

**CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER
DENVER ZOOLOGICAL FOUNDATION**
Denver, Colorado
[Denver Zoo](#)



The Aspen Leadership Group is proud to partner with Denver Zoological Foundation in the search for a Chief Development Officer.

The Chief Development Officer (CDO) will provide strategic and tactical leadership on all Denver Zoological Foundation (Denver Zoo) fundraising. As an external ambassador, the CDO will advance the Zoo's mission and goals by actively participating on the Zoo's Executive Leadership Team to execute the vision and strategic direction for the future of Denver Zoo; planning, organizing, and implementing a range of fundraising programs that will enable Denver Zoo to obtain the capital improvement, operating, and endowment resources required to attain its goals; and assuming responsibility for hiring, managing, and evaluating staff and providing leadership to staff and volunteers within the Development department.

The successful candidate will benefit from working with a passionate and committed Board as well as a staff and volunteer group eager to grow and advance the mission, the Strategic Plan and Master Plan. In calendar year 2017, Denver Zoo's revenues totaled approximately \$45 million. The Zoo benefits from the region's [Scientific and Cultural Facilities District](#) tax, one of the nation's most progressive funding mechanisms for more than 300 scientific and cultural organizations in seven Colorado counties. Renewed by voters in 2016, the SCFD tax support is assured until 2030. In 2017, this support for the Denver Zoo totaled over \$9.0 million, or approximately 20% of total revenues. 2017 revenues also included \$17.2 million in admissions and membership revenues; \$9.8 million in events, attractions, and concessions; \$4.1 million in donations and gifts; \$2.2 million in City and County of Denver support; and \$2.7 million from other sources. 2017 operating expenses totaled \$42.4 million, with animal care and research accounting for 31% of that total. Other major expense categories included guest experience/education (27%) and facilities (20%).

The Colorado Zoological Trust (CZT), a separate organization created in 1997 to invest, manage, and distribute Denver Zoo's endowment and estate gifts, currently has over \$23 million in net assets for the benefit of the Zoo. In 2017, Denver Zoo was a part of a successful Denver bond campaign that will provide \$20 million in capital funds over five years to support the new veterinary hospital and other components of the 2016 Master Plan.

The Zoo plans to launch a major capital campaign in the near future and completed a feasibility study in June for that campaign. The recent creation of the Leadership Council, along with firm philanthropic commitments from this Council and the Board of Governors, is designed to lay the groundwork for enhanced annual fundraising and the upcoming campaign.

Denver Zoo traces its origins to the donation of an orphaned American black bear cub to the mayor of Denver in 1896. The mayor then gifted the cub to the keeper of Denver's City Park, who founded the Zoo with this animal, soon joined by monkeys, elk, bison, and birds. With the opening of the Zoo's first designed exhibit in 1918, Bear Mountain, Denver Zoo became the first American institution to use naturalistic enclosures rather than cages with bars or fences. This pioneering exhibit, now on the National Register of Historic Places, featured artificial rock formations produced using plaster casts from natural cliffs near Morrison, Colorado.

A 1956 cooperative agreement between the City and County of Denver and the Denver Zoological Foundation changed the face of the Zoo forever. Under the new cooperative agreement, the Zoological Foundation, an independent 501(c)(3) organization governed by its own Board of Trustees, assumed fiduciary, operational, management, and fundraising responsibilities for the Zoo. Through the help of generous donors and support from the six-county Denver metro area's cultural tax, Denver Zoo, the most popular cultural attraction in Colorado, has evolved into a dynamic campus in Denver's beautiful City Park.

Increasingly, and with strong support from the Board, Denver Zoo is integrating its conservation and sustainability work in the field with its collections, activities, and messaging at home. Already a local cultural icon, and cherished as a safe family-oriented destination for learning and engagement, Denver Zoo intends to become a fully zoo-based conservation organization dedicated to protecting animals within the Zoo and around the world while inspiring others to care about their well-being and survival. It seeks to help raise public awareness of growing threats to wildlife, educate its visitors about the applications of its science and expertise to the demands of animal care and survival in constricted wild habitats, and galvanize these visitors to take action.

STRATEGIC AND MASTER PLAN

In 2016, staff and Board finalized a new [Master Plan](#), which includes incredible concepts for a new coastal exhibit complex that uniquely ties animal experiences and event space, a new veterinary hospital/animal health complex, a robust expansion to the Zoo's commitment to African wildlife in huge mixed species exhibits, and amazing exhibits and experiences designed to connect visitors in Denver with the Zoo's field conservation efforts across the globe. Initial estimates for this bold and creative new Master Plan are approximately \$220 million, with projects to be phased over 15–20 years. The Master Plan, built on a model of transparency with input and feedback of people, both within and outside the Zoo., is a roadmap/blueprint of how Denver Zoo will achieve its goals and get where it wants to go.

Funding for the capital projects outlined in the new Master Plan will be a major focus of the Zoo's new Chief Development Officer. A full capital campaign is launching and will combine fundraising for several capital projects, endowments, and other special projects.

All these plans position Denver Zoo to be transformed into an exciting conservation center which will further the evolution of innovative zoo exhibitory that enjoys a very strong position in the Denver community, the State of Colorado, across the United States and on a global basis.

REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

The Chief Development Officer will report to the President and Chief Executive Officer.

PRINCIPAL OPPORTUNITIES

What difference will the right person be able to make?

This position allows for the Zoo to engage and connect with the community, build relationships, and help us achieve our mission. Combined with strong earned revenues, governmental support, the development efforts can help the Zoo continue to be a leader in animal care, conservation, and education.

Why is this position not only an essential position for Denver Zoo, but also an excellent opportunity for the selected candidate and that person's career?

This person will help take a program that is in its infancy to a leadership program. The Denver Zoo is one of the most recognized and respected organizations both locally and nationally. With a new CEO that embraces fundraising, a new master plan, and many other efforts in place, the selected candidate will have many of the critical tools needed to build a successful program.

When the selected candidate looks back on this position twenty years from now, what will that person have been able to accomplish that will give him/her great professional satisfaction and pride?

They will be able to say they made a difference for the community (over 2 million guests per year), animals, and wildlife both locally and around the globe and helped create one of the world's best zoos.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

Vision and Leadership

The Chief Development Officer will

- provide leadership and vision to the Development department, the Development and Capital Campaign Committees of the Board, and the entire Board of Trustees, related to the planning and implementation of a creative, aggressive, and effective fundraising plan on behalf of Denver Zoo;
- in coordination with the CEO, provide leadership to a large capital campaign with a multi-million-dollar goal for both increasing endowment and supporting major new capital improvements;
- ensure that fundraising programs articulate the mission of Denver Zoo in a way that extends the brand, reach, and financial support of the organization;
- ensure that Development strategies align and supports the organizational strategic plan and master plan;
- serve on the senior leadership team for zoo-wide strategic decision making and to represent Development; and
- serve on the organizational strategy team and other cross divisional teams to represent Development.

Fundraising Strategy and Administration

The Chief Development Officer will

- partner and engage the CEO in strategy for top major gift prospects;
- prepare and support the CEO for donor visits and events;
- be responsible for the preparation and justification of the annual budget for the Development department, and maintain strict fiscal budgetary control over expenditures;
- implement on-going fundraising activities and programs, including, but not limited to major gift solicitation, prospect research, in-kind gift solicitation, corporate sponsorships, grant preparation, annual fundraising events, and a variety of planned and deferred giving programs;

- oversee the management of the development staff, plans, projects, and activities to achieve revenue goals;
- prepare and oversee implementation of annual fundraising plans with specific fundraising goals for each segment of the development programs;
- maintain accountability and compliance standards for donors and funding sources;
- oversee the development of materials (brochures, direct mail literature, solicitation letters, videos, social media, etc.) needed to support fundraising efforts;
- oversee the preparation of articles for publication in Denver Zoo newsletters and publications to members and the general public in support of development goals and objectives;
- make personal appearances and presentations to various organizations, groups, and media to promote Denver Zoo and facilitate its fundraising programs;
- oversee the analysis of success/failure rates of numerous components of the annual fund campaign;
- oversee the stewardship strategy to retain current donors and deepen their level of engagement with the organization;
- be a source of development knowledge and expertise for the organization;
- stay on top of research industry trends and apply findings to inform and adapt the strategy;
- oversee the development and preparation of reports on donation trends, activity, and opportunities;
- oversee the enhancement of development systems and processes relating to volunteer and donor management, prospect research, gift processing, and recognition;
- oversee the recruitment of campaign volunteers, event chairs, and other community volunteers to assist with development programs;
- oversee the development and execution of a plan to expand participation in the Zoo Pride Membership Program, which includes a giving component; and
- support the Development team to create dashboards and reports to provide the necessary analytics to help guide strategy and track progress.

Working with Board and Senior Staff

The Chief Development Officer will

- serve as a member of the Zoo's Executive Leadership Team and be a positive leader in advancing Zoo-wide goals and initiatives;
- work in very close cooperation with all Zoo departments, to coordinate Zoo-wide fundraising activities with their respective programs;
- with the CEO, help to advance the development conversation at the Board level and solicit Board participation in executing the fundraising plan;
- plan departmental work assignments, develop staff job descriptions in collaboration with Human Resources, delegate responsibilities, and supervise and evaluate both professional and support staff members of the departments;
- collaborate with the CEO and Senior Leadership Team to execute strategic direction for fundraising programs and maintain strong and functional interdepartmental communications and relationships;
- work closely with Marketing and Communications to identify, cultivate, develop, and implement promotional activities benefiting Denver Zoo;
- ensure that development marketing strategies target key donor audiences, effectively educate about the campaign and its mission, and advance program goals; and
- participate on task forces and other special projects as assigned by the CEO.

KEY COLLEAGUES



Bert Vescolani **President and Chief Executive Officer**

With more than 25 years of experience in nonprofit management, Bert Vescolani, who took over the helm of Denver Zoo in September 2018, has held numerous leadership positions within scientific and zoological institutions. At Denver Zoo, he leads more than 400 employees and 600 volunteers, oversees the care and management of more than 4,000 animals representing 600 species, and is responsible for the continued improvement, progression, and evolution of Colorado's most-visited cultural destination.

Before joining Denver Zoo, Vescolani served for seven years as President and CEO of the Saint Louis Science Center, where he oversaw the construction and renovation of 68,000 square feet of exhibits—the largest exhibit expansion in its 30-year history—and led fundraising efforts focused on capital projects completing a \$60 million capital campaign. As a result, attendance grew by 11 percent, and the institution achieved record guest satisfaction and Net Promoter scores under his watch.

Prior to his role at the Saint Louis Science Center, Vescolani served for six years as Director of the John Ball Zoological Gardens in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he successfully reengaged the community and garnered support and participation in the planning and approval of a \$100 million master plan. He also led the planning, building and renovating of new and existing animal exhibits, infrastructure and attractions, including a \$4.1 million lion exhibit, zip line and ropes course, and front entrance plaza.

A self-described “educator at heart,” Vescolani broke into the zoo and aquarium industry in 1991 as curator of education at John G. Shedd Aquarium in Chicago, where he worked his way up the ranks over the course of 14 years, eventually reaching the position of Senior Vice President of Aquarium Collection and Education. In that role he provided new direction and leadership for educational efforts and the aquarium collection, developed new initiatives to facilitate more programming, and created and led the development of an institutional training and professional development program for all employee and volunteers. Vescolani received a Bachelor of Science degree in education from Michigan State University, and completed graduate course work in nonprofit management from North Park University as well as graduate course work in biology/zoology at Western Illinois University.

Brian Aucone **Senior Vice President for Animal Sciences**

Brian Aucone began his zoo career as an intern in Denver Zoo's Tropical Discovery. In 1999 he left for Dallas Zoo where he became Acting Supervisor and then moved to Oklahoma City Zoo in 2003, eventually becoming the Assistant Director. He returned to Denver Zoo as Vice President for Animal Care in 2010, being named Senior Vice President for Animal Care and Conservation in 2014. Aucone has a Bachelor of Arts degree in biology from the University of Northern Colorado. At Denver Zoo, Aucone provides organizational leadership of the Animal Care, Conservation, and Veterinary Medicine Divisions which include all animal programs at the institution. Aucone has been active in the Association for Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) for over 15 years. He has served on the Lizard Advisory Group for over 12 years and as chair of this group for over 5 years. He has also served on the Crocodilian Advisory Group in the past. With strong herpetological background, Aucone was also a founding member of Southwest Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (SWPARC) and served as the co-chair of this group for nearly 4 years and is currently a steering committee member. He also leads training for SWPARC each year to train biomonitors for the Flat-Tailed Horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma mcalli*). Field conservation

experience has included work with the Anegada Iguana (*Cyclura pinguis*), Asian Elephants (*Elephas maximus*), and Greater One-Horned Rhinos (*Rhinoceros unicornis*).

Amber Christopher

Senior Vice President for Guest Experience

Amber Christopher advances the mission of Denver Zoo by overseeing all aspects of the day-to-day operation of the Guest Experience Division which consists of the Guest Services Department, Guest Operations Department, Guest Engagement Department, and the Learning Experiences Department. She provides strategic leadership across the Zoo by actively seeking and implementing new earned revenue opportunities and oversees the Zoo's concession contract for food, merchandise, catering, and rentals. She is an active member of International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) and Association for Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and is currently serving as a member of AZA's Trends Committee. Christopher joined Denver Zoo in 2005 and has a B.S.B.A. in Hotel, Restaurant, and Tourism and a master's degree in Computer Information Systems from the University of Denver.

Hollie Colahan

Vice President for Animal Care

Hollie Colahan began her career at Sunset Zoo in Manhattan, Kansas while completing her undergraduate degree in Biology at Kansas State University. Colahan also has a Master of Wildlife Science degree from Texas A&M University. She has held roles as an Animal Keeper at Cheyenne Mountain Zoo in Colorado Springs, Disney's Animal Kingdom in Florida as Zoological Manager, and Curator of Primates and Carnivores at that Houston Zoo. She returned to Colorado to be the Curator of Large Mammals at the Denver Zoo in 2011. In 2014, she was promoted to Vice President for Animal Care, where she oversees the animal collection and the staff that provide their care. Colahan maintains several leadership positions in the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), including Chair of the AZA Professional Development Committee, Coordinator for the Lion Species Survival Plan, Vice Chair of the Felid Taxon Advisory Group, and Course Administrator for the Managing Animal Enrichment and Training Programs course. She has also participated in field conservation work with native species in Kansas, Florida, Colorado, and New Mexico, as well as gibbons in Vietnam and lions in Botswana. Colahan has presented at professional meetings and been published in peer-reviewed journals, and serves as an instructor on a variety of topics, including Animal Welfare, Conservation, and Leadership in zoos and aquariums.

Dr. R. Scott Larsen

Vice President for Animal Health

Dr. R. Scott Larsen provides leadership for the Veterinary and Nutrition Departments. In this role, Dr. Larsen oversees the health care of the animal collection while continuing to serve as an attending clinician. He also oversees the nutrition center and coordinates veterinary involvement in conservation. Dr. Larsen holds a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from Colorado State University, a Master of Science degree in Clinical Sciences, Epidemiology from Colorado State University and a Bachelor of Science degree from University of Utah. Dr. Larsen joined the Denver Zoo in 2011 after nine years with the University of California, Davis where he taught veterinary students and zoological medicine residents, while providing clinical services for the Sacramento Zoo, the UC Davis Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital, the California Stanislaus Endangered Species Recovery Program, and various other field projects. He is boarded in the American College of Zoological Medicine, has served on the American Veterinary Medical Association's Committee on Environmental Issues, the Elephant TB Stakeholders Group, and the American Association of Zoo Veterinarian's Committee on Wildlife Health and Conservation. For the past 6 years, Dr. Larsen has served as an officer for the American College of Zoological Medicine and is currently the Immediate Past-President. For the past 3 years, he has been on

the Executive Committee of the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians and is currently the President-Elect.

Graeme Patterson, Ph.D.

Vice President for Conservation and Research

Graeme Patterson, Ph.D. joined Denver Zoo as Vice President for Conservation and Research in May 2016. Dr. Patterson earned his bachelor's degree in Botany at the University of Wales, UK, and completed a Ph.D. on the impact of heavy metal pollution on the ecology of freshwaters from the University of Durham, UK. Following his Ph.D., Dr. Patterson moved to Nigeria to teach, develop curricula, and conduct research as part of a large European Community support program to the University of Jos. Dr. Patterson also spent time in Kenya at the Botany Department at Kenyatta University, Nairobi. In 1991, Graeme started the job of Limnologist/ Plankton Ecologist on a 4-year program supported by the UK Government to study the pelagic ecology of Lake Malawi/Nyasa. After this he split his base between Africa and the UK to work for the Natural Resources Institute (NRI) as technical manager on the 5 year UNDP-funded GEF Lake Tanganyika Biodiversity Project. This was his major shift from pure science and teaching to conservation management. During this period Dr. Patterson also acted as a consultant on a number of other projects in Indonesia, Egypt, and the Maldives. He has published widely on the work he has conducted, particularly on the African lakes. Dr. Patterson moved to the Wildlife Conservation Society at the Bronx Zoo in New York City in January 2001 as Assistant, and then Deputy, Director of their Africa Program. He spent 14 years overseeing (managing, planning, fundraising, etc.) an ever-growing field conservation program in Africa as well as assisting with supporting the development zoo-based interpretation of the field program. Dr. Patterson moved from New York City to Colorado in 2015 and for a year worked as Deputy Director of Field Operations for the large NSF-funded NEON project, before taking up his current position at Denver Zoo. At Denver Zoo, Dr. Patterson oversees Conservation and Research which conducts expansive efforts regionally and internationally including projects in Botswana, Mongolia, Peru, Vietnam, and the Rocky Mountain Great Plains.

George R. Pond

Senior Vice President for Design and Campus Management

George R. Pond is responsible for the development and execution of the Zoo's facility master plan, including the design and construction of new exhibits and facility improvements. Pond oversees the Facilities Group which is responsible for facilities planning and design, management of grounds and horticulture, maintenance of all existing facilities, and the Zoo's safety and sustainability initiatives. Pond has two master's degrees in Architecture and in Landscape Architecture, both from the University of Colorado at Denver, and a Bachelor of Arts in English from Kenyon College. He has been with Denver Zoo for 13 years and during that time has also served on faculty at the College of Architecture and Planning at the University of Colorado at Denver as a lecturer and senior instructor in landscape architecture, and is currently an elected City Councilman in Wheat Ridge, Colorado.

Marie Revenew

Vice President for External Relations

Marie Revenew is the lead communications, public affairs, and community outreach executive for Denver Zoo. She manages an interdisciplinary team of 10 people who work in the fields of public affairs, communications, social media, public relations, marketing, advertising, design, brand strategy, thought leadership, and community relations. Revenew has a diverse marketing background including years in business development, advertising agency leadership, brand strategy, video and broadcast production, and non-profit marketing strategy leadership. Prior to coming to the Zoo, she led divisional marketing and public relations efforts for the largest healthcare system in Colorado, reporting to five hospital

CEOs. Prior to that, she was the brand strategy director for one of the largest branding firms in the United States, where she led complex organizations, primarily in healthcare and finance, rebrand with comprehensive brand platforms, messaging plans, design, marketing and advertising plans, and brand asset management. Renew also excelled in client management and business development while running large agency accounts and small advertising agencies over the years. She has won numerous awards for unique and effective marketing executions, rooted in competitive strategy and driven by creative solutions that get noticed.

Stephanie Stowell

Vice President for Learning and Engagement

Stephanie Stowell is responsible for the development, implementation, and evaluation of educational initiatives both on zoo grounds and in the community. Working closely with all staff and volunteers, along with key community partners, the Learning Experiences team strives to connect Colorado to the Denver Zoo as an educational organization that creates positive, ever-changing learning experiences through standards-based and STEM-focused school programming; on-site classes, camps and overnights; and the Zoo's unique master's degree program: the Advanced Inquiry Program offered in collaboration with Miami University. Stowell holds a master's degree in Education/Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in conservation education from the University of Montana. Prior to joining the Denver Zoo in 2015, she served as the Executive Director of the Pueblo Zoo and the Director of Education and Volunteer Programs for the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle and served on the senior staff team of the National Wildlife Federation for nearly ten years.

Jacqueline M. Taylor

Senior Vice President for Human Resources and Staff Development

Jacqueline M. Taylor is responsible for leadership in all aspects of human resources management including recruitment, career development, retention, leadership development, compensation and benefits, performance management, culture and staff engagement, internal communication and the Zoo's employee training and professional development programs to ensure alignment with the business strategy and management objectives of the organization. Taylor has been at Denver Zoo since 1997 and has also served as Denver Zoo's Vice President for Education and Volunteer Services from 2003 to 2011. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in mathematics and economics from Towson State University, Maryland, and a New York State Teacher Certificate. Taylor is a professional fellow of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, and a member SHRM, Society for Human Resource Management.

Charles Wright

Chief Financial Officer

Charles Wright is responsible for all of the finance, accounting, treasury-related, and Information Technology departments at the Zoo. Wright joined the Zoo in 2015. He most recently served as Mile High United Way's Senior Vice President of Finance and Administration with responsibilities for finance, accounting, and IT activities there. Wright spent over 10 years at Kroenke Sports & Entertainment (KSE) in a variety of executive and financial management positions. He was a Partner at Ernst & Young for 14 years prior to joining KSE. Charlie holds the CPA, CMA, CGMA, and CFF certifications. He has an M.B.A. in Finance and Accounting from the Owen School at Vanderbilt University and an undergraduate degree in Public Policy Sciences from Duke University.

CANDIDATE QUALIFICATIONS AND QUALITIES

The successful candidate for the position of Chief Development Officer should have

- the ability to act as a results-oriented and collaborative member of the CEO's senior leadership team;
- comfort with the non-profit world;
- the ability to thrive in a mission-oriented environment and be motivated by the Zoo's mission and brand to help lead the organization achieve its higher goals;
- experience cultivating multi-million-dollar gifts, including supporting donor strategies, solicitation approaches, and donor stewardship;
- demonstrated case histories of closing gifts;
- capital campaign experience;
- a range of experience including major gifts, corporate and foundation giving, planned giving, and a track record of results across all these areas;
- strong planning and analytical skills, and proven experience in developing and effectively implementing an organization-wide development plan;
- success working closely with and building executive team, board, and staff relationships including examples of working with diverse groups;
- strong communication skills, both verbal and written, effective across a variety of constituencies including donors, corporate partners, and community partners;
- a track record of taking organizations to the next level through strong development initiatives;
- experience in the development and implementation of budgets, budget management, and grant development;
- respect for confidentiality;
- key personal qualities that include compassion, strength without being bossy, readiness to listen, relentlessness, and adaptability;
- the ability to systematically plan a strategy calling upon the thinking and ideas of others and the ability to communicate a strategy well, overseeing its execution, and celebrating its results;
- the ability to work most effectively in a collaborative work environment with a strong hand on priorities; and
- an innovative, creative disposition with the confidence to propose something new and inspire others to do the same.

A bachelor's degree is required for this position as is a minimum of seven to ten years of professional experience in development and fundraising for not-for-profit organizations. A minimum of five years of management experience is required. An advanced degree or professional fundraising certification is preferred.

SALARY AND BENEFITS

The Denver Zoological Foundation offers a competitive salary and benefits package.

LOCATION

Denver Zoo's 80-acre facility is located in City Park of Denver, Colorado.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Denver Zoo recognizes and embraces human diversity. It accepts the moral and practical imperatives of its multi-racial and multi-ethnic society, on personal and professional lives. It values and seeks the strengths of human variety in race, ethnicity, age, culture, gender, personal beliefs, physical abilities, religion, and sexual orientation. In principle and in practice, Denver Zoo will strive to serve as a model to the community and commit time and resources to increasing the diversity of its workforce, audience, and vendors.

Denver Zoo commits to developing a comprehensive diversity and inclusion initiative in its hiring practices, the services and experiences it provides its visitors and the way that it does business in the community.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

All applications must be accompanied by a cover letter and résumé. Before submitting your materials, please read them over for accuracy. Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the successful candidate has been selected.

To nominate a candidate, please contact Don Hasseltine:
donhasseltine@aspenleadershipgroup.com.

All inquiries will be held in confidence.

