



ARE YOU?

A Genuine Leader

Sincere

Authentic

A Relationship Builder

Financially Savvy

A Visionary

An Innovative Thinker

MISSION

Our Mission is to enrich our community through wildlife conservation and education.

VISION

We believe what we do changes the world. Every choice we make helps save the planet.

DEAI Statement

We are committed to ensuring everyone feels welcome and valued by striving to create an environment that is as diverse as the wild spaces we are trying to protect.

The Topeka Zoo and Conservation Center seeks candidates for its CEO role. This position leads the team in their mission to enrich their community through wildlife conservation and education. With an impressive track record of innovative projects and a master plan outlining a visionary future, the next CEO stands to lead the Topeka Zoo and Conservation Center into a new era that redefines what it means to be a modern zoo.

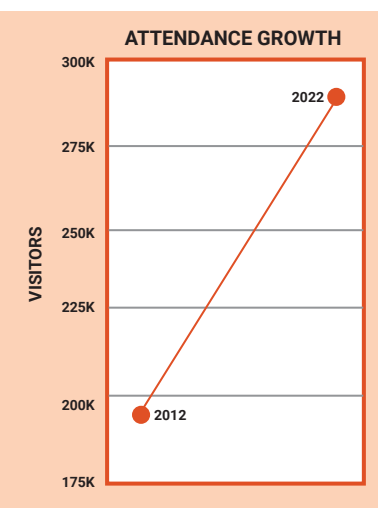
Candidate Strengths, Skills, and Qualities

At their core, the next CEO should be an **authentic, sincere, genuine leader** who actively models **transparency in their communications** and who can demonstrate compassion, empathy, and care for staff and guests. Having the ability to **build buy-in while consistently making progress** toward strategic priorities is key and critical for advancing the ambitious master plan. The CEO will need to be committed to continue to grow the Zoo's **DEAI initiatives** and the organization's sustainability goals.

While this is an exciting time to lead the Topeka Zoo, it is also a time of transformation. The next phase of the master plan is set to break ground in 2025, and funding for this and future projects will rely on the CEO's strength in **donor cultivation** and **fundraising**. The ideal candidate will also have experience with grant writing and solid **financial acumen**. To continue in its track record of pushing the boundaries of what the Topeka Zoo can and should be, a candidate should be a **visionary and innovative thinker** who can communicate and motivate others to join them in imagining the future.

Additional qualities successful candidates will have include: a deep understanding of the role modern zoos play in conservation, including **advocacy**, driving **community partnerships**, and looking holistically at the factors that contribute to **sustainability** success. Though not a prerequisite to have experience in animal care themselves, the next CEO should have a thorough awareness of the principles of **animal wellbeing** and an appreciation for the priority this takes within the scope of the role and organization. Demonstrated knowledge of **AZA** and **USDA** standards and other regulatory bodies is essential.

In addition to the qualities and skills listed above, candidates must be able to demonstrate the ability to successfully take on the responsibilities listed here and others that typically encompass a Chief Executive Officer role.



99
TOTAL STAFF

38
ACRES

\$9.2M BUDGET

54% of budget comes from sales tax income

First indoor rainforest exhibit in North America, and the first recipient of the AZA Exhibit Award

CEO

Roles and Responsibilities

Leadership, Vision, and Executive Management

- Serve as the Chief Executive Officer of the Topeka Zoo and Conservation Center, with ultimate responsibility for the human, fiscal, and capital resources of an organization with a clear mission and ambitious plans for its future.
- Recognize, support, and mentor staff and volunteers to realize their potential.
- Continue building the positive culture focused on attracting, retaining, and developing a high-performing leadership team.
- Advance diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives to ensure Topeka Zoo's team, volunteers, and audiences reflect the communities it does and should serve.
- Continually reinforce the mission and values of the Zoo, promoting an inclusive and transparent team culture.
- Nurture an environment of creativity, innovation, and collaboration, encouraging the staff and organization to develop unique solutions and offerings.
- Ensure a top-rated and engaging guest experience, strengthening opportunities to inspire and connect guests with the Zoo's mission.
- Ensure mission-oriented operations and programming (e.g., conservation, education, and animal care and wellbeing) are measurably successful and innovative.
- Ensure best-in-class animal well-being and associated exhibit designs, meeting or exceeding industry standards, trends, best practices and requirements.
- Maintain the Zoo's compliance with all state, local, and federal regulations.
- Maintain the Zoo's accreditation status with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and become an active contributor and member of the Association.
- Lead the organization in maximizing opportunities to generate revenue with varied earned income streams, including: gate, concessions, amenities, and events.
- Formulate the annual operating and capital budgets and maintain the overall financial integrity of the Zoo by monitoring associated operating revenues and expenses, contributions, capital expenditures, and other related financial matters.
- Develop and direct the development and implementation of the Zoo's Master and Strategic Plans, large, complex capital projects, ensuring timelines and budgets are met.

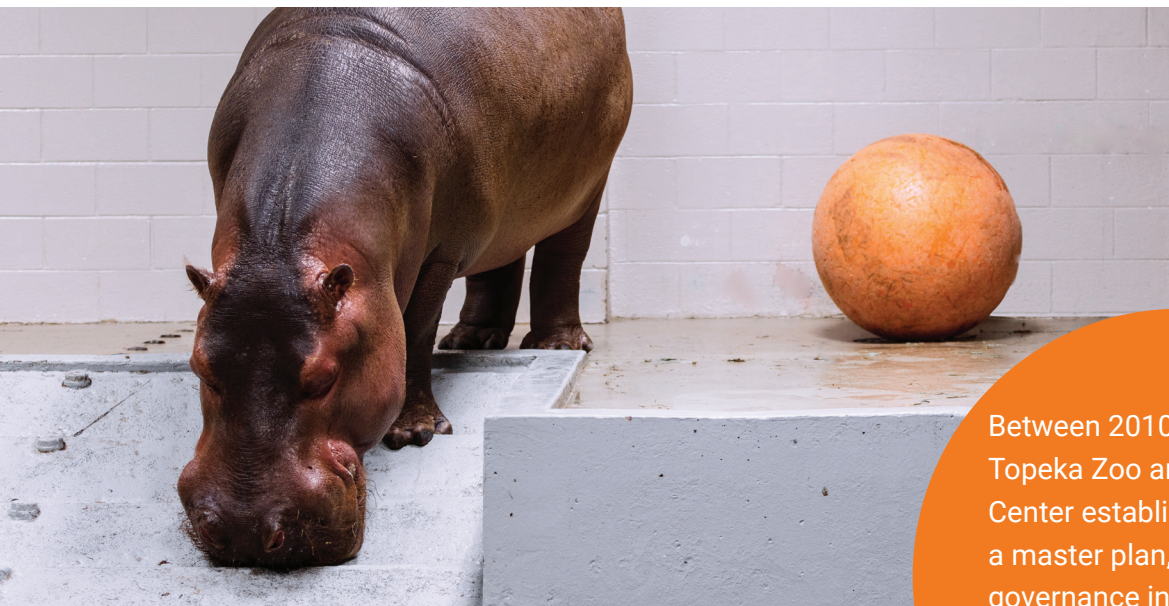
Community Relations and Fundraising

- Become identified as the 'face of Topeka Zoo and Conservation Center,' a visible and trusted advocate and champion for the Zoo throughout the community and beyond, including participating on strategic boards and in the national and international conversation on conservation and the benefits of city/community zoos.
- Ensure that the Topeka Zoo and Conservation Center remains and builds upon its reputation as an essential community destination that educates, inspires, entertains, and encourages conservation action.
- Engage frequently and easily with the community, regularly attending events, supporting initiatives, and recognizing the symbolic importance of active involvement in the community.
- Maintain and strengthen relations with government officials at all levels. Ensure that key public leaders and decision-makers understand and support the Zoo's unique capabilities, positions, and contributions.
- Work together with the Board and the Zoo's Philanthropy team, serving as Topeka Zoo and Conservation Center's lead fundraiser, cultivating donors and overseeing philanthropy for both operating support and capital projects included in the master plan.
- Oversee broad-based marketing, promotion, and fundraising campaigns.

Board Management

- Strengthen and engage the Board of Directors with a transparent and regular communication philosophy.
- Collaborate with the Board in confirming the mission of the Zoo and setting future strategic direction.
- Support the Board in their work of providing their time, talent, and treasures to the organization





Between 2010 and 2022, the Topeka Zoo and Conservation Center established and initiated a master plan, reformed its governance into a public-private partnership, and advocated and secured a designated sales tax to support the Zoo.

About the Zoo

The Zoo is set to be a model for the zoological profession on how to impact local and global conservation. The Topeka Zoo is the first North American zoo to use the UN's Sustainability Development Goals as a basis for establishing its own strategic plan. These criteria are woven throughout exhibit design, educational programming and marketing materials, and conservation planning.

Topeka Zoo and Conservation Center has been named the #1 family destination in Northeast Kansas outside of the Kansas City Metropolitan Area, and with attendance more than double the local population, it's clear that it's a favorite. It has also attracted visitors from the region and now boasts that 54% of visitors each year come from outside the greater Topeka area. In the last ten years, the Zoo has opened three new and innovative spaces: Camp Cowabunga (2018), Kay McFarland Japanese Garden (2020), and Giraffe & Friends (2023). Each of these simultaneously honored historic Topeka Zoo and community leaders as well as provided avenues for the Zoo to flex its future-thinking and innovative commitment to design and space-making.

The plans for the next ten years includes revamping the Heart of the Zoo with a new entrance experience for the community and a reimagined children's space called "My World". This 6 acre project which is slated to complete construction documents in 2024 and break ground in 2025 and has an active capital campaign of \$35 million. Following that, there are plans for a 3.5 acre Sumatran tiger exhibit, a 5 acre expansion for the White Rhinoceros Reproduction Center, and a 5 acre "American Shores" project, each of which gives the Zoo the opportunity to further advance its sustainability strategic goals.

Alongside the strategic master plan, the Topeka Zoo established a DEAI plan, driven by staff, to align and progress the social and business initiatives surrounding Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion. The DEAI statement reads, "The Topeka Zoo is committed to ensuring everyone feels welcome and valued by striving to create an environment that is as diverse as the wild spaces we are trying to protect." As part of this work, the Topeka Zoo is a certified sensory-inclusive venue through Kulture City. In support of this initiative, a local company assisted the Zoo in creating sensory bags filled with items that can help lessen sensory

Topeka: A Great Community

The City of Topeka is the state capital with the charm of a small town. The cost of living is 18% lower than the national average, boasts sub-15 minute commutes, and is home to about 126,000 residents. The "NOTO Arts District" in North Topeka has many parks, pavilions, art galleries, and other venues to celebrate the arts and entertainment. A revitalization of downtown includes commemorative pocket parks, Everygy Plaza for outdoor movies and concerts, and beautiful restoration of historic buildings.

There are many museums, including the Evel Knievel Museum, Mulvane Art Museum, and the Kansas Children's Discovery Center. Topeka boasts over 100 parks and green spaces, where residents partake in outdoor activities such as biking, fishing, camping, disc golf, soccer, softball, and generally enjoying the four-season weather. Washburn University, a Division II school, makes its home in Topeka. And, nestled between the University of Kansas in Lawrence and Kansas State University in Manhattan, collegiate Division I events and athletics abound. For those looking for major concerts or professional sporting events, Kansas City is an easy hour drive away.



TO APPLY: The Topeka Zoo and Conservation Center has retained Canopy Strategic Partners to manage this search. To be considered for this excellent opportunity, please forward a single PDF document that includes your detailed resume and a cover letter to [Lauren David at ldavid@canopysp.com](mailto:ldavid@canopysp.com). Questions about the role can be directed to [David Walsh at dwalsh@canopysp.com](mailto:dwalsh@canopysp.com)