COLLABORATION IN CAT WELFARE INITIATIVES

HUMANE CANADA™

Collaborative Leadership "is an innovative way of building partnerships to solve the civic problems too big for anyone to solve alone. It is a new type of leadership that brings together diverse stakeholders to solve a community's problems."

David Chrislip, Collaborative Leadership Fieldbook (2002)

INTRODUCTION

Why a document on collaboration for cat welfare initiatives?

In 2012, Humane Canada™, formerly known as the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, published a ground-breaking national study about the cat overpopulation crisis that was taking place in Canada at that time. Based on data and opinions from stakeholders, including humane societies, SPCAs, municipalities, veterinarians, rescue organizations, trap-neuter-return groups and spay/neuter organizations, the report elaborated on the negative consequences of cat overpopulation, such as homelessness, overburdened shelters and high rates of euthanasia. The report raised awareness of this crisis situation and informed initiatives on cat welfare undertaken by organizations across the country. In order to track the changes that transpired, Humane Canada™ conducted a follow-on study five years later.

The Humane Canada™ report, *Cats in Canada 2017: A five-year review of cat overpopulation* presented findings that cat welfare organizations and communities have indeed made some progress on cat overpopulation in Canada, and if we want to see further progress, *organizations cannot work in isolation*. Initiatives that were successful have one thing in common: they involved collaboration across community stakeholders. Often, success was achieved when the local municipality, humane society or SPCA and other NGOs worked together towards the common goal of reducing overpopulation and improving cat welfare.

On the basis of these findings, the Humane Canada™ Cat Task Force that advised on the 2017 report wanted to focus on promoting that key success factor: collaboration. In order to support the development of more successful initiatives, they provided guidance to Humane Canada™ in convening the **Canadian Stakeholder Workshop on Developing Collaborative Relationships for Healthy, Safe and Wanted Cats in Our Communities**.

For this facilitated workshop, participants who had experience in successful collaborative initiatives were invited to reflect on the concept of collaboration. They analyzed its role in three Canadian cat welfare initiatives, then used these three case studies as the basis of developing a framework for collaboration. Through the course of the workshop, advice and best practices for collaboration were discussed, with key elements agreed. These are presented here as a tool to help cat welfare organizations engage with stakeholders in their communities. The full agenda and list of participants of the workshop can be found in the appendices.

What are the most fundamental elements of successful collaboration?

Here are the ideas workshop participants came up with:

Empathy · Common goals · Shared vision · Inclusion · Action plan · Positive outcome · Non-judgment · Open-mindedness · Active listening · Transparency · Skin in the game · Commitment · Flexibility · Representation · Clean listening · Positively-charged · Trust · Communication · Broader picture · Reward · Diversity · Looking beyond one's self · Respect · Solution-minded · Effective communication · Motivation · Analytical thinking · Willingness to change

How to get started

Before you develop an initiative, you will want to set parameters for the scope of the project, such as the target location and population. Set out a clearly defined purpose for the project. Then identify your stakeholders, based on knowing the target area, the needs for the area and the desired outcome of your initiative. The box below lists the typical stakeholders for cat welfare initiatives. You will also want to select the leaders for the initiative.

Build your network of stakeholders

You can use the list below to brainstorm potential stakeholders in your community. Remember to look outside the box of people you might typically collaborate with, and consider others – like academics, for-profit organizations and groups that are not explicitly focused on animal welfare. Don't be afraid to cross over to non-traditional areas. Create a matrix to help you keep track of your stakeholders, their contact information and other background information that could be useful.

Once you know who your stakeholders are, it's time to get out there and get better acquainted. Take any opportunity you can find to network and connect with stakeholders, including using personal contacts; attending government meetings, among other events; and using media and social media.

If you're trying to connect with veterinarians, it is worth reflecting on how to communicate the personal and professional benefits to them of getting involved with your proposed initiative. Consider pro bono systems used to engage lawyers or physicians in community work and how something similar might be applied to veterinary professionals.

Who are the typical key stakeholders for cat welfare initiatives?

- Municipalities
  Note: municipalities are a key stakeholder; please see box below for additional information about engaging with municipalities.
- Elected officials, including MLAs, MPPs, MPs, City councilors
- Medical care providers
- Veterinarians
- Veterinary technicians
- Veterinary colleges
- Humane societies and SPCAs
- Shelters / rescues
- For-profit animal agencies
- TNR groups
- First responders

- Law enforcement
- Public health agencies
- Social agencies (including social workers, psychologists)
- Hoarding coalitions
- Nature / conservation organizations and wildlife groups
- Funders / granting agencies
- Universities and academics
- Corporations and businesses
- Innovative companies
- Pet owners
- General public (non-owners)
- Media
- Volunteers
- Unaffiliated groups

Help! I want to present our cat welfare project to the municipality. What should I do?

The general tips in this box have been graciously shared by a municipal official, understanding that each municipality has its own context and recognizing that the approach should be adapted to specific local issues and realities.

- Prior to starting any discussion, inquire about what actions the municipality has taken on the subject and its positions. Consider the issues the municipality may face.

- Determine your gateway: For example, visit the municipality's website to identify a contact person, or present yourself at a public meeting and approach an elected representative who can direct you to a point of contact.

- Request meetings with elected and administrative officials: If it is not a highly political subject, it may be wise to send the same meeting request to the political and administrative staff. The request should concisely describe the main elements for discussion and some arguments in favour of taking the opportunity to act.

- During the meeting, present a project plan. Include the problem, options considered or tested, a short summary of best practices, a proposal or offer of service to the municipality, and benefits for the community. Include relevant statistics, if you have them, to support the proposal.

- Prepare a one-pager about the project and cite some sources (e.g. web links) of best practices, similar projects in other municipalities, experts, scientists, media articles, etc.

- Consolidate the strengths of organizations working for the same cause and demonstrate collaborative efforts. If possible, submit a unified proposal.

- Follow up in a reasonable time after the meeting.

- Identify a positive leader for your initiative, who will stand out and be convincing.

What are the recommended practices I should use?

This section includes advice shared by workshop attendees about practices they have used to achieve successful collaboration.

Relationship-building

Be active in your network. And dedicate resources to expanding your network. Identify potential partners where there is mutual benefit. Include all stakeholders and engage the community as a whole, rather than working only with the leaders of an organization and implementing a top-down approach. Establish rules of engagement – and don't reinvent the rule!

Goal-building

Involve stakeholders in planning and strategy development. Set clear expectations, process, strategy and goals. Be inclusive and diverse with the goals – they should be goals that are held in common across community organizations. Define mutually agreed outcomes and timelines. Identify performance indicators and how they will be measured. Define and assign roles, including who will be in leadership and "driver" roles for the initiative.

Resources

Estimate the cost of the project, and don't forget the resources you'll need to manage the project. Identify resources available and additional funding sources. Reach out to corporate organizations for assistance. For any fundraising activities you want to undertake, use approaches that have been proven to get results.

Outcomes

Measure the outcomes, and report back to stakeholders. Celebrate successes to incentivize future action. When communicating the results of the project, reinforce key messages to maintain continuous support from the community and stakeholders.

Tools of collaboration

Workshop attendees identified the following "tools" or approaches that help make collaborations successful:

- Establishing common goals
- Guidelines or rules of engagement
- Diversity
- Inclusiveness - Value everyone's participation
- Early and open communication and inclusion
- Demonstrate by offering opportunities and expecting input
- Using facilitators
- Consensus-based planning
- Logistical planning for calls and meetings

- Momentum
- Keeping the objective top of mind
- Tolerating being outside your comfort zone
- Not dismissing difficult or unusual ideas
- Identifying barriers
- Creating multi-step opportunities to build trust
- Continually sharing information to keep the collaboration going
- Personal connections - Get to know people on an individual level

What are some other tips that have worked?

Inevitably, what leads to success is not simply following a step-by-step formula, but making real human connections throughout the process. Workshop participants shared a number of additional "quick tips" that speak to fundamental human connection and behaviour.

Nourish relationships
Take the time to develop and nourish relationships with your stakeholders. Make face to face contact, and if possible, break bread together – get to know each other over a meal.

Listen and engage
Practise "clean listening". Be curious about others' perspectives, and never be afraid to ask questions.

Motivate for success
Look for the "win:win" relationships and propose returns on investment for your potential partners. Provide incentives to take part. Listen for stories and what motivates people to act. And keep trying to build connection. If something you tried didn't resonate with others, it's not a failure, but rather an opportunity to tell your story and educate. Celebrate your successes, large and small. Leverage your success by telling your story and using the media to disseminate your results broadly.

Mirror other successes to achieve more wins. Think about who your "aspirational peers" are whose leadership and successes you can follow.

Build (and rebuild) understanding
Educate partners regarding everyone's roles in the project. Plan for change, including changes among roles and changes with the people involved.

Plan for disagreements. They will undoubtedly arise at some point, so how will you deal with them?

Be transparent
Determine how you are going to stay on track and be accountable. Share and use common data tools.

Okay, I've got it! What should I do first?

If you're ready to get started, tackle the big picture first. Identify your goal. Lay out a plan, including both short- and long-term actions. Identify your existing resources, as well as your needs, and the gaps between the two. Decide who the local champion should be.

Wherever you start, remember that others striving to make advances in cat welfare have seen significant impacts by working with partners throughout their community. Reach out for advice and words of wisdom to those working in other communities where there have been successes. *You'll be sure to feel encouraged.*

Appendix 1
Workshop goals, objectives and agenda

Canadian Stakeholder Workshop on Developing Collaborative Relationships for Healthy, Safe and Wanted Cats in Our Communities

April 16, 2019

Goal
To develop a framework that supports the advancement of collaborative cat welfare programming
in Canada.

Objectives
By the end of the workshop, participants will:
1. Learn successful factors of collaboration;
2. Analyze successful collaborative cat welfare programs;
3. Explore unsuccessful collaborative efforts in cat welfare programming;
4. Develop a framework to guide successful collaboration in cat welfare programming;
5. Identify a strategy for sharing and moving forward.

Agenda

8:30-9:00	A recent history of cat welfare in Canada
9:00-10:00	Reflections on collaboration
10:00-12:30 successful	Three sessions, 45 minutes each, consisting of a 15-minute presentation on
	or unsuccessful cat welfare initiatives, including the collaboration involved, followed by 30 minutes of small breakout group analysis • Guelph Cat Population Taskforce/Guelph Humane Society • CARMA (Cat Rescue Maritimes) • Montreal SPCA/ ÉduCHATeur
1:00-3:00	Developing the framework to guide successful collaboration
3:00-3:15	Brainstorming the strategy for sharing and moving forward
3:30	End of day

Appendix 2
Final workshop participants list

Vanessa Anastasopoulos	Individual (Montreal, QC)
Melanie Anderson	Summerlee Foundation (USA)
Dr. Esther Attard	Toronto Animal Services (Toronto, ON)
Dr. Shane Bateman	Community Vet Outreach / Ontario Shelter Medicine Association / Guelph Humane Society / Ontario Veterinary College (Guelph, ON)
Joan Casey	Summerlee Foundation (USA)
Sarah Cooper	Nature Canada - Keep Cats Safe and Save Bird Lives (Toronto, ON)
Valérie De Gagné	City of Montreal (Montreal, QC)
Lesa Donnelly	PEI Humane Society (Charlottetown, PE)
Caroline Drapeau	ÉduCHATeur Inc. (Montreal , QC)
Marion Emo	Hamilton / Burlington SPCA (Hamilton, ON)
Dr. Cecily Grant	Canadian Veterinary Medical Association-Society of BC Veterinarians Chapter
Lynn Kavanaugh	Annex Cat Rescue (Toronto, ON)
Sue Knight	CARMA (Upper Kingsclear, NB)
Jade Marcoux	Montreal SPCA (Montreal, QC)
Karen McGeean	Fredericton SPCA (Fredericton, NB)
Pierry McLean	Royal Canin Canada (Toronto, ON)
Marcie Moriarty	BC SPCA (Vancouver, BC)
Lindsay Nakonechny	Edmonton Humane Society (Edmonton, AB)
Brad Nichols	Calgary Humane Society (Calgary, AB)
Rick Perciante	Oakville & Milton Humane Society (Oakville, ON)
Gabrielle Perras St-Jean	Institut national de la recherche scientifique (INRS) (Montreal, QC)
Val Poulton	Winnipeg Humane Society (Winnipeg, MB)
Dr. Sherlyn Spooner	Canadian Veterinary Medical Association / La Clinique Veterinaire des Chats (Pointe Claire, QC)
Dr. Enid Stiles	Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (Montreal, QC)
Cindy Suffaletto	Hamilton Street Cats (Hamilton, ON)
Belinda Vandersluis	Toronto Cat Rescue (Toronto, ON)
Lisa Veit	Guelph Humane Society (Guelph, ON)
Lindsay West	Regina Humane Society (Regina, SK)
Jennifer White	University of New Brunswick / Fredericton SPCA / Nature Conservancy of Canada (Fredericton, NB)
Heather Woodin	NS SPCA (Dartmouth, NS)
Brandon Zweerman	VCA Canada (Ottawa, ON)

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