

FUNDING CONSERVATION

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Gather people from all areas; guest services, accounting, animal care, etc. As a group, list out the conservation efforts of the organization and ask:

1. For each project: If we totally nailed it, what could we accomplished in 4 years? Write down specific potential outcomes.
2. For the team: If you could only pick 3 projects to focus on, which ones would you choose? Why?

What new objectives can you take away from the discussion? How can you achieve the desired outcomes detailed by your organization?

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO...

Our thought partners and presenters: Eric Miller with Zoo Advisors and Rich Bergl with the North Carolina Zoo

IT'S **1** MISSION CRITICAL

Data confirms that people will support organizations with a strong shared mission. Zoos and Aquariums can be that as we enhance, refine, and enrich our conservation programs. Rich Bergl, Director of Conservation at the North Carolina Zoo, put it this way, **"how can we go from being funders of conservation to being actors for conservation?"**

As our zoological community shifts towards a conservation focus, it is imperative that we are true to our messaging, our mission, and our work. Younger visitors and our future donors want a fun experience and a contribution to our mission. Ideally, we see our missions align, and our guests care about and act on behalf of wild animals as much as we do.

Is 3% the magic number that will make our conservation efforts successful or was this goal implemented to motivate more direct financial contributions to the field of conservation? Approximately 55 of 230 organizations meet this 3% goal. Is it possible that the goal is doing a disservice to our community?

First off, we know that conservation success will require more financial input than just 3% of our combined operating budget. It must be more than financial input. We need holistic, cultural commitment to conservation. Second, if you looked on Charity navigator and found an organization that contributed 3% to its primary mission, would you contribute? Probably not. Our mission and vision must be bigger than the 3% goal.

2 IS 3% ENOUGH?

Many of our conservation programs are measured by financial contributions but is that the best gauge of success? Rich said it well, "we need other measures of success but without financial capital, there is no chance of success." We can explore new ways to invest financial capital.

Eric Miller, Senior Advisor for Zoo Advisors, suggested asking for a \$1 contribution as key sales points, including conservation endowments in capital campaigns, or cultivating conservation specific donors. We also need to explore new measures of success such as measuring social change, species viability, species diversity, and population counts (visit our newsroom to read about our ECHO Digital on [The 6th Extinction](#)).

3
MEASURE IMPACT

WELFARE & OUR **4** MISSION

How does animal welfare align with our mission of conservation? A challenge we need to be aware of is the perception of many that there is no justification for having animals in captivity even if operating as conservation organizations. We must be careful to not overlook our guests' experiences. We know from research that if animals are perceived as unhappy or unhealthy, any attempts at conservation messaging will fall on deaf ears.

Jim Gesualdi, author of Excellence Beyond Compliance said, "(welfare) needs to be an explicit part of our mission. It is our moral authority to uphold the public's trust by ensuring the highest quality of animal thriving." There are many conservation organizations that don't have live animals. We must, as Eric Miller, Senior advisor for Zoo Advisors said, make sure everyone knows how much we care for animals here (in the zoo) and there (in the wild).

At Zoo Tampa, every staff member goes through a conservation class taught by LeeAnn Rottman, VP of Conservation at Goodyear tire company. The Houston Zoo designates days where every staff member wears a shirt that says, "Ask me about conservation" and each person wearing a shirt has a story they can share.

What if advancing conservation started with our own people first? If we are conservation organizations, it must be integrated into every position of our organization. From front line staff to senior executives. They need to know how they contribute to the mission.

INCLUSION IS KEY **5**

ECHO Digital is hosted monthly to create opportunities for passionate zoo professionals to connect with innovative ideas from outside the zoo field as well as with other zoo colleagues around the country.

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