AFRICAN ASSOCIATION FOR WILDLIFE IN HUMAN CARE (AAWHC)

Education Policy

Contents

1. Purpose 3
2. Scope 3
3. Definitions 3
4. Policy Statement 4
5. Principles 4
6. Objectives 5
7. Responsibilities 6
8. Related Documents 6
9. Resources 7
10. Policy review 7
11. Approval 7

1. Purpose

All Accredited members of the African Association for Wildlife in Human Care (AAWHC) must have a written education policy or strategy which is available on enquiry. The AAWHC Education Policy has been developed to ensure that these members have a consistent approach to education. It offers leadership in the formulation of principles and accreditation standards for education, and supports the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums and the International Zoo Educators Association education strategy (**The World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Education Strategy**).

This policy will be updated to meet the evolving educational philosophy and practice in wildlife-keeping institutions as required.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all Accredited members of the African Association of Wildlife in Human Care (AAWHC). All other members are encouraged to abide or achieve the standards set by the policy.

3. Definitions

Conservation: AAWHC supports the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA) definition, whereby "Conservation is an action leading to healthy and resilient wildlife populations and natural ecosystems. These outcomes underpin the sustainability of the global environment and human societies and are achieved through direct interventions to manage populations, habitats and landscapes; promoting behaviour change at all levels of society through engagement and advocacy; and research and knowledge sharing to build conservation capacity".

Conservation education: The process of influencing people's attitudes, emotions, knowledge, and behaviours about biodiversity conservation. Conservation education:

- Builds knowledge and understanding about species, the natural world, and zoo and aquarium contributions to conservation.
- Fosters positive connections, emotions, attitudes, values, and empathy toward species, the natural world, and zoos and aquariums.
- Promotes awe, wonder, enjoyment, creativity, and inspiration about species and the natural world.
- Motivates pro-environmental behaviours, actions, and advocacy toward species and the natural world.

Lifelong learning: the continuous process of acquiring knowledge and skills throughout a person's life, encompassing both formal and informal learning experiences.

Natural World: the entirety of the physical universe, encompassing all living and non-living things that exist naturally, meaning not created or influenced by humans.

Visitors: people who pay to visit a wildlife-keeping institution

4. Policy Statement

All AAWHC members are committed to contributing to the conservation of the natural world. Through the provision of conservation education, we aim is to inspire our visitors to do the same.

The contribution to conservation education from each AAWHC member is unique to their facility. The Association recommends that members develop their own position statements, policies, and procedures that align with AAWHC's Education Policy. Audiences vary according to culture, beliefs and language and each member must create learning opportunities for effective communication that not only supports learning but also connects people emotionally to nature and supports the development of pro-environmental behaviours.

This policy outlines the minimum requirements for conservation education by all AAWHC members, and it should be viewed in conjunction with other relevant policies.

5. Principles

5.1 Conservation education plan

The conservation education role of the member should be reflected in its written mission statement, and it must have a written conservation education plan. This plan should outline its conservation education activities, how they apply to different types of audiences, and the strategic thinking behind the plan's design.

The conservation education plan should make specific reference to how the member has integrated its mission and vision, as well as applicable national, regional, and international policies and standards into its conservation education.

Conservation education should be an integral part of exhibit design, and the member should have appropriate facilities to deliver its conservation education plan.

5.2 Promoting conservation education for all

The AAWHC members should expand their reach and opportunities for people to learn about and get involved in conservation onsite, offsite, and online.

They should demonstrate a range of delivery approaches in their conservation education programmes that cater to different audiences' needs and diversities.

5.3 Applying appropriate approaches and methods in conservation education

The AAWHC members should present accurate and relevant information about the species, ecosystems, and issues exhibited.

The conservation education messages should be based on scientific facts and theories. Where cultural, religious, or alternative ideas are represented, they must be clearly indicated as such.

5.4 Integrating animal care and welfare into conservation education

The AAWHC members should comply with WAZA or regional guidelines on animal-visitor interactions.

They should connect audiences to the principles of animal care and show how their organisation achieves high welfare standards for the species in their care.

5.5 Prioritising conservation and sustainability into conservation education

Conservation education in AAWHC members should aspire to make conservation issues relevant to audiences' own lives and inspire people to take direct and indirect actions for species, ecosystems, and communities.

They should educate their audiences about their conservation and sustainability work by demonstrating their organisation's direct and indirect contributions to conservation.

5.6 Optimising training and professional development in conservation education

The AAWHC member should have at least one member of staff with the necessary experience and qualifications responsible for leading and implementing their conservation education plan.

They should support staff and volunteers involved in conservation education to be active in local, national, regional, and international conservation education networks and meetings.

They should support staff and volunteers involved in conservation education with the appropriate continuous professional development and training to help meet their conservation education plan.

5.7 Strengthening the Evidence of the Conservation Education Value of Zoos and Aquariums

The AAWHC member should collect and share a range of evidence to demonstrate how it is implementing its conservation education plan.

6. Objectives

6.1 Provide unique learning experiences that connect people with the natural world. This will be achieved by:

- Creating emotive experiences that capture visitors' imagination and sense of wonder.
- Creating good quality and relevant learning experiences within and outside our organisations and online.
- Developing activities that activate multi-sensory experiences that cater for the different backgrounds and learning styles of visitors.
- Utilising the expertise of all staff members to develop exciting and meaningful experiences.
- Engaging the community through unique activities such as behind-the-scenes tours and interpretive experiences.

6.2 Involve the whole community inclusive of professional bodies, education facilities and local communities. This will be achieved by:

- Formal and informal learning activities.
- Encouraging people to act in an environmentally responsible manner.
- Utilising information and communication technologies to provide educational opportunities for everyone.
- Consulting members of the wider community to create programmes that fulfil their educational requirements.
- Building indigenous perspectives into awareness and education.

6.3 Encourage lifelong learning. This will be achieved by:

- Providing opportunities for staff and community members of all ages to continually improve their knowledge and skills for environmental action: time, funding, equipment.
- Providing learning opportunities that are relevant and meaningful and build upon previous knowledge and experience.
- Including other government facilities to further their knowledge of animals.

6.4 Encompass all parts of the organisation. This will be achieved by:

- Establishing effective communication between staff members, volunteers and outside relevant organisations.
- Ensuring that all participants are aware and familiar with the education policy of the facility.
- Providing training for staff and volunteers to implement their policies effectively.
- Developing partnerships with schools, communities, other organisations.
- Creating opportunities for education research.
- Ensuring buy-in for financial support and resources.

6.5 Give people an understanding of their impact on the natural world and the need to take individual and collective action for ecological sustainability. This will be achieved by:

- Creating experiences that focus on the connections between all visitors and the world and increase their understanding of how their lifestyle impacts upon it.
- Modelling and providing the tools to action positive environmental changes.
- Ensuring that sustainability should be a natural choice for staff and visitors.

7. Responsibilities

The Head (CEO, Managing Director, Executive Manager, Owner, etc.) of the AAWHC member, or their delegated representative, must ensure that their organisation can satisfy the requirements of the AAWHC Education Policy, and be able to present evidence of an education policy or strategy, an education plan, and its implementation on request.

AAWHC's Accreditation Programme assessors shall regularly evaluate the AAWHC member's conservation education plan and activities and how they contribute to the member's conservation education policy or strategy.

8. Related Documents

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the following policies, procedures and guidelines of AAWHC:

- AAWHC Code of Ethics
- AAWHC Accreditation Guidelines
- AAWHC Animal Visitor Interactions Position Statement
- WAZA strategies

9. Resources

BIAZA: Conservation policy

WAZA: Conservation Education Strategy

Zoo Aquarium Association Australasia

10. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed every **five years** by the relevant committee of the AAWHC Board.

11. Approval

This Policy was approved by the AAWHC Board.