

Government Budgeting Basics

Government Budgeting Overview

Municipal shelter budgets are built upon a traditional model of animal sheltering that does not account for community-centric services. Most current fund allocation systems are based on intakes, call volume, and other workload metrics that incentivize the continuation of penalizing pets and their owners, causing a disconnect between real-life resource needs and their financial representation. Over the years, animal services departments have expanded to include adoptions, rescue transfers, medical care, pet support services, and more programs into consideration however the budgeting process has not increased in sophistication.

The future of government budgeting should be based on human population and a [united welfare approach](#), using cost centers to accurately fund programs to meet the needs of the community as efficiently as possible.

Government Budgeting Fundamentals

Understanding Municipal Budgets and Financial Reports

Municipal budgeting practices may vary by jurisdiction and understanding the basics of municipal budgeting, the regulations for a specific jurisdiction's budget process, and budget types is critical to advocating for changes. Request protocols from your municipality when possible. See examples from [The Municipal Research and Services Center \(MRSC\)](#) and the [City of Brea, CA](#).

General Budgeting Terminology

- [Budget terminology](#) - Massachusetts Government
- [Glossary of Budget Terms](#) - Office of Financial Management
- [Glossary of Budget Terms](#) - Municipal Research and Services Center
- [Glossary of Budget Terms](#) - Sacramento County

Government Budgeting vs. Business Budgeting

See [Government Budgeting 101](#) to learn more about the difference between business budgeting and government budgeting.

How Organizations Can Begin

Utilize the [HASS Budget Calculator](#)

The [HASS Budget Calculator](#) offers a new way for animal welfare agencies to understand how to estimate costs and provides a means for negotiating operational budgets to better support the quality of services communities expect animal services to provide. The cost of meeting expectations for in-shelter quality of care, responsive customer service, return-to-home, transfer programs, and other lifesaving programs is considerable. Coupled with understaffed facilities, high turnover, high stress and compassion fatigue, and generalized underfunding it is critical to understand what an ideal budget should look like so changes can be made to meet the needs of people and pets effectively.

Build Relationships

Animal welfare agencies managed by government entities will benefit throughout the budgeting process by [building relationships](#) with the legal, finance, procurement, and accounting department directors. When a shelter requests budgetary changes, it is invaluable to have advocates within the system who understand the shelter's programs and needs. Other resources can be found [here](#) to support building municipal relationships.

Assess Community Opportunities and Challenges

[Assessing a community](#)'s challenges and opportunities can help identify what is needed to achieve greater lifesaving success. See the 2015 webinar with Bonney Brown, [Assessing Your Community](#) for details on planning an assessment, collecting data, and using analysis to make programmatic decisions.

Example

Los Angeles Animal Care and Control published an [impact report](#) following their first full year of implementing community-oriented programs. Data shows, "Staff and volunteers are able to dedicate individual time and attention to assess, care for, and socialize the animals most in need. Improvements have been noted across our efforts, from behavior to medical to adoption programs." This includes lower on-site census leading to reduced cost of care, decreased spread of transmissible illnesses, and improved customer satisfaction.