Chicago Wilderness Alliance

CHICAGO WILDERNESS ALLIANCE POLICIES and PROCEDURES

I. PREAMBLE

A. Purpose

Our region is home to a spectacular assemblage of rare ecosystems and diverse plant and animal species. Our collective efforts using science and data-driven approaches to restore, manage and protect natural areas contributes to a more climate resilient region. The work is more urgent than ever as climate change increasingly threatens human health, quality of life, food security, economies and biodiversity.

The purpose of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance (or "Alliance") is to bring together a coalition of partners to implement the mission of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance.

The Alliance focuses on landscape-scale efforts across the southern Lake Michigan region because nature needs connections across all geopolitical boundaries. Working together, Alliance partners identify conservation priorities; develop and implement long-term regional conservation plans; and collectively enhance, elevate and celebrate our individual partners' work, all at the regional scale.

B. Mission

The Chicago Wilderness Alliance is a regional collaborative of hundreds of partner organizations and individuals working to implement landscape-scale approaches to conservation in and around the southern shores of Lake Michigan including members from Southeast Wisconsin, Northeast Illinois, Northwest Indiana and Southwest Michigan. We bring leaders, experts, mid and young career conservation professionals together from all sectors of the membership footprint to share diverse voices, perspectives and work toward a common goal: creating and protecting a vibrant, accessible region where people and nature thrive.

C. Green Vision

The Green Vision for the Chicago Wilderness Alliance is a comprehensive and inclusive approach to fostering thriving nature for both people and wildlife in the CWA region. The Green Vision encompasses seven key thematic areas, known as the "Green Vision Initiatives or GVIs," that guide the Alliance's effort and are connected to a mapping tool, known as the "Hub," to visualize, share and track progress. The seven Green Vision Initiatives are:

1. Managing Healthy Landscapes: Taking tangible actions to preserve and enhance natural areas.
2. Growing with Agriculture: Collaborating with farmers and agricultural production leaders to improve farming methods that result in measurable and sustained ecological improvements.
3. Prioritizing Green Infrastructure: Developing and maintaining green infrastructure to support ecosystem services and human well-being.
4. Protecting Landscapes for Biodiversity Conservation: Protecting and restoring the diversity of native species and ecosystems.
5. Increasing Equitable Access to Nature: Engaging communities and fostering environmental stewardship through education and outreach.
6. Taking Climate Action: Building resilience to climate change impacts and promoting sustainable practices.

7. Protecting Healthy Waters: Protecting and restoring water quality and aquatic habitats.

The Alliance's Green Vision together with the Green Vision Initiatives and the Hub provide a roadmap for collaborative action among regional partners, leveraging expertise, resources, and innovation to achieve long-term conservation goals.

II. ORGANIZATION

Chicago Wilderness Alliance shall be organized as follows:

A. Chicago Wilderness Alliance

Partners of Chicago Wilderness Alliance are composed of Executive Council and General members that have been admitted by a majority vote of Executive Council partners present at an Executive Council meeting at which there is a quorum, and that agree with the Purpose,Mission and Green Vision of the Alliance as described in Section I.

B. The Executive Council

Partners that have been admitted to Executive Council partnership by a majority vote of Executive Council partners present at an Executive Council meeting at which there is a quorum. The Executive Council shall convene at least four times per year, normally on the third Wednesday in January, April, July, and October. At such meetings, the Executive Council shall:

1. Review progress toward achieving Chicago Wilderness Alliances' Purpose, Mission and Green Vision;
2. Set the strategic focus of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance;
3. Set one to five year strategies and objectives;
4. Implement the strategies of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance;
5. Determine annual objectives and the annual operations plan of Chicago Wilderness Alliance;
6. Approve leadership of existing teams and committees and create subcommittees or teams to better achieve the Purpose, Mission and Green Vision of the Alliance;
7. Admit new partners to the Chicago Wilderness Alliance, revoke the partnership of an existing partner, or approve changes in partnership level;
8. Develop key strategic external relationships;
9. Receive reports from Corporate Council, Green Vision Initiative Teams, standing committees, and other administrative groups, as appropriate;
10. Approve use of the name "Chicago Wilderness Alliance" for policy and project sponsorship;
11. Approve at its October meeting the annual budget and approve project work, approve grant recommendations, and balance priorities against resources;
12. Monitor results of projects;
13. Review and approve recommendations for recipients of Excellence in Ecological Restoration Program accreditation and/or George B. Rabb Force of Nature Awards;
14. Set policy and operational guidelines through review and update of Policies and Procedures document;
15. Accept quarterly Treasurer's Report;
16. Approve quarterly Executive Council meeting minutes;
17. Authorize agreements;
18. Follow Roberts Rules of Order for parliamentary practice and governance of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance meetings.

In addition, the Executive Council is responsible for electing the Chicago Wilderness Alliance Officers: Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, and five to twelve at-large Steering Committee partners of Chicago Wilderness Alliance.

The Executive Council has authority to modify or amend these Policies and Procedures. The Executive Council must take no action that would violate the Policies and Procedures of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance.

At all meetings of the Executive Council, fifty percent (50%) of Executive Council partners eligible to vote (as defined in Section IV.A.2) shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. The act of a majority of the Executive Council partners present at any meeting of the Executive Council at which there is a quorum shall be the act of Chicago Wilderness Alliance.

Notice of meetings of the Executive Council shall be posted on the online partner calendar and advertised in the partner e-news or equivalent communications. Meeting dates are generally set at the last meeting of the preceding year for the following year.

Meetings of the full Chicago Wilderness Alliance: Full participation of both the Executive Council and General partners are invited at the biennial Chicago Wilderness Alliance Congress. The Congress is further outlined in this Section.

C. The Fiscal Sponsor of Chicago Wilderness Alliance

The Chicago Wilderness Alliance is registered with the Illinois Secretary of State as a non-profit corporation and shall execute a Fiscal Sponsor Agreement with a Fiscal Sponsor. The Fiscal Sponsor of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance shall be an independent 501(c)3 non-profit organization operating under its own bylaws. The Fiscal Sponsor shall act as principal coordinators of the sponsored program (Chicago Wilderness Alliance). The Fiscal Sponsor, in its sole and absolute authority retains oversight authority to ensure funds disbursed by Fiscal Sponsor to Chicago Wilderness Alliance in support of the Sponsored Program are used for their intended charitable purposes. The Fiscal Sponsor agrees to receive donations that are designated to support the Sponsored Program. The Fiscal Sponsor agrees that all Program Funds will be reported for federal tax purposes as contributions to Fiscal Sponsor. The Fiscal Sponsor shall act on behalf of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance in contractual matters and provide services as agreed upon by and between the parties. The Fiscal Sponsor will maintain respective books and financial records for the Sponsored Program in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, shall retain records as long as required by law and shall make records available to auditors as required by law. The Alliance fiscal year is January 1 -December 31.

D. Steering Committee

The Executive Council has a Steering Committee. It includes four officers (Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary) of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance and five to twelve additional at-large partners, drawn from the Chicago Wilderness Alliance partnership, who are elected by the Executive Council. The Steering Committee oversees the day-to-day business of the Alliance under authority of the Executive Council, including internal and external communications; programs, in consultation with Chicago Wilderness Alliance partnership and existing working groups, task forces and committees; financial coordination, reporting, and budgeting; planning and leading Executive Council meetings; and partnership policy. The Steering Committee also serves to align the Alliance behind the Green Vision, and promotes coordination among Chicago Wilderness Alliance working teams to enhance collective impact, recommends multi-year goals and annual plans to advance the mission of Chicago Wilderness Alliance.

E. The Corporate Council

A forum to bring together the for-profit partners of Chicago Wilderness Alliance to leverage the resources, skills, capabilities, and influence of the business community to foster widespread awareness of the region’s biological diversity and its link with quality of life and a healthy economy, and to develop broad-based support for diverse vibrant communities. The Corporate Council determines its own leadership structure and meets every other month or as necessary.

F. The Working Groups and Teams (“Teams”)

Partners of the Working Groups and Teams of Chicago Wilderness Alliance meet regularly to facilitate communication and collaboration in order to further the Purpose, Mission and Green Vision of Chicago Wilderness Alliance. Working Groups and Teams are established by the Executive Council to address long-term, broadly conceived issues, and report their activities periodically to the Executive Council. At least two-partner representatives shall co-lead each team for staggered two-year terms, although no term limits exist. Individuals nominated for a team co-lead term shall be confirmed by the Executive Council and have regular attendance at Executive Council meetings. The process by which teams select their nominees is determined within each team.

1. **Green Vision Initiative Goal Teams**
   The Green Vision Initiatives (GVI) are a centralized framework to guide, track and implement progress towards a common vision and an inclusive approach to thriving nature for people and wildlife.

   In the largely urbanized areas of the four-state Chicago Wilderness Alliance region, the capacity to achieve the goals identified within the Green Vision will come not just from traditional conservation lands and waters, but from activating every land type – agricultural, residential, corporate – to contribute to meaningful landscape scale conservation.

   The GVIs include seven (7) key thematic areas: 1) Managing Healthy Landscapes, 2) Growing with Agriculture, 3) Prioritizing Green Infrastructure, 4) Protecting Landscapes for Biodiversity Conservation, 5) Increasing Equitable Access for All, 6) Taking Climate Action and 7) Protecting Healthy Water. All goals are centralized using a mapping tool that empowers regional partners to visualize, share and track progress, referred to as the "Hub". Each GVI is brought to life by teams that provide opportunities for the Alliance to engage, contribute and collaborate on shared goals.

   At least two-partner representatives shall co-lead each GVI team for staggered two-year terms, although no term limits exist. Each GVI co-lead organizes a monthly and/or quarterly meeting for their GVI Team. Responsibilities of GVI Team members include creating energy around team goals, identifying funding opportunities, advancing the GVIs, sharing metrics/accomplishments and creating synchronicity among teams. Co-leads should attend GVI Coordinating Team Meetings and Executive Council Meetings.

   GVI co-leads are eligible to receive a stipend which will be paid to their partner organization on a quarterly basis upon the execution and submission of a Shared Agreement Form. The amount of the stipend is determined annually through the budgetary process.

G. Standing Committees

Only partner representatives can serve as Chicago Wilderness Alliance standing committee chairs. Unless otherwise noted, new leadership of any standing Chicago Wilderness Alliance committee will be presented to the Executive Council for approval.

1. **Awards Committee**
   The Awards Committee oversees awards programs established by the Executive Council. Meetings are held as necessary.

2. **Communication Committee**
   The Communication Committee advises on the communication strategy for Chicago Wilderness Alliance, working closely with the Managing Director of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance or their appointee on content and design of website, newsletter, social media and outreach materials. Meetings are held as necessary.

3. **Congress Committee**
   The Congress Committee plans and executes the biennial Chicago Wilderness Congress. In order to permit active participation in direction-setting and the sharing of progress reports by

all partners of Chicago Wilderness Alliance, there will be a biennial Chicago Wilderness Alliance Congress. The Congress will be open to Executive Council members and General members of Chicago Wilderness Alliance, their partners, and other interested parties.

Functions:
The functions of the Congress shall include, but may not necessarily be limited to:
- Sharing information about partner activities relating to achievement of Chicago Wilderness Alliance Purpose, Mission and Green Vision;
- Presenting reports from the Executive Council, Steering Committee and Working Groups and Teams of Chicago Wilderness Alliance about activities since the last Congress; and
- Soliciting input, discussion, and recommendations on activities for Chicago Wilderness Alliance and its Working Groups and Teams for the coming two years.

Rules of Procedure:
- The Vice Chair of Chicago Wilderness Alliance will serve as ex-officio Chair of the Congress.
- At least 18 months prior to the Congress, the Executive Council will appoint a committee, drawn from all categories of partners, to develop the Congress program.

Location and Timing of Congress:
- Chicago Wilderness Alliance will select a date and a location for the Congress and announce these to its partners at least six months prior to the scheduled date of the event.

4. **Green Vision Initiative Coordinating Group**
The Green Vision Initiative COordinating Group which consists of GVI Co-Leads, provides cross-alliance coordination among the Green Vision Initiative Goal Teams and projects to deliver on the full expression of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance Green Vision. The group promotes coordination among Chicago Wilderness Alliance Green Vision Initiative Goal Teams to enhance collective impact, recommend multi-year goals and annual plans to the Steering Committee and Executive Council, and work on clear metrics witconsists of GVI co-chairs ready to problem solve and to put energy into keeping the collective focus on 1) incorporating new relevant data and efficiently updating existing data for enhancing nature restoration, 2) engaging a broader audience (from urban neighborhoods to farmers, elected officials of underserved communities to those in rural townships, land stewards to community activists) in implementation of the Green Vision, and 3) embracing new themes, from environmental justice to urban and agricultural community engagement to ecological tourism. Meetings are held quarterly (or more often, as necessary).

5. **Development Committee**
The Development Committee develops and oversees the strategy to raise funds for the Alliance. Meetings are held as necessary.

6. **Excellence in Ecological Restoration Commission**
The Excellence in Ecological Restoration (EERP) Commission administers the Excellence in Ecological Restoration Program. The Commission is co-chaired by two partners of the Executive Council who recruit commissioners, to be approved by the Executive Council, and oversee and lead the Commission activities. The Commission is charged with identifying sites for accreditation and recognition by the Chicago Wilderness Alliance. The Commission reviews sites for EERP accreditation and makes recommendations on qualifying sites to the Executive Council for approval every two years.

The Commission consists of seven (7) to nine (9) partners who represent the profession, including at least three natural resource professionals, one representative of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance Executive Council, one Chicago Wilderness Alliance Steering Committee partner, and two to four at-large representatives from Chicago Wilderness Alliance partner organizations.

Commissioners are approved by the Executive Council at a regular meeting and serve one, two, or three-year terms, but no more than six consecutive years. The Commission meets as needed. The Commission is augmented with an Advisory Panel consisting of professionals with expertise in the following disciplines: Hydrology, Entomology, Botany, Ornithology, Herpetology, Aquatics Biology, Soil Science, Malacology, and Wildlife Biology. The Commission will consult with partners of the Advisory Panel as needed. Commissioners must meet all the following requirements: 1) currently employed in (or recently retired from) the natural resource profession; 2) an employee or volunteer of a Chicago Wilderness Alliance partner, with written endorsement of the Executive Council representative of that partner; 3) hold at least one academic degree (bachelor's or advanced degree) in natural resources or a related professional specialization; and 4) five or more years of full-time professional experience in natural resources management or equivalent experience.

7. **Government Relations Community**
The Government Relations Community oversees the government relations strategy on the federal and state levels, in coordination with the Chicago Wilderness Alliance officers. Meetings are held as necessary.

8. **Partnership Engagement Committee**
The Partnership Engagement Committee strives to cultivate ownership among partners of Chicago Wilderness Alliance by increasing partner engagement and the value partners derive from the Alliance to better achieve regional conservation goals through collaboration. The Partnership Committee coordinates applications for partnership in Chicago Wilderness Alliance at both the General and Executive Council level and submits recommendations for partnership to the Executive Council. Additionally, the Partnership Engagement Committee, in coordination with the Steering Committee and Communications Committee, oversees the implementation of the Partner Engagement Strategy, including:
    a. Partner onboarding and mentoring
    b. Partner engagement metrics
    c. Additional strategies that enhance partner engagement and diversify participation within the Alliance.

In addition, the Partnership Engagement Committee oversees the recruitment, nomination and election of Chicago Wilderness Alliance officers and at-large partners of the Steering Committee. The Partnership Engagement Committee will prepare a slate of candidates and present the slate for approval by the Executive Council in October and affirmation and installation of new officers and at-large partners of the Steering Committee in January.

The Partnership Engagement Committee is composed of representatives from interested Chicago Wilderness Alliance partners. The Partnership Committee's chair(s) are representatives of Executive Council partners and appointed by the Steering Committee.

H. Other Administrative Groups

The Executive Council, Steering Committee and/or Chair and Vice Chair may set up task forces and ad hoc committees to make recommendations in various areas of operations. These groups, their responsibilities, and composition shall be listed on the partners' website.

III. OFFICERS

The officers of the Executive Council of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance are the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer, and the five to twelve at-large partners of the Steering Committee. Officers must be a partner of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance. The Chair presides over meetings of the Executive Council and Steering Committee; serves on the Steering Committee and Green Vision Initiative Coordinating Group; and represents Chicago Wilderness Alliance at local, regional, national, and international events. The Chair is authorized to sign with any other officer of the Executive Council any contracts or other instruments which the Steering Committee and/or Executive Council has authorized to be executed. The Vice Chair serves on the Steering Committee, Partnership Engagement Committee and Chicago Wilderness Alliance Congress Committee; in the absence of the Chair presides over meetings of the Executive Council, Steering Committee; and represents Chicago Wilderness Alliance at local, regional, national, and international events at the request of the Chair. The Treasurer leads coordination with the fiscal sponsor; leads financial oversight and reporting; and leads the budgeting process. The Secretary serves as parliamentarian and establishes quorum at Executive Council and Steering Committee meetings, takes attendance, coordinates the scheduling of Executive Council meetings. The Secretary, in absence of the Managing Director distributes agendas, and records and distributes minutes. At-large Steering Committee partners with the appropriate interest and capacity will be designated to coordinate key functions, including partnership recruitment and retention; public programs (e.g., Excellence in Ecological Restoration and other outward facing programs); external communications; and strategic initiatives. Steering Committee partners will be designated to act as liaison or MAP (most accountable person) to functioning Chicago Wilderness Alliance committees, task forces, and working groups.

A. Steering Committee

1. **Length of Term**
   The Steering Committee shall serve a staggered schedule with service terms not to exceed three years for each position.

Position	Term	Election Cycle	Installation Cycle
Chair	3-Years	Group 1	2025, 2028, 2031
Vice-Chair	3-Years	Group 1	2025, 2028, 2031
Treasurer	3-Years	Group 3	2027, 2030, 2033
Secretary	3-Years	Group 2	2026, 2029, 2032
At-Large – 1	3-Years	Group 1	2025, 2028, 2031
At-Large – 2	3-Years	Group 1	2025, 2028, 2031
At-Large – 3	3-Years	Group 1	2025, 2028, 2031
At-Large – 4	3-Years	Group 1	2025, 2028, 2031
At-Large – 5	3-Years	Group 2	2026, 2029, 2032
At-Large – 6	3-Years	Group 2	2026, 2029, 2032
At-Large – 7	3-Years	Group 2	2026, 2029, 2032
At-Large – 8	3-Years	Group 2	2026, 2029, 2032
At-Large – 9	3-Years	Group 3	2027, 2030, 2033
At-Large – 10	3-Years	Group 3	2027, 2030, 2033
At-Large – 11	3-Years	Group 3	2027, 2030, 2033
At-Large - 12	3-Years	Group 3	2027, 2030, 2033

2. **Term Limits**
   Officers and At-large Steering Committee Partners are eligible to serve three consecutive terms in their elected position. The only exception is for individuals who are elected to serve a term vacated by an officer or At-large Steering Committee Partner, as well as new At-large

Steering Committee Partners with a term of less than three years. In situations where a suitable or viable replacement is not available, the Chair may continue to serve until a replacement is found, determined by a simple majority vote of the Executive Council.

3. **Vacancy of Position**
In the event that an officer or at-large Steering Committee Partner resigns early or is otherwise unable to complete a term, a temporary replacement will be elected at the next regular election cycle. The Steering Committee may assign a replacement for the vacated position until the next regular election cycle. If a vacancy with an officer occurs, the vacancy may be filled by another Steering Committee member until the next election cycle. If an officer changes place of employment during a term, the officer may opt to join as an Individual Partner and complete such term. If such changes occur, the Steering Committee will notify the Executive Council at their next regularly scheduled meeting of these changes.

4. **Succession Planning**
Succession planning is vital for the continued health and vibrancy of the Alliance. By actively planning for transitions, we ensure that diverse voices and fresh ideas are always at the table, fostering innovation and inclusivity. This process promotes transparency and engagement among all partners, reinforcing our commitment to collaborative leadership.

Key Points:
- Sustainability and Continuity: Succession planning prepares our organization for seamless leadership transitions, ensuring ongoing stability and the preservation of institutional knowledge.
- Diversity and Inclusion: By providing opportunities for new leaders to emerge, we enrich our Steering Committee with diverse perspectives and ideas, driving more effective decision-making.
- Engagement and Transparency: Open succession processes encourage active participation from all partners, strengthening trust and accountability within our community.
- Innovation and Growth: Regularly introducing new members fosters an environment of continuous improvement and adaptability, essential for addressing evolving challenges and opportunities.

IV. PARTNERSHIP

A. Partnership Categories
There are two categories of partnership in Chicago Wilderness Alliance: 1) Executive Council and 2) General. All partners will have a demonstrable past record of work that supports the mission of Chicago Wilderness Alliance and will commit in the future to actively and publicly support the mission, goals, and objectives of Chicago Wilderness Alliance as established by the Executive Council. Both categories of partnership will participate equally in the Chicago Wilderness Alliance biennial Congress.

1. **General Partners**
Federal, state, county, and local agencies, biological research and education institutions, businesses, and not-for-profit agencies, individuals, students and others that support the mission of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance through programs relating to conservation of biological diversity and promotion of improved quality of life, and environmental health and justice.

Rights and Responsibilities of General Partnership:
General partners are encouraged to contribute, annually, based upon the Contribution Schedule in this Section. General partners are welcome to propose items for consideration by

the Executive Council and Steering Committee and to attend meetings of the Executive Council as observers. General partners are eligible to participate in Chicago Wilderness Alliance working groups and committees as partners or in leadership roles (e.g., vice-chair, co-chair or chair), to propose projects for official endorsement from Chicago Wilderness Alliance and implement projects.

2. **Executive Council Partners**
Federal, state, county, and local agencies, biological research and education institutions, businesses, not-for-profit agencies and other organizations, who will commit to the engagement to the fulfillment of the objectives of Chicago Wilderness Alliance.

<u>Rights and Responsibilities of Executive Council Partnership:</u>
Executive Council partners participate and vote in meetings of the Executive Council, which determines policies and strategies for Chicago Wilderness Alliance. Executive Council partners may propose projects for official endorsement from Chicago Wilderness Alliance. Each organization participating on the Executive Council shall assign an Executive Council delegate. Delegates (or designated proxies) of the Executive Council are expected to attend three (3) or more Executive Council meetings per year. Executive Council organizations shall actively participate on Chicago Wilderness Alliance working groups and committees, lead efforts and implement projects to promote the objective of Chicago Wilderness Alliance and to fulfill other responsibilities outlined in Section I.

B. Application and Admission Procedures for New Partners
Organizations and individuals seeking partnership initially will be considered for General partnership.

The applicant will complete an application describing their existing programs in support of the Purpose, Mission and Vision of the Alliance and proposed ways in which the organization/individual will contribute to the fulfillment of the objectives of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance. The application is submitted to the Partnership Engagement Committee.

The Partnership Engagement Committee will send applications to the Government Relations Community for review.

The Partnership Engagement Committee will notify the Executive Council of all applications for partnership. To be considered at a meeting of the Executive Council, applications must be received by the Partnership Engagement Committee at least 30-days before the next scheduled meeting.

The Executive Council will receive a list of proposed new partners with a summary of each applicant's application and the Partnership Engagement Committee's recommended action. Copies of complete applications will be available to the Executive Council prior to the meeting at which the proposed partnership will be considered.

Applicants for new partnership will be accepted by majority vote of the Executive Council partners present at a meeting at which there is a quorum. All votes related to the admission of new partners will be by private ballot or electronic ballot. Admission as a General partner will be official following the vote in the Executive Council. Denial of acceptance for General partners should be based upon concerns that the applicant either does not meet requirements of partnership under Section I or has not shown that it has or will support the objectives of Chicago Wilderness Alliance. In cases where admission is denied, the applicant will be informed of the nature of the objections raised to its admission and will be given an opportunity to apply again having responded to the objections.

C. Application and Admission Procedures for Executive Council Partnership

An organization that is a General partner may apply to become an Executive Council partner. The organization will complete an application describing their qualifications for Executive Council partnership. The application is submitted to the Partnership Engagement Committee.

The Partnership Engagement Committee will notify the Executive Council of all applications for elevation to Executive Council partnership. To be considered at a meeting of the Executive Council, applications must be received by the Partnership Engagement Committee at least 30-days before the next scheduled meeting.

The Executive Council will receive a list of proposed new Executive Council partners with a summary of each organization's application and the Partnership Committee's recommended action. Copies of complete applications will be available to the Executive Council prior to the meeting at which the proposed change in partnership will be considered.

Applicants for Executive Council partnership will be admitted when the Executive Council has determined that the applicant clearly shares and supports the objectives of Chicago Wilderness Alliance; that the applicant does not pursue objectives or carry out acts that conflict with the responsibilities outlined in the Section I; that the applicant has a substantial record of activity in the conservation of biodiversity, improved environmental health, or enhanced quality of life in the Chicago region; and that the applicant meets any other qualifications of Executive Council partnership as prescribed in these Policies and Procedures and elsewhere. The Executive Council shall admit the applicant to Executive Council partnership by a majority of votes of the Executive Council partners present at a meeting at which there is a quorum; the vote will be by private or electronic ballot.

D. Unincorporated Organizations

Unincorporated Organizations or Regional or National Alliances/Networks may be considered for reciprocal admission to the Chicago Wilderness Alliance and admitted as general partners and approved through the normal procedure noted above. Unincorporated Organizations or Regional or National Alliances/Networks who wish to be considered for reciprocal admission to the Chicago Wilderness Alliance may be asked to demonstrate their legitimacy and stability as an organization by submitting with their application copies of their organizational charter, bylaws or other defining instrument, as outlined in this Section.

E. Annual Partnership Contributions

1. **Annual Partnership Contributions Program**

   Each Alliance partner is required to provide an annual financial partnership contribution. The contribution amount outlined below in Table 1 are recommended levels based upon an organization's operating budget. Some partners, either because of their mission or benefit received from the partnership within Chicago Wilderness Alliance, may be able to provide greater support.

2. **Payment of Contributions**

   Contributions will be based on a fiscal year beginning January 1 of each year and ending December 31 of the following year.

3. **New Organizational Partners**

   New organizational partners are considered provisional until they are formally accepted by the Executive Council. Upon formal acceptance, new organizational partners will be invoiced and shall be required to make contribution payment within 60-days of the invoice date.

Table 1: Annual Partnership Contributions

Level	Annual Operating Budget	Level Description	Eligibility for Executive Council	Suggested Annual Contribution
1	$30M+	1	*	$12,500
2	$12M+	2	*	$8,500
3	$6M+ - $12M	3	*	$4,500
4	$1.5M+ - $6M	4	*	$2,500
5	$751k – $1.5M	5	*	$1,200
6	$501k - $750k	6	*	$550
7	$301k - $500k	7		$300
8	$101k – $300k	8		$100
9	< $100k	9		$50
10	n/a	Individual/ Retired		$25
11	n/a	Student		$10
12	n/a	Community Partners/Other/ Sponsorship		$ -

4. **Contribution Approval and Invoicing**
The Treasurer shall prepare the annual fiscal year budget establishing the revenue requirements for the next fiscal year. The Steering Committee shall review and recommend to the Executive Council the fiscal year budget and recommended contribution amounts. Following Executive Council approval, invoices for each fiscal year shall be prepared under the direction of the Treasurer and delivered to all partners by October 31 preceding each fiscal year. Partners receiving the invoice shall make payments by no later than March 31 of the fiscal year to remain a partner in good standing. Partners unable to make payments prior to March 31 must contact the Treasurer prior to the deadline to arrange an alternative payment schedule. New partners starting after March 31 in any fiscal year shall be invoiced a pro-rated amount based on the number of full months remaining after Executive Council approval and shall be required to make the payment within 60-days of the invoice date.

5. **Other/Sponsorship Contributions**
Some Chicago Wilderness Alliance partners are not able to contribute funding due to legal or policy constraints within their organization or by law. In those cases, or in other unique circumstances that arise, the partner shall discuss the issue with the Treasurer. The Treasurer will bring the issue to the Steering Committee, and the partner will be informed following the Steering Committee decision. Where a partner is able to contribute or sponsor Chicago Wilderness Alliance such that that contribution directly eliminates a component of the fiscal year's budget or provides funding that otherwise would have been incurred by the Alliance, such contribution can be considered equivalent to an annual contribution. These contribution requests must be made to the Treasurer and approved by the Steering Committee on the same timeline as outlined in regular contribution invoicing described in this Section.

F. Revocation of Partnership, Withdrawal of Existing Partners, and Change in Partnership Level

1. **Partner in Good Standing**
   A partner in good standing is defined as follows:
   a. A partner that comports with the ideals of Chicago Wilderness Alliance described in Section I;
   b. A partner that has completed the partnership process outlined in this Section; and
   c. A partner that has contributed to the Alliance and meeting the requirements of this Section.

2. **Revocation of Partnership**
   A General or Executive Council partner may have its partnership revoked if it acts persistently in a manner seriously inconsistent with the objectives of Chicago Wilderness Alliance as described in Section I or fails to make annual contributions as described in this Section. A proposal for revocation of partnership detailing the ways the partner organization/individual has violated the objectives must be submitted by at least three General or Executive Council partners to the Chair of Chicago Wilderness Alliance or any of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance officers (Vice-Chair, Treasurer, or Secretary), who shall immediately forward the proposal to the Partnership Engagement Committee. Within 30-days of receiving the proposal, the Partnership Engagement Committee shall report whether it finds that the proposal is based on legitimate grounds to the Chicago Wilderness Alliance officers, the partner organization/individual in question, and the partners submitting the proposal. If the Partnership Engagement Committee has found that the proposal is based on legitimate grounds, a hearing shall be scheduled for the next Executive Council meeting. The Executive Council, after hearing the reasons for which revocation is being proposed may, by a majority of vote of the Executive Council partners present at a meeting at which there is a quorum, request the partner in question to present to the next meeting of the Executive Council the reason why revocation of partnership is not justified. The partner in question will notify the Chair or the Officers of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance if it wishes to present its case against revocation of partnership. If not, then the partner will be considered to have withdrawn from partnership. If the partner elects to argue for maintenance of its partnership, they will do so at the next meeting of the Executive Council. After considering any response from the partner, the Executive Council may vote to revoke its partnership by a two-thirds majority of votes of the Executive Council partners present at a meeting at which there is a quorum; the vote will be by private or electronic ballot.

3. **Non-Payment of Annual Contributions**
   Upon review by the Treasurer, if any partner is found to not be in good standing as described in this Section, the Treasurer will bring the issue to the next meeting of the Steering Committee and contact the Partnership Committee Chair. The Treasurer and/or Vice Chair (Partnership Engagement Committee Co-Chair) shall present the circumstance to the Steering Committee. The recommendation of the Steering Committee shall be presented at the next scheduled Executive Council meeting. After discussion, the partner will be considered to have withdrawn from partnership due to non-payment, and the Executive Council may vote to revoke its partnership by a two-thirds majority of votes of the Executive Council partners present at a meeting at which there is a quorum; the vote will be by private or electronic ballot.

4. **Withdrawal of Partnership**
   Any partner may withdraw from the Chicago Wilderness Alliance at any time by providing written notice of the party’s intent to withdraw to the Chair of the Alliance.

5. **Change in Partnership Level from Executive Council to General**
   An Executive Council partner may request to change its level of partnership to General partner at any time, and the change must be acknowledged by the Executive Council. The

partner will submit its request to the Partnership Committee, which shall then notify the Executive Council in advance of its next meeting.

The Executive Council may change the partnership level of an Executive Council partner to General partner if the partner does not fulfill the expectations described in this Section. The Executive Secretary will track and report to the Partnership Committee Chair if an Executive Council partner fails to attend at least three Executive Council meetings per year for two calendar years. The Partnership Engagement Committee will recommend to the Executive Council potential changes to partner level. The partner will be notified that a change in level is being considered at least 60-days prior to the next Executive Council meeting and be invited to present at that meeting the reason why change in partnership level is not justified. The partner will notify the Chair of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance if it wishes to present its case against change in partnership level. After considering any response from the partner, the Executive Council may change the partnership level by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of votes of the Executive Council partners present at a meeting at which there is a quorum; the vote will be by private or electronic ballot.

V. GENERAL POLICIES

A. Chicago Wilderness Alliance Endorsement Policy regarding Policy and Advocacy Issues

The Chicago Wilderness Alliance Government Relations Committee facilitates the sharing of information on legislative matters and regional issues affecting the natural resources of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance region. To share such information with Chicago Wilderness Alliance partners, communication will be facilitated through the Chicago Wilderness Alliance Managing Director and Chicago Wilderness Alliance Chair. The information will be disseminated electronically or by other means as appropriate.

To request engagement from Chicago Wilderness Alliance partners on an issue, send the information, including a brief description of the issue, a bill number (if applicable) and contact information to the Chicago Wilderness Alliance Government Relations Community Chair. While the Alliance does not take a position for or against specific legislative or regulatory action, Chicago Wilderness Alliance does invite its partners to do so if they choose. However, Chicago Wilderness Alliance as an entity may render an opinion on whether and how legislative proposals will impact its goals and initiatives or provide other education or information useful in evaluating potential legislative action.

Chicago Wilderness Alliance, through its Government Relations Committee, may coordinate visits with elected officials to discuss related policy issues. Chicago Wilderness Alliance' State and Federal Legislative Principles serve as a reference document for legislators in developing or considering public policy that affects the Chicago Wilderness Alliance region.

Chicago Wilderness Alliance may also support or render an opinion on how a specific project or proposal of one of its partners or partners will advance the goals of the Green Vision for the region. Partner organizations may request a letter of support from Chicago Wilderness Alliance on a project, proposal, or issue at any time by contacting the Managing Director of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance.

Chicago Wilderness Alliance does not endorse specific projects of non-partners or individuals, nor can Chicago Wilderness Alliance endorse any projects or proposals developed for non-competitive fundraising or promotional solicitations directed to any funder.

B. Chicago Wilderness Alliance Data Sharing Policy

Chicago Wilderness Alliance partners will cooperate with one another to share ecological, social, and other data related to the conservation of the region's biodiversity, improved environmental health, and enhance quality of life, including geospatial data, and data resulting from monitoring, research, and other management, conservation, or educational activities.

Data should only be used in ways that enhance or strengthen efforts to enhance diverse, vibrant communities. Each partner organization has its own mission and priorities that should be respected and sharing data and information should facilitate the achievement of common Green Vision Initiative goals. Data, or information resulting from the data, may be used in projects, reports, brochures, websites, or other informational materials produced by Chicago Wilderness Alliance partner organizations for the purpose of promoting the region's Green Vision, with appropriate credit given to the data owner on all resulting products.

Third-party transfer of data is permissible provided that it is to another Chicago Wilderness Alliance partner organization and that the goal is to further the Green Vision. In the cases of large Chicago Wilderness Alliance data gathering projects, any intent to share the information with other Chicago Wilderness Alliance partners should be made known in advance and special arrangements made where necessary. However, Chicago Wilderness Alliance partners shall share data collected as part of a Chicago Wilderness Alliance funded projects with other partners of the Alliance to promote collaborative work and share lessons learned.

All users should respect the integrity and the limitations of any given data set, and all uses of data should respect legal and intellectual property rights.

Recipients of data will accept data "as-is" and will not hold the owner responsible for the accuracy or correctness of the data. Data owner will specify to the best of their knowledge the accuracy and completeness of the data. The data user will acknowledge the level of accuracy in any resulting products and shall only use the data in ways appropriate to its level of accuracy.

Whenever possible, data will be shared at no cost to other Chicago Wilderness Alliance partners, excepting nominal service fees for reformatting or extracting selected data or for creating special service map products or other applications. The intent is not to burden partners but further help partners.

VI. MODIFICATIONS AND AMENDMENTS

These Policies and Procedures may be modified or amended by a vote of a majority of all Executive Council partners. Proposed changes must be sent to all Executive Council partners at least one week prior to the meeting at which the changes are to be discussed. Ballots will be distributed electronically following the meeting, and must be returned by mail, e-mail, or fax within two weeks of distribution.

- *Adopted by the Executive Council of the Chicago Region Biodiversity Council, March 20, 2002 with clarification by the Partnership Committee, July 8, 2002.*

- *Further amended (partnership contribution structure) by Executive Council, December 18, 2002.*

- *Further amended (government and data sharing policies and language consistent with strategic plan) by Executive Council, November 16, 2005.*

- *Further amended (revised partnership contribution structure and seats on Steering Committee) by Executive Council, January 17, 2007.*

- *Further amended (partnership, structure, elimination of Steering Committee, adding and clarifying standing committees, establishing officers, partnership revocation, standing committee leadership, Trust functions, endorsement policy) by Executive Council, 2011.*

- *Further amended (team co-chair representation, standing committee chairs, Coordinating Group* *representation, Chicago Wilderness Chair candidate nomination process, governance, standing committees) by Executive Council, 2012.*

- *Further amended (endorsement policy, Partnership Committee, partner dues, Corporate Council) by Executive Council, 2013.*
- *Further amended (executive director appointment, honorary partners) by Executive Council, 2014.*
- *Further amended (fiscal year changes) by Executive Council, 2016.*
- *Further amended (adoption of Chicago Wilderness Alliance Policies and Procedures) by Executive Council on January 24, 2018.*
- *Further amended by the Executive Council on October 16, 2019.*
- *Further amended by the Executive Council on July 20, 2022.*
- *Further amended by the Executive Council on October 16, 2024.*