



HASS: Getting Started with Ecosystem Mapping

What is Ecosystem Mapping?

To fully support pet families through a Human Animal Support Services model, every animal in a community should have access to services and resources. Additionally, every *person* should have a clear, equitable, and accessible pathway to the services and resources available in their community. Ecosystem mapping involves creating visual maps that detail all community providers by service category and service area, and helps identify resource hubs that exist outside the animal shelter system. Once resources are mapped, shelters can identify current and potential future partnerships and stakeholders, build new connections, and cultivate relationships to fill [programming and service gaps](#).

Ecosystem Mapping fulfills two primary functions:

- **Case Management**
Your ecosystem map, paired with a platform like pets.findhelp.com, which allows your community to connect themselves with available services they may need, can be used for more effective case management to ensure individuals and their pets receive needed support.
- **Community Partnership**
Ecosystem mapping helps shelters see gaps in available services. As a result, you may learn what future partnerships would benefit your community the most, to fill identified program and service gaps.

Benefits of Mapping Your Community's Resources

- Improve client satisfaction and access to resources
- Reduce shelter intake and the number of animals housed in the shelter
- Increase the number of animals returned home or never had to be separated in the first place due to increased community resources
- Reach previously unserved communities and populations
- Reach people who weren't aware of you before
- Save money
- Save staff time
- Build community engagement
- Grow volunteer support
- Improve morale within the shelter
- Keep more people and pets together
- Promote responsible pet ownership
- Support diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Support human health and wellness

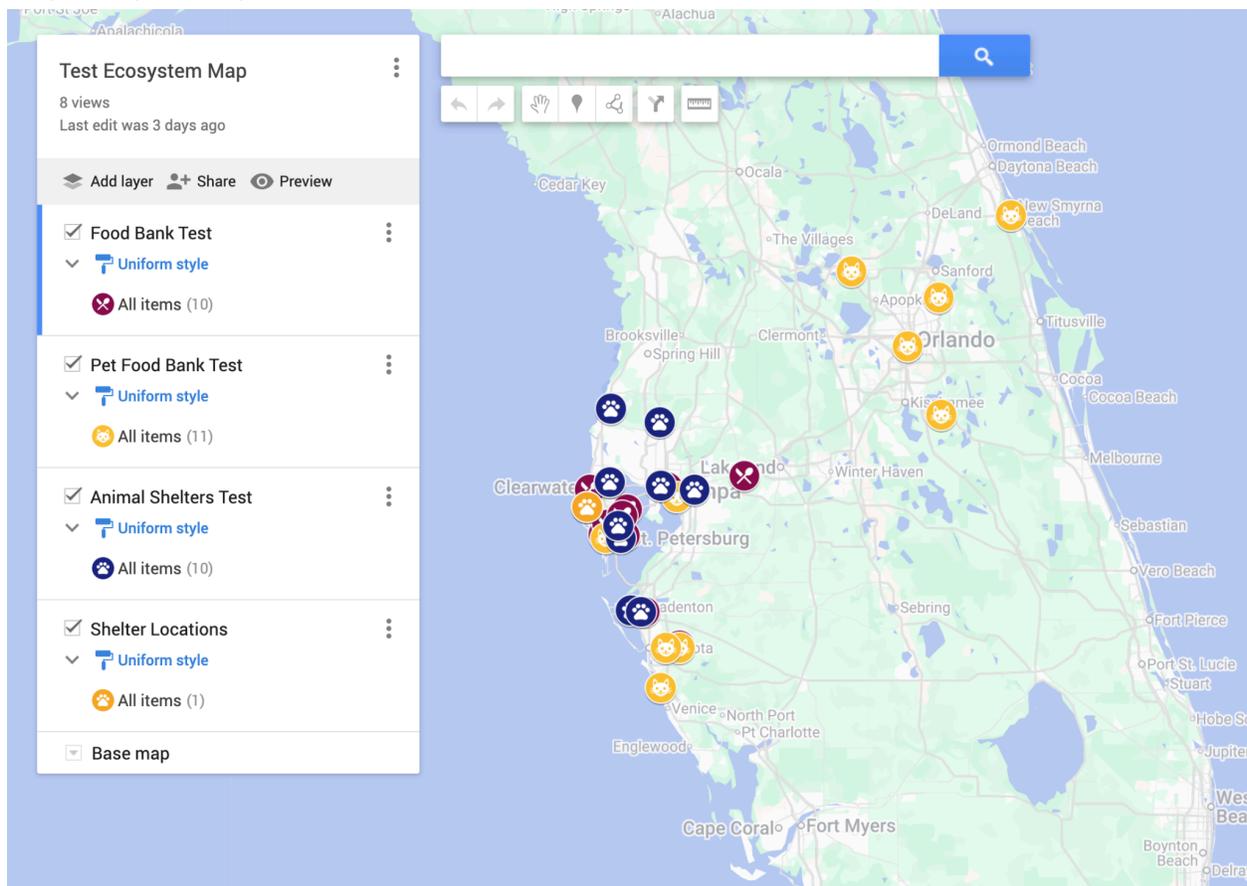


HUMAN ANIMAL SUPPORT SERVICES

What does success look like?

A successful Human Animal Support Services Ecosystem Map includes every layer of support as outlined in the [Animal Welfare & Social Services Ecosystem Mapping Guide](#). The map can be available for public use as a tool to find needed resources and/or used internally to find gaps in programming that your organization or partnerships can fill. Because internet accessibility is a factor, creating printable resource directories is vital. Sharing these resources digitally and in print across the community into neighborhoods, government offices, nonprofits, and businesses will further support human service and pet caretaker needs.

Sample ecosystem map:



Terminology for Ecosystem Mapping

- **Ecosystem Mapping:** Ecosystem mapping is the creation of visual maps that detail all community providers in the service area.
- **Gap:** A gap is a lack of services, a lack of access to services, or a lack of knowledge about services for community members.
- **Geographic Information System (GIS):** A computer system for capturing, storing, checking, and displaying data related to positions on the Earth's surface.



- **Service Area:** The area that the service organization serves.
- **Social Vulnerability:** The potential adverse effects on communities caused by external stresses on human health. Such stresses include natural or human-caused disasters or disease outbreaks. Reducing social vulnerability can decrease both human suffering and economic loss.
 - [CDC Social Vulnerability Index \(SVI\)](#)
 - The CDC SVI uses 16 U.S. Census variables to identify vulnerable communities grouped by four main categories:
 - Socioeconomic status
 - Household characteristics
 - Racial and ethnic minority status
 - Housing type and transportation

How Organizations Can Begin Mapping Their Ecosystem

It is helpful to document your ecosystem in two formats: both in a list (such as a spreadsheet) and within a visual mapping tool. You can use either method to get started!

What you need:

- Internet access
- Spreadsheet tool (e.g., [Excel](#), [Google Sheets](#))
- Mapping software (e.g., [Google My Maps](#), [QGIS](#), [ArcGIS](#), [Tableau Public](#))
 - *Note: Some free software options, such as Google My Maps, may limit the amount of information one map can hold at a time. Users can still accomplish mapping all of their ecosystem data points with free tools, but may need to build several maps in order to hold all relevant data.*
- Human resources
 - Research and tech-savvy staff/volunteers (consider making this project volunteer-led)
 - For external support, consider: GIS interns/students from local colleges/universities, GIS consultants for large projects, Municipal/local government GIS office staff (if applicable)



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Step 1:

Method 1: Start with a List	Method 2: Start with a Map
Create a List Make a copy of the “Animal Welfare & Social Services Ecosystem Mapping Worksheet” and list all local resources.	Create a Map Select a mapping tool to create a resource map. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Suggested: Google My Maps or other GIS tool.• Tip: See pages 17-22 of the “Pets for Life Community Outreach Toolkit” (by Humane World, formerly HSUS) for a step-by-step guide to building a Google Map for your community.
Search for Service Providers Utilize the Animal Welfare & Social Services Ecosystem Mapping: A Guide for Program/Service Searches as a tool for building your list.	Search for Service Providers Utilize the Animal Welfare & Social Services Ecosystem Mapping: A Guide for Program/Service Searches as a tool for building your list within the mapping tool.
Create a Map Once your list is complete, upload it to a mapping tool, such as Google My Maps or other GIS tool. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tip: See pages 17-22 of the “Pets for Life Community Outreach Toolkit” (by Humane World, formerly HSUS) for a step-by-step guide to building a Google Map for your community.	Create a List Once your mapping is complete, download it into a list/spreadsheet format (CSV). <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reference this list/spreadsheet template for guidance on helpful fields to document.
Congratulations! You now have a visual ecosystem map and list.	

Step 2: Determine Resource Gaps

There are several ways to identify resource gaps, but a great first step is to analyze your shelter data. This analysis can help reveal the factors influencing animal intakes and highlight unmet needs within the community, such as the geographic location from which intakes are originating in your community, trends in intake reasons, and more. Additionally, consider using the [Program/Service Gap Analysis Toolkit](#), which guides you in employing mapping techniques to pinpoint these resource gaps. It is essential to consider all socioeconomic, environmental, and human factors to ensure that communities receive comprehensive support and have equitable access to services.



Helpful resources:

- [Data Foundations: Best Practices and Data Tracking Recommendations](#)
- [Program/Service Gap Analysis Toolkit](#)

Step 3: Strategic Plan & Partnerships

Use the results from your gap analysis and the contact information gathered to create a strategic plan for collaboration and establishing partnerships.

Use the exercise below to begin planning for how you envision addressing gaps in programs/services. Helpful pathways may include building community partnerships or expanding current shelter programs.

Considerations	Notes
Which gap is most pressing?	
Which gap is the most approachable?	
Potential partnerships	
Outreach needed	
Can volunteers be utilized? How?	
How can you address your top shelter intake reasons?	
How can you address the top request types for pet help?	

Helpful resources:

- [Building Community Partnerships](#)
- [Social Services Roundtable Planning Guide](#)
- [Evidence for Supporting Human-Animal Bonds: Resource Collection](#)

Step 4: Communications

Inform staff and volunteers about the new resources created through this process, how to utilize them, and emphasize the support that can now be offered to community members.

Helpful resources:

- [Communicating Support Services with the Public](#)
- [Case Management Training](#)
- [Trauma-Informed Care Training](#)
- [Conversational Interviewing](#)



Step 5: Ongoing Maintenance

Establish regular times to review programming and available resources. Keep in mind that the ecosystem mapping resource list is a living document and should be updated regularly.

Advanced Recommendation:

Hire a [Case Manager](#) and/or [Social Worker](#).

Success Story: Dallas Animal Services

Dallas Animal Services (DAS) utilized mapping to establish a pet food and supplies pantry in Dallas, Texas. DAS identified areas of the community that are food resource deserts and established relationships with existing human food pantries. Through these partnerships, DAS can reach the community where they are and provide pet food and supplies, information on accessible veterinary services, and pet identification. In 2021, the [newly launched pet food pantry](#) fed 355 dogs and 150 cats in just three months' time. DAS's pet food pantry has also created opportunities for volunteers, outreach, and in-person pet support.

Additional Examples

- [Greenville County Pet Resources Map](#)
- [Dallas Animal Services - Pet Resources](#)
- [LA Animal Services Resource Guides](#)
- [Austin Pets Alive! Human Animal Support Services Resources](#)
- [Jacksonville Humane Society Free & Low-Cost Pet Help Resource Guide](#)
- [Humane World's Pets For Life Community Outreach Toolkit](#)