

Intake-to-Placement: Streamlining the Interest Form Process

Guide developed as part of the Competitive Pet Placement Project

Reducing Barriers to Foster and Adoption Interest Forms

Foster and adoption interest forms are frequently one of the first touchpoints a person may have with your organization. Unnecessary barriers or complicated processes to completing an interest form may deter individuals from connecting with your organization, reducing the potential positive outcomes for pets in care. These barriers may range from overly long applications, home visits, references, and other practices that are all too common in the animal welfare industry. With at least 690,000 shelter pets being euthanized in 2023 alone ([Shelter Animals Count, 2023 statistics](#)), creating inclusive, accessible, and barrier-free processes is an essential solution.

Reducing barriers is key as you do not want to remove the option of interest forms altogether. Interest forms are a critical piece of the puzzle to ensure individuals can express interest remotely, give relevant personnel a starting point to begin a matchmaking conversation, improve customer satisfaction, and encourage higher form completion numbers. This guide highlights immediately actionable steps to removing barriers to adoption and fostering interest forms that take minimal staff time or resources.

Terminology

- **Interest Form:** Sometimes referred to as “applications” or “matchmaking forms”; A form the public completes to show interest in fostering or adopting a pet.

How Organizations Can Begin Streamlining the Interest Form Process

1. Evaluate existing interest form questions
 - a. Cover the basics
 - i. Name and contact information
 - ii. Interested in adoption, foster, or other placement options offered by your organization such as temporary sitter stays for pets already in foster
 - iii. Interested in cats, dogs, or other pets available at your organization
 - iv. Name or ID of specific pets they are interested in
 - v. “What are you looking for in a new pet”
 1. Consider offering examples of personality options such as couch potato, energetic, loves meeting new people
 - vi. “Tell us about your resident pets”
 1. One free-form paragraph box
 2. Consider including examples such as “Two male dogs and one female cat” or “One male cat that has previously lived with dogs”
 - vii. “When are you available to take a new pet home?”
 - viii. “Is there anything else you would like us to know?”
 - b. [Remove requirement barriers](#) with no direct impact on the ability to adopt a pet:
 - i. Landlord calls
 - ii. Home inspections



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- iii. Income verification
 - iv. Vet reference
 - v. Background check
 - vi. Age restrictions (Ex: No college students, older adopters only adopt senior pets)
 - vii. Military or frequent/long-term traveler restrictions
 - viii. Application fees
 - ix. Minimum time spent at home during the day
 - x. Vaccination status of resident pets
 - xi. Yard requirements (minimum size, minimum fence height)
- c. For more information on common exclusionary practices and policies, view the [Common Barriers to Adoption blog here](#).
- 2. Create a virtual opportunity to complete interest forms
 - a. Basic and free digital options
 - i. Example: [Google Forms](#) creates a form and [tracks responses in a live-updating spreadsheet](#) that can be modified.
 - ii. Example: [Jotform](#) creates a form and [tracks responses inside the platform](#).
 - 1. This option is best suited for **small organizations** as the form maximum for the free option is [100 monthly submissions](#).
 - b. If your organization has an established CRM (customer relationship management) software, research if you can create a form directly in this software so all submissions are collected in one centralized location.
 - i. Example: [HubSpot form creation](#)
 - ii. Example: [Salesforce form creation](#)
 - iii. Example: [Mailchimp form creation](#)
- 3. Evaluate how a member of the public may find the organization's interest form. Are there any existing barriers that may be reduced or removed to increase accessibility?
 - a. Consider the following:
 - i. Is it easy to locate on the website or social media page?
 - ii. Are there steps that must be taken **before** accessing the form such as creating an account or accessing multiple web pages to get to the link?
 - iii. Is the form available in multiple locations?
 - iv. Is the form [available in multiple languages](#) that are spoken in your area?
 - b. Embed the digitized form or a link to the form in a visible, centralized location on your web page and social media platforms with usage instructions.
 - c. Consider [all available communication channels](#) that may benefit from the inclusion of a link to the organization's interest form such as recurring emails, text messages, social media, or web pages.
- 4. Follow-up! Submitting an interest form is often the **first interaction** someone has with the organization. Ensuring an interest form receives a response can cultivate a lasting relationship. This may be an opportunity to proceed with a matchmaking effort of meeting, provide information on similar pets if one isn't the best fit or is no longer available, and provide more information on organizational programs.



Example Shelter Implementation

Streamline Interest Form Process

Shelter leadership shared that the **Interest Form Process Initiative** has been a great way of **moving animals** through the shelter!



- **Revamp and streamline** existing process for receiving adoption interest
 - Customer-friendly templates
- New process supports **follow-up on all web interest forms**, where previously, follow-up efforts focused solely on forms for long-stay animals
- Counselors now have a **dedicated shift** where a team member is assigned to follow up on web interest forms
- Goals: create a good first impression, cultivate relationships, **increase adoptions**

Supporting Resources

- [Removing Barriers from Pet Interest Forms - HASS](#)
- [Offering Services in Other Languages - HASS](#)
- [Example Adoption Survey](#) - Fresno Humane
- [Adopters Welcome Toolkit](#) - HumanePro by HSUS
- [Sample Cat Adopter Questionnaire](#)
- [Animal Welfare Is Turning Away Good Adopters While Animals Die in Shelters](#) - HASS
- [Barrier Busting Basics for Busy Animal Shelters](#) - HASS
- [Adoption Requirements vs. Open Adoptions: a Conversation](#) - HASS
- [Proven Barrier-Busting Strategies That Send Animals Home - Fast Track for Spring 2023 Shelter Summit](#) - Maddie's University
- [Adopter's Welcome DIY Action Plan](#) - HumanePro by HSUS
- [Pet adoption policies: More red carpets, fewer roadblocks, empty animal shelters](#) - Best Friends Animal Society
- [Pet Adoption: Barriers and Solutions | Network Partners](#) - Best Friends Animal Society
- [6 Tips for Building a Barrier-Free, Inclusive Foster Base](#) - HASS
- [Open Fostering: It's Time to Make Fostering Inclusive](#) - AmPA! and HASS
- [Adoptions Training Playbook](#) - Best Friends Animal Society