

# What Do Your Donors Have to Say About Your Capital Campaign?



What do your donors think of your capital campaign, and specifically, your Case for Support?

After you've done the footwork of a feasibility study, and you know that you have a base of donors who are likely to support your campaign, you may be thinking of asking your donors what they think of your Case for Support.

If you do, it's important to do it the right way so that you don't isolate donors or diminish the impact of your Case for Support by trying to appeal to everyone. Your purpose in soliciting input is get feedback that you can use to guide your Case for Support, not to please all donors by taking all their suggestions.

We propose two main ways of eliciting donors' feedback: testing framing concepts, or getting feedback on your Case for Support.

## Testing Framing Concepts

The first method can be useful early in the campaign to get clarity on how to package your overall campaign. Many campaigns have multiple aspects that will appeal to donors. Campaign messages can be framed in different ways. Testing framing concepts allows you to find the message that will best appeal to the widest range of donors.

Think about a social service agency raising money for a new building. It can frame its story as expanding access for the population it serves or emphasize the expansion of a job training program in the new building that will have a "hand up, not a hand out" message or focus on how the new state-of-the-art facility will allow them to attract more qualified staff and improve the level of service to their clients.

Which message will best resonate with donors? Donor reactions to each of these messages help determine the priority or even presence of the message in the Case for Support. Which of these most strongly aligns with donors' values and will lead to a long, strong relationship between your donor and your organization?

Develop one-pagers on each approach, with compelling headlines and key points. This gives your donors something tangible to comment on. Present the options to donors in one-on-one meetings so you can ask questions about what appeals to them and why.

After you have the feedback, review it to determine if there are any patterns. Remember, if you are only talking to a handful of donors, you need to be cautious about how you interpret and use the findings. The results may not represent the views of all donors, and should be taken as anecdotal. However, you will get useful information, particularly if one of approach clearly resonates with donors much more than the others. You may also get ideas for ways to make the message more robust.

## Getting Feedback on Your Case for Support

The more typical way to solicit donor feedback is to present donors with a draft of your Case Statement and ask for their feedback. Which parts resonate the most with them? Which parts may be unclear? What do they think of the tone, the length, the flow? Are there specific phrases or language that resonates with them? Why? What do they know about the organization or the capital campaign that they think should be included? And, of course, how like they would be to support your campaign based on this Case for Support.

## Incorporating Feedback

Since you are asking for feedback, you'll get a lot of it. But remember to be judicious — use the feedback to guide adjustments in your Case for Support, not to make it a hodgepodge of messages. You want to be succinct, gripping, and distinctive.

Your Case for Support must represent your organization and your campaign accurately. And, as a fundraising document, it must resonate with most — but not all — donors. Again, you won't be able to please everyone. Thank them for their insight — they'll appreciate being asked and that in itself will help prime them for your campaign ask.