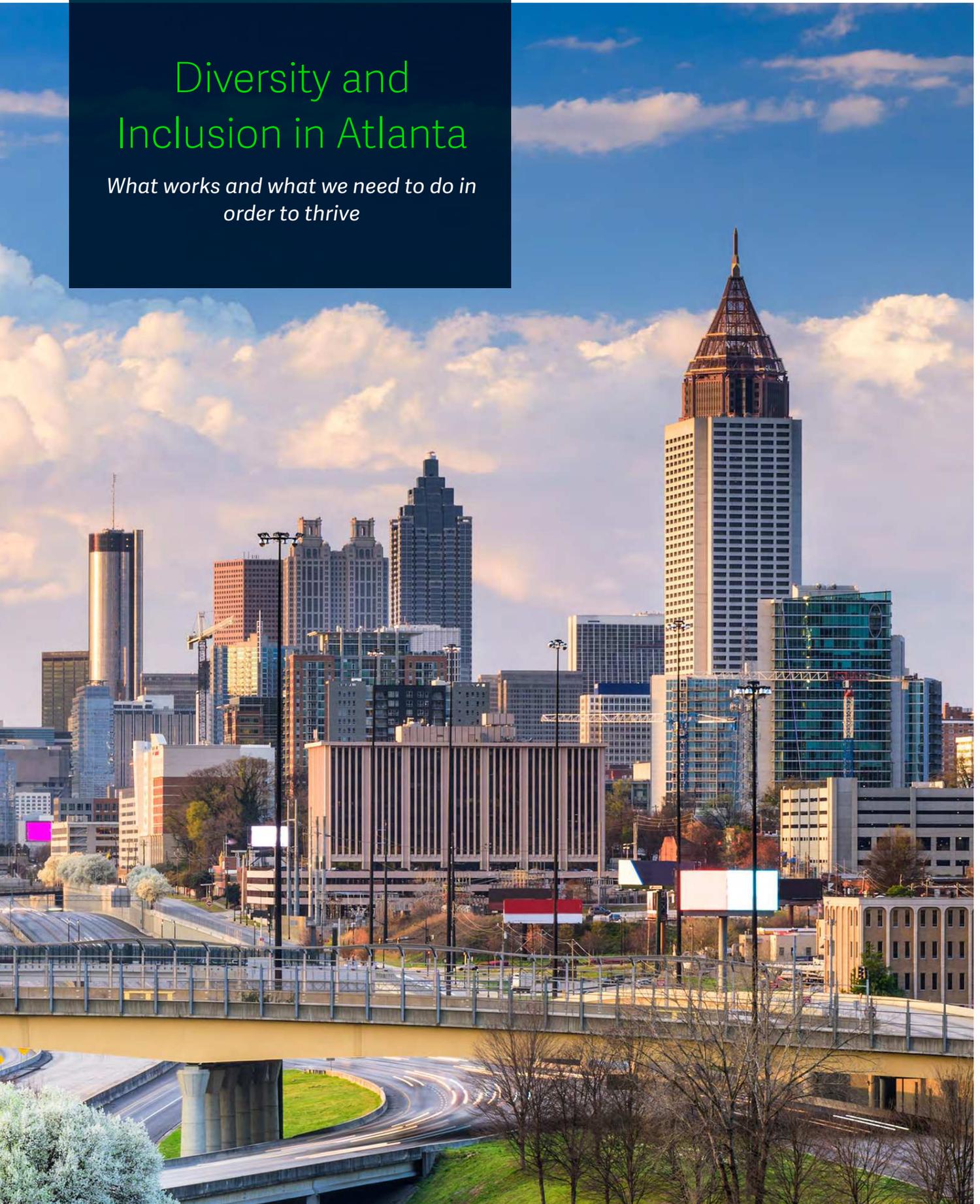


# Diversity and Inclusion in Atlanta

*What works and what we need to do in  
order to thrive*



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**We would like to thank the following companies and organizations for their contribution to this report:**



# Foreword

When Sage chose Atlanta to be the home of our North American headquarters, we knew this city was special. Atlanta is the city that led the country through the Civil Rights Movement. It is home to some of the country's most diverse companies. It is a city in which 83 percent of its citizens identify as 'non-Caucasian.' It houses almost five percent of the national LGBTQ community and has one of the largest ecosystems for women-owned businesses in the country.

There is also a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem. There is grit and passion to create a more progressive business environment, and a need for more action to create opportunities for all. Sage and our customers' ambitions for growth can't be met without a thriving business community that embraces sustainable diversity and inclusion practices.

It comes as no surprise that when we set out to advance our own diversity and inclusion plans through a keen understanding of what others were focused on, the first place we wanted to look was at our very own hometown Atlanta. Seeking diversity and promoting inclusion is central to our vision. We know that the best ideas come from diversity of thought. We knew that if we engaged with some of the country's best businesses for diversity and inclusion, we could all learn from each other.

We rallied corporate and civic leaders to discuss challenges we face in our organizations and as corporate citizens. The goal of our conversation was to understand best practices and learn what's working for each of us and where we could do better.

Diversity and inclusion is more than "tokenism" and demographic measures. It is about building a culture that embraces and lives this concept every day. It is about getting to a point where D&I is not a conscious thought, but rather a natural way of behaving and acting. From highlighting leaders who embody inclusion, to working on issues such as improving the gender pay gap and closing the skills gap, Sage is developing programs to support key challenges, and we can't do this alone. We must rely on our fellow organizations to help us choose the right priorities and drive change.

When we embarked on our study and started with our civic dinner conversations, a question that arose repeatedly was, *"Could we be doing more; can we collectively make a difference in Atlanta?"*

In fact, challenges to equity and a need for greater diversity in leadership in Atlanta were resounding discussion points. Through the conversations and depth interviews, a clear message stood out: D&I is an investment in the future of the city, the state and the country. We won't have all the answers, but we can set the course for truly sustainable change if we work together and keep each other accountable.

I want to thank and applaud everyone who participated in our study. We have a long way to go, but we are making big strides. I look forward to continuing the conversation as we expand on this report and keep you informed of progress.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Harris". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Nancy Harris, EVP and Managing Director, Sage**

# Our Purpose



This report is a part of a larger study commissioned by Sage to explore Atlanta’s Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) landscape, where we are headed and opportunities for the future. This year, we set out to understand how Atlanta’s corporate leaders can improve diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Sage will use these findings to ground a series of public conversations and actionable recommendations to help improve D&I for Atlanta’s diverse communities. Sage is “taking action to build social, economic, and entrepreneurial opportunities in their local community”<sup>1</sup>. In describing the current climate of D&I within the City of Atlanta, our analysis also aims to understand the attitudes of Atlanta businesses towards the City’s D&I initiatives, policies, and practices.

<sup>1</sup>Read more about Sage’s commitments to D&I and [community service](#).

# Executive Summary

The pace of innovation must keep stride with the rapid diversification of Atlanta's population. The majority of companies and organizations in this study have changed their structure and recruiting strategies to engage with the diverse talent within the City of Atlanta. Atlanta's business leaders understand the history of this city and are prepared to answer the call that demands that their operating and leadership decisions are equitable and fair. In order to make these decisions, leaders need quantitative and qualitative data and multifaceted solutions to meet the needs of their workforces.

Atlanta's business leaders understand the history of this city and are prepared to answer the call that demands that their operating and leadership decisions are equitable and fair.

Atlanta's diverse populations are subject to various barriers to social mobility that can and will be addressed through the coordinated efforts of the public and private sectors. However, organizations are faced with challenges caused by the same chronic inequities such as healthcare, transportation, and education, to name a few. These inequities are negatively impacting employees, and companies and organizations stand ready to meet these challenges<sup>2</sup>. Through our research, we discovered a few of Atlanta's companies and organizations are collaborators, partnering together to meet common goals. Yet there are many businesses who are left out of this coordinated effort.

<sup>2</sup> Kanell, M. E. (2019, May 16). Study: Georgia's shortcomings threaten to undermine economic growth. Retrieved from [AJC](#).

# Three Big Takeaways

## Our Key Findings



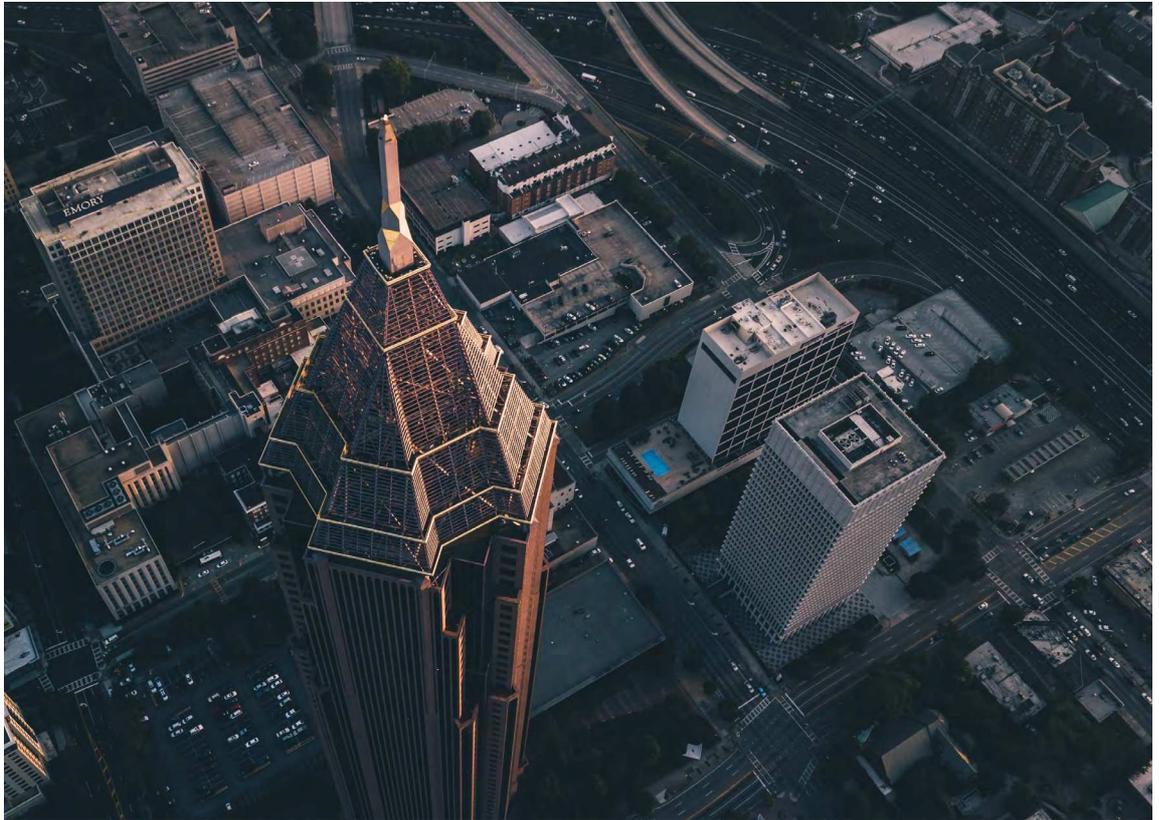
Business leaders within these organizations have similar priorities as it relates to creating more diverse senior leadership, utilizing new tools to streamline and strengthen talent acquisition; and create ongoing mentorship opportunities in their respective sectors.

The companies and organizations that participated in this study face varied challenges to making their D&I objectives actionable, based on their size and resources.

This study uncovers several gaps and reveals key opportunities to improve D&I practices citywide and statewide.

1. A need for better data and metrics related to workforce diversity and a standardized set of KPIs
2. More honest and open dialogue around D&I policies/priorities and the exchange of best practices
3. Stronger corporate-city partnerships to drive the acquisition of more diverse talent and tackle local issues that impact equality.

# Why Atlanta?



Atlanta's socioeconomic landscape is marked by generational poverty. The city's massive increase in urbanization combined with public goods and services (such as public transit, education, and health care), which are oftentimes insufficient, have widened the socioeconomic gap between populations of color and white Georgians<sup>3</sup>. This divide will continue to widen if city and corporate leadership do not work together with other key sectors to create sustainable, lasting change.

This report is based on both qualitative insight from focus groups that represent a sample of Atlanta's corporate and organizational senior leadership and a quantitative insight from a survey of corresponding Human Resources (HR) executives. The findings uncover how technology, dialogue and partnerships could be used to support organizations' new or existing D&I policies. We hope

<sup>3</sup> Pirani, F. (2018, October 11). Atlanta has the worst income inequality in the US. Retrieved from [AJC](#).

that the results of this study add to ongoing conversations about D&I in Atlanta and inform actionable policies and initiatives that will help drive change at the corporate and city levels. Additionally, this study provides suggestions from a sample of city leaders for how the City of Atlanta can nurture D&I initiatives, such as participating in civic engagement with business leaders.

## The D&I Landscape in Atlanta: A Growing Population with Growing Social Inequality

Atlanta struggles to close the gap between the privileged and the disadvantaged despite its exemplary economic growth. According to the Metro Atlanta Chamber, Georgia's 2017 reported GDP was \$385.5 billion; that is a 72% increase since 2008<sup>4</sup>. The Atlanta Regional Commission forecasts that the twenty counties within the Atlanta Metropolitan Area will add 2.5 million people and 1.5 million jobs by 2040<sup>5</sup>.

However, today, a person's zip code determines the trajectory of their lives. As illustrated by the map of metro Atlanta neighborhoods to the left, ninety percent of the one million new residents that moved into the Atlanta area over the past decade are populations of color, but the majority of them live south of I-20, which are areas generally marked by chronic, generational poverty<sup>6</sup>. Segregated neighborhoods in Atlanta are a result of persisting housing discrimination policies that continue the legacy of structural racism and Jim Crow Laws<sup>7</sup>.

**“Today, a person's zip code determines the trajectory of their life.”**

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<sup>4</sup> Metro Atlanta Chamber. (2019, May 5). Metro Atlanta Key Figures. [PDF]. Atlanta GA. Retrieve from MAC.

<sup>5</sup> Explore [The Atlanta Region Plan's data story](#) that details each county demographic changes and job forecasts.

<sup>6</sup> Map and statistics sourced from The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Changing the Odds: The Race Results in Atlanta. (June 2015). The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Retrieved November 11, 2018 from [AECF](#).

<sup>7</sup> Badger, E. (2016, March 2). The nation's housing recovery is leaving blacks behind. Retrieved from The Washington Post.



Poverty is a threat to the resilience of Atlanta, inhibiting the city from taking its place as a D&I leader and increasing the difficulty of finding and utilizing diverse talent within the city<sup>8</sup>. Our data, primarily qualitative in nature, did not provide specific information about the changes in the city over time. However, our research participants are concerned with the inequities that exist between Americans of color and white Americans. From 2008 to 2018, 94% of white Americans in Georgia were employed. Georgians of color during the same time period were

16% less likely to be employed<sup>9</sup>. One example of inequity referenced repeatedly is public education, where one participant noted that “the quality of education is tied to a school’s zip code.”<sup>10</sup>

## Despite the opportunities available in Atlanta, we found that businesses feel ill-equipped to engage with diverse populations.

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Additionally, Atlanta is home to many ethnicities and identities, but there is little information about the needs of Hispanics, Asian Americans, Americans of Middle Eastern descent and LGBTQIA+ communities. As of 2017, Atlanta’s metropolitan area is the 10th fastest growing metropolitan area in the U.S where 14.1% of its population is foreign-born yet there are very few statistics about these unique populations<sup>11</sup>. An estimated 4.2% of Atlanta’s residents identify as LGBTQIA+<sup>12</sup>. We found that there is a need for targeted data, policies, and programs that incorporate these identity groups into the growing economy.

<sup>8</sup> The Opportunity Index. Resilient Cities. (2019). The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development. Retrieved November 11, 2018 from [OECD](#).

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, LEHD. (n.d.). Retrieved May 22, 2019, from [QWI Explorer](#). This is a database. The analysis was done by the Creative Research Solutions team.

<sup>10</sup> Appendix Section: Focus Group Themes: Challenges to Equity

<sup>11</sup> Metro Atlanta Chamber. (2018, December). Profile of Metro Atlanta [PDF]. Atlanta: [Metro Atlanta Chamber](#).

<sup>12</sup> Bluestein, G. (2015, March 20). Gallup: Percentage wise, metro Atlanta has a larger LGBT population than New York. Retrieved from [AJC](#).

The City of Atlanta are committed to identifying policies that should be removed or redesigned to correct persistent systemic inequities<sup>13</sup>.

It is working to expand the pool of diverse talent by continuing education and training beyond K-12 so they can expand the career choices for citizens within metro Atlanta<sup>14</sup>. To do this, the City of Atlanta is making significant investments in its public education system to ensure that every student graduates from high school ready for college and the 21st-century workforce<sup>15</sup>. These investments are a combination of public and private sources, such as grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation<sup>16</sup>. Building more of these relationships between the City's public education leaders and the private sector is crucial to providing diverse career options.

The resilience of the City's physical, social, and economic infrastructures is the focus for civic leaders. The city's first Chief Resilience Officer was appointed in 2016, who is charged with executing the city's resilience strategy; this position is currently held by Amol Naik<sup>17</sup>. More recently, Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms created the One Atlanta Office, whose primary task is facilitating diversity and inclusion<sup>18</sup>. D&I policies and initiatives have been implemented through both offices. Additional policies and initiatives are currently in their planning and exploratory stages, an initiative of note is the Internet of Things (IOT) Living Labs Challenge<sup>19</sup>.

That said, the D&I landscape within the City of Atlanta is very different from the State of Georgia. There was an anti-abortion and an anti-LGBTQIA+ bill proposed by the State of Georgia's legislature in late 2018 and early 2019, bills such as these would likely discourage future businesses and diverse talent from moving into the Atlanta area. Report participants agree that legislation of this nature could inhibit social mobility of women and LGBTQIA+ people of color. Both groups are populations of interest for businesses, but if the state continues to propose these kinds of laws, it will be increasingly difficult for large organizations with strong LGBTQIA+ and pro-Choice values, to conduct business in the State of Georgia.

<sup>13</sup>100 Resilient Cities. Atlanta Strategy. (2017). (p.78) Retrieved April 9, 2019 from [100 Resilient Cities](#).

<sup>14</sup>100 Resilient Cities - Atlanta Strategy (2017). (p. 50).

<sup>15</sup>A part of the city's approach to education is addressing the housing inequities between wealthy and poor populations. Specific solutions were not discussed in detail during the focus groups.

<sup>16</sup>[Atlanta Public Schools and The Gates Foundation's partnership](#).

<sup>17</sup>Atlanta is one of twenty-two members of the 100 Resilient Cities. Read more [here](#). Visit the City's [Office of Resilience](#).

<sup>18</sup>[The Mayor's Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#).

<sup>19</sup>[Living Labs](#) showcases urban agricultural businesses that are innovating to feed diverse communities.

# Our Strategy: Coming Together in Conversation

Focus group and survey data were gathered for this report to support existing studies focused on the Atlanta community. The survey developed incorporates the survey data from human resources (HR) professionals while incorporating qualitative data from companies and organizations who participated in the focus groups. Both data sources measure the attitudes of the business community about the current D&I climate, needs, and practices in the city.

Three focus groups were hosted by Civic Dinners, an Atlanta business founded by Jenn Graham whose mission is to transform “dinner tables” into “forums for social change<sup>20</sup>.” Terri Bradley, PR Lead, and the Diversity and Inclusion Reporting Lead, Dr. Shaneshia Brooks-Tatum, attended the focus groups to assist with facilitation and documentation. A total of 50 city leaders participated in the two-hour-long discussions, including UPS, First Data, the Women’s Chamber of Commerce, the Atlanta Business League, Atlanta Public Schools, and Amazon Web Services<sup>21</sup>. In addition to verbatim transcriptions, notes taken by Dr. Brooks-Tatum were used to validate the themes and findings from the focus groups. The focus group transcripts were analyzed using qualitative software.

Creative Research Solutions, in partnership with Sage, developed a survey to better understand the alignment between senior executives and their Human Resources (HR) departments. Our aim was to determine what D&I metrics each company and organization are tracking, what their general goals are, and the D&I improvements (internal and city-wide) that they have seen over the last five to ten years. The survey was distributed to the participating leadership’s HR personnel<sup>22</sup>.



<sup>20</sup> About Civic Dinners. (2018). Retrieved April 9th, 2019 from [Civic Dinners](#).

<sup>21</sup> The complete list of attendees are listed in the Appendix

<sup>22</sup> Individual participants are not reported. See complete list of participants in the Appendix (p. 16, Table 2)

# What Our Research Found

## A Call for Better Data, Dialogue and Partnerships

A series of insights emerged. D&I is of considerable importance to companies and organizations in Atlanta. Organizations want to make decisions that intentionally advance D&I. Our report reveals that business leaders are keenly aware of the need for leaders of color who possess the social capital<sup>23</sup> required to make employees feel comfortable and included within historically white organizations.

People of color must be recruited, trained, and work alongside individuals who share their culture and values. While some strides have been made in this area with initiatives such as through the work of the High Demand Career Initiative of Metro Atlanta, changes to employee recruitment and leadership diversification require significant investments to train new employees which are difficult to obtain, especially for smaller organizations.

What this support looks like varies by the size of the company or organization<sup>24</sup>. Support can be a combination of capital investments from larger organizations with the financial capital and the personnel dedicated to D&I data analysis. While companies are changing their policies and practices, they aspire to work with the City of Atlanta to remove barriers to socioeconomic mobility. Companies of all sizes need support from the City in finding qualified diverse talent<sup>25</sup>.

**Our report reveals that business leaders are keenly aware of the need for leaders of color who possess the social capital required to make employees feel comfortable and included within historically white organizations.**

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<sup>23</sup> Social capital is defined as connections between people who share similar cultural norms that encourages cooperation.

<sup>24</sup> Ability status is a term that is preferred over "disability status." Inherent diversity includes factors such as race, age, and ethnicity. Acquired diversity includes skills or traits such as languages, military training, business skills, and cultural fluency. See Appendix, Survey Data: Data Metrics.

<sup>25</sup> Appendix, Section: Survey Data and Findings, Finding no. 9.

A number of gaps and areas of support needed by businesses were identified:

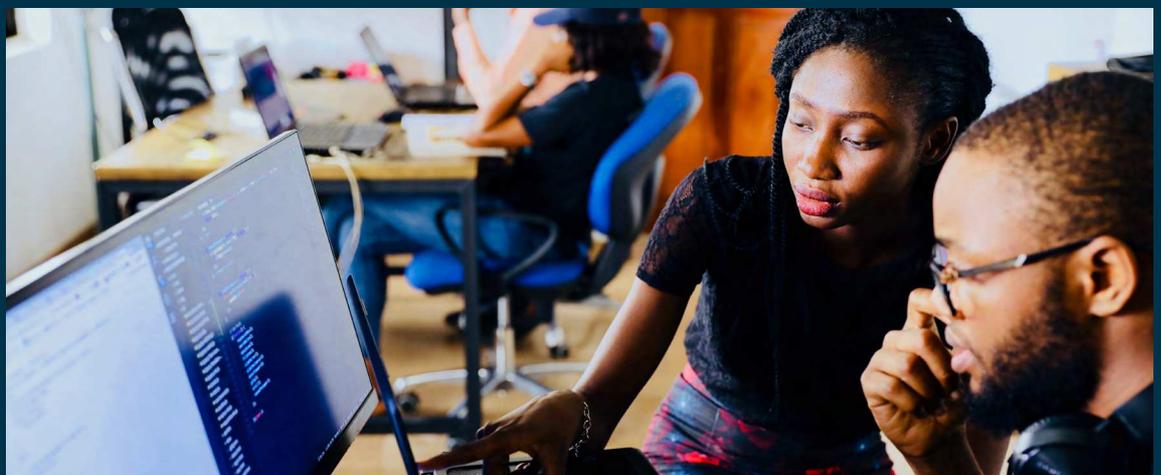
# 1. A Need for Better Data and Metrics

In order to create sustainable policies and promote diverse leaders, organizations agreed they need data collection and reporting tools that are accurately measuring workforce diversity. Over 60% of organizations measure the diversity of their workforce, but less than half measure the ability status, or an employee's acquired diversity, such as military experience or language skills<sup>26</sup>. These kinds of metrics about employee experiences and skills empower companies and organizations to make the best decisions to support their employees. Our participants are concerned that, without data that captures the entire D&I landscape of their organizations, they cannot support D&I policies and initiatives adequately<sup>27</sup>.

**“Over 60% of organizations measure the diversity of their workforce, but less than half measure the ability status, or an employee's acquired diversity, such as military experience or language skills.”**

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Tracking an employee through their tenure within an organization is essential in retaining diverse talent and understanding employee attrition. Large corporations, like Google, have central D&I offices dedicated solely to tracking employee attrition. On the other side, smaller organizations, even those with D&I departments, may lack the capacity to correct issues before an employee leaves the organization.



<sup>26</sup> Appendix, Section: Survey Data and Findings, Finding no. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Appendix, Section: Survey Data and Findings, Finding no. 8.

## 2. More Opportunities for Honest and Open Dialogue



Participating organizations understand that they are in a position to create impactful policies that both uphold company values and ensure colleagues from diverse communities have an opportunity to lead in their respective departments<sup>28</sup>. Open and honest dialogue within the company will enable leadership to make the best decisions and communicate to their employees which policies and practices are most effective or unimpactful<sup>29</sup>.

Clear, effective communication with employees keeps them invested in D&I efforts made within their organizations. Research participants shared that their organizations' policies were designed (or redesigned) to reflect the change of employee demographics. The majority of HR respondents in our survey reported that their organizations have had D&I policies, departments, and/or programs in place during or before their tenure<sup>30</sup>. However, our research participants are concerned that their employees are not reaping the benefits of existing resources, that the daily experiences of many employees are not improving due to the companies' poorly executed D&I efforts. A communication gap between leadership, management, and employees inhibits sustainable progress.

For newer organizations, especially those new to the city, they lack the financial and social capital needed to support D&I. Atlanta is a city established upon delicate networks of communities that older organizations rely upon to sustain themselves. Newcomers to the city are often excluded, either purposely or accidentally.

<sup>28</sup> Appendix, Section: Focus Group Theme, Leadership & Placemaking.

<sup>29</sup> Appendix, Section: Survey Data and Findings, Finding no. 8.

<sup>30</sup> Appendix (p.20) Finding no. 6.12; Infrastructure includes components such as policies across the company or organization.

For older organizations, their boards of directors or senior management are resistant to changes that they believe take away from the company's profit. Older leadership's resistance to change and their lack of communication with younger people can make D&I efforts difficult to implement and execute. HR personnel echo these concerns. Many expressed that the lack of internal support inhibits effective communication about progress from upper management. HR personnel want increased employee participation in D&I processes as well as increased education and awareness among all members of the company or organization.

### For Further Discussion: More Survey Findings from HR Respondents

(The Appendix provides a more in-depth discussion of the findings from the survey and the focus groups.)

<b>Finding Focus Area</b>	<b>Key Insights</b>
<i>1. Changes and Training</i>	Businesses have seen a significant increase in education, training, and processes to support diverse talent acquisition.
<i>2. Performance Indicators and Business Resource Groups</i>	Greater clarity on performance indicators and support in the business community is needed to create sustainable D&I initiatives and determine their success.
<i>3. Tracking Data &amp; Metrics</i>	Most organizations collect D&I data on inherent diversity such as race, age, and ethnicity, but not acquired diversity, skills or traits such as languages, military training, business skills, and cultural fluency <sup>31</sup> .
<i>4. Senior and Non-Senior Leadership</i>	The majority of respondents track racial/ethnic and/or gender identity differences; few track differences in financial rewards by race/ethnicity and gender.
<i>5. Ranking Of D&amp;I Practices</i>	Only the most established companies have the resources to advance sustainable D&I programs.
<i>6. Systems and Tracking</i>	Most companies and organizations use HR systems to track D&I performance and outcomes.
<i>7. Using Technology</i>	Most companies that use technology to capture diversity across the organization have a high level of confidence in using this technology to track D&I.
<i>8. D&amp;I Improvements</i>	Most respondents reported that they require more internal resources, increased communication about progress, and better partnerships or sponsorships within the organization to improve D&I practices.
<i>9. Finding No. 9: City Support</i>	Companies need assistance from the City of Atlanta to find diverse and qualified talent, as well as a D&I-focused outreach program.

<sup>31</sup> Inherent diversity are factors such as race, age, and ethnicity. Acquired diversity are skills or traits such as languages, military training, business skills, and cultural fluency. See Appendix, Survey Data: Data Metrics.

Approaches taken by organizations to reach D&I goals do not vary significantly by industry, but they do vary by size. All participants measure KPIs, periodically survey their employees, offer D&I training, and are diversifying leadership<sup>32</sup>. Here are a few examples of how size impacts D&I advancement:

- One organization lacks confidence in existing systems to track D&I data because volunteers are used rather than dedicated staff.
- A smaller company reported they have policies in place, but few practices, due to limited resources and bandwidth in the D&I department.
- Another corporation with greater resources has a centralized D&I office that provides support, including training and data analytics, to offices all around the U.S.

Another larger organization with a dedicated D&I budget, surveys their employees daily about their work environment using a tool called Connections.

The majority (over 90%) of HR survey respondents use a combination of workshops, mentorship, and online resources to educate and engage with colleagues. While respondents did not specify what types of workshops and online resources are used or how effective they are, the use of these resources tells us that there is an opportunity to diversify D&I education and training tools.

<sup>32</sup> Appendix (p.19) Finding no. 3.

### 3. Stronger Corporate-City Partnerships



All participants view D&I as an investment in the future of the city, the state, and the country. Yet, partnerships and programs between the private and public sector are only the beginning. In order to sustain these partnerships and the changes partners create, the public and private sectors must identify where the common ground exists between business goals and public priorities. For example, an area of commonality is found in actively training and mentoring youth. Over 61% of our participating organizations have internal mentorship programs<sup>33</sup>. The participants are seeking partnerships with local educational institutions, like colleges and universities, to create opportunities for the next generation.

Other areas where the city, state and businesses have a shared interest in working together include, but aren't limited to:

- Increasing the availability of and access to affordable housing: Homes near concentrated business sectors of metro Atlanta are unaffordable for most employees, causing an undue burden as they struggle to commute to work<sup>34</sup>.
- Creating adult education opportunities to fill skill gaps: Training working adults increases their opportunities to make a living wage, particularly in high-demand sectors that need to source employees immediately.

<sup>33</sup> Appendix, Section: Survey Data and Findings, Finding no. 1.

<sup>34</sup> Measuring housing affordability combines the total cost of housing and other associated living costs, such as transportation and child care. Read more in this report by [Atlanta Regional Commission](#).

- Improving public transportation: Improving MARTA reduces traffic congestion as the average Atlanta resident spends over 70.8 hours in traffic per year<sup>35</sup>. Additionally, poor transportation infrastructure impedes the ability of diverse communities living outside of MARTA's current operating area to travel to potential new jobs.

Investing in women and LGBTQIA+ leaders: Our participants believe that the presence and participation of diverse leadership automatically changes the way a business operates<sup>36</sup>.

Public health care programs and health insurance: An employees' health status impacts the cost of health insurance. An unhealthy employee can cost an average of \$10,000 per year<sup>37</sup>.

Participants explained larger cities like New York and San Francisco possess better and more equitable public transportation systems. Poor public transportation impedes the movement of diverse talent within the metro area. According to respondents, there are opportunities for Uber and scooter companies such as Bird to thrive if the existing transportation infrastructure of Atlanta is improved. Mixed modes of transportation (heavy rail, light rail, buses, biking) must be created through collaborative efforts between municipalities, private investors, and community stakeholders before automated technology can operate successfully. But there is still a long way to go. According to businesses, continued investment in transportation and housing will be critical to retaining talent. On a positive note, participants expressed that they experienced less discrimination in metro Atlanta as compared to working in cities on the West Coast, such as San Francisco<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> Pirani, F. (2017, February 21). Atlanta traffic among worst in the world, study finds. Retrieved from AJC.

<sup>36</sup> Appendix, Section: Focus Group Themes: Leadership & Place-making

<sup>37</sup> Bailey, L. (2015, December 10). Unhealthy choices cost company health care plans billions of dollars. Retrieved from University of Michigan News.

<sup>38</sup> Appendix, Section: Focus Group Themes: Realizing Equity

# Creating a Sustainable Process is a Continued Collaboration



No one organization has every answer. It is only through continued collaboration that solutions can be created. The civic leaders in Atlanta are looking for more opportunities to continue investing in the City's future. Likewise, businesses want to join the journey towards an equitable future and are looking for ways to connect with city leadership. To ensure that this progress is sustainable, Atlanta's leaders believe that implementing strong D&I policies and best practices is the best investment for their business. These businesses and organizations are aligning their objectives with the changing priorities of the bustling city's people and its government. The city is ripe with opportunity to collaborate and create lasting change for generations to come.

# Recommendations for the Future

Our study revealed that the dynamics within organizations are changing to improve the effectiveness of D&I policies. In order to build sustainable D&I practices, Atlanta leaders need to find common ground, build better public-private partnerships and harness technology to create better workforce insights. To support Atlanta in its rise to national D&I leadership, we've provided additional recommendations: **Create stronger relationships between leadership and employees; between organizations and communities; and between private and public organizations.**

The major contributors to the gap in communication inhibiting the honest dialogue are the absence of forums for leaders to engage with their employees, the communities that organizations operate within, and the public sector. Leaders must engage with their employees on a personal level in order to understand who they are, what their concerns are, and how they would like to see them addressed. A critical part of this engagement is the facilitation of communication between the City and the business community because civic offices house critical data, such as employment statistics at the neighborhood level that businesses need to make informed decisions about how to attract and grow a more diverse workforce.

## **Woodruff Arts Center Triples Non-White Audience with Strong Community Partnership**

The Woodruff Arts Center skillfully bridges the gap between varied communities through Atlanta's love for the arts. Since 1968, they have used their position as a cultural touchstone to bring corporations, institutions of higher education, and nonprofits together to provide citizens with affordable youth programs, college art nights, adult arts education, and much more. Their participation in the study demonstrates that there are leaders willing to reach across the city's cultural divides.

## **The City of Atlanta Builds Solid Foundation for Partnerships**

The Representatives from the City of Atlanta who attended the focus groups<sup>39</sup> shared the following initiatives as examples of successful corporate / civic partnership programs that have the potential to be scaled:

- Transitioning immigrant populations into the city community through Welcoming Atlanta;
- Exploring vocational and apprenticeship models by collaborating with the German Chamber of Commerce;
- Working with the Georgia Department of Education and the Atlanta Board of Education to improve cultural and foreign language education.

These are only a few of the many changes. While state representatives were not among the participants in this study, our participants are open to working with state leaders to find a compromise that services the D&I opportunity in Atlanta and beyond.

## **Design unique forums for communication between generations and find new ways to facilitate partnerships.**

All participants agree that education and engagement are key to successful and sustainable D&I. They need a combination of external and internal resources that include:

- Diversifying partnerships with K-12 institutions, colleges, and universities.
- Mentorship of existing employees provided by peers and/or leadership.
- Professional development, training, and schooling to recruit and retain employees.
- Unconscious bias and inclusive leadership training for leaders and colleagues.

## **Regardless of business size and resources, standardize D&I practices and KPIs.**

There is a need for standardizing D&I programs across industries, both in the form of KPIs and best practices. It isn't enough to have a percentage of upper management represent a certain minority group. Companies and organizations need to know which data and metrics drive impact across segments and

<sup>39</sup> Human Resources officials from the City of Atlanta did not respond to the survey.

industries, which metrics they should prioritize and how to use the data they have collected to create sustainable D&I practices. Businesses need to look at how technology and data analytics can help create a standardized metrics system, as well as how it can help create a coordinated effort to share best practices. Standardizing KPIs and technological tools as well as addressing statewide policies that inhibit inclusion and growth would help improve D&I practices citywide and statewide.

### **Re-examine hiring and recruitment practices.**

In terms of recruitment, organizations are still using traditional mediums such as press releases and advertisements to attract diverse talent. And while all organizations are sharing their progress on social media and online job boards, companies need to look outside of the four walls of their organization to recruit the right talent in their local communities.

An example of changing recruitment strategies is The Atlanta Business League which is building its capacity to support their members by partnering with organizations like the Georgia Women's Chamber of Commerce. Together they are designing programs that act as professional development and training for adults seeking better career opportunities.

Quality training programs that leverage partnerships are in high demand. Training and coaching programs in core industries are being created to ensure that learning is a lifelong process. These programs, like the Georgia Business Development Center, go beyond cultural sensitivity training<sup>40</sup>. Their aims are to cultivate genuine relationships between employees, managers to build culturally responsive leadership and provide training for employees who want to further their careers.

### **How Airbus Aerial Seeks Out Diverse Candidates in STEM**

Airbus Aerial, an aerospace company that is well-recognized in the aerospace industry but has lower brand visibility in metro Atlanta, needed to take a more creative approach to find diverse and qualified talent in the tech and engineering space. That's why the company partners with organizations like Women in Technology to recruit diverse candidates in STEM.

These are just a few examples of how companies must find new, creative ways to recruit and hire diverse talent in Atlanta.

<sup>40</sup> The Atlanta Business Leagues' Georgia Business Development Center.

# A Call for Accountability

A D&I community exists within Atlanta that is ripe for innovation. Atlanta has a rich history of Civil Rights activism that challenges businesses and governments to embrace all people, regardless of their ethnicity, race, creed, or other identities. There is a thriving network of business and civic leaders who are collaborating to bridge the gaps between peoples by giving communities the tools to help themselves. Atlanta’s social networks can create digital, social, and technological solutions that will enable the City of Atlanta to become a leader in D&I. These networks include, but are not limited to<sup>41</sup>:



Organizations can find common ground and share resources that lead to solutions. We call on everyone to join us as we create an equitable future for all of Atlanta where:

1. Members of Atlanta’s social networks reassess policies within their organizations and engage with city and local government to implement D&I-friendly policies.
2. There is space for diversified leadership within businesses that reflect the cultures, values, and populations of Atlanta.
3. D&I processes for data collection and tracking are standardized across all industries.
4. Organizations reflect and improve on their individual needs to continue creating the journey towards an equitable future.

<sup>41</sup> Complete list in Appendix (p.16, Table 1) with definitions.

# About Our Study

Indicators in The Opportunity Index<sup>42</sup> and 100 Resilient Cities<sup>43</sup> reports are used for this study in order to measure the diversity and inclusion (D&I) climate within Atlanta. The Opportunity Index is an evaluation framework designed by the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) that is used by cities across the globe. It measures a city's ability to respond to economic, environmental, social, and political threats. 100 Resilient Cities is a global cooperative that Former Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed's administration joined. The administration created an ambitious vision and mission plan to ensure the prosperity of Atlanta by working to rectify the city's physical and socioeconomic infrastructure. These indicators were designed to measure the economic and social health of a city using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods<sup>44</sup>.

## About Creative Research Solutions

Creative Research Solutions (CRS) is an award-winning research and evaluation firm in the Atlanta Metropolitan Area whose mission is to "tie passion and practice to impact."<sup>TM</sup> Founded by Dr. Travis Tatum and Dr. Shanesha Brooks-Tatum in 2009, CRS has won local, regional, national and international awards for five consecutive years (2014 - 2018) and has worked with clients such as the United Way of Greater Atlanta, the High Demand Career Initiative, the United Nations Foundation, Spelman College, UNCF, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Dr. Shanesha Brooks-Tatum (Project Lead), Shanice Bennerson, and Olivia Halls completed research and writing for this study. Learn more about CRS at [www.creativeresearchsolutions.com](http://www.creativeresearchsolutions.com).

## About Sage

Sage is the global market leader for technology that helps businesses of all sizes manage everything from money to people – whether they're a start-up, scale-up or enterprise. We do this through Sage Business Cloud - the one and only business management solution that customers will ever need, comprising Accounting, Sage Intacct, Enterprise Management, People & Payroll and Payments & Banking.

<sup>42</sup> Data & Scoring - Opportunity Index. (2017). Retrieved April 9, 2019, from [Opportunity Index](#).

<sup>43</sup> 100 Resilient Cities. Atlanta Strategy. (2017). Retrieved April 9, 2019 from [100 Resilient Cities](#).

<sup>44</sup> See Appendix for a complete list of metrics (p. 16, Table 2).

# Appendix

# Limitations of Findings

The majority of participants in this study are large corporations and a handful of non-profit organizations. Many educators, lawmakers, and municipal leaders were not present, with the exception of one official from the City of Atlanta and Atlanta Public Schools. Small businesses and start-ups outside of the technology sector attended the focus groups and responded to the survey to a lesser degree. While the survey response rate was lower than expected, forty-three percent (43%) of the 30 participating organizations responded. While the number of participants is only a small sample of the city of Atlanta's businesses and organizations, we propose that this study serve as an invitation to a deeper conversation about D&I in the City and ways that businesses and organizations can work across sectors to narrow the existing socioeconomic and opportunity gaps with support from the City of Atlanta.

# Discussion Group Questions

Attendees were asked the following questions:

1. How has your company invested in diversity and inclusion? And what results have you seen so far?
2. What is your vision for creating an inclusive culture to support the diverse, multigenerational workforce of tomorrow? And what specific systems, processes or policies would you consider proposing to your organization to further improve D&I?
3. Do you think Atlanta is an inclusive city? What unique challenges do you think we face in Atlanta? And what would be one policy you would like the City of Atlanta to make to help support your company efforts in diversity and inclusion?

# Survey Questions

**1. What is your name/title?**

**2. What is the name of your company or organization?**

**3. What industry does your company or organization primarily work in?**

Marketing/Public Relations  
Accounting  
Education  
Research  
Business-to-Business Services  
Policy/Government  
Nonprofit

**4. How long have you worked in your company or organization in an HR capacity? (Multiple choice)**

0-1 years  
1-3 years  
4-6 years  
6-10 years  
10-15 years  
15+ years  
Other\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Positive Changes Over Time: What positive changes (if any) have you seen in your company's or organization's D&I practices during your tenure? (Check all that apply.)**

Developing clearer D&I commitments across the company  
Developing clearer D&I metrics or key performance indicators across the company  
Implementing policies and procedures related to D&I  
Clear tracking of D&I metrics and initiatives  
Fewer grievances related to D&I among employees  
None of the Above - Please explain:  
Other - Please explain:

**6. D&I Data: What diversity and inclusion metrics or statistics are you tracking at your company or organization? (Check all that apply)**

Race/ethnicity of employees  
Gender of employees  
Religious/spiritual practices of employees  
Differently-abled/disabled employees  
Differences between racial/ethnic and/or gender makeup of senior leadership and employees  
not in leadership or management  
Employees who are people of color who are promoted  
Employees who are women who are promoted  
Religious/spiritual practices of employees who are promoted  
Differently-abled/disabled employees who are promoted  
Members of diverse groups who are recruited to the company/organization  
Members of diverse groups who leave the company and why  
Other - Please explain:

**7. Ranking of D&I Practices: How would you rank your company's or organization's D&I practices?**

Excellent, with very little room for improvement  
Very good, with considerable positive effects but some room for improvement  
Good, with some positive effects and considerable room for improvement  
Fair, needs some more work with lots of room for improvement  
Poor, a lot more work needs to be done and there is much room for improvement

**8. Systems and Tracking: What systems do you use to track D&I practices?**

Survey Platforms (Please specify)  
Phone Apps (Please specify)  
Internal Databases (Please specify)  
Other (Please specify)

**9a. Using Technology: How does your company or organization use technology to support its D&I efforts?**

To track D&I key performance indicators  
To send out monthly, annual or biannual surveys  
To send out pulse surveys  
To track departmental D&I progress  
To understand the landscape of D&I practices company-wide  
None of the Above  
Other - Please explain:

**9b. For each of the ways that you use technology, rank your confidence level with each (1 = not confident at all, 5 = extremely confident). (Options above will be repeated with corresponding ranking numbers)**

**9c. For those that you scored a 3 or below, briefly explain what can be improved about the technology platform or system to improve your confidence levels.**

**9d. What technology trends do you think will impact HR management as it relates to diversity and inclusion? (Open response)**

**10. Improvements: In your opinion, what needs to be improved about your company's or organization's D&I policies and practices? (Check all that apply.)**

Clearer policies and practices

More accountability among senior leadership

More accountability among management

More internal resources to support D&I efforts

More external resources to support D&I efforts (i.e., partnerships, sponsorships)

More employee participation in outreach and tracking efforts

Our D&I policies do not need improvement

Other - Please explain:

**11a. City Support: How can the City of Atlanta support your company's or organization's D&I efforts?**

More financial support for D&I efforts

D&I-focused policy reform (e.g., more support for working moms, LGBTQ community, etc.)

Programs and outreach focused on D&I

Support with finding qualified diverse talent

Assistance with finding/navigating proper partnerships with community/affinity groups

Other - Please explain:

**11b. Please provide additional explanations for your answers above, including other ways you see the City of Atlanta supporting D&I in your company or organization.**

# Figures and Tables

## Atlanta Social Networks

<b>Social Networks</b>	<b>Defined Boundaries</b>
<i>Business Owners</i>	Private enterprises of all sizes.
<i>Chambers of Commerce</i>	Local boards of trade.
<i>D&amp;I Leaders</i>	Professionals, directors, and coordinators within private and public organizations.
<i>Educators</i>	School district employees, teachers, and staff; Higher education administrators, advisors, and professors; Researchers and evaluators.
<i>Lawyers</i>	Public defenders, prosecutors, and applicable local government committee members.
<i>Municipal and City Leaders</i>	County and city government politicians, commissioners, and employees.
<i>Philanthropy</i>	Non-profits, coalitions, and individuals that are experts at raising charitable dollars.
<i>Public Health</i>	Major hospitals, research institutions, clinics, nurses and doctors plus interest groups
<i>Public Policy Makers</i>	Any members of the law apparatus at the local and/or state level.

Table 1: Social Networks within the Atlanta metropolitan area

## Dimensions and Metrics for D&I

<b>Sectors</b>	<b>Possible Indicators</b>
<i>Economy</i>	Jobs, Wages, Poverty, Income Inequality, Affordable
<i>Education</i>	High School Graduation & Post Secondary Education
<i>Community</i>	Volunteering, Youth Disconnection, Access to Public Goods and Services
<i>Environment &amp; Infrastructure</i>	Reliable Communication & Mobility, Natural and Manmade Assets

Table 2: Dimensions and Indicators

# Focus Group Themes and Explanation

Focus group attendees agreed that the following are their D&I priorities:

1. Policy-Making: Policies that are in place, in development, envisioned, and/or desired for and by corporations and the city
2. Leadership & Place-Making: Data-driven decision-making that reflects the organization's values while creating space for new, diverse leadership
3. Challenges to Equity: Funding inequities within D&I and lack of socioeconomic mobility within Atlanta communities
4. Cultivating Relationships: Existing and desired partnerships that meet mutual D&I goals and missions
5. Realizing Equity: Actions and beliefs that must occur to sustain businesses and communities that are truly equal

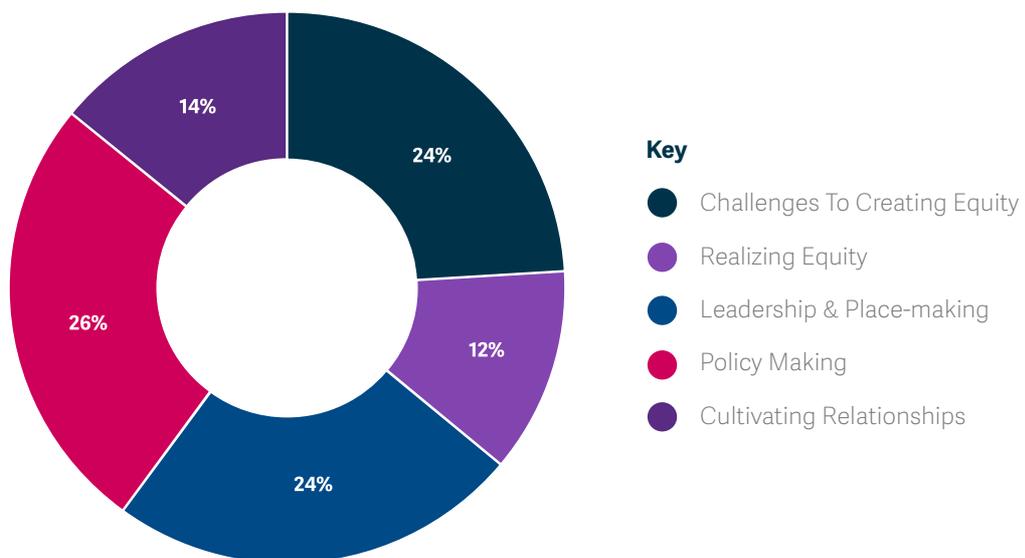


Figure 1: Percentage of Focus Group Themes. Calculated: # of quoted themes/total # of quotes

Policy-making (26%) and place-making (24%) are keys to addressing the challenges in Atlanta. The policies created by our participant can change the dynamics of their leadership by making room for diverse thought. Our research participants are changing who creates policies, like hiring and promotion criteria, it will lead to positive changes within their organizations. The challenges (24%) were discussed as often as solutions. Lack of social mobility caused by generational poverty within the city makes it difficult to find and retain diverse talent, which slows the progress made. A solution to this problem is cultivating key relationships (14% of themes) with civic and private entities. Some of our research participants believe that this leadership will see an equitable Atlanta realized (12%).

# Survey Data and Findings

## What industry does your company or organization primarily work in?

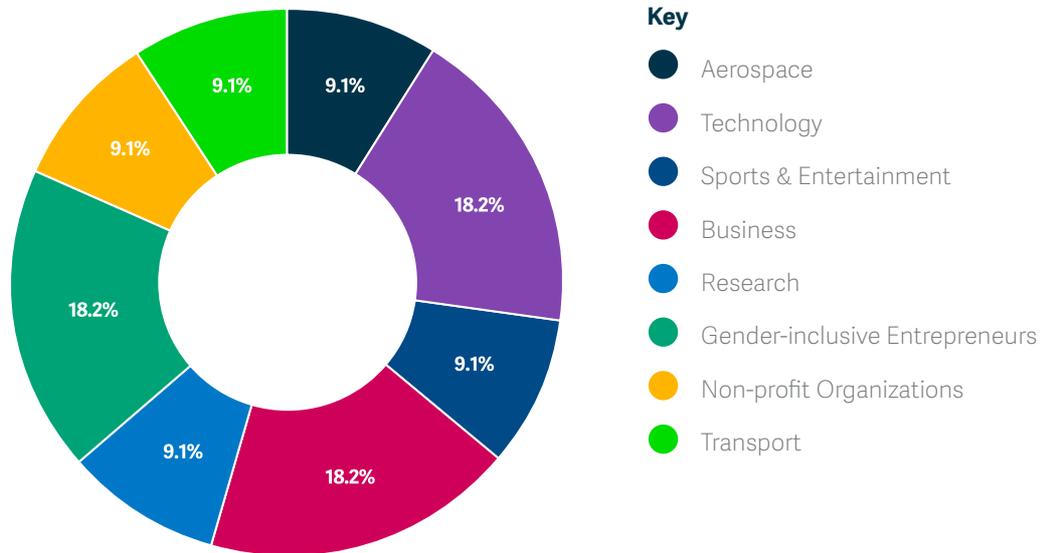


Figure 2: Industries respondents represent. Part of legend not shown, Transportation (7.7%) & Gender-inclusive Entrepreneurship (7.7%)

### **Finding No. 1: Changes and Training: There is an Increase in Education, Training, and Processes for Talent Acquisition**

Respondents believe that positive changes are occurring within their organizations. The most common indicators of these positive changes are increased D&I education and training (e.g. unconscious bias training) for all employees (69%). Another common indicator (62%) is the increase in education and changes in processes for talent acquisition and promotions.

### **Finding No. 2: Performance Indicators and Business Resource Groups: Clarity and Support Needed to Create Initiatives and Determine Their Success**

Forty-six percent of respondents reported that they want clearer D&I performance indicators, such as increased number of women promoted, as well as business resource groups to support colleagues and friends (e.g., LGBTQIA+ BRGs); and clarity) and greater clarity regarding how company metrics are used to create initiatives or policies and how success is measured.

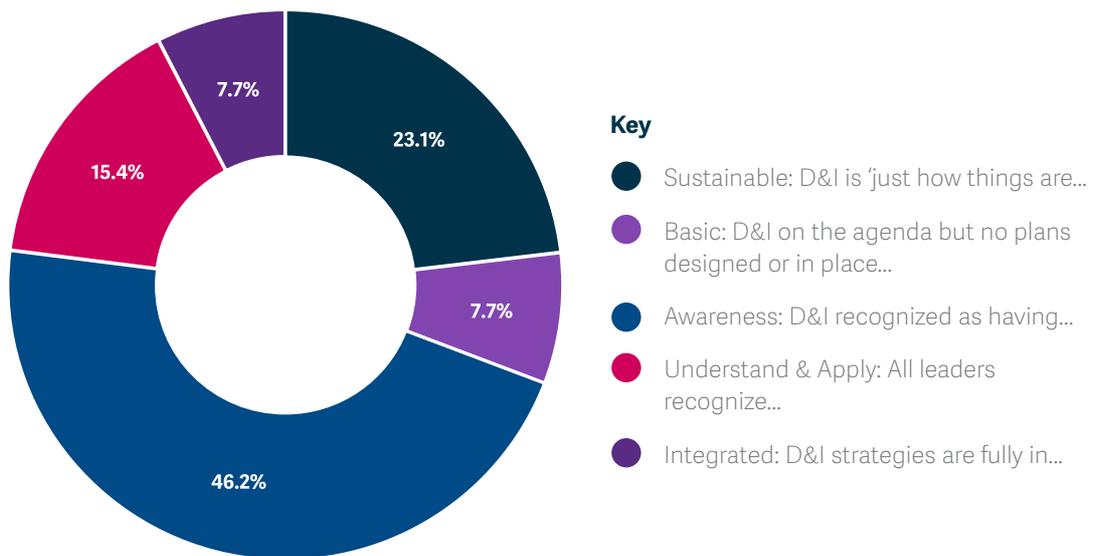


Figure 3: Survey ranking company or organization's D&I practices. Over 54% claim that "D&I is recognized as having a business benefit. Local initiatives are in place."

### Finding No. 3: Tracking Data & Metrics: Most Organizations Collect D&I Data on Inherent Diversity but Not Acquired Diversity

Eighty-five (85%) of respondents who answered questions related to D&I data and metrics responded to questions about D&I data and metrics tracked. More specifically, they were asked how they track inherent diversity, acquired diversity, the diversity of its leadership, financial compensation, promotions, recruitment, and the attrition or departure of diverse groups of employees<sup>45</sup>. All companies revealed that they collect data on employee gender (Male, Female, Non-Binary/Gender Fluid) and most respondents (73%) also indicated that they collect data on race/ethnicity/age of employees. Forty-five (45%) of the respondents' organizations collect data on whether employees are differently-abled or disabled. "Acquired diversity" data points were less common among respondents. "Military experience" (36%) and "language skills" (36%) are the most common "acquired diversity" metrics collected.

Organizations have missed opportunities to craft specific policies by neglecting to track the acquired diversity of their employees. There may be barriers or lack of tools that are inhibiting organizations from tracking this sort of data.

<sup>45</sup> Inherent diversity are factors like race, age, and ethnicity. Acquired diversity are skills or traits such as languages, military training, business skills, and cultural fluency.

#### **Finding No. 4: Senior and Non-Senior Leadership: A Majority Track Racial/Ethnic and/or Gender Identity Differences; Few Track Differences in Financial Rewards by Race/Ethnicity and Gender**

Seven individuals indicated that their company or organization tracks the differences in the racial/ethnic and/or gender makeup of senior leadership and employees that are not in leadership or management. Only two respondents track financial rewards for differences between gender and ethnicity; another metric not commonly tracked is attrition of employees who represent diverse populations). Only three and four organizations track women and people of color who are promoted. These findings reflect the concerns that participants have about the diversity of the City's business leaders. Tracking these key metrics will allow organizations to make better decisions about who is promoted, why and how they take on leadership roles, and what incentives are required to recruit diverse leaders.

#### **Finding No. 5: Ranking Of D&I Practices: Only the Most Established Companies Have the Resources To Advance Sustainable D&I**

Most respondents indicate that the companies and organizations they represent have some intention to advance D&I practices with 46% selecting the "awareness" ranking (Figure 3). Awareness is defined as "D&I recognized as having business benefit. Local initiatives in place." The reasons given for this ranking signal that the company or organization is still in the beginning stages of developing their approach to D&I. Three respondents (23%) indicate that their companies or organizations have more established D&I practices that are "sustainable," meaning that "D&I is 'just how things are done here'. It drives strategy and the business impact is clear."

#### **Finding No. 6: Systems and Tracking: Most Companies and Organizations Use HR Systems to Track D&I Performance and Outcomes**

To track D&I performance or outcomes, HR systems, internal databases (60%) and learning and development software (40%) are the most commonly used means. Methods of tracking include WorkDay, Applicant Pro, ADP, proprietary tracking metrics or WEI<sup>46</sup> and spreadsheets or tables.

<sup>46</sup> WEI: Worldcom Exchange Inc.

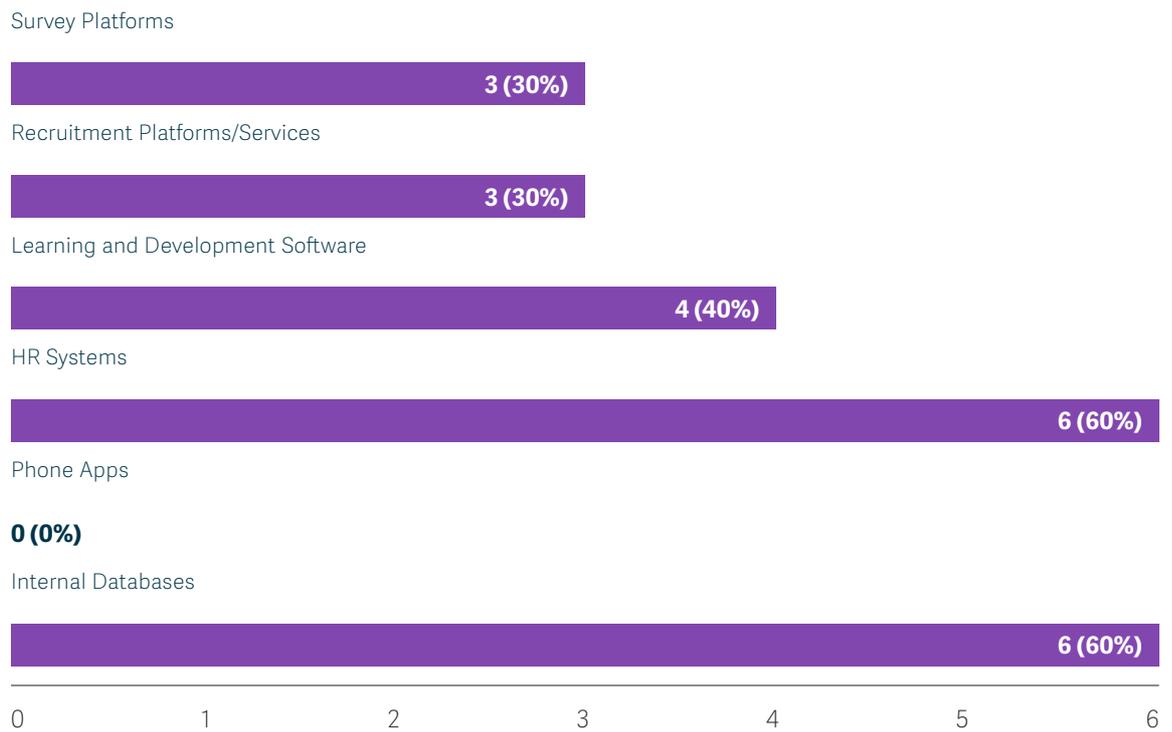


Figure 4: Systems used by 10/13 participants used to track D&I performance and outcomes.

### **Finding No. 7: Using Technology: Most Use Technology to Capture Diversity Across the Company or Organization with High Levels of Confidence in Using the Technology to Track D&I**

Respondents were asked to indicate how their company or organization uses technology to support its D&I efforts. Fifty-four percent (54%) of the 10 survey participants that answered the question indicated that they use technology to track D&I key performance indicators (KPIs) across functions, departments, and teams, and to capture diversity across their company’s or organization’s population. A smaller portion (45%) use technology to send out monthly, annual or biannual surveys or pulses.

Regarding confidence with using technology, individuals were asked to rate their confidence in tracking D&I data on a scale from 1 (not confident at all) to 5 (extremely confident). They were most confident in their ability to utilize technology to capture diversity across their company or organization’s population with two respondents reporting that they were extremely confident. Tracking D&I KPIs across functions, departments, or teams were the next most commonly reported skill in which respondents had the most confidence. Only two respondents indicated their reasons for low confidence in collecting

D&I data appeared to be a lack of ability to be consistent in data collection because a) not having dedicated staff to track D&I, only volunteers and b) not consistently conducting employee surveys. An organization's confidence and ability to use technology hinges on the size of their staff. The size of an organization must be kept in mind as the shift towards D&I excellence is underway.

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### **Finding No. 8: D&I Improvements: Most Respondents Require More Internal Resources, Increased Communication About Progress, and Partnerships or Sponsorships**

When asked “In your opinion, what needs to be improved about your company’s or organization’s D&I policies and practices?” more than half of the respondents believed that having more internal resources to support D&I efforts (54%) and increased communication of progress against goals, more external resources to support D&I efforts (i.e., partnerships, sponsorships), more employee participation in outreach and tracking efforts, and increased education and awareness for leaders and colleagues (46%) are necessary. HR and Senior Leadership are in agreement that the policies and practices must be created but 1) how they work, 2) how progress is defined, and 3) who participates in the process are not clear. Mechanisms must be created to ensure organizations are working across departments to achieve common goals.

### **Finding No. 9: City Support: Companies Need Assistance from the City of Atlanta to Source Diverse and Qualified Talent with D&I-Focused Programs and Outreach**

Lastly, respondents were asked how the City of Atlanta can support their company or organization’s D&I efforts. The majority (50%) of the 13 respondents to the question indicated that support with finding qualified, diverse talent is needed, and more than half (58%) indicated that having programs and outreach focused on D&I would also be helpful.



## Join the conversation

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