Quality and Productivity Commission

28th Annual Productivity and Quality Awards Program

"Los Angeles County: Ahead of the Curve"

2014 APPLICATION

Title of Project (Limited to 50 characters, including spaces, using Arial 12 point font):

NAME OF PROJECT: **AHEAD OF THE CURVE WITH CRITICAL CASE PROCESSING**

DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION/ADOPTION: **MARCH 1, 2012**
(Must have been implemented at least one year - on or before June 30, 2013)

PROJECT STATUS: X Ongoing _____ One-time only

HAS YOUR DEPARTMENT PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED THIS PROJECT? _____ Yes X No

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Describe the project in 15 lines or less using Arial 12 point font. Summarize the problem, solution, and benefits of the project in a clear and direct manner.

In 2011 the Department of Animal Care and Control (DACC) recognized a surge in the reported number of aggressive dog cases. It was difficult for field officers to balance their ongoing daily response activities with the need to investigate these complicated cases that required meticulous investigation, court case filings, and time-consuming follow through. To address this problem, the Department centralized activities under a pilot program dedicated to the investigation and resolution of potentially dangerous dog and vicious dog cases. This team, composed of seasoned field officers, was named the Critical Case Processing Unit (CCP). The benefits from this reorganization included quicker resolution of cases, significant cost savings to DACC, and safer communities with satisfied residents. The program included ordinance changes allowing DACC to hold administrative hearings, thus moving this activity out of the costly, overburdened court system. In its first fiscal year CCP Unit, resolved 315 cases through hearings.

(1) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED **ANNUAL** COST AVOIDANCE	(2) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED **ANNUAL** COST SAVINGS	(3) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED **ANNUAL** REVENUE	(1) + (2) + (3) = TOTAL **ANNUAL** ACTUAL/ESTIMATED BENEFIT	SERVICE ENHANCEMENT PROJECT
$2,630,805			**$2,630,805**	☒

ANNUAL = 12 MONTHS ONLY

SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS Department of Animal Care and Control 5898 Cherry Avenue Long Beach, CA 90805	**TELEPHONE NUMBER** (562) 728-4610
PROGRAM MANAGER'S NAME John Embery	**TELEPHONE NUMBER** (562) 256-1636 **EMAIL** jembery@animalcare.lacounty.gov
PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME AND SIGNATURE **DATE** (PLEASE CALL (213) 893-0322 IF YOU DO NOT KNOW YOUR PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME) Janet Yarbrough	**TELEPHONE NUMBER** (562) 256-2410 **EMAIL** jyarbrough@animalcare.lacounty.gov

We Support Plain Language

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DEPARTMENT HEAD'S NAME AND SIGNATURE	DATE	TELEPHONE NUMBER
Marcia Mayeda MMayeda	7/14/14	(562) 728-4610

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1st FACT SHEET – LIMITED TO 3 PAGES ONLY: Describe the **Challenge, Solution, and Benefits** of the project.

While walking her dog, Shuggie, a resident was attacked by Kona, a much larger neighbor's dog who had been left unattended in her owner's driveway. After slamming into the resident, completely shattering the resident's knee, Kona continued her attack on Shuggie and inflicted several bite wounds and lacerations. The wounds were serious, but thankfully not fatal. The responding Care Center Animal Control Officer referred the case to the Critical Case Processing Unit. After completing an investigation, an administrative hearing was scheduled and Kona was declared Potentially Dangerous. Her owners were required to comply with conditions of ownership including a minimum ten hours of training for Kona and her owners with an approved trainer. Other conditions of ownership required that Kona could only be off the owner's premises if restrained by a muzzle, with a leash not to exceed six feet, under the control of an adult, and wearing a bright colored reflective collar. The owners were further required to secure an additional $300,000 of liability insurance. They had sixty days to complete all of the requirements.

Before the sixty days was over, Kona's owners had complied with the conditions of ownership and been educated on the sort of unforeseen damages their dog was capable of inflicting. The victim was given peace of mind that the Department of Animal Care and Control acts swiftly to ensure safer communities and hold people accountable for responsible pet ownership. All of this was accomplished by the Critical Case Processing Unit (CCP), which was started as a pilot program in 2012 specifically to handle such cases.

The Department of Animal Care and Control is typically thought of as a place to adopt pets, bring strays, and perform animal rescue. However, protecting public safety is an even more important part of its mission. In 2011, the Department saw a serious and sustained elevation in the reported number of cases like Shuggie's and her owner. The increased and ongoing activity posed a serious threat to public safety. The demand for investigating and resolving these cases exceeded the resources of the Animal Control Officers in the field. These officers receive up to 50 calls for service daily and did not have the time to effectively investigate and resolve dangerous dog cases, which require extensive investigation and case preparation.

Additional challenges included significant court costs and timeliness of such cases. At the time, the County Code required potentially dangerous and vicious dog cases to be heard in Superior Court. These cases cost the Department $8,327 per case on average but could increase depending on the complexity of the case, sometimes exceeding $40,000 for a single case. They were extremely time consuming for staff. Due to these challenges the Department was only able to take action on a handful of potentially dangerous and vicious dog cases a year. With the increase in the number of cases filed it was estimated that the cost of handling outstanding cases could cost upwards of $1,000,000 annually if something wasn't done.

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Even if it were able to absorb this cost, the existing officer deployment structure made it impossible to handle these cases in a timely manner. Officers could not balance daily calls for service with the complicated cases that required meticulous investigation; interviews of witnesses, victims and owners; complication of evidence including medical records, declarations, and photographs; and time consuming follow through. Clearly, things had to change.

Recognizing the need to develop an alternative to court resolution the Department, in collaboration with County Counsel, brought forth amendments to the County Code to the Board of Supervisors. On July 19, 2011 the Board of Supervisors approved amendments that provided a cost effective administrative hearing option for deciding potentially dangerous or vicious dog cases. Other changes to the Code expanded the definitions of "vicious dog" and "severe injury" to increase the ability to place restrictions on dangerous dogs and increase protection for victims. Subsequent amendments in 2013 expanded the definition of "potentially dangerous dog"; added clarification to certain requirements of the hearing process; expanded the definition of domestic animal to include livestock; and expanded the definition of livestock.

Additionally, the Department turned its attention to its infrastructure so it could more effectively respond to and resolve dangerous dog cases. DACC initiated a pilot program – the CCP – in which six highly trained officers were reassigned to one unit tasked with only investigating and resolving these cases. Much like a detective bureau in a law enforcement agency, this unit was able to make a concentrated effort without the distractions of responding to dozens of field calls each day. This unit reported directly to the Department Head and in conjunction with executive staff completely restructured the way the Department resolved dangerous dog cases. A streamlined initial response; investigation; petition process; and administrative hearing process was implemented.

The benefits were tremendous. The number of pending cases was reduced significantly within just a few months of the start of the pilot program. The streamlined investigation process was more efficient and effective, greatly reducing the time to complete an investigation while obtaining more critical information for the successful imposition of restrictions on dangerous dogs. Officers with specialized knowledge, skills and abilities used these attributes to ensure the success of these critical cases. The administrative hearing process allowed the cases to be resolved in just a matter of a few weeks. Quicker resolution of cases meant dangerous dogs were more promptly placed under restrictions, creating safer communities for residents and their pets. A higher level of public education regarding animal safety was realized. All residents benefited because field officers were no longer taken away from their

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LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN (DETAIL IS REQUIRED FOR COUNTY DEPARTMENTS):
THE COUNTY COMMITMENT THROUGH CRITICAL CASE PROCESSING CAN BE DIRECTLY TIED TO TWO STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS: OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS (GOAL 1) AND INTEGRATED SERVICES DELIVERY (GOAL 3).

dozens of daily calls to help stray, sick, injured, abused or deceased animal calls. They could now more promptly respond to calls for service. Overall effectiveness of animal care and control services was enhanced.

Another benefit was realized by the increased number of cases that were heard by administrative hearings. Prior to 2011, due to the extensive cost and workload on field officers only a handful of cases were able to be brought to Superior Court for resolution. However, a fully operational CCP in fiscal year 2012-2013 saw a total of 315 cases resolved that year.

The proven success of the CCP prompted the CEO to support, and the Board to fund, the CCP as a fully funded program. Seven budgeted positions (to include a program manager) were approved in the 2013-2014 budget. This enabled the Department to hire behind the staff that had been moved from other DACC work functions, allowing those positions to be filled and taking the burden off their coworkers.

The Department has proven itself as an industry leader in the creation of the CCP. Other agencies often request advice from CCP staff, and CCP staff has been invited to give presentations to other animal care and control agencies regarding how to implement similar programs in other jurisdictions. They have developed public education fliers and materials to educate both victims and owners of the dangerous dog law and hearing process.

Most importantly, the Department developed creative solutions to save time, increase efficiency, reduce cost, and enhance public safety. The proper control and regulation of dangerous dogs is critical to maintaining safe communities for residents and their pets. The Department realized the increasing threats to public safety by the rising number of dangerous dog incidents and proactively took steps to address this.

The Department is ahead of the curve in protecting the public from dangerous dogs, and greatly appreciates the time and consideration of the Quality and Productivity Commission and the Quality and Productivity Departmental Managers in evaluating the CCP program. We continue to work towards ensuring safe and humane communities for people and animals.

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COST AVOIDANCE, COST SAVINGS, AND REVENUE GENERATED (ESTIMATED BENEFIT): If you are claiming cost benefits, include a calculation on this page. You must include an explanation of the County cost savings, cost avoidance or new revenue that matches the numbers in the box. Remember to keep your supporting documentation.

Cost Avoidance: Costs that are eliminated or not incurred as a result of program outcomes.

Cost Savings: A reduction or lessening of expenditures as a result of program outcomes.

Revenue: Increases in existing revenue streams or new revenue sources to the County as a result of program outcomes.

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The chart below reflects costs avoidance in fiscal year 2012-13, the first full fiscal year of the CCP Unit's operation. During fiscal year 2012-2013 the unit closed a total of 315 cases. Using the 2011 information for three cases, it is estimated that the average cost per case is $8,367.

315 in-house hearing x $8367.00 = $2,635,605 avoided if the same number of cases were heard in Superior Court.

The Department uses court reporters during its administrative hearings. Recording costs are $200 each time the service is used for a full day. At least one service a month was used during the 2012-2013 fiscal year for a total of $2400.00. Allowing for two monthly visits from the recorder during the pilot year, adjusted costs, for cost of the recorder are estimated at $4800.00.

A simple chart follows:

Average court cost of $8367.00 x 315 cases =	$2,635,605
Cost of Recorder at twice a month/twelve months	4,800
	$2,630,805