



President and Chief Executive Officer  
Utah's Hogle Zoo  
Salt Lake City, Utah

## THE SEARCH

Utah's Hogle Zoo (Hogle Zoo, the Zoo), one of the state's most iconic cultural institutions and a leader in animal wellbeing, seeks a new Chief Executive Officer to guide the Zoo into its next era. The Zoo reached a historic milestone in 2025 when it received a rare perfect score during its reaccreditation by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), becoming only the 10th institution to attain this achievement. With this achievement as a foundation, the next CEO will build on this momentum and commitment to exceptional care.

This is a moment of possibility for the organization. Operating in a crowded ecosystem that values family-friendly attractions, Hogle Zoo can solidify its place as the cultural organization for the state. The Zoo benefits from a talented, mission-driven team and a community that cares about the organization's successful future. With important work already underway, guided by a strategic plan with broad buy-in, and an ambitious vision guiding the years ahead, the next CEO will have the opportunity to expand the Zoo's impact, strengthen key partnerships, and elevate its role as a leader in conservation, education, and guest experience.

The CEO will steward relationships with state and county partners, maintain the Zoo's excellent reputation for animal wellbeing, and ensure that Hogle Zoo continues to deliver meaningful, accessible, and inspiring experiences for more than 900,000 annual guests. The CEO reports to a highly engaged 21-member Board of Directors and leads a four-member executive team, which oversees a staff of 145 full-time employees and more than 80 seasonal employees.

The new CEO must be an experienced and strategic leader with a deep commitment to the Zoo's mission to create champions for wildlife and foster a world where people and wildlife thrive together. The successful CEO will build trust through transparency, amplify the Zoo's existing strengths, and introduce fresh thinking and an innovative spirit, positioning the Zoo for continued success.

A seven-member Board search committee has been established to conduct this search. The search committee is assisted by Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm. Inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence to the search firm.

## BACKGROUND

Utah's Hogle Zoo began in 1911, when Salt Lake City created a small animal exhibit in Liberty Park. The Zoo was officially established in 1912 with a small but diverse group of birds and mammals. Expanding quickly, the Zoo opened the "Happy Family Building" in 1913. In 1916, thanks to community donations, the Zoo welcomed its first elephant, Princess Alice, who soon became a beloved symbol. The growing number of animal residents outgrew Liberty Park, and it could no longer accommodate the Zoo's needs. In 1931, the Hogle family donated land at the mouth of Emigration Canyon, providing the Zoo with its permanent 42-acre home. The Utah Zoological Society was formed in 1951 to raise funds and support the Zoo's growth. In 1971, the Zoo became a founding member of the AZA and has maintained continuous accreditation since 1979. Nearly a century later, the Hogle family remains a dedicated force, ensuring the Zoo's continued success.

## HOGLE ZOO TODAY

Today, the Hogle Zoo is home to more than 400 animals and is one of the most-visited attractions in Salt Lake City and the state of Utah. The Zoo has more than 13,000 member households and welcomes more than 900,000 guests annually. More than 78% of the approximately \$23 million operating budget comes from earned and contributed revenue. The remainder of the Zoo's operating budget is supported by an annual appropriation from the State of Utah and support from Salt Lake County's Zoo, Arts, & Parks (ZAP) fund, a County sales tax.

### Strategic and Master Plans

Hogle Zoo is guided by a set of principles, "we value" statements, that focus on the Zoo's culture, community, conservation efforts, and business that shape the Zoo's strategic plan. Created in 2023 and running through 2028, the strategic plan encompasses five strategic priorities: be the wildlife conservation leader in Utah; be a destination with purpose; be financially sustainable for long-term growth; be a zoo for all; and be a provider of excellent animal care and wellbeing.

The Zoo's master plan includes several transformative capital projects, including a giraffe herd room with indoor viewing and feeding, a South America complex, orangutan and gibbon exhibits, an education and conservation center, and expansions and improvements to the hoofstock barn and gorilla and primate habitats.

### Guest Experience and Education

[The Aline W. Skaggs Wild Utah exhibit](#), recognized during the Zoo's 2025 perfect accreditation, immerses guests in the landscapes, wildlife, and conservation opportunities unique to Utah. Spanning three acres,

Wild Utah invites visitors to take part in hands-on conservation activities in the Maker Space and to explore the Norma W. Matheson Education Animal Center, which features an interactive kitchen where guests can learn about and participate in animal diet preparation. In 2025, nearly 14,000 guests participated in conservation projects at the Wild Utah Makers Space, including making native seed dumplings, processing milkweed for monarch conservation, and building bee hotels for solitary bees.

Each summer, guests can enjoy the seasonal Canine Champions for Conservation dog show in the Zoo's amphitheater. The educational program demonstrates how trained dogs protect wildlife through natural behaviors such as scent detection, tracking, and identification. The Zoo's [iSee program](#) (Informal Science Education Enhancement) reached more than 11,500 students in 2025 across Utah, bringing ambassador animals to classrooms and helping young learners understand their local environments. These efforts complement the Zoo's Zoo For All commitment, which expands access through free field trips, community-based partnerships, and discounted opportunities for families, ensuring that Utahns of all backgrounds can connect with wildlife and conservation. Guests who receive SNAP benefits can enjoy discounted admission, and in 2025, the Zoo welcomed more than 38,000 guests through the program.

Hogle Zoo also partners with local high schools and FFA programs to help students gain technical and environmental skills while inspiring environmental stewardship. In 2025, students participating in Hogle Zoo's Career and Technical Education Program supported critical projects to improve safety, sustainability, and guest engagement, including designing and creating structures for BooLights and planting more than 300 pollinator plants.

## Conservation

"Creating champions for wildlife" guides every part of Hogle Zoo's conservation work. The Zoo invests in projects locally and globally, focusing its efforts through its [Big 6 conservation priorities](#): Jordan River, African Lion, African Elephant, Western Toad, Polar Bear, and Bornean Orangutan.

Across Utah, one of the Zoo's most significant initiatives is the [Western Toad conservation program](#), a multi-agency partnership that responds to steep population declines driven by disease, habitat loss, and climate impacts. Through its new Utah Amphibian Conservation Center in the Wild Utah exhibit, the Zoo raises eggs collected from vulnerable mountain populations and aims to breed and release 5,000 western toads in the next five years. Last year, volunteers and staff conducted 117 surveys across 93 sites. In 2025, animal care staff successfully bred Western Toads, and 14 juvenile toads were released into the wild.

The Zoo's local leadership extends to its long-term involvement in [Jordan River conservation](#), collaborating with partners to restore habitat, engage volunteers, and strengthen community connection to one of the state's most important waterways. Beyond Utah, Hogle Zoo supports global fieldwork through partners working to protect elephants and lions in Africa, orangutans in Borneo, and polar bears through climate-focused advocacy.

## Governance, Organizational Structure, and Finance

Utah's Hogle Zoo is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation governed by a highly engaged 21-member Board of Directors. There is a five-member executive staff that includes the CEO, Senior Vice President & Chief Mission Officer, Vice President of Finance & CFO, Vice President of People and Culture, and Vice President of Advancement. The Zoo employs 145 full-time staff and 80 seasonal employees. Between the Zoo and their food, retail, and catering concessionaire, Service Systems Associates (SSA), the Zoo employs more than 300 during peak season.

In 2024, the Zoo's operating revenue was approximately \$21 million, comprised of \$7.9 million in admission fees; \$2.4 million in membership fees; \$2.9 million in visitor services and programs; \$6.3 million in operating support, which includes contributions from Salt Lake County's Zoo, Arts, and Parks sales tax program; and \$2 million in other income.

## THE ROLE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the CEO serves as the strategic, operational, and external leader of Utah's Hogle Zoo. The CEO is responsible for the Zoo's overall performance, long-term vitality, and mission fulfillment, ensuring the organization remains a trusted community asset and forward-looking in its conservation mission. The CEO will steward the Zoo's financial health; oversee its people, programs, and facilities; advance the compelling strategic vision; and nurture a culture that empowers staff, delights guests, and inspires support.

Utah's Hogle Zoo is a collaborative organization with a century of history, a deeply committed staff, and a positive reputation in the region. It enjoys long-standing support from public partners and a loyal member base. Its animal well-being programs are increasingly recognized, and its culture of cross-departmental cooperation is a point of pride. At the same time, the CEO steps in at an important moment of evolution. Like many zoos nationwide, Hogle Zoo is navigating changes in guest expectations, shifts in philanthropic behavior, workforce pressures, and a competitive regional market for leisure and philanthropy.

With these dynamics come opportunities to ignite innovation in programming, community engagement, and guest experience, to become a destination with purpose that expands conservation impact and messaging, and to deepen partnerships at the local and state levels. The next CEO will be expected to build on the Zoo's considerable strengths while guiding it into its next chapter with purpose and ambition.

- **Champion the Zoo's strategic plan.** The current strategic plan was developed collaboratively and enjoys broad support. Staff is excited about the Zoo's direction and eager for continuity alongside fresh energy and ambition.
- **Strengthen the Zoo's identity as Utah's conservation leader,** integrating conservation storytelling and articulating the Zoo's commitment to animal care and conservation in ways that make the

Zoo synonymous with wildlife conservation, resonating with staff, guests, partners, and the broader Utah community.

- **Serve as the Zoo's chief ambassador**, representing Hogle Zoo across Utah's diverse communities, civic institutions, philanthropic networks, and legislative and county partners.
- **Encourage innovation and thoughtful risk-taking**, applying lessons from across the zoo sector and beyond to keep the Zoo relevant and inspiring. Facilitate a culture of bold thinking to ensure the Zoo is a leader in the field.
- **Deepen philanthropy and community engagement**. Build and revitalize donor relationships while leveraging partnerships with the thriving business community surrounding the Zoo, elevating its visibility and ensuring it is recognized and supported as a charity of choice.
- **Ensure operational excellence and financial resilience**. Maintain the Zoo's strong fiscal stewardship while identifying new opportunities to improve business systems, diversify revenue streams, and support sustainable long-term planning.
- **Lead with transparency, communication, and empowerment**. Strengthen decision-making processes and internal information flow, and continue to foster a culture where staff and volunteers are heard, valued, and trusted. Cultivate a workplace that is culturally and socially meaningful and recognized as an organization of choice.
- **Partner effectively with the Board of Directors**. Work collaboratively to ensure clarity of roles, strengthen governance practices, and engage Board members meaningfully in the Zoo's mission and strategic direction.

## QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While no one candidate will meet all the desired criteria, the successful candidate will bring most of the following qualifications and attributes:

- Successful track record of providing visionary leadership and effective management of a complex and sizable public or private organization, preferably one with conservation, educational, or research interests.
- Experience with non-profit governance is required. Experience reporting to a board preferred.
- Informed and demonstrated passion for nature and wildlife and a sense of urgency about their protection.
- Track record of developing and executing large-scale capital projects with animal care and guest experience as driving factors.
- Public presence. Exceptional communication skills and experience as a persuasive, compelling spokesperson for the Zoo and conservation issues broadly.
- Record of achievement or demonstrated capabilities in government relations.

- A flair and genuine appetite for fundraising. Experience and success in raising funds from public and private sources.
- Facility in change management, with the ability to empower, delegate, and build consensus.
- Entrepreneurial spirit and drive. An eye for strategic opportunities and innovative partnerships.
- Demonstrated success in attracting and retaining highly qualified staff.
- A strong commitment to fostering belonging and to sustaining a culture defined by trust, transparency, and open communication.
- Excitement about Hogle Zoo's role as a vital presence in Salt Lake City's cultural and civic life. A history of engagement and community partnership-building.

## APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Review of candidates will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. Inquiries, nominations, and applications, including a resume and letter of interest, should be sent via the [Isaacson, Miller website](#).

**Natalie Leonhard**, Partner  
**Annah Wells**, Senior Associate  
**Kendra Moleé**, Senior Search Coordinator  
Isaacson, Miller

*Utah's Hogle Zoo is committed to including everyone in the zoo experience regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, ideologies, or political affiliation. Utah's Hogle Zoo is an equal opportunity employer and complies with all Federal, State, and local laws in practice, and in the spirit of those requirements.*

*We celebrate diversity and are committed to creating an inclusive environment for all employees, volunteers, and guests of the Zoo.*

*Isaacson, Miller and Utah's Hogle Zoo are committed to creating an inclusive environment and welcome applications from candidates with disabilities. If you have any accommodation or access needs, we are happy to provide reasonable accommodations.*

*This document has been prepared based on the information provided by Utah's Hogle Zoo. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by Utah's Hogle Zoo would supersede any conflicting information in this document.*