Case for Support Basic Outline

1) Introduction/need
2) History and credibility
3) Mission and values
4) Vision/Specific objectives
5) What would happen if you didn’t get the money
6) How the donor can help/Call to action

Case for Support Expanded Outline

Introduction/Need—Give the reader a brief overview of what you are presenting—try to make it exciting, and create the desire to read more. This is an introduction to your entire unit or organization, or in some cases, a specific project. Treat the reader as if they don’t know anything about you: what are the most important things to include? What are likely to be the most compelling? Include and share those things.

Also use this space to describe the specific need and why it matters right now. This might include problems the unit or project has in securing funding, it might include why the specific issue itself is so pressing at this moment in time—it could be about why the work needs to happen now instead of later: anything to add a sense of urgency, the content of which is mostly up to you.

This is also the place to get the donor to care about the cause: so some discussion of why it matters on a larger scale is always fitting here. Give the donor a reason to care.

History and credibility—Use this space for the content section that gains credibility for the organization by highlighting successful past accomplishments and projects, it might illustrate how you are good stewards of past donations. The donor should feel as if you are a stable entity that will take care of the gift once it is given. This section is kind of a continuation of that first one, except in the introduction you say who you are in general, and in this section you provide some concrete examples to back it up.

Mission and values—Use this space as the section that tells who you are, how your mission and values have influenced how you have gotten to where you are.

This section can tee up the reason why your unit is deserving of support and why the donor should specifically give to you. How is this different than the beginning introduction of your organization? Because the mission and values are about how you are interacting with a problem or issue: the introduction to your organization is strictly about the organization. How is this organization especially fit to deal with the problem? This is all welcome in the mission section.

Vision/Specific objectives—Use this section to discuss the future—where the organization is going and what will be specifically done once a gift is received. It can be specific to a particular project, a few prioritized projects, or can be more general about your entire unit or initiative. A varying amount of description is needed here. This is the place to detail out the project or vision in its completed form. If you’re writing a case for a building, that might mean architectural renderings and descriptions of what will happen inside. If you’re talking about something bigger, like an entire science program and its goals, then you might highlight a few
prioritized projects, or talk generally about the development and movement of the college: the point is to present the plan concretely without losing sight of the bigger, altruistic meaning behind it.

**What would happen if the you don’t get the money**—Use this section to clarify the problem or the current state and vividly illustrate how different the situation will be if you get support. Depending on your Case, this may be an emotional appeal or it may be an appeal to be part of a revolutionary innovation, change, or premier program or initiative. You want to create a sense of urgency here to change the current picture. Don’t dwell on the negative but present it and then clearly present the positive solution and how private donations can make the situation SO much better.

**How the donor can help/Call to action**—You’ve teed this up in the last section and now it’s time for the call to action, or a hard or soft Ask—whichever is appropriate. You can simply “invite” the donor to be part of this exciting project, you can suggest that you “hope” they will be part of it, and/or you can let them know they can expect you to contact them to find out their level of interest.

The point here is to not miss the opportunity to somehow let the donor know you are serious about determining their level of interest. It can be very subtle if need be, but making some kind of Ask/letting the donor know your intent and next steps, can get you further down the road and wastes less time. And end on an emotionally resonant note!