



Volunteer Integration

What does it mean to integrate volunteers under HASS?

Volunteers are a critically important part of launching and running HASS programs. It's excited to provide an opportunity for volunteers to be fully integrated into driving forward the mission, vision and values of your organization and [HASS](#) together.

What problem is Volunteer Integration trying to solve?

Implementing HASS requires love, compassion, commitment, all in the name of doing better by the pets and people in our communities. Without volunteers, most HASS initiatives either would not be possible or will never have their potential fully realized.

Likely Benefits of Integrating Volunteers

- Improve customer satisfaction
- Save money
- Maximize staff time
- Build community engagement
- Grow volunteer support
- Improve morale within the shelter
- Increase fundraising and grant opportunities
- Keep more people and animals together
- Reduce the number of animals housed in the shelter
- Decrease length of stay in the shelter
- Reduce intake
- Learn more about animals in your care
- Increase adoption and rescue placement
- Increase the number of animals returned home
- Improve humane care in the shelter
- Promote diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Support human health and wellness
- Empower volunteers to find innovative solutions
- Increase partnership opportunities
- Increase marketing and media engagement

How do I start building a HASS volunteer program?

1. **Evaluate your current volunteer program.** Collect the following information:
 - a. How many full time volunteers are currently serving in your organization (full time = six hours per month or more)?
 - b. How many volunteer hours are logged each month?

- c. Will you use existing volunteers for HASS positions, recruit new volunteers, or do both?
 - d. Do you have barriers (policies, rules, union rules, or procedures) that will prevent or impede volunteers from helping with the HASS elements?
 - e. Are volunteers able to access your shelter software and other technology platforms? They will need access to these if possible. Some shelters offer additional training and expectations for volunteers to act in an administrative capacity.
 - f. Where do you need volunteers the most right now? Make a list of the HASS elements you are currently implementing and/or growing and identify where you most need volunteers.
2. **Consider how your volunteers can support each [HASS pathway](#):**
- a. Answer a pet support or pet resource hotline and help people before they come to the shelter
 - b. Be a lost pet detective, helping to get lost pets back home with their families
 - c. Provide rehoming counseling and information to help people rehome their pets without them coming to the shelter
 - d. Offer behavioral support, enrichment and training for pets to prevent owner surrender intake
 - e. Serve as case managers, speaking one-on-one to pet owners facing barriers to keeping their animals
 - f. Work as auxiliary animal control or animal protection team members, working alongside officers to help lost pets, provide transport, and supply resources
 - g. Help people who are food insecure, providing food and supplies throughout the community
 - h. Serve as ambassadors between the shelter and partner organizations, helping pets and people, as well as contributing to the overall health of the community
 - i. Responding to people who call in to file found pet reports, providing options, advising them on how to get the word out about the pet, and inviting them to serve as a finder-to-foster until the pet is found
 - j. Provide post adoption/foster placement support for new families

[Read this blog for some common roles and responsibilities volunteers are fulfilling right now!](#)

3. **Hold a meeting with all volunteers to explain the HASS elements and the idea of community-centered sheltering.** You may also share the [HASS website](#) and take time to walk through each element and answer questions and discuss. Invite volunteers to share their ideas for how they can help!
4. **Create volunteer positions and descriptions for the roles you want to fill.** Here are some examples of HASS-related volunteer roles:
- a. [Silicon Valley Pet Project Community Outreach Volunteer Position Description](#)

- b. [Silicon Valley Pet Project Volunteer Community Outreach Coordinators](#)
 - c. View all of [Silicon Valley Pet Project Volunteer Positions](#)
 - d. [My Pit Bull is Family Pet Resource Center Advocate](#)
 - e. [Gateway Pet Guardians Community Hotline Assistant](#)
 - f. [Gateway Pet Guardians Pet Crisis Counselor](#)
 - g. [Gateway Pet Guardians Pet Food Pantry Coordinator](#)
 - h. [Gateway Pet Guardians Pet Support Counselor](#)
5. **Recruit internally and/or externally to fill your new roles.** Provide basic training for these new roles, recognizing the entire organization is trying new things, so everyone has a lot to learn from one another.

Consider inviting one or more committed volunteers to lead the new program. Many of the most successful new initiative and volunteer roles in shelters involve volunteers leading the way. Here are a few examples of how volunteer groups can create positive change in animal services agencies:

- a. *Friends of Pima Animal Care Center project, [TOP Dogs](#) is a volunteer-led training program designed to give dogs with behavioral needs the chance to learn basic commands and relieve kennel stress while also teaching volunteers valuable training skills and handling techniques.*
 - b. *[Gateway Pet Guardians](#) became the St. Louis region's Rescue Bank Affiliate to assist local organizations receive the food and supplies they need. This program is led and managed completely by volunteers.*
6. **Talk about the new volunteer programs you are implementing.** Make sure you're communicating on social media and news releases about your new volunteer programs. This will have three potential benefits: raising funds to support the program; recruiting new volunteers, and elevating the role and public image of your organization.
7. **Track of how many new volunteer roles you've created, how many people are volunteering for HASS-related roles, and how these roles are impacting animals and people.**
8. **Set clear expectations for your volunteers.** When volunteers begin working more closely with people and animals, it is important to treat every person with kindness and respect and assume that every person we meet has good intentions. Having a larger workplace culture agreement for volunteers and staff can be instrumental in building a HASS volunteer program. For volunteers who are helping people in the community that are facing homelessness, financial struggles, or other challenges, invite them to read this blog: [Telling Pet Owners Stories - A Simple Guide to Photographing and Writing About the People You're Helping.](#)