

Diversity, Equity, Access and Inclusion at Potter Park Zoo

Valuing diversity at Potter Park Zoo (PPZ) by creating an inclusive, equitable and accessible environment for employees, volunteers, and community.

Key Definitions:

Diversity – Range of human differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, and political beliefs.

Equity – Fair and just treatment of all members of a community. Equity requires commitment to strategic priorities, resources, respect, and civility, as well as ongoing action and assessment of progress toward achieving specified goals.

Access – Giving equitable access to everyone along the continuum of human ability and experience. Accessibility encompasses the broader meanings of compliance and refers to how the organization makes space for the characteristics that each person brings.

Inclusion – The intentional, ongoing effort to ensure that diverse individuals fully participate in all aspects of organizational work, including decision-making processes. It also refers to the ways that diverse participants are valued as respected members of an organization and/or community.

Strategies	Objective	Actions
Diversity	Establish a workplace that supports employees, volunteers, and guests of all backgrounds and encourages their individuality.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide training for employees and volunteers annually 2. Build an inclusive environment 3. Recruit and retain diverse representation 4. Gather demographic data annually of Potter Park Zoo's employees, volunteers and guests 5. Receive feedback on workplace culture through Employee Satisfaction Surveys for all staff
Equity	Implement practices and guidelines that are fair and impartial to employee, volunteers, and guests.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review and implement new practices and guidelines to identify and improve the workplace culture 2. Commitment to supplier diversity 3. DEAI Committee and Strategic Plan
Access	Provide facilities and services that allow all individuals to experience the zoo.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide virtual tours 2. Accessible buildings and exhibits 3. Sensory tools and areas for guests
Inclusion	Provide ongoing opportunities for all to feel welcomed and included while at the zoo.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community outreach 2. Onsite programming and events

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Strategy: Diversity - Areas of Progress and Advancement

Action 1: Provide training for employees and volunteers annually

Progress

1. Potter Park Zoo provides training for Zoo Staff through different opportunities with partner organizations. Current partners are: KultureCity, Michigan Rehabilitation Services, Mid-Michigan Autism Association and trainings provided by individual professionals through other organizations.
 - a. Volunteers are required to take any trainings provided by KultureCity.
2. The DEAI program lead (Community Engagement & Inclusion Specialist) attends additional trainings and educates staff through what is learned. The information is shared through weekly newsletters or at monthly all staff meetings. The trainings include autism trainings by multiple organizations, sensory processing disorders trainings, and DEAI themed trainings.
3. The Zoo Director is completing the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) evaluation and yearlong process through Ingham County and the Michigan Department of Civil Rights.

Advancement

1. Continue to enhance staff capacity and skill for DEAI at Potter Park Zoo.
 - a. Integrate DEAI training and educational materials at each all staff meeting.
2. Work with the volunteer department to encourage volunteers in DEAI offered trainings.
3. Expand training to Potter Park Zoo and Potter Park Zoological Society board members.

Action 2: Build an inclusive environment

Progress

1. Pronouns are included on name tags of individuals that want to share this information.
2. Gender neutral/family restrooms are provided in the Welcome Center and Discovery Center.
3. Community Engagement & Inclusion Specialist is a certified Safe Space Advocate through Ingham County to allow a safe place for employees to go when they need guidance or a listening ear. *
4. New internship opportunity created, Community Engagement and Inclusion Intern, to help build the knowledge and experience of those working in the DEAI field and prepare them to guide other organizations in this work. *
5. Employee mental health supported by providing resources to staff through the staff newsletter and in person.
6. The different cultures of employees and volunteers are recognized through the staff newsletter and social media and highlight conservationists of different cultures during monthly heritage and historical days (i.e. Black History Month, Hispanic Heritage Month).

Advancement

1. Continually encourage feedback from staff as they voice ideas they would like to see implemented.
 - a. Feedback is given through a survey staff can submit anonymously, through their department's DEAI committee representative or in person to the Community Engagement Inclusion Specialist.
2. Bi-annual meetings held with the Community Engagement Inclusion Specialist, Zoo Director and Society Executive Director on DEAI topics, goals and potential new changes.

Action 3: Recruit and retain diverse representation

Progress

1. Removed biases in the hiring process and partner with organizations like Peckham and Disability Network Capital Area.

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- a. Peckham, Inc. is a nonprofit vocational rehabilitation organization that provides job training opportunities for person with disabilities and other barriers of employment.
 - b. Disability Network Capital Area partners with community agencies like Potter Park Zoo to help those with disabilities improve their quality of life.
2. New employees and volunteers recruited through different avenues: onsite job and volunteer fairs, email, news and social media.

Advancement

1. Provide additional information and trainings for hiring managers to mitigate implicit biases during the hiring process.
2. Increase staff retention rates by continuing to encourage learning and development opportunities for staff.

Action 4: Gather demographic data annually of employees, volunteers and guests

Progress

1. Gathered demographic data of employees in 2021. *
2. Demographic survey for guests was created and implemented in late 2022. *
3. A demographic survey was provided by an outside organization to Potter Park Zoo and Zoological Society board members.

Advancement

1. Complete demographic survey of employees annually.
2. Increase the number of guests completing the demographic survey by continuing to find unique ways to inform guests of the survey.
 - a. The survey is for those that visit the zoo provided through QR codes on signs throughout the zoo or on event materials.
3. Create a demographic survey for volunteers that can be used annually.
 - a. Work with the volunteer department to implement this survey in 2023.
4. Gather demographic data on those that attend onsite programming (i.e. Summer Camp, Big Zoo Lesson).

Action 5: Employee satisfaction survey for all staff

Progress

1. Updated employee satisfaction surveys were completed in January 2023. *

Advancement

1. Complete employee satisfaction surveys annually at a time of year when seasonal employment is the highest.
2. Use survey results to provide yearly check-ins with senior management to discuss specific DEAI topics brought up by employees.

Strategy: Equity - Areas of Progress and Advancement

Action 1: Review and implement new practices and guidelines to identify and improve the workplace culture

Progress

1. Diversity, Equity, Access and Inclusion document now included in the Employee Handbook. *
2. Breastfeeding Practices now included in the Employee Handbook the provided guidelines and resources for employees that breastfeed. *
3. Potter Park Zoo and Potter Park Zoological Society board members receive regular updates on the zoo's DEAI efforts through monthly board reports.

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4. Support employee's mental health by providing resources to staff through the staff newsletter and in person.
 - a. Example - mental health break held for staff offering various resources, fidgets, snacks, and a space to relax.
5. **New Partnership** with GRAZE, Growing Resiliency for Aquarium and Zoo Employees, to provide a Critical Incident Stress Management meeting for staff.
 - a. These debriefs for employees came after a mass shooting that happened in our community.
 - i. *Can add documents to show more*

Advancement

1. Facilitate the development and implementation of curricula, tools and opportunities that are shared among employees on their expressed needs in the areas of DEAI.
2. Continue to update and improve Employee Handbook policies and have a focused time during onboarding to educate new hires.

Action 2: Commitment to supplier diversity

Progress

1. Potter Park Zoo is required to follow all Ingham County Purchasing Policies
 - a. See document EOE Resolutions, page 2
 - b. As stated in their policies:
 - i. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that notice of the requirements of this policy shall be included in all formal Requests for Proposals or Bids issued by Ingham County for goods and services, that for statistical purposes only County vendors responding to formal requests for proposals or bids should provide statistical information regarding their workforce diversity, and the vendors shall certify their knowledge of the County's policy and disclose any conclusive findings of violations of federal, state, or local equal opportunity statutes, ordinances, rules/regulations, or policies within the past three (3) years.

Advancement

1. Create a supplier diversity plan for the Potter Park Zoological Society.

Action 3: DEAI Committee and Strategic Plan

Progress

1. The Potter Park Zoo DEAI Committee was created in 2022 and has since met bi-monthly.
 - a. From the committee, a DEAI Strategic Plan Goal was created. *
 - b. Multiple departments are represented on the committee and all staff are aware of who is on the committee and are encouraged to join the committee
 - i. It is encouraged that staff bring up any DEAI ideas or concerns to either the DEAI program lead or a committee member.

Advancement

1. DEAI Committee will continue its efforts by the following actions:
 - a. Continue to meet at least six times a year.
 - b. Recruit new members, as well as retain current members.
 - c. Work on advancement of PPZ DEAI strategies.

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Strategy: Access - Areas of Progress and Advancement

Action 1: Provide accessible resources

Progress

1. AbleEyes virtual tours were completed for four main buildings: AniMall, Discovery Center, Feline and Primate House and Reptile House.
2. Created an Accessibility Webpage on the zoo website, allowing guests to find accessible initiatives in one location.
3. Hired an outside company to improve the accessibility of our website.
 - a. Example: Updated the website to be screen reader friendly for those who are blind or visually impaired.
4. Braille booklets with the layout of the zoo are available for checkout in the Welcome Center. A large braille map is accessible at the front of the zoo for all guests to use.
5. Provide wheelchairs, electric scooters, strollers and wagons to guests for a cost.
 - a. These options are free for those that need them when attending a FALCONERS program.

Advancement

1. Provide a virtual tour through AbleEyes of the entire zoo.
2. Provide braille at exhibits with information about our animals.
3. Create audio tours for those that are visually impaired.

Action 2: Accessible buildings and exhibits

Progress

1. Step stools were installed in the public bathrooms so sinks are accessible for those of shorter heights.
2. StepNPull door openers were installed on main doors.
3. Updated several exhibit viewing areas to be more accessible for those at all heights and eliminate visual barriers (i.e. kangaroo exhibit, ant eater exhibit).
4. Savanna Grill provides tables that are wheelchair accessible and multiple ramps are available to enter the eating areas.
5. Michigan Rehabilitation Services provided ADAAG Reports for the AniMall and Discovery Center. *
 - a. The AniMall and Discovery Center guest services desks were updated to be accessible for those in wheelchairs as a result of these reports.
6. Photo boards located in the zoo were created to be accessible for those in wheelchairs and can be used by a wide range of audiences.

Advancement

1. Installation of touchless doors and sinks in main buildings.
2. Replace all zoo pathways.
3. Remove visual barriers at current exhibit viewing areas.
4. Continue to review the accessibility of exhibits and buildings as they are renovated.

Action 3: Sensory tools and areas for guests

Progress

1. Sensory bags provided for free to all zoo guests.
 - a. Bags include laminated sensory maps
2. Sensory map created and posted on the website and with sensory bags.
3. Headphones available for free with or without a sensory bag.
4. Four quiet areas designated throughout the zoo and park.

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5. Signage throughout the zoo indicates where headphones may be needed and the location of quiet areas.
6. Communication board is available near the playground in the park.
 - a. The communication board is a picture symbol board that can be used to support interaction in the playground area. The pictures on the board can be used to enable child to child or child to adult interactions when making comments, asking favors, or giving directions to each other.
7. Social story created and posted on the website to help guests have the best experience possible by allowing individuals and their families to prepare for their visit. *

Advancement

1. Continue to enhance PPZ's sensory inclusive initiatives through increased knowledge and funding.

Strategy: Inclusion - Areas of Progress and Advancement

Action 1: Community outreach

Progress

1. Zoo in Your Neighborhood provides free zoo passes and programming to over 40 community partners. *
 - a. In 2019, "Zoo in Your Neighborhood" was nationally recognized by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) by winning top honors for the Angela Peterson Excellence in Diversity Award.

Advancement

1. Continue to add new partners and continue programming with the Zoo in Your Neighborhood program.
2. Explore community events and additional partners for new program opportunities.

Action 2: Onsite programming and events

Progress

1. FALCONERS is designed to allow children or adults of all ages with special needs and unique challenges (such as autism or developmental disabilities) and their whole family to have an enriching educational experience in a safe, welcoming and sensory friendly environment. *

Advancement

1. Continue to advance all PPZ DEAI strategies and welcome more families with diverse needs to the FALCONERS program. Continue to grow the program to those that may not be represented currently in the program (i.e. Visually impaired, deaf).
2. Begin evaluating and working with the events department to expand inclusive efforts at public, private, and fundraising events.

**All items noted with an asterisk have supporting documents located in the S-15 folder.*