

10 Elements of a Case for Support

1. Theme

The theme sets the emotional and narrative foundation for your case for support, encapsulating your mission in a single, action-driven phrase. This one-liner should be memorable, impactful, and consistently woven throughout the document in both words and visuals. It should capture your organization's unique role and real-life impact, resonate with your audience by evoking emotion and connection, and clearly convey your purpose in just a few words. Examples like "Feeding the Hungry," "Restoring Hope," or "Building Community" instantly communicate a mission while inviting engagement. Additionally, this section introduces the visual identity of your case, using compelling images and graphics that speak to the heart. Photos should highlight the people you serve, the change you create, and the urgency of your work, ensuring that even an outsider can immediately understand and feel the importance of your mission.

10 Elements of a Case for Support

2. The Problem/Need

Your organization exists to address a critical issue in the community, so start with the most compelling statistic that highlights the problem. Clearly state the reality you are working to change, using data to emphasize the urgency of your mission. For example, specify how many individuals are affected by the issue, such as homelessness, food insecurity, or lack of access to healthcare, and describe the impacted groups, such as families, youth, or LGBTQ+ individuals.

Do not make a specific ask in this section! As you explain your needs, donors will begin to respond.

Donors want to help with your mission, not your budget. Avoid framing your need as funding for a budget; instead, position it as an opportunity to create real change. Reinforce that every dollar supports solutions, not spreadsheets. Let statistics tell the story by leading with the most powerful data point. Strengthen your case with a visual representation, such as a graph or chart, to clearly illustrate the scale of the issue and demonstrate why support is urgently needed.

10 Elements of a Case for Support

3. Mission

The mission statement is the foundation of your organization's work, serving as the answer to a pressing need in the community. Craft a statement that clearly defines why your organization exists and acts as the driving force behind every initiative. A compelling mission statement should be concise yet powerful, summarizing your purpose in a single sentence while inspiring action and support.

Ensure that your appeal for funding is directly tied to this mission. Donors should see their contributions as investments in real solutions, lasting change, and a stronger community—not just as funding for a budget. A well-crafted mission statement strengthens your case for support by demonstrating the impact and urgency of your work.

10 Elements of a Case for Support

4. Lifetime Value & Impact

The impact of your organization extends far beyond immediate assistance, it transforms lives and strengthens the entire community. Numbers are great but also use real stories to illustrate this lasting change and make the value of your work tangible.

Structure each story by introducing an individual who faced a significant challenge before receiving support. Describe their struggles in a way that highlights the urgency of your mission. Then, explain how your organization provided the resources, stability, or advocacy that changed their trajectory. Conclude by showing how their transformation contributes to the community, emphasizing the ripple effect of one changed life.

Whenever possible, include direct quotes and testimonials to add authenticity and emotional resonance. These personal stories serve as powerful proof of your organization's impact, making your case for support even stronger.

10 Elements of a Case for Support

5. Programs

This section should clearly outline your programs and activities, detailing who you serve and how you serve them. Explain how your programs bring your mission to life and what sets your organization apart.

Describe each program's purpose, the specific community needs it addresses, and the impact it creates. Highlight key activities, services, or initiatives that make your approach effective. Emphasize what makes your organization unique—whether it's an innovative strategy, a deep community connection, or a specialized focus on underserved populations.

Ensure that this section paints a clear picture of your work in action, showing donors and stakeholders exactly how their support drives meaningful change.

10 Elements of a Case for Support

6. Accomplishments

This section is where you quantify your achievements and demonstrate the tangible impact of your work. Share statistics that directly relate to your organization, such as how many people you served, how many individuals participated in your programs, or other relevant metrics.

Incorporate both anecdotal and objective data to show the depth and breadth of your success. Anecdotal data can include personal stories that highlight individual transformations, while objective data can include measurable outcomes like program completion rates or improved quality of life for those you serve.

Present your accomplishments in multiple ways to keep your audience engaged. Use a mix of statistics, pictures, and graphics to make the data more visually compelling and easy to understand. This will help capture attention and effectively communicate the impact of your work.

10 Elements of a Case for Support

7. Vision

This section outlines your vision for the future and shows where your organization is headed. Describe the long-term goals you aim to achieve and how your mission and programs are integral to reaching those goals. This can be a simplified version of your strategic plan, offering a clear roadmap for the future.

It's crucial to connect the donor's contribution to tangible impact. For example, you might say, "For every \$X we receive, we are able to provide [specific service or opportunity] to [number of individuals]." This demonstrates the direct link between their investment and the growth of your programs.

Make it clear that by supporting your organization, donors are helping expand your reach and impact. Highlight how their contributions enable you to achieve more and make a lasting difference in the community. This section helps reinforce the idea that donors are not just funding an organization, they are actively participating in creating a brighter future.

10 Elements of a Case for Support

8. Financial Needs

To continue making a lasting impact, your organization requires funding to sustain and grow its programs and services. Every dollar contributed directly supports your mission by covering the essential costs of delivering services to those in need.

Funding is essential for:

- **Program Delivery:** This covers the resources, materials, and direct services that create life-changing opportunities for the individuals you serve.
- **Staffing & Payroll:** These are the dedicated professionals who provide critical guidance, support, and expertise to ensure your programs are effective.
- **Operational Expenses:** This includes the facilities, technology, and infrastructure necessary to keep your organization running smoothly and efficiently.
- **Community Outreach & Advocacy:** Expanding awareness, building partnerships, and reaching those who need help most are vital for the continued growth of your mission.

When communicating your financial needs, frame them in terms of the impact on programs and services, not just as line items in a budget. This helps donors understand that their contributions are directly tied to the true cost of creating lasting change, making their investment feel meaningful and connected to your mission's success.

10 Elements of a Case for Support

9. Gift Plan

The Gift Plan is a strategic approach that illustrates how donor contributions fit into the broader financial picture of your organization. It defines different giving levels, each tailored to the capacity and connection of your supporters. These tiers work together to cover the full budget, ensuring that each donor understands how their gift contributes to the overall impact of your mission.

The plan is divided into three primary categories:

- **Top Tier:** This tier is for those with the ability to make large contributions, typically individuals who have a strong connection to the organization and a history of generosity. This group is expected to provide about one-third of the total funds.
- **Middle Tier:** Targeted at donors who have the capacity to give at a significant, but accessible level. These donors help bridge the gap between the top and lower tiers.
- **Lower Tier:** This tier is for supporters who may not be able to give at higher levels but still play a crucial role in helping reach the funding goal. Every donation counts, and this group represents the breadth of support from the community.

By breaking down the giving levels, the Gift Plan emphasizes how every donation, no matter the size, plays a critical role in funding the organization's mission. A graphic can be used to visually represent these giving levels and suggest appropriate donation amounts, making it easier to ask for specific gifts without overwhelming or limiting potential donors.

10 Elements of a Case for Support

10. Leadership

The Leadership section highlights the individuals and key staff members who are crucial to the success of your organization. This includes the Board of Directors, the Executive Team, and key staff who play an essential role in executing the mission and guiding the organization toward its goals.

It also acknowledges the foundations, corporations, and major individual donors whose generosity and commitment are instrumental in propelling the organization's efforts forward.

By showcasing the leadership and supporters, this section builds credibility and trust, reassuring donors that they are supporting a well-managed, impactful organization.

Additionally, providing contact information and social media handles encourages potential supporters to connect, engage, and stay informed about the organization's ongoing efforts. This makes it easier for individuals to learn more about your work and become more involved.