

Securing financial support for your program will require the support of senior leaders and decision-makers. Outlined below are examples of lines of questioning that you may encounter as you work to develop these strategic relationships.

Senior leaders are more likely to invest in work and projects that are tightly aligned with organizational goals. It is important to **not** assume why they are asking their questions, or label someone so you can judge their concerns. Instead, take time to prepare your responses across the range of potential reactions.

A skilled leader adapts their approaches and responses to different situations based on what they learn as part of their preparation, during a discussion, or in the follow up after. Below are types of questions you may encounter and potential responses you can use to build strategic relationships with decision-makers. These preparations are useful for funder conversations as well.

Line of Questioning	Description	Example Indicators or Questions
The Skeptic	Is doubtful that the program can be financially self-sustaining or is fatigued by the latest and greatest solution to improving health care or lowering costs.	- Asks detailed questions about revenue calculations or places you on the defensive "Why would I want to start something right now that isn't a sure money-maker?"
Not a Priority	Is clearly focused on other issues such as staffing shortages, growth of new services, or solving very specific problems like re-admissions.	- Difficult to schedule a time - Distracted during the meeting - Is primarily interested in knowing how the program will fix X or Y
The Negator	Actively or passively finds a way to be overly critical of new ideas, the service, colleagues, or most any changes status quo.	"How can this make a difference?" "Why can't they just go to the psych clinic?" "I don't agree this is a problem"
Interested but not informed	Is supportive but is not clear on what the needs of caregivers are, or what distress they face. Wishes to help but doesn't know the role of the hospital in it all.	"I had this case once..." "Can you explain the difference between this service and XXXX..." "Isn't this what support groups are for?"

Line of Questioning	Description	Example Indicators or Questions
I/we already do this	Does not (yet) appreciate the unique needs of family caregivers and the insufficiencies of existing mental health treatments	• “We already provide behavioral health services” • Asks questions about who will fund the service or whether the service is necessary • Speaks very highly of the efforts already in place to support caregivers, either in the organization or in the community
Cautious decision maker	Overall is supportive but does not want to be alone in making the decision. Seeks evidence of support from others (trustees, donors, department chairs)	• “Who else have you discussed this with?” • “What does the Social Work department think?” • “What can be the downsides to doing this?”

On the next page are suggested starter responses that can be helpful based on how the conversation is progressing and the approach they are taking in the meeting.

"What is important to you or the organization?"	• An open ended question that shifts the focus onto the decision-maker and meeting their needs
"What challenges do you see? What needs aren't being met?"	• Engages the decision-maker by asking them for examples or to name specific issues
"Can you provide me an example of when...?"	• Helpful if a problem has been named or a concern has been raised. Prompts a deeper discussion to better understand the opportunities or challenges important to the decision-maker.
"What was your experience with caregiver support at your last organization?"	• Helps provide more context for the decision-maker's perspective and to then help relate that past experience to the current situation."
"Tell me more..."	• Acknowledges that you are listening and are engaged. Also helps prompt a deeper discussion to better understand opportunities or challenges important to the decision-maker.
"What data would be helpful to demonstrate the problems or impact?"	• Helps shift the conversation from emotional or opinion-based perspectives to data. Also demonstrates your intention to measure impacts.
"It sounds like you..."	• Demonstrates that you are listening and provides an opportunity to clarify your understanding and for them to clarify their perspective.