



## Call to Artists 2026

### About Zoominescence

Our team at The Valley Zoo Development Society is excited to host our 14<sup>th</sup> year of Zoominescence: A Festival of Light at the Edmonton Valley Zoo! Nestled within Edmonton's beautiful River Valley, the Valley Zoo will be home to a spectacular exhibition of artistic light installations for guests of all ages to admire and enjoy. Zoominescence offers a unique and special way to experience the zoo at night to celebrate light, artistry, imagination, and the strong spirit of our community in the winter.

**Zoominescence will be open to the public from Friday to Sunday starting December 4<sup>th</sup>, plus every day starting December 11<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> and January 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> (excluding Christmas Eve and Christmas Day) for a total of 25 public festival days.**

### About our Call to Artists

We welcome individuals, teams, and organizations of local artists and creatives with a passion for the arts and animals to create a light-up installation or sculpture that enhances the beauty of the Edmonton Valley Zoo at night. Our Call to Artists is a friendly competition open to all, but only a handful of submissions will be selected to showcase their art at the zoo. Submissions will be judged and selected by a jury of zoo and event management and **winners will each be awarded \$3,500.**

### What we need from you

For our 14<sup>th</sup> year of Zoominescence, our theme is "**Shining a Light on Survival!**" Our goal is to celebrate the incredible ways animals have evolved to survive and thrive in some of the world's toughest environments, whether natural or human-made. From the icy Arctic to windswept mountain ranges, animals have developed remarkable adaptations that allow them to endure extreme temperatures, scarce food sources, challenging landscapes, and co-existence with humans.

Another important conservation-focused aspect of survival that we would appreciate seeing in the art submitted includes:

- Stories of animals who have survived threats of extinction, habitat loss, population fluctuations, etc.
- SSP (Species Survival Plan) or SAFE (Saving Animals From Extinction) species that humans are protecting

"Shining a Light on Survival" would highlight the resilience of wildlife and the extraordinary tools and strategies animals use to survive in environments (natural and human-made) that would challenge most living things.

#### Artwork submitted for the artist competition should be focused on:

- Animal(s) of your choice with a very clear and unique survival adaptation or survival story.
- Sharing key messages of how we as humans can support the survival of these animals, even from far away.

#### Installations that are of most interest for our festival include:

- Artwork that expresses clear conservation and educational messaging related to the artist's animal of choice.
- Interactive exhibits or memorable photo opportunities that animate our zoo grounds.
- Medium to large-scale stand-alone sculptures or installations that cast plenty of light.

In keeping with our environmental stewardship, environmentally friendly or recycled materials are highly recommended. We would like to see pieces that incorporate the zoo's three pillars: **Education, Stewardship, and Conservation.** Individuals and teams are strongly encouraged to work with recycled materials and renewable energy to design an art display that celebrates the aforementioned themes. Please keep in mind that the majority of visitors will be children.



## What you need to know

### A few things to keep in mind regarding the installation application are:

- Chosen projects will be provided with a budget of \$3,500.00, which will be paid in four installments.
  - Your use of the funds is discretionary as long as the project approved is the project built.
  - The Valley Zoo Development Society requests the right to buy pieces after the festival ends.
- Power will be provided by the Edmonton Valley Zoo, but artwork with energy-efficient lighting is preferred.
  - We require our artists to use timers to minimize the power used during the 25-day festival period.
  - Artists are expected to bring their own timers and extension cords, but depending on the location and supply, Event Coordinators may be able to provide them if requested.
- It is the artist's responsibility to ensure the exhibit is maintained.
  - If maintenance is required due to technical failures, weather, or other circumstances, our team will contact artists once we are aware of it to discuss a solution.
  - Please keep in mind our unpredictable winter weather when considering tech and materials.
- Please refrain from the use of generative artificial intelligence (generative AI) within your submission.
  - Submissions created in whole or in part with the use of generative AI, including visual/conceptual artwork, images, graphics, or animations, are not allowed in your renderings.
  - Acceptable alternatives can include hand-drawn or digitally-drawn renderings with references to previous artwork that is similar to the submission, but with explanations of how it will be adapted.
- This is meant to be fun, so get creative and keep it light-hearted and enjoyable! We want energetic people with a love of the arts to share in this experience.

## Submission

**The project submission deadline is Wednesday, July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026.** Installations will be chosen by the Valley Zoo Development Society and the Edmonton Valley Zoo. The winners of the Call to Artists competition will be contacted on Tuesday, September 1<sup>st</sup>. If your submission is selected, you will receive your funding of \$3,500 paid in installments after completing and signing your artist contract. Participants must submit a detailed project outline that includes a rendering, material list, required footprint, and a description of how their installation features an animal conservation success story by the submission deadline. Applicants must include a plan for installation and teardown, including a timeline for installation and maintenance requirements during the entire festival. You can email, or mail your submissions to the following:

Valley Zoo Development Society  
Box 2359, Edmonton, AB T5J 2R7  
Email: [events@buildingourzoo.com](mailto:events@buildingourzoo.com)  
Phone: 780-496-6924

Applicants will be able to have input in the selection of the location of their installments, but the finalized location will be decided by the Valley Zoo Development Society. In your submission, please indicate the type of area that your art piece requires (e.g. pavement, grass, behind a fence away from guests, hanging from a tree, etc.). If you would like to come and see the site during zoo operating hours to determine a potential location for your piece, please do not hesitate to contact us. Please complete the following application about your project as specified on the next page. For more information, please call the Valley Zoo Development Society at 780-496-6924 or email [events@buildingourzoo.com](mailto:events@buildingourzoo.com). Thank you for your support!



## Application

Please submit a 2-page application including your project Statement and Rendering.

If your application is missing any of the elements outlined below, it may be removed from consideration.

Before submitting your application, please confirm that you have included the following details:

1. **Statement (Page 1):** A detailed PDF/DOC file containing the project submission (Max 1 page, no font or size restriction). This file must be named after the submission title followed by the word "statement". For example, **Installation101\_statement.doc**. Please ensure the file includes the following:
  - a. The concept of your installation describing your project and its central ideas.
    - i. How does this represent the theme?
    - ii. Title this section "**Concept**"
  - b. Who will make up your team and what is their experience with these types of competition?
    - i. Are you a community group? Single artist? School group? Organization?
    - ii. Title this section "**Team**"
  - c. What do you intend to be your main materials required for the project?
    - i. How will the use of these materials incorporate alternative energy?
    - ii. Some example materials we urge you to consider are LED lights, recycled metals or wood, ice, snow, and any other more sustainable materials.
    - iii. Title this section "**Materials**"
  - d. How will you carry out the project?
    - i. This should include who will be your primary artist/artists, a general timeline of events, the craftsmanship involved in creating your piece, and how you plan to maintain your installation through the festival.
    - ii. Title this section "**Process**"
2. **Rendering (Page 2):** A rendering PDF file containing the full dimensions of your installations, the materials that will make each portion of the installation and any other information regarding your design. This PDF file must be named after the submission title and followed by the word "rendering". For example, **Installation101\_rendering.pdf**.
  - a. A drawing or rendering of the general idea behind your installation. Please refrain from the use of AI.
    - i. What will it look like? Please include dimensions, spacing, and visibility.
    - ii. What placement do you have in mind or where would be an appropriate spot for your installation?
3. **Reference to Previous Works (Optional):** You are welcome to provide examples of previous works you have created to illustrate your relevant capabilities, if necessary.

We look forward to seeing your amazing artwork and we wish you the best of luck!

All projects must be submitted to [events@buildingourzoo.com](mailto:events@buildingourzoo.com) by:

**Wednesday, July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026**