

YCAS Governance Workshop: Meeting Notes

April 29, 2013

Introduction of YCAS Governance Project (*Patrick Blacklock /Christine Crawford*)

Review agenda and ground rules (*Adam Sutkus*)

Explanation of the Key Points from Pre-Meeting Conversations (*Adam Sutkus*)

In an effort to gain an understanding of the issue and what is important to discuss in today's meeting, Adam conducted several pre-meeting conversations with interested parties prior to the meeting. Here are his major findings:

- There is a desire from several parties to gain clarity on the tasking/goals of the UD study. Specifically, what is it trying to accomplish?
- Participants felt that previous meetings had too much lecture, and not enough dialogue.
- Many interested parties wanted to see the “raw data” supporting the data used in today's presentation
- Decision makers and agency representatives wanted to stress that the focus on budget issues in this project are real. We will not be able to move forward with the new model unless we pay attention to cost.
- Limited resources available to do animal services work have made the agencies feel under fire. They feel like no matter what they do they cannot win.
- There is a strong desire from all parties to develop the best possible animal services organization. The well being of animals is the focus.

Comments from the group prior to the data presentation:

- Several parties wanted to know who was interviewed during Adam's pre-meeting conversations. They asked if the group was representative. Adam shared that he spoke with 6 people including agency representatives, animal advocates, and one elected official. One attendee was unhappy that nobody from YCAS was interviewed.
- People requested more copies of the PowerPoint, as there were many more attendees than expected, and not enough were printed. LAFCo staff agreed to post the presentation on their website.
- One attendee wanted to be sure that we would discuss the data for animals other than dogs and cats. Dr. Delany shared that the presentation would focus mostly on dogs and cats, because that is generally what people are interested in. However, there would be some discussion of livestock as well.

Dr. Delany's data presentation (key points): (see PowerPoint presentation)

- The initial study in early 2012 was based on data that wasn't really standardized, or comparable to other organizations.
- This new study is aimed at making specific recommendations regarding the staffing and programming needs for animal services in Yolo County. The results of the study will be recommendations for the organizations model, staffing, and programming.

- We are currently in the “where are we now” stage of the study. The goal of this stage was to cleanup and standardize the data, and then share it with the public.
- It is not just YCAS that has difficulty with collecting non-standard data. This is an industry wide problem. There is a large variety across the country in how animal services data is collected, making it very difficult to compare various animal services organizations.
- YCAS uses the Chameleon data system. Approximately 350 other shelter throughout the country also use Chameleon. There are also several other prominent animal services data collection tools being used by other shelters.
- Dr. Delany provided numerous examples of the data that other shelters in the area provide publically. She explained that they do not typically provide specific euthanasia rates. They might provide some raw data, leaving the interested party to calculate rates for themselves.
- One problem with Chameleon is that it is difficult software to learn, and they have recently been trying to get everyone on the same page. On the positive side, YCAS has been using the system since 2003, so there is a lot of data available. It just needs standardization.
- INTAKES: There has been a slight decrease in dog intakes. There has been a 20% decrease in cat intakes, largely attributed to the community cats program.
- OUTCOMES: These rates do not include owner requested-euthanasia, spay/neuter, or animals dead on arrival. YCAS currently has a 12% euthanasia rate for dogs, and a 23% rate for cats.

Roundtable Discussion of Data:

- One participant suggested that there are significant discrepancies between the data being discussed tonight and other data sources for YCAS. *Dr. Delany suggested that many of these discrepancies are related to data errors. The data was only recently cleaned up and standardized, including going back to find old errors.*
- One animal services officer supervisor shared that he believes the numbers are accurate, based on what he has been seeing at the shelter. The officer offered kudos to all the people working at the shelter to make it happen.
- There was an interest expressed in focusing less on “whether the shelter is doing well now.”
- One YCAS employee expressed the desire to see the current data be shared with the press to redeem YCAS for all the negative press focused on Yolo animal services in recent year.
- There was a request for YCAS/YCSPCA to share more information regarding what services are provided solely by YCAS versus YCAS, as the SPCA provides many free services to the shelter. *Dr. Delany responded that there will be a staffing analysis in the current study.*
- One agency representative wanted YCAS to provide a detailed cost breakdown. What they spend on each program/ per-animal/ etc., and how the SPCA services factor into the results.
- Several participants asked about the consistency and system of conducting behavior evaluations on animals, as these evaluation can result in an animal being euthanized. *Dr.*

Delany responded that dog assessments are a two-page standardized form. Cat assessments are less standard. YCAS hopes to update to a new version of Chameleon in June that will include a computerized standard dog behavior evaluation.

- *One participant asked for details on the active volunteers in the volunteer program. Dr. Delany shared that at the end of winter there had been 38 active volunteers (clocked-in) in the past 30 days. The number has gone up since then, due to volunteer outreach.*
- *One attendee wanted to know if LAFCo/UCD are open to recommendations regarding which organizations should be included in our comparable organizations list for our study. Dr. Delany suggested that she would be happy to share the list with interested parties, but may not be able to change it as it has already been finalized. She also stated that she wants to keep the list to California organizations because they would be subject to the same laws as YCAS.*
- *One attendee wanted to be sure that analysis of a potential licensing unit would be included in the UCD study. Dr. Delany affirmed that it would, and explained that there are formulas available to help estimate the potential impact of a licensing program.*
- *One attendee asked if the UCD study would be making suggestions regarding the governance structure, such as the challenges and benefits of JPA versus County. Dr. Delany affirmed that this would be included in her study.*
- *Several questions were asked regarding YCAS' Community Cats program. Specifically, are they being released without notifying the community? Dr. Delany explained that communities are not notified each time a feral cat is released, but literature regarding the program is very publicly available. Additionally, the cats are always released in the same area in which they were found.*
- *Some agency representatives requested specific information regarding whether it is possible to reduce the budget for YCAS. Dr. Delany explained that the current study will look at how various models might improve costs. It will also provide detailed information about how a licensing unit might increase revenues to pay for the program.*
- *Agency representatives also expressed that they feel an extreme concern over the cost of the program. They want to be clear that animal outcomes are important, but we should be paying equal attention to the cost.*
- *One attendee asked whether the current study would consider the best model of field staffing. Dr. Delany explained that field staffing analysis would be a part of the study, including the ideal hour for field staff based on call volume. She also explained that currently the jurisdictions decide their own field staffing levels.*
- *One attendee requested specific information regarding service usage by jurisdiction. Dr. Delany stated that she has some of this data available, and will include it in the study.*
- *Several attendees expressed concern that the current levels of animals being transferred to rescue organizations may not be sustainable. They become overloaded by the number of animals they are accepting, and have to reduce their acceptance rates at some point. The concern is that this will reduce positive outcomes for animals at YCAS if we are not aware of it. Dr. Delany explained that this problem had not yet been expressed to her by any rescue organizations. Christine Crawford agreed that it would be possible to conduct a survey of YCAS' rescue organizations to find out more.*

Next steps:

- UC Davis will continue to move forward with their study.
- LAFCO will look at cost, salary, etc. We will develop different cost scenarios for each governance structure, and are anticipating having that done in late June, along with the recommendations from the UCD study.
- LAFCO is targeting the next public meeting for July to discuss the recommendations of the study.
- The third public meeting will be scheduled sometime before our final recommendation go to the city councils and board.

Closing Comments:

- One attendee expressed gratitude that an independent facilitator was hired for this meeting, and requested that Adam return for the second and third meeting.
- It was also expressed that people appreciated that large screens displaying the PowerPoint in the room.
- An attendee requested that all data including the PowerPoint be emailed before the meeting next time.