

# Urgency Cheat Sheet



The lifesaving nature of animal sheltering can result in projects, tasks, needs, or requests with varying levels of urgency and priority, especially as we all juggle multiple tasks with competing or shifting deadlines.

Urgency can be perceived differently, which makes it difficult to determine where incoming needs may fall on your list of current priorities. Here are some questions to help you think critically and objectively about the requests you receive and what you ask of others, so you can determine what steps to take first and what can wait until later.

## High Priority Work or Requests



Is the immediate health, safety or welfare of an animal at risk?

Is the immediate health, safety or welfare of a colleague, client or community member at risk?

Will we lose a critical opportunity to advance our mission if I don't handle or respond immediately?

Is this item essential to meet a nearing deadline?

***If the answer is yes, this is a high priority request!***

## Medium Priority Work or Requests



Is my decision or action holding up the immediate actions of another person or team?

What is the impact to the animals/organization if I delay in handling or responding?

What is the impact to my team if I delay in handling or responding?

What is the impact to our relationship with an external partner if I delay handling or responding?

***The answer to these questions may determine whether the request is high or low priority!***

## Low Priority Work or Requests



Use a "Focus Funnel"\*:

1. Can I eliminate it?
2. Can I automate it?
3. Can I delegate it?
4. Can it wait until later?

***If the answer is yes, this is a low priority request!***

\* See: FastCompany, ["How Productive People Procrastinate"](#)

## Guiding Questions for Prioritizing Your Individual Work

If a task or request is not urgent, but still important, you may need to prioritize it on your growing list of projects and tasks. A good way to determine where the work or the request fits on your list of priorities is to think about the progress that the task makes toward advancing organizational objectives, team objectives, or individual goals.

### 1. Organizational Priorities

- a. Is this action a concrete step toward achieving your mission to prevent cruelty to animals in the United States?
- b. Is this action a concrete step toward achieving your long-term goals?
- c. Does inaction put the organization at risk?

### 2. Team Priorities

- a. Is this action a concrete step toward achieving my team's 3-5 year objectives?
- b. Is this action a concrete step toward achieving my team's objectives for this year?
- c. Does inaction on this item create barriers for my team?

### 3. Individual Priorities

- a. Is this action a concrete step toward achieving my team's objectives for this year?
- b. Is this action a concrete step toward achieving my individual annual goals?
- c. Is inaction on this item increasing my individual stress level?

As you think about the questions above, also consider how you prioritize your day-to-day work through the lens of your organization's goals and mission. Does the way you are spending your time align with these two touchstones? If not, it might be time to revisit your priority list.

These are just a few questions and tips you can consider when deciding how to prioritize a project, request, or task. Working with your manager will help you gain clarity as to whether a task or request is urgent and how best to prioritize your work.

