

2025 – 2029 Community Wide Plan for Indianapolis/Marion County Animal Welfare Executive Summary

Process

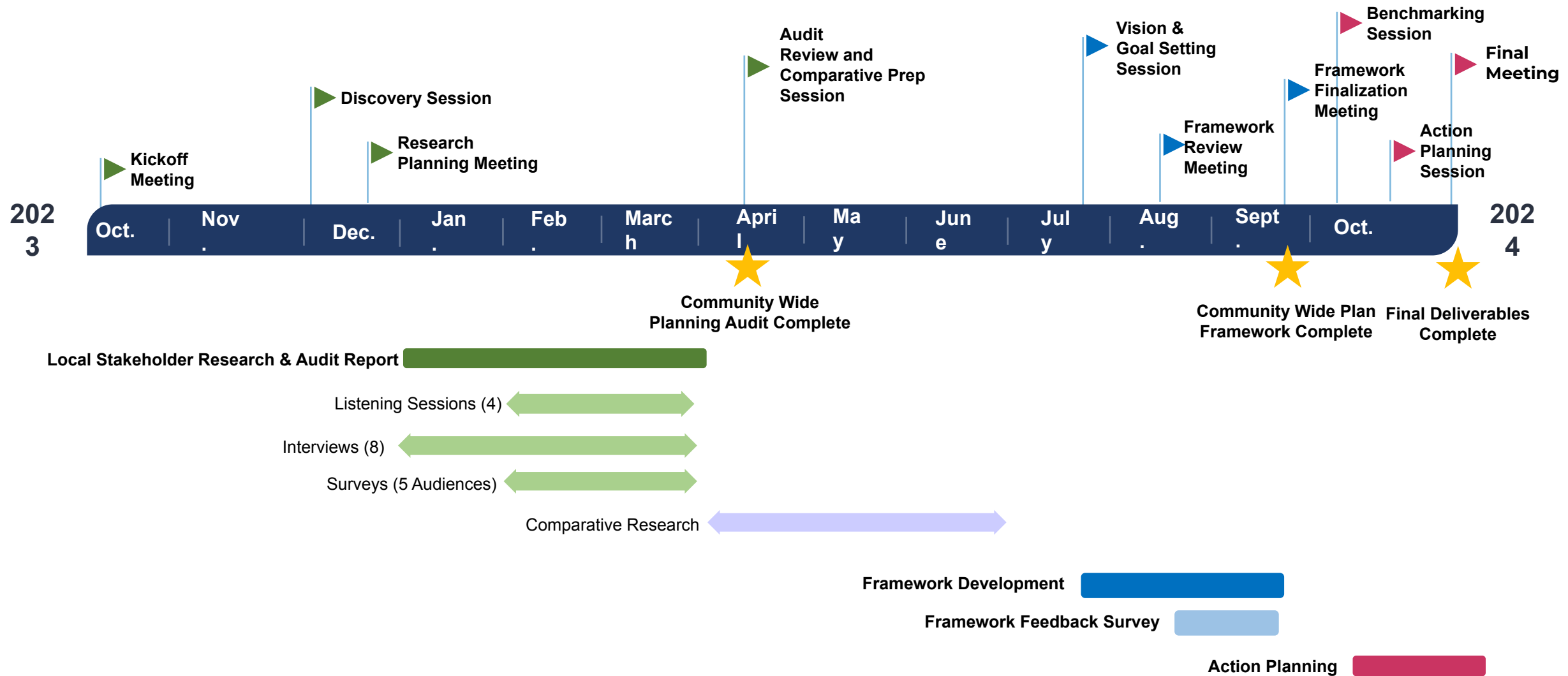
Introduction

In early 2023, a small group of Indianapolis animal welfare leaders recognized an opportunity to organize animal welfare efforts across the city. With funding from Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust and Lucky Dog Rescue, leaders looked to engage the community and develop a comprehensive process that align and prioritize efforts into a unified Community Wide Plan. An Indianapolis-based Consulting Firm, Hedges, was selected to facilitate a 12-month planning process, in partnership with a Steering Committee.

This Executive Summary highlights:

1. The Process Taken
2. The Research Conducted
3. The Stakeholders Involved
4. The Community Wide Plan Goals & Strategies
5. Ways for the Community to Get Involved

It is important to note that this Plan is intended to be a Plan developed by the community and implemented by the community, as a collaboration. It is not meant to be a plan focused on one organization. Individual organizations should consider how they can align their organizational strategy to support the Goals and Strategies in this Plan. It was emphasized many times through the process that challenges in the community will not be solved overnight, and with a collaboration of this size, progress over perfection may be an important approach to keep in mind.



Summary of Planning Sessions

Session	Purpose	Audience
Discovery	Conduct a SOAR Analysis of the Animal Welfare Community that will serve as the foundation for what information is needed and from whom in the community stakeholder research.	Steering Committee
Research Planning	Plan the logistics of the community stakeholder research including the methods and audiences of the research.	Steering Committee
Report Review & Comparative Preparation	Review and discuss the findings from the Indianapolis Animal Welfare Stakeholder Research Report and discuss the priorities of the comparative research to be conducted by the Steering Committee.	Steering Committee
Vision & Goal Setting	Begin to develop a vision and goals for the Community Wide Plan and start to determine strategies to effectively reach those goals.	Steering Committee + Animal Welfare Leaders and Community Members
Framework Revision	Conduct initial review and revision of the Plan Framework.	Steering Committee
Framework Finalization	Based on community feedback, final review and revision of the Plan Framework.	Steering Committee
Benchmarking	Discuss success indicators and draft specific Year One Benchmarks in alignment with the goals and strategies outlined in the Community Wide Plan.	Steering Committee + Animal Welfare Leaders and Community Members
Action Planning	Determine the high-priority action steps and key implementation roles for each Year One Benchmark.	Steering Committee + Animal Welfare Leaders and Community Members
Final Meeting	Review how to utilize the Action Plan Dashboard and discuss implementation strategies, including recommended immediate next steps.	Steering Committee

Summary of Research & Stakeholder Input

The planning process engaged over 1,600 stakeholder voices.

Purpose	Method	Audience	Reach
Local Stakeholder Research	Interview	Local and National Leaders & Funders	8
	Listening Sessions	1. IACS Staff 2. IACS Volunteers 3. Rescue & Shelter Leaders 4. Field Organization Leaders	11 26 9 4
	Surveys	1. General Public 2. Veterinary & Clinic Staff 3. Animal Welfare Organization Supporters 4. Social Service Providers	384 40 413 17
Comparative Analysis, conducted by Steering Committee Members	Review of Publicly Available Information + Interviews with Organization or Community Leaders	Fort Wayne, Indiana / Humane Fort Wayne; Lifeline Animal Project in Atlanta, Georgia; Louisville, Kentucky; Illinois Coalition, Cleveland Animal Protection League, Ohio	N/A
Community Input on Framework Draft	Survey	The general public was invited to review the drafted Plan Vision, Goals, and Strategies, and provide feedback.	702

Operation Indy Animals

Operation Indy Animals Board is representative of 10 different animal welfare organizations. The Board will oversee the project for the next 5 years.

- Darcie Kurtz, Co-Chair and Executive Director, FIDO
- Alyssa Lewis, Co-Chair and Executive Director Peaceful Souls Animal Rescue & Recovery
- Dawn Benefiel, Executive Director, Indy Neighborhood Cats
- Donna Casamento, CEO, IndyHumane
- Jen Hancock, Executive Director, FACE Animal Clinic
- Kelly Diamond, Director, Indianapolis Animal Care Services
- Pascale Hollings, West Michigan Street Veterinary Clinic
- Brett Kruger, IACS Advisory Board Member
- Kristin Hancock, Friends of Indy Animals
- Chris Roberson, IACS Advisory Board Member



Community Wide Plan Framework

Five-Year Community Wide Plan Vision

The Community Wide Plan is focused on creating a strong foundation for Animal Welfare efforts in Indianapolis/Marion County by ensuring there is unified and collaborative network working together to improve. “After much deliberation and consideration, the Committee ultimately chose to focus on dogs and cats in this first five years, with the understanding that more targeted efforts would build a solid foundation to promote long-term change and positive progress for all companion animals in the community.

The Five-Year Community Wide Plan Vision is:

“Indianapolis/Marion County has a unified and effective network of animal welfare organizations that improves the health, safety, and quality of life for dogs and cats while creating collaborative and sustainable community engagement and improved public health.”

Goal 1: Improved Pet Care & Retention

With the goal of improving pet care and retention, so pets stay with their caretakers, the Plan focuses on increasing access to resources in three areas over the next five years: veterinary services, basic pet care, and the cross section of human services as detailed below.

Strategy 1.A: Increase access to and knowledge of available veterinary services, including spaying and neutering, routine care, and emergency treatment.

Strategy 1.B: Increase access to basic pet care supplies and resources, including immediate food support, behavior counseling, and crisis fostering.

Strategy 1.C: Actively collaborate with human services organizations to provide community resources, tools, and support systems that can assist all pet owners/caretakers in keeping their dogs and cats for life.

The first year of the Action Plan focuses on gathering accurate lists of resources, making them available to the public, and building relationships across these three areas, setting a strong start to further work in accomplishing these strategies.

Goal 2: Increased Community Education & Active Engagement

Understanding that knowledge is power, and the community will fuel the success of this work, this goal focuses on ensuring community members know where to efficiently find resources to care for their pets and are inspired to actively support animal wellbeing efforts.

Strategy 2.A: Create and maintain a centralized and accessible virtual hub with resources for pet owners/caretakers, animal welfare professionals, veterinary staff, volunteers, and community members seeking support and care for animals.

Strategy 2.B: Provide education and resources to future pet owners/caretakers and youth.

Strategy 2.C: Cultivate an expanding network of diverse community members to actively support animal wellbeing efforts by contributing their time, talents, and financial resources.

The first year of the Action Plan focuses on gathering resources and creating an access point for these resources, developing information focused on adoption support, and determining how to intentionally engage community advocates.

Goal 3: Coordinated Rescue, Shelter, and Adoption Services

Diving into the challenges of the animal welfare sector, this goal focuses on coordinating systems, resources and planning for emergencies so dogs and cats can safely move through the system into their forever home.

Strategy 3.A: Create a coordinated, community-wide system of entry for all unwanted and stray dogs and cats to access shelter, safety, medical care, rehabilitation, and fostering and adoption opportunities.

Strategy 3.B: Provide each sheltered dog and cat with a tailored and timely care plan utilizing coordinated community resources.

Strategy 3.C: Develop and test a community-wide emergency response protocol for sheltering dogs and cats during disasters, including disease outbreaks and extreme weather.

The first year of the Action Plan focuses on improving intake and rapid response for stray dogs and cats, improving the triage and emergency care response time in shelters and rescues, and creating a network of animal sheltering options for cases of extreme weather.

Goal 4: Stronger Legislation & Enforcement

The legislative systems supporting this work, specifically in enforcement, are critical to ensuring the health and safety of the public, dogs, and cats. This goal focuses on enacting new laws and improving current laws.

Strategy 4.A: Enact enforceable animal welfare laws that are effective in reducing overpopulation and improving pet wellbeing.

Strategy 4.B: Improve enforcement of animal welfare laws to increase compliance while being supportive, equitable, and effective in preventing re-offenses.

The first year of the Action Plan focuses on gaining clarity on current legislation, determining potential needed legislation, and determine how to align the community and leaders in the animal welfare space to supportive legislative efforts.

Goal 5: Clear Leadership, Accountability, & Sustainability

By prioritizing creating a strong working structure focused on plan management, measuring and communicating success, and securing funding, this goal will set the efforts of the plan up for success and sustainability.

Strategy 5.A: Identify a lead organization and implementation structure that will govern and support all involved organizations to consistently manage the plan's progress and success.

Strategy 5.B: Track and share key metrics with the community and local government that measure the plan's progress and provide accountability.

Strategy 5.C: Develop and secure diversified funding to support the work of the plan and build sustainability for continued coordination and success.

The first year of the Action Plan focuses on creating committee and governance structures, establishing Key Performance Indicators, and creating a plan to fund the efforts outlined in the Plan.

Engagement Opportunities

This work can only be truly successful with the support and active participation of the community. Community Members and Animal Welfare Leaders are invited to engage with this work in the following ways:

1. Invest time in implementing the Goals and Strategies by joining a Work Group that is focused on accomplishing a specific Annual Benchmark. The following skills, expertise, experiences are needed to support successful implementation:
 - Fund Development
 - IT Skill
 - Marketing Skills
2. Financially support the efforts of the Community Wide Plan by making a donation of any size to: [link added here](#)