

MINNESOTA

August 2021

Census data determines the allocation of federal and other funds to vital social programs, guides redistricting, and informs research. Therefore, an accurate census that captures historically undercounted populations¹ is crucial for our democracy. Since 2016, a collaborative of philanthropic funders has worked to align and pool funding to build and strengthen the infrastructure needed to support a fair and accurate count.

The Democracy Funders Collaborative's Census Subgroup, which is the steering committee for the census funder collaborative, engaged ORS Impact as a partner to develop state-level reports that provide an overview of philanthropic efforts to promote the 2020 Census within and across the 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. This report provides a summary of census efforts for the State of Minnesota based on review of secondary data, and interviews with key actors involved (n=4).

¹We have opted to use the term "historically undercounted populations" in our narrative, but the term is interchangeable with "hard to count," which we use when our informants opted to do so



OVERVIEW GOING INTO 2020 CENSUS

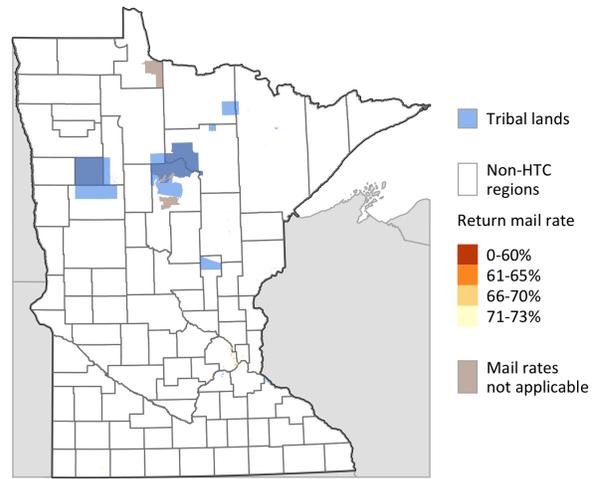
5,527,358

TOTAL POPULATION

151,840

TOTAL POPULATION LIVING IN HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED CENSUS TRACTS

HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED TRACTS BY COUNTY



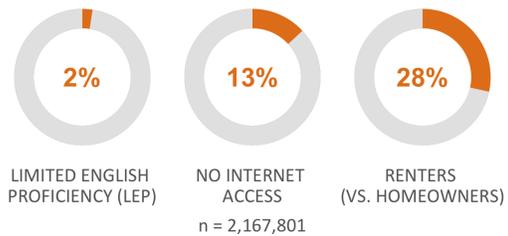
Special update/enumerate method used for counting as mail return rates are not applicable

Population

Past analyses of Census data have consistently shown differences in self-response rates based on household or individual characteristics, indicating that certain populations are at higher risk of being undercounted. The following graphs show the distribution of selected populations within the state that have historically been more likely to be undercounted. Data for all maps and graphs provided by CUNY Graduate Center via the Census 2020 Hard to Count/Response Rate map at www.CensusHardToCountMaps2020.us.

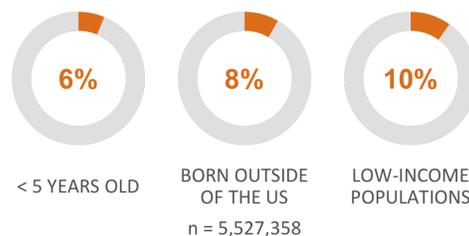
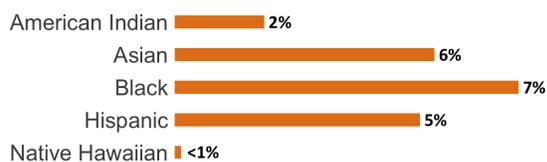
HOUSEHOLDS

Percent of total number of households in the state that have the following characteristics:



INDIVIDUALS

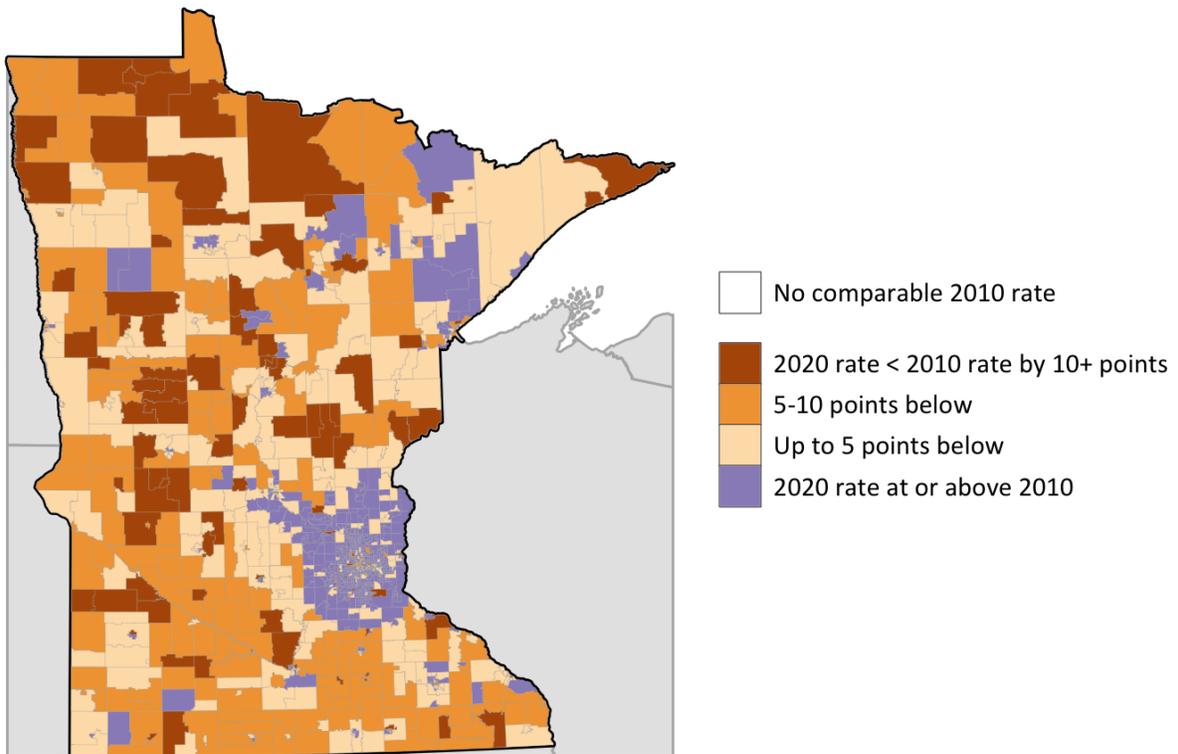
Percent of total number of individuals in the state that have characteristics of historically undercounted populations:



OVERVIEW OF CENSUS SELF-RESPONSE RATES

YEAR	SELF RESPONSE	CHANGE
2020	75.1%	+1.0
2010	74.1%	

CENSUS TRACTS WHERE 2020 CENSUS RETURN RATE WAS LOWER THAN 2010



STRUCTURE OF CENSUS OUTREACH

Minnesota's 2020 Census efforts were grounded in a large, cross-sector collaboration, co-led by philanthropy, state government, and nonprofit organizations, which focused on reaching historically undercounted communities. Efforts benefited from foundational organizing that began several years before the response period, considerable investments by philanthropy and the state, and complementary statewide activities on the part of the state demographer's office. Important milestones in the development of efforts in the state and a description of key structures and actors follow.

An early start on building a collaborative structure for the 2020 Census founded in authentic engagement of historically undercounted community leaders set up Minnesota for success. In 2015, spurred by the Minnesotans for the American Community Survey and with funding from the Joyce Foundation, the Minnesota Council on Foundations (MCF) began designing what became the Minnesota Census Mobilization Partnership (MCMP) as a complement to anticipated public sector efforts. MCF engaged the Minneapolis Foundation, the St. Paul & Minnesota Foundation, and the Blandin Foundation in early design conversations. MCF hired Grassroots Solutions, a Minnesota-based consulting firm, to form a Co-Creation Table (CCT) to develop a vision, strategy, and plan for mobilizing historically undercounted communities around the 2020 Census. The Grassroots Solutions senior strategist who led this foundational effort—herself a trusted messenger within communities of color—recruited community leaders from civic engagement groups and racial equity organizations across the state to join the CCT. Framing the census as a community power-building opportunity helped overcome any initial reluctance to join the CCT due to distrust of the federal government. Initial meetings of the CCT raised members' awareness of the history of undercounting Minnesota's Black communities, indigenous communities, and communities of color; how that related to underinvestment in those same communities; and federal laws ensuring the strict confidentiality of census data within the US Census Bureau. CCT members were paid for their time attending CCT meetings and for time to meet with members of their respective communities to inform the CCT's vision, strategy, and plan.

The collaborative structure allowed for both independent and coordinated leadership among a diversity of invested community stakeholders. In 2018, the CCT completed the organizing and mobilizing strategy and decided on the structure and timeline for what became Our Minnesota Census Campaign, which later became part of the state's We Count! census campaign. MCMP was organized into five coordinating hubs:

- *Our Minnesota Census Campaign Hub*, focused on relational organizing with historically undercounted communities (driven by former CCT members)
- *Complete Count Committees Hub*, focused on supporting the more than 200 local government, nonprofit, and affinity group complete count committees across the state
- *Greater Minnesota/Rural Hub*, focused on leveraging the networks of community foundations in the MCF membership to support census engagement in Greater Minnesota and rural communities

- *Nonprofit Hub*, focused on supporting the member organizations of the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits
- *Tribal and Native Communities Hub*, focused on supporting the state's 11 distinct indigenous tribes

A Coordinating Team—consisting of representatives from each hub plus key public, funder, and advocacy partners—acted as a connector across the hubs, supported collaboration between MCMP and public sector efforts, and brought in resources from national efforts (see Coordinating Team members in Table 1).

Throughout the effort, the Coordinating Team led several extra-hub organizing and mobilization efforts to maximize statewide participation. Additionally, two other groups also became key parts of the organizing and mobilizing effort: a group focused on engaging older people across racial and ethnic communities, which became the Association of Elders Complete Count Committee, and a college- and university-focused group.

During and between regular cross-sector meetings, partners exchanged information, resources, and stories in support of individual, coordinated, and collaborative efforts. MCMP offered a lot of value to their partners and other interested parties (including the US Census Bureau) in their quarterly, then monthly meetings, which began in 2017. Early meetings focused on strengthening understanding of the importance of the census for power-building and skills for relational organizing. Meetings included regular updates on efforts and developments at the local, state, and national levels, which helped partners understand they were part of a much larger effort and provided opportunities to ask questions and tell stories. When the meetings were in person, they offered food and swag and were centrally located, with free parking and accessibility to public transit. They were also accessible online, allowing for truly statewide participation. The meetings consistently attracted well over 100 people, even after they went solely virtual when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. When the police killing of George Floyd happened in Minneapolis, the partnership first gave partners space, then came back together to share stories and support each other. A Coordinating Table met monthly to set the agenda for the full partnership meetings, vet outreach materials prior to their release, and perform a variety of statewide coordination and planning functions. Members also spoke frequently between meetings as needs and opportunities arose.

Around the same time that the CCT was co-creating the vision, strategy, and plan for their census work, MCF approached the Minnesota State Demography Center (within the Minnesota Department of Administration) and asked the state demographer's office what the office needed for the state to run a successful census campaign. The response was: funding, additional staff, and partnerships with foundations and nonprofit organizations that could advise on how best to reach historically undercounted populations. Ideas emerged from the work with the CCT and the conversations with the state demographer's office that, at least initially, entailed the state demographer's office working with grassroots organizations and government agencies; the emerging collaboration working primarily with grassroots organizations; and both groups supporting each other's effort through participation in each other's planning meetings. Starting this conversation two years before the response period and extending it to other public entities allowed some of the major city governments to begin building their local infrastructure for the census and allowed for relatively early formation of local complete count committees. More than a year before the response period, the state

demographer's office created a manual for 2020 Get Out the Count (GOTC) efforts based on the Bureau's 2010 manual; conducted regional trainings for complete count committees throughout the state; sent regular email messages to them with information about relevant events and resources; and hosted monthly calls for the complete count committees. By the time the State Complete Count Committee first convened in July 2018, MCMP and the state demographer's office had so much momentum that there was no need for State Complete Count Committee members to play roles in driving GOTC, though the broad spectrum of government and community leaders effectively represented the statewide effort in media interviews and supported specific GOTC efforts through their networks.

In partnership with MCMP and the state demographer's office, several of Minnesota's higher education institutions offered a model for their sector's role in census efforts. In August 2019, Metropolitan State University, with Carleton College, Minnesota Campus Compact, and Minneapolis Community and Technical College, hosted a Census 2020 Planning Institute for faculty, students, and staff from campuses across the state. The two-day institute was designed to share information about the census, support their development of curricular materials for educating students and mobilizing campuses, and make them aware of mini-grant opportunities to support their student education and outreach efforts. With backing from MCMP and the state demographer's office, many of those involved in the institute eventually formed a higher education complete count committee, which supported student text campaigns, email blasts, US Census Bureau mailings to students using addresses provided by campus housing directors, and incorporation of census graphics into course management software.

Early advocacy efforts on the part of philanthropy and nonprofit organizations encouraged the state to allocate substantial funding for the 2020 Census. During the 2017 legislative session, MCF led successful lobbying efforts for state budget allocations to expand staffing at the state demographer's office (within the Minnesota State Demographic Center). MCMP lobbied again during the 2019 session for money that would be granted to community-based organizations doing the outreach. While many state legislators were interested in Minnesota's census preparations and outreach—including underlying concern about losing a congressional seat—and there was bipartisan support for this in the House, only Democratic Senate members signed on to or supported the necessary legislation for the appropriation. In both 2017 and 2019, support from the governor's office was critical, enabling coordination of legislative advocacy with the state demographer's office. In the end, funds were appropriated only at the insistence of the Democratic governor over the opposition of Republican Senate leadership as part of final budget bill negotiations. The collaboration between MCMP and the state demographer's office established through the lobbying efforts extended to the effective implementation of 2020 Census outreach.

Table 1: Key actors involved in Census Efforts²:

Actor	Role
<p>Minnesota Department of Administration, including the Minnesota State Demographic Center (office of the state demographer)</p>	<p>Led the state government’s census efforts, funded complete count committees throughout state, played leadership role in MCMP through membership on Coordinating Team</p>
<p>Minnesota Council on Foundations</p>	<p>Convener of MCMP; anchored MCMP’s Our Minnesota Census Campaign Hub; fundraised and regranted state and philanthropic dollars for preparing, organizing, and mobilizing in historically undercounted communities</p>
<p>African Career, Education, and Resource; Asian American Organizing Project; CAPI USA; Centro Campesino; Children’s Defense Fund; Hmong American Census Network; Islamic Civic Society of America; Isuroon; KOOTASCA Community Action; Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe; Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe; Navigate MN; People Serving People; the ANIKA Foundation/Black Votes Matter MN; American Indian Learning Resource Center (University of Minnesota Duluth); Voices for Racial Justice</p>	<p>Co-developed the 2020 Census communications and mobilization plan for MCMP as its CCT; drove engagement in historically undercounted communities within MCMP’s Our Minnesota Census Campaign Hub</p>
<p>Blandin Foundation, Common Cause Minnesota, League of Women Voters Minnesota, Main Street Project (now Sharing Our Roots), Minneapolis Foundation, Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, Minnesotans for the American Community Survey, US Census Bureau–Chicago Region, and, listed above, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, MCF, Voices for Racial Justice, Minnesota Department of Administration/ Minnesota State Demographic Center</p>	<p>Led and coordinated activity across MCMP’s five hubs as its Coordinating Team; Main Street Project also anchored MCMP’s Greater Minnesota/Rural Hub; Minneapolis Foundation also administered state-funded grants to complete count committees; and Minnesota Council of Nonprofits also anchored MCMP’s Nonprofit Hub</p>

²Data reflects the Census Bureau’s last update of self-response data (published in January 2021), which differs from the CUNY maps that use data from October 2020

Native Governance Center	Anchored MCMP’s Tribal and Native Communities Hub with Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
Metropolitan State University	Anchored MCMP’s higher education outreach and the Census 2020 and Minnesota Higher Education Network

FUNDING FOR CENSUS OUTREACH

Overall, more than **\$3.8 million** of state government and philanthropic funding supported census efforts in Minnesota. In addition, some organizations and institutions made in-kind donations of staff time to support these efforts.

Table 2: Funding for 2020 Census Outreach³

Funding Source and Amount	Funding Purpose
Philanthropy: \$1.67 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCMP received \$1,226,500 in grants from regional, state, and national foundations; large corporations; and anonymous donors • \$439,300 in funding aligned with MCMP’s efforts were reported by regional and community foundations • MCMP expended the most funds on hub organization and mobilization efforts, some of which was regranted to smaller organizations. Smaller proportions went to special projects, including the statewide Neighbors Calling Neighbors program; MCMP organizing, education, and operations, including staffing, events/meetings, and training (e.g., on relational organizing); and nonpartisan state and federal advocacy efforts • The Minneapolis Foundation administered two rounds of grants to complete count committees—the first consisted of \$750 grants to 221 complete count committees, and the second consisted of up to \$5,000 to 82 complete count committees

³Funding data should be taken as estimates. We included data from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and Census Equity Fund (CEF) grants where applicable; other figures are estimates provided by key informants

<p>State Government: \$2.17 million</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$760,000 was appropriated in 2017 (\$190,000 for four years, specifically for the state demographer’s office), and \$1,600,000 was appropriated in 2019 • Of the 2019 appropriation, about \$880,000 went to the state demographer’s office for shared statewide services, staffing, and tools, and \$720,000 was granted to MCMP, complete count committees, tribes, and nonprofit organizations.
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DESCRIPTION OF 2020 CENSUS OUTREACH

Minnesota’s GOTC efforts were grounded in relational organizing and employing trusted messengers specific to each community where partners did outreach. MCMP leveraged both national and local resources to ensure they had materials in as many languages as needed. Between Coordinating Team meetings, MCF/MCMP staff would check in with each hub to help the partners adapt, strategize, or troubleshoot. The state demographer’s office intentionally recruited enumerators from communities that were considered historically undercounted, using the complete count committees to amplify enumerator job announcements. MCMP-funded organizations and the complete count committees most often focused their outreach on racial and ethnic minorities, low-income households, immigrant communities, renters, and seniors, as well as young adults (including college students), disability communities, LGBTQ communities, families with young children, and people experiencing homelessness. They promoted the census by posting on social media; distributing flyers and other promotional materials, including census information in newsletters and other communications; presenting at meetings and other gatherings; organizing in-person and virtual events; phone and text banking; and door knocking. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, organizations and the complete count committees increased social media use, phone and text banking, hosting virtual events, and partnering with other organizations.

New and strengthened relationships were essential to facilitating outreach efforts in their respective target communities. Much of the success in the state’s GOTC efforts was due to relationships within hubs, across hubs, between hubs and Coordinating Team partners, and between hubs and entities external to MCMP. The Native Governance Center and Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe led MCMP’s effort to reach members of the state’s 11 distinct sovereign tribal nations. When COVID-19 hit tribal communities especially hard, the Native Governance Center connected with the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council and the state demographer’s office to conduct door-knocking campaigns that incorporated completion of paper census forms in communities with particularly low response rates. When meat-processing plants in southern Minnesota were closed due to the pandemic, members of the Greater Rural Minnesota Hub joined forces with partners focused on undocumented and Latinx communities to figure out how to support families impacted by the closures while keeping census messages visible.

The state demographer's office leveraged their connections and resources to engage in targeted GOTC efforts at scale.

Early in the response period, they sent a mailing to post office box owners in rural communities, informing them that census forms would not be mailed to post office boxes and asking them to check their homes (e.g., their barn door) for the form. To help reach low-income households, they partnered with the Department of Revenue to include census awareness materials in scheduled mailers on the Earned Income Tax Credit and with the Minnesota Commerce Department to include the materials with mailed applications for the state's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. When the COVID-19 pandemic foiled plans for door-knocking campaigns to reach historically undercounted populations living in apartment buildings, the state demographer's office partnered with the Minnesota Public Housing Authority so they could call apartment managers, send them packets with information about the importance of the census and GOTC materials, and enlist them to put posters up in hallways and Post-it notes on apartment doors to inform residents about the census and the importance of responding. Post-pandemic, they did a mass text campaign with links to the online census form, using voter lists from the secretary of state's office and text-banking tools from CommunityConnect Labs. In addition, as part of the Neighbors Calling Neighbors program, they worked with MCMP partners to support phone-banking from home with technology purchased by MCF, using the same voter list divided by location and language (based on surnames). This enabled partners to call others in their area or with shared languages to ask if they received their forms, filled them out, and had any questions, and, if needed, to assist them in completing the forms. The state demographer's office also translated 2020 Census materials into Somali, Hmong, and more than 10 other languages.

MCMP and the state demographer's office used a variety of data sources to support the planning and prioritization of efforts statewide.

MCMP used the US Census Bureau's data application and data from the state demographer's office, first to inform planning, then to inform ongoing efforts. In the planning phase, MCMP used the Response Outreach Area Mapper to identify target census tracts and neighborhoods based on low-count-area predictions, and shared that information with the partners that were focused on the communities living in those areas. Then, in April, when the Self-Response Rates Map was released, MCMP checked those maps regularly to inform targeted outreach, though these latter maps were limited for use in targeting historically undercounted communities because they did not incorporate demographics—limits that became increasingly felt as the deadline neared and they wanted to make every minute count. They also used statistics based on national research to inform messaging to raise awareness about the loss of federal program funds provided to the state for each person not counted (e.g., money available for Pell Grants and construction). The state demographer's office also used the Response Outreach Area Mapper and the Census 2020 Hard to Count Map to help them prioritize and direct their efforts to the census tracts with the lowest predicted self-response rates. The office also used these tools to help local government leaders understand the large sizes of historically undercounted populations in their jurisdictions and, therefore, the necessity of investing in reaching them. Although the 2020 Census Barriers, Attitudes, and Motivators Study (also known as the 2020 Census Planning Survey) came out relatively late for planning—in the summer of 2019—the state demographer's office used its segmented data on fears, likelihood of response, and preferred way of receiving messaging to inform plans for specific GOTC efforts for a given community.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Early, strong, and active investment of time and funding on the part of philanthropy is key to GOTC success.** Years before and through the response period, several foundations played essential roles in building the infrastructure for the state’s GOTC efforts and supporting those efforts. Such roles included providing early funding to staff network-building efforts, adding credibility to fundraising and networking efforts, sharing knowledge related to engaging specific populations, and managing grants.
- **Such philanthropic investment must proceed with humility, intentionality, and transparency.** In efforts focused on engaging historically undercounted communities, many of which are Black communities and communities of color, it is important that grantmakers—who are predominately led and staffed by people of privilege—work with humility and intentionality to create spaces where people of color can exert leadership as well, and to apportion funding as equitably and transparently as possible.
- **Ties to national efforts bring essential expertise to state efforts.** Local ties to those engaged in the census at the national level brought into state-level conversations strategic thinking and messaging about the value of a complete count, which helped set the tone and strategy for successful statewide efforts.
- **Having multiple staff dedicated to census work well before and through the response period is key to GOTC success.** Two dedicated staff members in the state demographer’s office and one at MCMP had the necessary time and resources to make personal connections and continuously carry the ball forward. This was especially important early on, when efforts had to overcome distrust of government among those in nonprofits and education who work directly with vulnerable populations. Even with this dedicated capacity, they could have used more.
- **By connecting the census to daily life, stories helped people see the census as a tool for their liberation.** Stories were particularly powerful when they incorporated an acknowledgment of distrust to overcome. The stories CCT members collected from their communities became collective wisdom that informed MCMP’s Our Minnesota Census Campaign and overall structure. And the stories CCT members and other community leaders shared as part of their outreach efforts helped connect the census to everyday issues people struggle with (e.g., affordable housing).
- **Building capacity within organizations and as a collaborative strengthened the overall work.** Organizations of all types and sizes benefit from a shared messaging and mobilization strategy and training. This has the potential to have lasting influence on the community and public coordination on promoting and protecting democratic institutions and building shared efforts on state and national initiatives. It also created leadership opportunities and strengthened emerging leaders at the local and state level.

LOOKING FORWARD

Minnesota's 2020 Census efforts built on its rich history of movement-building, grounded in close collaboration between philanthropy and nonprofits. Some of the CCT members knew each other as their work began and some did not. Many of MCMP's hubs leveraged existing networks, and collaborative activity across the state helped partners establish new relationships within and across sectors.

In bringing together the CCT and other partners, MCMP took a big step forward in building an infrastructure for addressing issues that are relevant to historically undercounted communities, which is particularly important in a state where each of these communities, on its own, is proportionately small. Many of these partners leveraged the connections, trust, and lessons learned from the 2020 Census work to collaborate on Get Out the Vote efforts. At the time of this writing, many are beginning to work together on efforts aimed at redistricting, and some have hopes to collaboratively address structural racism within public health. Staff in the state demographer's office who worked on the 2020 Census are now in the Department of Health, working on a vaccination campaign that will employ many of the strategies and tactics used in their census work.

DATA SOURCES

Representatives from the following organizations participated in interviews and/or contributed information for this report:

- Minnesota Council on Foundations
- Bauman Foundation (Advisory Board)
- Voices for Racial Justice
- Minnesota State Demographic Center

This report also used “2020 CENSUS: A story of unprecedented perseverance, purpose and impact in Minnesota,” a report prepared for MCF by The UpTake and Seiche, as a resource.