

# Case Statement

## Definition

Case, n. "The reasons why an organization both needs and merits philanthropic support, usually by outlining the organization's programs, current needs and plans."  
Association for Fundraising Professionals' Dictionary

Harold "Si" Seymour, who spent 50 years as a career fund developer for many national U.S. charities, describes the case statement as, "The one definitive piece of the whole development effort; it tells all that needs to be told, answers all the important questions, reviews the arguments for support, explains the proposed plan for raising the money, shows how gifts may be made, and who the people are who vouch for the project, and will give leadership and direction."

"Benefits, benefits, benefits" is to fund development, as "location, location, location" is to real estate. The case statement is your sales and marketing tool. It should be readily and easily responsive to marketplace changes.

## Internal Case File

The internal case file is preparation for the external case statement. An electronic and/or traditional file should be set up to provide consistent information for letters, brochures, flyers, fact sheets, media releases, proposals, and recruitment materials for new board members, other volunteers and staff. Start with the basics and add more information as it becomes available. It is critical to assign responsibility to someone to keep the information current and organized for easy retrieval.

The internal case file may include documentation on:

**Vision** – what success will look like in the future, i.e. five years

**Mission** – what your organization does

**Strategic Plan** including goals and objectives

**History of the organization** – Why was it established? By whom? When?

**Governance** – number of directors, terms of office, executive, etc.

**Charitable organization number** and copies of charitable tax returns (T-3010 forms)

**Community** – about the area your organization serves: geographic area, demographics, economic climate, etc.

**Competitors and how your organization is different from them** – What distinguishes a land trust from a conservation authority and other environmental organizations? What is happening regarding fund development in other sectors, which are competing for donor dollars, i.e. education, health, social service?

**Programs and services** – brief description of each program and service

**Benefits to the community** – list as many benefits as possible to appeal to individuals, foundations, organizations and corporations

**Cost of projects and resources required** – provide examples of how gifts can help, i.e. \$50 will . . . \$500 will . . . \$5,000 will . . .

**Critical path** for projects

**Statistics** – highlight key statistics and use them effectively in tables, charts and graphs

**Anecdotes and testimonials** – gather these as you go along

**Success stories** – special highlights, i.e. positive media coverage, awards and honours, other achievements

**Financial information** – audited financial statements, annual and project budgets

**Funding** – Who else will or has already invested? i.e. government funding, foundations, landowners

**Track record** – fund development, investments and property management

**Profiles** – board and staff; put a face on your organization by describing professional qualifications, special skills and talents; and personal motivation for becoming involved with the organization.

**Properties** – brief descriptions and photos

**Sectoral information** – about land trusts, about the environmental movement

**Fund development activities** – short description of how your organization raises money now and plans to in the future, i.e. mailers, major gifts (face-to-face), proposals, events, etc.

**Measure of evaluation** – statistics such as how much money raised over past five years, number of members each year, rate of acquisition, renewal and upgrading of gifts, etc.

**Ways to give** – Outright cash gifts, legacy gifts, transfers of land, etc. – short explanations of each method

**Stewardship** – of donations and land

**Sustainability** – What will it take for your organization to sustain its activities in the future?

**Objections** – Questions and answers to help overcome objections and respond to the unasked questions in a prospect's mind

**Key messages** – What are the three most important key messages that you need and want to communicate?

Anything else that is important.

By having this information readily available, your organization will be able to quickly respond to opportunities that arise, such as an enquiry from a reporter, a call for proposals with a tight deadline or request for a speaker at service club meeting.

## External Case Statement

An external case statement can be prepared with selective use of the material and information from the internal case file. Where the internal case file is a resource and archive of important information, the external case statement is how you tell your story to volunteers, potential donors and funders. You will need the same core information for all usages; however, you may need to include different additional information depending upon the audience. Foundations may want more information about governance and how you operate, while individuals may be more interested in how you are going to put their money to work to benefit the community. The case is a living document, continuously adjusted as donor feedback is obtained. Ask someone who is unfamiliar with land trusts and/or your organization to read the case to make sure your case is easy to read and understand.

The external case statement:

- Attracts financial support for the solutions you want to accomplish
- Builds consensus and buy-in, as well as confidence of volunteers
- Ensures everyone “sings from the same song sheet”
- Increases stakeholder commitment
- Attracts volunteers to work on program, policy and philanthropy
- Enhances community awareness.

### Characteristics

A good case . . .

- Reveals a solution to a compelling, self-evident need
- Shares a vision that captures people's imagination
- Explains why the opportunity is an investment that is consistent with the donor's values and beliefs
- Is defensible – any claims are fully supported
- Is optimistic and confident of success
- Is dynamic and action-oriented
- Is both rational and emotional. Often human anecdotes appeal to the heart, while statistical data reassure the heart
- Is memorable but brief and to the point, well-organized and meaningful
- Reads with a sense of urgency so the donor is convinced to make a gift quickly
- Evokes positive feelings – based on the organization's strengths, not its “needs”
- Is easy to get through
- Concludes with a financial goal and the prospect's role in helping to achieve it.

## Writing the Case

- Write in present tense as if your strategies are already reality – help people share your vision for a better future
- Include distinctive and innovative programs. Give supporters examples, illustrations and case histories or the organization's success stories
- Keep it simple and brief. Do not drown supporters in data. Highlight key statistics and use them effectively
- Highlight evidence of the planning behind the program. It shows prospects that the initiative is managed in a business-like way
- Anticipate questions and answer particular concerns by every reader such as other volunteers, clients, legislators, bureaucrats, business people and funders. Tackle the hard questions head on.
- Be concrete and specific . . . Do not say. "Our initiative is a model of success." Describe how it is successful and why it is a model
- State your goals in positive terms and relate what the organization is, rather than what it is not.

## Content

**We're a great organization and we've done a lot of good.** – The history and background of the organization, its vision and mission and accomplishment of that mission through the years.

**We're in a situation now and we have a great opportunity.** – A statement of the challenge or opportunity facing the organization and what it might mean if you don't act now.

**This is what we plan to do with this opportunity** – The plan of action developed by the organization's leaders to deal with the challenge or opportunity.

**In order to carry out this plan, here is how much money we need** – Spell out the fund development activity planned and how it is to be carried out.

**Our success will mean that the obstacles are overcome and the opportunity will not be wasted** – The anticipated success of the effort and how it will be achieved, what the money will buy and how the opportunity will be a success.

**If we raise xx dollars, we'll be able to go ahead with our plan** – Describe what will be accomplished by the successful fund development effort.

**Our success will mean great things for our community** – A clear statement of future anticipated results from the completed project.

**Therefore, dear Donor, we need your pledge. And when we are successful, you will benefit too** – A clear request for a specific amount of money or a range of contribution, helping the prospect understand that they have a personal stake in the outcome of your project's success. Also include information about how donors will be recognized.

Refer to the Appendices for samples of external case statements from a variety of organizations. Each presents its story in its own way, just as your organization should.

## Setting the Goal

Setting the goal for your annual campaign, endowment campaign or a capital campaign for a special project is always a challenge. The goal must be a balance between how much money you need and how much you can realistically raise during a specific time period.

There are some general rules of thumb to keep in mind:

- Try not to rely on any one income source for more than 30 percent of your budget
- 80 percent of donations will come from 20 percent of your donors.

Successful organizations develop an integrated plan featuring a variety of appeals or ways to raise money from different sources. Some appeals or solicitation strategies work for individuals, while others are more suitable for corporations, service clubs or granting foundations. The plan should include strategies to attract new donors (acquisition), encourage existing donors to give again (renewal) and motivate some donors to give more (upgrade). The goal must cover operational costs, as well as specific expenses related to philanthropy and fundraising activities.

One method to help determine an annual goal is to create an appeal chart. Charts B, C and D illustrate the investment required to raise money. Canada Revenue Agency reports that the overall average cost for all Canadian charities is 26 cents to raise \$1.00. The expenses amounts used are based on widely accepted fundraising cost ratios from Chart F (Section G, page 1). These expenses may seem high for organizations with no staff; however, it is better to base your fund development plan on these ratios to compare with the performance of other organizations and to provide consistent benchmarking over time as your organization grows. Also, do not underestimate the value of volunteer time.

The Knowledge Development website at [kdc-cdc.ca](http://kdc-cdc.ca) includes a Volunteer Value Calculator, an online tool to help you calculate the economic value of the volunteers at your organization.

### Chart B – \$10,000 Plan

Appeal	Revenue	Expenses	Net Income	Cost Ratio
Major Gifts	\$6,500	(\$760)	\$5,740	12%
Grantsmanship	\$2,200	(\$440)	\$1,760	20%
Special Event	\$5,000	(\$2,500)	\$2,500	50%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$13,700</b>	<b>(\$3,700)</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>	<b>27%</b>

### Chart C – \$100,000 Plan

Appeal	Revenue	Expenses	Net Income	Cost Ratio
Major Gifts	\$45,000	(\$4,500)	\$40,500	10%
Grantsmanship	\$27,000	(\$5,400)	\$21,600	20%
Direct Mail	\$25,000	(\$7,100)	\$17,900	28%
Special Event(s)	\$25,000	(\$12,500)	\$12,500	50%
Memberships	\$12,500	(\$5,000)	\$7,500	40%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$134,500</b>	<b>(\$34,500)</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>	<b>26%</b>

### Chart D – \$1,000,000 Plan

Appeal	Revenue	Expenses	Net Income	Cost Ratio
Major Gifts	\$425,000	(\$42,500)	\$382,500	10%
Grantsmanship	\$300,000	(\$60,000)	\$240,000	20%
Planned Gifts	\$175,000	(\$35,000)	\$140,000	20%
Mailers	\$130,000	(\$35,000)	\$95,000	27%
Tributes	\$15,000	(\$3,750)	\$11,250	25%
Special Events	\$200,000	(\$100,000)	\$100,000	50%
Memberships	\$100,000	(\$68,750)	\$31,250	69%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$1,345,000</b>	<b>(\$345,000)</b>	<b>\$1,000,000</b>	<b>26%</b>