



**Common Bonds**

Oklahoma. Pets. People. Places.

**2023-25 Strategic Plan**

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## Executive Summary

Common Bonds envisions a united Oklahoma organized and motivated to save lives and enhance the well-being of dogs and cats and the overall quality of life in Oklahoma communities. Stakeholders are committed to the Shared Goal of achieving a 90% or greater save rate for dogs and cats in Oklahoma animal shelters by 2025. The Shared Values of inclusion, empathy, collaboration, and community ownership illustrate how Common Bonds partners approach their collective work.

The Theory of Change reflects the core beliefs of what change is needed to achieve the Shared Goal and progress toward the Shared Vision. The Theory of Change is based on a shared understanding of the euthanasia rate problem and is the basis, along with a systems change approach, for Common Bonds' strategies.

The Strategies are

1. Backbone Support, Data, and Communications: Connect, support, and convene partners and stakeholders, ensuring a *systems* approach, monitoring of progress, and aligned action toward the Shared Vision and Goal.
2. Community Engagement: Provide consistent messaging to communities to promote understanding and awareness of animal well-being
3. Government Engagement: Engage local leaders to understand that animal well-being is a key component of a city's quality of life
4. Shelter Engagement: Connect Oklahoma animal shelters and rescue organizations through education, collaboration, sharing resources, mentoring, and mutual support to achieve a 90% save rate statewide and help shelters build relationships with communities for the health and safety of all Oklahoma pets

Each strategy has its own action plan with objectives, key results, and an overall performance metric. The Director, Steering Committee, Backbone Support Organization, and Working Groups all play important roles in leading and supporting the strategies. The Director, these groups, and an Advisory Council compose the Governance Structure for Common Bonds.

## History of Planning for Common Bonds

At a convening on April 30, 2018, hosted by the Kirkpatrick Foundation, participants filled the Oklahoma History Center to begin thinking about a statewide collaborative to save the lives of shelter dogs and cats. The focus on reducing pet euthanasia was inspired by a national movement supported by a number of national animal welfare organizations. In December 2018, the founding partners of Common Bonds established the collaborative's first strategic plan, structured around the Collective Impact<sup>1</sup> conditions of success. In August 2019, Common Bonds hired Kelly Burley as Director.

In December 2019, the Common Bonds Steering Committee updated the strategic plan. A network survey was conducted using the PARTNER platform, a network mapping tool, before the planning retreat. An analysis of the survey results and progress to date was used to refine objectives and steps within the strategies of the 2019-20 Strategic Plan. These changes were included in the 2020 Update of the 2019-20 Strategic Plan.

In August 2021, Common Bonds partners participated in a strategy session and applied the role of field catalyst<sup>2</sup> to Common Bonds.

A new Steering Committee, a mix of returning and new members, convened in December 2022 to recommit to Common Bonds's Shared Vision, Goal, and Values and update the Strategic Plan (see [Planning Retreat notes](#)). A survey of Common Bonds stakeholders was conducted before the planning retreat. The [survey results](#), a progress report on Common Bonds, and a discussion on systems change levers were used to determine revised strategies, objectives, and performance metrics for 2023-25.

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<sup>1</sup> Collective Impact is “a systemic approach to social impact that focuses on the relationships between organizations and the progress toward shared objectives.” ([Kania and Kramer, 2011](#)). Collective Impact begins with a Common Agenda, includes a plan and commitment to Shared Measurement, engages partner organizations in Aligned Action and through Continuous Communication, and regularly engages stakeholders through Backbone Support.

<sup>2</sup> A field catalyst is a “type of intermediary built to serve as a hub for spokes of advocacy and action, roll all stakeholders towards a defined goal,” and “help stakeholders summon sufficient throw-weight to propel a field up and over the tipping point to sweeping change.” ([Hussein, Plummer, and Breen, 2018](#)) A field catalyst focuses on achieving population-level change (not scaling up an organization or intervention), influences direct actions of others (not acting directly), concentrates on getting things done (not building consensus), and is built to win (not to last).

## Steering Committee

Common Bonds would like to thank the Steering Committee members that shaped and will steward this strategic plan.

Organization	Name	Role
Altus Animal Welfare Association	Kim Rumschlag	President
Ardmore Animal Care Inc	Scott Sutherland	Board Chair
Best Friends Animal Society	Brent Toellner	Senior Director of National Programs
Enid SPCA	Vickie Grantz	Executive Director
Kirkpatrick Foundation	Kelly Burley	Director, Common Bonds
Kirkpatrick Foundation	Louisa McCune	Executive Director
Norman Animal Welfare	Kellee Robertson	Manager
Northern Oklahoma Humane Society	Ashley Villines	Executive Director
OKC Animal Welfare	Jon Gary	Superintendent
OKC Animal Welfare Patrons	Heather Hernandez	Board Member
OKC Animal Welfare Patrons	Matt Goodwin	Board Chair
T-Town TNR	Samantha Polen	Founder

# Common Agenda

We work together toward our Shared Vision and Goal, guided by our Shared Values and Theory of Change.

## Shared Vision

We envision people united across Oklahoma in valuing the human-animal bond and supporting animal well-being and its connection to the quality of life in our communities.

## Shared Goal

By 2025, the save rate for cats and dogs in Oklahoma animal shelters will be 90% or greater.

## Shared Values

Inclusion: We welcome all individuals, organizations, and volunteers in support of humane outcomes for all dogs and cats in Oklahoma.

Empathy: We strive to understand the lived experiences of community members, shelter staff, and all others involved in animal welfare and provide support for each other.

Collaboration: We work together to share resources, ideas, and innovations, inspire change, and achieve our common goals.

Community Ownership: We believe in a community-focused approach to animal welfare in which all stakeholders share responsibility.

## Theory of Change

We believe that if we provide *consistent messaging* to communities that promote understanding and awareness of animal well-being, *engage municipalities* in understanding that animal well-being is a key component of the local quality of life, *forge connections among Oklahoma animal shelters and rescue organizations*, and help *shelters build relationships with communities*, then we will achieve a 90% save rate of cats and dogs in Oklahoma shelters and improve the quality of life for pets, pet owners, and their communities.

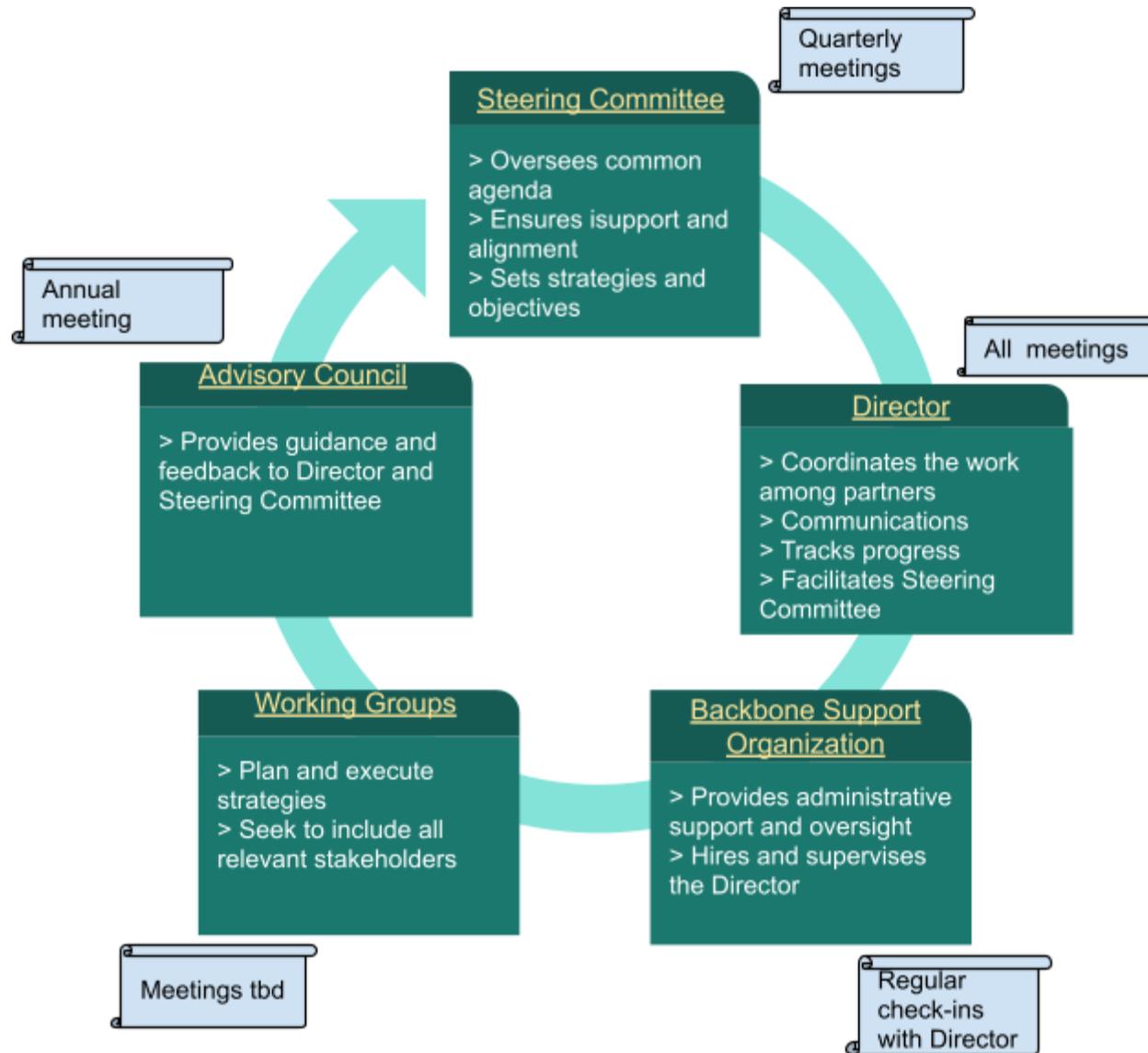
The theory of change is based on a shared understanding of the problem— the high euthanasia rate for cats and dogs in Oklahoma— and its root causes. (see **Figure 1**).

Figure 1- Shared Understanding of the Problem



# Governance Structure

Figure 2 - Governance Structure



## Director

The Director leads and manages the statewide collaborative in coordination with the Steering Committee, Backbone Support Organization, and partner organizations. The Director is responsible for keeping the collaborative organized, communicating regularly, coordinating strategies, supporting Working Groups, and monitoring progress. The Director represents Common Bonds in public events and facilitates the Steering Committee. Overall, the Director connects, supports, and convenes stakeholders. The Backbone Support Organization hires and supervises the Director.

## Steering Committee

The Steering Committee holds primary responsibility for the common agenda and setting strategies and objectives. Committee members commit their organizations to support the collaborative, align with partner organizations, and help Oklahoma achieve the Shared Goal of a 90% live release rate by 2025.

The Steering Committee comprises approximately 12 to 15 members, including the Director; senior leadership representatives of participating organizations and the Backbone Support Organization; and Working Group chairs. The Steering Committee reflects the cross-sector composition of the collaborative, including government agencies, nonprofits, and philanthropy.

The Steering Committee meets every quarter. Members serve staggered 2-year terms, with the option to serve additional terms.

## Backbone Support Organization

The Backbone Support Organization hires and supervises the Director; provides office space and support for the Director; provides administrative support for the collaborative; supports convenings of stakeholders; serves as the fiscal agent and on the Steering Committee. The Kirkpatrick Foundation has served in this capacity since the founding of Common Bonds.

## Working Groups

Working Groups lead and support priority strategies. Each group is active until objectives are achieved or deemed no longer necessary.

Working Group size varies from 6 to 10 individuals. Participation in the Working Groups is voluntary. Partner organizations select qualified representatives to serve on these groups.

Each Working Group meets monthly or bi-monthly and, in coordination with the Director, decides its virtual and in-person meeting schedule. Meetings may include the whole group or smaller subsets working on discrete objectives in the strategic plan.

Each Working Group will have two co-chairs serving 2-year terms. With support from the Director, the co-chairs guide the implementation of their Working Group strategy and objectives, including management of group membership, convening and facilitation of meetings, and monitoring of progress. One co-chair serves as the external lead, primary liaison to the Director, Steering Committee, and the other Working Groups, while the other co-chair serves as the internal lead, primarily responsible for communications within the Working Group, establishing meeting agendas, and following up with members.

[Working Group Membership Rosters](#)

[Meeting Calendar](#)

## Advisory Council

The Advisory Council provides valuable guidance by helping the collaborative leverage opportunities that exist in the broader context of Oklahoma, animal welfare, and community services. Through an annual meeting and other consultations as needed, the Advisory Council advises the Director and Common Bonds in evaluating progress, identifying opportunities, and shaping the direction of the collaborative. The council will consist of 6 to 12 members from various organizations, fields, and experiences.

## Performance Metrics (Cumulative)

[Performance Metric Data Tracking](#)

*Numbers in red italics indicate goals for future years.*

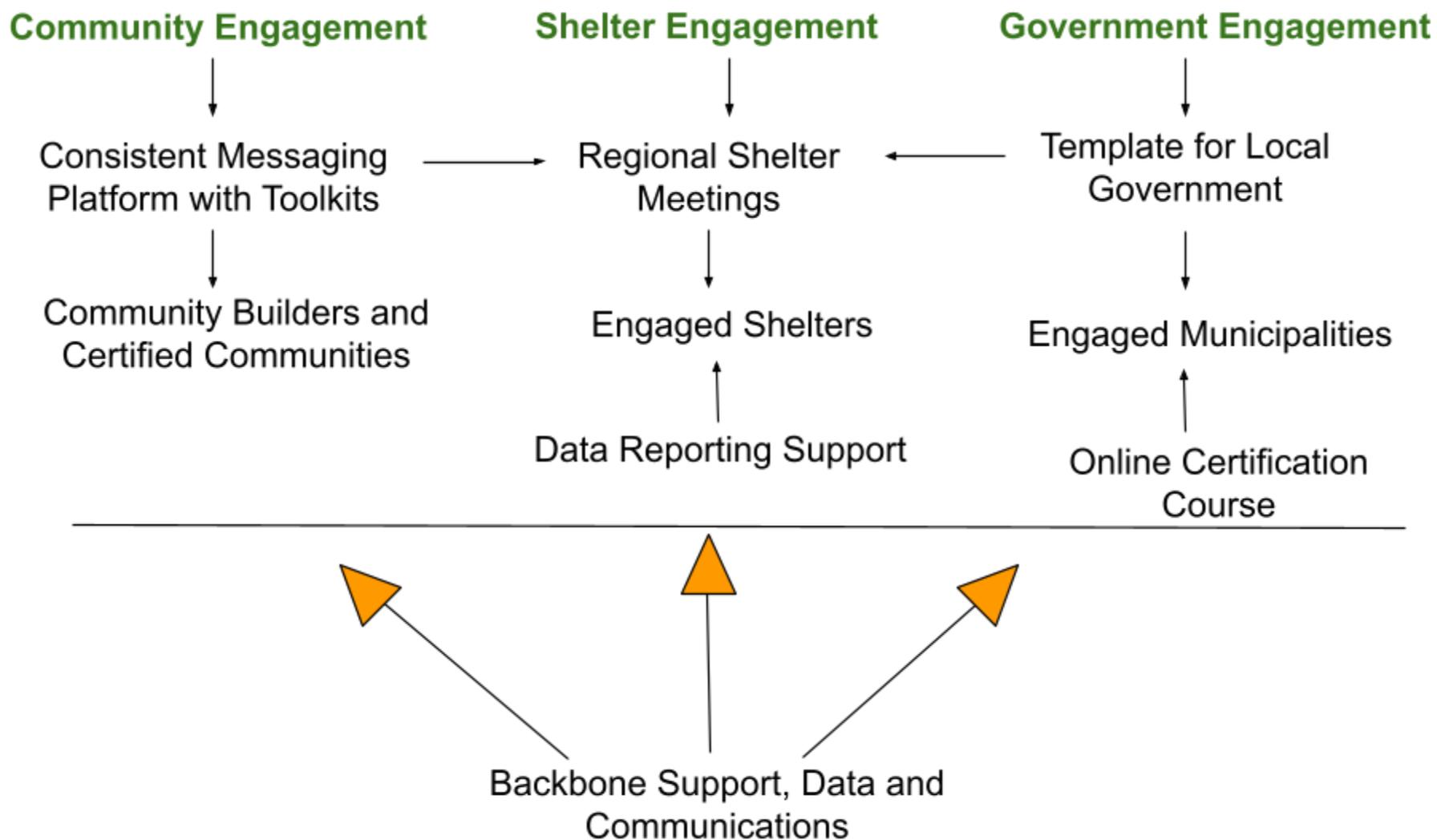
Metric (type)	YEAR ONE (2019)	YEAR TWO (2020)	YEAR THREE (2021)	YEAR FOUR (2022)	YEAR FIVE * (2023)	YEAR SIX * (2024)	YEAR SEVEN* (2025)
Save Rate (Impact)	73%	78%	80%	<i>80%</i>	<i>82%</i>	<i>86%</i>	<i>90%</i>
Certified Communities	NA	NA	3	4	<i>7</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>13</i>
Municipalities Engaged	NA	NA	NA	1	<i>3</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>10</i>
Shelters Engaged	NA	NA	NA	NA	<i>10</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>30</i>

\*Communities, municipalities, and shelters within OK's top intake shelters (cities) are prioritized.

## Strategies, Objectives, and Key Results

Strategy	Objectives
<p><b>Backbone Support, Data, and Communications:</b> Connect, support, and convene partners and stakeholders, ensuring a <i>systems</i> approach, progress monitoring, and aligned action toward the Shared Vision and Goal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Convene stakeholders and facilitate and deepen connections within the network</li> <li>➤ Run communications to keep the public informed and the partners supported and inspired</li> <li>➤ Monitor, evaluate and communicate progress using progress metrics and other relevant data</li> <li>➤ Monitor and connect strategies and working groups</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Engagement:</b> Provide consistent messaging to communities to promote understanding and awareness of animal well-being</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Implement a consistent messaging platform that emphasizes community ownership across Oklahoma</li> <li>➤ Identify and recognize communities through the Certified Communities program</li> <li>➤ Identify and recognize Common Bonds Community Builders</li> </ul>
<p><b>Government Engagement:</b> Engage local leaders to understand that animal well-being is a key component of a city's quality of life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Engage local animal welfare organizations and local government candidates from priority municipalities</li> <li>➤ Establish a template for helping local government prioritize animal well-being</li> <li>➤ Create an online course for Common Bonds in which local leaders can earn a certificate</li> </ul>
<p><b>Shelter Engagement:</b> Connect Oklahoma animal shelters and rescue organizations through education, collaboration, sharing resources, mentoring, and mutual support to achieve a 90% save rate statewide and help shelters build relationships with communities for the health and safety of all Oklahoma pets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Engage shelters in Common Bonds</li> <li>➤ Conduct quarterly regional meetings</li> <li>➤ Partner with shelters and provide resources for reporting data</li> </ul>

Figure 3 - Strategies and Objectives Flow Chart



## Backbone Support, Data, and Communications

Strategy: Connect, support, and convene partners and stakeholders, ensuring a *systems* approach, progress monitoring, and aligned action toward the Shared Vision and Goal.

Objective 1: Convene stakeholders and facilitate and deepen connections within the network

- Annual calendar of meetings by Jan 2023, Jan 2024, and Jan 2025
- A regularly updated database to track progress metrics and participating organizations and shelters, set up by March 2023
- 5th Common Bonds Anniversary Statewide Convening, April 2023
- 1 Advisory Council Meeting per year

Objective 2: Run communications to keep the public informed and the partners supported and inspired

- New Common Bonds brochure by June 2023
- Newsletter monthly
- 3 conferences/events in which Common Bonds partners present and/or attend annually
- Social media campaigns with 40,000+ unique views and 1,000+ reactions annually

Objective 3: Monitor, evaluate and communicate progress using progress metrics and other relevant data

- Annual update on performance metrics by June 2023, June 2024, and June 2025
- 1 or more research studies that illuminate shelter animal welfare issues in Oklahoma and inform Common Bonds strategies annually
- Annual report by Dec 2023, Dec 2024 and Dec 2025

Objective 4: Monitor and connect strategies and working groups

- 4 Steering Committee meetings per year
- Regular activity and progress monitoring overall and for each working group
- Arrangement of special meetings to tighten coordination and increase synergy among working groups as needed

## Community Engagement

Strategy: Provide consistent messaging to communities to promote understanding and awareness of animal well-being

Performance Metric Criteria: Certified Communities

- Committed to 90% save rate
- Appropriately reporting data
- Committed to improving shelter programs
- Expanding community partnerships

Secondary Performance Metric Criteria: Common Bonds Community Builders

- Committed to animal lifesaving
- Committed to collaboration
- Committed to 90% save rate

Objective 1: Implement a consistent messaging platform that emphasizes community ownership across Oklahoma

- Toolkit for animal welfare leaders to support consistent messaging (Community Unity, Spay/Neuter, Adopt First) by June 2023
- Toolkit for solutions to common issues (Supported Self-rehoming, Lost/Found Pet Resources) by Sept 2023
- Online access to toolkits via Common Bonds and partner organization websites by Dec 2023
- Tracking mechanisms for use of toolkits explored and in place as needed by Dec 2023

Objective 2: Identify and recognize communities through the Certified Communities program

- Final criteria by March 2023
- 7 communities certified by Dec 2023 (cumulative performance metric; 4 certified as of Dec 2022)
- 10 communities certified by Dec 2024 (cumulative performance metric)
- 13 communities certified by Dec 2025 (cumulative performance metric)

Objective 3: Identify and recognize Common Bonds Community Builders

- Final criteria by March 2023
- 6 community builders by Dec 2023 (cumulative secondary performance metric)
- 13 community builders by Dec 2024 (cumulative secondary performance metric)
- 20 community builders by Dec 2025 (cumulative secondary performance metric)

# Government Engagement

Strategy: Engage local leaders to understand that animal well-being is a key component of a city's quality of life

Performance Metric Criteria: Engaged Municipalities

- *Organized effort to engage a municipality, whether through a coalition or an individual organization*
- *Use of Common Bonds template for municipal engagement*
- *Solicitation of feedback on animal welfare issues from local government candidates and/or elected officials*
- *Follow-up with elected officials (events, letters of congratulations, phone calls, etc.)*

Objective 1: Engage local animal welfare organizations and local government candidates from priority municipalities<sup>3</sup>

- Final criteria for determining engaged municipalities by March 2023
- 3 or more engaged municipalities by Dec 2023 (cumulative performance metric; 1 as of Dec 2022)
- 6 or more engaged municipalities by Dec 2024 (cumulative performance metric)
- 10 or more engaged municipalities by Dec 2025 (cumulative performance metric)

Objective 2: Establish a template for helping local government prioritize animal well-being

- Playbook for strategies for engagement by June 2023
- List of model programs with descriptions by Sept 2023
- List of model policies by Dec 2023

Objective 3: Create an online course for Common Bonds in which local leaders can earn a certificate

- Review of existing programs by Sept 2023
- CEU's established for course by March 2024
- Course available by June 2024
- 10 local leaders complete course by Dec 2024
- 25 local leaders complete course by Dec 2025 (cumulative)

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<sup>3</sup> Exhaust list of municipalities with the top intake shelters in Oklahoma first

# Shelter Engagement

Strategy: Connect Oklahoma animal shelters and rescue organizations through education, collaboration, sharing resources, mentoring, and mutual support to achieve a 90% save rate statewide and help shelters build relationships with communities for the health and safety of all Oklahoma pets

## Performance Metric Criteria: Engaged Shelters

- *Participation at quarterly regional meetings*
- *Attendance at annual Common Bonds statewide gathering*
- *Commitment to regular reporting of shelter data*
- *Sharing of effective practices, programs and initiatives and/or engaged in learning about them*

## Objective 1: Engage shelters in Common Bonds<sup>4</sup>

- Final criteria for determining engaged shelters by March 2023
- 10 or more shelters engaged by Dec 2023 (cumulative performance metric)
- 20 or more shelters engaged by Dec 2024 (cumulative performance metric)
- 30 or more shelters engaged by Dec 2025 (cumulative performance metric)

## Objective 2: Conduct quarterly regional meetings

- Protocol for regional meetings with agenda items and suggestions for effective meetings by June 2023
- 2 regional networks (Central, NE) with two in-person and one virtual meetings annually by Dec 2023
- 4 regional networks (Central, NE, S, NW) with two in-person and one virtual meetings annually by Dec 2024
- Annual statewide meeting, starting in April 2023 with 5th Anniversary Common Bonds Convening

## Objective 3: Partner with shelters and provide resources for reporting data

- List of shelters that are in need of resources in order to report, including all in top intake shelters, by March 2023
- List of barriers for reporting data by June 2023
- Partnership with organization(s) that can provide data reporting support by Dec 2023
- 80% of top intake shelters reporting data to Shelter Animals Count by Dec 2023
- 100% of top intake shelters reporting data to Shelter Animals Count by Dec 2024

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<sup>4</sup> Exhaust list of the top intake shelters in Oklahoma first