



**Position Profile**  
**Akron Zoo**  
**Vice President – Life Sciences**

***Mission:** We connect your life to wildlife while inspiring lifelong learning and conservation action.*

***Vision:** We envision the Akron Zoo experience creating excitement and stirring passion in every visitor to become a champion of our natural world.*

***Ultimate Goal:** To be a beloved part of our regions culture and a resource to the communities we serve.*

The Akron Zoo has experienced remarkable success over the last two decades with tremendous attendance growth, strong financial sustainability, and an enviable record of repeated AZA accreditation certifications. This coupled with overwhelming community support demonstrated by the repeated passing of tax levy campaigns which provide annual funding towards the Zoo's operating and capital needs.

The Zoo is poised for continued growth and development having just completed new strategic, master, and conservation plans that outline several important projects including a new \$25M+ African exhibit expansion which will add giraffe to the collection, a new animal hospital and increased resources directed to new conservation programs.

With that as a canvas, the **Akron Zoo is looking for a new Vice President of Life Sciences** to help make those projects a reality and lead the animal care, animal health, and conservation teams to greater mission impact, while engaging modern zoological philosophies and practices across all areas of our mission and operations, ensuring the zoo's continued accreditation as one of the world's top zoological facilities

### **The Role**

Reporting to the Chief Executive Officer, the Vice President of Life Sciences is a leader who is part of the Zoo's seven-member Executive Team, committed to sustaining the Zoo's and this team's collaborative and One Zoo culture. The VP will be a zoological expert with veterinary, animal care, and collection management expertise but also will need to be a strategic thinker and excellent communicator to ensure the team not only delivers best in class animal care but contributes to the growth of the zoo and carrying out its mission.

The Vice President of Life Sciences leads and oversees an experienced management team and their reports in three mission-critical areas across the zoo:

- 1) Animal Care**
- 2) Animal Health**
- 3) Conservation**



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## **The Opportunity**

The VP of Life Sciences will provide leadership, and oversight to an experienced team of animal management professionals, as well as strategic management to address and accomplish goals, objectives and strategies related to all animal and conservation related programs/projects. This role will build on the strengths of the operation of all animal and conservation departments and coordinate work and initiatives in areas to include animal enrichment and training programs, animal husbandry programs, animal records maintenance and other operational processes. The VP will be a champion of a culture of wildlife conservation and sustainability and is also responsible for management of the collection planning process, coordinating participation in SAFE, SSPs, TAGS and other managed programs, developing and monitoring the departmental budget and ensuring compliance with AZA accreditation standards and other regulatory bodies.

The VP of Life Sciences will have excellent communication skills and must be able to build consensus among diverse groups and maintain relationships with other institutions and professionals to exchange scientific and modern zoological practices and be capable of evaluating people and processes in order to ensure quality and improvement.

The VP will be playing an active role in providing input and support during the implementation of the Zoo's strategic business plan and master plan including the development of new animal habitats and a new animal hospital. This will include providing input on designs with specific emphasis on animal care and wellbeing practices, staff and guest experience, overall work flow and operational needs.



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**Candidate Profile**

The ideal candidate will embody the following professional and personal qualities, skills and characteristics:

- **A Communicative Team Leader** – The VP should be experienced in leading teams and building and maintaining a high-performing and inclusive organizational culture while mentoring existing staff to their full potential and identifying new staff. The VP will have not only excellent technical skills but also have dynamic management, and communication qualities. The VP will provide mentorship for the professional development of staff.
- **Connected & Involved** – The VP will work with colleagues throughout the profession and build partnerships and relationships to advance the Zoo’s practices and enhance its reputation in the field. The VP will participate in the animal care, health, and conservation aspects of local, regional, national, and international programs as appropriate and linked to the zoo’s strategic plan. Forges mutually beneficial partnerships and relationships within the community and around the world, with AZA, and with other key collaborators and stakeholders in partnership with the CEO and the Chief External Affairs Officer as appropriate.
- **Committed to Mission** – The VP will demonstrate a passionate commitment to the zoo’s mission and have a strong knowledge of progressive animal care practices and a passion for the continual advancement of animal wellbeing. The candidate must also demonstrate an understanding of the balance between mission and margin, as demonstrated through excellent financial stewardship, and a recognition of how the two priorities complement one another and how they can be achieved throughout the Zoo’s campus.
- **Collaborative Servant Leader**– The VP will be able to foster strong team collaboration with the other members of the executive team, the animal care, animal health, and conservation departments and across the organization. They will be able to easily communicate the zoo’s vision and how it can be implemented, working with others to solve problems and overcome challenges together.
- **Big Picture Thinker** – The VP will have an “over the horizon view” and monitor the latest developments in the profession, bringing innovative thinking to the table and implement those developments when appropriate and through the executive team when collaboration is needed. They must also be a critical thinker, able to make difficult decisions, and identify and respond to shifting and changing organizational needs.
- **Open, Approachable, & Inclusive** – An approachable, empathic, and thoughtful leader who embraces equity, diversity, accessibility and inclusion in day-to-day work and creates a welcoming organizational culture.



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- **Operationally Adept** – Can see, understand, and work through the details to execute on delivering a best-in-class animal and mission experience

**Principal Duties and Responsibilities**

- Provides supervision, operational assistance and technical guidance for personnel engaged in the care and management of zoo animals at the Zoo. Responsible for ensuring appropriate animal health, enrichment, training, and husbandry of animals used in educational / contact circumstances.
- Strategic oversight and implementation of small conservation grants program housed in our foundation.
- Formulates and implements animal and department management policies (e.g. protocols, SOP's) and procedures consistent with the zoo's Goals and Mission Statement.
- Performs daily inspections as needed to assure that the collection, personnel, and facilities are properly maintained for keeper and animal health and safety, and for visitor enjoyment and safety.
- Develops, conducts and oversees training programs for senior leadership, animal care / vet care management and staff to develop the necessary skills and job knowledge for satisfactory performance of duties.
- Participates in AZA conservation programs and committees and initiates and identifies several key areas to assume leadership.
- Works in conjunction with the Veterinarian in directing diet formulation and health care.
- Creates annual operating budget in conjunction with the Chief Business Officer, understanding the need to remain on track with the 10 year financial plan. Makes decisions for the most effective use of budgeted funds and tracks or monitors expenditures as required, proactively taking corrective action when needed.
- Responsible for actively engaging the zoo while opportunistically participating in and conducting research in wild animal behavior and biology.
- Ensure appropriate methods are employed for safely capturing and restraining animals by physical, mechanical, or chemical methods.
- Responsible for conforming to all local, state, federal, foreign, and international laws regarding acquisition, maintenance, health, shipment, and welfare of the collection.
- Oversee the general health, security and environment of zoo animals.
- Assists in the Master Planning of renovations or new facilities
- Participates in SSP's, studbooks, TAG's, Institute committees, etc., as required.



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**Education and Experience**

- Advanced Degree in the Biological Sciences required, DVM or doctoral degree in a related field strongly preferred.
- Minimum of 10 years of experience at an AZA facility, with at least 8+ years in a leadership position responsible for supervising teams in animal care, animal health and conservation. Experience in animal care, health, and wellbeing, animal handling, interpretive presentation and a thorough knowledge of the requirements of the animals in their charge. Excellent knowledge and performance in the principles of supervision and training. Thorough knowledge of zoo administrative principles and practices. Direct experience with a wide variety of animal taxa required. AZA leadership and involvement on committee TAGS and SSP coordination is strongly preferred.
- Experience with / knowledge of habitat design and construction is beneficial.
- Outstanding written communications skills required to compose technical and popular reports on various aspects of captive animal exhibition and management. Ability to maintain detailed records of various aspects of animal treatment, care and exhibition.
- Ability to adjust work schedule to cover job responsibilities and respond to emergency situations. The position also requires a regular weekend and holiday schedule.
- Experience with an organizational incident command system is a plus, this position will serve as “Incident Commander” on a regularly scheduled rotation with the rest of the Senior Leadership Team (Directors, and Vice Presidents).

**ADA Requirements**

**Work Environment**

Must be able to work outdoors under extreme and variable weather conditions for extended periods on an occasional basis. Majority of work is conducted in an office environment. Must be able to use general office equipment, computer and two-way radio. Specific computer skills regularly used include the use of ZIMS, Microsoft Office Suite and Sharepoint.

**Physical Requirements**

Must be able to sit, stand, bend, walk, run, climb, and balance while performing normal and routine duties and potential emergency situations. Must be able to hear and understand verbal commands and cues. Must be able to visually and mentally comprehend and respond to colored and written commands and cues. Some risk exposure to fairly predictable and controllable hazards associated with wild animals and zoonotic diseases. Vaccinations are required to be able to work with specific wildlife species.



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**Tools and Equipment Used**

Computers, office equipment, machines with moving parts requiring safety gear, nets, nooses, transport crates, ladders, safety harnesses, trucks, vans, and other equipment typically associated with the care and management of wild and domestic animals.

**To Apply**

The Akron Zoo has retained **Canopy Strategic Partners** (formerly Zoo Advisors) to manage this search. To be considered for this unique and high-profile opportunity, please forward a single PDF document that includes your detailed resume and a cover letter expressing why you are interested in this role and how your experience can help the Zoo further its mission and commitment to best-in-class animal care.

**Kristin Elliott**

Project Consultant

Canopy Strategic Partners

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