



## PRESIDENT/CEO

### The Buffalo Zoo

As one of the crown jewels of Western New York's cultural and recreational attractions, the Buffalo Zoo welcomes 500,000 guests on an annual basis. The Zoo sits on 24 acres and includes a variety of buildings and habitats. Many of the components of the campus have historic significance. The Zoo is operated by the Zoological Society of Buffalo, Inc., under a lease agreement with the City of Buffalo.

Since 2000, more than \$50 million worth of capital improvements to exhibitry and infrastructure have been completed. In 2019, the Zoo's five-year strategic plan was completed. Our mission of **Building Community → Creating Connections → Saving Wildlife** is guiding our master plan that is under development. This master plan will guide the growth and development of the Zoo for the next twenty years.

### Basic Purpose and Responsibility

The President/CEO is responsible for leading the organization's strategic planning, organizational management, programmatic development, external affairs, master planning of the facility, and revenue generation - including fundraising. The President/CEO will collaborate with an experienced leadership team and Board of Directors to ensure the Buffalo Zoo is a strong, stable, vibrant, and high-functioning organization. The President/CEO manages, directs and supervises the day-to-day functions of the Buffalo Zoo in conjunction with the Zoological Society of Buffalo's Board of Directors, while also focusing on the bigger picture.

This role centers around five themes:

- **Passion for the Cause** - Understands and believes in the organization's mission and has a passion to advance that mission for greater impact at the Zoo, in the community, and across the zoo profession
- **Ambassador and Fundraiser** - Can be comfortable and confident in a range of business and social situations with a wide range of staff and stakeholders advocating for the Zoo and securing the necessary resources to realize its vision
- **Strategic and Visionary Leader** - Sees the big picture and then can connect the dots across the organization and lead the way, making things happen to take the organization to new heights
- **Business Acumen and Management** - Has the ability to transform financial and operating models to create a high-performing business
- **A Team Leader** - Builds and maintains a high-performing organizational culture while growing and mentoring staff to their full potential

**Essential Functions**

- The CEO will be a highly visible member of the community, representing the organization to other education/conservation organizations, political leaders, media, donors, other cultural organizations, and other external entities and stakeholders.
- The CEO will partner closely with the External Relations team to support the Zoo's burgeoning fundraising program and ensure the Zoo's long-term financial stability.
- The CEO will partner closely with the Chief Zoological Officer and Executive Leadership Team to evaluate and improve the Buffalo Zoo's animal collection plan; and the Buffalo Zoo's research, education, and conservation efforts - as a leader in conservation initiatives.
- Internal priorities include fostering a culture of equity and belonging for all, leading initiatives to support financial stability, elevating animal care and welfare, and partnering with staff and leadership to ensure cross-department collaboration and the successful running of day-to-day operations.
- External priorities include expanding the Zoo's reach, credibility, and influence, specifically in the animal education and conservation realm.
- Oversee the organization through the prism of different perspectives, departments, and leaders.
- Work with other senior leaders to implement the Zoo's strategic plan and revisit key goals and activities as conditions on the ground change.
- Works with other senior leaders, the Board, and external stakeholders in the continued development of the Buffalo Zoo's master plan. As part of the master plan implementation, leads the design process in conjunction with outside consultants.
- The CEO will set priorities decisively, delegate responsibilities, assure accountability, and allocate resources to guarantee effectiveness.
- The CEO will ensure that teams across the Zoo operate in synchronicity, and are aligned with the mission and vision, while also recognizing and being responsive to the changing landscape and the unique needs and strengths of the Western New York Community.
- A team player with transparent and authentic communication lines with each Department Head/Direct Report.
- Oversees the Buffalo Zoo's Executive Leadership Team. Ability to support and nurture leadership and accountability in the team – individually and as a group – and will be willing to delegate authority with trust and confidence while maintaining oversight and review. Executive Team oversight includes performance evaluations, performance management, and hiring.
- Establish and strategize a succession plan for the leadership positions to move the Zoo into the future.
- Works closely with the Chief Financial Officer to develop and monitor the Zoo's budgets.
- Manages all Zoo activities in a manner consistent with accreditation standards of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.
- Primary accountability for specific functions and results. The list of essential functions is not exhaustive and may be supplemented or changed as necessary.

## Position Qualifications

### *Special Skills*

- Results-driven, inclusive leader who builds and supports a culture of collaboration and empowerment across the organization's Executive Leadership Team and Board.
- Strategic thinker to support and promote a culture shift to establish a cohesive culture in the organization.
- Credible, authentic, and inspirational leader, who is high energy, affable, and keenly self-aware.
- Proven experience developing and nurturing relationships with current and potential funders, including high net worth individuals, foundations, and corporate and government funders. The CEO must be persuasive, responsive, and willing to engage with funders regularly and candidly about the Zoo's mission, impact, threats, and opportunities. Proven experience in cultivating and soliciting six-figure plus gifts.
- A content expert serving as a leading regional voice and expert on animal education and conservation issues, wildlife, and wild places.
- Charismatic and knowledgeable public speaker and spokesperson for the issues and for the organization.
- Skilled in working with a Board of Directors developing thoughtful and meaningful agendas to spur discussion, advice, and thought partnership about the Zoo's strategic initiatives. Expert at Board communication about the Zoo's growth, successes, and challenges. Experience working with the Board to identify and recruit new Board members in service to the Zoo's strategic plan.
- A flexible, resourceful, and thoughtful team player with a clear sense of the organization's direction.
- Can bring an entrepreneurial approach to revenue generation and an understanding of nonprofit finance, grant making, and various revenue streams.
- Strategic thinker with the ability to take a long-term, thoughtful approach to achieve organizational goals.
- Engender trust and followership in others through compelling influence and passion in their beliefs.
- Substantial knowledge in the areas of animal management, veterinary care, exhibit design, zoological research, education programming, and conservation education; or extensive non-profit management.

### *Education:*

- Four-year degree in Zoology, Business Management, Non-Profit Management, or other relevant discipline. Advanced degree (Masters' or PhD) preferred.

### *Experience:*

- The CEO will be a seasoned executive with a proven track record of effective operational and financial administration experience.
- Successful track record of working proactively and amicably with Boards and other key stakeholders to embrace, implement, and refine the Zoo's strategic plan and master plan.
- Ability to manage the short-term dynamics that require rapid response without losing focus on the longer-term, bigger picture.
- Demonstrated leadership, mentoring, coaching, and relationship management experience.
- Understanding and respect for populations with diverse cultural, economic, and educational backgrounds either through lived or professional experience.
- Progressive and proven management and leadership responsibility in a zoo, aquarium, museum or prominent nonprofit organization.

**Other Requirements:**

- May be required to work evenings, weekends, holidays and be on-call for emergency situations.
- In-office position.
- Must show proof of negative TB test upon hire. TB Test conducted annually.
- Successful completion of a post-offer pre-employment general medical screen and drug test prior to start.
- Successful completion of a post-offer pre-employment background check.
- Must possess or be able to obtain within 30-days of employment a valid New York State driver's license and have an average or better driving record based on the evaluation process of our insurance company. Retention of position is contingent upon maintaining required license. Must upgrade to classification appropriate to requirements (non-CDLC or CDL class).

**Physical Demands**

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions. While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to stand; walk; use hands; reach with hands and arms; stoop, kneel, crouch, or crawl and talk or hear. Use computer hardware and software for extended periods of time (repetitive motion). Sitting for long periods of time. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close vision, distance vision, peripheral vision, depth perception and ability to adjust focus.

**Benefits**

This is a full-time, exempt position. Some of the benefits available include health plan, life insurance, long term disability insurance, HSA or HRA, FSA, dental, vision, 403B retirement plan (Zoo contribution to the 403B plan will commence after two-years of service), annual leave time, holiday time, and sick time. Benefits are available after the successful completion of an introductory probation period of 60 days of work. Sick time available upon hire.

**To Apply**

Buffalo Zoo 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 expressing why you are interested in this role and how your experience can help the Zoo become an even greater asset for the Buffalo community and a leader in the zoo field.

**Kristin Elliott**

Project Consultant

Canopy Strategic Partners

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*The Buffalo Zoo is an At Will employer and all Buffalo Zoo employees are subject to employment eligibility and background security checks as well as testing for illegal substance use as allowed by law.*

**Equal Opportunity Employer**