From Barriers to Bridges
ACTION KIT

When times are tough for people and pets in our communities, shelter teams rally every resource and partnership to keep—and bring—people and pets together. Still, animals are entering shelters and staying there longer; fewer animals are returning to their homes or finding new ones. Families and their pets are facing complex economic, housing, and public health challenges that stem from systems built to be inaccessible to most of us, and when we go to work, we see the impact firsthand.

In this moment we have the opportunity to lead with actions, practices, and policies that are transformative for all of us: shelter teams, pets, people, and our communities. We can reject norms that divide us and build bridges in place of barriers. When an outdated practice, unfair policy, or oversized fee doesn't support pets and people together, we can change it.

We are excited to partner with you to make an impact on animal shelters and communities in California.

The More Pets and People Together Grants application period will be open to eligible organizations for 15 days beginning on Friday, September 15, 2023 at 7:00am PDT and ending on Friday, September 29, 2023 at 7:00pm PDT.

Illustration by Jaia Linden-Engel

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Illustration by Erika Ilumin-Wahlberg

Fall 2023 Grant Cycle Applicant Prep Checklist

We know that submitting a grant application can be overwhelming and intimidating. True to the spirit of this funding, we aim to make the grant application process as accessible and barrier-free as possible. This checklist is intended to help you prepare well before the More Pets and People Together Grant application submission period, September 15–29.

Understanding Barrier Busting

- ☐ Review the "Barrier Busting Fundamentals" glossary in this kit to familiarize yourself with terms related to barrier-free programming.
- ☐ Watch one or two barrier-busting webinars/presentations for a deeper dive.
- ☐ RSVP to an upcoming More Pets and People Together Roundtable discussion to gain inspiration from others.

Administrative

- ☐ Make note of the September 29 application deadline.
- ☐ Review the application questions (you can view our Sample Application prior to Sept. 15).
- ☐ Per our funding agreement with the state, we are required to collect a few key pieces of data from any organization that receives a grant through California for All Animals. This includes annual intake and outcome data for five years preceding and following the grant. If awarded a grant, plan to provide total annual intake numbers and total annual euthanasia numbers for "cat" and "dog" for the years 2019-2022. We will request data for 2023 – 2027 starting in 2024.
  - ☐ Contact the California for All Animals team at grants@californiaforallanimals.com if you are unable to provide full or partial data.
  - ☐ If applicable, get necessary approvals (e.g., Board, city council, etc.) to avoid administrative delays.

Proposal Prep

- ☐ Review the information in this kit regarding the Spectrum of Barriers and Objectively Scanning Your Operations for Barriers.
- ☐ Determine what your area of focus will be for your proposed project.
- ☐ Familiarize yourself with SMART goal-setting.
- ☐ Set 2–5 SMART goals for your proposed project.
- ☐ Create a proposed budget for your project.
- ☐ Get in contact with any partners to ensure your visions and goals align.
- ☐ Contact us at grants@californiaforallanimals.com if you have questions.

Barrier-Busting Fundamentals

We can reinforce harmful stereotypes and policies that block community partnerships and keep animals waiting in shelters, even when we don't intend to. We talk about barrier-busting a lot, but what does it actually mean, and how do the building blocks of barriers and bridges show up in animal welfare? Here's a quick run-down of terms and principles to get you grounded.

Term	What It Means	How It Shows Up in Animal Welfare
Barriers	Obstacles put in place, intentionally or unintentionally, that keep animals in the shelter and discourage or exclude community members from engaging with one's organization and/or make obtaining services less accessible to some and more accessible to others	Making community members go through rigid processes or vetting to determine who is qualified or appropriate to adopt and foster or receive services and rule out those who are not deemed qualified to foster or adopt or deserving of accessing services or reclaiming their pet; processes can be framed as protection for the animal or preventing returns or mishaps
Barrier-Busting	Removing processes that prevent certain community members (primarily members of marginalized communities, such as unhoused individuals, renters, individuals who are paid low wages, and people who speak languages other than English, etc.) from engaging with one's organization or obtaining services that are available to other community members	Assessing and revising the adoption application and process, reconsidering the amounts charged for adoption and Return to Home (RTH) fees, removing rigid vetting from accessing intake prevention services and intentionally learning more about communities who are excluded from accessing services or engaging with one's organization

Term	What It Means	How It Shows Up in Animal Welfare
Bridge-Building	Intentionally developing processes that welcome and enable excluded or marginalized community members to access services and engage with one's organization	Prioritizing keeping pets in their homes or making it as easy and accessible as possible for interested parties to foster or adopt; translating materials into most commonly spoken languages in the community; replacing rigid and lengthy vetting processes with flexible, streamlined steps
Bias	Unconsciously or consciously held preconceived notions based on stereotypes that inform treatment and policy, often resulting in unfair treatment of one group and preferential treatment of others	Inclination to trust the intentions and abilities of established "ideal" adopter norm (white and/or affluent people), thus deeming them "good homes," while scrutinizing or distrusting intentions and abilities of people with lower disposable income, deeming them unfit or inadequate homes
Unconscious/Implicit Bias	Attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner, leading to unfair or preferential treatment or policies	Prioritizing recruitment of volunteers, fosters and adopters from more affluent or low-intake zip codes in a shelter's service area, often due to the assumption that people in less affluent or high-intake zip codes are less apt or able to meaningfully engage with the shelter

Term	What It Means	How It Shows Up in Animal Welfare
Conscious Bias	Consciously held beliefs or attitudes that influence our understanding, actions, and decisions, often leading to unfair or preferential treatment and policies.	Upholding the stereotype that people who live in high-intake communities (in many cases Black, Latine, Indigenous, and other people of color) with limited spay/neuter resources do not care for or want to sterilize their pets, while also creating or reinforcing rigid processes that disproportionately impact these same community members when they seek access to low-cost or free services
Confirmation Bias	The tendency to recall or validate information that aligns with views of a certain group of people while forgetting or disregarding information that does not align with the beliefs or expectations about that same group of people	Asserting that people who rent are more likely to return or surrender pets and therefore setting policy based on this assumption; witnessing returns or surrenders from people who rent reinforces this assumption and ignores that there are nuances and interconnected reasons for pet returns and surrenders
Colonialism	A form of domination and control from one group to another within the same space, typically from a group who perceives superiority over another	Heavily policing/issuing citations in communities with primarily Black, indigenous or people of color or where community members have less disposable income with the understanding that community members must meet the shelter's criteria of a "responsible pet owner" to have the citation cleared

Term	What It Means	How It Shows Up in Animal Welfare
Saviorism	Also known as "white saviorism" or "white savior complex," an attitude or belief that presumes (primarily white) affluent people possess the ability, knowledge and expertise to save/teach poor people (primarily those who are BIPOC—Black, Indigenous or other people of color)	Providing services or implementing programming in communities, particularly communities of color, without consulting residents, shifting program design or decision-making power, or recognizing the community's stake in the solution; acting from a mindset of charity rather than solidarity
Cultural Competence and Humility	Cultural competence and humility mean holding the awareness and ability to thoughtfully and respectfully engage with people from cultures or beliefs that differ from our own, while also appreciating those differences; cultural humility also acknowledges and works to correct power differentials (such as service provider and recipient)	Thoughtfully partnering with a primarily BIPOC community with the intention to learn from community members and leaders about the full scope of challenges, strengths and needs; the goal is to follow the community's needs when providing services
Equity	Thoughtfully and intentionally distributing resources based on unique needs, circumstances and challenges; often, priority is given to marginalized or oppressed groups who have historically been and typically continue to be denied resources	Prioritizing distribution of resources and services for people who have been historically excluded, harmed and denied access; when resources are limited, those who are most marginalized are prioritized.

Term	What It Means	How It Shows Up in Animal Welfare
Equality	Giving everybody the same resources regardless of their unique needs, circumstances or challenges	Offering free spay/neuter or vaccinations to all members of a shelter's service area, regardless of their financial or housing status; when resources are limited, a first come, first served approach is taken
Diversity	Inviting and valuing the inputs, perspectives and voices of people from various racial/ ethnic backgrounds and lived experiences	Seeking, capturing and implementing ideas from people within and outside one's organization who are representative of the communities served; ensuring that communities who do not speak English are represented among an organization's decision-makers
Inclusion	Including and giving access to otherwise excluded, oppressed or marginalized groups	Investing in community-led work in high-intake areas to address the true needs of the people and pets in the community

Illustration by Ann Liu

Spectrum of Barriers

Barriers are not one-size-fits-all, and how barriers impact organizations and communities varies depending on unique circumstances. The idea of busting all the barriers can be overwhelming, and we hope this Spectrum of Barriers will help you identify where your organization currently lands and where you can go next. You will likely see an increase in outcomes the more low-barrier your programs are; however, if you are starting in a high-barrier status, aim to shift toward moderate and work your way to low barriers.

High Barriers

- Waived fees if requirements are met
- No translated materials
- Lengthy adoption form approved prior to visiting shelter
- Home checks, vet check, landlord approval/mortgage statement

Moderate Barriers

- Waived fees optional (not advertised)
- Auto-translate option
- Adoption form must be approved
- No home/vet checks, but must provide landlord approval

Low Barriers

- Waived fees
- Translated materials
- Brief adoption form
- No home/landlord/vet checks

Identifying Opportunities for Bridge-Building:
Objectively Scanning Your Operations for Barriers

Sometimes the barriers that come between people and pets are obvious, and sometimes they're hidden in plain sight. It can be difficult to look at our work and our policies objectively, so we compiled a list of questions you can ask yourself to help scan your operations for barriers. Instead of asking broad, yes/no questions that will likely keep you stuck in subjective mode, these specific, open-ended questions are intended to elicit thoughtful exploration and action. We recommend answering what is relevant and most urgent for your outcomes programs.

Question: Which community members are we leaving out with our current outcomes processes?
Program(s) it addresses: adoption, foster, RTH
Potential steps to take:
- Review each step of the process and name who is included vs. excluded along the way
- Remove any steps aimed at denying people from helping (e.g., home checks or landlord approvals)
- Offer alternatives to those who cannot complete every step of the process
- Find out where in the process and why interested parties are losing interest
- Find out what existing fosters/adopters found most helpful and welcoming (and expand upon that!)
- Familiarize yourself with your community demographics and languages spoken
- Aim to translate information into commonly spoken languages

Question: How can we make adopting and fostering accessible to anyone who wants to help?
Program(s) it addresses: adoption, foster
Potential steps to take:
- Explicitly define the purpose and definition of "fostering," "finder-foster," "foster-to-adopt" and "adopting"
- Offer various forms of support and resources to fosters and adopters and advertise all forms of support on your platforms and through community events/engagement
- Seek feedback from former/one-time fosters and adopters to learn about what worked well and what was challenging
- Be flexible with guidelines and norms, especially for first-time fosters/adopters
- Offer various communication/engagement options
- Subsidize cost of fostering or adoption fees whenever possible
- Don't wait for the community to come to you – go to them, especially those who are not coming through your doors

Question: What information do we need to know about interested adopters and/or fosters?

Program(s) it addresses: adoption, foster

Potential steps to take:
- Review each question and define what you plan to do with the information collected
- Remove any questions aimed at denying people from adopting/fostering
- Keep the form concise; ask only what you need to know
- Explain the reason you need specific information
- Frame all questions in an inviting manner ("Tell us more about…" instead of "You must provide…")
- Offer various options to provide information (phone, email, in-person, etc.)

Question: What steps do people need to take to onboard our program?

Program(s) it addresses: foster

Potential steps to take:
- Make training materials concise and offer supplemental materials
- Explicitly mention how the information shared during onboarding helps the foster caregiver
- Ensure new foster caregivers are not expected to retain 100% of the information and welcome any questions
- Provide on-demand, self-paced training materials
- Offer alternative onboarding options (in-person or by phone)
- Be flexible with finder-fosters by focusing them on the animal(s) in front of them

Question: How can we make RTH accessible and realistic for everyone?

Program(s) it addresses: RTH

Potential step to take:
- Eliminate fees whenever possible; make going home the priority
- Provide forms of identification, such as collars with ID tags and microchips
- Provide harm reduction options (e.g. fencing repair, runners, dog crates)
- Subsidize cost of required modifications to all (e.g. installing or fixing a fence)
- Offer to schedule a spay/neuter appointment for intact animals
- List all forms of support and resources on your website, social media and community flyers

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Illustration by Jade Howe

Question: How can we distribute tools/resources in an equitable manner across our community?

Program(s) it addresses: adoption, intake prevention, RTH

Potential steps to take:
- Determine which zip code(s) your highest intake is coming from and conduct targeted outreach
- Determine the main reasons people are surrendering their pets and/or what is preventing them from reclaiming their pets
- Remove income/means questions (i.e., means testing) from service request forms
- Familiarize yourself with the challenges/issues your community is experiencing
- Form partnerships with community members and human services agencies focused on supporting the most marginalized groups of people in your community (e.g., services for unhoused community members, human food banks)
- Explicitly list all forms of support offered on all your platforms in a manner that invites people to ask for support when needed

Illustration by Cami Morgan

5 Steps to More Pets and People Together:
Determining Your Area(s) of Focus and Developing an Action Plan

If your organization is operating from policies and procedures that are creating barriers for community members to access services or bring animals home, now might be the time to begin your barrier-busting and bridge-building journey. We've outlined five steps to consider taking wherever you are in the process of removing barriers. What your journey will look like depends on your circumstances, and the recommendations below are intended to guide you through an incremental change approach that you can tailor to your organization's current status and future goals.

Step 1: Identify Your Starting Point

Think of your grant proposal as an outline for a pilot program.

- What change(s) is your organization ready for?
- In what area(s) is your organization struggling most? Four broad categories to consider:
    o Reuniting pets with their families (Return to Home)
    o Recruiting and/or onboarding foster caregivers
    o Increasing adoptions and/or making adopting accessible to everyone in your community
    o Effective intake prevention and providing services in an equitable manner across your community

Step 2: Set Goals and Progress Checkpoints

We're asking grant applicants to set SMART goals as part of the application process (and instead of a lengthy proposal). SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound

Here's an example of what a barrier-busting SMART goal looks like:
Starting in January 2024, advertise Return To Home (RTH) fee waiver on website, social media and Next Door with the goal of increasing RTH of dogs from 20 dogs per month to 30 dogs per month

- Specific: Dog RTH
- Measurable: Increasing by 10 dogs per month
- Achievable: 30 RTH outcomes per month amounts to one RTH outcome per day
- Realistic: Advertising waived RTH fees will encourage more people to claim their pets
- Time-bound: Start date is in January 2024 and each month has a goal of 30 dogs tied to it

Step 3: Consider an Implementation Plan

Once you've set your goals (the "what"), consider how you will implement them and who will be involved in implementing them.

- Will you have any external partners? If so, who will they be and how will they be involved?
- Which staff members will be responsible for carrying out your goals and how will you communicate the changes to them?
- What training, resources and tools will you provide staff members?
- Who can stakeholders and staff members turn to for questions, feedback or concerns?

Step 4: Decide What Metrics You Will Collect

If your application is selected for grant funding, we will request data related to your project*, and we encourage you to consider the following:

- Which staff member(s) will be responsible for collecting/entering data?
- When and where will the data be tracked?
- Who will be responsible for providing data/grant reports to Cal for All Animals?

*Let us know on your grant application if you anticipate challenges around collecting and submitting data. Our team can offer guidance and/or alternative solutions.

Below are examples of metrics to consider collecting depending on your proposal's area of focus:

- Adopter, foster or RTH zip codes
- Number of dogs/cats adopted/fostered/reunited with their family
- Number of RTH fee waivers administered
- Number of field RTH's
- Number of foster homes recruited
- Number of intake prevention services administered

Step 5: Addressing Challenges or Roadblocks without Adding More Barriers

Without fixating on "what-ifs," consider how you will address one-off adverse situations, challenges you might encounter or roadblocks that might prevent progress without adding more barriers. Our motto is "Don't set strict policies around one-off situations!"

Some recommendations to consider adding as safeguards when addressing challenges that can tempt you to add more barriers:

- Collect data and "happy tail" stories to support your success (Another motto: "Don't let adverse situations overshadow your wins!")
- Debrief on adverse cases, acknowledge lessons learned and document necessary information
- Consider whether you have the tools or resources to address or prevent the challenges or roadblocks
- Make subtle adjustments to programs/pilots when needed – rather than making big shifts or setting strict policies around one-off situations
- Seek objective insight or feedback from others within or outside your organization
- Seek ideas and inspiration from the success of others