



Vice President of People & Culture

SEARCH PROFILE

Dallas, Texas

Peña
SEARCH

MAY 2024

The Zoo

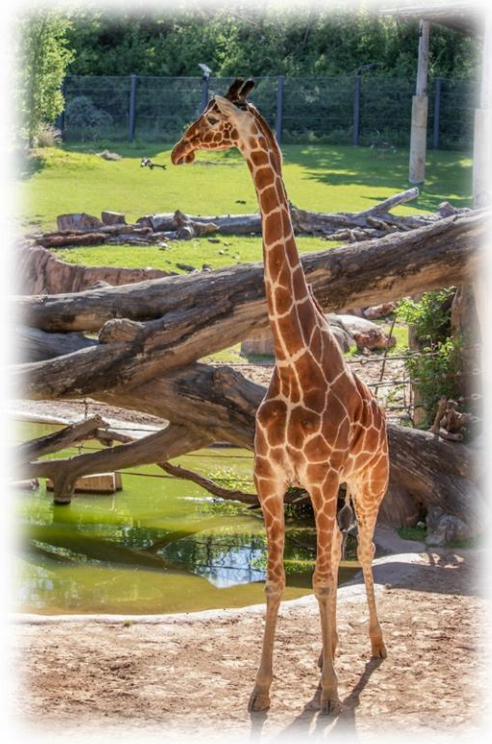
Founded in 1888 as the first zoo in the Southwest, the Dallas Zoo (Zoo) is the oldest and largest zoo in Texas. Located three miles south of downtown Dallas, the 106-acre Zoo is home to more than 2,000 animals representing more than 400 distinct species and provides its guests with real-world opportunities to make memorable connections with wildlife and supplement their experience with education. Frequently listed among the top 10 zoos in the country and a beloved community organization, the Zoo now regularly welcomes more than one million guests annually including more than 100,000 students via field trips. An accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the Dallas Zoo is dedicated to being a local and global conservation leader while continuing to provide unparalleled animal care and educational experiences.

The Dallas Zoo's Mission & Vision

The Dallas Zoo's Mission is *Engaging People and Saving Wildlife*. This serves as its North Star – the guiding force and the source of its continual motivation to achieve its vision of *Creating a Better World for Animals*.

Over the past 17 years, the Dallas Zoo community worked together to implement a well-executed, bold strategic direction that resulted in the Zoo's successful privatization in 2009; since that time, the Zoo has thrived as a public-private partnership. In 2010, the award-winning, 11-acre Giants of the Savanna habitat opened, which ultimately increased conservation awareness and educational programming. Accordingly, the Zoo's attendance doubled and the organization's economic impact for Dallas tripled. Attendance continued to grow, and the organization achieved a million visitors for the first time in 2015. Another capital bond program in 2017 allocated a further \$3.5 million in funds, the same year that the Simmons Hippo Outpost opened, made possible by \$17 million raised through private philanthropy. These efforts uplifted and readied the Zoo for 2024, which marked the start of the largest capital campaign in its 136-year history.

The Zoo maintains sound financial health and stability and is well capitalized with multi-million-dollar reserves, allowing the organization to maximize the enormous opportunities that lie ahead. The City of Dallas and the broader region continue to experience economic prosperity. The Zoo's 106 acres





are located at the border of the Oak Cliff area, which is experiencing particularly rapid growth and redevelopment. The Southern Gateway Park, one of the largest projects underway in the area, spans Interstate 35 at the entrance of the Dallas Zoo and will soon provide a direct linkage between the Oak Cliff neighborhood on one side of the interstate, and the Dallas Zoo and its DART rail station on the other side of the interstate, further stimulating development around the Zoo.

The Opportunity

Role

Under the leadership of a new Chief Executive Officer, Lisa New, and in a moment of great potential, the Dallas Zoo seeks a Vice President of People and Culture with extensive expertise in strategic leadership and culture development. As a direct extension of the Chief Executive Officer, this individual will be pivotal in managing talent and organizational development, enhancing employee engagement, and establishing an equitable compensation strategy.



This high-visibility role will be crucial for steering the Zoo toward a more inclusive, engaged, and strategically focused future, maintaining a keen awareness of employee needs, morale, and organizational shifts that align with and support the strategic vision and overarching goals of the Zoo. As an active executive leadership team member, the Vice President of People and Culture will contribute not just as a human resources expert but as a senior advisor who provides valuable insight into the operational direction and long-term strategy across the enterprise.

The ideal candidate will have a proven track record of handling complex situations and multiple responsibilities simultaneously, balancing long-term planning and projects with the urgency of immediate demands. The Vice President should demonstrate the ability to be proactive and mitigate risk for the organization while supporting the CEO in creating a cohesive, engaged, and vibrant organizational culture that supports the Zoo's mission for current and future staff.

Responsibilities

Reporting to the Chief Executive Officer and as a member of the leadership team, the Vice President of Human Resources will be responsible for:

Human Resources Strategy Development:

- Recommending and maintaining organizational structure and staffing levels to accomplish the Zoo's mission and goals.
- Overseeing compensation strategy and benefits improvement to facilitate retention of employees.

Human Resources Policies, Procedures, and Systems:

- Maintaining up-to-date knowledge of employment law.
- Managing reporting to appropriate employment agencies.
- Recommending policy and procedure revisions and modifications to ensure compliance with federal, state, and local requirements as well as adapt to changing environmental dynamics.
- Ensuring positive, productive relationships with any potential vendors that oversee outsourced functions of the people and culture team.

Recruitment and Talent Development:

- Creating, maintaining, and implementing consistent talent acquisition, development, and retention strategies that account for the unique strengths and challenges of a zoo.
- Working with managers to recruit and hire staff.
- Collaborating across departments to develop and execute comprehensive onboarding and offboarding programs to enhance the employee experience.
- Where appropriate, establishing pathways for career growth by facilitating opportunities for professional development and the acquisition of new skill sets.
- Determining the need for and managing temporary employees.

Compensation and Benefits:

- Developing and delivering competitive compensation and benefits programs, ensuring that structures are consistent and transparent across the organization.
- Evaluating and recommending benefit products and services.
- Overseeing benefit programs and coordinating the open enrollment process.
- Serving as liaison to the board retirement plan committee.

Employee Relations:

- Providing consultation, facilitation, and consistent resolution strategies for workplace issues.
- Providing education and training to ensure Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices and policies are consistently enforced throughout the zoo.

Performance Management:

- Leading performance management process.
- Developing and implementing effective employee learning, evaluation, and goal-setting processes and tools.
- Effectively communicating performance expectations and outcomes.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access:

- Chairing the Employee Advocacy and DEIA working group.
- Creating channels for employee voice and providing thought leadership to ensure informed decision-making.

Community Engagement:

- Participating in high-visibility community engagement and public speaking opportunities that advance the Zoo, its mission, and its vision.

Budget Management:

- Overseeing the human resources department budget.

The Ideal Candidate

Leadership

A fair and personable leader who takes an open and collaborative approach with all levels of employees, but who also has the discipline and tough-mindedness to ensure that organizational goals are consistently met.

A strong, energetic individual who has the confidence to use independent judgment and to make and follow through on difficult decisions.

An unpretentious and service-oriented executive who demonstrates respect and sensitivity in interactions with others.

An accessible, visible, and engaged person who is an active and positive presence in the daily life of the Zoo.

Experience

Bachelor's degree in human resources, organizational development, business administration, or a related field. Advanced degrees or certifications (e.g., SPHR) preferred.

Minimum of ten (10) years of broad, senior-level human resources experience, including design, development, and implementation of effective recruitment strategies and plans, compensation and benefits programs, and performance management systems and processes.

At least three (3) years of executive experience advising C-suite and employee leaders.

Experience in a zoo, museum, cultural attraction, or nonprofit institution with a significant hospitality and/or membership component is preferred.

Skills & Knowledge

Ability to work at all levels of human resources – strategic, operational, and tactical.

Demonstrated ability to work collaboratively with all staff and influence outcomes across departments.

Excellent organizational skills and ability to respond to multiple, competing demands and to motivate teams to produce high-quality work within tight timeframes and simultaneously manage several projects.

Extensive knowledge of local, state, and federal employment laws and regulations.

Exceptional supervisory skills with strong coaching and conflict resolution abilities.

Strong skills in human resources software and all Microsoft Office software.

Personal Characteristics

Passion for the mission of the Dallas Zoo.

Ability to exercise the utmost confidentiality and discretion.

Emotional intelligence – level-headed, flexible, and dependable.

Able to recognize different personality styles to communicate effectively with all.

Executive presence, polish, and self-confidence without self-importance.

Other Considerations

<u>Compensation</u>	Competitive with comparable organizations, and commensurate with capability, experience, and prevailing market trends
<u>Benefits</u>	Strong, comprehensive benefits package
<u>Location</u>	Dallas, Texas – Full time onsite
<u>Travel</u>	Limited
<u>Website</u>	https://www.dallaszoo.com/

Contact Information

Travis Hillier

Email address | travis@penasearch.com

Cindy Maloney

Email address | cindy@penasearch.com

Carlos Peña

Email address | carlos@penasearch.com

Peña Search

www.penasearch.com | 214.775.0903

Empowering causes through the power of people.

