



ATL ACTION FOR RACIAL EQUITY

ASSESSMENT REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**ATL
ACTION
FOR
RACIAL
EQUITY**

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Executive Summary

The Metro Atlanta Chamber's (MAC) ATL Action for Racial Equity leverages the power of our region's business community to advance racial equity through collective impact. This is a critical, multi-year, multi-step effort to address the pervasive effects of systemic racism in the region, specifically in metro Atlanta's Black community.

ATL Action for Racial Equity was designed to equip metro Atlanta businesses with a roadmap for implementing best practices in their organizations' unique racial equity journeys. To that end, the initiative developed a strategic list of actions and playbooks across four key areas: Corporate Policies, Inclusive Economic Development, Education, and Workforce Development.

As of 2022, more than 250 companies pledged to participate in the ATL Action for Racial Equity initiative. And since the initiative's inception in 2021, MAC committed to tracking ATL Action for Racial Equity's progress and sharing lessons learned as we collaboratively work to make metro Atlanta a more vibrant, equitable, and inclusive region.¹

MAC conducted the inaugural ATL Action for Racial Equity Assessment in 2021, surveying committed companies and gaining insights about where in their racial equity journey these companies were. The second Assessment was conducted in 2022, building on the findings from the 2021 Assessment.

ATL Action for Racial Equity Assessment

The 2022 ATL Action for Racial Equity Assessment survey had several key objectives:

- To identify strengths, opportunities and considerations for the metro Atlanta business community to better address racial inequities in the region,
- To assess changes/progress in the metro Atlanta business community's efforts to address racial inequities since the inaugural survey in 2021,
- To assess differences in survey findings by industry type, business ownership and business size and
- To engage key stakeholders to ensure the survey findings and considerations are salient and lead to action and adoption.

2022 Assessment Survey Respondent Demographics



¹ Metro Atlanta Chamber. (2022). DEI. <https://www.metroatlantachamber.com/dei/#>

The 2022 Assessment survey was administered electronically to 250 committed companies, with 119 organizations responding to the survey, a 15% increase in participation from the 2021 Assessment (83 out of 250 committed companies participated in the 2021 Assessment).

Of the 2022 survey respondents (n = 119):

- **Type of organization:** 22% were for-profit publicly held (n = 25),² 42% were for-profit privately held (n = 48), 33% were non-profit (n = 38), 1% were government or another public entity (n = 1) and 3% reported being a type of organization not listed (i.e., “Other”; n = 3).
- **Size of organization:** 40% reported 1,000 or more employees, 8% reported 500 to 999 employees, 9% reported 200 to 499 employees, 19% reported 50 to 199 employees and 25% reported fewer than 50 employees.
- **Industry type:** 21% reported their industry types as business products and services (B2B), 18% as financial services, 8% as healthcare, 7% as consumer products and services (B2C), 6% as education, 4% as information technology, 3% as energy, 1% as materials and resources, and 32% as “other.”³
- **Headquarter location:** Survey respondents provided services in regions across the globe; 73% reported their global/corporate headquarters are in metro Atlanta, and 80% reported their national/regional headquarters are in metro Atlanta.
- **Stage in racial equity journey:** 4% classified their organization in the Thinking stage, 17% in the Beginning stage, 26% in the Emerging stage, 32% in the Progressing stage, and 22% in the Leading stage.⁴

Key Areas of Strength and Opportunities for Growth

ATL Action for Racial Equity has four key focus areas and 20 key performance indicators (KPIs) within the four key focus areas to identify strengths and opportunities for growth in the metro Atlanta business community. **Key findings and high-level considerations from the 2022 Assessment on the strengths and areas of opportunity for each focus area are presented below.**

Please note that the 2022 ATL Action for Racial Equity Assessment full report will provide further insights into the strengths and growth opportunities for metro Atlanta businesses to advance racial equity within their organizations and in the region. The full report also shares actionable considerations for committed companies in metro Atlanta across each key focus area.

² “n = ” refers to the number of organizations that completed the survey or answered at least one corresponding question.

³ Some examples of industry segments provided by those who selected “Other” were Sports, Technology, Homeless Services, Workforce Development & Social Services and Animal Welfare.

⁴ **Thinking:** Organizations have identified a vision for integrating programs and elements that promote racial equity standards but have yet to plan for or discuss internally about how to create or implement them. **Beginning:** Organizations are planning for or discussing internally about starting the journey, or may be participating in training opportunities, or hiring consultants and other resources to support their integration of programs and elements that promote racial equity standards. **Emerging:** Baseline programs and elements in place to promote racial equity standards. **Progressing:** Programs go beyond foundational elements, demonstrating a more aggressive approach linked to business needs, community needs, corporate social responsibility and/or ESG commitments. **Leading:** Fully deployed programs and elements supported by continuous improvement; embodies an aggressive approach linked to business needs, community needs, and/or CSR commitments; testing new ideas to accelerate impact.



Key Focus Area #1: Corporate Policies

Strengths

- **52%** of designated DEI leaders report to the CEO of their organization (in 2021, 33% of DEI leaders reported to the CEO).⁵
- **32%** of survey respondents reported that Black talent made up at least **40%** of their recruited talent in the previous year.
- **81%** of survey respondents in the 2022 Assessment reported having an established DEI strategy that has the support of senior leaders.

Opportunities

- **48%** of survey respondents reported having retention and advancement strategies and practices in place.
- Only **30%** of organizations with fewer than 50 employees (n = 8) have established partnerships with Atlanta-based Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), whereas a higher percentage of the larger survey respondents reported having such partnerships (n = 42).
- **42%** of organizations with 50 or fewer employees (n = 10) have assessed pay equity across race and ethnicity.



Key Focus Area #2: Inclusive Economic Development

Strengths

- **55%** of survey respondents demonstrate their commitment to supporting Black-owned businesses by establishing partnerships with incubators, accelerators or entrepreneurial support and mentoring organizations to support Black owners and founders in metro Atlanta (in 2021, 42% of survey respondents reported such commitments).
- **64%** of survey respondents with 1,000 or more employees (n = 27) have established a formal supplier diversity program.

Opportunities

- Less than **10%** of organizations have contributed to funds that invested in Black-owned companies, sponsored an entrepreneur-in-residence program or established banking relationships with Black-owned banks.
- Under a quarter (**24%**) of organizations with fewer than 500 employees (n = 9) have established formal supplier diversity programs.

⁵ Note: The 2021 and 2022 ATL Action for Racial Equity Assessment survey findings are not able to be directly compared due to different organizations completing the survey each year.





Key Focus Area #3: Education

Strengths

- **21%** of survey respondents said that they attended conferences or workshops on early education or family benefits (in 2021, 16% of survey respondents reported attending these events).
- **37%** of for-profit publicly owned (n = 7) and **33%** of non-profit (n = 11) organizations hosted career opportunities for students from Title I or majority-Black K-12 schools in metro Atlanta.
- **57%** of survey respondents support various organizations in the region that assist students from under-resourced communities in preparing for/completing college and beyond.
- **59%** of survey respondents offer experiential opportunities for students in metro Atlanta who are at the beginning of their post-secondary education.
- **62%** of survey respondents engaged or encouraged employees to volunteer in mentorship opportunities that focus on Black youth.

Opportunities

- **53%** of survey respondents indicated that they do not survey their staff to understand barriers to high-quality, affordable child care or desire for expanded family benefits or flexibility.
- **53%** of survey respondents indicated that they did not host career opportunities for students from Title I or majority-Black K-12 schools in metro Atlanta.
- **19%** of survey respondents indicated that they sponsor or invest in funds that benefit Black students in post-secondary entrance and completion with a focus on students who are the first in their family to attend college in the last 12 months.



Key Focus Area #4: Workforce Development

Strengths

- **75%** of survey respondents paid livable wages for their location in metro Atlanta (based on the MIT living wage calculator⁶); in 2021, 67% of survey respondents paid livable wages.
- **85%** of survey respondents offered benefits to full-time employees, with no difference from 2021.
- **80%** of survey respondents have at least one strategy in place to invest in current talent (in 2021, 74% of survey respondents had at least one strategy in place).

Opportunities

- **20%** of organizations did not implement a specific strategy to increase access to employment for current employees and **25%** of organizations did not implement a specific strategy to increase access to employment for future employees.

⁶ [MIT living wage calculator](#): \$17.25/hr. In Fulton County for 2 adults and 1 child.

- Only **18%** of survey respondents are transforming low-wage jobs into high-quality jobs.

Key Actionable Considerations

The metro Atlanta business community has an opportunity, both internally and externally, to help address the ongoing effects of systemic racism and advance racial equity in the region, specifically for the Black community. **Findings from the 2022 Assessment suggest that internally, committed companies should prioritize (a) increasing the number of Black leaders at the executive and board levels, (b) improving DEI metrics tracking, and (c) improving employment access for current and future employees via targeted recruitment, retention, and advancement strategies.** Externally, committed companies can engage in broader conversations around protecting and improving the Black community's access to high-quality basic needs (e.g., access to flexible work policies, expanded parental leave options, and financial resources for child care). Additionally, committed companies should consider using their platforms to advocate for greater public investments in education, housing, transportation, and other areas that impact racial equity in metro Atlanta. There is also an opportunity to track progress on societal-level impacts via data sharing and coalition-building.

The 2022 Assessment reveals that metro Atlanta businesses differ with regard to where they are in their respective racial equity journeys, including the number of and types of DEI strategies implemented. In reality, some organizations have more capacity and resources to develop and implement a more robust DEI strategy than others. The 2022 Assessment provides examples of strategies that organizations of different types, sizes and at different stages in their racial equity journey have adopted, as well as considerations and resources to help organizations establish or enhance their work towards racial equity in the metro Atlanta region.

Below are high-level, actionable considerations based on the findings from the 2022 Assessment and presented according to the strengths and opportunities identified for each of the four key focus areas: **Corporate Policies, Inclusive Economic Development, Education and Workforce Development.**

Corporate Policies:

- Organizations have opportunities to focus on **increasing Black representation in the C-Suite** and on their Boards.
- A **comprehensive DEI strategy and plan** may help to guide businesses in activities that foster an inclusive and equitable culture for all employees, especially for those businesses in the Thinking, Beginning or Emerging stages of their racial equity journeys.
- Businesses can focus on establishing strategies aimed at **hiring, retaining and promoting current and future Black talent**, including fostering partnerships with community organizations and Atlanta-based HBCUs.
- Ongoing monitoring is important to track progress on the implementation of DEI strategy and performance metrics and to identify areas for improvement and measure the impact on advancing racial equity in metro Atlanta. Specifically, committed companies could benefit from establishing processes to track **indicators of hiring, retention, and promotion rates** and/or **performance** ratings of Black talent.

Inclusive Economic Development:

- Smaller organizations can work towards **establishing a formal supplier diversity program** to increase access to economic opportunities for Black-owned and -founded businesses.
- Organizations could also benefit from establishing processes and systems to track **indicators of inclusive economic development**, including supplier diversity metrics, diverse spending, and other related data.

Education:

- Organizations can focus on **establishing education and career learning programs** to increase access to employment for Black talent, including paid internship and mentorship programs.

Workforce Development:

- Metro Atlanta organizations can help to decrease the **racial unemployment and wealth gap** by offering flexible work policies, expanded parental leave options and financial resources for childcare.

MAC can play an integral role in guiding businesses toward achieving greater racial equity by:

- Supporting capacity building around data management within organizations to better track performance metrics and other DEI-related data, and;
- Connecting organizations that are facilitating mentor/mentee relationships and
- Connecting organizations with others focused on racial equity efforts and initiatives.

Overall, ATL Action for Racial Equity's committed companies embrace diversity, equity and inclusion as core values in the success of their businesses, the growth of the metro Atlanta economy, and the future of the metro Atlanta community. The 2022 Assessment survey respondents demonstrated that they are growing in their DEI journeys and implementing racial equity measures. They identified opportunities to improve their efforts to advance racial equity in metro Atlanta, including: (a) growing the number of Black leaders in their C-Suites and Boards, (b) upgrading DEI metric tracking, (c) offering childcare and other support for current and future employees, and (d) advocating for greater public investment in education, housing, transportation and other areas that impact racial equity in metro Atlanta.

With continued support from MAC and our other business and community partners, committed companies may have increased capacity to integrate DEI strategies aimed at advancing racial equity for their businesses and to take additional actions that foster inclusivity for diverse staff.⁷ The 2022 Assessment report can serve as a starting point for committed companies to not only celebrate the recent progress made within the region with respect to DEI, but also identify promising practices and areas of opportunity—topics for further dialogue, potential partnerships and multifaceted strategies—to continue to address the ongoing effects of systemic racism in metro Atlanta and beyond.

To learn more about ATL Action for Racial Equity, please reach out to the Metro Atlanta Chamber at atlactionforracialequity@macoc.com and visit the website at www.atlracialequity.com.

⁷ Metro Atlanta Chamber. (2023). DEI. <https://www.metroatlantachamber.com/dei/>

About our Research Partner

[Creative Research Solutions, LLC \(CRS\)](#) is the learning and research partner for the 2022 ATL Action for Racial Equity Assessment.

Founded in 2009, CRS is a Black- and woman-owned award-winning research and evaluation small business located in the Atlanta Metropolitan Area. Using a culturally responsive and equitable approach (CREE) and authentically engaged and rigorous data collection and analysis methods, we help clients critically evaluate their work to support and refine their approaches and make data-driven decisions.

CRS recognizes the impact of historical and present-day systemic racism, inequities, and other forms of oppression in the U.S. as an opportunity to rethink our evaluation practices and engagement with our work using an equity and social justice lens. When analyzing outcomes and impacts, we ensure that our approach—refined and sharpened over time—is aligned with local values while being directly coordinated with data collection activities.

CRS' work in the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) space has spanned research and evaluation in areas such as supplier diversity, racial disparities in business, educational equity, and equitable voting access.

CRS would like to acknowledge and thank the Metro Atlanta Chamber (MAC), especially Michael Baptiste (Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) and Christina Pollonais (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Project Manager), for partnering with CRS as MAC's learning and research partner. We would also like to thank the metro Atlanta businesses that participated in the 2022 ATL Action for Racial Equity survey for their time and invaluable insights about racial equity among businesses in metro Atlanta.

Definitions and Acronyms

MAC	Metro Atlanta Chamber
DEI	Diversity, equity, and inclusion
CRS	Creative Research Solutions, LLC
N	Number of survey respondents

