



JOB PROFILE

Executive Director - Zoological Society of New Jersey at Essex County Turtle Back Zoo

The Opportunity

The Executive Director of the Zoological Society of New Jersey (ZSNJ) leads the public/private partnership which fuels private support for Essex County Turtle Back Zoo. This is a high-impact opportunity for an accomplished executive with proven development and fundraising expertise. You will manage a relationship-driven advancement and modern membership program in support of a treasured asset and conservation leader in Northern New Jersey.

Turtle Back Zoo is a well-recognized destination and has seen tremendous growth, in attendance and more, over the last decade. All of this is a result of major investments by the County to deliver a high-quality guest experience and build innovative animal habitats. Building on its existing momentum in philanthropy and membership, the Society is poised to scale an already successful platform into a sophisticated major-gift and membership operation. The Executive Director will be the architect for this next chapter.

For a mission-driven professional, this role offers:

- A large, loyal audience of Zoo visitors and members who can be invited into deeper philanthropic engagement.
- Partnership with a Zoo that has experienced tremendous growth and continuing accreditation by AZA and American Humane Association
- A compelling, tangible case for support—the highest standards of animal care, demonstrated through a new state-of-the art hospital; high impact conservation programs; expansive education offerings; and innovative capital improvements that donors can see and experience.
- The opportunity to lead a comprehensive campaign in the next three to five years tied to the Zoo's new master-plan and Essex County's continued investment.
- A committed public partner in Essex County, whose investments in the Zoo provide a strong foundation and credibility with donors.
- The chance to elevate the Society's fundraising and membership systems, culture, and team, building off a strong foundation of success and grow the existing endowment into a larger, perpetual funding arm for the ZSNJ.
- High visibility across the County and region, with regular interaction with civic, corporate, and community leaders.
- Being part of a network of AZA professionals and fellow partner organization leaders, all of whom will share information and resources to support your success.



About the Zoological Society of New Jersey

The Zoological Society of New Jersey, Inc. (ZSNJ) is the 501(c)(3) nonprofit partner to Essex County Turtle Back Zoo. The Society's mission is to promote the general welfare and continued development of the Zoo by advancing conservation, education, capital improvements, and guest experiences through philanthropy, membership, and community engagement.

Working in close collaboration with Essex County and the Zoo's leadership team, the Society:

- Raises private funds for exhibits, facilities, animal care, education, and conservation initiatives, as well as contributing to a growing endowment.
- Operates and grows a membership program that provides critical support and enhances the guest experience.
- Builds community awareness and enthusiasm for the Zoo and its mission.
- Serves as a flexible, philanthropic partner to the County in advancing strategic projects at the Zoo.



Executive Director Position Summary

The Executive Director (ED) is the chief executive of the Zoological Society of New Jersey and reports to the Society's Board.

The ED's primary responsibilities are to:

1. Lead a comprehensive fundraising program (major and leadership gifts, annual giving, grants, corporate sponsorships, special events, endowment, including comprehensive campaigns and a maturing planned-giving program)
2. Drive membership growth, retention, and engagement, in close coordination with Zoo and County teams.
3. Serve as a relationship and coordination hub among the Society, Essex County leadership, and Turtle Back Zoo leadership, ensuring alignment on priorities and projects.

The ED will lead and grow a high-performing team of full- and part-time staff, with room to expand. The ED will be responsible for managing the budget and finances and all day-to-day operations of the organization.

Key Responsibilities

1. Fundraising & Development

Design and execute a multi-year development strategy to grow contributed revenue from individuals, corporations, foundations, and special events.

- Personally manage a portfolio of major donors and prospects, including cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship.
- Work with Zoo leadership, County officials, and the Board to identify and package funding priorities (e.g., exhibits, education, animal wellness, conservation programs, capital improvements).
- Strengthen and scale annual giving, sponsorships, grants, and fundraising events tied to high-profile Zoo programs and experiences.
- Develop clear donor recognition and stewardship practices that reinforce long-term relationships and reflect the Zoo's and County's roles.
- Ensure robust development operations (CRM/data integrity, moves management, acknowledgment processes, and reporting).
- Conceptualize, develop and execute innovative fundraising events and promotions designed to draw attendance, attract new audiences and increase repeat visitation.



2. Membership Growth & Engagement

- Transform current membership base and a meaningful recurring revenue stream into a major-gift pipeline.
- Lead the strategy for membership acquisition, retention, and upgrades, aligning membership offerings with Zoo visitation and programming.
- Collaborate with Zoo and County teams on membership pricing, benefits, and promotions to maximize value for guests and revenue for the Society.
- Gather and analyze guest feedback and outside data and segmentation to identify trends and understand member behavior and design targeted campaigns (e.g., lapsed members, high-potential upgraders, local families, corporate memberships).
- Oversee member communications, ensuring consistent, mission-focused storytelling about conservation, education, and animal care.
- Partner with Zoo staff on member-only events (e.g., previews, special experiences, education programs) to deepen engagement and create a pipeline for major giving.

3. Partnership with Essex County & Turtle Back Zoo

- Build and maintain excellent working relationships with:
 - Essex County leadership and relevant departments.
 - The Zoo’s Director and senior Zoo staff.
 - Other partners in the South Mountain Recreation Complex, as appropriate.
 - The ZSNJ Board of Directors and its various committees
- Ensure clarity and alignment regarding roles and responsibilities under any operating agreements, MOUs, or funding arrangements between the County and the Society.
- Participate in joint planning for capital projects, programmatic initiatives, and public events where philanthropic or membership support is needed.
- Serve as a trusted voice who can navigate County processes and timelines while advocating for the Zoo’s and Society’s strategic priorities.
- Represent the Society in County, municipal, and community forums as requested.



4. Staff Leadership & Organizational Culture

- Recruit, supervise, and develop Society staff and/or key contractors (development, membership, events, communications, operations) as resources grow.
- Set clear goals and expectations; conduct regular performance check-ins and evaluations.
- Foster an inclusive, collaborative culture aligned with the missions of both the Society and the Zoo.
- Be a leader within the AZA community in defining best practices, creating strong partnerships, advancing conservation and sustainability and supporting professional development.

5. Board Relations & Governance

- Serve as the principal liaison to the Board of Directors of the Zoological Society of New Jersey.
- Partner with the Board Chair on agendas, materials, and follow-up for Board and committee meetings (e.g., Development, Finance, Governance).
- Support Board recruitment and ongoing engagement, with an emphasis on fundraising, community connections, and diversity.
- Provide timely, accurate information on financial performance, fundraising pipelines, membership trends, and strategic risks/opportunities.

6. Financial & Operational Management

- Develop the Society's annual operating budget in collaboration with the Board; monitor performance and adjust as needed.
- Oversee financial management, reporting, and audit processes; ensure compliance with applicable laws and nonprofit best practices.
- Maintain appropriate internal controls, policies, and procedures (e.g., gift acceptance, conflicts of interest, expense approvals).
- Manage contracts, insurance, and risk related to Society-run programs and events.
- Oversee day-to-day administration (HR for any staff, vendors, technology, CRM, etc.).



7. Marketing, Communications & Community Engagement

- Oversee Society-focused communications that support fundraising and membership (newsletters, impact stories, digital content, donor and member messaging).
- Coordinate closely with Turtle Back Zoo's and Essex County's communications teams to ensure consistent branding and messaging.
- Represent the Society as a spokesperson in the community and with media, in coordination with County and Zoo protocols.
- Build partnerships with community organizations, schools, civic groups, and corporate partners to expand awareness and support for the Zoo.

Experience

- 10+ years of progressively responsible leadership experience in the nonprofit or public sector, ideally in a cultural, environmental, educational, or community-focused organization.
- Demonstrated success in fundraising, including personally soliciting major gifts and managing donor relationships.
- Experience growing membership, subscription, or recurring revenue programs strongly preferred.
- Proven ability to work effectively with public agencies and elected or appointed officials, or within a public-private partnership context.
- Experience working with or supporting a governing or advisory Board.
- Demonstrated experience in budgeting, financial oversight, and organizational operations.

Skills & Competencies

- **Strategic and analytical thinker** with the ability to convert vision into practical plans and measurable outcomes.
- **Polished executive presence** with excellent communication skills; comfortable presenting to groups and representing the organization publicly.
- **Proven relationship builder** with experience cultivating and deepening connections with donors, County officials, Zoological Society staff, members, visitors, and community leaders.
- High degree of **financial acumen** and comfort with data and metrics (fundraising pipelines, membership trends, ROI of initiatives).
- Proficiency with CRM/donor databases and standard office software; willingness to embrace new tools and systems as needed.
- **Politically savvy, diplomatic**, and able to manage complex, multi-stakeholder situations with discretion.



Personal Attributes

- Deep commitment to conservation, animal welfare, education, and community impact consistent with the missions of Turtle Back Zoo and the Zoological Society of New Jersey.
- Ethical, transparent, and trustworthy; maintains confidentiality and good judgment.
- Collaborative, inclusive leadership style that values diverse perspectives.
- Results-oriented and entrepreneurial, comfortable working in a growing organization where the ED balances strategy with hands-on execution.

Compensation

- \$150,000 - \$200,000; Salary range commensurate with executive level nonprofit experience and qualifications
- Excellent benefit package
- This role requires the Executive Director to be on-site.

How to Apply:

The Zoological Society of New Jersey has partnered with Canopy Strategic Partners to lead this search. To be considered for this role, please submit a letter of interest and resume in a single PDF format to Lauren David at ldavid@canopysp.com

As part of its comprehensive efforts to identify the most talented candidates, Canopy is partnering with **Beneficence (Beneficence.com)** on this the search. Letters of interest and resumes in a single PDF format can also be directed to Mike O'Neill @ mike.oneill@beneficence.com



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