# Avar
## Consulting, Inc.

# STATEMENT
# OF CAPABILITIES

1395 Piccard Drive, Suite 200 Rockville, MD 20850
Tel 301-977-6553 | Fax 301-977-0953
www.avarconsulting.com

**A Woman-Owned, SBA Certified 8(a) Firm**

# Table of Contents

# Avar Consulting, Inc.
## Statement of Capabilities

## COMPANY OVERVIEW

Avar Consulting, Inc. (Avar) is a woman-owned small disadvantaged business (SDB), a certified participant in the U.S. Small Business Administration's 8(a) Business Development Program, and a Certified Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) in the state of Maryland. A policy research firm headquartered in Rockville, Maryland, Avar specializes in attitude-behavior research, survey research, program evaluation, technical assistance and training, data analysis/management, and IT support. Since 2006, Avar has been providing a wide range of professional services in the areas of public health, education, social welfare, labor economics, refugee resettlement, veteran's affairs, and transportation. Our clients include federal, state, and local government agencies, non-profit organizations, and private corporations.

## CORE SERVICES

- **Program evaluation:** develop conceptual framework and evaluation measures, design data collection instruments and evaluation methodology, collect and analyze data, present findings, and write evaluation reports.

- **Survey design:** formulate research questions, develop data collection instruments, and determine appropriate survey mode(s).

- **Sampling design and execution:** identify and construct sampling frame(s), develop sampling strategies (e.g., SRS, stratified, cluster, PPS, multi-level, etc.), determine appropriate sample size(s), estimate sampling error and design effects, select samples in accordance with the sampling design, and manage samples throughout the course of a survey.

- **Statistical modeling, analysis, and reporting:** design statistical models/techniques based on research questions, analyze data using appropriate software (e.g., SPSS, SAS, etc.), present analysis results in graphics, and write study reports.

- **Economic analysis**: econometrics/econometric modeling, cost-benefit analysis, policy analysis, economic simulation and risk assessment/analysis, Monte Carlo methods, microsimulation, regulatory and policy impact studies.

- **Data processing and data mining:** data entry, data cleaning/editing, data weighting, and exploratory analyses.

October 2015

- **Database development and management:** design, develop, and manage various types of databases using Access 2003, Oracle PL/SQL, Developer 2000, DMBS 7.0, and DB4.

- **Website development and maintenance:** design, develop, host, and maintain websites for projects or clients.

- **Web survey and web-based data management:** design and program web-based survey questionnaires, establish security protocols for accessing online instruments, import and export survey data, enable online data processing, analysis, and reporting of survey data.

- **Focus group studies:** develop sampling strategies, recruit focus group subjects, provide logistic support, moderate group discussion, analyze data, and report findings.

- **Market research:** develop predictive models to determine market potentials, perform customer segmentation analysis, evaluate the effectiveness of marketing campaigns, perform web traffic/sales analysis, and conduct customer satisfaction/insight surveys.

- **Litigation support:** provide expert consultancy on research methodology including study design, sampling design, statistical models, and analytical techniques.

- **Psychometric testing:**  test instrument validity and reliability using a variety of statistical techniques.

- **Training and technical assistance (TTA):** conduct grantee training via conferences/workshops, webinars, and site visits; monitor program progress; design and develop web-based training and technical assistance services; provide on-site technical assistance; develop printed and electronic resources to support TTA activities; develop online and physical resource collections to support TTA.

- **Program support:** review program implementation plans, perform on-going data quality control, and provide feedback to both government agencies and program grantees.

- **Conference management:** develop content and support all logistical activities for events; conduct outreach and promotion for events; develop and manage web-based online registration, payment, and speaker paper/document submission; develop conference programs and materials.

# AVAR STAFF AND CONSULTANTS

Avar Consulting, Inc. has a team of highly qualified staff and consultants to deliver the core services described above. All of our key staff and consultants hold a graduate degree and have many years of experience in social science research and/or information technology.

## Z. Joan Wang, Ph.D., Founder and President



Dr. Wang has 25 years of experience in the areas of survey methodology, attitude-behavior research, and program evaluation in education, public health, and social services. She has special expertise in evaluation design and implementation, survey design and implementation, sampling design, statistical modeling, data analysis, psychometric testing, report writing, and management of large databases. She is currently serving as Project Director on the 2011–15 Annual Survey of Refugees for the U.S. Administration for Children and Families (ACF), three national surveys of youth soccer athletes and their coaches and

parents respectively for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and a methodological assessment project for CDC to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness of public health emergency preparedness and response systems. She has recently directed the National Survey of DWI Courts for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the National Children's Study Questionnaire Development Support project for the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), the Evaluation of Veterans Transition Assistance Program Training Workshops for the U.S. Department of Labor, the Survey of 2010 Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) program participants for the U.S. Bureau of Census, a technical assistance project for the evaluation of the U.S. Department of Labor's Young Parents Demonstration (YPD) Program, and a two-phase study to examine the U.S. Department of State's global exchange alumni coordination effort. Dr. Wang has served as Project Director and/or Senior Statistician on over 40 additional survey research and data analysis projects. These include, but are not limited to, the Consumer Expenditure Records Study; the 2009, 2011, 2013, and 2014 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS); two global online surveys of U.S. exchange alumni coordinators and alumni association leaders; the 2002, 2004, and 2006 Maryland Cancer Screening (MCS) surveys; the 2006–12 Annual Survey of Refugees; the National Follow-up Survey of Veterans' Health Care Services, the National Surveys of Veteran Entrepreneurs and Service-Disabled Veteran Entrepreneurs, the National Survey of Medicare Beneficiaries, the National Survey of Opioid Treatment Program Participants, the National Survey of National Science Foundation (NSF) Principal Investigators, the National Customer Satisfaction Survey for the National Endowment for Humanities, the Customer Satisfaction Survey of Maryland Mental Health Care Services Recipients, the Maryland Health Insurance Coverage Survey (MHICS), the National Survey of Women's Sexual Health, the Maryland Survey of Small Businesses, the Maryland Lottery Tracking Survey, the North Carolina Workforce Investment Act Customer Service Satisfaction Survey, the Housing Survey of Montgomery County Residents, the FEMA Customer Service Survey, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey of the Montgomery County Public Schools, the Survey of Maryland Public School Principals, the Survey of Parents of Students in Baltimore City Public Schools, and the National Survey of School Library Media Centers. She has also served as an expert survey methodologist/statistician on class lawsuits and other litigation cases.

Dr. Wang has served as Project Director and/or Senior Analyst on over a dozen other program evaluation projects including the Evaluation of the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, the Evaluation of Residential Resources in Maryland for Children with Special Needs, the Evaluation of the Maryland Substance Abuse Services Demonstration Project (Title IV Waiver), the Evaluation of the Maryland Child Support Enforcement Privatization and Demonstration Pilot Programs, the Evaluation of the Impact of Teachers' Professional Development, the Evaluation of the Maryland Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), the Evaluation of the "Communities Choosing" Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program in San Francisco, the Evaluation of the Effect of Increased State Aid to Maryland Local School Systems through the Bridge To Excellence Act, the 2001 Evaluation of the Baltimore City Public Schools, the Evaluation of the impact of Opioid Treatment Program Accreditation, and the Evaluation of the Education and Training for Employment in Morocco. She also served as Senior Analyst on a multi-year project to establish the National Evaluation Data and Technical Assistance Center (NEDTAC) for the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT). She developed the initial design of the CSAT Client-Level Minimum Evaluation Data Set (MEDS) to guide CSAT grantees in their program evaluation effort. She managed the Multi-Project Analysis (MPA) projects for several CSAT programs and participated in designing the Cross-Site Evaluation for CSAT programs. Dr. Wang was invited as an expert consultant by the Office of Inspector General in the U.S. Department of State to review the research methodology of a media impact project, assess the validity of the study results, and provide technical advice on the research design and analytical approach. Dr. Wang holds a Master's degree in journalism studies from the University of Wales at Cardiff, U.K., and a Ph.D. in social psychology from the University of Maryland at College Park.

**Rachel G. Hunt, M.A., Director of Client Relations**
A senior level federal contracting executive, Ms. Hunt has over 25 years of experience directing, managing, and working on communications and multi-service federal contracts as well as managing all aspects of the organization. As a seasoned project director, she understands the vital importance of careful planning, scheduling, and implementation of project activities, from start up or transition to close out activities to ensure smooth operation with minimal disruption to ongoing government services. Ms. Hunt has developed quality assurance-based systems and procedures for transitioning, starting up, and managing complex multi-task contracts such as clearinghouses and other communications programs that require the transfer or development of multiple management systems; recruitment, hiring, and training of staff and incumbent staff capture; transfer of electronic and hardcopy reference collections and warehouse inventories; and transfer of all in-process activities including inquires, publication order, and communication products and outreach activities, all with no disruption of service to the end users. Ms. Hunt's management expertise is supported by her technical skills in research, analysis, writing, outreach and marketing, and partnership development, particularly in the health arena. Ms. Hunt holds a Master's Degree in Anthropology from the State University of New York at Buffalo.

**James Lett, M.D., C.M.D., Medical Director**
Dr. Lett, Medical Director of the Beneficiary and Family Centered Care Oversight and Review Center, is board-certified in Family Practice and an expert in primary care and Geriatrics, Dr. Lett has a proven track record of clinical management and most recently served as the Medical Director/Vice President of Medical Affairs for the Charles E. Smith Life Communities, an extensive senior citizen complex that included an assisted living center and a long-term rehabilitation and nursing center. In this capacity he managed a large physician and healthcare staff that cared for hundreds of patients, most of whom were

Medicare beneficiaries. As a former Senior Medical Director for Quality at a California Quality Improvement Organization (QIO), Dr. Lett interfaced with multiple sectors of the healthcare community including local, state, and federal organizations. Additionally, he provided oversight that enabled the QIO to improve the quality of care for millions of Medicare beneficiaries. Dr. Lett is a long-standing member of the American Academy of Family Physicians and is a past president of the American Medical Directors Association. With this type of national presence, Dr. Lett has extensive experience regarding emerging healthcare trends and is familiar with the most current standards of quality medicine. Dr. Lett has managed and led several medical centers and is uniquely qualified to educate and improve care for the elderly and those patients in long-term care facilities. He has worked on numerous U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's Office of Inspector General projects to identify adverse events in skilled nursing facilities and in hospitals as well as efforts to improve patient safely in a variety of settings. He has published numerous articles on the appropriateness of medical care and interfacing with providers and has received several awards for his past distinguished service. An excellent communicator, Dr. Lett has spoken before many audiences including the U. S. Congress where he testified in regard to medical liability in long-term care.

**Roberto Cavazos, Ph.D., Project Director/Senior Analyst**
Dr. Cavazos has over 35 years of experience as an economist, policy analyst, public servant, and academic. He is currently serving as the statistical and analytics team lead on a contract with the Chief Evaluation Office of the Department of Labor. Dr. Cavazos has been involved in technical engagements in a range of contexts in the areas of economic development, labor, and housing. As a consultant and researcher he has worked with several U.S. Government agencies including Veterans Administration, Department of Housing and Urban Development and Economic Development Administration, Department of Homeland Security, Corporation for National Service, and Indian Health Service on a range of engagements directing interdisciplinary teams undertaking complex analysis and research. He is an experienced economist and econometrician and has worked on several large scale statistical and econometric projects for public and private sector organizations. Prior to joining Avar, Dr. Cavazos worked on training and labor initiatives for the Department of State and the Corporation for National Service. He has worked internationally and developed strategies, technical economic analyses, policies and plans for the Australian Department of Trade and Economic Development, the Australian Housing Trust, and the office of the Premier and Cabinet. He evaluated vocational training programs for non-college bound youth in Australia and employment programs for Aboriginal Australians. He has advised several housing authorities and worked on data intensive analysis of default and foreclosure for VA mortgages. He recently advised the Federal Housing Agency on optimal asset management strategies and also led an evaluation for the Indian Health Service. He is also Vice President of American Opportunity for Housing, a nonprofit housing organization providing 17,000 units of affordable housing in 7 states in the U.S. Dr. Cavazos held senior government posts in the State of Texas and as a senior manager in the City of New York Office of Comptroller, the Hon. Elizabeth Holtzman, where he was responsible for oversight of economic development, transportation, and public housing initiatives in the City of New York. As an academic, Dr. Cavazos served as an Associate Professor at Florida International University and at the Heinz School of Public Policy at Carnegie Mellon University. He taught graduate courses in Econometrics, Program Evaluation, Economics, Public Policy Analysis, and Housing Policy and led sponsored research projects around the world. He also served as senior advisor at the National Academy of Public Administration. His work has been published in the *Quarterly Review of Economics and Finance, Policy Review*, and others. He has published one book and has written chapters in edited works. Dr. Cavazos holds a B.A. in economics, an M.P.A. in public policy and management, and Ph.D. in

political economy with specialization in the fields of economics and statistics from the University of Texas.

**Anthony (AJ) Ernst, Ph.D., Project Director/Senior Analyst**

Dr. Ernst brings more than 25 years of experience in the field of substance abuse and mental health prevention and treatment as a clinician, academician, and project director. Throughout his career, he has led strategic planning, product development, policy development, training initiatives, and overall systems change strategies across mental health and substance abuse service delivery systems to promote collaboration and build service capacities in the delivery of services to diverse populations. Dr. Ernst most recently served as the Project Director for SAMHSA's Native American Center for Excellence, leading knowledge dissemination on community needs assessments, program evaluation and monitoring, practice- and evidence-based interventions, services integration, and revenue development to Native American programs throughout the U.S. As past Director of technology transfer at CDM Group for SAMHSA's Co-occurring Center for Excellence, Dr. Ernst led teams including state and community based organizations, national advisory council members, and diverse stakeholder groups to address issues related to co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders. While State Manager at state mental health and substance abuse agencies, Dr. Ernst served as the liaison for cross-sector collaboration between department stakeholders, local providers, advocacy groups, and local initiatives to standardize work force competencies and performance measures. Dr. Ernst is also the primary author of state administrative codes that ensure uniformity of clinical standards across state mental health and substance abuse service delivery systems. Dr. Ernst earned a Ph.D. in social work from the University of Texas.

**Wendy Gary, MHA, CSA, CMQ/OE, Project Director/Senior Analyst**

An experienced healthcare professional, Ms. Gary has worked at the state and national level in healthcare quality improvement and patient safety for over 27 years including serving for 10 years as Vice President of the Maryland and District of Columbia Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) under the CMS QIO program. Recognized as an expert in quality and performance improvement and an advocate for quality care, she possesses special subject matter expertise in care transitions, community care coordination, and patient safety with a passion for patient-centered care. Ms. Gary specializes in uncovering and developing organizational opportunities for improvement, improving outcomes, streamlining operations, reducing costs, building partnerships, and collaborating with diverse stakeholders. She is a highly skilled communicator and a proven mentor who teaches and leads teams that achieve continued success. Ms. Gary holds a Master of Health Services Administration (MHA) from Pfeiffer University in Charlotte, NC.

**Mark Low, Ph.D., Project Director/Senior Analyst**

Dr. Low has experience as a university researcher, as an evaluator of local and national policies and programs, and as Project Director managing two multi-year contracts with the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the U.S. Department of Labor's Chief Evaluation Office. As a doctoral student at Michigan State University, Dr. Low assisted on two research projects over five years in which he managed participant response databases, administered surveys, and interpreted findings. As a research associate with a small evaluation firm, he assisted on multiple local and national evaluation studies; as a part of this work, he designed the sampling strategy for a pair of nationally representative surveys of school districts, led the administration of those surveys, analyzed the information collected in those surveys using the complex samples module in SPSS, and he assisted the client in accurately communicating the findings to policy audiences. The NCES team consists of ten individuals; activities include conducting initial technical reviews of draft NCES publications for

accuracy and compliance with NCES standards and publications format; contributing new materials and updates to the NCES Handbook of Statistical Methods; monitoring the use of NCES data in education association websites; supporting IES data confidentiality and disclosure policies; developing the ED Data Inventory, which is a publicly searchable database of the data assets collected or created by the Department; and managing the updating of catatalog.data.gov for the Department per the government-wide Project Open Data initiative. The DOL team consists of eight individuals; activities include reviewing and editing evaluation deliverables such as draft Paperwork Reduction Act packages, design reports, work plans, final reports, white papers, and journal articles; developing evaluation tools to help Department of Labor agencies design, conduct, and analyze evaluation products and deliverables; establishing, maintaining, and analyzing various databases including but not limited to public use data files, agency administrative data, longitudinal survey files, and other micro data files that may be transferred from other DOL agencies or federal departments; managing and administering the DOL Scholars program; updating and maintaining the CEO website; and providing in-house support to the Office of Workers Compensation for statistical and modeling assignments. Dr. Low holds a Master's degree in Secondary Education from the University of Notre Dame and a Ph.D. in Curriculum, Teaching, and Education Policy from Michigan State University.

**Albert C. E. Parker, Ph.D., Senior Survey Methodologist/Senior Analyst**
Dr. Parker has over 25 years of experience as a survey research designer, manager, and analyst. He has directed sample survey data collection in all major modes, including personal interviews, mail, telephone, the Internet, and records abstraction. He recently served as a Senior Analyst on the National Children's Study (NCS) questionnaire development project and a project to support the National Center for Education Statistics' national longitudinal studies. He also served as a Senior Analyst on the Survey of Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) Program Participants for the U.S. Census Bureau, taking a lead in its questionnaire design, data analysis plan, and development of the final study report. He managed two iterations of a customer satisfaction survey for the National Center for Education Statistics that included drawing samples from multiple frames, telephone screening of sample segments to establish eligibility and identify respondents, multiple modes for recruitment (e-mail and postal mail) and data collection modes (paper with key entry, Web, and telephone follow-up), unduplication and weighting, and reports that included longitudinal comparison of key indicators and comparison of satisfaction ratings across subpopulations. He has conducted research on threats to individual confidentiality in individual data files and on preserving confidentiality while making data available to researchers. He analyzed the cost effects of alternative formats and follow-up methodologies for the 2000 Decennial Census household long and short forms and evaluated the early implications of emerging technologies for the 2010 Decennial Census. He provided technical direction for research on imputation of missing and erroneous data in a large institutional census (public schools and school districts). Dr. Parker received his M.A. and Ph.D. in History from Washington University at St. Louis.

**Steven J. Fink, M.A., Senior Survey Methodologist/Analyst**
Mr. Fink has over 20 years of experience directing small- and large-scale research projects, specializing in all phases of survey research and program evaluation for federal, state, and local government agencies, non-profit organizations, and private corporations. His expertise encompasses all phases of the survey research life cycle, including sample design, questionnaire development, data collection, data coding, statistical analysis, and report writing. He is currently Project Manager for the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) collecting detailed descriptive information about the DWI Courts and Hybrid DWI/Drug Courts in the United States. He recently served as Project Manager on the

National Children's Study (NCS) supporting the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development in developing questionnaires for the NCS main study. He currently serves as senior analyst/programmer for several projects, including the Chief Evaluation Office, U.S. Department of Labor and the Annual Survey of Refugees, Administration for Children and Families. His experience also includes conducting and summarizing telephone and in-person interviews and focus groups for the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Office of Career Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE). Prior to joining Avar, he managed more than 30 research projects for a large county school system, including the annual Staff, Student, and Parent Survey of School Environment and Non-School Based Survey of Work Environment examining issues such as job satisfaction, work environment, school culture, and needs assessment studies. Mr. Fink is an expert in SPSS and has provided classroom instruction to more than 3,000 analysts, including syntax programming, file management, statistical analyses, and presentation of tables/graphs. He has presented research results at several conferences, including the American Education Research Association, American Statistical Association, American Sociological Association, and Federal CASIC (Computer-Assisted Survey Information Collection). For the past 20 years, he has been an Adjunct Sociology professor at Montgomery College. Mr. Fink holds a B.A. in Psychology and Statistics from George Washington University and received his M.A. in Sociology and Survey Research from the University of Connecticut.

**Melissa Mowrey, M.Ed., Senior Analyst**
Mrs. Mowrey has over 40 years of experience as an educational practitioner including 34 years spent as a program director, administrator, program supervisor, and teacher (teacher specialist and classroom teacher). Mrs. Mowrey has ten years of program director experience involving program review, analysis, program reform, and school "turn-around." Most recently she has served as Project Director on a Department of Education project to evaluate the "Promoting Rigorous Career and Technical Education Programs of Study through Statewide and Multi-state Articulation Agreements" Grant Program. She has also worked as a senior project director and facilitator in assessment and education projects for the American Institutes for Research. Mrs. Mowrey has special expertise in Career and Technical Education, is a subject matter expert, and has created articulation agreements for ten Business and Cooperative Education Dual-Completer Program Clusters approved in the District of Columbia as well as with the Maryland State Department of Education. She is experienced in facilitating stakeholder groups and conducting focus groups and cognitive labs. Mrs. Mowrey holds a B.S. in Career and Technical Education/Secondary Education and a M.Ed. in Administration/Supervision, both from University of Maryland.

**Grace (Cheng-Shuang) Ji, Ph.D., Senior Research Associate**
Dr. Ji has over ten years of experience in the area of education, parenting practices, child development, mental health, family dynamics, cancer screening, health behaviors, and health disparity. Her expertise encompasses study design, development of research protocols, questionnaires, and evaluation instruments, as well as data collection, management, and analysis. She is currently serving as a Research Analyst on Avar's CDC Public Health Emergency Preparedness Project and Evaluation Support for the Department of Labor's Chief Evaluation Office. Most recently she worked on the National Children's Study (NCS) support questionnaire development contract with the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development as a Research Analyst and Content Expert. Prior to joining Avar, Dr. Ji worked as a research faculty and project manager at Georgetown University conducting behavioral research on cancer prevention and education. She managed two large clinical-based intervention studies to assess physician communication, cultural barriers, and patients' colon cancer and cervical screening behaviors. Dr. Ji was

also a key investigator and a research associate in many projects focusing on parental involvement, adolescent anxiety and depression, child/adolescent social-emotional development, parent-school communications, and cultural competence when she studied and worked at the University of Maryland. She conducted her dissertation research to examine the predicting effect of maternal mental health, education, acculturation, and social support in the Asian-American mother's cognitive stimulation and emotional warmth toward their children as well as their involvement in the school functions and settings, using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS-K). She is the lead author and co-author of four journal articles on clinical trials, cancer prevention, and parental involvement, and has presented research findings at prestigious national conferences. Dr. Ji also served as a Parent Specialist for the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and conducted training sessions and workshops for school registrars, teachers, counselors, and administrators for the DCPS from 2006 to 2010. Dr. Ji received her M.Ed. degree in Parenting Practices from the Beijing Normal University, China, and her Ph.D. in Family Science from the School of Public Health, University of Maryland, College Park.

**Bethanie X. Wang, Ph.D., Senior Research Associate**
Dr. Wang has 16 years of experience in the areas of education, parenting education, family science, mental health, child development, substance abuse prevention, workforce development, and distance education. She has worked on over a dozen federal, state, and county-level research projects since 2009 that encompass program design and evaluation, quantitative and data qualitative analyses, data collection and manipulation, technical assistance, questionnaire development, site visits, coding, and scientific writing. She is currently serving as the Deputy Project Director on the 2014 Annual Survey of Refugees, managing the project and conducting data cleaning, data analysis, and report writing, and serving as a Senior Analyst on the Evaluation Support for the Department of Labor's Chief Evaluation Office, reviewing and editing evaluation deliverables such as design reports, work plans, final reports, white papers, and journal articles. During her graduate studies, Dr. Wang conducted her dissertation research on the predictors of the academic achievement and socio-emotional development of Asian-American children using ECLS-K of 1998–99 data and participated in over a dozen research projects on adolescent mental health, early childhood education, child care policy, Head Start, and the effects of parental involvement on children's school education. Dr. Wang has presented seven papers at national conferences as the first author, completed a dozen reports/issue briefs, won the "Best Student Paper" award for designing a domestic violence intervention program, has over three years of university-level teaching experience, co-authored and translated book chapters, facilitated international collaborations, and has bilingual proficiency. Dr. Wang is highly proficient in SPSS, Microsoft Excel, and Microsoft PowerPoint, and has received training certificates on Data Confidentiality from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Data Stewardship Awareness from the Bureau of Census. She worked in an educational software company as a website content editor in Beijing for more than one year before starting her Ph.D. studies. She holds a Master's degree in Education from Beijing Normal University, and a Ph.D. in Family Science from the School of Public Health, University of Maryland, College Park.

**Pavan Dhanireddy, M.S., Ph.D., Research Analyst**
Dr. Dhanireddy has over nine years of experience in the areas of econometrics, statistics, international trade and development, agricultural economics, and banking services. He is proficient in multiple software, including SAS (Certified Base Programmer for SAS 9), STATA, SPSS, and GAUSS. He also has extensive experience in handling large data sets, model selection, estimation, and validation techniques. Dr. Dhanireddy is currently serving as a Research Analyst on a project with the Department of Labor; tasks include providing statistical and econometric support, data analysis and management, and

technical reviews of draft reports. He co-authored two publications, one on the free trade agreements and Washington state exporters, and the other on exchange rates. His dissertation work examines the impact of the South Asian free trade agreement on exports among seven member countries, factors influencing the settlement of illegal immigrants within the United States, and estimating the effect of microfinance on children's education in India. His research work in statistics includes predicting the apple bloom stages for Washington State using continuous and discrete models. He presented his research at various prestigious economic conferences such as American Agricultural Economic Association, Western Economic Association International, and Midwest Economics Association. Dr. Dhanireddy worked in a public sector bank in India for over three years as Assistant Manager looking after loans and advances to agricultural operations, retail trade, and handling personal and housing loans. He received his M.S. in Agricultural and Resource Economics from the University of Arizona, Tucson. Currently Dr. Dhanireddy is a doctoral candidate and received his Ph.D. in Economics from Washington State University, Pullman in May 2015. He also holds a Master's degree in Statistics from Washington State University, Pullman.

**Cynthia Holtan, RN, Clinical Research Analyst**
Ms. Holtan is an experienced health care professional with an extensive background in quality of care and utilization management. As a Clinical Advisor for Humana, a large managed care organization serving the Medicare Advantage population, Ms. Holtan worked with the Medicare population and reviewed potential quality of care concerns. In a previous position at Coventry Health Care, under a contract with CMS, Ms. Holtan served as a Case Manager working with Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries served under the special needs plan (SNP). In this role, Ms. Holtan developed the plan's SNP Model of Care and case managed beneficiaries enrolled as SNP members. As a Case Review manager at the Iowa Foundation for Medical Care, the CMS funded Quality Improvement Organization for Iowa, Nebraska and Illinois, Ms. Holtan managed, coordinated, and conducted case/DRG review; beneficiary complaints; and notice of non coverage/discharge appeals. In this role she reviewed coding, utilization, notices of non-coverage, and quality of care issues. Ms. Holtan's ability to conduct case review is grounded in her experience as a Registered Nurse. She served as a clinical manager of an urgent care clinic in Twin Falls, Idaho, where she was responsible for staffing and physician and community relations in addition to providing clinical care. While with the clinic, Ms. Holtan was largely responsible for making the clinic profitable. Through her efforts she helped increase the utilization of the clinic and improved community relations. Her work was recognized by the parent company of the clinic which formally recognized Ms. Holtan with an "Exceptional Leader" award. Ms. Holtan received an Associate's degree in Nursing from the University of Nebraska Medical Center and currently holds an active, unrestricted license as Registered Nurse in the state of Iowa. Ms. Holtan has previously held unrestricted Registered Nurse licenses in the states of Nebraska, Idaho and California.

**David Bercham, MSW, Research Analyst**
David Bercham has over 15 years of experience managing and conducting survey, program evaluation, and technical assistance projects on local, state, and national levels. Mr. Bercham has managed survey and program evaluation projects funded by government agencies including the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Justice, and the State of Michigan Department of Human Services. Mr. Bercham has provided technical assistance to local coalitions and grantee organizations on all phases of program evaluation including survey design and implementation, data management and analysis, and technical report writing. Additionally, he has experience in managing technical assistance projects on program evaluation, community risk factor assessment, evaluation of juvenile justice programs, and the

implementation of innovative approaches in family, youth, and adult mental health services; juvenile justice; and criminal justice. Mr. Bercham earned a Masters of Social Work from Michigan State University in East Lansing, MI.

**Robert C. Barrett IV, M.P.P., Research Associate**

Mr. Barrett brings experience in policy research, content analysis, data architecture, data business process analysis, and data coding and management. He currently serves as a Research Associate/Data Architect on a multi-year contract with the U.S. Department of Education (ED), National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), managing the database architecture and data coding process behind the ED Data Inventory (EDI), an online repository for metadata stemming from ED's various data collections ranging from national student evaluations to agency administrative data. His responsibilities included designing data structures and their associated schemas for storing final metadata; designing tools and methodologies for coding data into EDI from preexisting data sources, including both released data dictionaries and Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) clearance submissions; and engaging in process and data review of both data dictionary and PRA clearance submission-sourced metadata prior to final publication. Additionally, Mr. Barrett has provided services to both NCES and ED regarding methods by which existing ED business processes can be streamlined and automated using various information technologies, how the EDI data coding process could be merged into existing ED review processes, and how ED's existing and future public-use datasets could be transformed into publicly-accessible, secure, and online application programming interfaces (APIs). Mr. Barrett received his B.A. in politics from the University of Virginia, and his Master of Public Policy from George Mason University, with a focus in information policy.

**Gabriel E. Rodriguez, M.A., Research Associate**

An economist, Mr. Rodriguez offers experience in statistical analysis, programming evaluation, and data analytics. He has conducted cross-section, time series, and panel level econometric analysis on subjects ranging from the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), the United States' cigarette industry, and the overall construction employment market of the United States. He has experience conducting statistical analysis in his previous work in the healthcare sector, analyzing various hospital performance metrics in order to assist with future corporate planning. Mr. Rodriguez also was involved in conducting data analytics of various reimbursement programs during this time. His economic research has included the quantitative effects of subjects as far ranging as policy initiatives such as vice taxes to the overall statistical behavior over time of entire sectors of the economy within the United States. He also has journalistic experience communicating technical issues to a general audience. He has extensive experience doing statistical analysis in a variety of statistical programming languages such as SAS, STATA, and R. Mr. Rodriguez received his Bachelor's degree in Economics from New College of Florida and received his Master's degree in Applied Economics from Georgetown University.

**Kevin Ji, B.S., M.S., Senior IT Specialist**

Mr. Ji has over eight years of experience in computer sciences and IT technology. Mr. Ji has fulfilled various positions including mobile programmer for Department of Education, multimedia technician for LeBow Tech, and Performance analyst for Siemens Medical Solutions around the enterprise solution Soarian. From troubleshooting hardware to securing corporate networks, from programming web application to implementing enterprise solutions, Mr. Ji has a wide spectrum of experiences working with government agencies and business clients. Soon after joining the Avar team, Mr. Ji became involved with the development of a national online inventory of healthcare services datasets/databases for the Agency for Healthcare Research Quality (AHRQ), two web-based global surveys for the U.S. Department of State,

a web-based random assignment and monitoring system for the evaluation of the U.S. Department of Labor's Young Parents Demonstration Program, and programmed the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) annual survey. Mr. Ji also has experience in designing the logo and graphical materials for the Circle of Care grant program funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Agency (SAMHSA) and data release publication for TIMSS and PIRLS of 2012. Mr. Ji is currently involved with optimizing database, building front end interactive web portal, designing and developing web survey questionnaires, managing the day-to-day IT operations, and the processing of survey data. Mr. Ji holds a B.S. in Information Systems from Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA, and a Master of Cybersecurity degree from University of Maryland, University College.

**Steven Gou, M.S., IT Specialist**
As an IT professional Mr. Gou is experience in both web application development and native software application development across multiple operating systems such as Mac OS X, Windows, and Linux Ubuntu. He also has experience in database management and data lifecycle. He is currently involved in website development and database management for multiple projects such as the National Children's Study, the Annual Survey of Refugees (ASR), and a web-based assessment and training tool for substance abuse counselors. He has delivered multiple upgrades of the National Children's Study Survey Item Bank in terms of user experience with the web interface, database redesign, and complex search functions and performed regular data updates. For the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselor Knowledge Assessment (ADCKA) Tool, he has developed major survey functions, designed both back end data structure and interactive front end web interface. He also managed the ASR database and developed various new functions for its web application such as security enhancement, user experience enforcement, and website performance upgrade. Mr. Gou is highly proficient in programming languages such as C, Objective-C, HTML5, JAVA, JavaScript, ASP.NET, PHP, SQL, C++, and VB, and he is familiar with multiple IT development methodologies. Mr. Gou received his Master of Science in Electrical Engineering from George Washington University specializing in Communication and Networks.

**Brad Hannon, M.P.P., Research Associate**
As a research associate with Avar Consulting, Mr. Hannon brings experience in policy research, content analysis, data coding and management, and technical review of government contract deliverables. He currently serves as a Research Associate on a multi-year contract with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education (ED), for which he reviews ED's OMB clearance packages, extracts meta data, and codes the data for posting to ED's OMB data management system. He also conducts technical reviews of NCES publications and deliverables from research contracts in accordance with NCES statistical standards and technical guidelines. Mr. Hannon participated in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Training Workshops Evaluation for the Department of Labor, analyzing open-ended survey responses and coding them into analytic categories. As a Research Analyst, he was heavily involved in questionnaire development support for the National Children's Study (NCS) funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). His responsibilities included reviewing, coding, and summarizing open-ended responses to NCS pilot surveys. He conducted literature reviews; performed cross-study comparisons; reviewed questionnaire content and coded questions/question modules for entry into the Survey Item Bank, a database of survey items. He also prepared new questionnaires and associated meta data using the Survey Item Bank for OMB clearance. He reviewed and coded documentation from ED's grant program "Promoting Rigorous Career and Technical Education Programs of Study Through Statewide or Multi-state Articulation Agreements" to be used in an evaluation of the program and contributed to the final draft report by reviewing various

materials on states' participation. He has also organized focus group discussions and contributed to reports for NCES publications. Mr. Hannon has excellent communication skills and has had articles published both electronically and in print. Mr. Hannon received his B.S. in economics and his Master of Public Policy degree from George Mason University, with a focus in regional economic development.

**Chayun Yi, M.P.P., Research Associate**
Ms. Yi has research and analysis experience in various public policy areas including education, health, housing, immigration, and national security. She served as a Research Associate on a large multi-task analytical support contract with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and provided on-site support to the agency in statistical analysis, technical review of NCES publications, data disclosure, internship program recruitment and management, and special studies. She also supported the Project Director in screening client requests, coordinating task assignments, monitoring task completion status, conducting quality control, and managing the Data Quality Monitoring project. Ms. Yi has worked with university researchers and senior fellows at the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago conducting research and evaluation. She also has experience coordinating with writers and tracking progress for a newsmagazine publisher. Ms. Yi holds a Bachelor's degree in Government and International Studies from University of Virginia at Charlottesville and a Master's degree in Public Policy Analysis from George Mason University.

**Josephine Xu, M.S., Research Associate/Communications Specialist**
Ms. Xu has 5 years of experience in communication and broadcasting. She served as a radio and television producer at Voice of America (VOA), an institution under the umbrella of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, which disseminates news and cultural programs in over 40 languages. At VOA, she was actively involved in live interviews; news reporting; writing and editing; video production; and studio operations. Throughout her undergraduate and graduate studies, Ms. Xu has worked extensively with data and SPSS – employing various methods of data collection and performing both qualitative and quantitative analyses. Her graduate research analyzed the cross-cultural content of Chinese and English homepages of Fortune Global 500 companies. At Avar Consulting, Inc., Josephine Xu assists in multiple aspects of corporate operations and participates in various research projects such as the OMB database development of the National Center for Education Statistics and the National Children's Study (NCS) questionnaire development support. Ms. Xu received her Bachelor's degree in International Journalism and Broadcasting from Beijing Foreign Studies University and holds an M.S. degree in Journalism from Ohio University.

**Fifi Wang, Research Associate/Communications Specialist**
As a communications specialist, Ms. Wang has experience using Adobe Creative Suite, Final Cut Pro, and various social media outlets, including Wordpress, Twitter, and Facebook. Ms. Wang updates the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Handbook of Survey Methods, including producing new tables or graphs, modifying the website introduction, and verifying 508-compliance. As part of the Data Inventory Group (DIG) project for the Department of Education, Ms. Wang wrote original study descriptions to be featured on the DIG website. She has extensive experience in producing and copy-editing technical reports through her work with the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, and at Avar. While in school, Ms. Wang worked for the student newspaper at the University of Alabama as both a photojournalist and a writer for the magazine insert, Changing Tides. She directed a short documentary film about segregated schools in Alabama, which premiered before over a thousand people in Tuscaloosa and later screened at the Sidewalk Film Festival

in Birmingham. Ms. Wang also helped run the Twitter account for the University of Alabama's student senate, reaching over 800 followers. Ms. Wang holds a B.A. degree from University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, AL.

**Joseph Zhang, M.S., IT Specialist**
Mr. Zhang has two years of experience in web application development and database management. As an IT specialist, he is involved in multiple projects including the National Children's Study (NCS), Survey of DWI Courts, and a web-based assessment and training tool for substance abuse counselors. He implemented edits and improved the back-end database of the NCS Survey Item Bank (SIB). He also enhanced and maintained the front-end interface of the NCS SIB website. For the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselor Knowledge Assessment (ADCKA) Tool, he designed a front-end website and participated in designing web survey functions and an interactive front end web interface. He also managed the Project Management System database and developed new functions and a new user interface for its web application, improving user experience and website performance. Mr. Zhang is proficient in several programming languages such as HTML, CSS, JavaScript, ASP.NET, PHP, and SQL. He received his Master of Science in Electrical Engineering from George Washington University specializing in Communication and Networks.

**James Dotson, Ph.D., Senior Public Health Analyst (Consultant)**
Dr. Dotson has over 25 years of experience in health promotion and disease/injury prevention. As a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES), he has extensive experience working with organizations to plan, implement, and evaluate public health activities. He has been involved with a diverse range of health topics, among them substance use and abuse, obesity, physical activity and nutrition, HIV/AIDS, and other health areas. He has collaborated with clients to assess health issues and problems, and identify or develop effective strategies (programs, policies, and/or practices) to address those health concerns. He has supported initiatives and activities for a wide range of federal government agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and has presented on behalf of these agencies at professional meetings. Dr. Dotson has more than 20 years of experience in federal government contracting, serving as a Corporate Monitor, Project Direction/Principal Investigator, and/or Team/Task Leader on numerous projects, including multiyear/multimillion dollar contracts and task orders. He holds a B.A. degree in Biology from Washington Adventist University, and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Health Education from the University of Maryland at College Park. His doctoral dissertation was titled: "Physician-Delivered Smoking Cessation Interventions: An Information Synthesis of the Literature."

**James A. Swartz, Ph.D., Public Health Specialist (Consultant, Substance Abuse Treatment & Prevention)**
Dr. Swartz has 20 years of experience in mental health and substance abuse treatment and prevention research, which has resulted in over 30 peer reviewed publications, eight books and book chapters, over 20 study reports, and numerous presentations. His research topics include screening for serious mental illness in populations with co-occurring substance use disorders; the mediating effects of substance use between serious mental illness and arrest; substance abuse treatment and prevention for women; substance abuse treatment in the criminal justice system; and the impact of welfare policy on substance abuse. Dr. Swartz has served as a reviewer for a number of professional journals such as *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction, Contemporary Drug Problems, Substance Use and Misuse, American Journal of Public Health, Women & Criminal Justice, Crime and Delinquency, Criminal Justice and Behavior,* and *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*. He also served as a grant reviewer for the

National Institute on Drug Abuse and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Substance Abuse Policy Research Program. Dr. Swartz holds a Master's degree in behavioral research from Loyola University at Chicago, Illinois, and a Ph.D. degree in clinical psychology from Northwestern University Medical School. He is currently an Associate Professor at Jane Addams College of Social Work, University of Illinois at Chicago.

**Suzanne Bowler, Ph.D., Health Policy Analyst (Consultant)**
Dr. Bowler has 20 years of experience in designing, conducting, and managing single- and multi-site public health research and evaluation projects for Federal and State Government clients including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Centers for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) and Treatment (CSAT), SAMHSA, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), and the National Cancer Institute (NCI). Specific skills include process and outcome evaluation design, evaluation training, survey research, qualitative and quantitative data collection including site visits and in-person interviewing, focus group facilitation, case study research and analysis, content analysis of primary and secondary data, cross-site data analysis, and data management. She has also written technical reports and publications including Federal monographs and peer-reviewed journal articles and technical and grant proposals for a variety of Federal initiatives. Dr. Bowler holds an M.A. and Ph.D. both in Anthropology from the University of California at Berkeley.

**Sukari Ivester, Ph.D., Social Epidemiologist (Consultant)**
Trained as a social epidemiologist, Dr. Ivester's general research interests are in the social and structural determinants of health outcomes, particularly among vulnerable populations. Her research experience includes several evaluations in the areas of Maternal/Child Health and Substance Abuse Prevention funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services since 1997. Dr. Ivester is a Research Fellow at the School of Public Health at the University of California, Berkeley as well as an Adjunct Professor of Medical Sociology at the California State University, East Bay. She is currently leading an evaluation for the State of California of the Mental Health Service Act (MHSA), a $350 million effort to transform Mental Health Services in the state. In addition to a qualitative analysis of the Proposition 63/MHSA Evaluation, she is investigating urban health vulnerabilities from a spatial perspective as related to food access and the built environment. She has also been funded by the National Institutes of Health for both pre-doctoral and post-doctoral research. Dr. Sukari Ivester received her B.A. in Sociology from the University of California, Berkeley, and earned her Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Chicago.

**L. Dee Torre, Ph.D., Early Childhood & Special Education Specialist (Consultant)**
Dr. L. Dee Torre has more than 30 years of experience in education evaluation and policy analysis, especially in early childhood mental health and behavioral issues, special education, parental involvement and education administration. For eight years, she was a master teacher and administrator for students with disabilities aged 1–7 years old. She has also worked extensively as an advocate for interagency collaboration regarding students with intense individual needs. Dr. Torre has served as Project Director and/or Principal Investigator on numerous evaluation or research studies including: a three-year project to evaluate the Judith P. Hoyer Early Care and Education Enhancement program for the Maryland Department of Education; a seven-year longitudinal study that assisted the New York State Education Department in determining the long-term effect of preschool special education programs and services; the evaluation of California's Child Care Development Block Grants; a comprehensive study for the Florida Commission on Children with Developmental Delays; the Maryland, Arkansas, Georgia, Nevada,

and South Carolina Reading Excellence Act Program Evaluations; the evaluations of Reading First funding outcomes for K–3 students in New Jersey, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Kentucky. Dr. Torre holds a doctoral degree in Educational Administration and Policy Studies (with a minor in Educational Psychology, Testing, and Measurement) from the State University of New York at Albany. Additionally, she has an M.S. degree in Special Education, with a minor in reading, and is a certified teacher and superintendent. She has recently retired as a senior evaluator and partner in a national firm where she conducted statewide and local agency evaluation and planning projects in 12 states and is now pursuing projects of high interest as an independent consultant.

**Nancy S. Fontaine, Ph.D., Education Specialist (Consultant, Early Learning)**
Dr. Fontaine has over 30 years of experience in the field of education. Dr. Fontaine's background encompasses the full landscape of educational experience, from direct delivery of research-based best practices in early learning environments to guiding pre-service teaching candidates at the university level. She has extensive experience in designing, implementing, and evaluating professional development training, covering topics such as: early learning best practices; after school programs; school readiness; child development and developmental assessments; safe learning; family involvement; and diversity. Through her involvement with numerous federally and state funded grants and contracts, Dr. Fontaine has also provided technical assistance to school and program sites, school districts, agencies, and organizations in the areas of: high quality educational programming; teaching through authentic and appropriate assessment; differentiated instruction; wrap around early intervention services; emergent literacy; extended day programs for children ages four through grade 8; and programs such as Reading First. Recently, she designed a comprehensive training program that is utilized with 21st Century program providers throughout Florida. As a senior level professional, Dr. Fontaine has not only provided direct service, she has worked with public and private entities in conducting field research to further the development of appropriate and effective practices in early childhood education and has managed and directed numerous early childhood learning-related programs. In these leadership roles, Dr. Fontaine was responsible for all aspects of program management from planning, implementation, quality assurance and monitoring, reporting on project activities, and financial management. Dr. Fontaine received her Master's degree in Human/Child Development from the University of Maryland at College Park and her Ph.D. in Early Childhood Education from Florida State University.

**Alberto F. Cabrera, Ph.D., Education Specialist (Consultant, Higher Education)**
Dr. Alberto F. Cabrera is a full professor at the College of Education, the University of Maryland. He has conducted over 20 years of research in college choice, college students, classroom experiences, minorities in Higher Education, and economics of education. He was also a faculty member at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Penn State University, SUNY-Albany, and Arizona State University-West campus. Dr. Cabrera has served on the National College Access Network's board of directors as well as in the editorial boards of the top journals in higher education in the USA and Spain (e.g., *Journal of Higher Education*, *Review of Higher Education*, *Research in Higher Education and Revista Complutense de Educación*). He was a member of the advisory board for Pathways to College Network and currently serves on the GEAR UP Evaluation Council of the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP), a 14-member group charged with a mandate to develop a conceptual research framework and data collection design that will be implemented in GEAR UP programs nationally. His work on classroom practices, the role of finances on college persistence and on determinants of default behavior has received several awards. He was the co-leader of the Diversity Institute, a project funded by NSF seeking to create inclusive teaching practices in STEM fields. He was co-principal investigator for

the IES grant titled Dream Deferred which provided a most comprehensive review of the impact of GEAR UP on awareness and readiness for college among low-income middle school students. Dr. Cabrera holds a Ph.D. in Educational Administration from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison.

**George Ji, M.B.A., Senior Internet Service Specialist (Consultant)**
Mr. Ji has over ten years of experience in program management and Internet-based development and services, including web-based survey design, programming and hosting, website planning, design, development, hosting and maintenance, web-based database development and data management, as well as online business transactions. He has led/worked on more than 20 internet service projects. Leading a team of IT specialists, Mr. Ji has successfully transferred a large, on-going web survey, including its software applications, survey databases, records, and other associated materials from a Citrix server to Avar's multi-platform server without interrupting the survey operation. He is currently leading a number of Avar's web-based projects as follows: (1) hosting and management of the Transforming Church Index survey and producing customized on-line reports; (2) hosting and management of the Performula Assessment, a 360 degree performance review tool for corporate clients; (3) hosting and management of the Healthy Business Index, an on-line organizational assessment tool; (4) design and development of an on-line inventory of healthcare services databases for AHRQ; and (5) providing website, e-mail, and intranet hosting and data archiving services for a number of companies and organizations. Mr. Ji holds a Master's degree in American Studies from Shanghai International Studies University and an M.B.A. from Webster University at St. Louis with an emphasis on technology management.


# CORPORATE EXPERIENCE

## *U.S. Department of Agriculture*

**Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Evaluation — Office of Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture**
The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) was interested in evaluating the effectiveness of nutrition incentives for fruit and vegetable purchases among low-income consumers enrolled in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The primary goal of the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Grant Program is to determine whether nutrition incentives at the point of purchase contribute to increased fruit and vegetable purchases and consumption among SNAP participants and whether different approaches are more or less effective than others. Results will provide policymakers in USDA and Congress with credible information on which interventions work best. The evaluation has four components: process evaluation, outcome evaluation, comparative analysis, and technical assistance. As a subcontractor to Westat, Avar will be responsible for abstracting data from FINI grantee proposals to inform the discussions and interactions with the grantees and answer the process evaluation research questions. Avar will also conduct environmental scans and geocode the grantee community, such as the geographic, demographic, socioeconomic, and nutrition information in which each program operates. In addition, Avar will conduct key informant interviews among grantees and use qualitative software to code and summarize responses. Contact Person: Tracy C. Vericker, (301) 251-4242

## *U.S. Department of Commerce*

**Survey of 2010 Census Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) Program Participants — U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce**

To prepare for each decennial census, the Geography Division of the U.S. Bureau of the Census sends its records of housing unit addresses to local governments (cities, counties, minor civil divisions) for review, correction, and updating. The Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) Program is a partnership the Census Bureau established under the Census Address List Improvement Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-430). It utilizes the local knowledge of the tribal, state, and local governments to improve the accuracy and completeness of the address list by having the relevant government agencies review and update their portion of the Census Address List prior to each census. Census 2000 was the first one that benefited from this effort and a survey was conducted of the LUCA participants thereafter to collect their feedback. Under a 15-month contract with the Census Bureau, Avar supported the agency in conducting the Survey of the 2010 LUCA Program Participants, a mixed mode survey of approximately 11,500 local governments that participated in updating addresses for the 2010 Census. Data were collected via both USPS mail and the internet. Avar's responsibilities included: (1) reviewing a draft questionnaire prepared by the division and suggesting revisions in wording, format, and content to improve the validity and reliability of the questionnaire; (2) creating a database to manage and record responses to five different versions of the questionnaire; (3) receiving and processing paper and electronic responses from the local governments; (4) editing the survey data; (5) creating survey data files; (6) analyzing the data; (7) presenting a draft report to the division; and (8) developing a final report in accordance with client comments. Contact Person: Ethel Taylor, 301-763-8439.

**U.S. Consumer Expenditure Records Study — U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce**

The U.S. Consumer Expenditure Quarterly Interview Survey (CEQ) is a monthly survey developed and conducted by the Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) to capture continuous information about the current buying habits of American consumers. Since the CEQ is a long, complex survey requiring a high level of burden for the respondent, the Census Bureau and the BLS are concerned that the CEQ might be subject to various forms of measurement errors because of underreporting. To investigate and reduce underreporting of household expenditures in the CEQ, the Census Bureau conducted a study, the U.S. Consumer Expenditure Records Study, to explore the extent to which measurement error was a problem as well as to investigate the use of respondent records to reduce error. As a subcontractor with RTI International on this project, Avar assisted in developing the survey methodology, interview protocols, and data analysis plan; conducted quantitative and qualitative analyses of several subsets of the survey data; and prepared relevant sections of the final study report. Contact Person: Emily (McFarlane) Geisen, 919-541-6566.

**Research and Development 2014: Assessment, Planning, and Analysis — U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce**

As the leading source of quality data about the nation's people and economy, the Census Bureau needs to stay abreast of the latest statistical, methodological, and technological advances. Under this five-year multiple-award IDIQ contract, Avar will provide the Census Bureau with research and development support and services in six (6) sub-areas: survey planning; cost and workload modeling; survey assessment; survey management assistance; technical analyses; and technology assessment. Contact Person: Kristee Camilletti, 301-763-2870

## *U.S. Department of Defense*

**U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) Survey Operation Support Services**

Managing the Army's manpower requirements during an evolving global strategic environment requires that the Army's senior leaders have accurate and up-to-date information on Soldiers' attitudes and opinions on an array of personnel issues. The accuracy and timeliness of the attitude and opinion information provided to decision makers are of paramount importance in affecting the quality of decisions and personnel policies. As new policies are developed to enhance the Army's ability to staff the force, the Army needs survey research and analysis to gather and analyze data on the implementation and expected or actual effectiveness of those policies. The objective of this IDIQ contract is to provide comprehensive support to conduct attitude and opinion surveys in support of ARI's scientific and technology program. As a subcontractor to Data Recognition Corporation, Avar supports a broad range of survey-related services including database development and maintenance; postal address confirmation; paper, online, and telephone-based survey development, implementation, and support; and data collection monitoring and management. Contact Person: Valerie Waller, 763-0268-2166

## *U.S. Department of Education*

**Evaluation of *Promoting Rigorous Career and Technical Education Programs of Study through Statewide and Multi-state Articulation Agreements* Grant Project — Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education**

Under a contract with the Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE), Avar recently conducted an evaluation of the *Promoting Rigorous Career and Technical Education Programs of Study through Statewide and Multi-state Articulation Agreements* (RPOS1) grant program. The 2-year discretionary grant program was designed to promote the development of rigorous programs of study supported by state-wide or multistate articulation agreements as part of OCTAE's efforts to address the requirements of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006. In order to determine the effectiveness of the grants in stimulating the development of sustainable programs of study, Avar conducted a multistep program evaluation of the grantees. Avar staff developed a self-assessment tool that states used to capture their experience in developing and implementing the grants prior to the site visits and finalized the instrument as a web-based tool accessible to all states and localities wishing to assess their readiness for implementing rigorous programs of study. Avar conducted a review of all available program-related documentation held by the Department of Education and a series of interviews with all RPOS1 program grantees. Using these data, Avar developed a sample of states for site visits. Three states were chosen for multi-day site visits that involved a review of all available qualitative and quantitative program information; individual interviews with program personnel; visits to schools implementing the programs; and focus groups with the teachers, students, and representatives of businesses and industries involved with the program of study. Avar produced reports at the completion of each phase of the evaluation and prepared a final report that includes: a description of the purpose and design of the RPOS1 project, an overview of statewide articulation agreements and why they are important, case studies of select states that have successfully implemented articulation agreements, an analysis of lessons learned, challenges encountered, and recommendations for the development and implementation of programs of study and articulation agreements. The final report concludes with recommendations for how OCTAE could effectively use future federal investments to support the

development of articulation agreements as part of rigorous programs of study. Contact Person: Gregory Henschel, 202-245-7661

**Education Statistics Support Institute Network (ESSIN) 2012–16 — National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), U.S. Department of Education**

The Education Statistics Support Institute Network (ESSIN) is an IDIQ contract that provides statistical support to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), U.S. Department of Education. Avar was awarded a prime contract in 2011 as well as three multi-year task orders and subcontracts for two task orders.

*Tasks 1 & 2: Statistical Standards Program Support*

These tasks provide various statistical support services to NCES in the areas of publication review, data disclosure, and special studies. Review of NCES publications covers reports written by NCES staff or contractors based on data collections sponsored by NCES, including national universe surveys of elementary and secondary education (the Common Core of Data) and of higher education (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System [IPEDS]), the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), periodic surveys, and longitudinal studies. Review also includes compendium publications such as Condition of Education. Review activities include initial technical reviews for accuracy and compliance with NCES standards and publications format and compliance reviews after revision by authors. Avar and its subcontractors also contribute new materials and updates to the NCES Handbook of Statistical Methods and monitor the use of NCES data in professional journals, education association websites, Congressional testimony, and proposed or enacted legislation. In support of NCES confidentiality and disclosure policies, we review disclosure risk avoidance plans, apply statistical methods such as perturbation to NCES data sets prior to public use, and monitor contractor security clearance documentation. The National Institute of Statistical Sciences (NISS) is also a subcontractor for these tasks. Contact Person: Marilyn M. Seastrom, 202-502-7303.

*Task 4: Elementary and Secondary Longitudinal Support*

In this task, the Avar team supports three large-scale longitudinal studies of elementary and secondary education: the National Education Longitudinal Study of 8th graders (NELS:88), the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002), and the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09). All three studies are currently in various follow-up stages. Support activities include conducting special studies/analyses using data collected from these surveys; developing research syntheses, *Stats in Brief* publications, web tables, issue briefs, research papers, and compendia; reviewing questionnaires/assessment instruments; producing and checking sampling plans and data collection strategies; evaluating field test procedures and surveys; reviewing Office of Management and Budget (OMB) clearance packages and data collection activities; conducting non-response bias analysis and quality control checks; developing composite statistics and weights; producing data files and documentation; training users in the use of longitudinal data bases; and compiling annotated bibliographies of publications using data from the three surveys. Contact Person: Isaiah L. O'Rear, 202-502-7378.

*Task 14: NAEP Statistical and Psychometric Methodology Support*

As a subcontractor to American Institutes for Research (AIR), Avar staff work closely with AIR to conduct research studies, disseminate the results of such studies, attend research meetings, support NCES in checking the quality of research conducted by several contractors, and support NCES with analyzing existing NAEP data. The project team conducts up to eight studies (four per year) on emerging NAEP

issues to assess the value of potential changes in the technical design of NAEP and the analysis of NAEP data. The project also supports technical reviews of NAEP products. Each NAEP report, along with associated electronic products and technical documentation, requires a thorough review to assure they meet NCES standards for quality and accuracy. The goal of this review is to maintain and improve the technical quality of NAEP products by supporting technical reviews at the Assessment Division level. Additionally, this task supports developing, maintaining, and reviewing statistical, methodological, and quality standards and provides NAEP staff with statistical support related to reporting. Contact Person: Mary Ann Fox, 202-403-6103.

### *Task 20: Common Core of Data (CCD) Support*

This task provides support to the NCES Common Core of Data (CCD) staff to ensure data quality, improve statistical methodology, and increase production efficiency of data files and reports, including data reviews, correction of prior years' files and reports, web reviews, response to quick turnaround data requests, workshop/conference support, and research projects. As a subcontractor to American Institutes for Research (AIR), Avar was responsible for providing analytical and technical support to this task. Data reviews, web reviews, and correction of prior years' files and reports cover three CCD non-fiscal surveys (state level, school district level, and school level), two CCD fiscal surveys (state level and school district level), and the Teacher Compensation Survey. Avar staff also support NCES in response to quick turnaround data requests from Congress, other Department of Education programs and offices, NCES Commissioner's office, media reporters, and researchers; provide technical and analytical support to workshops and conferences where CCD data files are used such as CCD New Coordinator Workshops, Management Information Systems (MIS) Conference, and NCES Summer Data Conference; and carry out specific assignments given by NCES as needed. Contact Person: Mary Ann Fox, 202-403-6103.

### *Task 25: PACE Support Task*

The Department of Education's Postsecondary, Adult, and Career Education (PACE) division focuses on formal and informal education beyond high school, and through a series of research programs, collects data from institutions, students, and administrative data systems. NCES piloted the Adult Training and Education Study (ATES), which focused on measuring the prevalence of educational certificates and industry-recognized certifications in the adult population. Given the uncertainty in the results of the enumeration of certificate holders from ATES, NCES sought to undertake additional item development activities to improve the measurement of adults holding certificates. American Institutes for Research (AIR) was contracted to improve the measurement of these types of credentials. As a subcontractor to AIR, Avar was responsible for recruiting participants for three focus groups, coordinating all logistics, moderating the three focus groups, and writing the summary reports. Contact Person: Stephanie Cronen, 202-403-5000.

### U.S. Participation in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2011 and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2011 – U.S. Department of Education

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education supports a variety of international activities to collect and report data on education in the United States and other countries. These include TIMSS, PIRLS, and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). TIMSS is an international assessment that focuses on the mathematics and science knowledge and skill of fourth-and eighth-graders, while PIRLS is an international assessment that focuses on the reading knowledge and skills of fourth-grade students. NAEP is a U.S. national assessment that measures fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-grade students' performance in reading, mathematics, and science. All three

assessments are conducted regularly to allow the monitoring of student outcomes over time. Westat, Inc. is contracted with NCES to implement the U.S. participation in TIMSS and PIRLS. As a subcontractor to Westat, Avar recently completed a comparison study of these international assessments with their U.S. counterpart focusing on assessment goals, frameworks, and cognitive items. This study consisted of activities such as: (1) reviewing the NAEP, TIMSS, and PIRLS frameworks; (2) convening a meeting of external experts to cross compare the items in the three tests; (3) performing analyses of the reading passages in PIRLS and NAEP; and (4) providing summary statistics and analysis of the outcomes of these reviews and comparison. Based on the study results, Avar has produced two research papers: one comparing TIMSS with NAEP on mathematics and science at the 4th and 8th grade levels and the other comparing PIRLS with NAEP on reading at the 4th grade level. Avar is also responsible for producing the released item sets of TIMSS and PIRLS and disseminating them to the U.S. public via a web portal, CDs/DVDs, and print media. The items sets will be in two formats: one with each release item accompanied by its associated scoring guide and statistics on the percentage of students in the participating countries that correctly answered the item; and the other with items alone without the scoring guide and statistics. Contact Person: David Kastberg, 301-294-3811.

**U.S. Participation in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2015 – U.S. Department of Education**
The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education supports a variety of international activities to collect and report data on education in the United States and other countries. These include TIMSS, PIRLS, and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). TIMSS is an international assessment that focuses on the mathematics and science knowledge and skill of fourth-and eighth-graders. Westat, Inc. is contracted with NCES to implement the U.S. participation in 2015 TIMSS. As a subcontractor to Westat, Avar will complete a comparison study of TIMMS with their U.S. counterpart focusing on assessment goals, frameworks, and cognitive items. This study consisted of activities such as: (1) reviewing TIMSS frameworks; (2) convening a meeting of external experts to cross compare the items in the TIMSS test; and (3) performing analysis. Based on the study results, Avar produced one research paper comparing TIMSS with NAEP on mathematics and science at the 4th and 8th grade levels. Avar is also responsible for producing the released item sets of TIMSS and disseminating them to the U.S. public via a web portal, CDs/DVDs, and print media. Contact Person: David Kastberg, 301-294-3811.

**Professional Development Impact Study (Reading) — U.S. Department of Education**
Under the No Child Left Behind legislation, the U.S. Department of Education contracted with the American Institutes for Research (AIR), along with MDRC, Sopris West, and REDA International, to conduct a five-year quasi-experimental study to assess the impact of professional development on reading instruction and student achievement. The study was focused on second grade teachers who were already using popular scientifically based reading programs: *Open Court Reading* or Houghton-Mifflin's *Nation's Choice* or *Legacy of Literacy*. Under a consulting agreement with the AIR/REDA team, Avar participated in classroom observations to identify the difference in teaching instructions between teachers in the experimental and control groups as well their behavioral change over time. Contact Person: Dr. Stephanie Cronen, 202-403-5368.

## *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*

## *Administration for Children and Families*

**2011–14 Annual Survey of Refugees — Office of Refugee Resettlement, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

Avar has recently completed a four-year contract with the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) to conduct the 2011–14 Annual Survey of Refugees. To follow up and assess the refugees' adjustment to the United States, a telephone survey of approximately 2,500 refugee households and 7,000–10,000 individuals has been conducted every year since the 1970s to collect data on the status of their English proficiency, education, employment, income, self-sufficiency, and use of available government programs. Some of the issues are addressed at the individual level while others at the household level. Each cohort of the sampled refugees is followed for 5 years, and each year a new cohort is added to the sample while an old cohort retires. Specific tasks include: (1) assisting ORR in questionnaire revision and sampling design; (2) tracing the sampled refugees on an ongoing basis; (3) collecting survey data via the internet and computer assisted telephone interviews in over a dozen languages; (4) processing survey data; (5) creating cross-sectional and longitudinal data files at both individual level and household level; (6) performing basic and post-stratification weighting; (7) conducting cross-sectional and longitudinal data analyses; (8) presenting analysis results in appropriate graphics; and (9) preparing the "Economic Adjustment" section of ORR's Annual Report to Congress, which can be accessed on the ORR website via http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/data/arc.htm. Contact Person: Wanda Hall, 202-401-4646.

**2006–10 Annual Surveys of Refugees — Office of Refugee Resettlement, Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services**

Under a subcontract with DB Consulting Group, Inc., Avar was responsible for constructing the sampling frame; editing, cleaning, validating, and weighting the survey data; performing data imputation where necessary; creating cross-sectional and longitudinal datasets; furnishing documentation for the data files; conducting both cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses using univariate, bivariate, and multivariate statistical techniques; producing graphic presentations; and participating in the preparation of the ORR Annual Report to the Congress. Data validation/processing involved logic checks to identify out-of-range values and data elements inconsistent with the design format; internal consistency tests of key measures; identification of outliers; and cross-validation of key variables with baseline data, with other similar studies, or with known population statistics (Census, etc.). Contact Person: Ms. Rebekah Brown, 301-589-3955.

**Evaluation of the "Communities Choosing" Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program — Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

Funded by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), this was a multi-year program implemented in the San Francisco middle schools. The multi-year evaluation was conducted by the School of Public Health at the University of California, Berkeley. Avar contracted with UC Berkeley to perform statistical analysis of the pre- and post-intervention survey data and prepare the quantitative analysis report. Contact Person: Dr. Sukari Ivester, 510-643-3366.

## *Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality*

**Development of a National Online Library of Healthcare Services Datasets and Databases -**

**Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

With the increasing costs of health care, it has become more important than ever to use health services efficiently, yet care and information about care is often collected and delivered in isolation without coordination across sites or providers of care. Funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), this project was intended to comprehensively inventory all health care data collection initiatives (e.g., administrative datasets, survey data, distributed datasets) in each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, as well as other specific geographic areas of particular interest (e.g., health planning areas, multi-state regions), and to provide guidance to the AHRQ on the potential synergy across such initiatives and how the data and information that they collected and maintained might be used to inform Federal, state, and local health care policymakers, clinicians, and consumers. As a subcontractor with Econometrica, Inc., Avar designed and developed an online inventory of all the relevant datasets. It consisted of a back-end relational database that interfaces with a website portal to enable both public and security-protected online search and data access. The back-end relational database contained a description of each of the healthcare service datasets, name of the funding agency/organization, location of the dataset, name and contact information of the managing agency/organization, as well as the format of each key data element. The front-end portal presented itself on a well-designed website that allowed users to search by keywords and apply multiple filters on a variety of criteria to obtain information in accordance with their designated level of access. Using the search result, the user was able to visit the actual dataset; export what they found; and save, share, or modify their search. The system was built in compliance with NIST Special Publication 800 and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Contact Person: Dr. Richard Hilton, 301-657-1035.

# *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

**Improving Operational Efficiency and Effectiveness of Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Systems**

Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response is critical for the nation's interests. As disasters increase in scale, frequency, length, and type, threats to public health increase. Being prepared to prevent, respond to, and recover from disasters whether caused by natural, accidental, or international means is essential to protect and secure our nation's public health. Since 2002, the federal government has invested nearly $9 billion to public health departments across the nation to update their ability to effectively respond to a range of public health threats through the Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response (PHEP) cooperative agreement. In March 2011, CDC developed 15 public health preparedness capabilities to serve as national public health preparedness standards. The capabilities provide state and local public health departments with guidance on organizing their preparedness activities, planning their priorities, and deciding which capabilities they have the resources to build or sustain. The national standards also ensure that federal preparedness funds are directed to priority areas within individual jurisdictions. While awardee states or entities receive cooperative agreement funds, they are required to provide data for assessing their public health emergency preparedness and response systems. However, evaluating these assessment measures or developing reliable and valid measures is now demanded by Congress and the public for the purpose of accountability, system improvement, and advancement of knowledge. Policy makers and the public need to know how well these systems are working, what and where improvements should be made, and whether the public health department's levels of preparedness have been improving.  The purpose of this project is to assess how the national standards are being utilized to improve public health preparedness at the state and local levels and how well these standards were utilized in recent events. Avar is developing a web-based survey of all 62 PHEP grantees. Using the

survey results we will select a number of PHEP grantees to conduct in-depth case studies to examine planning and coordination around the national standards during actual events and identify cross-cutting lessons learned for improving preparedness performance. Avar is in the initial phase of the study. We are currently developing the study design, questionnaire, and data analysis methodologies. Contact Person: Tonya Chapman, 404-639-2457.

**Improving the Understanding of Traumatic Brain Injury through Policy and Program Evaluation Research – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**
Every year, more than 7 million U.S. high school students participate in organized sports. The increasing incidence of concussions or traumatic brain injuries (TBI) due to youth sports has become a growing problem and poses serious long-term health risks for young athletes if TBI symptoms are left untreated. As a result, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) developed the "Heads Up" education campaign, which focuses on raising awareness of the signs and symptoms of concussions and improving the management of concussions among youth athletes. Additionally, 48 states and the District of Columbia have also taken the initiative and passed legislation requiring that athletes with suspected concussions be removed from play until evaluated by a clinician. The CDC contracted CSR, Incorporated to examine the impact of state laws on the awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding concussions among the coaches, youth athletes, and parents of the athletes. The study population consists of youth athletes (boys and girls) ages 14–18 as well their parents and coaches of soccer clubs affiliated with the U.S. Youth Soccer Association (USYSA). A stratified random sample of soccer clubs from USYSA is drawn from three strata representing different types of return-to play laws that correspond to their respective state. All participants are asked to complete a pre-season survey while youth athletes and their parents also respond to weekly surveillance surveys. As a subcontractor with CSR Incorporated, Avar offers its expertise in survey methodology and is specifically responsible for developing the data collection plan; directing the sampling frame construction activities; developing and implementing the sampling plan; recruiting 115 youth soccer teams to participate in the study; and conducting mixed-mode surveys of 115 coaches, 1,200 athletes, and 1,200 parents via internet and mail. Contact Person: John A. Foster-Bey, 703-741-7131.

## *Centers for Medicare and Medicaid*

**Beneficiary and Family Centered Care Oversight & Review Center (BFCC ORC) – Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**
Avar operates the Beneficiary and Family Centered Care Oversight & Review Center (BFCC ORC) under a five-year multitask contract with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS). The BFCC ORC supports CMS's Beneficiary and Family Centered Care Oversight Quality Improvement Organization (BFCC QIO) program, a component of the QIO 11th Scope of Work. The BFCC ORC's role is to support the improvement of Medicare beneficiary health care and reduce costs by focusing on continuous improvement across the BFCC QIO Program. Through its various activities, the BFCC ORC provides actionable findings regarding operations, performance, outcomes, and impact of the overall BFCC QIO services. Under this contract, Avar conducts medical case reviews and provides training to BFCC QIOs to ensure consistency across beneficiary case reviews and recommends initiatives to improve case review quality. Avar also administers the quarterly BFCC QIO Experience Survey to assess Medicare beneficiaries' satisfaction with the BFCC QIO complaint review process. Avar is responsible for reviewing and redesigning the survey, preparing OMB clearance packages for the new survey, and developing the IT infrastructure to convert the survey from paper to a CATI-based survey. Avar is also

responsible for developing reports addressing the BFCC QIO program. Contact Person: Steven Rubio, 410-786-1782

**2012–14 Medicare Part C and Part D Complaints Resolution Performance Assessment Survey – Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**
Medicare beneficiaries who received services often have complaints which are followed by a resolution process. CMS contracts IMPAQ International (IMPAQ) to assess the effectiveness of the current complaint resolution process for Medicare Part C and Part D from the beneficiaries' perspective. Under a subcontract with IMPAQ, Avar conducted a web-based survey of over 6,000 Medicare beneficiaries who filed a complaint(s) about the Medicare Part C and Part D services they received. Specific tasks included: (1) designing and developing an IT infrastructure for the web-based survey that met CMS CIO's IT security requirements; (2) programming the questionnaire (20–25 questions) and posting it on a designated website; (3) creating password protected access to the questionnaire; (4) conducting a pilot test of the data collection system; (5) making revisions based on the pilot test results; (6) hosting and managing the web survey; (7) providing weekly and ad hoc reports of the survey progress; (8) monitoring survey data quality by regular and ad hoc data exporting and analyses; (9) providing survey related technical support via an e-mail box or telephone; and (10) delivering final web survey data files to the prime contractor along with supporting documents. For this contract, CMS has thoroughly audited and approved Avar's secured hosting infrastructure. Each aspect of Avar's data center, including hardware, software, environment, project staff training, and operation procedures, were thoroughly examined during a full week of on-site audit facilitated by a security team from Mitre, Inc. Penetration testing and hardening checklists were met with excellent remarks. Avar's IT staff worked alongside auditors and CMS Technical Review Board (TRB) to successfully obtain Authorization to Operate (ATO) on the system. The information system pays particular attention to issues of data security, confidentiality, and reliability to ensure constant availability. It is possible for respondents to look up their CMS complaint cases based on email invitation code, Medicare number, or other information such as zip code. New cases were augmented into the survey sample on a weekly basis. The production system is 508 compliant, supports at least 100 concurrent users, and validates user identities so that only eligible respondents may enter the survey. Contact Person: Oswaldo Urdapilleta, 301-628-3000.

## *National Institutes of Health*

**The National Children's Study (NCS) Questionnaire Development Services – Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**
The National Children's Study (NCS) is a longitudinal study of 100,000 U.S. children who will be followed from their mothers' pregnancies until they are 21 years old. The NCS collected longitudinal data to study the relationship between a wide range of genetic, social, and environmental factors and the development of diseases and other health conditions through young adulthood. The large sample size will permit analysis of rare conditions and of the interactions between multiple genetic and environmental factors. NICHD sought assistance and support in the development of questionnaires for the Main Study of the NCS to be used from the mother's first trimester of pregnancy through the first 60 months (5 years) of the child's life. Under a two-year contract with NICHD, Avar's specific tasks included: (1) reviewing research literature on child development and compiling an inventory of existing instruments; (2) cross-checking NCS instruments with those of major U.S. and international studies to ensure data coverage, comparability, and consistency; (3) developing survey content; (4) building a questionnaire development tool with a web-based front portal linked to a SQL database containing hundreds of survey item sets and

related metadata; (5) analyzing pilot study data for questionnaire improvement; (6) determining instrument flow (i.e., questionnaire design, content wording, skip patterns, and layout/format); (7) developing supplemental text (i.e., instructions and clarification), (8) conducting quality control; and (9) documenting instrument metadata. Contact Person: Dr. Ruth Brenner, 301-594-8668.

## *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration*

**The Native American Center for Excellence (NACE) — Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**
Funded by SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, NACE was created as a national technical assistance and resource center for Native and non-Native audiences throughout the United States to address Native American substance abuse prevention and related behavioral health issues. NACE provided a broad range of services to Indian Country and those with an interest in substance abuse prevention in Indian Country including: onsite and offsite training, technical assistance, resource development, and online information resource dissemination via its website. Under a five-year contract with SAMHSA, Avar operated and managed NACE and provided technical assistance to the American Indian/Alaska Native communities. This multitask contract included: (1) convening expert panel meetings; (2) training and technical assistance and consultation; (3) identifying and developing innovative and evidence-based programs, practices, and policies to prevent and identify substance abuse in Native American communities; (4) instrument development and data collection and analysis; (5) information dissemination; (6) hosting and managing the NACE website and other IT support; (7) conducting program evaluations; and (8) conference planning and meeting logistics. Contact Person: Josefine Haynes-Battle, 240-276-2563.

## *U.S. Department of Homeland Security*

**Maintenance and Re-certification for Passenger Fee Data Portal System — Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Department of Homeland Security (DHS)**
Under a five-year contract with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Avar is working with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to operate, maintain, and recertify the Passenger Fee Data Portal System (PFDPS). When TSA was created in 2001 to help protect the nation's transportation infrastructure, it was authorized to collect user fees (the September 11th Security Fee or passenger fee) from air passengers to help fund the U.S. aviation security infrastructure. TSA created the PFDPS, a web-based portal that allows users to submit the required quarterly reports and facilitates TSA's reporting on the fee collection process. Under the current contract, Avar provides a range of support services for the PFDPS. Avar maintains 24-hour user access to the Passenger Fee Data Portal and provides user account maintenance and support including password and user name resets and data input problem support for the system's approximately 400 users. Avar's staff assists carriers in submitting their required quarterly information reports and maintains a record of original data submissions and revisions, safeguarding all data in the system. Avar staff works with the PFDPS Information System Security Officer (ISSO) to maintain the system's compliance with the Federal Information System Management Act (FISMA) by conducting monthly operating systems scans and completing a comprehensive annual systems assessment. Staff will also work with the ISSO to recertify the system and prepare a revised System Security Plan and formulate and test a Contingency Plan. The Avar team responds to queries and data calls from TSA/DHS IT Security, DHS IT Office of the Inspector General (OIG), etc. on an ongoing basis. Contact Person: Rose A. Kline, 571-227-1089.

**Evaluation of the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) Program — United States Customs and Immigration Services (USCIS), U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)**

The United States Customs and Immigration Services (USCIS) Office of Policy and Strategy (OP&S) Research and Evaluation Division (OP&S-RED) awarded IMPAQ International a contract to conduct an independent evaluation of USCIS's Verification Division's Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) program. SAVE is a fee-based intergovernmental initiative designed to help federal, state, tribal, and local government agencies and licensing bureaus determine U.S. citizenship or immigration status information. This includes facilitating status verifications by a federal, state, tribal, or local government agency, or by an agent acting on the agency's behalf, to the extent that such disclosure is necessary to enable these agencies to make decisions related to eligibility for benefits, licensing, grants, credentials, voter registration, or any other lawful purpose. SAVE user agencies or bureaus must be legally authorized to engage in an activity or provide a benefit for which immigration status verification is required. SAVE helps ensure that eligible benefit applicants receive timely public benefits and that benefit granting programs do not provide public benefits to persons who are ineligible to receive such benefits by virtue of their immigration status. The project will describe and evaluate how user agencies are implementing the SAVE Program and the experience of benefit applicants when they need to correct their records in response to SAVE-issued information. Findings from this evaluation will support USCIS's efforts to continue to improve SAVE's usability and compatibility with agencies' business processes, promote user agencies' full participation in SAVE, and prevent misuse of SAVE. Under a sub contract with IMPAQ, Avar will be responsible for conducting extensive site visits to entities using the SAVE system. Staff will gather data through in-depth interviews, and focus groups. Contact Person: David Thomas, 443-259-5500

## U.S. Department of Labor

**General Evaluation Support for the Chief Evaluation Office, U.S. Department of Labor**

The Department of Labor's Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) coordinates, manages, and implements the Department of Labor's (DOL's) evaluation program. As an intendent evaluation office, the CEO works closely with all offices and agencies throughout DOL to develop and implement evaluations that address priorities set by the Secretary and the agencies. The CEO promotes high-quality independent evaluations and works to institutionalize an evidence-based culture at the Department to inform policy and practice. To assist the office in achieving their mission, the DOL CEO has procured the services of Avar Consulting, Inc. to support a range of different activities under a multiyear, multi-task contract. Avar reviews OMB's Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) packages submitted to the CEO by DOL agencies and contractors conducting research on DOL's behalf to assess the appropriateness of the statistical and methodological approach and the compliance with OMB requirements. Avar is also reviewing products of completed evaluation projects for statistical and methodological issues prior to public release of the reports. Contact Person: Jonathan A. Simonetta, 202-693-5085.

**DOL Scholars Program, CEO Website, and CEO Communications Support — Chief Evaluation Office, U.S. Department of Labor**

The United States Department of Labor's (DOL) Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) maintains the DOL Scholars Program, a grant program designed to promote and expand labor research that directly relates to DOL policies and programs. Through this program, DOL funds developing labor researchers, with individual awards ranging from $10,000–$50,000. Under this multi-year multi-task contract, Avar supports the DOL Scholars Program Competition. Avar staff are responsible for promoting the program,

receiving applications and selecting the participants, managing the grant funds, providing guidance to the scholars throughout the grant periods, and managing peer review of the scholars' papers. Under this contract, Avar also provides communications support for the CEO. Avar is also developing and will implement a communications strategy and strategic plan for the CEO with defined goals and target audiences. Based on the strategy, Avar is developing and will produce and evaluate the effectiveness of a customized range of products and dissemination activities including fact sheets and infographics, multimedia web pages, issue briefs, presentations, media outreach activities, and webinars. Avar is also responsible for updating the CEO's Webpages on the Department of Labor website. This task entails supporting the CEO website by creating, updating, and adding new content, revising format, and establishing procedures to track usage. Avar's technical staff develop and run Google Analytics reports and conduct analysis of the data generated by these reports. Contact Person: Christina Yancey, 202-693-5910, Adrienne Wong, 202-693-5918.

**Analytic and Evaluation Support for the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs** — **U.S. Department of Labor**
The DOL Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is responsible for the administration of four major disability compensation programs which provide wage replacement benefits, medical treatment, vocational rehabilitation and other benefits to certain workers or their dependents who experience work-related injury or occupational disease.  To assist OWCP in making these programs more efficient and responsive in protecting worker benefits, Avar has been awarded a multiyear, multitask contract with OWCP to provide analytic and evaluation support. The work involves conducting a mix of analyses to support OWCP executives in decision-making. Avar's assignments include a range of policy, statistical, economic, and financial analyses as well as model development and/or validation. The analyses use a variety of data which including public use data files, agency administrative data, longitudinal survey files, and other micro data files transferred from other DOL agencies or federal departments. Contact Person: Judith Binder, (202) 354 9698.

**Support for the Structure of Work Symposium** — **Chief Evaluation Office, U.S. Department of Labor**
Under this contract with the Department of Labor (DOL)'s, Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) Avar is providing full logistical support for a December 2015 symposium on the changing structure of work." Held in Washington, D.C., attendees will discuss current trends that are altering the nature of work and implications of these changes for workers and employers. The symposium will cover topics such as the increased fissuring within some industries as a result of expanded contracting, franchising, the emergence of complex global business structures, and rapid changes in technology. Discussions will also cover labor and employment issues related to increased independent contracting, consulting, temporary workers, and alternative work arrangements. Tasks under this contract include: (1) management and administration of the commissioning of six papers from experts identified by CEO on topics determined jointly by CEO and the experts, (2) logistical support for the six experts' travel to and stay in Washington, D.C., for the symposium and, (3) other logistical support related to the symposium at the behest of CEO. Contact Person: Jonathan A. Simonetta, 202-693-5085.

**Chief Evaluation Office Evaluation Support Contract, U.S. Department of Labor**
The Department of Labor's (DOL) Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) procured the services of Avar Consulting, Inc. to support a range of different activities under this multi-task contract. Avar is reviewing OMB's Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) packages submitted to CEO by DOL agencies and contractors conducting research on DOL's behalf to assess the appropriateness of the statistical and methodological

approach and the compliance with OMB requirements. Avar also reviewed products of completed evaluation projects for statistical and methodological issues prior to public release of the reports. Avar will also provide a range of statistical and methodological support to CEO, the Office of Worker's Compensation Programs (OWCP), and other DOL agencies and contractors in planning and implementing evaluation projects, developing products to assist researchers in developing and conducting effective studies, and reviewing evaluation tools to assist reviewers in assessing the quality of studies. Under this contract, Avar is also supporting the DOL Scholars Program Competition. Avar staff are responsible for promoting the program, receiving applications and selecting the participants, managing the grant funds, providing guidance to the scholars throughout the grant periods, and managing peer review of the scholars' papers. Avar is also responsible for updating the CEO website and developing new content. Contact Person: Jonathan A. Simonetta, 202-693-5085.

## Evaluation of the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program — Chief Evaluation Office, U.S. Department of Labor

The purpose of the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) is to provide services to assist in reintegrating homeless veterans into meaningful employment within the labor force and to stimulate the development of effective service delivery systems that will address the complex problems facing homeless veterans. Funded by DOL, this project documents the types of services and supports offered through grantees receiving awards under HVRP, identifies potentially promising practices or models, and conducts statistical analysis of administrative data collected by the grantees and other data as applicable on job placement and other outcomes of interest to HVRP participants. Under a two-year contract with DOL, the Avar team is responsible for: (1) conducting an extensive review of research literature and documents regarding services to homeless veterans and associated issues; (2) developing an evaluation design that contains research questions, theoretical models, and research methodology; (3) developing data collection instruments; (4) preparing the OMB clearance package; (5) conducting key personnel interviews and 12 grantee site visits; (6) performing qualitative and quantitative analysis of data collected during the evaluation process; (7) organizing and facilitating two technical working group meetings; and (8) preparing a final evaluation report to DOL. Contact Person: Jonathan A. Simonetta, 202-693-5085.

## Transition Assistance Program Employment Workshop Evaluation — Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS), U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)

DOL/VETS conducts the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Employment Workshops that provide employment information, training opportunities, and vocational guidance to allow separating service members to make informed career choices. A redesign of the employment workshop curriculum was completed in November 2011. The implementation of the redesigned curriculum was phased in, beginning with 11 identified pilot sites in February 2012. The purpose of this project was to conduct an evaluation of these TAP Employment Workshops. The study consisted of the following components: (1) design and development of various data collection instruments such as site observation protocols, key personnel interview protocols, and questionnaires for the workshop facilitators and participants' surveys; (2) site visits to 11 bases piloting the revised TAP curriculum; (3) key personnel interviews with program staff and workshop facilitators; (4) three paper- and web-based surveys (customer satisfaction, facilitator, and follow-up); (5) analysis of qualitative and quantitative data regarding the delivery and effectiveness of the TAP curriculum; (6) presentation of results to DOL through interim and final reports and regular briefings; and (7) revision of the published written and online curriculum based on study findings. Contact Person: Tim Winter, 202-693-4705.

**Technical Assistance for the Young Parents Demonstration Grant (Round 2) — Employment Training Administration (ETA), U.S. Department of Labor**

Funded by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Pilot, Demonstration and Research funds, ETA's Young Parents Demonstration (YPD) program was designed to add enhancement services to existing education/training programs that targeted young parents or serve a broader population of youth that included young parents. A randomization design was employed to systematically evaluate the added value of the enhancement strategies or service components. Program participants were randomly assigned to a "bump-up" experiment group in which they would receive the additional services or a "control" group in which they would receive the existing services offered by the original program. Avar was under a one-year contract with ETA to provide technical assistance to Round 2 YPD grantees to ensure that the evaluation design was rigorously implemented. The project team (1) planned and convened grantee conferences, meetings, workshops, and training sessions; (2) conducted site visits and on-site training to grantees across the country; (3) managed travel and meeting arrangements; (4) conducted online training via Webinar; (5) developed and managed an on-line Participant Tracking System (PTS) to collect and monitor program participant information and facilitate the random assignment; (6) developed and managed a data quality control system to monitor random assignment build-up, analyze data completeness and accuracy, and produce weekly reports to ETA, the evaluation team, and the grantees; (7) conducted weekly conference calls with grantees to resolve issues as needed; (8) developed training materials and data collection forms; (9) managed/shared project documents via SharePoint; and (10) established a toll-free help hotline. Contact Person: Gloribel Nieves-Cartagena, 202-693-2771.

## *U.S. Department of State*

**Review of Exchange Alumni Coordination — Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), U.S. Department of State**

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) at the U.S. Department of State (DOS) fosters mutual understanding and respect between the United States and other countries through international educational, professional, and cultural exchanges and programs. A growing number of DOS Posts overseas (i.e., embassies and consulates) started to designate full- or part-time Alumni Coordinators to promote greater contact and cooperation among host country alumni of U.S.-sponsored exchange programs. Under a contract with ECA, Avar completed an 18-month review to examine the functions of the designated alumni coordinators and the implementation process of the State Department's overseas exchange alumni coordination, identify best practices, and recommend future strategies. The study was implemented in two phases. Phase 1 served as a pilot study to conduct preliminary research on alumni programming and coordination in preparation for the main study in Phase 2. Phase 1 consisted of numerous in-depth interviews with the ECA staff at different levels and two overseas site visits (Nepal and Russia) during which the study team conducted interviews with the Post staff, meetings with alumni association leaders, and focus group discussions with individual alumni. Based on information collected from Phase 1, Phase 2 launched two additional site visits (Colombia and Vietnam) and two web-based global surveys, one of all the DOS overseas Posts regarding their exchange alumni coordination and the other of all the established exchange alumni associations around the world. The entire study involved extensive effort in designing, developing, and testing/re-testing various types of data collection instruments (e.g., survey questionnaires, interview protocols, and focus group discussion guides); conducting quantitative and qualitative data analyses; developing reports for each phase and each site visit; and producing a camera-ready final study report including graphic presentations of statistical results and overall graphic design of the report layout (covers, content arrangement, etc.). All of these activities were conducted in-house by

the project team, as well as all its overseas travel arrangements and visa applications. The final study, "Review of the Role of Alumni Coordinators," was published and distributed within ECA and posted on the DOS website. Contact person: Dr. Robin Silver, 202-632-9319

# U.S. Department of Transportation

**National Survey of DWI Courts – National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)**
DWI Courts were developed to address the root causes of impaired driving due to alcohol and other substance abuse. DWI Courts use a collaborative approach, including judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, law enforcement, behavioral health services, and other treatment modalities to pursue desired results. NHTSA developed a survey to collect baseline information on the characteristics and operations of DWI and Hybrid DWI/Drug Courts to support an initial formative evaluation. NHTSA contracted Avar Consulting to collect detailed descriptive information about the DWI Courts and Hybrid DWI/Drug Courts in the United States via a web-based survey. Results of the survey will help NHTSA design a more rigorous evaluation of the outcomes, impacts, and cost-efficiency of DWI Courts. Avar's specific tasks for this project include: (1) modifying and formatting the survey instrument for effective, user-friendly, low-burden, Web-based administration; (2) creating a survey website and related IT platform that meets the government IT security requirements; (3) programming the questionnaire with built-in data quality checks using a selected web survey software; (4) creating and managing an inventory of access codes to provide control over web-based data capture; (5) developing, testing, documenting, and launching the web-based survey platform and associated quality assurance/control features in close collaboration with NHTSA; (6) hosting, maintaining, and supporting all users of the web-based survey throughout the survey period; (7) extracting raw survey data from the Web-based repository and processing and documenting the survey responses into several formats for NHTSA's use; and (6) providing weekly data monitoring reports during the field operation period. Contact Person: Alan Block, 202-366-6401.

**Operation of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Research Library — U.S. Department of Transportation**
Under a five-year contract with the Department of Transportation (2012 to 2017), Avar is managing the Federal Highway Administration's Research Library that supports the FHWA's Office of Research, Development and Technology (RD&T). The full service library, located at the Turner-Fairbank Highway Research Center (TFHRC) in McLean, Virginia, houses more than 51,537 hardcopy and electronic holdings covering all aspects of surface transportation with an emphasis on research that supports the work of the FHWA TFHRC laboratories. The Avar team's professional research librarians are providing complete collection management support and reference services for FHWA RD&T employees nationwide. Our onsite staff catalog and maintain the collection, acquire all research reports done by or for FHWA, and make acquisition recommendations for the collection as a whole. They support RD&T research staff by conducting literature searches and reviews, preparing bibliographies, and providing general reference and referral services to onsite and virtual visitors. The Avar team also manages the Summer Transportation Internship for Diverse Groups (STIPG) intern program and is responsible for conducting outreach and marketing efforts to promote the usage of the FHWA Research Library. In addition, they provide research support to the Exploratory Advanced Research (EAR) program, which was established at TFHRC to conduct long-term high impact research on improving the durability, efficiency, environmental impact, productivity, and safety aspects of highway and intermodal transportation systems. Contact Person: Lisa A. Williams, 202-493-3375.

## *U.S. General Services Administration*

**International Sustainable Acquisition Research Project — U.S. General Services Administration (GSA)**
The Federal Acquisition Service (FAS), Office of Acquisition Management (OAM), of the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) sought to develop ways to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions of vendors who provide the goods and services procured by the U.S. government. For this project, GSA was interested in collecting data to better understand the strategies used by European governments, what actions they have taken, and what they have accomplished as a result. The information gathered will be used to inform the U.S. Government's efforts to incorporate environmental considerations into public procurements. As a subcontractor with Censeo Consulting Group, Avar was responsible for reviewing the draft questionnaire and online survey, including wording, format, and content. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, Avar ensured that meaningful quantitative and qualitative data were collected to improve the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. Contact Person: Curt Cote, 978-409-2012.

## *State of Maryland*

**The State of Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE) — Maryland Department of Transportation**
To ensure compliance with constitutional mandates and M/WBE best practices, Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) conducts a series of studies to examine the past and current status of M/WBEs in the State's geographic and product markets for contracting and procurement, to provide the evidentiary record necessary for the State's consideration of whether to implement renewed M/WBE policies that comply with the requirements of the courts, and to assess the extent to which previous efforts have assisted M/WBEs to participate on a fair basis in the State's contracting and procurement activity. Under a subcontract with RK&K, LLC, Avar provides statistical consultation to MDOT with regard to the design and results of these studies. Specific tasks include: (1) advising MDOT on general principles, statistical issues, and methodologies involved in setting goals for MBE/DBE participation; (2) advising MDOT on the usefulness of various databases for calculation of MBE/DBE availability and performing preliminary data analyses as needed; (3) assisting MDOT in computing MBE/DBE availability figures and making appropriate adjustments of such figures; (4) advising MDOT staff on any statistical issues that may arise in connection with the MBE Disparity Study; and (5) providing assistance in litigation related matters. Contact Person: Richelle Thomas, 410-865-1242.

**2009, 2011, 2013, 2014 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) Monitoring and Coordination — Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)**
The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) was developed in 1990 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to monitor priority health risk behaviors such as tobacco use, unhealthy dietary behaviors, physical inactivity, alcohol & other drug use, sexual behavior/STDs/HIV/AIDS/unintended pregnancies, and violence/injury. Maryland began conducting the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) in 2005. Students in grades 9–12 are surveyed in the spring of odd years. Under multiple contracts with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Avar coordinated the sampling and data collection activities of the 2009, 2011 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), monitored its data analyses, interpreted data analysis results, participated in the design and development of the final report, performed in-depth analyses regarding significant issues, and will participate in presentations/testimonies to the Maryland Board of Education. Avar conducted the same activities for the 2013 and 2014 joint operation of Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey and Youth

Tobacco Survey (YRBS-YTS) and will provide the same support for the 2015 survey. Contact Person: Richard Scott, 410-767-0288.

**Data Collection Support and Analytic Report Development — Maryland Health Care Commission**
The Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC) is required by law to analyze and report on health care utilization and spending in Maryland. To support these activities, the MHCC developed the Maryland Medical Care Data Base (MCDB), which contains information on health professional services and prescription drugs provided to Maryland residents. Each year, all the healthcare providers and prescription drug providers in Maryland are required to submit their service records to MCDB. As a subcontractor with the Social & Scientific Systems (SSS), Inc., Avar provided SAS programming and statistical analysis support in collecting, processing, validating, editing, analyzing, and reporting these data on an annual basis. The annual reports included: Report on State Health Care Expenditures for Maryland Residents, Report on Practitioner Payments and Utilization, and Report on Prescription Drug Spending in the State. All reports provided comparisons of the Maryland spending and utilization patterns and trends with those in neighboring states and the national. Contact Person: Katrina Hedlesky, 301-628-3210.

**Evaluation of the Effect of Increased State Aid to Local School Systems through the Bridge to Excellence Act — Maryland State Department of Education**
Under the *Bridge to Excellence Act* in 2003–04, each local school system in Maryland developed and started implementing a five-year comprehensive Master Plan outlining the goals, objectives, and strategies for improving student achievement and meeting Maryland's performance standards. The State funding for education was increased to finance the initiative. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) awarded a contract to MGT of America, along with REDA International Inc., to conduct a comprehensive review and evaluation of the effect of increased state aid to local school systems on student, school, and school system performance. Under an agreement with the MGT/REDA team, Avar was responsible for editing and weighting the survey data collected from the school principals and Master Plan committee members, performing statistical analyses to address the relevant evaluation questions, and assisting in the preparation of the survey report. Contact Person: Dr. Jerry Ciesla, 850-386-3191.

## *Prince George's County, Maryland*

**In-Depth Evaluation of the Financial Incentive Rewards to Supervisors and Teachers (FIRST) Program — Board of Education of Prince George's County**
In 2007, Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) was one of 18 grant recipients of the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF), a new funding initiative of the United States Department of Education that was designed to address the teacher quality disparity that existed in lower-income communities. With the TIF funds, PGCPS in collaboration with other stakeholders developed the Financial Rewards for Supervisors and Teachers (FIRST) program during the first year of the grant. During years two through five, the program was rolled out and implemented in a total of 42 schools. The goals of FIRST were to: (1) develop and refine a comprehensive teacher and administrator compensation system that rewarded student achievement improvements; (2) attract, develop, and retain highly qualified, effective teachers and administrators; and (3) develop and refine a standards-based, research-proven evaluation system for participating teachers and administrators. To meet these goals, the FIRST program consisted of four components: professional development, evaluation, leadership, and hard-to-staff subjects. Measurement Incorporated (MI) was contracted to conduct an in-depth evaluation of the FIRST program. As a

subcontractor with MI, Avar assisted in conducting in-person interviews with the key PGCPS program staff, observed data collection platforms and processes during site visits, collected data on teacher and administrator outcomes and student academic achievement, developed evaluation and data analysis plans, performed data analyses using various statistical techniques (e.g., descriptive statistics, paired t-tests, correlations, multiple regression), analyzed qualitative data, produced data analysis reports, and assisted in the preparation of the final summative evaluation report. Contact person: Shelly Menendez, 630-857-9592.

## *For Profit Clients*

### Data Quality Audit, StatisticaMedica Ltd. — Ireland

StatisticaMedica Ltd. (SM) is a leading European provider of specialist services for the design and implementation of clinical trials and studies in the pharmaceutical, medical device, diagnostics, food, and healthcare industries and in academic and research organizations. Under a contract with SM, Avar conducted an audit and analysis of the data quality of interviews completed by an international marketing research company for the 2014–15 National Prevalence Study on Drug Use and Alcohol in Ireland. Avar compared the original sample design with actual interviews conducted and reviewed the Contact Record Sheet of attempted and completed interviews. Avar staff created an SPSS data file containing multiple merged files of parallel and nonparallel data and addition and prepared multiple tabulations summarizing results. Specific analysis included examining response rate variations by region, county, and interviewer; identifying possible falsified records; reviewing incomplete data; and verifying missing data codes. Avar summarized and presented the results to SM, which were subsequently integrated into a final report. Contact Person: Gloria Crispino, gloria.crispino@statisticamedica.com

### BWI Passenger Intercept Survey and BWI Airport User Survey Data Analysis — Campbell-Hill Aviation Group, LLC

Campbell-Hill Aviation Group, LLC procured the services of Avar to support a task order under their BWI Air Services Development IDIQ contract. Avar is providing quarterly data analysis for the Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall (BWI) Airport Passenger Intercept Survey. BWI collects survey data from passengers every quarter to help improve customer service and satisfaction. The data gathered also supports planning and development efforts. The data collection includes administering two surveys per quarter per year. The primary survey titled "the Passenger Intercept survey" is administered by an interviewer in a face-to-face mode at the airport intercept; the supplement survey named "the BWI Airport User Survey" is a self-administered survey completed by the same participant passenger. For the supplement survey, the participant has an option to mail back the survey within five days if he or she does not have time to complete it at the airport. For the initial task under the contract, Avar combined data collected for all four quarters for the year 2013 and prepared a descriptive report that involved 25 different analyses including the total passenger counts by zip code for each carrier and different type of carriers (e.g. legacy carriers, low-cost carriers, etc.). The report also compared carrier usage patterns by passengers who traveled for business versus other purposes and passengers with different categories of household incomes. Contact Person: James Lundy, 703-229-4283.

**Addiction Drug Counselor Knowledge Assessment (ADCKA) and Online Training Website — Avar Consulting, Inc**.

Substance abuse is a major public health problem in the United States. Substance use adversely affects individuals, families, and communities, yet the vast majority of people with substance use disorders do not receive the treatment they need because of the resource limitations and workforce shortages in the substance abuse field. Workforce problems have an impact on almost every aspect of substance abuse treatment across all sectors of the diverse behavioral health field. The issues encompass difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff, limited access to relevant and effective training, and financing systems that place enormous burdens on the workforce to meet high levels of demand with inadequate resources. Most critically, there are significant concerns about the capability of the workforce to provide quality care. In response to these concerns and in an effort to dramatically improve the quality of substance abuse services received by individuals and their families who are served by the behavioral health care providers, Avar's experts developed the Alcohol and Drug Counselor Knowledge Assessment (AADCKA), a web-based screening tool, to help individuals prepare for an Alcohol and Drug Counselor (ADC) Certification Examination. The AADCKA provides a preliminary assessment of the tester's strengths and weaknesses in four content areas that are found on current ADC certification examinations. After completing the assessment, participants will receive a score report with information on his or her strengths and weaknesses in each content area. Based on the score report, the participants are guided to free online resources from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and other sources as well as relevant training sites to help the participant gain knowledge in the identified areas. Contact Person: Z. Joan Wang, 301-977-6553.

**Transfer, Host, and Manage the Web-Based Transforming Church Index (TCI) Survey — TAG Consulting**

Developed by Kevin Graham Ford and funded by TAG Consulting, the TCI survey is one of the most influential congregational surveys and assessment tools in the United States and around the world. It is an ongoing web-based survey for different congregations to assess their needs for improvement by collecting opinions from their members using a multi-dimensional development index. Approximately 10,000 congregational members participate in the survey every year and the survey database currently contains data from over 50,000 respondents. The instrument consists of 15 function areas which are organized under five major domains/key indicators. Survey results are automatically generated in terms of mean scores, median scores, overall composite score, standard deviations, percentages, and presented in bar graphs, stars, and arrows. Domain and composite scores of each congregation are automatically compared to those of the national norm. Data are also reported about the characteristics of the respondents, the top and bottom scores, and the overall composite scores of the various subgroups. Under a long-term contract with TAG Consulting, Avar has successfully transferred the entire web-based survey software applications, survey databases, records, and other associated software applications from TAG's old Citrix server to Avar's multi-platform server without interrupting the survey operation. Avar's multi-platform server is running on the latest version of Windows 2008 64bit server edition operating system. It features a 2.6 GHz dual-core Opteron processor, with 4024MB memory, 450GB expandable storage, and directs up to 100Mb of web traffic per second. All data are backed up automatically on a daily basis and protected by Cisco external firewall solution on top of the server's own firewall. The web server sports a dedicated SSL certificate with 256-bit encryption for conducting Internet transactions of sensitive information with confidence. We are currently hosting the TCI survey; providing survey management, IT services, and statistical support; and conducting customized survey programming, data analysis, and report writing to meet additional needs of the clients. Contact Person: Mr. Kevin Ford, 703-352-0660 ext 201.

**Server Hosting and Management —TAG Consulting**
TAG is an organizational consulting firm based in Virginia. It uses a multi-functional virtual desktop to connect all its partners, staff, and consultants across the country via internet. This virtual desktop also supports PDA accessible corporate e-mails, three (3) online surveys, and several online data analysis and reporting tools. Avar migrated the virtual office in its entirety from the previous service provider onto a number of Avar's multi-platform servers running on the latest version of Windows 2008 64bit server edition operating system. The server blades run on Opteron processors and direct up to 100Mb of web traffic per second. All data are backed up automatically on a daily basis and protected by Cisco external firewall solution on top of the server's own firewall. The web server sports a dedicated SSL certificate with 256-bit encryption for conducting Internet transactions of sensitive information with confidence. In addition, Avar is also providing online survey management, statistical support, technical support, and feature enhancements for all the virtual office functions. Contact Person: Ms. Karen Robbins, 703-352-0660.

**Study of Rural Egypt 2005 — Chemonics International**
Sponsored by Chemonics International and the University of Utah, the study was part of a 4-decade longitudinal study of the social, economic, and political changes in rural Egypt. Five surveys were conducted respectively of Egyptian rural households, farmers, women, village council members, and district agencies. Under a consulting agreement with REDA International, Avar was responsible for data cleaning, data management, data analysis, and consultation in statistical modeling and interpreting the analysis results. Data management techniques included merging and transposing datasets, computing and recoding variables, creating scales, and integrating multi-level data into an analysis database. Statistical techniques included frequency analysis, mean comparison, cross-tabulation, scaling, factor analysis, regression, and multi-level analysis. Contact Person: Dr. James B. Mayfield, 801-673-4405.

## Non-Profit Clients

**Global Compensation Analysis, Association of Corporate Counsel**
Respondents from the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC) 2015 Global Census working in different countries reported their base salaries and total compensation in local currencies such as the Euro, British Pound, and Japanese Yen, etc. In order to allow a true comparison of corporate counsel compensation for counsel employed in places with different costs of living and receiving compensation in different currencies, ACC contracted with Avar to conduct a comparability analysis. To conduct the analysis, Avar economists converted all foreign currencies to USD for base salary, total compensation, and total gross revenue using the average exchange rate for the year 2014; created a weighting scheme to allow for cross-border comparison of base salary and total compensation, making it possible to compare the salaries of a global population; and used an index to equalize different cost of goods and services in multiple global locations. Simple conversion of local currencies to a standard global currency such as U.S. dollars is not sufficient for cross-country comparison of salaries. To solve this problem, we used purchasing power parity (PPP) which equalizes the value of comparable market baskets of goods and services between different countries. We converted USD to PPP dollars for base salary and total compensation which enables the best possible comparison of compensation between counsels in different countries as it captures the differences in cost of living between different countries. Contact Person: Robin Mayers, 202-293-4103, ext. 396

**Web-Based Database and Data Collection — The Mulan Foundation**

The Mulan Foundation is a non-profit performing arts organization devoted to promoting the Sino-U.S. cultural exchange in Chinese and Western classic music. Avar Consulting's IT specialists developed the foundation's online data management and collection mechanism to collect customer contact information and conduct financial data transactions. An online customer survey was also conducted by the Avar team to collect data for the foundation on market needs and customer satisfaction. Using Access in the Microsoft Windows environment, data collected via the website were stored automatically into an Access database on a secured server and retrieved to produce customized summary reports as needed. Contact Person: Dr. Patrick Lu, 240-606-5039.

# FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

Avar possesses all the facilities and equipment required to perform the work and services in the areas of our core competencies.

*Facilities.*  Avar's 10,000-square-feet main office is located in Rockville, Maryland, 1.5 miles away from the Shady Grove Metro Station. It contains a survey center and three conference rooms equipped with webinar and tele-/video-conferencing capabilities. One of the conference rooms can accommodate over 30 people while the other two each can accommodate over 15 people. They are designed for training and focus group studies. The premises are both key and access card restricted and are monitored 24/7 by Datawatch. Off-site data backup is available in a locked area located in Potomac, Maryland. The remote storage area keeps encrypted copies of selected backup data safe as part of the contingency plan, and is monitored by ADT Security Systems.

*Survey Center.*  Avar's 1,800-square-feet telephone survey center is equipped with 15 computer assisted telephone interview (CATI) stations using high-speed internet and industry leading professional CATI software (Blaise). It can be instantly expanded to accommodate 20 stations if needed. With a large pool of well-trained interviewers working in shifts, it is open 2–14 hours a day to conduct surveys of various sizes in both English and 10 other languages. Avar's CATI system is able to automatically distribute samples for random digital dialing (RDD) in different time zones, conduct quality control of survey data using built-in logics, and record detailed administration data for paradata analyses.

*Server Hardware*.  Avar's data center is well equipped with advanced hosting capabilities and information technologies. Our multi-platform servers run on the latest versions of Windows 2012 R2 Server Edition, Windows 2008 Data Center Edition, and Linux operating system each hosting its unique solutions. The servers feature 3.2Ghz Intel Xeon and 8-core Opteron processors, with 12GB+ memory, 1TB+ RAID5 storage, failsafe redundancy, and direct up to 100Mb of internet traffic per second over multiple concurrent internet connections. Virtual servers on Microsoft HyperX platform are available for projects requiring dynamic scaling. Backward compatibility servers running on Pentium and Phenom based system are available for legacy application support. All data are backed up automatically on a daily basis and protected by Cisco external firewall solution on top of the server's own firewall. The web servers sport dedicated SSL certificate with 256-bit encryption for conducting Internet transactions of sensitive information with confidence. Other technologies and equipment include, but are not limited to: Comcast and Verizon business class fiber dual network, numerous high-performance desktop and laptop computers, an external fail-safe storage system for office workstation data backup, and several high-quality laser printers and copy machines.

Avar's network facilities have been audited by Mitre Inc. and obtained Authorization to Operate (ATO) from Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Information Security Certification & Accreditation (CA).

*Software Suite and Production Capabilities*. Avar possesses computer software that are necessary for performing all the tasks regarding statistical analyses, data processing/management, data reporting/presentation, internet security, and accounting. These include, but are not limited to Adobe Creative Suite CC, Blaise, Microsoft SQL Server 2012, Microsoft Office Professional, SPSS 21 with Modeler, SAS v9, Microsoft Publisher, Norton Antivirus, AVG Enterprise Security Suite, Avira Server Solution, and Watchguard Security Systems. Avar also hosts multiple custom-built information systems that facilitate the finding, aggregating, and provisioning of project information and collaboration. All hardware and software receive regular tuning and upgrades by a team of in-house IT professionals to ensure the best reliability, stability, and security.

*Data Transfer*.  Avar's internal workstations are connected by 256bit encrypted WPA2 networks behind firewalls. Guest networks and BYOD networks are physically separated and do not interfere with enterprise networks. Project related data are only transported via secure FTP or SSL connections. All archived project files are encrypted using SecureZIP software, a FIPS 140-2 compliant encryption tool for zipping files. All data transmissions occurring between the file server and Avar occur on Avar's encrypted network.

*Library Access*.  Avar has current access to the University of Maryland Library System which contains over 3 million volumes of books and 52,000 journals and magazines. Its online system consists of 78 subsystems categorized by subject area.

*Accounting Systems*.  Avar has its own in-house accounting system using Deltek. It is managed by Avar's in-house accountants following established federal contract accounting procedures. Avar's accounting system has been audited and certified by DCAA as meeting federal contracting requirements. It puts great emphasis on timely time entry, adequate internal controls for documentation, and supervisory approval. The system has the capability to separate unallowable cost per FAR Part 31.201-2, 6, and 31.205, label project-expense adequately for cost reimbursement, and treat direct and indirect costs consistently per FAR 31.202, FAR 31.203 and CAS 402. Up-to-date indirect cost rate is calculated based on the 3-tier model issued by the DFAS Indirect Cost Branch. A consistent estimating system is in place using current, complete, and accurate cost and pricing data. Avar has procedures in place requiring periodic management reviews of the accounting system, as well as documented formal policies and definitions. As always, Avar constantly implements required changes to comply with government regulations wherever needed.

# CONTRACT VEHICLES

- GSA MOBIS Schedule, SIN 874-1, Contract # TF096CA
- Program Support Center Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity ( PSC IDIQ) contract, Program Support Center, Department of Health and Human Services
- Education Statistics Support Institute Network (ESSIN) Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract, National Center for Education Statistics Department of Education
- Survey Operation Support Services, U.S. Army Research Institute For the Behavioral And Social Sciences
- Research and Development 2014: Assessment, Planning, and Analysis ID/IQ Contract, U.S. Bureau of Census, Department of Commerce
- Communications and Operations Research and Analysis Support Services (CORA) IDIQ contract, Volpe Center, Research and Innovative Technology Administration, Department of Transportation
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) IDIQ contract, SAMHSA, HHS
- Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA) for Achieving Public Health Impact Through Research, Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), HHS (subcontractor)

# CONTACT US

**Z. Joan Wang, Ph.D. – Owner and President**
Tel: (301) 977-6553 ext. 222
Cell: (240) 328-9659
E-mail: joanwang@avarconsulting.com

**Rachel G. Hunt – Director of Client Relations**
Tel: (301) 977-6553 ext. 228
Cell: (301) 525-1835
E-mail: rhunt@avarconsulting.com

**Avar Consulting, Inc**.
1395 Piccard Drive, Suite 200
Rockville, MD 20850
Fax: (301) 977-0331
www.avarconsulting.com