



Zoological Registrars Association 2026-2030 Strategic Plan

Developed by: ZRA's Strategic Planning Committee and Board of Directors

History of the Association

The Zoological Registrars Association (ZRA) originated in 1984, when twelve zoo registrars and animal records keepers met at Brookfield Zoo. Originally known as the “Registrars Group”. There being no training for the duties and responsibilities of registrars in zoological institutions, two members of the Registrar’s Group published Animal Records-Keeping in 1992. It became a foundation upon which the Registrar’s Group built as it grew, becoming a leading advocate for the zoological registrar position and proponent of data standardization. By 1998, the group had adopted bylaws, gained nonprofit status, and officially became ZRA.

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, ZRA played a leading role in advancing animal record standards, contributing to the development of record keeping softwares, launching the Institutional Record Keeping (IRK) course in partnership with Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and establishing ZRA’s Training Certificate Program (TCP) to provide comprehensive online training for registrars. The Code of Ethics, leadership succession programs, and new professional recognition awards are some other initiatives introduced through the association’s Strategic Plans.

ZRA’s membership now spans multiple continents, representing numerous professional associations, with member involvement in animal programs and advisory groups. As ZRA celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2024, it reaffirmed its role as a global leader in animal record keeping, professional development, and conservation support.

ZRA’s Mission and Vision

ZRA’s Mission Statement was written and approved by the membership in 2018. The Vision Statement was crafted by the Strategic Planning Committee in June of 2019. The Core Commitments were adopted in 2019.

Mission

ZRA connects, trains and empowers the community of zoo and aquarium registrars.

Vision

ZRA envisions a future where registrar expertise is valued and acknowledged by institutions worldwide to promote the care and conservation of animals.

Core Commitments:

- ZRA empowers its members to promote industry-wide standards and creates platforms for members to share their knowledge with each other.
- ZRA provides easy access to resources and training/professional development opportunities.
- ZRA fosters global communication amongst registrars and animal records professionals of all kinds and from all countries.
- The ZRA organization is run in a transparent, deliberate, forward-thinking manner that encourages all members to participate.

2025 Analysis of the Member Survey

In July of 2025, the ZRA Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) reviewed the previous Strategic Plan approved by the membership. The SPC also refined the 2019 Member Survey for relevancy.

The 2025 Member Survey was sent to all ZRA members in August 2025 and 71 members completed the survey. The survey results are included as Appendix I of this document. All action plans contained in this document are supported by the survey results.

Members expressed their overall satisfaction with ZRA as 8.94 out of a possible 10, and 9.59 out of 10 would recommend ZRA membership to their colleagues in the profession.

Top 5 services that the members want:

1. Access to a professional “listserv” or network with online discussion
2. Website with member contact information
3. Annual in-person Conference
4. Standards and best practices for the profession
5. Virtual, industry-specific educational opportunities (webinars, TCP, etc.)

Top 5 services ZRA provides well:

1. Access to a professional “listserv” or network with online discussion
2. Website with member contact information
3. Annual in-person Conference
4. Virtual, industry-specific educational opportunities (webinars, TCP, etc.)
5. Standards and best practices for the profession

These results demonstrate strong alignment between the services members value and those ZRA delivers effectively. The rank order is nearly identical, with only a minor interchange between the fourth and fifth priorities, providing clear validation that ZRA is investing in the right services and executing them well.

This Strategic Plan builds on ZRA’s strong foundation of service, collaboration, and advocacy. By enhancing core programs and remaining responsive to evolving industry standards and member needs, ZRA will continue

to provide meaningful value to its members. The plan's guiding principles, objectives, and action items were informed by member survey feedback, ZRA Committee Action Planning (ZCAP) discussions, and leadership input.

Strategic Guiding Principles, Objectives and Action Items

Guiding Principle 1- Continuing Education

Objective: ZRA will provide its members with accessible high-quality training designed to support both professional and personal development. These programs will focus on critical areas such as records management, animal transportation/ logistics, and emerging technologies, to ensure members are equipped with the knowledge and skills to excel in this profession.

Action Items:

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	COLLABORATING	TIMELINE
1.1 Host a permits workshop(s)	Board of Directors	Training Standards	2026-2027 establish taskforce 2027-2028 planning and logistics 2028- 2030 execution of workshop
1.2 Expansion of webinar program	Training		2026-2027 develop strategy; present to BOD 2027 execute new program 2028-2030 brainstorm new ideas for future
1.3 Create guidance documents for animal transaction paperwork	Standards		2027-2030 issue one guidance document per year

- 1.1 Host workshop or a series of workshops regarding permits, permitting process, and regulatory compliance.
 - Considerations could include virtual opportunities for members, or dissemination of information to the Association.
 - If this workshop is successful, investigate the interest and logistical feasibility for regional centered workshops.
- 1.2 Expansion of the webinar program to a series of scheduled classes.
 - Investigate how completed webinar recordings can be available to members.
 - Considerations could include incorporating annual conference presentations and submissions.
 - Questions for the committee: can this mirror AZA Learn?; should we charge a fee for access to non-members? Based on the feedback from the webinar series and member feedback, determine if there are opportunities for formalized learning opportunities. These classes can be created and captured within Thinkific (separate from the TCP), and sold as individual learning modules from the ZRA website.
- 1.3 Create guidance documents for animal transaction paperwork that explain rationales and best practices around animal transfer forms, loan agreements, and travel contingency plans.
 - Emphasize that each document will need to be created by individual facilities based on their governance model, accreditation status, and internal policies.
 - ZRA will not be creating templates for agreements, but suggesting sections and information that should be contained therein.

Guiding Principle 2- Expanding Opportunities

Objective: *ZRA will empower and advocate for its members and the profession by fostering networking opportunities, promoting professional development, and ensuring adherence to best practices through active engagement and support for certification.*

Action Items:

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	COLLABORATING	TIMELINE
2.1 Create a calendar of events	Professional Development	Website	2027-2028 create calendar 2028-2030 maintain calendar
2.2 ICRM Zoological Specialist Certification	Professional Development	CRA & CRM members	2027-2028 update documents; BOD approval; ICRM approval 2028-2029 launch the certification
2.3 Promote available scholarships	Marketing and Outreach	Professional Development	2026-2030 promote available scholarships 2027-2030 research new opportunities each year

2.1 Create and maintain a calendar of events and opportunities that will include both ZRA educational offerings as well as external possibilities.

- The calendar will be housed and maintained on the website; consider if it should be for members only or if it should be accessible to anyone.
- Upcoming events should be advertised in ZRA's newsletter.

2.2 Develop the zoological specialist certification through the ICRM.

2.3 Promote available scholarships in a visible and accessible way, including both internal and external opportunities. Continually look for opportunities to secure funding for professional development for members, for example, possibly connecting with the Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA) Education Foundation.

Guiding Principle 3- Visibility, Advocacy, and Impact

Objective: *ZRA will enhance its visibility and impact by positioning itself as the leading authority in zoological records management, through targeted outreach, strategic partnerships, and communication initiatives.*

Action Items:

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	COLLABORATING	TIMELINE
3.1 Establish a presence at external events	Marketing and Outreach	ZRA members	2026-2027 attend 2 zoological conferences 2027-2030 evaluate and

			expand if effective
3.2 Review membership categories	Membership Services	Marketing and Outreach	2027-2028
3.3 Restructure conference sponsorship levels	Annual Conference		2027-2028
3.4 Create a social media taskforce	Board of Directors	Marketing and Outreach	2026-2027 establish taskforce 2027-2029 report findings to board

3.1 Establish a presence at external events.

- Recruit ZRA members to advocate for both the association and its members at other, related conferences. Examples of related conferences include the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, American Association of Zoo Keepers, Zoological Association of America, Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums, Association of Zoo Veterinary Technicians, or other options. (AZA, AAZK, ZAA, CAZA, AZVT, etc.).
- This will be a coordinated effort between several committees to create a promotion plan for ZRA and its resources (TCP).
- They will identify interested members that live close to the city of the relevant conferences and find ways to participate, whether as an exhibitor, presenter, etc.

3.2 Review our membership categories and benefits.

- Make the Association more appealing to institutions, governmental agencies, or other groups.
- ZRA can expand its impact by reorganizing the membership categories.
- Actively promoting the association through targeted membership drives and offering various benefit opportunities.

3.3 Restructure the conference sponsorship levels and benefits to make annual conference sponsorships more transparent and appealing.

3.4 Create a social media task force that will evaluate and work towards creating an overall social media plan.

Guiding Principle 4- Resources

Objective: ZRA will serve as the trusted source of essential knowledge, tools, and best practices that empower members to excel in their daily work, advance their careers, and meet professional standards.

Action Items:

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	COLLABORATING	TIMELINE
4.1 Curate and maintain a centralized online library of best practices and guidance documents	Standards		2027-2028 determine what the library should include 2028-2030 begin assembling library

4.2 Develop and maintain career support resources	Professional Development	Training	2028-2030
4.3 Review and update current resources	Website Taskforce	Applicable committee	2026-2028
4.4 Research establishing a Directory of Transport Related Vendors	Transport Taskforce		2027-2028
4.5 Develop a proposal for digital archives	History		2027-2028 proposal 2028-2030 implementation

4.1 Curate and maintain a centralized online library of best practices and guidance documents. Clarify the types of templates that will be available for the members. They should not include any transaction agreement paperwork.

- Create a library for best practices and guidance documents for the membership.
- Create a list of templates that will be made available to members.
- Add transaction document samples to the library only as a guide; they are not to be copied.
- Create a guidance document for locating State Agencies.

4.2 Develop and maintain career support resources, including:

- Conference and training justification templates.
- Sample job descriptions and role scope examples.
- General guidance on professional advocacy.

4.3 Review and update current website resources.

- Implement a regular review cycle to keep resources current and relevant.
- Reminders sent out once a year to committee chairs.
- Add this to the committee standing rules.

4.4 Research establishing a Directory of Transport Related Vendors. Depending on the results of this research, ZRA may decide against creating this directory.

4.5 Develop a proposal for digital archives.

- Identify funding or sponsorship opportunities to offset costs of digital tools and content development.
- Create a workflow for documents needed by the History Committee.
- Review retention schedule.

Guiding Principle 5- Evaluation

Objective: ZRA will ensure that programs and initiatives are objectively evaluated for alignment with membership goals, measurable impact, and efficient use of volunteer resources.

Action Items:

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	COLLABORATING	TIMELINE
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5.1 Create evaluation processes that can be used for ZRA programs	Applicable committee	Board of Directors	2027-2030 one program per year referencing the 5.2 list below.
5.2 Evaluate one ZRA program each year	Applicable committee	Board of Directors	2028-2030 one program per year referencing the 5.2 list below.

5.1 Create an evaluation process that can be used for ZRA programs

- The process may vary depending on the program.

5.2 Evaluate one ZRA program each year

- Evaluate the mentorship program
- Evaluate the website
- Evaluate the webinar program
- Evaluate the Training Certificate Program
- Evaluate the storage of historical documents, including workflows and storage requirements

Adoption Process

The 2026–2030 Strategic Plan was developed by the ZRA Strategic Planning Committee in 2026. Following its creation, the plan underwent a comprehensive review, receiving input and approval from the leadership of all standing committees. It was subsequently endorsed by the ZRA Board of Directors.

The plan was given to the Committee Chairs to review and provide feedback. Professional members will vote on the formal adoption of the plan.

Upon approval, specific objectives will be assigned to Committees or Task Forces. These groups will be responsible for refining action items, conducting research as necessary, and establishing specific timelines with measurable goals.

The Strategic Planning Committee will conduct an annual review of the plan to monitor progress and ensure effective implementation.