



ATL ACTION FOR RACIAL EQUITY

ASSESSMENT REPORT
FEBRUARY 2024

METRO
ATLANTA
CHAMBER



ATL
ACTION
FOR
**RACIAL
EQUITY**

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Table of Contents

Annual ATL Action for Racial Equity Assessment Report & Methodology	5
Participation and Demographics	8
Stage in Racial Equity Journey	13
Key Focus Area #1: Corporate Policies	16
Findings	16
Key Focus Area #2: Inclusive Economic Development	24
Findings	25
Key Focus Area #3: Education	30
Findings	31
Key Focus Area #4: Workforce Development	32
Findings	33
Conclusion: Overall Key Takeaways and Considerations	36



Introduction

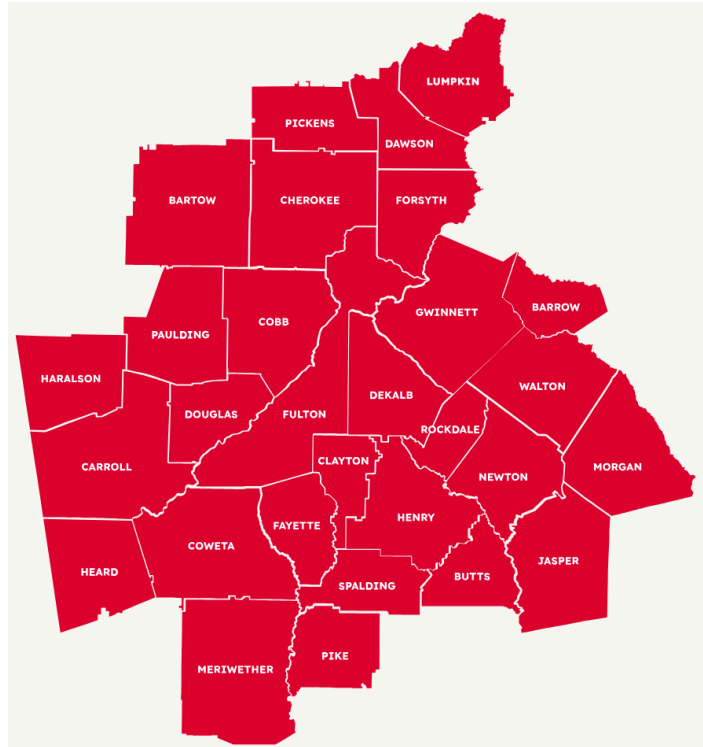
About The Metro Atlanta Chamber (MAC)

The Metro Atlanta Chamber (MAC) is a 165-year-old organization representing businesses, colleges and universities, and nonprofits across the 29-county region that makes up the nation's eighth-largest market. Member companies invest in MAC's work to attract and retain business, ensure a business-friendly climate through public policy efforts, and market the region as a great place to live, work and play.¹

MAC's purpose is to "unleash Atlanta's ambition"² and our work is structured around three strategic imperatives:

- Economy – We aspire to be the best and most inclusive place to do business.
- Talent – We leverage and grow metro Atlanta's skilled and diverse talent advantage.
- Community – Our work catalyzes the ecosystem to drive transformative community impact.

The Chamber's 2023 Impact Report details our specific impact across each of these three strategic imperatives. In terms of economy, Georgia has been named the best state to do business, with 2023 marking the 10th consecutive year for this distinction.³ Metro Atlanta plays a significant role in Georgia's economy as the #1 fastest-growing metro region for entrepreneurs in the U.S.⁴ Moreover, metro Atlanta's talent makes Atlanta the #2 most educated city in the U.S., reflecting an impressive skilled workforce.⁵ Metro Atlanta's community also provides attractive and customizable places to live, with Atlanta recently named the #2 most liveable city in the U.S.⁶ These factors, combined with metro Atlanta's rich history and culture, make for a region that was built for business.



¹ Metro Atlanta Chamber. (2023) *About the Chamber*. <https://www.metroatlantachamber.com/about-the-chamber/>

² Metro Atlanta Chamber. (2023). *FY23 Impact Report*. https://www.metroatlantachamber.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/MAC_FY23-Impact-Report-Final-1.pdf

³ Kaelble, S. (2023, Q3). *Top States for Doing Business*. Area Development. <https://www.areadevelopment.com/Top-States-for-Doing-Business/Q3-2023/2023-top-states-for-doing-business-meet-the-needs-of-site-selectors.shtml>

⁴ Anders, G. (2023, September 13). *For anyone starting a business, these 10 metros are standouts*. LinkedIn: Workforce Report. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/anyone-starting-business-10-metros-standouts-george-anders/>

⁵ Carleton, G., & Beagle, V. (2023, October 13). *What Are The Most Educated Cities In The U.S.? Top 100 Cities Ranked*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/education/most-educated-cities/>

⁶ The Economist. (2023, June 21). *The world's most liveable cities in 2023*. <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2023/06/21/the-worlds-most-liveable-cities-in-2023>



About the ATL Action for Racial Equity (AARE) Initiative

ATL Action for Racial Equity (AARE) is a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiative that was established by MAC in 2021.⁷ The goal of the program is to work towards dismantling systemic racism in the metro Atlanta business community through targeted actions, metrics tracking, and knowledge sharing. The AARE Assessment Survey is a data-driven method used by MAC to provide an annual snapshot of racial equity actions undertaken by committed companies in metro Atlanta. Four focus areas of key performance indicators (KPIs) are targeted in the annual Assessment Survey (see Figure 1), and this year's key focus area findings are presented in separate sections of this report.

- **Corporate Policies** problem statement: Metro Atlanta-based businesses have not fully leveraged the region's strength as a location of choice for Black college students and Black talent across industries.
- **Inclusive Economic Development** problem statement: Black entrepreneurs face systemic obstacles to success that limit access to networks, capital, knowledge, and customers.
- **Education** problem statement: Black students in metro Atlanta face limitations to affordable, high-quality learning experiences.
- **Workforce Development** problem statement: A disparity gap in unemployment rates and median household income exists between the Black and white population in metro Atlanta.

The Metro Atlanta Chamber's goal is for businesses to commit to the ATL Action for Racial Equity initiative, implement actions to advance racial equity using the four playbooks⁸ to guide their work, and track their progress and individual racial equity journeys using impact metrics. 262 metro Atlanta businesses have committed to the initiative, finding ways to integrate racial equity actions no matter what stage of its racial equity journey the organization is in.

Figure 1 | Annual ATL Action for Racial Equity (AARE) Initiative Key Focus Areas and Example KPIs

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

⁸ Corporate Policies Playbook:

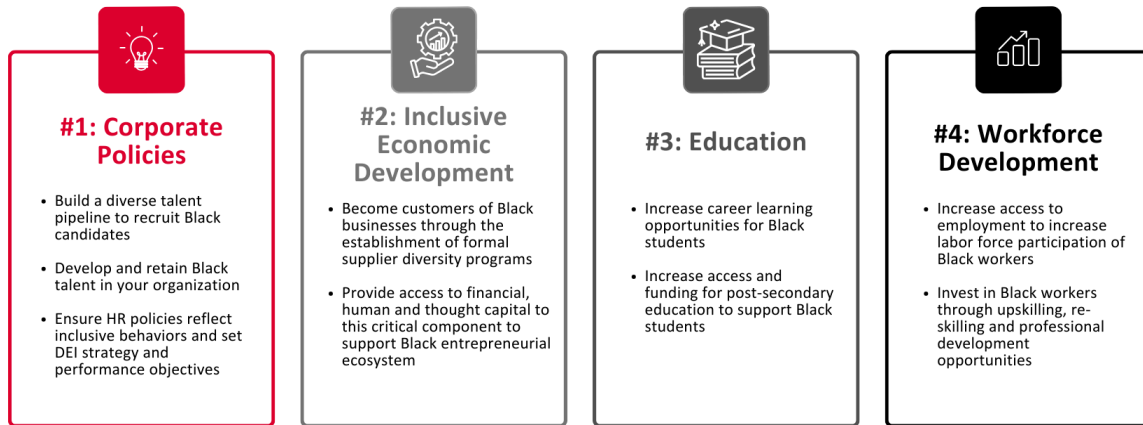
https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/5fff3be8cd939f2b6d4ec49d/61647ea09b53501c6bba5256_ATL_Action_for_Racial_Equity_Playbook_Corporate_Policies_Sept272021.pdf

Inclusive Economic Development Playbook:

[https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/5fff3be8cd939f2b6d4ec49d/61647f900b55a3e17103687a_ATL_Action_for_Racial_Equity_Playbook_Inclusive_Economic_Development_Sept272021_\(1\).pdf](https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/5fff3be8cd939f2b6d4ec49d/61647f900b55a3e17103687a_ATL_Action_for_Racial_Equity_Playbook_Inclusive_Economic_Development_Sept272021_(1).pdf)

Education and Workforce Development Playbooks:

https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/5fff3be8cd939f2b6d4ec49d/61647fe83330ebe8ba1c777_ATL_Action_for_Racial_Equity_Playbook_Education_and_Workforce_Development_Sept272021.pdf



In its third year, the AARE Assessment Survey contained survey questions across the four key focus areas, and the purpose of the survey and the methodology used are described in the following section.

Annual ATL Action for Racial Equity Assessment Report & Methodology

The 2024 AARE Assessment Report represents a collaborative effort between MAC and CRS, leveraging their learning and research partnership to address the persistent effects of systemic racism and promote racial equity, specifically for the Black community in the metro Atlanta region. The 2023 Assessment Survey is designed to measure goals and progress toward racial equity in the metro Atlanta business community.

The purpose of the 2023 AARE Assessment Survey is to advance racial equity by acquiring a quantitative understanding of the current stage of committed companies' DEI policies and strategies. The survey aims to measure progress, identify areas of success to be continued, and pinpoint opportunities for growth. Through this comprehensive analysis, the report seeks to offer guidance on allocating resources effectively and implementing strategic initiatives to address systemic racism in metro Atlanta.

Survey Development and Administration

The 2023 ATL Action for Racial Equity Assessment Survey was built upon the foundation established in the previous two years. The survey design was based on key performance indicators (KPIs) identified by MAC

in the Playbooks⁹ for Corporate Policies, Inclusive Economic Development, Education, and Workforce Development. While some questions were adjusted for clarity, the overarching themes remained consistent to facilitate meaningful multi-year progress. The survey was sent to 262 businesses in metro Atlanta via an online platform in August 2023 and concluded in September 2023.

Assessment Survey Data Analysis

The 2023 Annual ATL Action for Racial Equity Assessment Survey had the following goals:

- To identify strengths, opportunities, and considerations for the Atlanta business community to implement as they address racial inequities in their organizations;
- To assess changes and progress in the Atlanta business community in addressing 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 as a means of ensuring the survey findings and considerations are salient and will lead to action and adoption.

The findings were obtained through the implementation of frequency analysis of self-reported responses¹⁰ to multiple-choice survey questions. Additionally, strengths and opportunities for growth were summarized using key performance indicators in each key focus area, reflecting organizations' efforts in addressing key focus areas. It is important to note that direct statistical comparisons with previous years are not feasible, as it cannot be determined if the groups of organizations participating were the same. To tackle this issue, this year's survey requested the identification of organization names accessible only to the CRS team for tracking purposes. The Metro Atlanta Chamber did not have access to organization names paired with survey responses. Nevertheless, we observed consistency of survey responses between this year's survey and previous years' surveys.

All percentages in this report are rounded down to the nearest whole percentage. As such, some totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Sensemaking Session with Stakeholders at MAC

The Sensemaking Session consisted of a thorough discussion focusing on highlighted findings derived from the survey analysis. During the session, stakeholders at MAC were provided with a medium to express their opinions and insights on the survey findings for each key focus area's findings. These

⁹ Corporate Policies Playbook:

https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/5fff3be8cd939f2b6d4ec49d/61647ea09b53501c6bba5256_ATL_Action_for_Racial_Equity_Playbook_Corporate_Policies_Sept272021.pdf

Inclusive Economic Development Playbook:

[https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/5fff3be8cd939f2b6d4ec49d/61647f900b55a3e17103687a_ATL_Action_for_Racial_Equity_Playbook_Inclusive_Economic_Development_Sept272021_\(1\).pdf](https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/5fff3be8cd939f2b6d4ec49d/61647f900b55a3e17103687a_ATL_Action_for_Racial_Equity_Playbook_Inclusive_Economic_Development_Sept272021_(1).pdf)

Education and Workforce Development Playbooks:

https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/5fff3be8cd939f2b6d4ec49d/61647fe83330ebe8ba1c777_ATL_Action_for_Racial_Equity_Playbook_Education_and_Workforce_Development_Sept272021.pdf

¹⁰ Because the responses were self-reported by individual respondents at organizations, we caution against strong interpretations of the findings that do not take into account the possibility of respondent bias.



takeaways helped shape the structure of the rest of the report, provided greater insight and context into MAC's approach to the AARE initiative, and promoted widespread information sharing and actionable insights.

Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

- **Racial equity journey self-assessment for 2023 and 2022:** This assessment enabled an instance where direct comparison was possible, as it involves the same group of respondents. Additionally, it potentially encourages a consistent comparison to the prior year, fostering continuous reflection among organizations participating in the survey.
- **Self-assessment on key focus area engagement:** The survey's focus on prompting committed companies to self-assess their engagement in specific key focus areas helped capture nuanced insights into companies' perceived strengths and priorities.
- **Minimal deviation from last year's survey:** The questions maintain a high degree of consistency with the previous year's survey, which helps guarantee that companies respond to comparable questions, even if the participating organizations varied across the survey administrations. Such continuity allows for clear and easy data interpretation across the different survey administration time points.

Limitations

- **Ambiguity in industry segmentation:** Some participants found it challenging to self-identify within specific industry segments. This ambiguity led to a notable number choosing the "Other" category, potentially leading to a loss of specific information about the organizations' industries.
- **Decreased participation and survey completion rates:** A limitation of this year's survey was the reduction in participant numbers compared to previous years.¹¹ However, percentages in findings remained consistent, and valuable insights were still obtained.

¹¹ Some recommendations would be to determine fixed respondents in each organization as a direct point of contact, issue regular reminders about the importance of tracking the region's progress, consistently reassure companies that the assessment is confidential, and minimize the survey length to decrease response burden.

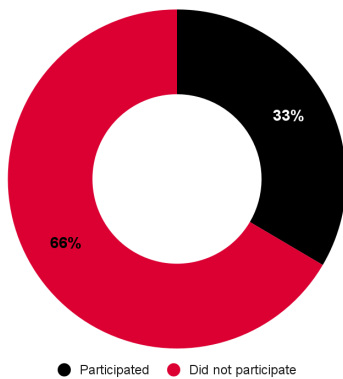


Participation and Demographics

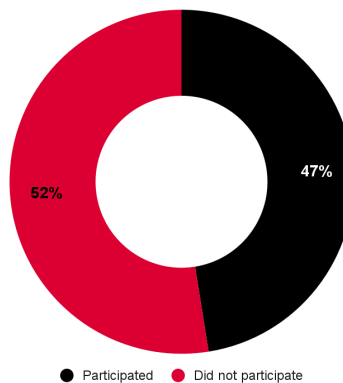
The survey was sent to 262 organizations, resulting in a response from 72 entities. The 2022 survey saw participation from 119 of 250 businesses, and the 2021 survey from 83 of 250 businesses. The response rates for the years 2023, 2022, and 2021 were approximately 28%, 47%, and 33%, respectively (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 | AARE Assessment Survey Participation by Year

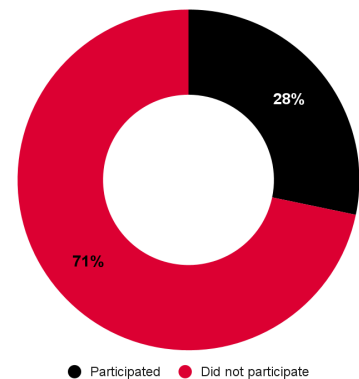
2021 Assessment Participation



2022 Assessment Participation



2023 Assessment Participation



Several potential reasons may explain the decrease in committed companies that responded to this year's survey:

- Technological difficulties. There were firewall and IT issues with the survey being successfully delivered to some companies.
- Length of the survey. Some committed companies may have experienced fatigue during the survey and subsequently not reached the end of it. Additionally, potential respondents may have opened the survey preview that was included with the recruitment email, felt that there were too many questions to answer, and decided not to participate in the survey. Potential respondents may have also not had access to the DEI data being requested in the survey's questions and may have become discouraged from answering the survey's questions.
- Organizations' competing priorities. A July 2023 article in *Forbes* pointed to alarming trends in U.S. companies' attitudes and actions toward DEI efforts and racial equity in particular.¹² The article details that while many employees want an employer to support DEI efforts, over 60% feel that the companies they work for are "doing mediocre or worse" at demonstrating a promised commitment to advancing

¹² Robinson, B. (2023, July 1). *As Supreme Court erases college affirmative action, new reports find companies refusing to deliver on DEI promises*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bryanrobinson/2023/07/01/as-supreme-court-erases-college-affirmative-action-new-reports-find-companies-refusing-to-deliver-on-dei-promises/?sh=66ce56ff5a85>

racial equity. This trend is also reflected in DEI roles at organizations continuing to disappear.¹³ It may be worth exploring patterns in how companies prioritize racial equity efforts to further understand if there is an impact on response rates.

- Turnover at organizations. DEI-related roles have recently experienced a high rate of turnover, especially amid companies' changes in priorities over the last year (as mentioned in the bullet point above).¹⁴ Former DEI officers and executives cite burnout as a top reason for the increased turnover.
- The Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) ruling on affirmative action.

While the recent SCOTUS ruling on affirmative action primarily targets government actors and universities, there is a potential risk that some corporate leaders may interpret it as a reason to downplay their commitment to DEI programs.¹⁵ This could have potentially affected the participation of committed companies in this year's survey.



**MAC Sensemaking
Session Insight**

This year's lower survey response rate prompted brainstorming about how to encourage committed companies to respond to the survey. Partnering with Investor Relations and Marketing teams at MAC, developing tools and further messaging to send to potential respondents in advance, alternating survey years to measure progress in two focus areas at a time, working on accessibility and digestibility of the survey, streamlining survey questions, and rewarding companies for survey completion were all potential actionable insights identified by attendees that can be further explored.

Annual AARE Assessment Survey Respondents

The survey effectively gathered key demographic information related to organization type, size, and industry segment. Examining the tables below reveals a consistent distribution pattern across the years 2021, 2022, and 2023.

Of this year's survey respondents, 72% of the organizations who responded have global/corporate headquarters in metro Atlanta, and 79% of the organizations' national/regional offices are in metro Atlanta. Below are tables listing survey respondents' organization type, organization size, and industry segment. The distribution of these demographic categories in this year's survey was similar to last year's survey. The primary difference was that in this year's survey, several more industries were added to the *industry segment* question (based on the additional industry segments written in by participants on last year's survey) to decrease "Other" responses. *Organization types* and *organization sizes* reported in this year's survey were nearly identical to those in last year's survey.

In Table 1, the for-profit organization type stands out as the mode, representing 40%, 42%, and 43% for the respective years. The analysis of organization sizes shows that in 2021, 2022, and 2023 a plurality of the organizations had a minimum of 1,000 employees within the 50%, 40%, and 44% range, respectively. This

¹³ Gonzales, M. (2023, March 15). *Why are DEI roles disappearing?* SHRM.

<https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/behavioral-competencies/global-and-cultural-effectiveness/pages/why-are-dei-roles-disappearing.aspx>

¹⁴ Chen, T. P., & Weber, L. (2023, July 21). *The rise and fall of the Chief Diversity Officer*. The Wall Street Journal.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/chief-diversity-officer-cdo-business-corporations-e110a82f>

¹⁵ Yoshino, K., & Glasgow, D. (2023, July 12). *What SCOTUS's Affirmative Action decision means for corporate DEI*. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2023/07/what-scotuss-affirmative-action-decision-means-for-corporate-dei>



consistent distribution reflects the ongoing representation of larger-sized organizations in the survey's demographic composition.

Table 1 | 2023 AARE Assessment Survey Organization Types

Organization Type	2021	2022	2023
For-profit publicly held	29%	22%	23%
For-profit privately held	40%	42%	43%
Non-profit organization	29%	33%	29%
Government/public	2%	1%	1%
Other	—	3%	2%

Table 2 | 2023 AARE Assessment Survey Organization Sizes

Organization Size	2021	2022	2023
Fewer than 50 employees	23%	25%	22%
50 to 199	13%	19%	19%
200 to 499	9%	9%	5%
500 to 999	5%	8%	8%
1,000 or more	50%	40%	44%

Throughout this report, a double dash "--" is utilized to signify information that was not assessed during a specific year's survey. Despite the introduction of new industry segments, Business Products & Services (B2B) consistently maintained its position as the most commonly reported industry.

Table 3 | 2023 AARE Assessment Survey Organization Industry Types

Industry Type	2021	2022	2023
Business Products & Services (B2B)	43%	29%	22%
Consumer Products & Services (B2C)	20%	6%	6%
Financial Services	13%	18%	19%
Education	11%	12%	8%
Healthcare	7%	0%	2%
Material Resources	2%	0%	1%
Energy	2%	6%	0%
Other	–	29%	12%
Information Technology	–	0%	4%
Entertainment	–	–	0%
Social Services	–	–	2%
Legal	–	–	4%
Consulting	–	–	4%
Sports	–	–	1%
Arts	–	–	2%
Philanthropy	2%	–	–



In the figures below (Figures 3 and 4), the question of whether the organizations' headquarters are located in Metro Atlanta is explored. Both global and national headquarters are predominantly situated inside Metro Atlanta, at 72% and 79%, respectively (n = 72).¹⁶

Figure 3 | Is your organization's **global/corporate headquarters** in metro Atlanta?

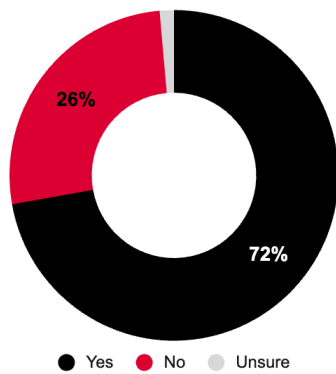
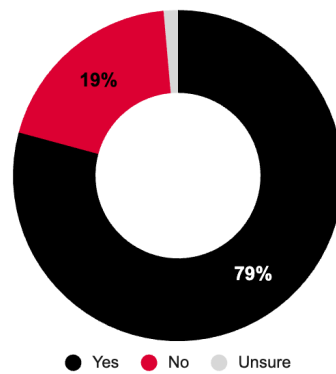


Figure 4 | Is your organization's **national/regional headquarters** in metro Atlanta?



¹⁶ "Unsure" was selected by 1% of organizations for both headquarters questions (gray sliver in Figures 3 and 4).

Stage in Racial Equity Journey

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.

The annual ATL Action for Racial Equity Assessment Survey incorporates the identification of stages in the racial equity journey by respondents. This acknowledges the diversity of approaches among survey participants, recognizing that each organization is at a distinct stage in addressing racial equity.

The tiered stages facilitate progress tracking over time, offering respondents the opportunity to choose the stage that best aligns with their organizational journey. This approach underscores the importance of organizations as the primary narrators of their racial equity progress,

encouraging self-reflection on current and future actions.

In the 2021 Assessment, three stages (Emerging, Progressing, and Leading) were established to categorize participants based on their progress in the racial equity journey. Recognizing the need for nuanced classifications, the 2022 Assessment introduced two additional stages, Thinking and Beginning. These stages were intended to more accurately represent respondents who perceived themselves at an earlier phase in their racial equity journey, distinct from the established categories. In the 2023 Assessment Survey, the stages remained consistent from 2022, ensuring continuity for participants and facilitating a longitudinal understanding of their evolving positions in the racial equity journey (REJ).

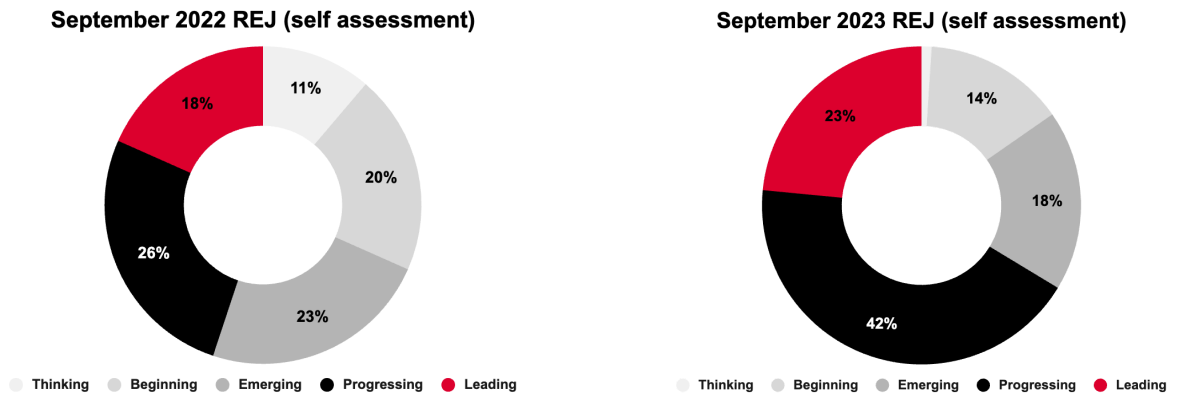
The figures below depict a self-identification of the REJ stage that committed companies align with for both September 2022 and September 2023. Notably, there is a salient difference in the Thinking and Progressing stages. The Thinking stage decreases from 11% to 1%, while the Progressing stage increases from 26% to 42%. This suggests that organizations experienced overall progress in their internal growth trajectory of REJ initiatives.

Figure 5 | Racial Equity Journey (REJ) Self-assessment for “Overall, How Would You Self-identify Your Organization in Their Racial Equity Journey?” (n = 69)¹⁷

Paraphrasing the questions:¹⁸ Thinking back (left figure) and Currently (right figure), how would you self-identify your organization in its racial equity journey? (n=69)

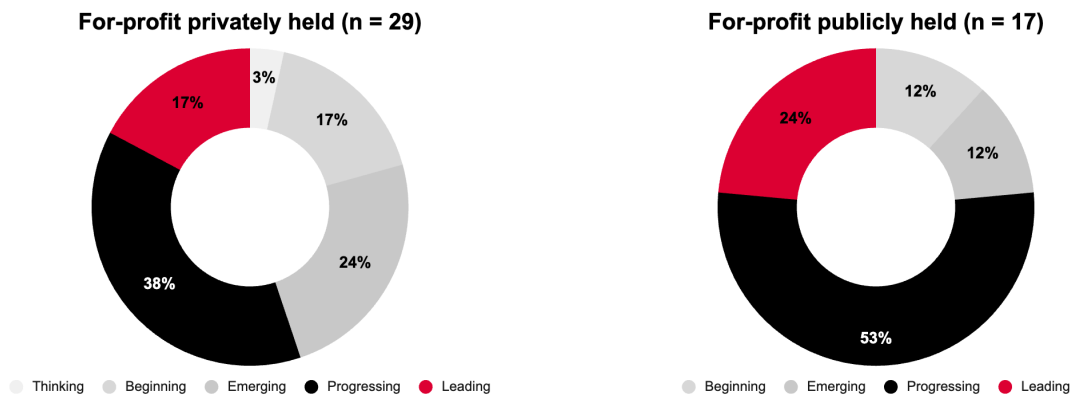
¹⁷ Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

¹⁸ This is how the exact questions were phrased: 1) Currently, how would you self-identify your organization in its racial equity journey? And 2) Thinking back, how would you have self-identified your organization in its racial equity journey in Sept. 2022?



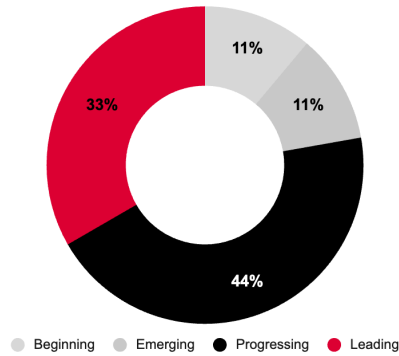
The chart below demonstrates the distribution of the self-assessment racial equity stages in terms of percentage for the for-profit privately and publicly held organization types. Both private and public for-profit organizations indicated that the largest percentage of companies are in the Progressing stage, with 38% privately held, and 53% publicly held. For the non-profit organization type, for example, we can observe that the largest percentage of self-reports falls in the Progressing stage (44%).

Figure 6 | Stage in Racial Equity Journey by Organization Type (2023 Assessment)¹⁹



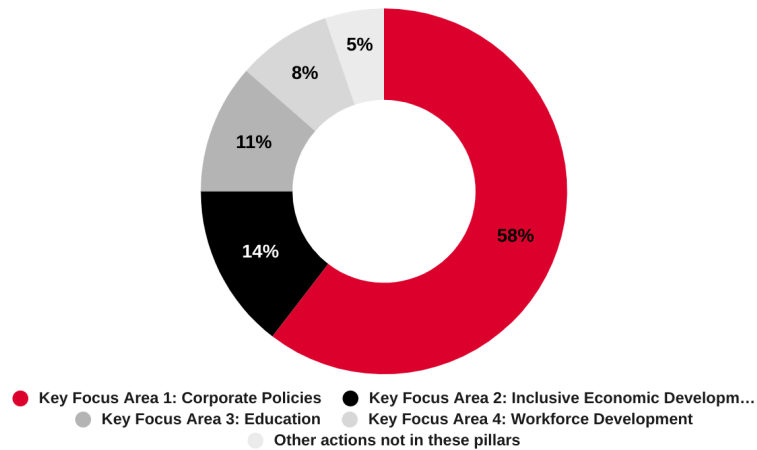
¹⁹ Government/public entity (n = 1) responded Leading (100%), and for Other (n = 1) responded Progressing (100%). These are not represented using pie charts in Figure 6 because the 'n' was small and they represented two or fewer stages.

Non-profit organization (n = 18)



Organizations indicated that they have engaged in conducting racial equity work under Key Focus Area #1: Corporate Policies the most.

Figure 7 | Racial Equity Work Conducted by Organizations in Key Focus Areas (2023 Assessment)²⁰



Beginning with the Key Focus Area #1: Corporate Policies section below, findings from the 2023 Annual AARE Assessment Survey are detailed by section, including strengths and opportunities for growth found in each key focus area's findings.

²⁰ Percentages are rounded down to the nearest whole percent and may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Key Focus Area #1: Corporate Policies

Problem Statement: Metro Atlanta-based businesses have not fully leveraged our region's strength as a location of choice for Black college students and Black talent across industries.

The struggle for DEI in corporate C-Suites and on Boards continues to be an issue for businesses in the United States. More locally, Metro Atlanta is home to 17 Fortune 500 company headquarters,²¹ and in 2023, 88% of executives (CEO, CFO, and COO) of Fortune 500 and S&P 500 Companies were white, and 86% of executives were men.²² Racial and ethnic diversity gains in company settings move slowly, though new data indicates that companies with above-average diversity are 2.4 times more likely to outperform their peers financially.²³

Setting and achieving DEI performance objectives can be a valuable asset to companies in more ways than one. Indeed, 62% percent of job seekers are more likely to join a company that values inclusion, and DEI performance objectives may be a key feature in recruiting new talent.²⁴ At its core, the setting and achieving of DEI performance objectives ensures accountability across companies, a main goal of the ATL Action for Racial Equity Initiative.^{25,26}

There are three groups of KPIs for this key focus area: People, Talent Pipeline, and HR Policies. The findings in this section are divided into three subsections, with the KPI group for each subsection listed before their corresponding findings.

Findings

Findings related to the first group of KPIs (People) for Key Focus Area #1: Corporate Policies are discussed below.



People KPIs

- Expand Black salaried workforce
- Increase the number of Black employees in senior management roles
- Elect Black leaders to all boards

²¹ Metro Atlanta Chamber. (2023). Metro Atlanta Welcomes Assurant as newest Fortune 500 Company. <https://www.metroatlantachamber.com/fortune-500-1000-company-assurant/>

²² Kolder, C. (2023). Volatility Report.

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/62164a05607c3e5978f251ec/t/64ee04ff1bd3a87e1b9e4a9b/1693320448585/2023_Volatility_Report_Summer.pdf

²³ DDI. (2023). Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Report. <https://www.ddiworld.com/glf/diversity-equity-inclusion-report-2023>

²⁴ PwC. (2022). *The future of recruiting*.

<https://www.pwc.com/us/en/services/consulting/business-transformation/library/hr-recruiting.html>

²⁵ Gaudiano, P. (2022). *The many tangible benefits of creating more granular DEI goals*. Forbes.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/paologaudiano/2022/10/05/the-many-tangible-benefits-of-creating-more-granular-dei-goals/?sh=121a06612494>

²⁶ Metro Atlanta Chamber. (2022). *DEI*. <https://www.metroatlantachamber.com/dei/>



Strengths

Organizations exhibit prioritizing diversity and leadership roles with a designated DEI leader. This year, 82% of respondents reported having a designated DEI leader, and 71% of organizations reported having a DEI leader last year.

While 76% have Black leaders on the Board, similar to the 72% measured last year; 72% of respondents reported having Black leaders represented in the C-Suite in 2023, up from 69% in 2022 and 43% in 2021.

The percentage of organizations implementing employee demographic tracking stayed relatively the same compared to last year, with 94% of organizations implementing it. See Table 4 below for more information on previous years' survey data regarding Black leadership and representation.

Table 4 | Black Leadership and Representation

Progress on Corporate Policies	2021	2022	2023
% have a designated DEI leader	70%	71%	82%
% have a designated DEI leader that reports to their CEO	33%	52%	56%
% have at least one Black leader represented in the C-suite	43%	69%	72%
% have at least one Black leader represented on the Board	48%	72%	76%
% track employee demographics, specifically Black representation	82%	92%	94%

Spotlight story on making goals towards organizational racial equity:



"We believe our organization should mirror the markets we serve. We developed 2030 aspirational goals to reflect the racial and ethnic diversity in the United States. Our plan focuses on internal and external recruitment, hiring, development, and advancement of people of color."

- For-profit, publicly held company with 1,000+ employees

Opportunities

Even though there was an overall increase in designated DEI leaders from last year, there is still room to grow in terms of corporate policies that promote racial equity. Likewise, though there was a large proportion of survey respondents with Black leaders represented in their C-Suite and/or on the Board, there is still room to increase Black representation in senior leadership positions so that leadership is proportionally representative of the Black community in metro Atlanta.²⁷

²⁷ Currently, 33.4% of metro Atlanta identifies as Black or African American; see metro Atlanta Census data for more information: https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2021.S0601?q=unemployment&q=310XX00US12060_010XX00US



Table 5 | Participating Member Organizations That Have a Designated DEI Leader, by Organization Size and Type in 2023

Organization Size	%	Organization Type	%
Fewer than 50 employees	53%	For-profit publicly held	94%
50 to 199 employees	100%	For-profit privately held	89%
200 to 499 employees	75%	Non-profit organization	66%
500 to 999 employees	75%	Government/public entity	0%
1000 or more employees	93%	Other	100%

Examples of Retention and Advancement Strategies

When asked to provide examples of retention and advancement strategies and practices for Black talent, some examples included:

- Scorecard criteria for inclusive promotion
- Mentorship, one-on-one coaching
- Employee resource groups
- Targeted professional development
- Pay equity assessments

Spotlight story on actions taken to retain Black talent:



"[We provide] ERGs [employee resource groups], mentorship, developmental programs, promotional analyses, high touch development programs, sponsorship, and... a reciprocal mentoring program for [staff] that also includes one-on-one coaching from a third party facilitator."

- Non-profit organization with 1,000+ employees

Findings

Findings related to the second group of KPIs (Talent Pipeline) for Key Focus Area #1: Corporate Policies are discussed below.





Talent Pipeline KPIs

- Accelerate recruiting and partnership efforts with the Atlanta University Center Consortium
- Establish formal recruiting relationships with Georgia State University and technical colleges with a focus on recruiting Black graduates
- Continue recruiting Black students across our higher education community
- Assess diversity on executive candidate slates and interview panels

Strengths

Organizations continue to invest in policies focused on racial equity in different organizational aspects, such as hiring and promotion. In this year's survey, 84% of organizations review job descriptions and interview questions to implement inclusive language. Last year, 77% of organizations reported reviewing these questions for inclusivity. In addition, 69% of organizations reported assessing pay equity policies across races, and 32% of organizations reported that Black talent made up 40% or more of their recruited talent. Table 6 includes more information about how organizations have adopted equitable hiring practices.

Table 6 | Percent of Participating Member Organizations Adopting Equitable Hiring Practices

Adopting equitable hiring practices	2022	2023
Review job descriptions and interview questions for inclusive language	77%	84%
Track hiring rates of Black talent for all positions	70%	75%
Established partnerships with Atlanta-based HBCUs to recruit entry-level talent (e.g., career fair, recruiting, minority student groups)	59%	53%

Opportunities

As shown in Table 6 above, there is room for improvement in companies partnering with HBCUs. This year, 53% of organizations partnered with Atlanta-based HBCUs to recruit entry-level talent, compared to 59% last year. Moreover, 26% of organizations reported that Black talent made up 40% or more of their entry-level or internship recruits, leaving additional room for improvement in partnering with HBCUs for recruiting future talent as well as supporting the talent pipeline with valuable internships.



MAC Sensemaking Session Insight

There is a need for continued research and emphasis on how MAC can best encourage collaboration between HBCUs and businesses in metro Atlanta, stoking an important talent pipeline and contributing to equitable workforce development. Re-upping efforts with Kennesaw State University and the Technical College System of Georgia were mentioned as specific ways to create collaboration.



Also shown in Table 6 above, although most organizations implement tracking practices among Black talent in hiring, retention, and promotion rates, there is still opportunity for growth, as 18% do not track hiring rates. Additionally, 23% do not track retention rates, and 26% do not track promotion rates of Black talent.

There are also opportunities to implement practices to improve the retention rate of Black talent. For example, 20% of organizations reported that they have at least a 20% turnover rate for Black talent, and only half of the organizations have strategies and practices for Black talent retention and advancement.

Table 7 below shows how different organization types interact with metro Atlanta HBCUs to partner and recruit Black talent.

Table 7 | Participating Member Organizations That Have Established Partnerships With Atlanta-based HBCUs to Recruit Black Talent

Organization Type*	%
For-profit publicly held	70%
For-profit privately held	48%
Non-profit organization	44%

*Note: We are unable to present results for government organizations or “Other” organizations due to small numbers of those respondents.

Spotlight story on actions taken to recruit Black talent:




“[We are] currently developing an ‘Emerging Talent’ program in collaboration with HBCUs and a local university to train new graduates and place them with Atlanta-area businesses.”

- For-profit, privately held company with 200-499 employees

Findings

Findings related to the third group of KPIs (HR Policies) for Key Focus Area #1: Corporate Policies are discussed below.



	HR Policies KPIs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt DEI best practices at scale • Implement unconscious bias/conscious inclusion training • Implement DEI performance objectives • Commit to pay equity • Remove unnecessary requirements for college degrees for appropriate roles
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Strengths

Similar to last year, a majority of the organizations are establishing DEI-oriented policy actions. Around 78% have a DEI strategy and gained buy-in from senior leaders, and 65% have established DEI performance objectives within their organization. Approximately 79% have implemented DEI training within Atlanta-based operations/work sites. Table 8 below shows the 2021, 2022, and 2023 AARE Assessment Survey data regarding DEI strategy and performance objectives.

Table 8 | Percentages of Organizations with a DEI Strategy or DEI Performance Objectives

DEI Policies	2021	2022	2023
% have a DEI strategy with buy-in from leaders	74%	81%	78%
% have established DEI performance objectives	62%	67%	65%
% have implemented DEI training within ATL-based operations/work sites	68%	76%	79%

Spotlight story on actions taken to support DEI strategy and tracking:



"[We have] brought on a designated DEI Program & Culture manager to oversee strategy and support the growth of our Employee Resource Groups while tracking, measuring, and aligning our DEI initiatives to needs of the business."

- For-profit, privately held company with 500-999 employees

Opportunities

Although 78% of organizations have created a DEI strategy, there is room for growth in establishing formal DEI performance objectives. About 32% of organizations have not established formal DEI performance objectives, which indicates a need for making DEI strategy concrete and measurable within organizations. Although most of the organizations are committing to establishing DEI policies, there are still obstacles that prevent them from doing so. Some of the reported reasons why organizations have not implemented these policies are listed below.

- They are awaiting revision on inclusive language
- DEI policies are still in progress
- The Board is based solely on experience



- It is a small and/or new organization

Table 9 below shows the percentage of different organization types that have established DEI performance objectives.

Table 9 | Member Organizations That Have Established DEI Performance Objectives, by Organization Type in 2023²⁸

Organization Type	%
For-profit publicly held	93%
For-profit privately held	50%
Non-profit organization	54%
Government/public entity	0%
Other	100%

Table 10 below shows percentages of organization types that have assessed pay equity across race.

Table 10 | Participating Member Organizations That Have Assessed Pay Equity Across Race, by Organization Size

Organization Size	%
Fewer than 50 employees	66%
50 to 199 employees	54%
200 to 499 employees	75%
500 to 999 employees	100%
1000 or more employees	70%

Spotlight story on actions taken to establish DEI metrics:



"While not established, we are in the process of establishing DEI metrics that will support buy-in."

- For-profit, privately held company with 50-199 employees

In this year's survey, responding organizations were asked what obstacles their organization faced when

²⁸ While government/public entity and other were 0% and 100% respectively, it is worth noting that each of these figures is based on the responses of only one organization in each organization type.



establishing a DEI strategy. Organizations' answers ranged from establishing a DEI knowledge base to assistance with appropriate staffing and funding, to logistical questions such as how to implement DEI initiatives with a distributed or hybrid workforce. Below is a list of the variety of obstacles organizations reported encountering when establishing a DEI strategy.

- Resources (time, money, capacity)
- Recent legislation, politics, and Supreme Court decisions
- Obtaining buy-in (such as from middle management)
- Access to investors that value DEI
- Trust-building
- Having majority-white leadership
- Risk aversion to advancing DEI
- Having a DEI strategy that meets all levels of needs in the organization (e.g., regional, global)
- Maintaining momentum toward DEI
- Having distributed remote, hybrid, and in-person workers
- Knowing and understanding what steps to take towards DEI

Responding organizations were also asked what examples, resources, or strategic support could help their organization overcome the obstacles to establishing a DEI strategy. Facilitation of networking seemed to be a unifying theme throughout responses to this question, such as increased connections with K-12 schools, funders, investors, and other agencies. Below is a list of support and resources that organizations reported would help them establish a DEI strategy.

- Increased staffing
- Funding
- Peer knowledge-sharing and learning, roundtables
- Partnerships and collaboration with other agencies
- Case studies of successes
- Ways to develop a pipeline of DEI leaders
- Networking with funders
- Professional development
- Data on external DEI trends
- Increased connections with K-12 schools and colleges
- Managing hybrid work models
- Hiring DEI staff

Considerations for Key Focus Area #1: Corporate Policies

Several considerations exist after a holistic examination of the findings associated with Key Focus Area #1: Corporate Policies. In terms of the People area of KPIs, a high percentage of organizations who responded to this year's survey have a designated DEI leader (82%), as well as having at least one Black leader represented in the C-Suite (72%) and at least one Black leader on the Board (76%). These percentages show a commitment to Black leadership representation at high levels of organizations. Organizations should ensure that Black leadership is represented everywhere in the organization that decisions are being made, as well as make sure that a single Black leader is not tokenized on a Board or in a C-Suite.²⁹

²⁹ Sherrer, K. (2018, February 26). *What is tokenism, and why does it matter in the workplace?* Vanderbilt University Owen Graduate School of Management. <https://business.vanderbilt.edu/news/2018/02/26/tokenism-in-the-workplace/>



For the Talent Pipeline group of KPIs, it seems that organizations' relationships with HBCUs in metro Atlanta can continue to be strengthened to serve as a pipeline for Black talent. This year, 26% of organizations reported that Black talent made up 40% or more of entry-level or internship recruits. Relationship building with HBCUs could serve to increase this percentage. To name a few, the #1 and #4 HBCUs (Spelman and Morehouse Colleges, respectively) in the United States are located in metro Atlanta, providing a steady pipeline of Black talent and uniquely positioning metro Atlanta organizations with opportunities to take advantage of local talent.³⁰

Lastly, for the HR Policies group of KPIs, organizations should work to set DEI performance objectives alongside their DEI strategy, providing concrete ways to track metrics to measure progress towards DEI strategy goals. Organizations reported considerable barriers to setting DEI performance objectives, and a main barrier concerned slow rates of progress toward establishing such objectives. Technical assistance or learning from case studies of other similar organizations may help metro Atlanta organizations speed up progress toward setting DEI performance objectives.

Please see the list below for current, valuable Corporate Policies resources for organizations of various types and sizes.

Corporate Policies Resources for Organizations

1. Cooper, W. P. (2023, May 26). *5 DE&I strategies for small businesses*. CFO. <https://www.cfo.com/news/5-dei-strategies-for-small-businesses/654498/>
2. Merriweather, K. (2023, January 13). *How small businesses can collect and use DEI data to boost growth*. The Diversity Movement. <https://thediversitymovement.com/how-small-businesses-can-collect-and-use-dei-data-boost-growth/>
3. Kalev, A., & Dobbin, F. (2022, September 29). *How companies should set – and report – DEI goals*. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2022/09/how-companies-should-set-and-report-dei-goals>
4. Brown, J. J., & Williams, H. L. (2021, March 18). *How to build the talent pipeline for people of color*. Fortune. <https://fortune.com/2021/03/18/talent-pipeline-diversity-equity-inclusion/>

Key Focus Area #2: Inclusive Economic Development

Problem Statement: Black entrepreneurs face systemic obstacles for success that limit their access to networks, capital, knowledge, and customers.

³⁰ Metro Atlanta Chamber. (2023). *Education Hub*. <https://www.metroatlantachamber.com/built-for-business/education-hub/>



The 2022 Census shows that out of the total number of employer firms in metro Atlanta, 8.8% percent are Black-owned.^{31,32} However, Black-owned businesses face numerous obstacles in elevating and growing their businesses due to limited access to important resources and capital:

- Black-owned businesses are valued at up to 11 times less than white-owned businesses (\$58,085 compared to \$658,264).³³
- Discriminatory lending practices against Black applicants and borrowers affect access to capital.³⁴
- Black-owned businesses have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.³⁵

Metro Atlanta's business community can help establish, elevate, and grow Black-owned businesses by building networks and investing in Black-owned businesses. Businesses can be intentional about providing capital, including financial (e.g., funding, banking, sponsorship), human (e.g., networking, mentorship), and thought (e.g., resources, courses) capital to Black-owned businesses. For example, an important way to increase access to capital for these businesses is inclusive procurement through supplier diversity programs. These and other initiatives and strategies could have societal-level impacts advancing racial equity in the region by increasing the number of successful Black-owned businesses and by addressing their barriers to economic advancement.

Key Definitions

Formal supplier diversity programs are proactive business programs that encourage partnerships with businesses that are at least 51% owned, operated, or controlled by underrepresented suppliers. They do this through establishing policies and procedures for engaging, measuring, tracking, and developing these partnerships.

Underrepresented suppliers include Asian-Indian, Asian-Pacific, Black, Hispanic, Native American, Women, LGBTQ, Veterans, Disabled, Small Businesses, and Historically Underutilized Business Zones (HUBZone). Common classifications of underrepresented suppliers are small business enterprises (SBEs), minority-owned enterprises (MBEs), and woman-owned enterprises (WBEs).

Diverse spend refers to the amount of money companies spend with Minority-Owned Business Enterprises (MBE).

Findings

Key Focus Area #2: Inclusive Economic Development KPIs can be found below, followed by findings related to these KPIs.

³¹ Business ownership is defined as having 51 percent or more of the stock or equity in the business.

³² MAC Economic research calculations from <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/abs/data.html>

³³ Atlanta Wealth Building Initiative. (2022). *Racial wealth gap*. <https://www.atlantawealthbuilding.org/racial-wealth-gap>

³⁴ Broady, K. et al. (2021). *An analysis of financial institutions in Black-majority communities*.

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/an-analysis-of-financial-institutions-in-black-majority-communities-black-borrowers-and-depositors-face-considerable-challenges-in-accessing-banking-services/>

³⁵ Perry, A. M. et al. (2022). *Black-owned businesses in US cities*.

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/black-owned-businesses-in-u-s-cities-the-challenges-solutions-and-opportunities-for-prosperity/>



Inclusive Economic Development KPIs

- Achieve full adoption of formal supplier diversity programs among our Fortune 1000 companies
- Increase the share of Black-owned employer businesses in metro Atlanta
- Increase access to capital for Black founders
- Increase the share of venture-backed metro Atlanta based companies with Black founders

Strengths

Some organizations have established supplier diversity programs to promote racial equity at their company. Around 37% of organizations who responded have a formal supplier diversity program, and 11% of organizations who responded established their supplier diversity program in the last 12 months. Table 11 shows 2021, 2022, and 2023 supplier diversity metrics.

Table 11 | Procurement and Supplier Diversity Metrics

Procurement	2021	2022	2023
% that have a formal supplier diversity program	40%	37%	37%
% that track underrepresented suppliers	37%	37%	46%
% that track diverse spending	37%	36%	46%
% that track supplier diversity metrics for Black-owned suppliers in Metro Atlanta	13%	15%	24%
% that track underrepresented suppliers by revenue class	4%	5%	6%

As shown in Table 12, when examining supplier diversity program findings by organization size, larger organizations with 1000 or more employees show the highest rates of establishing formal supplier diversity programs.



Table 12 | Percent of Survey Respondents with Established Formal Supplier Diversity Programs, by Organization Size

Organization Size	2022	2023
Fewer than 50 employees	24%	26%
50 to 199 employees	11%	9%
200 to 499 employees	10%	0%
500 to 999 employees	29%	25%
1000 or more employees	64%	62%

Notably, of organizations that had a supplier diversity program (n = 26), 79% had their program for 5 years or more, indicating that this may be a sustainable metric for some organizations. As mentioned in the Sensemaking Session, it could be that the high percentage of supplier diversity programs that are 5 or more years old is a function of selection bias – organizations that responded to this year’s survey may have been ones especially committed to racial equity work and made a point to complete the survey for their organization.

Table 13 | Procurement and YoY Growth

Procurement	2021	2022	2023
% tracking year-over-year growth rate of underrepresented suppliers	21%	21%	26%
% with supplier diversity programs more than 5 years old	—	47%	79%

Spotlight story on impacting the racial wealth gap:



“We have adopted an integrated economic mobility model designed to directly positively impact closing the racial wealth gap.”

- Non-profit organization with fewer than 50 employees

Opportunities

Although organizations are establishing supplier diversity programs to promote racial equity, there is still room for improvement, as 63% of organizations do not currently



MAC Sensemaking Session
Insight

For both the 2022 and 2023 surveys, a high number of respondents selected "Unsure" to the questions about tracking inclusive economic development metrics, creating an opportunity to invest more in tracking. The terminology used in the questions, although it was defined for participants in the survey, may be unfamiliar to some respondents. A lack of capacity to track such metrics or knowledge of how to track them may also be a challenge. Organizations may see these as secondary or tertiary metrics within a supplier diversity program and collect more basic data or metrics instead. Finally, the wording of the questions may need to be adjusted for respondents.



have a formal supplier diversity program. Relatedly and similar to last year, there can be an improvement in tracking indicators of inclusive economic development, although tracking the indicators was reported at a higher rate on this year's survey compared to last year's; around 46% of organizations track their number of underrepresented suppliers. Last year's tracking rate was 37% of organizations that responded to the survey.

Table 14 below shows how organization types differ in their establishment of formal supplier diversity programs. Similar to last year's findings, for-profit publicly held organizations showed the highest rates of formal supplier diversity program establishment.

Table 14 | Percentage of Organizations with Established Formal Supplier Diversity Programs, by Organization Type

Organization Type	2022	2023
For-profit publicly held	81%	76%
For-profit privately held	26%	34%
Non-profit organization	23%	11%
Government/public entity	0%	0%
Other	33%	100%

As shown in Table 12 above, 46% of organizations track diverse spending, and last year's survey showed a 37% diverse spending tracking rate. So while there is improvement, there is still room for growth. Around 26% of organizations who responded track growth rates of underrepresented suppliers year-over-year (YoY), and 24% track supplier diversity metrics for Black-owned businesses. In last year's survey, 15% of organizations reported tracking supplier diversity metrics for Black-owned businesses. Revenue class tracking of underrepresented suppliers remains a difficult metric, with 6% of this year's responding organizations tracking revenue class. Around 5% of organizations in last year's survey reported tracking underrepresented suppliers by revenue class.

Spotlight story on accessing the diverse supplier community:



"We are a member of the GMSDC (Georgia Minority Supplier Development Council). They are our primary gateway into the diverse supplier community."

- Non-profit organization with 1000+ employees

Engagement, networking, and investment in Black owners and founders in metro Atlanta can improve. When it comes to engagement with metro Atlanta Black-owned suppliers, some organizations actively engage in partnering with mentors and suppliers to support Black-owned organizations. According to Table



15, approximately 38% have established partnerships with incubators and mentoring organizations to support Black owners and founders in metro Atlanta, which seems to be lower than in 2021 and 2022. About 46% of respondents reported that Black-owned suppliers in metro Atlanta made up 20% or more of their total suppliers. There is room for business leaders to engage and partner more closely with Black entrepreneurs in the region by attending networking and/or showcase events, participating in or facilitating panels, seminars, conferences, and/or workshops, serving as a mentor, and providing sponsorship and/or funding.

Table 15 | Percentage of Organizations Supporting Black Owners and Founders in Metro Atlanta

Progress on Inclusive Economic Diversity	2021	2022	2023
% of organizations with established partnerships with incubators and mentoring organizations to support Black owners and founders in metro Atlanta	42%	55%	38%

Although the percentage of organizations engaging and investing in Black-owned and founded business in metro Atlanta was lower in this year's survey than in previous years, when taking a closer look (shown in Table 16 below), some specific strategies that organizations who responded to the survey have adopted were more highly utilized than in previous years. Notably, this year's survey showed more organizations providing sponsorship and/or directly funding Black-owned and founded companies in metro Atlanta (52% compared to 26% and 20% in 2022 and 2021, respectively). Additionally, pitch competitions and/or accelerator opportunities seemed to be more frequently reported as ways organizations supported Black-owned and founded businesses in metro Atlanta in the last 12 months.

Table 16 | Percentage of Organizations Adopting Strategies in Support of Black Owners and Founders in Metro Atlanta in the Last 12 months

Strategy to Support Black Owners and Founders	2021	2022	2023
Provided sponsorship and/or funding directly to a company	20%	26%	52%
Partnered with startup(s) on a project	12%	17%	34%
Supported pro bono work	14%	15%	36%
Sponsored pitch competitions and/or accelerator opportunities	7%	10%	34%
Contributed to funds that invested in companies	7%	9%	13%
Sponsored an entrepreneur-in-residence program	5%	7%	7%
Established banking relationships with Black-owned banks	2%	5%	5%

Considerations



Tracking indicators of inclusive economic development seems to vary across organizations, with lower percentages of some metrics being tracked compared to others even though a higher percentage of organizations who responded this year (46%) reported tracking indicators of inclusive economic development compared to last year (37%). However, lower percentages of organizations track more specific supplier diversity metrics, such as 26% of organizations tracking year-over-year growth rates of underrepresented suppliers and 24% of organizations tracking supplier diversity rates for Black-owned businesses. Only 6% of organizations who responded to this year's survey track the revenue class of underrepresented suppliers at all.

Given additional feedback about challenges and barriers that was provided by survey respondents, it seems that more granular metrics like these are harder to track due to limited time, staffing, and other resources. Indeed, for-profit publicly held organizations and organizations that had 1000 or more employees showed the highest rates of establishing supplier diversity programs that track supplier diversity metrics. Assistance of some sort in tracking such metrics, as well as information on baseline knowledge needed to navigate supplier diversity metrics and program building, would be helpful for organizations to further progress in this area, especially for organizations that are smaller and/or have fewer resources.

Key Focus Area #3: Education

Problem Statement: Black students in metro Atlanta face limitations to affordable, high-quality learning experiences.

According to the most recent 2022 American Community Survey data,³⁶ only 25% of Black adults over the age of 25 have attained a bachelor's degree in the United States. In the state of Georgia, as indicated in the 2022 American Community Survey data, only slightly more than 28% of Black adults over 25 are estimated to have attained a bachelor's degree or higher. For the metro Atlanta area, the 2022 estimate for Black adults' (25 years or older) attainment of a bachelor's degree or higher was 34%.

Broadly speaking, demographic data such as what is available in the American Community Survey continue to demonstrate that, while metro Atlanta is outperforming the national and state trends in 2022, Black students still generally lack comprehensive access to affordable, high-quality learning experiences in the region. Furthermore, the persistent educational impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are already far-reaching for Black students in the metro Atlanta region. The consequences on educational attainment are anticipated to increase learning gaps between Black and white children,³⁷ as well as gaps between Black and white college students.³⁸ Education accessibility efforts remain more important than ever,

³⁶

https://data.census.gov/table/ACSSPP1Y2022.S0201?t=004:Educational%20Attainment&g=010XX00US_040XX00US13_160XX00US1304000_310XX00US12060&moe=false

³⁷ Department of Education Office of Civil Rights. (2021). *Education in a Pandemic*.

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/20210608-impacts-of-covid19.pdf>


³⁸ Hiler, T., et al. (2020). *COVID-19's impact on Black college students*.

<https://www.thirdway.org/infographic/covid-19s-impact-on-black-college-students>

presenting an increasingly significant opportunity to make a lasting impact on education outcomes in the metro Atlanta region.

Findings

The KPIs for Key Focus Area #3: Education can be found below, followed by findings related to this Key Focus Area.

	<p>Education KPIs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve educational outcomes for Black children by increasing enrollment of Black students ages 0-5 in high-quality early learning programs in metro Atlanta• Increase career learning opportunities for Black students in metro Atlanta with a concentration on historically under-resourced schools and communities• Increase educational attainment of Bachelor's or higher degrees
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Strengths

At least half of the organizations who responded reported that their organization is involved with education-related initiatives such as advisory boards. About 57% encourage and support involvement with local organizations that support educational achievement and success for Black youth, and 52% encourage and support involvement in training programs at academies, Title I or majority Black schools, or non-profit training providers. Moreover, 50% support other organizations in metro Atlanta that help students from under-resourced communities prepare for and complete post-secondary education.

Two-thirds of organizations who responded said their organization has engaged in or encouraged employees to volunteer as mentors with organizations focused on Black youth. Examples included partnering with the Boys & Girls Club, hosting a career institute, and mentoring at local elementary schools.

Regarding offering students experiential learning, 45% of organizations who responded said they offer experiential opportunities for students in metro Atlanta who lack access to career experiences. Examples provided by organizations included offering summer internships to high school and college/university students, establishing a work-study program, and providing skills preparation programs to young adults to promote career readiness.

Opportunities

More organizations could work towards adopting recommendations from the [Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students \(GEEARS\) Business Toolkit](#).³⁹ As shown in Table 17 below, only 13% of organizations who responded have adopted any of the GEEARS recommendations (n = 9). Of those who responded, the most commonly adopted GEEARS recommendations (each adopted by 77% of the

³⁹ GEEARS is a nonprofit organization that operates to “inspire and provide leadership for a statewide movement on quality early learning and healthy development for all children ages birth through five.” The GEEARS Business Toolkit provides Georgia employers resources to maintain a family-friendly work environment and a competitive advantage over other employers, both of which help with recruitment, retention, and advancement of employees.

respondents who reported adopting GEEARS recommendations) were

- helping employees find childcare,
- expanding parental leave options, and
- expanding work flexibility options for parents.

Table 17 | GEEARS Business Toolkit Recommendation Adoption

GEEARS Business Toolkit	2021	2022	2023
% of organizations adopting one or more of the GEEARS recommendations	10%	16%	13%

Organizations have room to grow in their efforts focused on investment in early education. Over half of the organizations who responded reported that their organization's leadership and staff did not engage in efforts focused on investment in early education in the last 12 months, such as attending early education and benefits conferences and workshops, touring local metro Atlanta childcare facilities, and speaking publicly about business investment in early education programs.

Opportunities exist for organizations to invest in or sponsor career learning and access for metro Atlanta families. Around 42% of organizations who responded to the survey indicated that they had not done any of the following in the last 12 months: providing support networks for students and families to access career learning opportunities, promoting financial literacy and FAFSA completion for students and families, and sponsoring local events and career learning opportunities for Title I or majority Black schools. Hosting career opportunities for K-12 students seems to be a viable way to engage but requires staffing and coordination resources.

Considerations

Since the GEEARS toolkit has not been utilized at more than a 16% rate in the last 3 years by companies responding to the survey, the marketing and accessibility of the toolkit should be considered. Questions of whether the toolkit is user-friendly and if knowledge of the toolkit is widespread in the business community may provide information about toolkit use. Guidance in the form of webinars or videos about GEEARS may increase its adoption, as well as technical assistance or case studies regarding how other organizations have effectively utilized the toolkit. More interaction with early education facilities in metro Atlanta could also increase organizations' knowledge of how to support their employees' caregiving responsibilities since less than half of organizations reported engaging in efforts aimed at investing in early childhood education.

Key Focus Area #4: Workforce Development

Problem Statement: A disparity gap in unemployment rates and median household income exists between the Black and white population in metro Atlanta.



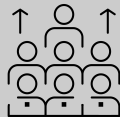
In 2022 in metro Atlanta, the median household income for Black families was \$68,017, compared to \$99,405 for white families.⁴⁰ Additionally, there are stark racial disparities in unemployment rates (shown in Table 18 below) at the national, state, and regional levels. Actions that employers can take, such as those measured in the 2022 Assessment, can effect change in decreasing these gaps. Employers hold power that enables them to consider the family, work life, and health of employees and, therefore, use their organizations' resources to create more racially equitable distributions of pay, healthcare, and other employee benefits, as well as the ability to make employment more accessible to decrease the unemployment gap.

Table 18 | Black and White Unemployment Rates from 2022 U.S. Census⁴¹

Location	Black unemployment rate	White unemployment rate
United States	8%	3%
Georgia	7%	3%
Metro Atlanta	6%	3%

Findings

Below are the KPIs associated with Key Focus Area #4: Workforce Development. Following the KPIs are the findings related to the Workforce Development Key Focus Area.



Workforce Development KPIs

- Support the Black workforce in metro Atlanta by decreasing the unemployment rate gap between Black and white populations

Strengths

Organizations that responded to the survey largely reported that they are dedicated to paying a livable wage for their location in metro Atlanta (based on the MIT Living Wage Calculator⁴²). According to this year's survey, 86% of organizations paid a livable wage, while 71% of organizations who responded to the survey last year reported paying a livable wage.

Organizations reported providing several benefits to full-time employees. Similar to what was reported in last year's survey, 84% offered healthcare benefits and paid sick time to full-time employees. In addition,

- 77% of organizations provided paid parental leave,
- 76% provided unemployment benefits,

⁴⁰ <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2022.S1903?q=household%20income&q=310XX00US12060&moe=false>

⁴¹ https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2022.S2301?q=unemployment&q=010XX00US_040XX00US13_310XX00US12060&moe=false

⁴² Glasmeier, A. K. (2024). *Living Wage Calculator*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. <https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/13121>

- 73% provided retirement benefits, and
- 69% provided a flexible spending account (FSA) for childcare.

To a lesser degree, organizations also reported providing benefits to part-time employees, with the most commonly provided benefit being paid sick time (33%).

Organizations that responded to the survey reported increasing access to employment through specific organizational procedures within the last year. For example, 72% had flexible work policies for all employees such as telecommuting and scheduling flexibility, and 51% have updated job descriptions to be skills-based instead of credential- or college degree-based. About 24% have eliminated certain screening barriers (e.g., credit checks and criminal background checks).

It should be noted that in terms of the ways organizations have increased access to employment, flexible work policies were adopted at a greater rate this year compared to last year's reported findings (in which 61% of organizations adopted such policies). This reflects a larger societal discourse about workers' and organizations' continued post-COVID-19 pandemic needs and challenges regarding flexible work environments.⁴³

Organizations also reported ways they have invested in workforce development for their current talent, including

- implementing mentorship and sponsorship opportunities for employees within the organization (66%),
- creating career pathways for entry-level and hourly workers (54%), and
- transforming low-wage jobs into high-quality jobs such as through cross-training and pathway improvements (28%).

The most common investment in future talent undertaken by organizations was partnering with education and training providers to develop programs focused on high-demand skills (39%).

Opportunities

Organizations have room to improve policies related to benefits for part-time employees to support their families, as the most commonly paid benefit was paid sick time (33% of organizations who had part-time employees).

Organizations have more opportunities available to increase access to employment, such as subsidizing transportation costs for hourly workers or other commuter benefits (provided by 13% of organizations who responded) and mitigating child care challenges (e.g., on-site or near-site child care, subsidizing cost of child care), which was provided by 20% of organizations. Organizations have opportunities to implement an employer-assisted housing program (e.g., housing cost wage assessments, rental or down-payment assistance), which was reported by 3% of organizations.

⁴³ <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/real-estate/our-insights/americans-are-embracing-flexible-work-and-they-want-more-of-it>



Nearly half of the organizations reported that they had not taken any actions to advocate at the local, state, or federal levels for greater public investment in the areas such as those found below, similar to last year's survey findings (42%):

- child care,
- affordable housing,
- transportation,
- education, and
- healthcare.

Organizations have opportunities to improve their investment in future talent, as 46% reported that they do not do any of the following:

- partnering with education and training providers to develop programs focused on high-demand skills,
- implementing tailored apprenticeships, and
- sharing education, hiring, and retention data with hiring partners such as education institutions, workforce agencies, staffing agencies, and other partners, to better evaluate the effectiveness of partnerships and programs.

Considerations

Organizations' efforts to increase access to employment can be focused on and strengthened to support a more inclusive workforce in metro Atlanta. Of particular note is the opportunity for organizations to consider how to mitigate costs of transportation and child care for employees—only 13% of organizations subsidized transportation costs, and 20% mitigated childcare costs and challenges. Relieving some aspects of the childcare burden for employees helps retain employees, especially since a lack of childcare options is an often-cited reason for employees' decision to leave the workforce.⁴⁴ These considerations may play an even more important role in retaining employees whose organizations are shifting to in-person requirements c, offering a way to offset the stress and costs associated with finding childcare options in early childhood education and childcare “deserts.”⁴⁵

Resources are available through the [Metro Atlanta Chamber](#), including both a Talent Supply Report and an Opportunity Report, that can help organizations shape workforce development initiatives.

⁴⁴ Caldwell, E. (2023, May 1). *On-site child care would alleviate companies return-to-office struggles*. Seattle Times. <https://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/on-site-child-care-would-alleviate-companies-return-to-office-struggles/>

⁴⁵ Center for American Progress. (2020). *Child Care Deserts*. <https://childcaredeserts.org/>

Conclusion: Overall Key Takeaways and Considerations

In the section to follow, we will highlight key considerations based on the findings presented in this report. These are enumerated according to the strengths and opportunities presented for each of the four key areas: Corporate Policies, Inclusive Economic Development, Education, and Workforce Development.

- Progressing organizations require continued help for their racial equity journeys, which can be supported via greater access to DEI data and through networking.
- There is an identified need to develop more guidance on closing the loop between establishing DEI strategies and implementing DEI performance indicators that can be facilitated through peer and partnership learning initiatives.
- There is a call for improving the rate of entry-level and internship opportunities for Black talent and investing in career learning and access for metro Atlanta, both of which can best be supported by developing stronger ties to K-12 and undergraduate educational institutions.
- There is a need for increased means of tracking metrics and capacity-building for knowledge sharing that can be supported through professional development and increased access to data on DEI trends.
- Organizations can improve processes for implementing a formal supplier diversity program, though this would require hiring DEI staff and securing funding for the program.
- Several organizations demonstrate that they are committed to supporting Black-owned businesses; however, one area for growth across organizations is to offer more opportunities for accessible employment.

ATL Action for Racial Equity remains rooted in committed companies embracing DEI as core values in the success of their business, the growth of the metro Atlanta economy, and the future of our community. Metro Atlanta companies that responded to the 2023 ATL Action for Racial Equity Assessment survey demonstrated that they are growing as a result of their DEI journeys, continually implementing racial equity measures and leveraging opportunities to further grow as they work to advance racial equity in metro Atlanta.

Findings from the 2023 Assessment survey suggest that internally, committed companies should continue to 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. Across the globe, committed companies can be engaged in the conversation around protecting and improving the Black community's access to high-quality basic needs. To this end, committed companies should use their platforms to advocate for greater public investments in education, housing, transportation, and other areas that impact racial equity in metro Atlanta.

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.



Afterword

[Creative Research Solutions, LLC \(CRS\)](#) is the data and learning partner for the Annual ATL Action for Racial Equity (AARE) Assessment Survey. Creative Research Solutions, LLC was also the data and learning partner for the [previous iteration](#) of the survey.

Based in metro Atlanta, CRS is a Black- and woman-owned small business that provides research and evaluation consulting services. At the heart of CRS are CREE (culturally responsive and equitable evaluation) practices, which allow us to use rigorous mixed-methods approaches to collect and analyze data, providing a holistic view of clients' initiatives and illuminating a path to data-driven decision-making.

Our firm's positioning in metro Atlanta has allowed CRS to delve into the AARE initiative at the Metro Atlanta Chamber (MAC) with local knowledge at the foundation of our approach, including consideration of the region's past and current racial context and its role as a hub for Black innovation. Our work in metro Atlanta and other cities across the United States has focused on integrating DEI into all spaces, including projects in civic engagement, educational equity, equitable economic development, and supplier diversity.

We would like to thank MAC's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion team, including Michael Baptiste, Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, for his leadership and partnership on the AARE Assessment Survey. Lastly, we would like to thank the metro Atlanta companies committed to racial equity in their organizations for their time and effort in completing the survey.

