

Talking About Case for Support

Your case for support is your practiced response to that all-important invitation: “Tell me about your organization.” It’s part presentation/part conversation. To develop it, start with a working discussion among your staff, board or a combination of members who are drafting the case for support. Use these questions and suggestions as talking points.

Start at the Beginning

- What does your organization do? Aim to summarize in one sentence.
- How did your organization begin? Brainstorm for an anecdote that conveys the passion at the heart of your nonprofit.
- Whom does your organization serve? Put needs you address in a human context by describing a typical individual served or how your work impacts a wider community.
- What should you include to align your case for support with your organization’s mission, vision and values?

Showcase Success

- What changes, such as examples of growth or shifts in services, should be part of your case for support story? Describe in ways that show commitment, flexibility or other positive organizational traits.
- What are significant achievements to date? Summarize the most impressive with specifics on goals, outcomes and impact that underscore your nonprofit’s capabilities.
- How can you demonstrate fiscal responsibility in the case for support? Give examples of judgment and consistency in making and keeping funding priorities.
- On a personal level, what do you point out about your organization when speaking with others? Consider words, phrases or examples to include in a case for support.

Look to Tomorrow

- What are your organization’s current service or funding goals? Present in ways that show continuity and growth in services, commitment, success.
- How can interested others support your organization in achieving new goals? Be specific about giving, volunteer or other opportunities.
- What motivates you to give to your organization? Consider words, phrases or examples to include in a case for support.

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Talking About Case for Support *continued*

Writing – Revising – Presentation Tips

Answering those and other questions that come to mind will create a longer story than you'll want to tell in a case for support. A written document that you post on your website could be a longer version of your case for support. But the case you develop for real-time, person-to-person exchange needs to be significantly shorter. It's not meant to be a speech. You'll have a matter of seconds to engage your listener. Here are suggestions for molding an effective but brief case for support.

- **Consider the basics:** A case for support is a story told as a subtle call to action. It describes the problem your organization addresses; how you're tackling the problem; your successes; and what support is needed for continued success.
- **Consider the tone:** It's clear and concise. You are educating but also inspiring others to act. Aim for memorable details that will get inside heads and touch hearts.
- **Be collaborative:** Once you have a draft, ask other staff or board members to take a pass at editing and revising. Fresh eyes will help trim and ensure the wording captures what your organization does and why it matters.
- **Say it aloud:** How does it sound when you literally articulate your case for support? This is another step that will help in trimming and refining the text.
- **Allow for some variation:** Your intention is a consistent organizational story, but you also want everyone sharing it to feel natural. It's okay to adjust the wording to fit personal speaking styles, as long as the key messages are the same.
- **Commit it to memory:** Again, you want staff, board members – anyone conveying your case for support to be comfortable and effective. The ums and ahs of hesitation can eat up valuable time and divert a listener's attention.
- **Make the most of it:** Remember, you have seconds to engage. Tap into the emotion – drama in the most genuine sense – that drives your organization, and you'll have a powerful case for support.