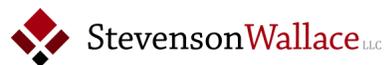


AGENCY BOARD RETREAT

January 15, 2026



OBJECTIVES FOR TODAY

- Increase understanding of stakeholder feedback (research results)
- Define success for animal welfare in Stanislaus County
- Increase understanding of resident sentiment around animal welfare (public comment)
- Identify next steps for addressing community requests and SASA resourcing



VISION EXERCISE





TEN YEARS FROM NOW....

- Imagine that ten years from now, Stanislaus County has been given a cover story in the *New York Times* for its excellence in animal welfare.
- Please write the headline that you hope to see for that cover story.
- I.e., what do you hope the County does so *well* or so *uniquely* in the field of animal welfare that it deserves national recognition?

STAKEHOLDER RESEARCH



STAKEHOLDER RESEARCH PROCESS



Online survey of JPA board (6)



Online survey of SASA staff (19)



13 individual phone interviews
with partners, peers and industry
leaders

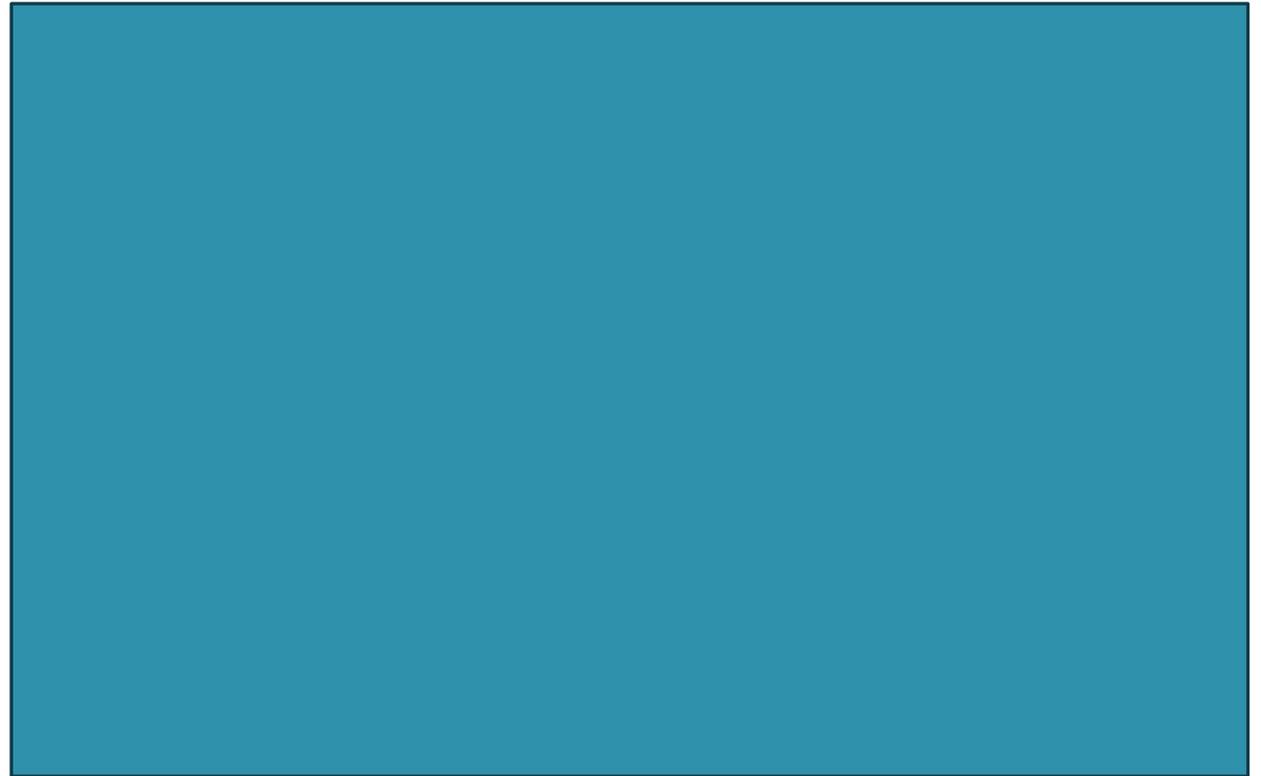


2 Zoom focus groups with elected
officials of JPA partners (8)

CURRENT STATE



What SASA
currently provides



What the community wants SASA to provide

CONTEXT: KEY SASA METRICS

Metric	SASA	Sacramento ACS	San Diego County Animal Services	Inland Valley Humane Society (ACC contracts)	Humane Society of Charlotte (no ACC)
Annual budget size	\$6.9 MM	\$12 MM	\$11 MM	\$13 MM	\$6.8 MM
Total staff count	38 FT / 11 PT&C	67	63	89	79
Annual animal intakes	10,520	12,184	5,364	10,370	3,650
Spay/neuter surgeries performed in house	4,226	5,570	2,828	10,864	8,076

JPA BOARD SURVEY: KEY THEMES



SASA'S STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

What SASA Does Well

Dedicated staff with strong commitment to the mission

Managing operations with limited resources

Organizing and promoting animal adoptions

Partnering with other rescue groups and agencies

(Two responses were "I don't know.")

Greatest Challenges in Next Several Years

Funding (dominant answer)

Growing populations of people and unaltered pets

Shelter overcrowding and lack of physical resources

Understaffing (especially veterinarian shortages)

Community relationships and community trust

MOST VALUABLE THINGS SASA DOES FOR THE COMMUNITY

No dominant theme, but responses included:

Sheltering dogs and cats until they can be rehomed or returned

Protecting the public from dangerous animals

Educating the community on pet welfare and pet ownership

Enforcing regulations on licensing and vaccines

Affordable spay/neuter services

SHORT- AND LONG-TERM PRIORITIES

Boldest Dream, Ten Years Out

Fewer animals coming into the shelter

All pets in the county are altered, thus ending overpopulation

Fully and consistently staffed

SASA being a leader in a well-connected, efficient regional shelter community

Priorities for Next Two to Three Years

Developing additional funding sources

Expanding spay/neuter services

Expanding the TNR program for cats

Educating the public to reduce overpopulation and neglect

Hiring a clinic veterinarian

Clarifying and communicating SASA's purpose and core roles

BOARD SELF-ASSESSMENT

Response	Score (five is the highest possible score)
Nurturing a collaborative, cooperative board culture	4.17
Building a respectful, collegial relationship between the board and the Executive Director	4.17
Financial oversight	4.00
Fostering strong communication among board members	4.00
Understanding the board's core functions and responsibilities	3.83
Understanding and respecting the boundaries between board and staff roles	3.83
Leading productive, efficient, inclusive board and committee meetings	3.83
Championing diversity, inclusion, equity and belonging	3.33
Aligning SASA's work with its mission, vision and values	3.00
Succession planning for board leadership	2.82
Strategic planning	2.67
Advocating for SASA within each board member's network	2.67
Thoughtfully onboarding new board members	2.50

BOARD'S OVERALL LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

Response	Responses
Board is too engaged; needs to be less engaged	17%
Board is engaged at exactly the right level to make SASA successful	50%
Board is not engaged enough; needs to be more engaged	33%
Unsure / no opinion	0%

HOW THE BOARD COULD BE GREATER CHAMPIONS AND LEADERS FOR SASA

Provide appropriate funding and tools to the staff

Attend events to represent the organization and show support

Engage with committee work

Approve effective policies and programs

One answer of “I don’t know”

STAFF SURVEY: KEY THEMES



SASA'S STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

What SASA Does Well

Providing services with limited resources

Dedicated staff truly committed to animal welfare

Housing animals in need

Providing affordable adoption services

Greatest Challenges in Next Several Years

Inadequate funding for expected services (dominant theme)

Overcrowding and inadequate shelter capacity control

Low staff morale and burnout/exhaustion

Increasing animal overpopulation

Staffing levels and compensation (retention and recruiting)

Lack of veterinary staff

SHORT- AND LONG-TERM PRIORITIES

Boldest Dream, Ten Years Out

Empty kennels because stray population has been reduced or eliminated

All pets in county spayed or neutered, ending overpopulation (thriving TNR program)

Expanded veterinary services, both mobile and at the shelter

Animals have short lengths of stay and positive shelter experiences with enrichment and human interaction

Staff is large, well-trained, satisfied and engaged

Priorities for Next Two to Three Years

Reduce intake and decrease kennel population to a more manageable level

Expand veterinary care through clinic and spay/neuter events

Increase canvassing and compliance programs; enforce licensing

Grow public communication, education and outreach

Prioritize staff growth and staff welfare

MOST VALUABLE THINGS SASA DOES FOR THE COMMUNITY

Offering safe housing and medical care for strays and unwanted animals

Improving public safety through ACOs and field services

Affordable pet adoptions that connect animals with new homes

Low-cost spay and neuter services

Low-cost vaccines

HOW SASA PROGRAMS SHOULD CHANGE IN NEXT SEVERAL YEARS

Expand the clinic significantly; staff up accordingly

Grow low-cost spay/neuter and low-cost vaccines

Create a robust TNR/community cat programs to reduce overpopulation

Redesign and grow the foster program

Bring back the canvassing team as part of an expanded field services program

Go upstream: Support struggling pet owners to *prevent* surrenders and strays

WHERE STAFF SEE THEMSELVES PROFESSIONALLY IN THREE YEARS

Response	Responses
At SASA, in the same position	11%
At SASA, promoted into a more senior position	17%
At SASA, in a different and lateral position	0%
Working at a different agency/organization/business	39%
Out of the workforce entirely (retirement, etc.)	0%
Unsure	33%

RESOURCES THAT WOULD MAKE YOUR JOB EASIER OR MORE ENJOYABLE

More staffing (dominant answer)

Funding for equipment, maintenance, supplies and training

More manageable shelter population / less overcrowding

Expanded crisis response planning

Higher staff compensation

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS: KEY THEMES



STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWEES

Name	Affiliation	Role
Laurie Daily	University of the Pacific / Humane Network	Oversees Shelter Management and behavior courses
Heather Bessoff	Northern San Joaquin Vet. Medical Association	President
Jill Tucker	CalAnimals	CEO
Cynthia Karsten	UC Davis	Outreach DVM
Alesha Davidson	Best Friends Animal Society	Strategist
Jasmin Robinson	Assoc. for Animal Welfare Advancement	Director of DEI Initiatives
Doris Foster	Stanislaus County	Workforce Development Director
Gina Barbata Knepp	Petco Love	Senior Specialist
Jennifer Hidalgo	Stanislaus County	Community Relations Manager
Annette Bedsworth	Sacramento County Animal Care Services	CEO; former director, SASA
Vaughn Maurice	San Diego County Animal Services	CEO; former director, SASA
Shelby Milam	City of Oakdale/Riverbank Animal Shelter	Officer, Oakdale Animal Control
Bruce Wagman	Riley, Safer, Holmes & Cancila	Animal welfare lawyer; affiliated with SFSPCA

GREATEST CHALLENGES OVER NEXT FEW YEARS

Reducing widespread perception of being underfunded and short-staffed; improving customer service and responsiveness

Addressing access to care: need for affordable spay/neuter, vaccines and veterinary care

Reducing the growing stray/feral animal population

Aligning funding levels with service expectations; considering other business models

Stabilizing, retaining and compensating staff

Controlling intake and managing shelter population

RECOMMENDED PRIORITIES, PART ONE

Improving customer service (answering phones, welcoming walk-ins, etc.)

Building a thriving TNR/community cat program

Expanding spay/neuter services, vaccine clinics and other veterinary services

Moving upstream and focusing on keeping animals with their people

Increasing community engagement, visibility and presence in various municipalities

Reconsidering the value of the JPA structure and changing the governance/funding model

RECOMMENDED PRIORITIES, PART TWO

Overhauling and expanding the foster program

Hiring veterinary staff to reduce backlog of spay/neuter cases, which slows adoptions and transfers

Rebranding, updating website, expanding online resources, possibly renaming

Stabilizing and strengthening staff culture while reducing burnout and turnover

Preparing for reductions in the social safety net, which increase pet owners' need for support (and likelihood of pet surrender)

REPRESENTATIVE QUOTES

“There’s a major disconnect between the funding given to SASA and the community’s expectation that they ‘save them all.’”

“The #1 task is how you keep animals out of the shelter, preventing owner surrender. But they don’t have enough staff to do that right now.”

“Most people think the shelter is overwhelmed and understaffed.”

“They barely have enough staff to run the shelter and ACO work, much less do community education, vet services, outreach, owner support and TNR.”

“The JPA model is a challenge, not a strength.”

“The model of funding from the cities doesn’t work that well because city budgets are tight and they don’t want to invest more in SASA, but the service expectations keep going up.”

ELECTED OFFICIAL FOCUS GROUPS: KEY THEMES



MOST VALUABLE THINGS SASA DOES

Vaccine clinics in various communities (beyond the shelter)

Adoption events in various communities (beyond the shelter)

Discounted adoption fees

Providing services that would be too expensive for municipalities to provide themselves

GREATEST CHALLENGES OVER NEXT FEW YEARS

Staffing SASA adequately for the spay/neuter program, for shelter operations, and for excellent customer service

Aligning funding with program needs; finding additional funding

Expanding the spay/neuter and TNR programs to address growing stray population

Supporting people suffering financial hardship (affordable vet care, pet food, vaccines, training, etc.)

Connecting residents with resources that SASA does not or cannot provide

Clarifying/communicating what SASA actually does and how

Perceived inability to take in animals due to overcrowding

Strong need for a robust TNR program for cat population

Strong need for more spay/neuter appointments to be available each week

Desire for extended hours and adoption times (weekends, evenings, etc.)

Improved response times for ACOs (perceived as short-staffed)

Customer service, follow-up and responsiveness are perceived as low

Answering phones and availability for community questions (perceived as short-staffed)

NEEDED AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

PRIORITIES OVER NEXT FEW YEARS

Define and clarify SASA's core purpose and services

Improve customer service, convenience and responsiveness to community

Expand spay/neuter and veterinary clinic capacity

Build a strong TNR program for community cats

Rebuild trust and positivity in community relations

Expand community-based events in various municipalities (vaccine clinics, adoption events, etc.)

Reduce overcrowding and improve shelter conditions

CRITICAL QUESTIONS



CRITICAL QUESTIONS



How can SASA close the gap between what it's delivering now and what the community is asking for?



What is the best business model/funding model to deliver the services that Stanislaus County residents want?



What are the options for how SASA can have this conversation?

DISCUSSION





BREAK

DEFINING SUCCESS



DEFINING SUCCESS

Consider what you want animal welfare in Stanislaus County to look like, three years from now, from four perspectives:

1. Animals who have homes and people
2. Animals who are stray or feral, who do not have homes
3. People who have pets in their homes
4. People who do not have pets in their homes

It may be helpful to use the frame, “Three years from now, we want this to be true.....”



LUNCH

PUBLIC COMMENT



WRAP UP & NEXT STEPS





Andi Stevenson, Founder and Principal