



Legacy Fund Progress Report

January 2017



COMO PARK
ZOO & CONSERVATORY





LEGACY AMENDMENT ARTS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE GRANT

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory

FY 2016 Report Minnesota Legislative Reference Library

January 2017

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory is pleased to submit a current review of our work and accomplishments with the generous appropriation from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund of the Minnesota Legacy Amendment. Como has created projects that interweave the arts, culture, and history for the guests that participate, along with increasing the number of participants and students that are exposed to arts and culture.

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory is one of the top visited cultural destinations in the state of Minnesota, with nearly 2 million visitors each year, because it's free, interactive, welcoming, and accessible for families. Como Park Zoo and Conservatory celebrates diversity in many forms, across cultures, ethnicity, economics and generations and visitors come from all over the state.

Grant Program Overview (brief): Minnesota Laws, 2015, 1st Special Session, Chapter 2, Article 4, Section 2, Subd. 6 awarded \$1,960,000 to Como Park Zoo and Conservatory for projects and program development. The grant requires a 25% match to come from other source of funding and includes a 2% administrative cost.

Funded initiatives fall into the following categories: EdZooCation Programs, Special Exhibits, Teen Conservation Community(YEP), Forecourt Gardens, Residency Program, Habitat Renewal and Music Series.

Oversight of these projects is the responsibility of Como Park Zoo and Conservatory a division of the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Department and key senior staff. Questions about these projects may be directed to:

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MUSIC SERIES

Music Under Glass and Groovin' in the Garden are free, eight week, live music series inside the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory's two-acres of tropical gardens during the winter months and out on the front lawn of the Conservatory in the summer. These concerts feature Minnesota artists and are held outside of the standard public hours and introduce the arts to a new audience. In addition, during the summer months Music Mondays featured strolling artists throughout the Zoo grounds.

Outcomes:

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory offered 18 Minnesota bands, totaling 86 musicians, the opportunity to showcase their art in a paid performance at the number one cultural institution in Minnesota during the series of Music Under Glass and Groovin' in the Garden. In total 32 music events were available that over 16,000 Minnesotans enjoyed, while increasing appreciation to local music and musicians in a non-traditional setting.

Funding & Duration

Fiscal Year 16 Budget = \$31,235.76
July 1, 2015-June 30, 2017

FTEs
.25

COMO RESIDENCY PROGRAM

The Como residency program is designed to be a high-dosage program that connects elementary school classrooms with the plants and animals of Como Park Zoo and Conservatory. Students learn about different biomes and have the chance to apply the skills needed for STEM focused careers.

For Schools in the Twin Cities Metro Region:

The Twin Cities Metro residency program is a week-long learning opportunity for elementary school classrooms. Teachers move their classrooms to Como for an entire week to participate in hands-on, interdisciplinary, STEM focused activities. Como education staff partner with classroom teachers to deliver a program where students use the scientific method to do real-world learning about the plants and animals of Como. Teacher training is provided over the summer to help teachers prepare curriculum to teach during the trip and to incorporate the program throughout the school year in their classroom.

For Schools in Greater Minnesota:

During the 2016-2017 school year, Como expanded the residency program to schools in Greater Minnesota including Faribault, Hinckley and Saint Cloud. This program consists of a combination of Como education staff visiting student's classrooms, the class visiting Como, and lessons that can be taught in the classroom throughout the school year with support from Como staff. The program includes hands-on science and engineering activities along with the chance to get up close with the plants and animals of Como.

Outcomes:

During the 2015-2016 school year we served 752 students, worked with 70 educators and had 191 parent volunteers participate in the residency program. Students are given pre and post tests and teachers have the opportunity to give feedback on the program. Some of the highlights from our evaluation include:

- A 61% increase in students' understanding of how to use engineering in how to solve problems.
- A 30% increase in students' knowledge of what can be recycled, composted and thrown in the garbage.
- A 25% increase in students' knowledge of how their actions affect plants and animals all over the world.

Teachers reported that the residency program had a positive impact on their students' ability to retain information, provided authentic hands-on experiences, changed the way they taught science (now incorporating the scientific method), and showed them how much further they could go as an educator.

Funding & Duration

Fiscal Year 16 Budget = \$228,837.12
Total Non-grant Funding = \$20,000.00
August 1, 2015-May 30, 2017

FTEs
1.97



EDZOOICATION PROGRAMS

LIL' EXPLORERS, NATURE'S ENGINEERS
and PROJECT PASSPORT



LIL' EXPLORERS

Lil' Explorers is a free, hands on programs offered Thursdays from 10am-1pm between the months of September and April. The target audience for Lil' Explorer Thursdays is children between the ages of one and five years, along with their adults. The adult demographic typically includes stay-at-home parents, grandparents, and childcare providers. We offer 13 different themes over the 26 weeks offered in the 2016 FY.

Each week consisted of several discovery stations and a program consisting of a special story time followed by an animal visitor relating to the theme for the week. Themes included: Animals in Winter, Junior Zookeeper, Junior Gardener, Animal Families, Bird Buddies, Fantastic Frogs, Busy Bugs, Seeds & Sprouts, Teddy Bear Picnic, Fun with Fish, Furry Friends, Reptile Rock 'n' Roll and Fancy Flowers.

To accommodate large audiences, a wide-range in skill level of the participants, and the drop-in format, the program was designed to be child-directed, with the children being encouraged to select and initiate their own activities from a variety of learning stations. The activities were setup on rugs and preschool tables. Carpeted areas specifically designated as the "Littlest Explorer Area" featured activities geared toward the youngest participants (pre-walkers). Signs placed at each activity station provided adults with guidance on possible ways to engage their child in the activity.

Outcomes:

During the 2015-2016 Lil Explorer's program offerings we have seen approximately 2,875 toddlers, an average of 110 toddlers (adults not included in total). Each week, the staff asked families and children about their experience. The feedback has always been positive, with many adults asking for additional brochures to give to friends and family. Surveys were offered informally and electronically. The volume of repeat attendees speaks to the success of this popular program.

NATURE'S ENGINEERS

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory offers three ways to explore science and nature through the eyes of an engineer with the series of programs that fall within Nature's Engineer's.

During "Mini Movers," our youngest learners of up to five years of age, discover how animals stay safe in nature by swimming, hopping, flying, and stomping. This 30 – 45-minute program includes an interactive story, creative movement and animal visitors that are sure to delight.

We take learning to the next level with our school-aged "Early Engineers" program. Early Engineers is a beautiful blend of literature and science. Students are engaged in science processes through a whimsical story that introduces them to a variety of natural wonders. Each of the three programs are inquiry-based, and allows children the experience of building projects using plants and animals as their models for design. Not only will children be inspired when they meet animals with amazing adaptations, they will be thrilled with the opportunity to think like real scientists and design like real engineers. Early Engineers classes last approximately 75 minutes.

For adult audiences, Como Park Zoo and Conservatory provides "Natural Wonders." This interactive slide show presentation highlights the science of biomimicry. Amazing technological advances have been made in all areas of science. Many of these advancements have been inspired by plants and animals. Participants will learn more about how nature is helping scientists clean up oil spills, reduce energy consumption, and make advancements in aviation just to name a few. The Natural Wonders lecture is approximately 45 – 60 minutes in length.

Outcomes:

During the 2015-2016 school year we taught 76 programs to 1,042 students. Teachers were surveyed after the program to see how it impacted them and their students. Teachers strongly agreed that after the program their students' ability to make observations and inferences increased and that the program helped to enhance their STEM curriculum for the year.



YOUTH ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM



A new program developed and launched was YEP – a youth engagement program. The model of this program was based on several successful youth-based organizations including the National Youth Leadership Council, the Search Institute, 4-H, Roots and Shoots, and through consultation with several local and national industry-based youth programs. The concept is for teen teams to prepare to implement conservation-based service projects in their communities. Teens are offered skills needed to succeed in bring effective change to their communities.

Como offers a unique environment to foster leadership skills, have fun and inspire change. The program consists of a four-day summer leadership workshop and tours to other local destinations that support conservation and sustainable practices, monthly workshops, project support throughout the year, grant writing and a connection with fellow youth that share the passion to create change. Como was also able to leverage private dollars to support micro grants to assist the teens to making their projects realized in their communities.

Outcomes:

FY16 was the development and recruitment period for this new program. Five teams of youth joined the Youth Engagement Program by the end of the 2016 fiscal cycle. Teams will prepare to implement conservation-based service projects in their communities throughout the 2017 fiscal year. Programing began in August 2016.

Funding & Duration

Fiscal Year 16 Budget = \$35,026.21
September 1, 2015-June 30, 2017

PROJECT PASSPORT

Project Passport offered 14 weeks of programming for the public to explore a variety of conservation stations all summer long. The target audience for Project Passport Thursdays is children between the ages of 8 and 12 years, along with their adults. The adult demographic typically includes community camps, childcare providers, and family groups. These types of groups compose a majority of our visitor attendance on weekdays between the months of June through August. We offer 7 different themes over the 14 weeks of programming in the 2016 FY.

Each week consisted of several tented stations outside on Como's Donor Plaza. Themes included: arctic, rainforest, gardens, savanna, Butterflies/pollinators, and MN backyard. Many weeks' partner organizations or musicians were brought in to augment the theme.

Outcomes:

Project Passport enlightened 980 visitors over the course of the summer. We had a set group of volunteers who enjoyed the program so much they signed up for multiple weeks instead of just the one or two they had initially planned. Since this program catered to our summer audience we did not see the repeat participation realized in other Legacy funded programming. This is also why we felt the informal evaluation was the most productive evaluations to use to make changes and adjustments to programs. Most participants found the take away material as the best part of their experience.

Funding & Duration

Fiscal Year 16 Budget = \$74,203.08
September 1, 2015-May 31, 2017

FTEs

.57





SPECIAL EXHIBITS

Como developed new immersive, educational experiences that engaged visitors and reinforced conservation messages. In January, Dr. Entomo's Palace of Exotic Wonders, an insect special exhibit opened. Como re-introduced Blooming Butterflies in June, a popular learning experience that appeared in 2008-2010. Special exhibits in the Gallery that featured local photography and built partnerships to feature exhibitions were also included, along with special events that enhanced visitor experiences.

Outcomes:

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory saw a year-end total increase in estimated attendance in 2016 of 2%, which matched the summer period of June-August and in the off-peak season, the year over year increase was 5%.

Funding & Duration

Fiscal Year 16 Budget = \$99,917.31
 Total Non-grant Funding = \$150,000.00
 January 1, 2016-June 30, 2017

FTEs

2.5



MINNESOTA GARDEN & CIRCLE GARDEN

The next phase of Como's master plan for the development of ornamentals gardens in front of the Visitor Center continues with the concept and design development of the Minnesota Garden and Circle Garden. The concept of the Gardens is to provide a central pedestrian mall as the primary organizing element related to the front entrance of Como Park Zoo and Conservatory and the Visitor Center. In addition, renewing the historical significant collections in Como Park. Work completed in FY16 included design and the initial selection for a place making piece of art in the center of these gardens. As part of this process, a team that consisted of stakeholders from the City of Saint Paul, private partners and Public Art Saint Paul developed a RFQ. Three finalists were selected and commissioned to a design process of their concept for that space. Construction on the gardens began in September and work will be completed in Spring 2017 with the installation of the new art piece

Outcomes:

FY16 was the schematic, design development and construction document phase of the projects. The visitor surveys and analysis will be conducted once the gardens open.

Funding & Duration

Fiscal Year 16 Budget = \$258,720.67
 Total Non-grant Funding = \$130,000.00
 October 1, 2015 – June 30, 2017

FTEs

1.1

HABITAT RENEWAL

Improve interpretive graphics, add interactive elements, and expand encounters for both the guest and animal to better make the connection to inspire the public to value the presence of living things. In FY16, Como did some final enhancements to the African Hoofstock Area and did planning work for the Large Cat Building. In FY17, work will be executed to begin this area.

Outcomes:

Increase knowledge and awareness with enhanced signage by also creating opportunities to inspire the public. Length of stay will be measured upon construction completion.

Funding & Duration

Fiscal Year 16 Budget = \$34,829.52
 Total Non-grant Funding = \$200,000.00
 June 1, 2015 – June 30, 2017

FTEs

.06