



Preparing for and Writing The Case for Support

The foundation for the Case for Support is the organization's mission and vision. At its core, the Case must explain why the organization exists, and why what the organization does merits donor support. It's a fundraising principle that the needs of the organization pale in comparison to the community's needs. Organizations must always be prepared to explain how they benefit the community. The Case does this.

Serious donors always look for a match between their values and those of the organization. They want to know about the strength and quality of staff and volunteer leadership. They want to know the organization occupies a key position in the philanthropic marketplace addressing real community needs. They need to be able to evaluate how successful the organization is and how urgent the cause versus other organizations. They need to know how their investment in the organization will be managed and used and what the return on their investment will be. The Case for Support assures donors that making a gift is the right thing to do.

Creating the Case for Support

The Case for Support has several objectives.

- To justify the existence of the organization today and the need for the organization to continue to exist in the future
- To compile a central document from which other materials such as proposals can be written for various constituencies and/or various fund raising activities
- A strong and convincing Case is essential to marketing the organization and motivating donors, volunteers and the community to support its initiatives.

To begin, the organization's leaders should gather, face to face, and answer the most compelling questions about the organization:

- Who are we?
- Why do we exist?
- What is distinctive about us?
- What is it that we want to accomplish?
- How do we intend to accomplish it?
- How will we hold ourselves accountable for producing outcomes?

Working Sequence

1. Answer the core questions in the section above
2. Identify, document, and validate what the organization needs to be successful
3. Identify programs, services, and strategies that will address community “needs”
4. Specify the resources necessary to fund programs and services
5. Establish the competence of the organization’s leadership and its staff
6. Explain who will benefit from the initiatives made possible by funding
7. Explain why the prospect should give
8. Explain how the prospect can give
9. Respond to any unasked questions that a prospect might have in mind

Sections of the written Case for Support

1. A definitive title that cuts to the heart of what it is the organization will change, uphold, or otherwise impact in the community.
2. Big, broad, introductory statement that captures the reader’s imagination
3. The urgent need, problem, or issue that must be addressed
4. The organization’s creative response
5. Summary of prevailing opinion and widely held principles that reinforce the organization’s creative response
6. Statements about the financial support required
7. Closing summary of the larger Case for Support

Using the Case for Support in Proposals

Proposals are how the contents of the Case for Support find its way into public consumption, using elements of the Case for Support tailored to the audience. Components might include (in no particular order) a description of the organization’s mission and vision, a summary of the organization’s history and importance in the community, a statement of the community’s “needs”, fundraising goals and activities to reach these goals, an outline of programs and services and their objectives, notes on staffing and governance, funding required for operating and capital needs, the organization’s financial snapshot and relevant budgets, gift range table for specific campaigns, giving opportunities, recognition and stewardship commitments.