



ANIMAL CARE SERVICES

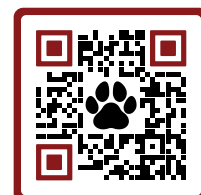
4710 State Hwy 151
San Antonio, TX 78227

saacs.net



ANIMAL CARE SERVICES

Strategic Plan 2023



LEARN MORE ABOUT THE STRATEGIC PLAN.

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Message From the Director

Animal Care Services (ACS) is happy for the opportunity to build our strategic plan and begin implementing it this year. We want to be ready to address the needs of the community and the challenges of making San Antonio a safer place for residents. This includes ensuring the safety and placement of the animals in our city.

Faced with the many challenges in animal welfare that have evolved post-pandemic, we've placed great emphasis on ensuring that we are moving all of our key responsibilities forward at the same time in a phased implementation. To do this, we conducted extensive research over the last year. The research aimed to capture the needs and desires of the community and those involved in animal rescue, as well as noting the best practices from across the nation.

The result of this is the development of five key focus areas with measurable goals and objectives identified to make this plan a reality for San Antonio. The five focus areas set forth are: (1) supporting a safe community for people in their neighborhoods, (2) protecting the safety and humane treatment of pets, (3) supporting the placement of pets for life, (4) fostering positive connections with the community, and (5) empowering a healthy and thriving workforce.

This balanced multiyear approach will help the city expand its support to the community. It will also help make the city safer and more successful in years to come by addressing calls in a more timely manner, ensuring owned animals make it back home and getting more pets into forever homes.



Shannon Sims
Director of Animal Care Services
City of San Antonio



Table of Contents

2 Executive Summary	23 Community Connections
7 Safe Community	29 Thriving Workforce
11 Humane Treatment	35 Implementation Plan and Timeline
17 Life Placement	42 Glossary

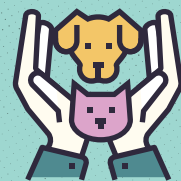
PURPOSE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Purpose Statement

Together we provide exceptional, compassionate care and education that promotes a safe community for the health and well-being of pets and the people who love them.



STATEMENT



Executive Summary

BACKGROUND

Animal Care Services (ACS) is the City of San Antonio's municipal animal shelter entrusted with maintaining and enforcing animal ordinances within the city. ACS is the largest open-admission municipal shelter in South Texas. It is comprised of six divisions: Live Release, Field Operations, Community Animal Support and Assistance (CASA), Clinic Operations, Shelter Operations, and Support Services. Each of these divisions plays an important role in caring for and finding placement for approximately 25,000 animals impounded by ACS each year. They also uphold animal-related ordinances and promote humane pet care.

In 2004, a local newspaper published an article titled "Death by the Pound," which highlighted the shelter's 90% euthanasia rate and made a compelling case for change. In 2006, the first formal strategic plan was created, leading the way for significant improvements with the live-release rate and in the areas of animal control and enforcement. During FY 2011, a second strategic plan included a dispersion of resources, increased partner support, diversified pet outcome options, and innovation within new and existing ACS programs. ACS reached a 91.5% live-release rate in FY 2017 and maintained a live-release rate of more than 90% for the next four years.

In FY 2022, ACS began experiencing the widespread negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. A combination of factors (such as a decrease in adoptions and rescues, an increase in owner surrenders, and an ongoing national veterinarian shortage) has impacted ACS operations and led to a drop in the live-release rate. With these growing challenges, ACS acknowledges the need for a strong, comprehensive vision for the future in the form of a new strategic plan.



DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

During the FY 2022 budget process, ACS presented to the City Manager's Office, City Council and ACS Advisory Board a proposal to develop a new strategic plan. With the approval of these key stakeholders, ACS began development in three phases.

PHASE 1 | Discovery Phase (January – May 2022)

ACS Internal Staff Survey: Staff at all levels of the department participated in a survey to identify what ACS is doing well, what can be improved and what ACS should work toward for the future.

ACS Leadership and ACS Advisory Board Interviews: Members of the ACS Leadership Team and members of the ACS Advisory Board were interviewed to gain insight into the department's successes and shortcomings, ACS-related issues in the community, and suggested areas of improvement.

Public Input Survey: ACS conducted a public input survey to identify ACS-related priorities in the community, satisfaction with ACS services and insight into community needs. More than 3,100 people participated in the survey both online and in-person at various City facilities. Participants identified their top three priorities as: 1) controlling animal overpopulation through spay and neuter, 2) enforcement of animal-related laws, and 3) increasing the live-release rate and finding placement for animals impounded at ACS.

Best Practice Research: ACS staff conducted research into comparative municipal shelters and other animal welfare organizations across the country to learn about effective programs, innovative solutions, and other standards of practice that ACS may be able to incorporate into the new strategic plan. Staff also researched community needs for San Antonio residents and identified gaps in community resources and services as they relate to animal care.

PHASE 2 | Engagement Phase (June – December 2022)

Public Input Meetings: ACS hosted five community meetings between July 12 and July 19, 2022. The meetings (facilitated by inclusive consultancy EngageBetween) aimed to gather input from the public on their ACS-related priorities and discuss solutions to community issues. Approximately 150 people participated in the meetings, which were held in different locations around the city.

ACS Advisory Board Retreat: On August 12, 2022, the ACS Advisory Board convened for a work session facilitated by EngageBetween to discuss priority areas for the strategic plan.

THE PLAN

This Strategic Plan is built on the priorities of San Antonio residents, City Council, the ACS Advisory Board and staff, and community partners. To achieve these goals, ACS must take a balanced approach by addressing public safety and live placement. ACS must also engage with the community to implement solutions and ensure that ACS is staffed by passionate, competent and valued individuals. The Strategic Plan reflects five critical focus areas that will direct ACS' efforts in the coming years. Each focus area has two to three broad, longer-term goals. Each goal has its own objectives with specific tactics, actions and measures for success.

1. Support a Safe Community for People in Their Neighborhood.

Advance public safety through strong processes and partnerships to boost guardian accountability and promote a sense of security in our communities.

2. Protect the Safety and Humane Treatment of Pets.

Protect and respect pets by nurturing community compassion, reducing potential dangers from humans and animals, and supporting an enforceable standard of care.

3. Support the Placement of Pets for Life.

Provide exemplary shelter care for pets, grow lifesaving options, and create strong foundational resources that keep families and pets together.

4. Foster Positive Connections With Our Community.

Extend the shelter's positive impact through support for lifesaving programs, and motivate individuals to make informed and compassionate decisions regarding animal care and welfare.

Partner Focus Group: ACS hosted a moderated focus group on October 19, 2022, to bring together 27 local and national animal welfare partners who provided insight on their needs and ideas for continuing the lifesaving work of rescuing pets.

PHASE 3 | Finalization Phase (January – September 2023)

During the final phase of development, ACS staff has utilized all of the research and feedback collected during Phases 1 and 2 in order to compile the strategic plan document. The strategic plan includes strategic goals and objectives, along with action plans on how to accomplish the goals and how to measure success.

5. Champion a Healthy and Thriving Workforce.

Recruit and retain passionate, competent staff by providing the tools and resources to further the ACS mission and create an environment where people feel a sense of belonging.





FOCUS AREAS



1 SUPPORT A SAFE COMMUNITY FOR THE PEOPLE IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS.

Advance public safety through strong processes and partnerships to boost guardian accountability and promote a sense of security in our communities.



GOAL 1 | PERSONAL SAFETY

Empower people to feel safe from animals while walking and playing in their neighborhood.

During the development of this plan, the public was asked to provide feedback through a public input survey and several community meetings. Residents consistently reported that they want to feel safe while walking in their neighborhood, without the threat of stray or roaming dogs.

OBJECTIVE 01

Reduce stray/roaming population through spay/neuter services.

The most effective way to prevent more stray and roaming animals is through sterilization. As of the time of writing this plan, the City is not legally able to require owners to sterilize their pets. As a result, ACS must take a comprehensive approach not only to promote the sterilization of pets but also to make spay and neuter services more available, accessible and affordable to pet owners.

1. Measure the Stray and Roaming Population.

In January 2019, ACS conducted a survey in targeted areas to understand the stray and roaming dog population. The study found that (at any given point in time) there were more than 34,000 stray/roaming dogs in San Antonio, with 87.2% to 96.5% being owned (roaming) dogs and only a small percentage being unowned (stray). With the changing landscape in animal welfare over the past few years, a new study is needed to benchmark the current stray/roaming population, with follow-up studies every other year to observe the impact of spay/neuter efforts on the stray and roaming population.

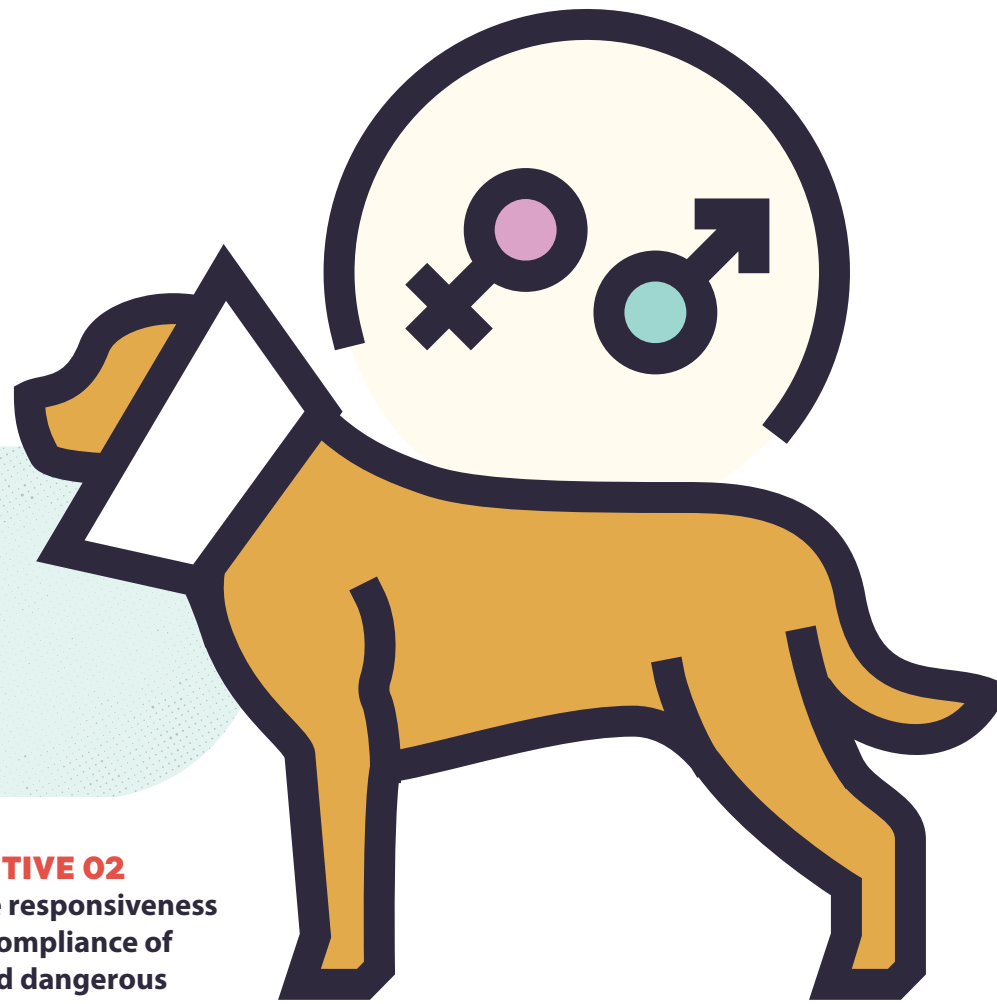
2. Increase Spay/Neuter Capacity and Accessibility.

ACS currently supports about 44,000 spay/neuter surgeries through on-site sterilizations of ACS pets, the Community Spay/Neuter partnerships, and two City-owned spay/neuter clinics. With current challenges, including a veterinarian shortage and increased costs of veterinary care, it has been more difficult for the City and its partners to fulfill these surgeries. ACS intends to address these challenges through increased funding for partner-provided free and low-cost surgeries, additional City-owned spay/neuter clinics, and transportation assistance for residents to get their pets sterilized.

OBJECTIVE 02

Increase responsiveness to and compliance of bites and dangerous investigations cases.

As part of ensuring that people feel safe in their neighborhoods, ACS aims to strengthen its Bites Investigations Team and Dangerous/Aggressive Investigations Team. ("Dangerous" refers to animal-on-human incidents, and "Aggressive" refers to animal-on-animal incidents.) Each team is responsible for investigating reports, enforcing City ordinances and State laws, and pursuing legal action when appropriate. ACS needs to strengthen its Investigations Teams to respond to all these types of calls, as well as increase capacity to ensure that violators are in compliance.



OBJECTIVE 03

Expand ACS presence in the field through community-oriented programs.

Communities will feel safer with more ACS staff "in the field." An increased presence will boost both visibility and services provided in the field. This includes picking up roaming dogs and returning them to their owners (RTOs), as well as offering tangible resources to prevent violations.

1. Increase CASA's canvassing efforts.

As part of the FY 2022 budget, ACS added a new team – Community Animal Support & Assistance, or CASA. The CASA team, made up of four Case Coordinators and a Case Manager, is tasked with reducing violations by providing resources and education, helping pet owners resolve compliance issues completely to prevent further violations and assisting struggling families retain ownership of their pets when appropriate. In FY 2023, the CASA team piloted a large-scale canvassing event, in which Case Coordinators and ACOs offered education and tangible resources to residents and returned roaming dogs to their homes, with the goal of resolving visible issues permanently and in the moment. During the eight week-long event, a total of 783 free-of-restraint pets were returned to their owners (which accounted for an 83% success rate of returning animals to their owners), 631 microchips were implanted, and Case Coordinators were able to free over 90 pets from chains by explaining humane tethering laws and providing human tethers on the spot. ACS plans to make this a permanent team within

the CASA division to increase RTOs and provide boots-on-the ground education for the community.

2. Explore a program to provide direct support to underserved communities.

ACS plans to explore solutions to provide enhanced support to areas with higher pet welfare needs. Having an increased presence in these areas can help ACS build relationships with residents, better understand the unique needs of these neighborhoods and provide face-to-face solutions for pet welfare challenges. This will be a multi-pronged approach that will increase:

- First-response Officers to allow more Officers per Council District at any given time;
- Sweeps Officers from two to four. These Officers focus on high-density areas of dog packs that are in neighborhoods, schools, and parks; and
- The District Officer program that would proactively work with CASA on addressing neighborhood issues and providing education.

1. Expand Bite-Prevention and Response.

The Bites Investigations Team is responsible for following up on bite calls and conducting investigations when needed. For a city of approximately 1.5 million people, ACS only has four (4) Bites Investigators. As a result, 30% of dogs involved in bite incidents are not being quarantined. ACS needs to strengthen its Investigations Team to ensure all bite calls are addressed on time and with the appropriate follow-up, as well as to provide public-facing education on bite-prevention.

2. Expand the Aggressive/Dangerous Dog Investigations Program.

ACS currently has only two (2) officers dedicated to both Dangerous and Aggressive Dog investigations. This does not provide the capacity needed to conduct annual compliance inspections in addition to addressing all dangerous dog affidavits and performing the initial compliance inspections. As a result, only 55% of designated Dangerous cases are currently in compliance. ACS needs to expand this team to ensure community safety from dangerous and aggressive animals.

Key Performance Indicators for Personal Safety

- Increase the sterilization rate of owned animals from 30% to 60% by 2033.
- Reduce the stray/roaming dog population by 50% by 2033.
- Ensure an 80% compliance rate of Dangerous Dogs by 2025.
- Increase Returns-to-Owner (RTOs) as a percent of all outcomes from 25% to 40% by 2028.
- Increase the year over year positive response rate regarding personal safety on the biannual community surveys as it pertains to ACS.



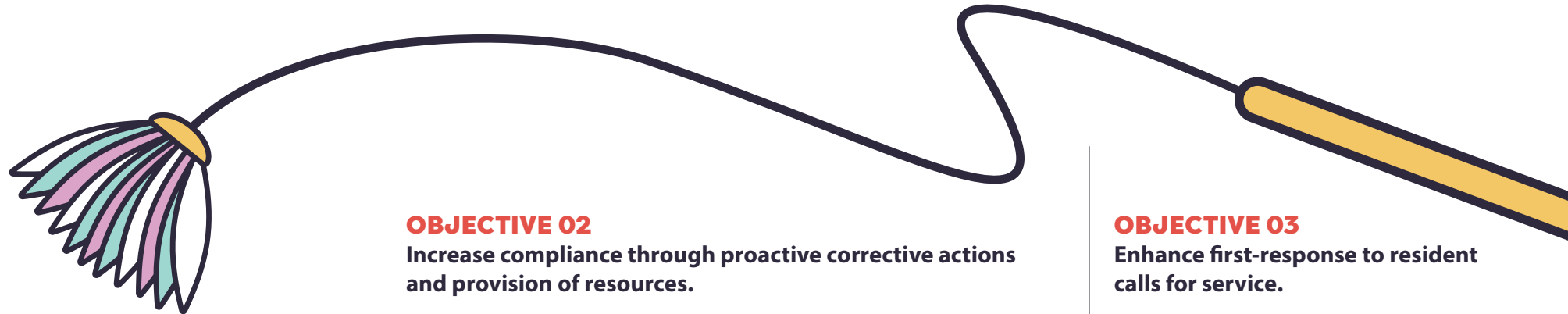
1 SUPPORT A SAFE COMMUNITY FOR THE PEOPLE IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS.



GOAL 2 PUBLIC SAFETY

Advance a comprehensive system to positively impact community accountability.

During the development of this plan, the public was asked to provide feedback through a public input survey and several community meetings. Residents consistently reported that they want to feel safe while walking in their neighborhood, without the threat of stray or roaming dogs.



OBJECTIVE 01 Increase accountability of civil and criminal citations.

As the enforcement arm of ACS, the Field Division is tasked with responding to violations and issuing citations. Field officers work with Municipal Court and the City Attorney's Office to prosecute violations when necessary. Citations given by ACS can be either criminal or civil in nature.

- 1. Pursue stricter accountability for criminal citations.** For criminal citations, Animal Care Officers (ACOs) refer cases to Municipal Court for adjudication and sentencing. Currently, only about 20% of criminal cases are adjudicated. ACS can enhance enforcement efforts by working with Municipal Court to strengthen the adjudication process for criminal offenses to include ensuring that a proper number of hearings are dedicated for ACS-related cases. They will also work to develop a data-sharing system that allows both departments to monitor the status of cases.
- 2. Pursue stricter accountability for civil citations.** For civil citations, ACOs refer cases to the City Attorney's Office (CAO) to issue the citation fees. If the fees are not paid, the CAO may choose to follow-up by sending the fees to debt collectors who will pursue payment from the defendant. ACS can enhance enforcement efforts by working with the CAO to navigate barriers that may be preventing more cases to be sent to collections.
- 3. Enhance proactive data management.** In addition to strengthening the prosecution processes, stricter accountability will also rely on creating the capacity to conduct proactive data-management processes. This will include developing interdepartmental connections between data systems, such as sharing data with Municipal Court to better track and produce metrics. It will also include participating in a joint effort with other departments to identify addresses that are deemed to be an issue due to the number and variety of calls regarding that location. Additionally, proactive measures will include the development of automated data governance tools that help with collecting, monitoring and protecting data.

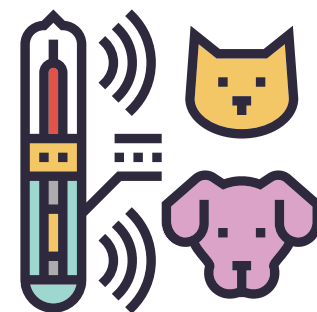
OBJECTIVE 02 Increase compliance through proactive corrective actions and provision of resources.

ACS understands that not all those who commit violations do so knowingly or willingly. In these cases, ACS aims to take a proactive approach to help pet owners come into compliance and prevent further violations. The CASA Team provides education and tangible resources to pet owners to ensure compliance with Chapter 5 of the City Code. This may include providing a tether to keep a resident's dog from roaming, appropriate restraints in the form of humane collars, appropriate outside shelter or microchips to comply with the City's microchip ordinance.

- 1. Support Community Members in Domestic Violence Situations.** Often times, a victim of domestic violence will not want to leave their current environment because they do not want to leave their pet. The ACS CASA program will be working with Metro Health Violence Prevention Domestic Violence Unit to support an individual when needing to make this transition by providing shelter that is pet friendly, along with pet resources.
- 2. Resources for the Unhoused Population.** The unhoused population and resident encampments were the number one issue cited by residents during the FY 2023 public input surveys. The ACS CASA program intends to support the Department of Human Services Homeless Division when there is an individual or group of the population that is receiving City support and has an animal that needs support. The primary resource provided in

these situations will be materials and items that keep the animal from being free of restraint, and to help the animal by providing flea/tick/heartworm prevention, vaccinations, and eventually support for S/N options.

- 3. Case Management for Community Dog Guardians.** Many pet guardians have a genuine desire to care for their pets but because of lack of knowledge on standard of care, the pets do not have adequate care. The purpose of the ACS CASA team is designed to work with these individuals who need support and education, and any deficiency on pet care is not due to willful neglect. In these cases, instead of a citation given to a resident by an Animal Care Officer, the resident would instead work with the CASA team to identify resources that keep the animal safe and not able to roam freely.



OBJECTIVE 03 Enhance first-response to resident calls for service.

ACS currently has 28 Animal Care Officer (ACO) positions serving in a "first response" capacity. These officers make the initial response to calls for service for all types of requests. Due to shift schedules and to provide coverage seven days a week, there are often only three (3) to four (4) ACOs working at any given time to cover the whole city. As a result, ACS can only respond to approximately 44% of priority public safety calls.

- 1. Increase the number of First-Response Officers.** ACS currently only has the capacity to consistently respond to the highest priority calls for service, such as calls for San Antonio Police Department (SAPD) officer standby and sick/injured animals. ACS plans to increase the number of First Response ACOs over a three-year phased approach to ensure adequate coverage for the City and that all safety-related calls for service are responded to in a timely manner.
- 2. Increase the number of Dispatch positions.** Dispatchers are responsible for reviewing all calls that come in through 311, updating the priority level based on the type and details of the call, and assigning each call to a First Response Officer. With an increase to the First Response Team, ACS will need additional Dispatch positions to properly assign calls to all officers.

Key Performance Indicators for Public Safety

- Increase the adjudication rate of criminal citations from 20% to 50% by 2026.
- Respond to 64% of safety-related calls for service in 2024.
- Respond to 100% of all safety-related calls, permitting calls, and targeted roaming calls for service by 2029.



2 PROTECT THE SAFETY AND HUMANE TREATMENT OF PETS.

Protect and respect pets by nurturing community compassion, reducing potential dangers from humans and animals, and supporting an enforceable standard of care.



GOAL 1 | SAFETY FROM ANIMALS

Keep animals safe from other animals.

While stray and roaming dogs pose a threat to people (as addressed in the Safe Community focus area), they also pose a threat to other animals. This includes bodily harm through aggressive attacks, as well as harm to animal health through the spread of diseases.



OBJECTIVE 01 Reduce the stray and roaming animal population.

One of the most effective ways to keep pets safe from other animals is to prevent animal-on-animal attacks by reducing the stray and roaming animal population. As described in the Safe Community focus area, these efforts will be focused on increasing spay/neuter options to prevent more unwanted and free-roaming animals, as well as increasing CASA's canvassing program to get dogs off the street and boosting enforcement against pet guardians who allow their animal to roam.



OBJECTIVE 02 Protect community health of animals against disease.

Beyond physical safety, keeping pets safe from other animals also requires preventing the spread of diseases among animals. Although protection against rabies is the only vaccine mandated by law, it is recommended to have pets vaccinated against additional diseases to prevent serious, contagious and deadly illnesses.

- 1. Provide vaccinations in the field.** Every stray animal brought to the ACS campus that is of age is vaccinated (rabies for both dogs and cats, DHPP for dogs, and FVRCP for cats) upon arrival. However, ACS still impounds animals that do not enter the shelter, such as when RTOs are completed in the field. It is important to ensure that these animals are also vaccinated to prevent the spread of disease in the community and the shelter should they be found roaming.
- 2. Provide wellness services in targeted areas, and hold vaccination events in the community.** During the development of this plan, residents often expressed their concern with the inaccessibility of low-cost wellness services for their pets, such as vaccines and simple treatments. In January 2022, ACS began partnering with the Animal Defense League of Texas (ADL) to provide free vaccines and microchips at varying locations around the City. ACS began partnering with Protect Your Pet in May 2023 to expand the reach of these clinics. ACS plans to develop more relationships with local partners who can join us in increasing the number of vaccine/microchip clinics and mass-vaccination events for the community. Additionally, ACS intends to partner with local clinics who can provide free and low-cost wellness services, such as treatments for common skin and eye issues.

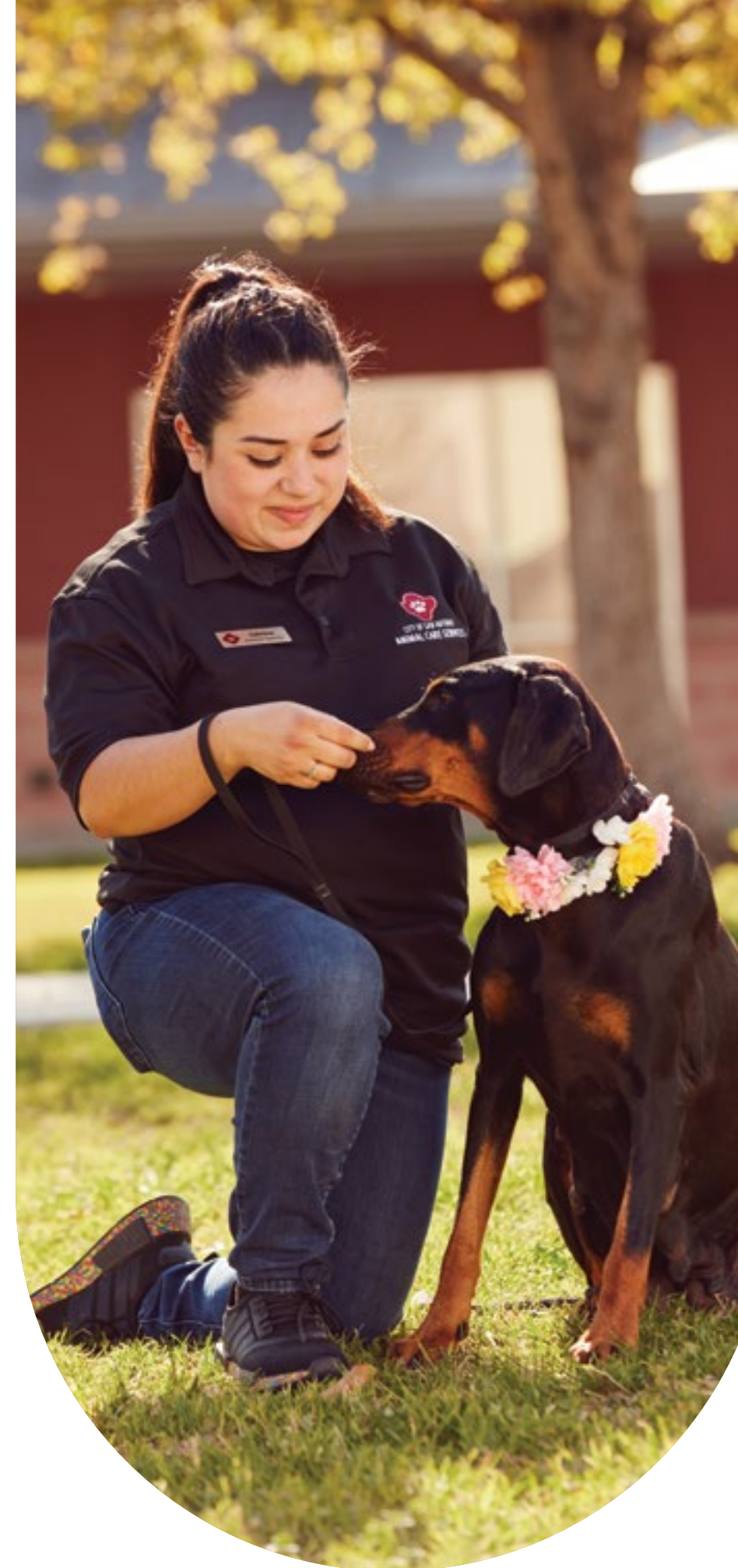
OBJECTIVE 03 Increase responsiveness and compliance of aggressive dog investigations.

ACS currently has two (2) Aggressive Dog Investigators who also serve as the only two (2) Dangerous Dog Investigators. ("Aggressive" relates to animal-on-animal incidents, and "Dangerous" relates to animal-on-human incidents.) Because these officers are also responsible for dangerous investigations, which take precedent over aggressive calls, ACS does not have the capacity to follow up on compliance for most aggressive cases.

- 1. Expand Dangerous/Aggressive Investigations Team.** Currently, all aggressive dog affidavits received are investigated. However, of the founded cases, ACS follows up on less than 10% of these cases to ensure the owner is in compliance. ACS will add more dangerous/aggressive officers to meet the demand for aggressive investigations. Compliance requirements vary depending on the level of aggressive dog designation. They can include carrying a license, ensuring secure enclosures and proper restraints, and posting signage to alert neighbors of the presence of an aggressive dog.

Key Performance Indicators for Safety from Animals

- Reduce the stray/roaming dog population 50% by 2033.
- Reduce pet disease in the community by 25% by 2033.
- Increase annual compliance for designated Aggressive dogs to 70% by 2026.



2 PROTECT THE SAFETY AND HUMANE TREATMENT OF PETS.



GOAL 2 STANDARD OF CARE

Establish a community standard of care for San Antonio's pets, and promote pet-friendliness within the community

In our community, far too many owned pets receive only the most basic of care from their guardian/caretakers. ACS believes a higher level of care should be afforded to pets, beyond only what is legally required. State law and Chapter 5 of the City Code include providing food, water, shelter, exercise, safety from the elements and veterinary care as part of their standards of basic care for owned pets. ACS uses the word pet guardian deliberately. In the state of Texas, pets are viewed as property, but ACS believes pets play an important role in the community and with families.



OBJECTIVE 01
Advance a community-led standard of care.

Without the ability to enforce a level of care beyond the legal requirements, ACS is asking the community to lead the effort to create a standard of care for San Antonio pets. ACS will work with residents, veterinarians, animal behavior specialists and other experts to develop a community-backed standard of care. This new standard will include guidelines for the types of vaccines pets should have, an expectation that pets will be sterilized, providing flea/tick and heartworm prevention, and/or recommendations for training and enrichment.

- 1. Develop a community-led standard of care through public input, animal welfare expertise and best practices.** Since the intent is for the new standard of care to be community-led, it is important to engage residents to understand what they expect of their neighbors regarding pet care.
- 2. Promote the newly created standard of care through an educational campaign and community-led involvement and advocacy.** Once a new standard of care is developed, ACS will need to educate pet guardians on why this level of care is recommended and encourage residents to advocate for the standard of care to promote widespread acceptance.

OBJECTIVE 02
Assist residents in meeting the standard of care.

After developing a new standard of care, ACS will work to promote that standard community-wide to reach those who were not engaged in the development phase. Along with promoting and encouraging residents to adopt the new standard of care, ACS also plans to aid pet guardians in its adoption.

- 1. Increase access to pet-related services, such as dog training, low-cost vet care and pet food resources.** If pet guardians are to go beyond the current legally required standard of care, they will need assistance in the form of increased access to services.

OBJECTIVE 03
Revise Chapter 5 to enhance the legally required standard of care.

Chapter 5 of the City Code lays out what is legally required to care for a pet. It currently includes access to an adequate supply of fresh air, species-specific food, fresh water, exercise, shelter, shade from direct sunlight and veterinary care when suffering. Once the new community-backed standard of care is developed and generally acknowledged, ACS plans to enhance Chapter 5 so that the legally mandated standard of care is in line with the community's expectations on how pets should be treated.

Key Performance Indicators for Standard of Care

- Increase the sterilization rate of owned animals from 30% to 60% by 2033.
- 20% increase in the average number of animals that come into ACS with a microchip already implanted by 2028.



Focus Area

2 PROTECT THE SAFETY AND HUMANE TREATMENT OF PETS.



GOAL 3 | SAFETY FROM HUMANS

Enforce the humane treatment of animals.

The Cruelty Investigations Team is responsible for protecting the health and safety of residents and their pets. A key part of that is enforcing laws related to animal neglect, cruelty and abuse. Inhumane treatment of animals can come in many forms, and ACS has a Cruelty Investigations Team to address these issues.



OBJECTIVE 01

Increase capacity to investigate cruelty cases appropriately.

The ACS Cruelty Team is responsible for following up on abuse/neglect calls and violations, as well as conducting investigations if the call meets legal criteria to file a cruelty case. Currently, the Cruelty Team is prioritizing cases based on severity. Cases leading to investigations require substantial evidence before being considered by the District Attorney's Office. Increasing the Cruelty Team's capacity will allow for all calls of abuse/neglect to be reviewed and resolved, as well as sufficient evidence gathering for cases that qualify for filing.



1. Expand Cruelty Investigations Team.

There are currently five (5) ACOs to handle 13 high-profile cruelty cases annually. Additionally, the Cruelty Investigations team follows up on abuse and neglect calls for service daily. ACS will enhance cruelty efforts by adding more Cruelty Officers to meet the need for initial investigations and follow-up.

2. Increase capacity for cruelty exams.

One of the most important pieces of evidence in a cruelty case is a veterinarian's report, either through a necropsy (autopsy) of an animal whose death is suspected to be caused by animal cruelty or through a cruelty exam of a living animal that is suspected to have been abused. Because of the national veterinarian shortage over the past several years, ACS has not had a consistent provider for necropsies and cruelty exams. ACS plans to fill this gap by adding a new staff veterinarian and veterinary support team to provide exams as one of their essential tasks.



OBJECTIVE 02

Eliminate illegal and inhumane breeding.

Per Chapter 5 of the City Code, anybody whose dog or cat has a litter must obtain a litter permit prior to or within 10 days of the litter's birth. This is the only instance in which it is legal to allow pets to breed in San Antonio. Additionally, a seller's permit is required for anyone seeking to sell one or more puppies or kittens. Despite these laws, illegal and inhumane breeding remain prevalent in the City.

- 1. Develop an Illegal Breeding Investigations Team, and revise Chapter 5.** In order to adequately address illegal and inhumane breeding, ACS plans to create a team of investigators dedicated to finding and stopping illegal breeders. Additionally, ACS plans to revise Chapter 5 to strengthen enforcement efforts against illegal breeding, such as making it illegal to buy from an unlicensed breeder and requiring all breeders to register in an online database. Furthermore, ACS will emphasize citing individuals who conduct roadside litter sales. This is not currently being enforced despite dozens of active sellers in San Antonio. Providing resources for this effort in conjunction with Municipal Court support would suppress roadside litter selling and make it more difficult to operate.
- 2. Enhance permitting related to breeding/selling.** Although permitting is a relatively small function of the Field Division, ACS needs to add officers dedicated to managing the permitting and compliance process, as well as following through on citations for unpermitted breeders and sellers.

OBJECTIVE 03

Increase accountability of civil and criminal citations.

Reducing animal cruelty and neglect will require holding offenders responsible for their violations. As explained in the Safe Community focus area, ACS will work with Municipal Court and the City Attorney's Office to strengthen efforts to pursue stricter accountability for civil and criminal offenses.

Key Performance Indicators for Safety from Humans

- Increase the number of severe cruelty cases adjudicated from 52 to 91 by 2025.
- Increase number of Neglect calls addressed with an Officer on scene 20% by 2026.
- Increase the number of litter/seller permit violation citations from 50 to 500 by 2025 through the execution of monthly roadside sales sting operations in coordination with SAPD.



3 SUPPORT THE PLACEMENT OF PETS FOR LIFE.

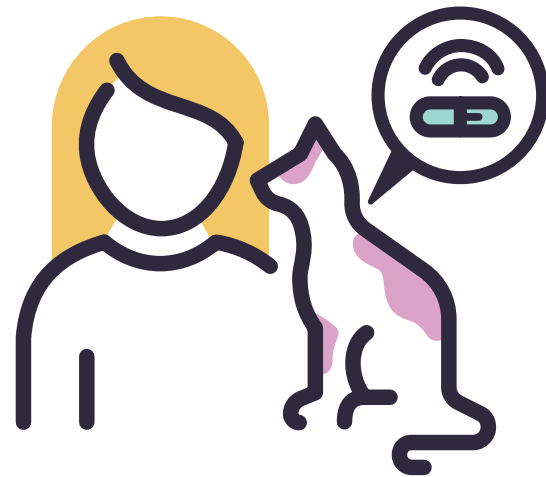
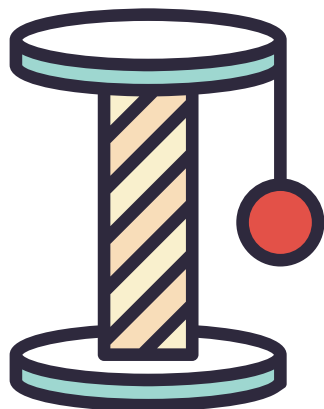
Provide exemplary shelter care for pets, grow lifesaving options, and create strong foundational resources that keep families and pets together.



GOAL 1 SHELTER PREVENTION

Provide services and resources to keep animals in their homes.

For many years, the animal welfare industry has focused on getting animals out of shelters through placement, such as adoption and rescue. Recently, there has been a push to also prevent animals from coming into the shelter in the first place. ACS plans to increase shelter prevention efforts so that owned pets can stay in their homes when possible and appropriate.



OBJECTIVE 01 Decrease the number of owner-surrenders.

In FY 2022, ACS received more than 4,200 owner-surrender requests (17% of all intakes) for a variety of reasons, including a lack of resources, inability to get medical treatment and behavioral challenges. Many of these surrenders were preventable with access to the right services and resources. Improving access to these services will prevent more owner-surrenders, keeping pets out of the shelter and with their families.

- 1. Increase the CASA Team's owner-surrender prevention efforts.** When an owner requests to surrender their pet to ACS, the case is referred to the CASA Team if the pet isn't currently under medical duress. CASA works with the owner to identify why they are requesting to surrender their pet and provide them with the appropriate resources if possible. In FY 2023, CASA prevented 60% of the cases they worked from turning into an owner-surrender by providing access to pet food, helping the owner get their pet sterilized, providing humane restraint to keep their pet on their property, and assisting the owner with basic standard of care. These efforts will be enhanced by expanding the CASA Team and available resources, improving the surrendering process to better identify the reason for the surrender, and working with apartments and homeowner associations (HOAs) to ease breed restrictions.
- 2. Improve access to veterinary and wellness services.** A common reason that owners choose to surrender their pets is that they cannot afford or access medical resources for their pets. Veterinary care has become increasingly expensive. Due to severe veterinary deserts in San Antonio, many residents also have trouble traveling to a clinic. ACS plans to improve access by exploring partnerships to provide low-cost wellness services and providing transportation to such services.
- 3. Provide training to pets and guardians in the community.** Behavioral issues can often make a pet guardian feel that surrendering their pet is the only option. However, many of these issues can be resolved with adequate training for both the pet and their guardian. Increasing access to free training and education can help mitigate behavioral concerns and keep pets with their families.

OBJECTIVE 02 Increase the number of pets reunited with their owners.

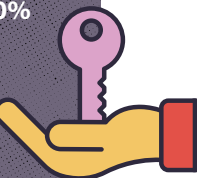
Based on a stray and roaming dog study performed by ACS in 2019, an estimated 87.2% to 96.5% of unrestrained dogs in the community are owned but off their property. Over the past several years, ACS has increased efforts to return unrestrained dogs to their guardians. RTOs now consistently make up 20% to 25% of total outcomes. ACS plans to further increase efforts to return dogs to their owners to avoid them being brought into the shelter, create opportunities to educate pet guardians and provide enforcement when appropriate.



- 1. Increase the number of Return-to-Owners (RTOs) in the field.** As described in the Safe Community focus area, the CASA Team piloted a canvassing program, during which 738 free-of-restraint dogs were returned to their owners in the field. Making the canvassing program a permanent part of ACS operations will not only reduce the number of roaming dogs, but it will also prevent dogs from coming into the shelter. This proactive measure will maintain kennel space for unowned pets who are waiting to find placement.
- 2. Increase the number of ACS-provided microchips.** In 2015, ACS updated Chapter 5 to require all pets to be microchipped. To assist pet guardians in complying with this ordinance, ACS offers free microchips to San Antonio residents on-site, through regular appointments, and in the field for pets that ACOs and CASA Case Coordinators encounter through RTOs or through working with owners on other compliance issues. ACS has also developed partnerships, as described in the Humane Treatment focus area, to provide free microchips at community vaccine clinics. In FY 2022, 88% of stray dogs came into ACS without a microchip or tag. Only 10% were reunited with their owner. On the contrary, 46% of roaming dogs that came into ACS with a microchip or tag were reunited with their owner. ACS plans to increase the number of microchips provided on-site, in the field, and through additional partner events.
- 3. Increase access to free pet identification resources for residents.** For community members who find a lost pet, it can be a difficult process to try to reunite that pet with its guardian. ACS will help residents through community outreach efforts and during all ACS adoption events. This method serves as a backup tool if microchips aren't registered or updated, while also allowing community members to assist in the process of helping pets return home without entering the shelter.

Key Performance Indicators for Shelter Prevention

- Decrease the number of Owner-Surrenders by 25% by 2033.
- Increase RTOs as a percentage of all outcomes from 25% to 40% by 2028.
- Implant 10,000 microchips annually through community-based activities.



3 SUPPORT THE PLACEMENT OF PETS FOR LIFE.



GOAL 2 | SHELTER CARE

Provide the highest standard of care for pets in the shelter.

ACS strives to provide the highest level of care possible. Currently when an animal comes into the shelter, ACS staff administer vaccines; schedule a vet exam if necessary; and assign a kennel where the pet will receive food, water and care. ACS has an ethical responsibility to provide the best possible care to the pets entrusted to us. These pets may have been abandoned, neglected or abused. The shelter becomes their refuge. By providing the best care, ACS demonstrates their commitment to promoting animal welfare and improving the lives of the pets in our care.



OBJECTIVE 01

Increase quality of life and placeability through enrichment.

Shelters can be a challenging environment for pets. Many dogs end up displaying signs of fear, anxiety or stress. Dogs who are displaying these signs of stress are often not approachable to potential adopters. They may be overlooked throughout their time in the shelter. They may be overlooked throughout their time in the shelter. Enrichment opportunities can help dogs

- 1. Create an Enrichment and Behavioral Team.** ACS currently has two trainer positions who provide evaluations and enrichment for pets in our care. ACS plans to establish an official Enrichment and Behavioral Team with additional certified trainers to expand capacity for conducting enrichment activities and provide individual assessments for each available pet in their online profile.
- 2. Enhance animal evaluations for placeability.** Ensuring that pets in our care are accurately assessed is a growing need among our rescue partners, adopters and fosters. Individualized evaluations and assessments will set the pet and the placement up for success, as well as decrease the chance of the pet returning to the shelter.
- 3. Create a comprehensive enrichment program for on-campus pets.** Creating a comprehensive enrichment program for pets at the ACS campus will improve the overall well-being of the pets in our care by creating an environment where pets can decompress and work through their fear and anxiety. Enrichment programs enhance the pet's quality of life while in the shelter by providing them with opportunities for mental stimulation, physical interactions and positive experiences. Additionally, enrichment programs can help pets show their best qualities and increase the likelihood of finding placement.

OBJECTIVE 02

Grow the foster program for harder-to-place animals.

By growing a foster program specifically for harder-to-place pets, ACS increases the chances of finding permanent loving homes for the pets in our care. Foster homes improve the pet's overall well-being, reduce stress, and allow for specialized care and rehabilitation. Foster homes also strengthen community engagement, create kennel space and contribute to the underlying mission of promoting animal welfare. Currently, the Rescue Program and Foster Program is bundled into one team. Having a separate, dedicated Foster Team will ensure that the pets in the shelter gain suitable matches. ———>

- 1. Provide basic medical support and socialization for fosters.** Offering medical support for fosters can help to alleviate any hesitations that fosters have regarding the time and financial commitment required, allows for more flexibility, and confirms the commitment to providing the highest level of care. Additional support to assist with socialization and follow-up can help foster pets find permanent placement sooner.



- 2. Provide comprehensive marketing support for the foster team.** Providing comprehensive marketing support for the foster team will help promote pets in foster care to a wider audience. The marketing support can effectively convey the benefits and rewards of fostering through promoting the pets in the shelter, showcasing success stories, facilitating suitable matches, and securing resources for long-term sustainability.

OBJECTIVE 03

Enhance the quality of care through shelter medicine and animal care.

By actively participating in the development and creation of best practices, ACS contributes to the collective knowledge and advancement of animal welfare. The goal is to go above and beyond best practices. Surpassing the highest standard of best practices helps minimize the spread of contagious diseases, and it ensures that animals entering the shelter are properly assessed and treated. Additionally, ACS operations rely on an emergency room clinic for after-hours care for animals that sustained critical injuries, neonatal animals that need frequent feedings and animals that otherwise need overnight care or treatment. Developing an organic capability to provide this type of support will reduce reliance on costly emergency room contracts.

- 1. Enhance intake procedures.** Although ACS strives to follow best practices, further enhancing intake procedures will help protect against diseases, improve efficiency in shelter care operations, and ensure that every animal entering ACS is properly assessed and treated.
- 2. Create an additional veterinary team for extended medical hours and foster support.** Medical assessments are a critical tool for supporting the well-being of shelter pets and for finding placement. Currently, ACS has three veterinarians on staff, which is not sufficient for providing vet exams for all of the shelter pets that

need them. Adding another veterinary team (which includes a Veterinarian, three Vet Techs and one Animal Care Attendant) will add capacity for an additional 7,000 medical exams per year for ACS pets. This additional medical information is important in determining treatment for the pet while at ACS, as well as providing critical information to rescue partners. Growing medical capacity will also enhance our ability to support a robust foster program with extended hours to provide medical treatment to pets in foster care.

OBJECTIVE 04

Improve campus facilities and physical space to optimize humane care, disease mitigation and staff space.

A shortage of office and kennel space adds a level of difficulty when committed to providing humane care, proper disease mitigation and a welcoming physical environment for customers. ACS plans to develop a comprehensive long-term master plan that addresses the significant inadequacies of our physical buildings. Committing to the strategic plan will require providing adequate kennel space and layout to accommodate for disease mitigation; proper socialization and decompression; dedicated kennel space for investigations; isolation areas for disease and nursing females; and office space for the additional roles required.

- 1. Conduct a comprehensive master plan.** ACS will need a comprehensive, long-term master plan focused on ensuring the appropriate amount of kennel space and office space to accommodate current and future needs. This plan will include adequate and appropriate space for ACS pets and the staff that care for them. It will also aid in the successful implementation of this strategic plan for years to come.

Key Performance Indicators for Shelter Care

- Increase the percentage of ACS pets receiving behavior assessments publicly available to 100% by 2028.
- Incorporate best practices in shelter enrichment by 2025.
- Implement playgroup five days a week by 2026.
- Design and build appropriate disease mitigation and prevention facilities by 2028
- Increase the number of active fosters by 300% by 2028.



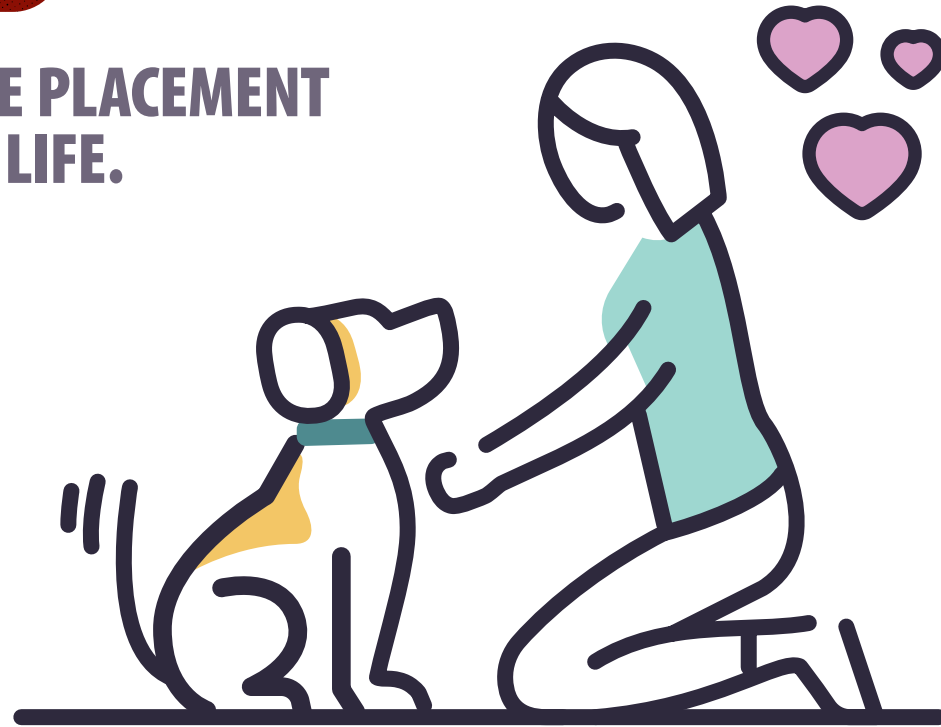
3 SUPPORT THE PLACEMENT OF PETS FOR LIFE.



GOAL 3 SHELTER PLACEMENT

Provide lifesaving placement options for animals in the shelter.

Providing lifesaving placement options for the pets in our care aligns with our commitment to improving animal welfare and the well-being of the pets in our care. Adoption, foster, rescue, Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) and RTO programs alleviate the strain on shelter resources and open kennel space. These lifesaving programs provide an opportunity for the community to contribute to the well-being of the pets in our care. Lifesaving placement options innately provide a platform for education and outreach about responsible pet care, as well as the benefits of adopting or fostering shelter pets. They also spread awareness of the importance of supporting animal welfare organizations. Throughout our research, we found areas of opportunity to enhance and diversify these programs.



OBJECTIVE 01

Diversify placement options through transport, adoptions and rescue.

The need to diversify placement options is crucial to ensure successful lifetime placements for animals in our care. The development of a transport program will allow us to send healthy, adoptable pets to other areas of the country for lifelong placement. An adoption program focused on matching families with pets based on their lifestyle and family dynamic can set adopters up for success. Additionally, providing better incentives and medical support to our rescue partners will promote the placement of harder-to-place pets.

- 1. Grow partnerships with rescue groups.** ACS currently contracts with several rescue groups to provide compensation for each pet pulled, but there is a need for additional support. Increasing funding for rescue partnerships and providing more medical support will allow more pets (especially harder-to-place ones) the chance at placement for life.
- 2. Create a transport program.** During development of this plan, ACS repeatedly heard about the community's desire to transport animals out of San Antonio and Texas. Creating a transport program allows ACS to expand our reach, open kennel space and significantly increase the likelihood of successful adoptions. Transport programs help

alleviate the strain of an overpopulated area by sending shelter animals to other areas of the country with a high demand for adoptable pets. Successful transport requires a robust and sustainable Foster program to ensure animals have been quarantined outside of the shelter and will not bring disease to receiving shelters.

- 3. Enhance adoption efforts through matchmaking support.** There can be an overwhelming number of factors to consider when adopting a pet. Providing matchmaking support will help families navigate the process. It will also ensure that the pet's needs and requirements align with the family's capabilities. Proper matching reduces the likelihood of pets being returned to the shelter or the need to rehome. It also creates an environment where the pet can thrive.

OBJECTIVE 02

Deliver comprehensive marketing of placeable animals.

Developing a robust marketing program for placeable animals is a powerful tool that will connect pets with adopters, rescues, foster volunteers and families. This will lead to a more successful live-release program and improved animal welfare. A marketing program also provides an opportunity to celebrate successes and share the joy of pets finding their forever homes. Additionally, a comprehensive marketing program will allow ACS to optimize its resources by effectively showcasing and promoting placeable pets. It will lead to a reduced length of stay, relieve kennel space and demonstrate that ACS is proactively committed to finding forever homes.

- 1. Create a Placement Team.** The addition of a Placement Team that is focused on behavioral assessments and effective marketing of adoptable animals will increase the likelihood of successful placements. It will also contribute to the overall welfare of the animals. This Placement Team will be responsible for capturing high-quality photographs of adoptable animals, translating complex behavior evaluations into accessible language about the pet's personality and temperament that potential adopters can easily understand, and creating user-friendly displays (digital and physical) that showcase adoptable pets. These items will make it easier for potential adopters to find matches.
- 2. Share compelling stories and anecdotes about shelter pets.** Comprehensive marketing will also include highlighting rescued and adopted animals and their journeys to inspire empathy and emotional connections with potential adopters. ACS will use social media, newsletters and blog posts to regularly showcase shelter pets and engage the community. ACS will also encourage future adoptions by highlighting heartwarming stories and photos of adopted pets thriving in their new homes.
- 3. Forge collaborations and partnerships.** Along with our in-house placement and marketing teams, ACS will work to develop relationships with local businesses, influencers and media outlets to increase the reach and visibility of adoptable pets.

OBJECTIVE 03

Provide continuous foster and adoption support.

Providing continuous foster and adoption support is essential for the long-term success and well-being of the pets placed. Continuous support ensures that pets placed with a foster or adopter receive the ongoing care required. It helps address any issues that may arise during the transition from the shelter into a home. This support also provides continuous access to educational resources, empowering adopters and fosters with the knowledge needed to provide optimal care for the pets in their care.

- 1. Organize regular check-ins with fosters and adopters.** Helping facilitate successful placement transitions can ensure the well-being of pets and reduce the likelihood that the pet returns to the shelter. ACS plans to provide regular follow-ups to assess the pet's adjustment, answer questions and offer additional support. These interactions can be conducted in-person, over the phone or through video calls depending on practicality and availability. ACS plans to develop a system for periodic updates and reminders to fosters and adopters about vaccinations, veterinary care and preventive care needs. Regular check-ins can also be a useful tool for ACS to receive feedback and learn about evolving needs. This will help make sure that the foster and adoption programs remain responsive and effective in meeting the ongoing needs of pet guardians.
- 2. Offer behavior training.** Behavior issues can be a common frustration for new adopters and fosters. ACS plans to offer classes, workshops or webinars specifically tailored for fosters and adopters. These educational sessions can cover topics like understanding dog body language, house training and addressing common behavior challenges. The goal is to empower pet guardians with the knowledge and skills necessary to provide effective care.
- 3. Create an online community.** It can be helpful to learn from the experiences of others. An online community or forum where fosters and adopters can connect with each other, share experiences and seek advice can offer additional support from what ACS provides. This virtual platform can facilitate peer-to-peer learning and offer a sense of belonging to a supportive community.

Key Performance Indicators for Shelter Placement

- Achieve and maintain a 90% Live-Release Rate and a 93% Live-Release Placeable Rate by 2028 to minimize euthanasia for capacity.
- Increase adoptions by 4,000 by 2028.
- Develop a robust transport program by 2026.



4 FOSTER POSITIVE CONNECTIONS WITH THE COMMUNITY.

Extend the shelter’s positive impact through support for lifesaving programs and motivating individuals to make informed and compassionate decisions regarding animal care and welfare.



GOAL 1 | INCREASE AWARENESS OF ACS

Expand resident recognition of ACS as a community resource.

ACS recognizes its role in serving as a community resource. We are committed to increasing resident awareness of the importance of responsible pet care. Our dynamic approach includes targeted outreach through digital and traditional marketing channels, creating accessible educational resources, organizing pet-centric workshops and seminars, interactive community events, and establishing partnerships with local businesses and community organizations. By showcasing the shelter’s programs, services and success stories, we aim to engage residents and encourage them to utilize the shelter’s resources for responsible pet care, adoption and animal well-being. Together, we will build a community that values and supports ACS’ vital role in establishing and providing humane education and resources for pet care.



OBJECTIVE 01

Define what ACS does.

The new mission and vision of ACS reflects the collective aspirations and values of key stakeholders, including community members, volunteers, staff, local authorities and animal welfare organizations. Our Strategic Plan serves as a roadmap to achieve the desired outcomes listed throughout this document. Continued evaluation, feedback gathering and adaptation will ensure that ACS remains responsive to evolving needs. This will strengthen its status as a trusted and valued resource for responsible pet care, animal welfare, community outreach and beyond.

1. Create accessible materials and educational opportunities. Expanding awareness of ACS and what we do will require an enhancement of all touchpoints between ACS and the San Antonio community. Examples include revising the ACS website, expanding campus beautification, providing resources on responsible pet care and beyond.

OBJECTIVE 02

Create a multipronged marketing strategy.

Developing a diverse marketing strategy is key for ACS to effectively communicate its mission and engage with the community. This strategy will include leveraging digital platforms for extensive communication with the public, optimizing the shelter’s website for user-friendliness, collaborating with local businesses and organizations for cross-promotion, developing channels of information accessible to the community, organizing community events, and utilizing traditional marketing and advertising techniques. By employing this multifaceted approach, ACS will amplify its message; build a strong brand presence; and cultivate meaningful connections with potential adopters, volunteers and supporters.

1. Develop and grow the Visual Communications Team to produce effective marketing and communications materials. Supportive of a healthy and thriving workforce, developing a skilled and talented Visual Communications Team can enhance community experiences both in-person and online to create visually compelling and user-friendly spaces and experiences. —————>

OBJECTIVE 03

Limit the spread of misinformation.

By providing consistent, transparent and open communication, ACS will combat the spread of misinformation. The ACS Community Action Team will actively engage the community via numerous avenues to share accurate information. This will foster an environment of trust to effectively address misconceptions and promote a positive understanding of the animal shelter’s operations.

1. Establish clear communication channels; and provide accurate, timely information. Because ACS serves the entire community, we need to be comprehensive in our communication channels. ACS will use hotlines, websites, Q&A sessions, newsletters and social media accounts where community members can reach out with questions or concerns regarding ACS services, programs, resources or operations. This ensures that accurate information can be shared directly from the shelter’s trusted sources.

2. Engage in proactive community outreach, and collaborate with local partners. To reach wider audiences and strengthen ties within the community, ACS plans to organize joint educational initiatives. This includes workshops, public events, tours and public meetings to engage with the community. It will also

provide opportunities for direct interaction with shelter staff and volunteers. ACS will combat misinformation and promote accurate understanding of animal shelter operations, programs and services by including shelter staff, volunteers and stakeholders.

3. Foster positive relationships with local media, journalists and industry publications. Since the media plays a significant role in communicating information to the community, ACS will work to nurture relationships with newspapers, radio stations, magazines and television networks. ACS will provide subject matter experts for interviews on animal shelter and animal care topics. This will ensure that accurate information is consistently shared with the broader community.

- 2. Increase paid advertising methods to incorporate both traditional and non-traditional channels.** Just as we are diversifying other areas of ACS operations, we will also work to diversify our advertising capacity. This includes utilizing progressive mediums, such as ATM screens, shopping center banners and digital advertising.
- 3. Create community connections, and inspire action.** ACS will reach out directly to residents by organizing events and establishing partnerships with local schools, libraries, journalists and youth organizations. ACS will also provide branded collateral and share compelling content that promotes responsible pet care information and ACS services.
- 4. Ensure that the organization stays updated with emerging communication tools.** It is important that ACS stays relevant with our local community. We will utilize tools, such as email marketing, text messages, customer relationship management (CRM) applications, and social media management to enhance messaging and ensure that ACS continues to adapt in its marketing strategy.

Key Performance Indicators for Increasing Awareness of ACS

- Ensure that 95% or higher attendance capacity is met for vaccination, spay and neuter programs and events.
- Collect 10,000 responsible pet care pledges by 2025 that originate from community outreach efforts.
- Increase monthly media interactions by 20% by 2025.



4 FOSTER POSITIVE CONNECTIONS WITH THE COMMUNITY.



GOAL 2 | COMMUNITY TRUST

Grow trust between ACS and the San Antonio community through elevated transparency.

ACS aims to build an atmosphere of openness and accountability by proactively sharing detailed information about shelter operations, including intake and adoption processes, medical care protocols, and behavioral assessments. By implementing measures such as regular public updates, accessible reporting on key performance indicators and engaging community members in decision-making processes, ACS aims to strengthen the bond of trust and foster a collaborative relationship with the San Antonio community.

OBJECTIVE 01

Build the ACS brand and reputation.

Building a brand and reputation for ACS is essential for its long-term success and impact. Through this rebranding, we aim to establish a reputable brand with the goal of inspiring trust, attracting resources and forging lasting connections with the community. This will ultimately advance the mission of promoting responsible pet care, as well as keeping pets and their families together.

1. **Create a branding and identity strategy.** ACS plans to provide a clear and distinctive identity that reflects the shelter’s mission, values and unique qualities. This includes the development of content and branding style guides.
2. **Consistent branding across touchpoints.** Consistency in branding reinforces recognition and builds trust with the community. ACS will ensure that the shelter’s brand is consistently represented across all touchpoints, including signage, marketing materials, website, social media and staff uniforms.
3. **Promote consistent messaging.** To inspire trust, it is important to provide consistent messaging across all communication channels, including the website, social media, print materials, cross-team communications and in-person interactions. ACS will ensure that the messaging reinforces the shelter’s mission, highlights its unique offerings and communicates its commitment to responsible pet care.



OBJECTIVE 02

Match customer service to strategic needs.

Matching customer service to strategic needs is a key priority for ACS. By aligning customer service efforts with the shelter’s strategic goals and objectives, the shelter can enhance its impact on community programs, services and engagement. Training staff, establishing service standards and tailoring interactions to address specific needs will ensure that every resident interaction contributes to the shelter’s mission. By prioritizing customer service alignment, the shelter can build lasting relationships with adopters, volunteers and supporters to foster a positive and impactful experience for all..

1. **Provide transparency of ACS operations and decision-making.** One of the most important aspects in building trust and providing effective customer service is transparency. ACS will work to increase the transparency of its operations wherever possible through proactive and thoughtful communication.
2. **Provide comprehensive training to staff members.** Effective customer service requires all staff members to consistently meet service standards. ACS will ensure that staff understand the shelter’s strategic goals and objectives and how we intend to meet them. ACS will also make sure that staff members are equipped to provide effective communication, empathy and problem-solving skills when communicating with the San Antonio community. This will also include establishing clear service standards across operations.
3. **Build lasting relationships, and seek regular feedback.** Instead of one-way communication with adopters, volunteers and staff, ACS plans to gather feedback to understand their perspectives and assess the effectiveness of service efforts. This can occur by utilizing surveys, feedback forms and other input channels to collect insights and remain adaptable.
4. **Perform ongoing assessments and evaluations of customer service efforts.** Customer service efforts cannot be effective if they remain static. ACS needs to regularly identify areas for improvement and adapt strategies accordingly. This will help ACS embrace a culture of continuous improvement to ensure alignment with the shelter’s evolving strategic needs.

OBJECTIVE 03

Improve methods for sharing information with the community.

A lack of trust in ACS appeared consistently in public feedback during the development of this plan. The community consistently expressed their desire for transparency and better access to information. Building trust with the community through the mediums by which ACS communicates will be fundamental to the success of the strategic plan.

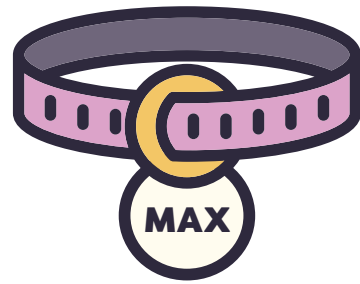
1. **Develop a dashboard to display real-time data for the public.** Currently, ACS produces several monthly and quarterly reports for a variety of performance measures. Since these reports are static, they are giving only a snapshot of the department’s performance at any given time. ACS plans to develop a dynamic, public-facing dashboard with real-time data to give users a better picture of ACS performance over time.
2. **Enhance Spanish language accessibility in all communication.** According to the U.S. Census, almost 13% of San Antonio residents speak English at a level less than “very well.” To reach these community members and enhance inclusion efforts, ACS will work to recruit more Spanish-speaking staff members and add a Spanish Communications Liaison. ACS will also provide Spanish-translated materials, including adoption applications, field communications and other educational collateral. ACS will strengthen collaboration with Spanish media outlets to promote responsible pet care and shelter information, as well as seek feedback from the Spanish-speaking community to understand their needs and preferences better.

Key Performance Indicators for Community Trust

- Collect at least 25% of community feedback from tracked ACS interactions (adoptions/foster pickup, field/outreach, etc.).
- Respond to 95% of digital inquiries, including social media comments, messages and reviews.
- Answer 90% of customer service calls by 2028.



4 FOSTER POSITIVE CONNECTIONS WITH THE COMMUNITY.



GOAL 3 COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

Foster resident action and engagement through community-based education and solutions.

Our goal is to empower residents to actively participate in responsible pet care initiatives. Engaging the San Antonio community in finding practical solutions (such as promoting shelter pet adoptions and supporting trap-neuter-return programs) not only helps animals, but it also strengthens community bonds. It promotes a sense of shared responsibility for the well-being of companion animals.



OBJECTIVE 01 Leverage community action.

By leveraging community action, we aim to create a socially responsible community where we work together to empower residents to take responsibility for their pet's well-being. We also want to create a more compassionate and caring environment for animals.

- 1. Develop an Engagement Team to expand ACS' presence in the community.** This team will be responsible for planning and executing community engagement initiatives, promoting responsible pet care and embracing the positive role that animal shelters play in the community. This includes forming partnerships with local organizations and businesses, implementing educational workshops and pet training sessions, and utilizing digital and social media platforms. All of these things would promote educational content, adoption success stories and information on upcoming events. Efforts will match the needs of the community and engage residents where they are.
- 2. Develop an ACS ambassador program.** This program will be formed by local volunteers, partners and stakeholders who are passionate and committed to practicing and educating others on humane pet care. This group will actively engage with the San Antonio community by attending events, setting up booths at public gatherings and collaborating with other community organizations. They will have the tools and knowledge base to provide information on responsible pet care, ACS programs and services (such as upcoming free vaccination clinics). They would
- share information on our adoption and foster programs, as well as provide resources promoting responsible pet care (such as custom pet ID tags).
- 3. Enhance the existing volunteer program to support operational needs and strategic goals.** Forming strategic project teams within the volunteer program will help tackle specific goals and challenges in line with ACS' operational needs. These volunteer teams will be focused on adoption, animal enrichment programs and community outreach efforts. They will work closely with shelter staff to implement innovative solutions and achieve strategic objectives. By implementing these enhancements, ACS' volunteer program will become a dynamic and effective resource to foster more engaged and committed volunteers aligned with the shelter's mission. ACS will diversify the roles offered to volunteers, tailoring positions to match their unique skills and interests. The volunteer program will also provide comprehensive training and continuous development opportunities for volunteers, empowering them with the knowledge they need to make a difference. Acknowledging the dedication of volunteers is equally essential. Implementing a recognition system (such as regular appreciation events) and open-communication channels to gather insights from volunteers about their experiences and suggestions for improvement will further strengthen the program's impact and success.

OBJECTIVE 02 Increase access to humane pet education.

Community understanding of responsible pet care practices is a top priority for ACS. By fostering empathy and By fostering empathy and compassion toward animals, humane pet education encourages a culture of respect and kindness motivates more people to adopt and foster pets from shelters. This reduces the number of roaming animals. It ultimately creates a safer and more nurturing environment for both animals and humans throughout San Antonio.

- 1. Develop targeted school curriculums on humane pet education.** ACS will increase access to humane pet education by establishing partnerships with schools to integrate pet care and animal welfare topics into their curriculum. ACS will conduct interactive sessions and organize school-based events focused on responsible pet care. These efforts will proactively engage with youth organizations to carry out community projects, awareness campaigns and activities centered around the importance of animal welfare.
- 2. Provide educational opportunities and resources in a variety of methods.** To ensure that humane pet education is widely available, ACS will develop and distribute educational materials and resources. This includes hosting brown bag lunch events focused on humane pet care, renewing former after-school programs and clubs, and hosting spring and summer camp programs. This also includes the creation of pamphlets, books, infographics, and online resources accessible through community websites or social media platforms. These materials will be designed to be easily understandable and engaging. They will provide essential information about pet care, health, and the importance of treating animals with kindness and respect.
- 3. Partner with libraries, education centers and community-based organizations.** ACS can expand its educational reach by providing accessible resources and holding events at places where residents already gather, such as libraries, education centers and community-based organizations. These sessions would cover various topics, such as responsible pet care, animal behavior and communication, and the importance of spaying and neutering. At the same time, ACS will learn about resident issues and concerns. By providing these educational opportunities, the San Antonio community can learn how to better care for their pets, and ACS can better understand barriers to responsible pet care.

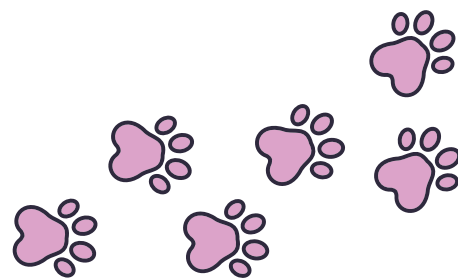


Key Performance Indicators for Collective Responsibility

- Increase volunteer hours by 20% by 2028.
- Achieve and maintain a returning volunteer rate of 50% by 2027.
- Obtain a 90% completion rate of those asked to take the responsible pet care pledge at educational opportunities.
- Offer a minimum of two educational or informational opportunities per month.
- Create a Community Ambassador program by 2026.



5 CHAMPION A HEALTHY AND THRIVING WORKFORCE.



Recruit and retain passionate, competent staff by providing the tools and resources to further the ACS mission and creating an environment where people feel a sense of belonging.



GOAL 1 PROFESSIONAL HEALTH

Attract, develop and retain quality employees.

The 2023 City of San Antonio (COSA) Employee Survey results show that more than 90% of current ACS employees agree the work done by the department is meaningful to them and important to the community. In fact, more than 94% of ACS employees responded positively to the statement, "I like the kind of work I do." ACS is dedicated to its hardworking staff and understands that the success of this strategic plan rests heavily on the ability of the team to implement it. ACS must not only attract high-quality candidates, but also ensure that staff are set up for success in all facets of their work. ACS is committed to do so by providing the support and resources needed to ensure that our team members are successful in their career and in carrying out the mission of the department.



OBJECTIVE 01 Fulfill the department's staffing needs.

The greatest area of opportunity from the 2023 COSA Employee Survey was in regard to current staffing levels. Approximately 74% of staff responded negatively to the statement, "There are enough staff in my team to get the work done." Additionally, staff were divided 44% (negative responses) to 43% (positive responses) when asked if they felt their compensation was reasonable when compared to other organizations. In order to remedy this, ACS will identify where employees are most needed and find innovative ways to recruit the best individuals for these positions, while committing to offer competitive wages and benefits.

- 1. Right-size the department through staffing analyses.** In FY 2020, ACS asked the Office of Innovation to perform an analysis of the Clinic operations. The analysis showed that the Clinic was understaffed for the level of service it was meant to provide and recommended adding several positions to right-size the division. ACS plans to do similar analyses for all divisions to assess what the appropriate staffing is for current levels of service, as well as determine if staff is positioned appropriately.
- 2. Enhance recruitment efforts.** ACS strives to obtain and retain the best talent in an ever-changing industry. Because of the wide range of job duties at ACS, recruitment cannot be a one-size-fits-all method. ACS plans to recruit more strategically by focusing marketing and advertising efforts on methods specific to the job type. In addition, ACS plans to develop a program that ensures wages are exceeding the market by regularly reviewing pay scales. ACS also plans to implement a progression plan for each division that will provide employees with the necessary ongoing training and resources to work toward career advancement opportunities within the department.
- 3. Renew staff-retention efforts.** Just as important as hiring the finest candidates is retaining them. Staff turnover is not only costly, but it can also impact productivity and the overall culture of an organization. ACS' renewed focus on staff retention will allow the department to grow and ultimately meet the community's needs in a more effective manner. Enhanced efforts will include increasing engagement opportunities for staff, training managers on employee retention, and conducting exit and stay interviews to assess shortfalls and strengths of the department.

OBJECTIVE 02 Develop a comprehensive training and staff development program.

Employee retention can be even more successful with the implementation of training and staff development programs. An enhanced onboarding program will integrate new team members into the department while improving productivity, increasing job satisfaction and cultivating a positive organizational culture. Continuation of these factors will be seen through cross-training opportunities, professional development curriculums and continued education to ensure that ACS remains innovative in the field of animal welfare. Additionally, ACS will implement an annual employee satisfaction survey that will focus on department-specific feedback and metrics.

- 1. Support a comprehensive training program.** A comprehensive training program for all staff is a vital initiative to foster employee growth, development and engagement. It is imperative that new team members understand their roles and responsibilities through a successful onboarding program and ongoing training programs. All staff should be knowledgeable of department-wide standards, such as Fear-Free Shelter training, basic animal-handling techniques and disease-mitigation practices. Team members also need access to position-focused trainings, so they can obtain the resources needed to excel in their roles.
- 2. Create a professional development curriculum.** A professional development curriculum provides structured and intentional learning opportunities to enhance the skills, knowledge and competencies of team members. By implementing a well-designed curriculum, ACS can empower its workforce to continuously grow and adapt to changing industry trends and demands. This not only enables employees to acquire new skills while refining existing ones, but it also demonstrates ACS' commitment to employee growth and career advancement.
- 3. Promote external development opportunities and continued education.** While developing new programs internally is important to professional development, it is equally important to use external resources to support the goal. Finding effective professional development opportunities not only promotes networking and engagement, but it also allows us to stay "in the know" within the animal-welfare field. Equitable promotion of these opportunities will allow all staff to have an opportunity to participate in these events. This is an effective way to ensure that team members with certifications that require continued education (CE) credits can maintain their certifications and enhance their expertise.

OBJECTIVE 03 Grow ACS' presence and knowledge-sharing relationships in the animal-welfare industry.

The successful function of ACS relies in part on our relationships with local, state and national partners. In order to excel as leaders in the industry, we must also be present in each of these areas to share with and learn from others in our field. This will be achieved by attending state and national boards and conferences, as well as through transparent communication of the challenges we face as one of the largest municipal shelters in South Texas.

- 1. Attend and participate in state and national boards and conferences.** The success of various programs at ACS makes us subject-matter experts in many areas of animal welfare. As such, it is important to share that knowledge with other animal-welfare organizations. It is equally important to learn what other organizations are doing and how they are staying innovative in this ever-changing field. Attending state and national conferences encourages the sharing of information and knowledge. It also allows for networking across multiple audiences and provides further opportunities for staff development.
- 2. Collaborate with subject-matter experts, state and national stakeholders to develop and promote animal welfare.** This includes producing white papers, position statements, supportive policies and mutually beneficial knowledge bases that further establish shelter standards of care and define humane pet care practices.

Key Performance Indicators for Professional Health

- Increase employee tenure from 5.1 years to 6.5 years.
- Establish a baseline for employee satisfaction through a new annual survey.
- Increase positive responses to staffing concerns by 10% (on annual COSA Employee Survey).
- Create standardized onboarding and professional growth training.



5 CHAMPION A HEALTHY AND THRIVING WORKFORCE.



GOAL 2 | STRUCTURAL HEALTH

Support dynamic teams with the tools and space needed for success.

It is crucial for ACS to build good structural health. This means that the department has the physical supplies, equipment and facilities needed to be successful, as well as the organizational capacity to anticipate and manage future challenges. Employees should be equipped with the tools and resources they need to perform their job duties successfully. Outdated, faulty equipment impacts productivity and daily operations and affects the employee’s engagement and overall job satisfaction. Likewise, ACS needs the proper operational structures and facilities to support its mission and programs, and successfully implement the strategies outlined in this plan. Finally, the organization needs to develop resilience strategies to persevere through potential emergencies.

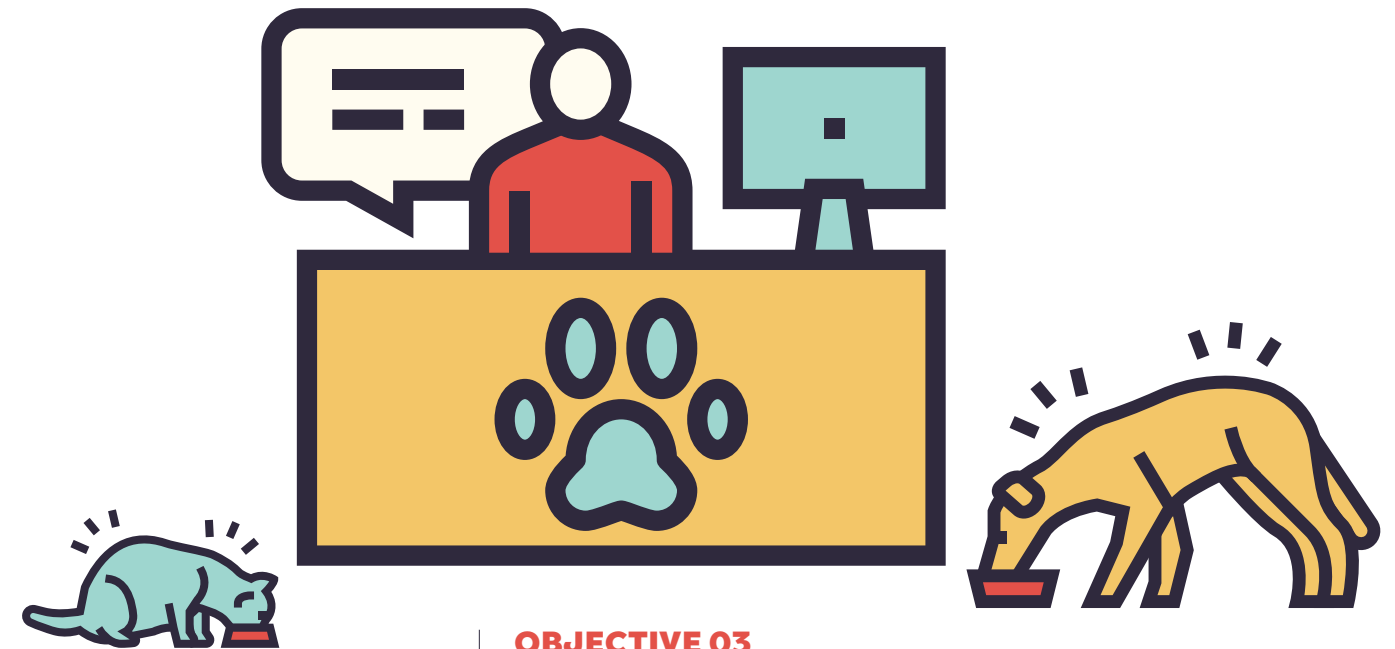
OBJECTIVE 01

Provide staff with necessary physical resources.

ACS jobs require a variety of (often highly specialized) physical resources and equipment. It is vital that these supplies are in proper working order and readily available. Necessary equipment can range from larger, expensive items like ACO trucks needed to transport animals safely, down to gloves utilized by clinic staff when treating animals with medical needs. Proper mechanisms are needed to ensure that all necessary resources are available and functional.

- 1. Implement a universal, department-wide inventory system.** Current inventory tracking is done manually by counting individual items being used by each division. A digitized inventory system will provide ACS the ability to have all items accounted for in a computerized program, which will decrease the need for emergency purchases, require less time for staff members to count inventory and provide them with more time to focus on the animals in our care. Another part of this system will be used by employees for requesting necessary items and repairs to current tools. ACS plans to continue to provide stipends for employee uniforms and other resources, and commits to the ongoing evaluation of these amounts.

- 2. Fulfill vehicle needs.** ACS utilizes a variety of vehicles, including ACO trucks to transport impounded animals to campus, passenger vehicles for staff to carry out their job duties, and small electric mules for transporting animals and supplies across campus. All vehicles need to be in safe working order for the safety of ACS staff and pets. They also need to be available in adequate numbers to support our work. As the department continues to expand and grow, our need for a larger fleet of vehicles also grows. ACS will conduct a vehicle-need analysis to determine how many vehicles are needed to right-size the department’s fleet. This will include the type of vehicle and any additional features needed by the divisions that use them.



OBJECTIVE 02

Provide adequate operational structure and facilities.

ACS has grown continuously over the years, and our campus and facilities reflect that growth. Office spaces are being shared to maximize capacity. Closets are being used as offices. Pets are being housed in administrative spaces due to the limited space in the kennel buildings. While the Life Placement focus area explained how our limited spaces impact the pets in our care, here we focus on how this same problem impacts the staff.

- 1. Improve physical space and capital resources.** The need for more animal care staff overall has greatly increased over the last few years. The physical space used by employees, however, has not kept up with the demand. To create more office space, break rooms have been converted into large shared office areas. Multiple employees are sharing already tight office spaces. As we continue to grow as a department, there is an urgent need for more physical space and capital resources. A comprehensive master plan will help determine the physical space needed to accommodate a growing workforce.

OBJECTIVE 03

Develop organizational resilience.

The recent global pandemic severely impacted all businesses and organizations, and ACS is no exception. This experience has provided a new perspective and opportunity for us to think ahead and consider the unimaginable. As such, ACS is committed to exploring ways to guard against external disruptors, including natural disasters and pandemics, while also ensuring adaptability to an ever-changing animal-welfare environment.

- 1. Ensure ACS has a well-rounded contingency plan in the event of a City-wide closure.** The quick onset of the COVID-19 pandemic forced ACS and the rest of the COSA departments to review daily operations every step of the way, while making adjustments as needed. Having a well-thought-out contingency plan will keep us prepared in the event of another shutdown. It will also allow us to transition operational protocols seamlessly without interrupting the services we provide the community, while ensuring we stay within recommended guidelines.
- 2. Develop relief plans for pets and guardians affected by natural disasters in the region.** Due to our location near the Gulf Coast, ACS has been a resource for shelters located in cities that have undergone mandatory evacuations during past hurricane seasons. Revamping our current protocols, including the development of a hurricane-relief action plan and procurement of necessary resources, will allow us to be better prepared for the influx of pets that come onto our campus for care and shelter during these events. It will also help mitigate the spread of disease while keeping the pets’ safety and well-being as our number one priority.

Key Performance Indicators for Structural Health

- Decrease number of emergency orders due to inventory issues.
- Increase staff training on ACS emergency-closure protocols and disaster-relief protocols.
- Increase employee satisfaction as related to availability of resources, equipment, vehicles, etc.



5 CHAMPION A HEALTHY AND THRIVING WORKFORCE.



GOAL 3 PERSONAL WELL-BEING

Equip employees for enhanced work-life balance and better personal health.

A healthy work-life balance is crucial to an individual's overall well-being. With 53% of staff responding positively and 27% responding negatively to questions about work-life balance, the results from the 2023 COSA Employee Survey confirm that ACS must do more to ensure employees have the needed resources and support to achieve this balance. In addition to promoting a healthy work-life balance, ACS intends to continue to support improved personal health for all employees. The nature of a municipal shelter is unlike other no-kill animal-welfare organizations. The employees who work at ACS need specialized mental health support in order to reduce compassion fatigue and burnout.

OBJECTIVE 01 Support mental health needs and compassion fatigue prevention.

Empirical research has shown that there is substantial need for mental health support among animal shelter workers. While COSA offers a strong employee assistance program, it is often difficult for employees to speak with mental health professionals who do not have experience with the specific type of trauma that animal shelter workers face daily. Prioritizing the mental health needs of the staff is of the utmost importance. Supporting the team's mental well-being can help prevent burnout while promoting compassionate care for the animals. Ultimately, it would lead to a more effective and fulfilling workplace.

1. Provide mental health services and regular compassion fatigue/stress reduction training.

There has been a cultural shift in our society to prioritize the importance of mental health. ACS is showing its commitment to this by providing regular, tailored compassion fatigue and stress reduction training to all staff. The ability for individual teams to attend seminars tailored to the work they do will become an invaluable facet of self-help. New team members will also receive information on available resources during onboarding week. Additionally, having an on-site mental health professional



will be a key resource to all staff. These services will help team members cope with the challenges of their day-to-day experiences, reduce stress, promote resilience and enhance overall well-being.

2. Provide regular supervisor trainings on how to spot burnout.

Studies show that strong organizational support can help reduce the psychological distress (such as compassion fatigue, burnout, etc.) that animal shelter workers experience. For this reason, it is important that individuals in leadership positions be properly trained on how to best support their teams and how to identify individuals who may need more support at a higher level.

3. Develop internal support groups and offer counseling/debriefs after major incidents.

In addition to an on-site mental health professional, ACS aims to develop internal support groups and peer counseling for team members. Access to these services will help provide a supportive and empathetic environment where team members can share their experiences and challenges with others facing similar issues. Particularly after a traumatic event, these services can help individuals process their emotions, reduce psychological distress and prevent long-term negative impacts.

OBJECTIVE 02 Support a healthy intersection of work and personal life.

Supporting a healthy work-life balance enhances employee well-being, reduces burnout, and increases overall productivity and job satisfaction. Team members need time to recharge and focus on their personal lives. This helps them return refreshed, motivated and ready to provide exceptional and compassionate service to the animals in our care and to our community. A positive work-life balance also increases employee retention, and it contributes to a more positive and efficient workplace.

1. Ensure staffing levels include redundancies to allow employees to take leave and avoid overtime.

In order to promote a healthy work-life balance and prevent burnout among employees, staffing levels must include redundancies to allow team members to take their requested leave without causing other impacts. Having appropriate staffing levels can reduce the amount of overtime that is paid out and ensures that operations are not disrupted (particularly if unexpected absences or emergencies arise). Additionally, appropriate staffing fosters a more sustainable and supportive work environment, which leads to higher overall satisfaction.

2. Ensure systems are in place so that employees do not feel obligated to take animals/bottle babies home.

Animal shelter work can be exhausting. It is important for team members to identify their personal boundaries when it comes to fostering. The first part of this is to ensure that ACS has a robust foster program, including fosters who are ready and available to take bottle babies on the same day they arrive at the shelter. The second part of this is to ensure that team members recognize the impacts that fostering has, and that they have the support and understanding necessary (regardless of their decision of if/when to foster).

3. Allow for flexible scheduling as appropriate that supports proper decompression and rest for staff.

Allowing for flexible scheduling is crucial to individual well-being and performance. This encourages team members to manage their work and personal commitments efficiently while reducing stress and promoting a healthier work-life balance. Supporting proper decompression and rest for staff will help them feel valued and supported, resulting in increased productivity and morale.



OBJECTIVE 03 Support physical health.

Promoting physical health directly impacts employee well-being and performance. Individuals who are physically healthy are more likely to have higher energy levels, improved focus and enhanced mental clarity. This results in greater productivity and job satisfaction. The development of a new wellness program (along with other health initiatives) will demonstrate that ACS values its employees' overall well-being.

1. Develop an ACS-specific wellness program to encourage healthy habits and physical well-being.

While the new gym at City Tower is available to all COSA employees, ACS staff (like many others) are not located downtown. As such, ACS intends to develop a new wellness program (specific to the department) to promote healthy habits and encourage physical well-being. This program will help foster a culture of positivity and encouragement with inclusive activities promoting physical health and general wellness.

Key Performance Indicators for Personal Well-Being

- Reduce burnout rate among staff.
- Increase employee tenure from 5.1 years to 6.5 years.
- Increase the number of staff participating in mental and physical wellness activities quarterly.
- Increase positive responses to work-life balance concerns by 17% (on annual COSA Employee Survey).



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND TIMELINE



1 SUPPORT A SAFE COMMUNITY FOR THE PEOPLE IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS.

GOAL 1 PERSONAL SAFETY						
Objective	Program	Year 1 FY 2024	Year 2 FY 2025	Year 3 FY 2026	Year 4 FY 2027	Year 5 FY 2028
Reduce stray/roaming population through spay and neuter.	Measure Stray/ Roaming Population	Develop partnership and conduct initial stray/roaming dog study to secure population baseline.	Identify key problem areas and develop proactive enforcement techniques.	Repeat stray/roaming dog study.		Repeat stray/roaming dog study
	S/N Capacity & Support	Support more s/n surgeries with increased contract funding for in-house and community surgeries, including feral cats.	Manage s/n partnerships and explore additional leasing opportunities for clinics on the East and West side by adding a Spay/Neuter and Wellness Coordinator.	Develop and manage a Wellness Transport Program to assist with getting pets to and from surgery appointments by adding 1 Spay/ Neuter Coordinator; Increase funding for free community spay/ neuter surgeries.		
Increase responsiveness and compliance of bites and dangerous investigations.	Bite Investigations	Increase capacity for Bite investigations and divert initial response of bite calls to Bites Team with the addition of 4 Bites Officers.	Develop public-facing education on bite prevention.	Roll out and promote bite education to the community.		
	Dangerous/ Aggressive Investigations	Increase capacity for Dangerous and Aggressive investigations with the addition of 2 Dangerous Officers and 1 Supervisor.				
Expand community presence in the field through community-oriented programs.	Canvassing Program	Increase funding for pet resources to be distributed by CASA.	Expand canvassing efforts year-round with the addition of 4 CASA Canvassing Coordinators, 4 Community Officers (ACOs), and 1 Supervisor.		Continue to increase canvassing efforts with the addition of 2 Community Officers (ACOs) and 1 Supervisor.	

GOAL 2 PUBLIC SAFETY						
Objective	Program	Year 1 FY 2024	Year 2 FY 2025	Year 3 FY 2026	Year 4 FY 2027	Year 5 FY 2028
Increase accountability of civil and criminal citations.	Court Accountability & Data Management	Enhance management of enforcement-related data and explore data-sharing methods with other City departments and the Good Neighbor Program.	Add 1 Court Officer to manage increased compliance and coordinate with Municipal Court.			
Increase compliance through proactive corrective actions and provision of resources.	CASA Case Management	Increase funding for pet resources to be distributed by CASA.	Add 1 Case Management Supervisor to oversee case management investigations.			
Enhance first-response to resident calls for service.	First-Response Team	Add 7 First-Response ACOs (including one Lead ACO) and 1 Supervisor to manage call volume of critical priority calls.	"Add 6 First-Response ACOs and 1 Supervisor to manage call volume; Assess call volume management for Customer Service team and Dispatcher workload."	Add 6 First-Response ACOs and 1 Supervisor to manage call volume.		

2 PROTECT THE SAFETY AND HUMANE TREATMENT OF PETS.

GOAL 1 SAFETY FROM ANIMALS						
Objective	Program	Year 1 FY 2024	Year 2 FY 2025	Year 3 FY 2026	Year 4 FY 2027	Year 5 FY 2028
Reduce the stray/roaming animal population.		See Safe Community focus area				
Protect community health of animals against disease.	Vaccination Clinics	Increase contract funding for community vaccination clinics to ensure more pets are protected against disease.	Recruit more partners to provide more free vaccination clinics.	Recruit more partners to provide more free vaccination clinics.	Recruit more partners to provide more free vaccination clinics.	Recruit more partners to provide more free vaccination clinics.
	Wellness Services	Develop partnerships to pilot free and low-cost wellness services.	Add contract funding for partners to provide free and low-cost wellness services.	Analyze data on animal disease in the community to target high-impact areas.	Explore community need for end-of-life wellness services.	Implement wellness services in target areas with high disease rates.
Increase responsiveness and compliance with aggressive dog investigations.	Dangerous/Aggressive Investigations	See Safe Community focus area				

GOAL 2 STANDARD OF CARE						
Objective	Program	Year 1 FY 2024	Year 2 FY 2025	Year 3 FY 2026	Year 4 FY 2027	Year 5 FY 2028
Advance a community-led standard of care.	Community Standard of Care Development & Promotion	Begin marketing and engagement for the development of community standard of care.	Continue engagement and promotion of the new standard of care to raise awareness.			
Assist residents in meeting the standard of care.	Community Standard of Care Implementation		Begin a pilot program to offer fence repair and increase access to pet-related services and resources.	Work with the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Department (DEIA) in identifying barriers to meeting the standard of care.		
Revise Chapter 5 to enhance the legally required standard of care.	Community Standard of Care Ratification			Revise Chapter 5 to align with the community-led standards of care by working with the City Attorney's Office and seeking City Council approval.		

GOAL 3 SAFETY FROM HUMANS						
Objective	Program	Year 1 FY 2024	Year 2 FY 2025	Year 3 FY 2026	Year 4 FY 2027	Year 5 FY 2028
Increase capacity to investigate Cruelty cases appropriately.	Cruelty Investigations		Manage existing cruelty workload and ensure timely completion of necropsies and exams with the addition of 2 Cruelty Officers, 1 Supervisor, and a Veterinary Team (1 Veterinarian, 3 Vet Techs, and 1 ACA).		Address cruelty and neglect caseload with the addition of 2 Cruelty Officers.	
Eliminate illegal/inhumane breeding.	Breeding Investigations			Develop an Illegal Breeding Investigations Team and revise Chapter 5 with the addition of 2 Illegal Breeding Officers.	Build a community awareness marketing campaign warning of the dangers of illegal breeding.	
	Permitting Program		Work with ITSD and Finance to develop an online permitting system and an online point of sale system.	Enhance permitting related to breeding and selling with the creation of a Permits Team (2 ACOs).		

3 SUPPORT THE PLACEMENT OF PETS FOR LIFE.

GOAL 1 SHELTER PREVENTION						
Objective	Program	Year 1 FY 2024	Year 2 FY 2025	Year 3 FY 2026	Year 4 FY 2027	Year 5 FY 2028
Decrease the number of owner surrenders.	Owner Surrender Prevention Team		Pursue State legislative changes that allow municipal shelters to treat owned animals.		Enhance CASA's owner-prevention efforts with the addition of 1 CASA Coordinator.	Continue the enhancement of CASA's owner-prevention efforts with the addition of 1 CASA Coordinator.
	Owner Surrender Resources		Provide humane pet education resources so residents can make informed decisions before surrendering.		Prevent owner surrenders through increased wellness contracts and the provision of training classes.	
Increase the number of pets reunited with their owners.		See Safe Community focus area - Canvassing Program See Humane Treatment focus area - Vaccine Clinics and Wellness Services				

GOAL 2 SHELTER CARE						
Objective	Program	Year 1 FY 2024	Year 2 FY 2025	Year 3 FY 2026	Year 4 FY 2027	Year 5 FY 2028
Increase quality of life and placeability through enrichment.	Enrichment & Behavior Team	Create an Enrichment and Behavior Team with the addition of 1 Trainer/Behavior Specialist to increase the number of pets receiving behavior assessments and enrichment opportunities.	Grow the Enrichment & Behavior Team with the addition of 1 Trainer/Behavior Specialist to increase the number of pets receiving behavior assessments and enrichment opportunities.	Enhance the Enrichment & Behavior Team with the addition of 2 Trainers/Behavior Specialists and 1 Supervisor for the Team, as well as improvements to the play yards and other enrichment tools.		
Grow the Foster Program for harder-to-place animals.	Foster Program		Grow the Foster Program with the additional of 2 Live Release Program Coordinators.	Enhance the Foster Program with the addition of 1 Live Release Program Coordinator and 1 Supervisor.		
Enhance the quality of care through shelter medicine and animal care.	Medical Care	Provide expanded medical care hours and enhanced foster support with the addition of a Veterinary Team (1 Veterinarian, 3 Vet Techs, and 1 ACA).	Increase the number of medical and cruelty exams through the addition of one Vet Care Team (see Humane Treatment focus area).			
	Intake Management	Enhance intake procedures and quality of care campus-wide with the addition of 4 Lead ACAs.		Continue quality of care enhancements with the addition of Intake Attendants.		
Improve campus facilities and physical space.	Facilities Master Plan	Complete facilities master plan; Identify and recommend capital projects based on master plan results.	Develop a five year deferred maintenance plan.	Identify and recommend capital projects for the 2027 Bond based on the master plan results.		

GOAL 3 SHELTER PLACEMENT						
Objective	Program	Year 1 FY 2024	Year 2 FY 2025	Year 3 FY 2026	Year 4 FY 2027	Year 5 FY 2028
Diversify placement options through transport, adoptions, and rescue.	Rescue Partnerships	Grow partnerships with rescue groups by increasing funding opportunities.		Identify additional incentives to encourage rescue programs to pull pets.	Enhance medical support through heartworm treatment and the addition of 1 Medical Placement Coordinator to help with placement options for pets with higher medical needs.	
	Transport Program	Explore partnerships and contracts that facilitate transport out of state; Identify transportation networks; Begin developing a local network of short-term fosters for transport events.	Create a transport program to foster partnerships and implement transport processes with the addition of 1 Transport Coordinator.			
	Adoption Program	Provide support for potential adopters on campus and manage increased hours of operations with the addition of 4 ACAs.	Support match-making efforts between pets and potential adopters with the addition of 3 Live Release Coordinators.	Utilize current adoption data to identify new target adoption markets.		
	Live Release Apprenticeship Program	Develop future Live Release staff by adding 4 Apprentice positions to help new staff gain the necessary experience.	Continue to develop trainees.	Evaluate the success of the apprentice program and the need for additional apprentices.		
Deliver comprehensive marketing of placeable animals.	Placement Team	Continue sharing compelling stories and anecdotes about shelter pets to increase visibility to potential adopters.	Create a Placement Team focused on comprehensive evaluation and marketing of placeable animals with the addition of 2 Marketing Specialists, 2 Placement Specialists, and 1 Supervisor.		Explore partnerships with local businesses, influencers, and media outlets to increase the reach and visibility of adoptable pets.	Identify new networks in which to highlight shelter pets.
Provide continuous foster and adoption support.	Post-Adoption & Foster Support	Develop a marketing campaign to attract fosters; Adjust foster medical support.	Enhance support for ACS fosters and adopters by providing training, educational resources, and technology tools to help transition pets into homes.	Conduct a survey of fosters and adopters to gauge existing needs and gaps in service.		

4 FOSTER POSITIVE CONNECTIONS WITH THE COMMUNITY.

GOAL 1 INCREASE AWARENESS OF ACS						
Objective	Program	Year 1 FY 2024	Year 2 FY 2025	Year 3 FY 2026	Year 4 FY 2027	Year 5 FY 2028
Define what ACS does.		Roll out and promote the new mission, vision, and values.	Develop core messages on what ACS does to communicate with different residents.	Train Ambassadors on the ACS mission, vision, and values.	Continue to promote and support ACS's mission and values.	Continue to promote and support ACS's mission and values.
Create a multi-pronged marketing strategy.	Creative Marketing Team	Continue enhanced marketing efforts with increased funding for TV and radio campaigns that provide community awareness.	Build a Creative Marketing Team with the addition of 1 Graphic Designer and 1 Design Communications Coordinator; Implement an email marketing tool.	Enhance messaging by exploring new tools to communicate and engage with residents who do not have digital access.	Identify ways to extend ACS's creative reach to more community members.	Utilize the roaming dog study to target campaigns on free-roaming dogs to areas of critical need.
Limit the spread of misinformation.	Elevated Transparency	Begin developing improved methods of sharing information with the public, such as real-time data dashboards.	Enhance accessibility to ACS information with the addition of 1 Spanish Language Liaison and increased funding for Spanish-translated print materials.	Reallocate staff capacity and enhance transparency with the addition of 1 Senior Management Analyst to manage open records requests.	Develop a communications strategy focused on providing ongoing and accurate information shares.	

GOAL 2 COMMUNITY TRUST						
Objective	Program	Year 1 FY 2024	Year 2 FY 2025	Year 3 FY 2026	Year 4 FY 2027	Year 5 FY 2028
Build the ACS brand and reputation.	Branding Development	Enhance the ACS brand and identity by partnering with an agency to assist in developing content and branding style guides.	Promote consistent branding across all touchpoints by updating print materials, online platforms, staff uniforms, and other items with new branding.	Continue to incorporate and support ACS branding in all communications and materials.		
Match customer service to strategic needs.	Community Input-Based Customer Service	See the roaming dog study. Launch staff onboarding and develop a customer feedback survey into communication touchpoints between ACS and the community.	Analyze and present data collected from the community on ACS-related needs. Incorporate feedback to adjust performance metrics and operations as needed.	Identify and procure resources required to meet community-identified needs.		Implement and enhance communication touchpoints based on community feedback.
Improve methods for sharing information with the community.	Data Dashboard		Launch a dashboard to provide the public with a comprehensive perspective of ACS operations.	Monitor the dashboard and adjust presented data as needed.		Identify and fix any lingering communication gaps.
	Spanish Language Outreach	Identify gaps in language access and develop solutions for implementation.		Prioritize hiring Spanish-speaking team members in employment practices.		Work towards 50% of Spanish-speaking team members for all community engagement positions.

GOAL 3 COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY						
Objective	Program	Year 1 FY 2024	Year 2 FY 2025	Year 3 FY 2026	Year 4 FY 2027	Year 5 FY 2028
Leverage community action.	Community Engagement & Education	Develop the structure of a neighborhood-based engagement plan.	Begin development of an Engagement Team to expand ACS's presence in the community with the addition of 1 Neighborhood Engagement Coordinator.	Expand the Engagement Team's efforts and reach with the addition of 1 Neighborhood Engagement Coordinator and 1 Engagement Supervisor.		
	Ambassador & Volunteer Program	Develop an ACS Ambassador Program made up of volunteers, partners, and stakeholders to engage with the community.	Expand the ACS Ambassador Program with additional resources and collaboration opportunities.	Enhance the volunteer program with the addition of 1 Volunteer Coordinator to focus on utilizing volunteers to tackle specific ACS goals and challenges in line with operational needs.		
Increase access to humane pet education.	Develop responsible pet care program for all age groups.	Identify resources needed to develop humane education program (team, resources, partnerships)	Develop age-appropriate educational curriculums to distribute to schools, after-school programs, learning centers (such as libraries), etc. in addition to providing learning tools.			

5 CHAMPION A HEALTHY AND THRIVING WORKFORCE.

GOAL 1 PROFESSIONAL HEALTH						
Objective	Program	Year 1 FY 2024	Year 2 FY 2025	Year 3 FY 2026	Year 4 FY 2027	Year 5 FY 2028
Fulfill the department's staffing needs.	Staffing Analysis and Right-Sizing	Begin the first round of staffing analyses to determine appropriate staffing levels; Begin development of standardized onboarding procedures.	Continue staffing analyses and implement any staffing changes resulting from Year 1 analyses.			
	Recruitment & Retention	Begin the development of progression plans for each division to establish pathways for staff to move up within ACS.	Improve recruitment with the development of marketing and advertising plans for different types of ACS positions.			
Develop a comprehensive training and staff development program.	Employee Engagement & Development	Identify critical professional development needs.	Create a professional development and training program with the addition of 1 Employee Engagement Coordinator.			Increase staff engagement and development with the addition of 1 Employee Engagement Coordinator.
Grow ACS's presence and knowledge-sharing relationships in the animal welfare industry.		Spend time cross-training with partner shelters to learn new best practices. Invest resources towards external training opportunities (ie. animal welfare conferences, classes for CEs, etc).	Spend time cross-training with partner shelters to learn new best practices. Invest resources towards external training opportunities (ie. animal welfare conferences, classes for CEs, etc).	Continue developing a knowledge-sharing network of shelters.	Research and share innovative and progressive animal-care management practices.	

GOAL 2 STRUCTURAL HEALTH						
Objective	Program	Year 1 FY 2024	Year 2 FY 2025	Year 3 FY 2026	Year 4 FY 2027	Year 5 FY 2028
Provide staff with necessary physical resources.	Department-Wide Inventory System	Improve management of equipment and supplies by developing and beginning implementation of a department-wide inventory system.	Finalize implementation of department-wide inventory system; Create a process for staff to request necessary items and repairs for current tools.		Re-evaluate staff uniform and supply allowances to ensure they adequately cover staff needs and adjust if necessary.	
	Vehicle Needs Analysis	Right-size the ACS fleet by performing a vehicle needs assessment.		Re-evaluate size of ACS fleet by performing a vehicle needs assessment (with staff growth).		
Provide adequate operational structure and facilities.	Facilities Master Plan	See Life Placement focus area - Facilities Master Plan				
	Facility Management	Manage campus projects and facility upgrades with the addition of 1 Facility Manager to support strategic needs.	Manage the groundbreaking of the new hospital building.			
Develop organizational resilience.	Process Improvement & Resiliency	Create well-rounded contingency plans and conduct department-wide operational process improvements with the addition of 1 Senior Management Coordinator.	Re-evaluate existing protocols regarding natural disaster response.	Continue process improvement and resiliency development, as well as institute proper span of control for increased staff with the addition of 1 Senior Special Projects Manager.		
	Staffing Support		Effectively manage increased staffing with the addition of 1 Assistant Director; Support a significant increase in contract needs with the addition of 1 Procurement Analyst to manage ACS solicitations.	Support increased operational needs with the addition of 1 Administrative Assistant II.		

GOAL 3 PERSONAL WELL-BEING						
Objective	Program	Year 1 FY 2024	Year 2 FY 2025	Year 3 FY 2026	Year 4 FY 2027	Year 5 FY 2028
Support mental health needs and compassion fatigue prevention.	Compassion Fatigue Training	Create a training curriculum for compassion fatigue and stress reduction education that is tailored to animal welfare work.	Develop and roll out a recurring training class for ACS supervisors on how to spot burn-out in their staff.	Ensure all staff have gone through at least one unit of compassion fatigue training.		
	Mental Health Support		Develop internal support groups and implement debriefing sessions after major incidents.			Utilize an on-site mental health professional to provide direct support to ACS staff.
Support a healthy intersection of work and personal life.	Staffing Redundancies	Begin the first round of staffing analyses to determine appropriate staffing levels; Begin development of standardized onboarding procedures.	Continue staffing analyses and implement any staffing changes resulting from Year 1 analyses.	Identify workflow issues.		
Support physical health.	Health & Wellness Program	Survey employees to evaluate needs.	Hold wellness competitions.	Develop employee clubs.		

STRATEGIC PLAN GLOSSARY



Strategic Plan Glossary

The 2023 Strategic Plan contains specialized and technical terminology that is unique to the City of San Antonio Animal Care Services Department. To assist the reader of the Strategic Plan Document in understanding these terms, a glossary has been included in the document.

Adoption

The act of obtaining (adopting) a pet from an animal shelter or animal rescue organization.

Aggressive Dog

Legal designation of a dog that has killed, has attacked, or is found to display threatening or unprovoked aggressive behavior toward another domestic animal or livestock. There are three levels of designation based on severity of the dog's actions.

Altered

Refers to spaying and neutering. Spaying is the removal of the reproductive organs of female dogs and cats. Neutering is the removal of the testicles in male dogs and cats.

Animal Defense League

The Animal Defense League of Texas takes in rescued cats and dogs. They provide medical treatment, nutrition, shelter and safety in a live-release facility until the pets are matched with a "forever family."

Community Animal Support and Assistance (CASA)

An Animal Care Services initiative that aims to reduce recidivism for noncompliant citations and to keep animals out of the shelter by providing resources to pet owners with a case-management approach.

Dangerous Dog

Legal designation of a dog that has made an unprovoked attack off-property on a person that causes bodily injury or a dog that acts in an unprovoked way off-property that would likely lead to an attack.

DHPP Vaccine

The DHPP vaccine is a combination vaccine that provides protection against canine distemper (D), infectious hepatitis/adenovirus (H), parvovirus (P) and parainfluenza (P).

Enrichment

Enrichment involves regularly providing positive environments, cognitive challenges and socialization opportunities for the animals.

Equity

Equity is impartiality, fairness and justice for all people in relation to social policy. Equity takes systemic inequalities into consideration to make sure everyone in a community has access to the same opportunities and outcomes. Equity of all kinds acknowledges that inequalities do exist and works to get rid of them.

Equity Atlas

The Equity Atlas is an interactive tool that highlights the demographics, disparities and some infrastructure distribution within the city. Maps relating to basic demographic indicators (such as race, income and language) are published in a standard format that includes consistent methodologies as it relates to breaking points, census tract data and thresholds.

Equity Matrix

Focuses on breaking points above and below the citywide averages for race and income.

Euthanasia

The act of intentionally ending a life in order to relieve pain or suffering. Regarding animal shelters, euthanasia may be performed when the facility no longer has enough space for animals or when an animal is determined to be less adoptable because of its health or temperament.

Foster

A volunteer who works with animal shelters or rescue organizations to care for adoptable animals in their own home until the animal can be placed in a permanent home.

FVRCP Vaccine

The FVRCP vaccine is a combination vaccine that protects cats against feline viral rhinotracheitis (feline herpes), calicivirus and feline panleukopenia (feline distemper).

Live-Release Rate

The Live-Release Rate is the percentage of animals that leaves the shelter alive no matter what their health or behavior status. This could be through adoption, return to owner or rescue.

Microchip

A pet microchip is a small electronic chip enclosed in a glass cylinder. It is activated by a scanner passed over the area. The radio waves from the scanner activate this chip. The chip transmits an identification (ID) number to the scanner, which displays the number on a screen. The microchip's ID number is useful for looking up owner information for a pet.

Recidivism

Recidivism refers to a person's relapse into criminal behavior. This is often after the person receives sanctions or undergoes intervention for a previous violation.

Return to Owner (RTO)

Returning lost pets to their homes.

Spay and Neuter

Spaying refers to the removal of the reproductive organs of female dogs and cats. Neutering is the removal of the testicles in male dogs and cats.

Stray Hold

The amount of time a shelter must hold a stray animal before determining the outcome, as determined by local ordinances.

Sterilized

See Spay and Neuter

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)

Refers to an approach for managing community cats that is an alternative to shelter impoundment. In appropriately managed TNR programs, cats are humanely trapped and surgically sterilized. They are also vaccinated, ear-tipped and returned to the area where they were trapped.