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**What does it take  
to achieve a “no-kill” shelter  
(community)?**

**Workbook**



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**Michigan Pet Fund Alliance  
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## **About the Workbook**

This Workbook is meant to be used as a tool to help think through the various aspects that can move an animals control or typical shelter to a “no-kill” program. It is set up so that a manager or “friends of” group can go through the various items and assess the current condition and decide if changes are needed – what it would take to change – and when. From the notes made throughout this workbook by the manager and/or friends group, a Strategic Plan can be developed.

Additional tools can be found on the Michigan Pet Fund Alliance website: [www.michiganpetfund.org](http://www.michiganpetfund.org). Those tools include a volunteer manual, a handbook for fostering and a sample of a Strategic Plan for a shelter. In addition, the Michigan Pet Fund Alliance stands ready to assist municipalities and interested groups in advancing “no-kill” programs within their community.

Care needs to be taken that “in the box” thinking isn’t used when going through the Workbook. It can be too easy to feel overwhelmed or constrained by reduced government budgets. Don’t despair instead be creative. The Royal Oak Shelter had no air conditioning and hot summer days stressed the animals. This was not an expense that the city was willing to assume. The shelter workers and volunteers held a fundraiser to cover the expense of installing air conditioning in the shelter. Part of the appeal was showing the stress the animals were under during a recent heat wave. The fundraiser actually resulted in double the amount of money needed for the capital improvement to install the air conditioning. Part of the excess money is currently being used to defray the cost of spay/neuter for the pets of Royal Oak residents.

### **Developing a written strategic plan is imperative to the success of becoming “no-kill”.**

A strategic plan identifies the incremental changes necessary and provides a guide and benchmark for progress. There may be good reason that a program did not advance as expected or perhaps a program was implemented much quicker than was planned. The strategic plan document with the schedule of projects can always be adjusted to spread out the timing of projects which are not going as expected or move up a project because an opportunity presents itself.

## What does it take to achieve a “no – kill” community?

### *One size does not fit all*

Unfortunately there is no one size fits all or handbook that instructs exactly what to do and how to do it. Each community has different resources and characteristics, so each community (county) will need to *develop* their own individual *plan*. However, the Michigan Pet Fund Alliance is available to help and provide expertise and guidance of best practices in the development of the plan.

### *More than just a moral goal....it is good government*

A “no-kill” goal is much more than a moral goal. It is also a good/efficient government goal. When the discussion begins, the most common question asked is “how much will it cost?” And there will be costs associated with any change; however the reverse question should be asked and that is how much will it cost if we don’t change? Becoming a “no-kill” community requires work to achieve a balanced pet population. In most jurisdictions it is out of control. A health department would not just treat citizens becoming ill from a water source. They would get at the cause of the problem and stop it so they would not have to treat more and more people on a continuing basis. Nationally, pet overpopulation has been addressed by euthanizing, but that response never solves the root problem of overpopulation. There are substantial costs associated with over population – number of animal control officers, shelters, costs associated with daily euthanasia of animals, etc. And without addressing the root cause and mitigating overpopulation, government will continue to incur substantial animal control costs annually. A “no-kill” community finds homes for homeless animals while reducing the number of unwanted births to achieve a population balance and therefore addressing the root cause.

### ***Guiding Principles & Considerations for Your Plan***

There are some guiding principles that are necessary to achieving a “no-kill” community. In addition, best practices are necessary. Below is a summary of the Guiding Principles and the identification of various best practices that are being used to achieve “no-kill” communities and should be considered in preparing a plan for the effort.

#### ***Guiding Principles***

1. Define what is meant by “no-kill”. Everyone needs to be on the same page. Start with an agreeable definition of what is meant by “no-kill.” The term no-kill clearly and powerfully protests the status quo, that being the killing of savable companion animals in our shelters every year. At the same time, it describes a new approach to animal sheltering and a new commitment to saving lives within animal welfare organizations and communities. Michigan Pet Fund Alliance subscribes to Maddie’s® definition as saving both healthy<sup>i</sup> and treatable<sup>ii</sup> dogs and cats, with euthanasia reserved only for unhealthy and untreatable<sup>iii</sup> animals. While no-kill *organizations* save all the healthy and treatable shelter dogs and cats under their care, no-kill *communities* save all of the healthy and treatable pets in all of the animal welfare agencies community-wide.

The appendix contains the full definitions of healthy and treatable. As an example, an animal is treatable if surgery or medications correct or treat the problem – however it may not “cure” the problem. As an example treatable animals may have an upper respiratory infection, a broken limb, heartworm, Cushing’s disease. Treatment of these and many other conditions can provide a good quality of life for the animal and though some conditions may be considered “a special need” these animals can be a good companion animal for the adopter.

2. Getting to a “no-kill” goal takes strong leadership. It takes people that are not just dedicated to doing good work but who are willing to set quantifiable, life saving goals and commit to reaching them given a time frame as identified in a strategic plan.
3. Getting to a “no-kill” goal requires collaboration, a can-do spirit, creativity and community support and involvement. No one group or no one agency can accomplish the goal alone.
4. Getting to a “no-kill” goal requires tracking homeless animals using more detailed information than is reported to the Michigan Department of Agricultural. Shelters and rescue organizations need to determine the condition of the animals they intake – are they healthy, are they treatable, are they animals that will never be healthy or treatable?
5. Getting to a “no-kill” goal requires solutions with business strategies and models that are creative for government to embrace and champion.

6. Change is inevitable. Insanity is defined as doing the same thing and expecting different results. Results don't change unless new ways of doing things are introduced and followed.
7. Getting to a "no-kill" goal requires increasing adoptions while working to reduce future overpopulation of homeless animals through comprehensive and effective spay/neuter efforts.
8. Getting to a "no-kill" goal takes time. It will not happen overnight, however following a strategic plan will result in incremental improvements which will eventually get to the goal.

















or worn fiberglass are hard to disinfect and lead to the spread of germs and disease.

- 3. Environment** – The shelter should be a place people want to visit. A homey lobby with cozy settings for the animals is a great way to do it. It’s also important that the shelter be clean and fresh smelling. Many municipal shelters look like prisons so it is not always easy to make it an appealing place to visit. Low cost improvements may be colorful paint, large character graphics on the walls, good lighting, a welcome mat, flowers and plants, or maybe a decorative window treatment. Be creative- think about how can you make people want to visit – and ultimately adopt.

Never under estimate the power of a name. An adoption center is positive – a county pound or animal control is not. An attractive sign with dogs and cats is a positive greeting to the public and a marketing tool.













## **Appendix**

**Minimal Mental Health Requirements of Dogs and Cats at Shelters**

**Funding Sources**

**What about Feral Cats**

**Modal Data Form**

**Footnotes**

## **Minimal Mental Health Requirements for Dogs**

1. A comfortable bed or den.
2. At least three daily opportunities to use a dog toilet area (outside of their kennel) and be rewarded for using it.
3. Sufficient entertainment (environmental enrichment, or occupational therapy) and stuffed chew toys such as Kongs or Big Kahunas.
4. Hand feeding, with remainder of food stuffed in chew toys: in other words, no feeding from bowls.
5. Interaction with at least 20 people, including at least five unfamiliar people, each day.
6. Daily education (basic manners training) and mental stimulation (walks).
7. Quiet kennel "down time" each day, allowing for a scheduled break from the public.
8. At least 20 minutes out of their kennel run each day, used either for training, socialization, playtime, exercise or "down time" in somebody's office.
9. Canine companionship--either housing with other dogs, or daily 20 minute play/training sessions.

## **Minimal Mental Health Requirements for Cats**

1. A warm clean environment with comfortable hiding place.
2. A separate litter box area.
3. A litter box that is cleaned regularly (feces removed immediately when noticed).
4. A convenient scratching post with suspended toys.
5. Interaction with at least 20 people, including at least five unfamiliar people, daily.
6. Daily handling, gentling and grooming by at least three people.
7. Feline companionship for social cats (group housing).

**MMHRs for puppies:** Puppies under four months must be housed together in a self-training, long-term confinement area, with constant access to a puppy toilet area, and fed only by hand (during conditioning and training) or from stuffed chew toys, (i.e., no feeding from bowls). Puppies require daily handling, grooming, and manners training by at least five unfamiliar people. Puppies should be fostered whenever possible.

**MMHRs for kittens:** Kittens under four months should be housed together in a self-training, long-term confinement area, with constant access to a scratching surface with suspended toys and to a separate litter box area. Kittens require daily handling, gentling and grooming by at least five unfamiliar people.

## Funding Sources

There are many funding sources that can assist in moving a community to a “no-kill” program. The following is a sample list:

1. Census – The law requires jurisdictions that issue licenses to perform an annual census. Undertaking a census using college students in the summer can generate funding that not only covers the student costs but generates additional funds. Geographic Information Systems and new technology can make a census program easy to administer.
2. Designer Licenses – Designer Licenses can be offered as an option for the annual licenses (a special design - bone, heart etc.) and sold for a premium \$2 - \$5 dollars above normal charges. This additional money can be used for a spay/neuter program, wellness program for shelter dogs, etc. Allow people to make a donation for a program when they renew their dog licenses.
3. Donation Jar – Always have a donation jar at the door and available at all special events. Visitors will often leave a donation especially if it is for a special cause.
4. Maddie’s Fund – Maddie’s is a foundation that specifically supports community efforts to achieve a “no-kill” status. [www.maddies.org](http://www.maddies.org)
5. PetSmart Charities – Will help to fund the first year of spay/neuter for shelters implementing a program prior to adoption. [www.petsmartcharities.org](http://www.petsmartcharities.org)
6. ASPCA – Offers shelter’s grants for making various improvements [www.asPCA.org](http://www.asPCA.org)
7. Elinor Patterson Baker Trust Fund - Offers grants for a wide variety of shelter needs, including prevention of cruelty, spay/neuter, shelter improvement and innovative new programs.
8. Bernice Barbour Foundation - Awards grants for hands-on animal care projects. Funds ONLY shelters with a mandatory spay/neuter policy before adoption.
9. Meacham Foundation Memorial Grant - Awards grants of up to \$4,000 for construction, capital improvements, repairs, or equipment that directly affects the welfare of the animals in the shelter.
10. Second Chance Fund/American Humane Association - Awards of up to \$500 for rehabilitation of animals who are the victims of criminal acts of violence.
11. Fundraising – There are countless fundraising programs. A “friends of the shelter” group can put something together annually to help fund one of the items in the Strategic Plan. Such events can be anything from a bowl-a-thon, to a Pet-Lovers event - to working with area businesses to sponsor special dinners or shopping events that benefit the shelter.

Michigan Pet Fund Alliance [www.michiganpetfund.org](http://www.michiganpetfund.org)  
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### **What about Feral Cats**

A “no-kill” program traditionally focuses on companion animals – dogs and cats. Certainly shelters also deal with a variety of other animals including birds, ferrets, snakes, rabbits, etc. All pets should be considered in the “no-kill” program along with farm animals that might be part of the shelter’s care and jurisdiction.

Feral cats are not pets. They are wild animals just as raccoons, skunks, squirrels and other animals that Animal Control may need to address as a part of their responsibilities. When a jurisdiction has achieved or is well on their way to achieving “no-kill” for companion animals, consideration should be given to the development and support of programs which control and address the problems and issues of wild animals’ - especially feral cats. Cat colonies can be controlled and sometimes naturally diminished if 75% of the colony is successfully spayed/neutered. Alley Cat Allies [www.alleycat.org](http://www.alleycat.org) has instructional videos and information for setting up Trap, Neuter, Return programs. Animal Control Agencies need to fully educate themselves as to all issues concerning feral cats. Often feral cats are considered a nuisance to a neighborhood and the agency needs to be prepared and have policies in place to address concerns and issues raised by residents that don’t want wild animals in their neighborhood and feel animal control’s responsibility is to remove them.



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<sup>i</sup> The term "**healthy**" means and includes all dogs and cats eight weeks of age or older that, at or subsequent to the time the animal is taken into possession, have manifested no signs of a behavioral or temperamental characteristic that could pose a health or safety risk or otherwise make the animal unsuitable for placement as a pet, and have manifested no sign of disease, injury, a congenital or hereditary condition that adversely affects the health of the animal, or that is likely to adversely affect the animal's health in the future.

<sup>ii</sup> The term "**treatable**" means and includes all dogs and cats that are "rehabilitatable" and all dogs and cats that are "manageable."

- **Rehabilitatable:** The term "rehabilitatable" means and includes all dogs and cats who are not "healthy," but who are likely to become "healthy," if given medical, foster, behavioral, or other care equivalent to the care typically provided to pets by reasonable and caring pet owners/guardians in the community.
- **Manageable:** The term "manageable" means and includes all dogs and cats who are not "healthy" and who are not likely to become "healthy," regardless of the care provided; but who would likely maintain a satisfactory quality of life, if given medical, foster, behavioral, or other care, including long-term care, equivalent to the care typically provided to pets by reasonable and caring owners/guardians in the community; provided, however, that the term "manageable" does not include any dog or cat who is determined to pose a significant risk to human health or safety or to the health or safety of other animals.

<sup>iii</sup> The term "**unhealthy and untreatable**" means and includes all dogs and cats who, at or subsequent to the time they are taken into possession,

1. have a behavioral or temperamental characteristic that poses a health or safety risk or otherwise makes the animal unsuitable for placement as a pet, and are not likely to become "healthy" or "treatable" even if provided the care typically provided to pets by reasonable and caring pet owners/guardians in the community; or
2. are suffering from a disease, injury, or congenital or hereditary condition that adversely affects the animal's health or is likely to adversely affect the animal's health in the future, and are not likely to become "healthy" or "treatable" even if provided the care typically provided to pets by reasonable and caring pet owners/guardians in the community; or
3. are under the age of eight weeks and are not likely to become "healthy" or "treatable," even if provided the care typically provided to pets by reasonable and caring pet owners/guardians in the community.

<sup>iv</sup> One commonly used method for testing food aggression in shelter dogs has a shelter worker take a rubber hand on a stick, approach a dog while he is eating and then push his face away from the food dish. Dogs that freeze, growl or attack the hand are often considered unsuitable for placement and euthanized. The Wisconsin Study developed new shelter protocols and after shelter staff implemented the protocols, forty-eight of the fifty dogs had no observable food aggression in the shelter or in their adoptive homes. Since then, several other shelters throughout the country have implemented the simple in-shelter and in-home behavior modification plan and all report success rates of over 90%.