

Territory Business Services Grant Response Template: Financials, Issues & Ideas

Companion Animal Grant

- **Organisation Name:** Completely Rescued Incorporated
- **Reporting Period:** 2024 - 2025
- **Date Submitted:** 31st July 2025
- **Contact Person:** Courtney Smith court@completelygroup.com.au Personal information

Summary

Reporting Period Overview: Rescue & Retain Initiative

During the reporting period, the *Rescue & Retain* initiative delivered measurable outcomes that align directly with the goals outlined in our original funding application. This project has had a tangible and lasting impact on animal welfare and community education in the ACT.

Key Financial Outcomes

The grant enabled us to:

- Subsidise high cost desexing procedures for vulnerable animals, significantly reducing overpopulation risks.
- Provide behavioural assessments and training for at-risk pets, preventing unnecessary surrenders.
- Deliver education sessions and individual consultations to pet owners, improving long-term pet retention.

These interventions were delivered efficiently, leveraging additional support from donors, corporate partners, and in-kind services, ensuring excellent value for money.

Achievements

- **Overpopulation Prevention:** We successfully desexed a high volume of animals, directly reducing future shelter intake and community management costs.
- **Surrender Reduction:** Through behavioural support and education, we assisted families in keeping their pets during difficult transitions.
- **Community Empowerment:** Pet owners reported improved confidence and capability in managing pet behaviours following our training programs.
- **Sustainable Impact:** The knowledge and networks created during the project will continue to provide community benefits well beyond the grant term.

Major Wins

- Strong collaborative partnerships increased our service capacity beyond initial projections.

- Several high-risk animals received critical veterinary care and were rehomed instead of surrendered.
- Community feedback reflected increased awareness and commitment to responsible pet ownership.

Challenges

- The demand for desexing support was higher than expected, requiring strategic triaging to prioritise urgent cases.
- Some behavioural cases required more intensive support than initially scoped, but this challenge underscored the importance of early intervention, validating our approach.

Innovations and Improvements

- We introduced a mobile consultation model for behavioural support, increasing accessibility for those unable to attend in person.
- Digital resources and online follow-ups were added to our education program, expanding reach and ongoing support.

In summary, the *Rescue & Retain* initiative achieved its objective of improving animal welfare and strengthening the human-animal bond across the ACT. The program addressed root causes of animal surrender, empowered the community, and created a sustainable model for continued impact, affirming the ACT Government's investment as both timely and transformative.

Financial Reporting

A. Budget Summary

Budget Summary

Category	Amount Budget	Actual Expenditure
Marketing	\$1600	\$908.97
Suppliers + Maintenance	\$6000	\$4142.96
Vet bills	\$12000	\$15523.17
Training & Courses	\$3000	\$2024.90
Total	\$22,600	\$22,600

Significant Variances & Reallocation of Funds

During the course of the project, there were a few notable variances from our original budget due to unforeseen but critical circumstances:

Significant Variances

One of the most substantial and unexpected changes was the intake of a litter of 13 neonatal kittens, just four days old and without a mother. This urgent rescue was not anticipated but

aligned closely with the goals of the *Rescue & Retain* initiative. Their care required intensive, round-the-clock support and significantly higher-than-expected veterinary expenditure. We redirected a portion of the budget toward emergency vet care, medical supplies, and specialised feeding equipment to ensure their survival and wellbeing. We are proud to report that all 12 out of the 13 kittens were successfully raised and are now healthy and thriving—a major outcome of the initiative. With only 1 loss we feel this was an amazing outcome.

Reallocation of Funds

In response to the evolving needs of the program and to strengthen our capacity for future success, we reallocated a portion of the funds to enrol two team members in formal animal welfare training courses. This decision was made to build internal knowledge and upskill our team in areas such as neonatal care, behavioural management, and community engagement—skills that have already proven invaluable, particularly during the neonatal rescue. We expect the courses to be finished with qualifications achieved later this year.

Justification:

These reallocations were made thoughtfully and strategically, ensuring the funds were still used in direct alignment with the project's core objectives: preventing animal euthanasia, supporting at-risk animals, and improving community education and care standards. The investment into staff training contributes to the long-term sustainability and impact of the program, extending the value of the grant well beyond the funding period.

In summary, while there were variances and reallocations, all adjustments were made in direct response to emergent needs and with a focus on enhancing animal welfare outcomes and program sustainability.

Issues and Challenges

A. Operational Challenges

Delays, Staffing Issues, and Logistical Challenges

During the project period, we encountered a few logistical and operational challenges that impacted timelines and resource allocation:

Delays & Logistical Issues

- **Emergency Neonatal Intake:** The unexpected intake of the 13 orphaned neonatal kittens created immediate logistical strain. Caring for such young animals required round-the-clock attention, which temporarily redirected staff and volunteer resources from other planned activities. This also caused some delays in the delivery of our scheduled community education sessions and consultations.
- **Increased Veterinary Visits:** Due to the fragility of the neonates and a few other complex medical cases, we faced increased vet visits, some of which were time-sensitive and disrupted previously scheduled tasks and planning.

Staffing Challenges

- The intensity and unpredictability of the neonatal case placed added pressure on our small team. While we did not lose staff, the emotional and physical demands were significant, and we needed to manage workloads carefully to avoid burnout.
- We experienced a temporary shortfall in volunteer availability during a period of high demand, which further stretched our team and impacted our capacity to roll out some aspects of the community outreach components as originally planned.

Impact on Project Outcomes or Timelines

- **Program Delivery Adjustments:** While some educational and training components were delayed slightly, all core project activities were completed within the funding period. The timeline for non-urgent consultations was extended by a few weeks in some cases to allow our team to stabilise and recover capacity.
- **Overall Impact:** Despite these challenges, we successfully delivered all project outcomes. The additional demands brought on by the neonatal litter also demonstrated the importance and value of the grant—without it, saving those lives and providing ongoing care would not have been possible.

In summary, while there were delays and operational hurdles, they were managed effectively and did not compromise the overall success of the initiative. The challenges also highlighted areas for future improvement, particularly around resourcing for emergency intakes and volunteer capacity planning.

B. Financial Challenges

Cash Flow Issues, Unexpected Costs, and Funding Gaps

Unexpected Costs & Funding Gaps

The most significant unexpected cost arose from the urgent care of the 13 orphaned neonatal kittens. These four-day-old kittens required immediate and intensive intervention, including:

- Emergency veterinary care
- Specialised formula and feeding equipment
- Medications and preventative treatments
- Heating and hygiene supplies for round-the-clock care

These expenses far exceeded the originally allocated veterinary and supplies budget. Additionally, due to their young age and fragile condition, their care extended over a longer period than anticipated, further increasing ongoing costs.

Cash Flow Pressures

The sudden redirection of funds toward these lifesaving efforts placed temporary pressure on our operational cash flow. It also reduced the funding available for other planned initiatives, including broader community outreach and behavioural consultations.

Mitigation Strategies

To address these challenges, we took several proactive steps:

- **Secured Additional Donations:** We launched a targeted fundraising campaign highlighting the neonatal rescue story, which attracted additional community donations to help cover the unexpected expenses.
- **Deferred Non-Essential Costs:** Some lower-priority expenses, such as marketing material printing, were deferred or reduced to prioritise essential care needs.
- **Volunteer Support & In-Kind Donations:** We increased volunteer engagement and accepted in-kind donations of supplies (such as puppy pads, formula, and bedding) to offset costs.
- **Internal Budget Reallocation:** As noted earlier, we strategically reallocated some internal budget lines (e.g., training, supplies) to prioritise animal care without compromising the broader goals of the program.

In summary, while we experienced funding gaps and cash flow pressure due to the neonatal emergency, we responded quickly and strategically to ensure continuity of care and project delivery. These challenges ultimately reinforced the importance and resilience of the initiative.

Ideas and Innovations

A. Process Improvements

Reflections on the Application and Deed Process

What Worked Well

- **Clear Guidelines:** The application process was well-structured, with clear objectives and assessment criteria. This helped us align our project goals effectively with the funding priorities.
- **Supportive Communication:** The responsiveness of the Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) team when we had questions or needed clarification was greatly appreciated and helped us navigate the process with confidence.

What Could Have Been Done Better

- **Flexibility in Budget Adjustments:** While we understand the importance of accountability, a more streamlined or flexible process for reallocating funds within approved categories—especially in response to emergencies like our neonatal intake—would have reduced administrative burden and enabled quicker decision-making.
 - **Reporting Templates:** A more user-friendly or standardised reporting template would have saved time and helped ensure consistency across milestones. Pre-filled sections or examples could support smaller organisations or first-time applicants.
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Suggestions for Simplifying the Process

1. **Flexible Contingency Line:** Allow applicants to include a contingency line in the budget (e.g., 10%) to cover emergencies or unexpected needs without requiring formal reapproval.
 2. **Mid-Project Check-Ins:** Short, informal check-ins during the funding period (e.g., a quick email or phone call) could provide an opportunity to flag any changes early without needing to submit formal amendments.
 3. **Digital Reporting Portal:** A simple online reporting system with dropdowns, checklists, and file upload options would streamline acquittal and improve overall efficiency.
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Efficiency Gains & Cost Savings

- **Upskilling Team Members:** By investing in accredited animal welfare training during the funding period, we created long-term efficiency gains. This internal capability has reduced the need for external consultants and improved the quality of care we can provide in-house.
- **Partnership Leverage:** By building stronger relationships with local vets, suppliers, and donors, we secured in-kind contributions and discounted services, increasing the value of the grant and delivering broader impact at reduced cost.
- **Emergency Fundraising Strategy:** The public response to our neonatal rescue effort showed us the value of timely storytelling and engagement, helping us raise supplementary funds and avoid deep financial strain.

In summary, while the process was generally smooth, a few enhancements could support even greater impact and ease for small, high-impact community organisations like ours.

B. Program Enhancements

New Strategies, Partnerships, and Community Engagement Methods

Throughout the *Rescue & Retain* initiative, we introduced several key enhancements that strengthened the program's delivery and long-term impact:

- **Emergency Response Capability:** The unexpected care of 13 neonatal kittens prompted the development of a rapid response protocol for emergency intakes. This included rostering systems, supply checklists, and vet liaison procedures—tools we will now implement for future critical cases.
- **New Partnerships:** We formed new collaborative relationships with local veterinary clinics, pet supply stores, and community donors. These partnerships provided discounted services, in-kind donations, and greater reach into the community, enabling us to do more with the same resources.
- **Community Education Expansion:** In addition to in-person consults, we trialled the use of online resources (e.g. care guides and behavioural tip sheets) which were well-

received. This allowed us to reach more pet owners and created lasting resources we can now build upon in future outreach.

- **Skills Development:** Enrolling two team members in formal animal welfare courses has already increased our in-house knowledge, resulting in more informed decision-making and better outcomes for animals in our care. This training will inform future protocols and enhance the confidence of our team in responding to complex behavioural and medical needs.

Lessons Learned and Future Application

- **Expect the Unexpected:** Emergencies, like the neonatal litter, can happen at any time. Going forward, we will build an emergency reserve into all future project budgets and ensure volunteer training includes crisis care basics.
- **Upskilling Pays Off:** Investing in staff education delivers compounding returns—better care, fewer external costs, and higher confidence. We will continue to prioritise professional development in future programs.
- **Digital Tools Extend Reach:** By incorporating more online resources, we learned we can educate and support pet owners far beyond our physical capacity. Future programs will include a digital education strategy as a standard component.
- **Community Stories Drive Support:** Sharing real stories from the field (such as the neonatal litter) engaged the community and increased donations. Future engagement strategies will include a storytelling and content plan to sustain public support and awareness.

In summary, the program not only achieved its immediate goals but also laid a stronger foundation for future animal welfare initiatives. The enhancements trialled during this period will now become permanent features of our operations, ensuring greater impact and resilience in the years ahead.

C. Additional Feedback

We would like to express our sincere gratitude for the opportunity to be part of this funding program. The support provided through this grant has had a direct and meaningful impact on animal welfare outcomes in the ACT, and we believe strongly in the value of this collaboration between community organisations and government.

One key reflection from this experience is the importance of ongoing funding support for small, frontline charities like ours. While we are passionate and committed to our mission, the reality is that without grants like this, we rely almost entirely on community donations to fund our work. This creates constant financial pressure and can limit the scale and sustainability of the services we provide—particularly when we are dealing with animals that require intensive care, long-term behavioural rehabilitation, or emergency intervention. We would also like to see Pound animals desexed prior to being rehomed. It seems very unfair that small organisations like ours that have now rehomed over 350 animals have to fund the funding to microchip, desex and vaccinated all the animals when the pound do not have an obligation to do so.

In addition to rescuing and rehoming animals, we are also supporting government pounds by relieving pressure on the system, and we are working directly with community members to prevent surrenders and keep pets in homes. This is not only vital work but also cost-saving and resource-efficient for government services in the long run.

We respectfully encourage Transport Canberra and City Services to consider the broader, long-term value of continued investment in grassroots rescue organisations. Reliable, ongoing funding enables us to plan ahead, build capacity, and provide even greater support to both animals and the wider community.

Thank you again for your support—it has made a real difference.

6. Attachments

Annual Profit & Loss and General Ledger breakdown from professional Xero software accounting platform

7. Declaration

I certify that the information provided in this report is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge.

Name: Courtney Smith

Title: Founder + Director

Signature:

Personal Information



Date: 31/07/2025