

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: 4/21/2022

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Amos Morris, Executive Zoo Director, Zoological Department

Subject: From the Executive Zoo Director submitting the Milwaukee County Zoo's 2021 Annual Report

File Type: Informational Report

This informational report provides a report on how the Milwaukee County Zoo set and achieved its 2021 goals.

POLICY

This report aligns to Chapter 108: Achieving Racial Equity & Health.

Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	Chapter 108: Achieving Racial Equity & Health
--	---

BACKGROUND

[File 22-104](#) amends Chapter 108 to require that “annually, by April 30 of each year or sooner, each Milwaukee County department leader and/or their designee(s) shall provide a written and oral report outlining their year-end results to a Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors committee. The reports shall, at a minimum:

- (a) Indicate the year-end goals the department set in the prior year
- (b) Share the rationale and relevance of the department's performance metrics (i.e. explaining why they are “SMART” goals (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely, and extending) and how they align to the county's racial equity strategy, if applicable)
- (c) Report the department's year-end results relating to the goals it had set, and
- (d) Provide a thorough analysis clearly articulating why goals were significantly exceeded, met, or not met.
- (e) Explain the department's progress in creating a departmental-level strategic plan that aligns to the countywide strategic plan and provide an update about future plans to revise and enhance the departmental-level plan in the year ahead.”

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

- 1A: Reflect the full diversity of the County at every level of County government
- 1B: Create and nurture an inclusive culture across County government
- 1C: Increase the number of County contracts awarded to minority and women-owned businesses
- 2A: Determine what, where, and how we deliver services to advance health equity
- 2B: Break down silos across County government to maximize access to and quality of services offered
- 2C: Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions
- 3A: Invest “upstream” to address root causes of health disparities
- 3B: Enhance the County’s fiscal health and sustainability
- 3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities

Alignment to the above strategic objectives is articulated in response to the questions below.

BODY

The Zoo aligns to the County’s vision by providing a solid, strong cultural institution, which is vital to a vibrant, healthy and thriving community. We serve as an educational facility for the public and school children, provide an economic boost for the local community and care for animal species and their habitats to save endangered animals from extinction. In a non-COVID year, the Zoo on average serves over 1.2 million guests.

In lieu of a current strategic plan, Zoo management created 2021 Zoo-wide priorities centered around Animal Welfare/Conservation, Fiscal Responsibility and Customer Service/Experience. These priorities were then used in the development of staff performance evaluation goals. Each division and employee goals were developed in harmony with the County’s values of Inclusion, Influence and Integrity. Management overlaid these values, so that all employee goals not only aligned to a priority but also positively impacted the County’s values.

1. **What were the top 3 goals of your department/office 2021? Please explain why they are “SMARTIE” goals (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely, inclusive, and equitable) and how they align to the county’s racial equity strategy.**
 - Goal 1: Animal Welfare/Conservation – Optimal animal welfare links directly to our mission and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accreditation standards. It is measured by animal health and behavior welfare assessments, as well as through public perception. Positive welfare is achieved through an environment that promotes natural behaviors and social groupings, opportunities for choice and control, training and enrichment, habitat complexity, nutrition, and health care.

Measures can be enhanced through formal evaluation of health and behavior, implementation of advancements in the field and public promotion of these activities.

The County's values of Inclusion (Create Intentional Inclusion), Influence (Bridge the Gap) and Integrity (Invest in Equity) were intertwined to inspire empathy for animals and wildlife in all visitors and program participants, promote conservation by mission vision and example and making animal welfare the hallmark of the Zoo's operations, maintaining AZA accreditation standards, and abiding by the AZA's code of ethics.

- Goal 2: Fiscal Responsibility – Fiscal health is critical to our operations and can be achieved multiple ways including increases in revenue, partnerships, expense savings, and efficiencies that increase productivity.

The County's values of Inclusion (Create Intentional Inclusion), Influence (Bridge the Gap) and Integrity (Invest in Equity) were incorporated to ensure accessibility opportunities for all in MCZ's admissions and Zoological Society of Milwaukee (ZSM) programs and memberships. The practice of sound fiscal responsibility is part of every fiscal decision.

- Goal 3: Customer Service/Experience – Our visitors are clearly our customers, but the definition of our customer is: EVERYONE you encounter every day. Strong partnerships across divisions and within teams contribute positively to the experience for both internal and external customers. Activities that align to this priority include the following: reviewing guest feedback for quality control; proactively engaging guests in a positive way; creating inspirational experiences and environments; considering the impact of daily decisions on the guest experience; and implementing innovative programs that continue to engage our community, supporters and visitors and attract new interest from these groups.

The County's values of Inclusion (Create Intentional Inclusion), Influence (Bridge the Gap) and Integrity (Invest in Equity) were linked to a customer service policy that welcomes all and focuses inclusion as an integral part of the Zoo's Guest Experience Committee.

2. To what extent were these goals accomplished in 2021? Please explain.

- *Goal 1: Animal Welfare/Conservation*

- i. Maintained AZA Accreditation and USDA Standards: Every five years, AZA evaluates the Zoo to make sure it meets AZA standards for animal welfare, care and management, including living environments, social grouping, health and nutrition. Every animal at AZA-accredited institutions undergoes a thorough welfare assessment at least once a year. Animals are provided with enrichment, which stimulates each animal's natural behavior and provides variety in their daily routine. The Accreditation Commission also evaluates the veterinary program, involvement in conservation and research, education programs, safety policies and procedures, security, physical facilities, guest services, and the capacity of the institutions' staff.
- ii. Animal Species – Milwaukee County Zoo is home to more than 2,000 animals representing 330 species (see table below). The Zoo serves wildlife and their habitats by working to save endangered animals and providing them with exceptional professional care. In 2021, animal staff participated in 117 Species Survival Plans® (SSPs) and 46 Taxon Advisory Group (TAG) programs.

On Zoo Grounds	Species	Specimens
Mammals	72	324
Birds	91	309
Reptiles	40	70
Amphibians	7	11
Fish	81	1,280
Invertebrates	39	116
Total	330	2,110

The animals owned by the Zoo and on loan to other zoological institutions included:

Out on Loan	Species	Specimens
Mammals	10	29
Birds	1	2
Reptiles	6	7
Total	17	38

- iii. Wildlife Conservation: Animal care professionals at MCZ contribute to a diverse portfolio of conservation, research and reproduction programs at local, national and international levels. Our collaborations with other conservation-focused organizations are of significance. They bring strength and stability to the programs, as well as to the conservation community. The following projects were supported by the Milwaukee County Zoo in collaboration with the Zoological Society of Milwaukee in 2021.

1. AZA African Penguin SAFE / SANCCOB: Funding for disaster/disease response
2. AZA Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake SSP: Zoo Staff participation in field surveys
3. AZA Florida Reef Tract Rescue Project: General support funds
4. AZA Jaguar SAFE/SSP: Funding to support rangers at Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary, Belize
5. AZA Orangutan SAFE: Funding for Bornean Orangutan Survival Foundation release program
6. AZA Panamanian Golden Frog SSP/Project Golden Frog: General support funds
7. AZA Puerto Rican Crested Toad SSP / Conservancy: General support funds
8. AZA Sea Turtle SAFE Stranding Event Response: Funding for cold-stunning event response
9. AZA Avian Scientific Advisory Group: General support funds
10. AZA Reproductive Management Center: General support funds

11. AZA Tiger Conservation Campaign: Funding for Amur tiger projects
12. Baird's Tapir Survival Alliance: General support funds
13. Bat Conservation International: General support funds
14. Belize Tapir Project: Zoo Veterinary Staff participation in tapir collaring project
15. Berggorilla and Regenwald Direkthilfe: General support funds
16. Borneo Nature Foundation: Funding to adopt a village for reforestation project
17. Cheetah Conservation Botswana: Funding for Cheetah distribution and range studies
18. Community Conservation, Inc.: General support funds
19. Elephants for Africa: Funding for collaring research
20. Endangered Wildlife Trust: Funding for the Carnivore Conservation Programme
21. Game Rangers International: General support funds
22. Giraffe Conservation Foundation: Funding for Reticulated giraffe studies in Kenya
23. Hornbill Research Foundation: Funding for the nest adoption program
24. International Bongo Foundation: General support funds
25. International Elephant Foundation: General support funds
26. International Iguana Foundation: General support funds
27. International Rhino Foundation: General support funds
28. IUCN SSC Conservation Planning Specialist Group: General support funds
29. IUCN Species Survival Commission: Funding for the Office of Strategic Partnerships
30. Kibale National Park: Funding for stove-building project
31. Lola Ya Bonobo: General support funds
32. Mabula Ground-Hornbill Project: General support funds
33. Madagascar Fauna & Flora Group: General support funds and Betampona Reserve community fire response
34. Marmot Recovery Project: General support funds
35. Migratory and Resident Avifauna Collision Abatement: Zoo staff and volunteers collecting data at the Zoo, and applying window treatments
36. NPS Santa Monica Mountains Predator-Prey Study: Zoo staff participation in mule deer immobilization
37. Orangutan Outreach: General support funds
38. Polar Bears International: General support funds
39. Proyecto Tití: General support funds

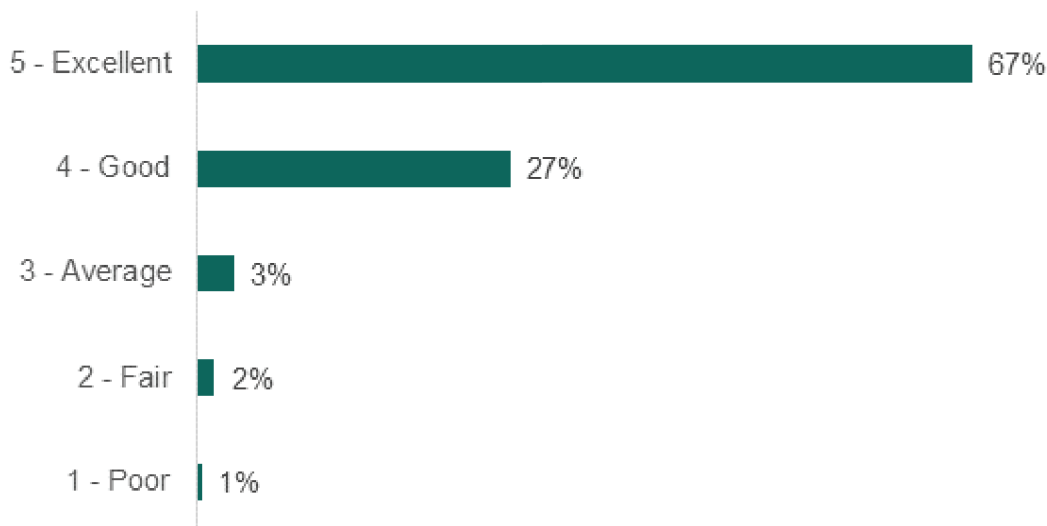
40. Punta San Juan Program Humboldt Penguin Conservation: General support funds and Operations Center
41. Red Panda Network: General support funds
42. Red Siskin Initiative: General support funds
43. River Alliance of Wisconsin: General support funds
44. Rock Iguana Conservation: Zoo Staff participation in headstart program for Jamaica iguana
45. Rwanda Wildlife Conservation Association: General support funds
46. Sahara Conservation Fund: Funding for Red-necked Ostrich project, Niger
47. Save the Golden Lion Tamarin: General support funds
48. Snow Leopard Trust: General support funds
49. The Trumpeter Swan Society: Funding for Midwest swan collaring research
50. Turtle Survival Alliance: General support funds and care for confiscated Radiated Tortoises
51. WI DNR Bureau of Endangered Resources: Funding for Herps programs
52. Wild Animal Health Fund: Funding for Veterinary research grant program
53. Wild Camel Protection Foundation: General support funds
54. Wildlife S.O.S.: General support funds
55. Wildlife Trafficking Alliance: Participating partner support funds
56. Ya'axche Conservation Trust: Funding for Jaguar conflict mitigation officer with Pat Gives Back

iv. 2021 Research Supported by the Milwaukee County Zoo: Below are approved studies that were supported by providing biological samples, hosting researchers for observational studies, direct staff involvement.

1. Genetic analysis of US captive tigers
2. Evaluation of serum and liver copper concentrations and association with dietary factors in captive Baird's tapirs (*Tapirus bairdii*)
3. Behavioral, cognitive, and genetic mechanisms underlying socio-communicative development in bonobos (*Pan paniscus*)
4. SARS CoV-2 vaccination response trial in non-domestic felids
5. Wobbly hedgehog syndrome studies

6. Review of elephant tusk fractures
 7. Evaluation of morbidity and mortality in tigers housed in AZA facilities
 8. Submission of tissue biopsy to culture cell lines at San Diego Wildlife Alliance Frozen Zoo
 9. Understanding the changes in gut microbiome, proteome, metabolome and immune function: Influence of sex, diet, reproductive status, and health in wild vs. zoo-managed black rhinoceros
 10. Continuing work of the Great Ape Heart Project; including Milwaukee-based Great Ape ultrasound and cardiovascular disease studies
- v. Family Farm Internship Program: In 2021, the Animal Division began a new Family Farm Internship Program in partnership with Vincent High School to provide opportunities for job training and interest in zoo careers. The Zoo launched the program with two Agriculture interns for the 2021 summer season with a commitment to expansion of the program for 2022.
- vi. Exit Survey Results – Animal Care: The annual exit survey includes a very important question of “How would you rate the overall quality of animal care at the MCZ?” The question was added to the survey in 2019 as part of the strategic plan for AZA’s Animal Welfare Committee is to gain a better understanding of visitor perceptions of animal welfare at AZA facilities. Survey results showed 94% of respondents, in the table below, rated animal care as excellent or good. Studies have shown there is a relationship between perceptions of animal welfare and overall visit satisfaction. Our results showed the respondents who gave the top rating of Excellent or 5 for overall quality of animal care were significantly more likely to report being extremely satisfied with their overall zoo visit. The higher animal care is rated, the higher the average overall experience rating.

**How would you rate the overall quality
of animal care at the Milwaukee County
Zoo?**



- *Goal 2: Fiscal Responsibility:* Below is a table showing the Zoo's revenue categories, expenditure savings, net surplus (deficit) and attendance performance for 2021.

Account Groupings	2021 Adjusted Budget	2021 Actuals	Variance
General Visit Revenues	\$ 9,995,348	\$ 9,587,267	\$ (408,081)
Events	\$ 1,704,188	\$ 621,416	\$ (1,082,772)
Group Sales	\$ 2,045,662	\$ 1,002,751	\$ (1,042,911)
Society	\$ 3,432,554	\$ 3,309,922	\$ (122,632)
Sponsorships	\$ 400,000	\$ 229,099	\$ (170,901)
Exclusivity Donations	\$ 160,000	\$ 135,000	\$ (25,000)
Misc.	\$ 647,020	\$ 252,480	\$ (394,540)
Shuttered Venue Operators Grant	\$ 6,358,373	\$ 6,358,373	\$ -
Total Revenues	\$ 24,743,145	\$ 21,496,308	\$ (3,246,836)
Expenditures	\$ 23,912,368	\$ 21,376,842	\$ 2,535,526
Net Surplus (Deficit)			\$ (711,310)
Attendance	1,351,500	1,092,122	-259,378

* 2021 Actual expenditures include SVOG carryover of \$6,257,814 for presentation purposes

As you can see in the table above, the deficits in Events and Group Sales were 66% of the total revenue shortfall. Due to the pandemic, five

revenue generating events were cancelled including the one of Zoo's largest events, a la Carte, which historically generates over \$1M in revenues during the four-day event. Cancelled events also resulted in fewer corporate sponsorships. Group Sales were negatively impacted by the pandemic restrictions as many clients and companies did not hold their picnics and weddings and gatherings were cancelled. Another area that affected the deficit for Group Sales was the lack of availability of the Zoofari Conference Center due to Children's Court use of the building to hold COVID-safe hearings.

The table below shows 2021 results compared to pre-COVID 2019 and 2020. Even though the Zoo did not make attendance goals in 2021, it exceeded 2020 by 210% and 88% of pre-COVID 2019.

2021 Data	2019 Comparison	2020 Comparison
2021 Revenues	101.08%	235.62%
2021 Attendance	87.92%	210.17%

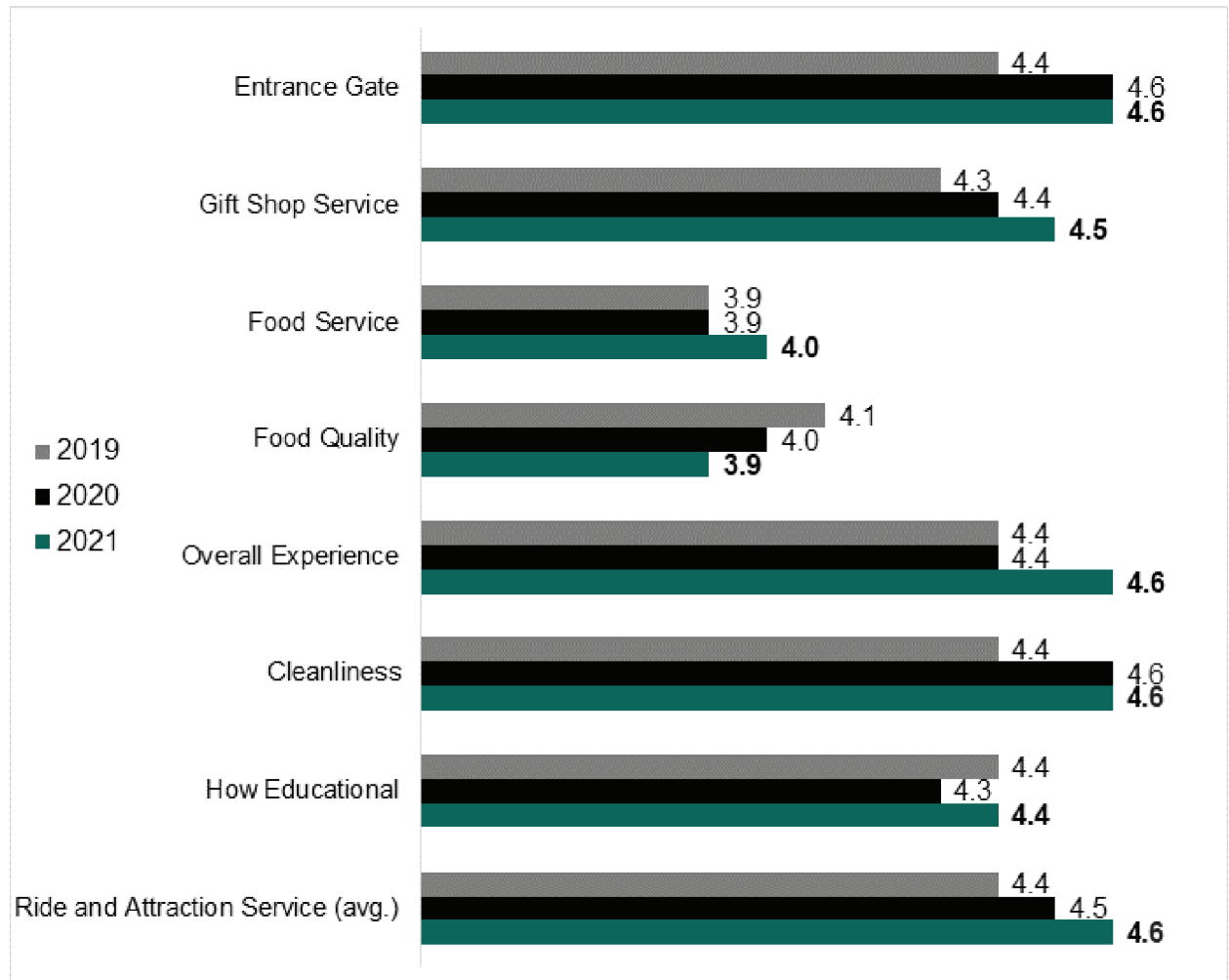
Despite the pandemic, the Zoo pivoted to operate under the administrative orders to provide revenue opportunities and new programming. Some program highlights that supported the budget are as follows:

i. New Programming & Revenues:

1. Virtual Opportunities: The virtual Valentine's program that began in 2020 continued in 2021 and exceeded prior year sales. The Samson Stomp Run/Walk was held virtually for the first time. Six hundred and sixteen people participated from 14 states and Washington DC. The Zoo received positive feedback and raised over \$4,000 in donations. To avoid large crowds our annual Ground Hog Day event was held virtually as a Facebook Live event. Schools from around the area participated garnering 70,000 impressions and 8.8 thousand engagements. It was so successful it was a Facebook Live event in 2022.
2. Wild Connections: The Wild Connections program allows guests to purchase tickets for an up-close animal encounter. Due to the pandemic, staff re-developed the experiences to make them COVID-safe for the guests, employees and animal collection. The program generated 61% of its budget.

3. Zip Line/Ropes Course: The operation of the zip line and ropes course was handled in-house by staff in 2021. Even though the pandemic delayed opening of the experience, 90% of the budgeted revenue was met.
 4. Boo at the Zoo: Due to the pandemic, the Boo at the Zoo event was held on eight nights as a drive-thru experience for the second year. The event generated over \$208,000 in revenues surpassing the budget by \$71,760.
 5. Wild Lights: The new Wild Lights event was created to generate additional revenues and was held on 25 nights in December with one as an adult night (21+). COVID cases had an uptick over the holidays, and we believe that impacted attendance as we did not reach our goal. On a positive note, the average guest rating of the event was 4.5 on a five-point (5 being the highest).
- ii. Efficiencies/Process Improvements: Through the use of technology, the Zoo was able to automate seven manual processes. One of the automation projects was the Guest Communications Dashboard that combined all customer feedback into one place that can now be easily viewed and tallied for daily and weekly review.
 - iii. Shuttered Venue Operators Grant (SVOG): In August of 2021, the Zoo was awarded \$6.8M in SVOG funds from the U.S. Small Business Administration. The grant guidelines allowed the Zoo to apply 2020 personnel costs to meet the expenditure requirements thus freeing up the dollars to benefit the Zoo. The majority of the funds were carried over into 2022 and will to be used for deferred maintenance, preparation for the 2024 accreditation inspection and offset any potential 2022 net deficit.
- *Goal 3: Customer Service/Experience*: Below are the various ways we measured the Zoo's success in this area.
 - i. Annual Exit Survey Service Results: Yearly, the Zoo performs an annual survey to receive guest's feedback regarding their visit and the data is used to better understand guest experience and determine whether service performance goals are being met. Despite staffing difficulties and the impact of the pandemic, most customer service performance metrics met or even exceeded

goals. Below are the results from 2021 for the key areas. The rating scale is 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest mark. The gray bar is from 2019, the black is 2020 and green is 2021. As you can see, almost all categories saw an increase in the rating and out of the 8 categories, 7 received the top two rating of excellent and good.



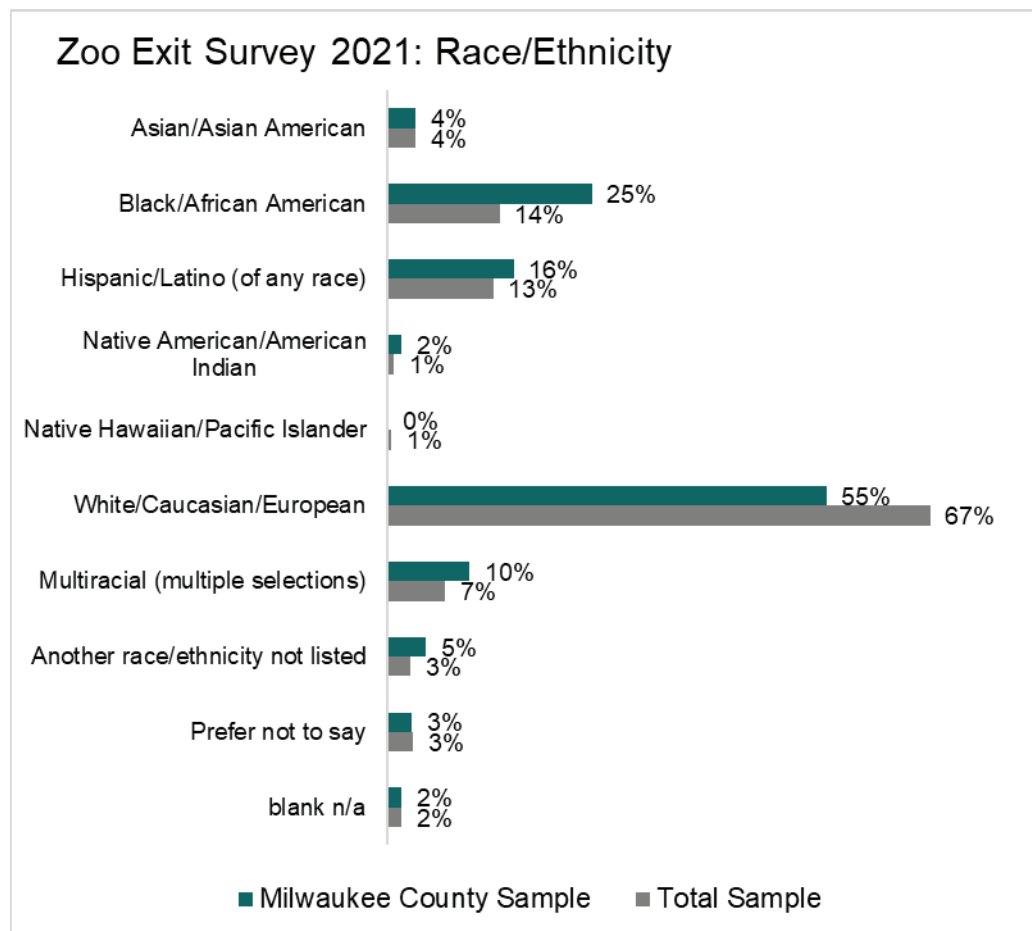
The 2021 goal was 90% of respondents rate the Zoo extremely or very satisfied. The 2021 results showed 94% of respondents rated their visit as extremely or very satisfied.

- ii. Social Media Reach: The Zoo saw a significant increase in social media impressions (number of times a post was seen) in 2021. Impressions increased from 68.5 million to 119 million. Engagement also increased significantly in 2021 going from 3.9

million to 19.8 million. We had several posts shared on national and international news sites.

- iii. Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI): Per AZA accreditation standards, the Zoo must follow a written diversity, equity, access and inclusion program. Programs must be proactive and transparent, with measurable goals for assessing progress, and must have a paid staff member(s) or committee responsible for oversight. Here are some of the ways we measure our progress.

1. Annual Exit Survey Demographics: Forty-five percent of the survey participants reported visiting from Milwaukee County and the average overall experience rating was 4.5/5. The Milwaukee County survey subsample in the table below aligns more closely to the actual racial/ethnic breakdown of Milwaukee County.



2. Accessibility Programs: The Zoo and the Society participate in many accessibility programs from free admissions/

programming to reduced fees. For 2021, 19 accessibility programs were offered. For a breakdown of all the accessibility programs, see attachment #1.

3. Zoo's Guest Experience Committee (GEC): The GEC brings together employees from all departments at the Zoo, Society and the SSA. The members of the GEC share information, collaborate and identify ways to improve guest experience, with a special singular commitment to diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion for all Zoo visitors. 2021 Accomplishments include: recertified KultureCity Sensory Inclusion Certification (created a social story for Wild Lights event), translation of maps (Spanish, German and Hmong), exit survey translation into Spanish and Milwaukee County Transit survey completed to improve public transportation to the Zoo.
4. 2021 Marketing Strategy: The Zoo has continued to shift a greater portion of its advertising budget and marketing strategy to attracting visitors from underserved markets and populations. In 2021, using data to target our efforts, the Zoo earmarked 20% of its advertising budget to outlets that are most commonly used by underserved communities. In addition to these targeted efforts, the Zoo's radio, pre-roll and digital ads were translated into Spanish. In addition, our pre-roll video featured families that better represent the Zoo's diverse audience.

3. What factors *enabled* progress toward accomplishing these goals?

- The ability for the Zoo to stay open all year despite the pandemic was critical to the success of the organization.
- Dedicated Zoo employees who reported to work during the pandemic enabled the Zoo to achieve the 2021 goals.
- Staff that shifted to a telework hybrid also contributed to the success of the Zoo.
- The Zoo's strong partnerships with the Society, SSA and revenue share partners.
- The ability for staff to quickly adapt to the changes in COVID Administrative Orders.

4. What factors *hindered* progress toward accomplishing these goals?

- The Zoo continued the partnership with the County's Children Court system that began in 2020 for a safe COVID free environment to assist with reducing backlogs and advocating for children and their rights at the Zoo's Zoofari Conference Center. Allowing the Courts System the ability to use the Zoofari Conference Center was a positive for the families that were served but did not allow for the ability to generate revenues from rental of the building.
- The pandemic and County COVID Administrative Orders had a negative impact on group sales and revenue generating partners and programs.
- The fiscal health of our partners during the pandemic affected our revenue budget and operations.
- Balancing revenue generation and the safety of guests during a pandemic.
- Seasonal Staffing Shortages / Seasonal Starting Wages

5. What is the status of your department/office in developing its strategic plan?

In March 2022, the Zoological Society in partnership with the Zoo issued a Request for Proposal to create an enterprise-wide strategic plan for the Zoo and the Society. The Society graciously offered to pay for it. The plan will be a holistic look at our shared vision and commitment to the Zoo and our community while honoring the respective roles and governance models of each organization. It will be used jointly by the Society and the Zoo to guide the strategic direction over the next 7-10 years. The project will include the completion of a strategic plan, refresh the existing master plan (facilities plan) and a business plan. The plan will align to the County-wide strategic focus areas of inclusion, influence and integrity. The goal is to have a completed plan by year-end.

FISCAL EFFECT

The report is informational only and there is no fiscal impact.

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Amos.Morris@Milwaukeecountywi.gov, Vera.Westphal@Milwaukeecountywi.gov,
Gary.Lunsford@Milwaukeecountywi.gov, Laura.Pedriani@Milwaukeecountywi.gov,
Matthew.Haseman@Milwaukeecountywi.gov

PREPARED BY:

Vera Westphal, Deputy Zoo Director

APPROVED BY:

Amos D Morris, Jr.

Amos Morris, Executive Zoo Director

ATTACHMENTS: Milwaukee County Zoo 2021 Accessibility Programs (PDF)

cc: Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County Clerk
David Crowley, County Executive
Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive
Scott Manske, Comptroller
Aaron Hertzberg, Director, Department of Administrative Services
Joseph Lamers, Director of Performance, Strategy & Budget
Steve Cady, Research and Policy Director, Comptroller's Office
Ciara Miller, Research Analyst, Comptroller's Office
Anthony Rux, Budget and Management Analyst, PSB
Vera Westphal, Deputy Zoo Director
Laura Pedriani, Director, Marketing and Communications
Gary Lunsford, Director, Animal Management and Health
Matthew Haseman, Director, Grounds, Maintenance and EVS