

+ME PROJECT



**ANNUAL
REPORT**

2019

FY

**WHERE
EVERY
STORY
MATTERS**

PLUS ME Project

IS BRINGING THE ART OF STORYTELLING TO THE YOUTH OF LOS ANGELES!





TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Message from Our Executive Director	3
About Us	4
Why We Exist	5
Program Overview	6
Who We Serve	8
2018 – 2019 Highlights	9
Impact	10
Financials	12
Supporters	13
Strategic Plan	14
Team	16



Did you know PLUS ME is an acronym?

It stands for Proof Learners Ultimately Succeed with Motivation and Education.

It was coined as a continuation of our founder's 10,000 PLUS (Proof Learners Ultimately Succeed) Project where Richard shared his story with over 10,000 students while earning his undergrad degree from Occidental College.





Dear PLUS ME Community,

Throughout my senior year in college, I visited 77 schools and shared my story of getting accepted into Occidental College with over 12,500 students. My goal that year was to connect with and inspire at least 10,000 students by highlighting the obstacles I overcame and hoping it would encourage them to remain resilient on their road to success.

I will never forget the day I finished reading *Nonprofits For Dummies* and decided to expand this necessary work by taking the first official step to launch the PLUS ME Project. I was extremely excited, absolutely terrified, and truly had no idea how that decision would forever change my life and the lives of so many others.

Six years later, we are releasing our first ever annual report at such an inspirational time in our organization's growth trajectory. Recently, PLUS ME entered into a new chapter and I am honored to highlight some of our past accomplishments and where we plan to go in the future.

This past year, 16,230 students engaged in our storytelling programs, 106 volunteers shared their stories with the youth of Los Angeles, and \$75,000 in new funding was secured from multiple foundations and corporate supporters. In addition to this, we also developed our new three-year strategic plan with support from Executive Service Corps, won UCLA's Social Enterprise Academy venture competition, and finalized our new comprehensive program model.

Our team is so thrilled and proud to showcase



PLUS ME Project's new logo, website, and overall new branding throughout this annual report. This feat was one of the biggest projects we took on last year and with the help of a dedicated volunteer team, we successfully launched our new modern brand.

This year was one I will never forget and I want to thank everyone who was a part of making PLUS ME's FY 2019 the true victory that it was for us. I look forward to leading our team and growing our work so that we can continue to inspire students in Los Angeles and beyond to realize their story matters.

PLUS ME continues to evolve and fulfill the goal that I set many years ago by building a movement of confident storytellers. As we remain an emerging, industry-leading organization that truly represents the communities we serve, we hope after reading our annual report, you are inspired to engage, advocate, and continue to support our work even more this year.

Always remember that your story matters and that you have the ability to make a positive impact on someone else's life.

Richard Reyes
Executive Director

ABOUT US



Mission: We are a community partner dedicated to empowering youth to build their confidence by teaching the art of storytelling.

Vision: Our vision is for everyone to find motivation, connection, and self-worth by sharing their stories.

Values:

- **Community:** Creating lasting relationships through meaningful partnerships
- **Equity:** Never turning a school away due to lack of financial resources
- **Social Justice:** Bridging the gaps in education, college readiness, and career advancement

WHY WE EXIST

We believe everyone has a story that matters and everyone should have access to relatable role models.

Unfortunately, we also know how difficult it can be for individuals to learn how to vulnerably share their stories with others and connect with inspirational members from their community.

We found that there was limited exposure for youth to the positive, success stories from community members that reached their goals and found their success. We also noticed that there were not enough resources to help students and adults learn how to articulate who they are, what they have been through, and how it qualifies them to advance their college and career opportunities.

That's why **PLUS ME** was launched.



WE EXIST TO:

Bring more relatable role models into schools to share their life journeys with students

Provide a framework that makes it easier for youth to craft their personal narratives

Empower youth to confidently share their stories within their communities and build meaningful connections with each other

Inspire youth to take action and turn their narratives into college personal statements

Support parents and educators with tools on how to build supportive storytelling cultures

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

PLUS ME has evolved its programming over the past six years. Below is a list of our programs and products highlighting when they were launched.

July 2013

Guest Speakers PLUS ME

Brings trained speakers into schools to highlight their journeys to and through college with students.

October 2014

Leaders PLUS ME

Encourages and trains students to become proactive and goal-oriented by understanding their strengths, career interests, and resilience.

September 2015

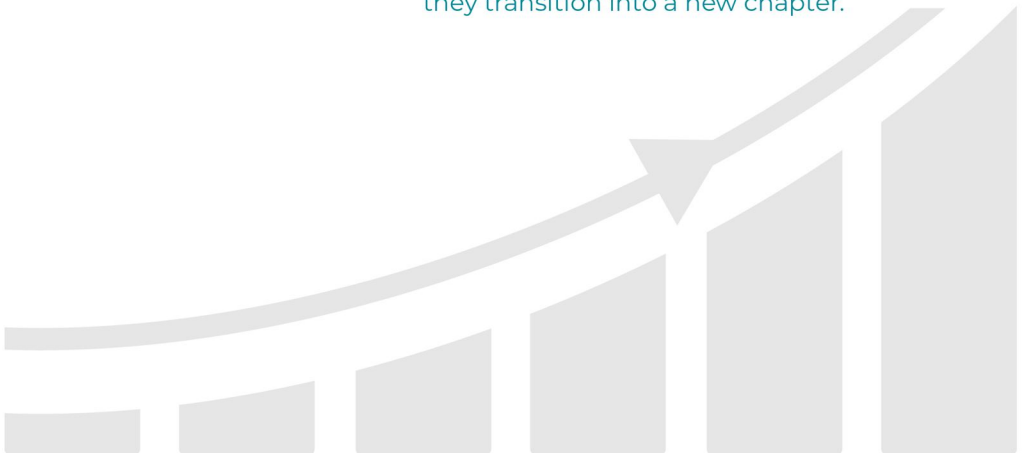
Storytellers PLUS ME

Supports youth with discovering the power of their own personal narrative helping them identify the important characters, settings, events, and lessons from their lives.

April 2016

Achievers PLUS ME

Encourages college bound high school students to gain the confidence and self-awareness as they transition into a new chapter.



August 2017

Educators PLUS ME

Provides a framework for educators on how to build a storytelling culture and support their students with articulating their own stories for college advancement.

September 2018

My Story Matters Journals

These 100-page personal narrative guides walk users through the elements of their own story and are used in our Storytellers PLUS ME curriculum.

October 2018

Parents PLUS ME

Immerses parents in our storytelling curriculum and gives them the opportunity to discover, develop, and articulate their own stories.

March 2019

Writers PLUS ME

Strengthens the work from our storytelling curriculum and provides students with a structure for writing their personal narratives prior to their college personal statements.

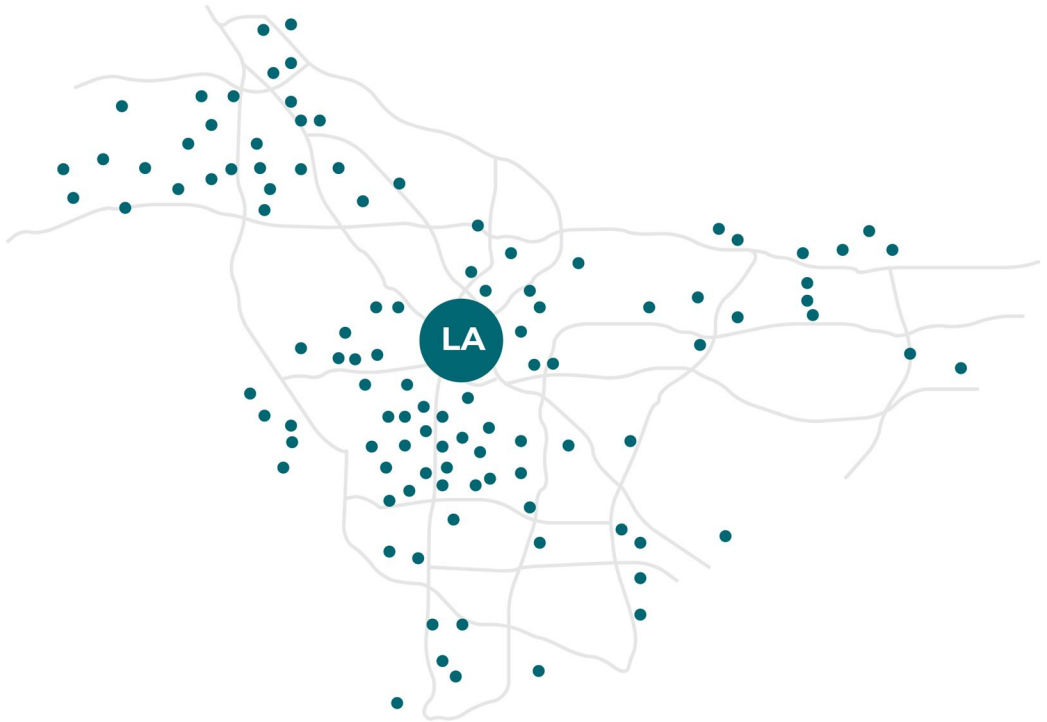
Our 5-step comprehensive student program model is designed to empower youth to build their confidence by providing relatable role models who facilitate content that inspires them to self-reflect and own who they are.

Once a student has completed our cycle, we believe they will have the skill set and confidence to become a guest speaker for PLUS ME and inspire the next generation of students to follow in their footsteps.

WHO WE SERVE

In FY 2019, PLUS ME visited 87 schools and brought our programs to 16,230 middle and high school students throughout Southern California.

As a community partner, we bring our programs to schools, organizations, and agencies that work directly with youth in primarily underserved communities.



IN ADDITION TO OUR WORK AT SCHOOLS, WE ALSO MAINTAINED A PARTNERSHIP AND SUPPORTED YOUTH FROM:

- After School All Stars
- Alliance College Ready-
Public Schools
- Alliance GEAR UP
- BOOST

- College Track
- Determined To Succeed
- Equitas Academies
- GEAR UP 4 LA
- KIPP LA
- Los Angeles Unified
School District

- MPYD
- Partnership Scholars Program
- Synergy Academies
- United Friends of the Children
- Youth Policy Institute

GEAR UP CONFERENCE

Last July, we travelled to Washington D.C. and facilitated a storytelling training at the national GEAR UP conference.



100 VOLUNTEERS GIVING TUESDAY

In November, we recruited and trained 100 volunteers to share their stories with the youth of Los Angeles.



ANNENBERG ALCHEMY

In March, we participated in the Annenberg Foundation's Alchemy program where we gained professional development training on board development, storytelling, and fundraising strategies.



BOOST CONFERENCE

This April, we exhibited in Palm Springs at the BOOST (Best-Out-Of-School-Time) Conference and shared our message with thousands of educators from across the country.



MICROSOFT FUNDING

In April, we were awarded the Rich Walker award from Microsoft and received a \$10,000 grant.



UCLA SOCIAL ENTERPRISE WIN

In May, we beat out 9 other non-profits and won the UCLA Social Enterprise Academy venture competition with our pitch of our My Story Matters journals.



IMPACT



STUDENTS = 86,240



SCHOOLS = 253

Since 2013, we have impacted the following number of students and schools in Southern California.

**While we impacted fewer students than the previous 2 years, more of our students experienced our curriculum workshop programs as opposed to our one-time guest speaker program from previous years. Over 750 high school students were part of our pilot program that gave us direct feedback on our new personal narrative journals. These students left our program with the content that they will turn into powerful college personal statements.*

IN FY 2019, WE SUPPORTED HUNDREDS OF STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND EDUCATORS WITH STORYTELLING WORKSHOPS FROM GEAR UP 4 LA.



"The PLUS ME Project has been a perfect match for our grant. Their services have done so much more than just help prepare our students for writing their personal narratives for college applications. They have instilled a confidence in our students that has helped them realize the power and strength in their story, and to take pride in who they are, where they've been, and where they're going."

Lois Bramwell, GEAR UP 4 LA Project Director



"Thank you for teaching me that my story matters. This changed how I see things because I appreciate everything I have. Since your visit I have begun to write in a diary. I have also thanked my mom and dad for everything they've done for me and what they gave up to feed us. I also want to thank you for giving me advice on how to deal with my pain, I have started to express and open up more with my family. Turns out a lot of my cousins know what I'm going through and told me their stories. It really helped me to be able to feel stronger, now I know I can get through anything, even if it is a little rough. Thank you again for teaching me that every bad event can have its good side. You also reminded me that things happen for a reason."

Jessica, GEAR UP 4 LA student

**OVER 95% OF STUDENTS
RECOMMEND OUR PROGRAMS**

“

My name is Jose Lopez and I am currently a rising third year student at the University of California, Merced studying Political Science.

I am extremely grateful for the PLUS ME Project because they helped me realize that I had a story and that it can be used to inspire others. I was extremely moved by Richard's story when I heard him speak at a Southern California College Access Network event. He walked our cohort through a storytelling experience that I will never forget. It was in that moment when I realized I had a story that I wanted to share with students across Los Angeles.

I was invited to share my story for the first time with the PLUS ME Project at John Muir High School in Pasadena. I was terrified because I did not know how the students would react or if they would be interested. However, as I told my story, I noticed how engaged the students were by their facial expressions. Their eyes and mouths began to light up with interest in the same way I reacted to Richard's story. It was a wonderful experience letting other students know that if I made it into college, despite my hardships, then they can too.

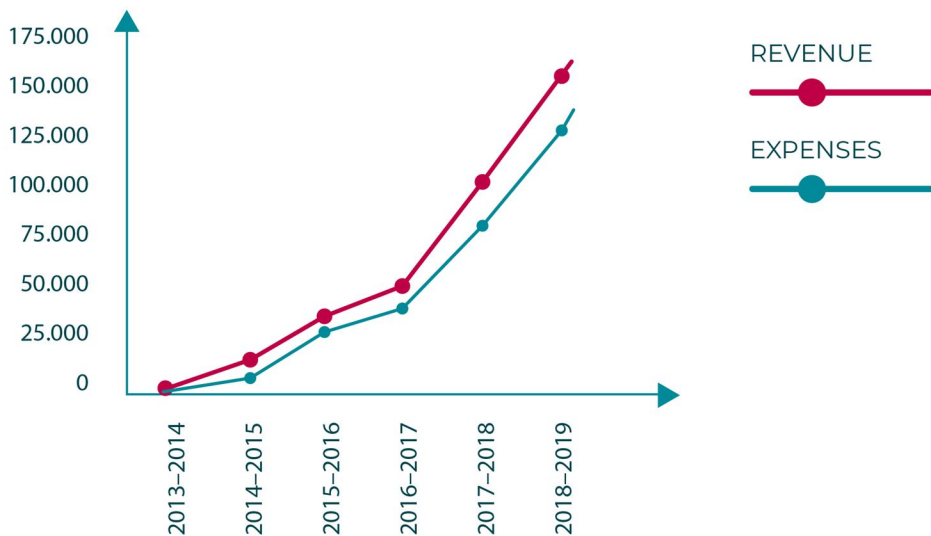


I want to continue sharing my story because I know it is difficult to talk about our struggles. I hope to relate with students whether it's experiencing domestic violence, coming from a low-income household, being a first-generation college student, or even facing academic barriers. The goal is to simply help students understand that their struggles should be used as a source of motivation and not discouragement.

I would like to thank the PLUS ME Project for allowing me to serve as a role model by using my story to uplift and motivate others.

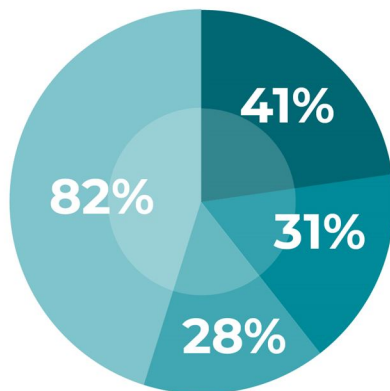
FINANCIALS GROWTH

FINANCIAL GROWTH OVER THE YEARS



FUNDING

- **41%** Foundation & Corporate Grants
- **31%** Earned Service & Product Income
- **28%** Individual Donors & Events
- **82%** of our revenue went directly to program support



SUPPORTERS

- Ahmanson Foundation
- Joseph Drown Foundation
- Microsoft
- UCLA Social Enterprise Academy

FOUNDATION & CORPORATE GRANT SUPPORTERS

- > \$1,000 : 5 donors
- \$500 – \$999 : 13 donors
- \$250 – \$499 : 10 donors
- < \$250 : 154 donors

We had 182 individual donors support PLUS ME in FY 2019

INDIVIDUAL DONORS

STRATEGIC PLAN



With financial support from Supervisor Hilda Solis and guidance from Executive Service Corps, our team developed our new 3-year strategic plan that will support in our growth and effectiveness through 2022.

Goal One:

Building & Sustaining Community Relationships

Establishing partnerships with more school districts, charter organizations, and nonprofit organizations serving youth in Southern California

Introducing our work to more foundations, corporations, and donors who have the capacity and interest to support our programs

Goal Two:**Strengthening Program Offerings & Impact**

Clarifying our comprehensive program model for potential partners

Developing a new data and evaluation system that will result in stronger understanding of our impact

Goal Three:**Developing Sustainable Organizational Infrastructure**

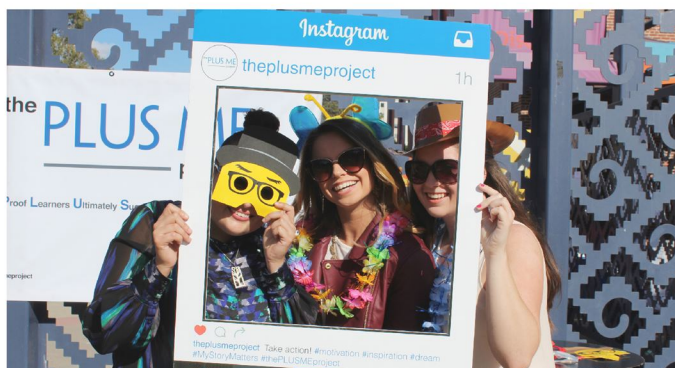
Hiring of new staff members and volunteers who can support implementation of plan

Adopting new policies and procedures that streamlines staffing productivity

Goal Four:**Improving Brand Awareness & Storytelling**

Creating new video content showcasing our impact in the community

Utilizing social media to better tell our story throughout Los Angeles and beyond



TEAM

Staff

Richard Reyes, Executive Director

Bethanee Epifani, Program Associate

Morgan Chitty, Development Associate

Marlene Lopez, Creative Associate

Board of Directors

Rosa Castro, Board President,
Metropolitan Water District of Southern
California

Caleigh Hu, IQVIA

Claire Kwon, BlackLine

Brian Campain, Board Vice President,
City Year

Sari Ladin-Sienne, City of Los Angeles

Walter Marlowe, Retired Financial Adviser

Tina Patel, Board Secretary,
UnitedHealthcare

Rosita Medina, Social Enterprise
Consultant

Jay Ng, Board Treasurer, Crescent Capital

Jennifer Surface, Sony Pictures

Salim Ahmed, UCLA Medical Center

Michelle Uvimolchai, Snap, Inc.

Beth Bythrow, Retired Educator

Jawaan Wallace, Marlborough School

Christian Entezari, California Charter
Schools Association

Junior Board

Sydney Correa, Cinelytic

Kevin Rajput, Canyon Partners

Kelly McConville, Freelance

Adhithya Ravi, Transom Consulting
Group

William Munch, James Hardie

Feroza Stegmann, Verser Technology

Angela Ovsepyan, Brighter Day

Joni Thissen, The CW Television Network

Tanya Puri, AECOM

Alice Wang, Moelis & Company



TWITTER
@PLUSMEPROJECT

INSTAGRAM
@THEPLUSMEPROJECT

FACEBOOK
/THEPLUSMEPROJECT

WWW.THEPLUSMEPROJECT.ORG

