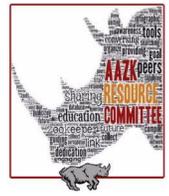




AAZK Chapter Handbook

Section 2: Chapter Membership



The AAZK Chapter Handbook was produced to act as a guideline that completely and systematically answers common chapter questions with the understanding that all chapters are run differently. This information may serve as a companion, but not as an alternative, to the AAZK National Operations Manual.

This section was produced to provide examples (not all inclusive) of membership benefits provided by AAZK Chapters. Benefits that AAZK Chapters provide to their members vary, but all seek to promote professional development and to build a cohesive team. This document can be used to help recruit new chapter members and promote membership within the organization.

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What is Included with a Local AAZK Chapter Membership?

The Quick Points

- Voting rights at chapter level.
- Development of leadership skills by holding the office of President, Vice- President, Secretary, and Treasurer on the Chapter Executive Team.
 - The member must also be a member of National AAZK to hold these positions.
- Act as the organizer for events, fundraisers, conservation initiatives.
 - Locally and Globally.
- Opportunities for professional development and growth.
 - Chapter-run scholarships, workshops, and leadership positions.
- Members only events or trips.
- Network with like-minded individuals both in and outside of the place of employment, such as with staff of other zooquaria facilities or conservation organizations.

Disclaimer: Membership should have its benefits, but never be exclusive. It's important to keep the needs of non-members in mind when planning events, fundraisers, or gatherings. An effective way to do this is by offering free or discounted entry for members. AAZK Chapters should always consider all qualifying non-members as potential future members, and offer them as many member-like opportunities as possible to encourage interest in joining.

Chapter Membership Benefits

Voting Rights

- Voting rights at the chapter level allow for equality and fairness among members.
- Chapter members are entitled to one vote, provided they are an active member (i.e. have contributed dues for the year).¹⁰
- Chapter members have the chance to vote on chapter activities, who acts as chapter officers, and the overall direction of the chapter.

Leadership Opportunities

- Skills gained by members while acting as a chapter leader are transferable to current and future careers, professional functions and duties, and unassociated personal endeavors.
- Individuals can act as a local chapter leader by holding the office of President, Vice-President, Secretary, or Treasurer on the Chapter Executive Team.
 - Term limits are determined by each Chapter's Bylaws.¹⁰
 - Some chapter's elected officers serve for two-year terms.¹
 - Chapters Officers need to be members in good standing with AAZK National.¹⁰
 - Only active chapter members are eligible to hold these positions.¹⁰
- Chapter Officers are chosen by members during routine elections.¹⁰

Internal and External Networking

- Networking builds relationships among members (both within and outside of a chapter) and grants opportunities to find outside resources.
 - Utilize travel grants and scholarships to attend conferences and workshops, which all have many networking opportunities.
 - Collaborate with other AAZK Chapters and members to exchange ideas.
 - Monthly meetings provide an opportunity for members to share stories and experiences in an informal setting.
 - Chapter membership can include other staff or volunteers from a facility that usually would not cross paths.
 - Meetings provide an opportunity for members to connect.

Participate in or Organize Conservation Based Events

- Members organizing events gain skills that can be used elsewhere in their personal and professional lives.
 - Gain leadership and teamwork skills while planning and organizing with the support and guidance of a network of peers.
- Participation in conservation based events can foster a feeling of contributing to the “bigger picture” while working locally.
- Run events to raise awareness about specific species or environmental concerns or simple fundraisers to financially support conservation efforts.
 - Example: Organize a Red Panda Day Celebration to educate about threats facing the species in the wild.¹
- Additionally, there are a variety of ways members can use their creativity to organize fundraisers for a conservation project they are passionate about.
- There are many supportive resources from AAZK to help organize these events.
 - By logging in to the members only section of www.aazk.org, resources are organized by subject.
 - Organizing a Fundraiser document.
 - Under the Chapter Resources tab, select Chapter Operations.
 - Running a Bowling for Rhinos event.
 - Under the Bowling for Rhinos Member Resources tab, select “BFR - Holding an Event”.

Participate in Local Conservation and Field Work

- Chapters can provide opportunities for members to be involved with local conservation and fieldwork, which can foster cooperation between chapters and local government/businesses/people while providing rewarding experiences for members.
 - Street clean-up and planting project.⁴
 - Yearly beach clean-up event.¹
 - Plant/maintain pollinator garden on zoo grounds.¹

Professional Development of Chapter Members

- Professional development provides members with a chance to grow in their career and develop new skill sets.
- There are many ways to provide professional development opportunities to members.
 - Scholarships for the AAZK Conference.²
 - Scholarships for travel to professional development or work-related travel (field work)³
 - Hosting workshops or training events.
 - Bring in guest speakers that can talk about global or local initiatives, animal training, or other topics of interest.
 - Offer trainings or lectures from leaders with expertise, such as
 - Resume & interview pointers.²
 - Snake handling⁴
 - Members discuss workshops, conferences, or other experiences they've had.
 - Presentations after chapter meetings on how travel funds were used and what the participants learned.⁴
 - Symposium style presentation by members who attended conferences, conservation opportunities or workshops.^{5&6}
 - Monthly "In-Depths" which can be hour-long, lunchtime seminars led by facility staff that take a closer look into specific conservation efforts, animal care, and the zoo keeping profession.⁸

Chapter Member Recognition

- Always ensure the hard work of chapter members is recognized, which can help with membership retention and encourage future participation and contribution.
- Utilizing a Point System.
 - Points can be earned by attending meetings/events, helping to organize an event, serving on a committee, or helping at a fundraiser event.⁷
 - Points can be redeemed or used in the decision making process for professional development opportunities and associated costs⁷
 - In Chapters in which members redeem points they've earned, they may be required to submit a written request to the Chapter.
 - In Chapters in which points are used in selection of members for professional development opportunities, the membership may vote to allocate funds at chapter meetings.
 - Members can present highlights of the event back to the chapter, if required.
 - Members with the most points can be awarded small prizes such as gift cards to local restaurants/business or items with chapter logo.¹
- National Zoo Keeper Week (*annually during the third full week in July*) is a great platform to recognize members for their hard work.
 - Keeper Profiles online to highlight individual keepers and the work they do⁴
 - Raffle off chapter memberships.⁹
 - "Member of the Year" awarded with one year membership (usually a non-officer) with highest points or meeting/event attendance.²

Chapter Member Only Activities and Social Events

- Member only activities provide opportunities for informal socialization and can help build a fun atmosphere.
 - Activities such as enrichment nights and National Zoo Keeper Week
 - Restaurant nights or happy hour
 - Secret Santa Happy Hour⁸
 - Trips to other zoos or parks.
 - Keeper exchanges, in and out of house.⁴
 - Networking with local organizations.
 - The Healthy Harbor Initiative⁴
 - Field work outings
 - Osprey banding⁴
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Additional Resources

Why Should I Become An AAZK Member?

Use this resource to help explain what AAZK has to offer animal care professionals and other like-minded parties. This resource is available as a .pdf file and available for you to download from the general public side of the [AAZK website](#).

Customizable Resources for your Chapter

The following documents are *templates* to aid AAZK Chapter Leaders in providing information for prospective and new members to the Chapter. The examples listed in the templates are not meant to be all inclusive as the benefits that AAZK Chapters provide to their members may vary.

These templates are formatted as .docx files, which enables editing by Microsoft Word, Apple Pages and Google Docs.

Download the templates from the Members section of the [AAZK website](#)

(*Member Login/Resources/AAZK Chapters/Retention, Recruitment, Participation*).

- **Chapter Membership Benefits**

The *Chapter Membership Benefits* document was produced to provide prospective members of a local AAZK Chapter an outline of local membership benefits.

- **Chapter Membership On-Boarding**

The *Chapter Membership On-Boarding* document was produced to aid Chapter leaders in assisting new members with getting involved in the chapter's business faster, therefore helping the chapter retain valuable members.

Citations

- ¹ Green Bay Chapter
- ² Pittsburgh Chapter
- ³ Puget Sound Chapter
- ⁴ Greater Baltimore Chapter
- ⁵ Connecticut Chapter
- ⁶ Greater New Jersey Chapter
- ⁷ Greater Houston Chapter
- ⁸ National Capital Chapter
- ⁹ St. Louis Chapter
- ¹⁰ AAZK Operations Manual

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