Development Associate & Executive Support

FLSA Status: Non-Exempt
Reports To: Membership & Development Supervisor
Works Closely With: Chief Executive Officer

About Wildlife Prairie Park

Wildlife Prairie Park is a 1,800-acre zoological park near Peoria, Illinois, dedicated to conservation, education, recreation, and creating unforgettable outdoor experiences. Through our animal exhibits, educational programs, lodging, events, trails, and natural spaces, we connect people with nature while advancing our mission of conservation and environmental stewardship.

Position Summary

Wildlife Prairie Park is seeking a highly organized, relationship-focused professional to serve as our Development Associate. This position plays an important role in supporting fundraising efforts, donor stewardship, special events, and development operations while also providing executive and administrative support to the Chief Executive Officer.

The Development Associate reports to the Membership & Development Supervisor and works in daily coordination with the CEO to support donor engagement, fundraising campaigns, board relations, executive projects, and organizational initiatives.

The successful candidate is a strong communicator who is professional, discreet, detail-oriented, and capable of managing multiple priorities in a fast-paced environment. This role regularly interacts with donors, board members, sponsors, community leaders, guests, volunteers, and staff and serves as a positive ambassador for Wildlife Prairie Park.

What Success Looks Like

Success in this position will be measured by:

- Timely completion of donor stewardship activities and follow-up.
- Accurate and organized donor and membership records.
- Effective coordination of fundraising campaigns and events.
- Outstanding service provided to donors, sponsors, board members, and guests.
- Responsiveness to executive priorities and organizational needs.
- Strong attention to detail, confidentiality, and follow-through.

Key Responsibilities

Development & Donor Relations

- Support donor cultivation, stewardship, and relationship-building efforts through professional correspondence, acknowledgments, impact communications, invitations, prospect research, and personalized follow-up.
- Maintain accurate donor, prospect, sponsor, pledge, membership, and fundraising records within the Park's CRM and database systems.
- Coordinate stewardship schedules and donor touchpoints to ensure commitments and communications are completed promptly.
- Assist with online, annual, and seasonal fundraising campaigns and monitor campaign activity and results.
- Provide support for gift processing, donor acknowledgments, fundraising reports, mailing lists, and database management.
- Assist with tracking donor retention, sponsorship activity, campaign performance, event revenue, and other development metrics.
- Prepare reports, summaries, and development materials as requested.
- Maintain strict confidentiality regarding donor information and organizational records.
- Perform other development-related duties as assigned.

Annual Gala & Fundraising Events

- Coordinate live and silent auction activities from solicitation and procurement through event execution.
- Work closely with donors, sponsors, vendors, volunteers, and internal departments to support successful fundraising events.
- Assist with auction software, descriptions, displays, bid materials, donor recognition, sponsorship fulfillment, registration, and guest communications.
- Coordinate event logistics, timelines, and post-event follow-up.
- Assist with event reconciliation, donor acknowledgments, reporting, and stewardship efforts.
- Support additional fundraising events, donor activities, and special projects throughout the year.

Executive & Board Support

- Manage the CEO's calendar, scheduling priorities, meeting logistics, and follow-up activities.

- Serve as a professional point of contact on behalf of the CEO with donors, board members, community partners, vendors, sponsors, and other stakeholders.
- Coordinate executive meetings, prepare supporting materials, track action items, and assist with organizational follow-through.
- Conduct research and support special projects by gathering information, coordinating with departments, monitoring deadlines, and preparing summaries.
- Assist with board-related communications, meeting coordination, and administrative support as assigned.
- Exercise sound judgment and maintain strict confidentiality when handling sensitive donor, personnel, financial, legal, and organizational information.

Marketing & Administrative Support

- Print and distribute approved marketing materials throughout the Park.
- Maintain community calendar listings and assist with event promotion efforts.
- Coordinate documentary and presentation scheduling for Park theater programming.
- Support marketing and communications projects as assigned.
- Assist with administrative projects and organizational initiatives that contribute to the Park's mission and guest experience.

Organizational & Guest Support

- Represent Wildlife Prairie Park in a professional, positive, service-oriented, and mission-focused manner.
- Deliver exceptional customer service to donors, members, sponsors, guests, volunteers, and community partners.
- Utilize technology, digital communication tools, and approved artificial intelligence tools to improve efficiency, productivity, and communication while maintaining confidentiality and adhering to Park policies.
- Support a culture of hospitality, stewardship, conservation, and guest engagement.
- Work occasional evenings, weekends, holidays, outdoor assignments, and special events as business needs require.

Qualifications

Required

- Associate degree or an equivalent combination of education, training, and relevant experience.

- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.
- Strong organizational skills, attention to detail, project management abilities, and follow-through.
- Ability to handle multiple responsibilities and meet deadlines in a fast-paced environment.
- Professionalism, discretion, initiative, and sound judgment.
- Demonstrated ability to maintain confidentiality and manage sensitive information appropriately.
- Proficiency with Microsoft Office, including Outlook, Word, Excel, and PowerPoint.
- Ability and willingness to learn and utilize technology and approved AI tools to improve workplace productivity.
- Ability to pass a criminal background check.

Preferred

- Two or more years of experience in nonprofit development, fundraising, executive support, hospitality, tourism, membership programs, communications, event coordination, customer service, or a related field.
- Experience working with donor databases, CRM systems, fundraising software, event management platforms, or auction software.
- Experience supporting executives, boards of directors, fundraising campaigns, sponsorship programs, or donor stewardship efforts.
- Demonstrated customer service or hospitality experience with a strong focus on building positive relationships and exceptional guest experiences.

Physical Demands & Work Environment

This position requires extended periods of computer work, frequent communication by telephone and electronic means, indoor and outdoor assignments, and occasional lifting or movement of event materials weighing up to 25 pounds. The position may require working in varying weather conditions during outdoor events and activities.

Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable qualified individuals to perform the essential functions of the position.

Work Schedule

This is a full-time, non-exempt position. The schedule generally follows the operational needs of Wildlife Prairie Park and may include occasional evenings, weekends, holidays, fundraising events, donor functions, and special Park activities.

Equal Opportunity & Inclusive Hiring

Wildlife Prairie Park welcomes candidates whose experiences reflect the skills needed for this role, including transferable experience gained through employment, military service, education, volunteer work, community involvement, leadership activities, or other relevant experiences.

We are committed to creating a workplace where individuals with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives can thrive while contributing to our mission of conservation, education, recreation, and hospitality.