

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



AMAKA
Consulting and Evaluation Services, LLC



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A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER

Dear ACES Family and Friends,

It is with great pleasure and excitement that I write this President's update for our 2023 Annual Report. Amaka Consulting and Evaluation Services, LLC (ACES) has undergone tremendous growth this past year, and I am proud to share that we have experienced many "firsts" as well.

We hired our **first** full-time employee at the top of the year (Director of Operations, Jacqueline Gifuni-Koutsouris, MPH, MCHES) and our **first** Institutional Review Board Consultant (Demetria Hubbard, MSPH).

For the **first** time ever, ACES is now certified as a minority and woman business enterprise (MBE and WBE) with the Massachusetts Supplier Diversity Office! We will be listed in the Supplier Diversity Office (SDO) Certified Business Directory and the Massachusetts Central Register under the Public Health Consulting and Evaluation Services, Firm description.

You can read about all of this and much more in the enclosed report. We also are forecasting 2024 to be our biggest year yet, for both projects and consultants. I hope you take the time to read through our accomplishments for the year, and reflect on the amazing partnerships developed throughout the year. Finally, I would like to thank all of the consultants that make our work possible; we would not be where we are today without your dedication to ACES and our mission!

Sincerely,

NDIDIAMAKA AMUTAH-ONUKAGHA, PHD, MPH, CHES
PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER

"There is no magic to achievement. It's really about hard work, choices, and persistence."

-Michelle Obama

Overview of ACES



Herstory

Reaching New Heights

Amaka Consulting and Evaluation Services (ACES), LLC is a certified Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) and Women Business Enterprise (WBE) with the Massachusetts Supplier Diversity Office. As a trusted consultancy firm, we have provided invaluable technical expertise in areas such as health disparities, maternal and child health, program evaluation, grant writing, and mixed methods research.

With over 50 consultants ranging from various public health backgrounds, the composition of team members within ACES reflects the diversity of technical skills and content knowledge to meet clients' needs across many domains. We prioritize transparency, integrity, and professionalism.





Mission & Values

Our mission is to provide high-quality, evidence-based evaluation and consulting services with a keen focus on equity and social justice.

Our values include respectful and clear communication, thoughtful engagement, collaborative partnership, and innovative outputs.

CORE COMPETENCIES

ACES' work can be found at the intersection of racial justice, maternal and child health, and health equity through our services in program evaluation, grant writing, and mixed methods research. ACES' approach to research, results, and consultants is one and the same—we believe in diversity of thought and experience.

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES INCLUDE:
Evaluation Feasibility and Study Design
Instrument Development (Focus Groups, Interviews, Surveys)
Program Evaluations (Process and Outcomes)
Qualitative Research and Analysis
Quantitative Data Management and Analysis
Grant Writing
“Big Data”
IRB Application Development and Management
Capacity Building for Community-Based Organizations
Technical Assistance
Project Management
Meeting Facilitation
Stakeholder and Community Engagement
Strategic Planning
Mission and Vision Refreshing
Staff and Board Trainings on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging
Assessments and Curriculum Development

Our Team



ABOUT OUR TEAM

The Amaka Consulting & Evaluation Services' approach to research, results, and consultants is one and the same—we believe in diversity of thought and experience. As a WBE and MBE certified firm, many ACES team members are women of color, and can thus bring a cultural depth and sensitivity to our work in, for, and with underserved communities.

Our minority-woman-led consulting firm is committed to diversity and inclusion.



CONSULTANT INSIGHT



I am new to the ACES team and have loved my experience so far! I appreciate the RADIUS team's professionalism and warm spirit. As a whole, ACES is deeply rooted in equity, advancement, and kindness and this is reflected in both our work environment and output! I look forward to continuing my consulting experience with the ACES family by providing value to the clients' evaluation needs and expanding my skill set.

-Claudine Lavarin, MPH



ACES Consultants as of November 2023



33

active consultants

19

consultants in our repository

6

individuals on our Leadership & Administrative team

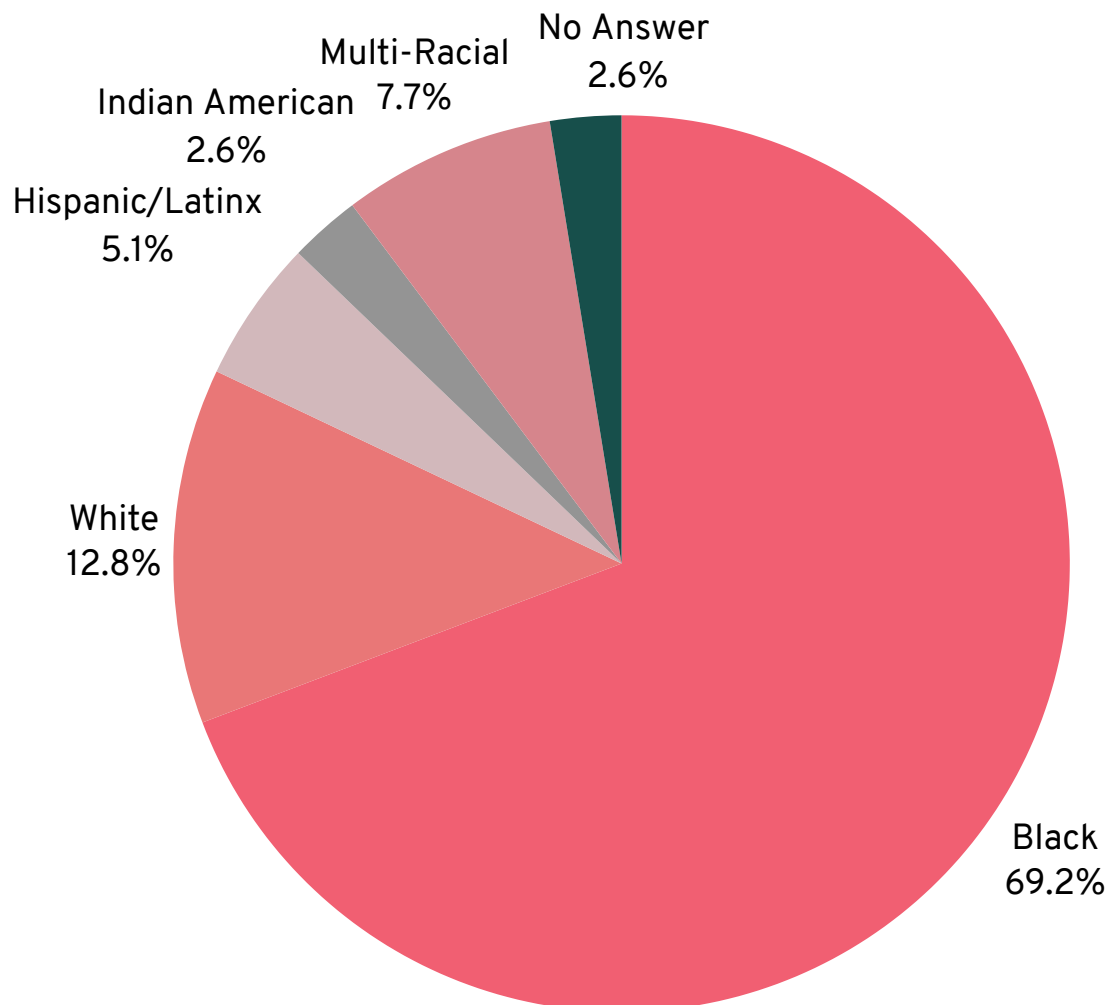



74% of our consultants identify as Black and/or Latinx.

ACES Consultants as of November 2023



ACES Team Demographics, By Race



A blurred background image showing a group of diverse business professionals, including men and women of various ethnicities, smiling and standing together. The image is semi-transparent, allowing the text to be clearly visible over it.

The diversity of our consultants
extends beyond race.

8% of our consultants identify as
LGBTQIA, and 5% are differently-
abled.

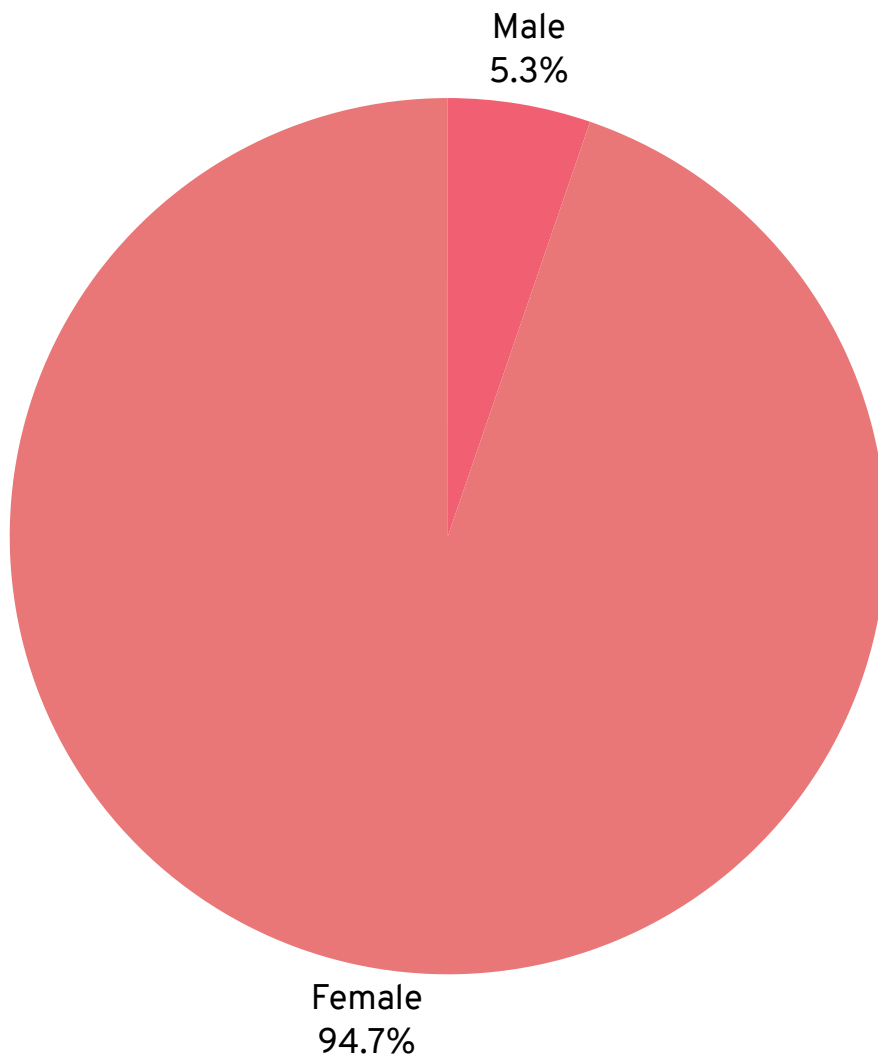
When it comes to diversity, our firm
lives its values.

56% of our consultants are first-
generation immigrants and/or college
graduates.

ACES Consultants as of November 2023



ACES Team Demographics, By Gender

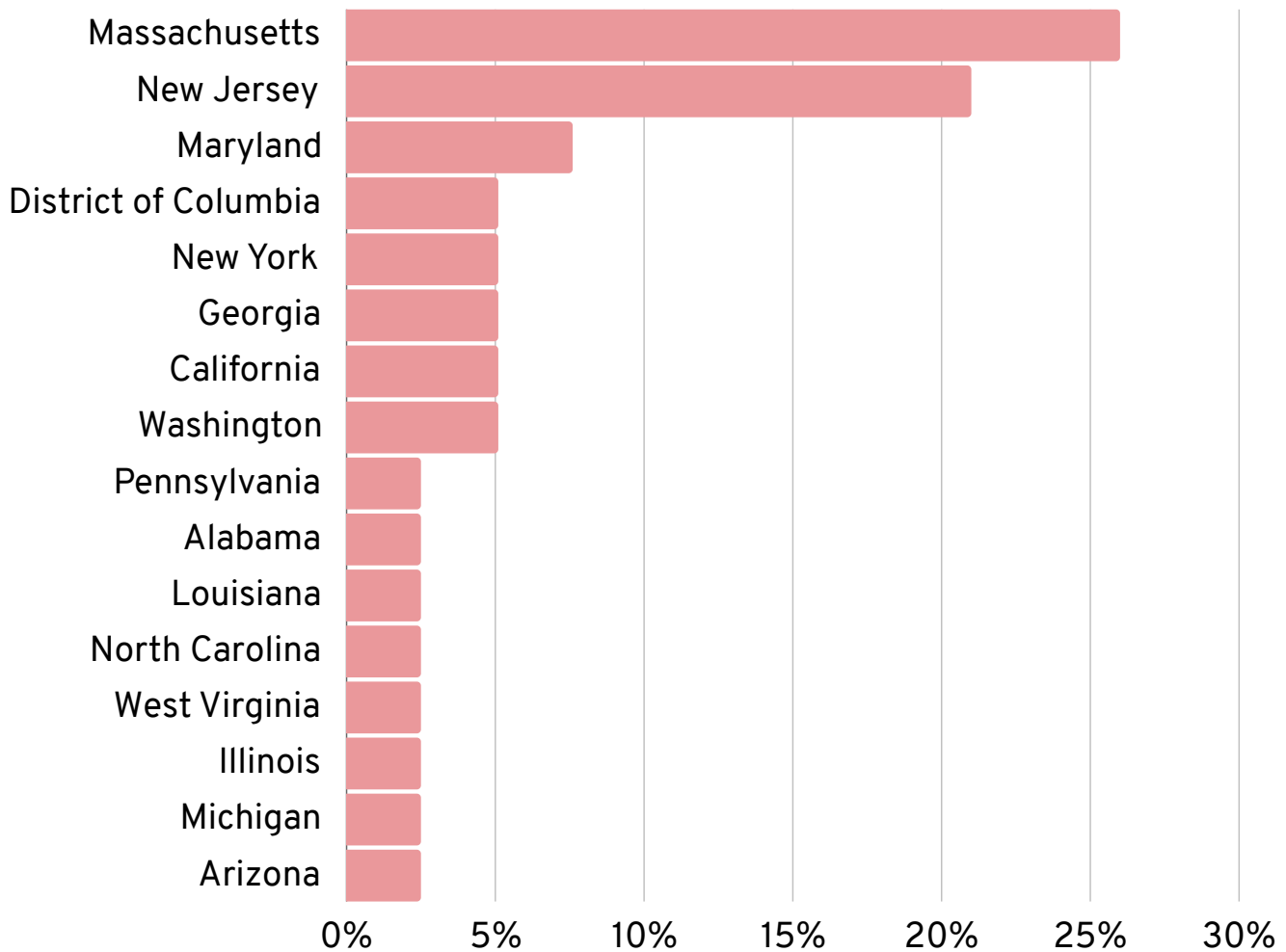


ACES Consultants as of November 2023



ACES Team Location, By State

We also have consultants located across the continental United States (n=16 total states).



OUR FIRST IN-HOUSE IRB CONSULTANT

DEMETRIA HUBBARD, MSPH



With 5 years of experience, **Demetria Hubbard** is a dedicated IRB consultant known for promoting ethical research practices. Demetria excels in guiding researchers through IRB processes, ensuring compliance with regulations while fostering trust and collaboration. Her expertise lies in protocol development, documentation, and navigating complex research ethics landscapes. By combining technical knowledge with a warm approach, Demetria is committed to upholding integrity and responsible research across diverse projects and institutions.

CONSULTANT INSIGHT

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Every team member I've worked with has been so helpful, understanding, and insightful. I've learned a lot about consulting, as this is my first role in it. Learning how to talk to clients and deliver on their needs.

-Betty Derege, MPH (c), BA

”

ACES FINANCE TEAM

CAREN C. JESSEMAN, CPA, MBA



Caren C. Jesseman, CPA, MBA, is the owner and president of CFO Solution, LLC, and has been brought on as a CPA for ACES.

CFO Solution, LLC provides outsourced interim, fractional and project-based Chief Financial Officer (CFO) services to small and mid-sized organizations. CFO Solution provides day to day operational support and leadership, bookkeeping, audit readiness, budget prep, analytical financial reports, procedure and process development, tax preparation, grant applications, and more. Clients include hospital and healthcare systems, nonprofit organizations, family-owned businesses and more.

Caren spent fifteen years in public accounting, followed by eight years as CFO of a complex nonprofit organization, before launching CFO Solution, LLC in 2018. Some of her volunteer activities include Board Treasurer of KinderSmile Foundation, as well as, Chairperson of the NJ CPA Society Business & Industry Professionals Interest Group. Caren holds a Bachelor's degree in Finance from the University of Delaware, a Masters in Business Administration from Rider University, and is a Licensed Certified Public Accountant in the states of New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Caren likes to spend her spare time traveling, gardening, biking and hiking.

ACES FINANCE TEAM

MAYA ROBLES



Maya Robles is the owner of MAR Bookkeeping, LLC, and has been brought on as a Bookkeeper for ACES. She works with nonprofits and small to medium-sized businesses to help them organize their day-to-day financials and harness the power of their own books. She was introduced to bookkeeping while working at an environmental nonprofit in New Jersey and later, turned her skills for organization into her own bookkeeping business. With four years of bookkeeping experience, she loves to work with passionate people, like Dr. Amutah-Onukagha, to help them achieve their goals.

She is a QuickBooks ProAdvisor, who has been trained to manage the intricacies of QuickBooks Online. At Amaka Consulting and Evaluation Services, Maya's responsibilities include Quickbooks categorization, reconciliation, organization of financial records and project-specific financials, accounts receivables, financially-related administrative work and QuickBooks account management.

Maya also loves to swing dance, learn about plant and bird identification, read books, and attend concerts. 18

CONSULTANT INSIGHT



I wanted the opportunity to use my quantitative analysis skills on a range of public health topics/projects. Having the opportunity to work on different projects allows me to flex my skills and take a deeper dive into various public health topics, allowing me to learn and grow as a public health professional. Lastly, it is an added bonus that ACES values diversity and inclusion as seen in the range of consultants at ACES.

-Octavia Goodman, MPH, CHES



CONSULTANT INSIGHT

“



Dr. AO has a caring nature for her team. ACES allows a healthy balance between work and personal time.

-Timberly Robinson, Ed.D, MBA

”

ACES' FIRST FULL-TIME HIRE

JACQUELINE GIFUNI-KOUTSOURIS, MPH, MCHES



We are thrilled to share that **Jacqueline Gifuni-Koutsouris, MPH, MCHES** long-time ACES team member, accepted a full-time position here at ACES as our first-ever Director of Operations and first full-time hire. Jackie has been part of the ACES team since its inception in 2016. Her first project as a Research Associate was for a maternal outcomes evaluation in Burlington County, NJ working with the March of Dimes. Since then, she has worked her way up from Research Associate to Senior Research Associate, to Project Manager.

Since starting her position in January 2023, she has overseen the daily operations of our company, including hiring/onboarding, reviewing contracts, and setting company performance goals. The goal of this position is to safeguard and augment the efficiency of the company's operations to facilitate accelerating development and long-term success.

CONSULTANT INSIGHT

“



I was keen on enhancing my existing qualitative and quantitative skills within a consulting environment. I valued ACES' expertise in maternal and child health, health equity, diversity, inclusion, and evaluation.

-Ololade Solaru, MPH

”

ACES STAFFING CHART



CONSULTANT INSIGHT

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Working at ACES as a Project Manager has been a really rewarding experience for me. I love working with a diverse team of individuals who bring exceptional skill sets to the projects. When someone is hired at ACES, I can be assured that they are a very driven, compassionate, and knowledgeable candidate who is ready to help the world become a better place through each project we take on.

-Christina Gebel, MPH, LCCE, Birth Doula

”

ACES Team - In the Field



Team Dinners



NEW JERSEY TEAM DINNER MARCH 2023

Left to Right: Jacqueline Gifuni-Koutsouris, Dr. Ndidiamaka Amutah-Onukagha, Monica Rodriguez-Mendez, and Sarah Bonilla



NEW JERSEY TEAM DINNER DECEMBER 2023

Left to Right: Kendra Julien, Lina Acosta, Tekeyah Sears, Jacqueline Gifuni-Koutsouris, Sarah Bonilla, Dr. Ndidiamaka Amutah-Onukagha, Kimberly Pierre, and Melissa Boucard.

ACES Team Meetings



New Hire Orientation, March 2023



All-Hands Meeting, June 2023



All-Hands Meeting, September 2023



Executive Team Retreat, December 2023

ACES Swag



Aika Aluc, our Q1 winner of the ACES Swag Raffle, sporting her zip-up jacket!



Christina Gebel, our Q2 winner of the ACES Swag Raffle, keeping cool with her water bottle!



Yoann Sophie Antoine, our Q3 winner of the ACES Swag Raffle, staying warm and cozy in her sweatshirt!

Client Site Visit



Omaha, NE Trip to Conduct a Site Visit of Sherwood Foundation - Radius Project

RADIUS, a non-profit organization dedicated to serving youth aged 12-18, focuses on repairing relationships among young individuals, their families, and the community.

ACES secured a contract, supported by the Sherwood Foundation, to oversee the evaluation of RADIUS's youth residential program. As part of this endeavor, ACES team members, accompanied by Dr. AO, conducted a site visit in Omaha, Nebraska in late September 2023. During our time in Omaha, the ACES team toured the residential facility, engaged with the program's youth, and held discussions with RADIUS leadership to gain insights into their program and highlight the evaluation's progress. This meeting enhanced connections and further solidified this fruitful partnership that will last for the next 24 months.

Our Impact



ACES Clients/Projects

2023 Clients



Certified Business

Amaka Consulting and Evaluation Services received certification as a minority and woman business enterprise (MBE and WBE) with the Massachusetts Supplier Diversity Office! ACES will be listed in the Supplier Diversity Office (SDO) Certified Business Directory and the Massachusetts Central Register under the PUBLIC HEALTH CONSULTING AND EVALUATION SERVICES FIRM description. SDO certification is a marketing tool that will enhance our firm's ability to do business in public and private markets.



Inclusive Recovery Grant Awardee



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has made \$75,000,000 available to support small businesses negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This program targets businesses that focus on reaching markets predominantly made up of socially and economically disadvantaged and historically underrepresented groups, underserved markets, and those owned by minorities, women, veterans, immigrants, first-generation immigrants, disabled individuals, or those that identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community.

This project is being supported by federal award number SLFRP1025 awarded to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts by the U.S. Department of the Treasury. These funds were appropriated through the Commonwealth's FY2023 Economic Development Bill.

ACES is very excited to have been awarded this wonderful opportunity.

Publications



Several of our team members (Amutah-Onukagha, Ndidiama PhD, MPH, CHES; Gifuni-Koutsouris, Jacqueline MPH, MCHES; Assan, Maame Araba MPH, CHES; Bryant, Cierra MPH, CHES) recently published findings from their evaluation of the NASTAD Minority Leadership program. You can learn more about the article, titled *“An Evaluation of the Successes of the NASTAD Minority Leadership Program and Its Implications for Leadership in State Health Departments”*, [here](#).



Conferences



ACES was an exhibitor at the **Annual American Evaluation Association Conference** for the first time this year! The annual conference took place from October 4th-7th, 2023 at Indianapolis, Indiana. Our Director of Operations, Jacqueline Gifuni-Koutsouris, represented the firm, and made over 50 new contacts at this event.



Webinars



Sarah Bonilla (Project Manager) and Ololade Solaru (Research Associate) presented on behalf of ACES at **Trailhead Institute's *Engaging Military Veterans in the Public Health Workforce Lunch & Learn*** on October 4th, 2023. Trailhead Institute's Workforce Programs & Initiatives hosted a virtual Lunch & Learn to discuss strategies and opportunities to engage military Veterans in the public health workforce. This webinar provided an introduction to key findings, reflections, data, and opportunities that emerged from extensive review and discussions with Veterans across all branches of the military. Trailhead engaged external partners to conduct an environmental scan and national literature review on strategies to include military Veterans in the public health workforce. A video of the session can be found [here](#). The reports and action planning tool are also [available](#).



Presentations



ACES President and Founder, Dr. Ndidiamaka Amutah-Onukagha, presented findings from a maternal telehealth services evaluation at American Public Health Association Conference on November 13, 2023.

The session focused on ACES' evaluation of maternal telehealth services provided by Accompany Doula Care. ACES conducted three focus groups with a total of 15 select ADC doulas and distributed surveys (n=23) to better understand current telehealth systems and practices. Focus group discussions painted the resiliency of both doulas providing maternal telehealth services, and their patients. While there were several missed opportunities in using telemedicine (i.e. barriers to care, physical touch, difficulties in labor and postpartum care), there were also several unintended benefits that arose through these conversations with doulas. Overall, doulas found telehealth services to be beneficial during this time of quarantine and social distancing.

Authors include: Ndidiamaka Amutah-Onukagha, PhD; Jacqueline Gifuni-Koutsouris, MPH, MCHES; Cecilia Flores, PhD; and Christina Gebel, MPH, LCCE, Birth Doula.

Client Testimonials from 2023



CLIENT TESTIMONIAL

“

The ACES team was a pleasure to work with. Their diversity of perspectives and expertise in the subject matter made them incredibly knowledgeable and insightful. Further, their project management style ensured we always had clear expectations, timelines and deliverables. They were also incredibly accommodating and flexible to our requests.

-Shelli Grogg | Program Manager, UNC Health's Equity and Inclusion Dept.

UNC
HEALTHSM

CLIENT TESTIMONIAL

“

ACES offers a highly talented team of public health consultants to support your needs. They are efficient, effective, and meticulous in the work they do. ACES offers a collaborative approach to project management and completion.

-Jennifer Edwards, PhD | Director of Workforce Programs & Initiatives, Trailhead Institute



Social Media

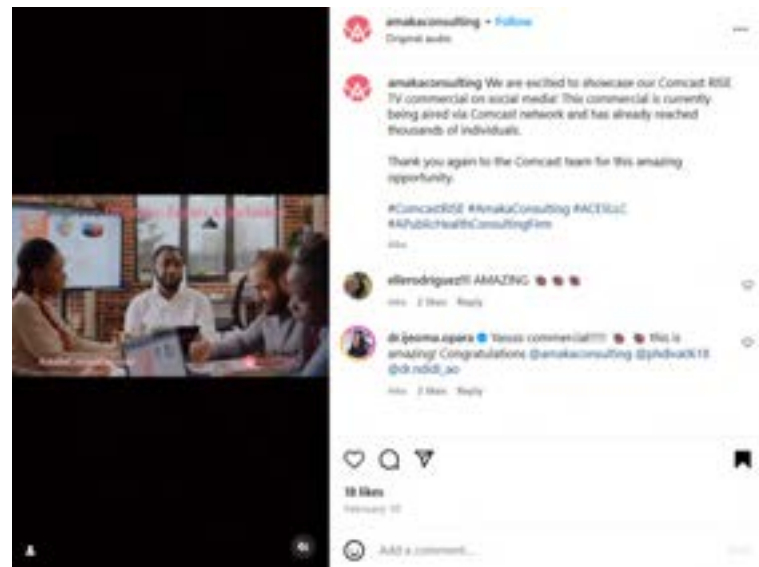
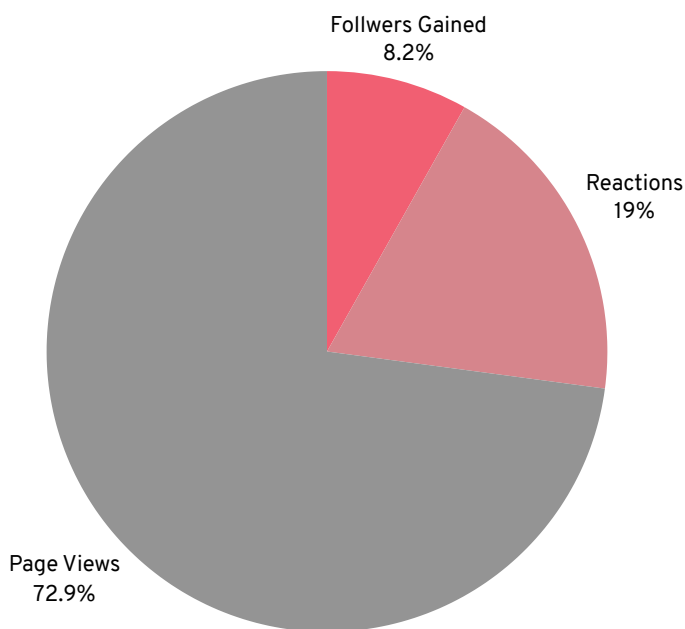


Social Media Highlights

In 2023, we reached over 2,000 individuals via social media. We also had the opportunity to highlight our Comcast RISE commercial which performed well on all platforms— bringing in over 1,500 views.

2023 Social Media Growth

**compared to 2022*



Please click [here](#) to view the full Comcast RISE commercial.



Stay Connected



Facebook: Amaka Consulting and Evaluation Services, LLC



LinkedIn: Amaka Consulting and Evaluation Services, LLC



X: @AmakaEvaluation



Instagram: @AmakaConsulting



YouTube: Amaka Consulting and Evaluation Services



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TRANSPARENCY.

INTEGRITY.

PROFESSIONALISM.



AMAKA

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