

Canine Ambassadors Foster and Adoption Business Plan

1.0 Executive Summary

Canine Ambassadors will be a nonprofit 501(c) (3) animal rescue organization located in Rhode Island. We intend to provide a much-needed service to augment the capacity of existing nonprofit animal shelters and rescue organizations by providing a network of pre-screened foster homes. We further intend to assist existing shelters in placing dogs in permanent homes through an aggressive marketing strategy, in which the dogs' foster "parents" will be highly encouraged to bring their dogs out in public as much as possible, and through partnerships with targeted local businesses. Our goal will be to reach potential adopters who would not otherwise be aware of the dogs' existence, or would normally visit a shelter.

1.1 Board of Directors

Canine Ambassadors' Board of Directors will consist of five individuals. Board members will be recruited with the following credentials: The President of the Board will be a person with over a decade of experience in marketing, preferably with a nonprofit corporation. One member will have at least one-decade experience in social work in a nonprofit organization. One board member will be a veterinarian. Another will be an attorney. The fifth board member will be a Certified Public Accountant. We believe that these professionals' oversight will provide our team with advice and guidance that will be critical to our overall success.

1.2 Organizational Structure

Canine Ambassadors will be established for charitable purposes related to the housing and placement of homeless dogs. It will meet the organizational, administrative and auditing criteria necessary to obtain and retain 501 (C) (3) status from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

“John Smith” will serve as manager of Canine Ambassadors, overseeing all operations. He will be assisted by an all-volunteer staff that will include a business manager, a finance manager, a development and fundraising manager and assistant, a foster/volunteer manager and assistant, and an event manager and assistant. As Canine Ambassadors grows, we anticipate that these positions will transition to paid full or part time positions, and that additional volunteers will be recruited to meet the additional workload.

2.0 Operations

2.1 Concept of Operation

Canine Ambassadors is intended to be a supporting organization, partnered with existing animal shelters in Rhode Island. A survey of Rhode Island shelters has shown that their greatest current need is to increase their capacity for sheltering dogs, which is currently constrained by staffing, space and funding. The intent of this program is to provide partnering shelters with additional capacity for housing dogs, and to improve the rate of adoptions by increasing the visibility of the dogs and exposing them to potential adopters in varied locations. We will not have a direct intake function, all dogs acting as Canine Ambassadors will be fostered from our partner shelters.

Our intent is to allow shelters to increase their capacity and number of dog adoptions without incurring additional cost or overhead expenses.

2.2 Statement of Need

Rhode Island has an impressive network of nonprofit “no-kill” shelters, which function as direct intake facilities for owner-surrendered animals (state law requires that stray animals be turned into municipal shelters). As found in many cases (Barrington, 2015), the policies prohibiting the euthanasia of healthy, adoptable pets creates a strain on the finances and physical plant for brick-and-mortar rescues, limiting their ability to accept animals that need placement, or to ramp up operations in the event of an emergency.

The intent of our program is to assist shelters by allowing them to place adoptable dogs in the care of screened and qualified foster homes, and to actively aid in the placement of these pets in permanent homes.

2.3 Location

Canine Ambassadors will not have a physical location, and will be organized as a “rescue” as defined under Rhode Island state ordinances (State of Rhode Island, 2015). As an all-volunteer startup, we intend to house all dogs in our program at foster “parents” residences. These residences will be visited and checked for compliance with our partner shelters’ requirements, as will all volunteers who will be housing and caring for dogs.

2.4 Intake, Adoptions and Capacity

Canine Ambassadors will not be a direct intake operation. All dogs will be fostered from existing shelters, in accordance with the specific requirements of each shelter. A Memorandum of Agreement will be drafted and signed with each partner organization, specifying the process and requirement for fostering all canines. The shelters will perform all normal health and behavioral checks, vaccinations and spay/neutering surgeries before placing dogs into the Canine Ambassadors foster system.

Each partner organization will be responsible for adoptions of dogs being fostered by our organization. Any dogs being adopted from Canine Ambassadors will be returned to the partner shelter for processing. Adoption fees will be paid directly to the partner shelter by adopters, in accordance with shelter policies.

2.5 Foster Network

Foster families will be recruited through a variety of means, including direct outreach to partner shelter volunteers, partnership with existing rescues, social media, advertisements in local papers and personal contacts.

Canine Ambassadors will require each potential foster “parent” to complete a detailed application questionnaire, which will be compiled from the documentation provided by each partner shelter, and will maintain a database of each foster applicant that will include the survey information and record of fosters. The Canine Ambassadors team will visit each foster home to verify the information provided in their application, and will follow up annually to check if there have been any significant changes.

2.6 Outreach

Canine Ambassadors will use an active outreach program modeled on successful efforts in New Orleans, LA, and Charleston, SC (Mohan-Gibbons, Weiss, Garrison and Allison, 2014). Each dog will be fitted with a bright colored jacket, with the words “Adopt Me” printed in large letters followed by the Canine Ambassadors name, logo website and phone number. The foster parent will be strongly encouraged to take the dog everywhere that dogs are allowed during their daily activities. The foster parents will agree to take the dogs to scheduled meetups in outdoor locations that are not usual dog “hangouts”, with prior permission from the establishments). By

this method, we will make our adoptable dogs highly visible in malls, outdoor cafes, home improvement stores, waterfront shops, and other locations in which adoption programs are not generally advertised. It is our belief that nothing will spark interest in an adoption program more than the sight of a cute dog wearing a coat that says, “Adopt Me”. Rhode Island has, over the past decade, developed the cities of Providence and Newport, as well as smaller towns such as Bristol, North Kingstown and Wickford, as walkable outdoor venues. This will lend itself to our innovative outreach efforts. In addition, we will reach out to other rescue organizations and take part in organized rescue events, and will encourage our volunteers to assist in joint fundraising and adoption events.

Our aggressive social media efforts will be key to the success of our placement program and our fundraising efforts. We will link our website will be linked to those of the partner shelters and other local rescue programs. Our web site manager will add social media hooks, to include common platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and dog specific platforms such as BarkBuddy; and will actively employ Search Engine Optimization techniques to increase the likelihood of our dogs being found in internet searches. We will include a blog entry for each dog which will be updated and shared with our linked social media sites.

2.7 Metrics

We will use the following metrics to determine the effectiveness of our program, and determine what adjustments or improvements may be needed.

- Track the average adoption times of dogs placed in Canine Ambassadors vs dogs in the shelters from which they are taken.

- Volunteers will report the hours and locations spent in outreach activities, allowing us to determine the relative success in each time and place
- Adopters will be asked to complete a brief survey about how they became aware of the dogs they adopted.

3.0 SWOT Analysis

Strengths:

- Provides local shelters with a means of reducing crowding and increasing number of dogs they can place in homes.
- Actively increases the visibility of adoption programs and reach new potential adopters.
- Reaches venues that would not be reached by conventional means.
- Programs such as this been proven to be successful in other regions (Mohan-Gibbons, Weiss, Garrison and Allison, 2014).

Weaknesses:

- The program does nothing to reduce the overhead expenses and financial burden of existing shelters.
- Will require significant fund raising in the form of donations and grants.
- Requires a volunteer staff that will be willing to go beyond the usual housing and feeding of foster animals.

Opportunities:

- Increase the overall awareness of pet adoption programs.

- Network with other rescue organizations and shelters.
- Can grow without space constraints and regulations imposed on brick-and-mortar shelters.

Threats

- Dependent on fundraising. No financial help will be sought from partner shelters.
- Failure to raise funds would limit the number of animals placed in foster homes.
- May encounter difficulties in identifying foster parents willing to take part in the program's unique outreach efforts.
- Shelters may be reluctant to have their dogs take part in an ambassador program.

4.0 Finances

4.1 Initial expenditure:

Canine Ambassadors has received an initial grant of \$50,000. Based on the numbers provided below, our starting funds will provide foster care for up to fifty dogs with an all-volunteer staff, and maintain a cash reserve of over \$3,500 for emergencies.

Function	Estimated Annual Cost per dog*	50 Dogs	100 Dogs	150 Dogs	200 Dogs	250 Dogs
Food	\$350	\$17,500	\$35,000	\$52,500	\$70,000	\$87,500
Routine Medical Care**	\$160	\$320	\$640	\$1,280	\$1,600	\$1,920
Vaccinations***	\$60	\$300	\$600	\$900	\$1,800	\$1,500
Routine treatments/Flea and tick/Heartworm	\$70	\$3,500	\$7,000	\$10,500	\$1,400	\$1,500
Emergency Veterinary Care****	\$1,000	\$500	\$1,000	\$1,500	\$2,000	\$2,500
Supplies/Collars/Leashes/bowls/crates	\$35	\$1,750	\$3,500	\$5,250	\$7,000	\$8,750
Ambassador Coats (assorted sizes)	\$80	\$4,000	\$8,000	\$12,000	\$16,000	\$20,000
Transportation*****	\$324	\$16,200	\$32,400	\$48,600	\$64,800	\$81,000
Liaibility Insurance	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,500	\$2,000	\$2,500	\$3,000
Business expenses	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500
Web site	\$50	\$50	\$50	\$50	\$50	\$50
Development Expenses	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500
		\$46,120	\$90,690	\$135,580	\$168,150	\$208,720

* Estimated numbers derived from (“Annual Dog Care Costs”, n/d)

** The partner shelters will be responsible for wellness checks prior to placing the dogs into foster care. We anticipate that fewer than ten percent of our dogs will be fostered long enough to require a routine checkup.

*** The partner shelters are required to perform full vaccinations of all dogs in their care. We anticipate that fewer than ten percent of our dogs will be fostered long enough to require updating their vaccinations.

**** We anticipate that one percent of our dogs may require emergency medical care.

***** Volunteers will be given the option of being reimbursed for mileage at the standard rate of fifty-four cents per mile, or claiming their mileage as a charitable deduction on their tax returns.

4.2 Budget

We will budget for a maximum of 50 fostered dogs in our first year, using the above calculations (“Annual Dog Care Costs”, n/d) and project those numbers for our second-year requirements. At that level of support, we intend to function with an all-volunteer staff without benefits and compensation. As our program grows, we will modify our calculations based on experience in our starting phase and add staffing requirements as necessary. We will calculate our growth based on our successful outreach and develop efforts mature.

4.3 Fund Raising and Development

As indicated above, this program will not reduce overhead requirements for the partner shelters, therefore we must seek independent funding. We will immediately register as a non-profit charitable corporation with the State of Rhode Island (“How to Form a Nonprofit”, n/d) and obtain 501(c)(3) status with the IRS.

Once registered as a charitable corporation, we will apply for grants from government programs such as the United Way of Rhode Island, the Combined Federal Campaign, and The Rhode Island Foundation (Humane Society of the United States, n/d). We will also apply for grants from private foundations such as the Humane Society of the United States, Maggie’s Fund, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and local philanthropic organizations in our state (Rhode Island Foundation, 2017).

Each web and social media site will be used to actively raise funds, include a means of donating, including PayPal, and each dog’s blog will include a means of sponsoring that animal. We will also solicit tribute donations in the name of deceased pets, and sustainment donations. (Garecht, n/d) In the event of any budget shortfalls, emergencies, or if we wish to attempt any incremental expansions in capacity, we will directly solicit donations via GoFundMe. If we succeed in obtaining grants from government, national and local organizations, we believe that

our fund-raising efforts via social media will allow us to maintain our operations and develop partnerships within the animal welfare community, as well as continuing relationships with Rhode Island philanthropic organizations.

5.0 Conclusion

Canine Ambassadors is an innovative program, based on successful pilot efforts elsewhere in the United States. We have sufficient seed money to begin our program on a limited basis and prove our concept of operations. By combining the “ambassador” strategy with aggressive social media outreach, we are confident that we develop our program into a sustainable effort that will benefit our partner organizations and the homeless dogs in our region.

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