



# Strategic Plan

## 2024-2026

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**HEARTLAND**  
Animal Shelter

# INTRODUCTION

*Let's begin...*



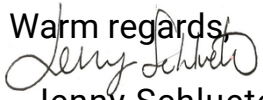
At Heartland, our passion is to find every dog and cat in our care a safe and loving forever home. Whether it is helping to keep animals with their existing families or finding new homes for those without, we're dedicated to making a difference.

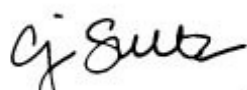
We are proud of what we have done so far, including rescuing and adopting nearly 1,000 animals yearly. Still, we know we can do more, and that's why we constantly assess our impact and seek innovative ways to expand our reach and strengthen our long-term sustainability.

Recognizing the power of a clear roadmap, the Heartland Board of Directors convened a diverse group of stakeholders to develop a new Strategic Plan. This plan incorporates the views of our staff, volunteers, board members, community representatives, fosters, and donors. Through in-depth research, survey responses from 284 stakeholders, interviews, and an analysis of our community demographics, we developed a comprehensive "SWOT" (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis. All our strategic goals align with Heartland's Mission, Vision, and Values, which you can find at the end of this document.

The plan was officially approved on October 17, 2023, and we're now focused on bringing it to life. Led by the Executive Director and coordinated with senior staff, the Board will closely monitor the implementation through quarterly progress evaluations.

We offer our sincerest gratitude to every stakeholder who contributed to this plan, and to the incredible team of staff, volunteers, fosters, donors, and adopters who will make our vision a reality. Together, we can create a brighter future for countless animals in need.

Warm regards,  
  
Jenny Schlueter  
Executive Director

  
C.J. Sultz  
President  
Board of Directors



# COMMUNITIES & PARTNERSHIPS

Extend our services by investing more in community and partner-oriented foster and diversion programs



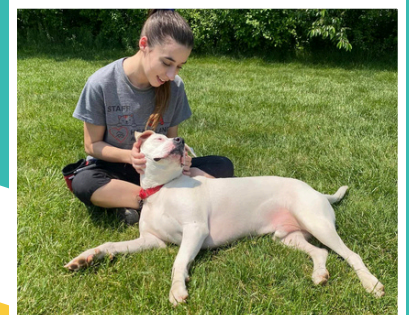
# FUNDING

Ensure long-term financial stability in an increasingly challenging environment



# PEOPLE

Invest in the people who support our operations



# OPERATIONS

Continuously improve shelter operations



# COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

Create and implement effective and consistent communications and branding to all internal and external stakeholders

## FUNDING



### ENSURE LONG-TERM FINANCIAL STABILITY IN AN INCREASINGLY CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT



Our ongoing viability and success require developing and implementing a plan to achieve sustainable and recurring sources of funding.

This goal is particularly important as animal care costs are increasing and successful shelter operations require additional staff funding.

In addition, historical reliance on unplanned bequests and small donations from many donors to keep the organization solvent is not fiscally prudent.

## PEOPLE



### INVEST IN THE PEOPLE WHO SUPPORT OUR OPERATIONS



Rescuing homeless animals requires that we attract and retain a talented staff through competitive compensation, rewarding work, and growth opportunities.

Daily operational effectiveness is impacted by the lack of funding to hire and keep qualified staff, especially in the medical department, and in a tight labor market.

In addition to staff, we must invest in volunteer development, providing opportunities for training, advancement, and recognition.

## OPERATIONS



### CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE SHELTER OPERATIONS



Achieving our mission and vision requires implementing shelter management best practices, incorporating data-based decision-making into daily operations, and updating and communicating standard operating procedures (SOPs).

In addition, we must continue to focus on better implementation of progressive industry best practices and data-based decision-making. Trackable metrics will help us focus the organization on important versus urgent activities and improve outcomes for our animals.

## COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING



### CREATE AND IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE AND CONSISTENT COMMUNICATIONS AND BRANDING TO ALL INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

We must focus on communicating with staff and volunteers regarding operational activities in a consistent, accurate, and timely manner in order to enhance operational efficiency.

Perceptions of Heartland are very positive among external stakeholders. Still, we need to expand brand awareness to a broader audience by creating a marketing plan targeting existing stakeholders (staff, volunteers, donors, and adopters) and new stakeholders (potential adopters, donors, pet guardians, and communities).

# COMMUNITIES & PARTNERSHIPS



## EXTEND OUR SERVICES BY INVESTING MORE IN COMMUNITY AND PARTNER-ORIENTED FOSTER AND DIVERSION PROGRAMS

Heartland's ability to help more animals requires forging or strengthening relationships with animal welfare partners and local communities to create programs that keep pets out of shelters or find them homes.

We plan to focus on diversion and foster programs to increase our capacity to assist homeless pets:

- **Diversion** activities can mitigate surrender situations by offering alternatives to keep pets in their homes.
- Placing animals in **foster** homes creates additional kennel space for animals from open-access shelters, which struggle to house and find rescues for unclaimed and/or abandoned animals.

Finally, we will pursue new partnerships with animal care groups and surrounding communities to develop new opportunities for marketing, events, and education.



*We appreciate your support of the Strategic Plan to guide our life-saving work!*

# MISSION, VISION & VALUES



## OUR MISSION

Heartland Animal Shelter provides excellent care to the most vulnerable dogs and cats until we find them good homes. Through progressive programs, outreach, and collaborative partnerships, we also work to keep all companion animals with their families.

## VISION

Heartland is building a humane community where pets and people thrive together in Chicagoland and beyond.

## OUR VALUES

**Compassionate:** We are compassionate members of our community who equally value serving our animal friends and their human guardians.

**Community-oriented:** We believe in cultivating a community-oriented approach with our stakeholders to provide a network of support, resources, and advocacy for homeless pets in need.

**Respectful:** We hold the value of respect as a cornerstone of our mission, ensuring that every interaction with our animals, staff, volunteers, and community reflects a deep consideration for the dignity and worth of all.

**Collaborative:** We work together and learn from each other to make Heartland the best it can be. We collaborate, listen, share ideas, and give/receive feedback in the spirit of continuous improvement.

**Safe:** We are committed to fostering a safe and fear-free environment for animals and humans alike. We model safe handling and minimize anxiety with humane and respectful treatment of the animals in our care.

**Trustworthy:** We create a foundation of trust by being transparent and accountable to all stakeholders. We honor our commitments and support one another with empathy and honesty.

**Integrity:** Our decisions, practices, and policies are shaped by the unwavering commitment to do what is right and ethical.

*Heartland is a 501(c)(3) private  
non-profit organization*