

EXPLORING FOSTER PROGRAMS AND THEIR PEOPLE, MANAGEMENT, AND LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES



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Executive Summary

The purpose of the *Exploring Foster Programs and Their People, Management, and Leadership Challenges* project was to understand the principal challenges that foster programs face from a people, leadership, and management perspective. The organizations that utilize foster programs are very eclectic in structure and nature, and we wanted to better understand both how they organize themselves and what their needs are to carry out their missions from a people perspective. We accomplished this goal in three phases. In the first Phase, we conducted a literature review to learn about the challenges present in animal fostering program; the information from this phase helped to inform our efforts subsequent phases. In Phases 2 and 3, which incrementally build on one another, we survey animal welfare organizations and asked them about the principal challenges their foster programs face.

The following areas present challenges to foster programs. These results are robust across organizational type (i.e., shelter v. rescue), though there are slight differences in the extent to which they are challenging for each organization type.

1. Recruiting foster homes
2. Finding qualified foster homes
3. Retaining foster volunteers long-term
4. Finding a foster home or place to stay for pets returned to the program
5. Foster volunteer burnout.
6. Volunteer/animal attendance at adoption events
7. Advertising/marketing of foster pets
8. Getting foster volunteers to adhere to policies and procedures
9. Training foster caregivers about animal caregiving

We have identified a few specific, actionable recommendations to address the needs of these organizations. The hope is that these materials can help animal welfare organizations carry out their mission more effectively and help drive an agenda for the industry.

Phase 1: Literature Search

We conducted an extensive literature search to gain information about animal fostering programs. We explored both science and trade sources for insights into the sector and their people, management, and leadership challenges. The literature that we gathered as part of this phase and our learnings from it helped to inform and contextualize our efforts in the subsequent phases.

Phase 2: Email Gathering

The goal of Phase 2 was to collect emails of animal welfare organizations with foster programs to begin to gain insights to inform our efforts in Phase 3. We included information and a link to a short survey in Adopt-a-Pet's monthly newsletter. We also sent the survey out via Maddie's Fund's Listserv. From these efforts, we had a total of 1,514 people complete the survey.

The survey asked for basic descriptive information about the organization, its mission, and whether it utilizes fostering. About 94% of the total sample (1,403 organizations) indicated that their organization uses foster programs. We also asked the respondents to describe their biggest challenges with regard to their foster program. This information was to help build a content valid survey for Phase 3.

At the end of the survey in Phase 2, we asked the respondents if they would be willing to help us in a future survey regarding fostering that will help inform outreach services. Those who were interested input their name, title, email address, name of the organization, and the organization's website (if applicable). This resulted in 1,183 people who indicated that their organization had a foster program and were interested in participating in the Phase 3 survey.

There were no differences in terms of organizational demographic variables between those willing to participate in future research and those not willing.

Phase 3: Foster Program Challenges

Phase 3 had a few principal goals: 1) we wanted to better understand the structure and organization of fostering programs. To get at this, we asked questions about their animals (how many they take in annually, what kinds of animals they accept, and where they are housed), the composition of their 'workforce' (in terms of paid staff [part and full-time], contractors, volunteers, fosters, etc.), their budget, the involvement of their board of directors (if applicable), and the role in the organization of the person taking the survey. 2) we wanted to better understand what people involved in foster programs see as their principal challenges and needs from a people, management, and leadership perspective. 3) we wanted to learn about the education and training needs foster programs have and would benefit from.

Pilot testing

Using the information gathered from the results of Phase 2, along with scientific and trade literature, and the expertise of Maddie's Fund, we put together a survey aimed at addressing the three goals stated above. Before sending the survey out to the participants, we wanted to make sure that our survey was clear and complete. We pilot tested the survey with six people who are heavily involved with animal welfare organizations, and foster programs in particular. We conducted this pilot test using verbal protocol analysis, meaning that we asked the pilot participants to provide their feedback on the survey in real time articulating all thoughts, as they were actually taking the survey. This helped to understand their thought processes when responding to the questions, and helped to highlight when something was

unclear or if there were response options that were missing or redundant. This process resulted in changes to the wording of the questions, clarification and distinction between questions that were similar, and the addition of response options that were otherwise missing yet relevant. Pilot testing ended when we were not receiving any unique feedback from the pilot participants.

Pre-notification

In an attempt to increase the response rate of the Phase 3 survey, we sent out an email to eligible respondents from Phase 1 (indicated they would like to participate in a future survey and use a foster program). In this email, we notified them that we would be sending the follow-up survey in one week. That way, the recipients would be on the lookout for the email, and thus more likely to take it.

Final Survey

After bad emails and duplicate organizations and/or emails were removed, the final Phase 3 survey was sent to 1,093 people. 461 people completed the survey in its entirety; an additional 162 started the survey, but did not complete the whole thing. Considering only the people who opened the email (821), the response rate for completed surveys was 56% and 76% for partially completed surveys. This is an excellent response rate for a survey of this type.

There were no differences in terms of organizational demographic variables between those who responded to the survey and those who did not.

Table 1 shows the role in the organization of the respondents that took the survey. Tables 2.1 – 2.7 show the characteristics of the organizations that participated in the survey. In addition, 46 out of the 50 states in the U.S. were represented by these organizations, as were a handful of other countries (e.g., Canada, Italy, Australia, Grenada). As we expected, there is a lot of variability in terms of animal welfare organizations that utilize

foster programs. Please note, all the tables below are just animal welfare organizations with foster programs.

Table 1: Role in the organization of the respondents

	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Senior Leadership	198	46.9
Volunteer Coordinator	16	3.8
Work as part of Animal Care (includes veterinary care)	19	4.5
Adoptions Coordinator	12	2.8
Work as part of Operations/Development	23	5.5
Board of Director member	89	21.1
Foster Program Coordinator	49	10.0
Other: All of the Above	23	5.5

Table 2.1: The foster program is part of a shelter v. rescue

	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Shelter	169	28.5
Rescue	425	71.5

Note: we did not report the other category for this characteristic, as it was a fairly small number of organizations and mostly included organizations that classified themselves as both shelter & rescue.

Table 2.2: The type of organization with a foster program

	<i>N</i>	%
Municipal animal services	31	5.2
Private shelter/rescue with a municipal or government contract (i.e., animal control or housing service)	68	11.4
Private shelter/rescue without a municipal or government contract	459	76.8
Other: Not specified or clear	40	6.7

Table 2.3: The structure of the workforce of the organizations

	<i>N</i>	%
Volunteer based organization	405	67.8
Paid leader, otherwise volunteer based	24	4
Paid leader and staff, no or few volunteers	5	0.8
Paid leader and staff, with some or many volunteers	163	27.3

Table 2.4: Annual budget for the organizations

	<i>N</i>	%
Under \$19,999	124	22.1
\$20,000 to \$199,000	259	46.3
\$200,000 to \$999,999	75	13.4
\$1 million to 10 million +	55	9.8
Don't know	47	8.4

Table 2.5: Policy for admitting animals to the organization

	<i>N</i>	%
Open admission policy (will accept all animals regardless of space)	71	13.4
Strays only (will accept stray animals only, no owner-surrendered animals are accepted)	12	2.3
Limited admission policy (only accept new animals when space is available)	384	72.6
Open stray/limited owner-surrendered (accept all strays regardless of space, owner surrendered animals are only accepted when space is available)	62	11.7

Table 2.6: Annual Animal Intake for the organization

	<i>N</i>	%
1-99	164	27.5
100-499	232	38.9
500-999	75	12.6
1000-4999	76	12.7
5000-9999	24	4
10000+	18	3
Don't know	8	1.3

Table 2.7: Where the organization houses their animals

	<i>N</i>	%
Primarily in our organization's physical facility or shelter (some foster care)	211	35.3
Primarily in foster homes (some physical sheltering)	109	18.2
Only in foster homes (no physical sheltering)	248	41.5
Other	29	4.9

Principal Challenges Results

We assessed the principal challenges that foster programs face in multiple ways:

1. We asked the respondents to describe, in an open-ended format, the *biggest challenges, obstacles and needs* that they face.
2. We presented the respondents with a list of 24 statements that describe challenges that were identified through Phase 2, the literature search, and by experts in the field. Respondents were directed to indicate, using a given response scale, the extent to which they feel each statement presents a challenge to their organization.
3. We presented the same list of challenges and asked the respondents to rank their top 3 challenges and provide open-ended responses to prompts attempting to understand their top challenges in more detail.

As part of the survey, we also asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they would like to receive training or educational materials on the list of challenges. These results are presented in Appendix B and, on the whole, indicate that foster programs are very interested in receiving training and educational materials on a variety of topics.

We assessed the principal challenges of foster programs using these three different methods so that we could be confident that we were accurately capturing the challenges that foster programs face and not imposing a biased view on it. By asking it in three different ways, we could use the answers from one method as a 'check' of the answers of the other two methods, and vice versa. To the extent that the responses from the three different approaches lead to similar conclusions, we can be certain that we really understand the challenges of these organizations. As the results below show, the three methods lead us to draw very similar conclusions about the top challenges that foster programs face.

The overall results from the challenge statements (the second method) and the ranking (the third method) are presented in Table 3. For the purposes of this report, we chose to focus specifically on those challenges which received a mean rating from the second method of above 2.5 (on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 indicating that it is more of a challenge for the organization) and were ranked as a top 3 challenge by at least 10% of the sample. A mean rating of 2.5 suggests that the statement presents at least somewhat of a challenge to the organizations. These criteria assured that we captured all important challenges – casting a wide net. From the table, we see that the following are the top challenges that these programs face:

1. Recruiting foster homes
2. Finding qualified foster homes
3. Retaining foster volunteers long-term
4. Finding a foster home or place to stay for pets returned to the program
5. Foster volunteer burnout.
6. Volunteer/animal attendance at adoption events
7. Advertising/marketing of foster pets
8. Getting foster volunteers to adhere to policies and procedures
9. Training foster caregivers about animal caregiving

We conducted a series of tests to see if important demographic variables influenced the ratings and rankings of the challenge statements. We ran statistical tests (e.g., t-tests, ANOVAs, and MANCOVAs) to determine whether there are differences in the mean ratings. We found that there were significant differences between shelter and rescue organizations. In particular, we found differences in the *extent* to which a particular statement is a challenge. On the whole, rescues struggle with the challenges to a greater extent, though shelters face some challenges (e.g., home checks) to a greater extent than rescues. Regardless, the pattern of results is the same for both shelters and rescues. In addition, the top ranked challenges were the same for both types. See Appendix A for more about the methodology and the results of the analyses.

These results are consistent across both the challenge statements as well as the ranking methods. As noted above, not only do those 9 challenges have mean ratings above 2.5, but they were also ranked in the top 3 by the largest percentages of respondents. We should note that there was an “other” category where participants could explain challenges not covered by the statements. However, upon reviewing the open-ended responses, there were no unique insights that were not already captured by the challenge statements.

Table 3: Ratings of the challenge statements for the whole sample

	<i>% Agreement</i>	<i>Mean Rating</i>	<i>% Ranked in Top 3</i>
1. Recruiting foster homes	67.88%	3.98	51.50%
2. Finding qualified foster homes	64.70%	3.86	50.64%
3. Retaining foster volunteers long-term	48.84%	3.41	38.20%
4. Finding a foster home or place to stay for pets returned to the program	40.75%	3.18	22.32%
5. Foster volunteer burnout	36.31%	3.09	18.24%
6. Volunteer/animal attendance at adoption events	28.93%	2.77	13.95%
7. Advertising/marketing of foster pets	27.13%	2.67	10.09%
8. Getting foster volunteers to adhere to policies and procedures	20.62%	2.55	15.45%
9. Training foster caregivers about animal caregiving	20.26%	2.54	10.73%
10. Training foster caregivers about shelter/rescue policies and procedures	19.85%	2.53	8.37%
11. Communicating with would-be foster caregivers about animals in need of foster homes	20.54%	2.52	4.72%
12. Providing foster pet emergency medical care	24.22%	2.48	9.87%
13. Handling the volume of foster caregiver questions, requests, needs and problems	19.14%	2.38	11.59%
14. Communicating necessary information (e.g., policies, procedures, animal information) to current foster volunteers	15.47%	2.35	5.58%
15. Reviewing and/or interviewing new foster volunteer applicants	15.70%	2.33	4.72%
16. Foster pet behavior questions	12.67%	2.27	3.86%
17. Communication between foster volunteers	12.48%	2.25	4.51%
18. Tracking the animals and follow up on care and placement	14.71%	2.25	6.22%
19. Answering after hours questions about foster pets' care or health	16.63%	2.23	6.65%
20. Home checks for potential foster care volunteers	15.15%	2.22	3.00%
21. Providing food and supplies	15.02%	2.19	8.58%
22. Getting foster caregivers to follow up with interested adopters in a timely manner	12.95%	2.15	2.79%
23. Providing foster pet routine medical care, vaccinations and/or spay/neuter	11.08%	2.04	8.15%

Note. The results are sorted in order of importance with regard to the mean ratings. The % agreement column represents the percentage of respondents that answered 'to a good extent' or 'to a great extent' to that challenge. The response scale for the ratings ranged from 1 to 5, 5 indicating that it is more of a challenge for the organization. The % Ranked in Top 3 is the percentage of respondents who ranked that challenge as one of the top 3 challenges their organization faces.

Better Understanding the Challenges

In this next section, we leverage open-ended comments to better understand the nature of the challenges presented above. The open-ended comments came from two sources. First, we drew from the open-ended responses from the first method described above (e.g., asking participants to briefly describe their organizations' top challenges). Second, we had respondents answer a series of open-ended questions in response to each of the top three challenges that they ranked. In particular, we asked the respondents to discuss:

1. The techniques that they have implemented that have successfully addressed the challenges (at least in some capacity)
2. The biggest barriers to finding a solution
3. What materials/resources they would need in an ideal world to be able to address the challenges.

Below, we present the major themes that emerged from the open-ended data (along with sample quotes) for each question with regard to the top challenges described above. The results are based on a random sample of 75 participants (if less than 75 respondents ranked the challenge, all responses were reviewed). For those challenges that were not ranked by a substantial number of people, the amount of available open-ended data explaining the challenge is limited. This results in the biggest challenges receiving the most amount of text. Throughout the next section, we have also highlighted areas that present opportunities for action; they are presented in the 'Bright Idea' boxes on the right.

1. Recruiting foster homes
2. Finding qualified foster homes
3. Retaining foster volunteers long-term

General Description of the Challenge

With regard to **recruiting foster homes**, many organizations noted that they simply had trouble getting enough people to volunteer to foster. Others noted that it was difficult because they operate in a small and/or rural community, so there is even a smaller pool of potential volunteers. Some noted the opposite problem, where they operate in large cities that have a lot of competing organizations that vie for the same pool of potential fosters. For example:

- *The biggest challenge we face is finding fosters. We need people in order to save lives and although we cover 100% of the expenses, people have a hard time fostering.*
- *The primary issue is probably space. We have a limited number of foster homes and can only take a dog into the rescue if there's a foster who is able to take the dog in.*
- *We are located in a small rural community. This makes our pool of volunteers and possible fosters very small. We are building a facility on donated land which will house our rescues but we will still use fosters. We pay all vet costs for our rescues and provide food for all our dogs in foster care but folks don't seem to understand the importance of fostering and how it saves an animals life and is usually a temporary job.*
- *Our biggest obstacle is in recruiting new people to be fosters and volunteers. In Chicago there are scores of groups competing and we are located in an economically depressed area.*
- *There is always a demand for more foster homes available for our cats and dogs. Especially short notice, temporary foster homes are hard to come by for animals needing rehab from an illness, operation or behavioral.*
- *The biggest Challenge we currently and consistently face is having enough fosters available for the various pets. Since we are reliant completely on foster care/personnel. When our fosters personal lives change, as does happen, this makes our available placements change and fluctuate. These gaps leave potentially needy animals in potential peril until another placement can be found. Having enough fosters, is always an issue.*

The respondents also indicated that **finding qualified foster homes** presented a challenge. Rather than needing simply *more* foster volunteers, this challenge suggests that foster programs need volunteers who have a particular skill or are willing to take on more 'difficult' animals that most people would not want or know how to handle. The open-ended responses help to clarify this challenge from the first one:

- *Finding fosters who can work with feral kittens as well as finding homes for feral or semi-feral cats. Finding fosters willing to take in dogs requiring socialization and training to make them adoptable.*
- *We always desperately need more reliable, trustworthy fosters. We can never find enough. We don't know how to find more. We have tried outreach events but we can never find enough foster homes.*
- *biggest challenge is finding enough qualified and available fosters to help with the difficult cases, bottle babies, young dogs who know nothing, ill animals and animals with behavioral issues*
- *Our biggest challenge is adequate fosters. We specialize in neonatal kittens, that require round the clock care. It's tough to find people who don't work, or are willing to sacrifice sleep/deal with the mess of young kittens. With more people we could take in more animals.*
- *Finding volunteers who are willing to foster adult cats and socialize feral kittens. Our program is very limited because of the small number of foster volunteers we are able to recruit and retain.*
- *The biggest challenge is definitely finding good fosters who are willing and able to separate new animals from their resident animals until we find out if they are sick, good with other animals, housebroken, etc. So many people offer to foster but only if the dog is housebroken, good with kids, cats and other dogs and unfortunately when we find a stray or take in an abandoned animal, we don't know all of that right away but we need a place for them to go relatively quickly.*

Additionally, **retaining foster volunteers long-term**, is related to the recruitment of foster homes in general, as well as finding qualified foster homes. From the responses, it seems as if organizations struggle to get volunteers who can commit for long periods of time. Because foster programs are having trouble retaining foster volunteers, it makes recruiting new foster homes even more of a pressing issue, and vice versa. In addition, these animal welfare organizations want to keep the *qualified* volunteers. The quotes below highlight the intertwined nature and interdependence of these challenges:

- *Recruiting dedicated & responsible fosters that are willing to follow through on their promises. Having some volunteers with dog training experience rather than always having to pay a trainer.*
- *Recruiting and keeping active volunteers. Retention of quality volunteers is a major issue.*
- *Biggest challenges are attracting new ones and retaining the old ones. Commitment - we get many people want to foster and then something happens and suddenly they don't. Not much lead time.*
- *Retaining volunteers and foster homes is the biggest challenge, seconded only by securing new foster homes. People don't seem to understand the time and energy it takes to foster or they do the "I couldn't foster, I wouldn't be able to give the dog up!" So many end up keeping the dog, but then don't "have room" to foster anymore.*
- *The biggest challenges we face are finding an adequate number of foster homes. We have fosters who want to foster-to-adopt which is great but once they finalize the adoption we lose out on a foster home. This often times limits us to the amount of dogs we can take into the program.*
- *GETTING foster homes. most of the staff has multiple pets so its hard for us to foster and we are not able to get a steady group of foster homes. It seems to just be too hard for people to do.*
- *Dedicated volunteers that will take their position seriously. Also, the need for more volunteers that will make a commitment.*
- *Finding dedicated, reliable volunteers / fosters to commit to the pets we need fostered. Not 'returning' or 'quitting' as foster while we are working to place the animals in their care. Getting volunteers who will follow through with adoption events and show up, and handle the animals appropriately.*

- *The biggest obstacle we face is being able to keep some of our foster volunteers. We often lose them for various reasons like adopting their foster, an animal passing away in their care, or just being too much to handle.*

Due to the similarities and interdependent nature of the first three areas (recruiting foster homes, finding qualified foster homes, and retaining volunteers long-term), we chose group those challenges together when reporting on the remaining open-ended questions. This is because the responses that the participants gave for those three challenges areas were very similar.

Successful Strategies Implemented

- **Short-term fostering**
 - *We ask people if they can foster for even a short time even if not until a dog is adopted.*
 - *WE have a Saturday night Foster program for just an overnight. Many of our foster home began as Saturday night fosters.*
 - *The best fosters are adopters who we can rope in temporarily - some of the temps realize they actually like fostering and stick at it.*
- **Social media**
 - *When we blast out on social media a big need for foster we get an influx of applications.*
 - *Posting certain dogs online that we can rescue if we have a foster.*
 - *Posting on social media with pleas works the best but it creates the image that we are always in "panic mode", so we limit our posts like this.*
- **Make fostering easy**
 - *We make sure that all foster animals are vet checked, vaccinated, flea treated, etc.*
 - *Try to place "good" pets in homes with newer fosters and try to reserve one of our more advanced fosters in case we need them.*
 - *We provide crates and toys to occupy the pets and be less destructive.*
 - *Being able to provide food for the animals.*
 - *being very thankful for all their help, supporting them as much as possible, being considerate of their time and needs*
- **Education**
 - *We spend hours explaining the reality of fostering. It takes a very long time and much effort to show that fostering is NOT an evil thing. We explain so much of it so often, it starts to sound dry and dull.*
 - *Communicating the importance of "letting a foster go" to a new home so they can help another. Encourage new adopters to stay in touch with pictures and stories on our Facebook page so foster parents can stay in touch and see happy results of their work.*
 - *Educating them on what it really entails. A foster mom and kittens really do not take much time or effort until several weeks in. Same as for puppies.*

BRIGHT IDEA

Maddie's Fund could create a series of short 1-2 minute skill-building YouTube videos that contain information about fostering and proper procedures on narrow topics (e.g., health and behavioral care)



Barriers to Addressing the Challenge

- **The public**
 - *It is difficult to convince people to try fostering. People worry about it being too much a commitment. Also many people fear that they will not be able to let the dog go to another home because they are attached to the dog.*
 - *Reaching people--it would be great if we could use school aged kids under the boy or girl scout leadership with badges to earn for companion animal care.*

- *There still seems to be a lack of awareness in the general public about fostering, what it means, and how they can help. We also do not have a marketing budget so all our recruitment has to be free.*
- *We live in a rural area where the majority of residents are low income, not highly educated. They "love" animals but incapable of caring for them properly.*
- *Education. While I try to educate at every possible turn, I think many people have already made up their minds and need a lot more prompting before they are willing to commit.*
- **Lack of time/resources**
 - *If we had the time and energy to teach people how to train animals. Unfortunately, it's often easier for us to just take the animal into one of our experienced foster homes and train the dog than to try to teach the people how to - some are very resistant to the idea that they don't know what they're doing.*
 - *We don't have an advertising budget that would allow us to encourage fostering. While our local newspaper does work with us to provide as much advertising as possible, the advertising is mostly dedicated to promoting fundraising events. Getting the word out to potential foster parents is our biggest barrier. However, we also don't want to over-recruit.*
 - *We work full time jobs, and this is strictly a volunteer organization. We don't have the time to go out and find the people and screen them.*
 - *Funding to provide supplies and the time/labor to host the classes.*
 - *TIME is our greatest barrier. Managing new foster intakes, versus addressing animals requiring URGENT Foster placement.*

Ideal Resources and Materials Needed to Address the Challenge

- **Marketing/advertising**
 - *Well written materials to use in advertising in recruiting foster homes. I am not a good writer. Things that contain benefits to the foster home by fostering animals*
 - *Marketing about our group and our highlights of our success and goals of number of lives saved and how many cats we have trapped and released*
 - *National television advertising to educate the public about the need for foster homes, advertising in magazines and newspapers to reach a new circle of people, and professionally-designed marketing materials to make these appeals attractive, fun, and positive.*
 - *We would love to have a brochure, a TV commercial, media made by professionals - that extol the virtues of foster homes for rescues.*
- **Educational materials for fosters**
 - *It would be wonderful to have materials that explain the role of fosters, the funds to cover printing and mailing costs, and volunteers who have time to focus on recruiting fosters.*
 - *More educational support about animal care*
 - *A community wide education program, on how to foster for your local rescues and shelters would help to get interested individuals into the mind set. Even lectures from local vets on the day to day care of fosters with special needs, or regular healthy fosters would help.*
 - *Educating the general public about the benefits of fostering a rescued dog, correcting the dog's immediate problem, and seeing them adopted into loving homes.*
- **A pool of volunteers**
 - *General website with lists of volunteer fosters in the area along with a questionnaire with what*



BRIGHT IDEA

Create a "Foster-Finder" database where potential foster volunteers can input their contact information, what types of animals they are willing to foster (e.g., specific breed, special needs), and skills related to obedience training, etc. Organizations can pull from the database in times of need (specifically emergency situations or short-term assignments). Potential fosters could also search the database for animals/situations they are interested in. This would be akin to a two-way Pet-Finder. This could be extremely impactful.

- *pets (size, breeds, etc.) they are willing to foster, and their availability to participate in events.*
- *Would be nice to have a "pool" of people in a given area, whom may be interested in fostering, what animals they would consider taking in, time frame they would accept, age, needs, info about their home, i.e., do they have a fenced in yard*
- *A better database of people who want to foster. Sites like Adopt-A-Pet provide volunteers regularly, but many people do not reply to emails we send requesting their help. So, a better screening process from such sites.*
- *A pool of candidates who have signed up to be volunteers/fosters, with their geographical locations outlined, and having the proper space to house fosters, and the proper knowledge to care for them.*
- **Money**
 - *Advertising dollars to spread the word --- dollars to provide the fosters with litter, litter pans, pet shelters, bedding, food, toys, etc. And dollars to help provide the necessary transports for the foster animals such as to the clinic for vaccinations, routine health care and spaying and neutering.*
 - *Finances to support foster program, so program coordinator can run it effectively. Controlling the Director as to what is placed in foster care and requiring fosters to communicate with coordinator for needs.*
 - *More money to provide everything for the people fostering. Some cannot afford food litter etc. to help us. Or their homes are too small for quarantine area.*

4. Finding a foster home or place to stay for pets returned to the program

General Description of the Challenge

This challenge centered around the situations where a dog that was previously placed in a foster home (or an adopted home) is returned to the program. Because these programs have trouble recruiting and retaining volunteers to begin it, it makes it especially difficult to find another home when animals are returned to the program.

- Once someone has a foster, they normally do not take more in. When an animal is returned to the program, we need to find an empty home or someone willing to have multiple animals. Not many people are up for this challenge.
- This is difficult. When we have a foster volunteer that backs out after accepting a dog, we generally have no other open fosters or a place for the dog to go. Then the dog has to go to boarding until a foster home can be found.
- Since we are always short fosters in general when an animal is returned it is very tough to have a foster available to take it back into our program. We often have to board them.
- We just do not have fosters readily available to take returned dogs because all of our fosters homes are kept full and often these dogs are being returned due to either health or behavior issues which many of the fosters are unable or unwilling to deal with. We have no 911 in place for such situations.
- We've had some dogs returned (for various reasons - not necessarily anything the dog did wrong), and when we already have our spaces full, it's hard to find a place to keep them, unless we have money to board them.

Successful Strategies Implemented

- **Offer education/support to the adopter or foster**
 - *Best technique so far is to make sure our adopters understand how to get a new pet to adjust to their home.*
 - *we do reference checks, home visits, and speak with people about traits of the dog they are adopting in hopes of finding a truly perfect home for our dogs.*

- *Let the family know this is common and to not let it get them down. There are lots of other pets to try out. Finding the right pet that fits in your home is important to the board and we care about you and your pets.*
- *We ask adopters to give us a week to find a foster home. We also offer training and resources to them to try to keep the pet in the home.*
- **Board the animal in a facility**
 - *We have built relationships with a couple of vets and some boarding facilities and they help us out when we are in a bind. Even keeping one for a couple of weeks can make a huge difference for us.*
 - *Sometimes we simply have to board the animal temporarily at a commercial facility.*
- **Recruit volunteers or rely on 'reserve' volunteers**
 - *Having a "back up" volunteer who only fosters in a pinch has been helpful but is not as reliable a solution as we'd like.*
 - *Trying to outreach through social media (Facebook) and flyers and videos*
 - *We use our foster homes that CAN take on more animals and then we work extremely hard to find a new foster...*
 - *We advertise the story in the newspaper, use write ups online on our website and use our growing social media posts--newsletter, twitter and instagram to feature the cat.*



BRIGHT IDEA

Have a group of reserve volunteers who are *only* brought in for returns or emergencies. They should not be used for long-term fostering.

Barriers to Addressing the Challenge

- **Small number of foster volunteers**
 - *Low number of open foster homes.*
 - *We need more foster parents who have specialized training to dogs with these issues.*
 - *Shortage of fosters, particularly ones who will handle ill or bottle babies.*
 - *We always need more foster homes. Many of our foster dogs are adopted by their foster providers. We never discourage this, but it is hard to lose a spot or even a foster provider as a result.*
- **Money for boarding facilities**
 - *When a dog has to go to a boarding facility, it costs the rescue a lot of money until a new foster can be found and trained. The money spent on boarding could be used to save new animals.*



BRIGHT IDEA

Even if there is an animal in need, it is best not to overload and overtax foster volunteers. By taking in an animal, you may have a short-term win, but you will lose volunteers in the long-term. Declining to take in an animal may be, at times, even though it can be very upsetting, critical for the long-term health of the Foster program.

Ideal Resources and Materials Needed to Address the Challenge

- **Foster volunteers**
- **Money to pay boarding facilities or to build shelters**
 - *Our own facility would be ideal until a proper foster home could be found.*
 - *Sponsorship, corporate donors and a larger, more consistent donor base so funding was always available.*

5. Foster volunteer burnout

General Description of the Challenge

Because recruitment and retention of additional foster volunteers is difficult, the same people are constantly taking in animals or providing support to the foster program in a number of ways (e.g.,

administrative, transportation, etc.). This is leaving volunteers feeling both physically and emotionally exhausted.

- *This applies to foster parents and volunteers- we have seen rescue fatigue to be a big problem- where the rescuer gets overwhelmed by the demands of the animals in their care*
- *Sometimes our best foster homes are unable to continue fostering as they've almost continually had fosters.*
- *Some of our best and most reliable fosters quit after fostering multiple times, placing a burden on the remaining fosters, which in turn adds to their burden.*
- *Many of our volunteers have 1 -5 animals of ours in foster, simply because they know what will happen if not fostered. They take on as much as they can do to lack of fosters.*
- *Fosters who are burned out "need a break" in between foster pets and may not return to fostering at all. Oftentimes we don't have any new fosters to take the place of the burned out foster who is on a break, so we have fewer options for animals in need. It can take us months to replace a good quality foster.*
- *People get burned out and want to do something else, but we don't have people to replace them - and we need them. We always need to fill the pipeline with new members and teach/build their experience -- or we run out of volunteers.*

Successful Strategies Implemented

- **Limiting the number of foster animals**
 - *limiting the amount of animals that the foster parent can have at any one time*
 - *Breaks between fostering, events gigs!*
 - *Requiring breaks between fostering a new pet after one has moved on through adoption.*
- **Rotating the volunteers so the same people aren't fostering all the time**
 - *I have several different foster homes that I rotate through.*
 - *Try to find more volunteers and divide the tasks up evenly. It's a work in progress.....*
 - *Trying to recruit more fosters and use a rotating schedule.*
- **Praise and recognition**
 - *We have tried offering get-togethers for the volunteers, events, used to give certificates of appreciation, discounts of dog adoption, lots of praise & thank yous!*
 - *Thanking them and hoping they come back one day.*
 - *lots of praise! We make it a big deal when they come into the building :) they know they are loved!*
- **Support**
 - *We use a private FB group to be a source of support and encouragement for our foster group. Fosters can communicate successes and challenges with one another in that forum, and get the support of their peers.*
 - *We encourage similar experts to counsel fosters to vent/alleviate fears and frustrations, basically vent.*

Barriers to Addressing the Challenge

- **Lack of foster volunteers and too many animals**
 - *Not enough people to share the fostering load.*
 - *We always want to save more and constantly get requests.*
- **Compassion**
 - *The biggest barrier is that none of us can say NO to an animal in need.*

Ideal Resources and Materials Needed to Address the Challenge

- **More volunteers**

- *Ideally we'd have enough qualified fosters that we could give each foster a 2 week break between foster pets. It would also be great to have more volunteers to create, implement and manage an appreciation campaign.*
- **Build a facility**
 - *Building So we house other dogs at the rescue, and use Foster's only to observe their behaviors*
 - *Having our own sheltered facility and clinic.*

6. Volunteer/animal attendance at adoption events

General Description of the Challenge

Finding volunteers willing to foster is one step toward finding a permanent family for animals. However, organizations struggle with getting these foster volunteers to bring their animals to adoption events, where the animals are most likely to be adopted. Thus, the organizations are missing out on crucial opportunities to place the animals out of foster care and into adopted homes.

- *When we do adoption events the more people and more greyhounds we have the more interest we get from the public. At the same time volunteers have families and lives of their own so they are not able to attend all our events.*
- *Not all fosters see the importance of attending the events or have schedules that make attendance difficult. Adopters get frustrated when dogs are late or no-show.*
- *Adoption events are an excellent way to get a foster pet seen. It's also a great way for the foster coordinators to get new pics of the animal, get new info for the animal's bio, give helpful tips on problem behaviors we see (i.e., leash-pulling), and to distribute meds (monthly HW preventative and flea-tick preventative. If the animals aren't coming to the events, it not only decreases that animal's adoption exposure, but it keeps us from getting valuable, real-time, in-person information on the animal (pictures, personality info for the bio, behavior updates, etc).*
- *Many new fosters don't understand the importance of bringing their animal to adoption. Nearly all of our adoptions are done at the pet store sites and if the animal doesn't come it doesn't get adopted.*

Successful Strategies Implemented

- **Using other foster volunteers to bring the animals to the events**
- **Giving them flexibility in terms of times/locations of the events they go to and when to drop the animal off**
 - *Offering the foster to bring the dog to the shelter when we are open in the evenings. Allowing the foster to drop the animal off at the shelter the evening before the event and we transport the animal to the event.*
 - *Offering to transport the foster dog to and from the adoption event. Foster does not have to stay during the event.*
- **Sending reminders and explaining the importance of events**

Barriers to Addressing the Challenge

- **Volunteer's schedules**
 - *People don't want to give up their valuable weekend time to attend an adoption event or have to drive across town.*
 - *I suspect the transportation logistics and busy schedules are the most formidable barriers to maximizing pet adoption even success.*
- **Not enough volunteers**
- **Fosters living far away from the events**

Ideal Resources and Materials Needed to Address the Challenge

- **Transport team**

- *We would have a transport team with well-equipped vehicles to help transport foster pets to events and return them to their foster homes if not adopted at events.*
- *Ideally we would also have more volunteers that don't have foster dogs who can assist in picking up/handling dogs.*
- *A transport vehicle would allow us to offer to pick up foster pets for events and drop off if needed. Also, having other options for holding foster pets until the foster could've pick them up.*
- *I believe if my organization could stimulate pet adoption event success of the organization itself could provide transportation for foster caregivers and their foster pets to and from events.*
- **Shelter/facility**
 - *Have our own central location so our adoption events could all take place at one location instead of being scattered across the city.*
 - *Have our own facility to show our adoptable cats*
- **More volunteers**

7. Advertising/marketing of foster pets

General Description of the Challenge

Similar to the lack of attendance at adoption events, organizations are missing opportunities to adopt out animals because they do not have adequate advertising and/or marketing of pets. Therefore, the public doesn't know that these animals are available for adoption.

- *We would like to advertise for more foster homes but the money is not always there or the ads do not seem to work*
- *It can be a challenge to find homes for seniors and dogs with special needs. Our web site needs some work, and sometimes it takes a long time for fosters to post their dogs' info to the web site.*
- *Fosters are unwilling to take the time to get photos of pets and post them to website.*
- *we have better luck finding homes for animals that are visible at the shelter and find that most people would rather take a dog or cat home that day from the shelter (or another shelter/rescue) then wait to meet a specific animal in foster care*
- *animals in foster don't get the exposure the shelter animals do, and are often overlooked by people who would be a good match*

Successful Strategies Implemented

- **Facebook/online presence**
 - *We post a lot of our dogs to Facebook, and in December we did a "12 Dogs of December" drive, where one senior or special needs dog was posted with a fundraising link each day. We raised a good amount of money for the rescue, and a few dogs found forever homes.*
 - *Flyers, website, and facebook have helped promote available cats/dogs*
 - *We have put more people onto the task of updating the site as well as giving most fosters the ability to directly post photos and videos to Facebook and Instagram*
- **Repeatedly asking foster volunteers for photos and bios or making advertising a volunteer role**
 - *have volunteers whose task it is to get photos and videos of animals who have been in long term foster / we also have on site events where those animals who are able to come back for short term visits (dogs) are scheduled and advertised doing so*


Barriers to Addressing the Challenge

- **Limited time**

- *All of our fosters are volunteers, many of whom have jobs and other responsibilities. They sometimes have limited time to reply to inquiries, especially when a dog is particularly popular.*
- **Lack of skills or willingness among volunteers**
 - *Time, technologically inexperienced people trying to send photos that are not suitable for use (blurry, grumpy, badly lit)*
 - *Finding a volunteer willing to take this on that has camera skills.*
 - *Finding someone that has the time and desire to do all this for free.*
 - *Again, staffing. The ability to train and coach volunteers and fosters falls by the wayside when there are so many other priorities begging for attention.*
 - *Volunteers who have basic computer knowledge and the dedication to updating the dogs' status and online bio page on a regular basis.*

Ideal Resources and Materials Needed to Address the Challenge

- **A staff or volunteer role dedicated to advertisement**
 - *Someone who can follow up when dogs come into the rescue to ensure they're posted within a few weeks, or periodically thereafter if the dog has medical issues that need to be addressed first. An internal system where volunteers can easily view all the dogs who are currently in the rescue (even if they are not available for adoption yet).*
 - *in a perfect world we would have the ability to pay someone to keep our online presence up to date*
- **Funds to create good advertising materials**
 - *Money to design professional adoption posters and vets/shops being willing to display them. / Time to develop videos of animals.*
 - *I guess having money to be able to pay for places to advertise for fosters or hitting the right people with flyers, posters, billboards.*
 - *Videos and brochures to distribute to fosters instructing them on what kind of materials to provide*
- **Training and skill development/recruitment**
 - *Definitely training on how to market pets that aren't cute fluffy puppies: how to write a good bio, etc. Perhaps a regularly-expected schedule to communicate out to fosters: for example, "within two days we will need at least one picture, after one week we need a bio, after that we need at least one new picture a week," or something like that. Standards for everyone.*
 - *More volunteers that are computer savvy, and aren't challenged by a new program or database to work with. Material that would offer some training in newsletter editing, mailing list maintenance, etc.*



BRIGHT IDEA
Create sample or template advertising materials that organizations can use to recruit new fosters, donors, or to simply educate the public and/or prospective fosters.

8. Getting foster volunteers to adhere to policies and procedures

General Description of the Challenge

Because foster programs are running into issues with recruitment, they tend to take almost any volunteer that expresses interest. In doing so, they get foster volunteers who aren't necessarily qualified for the position, or think that they know best. This leads to disregarding policies and procedures set forth by the organization.

- *This really circles back to training them properly. it is a failure on our part to train them efficiently if they really have a problem adhering to policies.*
- *The medical needs of dogs are often compromised because procedures are not followed. Adoptive homes can be lost, adoption fees can be lost when policies and procedures are not followed.*

- *If guidelines are not followed it can impact the health and safety of our animals, volunteers, and adopters. Volunteers need to understand that procedures like proper applicant screening, quarantine of new foster animals, honest behavioral assessments, etc are for the safety of all.*
- *We have procedure manuals and forms but the foster volunteers don't use them. This makes it necessary for the Foster Team managers to spend a lot of time emailing and making phone calls. It affects many shelter teams because we don't know the current status of foster cats, where they are, if they've had all their needed vet visits, what special dietary, health, or behavior challenges they have.*

Successful Strategies Implemented

- **Reminders**
 - *constant reminders, which can be frustrating and wastes time...but it's what you do when you can't have someone specifically to manage each person closely.*
 - *we follow up with a phone call and reiterate our policies*
 - *All we can do is repeat policy, but ends up being much more often than we think it should.*
 - *We gently remind the foster volunteers to follow protocol but we don't want to lose a foster just because they want to do their own thing. It's a balancing act and frustrating. I recently resigned from managing the foster program because I found it too frustrating (also for other reasons).*
 - *Frequent reiterative communication. Using email, Facebook and printed handbooks to reinforce the same message.*
- **Written policies and procedures**
 - *Writing policies and procedures down. Holding fosters responsible for their compliance.*
 - *We need to develop written guidelines for all foster homes to follow. We are a growing organization and up to this point, have not needed the guidelines but we have added new foster homes and need all to follow the rules for the sake of the kitties.*
 - *We're developing a foster care contract and working on an in-depth foster resource guide website*

Barriers to Addressing the Challenge

- **Stubborn volunteers**
 - *Volunteers are just that...volunteers-they choose to comply they do and if not..they are volunteers and can't be compelled*
 - *Personal ideas of the fosters is the biggest barrier. we can only address it through education and experience*
 - *There are simply people who think they know better than others or that the rules don't apply to them. They may have gotten away with these same mistakes in the past, but the one time they don't could be very costly for the rescue and puts the animal at risk.*
- **Time/Resources**
 - *You cannot monitor all foster home activities day to day.*
 - *Time. We don't have time to do foster training or develop of foster manual.*

Ideal Resources and Materials Needed to Address the Challenge

- **Staff support**
 - *More staff to be able to closely monitor animals' progress in foster and ensure foster volunteers are keeping current with animal needs.*
 - *More people to work with the fosters.*
 - *Paid staff who handle records and other paperwork.*
 - *A volunteer trainer because I don't have time to do any more training sessions. There is a lot to cover and sometimes you need multiple sessions. I am trying to get some additional*

training materials together and possibly have one of my experienced foster caregivers run the sessions.

- *Specific foster coordinator with no other duties who can send follow up inquiries, reminders about appointments, home checks etc..*

- **Training**

- *Multiple levels of training readily available through multiple outlets.*
- *Regular volunteer orientation meetings for new volunteers and growth of the foster mentor program*
- *Systematic foster training and a foster manual. Follow-up workshops on skills training. That might be something multiple small rescues could band together to do.*

- **Manuals**

- *A downloadable handbook for each foster home to have. OR paper handbook for those without computers. Many of our fosters in our Old Age Retirement program for our senior dogs are also human seniors, who don't use computers.*
- *Additional educational material that support the need for procedures and adherence to them*
- *A training program and manual with signed foster agreement.*
- *A staff member dedicated solely to foster care with no other major responsibilities.*

BRIGHT IDEA

Provide foster programs with sample volunteer handbooks. These handbooks can explain and clarify the policies, procedures, and expectations of the foster volunteer role. The handbooks could include administrative information, or information regarding animal care and adoptions.



9. Training foster caregivers about animal caregiving

General Description of the Challenge

Many organizations struggle with how to give foster volunteers the necessary training regarding animal care – both in terms of specific needs (e.g., bottle feeding or administering medicine) as well as care in general.

- *It is difficult to train some people to bottle feed. It takes a special talent and some people just have a hard time picking it up.*
- *It takes a lot of time to train all foster families about basic animal care as well as special needs care.*
- *Many of our foster homes are filled with loving, albeit unskilled pet parents. Teaching them the ways to not only care for a pet, but one that needs to be prepared for adoption can be quite time consuming.*
- *Foster homes need knowledge about how to care for young or unhealthy or behaviorally challenging animals. No resources or support from the Director results in unhappy fosters.*
- *Poorly trained volunteers who do not understand animal care create situations where health issues are missed.*

Successful Strategies Implemented

- **Training**

- *Rather than training new foster people one at a time, we are planning to have orientation and training sessions for multiple foster parents.*
- *Miscellaneous training offerings, but our need is so great for foster parents that we do not require these trainings, because we don't offer enough of them.*
- *Handouts, videos and continual telling fosters they need to handle the shy ones*
- *Education is the biggest help in resolving those issues and many foster people were eager to learn the proper way to care for neonatal kittens.*
- *Formal and informal education. / Hands-on training. / Frequent updates (refresher course sessions). / Engage in "what-if" scenario role-play.*

Barriers to Addressing the Challenge

- **Lack of interest**
 - *Rarely do we have a number of foster families signing up at one time to make orientation days worthwhile.*
- **Lack of resources (including personnel)**
 - *lack of infrastructure (physical location, paid staff, time) to create a training program*
 - *Foster volunteer time and effort, staff time and effort*
 - *Finding more/new volunteers willing to take on coordinator/training tasks.*
- **Stubborn volunteers**
 - *Volunteers often have pet experience and they don't listen to the shelter staff as they believe they are prepared and ready to handle a foster animal without the additional training.*
 - *The information is only as effective as the person hearing it and then utilizing what this information can do to assist them.*
 - *People being stuck in their ways and believing that they have to do it their way.*

Ideal Resources and Materials Needed to Address the Challenge

- **Training**
 - *I guess my fosters would have a massive full time training were they would learn about animal health, / animal behavior and would agree to do it*
 - *Seminars to provide training and time to attend them*
 - *Quality webcast of the workshops available to our volunteers. Library of useful online videos that address some of the common issues.*
- **Handbook**
 - *Foster parent handbook outlining basic care and training guidelines.*
 - *A foster handbook (online or print), videos on 'how to'--ways for foster homes to self educate within our framework of policies and rules.*

Summary

The table below summarizes the principal challenges that foster programs face as well as potential recommendations that Maddie's Fund can implement to help organizations address these challenges.

	Recruitment & retention	Rehoming pets	Burnout	Adoption Events	Advertising	Policies & procedures	Training
Create a virtual community where foster volunteers and members of animal welfare organizations can exchange ideas and learn from one another	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
YouTube training videos on various topics (e.g., animal care, expectations of fostering, behavioral issues, how to deal with stress and burnout)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Create sample advertising materials so that organizations can advertise their animals to the public as well as recruit additional volunteers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
'Foster-Finder' foster volunteer database where prospective volunteers can be called upon by organizations for various situations (emergencies, breed-specific, no-animals, training, etc.)	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Keep a pool of reserve volunteers that are <i>only</i> used in emergency or short-term foster situations	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Limit the number of animals that are taken in so that volunteer resources are not-overtapped and to prevent burnout	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Provide templates for volunteer handbooks that outline the policies and procedures of the organization and explicitly describes the expectations for the position	✓		✓			✓	✓

Note. The 'Recruitment and Retention' category includes three inter-dependent challenges (1. Recruiting foster homes; 2. Finding qualified foster homes; and 3) Retaining foster volunteers long-term)

Appendix A: Demographic Differences

To see whether important demographic characteristics of the organizations influenced responses, we focused the question that asked respondents to indicate to what extent each of 24 challenge statements were for their organization. We ran statistical tests (e.g., t-tests, ANOVAs, and MANCOVAs) to determine the extent to which there are differences in the extent to which each statement represented a challenge for the organization.

The results suggested that there were significant differences on a number of challenge statements across a handful of demographic variables (e.g., shelter v. rescue, the organizational type, organizational structure, etc.). To get a better understanding of how these demographic variables were functioning, both in relation to each other, as well as to the challenge statements, we conducted a more fine-grained analysis. The purpose of this fine-grained analysis was to see if there were differences beyond simply rescues and shelters. That is, are there differences in challenges among the various types of shelters (e.g., with government contracts v. without) or various types of rescues (e.g., with some paid staff v. completely volunteer based)? For some demographics, we collapsed groups that were similar, but that did not have large sample sizes.

To answer this question, we looked at where the differences were occurring among each demographic group. For example, we looked at the differences among organizational types (i.e., rescue, shelter with government contracts [including municipalities], and shelter without government contracts). We found that the two types types of shelters did not differ significantly from each other on their ratings of the challenge statements. However, both shelter types differed from rescues in their ratings of the challenge statements. Across the demographics, we found a similar pattern of results whereby many of the differences boiled down simply to whether the organization was a shelter or a rescue. That is, there does not seem to be many differences *within* shelters or *within* rescues. Thus, we felt that the best way to understand the responses of the survey was to break out the results by shelter and rescue. Table A shows the mean rating for each of the challenge statements for the overall sample, shelters, and rescues. The challenge statements marked with a * represent where there were significant differences.

Table A: Shelter v. Rescue Ratings of Challenge Statements

	Rescues		Shelters	
	% Agreement	Mean	% Agreement	Mean
1. Recruiting foster homes*	75.22%	4.16	47.79%	3.48
2. Finding qualified foster homes*	71.07%	3.99	49.27%	3.49
3. Retaining foster volunteers long-term*	52.54%	3.52	40.74%	3.15
4. Finding a foster home or place to stay for pets returned to the program*	47.14%	3.39	22.13%	2.58
5. Foster volunteer burnout*	40.23%	3.18	29.63%	2.92
6. Volunteer/animal attendance at adoption events	31.53%	2.86	22.61%	2.56
7. Advertising/marketing of foster pets	26.65%	2.67	27.56%	2.65
8. Getting foster volunteers to adhere to policies and procedures	21.66%	2.56	19.12%	2.54
9. Training foster caregivers about animal caregiving	20.34%	2.55	19.56%	2.51
10. Training foster caregivers about shelter/rescue policies and procedures	20.06%	2.53	17.04%	2.47
11. Communicating with would-be foster caregivers about animals in need of foster homes	21.02%	2.53	17.39%	2.41
12. Providing foster pet emergency medical care	22.57%	2.45	29.85%	2.56
13. Communicating necessary information (e.g., policies, procedures, animal information) to current foster volunteers	16.34%	2.38	13.14%	2.28
14. Handling the volume of foster caregiver questions, requests, needs and problems	20.40%	2.38	19.55%	2.43
15. Reviewing and/or interviewing new foster volunteer applicants	14.53%	2.34	18.65%	2.31
16. Tracking the animals and follow up on care and placement	16.23%	2.33	11.81%	2.09
17. Providing food and supplies*	18.07%	2.29	6.82%	1.83
18. Communication between foster volunteers	13.90%	2.26	9.92%	2.22
19. Foster pet behavior questions	11.40%	2.24	15.94%	2.37
20. Getting foster caregivers to follow up with interested adopters in a timely manner*	15.19%	2.22	7.14%	1.98
21. Home checks for potential foster care volunteers*	13.63%	2.17	20.88%	2.34
22. Providing foster pet routine medical care, vaccinations and/or spay/neuter	13.18%	2.09	4.51%	1.83
23. Answering after hours questions about foster pets' care or health *	12.39%	2.07	28.03%	2.62

Note. The results are sorted in order of importance with regard to the mean ratings for rescues. The % agreement column represents the percentage of respondents that answered 'to a good extent' or 'to a great extent' to that challenge. The response scale ranged from 1 to 5, 5 indicating that it is more of a challenge for the organization.

From Table A, we can see that, while there are some differences in the *extent* to which a particular statement is a challenge, the pattern of results is the same for both shelters and rescues. The challenges with the highest average, indicating that it presents a rather large challenge to the organization, were the same for both organization types and consistent with the overall challenges described above. However, they differ in the extent to which they find each of those challenges a struggle. For example, rescue organizations find recruiting foster homes much more challenging than shelters do.

We also examined whether shelters differ from rescues in terms of how they rank the challenges. The results suggest they do not differ. This suggests that both organizational types seem to have similar needs in terms of the challenges they face.

Appendix B: Educational & Training Needs

We also asked respondents to indicate how helpful additional educational and training materials would be on each topic. Shelters and rescues differed significantly on the extent to which they would find materials on certain challenges helpful. The results can be seen in Table B. Differences are indicated by *.

Table B: Shelter v. rescue ratings of the helpfulness of training materials

	Rescues		Shelters	
	% Helpful	Mean	% Helpful	Mean
1. Retaining foster volunteers long-term*	82.78%	4.37	76.19%	4.14
2. Finding qualified foster homes*	78.00%	4.24	72.22%	4.01
3. Recruitment of foster homes*	79.27%	4.23	68.26%	4
4. Training foster caregivers about animal caregiving*	75.74%	4.05	65.60%	3.9
5. Foster volunteer burnout	72.09%	4.04	69.05%	3.87
6. Finding a foster home or place to stay for pets returned to the program*	70.76%	3.99	43.20%	3.16
7. Foster pet behavior questions*	64.45%	3.84	54.40%	3.55
8. Advertising/marketing of foster pets	64.09%	3.84	66.13%	3.69
9. Communicating with would-be foster caregivers about animals in need of foster homes*	64.12%	3.81	55.20%	3.54
10. Training foster caregivers about shelter/rescue policies and procedures	61.26%	3.68	58.73%	3.7
11. Reviewing and/or interviewing new foster volunteer applicants*	56.66%	3.65	50.40%	3.39
12. Providing foster pet emergency medical care*	60.47%	3.65	47.20%	3.38
13. Getting foster volunteers to adhere to policies and procedures*	56.15%	3.63	46.03%	3.38
14. Volunteer/animal attendance at adoption events*	54.82%	3.57	36.00%	2.88
15. Communicating necessary information (e.g., policies, procedures, animal information) to current foster volunteers	52.47%	3.52	46.03%	3.47
16. Providing food and supplies*	55.63%	3.52	27.78%	2.83
17. Providing foster pet routine medical care, vaccinations and/or spay/neuter*	50.50%	3.45	36.80%	3.06
18. Tracking the animals and follow up on care and placement*	52.49%	3.45	38.89%	3.01
19. Handling the volume of foster caregiver questions, requests, needs and problems	46.33%	3.37	55.20%	3.5
20. Home checks for potential foster care volunteers*	46.00%	3.33	25.81%	2.61
21. Communication between foster volunteers*	44.67%	3.3	34.92%	3.01
22. Answering after hours questions about foster pets' care or health	43.14%	3.25	49.60%	3.46
23. Getting foster caregivers to follow up with interested adopters in a timely manner*	41.34%	3.16	28.23%	2.60

Note. The results are sorted by importance with regard to the mean ratings of rescues. The % helpful column represents the percentage of respondents that answered 'very helpful or 'extremely helpful'. The response scale ranged from 1 to 5, 5 indicating that they would find training materials on that topic very helpful.

From Table B, it looks like the animal welfare organizations that we surveyed are, on the whole, interested in receiving training materials. This is evident by the fact that the average response across most challenge areas is over a 3.0, indicating that receiving materials on how to work on that area would be at least moderately helpful.

While rescues and shelters differed in the *extent* to which they would find materials on these topics helpful (e.g., rescues tend to find materials more helpful than shelters), the top three areas that they'd like to receive help on are the same for both. Coinciding with the results above regarding the biggest challenges that these organizations face, the areas that the organizations wanted training materials on *recruitment and retention of volunteers, volunteer burnout, and finding a new home for returned pets*. In addition, rescues are interested in receiving materials about *training volunteers about animal caregiving*.

Appendix C: Phase 2 Survey

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey! We are interested in understanding the wide variety of animal welfare organizations in the community and whether they have foster programs or not.

Please answer the questions below about your organization to the best of your ability. The survey should take you about 2 - 3 minutes to complete. At the end, you can give your email address to be entered in a lottery to win \$25 in exchange for your participation. There will be a total of 20 winners, so your chances are quite good!

Is your organization a:

- Shelter
- Rescue
- Other _____

Does your organization have a foster care program?

- Yes
- No

Which best describes your organization?

- Municipal animal services
- Private shelter/rescue with a municipal or government contract (i.e., animal control or housing service)
- Private shelter/rescue without a municipal or government contract
- Other (please specify): _____

The organization I am representing serves (select all that apply):

- Dogs
- Cats
- Rabbits
- Small Animals (e.g., ferrets, hamsters, rats, and guinea pigs)
- Birds
- Horses
- Reptiles, Amphibians, and/or Fish
- Farm-type Animals (e.g., cows, goats, and pigs)

Approximately, how many animals (in total) does your organization take in annually?

- None
- 1 - 99
- 100 - 499
- 500 - 999
- 1,000 - 4,999
- 5,000 - 9,999
- 10,000 or more
- Don't know

Where does your organization house the animals it takes in?

- Only in our organization's physical facility or shelter (no foster care)
- Primarily in our organization's physical facility or shelter (some foster care)
- Primarily in foster homes (some physical sheltering)
- Only in foster homes (no physical sheltering)
- Other (please specify): _____
- Don't know

Which of the following staffing structures best represents your organization (please read all options before answering)?

- Volunteer based organization
- Paid leader, otherwise volunteer based
- Paid leader and staff, no or few volunteers
- Paid leader and staff, with some or many volunteers

If applicable, please reflect on your foster program. When it comes to the people side of the foster program, what are your biggest challenges (e.g., the need for more training regarding animal handling)? Please be specific.

To better understand your responses above, please indicate your current primary role in the organization (pick the role that most aligns with what you do).

- Senior Leadership
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Work as part of Animal Care (includes veterinary care)
- Adoptions Coordinator
- Work as part of Operations/Development
- Volunteer
- Board of Director member
- Other (please specify): _____

Thank you for taking the time to fill out our survey! If you'd like to be entered into a lottery to win \$25, please enter your email address below.

We are interested in doing further research to help animal welfare organizations. May we contact you again to participate? It would help us tremendously. If so, please fill out more detailed contact information below. We would really appreciate it.

Name of your organization

State

Website (if applicable)

Your name

Your title

Your email address

Appendix D: Pre-notification email for Phase 3

Dear [Name]

A few months ago, you completed a quick survey about your animal welfare organization that was sponsored by Maddie's Fund and researchers at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Thank you so much for your participation! The results of that survey are important to help us understand how many foster programs there are in the community. As part of that survey, you also indicated that you would be willing to participate in a future survey about foster programs. This is information about that survey.

The Maddie's Fund – UNC Charlotte team would like to learn a bit more about foster programs so we can create outreach programs to help. And to do that, we need you! We would like to invite you to participate in another survey about your organization's foster program. This survey will be more detailed and will primarily ask about the principal challenges that your foster program faces. It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. We wanted to give you a warning to look out for the survey in your inbox - we will send the survey in 5 days. After completing the survey, you will again have the opportunity to enter to win one of 25 \$25 Visa gift cards. We will be happy to share the results of the survey with you as well.

Again, the findings from this survey will be used to develop outreach initiatives targeting the challenges that foster programs face. These outreach initiatives will be made available to the community for free and you can be first in line.

Thank you so much for your time and interest! If you have any questions or concerns, please email me at hmyers11@uncc.edu.

Best,

Maddies Fund & UNC Charlotte

Appendix E: Email Invitation for Phase 3

Hello again!

This email is a follow up to one that you received late last week. Maddie's Fund and researchers at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte would like to invite you to help with their research about foster programs. Below is a link for a survey (about 15 minutes long) that asks you about the principal challenges that your foster program faces. It will also ask for some more information about your animal welfare organization. The survey will be open until *March 28th*.

The findings from this survey will be used to develop outreach initiatives targeting the challenges that foster programs face. These outreach initiatives will be made available to the community for free.

To show our appreciation for your participation, you will have the opportunity to enter to win a \$25 gift card when you complete the survey. The good news is that we will have at least 25 winners! Please click the link below to participate.

Thank you!

Maddie's Fund & UNC Charlotte

Follow this link to the Survey:
{Survey link}

Appendix F: Phase 3 Foster Program Survey

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey! Maddie's Fund is interested in better understanding the wide variety of animal welfare organizations in the community and, in particular, the role of foster programs.

In this survey, there are some questions about your organization and potential challenges and needs you and your organization may have. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability. On the next page, you will be asked to give your consent so that we can use your responses for research purposes. The findings from this survey will be used to develop outreach initiatives targeting the challenges that foster programs face. These outreach initiatives will be made available to the community for free. The survey should take you about 15 minutes to complete. At the end, you can give your email address to be entered in a random drawing to win \$25 in exchange for your participation. We will have a lot of winners – at least 25!

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: The purpose of this study is to understand animal welfare organizations.

INVESTIGATOR(S): This study is being conducted by Dr. Steven Rogelberg, director of the Organizational Science department and professor in the Organizational Science, Psychology and Management departments at the University of North Carolina Charlotte and in partnership with Maddie's Fund.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO? If you decide to participate, you will be asked to answer a series of descriptive questions regarding the animal welfare organization you represent.

HOW LONG WILL THIS STUDY LAST? The questionnaire is expected to take around 15-20 minutes to complete.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS? There are no known risks to participation in this study. You will not experience any discomfort greater than what you would experience in your everyday life.

WILL I BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? There are no known benefits to participating in this research study. However, the results of this research will be used to help develop educational and training materials for animal foster programs.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY? No, you do not. Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE? The research team will have access to the information you provide. You will have the option to provide your name to enter yourself in to a random drawing to win one (1) of 25 \$25 Visa gift cards. If you choose to provide your contact information, we will keep it completely confidential and will be disassociated from your survey responses.

What types of animals are eligible for your foster care program? Select all that apply.

- Healthy animals
 - Neonatal kittens or puppies (bottle feeding)
 - Treatable, non-contagious health issue requiring medication
 - Treatable, contagious health issue requiring medication
 - Chronic health condition controlled by medication
 - Recovering from an injury/surgery (needing rest, possibly medication)
 - Minor behavioral issues
 - Traumatized, frightened, shy
 - Aggression issues toward other animals
 - Aggression issues toward people
 - Pets suffering from behavioral deterioration
 - Pets in need of hospice care
 - Any animal someone chooses to take into foster care
 - Animals selected by staff as in need of foster care
 - Other (please explain) _____
-

What is your organization's annual budget, roughly?

- Under \$19,999
- \$20,000 to \$199,000
- \$200,000 to \$999,999
- \$1 million to 10 million +
- Don't know

Does your organization have a particular niche (e.g., baby kittens/puppies, senior pets, a particular breed, etc.)?

- Yes (please specify) _____
- No

In one sentence, please explain why your organization uses a foster program.

Do you have a Board of Directors?

- Yes
- No

Answer If Do you have a Board of Directors? Yes Is Selected

To what extent is your board involved in day-to-day operations?

- Not at all
 - To a small extent
 - To some extent
 - To a good extent
 - To a great extent
 - Don't know
-

In thinking about the composition of your "workforce", approximately how many of each role do you have that are active? Please fill in your best estimate using whole numbers (not words) for each.

Paid staff__

Independent contractors__

Foster care volunteers__

Volunteers that support the foster program but don't foster__

Volunteers who do NOT support the foster program (i.e., shelter volunteers)__

Answer If *'In thinking about the composition of your "workforce", how many of each role approximately do you have that are active? Please fill in your best estimate using whole numbers (not words) for each. Paid staff'* Is Greater Than 0

Approximately what percent of your paid staff serve as foster caregivers?

Which option best describes who coordinates/manages the volunteers in your foster care program?

- A full-time foster volunteer coordinator/manager
- A part-time foster volunteer coordinator/manager with no other major responsibilities
- A part-time foster volunteer coordinator/manager with other major responsibilities
- Multiple staff members share this role
- Other (please explain) _____

Is the foster volunteer coordinator position a paid position?

- Yes
- No
- Some are paid, others are not

Which option best describes who is handling the coordination/management of your foster care program?

- A full-time foster coordinator/manager
- A part-time foster coordinator/manager with no other major responsibilities
- A part-time foster coordinator/manager with other major responsibilities
- Volunteer coordinator/manager (staff member who manages volunteers and foster care program)
- Multiple staff members share this role
- Other (please explain) _____

Providing foster pet emergency medical care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Answering after hours questions about foster pets' care or health	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Foster pet behavior questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advertising/marketing of foster pets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Getting foster caregivers to follow up with interested adopters in a timely manner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Foster volunteer burnout	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Retaining foster volunteers long-term	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Finding a foster home or place to stay for pets returned to the program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tracking the animals and follow up on care and placement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing food and supplies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please explain)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Below is the same list of areas that may be challenges or sources of difficulty within your current foster care program. Please rank the top 3 areas that are the biggest challenges/cause the most difficulty in your foster program (1 being the most challenging, 2 being the second most challenging, and 3 being the third most challenging). You can drag and drop the choices into the box on the right.

Top 3 Challenges	
_____	Recruiting foster homes
_____	Finding qualified foster homes
_____	Reviewing and/or interviewing new foster volunteer applicants
_____	Home checks for potential foster care volunteers
_____	Training foster caregivers about animal caregiving
_____	Training foster caregivers about shelter/rescue policies and procedures
_____	Communicating necessary information (e.g., policies, procedures, animal information) to current foster volunteers
_____	Getting foster volunteers to adhere to policies and procedures
_____	Volunteer/animal attendance at adoption events
_____	Communicating with would-be foster caregivers about animals in need of foster homes
_____	Communication between foster volunteers
_____	Handling the volume of foster caregiver questions, requests, needs and problems
_____	Providing foster pet routine medical care, vaccinations and/or spay/neuter
_____	Providing foster pet emergency medical care

Answering after hours questions about foster pets' care or health

Foster pet behavior questions

Advertising/marketing of foster pets

Getting foster caregivers to follow up with interested adopters in a timely manner

Foster volunteer burnout

Retaining foster volunteers long-term

Finding a foster home or place to stay for pets returned to the program

Tracking the animals and follow up on care and placement

Providing food and supplies

Other (please explain)

On the next few pages, we are going to ask you some questions about the top three challenges that you identified in the previous question. You indicated that {Rank #1 Challenge} was the biggest challenge for your foster care program. Please refer to this challenge when answering the questions below.

Tell us more about this challenge and how it affects your foster care program.

What techniques have you found to be successful at resolving this challenge?

What do you see as the biggest barriers to addressing this challenge?

In a perfect world, what support and/or materials would you need to address this challenge?

You indicated that {Rank #2 Challenge} was the second biggest challenge for your foster care program. Please refer to this challenge when answering the questions below.

Tell us more about this challenge and how it affects your foster care program.

What techniques have you found to be successful at resolving this challenge?

What do you see as the biggest barriers to addressing this challenge?

In a perfect world, what support and/or materials would you need to address this challenge?

You indicated that {Rank #3 Challenge} was the third biggest challenge for your foster care program. Please refer to this challenge when answering the questions below.

Tell us more about this challenge and how it affects your foster care program.

What techniques have you found to be successful at resolving this challenge?

What do you see as the biggest barriers to addressing this challenge?

In a perfect world, what support and/or materials would you need to address this challenge?

We are considering creating educational and training materials for fosters and want to know which topics would be most helpful. For each topic listed below, please indicate how helpful additional materials from Maddie's Fund would be.

	Not at all helpful	Somewhat helpful	Moderately Helpful	Very helpful	Extremely helpful
Recruitment of foster homes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Finding qualified foster homes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reviewing and/or interviewing new foster volunteer applicants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Home checks for potential foster care volunteers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training foster caregivers about animal caregiving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training foster caregivers about shelter/rescue policies and procedures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communicating necessary information (e.g., policies, procedures, animal information) to current foster volunteers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Getting foster volunteers to adhere to policies and procedures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Volunteer/animal attendance at adoption events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Communicating with would-be foster caregivers about animals in need of foster homes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communication between foster volunteers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Handling the volume of foster caregiver questions, requests, needs and problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing foster pet routine medical care, vaccinations and/or spay/neuter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing foster pet emergency medical care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Answering after hours questions about foster pets' care or health	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Foster pet behavior questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advertising/marketing of foster pets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Getting foster caregivers to follow up with interested adopters in a timely manner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Foster volunteer burnout	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Retaining foster volunteers long-term	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Finding a foster home or place to stay for pets returned to the program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tracking the animals and follow up on care and placement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing food and supplies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please explain):	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To better understand your responses above, please indicate your current primary role in the organization. Please pick the role that best aligns with what you do.

- Senior Leadership
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Foster Program Coordinator
- Work as part of Animal Care (includes veterinary care)
- Adoptions Coordinator
- Work as part of Operations/Development
- Board of Director member
- Other (please explain) _____

Thank you again for taking the time to fill out our survey! If you'd like to be entered into the random drawing to win one \$25 Visa gift card, please enter your email address below. There will be at least 25 winners!

Email address:

Would you like to receive a summary of the results of this survey? If yes, please provide your email address above.

- Yes
- No