2024 Animal Center Internal Operations & Climate Assessment

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The County of Fresno (The County) engaged Hatching LLC to conduct an organizational assessment and provide advisory support for developing strategies, plans, and tactics for animal services. These services are delivered through Fresno Humane Society, referred to as Fresno Humane Animal Services (FHAS) throughout this report. The goal of this assessment is to provide insights and recommendations to inform and design a comprehensive strategy that not only enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of the animal services provided but also integrates these efforts into the broader social, economic, and cultural landscape of Fresno County.

The County, like many communities, faces the challenge of managing animal services in a way that acknowledges the intricate link between the well-being of animals and the overall health of its communities. The issues surrounding animal welfare are not simply a result of "irresponsible pet owners" or the need for mandatory spay/neuter laws, rather, they are a reflection of deeper systemic issues such as economic instability, housing insecurity, and limited access to essential services. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic, community-driven approach that prioritizes cultural responsiveness, equitable and intentional resource distribution, and meaningful engagement with residents.

Our approach to this project has been multifaceted, beginning with a comprehensive review of existing animal shelter data from January 2021 through October 2024. As with all data, shelter data has limitations due to factors such as the consistency of data collection and changes in practices and policies, which impact how data is collected and the types of trends we can analyze. For FHAS, Hatching worked to separate County data from City data during the period when FHAS was overseeing both contracts and managing multiple animal shelters. Additionally, due to the setup of the shelter software and the specific information FHAS collects, some aspects of our analysis are limited. Therefore, throughout this report, we will be recommending areas for enhanced data collection to support better analysis and insights in the future. We also prioritized data from the years following COVID-19, as sheltering—like many other industries—experienced shifts in service delivery. This focus allows us to provide insights that are relevant to current and future needs.

In addition to shelter data, we explored various other components of community data and initiatives, including the COVID-19 Equity Project, the Fresno Community Health Improvement Partnership (FCHIP), and The County's strategies and programs for supporting community members experiencing homelessness. These initiatives provide a foundation for community-centered models that focus on neighborhood insights, collaboration, and accessible resources. By drawing from these frameworks, we aim to create recommendations that align with The County's ongoing efforts to build stronger, healthier communities.

During our on-site visit from September 2-6, 2024, three Hatching consultants assessed the newly constructed shelter facilities, completed in April 2022, located at 1510 W Dan Ronquillo Drive, Fresno, CA, 93706. We engaged in candid conversations with leadership, staff, and community stakeholders to understand their experiences and observations at FHAS. Hatching also distributed a virtual employee engagement survey to solicit confidential feedback about the workforce's experience working at FHAS. Our team observed processes from intake to outcome, reviewed disinfection protocols, and audited all lifesaving programs. We also participated in various FHAS meetings, covering topics from personnel matters to euthanasia decisions. This firsthand insight, along with findings from national best practices, successful programs across California, and interviews with local government officials, rescue community members, and other invested stakeholders, shapes the foundation of our recommendations.

1510 W Dan Ronquillo Drive
Fresno, CA 93706

"FIRST IMPRESSIONS" RECOMMENDATIONS

Shortly after our visit, Hatching provided actionable recommendations below:

✓ **Financial Reporting & Monitoring**
Produce & review monthly Profit & Loss, Cash Flow, Budget vs. Actuals, Overtime, & Emergency Vet Expenses.

✓ **Improve Animal Transport Conditions**
Invest in battery-operated fans for transport vehicles.

✓ **Agendas & Meeting Structure**
Implement daily morning huddles with clear agendas, goals, and actionable outcomes.

✓ **Deploy Petco Love Lost Program**
The PLL program enhances community services, speeds up reunifications, aligns FHAS with community needs, and opens funding opportunities from Petco Love.

✓ **Increase Community Adoptions with Spanish Marketing Campaign**
Hatching provided Cultura Pawsitiva Digital Assets to be edited and used for FHAS.

✓ **Utilize Live Release Checklist**
Implement a Live Release Checklist, to ensure all alternatives are explored before making end-of-life decisions. Shift the focus from creating space through euthanasia to uniting efforts around expanding lifesaving opportunities.

✓ **Automate Licensing Program**
Reallocate/automate these tasks to client service staff to free up resources for lifesaving roles.

Designed in three phases—**stabilization, sustainability, and transformation**—these recommendations aim to provide The County and FHAS with a structured approach to addressing gaps in budget and service. While some recommendations involve straightforward policy adjustments at the shelter level, others will require more planning, budget consideration, and broader organizational alignment to ensure an effective, lasting impact that can be adapted as resources allow.

1 STABILIZATION

2 SUSTAINABILITY

3 TRANSFORMATION

Hatching's commitment has extended beyond the scope of this report, offering continued support through virtual follow-up conversations, consultations, and connecting FHAS with people and resources who may be able to provide additional support. Our aim is to empower The County leaders and FHAS staff with the tools and resources they need to implement these changes effectively, creating a sustainable impact that echoes throughout the community.

This report highlights opportunities for growth while honoring the progress The County has already achieved. Intended as a guide rather than a rigid framework, this assessment provides a snapshot based on the best available information, recognizing that evolving circumstances should always shape decisions and resource allocation. Understanding that animal services intersect with broader social issues and human well-being, our approach seeks to foster solutions that are reasonable, humane, and tailored to Fresno County's unique cultural and community landscape.

CRITICAL CONTEXT: HOW INTERCONNECTED CHALLENGES AFFECT BOTH PEOPLE AND PETS IN FRESNO COUNTY

Fresno County is a vibrant and resilient community, yet many of its residents face significant, interconnected challenges that impact both human and animal well-being. With a poverty rate of 19.5%—well above the state and national averages—nearly one in five residents is navigating financial hardships, making it difficult to meet basic needs (U.S. Census Bureau, 2024). Nearly 30% of children live below the poverty line (California Department of Public Health, 2024), and more than 20% of families experience food insecurity (Feeding America, 2024). Despite these obstacles, the deep bond that residents share with their pets remains strong. Many families go above and beyond to prioritize the care of their beloved animals, even when access to resources like affordable veterinary care and pet supplies is limited.

Environmental factors also play a role in shaping the experiences of Fresno County residents and their pets. Approximately 60% of the population lives in areas with elevated air pollution levels (California Environmental Protection Agency, 2024). Neighborhoods such as West Fresno face higher rates of respiratory illnesses, affecting both people and pets alike (California Department of Public Health, 2024). These health challenges add another layer of complexity for families already stretched thin, as they strive to care for their pets amid limited access to veterinary services.

The rising cost of housing has further increased pressure on Fresno County families. Between 2021 and 2024, housing insecurity intensified due to a shortage of affordable homes and high rental prices. Over 25% of renters now spend more than half of their income on housing (Fresno Housing Authority, 2024), making it challenging to cover other essentials, including pet care. The recent Point-In-Time count showed a 20% rise in homelessness since 2020, with many individuals experiencing homelessness also caring for pets who are deeply valued members of their families (Fresno Madera Continuum of Care, 2023). Accessing shelter and veterinary services is often an additional hurdle for these pet owners, who remain dedicated to keeping their companions by their side.

Fresno's climate adds to these challenges, with summer temperatures frequently surpassing 100°F. For families without reliable access to cooling or shelter, heat-related health issues can impact both people and their pets. Extreme weather events, such as droughts and heat waves, affect local industries like agriculture, directly impacting workers and their families, many of whom have pets (California Climate & Agriculture Network, 2024).
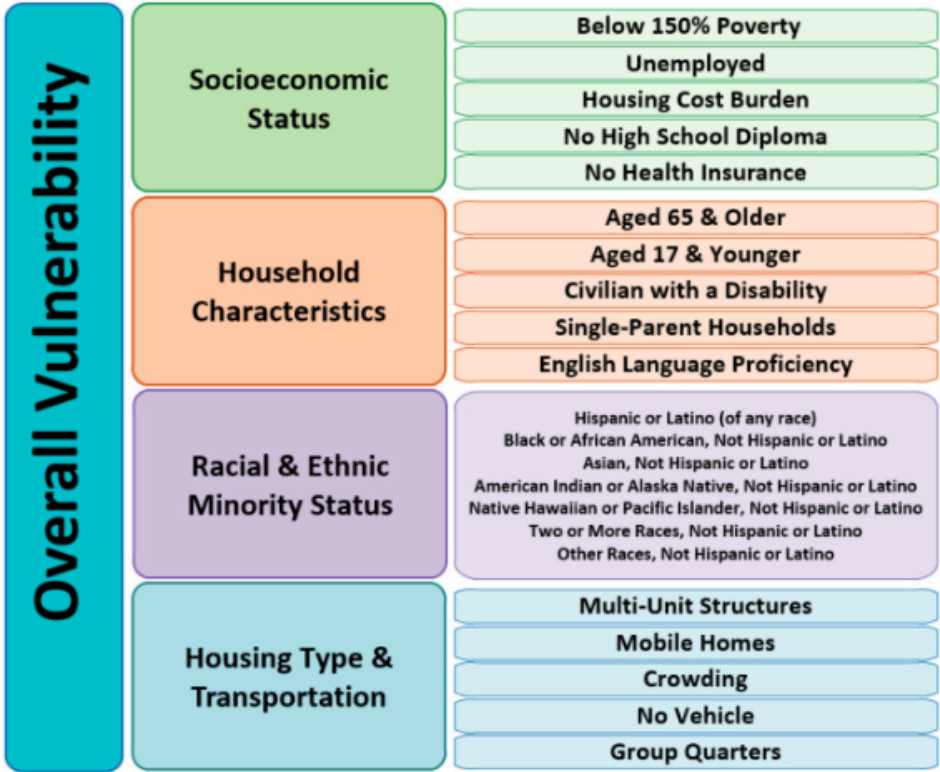
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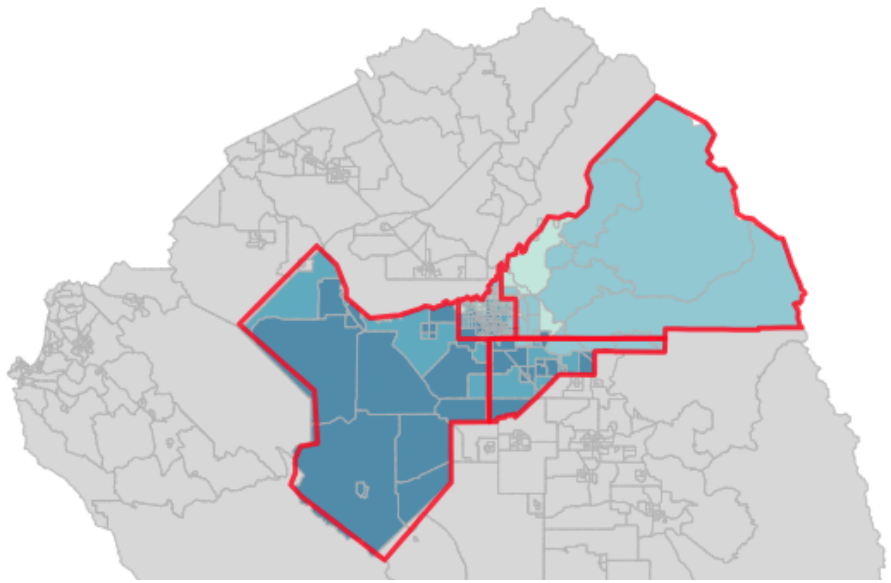# Fresno Humane Animal Services Social Vulnerability

Fresno's community spirit and determination are evident even in the face of adversity. Yet, metrics like the Social Vulnerability Index indicate that many residents remain at risk, increasing the demand on community resources, animal services, and shelter operations. For FHAS, this means stepping up to support families and pets as they navigate these interconnected challenges, reinforcing the strong ties between people and their animal companions.

Methods Variables Used

American Community Survey (ACS), 2018-2022 (5-year) data for the following estimates:

Overall Vulnerability	Socioeconomic Status	Below 150% Poverty
		Unemployed
		Housing Cost Burden
		No High School Diploma
		No Health Insurance
	Household Characteristics	Aged 65 & Older
		Aged 17 & Younger
		Civilian with a Disability
		Single-Parent Households
		English Language Proficiency
	Racial & Ethnic Minority Status	Hispanic or Latino (of any race)
		Black or African American, Not Hispanic or Latino
		Asian, Not Hispanic or Latino
		American Indian or Alaska Native, Not Hispanic or Latino
		Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Not Hispanic or Latino
		Two or More Races, Not Hispanic or Latino
		Other Races, Not Hispanic or Latino
	Housing Type & Transportation	Multi-Unit Structures
		Mobile Homes
		Crowding
		No Vehicle
		Group Quarters

Fresno County I Overall Summary

Low Low-Medium Medium-High High

Introduction

Between 2021 and 2023, FHAS saw a 25.6% increase in total animal intakes, with stray animals consistently making up the majority of these cases. By 2023, stray animals accounted for 88.5% of all intakes, totaling 7,067 animals. As of October 2024, FHAS had taken in 4,440 animals year-to-date, with stray animals comprising 86.1% of total intakes. FHAS has observed a decrease in overall intake numbers for 2024, likely influenced by the county's temporary shift to a managed intake model, also known as coordinated intake.

	2021	2022	2023	2024
Stray	4,523 | 71.1%	5,726 | 77.7%	7,067 | 88.5%	3,823 | 86.1%
Owner/Guardian Surrender	1,390 | 21.9%	1,318 | 17.9%	670 | 8.4%	419 | 9.4%
Service In	1 | 0.0%			
Transfer In	321 | 5.0%	165 | 2.2%	57 | 0.7%	22 | 0.5%
Seized / Custody	73 | 1.1%	82 | 1.1%	110 | 1.4%	120 | 2.7%
Return	50 | 0.8%	76 | 1.0%	80 | 1.0%	56 | 1.3%
Grand Total	6,358 | 100.0%	7,367 | 100.0%	7,984 | 100.0%	4,440 | 100.0%

FHAS faces an increasing number of animals with complex needs, often outpacing available resources due to the region's social, economic, and environmental challenges. To better manage these pressures, a coordinated intake model can be a valuable tool when used strategically. Rather than implementing this approach permanently, we suggest adopting a flexible intake policy that activates coordinated intake only when the shelter reaches a certain capacity threshold.

THE BENEFITS OF COORDINATED INTAKE

Coordinated intake offers several advantages, particularly during times of high intake or resource strain. By requiring appointments for non-emergency cases, shelters can:

1. **Prioritize Urgent Need**s: Focus resources on the animals most in need, such as those with medical emergencies or severe behavioral concerns.
2. **Reduce Overcrowding**: Manage the flow of incoming animals to prevent overcrowding, which can lead to stress, illness, and a decline in overall animal welfare.
3. **Improve Care Quality**: With fewer unexpected arrivals, staff can provide more focused and consistent care, improving outcomes for animals in the shelter.
4. **Align with Community**-Centered Practices: Similar to services offered by public health clinics or social services, an appointment-based intake system sets a clear expectation that non-emergency cases require scheduling, helping manage community demand.

CHALLENGES AND COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS

However, implementing a coordinated intake model also presents challenges:

1. **Increased Pressure on the Community and Rescue Group**s: When intake is managed through appointments, it may shift the responsibility onto community members and rescue partners to find immediate solutions for animals in need, especially if the shelter is unable to accommodate them right away.
2. **Resetting Long-Standing Expectation**s: Many community members have become accustomed to dropping off stray animals or surrendering pets directly to the shelter without prior notice. Changing this expectation requires public education and outreach efforts.
3. **Equity and Accessibility Concerns**: Appointment-based systems can inadvertently create barriers for residents who lack transportation or digital access to make appointments, particularly in underserved areas. Ensuring equitable access to services will be a key consideration.

A BALANCED APPROACH: ACTIVATING COORDINATED INTAKE WHEN NEEDED

Rather than adopting a permanent coordinated intake model, we recommend a flexible, capacity-based policy. Under this approach:

TRIGGER POINT FOR COORDINATED INTAKE	FHAS would implement coordinated intake only when shelter occupancy reaches a predefined capacity threshold (e.g., 75-80% of kennel space filled). This policy would allow the shelter to operate with an open intake approach during periods of lower demand while providing a safety valve when resources are strained.
CLEAR COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT	It's essential to communicate the activation of coordinated intake clearly and transparently to the community. Outreach efforts, including social media updates, partnerships with local organizations, and informational sessions, can help residents understand when and why intake appointments are necessary.
COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS WITH RESCUE PARTNERS	Engaging local rescue groups and foster networks as part of the intake strategy can help bridge gaps when coordinated intake is activated, ensuring animals still have pathways to care and support outside the shelter.

A flexible, capacity-based intake policy allows FHAS to align with modern, community-centered practices while remaining responsive to the dynamic needs of the community. This approach optimizes resources and helps create a more compassionate sheltering system, where both the public and rescue partners play an active role in supporting animal welfare. By tailoring intake practices based on capacity, FHAS can better balance the needs of animals, staff, and the broader community.

DECLINING SAVE RATE AND THE IMPACT OF INCREASED LENGTH OF STAY ON POPULATION BALANCE

FHAS's Save Rate—the percentage of animals that leave the shelter alive through adoption, transfer, or other lifesaving measures—has seen a significant decline over recent years.

In 2021, FHAS achieved a Save Rate of 83%, which decreased to 81% in 2022 and dropped further to 65% in 2023. As of 2024, there has been an improvement, bringing the Save Rate up to 70%. This decline highlights the strain on shelter resources and the challenges posed by increased community needs and staffing shortages. The data reflects that while FHAS has made efforts to recover its lifesaving rate, additional support and investment in staffing are essential to meet community expectations, reduce the **Length of Stay (LOS)** for animals, and fulfill FHAS's commitment to humane lifesaving practices.

2021 SAVE RATE	2022 SAVE RATE	2023 SAVE RATE	2024 SAVE RATE
83%	81%	65%	70%

	2021	2022	2023	2024
Adoption	511 | 7.6%	916 | 11.7%	1,105 | 14.2%	980 | 19.1%
Return to Owner/Guardian	387 | 5.8%	349 | 4.4%	316 | 4.1%	170 | 3.3%
Transfer Out	4,479 | 67.0%	4,757 | 60.6%	3,741 | 48.1%	1,946 | 37.9%
Euthanasia	635 | 9.5%	943 | 12.0%	1,375 | 17.7%	1,114 | 21.7%
Other	677 | 10.1%	891 | 11.3%	1,237 | 15.9%	929 | 18.1%
Grand Total	6,689 | 100.0%	7,856 | 100.0%	7,774 | 100.0%	5,139 | 100.0%

One of the drivers behind this lifesaving decline is the increased LOS animals are experiencing at FHAS. When animals remain in the shelter longer, the population builds up, creating a backlog that clogs the system. As more animals enter than leave, overcrowding intensifies, creating daily challenges that strain staff, resources, and space. This overcrowding forces the shelter into a reactive crisis-management mode, where constant adjustments are needed to accommodate incoming animals, limiting the shelter's capacity to provide consistent care. Reducing LOS is therefore essential not only for reducing animal stress and enhancing well-being but also for sustaining a steady flow through the shelter that supports lifesaving efforts and ensures all animals receive timely attention.

Below is a LOS report that shows the increase in LOS over the past three years. While there's no LOS standard across all shelters due to varying resources and community needs, many shelters aim for an average LOS of 7-14 days for cats and dogs.

Lenth of Stay
2021-YTD 2024

| ANIMAL TYPE	LOS 2021	LOS 2022	LOS 2023	LOS 2024 (YTD)
DOG	7.9 days	19.4 days	26 days	21.2 days
CAT	9.6 days	35.4 days	36.3 days	28 days

POPULATION BALANCE is a term used in animal sheltering to describe the relationship between the number of animals entering the shelter (intakes) and the number of animals leaving the shelter (outcomes) over a specific period, typically measured monthly. This metric helps shelters monitor whether they are maintaining a stable population, reducing overcrowding, or experiencing an increase in the number of animals housed.

A **BALANCED POPULATION** is achieved when the number of outcomes (e.g., adoptions, transfers, returns to owner, or other live outcomes) matches the number of intakes, resulting in a **Population Balance Calculation (PBC)** of 100%. A PBC higher than 100% indicates more animals are leaving than entering, which reduces the shelter population. Conversely, a PBC below 100% signals that more animals are entering than leaving, potentially leading to overcrowding and capacity challenges.

Understanding and maintaining population balance is crucial for ensuring shelters operate within their capacity and provide optimal care for the animals housed.

- Green percentages mean there was no gap (outcomes matched or exceeded intakes).
- Red percentages mean there was a gap (more animals came in than went out).
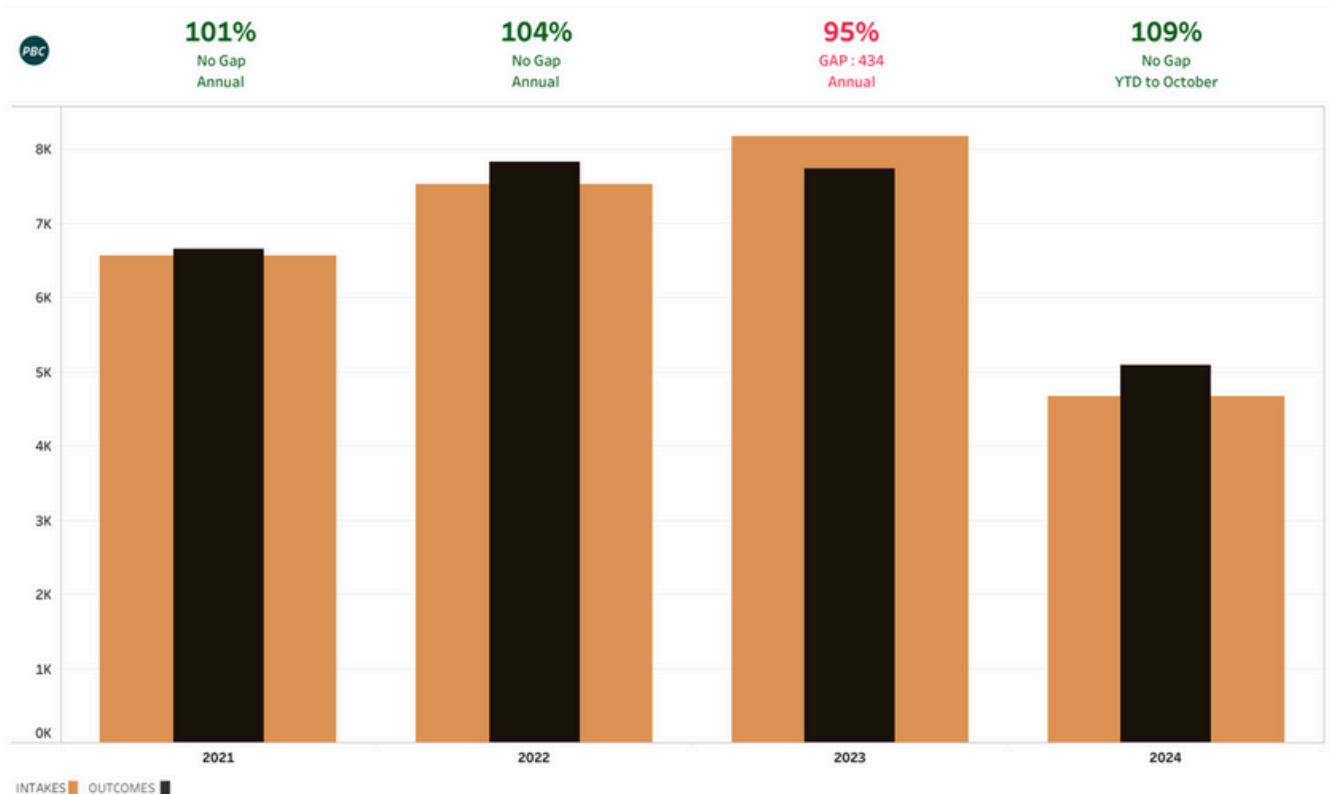
Data Aggregation: Shows total intakes versus outcomes for each year.

Introduction

Ultimately, Fresno County's animal welfare challenges are not solely a matter of what many community members describe as "pet overpopulation" or "irresponsible owners"; they stem from deeper issues of poverty and human vulnerability. Families across Fresno County face barriers that make it difficult to access essential pet care, from affordable veterinary services and pet supplies to stable housing that allows pets. These challenges are not a reflection of a lack of care but rather of a lack of resources. By addressing the root causes—like limited access to pet support services—The County can reduce shelter intakes, improve pet retention, and strengthen the human-animal bond that enhances community resilience. Through compassionate, community-centered solutions, Fresno County can move toward a future where every family, including its pets, has the support needed to thrive.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

For over a decade, FHAS has played a pivotal role in advancing animal welfare across Fresno County and the Central Valley. What began as a grassroots initiative, operating from the parking lot of the former County morgue, has grown into a cornerstone of compassionate care and innovative community services. Initially intended as a temporary solution, this makeshift location became FHAS's home for nearly ten years, presenting significant operational challenges due to space limitations and inadequate facilities.

Despite these constraints, FHAS has consistently pioneered solutions tailored to the unique needs of the region, including:

- Non-punitive, community-focused field services.
- Groundbreaking practices for managing free-roaming community cats.
- Strategic partnerships with local veterinary clinics to expand access to care for shelter pets.

In April 2022, FHAS reached a significant milestone, relocating to a newly constructed County animal shelter. This transition provided expanded kennel capacity and upgraded facilities, enabling FHAS to better serve the community.

As the organization has grown, so has its unwavering commitment to the welfare of animals and the people of Fresno County. However, a comparison with similar organizations reveals that FHAS operates within a landscape of persistent financial limitations.

The organizations referenced in this analysis share comparable intake numbers, regional characteristics, or operational scope, making them relevant benchmarks for assessing FHAS's fiscal and operational position. The chart on the following page illustrates how FHAS achieves impressive outcomes despite these challenges, highlighting its resilience and resourcefulness.

However, this success comes at a significant cost. Chronic underfunding has strained FHAS's operations, forcing difficult decisions, including:

- Leaving critical positions vacant due to budget constraints.
- Offering wages that struggle to compete with market rates
- Operating with inadequate infrastructure.

This financial imbalance is unsustainable. Without increased investment, FHAS faces the risk of diminished service quality, staff burnout, and setbacks in its mission to support the animals and communities of Fresno County.

Financial Analysis

The following chart illustrates how FHAS compares to similar organizations, providing critical context for understanding its fiscal challenges and operational achievements.

Agency	2023 Budget (USD Millions) approx.	Total Employees (2023)	Intake (2023)	Service Area Population (Thousands)	Service Area (Sq Miles)	Contract with other cities (2023)
Fresno Humane Animal Services (Unincorporated Fresno County)	1.9M	38	7,200	161,863	5,818	0
City of Fresno Animal Services	6.7M	79	11,000	550,000	116	0
Stanislaus Animal Services Agency	6.5M	54	7,200	551,000	1,439	6 Joint Powers Association
The City of San Bernardino Animal Services	4.5M	40	6,000	355,000	62	2

Financial Context and Comparison

The budget figures presented in the table generally represent the total operational costs for each agency, including staffing, facility maintenance, direct animal care, and other expenses. However, without detailed financial breakdowns from each organization, it is difficult to determine the exact allocation of funds between these categories.

One key distinction in this comparison is that staffing costs often make up the largest portion of an animal services budget—typically ranging between 60-80%—which impacts the funding available for direct shelter services and field operations. Agencies with higher budgets may have more robust staffing structures, expanded service offerings, or additional resources for medical care and outreach programs. Additionally, service area size and funding structures play a significant role in financial and operational efficiency. FHAS serves the largest geographic area (5,818 square miles) with the lowest budget among the agencies compared.

Financial Analysis

To comprehensively assess the finances and business structure of FHAS, Hatching LLC conducted a high-level analysis encompassing several critical areas:

1. **QuickBooks Online (QBO):**

   - Profit & Loss statements, balance sheets, cash flow statements, and budget vs. actuals were created and examined to evaluate the organization's financial health and performance.

2. **Budget Amendments & Compensation Schedules:**

   - Existing budgets were reviewed, and necessary amendments were proposed to align financial planning with actual fiscal realities and strategic goals.

3. **Fact-Finding Interviews with FHAS Staff:**

   - Conducted interviews and observations to gather firsthand information from staff, identifying areas needing improvement and understanding operational dynamics.

4. **Payroll Information Review**:

   - Examination of payroll data to analyze current costs, overtime reporting and staffing.

5. **Tax Returns Review 2021-2023**:

   - Reviewed tax returns for the years 2021-2023 to identify trends.

6. **FHAS Audit Findings Review 2021-2023:**

   - Evaluated audit findings for the years 2021-2023 to address identified deficiencies and implement necessary corrective measures for enhanced financial integrity.

7. **FHAS Org Chart** (Attachment A-FHAS Org Chart as of 11/4/24):
   - Evaluated org chart to understand the structure, dynamics, roles, and relationships within FHAS.

This multifaceted analysis provides a robust understanding of FHAS's financial landscape, enabling Hatching to make data-driven recommendations and strategic planning for a sustainable future.

Financial Analysis

FHAS stands at a pivotal moment where strengthening its financial foundation is essential to sustaining and evolving the services it provides to the community. While Fresno County's contributions are meaningful, they do not fully cover the actual costs associated with delivering the contracted animal services. This funding gap has created challenges in meeting the needs and expectations of the community, including those of staff, rescue organizations, and key stakeholders. Additionally, in the absence of a dedicated director and financial officer and/or business manager, financials are not being strategically managed. Establishing stronger internal controls, consistent checks and balances, and comprehensive financial reporting are essential steps to safeguarding the financial investments recommended throughout this report.

Financial Analysis

On June 18, 2024, The County approved an amendment to the 2024 budget for FHAS, setting the total FHAS compensation at **$2,220,928.00**. That was an increase of **18.44%** from 2023.

- The 2023 FHAS compensation was $1,875,133.
- The 2022 FHAS compensation was $1,706,733.
- The 2021 FHAS compensation was $1,611,681.

Below is a detail of the amended 2024 budget:

	2024 County Budget for Animal Services
Salaries/Benefits/Standby/Overtime	1,196,484.00
All Service and Supplies	737,996.00
All General Vet Services	130,000.00
All Fleet Maintenance/Fuel	52,716.00
Emergecty Vet Services	103,732.00
Total	2,220,928.00
Contingency Fund (Not for FHAS use)	559,702.00
Sheriffs Office (Not for FHAS use)	2,000.00
Grand Total	2,782,630.00

Relevant notes from the compensation schedule:

* Emergency veterinary costs are paid by COUNTY upon approval of invoice remitted by FHAS in accordance with Agreement provisions.
* Contingency Funds shall provide for sudden or unanticipated expenses required of FHAS by COUNTY. Anticipated expenditures should be approved by the County in advance and requests for payment shall be invoiced.
Compensation for renewal periods years 2 and 3 shall increase at a rate of three percent (3%) from the prior year compensation, less purchases of new vehicles.

Financial Analysis

As of October 28, 2024, the total expenses incurred have reached $2,450,012.06. This indicates that the actual operational costs have exceeded the planned budget, resulting in a net loss of **$229,198.06**. This shortfall in funding highlights the need for addressing financial stability.

	2024 County Budget for Animal Services	FHAS Actual (1/1/24-10/28/24)	Difference as of 10/28/24
Salaries/Benefits/Standby/Overtime	1,196,484.00	1,463,819.73	(267,335.73)
All Service and Supplies	737,996.00	552,869.09	185,126.91
All General Vet Services	130,000.00	195,278.39	(65,278.39)
All Fleet Maintenance/Fuel	52,716.00	50,546.48	2,169.52
Emergencty Vet Services	103,732.00	187,612.37	(83,880.37)
Total	2,220,928.00	2,450,126.06	(229,198.06)
Contingency Fund (Not for FHAS use)	559,702.00		
Sheriffs Office (Not for FHAS use)	2,000.00		
Grand Total	2,782,630.00	2,450,126.06	(229,198.06)

Financial Analysis

Due to FHAS current spending patterns and anticipated future expenses, the total projected expenses are expected to reach $2,984,096.54, resulting in a projected net loss of **$763,168.54**. This significant shortfall underscores the urgency of reassessing financial strategies to ensure the organization's financial stability and operational efficiency.

	2024 County Budget for Animal Services	Projected 2024 Ending	2024 Ending Difference
Salaries/Benefits/Standby/Overtime	1,196,484.00	1,762,467.62	(565,983.62)
All Service and Supplies	737,996.00	699,301.71	38,694.29
All General Vet Services	130,000.00	234,062.39	(104,062.39)
All Fleet Maintenance/Fuel	52,716.00	60,652.48	(7,936.48)
Emergencty Vet Services	103,732.00	227,612.34	(123,880.34)
Total	2,220,928.00	2,984,096.54	(763,168.54)
Contingency Fund (Not for FHAS use)	559,702.00		
Sheriffs Office (Not for FHAS use)	2,000.00		
Grand Total	2,782,630.00	2,984,096.54	(763,168.54)

Financial Analysis

According to the current 2024 FHAS Compensation Schedule, the monthly payments are structured as follows:

- January 2024 through June 2024 is $138,933.
- July 2024 through December 2024 is $213,933.

Beginning in January 2025, the monthly compensation payment decreases to $142,901, resulting in a significant monthly shortfall of nearly **$96,000** for FHAS.

Based on current data, the average total monthly expenses that FHAS incurs is approximately $248,675.

Despite a 2024 budget adjustment made between The County and FHAS, FHAS continues to face a monthly income shortfall. Without an increase to The County compensation contract, FHAS is projected to face a critical cash shortfall for daily operations by **May 2025**. This makes it essential to address funding to ensure continued service and stability.

The cash flow chart below demonstrates that FHAS's monthly operating expenses surpass the current compensation schedule approved by the county. As a result, FHAS dips into their cash reserves to cover essential operating costs.

	Nov 2024	Dec 2024	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25
Cash Balance, Beginning	474,455.96	448,993.96	423,531.96	327,037.96	230,543.96	134,049.96	37,555.96
County Compensation	213,933.00	213,933.00	142,901.00	142,901.00	142,901.00	142,901.00	142,901.00
FHAS Income	14,605.00	14,605.00	14,605.00	14,605.00	14,605.00	14,605.00	14,605.00
Total Income	228,538.00	228,538.00	157,506.00	157,506.00	157,506.00	157,506.00	157,506.00
Total Expenses	254,000.00	254,000.00	254,000.00	254,000.00	254,000.00	254,000.00	254,000.00
Revenue Less Expenses	(25,462.00)	(25,462.00)	(96,494.00)	(96,494.00)	(96,494.00)	(96,494.00)	(96,494.00)
Cash Balance, Ending	448,993.96	423,531.96	327,037.96	230,543.96	134,049.96	37,555.96	(58,938.04)

This cash flow chart below is based on current information and projections. It does not account for unforeseen circumstances or potential rises in shelter-related costs. This chart should be used for general planning purposes and not as a definitive financial forecast. The total expenses of $254,000 are derived from the projected average monthly expenses for November 2024 through June 2025.

2021-2023 TAX FIGURES AND FINANCIAL EVENTS

A review of year-over-year financial figures from 2021 through 2023, along with audit findings, reveals a significant decline in both assets and revenue, highlighting the urgent need for financial adjustments and enhanced oversight.

In 2021, FHAS reported a revenue surplus of $501,054

In 2022, FHAS reported a revenue surplus of $404,576.
- Shortly after moving into a newly built Fresno County shelter facility, FHAS began experiencing monthly revenue shortfalls.

In 2023, FHAS reported a loss of **$1,745,968.**

	2021	2022	2023
Total Revenue	2,214,348.00	5,159,263.00	6,830,012.00
Total Expenses	1,713,294.00	4,754,687.00	8,575,980.00
Revenue (Less Expenses)	501,054.00	404,576.00	(1,745,968.00)
Total Assets	1,774,219.00	3,193,051.00	778,204.00
Cash, beginning of period	1,071,116.00	1,544,698.00	2,112,940.00
Cash, end of period	1,554,698.00	2,112,940.00	343,224.00

Financial Analysis

Throughout half of 2022 and all of 2023, Fresno Humane operated contracts for both the County and the City concurrently. This dual commitment resulted in substantial operational and financial strain, culminating a high loss from 2022 to the 2023 tax year. This stark figure highlights the critical need for strategic financial planning and robust oversight to stabilize and enhance the organization's fiscal health.

FHAS experienced rapid growth and managed substantial fund transfers in 2022 and 2023. However, without the necessary business and financial infrastructure in place, they were underprepared for the demands of scaling their operations. Despite this, FHAS consistently strived to meet the needs of both the County contract and the broader community, including the people and animals they serve. Years of inadequate funding and a lack of sustainable resources have exacerbated these challenges, leading to financial practices that require improvement for achieving long-term stability.

Information gathered and reviewed indicates that FHAS lacks leadership with the financial expertise necessary to maintain a proactive and sustainable business model. This oversight has presented opportunities to strengthen internal controls to prevent accounting errors and enhance financial leadership and strategic oversight.

These challenges have led to a largely reactive approach to financial management. Consequently, FHAS projections and budget planning are based on 2024 performance data, as this is currently the most reliable information for assessing current operations.

Due to these findings and the current state of financial management, an urgent amendment to the compensation schedule is recommended to increase funding to FHAS. This adjustment is essential to ensure the financial stability and continued operation of the organization, allowing it to provide the care and services needed for the animals and community it serves.

PROPOSED EMERGENCY BUDGET INCREASE FOR JANUARY 2025 – JUNE 2025

This proposed emergency budget for January 2025 to June 2025 is essential to address the immediate operational needs of FHAS, increasing the monthly compensation from **$213,933** to **$260,000.** This transitional funding is a critical step towards stabilizing FHAS, alleviating pressures on staff, and improving service delivery for the community. However, it only addresses immediate needs; further investment will be necessary for FHAS to sustain operations beyond July 2025.

 The proposed emergency budget includes:

1. Funding for **two additional animal care assistant positions** to support kennel disinfection and disease mitigation, enabling lifesaving coordinators—some who are currently spending half their shifts cleaning kennels—to fully focus on essential programs like adoption, foster, rescue, and transport. This will help reduce Length of Stay (LOS) for animals, which can positively impact their behavior, health, and chances for successful outcomes.
2. Funding for **six critical positions** (See FHAS Org Chart-Image 2) currently not in budget and funded by FHAS to allocate resources for outsourcing both emergency and routine medical care.
3. Funding for **professional accounting services** for tax preparation, filing, accounting support, and financial audits.
   a. Cuttone & Mastro CPAs have historically completed FHAS tax returns and audits. During the 2023 audit, C&M CPAs identified and helped correct several deficiencies in FHAS's accounting records. To build on these improvements, a mid-year 2024 review of FHAS's books and a continued partnership with C&M CPAs is recommended. This review will help FHAS detect and address any 2024 accounting errors, providing critical ongoing support.
   b. Hatching has also offered to provide financial consulting services to support the stabilization of FHAS's financial infrastructure.

	Proposed Monthly Budget
Salaries / Benefits / Standby / Overtime	$ 146,725.00
All Service and Supplies	$ 62,211.09
All General Vet Services	$19,500.00
All Fuel Maintenance / Fuel	$ 5,000.00
Emergency Vet Services	$ 20,000.00
Total	$ 253,436.09
2 Additional Full Time Animal Care Asst.	$ 6,563.91
Grand Total	**$260,000.00**

Financial Analysis

Current **vacant** positions include:

- Animal Care Assistant
- Animal Care Technician
- 1 Field Services Admin Lead
- 1 Adoption Coordinator

FHAS currently operates without a Director. Additionally, no funds are currently allocated in the approved budget to fund this position.

To continue operations, FHAS is currently **funding six critical** positions outside the approved budget. Year to date, these positions have incurred approximately **$180,000** in payroll and benefit expenses.

- Field Services Lead
- Field Services Admin Lead
- Cat ISO Lead
- Outcome Programs Supervisor
- Lost/Found/RTO
- Client Services Lead

Additionally, Hatching recommends **two additional animal care assistant** positions to support kennel disinfection and disease mitigation.

Financial Analysis

On December 17, 2024, the County of Fresno approved an FHAS budget increase of $702,594 for 2025. As a result, FHAS will receive a total monthly compensation of $260,000 beginning January 2025 through June 2025. The County plans to return the Board with a new animal services agreement before July 1, 2025.

Dashboard to documents relating to Amendment II to Agreement 24-696:
https://fresnocounty.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7047660&GUID=8322AB06-D67D-4166-8743-255462873D0D&Options=ID|Text|&Search=humane

- **Board Agenda Item #66:** https://fresnocounty.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=13611307&GUID=7E1434B4-BFBF-4397-BFCE-1D7A4499D44C

- **Amendment II to Agreement 24-696:** https://fresnocounty.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=13638317&GUID=1CCDAAF1-4A0E-4809-9C87-1F67CCCDA06A

- **Resolution:** https://fresnocounty.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=13638310&GUID=CED8D1E1-3E72-4A28-A0F8-1313963ED375

Financial Analysis

There is a critical need for financial monitoring systems to safeguard the financial investments recommended throughout this report.

STRATEGIC GOAL:

Implement robust financial monitoring systems and utilize comprehensive financial reporting for more strategic decision-making. This will empower FHAS to proactively:

- Enhance stakeholder confidence
- Improve accountability
- Ensure compliance
- Identify & mitigate risks
- Optimize resource allocation
- Improve overall fiscal efficiency

POSITIVES:

- Awareness of the importance of financial oversight.
- Leadership's openness to integrating financial reporting.

ACTION STEPS:

✓ Monthly: Produce and analyze Profit & Loss statements, Balance Sheet statements, cash flow, and grant reporting.

✓ Establish an Overtime Protocol for accurate tracking and monitoring of expenses per payroll period.
  - This protocol should include clear guidelines for approval, regular review, and ongoing monitoring.

✓ Establish an Emergency Vet Services (EVS) Protocol to:
  - Streamline medical decision-making
  - Accurately track and audit EVA expenses
  - Review invoices for discrepancies and budget/forecasting
  - Submit and request reimbursement from The County in a timely manner
  - Maintain vigilant monitoring of budget versus actual expenses.

✓ Establish a monthly financial reporting schedule.

✓ Train staff in financial monitoring tools and processes.

FHAS Finance has a vital opportunity to regularly and formally inform leadership and stakeholders about the organization's financial status.

STRATEGIC GOAL:

Establish consistent and reliable financial updates to FHAS leadership and stakeholders to enhance transparency and informed decision-making.

POSITIVES:

- Leadership and stakeholders recognize the importance of financial transparency.

ACTION STEPS

✓ FHAS Finance to establish and schedule monthly finance meetings with FHAS leadership.

✓ Present at minimum quarterly financial performance and trends to FHAS board and The County.
  - The Board should receive monthly reports on financial performance including monthly bank reconciliations and bank statements and should question discrepancies or variances.

Due to the current operational practices at FHAS, there is a lack of internal controls to detect, prevent, and correct accounting errors and fraud in a timely manner. Strengthening these controls is essential for operational efficiency and financial integrity. Key steps include implementing authorization processes, ensuring segregation of duties, and documenting financial procedures.

STRATEGIC GOAL:

Establish and maintain strong internal controls to ensure operational efficiency and financial integrity.

POSITIVES:

- Recognition of the need for enhanced internal controls.
- The finance and leadership team are cooperative and eager to implement improvements.

ACTION STEPS:

Implement authorization processes with checks and balances. This is critical to ensuring accuracy, accountability, and preventing fraud within an organization.

✓ **Define Authorization Levels & Role Assignments**: Establish clear levels of authority for financial transactions.

✓ **Segregation of Duties**: Ensure that no single individual has control over all aspects of cash receipts, accounts receivable, cash disbursements, accounts payable and payroll.
  - Segregate duties among different staff members so that the tasks of initiating, approving, and recording transactions are handled by separate individuals.

✓ **Document Procedures**: Clearly document the authorization processes, including the steps for reviewing and approving transactions. This documentation should be accessible to all relevant staff members.

✓ **Implement Approval Workflows**: Use technology to create automated approval workflows. Financial management software can route transactions to the appropriate individuals for approval, ensuring a streamlined and consistent process.

✓ **Conduct Training**: Regularly train employees on the importance of internal controls and how to follow them correctly. This helps in maintaining adherence to established procedures and mitigating risks.

✓ **Monitor and Review**: Continuously monitor the internal control processes to ensure they are being followed correctly. Periodically review the processes to identify any gaps or areas for improvement and update them as necessary.

✓ **Establish Audit Trails:** Maintain records of all approvals, including dates, the individuals involved, and any relevant documentation. This creates an audit trail that can be reviewed to verify the integrity of transactions.

Financial Analysis

ACTION STEPS:

✓ **Review Vetcove.com** to ensure real-time best pricing for preventive care and pharmaceuticals from a variety of vendors.

✓ **Migrate licensing** to an online platform and repurpose funding and position.

✓ Ensure that all **fees are waivable and flexible** to help reduce length of stay (LOS).

✓ Continue **exploring resources and means to reduce the LOS** for animals, financial benefits include:
- **Lower Operational Costs:** Shorter stays mean fewer days of food, bedding, and medical care for each animal, reducing daily expenses.
- **Increased Capacity:** Faster turnover allows shelters to help more animals
- **Improved Resource Allocation:** Efficiently moving animals through the shelter system ensures resources are used effectively, avoiding overuse of staff time and supplies.
- **Reduced Stress-Related Costs**: Shorter stays can decrease the stress on animals, leading to better health outcomes and lower veterinary costs.

Financial Analysis

To address the need for enhanced financial support in a manageable way, we propose a flexible, three-phase approach designed to align with Fresno County's budgetary constraints. These recommendations are set forth in a phased approach for ease of implementation but are flexible and able to be adjusted based on future conversations that this report will produce.

STABILIZATION & FOUNDATION	BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY	EMPOWERED TRANSFORMATION

Phase One: Stabilization and Foundation

1

This phase addresses urgent needs by ensuring FHAS has the essential resources to operate smoothly. Key actions include filling critical staffing and medical budget gaps, establishing immediate financial and data tracking controls for better management, and implementing foundational reporting systems for better data analysis. These steps will support enhanced program planning and operational stability.

Phase Two: Building Sustainability

2

Building on the stabilization efforts, this phase aims to establish consistent service delivery by refining internal processes, evolving community safety net programs aimed at the stray/lost dog population, and improving facility infrastructure to accommodate an onsite medical team. These improvements will position FHAS to meet community demands reliably while strengthening safety net services for local animals.

Phase Three: Empowered Transformation

3

This final phase focuses on positioning FHAS for long-term success. Key initiatives include expanding the medical team to provide comprehensive onsite care, eliminating the need for offsite medical services, including spay and neuter, and implementing a holistic approach to meet the needs of shelter animals and the broader community with efficiency and compassion.

This phased plan is adaptable and can be scaled according to available resources, allowing for incremental investment that respects The County priorities and constraints.

PHASE 1:

STABILIZATION & FOUNDATION

PHASE 1

As outlined in the cash flow summary, FHAS's current spending surpasses County reimbursements in two critical areas: **medical services and staffing costs.** Our assessment indicates opportunities to improve tracking and management of medical cases, which could help mitigate some expenses. However, the need to outsource both routine and emergency veterinary care will continue due to limited onsite capacity.

Staffing costs represent the second major overage, with FHAS currently funding six full-time positions directly from its reserves **(See attachment A-FHAS Org Chart as of 11/4/24)**. These positions—including field officers, customer service representatives, and dispatch staff—are essential to meet daily operational needs. Our phased recommendations advocate not only for County support to cover these critical roles but also for the addition of strategic positions to stabilize program efficiency and impact:

Animal Services Director
This role provides essential leadership for animal welfare operations, fosters strong community relationships, and drives strategic initiatives. The Director is responsible for maintaining organizational structure and integrity, providing vision and guidance, and serving as a key liaison between the County and other community stakeholders.

Business Manager
This role ensures effective financial oversight, budget management, and operational efficiency. By collaborating across departments, the Business Manager ensures resources are allocated strategically and align with organizational financial plans and goals.

Medical Coordinator (RVT recommended)
Responsible for overseeing medical cases and managing associated expenses, the Medical Coordinator works closely with the Business Manager to ensure accurate budgeting and financial forecasting. A background as a Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT) is recommended to provide clinical expertise, enhancing the quality of medical care and improving cost management.

PHASE 1

One of the most pressing challenges facing FHAS is inadequate staffing, which directly affects operational efficiency, service delivery, and the well-being of both employees and animals. Research highlights that animal welfare professionals work in a highly demanding and emotionally taxing environment, with burnout and stress levels similar to those in first responder fields. A study by the ASPCA found that over 50% of animal care workers experience burnout, with the American Psychological Association noting that these workers face intense emotional strain due to high-intensity workloads, compassion fatigue, and limited support systems (ASPCA, 2022; APA, 2021).

In a recent survey, 90% of FHAS staff responded to questions about their experiences working at the organization. The results provide valuable insights into the strengths and challenges within FHAS, highlighting both the commitment and dedication of employees and the areas where support is most needed. These findings underscore that the staff—who work daily in a demanding, high-stakes environment to protect and care for vulnerable animals—are FHAS's most valuable asset and are well worth investing in.

FHAS 2024 EMPLOYEE PULSE SURVEY: EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE SENTIMENTS

FHAS employees' experiences are divided. While many find fulfillment, purpose, and a supportive community within the organization, others struggle with stress, uncertainty, and a sense of being underappreciated. There is a wonderful opportunity for improvement in reducing stress and creating more stability and support those for who feel overwhelmed or undervalued.

✅ Positive Sentiments

Fulfilling and Rewarding:

Many employees express that their experience is "fulfilling," "rewarding," and meaningful. Words like "growth," "gratifying," and "purpose" reflect a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment.

Supportive and Collaborative Environment:

Employees value the "caring," "supportive," and "collaborative" nature of their workplace. The terms "family," "teamwork," and "healthy work environment" also point to a strong sense of community.

Inspirational and Motivational:

There are mentions of "inspirational," "motivating," and "enriching," indicating that employees find their work environment stimulating and engaging.

❌ Caution Areas

Stress and Overwhelm:

A significant portion of employees described their experience as "stressful" or "overwhelming." Words like "exhausted," "taxing," "frustrating," and "trying" reflect that some employees feel overworked or unsupported in managing their workload.

Feelings of Being Undervalued or Unsupported:

Terms like "underpaid," "undervalued," "unsupported," and "unaccommodating" point to a perception that their contributions or needs are not fully recognized or met by the organization.

To build and maintain a strong, resilient team, FHAS must address critical challenges, including unbalanced workloads, lack of recognition, and limited opportunities for staff to fully utilize their skills. These issues, if left unaddressed, risk leading to staff disengagement, which could severely undermine FHAS's ability to provide quality animal care and compassionate support to the community.

One key area requiring immediate attention is compensation. Hatching recommends conducting a **comprehensive compensation study** to evaluate and adjust FHAS's pay structure. While differences in operations, budgets, and priorities exist between the City and County, it is vital for FHAS to offer wages that align with local standards to remain competitive and attract skilled professionals.

A closer look at the Animal Care Specialist role underscores this need: FHAS offers a starting wage of $17.00 per hour, lower than the City's $19.00 per hour, which increases to $20.90 after six months. Addressing this wage disparity and ensuring fair, competitive pay across all roles will be a crucial step toward building a sustainable workforce.

PHASE 1

FHAS is experiencing critical staffing shortages, severely limiting its capacity to maintain consistent animal care, support the community, and handle daily operations. In 2024, the shelter's average daily population was approximately **300** animals, primarily dogs, each requiring regular cleaning, feeding, and medical attention to ensure a safe and healthy environment.

To meet these basic needs, at least **15** staff members are needed on-site every day. This calculation is based on animal population, length of stay, and physical setup of the shelter. However, current staffing levels average just **8** full-time staff per day, with **11** full-time positions in total. This significant gap in staffing strains the existing team, impacts the quality of care provided, and highlights the need for additional personnel to meet the demands of the shelter's animal population.

To ensure that 15 staff are consistently available each day, we are providing two staffing model recommendations for animal care staff:

The first model, reflected in the Phase 1 Recommended Org Chart (Page 53), requires **21 full-time staff members** and would necessitate hiring **10 additional positions in total.** However, this approach would leave little to no allowance for absences and various forms of leave. In this case, a budget allotment to hire on-call or temporary staff could help cover staffing gaps.

Please note that two of the ten animal care positions are allocated to the proposed emergency budget for January 2025 through June 2025.

Recommendation 1

Staff /Staff-Days

Daily Staff Needed	15
Total Weekly Shifts Needed	105
Staff Needed: 21 FTE	

- *To ensure 15 staff members are available every day, FHAS needs to cover 105 shifts per week (15 staff x 7 days= 105).*
- *Since each full-time staff member works 5 shifts per week, FHAS would need 21 full-time employees (105 ÷ 5= 21) to consistently meet daily staffing needs without gaps.*

The second recommendation includes a 15% coverage margin—a widely recommended standard in workforce planning to account for typical absences, such as sick leave, vacation, and other forms of leave. This margin provides FHAS with the flexibility needed to prevent coverage gaps and maintain service quality. Based on this formula, FHAS would need 24 full-time staff members to reliably meet daily demands. This means FHAS would need to hire **13 additional positions** to achieve the required coverage.

Recommendation 2

	Staff / Person-Days
Daily Staff Needed	15
Weekly Shifts Needed	105
Additional Coverage Margin (15%)	16
Total Shifts	121

Staff Needed: 24 FTE

The role of the animal care staff extends far beyond basic care; not only are they responsible for daily care and primary disease management, but with proper staffing, they can also play a key role in supporting lifesaving programs, assisting the behavior team, and engaging with volunteers, adopters, and community members searching for lost pets. To fully capture the breadth of their responsibilities and impact, these positions should be reclassified as Care and Lifesaving Specialists. This reclassification reflects their vital role in promoting animal well-being, enhancing shelter operations, and fostering positive community relationships, ultimately contributing to a more effective, compassionate, and sustainable shelter environment.

Note: Shelters such as Pima Animal Care Center in Tucson, Arizona, partner with local boarding facilities to provide contracted cleaning staff as an alternative operational model.

PHASE 1

FHAS operates with a small yet dedicated team of 5 field officers and 2 dispatchers, striving to cover the large geographic area of Fresno County with 24/7 coverage. Fresno County spans 5,818 square miles, presenting logistical challenges as officers frequently respond to calls that can require extensive travel across both rural and urban areas. Dispatchers play a crucial role in managing call prioritization and coordinating responses efficiently, helping to maximize the team's ability to address community needs despite the vast territory.

Typically, 3-4 Animal Control Officers (ACOs) are on duty Monday through Friday from 8 AM to 4 PM, with reduced coverage on weekends (2 ACOs on Saturdays and 1 on Sundays). To meet the 24/7 demand, each ACO is assigned on-call shifts 1-2 days per week, during which they receive $5 per hour in stand-by pay. If called into the field, they earn time and a half their regular hourly rate. Hatching recommends exploring an increase in the current $5 per hour stand-by pay to ensure it's aligned with best practices.

ACO	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
ACO 1	On	On	Off	On/on call	On	Off	On
ACO 2	On	On	On/On call	Off	On	Off	On Call
ACO 3	On	On Call	On	On	Off	On/ On call	Off
ACO 4	On	On	On	On	On/ On call	Off	Off
ACO 5	On Call	Off	On	On	On	On	Off

Due to staffing limitations, the field services team primarily responds to **Priority 1** calls that require immediate, emergency responses to serious situations where public safety or animal welfare is at risk. These include incidents involving aggressive or injured animals posing immediate threats, animals obstructing major roadways, cases of animal cruelty, and requests from law enforcement for urgent assistance. Priority 1 calls have steadily increased, reaching 422 calls already in 2024 compared to 350 in 2021, indicating a rising demand for urgent interventions in the community.

Year	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3
2021	350	1147	2798
2022	412	1373	2741
2023	430	1663	3167
2024 (Jan-Oct)	422	1820	2442

Priority 2 calls require a timely response during regular service hours, ideally within 24-48 hours, but they are often delayed due to the field team's focus on Priority 1 emergencies. These calls address pressing situations like contained animal bites, non-urgent law enforcement assistance, confined strays, and abandoned young animals unable to survive alone; however, limited resources mean these cases typically take twice as long to be addressed.

Priority 3 calls play a crucial role in community education and engagement, focusing on proactive measures like educating the public on leash laws, information on pet ownership, and available resources. Addressing these calls is essential to building trust and working with the community on root causes of animal-related issues, ultimately helping to reduce incidents that escalate to Priority 1 emergencies. However, the lack of resources and the need to prioritize urgent cases often leave these valuable engagement opportunities unaddressed, limiting FHAS's ability to foster lasting, preventative change within the community.

Additionally, the FHAS vehicle fleet presents logistical challenges impacting the welfare of animals during transport. Of the five vehicles, only one—a climate-controlled van—offers suitable heating and cooling for extended travel. The remaining four trucks have standard cabs without temperature control, which can be challenging for animals in Fresno County's extreme temperatures, where summer days often exceed 100°F. Additionally, animals are transported in open-air crates in these trucks, which, while functional, may increase the potential for disease spread. Investing in more climate-controlled vehicles specifically outfitted for animal services would help bring the fleet up to a higher standard.

To further stretch resources, ACOs are also required to support shelter operations during times of staffing shortages or high animal intake, performing tasks such as cleaning kennels and assisting with intake. This cross-utilization limits the time ACOs can dedicate to fieldwork, impacting response times and field service availability.

FHAS should **increase the field staff by at least <u>six</u> additional ACOs** for better coverage and respond effectively to Priority 2 and Priority 3 calls. By funding six additional ACOs, The County would not only improve response times for Priority 1 and Priority 2 calls but also strengthen community trust through increased attention to Priority 3 calls. This proactive approach can mitigate the escalation of animal-related issues, reduce the volume of emergency incidents, and improve overall public safety and animal welfare outcomes. Moreover, the additional staff would enhance call completion times across all priority levels, ensuring that incidents are resolved more efficiently. With more ACOs available, resources can be better dispersed across the County's large geographic area, enabling faster response times in rural and underserved regions. This would result in equitable service delivery, helping to address community needs comprehensively and foster a safer and more compassionate environment for both residents and animals.

With an expanded team of 11 ACOs, FHAS will have the flexibility to extend field service coverage over a broader span of hours, ensuring better responsiveness to community needs throughout the day. On average, approximately 7 to 8 ACOs will be available daily, even with regular days off, allowing FHAS to maintain consistent coverage across all seven days of the week. This increased staffing capacity allows for more dynamic scheduling, enabling field officers to be available during times of peak demand and addressing urgent calls more effectively. Enhanced coverage will ensure that residents across the County, including those in rural and underserved areas, can access timely animal services when they need them most, improving overall public safety and animal welfare outcomes.

DISPATCHER STAFFING

To support the expanded team of 11 Animal Control Officers (ACOs), we recommend hiring **3 additional dispatchers**, bringing the total to 5 full-time employees (FTEs). Research from emergency service best practices indicates that one dispatcher should ideally handle communications for every 4 to 5 field officers, which aligns well with FHAS's operational needs (International Association of Chiefs of Police, US Department of Justice). With 5 dispatchers on staff, each having two days off per week, an average of 3 dispatchers would be available daily to cover all seven days of the week. This staffing ratio not only facilitates efficient communication and timely response coordination but also creates capacity for dispatchers to engage directly with the public, offering critical information and resources as part of a broader Pet Support Function. This ensures consistent and reliable service for both the community and the expanded field services team.

It's important to note that these staffing models for both field services and dispatch do not factor in coverage margins for unexpected absences, such as sick days, vacation, or other time-off requests. Without accounting for these variables, the average daily staffing levels could fall below the calculated numbers, potentially straining the system during high-demand periods. Furthermore, these models assume optimal efficiency and do not provide a buffer for increased workload during emergencies, special events, or seasonal fluctuations in call volume. To maintain consistent service levels and avoid overburdening staff, it would be prudent to consider additional staffing to create a margin for such contingencies, ensuring both field and dispatch teams can sustain reliable coverage throughout the year.

To effectively meet the needs of The County's growing demands for animal control and welfare services, we recommend that The County invest in expanding the vehicle fleet by procuring **eight additional field services vehicle**s. These vehicles are essential for supporting the increased number of Animal Control Officers (ACOs) and meeting the needs of the large geographic area that FHAS serves.

Rationale for Additional Vehicles:

1. **Increased ACO Staffing**: With a recommended expansion to 11 ACOs, FHAS needs a sufficient fleet to avoid vehicle shortages during peak hours. This ensures that each officer has access to a vehicle when responding to calls, particularly during overlapping shifts, maximizing response efficiency.
2. **Climate-Controlled Transport**: Given the county's extreme temperatures, where summer days can exceed 100°F, climate-controlled vehicles are necessary to ensure the humane transport of animals. By investing in properly outfitted vehicles, FHAS can transport animals safely over long distances, prevent stress and health issues caused by heat exposure, and reduce the risk of disease spread associated with open-air crates.
3. **Replacement of Current Trucks:** The 4 existing trucks lack adequate climate control, limiting the ability of FHAS to transport animals in a way that aligns with humane standards. Replacing these vehicles with climate-controlled vans or trucks specifically designed for animal transport will elevate FHAS's operational standards and better protect animals in transit.

Given the essential role FHAS plays in maintaining public safety and animal welfare across Fresno County, we recommend that **the county provide the necessary funding or vehicles** to support this expansion. Investing in these resources will enable FHAS to meet service demands, cover a large territory more effectively, and provide the level of care expected by the community.

To support these improvements, we recommend hiring a dedicated Field Services Manager. Currently, the Shelter Manager is also overseeing field operations, which stretches resources and limits the capacity for strategic planning and oversight in both areas. With the expanded staffing model of 11 ACOs, which includes one designated supervisor and shift leads, a Field Services Manager would provide the necessary leadership to ensure efficient operations and a clear chain of command. The supervisor role would focus on high-level oversight, while shift leads would manage daily operations and address any immediate issues during their shifts, streamlining communication and decision-making.

This structure enhances operational clarity, improves accountability, and support the coordination of field activities. With the recommended investments and expansions in the shelter, the Shelter Manager will require additional capacity to manage these developments effectively. A dedicated Field Services Manager would allow the Shelter Manager to concentrate on implementing new shelter initiatives and staff management, while also strengthening field services to align with shelter and community goals. Together, these roles would bolster overall operational efficiency and enhance service quality across both shelter and field services.
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PHASE 1

The Client Services function is integral to the overall success of FHAS, overseeing critical lifesaving programs, managing animal intake, and coordinating medical care through offsite veterinary providers. This department plays a pivotal role in connecting community members to essential resources while ensuring the well-being of animals throughout their shelter stay.

CURRENT OPERATIONS

The Client Services team is responsible for three primary functions:

1. **Lifesaving Programs**

   This includes foster care, adoptions, rescue partnerships, and animal transport programs, all of which are central to increasing live outcomes and reducing the shelter population.

2. **Intake Management:**
   The team manages incoming animals, including those surrendered by the public, strays, and transfers from other agencies. It also supports pet owners seeking guidance or resources to keep their pets.

3. **Medical Case Oversight:**
   Coordination of medical cases between offsite veterinary clinics and the shelter, including scheduling spay/neuter appointments, managing treatment plans, and ensuring animals receive continuous care.

PHASE 1

To strengthen Client Services and enhance its lifesaving impact, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Elevate the Current Outcomes Coordinator to a Manager Position

This role would provide leadership across all lifesaving programs, including adoptions, fosters, and rescue/transport efforts. With dedicated oversight, this position would drive strategy, ensure program alignment, and improve outcomes for both cats and dogs.

2. Evolve Intake to a Pet Support Model

Transitioning intake operations from a traditional surrender-based system to a **Pet Support Mode**l would not only prioritize keeping pets and families together but also provide vital assistance to people managing stray or lost pets. This approach would emphasize connecting pet owners and community members with resources such as food, medical care, and behavior support, while also offering guidance on reuniting lost pets with their families or finding safe alternatives for strays. By empowering people with the tools and knowledge to address these situations, the shelter can reduce intake, build trust within the community, and enhance the overall welfare of animals in the community.

- To effectively implement this model, **three pet support specialists** should be available each day to support intake and provide assistance to the public. This ensures that animals are handled appropriately following best practices in animal care and that the public receives high-quality service and access to valuable resources. By maintaining a compassionate and professional approach, the team can help pet owners, individuals managing strays, and those seeking support, fostering positive outcomes for both animals and the community.
- Currently, the intake function is staffed by **2.5 team members total**, which often results in lifesaving coordinators and other staff being pulled away from their responsibilities to assist with intake duties and other support needed to help the public.
- Increasing this function by **2 additional pet support specialists** would bring the total to **5.5 FTE**, ensuring baseline coverage for this seven-day-a-week function. While this adjustment would enable team members to focus on their key roles without disruption, it does not account for coverage margins needed to accommodate staff absences, such as sick days, vacations, or other unforeseen circumstances. Additional consideration may be needed to ensure sustained operational efficiency and support during such instances.

3. Enhance Coordination for Medical Case Management

The newly created medical support positions would report to the Pet Support Department. These roles would streamline medical operations, improve communication, and ensure timely scheduling with offsite veterinary providers. This structure would also enhance tracking of offsite medical costs, improving financial oversight and operational efficiency.

4. Adjust the Client Services Manager Role and Title

With the shift toward a Pet Support Model and expanded oversight of medical case management, it is recommended to update the Client Services Manager's role to better align with a **Pet Support Manager.** This change reflects the broadened responsibilities and aligns with the department's evolving focus on pet retention, resource provision, and medical care coordination.

INCREASING COMMUNITY ADOPTIONS
AND FOSTER PROGRAMS

FHAS has developed one of the state's most effective transport and rescue programs which accounted for approximately 48.1% of total outcomes in 2023. Increasing efforts to **boost local adoptions**, which comprised approximately 14.2% of total outcomes in 2023 and are trending toward 19.1% in 2024 year-to-date, presents a valuable opportunity to **strengthen community engagement.** By actively connecting with Fresno's diverse communities, including non-English-speaking residents, FHAS can further reduce animal length of stay (LOS), benefiting both shelter capacity and animal well-being. Expanding these local programs would also alleviate the logistical challenges and resource strain associated with long-distance transports, enabling FHAS to allocate resources more effectively.

EXPANDING ADOPTION HOURS

One actionable strategy to support increased local adoptions is to expand adoption hours beyond 4 p.m., offering greater accessibility for individuals and families who work during traditional business hours. It is recommended to **pilot expanded hours one weekday evening and one weekend evening** to assess whether this change drives increased local adoption rates. This approach can help FHAS identify optimal adoption hours and maximize community engagement without requiring a full-scale schedule adjustment.

50

MAXIMIZING ENGAGEMENT WITH SOCIAL MEDIA, COMMUNITY EVENTS, AND MARKETING

To effectively engage the community and drive interest in adoptions, FHAS and Fresno County must collaborate on a cohesive branding strategy that reflects shared values and resonates with the public. A strong, unified brand helps build trust, increase visibility, and create a consistent experience across all communication channels. To achieve this, FHAS and the County should hold a facilitated brand vision session to align on core messaging, visual identity, and community engagement goals. Hatching is happy to support this collaborative effort to develop a strategy that meets the needs of both parties.

With this foundation, FHAS should implement a comprehensive, bilingual marketing plan that includes:

- **Regular Social Media Posts**: Featuring adoptable animals, success stories, and educational content to increase visibility and attract potential adopters.
- **Adoption and Foster Promotions**: Highlighting special events, discounts, and themed campaigns (e.g., "Senior Pet Month" or "Two for One Adoptions") to boost adoption and foster rates.
- **Community Engagemen**t: Participating in local events like farmers' markets, street fairs, and cultural festivals with pop-up adoption booths to meet potential adopters and fosters where they are.

DEDICATED BUDGET FOR MARKETING & PROMOTIONS

Allocating a specific budget for marketing, community engagement, and adoption promotions will be essential for success. Investing in paid social media and radio ads, plustargeted campaigns can help amplify FHAS's messaging and reach a broader audience.

To effectively manage these efforts, it is recommended that FHAS add a **Marketing and Communications Coordinator** to the team. This role would be responsible for:

- Creating and implementing a strategic marketing plan.
- Managing social media channels and content.
- Coordinating community events and adoption promotions.
- Building partnerships with local businesses and media outlets to increase shelter visibility.

By expanding local adoptions, foster programs, and community engagement efforts, FHAS can develop a more inclusive, accessible, and efficient system for placing animals into new homes. This approach will not only enhance operational capacity but also strengthen community ties, creating a compassionate culture that aligns with Fresno County's values and expectations for humane animal care.

As FHAS strengthens its community engagement and marketing efforts, leading to increased local adoptions and foot traffic at the shelter, the need for additional support to assist the public will grow. Currently, the adoption coordinator and team effectively manage the existing volume of visitors, but as foot traffic rises, they will require supplemental resources to maintain high levels of service.

LEVERAGING VOLUNTEERS FOR ON-SITE SUPPORT

Volunteers can play a pivotal role in supporting adoption efforts as community interest grows. Trained volunteers can assist with meet-and-greets, provide information about adoptable pets, and even be equipped to complete the adoption process. By creating a structured volunteer program, FHAS can enhance the adoption experience while reducing strain on staff. A strong volunteer presence ensures that increased foot traffic translates into more successful adoptions or reunifications while enhancing the quality of service provided to the public.

OFF-SITE ADOPTION EVENTS

Increasing the shelter's presence at community events offers another avenue to boost lifesaving and build visibility. Off-site adoption events at local farmers' markets, street fairs, and cultural festivals make pets more accessible to potential adopters who may not visit the shelter. These events not only raise awareness about FHAS but also provide an opportunity to showcase available pets in an engaging, community-focused setting.

To fully leverage the potential of both on-site and off-site support, as well as strategically place volunteers in critical roles across the organization, FHAS should invest in a **Volunteer Coordinato**r role. This dedicated staff member would focus on:

- **Recruiting, Training, and Managing a Diverse Pool of Volunteers**: Building a robust volunteer network to support various shelter operations and community initiatives.

- **Placing Volunteers in Key Roles:** Identifying organizational needs and assigning volunteers to critical positions, such as assisting with adoptions, conducting meet-and-greets, providing administrative support, and helping with animal care.

- **Expanding Volunteer Involvement in Community Outreach Initiatives**: Mobilizing volunteers for off-site adoption events, educational outreach, and community-based activities that enhance public awareness and engagement.

By creating a comprehensive and well-structured volunteer program, FHAS can increase its operational capacity while fostering community involvement. Strategically deploying volunteers both at the shelter and in the community allows the organization to meet growing demands, improve public interaction, and create a more connected and compassionate environment for pets and people alike.

This role is essential to ensuring that volunteers are effectively utilized to maximize their impact, ultimately supporting FHAS's mission and strengthening its presence in the Fresno community.
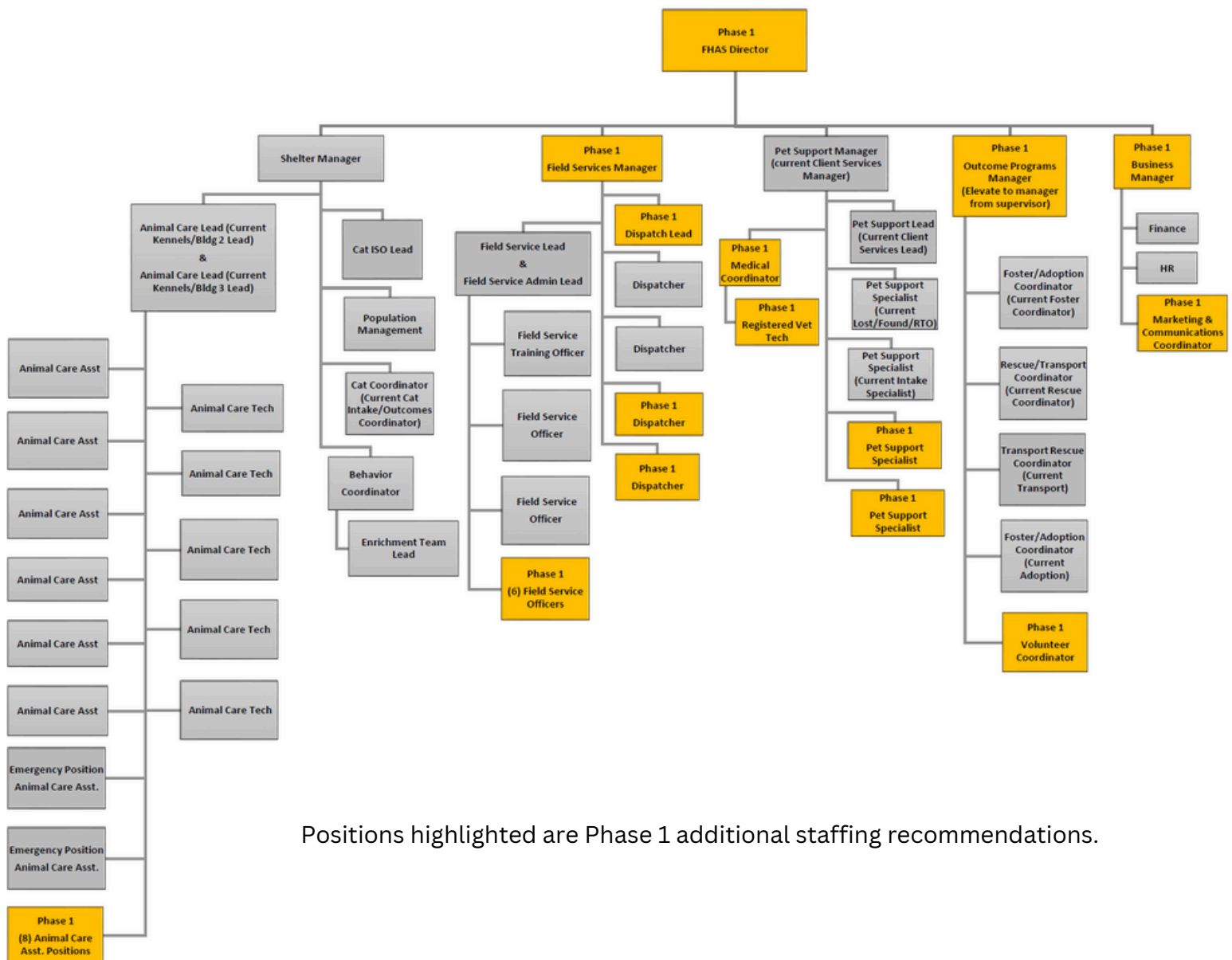
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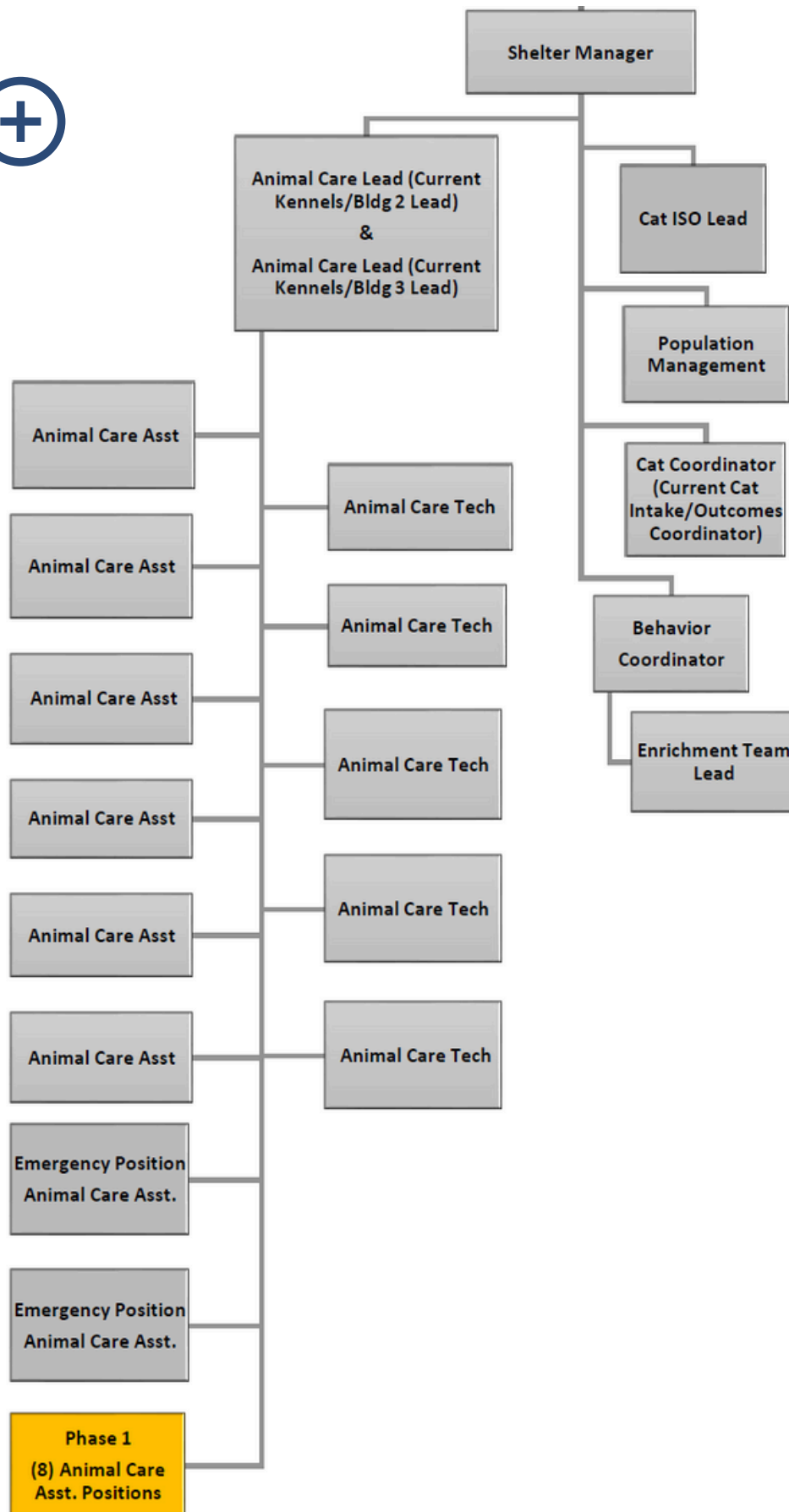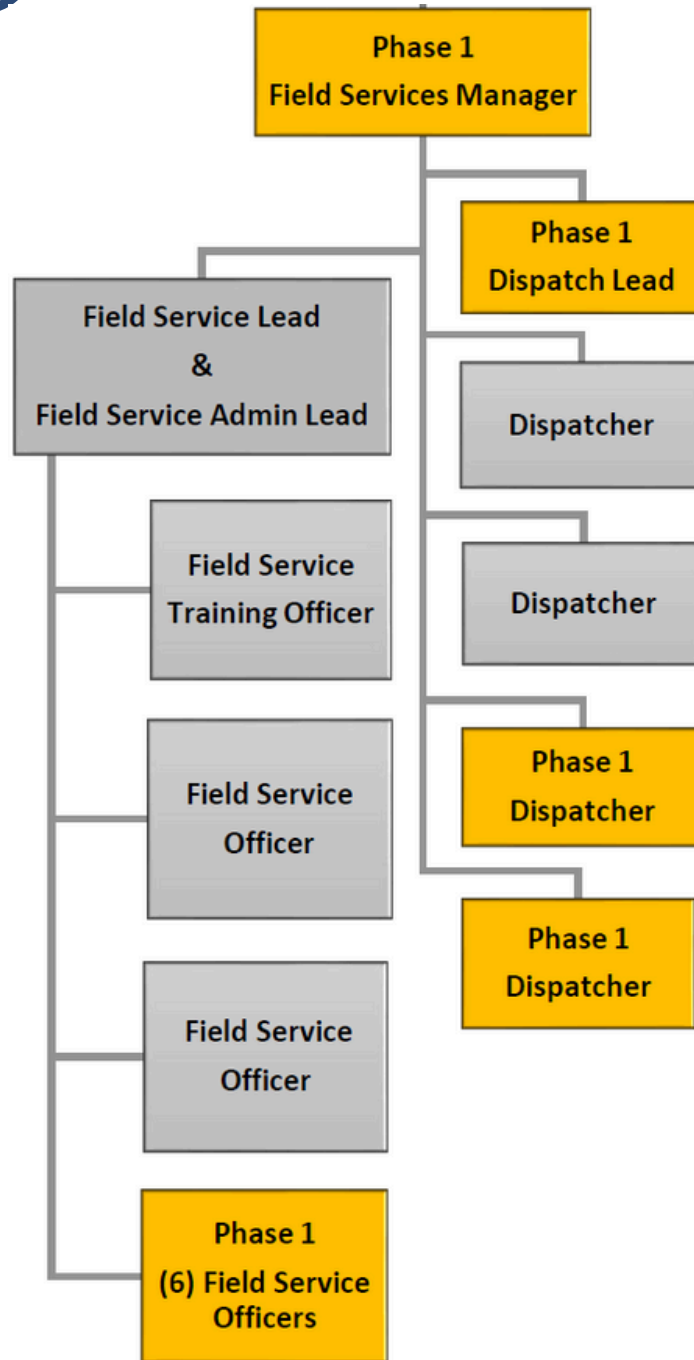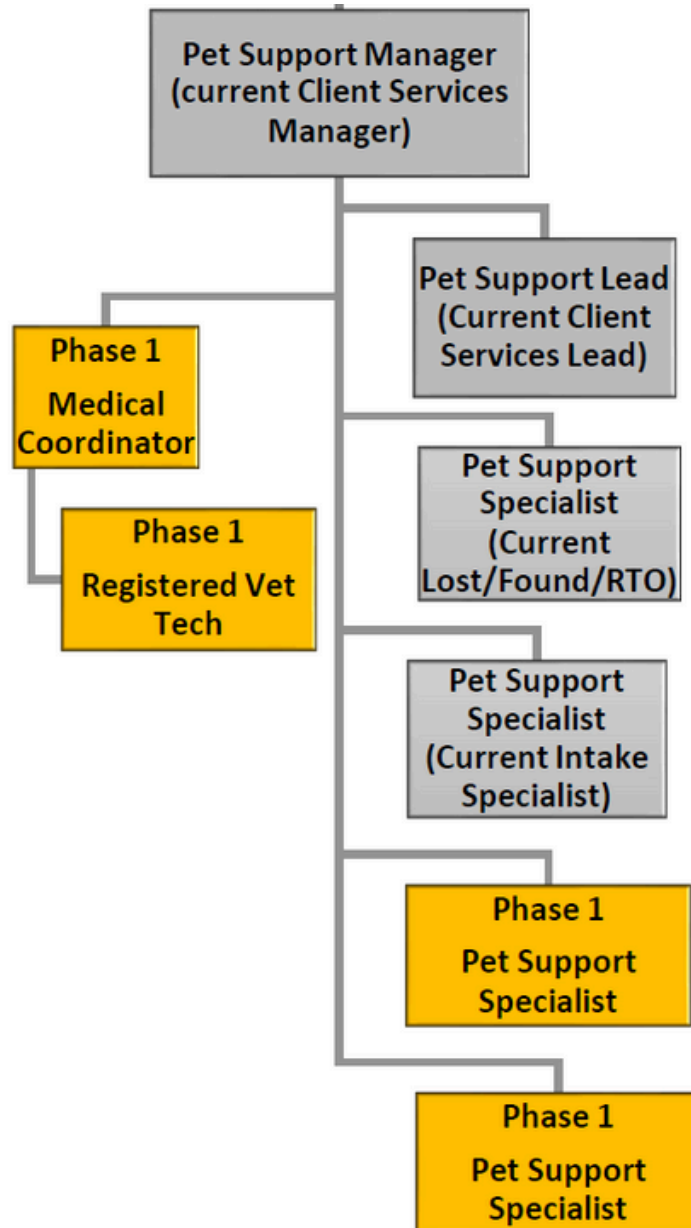
To fully implement the Stabilization Phase and address the critical needs identified, the following table outlines the essential positions and resources requiring funding as part of Phase One. Each role and investment are strategically selected to stabilize FHAS's operations, meet community expectations, and ensure that FHAS can provide consistent, compassionate care to both animals and the broader community.

It's important to note that these recommendations are based on industry standards and current organizational assessments; however, The County should conduct its own due diligence when determining the exact budget allocations. Any estimated figures provided are approximations and may vary based on factors such as salary benchmarks, local cost of living, and fluctuating costs of goods and services.

Positions highlighted are Phase 1 additional staffing recommendations.

PHASE 1

Shelter Manager

Animal Care Lead (Current Kennels/Bldg 2 Lead)
&
Animal Care Lead (Current Kennels/Bldg 3 Lead)

Cat ISO Lead

Population Management

Cat Coordinator (Current Cat Intake/Outcomes Coordinator)

Behavior Coordinator

Enrichment Team Lead

Animal Care Asst

Animal Care Tech

Animal Care Asst

Animal Care Tech

Animal Care Asst

Animal Care Tech

Animal Care Asst

Animal Care Tech

Animal Care Asst

Animal Care Tech

Emergency Position Animal Care Asst.

Emergency Position Animal Care Asst.

Phase 1
(8) Animal Care Asst. Positions

PHASE 1

Phase 1
Field Services Manager

Phase 1
Dispatch Lead

Field Service Lead
&
Field Service Admin Lead

Dispatcher

Field Service
Training Officer

Dispatcher

Field Service
Officer

Phase 1
Dispatcher

Field Service
Officer

Phase 1
Dispatcher

Phase 1
(6) Field Service
Officers

Pet Support Manager (current Client Services Manager)
- Phase 1 Medical Coordinator
  - Phase 1 Registered Vet Tech
- Pet Support Lead (Current Client Services Lead)
  - Pet Support Specialist (Current Lost/Found/RTO)
  - Pet Support Specialist (Current Intake Specialist)
  - Phase 1 Pet Support Specialist
  - Phase 1 Pet Support Specialist

PHASE 1

Phase 1
Outcome Programs Manager
(Elevate to manager from supervisor)

Foster/Adoption Coordinator
(Current Foster Coordinator)

Rescue/Transport Coordinator
(Current Rescue Coordinator)

Transport Rescue Coordinator
(Current Transport)

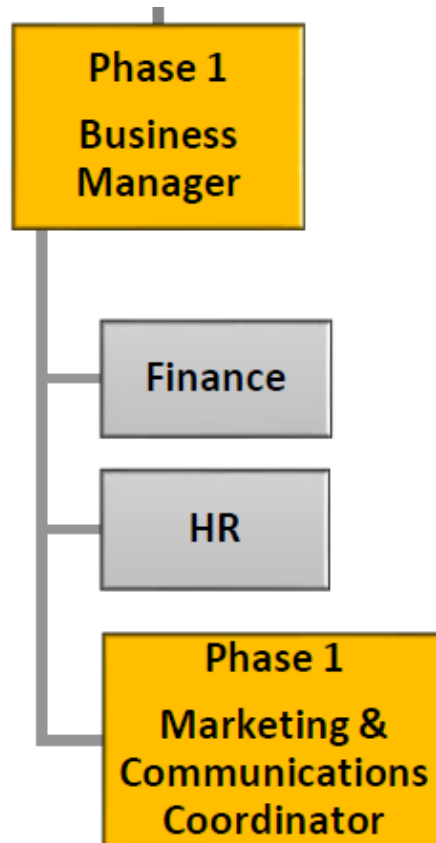Foster/Adoption Coordinator
(Current Adoption)

Phase 1
Volunteer Coordinator

INSTEAD OF ASSIGNING A SEPARATE LIFESAVING COORDINATOR TO EACH FUNCTION, CONSIDER COMBINING SOME FUNCTIONS TO ALLOW FOR DUAL COVERAGE.

```
┌─────────────┐
│  Phase 1    │
│  Business   │
│  Manager    │
└─────────────┘
      │
      │    ┌─────────────┐
      ├────│   Finance   │
      │    └─────────────┘
      │
      │    ┌─────────────┐
      ├────│     HR      │
      │    └─────────────┘
      │
      │    ┌───────────────┐
      │    │   Phase 1     │
      └────│  Marketing &  │
           │Communications │
           │ Coordinator   │
           └───────────────┘
```

RECOMMENDED POSITIONS & SALARIES
PHASE 1

The chart below lists all positions recommended in Phase 1:

Position/Resource	No. of Positions	Estimated Annual Salary per Position
Animal Services Director	1	$ 167,034.00
Business Manager	1	$ 60,000.00
Field Services Manager	1	$ 60,000.00
Medical Coordinator (RVT)	1	$ 60,000.00
Registered Vet Technician ($19.50)	1	$ 40,560.00
Animal Care Staff ($17 hr)	8	$ 35,360.00
Pet Support Specialist($18 hr)	2	$ 37,440.00
Field Service Officers ($22 hr)	6	$ 45,760.00
Dispatch Lead ($25 hr)	1	$ 52,000.00
Dispatchers ($21 hr)	2	$ 43,680.00
Volunteer Coordinator ($23.83 hr)	1	$ 49,566.00
Marketing & Comms Coordinator ($24)	1	$ 49,920.00

Estimated Annual Salaries per position does not include benefits.
Average salaries were pulled from ZipRecruiter.com or Salary.com.

PHASE 1

> **Phase 1 recommended monthly compensation: $397,133**
>
> **Phase 1 recommended 12 month budget: $5,101,596**

The following chart breaks down the Phase 1 budget by year and by month and includes estimated total compensation.

	Recommended Yearly Budget July 2025 - June 2026	Recommended Monthly Budget July 2025 - June 2026
Current Salaries/Benefits/Standby/Overtime	$ 1,839,468.00	$ 153,289.00
Animal Services Director	$ 200,436.00	$ 16,703.00
Business Manager	$ 72,000.00	$ 6,000.00
Medical Coordinator (RVT)	$ 72,000.00	$ 6,000.00
(1) Registered Vet Technician	$ 48,672.00	$ 4,056.00
(8) Animal Care Staff	$ 339,456.00	$ 28,288.00
(2) Pet Support Specialists	$ 89,856.00	$ 7,488.00
(6) Field Service Officers	$ 329,472.00	$ 27,456.00
(2) Dispatchers	$ 104,832.00	$ 8,736.00
(1) Dispatch Lead	$ 62,400.00	$ 5,200.00
Field Services Manager	$ 72,000.00	$ 6,000.00
Volunteer Coordinator	$ 59,472.00	$ 4,956.00
Marketing & Communications Coordinator	$ 59,904.00	$ 4,992.00
Total Salaries	**$ 3,349,968.00**	**$ 279,164.00**
Current Service and Supplies	$ 746,532.00	$ 62,211.00
Additional Marketing & Promotion Budget	TBD	TBD
Adt Workers Comp Insurance (.051568 X $1,941,072)	$ 100,092.00	$ 8,341.00
All Service and Supplies	**$ 846,624.00**	**$ 70,552.00**
	$ -	
All General Vet Services	**$ 234,000.00**	**$ 19,500.00**
	$ -	
Current Fleet Maintenance/Fuel	$ 60,000.00	$ 5,000.00
Additional maintenance/fuel for new vehicles	$ 35,004.00	$ 2,917.00
All Fleet Maintenance/Fuel	**$ 95,004.00**	**$ 7,917.00**
	$ -	
Emergency Vet Services	**$ 240,000.00**	**$ 20,000.00**
Monthly Grand Total		**$ 397,133.00**

Yearly Subtotal	**$ 4,765,596.00**	

(8) Climate Controlled Vehicles ($42k per vehicle)	$ 336,000.00	
Total Yearly Budget	**$ 5,101,596.00**	

PHASE 2:

SUSTAINABILITY

PHASE TWO: ESTABLISHING SUSTAINABLE SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY AND SHELTER NEEDS

PHASE 2

Building on the foundation established in Phase One, Phase Two focuses on creating sustainable systems and support networks that will ensure long-term stability and success for FHAS and the surrounding community. While Phase One addressed immediate needs by stabilizing staffing, establishing essential roles, and laying groundwork for operational efficiency, Phase Two expands these efforts to develop a robust safety net for both people and pets. This phase emphasizes the importance of a coordinated approach that integrates community support, financial sustainability, and enhanced infrastructure, addressing the root causes of shelter intake and providing resources that keep animals with their families. Through proactive, community-centered initiatives, Phase Two aims to reduce dependency on reactive measures, setting the stage for a comprehensive, community-driven approach that fully supports the county's vision for animal welfare and public health.

Safety net programs are vital for addressing the challenges faced by both residents and animals in Fresno County. Economic hardships, resource scarcity, and environmental risks can limit people's ability to care for themselves and their families, including pets. By funding and implementing comprehensive safety net programs, Fresno County can help alleviate these pressures, reducing the number of stray/lost animals entering shelters and ensuring pets remain with their families.

Success in these efforts relies on programs that target the root causes of vulnerability. Fresno HOPE and similar community initiatives demonstrate how outreach programs tailored to residents' needs can build trust and offer culturally relevant support. Building on this, Fresno County and FHAS can deepen its impact through non-punitive field services that provide resources such as pet care assistance, safety repairs, and access to essential services. These programs allow families to keep their pets despite financial or logistical struggles, underscoring the principle that when people are supported, their pets benefit as well.

By combining these safety net programs with proactive community engagement, community-based field services and humane investigations, Fresno County can create a more resilient community where both people and pets thrive. This unified approach reduces shelter intake, enhances community well-being, and builds a strong foundation for FHAS's long-term sustainability.
To maximize this approach, we recommend building Field Services on three interconnected pillars:

A community-based outreach model focuses on engaging local residents in addressing pet and animal-related needs in culturally relevant ways, building trust within neighborhoods. This approach prioritizes hiring local residents for roles such as neighborhood canvassers and outreach coordinators, empowering them to lead initiatives tailored to the community. Key efforts include supporting One Health projects, which address the health and welfare of both people and animals, and forming partnerships with established local organizations to expand outreach and impact.

For example, the San Francisco SPCA's partnership with Fresno's SNIP Bus provides mobile spay/neuter services to underserved areas, reducing barriers to veterinary care and addressing shelter overcrowding. Supported by California for All Animals grant funds, this program highlights how collaborations can increase access to essential services.

By aligning with local coalition frameworks and partnering with key entities like the City of Fresno, local shelters, and community organizations, Fresno County has a unique opportunity to comprehensively address public health and animal welfare needs. This is a significant community challenge that spans both city and county boundaries, as pets don't recognize these borders. **A coordinated, region-wide approach offers the most effective path to achieving lasting improvements for both people and animals.**

Working closely with the City of Fresno, Fresno County can implement focused programs that create meaningful impact. For instance, placing collars with ID tags to dogs in neighborhoods with high stray intakes could reduce lost-pet numbers and foster a culture of pet reunification. This would help community members return lost pets more easily and shift perceptions, emphasizing that these animals are cared for and valued rather than unwanted.

Further internal conversations, along with discussions with the City of Fresno and other key stakeholders, are essential for shaping a well-informed community strategy that will guide program development, staffing needs, and budget requirements.

PILLAR 2:
COMMUNITY BASED FIELD SERVICES

This model is the current approach used by FHAS for field operations, strengthened by the proposed investment of six additional Animal Control Officers (ACOs) to enhance community support. This strategy focuses on empowering residents to keep their pets by addressing common challenges that often lead to pet surrender, such as resolving containment issues, providing essential food and supplies, and offering resources to help community members keep pets out of the shelter. This approach helps reduce shelter intake while supporting families in maintaining their pets, even during times of financial hardship.

In this model, field officers primarily focus on guidance, education, and support, assisting pet owners with practical solutions to keep pets safely at home. Field officers also engage in community education on pet ownership, animal laws, and community safety. However, in situations where the welfare of residents or animals is at risk—such as cases involving neglect or abuse—field officers retain the authority to issue citations or take necessary enforcement actions. This balanced approach ensures that officers play a vital role in keeping families and pets together through supportive measures while also upholding the responsibility to protect community safety and animal welfare.

PILLAR 3:
HUMANE INVESTIGATIONS

Establishing a dedicated unit within Fresno County to directly manage cruelty and neglect cases will streamline shelter and field operations. By handling these cases in-house rather than relying on third-party organizations, the County and FHAS can exercise greater oversight and better manage resources and capacity. It's recommended to begin by hiring one investigator.

Analyzing call data, specifically identifying the types and volume of cases this investigator would respond to, will help refine future staffing recommendations. This initial investment in one position provides a starting point, allowing for a more informed approach to staffing as the unit's impact and needs become clearer over time.

Fresno County and FHAS should consider shifting field services to the direct management of the County. This change would allow FHAS to focus on sheltering, animal care, and achieving positive outcomes, while positioning the County to manage field services and community outreach. Although separating these functions is not typically recommended, given the challenges FHAS has recently faced, this shift may relieve capacity constraints and enable the County to invest more readily in staff, vehicles, and infrastructure needed to right-size and expand programs and services.

To prevent common issues that arise when field services are managed separately—such as Field Officers bringing animals to the shelter without consideration for its resources and capacity—a strong, clearly defined partnership is essential. This partnership should be formalized with an updated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that clearly outlines roles, responsibilities, and shared goals, with a focus on reducing intake, balancing lifesaving with safety and care, and keeping people and pets together as the core of this agreement.

PHASE 2

Municipal resources are often stretched thin, making it essential to cultivate additional support for long-term sustainability. Phase Two offers an opportunity to establish a 'Friends of' support group— an approach many municipalities use to offset costs that taxpayer dollars cannot cover. Or to consider funding dedicated roles or contractors in fund development, marketing, and communications for FHAS. Hiring a development team is critical to building a fundraising structure that can secure contributions from private donors and grants, creating new revenue pathways to address rising costs associated with animal sheltering.

This strategy, commonly used by municipalities, helps bridge funding gaps and provides resources that are otherwise unavailable due to budget constraints or shortfalls.

By investing in fund development, marketing, and communications, FHAS and the County can establish a financial model that increases investment at the community, state, and national levels. This ensures the resources needed to maintain the standard of care and level of service that both FHAS and the County aspire to provide. Staffing or contract costs for these roles should be calculated once the County and FHAS discuss and determine how they wish to proceed, allowing for an informed approach that aligns with shared goals and resource needs.

PHASE 2

A key component of FHAS's long-term sustainability is the ability to provide comprehensive onsite medical care, which requires hiring a dedicated medical team in Phase Three. To support this, Phase Two will involve identifying and preparing suitable spaces within the existing shelter for spay/neuter surgeries, triage, and treatment. This process includes evaluating the current shelter layout, identifying areas for modification, and estimating construction and equipment costs.

Since the County owns the building, it is recommended that the County engage its facilities team to collaborate with subject matter experts, such as the UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program, which provides facility consultations. This collaboration will help develop a detailed plan and budget for the necessary build-out. Establishing dedicated spaces for essential medical services enables FHAS to better support the community while reducing the need for costly and logistically challenging outsourcing of routine and emergency care.

RECOMMENDATION: ALLOCATE AN ONSITE COUNTY FACILITIES MANAGER

Due to the unique demands of an animal shelter, it is helpful to allocate a dedicated position who is responsible for managing all aspects of facility maintenance and oversight. Animal shelters are high-usage environments that require frequent upkeep and proactive management because of:

- **High Foot Traffic:** The daily movement of staff, volunteers, and the public, combined with the consistent presence of animals, places significant strain on flooring, fixtures, and common areas.
- **Stringent Disinfection Protocols**: Regular and intensive cleaning is necessary to prevent the spread of disease. This high frequency of disinfection can quickly degrade building materials and fixtures, requiring regular inspections and repairs.
- **Specialized Infrastructure Needs**: Animal shelters often have complex HVAC systems, plumbing, and drainage designed to handle animal waste, odor control, and specialized ventilation. These systems need consistent monitoring and maintenance to operate effectively.
- **Common Building Issues in Animal Shelters:**
  - **HVAC Failures:** Climate control is critical for animal health, and HVAC systems must be regularly maintained to prevent breakdowns, particularly in extreme weather conditions.
  - **Plumbing Backups**: Animal shelters rely heavily on robust plumbing systems for cleaning kennels and handling animal waste, making backups a frequent issue.
  - **Flooring Wear and Tear**: The use of strong disinfectants and high foot traffic often lead to premature flooring damage, requiring regular inspections and replacement planning.
  - **Critter Control:** The presence of animals and food can attract unwanted critters, necessitating ongoing management to maintain a safe and hygienic environment.

BUDGET AND COST CONSIDERATIONS
PHASE TWO

As Fresno County moves forward with Phase Two, a comprehensive budget outline will need to be developed for the long-term sustainability of these initiatives. Many of the associated costs—including the development of safety net programs, enhancement of field services, scale of community outreach efforts, and the buildout of medical spaces—will require additional research and collaborative discussions between FHAS, the County, and other key stakeholders. These discussions will help refine project scopes, identify funding opportunities, and ensure that budget allocations are both realistic and effective. By engaging with these partners, Fresno County can accurately assess and prioritize necessary investments, creating a well-rounded budget that supports Phase Two's objectives and aligns with community needs.

Summary Table: Key Positions, Departments, and Budget Considerations for Phase Two

Phase Two Components	Key Positions	Budget Considerations
Safety Net Programs	Outreach Coordinators, Neighborhood Canvassers	Costs for positions, pet care assistance and funds for the supplies and services that support the Safety Net Programs.
Community-Based Field Services	Existing Field Offices	Investment in ACOs to support pet retention and community education; costs for supplies and resources for community members. Data analysis costs to inform staffing needs.
Humane Investigations	Investigator (1)	Salary for one investigator, equipment, and ongoing certification and training costs.
Financial Sustainability & Community Engagement	Development Team (fundraising, marketing, communications)	Costs for hiring or contracting a team; establishing a 'Friends of' support group; fundraising and marketing expenses.
Building Medical Capacity	*Future Medical Team (Phase Three)*	Facility evaluation, modification, and construction costs; consultation fees with UC Davis Shelter Medicine Program.
Facilities Maintenance	Facilities Manager	The costs associated with hiring a Facilities Manager include salary and benefits, maintenance supplies, contractor services for specialized repairs, routine inspections, technology and equipment for facility management, training and professional development, mileage or vehicle expenses, and a contingency fund for unexpected repairs.

This table outlines the foundational elements for Phase Two and highlights budget considerations for each component to help guide financial planning and resource allocation.

PHASE 3:
TRANSFORMATION

PHASE 3

Access to veterinary care is a growing challenge in many areas, particularly in California and the Fresno region, where availability and affordability of medical services for pets are limited. For many community members, the shelter is often the only available source of veterinary support, whether through vaccinations, spay/neuter surgeries, or necessary treatments provided while the animal is under the care of the shelter system. Shelters like FHAS play a critical role in ensuring pets receive essential care, especially in underserved communities where private clinics are scarce or financially inaccessible.

In Fresno County, the need for accessible shelter-based veterinary care has never been more urgent. The high demand for services such as spay/neuter surgeries, vaccinations, and emergency treatment directly impacts shelter operations and community welfare. However, relying on offsite providers for these services presents challenges, including logistical delays, increased costs, and reduced efficiency. For FHAS to operate more effectively, onsite medical capacity is essential.

The shelter is currently able to operate under a premises license thanks to the generosity of Dr. Jennifer Scarlette, President and CEO of the San Francisco SPCA, who has allowed her license to support FHAS's medical needs. While this partnership has been invaluable, it is not a sustainable long-term solution. For FHAS to provide stable, ongoing care for Fresno County animals, it requires an in-house, licensed veterinary team dedicated to managing the scope of its medical program and meeting the demands of the community.

The future staffing model will need to be tailored to the scope of care the county intends to offer, but must account for significant service demands, including up to 6,000 spay/neuter surgeries annually, triage and treatment for the wide array of health conditions common among shelter animals, and the essential oversight required for a well-functioning medical program. This team would ideally consist of veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and support staff capable of managing the shelter's daily medical needs, addressing ongoing treatment cases, and overseeing preventative care initiatives that are critical for managing shelter population health.

By transitioning to an onsite veterinary team, FHAS can ensure more timely care, reduce the burdens and costs associated with offsite outsourcing, and better support the health and welfare of animals in its care. This transformation would allow FHAS to expand its role as a primary access point for veterinary care within the community, fostering a more equitable model of animal welfare and public health that aligns with the county's long-term vision for humane, accessible services.

Developing an in-house veterinary care model at FHAS will require collaboration with experienced leaders and experts in the field. Engaging key stakeholders, like Dr. Jennifer Scarlette, the UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program, and other local veterinary professionals, will be essential to designing a program that meets the unique needs of Fresno County's animals and community members. These partnerships bring valuable insights and practical expertise in shelter medicine, veterinary care standards, and community health, helping to ensure the model is both effective and sustainable. With input from these knowledgeable partners, FHAS can build a veterinary care program that not only addresses immediate needs but also strengthens the county's capacity to deliver compassionate, accessible care well into the future.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
CONCLUSION

This report presents a strategic, phased approach to stabilize, strengthen, and transform the animal services provided to Fresno County residents. Phase One focuses on addressing critical staffing and operational needs to deliver consistent and compassionate care for animals and the community. Phase Two emphasizes creating sustainable support systems, enhancing community engagement, and addressing root causes of shelter intake. Phase Three offers a transformative vision, including on-site veterinary services to reduce reliance on external providers and better support pets in care.

While these recommendations are informed by the best available data, some gaps remain in areas like budget tracking and animal data collection. Success will depend on ongoing collaboration among FHAS leaders, County and City officials, and community stakeholders to refine strategies and timelines based on emerging insights. Additionally, the inherent challenges of animal welfare, deeply intertwined with societal vulnerabilities like poverty, require a realistic and culturally responsive approach to implementation.

This report balances a high-level understanding of community needs with actionable, detailed assessments of FHAS's operations. Specific recommendations include workforce and leadership strategies, operational improvements, and program enhancements to guide FHAS toward greater effectiveness and impact. By adopting a regional and collaborative approach, Fresno County can provide resources that help keep pets with their families, ensure safe and healthy communities, and establish a foundation for meaningful, lasting change.

Hatching is grateful for the opportunity to partner with FHAS and the County in crafting these recommendations. The shared commitment to building a sustainable, impactful future is inspiring. We are eager to support continued efforts in leadership recruitment, shelter and program operations, leadership development, community organizing, coalition-building, brand and marketing strategies, fundraising, and more.

Together, Fresno County can set the standard for compassionate, intentional, and forward-thinking animal welfare practices, creating a brighter, healthier future for animals and people alike.

OPERATIONS AND PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

&

RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, Operations and Program Assessment, we provide a concise, high-level snapshot of each individual department, highlighting a strategic goal, positive observations, and targeted action steps for improvement. Our aim is to offer a streamlined overview that captures the essence of each area's strengths and opportunities. These summaries are intentionally brief, designed to be easily digestible, actionable, and aligned with overall organizational priorities, enabling efficient planning and execution.

FRESNO DATA DASHBOARD OVERVIEW

The Fresno Tableau Dashboard presents a synthesized analysis of data from FHAS and the County Animal Shelter, covering the period from January 2021 through October 2024. We selected these dates as data prior to the COVID-19 pandemic may not accurately reflect current operational realities or provide reliable insights for future trend analysis. To ensure the quality and consistency of our findings, we undertook a significant data cleanup process, though some limitations remain due to the software used (PetPoint) and the methods employed by FHAS staff to capture information. Additionally, it's important to acknowledge that there are multiple ways to interpret shelter data, which can affect metrics like length of stay, population balance, and lifesaving rates. While the data is not perfect, it offers a robust foundation for understanding key performance indicators and identifying areas for operational improvement.

STRATEGIC GOAL:
Improve data collection and reporting practices to enhance decision-making and program effectiveness.

POSITIVES:
- The shelter has established software (PetPoint) in place for data management, providing a solid foundation.
- The available data is robust enough to inform actionable insights, guiding improvements in programs and daily operations.
- Significant improvements have been observed in **population balance** and **lifesaving rates,** particularly from 2023 onward, indicating better data usage in strategic planning.

ACTION STEPS:

✓ **Geocode intake and outcomes data** to overlay on the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI), enabling intentional outreach and resource allocation.

✓ Implement **real-time data entr**y to ensure accurate timestamp tracking and reduce discrepancies in reporting.

✓ Establish **a system to track response times** and closure rates for enforcement calls, providing critical insights into service efficiency and areas needing improvement.

Based on the provided data for FHAS, here are the critical insights:

INTAKE INSIGHTS

Stray animals consistently form the majority, increasing sharply in 2023 (88.5%) but slightly decreasing in 2024 (86.1%).

Owner/Guardian surrenders have declined significantly, from 1,390 in 2021 to just **419 in 2024 YTD.** This drop likely reflects changes in both shelter policies and community behavior. FHAS has prioritized intake for the most vulnerable stray animals, limiting the acceptance of owner surrenders. Instead, individuals seeking to surrender pets are directed to the CCSPCA or provided with alternative resources. Additionally, it's possible that some community members are opting to label their pets as "strays" to facilitate intake, as this process is perceived to be easier, potentially inflating the stray intake numbers.

OUTCOME ANALYSIS

The **adoption rate** has improved in 2024, reaching 19.1%, the highest in four years, suggesting a positive trend in finding homes for animals locally.

Euthanasia rates have increased:

- **2021**: 9.5%
- **2022**: 12%
- **2023**: 17.7%
- **2024**: 21.7%

This suggests a rising challenge in managing intake and outcome capacity effectively.

REDUCED RETURN TO OWNER RATES

The **Return to Owner/Guardian** rate has declined, particularly in 2024 (3.3%), compared to previous years (5.8% in 2021). This may indicate challenges in reuniting stray/lost animals with their families.

DECLINING SAVE RATE

Save Rate: [(Live Intakes) - (Non-Live Outcomes*)] divided by [(Live Intakes)]

The save rate has seen a notable decline over the four-year period:
- **2021**: 83%
- **2022**: 81%
- **2023**: 65%
- **2024**: 70%

While 2024 shows a slight recovery, it remains below the 2021 and 2022 levels, indicating a challenge in maintaining high save rates.

CRITICAL INSIGHTS

- The **increasing euthanasia rates** alongside a declining save rate are concerning indicators of capacity issues or a possible strain on resources and community support.
- The decrease in **transfers out,** from 60.6% in 2022 to 37.9% in 2024, could point to less capacity among partner organizations to rescue animals from FHAS, impacting overall save rates.
- Despite challenges, the rise in **adoption rates** in 2024 signals potential improvements in adoption efforts or community engagement strategies.
- Addressing the declining **Return to Owner/Guardian rate**s could help reduce intake pressure and improve save rates by focusing on reuniting lost pets with their owners.

The current average length of stay (LOS) for cats is 28 days, while for dogs, it averages 21.2 days. These figures highlight the need for efficient outcomes to prevent overcrowding and ensure proper care capacity.

Animal Type	LOS: 2021	LOS: 2022	LOS: 2023	LOS: 2024 (YTD)
Dog	7.9 days	19.4 days	26 days	21.2 days
Cat	9.6 days	35.4 days	36.3 days	28 days

Population Balance: A balanced population** is achieved when the number of outcomes (e.g., adoptions, transfers, and returns to owner) matches or exceeds the number of intakes, preventing the shelter from exceeding its capacity.

- Green percentages mean there was no gap (outcomes matched or exceeded intakes).
- Red percentages mean there was a gap (more animals came in than went out).
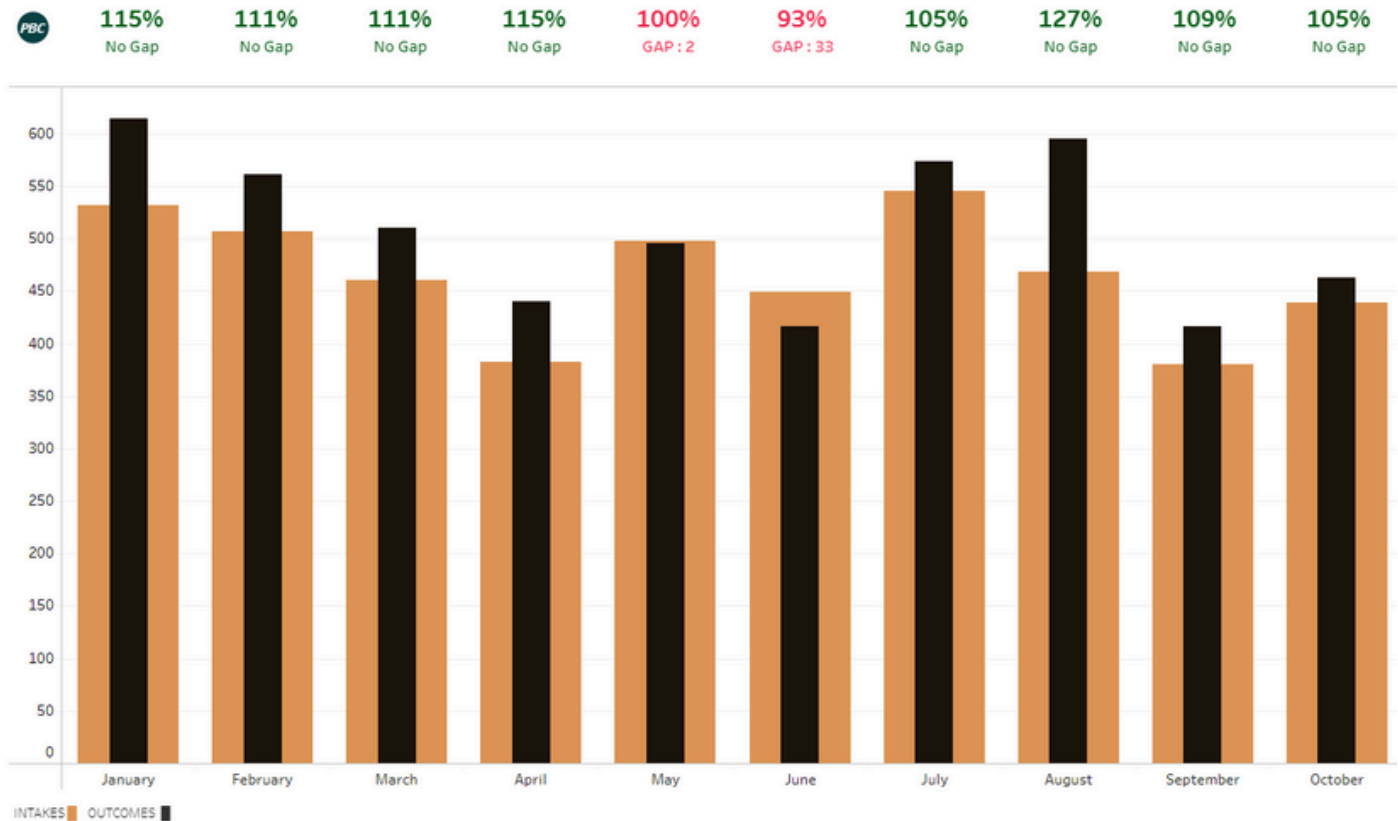
FHAS Population balance for 2023:

2023:

- There is noticeable fluctuation, especially towards the end of the year. December 2023 is a standout month, showing a drastic decrease in outcomes (PBC of 59%).
- The gaps in April and August align with historical patterns seen in 2021 and 2022, indicating potential seasonal challenges in managing shelter capacity.

FHAS Population balance for 2024:

| PBC | 115% No Gap | 111% No Gap | 111% No Gap | 115% No Gap | 100% GAP : 2 | 93% GAP : 33 | 105% No Gap | 127% No Gap | 109% No Gap | 105% No Gap |

INTAKES ▮ OUTCOMES ▮

2024 (YTD):

- The most recent year shows improved performance overall, with higher PBC percentages in most months (above 100%), indicating better alignment between intakes and outcomes.
- Only two months (August and October) show gaps, with significantly reduced deficits compared to previous years. This suggests effective changes in processes or strategies implemented in 2024.
- The year-to-date data for 2024 indicates a positive trend, with fewer gaps and higher PBC percentages compared to prior years.
- This suggests successful interventions, including coordinated intake processes, increased community adoptions, and field officers limiting pickups to only sick, injured, or safety-risk animals.

WORKFORCE AND CLIMATE

The following analysis combines insights from the recent 2024 Employee Pulse Survey and our direct observations during on-site visits. The survey captured feedback from 35 staff members (90% response rate), providing a snapshot of the current organizational climate. While the results highlighted a strong sense of purpose and camaraderie among staff, it also revealed areas needing attention, including inconsistent communication, limited support for supervisory roles, and concerns about workload imbalances. Many staff members reported feeling overburdened due to staffing shortages and noted that compensation levels are lower compared to city-run shelters, exacerbating issues of retention and morale. The following page integrates survey findings with our on-site assessments to address key themes, aiming to create a more cohesive, supportive, and sustainable workplace environment.

STRATEGIC GOAL:

Build a culture of trust and transparent communication that empowers staff at all levels, optimizes skill utilization, and strengthens relationships to support a collaborative and fulfilling workplace environment.

POSITIVES:

- **Strong Sense of Purpose:** 89% of staff feel their work is meaningful, especially in saving animals' lives, reflecting a mission-driven culture.
- **Supportive and Collaborative Team Environment:** Staff frequently support each other without prompting, and many express positive experiences of teamwork and camaraderie.
- **Motivated and Mission-Aligned Staff**: Employees are highly motivated and eager to help animals, showing strong alignment with the organization's mission and values.
- **Effective Supervisors for Frontline Staff:** 79% of non-supervisory employees feel valued by their direct supervisors, highlighting strong leadership at the ground level.
- **Skill Utilization (Non-Supervisory Roles):** 82% of frontline staff believe their skills are effectively utilized, indicating good alignment between job roles and employee capabilities.
- **Open Conversations:** Honest and open dialogue is already happening within certain groups, setting a foundation for broader communication improvements.

ACTION STEPS:

✓ **Conduct a Comprehensive Compensation Study:**
   - Assess current salary structures and benefits to ensure fair and competitive compensation, addressing any disparities and aligning pay scales with industry standards to support retention and attract top talent.

✓ **Balance Workloads by Increasing Staffing:**
   - Implement targeted staffing increases as outlined in Phase One, aimed at reducing burnout, distributing tasks more evenly, and enhancing overall team capacity.

✓ **Enhance Communication:**
   - Conduct regular one-on-one meetings and structured team meetings to foster open dialogue and build trust.
   - Implement a clear communication framework with regular leadership updates and an anonymous Q&A platform for staff feedback.
   - Reinforce proper communication channels to ensure consistency and minimize miscommunication.

✓ **Maximize Skill Utilization and Growth:**
   - Provide cross-training and job role reviews to align staff skills with responsibilities.
   - Develop individualized growth plans for career advancement across all roles.

In the absence of a formal director, key leadership decisions at FHAS are currently made collectively by the Personnel Manager, Shelter Manager, Client Services Manager, and the Playgroup and Enrichment Lead, with some additional support from the Board Chair. While it is commendable that this group has stepped up, often going above and beyond to handle their responsibilities, the lack of a designated leader has led to gaps in structure, systems, accountability, and consistent leadership support. This has created challenges for these managers, who would benefit from mentorship and guidance to navigate complex operational decisions and drive strategic growth.

STRATEGIC GOAL:

Hire a Director and invest in the development and mentorship of the current management team.

POSITIVES:

- **Strong Leader-Staff Relationships:** Many leaders have built positive, supportive connections with their teams.
- **Sense of Belonging:** Staff members feel a strong sense of camaraderie and support, contributing to a positive workplace environment.
- **Leadership Commitment:** Leadership exemplifies dedication by not only identifying challenges but also implementing solutions despite constraints.

ACTION STEPS:

✓ **Invest in hiring a Director:**
- Prioritize the recruitment of a highly qualified Director to provide strategic vision, cohesive leadership, and consistent oversight. A dedicated Director will help fill critical gaps in structure, decision-making, and accountability while offering essential mentorship and support to the current management team. This investment is crucial to establish stability, enhance organizational alignment, and drive long-term growth.

✓ **Enhance Mentorship and Leadership Development:**
- Create opportunities for leaders to mentor others while receiving mentorship themselves, strengthening skills across all levels.

✓ **Strengthen Engagement and Communication:**
- Develop a structured engagement plan with regular, intentional touchpoints for leaders to connect with their teams, fostering open dialogue and stronger relationships.

✓ **Foster Emotional Intelligence, Decision-Making, and Open Communication:**
- Offer comprehensive leadership workshops focused on integrating emotional intelligence with effective decision-making practices. Introduce frameworks that balance logical analysis with empathy and emotional awareness, helping leaders make well-rounded decisions. These workshops will also emphasize cultivating open communication, trust-building, and best practices for strong, supportive leadership across the organization.

OPERATIONS & PROGRAMS

INTAKE PROTOCOLS

STRATEGIC GOAL:

Establish consistent intake protocols, streamline data entry, enhance staff training, engage volunteers, and expand community services to improve operational efficiency, intake diversion, and strengthen community relationships.

POSITIVES:

- The "First 48" program is effective for disease control, allowing microchipping and vaccination prior to re-entry.
- Staff are proactive in asking for help when uncertain and avoid risky situations.
- Courteous staff ensure low wait times and provide excellent customer service.
- Thorough health assessments are conducted on every animal, with proper triaging and medical protocols for non-emergencies.
- Free microchips are being offered to the public, creating positive community **relationships.**

ACTION STEPS:

✓ Prioritize intake as a resource hub, providing guidance, support, and alternatives for pet owners and community members who find stray or lost animals, aiming to keep pets out of the shelter whenever possible through rehoming assistance, lost pet resources, and community support options.

✓ Ensure intake forms are entered into PetPoint promptly to avoid accumulation and delays.

✓ Assign a designated intake trainer and create specific guidelines for asking detailed behavioral questions during intake.

✓ Recruit and train volunteers to assist with intake tasks to alleviate workload on staff.

✓ Increase the frequency of free microchip events and add free pet tags to further benefit community engagement.

✓ Establish a cleaning protocol for intake areas, ensuring thoroughness to maintain hygiene, such as fully cleaning the weigh station and surrounding surfaces.

CANINE HOUSING AND ENRICHMENT

STRATEGIC GOAL:

Enhance canine housing and enrichment practices to improve comfort, reduce stress, and ensure a clean, healthy environment for all dogs.

POSITIVES:

- Kennels were consistently clean and well-maintained.
- Effective space management minimized the use of emergency pop-up kennels.
- Staff demonstrated professionalism and care in cleaning and sanitizing kennels.
- Two distinct cleaning methods (spot cleaning and full sanitation) were applied based on the condition of each kennel.
- Dogs received enrichment activities, including Kongs, toys, cream cheese, and cheese balls.
- Three outdoor play yards were available for playgroups and evaluations, with additional large yards for other uses.
- All dogs had bedding, which was kept clean throughout the day.
- Double-sided kennels in both stray and adoptable areas allowed for better movement and comfort.
- Most dogs had Kuranda beds in their kennels for added comfort.
- Play yards were promptly disinfected when disease was detected, maintaining a safe environment.

ACTION STEPS:

✓ Ensure every large dog has a Kuranda bed in its kennel for improved comfort and reduced stress.

✓ Launch a volunteer program to provide consistent enrichment activities throughout the day.

✓ Promote day trips for dogs as a valuable way to give them a break from the shelter and gather feedback to increase their adoptability.

✓ Continue refining the two-tier cleaning process to maintain high hygiene standards.

✓ Flush kennel drains regularly and use a degreaser to prevent buildup, enhancing the effectiveness of disinfectants.

✓ Disinfect play yard turf 1-2 times per week to maintain cleanliness and prevent disease spread.

✓ Explore additional enrichment options to further reduce stress, especially during periods of overcapacity.

STRATEGIC GOAL:

Enhance feline housing and enrichment to maintain a low-stress environment, increase adoptability, and provide engaging spaces for both cats and the community.

POSITIVES:

- Clean, well-maintained housing units for both free-roaming and single-housed cats.
- Cats show no signs of stress, indicating a calm and positive environment.
- The free-roam room includes stimulating features like cat trees, toys, and enrichment items.
- The housing area is well-distanced from dog kennels, reducing stress from noise.
- The spacious layout allows flexibility for enrichment activities and community engagement.
- A large glass window provides a welcoming, visually appealing view for the public.

ACTION STEPS:

✓ Improve the quality of cat photos on the Fresno website to boost adoptability; consider using resources like Maddie's Fund for ideas (https://www.maddiesfund.org/foster-care-resources.htm).

✓ Continue maintaining a clean, enriched environment to support the well-being of all cats.

✓ Utilize the spacious housing area for additional enrichment activities, such as interactive play sessions or community events to engage visitors.

A key reason FHAS is able to provide high-quality care for the cats in its facility is its long-standing practice of not intaking healthy free-roaming cats, often referred to as community cats or feral cats. By focusing intake efforts on cats that require medical attention or support, FHAS frees up crucial capacity to care for cats that are truly in need while also allocating more time and resources for dog care. This thoughtful approach ensures that FHAS can maintain a low-stress, enriched environment that boosts adaptability, and helps with population management.

OPERATIONS & PROGRAMS

STRATEGIC GOAL:

Optimize population management to reduce shelter capacity pressures, decrease length of stay, and improve outcomes for pets.

POSITIVES:

- The transport program effectively alleviates capacity pressure, supporting shelter operations.
- Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to providing high-quality care for every pet.
- Proactive strategies help decrease length of stay and lead to better outcomes for animals.
- Enhanced population management reduces stress, limits the spread of infectious diseases, and decreases negative behaviors, benefiting pets and staff alike.

ACTION STEPS:

✓ Review the Capacity for Care chart (https://www.californiaforallanimals.com/resources/capacity-score-chart/) to understand current capacity status and its impact on shelter operations, considering the following kennel spaces:
  - 54 double-sided kennels for adoptable dogs
  - 30 single-sided kennels for small dogs
  - 36 double-sided kennels for strays and animal control holds
  - 46 single-sided kennels for isolation purposes

✓ Aim to operate below the shelter's physical capacity by leveraging life-saving programs, maintaining space for emergency and enforcement cases.

✓ Review and Update Ordinance 9.04.275: Update the ordinance to reduce hold times to 72 hours, aligning with best practices to mitigate overcrowding, lower costs, and expedite outcomes while supporting efforts to reunite pets with their owners.

✓ Form a team to conduct daily rounds, ensuring each new pet has an active, updated care plan.

✓ At two-week intervals, increase advocacy efforts for pets still in the shelter, focusing on pathways to reduce their length of stay.

✓ Allow paid reservations for animals during their stray hold period to ensure an immediate outcome once the hold is complete, reducing time spent in the shelter.

✓ Create specific reports to analyze length of stay for both cats and dogs, and flag animals that remain in the shelter beyond 14 days. Use these reports to update notes, photos, and playgroup assessments as needed.

✓ Prioritize reunification with owners whenever possible, as it is a quick and effective outcome that reduces length of stay.

✓ Collaborate with local rescues to take in animals during their stray period, with an agreement to return them if an owner is identified; if no owner comes forward, transfer the animal to reduce shelter burden.

STRATEGIC GOAL:

Enhance medical care and disease control by placing trained medical staff in key roles to ensure timely identification of health issues, streamline treatment decisions, and improve overall animal welfare through effective communication with the veterinary team.

POSITIVES:

- All animals receive vaccinations and microchips upon intake, reducing the risk of infectious diseases.
- Clearly visible medical protocols for cat isolation facilitate quick reference and adherence.
- Disease outbreaks are well-controlled, with only 21 cases of Upper Respiratory Infection (URI) reported among 278 animals.

ACTION STEPS:

- ✓ Recruit a veterinary technician to serve as a medical coordinator, acting as the liaison between the offsite veterinary clinics and shelter staff to expedite medical care.

- ✓ Hire and train additional medical staff to quickly identify health issues and enhance disease surveillance efforts.

- ✓ Continue vaccinating every pet upon intake to minimize the immediate risk of disease transmission.

- ✓ Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for sanitizing dog kennels and Animal Control Officer (ACO) vehicles to maintain hygiene.

- ✓ Implement spot cleaning for cat enclosures, performing full disinfection only when a cat leaves the cage or if necessary due to excessive waste.

- ✓ Review current URI treatment protocols, particularly the practice of treating cases within kennels rather than in isolation.

- ✓ Assess the potential benefits of isolating URI cases to reduce the risk of further disease transmission.

- ✓ Train staff to identify early signs of illness and respond promptly, improving containment and treatment outcomes.

OPERATIONS & PROGRAMS

STRATEGIC GOAL:

Enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of field services by optimizing response times, improving resource access, and adopting a community-focused approach that prioritizes animal welfare and public safety.

POSITIVES:

- Officers demonstrate passion, patience, and respect when engaging with the community.
- Field staff show care for community property during interactions.
- High efficiency in vaccinating and locating kennels for impounded animals.
- Staff contribute to animal reunification efforts by proactively posting on social media when animals are impounded.
- Use of tablets and scanners in the field streamlines operations.

ACTION STEPS:

✓ Meet with key stakeholders to develop a comprehensive plan for improving field services.

✓ Address slow response times by increasing the number of officers on shift and optimizing dispatch operations.

✓ Create a volunteer auxiliary team to handle non-emergency calls, freeing up officers for critical fieldwork.

✓ Equip vehicles with air conditioning, battery-operated fans, and cooling pads to ensure safe animal transport during hot weather, reducing the need for frequent trips back to the shelter.

✓ Transition from phone-based dispatch to radio communication for faster, safer interactions, especially during emergencies.

✓ Keep communication channels (e.g., text threads) work-related and streamlined for clarity and efficiency.

✓ Provide additional uniforms to clearly identify officers on duty, enhancing safety and visibility.

✓ Limit long shifts by addressing on-call requirements and ensuring officers receive adequate rest.

✓ Develop written Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that are easily accessible, replacing reliance on email chains.

✓ Increase access to essential tools, such as dog and cat traps, citation books, and treats, to enhance field operations.

✓ Equip officers with pet supplies to support community members in keeping their pets, adopting an outreach-focused approach. Review Best Friends' Lifesaving Field Services Playbook for additional guidance (https://network.bestfriends.org/education/manuals-handbooks-playbooks/lifesaving-field-services-training-playbook).

✓ Utilize the Best Friends Animal Society's Humane Animal Control Manual as a key reference to supplement this report (https://resources.bestfriends.org/article/humane-animal-control-manual).

STRATEGIC GOAL:

Improve the efficiency and safety of dispatch operations by streamlining communication, consolidating data systems, and enhancing support through volunteer involvement.

POSITIVES:

- Dispatchers are knowledgeable and resourceful.
- Dispatchers are courteous, patient, and thorough in their communication with callers.
- Follow-up questions are consistently used to clarify details, ensuring accurate call handling.

ACTION STEPS:

✓ Transition from phone-based dispatch to radio communication for faster, more reliable interactions, particularly during emergencies.

✓ Consolidate all interaction data into PetPoint for each contact, reducing reliance on multiple platforms like Google Sheets.

✓ If Google-based systems are still used, adopt a single shared Google Doc for all dispatchers, improving access to historical data and minimizing search times.

✓ Recruit and train volunteers to manage non-emergency calls and assist with data entry in Google Sheets or PetPoint.

✓ Increase the number of dispatchers in line with officer growth, ensuring each dispatcher can effectively monitor officer movements for safety and maintain direct communication during shifts.

✓ Keep communication channels (e.g., text threads) focused on work-related topics to maintain clarity and efficiency.

OPERATIONS & PROGRAMS

RETURN TO OWNER (DOGS)

STRATEGIC GOAL:

Increase return-to-owner (RTO) rates by streamlining lost and found processes, leveraging technology, and enhancing community involvement to reunite pets with their families faster.

POSITIVES:

- Fresno Humane uses a community-driven approach for reporting lost or found pets, with reports posted on their website and organized in a Google Doc for staff review.
- Social media efforts, including Facebook Live, effectively increase visibility and public engagement around stray animals.
- Fresno Community Shelter utilizes Petco Love's image recognition technology, which has potential to improve RTO rates if fully implemented.
- The FIRST48 program encourages community members to help locate pet owners, reducing the need for shelter intake.

ACTION STEPS:

- ✓ Fully implement Petco Love's image recognition system as the primary tool on Fresno Humane's webpage to automate matching lost pet reports with shelter animals.
- ✓ Consolidate reporting platforms by directing all lost and found reports to the Petco Love system, streamlining data and improving efficiency.
- ✓ Display posters and promotional materials in the shelter lobby to encourage the public to use the Petco Love platform for reporting lost or found pets.
- ✓ Continue using Facebook Live to showcase stray animals, but integrate it directly into the main Fresno Humane page for broader visibility, reducing manual comparisons and potential errors.
- ✓ Consider waiving reclaim fees and removing other barriers for pet owners to facilitate faster and easier reunification.
- ✓ Provide free pet ID tags to pet owners to encourage proper identification, reducing the chances of pets becoming lost again.
- ✓ Encourage finders of stray animals to post directly on the Petco Love Lost platform, increasing exposure and improving the likelihood of reunification.
- ✓ Offer resources such as crates, food, leashes, and collars to finders, helping them keep stray animals out of the shelter while they search for the owner.
- ✓ Explore incentives, such as gift cards, for finders who agree to temporarily care for stray pets, reducing the shelter's intake burden.

OPERATIONS & PROGRAMS

FOSTER PROGRAM

STRATEGIC GOAL:

Expand and streamline the foster program to increase capacity, improve animal flow, and boost community involvement, ultimately enhancing the live release rate and reducing shelter overcrowding.

POSITIVES:

- The Dog Foster Program currently supports about 30 dogs in foster care.
- The Foster-to-Adopt Program is effective, despite occasional delays.
- The Cat Foster Program includes 35 active foster parents, achieving a high live release rate by only euthanizing for severe illness or injury, not for space.
- Same-day fostering is available, offering quick placement for animals.

ACTION STEPS:

✓ Provide mentorship and support to the Foster Coordinator, ensuring they can effectively focus on building and managing the foster program.

✓ Enhance marketing and outreach efforts with a dedicated campaign highlighting the benefits of fostering and sharing successful foster stories to inspire community participation.

✓ Revise foster contracts to automatically complete adoptions if there is no contact from the foster parent for over 30 days (provided the animal is altered and local ordinances allow), reducing administrative bottlenecks and freeing up staff time.

✓ Distribute feedback forms to current and past fosters to gather insights and pinpoint areas for improvement.

✓ Participate in Maddie's Fund trainings or review their toolkit (https://www.maddiesfund.org/foster-care-resources.htm) for new strategies on increasing foster retention, recruitment, and overall program expansion.

✓ Explore additional spay-neuter partnerships to prevent delays in animal flow and ensure timely adoption placements.

✓ Transition to a foster-centric approach where all animals are considered for foster care as a step toward adoption, with both the shelter and foster advocating for the pet.

✓ Empower fosters to actively market the pets in their care by providing resources and guidance (https://www.maddiesfund.org/empowering-fosters-to-help-market-pets-from-foster-care.htm).

OPERATIONS & PROGRAMS

ADOPTION AND CLIENT SERVICES

STRATEGIC GOAL:

Increase the percentage of animals placed through community adoptions.

POSITIVES:

- Adoption wait times are generally short (3-5 minutes), with occasional extensions up to 15 minutes.
- Conversational adoption approach and flexible application process allow for personalized matches without automatic disqualifications.
- The adoption application is a simple, one-page form, making it user-friendly.
- Off-site adoptions are being considered as a strategy to expand adoption opportunities.
- Adoption counselors possess extensive knowledge of the animals, improving the quality of matches.

ACTION STEPS:

- Develop a multilingual adoption strategy, starting with Spanish. In Fresno County, 31.46% of residents speak Spanish at home, and approximately 50% report limited English proficiency, highlighting a need for language-accessible services.

- Enhance the waiting experience by showcasing adoptable pets in the kennel lobby, allowing potential adopters to visualize and engage with pets while they wait for a counselor.

- Introduce roaming adoption counselors in the lobby and adoption areas to engage visitors proactively, further reducing perceived wait times.

- Explore dynamic pricing models, such as waiving adoption fees in exchange for essential donations (e.g., canned pumpkin for dog enrichment), fostering community support while maintaining adoption rates.

- Implement off-site adoption events to increase visibility and reach potential adopters beyond the main facility, reducing crowding and expanding opportunities.

- Streamline meet-and-greet procedures to maintain high-quality interactions while improving efficiency for both staff and potential adopters.

- Provide free dog tags with the owner's name and phone number, in addition to microchipping, to increase the chances of lost pets being quickly reunited with their families and reduce the need for staff follow-up.

RESCUE AND TRANSPORT

STRATEGIC GOAL:

Expand and optimize the rescue and transport programs to further alleviate shelter overcapacity, strengthen partnerships, and increase animal placement opportunities.

POSITIVES:

- The transport program is highly efficient, providing significant relief to shelter overcrowding.
- The rescue program effectively reduces the shelter population and has strong potential for growth, aiming to match the success of the transport program.
- A small group of dedicated volunteers play an essential role with animal transport, helping to reduce costs for the shelter.

ACTION STEPS:

✓ Simplify the process for becoming a rescue partner to attract more organizations and increase collaboration.

✓ Implement an automated system to upload animals needing rescue, with auto-generated emails sent directly to partnered rescues for faster response.

✓ Recruit additional volunteers to support the transportation of animals to rescue partners and other shelters.

✓ Allow rescue partners to visit during non-public hours, offering personalized assistance from the rescue coordinator or designated staff for animal selection.

✓ Expand the variety of animals offered to rescue partners, including those without behavioral or medical issues, to provide more flexible options and increase the chances of placement.

OPERATIONS & PROGRAMS

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

STRATEGIC GOAL:

Enhance the volunteer program by hiring a volunteer coordinator to improve recruitment efforts, and providing clear structure and support to maximize volunteer engagement and impact.

POSITIVES:

- A few volunteers currently assist with essential tasks such as laundry, food preparation, and animal transport to rescues and shelters.

ACTION STEPS:

✓ Hire a Volunteer Coordinator

✓ Identify and expand volunteer opportunities in key areas like animal care, fostering, administrative support, social media, event coordination, and adoption counseling.

✓ Develop clear job descriptions for each volunteer role, outlining responsibilities, expectations, and required skills to attract suitable candidates.

✓ Promote volunteer opportunities through digital platforms (website, social media, local forums) and partnerships with local businesses, schools, universities, and community organizations.

✓ Highlight the personal and community impact of volunteering, sharing success stories and emphasizing the emotional rewards, skill development, and training opportunities.

✓ Simplify the volunteer application process with an easy-to-use online form that gathers essential information about applicants' availability, skills, and interests.

APPENDIX:

GENERAL RESOURCE LIST

1. **National Animal Welfare Organizations**

- Association of Shelter Veterinarians: sheltervet.org
- Best Friends Animal Society: bestfriends.org
- Companions and Animals for Reform and Equity (CARE): careawo.org
- Fear Free Shelters: fearfreeshelters.com
- Human Animal Support Services (HASS): humaneanimalsupportservices.org
- Humane Society of the United States: hsus.org, animalsheltering.org
- Maddie's Fund: maddiesfund.org
- Maddie's Million Pet Challenge: maddiesmillionpetchallenge.org
- National Animal Control Association: naca.net

2. **National Statistics**

- Shelter Animals Count: shelteranimalscount.org
- Best Friends Dashboards: Animal Shelter Statistics
- American Pet Products Association Survey 2021-2022: Survey Results

3. **Guidelines and Best Practices**

- Adopter's Welcome Guide by HSUS: Manual
- AAFP 2020 Guidelines (Dr. Julie Levy): Webinar
- HASS Playbook: HASS Playbook
- Shelter Care Checklists (ASV Guidelines): Checklist
- ASV Spay-Neuter Guidelines: Guidelines
- ASV Standards of Care: Standards

4. **Surrender Prevention and Safety Net**

- Home to Home: home-home.org
- Rehome by Adopt-A-Pet: rehome.adoptapet.com
- PetPoint Safety Net Data: Video

5. **Foster Care Resources**

- HASS Intake to Placement Toolkit: Toolkit
- Doobert/FosterSpace: doobert.com

6. **Community Cat Programming**

- Million Cat Challenge Webinar: Webinar
- Best Friends Community Cats: Resources
- HASS Community Cats: Search Results

7. **Managed Admission and Appointment Systems**

- Best Friends Managed Intake Playbook: Playbook

8. Canine Support and Training

- Dogs Playing for Life: dogsplayingforlife.com
- Shelter Playgroup Alliance: sheltedogsplay.org

9. Adoption Resources

- Adopt-a-Pet: adoptapet.com
- Adoptimize: adoptimize.com
- Pets by the Numbers Survey: Survey Results
- Conversations from the Field: Video
- Petfinder: petfinder.com

10. Shelter Donation Programs

- Kuranda Beds: Kuranda.com
- Kong Cares Application: Kong
- Imperial Cat Scratchers: Giveback Program

11. Recommended Reading

- The Best Practice Playbook for Animal Shelters
- Animal Behavior for Shelter Veterinarians and Staff
- BSAVA Manual of Canine and Feline Shelter Medicine
- Every Nose Counts: Using Metrics in Animal Shelters
- Infectious Disease Control: UF Shelter Medicine
- Replacing Myth with Math by Peter Marsh: PDF

12. Return to Owner (RTO) Research

- Dallas, Texas RTO Research: Study

13. Networking and Information

- ASPCApro Newsletter and Blog
- Shelter Veterinarians Private Facebook Group
- Maddie's Pet Forum: Forum
- UF Shelter Medicine Newsletter

14. Education and Certification Programs

- 8-Week Compassion Course - The Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education
- Fear Free Shelter Certification: Certification
- Maddie's University: University

15. Grants and Articles

- Grant Database - The Association for Animal Welfare Advancement
- Article: Regular People Still Don't Know What Animal Shelters Do. How to Fix It and Why It Matters. - Outcomes Consulting