The Return to Home Challenge Practices

1. All animals in the community have identification
   a. All animals leave the shelter microchipped and registered to both the chip manufacturer and Found Animals Registry whether adopted or Returned to Home
   b. All animals are registered to Petco Love Lost
   c. All animals leave the shelter wearing an ID tag and collar
   d. All animals are given free or low-cost ID tags and collars when needed at the shelter or in the field
   e. Organization offers microchipping to the public in a variety of ways (microchipping during open hours, community chipping/registration events and clinics, "Check-a-Chip" Event, individual outreach via Pets for Life-type programs)

2. Animals are returned in the field rather than at the shelter
   a. Microchips are scanned in the field and searches are run in field (by officer or through dispatch, etc.)
   b. Lost and found animals are posted on social media when staff receives call or finds animal
   c. Neighbors and community are engaged immediately to help find owner
   d. Ear-tipped cats are left in the field and not brought to the shelter (unless sick or injured)
   e. Signs are posted and door hangers are left for found animals

3. Return to Home polices and lost/found techniques are marketed to the community
   a. Website contains content about importance of microchipping and registration, including information about checking registration bi-annually
   b. Website contains content about how to find lost animals
   c. Website contains content about how to report lost and found animals
   d. Website contains report/list of lost and found animals (or posted to social media if unable to do so on website)
   e. Magnets and business cards with info for lost animals are distributed to the community
   f. Animals used in organization’s marketing and communications have visible identification (collar/tags)
   g. Marketing campaigns are launched around Return to Home as the best outcome for the animal
4. **Organization embraces a culture of Return to Home**
   a. Staff/volunteer position dedicated to pet reunification is created or expanded
   b. Organizations create internal SOPs, tracking system and Return to Home goals
   c. Staff/volunteers are recognized/rewarded for successful reunifications
   d. LOS and cost of care for strays vs. cost of returning in field is recorded, analyzed and shared
   e. Stories of successful reunions are shared with team, stakeholders and community members
   f. Every member of organization is trained in lost and found practices (e.g., Maddie’s University Lost Pet Reunification course)
   g. Lost and found practices are discussed at time of adoption or Return to Home, including species-specific information
   h. Return to Home policies include keeping/returning Community Cats to their environment

5. **Organization works with community to help facilitate Returns to Home**
   a. Partnerships exist with local businesses (e.g., veterinarians, pet supply stores), community centers and churches and other partners
   b. Volunteers in high stray intake areas foster lost animals and help look for owners
   c. "Finder to Foster" programs are implemented and used before animals are brought to shelter
   d. Utilities companies help find contact information for owners

6. **Technology is used to help reunite pets and owners**
   a. Skip-tracing subscriptions help locate people who have moved or changed phone numbers
   b. Social media is searched for lost pet posts
   c. Owners are called, texted, emailed, contacted via social media or visited in person
   d. Adoptimize software is used to create clear, accurate photos of lost pets to increase chances of reunions
   e. Administrators of the local lost and found pet pages are partners in reunification
   f. Maximize use of Petco Love Lost to help reunite pets and owners

7. **Regulations and laws encourage Return to Home**
   a. Redemption fees can be waived or reduced; if not possible, offer affordable payment plans; donation-based fund for redemption; mandatory s/n for redemption can be waived
   b. Review state and local ordinances against internal policies to ensure what is truly required by law and what is aiding or hampering Return to Home
   c. Organization works with owners to fix problems that lead to lost animals (e.g., mending doors and fences)
   d. Encourage microchipping over mandatory licensing
   e. Ordinances allow for Community Cats to remain in their environment

8. **Other**
   a. Something not on this list. Use your imagination!