

## Making Your 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 — or improve — your case for support, begin with a working discussion among your staff, board or a combination of members that are drafting the case for support. Use these questions and suggestions for help.

---

### Start at the Beginning

- o What does your organization do? Aim to summarize in one sentence.
- o How did your organization begin? Brainstorm for an anecdote that conveys the passion at the heart of your nonprofit.
- o 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.
- o What should you include to align your case for support with your organization’s mission, vision and values?

### Showcase Success

- o 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.
- o What are significant achievements to date? Summarize the most impressive with specifics on goals, outcomes and impact that underscore your nonprofit’s capabilities.
- o How can you demonstrate fiscal responsibility in your case for support? Give examples of judgment and consistency in making and keeping funding priorities.
- o What do board/staff members point out about your organization when speaking with others? Consider words, phrases or examples to include in a case for support.

### Look to Tomorrow

- o What are your organization’s current service or funding goals? Present in ways that show continuity and growth in services, commitment, success.
- o How can interested others support your organization in achieving new goals? Be specific about giving, volunteering or other opportunities.
- o What motivates (beyond expected obligations) board/staff members to personally give to your organization? Consider words, phrases or examples to include in a case for support.

## Writing – Revising – Presentation Tips

Here's the challenging part: creating your case for support for real-time, person-to-person exchange. A case for support is not meant to be a speech. You'll have a matter of seconds to engage your listener. Here are suggestions for taking the raw material from your discussions and 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/issue your organization addresses; how you're tackling it; 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 speak 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 only 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.