

20 YEAR IN REVIEW

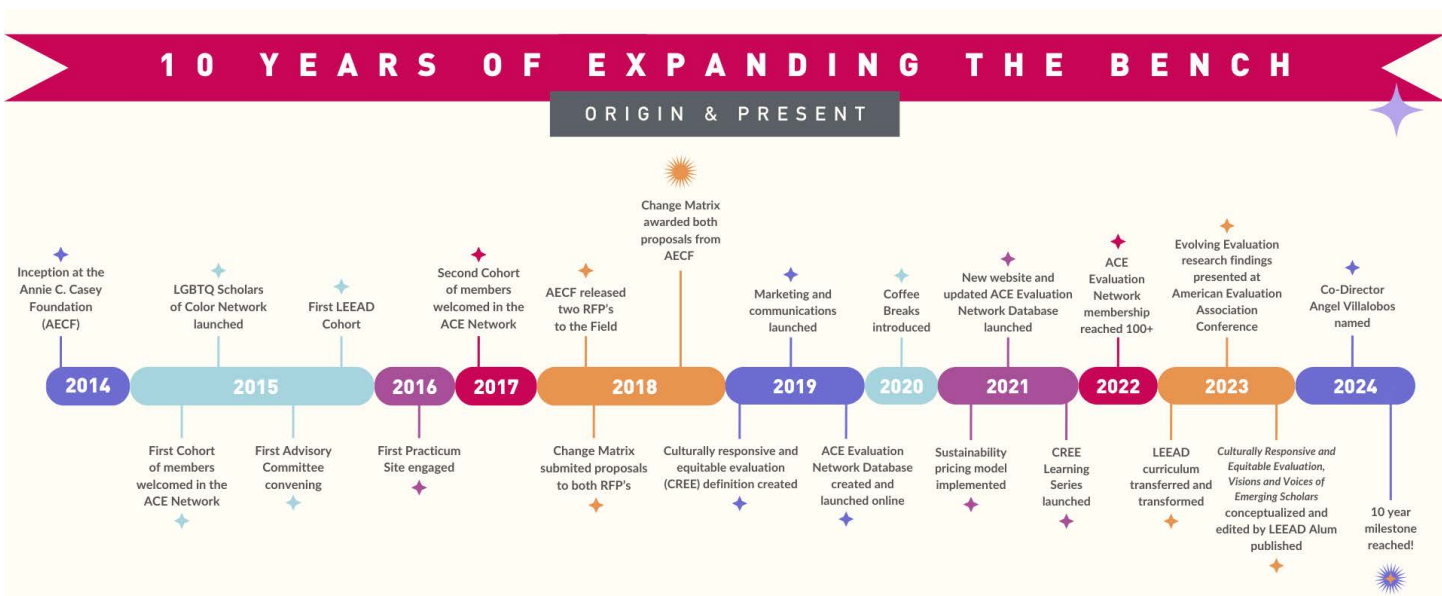


Celebrating 10 Years of Expanding the Bench

This year, [Expanding the Bench® \(ETB\)](#) celebrated its 10-year anniversary, marking a transformative journey of our commitment to centering racially and ethnically diverse evaluators and supporting the practice of [culturally responsive and equitable evaluation \(CREE\)](#). Since the beginning of ETB’s journey in 2014, we have been fortunate to have been able to build a dynamic and collaborative community to learn and engage with, foster relationships between funders and diverse evaluators, and incubate change in the field of evaluation.

A decade later, we have grown with an eager network of partners ready to engage in CREE to build stronger systems of change across the country. As we reflect on 2024, this milestone anniversary also finds us in the spirit of growth as we explore new horizons and plan for the new year. ETB looks forward to another decade of growth, innovation, and impact as we continue to build community and shape a more equitable and inclusive field.

We are thrilled to present our 2024 Year in Review and share the progress made within the Initiative and our goals as we move forward.



About Expanding the Bench

The ETB Initiative, led by [Change Matrix](#), supports the practice of CREE by evaluators, funders of evaluation, and partnered community members. Because of ongoing injustice, we specifically uplift evaluators who are racially and ethnically diverse. ETB envisions a reality where power is distributed to lead change toward justice — a field in which evaluators have reclaimed the power necessary to influence social and racial justice in collaboration with funders and community members.

ETB was created to address the lack of representative voices among evaluators and enhance and encourage the broad practice of CREE. The Initiative employs a three-pronged approach to achieve its mission:

1. Centering evaluators: expanding a pathway for diverse, historically marginalized evaluators;
2. Engaging all in CREE practice: promoting the practice of CREE; and
3. Connecting all participants in the field: increasing field awareness and demand amongst funders of evaluation for diverse, historically marginalized, and currently under-supported evaluators who practice CREE and providing support to build community.

Meet the Team



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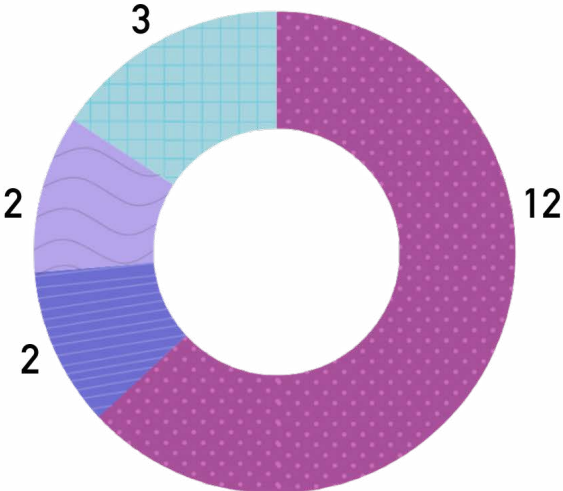
Leaders in Equitable Evaluation and Diversity (LEEAD) Program



[Leaders in Equitable Evaluation and Diversity \(LEEAD\)](#) is an evaluation training program designed to develop a pathway for diverse emerging leaders in CREE. The program carries Scholars through a CREE curriculum, Practicum Site placement, ongoing mentorship, and professional development. In 2024, 19 Scholars completed the program and culminated as Cohort 5 at the American Evaluation Association’s (AEA) annual conference.

LEEAD Cohort 5 Scholar Demographics

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



In early 2024, Scholars were matched with Practicum Sites to engage in thought partnership and application of CREE in evaluation work. Surveyed Practicum Sites (86%) feel that their partnership with Cohort 5 Scholars added to their ability to incorporate a CREE lens to their projects. Based on their LEEAD experience, Sites value the importance of using a CREE approach (86%) and intend to apply a CREE approach to other project work (85%).

In reflection of the mentorship component of the LEEAD Program, 88% of Cohort 5 Scholars found the relationship with their Mentor valuable to their LEEAD experience. 69% of surveyed Cohort 5 Mentors found their mentoring relationship valuable and intend to continue their connection with their Scholar.

The majority (88%) of surveyed Scholars were satisfied with the LEEAD experience and intend to continue relationships with their cohort mates. 75% felt that LEEAD contributed significantly to their overall CREE competencies.

	Cohort 5 Scholars	Masters Degrees	Doctorate Degrees	Total LEEAD Scholars since 2015 inception
LEEAD Program Highlights:	19	10	9	81



“LEEAD provides hope and concrete pathways for evaluators of diverse racial backgrounds to advance in the field while maintaining their commitment to social justice and equity. This kind of support is invaluable for diversifying and strengthening the evaluation profession.”

- Cohort 5 Scholar



Key Takeaways

Future Shifts

- ▶ Scholars are coming into LEEAD with more CREE experience and expertise that they are able to leverage during the program.
- ▶ Mentors enjoy witnessing Scholars blossom in their CREE journeys and enjoy being in relationship with Scholars outside their 1:1 pairing.
- ▶ There is value in engaging a mix of small emerging businesses and larger organizations with an interest in deeply embedding CREE into their current operations and future projects.

- ▶ Explore more relationship building techniques to build a sense of community within the cohort early on, including building bridges across cohorts to connect current Scholars with LEEAD Alumni.
- ▶ Engage more ETB community members in LEEAD as Mentors, Practicum Sites, and curriculum guest speakers.
- ▶ Adapt the curriculum to introduce Scholars to more practical applications of CREE principles earlier in their learning journey.

Advancing Culturally-responsive and Equitable Evaluation (ACE) Network

The [Advancing Culturally-responsive and Equitable \(ACE\) Evaluation Network](#) is a dynamic community of racially and ethnically diverse evaluators committed to advancing CREE. ACE strengthens engagement for its members through peer-to-peer and funder networking and learning opportunities, as well as featured profiles on our public ACE Database to showcase evaluators' skills and connect them with external partners.

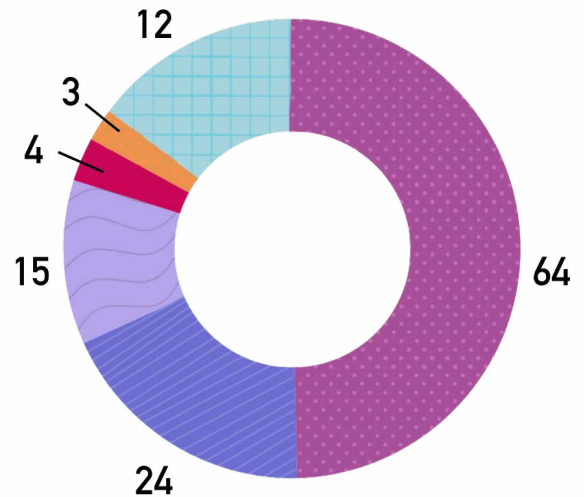
In 2024, ACE Members engaged in professional development like the interactive virtual session hosted in March by Member [Nicole Robinson, PhD](#) focused on movement leaders, grassroots advocates, and organizers. ACE Members were also invited to attend professional development events held by LEEAD.

This year, ETB welcomed four new ACE Members! As we worked to grow the network, the ACE Team also streamlined the application process to get better insights on the professional backgrounds of applicants and shorten the form by removing non-relevant sections. The team will continue to test, revise, and incorporate feedback to the ACE application to attract, engage, and support evaluators passionate about advancing equity.

“There are many [evaluators], I call them warriors, who are in these evaluation streets that really hold you accountable and hold you in space that you don’t even think about, and that’s one of the things I treasure about this Network.”

– ACE Evaluation Network Member

ACE Evaluation Network Member Demographics



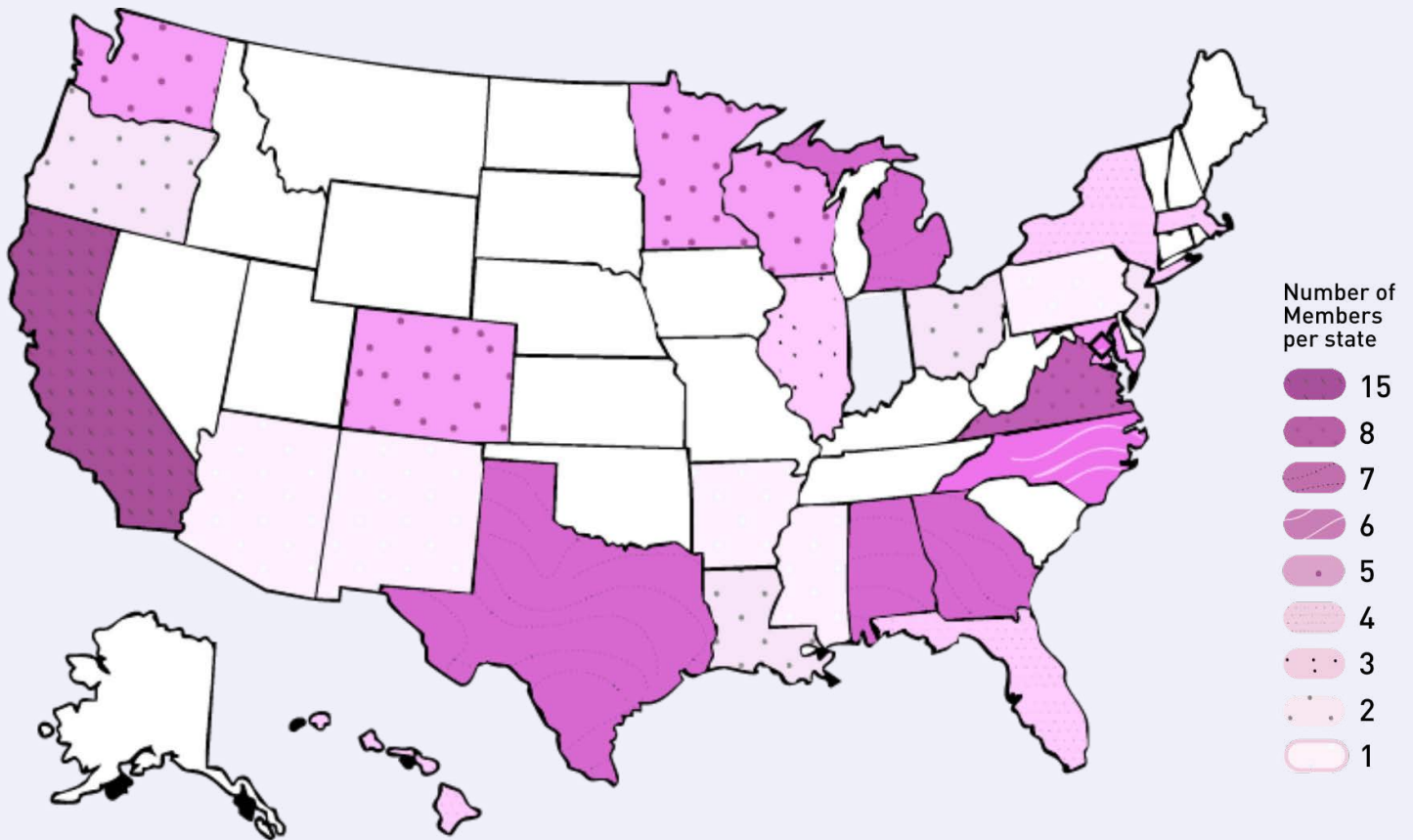
ACE Evaluation Network Members Database Users

ACE Evaluation Network Highlights:

122

282

ACE Evaluation Network Member Geographics



Key Takeaways

- ▲ The need for connection, collaboration, and community are still vital in virtual spaces as a network with evaluators across the U.S.
- ▲ The Network is actively moving toward co-creating Member-led spaces to strengthen relationships, deepen evaluation practices, and build collective knowledge of CREE.
- ▲ Efforts like professional development sessions, ACE Member Highlights, and increased Database usage continue to amplify the voices and profiles of Members within and beyond the ETB community.

Future Shifts

- ▲ Co-create the Network with ACE Member through a pilot cohort that identifies Network Champions to shape programming, strategy, and its continued evolution.
- ▲ Address virtual burnout by coordinating local in-person spaces to strengthen connections, foster collaboration, and advance CREE.
- ▲ Reimagine professional development and collaboration through creative formats, technology, and non-traditional methods to inspire engagement.

Fundraising and Field Building

The Fundraising and Field Building efforts of ETB are vital to the sustainability of the Initiative and our ability to offer free programming to racially and ethnically diverse evaluators. ETB continues to implement the [Pricing Model](#), allowing funders to support the Initiative through annual subscriptions or à la carte services. Through field building, ETB offers funders and allies in the field opportunities to learn about CREE, build relationships and partner with CREE-practicing evaluators, and engage with a community of peers who are advocating for CREE practice in their own organizations. We also offer events to learn more about ETB, such as the first Open House in June that invited evaluators, partners, and funders to explore the Initiative’s programming. The event emphasized the importance of CREE and provided opportunities to engage with ETB through various networks and programs.

CREE Learning Series

The CREE Learning Series returned for its fourth year from June to December, featuring a three-part video format introducing CREE to 38 beginner-to-intermediate learners. This edition offered a hybrid asynchronous structure, allowing participants to engage with content at their own pace through the teach:able platform after live introductory sessions. Learners also joined three CREEcess sessions for group discussions and reflections with learning guides. The series concluded with Connection and CREEflection, a final discussion with content experts to reflect on participants’ CREE journey and provide guidance on future application of CREE.

Culturally Responsive Indigenous Evaluation®

On July 30, 2024, ETB hosted *Being a Good Relative in Your Organization: Learning and Yakama Storywork*, a Culturally Responsive and Indigenous Evaluation® (CRIE) workshop. Led by [Dr. Michelle Jacob](#) and Dr. Gregory Sutterli of the Yakama Nation, the workshop drew on a resource guide co-created with [Carol Craig](#), inviting attendees to explore the power of Yakama storytelling and reflect on its relevance to their roles as researchers, evaluators, and learners.

Coffee Breaks

Coffee Breaks provide one-on-one spaces for evaluators in the ETB community to connect with peers and funders, strengthening the relationship between practice and community. In 2024, ETB hosted its first Coffee Break Mixer, introducing the concept to funders of evaluation, ACE Network Members, and LEEAD Alumni. Two subsequent Coffee Breaks facilitated 37 matches, fostering meaningful connections across the evaluation community.

Subscribers

CREE Learning
Series Registrants

Open House
Registrants

Fundraising & Field Building Highlights:

14

38

23

"I would recommend ETB Coffee breaks to my fellow ACE Evaluation Network. I learned so much from both of my coffee breaks and the intel was relational, encouraging, and applicable to my company."

- ACE Evaluation Network Member

ETB Equity Consultations

ETB Equity Consultations (EEC) are shared learning consultative spaces for funders and evaluators from the ACE Evaluation Network to contribute to dismantling power structures in evaluation. In its second pilot year, evaluators support funders with integrating CREE in their evaluation and organizational practices in three consultations. In future iterations, ETB aims to provide follow-up spaces between evaluators and funders and explore measures to understand the long-term impact of EEC and areas for continued improvement.

ETB Gathering

Evaluators, funders, and CREE allies came together for the annual ETB Gathering held on October 23, 2024, in Portland, Oregon during the AEA Conference. This year, ETB partnered with [Engage R+D](#) and [Informing Change](#), in collaboration with the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#), to host the Gathering. The event, attended by more than 134 people and opened to all AEA Conference attendees, celebrated 10 years of ETB, the introduction of new evaluators into the ACE Evaluation Network, and the culmination of Cohort 5 LEEAD Scholars. Attendees participated in an interactive exhibit organized by our co-hosts, mingled, and danced. The excitement around this year's event reinforces our decision to keep it open to the public and held in partnership with members of the ETB community. Looking ahead, the ETB Team is considering hosting a separate event for the LEEAD Culmination and ACE Member welcome prior to the ETB Gathering.

Key Takeaways

- ▶ Peer connection opportunities prove to be valuable, and we see continued success in connecting evaluators with funders.
- ▶ The field is consistently evolving, and ETB must continue to adapt our programming to best meet the needs and desires of the community.
- ▶ Funders and evaluators are increasingly interested in shifting from learning about the principles to the hands-on application of CREE in their work.

Future Shifts

- ▶ Consider a different approach to facilitating peer-to-peer and funder connections in the next year, including reimagining Coffee Breaks.
- ▶ Offer more open-access opportunities to expand our reach and engage with more evaluators and funders interested in ETB and CREE.
- ▶ Strengthen and enhance long-term engagement with ETB Community Members through evolving programming and feedback loops.

Looking Forward

The ETB Team is immensely proud to celebrate the accomplishments of the first ten years of ETB and so grateful to the extraordinary community members whose invaluable contributions to the Initiative, CREE, and the field of evaluation have brought ETB to where it is today. We are looking forward to the next 10 years of growth and transformation, starting with robust plans for 2025!

Goals for 2025

Launch Expanding the Bench: Regional | Inspired by the feedback ETB has received from ACE Members regarding a desire to connect with other CREE evaluators and funders more local to them, we are launching Expanding the Bench: Regional in 2025. With a goal of facilitating the creation of regional gatherings, resource sharing, and relationship building amongst evaluators and funders, ETB: Regional will pilot in the south (Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi).

Debut Theory of Change | After many rounds of iteration and Advisory Team feedback, we will be debuting ETB's updated Theory of Change on the website in the new year.

Reimagine LEEAD | Based on feedback from Alumni and Cohort 5 participants, the LEEAD Program will make significant changes for Cohort 6, including updating the eligibility to 3-5 years of experience and revising the curriculum to reflect this change.

Redesign the CREE Learning Series | The ETB Team will be restructuring the current series as well as building a CREE Learning Series 2.0 that offers learners more focused content on the application of CREE.

Expand Open Access Events | ETB will focus on offering more open access events, like the Culturally Responsive Indigenous Evaluation (CRIE)© series, in an effort to expand our reach.

Kick Off 2025-2026 ETB Evaluation Plan | In 2025, ETB will develop an evaluation plan to assess our programming and operations, with the goal of identifying opportunities to strengthen equity and impact.

Explore Publishing Opportunities | ETB will explore avenues to contribute to CREE thought leadership, including contributing to journals and CREE-centered blog series in collaboration with national partners in the field. The team will also explore self-publishing through the Initiative and offering this route to ETB community members.

Build on the Success of 2024's ETB Gathering | Building on the success of this year's ETB Gathering event, we will continue collaborating with individuals and organizations who are engaged in or supportive of CREE. We aim to expand these efforts by reaching new audiences and deepening our engagement with those dedicated to advancing CREE.

“Through Expanding the Bench, I’ve been honored to learn from ETB’s perspectives which seep into my work and influence my practice and my team’s practice in non-obvious, and sometimes obvious ways. We’ve had the great fortune to serve as a Practicum Site for LEED Scholars. I feel like my practice has always leveled up. I feel so held by a vast number of evaluators and other folks committed to equitable evaluative work.”
– Funder of Evaluation



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

We extend our gratitude to ETB’s 2024 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
Hartford Community Foundation for Public Giving | Hewlett Foundation | Hilton Foundation
James Irvine Foundation | Kresge Foundation | Nellie Mae Education Foundation
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation | St. David’s Foundation | Walton Family Foundation
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