

# 2023 ZAA Awards Criteria Guide

**Dear ZAA Members,**

It is with great pleasure that I present the *2023 ZAA Awards Criteria Guide*.

The Zoo and Aquarium Association Awards are a celebration and acknowledgement of achieved extraordinary success resulting from the dedication and valuable work of our member zoos and aquariums and their positive impact on conservation and animal welfare.

There are several categories available to enter, ensuring the opportunity for recognition in numerous areas. We are pleased to announce some changes to the submission categories, submission process and judging method for **2023** as outlined below.

## **Award Categories**

There are seven awards categories, for which five we invite member nominations (from both small and large institutions). We have also introduced a few changes to the categories versus previous years:

- The Education Award has been renamed the Engagement Award with an expansion of focus to education, social science or communication initiatives that are driving behaviour change.
- An Environmental Sustainability category has been added to the mix; and
- Employee of the Year; an opportunity to nominate an outstanding team member.
- Innovation has been incorporated into most categories and is therefore no longer a standalone category.
- ZAA will be nominating (without submissions) two awards; a Meritorious Award and an Accreditation Award.

Other award categories remain the same as previous years. See below for full details of all awards.

## **Submission Process**

We understand the effort and time it takes in preparing an Awards submission. Therefore, we are introducing an **expression of interest** stage to gather *a minimum of 3* entries per category in order for that award category to proceed. Once the final award categories are announced, those entrants who submitted an expression of interest will be invited to enter a nomination.

## **Application Process**

All applicants will now be given the opportunity to present their nomination via video conference to a judging panel. Here applicants can bring their nomination to life through a presentation, in a short 15 to 20-minute block. Then the judging panel will have the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback to the applicant.

## **Judging Panel**

There will be a different judging panel for each category. Judging panels will consist of at least 2 ZAA staff members and one external professional expert appropriate to that category.



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This document outlines the award process further, explains each award category and the criteria required for a nomination. It also includes tips for giving an award-winning presentation.

Once again, I invite you to apply and participate in this wonderful celebration of our zoo and aquarium community. The Expression of Interest (EOI) stage opens **15 February 2023** and closes **3 April 2023**.

If you have any queries regarding the Awards, please contact Judy or Simone on 61-2-9978 4797 or [awards@zooaquarium.org.au](mailto:awards@zooaquarium.org.au)

I look forward to receiving your submissions and seeing you in person or virtually at the ZAA Conference from **9 - 11 August 2023**. And, of course, best of luck!

Nicola Craddock  
Executive Director  
February 2023

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## Guidelines

Entering the ZAA Awards is a great way to showcase your achievements, gain recognition for your successes and promote your business to staff, visitors and the broader community.

These guidelines are to assist you with your Awards nomination, once you have been invited to final stages of presenting your nomination.

Judges are only allowed to use the information provided in the presentation, so putting effort into your delivery of the evidence is important. Across most categories, the top submissions can be within one or two marks of each other.

The following guidelines and tips provide an insight into the judging process for the Awards and will assist you in preparing an award-winning nomination.

## Key Dates

<b>15 Feb 2023</b>	Expression of Interest (EOI) Opens
<b>3 April 2023</b>	EOI Closes
<b>21 Apr 2023</b>	Shortlist of Award categories announced - <i>applicants invited to presentation stage including confirmation of presentation time and date</i>
<b>24 Apr - 26 May 2023</b>	Applicants prepare nomination presentation
<b>29 May - 16 June 2023</b>	Applicants present nomination to judging panel
<b>10 Aug 2023</b>	Winners announced - ZAA Conference in Sydney

## Submitting your nomination

All applicants must start the nomination process by submitting an expression of interest via the following link. Be sure to read through the Awards category criteria first for easy EOI completion.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VDXBYWV>

**Please submit one expression of interest per nomination.**

You will be asked to provide the following information:

- Contact name
- Institution name
- Institution size (Small or Large based on operating expenditure – please see *Overview of Award Categories for more information*)
- Contact email
- Award category (and subcategories if applicable)
- Project name
- Project description (provide a 1-3 sentence brief)

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- You have read the *ZAA Awards Criteria Guide*
- You acknowledge that you (or a chosen representative from your institution) will be willing to present the above nomination via video conference to a judging panel.
- You are aware that nomination presentations are to be either 15 or 20 minutes long, as indicated in the Awards Criteria.

## Shortlisting the Award Categories

After the close of the expression of interest stage, a shortlist of Award categories will be developed from category receiving three or more submissions. If a category does not have enough entries, we will not proceed with the category.

Applicants will be contacted with the results and those shortlisted will be invited to the presentation stage. At this point a date between **24 April – 26 May** will be confirmed with you.

## Presentations

Applicants must prepare to present their nomination by presentation at an agreed time by the applicant and the judging panel via video conference.

Institutions nominating for an award may nominate two [2] representatives to attend and present the presentation.

## Judging Panel

Members of the judging panel shall be comprised of two [2] ZAA staff members and one [1] external professional expert appropriate to that category.

## Judging Process

Judges only base their decisions on the information you provide in your presentation, so make sure that you address the criteria clearly and within the allocated time.

Judges will use a scale of one to seven to score nominees. Nominations or nominees will be scored according to how they perform against their award-specific criteria. The scale is as follows:

Score	Score definition
Seven	Outstanding
Six	Excellent
Five	Very good
Four	Good
Three	Sound
Two	Deficient
One	Flawed

Judges will rely on the criterion descriptions to score the nominations/nominees.

The judges will review the nominations independently immediately following the presentation and question time.

Where there is potential for a conflict of interest, a member of the judging panel will declare it and will not engage in discussions or otherwise influence the outcome of judging on the particular matter.

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A nomination must achieve a median score of 4.5 to be considered for an award.

If judges deem that no nominations meet the minimum score for an award, the nominees will receive a written notice explaining the reasons for this decision. Nominees will receive this notice before the awards presentation.

The Association reserves the right to decide when an award will not be conferred.

## Preparation for delivering your nomination presentation

There's more to this presentation stage than meets the eye. Here are a few ideas and tips help deliver your presentation:

- Develop a script
- Design and develop a PowerPoint presentation that addresses the all the award criteria.
- Provide evidence in your presentation:
  - Present the evidence against the criteria in a concise and clear manner
  - You may wish to include photographs and / or a short video clip
  - A general claim such as 'number of animals increased' is much stronger when evidence is given: 'Number of animals increased by 20 per cent, as demonstrated in the graph below'
- Give a few practice runs with colleagues
- Ensure your presentation meets the allotted time. A bell system will be in operation to ensure presentations are within the defined time.

## FAQs

### How will I benefit from receiving an award?

The Association Awards provide you with the opportunity to:

- showcase your institution's achievements
- attain regional recognition for your institution's activities
- include your Association Award in your marketing strategy and as an endorsement in your institution's advertising collateral
- formally recognise the hard work and commitment of dedicated staff
- network with key industry figures and provide an example of excellence, innovation and achievement within the industry and in communications with the wider community.

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## **Who is eligible to nominate for an award?**

ZAA regional members and member institution staff are invited to submit nominations for the Awards. Only ZAA member programs, projects, exhibits and employees are eligible for nomination.

## **Can I enter more than one category?**

Yes. Nominees are **not** limited to entering more than one category. *Please submit one Expression of Interest per award category nomination.*

## **How do I nominate?**

You can nominate by filling in the Expression of Interest form at [survey monkey link]. By filling in the form you agree that the nomination will be able to be presented via video conference to a judging panel.

## **How will I be able to present my nomination?**

ZAA will be able to provide the online video conferencing platform to allow you to deliver your presentation.

You will need access to a computer with audio, internet connection and be able to present a PowerPoint presentation to a judging panel. Your PowerPoint presentation will be shareable across the video conference link. Instructions to do this will be made available to you prior to your presentation time.

## **How long will I be allowed to present?**

Depending on the category and criteria required, 15-20 minutes. Once the award categories have been finalised after the expression of interest stage, finalists will be contacted to confirm the Award Category and to confirm information on time, date, video conference details etc.

## **Do I have to submit anything other than the Expression of Interest form?**

Yes. We will ask you to submit your PowerPoint presentation at least 72 hours ahead of the meeting with the judging panel.

## **Can I present in person?**

No. To allow for a level playing field, we are asking all nominations to be presented via video conference.

## **When is the awards night and where is it being held?**

The Awards ceremony will be held during the Gala Dinner on the final night at the Conference in Christchurch on **10 Aug 2023**.

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If you have any queries regarding the Awards, please contact Judy or Simone on 61-2-9978 4797 or [awards@zooaquarium.org.au](mailto:awards@zooaquarium.org.au)

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## Overview of Award Categories

All awards categories, except Employee of the Year, operate on a two-tier system based on an institution's operating expenditure. The two-tier structure aims to provide smaller zoos and aquariums a chance to compete on a more level playing field.

The two-tiers are as follows:

- **large institutions** – operating expenditure above \$1.5 million
- **small institutions** – operating expenditure \$1.5 million or below

When nominating your work for an award you will be required to indicate which of the two tiers your institution falls under.

We invite nominations for the following Award Categories.

### Engagement Award

The Engagement Award recognises outstanding achievement in driving behaviour change in conservation or animal welfare. Engagement program nominations, whether educational, social science or communication in design, will be judged on the degree to which they promote awareness, drive action for conservation or welfare, and incorporate innovative ideas.

### Exhibit Awards

The Exhibit Awards recognise significant advances in animal housing and exhibit design. Although, primarily intended for display facilities, off-exhibit facilities that demonstrate innovation and contribute to improved animal welfare are invited to nominate. The Exhibit Awards are further sub-divided into small- and large-scale developments.

### Conservation Award

The Conservation Award recognises exceptional outcomes in conservation in the wild, particularly species restoration and minimising the impacts of key threatening processes on biodiversity. Judges will assess your conservation gains, your measurable conservation outcomes and your contribution to biodiversity.

### Environmental Sustainability Award

The Environmental Sustainability Award recognises excellence in projects that advance commitment and efforts towards minimising business impact to the environment.



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## Employee of the Year Award

This award is to reward and recognise an outstanding employee working at a ZAA regional member organisation who has demonstrated their support to the value of good zoos/aquariums. This individual will have displayed outstanding aptitude and dedication at a level that goes well above and beyond expectation in every aspect of their role and demonstrates a strong commitment to the following values – teamwork, communication, continuous improvement, innovation and integrity.

See below for full details of all award categories and assessment criteria.

## Engagement Award

The Engagement Award recognises outstanding achievement in driving behaviour change in conservation or animal welfare. Engagement program nominations, whether educational, social science or communication in design, will be judged on the degree to which they promote awareness, drive action for conservation or welfare, and incorporate innovative ideas. *Only ZAA member programs/projects eligible for nomination.*

## Assessment Criteria

1. **Project goals:** Provide a short summary of the project, program or initiative and identify the main objectives/goals.
2. **Cost-effectiveness:** the program is cost effective and financially secure.
3. **Holistic support for the program:** the program is supported by the whole zoo/aquarium. The program is sustainable and incorporated in whole of zoo/aquarium planning documents. Support for the program is across different sections of the zoo/aquarium and is embedded in organisational culture and strategy.
4. **Program design:** The campaign appropriately researched and well-planned (e.g. market or online research, customer insight, target audience, targeted messaging, measurable objectives, effective comms channels or format of delivering program etc.)
5. **Innovative learning experiences:** The program demonstrates innovation in its approach. It uses animals and/or exhibits to increase knowledge; builds positive attitudes towards wildlife or welfare; and develops actions for participants to make a difference.
6. **Call to action:** It connects people and/or students with the natural world and inspires action for the environment. How is the program promoting awareness and encouraging action?
7. **Measurable data:** the program incorporates measurement to evaluate participants' actions within the relevant environment. Post program data on participants is being/has been collected to gain insights into the program's success and outcomes achieved.
8. **Third party partnerships & community involvement:**

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- a. The institution collaborates with, or receives support from other organisation(s) as part of the program (e.g. government, NGOs, etc)?
- b. The program is accessible and utilised by the community and/or school groups and has wide reach and appeal.
- c. Does the project/activity/event have potential to be taken up by other groups or individuals?

## Exhibit Awards

The Exhibit Awards recognise significant advances in animal housing and exhibit design. Although, primarily intended for display facilities, off-exhibit facilities that demonstrate innovation and contribute to improved animal welfare are invited to nominate. *Only ZAA member exhibits are eligible for nomination, and exhibits must have been completed between **January 2021 to May 2023** only.*

The Exhibit Awards are sub-divided into two sub-categories based on the cost of the development for the exhibit/animal holding facilities. *Please indicate the sub-category when submitting your expression of interest.*

Institution tier	Large scale development	Small scale development
Small institutions tier (operating expenditure \$1.5M or below)	more than \$150,000	\$150,000 or less
Large institutions tier (operating expenditure above \$1.5M)	more than \$500,000	\$500,000 or less

## Assessment Criteria

1. **Project goals:** Provide a short summary of the exhibit, whether it is a large- or small-scale development, the completion date, and identify the main objectives/goals.
2. **Improved animal welfare:** the development provides significant advances for the housing of the animals concerned. *Evidence might include data from animal records, outcomes of behavioural studies, or events such as breeding success, reduced incidence of aggression or other positive outcomes.*
3. **Improved work practices:** the development provides for improved work practices. *Evidence might include examples of reducing potential for injury, including repetitive strain injury; or reducing the amount of time that it takes to service the facility; or increased opportunities for monitoring animals.*
4. **Visitor experience:** the development provides opportunities for engaging visitor experience. *Evidence might include data showing time that visitors spend at the exhibit, results of surveys, increased attendance or other evidence that demonstrates improved visitor experience and/or positive response from visitors. Off-exhibit facilities might provide guided tours or animal viewing via webcams to enhance visitor experience.*
5. **Outcomes delivered:** the development should provide some tangible outcomes that relate to one of more of the following:

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- a. **Conservation** – the facility has been developed to support a recovery program or insurance population. Visitor experience contributes to conservation outcomes, including actions that visitors might take to reduce impact of threatening processes.
  - b. **Research** – the facility has been developed to support improved knowledge such as understanding of species biology, reproductive behaviour or it may contribute to advances in technology. Evidence might include current research underway.
  - c. **Education** – the facility provides opportunity for learning, this might be informal programs, or programs that support delivery of schools-based curricula. Evidence might include number of school visits, list of programs and presentations offered.
6. **Innovation:** the development demonstrates innovation. *Evidence might include use of technology or creative use of materials.*
  7. **Sustainability:** the development contributes to sustainability - environment sustainability and sustainability of the institution. *Evidence might include use of recycled material, reduced demand for non-renewable resources, use of renewable resources and recycled water, reduced carbon footprint, reduced costs in servicing and operating the facility (compared to the previous facility), or increased attendance.*
  8. **Cost effectiveness / ethically sourced materials:** the facility has considered cost effectiveness both in build and operations and/or how materials were ethically sourced or supported local businesses. *For example, more expensive plant and equipment may have been selected, but over ten years they will deliver significant cost-savings in operations.*

## Conservation Award

The Conservation Award recognises exceptional outcomes in conservation in the wild, particularly species restoration and minimising the impacts of key threatening processes on biodiversity. Judges will assess your conservation gains, your measurable conservation outcomes and your contribution to biodiversity.

*Only ZAA member programs/projects are eligible for nomination.* Your project may span 12 months or 100 years. The judges will award the most 'exceptional outcome'.

NB. Projects that focus on animal welfare/rescue/rehabilitation will not be considered for this award. Projects that focus on education or research activities also may not be considered, unless they are:

1. research/education projects targeting key education or research questions or
2. conservation projects that demonstrate clear biodiversity conservation outcomes.

## Assessment Criteria

1. **Project goals:** summarise the project and clearly state its conservation outcomes, and the role of the nominating organisation. project goals, objectives, actions and outcomes.
2. **Evaluation of program:** How were the project outcomes were evaluated? When possible, provide specific and measurable data that highlights the real conservation gains.

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3. **Benefits to the ecosystem:** The project identifies and describes benefits to the entire ecosystem:
  - a. Have there been any demonstrable benefits to a range of species, such as an increase in numbers or distributions? Is there regular, robust monitoring to support this finding?
  - b. Does the project demonstrate reducing or eliminating key threatening processes (e.g. pollution, poaching, pests, predation, habitat loss or degradation, disturbance, etc.)?
4. **Third party partnerships & community involvement:** The project demonstrates and supports strong community involvement. Note the following:
  - a. Does the project enhance the capacity of local people?
  - b. Are local stakeholders participating in the project?
  - c. Is the project supported by the relevant governments?
  - d. Does the project integrate wildlife conservation goals with social development needs?
  - e. Does the project produce benefits for the local community (e.g. better water supplies)?
5. **Project sustainability:** It is important that conservation gains can be sustained, most preferably by the actions of the relevant communities, rather than relying on external resourcing for years into the future. Of course, the degree to which this is possible varies greatly and the reality is that some projects will need some level of external input for the long-term. *For example, a strategic plan in place to ensure the project continues after your organisation ceases support.*
6. **Advocacy:** Does the project provide advocacy messaging and learning about the species and the key threatening processes?

*Threatened species recovery: if the nomination focuses on threatened species recovery consider the following in the criteria above:*

- a. *Does the project target any identified priorities in an endorsed Recovery Plan or similar document?*
- b. *Has there been a sustained increase in the wild population of the species?*
- c. *What % of the species' current range has been protected?*
- d. *Have the key threats to the species in the wild been adequately addressed?*
- e. *Have staff of a member institution benefited from this project (for example, increase in skills)?*

## Environmental Sustainability Award

The Environmental Sustainability Award recognises excellence in projects that advance commitment and efforts towards minimising business impact to the environment.

*Only ZAA member programs/projects are eligible for nomination. Your project may have been introduced / launched in the last 24 months. The judges will award the most 'exceptional outcome'.*

### Assessment Criteria

1. **Project goals:** Provide a short summary of the project, program or initiative and identify measurable goals of the environmental sustainability program?

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2. **Innovation:** the project or program demonstrates innovation. Evidence might include use of technology or creative use of materials.
3. **Sustainability in your Business:** Does your institution have an overarching vision for environmental sustainability, demonstrated by a strong track record in committing to and successfully implementing sustainability initiatives (i.e. support is embedded in organisational culture and strategy. The nomination must identify what sustainability means to all stakeholders and to the facilities management team and must relate to a broader sustainability agenda and achievements.
4. **Evaluation of program:** How were the project outcomes evaluated? If possible, provide specific and measurable data that highlights the real sustainability gains.
5. **Third party partnerships & community involvement** - please note the following:
  - a. Did the institution collaborate with, or receive support from other institutions as part of the program?
  - b. Does the project have potential to be taken up by other groups or individuals?
  - c. Identify how the knowledge and experience gained is shared and promoted?
  - d. Has there been any community engagement or messaging?

## Employee of the Year Award

This award is to reward and recognise an outstanding employee working at a ZAA regional member organisation and has demonstrated their support to the value of good zoos. This individual will have displayed outstanding aptitude and dedication at a level that goes well above and beyond expectation in every aspect of their role and demonstrates a strong commitment to the following values – teamwork, communication, continuous improvement, innovation and integrity.

### Who is eligible for this nomination?

The nominated individual must be employed by a ZAA Regional Member. They must have been employed by a member institution for a period of 12 months or more, immediately prior to the time of nomination.

This award is open to supervisors and operational/support staff across all areas but excludes directors, owners and senior management level. (If you are an independent owner/operator, this award excludes owners/operators, and if a large facility this award excludes senior management, directors, and CEOs.)

Self-nomination will not be accepted, only third-party nominations. In the interests of the award being a surprise, the nominated employee is not to be included in the presentation in person. All nominations are treated as confidential.

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## Assessment Criteria

1. **Summary:** Provide a short summary of the person, their name, role and why they are being nominated?
2. **Why do you think the nominee is an ideal candidate for this award?** *Nominations should clearly demonstrate how individuals have delivered specific outcomes against the following values.*
  - a. **Teamwork** – Displays the spirit of collaboration and trust, fosters team development and respects other team members
  - b. **Communication** - Proactive and communicating the values of conservation and welfare within the organisation and/or to visitors
  - c. **Continuous improvement and innovation** – Foster a culture of excellence and drives ideas into action through innovative approaches
  - d. **Integrity** – is honest, transparent and meets own commitments
  - e. **Other** – you may have other applicable values to support your nomination