Diversity & Inclusion Policy

The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) recognizes and embraces human diversity. We accept the moral and practical imperatives of our multi-racial and multi-ethnic society, on our personal and professional lives. We value and seek the strengths of human variety in race, ethnicity, age, culture, gender, personal beliefs, physical abilities, religion, and sexual orientation. In principle and in practice, AZA will strive to serve as a model to our member organizations and commit time and resources to increasing diversity of our workforce, audience, and vendors. To serve our member institutions, AZA will assemble and provide resources on diversity programs, trends and issues, celebrate successes at member institutions, and continue to strengthen standards that will help members advance diversity and inclusion.

AZA recognizes that zoos and aquariums operate as businesses, providing their communities with unique and valuable learning and recreation opportunities while supporting their local economies through employment opportunities, money spent in the community on goods and services, and as tourism destinations of significant economic impact. Therefore, it is critical that zoo and aquarium professionals recognize the importance of diversity and inclusion in their business practices. As the composition of our country’s population becomes increasingly diverse, zoos and aquariums must take the initiative to develop comprehensive diversity and inclusion initiatives in their hiring practices, the services and experiences they provide their visitors and the way that they do business in their communities.

This policy applies to the Association’s offices, its employees and its members. It acknowledges that Association members may have their own statements or policies. It also acknowledges that the AZA Diversity Committee will continue to advance diversity and inclusion through sharing education, trends, strategies, resources and best practices for AZA and its member institutions.

AZA recognizes that in order for its members to be effective in their missions they must reflect the diversity of their communities in their employees, volunteers, governing bodies, vendors and guests and have facilities and programs that demonstrate respect for differences.
Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

AZA strongly recommends that its members adopt diversity and inclusion policies and programs that:

- Reflect the demographic trends and changing communities each institution serves;
- Celebrate the unique qualities, perspectives, values, opinions, and experiences of all stakeholders including, but not limited to, workforce, audience, and partners;
- Create a dynamic environment that is inclusive of all individuals, enabling each person to reach his or her full potential;
- Develop partnerships with diverse audiences in order to identify and meet the needs of all constituents in the community; and
- Evaluate, assess and continually improve diversity and inclusion practices.

AZA will support its members in their efforts to understand, value, promote, and improve diversity and inclusion at member institutions. This commitment may be demonstrated by:

- Promoting the work of the AZA Diversity Committee;
- Supporting diversity and inclusion programming for training and professional development;
- Providing diversity and inclusion resources and trends to member institutions;
- Celebrating best practices in diversity and inclusion through annual diversity awards and AZA publications;
- Incorporating diversity and inclusion into the AZA strategic plan, web site, communication tools, hiring and purchasing.
- Collaborating with the AZA Accreditation Commission to review standards for practices and policies that foster inclusion.