

FUNDERS CENSUS INITIATIVE (FCI): A BLUEPRINT FOR PHILANTHROPIC CENSUS ENGAGEMENT



The Importance of the Census: The decennial census is a critical institution. The data are the statistical backbone of our society and inform the distribution of billions in public, private, and philanthropic resources. Further, census data are a cornerstone of democratic representation, as they inform the distribution of political power for a decade. Ensuring a fair and accurate census and American Community Survey (ACS) are especially important for historically undercounted groups like communities of color, immigrants, low-income families, young children, and others.

Ongoing Engagement from Philanthropy is critical to ensure Census Bureau decisions are informed by historically undercounted communities. Supporting these efforts can both maintain census infrastructure and make our democratic systems more equitable. The chart below serves as a blueprint of key census milestones and concrete examples of ways funders can engage and invest throughout the decade. Importantly, 2020 Census activity is ongoing through 2023. And while 2030 Census policies and operations are yet undecided, work on the next decennial has already begun. These actions can be undertaken collaboratively with national, state, and local funders, collaboratives, and philanthropy serving organizations (PSOs).

FCCP's Funders Census Initiative (FCI) and partners like the Democracy Funders Census Subgroup and United Philanthropy Forum educated and mobilized philanthropy to participate, convene, and invest around a fair and accurate 2020 Census. FCI stands ready to support the philanthropic community around key Census Bureau milestones and funder actions for the 2020 Census, ACS, and the 2030 Census.

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 (by September 30)
 - *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.)*
- Release of Demographic Profiles for governmental units (places) on a flow basis by state
- Count Question Resolution program (October 2021 to June 2023, tentatively)
- 2020 Census assessments and evaluations begin (through 2023, tentatively)
- American Community Survey (ongoing)

Funder Actions

- Monitor 2020 Census data quality assessments (e.g., Census Bureau data, independent benchmarks, etc.) and mitigation strategies; stay informed on census policy and litigation
- 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
- 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

2022

Census Milestones

- 1950 Census forms become available at the National Archives
- Count Question Resolution program begins (October 2021 to June 2023, tentatively)
- Results from the Post Enumeration Survey, which measure census accuracy
- Release of detailed data sets for various levels of geography, with cross-tabulations by race/ethnicity, age, and other characteristics
- Research and testing to inform 2030 Census design and operational development begins
- American Community Survey (ongoing)

Funder Actions

- Monitor 2020 Census data quality assessments (e.g., Census Bureau data, independent benchmarks, etc.) and mitigation strategies; stay informed on census policy and litigation
- Promote positive narratives around data releases
 - *Around the 2010 Census data releases, there were racist, xenophobic, and divisive narratives about the shifting demographics of the population*
- Maintain relationships with funders and funder/PSO collaboratives, as well as government, service provider, and practitioner partners throughout the decade; these collaborations can mobilize around issues like improving accessibility and equity around census data and other Census Bureau data and tools, expanding access to broadband infrastructure, leveraging technology and local knowledge to map communities, building government knowledge and improving data collection on the LGBTQ+ community and people experiencing homelessness, and strengthening civic participation
- Sustain grants to organizations working on the 2020 Census and early planning for 2030

2023-2025

Census Milestones

- Research and testing to inform 2030 Census design and operational development
- American Community Survey (ongoing)

Funder Actions

- Maintain relationships with the Census Bureau throughout the decade; these ongoing relationships can improve the Census Bureau's understanding of philanthropy, as well as build the local knowledge and cultural competencies of their workforce so that census policies and operations can better center historically undercounted communities
- Sustain grants to key groups 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 when the Census Bureau begins making decisions on design in 2025
- 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.)
- Engage more deeply around the ACS, which is part of the decennial census; the ACS collects much more detailed information on an ongoing basis and is therefore both a critical source of information and opportunity for increased and more equitable engagement

2026

Census Milestones

- Continued testing to support key decisions affecting 2030 Census design and operations, including, questionnaire content (topics) and question wording, and possible revisions to the Residence Criteria and Situations (“residence rules”)
- American Community Survey (ongoing)

Funder Actions

- Increase engagement at your institution
 - Identify a staff person/s dedicated to census issues
 - Identify potential grantees, both for early census campaign development and real-time outreach and promotion campaigns
 - Plan for your institution to become a 2030 Census Official Partner of the Census Bureau
 - In collaboration with funders and practitioners, respond to key regulatory, policy, and operational decisions
 - *Residence Criteria: In 2016, 35 funders joined a letter to the Census Bureau advocating that incarcerated persons be counted at their home address*
- 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, 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)

- Start of the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) operation (tentative)
- American Community Survey (ongoing)

2028

- End-To-End Census Test (“dress rehearsal”)
- 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 (late 2028)
- American Community Survey (ongoing)

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
 - *Questionnaire: In 2018, more than 330 funders and PSOs signed letters to the Department of Commerce opposing the citizenship question.*
- 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 local officials; maintain regular communication to identify emerging challenges and effective roles for funders and partners in supporting the 2030 Census

2029

Census Milestones

- 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 and address listers.
- Launch of education and communications campaigns
- American Community Survey (ongoing)

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
- Monitor and, as appropriate, contribute to decisions affecting 2030 Census preparations
- 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.)
- Leverage philanthropy's platform to promote census participation and respond, in alignment with practitioners, to unanticipated challenges

2030

Census Milestones

- 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)
- American Community Survey (ongoing)

Funder Actions

- Leverage philanthropy's platform to promote census participation and respond, in alignment with practitioners, to unanticipated challenges
 - *Operational timeline: In 2020, in response to an announcement by the Department of Commerce that the census would be cut short, 547 funders and PSOs signed a letter opposing the shortened timeline*
- 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
- 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