

CALGARY ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY (CALGARY ZOO)

Mission: Take and inspire action to sustain wildlife and wild places.

Mandate: The Calgary Zoological Society, operating as the “Wilder Institute Calgary Zoo”, develops, operates and promotes an integrated Zoological, botanical, and prehistoric park for the combined purposes of conservation, education, recreation and scientific study.

One Calgary Line of Service: Economic Development and Tourism Registered Charity

2023 City Investment

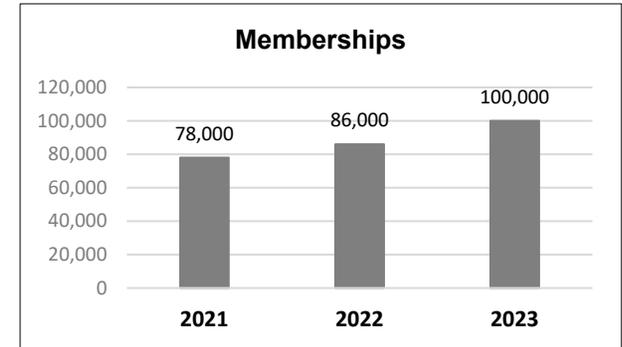
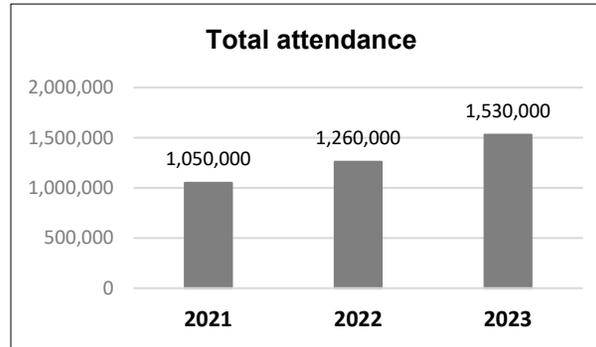
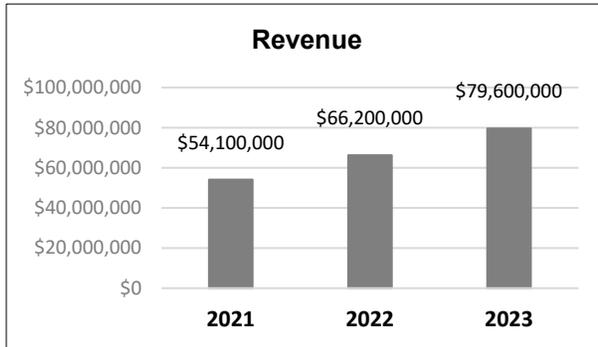
Operating Grant: \$8,793,107

Capital Grant: \$1,601,640

Capital Grant (Canadian Wilds): \$4,250,000

City owned asset

2023 Results



The story behind the numbers

- Revenues were bolstered in 2023 by capital funding for the Canadian Wilds Re-Development and record attendance levels. The well-received and value added Wildscapes exhibition added to the visitor experience.
- The Wilder Institute Calgary Zoo continues to be one of the top tourist attractions in the city, province and western Canada, setting an annual attendance record.
- The attraction continues to have strong community support, attracting 100,000 paid members for the first time since 2018.

Benchmarks

The organization uses a scorecard-based performance measurement system focused on measures that look at financial targets set by the board of directors and executive team and progress towards long term objectives and targets set in the annual planning process.

Looking ahead: 2024 highlights

- The organization will host more than 3,000 delegates for the Association of Zoos and Aquariums’ (AZA) conference in September at the new BMO centre. 2024 will also see the completion of its own AZA accreditation inspection.
- A process to complete new strategic and capital plans for the next five years will be launched.
- 2024 has seen continued support for a fee assistance program, and introduction of a new dynamic pricing model that offers opportunities for visitors to book tickets ahead of time for lower prices.



**CALGARY ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY
2023 Civic Partner Annual Report**

Civic Partner Name: Calgary Zoological Society

Legal Structure: Independent External organization (Societies Act)

Fiscal Year End: December 31

Manage/operate a City-owned asset: Yes (Calgary Zoo)

Mission: Take and inspire action to sustain wildlife and wild places

Mandate: The Calgary Zoological Society, operating as the “Wilder Institute Calgary Zoo”, develops, operates and promotes an integrated Zoological, botanical, and prehistoric park for the combined purposes of conservation, education, recreation and scientific study.

1. What 3-5 key results did your organization achieve in 2023 that contributed to:

- a) **one or more Council Strategic Directions- economic resilience, social resilience, climate resilience?**
- **Economic resilience:** Employed over 500 Calgarians and welcomed 1.5 million visitors, we estimate to have spent about \$75 million in salaries, purchasing and capital projects in the Calgary economy; significant reinvestment to ensure the Zoo offers relevant, timely, informative and engaging experiences to guests
 - **Social resilience:** Proudly supported the fee assistance program for low-income Calgarians with use of the program increasing by 84% vs. 2022 to a total of 31,685 visitors admitted at a 75% discount; volunteers and staff actively engage with guests to discuss conservation and how important it is to preserve plant and animal species and their habitats
 - **Climate resilience:** Continued to ensure 85% of waste diverted to composting and recycling and potable water use reduced by 4.5 million litres through use of well water where possible; maintenance and growth of one of Calgary’s largest urban forests; continuous upgrading of building systems for efficiency; hosted the second annual Alberta Biodiversity Festival, welcoming ~14,000 visitors to learn about biodiversity through 24 activity and learning stations across the zoo. (The event was so successful Alberta Environment and Parks extended their agreement to collaborate on the festival for an additional three years.)
- b) **Your own organization’s strategy?**
- Completed the Wild Canada re-development on time and under budget. The largest construction project in the organization’s history, added significant value for visitors as well as created a world-class sanctuary for polar bears, an iconic Canadian species. This project was an opportunity to amplify indigenous ways of knowing (see question 6 for more details) and educate on the impact of climate change.
 - Delivered the botanical Wildscapes exhibition as a value-added attraction for Calgarians during the construction of Wild Canada on time and under budget. 81% of visitors rated this experience a 9 or 10 out of 10.
 - Committed to two new conservation projects. Massasauga rattlesnakes in Ontario and endangered plants and polar bears in Newfoundland. This expands our conservation impact nationally, inspiring Calgarians with what a local organization can accomplish for our environment.

2. Performance measures help demonstrate the return on The City’s investment in a partner’s operations and support continuous improvement for Partners. What performance measures reflect your organization’s impact in 2023?

	Performance Measure Name	2021 results	2022 results	2023 results	How does this measure reflect your organization’s impact?
How much did you do?	Attendance	1.05M	1.26M	1.53M	We continue to be one of the top tourist attractions in the City, Province and western Canada setting an annual attendance record in 2023.
	Memberships	78K	86K	100K	The Wilder Institute Calgary Zoo continues to enjoy significant support from our community, reaching 100K paid members for the first time since 2018.
How well did you do it?	Total Revenues	\$54.1M	\$66.2M	\$79.6M	Revenues were bolstered by capital funding for our Canadian Wilds Re-Development and record attendance. We have built back stronger than ever after COVID.
	Likely to recommend	N/A	89%	94%	The well-received and value added Wildscapes exhibition added to the visitor experience.
	Conservation Awareness	n/a due to Covid	60%	91%	Our historic exit surveys say that supporting the Wilder Institute Calgary Zoo is a good way to support wildlife conservation, which is extremely important when identifying the total value that the Wilder Institute Calgary Zoo brings to the Calgary Community.
How are Calgarians better off?	City Operating Grant as percentage of revenue	15.2%	12.8%	11.0%	We significantly leverage the operating funding provided by the City allowing us to accomplish much more for Calgarians.
	Conservation Investment	\$3.4M	\$4.5M	\$6.7M	Having a local zoo at the forefront of wildlife conservation inspires Calgarians and bolsters the City’s reputation of being progressive and environmentally focused.
	Operating Spend	\$28.4M	\$36.1M	\$43.4M	The Zoo continues to be a strong and reliable economic contributor to the Calgary Community.
	Capital Investment	\$8.9M	\$16.1M	\$39.3M	We reinvest to ensure the Zoo offers relevant, timely and engaging experiences to guests.
	Interpretive Participants	1M+	1M+	1M+	95% of visitors are engaged with animal information and 30% receive conservation messaging.

3. Are there any additional stories or information you wanted to share beyond performance measures that demonstrate the impact of your organization's programs or services?

- This year saw the introduction of the Conservation Champions Club, providing free monthly conservation education for youths aged 14 to 17.
- Hosted 24 different types of special events across 156 days, from sellout gorilla breakfasts to our family-favourite Easter Eggstravaganza. Continuing to offer new and special experiences to our community.
- Because of our focus on animal wellbeing and welfare and leadership in Canada's zoo community, we actively participated in discussions with Senators and their staff on bills S-241 and S-15 in an effort to ensure expanded protection for non-domestic species under human care and for the public with respect to dangerous species.
- We continue to be consulted on reintroduction, translocation and conservation breeding of species at risk by organizations around the world.

4. Does your organization use benchmarks to evaluate and improve performance and operations, and increase your organization's impact?

a) Examples of benchmarks:

Our performance measurement system is a scorecard based on two types of performance measures:

- Financial: Achievement of budget targets established by zoo executive and the board at the beginning of the budgeted year.
- Qualitative: Progress toward long-term objectives and related targets identified in annual planning process.
 - Qualitative goals are based on tactics that correspond to our long-term strategic objectives and related current year strategic priorities. They cover all aspects of our organization's mission. Including, but not limited to: enhanced visitor experience, growth of our conservation impact, improved business processes, animal welfare, capital project execution and employee well-being.
 - Progress against the qualitative goals is rated as either: "Not achieved", "Partially Achieved", "Achieved" or "Exceeded"

The scorecard is updated by management and reviewed with the Board of Directors quarterly. Performance against the scorecard determines the size of the variable pay pool available for the year, ensuring alignment of compensation with performance.

b) What is your current and targeted performance in comparison to these benchmarks?

- In 2023, our performance against this scorecard was as follows:
 - Financials: Budgeted net income targets were exceeded
 - Qualitative goals: Out of 19 qualitative goals, 5 were rated as "Exceeded", 12 were rated as "Achieved" and 2 were rated as "Partially Achieved". Of the goals that were not "Achieved", most were conscious deferrals of work due to re-prioritization.
- Overall, the Board of Directors was pleased with the organization's performance in 2023.

c) How this information is being used to support continuous improvement?

- In 2023, we undertook a project to design a new strategic planning process for the organization. The goal of this improved process was to better define a set of strategies over a discrete 5-year time period, enhance our culture through more staff participation and alignment to our purpose,

vision and values and adopt best practices of comparable organizations (i.e. accredited zoos and aquariums). We engaged a consultant with a practice focused on strategy for zoos and aquariums and completed the design project in November 2023 with the full endorsement of the Board.

- In 2024, we are executing the process with the goal of a 5-year strategic plan approved by our Board in June.

5. How does your organization address equity, diversity or inclusion, or support racial equity?

- Beginning in 2022, WI/CZ embarked on an effort to better understand and address Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) within the organization by forming an internal staff/volunteer-based advisory committee. In 2023, the IDEA Advisory Committee was formed to strategically focus on providing direction and guidance on internal IDEA policies, programs, initiatives, and systems changes to create an organization-wide IDEA Action Plan.
- In 2023, the IDEA Advisory Committee conducted the organizations first DEI employee engagement survey to gather data on diversity within our workforce, and feedback on their experiences related to equity, inclusion and accessibility. From this survey feedback, WI/CZ has developed an action plan to guide IDEA initiatives across the organization. Our intention is to ensure IDEA is embedded within our Strategic Plan and that a 5-year IDEA Action Plan will be developed for 2025-2029.
- For our visitors, we have undertaken many initiatives to promote IDEA, below are a few examples:
 - Added segment to Biofact/Engaging the Visitor training, giving an overview of different tactile needs of visitors and ways to utilize the biofact collection to meet their sensory needs.
 - Offered sensory kits that can be used during day visits, ZOOLIGHTS, school programs and camps, which include learning tools such as wiggle seats, weighted stuffed animals, fidget tools, and more. During ZOOLIGHTS, we also offer a sensory story online to help neurodiverse visitors understand what to expect from ZOOLIGHTS before they arrive.
 - Our new Wild Canada zone features a fully inclusive play space in front of the polar bear viewing windows. The space can be navigated by wheelchair (rubber matting, maintained year-round free of snow and debris by our Facilities team) and tactile features are done at child wheelchair height. Our bronze statues and artwork were intentionally done at wheelchair height throughout Wild Canada.
 - Expanded the equity for schools served through our subsidy programs with sponsors now supporting grades 7-12 with transportation and program fee offsets.
 - Provided fully subsidized experiences for 15 campers in the summer (transportation, lunch and camp fee) and 14 over our fall PD Days
 - Free or discounted attendance to Special Events for Attendants so they can come and support those they care for (this is also done for day visitors)
 - Offering a “Friends and Family” bundle that was an affordable option for family units of all varieties.
 - In support of Pride Week 2023, we held a Drag Dinner. 150 guests attended and adult-only drag show and dinner in the BBQ tent.

6. How is your organization advancing Indigenous Truth and Reconciliation? (For example addressing specific calls to action in the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#) report or [The City’s White Goose Flying Report](#))

- In developing Wild Canada a key goal for the interpretive content was to incorporate Indigenous Ways of Knowing and promote Truth and Reconciliation. The following is a summary of how we did that.

- We brought on two Indigenous Community Engagement consultants from Siksika Nation to advise, share teachings, and help us foster relationships with communities.
 - We developed a four-pronged approach to weaving Indigenous Ways of Knowing into the interpretive journey, focusing on: amplifying the work of Indigenous artists, creating opportunities to profile Indigenous languages, infusing traditional plant teachings, and integrating the wisdom, perspective and stories of Elders and Knowledge Keepers.
 - We put out an open call to Indigenous artists from across Canada to create seven original works of art celebrating connection to the land across different ecological landscapes. We received more than 50 applications, and awarded seven contracts to artists, creating opportunities to showcase their artistic vision and connection to nature. Each piece was reproduced and installed on site in Wild Canada, while the originals will be displayed prominently in our administration building.
 - We created a traditional plant garden for educational and interpretive purposes, where culturally significant plants to the Blackfoot peoples will be cultivated and harvested, including sage, sweet grass, saskatoon berry, yarrow, aspen, and wild strawberry.
 - We held a Knowledge Keeper round table to listen and learn, were able to foster deeper relationships between our organization and Elders and Knowledge Keepers from Siksika Nation, Tsuut'ina Nation, Stoney Nakoda, and the Metis Nation. We built upon this to connect more deeply about languages, and share Blackfoot, Tsuut'ina and Stoney Nakoda language on habitat signage.
 - We formalized an honorarium policy to ensure that all Elders were properly and appropriately recognized and compensated for their time and wisdom.
 - We developed the programming for the opening ceremonies for Wild Canada with guidance from our two consultant and welcomed attendees and dignitaries through traditional songs and a blessing from the Elders. We also held a private smudge and blessing ceremony with our Executive and Leadership teams, conducted by the two Elders in advance of the grand opening. This moment honored the traditional practices of the Blackfoot People to bless a space before it opens, using the smoke from the sweetgrass used to cleanse and renew, and was accompanied by teachings on the significance of our relationships with the land, plants, and wildlife.
- Indigenous Truth and Reconciliation was incorporated into our Education programs in the following ways:
 - Our Zoo School Coordinator worked closely with a Blackfoot knowledge keeper to develop monthly activities based on phenology. These were offered to participating zoo school classes and numerous groups chose the knowledge keeper as their guest speaker for the week so he joined to share stories and Indigenous Science connections.
 - Incorporating Indigenous perspectives into virtual classrooms for the Conservation Champion Club and Conservation Champion Festival, where insights are shared on Indigenous traditional land stewardship.
 - Inviting three Traditional Knowledge Keepers, to share teachings at the Alberta Biodiversity Festival.

RESOURCES

7. Please estimate how The City's operating funding was allocated in 2023.

The \$8.8 million operating grant provided by the City is combined with our other sources of revenue and used to pay our \$62 million in total expenses, including facilities maintenance, staff compensation and various programs and services. A split by type of expenditure would be arbitrary.

%	Advertising and promotion
%	Programs or services
%	Office supplies and expenses
%	Professional and consulting fees

%	Staff compensation, development and training
%	Fund development
%	Purchased supplies and assets
%	Facility maintenance
%	Evaluation or Research
%	<i>Other, please name:</i>

8. Did volunteers support your operations in 2023? (including board and committee members)

How many volunteers?	579
Estimated total hours provided by volunteers:	61,740

9. Did your organization receive any awards or recognition in 2023, or have any client or participant feedback that you want to highlight?

- Awards received in 2023 included the following:
 - Avenue Magazine (public vote)
 - Winner - Best Unique Wedding Venue
 - Calgary's Child Magazine 2022 Parents' Choice Awards (Public vote)
 - Winner – Best Winter Events for Families, ZOOLIGHTS
 - Winner – Best Family Fun Location
 - Honourable Mention – Best Tourist/Family Attraction
 - Honourable Mention – Best Annual Family Festival
 - Honourable Mention – Best Place to have a children's party
 - Trip Advisor – Travelers' Choice Award Winner (based on reviews)
 - Best of Local – Winner – Best Attractions in Calgary (public vote)

- The following is selected feedback we had from visitors:
 - "I felt the hospitality throughout my visit. I've been greeted around every spot by the very friendly staff members who also explained the habitat of the animals. The visit felt fun and I learned at the same time. Big thanks to the Calgary Zoo; we will definitely visit again."
 - 'Had a great time. The Volunteers were great!'
 - 'We have been to the zoo multiple times and the kids love it.'
 - 'I was touched by the beauty of Wildscapes.'
 - "I stumbled upon a conservation parade and was pleasantly surprised with crowd engagement."
 - We saw live music and they were fantastic. My 1-year-old loved it and was clapping along, so one of the girls was engaging with him and smiling and clapping back at him. It was a very special experience. It is clear the employees care a lot about the visitors."
 - "The staff and even volunteers are always so helpful and informative. They always have answers to my questions! Thanks for the great work."

10. How did your organization address climate change in 2023, for example, operational or program changes that reduced greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), air/water pollution, or waste that aligned with [The City's Climate Change Program](#) including Council's Climate Emergency Declaration?

Continued to ensure 85% of waste diverted to composting and recycling and potable water use reduced by 4.5 million litres through use of well water where possible; maintenance and growth of one of Calgary's largest urban forests; continuous upgrading of building systems for efficiency as systems and components are replaced.

11. Are there any projects, initiatives or plans for 2024 that you want to briefly highlight?

- Hosting the AZA Conference: In September 2024, we will host ~3,000 delegates from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) as one of the first conferences held in the BMO center. In addition to showcasing our organization as a world class, accredited zoo, we will also be bringing a substantial number of visitors to Calgary from around the world who otherwise may not have reason to visit our city. This is a positive economic and reputational impact for the city.
- Completing our AZA accreditation inspection: Every five years we must complete a rigorous inspection by our accreditation body to ensure we are achieving the constantly evolving standards for animal welfare and zoo management. Maintaining this accreditation gives Calgarians the comfort that they are supporting the highest standards of animal welfare when they visit their zoo.
- Developing a new strategic and capital plan: After completing a full recovery from COVID in 2023 we are developing plans for the next 5 years of how we can make a difference for both biodiversity and our community. (See question 4c for more details)
- Implementing dynamic pricing: In addition to supporting the fee assistance program, we have also implemented dynamic pricing in February 2024 as a key tool for maintaining accessibility for Calgarians. We view this as an effective solution to discounting as those visitors who are more price sensitive can self-select and book their tickets ahead to receive lower prices. This helps to address the needs of Calgarians who don't meet the low income cut off to qualify for the fee assistance program but who nevertheless might struggle to pay full admission fees.

THE FOLLOWING SECTION IS FOR CIVIC PARTNERS MANAGING CITY-OWNED ASSETS

12. CAPITAL PROJECTS AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

Asset: The Calgary Zoo

a) How did you use The City's capital funding in 2023?

Project	City Funding	Benefit (service improvement, efficiency,
Caribou Holding Facility	\$245K	Improved/new condition
Stucco Repair Program	\$188K	Improved condition
Aviary Upgrades	\$178K	Improved condition
Asphalt & Concrete Repair Program	\$147K	Improved condition
Repair Handrails and Fencing Program	\$127K	Improved condition
Paint Maintenance Program	\$110K	Improved condition
Floor Maintenance/Replacement	\$63K	Improved condition
Various Smaller	\$543K	Improved condition
CW Re-development	\$4,250K	Improved/new condition