



LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

SANTA BARBARA ZOO · SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA

Chief Experience & Revenue Officer

Reports to the President & Chief Executive Officer and serves on the Executive Leadership Team — a new role uniting hospitality, earned revenue, audience growth, and experience design under one leader, all in service of the Zoo's mission to conserve the natural world.

LEADERSHIP SEARCH LED BY





The Opportunity

The Santa Barbara Zoo seeks a Chief Experience & Revenue Officer to serve as the architect of one of the most beloved guest experiences on the California coast.

Created at a defining moment, following a rigorous strategic planning process and ahead of an ambitious master planning effort, this new executive role brings together hospitality, earned revenue, audience growth, and experience design under unified leadership, all in service of the Zoo's mission to conserve the natural world.

This is a role for a creative, commercially astute builder: someone who sees the full arc of a guest's journey, from first digital impression to final farewell, and understands how hospitality, conservation, science, education, and community engagement come together to create meaningful and memorable experiences. Reporting to President and CEO Charles Hopper and serving on the Executive Leadership Team, the CXRO will help shape not only how the Zoo grows its earned revenue, but how every visit deepens a guest's connection to wildlife and inspires lifelong engagement.



MISSION

To conserve the natural world through education, science, and unforgettable experiences.

VISION

Be the Central Coast's conservation leader.



Santa Barbara Zoo at a Glance

A beloved, financially healthy institution on one of the most spectacular sites in North America.

30

OCEANFRONT ACRES

The Zoo's setting in Santa Barbara, California.

~500K

ANNUAL ATTENDANCE

Nearly half a million guests each year.

400

ANIMALS

Approximately, across 100+ species.

11,000

MEMBER HOUSEHOLDS

Approximately, across the tri-county region.

~\$20M

OPERATING BUDGET

Approximately \$20 million annually.

AZA

ACCREDITATION

Association of Zoos and Aquariums.





Why This Role, Why Now

The Zoo enters this chapter from a position of strength. Attendance has rebounded and remained consistently strong, the local community is deeply engaged, and the tourist audience represents real and underutilized potential. The Zoo's clearest path to long-term sustainability lies not simply in growing attendance, but in deepening the value of each visit: through richer on-site experiences, a more sophisticated approach to pricing and programming, and a membership program that turns first-time guests into lifelong supporters.

Just as important, the Zoo is creating this position to bring fresh thinking into the organization. This is a leader who will test new ideas, pilot emerging experiences, evaluate new business models, and help build a culture of continuous improvement. The CXRO will also help shape the future of guest engagement itself, from CRM strategy and personalization to digital experiences, audience insights, and thoughtful use of new technology across the guest journey.



DEEPEN

the value of every visit

PILOT

new experiences & models

CONVERT

guests into lifelong supporters



The Role

The CXRO leads the strategy and performance of the Zoo's earned-revenue operations and guest-facing programs — admissions and ticketing, food and beverage, retail, special events and facility rentals, marketing and brand, and on-site guest services. Equally fluent in the language of commerce and the language of mission, the CXRO can build a pricing and yield strategy in the morning and spend the afternoon on the grounds with frontline teams, listening to guests and spotting the next great experience idea.

KEY AREAS OF LEADERSHIP

Experience design & guest journey

Own the end-to-end guest experience, uphold a hospitality-first standard of service, and lead seasonal programming, signature events, and new participatory offerings that drive attendance and emotional connection.

Mission & conservation connection

Partner with conservation, science, animal care, and education teams to design experiences that deepen understanding, encourage action, and strengthen the bond between guests and the mission.

Marketing & brand strategy

Lead the Zoo's marketing, communications, and brand strategy, ensuring the story told through advertising, digital channels, and earned media is consistent, mission-forward, and effective at converting awareness into visitation, with particular attention to the tourist audience the Zoo has yet to fully reach.

Master planning & the future campus

Serve as a key contributor to the Zoo's master planning effort, helping ensure future investments support guest engagement, accessibility, revenue, and conservation storytelling.

Earned revenue & commercial strategy

Lead performance across all earned-revenue lines, develop a modern approach to pricing and yield that balances revenue with community access, and bring new experiences from concept to reality.

Audience development & community

Grow audiences across the tri-county region — local families, underserved communities, members, and future supporters — ensuring the Zoo is welcoming to everyone and serving fully as a community institution and cultural asset.

Technology, data & insight

Build a practical analytics capability and modern platform strategy — spanning ticketing, point of sale, CRM, and audience insight — to guide decisions across pricing, programming, and staffing.

Team & culture

Recruit, develop, and retain a high-performing, mission-aligned team across all experience and revenue functions, modeling genuine care for animals, guests, and colleagues.

COMPENSATION

The anticipated base salary range is **\$180,000 to \$200,000**, or commensurate with experience, plus an excellent benefits package.



The Ideal Candidate

The Santa Barbara Zoo seeks an experienced, intellectually curious, and commercially sophisticated leader who pairs genuine creativity with disciplined financial acumen. The ideal candidate has built and grown earned-revenue portfolios and guest experience operations at scale, and is energized by the chance to do so in service of a beloved conservation institution with a spectacular setting and a deeply engaged community.

- **Executive leadership** — progressive leadership experience in guest experience, attractions, hospitality, cultural institutions, or related fields, with executive-level responsibility for both revenue and customer experience.
- **Revenue track record** — a proven record of driving sustainable earned-revenue growth and leading multi-disciplinary teams across functions such as admissions, food and beverage, retail, events, and guest services.
- **Innovator's mindset** — comfortable testing new ideas and experiences, evaluating new business models, and building a culture of experimentation and continuous improvement.
- **Data fluency** — fluency with modern revenue and engagement platforms, including pricing strategy, CRM, and audience insight, with the judgment to know when data should lead and when mission, instinct, or relationships should.
- **Mission-driven spirit** — guest-obsessed and genuinely moved by the Zoo's purpose, able to connect commercial performance to conservation, education, and community impact.
- **Sector experience** — experience in mission-driven, nonprofit, or accredited cultural institutions is preferred; experience at a zoo, aquarium, museum, botanical garden, or major attraction is a plus.
- **Values & education** — a values-aligned leader committed to equity, inclusion, and accessibility, with a Bachelor's degree or equivalent experience; an advanced degree is welcome.



Santa Barbara



Santa Barbara consistently ranks among the most desirable places to live in the United States. Nestled between the Santa Ynez Mountains and the Pacific Ocean, the city offers year-round sunshine, world-class beaches, and a thriving wine country just minutes from downtown, along with a creative and deeply local culinary scene and a vibrant arts community. Its signature Spanish Colonial Revival architecture, the red-tile rooftops of State Street, the energy of the Funk Zone, and an easily walkable downtown give the city a cultural richness that belies its size.

Home to the University of California, Santa Barbara and excellent public and independent schools, the region offers an exceptional quality of life. The Zoo's setting, on the ocean and minutes from downtown, makes it one of the most beautifully sited institutions in North America: a place where the work itself is meaningful and where the setting makes the work even better.

LIFE ON THE CENTRAL COAST

YEAR-ROUND SUNSHINE

WORLD-CLASS BEACHES

WINE COUNTRY

CULINARY & ARTS SCENE

UC SANTA BARBARA



How to Apply

The Santa Barbara Zoo has retained Canopy Strategic Partners to manage this search. To be considered, please submit a letter of interest and resume in a single PDF to:

Lauren David

CANOPY STRATEGIC PARTNERS

Search@canopysp.com



All inquiries and applications will be held in strict confidence. Canopy Strategic Partners actively recruits candidates from across the zoological and conservation community, including those currently in senior leadership roles, those on a leadership development trajectory, and those whose backgrounds span adjacent fields. We encourage candidates from all backgrounds to apply.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

The Santa Barbara Zoo is an equal opportunity employer, committed to building a team that reflects the diversity of the communities it serves and to fostering an inclusive workplace where every team member can do their best work.

