

Background

Contra Costa County (CCC) has a population of about 1.157 million people. It is estimated that in our County our residents love and care for approximately 172,000 dogs, 69,000 rabbits and over 450,000 cats. The cat population estimates include indoor only, indoor/outdoor cats and outdoor “community” cats. In Contra Costa County we are experiencing a problem of pet overpopulation. This is due to primarily two reasons: a lack of affordable, accessible veterinary care which includes spay/neuter and vaccine services across and people having to make the difficult decision to give up their pets due to behavior concerns, or landlord issues.

Currently, Contra Costa Animal Services (CCAS) provides low cost spay neuter and vaccine services to all Contra Costa County residents through its animal medical center. However, CCAS’s public service levels are affected due to having one team of medical staff working in one surgery area also supporting our internal shelter medical needs for animals who come to the shelter lost, sick, injured or in danger from the unincorporated areas of the county and the 18 cities we contract with for services. This conflict reduces CCAS’s public impact by approximately 66-70%. A service our county residents urgently need to provide appropriate care for their pets and keep pets in their homes.

In 2022, CCAS provided housing and care to over 8,000 animals, which reflects an approximate 60% increase in animals since 2021. Cats represent about 42% of our incoming population, while dogs make up about 31% and the remainder is a conglomerate of bunnies, livestock, and small animals. CCAS receives animals from throughout County, but the largest influx of large breed dogs, neonatal kittens and sick/injured dogs/cats come from two key zip codes 94801 and 94565 (i.e., North Richmond, San Pablo and Pittsburg, and Bay Point). Many of these animals end up in the shelter due to a lack of access to veterinary care or humane education around animal care or behavior. This animal shelter population also has the greatest risk of euthanasia at the CCAS shelter, which consists of neonatal kittens (e.g., needing maternal care), sick/injured cats and dogs, plus large breed dogs that do not do well in overcrowded small living spaces. This population greatly needs additional support at the shelter. CCAS relies heavily on local rescue/transfer partner nonprofit organizations to help decompress, recover, and find a home for these animals and help save lives.

The Pet Over Population problem is exacerbated due to the nation experiencing a Veterinarian and Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT) shortage that is being felt here in Contra Costa County, along with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Local Veterinarians are charging fees to cover their costs for elective procedures like spay/neuter surgeries and vaccines. This places those procedures out of reach for our county residents who need these discretionary funds to be used for things that are needed to support their families. It also places our local residents/families in difficult situations that may cause them to need to relinquish/surrender their pets. Some of those issues are around behaviors that could be addressed with spaying/neutering the pet, or even medical conditions that could have been prevented through regular vaccines and/or medical visits to also prevent deadly zoonotic diseases that may impact a family or put the community at risk.

The Department’s goal is to empower Contra Costa County community residents to be a caring community for our human population and the animals they love. The proposed initiative would help provide wellness

services for our animals in our County and those animals in turn will continue to provide the love and companionship our residents need to support their physical and emotional health.

Funding Request

CCAS Service Area	Funding Sources		
Public S/N Services	ARPA	Measure X	City/GF/User Fees
Capital Project	139,000	-	-
S/N Grants	-	350,000	-
<i>Total:</i>	<i>139,000</i>	<i>350,000</i>	<i>-</i>
Animal Welfare Services	ARPA	Measure X	City/GF/User Fees
Shelter Adoptions	-	-	126,000
Animal Enrichment	-	252,000	-
Foster Program(s)	-	-	126,000
Transfer Program	-	-	126,000
Shelter Intervention	-	126,000	-
Reclaimed Animals	-	-	126,000
<i>Total:</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>378,000</i>	<i>504,000</i>
Community Services	ARPA	Measure X	City/GF/User Fees
Community Outreach	-	30,000	211,000
Adoption Events	-	-	0
Human Education	-	155,000	-
Vaccine/Microchip Events	-	220,000	-
Pet Retention Program	-	140,000	-
<i>Total:</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>545,000</i>	<i>211,000</i>
<i>Grand Total:</i>	<i>139,000</i>	<i>1,273,000</i>	<i>715,000</i>

* ARPA funding under review based on Architect Capital Project proposal

Total Annual Cost: \$1,273,000

Total Initiative Cost for 3 years: \$3,819,000

The Department's goal is to build a 3-year plan with Measure X and other Department funding to allow the Department to improve and expand appropriate veterinary medical care to our county residents and their pets.

Benefits of Funding CCAS Programs

If CCAS receives Measure X Funding to support a 3-Year Contra Costa County Pet Health Initiative Pilot Program, the Department believes the following benefits for County residents to care for pets align with the Measure X Community Advisory Body's core goals.

- **Goal #1: Mental Well Being.** Supports the mental and behavioral health and well-being of all residents with pets.
 - There are research studies that present that animals can enhance the health of their human caregivers. Supporting this initiative will contribute to Contra Costa County residents short- and long-term.
- **Goal #2: Equity in Action.** Prioritizes equity and removing barriers to receiving veterinary care (e.g., spay/neuter and vaccine services) and behavior/training support impacted by socioeconomic and demographic barriers.
- **Goal #3: Healthy Communities.** All residents should have access to affordable care to support their pet's health and wellbeing.
- **Goal #4: Welcoming & Safe Community.** All residents should act as responsible pet owners. Potentially Aggressive pets with behavioral needs should be able to access behavior training and humane education for public safety.

Targeted Population

Households earning less than 50% of area median income (AMI), at risk of homelessness and marginally housed populations.

Measures of Success

1. Alter 1000 cats, 500 dogs and 250 rabbits each year through owned pet voucher program.
2. Provide a minimum of 4 mobile S/N and vaccine events per month, target 1200 surgeries/yr., 9600 vaccines and 2400 microchips.
3. Number of altered dogs licensed in CCC increase by 10% first year and 5% each year afterwards.
4. Maintain or exceed an 91% live release rate of all healthy and treatable animals at CCAS at the end of the first year of the initiative, 93% by year 3 and 95% by year 5.
5. Decrease the Average Length of Stay (ALOS) for at risk large dogs at CCAS by 20%.
6. Assist a minimum of 100 families per year to keep their pets in their home through a pet assistance program.
7. Intake of lost large breed dogs into CCAS decreases by 10% each year.