

Running a Lifesaving Animal Sanctuary (RLAS) Certification Program Syllabus

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General Information

Course Description

Running a Lifesaving Animal Sanctuary (RLAS) is offered through a partnership between Best Friends Animal Society and Southern Utah University. This hybrid course offers the best of both worlds through online self-study, live weekly Zoom calls and a six-day, in-person experience at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary in Kanab, Utah. The in-person experience includes a tour of the facilities and live classes with animal care experts, plus group and individual mentoring.

RLAS is a three-month journey with Best Friends co-founders Jana de Peyer and Silva Battista along with other experts. It is geared toward people who are interested in starting an animal sanctuary and are not looking to work in a municipal shelter or humane society. Many people have the skills, resources and talents to help animals in their communities. They may need and benefit from Best Friends' history, experience, knowledge, resources, and insights in creating a successful organization.

- Total contact hours* 150
- Modality: Hybrid
- List activities and estimated additional hours that will be required outside of contact hours.:
 - Tour of community shelter/animal control and interview of staff: 8 hours

Expected Learning Outcomes

- Outline steps and processes necessary to create an animal sanctuary.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the skills needed to run a lifesaving animal sanctuary
- Illustrate how to ensure the well-being of the animals in a sanctuary
- Recognize and analyze the needs of the animals in their individual community
- Evaluate if starting a sanctuary is the best utilization of their skills and talents.
- Develop a plan to take action on behalf of the animals.

Course Materials

Required Materials

- Book: [Best Friends: The True Story of the World's Most Beloved Animal Sanctuary](#) by Samantha Glen
- [Prodigal Pets: A History of Animal Sheltering in America and the Origin of the No Kill Movement](#) by Susan K. Houser

Optional Materials

- Book: [Power of Joy in Giving to Animals](#) by Linda R. Harper Ph.D.
- Book: [The Little Book of Boards: A Board Member's Handbook for Small \(and Very Small\) Nonprofits](#) by Erik Hanberg
- Book: [Fundraising Realities Every Board Member Must Face](#) by David Lansdowne

Modules: Scope and Objectives

1. History of Best Friends

- Scope: This module will share the history and creation of Best Friends Animal Society.
- Learning Objective: Upon completion of this module, participants will recognize how the founders of Best Friends created societal change and transformed the narrative of how people addressed the issue of homeless pets. In addition, students will be able to describe why the practice of identifying animals' needs, thinking outside the box, and creating and employing solutions is key to creating and running a lifesaving sanctuary.

2. Starting a non-profit

- Scope: This module will explore the benefits and drawbacks of different types of organizational structures available, concentrating on the legal implications and requirements of creating a nonprofit.
- Learning Objectives: Upon completion of this module, participants will understand the steps necessary to legally begin their organization and be prepared to create and gather the necessary information.

3. Passion to a Plan: Strategic Planning

- **Scope:** This module outlines the importance of strategic planning, describes the elements that comprise a strategic plan, and recommends a process for planning and putting a plan into action. Participants will gain an understanding of the difference between policies and procedures and annual and strategic plans.
- **Learning Objective:** Once completed, course participants will be able to explain why strategic planning is essential to lifesaving. They will be able to outline a process for creating a strategic plan, identify key components, and draft their next steps based on their current lifesaving needs.

4. Cats and Kittens

- This module will give an overview of Cat World at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary. Outlined are operations and protocols utilized for the care of house cats and kittens awaiting adoption.
- **Learning objective:** Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to identify the medical and social needs of cats and kittens and employ learned techniques to give them the best quality of life while preparing them for adoption.

5. Community Cats

- **Scope:** This module gives an overview of the components of a comprehensive community cat program.
- **Learning objective:** Upon completion of this module, students will be able to identify the current status of cats in their community and describe how to participate in or create a community cat program.

6. Fundraising

- **Scope:** This module will explore the philosophy and methods of successful non-profit fundraising.
- **Objectives:** Upon completion of this module, participants will have a familiarity with the different modalities, strategies and techniques that are employed in fundraising. They will be able to identify the elements needed to create a fundraising plan and be prepared to confidently ask for funds for their organization.

7. Dogs

- Scope: This module covers Dogtown at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary and its operations and protocol to care for and house dogs successfully while preparing them for adoption.
- Learning Objective: Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to identify the medical and social needs of dogs and employ learned techniques to give them the best quality of life while preparing them for adoption.

8. Animal Housing

- Scope: This module will familiarize participants with the tools needed to create high quality, safe, and efficient housing environments for various companion animals, as well as for the caregivers who work in them.
- Objective: Upon completion of this module, participants will be prepared for the steps necessary to create appropriate animal housing; including recognition of planning and building regulations and the ability to design a building layout that will meet the specific needs of the animals in their care.

9. Basic Veterinary Care

- Scope: This module outlines the importance of veterinary care and medical decision-making in a sanctuary or shelter setting.
- Objective: Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to outline appropriate and timely medical care for the animals in their charge, including preparing and utilizing effective vaccination, quarantine and spay/neuter protocols.

10. Long Term Care for Animals

- Scope: This module outlines the specific medical and psychological issues often found in animals who need long-term care in a sanctuary setting.
- Objective: Upon completion, participants will be knowledgeable of chronic long-term care conditions and be able to both describe the

causes and recognize the importance of maximizing quality of care for sanctuary animals.

11. Making Digital Work for You

- **Scope:** This module gives an overview of what is entailed in creating a successful digital presence for engagement and fundraising.
- **Objective:** Upon completion of this module, participants will recognize the key technological components necessary to design and run an online fundraising program. They will be prepared to formulate and employ the digital platforms their organization will need to raise funds online and calculate the necessary metrics to gauge their fundraising scope and successes.

12. Communicating Your Message

- **Scope:** This module gives an overview of what is entailed in establishing your organization's brand identity and engaging with the public to grow awareness and support for your organization and programs.
- **Objective:** Upon completion of this module, participants will be prepared to establish their organizational brand, and build and execute a communications plan that includes marketing, outreach, social media, and public relations.

13. Risk Management

- **Scope:** This module outlines risk management as it applies to animal welfare work.
- **Objective:** Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to identify potential losses and implement resources and methods to minimize them. Additionally, they will be able to develop specific plans to protect their investments and assets in daily and emergency situations.

14. Working Together to Save Them All

- Scope: To provide an overview of Community Supported Sheltering and its connection to achieving no-kill communities.
- Objective: Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to identify needs and locate resources regarding the status of animals and shelters in their communities. Additionally, they will understand how to evaluate their passion against their community's animal issues and needs and be able to design programs that are inclusive and engage their entire community.

15. How to Engage Volunteers

- Scope: This module will outline a well-designed volunteer program which is key a key strategy to achieving your organization's mission and animal lifesaving.
- Objective: Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to describe the need for volunteers and the importance of volunteer retention. They will have the ability to build a volunteer engagement model that includes assessing needs, identifying volunteer opportunities, and applying successful training, communication, and appreciation programs.

16. Adoptions, Fosters and Transports

- Scope: This module will outline lifesaving programs that will allow you to say YES to more animals by finding positive outcomes through adoption, transport partnerships, and foster homes.
- Objective: Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to employ open adoption policies and design foster and transport programs to expand lifesaving capacity.