

# Zoo Stakeholder Bill of Rights - Everyone Wins

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**Introduction.** There has been a longstanding and fruitless debate among the zoo community over the question: “Which is more important, zoo visitors or zoo animals?” Standard answers were: 1) Zoo visitors; because without happy visitors and the income they generate there would be no funding for animal care!” 2) “Animals are more important; their needs must come first and without healthy animals no visitors would come!” The answer should always be: “We need both and much more!” Zoos require the strong support of a broad spectrum of stakeholders, those with a stake or serious interest in the zoo’s or aquarium’s affairs and success. These include not only professional staff, but also volunteers and visitors of all types and ages. To these must be added government regulators, university collaborators, donors large and small and the community at large, including those who oppose zoos. Zoos and aquariums, like all organizations, are subject to an unwritten “social contract”, that is they flourish with community support, and fail without it. But what about non-human stakeholders? What about the animals managed directly by the institution? And what about the animals managed indirectly, the free-living animals of all sizes cohabitating on zoo grounds? And what about the plants, organisms responsibly not only for beauty, but for life’s survival?

Traditional “**homocentric**” (anthropocentric) or human-centered philosophy maintains that “nature’s” value is judged only on how it benefits us. But a modern ecological view (and ancient ethos), “**biocentrism**”, holds that all living things (indeed many non-living elements) have inherent value irrespective their value to humans. The stakeholder universe becomes extremely broad when we take this position.

**Melbourne Zoo case study**<sup>1</sup>. In 2016 I was asked by Melbourne Zoo to assist in improving the traditional design process for a series of new “Predator 2” animal exhibits to optimize the welfare of these animals while supporting budgetary and schedule considerations. The clients identified the following goals and problems:

## Goals

- Exhibits resulting in high degrees of broad and deep team engagement
- Enrichment outcomes reflecting the passion, enthusiasm, and aspirations at the beginning of a new exhibit development

## Problems

- Typical project managers aim to limit project risk and untested outcomes
- Little stakeholder participation
- Built-in enrichment features are usually lost through project budget cuts and become unaffordable ‘add-ons’ to projects

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<sup>1</sup> Coe, J., Rowe, R., Sherwen, S. 2017. Tools and Examples from Zoos Victoria. Wroclaw Zoo Design Conference, Wroclaw, Poland

## **Result**

- Original motivating principles are compromised through balancing scope, cost, and quality
- 'Weak Tea' Result

## **Solutions - Multifaceted Exhibit Design Process**

- Consultation with all stakeholders (or representatives) in the project process and outcomes
- Enrichment embedded into all elements of the project design process
- Detailed construction and operational cost estimation and project balancing at each stage
- Prototyping and testing enrichment features before construction

## **Solutions - Exhibit Design Charter - "Bill of Rights" for all stakeholders**

- Based upon the "Construction Partnering Process"<sup>2</sup>
- Stage one – Kick off
  - Learn about, acknowledge & respect all stakeholders
  - Establish project charter ("Bill of Rights")
  - Establish issue resolution process
- Stage two – Follow-up
  - Identify & resolve issues
  - Monitor progress
- Stage three – Close-out
  - Team reviews
  - Evaluate & report

## **Solutions - Stakeholders Participation**

- Stakeholder diversity
- Mutual respect
- Goal: "Everyone wins"
- Mediation & communication skills
- Finding the "Third Path"

## **Stakeholders to be considered**

- Zoo Animals
- Zoo Staff & Volunteers
- Zoo Visitors
- Zoo Plants
- Free Ranging Zoo Animals
- Business Enterprise
- Community and Social Contract

## **Rights of all stakeholders**

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<sup>2</sup><https://partneringinstitute.org/about/what-is-construction-partnering/>

- Respect
- Safety
- Optimum welfare for individuals & species
- Choice, control & opportunity
- Access to critical resources

**Animal Enrichment Framework** - Types of Enrichment (includes 24/7 access in display and off-display animal areas)

- Passive Enrichment (built-in ambient features, relating to the immediate surroundings)
- Active Enrichment (staff-activated)
- Active Enrichment (animal activated)

### **Goals Beyond the “5 Freedoms” (5 C’s)**

- Animal’s Choice
- Animal’s Control
- Animal’s competence
- Animal’s challenge
- Change & novelty

### **Summary of Major Ideas**

- Embed environmental enrichment into all design elements and processes
- Develop a ‘Bill of Rights’ Charter and framework for all stakeholders
- Balance budget, quality/quantity, time, and “rights” at each design stage
- Prototype, test and evaluate all enrichment features before construction

**Case study results.** During the process, several enrichment features including “wobble logs”, “ice ball feeders”, and “clothes-line” or “Zip-line” feeders were devised and discussed. The usual detailed construction and operational cost estimations and project balancing occurred at each stage, but with the project charter ensuring animal welfare features received equal weight to other project requirements, none of the enrichment features were eliminated. Each was prototyped, tested, and installed by in-house craftspeople. The process achieved team goals with high degrees of broad and deep team engagement. Enrichment outcomes did reflect the passion, enthusiasm, and aspirations seen at the beginning of the work, both animals and stakeholders were enriched by the “Bill of Right Charter” process.