

What is a Case for Support & Why You Need a Strong One

There are likely many great reasons to support your nonprofit. But how do you convey your essence in a concise and compelling way that will motivate donors to support your organization? Your Case for Support is a document that tells your story. Whether raising money for your organization or for a capital campaign, your Case for Support, also called a Case Statement, is an essential fundraising tool.

Purpose of Case for Support

When you are looking to raise money, you want to have talking points and tools to explain to donors why your organization is important to the communities and constituents it serves, and why the money you are asking for will help those people, or places, or causes.

Your Case for Support can:

- Reinvigorate the support of your current donors by reinforcing their reasons for supporting your organization or providing new reasons and opportunities to do so.
- Open doors to new relationships that can be nurtured into long-term supporters.
- Raise awareness of your cause and its importance in your sector.
- Give your staff, board members, committees, and supporters a cohesive message to carry it forth, and the confidence to be enthusiastic ambassadors for your cause.

Part of Your Fundraising Strategy

This written document will not solve all your fundraising problem, but it is a fundamental part of your overall fundraising strategy, which needs to include a plan, staff, and donor database.

If your Case for Support is being used for your capital campaign, it won't replace the need for the appropriate work, such as conducting a feasibility study, developing a campaign plan, identifying donors, and building your campaign infrastructure.

Components of a Case for Support

So what's in your Case for Support? It needs to connect with donors in a personal way, draw them into your story, and make them eager to become part of your future. It should cover the following areas:

PROBLEM: What is the problem or issue that your organization exists to solve?

Present the evidence showing how deep or widespread this problem is. Describe the implications of this problem on the people in your area or nationally, on systems, the environment, or on beliefs or values. Use data, statistics, infographics, maps, charts, and images to graphically convey the problem, as well as first-person stories.

PROGRAMS: How is your organization addressing the need?

Describe your agency's mission and vision for what society will look like with this problem solved. It's important to convey what is unique about your approach to the problem, whether it is a specific theory of change, evidence-based practice, or understanding of a particular population.

IMPACT: How successful is your organization in addressing the need?

Convey your organization's achievements and inroads have you made. Substantiate the value of your organization's work by stating how many people you have helped and tell the story of individuals whose lives your organization has improved. Include progress on your issue, advocacy wins, innovations, new treatments or approaches developed, and leadership in the sector. Discuss lessons learned and how they can be applied in the future.

INVESTMENT: What you will use the money for?

Describe what would be possible with the donors' support. Convey your plans for addressing problems with new research, shoring up existing programs or launching new ones, replicating your model, building new offices or making capital improvements, establishing new partnerships, investing in your organizational capacity, or growing an endowment. You need to instill confidence that you can address the problems and make effective use of donors' contributions. How will it improve people's lives, the community, the environment, etc. How can donors' support be leveraged for even greater impact?

DONATE: What are the opportunities to get involved?

Lay out the different giving levels for supporting your organization and sponsoring programs, along with the appropriate donor recognition including naming opportunities. Describe the various ways of donating and appropriate contact information.

Telling Your Story

The purpose of your Case for Support is to motivate donors to support your organization — not tell about everything you do, so you need to be selective. It helps to have a clear focus. Develop your Case for Support around a single theme so that you don't lose or confuse your donors. This will help you choose the things that will reinforce your story in the most impactful way.

Choose a theme that frames your story in a way that resonates with donors. It's not what you think is important — it's what motivates your donors. And be concise — choose the evidence and anecdotes that best support your case.

Regardless of the form it takes — whether a brochure, presentation, website, or video — you want to pique interest, not convey everything.

Design to Engage

Your Case for Support is more than words. Design it to bring your story to life, make it interactive, and motivate your donors. Here are some ways that Red Rooster Group has engaged donors through creative design:

- Using a gatefold to reveal a before and after situation.
- Using short-cut flaps to engage donors to reveal a hidden image and message.
- Designing the brochure to open to a very wide format for a dramatic reveal.
- Bringing architectural renderings to life with translucent overlays showing photos of people using the space.
- Posing a series of questions on a website that allow the donor to click to reveal the answer with a photo.

When you consider how to stand out from the crowd and appeal to your donors, your Case for Support can end up being the tool that excites your team to champion your cause.