



STRATEGIC PLAN FOR ANIMAL SERVICES

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

OCTOBER 10, 2024



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- Appendix A—5-Year Strategic Plan Priorities Worksheet (Provided Digitally)
- Appendix B—CCAS 2018 Strategic Priorities Long Range Plans Results

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Citygate Associates, LLC (Citygate) is pleased to present this 2024 Strategic Plan to Contra Costa County (County) for Contra Costa Animal Services (CCAS). The Citygate Project Team members who have had the pleasure of working on this project are grateful to the County’s elected officials, staff, and community members who devoted their time and energy to contribute to this study and participate in interviews, surveys, and focus groups. Citygate is impressed with the commitment and passion demonstrated by County leadership, CCAS staff, and the community, and their desire to have a high functioning and effective animal services program for the County.

Citygate was able to distill the hundreds of County and community comments and ideas into two areas we determined to be “Crisis Critical”:

1. Capacity for Care
2. Policy and Philosophy on Sheltering and Euthanasia

We also identified five consistent themes. These themes offer a quick snapshot of the interests and issues that arose most frequently and consistently throughout Citygate’s review and form the central context and focus of the updated Strategic Plan and the recommendations it contains. The five themes are:

- ◆ Theme One: Communication
- ◆ Theme Two: Resources
- ◆ Theme Three: Leadership and Culture
- ◆ Theme Four: Scope of Services
- ◆ Theme Five: Services

Although Citygate found that there is a high level of consensus among the County leadership, elected officials, CCAS staff, and community members about the County’s needs and the desired departmental vision for the future, at the current time, there is no strong framework or plan in place to bring the community’s aspirations and ideas into sharp focus and productive implementation. There is also a significant gap between community expectations and the resources available for the department to meet those expectations. The primary purpose of this updated strategic plan is to align and clarify expectations and provide a roadmap for implementation including identifying potential resources.

STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

The 2024 Strategic Plan delineates an updated mission and vision for CCAS based on its core values. Following identification of these guiding principles, the Strategic Planning Committee developed two Crisis Critical and five Theme elements, followed by 82 recommended actions organized under 21 objectives that correspond to each of the elements. The plan includes target completion dates and metrics for each objective as CCAS embarks on implementation.

Setting priorities is a challenging and critical element of any implementation and it is not uncommon for the results of the prioritization process to show an imbalance, with most items as a high priority. Available budget and resources are among the key factors to consider for successful implementation. As discussed in Section 10.2—Implementation Fail Facts and Strategies, it is important to remember the various elements that influence the actual achievable outcomes.

The Five-Year Strategic and Implementation Plan includes priorities to be considered for implementation over a five-year period, which Citygate recommends begin in Fiscal Year 2024-2025. The plan includes seven Sections, two of which are classified as “Crisis Critical” with 20 recommended actions, and the other five are “Themes” with 56 recommended actions. The plan also includes six additional action items for consideration. There is a total of 82 recommended actions in the 2024 Strategic Plan, prioritized over a five-year implementation calendar.

SECTION 1—INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT SCOPE

Contra Costa County (County) requested Citygate Associates, LLC (Citygate) to assess, develop, and design the 2024 Animal Services Strategic Plan for Contra Costa Animal Services (CCAS). This new plan was to include an evaluation of the accomplishments of CCAS since the implementation of the 2018 Strategic Plan that was created with community input and designed to improve services.

The 2024 Strategic Plan identifies current successes and challenges and provides an updated plan for CCAS over the next five years. The primary objectives of the project include assessment of the 2018 strategic plan and development of an updated plan with input from elected officials, staff, volunteers, partners, and community members. The new plan contains clear prioritized goals and objectives and metrics to measure progress. The project also incorporates implementation support for CCAS.

1.2 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

Citygate’s report is comprised of the following sections.

Executive Summary

This section introduces the 2024 Strategic Plan project and summarizes Citygate’s process, analysis, and recommendations.

Section 1—Introduction

This section introduces the report organization, the project approach, and project steps.

Section 2—2018 Strategic Plan

This section reviews the 2018 Strategic Plan elements, tracking, and reporting.

Section 3—Overview of CCAS Organization

This section provides an overview of CCAS organization and operations.

Section 4—2023 Strategic Planning Committee Work

This section provides a detailed discussion of the role and actions of the Committee in developing and implementing the Plan.

Section 5—Stakeholder Survey Results

This section describes the stakeholder survey utilized for this effort, which was broadly distributed to stakeholders and staff, its methodology, and the use of closed and open-ended prompts. The survey covered services, desired changes, priorities, euthanasia decisions, and challenges facing CCAS.

Section 6—Focus Groups

This section provides an overview of the four focus groups that were conducted as part of the Strategic Plan research.

Section 7—Interviews with County Leadership

This section reviews the various one-on-one interviews that Citygate held with the County Board of Supervisors, County leadership staff, and the CCAS Director.

Section 8—Common Themes

This section describes the recurring themes that resulted from the surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

Section 9—Environmental Scan

This section discusses how some key internal and external factors may impact the Department and its service provision over the next five years.

Section 10—Strategic Plan Development

This section reviews the stages of development of the updated Strategic Plan.

Section 11—2024 Strategic Plan

This section presents the 82 recommended action items that correspond to each of the objectives developed by the Strategic Planning Committee, organized under the two *Crisis Critical* areas and five themes. Performance metrics are identified for each action and the actions are prioritized over a five-year implementation calendar.

Appendices

Appendix A—5-Year Strategic Plan Priorities Worksheet is a Microsoft Excel document containing the recommended action items that correspond to each of the 2024 Strategic Plan objectives, including performance metrics, implementation timelines, etc.

Appendix B—CCAS 2018 Strategic Priorities Long Range Plans Results an outline of the progress made on the 2018 Strategic Plan, provided to Citygate by CCAS staff, over the first 18 months of implementation (prior to the COVID-19 pandemic).

1.3 OVERVIEW OF STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS

The following summarizes Citygate’s five-task Work Plan to fully address the scope of work requested by the County.

Task 1: Project Initiation, Kick-Off Meeting, and Ongoing Project Management

1.1 Meet with the Department’s Strategic Planning Committee to Initiate the Project

At the start of the project, Citygate conducted a videoconference meeting with the Department’s Strategic Planning Committee to review the vision of the strategic planning initiative, expected outcomes, the strategic business planning process, timelines, workshop scheduling, and deliverables. We also discussed the Department’s 2018 Strategic Plan.

1.2 Ongoing Project Management

Throughout the entire project duration, Citygate monitored the engagement progress and completion of tasks, including providing monthly written status reports and periodic conversations with appropriate assigned staff. Adjustments were made in response to changes occurring within the Department and a contract extension was implemented.

Task 2: Information Gathering and Review

2.1 Request and Review Documentation

Citygate developed a list of data, documents, and information relevant to this project, including, but not limited to, prior studies, budgets, governance, agreements, organizational charts, priorities, policy direction, values/vision/mission statements, General Plan, and other relevant documentation. Citygate reviewed this documentation to gain an understanding of the Department in advance of the strategic planning workshop in Task 3.

2.2 Design and Administer a Strategic Plan Survey

Citygate designed and administered survey questions for each member of the Strategic Planning Committee to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; organizational and service delivery needs and priorities; staff and training needs; technology and infrastructure needs; and long-term goals for the Department. We analyzed, consolidated, and presented the survey results to the Strategic Planning Committee as part of the Strategic Plan development process.

2.3 Conduct Stakeholder Interviews

Citygate conducted interviews with the Animal Services Director, County Administrator, and Board of Supervisors to understand their respective perspectives, visions, and priorities for the Department over the next several years.

2.4 Focus Groups

Citygate held four focus group videoconference meetings with employees, volunteers and community member participants to understand their visions, goals, and priorities for the Department over the next several years.

2.5 Community Stakeholder Survey

In collaboration with CCAS, Citygate designed an online survey that was sent to community stakeholders including customers, volunteers, adoption partners, and rescue groups, city partners, and staff to obtain their input.

2.6 Prepare Environmental Scan

Citygate prepared an environmental scan that identifies key internal and external factors with potential to significantly impact the Department or the services it provides over the next five years. Citygate collaborated with the Strategic Planning Committee to identify the most relevant factors and seek further data or information to incorporate into plan priorities.

2.7 Prepare Summary Document

Citygate summarized and compiled the information from Task 2 into a summary document that was used in the strategic planning workshop session in Task 3.

Task 3: Strategic Planning Workshop

3.1 Strategic Planning Workshop

Citygate facilitated an on-site planning workshop with the Department’s Strategic Planning Committee in February 2024. This workshop reviewed and finalized CCAS’ mission statement, core values, and elements of the updated Strategic Plan.

Task 4: Draft and Final Strategic Plan Document

4.1 Prepare Comprehensive Draft Strategic Plan

Citygate prepared a comprehensive Draft Strategic Plan, which includes exhibits, and appendices. The Draft Strategic Plan included:

- ◆ Key information about the Department
- ◆ Overview of the strategic planning process
- ◆ Vision, mission, and values statements
- ◆ Goals, strategies, and objectives for the next five years
- ◆ Reporting and quantifiable accountability mechanisms
- ◆ Environmental scan
- ◆ Photos provided by the Department
- ◆ Other information requested by the Strategic Planning Committee

4.2 Draft Strategic Plan Review

Citygate conducted a videoconference review of the Draft Strategic Plan Report with the Strategic Planning Committee, answered any questions, and discussed edits for the Final Strategic Plan.

4.3 Submit and Present Final Strategic Plan

Citygate prepared and delivered a Final Strategic Plan Report in .pdf format with exhibits and appendices. As an option, Citygate will present the new Strategic Plan to the County Board of Supervisors and local community partners.

Task 5: Strategic Plan Implementation Support

5.1 Prepare Implementation Action Plan Template

Citygate provided implementation support by developing, in collaboration with the Department's Strategic Planning Committee, a Five-Year Strategic Plan Implementation Worksheet, that includes the Final Strategic Plan goals, strategies, and objectives. This template provides the Department an annual work plan that clearly identifies the elements of the plan to be addressed during each year, who will be responsible for leading each initiative, various specific actions for each of the strategic goals including specific timelines, resource allocation(s), performance metrics for measuring success, quantifiable accountability factors, approximate fiscal impacts, monitoring processes, communication plans, and key milestones.

5.2 Implementation Support

As an option, Citygate will provide implementation support to include up to three videoconference meetings with the Strategic Planning Committee as needed to explore and evaluate ideas; discuss elements of the implementation plan and strategy; discuss the evaluation from the Citygate Project

Team’s perspective of innovation; and review relevant research and assessments. This will also include a final discussion with the Animal Services Director to finalize the implementation recommendations.

SECTION 2—2018 STRATEGIC PLAN

2.1 KEY COMPONENTS OF 2018 PLAN

CCAS created the 2018 Strategic Plan through a facilitated process, and it was launched in August 2018. The intention of the Strategic Plan was to guide the work of CCAS towards a positive and meaningful impact on the community. The Plan lays out the Departmental mission and describes how that mission will be accomplished utilizing six guiding principles.

2.1.1 2018 Mission Statement

CCAS includes the following mission statement in its 2018 Strategic Plan.

Contra Costa Animal Services Department is committed to protecting the health, safety and well-being of the people and animals in our community through enforcement of state and local laws, providing compassionate care regardless of temperament or condition, and increasing the number of animals that stay in their homes instead of entering our County shelters.

We will prioritize lifesaving. We will shelter homeless, abandoned and lost animals, work to keep and place animals in safe, caring homes, and provide education and services to enhance the lives of people, their animal companions, and to strengthen the human-animal bond.

2.1.2 Guiding Principles

The Six Guiding Principles serve as a basis for reasoning and action, and provide a personal code of conduct that leads, shows the way, and directs the moments of CCAS.

- ◆ Be Collaborative
- ◆ Be the Service You Want
- ◆ Practice the three E's: Excite, Educate, Empower
- ◆ Apply Judgement
- ◆ Seize the Initiative
- ◆ Make the Most of Resources

2.1.3 Strategic Priorities

Seven Strategic Priorities were identified through the process and were organized under three Key Areas of Focus.

Areas of Focus

- ◆ **Act:** Take action to help residents and improve and manage the lives of animals in Contra Costa County while operating a fiscally responsible organization.
- ◆ **Care:** Provide quality care for the animals that come into our shelters and prepare them for new homes while operating the shelter with high quality (Five Freedoms) standards and efficiency.
- ◆ **Collaborate:** Working with partners, increase adoptions by improving public perception regarding the adoption of homeless animals.

A total of 16 long-term goals and 93 activities were organized under the following seven strategic priorities.

Seven Strategic Priorities

1. Public Safety
 - Ensure public health and safety. Enforce state/local laws while educating owners to best practices.
2. Medical Services & Resources
 - Prevent unwanted pet births by developing medical partnerships to increase spay/neuter services.
3. Education
 - Through educational efforts and discussions with pet owners, keep pets in their homes and provide resources to improve pet care.
4. Animal Care
 - Shelter, treat and rehabilitate abandoned pets to prepare them for their forever homes.
5. Operational Excellence
 - Build and maintain CCAS operational excellence and ensure that is fiscally responsible. Improve shelter management policies, procedures, and efficiency.

6. Community Engagement
 - Increase community engagement and humane education to influence the Contra Costa public to treat animals more humanely and to adopt more pets.
7. Rehoming Programs
 - Build and expand relationships and programs with transfer partners to find homes for rehabilitated animals and improve their ongoing quality of life.

The 2018 Strategic Plan was detailed and provided target completion dates for the various activities but did not include specific performance metrics or measures for successful completion. The plan was intentionally designed to be a living document, with periodic reviews and revisions. Detailed tracking was carried out over the first eighteen months of implementation. However, with the onset of COVID-19 and the operational challenges presented by the pandemic, tracking and continued implementation of the 2018 Strategic Plan became a lower priority.

2.2 CCAS STATUS REPORTING

CCAS provided Citygate an outline of the progress made on the 2018 Strategic Plan over the first 18 months of implementation (prior to the COVID-19 pandemic), which is included in **Appendix B—CCAS 2018 Strategic Priorities Long Range Plans Results**. Utilizing this information, Citygate prepared a worksheet containing all 93 activities which was used as a tool for staff to document the specific status of the activities.

Based solely on the information provided by staff, Citygate was able to estimate the following results for the 93 activities.

- ◆ Progress has been made on 77 percent of the activities.
- ◆ 51 percent of activities are ongoing.
- ◆ No progress has been made on 23 percent of activities, which also includes those activities determined to be obsolete, or for which implementation was not possible due to barriers or other constraints.

The following table shows the number of individual activities for each of the 16 long-term goals and the percentage of activities for which progress has been made. Notably, progress has been made on 100 percent of the activities under seven of the long-term goals. Only two goals have less than 50 percent of the activities underway.

Contra Costa County Animal Services
Strategic Plan for Animal Services

Table 1—2018 Strategic Plan Long-Term Goals and Progress

Long-Term Goals	Activities	Progress
1A – For Public Safety and Field Services, review current policies and results, identify best areas for improvement and begin making changes.	13	92%
2A – Continue to build the ease, availability and use of low cost (at cost) and/or no cost Spay/Neuter services in the shelter and for the public.	6	33%
2B – Provide Community targeted Pitbull mix and Chihuahua Spay/Neuter Program.	4	50%
2C – Continue to expand and improve the Community Cat Trap, Spay/Neuter and Return program as possible in tight collaboration with partners.	5	20%
3A – Implement a broad Prevention Program to reduce shelter intake from the public by intervening and helping before owners decide to surrender their pet(s).	7	57%
3B – Build a robust Retention Program to support owners keeping their pet(s).	4	100%
4A – Review existing standards of care and programs to provide high quality sheltering of animals at CCAS and decide where to improve efforts and/or add new initiatives.	6	83%
4B – After evaluating needs and facilities, seek Capital Funding from the County to make one-time major improvements at the Martinez and Pinole shelters and any other facilities deemed needed (i.e., Adoption Centers in South County).	3	100%
5A – Review and address personal safety concerns for employees and volunteers as well as the public who have business with CCAS.	3	100%
5B – Ensure CCAS Operational Excellence by improving Shelter Management Policies, Procedures and Efficiency.	7	100%
5C – Improve Customer Service at CCAS.	4	100%
5D – Improve Overall Shelter-Wide metrics.	5	80%
5E – Strengthen core financial activities through improved forecasting, budgeting, and licensing procedures. Increase employee hiring and retention through improved recruiting, training, and education on policies and procedures.	3	100%
6A – Increase Communication and Humane Education efforts to the Contra Costa public.	9	100%
7A – Increase countywide adoptions through a strengthened Contra Costa-wide Collaborative Partnership.	9	67%
7B – While building and maintaining the Five freedoms as the standard of care (capacity for care) and using existing resources and adding resources as available – build and continue the highest overall Live Release Rate possible of animals going directly to new forever homes or to Transfer Partners (and then to new homes).	5	60%

SECTION 3—OVERVIEW OF CCAS ORGANIZATION

3.1 CCAS DEPARTMENT

CCAS provides full animal care and control services, including sheltering and field services, to the unincorporated County and through contracts to eighteen of the nineteen cities in Contra Costa County (the exception being Antioch). The County currently operates an animal shelter facility in Martinez.

Figure 1—Some Members of the CCAS Team



3.1.1 History

CCAS has a long history in Contra Costa County, dating back to the 1950s. Originally a function of the Sheriff's Department, in 1959, Animal Control Officers were re-assigned from the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Department to the County Department of Agriculture, where Animal Services became its own division. At the time, the Department consisted of five employees and focused primarily on animal and rabies control. The County operated only one shelter at that time,

a medium-sized facility located in Martinez, roughly one block from the current shelter. In 1985, Contra Costa Animal Services became its own County department due to an increased demand for animal services which corresponded with the population boom at the time. In 2005, the County commissioned the construction of the current Martinez shelter, a beautiful two-acre state-of-the-art shelter complex which includes a six-stall barn. Within a year, the County built the Pinole shelter to provide West County residents with better access to the Department and for residents seeking to reunite pets with their families or finding new homes. Today, CCAS is comprised of one shelter and 84 full-time employees, including: field officers, medical staff, animal care staff, community and media relations personnel, and administration. There are also 11 contractors providing additional medical care, media relations, and behavioral support. The Department's operations are supported by over 200 committed volunteers who play a variety of critical roles that contribute to the enrichment, wellbeing, and placement of shelter animals. As of July 2024, the Department serves a population of 1,146,626 people (compared to 298,000 in 1959) and, in the calendar year of 2023, took in a total of 7,114 animals with an overall live release rate of 85 percent.

3.2 CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

At the onset of this project CCAS had an organizational structure led by the Director and had the Department divided into four functional divisions.

- ◆ Administrative Services
- ◆ Field Services
- ◆ Community and Media Relations
- ◆ Animal Care and Shelter Medicine

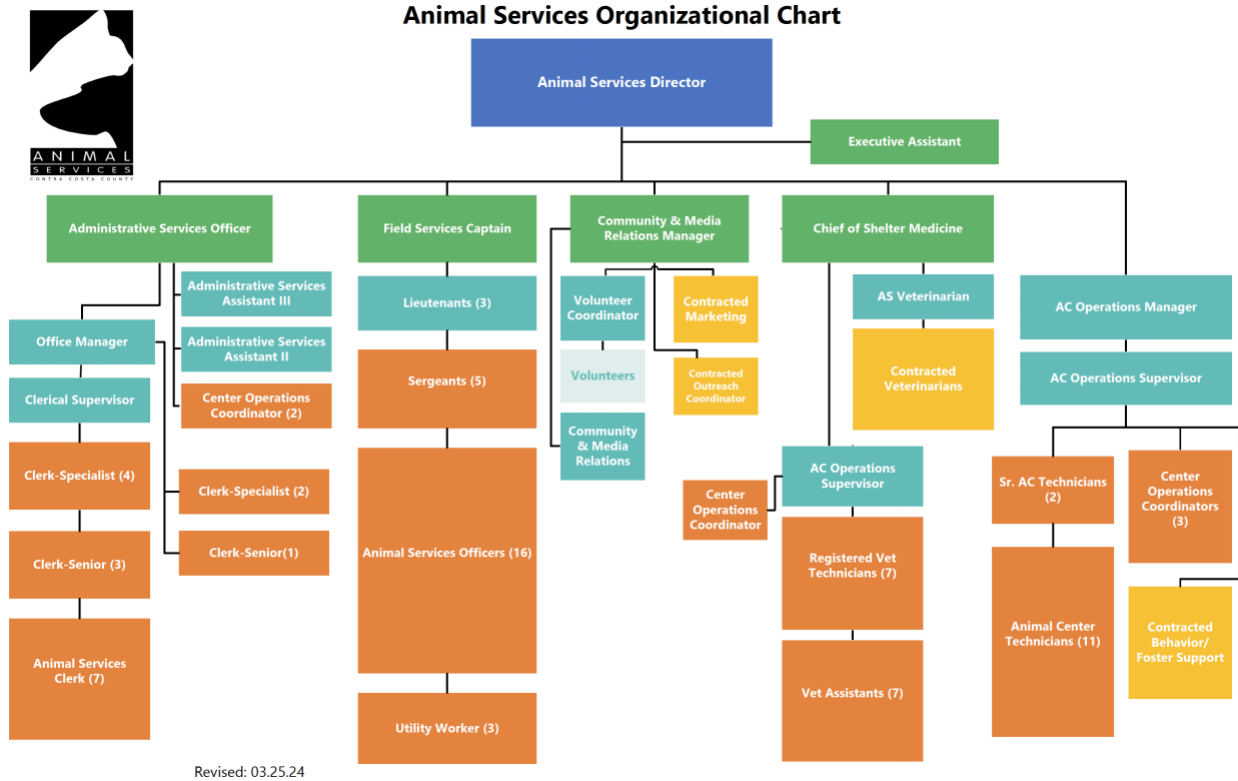
In FY 2022-2023, there were 84 FTEs and 11 contract positions allocated to the Department and distributed among the four divisions.

The Director resigned in December 2023 and an Interim Director was appointed in January 2024.

In January 2024, the Interim Director adjusted the organizational structure and split the Animal Care and Shelter Medicine Division into two separate divisions. This resulted in five functional divisions and some reorganization of the reporting structure.

A new Director was hired and began with CCAS in May 2024. Since then, two key managers of the Agency's main divisions, Administrative Services and Animal Care and Shelter Medicine, have also turned over.

Figure 2—Contra Costa Animal Services Organizational Chart



Revised: 03.25.24

3.3 DIVISIONAL FUNCTIONS

3.3.1 Administrative Services

The Administrative Services staff provides customer service by greeting and serving the public in-person, over the phone, and through mail and email. This team handles all cash transactions including (but not limited to) animal adoptions and redemptions, animal licensing, fees charged for medical care and procedures, trap rentals and contracts, and any other consumer fees for services. They manage incoming phone traffic and respond to voicemails. They also process animal intakes from the public, and pet adoptions and redemptions. The Administrative Services staff also provide additional support in the areas of budget and contract administration, coordination of training, and other special projects.

Figure 3—CCAS Field and Administrative Staff



3.3.2 Field Services

The Field Services Division provides field services to the 18 contract cities and the unincorporated County area of Contra Costa County. The duties of Animal Control Officers (ACOs) include responding to calls (seven days per week) regarding injured animals, animals running at large, welfare concerns, bite investigations, cruelty or neglect complaints, enforcing laws and ordinances, and a myriad of other types of field activities. ACOs write reports on critical cases such as animal attacks, animal fighting, and cruelty and neglect investigations, which frequently lead to prosecution. ACOs are dispatched through the Contra Costa Sheriff’s Department.

Figure 4—Animal Control Officer



3.3.3 Community and Media Relations

The CCAS Community and Media Relations Division handles all the brochures and informational material production, press releases, social media, the website and other public relations responsibilities. The Division regularly develops presentations for the Board of Supervisors, City partners, and other stakeholders. They also respond to public records requests. This division is also responsible for volunteer management.

Figure 5—Adopted Dog Headed Home



3.3.4 Animal Care

The Animal Care Division provides the care and sheltering for animals that are stray, surrendered by their owners, quarantined, neglected or abandoned, or which pose a threat to public safety. This can represent care for between 200 to 300 animals at the shelter on any given day. All animals are provided with vaccinations, medical care, food, and shelter. Additional duties include owner reunification with lost animals, match-making efforts for adoption, providing emergency care

during disasters, assisting with behavioral intervention efforts, humane euthanasia (when necessary), and disposal of deceased animals.

Figure 6—Animal Care Staff



3.3.5 Shelter Medicine

The Shelter Medicine team is responsible for the medical care of all animals entering the shelter. This includes routine vaccinations and de-worming, spay and neuter surgeries, provision of medical treatment for sick or injured animals, special surgical treatments, and veterinary care of any animals housed in isolation areas of the shelter. Prior to the recent separation of the Animal Care division, this team was also responsible for all the animal care within the facility.

Figure 7—Shelter Medicine includes Surgery



3.4 STATISTICAL REVIEW

Citygate conducted a high-level review of CCAS animal intake and outcome statistics for the calendar years of 2021, 2022, and 2023.¹ The animal intake and outcome numbers include the total of all animals taken into shelter care each year.

¹ 2021 data reflect the COVID-19 impacts of lower animal care and control activities generally, including shelter animal intakes and outcomes

3.4.1 Intakes

Animal intakes have grown steadily over 2021, 2022, and 2023.

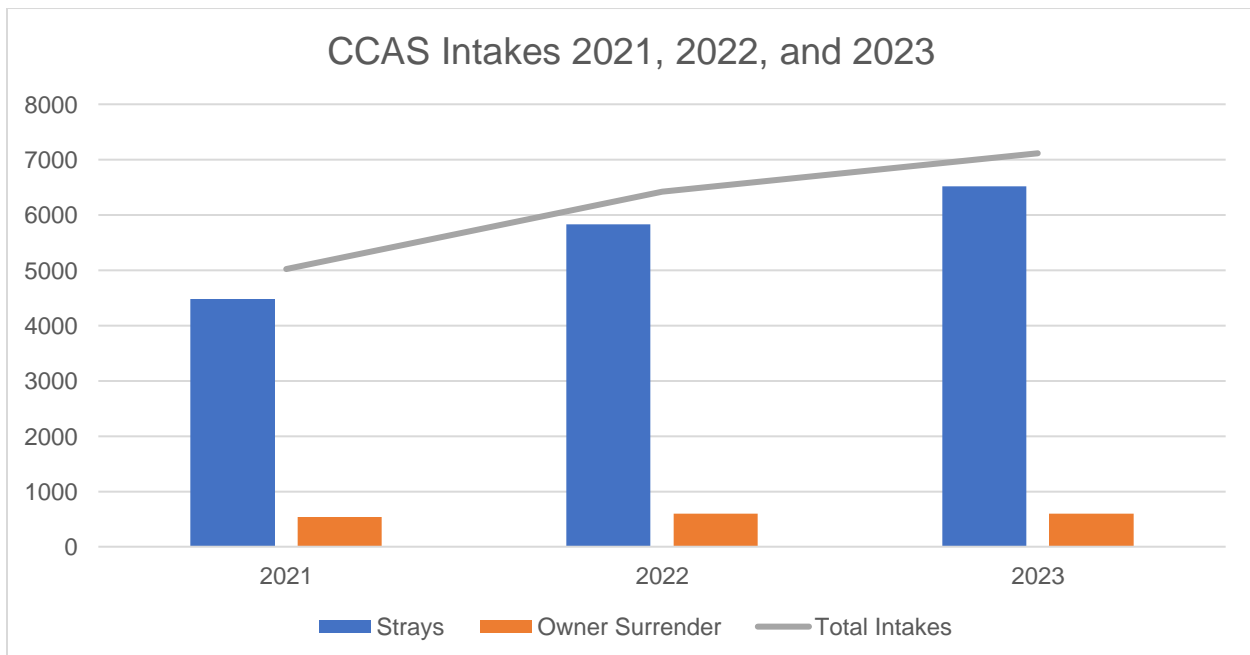
Table 2—Animal Intakes by Intake Type by Year

Intake Type	2021	2022	2023
Adoption Return	116	144	238
Confiscate	98	150	97
Disposal Request	1	2	1
Owner Surrender	427	458	357
Police Impound	100	105	137
Spay	3	72	9
Stray	4,276	5,495	6,275
Total	5,021	6,426	7,114

Table 3—CCAS Animal Intakes by Stray and Owner Surrender by Year

Intake Type	2021	2022	2023
Strays	4,478	5,824	6,519
Owner Surrender	543	602	595
Total	5,021	6,426	7,114

Figure 8—Live Animal Intakes



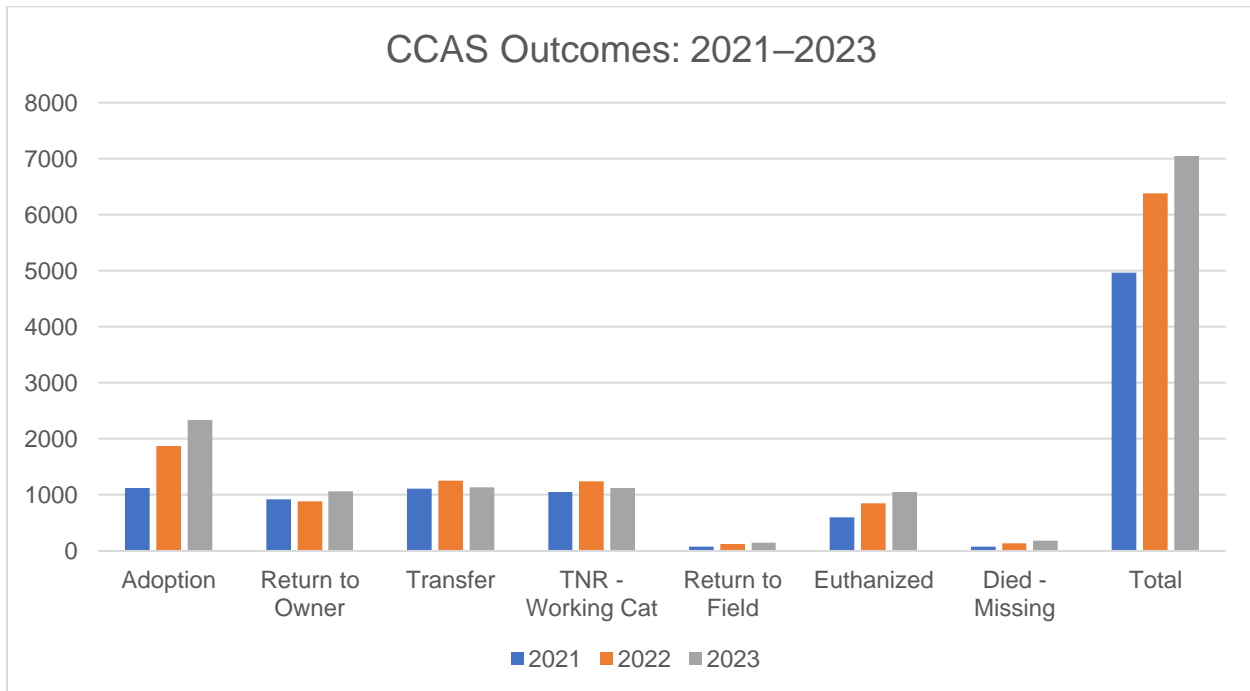
3.4.2 Outcomes

The following table displays the outcomes of the live animal intakes for the years 2021, 2022, and 2023.

Table 4—Animal Outcomes by Type by Year

Outcome Type	2021	2022	2023
Adoption	1,120	1,872	2,338
Return to Owner	927	890	1,062
Transfer	1,109	1,253	1,140
TNR - Working Cat	1,047	1,246	1,118
Return to Field	82	129	154
Euthanized	606	855	1,054
Died - Missing	74	142	186
Total	4,965	6,387	7,052

Figure 9—Live Animal Outcomes Graph



3.4.3 Live Release Rate

There are several different live release rates (LRR) used in the industry to measure the percentage of animals that leave a shelter alive. CCAS calculates its LRR percent by dividing the Live Outcomes by Total Outcomes (not including died or missing).

For the years 2021, 2022, and 2023, CCAS reported the following LRR data.

Table 5—Live Release Rates for 2021, 2022 and 2023

Year	Cat	Dog	Other	Total
2021	83%	93%	81%	88%
2022	83%	91%	82%	86%
2023	78%	92%	88%	85%

3.4.4 Average Length of Stay

Length of stay (LOS) measures the time that an animal is housed at a shelter. A shelter’s capacity to hold animals does not solely depend on how many animals are impounded but is also dependent on the shelter’s flow-through rate. The problem of being over capacity can be mitigated by ensuring that the animals that require sheltering pass through the shelter as quickly as possible to a positive outcome (reclaim, adoption, transfer), thus shortening their LOS.

To reduce the LOS, animal services operations operate with a sense of urgency, ensuring animals are reclaimed, adopted, or rescued as expeditiously as possible. Moving animals out of the shelter quickly is important for many reasons, including the follow.

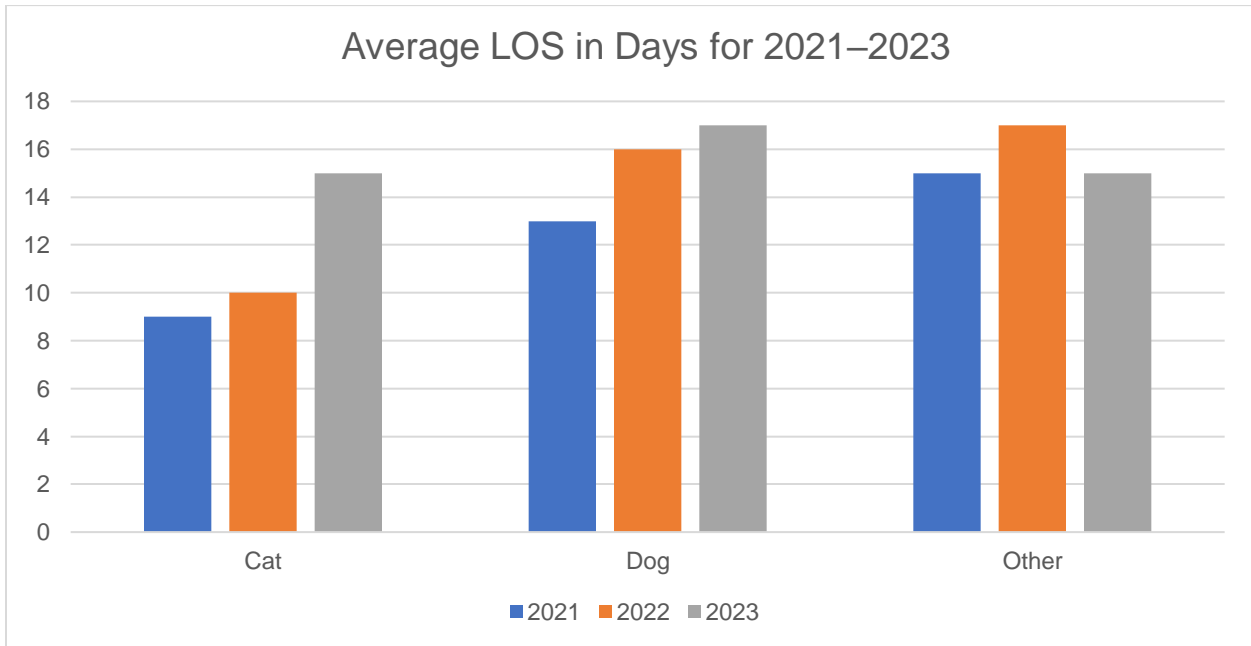
- ◆ More animals held in the shelter requires more supplies and more staff members to care for the animals, and thus costs more money.
- ◆ The longer an animal stays in the shelter, the more likely it is to become sick, and treating the animal for illness requires more veterinary staff time and medication and may extend the LOS even further.
- ◆ Moving animals out quickly means that there is more room in the shelter, so the shelter may not run out of cage and kennel space for incoming animals.

The following table displays average LOS (in days) for canines and felines, excluding time in foster care, for the past three years.

Table 6—Length of Stay in Shelter (Excludes Time in Foster Care)

Animal Type	2021	2022	2023
Cat	9	10	15
Dog	13	16	17
Other	15	17	15

Figure 10—Length of Stay Graph



The LOS has risen for dogs and cats over the past three years, which is a contributing factor to crowding at the shelter. This is likely due to the aftermath of the effects of COVID-19. While the LOS for *other* animals has risen, it is not significant to concerns about space as there are very few *other* animals as compared with dogs and cats, and they are generally housed outside of dog and cat enclosures.

3.4.5 COVID-19 Impacts

The COVID-19 pandemic had major impacts on the animal welfare industry. Many shelters and field operations were limited to critical needs, and many shelters were open by appointment only. Across the United States, government animal shelter intake numbers decreased significantly during 2020 and 2021, and then often reverted to a pre-COVID trajectory starting in 2022. Some government shelters experienced a rebound beyond pre-COVID intake numbers. The percentage of adoptions increased significantly in many shelters during 2020 and 2021.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacts on CCAS follow national trends, with increases in animal intakes and other activities in 2022 and 2023. While animal intakes rose in 2022 and 2023, there was a decrease in the percentage of animals transferred to partners, and an increase in the percentage of animals adopted.

3.5 OTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

3.5.1 Customer Service Surveys

CCAS provided Citygate the results of customer service surveys for 2022, 2023, and the early part of 2024. The surveys were sent electronically to recent clients who had utilized services either at the shelter, in the field, or by phone contact. The overall ratings provided by respondents were very positive about the client experience with the agency.

Table 7—Customer Satisfaction Survey Results

Contact Type	2024 (through Feb.)	2023	2022
Visit in person	74%	75%	76%
Called	13%	13%	14%
Field Officer	1%	1%	1%
Visit Reason			
Adopt	40%	43%	38%
License	17%	13%	16%
Lost Pet	3%	4%	5%
Found Stray	12%	12%	13%
Part of Rescue Org'n	3%	4%	5%
Overall Cleanliness			
Excellent	65%	72%	72%
Meets Expectations	27%	22%	23%
Who did you Contact			
Clerical Staff	58%	58%	63%
Volunteer	17%	19%	14%
Kennel Staff	12%	11%	10%
How Helpful			
Extremely	69%	73%	74%
Very	25%	22%	20%
Overall Impression			
Excellent	64%	71%	73%
Meets Expectations	25%	20%	19%
Recommend to Friend			
Yes	94%	96%	94%
No	6%	4%	6%

3.5.2 Changes to City Contract Methodology

CCAS renegotiated its contracts with the eighteen city partners in 2021 and the current contracts began July 1, 2022. The County implemented a new contract methodology that was based on a per-capita calculation and the increases were phased in over two years. CCAS provides the cities with an annual reconciliation each year in July. The new methodology has increased the city contract revenues for CCAS.

3.5.3 Closure of the Pinole Shelter

In March of 2020, during the uncertain times of the COVID-19 pandemic, Contra Costa County closed the Pinole facility as a budget saving measure. The facility has been sold to a non-profit for utilization as a low-cost spay and neuter clinic and is not available to be re-opened as a shelter in the future.

Figure 11—Volunteers Provide Additional Enrichment



SECTION 4—2023 STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE WORK

4.1 2023 STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE INITIATION

The Strategic Planning Committee convened July 11, 2023. The Committee was comprised of the Contra Costa Animal Services Executive Team, which included the Director, the Administrative Services Officer, the Field Services Captain, the Community and Media Relations Manager, and the Chief of Shelter Medicine. In addition to the Executive Team, the Administrative Services Assistant was also a member of the Committee.

At the kick-off meeting, Citygate and the Committee members reviewed the project plan, discussed the comprehensive document request, and examined the 2018 Strategic Plan and its results. The Committee collaborated well with Citygate and provided extensive documents, data, and historical information requested in the document request.

The Committee assisted Citygate with the development of a community stakeholder survey which consisted of both closed and open-ended questions. The purpose of the survey was to obtain feedback from as many stakeholders as possible to help identify priorities for the updated Strategic Plan.

4.2 MEETINGS, INTERVIEWS, AND PROCESS

Throughout the project, Citygate frequently met with the Director, the Interim Director, and the newly appointed Director. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss issues as they arose, plan for next steps, set meeting dates, review progress, and discuss any other pertinent information relating to the project. The change in leadership following the resignation of the Director resulted in the need to re-evaluate the project timeline and overall approach to updating the Strategic Plan. Once the new Director was placed, he was engaged in the process and briefed by Citygate and the Strategic Planning Committee.

Individual interviews were conducted via videoconferencing with each member of the Strategic Planning Committee. While a consistent set of questions was used for each interview, the format was informal, conversational, and confidential.

Multiple videoconference meetings with the Strategic Planning Committee were held to discuss survey results, input from the focus groups, and findings from interviews. A good deal of time and effort was invested in establishing the key goals, objectives, and priorities for the new plan. The committee carefully reviewed the plan elements, necessary resources, and milestones for the Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Planning Committee met with Citygate for an all-day session in February 2024. In advance of the meeting, the Committee was provided an agenda, presentation, and other relevant

materials to facilitate productive and efficient discussions. In the planning workshop, Citygate reviewed stakeholder input, including from County leadership, and including the survey and interview results; reviewed and agreed on any planning assumptions; identified how success has been measured over the previous five years and how it should be measured going forward; defined success for the next five years, including any crisis critical indicators; created a modified vision statement as appropriate; and reviewed the current mission statement and core values and updated changes as the Committee desired. Citygate also facilitated the development of goals, strategies, and objectives to achieve the desired future state of the Department, including prioritization of each. This was accomplished through a collaborative and participatory process that included reflection, action-based activities, clarifying discussions, fundamentals, and a clear understanding and plan for targeted goals and priorities.

SECTION 5—STAKEHOLDER SURVEY RESULTS

5.1 SURVEY OVERVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Citygate Associates, LLC (Citygate) conducted an internet-based stakeholder survey between Friday, September 8 and Friday, September 22, 2023, as part of our Strategic Plan Development for Animal Services for Contra Costa County. The stakeholders were invited by the Department to participate in this survey. An identical version of the same survey was also distributed to Department staff, which ran from Wednesday September 20 to Friday September 29, 2023. In total, there were 1,363 valid responses between both surveys.

Table 8—Survey Launch and Response Information

Information	Stakeholders	Staff
Launch Date	September 8	September 22
Close Date	September 20	September 29
Total Responses	1,363	

Apart from basic contact information questions, the survey consisted of numerous closed- and open-ended prompts.

Respondents were not required to answer every question. Additionally, they were permitted to respond “Not Applicable or Unsure” to many statements, and these responses were excluded from the mean response calculations. Therefore, the response totals to a particular question do not always correspond with the total of 1,363 valid survey responses.

5.2 ORGANIZATION OF SURVEY SUMMARY

The results for the survey are organized in the following order:

Contact Information and Relationship-to-Shelter Results

- ◆ The raw data for demographic-type questions included on the survey.

Primary Open-Ended Responses

- ◆ Tallies for the 10 most-commonly expressed sentiments for each of the primary open-ended prompts.

Veterinary Services, Affordability, Etc.

- ◆ Scores for each closed-ended statement regarding veterinary services, affordability, etc., as well as tallied responses for the related open-ended prompt.

Quality of Service – Expectations

- ◆ Scores for each closed-ended statement regarding the degree to which Department services are meeting expectations.

Euthanasia and Overall County Service

- ◆ Scores for each closed-ended statement regarding euthanasia and overall County service, as well as tallied responses for the related open-ended prompt.

Name

- ◆ Respondents were provided the opportunity to, but not required to, provide their names in case Citygate was required to contact them for follow-up information.

Email

- ◆ Respondents were provided the opportunity to, but not required to, provide their email address in case Citygate was required to contact them for follow-up information.

5.3 RELATIONSHIP TO SHELTER

The following information is regarding respondents' relationship to the shelter. Respondents were asked to mark all that apply, and many did indeed mark multiple options.

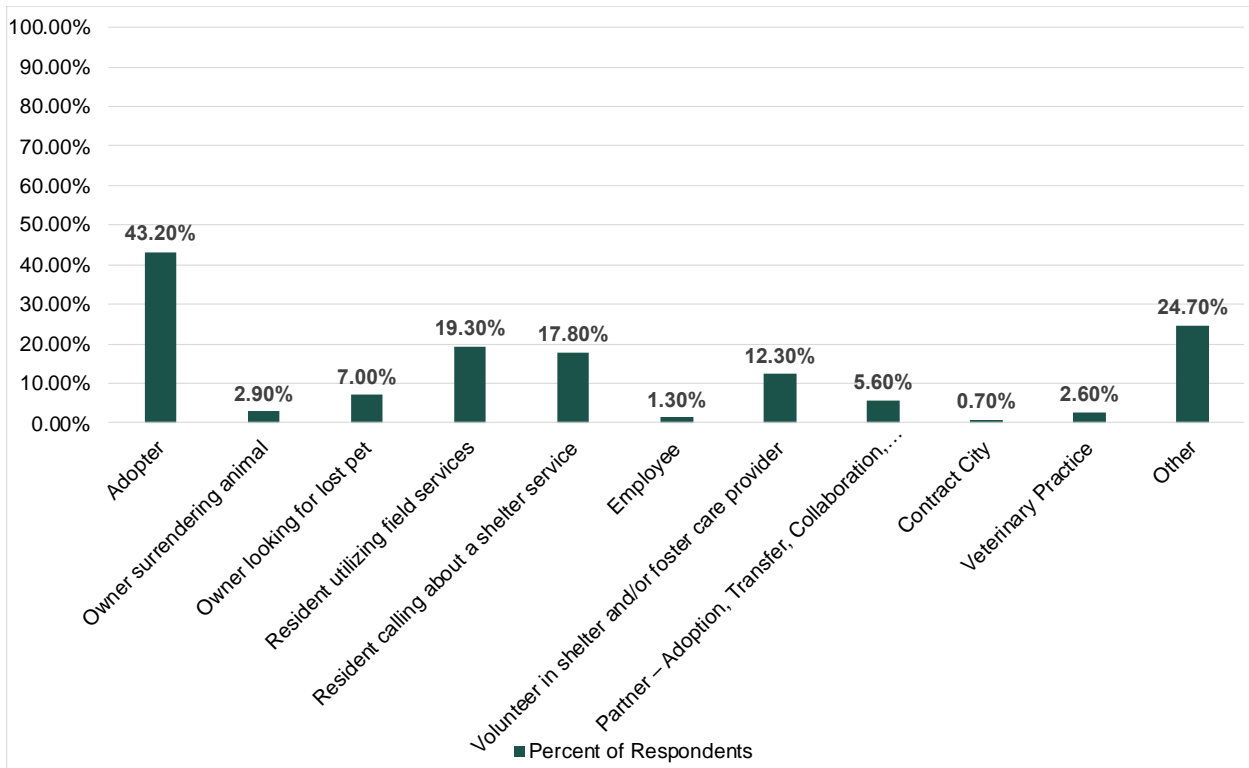
Relationship to Shelter

Table 9—Survey Opinion: Relationship to Shelter

Response	Number of Responses	Percent of Respondents
Adopter	589	43.2%
Owner surrendering animal	39	2.9%
Owner looking for lost pet	95	7.0%
Resident utilizing field services	263	19.3%
Resident calling about a shelter service	242	17.8%
Employee	18	1.3%
Volunteer in shelter and/or foster care provider	167	12.3%
Partner – Adoption, Transfer, Collaboration, Services, Industry based	77	5.6%
Contract City	9	0.7%
Veterinary Practice	35	2.6%
Other	337	24.7%

This information is represented graphically in the following image.

Figure 12—Survey Opinion: Relationship to Shelter



5.4 PRIMARY OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES

The following includes the primary open-ended prompts and responses regarding what is going well at the Department and what should be improved. The ideas expressed in each response were identified, categorized, and counted. The 10 most-commonly expressed sentiments are listed.

Please share about what you think is going well at Contra Costa County Animal Services. (250-character limit) (Responses: 1,121)

Table 10—Survey Opinion: What is Going Well at CCAS

Statement	Percent
Praise for caring and helpful staff, volunteers, and their dedication to the animals. Many respondents highlighted the passion, kindness, and commitment of staff members and volunteers, who work hard to care for the animals and help them get adopted. The staff's care and concern for the animals was frequently noted.	16.3%
Appreciation for adoption services, processes, events, promotions, and website. Numerous responses expressed satisfaction with adoption services, including easy processes, special events, promotions, webpage for browsing adoptable animals, and staff's assistance in finding a good match. Many shared they had positive adoption experiences.	12.2%
Praise for medical care, veterinary services, spay/neuter clinics. Many noted the quality medical care provided to shelter animals and affordable spay/neuter services available to the public have been valuable resources. Some specifically complimented veterinary staff.	12.0%
Appreciation for clean, nice facilities and equipment. The cleanliness, good condition, and spaciousness of the new/upgraded shelter facilities and outdoor areas were positively noted by many respondents. Some mentioned plentiful parking.	9.5%
Praise for playgroups, field trips, fostering, and other enrichment programs. Enrichment offerings like playgroups, field trips, and fostering that benefit shelter animals were frequently mentioned. These give animals exercise, socialization, and exposure for adoption.	8.1%
Social media, marketing, and community outreach praised. Many commented positively on increased online presence, social media accounts, and outreach efforts which have raised public awareness and helped increase adoptions.	7.8%
TNR (trap, neuter, return) program for community cats was appreciated. The availability of the free TNR program that helps manage community cat populations was frequently mentioned as an important, beneficial service.	7.8%
Appreciation for volunteers walking, socializing, and advocating for dogs. Many noted the volunteers who walk and socialize dogs provide enriching interaction and advocate for animals in need of rescue or adoption. Their extra effort was acknowledged.	6.3%
Professional, prompt, helpful customer service praised. Numerous respondents described polite, caring assistance from customer service staff who patiently answered questions, promptly returned calls, and provided helpful guidance.	6.1%
Lost/found services and reunification with owners was appreciated. Some shared appreciation for services that helped find their lost pets or reunite them with owners through microchipping, posting found pets online, and notifying owners.	5.4%

Is there anything that you would like to see changed at CCAS? (250-character limit) (Responses: 1,186)

Table 11—Survey Opinion: Requested Changes for CCAS

Statement	Percent
More affordable and accessible spay/neuter services: Many respondents expressed a desire for more low-cost or free spay/neuter services, including for pet owners as well as trap-neuter-return (TNR) programs for feral cats. There is a need for more appointments, reduced wait times, and easier scheduling.	27.0%
Become a no-kill shelter: A common sentiment was that euthanasia of healthy, adoptable animals should be eliminated, and the shelter should work to become a no-kill facility. Some specified no-kill except for extreme medical or behavior cases.	20.0%
Improved facilities and resources: Respondents felt the shelter facilities and resources are inadequate to properly care for the number of animals, suggesting more space, kennels, enrichment, and veterinary/staff capacity is needed.	16.2%
Reopen the Pinole shelter location: Many respondents lamented the closure of the Pinole shelter location and felt reopening it would better serve West County residents.	12.6%
Increased transparency and accountability: Respondents want more transparency on statistics like intake, adoption, and euthanasia rates as well as more accountability for policies on euthanasia, relationships with rescues, and investigations.	11.5%
Improved field services and intake policies: Respondents felt field services are understaffed. They expressed a desire for CCAS to accept more strays rather than advising residents to return strays to where they found them, and quicker response times for picking up dead animals, responding to bites, etc.	10.5%
Change leadership and staff: Some respondents expressed a desire for change in shelter leadership and staff, citing a lack of care, poor relationships with rescues or volunteers, and euthanasia policies.	10.9%
More collaboration with rescues: Working more closely with rescues to network and adopt out animals, instead of euthanizing, was suggested. Respondents want an easier process for rescues.	9.5%
More public outreach and accessibility: Respondents want more visibility of adoptable animals, adoption events, advertising, social media, and ways for the public to engage with the shelter and its animals.	8.8%
Reinstate wildlife response services: Many respondents were unhappy that the shelter no longer responds to calls about injured wildlife and wants this service reinstated.	9.0%

What do you think the top 1-3 priorities for CCAS should be? (250-character limit) (Responses: 1,204)

Table 12—Survey Opinion: Top Priorities for CCAS

Statement	Percent
More affordable and accessible spay/neuter services: Respondents want increased availability of low-cost or free spay/neuter services to help reduce overpopulation, including services for the public, feral cats, and pets being adopted.	29.4%
Become a no-kill shelter: Respondents want the shelter to transition to a no-kill model, eliminating euthanasia of healthy/adoptable animals except in extreme medical or behavior cases.	23.5%
Improved facilities and resources: Respondents felt current shelter facilities and resources like space, capacity, staffing, enrichment programs, veterinary services, etc. are inadequate and need expanding to properly care for animals.	19.3%
More public outreach and community engagement: Respondents want more visibility of adoptable animals, events to engage the public like adoption fairs, educational initiatives, advertising, use of social media, and more to promote adoptions, volunteers, donations, etc.	16.2%
Reinstate wildlife response services: Many respondents listed resuming response to calls about injured wildlife as a priority, instead of referring people to other agencies.	13.4%
Change leadership and staff: Some respondents want change in shelter leadership and staff due to issues with policies, relationships with rescues, euthanasia rates, and other concerns.	10.6%
Reopen the Pinole shelter location: Respondents, especially those in West County, commonly listed reopening the Pinole location as a priority to increase capacity and accessibility.	10.3%
Increased field services: Respondents want more field officers hired to improve response times for picking up dead/injured animals, investigating cruelty reports, enforcing licensing, etc.	9.1%
Lower/subsidized adoption costs: To increase adoptions, respondents suggested lowering or subsidizing adoption fees, especially for seniors, low-income families, and on "free adoption" days.	8.2%
More collaboration with rescues: Respondents want better partnerships with rescues to network and adopt out animals instead of euthanizing. They also want an easier process for rescues.	7.4%

What do you need most from an animal services agency? (250-character limit) (Responses: 1,112)

Table 13—Survey Opinion: Needed Most from Animal Services Agency

Statement	Percent
More affordable and accessible spay/neuter services: Many respondents expressed wanting increased availability of low-cost or free spay/neuter services, including for the public, feral cats, and pets being adopted, to help reduce overpopulation.	29.7%
Field services improvements: Respondents want prompt response times, more officers to improve pick-up of dead/injured animals, dealing with aggressive/loose dogs, investigating cruelty, and other field calls.	20.0%
Shelter facilities and resources improvements: Respondents felt current shelter facilities and resources are inadequate and need expanding, including space, capacity, staffing, enrichment programs, veterinary services, etc.	16.9%
Compassionate and caring staff: Respondents emphasized wanting staff that are compassionate, caring, responsive, professional, and treat animals humanely.	16.3%
Reinstate wildlife response services: Many respondents want the shelter to resume responding to calls about injured wildlife instead of referring people to other agencies.	15.4%
Become a no-kill shelter: Respondents want the shelter to transition to no-kill, eliminating euthanasia of healthy/adoptable animals except in extreme cases.	14.7%
Low-cost veterinary services: Respondents want more affordable vet services like vaccines, exams, dental, medical treatment, etc. for owned pets.	11.7%
Lost/found pet services: Respondents want services to reunite lost pets with owners and temporarily house found pets while trying to locate owners.	10.9%
Adoption services: Respondents emphasized the importance of adopting out pets, marketing adoptable animals, screening adopters, and supporting new adopters.	9.4%
Trap-neuter-return (TNR) services: Many respondents want increased TNR appointments to help manage feral/community cat populations.	9.4%

What do you think is the biggest challenge facing CCAS? (250-character limit) (Responses: 1,188)

Table 14—Survey Opinion: Biggest Challenges for CCAS

Statement	Percent
Lack of funding/budget constraints: Many responses express concerns about limited financial resources, budget cuts, and inadequate funding from the county impacting staffing levels, capacity, programs, and services.	64.4%
Overcrowding/too many animals: A large number of responses reference overcrowding and shelters at or exceeding capacity due to high intake and inability to adopt out or find placement for animals quickly enough.	52.7%
Need for more/better staff and leadership: Numerous responses indicate a need for more staff, better qualified and trained staff, and improved leadership and management.	33.6%
Irresponsible pet owners/overbreeding: Responses commonly cite issues like failure to spay/neuter, backyard breeding, and abandonment or surrender of animals by irresponsible owners contributing to overpopulation.	32.7%
Lack of resources - facilities, supplies, veterinary services: Many note insufficient resources like shelter facilities, space, supplies, veterinary services, medicine, etc. to properly care for the animals.	24.2%
Need for more spay/neuter services: Responses frequently emphasize the need for more affordable and accessible spay/neuter services to control overpopulation of unwanted animals.	21.5%
Negative public perception/lack of public engagement: Some discuss challenges in public opinion, communication, trust, transparency, education, engagement and addressing misinformation.	17.4%
Euthanasia concerns: Responses express desire to reduce euthanasia rates, become no-kill, and save more animals.	17.2%
Poor coordination with rescues/fosters: Some cite issues building relationships, coordinating with, and supporting rescues, fosters, and volunteers as problematic.	14.3%
Challenges adopting out animals: Difficulty finding adopters and homes for animals, especially certain breeds like pit bulls, was mentioned.	12.7%

5.5 VETERINARY SERVICES, AFFORDABILITY, ETC.

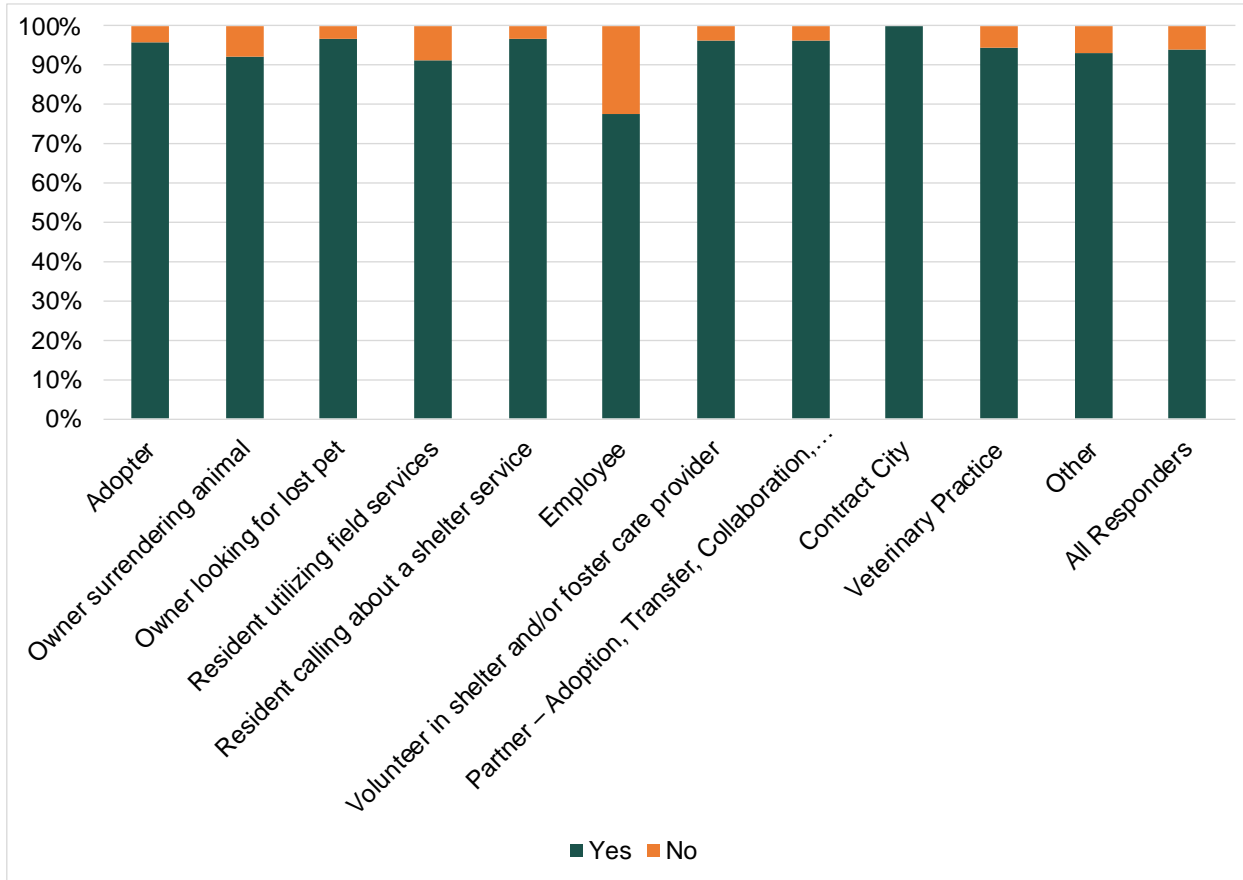
Do you believe that CCAS should be providing more opportunities for pet owners to access affordable veterinary services and spay and neuter surgeries?

Table 15—Survey Opinion: Affordable Veterinary Services Provision

Responder	Yes	% Yes	No	% No
Adopter	564	95.8%	25	4.2%
Owner surrendering animal	36	92.3%	3	7.7%
Owner looking for lost pet	92	96.8%	3	3.2%
Resident utilizing field services	240	91.3%	23	8.7%
Resident calling about a shelter service	234	96.7%	8	3.3%
Employee	14	77.8%	4	22.2%
Volunteer in shelter and/or foster care provider	161	96.4%	6	3.6%
Partner – Adoption, Transfer, Collaboration, Services, Industry based	74	96.1%	3	3.9%
Contract City	9	100.0%	0	0.0%
Veterinary Practice	33	94.3%	2	5.7%
Other	313	92.9%	24	7.1%
All Responders	1,280	93.9%	83	6.1%

This information is represented graphically in the following image.

Figure 13—Survey Opinion: Affordable Veterinary Services Provision



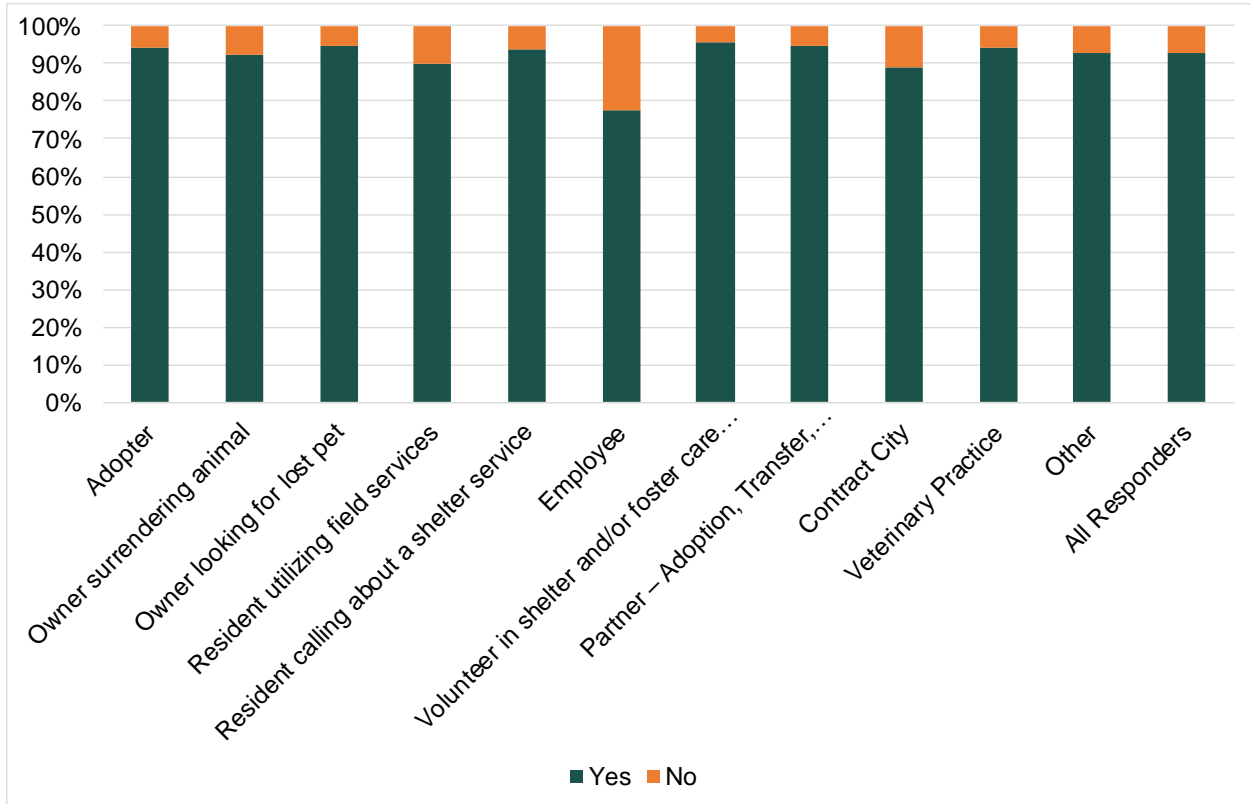
Do you think the county and cities should provide funding to create more low-cost spay and neuter surgery and medical care centers for socio-economic vulnerable residents of Contra Costa County?

Table 16—Survey Opinion: Funding for Low-Cost Spay and Neuter and Medical Care

Responder	Yes	% Yes	No	% No
Adopter	554	94.1%	35	5.9%
Owner surrendering animal	36	92.3%	3	7.7%
Owner looking for lost pet	90	94.7%	5	5.3%
Resident utilizing field services	237	90.1%	26	9.9%
Resident calling about a shelter service	227	93.8%	15	6.2%
Employee	14	77.8%	4	22.2%
Volunteer in shelter and/or foster care provider	160	95.8%	7	4.2%
Partner – Adoption, Transfer, Collaboration, Services, Industry based	73	94.8%	4	5.2%
Contract City	8	88.9%	1	11.1%
Veterinary Practice	33	94.3%	2	5.7%
Other	312	92.6%	25	7.4%
All Responders	1,263	92.7%	100	7.3%

This information is represented graphically in the following image.

Figure 14—Survey Opinion: Funding for Low-Cost Spay and Neuter and Medical Care



Please share about specific situations or areas of concern in your direct interactions with Contra Costa County Animal Services that you would like to make us aware of or that you feel need improvement. (250-character limit) (Responses: 944)

Table 17—Survey Opinion: Areas of Concern

Statement	Percent
Need for more affordable or free spay/neuter services. Many people cannot afford the high cost of spaying/neutering at private veterinarians and the shelter does not have enough appointments available. This leads to overpopulation of unwanted litters.	62.7%
Long wait times to get spay/neuter appointments at the shelter. Wait lists stretch out for months, during which time intact animals continue to breed. More appointments and veterinary staff are needed to meet the demand.	32.4%
Difficulty reaching staff by phone, long hold times, lack of call backs. People are frustrated when trying to reach staff for various needs like reporting found animals, dead animal pickup, making appointments. Improved phone system and more staff could help.	20.9%
Concerns about healthy/adoptable animals being euthanized. Some think the shelter's policies lead to unnecessary euthanasia of animals that could have been adopted out or taken in by rescues.	20.0%
Lack of services, long distance to Martinez facility for West County residents after Pinole shelter closure. West County residents lack accessible services with Pinole closure. New facility needed.	18.8%
Need for low-cost basic veterinary services beyond just spay/neuter. Many cannot afford vet care to keep pets healthy. Low-cost services needed beyond spay/neuter.	16.5%
Lack of adequate staffing levels to carry out needed services. Staff shortages mean less field response, fewer shelter services, long wait times. Need more staff.	12.2%
Concerns about poor shelter conditions causing stress in animals. Small kennels, lack of enrichment and human interaction creates stressed, unadoptable pets. More staff and volunteers needed for care.	10.0%
Difficulty getting TNR (trap-neuter-return) services for feral cats. Hard to get appointments and shelter turns away trapped cats. Leads to overpopulation. More TNR services needed.	9.8%
Lack of response and help with wildlife calls. Shelter no longer responds to calls about sick/injured wildlife, leaving public without help. Need improved wildlife response.	8.9%

5.6 QUALITY OF SERVICE – EXPECTATIONS

The following tables show stakeholder statements regarding quality of service, with positive and negative responses grouped. The highest rating is “Far Exceeds Expectations” and the lowest rating is “Unacceptable.” Neutrality is represented by “Not Applicable or Unsure” and is rated N/A.

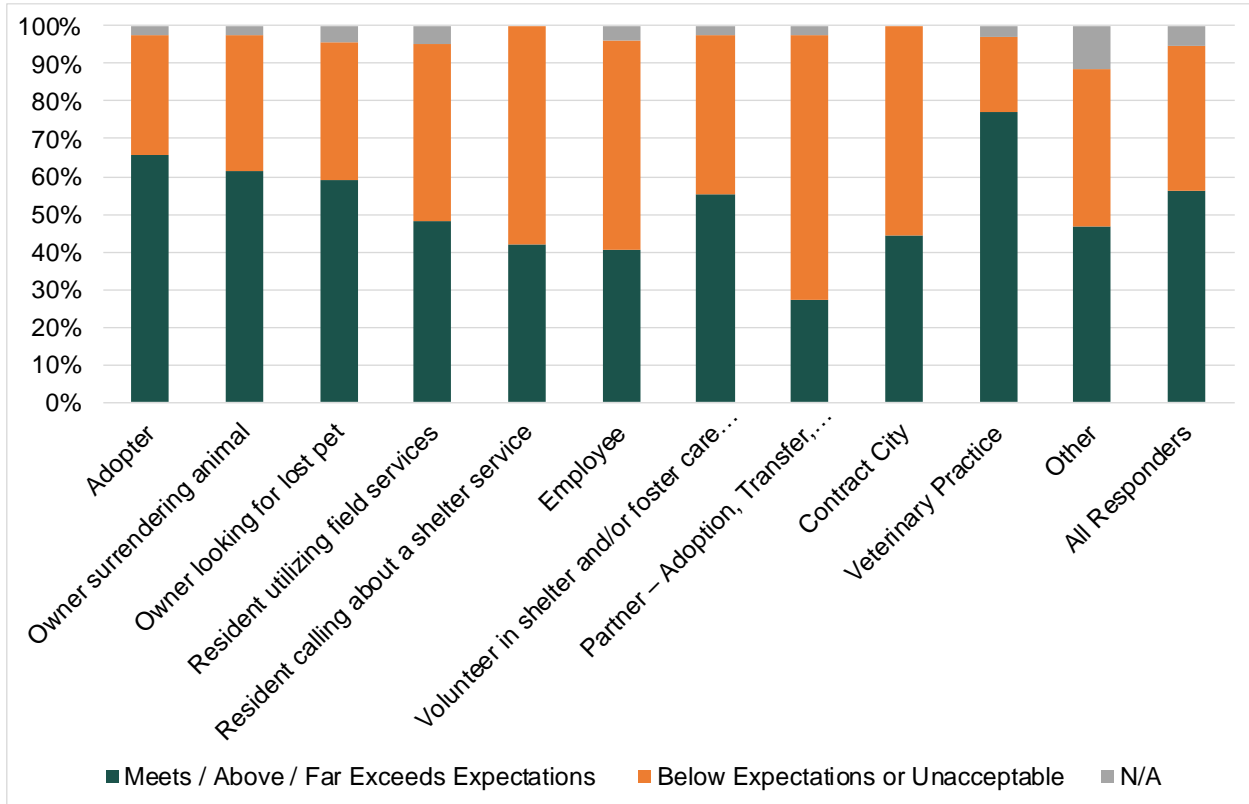
Please rate the quality of service for the following: The overall quality of services provided by CCAS:

Table 18—Survey Opinion: Overall Quality of Service

Responder	% Meets / Above / Far Exceeds Expectations	% Below Expectations or Unacceptable	% N/A
Adopter	65.9%	31.8%	2.4%
Owner surrendering animal	61.6%	35.9%	2.6%
Owner looking for lost pet	59.0%	36.9%	4.2%
Resident utilizing field services	48.3%	47.1%	4.6%
Resident calling about a shelter service	40.4%	55.4%	0.0%
Employee	40.4%	55.4%	4.1%
Volunteer in shelter and/or foster care provider	55.1%	42.5%	2.4%
Partner – Adoption, Transfer, Collaboration, Services, Industry based	27.3%	70.2%	2.6%
Contract City	44.4%	55.5%	0.0%
Veterinary Practice	77.1%	20.0%	2.9%
Other	46.6%	42.1%	11.3%
All Responders	56.2%	38.4%	5.4%

This information is represented graphically in the following image.

Figure 15—Survey Opinion: Overall Quality of Service



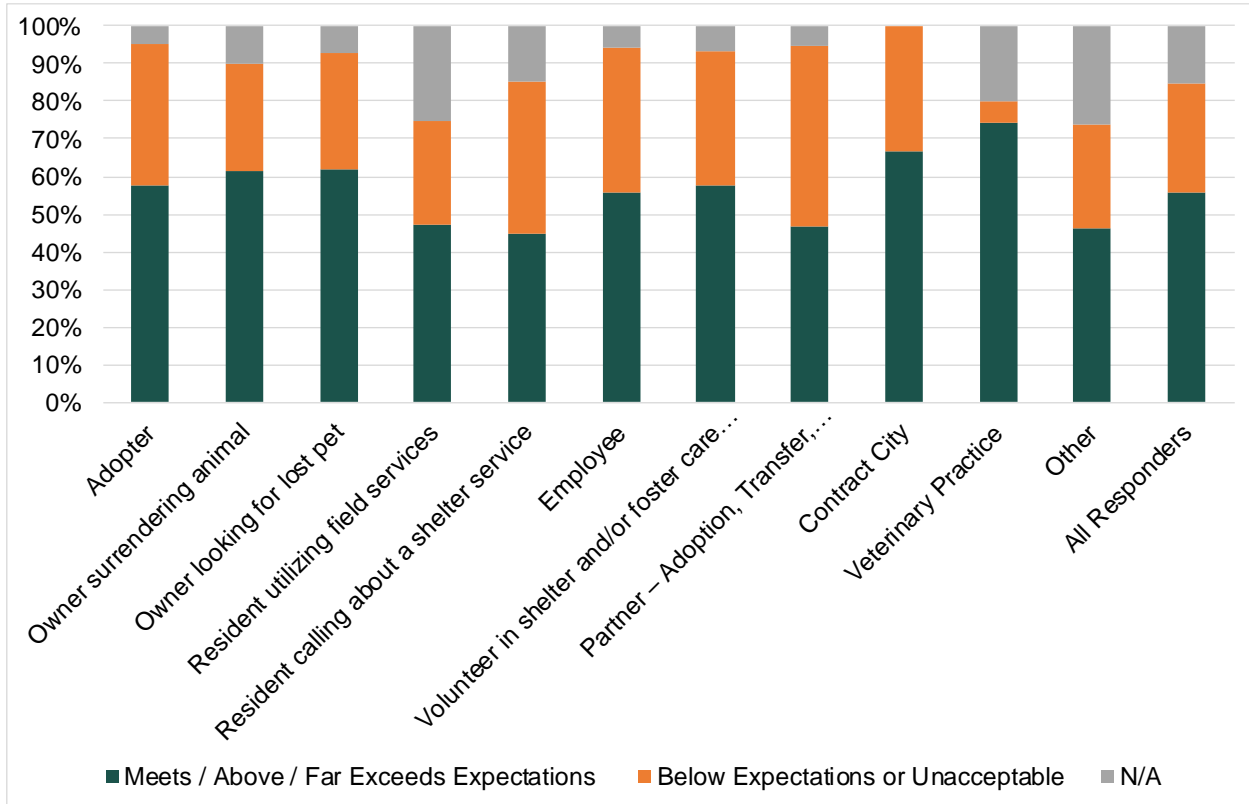
Please rate the quality of service for the following: The quality of care provided by CCAS for the shelter animals:

Table 19—Survey Opinion: Quality of Care

Responder	% Meets / Above / Far Exceeds Expectations	% Below Expectations or Unacceptable	% N/A
Adopter	57.8%	37.4%	4.7%
Owner surrendering animal	61.5%	28.2%	10.3%
Owner looking for lost pet	62.1%	30.6%	7.4%
Resident utilizing field services	47.2%	27.4%	25.5%
Resident calling about a shelter service	44.7%	40.5%	14.9%
Employee	55.6%	38.9%	5.6%
Volunteer in shelter and/or foster care provider	57.5%	36.0%	6.6%
Partner – Adoption, Transfer, Collaboration, Services, Industry based	46.8%	48.1%	5.2%
Contract City	66.6%	33.3%	0.0%
Veterinary Practice	74.3%	5.8%	20.0%
Other	46.3%	27.3%	26.4%
All Responders	55.9%	28.8%	15.3%

This information is represented graphically in the following image.

Figure 16—Survey Opinion: Quality of Care



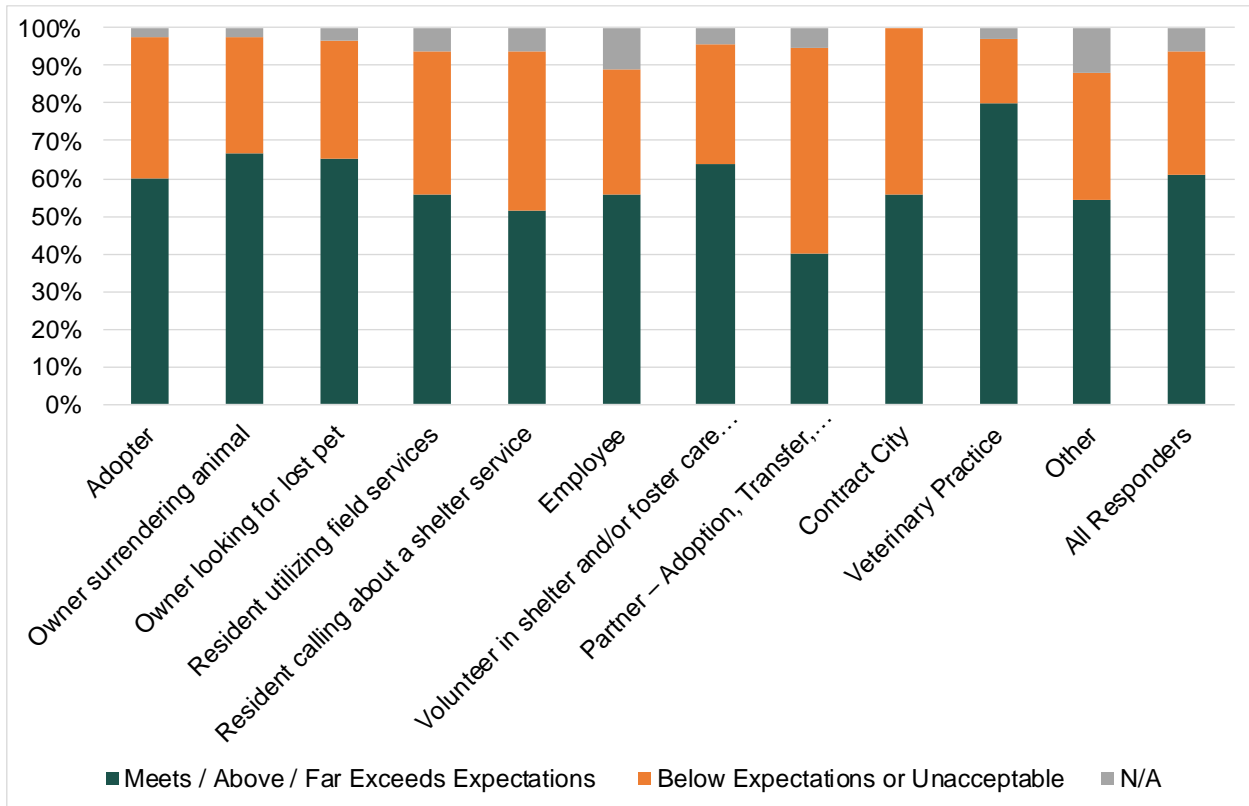
Please rate the quality of service for the following: The customer service provided by CCAS:

Table 20—Survey Opinion: Customer Service

Responder	% Meets / Above / Far Exceeds Expectations	% Below Expectations or Unacceptable	% N/A
Adopter	59.8%	37.9%	2.3%
Owner surrendering animal	66.6%	30.8%	2.6%
Owner looking for lost pet	65.2%	31.6%	3.2%
Resident utilizing field services	55.5%	38.4%	6.1%
Resident calling about a shelter service	51.3%	42.6%	6.2%
Employee	55.6%	33.4%	11.1%
Volunteer in shelter and/or foster care provider	64.1%	31.8%	4.2%
Partner – Adoption, Transfer, Collaboration, Services, Industry based	40.3%	54.6%	5.2%
Contract City	55.5%	44.4%	0.0%
Veterinary Practice	80.0%	17.1%	2.9%
Other	54.5%	33.3%	12.2%
All Responders	61.1%	32.6%	6.2%

This information is represented graphically in the following image.

Figure 17—Survey Opinion: Customer Service



5.7 DEGREE OF AGREEMENT

The following tables show stakeholder statements regarding agreement with the statement, with positive and negative responses grouped. The highest rating is “Strongly Agree” and the lowest rating is “Strongly Disagree.” Neutrality is shown in the last column.

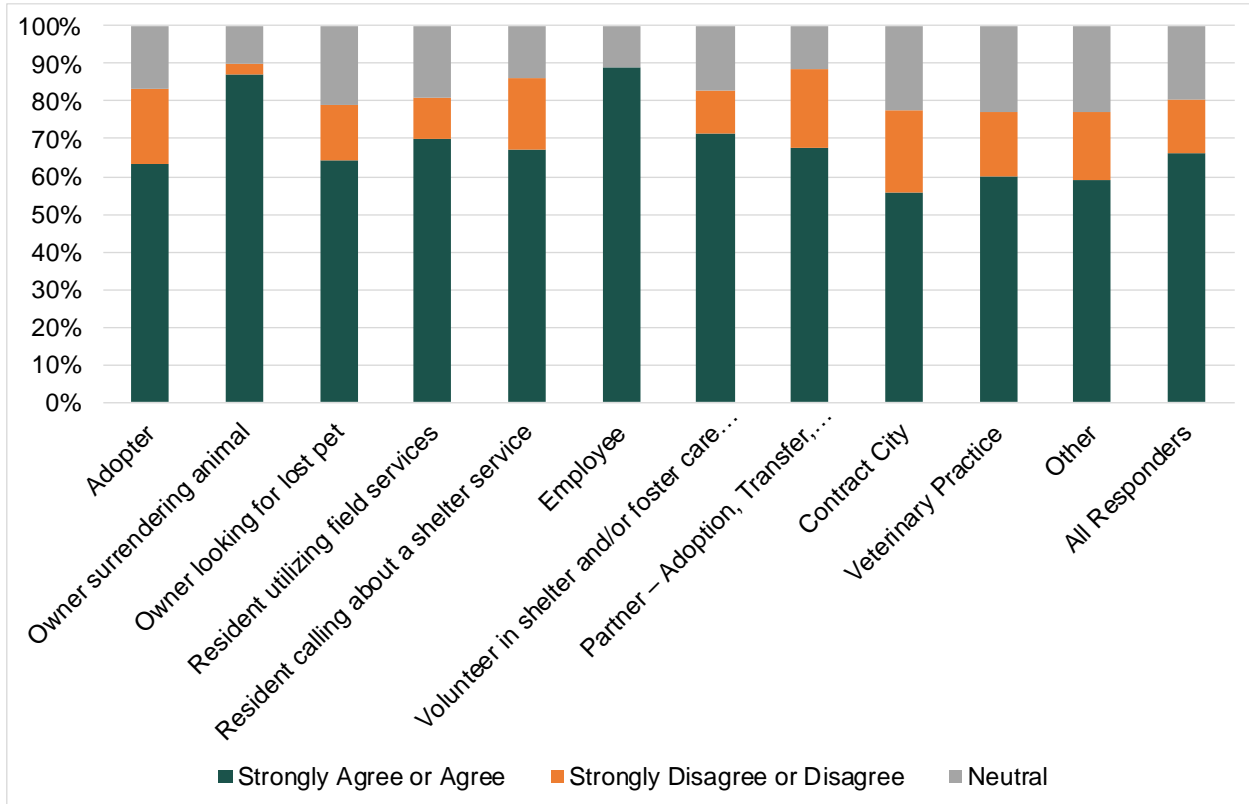
CCAS should make appropriate euthanasia decisions to alleviate suffering and ensure the health and safety of animals and community members.

Table 21—Survey Opinion: Euthanasia Decisions

Responder	% Strongly Agree or Agree	% Strongly Disagree or Disagree	% Neutral
Adopter	63.1%	20.1%	16.8%
Owner surrendering animal	87.1%	2.6%	10.3%
Owner looking for lost pet	64.2%	14.7%	21.1%
Resident utilizing field services	70.0%	11.1%	19.0%
Resident calling about a shelter service	66.9%	19.0%	14.0%
Employee	88.9%	0.0%	11.1%
Volunteer in shelter and/or foster care provider	71.2%	11.4%	17.4%
Partner – Adoption, Transfer, Collaboration, Services, Industry based	67.6%	20.8%	11.7%
Contract City	55.5%	22.2%	22.2%
Veterinary Practice	60.0%	17.1%	22.9%
Other	59.1%	17.8%	23.1%
All Responders	66.1%	14.2%	19.7%

This information is represented graphically in the following image.

Figure 18—Survey Opinion: Euthanasia Decisions



The following table shows percentages related to suggestions for solutions to prevent euthanasia.

If you disagree that CCAS should make appropriate euthanasia decisions, please describe possible solutions for expensive life-saving medical procedures, medically unadoptable or suffering animals, and animals that pose a significant threat to the safety of other animals or humans. (250-character limit) (451 Responses)

Table 22—Survey Opinion: Euthanasia Alternatives

Statement	Percent
Euthanasia should only be used as a last resort to end extreme suffering when medically necessary or no other options exist to save the animal. Many expressed that euthanasia is appropriate for terminally ill, severely injured/suffering animals with no quality of life.	18.0%
Healthy, adoptable animals should never be euthanized simply due to lack of shelter space, length of stay at the shelter, or minor manageable medical issues. Respondents believe euthanizing adoptable pets due to overcrowding or space limitations is unethical.	12.0%
More partnerships, volunteers, fosters, transfers to rescues/sanctuaries, and community fundraising are desperately needed to save animals and provide alternatives to euthanasia. Respondents want to see stronger networks with rescues and more public engagement.	12.0%
Euthanasia decisions should not be made unilaterally by shelter staff; vets, experienced behaviorists, rescues, long-term volunteers/fosters should be involved. Respondents feel those with medical and behavior expertise and hands-on experience with the animals can provide valuable perspectives.	7.3%
CCAS is too quick to euthanize scared, stressed shelter dogs without providing adequate time, training, and enrichment to allow their true personality to emerge outside the kennel. Dogs reacting negatively due to shelter stress are often incorrectly deemed unadoptable.	6.9%
More community education is needed on the true costs and responsibilities of pet ownership as well as realities of euthanasia to reduce intake and increase empathy. Respondents feel outreach can reduce irresponsible breeding/surrenders.	6.4%
Many respondents expressed concerns over who specifically makes euthanasia decisions at CCAS, what criteria is used, and called for full transparency on practices. The decision-making process appears unclear to many.	6.0%
Affordable spay/neuter services should be increased and penalties strengthened for irresponsible breeding in order to reduce shelter pet intake. Respondents see overpopulation from lack of spay/neuter as a key intake factor.	5.1%
Special funds need to be established through fundraising and donations to provide life-saving medical care for treatable conditions in adoptable animals. This would save pets needing expensive care.	4.7%
Some agree with euthanizing animals in certain appropriate circumstances per CCAS criteria, but overall do not trust CCAS judgement in making those decisions. Respondents expressed doubts about criteria application.	4.0%

The following tables show community survey responses, regarding agreement with the statement, with positive and negative responses grouped. The highest rating is “Strongly Agree” and the lowest rating is “Strongly Disagree.” Neutrality is shown in the last column.

CCAS should provide services to assist owners to be able to keep their animal in their home, including such services as training or behavioral modification, provision of animal food,

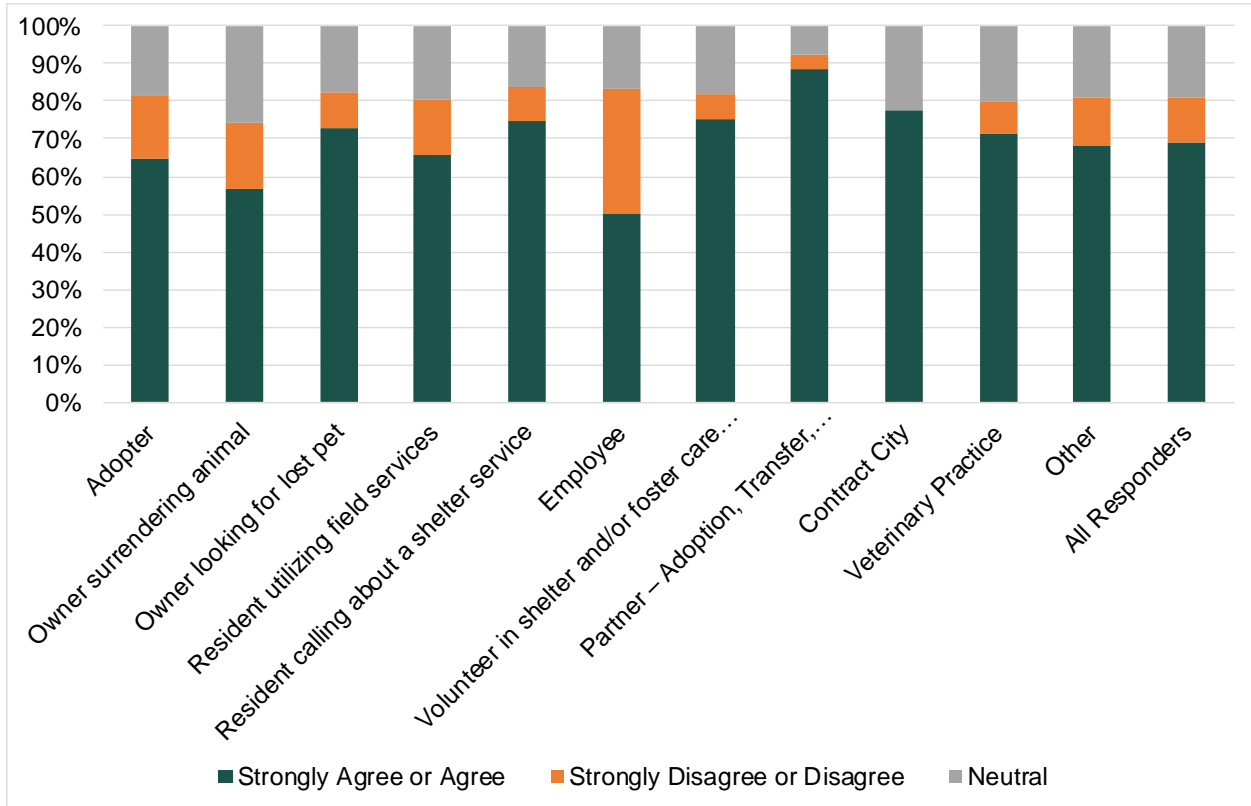
assistance to shelter or contain the animals such as fence repairs or dog houses, and/or other material items or counseling that allow the animal to remain with its owner.

Table 23—Survey Opinion: Owner Assistance

Responder	% Strongly Agree or Agree	% Strongly Disagree or Disagree	% Neutral
Adopter	64.7%	16.8%	18.6%
Owner surrendering animal	56.4%	17.9%	25.6%
Owner looking for lost pet	72.6%	9.5%	17.9%
Resident utilizing field services	65.8%	14.4%	19.8%
Resident calling about a shelter service	74.8%	9.0%	16.1%
Employee	50.0%	33.4%	16.7%
Volunteer in shelter and/or foster care provider	75.4%	6.6%	18.0%
Partner – Adoption, Transfer, Collaboration, Services, Industry based	88.3%	3.9%	7.8%
Contract City	77.7%	0.0%	22.2%
Veterinary Practice	71.4%	8.6%	20.0%
Other	67.9%	13.0%	19.0%
All Responders	68.8%	12.0%	19.1%

This information is represented graphically in the following image.

Figure 19—Survey Opinion: Owner Assistance



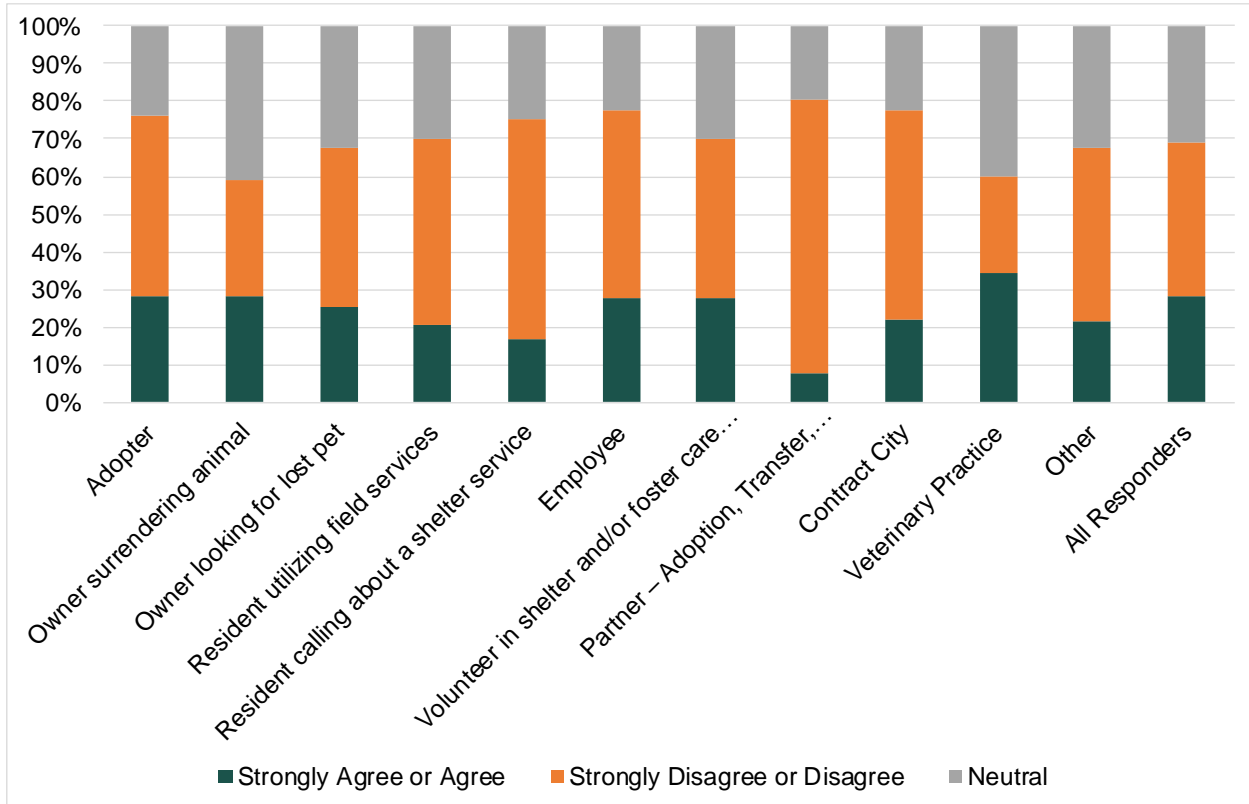
CCAS services are meeting the needs of the Contra Costa County community.

Table 24—Survey Opinion: CCAS Meeting Needs

Responder	% Strongly Agree or Agree	% Strongly Disagree or Disagree	% Neutral (0)
Adopter	28.4%	47.7%	23.9%
Owner surrendering animal	28.2%	30.8%	41.0%
Owner looking for lost pet	25.3%	42.1%	32.6%
Resident utilizing field services	20.6%	49.4%	30.0%
Resident calling about a shelter service	16.9%	58.3%	24.8%
Employee	27.8%	50.0%	22.2%
Volunteer in shelter and/or foster care provider	27.6%	42.6%	29.9%
Partner – Adoption, Transfer, Collaboration, Services, Industry based	7.8%	72.8%	19.5%
Contract City	22.2%	55.6%	22.2%
Veterinary Practice	34.3%	25.7%	40.0%
Other	21.7%	46.0%	32.3%
All Responders	28.2%	41.0%	30.8%

This information is represented graphically in the following image.

Figure 20—Survey Opinion: CCAS Meeting Needs



SECTION 6—FOCUS GROUPS

6.1 PURPOSE AND USE OF FOCUS GROUPS

Citygate conducted four focus group meetings consisting of volunteers, community stakeholders, and staff in October 2023. The purpose of the focus groups was to gain understanding of their visions, goals, and priorities for the Department over the next several years.

The focus groups were videoconference meetings which each lasted approximately ninety minutes. There were prepared topics for each session, the format was informal, and participants were requested to treat the sessions as confidential. Fourteen or fifteen people were invited to each session and the attendance ranged from three to seven participants per focus group.

6.2 FOCUS GROUPS RESULTS

The focus groups had many overlapping themes, comments, and suggestions. The diverse composition of the groups resulted in different perspectives and impressions about the Department. Emphasis on communication and finding ways to ensure that the public receives accurate information was consistently stated as a high priority. Some participants felt that a rebranding of CCAS would be beneficial. They also desired less reactive communication and more collaboration with the community and rescue partners. Messaging that explains the “why” for specific decisions and actions was desired. Better marketing and a more welcoming environment at the shelter were offered as possible ways to improve the customer experience and increase animal adoptions.

Multiple concerns that CCAS may not have enough resources or space were expressed. There were worries that the facility was not large enough and did not have enough animal housing to meet the community’s needs. Facility maintenance and adequate equipment were emphasized as important. Participants raised the need for more efforts on behavior modification and provision of enrichment for the animals, expansion of play groups for dogs, and ensuring that animals were outside of their primary housing location on a regular basis. Many felt this could be accomplished with better volunteer engagement and staff collaboration.

The need for more spay and neuter resources was frequently mentioned, including Trap-Neuter-Release services. It was acknowledged that there are funds available (Animal Benefit Fund), and that CCAS partners with nonprofits to provide the services. Participants recognized that the shortage of veterinarians and veterinary support staff adds to the challenge to increase spay and neuter services. More availability to spay/neuter inhouse (Mondays and Saturdays) would decrease the time animals are held and reduce crowding. The issue of spay/neuter was raised as a critical concern as there are long waiting times at current low-cost clinics, and participants expressed their perception that lower income communities are contributing to pet overpopulation problems.

Concerns were raised about staffing, especially that there were not enough personnel and that staff retention is poor. The high vacancy rate was attributed to the difficulty of the work and the perception that the pay scale is too low and does not meet industry standards. A lack of consistent training and support for both staff and volunteers was expressed, along with a need for effective intervention for compassion fatigue. Lack of teamwork and the existence of silos within the divisions of CCAS were felt to be contributing to communication challenges and deterring effectiveness.

Support for and development of the volunteer program was encouraged. Finding ways to recognize and enhance the volunteer experience was desired. The addition of an Adoption Counselor position who could work with volunteers on their skills was put forward. Expanding both the foster program and volunteer duties were offered as ideas for improving the health and care of the animals.

SECTION 7—INTERVIEWS WITH COUNTY LEADERSHIP

7.1 COMPOSITION AND PURPOSE OF INTERVIEWS

Citygate conducted individual interviews with each member of the Board of Supervisors, the County Administrator, the Assistant County Administrator, and the Animal Services Director. The purpose of the interviews was to understand their perspectives, visions, and priorities for the Department over the next several years. The interviews were conducted by videoconference and lasted approximately one hour each. A consistent set of interview questions was used, but the format was informal and conversational. Participants were informed that all specific feedback and comments were confidential.

7.2 INTERVIEW RESULTS

7.2.1 Vision for CCAS

Among the County Leadership, there were many and varied responses regarding a vision for the Department. Some saw it as a community center and gathering place for pet owners, adopters, rescuers, volunteers, and customers. Participants stressed the importance of CCAS to function as a resource for pet owners and to be able to accept unwanted pets, to quickly respond to dangerous dogs and threats to public safety, to be proactive and customer friendly, to be engaged in the community, and to provide education. Emphasis was placed on being a convener of services for pet owners and the community.

7.2.2 Top Priorities Over the Next Five Years

Top priorities for CCAS over the next five years included ensuring public safety, expanding partnerships with rescue organizations, supporting robust volunteer engagement, and communicating clearly on policies and decisions. Access to and more availability of spay and neuter resources was a recurring theme, with the understanding that not all the services must or should be provided by the CCAS. Leveraging collaborative partnerships with providers to ensure availability of affordable spay/neuter services was recommended.

The size and adequacy of the Martinez facility was of concern. Participants questioned whether the shelter has enough space and capacity, and expressed the need for more confidence that the facilities and equipment are adequate to meet the current and future needs of Contra Costa County. Most favored expansion of the current facility over an additional campus, but offsite activities were encouraged to have more visibility in the community. Common concerns included whether the current staffing level was adequate, with a clear understanding that having enough qualified staff was key to meeting the goals and objectives of the Department.

The need for proactive and positive community engagement was expressed as a primary concern. Developing strategies for prioritizing outreach while simultaneously managing community expectations was recommended.

Transparency, accountability, and effective leadership were frequently hailed as important priorities. Proactive, timely communication and messaging about the positive work and results of CCAS work was stressed. The importance of community engagement, public relations, clear communication and explanations, factual statements and information, and effective presentation skills and materials were common themes.

SECTION 8—AREAS OF INTEREST

8.1 COMMON OVERLAPPING CONCERNS

The community stakeholder survey, focus groups, and interviews revealed many areas of intersection. While there were different perceptions of the priority levels, Citygate found many topics overlapped and were repeated consistently. The primary themes and concerns are noted in the subsections to follow.

8.1.1 Communication

A clear theme around the need for clear messaging that is proactive and positive, rather than reactive, was identified. Many comments focused on the need for consistent communication of services, successes, and results that are backed up by facts and figures. The need for accountability and transparency was expressed, along with the need for a communication strategy that controls the message and manages community expectations.

8.1.2 Availability of Spay and Neuter Services

Concerns are pervasive regarding the availability and timely scheduling of spay/neuter surgeries for shelter animals, provision of low cost spay/neuter services for the public, and availability of spay/neuter for Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) and community cats. The desire to see outreach and collaboration expanded to increase spay/neuter services emerged as a clear theme.

8.1.3 Staffing

Perceived both internally and externally to the Department, whether the Department has adequate staffing was a concern consistently raised, along with the need to increase staff training and improve retention as methods to help CCAS accomplish its mission.

8.1.4 Facility and Capacity for Care

The question of whether the current facilities meet the needs of both the community and the animals and how CCAS can adequately provide for the needs of all the animals in its care was recurrent.

8.1.5 Optimal Utilization of Partnership Relationships

Many emphasized the value and benefits of collaboration with partners for animal transfers, assistance with fostering, and increased access to spay/neuter services. Many expressed the desire to see partnerships maximized.

8.1.6 Euthanasia Policy Clarification

The policy and criteria for euthanasia decisions are not understood internally within the Department, nor externally in the community. The need for clarity, transparency, and more communication in this area was a consistent theme.

8.1.7 Funding

The concern of whether the funding of the Department was adequate was raised by many stakeholders. Some expressed a clear belief that there was not enough funding, while others wanted more accountability regarding the use of funds.

8.1.8 Organizational Culture and Leadership

The apparent culture of silos within CCAS divisions were mentioned frequently as a concern. There is a shared desire to strengthen CCAS leadership by improving communication, enhancing internal collaboration, and demonstrating staff support for increased volunteer and community engagement.

8.1.9 Wildlife Policy

Many expressed an interest in re-visiting the handling of wildlife, especially where concerns for humane issues exist, such as helping injured or sick wild animals.

SECTION 9—ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

9.1 OVERVIEW

In collaboration with the Strategic Planning Committee, Citygate prepared an environmental scan that identifies key internal and external factors with potential to significantly impact the Department or the services it provides over the next five years. These factors are briefly described in the following subsections.

9.2 KEY INTERNAL FACTORS

9.2.1 Staffing

CCAS is challenged with hiring and retention. Animal welfare organizations are commonly experiencing severe struggles with hiring recently. CCAS is no exception to this. Once staff have been hired, ongoing difficulties include appropriate training, job satisfaction, and concerns about adequate pay.

As of March 2024, CCAS had seven vacancies in Administrative Services, five vacancies in Field Operations, one vacancy in Community and Media Relations, three vacancies in Shelter Medicine, and four vacancies in Animal Care Operations. This is a total of 20 vacancies out of a total staffing FTE count of 92 positions, which is almost a 22 percent vacancy rate.

9.2.2 Facility

CCAS currently operates one facility and is often at capacity or overcrowded. Expansion of the animal housing capability and veterinary medical clinical spaces may be needed.

9.2.3 Funding

The Department may not be adequately funded. Recent allocation of Measure X funding over the next three years is dedicated to spay/neuter and community outreach. Ensuring a sufficient annual budget is critical to meet CCAS' mission.

9.2.4 Underutilization of Volunteers and Foster Program

Improvements to the volunteer program, including more inclusion and expansion of duties, are current detriments. Volunteers are restricted in their responsibilities and need to be better supported. Focusing on engaging more foster caregivers will assist with ensuring best treatment for underaged, behaviorally challenged, and sick or injured animals.

9.2.5 Internal Culture

CCAS faces philosophical and moral variations that lower morale and employee satisfaction, which has led to an undesirable Departmental culture.

9.2.6 Communication

CCAS lacks a clear communication plan and strategy to accurately and proactively deliver the agency's messages.

9.3 KEY EXTERNAL FACTORS

9.3.1 County Processes

Some County processes, such as the procedures for Human Resources or procurement policies, create delays, bottlenecks, and unnecessary barriers that inhibit the ability of CCAS to fulfill its mission.

9.3.2 Activist Challenges

A small but vocal group of activists have created disruption and disseminated inaccurate information, which is misleading to the public and some County officials. The ongoing nature of the criticism and spread of misinformation contributes to low staff morale and poor retention.

9.3.3 Lack of Access to Affordable Spay/Neuter Resources

There are few local agencies, organizations, and private clinics providing affordable spay/neuter services for the public. The demand for spay/neuter services far exceeds the availability and current wait times may contribute to unwanted births, overpopulation, and humane concerns.

9.3.4 COVID-19 Rebound

The national trend of increased animal intakes, lower adoption numbers, and fewer available transfer opportunities is challenging shelters across the United States.

9.3.5 Veterinary Staff Shortages

An acute shortage of veterinarians and technical staff, exasperated in the animal welfare industry, has led to resource challenges for these important and necessary skills and personnel.

SECTION 10—STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT

10.1 STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

On February 27, 2024, Citygate facilitated a full-day strategic planning workshop attended by the Strategic Planning Committee consisting of the Interim Director, the Administrative Services Officer, the Chief of Shelter Medicine, and the Community and Media Relations Manager. At the workshop, the Citygate team provided information on the results of its work to gather broad community stakeholder input, as well as generalizations from the interviews with County leadership, and the focus groups. Using that information, Citygate facilitated review and discussion among members of the Strategic Plan Committee to refine the elements of the plan, including the Crisis Critical items and the Core Themes, and the spreadsheet outlining the actions under each category.

At a subsequent meeting with the Strategic Planning Committee, participants considered draft Core Values and Mission Statements that were the results of the stakeholder interviews and surveys and updating the original statements from the 2018 Strategic Plan document. Each statement was carefully reviewed to create clear, concise statements that represent the CCAS of today.

10.1.1 Core Values

Values are individual basic, fundamental beliefs that guide or motivate people to act or behave in a particular way. They are the things that individuals believe are important in the way they live and work. Values can represent one’s moral ideals. The organization’s values are the words or qualities that describe the type of life desired or that help guide an organization. Values are the standards or ideals by which we evaluate actions, people, things, or situations.

**Contra Costa Animal Services
Core Values**

*Transparency – Compassion – Accountability –
Professionalism – Humane – Public Safety*

10.1.2 Mission Statement

A mission statement is what drives the organization. It is what the organization does. The organization’s mission statement shapes its culture. It can motivate employees and it provides clarity. From this, an organization’s objectives are created. A mission statement focuses on today and what the organization does to achieve it. CCAS updated and simplified its mission statement.

**Contra Costa Animal Services
Mission Statement**

*Our mission is to protect the health, safety and well-being
of all people and animals in our community with
compassion, integrity, and professionalism.*

10.1.3 Strategic Plan Worksheet

During the strategic planning process, the Strategic Planning Committee began work to select, categorize, and prioritize all the significant items that were gleaned from both community and employee surveys, stakeholder interviews, historical data, the previous Strategic Plan, and point-in-time items. This information generated a comprehensive list of action items to be evaluated and organized into a concise statement of CCAS' current priorities. The plan was organized into two Crisis Critical topics (**Capacity for Care** and **Euthanasia Policy and Clarity**) and five Themes (**Communication, Resources, Leadership Culture, Scope of Services, and Services**). A worksheet containing all of the priority items was categorized by section and color-coded for prioritization. This worksheet has been provided as **Appendix A—5-Year Strategic Plan Priorities Worksheet**.

The worksheet contains columns for each action item in the Strategic Plan, including:

- ◆ Performance Metrics
- ◆ Cost (Y/N)
- ◆ Year and Tier
- ◆ Completion Date
- ◆ Grant Opportunity
- ◆ Lead
- ◆ Co-Lead
- ◆ Partners
- ◆ Time Allocation
- ◆ Fiscal Impact
- ◆ Notes

This worksheet was later modified and refined through multiple levels of review, including incorporating input from the new CCAS Director.

10.2 IMPLEMENTATION FAIL FACTS AND STRATEGIES

The strategic planning process is an important tool for the Department to identify its vision for the future and the resulting Strategic Plan provides a road map to that desired future. Once created, however, the plan must be implemented in a clear and thoughtful manner if the strategic planning

process is to be fully successful. Unfortunately, it is too often the case that an organization will invest the time and other resources necessary to create a Strategic Plan, but it will fail to adequately recognize the importance of developing a thoughtful implementation plan and then use that plan to guide future actions and decisions to assure that the Strategic Plan is implemented.

10.2.1 Fail Facts

What causes plans not to work out the way we envision them? Often, once a plan has been carefully developed things can and do go awry. Ongoing daily attention and care must be taken throughout the implementation process to achieve optimal results. Where applicable, monitoring performance metrics regularly as a tool to evaluate success is very helpful. It is important to recognize that even with the best of intentions, efficient efforts, and resource alignment, the end results may differ from the original vision.

A plan's implementation could fail if there is...

- ◆ minimal investment/buy-in to alignment with the plan
- ◆ no clear, consistent communication from leadership
- ◆ added work assigned to staff without any work taken away
- ◆ a lack of accountability
- ◆ a shortage of patience
- ◆ a lack of clarity among staff regarding the strategy
- ◆ “everything is a priority” syndrome
- ◆ no true allocation of resources
- ◆ a lack of perceived fairness, recognition, rewards, etc.
- ◆ an absence of innovation fostered by leadership
- ◆ neglect to utilize the right approach in execution
- ◆ no recognition that some failures are successes
- ◆ limited understanding of the real problem; distraction with other concerns
- ◆ an inaccurate perception of actual organizational capabilities
- ◆ no awareness of the cultural landscape

- ◆ no understanding of who is in charge.

While there are various tools and styles for implementation of the Departmental vision as outlined in the Strategic Plan, Citygate recommends that taking a human-centered approach has been found to be the most successful. This type of approach emphasizes collaboration and a long-term planning horizon. Among the implementation strategies that can be employed to ensure accountability and productive implementation of the plan are the preparation of annual reports to the Board of Supervisors to be delivered prior to the annual budget sessions, the use of technology to track progress, on-going communication, support and training for staff, and regular progress work sessions.

10.3 IMPLEMENTATION BEST PRACTICES

While there are many standards and best approaches to implementation, there are some fundamentals and key factors that support successful execution of any well-laid plan. There are six core components needed to support implementation: people, resources, structure, systems, culture, and vision. CCAS has done tremendous work in setting its vision, strategically determining what additional resources and people are needed, and ultimately developing a comprehensive Strategic Plan.

As implementation begins, the most important factor will be the clear, consistent, thoughtful, timely communication of the plan to CCAS staff, County leadership, volunteers, partners, stakeholders, and the community. This communication will set the tone as the plan unfolds. As the roles are determined, workload gets assigned and the execution and experimentation begin, there will be a need for ongoing accountability and monitoring, adjustments and pivots, and continuous review and reflection of what did or did not work well.

The following are some helpful tips and steps for the journey towards completing the desired objectives.

10.3.1 Determine a Lead and/or Co-leads for Implementing the Strategic Plan

Leads have been identified in the worksheet, but it may make sense to involve additional staff, volunteers, or contractors in some of the lead or co-lead roles. Creation of staff and volunteer committees specific to certain projects will also support success.

10.3.2 Have a Communication Plan

Quarterly executive one-page briefs for the County Administrator, Board of Supervisors, and community are advisable. This information should be a combination of postings that are easy to find and clearly located on the website, within the shelter, and on social media. A more detailed report should occur annually. Internal communication from the lead/co-leads and assigned staff should be included in monthly reports to the appropriate division/department manager. This should

also be a factor in their performance evaluations as appropriate. Other communication factors include adopting an “embrace mistakes” mantra, reward and celebrate the wins, and setting realistic expectations.

10.3.3 Have a Clear Accountability Approach

Clear accountability is both beneficial for the individual and the organization. Some of the key factors include seeking and giving feedback (360 feedback, self-evaluations), and consider using an accountability app for the team, like Time Doctor, Toggle track, Clockify, Deskttime, or others. Thoughtful feedback questions could include:

- ◆ What did I learn and what can I do differently next time?
- ◆ How did my actions or the results affect the team, department, organization, and community?
- ◆ Was that my best?

10.3.4 Performance Monitoring

After goal setting is accomplished, it is important to factor in effort, not just outcomes, to be empathetic and patient, to create improvement goals, to encourage often, to coach and mentor, to create opportunities for feedback, to make time for reflection, to help staff and other parties to stretch and grow, to seek potential, to recognize the good, and to use Smartsheets or some similar record keeping scorecard type tool. Some of the top performance indicators used include: quality of work, velocity of work, engagement (with community and staff), timeliness / keeping to schedule, efficiency, empowerment (courage, bravery, stepping out of one’s comfort-zone, experimentation and appropriate risk, asking challenging questions, increased participation), friendliness, and innovation.

It is important to remember that everyone grows and learns in different ways and at different paces. Some learn by doing (tasks, projects, experimenting), some learn more by training (courses and seminars), and some learn better with others (coaches and mentors). Often, a mixed approach is appropriate.

SECTION 11—2024 STRATEGIC PLAN

This section presents the finalized action items that correspond to each of the objectives developed by the Strategic Planning Committee. The year representations correspond to fiscal years as follows:

- ◆ Year 1 – FY 2024-25
- ◆ Year 2 – FY 2025-26
- ◆ Year 3 – FY 2026-27
- ◆ Year 1 – FY 2027-28
- ◆ Year 1 – FY 2028-29

These designations are meant as guidelines and remain flexible based on CCAS' ability to achieve the objectives and actions, timing and modifications necessitated by current conditions, or other factors affecting accomplishment of each objective.

11.1 CRISIS CRITICAL 1: CAPACITY FOR CARE

11.1.1 Objective 1: Operate within capacity for care.

Year 1

- ◆ Ensure that vacant positions are filled quickly to ensure that the Department is functioning at the highest capacity. Any policy, process, or recruitment roadblocks will be identified and addressed, and incentives and efficiencies to fill position will be identified. Performance measures and accountability will be established for staff and/or departments assigned to responsibilities.
- ◆ Utilize the Checklist for the Association of Shelter Veterinarians' Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters and other resources to implement industry best practices for managed intake, animal flow management, and pathway planning upon intake. The Checklist will be used to evaluate progress, establish objectives, and identify barriers.

Year 1 and Year 2

- ◆ Expand partnerships for animal transfers and transports. Develop criteria for partners, and build and explore new relationships where appropriate.

- ◆ Assess current use of volunteers and enhance and expand (as appropriate) volunteer opportunities to support animal care and core tasks.
 - Address the cultural barriers and attitudes with the Department and engage staff in identifying tasks and opportunities for volunteers.
 - Initiate discussions regarding additional roles for volunteers and share examples from other municipalities that effectively utilize volunteers.

Year 3

- ◆ Prioritize the intake of animals based on mandated responsibilities and establish criteria for managed intake. Track intakes that meet established criteria and intake exceptions. Include tracking of owner surrender requests, Return to Owner (RTO) in the field, and TNR/SNR.

11.1.2 Objective 2: Reduce the intake of owned animals.

Year 1 and Year 2

- ◆ Increase intake diversion efforts including owner surrender diversion, owner self-rehoming resources, safety net resources, and support for pet retention.
 - Develop resources, expand support network, and track owner diversion outcomes and statistics.
 - Utilize follow-up at one-month and three-months surveys sent to owners receiving surrender counseling, resources, and support to confirm outcomes and track intake diversion.
- ◆ Implement customer service methodology for directing owner surrender inquiries to diversion staff.
 - Create scripts to model conversations and counseling with owners wanting to surrender animals.
 - Develop algorithm/decision tree for various owner surrender scenarios.
- ◆ Expand Return to Owner (RTO) efforts in the field and track RTO attempts and outcomes in the field.

11.1.3 Objective 3: Decrease Length of Stay (LOS).

Year 1

- ◆ Update the policy for priority ranking categories for spay and neuter surgery scheduling (pregnant animals, feral cats, adopted animals, animals available for adoption, shelter animals, TNR, public services, etc.) to reflect industry best practices, reduce LOS, and support animal flow management and capacity for care limits. Staff will be trained and continuously coached to develop the surgery schedule in alignment with the priority ranking categories.
- ◆ Reduce spay/neuter surgery delays and wait time for shelter animals.
 - Implement creative ideas to expand staffing support by teaming veterinarians to cover shortages in Registered Veterinary Technician and Veterinary Assistant positions.
 - Schedule spay/neuter surgeries for shelter animals with nonprofit partners.
 - Utilize pathway planning to ensure timely spay/neuter surgery for adopted animals and to fast-track highly adoptable animals.
- ◆ Expand Foster Program.
 - Track the LOS for animals released to Contra Costa Humane and other foster partners prior to transfer.
- ◆ Evaluate the factors impacting LOS for animals RTO (including spay/neuter surgery scheduling, vaccinations, microchipping, etc.) to identify process/schedule barriers and opportunities to expedite services and RTO.

Year 1 and Year 2

- ◆ Streamline adoption process and identify areas to increase efficiency and reduce duplication of effort and transfer of duties between staff.
 - Develop adoption process flowchart.
 - Utilize follow-up survey for adopters and periodic survey of kennel and front-desk staff to ensure new processes are effective.

11.1.4 Objective 4: Expand affordable spay/neuter.

Year 1, Year2, and Year 3

- ◆ Expand affordable spay/neuter where possible with available resources.
 - Identify and address internal challenges and barriers to providing in-house public spay/neuter services. Expand in-house public spay/neuter services where resources allow.
 - Track in-house and partner spay/neuter statistics and include totals in all reporting.
 - Establish Measure X funding recipients and require monthly progress reports.

11.2 CRISIS CRITICAL 2: EUTHANASIA POLICY AND CLARITY

11.2.1 Objective 5: Develop clarity and consistency with euthanasia policies decision-making and increase transparency.

Year 1

- ◆ Adopt The Association for Animal Welfare Advancement’s PACT (People and Animals in Community Together) philosophy (or similar) to allow for flexibility over time and resources available while remaining committed to continuous improvement.
 - Develop new SOPs to align philosophy, policy, decision-making process, and tools with ordinances (public safety) and industry best practices and provide flexibility depending on available resources.
- ◆ Develop and implement process improvement for euthanasia decision making to reduce LOS and stress/compassion fatigue for staff.
 - Expand decision making matrices to include LOS and objective evaluation criteria for behavior and medical conditions.
- ◆ Update euthanasia policies to include: 1) objective decision-making matrices for behavior and medical conditions and 2) clarity regarding considerations of LOS and capacity for care. (Note: The current policy that combines transfer and euthanasia will be updated to create separate policies for animal transfer and euthanasia.)

Year 2

- ◆ Increase transparency and expand understanding of euthanasia decision-making policies and best practices, and request support and consistent messaging within the Department, broader County departments, Board of Supervisors, and municipal partners.
 - Conduct educational training for staff and volunteers on new euthanasia policies and decision-making.
 - Implement outreach across County departments, Board of Supervisors, and municipal partners to increase transparency and understanding euthanasia decision-making policies and best practices, and request support and consistent messaging when responding to community questions and concerns.

Year 2 and Year 3

- ◆ Develop communication strategy and plan to increase transparency and expand understanding of Departmental philosophy, policies, ordinance requirements (public safety mandates), available resources and funding, capacity for care, and industry best practices. The importance of humane care and the Five Freedoms and Five Domains of Animal Welfare will be included to broaden community understanding of herd management and the humane cost of extended LOS.
- ◆ Expand partnerships with community organizations and individuals with a shared understanding of best practices and operational philosophy.
 - Model PACT (or similar philosophy) and encourage wider endorsement throughout CCAS partners, especially with volunteers and municipal partners.

11.3 THEME 1: COMMUNICATION

11.3.1 Objective 6: Improve employee well-being and promote teamwork and collaboration.

Year 1 and Year 2

- ◆ Develop Staff Well-Being Program that includes The 2022 Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being and identifies key elements specific to CCAS culture to promote employee well-being and provide

better support to all staff, augmenting existing programs such as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

- Include the program framework in new employee onboarding and ongoing engagement with existing staff.
- ◆ Clarify staff roles and responsibilities and promote internal collaboration to maximize teamwork and eliminate silos.
 - Ensure written position descriptions clearly delineate roles and responsibilities.
 - Create a chart of routine tasks and responsibilities across all operational areas and identify areas requiring teamwork and collaboration.
 - Actively engage staff in developing opportunities to improve communication, processes, and teamwork.

11.3.2 Objective 7: Increase volunteer engagement and connection with CCAS.

Year 1

- ◆ Develop and implement a structured volunteer appreciation program.
 - Evaluate existing volunteer appreciation efforts and expand and/or create where appropriate.
 - Track volunteer metrics, including volunteer retention (including onboarding and retention from initial engagement [orientation]), events and methodologies for volunteer appreciation and engagement, volunteer participation, and volunteer hours.

11.3.3 Objective 8: Improve customer service throughout all Departmental service areas.

Year 2

- ◆ Develop and adopt new Customer Service Philosophy, including core values, performance metrics, accountability, and transparency.
 - Provide and track enhanced customer service training to all staff.
 - Solicit ongoing feedback from clients utilizing customer service surveys.

11.3.4 Objective 9: Promote clear, proactive, consistent, transparent, positive, and unified messaging, both within the Department and externally that aligns with Theme 3 objectives (workplace culture, values, and leadership philosophy).

Year 1 and Year 2

- ◆ Update existing external communication plan and policies (including best practices for online/social media presence) to promote (and model) clear, proactive, consistent, transparent, positive, and unified messaging that aligns with Theme 3 objectives (workplace culture, values, and leadership philosophy).
 - Track social media communication to ensure compliance with plan
- ◆ Develop and implement a clear social media strategy that includes controlling the narrative and responding to comments.
 - Hire professional contractor to conduct an objective review/assessment of existing social media presence and make recommendations.
 - Evaluate results of professional contractor recommendations and implement as appropriate (i.e., expand social media presence, adjust tone, etc.).

Year 2

- ◆ Develop and implement a two-year communication plan that includes internal and external communication policies, strategies, and pathways (staff, volunteers, partners, cross-departmental, Board of Supervisors, and municipal partners).
 - Track messaging communications and impact on alignment with philosophy and expectations.

Year 2, Year 3, and Year 4

- ◆ Conduct ongoing communication training for staff to expand skills in presentations, report writing, use of data, marketing, and effective communication. Training will be in alignment with organizational philosophy and internal/external communication plans.
 - Track staff training and develop performance measures to assess skill enhancement.
 - Track number of presentations given to audiences, nature of audience, topic, and estimated number of individuals or households impacted.

11.3.5 Objective 10: Improve the image and standing of the Department within the community through active marketing and outreach.

Year 2 and Year 3

- ◆ Hire a professional contractor to develop and conduct a two-year Public Image Campaign for CCAS that includes progress metrics.

11.4 THEME 2: RESOURCES

STAFFING

11.4.1 Objective 12: Improve employee retention, satisfaction, and professional development.

Year 1 and Year 2

- ◆ Identify and promote effective wellness practices to address burnout, compassion fatigue, and the negative impact of advocacy groups on morale.
 - Utilize survey tools to identify burnout and/or compassion fatigue and provide appropriate support for each condition based on staff input. Track staff improvement over time (1-month, 3-month, 6-month surveys).
 - Track employee callouts, leave, absenteeism, and retention/turnover.
- ◆ Collaborate with the County Administrator's Office and Human Resources Department to identify process improvements in recruiting and hiring.
 - Overlap with Line 11 from worksheet.
 - Identify roadblocks and/or potential incentives and efficiencies to fill positions.
 - Ensure accountability with staff and/or department assigned to responsibilities.

Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3

- ◆ Review and update the staffing structure for CCAS (including the need for new positions), duties, pay scales, and scope of individual position responsibilities.

- Evaluate the technical expertise needed for each position (current, new, partners) and whether any technical or key positions are missing (e.g., behaviorist, veterinary staff, adoptions).
- Offer competitive pay scales for all positions and incentives to attract experienced candidates for critical positions, special assignments, and bilingual employees.
- Develop a staffing structure review process, establish an annual or biannual review schedule, and incorporate industry trends and innovations. Track industry changes in positions, pay scale, and incentives.

Year 2

- ◆ Expand training and address skill gaps in core competencies including animal behavior, report writing and presentation development, leadership, mentorship, accountability, technology, and effective communication.
 - Utilize annual review process to identify skill gaps, create opportunities for training to enhance core competencies, and establish performance metrics and future objectives.

Year 3

- ◆ Re-evaluate structured onboarding and training process for new hires to enhance Departmental integration, employee satisfaction, embeddedness, and retention.
 - Track employee retention/turnover.
 - Utilize employee satisfaction surveys and stay interviews routinely to identify and address issues before they result in the loss of staff.

VOLUNTEERS

11.4.2 Objective 13: Expand Volunteer Program and improve volunteer retention and satisfaction.

Year 2

- ◆ Ensure volunteer access to staff assigned to volunteer coordination to support good communication, training, and integration with operations.

- Establish clear communication guidelines for volunteers including primary staff contact(s) and chain of command.
- Conduct periodic volunteer surveys to solicit feedback.

Year 2 and Year 3

- ◆ Evaluate and expand the Volunteer Program to support Departmental needs, complement staff roles, and provide enhanced animal care and service to the public.
 - Initiate discussions regarding additional roles for volunteers; share examples from other municipalities on effective use of volunteers. Share Departmental needs and objectives and seek input and support from the unions. Overlap with Line 12 from worksheet.
 - Address cultural attitude and/or barriers within department and engage staff in identifying tasks and opportunities for volunteers.

FACILITIES

11.4.3 Objective 14: Align facilities with current and future Departmental needs and services.

Year 2 and Year 3

- ◆ Assess and address current facility improvements needed.
 - Track facility improvements and projects.

Year 2, Year 3, and Year 4

- ◆ Hire a professional consultant to conduct a current and future facilities assessment including Departmental services, space, best practices, efficiency, maintenance, and future growth projections.
 - Create a list of all areas of deficiency within the facilities and ensure they are addressed in future planning and facility improvements.
 - Evaluate and consider additional facility needs including expanded shelter, satellite, storefront, or mobile options.

PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS

11.4.4 Objective 15: Develop policies and procedures that support a Departmental culture of continuous process improvement.

Year 1

- ◆ Collaborate with fiscal and contract departments to address barriers and implement process improvements to expedite payments to private veterinary and emergency clinics and other contractors.
 - Review any current policies around timelines for payment and update as needed.
 - Utilize the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Best Practices.
 - Conduct regular meetings with the fiscal and contract departments to discuss specific goals, challenges, and ideas.
 - Develop a policy and timeline for payment options and demonstrate accountability.
 - Develop a contingency plan for emergency payments and expedited options for payment.

Year 1 and Year 2

- ◆ Evaluate and acquire current equipment, tools, and supplies needed to support optimal and efficient Departmental performance and services.
 - Develop simple survey tool to determine specific tools, equipment and supplies needed, including prioritization.
 - Determine costs for each need, appropriateness of the request, and respond back (within 30 days of survey) to staff/volunteers/partners about the purchase plan and timing.
 - Adopt the MoSCoW (must have, should have, could have, will not have) methodology (or other method) for determining approval and prioritizing the items, including budget considerations and balancing supplies for each work unit.
 - Utilize a transparent approach internally and a checklist for accountability.

Year 2

- ◆ Explore opportunities and creative ways to expand and enhance current and new partnerships.
 - Develop criteria for partners, review potential partners against the criteria, and build/explore new relationships where appropriate and needed.

Year 2 and Year 3

- ◆ Expand staff (and volunteer) training and competency with current technologies through ongoing training.

Year 3 and Year 4

- ◆ Create a Continuous Process Improvements (CPI) policy and program.
- ◆ Conduct a full assessment for CCAS to determine if enhanced use of current technologies, or if new technology(s), would increase efficiency, improve service delivery, and enhance customer experience.
 - Collaborate with the County IT department (or hire a professional contractor) to conduct a full technology assessment for CCAS.
 - Review current technology-related contract(s) to determine if training is included and, if so, maximize utilization of training options and services.
 - Determine if the contract software system support team(s) can provide training (even if training is not provided within the contract).
 - Acquire and utilize new technology(s) as appropriate.

FISCAL BEST PRACTICES

11.4.5 Objective 16: Ensure fiscal excellence and long-term sustainability for the Department.

Year 1 and Year 2

- ◆ Conduct a Biannual Fee Study in alignment with Government Finance Officer Association (GFOA) recommendations.

- The fee study should be reviewed and adopted biannually, including an escalator clause that covers costs including the cost for future studies and updates.
- The fee study should include various members of the CCAS team.
- Develop a communication strategy around any increases or reductions for the public updates.

Year 2

- ◆ Review and adopt a minimum of three to five of the best practices recommended by the Government Finance Officer Association and collaborate with the County Budget Office to align with core fiscal goals.

Year 2 and Year 3

- ◆ Explore revenue opportunities and projections (ongoing).
 - Explore and attempt to develop a minimum of three new revenue opportunities by utilizing GFOA recommendations and best practices utilized by agencies similar to CCAS.
 - Identify and develop a minimum of three new Departmental fiscal efficiencies that lower expenditures or reduce time allocations by an established percentage.
 - Examine current customers and potential new customers for various cost savings and potential revenue streams, including but not limited to fees, penalties, awards programs, sponsorships, adopt-a-spot, private investor partnerships, and customer lifetime values.
 - Developing a fiscal performance index based on values, goals, and GFOA recommendations.
- ◆ Provide training and tools to develop internal CCAS expertise in budget forecasting and maintaining fiscal stability.
 - Review and adopt best practices in GFOA Financial Leadership, Budgeting, Debt Management, and Capital Planning. Any best practices adopted should align with Department and County goals and projected growth.
 - As needed, hire a professional contractor to provide fiscal consulting and training for all CCAS staff participating in the budget process. The timing

of the training should be in advance of the next budget cycle to ensure any deficits in knowledge are addressed.

Year 3

- ◆ Formalize the development of performance measures as recommended by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA).
 - Review GFOA performance measures and develop and adopt measures that align with Departmental values, mission, vision, budget, and fiscal goals. Collaborate with County budget office and agree on appropriate measures and adjust annually as necessary.

Year 3 and Year 4

- ◆ Develop a Succession Plan for key CCAS roles.
 - Identify key roles requiring succession planning and determine if there are any components of a succession plan in place.
 - Determine if there is adequate and/or potential diversity within the Department that can be utilized in succession planning.
 - Utilize an online performance metrics tool specific to succession planning as a team collaboration option.
 - Create a timeline for succession planning stages in 90-day increments, including the consideration of contracting with outside recruitment agencies.
- ◆ Update, review, or develop (as needed) the emergency fiscal plan for CCAS, including long-term fiscal stability based on projected occupancy growth rates for the 2024 Contra Costa Adopted Housing Element and conservative animal growth rate.
 - Obtain and review a minimum of two emergency plans from similar agencies.
 - Adopt a minimum of two new practices, fiscal enhancements, or efficiency elements.
 - Develop long-term fiscal stability and support for the emergency plan through outreach and communication with the community and County officials.

11.5 THEME 3: LEADERSHIP CULTURE

11.5.1 Objective 17: Create alignment of philosophy, culture, and values across all operations and services.

Year 1 and Year 2

- ◆ Utilize a collaborative process with staff to create a Workplace Culture Agreement (communication, teamwork, transparency, accountability).
 - Develop and utilize organizational culture benchmark survey tool.

Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, Year 4, and Year 5

- ◆ Provide additional employee events and opportunities to increase connection and embeddedness with the Department.
 - Track events, engagement opportunities, and employee retention.
 - Utilize ongoing stay interviews and employee satisfaction surveys.

Year 2

- ◆ Utilize a collaborative process with staff to create a Statement of Values.
 - Incorporate the Statement of Values into all internal and external Departmental messaging and various survey tools.
- ◆ Create a core leadership philosophy (shared/individual).
 - Share core leadership philosophy with staff and solicit ongoing feedback on the alignment of leadership staff with philosophy; implement adjustments as necessary to increase effectiveness.

Year 2 and Year 3

- ◆ Conduct monthly or bi-monthly leadership, teambuilding, and culture training and develop opportunities to provide positive reinforcement of workplace culture, values, and leadership philosophy.
 - Track events, exercises, training, and meetings.
- ◆ Develop an internal communication plan that aligns with Workplace Culture Agreement, Statement of Values, leadership philosophy, and Theme 1: Communication.

- Overlap with Line 29 from worksheet.
- Periodically review internal messaging and communications and solicit feedback from staff to ensure ongoing alignment with Workplace Culture Agreement, Statement of Values, and leadership philosophy.
- ◆ Develop a policy and algorithm/flowchart to provide clarity on chain of command for communication, appropriate communication channels, and reporting structure.

Year 3 and Year 4

- ◆ Create performance measures that align with the Customer Service Philosophy, Workplace Culture Agreement, Statement of Values, and Departmental mission.
 - Solicit bi-annual feedback from staff and volunteers on Departmental alignment with Customer Service Philosophy, Workplace Culture Agreement, Statement of Values, and Departmental mission.

11.6 THEME 4: SCOPE OF SERVICES

11.6.1 Objective 18: Align CCAS scope of services with mandated responsibilities, community and municipal partner expectations, allocated funding and resources, and community needs.

Year 1 and Year 2

- ◆ Update and enhance the materials and presentation for Board of Supervisors and municipal partners on current trends, data, and best practices regarding the industry shift towards prevention services designed to reduce the intake of animals into the shelter and away from the gathering and warehousing animals in shelters. The materials and presentation should include information on Contra Costa community expectations and desire for more low-cost spay/neuter and veterinary care and support for owners to retain animals in the home by providing safety net services, such as pet food and supplies, behavior training, and fence repair.
 - Track presentations, meetings, and engagement with the Board of Supervisors and municipal partners specific to this topic.

Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3

- ◆ For the allocated Measure X Funding (\$750K over three years), determine specific services and programs for low-cost spay/neuter, vaccinations, and microchips that

leverage current partnerships and opportunities, are achievable and measurable, and maximize impact.

- Track public spay/neuter, vaccinations, and microchips provided directly by CCAS and provided by grant recipients.
- Present annual reports including performance metrics.

Year 2 and Year 3

- ◆ Engage with County leadership and municipal partners through a series of scheduled meetings and presentations to determine the appropriate and achievable scope of services for CCAS based on current and projected funding and resources, mandates, and community expectations.
 - Develop and execute updated service agreements with clear expectations and alignment of services.
- ◆ Engage with County leadership, municipal partners, nonprofit organizations, and private veterinary clinics to develop a community-wide, multi-year plan (in alignment with Measure X funding) to increase access to low-cost spay/neuter and veterinary care, including funding and resource needs, leveraging partnerships, performance measures, tracking, and accountability.
 - Estimate the projected community need for low-cost spay/neuter and establish progressive targets over three years.
 - Provide quarterly reports on progress and metrics.

Year 2, Year 3, and Year 4

- ◆ Update, enhance, and conduct an ongoing outreach campaign to align community expectations with the CCAS scope of services and ensure consistent and clear messaging. Outreach materials should include FAQs and talking points for County and City leadership, elected officials, and Department staff.
 - Track estimated number of community members reached and conduct follow-up surveys to assess community understanding of service agreements, scope of services, funding and resources limitations, etc.

11.7 THEME 5: SERVICES

ALL OPERATIONS

11.7.1 Objective 19: Strive for highest service delivery for mandated responsibilities and expand or enhance services where possible to address community and municipal partner expectations, and community needs.

Year 1 and Year 2

- ◆ Evaluate and enhance core (mandated) services as appropriate for staffing and resources. (Align with Crisis Critical 1: Capacity for Care).
 - Develop a list of areas where mandated services can be expanded and/or enhanced (for example, the spay/neuter of adopted animals), determine feasibility based on existing staff and resources, and implement where possible.
 - Track reduction in LOS, performance of mandated services, and days operating within capacity for care.

Year 2

- ◆ Evaluate additional (non-mandated) critical service area needs and opportunities and enhance where it is realistic and achievable. (Note that this is a short-term objective that will be aligned with Theme 4: Scope of Services in the future.)
 - Develop a list of areas where non-mandated services can be expanded and/or enhanced, determine the feasibility based on existing staff and resources, and implement where possible (for example, public spay/neuter, TNR/SNR, public vaccinations and microchips, wildlife interventions, and safety net resources such as food, temporary shelter, behavior training, and medical support).
 - Track metrics in specific areas.

Year 2 and Year 3

- ◆ Expand CCAS service areas into prevention, reflecting industry trends and best practices, to address the current and future needs of Contra Costa County. The extent of expanded services will be determined by County leadership and municipal

partner approval and the allocation of additional funding and resources. (This will be in alignment with Theme 4: Scope of Services in the future.)

- Based on the outcome of actions under Theme 4: Scope of Services and adoption of the PACT or similar framework, metrics will be tracked for areas focused on prevention, intake diversion, foster/transfer expansion, safety net support, etc.
- ◆ Update and enhance reports to the Board of Supervisors and municipal partners and consider timely or quarterly reports, in addition to regular annual reports.
 - Ensure the report content is current, appropriate, and accountable to the resources allocated.
 - Ensure the reports contain consistent messaging reflecting the CCAS philosophical framework, industry trends, and continued education on capacity for care and humane care.

SHELTER

11.7.2 Objective 20: Ensure that the quality of care provided to animals at CCAS consistently meets or exceeds the industry best practice minimum standards of care.

Year 1

- ◆ Evaluate and expand the Foster Program (for kittens and adult animals as needed) and partnership with Contra Costa Humane, including enhanced foster support (24-hour hotline) and allocation of resources.
 - Track the statistics on LOS and live outcomes for cats and kittens to document success of enhanced efforts and the new partnership with Contra Costa Humane.

Year 1 and Year 2

- ◆ Evaluate and update the current Community Cat and TNR policy and program to align with industry best practices.
 - Create and apply new updated policies and procedures.
 - Conduct ongoing reviews of individual scenarios and cases with staff for continued learning and accountability to policies.

- ◆ Review the adoption process and identify areas for increased efficiency and improved customer experience, including the assignment of responsibilities to appropriate staff and adoption counseling on the behavioral and medical assessment and needs for specific animals.
 - Overlap with Line 13 from worksheet
 - Develop a flowchart for the adoption process and identify areas to increase efficiency and reduce duplication of effort and the transfer of duties between staff.
 - Identify and assign specific staff (or volunteers) to provide education and information to the adopter on the specific medical and behavior needs of the animal.
 - Utilize a follow-up survey for adopters, as well as periodic surveys of kennel and front-desk staff, to ensure the new processes are effective.

Year 2 and Year 3

- ◆ Provide ongoing education to staff (and volunteers) on how to recognize the signs of fear, anxiety, and stress in shelter animals, and provide enrichment and support to mitigate or prevent fear, kennel stress, aggression, and the under-socialization of dogs and cats in the shelter.
 - Identify and apply enrichment practices that can be incorporated into daily routines and kennel cleaning.
 - Track staff and volunteer training on recognizing the signs of fear, kennel stress, aggression, and under-socialization.
 - Track support/outcomes for animals identified behavior challenges.
 - Require a minimum of eight two-hour trainings for staff (and volunteers working directly with animals).

FIELD SERVICES

11.7.3 Objective 21: Optimize Field Services to meet the public safety and humane animal needs of the community.

Year 1

- ◆ Increase collaboration between Field Services and Shelter Operations to identify areas for improvement, such as prioritizing kennel space for intakes from the field, intake exams and vaccinations, and creating and updating animal records.
 - Create a list of areas where Shelter Operations and Field Services overlap and identify challenges and areas in need of additional collaboration.
 - Implement process and communication improvements to address key areas, including the assignment of specific responsibilities to staff.

Year 1 and Year 2

- ◆ Conduct a review/assessment of Field Services including the service provision hours, response times, staffing levels, and enforcement of violations to identify areas in need of improvement and enhanced customer experience.
 - Assess the call triage and prioritization process, review response times for priority calls, and review the time it takes to complete and clear the different categories of field activities.
 - Track metrics on the enforcement of violations and identify opportunities to improve or enhance compliance and services.
 - Conduct random monthly phone surveys of clients served in the field to collect feedback on field services.

Year 2

- ◆ Consider and evaluate improvements and/or expansion of the Wildlife Services Program (specific to humane concerns regarding injured wildlife in the field).
 - Develop an algorithm/decision-tree for how Field Services should respond to priority wildlife calls.
 - Design and implement a pilot project to respond to critical humane field calls. Track results of the pilot project and assess the viability for long term implementation.

11.8 ADDITIONAL ACTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Year 2 and Year 3

- ◆ Arrange tours of other similar facilities for staff and volunteers to observe operational industry best practices and innovation and generate new ideas and opportunities for CCAS.
- ◆ Leverage other funding sources (such as funding programs for homelessness) to support areas that overlap with CCAS programs.
- ◆ Provide iPads (or other mobile tablet device) at kiosks for customer/client check-in and digital services.

Year 3 and Year 4

- ◆ Review and consider alternative models and options for the provision of CCAS services through contracts with nonprofit organizations or municipal agencies.
- ◆ Develop a plan to expand capacity and provide CCAS services to meet the needs of the projected occupancy growth rates for the 2024 Contra Costa Adopted Housing Element and conservative animal growth rate.

Year 4 and Year 5

- ◆ Conduct outreach to community colleges, University of California at Davis, and local high schools for career planning and internships at CCAS and the animal welfare sector.

APPENDIX A

**5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITIES
WORKSHEET (PROVIDED DIGITALLY)**

APPENDIX B

**CCAS 2018 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES
LONG RANGE PLANS RESULTS**

Strategic Priorities, Long Range Plans and detailed Activities for November 2018- November 2019

Focus A – Take action (Act) to help residents and improve and manage the lives of animals in Contra Costa County.

1 – ENSURE PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY AND ENFORCE STATE AND LOCAL LAWS WHILE EDUCATING OWNERS TO BEST PRACTICES

One unique difference between CCAS and other animal welfare agencies in Contra Costa County is the legal authority and responsibility that requires CCAS Field Services to address animal issues in the 18 cities we serve and the unincorporated sections of the county. Field Service Officers have a broad mandate - and a very complex job - in ensuring public safety with regards to animal issues in a county that spans 804 square miles and a population of 1.1 million people. CCAS Officers touch the public in many ways when they impound strays, sick or injured animals, and investigate animal related crimes and other issues. This position also affords officers a key role in providing direct humane education to the parts of the public they touch.

Long Term Goal 1A - For Public Safety and Field Services, review current policies and results, identify best areas for improvement and begin making changes.

- Improve ability to see where officers are located in real time using a Geographic Information System (GIS) and use that information to improve dispatching officers efficiently with GPS coordinates – which should also reveal root cause issues. Project was delayed due to conflicting priorities in DoIT. **Demo of product was provided to staff in January 2019. Roll out to public placed in hold until internal project completed. DoIT has expanded the project to include Capacity Mapping and dashboard for shelter operations team. Work has been slowed because we have been working with Chameleon to automatically upload data into the GIS system. Target for completion of internal project moved to June 30, 2020.**
- Review public safety related metrics to understand if there are any unacceptable safety or response time issues or any currently unknown risks. **Developed priority call plan. Implemented in April 2018. Communicated out to all cities and have added a quarterly report of response times compared to goal for all cities. Plan to review in January 2019. Completed.**
- Use the above “performance metrics” to assess whether additional resources are needed and can be justified in addition to already authorized positions. Find ways to fill current open positions while tracking and seeking to reduce turnover. **Review planned for January 2019. Reviewed current response times across County and have identified gaps in service, especially for Level One and Level Two Priority calls. Need to increase staffing to properly provide service to our cities. Project in process to review City Fees and possible increases. Target for completion March 2020.**
- Analyze the impact of current enforcement policies to consider costs and opportunities if changed. Where possible, institute Field Services practices that aggressively seek to return pets in the field - favoring counseling over impoundment. **Citygate report completed and recommendations worked into Strategic Plan. See above – increased revenue is necessary to add staffing for improved services. Presenting to BOS Finance Committee in December 2019.**

- Review and clarify expectations for officers to provide educational materials when interacting with the public – this includes creating or obtaining better handouts including bilingual versions as needed. **Our Community Services team has begun working with the Field Services team to identify needs. Completed. Updated handouts and also produced them in Spanish for officers and staff to distribute. Next step Vietnamese...target 6/30/20.**
- Revise enforcement policies/expectations and consider key additional ordinances. As part of this review include back yard breeding to consider whether additional enforcement and/or ordinance would be helpful. **Modified License Ordinance to match fee schedules. Created new animal noise ordinance which went into effect in September 2017. Rooster ordinance to help control rooster populations and aid in eliminating Rooster fighting has been approved and implemented. Currently looking a modification to PDA/DA Ordinance and Animal Limits. New Fee Schedule developed and will be introduced at the BOS in Oct/Nov. Draft of modified PDA/DA Ordinance in the hands of County Counsel for finalization. Target 1/30/20.**
- Continue to build and/or establish collaborative relationships with local health and safety agencies in contract cities. This includes integrating Field Services with local Volunteer In police Services (VIPS) programs. *(Activities expected to continue in FY 2017-18)* **Continuing to work with and build collaborative relationships with all of our contracted City Police Departments, Fire Services and Public Work teams. Integrating with local VIPS programs continues to be on hold while we develop our current Field Services team. This project continues to be on hold due to staffing bandwidths and field priorities.**

2 – PREVENT UNWANTED PET BIRTHS - INCREASE SPAY AND NEUTER SERVICES

Pet overpopulation is a root problem in Contra Costa. Our two-prong approach is to reduce that overpopulation while working to develop more homes willing to adopt a pet. With our local partners, we plan to provide low cost spay/neuter services to Contra Costa residents in a timely manner. The county has hot spots of higher pet overpopulation where Pit Bulls and Chihuahuas can frequently be found running loose throughout the neighborhoods. Addressing these hot spots will be a priority. This strategic priority also includes a Return To Field program where healthy community cats are spayed or neutered and then returned them to stable environments where they can lives without negatively impacting wildlife or adding to the overpopulation problem.

Long Term GOAL 2A – Continue to build the ease, availability and use of low cost (at cost) and/or no cost Spay/Neuter services in the shelter and for the public – Run this program and provide Spay/Neuter options in partnership with Contra Costa Partners (and some Alameda County Partners)

- Partner with all low cost Spay/Neuter clinics – mobile or stationary – operating in Contra Costa (and Alameda). **Identified ARF mobile clinic, Pets In Need, Bad Rap, Fix Our Ferals, SNIP, Paw Fund and Contra Costa Humane Voucher program. Partnered with each agency or program to successfully increase the opportunities to provide low cost or free spay and neuter surgeries for dogs and cats in Contra Costa County. Making a proposal this year to increase unaltered license fees so we can use some of those funds to build an S/N Fund that is sustainable. Fee schedule to BOS 11/12/19.**

- With partners, help fill gaps where spay/neuter services most needed in the county – for example explore the option to spay/neuter animals before owner surrender to reduce shelter stay once surrendered (sometimes called foster to relinquish) **We are working closely with other S/N agencies and local vets to provide S/N services to owned animals BEFORE surrender which speeds up our internal processes, keeps animals healthier and in many cases helped to resolve issues to keep animals in their homes.**
- At the same time of Spay/Neuter, begin providing low cost and/or free basic preventive services including vaccinations, license tags and/or chips as appropriate. Institute first at CCAS and later with partners as possible. **Completed, consistently offering low cost vaccines, licensing and microchips at the time of S/N.**
- Assess the impact of limiting low cost spay/neuter to Contra Costa County residents only – determine the usage of in vs. out of county usage then change the residence policy as makes sense. **No studies of current programs have been completed to give us a clear understanding of current practices. Public S/N at CCAS remains on hold due to staffing levels and training needs. Hope to begin again by July 2020 or sooner.**
- Given the ease of, speed of and criticality of stopping rabbit and cat reproduction, continue efforts to Spay or Neuter immediately after their stray hold expires – which also provides behavioral benefits for sheltering and later adoption. **We have been able to meet this goal in our slower months and then struggle to meet goal in busier months. This goal may be adversely affected with changes in medical team staffing. No change – sporadic but the goal is still top of mind. Review 2/15/20.**

Long Term GOAL 2B - Provide Community targeted Pitbull mix and Chihuahua Spay/Neuter

Program – In conjunction with the general Spay/Neuter program, provide targeted programs to Contra Costa communities where Pitbull and Chihuahua mixes overpopulation exist

- Develop data to identify which neighborhoods (or zip codes) have a Pitbull and/or Chihuahua overpopulation – ultimately develop and maintain a map of areas with overpopulation problems. **In progress – working with DoIT on providing a demo to staff by January and then developing a plan to roll out to public on our website. Demo complete but public view stalled. Target May 2020.**
- Work closely with Transfer Partners to focus on Pit Bull mixes. Coordinate efforts for mobile Spay/Neuter (supporting partners Spay/Neuter outreach efforts) **Accomplished more in 2016, project has stalled due to lack of resources. Need to step up efforts. No change due to lack of staffing/resources/finances, need large grant. Target TBD.**
- Identify a transfer partner(s) to work with on Chihuahuas. **Accomplished more in 2016, project has stalled due to lack of resources. Need to step up efforts. No change due to lack of staffing/resources, need to find a large grant. Target TBD.**
- Decrease demand for backyard bred Chihuahuas & Pit Bulls with marketing campaign to encourage shelter adoptions of these same dogs (also includes evaluating the drivers of backyard breeding in order to reduce it) **No progress made, need to step up efforts. See above.**

- Provide county-wide communication on targeted programs like this as part of the overall marketing and communications plan. **No progress made, need to step up efforts. See notes above.**
- Integrate cultural sensitivity programs for staff, volunteers and community members into this effort (and other initiatives also as needed) **Use of Target Solutions has improved, Admin team has begun to track trainings and individualize trainings to department needs. Diversity training is in place for staff, need to improve on compliance for training. Target 1/30/20.**
- Integrate educational and support programs as possible. **No progress made due to poor staffing levels.**
- Build a volunteer program to provide educational outreach and support for targeted programs while also asking the volunteers to observe, assess and report anything they see contrary to law and policy (but NOT to challenge what they see) **Volunteer Coordinator hired and working in position. Current efforts continue to be on program development and recruitment/training of volunteers. Foundation being created. Target April 2020.**

Long Term GOAL 2C – Continue to expand and improve the Community Cat Trap, Spay/Neuter and Return program as possible in tight collaboration with partners.

Activities FY 2016-17

- Continue to provide free community cat Spay/Neuter for transfer partners and the public willing to trap and return the cats. **Ongoing, on target.**
- Expand the base of transfer partners willing and able to do trap and return to field – for example reach out to local veterinarian hospitals to ask if they will do some spay/neuters **Focus is on building CCAS RTF program and volunteers. Volunteer numbers have tripled (1-3) Still needs work. No change since last year. Recruiting and retaining volunteers for this role continues to be challenging. Staff working with volunteers to improve community cat housing – They have visited other locations - No Progress in improving physical housing – barriers, union, material costs and debate on staff/volunteer efforts. Need to find a Boy Scout or Girl Scout Troop to take on project. Target date May 2020.**
- Include community education and CCAS institutional support to reduce community concerns about the Community Cat Program – and where possible encourage “neighborhood adoption” of the cats. **Door hangers and info cards have been created. Some distribution has happened but we need to improve our distribution plan. Pilot program called Project Delta View Cats in Pittsburg started. Hopefully this program will be successful and we can model other city programs after PDVC. PDVC started off strong but has struggled with funding and volunteer recruitment/retention. Program continues but is at risk. Review in Feb. 2020.**
- Seek California Dept. of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) grant to support Spay/Neuter costs **No progress made. May be looking at local licensing fees to increase to support S/N efforts. Grant written and AWARDED! Dr. Mills looking to collaborate with HSSV to bring Mobile Unit to low income areas for S/N. Target March 2020.**
- Support Transfer Partners when they seek additional support so they can better work with CCAS and help community cats in specific geographic areas where additional help is needed **Progress has been made by working with various nonprofit groups in the East and West part of our county. Progress stalled – need improved coordination of efforts in East County –**

meeting in late October with local groups/individuals. Meetings with various groups has begun. Follow up by mid-February 2020.

- Educate local veterinarians about the Community Cat program to make them aware of resources for community cats coming into their practices **Need staff time to focus on developing better plan and actively going out to Vets. No target for completion.**

3 – KEEP PETS IN THEIR HOMES WHENEVER POSSIBLE

Many situations put companion animals at risk of losing their forever home. Renters move and find the new landlord doesn't accept pets. A medical emergency rises that costs more than the pet owner can afford. An untrained animal proves too difficult for the owner to handle. These and other problems cause people to think their only option is to surrender their pet. CCAS and partners will provide robust services to address these problems and educate the public about their availability with the goal of keeping pets in their forever home.

Long Term GOAL 3A – Implement a broad Prevention Program to reduce shelter intake from the public by intervening and helping before owners decide to surrender their pet(s) – this effort includes many other ideas in this plan from marketing to humane education included elsewhere.

Activities FY 2016-17

- Provide low cost medical services with or through partners – seek to expand and/or find partners to provide low-cost medical services for routine health exams (Wellness Clinic) and major medical needs (where if medical provided owners would keep their pet). **Working well through the Safety Net program in partnership with ARF.**
- Provide low-cost behavioral support and/or modification resources – through partners and explore how to provide a behavioral consulting hotline through partners and training to help owners keep their pets home. **Working well through the Safety Net program in partnership with ARF.**
- With partners, seek grants to fund collaborative medical services and behavioral training efforts above – like a stipend program or mobile community medical program **Working well through the Safety Net program in partnership with ARF.**
- Provide landlord education materials and consider an ordinance to prevent specific breed restrictions by landlords (units need to be either pet friendly or not at all). **No progress has been made.**
- Conduct Humane Education Outreach to improve the general quality-of-life for animals in Contra Costa and to increase the number of potential adopters and fosters – do this in tight conjunction with Transfer Partners. **Still need to develop plan and focused team.**
- As needed and possible, develop targeted efforts at specific populations, like finding ways for homeless residents to keep their pets and keep them healthy **Some progress made – still helping individuals as they come to us for assistance. Working with EHSD to support Homeless with pets in shelters and alternative housing.**

Long Term GOAL 3B - Build a robust Retention Program to support owners keeping their pet(s) – This expands the current “pilot” effort and should integrate the services available through partner organizations as much as possible. This program also includes services mentioned in Goal

3A "Prevention" above. **Still building program and relationships to support program. ARF last year and we have added Fix Our Ferals and Paw Fund this year. Added Furry Friends FY18/19.**

- Provide pet owner education about how to be a better pet owner and make resources available to support improved pet ownership.
- With partners, provide information and referral services for pet issues to address the needs of owners (caring for their pets) –
- Explore ways to provide long-term foster care for pets where the owners will be unable to care for them for months at a time (incarceration, hospitalization, etc.)
- As much as possible – provide low-cost services to Contra Costa residents only - explore whether there is an easy and reasonable way to establish a resident's low-income status to decide whether to limit free services to low-income residents only

Focus B – Take care of the animals that come into our care and prepare them for new homes while operating the shelter with high quality (Five Freedoms standard) and efficiency

4 – SHELTER, TREAT AND REHABILITATE ABANDONED PETS TO PREPARE THEM FOR NEW FOREVER HOMES

Many animals that come into our shelter have medical or behavioral problems that must be addressed by CCAS or a transfer partner before they can be successfully adopted into forever homes. Humane sheltering and socialization are keys to successful adoption. Our shelter will continue to improve to provide even better quality shelter and use the standard of the “Five Freedoms” as its broad measure and the Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) Guidelines for detailed standards. Improvements will be implemented throughout the department to improve shelter animal quality of life.

Long Term GOAL 4A – Review existing standards of care and programs to provide high quality sheltering of animals at CCAS and decide where to improve efforts and/or add new initiatives –

The broad goal of these changes is to improve the consistency of CCAS meeting the Five Freedoms guidelines - Freedom from 1) Hunger and Thirst; 2) Discomfort; 3) Pain, Injury and Disease; 4) Fear and Distress and 5) to express normal behavior. ASV guidelines will provide the detailed standards needed in specific situations.

Activities FY 2016-17

- Limit kennel capacity by the size of a given kennel that accounts for the type, species and size of animals housed (consistent with 5 Freedoms) In **progress, developing measurement tools, goals, programs to help manage capacity. Working with DoIT to develop Capacity maps and dashboards.**
- Institutionalize the recent change to make cleared animals immediately available for adoption on a first come first served basis and make improvements as needed. **Done but need to be consistent. Still struggling with consistency. Dr. Mills and team developing criteria and a plan to minimize the statuses.**
- Explore options to ramp up short term resources for routine (kitten season) or exception (confiscating many animals from a hoarder) situations. **Options have been explored and discussed but not implemented. Dedicated RVT identified and staff schedules being proposed to better support our “busy” kitten season.**
- Institutionalize the recent change to Spay or Neuter animals early in their stay at CCAS and improve policies and/or procedures if needed. Success is dependent on adequate resources and subject to increased volumes (i.e. Kitten season) Consistency **continues to be the challenge here – so far great effort but no consistency.**
- Review behavioral evaluation and consider ways to improve. In conjunction, explore the option of developing a timid/shy dog foster program (ensuring this or other similar programs are NOT used simply to increase shelter capacity using offsite “warehousing”) **developed SET team and they are conducting behavior assessments, providing in/out of kennel enrichment, training volunteers, etc. Very successful project so far. To present an update to the BOS in January/Feb. Update presented and new contract began 7/1/19. This will be the last year of contract – next year duties will need to shift to staff with the potential exception of evaluations.**

- Review staffing and efficiency issues to consistently reduce the time it takes to clear animals for adoption or transfer – this may involve additional staff training or using some staff to improve the efficiency of the clearance process **This is currently happening but again without consistency. Staff are being trained and processes are being documented. Even with training and processes consistency seems to be a challenge. Looking to develop Quality Assurance measures so we can identify sooner when things are not being done in a timely manner.**
- With partners, seek grants to fund collaborative medical services and behavioral training efforts – like a stipend program or mobile community Spay/Neuter program – this includes targeted help with animals experiencing shelter stress or “shy” animals. **One grant obtained. Need to seek larger grants.**
-

Executive Team Owner – Chief of Medical Services

Metrics

- Measure the impact of policies and practices on Length of Stay, Live Release Rates and quality of stay (Five Freedoms)
- Track shelter animal Spay/Neuter metrics
- Track the speed (cycle time) of behavioral testing – with goal to later set target cycle times

Long Term GOAL 4B – After evaluating needs and facilities, seek Capital Funding from the County to make one-time major improvements at the Martinez and Pinole shelters and any other facilities deemed needed (i.e. Adoption Centers in South County) – Improvements should not require increased staffing and if at all possible make managing the shelters less labor intense – possibly freeing up some staff time for higher value activities.

- In the short term – continue to evaluate facility needs and deficiencies and continue to make improvements as resources allow. **Identified needs, plans created – pending feedback from CAO’s office. Parking lot expansion and dog exercise area approved and due to start construction late fall 2019. Plans for Pinole created but nothing concrete yet.**
- For the longer term - evaluate current shelter needs (coverage and adoption) and existing buildings (and shelter design deficiencies) in the system (Martinez and Pinole) against expected county growth over the next 5-10 years (includes evaluating needs in South and East county). **No progress made.**
- Explore the possibility of establishing “satellite” adoption centers (possibly with partners). **Currently have centers with PetSmart and Pet Food Express. Need to explore other options.**

Executive Team Owner – Director

Metrics

- Completion of planning process and submission of initial requests by Jan. 2019.

5 - BUILD AND MAINTAIN CCAS OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE - IMPROVE SHELTER MANAGEMENT SAFETY, POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND EFFICIENCY

Review all aspects of shelter operations with operational excellence and customer service as primary considerations while maintaining shelter animal quality of life (as per Five Freedoms). Review or develop policies and procedures for all aspect of shelter operations.

Long Term GOAL 5A – Review and address personal safety concerns for employees and volunteers as well as the public who have business with CCAS – identify current and potential future safety concerns. Establish and implement a plan to address concerns now and prevent or mitigate those in the future. **New Safety Coordinator – making some progress on all bullet points.**

Activities FY 2016-17

- Identify, assess and respond to current safety concerns – including but not limited to the disclosure of staff and volunteer names to the public
- Implement a reporting mechanism specifically to raise safety concerns promptly to the Safety Coordinator
- Assess typical staff/volunteer interactions with the public for potential safety risks to any people involved (including public to public safety concerns)
- Craft initial and routine messages to staff, volunteers and the public to educate on potential concerns and set expectations for civil behavior – in person, on line or by phone **Code of Conduct created and shared. Now creating signage and continued training. Messaging still needs to be improved – not consistent. Created CCAS Guiding Principles and completed training for all staff/volunteers. Included in all new hire training.**

Executive Team Owner – Captain

Metrics

- Track incidents (actions and threats) and “red flags” (like concerning statements on social media)
- Assess the perception of personal safety on staff and volunteer by including a few questions on surveys they respond to

Long Term GOAL 5B - Ensure CCAS Operational Excellence by improving Shelter Management Policies, Procedures and Efficiency – Review all aspects of shelter operations with animal quality of life (capacity for care) and customer service as primary considerations. Review or develop policies and procedures for all aspect of shelter operations while keeping the Five Freedoms and ASV Guidelines as the critical criteria for success.

- Ensure all staff and volunteers are trained on and up-to-date on the 5 Freedoms and ASV Guidelines **Begun to introduce but needs to happen more and increase signage/language use. 5 Freedoms - Now included in Volunteer Onboarding Still need to develop work around ASV Guidelines.**
- Establish and implement policies and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for staff and volunteers in all areas of shelter, medical and field services departments as needed and maintain a central electronic repository easily available to all staff (and volunteers as appropriate). **In progress.**
- Review current Policies and Procedures including: Fee Schedules; Length of stay; notification if euthanasia imminent; etc. **In progress, constantly updating.**
- Institute a routine process when adding or changing policies that 1) ensures adequate change management is planned including communication and training and that 2) changes are immediately included in the central repository of policies and procedures and finally 3) changes are made on a known cycle (like the first Monday of the month). **In progress.**
 - Ensure that changes made also meet the test of efficiency – as much as possible changes should lower Operating Expenses (OpEx) or at least be cost neutral.

- As part of improving policies and procedures, ensure employees and volunteers have the authority needed to accomplish their tasks.
- In key roles, make sure there are back-up resources to take over or support when key staff are out for any reason.
- Assess staffing needs in conjunction with policy and procedure changes and adjust or add resources as possible – keeping in mind that under staffing leads to stress and risks the success of changes planned **Need to continually address.**

Executive Team Owner – Director

Metrics

- Track when policies and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for staff and volunteers are in place in all departments.
- Build measures of efficiency and cost to evaluate the cost/benefit of changes.
- Track whether change management process is in place and routinely used.

Long Term GOAL 5C - Improve Customer Service at CCAS – Customer service includes all points where Contra Costa residents and partners (transfer partners, municipal police, Fish and Wildlife, etc.) interact with CCAS. All customer service interactions will become measured in some way with areas of improvement addressed. Training and support to be provided CCAS staff and volunteers as needed to implement improvements.

Activities FY 2016-17

- Set clear customer service expectations for staff and volunteers and include a way to measure whether expectations are being met. **Customer Service Survey created and implemented.**
- Provide customer service training to staff and volunteers – with major push in 2016-17 and ongoing training after that – including training on how to respond to difficult people and situations. **First training completed. Next training still in planning stages. Seeking funding for trainer.**
- Institute ongoing metrics systems to assess customer service results from the customer’s point-of-view. **Completed and implemented phase one. Have added Nemo-Q to better understand service needs and staff time. Will continue to evaluate.**

Executive team Owner – Administrative Services Officer

Metrics

- Institute a routine survey process to assess quality of customer service by the public who uses CCAS services.
- Track Customer Service training provided and attendance by staff

Long Term GOAL 5D - Improve Overall Shelter-Wide metrics tracking – Develop a routine metrics system that tracks the right key measures and can be used to report them out (built on the Chameleon Shelter Case Management System currently in use)

- Establish guidelines (pet evaluation matrix) for tracking animals from intake to outcome – this includes confirming and consistently using descriptions for animal medical and behavioral conditions so that tracking metrics are consistent (includes specifics to define “treatable” conditions for example). The guidelines need to be dynamic and change as needed while also simple enough to effectively implement. **Draft matrix created – being piloted in the**

behavior/SET team. Working well so far – need to create reports to track results. **Still pending next steps– need to move forward in medical.**

- Train staff to accurately input data to the Chameleon system in a way consistent with tracking guidelines **See above. Chameleon training program being created.**
- Embed metrics when instituting any policy or procedure changes. **Staff are learning how to use metrics, we can now see and hear their learnings in various meetings/conversation when they discuss performance metrics and decision making.**
- Establish metrics that help understand the drivers of surrender and adoption. For surrender seek to capture the factors that lead to the decision to surrender an animal to the shelter. For adoption find out why some animals are chosen and others passed over (including data on transfer partner decision) **In process. PEM needs to be implemented.**
- Track the factors leading to each Euthanasia. Some information is already gathered about each death. Review what is currently gathered and decide if and what additional information would be helpful to understand euthanasia decisions with the aim to reduce them over time. **In process. Need to further define reasons and develop tools. PEM needs to be implemented**
- Hire an IT consultant to help develop guidelines then implement a metrics input and results system to deliver metrics information for manager's use in decision-making. **Completed and a HUGE help!**

Executive Team Owner – Several Options but suggest – Administrative Services Officer Metrics

- Confirm that the metrics system is fully in place and providing useful information by June 2017.

Long Term GOAL 5E - Strengthen core financial activities through improved forecasting, budgeting, and licensing procedures. Increase employee hiring and retention through improved recruiting, training, and education on policies and procedures.

- Reduce variance occurring in the department's budgeted revenues and expenditures; use multi-year data to develop both revenue and expenditure trends; review with internal and external sources.
- Review results of HR department exit interviews, recruitment practices and results, workers' compensation practices, and compensation information to determine any barriers to retention and recruitment efforts. Address these directly or in combination with County resources.
- Evaluate all contracted services for effectiveness and cost, including enrichment team, veterinary services team, and foster and transfer partner role; use temporary assistance workers as needed while recruiting for open positions.

Focus C – With partners, improve public attitudes about and increase the adoption of homeless animals in the County

6 – INCREASE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND HUMANE EDUCATION TO INFLUENCE THE CONTRA COSTA PUBLIC TO TREAT ANIMALS MORE HUMANELY AND ADOPT MORE PETS

Through as many media channels as possible send broad messages about the need for and satisfaction of adopting homeless animals. Tell the stories, both inspiring and difficult, about homeless animals in Contra Costa County. Educate people on how to humanely interact with animals. Keep the public informed about the efforts of CCAS and partners.

Long Term GOAL 6A – Increase Communication and Humane Education efforts to the Contra Costa public – Focus the effort keeping in mind Maddie's Fund Contra Costa Community Assessment that there should be room to expand the population of potential adopters. Some of the communication by CCAS staff should be in support of partners as well as CCAS directly. Humane Education efforts should occur in tight partnership with Contra Costa partners who have a similar interest and capability.

- Develop a multi-year communication plan to support the Mission of CCAS and the implementation of these seven strategic priorities – including communication support for partners as needed and where possible. **Strategic Plan completed and shared with BOS. Now have to place on website and begin sharing the matrix for the strategic priorities. Completed but matrix not on website yet.**
- Promote adoption and responsible pet ownership – humane education. **We do this on our website and printed materials.**
- Inform the public of resources available to support pet ownership – including the Pet Owner intervention program. To include low cost medical services available. **Our ARF partnership with the Safety Net program.**
- Inform the public on requirements and best practices for pet ownership in Contra Costa (Spay/Neuter, Licensing, Chipping, Vaccinations, Wellness, Flea Control, etc.) and how and where to report problem animals (dangerous dogs, wildlife, animals at risk). **Have created**

more microchipping, disaster and hot weather tips in the last year. **Need to develop more materials.**

- Identify the humane education/responsible pet education needs of specific geographic populations and begin to meet them – in conjunction with efforts like the targeted Pitbull mix and Chihuahua Spay/Neuter Program. **We have not even begun to tease these elements apart.**
- For all humane education and public relations efforts track the number of people “touched” by the effort. **We have continued to have discussions around what this may look like but still no real progress made at this point.**
- Keep a broad channel of communication open to advocates and others with particularly strong interest in animal issues and CCAS. **Always.**
- Provide Humane Education and how best to work with and support field officers. **No progress to date**
- In addition to CCAS focus, market Partner organization efforts that help the county overall including: **some work being done via social media.**
 - Recruiting Fosters, focusing on the need for and benefits of fostering
 - Recruiting volunteers
 - Community cat trap and return programs

Executive Team Owner – Community and Media Relations Officer

Metrics

- Track completion and implementation of the marketing plan and Humane Education efforts.
- Track results of the marketing campaign and Humane Education.

7 - FIND NEW HOMES FOR REHABILITATED ANIMALS AND IMPROVE THEIR ONGOING QUALITY OF LIFE (with Transfer Partners)

Once available to move out of the shelter, companion animals need to be placed directly in forever homes or transferred to one of our partners (particularly if additional care or rehabilitation beyond what CCAS can provide is needed). Transfer Partners help CCAS find new forever homes so this priority is tightly dependent on successful collaboration with transfer partners. Throughout this process a high quality of care needs to be built and maintained for companion animals in CCAS’s care.

Long Term GOAL 7A – Increase countywide adoptions through a strengthened Contra Costa-wide Collaborative Partnership (may also include some Alameda County partners since they transfer animals from CCAS) - Plan and implement ambitious countywide goals consistent with these strategic priorities.

- Assess total program coverage of Contra Costa partners and seek to identify gaps in services, if any. **In early discussion stages.**
- Prioritize partnerships with “brick and mortar” shelters first starting with planning for and running the November “Base Camp Meeting.” **Started off well, has stalled and we need to re-energize.**
- Also develop specific “focused” partnerships to attack specific areas like the Trap, Spay or Neuter and Return program for community cats or dog breed targeted programs (for Pit Bulls and Chihuahuas). **Not completed.**
- Make special consideration to keep “sub” partnerships that focus on Rabbits, other small mammals, birds and reptiles included in efforts (for example, partnership with Rabbit rescue

organizations have resulted in a very high live release rates which should be maintained).

Completed and ongoing.

- As part of working with partners, establish Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) to better focus the partnerships, set expectations and improve the relationship and commitment of staff across the partner organizations (and reduce conflict). **Developed contract with ARF, working on relationships with CCHS and FOF- completed, ASPCA MOU in process for disaster support.**
- With partners – improve and streamline the “transfer process” of moving animals from CCAS to partner organizations. **In process but still rocky at times, mostly due to timing and staff availability.** This includes components of the process including:
 - Transferring before an animal goes offline and is at risk of euthanasia – taking the more difficult to adopt out of the shelter earlier than currently done.
 - Ensuring accountability across both organizations.
 - As needed, agreeing to service to be provided both before and after transfer
 - Sharing metrics and results
- Pursue specific activities and programs with partners **No movement on, large complicated task.**
 - Seek collaborative grants to fund work with partners.
 - Create a shared matrix of Contra Costa County stats to aid a “county-wide” view of animal rescue issues
 - Adopt collective marketing strategies
 - Consider option to provide one CCC Help Desk that all partners can refer clients to
 - Given the large geography of the county – explore options to improve the efficiency and ease of transferring animals to partners (transportation)
- Help partner organizations start or increase their base of Fosters willing to take animals – particularly animals needing socialization and/or training. Some fosters could be used only for high need periods like kitten season (this initiative assumes CCAS will not want to build its own broad foster program). **We have tried helping to advertise for fosters to help our TP. Not highly successful, families seem to prefer helping CCAS so we have begun a dog foster pilot program.**
- As possible, continue to build and expand the “Bridge” stipend program to support transfer partners taking animals with treatable medical and behavioral conditions (for example, consider a \$100-200 stipend for transfer partners who take animals needing longer term care for treatment of chronic conditions which are outside the scope of CCAS medical services). **Successfully launched but implementation is difficult due to vet/paperwork challenges – very staff intensive. Still in effect but we are evaluating the program needs and may make significant changes. Program cancelled in December 2018 due to not meeting needs of animals or TP – funds were predominately being used for S/N.**
- Retain and build on partnership with UC Davis, Encino, EBVS and Carrington College to provide services to CCAS by veterinarians and RVTs in training. **UCDavis partnership strengthened and Dr. Mills developing Carrington College partnership. Some other partnerships have been developed but we need to make a more concentrated effort.**
- Explore options for innovative programs that keep up with evolving “best practices” - including programs focused on Prisoners (dog training), Veterans or Homeless populations. **Tried re-engaging with rescue interested in creating a jail program and spoke with group doing a similar program in Southern California. We have had some conversations but they stalled.**

- As much as reasonable, support statewide and national efforts to improve animal welfare with the expectation that some benefits will also accrue to CCAS and Contra Costa (like the Shelter Count initiative, which will also ensure focus on monthly results monitoring). **We actively participate in Shelter Animals Count, Maddie’s Fund and CalAnimals. Sent staff and one volunteer to PetsAlive Conference in Texas.**
- Consider resource-sharing options like central purchasing to lower per unit costs for needed items. **We have just begun exploring some cost saving measures – focus currently is on medical and office supplies.**

Executive Team Owner – Director

Metrics

- Measure partnership program results across all organizations involved – measure program impact, not just CCAS impacts.
- Track the development of the partnerships in terms of level of interaction and intensity or purpose.

The last Long Term goal below is actually the cumulative result of all other efforts to do the most possible with existing resources (use them as efficiently as possible) and work to expand resources (like finding more homes willing to adopt) in order to build and maintain a high quality of care at CCAS while saving as many lives as possible. This is the dynamic balance between quality of care (capacity for care) and the Live Release rate.

Long Term GOAL 7B - While building and maintaining the Five freedoms as the standard of care (capacity for care) and using existing resources and adding resources as available – build and continue the highest overall Live Release Rate possible of animals going directly to new forever homes or to Transfer Partners (and then to new homes) - Over five years, while maintaining a high quality standard of care (the Five Freedoms based on ASV Guidelines) for animals at the shelter and as resources permit, work to increase the live release rate at CCAS to do as much as we can for as many as we can with as much quality as we can.

- Increase the CCAS Live Release rate every year over the next five years (with the understanding that improvements in large part depends on resources available and that at some point a relative maximum rate will be achieved and the goal shifts to maintaining a high Live release rate). **Ended 2018 at 88.26% LRR for ALL animals, up from 87.8% in 2017 and a 91.9% LRR for dogs, up from 87.8% LRR for in 2017 and cats a LRR of 84.11% up from 82.77% in 2017.**
- With partners, increase the overall Contra Costa live release rate across all partners **No complete data currently available for comparison. Antioch Animal Services only began reporting number in 2018. 2018 numbers with ARF, AAS and CCAS we show an 81% LRR in the County.**
- Ensure that quality of care for the animals is maintained using the “Five Freedoms” as a broad guide and ASV Guidelines for detailed standards. **Created some awareness around the Five freedoms and the housing in Pinole has improved with some improvement for dogs in Martinez, just not consistent..**
- Standard of care should encompass all species in the shelter including cats, dogs, rabbits, small mammals, birds, reptiles, etc. **Some progress but not enough**
- Knowing resources are not infinite, maximize the use of available resources including staff and volunteer expertise, shared partner resources, budget dollars and willing adopters to

save the highest number of animal lives possible – and seek to expand resources as possible.
Some progress but not enough

Executive Team Owner – Chief Medical Officer

Metrics

- Live release rates compared to resources available
- Quality of care measures achieved that are consistent with the “Five Freedoms” and ASV Guidelines