

MAKING THE CASE: BUDGET ADVOCACY FOR ANIMAL SHELTER LEADERS

How Shelter Leaders Secure Sustainable Funding



Introduction: Budget Advocacy Supports Lifesaving

Government animal services leaders must secure resources to deliver humane, professional services that promote public health, protect employees, support community safety, and improve outcomes for pets and communities. Stable funding is what allows these services to operate consistently and effectively.

Local government budgeting is competitive, with animal services funding weighed alongside police, fire, infrastructure, and housing. Budget proposals typically move through departmental review, finance analysis, executive recommendation, and final approval by elected officials, often months before the public sees the final proposal.

Success requires understanding local government budgeting and communicating clearly with finance staff, administrators, and elected officials. The most effective animal services systems focus not only on sheltering pets, but on preventing unnecessary shelter intake by keeping pets with their families and reducing strain on the system while improving outcomes.

This playbook provides practical tools to help animal services leaders navigate those systems and present clear, data-informed budget requests. Many strategies described here support proven programs — such as intake prevention, return-to-home, foster expansion, and community cat management — that help shelters and communities achieve sustainable lifesaving and that reduce intake, improve system efficiency, and support sustainable lifesaving.



Budget Advocacy: Common Myths and Realities

Understanding the realities of the budget process and not buying into myths helps you as animal service leaders frame requests in ways that resonate with decision-makers.

Budget Myth	Reality
<i>“We should be grateful for whatever we receive.”</i>	Gratitude is appropriate, but animal services are essential public services. Responsible leadership includes advocating for necessary resources.
<i>“Advocating will upset city hall.”</i>	Decision-makers rely on department leaders for accurate information about operational needs. Clear professional communication supports better decisions.
<i>“If we just show the numbers, they’ll understand.”</i>	Data is essential, but numbers alone rarely tell the full story. Effective advocacy connects metrics to real-world community outcomes.
<i>“Lifesaving is everyone’s top priority.”</i>	Officials balance many priorities including fiscal stability, risk management, and constituent concerns. Successful advocacy connects animal services outcomes to these broader priorities.
<i>“Budget decisions are based only on need.”</i>	Funding decisions also reflect revenue limits, competing requests, political priorities, and community expectations.

PART 1: THE BUDGET CALENDAR

Director's Reminder:

If a request is not included in the department's proposed draft budget, securing funding later becomes significantly more difficult. Early engagement with department leadership and finance staff is one of the most important steps in the entire budget process and often determines whether a request is considered at all.

Key Takeaways:



Most funding priorities are set during internal review months before the proposed budget goes public. Map your local budget calendar and engage decision-makers early.



Compile operational data, cost estimates, and program outcomes well before submission deadlines so your proposals are clear, well-supported, and ready for review when internal discussions begin.

In most municipalities, the proposed budget is largely shaped months before it is publicly released. Mapping the budget calendar helps leaders prepare proposals early, engage finance staff before priorities are fixed, align requests with executive priorities, and coordinate community advocacy. Ensuring animal services is adequately funded not only maintains humane care, but it also protects public safety and supports prevention programs that reduce intake and improve outcomes.

Budget Phase Advocacy Strategy

Use this framework to map your local government's calendar and identify when engagement is most effective. Each phase presents a different opportunity to influence outcomes, and early engagement is typically the most impactful.

Budget Phase	What Happens	Actions that Influence Outcomes	Key Audience
Fiscal Year Begins	New fiscal year starts; performance tracking begins.	Build data foundation: track intake, call volume, workload, and identify early service gaps and emerging pressure points.	Internal shelter staff
Department Drafting	Departments develop internal budget proposals.	Define and prioritize funding needs; align staffing, programs, and outcomes with budget requests so they clearly reflect operational demand.	Internal shelter staff
Proposal Submitted	Departments submit proposals to leadership.	Align animal services priorities with department strategy; ensure requests are clearly framed and connected to measurable outcomes.	Department leadership
Executive Review	Administration develops recommended budget.	Influence outcomes pre-release: provide data, justify requests, and clearly communicate the operational and community consequences of underfunding.	City manager, finance, budget office
Proposed Budget Released	Budget becomes public and goes to elected officials.	Build early support: brief council members and stakeholders; frame impact and community value; clearly frame service impact and community value.	Elected officials, community partners
Committee Review	Budget committees evaluate and revise proposal.	Clarify positions, answer questions, and strengthen proposals with targeted data and aligned advocacy.	Council members, committees
Work Sessions	Officials discuss budgets in detail.	Reinforce operational impact; respond in real time to concerns and clearly explain tradeoffs.	Council members
Public Hearings	Public comment on proposed budget.	Demonstrate community support through coordinated messaging and trusted stakeholder voices.	Public, advocates
Final Adoption	Budget is approved by governing body.	Reinforce consequences and next steps; prepare for implementation and ongoing accountability and reporting.	Council, executive leadership



PART 2: PREPARE INTERNAL STAFF



Key Takeaways:



Align your team on shared priorities, data, and talking points before budget discussions begin. Conflicting messages can undermine credibility at critical decision points.



Help staff articulate prevention programs — return-to-home, intake vaccination, community cat sterilization, pet retention — fiscal strategies that stabilize costs and improve system efficiency, not just lifesaving tools.

Conflicting messages from staff or advocates can weaken credibility during budget discussions. Internal alignment is one of the strongest predictors of whether a request advances through the budget process.

Preparing staff early ensures consistent priorities, data, and messaging throughout the process. When staff and advocates understand the agency's priorities, timeline, and decision-making structure, their engagement becomes more focused, coordinated, and more effective in supporting budget outcomes.

Preparation Step	Key Actions
Share the Budget Timeline and Emphasize Timing	Provide staff with a clear calendar of drafting deadlines, review stages, hearings, and decision points. Reinforce that advocacy is most effective when delivered at the appropriate stage of the budget process.
Align Messaging	Ensure staff understand priorities, supporting data, and the messaging framework so communication remains consistent and aligned across all interactions.
Explain the Process	Explain the budget process and where influence is most effective.
Clarify Roles	Identify who presents publicly, who prepares data, and who engages decision-makers or partners to ensure clear responsibility and coordinated advocacy.
Prepare Advocates	Staff can assist in briefing supporters on messaging and timing so advocacy remains strategic. Provide community partners with clear guidance on timing, procedures, and expectations to support coordinated and effective engagement.

Prevention as Fiscal Strategy

Ensure staff understand that prevention programs — return-to-home, intake vaccination, community cat sterilization, and pet retention services — reduce intake pressure, protect shelter capacity, and keep pets with families. These strategies support both improved outcomes and long-term fiscal stability by reducing demand on the system.

Many animal services costs are embedded in daily operations — staffing, equipment, facilities, contracts, and veterinary care. Making those costs visible is essential. Calculating the true cost of care helps leaders clearly demonstrate the resources required to maintain service levels, meet legal obligations, ensure humane care, and protect public safety.

Turn Needs into Budget Requests

Strong budget proposals follow a clear structure that connects the problem, impact, solution, cost, outcomes, and overall strategy.

Problem ► Impact ► Solution ► Cost ► Outcomes ► Strategy

Step	What to Do (Guidance)	Why it Matters
1. Define the Problem & Required Services	Start with legally and operationally required services (e.g., stray holding, cruelty investigations, dangerous dog response). Clearly define the operational or community problem and identify where current resources fall short of meeting demand.	Establishes that the request supports core public safety responsibilities and grounds it in clearly defined service gaps.
2. Demonstrate Impact & Need with Evidence and Data	Explain why and how the issue impacts and matters to residents, public safety, and shelter operations. Support with data such as intake trends, call volume, length of stay, staffing ratios, and workload indicators to clearly demonstrate demand and system pressure.	Builds urgency and credibility by connecting the problem to real-world outcomes and measurable demand.
3. Present the Solution	Describe the proposed program, staffing, equipment, contract, or operational change. Clearly explain what the funding will support and how it will be implemented in practice.	Moves from problem to action and shows the request is practical, targeted, and ready for implementation.
4. Define Cost & Funding Structure	Provide the total funding request with a clear breakdown (personnel, equipment, contracts) and clearly distinguish between one-time and recurring costs.	Enabling fiscal evaluation helps reduce uncertainty or pushback from finance and executive leadership.
5. Show Outcomes & Consequences	Identify measurable results and realistic timelines. Clearly explain what happens if the request is not funded, including operational, fiscal, and community-level impacts.	Demonstrates accountability while reinforcing urgency and the risks associated with inaction.
6. Align Strategy & Timing	Identify decision-makers and approval pathways. Align the request with the local budget cycle and clearly frame it as supporting essential government functions.	Ensures the request reaches the right audience at the right time with clear and effective positioning.

See the Appendix for a blank and a completed worksheet/checklist for a practical application of this framework.



Director's Reminder: Classify the Request

Finance departments evaluate whether requests are one-time or recurring, operational or capital, and sustainable within future budgets. Clearly classifying requests helps finance staff evaluate feasibility and long-term impact. One-time equipment (scanners, crates) is often easier to fund. Staffing requests carry recurring costs with benefits and contracts may involve additional procurement considerations.

Key Takeaways:



Structure every request clearly: define the problem, present evidence, propose a solution, estimate costs, identify measurable outcomes, and explain the consequences of inaction. Prepare multiple funding options (full, reduced, pilot) to demonstrate flexibility and fiscal responsibility.



Make hidden costs visible. Many animal services expenses are embedded in daily operations and easy to overlook — calculating the true cost of care helps decision-makers understand what adequate service delivery actually requires.

Be Prepared with Alternative Funding Options

Strong budget advocacy is not limited to a single funding request. Decision-makers often evaluate competing priorities and may seek lower-cost alternatives, phased implementation, or pilot projects. Preparing multiple options allows leaders to advance critical needs while adapting to fiscal realities:

Option	Description	Purpose
Primary Ask	Full funding to address the problem and achieve the intended outcomes.	Establishes the optimal operational solution.
Secondary Ask	Reduced version if full funding is unavailable while still making meaningful progress.	Allows partial progress when budgets are constrained.
Pilot/Scaled Option	Phased or one-time investment to demonstrate results and support future expansion.	Provides a lower-risk option that can support future expansion.

PART 4: DATA AND METRICS PROCESS

Strong budget requests depend on credible data. Once funding needs have been identified, leaders must collect and organize the information needed to demonstrate demand, capacity, costs, and outcomes.

Step 1: Identify and Organize Key Data Categories

Before presenting a budget request, animal services leaders should prepare and organize data across four core categories. The most effective advocacy connects operational data to community impact and fiscal implications.

Operational Data ► Community Impact ► Fiscal Implications

Operational data helps decision-makers understand:

- The needs of pets and people in the community
- Whether the animal services system has the capacity to meet those needs
- How effectively and efficiently services are being delivered
- What is driving costs across the system
- How investments and operational decisions influence community outcomes

Key Data Categories for Budget Advocacy

Data Category	Key Metrics	Why It Matters	Who Cares Most
1. Service Demand	Intake totals, field calls, complaint volume.	Demonstrates the level of community demand and visible service needs.	Council: constituent concerns and community impact.
2. Operational Capacity	Staffing ratios, kennel capacity, veterinary workload.	Shows whether current resources are sufficient to meet demand safely and consistently.	Finance: workload and staffing ratios.
3. System Efficiency	Length of stay, return-to-home rate, adoption outcomes.	Measures how effectively animals move through the system and where bottlenecks exist.	Finance: efficiency and performance indicators.
4. Financial Indicators	Cost per animal, medical costs, program costs.	Connects operational activity to fiscal impact and identifies cost drivers.	Finance: budget sustainability and cost control.

Director's Reminder:

Finance departments focus on efficiency and cost drivers. Elected officials respond to visible community impact. Present the same data with different emphasis for each audience to ensure it resonates with their priorities.



Step 2: Track Multi-Year Trends

Budget decisions rarely rely on a single year of data. Tracking three to five years of trends helps identify whether demand is increasing, stable, or shifting and strengthens the case for investment by showing where the system is under pressure.

The most effective trend data connects operational activity to system pressure and directly to budget needs.

Operational Activity ► System Pressure ► Budget Needs

Key Multi-Year Trends to Track

Operational Area	Key Metric	What It Shows	Budget Implication
Community Demand	Total intake	Overall demand for shelter services	May justify staffing increases or facility expansion
Field Services	Calls for service	Enforcement and response workload	Supports additional field officers or resources
Veterinary Operations	Surgeries and treatments	Level of medical demand	May require veterinary staff, contracts, or equipment
Capacity Management	Length of stay	Shelter population pressure	Longer stays increase costs and limit capacity
Reunification	Return-to-home (RTH) rate	Effectiveness of reunification efforts	Higher RTH reduces intake and costs
Community Cat Programs	Community cat intake	Impact of TNVR/RTF programs	Lower intake demonstrates prevention success
Foster Programs	Foster placements	Use of community-based housing	Expands capacity without facility expansion
Operational Costs	Cost per animal	True cost of sheltering	Identifies cost drivers and budget pressure



Step 3: Identify and Address Operational Cost Drivers

Operational policies and practices directly shape cost, capacity, and system performance. Data can reveal where policies unintentionally increase costs or limit lifesaving capacity. Cost drivers explain why costs are increasing and where operational changes are needed.

The strongest budget requests don't just ask for more funding — they show how targeted operational changes can reduce costs and improve outcomes.

Common Cost Drivers and Operational Strategies

Policy Area	Common Barrier	Why It Matters (Cost & Capacity Impact)	Strategy / Resource
Adoption	Restrictive requirements or high fees	Slows placements, increases length of stay, and raises daily care costs.	Evaluate policies and fee structures; open adoption practices increase placements and reduce length of stay.
Fostering	Complex or slow approval processes	Limits ability to expand housing capacity outside the shelter.	Streamline approvals; expand foster programs (see Foster Programs Training Playbook*).
Return-to-Home (RTH)	High reclaim fees or procedural barriers	Pets remain in shelter longer than necessary, increasing costs.	Reduce barriers; implement field and in-shelter RTH practices (see RTH and Field RTH Playbooks*).
Managed Intake	Lack of intake scheduling policies	Uncontrolled intake overwhelms staff and facilities.	Implement structured intake scheduling to balance demand (see Managed Intake resources*).
Community Cats	Reliance on intake-based approaches	Repeated intake increases costs without reducing population.	Implement TNVR/RTF programs to stabilize populations (see Community Cat Programs Playbook*).

*See playbook links and other resources in Appendix.

Steps 2 and 3 work together to help you demonstrate that demand is increasing and capacity is strained. They also help identify the operational changes and investments that are most likely to improve outcomes.



Director's Note: Data Systems

If your agency lacks shelter management software, consider advocating for this investment. Modern systems improve reporting accuracy and generate reliable data to support budget advocacy

Shelter Pet Data Alliance (SPDA) provides free tools for analyzing your organization's data trends and benchmarking performance. Best Friends Network Partners can also receive complimentary data analysis support to strengthen budget requests.

Visit shelterpetdata.org to learn more.

Step 4: Translate Data into Budget Requests

Operational data should lead directly to a funding recommendation. The most effective advocacy connects data to operational impact and to a clear funding solution.

Operational Impact ► A Clear Funding Solution

Key Takeaways:



Strong budget advocacy does not rely on data alone. It depends on how data is framed and communicated.

- Service demand explains community needs
- Capacity shows where the system is under pressure.
- Efficiency demonstrates how well resources are being used
- Financial data translates operational challenges into budget needs



The most persuasive requests clearly connect these categories to show here is the demand, here is the gap, here is the impact, and here is the cost.”



Data is most persuasive when it connects operational metrics to community outcomes. Present the same data with different emphasis for different audiences — efficiency for finance staff and visible community impact for elected officials.



Track three to five years of trends rather than single-year snapshots, and use the data to identify policies driving up costs or limiting capacity — then tie those findings directly to budget requests.



Trend data is most persuasive when it shows a pattern over time and clearly answers: “Is demand growing, and can the current system keep up?”



Many cost pressures are driven by policy and practice decisions.



Identifying and addressing these drivers allows you to make a stronger case for both targeted investment and system improvement.

Strong budget requests clearly demonstrate:

- How community needs are changing
- Where capacity is limited or no longer aligned with demand
- Opportunities to improve efficiency and outcomes
- The factors driving current costs
- Future needs the community is likely to face
- How the proposed investment will address these challenges

Data-to-Budget Translation Framework

Step	What the Data Shows	Operational Meaning	Potential Budget Request	How to Use This Data in a Budget Ask
Measure Service Demand	Rising intake, field calls, or complaint volume	Demand exceeds current service capacity	Additional field officers, kennel staff, or frontline resources	“Calls and intake have increased by __%, while staffing has remained flat, creating delays in response and service delivery.”
Evaluate Operational Capacity	Staffing ratios, kennel capacity, veterinary workload	Resources are insufficient to meet demand safely and consistently	Additional staff, overtime, or contracted services (e.g., veterinary)	“Current staffing and veterinary capacity are not keeping pace with demand, limiting our ability to safely and consistently provide services.”
Assess System Efficiency	Length of stay, return-to-home (RTH) rate, adoption outcomes	Bottlenecks are reducing throughput and limiting available capacity	Investments in adoption, reunification, foster, or process improvements	“Animals are staying longer than necessary due to system bottlenecks, reducing available capacity and increasing daily care costs.”
Identify Cost Drivers	Cost per animal, medical costs, program expenses	High-cost activities or inefficiencies are driving budget pressure	Prevention programs (e.g., TNVR, RTH, community support) to reduce intake and costs	“The cost per animal continues to rise due to increased length of stay and medical needs, making prevention programs a more cost-effective approach.”
Project Future Demand	Multi-year trends (3–5 years)	Demand is increasing, stable, or shifting over time	Multi-year staffing plans, facility expansion, or long-term program investment	“Over the past several years, demand has steadily increased, and without additional investment, service gaps and costs will continue to grow.”



Key Takeaways:



Internal advocacy is the critical first step — requests supported by department leadership are far more likely to reach elected officials intact. Tailor your message to each audience: fiscal sustainability for finance staff, community impact for council members, and operational reliability for administrators.



Prepare for the toughest questions before you walk into the room, and identify potential champions and skeptics in advance.

Budget proposals move through several layers of internal review before reaching elected officials. Understanding how the stakeholders, decision-makers, and elected officials at every level evaluate funding requests helps animal services leaders frame proposals effectively and build support before formal budget discussions begin.

Requests supported internally are far more likely to advance through executive review intact. Ensure internal leadership understands the agency's legal responsibilities, operational demands, staffing requirements, and the consequences of underfunding early in the process.

Align Your Message with Decision-Maker Priorities and Context

Different decision-makers evaluate funding requests through different lenses — operational, fiscal, and political. The effectiveness of your advocacy depends on how clearly your message aligns with those priorities.

Just as important, each interaction in the budget process — whether an internal briefing, executive review, or public hearing — serves a different purpose and requires a different approach. Tailoring your communication to both the audience and the moment strengthens your ability to influence outcomes.

The framework below outlines how key stakeholders evaluate requests, what matters most to them, how to communicate effectively in each setting, and common pitfalls that can weaken your message.

Stakeholder Decision Point	Role & What Happens	Key Concerns / Priorities	Messaging Strategy	What to Avoid
Department Director	Approves internal request; animal services competes with other departmental priorities (often within police/sheriff structure).	Staffing efficiency; mission alignment; departmental performance.	Demonstrate operational impact and performance improvement. Frame requests as strengthening the department's mission, reducing strain on other divisions such as patrol, dispatch, code enforcement, and public health systems. Align with departmental metrics and service outcomes.	Requests framed as standalone needs (not tied to department goals); failure to show impact on other divisions; lack of performance metrics.
Finance/Budget Director/ Department	Reviews fiscal sustainability, cost drivers, and long-term projections; refines or challenges requests before advancing.	Fiscal sustainability; cost control; workload drivers; long-term cost stability.	Provide clear cost structure: multi-year projections, staffing ratios, a clear distinction between one-time and recurring costs. Emphasize efficiency, workload indicators, and cost avoidance through prevention. Be prepared to clearly explain and defend assumptions with data and documentation.	Vague or unsupported cost estimates; no distinction between one-time vs. recurring costs; overreliance on emotional appeals; inability to explain assumptions.
City Manager/ Administrator (Pre-Budget & Executive Review)	Shapes and recommends proposed budget; balances competing requests, risk, and political feasibility before public release.	Operational reliability; risk management; political feasibility; administrative alignment.	Show how requests support consistent service delivery, mitigate risk, and align with administrative priorities. Position animal services as a community investment that improves outcomes and reduces downstream costs. Keep messaging concise, data-driven, and solution-oriented.	Overly detailed or technical presentations; failure to connect to risk or administrative priorities; unclear outcomes; requests that appear politically infeasible.
Mayor/County Executive	Focuses on political optics, constituent satisfaction, and visible community outcomes.	Public perception; visible results; community impact.	Deliver strategic, outcome-focused messaging. Highlight prevention, public safety, and community impact. Clearly summarize the request, cost, and expected results, and provide simple, usable talking points.	Technical or operational deep-dives; unclear or abstract outcomes; lack of clear narrative; failure to connect to public-facing impact.
One-on-One or With Small Groups of Elected Officials	Build relationships informally and vote on final adoption; influence shaped before and during formal deliberation.	Constituent concerns; community impact; political feasibility; district priorities.	Connect funding requests to neighborhood-level concerns, public safety, and constituent needs. Tailor messaging to district and committee roles, and combine data with real-world examples and service outcomes.	Generic, non-localized messaging; failure to connect to constituent concerns; ignoring political realities; relying only on data without real-world examples.
Council Work Sessions/ Workshops	Detailed review and discussion; technical questions and refinements before votes or amendments.	Policy understanding; operational clarity; feasibility of implementation.	Bring supporting data and documentation. Anticipate and answer operational questions, clearly explain tradeoffs, and connect technical details to long-term outcomes and prevention impact.	Being unprepared for technical questions; inconsistent or incomplete data; inability to explain tradeoffs; overly defensive responses.
Community Stakeholders (Advocates, Business, Housing, Nonprofits)	Build grassroots support and influence decision-makers before formal votes.	Community impact; shared responsibility; service access.	Translate funding into community-level outcomes. Equip partners with clear and consistent talking points. Emphasize prevention, housing stability, and shared responsibility for community outcomes.	Overly technical explanations; lack of clear "why it matters"; inconsistent messaging; failure to give advocates usable talking points.
Public Hearings	Formal public record with time limits; shapes public narrative and media framing.	Public sentiment; visibility; accountability.	Deliver concise, structured message: 1. problem 2. request 3. cost 4. outcomes. Avoid technical detail. Emphasize prevention, community impact, and long-term cost stability and close with a clear funding ask.	Rambling or overly detailed testimony; lack of clear ask; inconsistent messaging across speakers; failure to connect emotionally and locally.

Key Takeaways:



Frame requests in government terms — service stability, cost control, public safety, and risk reduction — rather than mission-based language. When decision-makers see animal services as an operational necessity tied to government performance, funding requests carry significantly more weight.



Anticipate skepticism and prepare concise, data-driven responses to common challenges like "Why do you need more funding?" and "Can you do more with less?" Preparation keeps the discussion grounded in operational realities and measurable outcomes.



Effective budget advocacy requires three core skills:

1. Translate needs into government priorities
2. Communicate in clear, outcome driven language
3. Respond to skepticism with data and operational clarity



The goal is not to "defend" a request — but to help decision-makers understand: what the system needs, what happens without it, and why the investment is responsible.

Local government budget decisions are rarely based on mission alone. Connect funding requests to outcomes that matter to decision-makers: service stability, fiscal responsibility, risk management, and community impact.

Internal language doesn't always translate in budget discussions. Reframing shelter needs in operational, fiscal, and public outcome terms helps decision-makers understand impact and justify investment. Translate the problem and capacity into cost and public impact. This ensures your message is clear, credible, and decision-maker focused.

Translate Shelter Needs into Government Priorities

Use this framework when preparing or presenting any funding request to align your message with how governments evaluate investments:

Step	What to Do	Why It Matters
1. Lead with the Public Function	Describe the service, legal duty, or operational need in clear, concrete terms	Grounds the request in government responsibility — not internal preference or mission-based framing
2. Connect to Measurable Impact	Use data on demand, capacity, cost, and outcomes to clearly demonstrate scale and urgency	Demonstrates scope, urgency, and accountability for results
3. Frame in Government Terms	Emphasize stability, cost control, safety, and risk reduction in clear, outcome-based language	Aligns with how governments evaluate spending
4. Anticipate Skepticism	Prepare concise, data-driven responses to common questions and concerns	Keeps discussion focused on operational realities
5. Reinforce Stewardship	Show responsible use of taxpayer funds and long-term value of the investment	Builds credibility with administrators and elected officials

Translate Shelter Language into Government Terms

Issue To Address	Say This Instead	Why This Works
<i>“We need more funding.”</i>	<i>“This investment improves service stability, operational capacity, and cost control.”</i>	Connects funding to outcomes and fiscal responsibility; highlights the cost of underinvestment.
<i>“We’re doing too much with too little.”</i>	<i>“Current resources are insufficient to sustain service levels without increasing risk and long-term costs.”</i>	Decision-makers rely on department leaders for accurate information about operational needs. Clear professional communication supports better decisions.
<i>“We’re overwhelmed.”</i> <i>“We don’t have enough staff.”</i>	<i>“Service demand exceeds current staffing capacity.”</i> <i>“Staffing is not aligned with demand, limiting timely response.”</i> <i>“Limited field capacity is increasing response times for public safety calls.”</i>	Uses capacity language; frames staffing as a service delivery and public safety issue.
<i>“Too many animals are coming in.”</i> <i>“Our shelter is overcrowded.”</i>	<i>“Intake exceeds system capacity, indicating need for prevention investment.”</i> <i>“Facility capacity constraints are increasing costs and slowing outcomes.”</i>	Shifts from symptom to solution; links crowding directly to cost and system performance.
<i>“We need more space.”</i>	<i>“Capacity constraints are increasing length of stay and overall operational costs.”</i>	Frames space as throughput and cost issue.
<i>“We need more vet care.”</i>	<i>“Veterinary demand exceeds capacity, extending treatment timelines and increasing length of stay.”</i>	Connects medical demand to system efficiency.
<i>“We need more programs.”</i> <i>“We’re trying to save pets.”</i>	<i>“Prevention-focused programs improve public safety and reduce long-term costs.”</i> <i>“Targeted programs reduce intake and improve overall system efficiency.”</i>	Positions programs as cost-saving and outcome-driven.

Preparing for Tough Questions

Strong advocacy anticipates skepticism and responds with clear, concise, and data-driven answers.

Question You May Hear	Decision-Maker Concern	Key Message	Supporting Data Points
<i>“Why do you need more funding?”</i>	<i>Is the request justified?</i>	<i>Service demand exceeds current capacity and requires additional resources to maintain service levels.</i>	Intake trends, call volume, staffing ratios, measurable outcomes.
<i>“Can you do more with less?”</i>	<i>Efficiency and resource use</i>	<i>Current operations are optimized; further cuts affect service delivery.</i>	Benchmarking data, workload indicators.
<i>“Why can’t nonprofits handle this?”</i>	<i>Government vs. external role</i>	<i>Core services are government responsibilities and cannot be fully delegated to external partners.</i>	Enforcement duties, legal requirements, nonprofits supplement — not replace.
<i>“Is this a new or ongoing cost?”</i>	<i>Budget sustainability</i>	<i>Clearly define and justify cost structure, including one-time and recurring components.</i>	One-time vs. recurring costs, long-term impact.
<i>“Why should this be prioritized?”</i>	<i>Competing priorities</i>	<i>Animal services supports public safety, public health, and community stability.</i>	Cross-department impacts, legal obligations.
<i>“What happens if we don’t fund this?”</i>	<i>Risk of inaction</i>	<i>Service reductions and increased long-term costs.</i>	Response delays, overcrowding, higher costs.
<i>“Can volunteers replace this?”</i>	<i>Cost avoidance</i>	<i>Volunteers support but cannot replace trained staff.</i>	Certification needs, safety, liability, supervision requirements.
<i>“How will we know it’s working?”</i>	<i>Accountability</i>	<i>Clear metrics and a defined reporting plan.</i>	KPIs, timelines, outcome tracking.

PART 7: RESPONDING TO BUDGET CUTS

Budget reductions are common. Even well-supported proposals may be modified as decision-makers balance competing priorities.

Effective leaders approach these discussions with clear analysis and practical solutions. The goal is not to defend a program emotionally, but to explain how operational realities create fiscal tradeoffs, community impacts, and more effective alternatives.

Step 1: Analyze the Proposed Reductions

Before responding, clearly understand what the reduction means in practice.

Reduction Analysis Framework

Step	What to Analyze	Key Question	Purpose
1. Clarify the Cut	Confirm what is being reduced. Identify the specific position, program, service, or timeline under consideration.	What specifically is being cut?	“Calls and intake have increased by __%, while staffing has remained flat, creating delays in response and service delivery.”
2. Identify Consequences	Evaluate changes to service delivery, response times, capacity, and compliance requirements.	How will day-to-day operations change?	“Current staffing and veterinary capacity are not keeping pace with demand, limiting our ability to safely and consistently provide services.”
3. Quantify Tradeoffs	Identify costs that may increase elsewhere (e.g., medical, overtime, liability) as a result of the reduction.	Will this shift costs rather than reduce them?	“Animals are staying longer than necessary due to system bottlenecks, reducing available capacity and increasing daily care costs.”
4. Use Benchmarking	Compare staffing, demand, and outcomes with similar jurisdictions to provide context.	How do we compare to peers?	“The cost per animal continues to rise due to increased length of stay and medical needs, making prevention programs a more cost-effective approach.”
5. Assess Risk	Evaluate safety, liability, compliance, and workforce stability risks associated with the reduction.	What risks increase if this is cut?	“Over the past several years, demand has steadily increased, and without additional investment, service gaps and costs will continue to grow.”



Key Takeaways:

 Respond to proposed reductions with operational analysis, not emotional defense. Quantify whether cuts would shift costs elsewhere in the system, and use benchmarking data from comparable communities to ground the discussion in objective need.

 Prevention programs function as cost-control strategies. Cutting them doesn't eliminate demand — but shifts workload and expense back into the shelter. Demonstrate this with multi-year data, and always offer practical alternatives like phased implementation.



Step 2: Respond and Communicate Effectively

Once the impact is clear, communicate in a way that is solution-oriented, data-driven, and aligned with decision-maker priorities.

The goal is to help decision-makers understand: “What happens if this is cut — and what is the more effective path forward?”

Budget Cut Response Framework

Step	Action	Key Question	Purpose	Example Talking Point
1. Explain Operational Consequences	Describe how service delivery will change in practical terms.	<i>How will operations be affected?</i>	Helps decision-makers understand real-world operational impact.	“Reducing field staffing would likely increase response times for dangerous animal complaints.”
2. Identify Cost Tradeoffs	Explain where costs may increase elsewhere in the system.	<i>Will this create new costs?</i>	Demonstrates that cuts may shift costs rather than reduce them.	“Without intake vaccination, we increase the risk of disease outbreaks requiring costly treatment.”
3. Connect to Community Outcomes	Explain impact on residents and neighborhoods and overall service access.	<i>How will constituents be affected?</i>	Aligns with elected official priorities and constituent concerns	“Longer shelter stays increase overcrowding and reduce adoption capacity.”
4. Offer Practical Alternatives	Suggest modifications to protect essential services while maintaining core operations.	<i>Can this be phased or prioritized?</i>	Shows flexibility and problem-solving approach.	“We could phase implementation or prioritize the highest-impact components.”
5. Protect Prevention Investments	Highlight programs that reduce future demand and stabilize the system.	<i>Will this increase future workload?</i>	Frames prevention as a fiscally responsible, long-term strategy.	“Programs like return-to-home and TNVR reduce long-term intake and stabilize costs.”

Example: Operational Impacts of Underinvestment

Personnel costs typically represent 60–80% of a shelter’s operating budget, making staffing a common focus during budget reviews. When staffing falls below operational needs, shelters experience slower response times, longer stays, compliance risks, and increased turnover — conditions that often shift costs rather than reduce them.

Under-resourcing animal services has direct consequences across public safety, operations, financial performance, and community trust. The most effective budget advocacy clearly connects the operational impact with financial consequence to decision-maker relevance.

Operational Impact ► Financial Consequence ► Decision-Maker Relevance

Impact-to-Decision Framework

Impact Area	Operational Impact & Consequences	Financial Consequence	What Decision-Makers Should Understand
Finance/Budget Director/Department	Reviews fiscal sustainability, cost drivers, and long-term projections; refines or challenges requests before advancing.	Fiscal sustainability; cost control; workload drivers; long-term cost stability.	Vague or unsupported cost estimates; no distinction between one-time vs. recurring costs; overreliance on emotional appeals; inability to explain assumptions.
City Manager/Administrator (Pre-Budget & Executive Review)	Shapes and recommends proposed budget; balances competing requests, risk, and political feasibility before public release.	Operational reliability; risk management; political feasibility; administrative alignment.	Overly detailed or technical presentations; failure to connect to risk or administrative priorities; unclear outcomes; requests that appear politically infeasible.
Mayor/County Executive	Focuses on political optics, constituent satisfaction, and visible community outcomes.	Public perception; visible results; community impact.	Technical or operational deep-dives; unclear or abstract outcomes; lack of clear narrative; failure to connect to public-facing impact.
One-on-One or With Small Groups of Elected Officials	Build relationships informally and vote on final adoption; influence shaped before and during formal deliberation.	Constituent concerns; community impact; political feasibility; district priorities.	Generic, non-localized messaging; failure to connect to constituent concerns; ignoring political realities; relying only on data without real-world examples.
Council Work Sessions/Workshops	Detailed review and discussion; technical questions and refinements before votes or amendments.	Policy understanding; operational clarity; feasibility of implementation.	Being unprepared for technical questions; inconsistent or incomplete data; inability to explain tradeoffs; overly defensive responses.
Community Stakeholders (Advocates, Business, Housing, Nonprofits)	Build grassroots support and influence decision-makers before formal votes.	Community impact; shared responsibility; service access.	Overly technical explanations; lack of clear “why it matters”; inconsistent messaging; failure to give advocates usable talking points.
Public Hearings	Formal public record with time limits; shapes public narrative and media framing.	Public sentiment; visibility; accountability.	Rambling or overly detailed testimony; lack of clear ask; inconsistent messaging across speakers; failure to connect emotionally and locally.



Prevention as Cost Control

Prevention programs function as both capacity management and cost-control strategies. Programs that reduce intake, shorten length of stay, prevent disease, or reduce repeat field calls stabilize operations and reduce long-term costs.

Prevention Strategy	Operational Impact	Costs Avoided
Microchip scanners in the field	Officers can reunite pets without transporting to shelter	Avoided intake, drive time, fuel costs
Vaccination at intake	Prevents disease spread	Avoided outbreak and treatment costs
Return-to-home in field programs	Reunification without shelter intake	Reduced kennel use and processing costs
Community cat programs (TNVR/RTF)	Stabilized outdoor cat populations	Reduced repeat impoundment and intake pressure; Reduction in euthanasia.
Pet retention services	Fewer surrenders	Reduced shelter demand and housing costs
Foster programs	Pets housed in homes, not kennels	Reduced facility strain and medical decline

Community support is critical to successful budget advocacy. Elected officials often hear more from residents and community partners than from department staff during public budget discussions, and different decision-makers respond to different messengers.

Because local government employees may face limits on direct advocacy, informed partners can reinforce the need for stable, sustainable funding. Building coalitions across public safety, public health, housing, business, and other sectors strengthens credibility and demonstrates the broad community value of animal services.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder	Why Decision-Makers Listen to Them	Budget Message They Reinforce	How to Engage Them
Veterinarians	Trusted authorities on animal health, disease prevention, and humane care standards.	Prevention programs (spay/neuter, vaccination) reduce long-term costs, improve animal welfare, and support responsible shelter operations.	Invite veterinarians to speak with officials, provide written support for funding, and share community health and prevention perspectives.
Housing Providers	Key voices on housing stability and homelessness prevention — major local government priorities.	Pet-inclusive housing and retention programs reduce owner surrenders, lower intake, and strengthen community stability.	Partner with housing authorities, landlords, and advocates to clearly demonstrate how pet retention reduces shelter demand.
Rescue Organizations	Demonstrate the collaborative, community-based nature of modern animal services systems.	Shelter-rescue partnerships expand placement capacity and improve outcomes across the system.	Ask rescue leaders to share partnership examples and reinforce the importance of stable shelter infrastructure.
Public Health Professionals	Bring credibility on disease prevention, safety, and community health risks.	Vaccination, sterilization, and population management programs protect public health and reduce service demand.	Coordinate messaging with health departments to clearly connect animal services to disease prevention and community safety outcomes.
Law Enforcement/Public Safety	Direct partners in cruelty investigations, dangerous animal response, and emergency situations.	Adequately funded animal services support public safety, enforcement, and emergency preparedness.	Highlight joint cases and emphasize how animal services capacity directly supports broader public safety operations.
Business & Economic Leaders	Influential in economic development, quality of life, and community planning discussions.	Effective animal services contribute to safe neighborhoods, community stability, and economic vitality.	Engage chambers of commerce and business groups to connect humane services to safe, stable, and economically strong communities.

Key Takeaways:

 Build diverse coalitions year-round — not just during budget hearings. Veterinarians, housing providers, business leaders, and public safety partners carry more weight with decision-makers than animal welfare voices alone.

 Equip advocates with clear talking points. One well-prepared community voice delivering a specific, focused message is more effective than many scattered comments.

 Strong budget advocacy is not just internal — it is community-driven and reinforced by trusted voices:

- Different stakeholders reinforce different parts of your message
- External voices often carry unique credibility with decision-makers
- Cross-sector alignment shows that animal services funding is a community-wide priority

 The most effective strategy ensures decision-makers hear a consistent message from multiple trusted voices: “This investment supports public safety, public health, and community stability.”

PART 9: EDUCATING DECISION-MAKERS

Budget advocacy is most effective when decision-makers understand the work of animal services before funding discussions begin.

Year-round education through briefings, tours, and ongoing communication helps leaders understand:

- Service demand and legal responsibilities
- Operational realities and system constraints
- The role of prevention in controlling long-term costs

Because animal services funding competes with other municipal priorities, informed decision-makers are better equipped to evaluate tradeoffs and support sustainable long-term investment.

Year-Round Advocacy Timeline

Effective education is continuous and aligned with the budget cycle. The goal is to ensure decision-makers understand animal services as a public safety function, public health system, and community stability strategy and not just a shelter function.

Timing	Objective	Core Actions What to Do	How it Looks in Practice	Purpose
Early Fiscal Year	Identify and engage partners.	Build awareness; initiate relationships; connect operations to priorities.	Meet with stakeholders and decision-makers; share baseline data, priorities, and key programs; begin briefings.	Establish early understanding and alignment.
Throughout the Year	Build relationships and deepen understanding.	Provide ongoing education; reinforce with data; invite observation.	Share regular updates, outcomes, and metrics; host shelter tours, ride-alongs, and program demonstrations.	Ensure leaders understand services before funding decisions arise.
Pre-Budget Season	Prepare informed advocates.	Connect operations to budget; reinforce key messages.	Share funding needs, results, and priorities; explain how staffing, capacity, and prevention affect costs; provide talking points.	Position decision-makers to evaluate requests effectively.
Budget Hearings	Support constructive participation.	Reinforce messaging through partners and community voices.	Explain budget process and timelines; encourage partners to share program impact and community benefits.	Strengthen alignment during formal decision-making.
Post-Budget	Sustain relationships and momentum.	Demonstrate results; maintain communication; prepare for transitions.	Share outcomes and performance data; thank supporters; onboard new officials as needed.	Maintain trust and continuity for future cycles.



Key Takeaways:

-  Effective education is not a separate activity — it is embedded throughout the budget cycle.
-  Regular shelter tours and operational briefings help decision-makers understand community needs, system challenges, and funding priorities before budget season begins. Include both elected officials and executive leadership. For additional guidance and a sample shelter tour, see the Appendix.
-  Prepare onboarding materials for new leaders — a one-page overview, key metrics, and budget priorities — so leadership turnover doesn't reset progress toward sustainable funding.
-  Strong budget outcomes are built on early understanding, not last-minute persuasion.
 - Educate early
 - Reinforce consistently
 - Connect operations to outcomes
 - Show the value of prevention
-  When decision-makers understand the work, they are far more likely to invest in the solutions that sustain it.



CLOSING:

Budget advocacy does not end with adoption. It is sustained through relationships, results, and trust. When leaders connect data to community impact, communicate clearly, and demonstrate accountability, they build the foundation for long-term, stable funding.

This work is not about asking for more — it is about ensuring communities understand what effective animal services requires as a core public function. With strategic investment, communities can move from reacting to crises to investing in prevention by reducing intake, improving outcomes, strengthening public safety, and keeping pets and families together while reducing system demand.

For advocacy assistance: legislative@bestfriends.org





APPENDIX A:

EXAMPLE BUDGET ASK WORKSHEET/CHECKLIST:

Local Government Budget Advocacy Worksheet The 6-Step Budget Request Builder

1. Define the Problem & Required Services

What legally or operationally required services are impacted?

(e.g., stray holding, cruelty investigations, dangerous dog response, rabies control)

What is the specific problem or gap?

Where are current resources insufficient? (staffing, equipment, capacity)

2. Demonstrate Impact & Need

Why does this matter? (community, public safety, operations, animal welfare)

What data supports this need? (check all that apply and fill in details)

Intake trends:

Call volume:

Length of stay:

Staffing ratios/workload:

Cost data:

Other:



3. Present the Solution

What are you proposing? (e.g., staffing, program, contract, equipment, policy change)

What will the funding specifically support?

How will this be implemented?

4. Define Cost & Funding Structure

Total funding request: \$

Cost breakdown (as applicable):

Personnel:

Equipment:

Contracts/Services:

Other:

Is this request:

One-time Recurring

Both (explain):

5. Show Outcomes & Consequences

What measurable results are expected? (e.g., reduced intake, faster response times, increased lifesaving)

What is the expected timeline for results?

What happens if this is NOT funded? (operational, fiscal, community consequences)

Local Government Budget Advocacy Worksheet The 6-Step Budget Request Builder

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Other:

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Total funding request: \$

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Equipment:

Contracts/Services:

Other:

Is this request:

One-time Recurring

Both (explain):

5. Show Outcomes & Consequences

What measurable results are expected? (e.g., reduced intake, faster response times, increased lifesaving)

What is the expected timeline for results?

What happens if this is NOT funded? (operational, fiscal, community consequences)

6. Align Strategy & Timing

Who needs to approve this request?

Department Leadership:

Finance/Budget Office:

City manager/Administrator

Mayor/Executive:

Council:

Other:

What is your strategy for each audience?

Where are you in the budget cycle?

Early/internal drafting

Executive review

Proposed budget released

Committee/work sessions

Public hearings

How is this request framed?

Required service/legal obligation

Public safety

Cost savings/prevention

Community impact

Other:

Final check (before submission)

Problem is clearly defined

Data supports the request

Solution is specific and actionable

Costs are clear and justified

Outcomes are measurable

Consequences of inaction are explained

Messaging is tailored to decision-makers

One-Sentence Budget Ask (Practice Statement)

Complete this before any meeting or presentation:

“We are requesting \$ _____ to _____,
which will result in _____,
and if not funded, _____.”



APPENDIX B:

EXAMPLE COMPLETED WORKSHEET/CHECKLIST:

Community Cat TNVR/RTF Initiative (Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return)

1. Define the Problem & Required Services

What legally or operationally required services are impacted?

(e.g., stray holding, cruelty investigations, dangerous dog response, rabies control)

Stray animal response, public nuisance complaints, shelter intake management, and rabies control.

What is the specific problem or gap?

Free-roaming community cats are entering the shelter system at high rates. Many are not adoptable and are being held, processed, and often euthanized or returned inefficiently.

Where are current resources insufficient (staffing, equipment, capacity)?

Lack of a structured TNVR/RTF program results in repeated intake of the same cats, inefficient use of shelter capacity, and ongoing community complaints.

2. Demonstrate Impact & Need

Why does this matter? (community, public safety, operations, animal welfare)

High intake of community cats strains shelter capacity, increases costs, and does not reduce population levels over time. Residents continue to report nuisance concerns, and shelter resources are diverted from higher-priority services.

What data supports this need? (check all that apply and fill in details)

- ☒ Intake trends: High volume of community cats entering the shelter annually
- ☒ Call volume:
- ☒ Length of stay: Cats held for required periods without placement outcomes
- ☒ Staffing ratios/workload: Repeated intake and processing of the same populations
- ☒ Cost data: Daily care and processing costs for non-adoptable cats
- ☒ Other: Low live outcome rates for community cats without intervention



3. Present the Solution

What are you proposing? (e.g., staffing, program, contract, equipment, policy change)

Implement a community cat TNVR/RTF program to sterilize, vaccinate, and return healthy free-roaming cats to their original location.

What will the funding specifically support?

Veterinary services (spay/neuter, vaccination), trapping equipment, program coordination, and partnerships with community organizations.

How will this be implemented?

Partner with local veterinary providers and nonprofit organizations to conduct TNVR services. Shelter staff will divert eligible cats into the program rather than intake for holding.

4. Define Cost & Funding Structure

Total funding request: \$ (e.g., \$75,000 annually depending on scale)

Cost breakdown (as applicable):

Personnel:

Equipment:

Contracts/Services:

Other:

Is this request:

☒ One-time ☒ Recurring

☒ Both (explain):

5. Show Outcomes & Consequences

What measurable results are expected? (e.g., reduced intake, faster response times, increased lifesaving)

- Reduction in community cat intake over time
- Decrease in euthanasia for community cats
- Stabilization and gradual reduction of outdoor cat populations
- Reduced shelter costs and improved capacity for adoptable animals

What is the expected timeline for results?

Initial intake reductions within 6–12 months; population-level impact over multiple years.

What happens if this is NOT funded? (operational, fiscal, community consequences)

Shelter intake of community cats will remain high or increase, costs will continue to rise, and population levels will not decrease — resulting in ongoing community complaints and resource strain.

6. Align Strategy & Timing

Who needs to approve this request?

- ☒ Department Leadership:
- ☒ Finance/Budget Office:
- ☒ City manager/Administrator

What is your strategy for each audience?

- Finance: Emphasize long-term cost stabilization and reduction in intake-related expenses
- City Manager: Highlight system efficiency and reduced operational strain
- Council: Focus on community complaints, humane outcomes, and long-term solutions

How is this request framed?

- ☒ Required service/legal obligation
- ☒ Cost savings/prevention
- ☒ Community impact
- ☒ Other:

One-Sentence Budget Ask (Practice Statement)

Complete this before any meeting or presentation:

"We are requesting \$75,000 annually to implement a community cat TNVR program that will reduce shelter intake and costs over time, stabilize outdoor cat populations, and address ongoing community concerns, and if not funded, intake and costs will continue to rise without reducing the underlying issue."

Connecting Operations to Budget Decisions

Inviting decision-makers into the shelter is one of the most effective ways to build understanding. Include both elected officials and executive leadership, since administrators shape budget recommendations before proposals reach council.

Shelter visits are most effective when leaders connect operations to funding realities. Help decision-makers understand:

- The staffing needed to maintain humane care and public safety
- How prevention programs reduce long-term costs
- The relationship between capacity, length of stay, and resources
- How strategic investments improve efficiency and community outcomes•

The goal is not simply to highlight challenges, but to show how animal services addresses community needs while delivering value for public investment.

Operational Area	What to Highlight	Why it Matters for Funding
Intake & Demand	Volume, reasons pets enter the shelter, trends	Justifies staffing levels, capacity, and prevention investments
Field Services & Public Safety	Calls for service, cruelty investigations, dangerous animal response	Supports funding for officers, equipment, and training
Veterinary Care	Medical capacity, disease prevention, intake vaccination	Prevents outbreaks and reduces long-term operational costs
Prevention Programs	TNVR, return-to-home, community outreach	Reduces intake pressure and lowers long-term housing and medical costs
Adoption & Foster Programs	Placement programs moving pets into homes	Expands capacity, shortens length of stay, improves outcomes



APPENDIX D:

BEST FRIENDS TOOLS AND RESOURCES LINKS

Best Friends Webinars and Training

Data Management Interactive Module

https://share.articulate.com/UwBCrbdS0t2NWA1_xgHDC#/

Lifesaving with the Latest Data Technology Webinar Series

<https://bestfriends.org/network/webinars-videos/lifesaving-latest-data-technology-webinar-series>

From Data to Dollars: Making Your Government Shelter's Case for Funding

<https://bestfriends.org/network/resources-tools/data-dollars-making-your-municipal-shelters-case-funding>

Take Charge to Make Change Webinar Series

<https://bestfriends.org/network/webinars-videos/take-charge-make-change-webinar-series-part-one>

Municipal Shelter Leadership, Culture & Community Engagement Webinar

<https://bestfriends.org/network/webinars-videos/municipal-culture-community-engagement>

Operational and Program Resources

Community Cat Programs Training Playbook

<https://bestfriends.org/network/resources-tools/community-cat-programs-training-playbook>

Managed Intake Training Playbook

<https://bestfriends.org/network/resources-tools/managed-intake-or-admissions-training-playbook>

Putting Data into Action with Field Services Staff

<https://bestfriends.org/network/blog/putting-data-action-field-services-staff>

Foster Programs Training Playbook

<https://bestfriends.org/network/resources-tools/foster-programs-training-playbook>

RTH Playbook: Return to Home (Owner) Training Playbook

<https://bestfriends.org/network/resources-tools/return-home-owner-training-playbook>

Field RTH Playbook: Return to Home (Owner) Training Playbook

<https://bestfriends.org/network/resources-tools/field-return-home-owner-training-playbook>

Advocacy and Community Engagement

Advocacy Due Diligence Playbook

<http://bfas.org/duediligence>

Best Friends Action Team

<https://action.bestfriends.org>

Printable Materials for Talking with Elected Officials

<https://bestfriends.org/network/resources-tools/printable-materials-talking-your-elected-officials>

Topics include:

- Community-Based Field Services
- Community Cat Programs
- Conversation-Based Adoptions
- High Cost of the Status Quo
- IMLA People, Pets and Policies
- Modernizing Policies
- Return to Home Programs
- Strategic / Managed Intake

Best Friends Resource Library

Additional guides, playbooks, and training materials are available in the Best Friends Network Resource Library:

<https://bestfriends.org/network/resource-library>

Additional Reading

Volunteers Prove They Can Do More Than Walk Dogs or Play with Cats

<https://bestfriends.org/network/blog/volunteers-can-do-more-just-walk-dogs-or-play-cats>