



Multnomah County Animal Services
Plan for Saving More Animal Lives
December 2011





Plan Overview

A. Strategic Goal: Save More Animal Lives by increasing MCAS's Live Release Rate

Live Release Rate is the industry standard for measuring lifesaving success in animal shelters.

B. We have set two specific, measurable objectives for increasing Live Release Rate over the next three years:

1. Increase Cat Live Release Rate to 60% by 2013
Focusing our efforts on increasing the Live Release Rate for cats is our best opportunity for an immediate impact on saving more lives.
2. Sustain Dog Live Release Rate at 86% through 2013
This rate is consistent with the nation's top performing public agencies.

C. Our Strategy:

1. Focus our staff time, energy, resources and volunteers on the lifesaving programs that will increase the Live Release Rate.
2. Improve customer service by strengthening the MCAS customer experience.
3. Create an MCAS presence and voice in the community to tell our story.

D. We are focusing on these lifesaving programs:

1. Increase Adoptions
Improved customer service & access to adoptions will result in more shelter animals finding homes.
2. Increase Number of Pets Licensed
More dogs and cats licensed in our community will result in more animals reunited with their owners.
3. Increase Spay and Neuter Services for Low Income Pet Owners
The efforts of the regional coalition, Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland (ASAP) to spay/neuter cats, including targeted Trap-Neuter-Return programs, will help reduce future cat intake numbers at the shelter.



Live Release Rate - *Saving More Lives*

In 2005, all of the public and private animal shelters, and the veterinary community, within the four-county Portland metropolitan community, joined together to form a coalition: The Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland (ASAP). The alliance established a goal to end the euthanasia of social, healthy, and treatable cats and dogs in our local shelters. ASAP members made a commitment to collaborate on spay and neuter programs, education and outreach efforts, and promote of humane alternatives for feral cats. MCAS is a founding member of ASAP.

Why Live Release Rate?

- The Live Release Rate is part of the Asilomar Accords reporting methodology. The Asilomar Accords, which was developed in 2004 by a group of animal welfare leaders from across the country, has become the shelter industry standard for measuring agency performance in saving the lives of dogs and cats entering shelters.
- The Live Release Rate is the combined number of all shelter animals that are: reunited with their owners, adopted into new homes, or transferred to adoption partner agencies.
- The Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland adopted the Asilomar data collection and reporting methodology in 2005. ASAP, as well as MCAS, has collected and reported five years of data.
- Setting a Live Release Rate goal for Multnomah County establishes a measure to which the community can hold MCAS accountable.
- Live Release Rates can be tracked separately for dogs and cats in order to account for differences in the animal populations in the community, the levels of spay and neutered pets, levels of license compliance, the population of animals entering the shelter, as well as other factors.
- Multnomah County can use the Live Release Rate statistic to compare our community's performance with other jurisdictions. We can identify and research those communities that have higher Live Releases Rates and apply best practices to increase our community's success.



The following chart is the Live Release Rate data from a variety of public agencies representing medium to large, urban jurisdictions across the country. In 2010, the Live Release Rate for dogs in Multnomah County was higher than the average. The Live Release Rate for cats was below the average.

Yr	Jurisdiction	Cat	Dog	Total
2010	Miami-Dade County, FL	18.7	62.1	44.2
2010	San Diego County, CA	49.2	82.8	68.3
2010	City of San Jose, CA	55.4	72.4	62.5
2010	Multnomah County-Portland, OR	46.0	85.9	60.7
2010	City of Seattle, WA	84.5	86.9	85.5
2008	City of Richmond, VA	67.3	67.4	67.4
2010	San Francisco City-County	85.0	85.0	85.0
2010	Maricopa County (Phoenix), AZ	48.0	57.7	55.1
2010	Denver City-County, CO	71.5	82.4	78.3
2008	City of Los Angeles, CA	48.3	75.6	63.8
2010	Sacramento County, CA	30.7	72.4	36.5
2010	City of Sacramento, CA	18.6	37.8	27.5
2007	City of Albuquerque, NM	38.4	69.8	55.2
2010	Spokane County (SCRAPS), WA	58.3	86.3	66.5
2010	City of Spokane, WA	44.4	86.1	60.7
2010	City of Austin, TX	65.0	82.0	74.0
2010	Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC	18.5	51.4	35.2
2010	Washoe County (Reno), NV	94.0	93.0	94.0
	Average	52.3	74.2	62.2

Improving Customer Service to Save More Lives

Excellent customer service is at the heart of our plan to Save More Animals. It is crucial that we improve the customer’s experience with MCAS at all touch-points -- on the phone, at the shelter, on the web, and in the community. Our success in achieving the goals in the plan will help us strengthen public awareness and understanding of what work we do, while we enhance programs and services. MCAS hired The Metropolitan Group, a strategic communications consultant, to engage MCAS customers and stakeholders. The Metropolitan Group identified four areas to improve customer service:

- Continue to strengthen MCAS customer experience
- Enhance clarity around euthanasia policy while increasing Live Release Rate
- Continue evolving voice in the community
- Learn how best to leverage “public power”



Objective 1: Increase Live Release Rate for cats to 60%

Background

MCAS provides humane shelter and care for the community's lost, homeless, and stray animals. Our priorities are to reunite animals with their owners, adopt them into new homes or transfer them to one of our adoption partner agencies. The data from 2005 to 2010 reveal that cat intake numbers increased approximately 3%, while the Live Release Rate increased 22.1%. During the same period the number of cats adopted declined, and cats transferred to our adoption partner organizations increased.

Year	Intake	Return owner	Adopted	Transferred	Total Outcomes	Live Release Rate
2006	5,139	213 (4.1%)	988 (19.4%)	711 (13.9%)	5,083	37.6% (1,912)
2007	5,413	423 (7.6%)	1,219 (22.0%)	356 (6.4%)	5,539	36.1% (1,998)
2008	4,898	200 (4.1%)	907 (18.6%)	734 (15.0%)	4,869	37.8% (1,841)
2009	5,156	447 (8.6%)	755 (14.6%)	788 (15.2%)	5,176	38.4% (1,990)
2010	*5,293	*732 (13.7%)	722 (13.6%)	988 (18.6%)	5,320	46.0% (2,442)

* includes cat intake for Public Low Income Spay and Neuter Program

Setting the Goal

Our best opportunity to have an immediate impact on saving more lives is to focus our staff time, energy, resources and volunteers on life saving programs that will increase the Live Release Rate. Specifically, a focus on increasing cat adoptions and increasing spay and neuter services will reduce the high number of cats entering the shelter. Improving these two programs will have the added benefit of increasing public awareness of services and improve overall customer satisfaction.

We researched the Live Release Rate of the top performing communities in the country, and looked at the trends in our data. Our Live Release Rate for cats increased 22.1% from FY06 to FY10. However, we are below the average Cat Live Release Rate of 53.3% when compared to the communities we studied.

We are projecting that over the next three years, cat intake at the shelter, transfers, and cats returned to their owners will remain constant. We base this projection on having the same resources and the same staffing levels.

We set our goals based on two pieces of data: the average Live Release Rate from comparable public agencies, and the 3-year average MCAS Live Release Rate

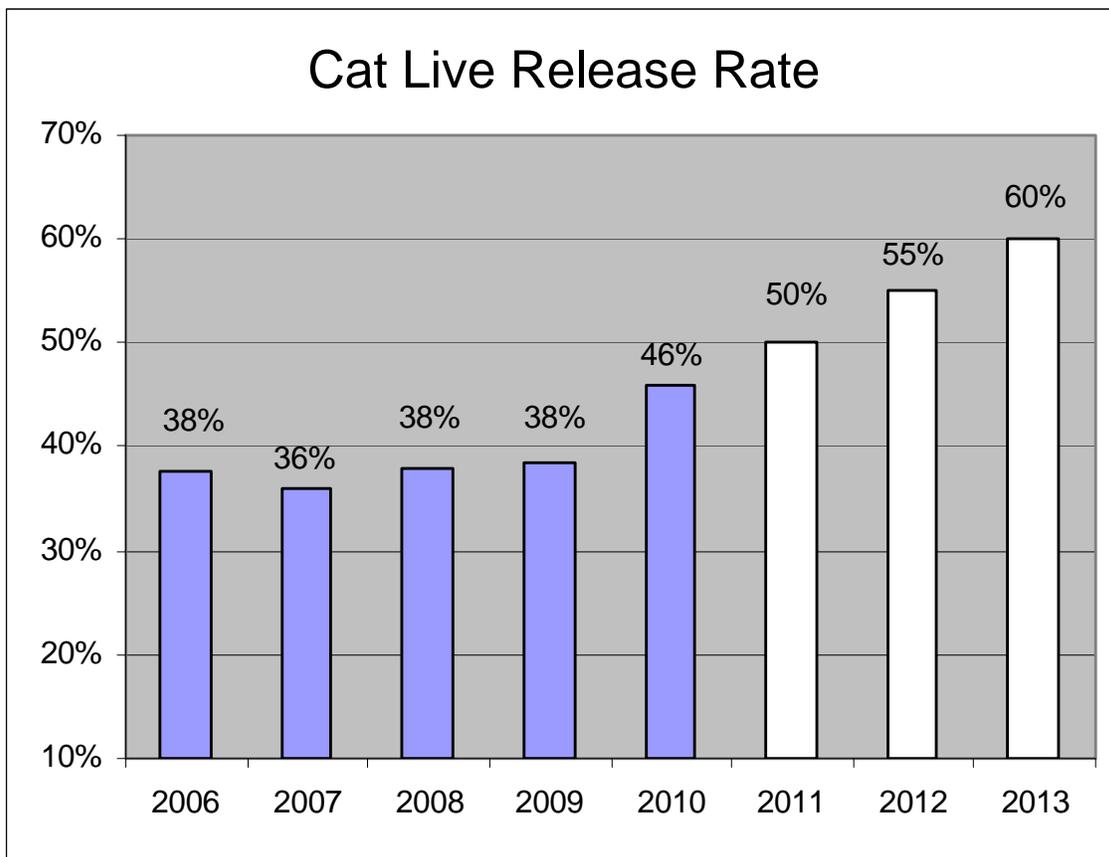


change from 2006 to 2010. The average Live Release Rate for cats among comparable jurisdictions is 52.3%; and, the 3-year average annual change in MCAS cat Live Release Rate from 2006 to 2010 is + 4.3% for Cats.

Based on this assessment, we set the following goals for Cat Live Release Rate for the next three years:

Live Release Rate	2010	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Cats	46%	50%	55%	60%

The following chart shows the Cat Live Release Rate at MCAS from calendar year 2006 through 2010, as well as the projected Live Release Rate for calendar 2011, 2012, and 2013.





Objective 2: Sustain Live Release Rate for dogs at 86%

Background

MCAS has the dual responsibility for safeguarding animal welfare, and protecting public health & safety. Some dogs entering the shelter are more difficult to safely and humanely place back into the community, such as potentially dangerous dogs, and cases of severe animal neglect and abuse. Even given these constraints, our Live Release Rate for dogs has shown a steady increase over the past five years. The annual percent changes in Live Release Rate have slowed as we approach higher levels of success.

Annual gains have moderated, and challenges increase, as we work to place more treatable/manageable dogs—both of which require greater time and resources.

The Live Release Rate increased 15.1% over the past 5 years. Dog intake decreased 30%, while dogs adopted and returned to owners stayed constant, as a percent of intake. The percent transferred has steadily increased.

Year	Intake	Return owner	Adopted	Transferred	Total Outcomes	Live Release Rate
2006	4,344	1,945 (44.8%)	881 (20.3%)	316 (7.3%)	4,335	70.8% (3,072)
2007	3,628	1,475 (40.2%)	809 (22.0%)	268 (7.3%)	3,670	69.5% (2,552)
2008	3,158	1,225 (39.4%)	653 (21.0%)	418 (13.5%)	3,105	73.9% (2,296)
2009	2,844	1,211 (42.6%)	665 (23.4%)	393 (13.8%)	2,843	79.8% (2,269)
2010	3,057	1,387 (45.8%)	726 (24.0%)	487 (16.1%)	3,025	85.9% (2,600)

Setting the Goal

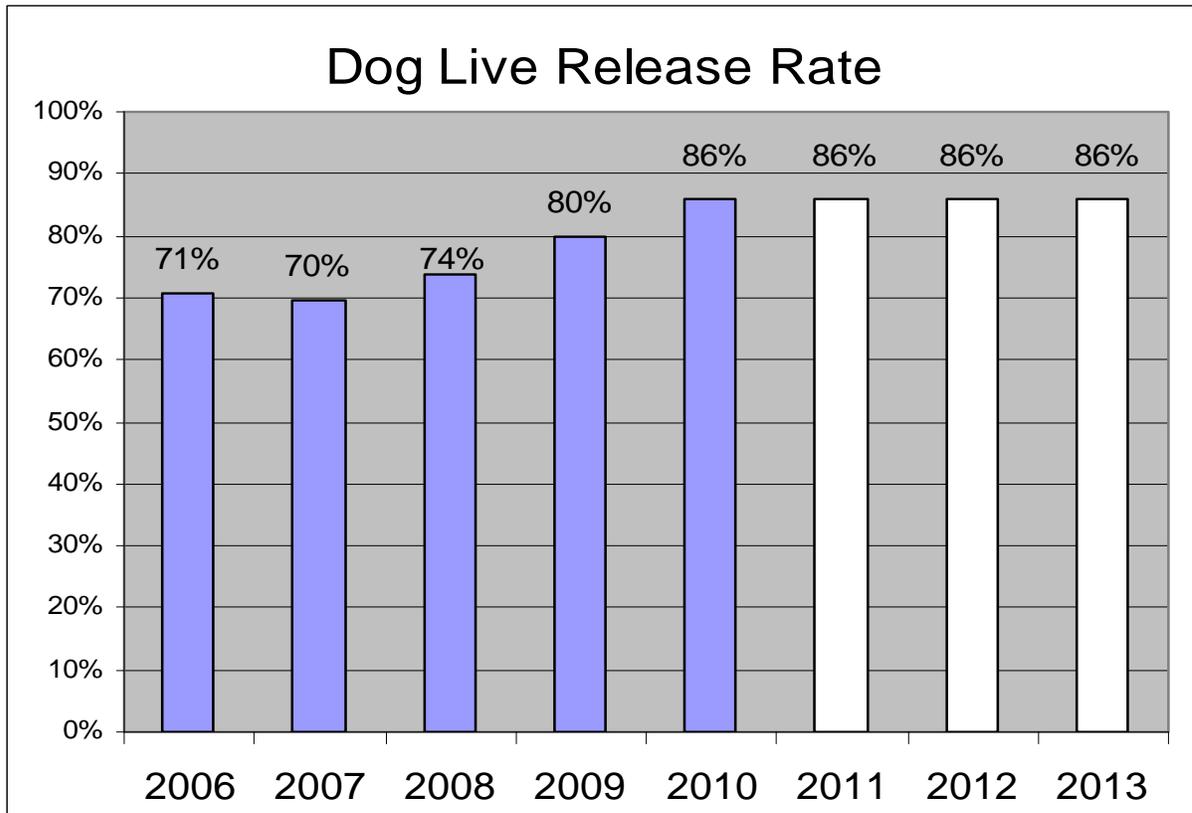
The current MCAS Dog Live Release Rate of 86% exceeds the average of those communities studied (74.2%), and is consistent with the nation’s top performing public agencies. Given MCAS’ public health and safety responsibility, every percentage point increase at this high Live Release Rate level comes with greater challenges and increased risks to the community. We set our goal based on the average Live Release Rate of comparable public agencies, and, the 3-year average annual MCAS Live Release Rate change from 2006 to 2010, which is + 2.0% for dogs.



Based on this methodology, we set the following goals for sustaining the dog Live Release Rate for the next three years:

Live Release Rate	2010	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Dogs	86%	86%	86%	86%

The following chart is the Dog Live Release Rate at MCAS from calendar year 2006 through 2010.



The trend shows a steady increase in Live Release Rate from 2006 to 2010. The chart includes the projected Live Release Rate goals for calendar 2011, 2012, and 2013.



Action Item 1: Improve Adoption Program

Background

We will focus our efforts on improving our adoption program to increase dog and cat adoptions. This objective’s action items will improve access, streamline the adoption process, and better meet the needs of our customers. In year one, we will focus on improving our adoption program. We have set a target to save an additional 120 cats in 2011. That is an additional 10 cats per month, for a total of 2,562 cats saved in 2011.

1.1 Increase off-site adoption outreach locations	
Assumptions	We currently have outreach locations with two partner organizations. More facilities closer to the Portland population center will lead to more adoptions. Accomplish within current staffing levels by switching to a “transfer partner” agreement model.
Customer Service Impact	Increases customer accessibility to adoption services
Performance Outcome	Increase outreach locations from 2 to 4 by 2013

1.2 Train MCAS volunteers to serve as additional adoption counselors	
Assumptions	More staff and volunteers will be available to assist customers with adoptions.
Customer Service Impact	Less time spent waiting for interviews
Performance Outcome	Volunteer-led interviews will last no longer than 45 min. Volunteers will adopt out 25% of cats

1.3 Track all adoptions and post for public view at the shelter and on web	
Assumptions	The staff, volunteers, and the public will know our goals, and can focus on meeting them.
Customer Service Impact	Increase public awareness of adoption program performance
Performance Outcome	Increase monthly cat adoptions from 60 to 70 adoptions per month



1.4 Train volunteers to run the Information Desk at the shelter	
Assumptions	Currently, Client Services staff are assigned to the Info Desk. This will free up staff to become more available for adoption customers.
Customer Service Impact	More staff available to help customers at front counter and on the phones
Performance Outcome	Decrease customer wait time by 50% Increase customer satisfaction on surveys.

1.5 24-hr timeline from adoption to animals going home	
Assumptions	Adopters are waiting several days before their new pets are spay/neutered and can go home. The additional time at the shelter takes up valuable cage space, and added animal care.
Customer Service Impact	Much less cumbersome process; faster time between the adoption interview and when their new pet goes home.
Performance Outcome	90% of adopted animals are in their new home within 24-hours from approval

1.6 Establish a process improvement team to streamline adoption program	
Assumptions	Adoptions are a key component of the Live Release Rate. A formal process improvement effort will identify ways to reduce process time, reduce costs, and improve customer satisfaction.
Customer Service Impact	Improve customer satisfaction
Performance Outcome	Reduce adoption process time by 25%

1.7 Establish a customer comment card to collect customer feedback	
Assumptions	An improved customer experience with our adoption process will create repeat customers and they will tell friends and family about their experience.
Customer Service Impact	Improve customer satisfaction
Performance Outcome	Increase customer satisfaction on surveys

1.8 30 min. adoption interviews for cats; 45-minutes for dogs	
Assumptions	Adoption interview times range widely from person to person. Staff will be given time guidelines and general overview of process to increase efficiency.
Customer Service Impact	Less wait time for an interview. Less time spent in interview. Adopter will be sent home with information to be accessed later on our website.
Performance Outcome	a. 30 min cat adoptions b. 45 min dog adoptions



Action Item 2: Increase number of pet licenses to 100,000.

Background

A pet license is the primary identification system for pets. Whenever an animal enters the shelter wearing a license tag, MCAS staff contact the owner to notify them that their pet is at the shelter. The number of dogs and cats entering the shelter that are licensed directly impacts the number of animals that MCAS can reunite with their owners—and impacts the Live Release Rate.

Over the past five years:

- Licensing has increased 131% since FY07
- Ordinance change to require veterinarians to report rabies vaccinations to MCAS
- Online license sales have doubled since FY07
- Licensing grew 11% from FY10 and FY11

Pet Licenses			
FY	Dog	Cat	Total
FY2007	25,392	13,886	39,676
FY2008	43,807	23,957	68,449
FY2009	48,790	26,434	75,224
FY2010	53,002	29,499	82,501
FY2011	58,212	33,330	91,542

Even as the number of licensed pets has increased, research from the Metropolitan Group study revealed that the average pet licensing customer found the current licensing process to be “inefficient and aggravating.” This objective identifies specific improvements to the licensing system to remove barriers, speed up the process, and be more customer-friendly—all designed to increase the number of licensed pets in the community.

2.1 Redesign license renewal notice to a standard business mail format	
Assumptions	Current mailing is a post card. Research shows using a standard business mailing results in a higher response.
Customer Service Impact	Easier to understand license renewal notice
Performance Outcome	Increase in response rate from 72% to 80%

2.2 Establish a predictable schedule and timeline for all license related billings	
Assumptions	Predictability in mailing renewal/delinquent notices, Notices of Infraction, and collection notices will increase compliance without follow-up from staff.
Customer Service Impact	Improve customer understanding of process
Performance Outcome	Decrease customer complaints about licensing process; Increase compliance rates for renewal/delinquent notices; Improve customer satisfaction in surveys



MCAS Plan To Save More Lives

2.3 Increase the number of pet license vendor locations	
Assumptions	License vendors are primarily veterinary clinics. More vendor locations improve convenience for pet owners.
Customer Service Impact	Offering licensing at the vendor is a convenience to the pet owner.
Performance Outcome	10% increase in the number of vendor locations (from 60 to 66 location).

2.4 Establish a process improvement team to streamline licensing process	
Assumptions	The number of pets licensed in the community is a key component of returning animals to owners, and contributes to the Live Release Rate. A formal process improvement effort—which will include the County I.T. staff, will identify ways to reduce process time, reduce costs, and improve customer satisfaction.
Customer Service Impact	Easier, more user process for customers
Performance Outcome	Reduce process time by 25%

2.5 Increase License vendor incentive fee from \$2 per sale to \$4 per sale	
Assumptions	There are sixty business locations that sell pet licenses for the county. These license vendors receive a fee for each license sold. Vendors have told us that an increased fee would lead to more sales.
Customer Service Impact	License vendors are primarily veterinary clinics. Offering licensing at the vendor is a convenience to the pet owner.
Performance Outcome	25% increase in license sales at vendors. From 20% of total license sales to 24% of total sales

2.6 Audit veterinarian rabies reporting program	
Assumptions	The County ordinance requires veterinarians to report all rabies vaccination certificates to MCAS. The information is used to identify pet owners for license sales. Maximizing reporting leads to increased licensing.
Customer Service Impact	Improve convenience of licensing for customers
Performance Outcome	100% of rabies vaccinations are reported to MCAS

2.7 Review and adjust license fee structure	
Assumptions	The cost of a pet license can impact the number of licenses issued. An annual review of the fee will establish an appropriate price-point for the fee.
Customer Service Impact	Full explanation of the reasoning and value behind setting fees helps customers understanding and support pet licensing.
Performance Outcome	Take a fee resolution taken to the Board of County Commissioners by July 1, 2012



2.8 Improve online license purchasing process	
Assumptions	Customers surveyed by Metropolitan Group found the online license process “inefficient and aggravating.” More customers are choosing online licensing to purchase and renew their pet’s licensing.
Customer Service Impact	Creating a more customer friendly online experience will build stronger support.
Performance Outcome	Improve customer satisfaction with licensing to 80% satisfied/very satisfied.

Action Item 3: Increase Spay/Neuter services for low-income pet owners

Background

Spay and neuter is the principal prevention program designed to reduce the number of unwanted animals that enter the shelter system. The Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland created a program, “Spay & Save” to provide subsidized spay/neuter surgeries for qualified, low income pet owners. MCAS is a surgical site for the Spay & Save program. The program is funded with private funding and from MCAS licensing funds. We have funds available to increase the number of surgeries, but the lack of space in our shelter hospital limits our ability to perform more surgeries. We can expand our capacity by establishing an off-site surgical location in partnership with other nonprofits.

This objective will expand our surgery capacity by partnering with other organizations, employing outreach methods to directly assist pet owners in need, and empower pet owners to be successful pet owners.

3.1 Contract with ASAP partners for spay and neuter surgeries	
Assumptions	We have private funds available to fund additional surgeries; but limited space.
Customer Service Impact	More surgical capacity reduces customer wait time for surgery; Improves customer access to services
Performance Outcome	Increase number of surgeries by 25% From 600 to 750 per year

3.2 Recruit additional on-call surgical team to expand surgery numbers	
Assumptions	We have private funds available to fund an additional on-call veterinary surgical team.
Customer Service Impact	Expanded surgery schedule increases customer access to services.
Performance Outcome	Increase number of surgeries from 725 to 800



3.3 Establish a new surgery site in partnership with other nonprofits to expand capacity	
Assumptions	Lack of space limits us in the number of surgeries we can do at the shelter.
Customer Service Impact	Increases customer access to services; Reduces customer wait time
Performance Outcome	Increase total number of surgeries by 25% From 800 to 905 surgeries
3.4 Pilot a new Apartment Cat Trap/Neuter/Return (ACT) project to target neighborhoods with high numbers of feral, community, and free-roaming cats.	
Assumptions	Low income pet owners face barriers to having their cats spay/neutered. Barriers include cost, transportation and a compelling reason.
Customer Service Impact	Increases access to services; Removes barriers
Performance Outcome	Assist 100 low-income pet owners/year

Lifesaving Programs in Place Today at MCAS

- **Dog & Cat Adoption Program** – shelter adoption services
- **Cat & Dog Transfer Program** – transfer animals to adoption partner agencies
- **Returning Animal to their owners** – reunite shelter animals with their owners
- **Dog and Cat Foster Program** – shelter animals cared for in the homes of volunteers
- **URI Cat Foster Program** – foster care for cats with special health needs



- **Kitten Foster Program** – foster care for underage kittens without moms
- **Adoption Outreach Program** – Permanent community adoption sites and special events
- **Treatable & Manageable Dog & Cat Program** – medical & behavioral care for special needs animals
- **Behavior Enrichment Program** – special socialization & training for shelter animals
- **Deferred Payment Program** – financial hardship payment plans to assist returning animals to their owner
- **Low Income Spay-Neuter Program** – subsidized surgery services at the shelter for pets owned by low income qualified pet owners
- **Trap, Neuter, Return Program** – Spay/neuter services & population management services for people caring for feral cats
- **Web, Facebook, Twitter, Petfinder** – adoptable pets posted on social media sites
- **Private Donations** – Dolly's Fund (animal care); Adoption Outreach Fund, Capital Fund, and the Spay-Neuter Assistance Fund
- **Shelter Medicine Program** – high quality medical care accredited by the American Animal Hospital Association since 2006
- **Pet Licensing Program** – Sixty license vendor locations, Online licensing, and Rabies vaccination reporting by veterinarians
- **Volunteer Program** – direct community involvement to help MCAS meet its mission