



# Three-Year Strategy for The Practice Space

March 2022 - March 2024  
*National Relevance, Local Impact*

## I. Executive Summary

Over the past 5 years, The Practice Space has become a trusted educational resource in the West Contra Costa community, known best for our engaging programs and events, inclusive facilitation, speech and debate success, and educational resources to support public speaking skills. Throughout the pandemic, we have been able to successfully provide high-quality program experiences online, serving more participants during the pandemic than in our previous years combined; as a result, we are now capable of providing high-quality experiences both in person and online, which expands our reach. We have made significant progress defining and refining our model and method of Expression-Driven Teaching, grown our team capacity and size (particularly through key senior hires), grown our budget from \$17K to \$473K, and helped nearly 1500 participants to confidently express themselves. Our last strategic plan focused on establishing our identity, piloting programs, creating our method, and growing the team.

This new plan describes our priorities from 2022 to 2024. It replaces our existing plan and will go through frequent reassessment with our Board, Junior Board, and staff to ensure that our goals remain relevant and accurate. Our strategic intent is to become an organization with ***national relevance and local impact***. Accomplishing this plan will involve increasing our organizational budget from \$473K to \$750K-\$1mill. This plan was unanimously approved on March 29, 2022 by 10 members of our Board of Directors and 10 members of our Junior Board of Directors.

### ***National Relevance:***

- Our mission has national relevance because we help people whose voices have been silenced by a lack of access to oral literacy and public speaking education, many of whom have experienced internalized oppression and anxiety. We are unique because we frame public speaking education as a vehicle for equity, helping people navigate the conditions that silence them, increasing their participation, and elevating underrepresented voices. Through educational content, our aim is to become an educational thought leader in areas related to youth voice and leadership, debate and oral literacy, and inclusive facilitation, sharing our Expression-Driven Teaching method to improve how people facilitate space for oral expression, particularly for underserved populations such as English Language Learners.

### ***Local Impact:***

- We know our programs are strongest when we work directly with speakers and facilitators, and this plan articulates how we will increase our local engagement through a strategic combination of core and partner programs and events, while also continuing to refine our audience and improving how we track and deepen our local impact.

## II. The Practice Space Identity

### ***The Problem***

For historically marginalized groups in the United States, silence is a source of oppression that impacts confidence when internalized. For many, silencing originates from deceptively simple sources: never learning how to speak publicly, believing you can never live up to the model of “successful speakers”, or feeling afraid of losing or being judged. While silencing can feel like an individual problem, it has roots in oppressive systems, models, and histories that impact self-belief and restrict freedom. Feeling free to speak is a privilege currently reserved for those whose voices have been encouraged, cultivated, celebrated and held up as a model of success, and valued as significant.

### ***Our Why***

We help people who struggle to believe that their voice matters, due to experiences with self-doubt and shyness, oppression, being excluded or mistreated, or not having opportunities to speak or learn to speak effectively. We help people find a space to express their unique intersectional identities and develop new identities as public speakers and leaders. We elevate underrepresented voices, including youth, women & girls, people with marginalized gender identities, people of color, people with disabilities, immigrants, English Language Learners, and first generation students (not in order of priority).

### ***Our Philosophy***

This purpose is aligned with the work of important thinkers such as bell hooks and Paulo Friere, who emphasize the need for ***liberatory education***, where all human beings have the right to freely participate in shaping a world that is already shaping them, learning to navigate hardship, developing new capacities to creatively engage, and fostering human potential and intellectual curiosity instead of fearing difference. We are informed by the work of Black feminist theorists such as Audre Lorde and Bettina Love, who uphold the importance of joy and voice in creating a more equitable world. The development of a person’s voice is vital in helping someone engage as an architect of their own life, as a person who cares about their fellow human beings, and as a participant in democracy.

- To unlock this potential, we believe that ***equity is an environment*** that reduces the predictability of success and failure, disrupts restrictive power dynamics and promotes shared power, maximizes opportunities to showcase strengths, and minimizes the impact of oppression.
- Our method, ***Expression-Driven Teaching***, is a facilitation approach to develop the communication skills and inclusive environment necessary to cultivate voice and joy, while creating opportunities to learn from and elevate underrepresented voices.
- Advancing educational equity and challenging systemic and internalized oppression requires the presence of diverse voices, which can only be cultivated when diverse forms of self-expression are valued and taught in a safe environment where people can be vulnerable and brave.

<p><b>Our Mission:</b> We build confidence and community through communication skill development to advance inclusion, develop empathy, and elevate underrepresented voices.</p>
<p><b>Our Vision:</b> We envision a world where diverse communities of youth and adults feel free from stereotypes, cared for, and capable of meaningful and authentic connection.</p>
<p><b>Our Values:</b> We do serious, intentional work in fun, creative, and communal ways.</p>

When engaging with people, we are:

- **Relationship-Driven:** We value our engagements with people, creating lasting, nurturing relationships that instill a sense of belonging and community.
- **Boundary Crossers:** We engage with people across typical demographic labels, serving a diverse, multi-generational community built upon common connections.
- **Engaged Listeners:** We listen to what people need and create experiences that promote meaningful learning to achieve their goals.
- **Rigorously Positive:** We help people realize their own potential by developing communication skills in a joyful, fun environment with people who regularly see and celebrate their progress.

When designing experiences, we are:

- **Committed to Inclusive Design and Expression-Driven Teaching:** We design personalized, flexible experiences that help everyone engage and participate – we avoid deficit mindsets.
- **Fiercely Nuanced:** We create high-quality experiences by paying attention to what people need, asking questions, adapting to context, improving our ideas through field research, and staying current with changes in the world.
- **Capacity Builders:** We build up people’s capabilities through strong mentorship, getting them ready for new opportunities and helping them find the leader within.
- **Grassroots-Oriented:** We are a part of the communities we serve and we create experiences that reflect our dedication to deeply understanding local needs and enabling people to enact positive change.

### III. What We Do

As an organization, we have always set out to redefine public speaking as a method of self-expression to connect with people through verbal and non-verbal communication. We believe each person’s approach to public speaking should fit their personal style, preferences, audience, context, and purpose. To hear diverse voices, we need diverse approaches to public speaking. Over the past 5 years, we have taught the following public speaking *modalities*: **storytelling, debate, presentation, self-advocacy, and poetry**. We have also supported people to use their voice using different *media* (i.e. podcasting, video, in-person, online), under different *conditions* (i.e. prepared speaking vs spontaneous speaking), and in Spanish and in English. We use the following terms somewhat interchangeably to describe our work, including public speaking, oral expression, oral literacy, and oral communication. Public speaking is the clearest way to describe our work, but often comes with inaccurate ideas about what public speaking involves (i.e. always on a stage giving presentations) or negative histories and fears that make people avoid the activity. Our organization’s work takes place in the following ways:

<b>Core Programs</b>	Programs that directly serve individual participants from a variety of different places, who register through our website and whose experience takes place online or in person in “TPS Land”, plus the volunteer listeners who offer feedback. To date, these programs have included: camps, clubs, private lessons, and mini-courses.
<b>Partner Programs</b>	Programs that are customized in relationship with an outside organization/entity such as a school, company, or non-profit, where TPS has been contracted to do specific work. Internally, we know these as “TPS Groups”, which have included customized workshop series, district contracts, and school-based speech and debate teams.
<b>Content Resources</b>	Curriculum materials, tools, slide decks, and other educational resources that people can use to learn and practice our method. To date, we have produced our open educational curriculum resources, upcoming book, and individual course materials.

## IV. Our Financial Sustainability

Our work is made possible by a combination of capital from grants, revenue from core and partner program services, and individual donations. To ensure our long-term sustainability, as part of this strategic plan we are moving towards a desired distribution of 55% of our budget to come from grants, 35% to come from earned revenue, and 10% to come from donations. In the era of this strategic plan, we are working to diversify our grant funding sources, increase our earned revenue from 23% to 35% through more partner work, and increase our individual donations from 8% to 10% through relationship-building.

### **Grants:**

- **Hewlett Foundation. Since 2018**, we have been supported by funding from the Hewlett Foundation, which currently makes up 46% of our 69% of the budget that comes from grant funding. The activities in this strategic plan will be supported by a Hewlett general operating grant. Historically, we have been supported by Hewlett program grants and Organizational Effectiveness grants.
- Program Grants. Our remaining grant sources are local Bay Area funders.
- We aim to identify new sources of grant funding, including at least one more large national funder or corporate funder.

### **Earned Revenue:**

- Our sources of earned revenue take place throughout the year from the following:
  - Program Tuition from Individuals (e.g. private lessons, camps, clubs, mini-courses which take place all year long)
  - School District Contracts (e.g. district-wide after-school programming, teacher professional development)
  - School-Based Funding (e.g. funds from a school site or parent group to support speech and debate programs)
  - Partner Contracts (e.g. payment for services in our workshop packages, typically from nonprofits or corporate groups)

### **Donations:**

- The majority of our donors are small donations from local community members who have been directly impacted by our programs (less than \$1000).
- We aim to establish a mix of donors at different levels of contribution, including new major donors and 100% Board giving.
- As we establish our mix, we will continue to strengthen our relations with current donors.

In Year 1 of this strategic plan, we have a budget of \$473K, with approximately 80% of funding going directly into programs. For the remaining two years of the strategic plan, we are aiming for 80-85% to go towards programs each year, with a budget of \$750K to \$1million in Year 3.

## V. Our Impact Framework

We believe public speaking is more than a skill: it is a method for self-expression and engaging with one another as human beings. We appreciate the context-specific and developmental nature of becoming an effective speaker as well as its **deep connection to social and emotional learning**. While it is helpful to be exposed to public speaking at a young age, a person’s confidence goes through ebbs and flows, especially when they are uncertain, in points of transition, or are wrestling with articulating emerging ideas and identities. Our attention to the participant journey helps us frame impact beyond the typical measures of test scores and academic achievement measures.

Journey	Before/After Description	Impact We Will Claim	Questions to Address
<b>Emotional</b>	Going from dreading public speaking to enjoying it, to having it as an important part of their identity.	Our participants will develop identities as public speakers, learners, facilitators of voice, and leaders who listen.	How can we best measure confidence, both for an individual and across different marginalized groups?
<b>Self Awareness &amp; Belief</b>	Going from not believing that what they say will matter, to finding language to express their identity, to believing in themselves enough to share even when audiences are unsupportive.	Our participants will see positive shifts in self-perception, self-esteem, and self-belief.	How can we improve our self-report and survey measures to better capture the richness of this individual journey?
<b>Technique</b>	Going from selecting a topic and main idea, to structuring an idea, to considering an audience, to being compelling, clear, credible, and convincing to the audience.	Our participants will consistently demonstrate and facilitate strong communication skills.	Which external measures should we use to evaluate communication skills and how are these different for English Language Learners?
<b>Agency</b>	Going from not participating at all, to completing a speaking task, to improving how they relate to others, to making their own intentional and effective decisions about what will resonate with an audience.	Our participants will develop a strong capacity for social and emotional learning, relationship-building, leadership, and empathy.	Which social and emotional learning measures can we use that will be most meaningful to schools and districts?

## VI. Our Three-Year Strategic Goals

Our mission highlights our aim to “elevate underrepresented voices”. We define underrepresented voices as groups of people who have struggled to speak, communicate, and participate because their identities have been historically marginalized, negatively positioned, and undervalued in places of power. We emphasize youth voices, along with women & girls, people with marginalized gender identities, people of color, people with disabilities, immigrants, English Language Learners, and first generation students. Our 4 strategic goals guide our priorities for growth as an organization over the next 3 years, with Goals 1 and 2 focused primarily on local reach and Goals 3 and 4 focused on increasing awareness on a national level through our proof of concept. As we grow, we need to continue our personal and human approach to relationships, joyful and creative approach to all our offerings, and our high standards for facilitation quality and program design.

**Goal 1: Increase local access and engagement, with a focus on Richmond, West Contra Costa, and our pilot district partners.**

We will increase our engagement in local educational settings by improving access and exposure to public speaking through basic, repeatable programs, practice opportunities, and inclusive community experiences. We will focus on the City of Richmond, West Contra Costa and East Bay region, and continue to expand our pilot district partner work in Vallejo, American Canyon, Pittsburg, and San Leandro. This goal will help us expose more young people to public speaking education through our partner programs and increase their opportunities to practice public speaking. This work will help us reach more youth locally through a basic experience, as well as build our reputation, credibility, and awareness in the local community.

<p><b>Goal 1: Increase local access and engagement with a focus on Richmond, West Contra Costa, and our pilot district partners.</b></p>	<p><b>Priority Activities:</b> In the era of this strategic plan, we aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Serve students in grades 3-6 in all the elementary schools in West Contra Costa Unified through after-school programs and related summer offerings;</li> <li>→ Lay the groundwork for school-based programs in neighboring districts (beginning in Pittsburg) by working with teachers in their classrooms;</li> <li>→ Launch and establish practice tournament experiences that are open to the public.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Targets:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Year 1 (280 students total):</b> 4 elementary schools served with roughly 120 unduplicated students (unless receive grant funding that support a goal of 8 schools in Year 1), 4 practice tournament experiences serving 40 students, and 4 classroom teachers served with 120 students;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Year 2 (510 students total):</b> 8 elementary schools served with roughly 250 unduplicated students, 4 practice tournament experiences serving 80 students, and 6 classroom teachers served with 180 students;</li> <li>● <b>Year 3 (900 students total):</b> 16 elementary schools served with roughly 500 unduplicated students, 4 practice tournament experiences serving 160 students, and 8 classroom teachers served with 240 students.</li> <li>● <b>Participation Target:</b> 75% of students who take part in at least half of the program activities participate in 1 public speaking performance each session (fall, spring, and/or summer), speaking for a public audience (i.e. showcase, tournament, presentation).</li> <li>● <b>Connection to Impact Framework:</b> Emotional Impact for students in their first year, followed by Agency Impact for students in their second year.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Relevant Data:</b> Number of people served; improvements to student participation, communication skills, and social and emotional learning; number of schools served and their demographics</p>
	<p><b>Funding Requirements and Sources:</b> Funded by a mixture of local grants and district contracts; need approximately \$100K in Year 1 to meet minimum number of schools, \$145K in Year 2, and \$305K in Year 3. District contracts can be expected to cover 30-35% of the cost. We will need to recruit 20 coaches for 10 hrs/week year-round and 30 volunteers for practice tournaments. We will also need to make 1 new senior program hire.</p>

**Goal 2: Build strong partnerships with mission-aligned organizations that want to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion by helping their teams, participants, and community use their voices.**

We will build strong relationships with partners by working closely with workplaces and individuals who have experienced barriers to communication and whose voices have been underrepresented as a result of these barriers (including women and girls, immigrants, English Language Learners, BIPOC, youth, LGBTQ+, people with marginalized gender identities, and people with disabilities). By doing so, we will also use our partner work to address larger inequities around who gets to speak up through more customized work and relationship-building. If successful, this work will also help raise awareness about our organization as an integral part of the community, which will help increase sign-ups across our other programs and position us for future co-funding opportunities.

<p><b>Goal 2: Build strong partnerships with mission-aligned organizations that want to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion by helping their teams, participants, and community use their voices.</b></p>	<p><b>Priority Activities:</b> In the era of this strategic plan, we aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Refine our partnership model and increase partnership growth</li> <li>→ Continue to create special core offerings and mini-courses to extend learning beyond partnerships or to provide opportunities where they do not currently exist for focus populations (i.e. creating Spanish speaking mini-courses or practice sessions that continue learning beyond a partnership).</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Targets:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Year 1:</b> \$35K from partner revenue (current revenue is \$25K); <b>Year 2:</b> \$50K; <b>Year 3:</b> \$60K.</li> <li>• <b>All 3 Years:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>% of total partners:</b> 50% focused on women, girls, and people with marginalized gender identities; 20% focused on BIPOC; 15% focused on Spanish speakers, English Language Learners, and immigrants; 10% focused on first generation college students, and 5% focused on people with disabilities.</li> <li>○ <b>% of time:</b> 75% nonprofit/education (majority in Richmond, with some in greater Bay Area, California and out-of-state); 25% mission-aligned corporate; split between online and in person offerings.</li> <li>○ <b>Rationale:</b> Percentages are based on what we are most well-positioned to achieve given the work and partnerships we have already established to date (lower percentages represent newer work that we want to start building up during the era of this strategic plan).</li> <li>○ <b>Strong Partnerships are defined as:</b> Level I (participate in all requirements and activities in one initial package); Level II (repeat services at least once with the same or different people and/or have some</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>people continue to practice in our core programs); Level III (repeat services for multiple years, have people continue to practice in our core programs, and collaborate with us on projects for mutual benefit). We aim for all partners to at least be Level I, with 35% at Level II, and 10% at Level III.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Growth Targets:</b> 90% of participants report that services have improved their confidence, self-belief, and self-perception and that the tools that they received will help meet their needs.</li> <li>● <b>Connection to Impact Framework:</b> Self-Awareness and Belief Impact for all partners; Technique Impact for partners that take advantage of additional practice and coaching beyond the initial workshop series.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Relevant Data:</b> Number of people served, length of relationship and nature of the work accomplished as a result, case studies and interviews on what our partners have done with their improved communication skills, reported relevance to their life in terms of improved self-perception, identity, and communication skills.</p>
	<p><b>Funding Requirements and Sources:</b> Funded primarily by earned revenue with the support of local or equity-focused grants; at our current rate of partner work, we need approximately \$65K in Year 1 to cover staff time, \$75K in Year 2, and \$80K in Year 3. If we don't secure enough partner revenue or grant support, then we need to be selective and serve fewer partners.</p>

**Goal 3: Develop youth leadership and emerging leaders nationwide through our core programs and teams.**

We will develop youth leadership and emerging adult leaders nationwide (with an emphasis on women, girls and gender-expansive youth, youth of color, and youth with disabilities) through a journey that helps them form opinions, tell stories, (self) advocate, actively disrupt inequities, and serve as mentors to those who feel silenced and powerless. By doing so, we will use our core programs and teams to offer a deeper experience with public speaking than can be offered in formal institutions and establish a proof of concept for our methods. If successful, this work will become the model we are most known for and where we see the biggest change in communication skill development.

<p><b>Goal 3: Develop youth leadership nationwide.</b></p>	<p><b>Priority Activities:</b> In the era of this strategic plan, we aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Clarify our core program trajectory and build a better pipeline into our core programs (3-4 online/hybrid clubs and camps offered 3 times/year, including Expressive Leaders in spring, 1-2 in each age bracket, as well as a youth-led self-advocacy course, adult subscription series, and adult private lessons).</li> <li>→ Support our speech and debate teams (adding one team per year or increasing enrollment on existing teams).</li> <li>→ Showcase and share youth voice through our events, showcases, and multimedia channels.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Targets:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>All 3 years:</b> Approximately 220 youth served through core programs (clubs, summer camps, speech and debate teams, and Expressive Leaders) and 30 adults served through core programs (private lessons and mini-courses), 250 people total.</li> <li>● <b>Growth Targets:</b> In their 1st program, we want 90% of our students to report improved confidence; we aim to have 70% return for at least one more season; we want 80% to demonstrate observable improvement.</li> <li>● <b>Connection to Impact Framework:</b> Emotional Impact and Self-Awareness &amp; Belief Impact for beginning students, Technique Impact and Agency Impact for more advanced students</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Relevant Data:</b> Work accomplished by youth leaders, improvements across all desired measures of the participant journey (identity, self-perception and self-belief, communication skills, social and emotional learning, and agency).</p>
	<p><b>Funding Requirements and Sources:</b> Funded primarily by earned revenue from our partner programs and individual family tuition, donations towards scholarships, and general operating grants; we need approximately \$120K each year to cover staff time and coaches.</p>

**Goal 4: Grow as a thought leader with national relevance through easy-to-use educational resources for speakers and facilitators and presence in national publications and events.**

**We will improve our organizational presence and codify our method of Expression-Driven Teaching into easy-to-use resources that can be shared openly in the field of education and youth development to begin establishing The Practice Space as an organization with *national relevance and local impact*. If successful, this goal will build our internal capacity for growth and will result in ripple effects to our other three strategic goals by developing coaches, attracting partners, and guiding youth leadership.**

<p><b>Goal 4: Grow as a thought leader with national relevance through easy-to-use education resources for speakers and facilitators and presence in national publications and events.</b></p>	<p><b>Priority Activities:</b> In the era of this strategic plan, we aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Create a new set of materials for <b>speakers</b> focused on helping them prepare for public speaking and self-advocacy situations.</li> <li>→ Continue to create materials for <b>facilitators</b> to help educators, judges, and coaches to become better facilitators of youth voice, accessible through open educational resources, material guides, judge training experiences, and our book.</li> <li>→ Secure more talks and public speaking opportunities for the ED and senior staff to increase our organizational presence and journal articles and press about our method and book (ideally 4-5 high-value opportunities per year that result in new partners, new staff, new participants, new supporters, or more inquiries and searches for The Practice Space).</li> </ul> <p><b>Targets:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Target Audience:</b> We will focus on the field of education and youth development, specifically educators who want to integrate youth voice and speaking &amp; listening activities into their classes, families who need to speak up for their children (including bilingual and Spanish speaking families), youth who are leading speech and debate or leadership groups, and participants &amp; coaches in our programs who want additional guidance.</li> <li>● <b>Year 1:</b> Completion and curation of core resource materials (i.e. book, family guide, youth leadership guide, topic decks, and coach kits), distributed among our participants and partners; participate in at least 3 talks; be featured in at least 2 press opportunities.</li> <li>● <b>Year 2:</b> Market more broadly to educator audiences outside our participants and partners, with a focus on the ASCD educator community and landing in the top 25% of their books sold; identify a researcher-in-residence</li> </ul>
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	<p>to write case studies and submit to at least one journal publication; participate in at least 4 talks; be featured in at least 3 press opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Year 3:</b> Continue to refine and improve our marketing to educator audiences outside our participants and partners; get published in at least one journal and apply for at least one research grant; participate in at least 5 talks; be featured in at least 5 press opportunities.</li> <li>● <b>Connection to Impact Framework:</b> Technique Impact</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Relevant Data:</b> Relevance and ease of the resources, examples of use, how prepared our speakers and facilitators are after use, networking achieved through public speaking opportunities, number of books/subscriptions sold.</p>
	<p><b>Needs and Priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Funding Requirements and Sources:</b> Funded primarily by general operating grants; to cover staff time, we need approximately \$41K in Year 1, \$62K in Year 2, and \$77K in Year 3.</li> </ul>