



MARYLAND
ZOO

DEAI STRATEGIC PLAN

DIVERSITY **EQUITY** **ACCESSIBILITY** **INCLUSION**



The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore embraces and cultivates diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) for its workforce, visitors, volunteers, audiences, and vendors.

MISSION

The Maryland Zoo is committed to the people who carry out our mission of providing exceptional animal care, building empathy, and supporting the conservation of wild places. As a science-based organization, we value biodiversity and recognize that it is critical to the future of our world. To create a thriving ecosystem built on these principles, we strive to be a welcoming, diverse, considerate, and respectful place to work, visit, volunteer, and learn.



VISION

We create a welcoming environment that reflects the humanity of our community and celebrates the unique attributes that make our staff, volunteers, and visitors who they are. By engaging people in the wonders of the living world, we ensure human connection to the health of our planet and the creatures that call it home.

VALUES

Welcoming and Accepting: Our Zoo creates a sense of belonging and connection that is supported through engagement with people of all backgrounds and abilities.

Safe: Our Zoo is free of bias, disruptive attitudes, and behavior that threatens others or impedes inclusivity.

Respectful: Our Zoo is a place where people work cooperatively together and are treated with dignity and kindness.

DEAI GOALS - 2024 to 2032

THEME AUDIENCE PRIMARY GOAL	SUBGOAL/STEPS	MEASUREMENT	COMPLETION DATE
MULTILINGUALISM			
1. Increase number of Hispanic/ Latine attendees at Zoo	1.a. Determine baseline of current attendees	Conduct survey or use tools to determine audience size	2024
	1.b. Marketing messaging, advertising, outreach in community	Inclusion in advertising; attendance at community meetings or fairs	Initiate in 2024
		Increase baseline percentage attendance by 10% every year	Initiate in 2025
2. Improve access for and communication with Spanish-speaking guests	2.a. Install Zoo Keys with Spanish translation	Installation	2024
		Evaluate usage of Zoo Keys by conducting annual survey or renovating boxes	2025 and thereafter
		Success defined as 10% use by Hispanic/Latine attendees	
	2.b. Signage - phase in QR codes or direct translation for exhibit signage, wayfinding, SSA menu, and interpretive signage	Evaluation of signage to modify	2025
		Installation	2027
	2.c. Support employees to learn Spanish or hire employees who know Spanish: V-Serv and Education teams are priority	At least 5 employees pass an elementary on-line examination in Spanish	2027
	2.d. Create basic list of Spanish phrases for front-facing staff and presenters	Produce and post list	2024
	2.e. Support volunteers to learn Spanish	At least 5 volunteers pass an elementary on-line examination in Spanish	2027
3. Improve access for and communication with the deaf community	2.f. Make translation devices available for tours, train experience, Keeper Chats	Availability of 20 devices	2029
	3.a. Ensure that sign language interpretation assistance is prominent on website and other marketing materials	Prominent placement	2024
	3.b. Support employees to learn ASL or hire employees who know ASL: V Serv and Education teams will be top priority	At least 5 employees earn ASL certificates or complete course	2027
	3.c. Make assisted listening devices available for tours, train experience, Keeper Chats, SSA offerings	Availability of 20 devices	2025

DEAI GOALS - 2024 to 2032

THEME AUDIENCE PRIMARY GOAL	SUBGOAL/STEPS	MEASUREMENT	COMPLETION DATE
EQUALITY OF ACCESS			
1. Expand partnerships with groups supporting people with autism, neurodivergence, Alzheimer's disease, and developmental disabilities; make changes in response to input	1.a. Meet with partners to understand needs	Attend meetings	2023, 2024
	1.b. Collaborate with partners to design programs to accommodate needs	Designing new programs	2024, 2025
	1.c. Modernize aging mobility vehicle	Replace current aging vehicle	2025
2. Support nursing parents	2.a. Install Nursing Pods in Picnic Pavilion	Installation	2024 or 2025
3. Support adults with disabilities in need of changing stations	3.a. Install changing stations in Zoo Central or Penguin Coast and in any new bathroom construction	Installation of two changing stations in Zoo Central or Penguin Coast	2026
4. Eliminate steep grades	4.a. Between Goat Corral and Meadow	Modification	2024, 2025
	4.b. Behind Mansion House	Modification	2025
	4.c. Bottom end of Main Valley (between Paw Print Park and Naturalist Lodge)	Modification	2029
5. Renovate fencing and walls on African Journey boardwalk to create better viewing for people in accessibility vehicles	5.a. Design new concept	Complete design	2025
	5.b. Renovate	Complete renovations	2026- 2027
6. Create a play area on Celebration Hill that is accessible to all	6.a. Raise funds	Raise funds	2029
	6.b. Construct with ADA compliant pathway	Installation	2030
7. Make VIP area at elephant building ADA accessible	7.a. Fund, design, and construct	Completion of construction	2032
8. Make doors ADA accessible at Penguin Coast, Mansion House, and Chimp Forest	8.a. Fund, design, construct	Construction	2031

DEAI GOALS - 2024 to 2032

THEME AUDIENCE PRIMARY GOAL	SUBGOAL/STEPS	MEASUREMENT	COMPLETION DATE
9. Add handrails at Northern Passage (near bald eagle habitat)	9.a. Fund, design, and construct	Construction	2030
10. Provide more tools for all people to understand messaging at gatherings	10.a. Provide closed captions for formal presentations, All Staff meetings, Volunteer meetings	Closed captioning provided	2026
11. Train staff and volunteers to understand needs of sensory sensitive individuals	11.a. Continue partnership with KultureCity for sensory inclusive certification	75% of employees and volunteers to pass annual survey	2024
		Increase pass rate by 5% each year, up to 85%	2026
REACHING DISENFRANCHISED COMMUNITIES			
1. Increase outreach to the immediate community, specifically 21215 and 21217 zip codes	1.a. Attend community fairs	Attendance at fairs	2023 ongoing
	1.b. Offer free family memberships	Provide 30 memberships per year	2023 and 2024
		Increase to 60 per year	2027
	1.c. Offer affordable options for paid experiences, such as camps and Zoo offerings	Provide discounts for camps, rides, and offerings	2027
2. Improve access by community partners to Zoo	2.a. Create free transit connection to Charm City Circulator	Set up circulator shuttle system	2027, 2028
3. Diversify vendors on capital projects and procurement in all departments		Meet State aspirational goals: 29% MBE, 15% small business, 1% veteran-owned	2027
BOARD, STAFF, & VOLUNTEER DIVERSITY			
1. Diversify members of Board	1.a. Create a Board that reflects the demographics of Maryland	2020 Maryland Census	2027
2. Keep Board apprised of DEAI goals & programs	2.a. Ask Trustees on DEAI Committee to provide reports at Board meetings	Provide reports	2024
3. Create a team of employees that reflects the demographics of Maryland	3.a. Evaluate composition of teams; prioritize teams that are under-represented in their respective fields	Maryland Census	2025
	3.b. Hire and retain employees to create such diverse workforce	Will reflect Maryland Census	2029

DEAI GOALS - 2024 to 2032

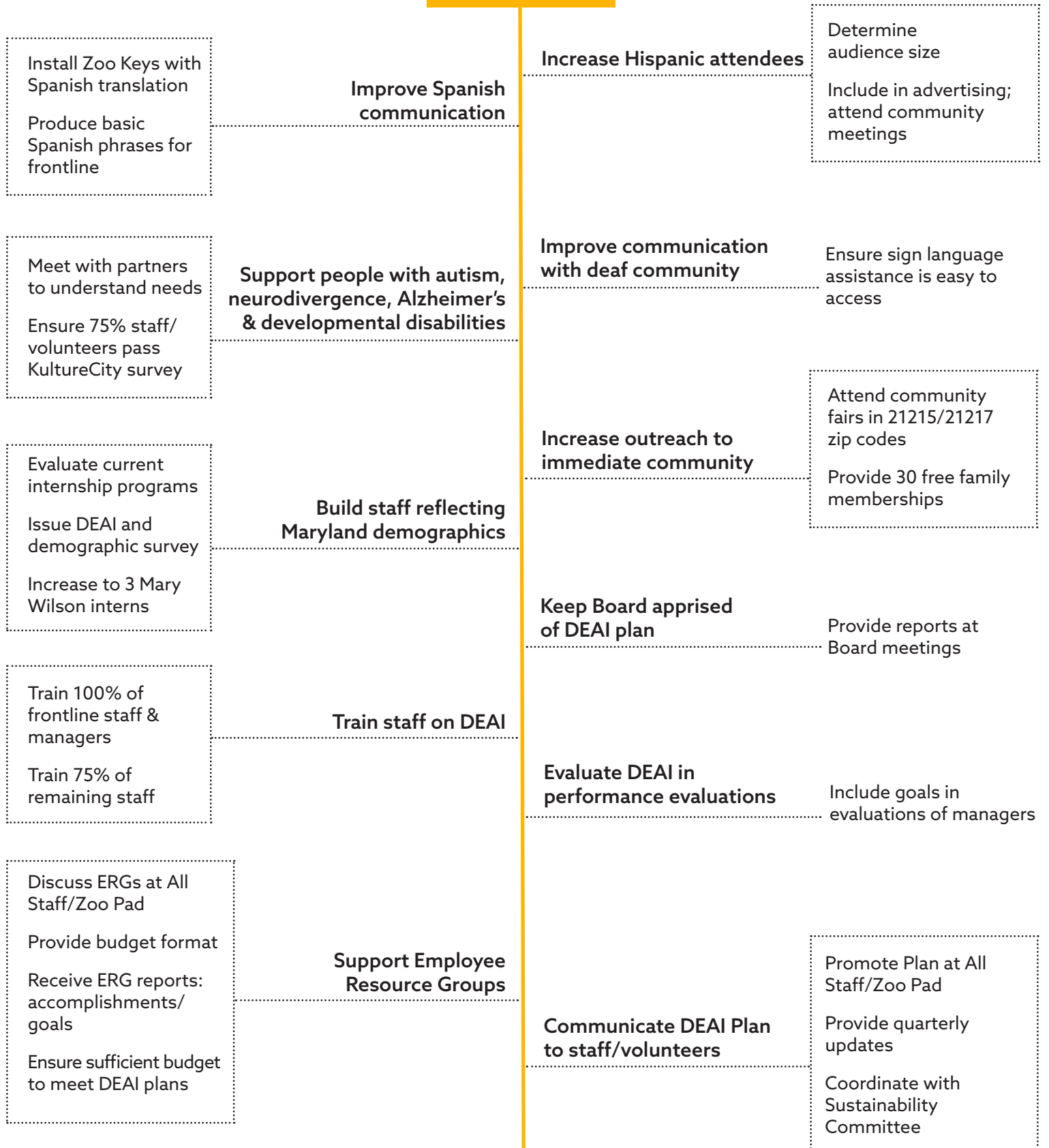
THEME AUDIENCE PRIMARY GOAL	SUBGOAL/STEPS	MEASUREMENT	COMPLETION DATE
(Cont.) Create a team of employees that reflects the demographics of Maryland	3.c. Improve partnerships with 4 local HBCUs to enhance recruitment	Identify contacts at HBCUs; post on HBCU job boards	2025
	3.d. Expand Mary Wilson internship program	Increase number of interns every other year by one to get to total of 5	2028
	3.e. Ensure consideration of under-represented communities in other internship programs	Complete evaluation of programs	2024
		Interns (from 2024 through 2029) will reflect diversity of Maryland Census	2029
	3.f. Confirm importance of formal education requirements	Research entry standards for each department; remove formal education requirements where possible	2025
	3.g. Evaluate need to improve ADA accessibility and reasonable accommodations for employees to perform work	Conduct evaluation	2025
		Make recommended modifications	2026
4. Understand diversity of employee base	4.a. Conduct demographic survey in association with a DEAI survey	Issue survey	2024
5. Diversify composition of volunteers (recognizing that volunteering is often much easier for people with stable and upper incomes)	5.a. Promote volunteer opportunities in immediate communities for Zoo events and general volunteer programs	Social media postings and attendance at community fairs/meetings	2024 and 2025
	5.b. Train volunteers on DEAI initiatives and policies	Conduct training sessions; 85% of volunteers to complete every year	2025 and ongoing
COMMUNITIES OF TRUST & WELL-BEING			
1. Maintain and build levels of trust among employees	1.a. Create a survey that better defines "trust" (making it less subjective) and provides better guidance for action; determine baseline	Create survey	2025
	1.b. Conduct trust survey every two years	Issue survey	2025, 2027, 2029, 2031
	1.c. Improve baseline	5% increase every two years	2025
2. Evaluate pay equity and improve where needed (see Sustainability Plan for similar goals)	2.a. Evaluate pay equity	HR Department evaluates pay equity for all departments	2024, 2025
	2.b. Implement recommended improvements	Implementation	2025 and onward
3. Increase use of mental health support tools and access to services	3.a. Create partnerships with mental health service providers and counseling		2025
	3.b. Train managers in mental health first aid training	Implement training for all existing and new managers	2026

DEAI GOALS - 2024 to 2032

THEME AUDIENCE PRIMARY GOAL	SUBGOAL/STEPS	MEASUREMENT	COMPLETION DATE
DEAI FLUENCY			
1. Train staff on all DEAI initiatives, including legal overview	1.a. Hold training sessions of managers and public-facing employees	Schedule training session; require annually for 100% of Visitor Services, Education, Security, Keeper Chat presenters, and new managers	Initiate 2024
	1.b. Hold training of remaining employees	Schedule training session for 75% of remaining workforce each year	Initiate 2024
	1.c. Evaluate training sessions	Issue surveys and review responses	2024
2. Evaluate DEAI and accomplishment of all these goals in performance evaluations	2.a. Evaluate DEAI performance and identify DEAI goals for managerial employees	Include narrative and goals in performance evaluations	2023, 2024
3. Promote and support Employee Resource Groups	3.a. Advertise support for ERGs	Discuss at monthly All Staff meetings; promote in ZooPad	ongoing
	3.b. Assist ERGs in creating realistic budgets	Provide budget format	ongoing
	3.c. Require ERGs to identify annual accomplishments and goals of future years	Receive reports from ERGs	2024
4. Allocate sufficient funds to budget to support DEAI goals		Each annual budget is sufficient to meet DEAI plans for the given year	2024 and onward
5. Develop communication strategy to promote DEAI Strategic Plan to staff and volunteers	5.a. Announce at All Staff, include in Zoo Pad	Promote Plan	2024
	5.b. Provide quarterly updates	Updates provided	Initiate in 2024
	5.c. Integrate with 2023 Sustainability Plan and determine areas of overlap	Hold meeting with Sustainability Committee each year	Initiate in 2024

TIMELINE OF DEAI GOALS:

2024



2025

Strive for 10% use of Zoo Keys - Spanish Evaluate signage for QR codes or direct translation	Improve Spanish communication	Increase Hispanic attendees	Increase 2024 baseline by 10%
		Improve communication with deaf community	Purchase 20 assisted listening devices
Replace aging mobility vehicle Ensure 80% staff/volunteers pass KultureCity survey	Support people with autism, neurodivergence, Alzheimer's & developmental disabilities	Increase outreach to immediate community	Provide 30 free family memberships
Evaluate staff composition Identify contacts at HBCUs; post on job boards Remove formal education requirements where possible Evaluate need to improve ADA accommodations	Build staff reflecting Maryland demographics	Improve ADA safety & accessibility	Eliminate steep grades: Goat Corral/ Meadow/Red Panda Design fencing to improve sightlines: African Journey
		Support nursing parents	Install Nursing Pods: Picnic Pavilion
Train 100% of frontline staff & managers Train 75% of remaining staff	Train staff on DEAI	Evaluate DEAI in performance evaluations	Include goals in evaluations of managers
Promote/fund ERGs	Support Employee Resource Groups	Diversify composition of volunteers	Promote opportunities via social media & community gatherings Train 85% of volunteers on DEAI
Issue effective survey & determine baseline Evaluate pay equity/ implement	Build trust among employees	Increase use of Mental Health support	Partner w/ mental health providers

2026

Ensure 85% staff/
volunteers pass
KultureCity survey

**Support people with autism,
neurodivergence, Alzheimer's
& developmental disabilities**

Increase Hispanic attendees

Increase 2025 baseline
by 10%

Increase to 4 Mary
Wilson interns

Adopt
recommended ADA
accommodations

**Build staff reflecting
Maryland demographics**

**Increase outreach to
immediate community**

Provide 30 free family
memberships

**Improve ADA safety
& accessibility**

Install 2 changing
stations: Zoo Central
or Penguin Coast

Train 100% of
frontline staff &
managers

Train 75% of
remaining staff

Train staff on DEAI

**Provide tools for all people
to understand messaging**

Provide closed
captioning at all large
gatherings

**Diversify composition
of volunteers**

Train 85% of volunteers
on DEAI

Promote/fund ERGs

**Support Employee
Resource Groups**

**Increase use of
Mental Health support**

Train all existing and
new managers

2027

Implement signage
recommendations

Support 5 staff & 5
volunteers to learn
elementary Spanish

**Improve Spanish
communication**

Increase Hispanic attendees

Increase 2026 baseline
by 10%

**Improve communication
with deaf community**

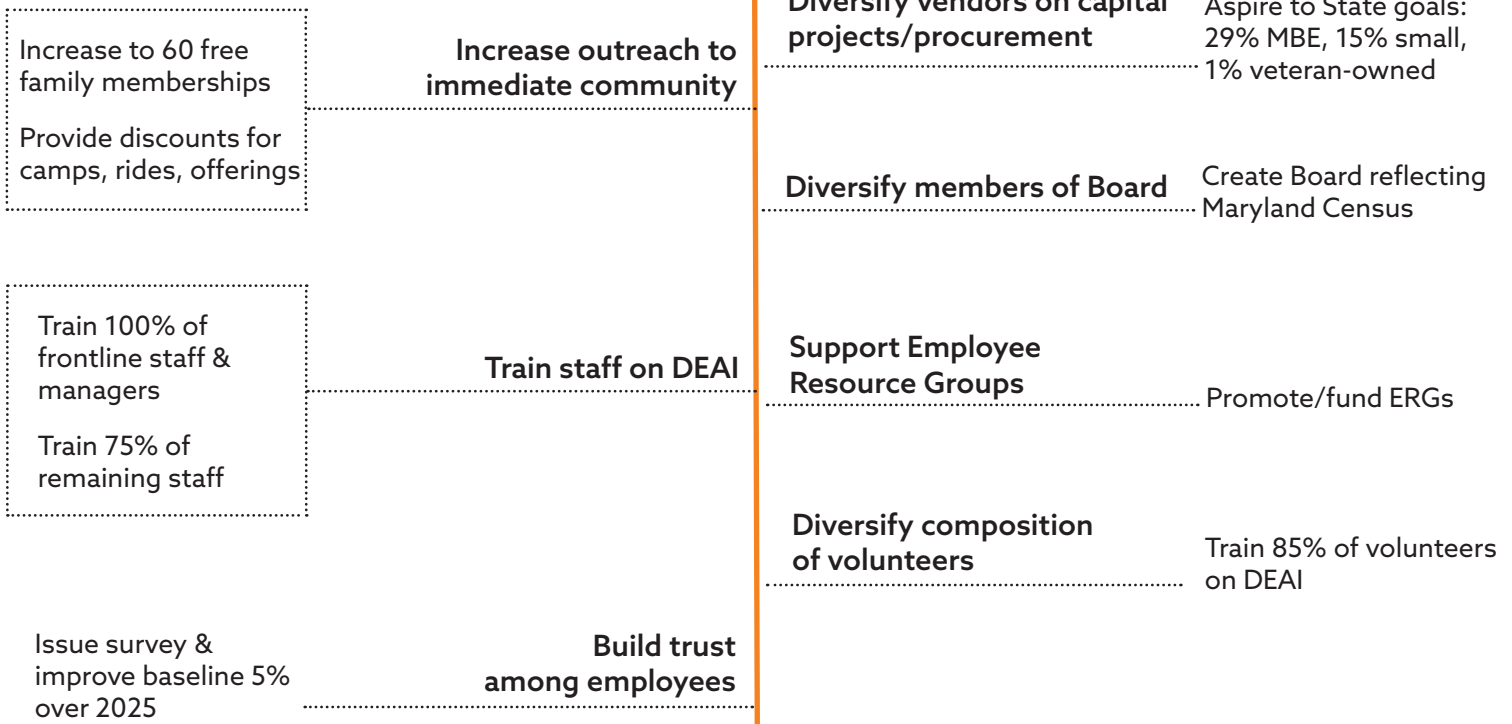
Support 5 employees to
earn ASL certificates

Ensure 85% staff/
volunteers pass
KultureCity survey

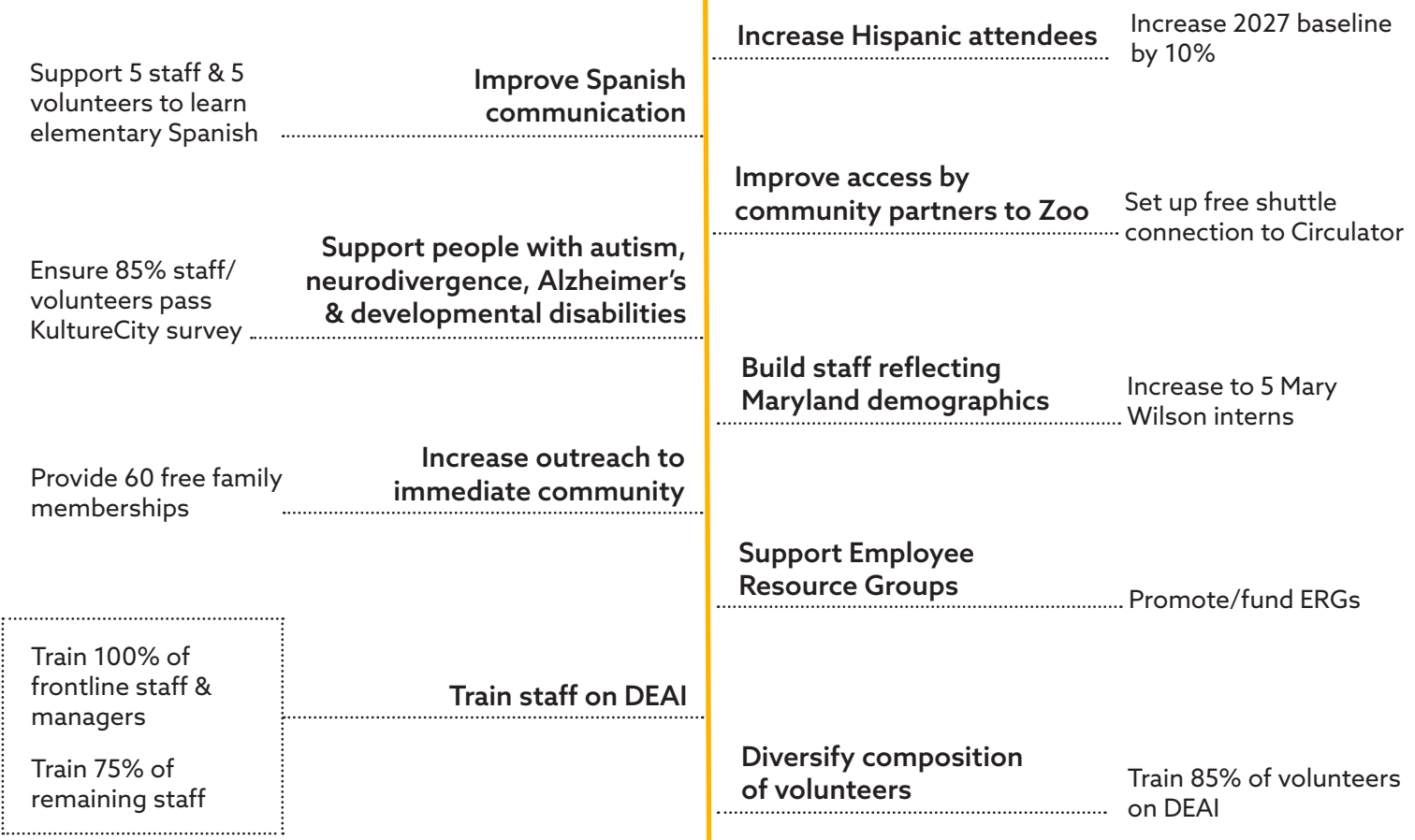
**Support people with autism,
neurodivergence, Alzheimer's
& developmental disabilities**

**Improve ADA safety
& accessibility**

Renovate fencing to
improve sightlines:
African Journey



2028



2029

Make 20 translation devices available

Support 5 staff & 5 volunteers to learn elementary Spanish

Improve Spanish communication

Increase Hispanic attendees

Increase 2028 baseline by 10%

Ensure 85% staff/volunteers pass KultureCity survey

Support people with autism, neurodivergence, Alzheimer's & developmental disabilities

Increase outreach to immediate community

Provide 60 free family memberships

Create staff reflecting Maryland Census

Create internships reflecting Maryland Census

Build staff reflecting Maryland demographics

Improve ADA safety & accessibility

Modify steep grades: bottom end of Main Valley

Raise funds to build accessible play area

Train 100% of frontline staff & managers

Train 75% of remaining staff

Train staff on DEAI

Diversify composition of volunteers

Train 85% of volunteers on DEAI

Promote/fund ERGs

Support Employee Resource Groups

Build trust among employees

Issue survey & improve baseline 5% over 2027

2030

Support 5 staff & 5 volunteers to learn elementary Spanish

Improve Spanish communication

Increase Hispanic attendees

Increase 2029 baseline by 10%

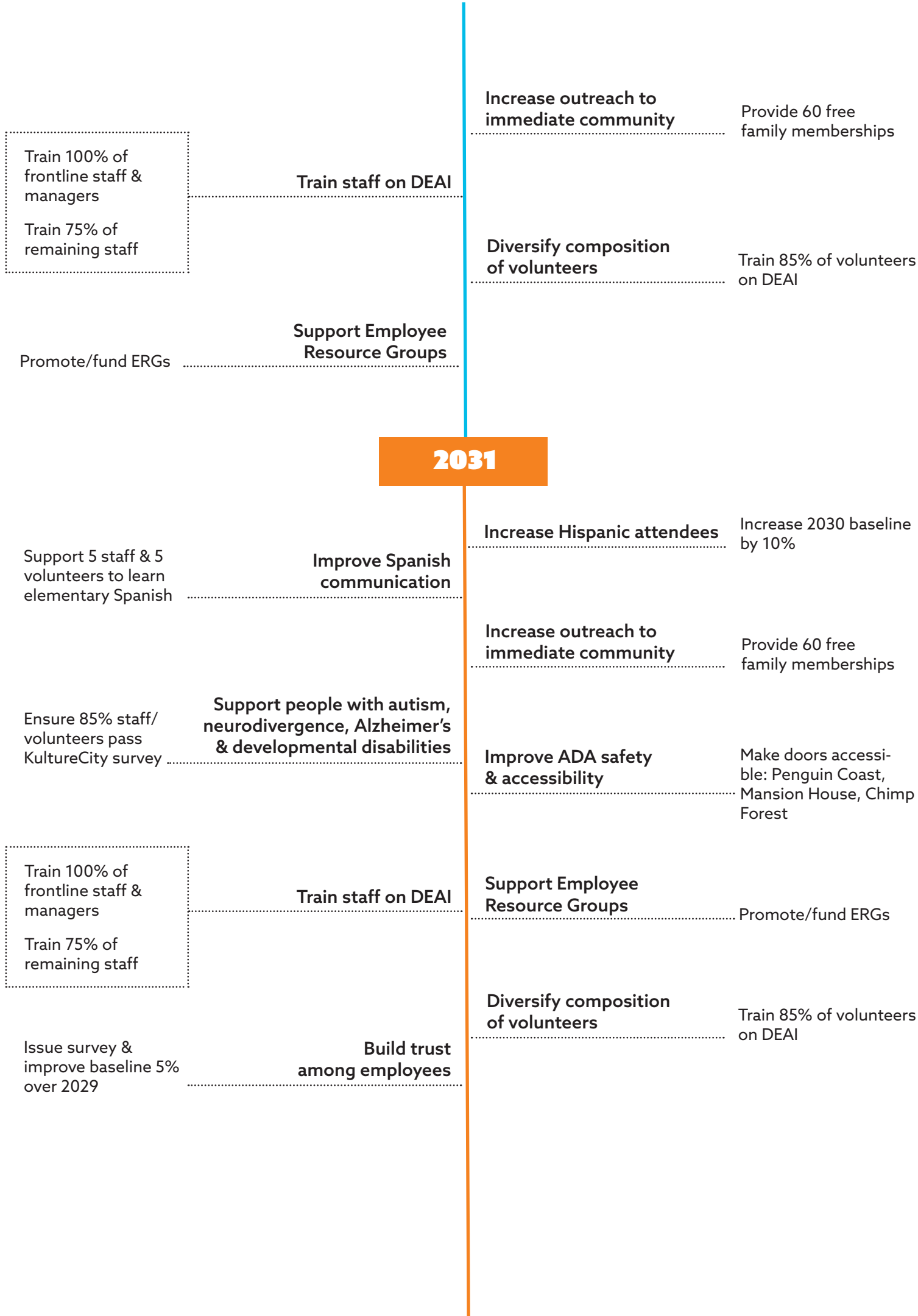
Ensure 85% staff/volunteers pass KultureCity survey

Support people with autism, neurodivergence, Alzheimer's & developmental disabilities

Improve ADA safety & accessibility

Construct accessible play area

Add handrails: Northern Passage/ bald eagle



2032

Support 5 staff & 5
volunteers to learn
elementary Spanish

**Improve Spanish
communication**

Increase Hispanic attendees

Increase 2031 baseline
by 10%

Ensure 85% staff/
volunteers pass
KultureCity survey

**Support people with autism,
neurodivergence, Alzheimer's
& developmental disabilities**

**Increase outreach to
immediate community**

Provide 60 free
family memberships

Train 100% of
frontline staff &
managers

Train 75% of
remaining staff

Train staff on DEAI

**Improve ADA safety
& accessibility**

Make VIP area
accessible at
elephant building

**Diversify composition
of volunteers**

Train 85% of volunteers
on DEAI

Promote/fund ERGs

**Support Employee
Resource Groups**