

# 20 23



## Year in Review

### Center, Engage, Connect

As we bid farewell to 2023, it is with immense joy, gratitude, and humility that [Expanding the Bench® \(ETB\)](#) reflects on a year filled with continued growth and connection within our vibrant community. This year has been marked by significant milestones and shared achievements, all of which underscore our commitment to advancing [culturally responsive and equitable evaluation \(CREE\)](#) within the field.

ETB's strength lies in relationship building, and 2023 has seen the creation, nurturing, and strengthening of numerous connections. These bonds have flourished within the Expanding the Bench community and with Funders of Evaluation and evaluation partners — partnerships that are all indispensable to ETB's mission. After wrapping up a remarkable year, we celebrate the accomplishments of ETB and reflect on our lessons learned.

**We are thrilled to present our 2023 Year in Review and share the progress made within the Initiative and our goals as we move forward.**

# About ETB

The work of the ETB Initiative, led by [Change Matrix](#), is based upon the belief that the evaluation field has suppressed the perspectives and voices of Indigenous and racially/ethnically diverse communities who have been and/or are presently marginalized in the United States. By promoting CREE as best practice, ETB envisions a future in which evaluators have reclaimed the power necessary to influence social and racial justice in collaboration with funders and community members. Through our programmatic and field building efforts, we work to center racially and ethnically diverse evaluators, support funders in implementing CREE in their evaluation and investment practice as well as collaborating with CREE-practicing evaluators, and advance the practice of CREE in the field.



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## Meet the Team

# Advancing Culturally-responsive and Equitable Evaluation (ACE) Network

The [Advancing Culturally-responsive and Equitable \(ACE\) Evaluation Network](#) is a community of racially and ethnically diverse Evaluators who have experience in and a strong commitment to CREE. The Network serves to increase equitable opportunities and connections for ACE Members, including unique professional development opportunities, networking, and public profiles on the [ACE Database](#). The Database is a free resource available for anyone to search for and/or connect with Evaluators. In 2023, the Database expanded to 258 users from varying backgrounds and interests in utilization.

Following another successful rolling application process, ETB welcomed 13 new Members to the ACE Evaluation Network in 2023 — five in the spring and eight in the fall.

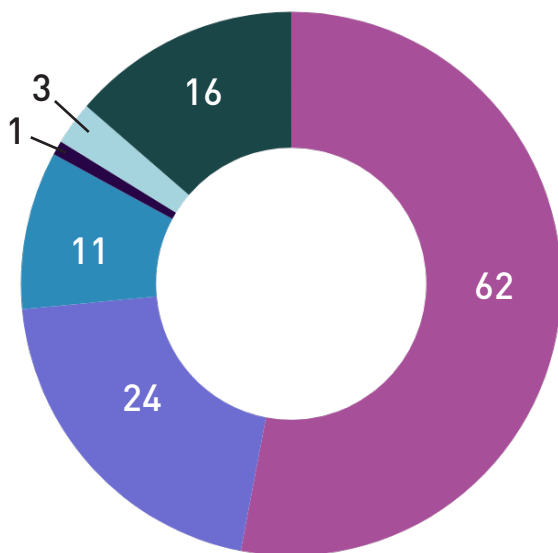
## ACE Evaluation Network Highlights

118

ACE Evaluation Network Members

258

Database Users



## ACE Evaluation Network Member Demographics

- Black, Sub-Saharan African, African American, Afro Caribbean, of the African Diaspora
- Hispanic, Latinx/a/e/o/@, Afro Latinx/a/e/o/@
- Asian, Asian American (including South, Southeast, and East Asian)
- Native American, American Indian, Alaska Native (indigenous to land that shares geography with the continental U.S.)
- Arab, Middle Eastern, Southwest Asian, North African
- Biracial or Multiracial

Based on qualitative feedback gathered from Members in 2022, the ACE Team focused on shifting programming to be responsive to Members' desires in 2023. This included an emphasis on networking and building strong relationships within the Network through professional and informal virtual settings.

*I started my journey as a consultant nearly five years ago. When I started this journey, I thought of it as a temporary gig. Over these five years, I partnered with some of the best thought partners in the world and learned a lot from each of these outstanding leaders. Expanding the Bench and the ACE Network has been a huge pillar of support through this journey. The team led by Angel Villalobos and Nancy Vang has helped me center my work in culturally responsive and equitable evaluation. Through their partnership and support, I served many clients in these five years, and I am thankful to my clients who supported me on this journey and believed in me.*

**ACE Evaluation Network**

## Open Mics

ACE Open Mics are intended to offer ACE Evaluation Network Members a space to informally gather; share stories, work-related or otherwise; and contribute to community building. Three Open Mics were offered in 2023 (June, July, and December), offering Members the opportunity to connect with each other and enjoy a good meal with DoorDash gift cards provided by ETB. Open Mics will continue to be offered in 2024.

## Professional Development Series

This year's ACE Professional Development Series featured virtual sessions led by ACE Members with topics focused on aspects of CREE, Culturally Responsive Indigenous Evaluation® (CRIE), evaluation practices, business development, and more to support professional growth and wellbeing of racially and ethnically diverse Evaluators. Several sessions were also opened to Leaders in Equitable Evaluation and Diversity (LEEAD) Alumni.

**April** Positionality, Methods, Power, and Learning by [Carlos Romero, MBA](#)

**May** Reproductive Justice & CREE in Action by [Nicole Clark, LMSW](#)

**June** Actionable Tools to Debias Evaluation Practice by [Deepika Andavarapu, AICP, PhD](#)

**August** Conducting Intervention Research Using an Indigenous Worldview by [Angelique Day, PhD, MSW](#)

**September** How to Write Evaluation Reports for Non-Evaluators by [Anane Olatunji, PhD](#)

**October** Data-Driven DEI: The Tools and Metrics You Need to Measure, Analyze, and Improve Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion by [Randal Pinkett, PhD](#)

## Key Takeaways

- The current iteration of the ACE Evaluation Network application was live for two years with three review cycles, and although we got closer to what we envisioned, we received feedback that it was still too cumbersome to complete. The ACE Team will be reviewing and updating the application, including shortening the form and providing more clarity around eligibility. We plan to reopen the updated version of the application in spring 2024.
- The current version of the Database is limited in its filter functionality and evaluation skillset list. In 2024, the ACE Team will review and update the Database to provide more options for Evaluators and Database Users.
- Though virtual connection is still valuable, there is a need and desire to have more in-person gatherings to strengthen the community. ETB will explore regional and national in-person gatherings in 2025 and beyond.

# Leaders in Equitable Evaluation and Diversity (LEEAD) Program

[Leaders in Equitable Evaluation and Diversity \(LEEAD\)](#) is a 15-month evaluation pathway program for diverse early to mid-career evaluators who will advance CREE in the field of evaluation. The program carries Scholars through a CREE curriculum, Practicum Site placement, ongoing mentorship, and professional development. In 2023, ETB welcomed 20 Scholars to Cohort 5 — a 33% increase from previous years.

## LEEAD Program Highlights

**20**

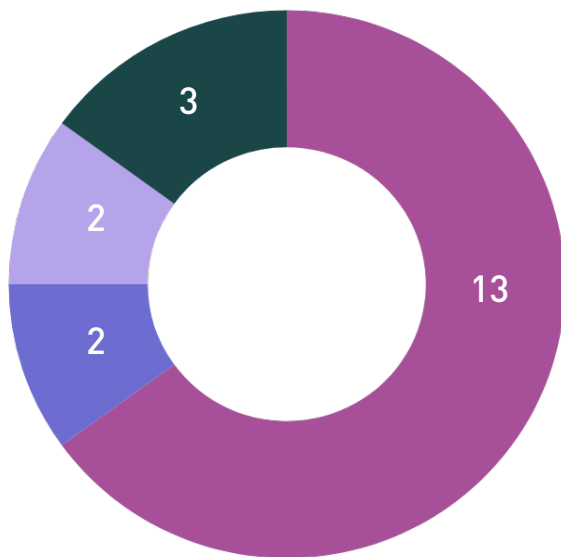
Cohort 5 Scholars

**10**

Masters Degrees

**10**

Doctorate Degrees



## LEEAD Cohort 5 Scholar Demographics

- Black, Sub-Saharan African, African American, Afro Caribbean, of the African Diaspora
- Hispanic, Latinx/a/e/o/®, Afro Latinx/a/e/o/®
- Asian, Asian American (including South, Southeast, and East Asian)
- Biracial or Multiracial

In an effort to be more inclusive of earlier career evaluators, the LEEAD Team decreased the required years of experience from 3-7 years to 1-3 years. To coincide with this change, the eligibility for Mentors was also reduced from 15 years of experience to 10. This change allowed LEEAD to reach talented evaluators that are ready and eager to advance their CREE practice.

Scholars and Mentors had the opportunity to meet in person to kick off the program at the LEEAD Symposium in Baltimore, MD. This gathering allowed the cohort to get to know each other in informal and structured settings.



*I most valued meeting folks and building relationships in person. It really was invaluable to be able to do so. Even beyond work relationships, I see potential friendships budding and I am very excited to build and join a network of folks who have a passion for CREE, use of data, social justice, and liberation, and transformation.*

**Cohort 5 Scholar**

## LEEAD Curriculum

Based on Alumni feedback, the LEEAD Team completely revamped the LEEAD curriculum and held it in-house. ETB contracted with LEEAD Alum [Tanisha Tate Woodson, PhD](#) to develop a new CREE-focused curriculum in partnership with the LEEAD Team and feedback from the [ETB Advisory Team's LEEAD Workgroup](#). Dr. Woodson provided invaluable insight as an alum of the program. Broken into two



courses spanning from September to December 2023, the new curriculum focused on the theory and foundations of CREE and influences of other equity-focused paradigms, and the practical application of CREE principles. The synchronous courses were delivered on the teach:able platform with weekly live sessions featuring components led by the Scholars and guest instructors from the ETB community.

## Key Takeaways

- Though it is difficult to tailor content to the varying levels of experience that Scholars enter the program with, adapting the curriculum has been successful overall for this cohort. Leaning on the perspective and expertise of a LEEAD Alum in the development and instruction has been invaluable to experience of Scholars.
- Feedback from Cohort 5 suggests that the Adaptive Leadership model that has been historically used in the leadership professional development components of the program could benefit from the addition of diverse perspectives. In 2024, the LEEAD Team will be working to develop a LEEAD Leadership model that will incorporate culturally relevant frameworks.
- Relationships and engagement among the cohort benefit from in-person gatherings. The in-person Symposium to kick off the program set the tone for connections and relationship building that has carried into the curriculum, mentorship, and other events such as the ETB Gathering.
- Scholars and Mentors appreciate the adaptability of the program in being responsive to their needs and integrating relevancy in the field of evaluation to the curriculum.

# Fundraising and Field Building

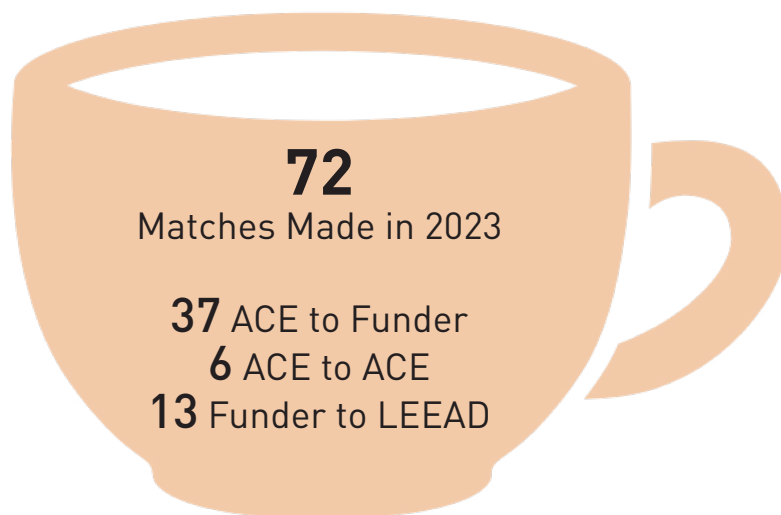
The Fundraising and Field Building efforts of Expanding the Bench are vital to the sustainability of the Initiative and our ability to offer free programming to racially and ethnically diverse evaluators. In 2023, ETB continued to implement the [Pricing Model](#), allowing Funders to support the Initiative through annual subscriptions or à la carte services.

Through field building programming, ETB offers Funders and others in the field opportunities to learn about CREE, build relationships with and partner with CREE-practicing evaluators, and engage in a community of peers who are advocating for increasing CREE practice in their own organizations.

## Fundraising & Field Building Highlights

18

Subscribers in 2023



## Coffee Breaks

[ETB Coffee Breaks](#) were designed to connect ACE Evaluation Network Members and Funders of Evaluation interested in CREE in an informal, get-to-know-you setting. Four times a year, the ETB Team pairs ACE Evaluators with either Funders or fellow ACE Network Members for a 1:1 chat based on focus areas and interests. In the final quarter of 2023, we opened this opportunity to LEEAD Alumni to meet with Funders or ACE Evaluators.

*I have found Coffee Breaks very useful ... to connect with a diverse set of evaluators, many of whom I would have not met otherwise. Matchmaking by the ETB staff has made the ... process very easy. These conversations have helped us broaden our network and informed our evolving work to advance and practice culturally responsive and equitable evaluation at [the Foundation]. ...Many of the Coffee Break conversations are more than a sales pitch but truly a dialogue for us to learn about each other's practices and approaches to CREE, making the dynamics and relationships between evaluators and funders just a little more equitable.*

**2023 Subscriber**

*I plan to use the information from the CREE Learning Series to do better evaluation ... More specifically, I now have the ability to make a better case for CREE when developing proposals and doing the work.*

**2023 CREE Learning Series Participant**

### CREE Learning Series Highlights

**111**

Registrants

**10**

Organizations

## CREE Learning Series

ETB hosted the [CREE Learning Series](#) for the third year in a row. This three-part video course educates learners about CREE and engages them in live discussions. This iteration featured numerous shifts, most notably the shift to the online learning platform teach:able. Learners watched video content, accessed resources, and engaged with others on discussion boards. The ETB Team changed the structure of the

live discussions, integrating an introductory session and offering shorter sessions that prioritized small group, peer-to-peer learning. The series culminated with a CREEcess session, providing participants with the opportunity to engage with learning guides and subject matter experts. This year, ETB piloted using paid LinkedIn marketing promotion to reach new audiences.

## ETB Equity Consultation

[ETB Equity Consultation \(EEC\)](#) supports Funders to integrate CREE with the expert consultation of experienced CREE evaluators. EEC is intended to create a shared learning space for Funders and evaluators to contribute to dismantling power structures in evaluation. While slow to start, with three consultations completed in 2023, we have learned a lot about the value of this consultation and how we can make it more accessible to Funders.

## Funder Community of Practice

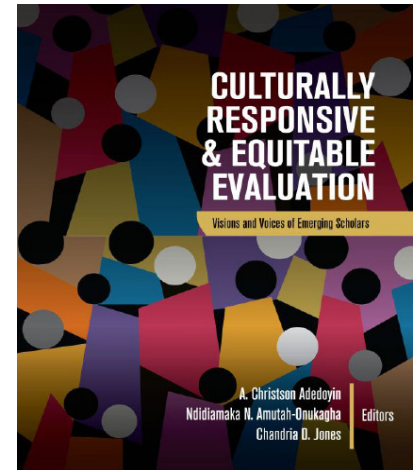
In 2023, ETB hosted the second Funder Community of Practice (CoP) — an opportunity for Funders to engage with each other and collectively consider how to successfully embed CREE into their organizational strategies and practices. This CoP focused heavily on the RFP and recruitment process. Toward the end of the year, ACE Evaluation Network Members joined a CoP session to contribute to a conversation around shifting the culture of request for proposals. Funders walked away from CoP sessions inspired and grateful to hear from evaluators' experiences.

## CREE Book

[Culturally Responsive and Equitable Evaluation: Visions and Voices of Emerging Scholars](#) — a first of its kind book on CREE edited by LEEAD Alumni [A. Christson Adedoyin, PhD](#), [Ndidiamaka Amutah-Onukagha, PhD](#), and [Chandria Jones, PhD](#) — was published in 2023. This groundbreaking book brings together the collective wisdom of 70



influential authors with diverse perspectives and expertise, many of whom are part of the ETB community, and presents the theoretical foundations and practical applications of CREE. Current and former ETB Team members Chyenne Mallinson, Rachele Espiritu, Sandra Silva, and London Losey were honored to contribute to the publication. ETB gifted each Cohort 5 Scholar and Mentor with a copy as the new LEEAD curriculum pulled from the text.



## ETB Gathering and In-Person Conferences

As the world returns to a sense of normalcy, ETB took advantage of the opportunity to gather in person and connect with community members at various conferences throughout the year. ETB Team members and over 25 ETB community members presented at the Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO), American Evaluation Association (AEA), Center for Culturally Responsive Evaluation and Assessment (CREA), and other evaluation conferences. The numerous presentations at national conferences are a testament to their hard work and dedication, shaping the landscape of evaluation and pushing boundaries to foster equity and justice.



ETB had the pleasure of hosting a happy hour at the CREA Conference in Chicago, IL and our second annual ETB Gathering at AEA in Indianapolis, IN. Our Team was excited to offer the opportunity for LEEAD Scholars, Mentors, and Alumni; ACE Evaluation Network Members; Funders of Evaluation; and evaluation partners to come together in celebration of CREE.

### Key Takeaways

- ETB needs more engagement from Funders; there is a necessary shift in behavior change still needed to encourage engagement in new and creative ways, including championing CREE by “inviting” a friend.
- EEC needs adapted strategies to be more successful. In 2024, we plan to coordinate more meet-and-greet events with Consultants and Funders and provide concrete examples of how Funders can utilize EEC. The ETB Team will also assign consultant teams to Funders upon subscription rather than by request to encourage more engagement.
- ETB can set the stage for and expand the reach of CREE in the field of evaluation through resource curation, communication and dissemination strategies, and continued relationship-building amongst ETB Partners and CREE practitioners.

# Looking Forward

## Center, Engage, Connect

In 2024, we reaffirm our commitment to establishing Expanding the Bench as a bridge to culturally responsive and equitable evaluation for all in the evaluation ecosystem. Together, we will serve as connectors, building a village that elevates community voice and disrupts traditional evaluation practices rooted in oppression. This learning community will continue to instill CREE practice into every facet of our evaluation work and programming. We look forward to actively expanding the ETB community with an emphasis on growing the ACE Evaluation Network, connecting with organizations that are not yet aligned with us, and reaching new funders to spread CREE practice. Building on our work from 2023, the ETB Team will be revising our Theory of Change to reflect both the impact of our programming and our efforts to advance CREE. ETB will also be focusing on evaluating our impact on the broader evaluation field. We understand that relationship and community-building play a huge role in equity, but there is a lack of supporting evidence to prove how this impacts the evaluation ecosystem. We will be exploring avenues to demonstrate how ETB's relationship-building efforts impact the field and contribute to power sharing, especially with racially and ethnically diverse evaluators.

In 2024 we will continue to laser focus on **centering** evaluators of racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds. We will **engage** the entire evaluation ecosystem to promote and implement CREE practice, and we will **connect** individuals in a thriving community. We are committed to expanding and growing to new heights. Together, we look forward to the impact we will see and articulate in 2024 and beyond. Your dedication, collaboration, and passion are the driving forces propelling us toward a future where cultural responsiveness and equity define every aspect of evaluation work. Here's to another year of growth, connection, and impactful change.



ETB would like to thank our [Advisory Team](#) for their constant partnership and strategic direction that helps make our work impactful.

We extend our gratitude to our 2023 Subscribers and Funding Partners who work to be CREE champions. Your support is vital as we strive to bridge diverse backgrounds and experiences, uniting individuals with a common goal of advancing the mission of ETB.

Annie E Casey Foundation | Barr Foundation | Blue Shield of California Foundation | California Health Care Foundation  
David and Lucile Packard Foundation | Ford Foundation | Hewlett Foundation | Hilton Foundation | James Irvine Foundation  
Kresge Foundation | Lumina Foundation | Nellie Mae Education Foundation | Omidyar Network | Pew Charitable Trusts  
REDF | Robert Wood Johnson Foundation | St. David's Foundation | Walton Family Foundation | Wellspring Philanthropic Fund