



PAWS IN THE FIELD CHALLENGE



Paws in the Field Marketing and Communications Guide

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We know that reuniting lost/stray dogs with their families is something your organization cares about and is critical to supporting your community. We all want lost/stray pets to get back to their families sooner. This guide will help you speak clearly and consistently about what actions your community should take if they find or lose a pet, and what actions your shelter and your officers are taking to get more pets back to their families. Use this guide as a checklist for the content and resources needed to effectively communicate return-to-home guidelines and policies to all types of audiences. [Plus, access creative templates for the challenge.](#)

How to Get Started

Internal Communications

- ❑ **Key Message:** Develop a central message point that resonates with staff and effectively conveys information about the return-to-home policy and guidelines.
- ❑ **Training Sessions:** Host interactive training sessions with Q&A where staff members can learn about the policy in-depth, ask questions, and participate in discussions. [Train staff](#) and volunteers in the importance of how return-to-home (owner) impacts overall intake numbers and can help with save rates. Use visual aids, case studies, and role-playing exercises to enhance understanding.
- ❑ **Email and/or Newsletter Announcement:** Send a detailed email to staff, volunteers, fosters, and other stakeholders outlining the new policy. Include the reason and objectives for the new policy, key changes, and implementation timeline. Provide links to relevant documents and resources such as this [Return-to-Home Playbook](#).
- ❑ **Flyer:** Create an announcement flyer that concisely summarizes the return-to-home policy, emphasizing its benefits. Post in common staff areas, such as the breakroom or bulletin boards.
- ❑ **FAQ:** Compile a list of frequently asked questions about the new return-to-home policies and guidelines, categorizing them into relevant topics such as the steps officers take in the field and how these fit into your existing processes. This will serve as a reference for staff to ensure consistent understanding and implementation throughout the organization.

External Communications

- ❑ **Website:** Explain your return-to-home policy and prominently display guidelines for families who lost or found a pet on your organization's website with a link to the steps to take and reclaim webpages. If your organization can reduce or waive reclaim fees, make sure that it is displayed clearly and kept up to date on your website.

- ❑ **Social Media:** Post on each platform, clearly and concisely explaining what to do if you lost or found a pet. You can use [these eye-catching infographics](#) to do so. Post English, Spanish, or other language versions, when applicable to your community. Additional visuals can be created in [Canva](#), a free design tool that enables users to create graphics, flyers, and more. In addition, explain any new return-to-home practices you're trying during the challenge such as Petco Love Lost reports or microchipping events. Make sure you have tapped a staff member or trusted volunteer to monitor these channels and answer any questions that arise. Templated answers can go a long way.
- ❑ **Google Listing:** Go to [your Business Profile](#) and sign in to the Google Account associated with it. Verify that your hours, location, and contact information are correct. If you haven't [claimed your organization on Google](#), make sure to do so.
- ❑ **Press Release:** By issuing a press release to your local media, you can reach a broader audience beyond your organization's existing network. Let them know about your participation in the challenge and the best practices for getting lost pets home. [Bookmark this resource for free press release templates and examples.](#)

Ongoing External Communications

- ❑ **Spread the Word on Social Media:** Continuing to post about best practices for lost and found pets is essential for getting more lost pets in your community. Try doing a ride along with an officer and capture some of these new practices in action. Post photos of pets being reunited with their family due to one of these practices, with clever videos or engaging graphics to accompany the explanations. Change the perception of "the old dogcatcher" by highlighting your individual officers' efforts to help pets and families, especially reuniting them. This approach will humanize them to your community and make them feel more approachable (like [this example from Maricopa County Animal Care & Control](#)). Consider paid social media ads to expand your audience reach beyond your current audience. If you can add a few dollars, boost your posts. You can start with as little as \$1 a day ([Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#)).
- ❑ **Engage Your Local Media:** Local media love a feel-good story from their community. [Consider pitching the local media](#) with stories of lost pets who have made it back home, and how they did it. These stories should include good reunion photos or videos to grab attention. A good reunion photo should have the following: emotion, no cages or chains, and a good vantage point of the person and animal. Keep background in mind, like business signs, for example. Don't be afraid to ask the pets' family to hug them again to get more shots, increasing chances of a good one! Build a media contact list and keep it updated so when it is time to engage the local media, you can easily send a press release or pitch out.
- ❑ **Collaborate with Local Businesses and Neighbors:** If you collaborate with the community where the pet was found, you will find some of your best resources are neighbors. Immediately connect with neighbors and businesses in the area. If field officers can't find clues to the pets' home from there, follow up a bit later and see if there is a local neighborhood restaurant that will allow you to put up a sign about the lost pet. Area veterinarians' offices almost always have boards for this kind of information. Stop by regularly and make sure information stays current.
- ❑ **Encourage finders to foster:** When a community member finds a pet, make it easy for them to foster while they look for the pet's family. Check out the [found pets page on Williamson Regional Animal Shelter's website](#) to see how they ask finders to get involved with helping their found pet. You can also get a head start on your process by mirroring [Pasco County Animal Services' Finder to Foster SOP](#).
- ❑ **Utilize Volunteers:** Ask your volunteers to post about found pets and return-to-home best practices and answer questions on NextDoor or other local social media channels.

- ❑ **Local Events:** Check for community outreach events and ask if you can have a small table for public information. Have flyers and reunion photos and be ready to talk pets and return-to-home! Everyone loves talking about their animals! Pick your most friendly, outgoing volunteers/staff for these types of ongoing outreach!

Sources

- [How to Boost at Post on Social Media \[Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter\] | HubSpot](#)
- [22 Facebook Marketing Tips for Small Businesses on a Budget | WordStream](#)
- [Edit your Business Profile on Google | Google Business Profile Help](#)
- [Create an event for your Facebook Page | Meta Business Help Center](#)
- [How to create an event ad from your Facebook Page | Meta Business Help Center](#)
- [TikTok Marketing: The Complete Guide for Brands in 2025 | Sprout Social](#)
- [Get Started Meta Advertising | Meta Business Help Center](#)
- [How to boost posts on Facebook | Meta Business Help Center](#)