



Volunteer Engagement Award

2024 Guidelines for completing the application

All Applications are due by close of business on June 14, 2024 and must be compiled into one PDF file. Please upload your file to <https://bit.ly/AZAVolunteerAward>

The file should reflect both the name of the institution and the award name. Abbreviations are allowed. Your file will go to the AZA Digital Dropbox account, but you do not need to sign in, or even have a Dropbox account to use this link. When it opens, just click on the “Choose Files” box and upload your application. Please contact Leticia Orti (lorti@aza.org) if you have any questions about the application.

The Association of Zoos and Aquariums recognizes achievement in an organization’s ability to engage volunteers in the overall mission and operation of the organization. This application can be used for nominating overall volunteer engagement or a specific project or initiative within volunteer engagement.

Awards will be presented in two categories based on Annual Operating Budget – less than \$8 million and \$8 million and above.

A. Candidate

Include a title of the volunteer engagement up for review. The title should be used consistently throughout the application.

B. Applicant

Include the organization name, address, budget category, and organization director with signature.

C. Summary—one page or less

Provide a concise description of the volunteer engagement and its value to the organization. What makes it excellent? What makes it unique and/or innovative? What is the overall impact of the engagement to both the organization and the volunteers. This should be a general overview of the details in sections D and E.

D. Goals & Objectives—one page or less

Describe goals and objectives for the volunteer engagement being nominated. Include organizational mission and vision, and how the described volunteer engagement meets organizational goals and objectives. If appropriate, please include a volunteer engagement strategic plan.

E. Narrative—Describe in 3 pages (12-point type) or less how the volunteer engagement demonstrates excellence in one or more of the following categories:

- **Conservation** – AZA names conservation as its highest priority, and recognizes exceptional efforts by AZA organizations toward habitat preservation, species restoration, and support of biodiversity in the wild. Awards will recognize organizations that best utilize volunteer engagement that effectively leverage their community to engage in conservation/saving species and demonstrate their

organization's mission.

- **Innovation and/or Technology** – Awards will recognize organizations that have created and implemented original, cutting-edge and unique ideas by using imagination, information, and initiative to significantly improve processes, attain goals, track metrics, and utilize resources to better engage volunteers.
- **Diversity and Inclusion** - AZA recognizes the value of human diversity (including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs and political or other ideologies) and equitable access in all endeavors. Awards will recognize organizations that have overcome barriers and challenges to have a diverse and inclusive volunteer team reflective of the community that it serves.

Please describe the following in the narrative:

- Why you are applying for the Volunteer Engagement Award and the category or categories you selected.
- What actions or projects your volunteer department has developed and implemented to achieve the goal related to the category.
- The roles that volunteers fill and their significance for the organization.
- Data on the impact of the volunteer engagement on your organization and/or your community
- Evaluation tools used to determine success of the engagement.
- Barriers or challenges you have had to overcome to reach success.

F. Volunteer Policies and Procedures—attached as a PDF

Provide your current volunteer engagement policies and procedures if they are separate from your handbook. A volunteer handbook may be submitted if it covers the policies and procedures or as an additional source of information. Be sure to include policies, procedures, and training details specific to the volunteer engagement that is the focus of the application.

G. Supplemental Materials - Include materials that highlight or build a fuller picture of the work described in the narrative. These materials can include photos, testimonials (volunteer or guests), publications, training agendas, evaluations, and awards. Photos should be curated to tell the story. **Designate one digital image that illustrates the program to be used during the AZA Annual Conference Awards Ceremony PowerPoint presentation.**

H. Submitter

The SUBMITTER is that person who filled out the application and is responsible for the contents of the entry. Failure to provide an electronic signature on the designated line (note: the signature can be scanned and placed in the document) will constitute an incomplete application.

I. News Release Form

AZA will create a news release for each award winner. Please complete the [Media Release Form](#) and in the “summary” portion, write a paragraph describing your program, including details such as new techniques or technologies employed, cost of construction (for exhibit award applications), and a description of any species of animal involved.

Also, please submit the name, phone number and email address of a media contact for the organization and a quote from the organization director. Copies of the release are shared with the organization for approval.

It would be helpful to request that the Public Relations Department at your organization complete this form. Submit the completed News Release Form (also available at www.aza.org/volunteer-engagement-award/) with the application and also email the form as a WORD document to Betsy Hildebrandt at bhildebrandt@aza.org

J. WINNER'S RELEASE: HELP YOUR FELLOW MEMBERS!

If yours is the winning application, would you be willing to have it posted on the AZA website?