

Minnesota Zoo FY26-27 Budget Request: SF1902 & HF2034

\$3.5 million per year

The Minnesota Zoo is a unique state agency with a mission to connect people, animals, and the natural world to save wildlife. To maintain its excellence and meet evolving standards, the Zoo seeks a sustainable 50/50 public/private partnership with the state.



Current Situation: Unbalanced Public/Private Partnership

- State funding only covers 37% of the Zoo's operating budget
- The Zoo's earned revenue has grown by 40% since 2019
- The timing is critical for heading towards a 50/50 private/public partnership

50/50 Public/Private Partnership

- Forecast modeling indicates we must achieve a 50/50 funding model with the state within the next two biennia to maintain a safe, smart, and efficient operation
- This model will ensure healthy long-term success for the Zoo

Key Cost Drivers and Operational Pressures

- Workforce challenges - rising costs driven by legal changes, contract adjustments, and salary increases
- Aging infrastructure - non-bondable maintenance for a nearly 50-year-old 485-acre campus
- Average 10% annual growth in general operating costs over five years
- Stricter animal care and welfare requirements from regulatory and accrediting agencies such as USDA, OSHA, AZA, U.S. Fish & Wildlife, FDA, and EPA

This request moves us halfway to a 50/50 model enabling us to continue our role as:

- A top Minnesota attraction – welcoming 1.5 million visitors annually
- The 5th largest zoo in the nation
- A major economic driver – contributing \$227M+ to Minnesota's economy
- Minnesota's largest environmental education center
- A statewide community resource – serving all 87 counties
- Minnesota's leader in conservation

Questions? Contact Missy McGrath: 651-276-7258 or Missy.McGrath@state.mn.us