

CITY OF AUSTIN ANIMAL SERVICES OFFICE STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2030
DRAFT 01.08.2025

Vision: The vision of the Animal Services Office (ASO) is to provide services and resources that allow people and animals to thrive in the city of Austin.

HUMANE CARE

Description: Meet animals' physical and emotional needs and ensure a high quality of life for animals in shelter and foster care by providing enrichment, behavioral support, and well-maintained facilities.

Goal: Increase enrichment, socialization, and behavioral services

Measures:

- # of times out of kennel per day per dogs (2 times for large dogs, 3 times for small dogs)
- % of animals with daily in-kennel enrichment
- # of staff training hours in animal behavior

Strategies:

- Expand capacity to provide enrichment and socialization services for all animals through adequate staff, volunteers, funding, and partnerships
- Offer staff training and educational opportunities in animal behavior
- Enhance support for fosters through training and resources

Goal: Improve campus facilities and physical spaces

Measures:

- Average amount of time between issue identification and entry of work order into Building Services system
- Additional location analysis completed within 12 months of strategic plan implementation

Strategies:

- In partnership with the Building Services Department, identify opportunities to enhance proactive maintenance and optimize facility operations
- Identify priority facility upgrades and develop a timeline to enhance animal and staff spaces for optimal care and safety
- Research, analyze, and explore additional locations to offer ASO services throughout the community (i.e., new satellite locations, secondary locations)

Goal: Enhance shelter cleanliness and sanitation

Measures:

- Pass yearly state health inspection
- Quarterly kennel cleanliness audit

Strategies:

- Establish and implement a sanitation protocol for facilities and kennels aligned with best practices, including routine checks to maintain a high standard of cleanliness

Goal: Develop responsible pathways for all eligible animals emphasizing those with behavioral needs

Measures:

- % of at-risk animals who have a behavioral training plan
- % of behavioral animals placed with partners and rescues
- % of adult animals in ASO care beyond 30 days who are plead for foster or rescue placement
- % of behavioral animals in ASO who are plead for foster placement
- Total number of cats and dogs over 30 days

Strategies:

- Create a citywide, inter-shelter team to identify, assess, and connect at-risk animals into the most appropriate behavior program
- Proactively identify animals at risk of behavioral decline and prioritize for appropriate placement
- Establish and implement a protocol for assessing, managing, and supporting animals with behavioral needs, including the process for developing behavioral training plans
- Review, research, and provide recommendations for policies, regulations, processes, and programs to support animals with behavioral needs, seeking review and/or approval from governing bodies (e.g., City Council, Animal Advisory Council, Travis County Commissioners Court) as applicable

SPAY NEUTER

Description: Reduce the number of stray, unowned, and unwanted animals by improving and increasing spay/neuter services.

Goal: Increase the number of free and subsidized spay/neuter surgeries for owned animals

Measures:

- # of free or subsidized spay/neuter surgeries performed by contracted partners
- # of free or subsidized spay surgeries for large female dogs performed by contracted partners
- # of free or subsidized spay surgeries for female cats performed by contracted partners

Strategies:

- Develop and maintain strong partnerships with community organizations and national vendors to expand low-cost spay/neuter services and referral opportunities available within the community
- Review, research, and provide recommendations on policies, regulations, processes, and programs that promote and expand spay/neuter, seeking review and/or approval from governing bodies as applicable
- Create additional marketing efforts to communicate spay/neuter services to the community, targeting areas with the highest rates of stray and surrendered pets

Goal: Increase the number of spay/neuter surgeries for stray and unowned animals

Measures:

- Number of cats served through trap-neuter-return (TNR)
- # of spay/neuter surgeries performed at the shelter
- Average length of wait time for spay/neuter for shelter/ASO foster animals (from eligibility to receive surgery to time the surgery is performed)

Strategies:

- Partner with volunteers and organizations that support community cats to identify opportunities to maximize the impact of trap-neuter-return programs
- Allocate additional resources and optimize processes and staffing to ensure stray animals are spayed/neutered as quickly as possible while in shelter or foster care

OPEN INTAKE

Description: Ensure Austin Animal Center has the capacity to accept animals, facilitate care by partners and the public, and assist people in keeping their pets in a timely manner.

Goal: Increase the timeliness of ASO intake support

Measures:

- # of days intake is fully open per quarter
- # of people seeking intake (# receive same day intake, # receive services no same day intake)
- Pet Resource Center (PRC) Wait Times for walk-ups and for owner surrender appointments

Strategies:

- Develop and implement standard operating procedures for triaging intake requests and providing customers with appropriate and timely support
- Collaborate with volunteers to identify opportunities to involve them in intake support, with appropriate training and guidance

Goal: Expand the capacity of the shelter

Measures:

- Number of active fosters
- Number of pets fostered
- Number of people participating in finder-to-foster
- % of animals in ASO care/control in foster and other placements (i.e. boarding, training programs)

Strategies:

- Explore innovative collaborations with community groups and partners to facilitate the direct placement of animals into care, minimizing shelter intake
- Increase foster enrollment and streamline the foster process to improve efficiency and responsiveness
- Expand capacity of the finder-to-foster program, including developing protocol and providing adequate staffing to provide timely services for finder-to-foster participants
- Collaborate with community partners to increase awareness and accessibility of programs that divert animals from shelter (e.g., lost and found resources, finder-to-foster, microchip scanner locations)
- Enhance capacity to comprehensively manage the flow of animals, ensuring optimal space utilization, improved animal well-being, and successful placements

Goal: Remove barriers to pet ownership through resources and policy change

Measures:

- # of community events with ASO staff/volunteers providing responsible pet owner education
- Services provided (# of vouchers, # of families receiving fencing supplies, # of microchips)
- # of owner surrenders

Strategies:

- Review, research, and provide recommendations on policies, regulations, processes, and programs that advance pet-friendly policies (e.g., restrictions on pet rent, pet deposits, and weight limits), seeking review and/or approval from governing bodies as applicable
 - Expand and market resources and education on responsible pet ownership, including microchipping and spay/neuter
 - Identify grants and partnerships to increase and promote services to those in need including fences, vet assistance, and behavior assistance services
 - Develop and maintain strong partnerships with community organizations to expand low-cost services and referral opportunities available within the community
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LIVE RELEASE

Description: Maximize the number of animals that are adopted, rescued, transferred, or returned to their owners through enhanced services, partnerships, and community engagement.

Goal: Expand and enhance all programs that lead to successful placements for animals

Measures:

- Average length of shelter stay
- Number of animals adopted
- Number of animals transferred
- Number of animals returned within 30 days of adoption
- % of pets returned to owner

Strategies:

- Improve the adoption process and ensure successful placements by expanding services and providing adopters with training and resources
- Improve the rescue process and ensure successful placements

- Develop and implement innovative solutions to expand the transfer network and increase the quick transfer of animals
- Improve the availability of information and the marketing of shelter animals
- Design and implement methods that leverage technology, outreach, and partnerships to increase visibility of animals in stray hold, maximizing the number of animals returned to their owners
- Review, research, and recommend policies, regulations, programs, and processes to support high live release rate, gathering stakeholder input and seeking review and/or approval from governing bodies as applicable

Goal: Improve customer experience

Measures:

- Customer satisfaction ratings
- # customer service training hours per employee

Strategies:

- Create more and easier ways for customers to share their feedback to enhance customer experience (e.g., exit surveys)
- Enhance the shelter experience by improving signage and navigation and ensuring staff and volunteers are available to support customers
- Develop and implement customer service training for staff and volunteers
- Increase accessibility to ASO services through offsite events and exploring new locations across the community

Goal: Increase awareness of ASO and build community trust

Measures:

- ASO Web and Social Media Traffic
- City of Austin Community Survey ASO Service Rating
- # of participants at ASO events
- # of animal outcomes associated with offsite events (e.g., adopted at event, returned to shelter to adopt after event attendance)

Strategies:

- Implement a new data management system for transparency and to ensure data accuracy
- Launch a comprehensive marketing campaign to increase awareness of ASO's mission, policies, resources, and location

- Expand ASO's community presence, including increasing participation in local events, hosting new activities, and building partnerships
- Expand multilingual resources and improve accessibility across ASO services
- Strengthen outreach and trust-building efforts with community partners

PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

Description: Ensure the health and safety of the public and animals by providing resources and information, working with community partners, and responding quickly to animal related concerns.

Goal: Increase public awareness on how to interact safely with animals

Measures:

- Reduction in incidents with unhealthy or aggressive animals
- # of dogs adopted from ASO returned for aggression/behavior
- Web page traffic to resources

Strategies:

- Offer targeted training, resources, and support for managing behaviorally challenging animals, including through an online training and resource hub
- Enhance public education and awareness on safely interacting with behaviorally challenged pets, unfamiliar animals, and local wildlife
- Strengthen partnerships and increase awareness of community cat programs and trap-neuter-return (TNR)

Goal: Ensure timely response to animal welfare calls and public safety concerns

Measures:

- APO to call volume ratio
- 311 call measures (ASO response time and percentage of APO service calls meeting service standard)
- # of ASO dispatcher training hours

Strategies:

- Expand capacity of animal protection officers (APOs) and dispatchers consistent with community need
- Collaborate with 311 to enhance ASO service call triage, ensure consistent messaging, and provide clear interim assistance to the community (e.g., steps to take while waiting, when to expect updates)
- Identify opportunities for external organizations, such as wildlife rescues, to directly support response to animal welfare needs

Goal: Reduce the number of incidents involving aggressive or unhealthy animals in the community

Measures:

- 311 call volume related to animal public health and safety incidents

Strategies:

- Develop and implement methods to evaluate and improve the impact and effectiveness of public health and safety resources and services provided by ASO
 - Review, research, and provide recommendations on animal related policies and regulations that impact public health and safety, seeking review and/or approval from governing bodies as applicable
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STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Description: Recruit and retain well-trained and dedicated staff and volunteers by providing the tools, resources, and support they need to create a culture of inclusion and responsibility.

Goal: Enhance working conditions and build skilled and supported staff and volunteers

Measures:

- Training completion rates for staff and volunteers

Strategies:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive training and development program for staff and volunteers
- Conduct staffing analysis to determine appropriate levels of staff and volunteers and ensure pay equity
- Conduct an analysis of equipment needs for staff and volunteers, and take steps to address them
- Review, research, and recommend policies, regulations, training, and processes to ensure the health and safety of staff and volunteers, seeking review and/or approval from governing bodies as applicable

Goal: Increase morale and satisfaction of staff and volunteers

Measures:

- Retention rates for staff and volunteers
- Staff and volunteer satisfaction rates (collected through surveys)
- % of staff that attend annual compassion fatigue training

Strategies:

- Increase awareness of and access to resources to support the mental health needs of staff
- Develop programs to improve volunteer participation and retention, including incentives and team building
- Develop programs to improve staff retention, including team building, mentorship, and career development
- Increase and improve cooperation between staff and volunteers

Goal: Improve operational efficiency

Measures:

- Percentage of standard operation procedures reviewed and updated annually

Strategies:

- Maintain, regularly update, and enforce clear standard operating procedures
- Review, analyze, clarify, and define roles and responsibilities of staff, volunteers, and partners
- Conduct analysis of technology, contracts, and shared services needed to operate shelter at maximum efficiency and create a roadmap for implementation