

Grant ID: 2228

Title of Proposal: MEOW Now
Agency Type: Non-Profit
Total Funding Requested: \$25,000.00
Check Payable To: Friends of Strays

Application Information

Demographics

Name of Applicant Agency: Friends of Strays
Person Submitting Proposal: Dara Eckart
Person Submitting Proposal Email Address: dara@friendsofstrays.org
Agency Head: Dara Eckart
Organization Business Address: 2911 47th Ave N
State: FL
Phone (xxx-xxx-xxxx): 727-522-6566
Cell:

Website Address: www.friendsofstrays.org
Position: CEO
Agency Head Email: dara@friendsofstrays.org
City: St. Petersburg
Zip: 33714
County: Pinellas
Fax:

Agency Details

EIN: 59-2156540
Date of 501(c)(3) Incorporation: 09/26/1980
Dates of Last Fiscal Year: Begin: 01/01/23 **End:** 12/31/23
Organization Income in Last Fiscal Year: \$1,676,386.00
Organization Expenses in Last Fiscal Year: \$2,184,223.00
Number of Paid Employees: Full Time: 26 Part Time: 1
Number of Active Volunteers: 150

Total Volunteer Hours per Week: 80.00

How did you learn of the 2009 Florida Animal Friend grant competition? Received previous support from Florida Animal Friend grant

Year(s) of previous Florida Animal Friend grants (if applicable):

Previous Florida Animal Friend Applications: Years Funded: 2022 Year(s) denied/incomplete: 2020

Auto-Generated (Previous Applications):

Grant #	Proposal Year	Proposal Title	Status
1924	2020	Friends of Strays TNVR Support	Denied
2066	2022	RTF Funding for Pinellas Cats Alive! program	Funded
2228	2024	MEOW Now	Funded

***Type of Organization (check all that apply):**

- Municipal Animal Shelter
- Private Animal Shelter
- Private Animal Shelter with Municipal Contract
- Public Spay/Neuter Services
- Other Public Veterinary Services
 - Private Non-Profit Agency
 - TNR Group
 - Rescue Group
- Other

List the current board of directors of your nonprofit organization (Not required of governmental agency):

Name	Title
Alison Barlow	Secretary
Arin Greenwood	Board Member
Barry Rubin	Board Member
Ben Kirby	Vice Chair
Cathy Unruh	Board Member
Eve Epstein	Board Member
Michael McKenny	Board Member
Mo Eppley	Board Chair
Rosa Lopez	Board Member
Sarah Penner	Treasurer

Applicant Qualifications

For your organization, in the last complete fiscal year:

4415 cats and 503 dogs were admitted.

4317 cats and 496 dogs were adopted, transferred, or other live outcome.

40 cats and 0 dogs were euthanized.

3942 cats and 370 dogs were sterilized.

Briefly describe your animal programs:

- Stray/lost pet intake
- Foster program
- Wellness services to understand pet owners
- Volunteer program
- Owner surrendered animals
- Food bank
- Cruelty investigation
- High volume spay/neuter clinic
- Lost and found program
- Behavior counseling
- Enforcement of ordinances
- Full service wellness clinic
- Adoption program
- Disaster services

Give additional background information on your organization's programs as they relate to this application and the qualifications of the personnel who will be in charge of this program. Show that you have the capacity to carry out this program.

In January of 2021, with funding from Best Friends, Friends of Strays started a new RTF program, Pinellas Cats Alive. In October 2022, Friends of Strays took over the non-profit TNVR organization, MEOW Now which had been in operation for 10 years. With the addition of MEOW Now, Friends of Strays is in the unique position of having both RTF and TNVR programs. Together, these programs give us a two-pronged approach to humanely reducing the number of stray and community cats in Pinellas County. In July, 2024, the TNVR and RTF programs will merge under the MEOW Now program name to help the community better understand our services. TNVR and RTF services will be billed as assisted- and self-trapping, respectively. We have two managers for the combined program, one overseeing TNVR and one overseeing RTF services, as well as one full-time coordinator for the TNVR program. Additionally, we have more than a dozen volunteers that help both programs with trapping and returning of cats. In 2023, 2,962 cats went through either our Pinellas Cats Alive RTF program or our MEOW Now TNVR program.

Florida Animal Friend grants are for low-cost and/or no-cost spay/neuter programs; If you currently have such a program, please describe

Friends of Strays has a full-time veterinarian, a medical manager, and 6 full time vet techs. We provide nearly full-service veterinary care for adoptable animals that come through our doors, and TNVR/RTF services for stray and community cats. The TNVR/RTF services are at no cost to the caregiver/finder and are funded through the generosity of our community, as well as grant opportunities like Florida Animal Friend. Since starting the RTF program in 2021, our medical team has averaged nearly 5,000 spay/neuter surgeries per year, including spay/neuter surgeries for adoptable dogs and cats.

Number of animals sterilized in that program in the past year:

Cats: 4705 **Dogs:** 370

Target Population

Geographical target area (name of city, county, zip codes, etc. Be as specific as possible.):	Pinellas County
Total human population in target area:	961735
Percent of residents living below poverty in target area:	119256
Estimated number of pet cats in target area (human population divided by 3.3):	291435
Estimated number of pet dogs in target area (human population divided by 4.0):	240434
Estimated number of free-roaming community cats in target area (human population divided by 6.0):	160290
Number of cats admitted to animal control shelters in the target area last year (if known)	3452
Number of dogs admitted to animal control shelters in the target area last year (if known)	3019

Number of cats euthanized in animal control shelters in the target area last year (if known)	366
Number of dogs euthanized in animal control shelters in the target area last year (if known)	395
Please explain if you believe your target area animal population is significantly different than above. We believe the population of free-roaming cats in Pinellas County is significantly higher than the calculations above show. Prior to MEOW Now joining forces with Friends of Strays, they used a software platform called Cat Stats to register caretakers in the county. According to that data, there are likely nearly as many free-roaming cats in our county as humans.	
Please explain what you believe are the most substantial sources of dog and cat overpopulation in the target area: We will focus our answer on cat overpopulation as our S/N programs are for free-roaming cats in Pinellas County. We believe that in many low-income areas throughout the county, the residents are not aware of the TNVR and RTF services that are available through Friends of Strays. Many low-income housing units and mobile homes are considered hot spots, overrun with free-roaming cats who, without sterilization, continue to breed and add to the overpopulation of cats in the county. Over the last two years, we have been targeting these areas with flyers, door hangers, and other outreach materials to educate them on the issue and let them know about the services that we offer. We also have a partnership with Pinellas County Animal Services, which provides information to the public about our services.	
What kinds of spay/neuter services are currently available in the target area and in what ways are these resources currently insufficient to meet community needs? There are three low cost spay/neuter organizations in Pinellas County, Operation SNIP, SPOT, and Pet Pal Veterinary Services. However, these organizations are always overbooked, and they focus on owned pets. It can take up to 2 months to get an appointment at SNIP and SPOT. We are working with Pet Pal to schedule overage appointments for TNVR surgeries. With our full-time veterinarian and 6 full-time vet techs, we are able to meet most of the needs for surgery for both our TNVR and RTF programs.	
Florida Animal Friend is highly supportive of proposals that are focused on animal populations that are identified as substantial sources of dog or cat overpopulation rather than being diluted over too broad of a geographic area or diverse animal populations. Describe the specific target animal population(s) of the spay/neuter project proposed for this grant: <input type="checkbox"/> Pets in low-income families <input type="checkbox"/> Large mixed-breed dogs <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Trap-Neuter-Return of free-roaming community cats. EAR-TIPPING IS REQUIRED <input type="checkbox"/> Other	

Objectives

What do you hope to accomplish with these funds (objectives should be specific and quantifiable)?

In 2023, we serviced 2962 community cats between our two programs (1148 TNVR and 1814 RTF). In 2024, we want to increase that overall number to 3400. (1,400 TNVR and 2,000 RTF). We are increasing our goals because we know the need is there, but our funding is already stretched at our current numbers. This grant from FAF would help us to reach our goal of increasing the number of cats serviced to 3400, without overextending our budget.

How does this program increase the number of sterilization surgeries above the existing baseline?

This increase in the number of community cats to receive sterilization surgeries through our TNVR and RTF programs will substantially increase the total number of cats released back to their homes healthier, protected against disease, and unable to add to the population by reproducing. We will target areas of Pinellas County that are hot spots in terms of numbers of community cats, thus increasing the impact of the program by curtailing the rampant growth in numbers in those areas.

Methods

What criteria will you use to determine eligibility for your program?

This program is for stray/community cats and colonies of cats throughout Pinellas County with a focus on South St. Petersburg and North Pinellas County. Owned cats are not eligible for the program.

How will you advertise the program? Explain how the advertising will reach the target audience.

We have an active Facebook page for both Friends of Strays and MEOOW Now, and we will advertise the program broadly through both channels. Additionally, we plan to advertise with flyers and door hangers in targeted neighborhoods and with local vets, as well as Operation SNIP and Spot.

How will you address barriers to full use of the program such as transportation, illiteracy, and cultural hurdles?

The TNVR Program provides full service to caretakers of colony cats. We have two full-time employees for this program who manage and coordinate all services including trapping, transportation to surgery, and release of the cats back to their original location. Our staff and volunteers knock on doors to talk with residents in areas where there are known colonies of cats, to coordinate TNVR services. The RTF program depends more on the help of the community to trap and transport the cats going through the program; however, we have several volunteers for the RTF program that will help with releasing the cats back to their original location should the finder be unable to do so due to transportation, illiteracy, and cultural hurdles.

Does this project involve the transportation of animals by someone other than the client? If so, describe the vehicles, methods for confinement, personnel training, liability releases used to assure the safety of the animals and handlers.

Yes, the TNVR program is a full-service program where full-time staff and volunteers coordinate and manage the trapping, transportation to surgery, and release back to their original location. Our RTF program offers assisted release where volunteers are trained to release the cats back to their original location. We have a robust orientation and training program for volunteers, led by the managers of both programs and our Engagement Manager, who oversees all volunteer programs. All volunteers are required to sign a liability waiver to volunteer at Friends of Strays. We have SOPs established for these programs and we review them with volunteers as they are going through training to ensure their safety and the safety of the cats in our care. We have two vans and a jeep, all fully insured, that staff and volunteers use throughout the TNVR and RTF processes. TNVR cats are kept at our off-site MEOOW Now headquarters until the program moves fully over to our current shelter in July. RTF cats are held in a dedicated, low-stress RTF rooms within our shelter until they receive their surgery and are cleared for return.

Veterinary Services

What arrangements have you made with veterinarians to perform the surgeries?

Most of the surgeries for this program are performed in-house, however, on weeks that we have an excess of cats coming through the program, we have an arrangement with Pet Pal Animal Clinic to handle the overflow.

Are they: In-House Veterinarian Outside Clinic Combination

Participating veterinary practices if surgeries will not be performed in-house:

Practice Name	Address	City	State	Zip	Phone	Lead Practice
Pet Pal	1900 34th Street South	St. Petersburg	FL	33711	727-328-7729	<input type="checkbox"/>

Fee Range

What is the fee range to be paid for spay and neuter and what is the distribution to be paid by the client vs. the grant program? **Keep in mind that Florida Animal Friend grant funds may only be used for costs directly associated with sterilization surgery (including anesthesia and pain control, which is required) and not for other items such as testing,**

licensing, and capital purchases. However, \$2 per animal of grant funds can be used for rabies vaccination.

	Amount Paid by Client	Amount Paid by Project	Total Amount
Range for Male Cats	\$0.00	\$30.00	\$30.00
Range for Female Cats	\$0.00	\$30.00	\$30.00
Range for Male Dogs	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Range for Female Dogs	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

Please check each item below to indicate additional services offered at the time of surgery, whether the client is required to pay for them, and if so what the fee is. For example, if an examination is required for surgery but is not charged to the client it would be marked: Required Yes, Fee to client No

Required, Optional, or Not Offered **Fee to Client?**

Examination Required Optional Not Available No Yes

Rabies Vaccination if Due Required Optional Not Available No Yes

Other Vaccination if Due Required Optional Not Available No Yes

Pain Medication* Required Optional Not Available No Yes

Parasite Medication Required Optional Not Available No Yes

HW Testing Required Optional Not Available No Yes

Feline Leuk/FIV Required Optional Not Available No Yes

County License Required Optional Not Available No Yes

Ear tipping* Required Optional Not Available No Yes

Microchip Required Optional Not Available No Yes

Other Required Optional Not Available No Yes

*** = REQUIRED by grant**

None of the anticipated grant funds can be used for any of the above services, except for mandatory pain medication, ear-tipping and \$2 per animal for rabies vaccination.

If necessary, please explain the procedures and fees described above:

The great majority of services are performed in-house. As such, we assign a cost of \$30 per cat, which covers the costs of all services provided, in terms of veterinary staff time, pain medications and medical tests. This is also the cost of those surgeries outsourced to Pet Pal when needed.

Is this a voucher program? No

If so, how will you assure utilization of the program?

For your voucher program, how have you determined the capacity of the veterinarians listed above to handle the projected capacity?

Will you have the ability to report the number of vouchers issued and the number redeemed for spay/neuter surgeries?

Community Collaboration

Florida Animal Friend values community/inter-agency collaboration. Are there any local groups (such as rescue groups, animal control agencies, TNR groups, local businesses, local media, social service agencies, etc.) other than your organization and your cooperating veterinarians who are committed to assist?

Yes No

Please list them and detail their level of involvement with the proposed effort.

Name	Level of Involvement
Cat Trap Fever	Cat Trap Fever (CTF) is another local, nonprofit organization that works to humanely reduce the number of free roaming cats in Pinellas County through TNVR. We work closely with CTF and collaborate on trapping in Pinellas County and also occasionally provide surgical resources for their program.
Kneady Kitty	Kneady Kitty is a local nonprofit rescue that focuses on bottle baby kittens. We work closely with this group to transfer neonate kittens when Friends of Strays is at capacity for foster homes.
Pinellas County Animal Services	Pinellas County Animal Services (PCAS) transfers any community cats that are surrendered to their facility to Friends of Strays for RTF services.

Other Information

Provide any additional information that will help the grant selection committee understand how the program will operate to achieve its goals.

Since MEOW Now began more than 10 years ago, more than 14000 cats have gone through the TNVR program. Since our RTF program began in 2021, we have provided RTF services for nearly 5000 cats in Pinellas County. We are the only shelter in the Tampa Bay area that has both TNVR and RTF programs, allowing us to more broadly address the free-roaming cat population in Pinellas County.

Budget

Total number of sterilization surgeries projected:

Cats: 3400 **Dogs:** 0

Total budget requested (Budget should not exceed \$25,000): \$25,000.00

Average cost/surgery projected: \$8.00

Describe any expenses that are not included in the grant and how they will be paid for (for example, vaccines, microchipping, ear notching, etc.):

Vaccinations are covered by the Petco Love vaccine program. Any additional medical services provided will be funded by community donations to Friends of Strays.

Describe any other funding sources for this program, i.e. other grants, targeted fundraising efforts, budget allocation, etc.

We received a grant from the Summerlee Foundation to support our TNVR program. Funds from that grant will cover the purchase of new traps to replace old and broken traps, and will cover expenses related to training volunteers on SOPs, including trapping, transportation, and return.

What percent of the total cost of the program would this projected grant cover?

25

Timeline

PROJECTS CANNOT BEGIN UNTIL GRANT FUNDS ARE RECEIVED, usually before September 1.

All projects must be completed within 12 months of receipt of funding, with the final report submitted no later than September 1 of the following year.

Projected start date: 09/01/24/ **Projected end date:** 08/31/25

Unexpended funds

Any unexpended funds must be refunded to Florida Animal Friend within 30 days of the end of the project.

Requests for extensions

Requests for time extensions are discouraged and not often granted. If it is imperative to request an extension, such request must be made in writing at least 30 days prior to the end of the project. It is FAF's policy to seldom grant more than a 30-60 day extension.

Failure to submit reports and requests within the required time period will impact your agency's future grant applications.

Future Funding to Sustain Public Spay/Neuter

***Explain how the organization plans to fund this program in the future. Having sustainable plans including other grants, local donations and other services generating revenue enhances the chances of receiving this grant.**

We seek grant opportunities for our RTF programs. This year, we received a grant from the Summerlee Foundation to purchase additional traps and provide funding for training of volunteers for both programs. We also have a strong fundraising program and are targeting fundraising opportunities in Pinellas County from individuals interested in humanely reducing the number of free-roaming cats in the County.

Promotion of Florida Animal Friend Spay/Neuter License Plate

***Applicants selected for funding are expected to publicize their grant in support of their spay/neuter program and promote the sale of the Animal Friend license plate via press releases, newsletters, website links, social media, etc. Please describe your plan to promote the Florida Animal Friend Spay/Neuter License Plate. Grantees are required to submit documentation of promotional endeavors with their final report.**

We have a strong social media presence and will use both our Friends of Strays and MEOW Now Facebook groups as well as our Friends of Strays Instagram to post the grant announcement, if it is funded, as well as our progress throughout the grant period. All posts will have language promoting the FAF Spay/Neuter license plate program.

Number of FAF specialty plates on vehicles of staff and/or volunteers:

6