

**October 2013 Guidance on Opportunities:  
Sustainability – Making the Case for Support**

APPRECIATIVE ICEBREAKER

Think about the last time that you gave a financial donation to support an organization.

Now, consider the following questions:

- What motivated you to donate?
- Why did you give?
- How did you feel when you gave?
- If the gift was not to League, what are the lessons that might be observed?

GUIDANCE

In the Membership and Leadership Development (MLD) program, we often talk about the need to demonstrate the value of membership in the League. We need to show people why they should care about and believe enough in LWV that they will join us. We try to show them the impact of their placing their values next to ours to make our communities and our democracy healthy, vibrant and strong.

When we think about the financial sustainability of the organization, we need to do the same thing. We need to demonstrate to potential donors (and often our current donors) that our work is so valuable to them, to the community and to our democracy that they should give us financial support.

How do we do this? Much like when we recruit members and we need to have our “elevator speech” ready, in fundraising, we need to be ready to tell people why they should give and what the impact of their gift to the League will be.

**What is a Case Statement?**

In the fundraising world, this is called developing a **case statement** or case for support. The case statement is really just another tool for making the ask. There are six critical elements or components to creating an effective case for support:

**The Need:** What are the needs in the community that your League fills? What is the relevance of the League’s work for the community? What is going on in the state/region that sets the tone/context for your work? What are the state/regional issues that you are addressing?

*If you are fundraising for a specific activity, outline that here. If you are looking to fund League work in general, then this is the spot to summarize the importance of your League’s work in the community and the issues you are addressing,*

**The Solution:** Explain your work. What is the League’s approach to filling the need? Why is it/will it be effective?

*In short, explain how your League will address/solve the issue.*

**The Beneficiaries:** Who are the beneficiaries of the League’s work – the neighborhood, the community, certain populations in your community? How will your work make a difference?

*Often this answer is the entire community, but try to add as much specificity as possible.*

**Self-Interest:** What is in it for the donor?

## LWV Membership and Leadership Development

*Help them see how important their gift will be, how their life/community will be different because of the League's work and their generous support of that work.*

**Your Capacity:** Where does the League add unique value? How have your past successes positioned you to take on new challenges and meet new needs?

*Let the world know about your successes; showcase your League's ability to provide the solution that meets the need.*

**The Ask:** What resources does the League require to provide the solutions to the needs? What will their gift enable you to do that you cannot presently accomplish?

*ASK for support, providing specific, appropriate options for the level of donation you are requesting.*

*This is the most important piece of this case statement: You MUST make an ask. If we simply outline the need, solution, beneficiaries, and other pieces, but never utter the words, "Will you make a gift of X? Or Can I count on you for a gift of Y?" Your donor will simply shake his/her head agreeing with everything you have just said, but will not make a financial contribution. Just as we must ask people to join, the most important rule in fundraising is that you MUST make an ask!*

### **Where do we use the Case Statement?**

An effective case statement is a universal fundraising tool. It can be used to ask donors from all segments of our community – from our own members and “friends of the League” to businesses and foundations. Much like the membership ask, the key with the fundraising ask or case for support is to:

1. **Be prepared:** Think it through in advance. What are we asking and why?
2. **Know your audience:** What do they care about? How can we speak to that?
3. **Empower others:** Fundraising is not just the responsibility of the development chair or president. Let others know about and add to the League's case for support so that they are comfortable and confident to use it themselves.
4. **Look for opportunities:** Some opportunities need to be created (such as an annual appeal letter), but other opportunities exist as part of what we already do. Think about how financial sustainability could be added to your next League event or activity, much like we have intentionally folded in media outreach, allied outreach and leadership development components into all our activities. What are the financial sustainability opportunities at each event? Much like with the membership ask, we won't always get to the place of asking someone to write a check. But, there are seeds that can be planted at each event about our need for financial support, how effective we are as an organization, and how donor support makes a difference.

### WHO to ask?

**Start with individuals.** There is a myth that “big giving” comes from businesses and foundations. According to Giving USA, in 2010, individuals gave 73% of all charitable gifts in this country totaling \$211 BILLION dollars! And if you include individuals who provided for charity after their death, individuals actually gave 83% of all gifts totaling \$234 BILLION dollars.

### **Key Resource:**

To learn more about the case statement and other aspects of financial sustainability, please review [Fundraising 101 – The League Way](#).