



RESEARCH COMMITTEE CHARTER

PURPOSE

The Florida Aquarium (the “Aquarium”) is committed to supporting, facilitating and conducting mission-focused research that has scientific merit, rigor, defensibility and need, aide in the conservation of species and/or ecosystems, improves animal husbandry and/or welfare, adds to the scientific knowledge of the species in our care, and/or forwards our guest experience and education impacts.

The purpose of the Research Committee (the “Committee”) is to assure that all research projects and related grant requests and/or Memorandums of Understanding (or Agreements) (“MOUs) are directly relevant to the Aquarium’s Mission and conservation, animal care and welfare, science, or learning programs and/or priorities, are science-based and ethical, facilitate collaborative partnerships, and disseminate critical information and findings to maximize the Aquarium’s conservation impacts.

MISSION-FOCUSED RESEARCH

Mission-focused research includes any project undertaken by, or involving, the Aquarium that:

- Involves application of the scientific method: is hypothesis-driven, involves systematic data collection and analysis of those data, and draws conclusions from the research process.
- Is primarily focused on studying questions relevant to the Aquarium’s Mission and conservation, animal care and welfare, science, or learning programs and/or priorities.
- Includes any of the following and occurs *in situ*, *ex situ* with the Aquarium’s collection, and/or in collaboration with external partners:
 - Systematically-conducted surveys related to the areas above which are analyzed to draw conclusions;
 - Applied research that informs our understanding and management of animals, including reproduction, nutrition, epidemiology, sensory biology, physiology, population biology, behavior, welfare, etc.;
 - Basic research that focuses on increasing understanding of fundamental biological principles, including evolutionary biology, physiology, behavior, etc.;
 - Research focused on species, habitat, or related conservation of those species or habitats;
 - Research in conservation education, public engagement, or how our guests use, are influenced by, and view the Aquarium.

COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

The Committee is charged with approving (or denying) and providing oversight of all mission-focused research, grant funding and MOUs that are proposed, whether conducted internally (e.g., research conducted at the Aquarium) or in collaboration with external partners (e.g., requests for biological samples) that utilize Aquarium resources, including the living collection. At a minimum, the Committee will assure that each proposal:

- includes all required information;
- is directly relevant to the Aquarium’s Mission and conservation, animal care and welfare, science, or learning programs and/or priorities;
- has clearly identified scientific merit, rigor, defensibility and need;
- is in compliance with federal, state and local regulatory requirements as well as all applicable accrediting organizational standards and guidelines;
- meets or exceeds ethical best practices;

- is logistically and financially feasible within the framework of the Aquarium’s operations and resources;
- has a specific timeline from start to finish;
- has a specific plan for the dissemination of the research findings.

The Committee will also follow the Research Project, Grant Proposal and MOU Approval Processes & Protocols to:

- seek IACUC approval of proposals (if appropriate);
- approve (or deny) proposals;
- monitor approved projects;
- assure findings and/or updates are disseminated and documented appropriately.

INSTITUTIONAL ANIMAL CARE AND USE COMMITTEE (IACUC) WORKING GROUP

Any *in-situ* or *ex-situ* project in which animals will be involved in invasive procedures that may result in pain, harm, distress, or significantly and/or adversely altering of behavior as part of the research protocol (excluding veterinary or husbandry procedures) must also receive an IACUC approval recommendation (see the IACUC Working Group Charter for more details).

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Committee shall meet three (3) times per year, or more frequently as the Committee may determine. The Chair will oversee all regular sessions of the Committee and will coordinate with the Vice Chair to set the agendas and record meeting minutes.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Committee shall be comprised of at least seven (6) members including:

- Chair (SVP Conservation)
- Vice Chair (SVP Animal Care and Health)
- Health Representative (Senior Veterinarian)
- Two Animal Care Representatives (Associate Curators)
- Learning Representative (VP Education)

COMMITTEE RESOURCES AND ADVISORS

The Committee shall have the authority, at the expense of the Aquarium, to retain outside consultants, legal counsel or other independent third-party experts as it shall deem necessary to carry out its duties, with Board or management approval.

STAFF SUPPORT

The Senior Vice President of Conservation shall serve as the primary staff resource for this Committee. Assistance as required will also be provided by members of the staff.