

Expanding the Bench



2020

YEAR IN REVIEW

As most organizations do, the Expanding the Bench® (ETB) Team kicked off 2020 with a clear set of goals: increasing our visibility, demonstrating the value of diverse evaluators using culturally responsive and equitable evaluation (CREE) in their work, and expanding the number of evaluators using CREE. However, no one could have predicted the global pandemic that would soon follow, the national outcry over racism and injustice, an election that might be one of the most divisive in history, and the impact each of these elements would have on all aspects of our lives. Through it all, ETB has adapted, seized opportunities, and supported a community that came together to learn, connect, and commit to our quest for equity in the evaluation ecosystem.

We are pleased to offer you our 2020 Year in Review that underscores the work we've done, what we're doing, and our goals moving forward under our key priorities of People, Practice, and Field.

PEOPLE

Because the evaluation field does not traditionally include the perspectives and voices of diverse communities who have been historically excluded and oppressed, ETB is strengthening, diversifying, and increasing access to evaluators.

This year alone, the Leaders in Equitable Evaluation and Diversity (LEEAD) Program graduated **15 Scholars** as part of Cohort 3, increasing the **total number of LEEAD Alumni to 50**. And **93% of Cohort 3 Scholars** agreed that **LEEAD helped them advance their career goals**, with **73% reporting that they have been offered opportunities as a result of their CREE knowledge or participation in LEEAD**. We anticipate opening applications in 2021 and welcoming a **brand-new cohort of 15 Scholars!**

As a result of the LEEAD Program:



50

total LEEAD Alumni at the end of 2020, 15 of which graduated in 2020



93%

of Cohort 3 LEEAD Scholars agreed the Program helped them advance their career goals



73%

of Cohort 3 LEEAD Scholars have been offered opportunities

At the end of 2020, we welcomed **16 new Members** to the Advancing Culturally-responsive and Equitable (ACE) Evaluation Network—**adding to the existing 82 evaluators within the Network.**



98

diverse evaluators make up the ACE Evaluation Network at the end of 2020

The 15 graduated LEEAD Cohort 3 Scholars



PEOPLE

In a year devoid of in-person meetings, we didn't let that hinder us. We coordinated several virtual networking opportunities for the ACE Evaluation Network—like our **two virtual Funder:Evaluator Networking Sessions**—the “**Annual ACE Evaluation Network Gathering,**” and **89 virtual one-to-one “ETB Coffee Breaks,**” throughout June and September. Our ETB Coffee Breaks resulted in connections between Funders of Evaluation and CREE-focused ACE Evaluation Network Members. They were so successful that **100% of participating ACE Evaluators and Funders said that they had plans to sign up for more!**

I really appreciate the connectivity [the Coffee Break] provides with evaluators who I would not necessarily have an opportunity to meet otherwise. And I love that it provides me a way to make them feel welcome calling and chatting with me, since I've heard from so many that it's intimidating to get connected with foundations.

ANONYMOUS
Funder of Evaluation



2

Funder:Evaluator
Networking Sessions



89

virtual one-to-one
ETB Coffee Breaks



100%

of Coffee Break
participants intend
to sign up for more

I got quick and generous support from [the ETB Team] this summer for communicating about upcoming research solicitations as part of my work. Both that earlier announcement and the later RFP that I posted yielded conversations and bids from researchers of color and with CREE skills I would otherwise have been unable to reach.

KERI-NICOLE DILLMAN, PHD
Independent Evaluation & Learning Consultant
ACE Evaluation Network Database User

Overall, our efforts resulted in a **fivefold increase in the ACE Evaluation Network Database's users** who signed up to search for and solicit a diverse CREE evaluator in 2020.

PRACTICE

Because systemic racism, in tandem with the primary reliance on traditional evaluation procurement, creates biased narratives that uphold racial injustices, ETB is developing and promoting the evolving practice of CREE.

This year, **all 15 Cohort 3 LEEAD Scholars and 93% of LEEAD Practicum Sites valued the CREE knowledge they gained through participation.** In fact, they reported either applying CREE concepts or the intention to apply them to their project work, and some Scholars integrated CREE into instruction of undergraduate and graduate courses, developed training modules around CREE, and presented about it at conferences or on webinars.



100%

of Cohort 3 Scholars appreciated the CREE knowledge gained through participation



93%

of Practicum Sites valued the CREE knowledge gained through their LEEAD participation

We actually learned a lot about CREE through this process. Along with the Scholar, four of us worked as a team. Two of us had little background in CREE and this was an invaluable experience we would not have had otherwise.

ANONYMOUS
LEEAD Practicum Site Partner

Five ACE Evaluation Network Members with 15+ years of CREE experience served as LEEAD Mentors for our Cohort 3 Scholars, helping to build a shared understanding of the practice and theory behind CREE.

In 2020, we also offered **eight Community of Practice (CoP) meetings** for ACE Evaluation Network Members and others to explore how they are currently practicing CREE and to identify opportunities where they might partner to grow and deepen their practice, as well as support the CREE practice of others. In addition, **three ACE Evaluation Network Members are serving as subject matter experts for the CREE Learning Series** that will launch in early 2021.



5

ACE Evaluation Network Members served as LEEAD Mentors for Cohort 3

PRACTICE

It's clear that CREE is a valuable approach that is becoming more visible, too, with **1,718 visits to our CREE definition on the ETB website** in 2020. Recognizing that CREE is uniquely tailored depending on the purpose of an evaluation and its context, in 2020, ETB community members, Funders of Evaluation, and Evaluation Partners all came together to engage as both learners and providers of knowledge. **ETB hosted CREE-specific events** including three multi-part learning series for ACE Evaluation Network Members—"Adapting CREE When Social Distancing" series, the "Adaptive Leadership Series" for LEEAD Scholars, and the ACE Evaluation Network's "Learning Table" sessions. In each of these series, Members were given the opportunity to share their evaluation work with one another and seek feedback from their Network peers to improve their work.

ETB CREE events for learners and providers of knowledge:



**Adapting CREE
When Social
Distancing Series**



**Adaptive
Leadership
Series**



**Learning
Table
Sessions**

[I plan to use the information from the Adapting CREE When Social Distancing Series to] continue the effort to integrate CREE approaches and methods into my organization (a small research and evaluation firm). I am the only evaluator of color, so being a part of [ETB] is such a gift to my work, not just for me but for my entire company. COVID-19 brought uncovered so many issues, and now is the time that we need equity and inclusion in our STEM evaluation work more than ever.

**ANONYMOUS
ETB Community Member**

In each of these series, Members were given the opportunity to share their evaluation work with one another and seek feedback from their Network peers to improve their work.

FIELD

Our experience has shown that good relationships are key to building trust and creating new opportunities for diverse evaluators. Because we value knowledge-sharing and leadership, ETB is contributing thought leadership and growing a network of allies who are contributing to the field.

In 2020, **87% of the Cohort 3 LEEAD Scholars** saw themselves as leaders in their role as evaluators and collaborated with other cohort members and their LEEAD Mentors to present at conferences and write articles and book chapters about ETB. And **93% of the Cohort 3 LEEAD Scholars** were able to expand professional networks directly because of ETB's work. Indeed, strong relationships were established across all Cohort 3 LEEAD participants in 2020, and **93% of the Cohort 3 Scholars** agreed that their mentoring relationship was valuable to their LEEAD experience. The same percentage of **Mentors** intend to continue their relationship with their LEEAD Scholar.

Of Cohort 3 LEEAD Scholars:



87%

saw themselves as leaders in their roles as evaluators



93%

were able to expand their professional networks directly because of ETB



93%

found their mentoring experience valuable

LEEAD has helped me to critically think about the impact of evaluation work and to examine implementation opportunities to encourage/drive more CREE-centric work. It has also helped me to create a network of evaluators that I am able to draw upon for thought leadership and collaborations.

SANDY-ASARI HOGAN, DRPH, CPH
Booz Allen Hamilton
Cohort 3 LEEAD Scholar

Of 10 Practicum Sites:

Of the 10 evaluation firms, foundations and universities engaged by the LEEAD Program to serve as Practicum Sites for the Cohort 3 Scholars, **74% intend to work with their current Scholar again** and **92% are interested in hosting a future LEEAD Scholar**.



92%

are interested in being LEEAD Practicum Sites in the Future

FIELD

This year has shown that CREE has been a mainstay in both the presentations and dialogue led by ACE Evaluation Network Members and that Network Members are challenging norms in the evaluation field by actively working to shift power and practice in favor of diversity, equity, and inclusion principles. For example, **85% of ACE Evaluation Network Gathering participants stated the gathering provided an opportunity for sharing knowledge around CREE.** Ideally, these shifts will result in changes to policy and practice that are more just, equitable, and liberating.



85% of ACE Evaluation Network Gathering participants shared the gathering provided an opportunity for sharing knowledge around CREE.

I love these opportunities for us to share space together. I think what [ACE Evaluation Network Gathering presenter] said about being intentional in building relationships that are authentic and not transactional, is critically important for our network. This is especially true because many of us are working in spaces where we're continually having to explain/justify CREE at the '101' level, and perhaps don't have enough opportunities to be with peers who will help us push our own practice at the '201+' level and beyond.

ANONYMOUS
ACE Evaluation Network Member

In 2019-2020, ETB had a total of **11 Funding Partners**—or entities that have financially supported ETB—and **5 new Funding Partners in 2020!** We are actively supporting field-wide learning and networking connections among diverse evaluators and Funders of Evaluation and their partners. **Many of our most innovative ideas and suggestions came as a result of dialogue with our ETB Advisory Team, a group of 18 stakeholders** who offer strategic direction, feedback, and recommendations to guide the development and growth of ETB. We also meet with Funders of Evaluation and partners regularly to discuss our work and broaden support. This year saw a **50% increase in meetings between ETB Team Members and external audiences**, indicating a growing interest in learning about and funding ETB.



5

new Funding Partners financially supported ETB in 2019-2020



18

members of the ETB Advisory Team helped us to innovate



50%

increase in meetings between the ETB Team members and external audiences

WHERE WE HOPE TO GROW IN 2021

We have four key strategies for 2021 based on our Theory of Change:

Strengthen, diversify, and increase access to evaluators

- Expand eligibility for the LEEAD Program to include applicants with master's degrees.
- Refine the ACE Evaluation Network's Database search experience based on user feedback.
- Institute rolling applications to the ACE Evaluation Network's Call for New Members.

Develop and promote the evolving practice of CREE

- Grow and deepen a shared understanding of CREE through our 2021 CREE Learning Series.
- Launch a Funder CoP to integrate the practice of CREE and diversify the field.

Contribute thought leadership

- Launch Evolving Evaluation, a two-year effort that will engage evaluators in critical reflections of their own journeys, stories, and experiences with evaluation.
- Welcome a new group of Advisory Team Members.

Grow a network of allies

- Raise awareness about ETB by hosting and co-hosting informational webinars with others in the evaluation ecosystem.
- Engage in 100+ meetings with Funders of Evaluation or Allies.



Want to learn more about the role you can play? Let's connect: team@expandingthebench.org

