

Making the 2010 Census Count: A Quick Guide for Foundations

Local and community foundations can play a vital role in promoting a full and accurate census count in the communities they serve.

The 2010 Census: The Basic Facts

The decennial census is a count of everyone residing in the United States: in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the Island Areas. The first Census was conducted in 1790 and has been carried out every 10 years since then. All residents of the United States must be counted. This includes people of all ages, races, ethnic groups, citizens and non-citizens. Census questionnaires will be mailed or delivered to every household in the United States in March 2010.

The questions ask you to provide information that is accurate for your household as of April 1, 2010. The 2010 Census questionnaire asks only a few simple questions of each person—name, relationship, gender, age and date of birth, race, and whether the respondent owns or rents his or her home. This simple, short questionnaire takes just a few minutes to complete and return by mail. Census takers visit households that do not return a questionnaire by mail.

The Census Bureau does not release or share information that identifies individual respondents or their household for 72 years. Every Census Bureau worker takes an oath for life to protect the confidentiality of census responses. Violation would result in a jail term of up to five years and/or fine of up to \$250,000. By law, the Census Bureau cannot share an individual's answers with anyone, including welfare and immigration agencies.

The Census Bureau must count everyone and submit state population totals to the U.S. President by December 31, 2010.

Why the 2010 Census is Important

Getting a full and accurate census count is important to every community. Here's why:

- **Census affects funding in your community**
Census data directly affect how more than \$300 billion per year in federal and state funding is allocated to communities for neighborhood improvements, public health, education, transportation and much more. That's more than \$3 trillion over a 10-year period.

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- **Census affects your voice in Congress**
Mandated by the U.S. Constitution, the census is also used to apportion seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and redistrict state legislatures.
- **Census affects your representation in state and local government**
Census data are used to define legislature districts, school district assignment areas and other important functional areas of government.
- **Census informs your community's decisions**
The census is like a snapshot that helps define who we are as a nation. Data about changes in your community are crucial to many planning decisions, such as where to provide services for the elderly, where to build new roads and schools, or where to locate job training centers.

Counting the Hard-to-Count

Certain individuals are harder to count and consequently at higher risk of being overlooked. Those most at risk of being undercounted include young children in low-income houses, minorities, recent immigrants, the homeless, renters, and persons living in large households. Many of those who are “hard-to-count” are located in large urban areas or in poorer sections of rural America.

In preparation for the 2010 Census, the Census Bureau has prepared a tract level planning database with data from the 2000 Census. Included in this database are “hard-to-count” (HTC) scores for each census tract. HTC scores, which can range from 0 to 132, rank the attributes of each tract in terms of enumeration difficulty and are based on 12 variables. The planning database and supporting documentation can be downloaded from the 2010 Census site.

How Local Organizations and Community Leaders Can Help

In an effort to get everyone counted, the Census Bureau works in partnership with over one hundred thousand organization and community leaders. At the local level, the Census Bureau Partnership Program works with elected officials, educators, businesses, faith-based groups, and various community and social service organizations. Every ten years, the Census Bureau forms thousands of “complete count committees” that operate at the neighborhood and community levels. Organizations and community leaders:

- Recruit census workers;
- Display and distribute census materials;
- Provide space for testing and training census employees;
- Sponsor community events to promote the census;
- Include information about the census in newsletters and mailings; and
- Enlist the support of other organizations and community leaders.

More information about the Partnership and what groups can do to support the Census is available on the Census Bureau’s website.

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How Local and Community Foundations Can Assist

While the Census Bureau's Partnership Program provides free promotional materials to partnering organizations and the "complete count committees" that are operating at the neighborhood and community levels, the Census Bureau does not provide any cash assistance to these groups. Even small amounts of financial support from local and community foundations can make a critical difference. Small grants to an organization or committee (or its fiscal sponsor) can enable these organizations to hire the organizers and support staff needed to mount a successful community outreach effort, or pay for other project related costs.

Foundations interested in supporting census activities in their communities should begin planning now. The regional offices of the Census Bureau are already setting up local offices and forming "complete count committees." Next year, in 2009, local organizations and the "complete count committees" will begin building census awareness in their communities.

Foundations interested in supporting census activities in their community are encouraged to contact the regional office of the Census Bureau for help in identifying the organizations and "complete count committees" that are supporting the census in their community.

For more information, contact:

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