

Central Arizona Conservation Alliance

Charter

Mission

Convened in 2012 by the Desert Botanical Garden, the Central Arizona Conservation Alliance (CAZCA) aligns and unifies the efforts of more than 60 organizations to conserve, restore, and raise awareness for open space in Central Arizona. Through community engagement, collaboration, and strategic regional coordination, CAZCA works to ensure a sustainable regional open space system that supports healthy ecosystems and healthy communities.

Challenge and Opportunity

Maricopa County is situated at the northeastern reaches of the Sonoran Desert, a singular place on the planet, rich in diversity of people, cultures, landscapes, flora, and fauna. The Sonoran Desert is the most biodiverse desert in North America, if not the world.

As our region grows toward 7+ million people, as our legacy parks and preserves age and accommodate more and more visitors, as we begin to transform millions of acres of Sonoran Desert, these are the opportunities and challenges of our time: Where is it best to grow? What is best conserved? The good news is that we can grow in ways that at once sustain our most valuable natural assets and services, promote thriving economies, and enhance the region's quality of life.

Goals

Recognizing the urgency to conserve and connect natural areas amidst rapid growth, the Central Arizona Conservation Alliance has developed a Regional Open Space Strategy (ROSS) for Maricopa County. Together, we aim to realize these four essential goals:

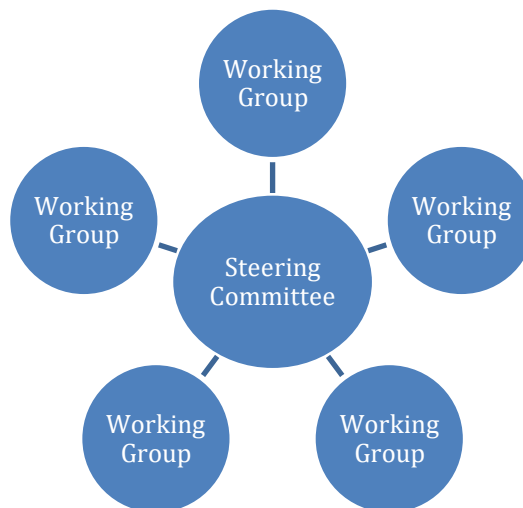
1. **Protect and connect:** Ensure a robust network of habitat blocks and connections to sustain native plant and animal communities, provide opportunities for recreation, support clean air and water resources, and improve resilience to drought, extreme heat, and flooding.
2. **Sustain and restore:** Identify and engage best practices in land management and restoration to sustain and enhance biodiversity, positive recreational experiences, and socio-economic benefits connected with the Sonoran Desert.
3. **Love and support:** Build champions and the constituency of support and action for Sonoran Desert conservation by raising awareness and connecting people with nature.
4. **Coordinate and elevate:** Build upon the CAZCA foundation to ensure and amplify regional open space collaboration, coordination, management, and conservation successes.

CAZCA Guiding Principles

As a diverse alliance, CAZCA commits to following basic principles of successful collaboration. These include:

- Accountability
 - Establish clear roles and responsibilities through plans, agreements, etc.
 - Pursue direct, constructive, and timely engagement and communication among alliance members and external partners.
- Transparency
 - Clarity and openness about our measures of success.
 - Track and report the progress of our work to multiple audiences.
- Sustainability
 - Develop and maintain operational structures that ensure the alliance has the necessary staff, resources, and volunteer support
 - Develop funding sources and mechanisms that are diverse and lasting.
 - Build leadership and engagement among alliance members to ensure their long-term participation in CAZCA.
 - Assist alliance members in building their capacity to realize the ROSS' goals.

Structure and Groups



STEERING COMMITTEE

Responsibilities:

- Support the alliance through strategic planning and regular assessment of the effectiveness of the alliance in fulfilling CAZCA's Mission, Goals and Guiding Principles.
- Serve as a forum to prioritize projects, funding needs, and policy initiatives.
- Foster early identification and discussion of threats and opportunities impacting ROSS implementation.
- Facilitate coordination, communication, and otherwise support Working Groups, alliance members, and external partners.

Meetings:

- Steering committee monthly closed meetings (or by invitation)
- Annual meeting of all alliance members

Makeup of the Steering Committee

- The Steering Committee will be comprised of representatives from a minimum of seven alliance partner organizations, with a maximum of no more than eleven.
- Steering Committee members will serve a term of two years, after which they (i.e. the organization they represent) may choose to serve an additional two-year term, or roll off the steering committee. After two two-year terms Steering Committee members will roll off and be eligible to have representation on the Steering Committee after a period of one year. The Convener organization will have a standing position on the Steering Committee.
- Steering Committee members will be identified on the CAZCA website.

Selection of Member, Chair, and Secretary, Steering Committee:

- Each organization is responsible for selecting principal and alternate representatives on the Steering Committee.
- Alliance member organizations may be nominated to serve on the Steering Committee by any existing member organization and must be approved by a majority of Steering Committee member organizations.
- Individual advisors, outside the Steering Committee, may be invited to provide needed expertise or otherwise guide the Steering Committee, with approval by a majority of Steering Committee member organizations.
- A Chair of the committee will be selected on an annual basis by a majority of Steering Committee member organizations.
- The role of Secretary of the committee will be filled by the CAZCA Engagement Coordinator.
- The current Convener, Desert Botanical Garden, will be confirmed on an annual basis. In the event that the Garden no longer is able or willing to serve as Convener, a new convening organization will be recruited and approved by a majority of the Steering Committee.

Roles of Chair, Secretary, and Convener:

- The Chair is responsible for leading all Steering Committee meetings and appointing another Steering Committee member to lead meetings in her/his absence.
- The CAZCA Program Director will serve as the public spokesperson for CAZCA.
- The CAZCA Program Director is responsible for soliciting agenda items from Steering Committee members prior to meetings and circulating agendas.
- The Chair has final determination of agenda items and order.
- The Secretary is responsible for drafting meeting minutes.
- Meeting minutes will be reviewed and approved by a majority of Steering Committee member organizations.
- The Convener is responsible for providing support services to the Steering Committee and the alliance as determined by the Steering Committee and approved by a majority of Steering Committee member organizations.

Member Participation:

- Steering Committee member organizations will strive to participate fully and ensure that their primary or secondary representatives attend all Steering Committee meetings.
- Steering Committee members are encouraged to commit to a two-year term.

Fundraising:

- Steering Committee members will assist in identifying funding sources and support joint fundraising efforts to advance alliance operational needs and ROSS implementation priorities.
- All Steering Committee member organizations are encouraged to pursue funding, as appropriate, to support their participation in the alliance.
- Fundraising activities for alliance operational needs and priorities and ROSS implementation priorities should be communicated and coordinated by the Steering Committee, to reduce duplicative and uncoordinated request to individual funders.

Communications:

- The Steering Committee shall ensure timely communication between Steering Committee members and Working Groups and organize annual all partners meetings to keep Working Groups apprised of each other's work.
- The Steering Committee is also responsible for keeping funders apprised of the alliance's work.
- The Steering Committee will establish policies and procedures on the use of the CAZCA name and logo and enforce these policies.

Decision Making:

- At times when a decision or agreement is needed, members of the Steering Committee may seek guidance or approval from the organization they represent. For all decisions or agreements, the Steering Committee will strive for consensus. Consensus has been reached when everyone agrees they can accept whatever is proposed after every effort has been made to meet the interests of all member organizations. Steering Committee member organizations have the right to expect that no one will ask them to undermine their interests, and their responsibility is to propose solutions that will meet everyone else's interests as well as their own. If consensus cannot be reached, areas of divergence, along with the reasons for divergence, will be documented. If a decision is needed in the absence of consensus, the Steering Committee will rely on a voting majority.

Advisory Council

- Steering Committee may appoint an advisory council to provide input and strategic guidance for the implementation of the ROSS.
- Membership in the advisory council is decided by a majority of the Steering Committee. Activities of the advisory council are decided by the Steering Committee.

WORKING GROUPS

Responsibilities:

- Collaborative, action-oriented Working Groups are the primary means of guiding and implementing our work, ensuring effective collaboration and communication among alliance members and assessing the progress and impact of the work being done.

Formation: Working Groups are formed as needed and may change over time.

- Working Groups are established by the Steering Committee, which will designate a committee member to serve as the Liaison to each Working Group.
- Each Working Group Liaison will be responsible for recruitment and initial formation of the Working Group, and for reporting back to the Steering Committee on the Working Group's activities. The Liaison may recruit individuals for the Working Group from alliance member organizations and other external organizations.
- Once established, the Working Group will determine its responsibilities, tasks, and Chair to lead it. Working Groups are expected to be self-managing and committed to fulfilling CAZCA's Mission and Goals and realizing our Guiding Principles.

Assessing Our Effectiveness as an Alliance

Each year the alliance will survey member organizations, partners, and funders to evaluate our effectiveness as an alliance. Survey results will be presented and discussed at the annual meeting. Questions may include:

- Are we addressing the challenges of scaling, capacity, and sustainability?
- Are we adhering to our defined roles and responsibilities?
- Are we effectively engaging each other and our partners?
- Are we learning from our efforts?

The Steering Committee also will develop a set of success metrics related to ROSS implementation priorities including how to monitor and communicate our progress relating to those success metrics.

Amending the Charter

This Charter can be modified, as needed, after providing 30 days' notice to alliance members, and with assent of a majority of Steering Committee members.