

Connie Atkins served as the Founding Executive Director of the Consortium of African American Organizations (CAAO) from April 2001 to December 2011 (currently, Executive Director Emeritus). In her role at CAAO, she was responsible for the implementation of the mission and principles of this collaborative organization for the black professional organizations of Northeast Ohio. CAAO (pronounced K-O) acts as a conduit and collaborative point of reference to assist with entrepreneurial development, professional development, and leadership development for those organizations and their members. CAAO has worked with over 50 organizations with an outreach of over 30,000.

Connie founded and led the Greater Cleveland Business Consortium of interrelated or complementary businesses from 1980 through 1998. Simultaneously, she built her business from three to 24 employees.

Connie helped to start, develop, and coach an average of 300 individuals and businesses/year, ranging from startups to over \$50 million in revenue and individuals from secretaries to Senators, managing a staff of 10 for CAAO and a staff of up to 24 for her own business, helping to put over \$80 million into the region in 15 years.

Connie is a seasoned entrepreneur, a published author, a motivational speaker, a life coach, an adjunct college professor, a philanthropist (founded the Minority Scholarship Endowment at John Carroll University), and an international business consultant, having served on many community boards, including the Business Advisory Council of John Carroll University, the U.S. – South Africa Business Development Council, the Cleveland World Trade Association, the Greater Cleveland Minority Technology Council, the Northern Ohio District Export Council, the Cleveland Job Corps, the SBA, Cleveland Skilled Industries, Cleveland Bridge Builders, NorTech Advisory Council, the Supplier Diversity Initiative Council of Case Western Reserve University, the vendor diversity steering committee for the Cleveland Clinic, and others.

As the owner of a consulting and training company, Connie wrote and facilitated training curriculum on 25 subjects, including an 11 chapter self-paced training manual for investment associates, meeting leadership training manual, and administrative training programs and documentation for government entities, as well as for the financial, industrial, and medical environments in the private sector.

As an international business consultant, Connie led two trade missions to South Africa and was selected to serve on a Bi-national Commission as an advisor to Secretary of Commerce Daley and Vice President Gore on \$2.6 billion economic development budget between the USA and South Africa and participated in developing the first Trade Initiative Framework Agreement between the U.S. and South Africa since the end of apartheid with Vice President Gore, Secretary Daley, and President Thabo Mbeki.

Currently, Connie is a principal of an IT company that does IT staffing and software development; and through her original company, Atkins' Professional Advantage, of over 35 years, Connie manages a variety of consulting projects for nonprofits and for profit companies on business development, fund development, social media development, and program development and coaches several individuals.

Connie is a Magna Cum Laude graduate of John Carroll University and a Summa Cum Laude graduate of Cuyahoga Community College and has received numerous honors and awards, including:

- Case Western Reserve University, Community Leadership Diversity Award (2017)
- Women's History Month Honoree, C-Suite Pics (2016)
- Honoree, Black History Month, Radio 107.3 The Wave (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017)
- Alpha Sigma Nu, Magis Medal, 1 of 100 honored globally, St. Ignatius Loyola, 2015
- Good Works Awardee, CAAO (2013)
- MLK Jr. Community Service Award from the City of Cleveland, the Cleveland Orchestra, and the GCP
- Athena Finalist, Inside Business Magazine
- Toast of Midtown Award for Community Service
- Community Impact Award, Black Pages Ohio
- BrownFlynn *Circle of 10* finalist out of 63 nonprofits in Northeast Ohio "for defying the traditional definitions of creativity and excellence – thinking outside the box to ensure the healthy future of their organizations"
- Community Impact Award, Cleveland Northeast Ohio Chapter of the National Black MBA Assn.
- Woman of Note, Crain's Cleveland Business
- Teacher of the Year, Cuyahoga Community College
- Northeast Ohio's Most Influential, Top 100, Call and Post
- Panelist, National Town Hall Panel, aired on C-Span and Word Network, PowerNetworking 2003
- Hall of Fame Inductee, Salem High School Alumni Association, Salem, Ohio (1999)
- International Business Development Award, Cleveland World Trade Association (1998)
- Outstanding Business Services and Community Leadership Award, Kaleidoscope Magazine (1996)
- Fifty of Our Finest Award, John Carroll University, School of Business (1995)
- Graduate, Leadership Cleveland (1995)
- Minority Service Firm of the Year, City of Cleveland (1992)
- Inducted into National Jesuit Honor Society, Alpha Sigma Nu (1992)
- Honoree, Black History Month, East Ohio Gas Company (1991)
- Business Woman of the Year, Iota Phi Lambda Sorority, Inc., Epsilon Chapter (1989)