Advancing Empathy grant enabled the team to offer no-cost extensions (NCEs) to projects scheduled to end in fall 2023 (all Tier 1 projects, Round 3 Tier 2 projects), which was tremendously helpful for grantees. When given the opportunity for NCEs, 50% (13 of 26 active grants) requested additional time. Round Two Tier 1 grants had only 18 months to complete work,

which was particularly compressed—5/6 (83%) ended up requesting NCEs because they were unable to complete their activities within that timeframe. While incredibly helpful to grantees, offering the NCE dramatically reduced AE team time to review and analyze the results in preparation for the next grant application for the overarching AE program.

The next, related challenge was the number of grant projects underway. There were 36 projects funded in the first three rounds, followed by an additional 18 projects in Round 4. At any given time, the Grants Specialist was supporting about 30 grants at various stages due to the compressed nature of grant rounds. As demonstrated in this report, having so many and such varied projects also makes it difficult to determine collective outcomes and sustainability. Fewer, bigger grants could also reduce the administrative burden on grantees, concentrate efforts on more impactful projects and allow for more budget toward staff time which could help with limited capacity. Notably, with an increase to $60,000 as the maximum for Tier 2 projects, 83% of projects asked for over the earlier maximum of $50,000. Toward the end of 2023, some Partners with multiple grants seemed to also feel challenged in managing all the different projects reports and share-outs. Having so many projects also resulted in a high volume of grantee webinars and resources shared that was hard to absorb by the Network all at once. Grantees and Members of the ACE for Wildlife Network have requested curation and consolidation of grant resources to help them make sense of all the materials.

The third area of feedback the AE team received from grantees at the 2024 summit and through the Social Network Analysis survey was a desire to increase connections across grantees. Currently, the Grant Specialist shares with grantees a list of other grantees working on similar projects but leaves connections and potential collaborations in the hands of grantees. With projects starting at various points and busy staff schedules, connecting with others often gets forgotten. There is interest in having the Grant Specialist facilitate grant cohorts to help grantees connect more directly with those working on similar projects. This desire corresponds to feedback the AE team has heard from the Network.

The fourth challenge is a desire for grantees to get a better sense of the effectiveness of various empathy projects, which was mentioned by grantees at multiple points in the grant cycle. Having this information would help them to determine future projects to pursue and increase buy-in for empathy at their home institutions by highlighting the success of others. This request speaks to a continued need to strengthen evaluation components and support across all grant tiers and build knowledge about what works in general.

The final challenge identified by our external evaluator, and something also noted by the AE team, is confusion between the ACE for Wildlife Network and the Granting Program. Branding differences are subtle (WPZ logo vs. ACE for Wildlife logo) and the lengthy name of the Granting Program is forgettable. Grants are often referred to as "ACE grants" and a shared email is used for both the Network and the Grants. Now that the ACE for Wildlife Network has expanded, the eligible organizations for both prongs of the AE program are no longer identical and so crystalizing these differences has become more important.

As an intermediary, the AE Team also has a responsibility to their funder to determine ways they can assess the sustainability of the projects they fund and look for ways they can assess the collective impact of grants across all eligible partners. The section above provides case studies and general learnings, but it would be helpful to have some level of standardization to be able to track progress. With so many one-year grants, where a project may not have included time for evaluation and may not continue exactly the same without additional funding, the topic of sustainability and collective impact can be difficult to address. In future grant rounds, the AE team should find ways strengthen both evaluation and ways to measure impact across multiple grant-funded organizations.

## Granting Program Recommendations

Overall, the Granting Program has been quite successful in catalyzing the infusion of empathy into the 19 eligible grantee organizations. To address the challenge areas identified above, the AE team recommends that the following changes should be made to the Granting Program for subsequent rounds.

**Increase grant length**. Given the likely three-year length constraint of future funding for the AE program itself, the Granting Program can only make small adjustments to the grant calendar. In terms of grant length, they should be increased to a minimum of 2 years and extended to 2.5 years for Tier 1 if possible. For Tier 2 grants, grant periods should be extended up to 1.5 years. This change will require starting the request for proposal process for Round 5 in 2024, once a future AE grant is approved, but before the grant period begins.

**Raise grant maximum dollar amounts**. To address challenges with the number of grants operating at any given time, the maximum dollar amounts of grants should be increased to $300,000 (Tier 1) and $100,000 (Tier 2), which will result in fewer overall grants but larger and longer grants to enable greater impact. Applicants should be able to consolidate smaller projects into a bigger project to streamline administrative burden and reporting. Of course, there should not be any minimum grant amount required so that organizations can still request funding for smaller amounts, maintaining the flexibility from prior rounds.

**Improve process for sharing results and knowledge**. Fewer grants spread out over longer periods will also help the pace of release of resources from grantees. The Granting Program should also consider a different format for webinars – either spreading them out over a longer period and/or grouping them into longer sessions to attract larger audiences. Also consider additional ways to curate and organize resources into toolkits on particular topics to help others to make sense of all that is available. Another idea is to offer additional funds to grantees who create a workshop, toolkit or other training on a grant topic beyond a simple presentation. For example, a grantee who did A/B testing of signage as part of their project could create a workshop on how to do something similar at other sites, which would allow others to build the understanding of how to implement similar projects.

**Initiate a grantee cohort program**. To increase connection and further collaboration across grants, the Grants Specialist should coordinate a cohort of all grant recipients at the start of each grant cycle

where they can share brief overviews of their project, connect with others and encourage further meet ups as interest and time allows. The creation of Special Interest Groups on the Network discussion board and potentially with events will also help give a space for grantees to connect with others interested in specific topics (e.g., exhibit signage, interpretive planning). Site visits should continue, but perhaps should include representatives from other grantees as well. For example, having a grantee from a play space project participate in the site visit of a play space at another organization would further facilitate learnings and potential collaborations.

**Continue to build evaluation components in grant projects**. To address interest in understanding what works, incorporate evaluation more intentionally into Tier 2 grants as well, so the AE team can assess the effectiveness of grant activities that they are more clearly able to establish what is working and how/why. Continue to provide evaluation support. Another suggestion would be to prioritize multi-site grants that build knowledge about effectiveness of empathy practices

**Improve the delineation of the Granting Program more clearly from the ACE for Wildlife Network**. To more clearly articulate the differences between the Network and the Granting Program, the AE team recommends simplifying the name of the Granting Program to the Advancing Empathy (AE) Grant Program, creating a logo and branding for the program that is distinct from the Network, create a separate empathygrants@zoo.org email, and move away from advertising grant opportunities through ACE for Wildlife website and channels. Also work on messaging to further delineate the two programs moving forward, provide language on how to refer to the grant program and credit funding to get grantees to move away from calling support an "ACE grant."

**Create standardized ways to assess impact**. To assess impact across the Granting Program, enhance evaluation as noted in the recommendation above and ask grantees to utilize the Self-Assessment Rubric in their proposal to identify an area of growth they want to address with a grant, in what phase they currently are in that category, and where they hope to grow to. By anchoring their work to areas the Network has identified as important for advancing and sustaining empathy at institutions, they can better assure that projects will have lasting impact. For example, an organization could indicate their signs were at Phase 1 (some signage with empathy practices) and the project would move them to Phase 3 (most signage has empathy practices). It would potentially motivate folks to use the rubric and give us some way to measure their progress across multiple grant projects. It would also establish the rubric as an end state of where the AE team wants to see organizational growth directly tied to empathy.

# CONCLUSION

WPZ's Building Organizational Capacity to Foster Empathy for Wildlife Granting Program supports AZA-accredited organizations in Alaska, Idaho, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, Washington, & Wisconsin in their efforts to plan, build and/or expand programs aimed at advancing empathy for animals and wildlife. In three granting cycles from 2021-2023, $3.6 million in total grant funds were distributed. Overall, the program was successful. Final grant reports and feedback gathered from

grantees indicate that it successfully increased capacity in several areas including incorporating empathy into multiple facets of zoo and aquarium work, grant writing, and planning for and doing evaluation of empathy-focused work. Grantees nearly universally completed or exceeded project goals, and support, trust, and flexibility from WPZ staff ensured that grantees that did encounter challenges were still able to complete meaningful work.

Based on this success, the program should be able to move forward with no major changes, only minor adjustments. Now that organizations have begun to engage in empathy-based work, there is great potential to continue building on projects that have started thus far and explore new ways to utilize empathy in zoos and aquariums. Moving forward, fostering continued learning about empathy should be a central tenet of the Granting Program in order to advance this work overtime. In addition to maintaining support for evaluation capacity building, the program will focus on encouraging collaboration and shared learning between grantee organizations through grantee learning cohorts and by encouraging more collaboration within grant-funded work.

# APPENDIX A FUNDING TABLE BY GRANT ROUND

**Round 1**

| Organization | Project Title | Project Area/Objectives | Grant Tier |
|---|---|---|---|
| Lake Superior Zoo | Researching the Impact of LSZ School on Preschoolers' Empathy for Wildlife | Conduct evaluation on their newly implemented preschool empathy/SEL curriculum to understand its impact and identify where changes are needed. | Tier 2 |
| Lake Superior Zoo | Fostering Empathy for Ambassador Animals through Choice and Control | Incorporate animal choice and control presentation techniques into education programs that foster empathy and improve perceptions of animal welfare. | Tier 2 |
| Minnesota Zoo | Piloting Culturally Responsive Empathy Programming for Diverse Audiences in a Virtual Environment | Pilot and evaluate empathy-based virtual programs with schools with high cultural diversity to measure the effectiveness of the programs themselves, and to explore the intersection of culture and indicators of empathy. | Tier 2 |
| NW Trek Wildlife Park | Discovery Tram Tour: A Vehicle for Increasing Empathy Outcomes | Evaluate and modify the existing Discovery Tram Tour to determine how effective empathy best practices are during passive program experiences. | Tier 2 |
| Zoo Boise | Creating Empathy for Animals at Zoo Boise | Reflecting on earlier efforts to enhance visitors' empathy onsite, they will expand empathy efforts to include designing and implementing empathy training for staff and assessing exhibit effectiveness in increasing empathy. | Tier 2 |
| ZooMontana | Animal Bios of ZooMontana | Update signage across the zoo to share individual stories. Because most of their animals are rescues, they believe this will reinforce empathy with guests. | Tier 2 |

| Organization | Project Title | Project Area/Objectives | Grant Tier |
|---|---|---|---|
| Como Park Zoo & Conservatory | ROADMAP to Empathy Project | Enhance the ROADMAP (Reaching Our Audiences by Developing Mission Aligned Programs) framework to operationalize empathy best practices within key framework resources used organization-wide. | Tier 1 |
| Henry Vilas Zoo | Building Capacity for Empathy through Interpretive Master Planning | Create a strategic framework that infuses empathy best practices throughout their exhibits' interpretive master planning and implementation process. | Tier 1 |
| Pt. Defiance Zoo & Aq. | Growing Empathy by Connecting Elementary Schools to Nearby Nature | Expand Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium's Wildlife Champions program to Lister Elementary in the Tacoma School District. | Tier 1 |
| Racine Zoo | Advancing Empathy-Focused Animal Behavioral Programming | Train staff to implement new voluntary husbandry training and protocols, working closely with their education department to develop public programs that highlight this within an empathy framework. | Tier 1 |
| | | **Total Amount Funded, Round 1:** | $1,169,537 |

## **Round 2**

| Organization | Project Title | Project Area/Objectives | Grant Tier |
|---|---|---|---|
| Como Park Zoo & Conservatory | Integrated Strategic Planning for Empathy Action | Using an integrated strategic planning process, Como will partner with Zoo Advisors to envision and create a comprehensive, interdepartmental Empathy Action Plan in concert with an organization-wide Education Strategic Plan. | Tier 2 |
| Como Park Zoo & Conservatory | Empathy-Focused Volunteer Interpretation Project | This project will rewrite their interpretive plans using empathy-based resources and redesign the interpretive volunteer training program to build capacity for volunteers to deliver high quality empathy-based interpretation. | Tier 2 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Racine Zoo | Becoming Bear - Bear Burrow Interpretive Exhibit | This project will create a new indoor space with interpretives, allowing for their first non-guided empathy programming to lead guests through the life of a bear. | Tier 2 |
| Seattle Aquarium | Marine Science Club: Building Empathy for Animals in Teens through Effective Instruction Techniques | Through the Marine Science Club, teens will incorporate empathy for wildlife into their ethos within a community of concerned citizens who act on behalf of ocean life. | Tier 2 |
| Grizzly & Wolf Discovery Center | New Grizzly Bear Den | This project will save bears by doubling their den capacity. Bears act as ambassadors and assist education staff in empathy-related interpretation programs to help visitors understand how their actions can help bears avoid euthanasia and stay wild. | Tier 1 |
| Idaho Falls Zoo | A Model for Inspiring Conservation Action through Empathy | IFZ will expand their investment in their "Inspiring Conservation through Empathy Model (ICE-M)" model for empathy-based zoo design and enhancements. ICE-M leverages key community members to identify and refine ideas for implementing empathy practices for visitors, focusing on their Adventure Island exhibit. | Tier 1 |
| International Crane Foundation | Where Cranes Dance: Connecting People with Endangered Species, Communities, and Wild Places | To foster a true sense of empathy for cranes and other wildlife, they propose an immersive introductory video, four-minute-films to dive more deeply into stories, and opportunities for visitors to access media online and through social media. | Tier 1 |
| Lake Superior Zoo | Immersive Nature Experiences at the Lake Superior Zoo | This project will design, build, and refurbish nature trails that will provide an immersive experience for guests and education program attendees that will foster empathy with a focus on native species and regional conservation efforts. | Tier 1 |
| Zoo Boise | Designing Exhibits & Revising Visitor Experiences to Foster Empathy for Wildlife | This project will produce empathy-driven concept designs for new exhibits in Phase I of Zoo Boise's master plan and interpretive guides for zoo chats and visitor experiences that foster empathy for wildlife. | Tier 1 |
| Zoological Society of Milwaukee | Building Community-Relevant Empathy for Wildlife Infrastructure | ZSM will develop a community-focused program design process and organizational evaluation framework to ensure their offerings provide culturally-responsive | Tier 1 |

| | | learning spaces and foster empathy for wildlife to inspire conservation action. | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Total Amount Funded, Round 2:** | $1,671,416 |

## Round 3

| Organization | Project Title | Project Area/Objectives | Grant Tier |
|---|---|---|---|
| ZooMontana | Caring for Our Care Staff | ZooMontana would like to add laptops and Wi-Fi jetpacks to allow animal care staff more access to the internet while working in order to engage more with empathy materials online. Keepers currently only have one computer to share. | Tier 2 |
| Racine Zoo | Increasing Capacity for Choice and Control in Ambassador Animals | This project will provide materials for Racine Zoo to present nearly all their ambassador animals using hands-off methods and voluntary participation, highlighting animal agency and beginning a collaborative resource document showing the value of these projects. | Tier 2 |
| Como Park Zoo & Conservatory | Wolves & Large Cat Outdoor Signage Upgrades | This project will utilize Como's empathy-based ROADMAP tools to develop, write and implement new interpretative signage at Como Zoo's Wolves and Large Cat Habitats. The process will use the opportunity to foster empathy and inspire caring action within the ROADMAP framework to make memorable, mission-focused visitor interactions. | Tier 2 |
| Roosevelt Park Zoo | Fostering Empathy Through Enriched Experiences | This hybrid research–staff development project will evaluate the effects of enriched experiences on animal behavior and the effect that more active and engaged animals have on guests' attitudes toward animals, their perception of animal well-being, and their intent to take caring action. (CoP with Red River Zoo) | Tier 2 |
| Dakota Zoo | Cultivating Empathy for Wildlife through Staff Development and Guest Programming Enhancements | This project will incorporate consistent messaging, increase staff confidence with public speaking, provide knowledge and resources for staff that pertains to building connections with visitors, and enhance Dakota Zoo's empathy-based outcomes. | Tier 2 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Zoological Society of Milwaukee | Amplify Empathy: Volunteer Impact on Public & Zoo Employees | ZSM will restructure their volunteer program to amplify empathy as an organizational value, piloting an information-sharing approach through the creation of an Empathy Area Leader, and updating/creating resources, including new volunteer training videos. | Tier 2 |
| Seattle Aquarium | Animal Care Play Space | This project will foster empathy for animals through an explorative, interactive and hands-on Animal Care Play Space. This space will empower youth and families to imagine themselves as veterinarians and caretakers through guided- and free-play experiences. | Tier 2 |
| Minnesota Zoo | Breaking Down Barriers: Bringing Empathy for Animals to Traditionally Underserved Audiences | This will design and implement off-site education programs for audiences with economic, geographic, or health-related barriers to coming to the Zoo. They will design program structures and curriculum based on best practices for implementing culturally responsive programs as well as empathy for animals and provide e-Learning programs. | Tier 2 |
| NEW Zoo | Education Courtyard Expansion | This project will upgrade NEW Zoo's Education Courtyard area to provide a unique, interactive space for zoo visitors to learn and play. They will create additional habitats for ambassador animals and provide empathy-based signage, and nature play activities. | Tier 2 |
| Red River Zoo | Fostering Empathy Through Enriched Experiences | This hybrid research–staff development project will evaluate the effects of enriched experiences on animal behavior and the effect that more active and engaged animals have on guests' attitudes toward animals, their perception of animal well-being, and their intent to take caring action. (CoP with Roosevelt Park Zoo) | Tier 2 |
| Zoo Boise | Empathy Driven Construction Documents for New Red Panda Exhibit at Zoo Boise | This project is focused on fostering empathy for wildlife in guests who visit the new red panda exhibit. In collaboration with zoo architecture firm GLMV, Zoo Boise will produce empathy-driven construction documents for the new red panda exhibit. | Tier 2 |
| Zoo Boise | Fostering Empathy for Wildlife through Signage | This project will foster empathy for wildlife through reusable animal care signs with empathic language for when animals are not on | Tier 2 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | and Phase 1A Interpretive Plan | exhibit and a focus on storytelling by introducing names and information for their lion, hornbill, crocodile & African wild dogs. | |
| ZooMontana | Creating a Space for Empathy | The primary goal is to be able to provide ZooMontana's animal residents with an outdoor facility in which guests would be better able to observe relationships with staff; as well as training, education, and enrichment sessions. Also adding shading to amphitheater. | Tier 2 |
| Lake Superior Zoo | Deepening Empathy Practices with Indigenous Perspectives through a Community of Practice Approach | This project will use a Community of Practice approach to engage a cohort of regional early childhood professionals, including LSZ educators in the co-creation of empathy practices deepened by Indigenous perspectives. | Tier 2 |
| Lake Superior Zoo | Inspiring Motivational Empathy through Playful Connections with Zoo Animals | This project will design and build new play spaces and interactive signage on Lake Superior Zoo grounds to enhance guests' opportunities to empathize with zoo animals. | Tier 2 |
| Alaska SeaLife Center | Fostering Empathy through Experiential Learning (FEEL) | This project will develop and implement empathy-focused curricula for summer camp focused on increasing awareness of Alaska's animals, ecosystems and native culture. | Tier 2 |
| **Total Amount Funded, Round 3:** | | | $749,072 |

# APPENDIX B LINKS TO RESOURCES

**ZSM's four empathy-focused training videos:**

1. Why Empathy: Susan https://youtu.be/uwjPAsLjy2A

2. Empathy in Action as an Animal Ambassador: Priya https://youtu.be/Osg5OPmxipI

3. Empathy for Conservation & Animal Care: Jody https://youtu.be/Pp2gO4BBxy0

4. Inspiring New Conservationists: Shawn https://youtu.be/1APwbfNgkVg


**Minnesota Zoo's literature reviews:**

5. Considering cultural factors when teaching empathy for animals online

6. Non-verbal Empathy Evaluation Tool

7. Best Practices for Delivering Ambassador Animal Programs to New Audiences (Literature Review)


**Lake Superior Zoo published articles:**

8. All relatives Share Empathy: A Reciprocal Empathy Model

9. Investigating the Impact of Preschool Type on Young Children's Empathy


**Henry Vilas Zoo sample animal fact sheets:**

10. Capybara Fact Sheet


**ZooMontana animal-focused signage:**
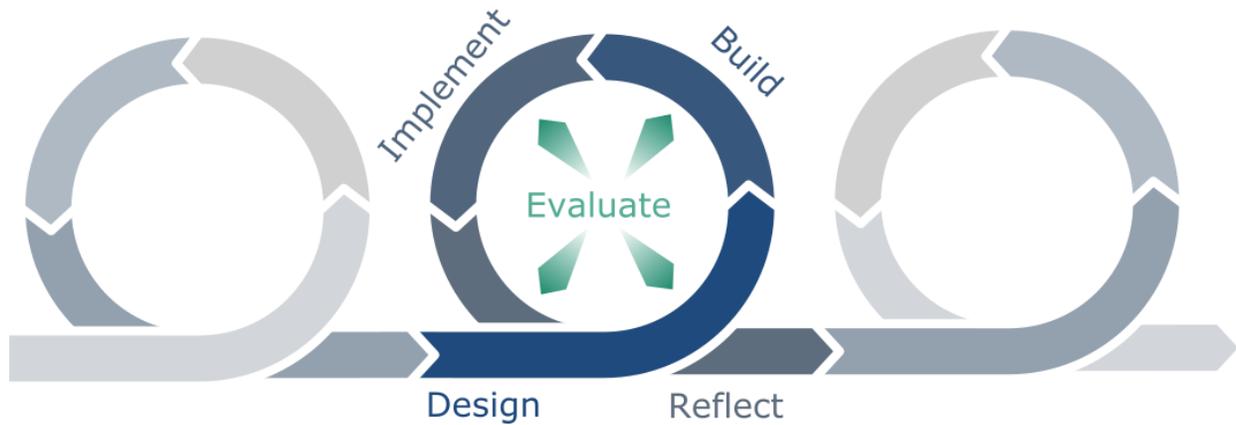
11. Tiger Habitat and Sign

12. Bear Biography Sign


**Evaluation Reports on the Granting Program**

13. RIC 4

14. Reviewer Feedback:

- Round One
- Round Two
- Round Three


15. Applicant Surveys

# APPENDIX C GRANTEE PROJECT DEFINITIONS

## Definitions of Project Stages

Eligible organizations and projects, regardless of their level of readiness, are valued equally. Recognizing that this cycle is iterative and provides opportunities for peer learning and translation at all stages, for the purpose of this opportunity, we define the program stages as follows:



| **Design:** Early concept and planning stage. This includes stakeholder buy-in, securing resources, information-gathering, defining measurable objectives, and determining intended audience(s). This phase may be informed by reflections on a prior iteration of the program. | **Build:** Moving from the design stage to assembling the project components. This may include creating tools, coordinating resources, and/or finalizing the operational plans necessary to move into the implement stage. | **Implement:** Program kicks off and is actively underway. | **Reflect:** Bringing in both internal and external data (e.g., surveys, focus groups, other useful evaluation tools) to identify strengths, gaps or challenges, opportunities and areas of growth for future iterations of the project. |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |

**Evaluate:** Assessment of your activities' results towards your learning or outcome goals. Evaluation can occur across all program stages and, depending on the phase you are in, you may ask different types of questions.

In the design/build phases you may ask, "W*hat does my audience already know or how do they perceive a topic, what are my audience's needs, assets or interests?*" In implement phase you may ask, "*Are audiences experiencing our activities as planned, why or why not?*" And, in reflection phase you could ask, "*Did our project produce or contribute to our intended outcomes or what aspects of our project made the biggest difference in whether the project was successful?*"

## Definition of Capacity Building

For the purposes of this funding opportunity, "capacity building" refers to activities that enhance the skills, resources, and/or abilities that can increase an organization's readiness to effectively foster empathy for wildlife. We are interested in learning how an organization develops, utilizes and strengthens existing internal resources (e.g., personnel, expertise, partnerships, supplies, facilities, etc.) to achieve its empathy-based goals most effectively.

Strong proposals will clearly communicate how the proposed activities foster empathy in their specified audience, but, equally importantly, will communicate how the project enhances internal resources, skills and capabilities during and after the grant period closes.

Examples might include increasing staff knowledge and skills, defining or refining processes, creating new initiatives or transforming existing initiatives, partnership-building, etc.