



Association of Zoos & Aquariums – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service American Rescue Plan COVID-19 Relief Cooperative Agreement— Updated

May 22, 2023

Round 2 – Notice of Funding Opportunity

The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) have worked cooperatively to implement Section 6003(a)(2) of Public Law (P.L.) 117-2, the American Rescue Plan Act. The enacted language of Section 6003(a)(2) stated:

“\$30,000,000 shall be for the care of captive species listed under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, for the care of rescued and confiscated wildlife, and for the care of Federal trust species in facilities experiencing lost revenues due to COVID-19.”

FWS entered into a cooperative agreement with AZA to provide reimbursements to eligible facilities that cared for native endangered and threatened species and rescued and confiscated wildlife and that experienced earned revenue declines as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Funds were directed toward reimbursing eligible facilities for the following three captive care categories: 1) U.S. native plant and animal species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA); 2) U.S. native animal species listed under the ESA that were rescued from the wild; and 3) Animals listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA and/or species listed in the Appendices of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) confiscated by the U.S. Government at, or destined for, U.S. ports and borders and held in animal care facilities.

AZA received, processed, and screened all proposals for completeness and contacted applicants if questions arose. AZA responded to queries from applicants about the program, submission, process, and status of proposals. Eligible applications were reviewed by FWS (in coordination with the National Marine Fisheries Service) and approved by the FWS Director.

Summary of Cooperative Agreement Progress to date:

- A total of 103 facilities applied for reimbursement expenses incurred for the applicable time period—March 2020 – May 2021. The total requested amount for reimbursements was over \$40 million.
- A total of 93 applications have been approved and funded for a total \$17.4 million. Three remaining applications (totaling over \$2 million) are currently undergoing AZA review and subsequent USFWS approval. The remaining applicants either withdrew their application, did not have eligible species, or did not respond to multiple requests for information.

Round 2 applications: AZA is conducting a second round of funding for the projected balance of approximately \$10 million. In this second round, we are expanding the eligibility criteria for the rescued wildlife category to include native marine mammals rescued from the wild, *regardless of ESA status*. This expansion of criteria aligns with the language of the American Rescue Plan Act to address the care of Federal trust species.

Therefore, the three categories of care eligible for reimbursement in this new opportunity are:

1) U.S. native plant and animal species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA); 2) U.S. native animal species listed under the ESA that were rescued from the wild *and* U.S. native marine mammals rescued from the wild regardless of ESA status; and 3) Animals listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA and/or species listed in the Appendices of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) confiscated by the U.S. Government at, or destined for, U.S. ports and borders and held in animal care facilities.

Round 2 reimbursements will be prioritized as follows:

1. Applicants that did not apply in Round 1 (capped at \$1 million)
2. Applications from Round 1 recipients that submit additional reimbursement requests (including applications for marine mammals rescued from the wild) and that have not hit the \$1 million reimbursement cap in Round 1.
3. The overage for each application that exceeded \$1 million in eligible reimbursements that were capped in Rounds 1 and 2. No new application is needed for previous applicants that exceeded \$1 million unless there are additional requests for reimbursements (e.g., marine mammals rescued from the wild). *Overage reimbursements will only be available if there are funds available after Priorities #1 and #2 are met. If the total of these overages exceed remaining funds, the overages will be pro-rated.*

Round 2 Submission deadline: June 21, 2023, at 11:59pm Eastern Time.

Facility Eligibility and Key Definitions:

The following facility eligibility criteria apply:

- Applicable time period for reimbursement expenses: March 2020 – May 2021. Applicants may submit funding requests for all or a minimum time period of six consecutive months within the applicable time period. Declines in earned revenue calculations and related reimbursement requests will be allowable for the specified time period only.
- Eligible animals and plants must have been held, and care given, during the designated time period for reimbursement expenses. For rescued and confiscated animals, the specific rescue or confiscation activity did not have to occur during the period of March 2020 – May 2021.
- Facilities must be located in the United States, U.S. territories, or commonwealths.
- Eligible facilities do not have to be AZA accredited or certified to be eligible to receive reimbursements.
- Eligible facilities must have experienced a 25% or more decline in earned revenue for the designated time period. For the purposes of this agreement, earned revenue is defined as monies that facilities receive from sale of goods or services, including ticket sales, parking, concession revenues, memberships and special admissions. Philanthropic giving is not considered earned revenue. Applicants must document that their facility experienced a 25% or greater loss in earned revenue in comparison to the previous pre-COVID year.

EXAMPLE: If an applicant designates March 2020 – December 2020 as their specified time period for reimbursement, then the applicant should document losses based on earned revenue from the previous year's comparable time period: March 2019 – December 2019.

- Eligible facilities may request funding for one or more of the following three captive care categories: 1) U.S. native plant and animal species listed under the Endangered Species Act; 2) U.S. native threatened and endangered animals listed under the Endangered Species Act, and U.S. native marine mammals (regardless of ESA status) that were rescued from the wild; and 3) ESA and/or CITES-listed animals confiscated by the U.S. Government at, or destined for, U.S. ports and borders and held in animal care facilities.
- Allowable reimbursable expenses related to the three captive care categories include: food; veterinary care/medicines; direct care staff time; critical life support systems; transport for medical, reintroduction into the wild and captive breeding purposes; real property debt and holding space improvements/modifications; and utilities essential for care of species (e.g., electricity/gas/natural gas) to power essential services. Comparable expenses for care of native ESA-listed plants are allowable for submissions under the first captive care category.
- Applicants must certify that none of the requested reimbursement funds have already been covered by another Federal funding source (e.g., Paycheck Protection Program, Shuttered Venue Operator Grants) or any other Federal assistance programs.
- If total eligible reimbursement requests for Round 2 exceed the amount available, distribution of funding will be pro-rated.

Key definitions:

U.S. native ESA-listed species: U.S. native threatened and endangered plant and animal species listed under the Endangered Species Act that are cared for by a facility for non-commercial purposes (commercial is defined as selling of live ESA-listed species or their parts or products) and for the purposes of contributing to conservation, with emphasis on captive breeding or artificial propagation for recovery and reintroduction efforts.

Eligible facilities **MUST** provide relevant documentation such as an ESA permit or other Federal authorization, or certification from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the National Marine Fisheries Service that the expenses are for care of U.S. native ESA-listed species for the purposes of conservation and the name and phone number or email for a Federal agency point of contact who will be able to confirm that certification. **Applications that fail to provide said documentation will be returned to the applicant.**

Rescued animals: U.S. native threatened and endangered animals (listed under the Endangered Species Act), and U.S. native marine mammals (regardless of ESA status), removed from the wild because of injury, impending threats, or impacts due to natural and human-induced activities.

Eligible facilities **MUST** provide relevant documentation that identifies the species and number of animals rescued, the date(s) when the rescue(s) occurred, the dates when the animals were cared for at the facility, and authorization from the Federal or state agency to conduct such rescue(s).

Applications that fail to provide said documentation will be returned to the applicant.

Confiscated animals: Animals listed either in the Appendices of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) or listed as threatened or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act that have been seized by a U.S. Government agency at, or destined for, U.S. ports or borders and held at facilities for general animal care and welfare purposes.

Eligible facilities **MUST** provide relevant documentation that identifies the species and number of animals confiscated, the date(s) when the confiscated animals were placed and held for care at the facility, and a contact from the Federal agency that requested the confiscation(s). **Applications that fail to provide said documentation will be returned to the applicant.**

Direct care: Any activity that provides direct support for care and welfare of the animal or plant.

EXAMPLES: Staff work that interacts with the animal or plant directly (keeper, horticulturist, maintenance, transport, rescue, rehabilitation, return to the wild, etc.); staff work that results in a product (food preparation, medicine application, enrichment development, enclosure construction) that directly impacts the animal; and staff engaged in veterinary services (x-rays, analytics). This does not include management and administration, finance, human relations, guest services, public relations, government affairs, etc.

Real property debt: Debt service payments are allowable if specifically assignable to a separate facility committed to care of eligible species, such as a “conservation center.”

Application forms can be found here: ([Link](#))

Submissions must be made using Excel spreadsheets as described in the Round 2 application instructions.

AZA Administrative Point of Contact:

ESACovidRelief@aza.org