



Global Evaluation & Applied Research Solutions Inc.

4153-C Flat Shoals Parkway, Suite 314; Decatur, GA 30034-4187

404.328.9850 (office) ♦ 404.328.9854 (fax)

www.GetInGears.com

Contact: Bridget Hardaway, MPA
Business Development Manager
GEARS Inc.
404.328.9850
bhardaway@GetInGears.com

Who we are

Global Evaluation & Applied Research Solutions (GEARS), Inc. is a management consulting firm founded in 2002. We are a woman-owned business with offices located in Decatur, Georgia and Boston, Massachusetts and access to a wide variety of expert consultants. In 2004, GEARS was certified as a participant in the U.S. Small Business Administration's 8(a) and small disadvantaged business programs. GEARS was awarded the GSA MOBIS contract in 2003 (GS-10F-0536N). Our website address is www.getingears.com.

GEARS provides a host of related management consulting services including: program evaluation, applied research, strategic planning, executive coaching, focus group research, organizational development, employee assessments, meeting facilitation, conference planning, data management and warehousing, application design and development, database development, and website design.

We are organized into three divisions, reflecting our primary core competencies: Division of Evaluation & Applied Research, Division of Organizational Management, and the Division of Information Technology Services.

Division of Evaluation & Applied Research (DEAR)

- program evaluation
- applied research
- focus group research
- customer/client satisfaction assessment
- culturally competent research designs

Division of Organizational Management (DOM)

- strategic planning
- organizational development
- meeting facilitation
- executive coaching

- organizational assessment and diagnosis
- conference planning

- cultural competence training

- professional development training
- development of organizational policies and procedures
- placement of administrative personnel
- management studies

Division of Information Technology Services (DITS)

- database development
- website design
- website maintenance
- content management design and development
- quality assurance software testing
- application design and development (Unix and Windows OS)
- Intranet design and development
- computer networking

- ASP, ASP.NET and .NET development

Our Clients:

Government	Foundations/Non-profit organizations/Academia	Community Based Organizations
U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	Healthcare Georgia Foundation	Multicultural AIDS Coalition (Boston)
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	National Association of Chronic Disease Directors	
U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration	CDC Foundation	
U.S. Department of Education	National Minority AIDS Council	
U.S. Department of Commerce	University of Massachusetts/Boston	
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	Ford Foundation	
U.S. Food and Drug Administration	National Estuarine Research Reserve Association	
National Science Foundation		
Boston Public Health Commission		

Our Corporate Core Competencies and Skill Sets:

- Management of complex evaluation and organizational management projects
- Work with special populations (racial/ethnic, youth, women, etc.)
- Organizational diagnosis and assessments
- Strategic planning process
- Focus group design, implementation and analysis
- Data gathering, analysis and synthesis
- Professional training
- Expertise in cultural competence
- Strong written & oral communication skills
- Web design & development
- Database design
- Network Solutions
- Development of online content management-system.

PCI Relevant Projects:

Presented below are brief statements of our experience by task area: organizational management, strategic partnerships, program evaluation, logistics & event management, database development, websites developed by GEARS, and health disparities expertise. The numbers in parentheses designates the PIC task associated with the GEARS project.

Organizational Management

- GEARS Inc. has been contracted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention (NCHHSTP) to plan, design, and execute all activities associated with the Coordination of Behavioral Assessments and Rapid HIV Testing (BART) Among African American Adolescents and Adults, Men Who Have Sex with Men, and Other Groups At-Risk for Infection. BART is a three year initiative designed to foster cross sector collaborations to facilitate strategic approaches in addressing the social determinants associated with the disproportionate impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic among at-risk groups. BART solicits health departments, community based organizations, and other service providers to conduct rapid HIV testing activities at national community events. To effectively address these goals, GEARS developed a comprehensive social marketing and partnership development plan to engage individuals at multiple layers.

Strategic partnerships have been essential to the successful development of BART to date. The GEARS team has mobilized and fostered relationships with community based organizations, state and local health departments, and other HIV testing groups to assist us in advertising and offering support for national BART events. The GEARS team has secured a significant amount of rapid HIV testing kits at a discounted rate from OraSure Technologies, Inc., which will relieve a considerable amount of financial strain for the testing partners. GEARS carefully selected and negotiated appropriate networks within the private and public health sector to ensure that BART target audiences are reached

The BART social marketing campaign is central to managing the high visibility and complexity of this project. Our media experts are heavily connected in different segments, including print, broadcast, and cyber networks. They have strategically maneuvered multiple markets to gain access to diverse target groups, while also remaining sensitive to the needs of CDC and the target population. GEARS media experts have designed press packets, attended conferences, and developed a detailed tracking system to ensure that BART information is disseminated properly. Specifically, the GEARS social marketing team successfully assembled, prepared, and packed the necessary exhibit materials for BART display and distribution at the National AIDS Education & Services for Minorities MSM Leadership Conference as required by the host site; all appropriate members were available to offer event support.

While our media experts are well-established in their field, they understand the progressive nature of the social market. Thus, they have embraced several different social marketing techniques, including the development of a Facebook page to ensure that the appropriate audiences are reached. The team has also constructed a comprehensive website as a marketing strategy to promote the initiative that included a social media profile with a newly constructed BART logo and tagline to assist our target population in embracing the notion of HIV testing, a blogging space linked to the Facebook profile, and an extranet website to capture requests for proposal submitted by interested organizations and inquiries from persons interested in volunteering. While browsing the site, visitors have access to searchable full-text documents that report HIV/AIDS research and statistics, alternate formats for documents (i.e., adobe files), feature boxes, links, animation, and online applications. The project team plans to incorporate interactive multimedia to report appropriate, cleared results of national testing events. All information submitted is protected by a secure portal that is used to safely share information with our partners. (1, 2, 4-11, 13, 15, 16)

- CDC has engaged GEARS to provide project management, information dissemination, technical assistance, logistics and web support to the intervention focus area (IFA) of the

Diabetes Primary Prevention Initiative (DPPI). The DPPI is conducted through three focus areas, including surveillance, systems dynamics modeling and interventions. Pilot states are conducting activities that focus on diabetes primary prevention and pre-diabetes awareness, screening and lifestyle activities and health policy. GEARS support assists CDC to manage voluminous state-based information on intervention activities, best practices, and meeting activities. GEARS organized DPPI's five years of extensive research, by creating a DPPI website that provides links to a database of tools and curriculum developed by the individual focus areas, as well as, listing the DPPI's annotated bibliography. GEARS activities include documenting and reporting outcomes from bi-weekly meetings with CDC and the pilot states, synthesizing surveillance focus area and systems modeling focus area state reports into one comprehensive report.

In preparation for the DPPI comprehensive report, GEARS conducted a review of CDC diabetes initiatives that have contributed to the current literature on prediabetes. The comprehensive report requires that GEARS work with each pilot state to determine how their interventions can best be incorporated into a document that can serve various diabetes stakeholder groups. This has included reviewing information from multiple sources (i.e., IFA reports, meeting notes, and summaries from the CDC diabetes workgroup and pilot states) and determining which materials was pertinent to CDC's purpose for the final report. This has necessitated that GEARS be judicious in editing the report and balancing the needs of individual states with the overall goals of the DPPI. We also provide on-going technical assistance in the identification of key stakeholders, and the development of conference and meeting materials and presentations. GEARS also supports the development and dissemination of information and appropriate reporting tools to share critical lessons learned in settings and media appropriate to reaching persons at risk for developing Type 2 diabetes. This project, based in the Division of Diabetes Translation, is a collaboratively co-created plan of action for federal, state, and local public health implementation of diabetes primary prevention. GEARS is providing direct support to the interventions focus area, which involves five pilot states, California, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, and Washington. (8, 13, 15)

- GEARS assisted the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office of Diversity with developing a Diversity Communications Plan. The plan included communication strategies suggested by a cross-section of CDC employees, CDC management, relevant internal affinity groups, and input from a review of the best practices for developing effective diversity communications plans identified from an analysis of organizations who have developed and implemented successful plans. This plan will be used to assist CDC in educating and informing both CDC employees and the public about CDC's philosophy related to diversity, how diversity impacts the everyday work life of CDC employees, and how the diversity initiative benefits the agency. Communications products include posters, forums, presence on CDC's website, and web blogs. (1)
- GEARS provides writer, editing, and copy editing services to develop an average of five news and interview articles per month for *CDC Connects*, CDC's intranet-based employee communications vehicle. *CDC Connects* is published daily and accessed by CDC employees worldwide providing immediate information about accomplishments of the agency and individual employees. GEARS has researched dozens of topics and created informational and educational articles. We conduct interviews with senior CDC leadership, CDC employees, and other health professionals to supplement important research findings. GEARS has the expertise required to conduct comprehensive

research, develop high-quality articles, interview a variety of health professionals to create informational and educational articles. We conduct interviews with senior CDC leadership, CDC employees, and other health professionals to supplement important research findings. GEARS conducts interviews with CDC employees and creates an “employee of the month” profile. We develop important news articles on topical public health issues (such as hand washing) and are responsible for the outlining, researching, interviewing health professionals, and writing tasks.

- GEARS was engaged by the CDC to design, implement, and report a series of 22 discussion sessions of CDC employees conducted in eight locations throughout the United States. The results of these sessions were used to assist CDC management in developing the future direction of CDC, a process called the CDC’s Futures Initiative. This project was very complex, involving the management and conduct of multiple and simultaneous activities and critical contact with the CDC’s Director of Strategy and Innovation. In addition to staff located in Atlanta, GEARS worked with CDC’s human resources office, employee union stewards, and staff offices in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Colorado, Alaska, Puerto Rico, and Maryland. This project was half the budget of the listening tour project (see below) and was developed and completed within three months. Final results were developed and presented to the Director, Strategy and Innovation, CDC. Correspondence noting GEARS’s exceptional performance for accomplishing such an exhaustive procedure in a limited time frame is on file with the CDC contract’s office.
- GEARS designed, implemented, and reported statewide listening tours for the Healthcare Georgia Foundation. The results of these tours assisted the Foundation in developing grant making guidelines and enhanced the Foundation’s knowledge of healthcare consumers in GA, ultimately affecting grant making priorities. The initial tour in 2002 involved convening leaders from among Georgia’s healthcare provider community (including public health departments, community based organizations, community health centers, school nurse programs, law enforcement, homeless shelters, etc.) in nine regions of the state. The 2003-2004 tour involved convening sessions with Georgia healthcare consumers to learn their opinions of and experience with the healthcare system. The project involved a complex design of identifying appropriate public health and other health officials throughout the state, developing interview instruments, conducting over 40 focus groups with diverse audiences, working closely with community based organizations to recruit consumers, and managing, analyzing, and reporting quantitative and qualitative information. This activity required management of multiple and simultaneous activities in five regions of the state for two years. GEARS established a time table for the two years and met each scheduled deliverable on time and brought the project in within budget. GEARS was the only HGF grantee to present at the Foundation’s annual grantees conference held in November 2003. The listening tour project was also selected to present at the 2004 American Public Health Association annual meeting. GEARS has been engaged to conduct a follow-up tour in 2009.

Strategic Partnerships:

- GEARS is currently assisting the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion to develop a national model for partnership development. Specifically, GEARS is creating a historical

perspective of the creation of the partnership from original discussions to the present time. Our work in previous projects that included partnership activities, such as the Healthcare Georgia Foundation (see description above) provided us a strong understanding of the necessary components of and techniques and strategies for building effective strategic partnerships.

GEARS devised a qualitative approach to capturing these data including telephone interviews with CDC and Y-USA staff, focus groups with CDC partnership committees, and individual in-person interviews with selected CDC steering committee members. Initial discussions with stakeholders were mapped into a strategic work plan for ensuring that the most appropriate individuals were included in the data collection process. Based on initial discussions, review of existing documentation related to the partnership formation (including meeting minutes, emails, publications, and website materials) and detailed discussions with the CDC Partnership Steering Committee, GEARS developed data collection instruments to collect information from CDC and Y-USA staff involved in the initial phases of the partnership. We were especially interested in identifying motives for entering into the partnership, pre-partnership perceptions, challenges, successes, and communication activities. Interviews were recorded, with permission of the respondent, and transcribed for more efficient data capture. GEARS developed an interviewer's protocol including an introductory script to inform participants of the nature of the interview, audio recording activities, how the data will be used, and of the voluntary nature of the data collection. All of the interviews were conducted by the same GEARS staff member to retain consistency in data capture and interpretation. The qualitative data were coded and organized into a database to capture response frequencies prior to analysis. A comprehensive report, including the creation of what GEARS developed and called the "Eight Keys" to a successful partnership, was shared with multiple levels of employees within CDC and with the Y-USA corporate staff and also identified significant accomplishments that were overcome to forge the partnership, lessons learned and conclusions. CDC has now engaged GEARS to conduct follow up activities.

GEARS designed a protocol to conduct focus groups among Y-USA and CDC staff to glean information about the community impact of the partnership. We also facilitated all sessions. GEARS designed focus group questions relevant to the purpose and goals of the partnership. These sessions defined partnership issues, problems, successes and accomplishments. GEARS developed a report of findings, including recommendations.

GEARS provided CDC with a comprehensive literature review of public-nonprofit partnerships resulting in the identification of best practices, effective model components, and strategies for overcoming challenges. The final model is available on CDC's website.

Program Evaluation:

- GEARS has been engaged by the DHHS/Office on Women's Health (DHHS/OWH) to conduct an evaluation of HIV Prevention among minority serving institutions. GEARS will utilize its expertise in cultural and gender-specific knowledge to design an evaluation framework to measure HIV prevention knowledge among young women attending these institutions. A sampling of Historically Black Colleges and University, Tribal Colleges and Hispanic Serving institutions will comprise the institutions included in the evaluation design. This is a three-year evaluation project.

- GEARS recently completed a three-year evaluation contract with the DHHS/Office on Women's Health (DHHS/OWH) on the project entitled, Evaluation of HIV Prevention Programs for *Women*. This project measures the effectiveness of HIV prevention programs funded by OWH in three categories: women living in the rural south, incarcerated/newly released women and model mentorship programs. The results of this evaluation will enhance the understanding of how well women-focused HIV prevention programs utilize gender-specific prevention strategies and their effectiveness. Additionally, the results of this evaluation will provide OWH with information that will inform the programmatic development of future HIV Initiatives for women.

This is a large, complex evaluation project involving fourteen grantees from among the three categories listed above. GEARS developed ten different data collection instruments used for a range of purposes including enhancing grantees' buy-in and measuring client satisfaction. GEARS also developed the OMB Clearance package for this evaluation. Additionally, GEARS developed and submitted an application package to an independent Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure human subject protection during the evaluation study. GEARS will conduct training with each contractor during annual site visits to ensure that they understand and are able to accurately complete the data collection forms. GEARS is completely versed with OMB clearance requirements and comfortable with that process, adding valuable expertise to clients who have never been through the process.

- GEARS conducted focus group research among twelve CDC REACH community coalitions from diverse racial and ethnic groups including African American, Asian Americans, Latinos/Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans were selected to participate in this study. They also represented a diverse set of health priority areas. These areas include breast and cervical cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, HIV infections and AIDS and infant mortality. This project was conducted for the Community Health and Program Services (CHAPS) Branch of the Division of Adult and Community Health/NCCDPHP. GEARS designed an evaluation protocol to assess how culture influences the process of building and maintaining a coalition and how coalitions ensure that their training is culturally competent. Further, this study investigation of CDC's REACH 2010 grantees aimed to answer the following questions: (1) Were REACH coalitions culturally competent? (2) What was the relationship between cultural competency and the coalitions' outcomes for the racial/ethnic populations they serve? and (3) Based on the performance and experiences of these coalitions, what recommendations could be offered toward future efforts. The objective of this project was to determine the extent to which these coalitions have adopted and utilize effective cultural competence strategies within their communities. Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were employed to obtain desired measures. GEARS was responsible for partnership development, recruiting, and reporting focus group results. The results of this project provided CDC an understanding of how cultural competence is understood, operationalized and implemented among REACH grantees.

GEARS recently completed an additional phase of this project which entailed the development of a cultural competency training manual and materials for coalitions addressing health disparities among racial/ethnic populations. These materials will provide technical assistance to CDC and community coalitions. This manual is based on focus groups that were conducted with a subset of REACH 2010 coalitions and as well as best practices as outlined in the literature.

- GEARS conducted an evaluation of the Coastal Management Fellowship Program for the Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA), Coastal Services Center (CSC). The results of this evaluation helped NOAA meet the high priority coastal zone needs of states and improve its prevention of coastal emergencies. This project will assess the effectiveness of the fellowship program, impact of the fellowship on state coastal zone programs, and the professional goals of fellows. Both quantitative (e.g. survey) and qualitative (e.g. interview) methods are used in the evaluation. Participants include current and past fellows, a control group similar to fellows, state coastal zone program mentors, and CSC partners. Since this was a government authorized data collection, GEARS developed the required OMB Clearance package for the evaluation.
- Lupus Qualitative Research Focus Groups and Analysis: GEARS has been very involved in lupus research and has conducted two qualitative studies pertaining to lupus that utilized focus group methodology. Both studies were performed under contract with Brigham and Women's Hospital, Department of Rheumatology. Dr. Patricia Fraser was the principal investigator for the first federally funded study which examined connective tissue disease in high risk groups. For this study, GEARS designed recruitment and focus group methodology to investigate the views of women of African descent on participating in medical research, especially studies investigating genetics and requiring a blood sample. The results of these focus groups were summarized by GEARS and the information used to design study methodology to investigate connective tissue disease among women of African descent. Following the implementation of this study, GEARS conducted follow-up focus groups to determine those factors that influenced the decision of women of African descent to participate in the research study.

Dr. Matthew Liang was the principal investigator for the second federally funded study. Dr. Liang contracted with GEARS to conduct focus groups to investigate those factors that influence lupus patients' participation in prevention research. Dr. Liang encountered difficulty in recruiting sufficient lupus patients to participate in a prevention study that he was conducting that required patients to participate in clinical trials. GEARS was hired to conduct focus groups with patients who had refused to participate in his study, who had participated in his study and a comparison group (diabetes patients). The results of this project are used to better understand those factors that influence patient participation and to make recommendations for future research designs.

- GEARS also designed and implemented the evaluation of two grants awarded to the Multicultural AIDS Coalition (MAC), Boston, Massachusetts, from 2000 to the present. These projects, funded by the DHHS/Office of Minority Health, evaluated the effective of the MAC's organizational technical assistance and organizational capacity building services to minority community based organizations (CBOs) working in the HIV/AIDS area. The goal is to help these CBOs improve and increase their ability to deliver HIV/AIDS services. In collaboration with MAC, GEARS has responsibility for: (1) designing the organizational capacity and technical assistance assessment tools, workshop/seminar evaluation surveys, and interview protocols and assessment tools for faith-based organizations participating in the project; (2) conducting meetings with MAC staff to review evaluation procedures and progress, (3) conducting interviews with participating organizations, (4) developing databases to manage the disparate data sources, and (5) analyzing the data from these sources. GEARS also provides bi-annual and annual reports throughout the project period. The results of the evaluation assisted MAC in designing a more efficient and focused technical assistance and

capacity building program. This redesigned program was recently funded (10/1/05) by OMH for three additional years.

- GEARS recently conducted a cultural needs assessment for the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) (a network of nationwide providers and researchers interested in child traumatic stress). The purpose of this cultural needs assessment was to determine the ways in which culture has been conceptualized and integrated into the work of the network and to what extent these cultural values influence organizational products and outcomes. NCTSN is using the results of this assessment to design a program to increase cultural competence in the network and among its partners.
- GEARS conducted a qualitative evaluation and meta-analysis of 92 Final Reports for Cohort I of the Family Strengthening Program Grant funded by SAMHSA. This project was conducted as a subcontractor to McFarland & Associates (2002- 2003). The purpose of the meta-analysis was to identify those program attributes that correlate with improved youth substance use and individual outcomes as a result of participating in an evidence-based (or empirically supported) family strengthening intervention. In conducting this meta-analysis, GEARS identified key research questions, developed coding methodology, established reliability of coding methods, trained coders, and analyzed data using a statistical software package.

Communications and Outreach

- GEARS completed a project with the DHHS/Office on Women's Health (DHHS/OWH) on a project entitled, Lupus Community Education and Awareness Outreach Program. This project involves raising awareness about lupus through community seminars and development of a community health leader program. GEARS has developed partnerships with local and national lupus organizations to work collaboratively in designing ADA compliant seminars and a model for the community health leader program. GEARS will conduct four lupus seminars focusing on women of African descent. These seminars will address the physical, mental, social, and legal issues involved in lupus. Women will also be provided lupus related resources such as brochures and pamphlets, as well as information about clinical trials. The community health leader program will train community women, who volunteer, to serve as lupus educators to raise awareness about lupus in their communities. The model that is being developed is one that is sustainable in that women who serve as community health leaders will be connected with appropriate resources to allow continuation after the end of the contract. GEARS will also conduct an evaluation of the seminars to assess how well the seminars met the needs of participants and raised awareness about lupus. The anticipated accomplishment of this project is that it will raise awareness about Black women's increased risk for lupus and the resources available to cope with lupus.
- GEARS was engaged by CDC to assist in creating a federally-approved survey to gauge the opinions of the leadership of state and local public health agencies regarding crisis management emergency communications. Utilizing three different surveys, GEARS created an online survey, hosted the website and provided technical assistance to over 1100 respondents to the survey. GEARS also conducted a mass mailing to all potential respondents (1100) and managed all the logistics to mailing to such a large group including working with Federal Express and the USPS for street versus PO box addresses. GEARS also provided the statistical analysis of all the resulting data, over 400 respondents. The survey was administered on a Section 508 compliant website that was created and maintained by GEARS.

GEARS also provided event support for the 2009 Crisis Emergency Risk Communication Training held on August 26 - 28, 2009, in Houston, Texas. The conference provided crisis communication training to stakeholders who would be involved with pregnant women during a pandemic influenza outbreak in the United States. At this event, GEARS provided logistical assistance and note taking.

Logistics & Event Management

- GEARS provided logistical expertise to assist the CDC in convening three expert panels, two on mental health and the other on health-related quality of life surveillance issues. GEARS provided project management expertise, meeting facilitation, meeting capture and report development. During the proposal development for this project, GEARS recommended and CDC approved the development of a website devoted to this meeting. GEARS uploaded all panel member information to this site for easy access of participants. Information posted includes all pre-meeting reading materials, meeting schedules and agendas, participant checklist, and all travel-related forms as GEARS had complete responsibility for ensuring that all panel members are recruited, traveled, and paid honoraria. GEARS also provided CDC with CD ROMS of the meetings, final reports of all discussions and facilitated both meetings. GEARS also provided support for the development of manuscripts for the 2010 edition of CDC's online journal, *Preventing Chronic Disease: Public Health Research, Practice, and Policy*. This edition, which will be focused on mental health promotion and mental illness prevention, will provide key implications for the future direction of related CDC and public health programming.
- GEARS was engaged to support the Department in its 2008 review of grant applications using the E-Reader electronic review and rating system. This project included providing travel and lodging arrangements for out of town reviewers, on-site support to the full panel of 18 reviewers (including developing final scoring packages and appropriate notification letters to applicants) analyzing and summarizing grant reviews, preparing applications in the Departments GAP program, and processing and paying per diem and travel for all 18 reviewers. The US Department of Education provides grant awards to operate regional equity assistance centers that provide technical assistance and training, at the request of school boards and other responsible governmental agencies, on the preparation, adoption, and implementation of plans for the desegregation of public schools. The result of our efforts under extremely tight deadlines ensured continuation of the program.
- GEARS provided logistics and planning support to US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region 4's, 2008 Collegiate Environmental Sustainability Conference. Support services included: securing appropriate "green" lodging space for out of town participants and speakers, identifying and managing appropriate audio/visual equipment with Spelman College, providing ground transportation for conference participants to/from lodging and event facility. GEARS also provided on-site registration and support services during this two-day conference. GEARS collected speaker presentations for web posting as well as develop and collect evaluation tools which will be disseminated during the conference and summarize results to provide recommendations and lessons learned for future meetings of this type. EPA partnered with Spelman College to promote green building strategies among which can maximize both economic and environmental performance. To that end, EPA Region 4 and Spelman College are co-sponsors of the

2008 Collegiate Environmental Sustainability Conference on October 23-24, 2008. The conference goal was to serve as a catalyst for promoting, sharing and initiating “green” campus initiatives throughout the nation. GEARS was responsible in supporting their effort to bring together leaders from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Minority Academic Institutions (MAIs), and other institutions of higher learning from Region 4 states and the Southeast. Green requirements included recycling activities, linen/towel re-use options, accessibility to public transportation and water conservancy programs. In addition to developing the logistics page for the conference webpage, we also assisted EPA and Spelman to promote this conference by disseminating marketing materials and serving as the primary point of contact for conference inquiries.

- GEARS supported EPA Region 4 for the development and implementation of a two-day conference held in February 2009 by providing logistics, facilitation services, developing and disseminating marketing materials for the conference, and developing and hosting a conference website. GEARS was also responsible for identifying appropriate partners and sponsors for this conference. The purpose of this conference was to initiate a dialogue between the construction industry, federal and state regulators, and local government officials to introduce a comprehensive approach to building design, construction, and demolition; materials re-use; construction site emissions; hazardous waste; and storm water and sediment loading; and revitalization. This dialogue will help ensure that all parties involved in these issues have a context for each other’s activities and that building and demolition outcomes have improved environmental implications. GEARS staff provided on-site registration and support.

Database Development:

- GEARS designed two relational databases in Visual Basic to manage evaluation data from 18 grantees participating in the DHHS/OWH national HIV evaluation. These
- GEARS provided technical assistance to the University of Massachusetts at Boston’s Urban Scholars Program (USP), a competitive pre-collegiate scholars program designed to prepare urban youth to excel in college, by designing a Windows based .NET applications were developed to maintain and sustain yearly student records in a Microsoft Access Database accessed through a University of Massachusetts/Boston-maintained server.
- GEARS provided help desk services for projects in which we developed databases such as OWH, MAC, and Urban Scholars.
- GEARS designed a relational database to track policy and emerging issues for the Office of the Executive Secretariat (OES), CDC.
- GEARS enhanced the relational database of the National Foundation for CDC that tracks and monitors funding (contracts and grants) for programs. The database provided user-level password protection, as well as read and write privileges, based on the user and department. A program summary was entered into the database and monitored along with the incoming and outgoing grant funds.

Websites Developed by GEARS:

- GEARS designed and maintains a website for the Behavioral Assessment of Rapid HIV Testing (BART) initiative, which focuses on increasing HIV awareness, while decreasing the stigma surrounding HIV testing. This website, www.bartevent.com, is a significant part of a comprehensive social marketing strategy designed for the project. The BART initiative primarily targets underserved and high-risk groups; these include African Americans, adults, youth, and men who have sex with men. The BART website has multiple functions in that it provides links to HIV educational materials and links consumers to HIV testing facilities in fifty states. The BART website also serves an instructional purpose as users are able to download funding information to potential partners; it allows volunteers to register to participate in BART events.
- The Diabetes Primary Prevention Initiative (DPPI) website was created out of CDC's need to consolidate and transfer five years of diabetes research materials collected by the five pilot states involved in the project. GEARS designed a user-friendly website that links the user to a database of tools, research materials, and curriculum developed for individual focus areas (i.e., including surveillance, systems dynamics modeling and interventions), as well as, a listing of the DPPI's annotated bibliography.
- GEARS designed and maintains a conference website for the 2009 Lifecycle Construction Conference, an activity of the US EPA Region 4. The conference website included functionality for posting general information, collecting registration information and fees, and hosting post-conference information such as speaker bios and presentations and participant lists. The website also includes information about Atlanta, the host city and hotel accommodations.
- GEARS designed and maintains an event focused website for the CDC Expert Panel on Mental Health and Mental Illness. The purpose of the website is to manage the development and distribution of information related to the panel meeting in a sustainable and efficient manner. Panel members receive email notifications that materials have been posted to the website and are able to download them at their convenience without the added expense to CDC for postage. The website is also used to obtain panel members' travel profiles and provide them with necessary updates about the meeting.
- A website to provide support for the 2004 Healthcare Georgia Foundation consumer-based listening tours was designed and is currently maintained (www.listeningtours.com). The website was used during the 2004 tour to support recruitment efforts by providing potential sponsoring organizations information related to the tour, meeting information for participants, and session report summaries. Other design features used to engage the site visitors included pop-up windows, PDF file attachments, a scrolling information box and drop-down menus. The website played a critical role in recruitment and information dissemination to participants and sponsoring organizations.
- GEARS designed and maintains www.invisiblegiants.com website to assist in the marketing of the GEARS-produced documentary entitled, *Invisible Giants...Hidden Treasures*. This documentary is developed from powerful stories shared by 2003-2004 consumer based listening tour participants living with mental illness and disabilities. The site provides a flash introduction to display buzz-words that express the intentions of the project, a nine-minute preview of the documentary and an online contact form. A photo gallery and information about the participants will be added to the site as the documentary is promoted.

Health Disparities Expertise:

- GEARS facilitated a series of meetings with CDC CHAPS Branch in order to provide its expertise in the development of a health disparities strategic plan. GEARS assisted the CHAPS/Expert Center/REACH US teams with developing a strategic plan that will include a definition of health disparities, delineate the CHAPS Expert Center and REACH US goals, clarify the role and professional development of staff and identify potential program and agency collaborations. These meetings are instrumental in assisting CHAPS to accomplish its mission to provide leadership in eliminating health disparities.
- GEARS supported the development of the CDC Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Action Institute, which was conducted to provide capacity building to community-based organizations engaged in the fight against health disparities. This activity was sponsored by the CDC Division of Adult and Community Health in the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. GEARS was charged with leading the planning committee to identify a date and location for the institute, determine the number of and profile of appropriate participants and develop learning objectives. These activities were accomplished through a series of meetings for which GEARS developed and distributed the agenda and summaries. To test the proposed methodology, GEARS also assisted with the development, implementation, and reporting of a focus group. This group was conducted with leaders from community based organizations located around the country, representing a diverse make up of cultural and health related experiences. GEARS assisted CDC to develop criteria and recruitment documents for focus group participants. Additionally, GEARS co-facilitated and reported findings from the focus group. The results of this rich experience provided further enhancements which GEARS helped to ensure were incorporated into the final methodology.