A zookeeper in a khaki uniform is smiling and interacting with children in front of a large world map. The zookeeper is leaning forward, and the children are looking at her. The background is a large world map.

Senior Vice President Guest Experience, Brand, and Revenue Operations

Position Specification

The Opportunity

Consistently ranked in the top five zoos globally, previously named World's Best Zoo by Travelocity, and currently rated the #1 zoo in the country by the readers of USA TODAY, [Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium](#) seeks a Senior Vice President of Guest Experience, Brand, and Revenue Operations (SVP) to help optimize earned revenue potential, enhance brand awareness, and elevate the guest experience. Omaha's Zoo is a popular attraction in Nebraska, receiving over 1.7 million visitors annually. In addition to being voted Best Zoo, it was awarded the Best Zoo Exhibit and Best Wildlife Park in North America by the USA TODAY 10 Best Readers' Choice, taking the top spot in all three categories for two consecutive years. Omaha's Zoo, known for its commitment to education, conservation, and entertainment, continually seeks ways to enhance revenue while fulfilling its mission.

Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium is dedicated to upholding its strong leadership tradition by working closely with a passionate and devoted community. Their top priorities are maintaining and enhancing animal exhibits that reflect the best in design, education, conservation practices, and animal welfare. Zoo leaders at all levels aim to support a committed staff who embody a mission-driven and financially sustainable organizational culture that advances growth opportunities and conservation efforts. Additionally, the Zoo desires to maintain a positive brand identity and increase community awareness of its conservation initiatives. To achieve this, the Zoo seeks to build partnerships with diverse organizations to broaden its impact and advocacy. The ideal candidate for the position is dynamic, creative, and entrepreneurial, able to effectively represent the Zoo's mission of saving animals and their habitats to all stakeholders.





In 2022, the Zoo welcomed [Dr. Luis Padilla](#) as its President and Chief Executive Officer. Luis will work closely with the new Senior Vice President to sustain the Zoo's reputation as a conservation, sustainability, and global impact leader. As a leadership team member, the SVP will create customized and ambitious revenue management plans that align with the Zoo's distinctive characteristics. Almost 90% of the organization's budget comes from earned revenue, which includes admissions, membership, gift store sales, food and beverage, rides and transportation, and events. Implementing revenue management strategies that cater to the Zoo's unique offerings, visitor demographics, and capacity limitations, this executive's efforts will provide guests with an exceptional and personalized experience and support organizational growth. This innovator will conduct a comprehensive review of existing strategies with a focus on key performance indicators. One primary goal will be to enhance the current programs and identify new revenue streams that are consistent with the Zoo's mission and brand.

The SVP will also focus on balancing maximized revenue, enhanced guest experiences, and long-term sustainability to gain a competitive edge and consistently deliver exceptional experiences. This leader will set the strategic vision and lead the demand, revenue, and forecasting processes in partnership with the Vice President of Guest Services and Chief Financial Officer. The SVP will understand visitor preferences and adapt to their unique characteristics to achieve revenue goals. Using various strategies to cater to diverse visitor segments, the SVP will implement continuous evaluation, analysis, and innovation, as revenue and brand management are ongoing processes affected by constantly changing market conditions in Omaha and nationally.

A leader in conservation, animal care,
and exhibit design with a global
mission to protect, care for, and share
the wild.

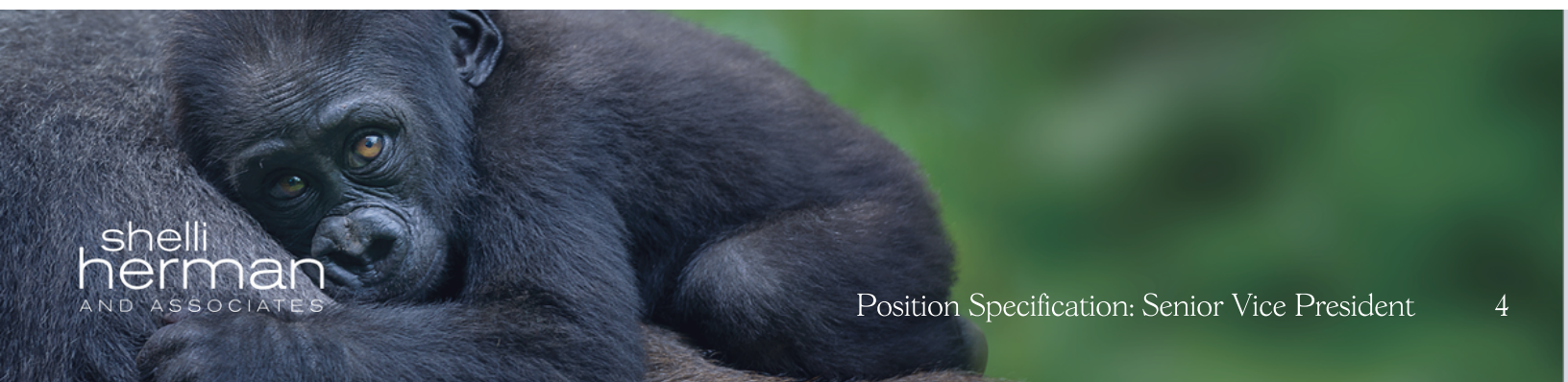
The Organization

Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium's mission is to inspire, educate, and engage people to serve as lifelong stewards for animals, their habitats, and their conservation.

The Zoo's 160-acre location is home to more than 39,000 vertebrate and invertebrate specimens representing over 1,000 distinct species, with guests experiencing an immersive and educational visit that inspires them to become conservation advocates. It is complemented by the [Lee G. Simmons Conservation Park & Wildlife Safari](#), a 440-acre park located 22 miles west of the Zoo's site, with the mission of promoting live viewing, educational activities, and conservation programs of native animals to enhance public appreciation for, and actions on behalf of, wildlife and wild places.

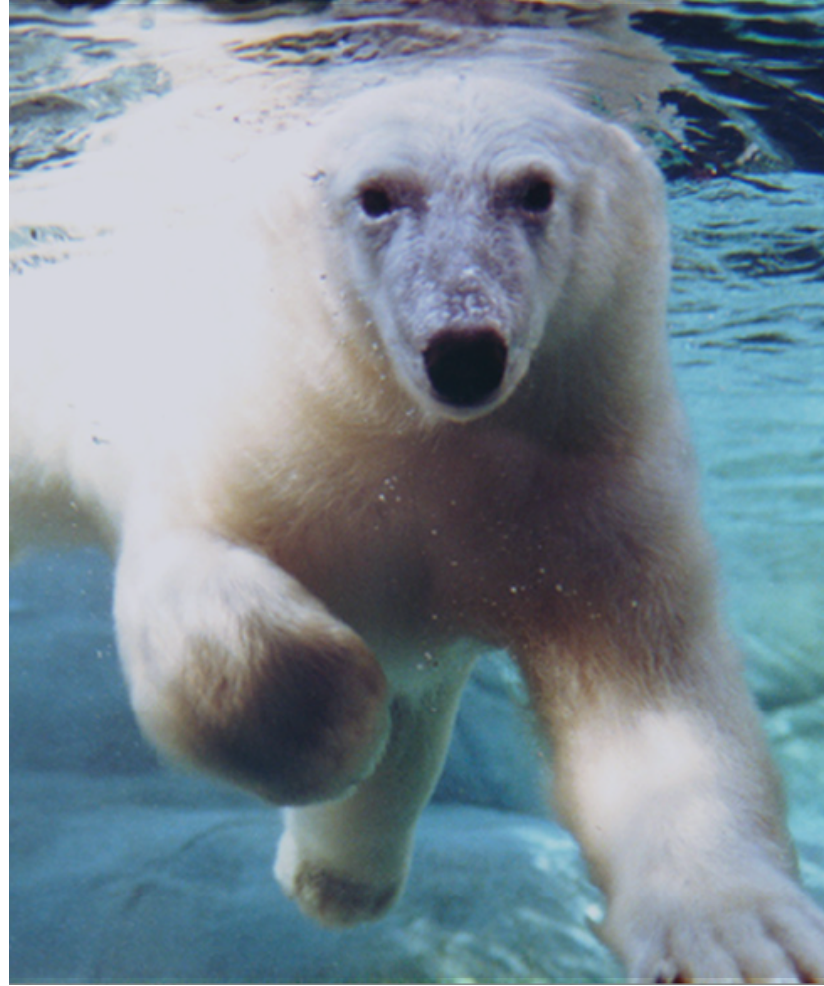
The Zoo has benefitted from completing a 10-year [master plan](#) that improved guest services and state-of-the-art exhibits, including the [Scott African Grasslands](#), [Asian Highlands](#), [Bay Family Children's Adventure Trails](#) and Daugherty Education Center, and [Owen Sea Lion Shores](#). This state-of-the-art sea lion habitat features a 275-thousand-gallon pool, a 40-foot-long underwater viewing window, natural boundaries, an underwater kelp forest, and sandy beach areas. In 2021, Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium and Autism Action Partnership launched a free, all-inclusive mobile app experience, [Omaha Zoo 4 All](#), to help prepare, engage, and inspire visitors with autism or sensory needs. That year also saw a new permanent home created for the Zoo's interactive stingray experience, supplementing the largest aquarium in a zoo in the US, the [Suzanne and Walter Scott Aquarium](#), the planting of the 4-millionth tree assisted by the Zoo in Madagascar; and the opening of the Darrald Harsh Wildlife Education Center at the Wildlife Safari Park. In July 2021, the Lee G. Simmons Aviary reopened with an elevated and on-ground boardwalk, a special section dedicated to flamingo viewing, and an indoor, nearly 1,000-square-foot flamingo shelter. The completion of this project capped off the master plan that transformed Omaha's Zoo into a predominately immersive experience. This educational style is reflected in the redesigned [Hubbard Gorilla Valley](#). Zoo leadership is about to embark on the next phase of strategic planning, for which the SVP will play a central role. Meanwhile, work continues; last year, the [Lied Jungle](#), America's largest indoor rainforest, reopened following repairs and renovations. A reimagined [Hubbard Orangutan Forest](#) is scheduled to welcome guests in 2024, and construction started for the Bill and Berniece Grewcock Veterinary Hospital, a leading Zoo-veterinary hospital that will advance animal care and train the next generation of zoo and wildlife veterinary leaders. These sustained efforts have ensured world-class, leading-edge facilities that provide the foundation for the Omaha Zoological Society's aspiration to advance conservation initiatives on a global scale.

Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and is a member of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums.



Conservation and Education

Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium has built a vigorous program of scientific investigation in conservation genetics, reproductive sciences, nutritional and behavioral husbandry, and conservation medicine. The Zoo's [conservation efforts](#) are intended to have a global impact through their many in-situ and ex-situ projects and collaborations. All programs emphasize capacity building, student and professional training, technology transfer, and research in the conservation of endangered species. The Zoo's focus throughout the numerous conservation projects that the organization is involved in is to connect their collection to counterparts and counterpart habitats in six primary regions of the world, including oceans, North and South America, Asia, Africa, and Madagascar. Zoo-based initiatives are broad-ranging and include projects focused on local species.

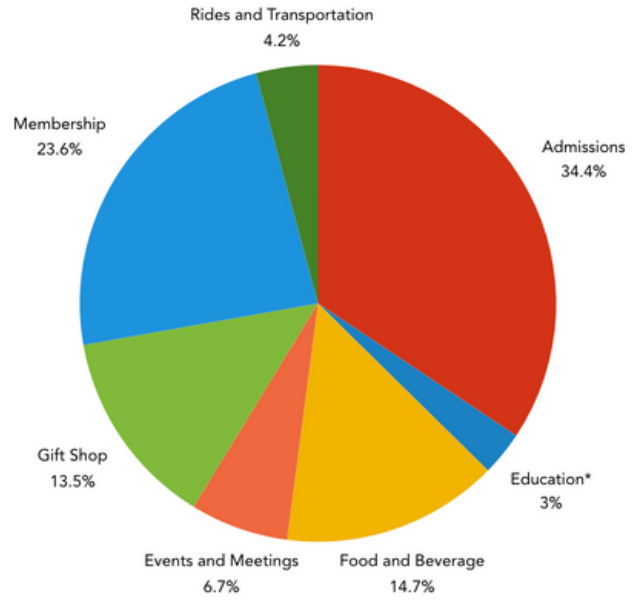


For many, a trip to the Zoo is their first and only experience with wildlife. Through contact with animals and dedicated education efforts, Omaha's Zoo inspires wonder, appreciation, and awareness of the natural world through personal and unique experiences that encourage environmental stewardship. The 15 certified teachers, informal science educators, 60 part-time staff, and more than 450 volunteers of the Education Department play a significant role in conservation education by providing valuable information to visitors on and off-site through programs that are designed to enhance science, technology, engineering, and math literacy and knowledge for all ages. Through state, local, and national partnerships, the Education Department has established [innovative, nationally recognized education programs](#) that help empower individuals to take action on various wildlife conservation issues.

Governance and Financial Health

The Omaha Zoological Society, a nonprofit, operates Omaha’s Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium for the City of Omaha. The Society is governed by an 11-member Board of Directors, four of whom are ex-officio; ex-officio members include the Zoo’s CEO, the President and CEO of the Omaha Zoo Foundation, and two City of Omaha staff members. Omaha’s Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium has a related nonprofit, the [Omaha Zoo Foundation](#), dedicated to raising funds to support the Zoo’s mission. The Foundation is a public charity and a 501(c)(3). The Foundation has four Board members, three of whom also serve on the Omaha Zoological Society Board. Depending on capital project plans, the Foundation typically raises between \$6.5 and \$50 million annually from private philanthropy. The healthy endowment currently sits at \$105 million.

Earned revenue projected for 2024:



* The Senior Vice President is responsible for all earned revenue streams except education.

The Zoo operates from a solid financial position and is poised for future growth and success. Historically, annual revenues have increased yearly, and the Zoo has successfully funded substantial organization-wide renovation and construction projects and conservation efforts globally. Revenues for 2023 were just under \$69.2 million, with expenses of \$65.1 million. Projected for 2024 are revenues of \$66.7 million and expenses of \$58.9 million. Earned revenue accounts for 90% of the Zoo’s budget, augmented by a small city subsidy and Foundation monies.

More detailed information is available in the most recent [audited financial statements](#).

Location

Situated on the bank of the Missouri River, [Omaha](#) has long attracted a diversity of residents who value the city’s culture of friendliness, strong work ethic, and Midwestern grit. Residents enjoy the vibrant arts scene, sports (Omaha is home to the College World Series), varied and exciting restaurants, and nightlife. With diverse food, music, and shopping, the city has its own personality while retaining a low cost of living. Omaha provides many job opportunities in organizations as wide-ranging as start-ups to the four Fortune 500 or six Fortune 1000 companies headquartered in the city. Recently, the riverfront and downtown areas have seen substantial investment and revitalization that created destination neighborhoods in the heart of a city still on the rise. The Omaha metropolitan area has a population of more than a million people.



Position Concept and Essential Functions

The Senior Vice President of Guest Experience, Brand, and Revenue Operations is responsible for developing and implementing strategies that boost revenue, increase brand exposure and reputation, and enhance the guest experience to achieve the Zoo's mission at Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium and the Lee G. Simmons Wildlife Safari Park. The SVP reports to the President and CEO and is a crucial member of the Zoo's executive leadership team. This executive oversees two Vice Presidents, one over guest services and one responsible for communications, marketing, and events. Each vice president directly manages four professionals; their teams are responsible for maintaining brand visibility, maximizing revenue, and providing an exceptional visitor experience.

Along with their colleagues, the SVP is responsible for the following essential functions:

- Actively engages and participates as a member of the Zoo's executive leadership team and the Omaha Zoo Foundation to collaboratively provide vision, strategic input, and perspective to advance the organizational mission, brand, and image.
- Works closely with Foundation colleagues to address common issues and opportunities. The aim is to ensure continuity and the advancement of the Zoo's philanthropic initiatives and goals by being a supportive and engaged partner.
- Provides leadership and drives initiatives that result in increased and sustained revenue through mission-aligned offerings that promote brand loyalty and excellence in guest experience.
- Oversees the on-site revenue generation team led by the Vice President of Guest Services. Revenues for 2024 are projected at more than \$20.7 million from admission and attraction-based revenue, just under \$14.3 million in memberships, approximately \$8.1 million from retail, more than \$2.5 million from rides and transportation, and just under \$8.9 million from food and beverage operations, which are managed internally.



- Supervises activities led by the Vice President of Communications, Marketing, and Events, including event-related revenue and experiences, image and branding, and communications and marketing strategies. The 2024 revenue goal for events is just over \$4 million.
- Creatively develops initiatives to make the Zoo accessible, affordable, inclusive, and welcoming for people from all socioeconomic sectors. Actively supports organizational initiatives to have a more inclusive and diverse workforce.
- Uses data, analytics, guest feedback, and other tools to remain relevant and competitive; develops and refines strategies, programs, and product offerings that sustain and increase revenue; and presents a positive guest experience and brand image that appeals to current and future audiences. This includes enabling effective planning and decision-making by leveraging historical data and advanced forecasting techniques to predict visitor demand across the enterprise.
- Leads the team to coordinate advertising, public relations, marketing events, activations, and strategic initiatives to enhance visibility and positive perception of the Zoo's brand. This also involves ensuring alignment between the brand and all outsourced vendors and developing community relationships to advance the Zoo's image and reputation.
- Optimizes revenue and visitor satisfaction by strategically allocating resources. Hones financial decision-making by understanding cost-revenue relationships at each operational level for better revenue management. Collaborates with the Chief Financial Officer on the Zoo's financial forecasts and budget planning.
- Continuously reviews, refines, and pursues partnerships, programs, and contractual agreements that benefit the Zoo, considering revenue, brand alignment, and a positive guest experience in all approaches.
- Strategically plans for necessary facility, equipment, and system investments to position the Zoo for sustained revenue generation, including incorporating modern technology, experiences, and relevant offerings. Explores the e-commerce mechanism to add incremental sales and continue to promote the mission and message following a visit.
- Actively furthers Zoo-wide workforce culture initiatives supporting employee satisfaction, retention, and engagement. Promotes trust, relationship building, and interdepartmental cooperation.
- Ensures compliance with federal, state, and local regulations and organizational policies.

Professional Qualifications and Personal Traits

The Senior Vice President of Guest Experience, Brand, and Revenue Operations is a crucial position in the Zoo's senior leadership. The ideal candidate should have a proven track record of accomplishment and experience leading a capable, collaborative, and motivated group of colleagues with the highest standards of professional conduct and integrity.

We seek a dynamic and innovative leader with a refined knowledge of revenue-generating operations and strategies that enhance brand loyalty and elevate the guest experience gained from at least ten years in a managerial role.

The ideal candidate may come from various sectors, including zoos, aquariums, theme parks, sports teams, consumer-facing businesses, conservation or environmental organizations, hospitality, or the entertainment industry.

- To excel in this position, it is essential to have a deep appreciation for and understanding of the intricacies of profitable commercial recreation facility operations that prioritize generating revenue, elevating brand loyalty, and delivering excellent guest experiences. This entails comprehensive knowledge of guest-facing operations such as attractions, food and beverage services, retail, ticketing, membership programs, sales, private events, catering, entertainment, and marketing.
- The ideal candidate for the SVP role at the Zoo will have a track record of generating income and a well-informed understanding of market dynamics, especially in the Midwest. They should also possess the creativity, vision, and business skills to develop new revenue streams while improving existing guest service programs.
- The SVP's main objective is to offer outstanding experiences to visitors and enhance brand loyalty. To achieve this, they will keep current with industry trends and implement efficient revenue management techniques. This involves maintaining current knowledge of business analytics, metrics, and tools used to evaluate and predict performance and gathering and analyzing guest feedback. Additionally, the SVP will understand the nuances of optimized staffing and people management strategies that inherently elevate the guest experience.
- The successful candidate will also be collaborative, visible, and compassionate, with excellent and proven people development skills. They should be able to build relationships and lead through influence, creating connections that encourage open and honest communication with all team members.

- The organization is committed to accessibility, which includes reaching out to diverse audiences and supporting community-based inclusion initiatives. The SVP will understand the significance of the "big picture" vision of how Zoo operations and opportunities enrich the community's resources for education and entertainment and how they play a crucial role in efforts towards wildlife preservation.
- The SVP will have a genuine customer-centered attitude and be able to implement the Zoo's philosophy to create exceptional experiences for visitors and promote positive public relations within the larger community. They should also lead by example for the staff to follow this pursuit and utilize a hands-on leadership approach.
- Having excellent organizational, administrative, and project management skills is essential. This includes the ability to create and implement clear goals and priorities. It is equally crucial to analyze situations effectively, adapt quickly, and take initiative with a creative mindset while maintaining a sense of urgency and direction. The SVP will achieve operational efficiency through resource optimization and successful budget management.
- The ideal candidate has a proven track record of excellent communication skills in writing and speaking. They possess a strong sense of political astuteness and awareness while maintaining a neutral stance. Furthermore, they can unite and collaborate with diverse groups, such as government agencies, donors, and other stakeholders, to further the Zoo's mission and objectives.

Education

The successful candidate will hold a bachelor's degree in business management, marketing, or a related field with an advanced degree preferred or a combination of professional experiences that optimize success in the role.



Remote Work

This executive leadership position is expected to be primarily an on-site leader and resource, but task-specific remote work is allowed and expected within the responsibilities of this position.



Compensation

Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium offers an annual salary of \$215,000 to \$275,000, augmented by a comprehensive benefits package. The salary offer will depend on several factors, including educational qualifications, training, years of experience, and performance in previous roles.

Process

Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium believes in providing equal opportunities to all job applicants and is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer as defined by the EEOC. It does not discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetics, or any other characteristic protected by law. Moreover, the Zoo considers diversity essential to successfully fulfilling its mission. Therefore, we encourage people from various backgrounds, cultures, races, educational qualifications, life experiences, socio-economic classes, sexual orientations, ages, genders, gender expressions, and physical abilities to apply for employment at the Zoo.

Omaha's Zoo has enlisted the services of Shelli Herman and Associates, Inc., a fully retained executive search firm, to aid in their search for suitable candidates. If you have any questions or nominations or wish to apply, kindly contact the search firm. All communication will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

We will begin reviewing applications immediately. If you are interested in the opportunity, please submit your complete credentials as soon as possible for full consideration. To apply, email your cover letter and resume, including all work experience. Please explain your commitment to the zoo's mission and how your experience aligns with the job description in your cover letter.

Before submitting your resume, please review it for accuracy. Shelli Herman and Associates, Inc. verifies academic credentials, and background checks may be conducted by our clients prior to finalizing an offer of employment.

Contact

Shelli Herman, President
Shelli Herman and Associates, Inc.
11693 San Vicente Blvd., Suite #104
Los Angeles, California 90049
E-mail: OmahaZoo-SVP@shellihermansearch.com

