

# Bring love home.

## CHALLENGE



## Open Adoption and Foster Marketing and Communications Guide

June 2024 | *Bring Love Home Challenge*

Open adoptions or conversation-based adoptions means removing barriers to adoption and creating a welcoming and non-judgmental experience for the public. How each shelter attempts to implement this can be different, depending upon their own needs, the community they serve, and, often, the number of animals in their care. This checklist is intended to serve as a guide and includes content and resources needed to effectively communicate open pet adoption policy to both internal and external audiences.

### Internal Communication:

- ❑ **Key Message:** Develop a central message point to serve as consistency in communication, resonate with the intended audience, and effectively convey the desired narrative or information about the transition to an open adoption policy.
- ❑ **Email and/or Newsletter Announcement:** Send a detailed email to staff, volunteers, fosters, and other internal stakeholders outlining the new open adoption policy. Include the reason and objectives for the new policy, key changes, and implementation timeline. Provide links to relevant documents and resources such as this [adoptions training playbook](#) and [module on open adoptions](#).
- ❑ **Flyer:** Create an announcement flyer that concisely summarizes the open adoption policy, emphasizing its benefits and the organization's commitment to transparent and responsible pet adoption practices. Post in common staff areas, such as breakroom or billboard.
- ❑ **Training Sessions:** Host interactive training sessions with Q&A where staff members can learn about the policy in-depth, ask questions and participate in discussions. Train staff and volunteers on the importance of [screening](#) vs. putting up barriers. Use visual aids, case studies and role-playing exercises to enhance understanding. [Find training resources for conversation-based adoption here](#).
- ❑ **FAQ:** Compile a list of frequently asked questions about the new open adoption policy, categorizing them into relevant topics such as the adoption process, pet care guidelines, and post-adoption support. This will serve as a reference for staff to ensure consistent understanding and implementation throughout the organization. [Here is a sample FAQ document](#) that Muddy Paws Rescue shared with their staff.

### External Communication:

- ❑ **Website:** Feature a prominent announcement or banner on the homepage to notify visitors about the new open adoption policy, with a link to the adoption page explaining the open adoption policy. Also, include any updates to adoption fees ([reduced or fee waived](#)), expanded adoption hours, and same day adoptions. Muddy Paws Rescue [explains its open adoption policy](#) under their Community, People, and Partnerships section.
- ❑ **Social Media Platforms:** Create a dedicated announcement post on each social media platform (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X, TikTok, etc.) to introduce the new open pet adoption policy. Use eye-catching visuals such as photos of adoptable pets, clever videos, or engaging graphics to accompany the announcement. These visuals could be created in [Canva](#), a free, intuitive design tool that enables users to create graphics, flyers, and more. Keep post messages welcoming, concise, and easy to understand. Consider utilizing both English and Spanish language assets if applicable to your community. Consider paid social media ads to expand your audience reach beyond your current network of followers and supporters. If you can add a few dollars, boost your posts. You can start with as little as \$1 a day on Meta (Facebook & Instagram).
  - **Facebook**
    1. Go to your Facebook Page.
    2. Find the post you want to boost.
    3. Tap Boost post. Note: If you cannot tap Boost post or your post says Boost unavailable, boosting may be unavailable for this post.
    4. Fill in the details for your ad.
    5. Tap Boost post or publish now.
  - **Instagram**
    1. Go to your Instagram Page.
    2. Find the post you want to boost.
    3. Tap Boost post. Note: Underneath and to the right.
    4. Fill in the details for your ad.
    5. Tap Boost post now.
  - **TikTok**
    1. Find the video you want to boost.
    2. Click Promote.
    3. Select a goal from the options provided and create a custom audience.
    4. Choose budget and duration (\$10 per ~ 1000 views).
    5. Tap Start Promotion.
- ❑ **Press Release:** By issuing a press release to your local media, you can reach a broader audience beyond your organization's existing network, including potential adopters, community members, and stakeholders. A press release should include:
  - A headline that succinctly summarizes the announcement and grabs the reader's attention.
  - A brief introduction that provides context for the announcement.
  - An overview of the policy and any changes/benefits from former policy such as expanded adoption hours, waived adoption fees, etc.
  - 1-2 compelling quotes from shelter staff, board members, or other relevant stakeholders expressing support for new policy.
  - A boilerplate that provides background information about your shelter or organization.

- Also consider embedding a photo or linking to photos that can be used as a visual to accompany a news story. [See this sample that media picked up.](#)
- ❑ **Onsite Signage:** Consider making banners or signs that welcome and encourage same day adoptions and fostering opportunities. If adoption hours have expanded be sure to update hours at entrance to building and include signs at the adoption processing if fees are reduced or waived.
- ❑ **Check Google Listing:** Ensure your hours are updated to reflect any changes.
  - Go to your Business Profile
    - Important: To find your profile, you must sign in to the Google Account associated with it. Try any of these methods to find your profile.
      - On Google Search, search for my business.
      - On Google Search or Maps, search for your business's name and city.
      - In the Google Maps app Maps, at the bottom right, tap Business.
  - To edit your business info:
    - With Google Search, select Edit profile.
    - With Google Maps, select Edit profile and then Business information.
    - Near the top, select the Hours tab.
    - Next to "Hours," select Edit pencil and then Open with main hours.
    - Next to each day of the week that your business is open, check the box.
    - To set hours, use the dropdowns.
  - If you haven't claimed your organization on Google. Use [this guide](#) to learn how.
- ❑ **Check Third-Party Sites:** Confirm complete and accurate listings on third party sites such as Petfinder and Adopt-a-Pet.

## Marketing Resources to Support Open Adoptions and Pets in Foster Homes

As you navigate the transition to open adoptions or seek innovative ways to promote foster pets, consider leveraging these resources for effective strategies and compelling storytelling ideas. Implementing effective marketing can support you in your journey to save lives by bringing greater awareness to the adoptable pets in your care and connecting them with the people in your community that can give them the home they deserve.

- ❑ **Pre-Market Pets on Stray-Hold:** The marketing of pets in your care does not have to wait until their stray hold is up. While you hope to find the pet's original family, you can start taking steps to pre-market those pets while they are on stray hold if they are not reclaimed. One way to market these animals is with a sticker for the kennel card that lets potential adopters know when the pet will be available for adoption. You can even include a [scannable QR code](#) that links to your adoption page or page to place a "hold." This will help you to fast track some pets through your shelter and give the pet a head start on finding a new home if their original family does not claim them.
- ❑ **Get Good Photos:** Often potential adopters' first encounter with an adoptable pet is online—whether they are combing adoptable pet pages or scrolling through social media. Capturing great photos (and replacing intake photos) of the pets in your care can make a lifesaving difference. For tips on how to create web-worthy photos check out [Hearts Speak's Easy Tips for Great Shelter Pet Photos.](#)
- ❑ **Market Pets in Foster Homes:** Sometimes when a pet goes to a foster home, they can have longer length of stays because the pet is considered to be "safe." Empower your fosters to begin marketing their foster pets to their network and community as soon as possible to expedite the pet finding an adoptive home. By doing this

you more quickly support the pet's transition from shelter to adoptive home and open the foster's home to be able to take in another pet. Maddie's Fund®'s [The Foster Caregiver Marketing Guide](#) and Best Friends Animal Society's [10 Creative Ways to Promote a Foster Pet](#) provide insights and tips on best practices for marketing foster pets. If possible, add a page to your website that fosters can access with tips for marketing their foster pets. Here are some great examples:

- Muddy Paws Rescue: [How to Market Your New Foster Dog for Adoption](#)
- El Paso Animal Services: [Foster Resources](#)
- One Tail at a Time: [Help Get Your Foster Adopted](#) (available on their [Foster Resources page](#))

- ❑ **Host Adoption Events:** Holding regular adoption events can help to increase adoptions and reduce shelter overcrowding. Adoption events often provide a fun and welcoming experience for your community to meet and adopt a pet. When hosting an adoption event, be sure to also include and invite pets residing in foster homes to attend. For tips on how to plan a successful adoption event, check out [Best Friends Animal Society's resource on How to Conduct Successful Adoption Events](#).
- ❑ **Leverage The Power of Social Media:** Social media is a great tool to market the pets that are available for adoption, to share information about Open Adoptions and to engage your community.
  - Meta with Facebook and Instagram is the most established platform, and you can utilize [Facebook events](#) to promote an upcoming adoption event. Facebook stories and reels are excellent tools for sharing a quick uplifting video of adoptable pets. Facebook Live allows you to be the reporter and go live on video to talk about that new litter of kittens that need a foster or that cute puppy that is ready to find a home. Instagram is your opportunity to post your best photo and video content. Leverage your following and allow user-generated content on Instagram. You can post on Facebook and Instagram organically to your followers or put a few dollars behind it with [Facebook Boosted posts](#) or [Ad campaigns](#) through Meta Business Suite App. If you link your Facebook account to Instagram it becomes easier to cross post across platforms and to run cost effective ad campaign across both platforms. You can also create Facebook groups for volunteers, supporters, fosters, adoption alumni and more.
  - TikTok is a platform dedicated to short-form videos. Share short 15-60 second videos. Try and use audio that is trending to increase your reach. Text on videos is very important to keep people from scrolling past. Use hashtags to help your posts go further. Here is a [Beginner's Guide to TikTok](#).
  - Aim for upbeat happy content in your marketing. Find fun ways to market even your more "challenging" pets. The community will be more likely to follow your page and interact with your posts and organization if they see positive posts showing them how they are making a difference. Check out [Don't worry, be happy: Opting for the upbeat in your messaging](#).
  - Don't forget to ask your staff, fosters, volunteers to reshare your content to increase the reach of your message.
- ❑ **Collaborate with Community Partners and Businesses:** Some of your best resources can come from working with your neighbors. Connect with community leaders, influencers, residents, and businesses around you. Visit businesses in your area and ask them how you might be able to run a collaborative promotion. Is there a local coffee shop where you can host an adoption event? Is there a local neighborhood restaurant that will put up signs about your event? Or a high school that has kids that need volunteer hours where you can find volunteers to help you post door hangers around the local neighborhoods?

- ❑ **Engage Your Local Media:** Local media love a feel-good story from their community. You can promote your adoption event to your local media to help you spread the word and get your pets into good homes. Build yourself a media list of all the local media outlets. Keep this list updated so when it is time to engage the local media you can send the releases out and focus on your adoption event. Send your press release to the media outlets and follow up before your event. Share photos or videos of the pets available for adoption. When the press does cover your event, ask them to provide a link for you so you can share the story on your website and social media outlets. [Check out this page for some local media tips.](#)

## Sources

- [Effective social media boosting strategies for 2023 | Vendasta](#)
- [Social Media: What You Need To Know About Paid Social | MUD Marketing Resource Kit](#)
- [22 Facebook Marketing Tips for Small Businesses on a Budget | WordStream](#)
- [Edit your Business Profile on Google | Google Business Profile Help](#)
- [Create an event for your Facebook Page | Meta Business Help Center](#)
- [How to create an event ad from your Facebook Page | Meta Business Help Center](#)
- [How to Use TikTok - 2023 Beginners Tutorial | YouTube](#)
- [Get Started Meta Advertising | Meta Business Help Center](#)
- [How to boost posts on Facebook | Meta Business Help Center](#)