



NOTICE OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Government Lobbying Services

ISSUED: November 1, 2022

**PROPOSAL DUE DATE EXTENDED: Wednesday, November 30
at 5 p.m.**

Statement of Purpose:

This document constitutes a request for proposals from qualified firms to provide state and federal lobbying services for the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, Safari Golf Club, The Wilds, and Zoombezi Bay (CZA Family of Parks). These services will mainly focus on the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium and The Wilds.

CZA Family of Parks is requesting proposals to contract with a lobbying firm to represent its' parks to develop and maintain a state and federal relations program tailored to meet our specific interests, needs and budget.

The RFP process is part of our business standard which helps to keep the CZA Family of Parks fiscally responsible, competitive, and ensure transparency.

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Section 1: Introduction

The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium is located in a suburb northwest of Columbus. The Zoo property is an estimated 600 acres, and more than 200 acres are developed as animal habitats and public spaces. The campus includes the 22-acre Zoombezi Bay water park and 18-hole Safari Golf Club that contributes to the family-destination experience and provides revenue to support the nonprofit Zoo. The Zoo also operates The Wilds conservation center and safari park located approximately 100 miles away in rural southeastern Ohio. To learn more about the four properties, familiarize yourself with www.columbuszoo.org and our social channels.

Columbus Zoo and Aquarium

Founded in 1927 with a small menagerie of animals, the Columbus Zoo gained international recognition and stature with the 1956 birth of Colo, the world's first zoo-born gorilla. Today the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium is a nationally and internationally acclaimed conservation center and is home to more than 10,000 animals representing over 600 species displayed in naturalistic habitats according to zoogeographic regions. In the early 1990s, two conservation initiatives were formed separately and almost simultaneously. A grants program was established to fund grassroots conservation efforts around the world. Partners in Conservation was founded to save the endangered mountain gorilla by funding boots-on-the-ground programs as well as humanitarian projects so the people in the region could thrive without negatively impacting wildlife.

This year, we are supporting 78 projects and organizations in more than 28 countries. These projects will help hundreds of species around the world, from Asian elephants to Siberian cranes.

In addition to its role as a global conservation leader, the Zoo is a renowned year-round education and recreation facility for visitors of all ages, backgrounds, and experiences. Each year, the Zoo attracts and educates more than 2.1 million visitors and its mission is to lead and inspire by connecting people and wildlife.

The Zoo receives support from a ten-year county property tax levy and has approximately 100,000 household members.

Zoombezi Bay

From 1984 until 2006, the central Ohio region knew Zoombezi Bay as "Wyandot Lake," a combination amusement and water park adjacent to the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium. Wyandot Lake was sold by Six Flags to the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium in 2006, with Wyandot Lake closing in September 2006.

The Columbus Zoo began construction of a new 22-acre water park in January 2007, rebuilding the park from the ground up with new water rides and slides and an entirely new name. Chosen by nearly 3,000 citizens of central Ohio through an online vote, the name Zoombezi Bay beat out four other names and calls out both the "Zoo", of which it is a part, and "Zoom", which describes its exciting rides. Zoombezi is also a play on the Zambezi River in Africa.



The construction of Zoombezi Bay was completed in May 2008 and the new park featured 15 water slides, a wave pool, an “action river”, and a children’s water play area. Several enhancements have been made since then including two additional slides in 2011, a multi-level children’s play structure in 2014, Otter Banks, the largest expansion in the parks’ history, in 2018, and the all-new Croctail Creek and Sandbar adults’ only area in 2020. In 2019, Zoombezi Bay had more than 460,000 visitors, including 25,000 season pass holders.

Safari Golf Club

In 1989 when the golf course adjacent to the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium went up for sale, Zoo officials jumped at the chance to purchase additional land for future expansion. Since then more land has been purchased and it was decided to operate the golf course as another means of generating revenue to support the Zoo’s operation and mission. The facility has been completely renovated and today’s Safari Golf Club is an 18-hole, par 72, 140-acre mature course. The affordable public course includes wooded areas, rolling fairways, and waterways. Safari Golf Club includes a driving range, practice putting, and chipping greens, as well as a clubhouse with a pro shop and bar and grill with facilities to host group outings.

As part of our conservation and sustainability mission, we are very proud of Safari Golf’s Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary. This certification means we are creating wildlife habitat, and using environmentally friendly land management methods is important to all of the Columbus Zoo properties. With its pollinator garden, bird nest boxes, native vegetation, and safe chemical use, Safari Golf has a green fairway that is truly “green.”

The Wilds

The Wilds is one of the largest and most innovative wildlife conservation centers in North America for endangered species. Located on nearly 10,000 acres in southeast Ohio, The Wilds is a private, non-profit safari park that combines cutting-edge conservation science and education programs with hands-on experiences and one-of-a-kind adventures. In southeast Ohio, The Wilds provides a natural, open-range home to rare and endangered species from around the globe, as well as home to hundreds of indigenous species. In addition to in-depth science and education programs, The Wilds offers guided experiences to the public on selected days from May through October. Originally conceived as a private-public partnership involving the Ohio Departments of Natural Resources and Development, the Ohio zoological parks, and the private sector, The Wilds was formally incorporated in 1984 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit under the name The International Center for the Preservation of Wild Animals, Inc. (ICPWA) dba The Wilds. In 1986 the ICPWA received a gift of 9,154 acres of reclaimed mining land from the Central Ohio Coal Company, a subsidiary of American Electric Power Company. The first animals arrived at The Wilds in 1991 and the facility opened to the public in 1994.

Columbus Zoo and Aquarium became involved with The Wilds in 2001 to support the struggling operation. While the two remain separate nonprofit organizations, the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium now runs The Wilds.



The scientific staffing at The Wilds includes professionals in the fields of restoration ecology, veterinary and conservation medicine, conservation education, animal management, and conservation science training. It is also a safari park with hands-on experiences and one-of-a-kind adventures that include open-air vehicle tours, zip lining, horseback riding, fishing excursions, and lodging including a luxury-tented experience. More than 115,000 people visit The Wilds annually.

Organizational Background

The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium is a year-round attraction with an attendance of over 2.2 million with 60% of our revenue being member-based. Other areas of revenue are made up of the main gate, group sales, promotions, and education. The Zoo contributes \$351 million annually to the region and sustained more than 3,800 jobs. The primary months of operation are from May to September, which generates over 60% of the attendance. In addition, The Wilds is in operation from May to September, with an annual group and individual tour attendance of over 115,000. The Wilds contributes more than \$26 million to the regional economy. The Safari Golf Course does approximately 42,000 rounds of golf per year. Zoombezi Bay is open annually from May to September and is expected to draw 350,000 to 450,000 visitors.



Section 2: Statement of Work:

CZA Family of Parks seeks a strong lobbying firm and/or lobbyist with existing relationships in the federal and state legislature, sound knowledge of budgetary issues, policies, and experience building new relationships on behalf of institutional clients. Lobbying firm and/or lobbyist services focus would be 70% focus on state legislature and 30% on federal legislature. We also seek individuals and/or teams that have experience working with policy in animal well-being, conservation, sustainability, and can promote the goals and mission of CZA Family of Parks.

A contract would be awarded for 5 years.

The firm selected must be able to provide services and meet requirements including, but not limited to the following:

Strategy

- Assist CZA Family of Parks in the development of relationships and landscape of the federal and state legislature, influencers, policies, and future issues of interest related to our mission.
- Propose a strategic advocacy and political engagement plan designed to achieve legislative goals
- Communicate the goals, aspirations, and work of the CZA Family of Parks to key influencers in the legislative policymaking space
- Assist in the identification and solicitation of various sources of state and federal funding (i.e. grants, low-interest loans, federal earmarks, capital appropriations) for CZA Family of Parks development infrastructure improvements
- Work collaboratively with CZA Family of Park to identify new potential philanthropic and corporate donors

Tracking and Reporting

- Identify, track, and report on federal and state legislation and legislative proposals that may have an impact on the CZA Family of Parks
- Report the activities at minimum bi-weekly reports and/or meetings
- Track priorities and meetings of CZA Family of Parks staff
- Organize federal and state lobby registration, compliance, and reporting
- Draft legislation and amendments
- Speak at requested board and committee meetings

Advocacy

- Support CZA Family of Parks by being the day-to-day contact for legislators, other lobbyists, and interest groups



- Work to advance CZA Family of Parks' legislative agenda by lobbying members of the legislature, their staff, and other federal and state government officials

Relationship Building

- Organize and arrange meetings with key elected State of Ohio officials to provide briefings on various ongoing CZA Family of Parks development plans
- Create a robust plan of introductory meetings with key legislators, regulatory agencies, and related policy organizations that are consistent with the mission and scope of CZA Family of Parks
- Assist in positioning the CZA Family of Parks in the legislative ecosystem as an authentic advocate and leader on matters related to animal well-being, conservation, sustainability, attractions, and economic development.



Section 3: RFP Process

The contact below is the main point of contact for this RFP. All questions should be communicated by email only.

Nala Key, External Affairs Manager

Email: nala.key@columbuszoo.org

- Participating firms are expressly instructed that the CZA Family of Parks is the only authorized source of information concerning the solicitation. Contact with unauthorized agents of the CZA Family of Parks or members of the selection committees/boards while solicitation and evaluation are in process could result in immediate disqualification.

Evaluation, Criteria, and Process

During the evaluation process, the CZA Family of Parks reserves the right to request additional information or clarification from firms, or to allow corrections or modifications to a proposal. At the discretion of the CZA Family of Parks, vendors submitting proposals may be requested to make oral presentations as part of the evaluation process.

Following the receipt of proposals, the Zoo will review those timely submitted and will rank the Firms deemed, in the Zoo's sole and absolute judgment, to be the most qualified firms to provide state and federal lobbying services. CZA Family of Parks reserves the right to reject any proposal, to waive any informality, technicality, or minor defects in any proposal, or award a contract in what the CZA Family of Parks decides, in its sole discretion, are in its best interests, or to award no contract at all. The CZA Family of Parks makes no representations or warranties as to the accuracy of any information or assumptions contained in this request.

All proposals submitted become the property of the CZA Family of Parks and will not be returned.

Firms will be evaluated on the criteria below, and as such, responses should include the following information:

- The ability of the firm to service this account based on the contemplated scope of work and volume of business
- The experience of the firm, length of time in business, and other matters relating to relevant experience
- Experience of the individuals assigned to this account including resumes
- The firm's approach to this work, including compliance with requirements, innovative offerings, services offered, and other related matters



- The budget and narrative justification are itemized and sufficiently detailed to show how the total project cost was derived and costs appear to be reasonable
- Applicants may be asked for additional information and clarification of plans and/or to give an oral presentation.
- Other information as appropriate

CZA Family of Parks reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals received, to negotiate with any qualified source, or to cancel in part or its entirety the RFP process if it is in its best interest to do so. The RFP does not commit to the CZA Family of Parks to award a contract or to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of proposals.

Proprietary rights to all data, materials, and documentation originated by and prepared pursuant to the contract shall belong exclusively to Columbus Zoo and Aquarium. The contractor will be prohibited from disseminating information developed under the contract without the prior written consent of the CZA Family of Parks.

Unless otherwise noted in this RFP, Firms may not contact any employees of the CZA Family of Parks concerning this procurement while the proposal and evaluation are in process. Such contact will cause disqualification of the firm's proposal.

All firms agree that they shall defend, indemnify, and hold the Columbus Zoological Park Association, its officers, employees, and agents harmless from and against all claims which arise out of the firm's performance, negligence, or actions of its officers, employees, and agents in the performance of this selection process.

The firm shall comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-226), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of physical or mental disabilities in delivering contract services or in the employment of qualified individuals. People with disabilities who need special accommodations to participate in the proposal process or implementation may request special accommodations such as interpreters, alternative formats, or assistance with physical accessibility. Requests for special accommodations must be made with 72 hours prior notice by contacting the contracting officer listed on page 7 of this RFP.

The Columbus Zoological Park Association is committed to ensuring that certified minority-owned business enterprises (MBE's), women-owned business enterprises (WBE's), disadvantaged business enterprises (DBE's), and U.S. Small Business Administration 8(a)-certified firms are afforded opportunities to compete for and participate in the Zoo's purchasing activities. If your company is certified as a MBE, WBE, DBE, or 8(a) company, please send your current certification with your response to this RFP.



Section 4: RFP Response

Submit an electronic version of the proposal to:
Nala Key, External Affairs Manager
Nala.key@columbuszoo.org

No changes, modifications, or additions to the response submitted will be accepted after the deadline for submission has passed.

- Firms requesting clarification regarding the Request for Proposal or the content therein must be sent via email must be received by **Tuesday, November 22 by 5 p.m.**
- Any questions regarding this RFP will be handled as promptly as possible. If any question results in a change or addition to the RFP, the changes or additions will be forwarded to all Firms that submitted an Intention to Bid as quickly as possible by addendum.
- Firms shall designate and provide contact information for an individual to contact should any questions arise concerning a proposal. The firm shall also state the name and title of individuals who will make final decisions regarding contractual commitments and have the legal authority to execute the contract on the vendor's behalf.

Failure to respond to any item, including providing any requested information, or failure to follow these instructions shall be considered submission of any incomplete response and may result in disqualification.

All proposals should include the following information:

1. Letter of interest
2. Ownership and history
3. Names of the individual(s) who will be working on the project and the areas of responsibility, including the individual(s) responsible for managing the CZA Family of Parks relationship and communication, administering the contract, and lobbying on our behalf
4. Experiences of the individuals named above, highlight their previous work, areas of expertise, and capacity to fully execute the function outlined in the proposal
5. A list of at least three clients for whom you have lobbied within the past five years and an example of successful efforts managed on their behalf. Include the client name, contact name, email, and phone number
6. A comprehensive list of all current clients and those served within the preceding 24 months of the submission date
7. Experience with nonprofit organizations, conservation organizations, and/or attractions
8. A synopsis of how you see CZA Family of Parks' advocacy work growing into the future
9. Firms are encouraged to include any specific levels of expertise in the submitted proposal



RFP Timetable **subject to change*

Target Date	Action	Additional Information
Tuesday, November 1, 2022	Issuance of RFP	
Tuesday, November 22, 2022	Deadline for Submission of Questions by 5 p.m. (EST)	Via email to nala.key@columbuszoo.org
Wednesday, November 30, 2022	Deadline for Submission of Proposal by 5 p.m. (EST)	Via email to nala.key@columbuszoo.org
Friday, December 2, 2022 and Monday, December 5	Committee Review of Proposals and Selection of Finalists	
Friday, December 9, 2022	Firm Interviews or Presentations	Location TBD
Tuesday, December 13, 2022	Notification by Email to Proposers not Selected	
Wednesday, December 14, 2022	Award of Contract	Via email



Section 5: Rights of the CZA Family of Parks

The CZA Family of Parks and properties reserves the right to:

- 1) Select the vendor that in the judgment of The CZA Family of Parks best meets its needs.
- 2) The CZA Family of Parks reserves the right without prejudice to cancel or reject any and all proposals.
- 3) All material submitted by a Firm as part of the response to this Request for Proposal shall be considered the property of the CZA Family of Parks
- 4) The CZA Family of Parks will not be responsible for proposals that are not received at the proper location.

5.1 Non-Disclosure Agreement

The Firm acknowledges that during the course of the project, the Firm and its employees will obtain and have access to confidential information that is important to the CZA Family of Parks' business. This confidential information includes but is not limited to matters relating to its donors and members such as donor and member names, addresses, financial information, trade secrets, marketing documents, business projections, plans and strategies, legal matters, and other personal information (collectively referred to as the "Confidential Information").

The Firm acknowledges that such Confidential Information is worthy of protection and is the sole property of the Zoo. The Firm agrees that during the term of this Agreement and thereafter, the vendor shall not divulge or make use of any Confidential Information, directly or indirectly, personally or on behalf of any other person, business, corporation, or entity without the prior written consent of the Zoo. The parties hereby acknowledge and agree that the prohibition against disclosure of Confidential Information is in addition to, and not in lieu of all rights or remedies which the Zoo may have available pursuant to the laws of any jurisdiction or at common law to prevent the disclosure of trade secrets.