The Red Door Project’s mission is to use the power of stories to bring difference into the spotlight, illuminate our shared humanity, and create opportunities for new thinking, healing, and collaboration.

WHAT WE DO
The Red Door Project delivers our core program, The Evolve Experience, in several different ways: as a fully online live workshop, as an in-person workshop featuring filmed monologues, and as a fully live performance experience combining live actors and film. All Evolve programming centers around monologues that present perspectives from police officers, judges, and Black community members describing their lived experiences at the intersection of race and the justice system. Our curriculum focuses on building skills that are crucial for thoughtfully navigating change and conflict including self-awareness, flexibility, curiosity, and a willingness to grapple with complexity.

WHY STORIES?
Our brains are hard-wired to be suspicious of anything that’s different, and our differences—differences in opinion, race, accent, gender, etc—can often be seen as a threat. The world we live in reinforces these fears, and many of us retreat to the safety of our ideological bubbles. This division holds us back from understanding each other and building the types of coalitions we need to effectively address the problems we all face. That’s why we created The Evolve Experience, which uses the unique power of first-person storytelling to spark empathy, enabling participants to listen with less inhibition, access their emotions, and relate to others with curiosity, interest, and imagination. Witnessing personal stories lays the foundation for empathy and compassion, which opens a willingness to adjust thinking and behavior, creating the possibility for transformation at the individual, institutional, and community levels.

HOW WE GET IT DONE
Our two co-founders, Kevin Jones and Lesli Mones, lead a team of three full time employees. Paige Rodriguez coordinates the creative and production side of the organization including theatrical production, film projects, and commissioning new works. Jory Jolivet handles fundraising, communications, and operations, ensuring that we have the financial capacity and organizational stability to serve our mission. Tiona Cage supports the full team administratively, and stewards our relationships with our partners.

We also work closely with Reginald Lawrence (a.k.a. Shepsu Aakhu), a founding member of MPAACT Theatre in Chicago, and an award-winning play and film writer, who serves as our dramaturg; and Bob Day, Retired Deputy Chief, Portland Police Bureau, who helps us build relationships with law enforcement and other justice sector partners. We are currently also collaborating with John Urang, Ph.D., a higher education expert with extensive curriculum design and e-learning experience, to write the curriculum for the Evolve online course, slated to launch later this year.
ABOUT THE EVOLVE EXPERIENCE

Since its premiere in May 2019, Evolve has engaged 3,237 individuals including over 1,600 criminal justice professionals. We have long-standing relationships with the Portland Police Bureau, the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training, and the National Center for State Courts. Recent partners include police departments in Beaverton, Forest Grove, West Linn, and Lake Oswego, the Nevada State Supreme Court, Alaska State Courts, the South Dakota Unified Judicial System, and the University of California, Davis.

Evolve is highly esteemed by both the arts and justice sectors, having been featured on PBS NewsHour, and received awards including the 2020 Robert E. Gard Award from Americans for the Arts, which honors projects that integrate the arts into the community in meaningful, measurable ways, and the 2020 Portland FBI Field Office’s Directors Community Leadership Award, which recognizes the achievements of individuals and organizations that make extraordinary contributions to crime and violence prevention and education in their communities.

One officer described how the program challenged their assumptions:

“I never thought that a law abiding citizen would ever have a negative interaction with law enforcement. I always assumed that only criminals hated police officers and any racism claims made were made only to distract us from their actions. After listening to the fourth story I realized that not everyone has had the same interactions with law enforcement and my attitude has been somewhat naive.”

This type of attitudinal change has potentially life-or-death implications, and, taken to scale, could shift the tide of outcomes of community-police interactions throughout the country.

A major goal is to establish Evolve as an evidence-based program. We have begun preliminary planning conversations with Dr. Kimberly Kahn, an Associate Professor of Social Psychology at Portland State University, who is a nationally recognized leader on the psychology of racial bias in policing and has conducted empirical research and interventions to reduce racial bias and stereotyping within education systems, work organizations, and police departments, and Greg Stewart, a Research Analyst/Adjunct Professor at PSU, retired Police Lieutenant, and a founding member and past board member of the American Society of Evidence-Based Policing.

Survey data from 2022 further demonstrates positive change following Evolve participation. Self-reported outcomes (above). Data from 2021 & 2020 indicate similar levels of positive outcomes.
Throughout the year, about 550 people participated in Evolve events, half of whom were justice sector professionals. We are proud to have worked with the Beaverton and Lake Oswego Police Departments, the South Dakota Unified Judicial System, the University of California, Davis, and members of their communities.

WE STARTED THE YEAR in the middle of a partnership with the Beaverton Police Department, which continued through May. These four online sessions were our last virtual Evolve workshops before we returned to in-person work!

IN APRIL we conducted our first in-person Evolve workshops for the Lake Oswego Police Department. We also attended the annual Oregon Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP) conference in Bend to talk about our work, and launched the alpha test of our new Evolve online course! We had 28 course testers, and we’re using their feedback to design the next iteration, which will be launched in 2023.

IN MAY we presented at the annual South Dakota State Judicial Conference, where we met the most open and receptive group of (largely) Republican judges. They challenged some of our assumptions and biases, and that workshop was one of our favorites this year.

IN FEBRUARY we filmed three monologues with Enlight Media and interviewed judges for a new monologue, commissioned by the National Center for State Courts. The resulting monologue is called The Catch, which focuses on a judge who is grappling with the distance between the law and justice, and her role as an intermediary between the two.

We had some great experiences working with organizations remotely across the country throughout the pandemic. However, we also recognized that as impactful as our online workshops were, something about that in-person connection was missing.

IN JUNE our long-term Operations Manager, Jory Jolivet, graduated from the WVDO Certificate in Nonprofit Fundraising course and was promoted to the Development Manager position. This is the first time in our history that we’ve had a role dedicated to fundraising work, which we consider a milestone in our growth.

IN JUNE we conducted a week-long engagement at UC Davis, returning to the theatrical stage for the first time since 2020. This new performance uses a combination of live actors and filmed monologues, and it works to tell a very powerful story. Law enforcement personnel, community leaders, and members of the general public gathered to connect and build the relationships they’ll need to work together effectively.

IN MID-NOVEMBER we conducted a week-long engagement at UC Davis, returning to the theatrical stage for the first time since 2020. This new performance uses a combination of live actors and filmed monologues, and it works to tell a very powerful story. Law enforcement personnel, community leaders, and members of the general public gathered to connect and build the relationships they’ll need to work together effectively.

OVER THE SUMMER, we continued work on The Catch, started preparing for our UC Davis performance, and began thinking hard about our future and where to go next. That thinking got fleshed out during a staff retreat IN OCTOBER, and prepared us to launch our search for an Executive Director, which is currently nearing completion. We also filmed two monologues in October, including The Catch, and began rehearsal for UC Davis.

2022 IN REVIEW
BY THE NUMBERS

544 EVOLVE PARTICIPANTS IN 2022
228 JUSTICE SECTOR PARTICIPANTS

4 MONOLOGUES FILMED bringing us to 12 total monologues on film

1 NEW MONOLOGUE COMMISSIONED bringing us to 31 total monologues written (7 Hands Up, 20 Cop Out, 3 judicial, 1 other)

7 MODULES FOR ONLINE COURSE
13 EVENTS
24 CREATIVES ENGAGED

Income breakdown
TOTAL $939,488
Earned Income $120,187
Grants $520,860
Individual Donations $298,441

Expense breakdown
TOTAL $913,812
Programs $535,779
MONOLOGUE DEVELOPMENT $131,634
EVOLVE ONLINE COURSE $67,703
EVOLVE EVENTS $312,989
OTHER PROGRAMS EXPENSES $23,455
Management/General $234,652
Development $143,379

We engage historically underrepresented individuals and racially diverse justice sector professionals as interview subjects, writers, directors, filmmakers, staff members, performers, and more. Of the 24 creatives we engaged in 2022...

55% BIPOC
46% WOMEN
We ran another successful Give!Guide campaign, exceeding our goal of $50,000 by over $10,000! Thank you to everyone who donated.

A special thank you to our partners!

Por Que No once again generously offered free tacos to all of our donors, as well as a $2,500 matching gift. We are grateful to them for their many years of partnership, and the many tacos that we have enjoyed!

Artists Repertory Theater provided five pairs of tickets to True Story, written by local playwright E.M. Lewis, who has also written several Evolve monologues! Artists Rep has been a partner of the Red Door since our founding in 2011, providing office and rehearsal space for many years, and hosting us as a member of their ArtsHub. A big thank you to Artists Rep, which has played an integral role in making the Red Door what it is today.

NW Printed Solutions, our go-to printing company, supported our Give!Guide campaign with discounted printing services (the results of which you have in your hands right now!). We really enjoy working with a locally-owned small business, where we have developed a collaborative relationship with the team. A big thank you to Pat and Jacob!

We also collaborated with a number of other nonprofits that do wonderful work in our community, including Friends of Noise, BRAVO Youth Orchestra, Caldera Arts, PassinArt, Portland Playhouse, Central City Concern, The Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA), The National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA), and The Native Arts and Cultures Foundation (NACF). It’s a privilege to be in community with these organizations, all of which are working to make our world a better place.

During the 2022 fiscal year, over 300 individuals and 10 foundations invested in the Red Door Project. We want to especially thank our major donors and the members of our Inner Circle for their consistent, inspiring, and incredibly generous support.

OCT Spotlight

Do you ever wish that you could choose where your taxes go? Would you like a greater portion of your taxes to fund cultural activities? Well we have some good news for you, that’s exactly what Oregon’s Cultural tax credit does!

It goes like this: donate to a qualifying nonprofit, then donate an equivalent amount to Oregon Cultural Trust, and that amount will be deducted from what you would have paid on your taxes. It’s that simple!

You can also combine multiple donations! So if you donated $10 to the Red Door, $10 to Artists Repertory Theatre, and $10 to Friends of Noise, you can donate $30 to Oregon Cultural Trust and pay $30 less on your taxes. Individuals can claim up to $500 and couples can claim $1,000.

If you’re going to owe state taxes in any amount, you can divert that to arts & culture! Even if it’s $10, $20, or $50. Through the tax credit, you have the opportunity to choose what your state taxes fund.

The Red Door Project has received many grants from the Oregon Cultural Trust over the years. They’ve supported new staff positions, filming monologues, and professional development opportunities. Your donations allow them to make these grants that support us, and many other organizations across the state!
The “red door” is a symbol introduced by playwright August Wilson. The (literal) red door is the entryway to the Pittsburgh home of Aunt Ester, a mystical figure featured throughout Wilson’s 10-play American Century Cycle.

Aunt Ester was born in the year 1619, the year slaves were first brought to the United States.

In the play Gem of The Ocean, a freed slave named Citizen Barlow is instructed to visit Aunt Ester to get free of the internal chains binding him. In guiding his journey of transformation, Aunt Ester asks him, “What is your life worth, Mr. Citizen? That’s what you got to find out. You got to find a way to live in truth. If you live right you die right.”

For those who are willing, entering Aunt Ester’s red door provides healing from a society ripped apart by the legacy of slavery and racism. The Red Door Project’s work is inspired by this journey of transformation and redemption.

Visit our website and follow us on social media for current projects and donation options.

Ever wonder why we are called the “red door” project?