



FINAL REPORT

City of Stockton

ANIMAL SHELTER EFFICIENCY STUDY

May 20, 2024

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. BACKGROUND

This Animal Shelter Efficiency Study provides the City of Stockton (the City) with an assessment of its Animal Shelter (the Shelter), identifying opportunities for improvement of Shelter programs and services, staff recruitment, staff retention, staff capacity, and facilities. For this engagement, Moss Adams LLP (Moss Adams, we, our) conducted planning, document collection, interviews, and analysis to gain an understanding of the Shelter's unique organizational context, identify opportunities for improvement, and provide the practical recommendations listed in this report. We also conducted benchmarking with five peer organizations to provide additional context for the Shelter's current environment and resources and a comparable analysis of other organizations for use in assessing Stockton's Animal Shelter.

Moss Adams conducted this engagement between January and May 2024. A final report will follow this draft report, incorporating the City's feedback to these draft observations and recommendations.

B. SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study's observations and recommendations are summarized below, and were grouped into four domains: People, Facilities, Strategies and Processes, and Technology. More detail is provided in Section III of this report.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS		
PEOPLE		
1.	Observation	Due to vacancies and surging demand for animal shelter services in the community, Shelter staffing levels are insufficient, which results in employee burnout and a limited ability to respond to community concerns.
	Recommendation	<p>A. In coordination with HR, continue to prioritize efforts to fill vacant Animal Services Assistant and Animal Services Officer positions.</p> <p>B. Conduct a workload and staffing analysis to quantify the degree of additional staff that would be necessary to better serve the community's current and future demand for animal services</p>
2.	Observation	The Animal Shelter's hiring process includes civil service testing and extensive background check processes, which delays hiring and significantly hinders the Shelter's ability to fill vacant positions. These difficulties are particularly pronounced for entry-level Animal Services Assistant positions since applicants can more rapidly find work for comparable pay elsewhere.
	Recommendation	<p>A. Evaluate whether CJIS background checks are necessary for Animal Services Assistant positions.</p> <p>B. Where possible, consider options to simplify civil service testing for Animal Services Assistant positions to improve hiring efficiency.</p>



OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONSE		
		C. To help fill vacancies, evaluate whether the requirement of two years in animal care or law enforcement services for the Animal Services Officer role can be augmented through coursework or other experience.
3.	Observation	The Shelter's limited training budget and employee time constraints hinder employee growth and development.
	Recommendation	<p>A. The City should reevaluate the Shelter's annual training budget to ensure sufficient resources are allocated to expose staff to innovative and best practices often identified through conferences and external training opportunities.</p> <p>B. Develop internal cross-training opportunities for staff, particularly junior staff.</p>
4.	Observation	Foster and rescue staff are critical to moving animals through the Shelter, but are overseen by the Shelter's contractor for veterinary services, Hard Luck Animal Welfare Advocates (Hard Luck AWA) rather than by the Shelter Manager.
	Recommendation	Evaluate whether foster and rescue staff should be Shelter employees to ensure appropriate oversight, tracking, relationship-building with the community, and success in moving animals out of the Shelter and into permanent homes.
FACILITIES		
5.	Observation	The existing Stockton Animal Shelter facility has deficiencies that impact animal welfare and spread disease. Many of these deficiencies, particularly the quality of primary enclosures for dogs, will not be addressed in the new shelter building.
	Recommendation	<p>A. Develop a plan to improve primary enclosures and isolation area for dogs within the Shelter's current facility or in the new building.</p> <p>B. As the new building is developed, review the Shelter's current drainage and anticipated future needs and develop a plan to ensure the drain system has the appropriate capacity to meet these needs.</p> <p>C. To the extent possible, improve dog play yard conditions.</p> <p>D. Prioritize addressing the rodent and insect infestations.</p>
6.	Observation	The existing Stockton Animal Shelter facility lacks adequate, welcoming, and safe space for employees and customers.
	Recommendation	<p>A. Ensure that the additional office space in the new building is sufficient for staff to perform daily activities and allows for private discussions.</p> <p>B. Ensure that the space for customers is sufficiently large and welcoming in the new building, including a waiting area.</p> <p>C. To the extent possible, protect staff from drainage-related safety hazards via capital improvements and standard operating procedures.</p> <p>D. Prioritize addressing the rodent and insect infestations to ensure workspaces are clean and safe.</p>



OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS		
STRATEGY AND PROCESSES		
7.	Observation	Given current staffing conditions and the community's surging demand for animal services, strategic performance measurement and management at the Shelter has been difficult to implement.
	Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. In collaboration with City and Police Department leadership, develop a strategic plan for the next five years of animal shelter operations. B. Establish a framework for strategic performance management, including the selection and monitoring of key performance indicators (KPIs). C. Develop externally-facing performance measures to regularly report to the community and help garner public support for Shelter operations.
8.	Observation	The Shelter has well-developed comprehensive policies and procedures, but staffing shortages present challenges in implementing all documented guidance.
	Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Shelter management should work with frontline staff to identify which standard operating procedures are particularly difficult to implement with fidelity given current staff and resource constraints. B. As necessary, conduct additional staff training to support adherence to policies and procedures. C. If needed, revise identified standard operating procedures to reflect current practices that will meet the needs of Shelter staff and animals.
9.	Observation	Like other organizations within the industry, the Shelter uses social media to perform public outreach, cultivate support for the Shelter, and generate interest in adoptions. Although the Shelter appears to use social media well, it lacks a designated employee resource to support this work or a strategy to support continuous and growing community engagement.
	Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Dedicate at least 0.5 of a full-time equivalent (FTE) employee to social media management to ensure continuous engagement with social media platforms. B. Integrate social media goals and strategies into the Shelter's strategic plan (see Observation 7), including ways to leverage current trends such as shortform videos to engage audiences.
TECHNOLOGY		
10.	Observation	Staff report satisfaction with Chameleon, the Shelter's primary system to intake and track animals, but indicated that it is difficult to learn and only accessible on-site.
	Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. From the experience of staff who recently joined the Shelter, identify opportunities where additional training or mentoring could have improved their experience and ability to use Chameleon more quickly. B. Create formal training or facilitate informal mentoring opportunities based on the software learning gaps identified.



OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS		
		C. Work with City and Police Department IT leadership to determine if Chameleon can be accessed when staff are off-site with alternative security protocols.
11.	Observation	Currently, most requests for service at the Shelter come through customer phone calls, which require additional employee resources to intake, triage, and address.
	Recommendation	<p>Explore ways that the Shelter's customer service can be channeled through systems that require less labor from Shelter staff.</p> <p>A. Consider if an online portal can be more effectively used for service requests.</p> <p>B. Consider whether an automated phone system can be used for service requests, or at least to provide answers to frequently asked questions.</p>
12.	Observation	Shelter staff must currently share computers and other electronic devices, which impairs operational effectiveness and efficiency.
	Recommendation	Ensure all employees are equipped with the appropriate tools and resources to be able to complete their duties.



II. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

The City of Stockton (the City) operates a municipal animal shelter through its Police Department to provide animal-related services to the community. The mission of the Animal Shelter (the Shelter) is to improve the lives of animals that enter the Shelter and neglected animals in the community. The Shelter serves the City's population of over 322,000 people across an area of 65 square miles. In addition, it provides services to unincorporated San Joaquin County, meaning that the Shelter provides services to an additional 208,000 estimated residents and 1,273 square miles of nearby unincorporated areas. Currently, the Shelter has 18 authorized full-time-equivalent (FTE) positions, including five Animal Services Officers. However, as of May 2024, the Shelter has seven vacancies. The Shelter contracts for veterinary services, rescue coordination services, and foster coordination services through Hard Luck Animal Welfare Advocates (Hard Luck AWA).

Following the pandemic, demands on the Shelter increased while staffing became more challenging to recruit and retain. Given the changes in its operating environment, City leadership requested that Moss Adams conduct an Animal Shelter Efficiency Study. The purpose of this study is to identify opportunities for improvement regarding Shelter programs and services, staff recruitment, staff retention, staff capacity, and facilities.

This study consisted of four major phases, performed between January and May 2024:

- **Start-Up and Management:** This phase concentrated on comprehensive planning and project management, including identifying employees to interview, identifying documents to review, and communicating results.
- **Fact-Finding:** In the second phase we conducted fieldwork, including document review, a site visit, interviews, and peer benchmarking.
 - Document Review: We reviewed a variety of documents and information provided by the City including policies and procedures, job descriptions, performance monitoring, the Hard Luck AWA contract, and others.
 - Interviews: We conducted interviews and focus groups with all Shelter staff as well as key stakeholders such as Human Resources. The purpose of these interviews was to gain insights into the current operating environment, strengths, and opportunities for improvement at the Shelter.
 - Site Visit: To better understand the condition of the Shelter facility, we went on-site and walked through the current building and grounds.
 - Peer Benchmarking: We conducted peer benchmarking with five peer and aspirational animal shelters identified by the City, including the City of Sacramento Front Street Animal Shelter, Sacramento County Bradshaw Animal Shelter, Washoe County (Nevada) Regional Animal Services, San Diego Humane Society, and San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA).
- **Analysis:** Based on the information gathered during our fact-finding phase, we conducted and consolidated research on animal shelter standards and best practices. Leveraging peer and best practice information, we developed practical recommendations.



- **Reporting Results:** We are communicating the results of our analysis in this draft report, which will be reviewed with Shelter management to confirm the practicality and relevance of recommendations before finalizing.



III. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the input gathered from interviews and documents reviewed as well as comparisons to peer animal shelters and best practices, we prepared a comprehensive set of observations and recommendations, which are presented below.

A. PEOPLE

Staffing Levels

1.	Observation	Due to vacancies and surging demand for animal shelter services in the community, Shelter staffing levels are insufficient, which results in employee burnout and a limited ability to respond to community concerns.
	Recommendation	<p>A. In coordination with HR, continue to prioritize efforts to fill vacant Animal Services Assistant and Animal Services Officer positions.</p> <p>B. Conduct a workload and staffing analysis to quantify the degree of additional staff that would be necessary to better serve the community's current and future demand for animal services</p>

Like many municipal animal shelters, surging animal populations and growing community demand for services exceed the Shelter staff's capacity to provide consistent services at the level of quality desired. Currently, the Shelter has 18 budgeted FTEs but is carrying seven vacancies. At the time of this analysis, these vacancies were largely in the Animal Services Assistant (four vacancies) and Animal Services Officer (two vacancies) roles, which both have a direct impact on the City's ability to respond to community concerns and care for the animals in the Shelter. As of May 2024, the two Animal Services Officer positions were filled.

Although Shelter staff work diligently to provide high-quality services to the animals and community of Stockton, ballooning demands on the Shelter create an environment of constant triage. Staff routinely have to address competing demands for employee time and Shelter resources. This environment makes strategic organizational and operational management of the Shelter difficult (see also [Observation 7: Strategic Performance Management](#)) and contributes to the risk of employee burnout. Understaffing is particularly concerning for the Animal Services Officer roles. Although one Officer recently returned from leave, the entire City was only served by one active Officer for a period of several months. This created conditions both of insufficient service provision, as well as excessive physical and emotional drain on the remaining Officer.

This environment of constant triage can negatively impact the quality of services provided to the animals and residents of Stockton. Because staffing is limited, animals may experience more stress during their stays with the Shelter, despite employees' best efforts and commitment to honoring the five freedoms of animal welfare. Similarly, because Animal Services Officer positions are limited, there is less capacity to respond to calls from community members.



The City should apply industry guidance to inform appropriate staffing levels. According to the Humane Society of the United States and the National Animal Control Association, employee work hours must be sufficient to ensure that the basic needs of animals in the Shelter are met each day. These organizations recommend 15 minutes of basic care per animal per day.

Demand Measure	Stockton	Peer Average
Population Served	563,878	960,927
Area Served (Square Miles)	1,338	1,611
Annual Animals Served	11,000	15,232
Annual Calls Fielded	32,651	70,154
Authorized FTE Employees	18	207.4

In addition to industry standards, the City should analyze staffing levels compared to peer benchmarks. Four measures of service demand were collected during the Study's peer benchmarking process that can be used to inform staffing: population served, area served, animal throughput, and number of fielded calls. In their own unique ways, each of these metrics is a gauge of the degree of animal services that the Shelter must provide. By examining these measures of demand along with the staffing available to meet this demand, and comparing these metrics to peers, the City can begin to understand the degree of current understaffing at the Shelter.

Each of the four measures of demand can be used to calculate a ratio between demand and staffing, both for the Stockton Animal Shelter and for its peers. In turn, each of these ratios can be applied to Stockton to determine what additional staffing Stockton would need to better match the service demand.

Demand-to-Staffing Metric	Stockton Animal Shelter	Peer Average	To Match Peer Average, FTE Staffing in Stockton Would Be	Increase Over Existing FTE
Population Served Per Authorized FTE	31,327	9,842	57 FTE	+39 FTE
Population Served Per Authorized Officer	112,776	55,101	10 Officers	+5 Officers
Square Miles Served Per Authorized FTE	74.3	33	40 FTE	+22 FTE
Annual Animals Served Per Authorized FTE	611	125	88 FTE	+70 FTE
Annual Calls Fielded Per Authorized FTE	1,814	394	83 FTE	+65 FTE



Each of these demand-to-service metrics suggest that Stockton is severely understaffed in its authorized positions. In order to achieve service levels to the same extent as its peers, Stockton would need to increase staffing by between 22 to 70 additional FTEs—a 122% to 389% increase over current staffing levels. To provide its population with similar levels of Officer services, the Shelter would need to double its current number of authorized Animal Services Officers. Furthermore, this analysis understates the true shortage of current Officer services, since there are currently only two Officers actively providing service to the Stockton community due to vacancies. In FY 2024-45, the City added two Animal Service Officer positions which will help to address this staffing shortage.

In addition to adding staff, the City can improve Shelter operations by prioritizing streamlining the Shelter's hiring process (see [Observation 2: Hiring Processes](#)), providing additional employee training (see [Observation 3: Training and Cross-Training](#)), and making efforts to maintain and improve staff morale.

Hiring Processes

2.	Observation	The Animal Shelter's hiring process includes civil service testing and extensive background check processes, which delays hiring and significantly hinders the Shelter's ability to fill vacant positions. These difficulties are particularly pronounced for entry-level Animal Services Assistant positions since applicants can more rapidly find work for comparable pay elsewhere.
	Recommendation	<p>A. Evaluate whether CJIS background checks are necessary for Animal Services Assistant positions.</p> <p>B. Where possible, consider options to simplify civil service testing for Animal Services Assistant positions to improve hiring efficiency.</p> <p>C. To help fill vacancies, evaluate whether the requirement of two years in animal care or law enforcement services for the Animal Services Officer role can be augmented through coursework or other experience.</p>

All potential new staff at the Shelter must undergo civil service testing, as required by the City Charter. In addition, they must undergo a thorough background check process to become Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) certified because the Shelter is in the City's Police Department. This process applies to Animal Services Officers and Supervisors, but also includes entry-level Animal Services Assistants and Office Technicians.

Both background check processes and civil service testing requirements lengthen the hiring process. This elongated hiring process negatively impacts recruitment, as potential employees typically wait four to six months between the selection process and the actual date of hire. This is particularly untenable for entry-level Animal Services Assistant positions, since applicants can pursue numerous job opportunities with comparable pay more quickly outside of City service. Additionally, becoming CJIS-certified requires an extensive background check that may not be necessary for Animal Services Assistant positions. Staff report that this requirement often deters potential candidates from



completing the hiring process, which results in the Shelter regularly carrying a high number of vacancies for these positions.

The City should reassess whether performing CJIS background checks is necessary for all Shelter positions. For positions with a less direct impact on public safety and lower levels of interaction with the rest of the Police Department (such as Animal Services Assistants), the City could conduct a modified background check that is less rigorous but more rapid, recognizing the recruitment tradeoffs that accompany a full CJIS background check.

Similarly, although the City Charter requires civil service testing for Animal Services Assistant roles, there may be opportunities to simplify or expedite the testing process given the scope of their duties in performing manual cleaning, maintenance, and animal care duties. The City charter states that “all tests shall be practical and shall consist only of subjects which fairly determine the capacity of the persons examined to perform the duties of the position to which appointment is to be made.” Although the charter clearly states that testing cannot be foregone, this charter language presents considerable flexibility with regard to both testing content and rigor. This flexibility can be utilized by the Shelter, allowing Shelter leadership and Human Resources to design simplified tests that would allow candidates to progress through the hiring process more rapidly.

Finally, the Animal Services Officer job description requires two years of experiences in animal care services or law enforcement. Staff report that this requirement can also create challenges in filling vacant positions. The City should consider whether this experience is required, what would reasonably fulfill this requirement, and if there are opportunities to augment candidates’ animal services experience through course offerings, trainings, and job shadowing after a candidate is hired.

Training and Cross-Training

3.	Observation	The Shelter’s limited training budget and employee time constraints hinder employee growth and development.
	Recommendation	<p>A. The City should reevaluate the Shelter’s annual training budget to ensure sufficient resources are allocated to expose staff to innovative and best practices often identified through conferences and external training opportunities.</p> <p>B. Develop internal cross-training opportunities for staff, particularly junior staff.</p>

The Shelter currently has an annual training budget of \$1,500, which equates to approximately \$80 per person each year. This amount is insufficient to support the growth and development of Shelter employees across all levels. In addition to this budgetary constraint, Shelter staff also lack time to participate in training opportunities. Staff throughout the organization expressed desires for more training opportunities in interviews. These desires were particularly pronounced for lower-level staff who were relatively new to working with animals.

The City should reevaluate its training budget to ensure that sufficient resources are dedicated to training. Employee training is a critical factor in retaining and growing high-performing employees,



developing leadership succession, and improving employee morale. Shelter leadership should assess the training needs of both managerial and frontline staff to determine where gaps in skills or knowledge exist. Training opportunities should be prioritized around these gaps.

Additionally, Shelter leadership should work to identify and prioritize appropriate training opportunities and resources to expand the knowledge base of Shelter staff. As part of this work, the Shelter should develop a standard process where managers can request external trainings, and a clear set of criteria to determine what training opportunities are pursued. to support equitable allocation of resources, strategic use of funds, and transparency for all staff. The criteria should prioritize training for managers that would then allow them to train lower-level staff on the information or skills learned.

Due to the environment of triage and constant informal position backup (see [Observation 1: Staffing Levels](#)), Shelter leadership should also consider facilitating formal in-house cross-training for staff. Such training could include job shadowing or mentorships and would not require additional financial resources, but would require designated staff time. Cross-training facilitates the consistent provision of services despite turnover, absences, or other exigencies.

In-house-developed training can be an essential vehicle for professional development, particularly in a fiscally constrained environment. In addition to the benefits of training more junior-level staff, there are benefits to the trainers in demonstrating greater leadership. Empowering staff to design and provide training can engage employees, develop leadership and communication skills, and improve morale.

Foster and Rescue Staff

4.	Observation	Foster and rescue staff are critical to moving animals through the Shelter, but are overseen by the Shelter's contractor for veterinary services, Hard Luck Animal Welfare Advocates (Hard Luck AWA), rather than by the Shelter Manager.
	Recommendation	Evaluate whether foster and rescue staff should be Shelter employees to ensure appropriate oversight, tracking, relationship-building with the community, and success in moving animals out of the Shelter and into permanent homes.

When the City terminated its relationship with a previous contractor, contracted staff who were fulfilling foster and rescue responsibilities were able to be retained at the Shelter by being hired through the contract with Hard Luck AWA. However, Hard Luck AWA is predominantly an animal medical care provider. Foster and rescue responsibilities are supplemental to this organization's mission and expertise, yet these medical professionals are charged with the formal oversight of foster and rescue staff.

Given current staffing and resource constraints at the Shelter, foster-related duties are successfully performed by staff employed through the Hard Luck AWA contract and overseen by the contractor's management team. However, contracting out foster and rescue employees can present challenges in ensuring philosophy alignment, accountability, and consistent relationship-building with local rescue organizations.



Although Hard Luck AWA staff are formally responsible for foster and rescue staff oversight, the line between the accountability of these staff to Shelter managers and Hard Luck AWA managers is blurred. While any hybrid service provision through in-house and contracted staff would contribute to complex accountability structures, the fact that Hard Luck AWA is managing employees outside of its subject matter expertise particularly muddles accountability and decision-making. In matters pertaining to rescue and foster, City employees have more expertise and experience than the de jure employer of these employees.

Foster and rescue staff provide critical support in helping animals move through the Shelter and find permanent homes and given the importance of non-shelter options, the City should consider whether these positions would be better filled in-house. Shelter leaders should examine the decision to provide foster and rescue staffing through the Hard Luck AWA contract, to ensure that this service provision model is effective and, most importantly, sustainable.

There is no current indication that Hard Luck AWA would stop being the veterinary contractor for the Shelter, but if an exigency occurred that led Hard Luck AWA to unexpectedly cease its relationship with the City, the Shelter would suddenly find itself without rescue or foster coordinators. Moving these positions in-house would safeguard the Shelter from the unexpected. Staff indicated that these positions, if brought in-house, would require establishment of an entirely new job title and description.

B. FACILITIES

Facility Issues: Animals

5.	Observation	The existing Stockton Animal Shelter facility has deficiencies that impact animal welfare and spread disease. Many of these deficiencies, particularly the quality of primary enclosures for dogs, will not be addressed in the new shelter building.
	Recommendation	<p>A. Develop a plan to improve primary enclosures and isolation area for dogs within the Shelter's current facility or in the new building.</p> <p>B. As the new building is developed, review the Shelter's current drainage and anticipated future needs and develop a plan to ensure the drain system has the appropriate capacity to meet these needs.</p> <p>C. To the extent possible, improve dog play yard conditions.</p> <p>D. Prioritize addressing the rodent and insect infestations.</p>

The Stockton Animal Shelter facility was built over half a century ago when the philosophy and expectations around municipal animal shelters were much different than they are today. Recognizing this, the City is in the process of finalizing plans for a new shelter building to better serve the community and its animals.

[Appendix B](#) details the alignment of the Animal Shelter facility's present and future facilities with animal services best practices. Currently, the Shelter is in full alignment with 22% of the identified facility best practices, and this degree of alignment is expected to increase to 28% after construction



of the new facility. Although 16% of indicators currently show partial alignment with best practices, there currently is and will remain room for additional improvement of shelter facilities to meet industry best practices.

The new shelter space addresses some important existing concerns with the current building. A very important example regards non-medical euthanasia. Facility best practices require a separate indoor room for euthanasia that is well lit, with a sink, set up to minimize discomfort and distress and accommodate the individual animal's behavioral and physical needs. Currently, the Shelter performs euthanasia in an outdoor area in the back of the Shelter. The new facility will provide a designated indoor space, providing better care for animals in the process of euthanasia.

Additional concerns that will be addressed with construction of the new shelter include designated medical care space that allows for greater community animal medical services, improved cat enclosures that allow for a better manifestation of the fourth freedom of expressing normal behavior, and vastly improved ventilation.

Although the new shelter facility will improve alignment with best practices, the following significant concerns will remain unaddressed and continue to negatively affect animal welfare:

- Dog Enclosures and Isolation Area:** Perhaps most importantly, sanitation and structural concerns will remain regarding primary enclosures for dogs. Because enclosures are made of chain link fencing, diseases can more easily spread between animals and dogs can make regular eye contact with one another, increasing barking, noise levels, and kennel stress. There are also concerns with unsealed floor and wall gaps creating unsanitary conditions, particularly regarding animal waste. There should also be opportunities for dogs to hide within their enclosures. Shelter and City leadership should develop a plan to improve primary enclosures for dogs. Additionally, the dog quarantine area would benefit from improvements to reduce the spread of contagious diseases.
- Drainage:** Shelter and City leaders should also anticipate and plan for drainage problems. Drainage in the current building, and perhaps in the future building, is of particular concern. Drain placement in some hallways is not aligned with best practices, which has previously resulted in staff injury and presents risks to animal health. Additionally, the drainage system's capacity to handle the Shelter's needs has decreased over time and/or drainage capacity has not been able to meet increased use. Already, staff have adjusted their cleaning practices to compensate for insufficient drainage capacity, and interviewed staff reported occasional issues with drain backup. Concerns with drainage are particularly notable because the new building's drainage system is currently planned to flow through the current building, increasing drainage use without any planned changes to drain capacity.
- Play Yard:** To the extent possible, Shelter leadership should prioritize improvement of the play yard. The dog play yard is currently of low quality and does not support regular use of dog play groups. Currently, play groups occur more infrequently than would be ideally desired by staff, and are usually conducted solely for determining the socialization status of dogs, rather than routine play and expression of social behaviors. This negatively affects socialization, which increases kennel stress. This decreases animal welfare and the likelihood of successful outcomes for dogs. Best practices indicate that shelters should provide animals with opportunities to engage in healthy social contact with people and other animals of the same species.
- Infestations:** Shelter and City leadership should also prioritize the improvement of rodent and insect infestations within the Shelter. These infestations create additional sanitation and health



concerns for animals, in addition to health and morale concerns for staff. These infestations can occur in part due to deficiencies in dog enclosures.

Shelter and City leadership should evaluate these facility needs and prioritize them during the City's budgeting process.

Facility Issues: Humans

6.	Observation	The existing Stockton Animal Shelter facility lacks adequate, welcoming, and safe space for employees and customers.
	Recommendation	<p>A. Ensure that the additional office space in the new building is sufficient for staff to perform daily activities and allows for private discussions.</p> <p>B. Ensure that the space for customers is sufficiently large and welcoming in the new building, including a waiting area.</p> <p>C. To the extent possible, protect staff from drainage-related safety hazards via capital improvements and standard operating procedures.</p> <p>D. Prioritize addressing the rodent and insect infestations to ensure workspaces are clean and safe.</p>

In addition to facility concerns regarding animal welfare, the current shelter space creates challenges for the staff tasked with providing the City with animal services. Although the City should emphasize animal health and welfare improvements in its facility planning, shelter staff are ultimately the source of ongoing animal care and services, and staff needs should be emphasized. Additionally, by ensuring the shelter facility meets the needs of its employees, it is more likely to also meet the needs of potential customers.

Currently, there is insufficient office space for staff to complete their daily administrative duties. Office space is extremely cramped. Although plans for the new facility include additional space for staff, the City should ensure that the new space adequately serves staff needs prior to finalizing construction plans. Shelter and City leadership should work with staff at all levels to understand the full range of administrative duties performed and the necessary space for each, and ensure that the new facility will better accommodate this through additional office space.

Additionally, the space for Shelter customers is extremely small and largely confined to the hallway in front of reception, with any spillover space requiring customers to stand or sit on one bench outside. Although plans for the new facility include additional space for customers, the City should ensure that the new building provides sufficient customer space before finalizing construction plans. Similar to ensuring sufficient office space, the goal for the new facility should not simply be more space—but adequate space. Shelter and City leaders should intentionally estimate the additional space necessary for effective customer service and ensure that the new facility addresses this need.

As mentioned above in [Observation 5](#), drainage locations within the Shelter's hallways have resulted in a previous staff injury. To the extent that capital improvements can be made to improve staff safety,



the City should protect workers from drains and drain overflow wherever possible. If capital improvements cannot sufficiently protect staff, the City should ensure that standard operating procedures adequately guide staff on how to protect themselves and animals from injury. Given the degree of informal job duty backup required for staff (see [Observation 1](#) and [Observation 3](#)), any updated safety procedures should be provided to all staff.

Finally, recurring rodent and insect infestations at the Shelter create health risks for staff and have negative impacts on employee morale. The City should prioritize addressing these infestations to support a safe and clean environment for both employees and animals.

C. STRATEGY AND PROCESSES

Strategic Performance Management

7.	Observation	Given current staffing conditions and the community's surging demand for animal services, strategic performance measurement and management at the Shelter has been difficult to implement.
	Recommendation	<p>A. In collaboration with City and Police Department leadership, develop a strategic plan for the next five years of animal shelter operations.</p> <p>B. Establish a framework for strategic performance management, including the selection and monitoring of key performance indicators (KPIs).</p> <p>C. Develop externally-facing performance measures to regularly report to the community and help garner public support for Shelter operations.</p>

Due to the current state of overwhelmed staff and surging demand for services, much of the Shelter's operations are inherently reactive. This has not provided Shelter leaders with the capacity to proactively and strategically manage the Shelter's performance. This is not to say that Shelter leadership does not act strategically given current constraints: one notable peer specifically praised Shelter leadership and staff on their performance given available resources. However, more purposeful strategic management of operations could be implemented if staffing levels are improved and leaders have more capacity to address long-term strategy rather than short-term triage.

Strategic Planning

In collaboration with City and Police Department leadership, the Shelter should develop a five-year strategic plan to guide its operations and priorities. The Shelter would benefit from having a defined vision for future success, rooted in community priorities but with realistic goals given available resources.

A strong strategic plan incorporates measurable objectives and performance measures that link goals, strategies, and actions in the plan with programs and activities performed by departments. Each goal should have time-bound and specific objectives that are tied to Shelter-wide performance



measures. The strategic plan should be a practical, actionable guide for the next five years of Shelter operations.

At a minimum, an effective strategic plan should delineate the following:

- **Mission:** A concise statement of the Shelter's purpose and role in the community. The Shelter already has a defined mission statement, but could take the opportunity during the strategic planning process to make any necessary revisions.
- **Vision:** An inspiring description of how the Shelter would optimally serve the community and manifest its values and goals as an organization in the future.
- **Goals:** Specific, desired end results that the Shelter will work toward in fulfilling its mission and pursuing its vision.
- **Performance Measures:** The metrics by which Shelter leadership will determine whether the organization is progressing toward and accomplishing its goals and advancing toward its vision.

The strategic plan may be accompanied by one or more business plans for different operational teams within the Shelter, each supporting achievement of the Shelter-wide strategic plan. Business plans should define the service philosophy, priorities, and levels; clarify goals, objectives, and desired outcomes; and develop efficiency- and effectiveness-based performance measures. Business plans that relate to offering new services and programs at the new shelter facility, as well as strengthening foster and rescue partnerships, could be beneficial.

Finally, the strategic plan should serve as a high-level decision-making framework that provides a foundation for evaluating new initiatives, project prioritization, and strategies. This comprehensive planning framework will help the Shelter evaluate and prioritize issues moving forward. Strategic plans should be revisited and updated every four to five years and should not be significantly altered on a more frequent basis. In this way, the plan can serve as a strong and reliable guide for the Shelter's future.

Key Performance Indicators

The Shelter already reports on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) primarily related to the volume of animals served, release rates, and animal outcomes. These KPIs should be reviewed alongside the development of a strategic plan to promote alignment with goals and demonstrate progress over time. Staff at all levels should use these KPIs to inform and guide their work and decision-making to improve shelter performance collaboratively and continuously.

The Shelter should use KPI data to continuously support transparency and accountability through the use of outcome reporting and performance measures tied to strategic goals outlined in the strategic plan. It is best practice to use data to inform decision-making. In addition, providing frequent, accessible, transparent, credible, and accurate performance reports can increase public trust.

Each of the peer shelters interviewed use KPIs to measure and guide internal performance. For example, Washoe County Regional Animal Services uses KPIs generated from Chameleon on a monthly basis to guide internal decision-making and performance management. These KPIs include detailed statistics on intakes, returns to owners, microchip intakes, other animal outcomes (e.g., euthanasia and other animal death statistics), and the number of community seniors assisted. Washoe County Regional Animal Services publishes an annual calendar year statistics infographic



for public consumption. These statistics include live animal release rates, numbers of calls for service, noise complaints, animal bites, animal welfare calls, and stray animals returned to owners.

Most—but not all—of the peer shelters interviewed also use KPIs to communicate performance to external stakeholders. On at least an annual basis, the Shelter should publish a set of external performance statistics for elected officials and the community. These performance measures should reflect the workload and outcomes of the Shelter and serve as a useful communications tool for the community to help foster public support for the Shelter. The Front Street Shelter website serves as a good example of this external-facing information and reporting.

Practicality of Policies and Procedures

8.	Observation	The Shelter has well-developed comprehensive policies and procedures, but staffing shortages present challenges in implementing all documented guidance.
	Recommendation	<p>A. Shelter management should work with frontline staff to identify which standard operating procedures are particularly difficult to implement with fidelity given current staff and resource constraints.</p> <p>B. As necessary, conduct additional staff training to support adherence to policies and procedures.</p> <p>C. If needed, revise identified standard operating procedures to reflect current practices that will meet the needs of Shelter staff and animals.</p>

Despite the everyday challenges faced by staff, interviewed staff from all levels of the Shelter uniformly praised the quality of its policies and procedures. Policies and procedures help employees understand expectations and perform processes consistently across locations and time. Additionally, policies and procedures support operational continuity when employees leave the Shelter. Well-developed policies and procedures reduce the Shelter's operating risk and increase employee accountability.

Despite the clear quality of the Shelter's standard operating procedures, staff report that they are not always realistic to implement given current understaffing at the Shelter, particularly for Animal Services Assistants. The Shelter's formal written guidance often represents what could and should be done with adequate staffing and resources, and is therefore difficult to consistently implement with fidelity given existing staffing and resource constraints.

Policies and procedures that are not practical to implement can present significant challenges related to the following:

- **Efficiency:** When processes are unclear or inconsistent compared to what is written, this can cause rework for staff. It is also difficult to optimize processes that are not documented, as there is no standard baseline procedure to improve upon.



- **Customer Service:** Having policy and procedure documentation that is not applicable to day-to-day staff efforts can result in communication and customer service issues due to a lack of actionable service standards.
- **Roles and Responsibilities:** Policies and procedures can create a discrepancy between de jure and de facto roles and responsibilities, which can impact employee morale and team relations.
- **Knowledge Transfer:** When knowledge of the standard operating procedures to actually perform with fidelity is primarily shared orally, it can be difficult for new staff to efficiently learn the Shelter's true operational processes and procedures.
- **Accountability:** Policies and procedures facilitate accountability for departments and staff. When policies and procedures are not practical to implement, they cannot realistically be used to hold staff accountable.

Shelter management should work with frontline staff to identify the standard operating procedures that cannot be consistently implemented due to capacity constraints. If supplemental training will allow for procedure implementation, supervisors should provide the necessary training to staff.

In cases where policies and procedures cannot be implemented due to insufficient resources, supervisors should work with frontline staff to revise these procedures so that they are realistic. In this process, Shelter management should consider how revised processes will meet the needs of both employees and animals.

After any necessary procedure revisions, the Shelter should also develop a schedule to guide regular reviews by policy and process owners, to ensure practicality and usefulness given current resources. Shelter leaders should consider a monthly cadence for these meetings. However, if the Shelter's available resources increase in the future, Shelter leaders should review the original policies and procedures to determine if and when it would be appropriate to reinstate the original, full-resource-dependent policies and procedures.

Social Media

9.	Observation	Like other organizations within the industry, the Shelter uses social media to perform public outreach, cultivate support for the Shelter, and generate interest in adoptions. Although the Shelter appears to use social media well, it lacks a designated employee resource to support this work or a strategy to support continuous and growing community engagement.
	Recommendation	<p>A. Dedicate at least 0.5 of a full-time equivalent (FTE) employee to social media management to ensure continuous engagement with social media platforms.</p> <p>B. Integrate social media goals and strategies into the Shelter's strategic plan (see Observation 7), including ways to leverage current trends such as shortform videos to engage audiences.</p>



Like many shelters, the Stockton Animal Shelter uses social media to generate public awareness of and public support for Shelter programs and activities. The Shelter produces frequent social media content and frequently provides information in both English and Spanish.

Currently, social media tasks are managed ad hoc by various staff members, adding these responsibilities to their already overwhelming list of regular tasks. In addition to being another instance of overburdening staff, operating social media as an add-on task rather than a dedicated function likely decreases the quality of public outreach, support, and interest generated by the Shelter, which are all vital to improving outcomes for animals.

If the Shelter's staffing resources can be improved, the City should consider dedicating a position of at least 0.5 FTE to managing social media, if not 1.0 FTE. Both Washoe County Regional Animal Services and Sacramento Front Street Shelter have dedicated social media staff. Having dedicated staffing for social media increases the quality of content and likelihood of increased community engagement and interest. Improving social media through dedicated staffing could also increase the Shelter's ability to recruit and retain volunteers.

In addition to dedicating staffing to social media, the Shelter should integrate social media management into its strategic plan (see [Observation 7: Strategic Performance Management](#)). Social media initiatives should have a defined set of aims and tactics to support enterprise-wide operations and consistency in employee expectations. Through integrating social media into the strategic plan, the Shelter can indicate to stakeholders its importance and deserved use of resources, and integrate its KPI performance monitoring and improvement framework to promote effective use and results through social media platforms.

Currently, the Shelter uses occasional video content on social media. In particular, the Shelter frequently reposts longer videos made by Hard Luck AWA, the medical, foster, and rescue contractor. Sacramento's Front Street Shelter attributes some of its social media success to its ability to create and publish 30 to 45-second videos, particularly of uplifting stories on its animals. These shorter videos provide positive content for potential customers and take advantage of new social media trends to reach a broader audience. Stockton Animal Shelter management should consider how new or existing staff resources can be best leveraged to produce and publish similarly short videos that tout its successful animal outcomes.

D. TECHNOLOGY

Chameleon

10.	Observation	Staff report satisfaction with Chameleon, the Shelter's primary system to intake and track animals, but indicated that it is difficult to learn and only accessible on-site.
	Recommendation	A. From the experience of staff who recently joined the Shelter, identify opportunities where additional training or mentoring could have improved their experience and ability to use Chameleon more quickly.



- B. Create formal training or facilitate informal mentoring opportunities based on the software learning gaps identified.
- C. Work with City and Police Department IT leadership to determine if Chameleon can be accessed when staff are off-site with alternative security protocols.

Chameleon Learning Gaps and Training

In interviews, staff from all levels consistently praised the capabilities of Chameleon, the Shelter's main management software. Even junior staff who recently joined the Shelter were pleased with the software and its capabilities, though many noted that the process of learning how to become effective users of Chameleon was difficult and that there are additional capabilities that they would like to learn to use.

Shelter management should work with new employees to learn how training and mentoring could be improved to facilitate Chameleon skill development. The Shelter should assess the training needs of staff, particularly junior staff, and determine what gaps in skills or knowledge exist. Using this information on Chameleon skill gaps, Shelter management should prepare formal trainings or facilitate the delivery of informal mentoring to help more junior staff develop their abilities in using Chameleon. This training will help support the enhanced use of Chameleon, which can increase efficiency and also enhance reporting capabilities.

Remote Access

Currently, Chameleon can only be accessed on-site at the Shelter. Staff reported that off-site access is restricted due to IT security concerns. It would be broadly beneficial, particularly for supervisors, to be able to access Chameleon from home or from other locations outside the Shelter. Interviewed staff noted several instances in which leaders could better perform their duties if able to access the system remotely.

Shelter leadership and City leadership should work with City and Police department IT staff to reconsider whether staff could be able to access Chameleon off-site. The Shelter and IT functions should determine whether additional security precautions, such as the use of a VPN, could be implemented to balance the need for IT security and operational efficiency.

Customer Service and Automation

11.	Observation	Currently, most requests for service at the Shelter come through customer phone calls, which require additional employee resources to intake, triage, and address.
	Recommendation	<p>Explore ways that the Shelter's customer service can be channeled through systems that require less labor from Shelter staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Consider if an online portal can be more effectively used for service requests. B. Consider whether an automated phone system can be used for



service requests, or at least to provide answers to frequently asked questions.

Currently, the majority of service requests to the Shelter are placed through customer phone calls. One staff member estimated that this results in approximately 150 phone calls each day. If each of these calls takes between three to five minutes on average, this results in between 7.5 to 12.5 hours of customer calls every day that Shelter staff must address. Due to shortages in Animal Services Officer positions, some staff estimate the portion of unaddressed calls to be as much as one-third of total calls.

Shelter leadership should explore ways that customer service requests can be addressed or channeled through automated systems that require less staff time to intake and address. This can both reduce staff burden and improve customer experience.

Although the City has previously attempted to redirect Shelter customers and other service requests through its *Ask Stockton* system, the current design of Shelter service requests may not sufficiently direct customers away from phone calls. Although this online platform facilitates the reporting of online service requests, many of the animal service requests provide prompts for customers to call the Shelter right above the button to submit an online service request. For example, although the *Ask Stockton* system allows online requests to address *Excessive Noise – Barking Dog* on the webpage right above the request submission button, the webpage says: “Barking Dogs can be annoying. In the City of Stockton a dog barking, non-stop for 10 minutes is considered a menace. To report a dog that is a menace, please call Animal Control at (209) 937-8274.” This text explicitly prompts the reader to call Animal Control rather than submitting an online service request. This likely increases the number of calls received by the Shelter.

Shelter leadership should consider if the *Ask Stockton* platform for animal service requests can be revised to better channel customer requests online, or if a Shelter-specific online portal for service requests may better serve the public and Shelter staff. Revising the text of the Shelter’s service requests in the *Ask Stockton* system can likely be designed and implemented very quickly. Although examining the potential for a Shelter-specific online portal will take longer, it is possible that this may be more effective for the City.

Similarly, Shelter leadership should consider whether an automated phone system can be used to help channel routine customer service requests to the appropriate resource. Automated phone systems can direct customers to resources for frequently asked questions. Such phone systems can also receive customer audio messages that are categorized into their specific type of service requests. By grouping customer service requests into similar categories, staff may be able to respond to these requests more efficiently through a strategic allocation of attention, time, and resources, as opposed to having to address new customer requests for disparate issues one at a time.

When considering implementation of a dedicated Shelter-specific portal and/or an automated phone system, Shelter and City leadership should make sure to appropriately assess the comparative costs of action versus inaction. Although the costs of additional information infrastructure are easily identified, the costs of the status quo are less easily quantified. However, every hour that a staff member unnecessarily spends on a phone call with a customer that could be more quickly handled through an automated system represents an hour that staff member is not spending on other work for



the Shelter and the City. Whether this foregone hour comes in the form of animal care, administrative work, or other tasks, there are operational costs to the Shelter and the City for staff time that could be spent doing more productive work. Although the City may decide that additional investments in technology and customer service automation are not worth the cost, these decisions should be made with full understanding of both of the costs of implementation and the costs of inaction.

Devices

12.	Observation	Shelter staff must currently share computers and other electronic devices, which impairs operational effectiveness and efficiency.
	Recommendation	Ensure all employees are equipped with the appropriate tools and resources to be able to complete their duties.

Currently, for both Shelter staff and for the Shelter contractor Hard Luck AWA, there are fewer devices (e.g., computers and tablets) available than the number of staff who need to use them at any given time. This means that staff must wait to use devices until others have completed their tasks.

The Shelter should determine the appropriate technology resources (e.g., desktops, laptops, tablets, and/or phones) for each of its employee classifications. Shelter leadership should work with the Police Department and City administration to ensure all Shelter employees have the appropriate tools and resources needed to fulfill their responsibilities efficiently and effectively. When determining technology requirements, Shelter leaders should ensure technology provision alignment with available administrative space, both in the current and future shelter facilities.

Like investments in more automated forms of customer service (see [Observation 11: Customer Service and Automation](#)), although additional devices will require additional one-time appropriation of City funds, real costs in the form of inefficient and ineffective use of staff time will result if the City does not invest in additional devices. While these costs can indeed be expressed in dollars, they can also be expressed in lower levels of animal and human welfare. Relatively low levels of additional investments in technology can have important and positive impacts on staff productivity, improving results for the people and animals of Stockton.



APPENDIX A: PEER BENCHMARKING SUMMARY

Shelter	Population Served	Area Served	Annual Budget	Staffing	Annual Animals Served	Annual Calls Fielded (2023)
Stockton Animal Shelter	322,120 Stockton Residents + Estimated 208,758 Residents of Unincorporated San Joaquin County: 563,878 Total	65 square miles + 1,273 unincorporated San Joaquin County square miles	\$4,134,444	18 Authorized FTE 5 Officers (3 Officers Vacant)	Approximately 11,000	32,651 Total 32,651 for Office Assistants 4,309 for Officers
Front Street Animal Shelter, City of Sacramento	525,041	100 square miles	\$7,646,488 + \$250k fundraising expenses	62 FTE 13 Officers	Between 10,000 and 11,000	27,003
Washoe County (Nevada) Regional Animal Services	493,392	6,542 square miles	\$7,200,000	44 FTE 14 Officers	Approximately 9,900	20,972
San Francisco SPCA	815,201	47 square miles	\$38,700,000	223 FTE (No Officers)	4,608	17,205 Adoption Center Calls 87,744 Hospital Calls
San Diego Humane Society	1,382,000	372 square miles	\$64,000,000	641.1 FTE 30.4 Officers	41,250	177,000
Sacramento County Bradshaw Animal Shelter	1,589,000	994 square miles	\$12,948,383	67 FTE 16 Officers	9,901	20,843



Shelter	Population Served Per Authorized FTE	Square Miles Served Per Authorized FTE	Population Served Per Authorized Officer	Annual Budget Per Person Served	Annual Budget Per Square Mile Served	Annual Animals Served Per Authorized FTE	Annual Calls Fielded Per Authorized FTE
Stockton Animal Shelter	31,327	74.3	112,776	\$7.33	\$3,090	611	1,814
Front Street Animal Shelter, City of Sacramento	8,468	1.6	40,388	\$14.56	\$76,465	169	436
Washoe County (Nevada) Regional Animal Services	11,213	148.7	35,242	\$14.59	\$1,101	225	477
San Francisco SPCA	3,656	0.2	N/A	\$47.47	\$823,404	21	471
San Diego Humane Society	2,156	0.6	45,461	\$46.31	\$172,043	64	276
Sacramento County Bradshaw Animal Shelter	23,716	14.8	99,313	\$8.15	\$13,027	148	311



APPENDIX B: ANIMAL SHELTER FACILITIES BEST PRACTICES ASSESSMENT

The following details an analysis of both current state and the projected future state of animal shelter facilities in Stockton. For this analysis, 94 best practices for animal shelter facilities were synthesized from the following sources:

- [Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters, Association of Shelter Veterinarians](#)
- [University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine, Facility Design and Animal Housing](#)
- [Shelter Housing for Cats: Principles of Design for Health, Welfare and Rehoming](#)
- [Shelter Housing for Cats: Practical Aspects of Design and Construction, and Adaptation of Existing Accommodation](#)

The vast majority of standards (77) are derived from the Association of Shelter Veterinarians Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters. Seventeen additional standards are derived from the other three sources.

The Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters delineates four levels of best practice:

1. **Unacceptable** indicates practices that need to be avoided or prevented without exception
2. **Must** indicates practices for which adherence is necessary to ensure humane care
3. **Should** indicates practices that are strongly recommended, and compliance is expected in most circumstances
4. **Ideal** indicates practices that are implemented when resources allow

For each best practice identified, consultants evaluated the Stockton Animal Shelter on its current state (pre-construction) and projected future state (post-construction) of its animal shelter facilities. Each best practice was evaluated through a designation of one of the following criteria:

- **Full Alignment:** The animal shelter facility unambiguously satisfies the best practice to its fullest extent.
- **Improved Alignment:** In the future state, the animal shelter facility will exhibit improved alignment when compared to its current state. However, the Shelter would still fall short of full alignment with the best practice.
- **Partial Alignment:** The animal shelter facility partially satisfies this best practice. However, there are clear areas for improvement.
- **Insufficient Alignment:** The animal shelter facility does not sufficiently satisfy this best practice, even partially.
- **Severe Lack of Alignment:** The animal shelter facility's misalignment with this best practice is severe.
- **Unclear:** The consultant cannot evaluate the current or future animal shelter facility given current information.
- **N/A:** The best practice does not appear applicable to the animal shelter facility.



SUMMARY OF STOCKTON ANIMAL SHELTER FACILITIES ALIGNMENT WITH SHELTER FACILITY BEST PRACTICES			
Number of Standards Corresponding to the Following Levels of Alignment (% of Total Listed Standards)			
Alignment	Current Space	Future Space	Change
Full Alignment	27	50	+23
	29% of Total	53% of Total	+24%
Improved Alignment	N/A	10	+10
	N/A	11% of Total	+11%
Partial Alignment	19	15	-4
	20% of Total	16% of Total	-4%
Insufficient Alignment	22	12	-10
	23% of Total	13% of Total	-11%
Severe Lack of Alignment	11	5	-6
	12% of Total	5% of Total	-6%
N/A	15	2	-13
	16% of Total	2% of Total	-14%



FACILITIES BEST PRACTICES AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK								
Best Practice		#	Subsection	Level	Key Guideline Statement	Current Space	Future Space	Notes
General								
All	Sufficient Space	75	4.1	Must	Shelter facility includes sufficient space to allow for the execution of essential shelter operations and programs as required by mission or mandate	Insufficient Alignment	Improved Alignment	
	Appropriate quality and design of housing	76	4.1	Must	Both the quantity and design of housing is appropriate for the species, the number of animals receiving care, and the expected length of stay	Partial Alignment	Improved Alignment	
	Animal Separation	77	4.1	Must	Facility design and use provides for proper separation of animals by species, predator/prey status, health status, and behavior	Partial Alignment	Improved Alignment	
Primary Enclosures								
All	Variety of Housing	79	4.2	Must	Shelter has a variety of housing units available to meet the individual needs of animals	Partial Alignment	Improved Alignment	
	Primary enclosures maintained	80	4.2	Must	Primary enclosures are structurally sound and maintained in safe, working condition to prevent injury and escape	Insufficient Alignment	Insufficient Alignment	There are structural concerns regarding the primary enclosures for dogs
	No wire-mesh bottoms or slatted floors	81	4.2	Unacceptable	Primary enclosures with wire-mesh bottoms or slatted floors are unacceptable. Shelter avoids these unacceptable enclosures.	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
	No long-term cages/crates	82	4.2	Unacceptable	Cages or crates intended for short-term, temporary confinement or travel are unacceptable as primary enclosures. Shelter avoids these unacceptable enclosures.	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
	Enclosure arrangement	83	4.2	Unacceptable	It is unacceptable to stack or arrange enclosures in a manner that increases animal stress and discomfort, compromises ventilation, or allows for waste material contamination between housing units. Shelter avoids this unacceptable practice.	Insufficient Alignment	Insufficient Alignment	There are concerns regarding waste material contamination between primary enclosures for dogs
	Primary enclosure size	84	4.2	Must	Animals are able to make normal postural adjustments within their primary enclosure, including standing and walking several steps, sitting normally, laying down at full body length, and holding the tail completely erect	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
	Primary enclosures separate living from urination/defecation	87	4.2	Must	Primary enclosures allow animals to sit, sleep, and eat away from areas of their enclosures where they defecate and urinate	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
	Majority of animals in multi-compartment enclosures	88	4.2	Should	Multi-compartment enclosures are provided for the majority of animals housed in the shelter	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
	Indoor-outdoor access	91	4.2	Ideal	Primary enclosures have indoor-outdoor access for most animals, especially those held long term	Partial Alignment	Partial Alignment	All cat primary enclosures are indoor-indoor. Some dog primary enclosures are indoor-indoor.



FACILITIES BEST PRACTICES AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK								
Best Practice	#	Subsection	Level	Key Guideline Statement	Current Space	Future Space	Notes	
DRAFT	Outdoor spaces protect animals	92	4.2	Must	Enclosures that include outdoor space protect animals from adverse weather, provide choice for thermoregulation, protect from predators, and prevent escape, theft or harassment	Partial Alignment	Partial Alignment	There were concerns voiced regarding the possibility of escape for dogs from primary enclosures
	Soft resting place above floor	94	4.2	Should	A soft resting place that elevates animals off of the floor is available for all animals	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
	Long-term stays have additional space	98	4.2	Must	Housing that provides animals with additional space, enrichment, and choice within their enclosure is provided for animals remaining in the shelter long-term (i.e. more than 2 weeks)	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
	Enclosures DO NOT require forceful animal handling	99	4.2	Unacceptable	It is unacceptable to house animals in an enclosure that would require the use of forceful animal handling equipment for daily cleaning and care. Shelter avoids this unacceptable practice.	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
	Facility space intention	100	4.2	Unacceptable	Except for a brief, emergency situation, it is unacceptable to house animals in facility spaces not intended for animal housing (e.g. bathrooms, hallways). Shelter avoids this unacceptable practice.	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
	No tethering	101	4.2	Unacceptable	Tethering is an unacceptable method of confinement for any animal. Shelter avoids this unacceptable practice.	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
	Hiding Area	University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine, Facility Design and Animal Housing		Should	All animals should be provided with appropriate places for concealment which comfortably allow them to avoid visual contact with people or other animals	Partial Alignment	Partial Alignment	This is arranged for some cats via blankets or other concealment
	Young animal housing			Ideal	Because youngsters cannot be protected completely by vaccination, it is very helpful to provide special housing areas that mechanically prevent exposure to infectious illnesses.	Insufficient Alignment	Insufficient Alignment	"Puppy row" is not specially housed, or fully separated from other dogs
Cats	Adult cat minimum square feet (8)	85	4.2	Unacceptable	Individual adult cat housing that is less than 8 ft ² (0.75 m ²) of floor space is unacceptable. Shelter avoids these unacceptable enclosures.	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
	Adult cat ideal square feet (11)	86	4.2	Ideal	Individual cat housing provides 11 ft ² (1.0 m ²) or more of floor space	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	Cat enclosures have 16 square feet of space
	Cat enclosures are off the floor	89	4.2	Should	Cat housing units are elevated off the floor	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
	Cat cages: away from each other or more than 4 feet apart	90	4.2	Should	Cat cages face away from each other or are spaced more than 4 ft (1.2 m) apart	Partial Alignment	Partial Alignment	
	Cats: hide	95	4.2	Must	All cats are given the opportunity to hide within their enclosure	Insufficient Alignment	Improved Alignment	Beds may be removed for a day or two for disinfection between cats
	Cat enclosures: scratching, climbing, perching	96	4.2	Must	Feline primary enclosures allow scratching, climbing, and perching	Insufficient Alignment	Full Alignment	The new cattery will include areas for climbing, perching, and scratching while also allowing for disinfection



FACILITIES BEST PRACTICES AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK								
Best Practice	#	Subsection	Level	Key Guideline Statement	Current Space	Future Space	Notes	
	Litter boxes large enough	97	4.2	Must	Cats have a litter boxes large enough to comfortably accommodate their entire body and allow for proper posturing	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
	Shelving size	Shelter housing for cats: practical aspects of design, Part 2		Should	Shelving intended for cats should be a minimum of 12 in wide and be long enough for cat to lay out	Insufficient Alignment	Improved Alignment	Shelves can be added to kennels and cages in the renovated shelter
	Shelving height	Shelter housing for cats: practical aspects of design, Part 2		Should	Shelves should be raised 13-14 inches off the cage floor to accommodate hiding boxes, carriers, or other solid objects	Insufficient Alignment	Improved Alignment	Shelves can be added to kennels and cages in the renovated shelter
	Visual Stimulation	Shelter housing for cats: practical aspects of design, Part 2		Ideal	Where possible, housing units should be set up so that they provide cats with a "view" (e.g., the outside, the center of the room, a TV, or other cats--so long as cats have an option to choose to limit their view)	Insufficient Alignment	Full Alignment	
Dogs	Dogs: Hide in enclosure	93	4.2	Should	All dogs are given the opportunity to hide within their enclosure	Insufficient Alignment	Insufficient Alignment	
Co-Housing								
All	Co-housing has sufficient space	102	4.3	Must	The size of primary enclosures for co-housing allow each animal to express a variety of normal behaviors and maintain distance from roommates when they choose to do so	N/A	Full Alignment	
	Appropriate resources	104	4.3	Must	Appropriate resources (e.g. food, water, bedding, litter boxes, toys) are provided to minimize competition or resource guarding and ensure access by all co-housed animals	N/A	Full Alignment	
	Puppies and kittens: co-housing	110	4.3	Must	Puppies and kittens under 20 weeks of age are not co-housed with unfamiliar animals except when the benefits outweigh the risks for all animals involved	N/A	Full Alignment	
	Turnover minimum	112	4.3	Must	Turnover within groups is minimized to reduce stress and social conflicts as well as the risk of infectious disease exposure and transmission	N/A	Full Alignment	
	Individual enriched housing	114	4.3	Must	Individual enriched housing is provided for animals who are fearful or behave aggressively towards other animals, are stressed by the presence of other animals, require individual monitoring, or are ill and require treatment that cannot be provided in co-housing	N/A	Full Alignment	
Cats	Cat group housing: sufficient space	103	4.3	Should	A minimum of 18 ft ² (1.7 m ²) of floor space per adult cat is provided for group housing	N/A	Full Alignment	
	Cat group housing: variety	105	4.3	Must	For co-housed cats, a variety of elevated resting perches and hiding places are provided to increase complexity and choice within the living space	N/A	Full Alignment	
	Cat: 6 co-house max	108	4.3	Should	No more than 6 adult cats are co-housed in a primary enclosure	N/A	Full Alignment	
Dogs	Dog: 2-4 co-house max	109	4.3	Should	No more than 2-4 adult dogs are co-housed in a primary enclosure	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	



Facilities Best Practices and Evaluation Framework								
Best Practice		#	Subsection	Level	Key Guideline Statement	Current Space	Future Space	Notes
Isolation Housing								
All	Isolating infectious	116	4.4	Must	Shelter has a means of isolating infectious animals	Partial Alignment	Improved Alignment	Cat primary enclosures for infectious animals appear to be isolated. Dog primary enclosures do not appear to be isolated.
All	Meeting needs	117	4.4	Must	Isolation housing meets the medical and behavioral needs of ill animals	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	No obvious needs unmet in cat enclosures, apart from an ideal state of facilitating perching behaviors.
All	Isolation species separation	118	4.4	Must	Different species are not housed within the same isolation room	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
All	Co-infections	119	4.4	Must	Separate isolation areas are provided for animals with different highly contagious diseases to prevent co-infections with multiple pathogens	Insufficient Alignment	Full Alignment	In the new cattery, there will be an isolation ward that is sealed from other cats with its own air system.
All	Isolation rooms opening	120	4.4	Must	Isolation rooms are designed so that they do not open directly into another animal housing area	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
All	Isolation rooms sink	121	4.4	Should	Isolation rooms have access to a sink for handwashing and are set up with space for treatments, examinations, and storage for dedicated supplies	Insufficient Alignment	Improved Alignment	The cat isolation ward area will have a sink, but there are no plans for put a sink in the dog quarantine area.
All	Isolation rooms labeling	122	4.4	Must	Isolation rooms are clearly labeled to indicate current use and necessary precautions	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
All	Isolation rooms traffic	123	4.4	Should	Human and animal traffic through isolation spaces is limited	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
All	Isolation rooms window	124	4.4	Ideal	Isolation rooms are designed with windows to allow observation of animals from a corridor without needing to repeatedly enter the room	Partial Alignment	Full Alignment	Adding windows to the cattery
Surfaces, Drainage, and Plumbing								
All	Sanitization	125	4.5	Must	Primary enclosures and all animal areas are able to be fully sanitized and withstand repeated cleanings	Partial Alignment	Partial Alignment	There are concerns with the ability to sanitize the unsealed areas between kennels
	Sealed, impermeable surface	126	4.5	Should	A sealed, impermeable surface, such as resinous epoxy or resinous urethane, is considered for new facilities	N/A	Full Alignment	Presumably yes, but would need shelter staff input here
	Sealant where walls meet floors	127	4.5	Should	Points where walls meet floors are sealed to prevent water intrusion and the accumulation of organic matter and pathogens	Severe Lack of Alignment	Severe Lack of Alignment	Serious concerns with the primary enclosures for dogs
	Drainage: standing water and cross-contamination	128	4.5	Must	Drainage systems are designed to prevent standing water and cross-contamination of waste between housing units	Insufficient Alignment	Insufficient Alignment	There are concerns with the quality of the current drainage system. The drain for the new building is reportedly going to feed into the current building's drainage system, which will likely exacerbate concerns here.
	Sloped floors	129	4.5	Should	Floors are gently sloped to enable waste and water to run into the drains, particularly in animal housing areas	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
	Drain cover design	130	4.5	Must	Drain covers are designed to prevent injury or escape	Severe Lack of Alignment	Severe Lack of Alignment	Drains in primary enclosure areas for dogs have resulted in at least one injury to staff



FACILITIES BEST PRACTICES AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK								
Best Practice		#	Subsection	Level	Key Guideline Statement	Current Space	Future Space	Notes
	Drain cover removal	131	4.5	Should	Drain covers can be easily removable for routine cleaning	Partial Alignment	Partial Alignment	The front and middle sections of the building have drains that are difficult to remove
	Outdoor primary enclosure floors	132	4.5	Must	Outdoor primary enclosures or portions of primary enclosures that are outdoors have non-porous, durable floors that allow for sanitation and proper drainage	Partial Alignment	Partial Alignment	There are concerns with the ability to sanitize the unsealed areas between kennels
	Sink: Surgery	University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine, Facility Design and Animal Housing		Must	There is a sink in surgery	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
	Sink: Intake			Must	There is a sink in intake	Insufficient Alignment	Insufficient Alignment	No sink in intake area
	Sink: Treatment			Must	There is a sink in treatment	Insufficient Alignment	Insufficient Alignment	No sink in treatment area
	Sink: Treatment			Must	There is a sink in food preparation areas	N/A	N/A	No standalone food preparation area
	Drains in walkway			Must	Never place drains in walkway areas	Severe Lack of Alignment	Severe Lack of Alignment	In the front of the building, the drains are in the middle of the walkways. In the middle kennels, dog intake, and back building, the drains are along the side of the walkways in front of the kennels.
Heating, Ventilation, and Air Quality								
All	Isolation area air	140	4.6	Should	Air from isolation areas is exhausted outside and not recirculated	Partial Alignment	Full Alignment	Dog quarantine has an exhaust fan that directs area outside. The new cattery has a separate air system for the isolation ward.
	UV not sole air quality measure	141	4.6	Must	Ultraviolet irradiation is not relied upon as the sole method for ensuring good air quality or infectious disease prevention	Insufficient Alignment	Improved Alignment	There is no air purifying system in place in the dog quarantine, there is a portable system in place for the cat quarantine.
Noise Control								
All	Noise minimized in housing areas	142	4.7	Must	Noise is minimized in animal housing areas	Partial Alignment	Partial Alignment	Cat areas are well protected from barking noise
	Loud equipment housing	143	4.7	Should	Noise and vibration producing equipment and mechanical systems is located as far away from animal housing as possible	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
	Noise mitigation in facility design	144	4.7	Should	Prevention and mitigation strategies to minimize the impact of noise is implemented in facility design, added to existing facilities, and incorporated into shelter operations	Partial Alignment	Partial Alignment	Cat areas are well protected from barking noise. Dog primarily enclosures are not well designed to mitigate noise impact, which is to be expected given the age of the building
Dogs	Barking reduction	145	4.7	Should	Preventing visual contact between dogs is not used as the sole strategy to reduce barking	Severe Lack of Alignment	Severe Lack of Alignment	There are no clear strategies to reduce barking, including preventing visual contact between dogs
Lighting								
All	Appropriate lighting	146	4.8	Should	Lighting promotes a safe working environment and effective observation of animals and the enclosure	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
	Natural light	147	4.8	Should	Facilities are designed to offer as much natural light as possible	Insufficient Alignment	Insufficient Alignment	



Facilities Best Practices and Evaluation Framework								
Best Practice		#	Subsection	Level	Key Guideline Statement	Current Space	Future Space	Notes
	Artificial lighting & circadian rhythms	148	4.8	Should	When natural lighting is not available and artificial light is used, it approximates natural light in both duration and intensity to support circadian rhythms	Insufficient Alignment	Insufficient Alignment	
Enrichment Spaces								
All	Double door outdoor points	149	4.9	Should	All enclosed outdoor spaces have double door entry points to keep animals safe and reduce the risk of escape	Insufficient Alignment	Insufficient Alignment	The only areas where there are double door entry points are the dog play yards
Intake Spaces								
All	Intake separation	150	4.10	Should	Shelter admission areas are separated from adoptions and other client-facing areas	Insufficient Alignment	Full Alignment	The new build will have separate intake and adoptions areas
	Intake quiet space	151	4.10	Should	Animal intake occurs in a designated quiet space away from the main pattern of foot traffic	Insufficient Alignment	Full Alignment	
	Intake cages/kennels	152	4.10	Should	Cages and kennels in intake areas hold animals only until their initial intake assessment has been completed	Partial Alignment	Partial Alignment	Due to capacity challenges, dogs may need to stay in the intake area for a few days before placement in a kennel
	Intake elevation	153	4.10	Should	Intake rooms have elevated surfaces to place animals in carriers off of floor level	Partial Alignment	Partial Alignment	There is a desk at the intake area but it is difficult to disinfect
Drop Boxes								
All	NO drop boxes	154	4.11	Unacceptable	The use of “drop boxes” where live animals are placed in unmonitored receptacles for later intake is unacceptable. Shelter avoids this unacceptable practice.	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
Facility Design and Planning								
All	Flexibility incorporated into design	155	4.12	Should	Flexibility in operational and spatial use is incorporated into designs for remodeling and new facilities in order to meet the changing needs of the community and services offered by the shelter	N/A	Insufficient Alignment	Minimal flexibility in the renovation design exists
	Consult with shelter vet & architect	156	4.12	Should	When designing a new facility or undertaking a significant renovation, shelter consults with a shelter veterinarian and an architect experienced in shelter design	N/A	Partial Alignment	The contractor consulted with UC Davis but not with the shelter veterinarian
	Avoids large warehouse rooms	157	4.12	Must	Shelter avoids large warehouse type rooms when designing housing	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
	Design incorporates movement	158	4.12	Should	When remodeling or planning a new facility, the movement of animals, people, and supplies is incorporated into the design	N/A	Full Alignment	Movement is accounted for, although space is limited
	Staff & Clients	159	4.12	Should	Animal shelter design provides an environment that also serves the needs of personnel and clients	N/A	Full Alignment	
	Design and capacity	University of Wisconsin Facility Design and Animal Housing		Should	Shelter design incorporates demand and shelter capacity	N/A	Partial Alignment	The shelter design improves shelter capacity for staff and cats, but space overall remains limited



Facilities Best Practices and Evaluation Framework								
Best Practice		#	Subsection	Level	Key Guideline Statement	Current Space	Future Space	Notes
Behavior and Mental Well-Being								
All	Cat perception of dogs	346	9.4	Should	Cats are not handled or housed within spatial, visual or auditory range of dogs	Full Alignment	Full Alignment	
	Consistent and structured environment	347	9.4	Should	Animals are provided with a consistent and structured environment that minimizes reassignment of enclosures, caregivers and schedules	Partial Alignment	Partial Alignment	This is performed to the best of the Shelter's ability
	Healthy social contact	352	9.5	Should	Shelter provides all animals with opportunities to engage in healthy social contact with people and other animals of the same species	Insufficient Alignment	Insufficient Alignment	Understaffing hinders this for contact with people and animals. Playgroups are performed solely to review socialization skills.
	Long-term stays & enriched space	374	9.7	Must	Housing that provides animals with additional space, enrichment, and choice within their enclosure is provided for animals remaining in the shelter long-term	Severe Lack of Alignment	Severe Lack of Alignment	Double sided kennels are available for animals housed long-term, but do not meet industry standards on size and are in need of replacement
Euthanasia								
All	Euthanasia: Quiet	401	10.3	Should	A separate room is designated for euthanasia in a quiet area away from the main pattern of foot traffic	Severe Lack of Alignment	Full Alignment	Euthanasia currently takes place outside
	Euthanasia: Well lit, large	402	10.3	Should	The room used for euthanasia is well lit and large enough to accommodate the necessary people and equipment	Severe Lack of Alignment	Full Alignment	Euthanasia currently takes place outside
	Euthanasia: Minimize distress	404	10.3	Must	The euthanasia environment is set up to minimize discomfort and distress and accommodate the individual animal's behavioral and physical needs	Severe Lack of Alignment	Full Alignment	Euthanasia currently takes place outside
	Euthanasia: Sink	University of Wisconsin Facility Design and Animal Housing		Must	There is a sink in euthanasia area	Severe Lack of Alignment	Full Alignment	Euthanasia currently takes place outside
Facilitating Adoption								
All	Animals viewed	University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine, Facility Design and Animal Housing & Principles of shelter housing design, part 1		Ideal	Shelter design considers the number of animals on view for adoption	N/A	N/A	No plans for display of adoptable animals
Cats	Cats: eye level	University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine, Principles of shelter housing design, part 1		Ideal	Cat adoption housing at eye level	Partial Alignment	Partial Alignment	
	Cats: visitors can enter into cage			Ideal	Visitors have an opportunity to enter into cats' cages, giving cats the choice of soliciting or avoiding interaction	Severe Lack of Alignment	Full Alignment	Cattery in the New Building



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