

Understanding a Case for Support

A case for support is a nonprofit organization's donor prospectus, it outlines to prospective donors and current donors why they should give to your organization. It also shares why a gift to your organization is needed now. A case for support is a common communications story line that ensures that everyone from the fundraising team to the front of house team to the executive team to the organization's volunteers are on the same page regarding key messages about the organization's mission, history, programs, needs, and impacts.

"People think that stories are shaped by people. In fact, it's the other way around."
- Terry Pratchett

A case for support engages donors through storytelling and an emotional appeal as a powerful tool to inspire support for your cause. Stories and emotions can connect donors to your mission, showcase the impact of their donations, and motivate them to take action.

Creating the Case Framework

When creating a case for support, we start with a draft called a case framework, the case framework includes the following elements:

- a defined problem with a clear solution
- a clear and up front "WHY" message
- a clear value proposition
- a strong theme
- a narrative that speaks to the donor (it is donor-centric)
- it communicates urgency
- it has emotional appeal; it tells a compelling story; it creates empathy
- it demonstrates credibility and a group effort
- it contains copy that is concise
- it is on brand with your organization

Once the case framework is finalized it is used to inform the following donor focused marketing materials –

- 1:1 relationship building between organization team members and a prospective donor
- A case for support brochure
- Speaking points for news media and press releases
- Grant writing and presentations



- Social media content
- Website, donation pages, and online fundraising journeys
- Email newsletters and appeals
- Direct mail appeals
- Stewardship follow up actions

Creating the Case for Support Brochure

The case framework is an excellent internal document to keep an organizations team aligned on key messages and story for giving. A case for support brochure is a designed tool that can be used as part of relationship building with a donor. The case for support brochure can be given to a donor as a takeaway or it can be a leave behind document from an in person discussion, an email follow up after a discussion, or on display in the fund development office. A case for support brochure is typically read in one of two ways:

1. **It is scanned by the reader.** Headlines, photos, infographics and eye catching stats or quotes are captured by the readers attention.
2. **It is read from start to finish by the reader.** Like a good book, the reader will follow the story, the plot of your case needs to continue to hook the reader in and flow naturally to an ask, whereby the reader will feel inspired to give.

Types of Cases for Support

An organization can have more than one case for support and a case for support can have pages that are added to it to customize it for the donor you're speaking with. The most common types of cases are:

- **An Organizational Case:** An organizational case is built to share the story of your nonprofit as a whole, it shares all your programs, challenges, and giving areas. The ask in an organizational case is often generalized to giving to your organization as a whole or in an unrestricted manner. While donors can choose to make their donation to a specific program or giving area, the case doesn't emphasize a specific fundraising goal or impact area.
- **A Campaign Case:** A campaign case is built to share the story of a specific campaign that your organization is fundraising for. It shares the campaign goal, the impact of a successful campaign, and how the donor can make a difference with a financial gift and the resulting impacts of that gift. This is a more focused story related to an organization's more immediate goals.

Case for Support One Pagers: Nonprofit organizations are busy and have multiple programs and giving areas to help their clients and further their cause. While a case for support doesn't have a typical page limit, it's best to consider your donor audience. For example, a library could successfully have a 15 page case for support (their audience likes to read.) But a food bank might want to keep it shorter. So taking into account what your donor profile is, one pagers, can be



effective additions to a case.

A Case for Support is an Evolving Document

A case for support is a living document, it will evolve with your organization or campaign. A Case should be updated when any of the following events occur:

- Your strategic plan changes
- When newer testimonials or impact numbers are available
- When campaign momentum and feedback makes the current case for support feel outdated
- When common questions arise after reading the case that are not answered in the document
- When program or giving areas change
- When your branding changes