The Census is a cornerstone of American democracy. Accurate data from the decennial census and American Community Survey (ACS) are essential for the fair distribution of political representation and the equitable allocation of billions of dollars in annual federal assistance to states, communities, and families. Yet historically, the census has disproportionately undercounted people of color, immigrants, young children, low-income households, and rural communities, among others.

Ongoing Engagement from Philanthropy—to convene, educate, advocate, and invest—is critical to ensure Census Bureau policies and operations center the insights and lived experiences of historically undercounted communities. These efforts can both maintain census infrastructure and make our democratic systems more equitable. This Blueprint includes Census Bureau milestones and concrete examples of how philanthropy (national, state, and community foundations, donors, collaboratives, philanthropy serving organizations, and other philanthropic institutions) can engage and invest in census work on the road to Census 2030.

The Funders’ Census Initiative (FCI) is a program of the Funders’ Committee for Civic Participation (FCCP) that mobilizes philanthropy around a fair and accurate census, with a focus on historically undercounted communities. FCI engages and educates philanthropy by providing forums for funders to learn, strategize, and plan together; developing and distributing resources; and monitoring and sharing updates on Census Bureau policies and operations. FCI’s ongoing engagement around the census and ACS is grounded in our commitment to racial justice and to achieving a democracy where all communities are counted, resourced, and represented. We work closely with a Leadership Team composed of state and local philanthropy leaders and partners like the Census Equity Initiative (CEI) and United Philanthropy Forum.

Updated Fall 2022*
2020 Census activity is ongoing through 2023, including data releases, challenge programs, and evaluation reports. And while 2030 Census policies and operations won’t be finalized for a while, work on the next decennial has already begun. Join FCCP’s Funders’ Census Initiative listserv to stay informed, get access to helpful tools and updates, and be in community with others in philanthropy.

Participate in Census Collaborative meetings (three times per year, hosted by FCI, CEI, and Census Counts) to understand the latest policy and operational developments, catch up on strategies, and to collaborate with stakeholders. Share updates on census funder collaboratives, convenings, and grantmaking to keep FCI apprised of philanthropic engagement and investments across the country.

Track foundation and grantee use of census data for planning, priority-setting, advocacy, and evaluation to build awareness of how census data inform philanthropic work and build support for investments in census outreach and promotion over the decade.

Engage more deeply around the ACS, which is part of the decennial census and collects much more detailed information on a continuous basis, and is therefore both a critical source of information and opportunity for increased and more equitable engagement.

Maintain relationships throughout the decade with:
- Funders and funder/PSO collaboratives and practitioner coalitions. Census infrastructure is mobilizing nationally and in states across the country around issues like improving usability and accuracy of census data, COVID-19 recovery, expanding access to broadband infrastructure, leveraging technology and local knowledge to map communities, improving data collection for the LGBTQI+ community and people experiencing homelessness, advocating for an end to prison gerrymandering, and strengthening civic participation.
- The Census Bureau, states, and localities. These ongoing relationships can improve public-private partnerships and inform the Census Bureau’s understanding of philanthropy, as well as deepen the local knowledge and cultural competencies of their workforce so that census policies and operations can better center historically undercounted communities.
LOOKING BACK

2021

CENSUS MILESTONES

- Release of 2020 Census congressional apportionment counts and results; resident population totals for the nation, plus all states, DC, and PR (April 26).
- Release of 2020 Census redistricting “legacy format” data files (August 12) and transmittal of user-friendly redistricting files to the states, DC, and PR (September 16). Redistricting data files contain block level data by race and Hispanic origin, voting age (18+), housing unit counts and occupancy status, and Group Quarters data by type of facility (e.g., prisons, college dorms, military barracks, etc.).
- 2020 Census assessments and evaluations begin (through 2023, tentatively).
- Begin Design Selection Phase for the 2030 Census (Oct. 2023 - 2024).

FUNDER ACTIONS

- Capture and archive what was created, learned, and accomplished in a final assessment of your foundation’s engagement and/or investments in the 2020 Census; contribute to efforts to amplify 2020 Census learnings and develop recommendations for the Census Bureau.
- Determine how your foundation can sustain civic infrastructure and improve civic participation through the ACS, timely planning for the 2030 Census, redistricting, and other democratic processes.
- Determine whether to support, through grantmaking, any local government Count Question Resolution challenges.
LOOKING FORWARD

2022

CENSUS MILESTONES

- 1950 Census forms available at the National Archives.
- Results from the Post Enumeration Survey (PES), which measures census accuracy, identified net undercounts among most historically undercounted populations and households.
- Census Bureau Federal Register Notices seeking public input on the 2030 Census; restarting the Population Estimates Challenge Program, with possible revisions to the scope; and content and operational updates to the ACS.
- OMB listening sessions on revision of federal race and ethnicity Standards; White House Request for Information on Federal Evidence Agenda on LGBTQI+ Equity.

FUNDER ACTIONS

- Weigh-in on policy and regulatory issues to improve the census, such design of the 2030 Census, data collection on race/ethnicity and sexual orientation and gender identity, and the Population Estimates Challenge Program.
- Understand 2020 Census data quality assessments (e.g., Census Bureau’s operational metrics, independent benchmarks, etc.) and promote resources on how funders, PSO, grantees, and partners can use census data to make decisions, conduct research, and advocate for policy improvements.
- Fund organizations working on 2020 Census data releases, education around the American Community Survey, research development and use, advocacy, and planning for 2030. This could be by contributing to the CEI pooled fund, state pooled funders, or through direct grants to groups for project support or general operating funds.

2023 - 2024

CENSUS MILESTONES

- Research and testing to inform 2030 Census design selection and operational development
- Federal Register Notices seeking public input on the American Community Survey and race and ethnicity Standards
- Release of Demographic Profiles for governmental units (places) on a flow basis by state (by May 31, 2023)
• Release of Demographic and Housing Characteristics files, with additional data collected in the 2020 Census for various levels of geography, including age, sex, household/family relationships, and housing tenure (by May 31, 2023) and the first sets of detailed data for racial and ethnic subgroups (August 2023).
• Population Estimates Challenge Program restarts, allowing local and tribal governments to appeal their annual estimates starting with the 2022 estimates released in 2023.
• OMB federal race and ethnicity Standards revision completed (summer 2024).

**FUNDER ACTIONS**

• Sustain grants to organizations conducting education on the ACS and advocating for prudent policy and operational decisions that will affect the accuracy of the 2030 Census and ACS—both for early census campaign development and real-time outreach and promotion campaigns; groups need to be funded in a way that allows them to maintain relationships, advocate for funding, support congressional oversight, and provide input in advance of the 2030 Census design selection by the end of 2024.
• Monitor and, as appropriate, contribute to research and development decisions for the 2030 Census, such as residence criteria, operations (e.g., reliance on the internet, mapping technologies, administrative records, etc.), questionnaire development (e.g., citizenship question, improvement of the race/ethnicity questions, consideration of a gender identity question, etc.).
• Assess needs and develop funding strategies for supporting annual population estimates challenges.

**2025 - 2026**

**CENSUS MILESTONES**

• Final planning phase for the 2030 Census (through 2027).
• Testing to support key decisions affecting 2030 Census design and operations, including, questionnaire content (topics) and question wording, possible revisions to the Residence Criteria and Situations (“residence rules”), and new design features (2025-2027).

**FUNDER ACTIONS**

• Increase engagement at your institution.
  o Identify staff person/s dedicated to census issues.
  o Continue to identify grantees, both for early census campaign development and real-time outreach and promotion campaigns.
  o Plan for your institution to become an official 2030 Census “Partner”.
  o In collaboration with funders and practitioners, respond to key regulatory, policy, and operational decisions, including preparing for engagement around the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) operation, final census content, and residence rules.
• Increase grantmaking.
  ○ Fund national efforts to monitor and address policy and operational challenges related to 2030 Census planning and ACS implementation, federal advocacy, and congressional oversight.
  ○ Make multi-year grants to national, state, and local groups to begin educating and mobilizing their networks to address policy challenges and prepare for Get Out the Count campaigns in historically undercounted communities.
  ○ Make grants to national and regional PSOs to support funders in their engagement around the census.
• Increase engagement with philanthropic and other partners.
  ○ Initiate or join census funder collaboratives; develop governance structures and pooled or aligned funding mechanisms; identify communities (e.g. regions, cities, neighborhoods, rural communities, Tribal areas, etc.) at greatest risk of being undercounted to inform funding strategies.
  ○ Identify potential partners beyond the philanthropic community, such as business partners, service providers, and educational institutions, as well as state, local, and Tribal governments.
  ○ Convene funders, grantees, and partners to develop strategies in support of sound 2030 Census policy and operational decisions, and to identify shared resource needs (e.g., “hard to count” maps, analyses of geographic funding based on census/ACS data, toolkits, effective messaging strategies, etc.) and gaps.

### 2027

**CENSUS MILESTONES**

- Final testing of specific census operations, methods, and questions
- Submission of topics to be covered in the 2030 Census and ACS to Congress (by April 1)
- Bureau finalizes Residence Criteria and Residence Situations (affects prison gerrymandering)
- Start of the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) operation (2027-2019)

**FUNDER ACTIONS**

- Increase engagement at your institution, grantmaking, and with philanthropic and other partners (see details from 2024-2026)

### 2028

**CENSUS MILESTONES**

- Begin implementation of 2030 Census operational plan (through 2030).
- End-to-End Census Test (“dress rehearsal,” with April 1 “Census Day”).
- Submission of 2030 Census and ACS questions to Congress (by April 1).
• Six Regional Census Centers open.
• Recruitment begins for temporary census positions, including Partnership Specialists, local office managers/staff, address listers, and peak operations field staff (note: funders have recommended earlier hiring of census Partnership Specialists).
• Final planning for the education and communications campaigns, including message testing and ad buys.

**FUNDER ACTIONS**

• In partnership with FCI and other funder collaboratives/PSOs, mobilize a broad community of funders to participate, convene, and invest around the 2030 Census; collectively monitor and engage around key decisions on 2030 Census policies, operations, and preparations, such as LUCA, the census questionnaire, and the dress rehearsal.
• Issue RFPs and increase grants—directly or through funder collaboratives—to ensure groups have sufficient capacity to respond to policy and operational decisions, engage in federal and state advocacy, support congressional oversight, develop education and communications strategies, and prepare to launch GOTC campaigns in 2029.
• Participate in regular funder and funder/practitioner convenings to learn and strategize, align and amplify census campaigns, and identify emerging needs and resource gaps; assist funders, partners, and grantees in connecting with key census networks and resources (e.g., webinars, trainings, factsheets, news updates, etc.).
• Start or join a statewide and/or local Complete Count Committee to ensure philanthropy is represented.
• Expand partnerships with Census Bureau national, regional, and (starting in 2029) local offices; maintain regular communication to identify emerging challenges and effective roles for funders and partners in supporting the 2030 Census.

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**2029**

**CENSUS MILESTONES**

• Continue implementation of 2030 Census operational plan (through 2030).
• Final census preparations, including In-Field Address Canvassing and opening of local census offices; recruitment continues for temporary census positions; hiring starts for local census office staff, recruitment specialists, and address listers.
• Launch of education and communications campaigns, targeting historically undercounted population groups and communities.

**FUNDER ACTIONS**

• Complete grantmaking for census outreach and promotion campaigns by early 2029; ensure groups have sufficient resources and capacity to respond to policy and operational decisions, engage in federal and state advocacy, support congressional oversight, develop education and communications strategies, execute GOTC campaigns, and scenario plan for contingencies.
- Participate in regular funder and funder/practitioner convenings to learn and strategize, align and amplify census campaigns, and identify emerging needs and resource gaps; assist funders, partners, and grantees in connecting with key census networks and resources (e.g., webinars, trainings, fact sheets, news updates, etc.).
- Leverage philanthropy’s platform to promote census awareness and respond, in alignment with practitioners, to unanticipated challenges.
- Identify gaps in the Census Bureau’s advertising plan and consider grants to ensure sufficient in-language and hyper-local targeted advertising in 2030.
- Monitor and, as appropriate, contribute to decisions affecting 2030 Census preparations.

2030

CENSUS MILESTONES

- Remote Alaska enumeration begins in January.
- Launch of national 2030 Census advertising campaign.
- 2030 Census peak operations (April 1 is “Census Day”).
- Hiring of field staff, including supervisors and enumerators (beginning Feb./March).
- Coverage improvement, data processing, and quality check operations.
- Post-Enumeration Survey (PES), to measure census accuracy, begins.
- Secretary of Commerce transmits apportionment counts and results to the President; Census Bureau releases that information, along with national and state resident population totals, publicly (by Dec. 31).

FUNDER ACTIONS

- Leverage philanthropy’s platform to promote census participation and respond, in coordination with practitioners, to unanticipated challenges.
- Participate in regular funder and funder/practitioner convenings to monitor census implementation, align and amplify census campaigns, and identify emerging needs and resource gaps, including rapid response needs and/or communities that might require additional resources to ensure a fair and accurate count.
- Complete grantmaking by addressing emerging needs and resource gaps, including hyper-local targeted ads.
- Begin the process to capture and archive what was created, learned, and accomplished in a final assessment of your foundation’s engagement and/or investments in the 2030 Census.

2031  (See 2021 for tentative Census Milestones and Funder Actions)

*This is a living document that will evolve over the course of the decade as census milestones and, in turn, funder actions, evolve.*