

EAZA Annual Conference, Leipzig 2024

TASK 1

Director Group

Identifying challenges and concerns

Objective:

As directors, your goal is to list and analyse concerns or challenges associated with implementing a new conservation project in the zoo. Consider financial, operational and strategic implications that might arise. Your task is to explain why a zoo might be hesitant or unable to pursue such initiatives.

Identify the key challenges of conservation projects

List the concerns:

- Think about the potential obstacles that might hinder the zoos involvement in conservation projects. These could be financial, logistical or even strategic.

Possible challenges to highlight:

- High costs and resource allocation (staff, facilities, funding)
- Potential public backlash if the project fails or doesn't show immediate results
- Risk of diverting resources from other zoo programs or operations
- Ethical and welfare concerns related to keeping species in captivity
- Difficulty in ensuring long-term sustainability and commitment
- Unclear or limited conservation impact in some cases

Results:

Director Group 1

Challenge/Concern and Justification:

- project doesn't fit with the collection plan – conservation projects should align with collection strategy/plan
- „boring “animals – animals not attractive to guests, doesn't sell tickets
- not the right facilities/space – space constraints
- time consuming – „didn't I give you enough to do? “
- species not suitable for exhibition – e.g. hibernating
- cost/benefit – in terms of visitors
- difficult to collaborate with different stakeholders – e.g. universities, authorities etc., might endanger authority
- lack of expertise – need to use time to research or hire new staff with expertise
- too complex to explain/justify – e.g. genetics

Director Group 2

Challenge/Concern and Justification:

- funding – how to fund? do you have the staff expertise? is the grant big enough to be sustainable (moneywise)?
- timetable/timeline – how long is the approval process?
- skillset in the team – is the staff trained? what are the costs associated with training?
- strategic plan – is there an existing plan? does it fit?
- reliable partner – have you vetted the organisation?
- space – do you have sufficient space to dedicate to the project (enclosures, interpretation)?
- impact assessment – can you assess the impact of the project?
- collaboration – are there many partners involved? Limp's – support or not?
- prioritisation – do you lose another project? lots of things done poorly is not as good as few things done well, public perception (are they invested?)
- staff in situ – can the zoo donate time/skills/expertise as well as money? (storytelling), staff safety
- geo-political – where is the project? is there a lot of red tape? is it safe for the staff to travel?
- hotspot (where should EAZA focus?) – are we the best location to support the project (i.e. Probably not North America)? focus on local
- biodiversity – are we supporting more than one taxon?
- connection/links – links between project/institution
- education/conservation – is it easy to incorporate into education?
- welfare concerns

Zoologist Group

Pitch to the director

Objective:

As zoologists, your goal is to persuade the director to support a new conservation project. List the main advantages of zoo involvement in conservation projects and create a persuasive pitch. Consider scientific, educational and institutional benefits.

Identify the key pros of conservation projects in zoos

List the benefits:

- Write down all the advantages of having conservation projects in your zoo. Think of it from various angles: conservation success, public relations, education, financial benefits and future opportunities.

Possible benefits to highlight:

- Contribution to global biodiversity conservation
- Positive public perception and educational outreach
- Opportunities for research and scientific advancements
- Potential to attract more visitors and funding
- Ethical responsibility to protect endangered species
- Strengthened partnerships with other conservation organizations

Zoologist Group 1

Key benefit and Justification:

- good practise (recognition from external bodies) – e.g. IUCN, proof that you're a progressive zoo, brings more people and consequently more money
- preventing extinction – good for species, good for PR
- allows good storytelling with animals at the zoo – if you choose projects with link to the species at the zoo
- team building between depts.
- staff continuing professional development and empowerment
- new opportunities for grants that also benefit the zoo – e.g. build new or improve old enclosures with conservation funding
- being involved in local community – if it's a local species, then it's good for local networking and local recognition of the zoo

Director's possible concern and how to encourage the Director:

- cost – fund raising (can get external \$)
- lack of visitor interest
- will take staff time – external funding options, invite students, volunteers and interns, staff motivation and personal development will go up, as well as staff retention
- failures could cause negative PR – e.g. conservation partner does bad thing, managing expectations
- zoo based communication and PR not used to doing this – can be taught
- public scepticism that zoo can manage projects
- hard to show/measure impact
- too much bureaucracy

Zoologist Group 2

Key benefit and Justification:

- telling local stories – touches people's emotions
- precondition of EAZA – EAZA has lots of advantages to cooperate and acquire species
- purpose of the zoo – good story for the public, direct impact
- cooperation with NGO's – additional partners for outreach
- political authority – easy contact/dialogue with local authority, getting things done and improved local relationship
- opportunity for extra outreach – organise activities out of the zoo (excursions, citizen science...)
- ethic statement – locals will better understand our conservation rate, which supports our conservation work
- local flagship species – good as a first start

Director's possible concern and how to encourage the Director:

- financial costs – new visibility and action → value
- staff time costs
- staff is not ready for it