

American Rescue Plan (ARP) State Fiscal Recovery Funds (SFRF) Request Form

Please complete this form in accordance with the process instructions.

Agency/Point of Contact: Minnesota Zoological Garden / John Frawley

Title of Request: Minnesota Zoo Recovery from COVID-19 Impact

Date: 8/17/2021 **Request Amount:** \$ 11,495,000

Expenditure Time Period: 9/1/2021 to 6/30/2023

Brief Summary of Request: (Summary must be complete on this page with supporting information attached)

An authorization of \$11,495,000 is requested to support the Minnesota Zoo's recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This appropriation was agreed to by Governor Walz and legislative leaders in creating a budget framework for the FY 2022-23 biennium.

To help limit the spread of COVID-19 throughout the state, the Minnesota Zoo closed its doors to the public for four months in the spring and summer of 2020, and then for another four weeks beginning in November 2020. COVID-driven capacity limits and safety measures dramatically reduced daily admissions; forced the cancellation of events, education programs, and facility rentals; and caused the Zoo's membership base to decline from 41,000 to 28,000 households. Revenues from admissions, membership, and programming are critically important, typically supporting two-thirds of the Zoo's annual operating budget.

- To manage this significant loss in revenue, the Zoo took immediate and drastic action to reduce expenses, including:
- * laying off 48 staff members and impacting 125 total positions by eliminating or reducing hours for many intermittent and seasonal positions
 - * canceling or delaying major projects and significantly cutting back on infrastructure investments, repairs, and maintenance; and
 - * reducing hours of operation, eliminating shows and animal encounters, and canceling all summer camps and education programming including the popular Zoomobile program.

While these measures helped reduce costs by nearly \$8 million in FY 2020-21, concern remains over the ability to perform routine care for the Zoo's animals and facilities. Given the deep cuts to staffing and maintenance budgets necessary to manage through the pandemic, the Zoo is in a critical position. At minimal staffing levels, with the animal dispositions we've made, the significant and growing maintenance backlog, and the loss of so many member households and a year's worth of event bookings, we face a major rebuilding process to restore the Zoo experience to what Minnesotans expect and to generate earned revenue at the level needed to balance future budgets.

This request is critical to support the Zoo's recovery amidst the uncertainty surrounding the Delta variant. As a major cultural institution serving school children, young families, and diverse people from all walks of life, our earned revenue remains at risk as the pandemic drags on. Without certainty about our funding level for the upcoming biennium, we cannot rebuild our reduced staffing and animal collection which is necessary to serve 1.3 million guests annually. We will not be able to welcome back the nearly 90,000 school children who visit our campus from approximately 1000 schools around the state, as we did pre-COVID. We will not be able to rebuild the on-site and off-site programming that attracts guests and members from all parts of Minnesota. We will not be able to address deferred maintenance or restart halted construction projects, and our \$226 million of annual economic impact to Minnesota will be drastically reduced.



Department Head Signature

8/17/2021

Date